

*Can you hear me?
Are the headphones comfortable?*

On the 29th of February 2013 at 7 p.m. I opened an exhibition in the historical spaces of Viafarini. It took place one year after the end of my residency in this Milanese palace made of tenement houses with shared handrails. What is the purpose of this introduction? No one, don't wait for a tale about my life in residence. During this last year I've begun collaboration with a thinker; she wants to be anonymous, so from now on we shall call her with an acronym: V.A.

With her I realized all the work that you will see in this exhibition.

I know, the space is large and empty, the door is closed and it seems that everything will happen somewhere else. But there is a reason: I'm waiting for V.A. to give me the consent to let you in. And, so it seems, V. A. is late. I remember the scene of a known film. You know it, I am sure. In this scene Agrado is on a stage, she has to entertain the public in a theatre because of the unexpected absence of the main actress. Hence, now I feel a little bit like Agrado on that stage: she who was not an actress at all decides to recount about herself, about what it means to be authentic and about where to search for authenticity.

Now, it is my turn to entertain you and the comparison with Agrado is difficult, as she triumphed over the public and gained its applause.

I only ask for a few minutes of your time. Then I'm sure that V.A. will allow us to enter in the space. After all, the door is sliding, you can't close or block it properly and if I am well informed, neither fasten it with a bar.

For now just listen to me, do not enter, do not enter.

V.A. is particularly precise, I should say unbelievably precise, she is always there to control the details, that is a quality, although this particular detail, this finesse, is costing us some minutes of awaiting and a discrete embarrassment, here, in this space that is indeed roomy and cosy.

At this point I should introduce you to the exhibition considering that the title is, as it were, laconic; that the press release is rather succinct, and that – to sum up - nobody has understood anything: and you are here out of curiosity and maybe out of an unexpected and quite unsuspected confidence.

I can tell you that V.A. is obsessed with vintage, with objects of the past, with what is collectable and rare, as long as they are at least twenty years older than her and broken. In what sense? Don't think of useless objects, but rather of something that has an imperfection, probably due to wearing, thus not allowing a full use. On that imperfection she focuses her mania and that is where she finds space for her invention. I was conquered by this obsession nearly gone mad – in this regard I should describe you her studio - I felt so attracted that I decided to collaborate with her.

I adore obsessions too, they have something in common with authenticity, and in my opinion their relationship is a direct ratio: the growth of one, call it obsession, is the increase of the other, call it authenticity. Certainly it is necessary to distinguish among different typologies of obsession.... although I will not allow myself to deepen this issue here, as this will take us far from An Exhibition.

Our relationship began in an unusual way: V.O. accepted to work with me because of a red vintage bag, with handles and quite big, that I have been wearing almost every day for the past three years. I'm telling you this not to distract you, but to state that elective affinities arise for apparently the most banal reasons and that they are also in a strict dialogue with authenticity. Be patient, I'm always coming back to this speech, it is Agrado's fault, I am thinking too much of her.

My red bag, we were at my red bag: obviously it has a rather bad shape; I barely succeed in closing it with the zip.

V.A. is obsessed with vintage, I have a passion for stories: true stories and, even more, fake stories, intricate, complicated stories. Since I was young I loved to listen to storytellers. After a short period of meetings, V.A. and I found in imperfection the ground of our collaboration.

I have noticed that there, near the sliding door – our so much awaited door – there is an accumulation of chairs, while others are in the forefront corner: I propose you take some of those chairs and sit, so that you feel more relaxed as you listen. I'm making an exception for you because I usually prefer to be peripatetic.

If you have found the chair and your place in the space, I continue. Where were we? At imperfections, at how errors became the space of the encounter between V.I. and me.

I went to find her in her studio. Imagine a perfect archive of vintage objects, a collection that is currently composed by one hundred and thirty seven elements, accomplished during years of constant pursue and catalogued with abundance worthy of Eugenio Casanova. Every object find its collocation, every object has a record card that reports place, time and data of the retrieval, even a hypothesis of its previous life, in some cases excerpts of conversations she had with past owners, and the previous one: a sort of genealogy of the object that could assume the clothes of its geography. Imagine a documentary map of the former life of every single object of the archive. I say former because the entrance in the private collection of V.A. irreversibly modifies its status and its destination, or more precisely the status and destination of use.

During the time that these one hundred and thirty seven objects dwell in the studio through something that I define as the state of congeal, they are covered by that kind of frost that only archiving donates to the object of research: immobilization, suspension of its vital status in order to make an accurate vivisection of its being usque momento.

I can't say if I was more impressed by the frost or by the next transition to the state of movement that V.O. managed to impress on the objects: so that it was evident from the first glance which was the first, which the second, which in a midway state that we could define as the unfreezing that overcomes the inertia and engenders the demolition of the pre-existing mind-set and habits of the object under scrutiny.

At this point, I'm realizing that, probably, you have already decided to enter in the second space, driven by the irresistible impulse that the violation of a prohibition brings with itself, and by the annoyance caused by V.A.'s lack of punctuality; maybe you've already glided the sliding door and you shifted to peripatetic listening. I keep on inviting you not to enter, let's give time to V.A.

Coming back to her, to the most perfect V.A., that surely nurtures this obsession, I will reveal you a detail: she has an ordinary life. A house furnished with essential taste that is developed on two floors, a remunerated work at the faculty of law, she is on the verge of marrying the man with whom she lives together, and she plans to have two children in a few years ... and then she has her passion. I am trespassing the law of privacy, right? I know, nevertheless the door should be open and instead the consent hasn't arrived yet. Besides this, I can make it up to V.A. in some ways, given the difficult, complicated situation I'm in, or better in which she is putting me in, because of this precious temperamental gift: the extreme preciseness, that in these case is translated in a delay of some minutes in the time schedule of the opening.

I'm not able to stop thinking of Agrado, of her capacity to entertain and of her reflections on authenticity. So now I ask you for an advice: does authenticity have also a relationship with property? Or better with possession? Would you agree? Let's stop a minute to think

about this ... Tell me what do you think? Or rather has it got a nexus with the awareness of its impossibility and its desire to be attained? As usual I distract myself and I make you confused with useless speculations, as we were entirely focused on the description of V.I.'s studio and I lost myself, why was I then telling you about the studio?

Oh yes, sure, to go back with you to the discovery of this place and to the birth of our abiding collaboration. Maybe abiding, I should say. Everything depends on the expiring countdown of these minutes that we allowed her. Otherwise it will finish. The collaboration, for sure. In this way, reduced to a tale, in the sad day of the opening of yet another ordinary exhibition.

While we wait our right to entry to take effect, we go back to the status of the objects of V.O.'s study: catalogued, positioned, and shortly unfrozen in order to pass into the phase of the movement. A plank made of light wood, rather long than large, cuts the space diagonally; it is a work floor, on the wall you see the tools, everything you can imagine composes the laboratory of a photographer.

On the table that cuts the space and clings to opposite walls through sturdy steel clamps the now famous objects spend their short frozen life, lightened by halogen lamps, flashes, surrounded by lens of all kind. Our V.A. proceeds from imperfection, from the mistake dictated by consumption which she impresses on the film. She seeks no radical transformation in shape, but (for sure) in the substance of the fortunate object, thus giving it back to the sphere of the movement of matter and putting it again even in the market of the web, as she has her own blog, ready to be again possessed, used, worn out and finally tracked.

I've received the signal, it seems that V.A. finally has given her approval for our entry. How many minutes? Twelve, twelve minutes of delay or, better said, of endless precision. Now I leave to you the choice: you can decide not to slide our door, not to enter, in which case I greet you and I hope to see you soon. Or you can decide to follow me, you know I have no choice, if I don't enter I take the risk of the end of our collaboration. But I can understand that you're tired and that this delay got you annoyed: think that at least you have heard a story. You have to decide.

*Index of the names as they appear:
V.A. Valentina Altrimenti / otherwise
V.O. Valentina Oppure / or
V.I. Valentina Invece / instead*

*Milan, February 29, 2012
Valentina Vetturi*