



SACI Gallery - Studio Art Centers International - Florence Palazzo dei Cartelloni
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PRESS RELEASE



**Simonetta Moro:
2000-2008**

Emotional Geographies

May 16-30, 2008

Opening Reception:

Friday, May 16 at 6:00 pm

The SACI Gallery is proud to present "Emotional Geographies" - a series of paintings and drawings by Simonetta Moro, spanning from the monoprints of Rome of 2000 to the works inspired by New York City of 2008.

The two cities are more than just places where Moro has lived and produced the works; they become the metaphorical boundaries for an existential journey still in progress. Rome was the originator of a new direction in Moro's work, one that looks at the topography of cities and combines it with the emotional and subjective response that these cities exert on the artist.

In 2000, Moro spent a year at the American Academy in Rome as a Fulbright fellow; during that time she engaged in an exploration of the city's complex layering and archaeological past, focusing on such landmarks as the Colosseum. The monoprints in the exhibition are based on visions of the Roman Amphitheater as seen from above. The artist made them in several intense sessions at the etching press, by inking a large plate with hand-made colors (often including copper and silver dust), and carving the drawing out of the ink with cotton sticks and other rudimentary tools, resulting in an image resembling negative film. Each passage through the press yielded a unique and unrepeatable impression on the paper.

Living at the American Academy in Rome also meant to live in a place "in between": an island vaguely located between Italy and the United States, a "zona franca" in which the main spoken language was American English and a lot of fellow artists came from New York. In 2003, after a period of migration to and from Preston, UK, and obtaining a PhD from the University of Central Lancashire, Moro moved to New York City.

The installation *Liquid City* (2006-2008), made of 56 small scale paintings on two walls, is completed by arrows drawn directly on the wall. The piece is Moro's love song to New York City, but Venice has a lot to do with it, too. Venice is where she comes from, and where her study of painting began. Venice, in the artist's words, is like a mood, or a way of being. It carries with it the mist and floatiness of a place built on water. In common with Venice, New York City is surrounded by water, a strip of land stretching out into the Ocean, yet enclosed within its own ecosystem. One could imagine Manhattan as a giant raft ready to sail in the open sea, its neighborhoods as small islands, each with its own identity, loosely connected by the energy that emanates from its inhabitants. The arrows drawn on the wall indicate the immaterial flow of ideas and relationships through the city, and address the larger issue of migration; they are derived from batometric lines found in nautical

charts, defining the ocean currents and the relative pressure of the water. This piece recalls the Situationists' idea of the Naked City: Paris as a fragmented, imperfect and partially unknown territory; the "empty" areas in Liquid City representing the unknown, the interstices.

In these paintings Moro uses a technique of photographic transfer, that she later reworks in oils and wax; the arrows are the result of another transferred process, one that goes back to the ancient spolvero method to provide a drawing for a fresco. Here the preparatory drawing on the wall becomes the work itself; the thousands of holes pricked through the paper/cartoon are the opening through which the pigment defines lines and shapes.

The colorful Imaginary Maps on Mylar of 2007-2008 is a parallel series to Liquid City. Both series utilize translucency, one through Mylar, the other through wax; the act of tracing information about a place – mostly New York City – using common aerial views in each series. While Liquid City shows an overall image of the city by recomposing the fragments together, the series of Imaginary Maps is obscuring the image of the city by overlaying and complicating the lines that make its fabric. Losing the clarity of the city-image recalls the experience of getting lost in the city. The aim is to lose the predictable grid of the city. The bright and clashing colors, resemble archeological drawings color-coded for excavation, or ground level.

The drawings are made with pastels, color pencils, gouache and ink. One of them has an added layer of Mylar onto which circles have been drawn and also removed to expose the original layer. The circles drawn on the top layer depict street scenes as seen from a high vantage point (the 10th floor of an office building in downtown Manhattan, where the artist was working during a residency), showing pedestrians moving about. This allows the artist to introduce figures into the maps, making the place "populated". The people are represented from a point of view that highly distorts and flattens them. By tracing lines upon lines, the artist confuses and mixes the outline of each individual person. The people become like the streets, a tangle of marks framed by the "oculus" shape, implying vision, remote observation and close-up detail.

The largest of the Imaginary Maps, called All the cities I have lived and loved (which includes Florence, where Moro lived between 1994 and 1995), is the most recent one. Drawing on Walter Benjamin's hypothesis of representing his entire life in the form of a labyrinth, Moro creates her own depiction of her wanderings as one city-labyrinth, where borders and boundaries between places are eliminated. It is thus possible in such a map to take a boat from Venice and end up in Brooklyn; or take a walk from the Giardini dei Boboli and, a few miles after, arrive at the Rambla in Barcelona. Such is the nature – mental as well as physical, in time as well as space - of these emotional geographies.

SIMONETTA MORO was born in Portogruaro (Venice) Italy, and began to draw and paint at an early age. Moro received her B.F.A. in Painting at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Bologna (Prof. Daniele Degli Angeli); her M.A. in European Fine Arts, Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton (UK), followed by her Ph.D. in Visual Arts, University of Central Lancashire, Preston (UK), supervised by Prof. Lubaina Himid. She has been a Fulbright Fellow at the American Academy in Rome in 1999-2000. Moro's research interests revolve around drawing, painting, architecture, mapping, psychogeography, printmaking, philosophy, and urban culture. Many of these issues have been developed into courses she teaches as an Assistant Professor in Visual Arts at Eugene Lang College, The New School for Liberal Arts, in New York City. Exhibitions include: L(A)ttitudes, The Ann Loeb Bronfman Gallery, Washington, DC (ongoing); Mapping The Self, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, 2007-2008; Unrecorded Unreckoned Between Thick Walls, The Gallery at the Marmara Hotel, New York, 2005, (solo exhibition); Outside-In, Wooster Arts Space, New York, 2003; and Reconstructing Babel, Harris Museum, Preston, UK, 2002.

The SACI is open Monday – Friday from 9am-7pm, free entrance.

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