

Margherita Raso

the hearing eye and the speaking ear

Opening: April 6th, 2024

Until May 18th 2024

“All sounds are thoughts, music is translation,” said a note I found from a conversation with Margherita. In other words, musical compositions intertwine separate voices to complex pieces, adding meaning to these thoughts. If thoughts are communicated through our voice, and music transforms thoughts into a more intuitive, abstract augmentation of language, then whistling seems to be on the threshold of both or a hybrid of the two. As an interplay between the corpus and air, the human body becomes a musical instrument itself and at the same time its own player. Whistling often rather improvised melodies, the player simultaneously is a spontaneous composer, imbuing the whistled notes with meaning. But in this in-between-status, whistling is by no means an absolute form of communication; although it can be very direct, it is just as susceptible to misinterpretation and, to make matters worse, limited by the inability of some to whistle at all.

Similarly, Margherita's new aluminum sculptures, though their static materiality, aspire to speak for themselves: frozen in certain postures and draped in a fabric, the figures reveal their hollow insides through openings in their corpus that follow the logic of wind musical instruments. One presented on a saxophone stand, the other laying on a pedestal of shelf units, they embrace established carriers for communication: the shelf carries written language in the form of books ready to be read, the stand carries a musical instrument ready to be played. The figurative shape of the sculptures clearly identifies them as human, even if their fragmented bodies are concealed by the technique of drapery; just enough to prevent an absolute interpretation by reflecting on purity through nudity, and, like their poses, vague enough not to be recognized as specific allegories. Drapery uses suggestion to create desire (what's underneath?). This evoked desire could also be described as stimulated curiosity, as being seduced to pay attention to a communicative signal that's been sent, prompting someone to look closer or listen more closely.

The smaller shiny objects, exhibited on a black prism shelf on the gallery wall, are cast versions of the human inner ear. Functioning as processors of attention, these complex structures allow to translate sound (and therefore thoughts) by listening into meaning. Like all other works of the show, this anatomically correct arrangement approaches the urge to perceive and understand through the method of imitation. All pieces here are imitating conditions of communication with minimal alienation. In the same way, the big steel grid serves as a modular 1:1 replication of the artist's studio window, resembling an architectonic membrane between personal workplace and outside world, thereby delineating a moment of perceptual exchange and thus communication.

A multi-channel sound piece accompanies all the objects in the exhibition, adding a performative level to the addressed senses of seeing and hearing. *Eight Types of Whistle (2023)* draws upon the historical communication system of theater technicians which emerged as an alternative language to avoid confusion with stage directions, unavoidably creating a distinction between what is meant to be seen and what is directed behind the scenes. An extension of this work can be found in the form of posters distributed throughout the cityscape of Milan, outside the gallery. They come as motiveless monochromes, only adorned by surtitles of different descriptions of whistle sounds. Surtitles are known from opera houses; they accompany a performed piece like subtitles in a movie with a written form of the articulated. However, how does a *whistle to protest* differ from a *whistle to work*? Just like the whistled melodies in the exhibition space, their meaning tends towards an ambivalent interpretation, which, depending on the place of perception, may omit a resolution due to the absence of the correct description or accompanying melody.

All the works are linked by this tendency towards the ambivalent, as the artist aims to explore the indefinite conditions of generating meaning by nonverbal forms of communication. This engagement with ambiguous signals calls for attention and curious, patient listening. The aspiration to understand meaning generated through body language, gestures, melodies, or sound proves a commitment to perception and therefore anticipates emitting signals while receiving, just as the last work in the show: a photograph of a woman from behind, caught in a gesture suggesting she's aware of someone behind her. For her ear is looking at us.

- Otto Bonnen -

FANTA

1.
Eight Types of Whistle, 2023
4-channel sound installation
13' looped
Whistles by Víctor Carrascosa, Sophie Diggelmann, Elena Matamoro, Ivan Mitrovic, Marçal Perramon, Stas Shārifulla
Work produced with the support of Fondazione Elpis as part of Una Boccata d'Arte 2023

2.
Untitled, 2024
Aluminum, metal shelves
71 x 250 x 103 cm

3.
Interiors (dx, sx), 2023
Silver, iron
17 x 58 x 17 cm

4.
Untitled, 2024
Aluminum, saxophone stand
84 x 68 x 48 cm

5.
Studio, 2024
Iron, screws, football pads
233 x 346 x 3 cm

6.
Untitled, 2024
Print on aluminum
61.5 x 42 x 4.5 cm

Outside the gallery:
Rehearsal #1-#8, 2023
Digital prints on blueback paper
70 x 50 cm

With thanks to the Fonderia Artistica Battaglia for the support in the realization of the aluminum casts.

