

Espai Barberí_ Alessandra Forastiero



AT THE ESPAI BARBERI. AN EDGE.

Following the river Fluvia one arrives to the carrer Fontanella at Olot.

Espai Barberi: from the street one enters through robust wooden doors into the ex sculpture and church bells foundry. Straight ahead an installation: on a sheet of methacrylate the print of two figures in transparency, resembling a *miessian* radiography, walking towards the visitor. A suggestive play of images overlapping : the figures of a woman and a man, the reflection of yourself on the art medium and the reflection of the street behind one's shoulders, the view through the plastic sheet of the vegetation of the interior courtyard, all at one glance.

The second portal on the right, framed in corten steel, brings one to the "public" core of the Arquitectes workspace and to what I consider the most exciting area at the Espai. Above fragments of sky, below an abyss.

"We live on a mountain

Right at the top

There's a beautiful view

From the top of the mountain

Every morning I walk towards the edge

And throw little things off

Like:

Car-parts, bottles and cutlery

Or whatever I find lying around

It's become a habit

A way

To start the day..."

(from "*Hyper-Ballad*", Björk 1995)

Is that the edge?

I can define exactly it's line, as I get closer it moves and it does not allow to get captured.

The gap crosses the Espai Barberi, separating the exposition and conference space from the double height library and working areas.

Why does this edge posses such an incredible attraction? I'm magnetically drawn to it. It creates a sense of expectation in me. I felt something similar in front of Lee Bontecou's wall sculpture *Untitled*, 1959. His works could be called three-dimensional paintings or wall sculptures. They often feature holes; and these

holes either have a vertiginous depth or a soaring height, depending on how they are looked at.

Espai. From above the light filters in the interior space. Birds, bats, rain much can pass through.

Perhaps the natural light plays an important role. Suspended from the wood and iron beam a shiny curtain made of metal strips overseas this void. Is it the way the light caresses these surfaces? The progression from light to the shady ground? Is it the tension created by the space that allows the air to pass below the shiny metal veil?

I can see this void's bottom but it still seems mysterious anyway. Once descended thing might appear differently, like a border that once trespassed does not allow you to really turn back. Caught in "the space between", like the protagonist of J.G. Ballard's novel *"Concrete Island"**.

"It's real early morning

No-one is awake

I'm back at my cliff

Still throwing things off

I listen to the sounds they make

On their way down

I follow them with my eyes 'till they crash

Imagine what my body would sound like

Slamming against those rocks.

When it lands

Will my eyes

Be closed or open?

I go through all this

Before you wake up

So I can feel happier

To be safe up here with you".

(from *"Hyper-Ballad"*, Björk 1995)

During the days of the Architecture and Landscape Workshop I repeatedly went to visit it. I wondered if I was going to eventually fall in to this void not calculating appropriately my moves or taking the risk to step down into it. I found comfort in the sensation that even if I was going to fall in, most likely it was not going to be tragic. But I played safe. Unfortunately?

Roma, 23 ottobre 2013

Alessandra Forastiero

***J. G. Ballard, "Concrete Island", 1974.**

In the novel the architect Robert Maitland, crashes his car through a highway barrier finding himself injured and unable to escape the abandoned island between motorways – he has great difficulty climbing the embankment, peak hour traffic won't stop for him and the curve of the highway doesn't give drivers enough time to register him. Castaway on a man made island the postmodern Robinson Crusoe struggles for survival in a forgotten land, the island, that might be perhaps a physical manifestation of himself and his past.