

FAST/digiuno

Abstineo me ergo sum

From Buddhism to Islam, from Judaism to the Ash Wednesday, the Friday of the passion, and the Lenten fasting of Christianity, the total or partial abstinence from food is a method of purification and control of the body. In science, since the XX century, it is recommended to skip meals or at least to gradually reduce the amount of food, in order to follow a low calorie regime as the elixir of life: the dream and obsession of the post-modern man. Religious, mystical, political, and self-referential artistic fastings, the abstinence arouses curiosity, admiration and fear. Franz Kafka sensed it, especially in the short story *A Hunger Artist* (1922), which tells the extreme choice of an artist who practices a unique performance: to fast locked in a cage on public display, having the straw as bedding. In the 70s and in the Body Art, the fasters, from Marina Abramovic onwards, and the narratives of self-defeating eating disorders are countless. Fasting includes detachment from the body, thus the control of the instincts and the search for other "foods"; it becomes a metaphor of a will to overcome the limits of the body and of the traditional artists languages, highlighting voids, failures, expectations, unresolved questions, and the expressive potential of materials, beyond the object, the scrap, the assembly, to shape metamorphosis. In art, the abstinence from food reveals many attitudes, narcissistic and ethical rituals as practice for an aesthetic/conceptual redevelopment of what we produce and discard, valuing the void rather than the full, the concept, the idea itself, as the formal variable of the antinomies life/death, birth/rebirth, metamorphosis: the existential themes of Art.

With the *FAST/ digiuno* project, conceived by **Annamaria d'Ambrosio** during Expo 2015, in the middle of the "bulimia" of physical and virtual proposals of food, from the rural to the industrial ones, around the theme of nutrition for life, the art represents energy, revolution and change.

The voluntary deprivation of food, in this context, becomes a paradox of the wastefulness, an evocation of the impending natural disasters; we are 7 billion, we produce food for 12, yet every year about 900 million people dies of hunger in the poor countries, while in the West a million and half of obese are a social problem. FAST stages bio-plastics, obtained by the processing of food industry's wastes, along with performing bodies and photographed ones, as an instrument of knowledge of the world and, thus, of themselves. The fasting, in this context, transforms the always transversal artistic language into a visual thinking, acting on the transmission of ideas, investigating through actions and different amazing formal solutions a renewed sensitivity and relationship with the artificial materials: the stars of new perceptive, reflective, and cognitive, experiences. What is the *trait d'union* between the eight (the symbolic number sign of the infinite) "helmets", armour-sculptures made of forks, spoons and knives by **Sasha Meret** for the economArt project of Amy D Arte Spazio (Milan), displayed in this occasion for the first time and worn by moving automaton-bodies, which would have excited the imagination of Arcimboldi, with the four large **Marcin Klocek's** photographs of sumo wrestlers, sculptural bodies, masses of flesh

stuck in time and space, closed in their powerful physicality, symbol of on-going power, and the unusual **Daniele Franzi's** still lives, strictly white, composed of fibre-cement trays and dishes "hibernated" in Plexiglas boxes that Daniel Spoerri would appreciate? The answers are multiple and subjective, since they depend on the viewer. Among complexity, multifunction and clashing contradictions these works have two ways to exist: the first is the one for which they are recognized as such, the other is the one for which they offer a service of reflection, destabilization and revision on the transient nature of the objects in relation to the world. Materials free themselves from themselves, especially in the site-specific olfactory environment, where new biodegradable plastics produced by vegetables made by the **Department of Nanophysics** of the **I.I.T. (Italian Institute of Technology)**, the **Smart Materials Group** of Genoa, combine technology and nature, not representing but presenting the rapid changes occurring in the ways of living in an environmentally friendly way, investigating operational procedures in balance between natural and artificial, in function and not in fiction of an already present biotechnological future.

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