

## THE FORMULA

Interview with Gianfranco Baruchello by Maurizio Cattelan, October 2009

**MAURIZIO CATTELAN:** When you talk about your work, you use the term "formula". Now you've even made it the title of your exhibition in Berlin. What is it, this formula?

**GIANFRANCO BARUCHELLO:** Every day, the artist constructs his world and his way of being, which is coherence and contradiction at the same time. In doing so, he designs and uses a very personal formula, reserved only for him. It is the cast of his existence. It grows out of the search for the freedom to invent pictures. Whether rigid or moving, whether object or installation, that makes little difference to me. My formula allows me a few fictions: For example, that I shun large formats and grand displays; but also, to show a small image in a way as if it were quite large and seen from a distance (while in reality it must be viewed from close up). The formula requires – thereby risking rejection – a greater amount of attention, in order to take in the detail and that which puts it in relation to other details.

**MC:** Is the formula also a recipe with which to face up to survival?

**GB:** Yes, certainly, and aging in particular. The body ages, goes its own way – and we know where that leads. The waking mind accompanies it, confounded and curious. What you do goes through different channels and through other times, but it provides transient stimuli. The most indispensable among them is the one that makes you believe that your self has no age, because it has a place in all the times you have experienced, and in all the spaces you have measured yourself against. For me, the formula was, and is, actually an unsuitable weapon of resistance, which proves itself during the moments where it was and is easy to disappear, like in 1968, with the title of my movie: "Costretto a scomparire" – the urge to disappear.

**MC:** Would you say that you have traveled a path?

**GB:** For me, the road (the length of which I do not know) has two sides (the width I also do not know): One of the two sides is insurmountable and stands for the certainty of the impossible. The other side, however, is dominated by chance and poses the uncertainty of the possible. This uncertainty, however, allows pictures to be produced and hypotheses to be risked. My pictures, including the readable ones, are not based on some kind of vocabulary. I doubt whether communication is possible at all, but that is not my main concern. Often the less explicit acts, words or pictures are much more exciting and are very capable of saying

something about the perplexity and doubt which they create.

**MC:** What is the real thing for you?

**GB:** I do not know, but I do not like to lie and do not like to listen to the lies of others. I would say that the truth is banal, or rather, part of the banal. Within it I look for motives which I can use as a starting point. I have worked more on the idea of verification than I have propagated truths. What have I done and do springs from the combination of opportunities, attractions, various events, searched for, unprovoked, random, or even dreamed of.

**MC:** Is your garden of poisonous plants meant ironically, or as a provocation?

**GB:** The small garden of poisonous plants, which I will present in Berlin as a continuation of my older projects between aesthetics and agriculture, offers the possibility to think of danger, fear and error: The danger of death, the fear of ignorance, the error in decision. But it could also work if an ironic filter is placed over it: The contradictory nature of plants, which can kill or can save lives. Would Hippocrates, who had knowledge on the subject, if visiting this exhibition, again say: "Experimentum periculosum, iudicium difficile" – experiment treacherous, judgment difficult?