

The Alphabet of Babb

The various critics who found themselves commenting on Babb were often faced with a series of questions that were not immediately apparent. Many have tried to put his art into words, and some have succeeded effectively in illustrating the themes addressed and the stylistic traits that evolved, including that strange world of Babbesque creatures made up of mannequins, men in bowler hats, others in striped knitwear, pinocchios and mites.

Only now that the great book of Giorgio's Dal Canto's work has come to an end, can we appreciate its progress and evolution. Yet there is still much to be discovered because not all is revealed and the meaning of many details in the canvases has flown away along with the hands that created them. Babb's mouth, under a sly moustache, did not tell the whole story and something remained in the background. Knowing this would add yet another piece of the puzzle that makes up this story, and a few more notes to this splendid artistic symphony.

Ilario Luperini wrote of Giorgio's career: *'Apart from his early days (1967), (...) Babb's creative methods and his language were defined from the late 1970s onwards. The artist*



looks around and chooses the themes that, in his opinion, best identify the contradictions in the world, and the risks to humanity. Each theme is developed in a cycle. Of particular note are: Controfiaba (1991) La storia finita (1993), Disgrazie di un paese (1995) and Visioni oniriche (2004).

His painting progressively takes on the character of an unequivocal absoluteness: figures without space nor time, the fruit of an unparalleled imagination. Characters, buildings, landscapes are painted with meticulous skill; controlled chromatic compositions that create atmospheres of total abstraction, full of light, devoid of any projected shadows (except in very rare cases, however; where shadows are also subject to the same representational criteria); carefully studied combinations of colour by analogy or contrast; almost obsessive attention to all details, even the most minute; incessant and tenacious control of the composition and positioning of the figures in the space of the painting. A language, therefore, of rare richness and efficacy, capable of representing a world of idols and modern myths, of power

and subjugation, of becoming hardened and redemption, viewed with abiding, yet melancholic irony, but also with bitterness and, at times, ill-concealed anger; the bitterness and anger of those who, having gone from disappointment to disappointment, are unable to envisage (let alone proexpect) a rewarding future'.¹



It is a language precisely made up of figures invented to illustrate a thought. It is an artistic alphabet that evolves and adds letters and symbols, at the same time 'simple' but also effective, used to illustrate his ideas.

It is a universe that speaks much, and one where his 'inventions' often meet, collide, coexist and take different forms.

FOR 'MANNEQUIN' (1977-2010)

One of Dal Canto's first inventions were mannequins; empty, defenceless figures lacking the will and ability to make decisions.

They appear in the 1977 work '*Scomposizione*' (Decomposition), where the artist shows a broken, decomposed mannequin; the head is resting on the table, the torso on a red cloth as if sunbathing, and the limbs are tied to a branch of a bare tree.

*"Everything is silent and bare; even the trees (with or without leaves) and the sun are compressed into their stillness, determined by the Prohibition sign"*².

Accompanying the sad face is a something that was to become a Babb trademark: the man in the horizontally striped shirt, "a little man in a striped shirt" who "watches helplessly, confined to the edge of the table".³



Scomposizione (Decomposition), 1977
oil on canvas 70×70 cm

The landscape accommodates other trees; one with a few leaves and others with full foliage, the animal world is present with a cat and a snail. Next to the centre of the scene is a 'No Hooting' road sign forbidding, although the red bar across the horn is missing.

These characters also feature in the 1978 painting '*First Mannequins*'. This is the description of the work: *"The ordinary man in the cloud notes the invasion of the 'anonymous' mannequins. The hats are on the ground because the mannequins have no heads. They are becoming automatons. Everyone is using something (umbrella, cage, etc.)"*.

The mannequin would make a few more appearances until it returned in 2010 as the protagonist of the oil on canvas, '*Pregnant Mannequin*', here: *"Power quietly and indifferently (because it is thinking of other things while playing with the doll) leans on the mannequin that is gestating our future."*

The dummy comes out of nowhere. Only the common man, small and caged, can see from afar what will happen'.

This painting was to be the model for the homage realised by artist Marco Lodola in 2018: *LodoBabb*, a 5-metre high sculpture placed in Piazza Caduti Divisione Acqui Cefalonia e Corfù in Pontedera.

P FOR POWER (FROM 1980)

The main theme of Babb's work begins to echo from early works such as *Soldier* (1967) and then fully developed from 1980 with the painting *'Power'* where *'Power uses knowledge (the intellectual in the mouth of Power) at will'*. In the same months, he painted *'The Apostles'*, where Power overpowers Faith and the 'Alternative Creed' created by technology, and *'La Maitresse'*, which certifies how 'Power seeks the place where it can 'settle down' by being insidious'. The following year in *"Ser- vility"*, *"The 'anonymous' (faceless) Power is carried by ordinary people like a sacred image. Harlequin acts as a witness"*. In 1982, in *'Tickled'*, *'Power amuses itself by tickling (attempting to trick) the boy and again Harlequin acts as a witness to what happens. The boy tries in vain to escape"*.

'Direction' is from 1987 and portrays Power leading, a cow (the people) to a cathedral and in *'Pea- cock'* (1987) it is the turn of this splendid animal to be driven. In *'Excrements'* (1988), Power is seen *'helping a highly prized breed of sheep with its physiological needs and the people are called upon to collect the excrement'*.

1994 is a pivotal year for the development of this theme and Dal Canto produces many works to carry it out. One of these is *'The Vice'*. Here *'Power invents expensive ways of living, beautiful means of holidaying, enchanted dream places (see the representatives of power swimming happily) but all this is un- attainable for those who do not have power and who remain hanging on to a little pic- ture of those enchanted places. The figure of*



the poor man who would like to go, but cannot, speaks for itself. He is incapable of reaching a vi- sion, which is destined to remain just that in his future.

'Mobile aperitif', is another painting in this vein. *'The aperitif enjoyed by the aristocratic lady, next to a representative of power, consists of a little person with- out a drink, like the one in the glass. The rich drink and eat the poor, one would say. However, one has to be careful of the con- tradiction that is represented by the table with a tablecloth that is transparent. Thus,*



Il manifesto del Potere (The Manifesto of Power), 2011 oil on canvas 50×60 cm

The three witnesses show the decline of power with a man- ifesto that illustrates the most immoral aspects.

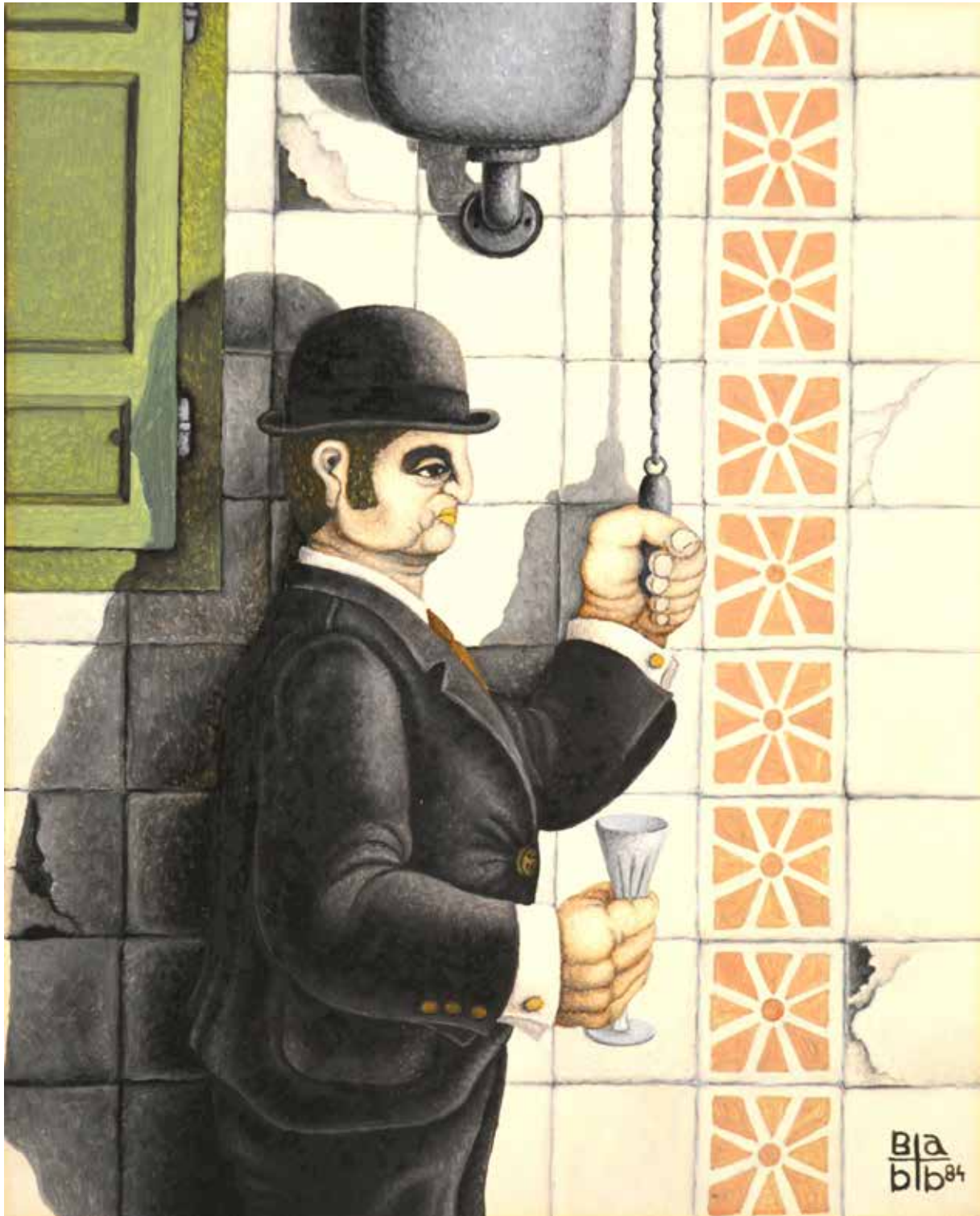
Gli apostoli (The Apostles), 1980
oil on canvas 80×100 cm

This disquieting work by Giorgio Dal Canto transfigures the emblem of Faith with the character assailed by the little men representing Power. Almost as if Power could conquer Faith... Behind him is the brute force of technology that overpowers history and traditions, always commanded by the Power that has left its bowler hat on the floor. The symbol of Faith has passed to the machine: an alternative creed has been formed.



Sciacquone (The Flush), 1984
oil on hardboard 20x25 cm

For Power, the act of flushing water down the toilet signifies liberation from various annoyances. He holds a glass, ready to toast the weight taken off his shoulders.



Sul cavallo chi può (By horse, those who can), 1987
oil on hardboard 45x38 cm

Ordinary people sit on the fence and watch those who can afford to ride a horse.



Costrizione (Obligation), 1988
oil on hardboard 30×24 cm

Mouth shut closed, nose stuffed, brain compressed. Moss begins to grow instead of hair and the symbol of Freedom is sinking into the swamp. An omen of catastrophe.





Escrementi (Excrements), 1988
oil on panel cm 35×23

A wretched job. Power helps a prize-winning sheep with its physiological needs, and the people are called upon to collect the excrement. A very bleak landscape, including the barren sun.



(Pavone Peacock), 1987
oil on hardboard 45×38 cm

Power gets its hands on everything and can afford beautiful things: it now leads a splendid animal on a leash, a lofty symbol in the ancient courts in the East.



Conduzione (Direction), 1987
oil on hardboard 23×30 cm

Power calmly leads an unsuspecting and perplexed cow on a leash towards the Cathedral. The cow represents the people who are kept on a leash, and led wherever Power desires.

Gatto mammone (The Hobgoblin Cat), 1988
oil on hardboard 30×23 cm

Poor people succumb to the claws of Power, in the form of a very special cat, with precious clothing and a collar with an embellished bell. A killing machine, however, it remains.



Soddisfazioni (Satisfaction), 1990 oil on canvas 55×40 cm

These are two important people, as can be seen in the posture of the waiter who awaits the orders of the hosts, as well as in the shape of the table and the setting. The wealthy can afford to satisfy any desire, even the least appropriate for those at the table. Chairs of Power; positioned all over; rise into the air.



the set-up presents an enigma, the same as a labyrinth'. Yet another example is *"In the Vicinity of Power"*. Here we see the respectful greeting, almost veneration of the statues of power, in whose presence one arrives after a long, exhausting queue controlled by the court master of ceremonies, who controls the flow. In *"Genesis of power"*, the egg hatches and magically the chick of Power flies out and, like a vulture, settles on the branch of the leafless trees that persist in a barren, lunar and sterile environment. It is as if power causes sterility where it is exercised. Then there is *"Musclemen"*. Everyone

today wants to go to the gym and everyone feels like an athlete. The awkwardness that emerges from the people performing the exercises is, however, controlled by power that shares and is pleased that people spend time with satisfaction in athletic exercises and do not vent their anger in other ways". In 1996, Babb produced *'The Carousel of Viareggio'*. 'The carnival in Viareggio is the inspiration of this painting, where power is at the centre of the merry-go-round, with his many hands claspng it. Power rests on a carousel of clowns conducting the orchestra. At the base, we see



Fuori dal giro (Out of the loop), 1993
oil on panel 50x22 cm

Some people remain outside the circle of power. Hat in hand and shoes on feet, someone has found all the places already occupied in both the hatbox and the bed. That's life!



Evoluzione (Evolution), 2010
oil on canvas 40x50 cm

*From the egg today Mites are born and no longer life!!!
Pinocchio reads Darwin and is amazed at what is happening. Everything breaks, even the glasses break and fall like the broken shell of the egg. Chaos is in progress, you can see it from the buildings that are falling apart, but with fantasy they want to hide the evidence by laying out a wonderful carpet that would like to cover the Chaos.*

On the next page

Riflessi (Reflection), 2011, oil on canvas 50x60 cm

The Power that has eyes to see in front of and behind itself, and therefore "everywhere", is reflected in the images in front of it, taking on different figures, which symbolize the various facets of power. In some cases the Mite is small (average perverse power), in other cases the Mite is so big that it replaces the Power, taking its place (Power at its most perverse). In the general chaos, caused by Power, the buildings take up inverted, transparent, and in any case incorrect positions, and in this situation the natural roles can be reversed, like the bird that pecks the cat and not vice versa. Pinocchio watches.



the costumed ladies of summer Viareggio. Note the Art Nouveau Margherita bath-house and the neoclassical Principe di Piemonte'⁴.

'The tree of power' (1997), 'is lovingly watered by the attendant and birds can flutter among its branches. The tree of power produces the people who manage power from the vase at the base of the tree. This is not a common vase, but a chamber pot. The allusion is obvious. In the background is the Leaning Tower of Pisa, which remains for the artist a symbol of his homeland, but has no relevance to the context'.

In 2001, he painted *'The Stairs of Life'*, which emphasises how 'people's lives are made up of stairs. For those with power (people in suits and bowler hats) there are stairs downhill

and therefore easier; and for those without power (people in jumpers) the stairs are all to be climbed. There are also those who have finished climbing their staircase, have reached the sky, and therefore no longer have to climb (or descend) but fly by their own means'.

In the same period, Babb made three canvases of unusual dimensions by his standards (20x60), two of which were dedicated to power: *'Human Balloons'* in which power imprisons the 'stripes' in balloons floating in the city sky, and *'Power over Florence'* in which three 'Bowler hats' ride flying fish controlling and threatening the city.

This last scene is replicated in *'Svolazzi'* (Fluttering) where bowler hats 'flutter', reigning, over a walled city.



Palliativi della vita (Palliatives of life), 2004
oil on canvas 140×180 cm

Giuseppe Diomelli commissioned this work to Dal Canto in 2001 because Diomelli wanted to illustrate the poisons or vices that man takes to alienate himself from reality. Dal Canto, repeatedly urged by Diomelli, took over two years and went beyond what was commissioned to him by interpreting the theme in his own way and expanding it to politics and Power. The picture is quite complex, let's tackle it from top to bottom: Power sponsors the media that fascinates the people with the women on TV. In fact, ordinary people are drugged, in addition to the real drug present everywhere and personified with the syringes where the windows of homes are set. Even the game of football (left) and sports in general (cycling on the right) drug people in general. But even the athletes themselves take drugs, see the cyclist's pacifier. But people don't care much about all this because everything always ends up with "pizza and mandolin" drowning the evils in a good meal and a loud song. But the evils are there and very evident: the loan shark, the drunk and those who do not want to see (blindfolded reader) supported by the circle of political power that goes arm in arm with the judges and the religious power. Note the extreme similarity of the figures at the bottom with a minister on the left and another on the right who comes out of a sort of transparent labyrinth. In the center the highest political office of the Italian State, recovering from a metamorphosis of his hair. At the top floats in the void the "nothing", personified by the dress without a person, and the President of the Italian Republic, with his wife, flies around the world waving, as if everything were calm, the symbol of our Country.



La Maschera del Potere
(The Mask of Power), 2004
oil on canvas 35×50 cm

The following year came *'The Power Factory'*: 'Power, impersonated with jacket, tie, umbrella and above all bowler hat, manufactures a considerable number of human beings who are not dressed like him.

These beings, which arise from its being and constitute its face, represent the essence of the existence of power itself as power could not exist if there were not those who are destined to be sub-

jected to it. Power lies in the centre of the city, or rather in the central square of the city'.

In 2003, Babb's brushes produced *'The Pied Piper'*: 'Communication is crucial for Power, which is represented here as a Pied Piper who, supported by TV showgirls, bewitches the journalists who scramble not to miss a moment of the Piper's message.

The media are at the service of power and journalists are on the payroll with many numbers poking out of their pockets or clothes.

The buttocks have been uncovered to characterise the movement of the tail, which moves, evoking excitement, like a dog wagging its

Frittura (Frying), 2005

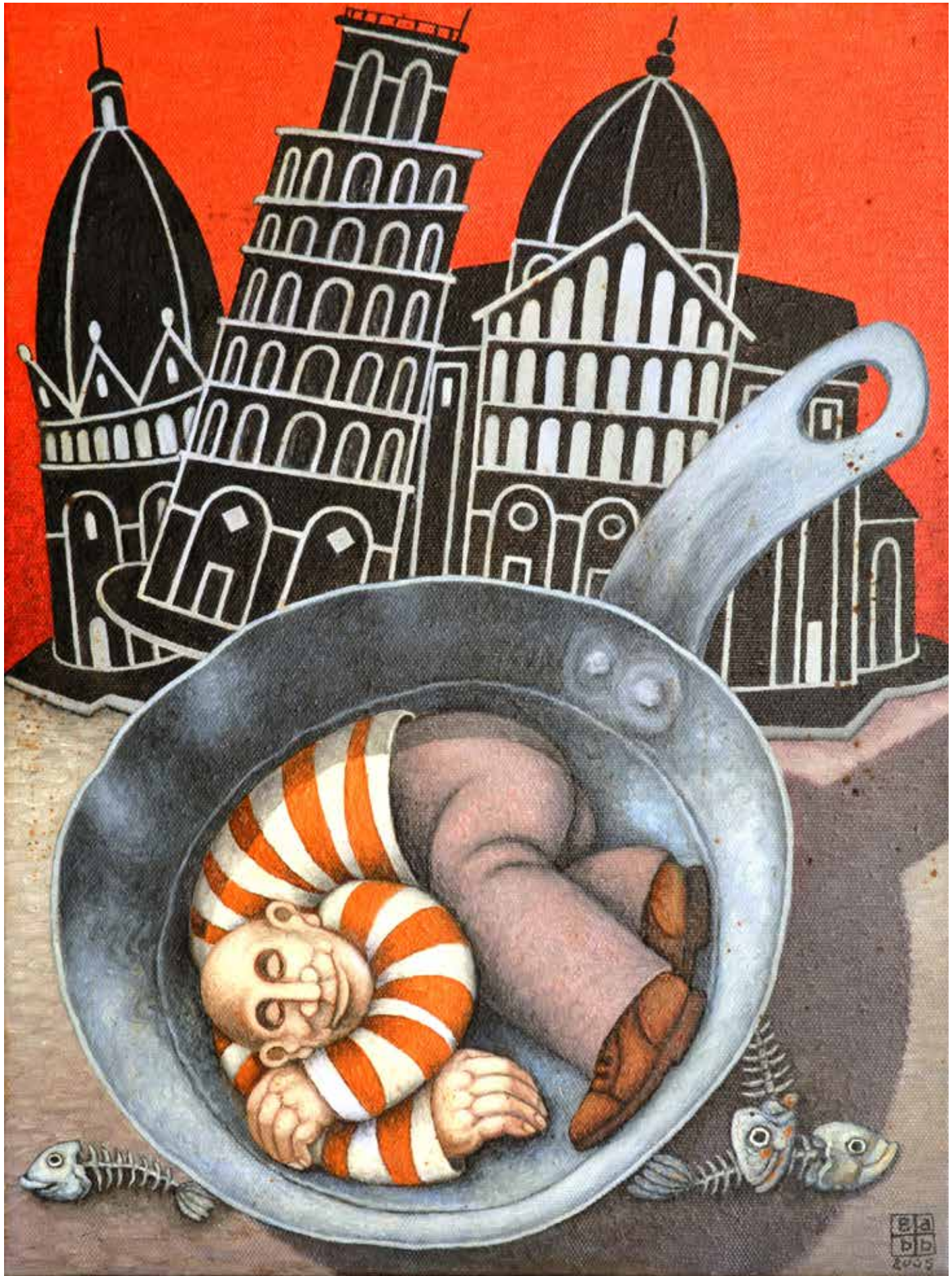
oil on canvas 30×40 cm

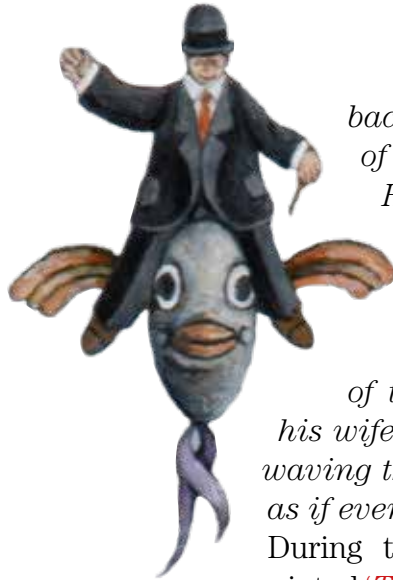
The common man is ready for frying in the frying pan of Power. The most beautiful monuments, symbols of cities, are obscured by today's neglect.

tail, at the call of the pipe sound (note the tails all pointing upwards...). The sheep sniffs what emanates from the uncovered parts'.

In 2001, Giuseppe Diomelli commissioned Babb to create a work in which he 'wanted to illustrate the poisons or vices that man assumes in order to distance himself from reality. Dal Canto, repeatedly urged by Diomelli, took over two years and went beyond what was commissioned, interpreting the theme in his own way, broadening it to include politics and power'.

Finally in 2004 the Pontedera genius 'gave birth' to *'Life's palliatives'*. The picture is a complex one; here is what it shows from top to bottom: 'Power sponsors the media that fascinates the people with TV showgirls. The common people indeed are drugged, in addition to the real drugs present everywhere and represented by syringes set in the windows of houses. Football (on the left) and sports in general (cycling on the right) also drug people. Nevertheless, even the athletes themselves are doping (see the cyclist's pacifier). However, people are not that interested in all this, because everything always ends in 'pizza and mandolin' anyway, drowning the evils in a good meal and a good sing-along. However, the evils are there, and they are obvious: the loan shark, the drunkard and those who do not want to see (the blindfolded), supported by the roundabout of political power that goes hand in hand with magistrates and religious power. Note the extreme similarity of the figures at the bottom, with Buttiglione on the left and D'Alema on the right coming out of a kind of transparent labyrinth, and Berlusconi in the centre, just





back from a metamorphosis of his hair.

High up in the void is the 'nothingness', as seen in clothes without a person wearing them, and the President of the Italian Republic and his wife flying around the world waving the symbol of our country as if everything were peaceful'.

During this year, Dal Canto also painted *'The Mask of Power'*: 'Power is always camouflaged by beauty (the decorations of parliament), but when the official mask is removed, the truth (the clown) is revealed. Everything has been consumed'. In *'Choreography of Power'* (2005) 'The people carry Power on their shoulders, represented by the man in tie and bowler hat. Power plays the drum and beats the rhythm'. In 2005, political parties also entered the scene with *'The Ox in the Arena'*: "We have arrived at the elections and the people, represented by the brute force of an ox, stand in the middle of the bombardment of the various political parties whose advertisements are posted inside the fence of the arena.

The party representatives, shady, ugly, tooth-grinding, shark-eyed figures vie for the microphone (symbolising the media) by grabbing it with their muscular hands, tightening their grip. The representative on the left pulls the microphone wire.

The ox who is eating what little hay he has been given turns his head and expresses himself with a questioning and resigned expression of one who has understood nothing!'

That year, Giorgio Dal Canto also expressed his opinion on the introduction of the Euro with the *'Epoch of the Eur'*, where he invented a postage stamp to celebrate this important event, however: 'The positive effects of the Euro have not been seen, and so Power is represented as giving the people an ice cream (the 'sweetener')'.

In *'Sheep Monument'* (2006), Babb summons the representatives of all powers and in the end, they are all there: 'The monument to the sheep, representing the common people, is inaugurated by the mayor standing on a chair. Around it revolves a roundabout consisting of the satisfied characters who actually administer power: the general, the cardinal, the financial-economic power (man with bowler hat), another military man who counts less than the general, others.

Note the ordinary man in a striped shirt near the monument, who can only be glimpsed, but does not participate in the roundabout, as he counts for nothing'.

Power appears unstoppable and in *'Modern Witches'* (2007), 'riding magical means, even the witches' brooms leave rubbish, viruses and other things above the city'⁵ but some try to oppose it by going *'Against the Wind'* (2007): 'Everything goes with the flow, Power has only one direction, which also directs the buildings below. There is, however; someone, representing the antagonist, who goes against the tide with great effort. In this case, the artist himself identifies with this person of high stature who is travelling against the wind'⁶.

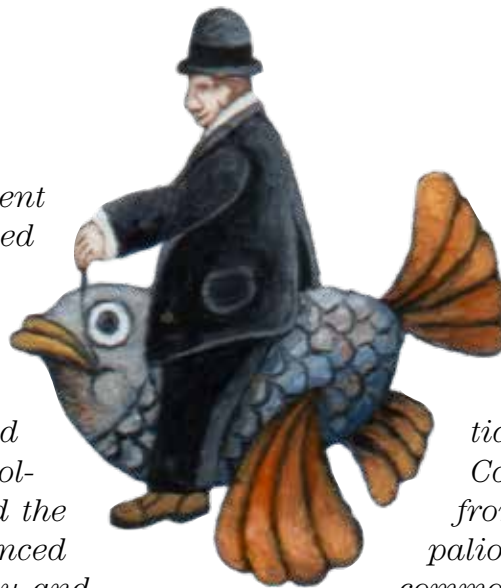
All this struggle leads to *'Equilibrium'* (2007): 'Ordinary people support and hold up the balloons that contain life in the cities, every-

day life, so the balloons represent everyday work in an organised society.

The monuments rise to the sky for their poetry and beauty, but sometimes the balloons are blown apart and destroyed by the crow, symbolising the menace of time and the insidiousness of neglect. Balanced Power dances, plays blissfully and revels in being on top of these worlds represented by the balloons. The rope of Power represents the thread that unites the various people wielding power’.

In *‘Fox Hunting’* of the same year, the artist emphasises that this activity ‘is the stuff of gentlemen, not for the ignorant people. However, the people stoop to do any kind of work for the powerful, even to look like the fox in order to please, to amuse the powerful on wooden horses’⁷. Also in 2007, *‘Power Games’* points out that: ‘The trumpet of power sounds, and is heard with perky ears by all (note the enlarged ears). The dog wearing a common man’s shirt, represented as an inferior being, covers his ears because he does not want to hear the sound of horrors.

The game of power depicts several disturbing aspects. There are the double faces of by the men of power (the taller ones), while the smaller ones try to get something by pulling on their jackets and searching in their pockets, trying to change their faces with a mask, all held together by sound waves emitted by the trombone. Note the two with the bouquet of flowers shaking hands through the keyhole of a door, representing two different worlds that do not talk to each other’.



Also from that year, *‘The Football Allegory’*, which tells of the relationship between football and Power: ‘The game of football is offered to the enthusiastic people on a silver platter. Communication descends from above like an enormous palio that plunges down into the common people. The fans surround the figure representing power; it is in front of everything and stands out even in front of everyday life represented by the houses of a large city in the background’⁸. In his masterpiece *‘Shadow’* (2007), ‘The cat expresses the balance that Power imposes in the play of parts. Against the light from the door of the labyrinth, Power projects a concrete and visible figure onto the pavement. This is a very strong concept of the artist; the flipping over of the figure that considers Power as an immaterial entity, as represented by the non-tangible shadow against the light, which in turn projects definite, real and tangible physical entities (the people who wield power)’.

In 2007, there is still room for: *‘The Key’* where ‘Power, in order to take the key that opens the lock of paradise and so control the masses, tramples without restraint on the masses themselves represented by the humble person lying down’. He also produced *‘The Masters of Time’* where ‘Power manages and commands time by moving the hands of the clock at will, thus allocating us the time in which we must live our existence. Power turns our time upside down. Despite having reached the highest attainable goals through

Il nido (The Nest), 2014
oil on canvas 60x80 cm

An unreal bird feeds Power that has built its nest in the centre of the city.



Albero immaginario (Imaginary Tre)e, 2014
oil on canvas 60x80 cm

All are trying to climb to the 'tree of plenty', which, however, has been completely consumed like the fishbone disputed between cat and dog.



Il Potere (Power), 2014
oil on canvas 60x80 cm

The 'falconer' Power is depicted as a being of absolute power and Pinocchio watches from the smoke rings. The people are amassed at the feet of Power.

the education (books) and other means (the bucket) in order to face life, the common people sadly look out of the window at the world, incapable of acting and participating'. In the same year, in 'Allegories', 'Power is represented by the many faces that make it up. The silhouette, in fact, shows the shape of the bowler hat, the arms, the body and the trousers.

This makes for a world as twisted as the houses and cypress trees on the side to the left. Note, however, that despite the fact that power seems fragile and light, it is firmly in the ground, stuck in the ground with some of the figures lower down'.

Babb, in 2008, shows the '*Ideal*' state of things, naturally from the point of view of Power: '*In an ideal world, where everything is perfect, Power ensures that everything works perfectly. The houses, the lawns, the monuments, the trees, just everything is perfect*'⁹.

To achieve this, power 'stacks' the cards and reality and is very good at making things appear what they are not. This is seen in '*Illusion*' (2008): '*Power is supported by ordinary people holding up the ladder and the paint pot. Power paints the sun red, as if it were a juicy orange, and shows an artificial reality as the poster only depicts a especially painted expectation*'¹⁰.

In Dal Canto's work, the finger is always pointed upwards, and the painter fearlessly uses the canvas as a manifesto that clearly depicts reality by taking sides, as in '*The Electric Chair*', where '*The just man is killed, sacrificed like Christ. Power, standing behind the electric chair, watches impassively as the figure in the electric chair, his head bowed and his body exhausted, is killed. In the background*

the clear allegory for American subjugation'¹¹.

Power uses every means and every technique to undermine everything and everyone, and always succeeds in its intent. In '*The Haystack*' (2008), '*Power, shown as the person holding a pitchfork in his hand, almost as if he were a devil, herds ordinary people into a neat pyramid that resembles a haystack. Notice the cup at the top of the stack pole, which farmers once used to keep rainwater out of the wood.*

It is a very cynical scene, which transpires from the look on the face of the representative of power, deliberately cut in half in the picture, and staring at the work done'. In 'Tickle' (2008), 'In order to get what it wants, power 'tickles' those who do not have it, and does so in a pleasant way, with a feather.

Everyone is involved, at all levels of society, which Giorgio Dal Canto identifies in the different strata in the city, monuments and countryside.

The colourful feathers are provided by a bird from the sky'¹².

Power does not hesitate to make use of the even most persuasive tools and with its mastery become '*The Cheat*' (2008). Here '*The game attracts ordinary people who hope to make their dreams come true in this backward world where the denial of love for art is evident.*

Notice how some monuments, symbols of art, are depicted in black and white, signifying neglect (the Leaning Tower) and denial (part of the facade of the Cathedral in Milan, in red and black).

The cheat, another symbol of power, invites you in his impeccably dressed figure to play a





Spremitura (Squeezing), 2013
oil on canvas 60×80 cm

Power squeezes and sucks up everything that can be squeezed out of the cities, right to the last drop.



Piccole allegorie 1 e 2 (Small allegories 1 and 2), 2013
oil on canvas board 30×40 cm

The poster symbolises the hallmarks of Power. From the Labyrinth, which symbolises the context in which we live, three hands emerge. The first takes possession of the Sun, the third takes possession of the Moon and the second holds Pinocchio, who just observes.



Cappelli (Hats), 2014
oil on canvas cm 50×60

Each of us tries to get a little power, which is represented by the hats.



game of cards. The cheat holds a wand in his hand to direct those who come to him. Note the huge contrast in attitude and attire between the cheat and the couple on his right'¹³. Babb always 'spoke' about power, its greed and its many forms, and told the story of resistance against this status quo.

It is a one-sided game, and some try to oppose it, but are overwhelmed. This happens in '*Objection*' (2008). Here, 'The message is both very simple, and horrifying.

Three phases (or layers) are represented. At the top, a general protest explodes, fuelled by many protesters with placards with clear symbols of disapproval. Power stands by, but does not intervene. In the second phase, Power grows and the demonstrators become scarcer. In the last phase, the one at the bottom, power has grown enormously, it has the necessary tool to exert its dominance (note the brick-coloured gown with a series of

classic clerical buttons) and protest has now been suppressed'.

Power mutates. It changes shape but remains the same. In '*Ephemeral Power*' (2009), 'The merry-go-round of power is in action and the rocking horse, straddled by a satisfied Power, does its duty. The servants of Power are portrayed as chickens, who, placed on the stage, praise and indulge the horse-rider, who, however, has a rotting head. Flies and insects settle there'.

This subject matter, Power, continued to be present in many works, each time emphasising how the scales are constantly tipped in its favour and how the game is played on many levels.

In '*Squeezing*' (2013), Babb describes the action of the 'Bowler hats' towards the cities harnessed with belts, padlock chains and ropes to squeeze out the heap of houses and monuments in order to obtain a few precious drops to use for their own ends.

Sogno (The Dream), 2014

oil on canvas 80×60 cm

Dreaming of a contraption that kicks in the pants those who manage Power into the dark building.

Unable to fight power in reality, Giorgio Dal Canto takes refuge in *'The Dream'* (2014), where he invents a 'contraption that kicks those who wield Power in the pants'.



FOR HARLEQUINS (1982-2008)

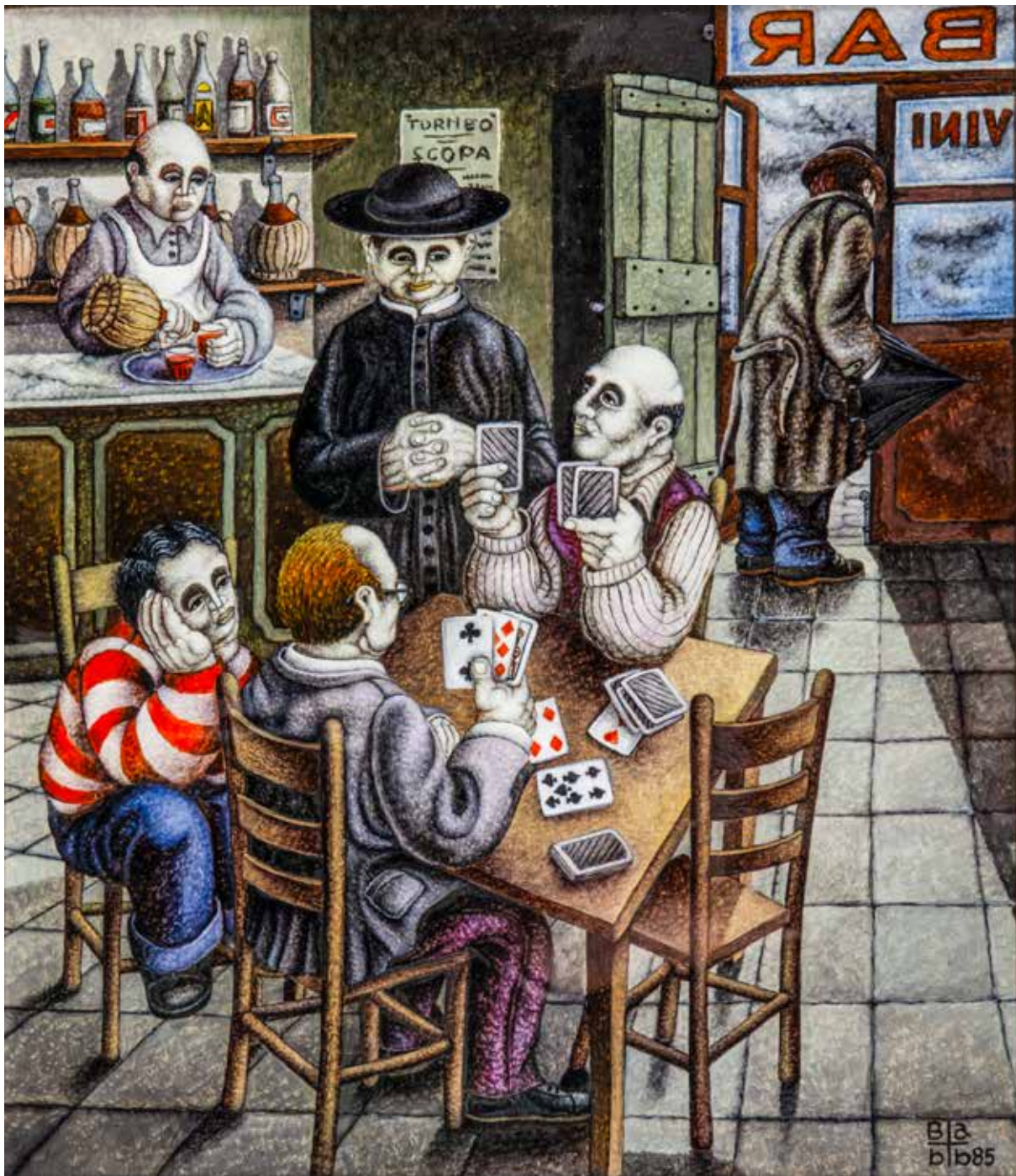
In January 1982, Giorgio Dal Canto exhibited at the 'Pisanello' Art Gallery. It was here that his Harlequins took the form and substance that would be present in Babb's art for many years to come.

The critic Dino Carlesi, presenting the *'Imaginary Journey'* folder with three etchings, wrote, *'Harlequin laughing, Harlequin bowing, Harlequin stealing. Perhaps never before has a 'mask' been so topical and meaningful. For centuries, the Harlequin has been touring the stage of the world (and of life): first as a diabolical and desperate knight, then as a ringing announcement of joy. Goldoni portrayed him with a mask, spatula and rag-doll dress, as a boorish and cunning servant, a boaster and a coward, glutton and slacker. It is not without good reason that many recognised themselves in him, and understandable why he was all the rage in the courts. Every public and private upheaval found him adept at adapting to the new and the unexpected, without doubts or regrets, to the rhythm of jokes, somersaults and sneers, sure of striking and mocking. We can imagine him in St. Mark's Square in Venice, as in Fiesole, in St. Peter's Square or in Paris, silent at Merola's scenes or gloomy in front of the Sassi di Matera, lying and truthful, whining and aggressive, always authentic since he is deliberately 'inauthentic'. He also jumps and scoffs on these sheets:*

he steals the Chiesa della Spina and loves it in his room, with his thoughts on the disastrous emptiness left on the Pisan Lungarno and the dismay of a crowd that perhaps does not even realise it. His spectators: a door, a window, a chair. The triumph of mockery. Alternatively, he climbs The Greasy Pole to end up in the whirlwind of roofs, around the round square of sleepy Lucca, and laughs at the circling of the priests, watched sternly by the thousand eyes of the houses and doors.

*Or else he calmly takes the Tower abducted from the Piazza dei Miracoli into the sky, rescuing it from its uncertain equilibrium and passing it with his arabesque flying carpet over the heads of the crowd. The artist's sign is here moved by the same Harlequin-like humour; the rages appeased in the play of the fable. Clouds, chairs or houses are the theatres of a human adventure of which Harlequin is only a pretext and an emblem: and the aquatint acts as a tenuous veil to the rigid morsel of truth, once again mischievously uncovered. The world is at the mercy of the maneuverers of the day, and now a cathedral can be made to disappear; the architecture of a city can be changed, or Power can be forced into the absurd game of his childish roundabout. All it takes is an invention of the pen to shatter a slab, but above all History itself. The invention solicits the residual hope of being able to take man's precious documents away from him - entrusting them to a mask - before man either destroys them with bombs or forgets them in the folds of a balance sheet. The idea seems excellent to me, at least as good as the graphic execution'¹⁴. Harlequin returned repeatedly to Babb's world until he finally regained the stage with the work *'Harlequin'* in 2008 when*





Giocatori di briscola (Trump Players), 1985, oil on canvas 30×35 cm (Rodolfo Giuntini)

'The Power dressed up as Harlequin. The mask well represents the diversity of aspects that Power can take on, holding the ancient game of cat and mouse, in a scenario of negation of the city whose buildings and monuments are upturned'¹⁵.

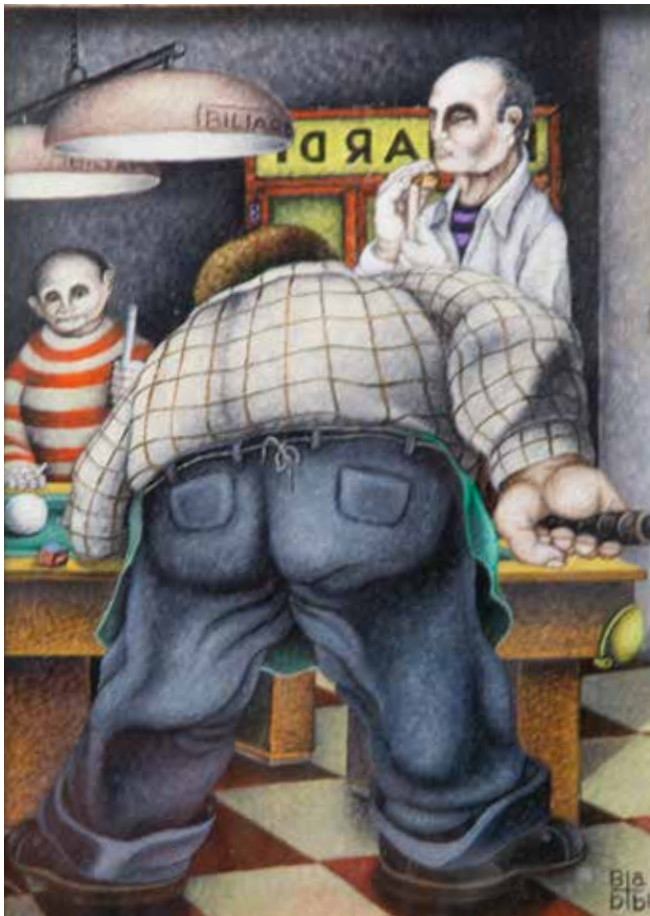
Harlequin, on the road taken by Babb, was to meet two other friends, Pinocchio and Pulcinella, who would keep him company on the canvas for a very long time.



FOR GAMES

Giorgio Dal Canto was a card player himself, and this passion of his could not fail to 'infiltrate' his art. In 1984, he created a complete 'cycle' with *'Players'*, *'Roulette'*, *'Teresina'*, *'The Card Game'*, *'Trump'* *'Trump Players'*, *'Billiards Champions'*, *'Zecchinetta o Toppa'*, *'Trotting'*, *'Bazica'*, *'Billiard Player'*, *'Game No. 1'*, *'After Game No. 2'*, *'Chemin de fer'*, *'Game of dice'*, *'The jack'*, *'Prize giving'*, *'Backgammon'*





Biliardo (Billiards), 1984
oil on canvas 18x25 cm
(Piero Frassi)

Roulette, 1984
oil on hardboard cm 35x50

Many people play the game, the table is crowded. The croupiers are attentive and impassive. They resemble gravediggers...

Teresina, 1984
oil on hardboard cm 27x35

Reflective phase of a player at the poker table. The thinking player's move is awaited.





On the previous page

Giocatori (Players), 1984
oil on canvas 23x40 cm
(Rodolfo Giuntini)



Campioni di biliardo, 1984
olio su tela cm 25x30
(Piero Frassi)

Briscola, 1984
olio su tela cm 25x30
(Piero Frassi)

Backgammon, 1984
olio su tela cm 25x30
(Piero Frassi)

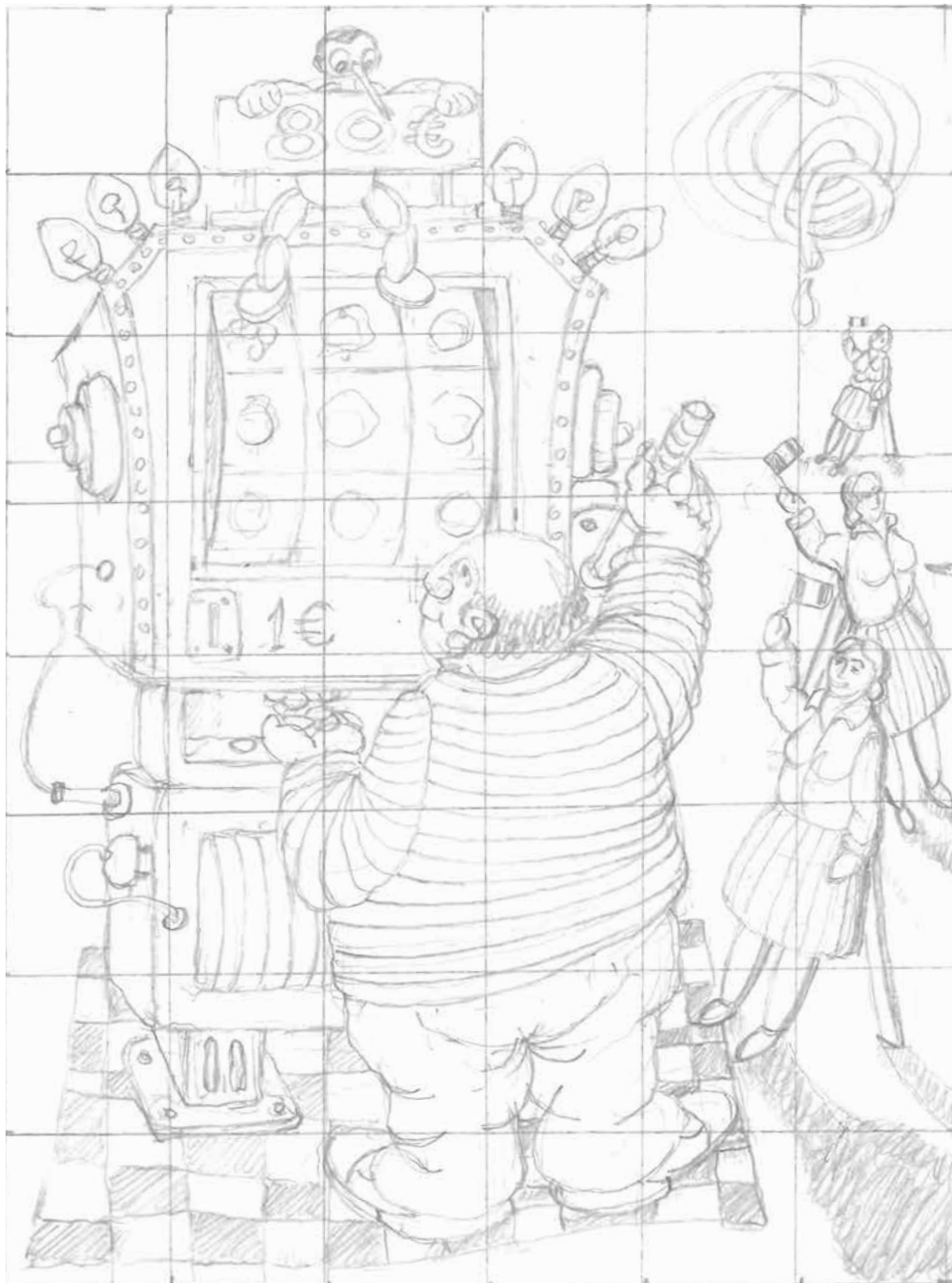




Gioco delle tre carte (Three-Card Game), 1984, oil on canvas 25×35 cm (Rodolfo Giuntini)



"Drawing on tracing paper for a lithograph, Pisa 8 September 2010" (Bandedech&Vivaldi Archive)



Slot machine, 2014
oil on canvas 60×80cm

People operate the Power machine, and when Power aligns, out comes the pocket money! In life, as in slot machines, those who play will always be losers. Power cannot be seen because it is hidden underground, but the power of money is evident. Female figures rejoice and praise power by waving flags. The sun, part of a contaminated environment, weeps. Note the uncanny resemblance of the face in the slot machine and on the coin to the then Prime Minister.



Leaders, 1988
oil on panel cm 46x35

Out of the multitude of humans, a few characters emerge, gathering groups of people at their feet. Leaders are not necessarily men of power, distinguished by their jacket and bowler hat, but can emerge from any walk of life. The small groups of each leader are also from different social backgrounds.

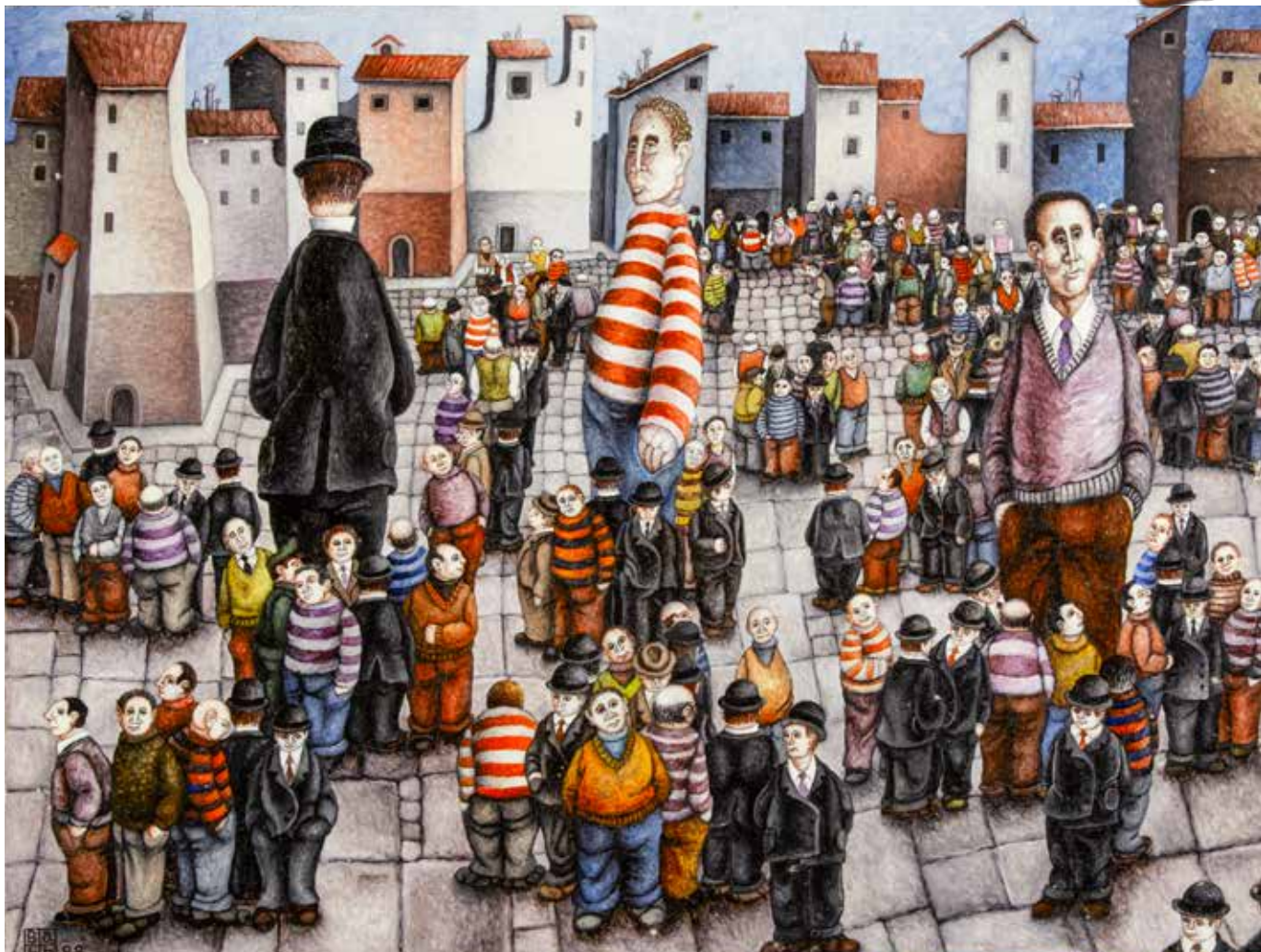
and *'Billiards'*. The following year, many of these works with others created for the occasion were featured in the exhibition 'The Gambles and Bets of Man'. In 2014, gambling appeared in the form of a *'Slot Machine'* where it was Power that regulated the mechanism, and as in life, the man who operates the lever of the device is always destined to lose.

BOWLER HATS AND STRIPES (FROM 1988)

One of the most frequently recurring motifs in Giorgio Dal Canto's paintings are the men in bowler hats, and those in horizontally striped shirts.

The former represent power, the latter its victims.

In 1988, in the oil on panel painting





'Leaders', they perhaps made their first appearance: 'From the multitude of humans, a few characters emerge, gathering small groups of people at their feet. Leaders are not necessarily men of power, distinguished by their jacket and bowler hat, but can emerge from any social class. Even the small groups of each leader are from different social backgrounds'.

Moreover, stripes and bowler hats are present in *'Excrement'* and *'The Hobgoblin Cat'*.

Ilario Luperini first decodified these two features of the Babb universe when he presented his work on Babb in 1989: 'The world, Dal Canto seems to say, is made of 'bowler' men (with the characteristic hat of these dark figures) and 'striped' men; the former flat, uniform and inexpressive, the latter more colourful and differentiated, but also with more tense, sometimes desperate physiognomies'. *He also wrote, 'Dal Canto's painting, therefore, nourished by a deep figurative experience and supported by the dexterity of a hand finely trained in the art of decoration, is imbued with symbols and allegories that raise tantalizing questions: do the 'bowler hats' indicate the power structure? Are the 'stripes' subjugated? Are the umbrellas protective shields against the adversities of life? Do the big animals represent the realm of passion and instincts, which, however, sometimes prevail, reducing man to a puppet at the mercy of chance? (the big cat plays with some 'stripes' reduced to the condition of a ball, a ball of wool).*

The legitimacy of these assumptions does not exclude other ones. It would be useless, as well as ineffective, to propose one single, unquestionable line of interpretation. The im-

portance of Dal Canto's work lies precisely in this: from the apparent simplicity of its contents emerges a

pressing invitation to reflect and discuss the complex human condition.

However, he does not stay out of the problem; he does not simply present it, while refusing to suggest answers. This time his is not just irony; he seems to feel that the crisis of mankind is deepening and that salvation presumably lies in a return to solidarity, which can give great strength to defenceless mildness of the 'stripes' against the unified conceit of the 'bowler hats'. Even the 'bowlers hats', in fact, Dal Canto seems to say, have little to rejoice about: their power is illusory, because it produces isolation and unhappiness. Ultimately, however, Dal Canto takes the side, at least emotionally, of the 'stripes'. He suffers their marginalisation; just look at the painting in which a series of 'stripes', with emaciated faces and bare legs sit fixedly. Some bees settle on them and, high up on the wall, a teddy bear appears, perhaps a symbol of lost serenity'.

Riccardo Ferrucci described the 'stripes' as follows: 'In Dal Canto we find the authentic and popular language of another great Tuscan artist, Giuseppe Viviani, who managed to illuminate, with poetry and humanity, a world crowded with humble and marginalised characters. Dal Canto's striped men are an ideal continuation of Viviani's figures, the protagonists of a game that they do not fully understand and in which they are forced to submit to the rules written and laid down by others'.

Babb is firmly on the side of the men in striped shirts and uses all his art in a condemnation of



Luogo di uguaglianza [L'ora fatale] (Place of Equality [The Fatal Hour], 1993
oil on canvas, 50×35 cm

power, alternating between humour and masterful denunciations. Despite this, as Luperini states: “‘Stripes’ and ‘Bowler hats’ seem to be increasingly united by a common, sad destiny: the unavoidable fall towards individualism, in a society that homologates everything and everyone, that leaves no room for the appreciation of the individual in a system of developed social relations”.

The only place where the two protagonists are equal is in the *‘Place of Equality’*¹⁶ from 1993, where a view from above of a public toilet is shown: ‘In this place we are all equal, there can be a bigger or smaller space, but we all do the same thing. Even the distinctions between the two are minimal: the representative of Power is reading a book, versus those who do not have Power; who read the newspaper. The place is ugly and the perspective makes it even gloomier’.

MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL (1980-2002)

The mirror has always fascinated artists, writers and thinkers of all ages, and it could not fail to do so with Giorgio Dal Canto, who used it in some of his works to bring about in the viewer of his paintings a greater attention to his ‘observations’. In 1980, he paid his first homage to this instrument with *‘Lo Specchio I’* (The Mirror 1) and five years later with *‘Potere spezzato’* (Broken Power), representing Power that ‘cracks and breaks like the mirror that reflects its image’.

*It looks so finished, but its symbols, the manual, the telephone, the dummy people in the drawer; the dancers remain intact and firmly in the service of the Power that is to come*¹⁷.



Immagine (Image), 2002

oil on canvas 30x40 cm

Power intends to see reflected in the mirror what it wants to see (image of a beauty).

In the background symbolizes the artichoke...

In 1993, with *'Power in the Mirror'*, he shows how 'Power never looks itself in the face. If it did, it would shudder in horror. Of its image, the mirror always reflects only its back. The fish on the chair means that the seats of Power stink. The rest is nothing but scenography'¹⁸. The following year, in the painting *'Escaping'*, 'the mirror reflects the representative of Power who enters through the door and is confronted with the scene of someone who is asleep (or rather, dozing off at work) or someone who wants to escape from reality.

*It is the constant scene of life: those who have no power ignore or shirk their responsibilities in the face of Power, which instils fear and dread'*¹⁹. In 2002, in *'The Mirror 2'*, 'Po-



*litical and military power wear different uniforms, but they are the two complementary faces of the same entity. In fact, they are portrayed in a mirror-image fashion. They have only one aim: to dominate the world by any means. Political power is firmly bolted to the chair with a wing nut. Difficult, very difficult to remove it'*²⁰.

Also in 2002, in *'Image'*, 'the image that Power has of itself is beautiful, but it is an image in unstable equilibrium, as false as the image of the artichoke, which symbolises the natural world'²¹.

Babb's mirror shows the truth, and not just who is the fairest of them all.

U FOR UMBRELLA

This object is recurrent in Babb's paintings, and its value and symbolism changes depending on the character using it and the situation in which the scene is set.

It appears as early as 1977, in the painting *'The Swimmers'*, where six butlers await with a towel and an umbrella (to protect themselves from the sun) some 'important people' who are quietly bathing in the pool.

In *'Piove'* (Raining) in 1983, a series of umbrellas stands in Corso Matteotti at the foot of the Clock Tower, and in *'Curiosi alla rete'* (Onlookers behind the fence) in 1983, a series of people with umbrellas stand behind a fence





Curiosi alla rete (Onlookers behind the fence), 1983
oil on canvas 30×50 cm
(Maura Neri)

Author's proof 9×13 cm
(Bandedchi&Vivaldi)

Piove (Raining), 1983
oil on canvas 18×22 cm
(Rodolfo Giuntini)

On the previous page

I nuotatori (The swimmers), 1977
oil on canvas cm 70×70

The six butlers with towels wait for the people in the water to come out. The swimmers are important people and are waited on, served and protected from the sun by their staff.



Instabilità (Instability) 2010 oil on canvas 40×50 cm

The chairs of power are not all the same: we start with the coarse, robust chair that is the basis of power and that leverages the common people. Above the coarse chair is positioned a slimmer chair on which sits a common person who however has a bowler hat (symbol of power) and finally we have at the top the more refined chair on which sits the strongest power.

All the chairs are in an unstable balance as the power needs to juggle in order not to lose its respective chair of power. The Mites appear shy, they must learn how balance works to fit in. They are the first mites to appear.

The balloons represent a sick sun, already in decline.



Al riparo (Sheltered), 2006
oil on canvas 25×35 cm
(Manrico Mosti)



Amico con ombrello (Friends with Umbrella), 2016
oil on canvas 25×35 cm
(Fabio Neri)



Ascesa (Ascent), 2005
oil on canvas 30×40 cm

Businessmen, with the symbol of power on their heads, rise towards the sky. Underneath, the monuments suffer and are ashamed (red colour) of the carelessness of those who climb high.





Prova di riproduzione (Duplication test), 1989
oil on canvas 34×25 cm

The painting is part of the intermediate works of the Artist Dal Canto.

The reproduction test would also have served him.

It is not signed with the classic table formed by 4 small squares containing the letters "BABB".

(possibly fans at the Marconcini football pitch). Two years later, *'Flying Umbrellas'* shows a series of people floating up above Pontedera, as in *'Ascent'* (2005), where this everyday object becomes a means of moving around the city and Power uses them to fly above the monuments. In *'Al riparo'* (Sheltered) in 2006, the umbrella returns to its original use and the man comfortably takes shelter. The scene takes on the air of everyday life, except that not a drop of rain is falling from the sky, as in one of his last paintings, *'Amici con umbrella'* (Friends with Umbrella) from 2016.



FOR SEA (from 1989)

In 1989, the sea is the star of *'Duplication test'*, an 'intermediate' work, almost an exercise in style, in which the centrepiece is a whale,

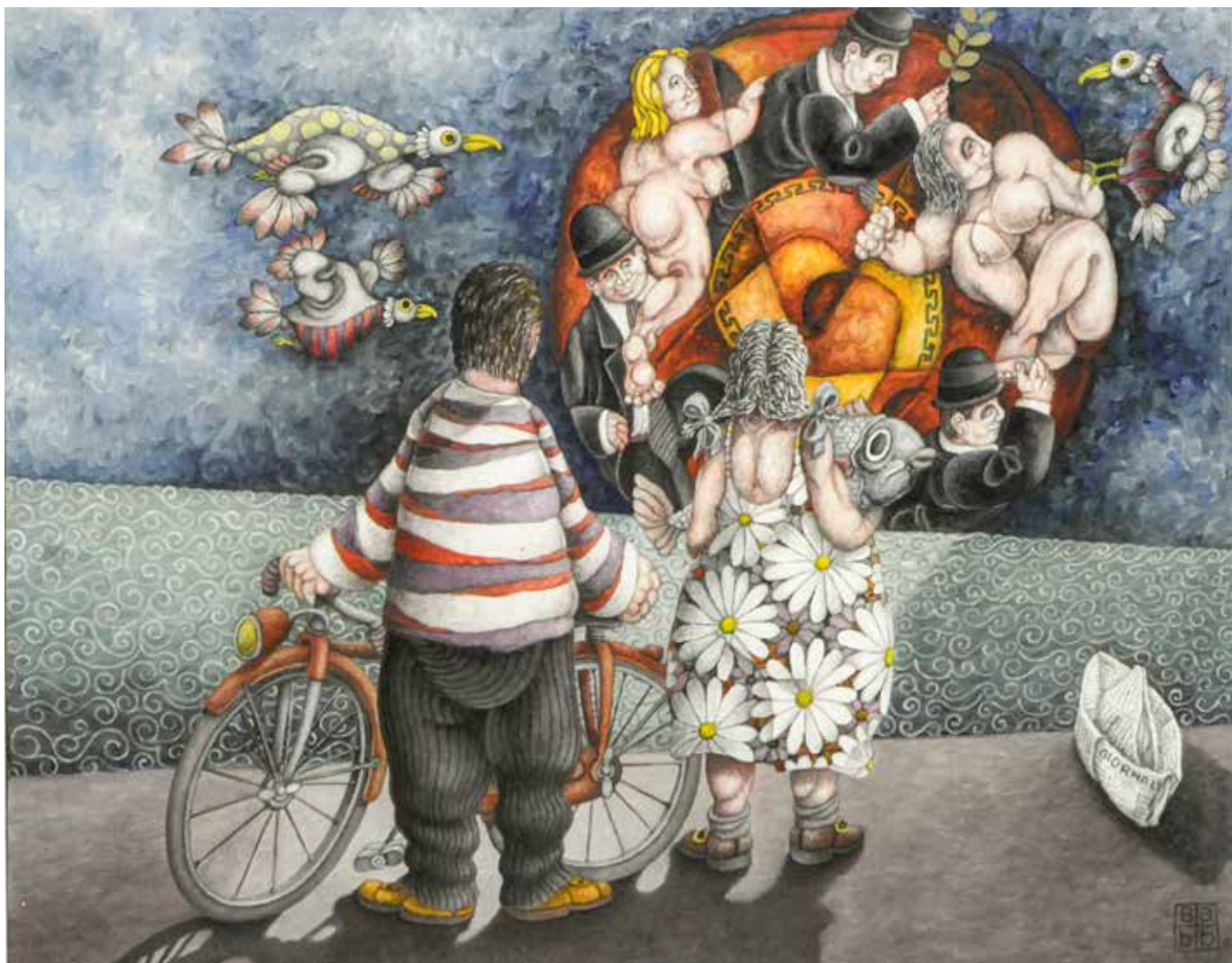
which the painter chooses as the subject to be duplicated, but which conceals an important meaning: *'The hand of Power reduces the artist to a simple replicator of reality, depriving him of any creative autonomy'*. In *'Modern Beaches'* (1994), Babb's attention shifts to the waterfront and shows the beach *'crowded mostly by fat women all wearing fashionable costumes. On the deckchair sits the husband, who wields power, but is far away with his mind on his business, which he carries out by means of his mobile phone.'*

*For all couples it is the same, indicating a general conformism*²². The shorefront becomes the stage where *'Landscape with Moon'* (1994) is performed: *'Beautiful the Moon, as a horizon of hopes! In the Moon, we have all our dreams: power, beautiful women, abundance, exoticism, mystery, and more. However, real-*



Spiagge moderne (Modern Beaches), 1994
oil on canvas 50×20 cm

Today's beaches are crowded mostly by fat women all wearing fashionable costumes. On the deckchair sits the husband, who wields power, but is far away with his mind on his business, which he carries out by means of his mobile phone. For all couples it is the same, indicating a general conformism



Paesaggio con luna (Landscape with moon), 1994
oil on canvas 50×40 cm

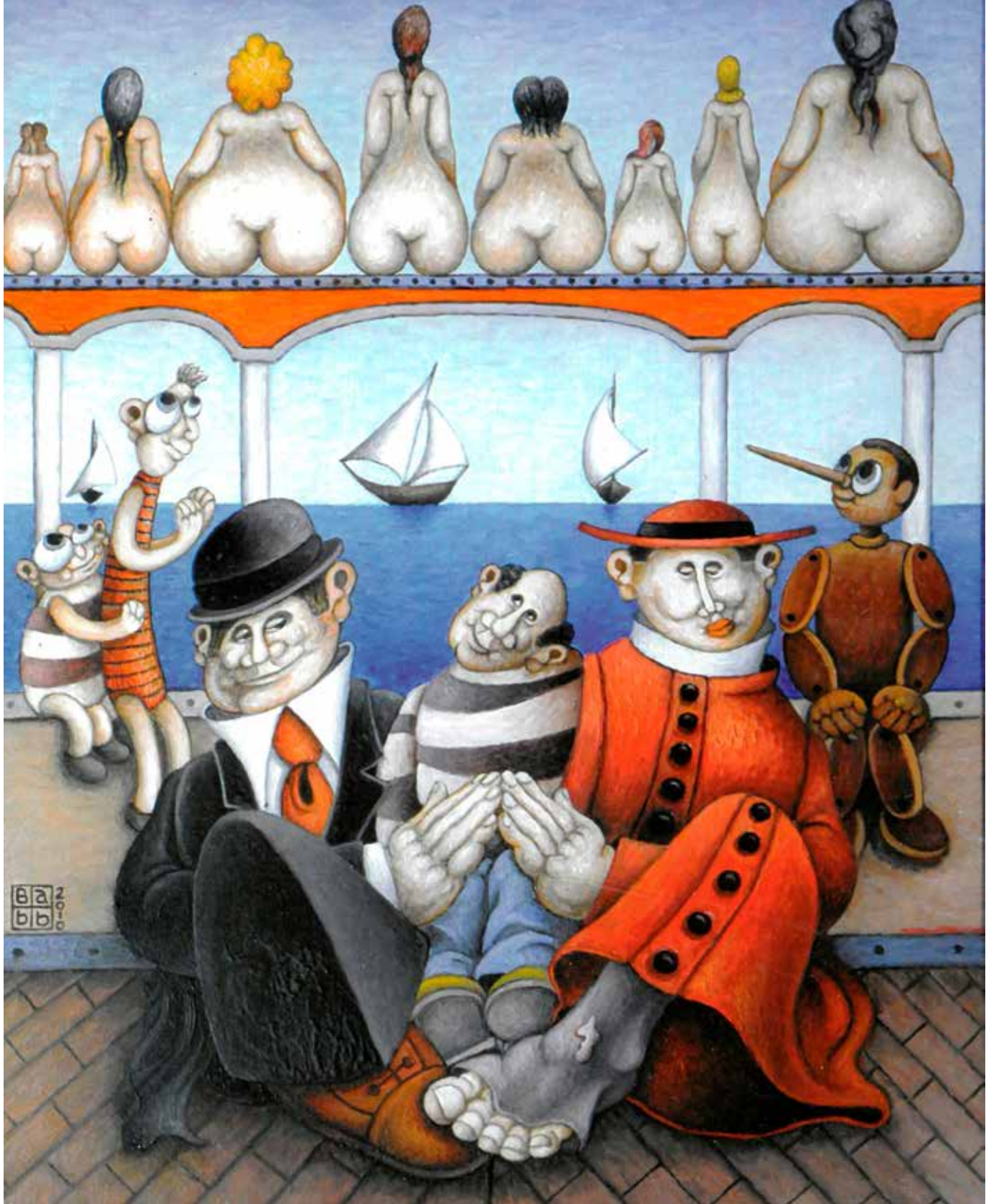
Beautiful the Moon as a horizon of hopes!! In the Moon there are all our dreams: power, beautiful women, abundance, exoticism, mystery, etc.

But reality is very different for ordinary people who dream of what they do not have: the boat is made of paper; the means of transport is the poorest, the clothing of the two boys denotes economic hardship, just notice the shoes and socks of the girl. There is a fish that the girl holds in her arms and represents the small illusion of the couple (at least a fish!).



Le tre grazie (The Three Graces), 2005 oil on canvas 80×100 cm

A splendid vision in a satirical vein regarding Botticelli's three women throwing doves and praising the holiday while wearing swimming costumes. The artist had made this painting, which he said was very colourful, to place above his bed in his beach house. The theme is the eternal obsession with femininity, which is grotesquely distorted by means of typical male musculature also outlined by ugly features.



La vacanza (The Holiday), 2010
oil on canvas 40x50 cm

Political and ecclesiastical power beguile the common people who, all things considered, do not disdain the thing and play along. The common man, squeezed between these Powers, calmly relaxes looking up at the variety of offerings to the sun. The two identities of strength are essentially represented by a single person (note only one foot and one hand for each strong Power).

The foot of the prelate symbolizes the humility that he would like to flaunt to the world.

The ladies' behinds are bare to signify today's indifference to any sense of modesty.

Acari and Pinocchio observe.



La Morsa (The tight grip) 1994 Oil on canvas cm. 35 x 50

Power invents expensive ways of living, beautiful means for vacations, enchanted dream places (see the representatives of power who swim happily) but all this is not reachable by those who do not have power and who remain attached to the image of the painting depicting those enchanted places. The figure of the poor man who would like to but cannot speak for himself, helpless to reach the dream that remains such for his future



Lo sbandieratore (The Flag-waver), 2014

oil on canvas 60x80 cm

Power supported by the people underwater directs the traffic of ships that, ostensibly bringing peace, are instead loaded with cannons

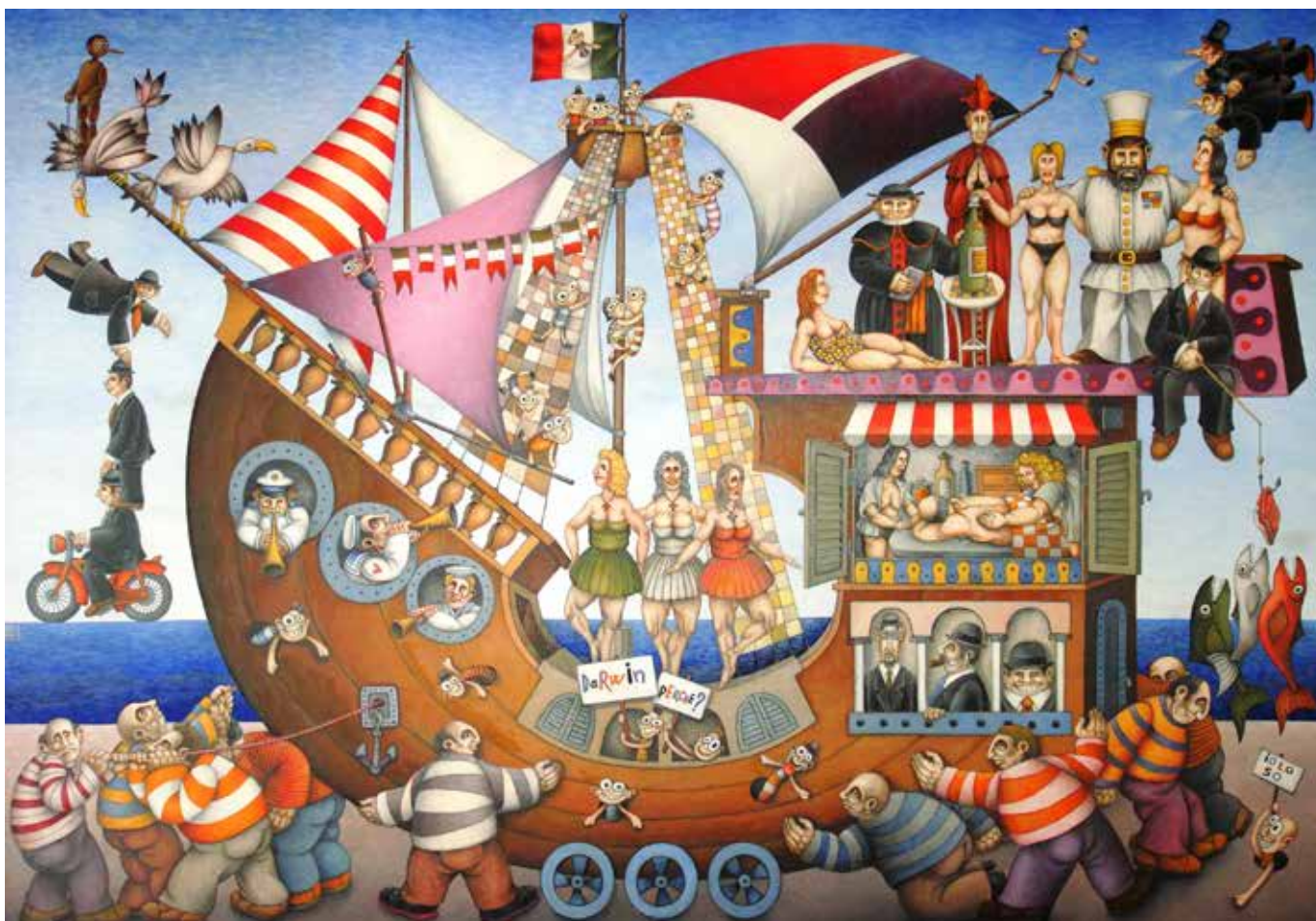
Il varo (The Launch), 2010

oil on canvas 200x140 cm

The people, aided by the breath of the Gnomes, push with difficulty the boat of Power that is having fun and enjoying itself.

The Mites appear from all sides and, referring to Darwin, ask why we have been reduced to this state. At the bottom right, a mite claims to have the answer. It seems that we are moving towards an awareness of the mites regarding their power to generate Chaos.

Dancers and fish represent Italy. Power is always in balance (motorcycle on the left)





Illusione (Illusion), 2012
oil on canvas 100x70 cm

Pulcinella carries an umbrella with the colours of Peace; Pinocchio raises a sailboat topped by a flag also bearing the symbols of Peace, Harlequin shares. Against the background of the sea appear the signs of war fuelled by Capitalist Power symbolised by smoke (bombs) coming out of a ship



Un Giorno al mare (A day at the seaside), 2008
oil on board 70x30 cm

Each Pinocchio looks for his own means of swimming



La crociera (The Cruise), 2009 oil sa canvas cm 100×150

Emblematic representation of the vacation of the various social classes where, even on vacation, there are those who have fun and those who work. At the bottom are the rowers with the classic striped shirt who work hard; above them there is someone who guides the ship but they represent an old and now outdated world (note the cobwebs). The real gentlemen are in the highest parts enjoying life. Above them rests the clergy who in turn rely on power. Advertising is everywhere, even on the symbol of the Church. Our country Italy is identified in the tricolor with cats and birds. For the first time the Mites appear, representing the vices and dark side of all of us: now they are small and have not yet done anything serious but they are coming out everywhere and will grow. The man in the cage observes and this task, later, will be taken on by Pinocchio when the Mites have taken over everything



Cicloprete (The Priest-bike), 1982
oil on canvas 30x20 cm (Sauro Macelloni)

*ity is quite different for ordinary people, who know exactly what they do not have: the boat is made of paper; the means of transport is of the poorest, the clothing of the two young people shows their hardship, just look at the girl's shoes and socks. There is a fish in her arms, representing the couple's hopelessness (at least we have a fish!)...*²³. In 2008, in *'Un giorno al mare'* (A Day at the Sea), Dal Canto imagines a series of pinocchios cutting through the water; each with his own means and style.



FOR CHURCH, "P" FOR PRIESTS

The churches of 'our' Tuscany are masterfully replicated in Dal Canto's work, and serve as a striking backdrop to hundreds of Babb-ish situations, not only as mere urban 'backdrops' but also as the founding elements of our cities.

They are historical monuments that often, by being

there, represent the place they come from.

Another feature is that of the priests, usually portrayed with the 'saturno' (headgear for priests also known as the 'Roman hat'), who populate Babb's work in many circumstances.

A priest is at the centre of *'Il mio mondo 2'* (My World 2) from 1979, while in 1982 three of them are the protagonists of *'Cicloprete'* (the Priest-bike) and on a three-seater tandem they pass in front of a church. In *'Cardinale'* (1990) a series of priests 'emerge' from under him while in the background, a guitar player is sitting apparently resignedly on the steps of a church. In 2006, his relationship with 'earthly' power became apparent. In the painting, *'The Vatican dominates all'* (2006), *'In St. Peter's Square, some cardinals dance happily around the whole world, represented by the buildings of Italian cities. St. Peter's Dome in the Vatican dominates over all others. Policemen prevent access to outsiders and thus defend the status quo. Given this situation, the people cling where they can both to umbrellas that slow down the fall and*





Cardinale (Cardinal), 1990
oil on canvas 35×40 cm
(Maura Neri)

to balloons that carry them aloft'. For the artist, the Church is close to Power, and this thought is evident in the work 'Vacanza' (Holiday) from 2010, which makes it clear that 'The political and ecclesiastical powers jest with the common man, who, all things considered, does not disdain this and plays along. The common man, caught between these powers, peacefully relaxes by looking up at the 'variety' on offer. The bishop's foot symbolises the humility he would like to demonstrate. The backsides of the women are naked to signify today's indifference to any sense of decency. Mites and Pinocchio look on.' In the same year, in the painting *'The Underpants'*, a clergyman cannot see the chaos that surrounds him because he is wearing dark glasses, 'but with apathy he exhorts people to stay calm, quiet, even if catastrophe is happening behind them'²⁴.

Unione, 2006
olio su tela cm 25×35
(Manrico Mosti)



Il Vaticano domina tutto (The Vatican dominates all), 2006
oil on canvas cm 60×80





Brindisi (Toasts), 2013
oil on canvas 60x80 cm

Power brings together its tools, who toast peacefully and with satisfaction while trampling on the Italian flag. The chicken 'does not trust', as it is aware of its fate. Everyone, in order to eat, is willing to take advantage of contingent situations.



Mercato delle vacche (Cattle Market), 2014
oil on canvas 50×60 cm

A transaction to win the consent of people who are willing to do anything to win a place in the sun for themselves. We are at the cattle market.



In 2011, *'Galileo'* emphasised that *'even ecclesiastical power participates in the degradation, as it did with Galileo: things from other centuries, but, unfortunately, still relevant today'*²⁵.

In *'Brindisi'* (A toast) in 2013, one of its representatives raises the goblet together with a member of the military and 'bowler' power, testifying to a unity of purpose.



FOR WOMAN (1994-2007)

The role of women in Babb's work is seen in many contexts and takes on different meanings. In 1994 in *'Fatal Attraction'*, *'a woman with a handbag is generally considered attractive. Therefore, there are those who cling to their handbags and those who, like fish, cling to their skirt. Women of a certain type, however, stand on high, hovering over the city dominated by Power in the middle of the square'*²⁶.

1998 is the year of the painting *'All hung up'*: *'We are all in search of mother's milk; we're all trying to suck the breast of the woman*

*who represents our country. This is inflated by Power; which ensures the maintenance of the status quo through fawning communication. Therefore, there are those who water the antennae so that the communication stays fresh and alive. There are also those who do not reach Power and stand in the top left corner'*²⁷.

In the same year, *'The teddy bears'* arrived: *'The Pontedera Fair represents a moment for women to show off, with great attention to detail and clothing.*

*Giorgio Dal Canto sees the female sex in an unattractive way and therefore draws the woman with muscles, various shortcomings, etc. in such a way as to make her unappealing. These two women are fashionably dressed but decidedly ridiculous because one is too fat and the other is too thin. They bring with them their children, who are depicted here as ragdoll puppets because, according to Giorgio Dal Canto, women today carry their children around not because it is good for them but to show them off to the next person they meet in the street'*²⁸.

The series produced between 2002 and 2005,

Donne suonatrici d'orchestra(Women musicians), 2002
oil on canvas 50×30 cm
(Fabio Neri)



Violinista (Violinist), 2002
oil on canvas 23×30 cm

Sharp contrast between female and male sex.



Flautista (Flute player), 2002
oil on canvas 23×30 cm

Sharp contrast between female and male sex, the same theme as in the previous painting of the Violinist but with inverted characteristics between man and woman. It should be noted that in the two paintings, the woman is always taller than the man, which for the artist Dal Canto means that the taller subject is more important than the other is.



in which women are the absolute protagonists, is wonderful, poetic and original. This includes:

'Violinist' (2002), *'Flute player'* (2002), *'Women Orchestra Musicians'* (2002), *'Suonatine'* (2003), *'Women with Jewellery on the Porch'* (2004), *'Women in Spring'* (2005), *'Women in Winter'* (2005), *'Women with Jewellery 1'* (2005), *'Women Summer'* (2005), *'Women with Jewellery 2'* (2005) and *'Women Easter'* (2005). Moreover, *'The Three Graces'* (2005) is 'a splendid vision in a satirical vein regarding Botticelli's three women throwing doves and praising the man and woman. It should be noted that in the two paintings, the woman is always taller than the man, which for the artist Dal Canto means that the taller subject is more important than the other is. The holiday wearing swimming costumes. The artist had made this painting, which he said was very colourful, to place above his bed in his beach house. The theme is the eternal obsession with femininity, which is grotesquely distorted by means of typical male musculature also outlined by ugly features'²⁹.

'The Beauty Salon' commissioned by Giuseppe Diomelli in memory of his friend Alberto is from 2007: 'Female vanity is emphasised in the characters who frequent the city's most fashionable beauty salon. Shoes, jewellery and clothes are the main components of the clumsy ladies waiting for the hairdressing guru, who is pulled by the shirt by a customer'³⁰.

"M" FOR MEDIA

'Babb-thinking' could not fail to include the media in his analysis given the central role it plays in our society. Power uses it for its own ends and seeks through its communication to persuade and to convince.

In Dal Canto's world, no one is spared, from print media to radio and TV.

In 1994, in the canvas entitled *'Culture'*, 'Radio, as a power-controlled media sends everyone to sleep in the tough fight against knowledge, represented by books and pictures with silhouettes of the trunk with the bowler hat of power. Some people struggle and climb the ladder'. *'The Television'* (1995) tells us that this medium 'has preyed on each of us and we all possess one. This power crumples in on itself (notice the very gaunt faces of those who impersonate prosperity) and makes everything around us barren and dangerous (see the noose tied to the tree branch). The environment is decidedly bleak and hostile to normal life'.

The painting *'Sonatore'* (Piper) from 2003 shows how communication is crucial for Power: 'Supported by TV's showgirls, the icon of the great magic piper beguiles the journalists, who flock and scramble not to miss a note of his musical message. Media is at the service of Power. The newspapers on the payroll, each with a number sticking out of their pockets or clothes, sit bare-assed, their tails pointed upwards and wagging their tails like excited dogs. Only one sheep lingers on to sniff what emanates from their behinds'³¹. In *'Television'* (2007), 'the artist allegorically challenges the medium of television. Power uses the medium, but is not swayed by it, as can be seen from the table set with two

Mass media, 2014 oil on canvas 50×60 cm

Talkative characters who talk continuously through the media without saying anything. They do not realise that time is running out.

bowler hat-wearing people eating, representing Power. The situation is different at the table of the common people: the majority, dressed in appropriate and attractive clothing, serves the main course on a very high, and therefore important, table, where there is a tray containing the television, which is, however, controlled by the hand of Power; which emerges from under the tabletop. The teddy bear is meant to bring cheer; it appeals to the viewers' childlike brains. Note the dog who, as an even lesser being than the servant of Power, holds the tip of the butler's shoe as the lowest link in the chain³². A work from 2009 is dedicated to *'The Press'*: 'Over the Italian landscape flies Power, attached to the falsehoods of the media world. The mite represents Italy...'



La stampa (The Press), 2009
oil on canvas 70×50 cm

In 2011 comes *'Advert'* where Pinocchio is 'reduced to a mannequin to sponsor our obsession with success. Power and the Mites cuddle and would like to appease Pinocchio, who is upset and, especially, cannot see what Power is making him do'.

In the same year, Babb painted *'The Press'* (same title as 2009) and *'The Press 2'*. In the former, Pinocchio who rises above a building of Power is 'dressed in the guise of printed paper and ironically observed by Harlequin and Pulchinella, personifying a world of falsehoods'.³³ In the second, 'Pinocchio is placed to simulate, in spite of himself, the lies of printed paper'.

'The Free Press Wagon' (2012) shows 'Pinocchio and the masks dragging a semblance of a boat made of newspapers onto a disused rail. Three ravens, representing the worst of Power, observe. The landscape is desolate, the houses are twisted and the tree has only one leaf'.

In 2014, Babb portrays *'The Readers'* of the printed paper with their heads, resting on a ta-

I lettori (Readers), 2014
oil on canvas 60x80 cm

Any means of information, whether from Power or from the people, is read 'without using the head' that is laid aside on the table.



ble in front of them. Critical sense is zeroed out and both the newspapers drawn by the artist ('The Servant' and 'The Master') are held by headless bodies.

In *'Mass Media'* (2014) 'talkative characters' speak through the media, not realising that time is running out for them and for us.

DRAMAS (FROM 1994)

Some people have spoken of melancholy in some of Babb's works, but perhaps these are just frescoes of reality, where smiles and tears, joy and drama coexist every day.

In 1994, Giorgio Dal Canto made *'L'ora è suonata'* (The Hour-bell Has Sounded), a dramatic portrayal of an existence that has come to an end: *'The hour-bell has 'sounded' for those who, after having worked hard all their lives, have not attained power but have remained in an intermediate role and now their time has run out. The sorrowful face, the wrinkled clothes and the resigned posture all indicate the impotence of those who wanted to, but were not able to seize power and thus put on the dark suit and bowler hat'.*

In the same year, a *'Still Life'* (inscription that occupies the lower right-hand corner of the work) re-enacts a Babb-ish tale that imagines a world where jugs, already portrayed in a 1986 work, are both a refuge and an instrument of offence: *'Life leads people to get into jugs that roll over each other and sometimes run over some people'*³⁴.

Giorgio paints and states, *'Everyone get your jug, hold it tight and go with the flow! Best wishes!'*

In 2008, *'The Wardrobe'* houses the body of a defenceless, 'coat-hung' man: *'Used and hung up in the wardrobe like discarded clothes. It*

La piramide del potere (The Pyramid of Power), 2001
oil on canvas, 19×58 cm

The overlapping chairs signify the overlapping of Power in its pyramidal function. Power needs a Conductor and at least one performer who is represented by the violinist in the background.

*is the very conclusion of life. We have all been used and then discarded. Eventually we all find ourselves in the wardrobe with the landscape of life in the background. With us remain our loved ones (the cat watching) and our enemies (the vultures on the top left)*³⁵.



FOR CHAIR AND FOR ARMCHAIR (2001-2010)

In Babb's work, the chair, already depicted in *'Equilibrio'* (Balance) in the 1978 exhibition at Il Pisanello and in *'Il mio mondo 18'* (My world 18) from 1979, where man finds some relief from human fatigue (the row of chairs in *'Brutti e Belli'* (Ugly and Beautiful) from 1993 is unique), becomes another element that helps the painter to illustrate his thinking.

In 1994, with *'Simulation'*, *'Power watches from the top of the armchair of power the passage of everything. He who has no power abandons himself to the role of an animal. A cat, walking in front of a person, who simulates its movement, making himself like the animal, represents this'.* These elements (chairs and armchairs) began to materialise as early as 1980 and in 1990 with the work *'Satisfaction'*. However, it is in *'The Pyramid of Power'* in 2001 that they become powerful 'messengers': *'The overlapping chairs signify the superposition of Power in its pyramidal func-*





Le sedie del Potere (The Chairs of Power) 2006
oil on canvas 40x50 cm

Every person who has reached power, identified with the suit and the bowler hat, does not want to give up the chair and so he carries it with him, attached to his bottom

Brutti e belli Ugly and beautiful, 1993
oil on canvas 50×20cm
(Maura Neri)



tion. Power needs a conductor and at least one performer, who is represented by the violinist in the background³⁶.

The following year, the chair is again used for Babb's mindful suggestions, and with the '*Two Faces of Power*', the artist emphasises the existence of two powers, the military and the political: 'These two powers are complementary and are therefore drawn symmetrically, but with the same aim of world domination by whatever means necessary. Political power is firmly bolted to the chair with a wing nut and is therefore very difficult to remove'.

In 2006 in '*The Chairs of Power*', 'Every person who has attained Power fears losing the chair. In order not to let go of it, he carries it around, attached to his backside'³⁷.

2010 saw the birth of the work '*Instability*'. Here 'the chairs of power are differentiated: we start with a rough, sturdy chair that sits at

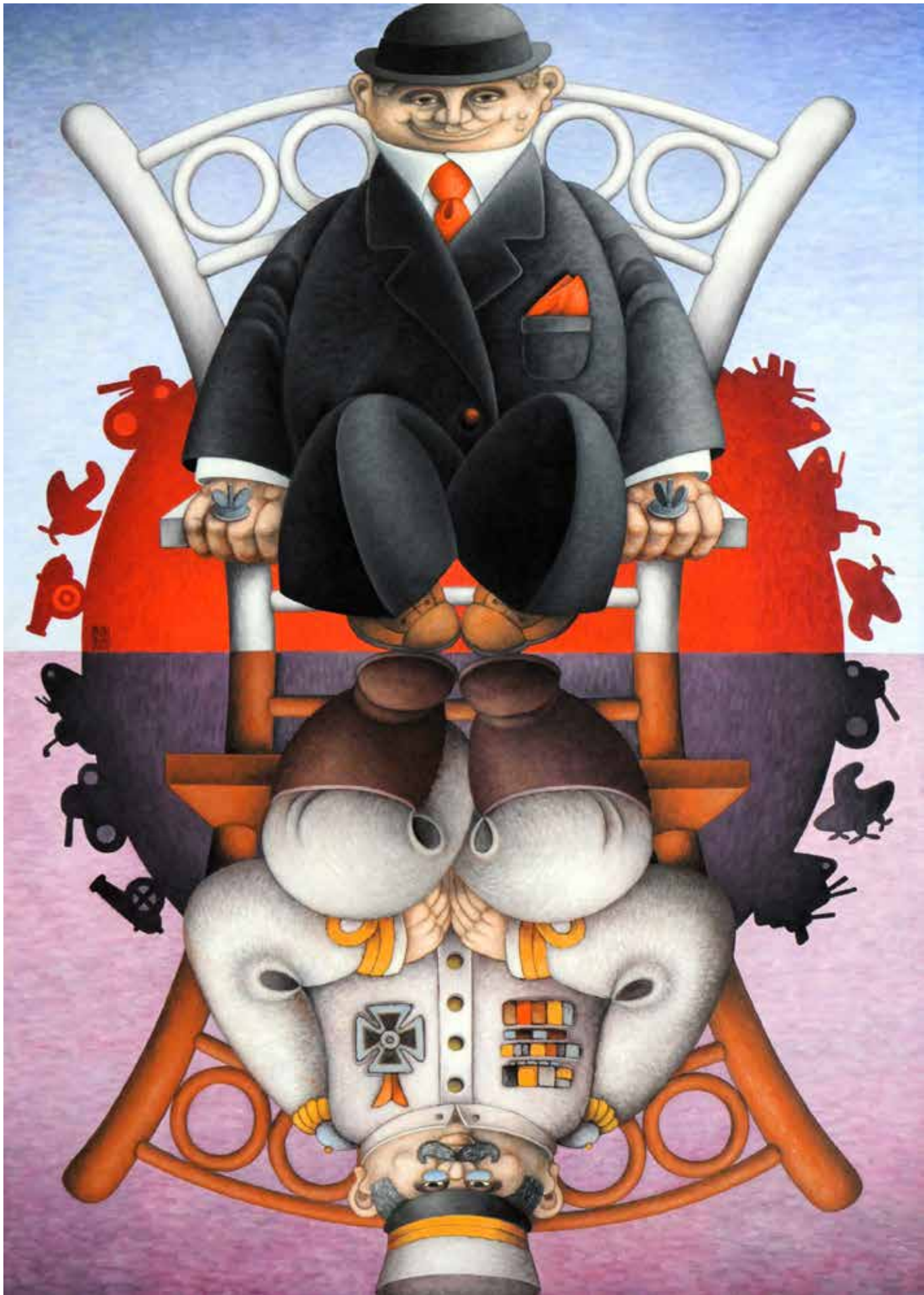
the base of power and appeals to the common people. Above this is a slimmer chair on which a common man is seated, but with a bowler hat (symbol of power), and at the top we have the more refined chair on which the strongest power is seated.

All chairs stand in an unstable balance as Power has to manoeuvre in order not to lose the chair of power. The mites appear shy; they have to learn how the balance works in order to fit in. They are the first mites to appear. The balloons represent a sick sun, already in decay'.

The armchair, a comfortable seat, is one of the symbols of power, and the relationship between those who have this 'privilege' and ordinary men who do not, is made malleable in '*Contrapposti*' (Opposing Worlds) from 2001, which highlights the difference between power resting softly on an elegant armchair and the 'stripes' lying on the ground 'without any kind of comfort'.

Lo Specchio (The Mirror) 2002
oil on canvas 70x100 cm

Two significant faces of Power: political power and military power. These two powers are complementary and therefore are drawn in a specular way but with the same purpose of dominating the world by any means. Political power is firmly nailed to the chair with a wing nut and therefore it is very difficult to remove it.



Contrapposti (Opposing Worlds), 2001
oil on canvas 40x50 cm

The theme of 'armchairs' as a symbol of power is depicted here with the man in the bowler hat sitting on a beautiful chair, which rests on a carpet that becomes larger and larger. In contrast, the ordinary man is on the ground and without any comfort at all. The people pay homage to Power with cypress plants.





L'albero della vita (The Tree of Life) 1997 Oil on canvas cm. 35 x 50

Life produces, through the tree, men of power (in the center), wealthy men (on the left) and common men forced to submit to power and serve the rich.

Important monuments are protected by common men against the effects that the new generations will produce.

La televisione (The Tv Set), 1995

oil on canvas 30x40 cm

Television has taken each of us and we all have one. This power that curls up on itself, note the very gaunt faces of those who impersonate well-being, and that makes barren and dangerous (see the noose tied to the branch of the tree) everything around us.

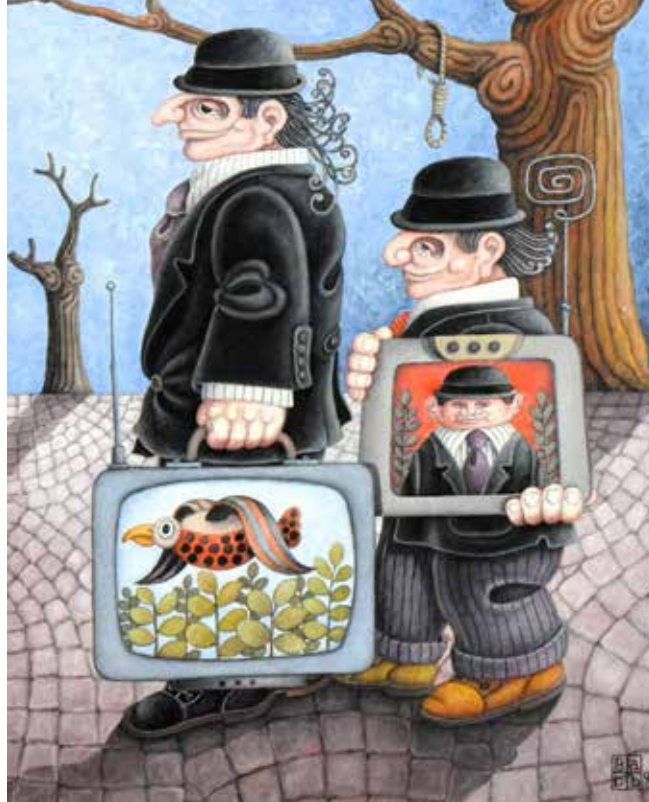
The environment is decidedly gloomy and hostile to the carrying out of a normal life, the trees in reality are bare but on TV the trees are lush with leaves!.



FOR TREES

Trees of all kinds adorn the Babb-ish landscape. Exquisitely Tuscan cypresses, with slender trunks and large foliage, or tilted by the wind. Nature provides a setting for the protagonists or, to put it better, it completes the pictorial phrase coming out of the thinking artist's brush. The debut of this 'instrument of the soul' dates back to 1980 with *L'albero della vita* (The Tree of Life), a title that was taken up again in 1997. The tree then becomes the protagonist in the same year with '*The Tree of Power*', which '*is lovingly watered by its servant and birds can flutter among its branches. From the vase at its base come the people who manage it. It is no ordinary vase, but an evidently allusive pot. The Leaning Tower of Pisa in the background remains for the author a symbol of his land, but has no relevance to the context*'. Many years later, in 2008, '*L'albero della cuccagna*' (The Greasy Pole) welcomes Pinocchio who is 'accompanied' by two adults who look as he does towards a tree with lush fruit. In one of the puppet's hands are the four gold coins that he hands over to the Cat and Fox in the fairytale. '*The Miracle Tree*' in 2012 shows Pinocchio, Pulcinella and Harlequin, admiring nine characters from Dal Canto's world who, attached to the branches, use mobile phones to communicate. Finally, in 2015 '*Trees*' offer us a score made up of four moments in which humanity and the animal world appear in the presence of these round-windowed giants.

The tree is an element that takes on many meanings and many forms and constitutes a poetic verse in the work of Giorgio Dal Canto, who happily uses it as 'one of the family'.



L'albero del potere (The Tree of Power), 1997

oil on canvas 30x40 cm

The tree of power is lovingly watered by the servant and birds can fly among its branches. The tree of power produces the people who manage the power who are born from the vase placed at the base of the tree. This is not a common vase but a chamber pot. The allusion is obvious. In the background there is the tower of Pisa which remains for the author a symbol of his land but has no connection with the context, as in the painting "The Cathedral".



Genesis del Potere (Genesis of Power) 1998
oil on canvas cm 30×40 cm



L'albero dei miracoli (The Miracle Tree), 2012
oil on canvas, 60×80 cm





Alberi (le quattro stagioni) (Trees), 2015
oil on canvas 50×60 cm (Marco Dal Canto)

On the previous page

Albero dei desideri (Tree of Wishes), 2001
oil on canvas 20×60 cm
(Maura Neri)



FOR LABYRINTH (2002-2006)

The labyrinth has been a constant challenge throughout the history of humanity, a powerful symbol, a metaphor always present in almost every path.

In 2002, it materialises in Giorgio Dal Canto's work *'Labirinto'* (Labyrinth): *'Smiling, always smiling, is the temple of Power, to which Dal Canto gives the appearance of a labyrinth, as in his other paintings. Straddling the temple, to which he is a stranger, a curious man looks down on the anonymous man who is about to go through the door, which is outlined like Milan Cathedral. However, he shows his bare bottom, and the reason is very simple: to enter the circle of Power, you have to offer up important personal things'*³⁸.

Four years later, with *'The Labyrinth of Power'*, the artist manifested that *'ours is the time of labyrinths, and many of his paintings carry this theme. One recalls the translucent labyrinth. Here we are in the presence of a clear labyrinth, alone, insurmountable, as it is well protected by Power. Outside the labyrinth of Power, there is the pavement and dry trees for the outside environment. Inside, the trees are green and the ground is well smoothed for a favourable environment. Ordinary people try to enter, but without success. A street sign is placed at the entrance forbidding access, obviously to ordinary people. Power, still wearing a bowler hat and jacket, is identified as Italian. The flag is proof of that. As you can see, he is missing his trousers, and as it happens, a man without trousers is worthless. The artist, in his unexpressed thought goes*

*further: he compares a man without trousers to shit'*³⁹.

In 2009, the work *'Labyrinth with Mites'* depicts *'Power, lolling on top of the buildings that have suffocated all cultural heritage, is convinced that it even has the Sun on a leash. The mites, now masters of the environment, roam in total freedom'*.⁴⁰

In *'Elevation'* (2010) there is a thin shred of hope: *'At the bottom of the labyrinth of the world, where everyone struggles, only a few manage to rise. Puppets try to help people as they strive to emerge. Note that at the bottom are the bad things (stumped and leafless trees, deformed clocks, etc.) while at the top the symbols are normalised'* and the clock becomes round again. Curiously, the deformed clock is reminiscent of *Salvador Dali's* 'soft' clocks.

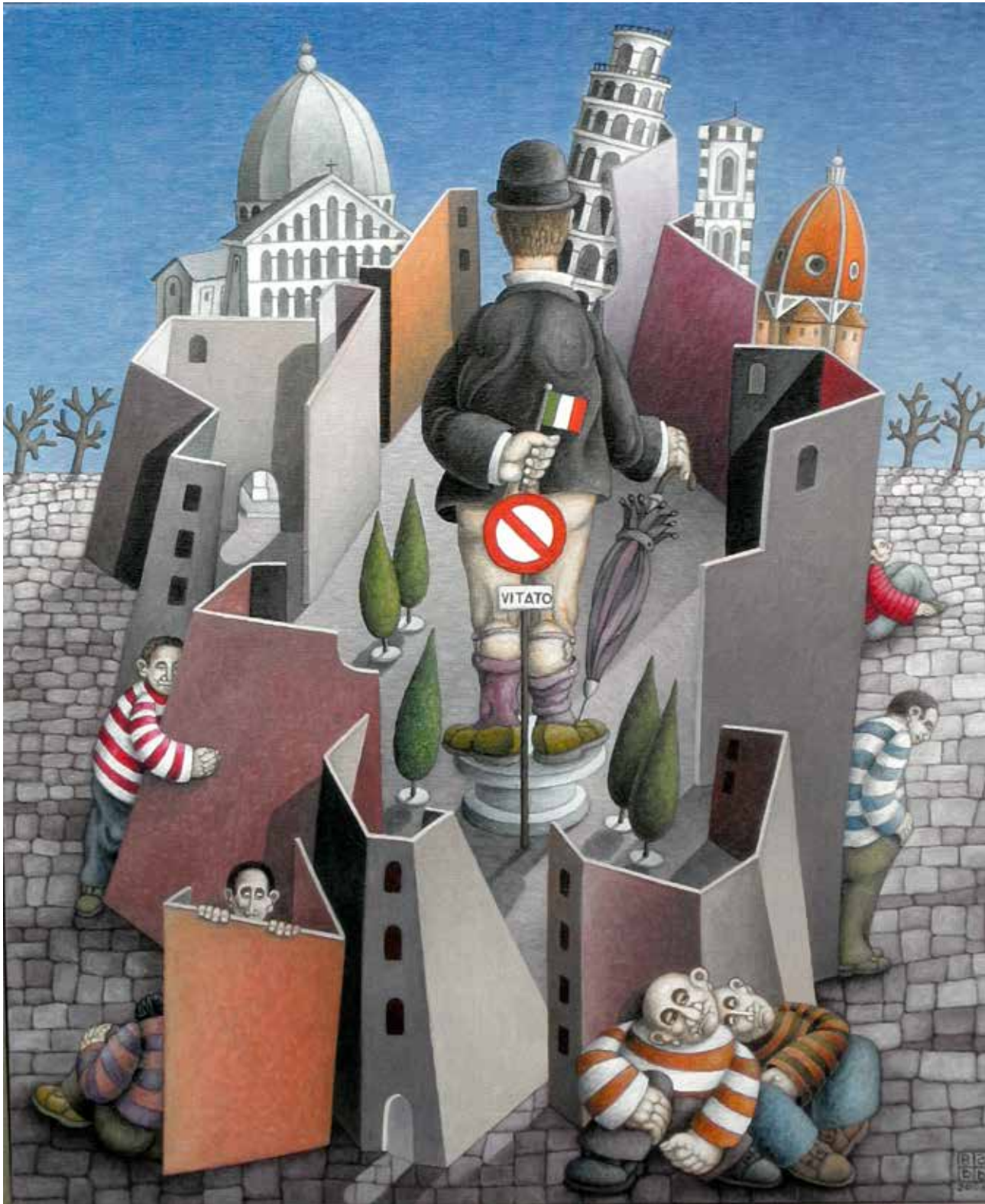


Elevazione (Elevation), 2010
oil on canvas 70×100 cm

At the bottom of the labyrinth of the world, where everyone is struggling, only some manage to rise. The puppets try to help the people who are struggling to emerge.

Note that at the bottom there are bad things (trees cut down and without leaves, deformed clocks, etc.) while at the top the symbols normalize (round clock)





Il Labirinto del Potere (The Labyrinth of Power), 2006
oil on canvas 50×60 cm

For the artist this is the period of labyrinths (remember the translucent labyrinth) and here we are in the presence of a clear, solid, insurmountable labyrinth because it is well protected by power. Outside the labyrinth of power there is the pavement and the trees are dry (hostile environment) while inside the labyrinth there are green trees and the ground is well smoothed, smooth (favorable environment).

Ordinary people try to enter without success and at the entrance there is a sign that prevents access: forbidden (obviously to ordinary people).

Power, always with a bowler hat and jacket is identified as Italian (see flag) but he lacks trousers because when you are without trousers you are worth nothing. The artist compares a man without trousers to shit.



Labirinto con acari (Labyrinth with mites), 2009
oil on canvas 50×60 cm

The Power is convinced that it can command (keep on a leash) even the sun from the top of the buildings that have defaced the symbols of Italy (Colosseum).

The mites circulate freely, now masters of the environment.

Fuga (Leak), 2012
oil on canvas 60x80 cm

Power, symbolically represented by the bowler hats, no longer cares about our heritage such as the Tower of Pisa and a twisted facade of a church, for example. The Artist Dal Canto paints the Tower of Pisa upside down to demonstrate what should be done and that instead, upside down as you see the Tower, is not done. The three witnesses do not accept this degradation and therefore fly away with the cat that symbolizes freedom because, he, has no masters.

M FOR MONUMENTS (2002-2012)

The historical monuments of 'our' Tuscany are an integral part of Babb's work. He studies them, duplicates them and in many works they become his protagonists.

Whether single figures, or surrounded by red-dish-roofed houses, they are all recognisable.

In the 2002 work '*Giù dalla torre*' (Down from the tower), he portrays the Leaning Tower of Pisa (one of the most representative monuments), which for him is a sacred place, and declares that '*All those unworthy, moneyed people should not climb the Tower. And so the Tower turns upside down and unloads onto the city all the people who do not understand its value, its history, or what it represents for the Pisa area*'.

In 2003, an ecological message arrived with '*The Polluted Arno*'. Here the churches, buildings and towers of Tuscan cities became sentinels of the river, which '*is depicted in an electric green, almost phosphorescent colour*', while '*the signs of power pass under the bridges: the hats, which go with the river current, as if Power had killed itself by the same pollution that it had caused*'.

Three years later, he produced '*Panels of Cities*': '*The most significant and beautiful talian cities presented on overlapping panels, encircled by Power. The hat placed on the top*



*Illustration for a publication
(Vivaldi family archive)*





right-hand corner of the front panel literally means that Power 'put its hat on it'. However, who is Power? It is that dark lord who operates at the margins or in the shadows. That is why you can only partially see it. The message is that Power envelops everything, even the most beautiful and meaningful of things"⁴¹.

In '*Murals*' from 2007, 'a colourful wall divides two opposing worlds. At the back is the world of the important monuments of our most beautiful cities. The forgetfulness and incuracy of Power makes them flat, grey, dirty, without splendour. Behind the wall, the monuments seem to belong to the past. In front of the wall is the world of affluence. A ridiculous dog is the centre of attention. Painted on the wall are dwarfs, dancers and songs: the frivolities that take over the world and make a 'wall' out of forgotten wonders'.

Battistero (Baptistery,) 1986
oil on canvas cm 50×70 (Piero Frassi)

Chiesa della Spina, 1986
oil on canvas 35×50 cm (Piero Frassi)





Il Vaticano domina tutto (The Vatican dominates everything) 2006
oil on canvas 60x80 cm

On Bernini's portico the cardinals dance, happy to envelop the entire world represented by the palaces of the Italian cities. The dome of St. Peter's in the Vatican dominates all the palaces. The carabinieri prevent access to non-experts and therefore defend the status quo. Given this situation, ordinary people cling wherever they can, both to umbrellas that slow their fall and to balloons that carry them aloft.



Arno inquinato (Polluted Arno), 2003
oil on canvas 50×70 cm

The Arno River that touches the important cities, for the artist represents a cradle of culture over the centuries, is polluted. The symbols of power pass under the bridges: the hats, which go away with the current of the river, as if the power was killed by itself because it caused the pollution. The Arno River is very polluted and therefore is depicted with an electric green color; almost fluorescent.



Pannelli di città (City Panels) 2006, oil on canvas 40×50 cm

The representative cities, the most significant, the most beautiful in Italy that are represented in overlapping panels have been surrounded by power. The hat on the right corner of the front panel means that power "has put its hat on it". But who is power??? It is that gentleman who works underground (in the shadows) and who can only be seen partially because his work is mostly hidden and therefore underground.

The message is that power envelops everything, even the most beautiful and significant things.

Gente (People), 2000
oil on canvas 40x50 cm

Too many people on the Tower! This crowding is not pleasing to one of the most beautiful monuments in the world.





Le mutande (The Underpants) 2010
oil on canvas 60×80 cm

The Tower of Pisa is an important symbol for Giorgio Dal Canto. Today, however, there is no longer any respect for anything because people behave rudely: they put their underwear on the top of the Tower and dress whatever they can, without distinction, in inappropriate ways (see the tie worn by the Tower). Those who are in their underwear degrade the symbol and it is no coincidence that the underwear was placed on the cypress (another Tuscan symbol) and the people, the cat, the pig and even the violinist were put in their underwear! Chaos is evolving and the priest does not see, because he wears very dark glasses, but with his phlegm he urges us to stay calm, quiet, even if the irreparable is happening behind him (Chaos).

Everyone is involved in the degradation: the old gentleman with the club and the power that leads a pig on a leash (and not the dog) to symbolize the indifference of power in choosing right things (dog) or wrong things (pig). The Mites persist in their curious work like looking at people's bottoms



Esodo (Exodus), 2005
oil on hardboard cm 60×30

The monuments suffer; they are red with shame and the managers of the religious monuments flutter in the sky almost as if, upon leaving, they were no longer part of it.



Mongolfiere (Hot Air Balloons), 2006 oil on canvas 80×60 cm



PONTEDERA, MY LOVE

Giorgio Dal Canto's hometown of Pontedera was a constant in his works, and throughout his career, he used it as an urban backdrop in many of his paintings.

The Cathedral, the Misericordia Church, the Palazzo Pretorio and the Napoleonic Bridge are ever-present, and do not merely play supporting roles, but leading ones.

In 1992, the subject was one corner of Pontedera, namely the 'Piazza dei Pulman' in Via Carducci, a bus station from which buses depart for the entire surrounding area. An impressive 'chapter' was given to the 'Tramme' (tram), which appears many paintings

and hundreds of illustrations for a publication with the same name. In addition to showing his favourite setting, Babb dedicated works to Pontedera that recall events or traditions, such as in 1991 with the work *'Fiera di Pontedera'*, which celebrated its 520th edition that year. This was repeated in 1998 with *'La fiera di Pontedera'*: 'It attracts many people who also want to compete in tests of strength. There is no symbolism in this painting, which is quite rare in Dal Canto. The artist only wanted to capture and fix on the canvas a moment of the fair'⁴².

In the same period, he painted *'The Carousel of Pontedera'* and the *'Pontedera Market'* (reminiscent of when it was held in the city centre) and the fantastic oil painting *'The Airship'*, which marks the era when these lighter-than-air aircrafts could be admired in the skies over Pontedera (1913-1928).⁴³

He also painted to watercolour works in honour of the Armonia Hotel, a historical hotel in Pontedera, on its re-opening in 1998.



Il ponte di Pontedera (Pontedera Bridge), 1983

oil on canvas
(Vivaldi family)

The symbol of the city, the river that crosses it, the boat of power that hosts the notables, the priest, the soldier and the men with the bowler hat (symbol of power) while the men-line (symbol of the people) sail alone with sadness and fatigue. From the larger boat come out some oars that presuppose someone who does this work "on the lower levels".

*'We can see the old-style hotel with the fountain and the fish jumping, the birds in the sky and the priest resting quietly in front of the cathedral. The inauguration, on the other hand, brings chaos to the square, which is symbolised by many cars on top of each other and with all the authorities invited onto the main balcony'*⁴⁴.

In 2006, the 'pink race' (Giro d'Italia) started in Pontedera's main square and the event was 'immortalised' in *'Il Giro d'Italia a Pontedera'*, which also recalls the passion of the people of Pontedera for this extraordinary sport.

In 2010, Babb celebrated the Tenth Crossbow Contest of Pontedera (*'10th Palio Città di Pontedera'*), an event in which teams of crossbowmen representing the districts and hamlets of the municipality competed in Piazza Cavour. In addition, countless artworks show the town in different contexts and different people. These are works that today we can admire in numerous 'Pontaderese' homes.

Piazzetta (Little Square) 1979
oil on canvas 80×60 cm

Right in front of the police station, on the steps of the Chiesa Vecchia, in the centre of Pontedera in the 1970s, there was a flourishing drug trade. This place was referred to as 'The Piazzetta', and was frequented mainly by young non-conformists.



On the following pages

Piazza Duomo Pontedera, 1983
oil on canvas 35×50 cm
(Rodolfo Giuntini)

Palloni volanti (Flying Balloons), 1984
oil on canvas 35×50 cm
(Piero Frassi)

Cammilla, 1992
oil on canvas cm 100×70
(Federico Nocchi)

Palazzo Pretorio, 1991
oil on canvas 40×30 cm
(Sauro Macelloni)

Fiera di Pontedera (The Pontedera Fair), 1991
oil on canvas 80×60 cm
(Piero Frassi)







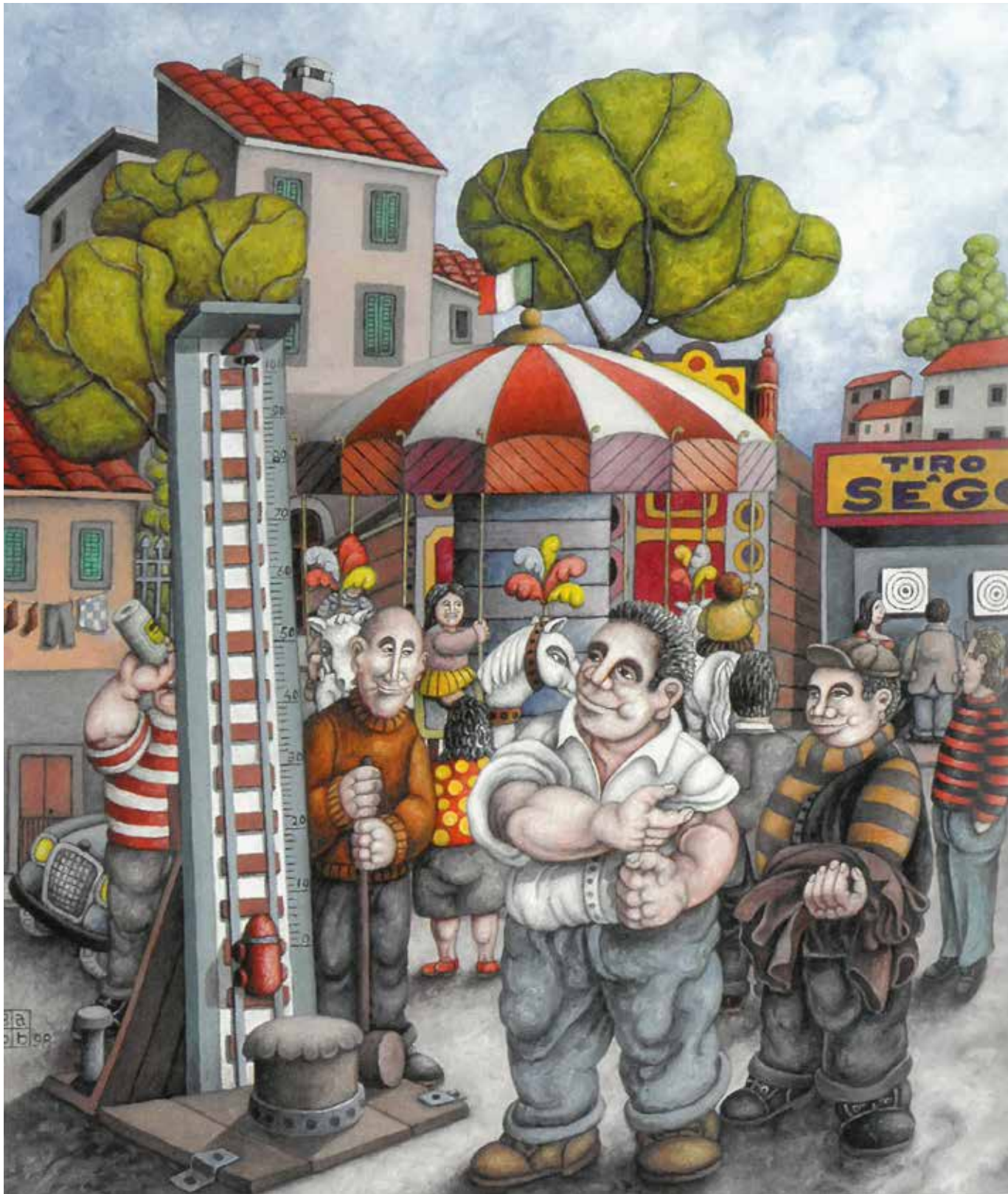


On the previous page

Piazza dei pullman (Coach Square), 1992
oil on canvas cm 100×70 (Enzo Polidori)

Mercato di Pontedera (Pontedera Market), 1998
oil on canvas 100×70 cm (Enzo Polidori)

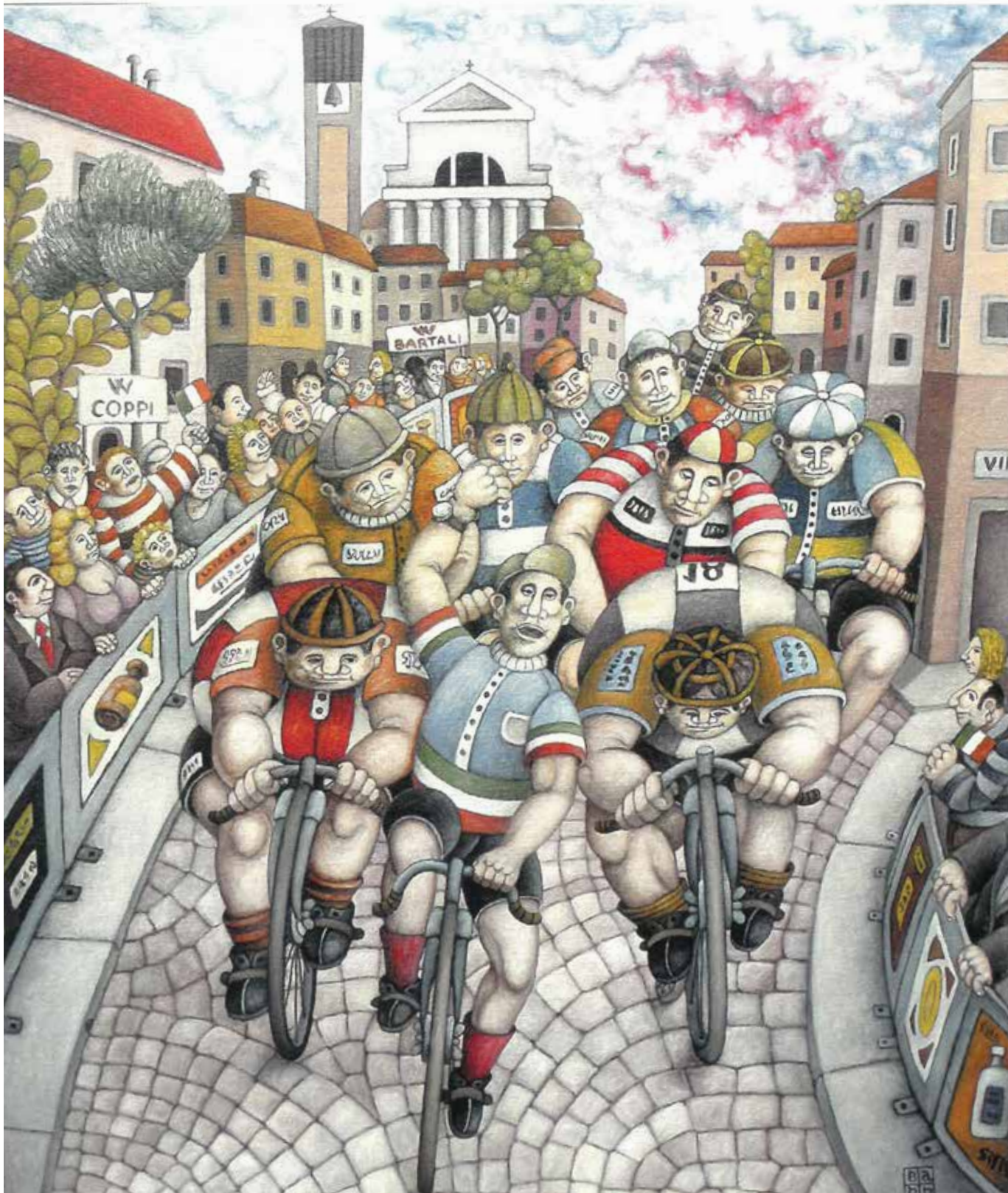
Giostra di Pontedera
(Carousel of Pontedera), 1998
oil on canvas 70×100 cm
(Enzo Polidori)



La fiera di Pontedera (The Pontedera Fair), 1998
oil on canvas 50×60 cm

The Pontedera Fair has always been an important local fair that attracts many people who also want to try their hand at tests of strength.

There are no allegories in this painting (and it is quite rare) because Giorgio Dal Canto only wanted to describe, through his eyes and his brush, a moment of the fair.



Il Giro d'Italia a Pontedera (The Tour of Italy in Pontedera), 2006
oil on canvas 50x60 cm

The event of the year has materialized and the tour started from the main square of Pontedera. Note the signs W Bartali and Coppi as the enthusiasm is still the same as it once was.



I padroni del Tempo (Masters of Time 2007)
oil on canvas 50×40 cm

Power manages and commands time by changing the hands at will, allocating the time in which we must live our existence. Power distorts your time. Ordinary people, despite having reached the highest window reachable through the use of culture (books) and other means (bucket) in order to look out at life, sadly look out the window at the world in the impossibility of acting and participating



FOR VIAREGGIO

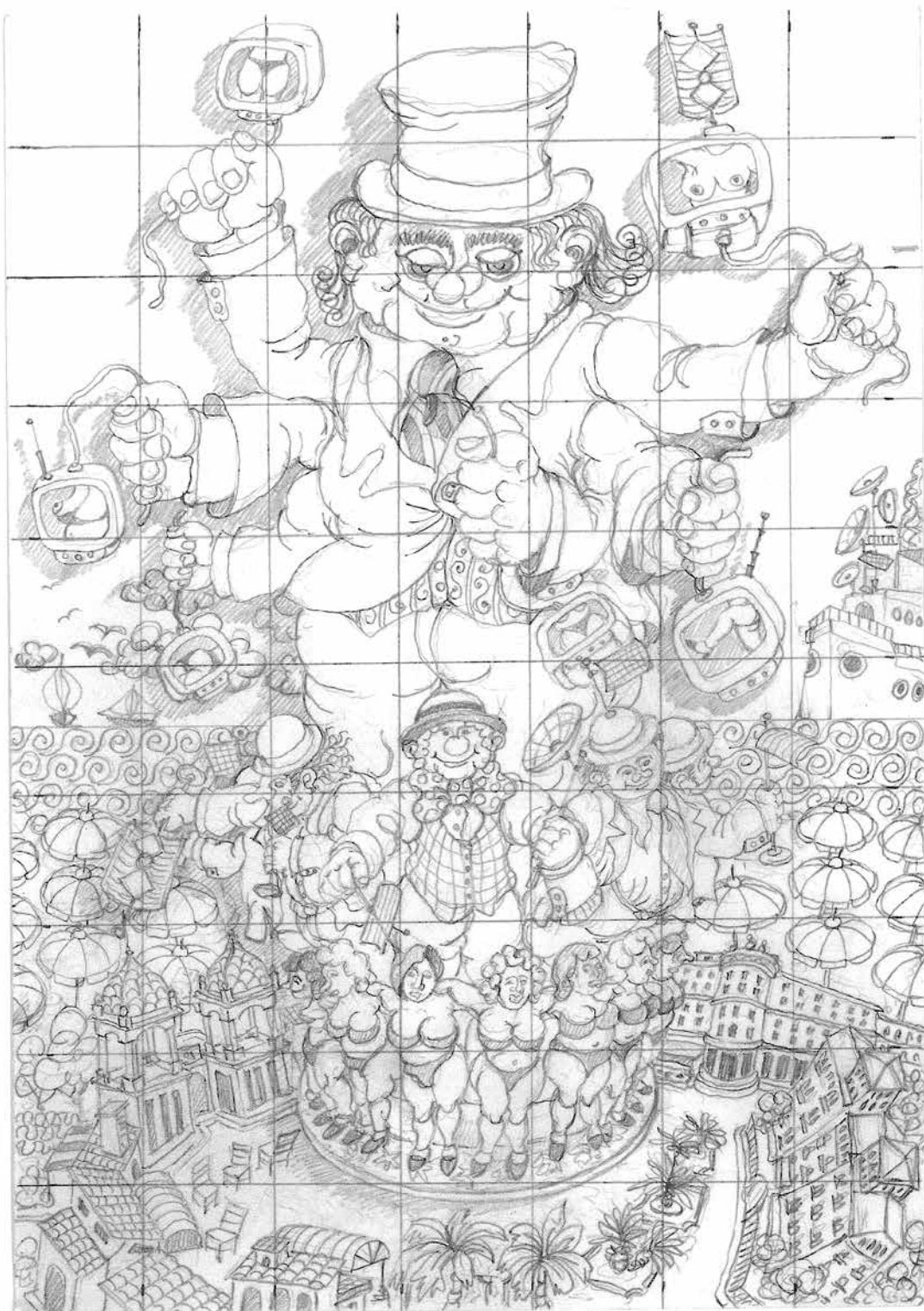
One of the places that Babb-ish art visits repeatedly is Viareggio, and here the focus is on is the event for which it Viareggio is universally known: the Carnival, its protagonists, but also its promenade immortalised in a splendid painting. This setting welcomes the masks that Dal Canto uses in his language, especially Harlequin and Pulcinella. In addition, on some

occasions, Babb tried his hand at sketching 'Burlamacco', the official float of the Carnival of Viareggio, which was designed by the artist Umberto Bonetti in 1931. Finally, there is one other colourful thread linking our town to this splendid holiday destination. When Giorgio was only two, a great Viareggio native, Lorenzo Viani, who was to have great importance in the formation and inspiration of Babb's art, passed away in Lido di Ostia.



Passeggiata a Viareggio (Promenade in Viareggio), 1993, oil on canvas 50×20 cm





La giostra di Viareggio (The Carousel of Viareggio), 1996
oil on canvas 70×100 cm

The Carnival of Viareggio inspires this picture. Power stands at the centre of the merry-go-round with many hands in which the medium par excellence is clasped. Power rests on a carousel of clowns directing the carrousel. At the base the costume-wearing women of summer in Viareggio. Note the Art Nouveau Margherita beachclub and the neoclassical Principe di Piemonte hotel.



Pinocchi (Pinocchios), 2011

oil on canvas 80×100 cm

Made to build a series of puppets piled up for display in a square at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011.



FOR PINOCCHIO (from 2007)

In 1856, some years before the release of his famous book 'Pinocchio', **Carlo Lorenzini** wrote a very curious book: *'Un romanzo in vapore, da Firenze a Livorno'*. (A Steam-powered Novel, from Firenze to Livorno)

It tells of a journey on the Leopolda Railway from the Tuscan port to the state capital via Pisa, Pontedera and Empoli, meeting people, telling anecdotes and narrating the history of the places passed through.

The writer-to-be of Pinocchio wrote a brief description of Pontedera: *'This town, which has such a lively and commercial appearance, was already an ancient frontier fortress of the Pisan Republic, equipped with moats and with a bridge over the Era River. The Pisans had to fortify it several times, because it suffered much damage in the wars between Pisa and Livorno. Then in 1328, the Florentines took it, sacked it and demolished the fortress. Similarly, in 1364, at the time of the famous war fought between the Pisans and the Florentines over Cascina, in which the latter, having had the upper hand, once again came to dominate Pontedera and its neighbouring castles. After various vicissitudes, the people of Pontedera, in 1431, gave themselves to Captain Niccolo Piccino, from whom the Florentines forcibly took back the town the following year. Around this time, it appears that the Castle of Pontedera was somewhat uninhabited, because in 1454, the Lordship of Florence ordered that one hundred families from Camporgiano, in Garfagnana and as many from Albiano and Caprigliola, in Lunigiana, go to live in Pontedera, in order to repopulate*

*this land. At the coming of Charles VIII (of France) to Italy, the Pisans rebelled against Florence as they were irritated that the people of Pontedera had refused to swear allegiance to their ancient motherland (Pisa). They ran on Pontedera, took it and sacked it mercilessly. But the villagers, at the first opportunity, chased away the Pisa garrison and Placed themselves once under the protection of the Florence. In vain, the Pisans returned with many people to attack the town, but those good people always bravely repulsed them. However, the greatest damage suffered by Pontedera was in 1554, when the Austro-Spanish-Medicean troops led by the Marquis of Marnano passed through. After forcing Piero Strozzi to retreat, they had the castle walls of Pontedera knocked down, as a punishment for having welcomed Strozzi among the inhabitants'*⁴⁵.

Lorenzini's narrative continues and concludes by talking about the mythical 'Count Anton Francesco Pontedera, famous for his valour and more so for his cruelty: He was painted in the Palazzo del Potestà, hanging by one foot on a rope, with a large reward for whoever brought him back dead alive'⁴⁶. He also spoke of the Church of Saints Jacopo and Filippo, today the Propositura that 'dates back to the 12th century. The first stone was laid, with solemn ceremony and in the presence of the people of Pontedera, on 15 May 1271'. When Lorenzini wrote these lines, the invention of Pinocchio and the first steps of the world's most famous puppet in the *Giornale dei Bambini* (Children's Newspaper), directed by Ferdinando Martini, a supplement to the legendary daily *Il Fanfulla*, were still a long way off. From the windows of the train, Collodi saw a lively



Pinocchio inquinato (Polluted Pinocchio), 2013 oil on canvas 60x80 cm

The puppet protagonist (part of the series preceding 'Pinocchio the Observer') is polluted by the mischievousness that Power imposes on a vague landscape that includes environmental disasters, neglect of monuments and the controversial cruise ships that disturb the historical beauty of Venice. The sun, seemingly indifferent, looks bothered by the current situation.

little town and its small station, of which only a trace remains today in a street name. He was probably not remotely imagining the creation that would make him eternally famous, and that would one day be 'borrowed' by an artist born right on the banks of the Era River.

Babb used Pinocchio to expose power, the contradictions of society and the loneliness of people.

It was in 2007 when Babb painted '*Lies*' where *'Power is multifaceted and manifests itself in various forms. Here it takes on a red colour (perhaps shame) instead of the black usually used by the artist, and has a double face, one of which is that of Pinocchio with a long nose. Here, the theme is that of lies, often used by Power. They grow in the tree of lies and are used by the gnomes that come out of the pockets of Power. Power is in the labyrinth, from which there is no exit, and the gnomes are holding the letters that make up the word 'Lies'.*

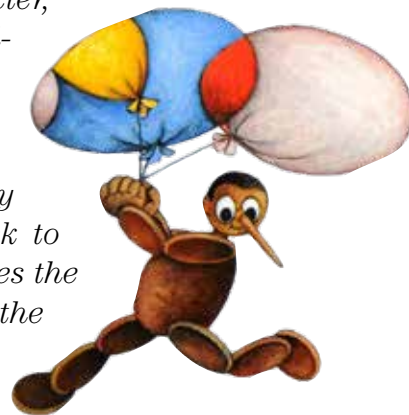
Riccardo Ferrucci writes: 'For Dal Canto it has been natural to take the side of the weak, the simple, the men who passively endure the march of history and whose rights and legitimate aspirations are frequently trampled upon. The characteristic feature and originality of Dal Canto's painting is that he is able to describe the existing power relations and the ever-increasing progression towards a cold and technological civilisation, but telling the story in surreal ways that are always different. In one of his latest cycles of paintings 'Puppets', he once again demonstrates a rare inventive ability to create a vast tragicomic fresco from the universally known story of Pinocchio. The idea of the art is not simply to tell and write the stories of

the Collodian character, but to cross these familiar symbols with his own poetic and stylistic stamp, narrating a new contemporary tragedy that looks back to the past and illuminates the present. The images of the fable already contain within them a strong social criticism and

the idea of a power mechanism that nullifies the aspirations for freedom and individual choices: at the heart of the poetic journey is the idea of a humanity reduced to slavery and deprived of direct instruments of knowledge. Television, computers and mobile phones are the symbols of a fragile modernity, but for this Tuscan artist they become the tools for manipulating consciences and creating a mediated and only virtual reality.

The painting of the puppets, which end up in the rubbish bin, is the exemplary story of our civilisation destroying our senses, the natural aspirations of mankind. The tone of the tale is dramatic, authentic, tragic, but continually elevated by the poetic timbres of invention and fabrication and he finds new and original ways to express, with imagination, the anxieties of our time'.

Luperini wrote in 2008, presenting him to the Empoli audience, 'Emblematic episodes from the tale of Pinocchio enter the scene, but remain in the background, as scenarios. Dal Canto does not want to make yet another interpretation of the events of Collodi's puppet. Pinocchio serves him to create immediate,





universally known references, without too much preamble. *Pinocchio* is the puppet par excellence; by taking on his guise, all humanity is transformed into a collection of puppets'. The next year, it was Dino Carlesi's turn to describe this *evoluzione*: 'The artist Dal Canto reveals his interpretative possibilities, all legitimised by aesthetic taste, as when he presents us with the cycle on *'Pinocchio'*. In fact, the artist's latest endeavour is linked to the twenty-three paintings relating to Collodi's work: *Pinocchio*. An astonishing sequence that, if examined in detail, would require an incredible amount of study and time. Elements of Power control an elegant apartment building from above and below (with tents, dogs, trees, churches in the balance). The 'powerless' disappear into a sun-drenched wardrobe, the crowd (watched between pitchforks and paradises) trudge in a pyramid fashion, as if caught between power and non-power in an extreme freedom of posture, while the religious authorities with their gold stripes bully and kill the poor Christ. While the *Pinocchio-Harlequins* subvert and unbalance the real city, others are propagating the tricks of the neighbourhood, transited in vain by small processions; others are preparing formulas

so that Power can better fulfil the indecent formalities of the master's trickery. When *Pinocchio* arrives, the crowd quickly moves to study his head, to become spectators and armed only with their gloves, flee in defence of their own little house, while others defend various brightly lit dwellings. The Police - the real power - is mocked by *Pinocchio*'s counter-power, which wants to disrespect him: unfortunately, Dal Canto's *Pinocchio* is caught and led back to Geppetto. Naked and with long faces, they are all there, with Power that dominates them. And so almost everyone becomes *Pinocchio* in the moment when - as usual - Power concedes to everyone a dance and a sweet, even leaving freedom in the coils of the pleasure-seekers, now all conquered by the false Power granted: the *Pinoccios* fish, play sports, do business, run TV channels, love beautiful women and golden coins, force silence, intercept every broadcast, move to the videos, form patrols'. *Pinocchio*, the 'son' of Collodi as conjured up by Babb was to continue to be present in his paintings for many more years, and with every appearance, he reminded us of his 'father' and all the lies in the world.

'La giostra' (The Merry-go-round) in 2008 shows 'fairies reduced to an allegory of a

La discarica (The Landfill), 2008
oil on canvas 60×40 cm

The Pinocchio's, who have completed their role, are now taken to the landfill.

Ordine! (Order!), 2008
oil on canvas 50×60 cm





merry-go-round invaded by pinocchios symbolising little Italy’.

Lorenzini's puppet subsequently appears in many works. These include: *‘Le suonatine’* (2008), where ‘Pinocchio’s long nose symbolises the entrancing lies’; *‘Tutti Pinocchi’* (‘We are all Pinocchio’ 2008), a ‘Landscape where each Pinocchio plays his role’; *‘Affissione’* (‘Posters’, 2008) a ‘landscape where each Pinocchio is hung like a poster’; *‘La fila’*, (The Row) which shows a ‘Row of Pinocchios waiting to put on the T-shirt advertising imposes on them’; *‘L’albero della cuccagna’* (The Greasy Pole, 2008); *‘Sponsor’* (2008); *‘Talking Crickets’* (2008); *‘Order’* (2008); *‘Applied’* (2008); *‘New toys’* (2008); *‘Shadows’* (2008); *‘The Dump’* (2008); *‘Mobile phones’* (2008); *‘The Rounds’* (2008); *‘5 colours’* (2008); *‘In Colour’* (2008); *‘The Image’* (2008); *‘Climbers’* (2008) and *‘The Pincers’* (2008).

In *‘The Offering’* (2008), which echoes the title of a work from 1967, *‘Pinocchio shows Power in a plate in a world already polluted and overflowing, with no hope of remedy. In fact, the available spaces have already been occupied. Flags signify conquests. Even the coloured folding cards have already been filled!’*

In 2009 *‘Pinocchio at the computer’* shows a him ‘frightened by technology that helps to bring out the good and the bad in the world. The landscape is always bare’. The protagonist, on this occasion, wears the clothes of power and his fear prevents him from realising ‘that the mites, symbols of the vices that corrode civilisation, are invading the scene’⁴⁷.

In *‘Subdivision’* (2011), ‘Every Pinocchio tries to salvage whatever is salvageable in a colourful but not at all cosy landscape’, and



in the same year, *‘The Parliament’* presents Pinocchio distributing Euros ‘in an arena of the corrupt’. Two years later, *‘Polluted Pinocchio’* is a condemnation of the pollution of the mischiefness of Power and the ecological disasters generated by it.

In 2014, Pinocchio also suffered the ugly fate of *‘Cancellation’* by the powers that be, a sad epilogue for Collodi’s invention.

B FOR BABB, L FOR LIE

In 2007 came the work *‘Lies’* where ‘Power is multifaceted and manifests itself in various forms. Here, it has a red colour (perhaps shame) instead of the black usually used by the artist, and has a double face, one of which is that of Pinocchio with an elongated nose.

Here, the theme is precisely the lie that Power often makes use of in its labyrinth. The lie grows in a special tree and is used by the gnomes that come out of Power’s pockets and hold up the letters of the word B U G I E (Lies)’. Lies are one of the recurring themes, but we can safely say that it is the principle one because everything else is hidden behind them. Power, the artist’s favourite target, makes extensive use of them, but ordinary people do not disdain them either. Babb has founded an important part of his art on lies, helping to open people’s eyes and unveil the mechanisms to arrive at its opposite: the truth.

Cancellazione (Erasing), 2014
oil on canvas cm 50x60

After having exploited Pinocchio in every way, Power tries to erase Pinocchio in the 'false' world that has been generated (mechanical snail, metal tree, etc.). However, the most important thing is "No Smoking".

PUPPETS AND MITES (2007-2012)

Puppets, now joined by mites, once again populate Dal Canto's paintings.

One of their first appearances is in the 2007 work *'The Three Little Monkeys'* where 'Power does not see, hear or speak. The mites lower an allegory of the 'Palace' from which Pinocchio emerges, observing'.

There are no pauses in the competition of life where Power always wins. Even in *'Cruise'* (2009), things do not change. This is an 'emblematic representation of the holidays of the various social classes where, even on holiday, there are those who have fun and those who work.

At the bottom are the hard-working rowers in the classic striped shirt; above them are those who steer the ship, but they represent an old and outdated world (note the cobwebs).

The true masters stay in the highest parts to enjoy life and their status relies on the clergy, which in turn relies on Power.

Advertising is rampant everywhere, even on the symbol of the Church.

Our country is identified in tricolour with cats, birds and the ship's helm. Mites make their first appearance: they are small and have not done anything serious yet, but they are showing up everywhere, even in the helm. The caged man observes, and this task will later be taken over by Pinocchio when the Mites take over everything'

Also in 2009, these beings subvert *'The Usual Game'*. Here, 'Power plays with the common people, taking up a position of advantage thanks to the Mite, which gives him the Ace so that he can, by cheating, get a full flush and win the game. For ordinary people there is no escape!'



In *'Coca Cola'* (2009), the soft drink 'here depicts Power because, like Power, it has spread all over the world. Mites come out of the can, as they are part of Power. Power is projected into infinity (figures fade progressively towards the horizon)'.

In *'The Dice'* (2009), 'the symbol of gambling is contaminated by mites; it stands in fragile equilibrium on triangles. The common man covers his head to avoid being hit by the contamination. Power, better equipped, uses an umbrella to shield itself. The cat has ousted the fish and sits on the chair, which is also contaminated by the same fish'⁴⁸.

'In the most recent cycles - among many others in the one entitled 'A story (against)' (2009) - Pinocchio comes forward, but Babb does not want to make yet another interpretation of Collodi's puppet: Pinocchio serves him to create immediate, universally known references. Pinocchio is the puppet par excellence; by taking on his likeness, all mankind is transformed into a collection of puppets. Bowler hats and Stripes also share the same fate. Their wooden bodies and limbs, their long noses, their round, wide-rimmed eyes, their expressions, at times bewildered, at times indifferent, perplexed or entertained. They are veritable mannequins, puppets at the mercy of a few unseens manipulators who, perhaps, do not even exist as physical persons, but identify themselves with the ugly fairy tales that have beguiled all the inhabitants of the small village that has become our miserable, quarrelsome planet. The Mites burst in, that is, the lies and the ugliness that wear down, corrode and engulf humanity. The evils, immoralities, wickednesses, the flaws of Power have always been

Appropriazione indebita (Misappropriation), 2010

Oil on canvas cm. 100 x 70

The monuments, heritage of humanity, should belong to everyone and instead they are enslaved to Power that appropriates everything it can steal.

Pinocchio writes "CULTURE 2010" smiling at what is happening while the Mites dance on the seats of Power.

*in Babb's world. They run through it underground like a red thread, but this time they reveal themselves, they come out into the open, they take on grotesque shapes between the human and the animal, they hold the stage boldly and even relegate Pinocchio to a corner, a mere observer, no longer a protagonist*⁴⁹.

In *'Leaning'* (2009), 'All support each other: the puppets, the mites, the trees, the animals and things, because in this world each thinks only of himself'.

In 2010, the mites are about to enter the play-

ing field with *'Selection'*, where 'Power pulls numbers from the hat, numbers he likes, and directs them into the production cycle (e.g. a car factory). The mites, about to invade the world, are unreal, suspended in the void and observing, together with Pinocchio. The landscape is flat and barren, symbolising that nothing good is left. We have consumed everything'.

With *'Ridicule'* (2010), the artist gives everyone false hope. In this work, 'The common man, with a balloon in his hand, symbolising normality, dreams of putting Power to pillory'.



Everything is normal and even Pinocchio and the mite seem happy, but it will not be so, it is only a dream'.

'The Choir' (2010) represents, on the other hand, *'the choir of liars singing along with Power and with the director in his underwear (the role of the director downgraded compared to the main theme)'*⁵⁰. The little theatre symbolises the whole world'. The curtain is held by two mites smilingly showing the scene.

'Underpants' returned that year, in the painting with the same name. Here, the Tower of Pisa, which is an important symbol for Babb, is the protagonist: *'People, however, have no respect for anything and behave rudely, placing their pants on the top of the tower and dressing everything, without distinction, in inappropriate ways (see the tie placed on the tower). He who is in his underwear degrades the symbol and it is no coincidence that the cypress (another Tuscan symbol) has been put in underwear, as have the people, the cat, the pig and even the violinist! Chaos is evolving and the priest does not see it, since he wears dark glasses, but phlegmatically urges all to stay calm and quiet, even if the irreparable is happening (Chaos).'*

Everyone is involved in the degradation: the old gentleman with the stick and Power leading a piglet (and not a dog) on a leash to symbolise the indifference of power in choosing right things (dog) or wrong things (pig). The mites keep on with the task of looking at people's backsides'.

Babb brings back *'The Wardrobe'* (2010) (a painting with the same title is from 2008) and portrays some clothes inside where *'two bare feet are sticking out because the shoes*

have been taken away by Power. Pinocchio opens the wardrobe, and observes. The mite is pleased'.

In *'Hands and Balls'* (2010), *'In a barren, dead landscape, the beautiful hands of Power emerge, wanting to prove that everything is OK. In fact, the hands come out of impeccable clothing and hold the strings of the coloured balloons. However, those who manoeuvre the balloons are not the fingers of the hands, but the mites. The mites symbolise the worst of ourselves, our inner devils'.*

At the same time comes *'Evolution'* (2010) where an egg appears from which *'mites are born, instead of life! Pinocchio reads Darwin and is amazed at what is happening. Everything breaks, even glasses shatter and fall like a broken eggshell. Chaos is taking place, as can be seen in the crumbling buildings. The only way to hide the evidence is to spread a wonderful carpet covering the Chaos'.*

In *'Vuoti a perdere'* (2010), *'Pinocchio participates in holding the past, symbolised by 'Old Power' locked in bottles, but in doing so, he leaves the way clear for the mites that will generate chaos'.*

Dal Canto continues with his narrative and *'Metamorphosis'* arrives: *'Power transforms itself according to its goals and does not disdain to present new developments: the mites. By now, Pinocchio is outdated, hung to die by events. Power hides the things that are wrong by laying a red and white chequered carpet over them.*

Note the buildings that have taken on a drab, flat, meaningless even transparent look. It is the moment of transition from Pinocchios to Mites'.



The artist then has *'New Thoughts'* (2010) where the man 'takes off his hat and out of his head come distorted thoughts (mites) holding the Italian flag, signifying the bad impression Italy makes on the world. The symbolic Leaning Tower of Pisa blushes and has to cover itself in shame. Degradation advances, breaking and killing the trees. Pinocchio crouches to watch. It should be noted that with the advent of mites, Pinocchio is no longer a protagonist but becomes a passive subject who just watches'.

'Transgenic' (2010) shows Power 'putting its hand on everything by making all the things that are labelled with the symbol of Power its own. The mites are an active part of the system, while Pinocchio is alone and only watches'. With *'Embezzlement'* (2010), the artist shows art as a hostage to Power: 'Monuments, the heritage of mankind, should belong to everyone, but instead they are enslaved to the power that appropriates everything that can be seized. Pinocchio writes 'CULTURE 2010' smiling at what is happening while the mites dance on the seats of Power'. In *'Involvement'* (2010), the 'mites wrap Power up using cut out clips of information'.

In the same year, Babb produced the important canvas (200×140 cm) *'The Launch'* and the mites pop up everywhere 'The people are pushing the boat of Power with great diffi-

Metamorfosi (Metamorphosis), 2010
oil on canvas 40×50 cm

Power transforms itself according to the needs of its interests and does not disdain to present the new evolutions: the Mites.

By now Pinocchio is outdated, hanged dead by events. Power hides the things that are not going well by spreading a red and white checkered carpet over them.

Note the buildings that have taken on a dull, flat, meaningless, even transparent appearance!

It is the moment of the transition from Pinoccchios to Mites.

culty. Mites emerge from everywhere and question Darwin about the reasons for the total degradation. In the bottom right-hand corner, one of the mites seems to have the answer, almost an awareness of its ability to generate chaos. Dancers and fish represent Italy, which, too, is beguiled by Power, always balancing on the motorbike'⁵¹.

The army of mites marches inexorably through Babb's mind, and through his pens invades his canvases to the point of generating chaos: 'Under the evil of the mites, the world crumbles, instability increases, chaos sets in, old balances are subverted. Everything breaks down; Chaos is taking place and involves every aspect of existence. Even the 'Bowler hats' and the 'Stripes' that have characterised his work to date, defining a world in perpetual contrast between one and the other (power and its victims) become subject to the same fate. The differences between the two classes remain, but the contrast is softened, even the black of the Bowler hats tends to veer towards brown in some cases. The same physiognomy, the same cumbersome gestures unite them. Power continues to exert its diabolical action of subjugation, but fails to realise that it is subject to the same destiny; a destiny that it constructs with its own hands, heedless of the destructive and self-destructive effects of its exploitative, incestuous action. Even the imprisoned old elephant, whose long, withered nose supports the last effigy of power, weeps, surrounded by applauding puppets (the defeated humanity) and triumphant mites (the dominant vices). All values, eventually overwhelmed by chaos, are confusedly piled onto a wagon and transported elsewhere, waiting to

regenerate. A mournful and festive wagon: mournful because it transports the remains of a broken-down humanity, festive because, once again, men, dazzled by the mirages of a misleading power, unwittingly take part in the deceptive feast of their own consumption'⁵².

The war is lost and the mites have the upper hand, and in the 'most evolved phase of chaos', *'In the turmoil, things and people overlap and merge, while the mites take charge of this crumbling humanity'*⁵³.

These strange beings wedge themselves in everywhere, while the Pinocchios watch on. Unstoppable, the mites find no obstacles in their way and, strengthened by their conscious fascination, they inspire Power, which thus *'lays its hands on the world, harnesses it and divides it up; the Teaning Tower, monument-symbol, falls ruinously. The labyrinth envelops the world and what remains of the symbol'*⁵⁴.

With *'The Winner'* (2010), the true nature of the end goal is revealed: *'Ordinary people pull the 'winner's chariot', which all would like to be on, especially the men of power; who hustle and bustle on the back. Too bad, though, that the coveted goal is nothing but a fake donkey!'*

So it was, with *'The Honourable Ones'* (2011) that the match was irremediably lost and in a 'colourful but non-existent landscape' there is *'the Monument to Power' 'treated with contempt (egg throwing)'*. Indeed, *'the mites are now masters of everything, even the sun itself'*.

With the appropriation of the all of creation, chaos sets in with *'Hoarding'* (2011): *'The world is held in place by the hand of Power;*

which carves up the world as it pleases. The environment is chaos: the labyrinth envelops the world and the monument (symbol) falls ruinously'.

The world now belongs to the mites and Italy is under their yoke, too. *'Possession'* (2011) illustrates the sad situation: *'Power pervaded by the mites is now master of our 'Bel Paese'. It rests on the most sinister Italian speculation, where even the fish are no longer free but forced into a merry-go-round.*

The mites come out from all sides and power shows its contradictions with its perforated soles (what is broken is not seen). A desperate message to save Italy is contained in the bottles floating on the polluted sea'.

These creatures reign over everything, and with *'Old and New Balances'* (2011) they climb to the highest rung: *'In a barren landscape where plants no longer bear fruit but skyscrapers swing, old and new balances at the top of the trunk of an old elephant which is imprisoned with pinocchios reduced to applauding puppets.*

*Mites stand in the place of honour. Values are trampled underfoot by the imprisoned elephant, who cries' while 'a human pyramid of 'stripes' holds up a mighty one'*⁵⁵. In *'Anonymous Ecology'* (2011), *'Unfortunately, the broken scraps of Pinocchio are swept away with a mite posing as the master of ceremonies. There is no distinction between the good and the bad'.*

The systems of power are further explained in *'Reflections'* (2011): *'Power has eyes to see in front of and behind itself, and therefore 'everywhere'. It is mirrored in the images in front of it, taking on different angles that symbolise the various facets of power.*

Evoluzione del caos (Evolution of Chaos), 2010
oil on canvas 60x50 cm

The Mite (which symbolizes vice, our bad actions) which is the cause of Chaos has its evolution from being tiny to a great protagonist (from left to right). When the Mite is small, power can still control and cities appear normal (see behind the greatest power) but as the mite grows, even cities transform into ugly buildings until they generate Chaos behind the figure of power; on the right, from which the Mite has even stolen the symbol of power: the bowler hat!!.

In some cases, the mite is small (power at its least perverse) in other cases the mite is so large that it replaces Power and takes its place (Power at its most perverse).

In the general chaos, caused by Power, the fools take up upturned, transparent, incorrect positions and in this situation the natural roles can be reversed, like the bird pecking the cat and not vice versa. Pinocchio is still watching'.

'Reflections 2' (2011) portrays 'Reflections of abundance into which some people easily fit. Pinocchio and the mites are witnesses'.

Babb's universe 'moves house' with the painting 'Clearing Out' (2011).

Here, 'Everything is transformed after being used and therefore is cleared from the places where one works, where one lives. People, monuments, furniture, bikes and even the symbols of the homeland (flags), which are on the wagon and on the ground, are removed. The mites play their part in this process and Pinocchio watches motionless'. With 'Little Power' (2011), 'The mites, like the sun, illuminate the landscape where Pinocchio amuses himself with the so-called "Power in underwear". Chaos is ever-present'.

The mites, the 'Bowler hats' and the 'Stripes' all seem to meet the same end in 'Differentiated'. Each one of these has their own bin, into which they are thrown, but 'only the mites appear at ease, while anonymous cats wait restlessly to take possession of the rubbish'⁵⁶.

In 'Matters of the Nose' (2012), puppets and mites are again together, the former riding on a large elephant, and around it, while the latter in a cart pulled by a Pinocchio. After all, they are only 'Matters of the Nose'.



FOR CHAOS (2010-2011)

In the 'Modern Geppetto' exhibition in 2010, 'Power, aided by the mites' builds the 'New Pinocchio. One perceives, as in other representations, the first symptoms of chaos, as cities fit into the environment and destroy nature'.

Then came 'Chaos' in 2010. Here everything unravels: 'It is now General Chaos. The cars are located above the monuments, above the houses; the church x-rays the bell tower as if it wants to expose it by showing the bricks used to build it. Dal Canto often uses this transparency (seen also in the labyrinths) precisely in order not to stop at what is visible, but at what exists inside or beyond it. Everyone has his or her own mite (vice) and it does not matter what social class the human being belongs to. The vice is carried around and has grown compared to the first mites, which only came out like woodworms from the furniture.

The active Pinocchio, who previously represented the lie, the piercing falsehood, has been superseded and is no longer needed. He is relegated to the role of a scarecrow, from which jars are hung, showing that Pinocchio's weaknesses are now outclassed by far worse evils (the mites). The broken neck and bowed head are intended to show this'⁵⁷. In the same year, the work 'Evolution of Chaos' illustrates that 'The mite (symbolising vice, evil deeds) while is the cause of chaos has its evolution from small to large, moving from left to right.

When the mite is small, Power is still in control and cities appear normal (see behind the biggest Power), but as the mite grows, even



cities turn into ugly buildings until chaos is generated behind the figure of Power; on the right, from which the mite has even stolen the symbol of power itself, the bowler hat'

In *'Chaos 2'*, *'Pinocchio is now cast aside; he remains motionless, hanging from a coat-hook while the new protagonists emerge from the holes in the earth to generate chaos. Power, despite the fact that chaos is in full swing, remains completely indifferent to the serious situation'*.

'Chaos 3' recounts the most evolved phase of chaos: *'In the turmoil, everything and everyone is superimposed while mites possession of this decaying humanity (people and monument symbols)'*.

The cycle continues with *'Chaos of the Mites'* (2010) where *'We are in the most evolved phase of chaos.*

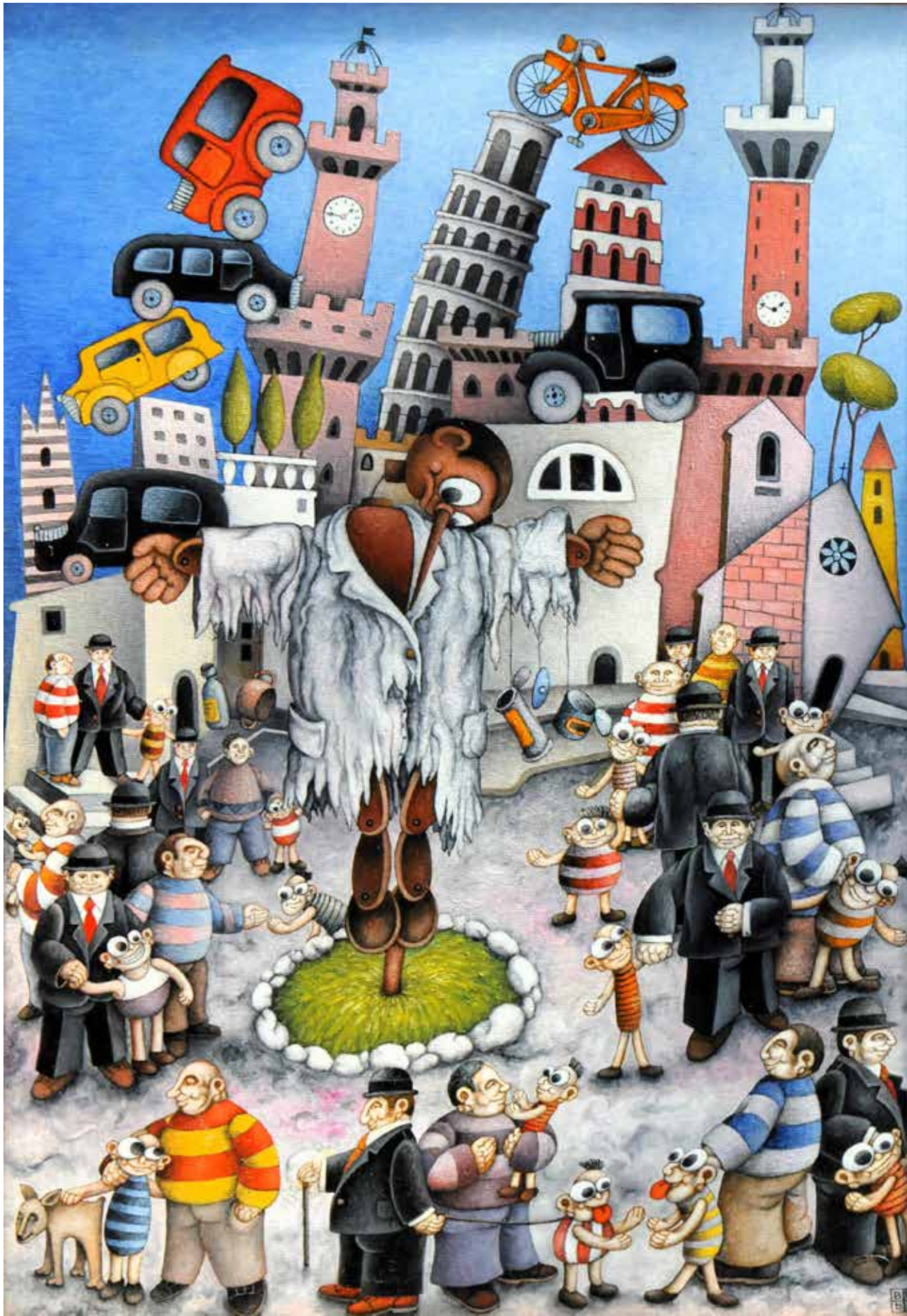
Chaos is the final stage, the Mites have put

aside the Pinocchios and everything is superimposed, confused, rolled up.

Everything and people are superimposed in the vortex as mites take possession of this decaying humanity (people and monument symbols)'.

The following year, everything seems to converge towards a secular Calvary where the *'Modern Cross'* stands out: *'The Cross, planted on Chaos, is supported by balloons, but it is still a cross where Power, equipped with a stool, takes its little dog to relieve itself on the symbol. Pinocchio is dismayed'*.

In 2013, Babb created a work full of symbolism, *'Chaotic Indifference'*, which seems to photograph the final act where a turreted Italy (a young woman with her head encircled by a wall crown, the national personification of Italy) is sitting on a toilet crowns Power.





Il caos n. 1 (Chaos No. 1), 2010 oil on canvas 70×100 cm

By now it is general Chaos. Cars are on top of monuments, on top of houses, the church X-rays the bell tower as if it wanted to lay it bare, glimpsing the bricks used for its construction. Dal Canto often uses this transparency (see in the labyrinths) precisely to not stop at what is seen but at what exists inside or beyond the visual obstacle. Everyone has their own Mite (vice) and it does not matter what social class the human being belongs to. Vice is carried around and has grown, if compared to the first Mites that only came out like small woodworms from the furniture. The active and lively Pinocchio, who previously represented lies and penetrating falsehood, has been surpassed and is no longer useful. He is relegated to the role of scarecrow, from which jars are hung, demonstrating that today Pinocchio's weaknesses are now outclassed by much worse evils (the Mites). The broken neck and the bowed head are meant to show this outclassing.

Il caos n. 2 (Chaos No. 2), 2010
oil on canvas 50×60 cm

Pinocchio is now sidelined, he remains immobile, hanging from a coat rack while the new protagonists emerge from the holes in the earth to generate Chaos. The power, despite the Chaos being in full swing, remains completely indifferent to the grave contingent situation.



Il caos n. 3 (Chaos No. 3), 2010
oil on canvas 80×60 cm

We are in the most evolved phase of Chaos. In the vortex everything overlaps with things and people while the mites take over the decaying humanity: both people and symbolically the monuments are prey to the mites.



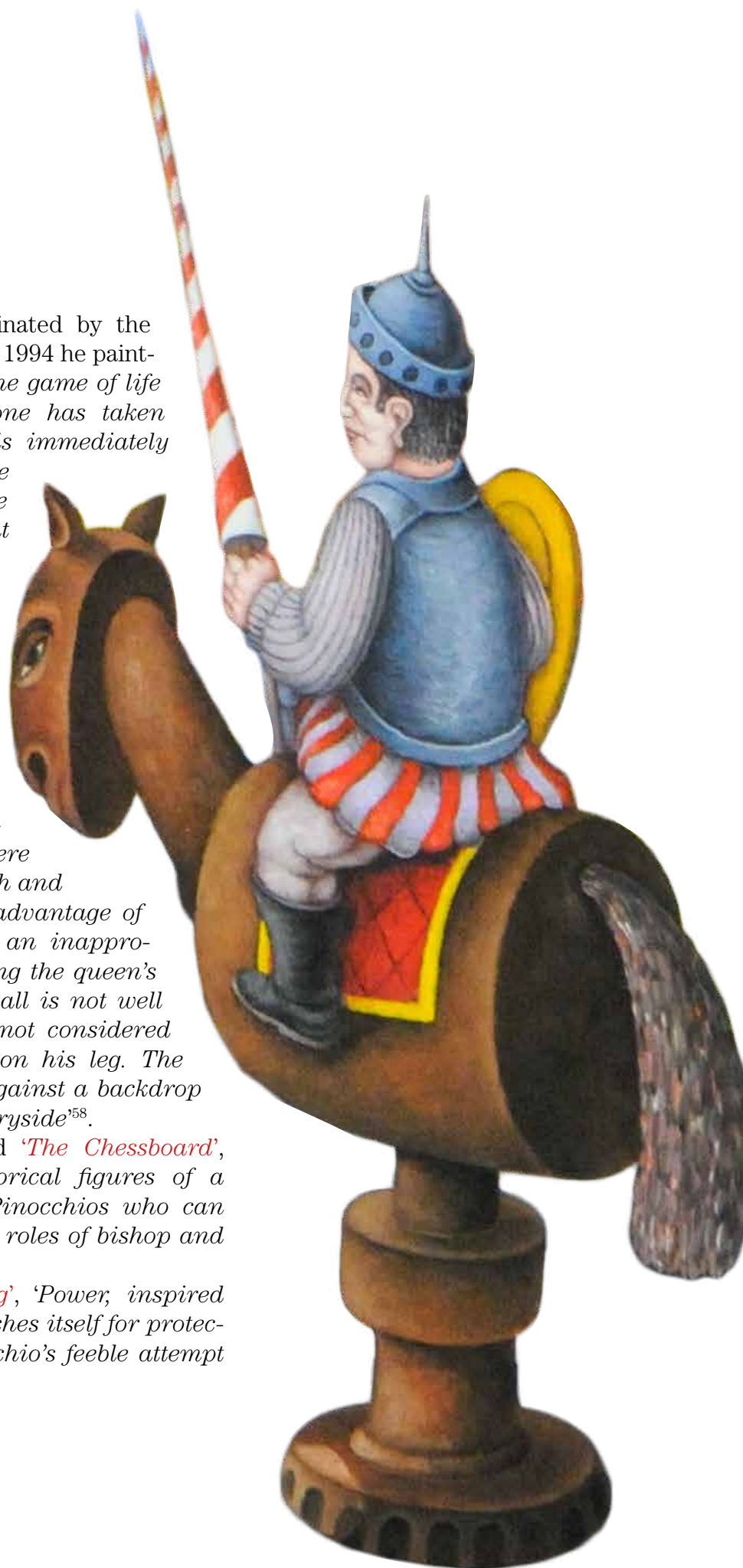
Indifferenze caotiche (Chaotic Indifference), 2013
oil on canvas 150×100 cm

Italy on the toilet, protected by the enforcers of public order, crowns Power while, symbolically, Power (with Lady) helps the horse in its bodily needs and the People with shovels are ready to clean up. Pinocchio, representing indifference, gives his good wishes while the members of Power rejoice, as always, at the damaging events that destroy our country. Symbolically, the cat on stage sticks its tongue out at the dog, entrenching itself in its petty position of 'power' in relation to the dog on the ground. The background is always chaotic and controversial.



CHESS MATE!

Babb was also fascinated by the game of chess and in 1994 he painted '*Chess Game*': *The game of life has begun. Everyone has taken their role and it is immediately noticeable that the queens count more than the king in that they are taller and the queen in the background has a higher power seat than the king. In the battle, there are those who fight in the centre and those who run away, hiding behind the tower. There are those who perish and those who, taking advantage of their role, commit an inappropriate act by groping the queen's backside; however, all is not well as the bishop has not considered the dog is peeing on his leg. The scene takes place against a backdrop of the Tuscan countryside*⁵⁸. In 2008, he painted '*The Chessboard*', which shows 'allegorical figures of a chess game with Pinocchio's who can play, at best, in the roles of bishop and pawn'. In 2010 in '*Castling*', 'Power, inspired by the mite, entrenches itself for protection, despite Pinocchio's feeble attempt at resistance'⁵⁹.



Arrocco (Castling), 2010
oil on canvas 35x50 cm
Power takes refuge to protect itself.



ANONYMOUS POWER 2011-2012

'Anonymous Power' is the title of a work on show at the 'Il Pisanello' gallery on 14 January 1978, in which a bowler man appears faceless, accompanied by two 'comrades' from behind. Dal Canto is at the beginning of his journey, but the condemnation of power is already mature. This is where he leaves from and arrives at, using new 'creatures and new 'elements', until he eventually gets to the mites.

The Mites-Power alliance leads the latter to evolve, to change form, to become almost ethereal and invisible. Those who previously repre-

sented clear and unambiguous presences now become almost imperceptible and some of them disappear from view.

This change is illustrated by the painting *'Power and Art'* (2011), in which Babb clearly reveals his thoughts on the great deception of power and includes art among its 'victims': *'Under the influence of mites, even Power has lost its most obvious features; the effigy remains (the serious dark suit, the bowler hat), but the head disappears. The powerful no longer even care where the world is going, as they are obsessed with their own exclusive interests.'*

They mock art, making it the object of absolute disregard, destroy cultural heritage, exaggerate every aspect of the tritest consumerism. The landscape becomes increasingly barren and the buildings even more shaky. Indifference expands and the powerful build their dominance on it. Against the disasters of this headless power, the values of tradition rise to extreme defence.

The three symbolic masks of three different Italian expressions - Harlequin, Pinocchio, and Pulcinella - try to escape the decay and maintain their own critical autonomy, which is often expressed through the irony of their physiognomic expressions and the cheerfulness of their gestures.

Nevertheless, the risk that they too will be caught up in this world of appearances and falsehood is always present. In order to avoid this risk, they cling to the popular vernacular language; then the word FALSE becomes FARZO, to gain more strength with the vernacular inflection.

But in the end, the three masks, disappointed and bitter, after having tried everything

Senza testa (Headless), 2014

oil on canvas 60x80 cm

Power has lost its head, and everyone travels without a head. Without the head, man is empty and nothing remains but trash and mice that live inside the individual. Pinocchio can do nothing.

to oppose degradation, they flee, fly away, in search of a coveted - but perhaps utopian - dimension of justice and equality, and Pinocchio's mask, ruined, ends up in the rubbish dump of falsehoods.

*The Constitution is also caught up in the disasters, but the desire for FREEDOM remains strong*⁶⁰.

With *'Moving'* in the following year, Babb's three 'friendly' characters return again, and here Dal Canto symbolises the journey of Power, which seems to go along with the action of a Pinocchio who, instead of the sword of Damocles, is guarded by three bowler hats: *'With his head bowed and his boots (to protect*



*himself from the decay), Pinocchio, guided by the influx of bowler hats hanging above him, pushes the chariot of a rambunctious Power towards new destinations. Harlequin and Pulcinella sit on it comfortably, but temporarily*⁶¹.

Collodi's puppet is still the protagonist, and Babb goes so far as to expose its latest use in *'For One's Own Use and Consumption'*: *'Everyone constructs the Pinocchio as it best suited them, distorting the symbolism and function of Lorenzini's masterpiece'*⁶². This is the summary of the 2012 painting entitled 'For one's own use and consumption', which features two more of Dal Canto's iconic characters: Harlequin and Pulcinella.

Everything ends with the work *'Epilogue'* of the same year where *'The mask of Pinocchio, help up by the two disillusioned witnesses who have always accompanied him, rests in the 'Dump of falsehoods'. The cycle closes'*⁶³. In his own handwriting, Dal Canto wrote in italics on the painting: *'Hello Pinocchio, thank you for helping me with my little story...*

I know, I have adapted to fit in. On the other hand, I too, am an error of nature'.



FOR HARLEQUIN,



FOR PINOCCHIO

AND PULCINELLA (2011-2012)

At a certain point in Babb's artistic journey, these three exquisitely Italian 'masks' appear on stage, each belonging to different geographical areas: Harlequin (Lombardia), Pinocchio (Tuscany), Pulcinella (Campania).

The three of them 'find themselves' in Collodi's famous fairy tale when Pinocchio arrives at the puppet theatre of which Mangiafuoco was 'king'. *'When Pinocchio entered the puppet theatre, something happened that caused something of a revolution. It must be known that the curtain was drawn and the play was already on.*

On the stage were Harlequin and Pulcinella, bickering with each other and, as usual, threatening at any moment to exchange a load of slaps and blows. The audience, all-attentive, was sick with laughter as they heard the bickering of those two puppets, who handled and treated each other so truthfully, as if they were really two reasonable animals and two people of this world.

When suddenly, which is what it is not, Harlequin stops acting, and turning towards the audience and hinting with his hand to someone at the back of the stalls, he starts shouting in a dramatic tone:

– Gods of the firmament! Do I dream or do I wake? Yet that's Pinocchio over there!

– It is Pinocchio indeed! - shouts Pulcinella.

– It is just him! – squeals Mrs Rosaura, peeping out from the back of the stage.

– It's Pinocchio! It's Pinocchio! – All the puppets shout in chorus, jumping out of the wings. – It's Pinocchio! It's our brother Pinocchio! Long live Pinocchio!

– Pinocchio, come up here to me,' cries Harlequin, 'come and throw yourself into the arms of your wooden brothers! - To this warm invitation, Pinocchio takes a leap, and from the back of the stalls goes to the front seats; then with another leap, from the seats he



mounts on the conductor's head, and from there he splashes onto the stage.

It is impossible to imagine the hugs, the wringing of necks, the pinches of friendship and the blows of true and sincere brotherhood that Pinocchio received in the midst of so much confusion among the actors and actresses of that dramatic company.

This show was moving, to say the least: but the audience in the stalls, seeing that the play was no longer going on, became impatient and started shouting: 'We want the play! We want the play! -

All breath was wasted, for the puppets, instead of continuing the play, redoubled their noise and shouting, and, placing Pinocchio on their shoulders, they carried him in triumph in the limelight. Then out came the puppeteer, a big man so ugly that it was frightening just to look at him. He had a beard as black as an ink scrawl, and so long that it went down from his chin to the ground: suffice it to say that, when he walked, he stamped on it with his feet. His mouth was as wide as an oven, his eyes looked like two lanterns of red glass, with the lamp lit from behind; and with his hands he cracked a large whip, made of snakes and foxtails twisted together'.



Simbolismo (Symbolism), 2013

oil on canvas 50x60 cm

The two masks represent two symbols of Power: the dummy with the brain full of worms and the mask of Power that reassures. Pinocchio witnesses the decay of the brain, highlighted by the X-ray, and the reassurance of Power highlighted by the red colour. The two symbols of Power (on the right) and rottenness (on the left) still stand on the same table.

At first, Pinocchio's encounter with Mangiafuoco was dangerous, as he ran the risk of being used as firewood for the fire that the puppeteer was using to cook his dinner, but after moving him to tears by telling him about his father, he was spared. In his place, the big-bearded Mangiafuoco wanted to throw Harlequin into the flames, but Pinocchio stood in the way and saved him by moving the man once again.

So it was that the three of them, after treading the boards of Collodi's puppet theatre, are used by Babb as important elements.

These three powerful characters made their first appearance in the work '*Farzo*' in 1977. *In popular Tuscan speech, the use of the consonants 'R' and 'Z' in place of the letters 'L' and 'S' tend to reinforce the meaning of the adjectives. In this case, 'false' becomes 'farzo', with the artist purposely wanting to achieve a more serious result. The severed tree branch and the mouse represent the degradation caused by falsehood'.*

The three then make several more appearances (in 2008 they are in a wardrobe in '*Ripostiglio*' ('Junk Room') in the company of a clown and in 2009 Pinocchio becomes Harlequin in '*Pinocchio Harlequin*'), but it is in '*Power and Art*' (2011) that they conquer Babb's power-crushed stage, never to leave it again.

Protagonists of '*The Manifesto of Power*' (2011), *The three witnesses show the decadence of Power with a manifesto illustrating its most immoral aspects*⁶⁴.

In '*Mosaic*' (2011), *'the floor is made up of a mosaic of poor people, crushed and polished by the force of Power. Pinocchio sweeps the bowler hat, the symbol of power. Harlequin and Pulcinella look on'. In 'Evasion of Power', the latter, with his back turned, shows*

his buttocks, and 'the three symbols – Pinocchio, Harlequin and Pulcinella – try to rise from this unworthy representation of Power. The illusion that generates Power is represented by the tree with leaves (not barren) in contrast to the usual twisted apartment block'.

In the same year, Pinocchio becomes a modern '*Don Quixote*', *'dressed and prepared for the duel by Harlequin and Pulcinella to fight helicopters (real war) and not just wind-mills'.*

The only thing left to do is to get away somehow, and with '*Fuga*' ('Escape', 2012), the three of them try just that: *'Power, symbolically represented by the bombs, no longer cares about our heritage like the Tower of Pisa and a twisted church façade, for example. Dal Canto paints the Leaning Tower upside down to show what should be done and what is not being done. The three witnesses do not accept this degradation and therefore fly away with the cat that symbolises freedom as a cat has no master'.*

2012 was also the year of '*The Three Witnesses*', *'Pulchinella, Pinocchio and Harlequin gaze in dismay at the decay of our country. The deleterious effects of Power are evident in the usual barren landscape with a background of shapeless houses. The symbols of power are in plain sight (bowler hat and tie)'.*

With '*Sandwich Man*' (2012), the headless Power figure shows the Tower of Pisa *'in ruins and the bowler hat is fiercely contested by men and beasts*⁶⁵. The three friends in mid-air watch the scene.

In '*Indifference*' (2012)⁶⁶ there is a *'horse lying on the ground' that 'represents human-*



Servilismo (Servility), 2012

oil on canvas 50x60 cm

The three servants of Power, leaning on Pinocchio, support and raise the symbol of power. Harlequin and Pulcinella observe in a barren and decadent landscape.

ity, living in the uniform white buildings where none stand out' and that 'is trampled by Power in a situation of total indifference. The egg, the ultimate symbol of creative perfection' contains the three characters: Harlequin, Pulcinella and Pinocchio.

In the same year, Babb painted *'The Measure of Power'*, where 'Power takes on the appearance most convenient to itself, with the witnesses sarcastically mocking it. The landscape is always barren, but the sun, unreachable and unconditional, shines in its splendidly'.

After meeting Mangiafuoco who gives him five gold coins to take to Father Geppetto, Pinocchio meets the cat and the fox who promise him rich profits by sowing treasure in the Field of Miracles.

Thus *'The Miracle Tree'* (2012), came into Babb's universe, a fake, unreal tree, held in place with nails. 'Even our mobile phones are fake. The decay and solitude linger in the buildings slumped to the ground to the amusement of a dog watching the sad scene. The three witnesses look on'.

Everything is swamped, even the text underlying our democracy. *'Poor Constitution'* (2012) shows a simple soldier who 'is supplied with

all possible weapons so that he is reassured and feels protected in carrying out his mission: the fight for freedom'. A clear reference to Article 11 of the fundamental law of the state. In 'Reforms' we see Power displaying a large part of his backside under a 'Reforms' sign. The work emphasises the 'nonsense of these and the conviction that 'they produce the opposite effect' of what is desired. 'Harlequin, Pinocchio and Pulcinella take shelter under the reformists' hat'.

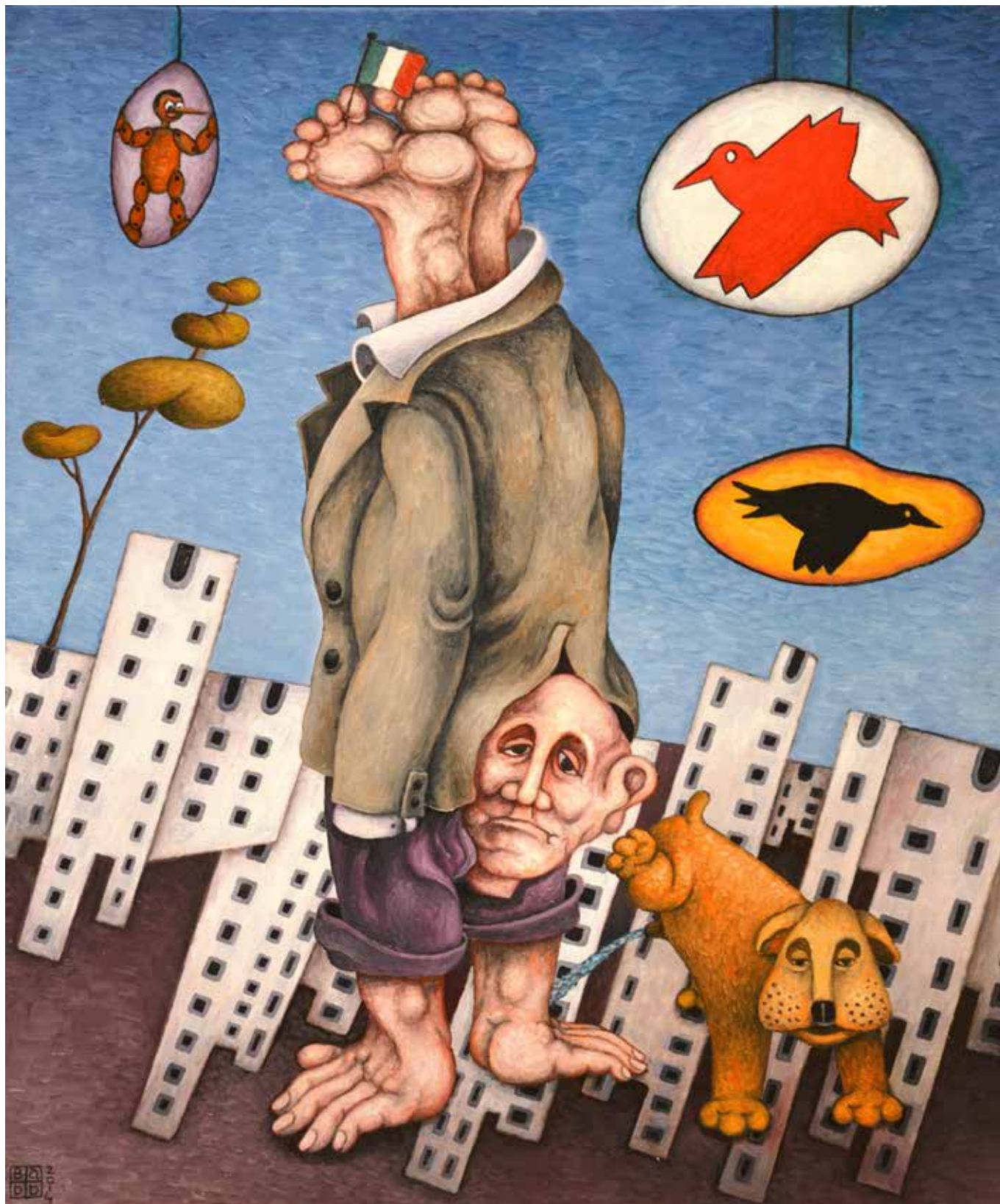
The three are again under a hat in *'Servility'* (2012), where three men, three 'servants leaning on Pinocchio, support and lift up the symbol of Power. Harlequin and Pulcinella look on in a barren and decaying landscape'. In 1981, Babb had created a work with the same title, in which the people were dragging the chariot of Power, whose presence could be guessed from his black shoes and trousers, and in which Harlequin was present at his feet, performing the sole function of a witness.

The oil on canvas *'Svolazzi'*⁶⁷ (Fluttering) of the same year shows 'The three witnesses together with Nature, here represented by of an animal and a tree, take shelter from the 'anonymous' symbols of Power that flutter in the air and glide over the usual desolate landscape populated by crooked, but identical buildings'.

In the work *'Hamburger and Coca Cola'* (2012), we find many Babbish elements: The Anonymous Power, Pinocchio, Harlequin, Pulcinella and an overhanging labyrinth 'from which the common people cannot get out, and they are forced to accept only what is offered. Pinocchio does not manoeuvre Power, but only shows its symbols'.

Inversione (Inversion), 2014
oil on canvas 50×60 cm

The world is upside down. The representation is given by the character that has inverted the natural position of the limbs and face. The scenery of the outside world is also up-turned and all the same. Even nature is caged in (birds in bubbles).





'Undifferentiated' (2012) reiterates that *'Power tramples on a suffering humanity (the white, deformed horse), while the three witnesses seek shelter inside the egg, the ultimate symbol of creative perfection'*⁶⁸.

The three friends also play leading roles in *'The Press 2'* and *'The Free Press Carriage'*, in which Babb denounces the relationship between newspapers and a Power that generates lies. *'Pinocchio and the two masks drag the press carriage along an unused track, while three ravens, symbolising the worst power, watch from a distance in a desolate landscape'*⁶⁹.

There was also room for *'Illusion'* (2012), in which *'Pulcinella carries an umbrella with Peace colours, Pinocchio lifts up a sailboat flying a flag with Peace symbols. Harlequin agrees. In the sea in the background, the signs of war appear, fuelled by capitalist Power, as symbolised by the 'bowler hat' smoke coming out of a ship'*.

In 2012 comes *'Attempts at salvation'*, where in *'our devastated world (the three friends) try a last chance attempt to save what remains (symbol of the Tower) from a sea already polluted by Power, which also attempts to take over the symbols of the universe'*.

Things come full circle by returning to the starting point when Babb paints *'Farzo'* (2012), the same title as the 1977 work in which the three friends made their debut. Here, *'the falsity of Power triumphs, taking on greater strength as it uses popular language (...) The severed branch and the mouse represent the degradation caused by falsity'*⁷⁰.

PINOCCHIO OBSERVER

From *'Anonymous Power'* we move on to a series of situations that the painter painstakingly detects.

He then focuses his indignation by highlighting the anomalies through his allegories, symbolism and the usual sarcasm typical of Giorgio Dal Canto.

Pinocchio becomes an observer as the mites take over and this new role is evident in many works such as *'At the Window'* (2011) where *'Pinocchio stands watching the gruesome scene before his eyes. Power destroys Italy drawn on the multicoloured balloons offered by the mites that facilitate this destruction of values'*. Moreover, in *'Differentiated'* (2011) *'Power is also scrapped in an anonymous landscape'*.

Only the mites are at ease. Anonymous cats seek sustenance with Pinocchio as a witness'. Pinocchio also observes the scene in the painting *'The Three Doors'* (2014), where the *'Struggle of the Poor'* is illustrated at the bottom, while power shows *'its appearance'*.

There is also room in the artist's world for a pacific manifesto of tragic topicality: *'The Flag waver'* (2014). This painting that places Power rising out of the sea on the shoulders of the people, who underwater are in the company of a Pinocchio watching the scene in the company of some fish while two ships are arriving, only apparently bringing peace but are actually loaded with cannons.

It is 2014 when the puppet again watches *'The Power'* (2014) now absolute master of everything and everyone.

Now, Pinocchio's 'job' is to be a mute spectator of a reality that always manifests itself in

Le tre porte (The Three Doors), 2013
oil on canvas 50×60 cm

The three doors symbolise Power. Pinocchio observes the confusion of the 'Struggle of the Poor' while Power shows its appearance (bare bottom and idleness with drink).





Ultimi avanzzi (Last Leftovers), 2013
oil on canvas 80×60 cm

Everything is thrown into the dump: a wide variety of objects and even people. Unfortunately, today even human beings are components of a landfill.

Venditore di bambole (Doll Seller), 2014
oil on canvas cm 60x80

The new leader, riding on the back of Power, builds dolls out of soap bubbles. Symbolically, the soap bubbles are the palliative for the common people. It is supported by Power that emerges anyway. Pinocchio observes.



Tutti uguali (All the same), 2014
oil on canvas 60×50 cm

Power is coining human beings in order to get the best uniformity in living beings. The homogeneous masses are unenforceable and can be controlled with less effort. Desolate landscape, bizarre monuments and Pinocchio observing.



Il teatrino (The Little Theatre), 2014
oil on canvas 80×60 cm

The magician lawyer and the journalist. An ensemble where everyone thinks exclusively of his own affairs (protagonism) and the poor wretch who should have justice in the end is only left with his dog to get some affection.

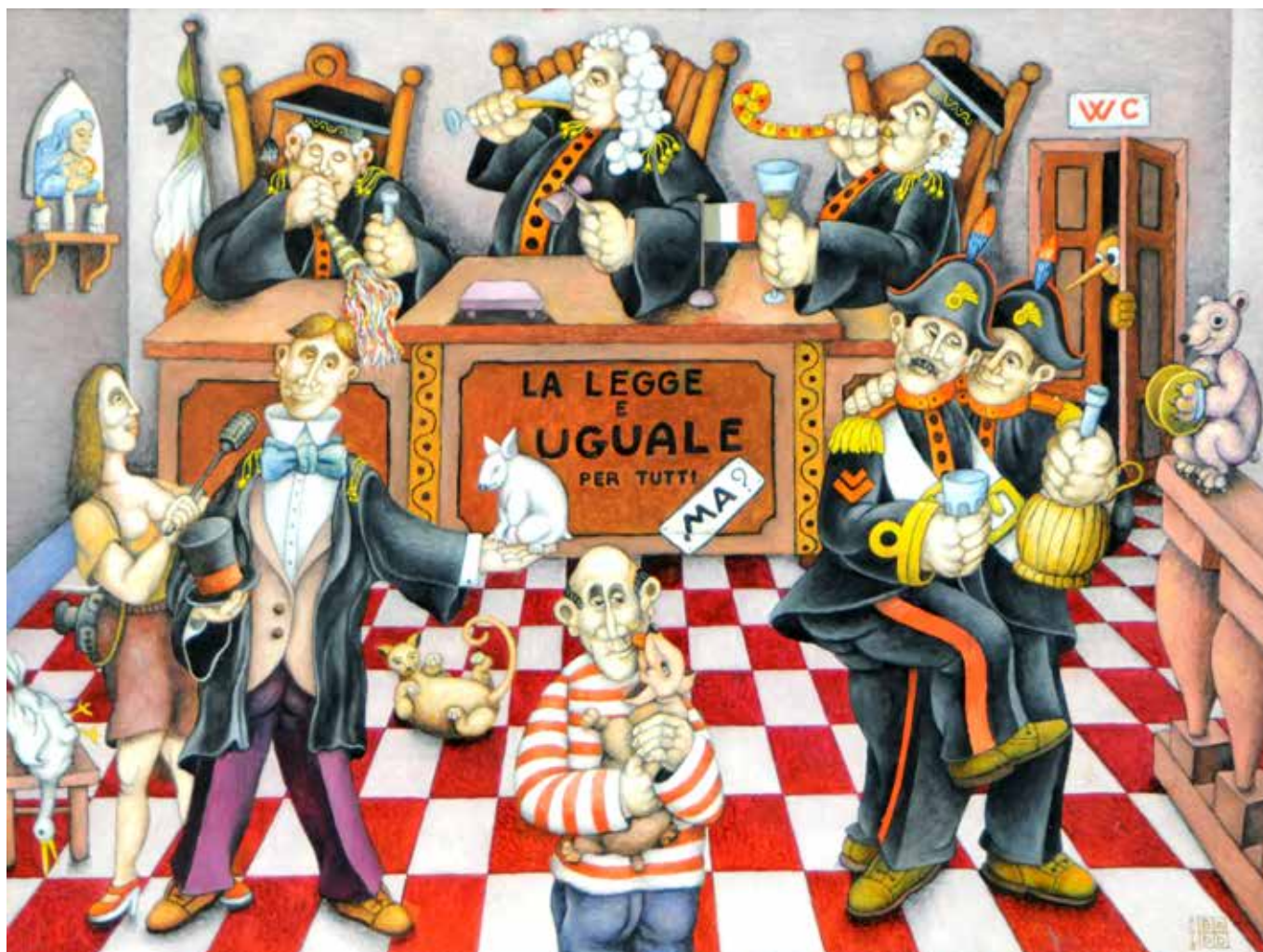
the same way: Power creating new monsters. In *'The Doll Seller'* (2014), this power-riding figure holds strings to which soap bubbles containing dolls are tied, *'the palliatives for ordinary people'*.

'All the same' (2014) shows Power 'minting' *'human beings to get the best uniformity'* in order to achieve a more controllable and influential homogeneous mass with minimum effort. The puppet continues to watch, helpless.

DOGS AND CATS

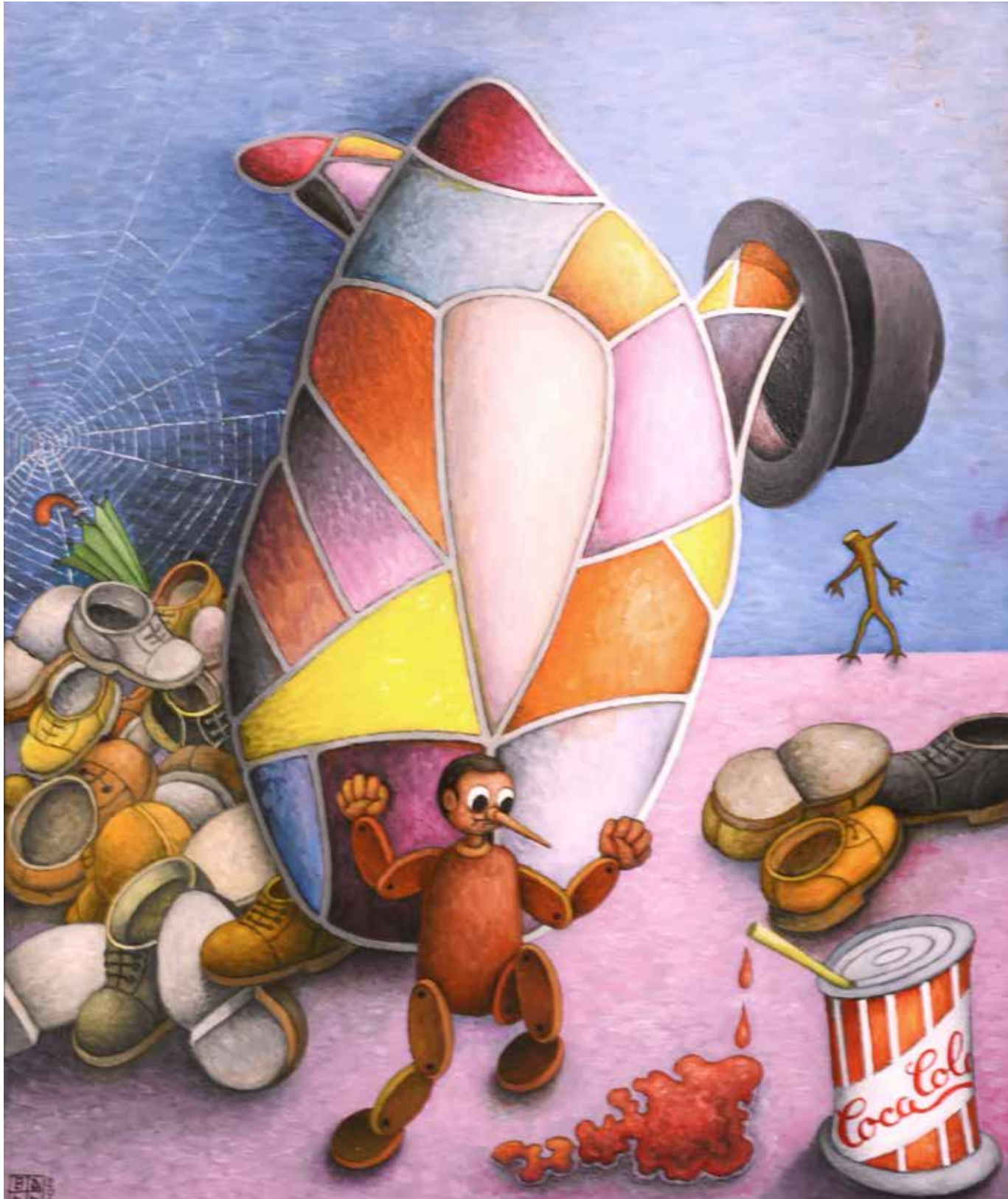
Dogs and cats are not random, decorative elements in Dal Canto's painting, but take on vivid and strong meanings depending on the context and the action they perform.

From pets, they transform into veritable actors in the Babbish 'sauce' of the human comedy. They often take on lead roles, as in the painting *'Hobgoblin Cat'*. In 2016, the artist realised a true 'feline' cycle by producing a series of exceptional paintings where cats return to being 'cats'.



Pinocchio costruito (Pinocchio constructed), 2014 oil
on canvas 50x60 cm

*We are in an old world, full of rubbish dumps! Power builds
Pinocchio with the colours of illusion and hangs its hat on
it. In reality, Pinocchio tries to avoid the Coca-Cola.*



Differenziata (Differentiated) 2011
oil on canvass 70x50 cm

Even power is scrapped in an anonymous landscape.

Only the Mites are at ease.

Menacing cats seeking sustenance with Pinocchio as witness.

All hope is lost in this situation of total annihilation.

a, which represents the power of business. The old tree also symbolises Pinocchio.





Gatti con gomitolo (Cats with ball of yarn), 2015
30×25 cm (Fabio Neri)



Gatta e gattini (Cat and Kittens), 2015
30×25 cm (Fabio Neri)

¹ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013

² Ibid, *Index of Lies*

³ Ibid, *Index of Lies*

⁴ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 65

⁵ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 44

⁶ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 42

⁷ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 90

⁸ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 92

⁹ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 63

¹⁰ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 84

¹¹ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 61

¹² Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 60

¹³ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 38

¹⁴ Pisanello, Art Gallery, *Giorgio Dal Canto*, 30 January 1982

¹⁵ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 58

¹⁶ In *A Story (against)* the work is given the title 'The Fatal Hour'.

¹⁷ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 106

¹⁸ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 105

¹⁹ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 102

²⁰ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 22

²¹ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

²² Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 96

²³ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 86

²⁴ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

²⁵ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

²⁶ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 30

²⁷ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 64

²⁸ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 91

²⁹ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 78

³⁰ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 47

³¹ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 80

³² Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 72

³³ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

³⁴ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 97

³⁵ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 100

³⁶ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 62

³⁷ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 41

³⁸ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 114

³⁹ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 116

⁴⁰ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁴¹ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 119

⁴² Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 98

⁴³ For this splendid epic, see Paolo Gori, *L'era del dirigibile a Pontedera. La storia dell'Aeroscalo 1913-1928*, Tagete Edizioni, Pontedera 2023

⁴⁴ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 46. For the Story of the Albergo Armonia: Nello Chetoni, *Albergo Armonia, (Story, characters, anecdotes)*, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 1998

⁴⁵ *A Steam-Powered Novel, From Florence to Livorno, Historical-humorous guide by Carlo Lorenzini*, typography by G. Mariani, Florence 1856, pp. 149-151

⁴⁶ For this figure: Mario Mannucci, *Quando Pontedera conquistava Roma: vita e avventure del capitano di ventura Conte Antonio da Pontedera con appunti per una ricerca futura sul Conte Antonio da Pontedera*



Gatti innamorati (Cats in love), 2015
30x25 cm (Fabio Neri)



Gatti con sedia (Cats with chair), 2015
25x30 cm (Fabio Neri)

by Michele Quirici, Tagete Edizioni, Bandecchi & Vivaldi, Pontedera 2010

⁴⁷ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁴⁸ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁴⁹ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013

⁵⁰ The choir of liars prevails 'even the director, small and reduced to his underwear', Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁵¹ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013 p. 24

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁵⁶ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁵⁷ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁵⁸ Giorgio Dal Canto, *A Story (against)* op. cit. p. 34

⁵⁹ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013 p. 73

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁶⁵ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁶⁶ In 1979, the painter painted '*Indifference*', where 'The lion, tamed and subdued, loses his naturalness, forced into a cage by the artificial world in which all mankind is immersed. The elegant character, from behind, looks at everything with indifference'. Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁶⁷ The title of this work is the same as one from 2001

⁶⁸ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁶⁹ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*

⁷⁰ Babb, Giorgio Dal Canto, *Harmonious Conflict* edited by Ilario Luperini, directed by Alberto Bartalini, Bandecchi&Vivaldi, Pontedera 2013, *Index of Lies*



A hand-coloured graphic dedicated to the Pontedera Fair in Piazza Garibaldi



A graphic depiction of the village of Montecastello, a hamlet of Pontedera, made on the occasion of the wedding of Maria Rita Vaglini and Alessandro Ballerini (May 19, 1990)
ink on cardboard 21.5×15 cm (Sauro Macelloni)