

# TUCCI RUSSO STUDIO PER L'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA

VIA STAMPERIA 9 – I 10066 TORRE PELLICE (TORINO)

TEL.0039 0121 953 357 – FAX 0039 0121 953 459

gallery@tuccirusso.com – www.tuccirusso.com

## CONRAD SHAWCROSS

### “DUMBBELL”

**Opening: Saturday 4th October 2008: from 18.30 to 20.30**  
**Until 31st January 2009**

**From Wednesday to Sunday: 10.30 - 13 / 15 - 19**

### PRESS RELEASE

*Dumbbell* is the first solo exhibition by Conrad Shawcross at Tucci Russo gallery, after his participation to the group show *S.N.O.W. – Sculture in Non-Objective Way* in 2005.

The artist presents a series of works that explore ideas concerning time and space.

“The show is a mixture of new and old works, although I feel that the old works are all revisited due their context in the show as a whole. There are four main pieces in the show, the oldest and the largest is *Paradigm (Ode to the Difference Engine)*, which without knowing it at the time became the last piece I made out of oak. As a result it is the last in a long series of wooden mechanical machines and installations. I am glad it is the last as it was the most ambitious and the most complex of these systems, but underneath its bold ambitious surface is a piece about human failure. Charles Babbage's *Difference Engine*, now recognized as the first computer, is one of the first mechanical machines to not have a material product or physical performatory function. Designed 1849, it is one of the earliest and still probably greatest examples of the poetic intuitive imagination that so many great scientists seem to possess. Babbage was a genius, way ahead of his time but sadly as a result died a laughing stock. I am interested in his life story and the loneliness of his vision, and how his engine was perceived at the time. I made *Paradigm (Ode to the Difference Engine)* very much with him in mind. It was not in any way to compare myself personally to him. This machine tried to unravel a rope as fast as it ravelled it, and then feed it back into itself - a task that I knew was impossible but I put myself in the shoes of an engineer trying to build it. Mechanically it worked perfectly, but if you turned it for too long it would crush itself. In a way my machine is a reverse of his – his machine failed mechanically; the technology at the time was just not accurate enough to make it. But conceptually it was perfect and if it had worked it would have changed the world. Both these machines are idealist systems that feed something back in to themselves to create an answer.”\*

- In the same room as *Paradigm (Ode to the Difference Engine)* is another large scale piece *Tetra Sphere (30 Tetrahedrons, blue spacers)* made of aluminium and painted nylon. This piece is a geometric work made of tetrahedrons: it is modular and abstract, but it deals with the same epistemological and cosmological preoccupations as always.-

“In a darkened room next door is a piece, entitled *Palindrome*, which shares some formal elements with *Paradigm* but is made of very different materials and this machine is fully functional and locked into a cycle. The machine basically makes a diagram of a hole extruding this in light by means of four articulated arms. It is a sculpture of a non – thing, a hole.

The third piece *Pre-Retroscope V (Lea River Journey 2008)* is a new piece but part of an old series. The work involves me going on a journey down a river, it could be any river, but this time it happens to be the Lea which is a tributary of the Thames in East London. The length of the journey is dictated by how far I get. In this case I start by a bridge on Millfields Road, which is near my studio and end up, one hour and forty minutes later, in Bow Creek which where the river becomes tidal.

The apparatus is about the desire to record and document and to try and know a space or a geography in its entirety and to try and capture that space entirely. Of course the technique falls short of this, but space and time are represented in a different way to normal.

The work also is a chart of a forgotten artery, one that every city has. They are abandoned territories through industrial wastelands, estates, and concrete ravines - a patch work of psycho-geography. The journey itself, through these sometimes underground waterways, in some ways is a performance: people by the river see me alone in the device navigating this river, attempting to record something. There is of course a humour to it and a folly, but the loneliness of the scientist is present here as well.

In term of an archive of London, the piece will be important, the journey takes me right past the Olympic site where there is already a lot change and development; my intention is to return in 2012 and repeat the journey and then show the pieces in parallel. I also would like when ever I do a show in a new city, to take this boat with me and make a recording through a part of that city's canal system.”\*

\* Abstract from an interview of Conrad Shawcross with Roberto Lambarelli