

## Seb Patane

GALLERIA FONTI

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View of “Seb Patane,” 2014–15.

Anxiety was the theme of Seb Patane’s recent exhibition at Galleria Fonti. The show was aptly titled “Abdomen,” in reference to the part of the body generally struck by illnesses of emotional and psychological origin, and particularly those traditionally associated with the pathology of hypochondria. Patane’s project, inspired by the binaries found at the root of theater (reality and fiction, honesty and dissimulation), was as dense and well-structured on a semantic level as it was radical in formal terms. The presentation was simple: Two installations—one consisting of video and sound, the other composed only of sound—offered a play of verbal and abstract acoustic reflections, through which history and personal experience established a concise, almost symbiotic dialogue.

The video installation, *Gustav Metzger as Erwin Piscator, Gera, January 1915*, was displayed in the first room of the gallery, and the sound piece, *Abdomen* (both 2014), was installed so that one could hear both works throughout the space. Transformed into a pseudo-movie theater, the second room was equipped with armchairs, in which visitors could sit to listen to the works. Both pieces were initiated during Patane’s residency in October 2013 at the Wysing Arts Centre in Bourn, UK, where he met fellow resident Gustav Metzger. Patane asked Metzger to recite a passage from *The Political Theater*, director Erwin Piscator’s 1929 study of the dramatists of the Weimar Republic. The excerpt describes Piscator’s memory of the moments before his departure to serve in the military during World War I, and including an account of his poorly tailored uniform, which Patane interprets to reflect the director’s disinclination to join his rank.

A recording of this reading underpins both works, but the sound element of *Gustav Metzger as Erwin Piscator*, is accompanied by the monochromatic projection of an

intense red color—one that recalls the viscera suggested by the show’s title—onto a central wall. In *Abdomen*, Metzger’s telling is followed by a layering of nature sounds recorded in the Cambridgeshire countryside, original music composed by Patane and musician Giancarlo Trimarchi, and artist Cécile B. Evans’s delivery of a passage from *The Good Soldier Šveik*, a 1923 novel by Czech satirist Jaroslav Hašek. Concluding the work is a song composed and performed by Patane and musician Andrew Moss, with lyrics that allude to Patane’s experiences with hypochondria, some borrowed from the correspondence between the Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his teacher Ford Madox Brown. In a letter from 1860, Rossetti wrote to Brown of the artist and model Elizabeth Siddal: “I have been . . . in the most agonizing anxiety about poor dear Lizzie’s health . . . as she has seemed ready to die daily and more than once a day.” Though it’s a most inward affliction, anxiety—as Patane’s sonic collage demonstrates—is universal in its attacks.

—Pier Paolo Pancotto