

## Francesco Vezzoli

Fondazione Prada

Milan

26 March - 16 May 2004

On Friday 26 March 2004 an exhibition devoted to the new project of Francesco Vezzoli (b. Brescia, 1971) will open at the Fondazione Prada.

Conceived specifically for the space at Via Fogazzaro 36, Milan, the show comprises two parallel installations, both inspired by the work of the poet and film director Pier Paolo Pasolini.

The first installation will feature the reconstruction of an old fashion movie theater, where Vezzoli's latest film will be screened non-stop. This work is directly inspired by one of Pasolini's earliest films, *Comizi d'Amore* (*Love Meetings*, 1964), in which the director himself interviews some of the most prominent Italian intellectuals and movie stars, as well ordinary people, about their attitudes to such sexual "perversions" as prostitution, adultery and homosexuality. The idea of recreating the atmosphere of Pasolini's *cinéma-vérité* masterpiece will take concrete form in a sort of reality TV show, produced in accordance with the standardized criteria of a real television production, during which some of the most famous movie stars will discuss their attitudes to sexuality and even choose a possible partner in a perverse and ironical version of the program *Blind Date*.

The second installation involves the recreation of a "ghost movie theater" with 120 Argyle chairs, designed in 1904 by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the seats of which — embroidered by Vezzoli himself — are adorned with portraits of Pasolini's actors and actresses, and dotted with blood-red tears. The Argyle chair is a reference to the final scene of *Salò, or The 120 Days of Sodom* (1975, Pasolini's last movie), where it functions as a podium from which the main characters in the film gleefully watch the cruelest tortures. Opposite the 120 chairs, a huge embroidered tapestry reproduces the screen that Pasolini used to end all his movies.

Both works are conceived by the artist as further exploration of the principal artistic techniques used in his works: video and embroidery. The unifying element in this unconventional combination is constituted by Vezzoli's passion for the cinema and legendary movie stars. Through his very original association of embroidery — an activity hitherto regarded as a decorative art and predominantly a female preserve — with the use of a modern form of expression like video, the artist creates an explosive visual mixture in which show business icons (such as Helmut Berger, Anna Magnani, Silvana Mangano, Valentina Cortese and Franca Valeri), rub shoulders with jet-setters (Marisa Berenson and Bianca Jagger), film directors (Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini and Jean Cocteau), artists (Andy Warhol and Blinky Palermo) and photographers and fashion designers (Cecil Beaton, Roberto Capucci). Heterogeneous in its structure — involving the alternation of scenes featuring glamour, sometimes very kitsch, with erudite and refined references to earlier styles — Vezzoli's artistic language is the result of a compulsive inquiry that leads the artist to devour images: "I like to browse through a range of publications, from the *Financial Times* to *Hola* and

the trashiest of design magazines, then I'll tear or cut out pictures from them, and I'm always watching *Fashion TV* on satellite television... and when I go to a multiplex, I often switch from one movie to another, right through the evening; for me it's a field of study."\*

Vezzoli studied at the Central St. Martin's School of Art in London from 1992 to 1995, when he returned to Italy and made his first videos, such as *An Embroidered Trilogy* (1997, 1998, 1999), which were shown in galleries and museums in Italy and elsewhere in Europe. In his subsequent works he developed a narrative structure that brought him progressively closer to the dreams and icons nurturing his imaginative life and, in parallel with each video, he created a series of embroideries. He has had solo exhibitions in 2000 at the Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, in 2002 at the Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, and at the Museum of Contemporary Art, New York. His most recent group shows include, in Italy, the ones at the Macro, Rome, in 2002 and the Mart, Rovereto, in 2003. He has also participated in such international exhibitions as the Istanbul Biennale in 1999 and the Venice Biennale in 2001. The artist lives and works in Milan.

On the occasion of the exhibition a publication will be realized by the Fondazione Prada.

\* From "VeZZi d'arte," interview conducted by M. Castel, *Donna*, Milan, April 2003.

#### *Exhibition info*

Title:	Francesco Vezzoli
Dates:	26 March – 16 May 2004
Venue:	Fondazione Prada
Address:	Via Fogazzaro 36, Milan
Opening hours:	Tuesday–Sunday, 10 am–8 pm; closed Monday
Admission:	Free
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