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Choosing Jan Dibbets

Beatrice Merz

"But this isn't *seeing*!" - "But this is seeing!" - it must be possible to give both remarks a conceptual justification."

But this is seeing! *In what sense* is it seeing?

"The phenomenon is at first surprising, but a physiological explanation of it will certainly be found."

Our problem is not a casual but a conceptual one. [...]

"Is it a *genuine* visual experience?" The question is: in what sense is it one?"

Here it is *difficult* to see that what is at issue is the fixing of concepts.

A *concept* forces itself on one. (This is what you must not forget.)

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Wittgenstein's short sentences - already used by Ursula Meyer in her important book on conceptual art published in 1972, seem perfect in presenting the important exhibition the Castello di Rivoli has dedicated to Jan Dibbets. In fact, these sentences represent a suggestion, a stimulus for visitors to further analyze the conceptual field in the art of these past decades; it seems difficult, when actually it accompanies the mind in philosophical inquiry.

But it is not my task to reveal too much of the cultural and visual game that will accompany visitors along the parallel itinerary of reading and seeing, through the exhibition's layout - where the artist personally collaborated - and now through this book with its in depth information on the exhibited works. Rather, I must personally thank Jan Dibbets for his coherent work. In his art practice, he has never stopped experimenting. With systematic and determined rigor, for over forty years he has progressively advanced in his projects and studies, from perspective to dialogue with nature and much more, without ever being an observer of a reality but instead bringing the photographic element to reality.

Today we may say that Jan Dibbets has written a piece of post-World War II European art history, still inspiring many artists' generations after him. I am delighted to have entrusted the Castello di Rivoli with this important retrospective - the most important and comprehensive to date in Italy. By covering some salient moments in his course, the show *Jan Dibbets. Another Photography* presents over fifty works from 1967 to today, and is hosted on the third floor of the Castello, in a particularly detailed thematic reading, as witnessed by the installation's images here published. Since the beginning, the Dutch artist has been a protagonist in the Castello's history. Dibbets was invited to the inaugural *Ouverture* exhibition in 1984; since then, by participating to several group shows, he kept on being part of the Museum's life. However, despite being also present in the Museum permanent collection - which recently grew with the piece *New Colorstudies - Silver*, 1976-2012 -

he never presented his work in a solo exhibition at the Castello. As said few times, the Castello takes great care in developing strong relationships with the artists, on the occasion of exhibition projects as well as in relation with the collection - considering the last an organic component of the exhibition program.

With these few words, I therefore introduce our choice that significantly opened the Museum's "European" program for 2014. A Museum that from its beginnings to today has touched Europe but has also looked a great deal to American culture. For its thirtieth anniversary, we have decided to make a selection, creating a complex program around the many aspects that lie at the base of a European cultural system the entire world looks to with renewed interest.

A Europe that may preserve its identity as a cultural focal point, as a small continent proud of its history, as a promontory of the world though it needs to grow, and does so only by looking south, north, east, and west, hosting the intercultural flow and embracing cultures.