

**Ernesto Sartori****Scaffalando****24.05 – 20.07.2024**

"Scaffalando" is the gerund form of the Italian verb "scaffalare," itself derived from the noun "scaffale" [meaning "shelf" or "bookshelf"]. It means "to furnish with shelves" or "to arrange, organize something on shelves." Regardless of the interpretation chosen, the verb appears particularly appropriate to describe the works of Ernesto Sartori from the last decade. Whether it's the large installations from about a decade ago, brimming with objects arranged on a variety of tables, platforms, or pallets, or the paintings from the following years, cluttered with volumes of uncertain scale, his works often grapple with the problem of space distribution and the arrangement of a large quantity of things by placing them, more or less orderly, on suitable surfaces. Shelves, for example.

In Sartori's new paintings on wood, the paint doesn't just fill the front face of the board. It spills over onto the sides of the wood and extends to the back, saturating every centimeter of available surface. There is no longer a front and a back, a face and a profile, but a single continuous surface that closes in on itself, without a privileged viewpoint. These paintings - the artist calls them "Topological Paintings" - can no longer be hung on the wall because, first, they don't have a raw back to attach a hook to or to drill a hole into. It becomes necessary then to construct supports to place, store, and exhibit volumes. Tables, shelves, and platforms from previous installations return in the form of a low table on which the paintings rest horizontally, and a wooden structure on which they can be placed vertically: a shelf, indeed.

The paint that envelops these flat, hollow, and lightweight wooden parallelepipeds alternately takes on the appearance of an architectural drawing, an urban plan, or a geographical map. We see - or believe we see - sets of buildings and green spaces, urbanized areas, and lakes. The colors - black lines, gray patches, occasional bursts of blue, still undrawn white expanses - reinforce the impression of looking at attempts to map out, or plan, vast portions of territory. Unless, given the uncertainty of scale, instead of an architect's table, we are observing the territory itself. A territory seen from a great height, like from a flying plane or a satellite.

The works from the "Trantorizzato" series are also made on board, on all six sides, but in this case, it's the drawing that predominates. Central perspective drawing, a classic one. These are images of vast and semi-empty interiors. At first glance, they resemble factories under construction, warehouses not yet filled, or shopping centers awaiting merchandise: collective spaces intended for large quantities of people and objects. Other details (a sofa, a lamp, a double bed lost in the immensity of space) suggest that what we see would be actual dwellings, although completely out of scale; the presence of a computer, a workstation transforms them into gigantic offices yet seemingly intended for a single person, a single worker. In any case, there is no trace of human beings. The title refers to a classic of 1950s science fiction, Isaac Asimov's *Foundation Cycle*, in which the author imagines a planet, Trantor, whose surface is entirely built, entirely occupied by a single vast city.



Sartori's "Trantorizzati" belong to a long genealogy of architectural fantasies that include the contributions of Boullée and Piranesi, Bruno Taut and Hermann Finsterlin, Superstudio and Lebbeus Woods. Projects whose scale and ambition deliberately make the realization improbable, even impossible; bold architectures, sometimes utopian or dystopian, designed to remain at the drawing stage. "Paper Architecture." No voices will resonate in these monumental spaces, no footsteps will traverse them. Only the eye can venture there.

The two series of works converge. Cartography and perspective are related: they are the most effective means that Western culture has devised to transpose the complexity of real space onto a surface. The philosophical, economic, and military domination that the West has long exercised over the world is based on reducing the latter to a model; this reduction has almost always involved the transition from three to two dimensions, from volume to surface. All of Sartori's recent works deal in their own way with this issue. They are two-dimensional works, based on two-dimensional representation codes, which attempt to go beyond the surface, to show the other side of the image, and more than that: they attempt to emulate the volume, the depth of the world. The failure of these works in their attempt to lead us beyond the surface - a carefully prepared, anticipated, programmatic failure - is their lesson, their ethics.

The world was not created to end in a representation. But perhaps it didn't deserve better.

Simone Menegoi

Ernesto Sartori was born in 1982 in Vicenza, Italy and lives in Marseilles. A graduate of the school of fine arts in Nantes, his work was shown at Frac Normandie (Caen, FR), The Community (Paris, FR), Chanot art center (Clamart, FR), CIAP Vassivière, the Académie des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (BE), Pavillon Blanc, Colomiers (FR) and Passerelle art center (Brest, FR) in the last years. His recent paintings were presented in a solo at the last edition of Artefiera Bologna (section Painting XXI).

Simone Menegoi (1970, lives in Bologna) is a critic, curator and teacher of contemporary art. Since 2019 he has been Artistic director of Arte Fiera (Bologna). He curated numerous exhibitions in private and public spaces, in Italy and abroad, often investigating the relationship between sculpture and other languages. He was contributing editor of the magazines Mousse (2006-08) and Kaleidoscope (2009-12) and collaborator of Artforum (2011-18). He has written numerous essays on contemporary art commissioned by international institutions.

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