

## Luca Buvoli A Very Beautiful Day After Tomorrow (Un Bellissimo Dopodomani)

Luca Buvoli explores flight—its possibilities and metaphors—in art that incorporates the mediums of drawing, sculpture, painting, animated films, videos, and artist's comic books. Ephemeral and transparent materials and trembling lines convey the tentative aspects of flying made all the more fraught by the conditions of travel and war today. At ICA Buvoli has transformed the 92-foot ramp, visible from the street through large picture windows, into a 3-D marquee for "A Very Beautiful Day after Tomorrow (Un Bellissimo Dopodomani)." As chronicled by art historian Christine Poggi, who appears here on video, this installation yields a complex narrative based on Futurism (the avant-garde movement that brought Italy up to speed with Modernism and into controversial relationship with Fascism), family lore and Western mythologies. Buvoli is the tenth artist to create a temporary work for this space, as part of a series of commissions that began in 2000.

Ingrid Schaffner, SENIOR CURATOR

Luca Buvoli's ramp project takes inspiration from the words of F.T. Marinetti, the founder of Italian Futurism, spoken towards the end of his life to his daughter Vittoria. Despite the fact that Marinetti was seriously ill, and that the Fascist Regime he supported was nearing final collapse, Marinetti urged his daughter not to worry about the problems of the moment; rather she should remember that "There will be a very beautiful day after tomorrow." The strange paths of these words, which cling to a utopian vision of the future even as Marinetti's dreams lay in ruins, reverberates through Buvoli's work. Captured in the opening sequence of one of the project's two videos, Marinetti's phrase echoes through Vittoria's voice and the repetitions of her hand gestures to initiate a set of reflections on the history and legacy of Futurism.

Buvoli renders Marinetti's paradoxically "heroic" motto in multiple forms throughout the installation, putting it into a kind of quasi-

cinematic movement. "A Very Beautiful Day After Tomorrow" appears as advertisement and spectacle painted on the screen of the ramp windows (where it partly aligns with and diverges from the text on the interior wall, depending on one's point of view); as a two-dimensional text stenciled in Italian onto the lower wall of the ramp; and as a sculptural form/force that multiplies, expands, and grows weightier as it takes flight up the ramp, as if striving to realize a future it also partly impedes; the fallen, unpainted plaster "M" (for Marinetti, but also Mussolini), gets in our way as we travel up the ramp, while the final projecting letters block our view as we turn to look back down).

Buvoli gives Marinetti's potentially universal, timeless phrase historical resonance by painting the letters a shade of crimson and turquoise achieved by combining the colors of the Italian and American flags. This fusion of tricolor flags alludes to the artist's country of origin and to his adopted home, to the status of "America" as a symbol of modernity in Italy, and to the shared myths and political ideologies that so often link Italy and the US. The bold, streamlined typography is adapted from art deco lettering, popular in Fascist propaganda, Futurist books and posters, and in Futurist-inspired graphic design during the interwar years. Buvoli constructs the letters in wood, plexiglass, rubber, wire, linoleum, reinforced polyester resin, polyurethane resin, and pigment, using cut and twisted wires to hold them in place. Polyurethane resin is a material employed by the aeronautics industry to sheathe structures subjected to high velocity. In previous sculptures of humanoid aviators, titled *Protoectors*, Buvoli pigmented translucent resin with Gatorade powder, as if to give his flying figures an artificial energy boost. Yet the admixture of Gatorade also insures that his *Protoectors* are subject to decomposition, so that they function both as emblems of "frozen light," and of material and temporal entropy. The letters that figure forth Marinetti's motto on the ramp similarly exemplify the tension between an ideal of contained, monumental form and its physical realization, through the presence of cracked surfaces, frayed edges, erasures on the wall, visible wires, partly misaligned forms, and other traces of material process and decay.

The dream of human flight has a long history, recorded in the myth of Dedalus, Leonardo's studies of birds' wings, and countless other stories, including those of popular comic book heroes such as Superman, Silver Surfer, and Astroboy, figures that fascinated Buvoli in his youth. Within the Futurist imaginary, this dream of flight assumed the form of a desire to fuse man and airplane, flesh and metal, in the creation of an anti-human type, impervious to sentiment and capable of withstanding the shocks occasioned by speed. Buvoli's aviator/airplane, which he calls a *Vector*, refers to these dreams of transcendence, power, and immortality, although in a distinctly less heroic manner. Buvoli's aviator, first realized in axonometric projection in a series of drawings, pictures the body moving forward but rotated to the side, with arms/wings tilted at an angle. A figure with a similar silhouette also appeared in the earlier *Protoectors*, and in the drawings, 16mm film, and sculptures for the first phase of a multi-part project collectively titled *Flying—Practical Training for Beginners* (1997-2002). Developed into a larger sculptural form that projects into space in an attempt to fly ("to the end of the future?" Buvoli asks), the *Vector* becomes visible as a Futurist "force-line" whose velocity generates a trail of comic book-like streaks and swirling vortices. As installed soaring up the ICA ramp, multiple *Vectors* seem at once to embody the thrill of flight, dreams of omnipotence, and a more pessimistic awareness of the consequences of human hubris. Buvoli compares his *Vectors* to Walter Benjamin's "angel of history," who flies forward while facing backward, so that he sees only the catastrophe of history and the wreckage it piles at his feet.

Buvoli's video, also titled *A Very Beautiful Day After Tomorrow (Un Bellissimo Dopodomani)*, (situated at the turning point of the ramp,) presents the viewer with a montage of contemporary interviews, historical film footage of Fascist era crowds hailing Mussolini and a newspaper burning, hand-drawn and animated scenes (including one of Marinetti dropping Futurist manifestos from the Clock Tower in Venice), a 1927 parade for aviator Charles Lindbergh, views of a 2005 aeronautical show in Oshkosh, flags held by American soldiers marching in "Operation Welcome Home" in 2006, Italian crowds at the World Soccer Finals in 2006, and menacing smoke rings produced by bombs used in a re-enactment of WWII operations. The audio track includes a 1935 recording of Marinetti declaiming *La Battaglia di Adrianopoli* (The Battle of Adrianopoli), his 1913 free word poem about the thrill of dropping bombs during the First Balkan War, and the Fascist era song, *Il Canto dell'aviatore* (The Song of the Aviator). As in Sergei Eisenstein's montage theory, Buvoli employs the collision of juxtaposed shots to spark critical thought about the relation of past and present fantasies of velocity,

flight, power, and violence. As the video nears its conclusion, it seems to encounter resistance: the sound track slows so that the refrain of the patriotic song ("the motor rumbles") becomes garbled, while the whirling propellers wind down. The final echoes of the song convey a sense of spatial and temporal distance; it is as if we are present at the far reaches of a stadium, and can hear the booming sounds of the loudspeaker only in blurred and distorted traces. Buvoli's second video, a two-channel documentary titled *How Can This Thing Be Explained? (Come si può spiegare questa cosa?)*, presents a range of contemporary views on Futurism, focusing on the movement's often contradictory relation to politics and everyday life. Through the recollections of Marinetti's daughters Vittoria and Luce, and the views of scholars in Italy and the US, the visitor can gauge the efforts (indeed the struggle, sometimes laden with emotion) of those with more or less contact with the movement and its historical moment, to understand the complexity of the past.

The viewer who travels through the ramp follows a related temporal trajectory, moving from the optimistic fantasy announced by the window marquee, to a vision of flying phrases and *Vectors*, to an awareness of the gradual breakdown of the montage video and grandiose letters, and finally to a backward glance down the ramp, a reversal already enacted by the *Vectors* as angels of history. Within this complex space, Buvoli succeeds in suggesting the lingering force of dreams of human flight and transcendence, but only from an anti-heroic, post-utopian perspective.

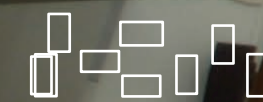
Christine Poggi, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
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LUCA BUVOLI'S (b. 1963, Brescia, Italy; lives in New York and Houston, Texas) work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the List Visual Arts Center, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, the Philadelphia Museum of Art (video gallery) and the Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro. His films have been screened at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the ICA, Boston.

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