

A Room of Stillness in Casa Rosso

In a text of his dating back to 1987, Rolf Julius described the Room of Stillness as a place “where one can withdraw and find rest, where one can see, hear and concentrate, where one is shut off from the external world and yet takes part in it. They should be simple, empty rooms that create an ambience of stillness with the aid of art or music or both together”. Further on, in the same text, Julius adds that these ‘hidden rooms’ could be anywhere, “in private apartments, in public buildings, they can be in the cellar or solitary in a forest, at a lake, or in the loud city”. According to Julius, one should be able to access these places “at certain times and be able to enter them alone. In my opinion, the mere idea that quiet zones in fact exist can help to calm this world down”. The German artist also describes an actual instance of this project, or rather, quoting his very words “the first step toward such a room”, that is, the mounting of *Chamber Music no.1* at the GAK in Bremen, at the beginning of that year. The text ends with his vision – conveyed to anyone who reads it – of “more such rooms, some without windows, rooms with only one work: a floating plate of iron, for example, that seems to float through the music, calmly floating.. I’m thinking of rooms into which one can withdraw alone, rooms that create an ambience of stillness, but not stupid stillness.. how should I put it.. active stillness, a kind of state of suspension, stillness”.

Exactly 20 years after the text was written, I suggested to Julius that we realize in Turin an instance of his fascinating project: Julius gladly accepted my proposal, which was set up in September 2007 in the e/static exhibition space, in via Parma 31, which he had always loved, since his first solo exhibition there in 2001. It only came natural to me to realize a second instance of the same project in April 2011, in what sadly turned out to be a tribute to the memory of a great artist and a great man, less than three months after his passing. Therefore, in a small room at blank, in via Reggio 27 in Turin, I mounted a new Room of Stillness, where I exhibited some works closely related to his greatest loves, Finland, Japan, his family; miniature landscapes which were however boundless and dense as whole universes, at once still and vital. The room was only lit by the light of two small video projectors, one of his typical desk lamps (positioned on the floor of the small room), and by the natural light from the window. Several plants were placed on the windowsill, just as it was customary in his house in Berlin, where dozens and dozens of plants of various kinds were propped against huge windows, right on the threshold that separates, or rather, joins the external and the interior world.

When I happened to visit Sonia’s beautiful house in Schierano, so precisely split into four different levels (five, if one counts the big underground well, which one may see as the house’s subconscious), starting from the shadowy coolness of the ground floor and moving up to the bright open space of the terrace, I immediately sensed that it would have made an ideal location to create a new Room. I think that the presence of the landscape distinguishes this house in a unique way: unexpected when one is still on the ground floor, but already perceived when one climbs up to the second floor and even more so on the third floor, it finally bursts forth with irresistible force when one has reached the terrace. I’m sure that Julius would have liked Casa Rosso very much, and after his visit, he would have felt the urge to place one of his marvellous little works within: one of his microscopic landscapes, juxtaposed with the bigger one surrounding it, able to mirror it though, thus creating a perfect balance, an osmosis, between inside and outside.

This is exactly what I perceived every time in Berlin, in Sarrazinstrasse 10, where he lived and worked for almost thirty years and where his earthly existence came to an end.

It is an homage I want to pay him, once more, and also an occasion (here like in Berlin, or in Texas, or in France, wherever a work of his is mounted) to bring back to life – for a limited yet eternal period of time – these small treasures, creating once again the miracle of his marvellous and incomparable art.

I want to thank Sonia Rosso from the bottom of my heart, for her time and effort and her sensitivity in immediately accepting my proposal with enthusiasm, and hosting this small installation inside her home.

Carlo Fossati, 21st August 2012