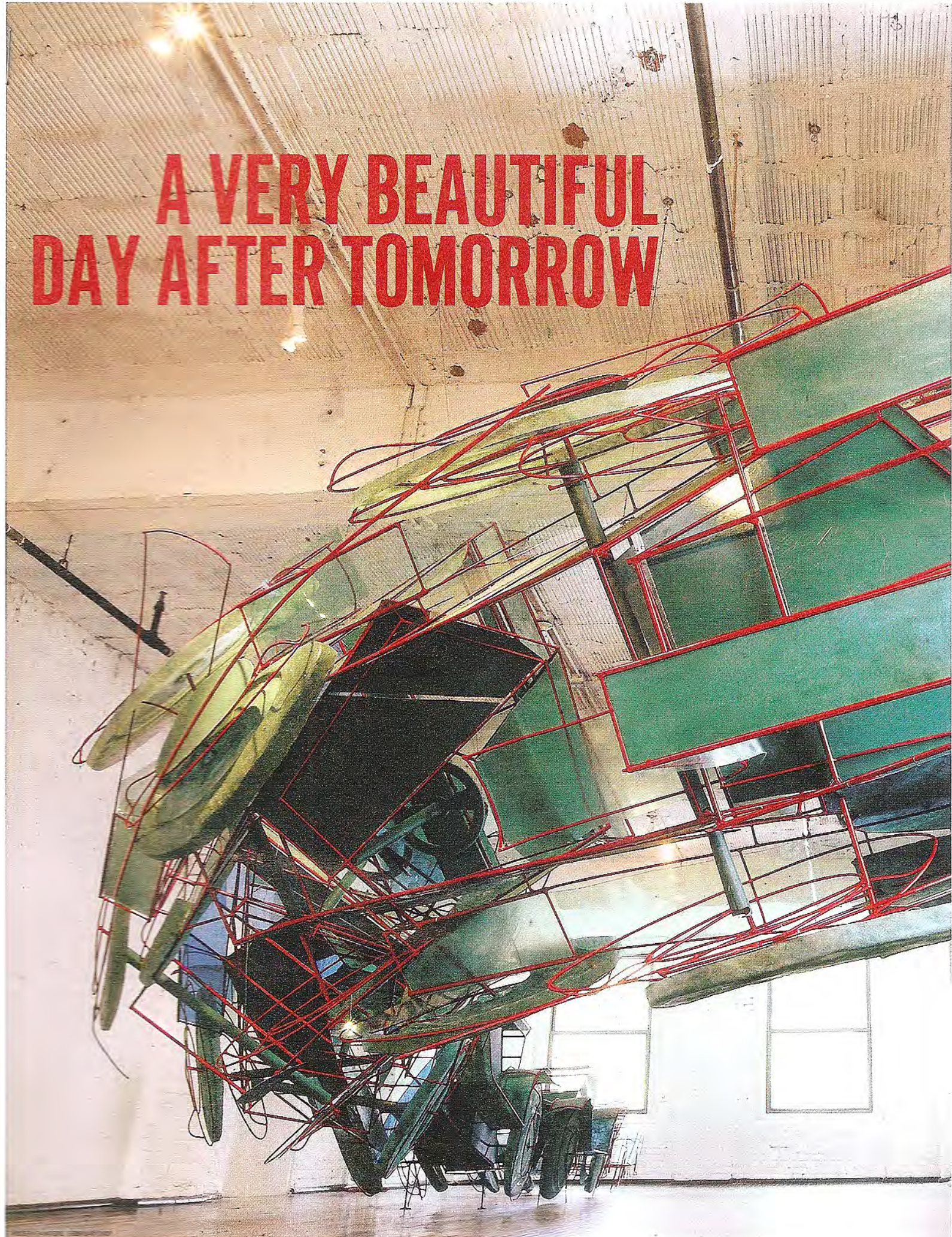
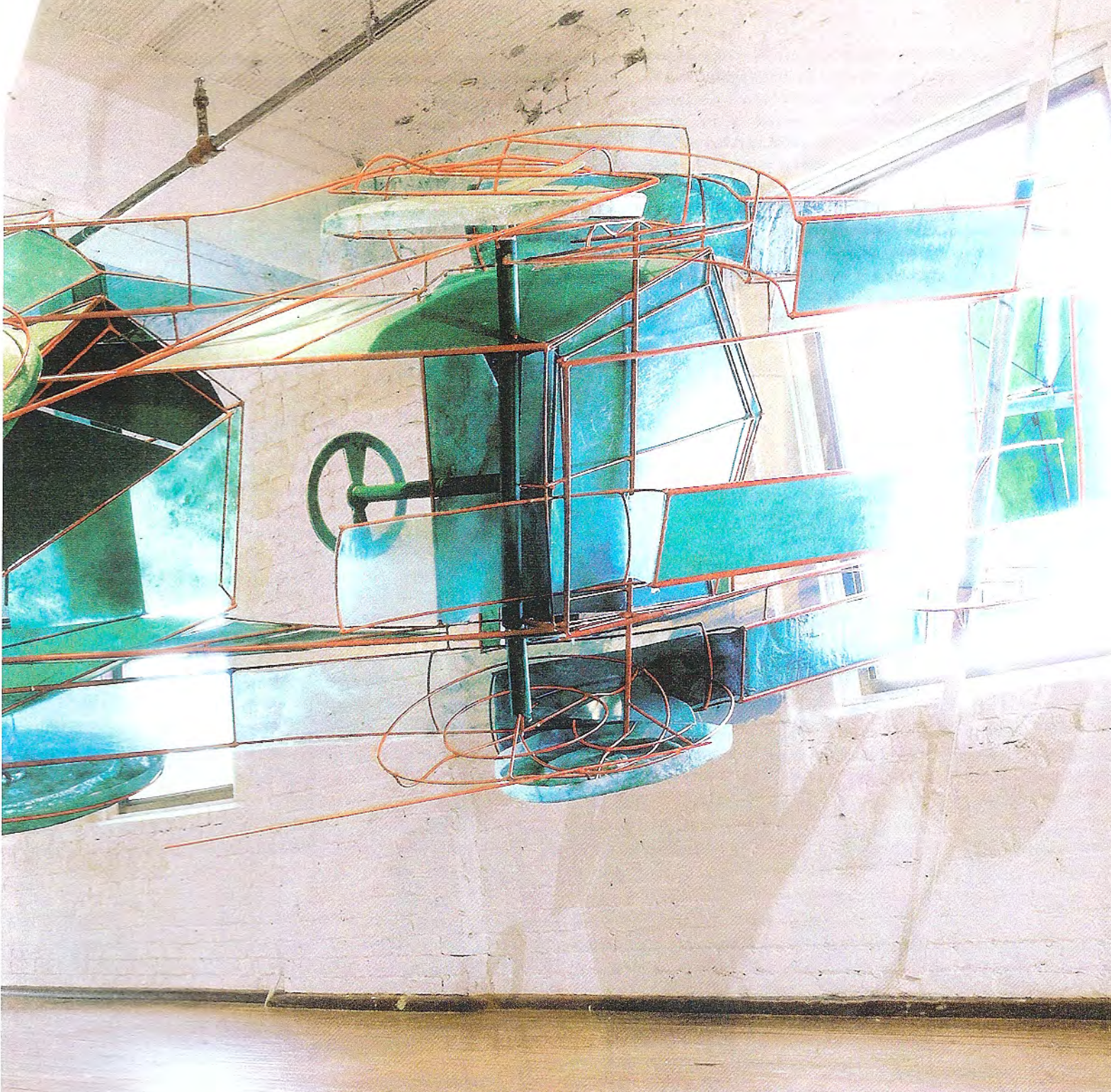


# A VERY BEAUTIFUL DAY AFTER TOMORROW





Luca Buvoli's elaborate installation, *Un Bellissimo Dopodomani* (A Very Beautiful Day After Tomorrow), was the crowning moment of Robert Storr's exhibition for the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007. The title comes from F. T. Marinetti's efforts to comfort his daughter, Vittoria, as he neared the end of his life. Christine Poggi, a leading scholar, spoke with Buvoli for *Modern Painters*.

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**Christine Poggi:** One hundred years ago, F. T. Marinetti published his deliberately inflammatory “Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” on the front page of the French daily *Le Figaro*. He was hoping to address an elite circle of writers and other intellectuals as well as a mass audience through this publicity stunt. His aim, to announce a violent rupture with the past in order to found a more dynamic and militaristic Italy, fused cultural and political ideals. Although issuing manifestos became an important part of 20th century avant-garde practice, today it seems too theatrical, or too utopian. Is this form of writing still available to artists today?

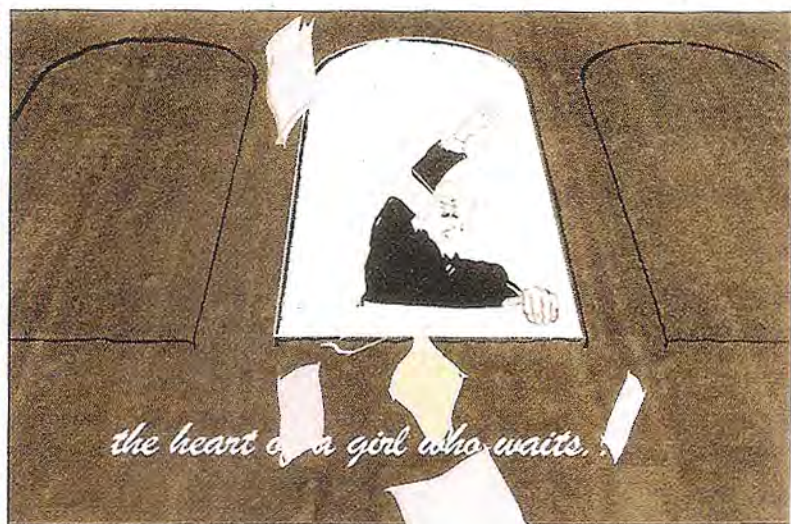
**Luca Buvoli:** A manifesto aims to convince a large audience to take new actions. Much like utopias, manifestos sound anachronistic in an age of a loss of absolutes; but once we step beyond skepticism, cynicism, and fear of anachronism, such texts can become meaningful in a variety of ways: as instructions on the process and practice of art and filmmaking, as in Lars von Trier’s *Dogma 95*; as agents that dismantle the intrinsic aggression by displaying the perspective of the “victims”; as ironic commentaries on idealism and heroism; or as creative, more removed interpretations.

**CP:** The narrative prologue of the Marinetti manifesto tells the story of Marinetti and his poet friends, who are galvanized by the roar of three “famished automobiles” to go out into the streets and experience the thrill of velocity. Marinetti’s reckless drive is brought to an abrupt halt when he suddenly comes upon two wobbling bicyclists and overturns his car in a ditch. The famous moment of the crash allows Marinetti to imagine his death and rebirth in industrial sludge. He

interruption, to break the flow of Marinetti’s narrative and its empathic appeal. Your airborne race car, a vector of speed suspended in space, is disassembled into parts that hang from visible wires. In a sense, the race car is already exploded. This temporal arrest and fragmentation allows the fantasies of power and the ego-ecstasy associated with speed to become a subject of analysis. If speed blurs the distinction between the present and the future, as Paul Virilio suggests, your temporal cut into Marinetti’s story forestalls the arrival of the future. To me this implies that the 11 points that follow from the scenario of the crash, which exalt war as the world’s only hygiene, contempt for women, militarism, patriotism, and the beauty of speed, can be reread as similarly suspended or exploded fantasies.

**LB:** Some of my works, such as *A Very Beautiful Day After Tomorrow* (2007), address, in dreamlike format, the iconography and psychology of the masses that paralleled, on a larger scale, Italy’s colonialist enterprise. I am not revisiting Italian Futurism and its co-optation by Fascism out of historical curiosity or formal interests, but rather to explore the thin line separating idealism and delusion, as well as parallels with demagogic strategies used today by media-driven societies. Of course I also have a personal connection to these events. My parents were born and raised under the National Fascist Party that governed Italy from 1922 to 1943.

**CP:** Marinetti declaimed his founding manifesto and other Futurist texts in numerous *serate* (theatrical evenings) in the years prior to World War I, often before large publics. His highly “virile” form of declamation enacted the Futurist principles of speed and violence,



**FIRST TWO PAGES:** Luca Buvoli, installation view of *Instant Before Incident (Marinetti’s Drive, 1908)*, Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, 2008. Reinforced UV stable polyester resin, pigment, steel, and Plexiglas.

**ABOVE AND OPPOSITE PAGE:** Stills from *Un Bellissimo Dopodomani (A Very Beautiful Day After Tomorrow)*, 2007. Video, 8 min., 17 sec.

emerges as a man-machine hybrid, his heart reformed by “the red-hot iron of joy,” to declaim the 11 points of the manifesto. Why, in your current project, *Instant Before Incident*, did you choose to represent the instant just before the crash?

**LB:** In the narrative section that introduces “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” the shock and euphoria experienced by Marinetti in his car crash were the catalysts for his aggressive vision. My entire “Meta-Futurist” project, since 2003, is based on different tactics that attempt to undo—on a small, intimate scale—the violence in the rhetoric of the manifesto, violence that pointed to the unfolding of destructive forces in the 20th century. In reconfiguring the 1908 Fiat that Marinetti was driving and lost control of, I refer to a Cubo-Futurist sequence in shaping its path, but stop it with a freeze-frame before its impact and ecstasy, almost as an absurdist proposal of an alternate fate.

**CP:** This freezing of an action functions as a form of Brechtian

which were meant to rouse the audience to collective enthusiasm and militaristic action. The oral performance of the manifesto is an issue addressed in your animation video, *Velocity Zero*. For this project you collaborated with several speech pathologists and individuals with aphasia (a condition caused by brain damage that generates language impairments) to defamiliarize the performance of the manifesto.

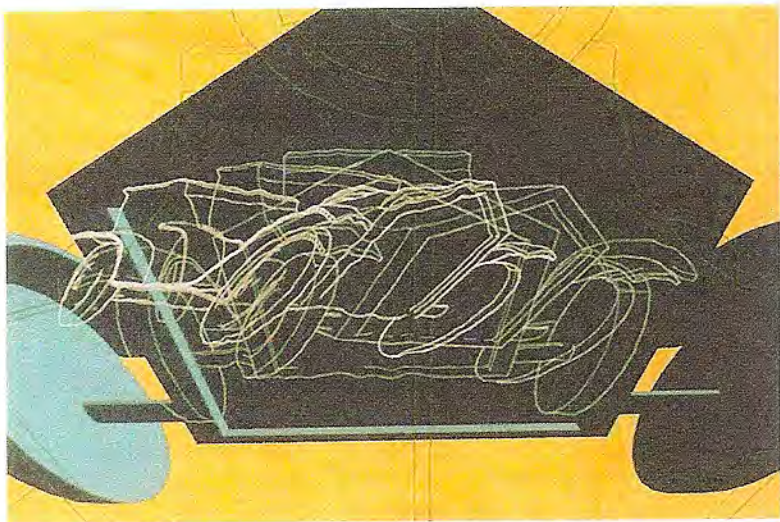
**LB:** I have videotaped several Italian and American adults who stutter or have the condition of aphasia reading the Futurist manifesto. In the two-part video animation, *Velocity Zero* (2007), Marinetti’s original celebration of velocity and aggression in his Futurist text is neutralized by the readers’ speech disorders and my subsequent hand-drawn animation of the footage, which at times delays and overlaps images in mimicry of the Futurists’ representation of motion. The result is a sense of fragmentation and incompleteness that parallels the readers’ struggle to capture the original text. I wanted to focus both on the neurological (aphasic) and the psychological (stutterer) obstacles in

“Marinetti’s highly ‘virile’ form of declamation enacted the Futurist principles of speed and violence, which were meant to rouse the audience to collective enthusiasm and militaristic action.” —Christine Poggi

relation to language. The difference in time between the average viewer’s reading of the caption and the aphasic readers’ is meant to create a sense of struggle and frustration. One experiences a different dimension of temporality, a confused state between the emphatic and the empathetic.

**CP:** How did the aphasic individuals you worked with understand their participation?

**LB:** The purpose of having the manifesto read by people with speech disorders was to utilize the difficulty of communication and the slowing of language in order to symbolically critique the rhetoric of velocity, virility, and violence in our society. From the very beginning I clearly expressed my ideas and intentions to the collaborating therapists and the prospective readers, since my main concern was to respect, to the highest degree, the persons and their communicative disorder. I wanted to empower them in producing a new reading of the manifesto. Clips from *Velocità Zero*, the Italian version of the project, were recently shown as public service announcements on Italian national television channels with a message from the Italian Aphasic Association to promote awareness of the condition.



**CP:** The representation of accelerated movement was a central theme in Futurist visual art. Giacomo Balla, for example, relied on a succession of quasi-cinematic stills to capture the trajectory of an object over time. Often he also fused the repeated profiles of an object with geometric vectors and swirling lines and shapes, which he called “lines of speed.” His 1913 painting *Racing Automobile* depicts an early Fiat moving horizontally across the canvas from right to left, while projecting lines and swirling forms evoke sensations of noise and blasts of wind. In *Line of Speed + Landscape of 1914*, Balla employed shiny colored metallic papers, cut into abstract vectors and swirls, to render the speed and glittering sheen of a race car traversing the countryside. What methods and materials did you use to represent the speed of the car in *Instant Before Incident*?

**LB:** I have adopted several tactics to represent movement, while attempting to slow it down. The oxymoron has always been generative in my work. In *Instant Before Incident* (2008) the car is condensed as a trope of representation of velocity; it is stretched, squashed, and extended like a cartoon character, yet paradoxically, it is constituted by delay. Cars intersect and overlap using a Cubo-Futurist syntax, which—in a new version for a show this month in New York at the Susan Inglett Gallery—is expanded by the use of an exaggerated perspective. The car that

faces viewers when they enter the gallery (almost the size of an actual car) originates in the back of the room as a small car jumping off a ramp. The fluidity of speed is immediately slowed down by porous, wrinkled, and irregular fiberglass panels that oppose the conventional smooth finish of cars.

**CP:** Your interest in velocity has led you to explore a variety of formal strategies and unusual materials. Some of the materials that you have used in your sculptures are associated with the automotive and aeronautics industries, such as steel and fiberglass that were intended to withstand great speed. But your construction methods, using visible wires and tape, or pigmenting figures such as the *Vectors* (man-airplane hybrids) with Gatorade, point to the inevitable decomposition of these heroic, energy infused forms. It is as if you want to accelerate the organic processes of entropy and decay that Futurism hoped to defeat. Can you describe some of these strategies?

**LB:** I deal with varying speeds by use of free association, *détournement*, and montage. In my early *Proto-vectors* (2002–03), small sculptures in the shape of an extruded human figure flying with open arms, I mixed resin with various flavors of Gatorade powder. I enjoyed utilizing the artificial flavors of these energy enhancers to produce bright colors in my hybrid flying men that would eventually decay. The *Vector Tricolor*, at the entrance of the Arsenale in my project at the last Venice Biennale, is a suspended sculptural hybrid fusing a human figure, flying with open arms, and a stealth bomber. Its contrail is represented in a series of fiberglass and Plexiglas segments that become progressively entangled and shattered in the



succeeding room, refracting light, color, and materials on the walls and floor. In the video animation *A Very Beautiful Day After Tomorrow*, movement and speed are also analyzed musically in a rearrangement of “Canto dell’Aviatore,” a popular song from the 1930s. A progressive deceleration, distortion, echo, and layering of two versions of the song (the original recording and a version I had commissioned from the director of a children’s choir in my home neighborhood in Vicenza), in conjunction with various animated and archival film sequences, transform the originally upbeat, jubilant song into a slowed down and decomposed eerie cacophony. This rearrangement addresses the sense of instability between hope and disillusionment, patriotism and collective madness. ✦

LUCA BUVOLI HAS A SOLO EXHIBITION ON VIEW AT THE ESTORICK COLLECTION, LONDON, THROUGH APR. 19, AND WILL HAVE SOLO EXHIBITIONS AT THE SUSAN INGLETT GALLERY, NEW YORK, FROM FEB. 13 THROUGH MAR. 14, AND AT THE KAAITHEATER, BRUSSELS, FROM FEB. 13 THROUGH FEB. 21. EXCERPTS FROM: *VELOCITY ZERO* (2007) WILL SCREEN AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, ON FEB. 20.