Giovanni Ozzola
Scars

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Scars is Giovanni Ozzola’s second solo exhibition with SMAC Gallery. The exhibition sees his exploration of concepts involving simultaneous binaries and duality brought to the forefront of his practice – featuring a multi-media installation including a selection of painterly photographic works and sculptural installations. The title of this exhibition is seemingly one-dimensional, referencing the sombre residue of past injury or damage; however, in keeping with Ozzola’s prime thematic interest in multidimensional meaning, a scar is also an emblem of healing and survival.

While the work in this exhibition is born of the artist’s personal experiences, each piece maintains a universal accessibility through Ozzola’s exposing of not only the dichotomy in the presence of a scar but also the binaries of human nature. The simplistic philosophical analogy of a hypothetical half-filled-glass that questions one’s temperament is challenged through Ozzola evidencing the universal existence of both dispositions simultaneously.

The underlying feature in the retelling of many traditional narratives is a ‘struggle’ between opposing entities – light and dark or honesty and concealment. While focus is usually placed on one overcoming the other, the story – or the experience – exists only because of the contrast. Each notion keeps it’s antithetical entity as a means of self-identification. This feature is threaded throughout humankind; in order to define the self, the ‘other’ must also be indicated. One of the more revealing examples of this concept is that of light and dark, often considered absolute opposing entities. However it is by this opposition or contrast that ‘energy’ is found.

This ‘energy’ exists through the experience of both light and dark, the memory of this experience is illustrated by the presence of scars. Ozzola assists viewers in interpretation of the body of work presented in Scars by leading audiences to view each individual work as a limb functioning in a completely different manner to all others, but vital to the functioning of the body as a whole.

A central concept to his presentation is the demonstration of what Ozzola terms the ‘invisible energy’ produced from such contradictions. He visualises and interprets this imperceptible energy through a narrative that manifests in his altering and re-appropriation of found objects, converting them into symbolising a dichotomy of abstract and concrete, infinite and finite and light and dark denotes another shade of meaning: harmony and equilibrium.

The piece around which Scars revolves, is an installation of five found brass bells from decommissioned ships. Bringing with them numerous connotations of presence, being and consciousness, their intended function is to indicate the position of a ship on moonless or fog-filled nights. Ozzola may reposition these bells, but he does not re-purpose them; they continue to indicate presence. Each bell is installed to complete it’s own uninterrupted rotation. With phrases inscribed onto the outer surface, the bells persist in producing the same sound despite their vastly changed context. The same is true of the engravings. The context and meaning of each phrase will change in time, but the marks will not. In Ozzola’s distinctive layering of meaning, each bell has seemingly simplistic phrases with ubiquitous words such as ‘dreams’, ‘fears’ and ‘breathing’ engraved onto them offering further interpretation through time, highlighting yet again, the contrast between the march of time versus the status of being.

The implied scars act as a map, illustrating the cyclical nature of narrative. In Scars Il Cammino (2016), the scars of historically accurate travel routes used by specific explorers are individually highlighted in carefully carved lines, referencing the dual destruction and creation that global exploration left in it’s wake. Ozzola makes no definitive claim on either affect, only underlining
the frequently forgotten symbiosis of both. This ‘map’ has no defined topography, only the visually abstract carvings. The piece makes use of a ‘collective memory’ that allows audiences access to their own recollections of what it is like to experience the journey that begins with a presence and purpose in the face of the geographical and conceptual unknown as original pioneers of exploration may have.

In Scars, Ozzola focuses on mathematical ideas of revolution or the full circle. Time is measured in cycles, such as the shape of the clock or dial. Through time one completes the whole, having passed through both halves. The process of inhalation and exhalation, each a different action, but both equal halves of a breath - the primary physical indicator of vitality. This measuring of time through cycles is augmented in Ozzola’s photographic series Through a Day (2016) – each porthole displaying a gradual change in light and colour throughout the course of one day.

Using photography and various mixed-media installations to capture the instantaneous binaries of light in their infinite possibilities – illuminating and blinding – Ozzola composes with light, evidencing his deep sensitivity and understanding of visual seeing and cognitive watching. Refraction, glare and darkness are present in every piece in an attempt to pin down a fluctuating sensation and to capture the sense of time as it appears for a mere instant to slow down. Ozzola asserts that “To perceive in darkness, you must be in complete connection with all your senses. Every single cell in your body must be together – trying to see – to be able to feel what is around you, to experience the un-seeable. In that specific moment, I am myself – spirit, mind and body connected. Day to day we live disconnected from ourselves, whereas in darkness I find myself, I can feel my nerves seeking my body; a deep Stimmung1 with the surroundings lets me understand where I belong, and where I am.”

Omnia Munda Mundis (2008), is an image shot at night, where the light of the moon and the light of the camera flash merge as they split the darkness, creating a delicate composition that defies the idea implied by the term ‘photorealism’, instead illustrating a photograph akin to an impressionist painting. Blossoms are highlighted in their fleeting essence – short moments in which one endeavors to perceive reality, yet is enchanted by what is revealed for a brief beat of the heart.

This exhibition expresses the harmonious status connoting both sides of the whole, and demonstrates the artist’s completion of his experiences, from injury to healing. It is in this process, fluctuating between the visible and the invisible, that Ozzola initiates the journey of multi-sensory experience. Epitomising the completion of a cycle, having survived the experience, Ozzola presents us with Scars; the evidence of being.

1. Stimmung is a German term lacking a direct English translation, it has been adopted to express the experience of specific moods and atmospheres.

The exhibition will run until 21 January 2017.
Giovanni Ozzola was born in 1982 in Florence, Italy and currently lives and works in Tenerife, Canary Islands. Starting his career in 2001 as part of the group show; *Happiness: A Survival Guide for Art and Life*, curated by David Elliott and Pier Luigi Tazzi, at the Mori Art Museum of Tokyo in Japan; Ozzola has since exhibited world-wide, with solo presentations as well as participation in numerous group exhibitions.

His 2016 solo exhibitions include; *Cercando Nella Notte Persa* at Spazio9aposa in Bologna, Italy; *Sistemi di Visione/Sistemi de Realtà* at the Centro Espositivo per le Arti Contemporanee, San Michele Degli Scalzi (SMS) in Pisa, Italy; as well as *adrift* at the District Six Museum Homecoming Centre in Cape Town and SMAC Gallery in Stellenbsoch, South Africa.

Ozzola recently formed part of *(RE)*BIRTH, curated by Fabrice Bousteau for Abu Dhabi Art 2016, UAE, and *Teoria della nuvola/ Theory of Cloud*, curated by Davide Ferri at Galleria Marcolini in Forli, Italy. Group exhibitions include; *Earth and Ever After*, an exhibition for the 21,39 Jeddah Art event in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and ‘YOU + ME = US’ at Galleria Continua in Havana, Cuba.

Previous solo exhibitions include *Naufragio*, curated by Ludovico Pratesi at the Centro Arti Visive Pescheria in Pesaro, Italy in 2011; *Routes and Stars* at Galleria Continua in San Gimignano, Italy and *Castaway Depot: 41° 7’ 31” N 16° 52’ 0” E – In a Sentimental Mood* at Doppelganger in Bari, Italy in 2012 and *La Théorie des Comètes* at Galleria Continua in Beijing, China in 2013.

Notable group exhibitions include; *On Another Scale*, curated by Ricardo Sardeberg at Galleria Continua in San Gimignano, Italy in 2014 and the international touring exhibition *LANDSEASKY: Revisiting Spatioality in Video*, curated by Kim Manchan and presented at Artsonje Center in Seoul, South Korea; OCT Contemporary Art Terminal in Shanghai, China; Guangdong Museum of Art in Guangzhou, China; Griffith University Art Gallery and MAAP SPACE in Brisbane, Australia during 2014 – 2015.

In 2015, Ozzola made his South African debut with *Dove Nasce Il Vento* in Johannesburg. This exhibition was first shown at Gazelli Art House in London, UK. That year, he also exhibited in *More Spaces* at the Palazzo Pigorini in Palma, Italy; *Tu Dois Changer Ta Vie*, curated by Fabrice Bousteau at LILLE 3000 in Lille, France, and formed part of *Follia Continual*, under direction of José- Manuel Gonçalvês, at Le Cenquatre– Paris, in Paris, France.

Among Ozzola’s awards are the Premio Cairo (2011), Premio Terna (2008) and Seat Pagine Gialle (2007).