

Luca Bertolo

(Milan, 1968)

Most of Luca Bertolo's paintings developed within his series, often carried out over a long span of time and never definitively completed. The roundish blocks of colour, for example, are recurring formal elements in his production, which appeared for the first time in his *Specie Specifiche* and *Grammatiche* from his debut period, and then again in another group from 2007 titled *Proof*, and lastly in his recent works of Divisionist inspiration. The series is liberating not only because it frees the artist from judgment of a single, conclusive and definitive work, but also and above all because it affords him the opportunity to experiment with all the possible variations of the same motif.

"Keep to the medium, but keep varying," states Bertolo, and this statement encapsulates his approach to painting, characterised by a wide range of styles and techniques, mastered before immediately giving way to something new. It's in this way that he alters the images from the magazine *Artforum*, leaving himself open to inspiration from the potential of the page, and painting over the advertisements for exhibitions currently on show. These are followed by his paintings displayed upside down, his variations on the flags of the world, his interventions on postcards and pretend children's drawings on squared paper. Dismounting the illusion of the painting, there are then his paintings mounted on the top of wooden poles like road signs or demonstration placards, and others in which the lower edge of the untreated canvas is covered in lumps of the paint used.

For almost twenty years, Bertolo's visual activity has been coupled with the production of very clear-minded writings on art which allow him in a more structured fashion to elaborate on his reflections on the state of painting and contemporary criticism. Despite admitting a certain degree of out-of-datedness of the pictorial medium, Bertolo continues to believe in it and lays claim to the right to make use of a medium with which to elaborate even the smallest and most concrete of things, such as a vase of wild flowers outside his home in the Apuan Alps, or a glass and a red apple on the table of his studio. The work in the collection *google+search+images+refugees+boats* (2016) should certainly be read in this light, being part of a larger series of large painted canvases with geometric blocks in brilliant colours. This time, in fact, the formal abstraction of the grid is not a mere exercise in style, but the veil that the artist places between the original images and the eye of the observer. The title, which in other works contains the terms *+goya&disasters_of_war* or *+syria&war*, imitates the string that identifies the results page of an online search. It's not a matter of censoring the contents, but of acknowledging that the small surface of the painting could hardly manage to contain and recount human suffering, the horror of armed conflicts or refugees' experiences of crossing the sea.

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