

**Press release**October 12th  
November 23th 2019opening  
Saturday, October 12th  
from 11am to 9pm

# *Like a Sort of Pompeii in Reverse* Salvatore Arancio

You can deduce many aspects of the artist Salvatore Arancio's work from the sentence "Like a Sort of Pompeii in Reverse"—borrowed from Guy Debord<sup>1</sup>—for his exhibition at Casa Jorn in Albissola. In this exhibition, he has presented a series of ceramic works created and modelled directly on objects or on organic forms created by Asger Jorn on the walls of his house's garden. In this way, the artist enters into a dialogue with the very rich Situationist experience, which experienced one of its most intense moments precisely in this spot on the Ligurian coast, and which expresses a sense of time that follows various dynamics. The ceramic takes the shape of the contour of things and follows this search for a space around reality, reconstructing a specific space and time. A space around the traces that fill an empty dimension; a void that also reflects a temporal dimension. The use of materials and objects recalls the concept of misappropriation typical of the Situationists. The change of context of objects and materials creates new narratives and a visionary aspect that comes close to psychedelic effects

A continuous dialogue develops between the history of science and the history of art. The search for a common past between these two disciplines defines a space in which the difference between them dissolves. Very often with Salvatore Arancio we encounter this moment where art and science are at one; connected precisely by this kind of absence of specific time. This interdisciplinary dilemma, this search for a space of dissolution, allows the artist to create a particular moment that generates an escape from the present; an absence that allows one to see objects from an interdisciplinary point of view in a kind of temporal apnoea. An obsolete form of science almost automatically becomes an aesthetic form that is linked to the artistic imagination. It is not for nothing that the instruments and objects exhibited in natural science museums seem to derive from an artistic and not a scientific imagination. The effort of imagination that one must make in order to enter this particular history of science relegated to the past is an effort of imagination that imposes a kind of inverted science fiction; a temporal dimension in negative form, a space in which the shape of emptiness fills itself. Many of the positions in Salvatore Arancio's works seek to develop this perspective. These are forms that constitute an absent time through the reconstruction of the negative of a shape. For this reason, the technique of reclaiming the space around the objects and the natural elements refers exactly to this inverted space that occupies an imaginary time.

[...] If we can't develop scientific potential immediately, then we imagine it. And this equation is equally possible in the opposite direction. Salvatore Arancio builds these imaginaries that recompose a series of never-discovered pasts—a series of historical shapes revisited backwards— and so he creates a "Pompeii in reverse."

[...] The technique that Arancio uses develops on a double register: on the one hand, he uses traditional techniques such as ceramics and engraving; on the other, he transforms these techniques with the use of contemporary forms.

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<sup>1</sup> Like a Sort of Pompeii in Reverse" is a quote from the text that Guy Debord wrote in 1972 for Asger Jorn's book *Le Jardin d'Albisola*, edited by Ezio Gribaudo for Edizioni d'arte Fratello Pozzo, Turin and published posthumously in 1974.

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This mixture places the observer before a tension of various moments that, in merging, create a neutral time, distant from a purely present state. The material clay has a direct relationship with the idea of landscape. A material that comes directly from the earth, clay can be modeled and transformed into imaginary shapes. This idea of an imaginary landscape that models and transforms itself establishes a rapport between the material and the concept of fantastic landscapes that form part of a collective imagination of hidden, mysterious lands that have never existed. The idea of landscape is tied to a specific point of view that a certain panorama can compose. In a sense, landscape is generated by a unique point that is multiplied by an infinity of other points placed at a fixed distance.

[...] The subtle border between nature and artifact diminishes in Arancio's art; it dissolves into a state of uniqueness between one thing and the other. It is no coincidence that the concept of cabinet of curiosities becomes central to his work. This frontier between art and nature, between history and geography fades, giving way to a dimension where science and history lose their conventional coordinates. Time becomes the most fragile and multiple element. With his technical and aesthetic recuperation, Arancio manages to re-discover some plural definitions of time; channeling the observer's moment at the heart of many and various moments. The observer relives some parallel dimensions. This is less about an absence of time than a multiplicity of time, a diffuse temporality.

The present dissipates into a constant tension between an impossible past and an imaginary future. And the observer finds himself before the technical difficulty of finding the contemporary dimension. The contemporary is challenged in its propensity to constantly look for speed and superficiality. This temporal dimension that binds art and the culture of the last decades into an area of synchronicity is undermined. Arancio works with the concept of contemporary time in a kaleidoscope of different moments. His references are never explicit quotations, but one cannot not think of an indistinct sharing of a literary and scientific phenomenon— imagination as an almost retroactive way of rethinking the world.

And yet, there is no presence of science fiction or of the dystopian narrative. We do not have the feeling that we are in front of an alternative form of the present. Reality is not questioned by the work, but rather elaborated and amplified. Arancio questions a dimension of the present that is related to the speed of the flow of our times. He finds in the depth of the present a complexity that refers to other epochs and creates different versions of our times.

Lorenzo Benedetti

This essay in full-length is published in *Pleased to meet you Salvatore Arancio* (Semiose éditions), october 2019.

Since February 2017, Lorenzo Benedetti is curator for contemporary arts at Kunstmuseum of Saint-Gallen (CH). After his studies of art history at La Sapienza University in Roma (IT), he attended the Curatorial Training Programme at De Appel Foundation in Amsterdam (NL) where he was the director and curator until 2015. In 2005, he founded the Sound Art Museum in Roma, a space dedicated to sound in visual art. He has been the director of the Art Center De Vleeshal in Middelburg (NL) and of the art center Volume! in Roma. Lorenzo Benedetti was curator at the Museum Marta Herford in Herford (DE) and guest curator at La Kunsthalle in Mulhouse (FR). During the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013, he curated the exhibition of Mark Manders for the Dutch Pavilion. He recently organized the exhibitions *During the Exhibition the Gallery Will Be Close* at WIELS in Brussels (BE) and *Also Sculpture Die* at Palazzo Strozzi in Firenze (IT).