

Francesca Referza, *Au Pair*, Fondazione Malvina Menegaz Castelbasso, Teramo, 2010

Lia Pantani (Florence, 1966) and Giovanni Surace (Vibo Valentia, VV, 1964) live and work in Calenzano (Florence).

Lia Pantani and Giovanni Surace have worked together since 1995, often producing ephemeral and temporary installations whose elaboration always begins with the artists' rare capacity for listening to the places in which they are invited to work. If the aim of physics is the study of natural phenomena, what Pantani and Surace use in their work is more of a *humanistic physics*. Indeed, although they often emphasize the natural alchemy of the transformations of a state, of a common element such as water for instance, the element which most clearly underlies their work is the transitory nature of objects but also, and above all, of states of mind and, therefore, man. Their works are therefore more a projection onto the physical environment of the changeability of the human *environment* made mentally visible and measurable. Despite the "cold" aesthetic and the judicial nature which characterises many of the works of Pantani and Surace, the titles often betray an emotional and narrative motif which gives them substance and warms them. *Se la memoria mi dice il vero* (2001), *voglio sentire il rumore di tutte le cose* (2002), *ti amo* (2003), *non spiegatemi perché la pioggia si trasforma in grandine* (2004) are just some examples.

Often the distinction between the physical environment and the human element in their installations becomes subtle to the point of making it impossible to tell which is one and which is the other. And so the banal proliferation of mould on a wall might be a substitute for the necessity to paint and, at the same time, convey the natural energy of what we usually consider to be an inert backdrop. Likewise in *beauties and black*, what at first sight might appear to be a tremulous trace of ink hand-drawn on rough paper is actually the result of the artists' patient manual work on a wooden board where a number of false eyelashes "trace" a delicate horizon.

*voglio sentire il rumore di tutte le cose* is the title of an installation that has been set up before by Pantani and Surace at the Ex meccanotessile in Florence in 2002 and at Nosadella due in Bologna in 2007 with very different results but using the same principle of the simultaneously mechanical and anthropological sound of a drop falling onto a surface. In the installation conceived for Castelbasso the environment moves, alters and reveals itself through the force of the water. It is a form of dripping which, apparently without any need of human intervention, but simply thanks to gravity, paints a natural canvas on the ground, slowly revealing the carpet by cleansing it of the layer of clay which covers and protects it like a skin. In *Senza titolo* the image of the drop of water is seen once again because the surface of an oval mirror is deformed by the overlapping of sheets of contact paper which swell up to create blisters and so the reflected image appears deformed as though it were filtered through macroscopic drops of water.

By accentuating the aesthetic of certain mechanisms, Pantani and Surace lay bare some physical and natural phenomena in order to paradoxically underline the strength of fragility and vice versa.

