

Angelo Bellobono

Low Life Wellbeing Center (2009)

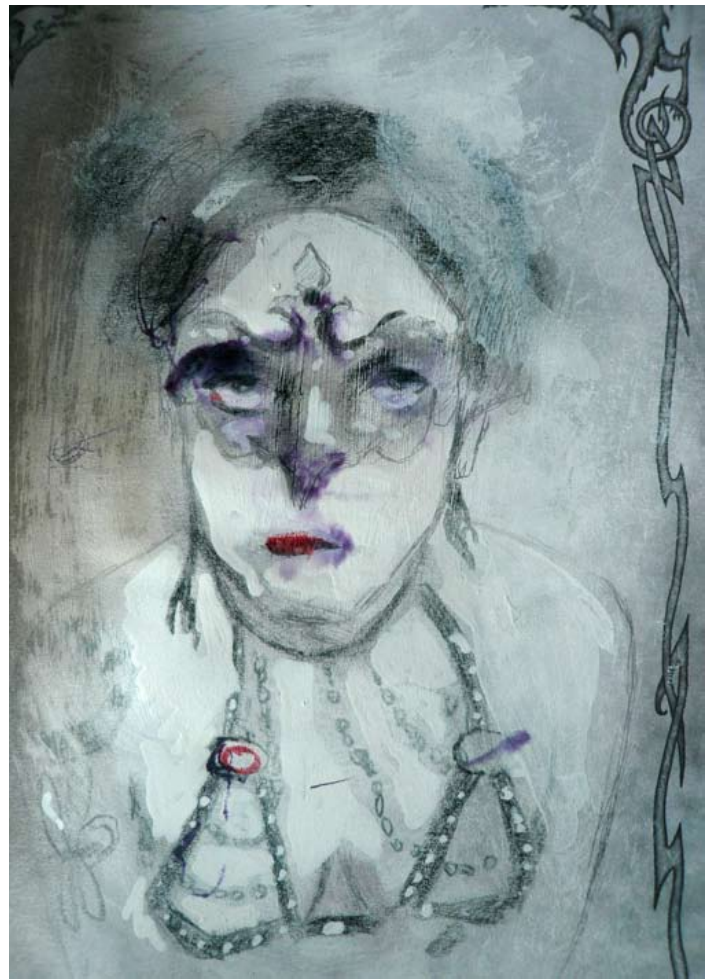
The Changing Role gallery becomes an imaginary wellbeing centre populated by punks, individuals and groups, standing at once for dissidence and conformism, and playing on the overturning of social roles through the concept of appointed place as appointed body. The idea is to create a gap in an officially “logical” system; whilst it is logical to imagine a wellbeing centre in a luxury hotel, it is less so to imagine it in a squatter’s warehouse. Bellobono’s painting process does not depart in character from the register for which he has come to be appreciated in Italy and internationally, but here there is a clearer emphasis on the true and characteristic aims of an artistic choice that goes beyond mere portraiture. This may be due in part to Bellobono’s recent work in the United States, culminating in his exhibition at New York’s Envoy Gallery in June 2009. The artist’s recent production evidences a need to construct an anthropological and social catalogue, an analysis of behaviours linked to belonging and human identity whose effects are analysed through faces. This conceptual framework is supported less by the desire to portray someone through their facial structure than by the need to state that the face is in fact a fertile ground on which to imprint the morphologies of a changing and influential outside world. Whether this be real, as in the ice ravaging the faces of Bellobono’s previous subjects, or ideal as in this new work, where the violence of the acid colour tones represents the anomalous influence of contemporary society, the need to define objectives is experienced in a far more acute way. The artist starts from an analysis of the subcultures which have emerged in recent years, debating the sifting process which they undergo within an official, widespread and accepted culture, which at generational intervals discharges new “acceptable” formulas, deprived of their ideological underpinning in favour of new marketing opportunities. The Low Life concept is perfectly suited to evoking these images of a rejected, low culture, in clear opposition to a more institutionalised form of culture. The word punk has its origins in precisely this context; the term historically refers specifically to something of low quality, worth nothing. In this new series of drawings, executed in a more severe style, the acrylics on canvas made in New York and the double video animation installed in the downstairs black room, Angelo Bellobono depicts the protagonists of an imaginary wellbeing centre where yoga and pilates are practiced (forms of activity which on the face of it have little to do with punk or pseudo-punk culture) and where the Sex Pistols’ god save the queen becomes a new age mantra to the chorus of ‘no future for you’. A vast range of genuine and serious shortcomings, linked to real hardships and difficulties, have produced an equivalent number of ostentatiously flaunted token attitudes, deployed with the aim of opposing institutionalized systems but which eventually create equivalent and parallel systems which are equally hierarchical and rigid. The tendency of human beings to organize themselves into ghettos and groups lies at the heart of all forms of intolerance and behavioural arrogance. The project curated by Alessandro Facente, starts from the expression Power House (in Pilates this refers to the body’s centre of balance and posture where all movements originate) to analyse the pervasive and ceaseless stimulation which we undergo, but with which our bodies are unable to keep pace. An awareness of this leads to an analysis of the use of technologies, new forms of communication and interpersonal relationships (social networks, private chat systems like msn, skype, etc) which help the body to receive these stimuli more easily because they are easier to share (posts, notes, video, audio, etc). Particularly interesting is the hypothetical central position occupied by our emotions in this system of relationships, the nerve centre where the upper and lower parts of our bodies conceptually converge as places of perception, assimilation and rejection. Fascinating above all is the awareness that the body may represent a unique, alternative but tendentially closed, system oriented towards the assimilation of external stimuli which are later re-emitted in differently assimilated forms.



membership of the low life well-being
condition























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 Dambroso 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