

LILIANA MORO

Text by Emanuela De Cecco

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In *Abbassamento* (1992), Liliana Moro explicitly requires of the audience a movement of the body: the viewer must bend down to look closely at the work, opening up a new perspective on the self as observer/participant and on traditional ways of seeing art. This turning to the audience is evident throughout the entire practice of the artist, and is decidedly present in two recent works: *This is the End* (2004) and *Underdog* (2005). In the former work, a portion of the exhibition space is rendered visually inaccessible via a cover made of the kind of tape which is used to close off a public space for security reasons (e.g., car crashes, work in progress, terrorist alerts), and which it is illegal to cross. A glowing red light can be perceived from the outside: the accompanying ambient sound comes from the beginning of *2001: A Space Odyssey*. With this work, Liliana Moro puts us in the position of not being able to look. Yet, it is undoubtedly an affirmation: the artist moves us away from the assumption of absolute visibility that we think applies to the everyday. The *mise-en-scène* signaled by the title, *This is the End*, when experienced with the ambient music also evokes a new beginning after a catastrophe. One is led to think that the center of the work could be the end of a certain mode of looking rather than the end of time on earth. This work requires a different sort of attention. The condition caused by the construction of a visually inaccessible zone involves a perturbation that is diametrically opposed to the torpor brought on by an uninterrupted flow of imagery.

Underdog (2005) is composed of five sculptures of dogs cast in bronze, two pairs of them fighting, and the fifth dog—the observer—not physically engaged, obliged to look at the others from the outside. In contrast to *This is the End*, here the scene is revealed; and the four animals tearing each other apart become a metaphor, compelling us to gaze out at a rapacious present beyond the work itself. While the same general theme might have been articulated in a more contemporary idiom—for example, with journalistic clippings—here we find ourselves confronting intentionally outmoded bronze sculptures, and the potency of the metaphor is both enhanced and universalized. The presence of the observing dog finds an interesting parallel in a statement made by Liliana Moro on the invitation to one of her recent solo shows:

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“The man who looks does not look against”. This affirmation is valid if by “look” what is intended is an act of participation (the observing look, but also the physically involved look that is solicited by the artist in *Abbassamento*). If looking means only to keep one’s eye on indistinct and repetitive flux, these words lose their meaning.

Translated from Italian by Chris Sharp

Emanuela De Cecco. “Traiettorie derli suardi, spazi della relazione” in *Donne d’arte. Storie e generazioni*, edited by Maria Antonietta Trasforini, Meltemi Editore, Rome, 2006, pg. 133-152.