

Interview by Guido Molinari in Around Photographyn 09 2006

Maurizio Mercuri's works are tied to conceptual art without ever being imprisoned in rigid and repeated patterns. Within this wide freedom of movement one can find elements of continuity in the modality of confrontation with reality. In particular the manipulation and re-projecting of the existent turn into primary necessities to be considered in the light of a light and playful spirit. In this context the artist's touch is very slight but illuminating, in particular cases it is only a question of inventing "ex-novo" but always keeping in mind praxis and real behaviours to reckon with. Thus the artist, through the making, the manipulation and the analytical examination of what he is considering, achieves the moment of re-interpretation, of the inventive burst, of the surprising re-visitation of daily reality. The languages blend, clash, confront producing meaningful as well as involving differences of potential.

GM What fascinates you in the numerous photos you keep, bought at junk markets or found in the most extravagant and strange contexts? When you use these photos in your works or you place them in installations, in what way do you re-consider them from an aesthetic point of view?

MM I have a collection of pictures, found photos, magazine cuttings, postcards, book and record covers and many other things that I have heaped up in the course of the years. It is a kind of disorganized archives combining vintage images de-contextualized and therefore incongruous.

Most of them come from junk markets and garrets, a reservoir of atmospheres compressed in boxes and file-holders that, every now and then, I observe and mix again in search of unforeseen connections. In the video "Qualche" ("Some") I used some old slides of the seventies showing images of ambients, life scenes, family ceremonies which, later, I elaborated with 3D graphic software, so as to create in the viewer the illusion of moving in a frozen scene. As to installations, early in the nineties I realized, in an exhibition curated by Claudio Marra, an ambient installation where the windows of the space where the exhibition was hosted had been closed and transformed into rudimental light boxes that lit up images and texts photocopied on translucent paper.

GM Some of your photos seem particularly accurate with regard to the composition of the image, of the light and shade, others, instead, seem to follow the logic of the visual Ready Made, that is photos that offer the viewer a direct and immediate contact with reality, perhaps showing little effects of estrangement, but leaving the merely visual values on the background, is it that so?

MM Form and content are inseparable. My research is not directly concerned with technical or stylistic problems because the objective is the quality of the creative and re-creative process. I want to reveal the dialectics of the real. All this emerges in some of my works. For example in "Tema" ("Theme") I propose perspectives framing the floor area under beds and furniture. The image almost turns into a heritage of a child's hide-out. Instead in "Untitled (mole)" I show a shot of this underground inhabitant of my garden, almost a symbol of the underground artist silently operating in search of his own roots.

GM I have been particularly struck by your re-visitation of the idea of a light box obtained by replacing neon lights with tanning lamps. What did you want to underline with this variation.

MM This is a large-size self-portrait where I wished to give back to the work a participatory dimension in relation to the ambient and to the viewers who, to observe it, are forced to get tanned. In this case I think of artist as Dan Graham, Dan Flavin or Bruce Nauman. Thus the sublimation of the image in a transcendental sense is opposed to pure idiocy, the portrait, even if of a large-size, draws back to the background, the place became the protagonist and the viewer participates in a ceremonial.

GM You have operated on photographic images also through photomontages made through computer modifications. Which particular creative path have you followed to come to a work centred in the manipulation of the image?

MM Sometimes I seek and experiment with a linguistic swerve through a technical escamotage. As it occurs in "Senza offesa" ("No Offence"): in this case a record cover shows Rubinstein, the pianist, bowing after a concert. I rotated the central part of this image producing a semantic "full turn". The image contains and highlights the idea of rotation, an abstract component, but generated by a pretext. Also in the work "Anch'essi" ("Them too") I used a very common and over-used process: the specular duplication and reflection. But operating these technical solutions on this particular subject (a painting by Millet) resulted in a particular drift of sense.

GM On some occasions to realize an image and therefore the work, you have used a scanner. Why have you chosen this method, excluding the camera?

MM For artists a scanner, a device for the acquisition of images is the descendent of a photocopier, you can put everything there, then you look at what comes out. Recently I have scanned an animal, a hedgehog, which, temporarily removed from its habitat, seems to put us questions about the essence of being in this world.

GM Sometimes in your works, and therefore also in your photos, the element of casualness can be found. What attracts you in this factor that you cannot control?

MM Case generates an irresponsible creativity that I like very much. This often constitutes the starting point of works based on images, photos or drawings, for example, and it is frequently an arrival point for performances or installations where casualness comes in in the form of possible, occasional collaborators or through unpredictable situations. I think that a work must be an open score whose result takes me by surprise.

The photo

GM What do you think of these very big image archives that the internet is?

MM Of course I am a fond user of the internet. I feel the fascination of this sort of shared intellect that generates an enormous amount of omnidirectional information. With the internet time is saved and wasted.

GM Some photos are shown inside videos you have realized. Why this passages from a still image to the movement that you forcefully give it?

MM Some of the videos I have produced such as "In fondo a destra" ("At the end, on the right") or "Boccad'oro" ("Golden Mouth") are so short that they can be seen as an extension of a photo, a temporal dilatation of image that records an awkward use of technology done on purpose.

Of course the titles of my works have a synergic function: they add an invisible dimension interacting with the sense.

Daniela Lotta "Spoil" Strategies for an aesthetics of the precarious 2006

When the first models of independent culture began to form in the 1970s, that is when autonomous cultural organisation first struck out in an alternative direction to dominant mainstream paths, a new aesthetic developed too. This was a direct consequence of the conceptual approach towards the need for self-determination. We do not want to diminish the importance of the punk rebellion or the musical genesis of independent record labels, pirate radio stations and antagonistic political movements. However, what we are interested in highlighting here is the fact that the demands and aspirations of the individual, transverse communication and a new cultural as well as social understanding gradually came to light during those years of protest.

It was a widespread innovative ferment, both ideological and artistic in form, which freed people's tastes and led them to experiment with all kinds of expression in total freedom. If those were the years of self-organisation, Do It Yourself and extreme collective expressionism, we now find ourselves experiencing a new revival of those sounds and rough,

awkward visions. There is an attitude that has characterised a section of contemporary studies for sometime now. It consists of the deliberate lack of 'correctness' that is now being expressed through the lo-fi revolution. Now that everyone can get the best of everything and 'democratised' digital technology offers affordable advanced performance, the tendency is to deviate and seek out a low definition effect, to contravene therefore the accepted order.

The trend takes in art and music as well as design and fashion, where sparse, homemade efforts and odd collages with bits and pieces taken from anywhere and everywhere, stuck together any which way, are taking over. The drive to recover the aesthetic in the everyday favours minimal interventions and focuses on micro events that open up the things around us to create an epiphany like experience. These are subtle interventions, which may involve solely the intention of the artist. He or she can decide to isolate our view of such objects in order to make them communicate with us in a completely new way.

This direction includes strategies of the precarious aimed at emphasising the peripheral, the marginal or whatever may seem banal and useless at first glance. Yet if seen from another angle, they can easily lead to alternative interpretations.

The main thrust comes from an ironic, disillusioned attitude, extreme openness and a predisposition to change, the subversion of every pre-established concept and every accepted value, driven only by the search for new interpretive solutions. This attitude is often transmitted through the reclaiming of an ordinary object, which undergoes an alteration in terms of both form and function. Thus a profuse repertoire becomes part of the work, purposefully disinterested in correctness and actually pleased to manually recreate improbable means of interaction with the world....

....Maurizio Mercuri (Fabriano, 1965) works with disparate materials reclaimed from everyday life. He produces unusual combinations that can induce shifts in sense with sophisticated lightness. For example, the spider's web of cracks created by the blow of a hammer onto an ordinary glass vase makes that object, without any inherent appeal, capture our attention. Or the pictures neatly displayed along the white walls of a gallery, chosen not for their artistic merit but because they perfectly conceal the holes made during a previous, 'destructive' performance.

Daniela Lotta Perspectives of escape 2005 City Council Art Gallery Faenza (RA)

Sergia Avveduti Piero Golia Maurizio Mercuri

...Dedication for the detail and the marginal can be found also in Maurizio Mercuri. His works can be easily defined as epiphanies of the daily experience, recordings of his disposition to contemplate the meaningless, to create paradoxical images, as when he replaces water with the beer in an ordinary garden fountain. Looking at a series of photos shot under a bed of his home (Tema 2001) Mercuri seems to discover a new place, perhaps testimony of a parallel world. Thus the artist invites us to transcend the object itself and to discover its hidden beauty, conveying to us, with his enthusiasm, the emphasis for trifling little things, for those micro-events which, if conveniently isolated, have the merit, instead, of activating unforeseen deviations. A glass vase smashed by hammer blows which, in spite of that, can still stand up thanks to a silicone coat previously spread inside, offers the opportunity to observe the original cracks resulting from the destructive action (Untitled 1995)

Dario Bellini il Riformista 17 June 2004

...I pick up a big shell from the corner of the gallery, automatically I bring it to my ear, from the hollow I hear, very softly, the sounds of a beach, bathers' voices, announcements from loudspeakers, coconutsellers. From a circular white concrete fountain, like those you find in courtyards with small statues of dwarves and Madonnas, spirts a yellow liquid seething and foaming in the basin, it is beer, the fragrance of fermented hop spreads in the gallery. On a table top there are some walkman earphones connected to a wire, no sounds or messages, but at once one realizes that they slightly warm the ears through microscopic resistances (!?! Well? In a small room, two metres by one, that is the porter's lodge of a block of flat at 42 Corso Garibaldi in Milan, a very kind lady with infinite grace and dedication, welcomes visitors and, at their request, tells them about the earlier works by Maurizio Mercuri (Fabriano 1965). On her

wrist she is wearing a watch from which comes out, as if it were a cannula, a small cable unrolling towards some rudimentary cardboard acoustic boxes. An unceasing ticking marks the never-stopping beat of time perhaps of the heart. An accidental overload puts the light out, the wrist glitters with the small light of a glow-worm, a red led. Perhaps the lady is an android.

Maurizio Mercuri, performance at Neon Gallery Milan

Elena Bordignon ONIG Milano 2004

Maurizio Mercuri stacks, joins, disassembles, destroys and recreates all that, in time, he has collected in his study in San Donato, a small place in the countryside of Fabriano, in Le Marche, where he lives and works. Most of his works are characterized by a mixture of technological refuse found in his exploratory trips, electronics wrecks and obsolete electric household appliances assembled to create playful machines. Re-using by transforming seems to be the motto of his work, the formula or the method that weaves a large part of his works. Like in a puzzle or, if he were a philosopher, like in puns, he loves overturning the function of things (the fountain spitting beer, the suitcase with sprouts, the broken vase fixed with silicone etc...) changing the direction of meaning (Hello Zucchi? What would you like to have?), removing the precision of physical and mental mechanisms. Most of the works produced by Maurizio Mercuri amaze and arouse curiosity just for their capability for desecrating commonplaces, reversing provisions, amplifying the absurdities that form the fabric of reality, its paradoxes and folly. We wonder: where does art start and where does the play start? To what extent is his work affected by chance, negligence, time, the public, train schedules, patience, rain, space?

In the performance "Onig" instead of producing real objects, Mercuri has thought of using his artistic career as a subject with which to work out his nth device. In a short stretch of time we will witness the description of his artistic career, from his first steps in the art world, to the galleries he worked with, to the critics he collaborated with. "Onig" is the result of a reflection on time, on the duration and insubstantiality of things, on the vanity of events and their absurdity. Like De Chirico in the painting "Enigma dell'ora", a work arising from the painter's will to represent time through a watch a stop, Mercuri wishes to describe himself through his ten-year work. But who will be really described? Whose story are we going to hear?

Elena Bordignon Onig Milan 2004

Daniela Lotta On Air: Video in onda from Italy Monfalcone March 2004

Maurizio Mercuri, Camere Fisse 1995 - 2004

In Maurizio Mercuri's video the stationary camera films and delineates gestures. It acts as a witness to the activity going on. Through the video recording the artist can therefore enable a future audience to experience first hand what happened. In this way the actual process of a performed gesture is recovered and in some cases can completely absorb the spectator. On this occasion four short videos, projected one after another, show single actions that are repeated in a potentially infinite sequence. A domestic interior is the setting chosen for Boccadoro where the only person featured is shown dozing up, while yawning over and over very widely and contagiously. An enclosed space, but this time intentionally anonymous, is also the backdrop for two more works: Spelling and Rizoma. In the first, Mercuri covers his hands in liquid glue, spreading and massaging it over his skin until he gets a thin covering that he then removes sadistically slowly, provoking another uneasy reaction among the audience. Rizoma on the other hand features coloured balloons that the actor tries continuously to blow up. In his last video, the scene offers more information about the actor, who performs following the same method, senselessly and continuously playing the cymbals. The situation becomes even more maniacal as a result of the red curtain behind him and the provincial band

uniform, shown off together with dark glasses. These videos are paradoxical in their obtuse repetitive tendency and are low-tech recordings in which the most important thing is to fix everyday stories that isolated in this way are filled with an unexpected allure.

Andrea Bellini Flash Art January 2003

...Less autobiographical than the first two, is M.M. The artist uses daily objects elaborated and presented in hallucinated and absurd situations with a particular flavour of obtuseness, for example the fountain that works only by beer, the self-portrait that tans the observer, the chewing gum chewed and photographed as if it were a great informal sculpture. His re-cycling of objects is a curious one, carried out with distinguished nonchalance with a total lack of care for the finishing touch and for this very reason, highly refined.

In a recent exhibition in Bologna (Entr'acte 2002) in the former premises of Telecom M.M. placed two tables in the reception room, on one of them he set a tape deck on the other a loud speaker from which you could hear the recorded phrases "hello Zucchi?" "No, you've got the wrong number". An oscilloscope traces the graphic of the audio signal, underlying the contrast between the apparent scientific look of the device and the evident stupidity of what was going on. On the occasion of the exhibition "Excerpts" at Lubjana Scuk gallery, M.M. presented the installation "Formamentis" (2002) composed of a couple of 3D graphics of two abstract objects, under which he placed two sculptures realized following the graphic project but using ordinary supermarket cardboards. The result was a curious contrast between the impeccable formal model and its real second-rate and sham version, perhaps a contemporary Formamentis with all the distance between self-illusion and reality.

Daniela Lotta Young Italian sculpture Flash Art n 235 2002

Maurizio Mercuri like a "mystic of the ordinary" observes and records every small element of our daily life is made of, realizing then unusual combinations that create ironic shiftings of sense. A heterogeneous rescue carried out with refined lightness, entirely free from hierarchies hence devoid of any moralistic rhetoric.

Guido Molinari Young Italian video art Flash Art n 234 2002

The videos proposed by Maurizio Mercuri originate from an emotional reaction to reality: psychological tensions and playful pastimes constitute a filter that disturbs the usual communicative mechanisms; in this context traces of human existence are elaborated through lightness of expression but also through a delicate taste for paradox

Andrea Bellini Cosa Arcanae stupendae catalogue 2001

Maurizio Mercuri is colder and more cynical than the first two, he shares their attitude of the young rebel whose imaginative vivacity tends to regain a Dada vision, including with "readymades". In fact, Mercuri works with common objects made and exhibited in absurd and disorienting situations, such as the fountain that spouts beer the self-portrait that gives the observer a tan, the chewing gum photographed as if it were an informal sculpture, etc. always with reference to analogous behavioral situations. He has a curious way of recycling objects that is not very and for this very reason, extremely refined, carried out, that is, with an intelligent and willful carelessness, almost with an esprit de finesse. Eccentric and a bit of a snob in the end, Maurizio Mercuri illuminates a world of poor and discarded items with a touch of irony, acting on them with an intentionally rudimentary, slightly retrò technology, such as the red LED's in "Mozziconi" (1994) or the walkman in "Falò sulla spiaggia" (1997) and "Canzoniper l'estate" (1997). In Sermoneta, the artist exhibits three quirky character-objects that seem to embody one of the many Italian families with only one child, busy here swearing at each other non stop over loudspeakers, with no possibility of understanding or really

communicating with each other. This time, and it is not by chance, Mercuri has added a minimal degree of credible workmanship to the three forms in fact, they fluctuate curiously between suggestively anthropomorphic shapes and mere pieces of furniture, in a dehumanized and slightly idiotic vision of a hypothetical domestic scene.

Interview by L. Marucci JULIET n. 101 febb 2001

Your work ranges from sign to painting, from the combination of objects to the installation, from performance to videos. And it shows that it is not conditioned by styles. Even if some affinities with some movements of the neo-avant-garde can be traced, an independence from conventional rules prevails in the essence of his work. It is not easy (and not even necessary) to avoid critical classifications, since even outsider is anyway a category. My work is an idea where the mind and the reality build images in order to reflect on something that we already know. I like combining different media according to my inclinations and to what the project requires. The initial idea for a work of art can be found in an apparently banal object. A new material is already a starting point. Now, for instance, I am preparing a work for the web, a stimulating means, using audiovisual aids. It will be on-line in a short time.

I see that you practise art freely as if you were playing, with the pleasure of one who spends his spare time with passion, transforming a hobby into a non-professional trade.

The realization of a work is the fruit of a union between tension and pastime. For example, the video where I skin my hands after spreading them with Vinavil, refers to the things you do at school when you are at the last lesson, sitting on the bottom row....but the idea of the body makes the performance a little more dramatic.

Instead of exploiting your academic training, you give yourself up to the spontaneity of the creative act, though associating it to analysis.

I use the principle of the participating observation: being de-constructive as to the communicative mechanism, comparing words and objects till one loses the traces of the significance.

Sometimes one can perceive a hint of the impertinent spirit of the comic....

Irony gives the opportunity of being creative and re-creative. When I built the ultra-violet light-box showing my face and tanning the viewers, I thought of an object that could have the control of the territory, permeate the space in a cold way but with a percentage of ambiguity that could give a human clock to the work.

The starting point is always the reality, the experience of life.

Of course. In fact Eisenstein says: "The organic unity of the work and the feeling of the organic unity produced by the work arise when the law of construction of the work corresponds to the law of construction of natural phenomena." I share this thought. I try to build a parallel world in which the natural and the artificial interpenetrate.

The work where there is the recovery of banal and obsolete objects might disguise a subtle criticism to the homologation and the ritual of use and throwaway....an ecology of the mind.

The consumer goods culture or the lack of space force us to get rid of objects that belong to us, making us throw away with them also a tranche of our past. The objects thrown away by the owners are signs of something else and recall life experiences like fragments of a different universe. It is an artist's task to rescue the object not only as a generator of significance, but above all as the holder of power.

On one hand the use of certain industrial materials linked to a real function and of other icons of everyday life favours the communication; on the other hand their subjectivization creates a transformation of significance and an estrangement. Is this perceptive short circuit intended?

Intended and sought for through the remote adoption of distorted functionalities, the disguise of contents and other special effects. There-awakening of perception is guaranteed.

Judging from certain digital works, sometimes the provocation changes into a behavioral interactive involvement.

The work proposes a theory and the viewer, who from simple user becomes an interpreter and a protagonist, participates, unaware, in a process of analysis. As a matter of fact I am concerned with the interactive processes or the provocation merely as additives that point out the language of the different fields of communications. The three-dimensional work requires an ability in projecting and a technical expertise peculiar to one who builds sophisticated electronic devices that non-codified artistic process.

My works are often inspired by extra-artistic knowledges. Projecting works that connoted different fields such as Bar Picture or the work made with lamps that cause the evaporation of the Vicks VapoRubin which they are immersed....., is

a way to investigate in to the essence and existence of a disorderly but bearable reality.
Is informatics used without being subject to its fascination and technical specificity?
Unveiling its fascination is the play. And the play shows the trick. The subjects live in a field of forces. The idea is to create and to seek points of balance, bridges between different imaginaries.
Evening this case do you manage to make the natural and the artificial co-exist?
The co-existence of the elements is not a presupposition or a poetics but an interpretative adjective a possible way for the observer
Everything is consistent with the constructive economy, with the necessity to de-materialize...
The economic core established by the work is not the one a series of images but of a relation between thoughts and objects mediated by them.
I have noticed that the paradox is never expressed by gigantism or monumentality, but by minimal components and by the lightness of the ironic-poetic dimension. Therefore creative ingenuity and pseudoscientific inventions merge generating a hybrid endowed with a new vital energy.
In a work certainly cumbersome as "Kultur und gesellschaft" (beer fountain) the attention is mechanically attracted by the alcoholic and spiritual aspect, a light and immaterial non-sense. While Naxos an object definitely minimal (a resin nose that, thanks to a magnet placed inside, is always northbound) is supported by its conceptual weight

Giulio Ciavoliello Flash Art February 1999

...The bricoleur of the digital era is a distracting builder who exploits all the opportunities offered by the re-use of the existent and by the combination of different realities in order to realize concrete paradoxes. He creates suspensions of sense, makes us dwell on recurring motives, amplifies the commonplace, interrupts the correspondence between perceptive capability and real perception makes the unique and the serial co-exist, presents uncommon interpretations of the already existent, camouflages but does not cancel differences. Just think of all the work that Maurizio Mercuri has been carrying out for several years. For example in his fountain he associates an ordinary outdoor object, a decorous symbol of well-being for a quiet low middle class house, with beer foaming and flavour. Through an improper use a witty remark is materialized. Extraordinary is the video where Mercuri* does nothing but yawning every now and then: the viewer ends by doing the same, confirming the saying of the catching character of yawning.

*Errata: the man yawning in the video is not Mercuri but a performer

Guido Molinari from recognition in real time Aspasia 1999

The three works exhibited by Maurizio Mercuri develop in a common atmosphere: it occurred that the visitors to the vernissage of Area (exhibition at the Salvatore + Caroline Ala Gallery Milano 1998) were introduced by a butler, dressed in an ancient costume, standing at the entrance door; after entering, the visitors got to the fountain from which beer instead of water was spouting. This time kitsch is out of question because the artist does not want to ransom bad taste already revalued by Pop art and then in the Eighties. In this case the artist's re-elaboration goes beyond the mechanisms of industry ready to make any kind of gadgets. Then the unusual fountain opens a confrontation first of all with the de-contextualization already carried out by art in the course of the century, entering into territories where the lightness of the associations and the meanings suggested by each part of the work offer an unheard-of result. In this way we are stimulated to activate unexpected connections in our system of filing reality, so as to short-circuit the information we already possess. And suddenly new unforeseen spaces of sense open up on the horizon. In the same way works another work by Mercuri: the teenager dummy, wearing a tracksuit, which is subjected to an odd test; through some loudspeakers, low frequency sounds bomb the dummy's stomach and back. We don't know if it is a

finished work or the simulation of a performance, what is certain is that the enigmatic experiment shows us a situation where the poly-sensorial effects are mysteriously disconnected from fiction.

Guido Molinari in Morphing Marabini Gallery Bologna 1999

Maurizio Mercuri's "Bar Picture" presses hard the accelerator of the playful paradox and conceptual lightness. In fact the picture hides, in its double bottom, a micro-bar full of mignon bottles. In Mercuri's works the ordinary mental processes are subject to unexpected deviations from meaning in order to escape from the routine hidden in everyday life as well as in art. Therefore in the artist's work the dimension of art and that of life subtly crash, a taste for representation is opposed to other forms of pleasure which, instead, directly stimulate us through the senses. In this work "luxury" and art are subject to a pleasant and original short circuit. We must not forget that the "mental" lightness that runs through the works of the artists of the Nineties is fully tuned in to the dematerialization typical of the electronic dimension. As matter of fact the image represented in the bar picture is the transposition of a computer icon that the artist has transferred using the manual skill of drawing/painting. But, besides, the work poises on the border between two areas that rarely come into touch: the area of design and that of art. In fact the possibility of a functionality, which is usually typical of design, becomes the characterizing element of an original work open to extreme and engaging solutions. Instead Mercuri's photographs are the fruit of a lyricism which confronts with reality. Some batteries without the foreseeable label, or piles of books placed near geometrical forms became ghost-objects in an atmosphere of research on the essence of the objects themselves.

Guido Molinari from catalog of "Officina Italia" curated by Renato Barilli 1997

...On the whole, considering the situation outlined, Maurizio Mercuri enriches his interventions with a subtle patina of life experiences: at Massimo De Carlo's gallery the artist shows a junk vase lined with silicon inside and hit with a hammer so that its surface is cracked without its being shattered. The junk objects and the triggered off processes have a density of their own and an immateriality connected with use. Subsequently in the moment of the re-laboration, the artist's subjectivity acts as a filter often on the edge of an almost imperceptible irony.

Francesco Toscano arte1 11-1998

"I don't think my work is trash" so answers Maurizio Mercuri. Rescuing is not necessarily in osmosis with bad taste. And undoubtedly is not in bad taste his last work "Maurizio De Mercuri" where the necessary self-celebration that we always find in any personal exhibition changes into mockery of the etiquette, of the cliché. Aware of the fact that he could be easily branded as trasher, Mercuri, in his last work violently steered towards formal solutions, which, though always with a mocking irony, land to an almost minimal logic up to now unknown to the Fabriano artist. That name "De Mercuri", though reinforcing the artist's identity, denies it in the meantime, but as in a short circuit, it comes back mocking inside through the light box, and the loudspeaker boxes (whose disquieting noise is actually produced by the crushing of biscuits!) and the video where an eighteenth century page introduces the guests to a party in honour of the artist (this time it is a real "laudatio trashorum!")... The play on communication is interrupted only by three small paper umbrellas that, thanks to the heat of the thermoconvectors on which they are placed, gently rotate on their shadows. In this case we could be tempted to think of Carducci's poetry, if we did not know Mercuri, who, on the other hand, claims to be still a little child! This constant play of recalling but made in different languages denotes a conceptual change of route... In this work we find "chance" (a fundamental component in Mercuri's work) together with projectual skill. If, before, the ironic synaesthesia relied chiefly on the object (trouvé) on which the conceptual organization was

based, here the idea is the driving motor of the installation (and the dimensional turning point is suggested also by the encumbrance of the object no longer revitalized by the symbiotic relation with the artist's inseparable rucksack). The mockery at consumerism, at the visitor is here almost hidden, is almost underground: instead it is Maurizio who is loyal to himself, to the provocative question "is this art?" replies with demotic humorism "dots dots".

Guido Molinari "Maurizio Mercuri", Flash Art n°199 ouverture

"When I was born I accepted everything free in life" asserted one of the characters by Andrea Pazienza; it is in the same spirit that M.M. sets out on his exploratory journey in the context that surrounds him. In his works we find found objects and lived up situations characterized by the denseness of existence that permeates them, chosen therefore for their possibility to belong to a mental space regarding thought, while from the sphere of electronics he will likewise choose to recover obsolete and wasted technologies in order to reinvent them. In one of his works, shown at "Aperto Out of Order", (Bologna, Modern Art Gallery) a small luminous led is connected with the body of a dead fly, thus recalling, with subtle humour, the interpenetration of the natural and the artificial, and pointing out the impalpability of technological "life". Then, humour and playful irony are necessary to react to the blows that come from the external context and are, in the same time, useful to convey a re-awakening of perception. This can be found, for instance, with the feigned cigarette stubs, whose charcoals, formed by a miniaturized neon, are kept permanently lit up; the work, camouflaged in the background, requires a high degree of perceptive sharpness, able to recognize and amplify the unsteady threshold that separates fiction from reality. A further relevant element in M.M.'s artistic research is, no doubt, music, which is part of his work, both as personal production and as something borrowed from the existent, for example the big size sea shell which sends out the summer musical hits. Besides, analysing the wide range of his works, we find an approach to spirituality, where the meditative state is induced by a sort of hypnotic trance: inspired by this feeling of simple spirituality, sprung from the ravines of everyday life, M.M. produces works such as the loop grafted on the voice of the well-known telecaster Sandro Ciotti; transmitted non-stop from an old radio placed near a bath towel in the 70's style. Once again there appears an operative element often present in his works, an element which can be found in the exigency to pursue, with lucid determination, a strayed and distorted functionality. In M.'s work, "Imagination in Power" is realized in a private, subjective sphere, as a strategy to escape from the homologation, the alienating dimension of work, the pressures we often have to suffer, acting in our social background. Through electronics, inventions, spirituality, it will be possible to rediscover those margins of pleasure and reflections, which, nowadays, are often sacrificed for productive aims.

Guido Molinari I have got a fake lobster Castelsanpietro terme 1996

The right to holiday is surely a theme dear to Maurizio Mercuri, committed, with his work as an artist, to assert the value of leisure, in inventiveness and imagination pursued to the detriment of hard work. The alienating dimension of efficiency and top performance typical of the capitalistic system perhaps responsible for denying the full happiness of living beings, is rejected by Mercuri who concentrates his attention on the principle of pleasure and of the unconscious rather than on the principle of reality. And then the necessity to approach "trash" the scraps, the rubbish of the technological industrial world in order to fulfill the rescue to be carried out through creativity and irony. However Mercuri confronts the "trash" line in a discreet, cold, conceptual manner, without ever resorting to easy, striking solutions. The spirit with which the artist approaches the everyday objects is the same as the spirit of the anthropologist who finds out and analyses traces of human existence, as is the case with the technological means that he, through a recovery of the obsolete, re-invents and freely re-interprets. Mercuri's works shot through an elaborated shattering/reassembling of everyday objects, cleverly manage to penetrate the ambient, turning into powerful generator of mental energy on which we can draw to re-discover the margins of pleasure that the present electronic age can allow us to have.

Roberto Daolio Out of order/out of place Aperto 1995

Maurizio Mercuri's capacity for reinvention does not stop at a recuperation space, but follows an itinerary of a logical project constructed by an intellectual and an attractive mixing of words and things; all refused by common sense and revitalized in linguistic surprise and wit and an eccentric reinventing of a future world collapsed into ours. What distinguishes Mercuri from analogous neo-Dada works is the ironic versatility of a gesture that reassembles and recreates the fragments of post-catastrophe universe without the pride of survival. With a headstrong desire it upsets the aesthetic rules with a lowly solution using extreme indifference and sophisticated nonchalance.

Claudia Colasanti Rivara castle Turin 1993

Maurizio Mercuri acts as a conjurer, transforms with irony the disagreeable aspects of the industrial production (aerosol bomb branded Culture and society). The irony to consumer objects turns into a series of odd and impracticable matching and piling. Photography (on this occasion the white and black enlargement of a chewed chewing gum) used as one of the many languages that the world offers us, becomes a system of "unmasking" the contents of the world. The operation "Culture & society" becomes the logo, the escape of the artist from his own name towards a comment that wittily accompanies the exuberant hyperproduction of objects we are immersed into (T-shirts, spray bomb, chewing gums...). The six+teen minutes video presented repropose the operation Culture & Society, rielaborated and revised in the thousand font of the computerized program.

Roberto Pinto Flash Art November 1993

VIA FARIN opened the season with a short review of young artists. The first was Maurizio Mercuri with the exhibition Culture & Society - Vita dell'Alleanza. He, reversing the usual terms of the artistic process, started from "finding" the catalogue in the Assurance Alliance monthly magazine. Mercuri exhibited about 300 pictures (simply cut out and stuck on a pasteboard) borrowed from this monthly in an exploitation-research of the graphic imagery (and not only) of a firm monthly with the hierarchy, prizes and typical group photos which in this context acquire a surreal character arising from the fact that the viewer fails to follow the internal logic regulating situations of closed communications like these and perhaps like art itself that, also in this case, shows to be a parasite of situations, but perhaps also a little weak so that it is "parasitized" by the most cynical media.
