



Ali MacGillp. Exit Express 54 (2010). Print



## Artist Profile: Ludovica Gioscia

With her wallpaper installations *Baroque Fractal* (2006), *Rococo-Hardcore* (2007) and the recent *Bomarzo Vertigo* (2010) at the Miro Foundation, Gioscia provides a chaotic regurgitation of the imagery she daily imbibes. Gioscia focuses on cacophonous environments as a metaphor for the times we live in and the texture of the membranes of information-architecture enveloping us, both visible and invisible. Swooningly artificial and disorienting, Las Vegas and the nightclub are the touchstones of the information overload she explores. Her kaleidoscopic structures build up layers upon layers of patterned wallpapers, some painstakingly hand-printed, others found on eBay, which are then ripped down, revealing a multitude of hedonistic fractals from chronologically incongruous eras. Papered-over wallpaper is an artefact of deceased fashion, emerging from the repressed depths of the unconscious. Gioscia's post-modern palimpsest, her archaeology of the present forms an instantaneous time-lapse evolution of styles. The torn wallpapers serve as a metaphor for multiple Internet pages open on a computer screen as much as the overlaying of history in an ancient city.

Gioscia's installations are a vertigo-inducing living graveyard of styles battling for prominence in a primal struggle. They form an arena for temporary alliances and clashes of culture, generation and colour; an all-consuming landscape of convulsive beauty. This jungle of raging patterns, all equivalent, prompts us to consider the way our amnesiac culture endlessly recycles imagery emptied of its ideological commitment, recognisable but free-floating. Gioscia celebrates the ecstasy and alienation of the contemporary urban condition with its overwhelming proliferation of visual information. She has recently turned her Technicolor wallpaper into three-dimensional structures, pleating it into origami sculptures or swirling it into balls, folded like Bernini drapery, in her series of abstract busts of decadent historical figures, *Beheaded Monarchs* (2009).

In Gioscia's biro animation *Untitled* (2003) we are cast as voyeurs as a couple kiss endlessly, accompanied by a slurping soundtrack in the ultimate romantic fantasy. Yet it is also a nightmare, vampire-like, the two kissers devour each other in the solipsistic, suffocating self-absorption of romantic love. In *Les Petits Morts* (2004) Gioscia invites us into a fluorescent twilight-zone, a psychedelic planetarium, a kaleidoscope of colourful figures picked out in ultra-violet light. Her contemporary incarnation of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*, Hieronymus Bosch's orgiastic portrayal of a world deeply involved in sinful pleasures abounding in cavorting nudes, huge birds and giant fruit, becomes a celebration rather than a moral tale. Gioscia's is an urban bacchanal of chaotic hedonism played out in clubs and parties outside society's jurisdiction. This wallpapered room pays euphoric tribute to the energy of life, love and friendship. The walls are scattered with jewels, dancing couples and grinning faces drawn from snapshots of friends at unguarded moments. Adam and Eve are revisited as an acid-induced hallucination. They stand poised eternally on the cusp of gaining the knowledge destined to destroy their innocent paradise forever. Gioscia focuses on transient moments of intense feeling and the radical potential of the transgressive state of jouissance.

Gioscia has an enduring fascination with teenage culture and for her current solo show at the Agency, London, Gioscia has taken inspiration from the *Paninaro* cultural phenomenon of 1980s and 90s Italy. *Paninaro* was the name given to youngsters who hung out at bar 'al panino' in Milan and ate hamburgers at the American-style fast food restaurants then opening. Obsessed with the American popular culture imported by Berlusconi's TV channels with programmes such as *Happy Days*, the kids wore Italian leisurewear brands, copied from the US. Companies such as Naj-Oleani created brand dependency from an early age, targeting preteens who had access to their parent's wallets with patterned merchandise, ranging from clothes to bedding to notebooks. This marked the beginnings of a bland globalised youth culture. These youngsters were naïve consumers when viewed from the more sinister context of today, with the Berlusconi government, the current global economic meltdown and young people subjected to an unadulterated fetishism of material objects. Gioscia's attitude is both critical and affectionately nostalgic: she presents a vitrine-based time capsule of

archive *Paninaro* ephemera, both from her own youth and purchased on eBay, with a hyper-coloured, gallery-sized sculptural text intervention. She also shows new hamburger-flavoured variations on *Vomitorium*(2009), candy-hued sculptural fountains of vomit which use the *kawaii* visual language of animation to comment on the emetic effect of our oversaturation in consumer culture. Is this ritual purging purely in order to devour more?