

# Angelo Bellobono

## Chist'è 'o paese d'o sole (this is the land of the sun) 2008

L'UNION Arte Contemporanea in collaboration with FONDAZIONE VOLUME presents Angelo Bellobono's installation performance and video art "Chist'è 'o paese d'o sole" curated by Alessandro Facente.

For some years now, well-being has been a buzzword at centres for mental and physical activities (fitness center, wellness center and well-being center); their aim is to broaden our approach to and our overall rapport with our psychological and motor consciousness, thus harmonizing our relationship with ourselves and with others.

It is with this specific concept in mind that Angelo Bellobono, in Chist'è 'o paese d'o sole ("This is the land of the sun"), contributes to investigating the related states of "psychological and motor reaction". Thus interpreted, the central concept is "effort", understood as experience-movement, experience-reaction, experience-intelligence, mental compensation as thought-nourishment, thought-survival.

The Cantine B.O.X., an ideal container for a human race in its storage phase, are conceptually linked to the ancient underground walkways used by slaves during the roman empire, the essential engine needed to maintain well-being above ground, the engine room where the energy needed by the Romans living outside was produced (Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli is a remarkable example).

All cities have their underground human engines and their underground life; a similar situation can be seen in New York, in downtown, where a submerged population of Mexicans ascends and descends through open trapdoors to keep the city going. Entries to underground warehouses or places where the work of restaurants and shops is done.

Two men thus toil on the installation consisting of ultra-modern sporting equipment, hidden in box-rooms, to drive a light board placed outside. This is a dynamo-driven machine, thanks to which the quantity of energy is directly proportional to the force exerted on the bike, resulting in a constantly changing intensity of light.

An absurd, dramatically sarcastic image, to which spectators at the opening will not have complete access unless they peek through a metal door with holes in it; by contrast, on the following days the boxes will remain completely empty, allowing spectators to activate the installation themselves. The outcome is, on the one hand, an experience without direct contact, removed from the view of the masses to create a strong contrast between "over-exposure" and "over-concealment"; on the other, a responsibility-inducing condition of shared effort which defines the true meeting of "personal-effort" equals "global-well-being".

Chist'è 'o paese d'o sole is the "collective training" of men sweating on their journey to improve their own lives. The installation is completed with a further two video installations, Temporary Runner, establishing the utopian global migration through unknown and desolate lands, with neither destination nor firm ground, lost in the absolute of black and white. The state of well-being is created by the effort made by the mind to fill the gaps in a life at risk of suffering, it is the precise intelligence of personal muscular memory as a struggle against an excess of conceptualism and stagnation as immobility. Thence to the amazing experience of Oscar Pistorius who roundly disproves the old and aberrant phrase mens sana in corpore sano, replaced by a more active corpore sano in mens sana precisely through the amazing reaction of the mind over the body. The body itself, after its initial mutilation and impotence acquires such enormous strength as to form a "threat" to the performance of normally able athletes; we can only advise them, taking on the role of coaches for a second, to amputate their legs to reap the benefits of prosthetic ones..."

*Chist' è 'o Paese d'ò Sole*





## Biography

From a past as a professional skier, trainer and free-rider, fogs, bodies and territories re-emerge, frozen and then melted, speed and instability; the vast spaces of Patagonia or the Alps return, at the mercy of nature at its most extreme, changing and modifying all certainties, all reference points, accustoming us to difference, irony and fear. In the same way, the years of community centres and fanzines, which subsequently became wellness centres or clubs or glamour magazines, reveal the processes of assimilation and institutionalization of subcultures and ideologies. After working as a graffiti and installation artist in the early 80s/90s and taking a degree in Motor Sciences in 1988, began nomadic years which led him first to live in France alongside two very different artists, Bertrand Lavier and Roberto Combas, and later in California with Liza Lou, Bill Viola, Bedia and Peter Halley. In 2000 he returned to Italy and Rome, where he lives for about 6 months a year, the remainder being spent in New York.

From the beginning of his career, Angelo Bellobono has always placed humanity and the territory at the centre of his artistic research, stressing the difficult relations of belonging and identity, understood not simply in the socio-cultural but also in a biological sense. The mechanisms by which biochemistry translates into behaviours and emotions is the thread running through all his paintings, videos and performances.

A sense of dramatic irony thus pervades his portraits, lost in a blinding whiteness or in a dark sea of crude oil, at once liquid and solid, conceptually unstable and temporary, dependent on their chemical sense of biological precariousness. They reveal the constant efforts made to seek out an identity and a place in which to belong, a constant freezing and unfreezing of hidden or denied existences and of an ideal well-being. Bellobono gives form and consistency to a sampler of emotions experienced by all human beings; in his most recent works, which also probe the drive to immigrate, this investigation once again combines painting with performance and video art.

So we find female body builders training with anorexic youths (*Cardiofrequenze* 1999), the training programmes developed for marines in fashionable wellness centres (*Body life program* 2003), icebergs drifting like nations, guarded by armies of toy soldiers from different civilizations (*Temporary civilization* 2006), migrants pedalling spinning bikes, lighting with the energy produced a sign displaying a call to wellness (*Chist'è o' paese d'ò sole*, *Fondazione Volume-Union* 2008) or moving crates of fruit to reveal their portrait, recontextualizing identity in a new territory (from ecuador to rome, *Wunderkammern* 2009), post-punks in a hypothetical community centre which ironically becomes an elegant wellness centre do pilates and yoga to the sound of God save the queen, turned into a New Age mantra (*Lowlife well-being center*, *Changing Role* 2009, *Lowereast life* 2009 *Envoy NY* and *Eastside Biosaart* 2010 *Bali*), Africans tackling blocks of ice, archives of memory and identity which melt on the skin (*Afrika(n)ice*, 2010-2011), the spreading mediocrity and denied freedoms starting from John Stuart Mill (*About freedom and Decimate mediocrity*, 2010/2011).

## Solo exhibition

- 2011 “Vis à vis” a cura di Nicola Davide Angerame, Whitelabs, Milano
- 2010 “Eastside – The journey” Biasa Artspace, Semyniak, Bali, Indonesia
- 2009 “Low Life Wellbeing Center\_Bunker House” curated by Alessandro Facente, Changing Role Gallery, Napoli
- 2009 “Lower east life” curated by Serena Trizzino – Envoy Gallery, New York
- 2008 “Chist’ è o’ paese d’o’ sole” curated by Alessandro Facente – Fondazione Volume L’Union, Rome
- 2006 “Temporary Civilization” curated by Francesca Franco - Galleria Il Sole artecontemporanea, Rome
- 2006 “Consolato italiano a Londra” Winner Premio Celeste 2005
- 2006 “Futuro Presente Primordiale” curated by Gianluca Marziani - Galleria Artsinergy, Bologna
- 2005 “Osservatorio Bellobono” curated by Alessio Verzenassi – Galleria il Sole artecontemporanea, Rome
- 2004 “Recruitment” curated by Lorenzo Canova - Galleria Altri lavori in corso, Rome
- 2003 “Body Life Program” curated by Lorenzo Canova – Studio d’Arte Fedele, Monopoli
- 2003 “Extrasistole e Pace Maker” curated by Raffaele Gavarro – DAG Art Gallery, Livorno
- 2002 “Aria Compressa” curated by Ludovico Pratesi and Lorenzo Canova, Casa Pratesi, Rome
- 2001 “Cardiofrequenze” curated by Lorenzo Canova - Palestra Linea, Rome

## Group exhibition

- 2011 “Crosscurrents” a cura di Marinù Padano e Marta Boeri, Lagos, Nigeria
- 2010 “Difforme” curated by Lorenzo Canova, Aratro Museo Università di Campobasso
- 2010 “Sbandati” curated by Lorenzo Canova, Ex Gil, Roma
- 2010 “Under italian eyes” Museum of modern art – Cairo - Egypt
- 2010 “Impresa Pittura” curated by Raffaele Gavarro and Claudio Libero Pisano, CIAC Centro Internazionale per l’Arte Contemporanea Castello Colonna Genazzano (Rm)
- 2009 “Titled/Untitled” curated by Alberto Dambruoso and Micol Di Veroli, Wunderkammern, Rome
- 2009 “The road to contemporary art” Changing Role Gallery, Palazzo Venezia, Rome
- 2009 “I\_D Intersecting identities” curated by Dominique Lora – Halles de Saint Gery, Bruxelles
- 2009 “Gustovagando” curated by Simona Cresci and Lina Calenne - Macro FUTURE, Rome
- 2008 “Ambientarti” curated by Davide Sarchioni and Cristina Antonini - Palazzo dei Priori, Viterbo
- 2008 “Young blood” Opera Gallery, New York
- 2008 XV Quadriennale di Roma – Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome
- 2008 “Experimenta” Farnesina Collection Ministero degli Esteri, Rome
- 2007 “Paesaggi Metropolitan” curated by Giorgia Calò – Museo laboratorio La Sapienza, Rome
- 2007 “Ficci Frame festival” Renaissance Hotel, New Delhi, India
- 2007 “OnThe Edge of Vision” curated by Lorenzo Canova - Victoria memorial hall Calcutta Museum of Modern art Mumbai and New Delhi, India
- 2006 “Art Territory” curated by Simona Cresci and Dominique Lora - Centrale Montemartini, (Rm)
- 2005 “Pasolini e Roma” curated by Lorenzo Canova and Enzo Siciliano Museo di Roma in Trastevere, Rome
- 2005 “Winner Premio Celeste” Final show at Magazzini del sale, Siena
- 2005 “TEC” curated by Alessio Verzenassi and Manuela Annibali – Scuderie Aldobrandini, Frascati (Rome)
- 2005 “Unmediated” curated by Matteo Basile – Galleria Tossi, Firenze