

## Biographical and critical notes

**Jason Dodge** (Newtown, Pennsylvania, USA, 1969) lives and works in Berlin. After studying at the Maryland Institute College of Art and Yale University School of Art, he started an intense personal exploration of the world of contemporary art. He has held solo and group exhibitions all over the world, also in important institutions and museums.

Dodge's art is a sort of endless narrative or better still a series of short stories composing a poem collection, and anthology of contemporary life. The fickleness of the moment, the ability to grasp a look, a detail, an almost nothing in which to find everything again, as in the great American writers, like Raymond Carver.

His works are often objects taken from everyday life, of common use, rather insignificant: gloves, blankets, pipes, light bulbs, ropes, electric wires. But their "insignificance", their apparent marginality turn out to be the origin of a story, the core of life. The detail becomes the mark of a generality bypassing it, bringing it over itself. A metonymical art or better still a synecdoche. In his gesture there is a constant ability to shift from a part to the whole, from individual to plural experience, from material to the object, from genus to species, with immediate and endless expansion and restriction of meaning. The work in its entirety is composed both by the visible part and the invisible story surrounding it and penetrating into it. The titles of his works have a great importance as they point at a way to look at things. We could say that they indicate the emotional tone through which a fragment of reality or discourse which the visible object embodies should be looked at. Objects are there in fact only to evoke images, feelings, pains, wonders, amazement and horror, otherwise lost in the greyness of a busy gaze constantly blinded by the spectacular ceaselessly attracting the attention of contemporary people, distracting them from themselves.

As in the famous motto by Aby Warburg, for Dodge as well we might say that "God hides in the details".

The issue of meaning, the meaning of life and the meaning of art, lies entirely in this ability to pay attention to details, to these tiny fragments of reality, these moments of being, when life comes to itself, when everything resumes again its reflection of the impending horizon.

**Gianni Caravaggio** (Rocca di San Giovanni, Italy, 1968) after spending his childhood in Germany, moved to Italy where he now he lives and works, in Milan. Graduated from the Fine Arts Academy of Brera, he later studied Philosophy at Florence University. In 2002 he received the award Fondo Speciale PS1 Italian Studio Program and in 2005 the prize Castello di Rivoli. His solo exhibitions have shown in important cities in Europe and Asia; he has also participated in many group exhibitions at national and international level.

Caravaggio's philosophical and artistic training has left a deep mark in his works. As for other Essential Art artists, however, this interest for art theory does not turn into conceptualisation, but in a direct confrontation with the matter of art, its concrete working.

Caravaggio has been the first to recall in recent years the need for an essentialist stance in art. To a direct question on how he could define his art, he replied bluntly: "Essentialist".

The attention he pays to the issue of essence, to a gesture capable of a deep rethinking of the poverist and minimalist lesson in a loftier and deeper practice of the very origin of artistic gesture make of him a sort of initiator of Essential Art.

From the start of his career to the present day, Caravaggio has developed a research increasingly unveiling the artistic gesture, by pushing the work toward a starkness where every form of aestheticization is replaced by the very question about art, its meaning and ethics. The use of materials (often noble ones, like marble and bronze) thus becomes a fundamental issue which seems dictated not by a desire to move back, but rather by an inner need to structure the work in a vision going beyond the present, its post-modernist stereotypes and its possible pre-modernist longing.

What surprises us in Caravaggio is his ability in never transforming this attention into a mere reflection, but rather in a wondrous *mise-en-oeuvre*, in the widest meaning of the word.

Caravaggio makes the art, giving back to the lost work of late modernism its deep and essential role; returning the disappeared body to art, thus infusing life into it again.

**Federico Ferrari** (Milan, 1969). He teaches Philosophy of Art at Brera Academy of Fine Arts in Milan, where he is also coordinator of MA in Visual Cultures and Curatorship. He is correspondent for Italy of the Collège International de Philosophie, based in Paris. Among his recent publications are: *La pelle delle immagini*, with Jean-Luc Nancy (Torino, 2003; Berlin-Zürich, 2006; Paris, 2006); *Lo spazio critico* (Roma, 2003); *Iconographie de l'auteur*, with Jean-Luc Nancy (Paris, 2005; Roma, 2006; Tokyo, 2008); *Sub specie aeternitatis. Arte ed etica* (Reggio Emilia, 2008); *Il re è nudo. Aristocrazia e anarchia dell'arte* (Roma, 2011).