

**Arcangelo Sassolino**

*Matter revealed*

curated by Luca Massimo Barbero

28th September – 27th October

Private view: Wednesday 4th October, from 6 pm  
Opening times: September 27th – October 27th, 2017 / Mon – Fri 10am – 6pm  
Location: 23 Bruton Street, 2nd floor, London W1J 6QF, United Kingdom

On the occasion of **Frieze London**, the **Repetto Gallery** presents the exhibition in its London venue of the contemporary Italian artist who best represents **experimentation on materials and mechanics, on precariousness and the contrast between strength and resistance**.

*Matter Revealed* is the first solo show to be held by Arcangelo Sassolino in the UK; an itinerary curated by Luca Massimo Barbero in the intimate and welcoming space of the **Repetto Gallery in Bruton Street** which will host the artist's work from September 28<sup>th</sup> until October 27<sup>th</sup>.

Sassolino's works are characterised by a clear reference to a **sense of constant tension, almost an imminent danger that looms over the visitor**: the choice of the materials, their conformation and the positioning of the works within the space are designed to convey to the visitor an extreme sense of **precariousness and instability**.

Arcangelo Sassolino explores **the limits and the infinite possibilities of shape and of the contrast between staticity and dynamism**, between **strength and resistance**, between **equilibrium and breakage**. When the visitor comes into contact with Sassolino's works, s/he experiences those moments in which the waiting for something about to happen pervades the environment: one is thus always convinced of being on the verge of a threatening event that may bring a precarious and estranging stasis to an end.

These contrapositions lead the artist's work to develop along two lines which however share a strenuous use of matter and of the interactions between various materials: on one hand dynamic works, in which the materials undergo constant **mechanical stress** to the point of giving way under pressure; on the other, almost monolithic works, in which dynamism is replaced by their static positioning in space in **transitory positions, subject to constant tension**.

Both of these typologies may be classified under what Sassolino himself defines as **'inorganic performances'**, playing also in semantic terms with the contradiction in terms that this description implies. Inanimate matter comes alive, manifested through sounds and movements but also through its mere presence in space which, being unstable, is not mere staticity.

*“With the manipulation of a certain kind of industrial technology, of its brutally functional and aesthetic realism, I try to give a tangible edge to a sensation of strenuous terminality. I attempt to propagate a psycho-physically vulnerable impact,”* states **Arcangelo Sassolino**. *“By applying to materials that which physics defines as natural phenomena such as pressure, speed and gravity etc., I feel I can give new potential to sculpture.”*

Repetto Gallery will host **five works by Sassolino** taken from just as many series of works: ***Analisi***, ***Igor***, ***Mai più come prima*** and two ***Untitled***. Each of them, being part of a cycle in constant evolution, is one-of-a-kind, insofar as it is **produced especially for the *Matter Revealed* exhibition**, despite drawing on previously explored concepts and visions.

**Analisi** (‘Analysis’) is a solid block of steel, an unusual monochrome insofar as its front side is covered in a coat of white paint. The essence of this work is its precarious position, being hung from the wall by a steel cable. The appearance is that of a light shape, floating in the air, while reality shows it to be an imminent danger, a weight which could fall to the ground from one moment to the next, interrupting a situation of uncertain equilibrium. Sassolino challenges gravity and at the same time uses it to create an artistic moment which is a genuine warning.

**Igor** exploits the same concepts of tension and equilibrium. A lorry tyre, blown up to the limit, is squashed by two beams that deform its circularity, causing a conflict of forces which is clear to the eye of the onlooker. The steel of the clamps forces the wheel to take on what for it is an unnatural position; the tyre strenuously opposes the pressure, trying to return to its original shape and thus interrupt the struggle. By using mechanics, the artist forces the path of physics, violating its natural procedure, trapping the shape of the tyre and resisting the pressure within it.

Right from the title, ***Mai più come prima*** (‘Never again like before’) evokes a situation of constant change and continual development. Long sheets of glass are clasped to one another by a steel clamp, which through the pressure it exerts, manages to hold them together. The installation, hanging on the wall, exploits the opposition and the tension between two contrasting materials: the steel compresses the glass, keeping it stable yet at the same time threatening its stability, for the point of balance that holds the work together is imperceptibly close to that breaking point which could shatter the panes of glass.

An even clearer and more dynamic struggle is that underlying the work ***Senza Titolo*** (‘Untitled’), made up of a hydraulic oil piston and a wooden beam. Part of a cycle of similar works on show in a number of major international museums, *Senza Titolo* is one of Sassolino’s most representative works and among those that best identify his poetics. Positioned on the floor, the work is both action and reaction, for the hydraulic oil piston exerts a very powerful force on the wooden beam, which in turn offers great resistance. This clash gives rise to unsettling noises and live sounds which inevitably signal the succumbing of the beam; it will, in fact, break in two, marking the end of the equilibrium and the clash.



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**Senza Titolo (Cemento) ('Untitled [Cement]')**, like *Analisi*, is striking by virtue of its hieratic and estranging aesthetics. The shape is the outcome of a complex industrial process made up of strong gestures yet ones that leave room to chance. It all starts with a polycarbonate sheet inserted within a press: this procedure creates a sort of model with an irregular surface onto which the artist applies cement, which over time hardens, making it possible to eliminate the plastic mould and free the work from the model. The result is a majestic and heavy yet fragile work with jagged edges. The cement, a key testimony to our era and the protagonist of countless architectural eyesores, takes on a different sense and is ennobled by the artistic gesture. *"'Cemento' is like a Polaroid,"* Sassolino explains. *"Only in the moment of its removal from the polycarbonate support are the edge and surface formed, smooth and shiny, and it is then displayed without any further intervention. For me this work reflects the sentiment of the uncompleted perimeter."*

**Arcangelo Sassolino** was born in 1967 in Vicenza, the city where he lives and works. His works and his installations explore mechanical behaviour, materials and the physical properties of forces. His works call for careful planning and in-depth research insofar as they revolve around a high degree of physicality and on forces applied by or on an object. The tension, the expectation and the awareness of risk – along with the powerful aesthetics of the works – play a key role in the experience of the visitor.

Arcangelo Sassolino has staged solo shows in institutions such as the Contemporary Art Museum, Saint Louis (2016), the Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt (2016), the MACRO, Rome (2011), the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2008), the Z33 Center for Contemporary Art, Hasselt (2010) and Art and the City, Zurich (2012).

Furthermore, his works have been displayed in various international galleries and museums: 104, Paris; the MART, Rovereto; the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; FRAC, Reims; Autocenter and Mica Moca, Berlin; Tinguely Museum, Basle; the Swiss Institute, New York; CCC Strozzi, Florence; the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice; Kunsthalle, Goppingen; the ZKM, Karlsruhe, and the Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan.