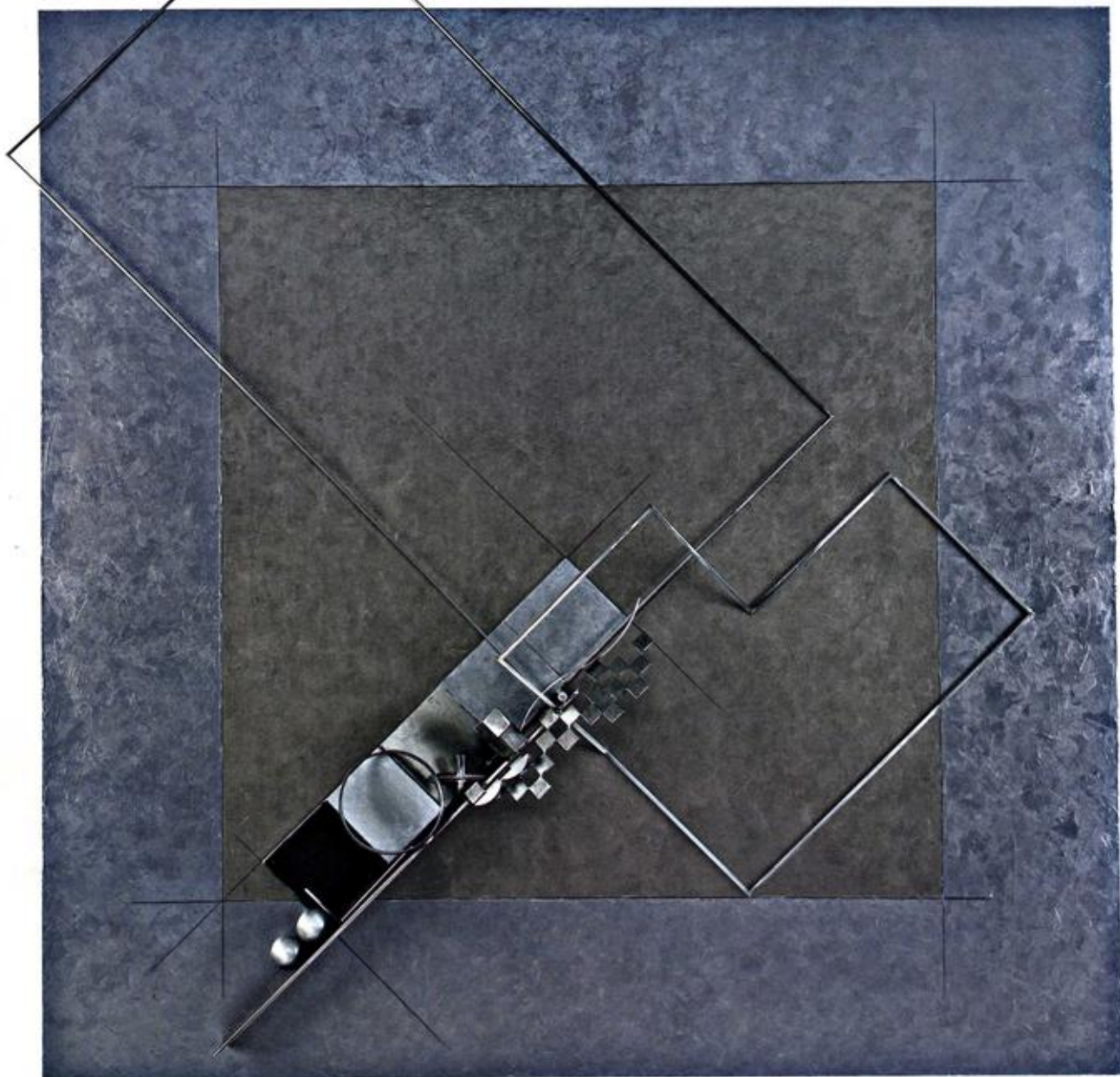


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FLORENCE

Mimmo Roselli

Galleria Il Ponte and the National Archaeological Museum of Florence

"Lineare" or "Line," Mimmo Roselli's recent two-part exhibition, focused on the artist's sculptural "Rounds" and "Practical Spaces." The show was installed in two different locations, Galleria Il Ponte, an important gallery for contemporary art in Florence, and the National Archaeological Museum, which houses a major collection of Etruscan and Roman art. At each venue, Roselli employed line in different ways. Whereas Galleria Il Ponte exhibited a work from the "Round" series—nine cords in groupings of three that traversed the gallery—the single cord installed on the second floor of the Archaeological Museum was more conceptual, continuously interacting with various vitrines and historic sculptures as it moved in and out of different galleries. The museum also hosted two works from the "Practical Spaces" series, which were installed in the garden. Outdoors, the geometric cord patterns interacted with tree branches in relation to the ground plane. While this integration may recall the dialogue between culture and nature so popular among structural anthropologists of the '70s, there is more to it than that.

For several years, Roselli's work has been focused primarily on the line and how it functions in space. For this show, the most visually overt demonstration of his concept

Right: Mimmo Roselli, *Spazio Praticabile*, 2007. Cotton rope, installation view. Below: Mimmo Roselli, *Round Il Ponte*, 2007. Cotton rope, 19 x 18 x 7 meters.

occurred in the ensemble of three cords strung from one end to another in the elongated upstairs space at Il Ponte. Roselli created an acute triangular configuration by embedding the endpoints of each cord into three walls: the points of the triangle were not visible, but implied, existing conceptually behind the walls. Roselli's works of this type are generally referred to as "Rounds" because they go around a space like a musical rondo, moving from one series of points to another. They are exquisite and sophisticated works, based on a concept that allows line and space to become entirely complicit with one another.

This can happen on a surface as well, as in the small square canvases shown in the basement gallery of Il Ponte. In these works, the lines are incised on the obverse side of the fabric using a surgical instrument. In contrast to the works of Lucio Fontana, Roselli's canvases are not cut through, but incised in such a way that a barely visible line emerges from the primed canvas.



The line is further articulated by layering thin glazes of oil paint, which seals the threads while maintaining the visibility of the line. For me, these works constitute a sculptural

space, a meditative instant that operates on a level of consciousness related to Taoist philosophy, concomitantly present in the installation of the "Round" upstairs.



Roselli works with cords and space, though differently than either Fred Sandback or Brian O'Doherty. A full analysis comparing these artists and their use of linear space would be interesting, given that each emerged from a unique cultural and aesthetic perspective that continues to evolve meaning.

—Robert C. Morgan

SYDNEY

Caroline Rothwell

Grantpirrie

Caroline Rothwell's small glittering metal sculptures have an alchemical quality. But instead of persuading lead to morph into gold, she seems to capture that wondrous, improbable frog/prince metamorphosis. In "The Law of Unintended Consequences," however, something seems to have gone wrong mid-transformation. Rothwell unveils mutant creatures, doomed chimeras like the hapless hero of the 1958 sci-fi classic *The Fly*. Her exhibition is more parable than fairytale—there is no happily ever after. Rothwell sews up her wild menagerie of critters from scratch. Once cast in metal, the objects retain the distinctive texture of fabric and the precise impression of her tiny stitches, evidence of their maker's hand. These sculptures form a kind of proxy genetic tinkering. In a way, Rothwell has been playing god, and her show reads like a warning against just this sort of human hubris.

The fraught relationship between man and nature is one of Rothwell's ongoing themes. While similar, early works clearly referenced the morbid Victorian passion for collecting taxidermied exotic animal specimens, her recent tabletop sculptures channel the ornate excess of Rococo and are far more ambiguous. Many present elaborate tableaux: human and hybrid creatures tumble through space—the great chain of being spinning out of control or tiny circus performances frozen in metal. At first



Above: Caroline Rothwell, installation view of "The Law of Unintended Consequences," 2007. Below: Caroline Rothwell, *Into the Woods*, 2007. Nickel-plated metal alloy, 28 in. high.

glance, they seem almost joyous and could be exuberant trophies celebrating the interconnectedness of all things in the universe. But closer inspection reveals that they commemorate our stubborn unwillingness to acknowledge that connection. In *The Law of Unintended Consequences I*, three men stare into space, ever-questing players in the omnipresent Enlightenment project

to discover, understand, and conquer the natural world, while a mutant toad in the center tries valiantly to hold together the whole teetering construction. Rothwell's sculptures remind us of our seemingly endless capacity for arrogance and folly in dealing with the natural world.

Rothwell's practice also includes wall drawings using sign-maker's vinyl. In this show, she eschews its

sticky backing and lets her bold, black, graphic cut-outs flop and droop into the third dimension. In the "Lexicon" series, Rothwell manipulates easily recognizable outlines of natural forms until they resemble oblique shadows, cast across the gallery walls, independent of any object.

—Tracey Clement



JENNI CARTER, COURTESY THE ARTIST