

Luca Bertolo
La felicità non fa racconto

opening: **Saturday May 9th, 2009**
via Amati 13, Pistoia 6.30pm
until July 10th, 2009, Tuesday - Saturday, 3.30 – 7.30pm
and by appointment

>> **Press Release**

One day Orlov stuffed himself with mashed peas and died. Krylov, having heard the news, also died. And Spirodonov died regardless. And Spirodonov's wife fell from the cupboard and also died. And the Spirodonov children drowned in a pond. Spirodonov's grandmother took to the bottle and wandered the highways. And Mikhailov stopped combing his hair and came down with the mange. And Kruglov sketched a lady holding a whip and went mad. And Perekhrestov received four hundred rubles wired over the telegraph and was so uppity about it he was forced to leave his job. [Daniil Charms]

Happiness does not make for a story, says the title of **Luca Bertolo's** new exhibition opening on **Saturday May 9th, 2009** at the **SpazioA** gallery.

Indeed, of the hundreds and thousands of novels written over the centuries, very few (if any) limit themselves to narrating peace of mind, well-being, happiness. Telling a story seems to be inextricably associated with difficulty. Even in the case of a phone call or piece of gossip. You run into someone: Hi, how are things? Have you heard about John? And then there's the whole litany of illnesses, accidents, anxieties and worries. After all, have you ever tried giving a full-blown account of a moment of happiness? Let's temporarily assume that happiness is instantaneous and hard to put into words (at least without being boring – perhaps that is what Dante feared as he approached paradise?), and that pain and fears give substance to time, in other words, to experience.

Two large-scale canvases stand out and seem to represent the core of the show. They are antithetical and complementary pictures. In *Allegoria* (Allegory) the situation appears to be anything but cheerful: something similar to a makeshift boat is floating in the middle of the sea, drifting and with the sail hanging limply from the mast. On board are human figures – frightened, helpless, alarmed. By contrast, *Untitled* (2009) is pervaded by a sense of carefreeness that is also reflected in formal terms. There are no characters to identify here, no symbols to interpret or plots to discover. There is not even a title. All that can be seen is a nostalgic, happy image of an untidy bedroom (or, if you prefer, of a white canvas full of coloured blots).

This alternation or ambiguity seems, however abstractly, to be the key note of the entire show. The melancholic tone of the small canvases entitled *Carcere* (Prison) act as a counterpoint to the sublime stupidity of the *Smile* works. Then there are the "portraits" – all inspired by a single photograph, chosen because it is hard to interpret – of the Russian writer Daniil Charms (1905–1942), Bertolo's favourite writer, who, according to the artist, set an "incomparable standard of the tragicomic".

"Painting is the path towards painting", says Bertolo, paraphrasing Franco Fortini. Indeed, it seems that with each new show (or series of works) Bertolo wants to start afresh. In short, the question is always: "What is painting and what has it got to do with the rest of the world? The common denominator of his works is the process of making and unmaking painting. In certain cases, one can move around in one of his paintings as one leafs backwards and forwards through a primer: here's a blot, and another one, and another. Here's an abstract background, and here's a rough figure. And now everything's turning into a new blot, something potential. Who knows, perhaps some of that happiness that it is impossible to relate lies precisely in this pure potentiality.

Luca Bertolo, (b. Milan, 1968) studied Computer Sciences at the State University of Milan between 1987 and 1992, where he began a thesis on mathematical logic. In the meantime he also did various art courses and worked as an illustrator. After a spell in London he returned to Italy, where he completed a diploma at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts in 1998. In the same year he moved to Berlin, where he lived until 2005. He lives and works on the mountains of Alpi Apuane. Among his exhibitions in public and private institutions: MACRO (Roma), Kettle's Yard (Cambridge), Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi pecci (Prato), Kunsthaus Tacheles (Berlino), Galleria Comunale d'Arte Contemporanea di Monfalcone, The Front Room Gallery (New York), Galleria Alessandro De March (Milano), SpazioA (Pistoia), Arcade (Londra).

