

# SINT-LUKASGALERIE BRUSSEL

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2006

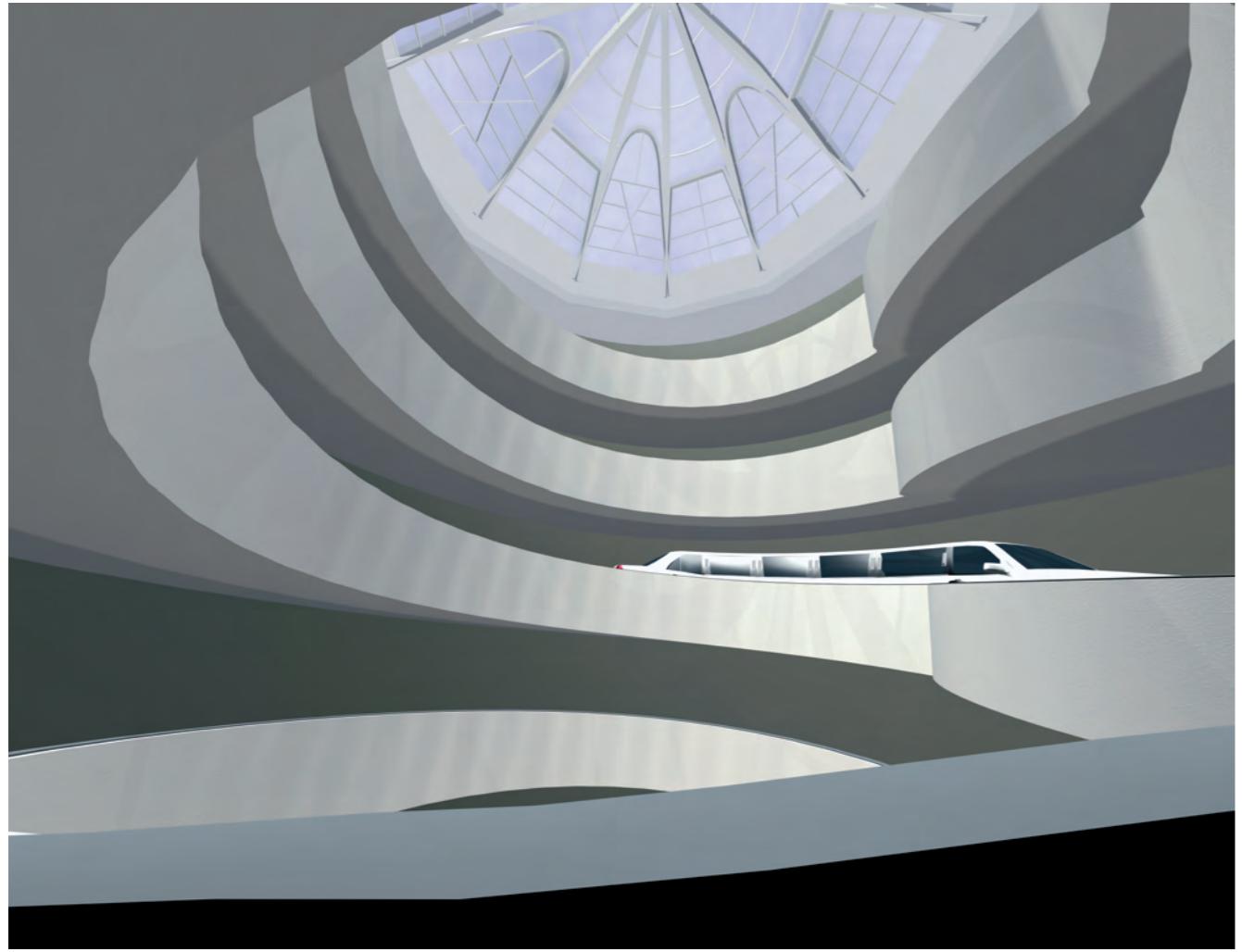


## DAVIDE BERTOCCHI

EXHIBITION: from 27.01.06 until 11.03.06  
VERNISSAGE: thursday 26.01.06

# PERSONAL MYTHOLOGY

Andrea Bellini talks to Davide Bertocchi



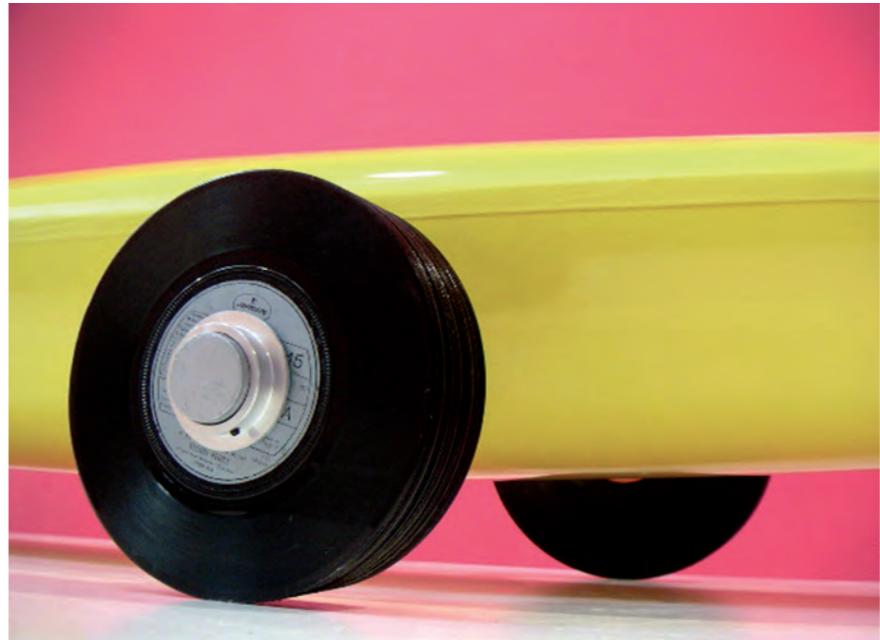
LIMO - 2001-2002. 3D animation on DVD - 30 min loop . Courtesy the artist. 3D graphic design: Christian Dubroca.

**Andrea Bellini:** The relationship between art and science has deeply marked the history of Western culture since the Renaissance. Science has not only provided the "content" for art, but has represented a living source of thoughts and considerations which have generated questions and issues regarding the very meaning of human life. In your work, for example, science seems to be ambiguous. Is that true? What does science represent in works like "21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY - ATTENTIFS ENSEMBLE" (2004)?

**Davide Bertocchi:** In "21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY- ATTENTIFS ENSEMBLE" I wanted to create a situation of

"total control" during the opening of an exhibition in Paris. The audience was faced by these mysterious figures, dressed in white laboratory suits, staring at the crowd and just standing still like menacing guardians.

On the back of their suits I printed a very disquieting message which has appeared on every transparent litter bag in Paris since October 2001: Vigilance-Propreté. It's a "neo-fascist" subliminal message for a new order of things: a police control strategy created around us. My aim was to copy the reassuring aesthetic format of science and slightly bend it in order to suggest



TOP100 - 2003-2007 fiberglas, aluminum, 100 vinyl records. dimensions: 340 x 120 x 40 cm. Courtesy the artist.

confusion and multiply perspectives. Some time ago I also installed a fake space-lab that really looked like a kind of NASA installation in the middle of the German town of Lüneburg. People thought it was real and therefore didn't react to it like an "artistic" event. Usually, with Art, people have a very cynical approach, but with Science it's different: it's either positive or frightening.

I'm not trying to be critical towards science, but rather I am trying to subvert the illusory general belief that reality is entirely explicable in scientific terms. Every scientific theory, from the beginning of the modern era, is just a theoretic model, an attempt to comprehend a mystery. I think this mystery is much more interesting than the logic of knowledge itself. Ambiguity is more open than certainty. In these metaphysical terms art and science overlap on a common path.

**AB:** In works like "BASE" (2004) as well, images of science interact with the landscape. Why are you interested in creating these enigmatic situations?

**DB:** In this series of images it's the specific environment that attracts my attention. These are places that I find randomly in the middle of nowhere, with a weird architecture or some kind of strange instruments and they almost look like ready-made installations. My intervention is very simple and minimal. I just ask a local person to dress up in a white lab suite and then I take a picture. In a way I appropriate the landscape like a kind of natural movie set.

I just want to give the viewer the opportunity to reinvent a new imaginary story so that these landscapes can become anything: a toxic site, a protected site, a sci-fi set, a postcard, etc.

Even though the enigma is the key to invent our own reality my images are also activated by "real life" information that we see everyday in the media, like terroristic

attacks simulations, or pollution related events.

**AB:** Looking at your works, from the beginning, it seems you always try to reach a kind of opaque, often metaphysical atmosphere. What's the aim of this?

**DB:** I try not to be a "realist" in the sense that I don't focus myself on a direct report of the "Real". Instead, I like to challenge reality through a dreamy, metaphysical parallel. Think of Fellini for example but also Pasolini's movies or Kubrik's, they all have a common magical way of making people think about (social, political) reality without representing it.

**AB:** I'm really interested in understanding what role you think these images have. Do you think the carefully controlled ambiguity of your images could be the source of a powerful collective emotional effect?

**DB:** Ultimately I see them as a generator of complexity. What I mean is that even science sometimes makes things look too simple. So I want people to look further than the first layer of reality. I try to keep my images open to the maximum number of interpretations and sometimes they reflect the collective unconsciousness. But in general I think of images and objects as interfaces for ideas.

**AB:** There's also a surreal quality to your work. I'm thinking about works like "GALAXY" (1999 – 2000) and "TANDEM D 10" (2001). Why did you create these kind of curved, non-functional objects?

**DB:** My obsession with the circular movement started originally with a



QUADROPHENIA - 2004. Deambulator, vinyl records, mirrors. dimensions:130 x 160 x 100 cm. Courtesy the artist and Le Pavillon, Palais De Tokyo,Paris.



TANDEM D 10 - 2001. 5 aluminum scooters, steel curved structure. dimensions: 450 x 100 x 20 cm, rotation diameter 1000 cm. Private collection, Milan.



EVIL MOLECULA - 2003. Death Metal and satanic music vinyl records, aluminum tubes, black silicone. Variable dimensions. Installation view at Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Los Angeles.



EVIL MOLECULA - 2003. Death Metal and satanic music vinyl records, aluminum tubes, black silicone. Detailof one of the record module.



BASE - 2004. digital print on Endura metallic paper. dimensions: 100 x 120 cm. Courtesy the artist, Tatjana Pieters/OneTwenty, Gent and La Blanchisserie Galerie, Paris.

project I began in 1999 called "SPAZIO". It was an unlimited series of very realistic little images of new planets, stars and other celestial bodies that I had created with my computer. Basically it was a personal fantastic theory about Space, a midpoint between what I imagined it to be, thanks to sci-fi films, and what I knew of it from human exploration.

Today, I'm still making these little imaginary planets; they could even exist as in fact we don't know much about the Universe.

Anyway, this repetitive work, also made me think of a different, more appropriate, set of physical laws. The movement of planets and

galaxies is circular, for example, but so is the movement of information on their support mechanisms, like CD's, DVD's, records or magnetic tapes. There is also an existential dimension related to this movement related to what we do everyday and with the unuseful dissipation of energy. Following this logic I started by creating curved skateboards for "GALAXY", or "LIMO"... a curved Limousine for the circular, spiral space of the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

**AB:** In "TOP100" (2003-2005) you asked lot of critics and curators to name their favorite song. Can you explain to me what is the

*relation between this compilation and the strange yellow vehicle you created?*

**DB:** Well "TOP 100" was about forcing people to make choices. I thought that there has been less and less critical sense in contemporary art, there are fewer and fewer people who have made choices and it seemed to me that art has simply become a Top 100 chart. So with my project I wanted to force people to make the most basic esthetical choice: their favorite song ever. And then I built a sculpture that could "float" on all these choices, something that, in a way, could stand above everybody's choice. That's why I collected all the vinyl

record of each song and I glued them together in order to make four wheels for a vehicle, that looks like a "Formula 1" kayak...

**AB:** For this yellow vehicle and for "QUADROPHENIA" (2004) you used wheels made from 2 sizes of vinyl records. As a result, these vehicles can only move in circles. Why does this idea of a circular movement always come back in your work?

**DB:** Yes, exactly, they are asymmetric: on one side there are 33 rpm records and on the other side 45 rpm. I thought that it was logical that all my vehicles would follow the same circular, self-referential,

movement and that is an element that keeps repeating in my work. Endlessly. It's an infinite movement; a different perspective than the linear and limited movement, conceived during the Renaissance, which ruled Modernism and Post-Modernism.

Circular movement has a lot to do with time, in a way. And "QUADROPHENIA" is a kind of personal time machine. The wheels are made of all my favorite records from when I was a teenager and the structure that they support is like a customized Zimmer frame, a Mod version of a walker for old people. My past and maybe my future are all there in that sculpture.



**EVIL MOLECULA - 2003.** Death Metal and satanic music vinyl records, aluminum tubes, black silicone. Variable dimensions. Installation view at Prague Biennale, Prague.



**B2 - 2004.** 39 skeateboards, metal structure, plastic helmet, black T-shirts. dimensions: 389 x 248 x 20 cm. Courtesy the artist and Le Pavillon, Palais De Tokyo, Paris.



**21st CENTURY (ATTENTIFS ENSAMBLE) - 2004.** Laboratory Tyvek suites, plastic glasses, vinyl letters. Performance. Courtesy the artist and Le Pavillon, Palais De Tokyo, Paris.



**B2 - 2004.** 39 skeateboards, metal structure, plastic helmet, black T-shirts. dimensions: 389 x 248 x 20 cm. Courtesy the artist and Le Pavillon, Palais De Tokyo, Paris.

**AB:** What's the role of your personal experience in your work?

**DB:** Let's say that the work itself is my personal experience, it's a continuous experiment and exploration. But of course there are also a lot of things that come out of my personal mythology, especially in the realm of music, my obsession with certain analog objects like vinyl records and a special attraction to sci-fi movies I grew up with.

**AB:** Does memory play an important role in your work?

**DB:** I would say memory is a key element in some of my projects such as "ARE YOU READY? (Once Upon a Time in The West)"

(2002). The history of South Wales, of the industrial revolution, coal mines and the beginning of a modern era in the Western world, triggered a memory I had that became the catalyst for a surreal performance on Swansea Beach.

I thought of the beach, a great natural arena, as a psychological platform to combine a diverse collection of elements to recreate a 'metaphysical landscape', much like the elements in the surrealist works of the painter Giorgio De Chirico. I have fused a childhood memory of the 1970's 'Spaghetti Western' 'Once Upon a Time in the West', the first movie I ever saw on the big screen, with elements of history such as the transmission of



**ARE YOU READY? (ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST) - 2002.** Video DV (filmed by Jonhatan Brooks) 13 min. (music by Ennio Morricone). Courtesy the artist. Photo by Ken Livingston

the world's first message by radio which was sent from Wales by Guglielmo Marconi in 1897.

Prophetically the radio message was: 'Are you ready?' and it was the members of a local Metal Detectors Club (a metaphor for researchers) who revealed the enigma or, at least, discovered the twelve metal letters that composed the message that I had hidden under the sand.

**AB:** In your work you use different media. How do you define your practice?

**DB:** Each project eventually defines itself and finds the best way of being perceived. I don't think I have much control over

that. And I like it that way. Each work develops in a different way. They usually start as ideas but then they always become objects/images or situations that change during the process, like a snowball.

Some of my work even collapsed after few hours of life like the "EVIL MOLECULA" (2003) I made for Prague Biennale 1.

There are two versions of this work and both are improbable, unstable constructions made of vinyl records of Death Metal and Satanic music glued together. The one I made for my solo show in Los Angeles held up very well as I used the strongest American glue but the one in Prague collapsed during the open-

ing because the strongest Czech glue wasn't strong enough. People thought it was deliberate, and in a way it was. They thought it was a reference to Arte Povera...

**AB:** And how would you describe your self?

**DB:** I would define myself as a researcher, in a practice that theoretically has no limits.

*Andrea Bellini is the US editor at Flash Art International, New York. Davide Bertocchi is an artist working in Paris and Milan.*