

ANNA CAIONE

There was a time when students of European culture considered the Grand Tour an essential rite of passage, a pilgrimage through which one could imbibe the wonders of the classical world first hand. The Tour confirmed a state of cultural insight, of having been where others could only imagine. These days mass global tourism has subsumed what was once the purview of the privileged. Museums and monuments are viewed on tightly controlled schedules, and art, when you get there, is little more than a spectator sport for crowds of high tech gawkers. No longer an experience to be had, art is but a box to be ticked.

In her new body of work Anna Caione reflects on her own cultural tourism to locations across Italy during the period of Europe's transition to a single monetary currency. In the wake of this momentous economic revolution countless everyday items have been made anew. Amongst them, and the subject of Caione's new work, is the seemingly innocuous museum entry ticket.

In the way that incidental objects from ancient civilisations take on great meaning, Caione has alighted on items redolent with signification. Displayed collectively they form an instructive tableaux, highlighting the increasing homogeneity of contemporary culture. Ironically these diminutive vouchers are the very pass keys to our halls of art and culture.

Consider for instance the old entry pass to the Vatican Museum. Ignoring its singular lack of religious iconography, its surface is festooned with symbolic forms of arts and letters hailing from past epochs of European culture. The leering masks of Greek tragedy, an artist's palette and brushes, a poet's laurel wreath, all announce the treasures within. Look now to the entry stub for the Venice Biennale. The sans serif font and matt red surface could be from any contemporary cultural event, situated for that matter, anywhere in the world. And the language of choice is no longer Italian, but English. Between these polar opposites, Caione has amassed an array of in betweens. In Turin for example the collision of old and new is rendered succinctly between *Museo* and speeding subway train.

As an artist with a long standing interest in the tactility and implicit meaning of surface, Caione has recreated these tickets as objects of some antiquity. Enlarged to reveal their details in full, the surfaces are closer to those of ancient architectural structures than disposable mercantile ephemera. In this they pose a number of pertinent questions, concerning not least of all, the lasting testimony of our consumer focused culture. Will it be a sustained and long lasting equation, capable of outlasting our current rate of consumption, or like so many disposable entry passes, lost with yesterday's garbage? These are the concerns of Caione's new body of work, making them a most worthy arena of investigation.

Damian Smith, 2008