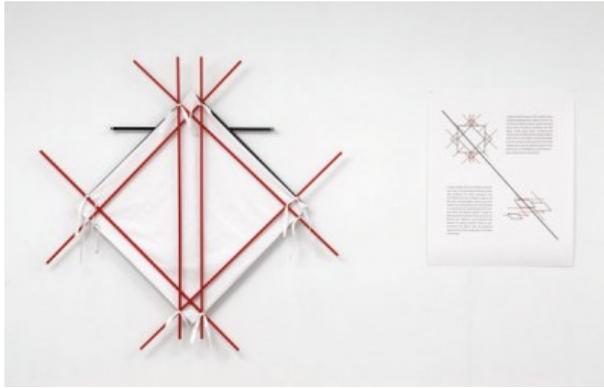


## Space in Language by Vincenzo De Bellis (Mousse Magazine)

*The work of Falke Pisano (1978) floats in a weird dimension between concrete and abstract; object-based and performative. Vincenzo de Bellis interviewed the Dutch artist, who now lives in Berlin, in pauses between her recent solo show at Hollybush Gardens in London and the preparation of her future projects. The result is a dense conversation about certain key topics of her practice, and insights on the new project she will be presenting both at the Venice Biennale and Unlimited – Art Basel.*



Falke Pisano, Figures of Speech (Formation of a Crystal), 2008

courtesy: Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam / Balice Hertling, Paris / Hollybush Gardens, London

"Falke Pisano's work proceeds primarily from an interest in the act of thinking and the possibilities of constructing and solving problems in the field of language".

Though there are others, this description of your practice is the one most repeated. Given the nature of your pieces, it seems highly interesting to notice how the same language is used in different sources. Precisely because your "work proceeds primarily from an interest in the act of thinking and the possibilities of constructing and solving problems in the field of language", can you tell me more about it?

There is definitely a circulation of language and ideas between different sources. A transfer from one source to another that often involves a change of status, a reflection within a different context or a further elaboration on an idea. Several formulations come back in different works; formulations of ideas for works become works; descriptions of works are used in preceding or following works, and there is an exchange between descriptive or explanatory texts about the work and the work itself. The concept of performativity is very important for my work, both in the sense of "saying is doing" and in the sense of saying and doing publicly. I deal with the first sense on a level of language and by insisting that what is said in a work has a direct effect on, and therefore changes, the material I work with and the conditions in my practice. The transparent, public construction and development of my work and ideas, on the other hand, is crucial to the understanding of performativity in connection to the notion of virtuosity as examined by Virno in Grammar of a Multitude. According to Virno, an activity is virtuous when it finds its own fulfilment, in itself, without objectifying itself into an end product, without settling into a "finished product," or into an object that would survive the performance. Secondly, it is an activity that requires the presence of others, which exists only in the presence of an audience.

Of course I do make "end products", so this idea exists more on a structural level instead of being concretely put into practice. These end products (like objects, performances, texts, works in other media or interviews, for instance) I see as moments of communication, constituting entrances to a structure that is activated through an investment in it.

Transformation, reconstruction and disintegration. These words are often present in your titles. They all allude to a change of status, and consequently refer to a process that takes place. What is in this process?

Transformation is a crucial moment in any form of circulation or exchange. How these moments of

transformation can be organized is what I try to work on. Be it the transformation of form and figures in communication or of structures of perception.

The organization of these transformations always involves the dimensions of time and affect.

A process of transformation, taking place within or as a work of art, like most processes, takes place within, and depends on, a structure or several structures. Whereas time inherently causes a permutation of value, affect enables the traversing and permutation of the structures involved. Both time and affect are reflected in the subject-object relation, which I take as the basic set of positions in the transformational moment.

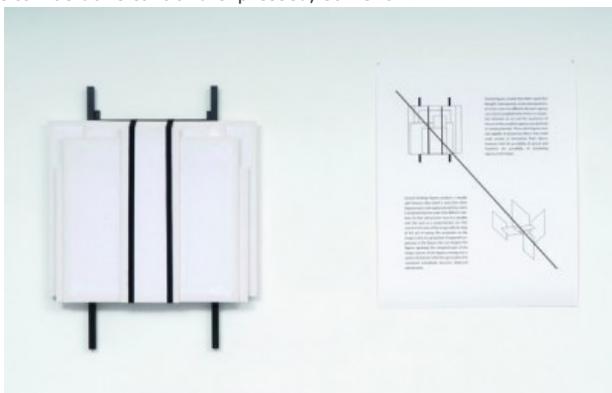
In my work, the (formal) vocabulary with which the processes are constructed places them in relation to a historical context. However, I use the titles to propose a literal reading of the whole process as the work in order not to connect the process to one particular structural level, and let the work fold open or back upon a series of structures.

I'd like to follow up on your words and ask: how can an object exist in different conditions?

Actually, I don't know exactly what this question means. I think I make my works partly to try to understand each word – or each sub-question – of this question and other questions, but I doubt if I will ever will come up with answers that can be properly formulated.

So what is the object, exactly?

See the above answer. I can talk about how the object functions in different pieces, what it is connected to, or what it brings together. But it doesn't have a real autonomous consistency. It exists because it functions, within language, within art, within ideas, because that what it can be ascribed or because that what can be done to it and expressed, somehow.



Falke Pisano, Figures of Speech (Formation of a Crystal), 2008

courtesy: Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam / Balice Hertling, Paris / Hollybush Gardens, London

One of your more sculptural pieces, Object and Disintegration (The Object of Three), is composed of large white wood panels, onto which three videos are projected. Each video is accompanied by an audio component in which you read three different texts, all of which speak of the potential disintegration of an object during the encounter between it and three subjects that you call "engaging spectator", "constructing artist/ contextualizing observer" and "creative subject". Can you further elaborate on these?

At some point I wanted to be able to reconsider notions like engagement, subjectivity, agency and the possibility of speech, by giving form to them within the work. This couldn't be evoked within the object-centered subject-object relations I was working with. Therefore it was necessary to re-organize the structure of my works so that it would support a multiplicity of relations.

I thought I should find a way to go from a situation centered on "the object" to a "relational situation". Therefore I set up an encounter with an object, during which both the object and the subjects lose their consistency and their previously ascribed autonomy, to finally result in a situation where only the relations they continuously enact exist.

Were you happy with the final result? I mean, did you realize whether your intention was achieved?

In my work there is often quite clearly a doubling, in the sense that what is developed in the piece is not directly related to the question of whether the piece functions as a work of art. I am happy with how the construction of the disintegration and the transformation of relations has affected my practice. Even if I cannot say whether the work functions as such for the spectator, I think that as a moment of communication it is quite rich.

For the recent show at Grazer Kunstverein, you worked in collaboration with Benoît Maire. The exhibition, entitled "Organon and the Wave" included – as the title cites – The Wave, a film that you both shot separately in different locations. Later, you combined it in the process of editing. What came out after that?

After our collaboration, I tried to formulate what I understood Falke Pisano, the film to be, for myself and for Benoît. I wrote:

The Wave is a situation in the form of a film.

The three parts of the film denote each an aspect of the situation, together creating the situation as a whole.

The first part gives the object.

The second part gives the relations that exist toward the object.

The third part gives the multiplicity of time and space that exists within this situation, creating the time-space that facilitates the object and the relations.

The Wave is a film about description.

The three parts of the film each give a different approach towards description.

The first part gives the description of a specific concrete object through the transcription of perception.

The second part gives the description in the form of a conversation and the relation of the present objects to an absent object.

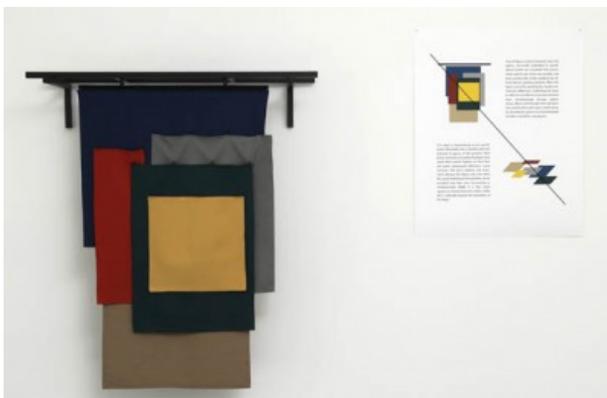
The third part describes an object by giving its characteristics as universal qualities that can be found in any act of perception.

The Wave is a film that narrates an event.

In the first part something is born and with it a new world.

In the second part the world is made specific.

In the third part the world has become a world amongst worlds and therefore has become – immanent and transcendent – multiple.



Falke Pisano, Figures of Speech (Formation of a Crystal), 2008

courtesy: Ellen de Bruijne Projects, Amsterdam / Balice Hertling, Paris / Hollybush Gardens, London

Besides the work you have done in collaboration with other artists (i.e. Armando Andrade Tudela and Will Holder), I'm interested in the references to older artists you place in many of your pieces. What is it, in this case, that you find necessary to develop through them?

It depends. Sometimes I use a visual aspect of a work to direct or give a rhythm to my thoughts. This is the case with the drawing by Josef Albers that I have used in quite a few pieces. I started to use it because its form helped me to focus my thoughts, then later the drawing came to represent a "solid object", and in my last work it represents an earlier work and functions as a site where there is a specific form of agency. On other occasions a specific instance, a work or a story, has a more structural function. The reference to Eileen Gray (and Le Corbusier) in the different works in my show at Balice Hertling in January 2008 came about because someone told me about the story when I was working on the texts for Object and Disintegration: The Object of Three. I recognized that it could structure the relations between this work and other works I had in mind for the show in a loose but precise way. Adding something to the show that would almost disappear if the works would be taken separately.

Other practices continue to be relevant on a more long-term and multi-leveled basis. These are the artists or writers that I keep coming back to; not necessarily always visibly in my works, but at some points there is a crystallization of the relationship. Often these practices constitute acts of continuous transformation or re-organization toward their own material. It is this kind of self-transformation and the structures in which this takes place that I am interested in.

This also happens with Hélio Oiticica in O Eu e o Tu / The I and the You. This piece was first presented at Yokohama Triennale in 2008, while for Art Unlimited at Art Basel 2009, you are presenting a second version. Can you explain in-depth the development of the project and the differences between the first and second version?

This work follows up on Object and Disintegration: The Object of Three. In Oiticica's practice I saw certain parallel developments connected to a re-organization of the subject-object relation. Shifting from proposing engagement with concrete aspects of constructed objects, toward an aesthetic

enactment of relations between subjects wearing his Parangolé's and a questioning of the (cultural, political) construction of subjectivity, within a specific environment like Eden or Tropicália. An interesting aspect for me was that I couldn't possibly approach the actual context or the way the artist and the work functioned within this context. I decided to take his Tropicália installation as a diagram – disconnected for a moment from its original social-cultural-political context and implications – and re-activate it as a site by slowly and carefully (that's why it is a work that will have more versions) re-inscribing certain questions revolving around subjectivity and agency. The first version of the work was quite unresolved, because I was rather unsure what the questions could be. But the bamboo and fabric modules and the five audio tracks presented a preliminary structure, from which I then departed again. Simultaneously, certain aspects explored in the body of work "Figures of Speech" feed back into the second version of this work.

The essay that is part of *O eu e o Tu / The I and the You*, and that addresses the context and reception of Tropicália, will hopefully be continued with another collaboration with the author, Max Hinderer, to articulate a more precise relation to the original work and to develop this specific structural part of *O eu e o Tu / The I and the You*.

### Can you tell me something in advance about your contribution to the 2009 Venice Biennale?

The piece I'm showing in Venice is *Figures of Speech II (Diagrammed)*. It is based on the floorpiece *Silent Element (Figures of Speech)*, which is a diagrammatic representation of three earlier works (*The Complex Object (Affecting Abstraction #3)*, 2007; *Object and Disintegration: The Object of Three*, 2008; *O Eu e O Tu / The I and the You*, 2008).

This diagram was the basis for *Figures of Speech I*, a lecture that traces the changing forms of the artist's agency (and how agency can be structurally transferred away from the artist) in the previously mentioned works.

*Silent Element (Figures of Speech) II* is in fact a spatial elaboration of this lecture. The flat pieces of the diagram will be slightly spread out, to make room for a tube structure with several panels. The spectator can walk into the work and occupy several defined positions in the diagram where the panels explain the specific transference of agency that happens in these places and address the spectator as an active party in the triangular relationship between artist, artwork, and spectator.

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