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PERUCCHETTI'S POWERFUL MESSAGE IN TRANSPARENT RESIN

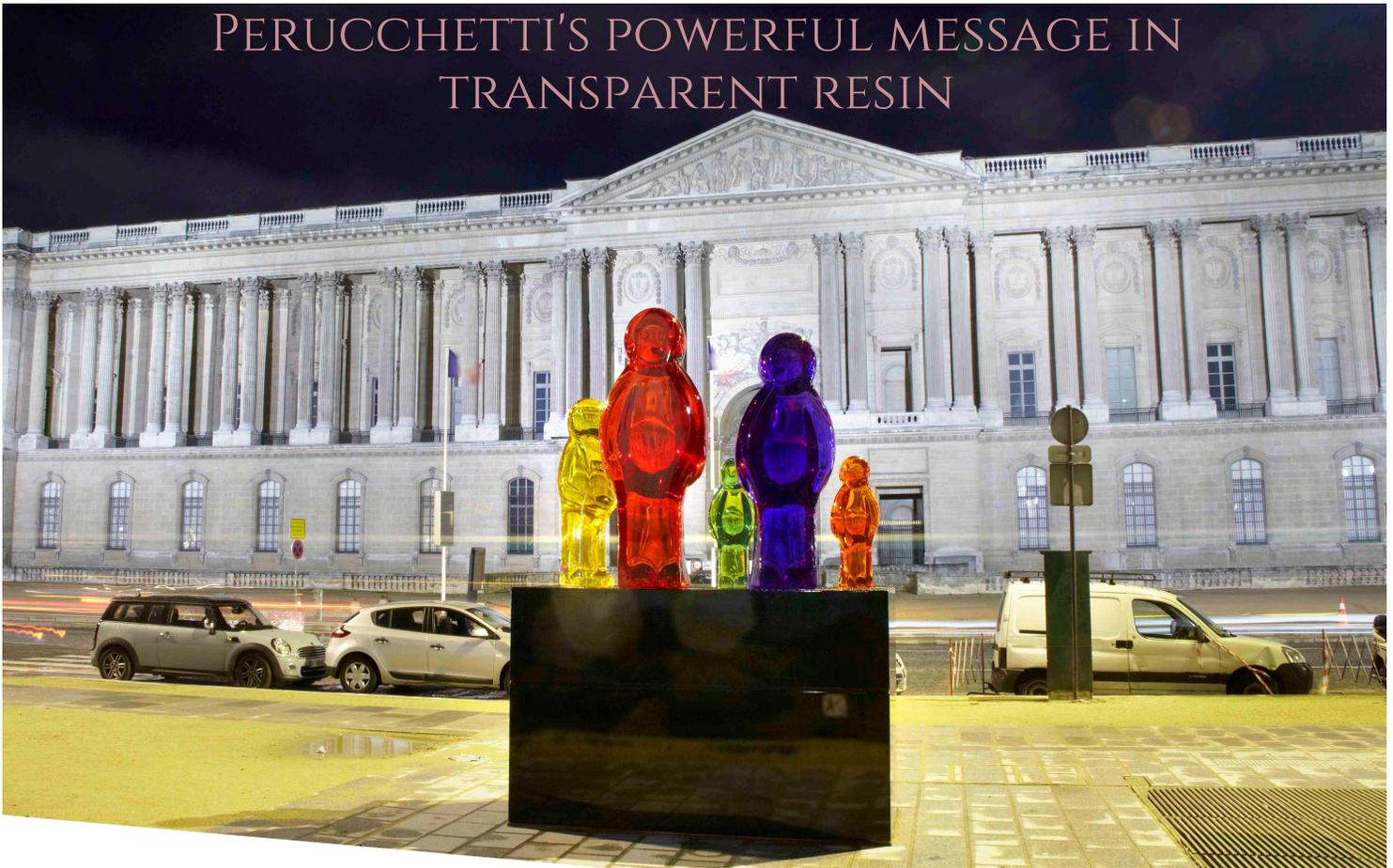


Image above: Paris public installation shot of Mauro Perucchetti's multicoloured Jelly Baby Family, during the Paris Contemporary Art Fair (FIAC) in October 2012, it was exhibited against the historic backdrop of the Louvre Museum. Italian sculptor's work mixes Conceptual, Minimalism and Pop art, fused with an elegance and an ironic touch with the typical Italian sensibility. Perucchetti's work has been exhibited in many solo and group exhibits around the world. Another significant public art placement was *Father and Child*, commissioned for the headquarters of Rieber & Son in Bergen, Norway (2009). Images below right: the detail shot of *Cloning Factory* (1999), which is why Perucchetti made them in first place and Mauro working on his Jelly Baby Notre Dame artwork.

Mauro Perucchetti sold his design and architectural practice and his home twenty years ago, so that he could dedicate himself to art full-time. Finding contentment in dedicating to his art – something he felt he had to do – the artist spent the next three years experimenting with materials before perfecting the formulation of the resin he wanted to use and patenting it. It was lustrous and transparent, forever changing under different lighting conditions, but also chemically hazardous. 'Perucchetti's use of polyurethane resins is pioneering', stated art critic Elspeth Moncrieff.

With bold, synthetic colours and pristine surfaces, Perucchetti's art appeals to the eyes and to the sense of touch.

The 'jelly babies', he has made from 1999 onwards, show him playing games with childhood associations. In *Cloning Factory* neat rows of the tiny figures, coloured like blackcurrant and lime, strawberry and orange, are laid out on shelves, with random babies standing up and teetering on the edge. The message is unsettling, the imagery cute.

His series of Jelly Baby Family has been installed at many famous locations, including in front of the Louvre in Paris, Rome, US and Marble Arch in London. Besides numerous art fairs, he was invited in 2011 to present three monumental works at Rome's first-ever festival of outdoor sculpture, the *Rassegna Internazionale di Scultura di Roma*.

MM: As a contemporary artist born in Milan, what art periods do you find most fascinating in the Italian art tradition?

Mauro Perucchetti: I was born in Milan and lived my early years there and in Rome. It was when I moved to Rome that I felt the first real impact that art had on my psyche.

Even at that early age I was in awe of the beauty that that City casually displays at every street corner. It doesn't matter where you go, you cannot get away from the art that has been piling up over the centuries and this is before you even start looking for it in museums, institutions and private homes.

The Renaissance has created some art that takes our breath away even nowadays but *Arte Povera* holds a special place in my heart as well because it represents, after WW2, the frustration, rebellion, ingenuity, political disposition or inclination and innovation of a People that I know and understand.

MM: With your famous Jelly Babies series the public space is confronted visually with the idea of identical cloning, what are your views on the subject?

MP: I started to make Jelly Babies in 1999 as a response to the fact that, after Dolly the sheep, an ensuing debate took place about the issue of cloning humans. Quite honestly, I thought the

idea of cloned human beings was like a horror film. For a start, it is hard enough to imagine an artificially produced creature resembling a human, without knowing how long they can "function" for, or what happens if they procreate and not knowing what is going on in the minds of these probably perfectly formed people: will they have emotions and therefore will they be happy or miserable and, most importantly, will they even have a soul or not.

This definitely created a dilemma between science, medical ethics and Religions. Considering the fact that we are already overpopulated in this world, it is going to be quite difficult to justify the necessity to create more human beings artificially.



If you were to write a list based on the usefulness of having such beings in this world it would sound like a nightmare. Anything from military applications to body parts, to made to order companion etc. would be in it.

MM: So the ethical discourse propagated the idea behind these artworks, nevertheless you use the personification for series of Jelly Babies, in itself Jelly sounds artificial, moreover you selected an artificial and transparent material to create series, what guided your selection of the perfect medium for these artworks?

MP: I started by choosing the Jelly Baby as an impersonation of cloned humans because they are massed produced and all look the same except for the colour which is artificial and is there to denote the flavor. It seems like a perfect POP ART appropriation of a popular product if it wasn't for the strong conceptual approach behind it.

Even the facial expression is confounding when you really study it. I wanted to retain the big smile but, from the side you can notice a strange resemblance with the profile of a great white shark giving the character ambiguity.

The resin was nearly a natural choice because of its transparency, the possibility of pigmenting the material/matter itself instead of coating it and the fact that resin can be polished to a very high level which creates surfaces that transmit light in magical ways, giving character to what could be characterless.

I also enjoy a challenge and resin never fails when it comes to being difficult.

What really resonates with this work of mine is the fact that Jelly Babies are different colours but they are all the same, a concept I have been trying to drive home since the sixties and the civil rights movement when I was a young man and my first girlfriend was an African American

activist, 15 years my senior with whom I had the dubious privilege of being exposed to rampant racism that scarred me for the rest of my life. Sounds familiar?

MM: Indeed it is still relevant to introduce your art and message in the public space. How important is public space for your message?

MP: Being in public places is possibly one of the best kick backs an artist can enjoy.

We make art for the world. Out of my work the Jelly Babies in particular lend themselves to public installations, particularly in the Jelly Baby Family iteration which I made later on as a tribute to the multiculturalism present in nowadays Society. A celebration of COLOURS something that is being so challenged at the moment.

MM: How long have you been working on your latest work, the "Nuvole" paintings series and the marbles, and what can you tell us about plans for future exhibitions?

MP: I worked on "Nuvole" for a year and a half, I wanted to enjoy a project which was void of any preparation, art movement or even subject. When I start to paint, I have no plan nor clue of what I am going to paint, even if you can see some surreal characters in the work, I painted Nuvole in a totally instinctive way, with everything flowing out from my subconscious. This is why I consider these paintings as totally abstract.

My next work is going to be very different and I might call it NEO POVERA. The marbles are something I have been working on for years and represent a tribute to the beautiful classical art I grew up with in Italy.

I lived most of my life in London and at times in New York and Los Angeles and often thought of emulating the old masters, but that is not what I do. One day the penny dropped and I found ways of incorporating international societal and political issues into the classicism of white figurative marble and its implementation, I am very pleased with the results.

Thank you, Nermin A.

"We make art for the world. Out of my work the Jelly Babies in particular lend themselves to public installations, particularly in the Jelly Baby Family iteration which I made later on as a tribute to the multiculturalism present in nowadays Society. A celebration of COLOURS something that is being so challenged at the moment." - Mauro Perucchetti, sculptor.

Below right: Perucchetti's 'Nuvole Painting' and his 'Sitting Jelly babies'.



Above right: Perucchetti's unmistakable, multicoloured Jelly Baby Family, with its chubby but elegant translucency, appeared at London's Marble Arch as part of Westminster Council's City of Sculpture Festival (2010-2011), at the Courchevel Winter Pop Sculpture Festival (2011-2012), at the Chelsea Flower Show and as a permanent installation in Singapore (both 2012); during Paris's Contemporary Art Fair (FIAC) in October 2012 it was exhibited against the historic backdrop of the Louvre. On Sky Arts television, it was selected for the 'Objects of Desire' series (2012) as one of the world's most coveted items, www.mauroperucchetti.com.

