

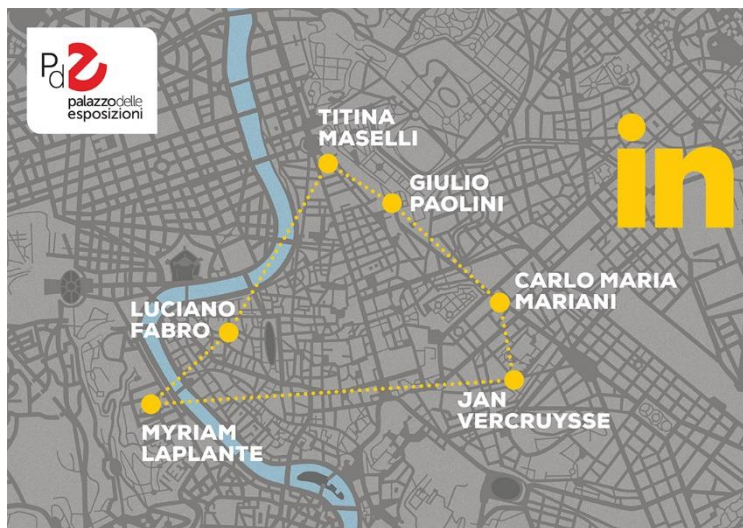


in mostra

ROMA CONTEMPORANEA DAGLI ANNI CINQUANTA AI DUEMILA / 1

Titina Maselli, Giulio Paolini, Luciano Fabro,
Carlo Maria Mariani, Jan Vercruysse, Myriam Laplante
con un omaggio a Sergio Pucci, fotografo

Hall texts



in mostre

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TITINA MASELLI, GIULIO PAOLINI, LUCIANO FABRO,
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con un omaggio al fotografo SERGIO PUCCI

2019
30 MAGGIO
28 LUGLIO

Mostra a cura di
Daniela Lancioni

Mostra promossa da
Roma Capitale. Assessorato alla Crescita culturale

ideata, prodotta e organizzata da
Azienda Speciale Palaexpo

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Desatech

Trasporto
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Installazione delle opere
Arteria
Galileo Pellion di Persano per il cartone
di Carlo Maria Mariani, La Costellazione del Leone, 1980
Andrea Toniutti per la sala dedicata a Luciano Fabro

Assicurazioni
MAG JLT

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Mostre in mostra

Contemporary Rome from the 1950s to the 2000s / 1

Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni

May 29th –July 28th 2019

Titina Maselli

Galleria La Tartaruga

From April 16th 1955

Giulio Paolini

Galleria La Salita

From October 31st 1964

Fabro

Concetto spaziale d'après Watteau, 1967-71

Corona di piombo, 1968-71

L'Italia d'oro / Alluminio e seta naturale, 1971

Incontri Internazionali d'Arte

November 29th 1971

Carlo Maria Mariani

La costellazione del Leone

Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone

from June 5th 1981

Jan Vercruysse

Tombeaux (Stanza)

Galleria Pieroni

February 24th – April 10th 1990

Myriam Laplante. Elisir

curated by Lorenzo Benedetti and Teresa Macrì

Fondazione Volume!

coproduced by The Gallery Apart

November 29th – December 22nd 2004

With a tribute to the art photographer Sergio Pucci

Each of the six rooms around the central rotunda of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni contains a recreation of a show held in Rome from the 1950s up until the 2000s. We have allocated each room to one decade, to one artist and either to one gallery or one institution. The room opposite the main entrance instead displays the work of an art photographer.

Mostre in mostra is an overview of exemplary works and moments in the contemporary visual arts panorama. It is also a historical itinerary which, if appreciated chronologically, will enable viewers to grasp the trends, developments and interactions undergone by art over a fifty-year time span.

We intend this to be the first in a series of similar shows held each summer, featuring different artists and galleries every time, with the idea of offering visitors a cross section of historic shows held in Rome – a city which has proved capable of reinventing its contemporary vocation thanks to individuals of exceptional intuition and discernment.

Titina Maselli, Galleria La Tartaruga 1955

Giulio Paolini, Galleria La Salita 1964

Fabro. Concetto spaziale d'après Watteau, 1967-71 / Corona di piombo, 1968-71 /

L'Italia d'oro / Alluminio e seta naturale, 1971, the "Informazioni sulla presenza italiana", curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, Incontri Internazionali d'Arte 1971

Carlo Maria Mariani. La costellazione del Leone, Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone 1981

Jan Vercruysse, Tombeaux (Stanza), Galleria Pieroni 1990

Myriam Laplante. Elisir, curated by Lorenzo Benedetti and Teresa Macrì, Fondazione Volume! and The Gallery Apart 2004

These shows will be accompanied by a tribute to photographer Sergio Pucci who, driven by his personal friendship with those involved and his own curiosity, devoted a considerable portion of his professional life to documenting art shows.

Visitors will find two texts for each room, one describing the gallery, cultural association or foundation which organised the show in question and the other devoted to the show itself. We have opted for a book layout and the texts are longer than they would normally be, with a view to offering more information on the artists and the shows. Likewise, with the histories of the exhibition spaces where the shows were held, we hope – in future editions – to be able to paint a broader picture of Rome's cultural landscape in those years.

The same texts that are on display in the six rooms can also be read in the central rotunda, or downloaded using the QR code.

Ever since artists first organised parallel presentations of their work, in protest against the official Salon exhibitions, shows have – in whatever varied form – represented the first step into the open. Arguably a sign that this practise is showing signs of age, and is therefore slowly being consigned to history, is the intensification of academic research and exhibition projects around this phenomenon in recent years.

The aim of the *Mostre in mostra* cycle is to take part in this debate with interest, particularly in the aspect that concerns the first moment in which an artwork meets its public, in whatever form, and passes from the private into the public sphere.

We have taken a philological approach in reconstructing the six shows here, using documentation, first-hand accounts, photographic material and memory. For a range of reasons, none of the featured shows is an identical copy of the original event: insufficient documentation to identify precisely what was on show, costs, conservation issues, works that have been destroyed or are untraceable, but also the alterations that some works have undergone over time, be it on account of their “musealization” or – as is more often the case – in the intentions of their creators.

Adjournments, additions, absences, transformations – our every decision is motivated in the text panels, highlighting in each and every show the pivotal, the practical and the theoretical aspects of works, artists and historical reconstructions. We very much hope that we will provoke discussion on all these themes, and that everyone will take part.

Titina Maselli

Galleria La Tartaruga

From April 16th 1955

La Tartaruga

This gallery opened with its first show on February 25th, 1954, at Via del Babuino 196, not far from Piazza del Popolo and right opposite what had once been the Hotel de Russie (which has since reopened), where RAI had moved in just a year earlier.

The gallery owners were a husband and wife, Plinio De Martiis and Maria Antonietta Pirandello. Just twenty-one, Maria Antonietta was the granddaughter of Luigi Pirandello. Plinio was thirty-four at the time and had previously opened a theatre (the Teatro dell'Arlecchino, in 1946, with *Un marziano a Roma* by Ennio Flaiano), worked as a professional photographer (in 1952 he was among the founders of the Fotografi Associati cooperative alongside Caio Garrubba, Franco Pinna, Nicola Sansone and Pablo Volta, collaborating for "Il Mondo", "Vie Nuove", "L'Unità", "Noi Donne" and publishing - among other projects - an incisive coverage of the Polesine flood), and had been an active member of the Partito Comunista Italiano for "press and propaganda".

Known to art historians across the world, Plinio De Martiis ranks as the most prominent Italian gallery owner of the Twentieth Century. He never left Rome except in his later years for his final venture, the exhibitions he curated at Castelluccio di Pienza.

Visitors may wonder why so much attention has been devoted to biographical details of Plinio De Martiis' life but it is important to grasp how this man's intelligence, inventiveness, his communication skills and the favourable circumstances of a city packed with writers, painters, sculptors, directors and musicians all combined to make him a legendary figure.

The choice of name for La Tartaruga was entrusted to chance, with five possible names written on slips of paper and placed in Mario Mafai's hat. The winning name was drawn

by Mino Maccari, who was assigned the task of conceiving the gallery's turtle logo. The inaugural show, possibly a choice intended to avoid offending any of De Martiis' many artist friends, featured lithographs by Honoré Daumier, Cham and Charles Vernier, with a quote from Charles Baudelaire on the invitation - a clear stance in favour of modernity.

Like Mino Maccari, De Martiis' initial engagement with modernity was light-hearted and playful but also very fertile. He went on to display a marked detachment from the factious rivalry - worsened by the Italian Communist party wading into the fray - which pitched supporters of abstraction against those in favour of figurativism. De Martiis featured artists from both fields in his gallery, sometimes even hanging their works side by side, even though he generally favoured painters and sculptors whose work went beyond such distinctions: Mario Mafai and Raphaël Mafai, Giulio Turcato, Ettore Colla, Titina Maselli, Fausto Pirandello, Corrado Cagli, Antonio Scordia, Piero Sadun, Ben Shan, Francesco Trombadori.

Around 1957, amidst a social climate of mounting tension (Hungary, 1956), possibly as a reaction to competition from other galleries or simply as an evolution in a career that was growing more mature (and consequently demanded clear choices) De Martiis concentrated his work on a select group of artists. Many of these were of his own generation and all were striving to define, in a new way, the formal and moral values of art. Among these were some who went as far as elaborating theories on this subject, while others simply produced their pieces: Pietro Consagra, Piero Dorazio, Ettore Colla, Salvatore Scarpitta, Achille Perilli, Leoncillo, Conrad Marca-Relli, Alberto Burri, Toti Scialoja.

La Tartaruga was the first gallery in Italy to run shows of works by American artists - Franz Kline, Robert Rauschenberg, Mark Rothko, Cy Twombly - largely thanks to its status as a reference point in Rome for international gallery owners, coupled with the contacts made during his many travels by its patron and sponsor, Giorgio Franchetti. Many will be familiar with the ties between Plinio De Martiis and Leo Castelli, or with Ileana Sonnabend (the planned opening of a gallery with her, which fell through, earned De Martiis the somewhat arguable merit of having defended art from a capitalist onslaught). Thanks to the many letters and interviews which have survived, it is also clear that De Martiis cultivated many more international relations, with the aim of exporting his gallery's artists abroad.

Around 1960, La Tartaruga entered a new phase with the emergence of a whole new generation of artists. While continuing to run shows of Cy Twombly (in total 6 solo shows and 12 group shows from 1958 to 1970), Achille Perilli, Giulio Turcato or Franz Kline, the prominence of the new arrivals was also blatant. Recently someone asked De Martiis how he met his artists, which provoked a reaction of complete astonishment – Rome was a very varied and crowded place in those years, a fascinating and fantastical world. It was certainly a place where La Tartaruga, for a number of years, exercised a powerful influence. Many of the artists who converged on this gallery debuted here, from Jannis Kounellis to Mario Schifano, Giosetta Fioroni, Cesare Tacchi, Sergio Lombardo, Renato Mambor, Mario Ceroli, Tano Festa, Umberto Bignardi, Franco Angeli, Gianfranco Baruchello, Pino Pascali, Eliseo Mattiacci, Enrico Castellani, Piero Manzoni, Ettore Innocente, Paolo Icaro, Fabio Mauri, Gherard Richter.

It was the critic and poet Cesare Vivaldi, who collaborated loyally with La Tartaruga over many years, to first pinpoint a common 'Roman' trait in the work of some of these artists, who were either born in the city or had adopted it as their home. His article dedicated to this group and entitled *La giovane scuola di Roma* (The Young Rome School), coined a definition that went viral even beyond Vivaldi's own expectations. With considerable insight, in his piece Vivaldi defined not a group but a movement, whose novelty lay in an aggressive and biting analysis of visible reality. This was the generation to follow on from the Informal, and which revitalised art with a new way of observing surroundings and landscape. Plinio De Martiis gave visibility to these new works, which were original both in terms of their materials and in their fruition by the viewer. De Martiis drew stimulating parallels between this movement and the early-Twentieth Century avant-garde artistic currents (in 1965, for example, he ran a show of Giacomo Balla's bedroom). He flanked the young artists with the poets of the neo-avant-garde Gruppo 63, the Nuovissimi, who were also striving to explore new styles and daring lexical contaminations. In the same spirit – walking a metaphorical tightrope between artwork and behaviour, matter and image, engagement and nihilism – De Martiis backed the group through to his best-known show, "Il Teatro delle Mostre", the ultimate fusion between art and life played out within the context of a theatre. An event much in tune with the *zeitgeist* – it was the month of May, 1968 – every evening a different artist would present a work, an installation or an action. The publisher Lerici produced a fine catalogue, with photographs taken by De Martiis himself, an accompanying text by Maurizio Calvesi and brief descriptions of each work by Achille Bonito Oliva.

By 1963 the gallery had moved to Piazza del Popolo 3, to a mezzanine floor whose windows looked out above the main gateway into Rome from the north. Late in 1968 La Tartaruga vacated these premises, reopening at the beginning of 1969 not far away, in Via Principessa Clotilde 1/A, with a show entitled "Archivio (1954-1969)". It consisted of photographs taken by De Martiis over the years and was the first in a series of shows which would cast a retrospective eye over the gallery's history. In 1971 the gallery closed, only to reopen from 1974 to 1978, first in Via Ripetta 22 and then in Via Pompeo Magno 6/B with a calendar of shows that remained faithful to the established tradition of provocation.

In the 1966 show entitled "Roma 66 realtà dell'immagine", De Martiis had grouped together works by around ten of his artists. Just a few months later two of these, Jannis Kounellis and Pino Pascali, would exhibit at the L'Attico gallery works that marked a clean breaking out of the traditional boundaries of the framing of an artwork. In conceptual terms, the 'realtà dell'immagine' show offered a clue to how the gallery's activities would evolve from then onwards. In a number of the shows that followed, De Martiis underlined the presence of both sculpture and painting. At the same time, he managed to intercept new artists who, although fully aware of the revolutions that had overturned established ideas of what art was supposed to be, were once more interested in conveying their synthesis of the world onto a traditional painting format. One such was Ettore Spalletti, who held his debut solo show at La Tartaruga in 1975.

Alongside his singular championing of painting, De Martiis saturated the gallery with works of just about any other genre imaginable provided they were innovative, experimental, provoked curiosity or simply appeared to sit naturally with the traditional painting genre. His intentions may also have been to underline the necessity for comparison and exchange between genres, without undermining the complexity of their different expressive forms. Visitors might stumble across musical compositions by the likes of Tony Ackerman, Alvin Curran, Michele Iannaccone, Gianni Nebbiosi, Giancarlo Schiaffini or Davide Mosconi, together with Super 8 mm films by Luigi Barzini, Anna Carini or Annabella Miscuglio. There were also showings of films by Taylor Mead and Marco Dolcetta, the pictorial stage actions of Antonello Aglioti with Memè Perlini, and even a poetry laboratory conducted by Elio Pagliarani – every Monday for over six months in 1977 and 1978. Two reviews held at the gallery reopened the close dialogue between visual arts and performance: "Parlare e scrivere", curated by Renato Barilli, and "Corpus Scripsit" by Nanni Cagnone.

In the 1980s and '90s the gallery moved again, first to Via Ripetta 22 and then to Piazza Mignanelli 25, after which it entered into a partnership with Netta Vespignani before De Martiis embarked on what would be his final venture, in Tuscany, alongside Benedetta Origo.

Before closing for good, De Martiis again challenged the times with a new and daring feat: so-called "anachronistic" painting, which arrived at the gallery with a show of Franco Piruca in 1978. This was followed by shows of Stefano Di Stasio, Maurizio Ligas, Aurelio Bulzatti, Alberto Abate, Paola Gandolfi, Piero Pizzi Cannella... The artworks were always placed in a dialogue with something else, from Amelia Rosselli reading Sandro Penna to Guido Ceronetti reading and commenting his Old Testament book *L'impazienza di Giobbe*, as well as paintings by Antonio Donghi, Mario Mafai, Francesco Trombadori, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Schifano... (DL)

Titina Maselli

Galleria La Tartaruga
From April 16th 1955

"Dear Titina, I have some news from you, and am sorry to hear it is not good. I was so keen to have your show immediately after Mafai but so be it. After all, I suppose it's the least that could happen with an ocean separating us." Dated February 4th 1955, this letter was written by Plinio De Martiis to Titina Maselli in New York. The exhibition in question, which he had scheduled to run at La Tartaruga in March, had to be postponed because Maselli would not yet have returned to Italy, bringing with her a set of new pictures that she had painted during her sojourn in America.

At just 28, Maselli had moved to New York in 1952, into a so-called "cold water flat" (an apartment with no running hot water) found for her by a family friend. The family entourage she had given up was a culturally stimulating one, regular guests at her parents' included intellectuals, artists, musicians and writers such as Silvio D'Amico, Alfredo Casella, Corrado Alvaro, Paola Masino, Alberto Savinio, Fausto Pirandello, Corrado Cagli and others. She had also left an artistic milieu which in those years was fired up by endless disputes between supporters of Abstraction and those loyal to Figurativism, something which held no interest for Maselli and a context in which she had never felt completely at her ease. On the one hand there was Renato Guttuso and the artists aligned with the directives of the communist party, pitched against the young members of the Forma 1 group and then Age d'Or, guided by Achille Perilli and Piero Dorazio. Maselli was also leaving her husband, Toti Scialoja, whom she had married at just over 20 in 1945.

After two solo shows in Rome, one at the Galleria L'Obelisco in 1948 and the other at the Galleria Il Pincio in 1951, in New York Maselli exhibited her work at the Durlacher Gallery in 1953. But as she recalled years later, in New York she had mostly painted, and part of

that body of work she brought back to Italy with her to present at La Tartaruga in April 1955.

The list of works in the foldable leaflet printed for the Rome show features a total of 14 canvases, several with titles that refer to unmistakably American places: *Montacarichi a Queensborough Bridge*, *Piccione a Wall Street*, *Grattacielie Cortile a New York*. Only one painting, *Palazzone*, dated 1952, was actually reproduced on the promotional leaflet. It is impossible to say for certain whether this work (which has been included in the show here at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni) was effectively among those presented at La Tartaruga. De Martiis could well have reproduced it for the leaflet because it was the only image he had – something which was not uncommon in those days. From the inscription on the reverse of the canvas we know only that it was painted in Rome, certainly prior to Maselli's departure for the United States.

It has not been possible to discover exactly which works were included in La Tartaruga show. Of the many paintings by Maselli made in those years which have been examined for this exhibition, none have the gallery's stamp or label on the reverse. Neither has it been possible to locate any photographs of the show, either in the artist's archive or in that of La Tartaruga, which is currently at the state archive in Latina. For this exhibition we are therefore presenting a meaningful selection of works by Maselli completed in those years, from 1952 to 1955. This moment of contact for Maselli with the American art scene – many years before Pop Art would take over the global scene but also before many Italian artists shifted back to figurative representation – was helpful in clarifying certain traits and features of her work. In 1988, remembering those four years spent in America, Maselli said "I paint New York every day even now, that *hyper-nature* exerted such a powerful influence on me that it has become an irreplaceable starting point for my work".

Titina Maselli's brother Citto remembers his sister started painting in the streets of Rome towards the end of 1945, particularly at night. She was interested in the city softened by darkness, suddenly punctuated by flashes of light. In 1953 she wrote, "...the city. Debris, inscriptions, metal. The debris of everyday lives, dirty flotsam left behind from overuse and unsettlement, lovelessly discarded by the side of the road. Suddenly illuminated at night, it comes back to life, rising like a glistening continent out of the weeds... precious... dazzling". Her painter's eye was caught first by the waste – objects, written signs – left behind in the streets of Rome by the American troops, then when she went to New York by the trash of the modern metropolis, itself a receptacle for "a population of misfits, immigrants, slaves driven by desperation and estrangement who have lost their identity".

Even the football players and athletes that became the subjects of Maselli's work in the 1950s were "discarded" images, as she explained, "I knew nothing of football as such, neither of the game nor its fans - my idea of football players was shaped by the illustrations I saw in newspapers thrown away in the streets".

Maselli's urban scenes - from an angle or in close-up visions - together with her bent, suffering figures, still convey a heartfelt empathy on the part of the artist. Her densely applied, layered paint - as only oils can be - smacks of the expressionism of the Rome School, the "Quattro artisti fuori strada" group of four artists gathered together in 1947 by Cesare Brandi, of which Maselli's husband Scialoja was a member. Maselli's works from the 1950s differ both from the colour tone experimentations of the Rome School and from what is arguably her best-known production from the 1960s. As film director Michelangelo Antonioni wrote of her paintings from this period, "there is very little colour... a lot of black - her reds and her blues are laboured, they vanish in the evening light. Only the greens stand out. Her leaves are lively abstract stains, hiding other stains that are yellow or white... neon lights". These flashes of light and colour are what capture the viewer's eye, generating unexpected apparitions.

Renzo Vespignani, who in his youth would wander the streets of the city with Maselli in search of inspiration for their paintings, wrote a brief text - in the form of a letter to the artist - for the leaflet promoting the show at La Tartaruga: "I could point out that your painting is dangerously close to abstraction but these cut, multi-faceted surfaces, these solidly intertwined elements are more than just exercises in form. They are the steel, the cables, the centrings, the gloomy framework of *your* city". This ambiguity is what makes these images so engaging even today, suspended as they are within a dimension of formal abstraction and at times dark - which Maselli would surely have called "inescapable" - tale of existence. (PB)

Giulio Paolini

Galleria La Salita

From October 31st 1964

La Salita

Named after the Salita di San Sebastianello, which runs from Piazza di Spagna up to the Pincian Hill, this gallery consisted of a space at street level, at number 16 / C. Gian Tomaso Liverani opened it on February 23rd, 1957. The inaugural show was a prudent one (which would seldom take place again over the following years), a collective with twenty names including Pietro Consagra, Leoncillo, Titina Maselli, Piero Sadun, Antonio Scordia – all chosen under the aegis of Lionello Venturi and presented in a catalogue by his pupil Valentino Martinelli.

Liverani was thirty-eight years old at the time, descended from an ancient Faenza family. Formerly a cavalry officer, he had followed his father's wishes and obtained first a degree in law and then one in agricultural science. After moving to Rome, he worked at FAO, only opening the gallery after his father's death.

Along with La Tartaruga, La Salita immediately came to be considered Rome's most prestigious contemporary art showcase. Its activity spanned almost thirty years in three different venues – after San Sebastianello it moved to Via Gregoriana 5 (1967-1971) and then to Via Garibaldi 86 (December 1971-1986). Shortly before its definitive closure, Liverani ran a series of shows that retraced its history entitled "Il disegno dell'arte", conceived in collaboration with Simonetta Lux.

It is safe to say that the *disegno* (drawing) in question, traced by this gallery, was a perfect reflection of the evolution of history of art in those years. Entirely independent in his choices, Liverani had an instinct for spotting novelty before it became mainstream. He almost always anticipated artists and trends that would become established, frequently contributing to their emergence himself. To this day he ranks as one of the gallery owners with the highest number of debut solo shows to his name. Just a few of these are sufficient to give an idea of his remarkable intuition and courage: Ettore Sordini (1959), Franco

Angeli (1960), Tano Festa (1961), Titone (1964), Carlo Battaglia (1964), Giulio Paolini (1964), Ettore Innocente (1965), Teodosio Magnoni (1965), Francesco Ravizza (1966), Richard Serra (1966), Maurizio Mochetti (1968), Franco Gozzano (1970), Vettor Pisani (1970), Alberto Abate (1977), Antonio Capaccio (1983).

Liverani was one who listened to what artists had to say without having to embrace their lifestyle. Some have accused him of not stimulating the art business in terms of financial turnover. But he was generous in other ways. He was active in cultivating – something few did in those days – relations with government figures to promote Italian art internationally. In 1959, for example, he endorsed the exhibition “Italian Painting Today”, which travelled around Japan presented by Giulio Carlo Argan, Palma Bucarelli and the Japanese art critic Sōichi Tominaga.

Given the profusion of eminent names commissioned to contribute to his gallery's catalogues, it would appear that Liverani made a concerted effort to lend academic substance to the broad tapestry of artists he featured in his shows. To begin with he engaged established art historians who were often also university professors – as well as Venturi, Martinelli and Argan, there were Marco Valsecchi, Franco Russoli, Enrico Crispolti, Nello Ponente, Ermanno Migliorini, Giovanni Carandente. There were also exponents of biting new theories on contemporary art like Michel Tapié's *Art Autre* and Pierre Restany's *Nouveau Réalisme*, alongside brilliant independent thinkers like Cesare Vivaldi and Emilio Villa. Over the 1970s, the relation between artists and art critics changed. La Salita reflected this in full and critics all but vanished from its activities, only to return the following decade with Simonetta Lux and Fulvio Abbate.

From 1957 to 1960, the gallery's activities frequently featured prominent figures from Italy's non-figurative art scene: Gastone Novelli, Carla Accardi, Bice Lazzari – two women artists in this first select group formed by Liverani, who never discriminated against the female sex in his choices – Toti Scialoja, Alberto Burri, Ettore Colla, Mimmo Rotella, Antonio Sanfilippo, Giulio Turcato. Some shows were striking also for the way in which the works were displayed, such as Carla Accardi's 1958 show in which the paintings were hung at different heights, disseminated across the walls, or the Alberto Burri show that presented just two large-scale works.

In the early 1970s the gallery continued to devote shows to Scialoja, Accardi, Rotella and Colla, although its programme would soon become saturated with a new generation of artists. This was partly anticipated in the group shows that ran in 1959, to then emerge in

full in the famous show entitled "Roma 60. Cinque pittori. Angeli, Festa, Lo Savio, Schifano, Uncini", which opened in November 1960 following two previous editions. The show marked a turning point, a break with the past and a new beginning all at once. The works on display were all monochrome surfaces tenaciously adherent to the values of painting (light) and matter, from which each artist soon developed new images each according to their personal sensitivity.

Of all the artists from this new generation, La Salita is most associated with Francesco Lo Savio, although many others were featured at the gallery - some just for a single show - and together offer a fairly articulate picture of the tensions of the time. Alongside Angeli and Festa there were Fabio Mauri, Christo (for his show he completed one of his very first 'wrappings' on a statue in Villa Borghese), Ettore Sordini, Piero Sadun, Nanda Vigo, Aldo Mondino (in his solo show that ran in 1964, visitors were encouraged to finish the paintings on display by colouring them in with pencils), Giulio Paolini, Marcia Hafif, Carlo Lorenzetti, Ettore Innocente, Teodosio Magnoni, Sergio Lombardo, Gianni Colombo, Richard Serra (who exhibited several stuffed animals and a live pig, for which Liverani was reported by the police for detaining merchandise that was not included in his license - Argan and Bucarelli testified in court, in his favour), Luciano Fabro, Maurizio Mochetti, without forgetting the groups of artists, revitalised in those years, such as Gruppo T, Gruppo 0 and Gruppo MID.

Liverani was not immune to the occasional *divertissement*, which were sharper and more incisive than they appeared at first glance. One such was his version of the typical Christmas show, in which he asked the artists to create "a useful object, a chair, a plate, a bed, a cupboard, a mirror, a candlestick, a cabinet, an armchair, a box, a vase, a stove, a table, a ladder etc." (1962-1963). Or the time when he offered "200 pieces at great prices" in the show entitled "La Salita grande vendita" (La Salita grand sale), laid out like a supermarket with a cash desk borrowed from the well-known Italian department store Standa (1964-1965). Those were the years of the all-consuming debate on the relation between object and artwork, and of the triumph of American art that culminated in the 1964 Venice Biennale. It was possibly as a response to the struggle Italian artists were having to define their identity - in their effort to stave off an art that had the backing of the most powerful economy in the world at the time but which had nonetheless fascinated them - that in the summer of 1965 Liverani conceived the show "Mostra a soggetto. Corradino di Svevia". He asked his artists to create a work about the unfortunate Conradin of Swabia, captured in 1265 at the Torre Astura fortress where the works were to be displayed. At Torre Astura Pino Pascali officiated a mock funeral, marking the birth date

of Italian performance art and in general consolidating the espousal between contemporary art and vestiges of the past.

In the 1970s the gallery became a kind of art laboratory, made available to artists by a Liverani who, with hindsight, appears to have been inclined to embrace even the most unusual art forms, unfettered from all prejudice except his own intuition. A number of the gallery's most memorable events date from this time, such as the *Progetto di avvelenamento* by Sergio Lombardo or Pisani in an 'ideal dialogue' with Duchamp. There was also Fabio Mauri's *Ebrea* and Jannis Kounellis in the darkened space seated at a table with in front of him the scattered plaster fragments of a Classical statue of Apollo – the mask of the god covering his face, a stuffed crow and music by Mozart performed live. Eliseo Mattiacci was featured with his *Essere e respirare*, and there were solo shows of Franco Gozzano, Alighiero Giuseppetti, Ernesto Tatafiore and Roberto Barni. The group show *Ghenos Eros e Thanatos* curated by Alberto Boatto set a new pace for Italian art, in the direction of an avant-garde that was inclusive of history and passions. A new generation of artists was also featured prominently – Sandro Chia, Ferruccio De Filippi, Gianfranco Notargiacomo – with a quick succession of shows in which they experimented with a form of conceptual art that was dense with anthropological and linguistic references, returning once more to the building blocks of traditional art: drawing, painting and sculpture. A number of shows were conceived jointly by Carlo Maurizio Benveduti and Tullio Catalano, the minds behind the situationist group known as the Ufficio per la Immaginazione Preventiva, which was actively promoting a capillary diffusion of art and was founded on the conviction that aesthetic values are, by definition, revolutionary. A lasting meeting point for a new generation of artists, in the early 1980s La Salita opened up also to artists it had never presented before, some of whom came from very different and independent artistic backgrounds such as Felice Levini, Mariano Rossano and Antonio Capaccio.

Throughout his career, Liverani was also an art publisher, commissioning projects from many artists over the years. Among his catalogue of publications, some were devoted to sculpture. There were also the monograph editions devoted to artists in the 1960s, of which the best known is *La Litografia*, introduced by Argan, with works by Accardi, Colla, Dorazio, Festa, Fontana, Lo Savio, Rotella, Schifano. His *Collana di Perle* series presented artists of the calibre of Sandro Chia, Ferruccio De Filippi, Gianfranco Notargiacomo and Jannis Kounellis. The many lithographs commissioned by Liverani were always printed in the traditional lithographic printing workshop of Roberto Bulla, in Rome. (DL)

Giulio Paolini

Galleria La Salita
From October 31st 1964

Giulio Paolini was just about to turn 24 when he inaugurated his first solo exhibition on October 31st, 1964, at Rome's La Salita gallery. Born in Genoa, Paolini was living in Turin at the time, where he had moved with his family while still an adolescent.

In her biography of Paolini (*Catalogo ragionato*, Milan 2008), Maddalena Disch traces the sequence of events that led to his first solo show in Rome: "Early in 1963, in Rome, he met Guido Montana, editor-in-chief of the journal 'Arte Oggi' (...), who introduced him to the city's art scene. He met Plinio De Martiis, the owner of La Tartaruga gallery, to whom he submitted a project for a solo show that was never made (*Ipotesi per una mostra*, 1963). In June 1964, Paolini attended the Venice Biennale (...) for the first time, where he met Carla Accardi and several other artists close to De Martiis, who were exhibiting at the Italian pavilion: Franco Angeli, Tano Festa, Giosetta Fioroni, Mario Schifano. Through Aldo Mondino Paolini also met Gian Tomaso Liverani, the owner of La Salita, who invited him to hold his first solo exhibition".

Before October 1964, Paolini had only two group shows to his name. Both were prize reviews, which at that time offered the best chance of visibility for artists at the start of their careers. His entry for the 1961 "XII Premio Lissone internazionale per la pittura" was a frame around a white, gesso-primed canvas (initially he had considered sending a similar piece with a pot of paint instead of the canvas). His train of thought was already clear at this stage - he was not interested in fixing his experience in an image, he wanted to remain in a suspended state among his frames, his pots of paint and to use them, as he in fact stated soon after to Carla Lonzi, not to arrive at a result but to create a model, even humbly, with means that are not pretending to have any meaning.

Only two photographs from Paolini's debut solo show are known to us, both anonymous. One shows a young woman and was probably taken on the opening night. On the floor behind her, propped against a wall, is the work which today forms part of the MAXXI

collection. The other photo is of the work currently in deposit at the Lugano MASI, and the one from the Milan collection. Somewhat dated (it would be changed soon after), the gallery's lighting consisted of articulated arm lamps shedding cones of light onto the works hanging on the walls. But there are no images on the plywood surfaces which Paolini arranged in the various rooms of La Salita, and which must have given visitors the impression that the exhibition was not completely mounted. Some works were up on the walls, while others appeared as if they were still waiting to be hung, stacked against the walls or (as sometimes happens in non-museum spaces) against each other.

In a text published in 1971, Paolini described the show at La Salita thus: "A show that gives the impression of an exhibition being mounted, with panels of untreated wood (either propped against one another or stacked against a wall) 'substituting' pictures and analysing the purely conventional associations normally found within an exhibition".

The La Salita show is now recreated at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni thanks to the collaboration of Giulio Paolini himself, who has conceived its present layout. The new project has borne in mind a number of factors, from an awareness of the time that has passed to the sedimented identity of each single work and the different space to which the works must necessarily relate.

The works arranged along the walls are almost all the ones on show at La Salita in 1964. The original collection only lacks two works that were broken up after the show. A third work, now in the Coetz collection in Munich, could not be loaned on account of conservation risks and has been substituted by a similar work dating from 1964 in which, from a nylon wire in the centre of a vertical panel, hangs a smaller element in the same material proportioned to the one onto which it is leaning. In addition, the artist has included a plywood board piece coated in laminated plastic on which rests a hook suspended from a nylon wire.

As in his previous works, Paolini placed his art tools on show within the exhibition – the sketching sheet discernible on the reverse of a work, or the wood or Masonite panel (a material widely in use as a painting support at the time, as visitors will – by pure coincidence – be able to see also in the works by Titina Maselli on show in the adjacent room).

In his project for La Salita, Paolini was striving to forge a new exhibition 'model' (with hindsight and his artistic maturity, it is now clear that each single work was part of this

design) by questioning his own concept of how a show works. A number of clues support this interpretation: the hooks and wires normally used to hang pictures and which appear in the works themselves, the inclusion of elements on the rear of works that are not visible from the front, the interaction between different elements arranged against one another or the presence of untreated surfaces which Paolini identified as walls where pictures were missing. A further subtractive action was performed in the invitation, again with the intention of redefining the overall perception of what an exhibition is – on the sketch card he ordered for the purpose, Paolini reserved the upper right hand corner for all the usual information (Giulio Paolini October 31st 1964 / Galleria La Salita Rome Via / San Sebastianello 16 c telephone/ 672841) except that it was written with a dry pen and was therefore invisible unless placed at a right angle under a source of light. Folded in four, the card contained a loose image of one of the works in the show.

The exhibition generated interesting results for Paolini. Carla Lonzi and Marisa Volpi came to see the show and they became friends, a bond that would extend also into their respective professional spheres. Paolini also made his first sale at that show, to Corrado Levi, the Turinese collector and talented intellectual who still owns it and who generously loaned it for this reconstruction.

After the show devoted to Paolini, La Salita ran a solo show of Marcia Hafif which was followed immediately, on December 19th 1964, by one of those customary shows in which gallery owners attempted to lure Christmas shoppers away from their choice of traditional Christmas presents and opt for an accessibly-priced artwork. The same year Pop Art had triumphed at the Venice Biennale, Liverani decided to mount a show featuring works that he had specially commissioned from his artists. He availed himself of the collaboration of Standa, a chain of department stores, which “kindly took care of shelving the merchandise” (according to the invitation). According to Liverani they even loaned a cash till. On the invitation poster, the exhibition was advertised in the promotional language used for marketing mass products: “12 days at La Salita. 200 special items at very special prices!”.

This prompted Paolini to exhibit and question also the very dynamics of the art market. In the exhibition poster his work was advertised as “BUSTE con sorpresa” (surprise envelopes) with a price tag of 1000 lire. Buyers received in exchange an envelope containing a card folded into four, similar to the one that had been used for his previous show, with 1000 lire inside – the same sum they had paid to buy the work.

Given their assonance with the works presented in his first solo show, Paolini has decided to place three of his *Disegni* from 1964 in the middle of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni room. They are part of a series of works which were also made up of a card folded into four and each contain a different object: a sheet of paper signed by the artist, three tubes of paint, a paint-stained spatula, a pencil, a scrunched up piece of paper, a page printed with geometrical elements... (DL)

With many thanks to Giulio Paolini, who agreed to rethink his first solo show in arranging the works here at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni.

A heartfelt thank you also to Maddalena Disch for sharing with us the information and her understanding of the works described in the profile cards written by her, and never published, for the Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini.

Fabro

Concetto spaziale

d'après Watteau, 1967-71

Corona di piombo,

1968-71

L'Italia d'oro

Alluminio e seta naturale,

1971

Incontri Internazionali d'Arte

November 29th 1971

Incontri Internazionali d'Arte

Many will already be familiar with the beginnings of this association. In the late-1960s Graziella Lonardi Buontempo, a lady in her forties of rare beauty, left Naples and her husband, whose surname she would continue to use for the rest of her life. She started a new life in Rome, living with Francesco Aldobrandini in a building opposite the Aracoeli, collecting art, travelling, socialising at the highest level with aristocrats, the wealthy bourgeoisie and intellectuals. In June 1970 she made a trip to Montepulciano and attended the exhibition "Amore mio", the brilliant debut of Achille Bonito Oliva, then in his thirties. Deeply impressed by what she had seen, within a few months the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome hosted the show "Vitalità del negativo nell'arte italiana 1960/70", again curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, with the overall design by the architect Piero Sartogo. It was a rigorous, highly selective retrospective of 1960s Italian art and art criticism. As well as covering up the state of disrepair in which the Palazzo delle Esposizioni languished in those years, the layout concept of the show transferred the critical notion of an art feeding on the negative – and redeeming it – into a very visual experience.

The Palazzo delle Esposizioni show marked the beginning of the Incontri Internazionali d'Arte association, which was formalised officially in a deed dated July 19th, 1971. According to the founding document, the aims of the association were "to spread and increase awareness of contemporary art in all its forms". Right up until Graziella Lonardi Buontempo's death in 2010, after a lifetime spent as the association's secretary-general and soul, this is exactly what the association pursued. Its activities continued uninterruptedly and with a volcanic energy that embraced many sectors, particularly the visual arts, but also film and literature. Its avant-garde approach was everywhere, from the new works it promoted to works it encouraged to reappraise, even down to the model

it adopted for its own organisation. Albeit chaotic and penalised by insufficient funds, the association was supremely successful at putting into practice its main concept: the conviction that even the most radical work of art must, in the magical moment of its presentation, reach the broadest possible audience, immediately entering into the public domain.

In the catalogue for the "Vitalità del negativo" show, Palma Bucarelli – who in those years was both the Soprintendente all'Arte Contemporanea and the director of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna – underlined that this was the first time the education ministry (at the time there was still no culture ministry) had lent its patronage to a show that was more "explorative than representative". Bucarelli interpreted this decision as a long overdue recognition of the formative role of museums, and a newly acquired awareness that the problem of art was inextricable from the problem of culture and the education of the masses.

Incontri succeeded on many occasions in introducing the new to museums or other places capable of housing a large public. The most astounding of all remains "Contemporanea" (1973-1974), Achille Bonito Oliva's master-stroke, which transformed the entire city into a show. Roughly 350 artists took part, with twelve curators each in charge of a different section: Bonito Oliva for art, Paolo Bertetto for film, Giuseppe Bartolucci for the theatre, Alessandro Mendini for architecture and design, Daniela Palazzoli for photography, Fabio Sargentini for music and dance, Yvon Lambert and Michel Claura for books and independent record releases, Mario Diacono for visual and concrete poetry, Bruno Corà, Lietta Gervasio and Paolo Medori for alternative information, plus an area called "Aperta" devoted to debuting artists. The aim of the project was to convey the anthropological complexity of contemporary society: the entire Villa Borghese underground parking lot, freshly built to designs by Luigi Moretti, was made available to the event by the contractor firm and transformed into a vast laboratory. Almost all of the artists involved came to Rome for the exhibition, many mounting their own pieces themselves and others actually completing them on site. Christo wrapped a 200-metre stretch of the city's Aurelian walls. Over the three months that the event lasted, a total of 40 shows were staged, 80 films screened, there were debates and conferences. Great care was taken to include learning, which paid off considerably in the high number of school groups that visited. Graziella Buontempo frequently remembered, with satisfaction, that "Contemporanea" was the first event of its kind in Italy where she had seen entire families among the visitors, complete with toddlers in their prams.

The titanic enterprise cost Graziella Buontempo the end of her relationship with Francesco Aldobrandini, who had been one of the main financial backers of Incontri, in an articulate and mixed system of financing that combined public and private funding.

There is not enough space here to mention all the initiatives that were organised in museums or other institutions, so we have limited ourselves to those in which Incontri was most actively involved.

"Roma interrotta" at Trajan's Market in 1977, from an idea by Piero Sartogo with designs by twelve architects for expanding Rome, starting from the Eighteenth-Century map of the city by Gian Battista Nolli.

"Identité Italienne. L'Art en Italie depuis 1959", a major show at the Centre Pompidou curated by Germano Celant in 1981.

A cycle of monographic shows at the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, all of which were curated by Bruno Corà from 1987 to 1991, with site-specific works conceived for the Sala dei Camuccini by Mario Merz, Daniel Buren, Carlo Alfano, Giulio Paolini, Sol LeWitt, Joseph Kosuth, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Eliseo Mattiacci, Sigmar Polke.

"Arte domani. Punti di vista", a review coordinated by Pieranna Cavalchini which ran from 1990 to 1997, started with the idea of ensuring visibility to a new generation of young artists and critics, and to favour international exchanges. The various editions were curated, among others, by Cecilia Casorati, Cornelia Lauf, Aldo Iori, Agnes Kohlmeyer, Sylvie Parent, Melissa Harris.

"Immagini Italiane", a show devoted to Italian photography organised in collaboration with the journal "Aperture" at the Guggenheim Collection in Venice, 1993. The project also included the opening of La Casa della Fotografia in Villa Pignatelli in Naples.

A new take on the Italian art scene, curated by Achille Bonito Oliva and entitled "Minimalia", was presented in 1997 and 1998 at the Fondazione Querini Dubois in Venice, the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome and at PS1 in New York.

The association's activities in the film sector were coordinated largely by the critic Adriano Aprà along with Patrizia Pistagnesi, with reviews of Italian cinema at the New York Museum of Modern Art and at the Centre Pompidou.

The Premio Malaparte non-Italian literature prize was launched in Capri in 1983 and is still running.

Each of these events was accompanied by a beautifully bound catalogue. Incontri also published a number of other titles, such as the writings of Sol LeWitt edited by Adachiara Zevi.

The logistical hub for this vast body of work was a space overlooking the Seventeenth-Century courtyard of Palazzo Taverna, in Via di Monte Giordano, with its gushing fountain – in those days overgrown with ferns and venus hair – that soon became the association's characteristic image. The same room witnessed the creation of Achille Bonito Oliva's Centro d'Informazione Alternativa, which inaugurated in November 1971 under the coordination of Bruno Corà. As indicated in its printed programme, the Centro was tasked with actively providing information and documentation. Its documentation duties consisted of chronicling cultural and political events by gathering texts, catalogues, magazines, etc. The active information entailed directly presenting works, actions, conversations and other material.

The programme made no mention of what some have termed 'apparitions' – the 'exhibitions' that ran at Palazzo Taverna for over a decade. Their most likely inspiration was the "Teatro delle Mostre" by Plinio De Martiis (La Tartaruga, 1968) with which Achille Bonito Oliva had collaborated. At the Centro, the events – be they works on show, actions, installations, screenings or debates – always lasted just the space of one evening. At times they would be part of a broader programme and spread out over one or more weeks, with a rapid turnover of different apparitions in quick succession.

It is safe to say that in those years Palazzo Taverna hosted just about all the artists and critics – Italian and international – being credited by a network of publications and exhibitions mostly in Europe as belonging to the last avant-garde current of the Twentieth Century. There were also a number of lesser-known episodes, organised thanks to their promoters' capillary knowledge of the local scene.

The socialising, collective spirit which pervaded the activities of Incontri was reflected in its predilection for group shows and the plurality of the contributions featured in its catalogues. This extended also to the programme of initiatives scheduled at Palazzo Taverna, two of which were exemplary in this sense. The first was "Critica in atto" (March 6th-30th, 1972) during which, day after day, there were lectures by Giulio Carlo Argan, Alberto Boatto, Luciano Caramel, Mario Diacono, Germano Celant, Renato Barilli, Italo Tomassoni, Maurizio Fagiolo, Giuseppe Gatt, Vittorio Rubiu, Filiberto Menna, Maurizio Calvesi, Daniela Palazzoli, Marisa Volpi, Paolo Fossati, Tommaso Trini, Catherine Millet, Jean-Marc Poinso, François Pluchart, Michel Calura, Klaus Honneff and Achille Bonito Oliva himself, who had promoted the event. The second was "Roma. Mappa 72" (November 20th-December 18th, 1972) which ran a series of exhibitions – some truly memorable – by Ferruccio De Filippi, Cesare Tacchi (the consecration of the ground),

Franco Gozzano, Sandro Chia, Eliseo Mattiacci, Luigi Ontani, Anna Valeriani, Patrizio Mangogna, Cloti Ricciardi (a meeting of the feminist collective which men were forbidden to attend), Domenico Centaro, Laura Grisi, Sergio Lombardo, Gianfranco Notargiacomo, Alighiero Giuseppetti, Collettivo Fiore-Varrone-Gramaglia, Claudio Cintoli, Mimmo Germanà, Jannis Kounellis, Giancarlo Croce, Renato Mambor, Luca Patella, Vettor Pisani, Maurizio Benveduti, Gino De Dominicis (cocktail to celebrate the twilight of the Second Law of Thermodynamics).

In 1972 Andy Warhol and Joseph Beuys were both hosted at Incontri meetings, for two long debates. From the photographs taken by Massimo Piersanti it is clear that there was always a packed audience at the Palazzo Taverna gatherings, fired up by the assiduous appearances of Renato Guttuso, Alberto Moravia – who served as the association's president for many years –, Giulio Carlo Argan and many others.

Throughout the 1980s and well into the '90s, the influence of Bruno Corà on the activities organised by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte grew steadily, conditioning its choices with a different way of working and an entirely new attitude. Greater prominence was given to individual artists, and a number of study projects and discussions were launched with research institutes such as the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche. Those were the years of the admirable shows held at Capodimonte, as well as others in which Incontri supported the presence of Italian artists abroad.

The activities at Palazzo Taverna entered a new phase of greater impetus towards the end of the 1990s, when Graziella Leonardi Buontempo decided to invest in a reordering of the library and archives, which opened to the public in 2001. With the cycle entitled "Cielo", anyone in the reading room or the meeting room could look up at the ceiling and appreciate a remarkable artistic feat: the *Cieli* works were commissioned from, among others, Giulio Paolini, Enzo Cucchi, Andrea Aquilanti, Donatella Spaziani. For the benefit of the younger generations, in 2003 Incontri Internazionali signed a deal lasting 50 years with the Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. At the time they were the only Italian organisation to have an atelier in this prestigious no-profit space, created by the French state with the goal of internationalising all art forms. (DL)

Fabro

Concetto spaziale d'après
Watteau, 1967-71

Corona di piombo, 1968-71

L'Italia d'oro

Alluminio e seta naturale,
1971

Incontri Internazionali d'Arte
November 29th 1971

The inclusion of Luciano Fabro at the 'show-event' organised by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte on November 29th 1971 was the third in the cycle of evenings entitled "Informazioni sulla presenza italiana".

The Incontri association was still in its early days, having inaugurated its activities in November the previous year with the show "Vitalità del negativo nell'arte italiana 1960/70" at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, curated by Achille Bonito Oliva. The success of this event was in all probability behind Bonito Oliva's appointment to the post of national commissar of the Italian section at the "Septième Biennale de Paris", for which he requested the organisational assistance of Incontri Internazionali d'Arte. When the Paris Biennale closed, Bonito Oliva conceived the review "Informazioni sulla presenza italiana" for Incontri in Rome, where he included many of the works that had been presented in Paris.

Founded in 1959 by André Malraux, for its 1971 edition the Paris Biennale underwent an overhaul of its regulations following the 1968 student uprisings. The commissioner-general for the event was Georges Boudaille and, as well as the artists, all the commissioners were required to be under 35 years of age. Where in previous editions entries were divided into nationalities, in view of the new art forms that were developing the new Biennale classified its entries into sections: *Travaux d'équipe*, *Art conceptuel* and *Interventions*. The exhibition space had also been moved from the Musée de la Ville in Paris to a freshly-built hangar at the Parc Floral, in the forest of Vincennes.

In the project he submitted to the cultural section of the Italian foreign office, Bonito Oliva motivated his choice of artists according to an idea of art unfettered from the constraints of society, in which mankind's anthropological complexity was retrieved through behaviour, action and imagination. The brief accompanying note also contained – a must in those days – a condemnation of the artwork as a “simple or complex object (...) financially gratifying (...) elusive of the dramatic times man is living in today”. As well as the official catalogue of the Biennale, *Incontri Internazionali d'Arte* published another which concentrated on the Italian artists present. The text by Bonito Oliva it contained argued in favour of an “anarchical (...) individual ideology”, with objects reinterpreted as “traces left by the artist's imagination, presenting the cordial unfamiliarity of the objects of Borges and the joyfulness of a decentralised placing”.

“Informazioni sulla presenza italiana” was the inaugural event of the *Incontri Internazionali d'Arte* space in Palazzo Taverna. The title echoed that of the famous show “Information”, held the previous year at the MoMa in New York and reflected the general interest in documentation typical of those years. Intrinsic to many conceptual works, the documentative or factual identity of art was championed by critics who opposed what was perceived to be the “authoritarian” practice of interpretation – the motivation largely behind the *Incontri's* decision to become a *Centro d'Informazione Alternativa* (centre for alternative information) soon after. Curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, the review was coordinated by Bruno Corà, who had collaborated with *Incontri* since its beginning, along the lines of the “teatro delle mostre” (exhibition-theatre) held in 1968 by Plinio De Martiis at La Tartaruga gallery in Rome. Every day of the week except Sundays, from 6 pm, for over four weeks, an individual artist or group of artists would be featured. A few months later, in March 1972, the catalogue of the review was published, made up only of images, all photographs taken by Massimo Piersanti. Edited by Achille Bonito Oliva, this volume was the first in a series known as the *Quaderni del Centro d'Informazione Alternativa*.

Fabro had just turned thirty-five when he was included in the Incontri Internazionali d'Arte event. His family was originally from the Friuli region of north-east Italy, but he was born in Turin and was living in Milan at the time. Already one of the most prominent Arte Povera artists, he had earned considerable acclaim – even at an international level – and had a long curriculum of shows to his name. If one were to summarise his work very briefly, one could say that it stemmed from a desire to overturn the established automatic mechanisms of thought and perception. In Rome, Fabro had already exhibited several times at the Galleria La Salita, emblematic pieces such as *Mezzo specchiato e mezzo trasparente* in 1965, which consisted of a sheet of glass – half see-through and half reflecting – suspended over an easel, which by permitting a simultaneous view of what was in front and what was behind was intended as an annihilation of the hierarchies governing the definition of space.

Achille Bonito Oliva had already included Fabro in both the shows he had curated, "Amore mio" (Montepulciano 1970) and "Vitalità del negativo". The artist responded to Bonito Oliva's Incontri invitation with an action similar to the one he had staged in Montepulciano, where the entire town had resounded with the recording "consideratemi irresponsabile di quanto succede" (do not consider me responsible for what is happening). For Incontri he presented a nucleus of four works, largely created using traditional sculpture materials and with a precise iconographical reference. It would appear that Fabro wanted to present a form of 'compendium' of his recent works, as a way of conveying the new path his work was taking. With this selection, he showed that he had distanced himself from Conceptualism, or at least from the Conceptualism which believed it could ignore the matter, colours and flavours of the world. Fabro clearly wished to come to terms with the image, and with the matter without which the image is not rendered. He continued to believe that the work of an artist was inextricably connected to the definition of space: "no work exists unless it is placed in the right space" (Luciano Fabro in the monography devoted to him by Jole De Sanna, Ravenna 1983).

All the pieces Fabro presented in Paris were later presented also at Incontri Internazionali d'Arte. The works featured in the French and Italian catalogues of the Biennale are the ones Fabro had initially intended to present. The pieces he in fact presented are documented in the photographs taken at the Parc Floral venue and those by Piersanti at Palazzo Taverna, in which it is possible to see that the artist was present in Rome for his exhibition.

The work *Concetto spaziale d'après Watteau* consisted of a camping tent with a veranda space, with a painting blocking the entrance to the inner chamber. On the invitation for the Incontri review, the work was listed with two dates: 1967-1971. The 1967 date referred to the year of *Concetto spaziale (tautologia)*, another work by Fabro in which the title was an explicit reference to Lucio Fontana. It had been included in the "Trigon" of Graz in 1967 and was made up of two perfectly identical rooms placed next to one another, separated by a doorway which was blocked by a canvas – larger than the door itself and with the rear in view. The second room was inaccessible and could only be appreciated by reading the text that accompanied the work.

A painting also blocked the access In *Concetto spaziale d'après Watteau*, although this time it was positioned in such a way that the front surface was visible, facing inwards and intended as a subversion of accepted notions of interior and exterior. According to the Incontri documents, the tent that was used in the Paris Biennale was never delivered back in Rome – in those years it was not uncommon for objects featured in shows to be damaged or lost during the dismounting process, simply because they were not understood to be part of an exhibit. From the Palazzo Taverna photographs, it would appear that the tent was a different one, not the Moretti Flavia brand used for the Paris show and which is mentioned in the correspondence regarding missing works. It could conceivably have been another tent loaned for the purpose by a friend in Rome... but this is beside the point.

Fabro had presented this piece for the first time in Munich, at the "Kunstzone" review in September 1971, for which he used the same tent as in Paris – in all likelihood his own camping tent. It in fact receives a mention in one of his texts: "At Munich I presented *Concetto spaziale d'après Watteau*. In Bavaria they do things on a grand scale and with few changes they converted the marquees used for the beer festival into an art fair. I patched up my little tent, Flavia, as best I could and – having obtained a Watteau (attributed), which had a freshness and was the right size on loan I pitched the tent and placed the painting in the opening between the inner chamber and the veranda." (*Attaccapanni*, Turin 1978).

For Munich, Fabro was lent a country scene attributed to Jean-Antoine Watteau, one of the finest Eighteenth-Century French painters and whose name has since been associated with this piece. Bruno Corà remembers that for the Rome event in 1971 the picture was loaned by antique dealer Cesare Canessa. Different paintings have been each time the piece has been presented over the years. At the Palais des Beaux Arts of Brussels

in 1986, each of the two openings in a double-chamber tent were hung with photographic images of the building designed by the famous Belgian architect Victor Horta. At the Centre Pompidou in 1996 Fabro's piece was renamed *Concetto spaziale d'après Lorrain*, after the painter Claude Lorrain whose painting was used. For this event, the old Flavia tent was replaced with the one featured here today.

For the current version of *Concetto spaziale d'après Watteau* 1971-2019 at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni we have used a Nineteenth Century painting of an outdoor scene. We have chosen a work that both fits over the opening of the tent and which works with the artist's original idea of reversing the back and front of the painting.

It has not been possible to trace the whereabouts of *Corona di piombo* del 1969-1971, which was sent up for auction at Christie's New York in 2011, so in its place we have included the first of two lead crowns by Fabro, entitled *Corona di alloro. Facsimile* and dated 1969.

L'Italia d'oro and *Alluminio e seta naturale (Piede)*, which on the Incontri invitation were listed simply as *Alluminio e seta naturale*, are the same works that were shown in Paris and Rome in 1971.

Fabro has stated that he had wanted to "take into consideration some of the themes that have remained at the crossroads of our culture: eroticism, nationalism, religious symbols, the sensory/ritualistic sphere" – in all of these the image was dictated by significance. He believed he was capable of elaborating such issues and... "to avoid generating a hybrid, I used a catalyser - seduction".

Fabro's version of the crown, historically a royal or religious symbol (although he had in mind the wreaths normally placed to honour the fallen in battle), is a multitude of leaves each cut out of lead individually and arranged either side by side or overlapping, to form a circle and kept together with a metal wire. A fragile assemblage which Fabro placed laying down on the floor – unlike the commemoration wreaths which the powerful normally leave standing against a monument – to ensure extra stability for elements cut out of such a heavy metal.

Italy itself was honoured by Fabro's 'new conscience' procedure, an image that could be substantiated with a material and rearranged in space. "I agree with anyone who holds Italy's shape dear", he declared – not without a degree of provocation aimed at those who

would consider such a statement to be nationalist. From the first of his *Italie*, completed in 1969 by cutting the shape of Italy out of a map and attaching it to a metal base, Fabro made a number of other versions in different materials and differently arranged in space. Many of these were conceived to be hung vertically, because "a hanging shape is always less authoritarian". The version on show here, with Sicily and Sardinia screwed onto the back, is in gilded bronze, "because gold is always an excellent maquillage for any shape".

Like the golden *L'Italia*, *Alluminio e seta naturale (Piede)* is also part of a series of works in which Fabro used similar shapes in different images. Perhaps more than in the other works, for this series Fabro tested the sculpture, reinventing it at the same time. In this piece, he took "the pivot of dynamism in the human body" and rendered it "plastic" with matter. In a cheeky break with accepted form for conceptual artists, he then perfected the work with artistic techniques, craftsmanship, in his selection of "the noblest quality materials, the most sophisticated of appropriate techniques, with polished marble, shined bronze, coloured glass, finely-cut silks ...".

The novelty of this work was noticed by Saverio Vertone, who first presented the *Piedi* series in March 1971 at the Galleria Borgognona in Milan – "maybe Fabro has seen the end of the clear-cut identification between work and concept, and has decided to look for something midway between the mental or psychological departure point and the objectual arrival point – in the density of matter and technique, in the non-measurable chance of their point of contact". Fabro expressed this attitude well in his characteristically caustic and happily provocative manner:

"I have nothing to say, but I have to keep you at a distance. I don't want any moaners around my works. Would you like me to be more transparent? I've seen all too well how transparency leaves your eyes gazing lazily at nothing.

(...)

I will be detailed! I will explain to you word for word my bad moods, my bad conscience in blaming you. Please understand, to me you are so happy-go-lucky, so imprecise, so pedestrian and instrumental. Instead you are the most radical! Wherever you are there are no borders, just the beyond!

(...)

Two or three years ago, when I began presenting the *Lenzuola* and *Italia* works, I didn't do what I normally do and offered no justification for the novelty of my work. I wanted instead to test how people would autonomously react when confronted with images that

were the opposite to what they would normally expect to find among conventional images. The result of that merry little test was truly embarrassing,

Anyone who has touched these feet will have experienced what the hands feel. Anyone who has seen these feet will have noticed that it is possible to listen to stone. But those who are deaf never thought of touching them or looking at them with sentiment.

To anyone who asks me to write about my work, I can only answer from my point of view. I am no town crier (I want to underline that), I do what suits me with imagination (I want to underline that).

I made them like no other. Phidias and Praxiteles, Donatello and Buonarroti, Bernini and Canova are my witnesses. I have not used them as examples but I have found them exemplary" (*Questi piedi non sono un'idea*, "Flash Art", May 1971). (DL)

The reconstruction of the Luciano Fabro show at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni was made possible thanks to the expertise of his daughter Silvia Fabro.

The Incontri Internazionali d'Arte documentation we have consulted is in the archives of the Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo.

Carlo Maria Mariani

La costellazione del Leone

Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone

From June 5th 1981

Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone

With their opening show "A New Sculpture by George and Gilbert", the Sperone Gian Enzo & Fischer Konrad gallery inaugurated its activities on December 7th, 1972, in Piazza SS. Apostoli 49. Although it was in the old Palazzo Balestra, the gallery's premises were by no means opulent – perforated panels in the false ceiling and marble grit flooring. The well-known British artist duo covered the walls with a drawing – or rather a new sculpture – in which their figures appeared not in real life, as in many previous shows, but outlined in charcoal amidst a dense vegetation.

In specialised magazines, the opening of the new gallery was advertised with unashamed panache: "Sperone Gian Enzo (born Turin, 1939) Fischer Konrad (born Düsseldorf, 1939) present 'a new art sanctuary' in Rome". An apparently humorous approach by two gallery owners who were already established and full of drive, and who always took their work seriously.

After giving up painting, Konrad Fischer (Konrad Lue) opened a gallery in Düsseldorf in 1967, with the first show in Europe of Carl Andre. This was followed by Sol LeWitt, Hanne Darboven, Blinky Palermo, Bruce Nauman, Robert Smithson, Daniel Buren, Jan Dibbets, Dan Flavin, Mel Bochner, Panamarenko, Sigmar Polke, Donald Judd, Mario Merz, Gilbert & George, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Joseph Beuys, Gerhard Richter, Alighiero Boetti, Brice Marden, Robert Ryman and many others. His gallery was rather more than just a space to display his artists' works; he would frequently invite them to spend time in Düsseldorf, forging a kind of community of common identity with the last, radical, avant-garde movement of the Twentieth Century. Fischer himself curated a number of major museum projects to this end, such as the five editions of the "Prospect" review organised in collaboration with Hans Strelow in 1968, at the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle, which involved

avant-garde galleries from several different countries. There was also the show "Konzeption / Conception", curated in 1969 together with Rolf Wedewer at the state museum of Leverkusen. Over the years, Fischer never abandoned his idea of art as a conceptual practice and process. Coherently with this, he remained close to the younger generation of artists such as Wolfgang Laib, Thomas Schütte, Reinhard Mucha, Juan Muñoz, Gregor Schneider, Hans-Peter Feldman. After his death in 1996, his wife Marries Dorothee Franke - who had been active in the gallery since its outset - continued his work, which today is carried on by their daughter Bertha Fischer.

After dabbling in poetry as a young man, Gian Enzo Sperone worked for the legendary art dealer Mario Tazzoli at his La Galatea gallery in Turin, before moving to Il Punto gallery for a year. In 1964 he opened the first gallery in his own name, in Turin. His first shows were a dazzling beginning, full of masterpieces by American artists who, at the time, dominated the international art scene. Put together also thanks to Sperone's contacts with Leo Castelli and Ileana Sonnabend, they featured - among others - Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, Jim Dine, Tom Wesselmann. Among the Italian artists he devoted shows to: Michelangelo Pistoletto, Piero Gilardi, Aldo Mondino and Gianni Piacentino, together with a number of other emerging artists from their generation including Mario Schifano and Pino Pascali (who in 1966 exhibited his *cannoni*, famously turned down by Plinio De Martiis).

Considerable interest sprang up around Sperone's gallery right from the start, both in terms of partners (Pier Luigi Pero) and refined collectors (Marcello and Corrado Levi). Sperone himself was an enthusiastic collector whose taste embraced a broad spectrum of art forms. All these elements created fertile conditions for the important progress that was being made by many young artists at the time. The traditional painting format was now a thing of the past; new art forms were being experimented and received immediate visibility at the Gian Enzo Sperone gallery. A more suitable venue for displaying such works was found in the space of Deposito d'Arte Presente, opened in spring 1968. Sperone showed works by Gilardi, Piacentino and Pistoletto. At the same time, he was also presenting the work of Alighiero Boetti, Gilberto Zorio, Giovanni Anselmo, Mario and Marisa Merz, Giuseppe Penone.

The young critic Germano Celant produced some well-known papers on some of these artists, underpinning their common opposition to the established art 'system', their engagement with contingent events, with the unhistorical, the present, an anthropological vocation towards the "real", living, man as intended by Karl Marx. It was

Celant who coined the term Arte Povera for them, an umbrella under which they were all identified and gained international fame. Particularly across Europe, there was an intensification of the artistic exchange network, with milestone exhibitions and publications that have gone down in history.

None of the terms coined in those years, not even the most generic of all – Conceptual Art –, successfully encapsulates all of the different attitudes, related or not, which constellated the avant-garde art scene at the end of the 1960s and in the early years of the 1970s. Besides Arte Povera, there was Land Art, Antiform Art, Process Art, Minimal Art, Mail Art, Behavioural Art – all expressions that were represented at the Gian Enzo Sperone gallery with their best-known artists: Robert Morris, Robert Barry, Bruce Nauman, Douglas Huebler, Sol LeWitt, Walter De Maria, Joseph Kosuth, Mel Bochner, Lawrence Weiner, Jan Dibbets, Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Brice Marden, Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Daniel Buren, Robert Barry and many more. Each of these artists presented museum quality pieces when they exhibited with Sperone. Others adorned the city with their works, as with the statement pieces by Joseph Kosuth or the portraits by Braco Dimitrijević.

The frantic pace of activity which Sperone subjected himself to over the years was, by his own definition, dictated by art, which “never gives you a break”. As well as the Turin gallery, which closed in 1981, between 1966 and 1967 he opened a gallery in Milan with Graziano Ghiringhelli. In 1972, together with the gallery in Rome opened with Konrad Fischer, Sperone opened another New York, first on his own and then – from 1975 – in partnership with Fischer and Angela Westwater. The Sperone Westwater Gallery, as it came to be known after Fischer withdrew from the venture in 1982, inaugurated its new premises in the Bowery in 2010, in a five-floor building commissioned from the Foster + Partners architecture studio. A historic dwelling at Sent, in Engadine, which has been running temporally rarefied shows, together with the Lugano gallery opened in 2012 (closed two years later), are the latest projects in chronological order to have been embarked upon by the Gian Enzo Sperone gallery.

Continuing the history of the Rome gallery, in the winter of 1974 Konrad Fischer left the partnership, which continued with the name Gian Enzo Sperone in Via delle Quattro Fontane 21a, in an apartment in Palazzo Del Drago with frescoed ceilings and gilded doors – it was whispered that Fischer, whose tastes were much more in favour of the austere, had left because of the new choice of venue.

Besides the shows organised in his own galleries, in the early 1970s Sperone also held several at Rome's Galleria Dell'Oca, in collaboration with its owner Luisa Laureati and her then partner, the legendary gallery owner from Turin, Luciano Pistoì. In 1984 Sperone moved to Via di Pallacorda 15, into ground floor rooms along the street that had proved fatal to Caravaggio. In 2004 he closed his gallery in Rome and left the city for good.

A glance through the two volumes with which, in 2000, the city of Turin celebrated Sperone's career (edited by Anna Minola, Maria Cristina Mundici, Francesco Poli and Maria Teresa Roberto for Hopefulmonster) immediately highlights the impressive quality of the artists he selected, both before and after that date. Many artists were chosen on the spur of the moment, while others were already at the zenith of their careers and it was only through Sperone's sheer hard work that he was able to secure them. But above all, a look at the career of this remarkable connoisseur reveals his underlying, very personal interests, together with the passion that always accompanied him in his forays through the many artistic seasons that have come and gone in the post-War art world.

Right from the first show of Cy Twombly organised in Turin, in 1971, the centrality of painting in Sperone's choice of artists was apparent. This predilection predated even his interest in those artists working in the Conceptual sphere and who were the first to turn their gaze back, albeit in a completely new manner, towards traditional draughtsmanship (Alighiero Boetti or Gilbert & George), sculpture (Giuseppe Penone) and painting (Salvo). Similarly, in the mid-1970s, the gallery testified to a renewed and established dialogue between contemporary art and antiquity: Carlo Mariani, with his 'quotations', then Giulio Paolini, Luciano Fabro, Vettor Pisani and Luigi Ontani, right up to Michelangelo Pistoletto and Vettor Pisani with their pieces that verged on the plagiaristic.

Towards the end of the 1970s, a new form of painting began to take hold and eventually triumph at the gallery. Termed Transavanguardia by Achille Bonito Oliva, this 'school' emerged in Rome but quickly gained surprising international recognition and popularity: Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente, Enzo Cucchi, Nicola De Maria, Mimmo Paladino.

This was also the period in which Mario Merz presented his new, large-scale paintings at the gallery, hugged by neon or bundled branches; Gino De Dominicis showed his painting of an enigmatic face with wide open eyes (now in the collection of the MoMA in New York) facing a pristine, lustrous lavatory (1984) and Giulio Turcato was featured with his most recent works in 1988, proving to all that his stature as a painter was in no way diminished.

Sperone supported painting in many different forms throughout the 1980s, from Bruno Ceccobelli to Giuseppe Gallo, Gianni Dessì, Domenico Bianchi, Julian Schnabel, Gérard Garouste, Donald Sultan, Susan Rothenberg, Ray Smith, Jonathan Lasker, Donna Moylan, José Maria Sicilia, Donald Baechler, Guillermo Kuitca, Massimo Kaufman, Peter Schyff, Peter Halley. Shows devoted to all these artists ran at all of the various Sperone galleries, from Rome to Turin and New York, and ultimately alternated between just Rome and New York.

A new 'mood' then took over all of Sperone's galleries, with a heightened sensitivity to objects that produced a change in the choice of exhibitions. This was the moment of the paradoxical 're-visitations' by Wim Delvoye, the sculptures by Not Vital and pieces – among others – by Mario Della Vedova, Saint Claire Cemin, Tom Sachs, Greg Colson, McDermott & Mc Gough, Kim MacConnel, Hope Atherton, Thorsthen Kirchoff, Bertozzi & Casoni.

Such shows were punctuated by tributes reserved exclusively to Italian artists: Carla Accardi, Piero Manzoni, Lucio Fontana's gold works hung alongside Fourteenth Century *fondi oro*, the "Quadrerie" with Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Italian paintings. Sperone also continued to run shows featuring those artists in whom his interest had never flagged throughout the years: Wolfgang Laib, Richard Long, Richard Tuttle, Alighiero Boetti, Mario Merz, Julian Schnabel, Braco Dimitrievic, Bruce Nauman. (DL)

Carlo Maria Mariani

La costellazione del Leone

Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone
From June 5th 1981

Carlo Maria Mariani was almost 50 years old when, on June 5th 1981, he inaugurated his solo show at the Gian Enzo Sperone gallery in Rome. In a reference to his own zodiac sign, Leo, the show was named after the large painting *La costellazione del Leone*, the central exhibit and Mariani's most ambitious work to date, having taken a year to complete in his studio-home in Via Zanardelli.

The painting was inspired by the fresco *Parnassus*, which Anton Raphael Mengs completed in 1761 for the villa of Cardinal Albani and which was itself a reworking of the composition by Raphael in the Room of the Segnatura in the Vatican. Mariani's painting features portraits of all the best-known artists working in Rome at that time – including himself, seated at the centre of the composition in the green cloak of the Accademia di San Luca (of which both Canova and Thorvaldsen had been presidents). By his side is a sketchbook and in his hand he is holding a sketch of the *Medusa Rondanini*. Looking at the painting from left to right, we can identify Gino De Dominicis reclining in the foreground with his back to the viewer, with above him the critic and curator Achille Bonito Oliva, in a red toga and contemplating – like Narcissus – an image of himself. Behind Bonito Oliva rises the castle of Genazzano, where the historic show *Le Stanze* was held in 1979, shortly before the Transavanguardia group was officially formed. To his right, an allegory of the city of Rome appears next to a portrait of the art dealer Paul Maenz, wearing the same hat as Goethe in the famous portrait of him reclining in the Roman campagna by Johann Tischbein. Opposite Maenz a putto, with a flute in its hand and fragments of a statue at its feet, covers its face with a mask bearing the features of

Jannis Kounellis. Mario Diacono's face is visible behind the Goethe *Altar of Good Fortune* monument, against which Gian Enzo Sperone is leaning as he reads a letter. Luigi Ontani as Ganymede is about to take flight as he embraces an eagle, with at his feet the Giulio Paolini sculpture *Mimesi*. Beneath him, to the right, the critic Italo Mussa gazes at a muse seated to Mariani's right. The figure of a hermaphrodite lies at her feet, under which a turtle carries a small weight on its carapace – a quotation from the work by Vettor Pisani *Io non amo la natura*. Francesco Clemente and Sandro Chia are portrayed next to Paolini's work, with behind them a depiction of Giorgio Franchetti, the collector. To the far right of the composition, American artist Cy Twombly is shown on horseback. Directly beneath him, standing in a tub, Mario Merz is shown with the body of the *Farnese Hercules*, holding spiral-shaped shells and with a bundle of sticks next to him.

Next to the painting, a typewritten text echoed the literary style of the early-Nineteenth Century and explained, "not without a trace of irony" and without ever naming anyone, the tastes and stylistic ideals of all those present in the work. The beginning of the text hailed the "Great exploit for the glory and happiness of the fatherland. Modern tragedies, or anecdotes, gathered from that which was witnessed by me in Rome in 1980, after the return of painting and the Ancient".

So far it has not been possible to reconstruct the show exactly as it was held in the Sperone gallery in Rome. There is no complete documentation in the artist's archive and we were not able to retrieve any photographic documentation from the archives of Mimmo Capone and Vincenzo Pirozzi, who were both working for the gallery in those years.

In his monography dedicated to Mariani and published in 2001, David Ebony mentions that the preparatory cartoon was also included in the show, next to the painting. This is confirmed in the volume edited by Anna Minola, Maria Cristina Mundici, Francesco Poli and Maria Teresa Roberto (Turin 2000), which charts the activities of the Sperone gallery. It also mentions that, as well as *La costellazione del Leone*, the show also included the paintings *Ganimede* (1981) and *Eros e Psiche* (1979).

Together with other works from the same group, these formed a nucleus of paintings featured in various other Sperone galleries. The series of shows had begun in May 1980 in Turin, with a selection of paintings including *Eros e Psiche* and *Ganimede*, presumably all accompanied by their respective preparatory cartoons. The Rome show, with the addition of *La costellazione del Leone* which Mariani had finished in 1981, was later

presented at the Fischer-Sperone-Westwater Gallery (which Fischer would leave shortly after), where it was expanded to include other paintings. The *Ganimede* picture probably entered the collection of Andy Warhol at that point (it was recently sent up for auction).

Assuming all this available information is correct, all these shows were structured around a comparison between the finished paintings and their preparatory cartoons – all works made using traditional techniques such as oil paints and drawing. It is hard not to interpret this display of the procedure which goes into the completion of an artwork as evidence that this choice was also a Conceptual one – particularly in view of the decision to reveal the imaginary, not from real life in these cases, source of the images themselves. The text which accompanied the shows was also decidedly Conceptual in style. Today Mariani refers to this painting as a “mental performance... a heightened artistic scene conveying a lofty grandeur”.

Mariani already had an established career prior to the Sperone show. The conceptual side to his previous work was, however, never without an important painting aspect to it. The works he exhibited at the Seconda Scla show in Rome entitled *iper / ri / cognizione*, in 1973, offer a good example of this. A series of oil paintings depicted magnified details of the human body and were placed in relation to other elements. The painting showing an ear, for example, was exhibited alongside a recorder. In another show held at the Gian Enzo Sperone gallery in 1977 and entitled *Animula blandula vagula*, Mariani presented a series of oils on canvas depicting people related to the life of Angelica Kauffmann and, in part, to the history of the *palazzo* where the gallery had its premises. The complex connections between each of the works on show and the lives of these historical characters were clarified in the text and illustrations published in the exhibition catalogue. On the opening night, two women in Eighteenth Century costume sang the verses of two female Arcadian poetesses whom Angelica Kauffmann is known to have admired.

These new shows organised by Sperone (the Rome show had been preceded by a first-time presentation of a series of preparatory cartoons by Paul Menz in Cologne, in 1978) were the first in which artists submitted only works created using the traditional tools of art. As Mariani explained in a text dating from 1988, “this was a voluntary intention derived from an ‘extreme’ attitude’. By opposing the prevalent artistic trends of the early 1970s, I wanted to react provocatively against those currents which were going in the direction of a complete dissolution of the artwork into theory. It was therefore necessary to return, with a critical spirit, to the question of how painting relates to figural representation”. (DL)

Jan Vercruysse

Tombeaux (Stanza)

Galleria Pieroni

February 24th – April 10th 1990

Galleria Pieroni

Mario Pieroni and Dora Stiefelmeier inaugurated their gallery in Rome in January 1979, on Via Panisperna at number 203. Pieroni had been working intensely in the art field for ten years already, in his hometown of Pescara. His first experiences dated back to 1970, when he promoted two initiatives in collaboration with his family's furniture company, where he was employed. Together with his cousin, Federica Coen, he had launched a line of furniture and tapestries by Balla, conceived in agreement with the artist's daughters Luce and Elica. That same year, from an idea by Getulio Alviani and together with his childhood friend Lucrezia De Domizio, Pieroni also started *Dal mondo delle idee*, a project combining art and design featuring interior decoration pieces and furnishings designed by a group of artists he was close friends with at the time - Alviani, Mario Ceroli, Laura Grisi, Enrico Job, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Concetto Pozzati, Paolo Scheggi and Ettore Spalletti.

In a recent interview, Pieroni said that by 1975 he was longing to break out of his bourgeois upbringing and had decided to embark on a more challenging project by opening a proper gallery of his own. His first space was an evocative setting steeped in history, within an area that was once the city's Bourbon fortress, in Via delle Caserme, which had been converted into a prison in the Eighteenth Century. The gallery opened in February 1975, with the Luciano Fabro installation *Allestimento teatrale*. The piece involved an actor reciting lines from a play inside a cube of mirrors, after which the work developed through a series of rooms separated by transparent sheets instead of doors. The gradually diminishing light source as the rooms progressed ended up with the viewer in a final room that was completely dark, a reference to the unlit conditions in medieval dungeons. From 1975 to 1978, Pieroni ran solo shows of Jannis Kounellis, Ettore Spalletti, Mario Merz, Francesco Lo Savio and Vettor Pisani, enlivening Pescara with some of the most promising names in the Italian art scene of the 1960s and '70s.

Pieroni and Dora Stiefelmeier first met in 1977. Originally from Zurich, Stiefelmeier had graduated in sociology from the Sorbonne in 1967 and was working as an editor for "nuova DWF - Donna Woman Femme", a periodical of international women's studies founded in Rome in 1975. They soon decided to open a new gallery together. Both shared a common vision of the art world, which they saw as a place of exploration made up of personal contacts and shared projects of transformation and development. They also shared a critical judgment of the increasingly impersonal mechanisms that were taking hold in the art market. Pieroni closed his Pescara gallery and in January 1979 he inaugurated the Galleria Pieroni in Rome, with a group show of works by Gino De Dominicis, Jannis Kounellis and Ettore Spalletti. The new gallery was in a second-floor apartment at the top end of Via Panisperna, in the city's Rione Monti area, not far from Via Nazionale and the Palazzo delle Esposizioni.

Between 1979 and 1992, the year the gallery closed, the Galleria Pieroni ran a total of 62 shows. In its first there were a series of solo shows devoted to artists with whom Pieroni had collaborated while he was still in Pescara. One of these was the show of Luciano Fabro, entitled *Oggi ripeto cos'è la scultura*, which included his piece *Il giudizio di Paride* - four oval elements in terracotta, in which the shape and surface texture of each piece (more or less smooth or rough) was intended to convey the physical and psychological identity of the mythological characters they were representing: Juno, Minerva and Venus around Paris. From March 1980 onwards, the gallery supplemented its calendar of shows featuring Italian artists with many shows devoted to international artists. The first was Gerhard Richter, who presented some of his monochrome works dating from the end of the 1960s - grey paintings on glass and canvas - alongside a more recent series of paintings in which colour was reintroduced to interact with the two-dimensional identity of the canvas. In 1987 the gallery collaborated with the American Academy and the Canadian Academy for the exhibition *Non in codice*, curated by Dan Graham, with works by Graham himself, Judith Barry, Dara Birnbaum, Barbara Ess, Rodney Graham and John Knight.

In the early 1980s, with Transavanguardia rising in prominence both in Italy and internationally, the Galleria Pieroni continued to focus on a spectrum of artistic research more in line with Conceptual Art and Arte Povera. While continuing to follow those artists with whom they had consolidated their collaboration over the years, Pieroni and Stiefelmeier also began working with Emilio Prini, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Giulio Paolini,

Alighiero Boetti, Sol LeWitt and with a younger generation of artists such as Remo Salvadori, Marco Bagnoli and Felice Levini. At the same time, their interest in international art grew substantially. In 1981 the gallery organised the screening of a film by British artists Gilbert & George, followed in 1984 by a show of their work. They also ran a solo of drawings by Swiss-German artist Meret Oppenheim. After making the acquaintance of art historian Jan Hoet, director of the contemporary art museum in Ghent, the gallery came into contact with the Belgian art scene. This generated the exhibition projects involving Jan Vercruysse in 1987 and 1990 (reproduced for this event at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni), Thierry De Cordier and Jan Fabre. The gallery also showcased the work of several prominent American artists such as Dennis Oppenheim, Maria Nordman and Dan Graham. The two final shows to run at the Via Panisperna venue in the spring of 1992 were Carla Accardi, with whom Pieroni and Stiefelmeier had entertained a strong partnership since 1982, and French artist Bertrand Lavier.

Lavier's artistic research straddled the dividing line between artwork and design, forming a natural evolution from Pieroni's early projects in Pescara in the 1970s – which combined art with industrial manufacture – and the new projects Pieroni and Stiefelmeier would go on to launch after they closed the gallery. In 1991, in fact, they founded the Zerynthia Associazione per l'Arte Contemporanea in Paliano, on a farm south of Rome, where for many years the guesthouses were the setting for friendly gatherings, collaborations between artists and new cultural initiatives.

The association worked alongside public and private institutions in developing a variety of contemporary art projects, from shows to conferences and publications. From 1997 up until 2002, together with the Académie de France, which in those years had entrusted them with the organisation of its contemporary arts programme, they organised *Atelier nel bosco*, a series of thirteen monograph exhibitions each devoted to an artist with strong ties to the city of Rome – Carla Accardi, Jannis Kounellis, Sol LeWitt and Giulio Paolini, among others. From 1995 up until 2000 Zerynthia also took over the artistic direction of the Centro Civico per l'Arte Contemporanea at Serre di Rapolano, in Tuscany. In 1998, together with the S.M.A.K. museum of Ghent and the contemporary art museum of Lyon, it organised *Indoor*, a laboratory-exhibition with Mario Airò, Massimo Bartolini, Jimmie Durham, Bruna Esposito, Johannes Kahrs, Fabrice Hyber, Annie Ratti and others.

After winning a European tender in 2003, Mario Pieroni and Dora Stiefelmeier founded RAM-radioartemobile, a contemporary art platform based in Rome and engaged in the promotion of projects relating the visual arts with Sound Art. In 2004 RAM launched the project of a permanent archive of sound artworks, the SAM SoundArtMuseum, together with the RAM LIVE radio web which streams 24 hours a day, offering information and interdisciplinary experimentation.

Still with the idea of contributing towards a greater interdisciplinary dialogue, RAM began a collaboration with Michelangelo Pistoletto's Fondazione Cittadellarte and his *Terzo Paradiso* project. Since 2012 RAM has run a cycle of innovative initiatives entitled "D/A/C denominazione artistica condivisa", round table discussions between artists and entrepreneurs focused on manufacturing according to the art world values of creativity, transformation and dialogue – exactly what Pieroni achieved in the 1970s at the start of his career as a gallery owner.

One of the association's most recent initiatives, set up thanks to the mediation of Arnaldo Mosca Mondadori and developed in collaboration with the Opera prison of Milan, consisted in the joint creation of a work by Jannis Kounellis and composer Carlo Crivelli. The project was sadly left unfinished following Kounellis' death in February 2017 but was commemorated in a tribute concert by Carlo Crivelli entitled *Il Violino di Kounellis*, performed at Frigoriferi Milanesi.

In 2016 Zerynthia was involved in setting up the Fondazione No Man's Land, based near Pescara at Loreto Aprutino and devoted to the work and theory of French-Hungarian artist-architect Yona Friedman, who is its honorary president. (PB)

Jan Vercruysse

Tombeaux (Stanza)

Galleria Pieroni

February 24th – April 10th 1990

"The works you see in this new show are called *Tombeaux*, which in French has two meanings: tomb, a place of silence and non-being, and a composition in medieval poetry indicating verse written in tribute to a deceased person". This is an excerpt taken from the press release issued for the show of Jan Vercruysse, presented at the Galleria Pieroni in February 1990 and which has been partly reproduced in one of the rooms of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni.

Mario Pieroni and Dora Stiefelmeier had embarked on their collaboration with the Belgian artist in 1987, after they had been introduced by the art historian Jan Hoet, director at the time of the Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst in Ghent. Vercruysse's work was much in tune with the gallery's interests, which at that time were concentrated on new developments in Conceptual Art and Arte Povera. In 1987 the Galleria Pieroni had run a first solo show dedicated to Vercruysse, which presented works from the *Atopie* series. Three years later, in 1990, the gallery ran the show "*Tombeaux (Stanza)*". One of the rooms in the gallery's Via Panisperna premises was set up with five of Vercruysse's works in iron – five different declinations of doors or bulkheads separated from the wall by a series of metal strips, alternating along the five vertical levels in different horizontal sequences. Two of these five pieces have been included in the show here. In another room of the Pieroni gallery there were six painted wooden elements arranged in a line,

all low-standing and identical, placed in an orderly sequence parallel to one of the walls. A very similar work dating from the same year, but consisting of seven elements, is presented at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni today.

Alongside the works from 1990, we have followed the artist's project in recreating the space - also entitled *Tombeaux* - which Jan Vercruysse conceived in 1988 specially for the entrance of the library and guest house which Mario Pieroni and Dora Stiefelmeier opened at Piazza Vittorio 144. A small, intimate space with two mirrors placed facing each other, so as to reflect into infinity anyone entering the space between them, and at the centre a gilded, table-like feature.

In the catalogue text published for the first show at the Galleria Pieroni in 1987, Jan Hoet recapitulated the long process of artistic research already trodden by Vercruysse, who was just over forty at the time. Having abandoned his initial research into visual poetry, in the early 1980s the artist had devoted himself to trying to find a tangible expression of "the theoretical issues concerning the artist" and the mechanisms of the process of making art. This crystallised into a predilection for photographic images - often self-portraits - made into lithographs. From 1984 Vercruysse had accompanied this rather more Conceptual side of his work with his series of *Camere*, which illustrate how his attention had shifted from analysing the actions of the artist to analysing art itself, in a new quest which hoped to define the rightful place of art in the world. The three-dimensional shapes of these imposing wooden structures were "the direct transposition of an isolated reality (art) into its own space (built with no exterior, opulently finished, like a temple, frontal, shunning contact, even elitist)". The *Atopie* presented at the Galleria Pieroni are a continuation of the intent to indicate (literally) a "non-place" where the artwork is enshrined, set apart from reality.

In an interview he gave in those years, Vercruysse declared that "art has to create something 'else', has to 'be else', for me, with archetypical images. 'Image' does not mean reproduction or representation, either. I want to feel in a work of art the strong wish of 'distancing'. (...). Analysing society through reproduction it not enough". The distancing of which Vercruysse speaks is therefore not purely abstract, and he has not relinquished the idea of an artwork having a physical presence. His *Tombeaux* are objects that are not entirely abstract (even though simplified, their appearance is not determined by geometric laws) and neither are they figurative, midway between objects and non-

objects. Their features escape a clear interpretation or practical use of any kind. "In these works," wrote Hoet, "we are able to discern the principles connecting artwork (and art) to reality", but at the same time "we live a sensual experience". The experience Hoet refers to is a perception of space articulated in the presence of these new forms, each one different, in a sequence and pace that resembles the poetical, musical meter, and to which the title is an explicit reference.

For the 1990 solo show, the Galleria Pieroni also published an artist's book, which is also on display here. In it Vercruysse compiled five images (a drawing of a frame, an antique print, a detail of a mosaic, a detail of a fresco and a photograph of a fountain) doubled in different ways and reassembled amongst the pages of a sequence that offers a declination of how images can present themselves to our gaze and stimulate our senses and intellect. One pair of images followed one another identically, another pair was reproduced in reflection, a pair alternated black and white and colour, and the final pair was duplicated one the right way up and the other upside down. (PB)

Myriam Laplante

Elisir

curated by Lorenzo Benedetti and Teresa Macrì

Fondazione Volume!
coproduced by The Gallery Apart

November 29th – December 22nd 2004

Volume!

Volume! opened its inaugural show on November 29th 1997, with works by Alfredo Pirri, Jannis Kounellis and Bernard Rüdiger. Initially a cultural association, Volume! became a foundation in 2006, based in Rome's Trastevere district. It occupies five ground floor rooms at number 88 of Via San Francesco di Sales, next to the Regina Coeli prison, in a Seventeenth Century building formerly used as a glassworks.

The association was conceived and backed by Francesco Nucci, a neurosurgeon, collector and supporter of contemporary art – passions he shared in full with his wife Daniela, who became a central figure in the development of Volume!. A small group of enthusiasts soon gathered around the couple: Alfredo Pirri, Jannis Kounellis, Bernard Rüdiger, Pietro Montani, Nicola di Battista, Franco Mancinelli. From the beginning, Nucci was clear that he wanted Volume! to be a place where artists could realise their ideas and projects with no limitations in terms of space or resources – in his own words, “a place of utter freedom... unfettered from the oppressive workings of the economy... a place like a blank sheet of paper ready to receive everything you feel”.

In keeping with these initial intentions, over its 22 years of activity – from 1997 up until today – Volume! has provided an open and ductile “environment” to which Italian and international artists have been able to connect. The idea of inviting artists to conceive works related to this space has certainly been the distinctive feature of Volume! within the Rome art scene.

In 1997, for the opening show, Alfredo Pirri created an elevating and descending itinerary through the various rooms, progressing from darkness into light. In one of the rooms he dug through the floor, down into the deep layers of soil beneath, in another he built a

cement bridge suspended off the floor that connected the indoor space with the exterior. In one of the passages between rooms, lit by just an oil lamp, Kounellis placed a naked pregnant woman seated on a stool. Within a specially constructed chamber, Rüdiger placed a striking installation of Forex PVC circles. From these pieces onwards, all works conceived for Volume! modified the space according to their needs – constructing, destroying, distorting, generating tension or pressure, closing or opening – as if the rooms themselves were a substance that was being modelled.

The freedom of spirit with which Nucci chose the projects he wished to support was matched with the freedom allowed to the artists to create their pieces for the association's Via San Francesco di Sales spaces. Over the years, this has been reflected in a stimulatingly broad and varied assortment of results, offering a faithful cross section of the nature of contemporary art – increasingly open to interdisciplinary contamination and coexistence. An impressive number of artists have worked on projects for Volume! over the years, including Nunzio, Raimund Kummer, Gianni Dessì, Maurizio Savini, Sol LeWitt, Gilberto Zorio, Bizhan Bassiri, Piero Pizzi Cannella, Paolo Canevari, Pedro Cabrita Reis, Mimmo Paladino, Giuseppe Gallo, Annie Ratti, François Morellet, Jorge Peris, Olaf Nicolai, Marco Gastini, Giuseppe Maraniello, Marina Abramović, Felice Levini, Myriam Laplante, Marina Paris, Fabio Mauri, Flavio Favelli, Jimmie Durham, Gregorio Botta, Mahum Tevet, Michele Zaza, Gregor Schneider, Kurt Johannessen, Roi Vaara, Melati Suryodarmo, Herma e Auguste Wittstock, Ivan Navarro, Sissi, Michele De Lucchi, Thomas Lange, Ruth Proctor, Ră Di Martino, Luca Trevisani, Luca Manes, Assaf Shoshan, Paolo Icaro, Christian Boltanski, Dennis Oppenheim, Walid Raad and many others.

In some cases, the works have sedimented over time and overlaid each other. It was not infrequent for the space to undergo a massive change between one project and the next – rooms, doors, windows, niches, mezzanines were all liable to be covered, filled in, illuminated or emptied. A case in point are two 2007 projects by Rui Chafes and Bruno Ceccobelli. Chafes constructed a long iron tunnel which compressed the space between strips of metal slightly taller than a person. This cold, forbidding path was followed by a spiral itinerary conceived by Bruno Ceccobelli as an elevated walkway suspended over a desolate wasteland, where the eye was caught by an orderly trail of footsteps in blue raku ceramic symbolising the achievement of a state of consciousness.

During the creation process of their works, the artists were frequently aided by curators

and critics such as Lorenzo Benedetti and Claudia Gioia, Achille Bonito Oliva, Mario Codognato, Ester Coen, Bruno Corà, Danilo Eccher, Lóránd Hegyi, Teresa Macrì, Giacomo Zaza and many more. Photographers of the calibre of Claudio Abate, Rodolfo Fiorenza, Marco Ciuffreda, Marco Fedele di Catrano, Claudio Martinez and Federico Ridolfi were also present to document every moment. Texts and images were of course published in the exhibition catalogues. A publishing house in its own right, Volume! also published essays, artist's books and special editions such as the 2005 study *Io sono un ariano*, dedicated to the performances of Fabio Mauri.

From 2000 Volume! began extending its projects to include other places around the city of Rome, in a series of initiatives entitled Extravolume!. The idea was to encourage a fresh outlook by making artworks interact with public spaces. *Siderare*, at Forte Portuense, and *Parco Nomade* are among the most recent of these exploits. Curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, *Parco Nomade* involved an artist and an architect in the creation of modular dwellings, similar to containers, which were arranged at Corviale in the Tenuta dei Massimi but could be easily transported to any other place or context. Both *Siderare* and *Parco Nomade* were conceived with the intention of favouring a polycentral dimension to art, involving a broader community in lesser known places around Rome, including its outskirts.

In February 2019 Nucci launched a radical new project at the Via San Francesco di Sales venue, which he transformed into a neuroscientific research lab. Entitled *Percezioni*, the new programme was drawn up in collaboration with various Italian and international universities. For at least a year, visitors are invited to enter Volume! one at a time. Alone and with no way of finding their bearings, they remain in the presence of a work created especially for the event by an artist. During the visit, viewers are asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire on the thoughts and feelings they are experiencing, with a view to gathering information and analysing the cognitive mechanisms of interaction between individual and artwork. (PB)

The Gallery Apart

The Gallery Apart's activity began in 2003 and was the result of an encounter between Fabrizio Del Signore and Armando Porcari. Although from very different professional backgrounds, Del Signore and Porcari shared a passion for art and collecting. Together they decided to launch a completely innovative and unprecedented cultural project: they worked alongside their artists in the creation of their works, all in collaboration with public institutions and various venues across Rome. The very name they chose for their new enterprise speaks of this project's initial vocation to 'nomadism'. Entirely unique in the art gallery panorama, The Gallery Apart project provided the necessary equipment to artists, supporting them in the creation of pieces that were at times extremely costly. In short, without being a proper gallery in the physical sense, The Gallery Apart behaved much in the way that many private galleries do. This is precisely what went into the 2004 show of Myriam Laplante, *Elisir*, which we have recreated here at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, and which was first organised in the spaces of Volume!.

The Laplante show was part of a series of initiatives started in 2003 and entitled "OUTSIDE", which opened with a solo show of Passarella in the Studio Andrea Gobbi in Rome, curated by Gianluca Marziani. Over the following years, "OUTSIDE" involved an initial nucleus of artists who exhibited in various other venues across Rome, such as Gea Casolaro and Andrea Aquilanti at the Teatro India in 2004 and 2006, Mariana Ferratto and Luana Perilli at the Fondazione Pastificio Cerere in 2005, Alessandro Scarabello at Sala 1 in 2005 and Myriam Laplante - after the Volume! show in 2004 - at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in 2007.

In February 2008, The Gallery Apart evolved from its initial, 'homeless' identity and opened its first space in Via della Barchetta 11, in a building with a small exhibition area. The following month, Myriam Laplante presented a selection of her photographic works from 1996 to 2008.

As well as nurturing the work of the group of Italian artists we have already mentioned – a group that was soon joined by Marco Strappato –, right from its beginnings The Gallery Apart cultivated an active interest in a number of international artists. These included Meital Katz-Minerbo, Astrid Nippoldt, Dominik Lang and Florian Neufeldt, in an interfusion of creativity and genres (from video to painting, drawing, sculpture and installations) which fully reflects the global and interdisciplinary nature of today's international art panorama.

In December 2009, the gallery moved to Via di Monserrato 40, where the inaugural show was a solo devoted to Luana Perilli, *Manutenzione sentimentale della macchina celibe*. In March 2013, The Gallery Apart found its current, more spacious premises, in Via Francesco Negri 43, in the Ostiense district of Rome on a street opposite what were formerly the city's main fruit and vegetable wholesale market. The inaugural project at this latest venue was an ambitious one by Dominik Lang, entitled *Missing Parts* and curated by Lýdia Pribišová. The Czech-born artist occupied the entire gallery space with a monumental work composed of sections of plaster in relief connecting the two floors of the exhibition space – a stimulating and alienating confrontation between art and architecture.

The gallery's activities continue, with a selection of artists and an exhibition programme particularly attentive to showcasing art with a strong political and social theme. This is thanks also to the involvement of major international artists such as Bertille Bak, Oliver Ressler and the Russian collective Chto Delat, as well as to the launch of new young talents such as Corinna Gosmaro, Rowena Harris and Sinae Yoo. (PB)

Myriam Laplante. Elisir

curated by Lorenzo Benedetti and Teresa Macrì

Fondazione Volume!

coproduced by The Gallery Apart

November 29th – December 22nd 2004

Myriam Laplante has been invited to present again, here at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, the work, intitled *Elisir*, she conceived in 2004 for the Fondazione Volume! in Via San Francesco di Sales. Francesco Nucci's foundation had organised the event in collaboration with The Gallery Apart, which had been recently launched by Fabrizio Del Signore and Armando Porcari, precisely with the intention of assisting artists in the realisation of projects in various locations spread across the city of Rome. Laplante's project was curated by Teresa Macrì and Lorenzo Benedetti and documented in a catalogue published by the Fondazione Volume! complete with photographs, a critical text by Macrì and an interview with the artist by Benedetti.

Born in Bangladesh of Canadian parents, Myriam Laplante lived a number of years in New York before moving to Italy in 1985. She held her first solo show in Rome in 1992. After beginning her artistic career as a painter, she broadened her research to include other media such as photography, video, installation and performance.

In her text for the Volume! show, Teresa Macrì wrote that "Laplante's imaginary is clear: recalling the literature of horror and thrillers, re-treading the land of B-movies, branching off into the acrobatics of the Cirque du Soleil, extricating herself between antique anatomical encyclopaedias and delving deep into those unconscious zones of the soul that are usually repressed in dark incunabula considered inaccessible". The Volume! venue offered Laplante an ideal location to unleash her unfettered and fertile imagination

and she produced a single work made up of an installation and a performance. It was her second installation after the 2003 project conceived for a show at the Certosa di San Lorenzo at Padula.

For her 2004 project Laplante altered the entire space of Volume!, beginning at the entrance itself. She had an old door mounted on the Via San Francesco di Sales entrance to the space, which narrowed the existing, modern access, taking the building back in time to when it was a glassworks. The old shop sign was mounted on the outside, the idea being that what was going on inside remained hidden. When visitors entered, they found themselves confronted by a glass factory setting, empty except for scattered alembics, burners, distillers, tubes and test tubes containing coloured liquids heated to boiling point. The condensed distillation from these liquids was made to drip onto the heads of five strange figures. In another corner, by a desk, three shelves were ranged with a series of bell jars containing curious creatures with "genetically modified" features. This was clearly a laboratory where strange experiments were being carried out on test subjects.

"As the show goes on, so do the experiments," explained Laplante at the time to Benedetti, "the creatures that receive the elixir will be progressively destroyed; their faces will disintegrate, leaving only the skulls. They are unwitting, (...), and they even whistle in chorus as they are being destroyed (...). It will be a slow and irreversible process, just like what is happening in the world today". Instead of reinvigorating them, after being condensed and dripped onto the heads of the subjects the elixir consumed them, melting the delicate clay from which they were made.

The installation was accompanied by a performance in which the artist, posing as a visionary, mad scientist, immersed first herself in the elixir, then her parasite twin – also the product of crazy genetic experiments and initially her ally. She then decided to murder her alter ego by suffocation, before ripping off its head and leaving it immersed in the elixir. The artist-scientist remained the only person left in possession of the miraculous elixir, with the power to control and keep alive the genetically generated organisms. Like the laboratory guinea pigs, the artist-scientist's end is not a happy one: there is no way to share knowledge in harmony with others, but only the negative, selfish drive of an individual who wants all the power. Laplante's work performs a "playful transposition" of certain dynamics typical of the globalised world, where biotechnological experimentation on plants and other living creatures is not always conducted according

to criteria that are either ethical or palatable to most of us. Quite the opposite, in fact: riches and power end up concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, at the expense of everyone else.

Re-staging *Elisir* at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni has placed the work in a very different context to the Volume! space, which necessarily implies that visitors will experience the work differently than they would have in the 2004 version. Presenting the piece in a museum context also means that there are a number of restrictions in terms of the actual functioning of the installation. In this context, for example, it will not be possible to light the laboratory burners and witness the slow dissolution of the bodies of the test subjects, together with the progressive alteration of the work (at the moment of writing, we are still waiting to hear from the Fire Department whether we will be allowed, for a day at least, to make an exception so that the public can appreciate the work in its original form). Notwithstanding this, the mere presence of Laplante's piece retains all of the disquieting power which generated it. Its strength lies in its ability to present an image from contemporary reality – a laboratory, the archetypal positive and catastrophic image of the future of mankind – whilst transfiguring it into a place and time seemingly from another dimension, far removed from reality. In Macrì's words, Laplante presents us "objects that have a double identity: those fake and fur dolls, innocuous and tender, which become acephalous monsters and modified bodies". Through her language and aesthetical *logos*, continues Macrì, "she intimates the risks and abuses from that shadowy area of science", just as in many of her other works she deals with issues related to "coercion and social control".

According to Laplante herself, we are all in a state of "blissful ignorance". For this new presentation of her work, she has decided to include a "cosmic gem" (similar to the ones she conceived for her installation with the same title at the Nuova Galleria Morone in 2015), an alien organism watching the passing of time and the transit between parallel dimensions – a glimmer of hope for an alien (?) regeneration. (PB)

We wish to thank the artist, who curated the presentation of her works for this exhibition.

Sergio Pucci

in conversation with Daniela Lancioni

Sergio Pucci

in conversation with Daniela Lancioni

Like many photographers, there are two sides to your profession – documenting for others and experimenting as an artist in your own right.

Sometimes these two activities overlap.

At the Palazzo delle Esposizioni we are presenting your work as a documenter but, before we introduce it, I would like to read something you said about artistic expressivity which will help us interpret your photographs on show here.

“Right from the start I realised that, as a technique, photography gave images an independence from reality, almost as if they had nothing to do with what they were representing. For this reason, rather than record reality, I used photography as the best form of subtraction”.

As I looked through some of the papers stored over the years, I noticed an old newspaper cutting: “Suicide victim saved in the nick of time yesterday afternoon at Ponte Sublicio. A fifty-nine-year-old man, Pucci Ferrer, did not hesitate a moment before running down the steps and diving into the water to save the drowning woman, who would otherwise have been swept away by the current”.

That was my father, an anarchist, an artist, the best stonecutter in Rome. He had a workshop in Testaccio and used to make the most spectacular inlaid tables... not to mention his alabaster basins, in layers like an onion. He graduated from the Istituto d'Arte, which in those days was called the Museo Artistico Industriale di Roma.

I wanted to work in films. In 1948, like my father, I enrolled to study painting at the Istituto d'arte but switched to photography as soon as the department opened. I wanted to become a film operator but in those days it was hard to get regular pay with film work. I had seen my brother Mario, who worked in the industry as an electrician.

I had to earn my crust somehow, so in 1954 – just two months after graduating – I began teaching at the Istituto d'Arte and continued there until I retired.

When did you start as an art photographer?

I started with colleagues from the Istituto d'Arte.

Ercole Drei and Leoncillo. Pericle Fazzini had been my plastics teacher and had a studio on Via Margutta, and Alberto Ziveri had also been my teacher but didn't allow anyone into his studio. There was also Giuseppe Uncini, who taught mosaic and who was a dear friend.

Another colleague used to photograph for Ettore Colla but he wasn't happy, so one morning he came to me and said, "I need someone who can photograph my sculptures without them being out of focus. Could you do that, Pucci?".

At the time I was working for Luigi Montanarini, the director of the Accademia di Belle Arti, as well as for my great friend Nicola Carrino, who taught at the Corso Superiore per le Industrie Artistiche.

Nicola Carrino has called you Colla's "bard", the one who could truly convey his candour and bring out the solid transparency of his sculptures.

My working relationship and personal friendship with Colla are so deep that they still continue today, fifty years after his death.

I should say that all the shots of him in his work outfit – with his leather apron, big leather gloves, holding the welder and wearing his visor – were all staged. Colla never made his pieces himself, he would supervise others as they worked from his drawings, and in the meantime he would scour scrap iron yards for whatever pieces he needed.

Some of the photos you have chosen were taken in Alberto Gerardi's studio. The one where you can see the forge hood and work tools was taken in the classroom at the art institute where Lorenzo Guerrini taught wrought iron lessons. Others were taken in Viale Parioli 12, where Colla lived and had his studio.

And the ones with the pistols?

He had two antique pistols and would pose with them. It was all an act, he was very ironical and had a great sense of humour.

Which other artists have you worked with?

Fausto Melotti, Giulio Turcato, Bice Lazzari, Edgardo Mannucci, Guido Strazza.

I met Francesco Lo Savio at Fazzini's, he was taking photographs for him. He was quite good, in fact, but I can't say I ever talked to him at length. Tano Festa, on the other hand, was a student of mine, when I first met him he was still in shorts. He had a good personality, and Schifano too - a good heart.

I also used to work with Luca Maria Patella, it was he who convinced me to first show my works as an artist.

I've also worked with Eliseo Mattiacci, Carlo Lorenzetti, Piero Sadun.

I photographed Sergio Lombardo's 'beams' in my home, as well as some Maurizio Mochetti's works. Lombardo and I introduced Mochetti to Gian Tomaso Liverani.

I have a truckload of photographs of Carlo Maria Mariani. The one you are showing was taken here at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni. Mariani had sent me to check on how the show was being mounted and I had to have all the lights illuminating the works changed.

I knew all the Transavanguardia artists.

How did you first start working for galleries?

I wasn't particularly interested in working for the galleries, I was interested in the artists. I always chose who I wanted to photograph, it wasn't a job - for me it was a way to get to know people and make new friends.

Gian Tomaso Liverani was introduced to me by Ettore Colla and Topazia Alliata, who at the time was running the Galleria Trastevere.

Lo Savio's metal sheets on show at La Salita weren't easy to photograph. Liverani said to me, "Pucci, don't you use photography umbrellas?". I answered, "I have them but they don't work for these pieces". I placed a light in front of the work and managed to photograph it that way. At the Galleria Odyssia I photographed Leoncillo. I gave all the photographs I did at the Marlborough to the management and didn't keep any for myself. Sometimes I would go to Angelica Savinio's. At L'Attico, for Fabio Sargentini, I photographed the work of Pino Pascali, Sergio Ragalzi and Piero Pizzi Cannella.

Luisa Laureati, Giuliana De Crescenzo, Maria Colao, Mario Diacono - how did you meet them?

My name was passed around a lot, I did just about all of Rome's artists and galleries. I never photographed the opening nights, though, I always refused to do that.

How is your archive organised?

I don't really have an archive, I've never bothered to file all the material. I often gave the negatives along with the prints, it was more of a bother for me to make more prints than it would have been to do the job over again. Uncini, for example, always had my negatives.

What camera did you use, and what type of film?

With the film, or camera roll, I used a Rolleiflex. I also printed 9x12 plates with an Arca Swiss.

I always photographed in black and white.

Did you print your own?

Yes, always. I had my darkroom at my Testaccio studio, in Via Evangelista Torricelli 1. I left it just two months ago, I had been there since 1954.

In which format did you print?

Always in 18x24.

What paper did you generally use??

Ferrania mat K 201, but also K 208 glossy. I was always careful to make very clear prints, I never touched the negatives up in any way, except in a few special cases.

He shows me some negatives where the surface around a sculpture by Colla has been coloured red and explains the pre-digital era technique for blurring outlines - you had to apply a red coating, new coccine, with a paintbrush over the area, which would not develop and stay white.

I touched up these photos of Colla and inserted clouds. What today you would do on a computer, in those days you had to do by hand.

He shows me a book containing an image of a sculpture by Colla, against a sky with a few - rather baroque - clouds. Next to the image, an annotation explains the procedure that was used: "photograph taken against a white background, overprinted with another negative with the clouds. The base has been reconstructed with paper cut-outs in different shades". Although superimposed negatives are still widely in use, it is very unusual to see - on the photographic print used for the reproduction - the rectangular base of the sculpture obtained with a collage of cardboards in different shades of grey, juxtaposed to mimic the effect of shadows and perspective.

Have you ever had an assistant?

No, not even to carry my equipment.

I never made much money with photography. I've earned exchanging photos with works of art.

Did you prefer photographing the artists while they were working or in studied poses?

The portraits would often come at the end of the job. When I had a few leftover shots in my camera I would photograph the artists.

(DL)

The photographs of Ettore Colla on display were printed by Sergio Pucci in his workshop.

The others are analogical prints made for this exhibition by Fotogramma24 in Rome.

in mostre in mostra

Albo dei prestatori

Stefania Brai
Laura Colnaghi Calissoni
Andrea Di Marsciano
Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Torino
Fondazione La Quadriennale di Roma
Fondazione Volume!, Roma
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Francesco Siciliano
Gian Enzo Sperone
Cesare Terenghi
The Gallery Apart, Roma

A tutti loro, insieme ai prestatori che hanno preferito mantenere l'anonimato, va il nostro più sentito ringraziamento.

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Sergio Pucci

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Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini
Jan Vercruysse Foundation
Fondazione Volume!
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Paola De Martiis
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