



**GETTING READY FOR A NEW BEGINNING.  
BUT ALWAYS CHANGING-** *Anna Coliva*

**WHAT'S ON: CURRENT EVENTS IN THE FOUNDATION**  
“ROMA ÆTERNA” 50 characters of Contemporary Rome.  
Works of the artist Edmondo Cudic - *Claudio Strinati*

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Interview with Arturo Galansino,  
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A thread between yesterday and today, looking at tomorrow: the Ceramics of Icheon  
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# Introduction

Contemporary art is one of the most effective tools for promoting intercultural dialogue.

The Ducci Foundation, whose twentieth anniversary is being celebrated this year, has always been committed to analysing the changes affecting the political, economic and cultural fabric of Italian and European societies, while actively and successfully operating on the national cultural scene, with international initiatives taking place both in Italy and in Morocco, at its headquarters in Fes. Since 2014, the Foundation has also had its own contemporary art gallery, “Aguas”, located in the medina of Fès, next to the Foundation’s building. Part of the collection was exhibited in July 2017 in Rabat, at the prestigious Bab Al Rouah State Gallery.

Interest in the artistic production of each period, ranging from classical to modern and contemporary, the Foundation has indeed an eclectic soul. Among the various initiatives carried out by the Foundation, it is worth mentioning ‘ArtInFondazione’, that each year warmly welcomed international artists in the evocative exhibition rooms of the Cenacolo dell’Erma, at Palazzo Cisterna in Via Giulia in Rome. Extremely well-known and established artists such as Jannis Kounellis, Mimmo Paladino and Hermann Nitsch, to name but a few, have had dedicated shows in these rooms.

Like other cultural institutions, the Ducci Foundation, as a result of the current health emergency, has seen its operations severely limited with regard to the organization of events. Consequently, the Foundation team has decided to continue its online activities, creating both a new website and an online publication, ArtFond, which aims to deal with all the most meaningful aspects of art.

To co-chair the Art Department of the Foundation there are high-profile personalities, such as professors Anna Coliva and Claudio Strinati, who will supervise the online magazine, coordinated by the Head of the Art Department Chiara Aluigi. The new publication aims to periodically collect and comment the most relevant events on the international art scene. This project is realized both through the valuable contribution of great experts in the sector and through the contributions of young researchers, in order to provide readers with an extremely valid analysis and, at the same time, an always fresh and intriguing approach to the subject.

“Art has the power to shake the dust accumulated in everyday life away from the soul”, as Pablo Picasso said, and the Art Department of the Ducci Foundation, with this new initiative, intends to make this vision its own. The cultural and creative dimension is in fact an essential element for the quality of life, especially in these difficult times that see our daily lives change radically and rapidly. Therefore, I hope that the Art Magazine of the Ducci Foundation will be able to attract the interest and appreciation not only of the experts but of all lovers of beauty.

With regard,

Paolo Ducci Ferraro di Castiglione  
President of Ducci Foundation

# Presentation of the Magazine

The Nike holding the laurel wreath on the cover has always been the personification of Wisdom as well as the symbol of the Ducci Foundation, has as a background a painting by Lee Ufan, a contemporary South Korean artist. The peculiar choice of combining images coming from two cultural traditions and very different periods - the classical and the contemporary - acquires an unprecedented coherence, as it is placed within the Weltanschauung of the Ducci Foundation, which embraces and promotes the cultural heritages of each country and historical moment. Therefore, the works to be the background to Nike will always vary, offering ArtFond readers new artists and movements, perhaps not yet met by them.

From this first issue onwards, the Ducci Foundation will publish this new art magazine monthly which will deal with every aspect of the world of art, as can be noticed from the various sections composing it.

The Art News section, at the opening of the magazine, collects the most interesting art-world news, reporting events happening in public and non-profit institutions as well as in the art-market, coming therefore from galleries and auction houses.

The Interviews section will include interviews with experts, professionals and in general prominent personalities of the Italian and international art scene. The Director of the Palazzo Strozzi Foundation in Florence, Arturo Galansino, kindly allowed to be interviewed in occasion of the first issue of this magazine.

The Art in the World column aims to present artistic productions from different countries, (in this case India and Korea), thus maintaining a profile marked by academic research and cosmopolitanism, elements that have always characterized the cultural programme of Ducci Foundation.

The Focus on the Artist section tells, through the magnifying glass of expert collaborators, the process of established artists, as in the case of this issue, the Chinese photographer Ren Hang and the painter Elisa Montessori.

The concern for the current state of our planet and the response to this problem by the artistic community is addressed in the column Art & Ecology, which deals with three Italian artists in this issue of the oeuvre: Roberto Ghezzi, Giulia Manfredi and Samantha Passaniti.

Finally, creating a sort of bridge between past and present, the last two columns What's On and Throwback to will respectively address the current events organized by the Ducci Foundation, such as the exhibition "Roma Aeterna 50 characters of Contemporary Rome" with works by the artist Edmondo Cudic, of which the comment of professor Claudio Strinati is reported, and past events in the Foundation, such as the Gil Topaz exhibition organized in 2000 at the Castello di Goro.

We hope that the dear friends and members of the Foundation find the contents of ArtFond interesting. We wish our readers an enjoyable reading.

Chiara Aluigi  
Head of Art Department

# Getting ready for a new beginning while always changing.

A desolate Italy in which “few inhabitants wander the deserted streets of ancient cities”. The first issue of a magazine like this, which is characterized by intercultural dialogue and a cosmopolitan vision, opens on a scenario such as that which, although described by Lucano at the time of Nero, is the best photograph of the present. The whole planet, not just the (few) countries that in the past found themselves all together and at the same time facing tragedies such as the two world wars or epidemics and that, until 2020, we dared to call world, has found itself living a planetary catastrophe in which everyone, from Antarctica to New Zealand to Africa, has been equally affected and where no one has been able to declare their non-belligerence. And now we will all have to start again in the same way; all, rulers and governed, we will have to demonstrate civic pride, dignity, resilience in the face of what awaits us in terms of enormous suffering, loneliness, impoverishment, unemployment.

The world of art, culture, entertainment and the huge economy that depends on these areas could not escape unscathed. It had never happened in memory of the current generations that museums, theaters, cinemas from all over the world had been closed all together and for so long, not even in the bloodiest moments of wars. The totally new experience that we had to live is something to be treasured to correct pathologies that have emerged for a long time and that this sudden and unexpected event has caused to explode in unison. The scenario of empty museums, of the hallucinating crowds of some Italian tourist realities such as the Vatican Museums, the Uffizi, Venice, suddenly sucked into a huge black hole, left us annihilated and, after the first ‘excited’ reactions in front of the forgotten beauty of squares, fountains, monuments freed from the hordes, the dismay has fallen that those ‘hordes’ perhaps, for a long time, may not return.

The Italian situation, also in this case, as in many others that the pandemic has highlighted, appears more serious, more pathogenic than elsewhere. All the large and attractive cities of the world are deeply affected by the closure of activities and movements, but life, even if slowed down, continues with a certain normality in London as in Paris, in Berlin as in Zurich, in New York as in Geneva.

But no city like Florence, Venice, Rome and many others presents similar, desolate scenarios of cities that appear empty and abandoned, without any form of normal and daily life of people who live and work, not even in what should be a great capital, but they are reduced to the melancholy scenario of an abandoned amusement park after closing. All this has a specific cause, the monoculture of tourism that has expelled its inhabitants from the cities and any productive activity that is not parasitic linked to the exploitation of large flows. There are no important business or financial realities in these cities, there are no centers of excellence or research, there is no dynamism that makes life in a city fascinating and desirable in itself, even when the attractiveness of the monument closes.

What are called in Italy the “cities of art” or “historic centers”, with meaningless and terribly excluding lexicons, perhaps invented by some department of culture, are in reality what the advanced studies of the tourism sciences call “theme parks”, non-tourist places with no autonomous life.

If you become aware of this deteriorated model you will be able to take action to cure the pathology because hoping that everything will go back as before would be a serious mistake.

For museums and culture too, reflection is essential and must not only concern the ways to make up for lost revenues or the number of visitors. The Italian museums then cannot even, and fortunately, resort to the sale of their works for the simple reason that, unlike the North American museums, those works are not their property as they have never been bought, they are entrusted to them to manage them. handed down intact to the next generations, just as it was done for us; and in any case they would not be decisive interventions but only the impoverishment of capital.

The strong increase in digital production that has developed in recent months with virtual visits and presence on social networks also appears to be necessary but not compensatory tools. In order to face emergencies like this, substantial changes must be envisaged in the ways of use in order not to continue to depend on the unpredictability of automatic tourist flows that we have proved unable to manage, direct, if necessary compensate with the recovery, in our “art” cities of real life, with real people who are not willing to live on the tourist parasitism of B & B’s, ice cream parlors, stalls, guides; new ideas must develop, strong thoughts capable of providing original solutions.

The resources that will arrive should be invested in higher education schools, in research centers, not necessarily of humanistic culture, but technical, scientific, political and financial, engineering and architectural design, to attract fresh energies and young inhabitants to these cities; and also to counter the cultural emergency that relegates a third of Italians to functional illiteracy. Museums will play an important role in returning to normal because they are part of the fiber of life. Visiting museums takes us back to our roots and strengthens us internally. But it is a foundation that must be explained in schools, that are now jammed, because it is necessary to encourage familiarity with the museum among a new public, who come from our cities and who can replace with full awareness and adhesion the foreign visitors who, in Italy, contrary to France, England, Germany, are almost 90% of the total.

I believe that the catastrophe we have experienced has put an end to the so-called “postmodern” era, to exasperated relativism, to “weak thinking”. The whole planet was faced with the choice between health and freedom: they are certainly not “weak thinking” dilemmas and having had to deal with them more or less well, will not allow us to go back and waste this terrible experience. We found ourselves having to choose between life and wealth, and most nations chose life.

According to one of the most original readings that emerged in this period, it was a real ancestral sacrifice, the peoples offered their economic prosperity (i.e. GDP) as the fattest beasts as a sacrifice to avoid death. After such fundamental dilemmas and choices that will have an unimaginable cost, one can only foresee a new humanism, not dangerously nostalgic but based on the possibilities offered by science, including the human sciences. In short, it will be necessary to be able to have an original idea and it will take the courage to have it.

Anna Coliva





# Art News







All the latest art-world news accurately selected  
by Ducci Foundation's Art Department



# The art market faces the pandemic: a comment on recent results and trends.



Hit by the virus, the art market is also trying to react. Organized by The Fine Art Group, the October Virtual Breakfast Briefing took stock of the results of the recent global auctions that took place during this very peculiar year. The video conference was moderated by Philip Hoffman, Founder and CEO of the group and received speeches from his colleagues Morgan Long, Senior Director, and Guy Jennings, Managing Director. The experts began by stating that it is evident that virtual events, thanks to technology, are almost totally replacing, even for the most important sales, sales conducted in the traditional way, or physical auctions. The current health crisis has prompted the major companies in the sector, such as Christie's and Sotheby's, to focus and invest heavily in these new sales methods already during the first wave of Covid-19. Although not without obvious difficulties, technology is proving

to be an excellent ally for auction houses and for the entire system in this very complicated and uncertain period, allowing transactions to be carried out using only alternative methods. An excellent example of this is represented by One, the first global auction organized by Christie's last 10 July, which linked the world art capitals of Hong Kong, Paris, London and New York for the first time in the same sale. In this regard, Guy Jennings underlined how in such a complicated and unprecedented situation, these major players in the market were quick and ready to adapt to the new scenario. However, the expert pointed out that the involvement of customers in the use of the new participation systems at the major market locations remains in a certain sense "local" at the moment, attracting the greatest interest of Asian customers for auctions that are held in Hong Kong, Americans in New York auctions and European

customers in London and Paris.

For this reason it can be said that this type of sales, despite the great success they have found, still need time to be considered truly global. Surely time could prove to be a valid ally for this purpose according to Morgan Long, the new methods will be accepted and digested by collectors and there will be more confidence in the new technological means. Long added, saying that young collectors prove to be more inclined and confident in using the new methods of participation and that for this reason auction houses will have to put in a lot of effort trying to involve them and attract their attention for the greatest number of sales possible, following them and taking care of their growth as collectors, from customers of the day auction sale to those of the evening auction sale. Long found that the volume and average value of the lots offered for sale in the last autumn cycle compared to that of the previous year is significantly lower.

On the contrary, she did not notice a big change with price respect to the offer: artists such as Banksy, Kaws, Richter and Hirst continue to reach very high prices for their works. Added to these observations is also that the trend and growing interest, also due to the great resonance of the BLM (Black Lives Matter) movement, towards works performed by African and African American artists is now ongoing. Also for this reason this market segment continues to record solid results. In addition, among the peculiarities noted in this period, the experts point out that the auction calendar at this time appears particularly rich, defined on several occasions as overloaded with auctions organized in every corner of the planet. The agendas of collectors and professionals are thus full of events to follow, bombarded daily by newsletters and invitations. For this reason, navigating this overabundance of information can be complicated; According to Jennings, in fact, discipline and meticulousness are needed to analyze the calendar, as even in this complex situation there are many

good opportunities both for those who sell and for those who want to buy because when the quality of the proposal is high, the art market responds well, recording very solid and encouraging results.

When very important works of art are offered on the secondary art market, it happens mainly for the reasons set out in the “3D” rule: death (death), divorce (divorce) or debt (debt). These events are generally recognized as one of the main reasons why some owners decide to sell the works of their collection. Continuing his analysis, Long states that at this moment a fourth D could be added to this rule, that of deaccessioning.

This practice, widespread mainly in the United States, allows public museums to dispose of part of their collections to obtain useful funds to guarantee and finance the activities of institutions or to renew and diversify museum collections. This controversial tool animates the US and international cultural debate on the appropriateness of its use every time a museum announces that it has decided to use it. In this period cases of this type are increasingly frequent as deaccessioning represents a quick way to cope with the current global crisis. The most recent and talked about cases are those of The Brooklyn Museum in New York, which sold in the last cycle of sales. Twelve important paintings (including a splendid work by Cranach) to compensate for the effects of the pandemic. The Baltimore Museum sold for the same reason he would have liked to sell several works from the collection including three masterpieces (Andy Warhol, Brice Marden and Clyfford Still), with Sotheby’s for a gross of about 65 million dollars.

He “would have liked” because shortly before the start of the auction comes a twist: the Baltimore Museum was forced to withdraw two of the three works at auction (the Marden and the Still; too late for the Warhol which had already been sold privately) to deflate the fuss of controversy that had been created around the sale. The crisis makes no distinctions and



▲ Lucas Cranach, "Lucretia". Christie's ©

also affects the giants of the US economy with some effects that have repercussions on the art market. Indeed, the prestigious art collection of businessman Ron Perelman has recently appeared on the market: 11 important works, including some by the likes of Richter, Twombly, Rothko and De Kooning, have allowed him to raise 145.4 million dollars (source Bloomberg). The sale of his collection is actually part of a larger divestment operation of the Perelman empire that has also divested shares in his companies and even put a private jet on the market. Since July, the owner of Revlon has sold (at auction and privately) works of art worth a total of \$ 200 million using these proceeds to repay loans received from Citigroup, some people close to the agreements have revealed. His investment firm MacAndrews &

Forbes also said in a statement released in July that the group was reviewing its plans in response to the economic damage generated by the pandemic. In a recent statement, the 77-year-old tycoon revealed that it was time for him to "give others a chance to enjoy some of the beauties I have acquired, just as I have done for decades." A trend, that of the alienation of public and private collections, which could recur in 2021, guaranteeing the market to keep its offers high. In a market that, as we have said, despite the obvious difficulties of the moment, is overall in good health. It is right to report the result of the Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale at Sotheby's (28 October, New York) as the excellent result of the evening earned the event the name of auction, "white gloves", a term that is used in the

▲ Clyfford Still, "1957-G". Sotheby's ©

jargon for auctions in which all the lots put up for sale are sold, a real rarity, even more so if we consider the current circumstances.

Commenting on the result, in an interview that appeared on the pages of the Financial Times, gallery owner David Nash, former Global Head of Impressionist and Modern Art at Sotheby's for over 30 years, stated that "the forced online experience has accentuated a series of episodes particularly opaque, such as the sales catalogs that are often no longer printed, giving the possibility to the lots that are withdrawn, to simply disappear from the online sales page". Nash refers precisely to the sale of October 28 which originally included three sculptures by Giacometti, only to keep only one (sold for \$ 25.9 million), withdrawing or selling privately, we do not know, the other two important works.

Online auctions offer a possibility that certainly guarantees players a certain flexibility but does not favor the growing demand for transparency on the part of market operators: "There is not even a great possibility of understanding where the offers come from. Those who follow the auctions now rely exclusively on the cameras of the auction house and the persuasive tone of an auctioneer. Given the great interests surrounding this business, there should be higher standards of transparency", concludes Nash.

Having briefly considered the current trends of the international market, with a focus on the US, we will see in the next article how the Italian market and more generally the European one will respond to a calendar that is also rich and interesting.

Jacopo Di Lucchio



# The social commitment of artists at the time of Coronavirus.

Since its inception, art has reflected its own time, witnessing cultural, social, economic, technological progress, providing visual and visible evidence of the major historical events later described in the manuals and accompanied by these images. Therefore, the art produced in recent months cannot fail to testify to the upheaval that the entire planet has undergone and continues to undergo “in this 2020”. Perhaps, never as now, contemporary artistic production is to be understood as truly global, united by the same problem, inevitably affected - even metaphorically - by the pandemic, whose etymological explanation denounces the common condition that breaks down any territorial boundary.

Despite the peculiarities, many artists share *modus operandi* and themes that testify chronically - as Ai Weiwei did with the film *Coronation* - or sarcastically, but always painfully, the change of our days. A new masked reality is imprinted on the walls of cities, visible to all, forcefully taken out of traditional exhibition places, to more easily reach the various types of public and even the non-public, but above all because the coronavirus itself somehow forces us to prefer airy places, open spaces that do not risk closure, alas periodically, to which the canonical structures responsible for the exhibition of art are subject.

Therefore, Street Art shows itself to be congenial to the series of limitations imposed by the scientific communities and government authorities, simultaneously expressing sufferings, difficulties and popular complaints, creating symbolic monuments in honor of those who have committed themselves to fight against the bitter enemy of those who have been victims of it. Images of health workers stand out on the facades near the hospitals, as in the

work created by Harry Greb in Rome, outside the Lazzaro Spallanzani National Institute for Infectious Diseases.

The street artist repurposed a scene from the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, that is, the embrace between Jack Nicholson and Will Sampson here forced to wear gloves and a mask. The central theme is the physical distancing imposed by the scientific community, imaginatively violated through the embrace of cinematographic and visual art in order to express the lack of that gesture so desired by hospitalized patients and their families, especially by those who will not be able to hold onto those who have passed away and rather pass away in complete solitude. Not being able to literally squeeze the pain out with a nug, not being able to do it even with masks and gloves is alienating, immensely painful and moving.

Through this embrace dedicated to those who have been isolated within the walls of the hospitals, Harry Greb has raised a monument in a symbolic place that can commemorate the pain, witness the radical change compared to the recent past, of which even the cinematographic icons undergo an adaptation, wearing the symbols of contemporaneity. In fact, Harry Greb also covered with the mask the face of Anna Magnani, emblem of Italian cinema, hard hit by the epidemiological wave and thus honored, as well as supported with trust and hope, through the choice of the title: *Rome Open City*, famous film by director Roberto Rossellini.

A similar action was carried out in the same city by TVBoy, who repurposed in a contemporary key the famous interpreters of *Roman Holiday*: Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn. But it is not only the actors and the film world that are remembered and



▲ Harry Greb, Roma, 2020, Courtesy of Harry Greb ©



▲ Harry Greb, L'abbraccio, Roma, 2020, Courtesy of Harry Greb ©

supported with these artistic actions, the world of art is also honored, such as museum institutions which have been severely limited in the physical use of heritage. The famous girl portrayed by Vermeer and reproduced on a large scale on the bricks of a Boston building with a piercing instead of the delicate pearl, which embellished her gentle appearance, today wears a mask. Its creation is associated by some by the name of Banksy, the faceless street artist who made a lot of talk about himself last spring. His works have an expressive force that shakes souls because the playful component, which characterizes them with concealed messages that are anything but light, imbued with a disarming sarcasm. A less

poignant tenderness than the aforementioned work by Harry Greb near the Spallanzani characterizes the work *Game Changer* that Banksy donated to the General Hospital of Southampton during Nurses Day as a collective thanks for the work done by the health staff. A child holds a doll dressed as a nurse in his hands. But in addition to the recognizable clothing, the toy nurse also wears a cape that inflates thanks to the action of the simulated flight by the child, an act that usually suits superheroes, such as Batman or Spiderman, who are ignored and placed in the toy basket. In this sad scenario, chromatically witnessed by the choice to depict the scene in black and white, the only glimmer of salvation is given by

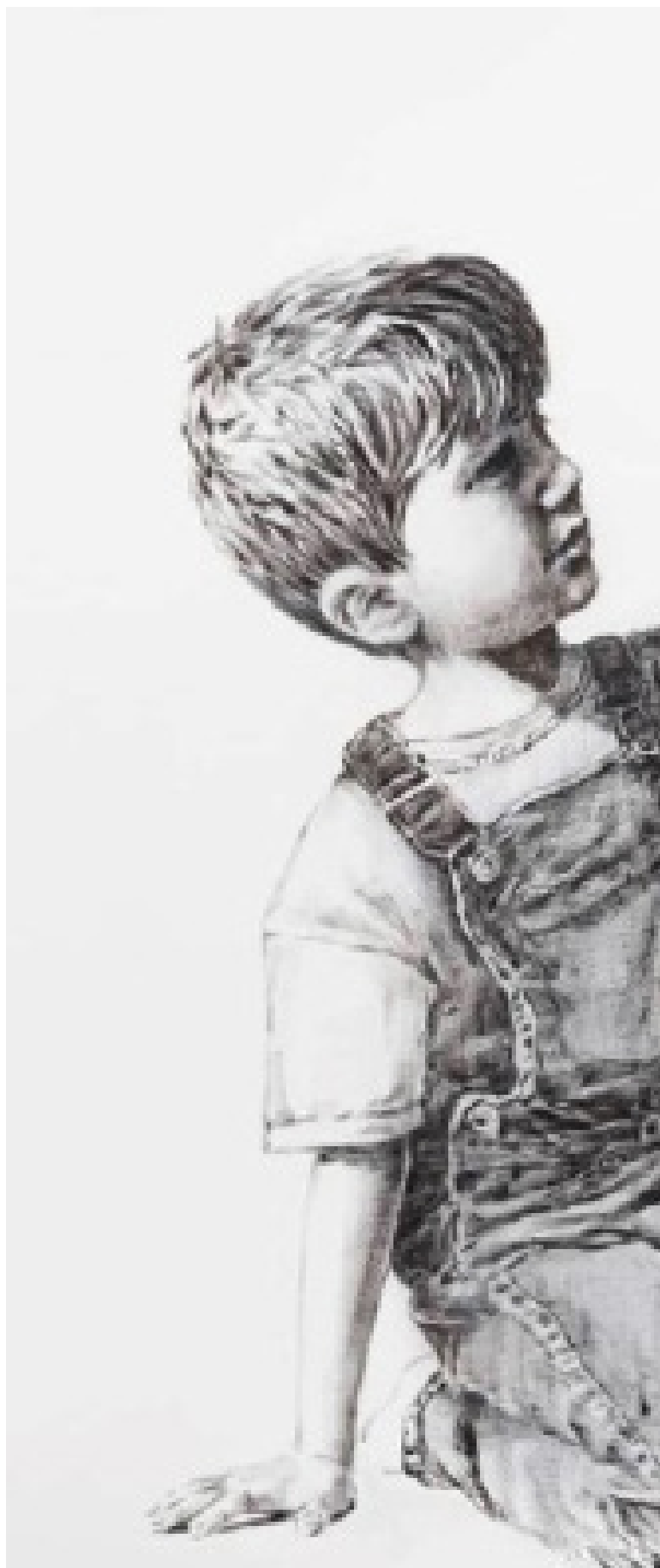


the symbol of Red Cross printed on the shirt of this superheroine.

Numerous other images cover the buildings of cities all over the world, also to instill hope through the use of brighter colors with which to simulate, for example, the textures of the masks under which the lips of lovers are hidden, as happens in the work of Greb, they do not renounce to have a contact, to touch each other, to give each other a kiss.

Therefore, this myriad of works underlies the participation and social commitment of the artists who shape and disseminate their creations not only in airy, but also liquid spaces, those of the so-called cyberspace, through posts on social platforms which make their works more accessible to those who would otherwise not be able to access their work due to a trivial physical distance. The contact therefore undergoes a momentary paradigm shift, bringing with it a series of reflections at various levels. We can only accept, until the pandemic subsides, to always wear a mask and sometimes gloves, just like the characters that animate the new works of art, we will undertake to respect physical, but not social distancing. Being physically distant does not mean being alone and this distance must be bridged through another type of connection. And the social networks have allowed the artists to overcome the separation and to re-establish contact, even more than what happened a few months ago. Art never comes to a halt, despite the limitations of various kinds that can break through, but uses every door to get out of its limits and reach its interlocutors who will find in it the comfort of that embrace that for now they have to give up.

Lucia Signore





# Christie's and Sotheby's autumn sales of Modern and Contemporary Art: lights, shadows and new strategies.

2020 was marked by global and socio-economic instability due to Covid-19. The art market had to rethink its lines of action, with international auction houses having to adapt in a few months to the new context. The reorganization was sudden and actually accelerated projects that already been planned for some time.

Since April, with the first sales transposed from live to online, the taboo of the virtual auction was quickly broken even for high-end lots, in the following months the two main major players in the sector, Christie's and Sotheby's, explored various new "hybrid" formats, from "cross-category"(1) auctions to sales relayed in sequence(2) that involved several sale locations at the same time: consider, for example, Sotheby's auction "From Rembrandt to Richter" on July 28th and Christie's "20th Century Evening Sale" on October 6th, which saw the inclusion of a definitely "outsider" lot like a T-Rex skeleton, an unusual choice that was however rewarded by the result of almost 32 million dollars of the fossil from the South Dakota, which contributed significantly to the sale total (340 million dollars).

The most recent sales of the two auction houses seem to confirm this trend: Sotheby's autumn strategy was to separate the "Contemporary Evening Sale" in New York, which was held on October 28th (as well as the Evening sale of impressionist art), from the "Day Sale", which took place on November 17th, placed in the middle of the online auctions "Contemporary art" (10-18 November) and "Impressionist & Modern art day sale" (11-19 November): with the latter forced into virtual format, Sotheby's has thus decided to bring them together in a single "auction week".

Already with the American "Contemporary Evening Sale", elements increasingly recurring in recent months' sales had emerged once again: a lot consisting of three historic Alfa Romeo cars from the years 1953-54-55 and an extraordinary 1950 table by the Turinese designer Carlo Mollino, sold by the Brooklyn Museum, have been placed in a catalogue usually limited to Contemporary works. Even more revealing is that the car trio was the top lot of the sale for \$ 14,840,000 with buyer's premium, while Mollino's table marked one of the best performances of the evening, tripling its low estimate and fetching



<sup>1</sup> cross-category:

Auctions which include in the catalogue categories of works normally offered in different sales: for example, old masters or impressionist paintings alongside works of contemporary art.

Barkley L. Hendricks, Jackie Sha-La-La (Jackie Cameron)  
Sotheby's©



\$6,181,000, a record for the artist and for an Italian design work. Overall, it was a sale with ups and downs, with some excellent results which were offset by important withdrawn lots and by the extensive use of third party guarantees. With a total of nearly 143 million, the sale settled towards the pre-auction low forecast.

Some dynamics (and critical issues) came up again with the most recent Day sale on November 17th. Despite a high-quality catalogue that also offered works that, as stated by Sotheby's itself, "one would normally expect to find in an Evening Sale", the

auction turned out to be less exciting than expected. The flagship painting, Jackie Sha-La-La (Jackie Cameron) by Barkley L. Hendricks, while backed by a guarantee (like most of the main lots), did not need it, being purchased by a client on the phone for \$ 2,803,000 with fees, within the pre-auction expectations. A similar situation also occurred for Keith Haring's series of 23 works on paper Untitled (Twenty-Three works) from 1982: almost a summa of the graphic compendium of Haring's work, already in the collection of the American photographer David LaChapelle and estimated \$ 900,000-1,200,000, was

<sup>2</sup> One of the new auction formats tested in 2020. These are large events, broadcast in streaming, involving two or more auction venues, with the catalogue divided by the number of participating sale locations; once the offer of the lots of a site is finished, the sale moves on to the next venue, always via streaming.



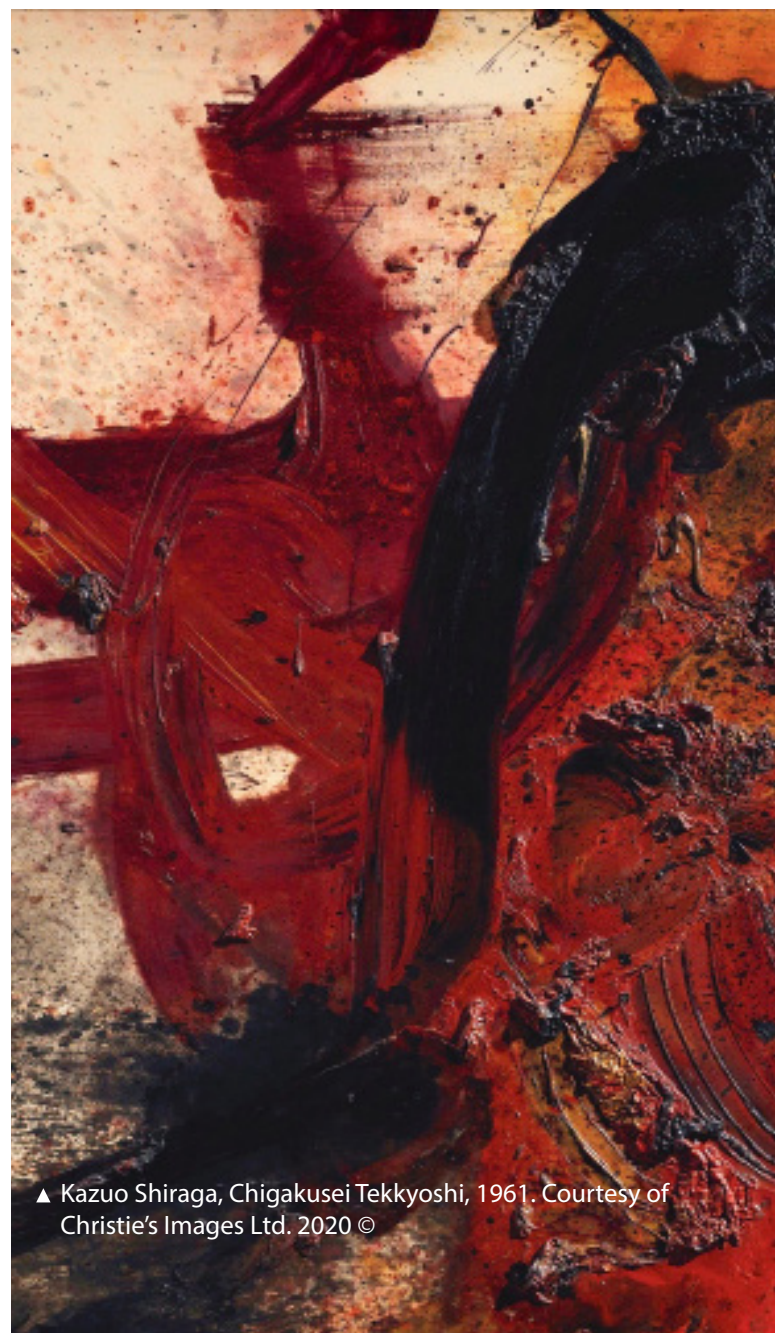
LaChapelle and estimated \$ 900,000-1,200,000, was also subject to a guarantee, but surpassed by the final buyer with a total bid of \$ 1,895,500. Instead, with a bid below the minimum estimate, have been sold to the guarantor two other important lots, Cosmic Skier by Yoshitomo Nara (\$ 700,000-1,000,000) and Plus Safe He Think by Jean-Michel Basquiat (\$ 1,500,000-2,000,000). Positive results for Wayne Thiebaud, whose iconic Single Triple Decker sold for \$ 2,319,000 from an estimate of 1.5-2 million, Fernando Botero (the bronze Leda and the Swan doubled the low estimate at \$ 2,440,000 with fees) and Helen Frankenthaler with Giant Step, which sells at the same amount as Botero's sculpture, doubling the low estimate also in this case.

However, the auction also showed a certain number of unsold items (ten, with a sell-through rate of 86%), of works sold below the minimum estimate (23, 28% of the total) and, above all, of withdrawn lots (nine), including highly valued works, such as Dead Wrong by KAWS (\$800,000-1,000,000). The auction thus ends with a sale total of about 39 million, around the minimum expected value.

If "Contemporary online" played a subordinate role, even in the not fully satisfactory total (about 9 million dollars), while fetching interesting results for works by Yayoi Kusama and Keith Haring, the "Impressionist & Modern Art Day Sale" seemed more sacrificed by the new positioning, despite a beautiful catalogue that would perhaps have deserved more independence from the "sale week" organized by the auction house. Even with a not exceptional result (30 million), it fetches important results including the stunning *Paysage Montagneux* by Lucien Levy-Dhurmer, belonged to the art historian Sir John Richardson, which exceeds the low estimate by thirteen times, reaching nearly two million dollars with fees and setting the new world record for the artist. Pierre Bonnard also performed

well with Assiette de fraises, which exceeds double the minimum estimate, selling for \$1,169,000, and Nu Assis, which follows the same path. However, 44 lots are unsold, out of a total of 206, in addition to seven withdrawn.

Are the overall not so exciting numbers of the latest Sotheby's auctions attributable to the specific strategies adopted for these sales or can they be read as signals of a slowdown of the sector, mainly caused by the unstable international situation? The important appointments of the next month will be indicative: on December 2nd Christie's will re-



▲ Kazuo Shiraga, Chigakusei Tekkyoshi, 1961. Courtesy of Christie's Images Ltd. 2020 ©

propose its extensive auction format “20th Century”, which will first involve the Hong Kong office and then, in sequence, New York: will be offered, among others, the imposing *Trees* by Joan Mitchell, dated 1990-91 (\$ 5,000,000-7,000,000), works by Renoir, Yoshitomo Nara, Zao Wou-Ki and Warhol, as well as an historic work by Pablo Picasso, *Femme Debout* of 1927, from the Morton and Barbara Mandel Art Collection, estimated \$ 3,000,000-5,000,000. Among the works that will be auctioned in Hong Kong stands out the wonderful canvas by the Gutai master Kazuo Shiraga *Chigakusei Tekkyoshi* (HKD

19,000,000-29,000,000). Sotheby's will follow shortly after (December 8th) with the last “cross-category” sale of the year, “Impressionist, Modern & Contemporary Art | An Evening Sale”, which will also propose, in the New York headquarters, masterpieces created over the span of about 150 years: here too, a pivotal work by Picasso, *Buste de femme assise* of 1962, estimated 8-12 million of dollars.

Filippo Durante





# The practice of deaccessioning as starting point for a more inclusive art history.

The current definition of “Museum” was approved during the 22nd General Assembly of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2007 and defines the museum as “a permanent, non-profit institution serving society, and of its development, open to the public, which carries out research on the material and immaterial testimonies of man and his environment, acquires them, preserves them, communicates them and specifically exhibits them for purposes of study, education and pleasure “. This definition is based on a basic structure that aims to make explicit the identity of the institution, the object of its activities, the functions it performs and the purposes it intends to pursue. Since 1946 the definition of a museum has been updated on average once every 10 years and in September 2019 the Committee should have proposed a new version during the ICOM General Conference in Kyoto.

However, following a week of intense debate that ended in the absence of an agreement, 70% of voters said they were in favor of postponing the vote. Of the more than 250 proposals, the one that caused the greatest sensation and heated discussions was formulated by the Danish museologist Jette Sandahl, whose definition deviates from the structure previously described and takes the form of an ideological manifesto:

“Museums are democratized, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue on past and future. By recognizing and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they preserve artifacts and specimens in safekeeping for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations, and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people. Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent and work in active collaboration with and for different communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit and improve understanding of the world, aiming to

contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and well-being planetary”.

It is clear that the focal point of this proposal is the idea of the museum as an inclusive, democratic space and as a point of reference and representation of communities characterized by diversity. Reading this definition, it is really difficult not to wonder if this is representative of the current reality of museums or if it describes what they should aspire to in the future to be relevant to contemporary society. In a historical moment deeply marked by movements that actively fight against gender inequalities and that seek to give a voice to ethnic minorities, a moment in which politics is no longer the space par excellence dedicated to debate but, on the contrary, a polarized place, full of incommunicability and absence of the possibility of mediation.

What is the real impact of museums? How do these institutions fit into the social debates that are most relevant to contemporary society? In North America, a large number of contemporary art museums have started selling works from their permanent collection to finance new purchases, with the aim of diversifying the selection of artists represented. The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), a professional organization made up of museum directors in the United States, Canada and Mexico, has always admitted among its guidelines the possibility for museums to sell some of the works of their collection, but on condition that the proceeds were invested entirely in new acquisitions. Although American museums have so-called endowment funds at their disposal, that is funds derived from private donations that are generally dedicated to this purpose, the main point of this deaccessioning practice is not simply obtaining liquidity.. Cultural institutions, in fact, want to update themselves, recognizing that the history of art they propose is based on an aesthetic and ideological



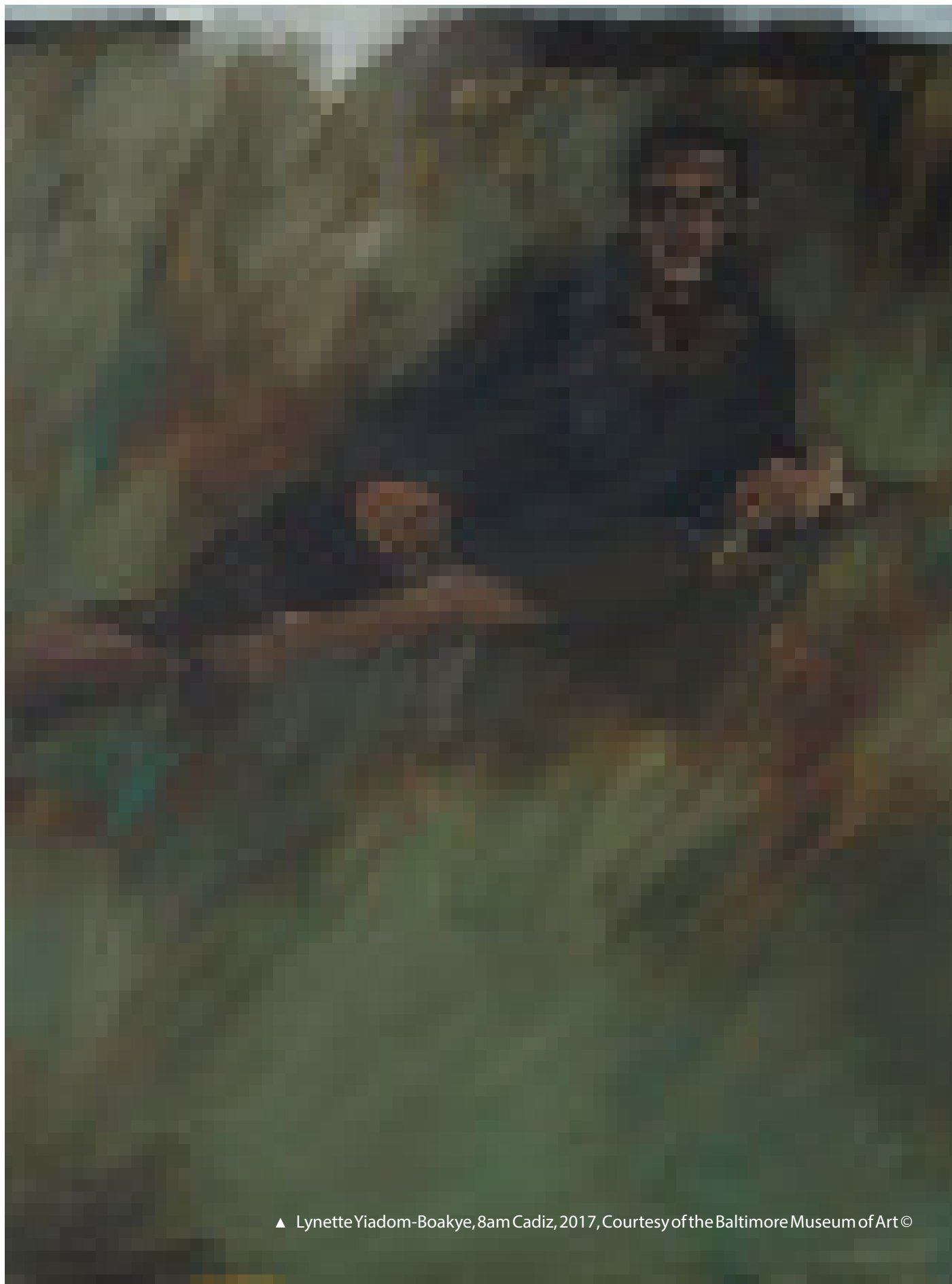
canon mostly centered on Western culture and created by eminent white male artists part of a privileged elite.

To be truly representative of the diversity of the communities they serve, museums must correct historical omissions and review, reread and reinterpret the course of history they promote in a new light, with a new awareness. One of the very first museums to pave the way for this new trend was the Baltimore Museum of Art which in April 2018 sold seven works by very renowned artists such as Franz Kline and Kenneth Noland and Robert Rauschenberg with the aim of focusing on African American artists . and female artists. The director of the museum at the time, Christopher Bedford, also specified that this process is the result of an analysis of what were the redundancies within the museum's collection, and that these arose from years of prejudice on which artists are representative of certain historical periods. In fact, in June of the same year, the Baltimore Museum of Art purchased works by Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Jack Whitten and Amy Sherald. The following year, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) joined the list of institutions that have openly declared their intention to make concrete efforts to diversify the permanent collection by auctioning off at Sotheby's Untitled (1960). Mark Rothko for \$ 50.1 million. With this amount, the museum acquired works by artists such as Alma Thomas, Kay Sage, Leonora Carrington, Mickalene Thomas and Rebecca Belmore.

According to the curator Gary Garrels, the purchased works were chosen with the aim of remedying the clear shortcomings of the permanent collection in terms of equality and representation, referring in particular to Latin American works of art, female and black artists. . The Baltimore Museum of Art and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art are just two of the museums on a list that is growing in size.

This new awareness regarding the impact of cultural institutions in contemporary social debates gives hope that it will also lead to exhibition and cultural programs that reflect this desire for diversity, in order to truly open up to all the communities they intend to include.

Olimpia Saccone



▲ Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, 8am Cadiz, 2017, Courtesy of the Baltimore Museum of Art ©



▲Mark Rothko, Untitled, Courtesy of Sotheby's©



# Interviews





# Interviews with Art World and Art Market experts



# Interview with Arturo Galansino, Director of Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi

CA: Your career as an art curator has an international character from the very beginning: it starts at the Louvre in Paris and then moves to the National Gallery and the Royal Academy of Arts in London, where you mainly deal with exhibitions on the Old Masters. Since 2015 you have taken the reins of the Palazzo Strozzi Foundation, promoting international artists, as well as pillars of contemporary art, such as Ai Weiwei (Libero 2016) and Tomás Saraceno (Aria 2020). For what reasons did you decide to opt for this new focus in the direction of contemporary art?

AG: It was a strategic choice: since Florence was the “cradle of the Renaissance” many expected that I would continue in this direction, focusing exclusively on ancient art. Together with the Palazzo Strozzi team, I partially respected this expectation, organizing large Renaissance exhibitions such as the one on art in Florence at the time of Francesco I, elected best exhibition of 2017, recognition also obtained by the incredible exhibition on Verrocchio, the first ever dedicated to Leonardo’s master, in 2019. Therefore, not setting aside ancient art, I decided to give new impetus to Palazzo Strozzi with an ambitious program of contemporary art exhibitions and debunking the cliché for which this type of art could not operate in Florence.

When I began my journey at Palazzo Strozzi, some attempts in this direction were unsuccessful and Florence continued to suffer from the cliché of “city of the past”. Data in hand, in Italy there was no place capable of organizing exhibitions of this type and attracting a large number of visitors; for this reason, contemporary art was relegated to a “niche sector”. Despite this starting context, I have always firmly believed that Florence could become a capital of contemporary art for several reasons, for example due to its strategic location: the city is in fact well connected thanks to fast trains with all of Italy. Furthermore, as Florence is one of Italy’s “tourist meccas”, numerous visitors from all over the world

come here to see the wonderful artistic heritage the city has to offer. By organizing contemporary art exhibitions, I wanted to focus on “quality tourism”, giving more educated visitors a further reason to go to the city. The Ai Wei Wei exhibition, mentioned by you, immediately met with enormous success, as well as that of Marina Abramović (The Cleaner 2018) and even the most “crazy” and experimental ones like that of Carsten Höller (The Florence Experiment 2018 ). In conclusion, since 2016 Florence has been demonstrating a new reactivity on the part of the public, both national and international. I noted with satisfaction an excellent reaction and welcome in favor of this new focus, also from the local public, which covers thirty percent of our visitors.

Florence also has unique assets regarding the location where our exhibitions take place: it is certainly a unique thing in the world to have the opportunity to organize large contemporary art exhibitions, in a fifteenth-century monument such as Palazzo Strozzi. Among other things, I often ask artists to link their poetics to certain themes that make Florence one of the most culturally important cities in the world, reusing the history of Florence and exploiting it as a potential generator of new themes and points for discussion. For these reasons, almost all the artists I have contacted in the past immediately agreed to work with the Palazzo Strozzi team, understanding that having an exhibition set up in the Palazzo would be a unique opportunity: a clear example is given by the last one. exhibition by Saraceno, who used the Palace as a symbol of restarting towards a new Humanism, a new future that is more sustainable and respectful of the environment.

CA: Before the museums closed, I had the pleasure of visiting the sensational exhibition you curated, Aria. Do you want to tell us more about the organizational path of an exhibition of this caliber? How did you relate to the brilliant artist Saraceno?

▼ exhibition: Marina Abramovic. The Cleaner  
(PH © Alessandro Moggi)



AG: Another thing that characterizes the Palazzo Strozzi team is the methodology and professionalism in every aspect, our exhibitions are never “improvised”. We move well in advance: we have a three-year program, but often the organization starts earlier. With Tomás Saraceno we started working at least three years ago, in order to create a perfect product and to find a narrative that best fits the historical context of that moment. Furthermore, we almost had a “prophetic intuition”: the exhibition found itself anticipating many themes that we experienced during the pandemic and also for this reason it had enormous media success.

CA: Are there any particular moments that you feel like sharing, about the relationship you have established with these great contemporary artists? Do you have a moment spent with Saraceno, Ai Wei Wei or Marina Abramovic that particularly impressed you?

AG: With all these artists I managed to establish a real long-lasting relationship, a very direct and, personally, very enriching dialogue. There are many memories and anecdotes, to name a few, I would mention the courage that Ai Wei Wei had to open the “contemporary saga” of Palazzo Strozzi: he was the first to fully understand the potential of the place. The installation he created on the facade, using the Renaissance symbol as a megaphone to talk about a theme linked to the present such as immigration, was, without a doubt, a brilliant idea. With Marina then the anecdotes are wasted! Marina’s stay in the city - another thing we at Palazzo Strozzi care a lot about, that is that artists come to the city and stay there for a long time - was exciting, because of her



▲ exhibition: Marina Abramovic. The Cleaner  
(PH © Alessandro Moggi)

presence, one breathed a real and its own “hysteria”, wherever we went there were crowds overwhelming us. We had organized a talk together at the Maggio, the great opera house in Florence, and \ after a few hours all the available seats were literally “burned” when the talk was announced. The whole city longed for the presence of this great artist and, unfortunately, there were even tense moments, culminating in the aggression, by a deranged person, of Marina. To conclude, not only art lovers participate in the initiatives of Palazzo Strozzi: our happenings have assumed such importance that they have become real “city events”, transmitting a warmth to contemporary artists of the highest importance that they could not receive. nowhere else.

CA: What events lie ahead for this 2021, which is still expected to be so full of uncertainties? Could you give us a little preview?

AG: They have already given us “daredevils”, because in such a difficult year, like the one just past, we at Palazzo Strozzi were the only ones to have already announced two major exhibitions. Instead, it is a deliberate choice, aimed at restarting Florence and its economy through culture and quality tourism attracted by our exhibitions. In all these years, the Boston Consulting Group, one of the consulting companies that works with us, has calculated that the activities organized by Palazzo Strozzi have generated an enormous economic impact on the territory, up to sixty million euros per year, numbers that reveal a economics of extreme importance also confirmed by the latest report from the Tuscany Region. In 2020, the pandemic showed us new and absurd scenarios, with ghostly cities of art, “deserted” by mass tourism.





▲ Marina Abramovic. The Cleaner  
(PH © Alessandro Moggi)



▲ Ai Weiwei. Libero  
(PH © Alessandro Moggi)

Florence has accused a lot of this phenomenon and Palazzo Strozzi has always worked to attract the aforementioned “quality tourism”, also generated by our exhibitions, which does not cannibalize but rather enrich the city, generating a sustainable economy. From 2021 we will try to restart after the pandemic, continuing with the same *modus operandi*: Palazzo Strozzi will continue to work, focusing on content and quality. 2021 will be a difficult year, with less tourism in general, but Florence will restart at its best, and Palazzo Strozzi wants to do its part, as we are doing by organizing the next two exhibitions in 2021. In spring, there will be an exhibition dedicated to American art from 1961 to 2001, with masterpieces, starting with Andy Warhol and passing through minimal art, the art of the Eighties and arriving at Kara Walker, analyzing social problems in parallel, through the work of the most committed artists. In autumn, however, there will be a great monographic by Jeff Koons, a retrospective of his career focused on the theme of light and surface reflectance, a real leitmotiv within Jeff’s production, and in fact the title of the exhibition will be just shine. These themes are also linked to the history of ancient art, the world of sculpture and their patina. This will be the starting point for a philosophical reflection on the strongest elements of Koons’ poetics, such as those of including the viewer within his sculptures: the viewer looks at the work but also looks at himself, placed face to face with the his desires, his unconscious and also with the “bad taste” of our society, which is sublimated in the works of Koons. It is important to mention the fact that Jeff Koons is also a collector of works of ancient art, and is proud to be able to present his works in the extraordinary historical setting given by Palazzo Strozzi and the city of Florence. Shine is a

highly anticipated exhibition and if conditions allow it we are sure it will be a great success.

CA: After you trained in Italy, you had your first work experience abroad and finally returned to Italy. What advice would you like to give to students and recent graduates who enter your sector, in such an uncertain period for museums and art institutions?

AG: I trained in Italy, I graduated here and did a research doctorate. My studies then took me to Paris, where I started my career in museums. I am happy to have studied in Italy, I find that our universities, often even rightly criticized, are still among the best in terms of teaching the history of art. The advice I could give is the following: study following your own inclinations and try to broaden your knowledge to the maximum, possibly try some experience abroad, as it is always very useful in order to create new contacts and job opportunities, and not fear of going outside the predefined and more traditional areas.

CA: What have been the “highlights”, the major achievements of your career so far? What moments do you look back on with extreme pride, which ones you still haven’t ceased to marvel at?

AG: I was lucky enough to work in various fields and in different cities, but bringing the contemporary to Florence, making it, in fact, become a capital of contemporary art exhibitions has certainly been one of the greatest satisfactions of my career so far. There are other achievements of which I am proud, such as having curated two exhibitions dedicated to Giovanni Battista Moroni - an extraordinary Bergamo painter of the late sixteenth century, wrongly considered a





▲ The Florence Experiment  
(PH © Alessandro Moggi)



▲ Tomas Saraceno Aria  
(PH © OKNOSTudio)

provincial artist - at the Royal Academy in London in 2014 and at the Frick Collection in New York in 2019. Celebrating a genius, not well known enough, of Italian painting by helping to make him known internationally was certainly an undertaking of which I am very proud. In fact, we must not always rely on the obvious, on guaranteed success, on the best-known names, but rather try to broaden the taste and knowledge by providing new stimuli and new perspectives to the public.

Chiara Aluigi  
Head of Art Department



Tomas Saraceno Aria  
(PH © OKNOSTudio)



▼ exhibition on Moroni



▼ Tomas Saraceno Aria  
(CAp74024\_Ph © Luca Grottoli©)



# Art in the World

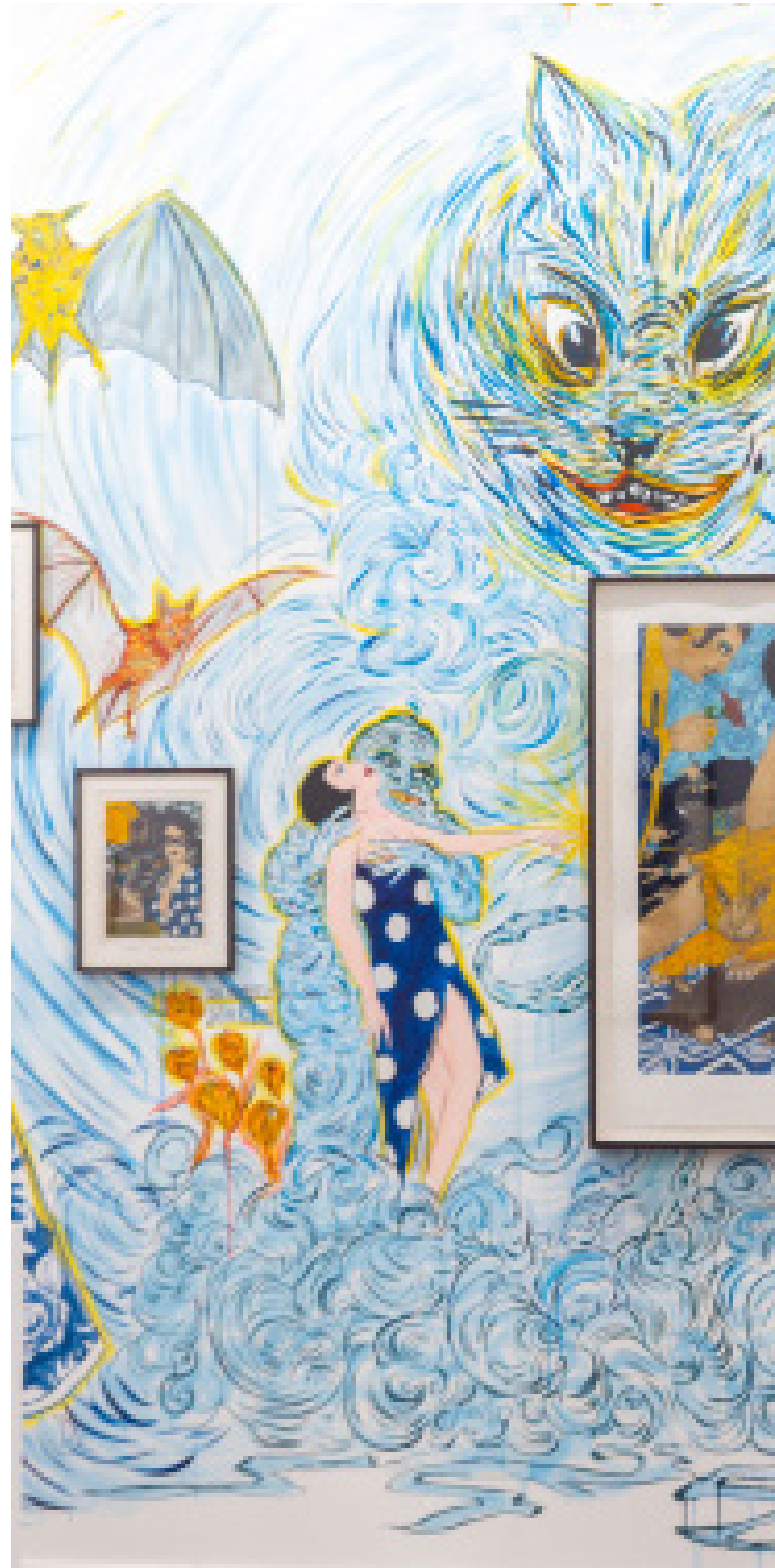


Art from different countries of the world:  
a column aimed at underlining the spirit of the  
Foundation which strives for an inclusive and open  
dialogue between cultures.



# Art & Culture as a Means of Diplomacy: Exploring Italy and India as a Case Study

In this article, we will explore ideas and possibilities for Italy to explore which can provide a robust platform for cultural diplomacy taking India as a case study, with the aim of building of long-term relationships between the two countries. While India's connections in Europe have been stronger with the UK due to the colonial connections, Italy has more recently tilted towards China for economic considerations. However, it is in mutual interest for both to reach out to each other in a post-Brexit post-Pandemic world. First, it is important for both not to merely think of culture as a transactional 'soft power' tool. Rather, it needs to be seen as an enabler for finding common ground and establishing mutual understanding which then forms a platform for win-win collaborations across a wide range of areas, both cultural and economic. Both the countries have an ancient past, a rich tradition of food, music and culture; and a paradoxical attachment for traditional values rooted in family and community in the face of modern individualism and globalisation. It is only meaningful that a relationship for the future between the two is rekindled by shared memories of the past. India was one of Ancient Rome's most valued trading partners, with a thriving commerce forged between the two through both land and maritime routes. Roman imports ranged from treasures of daily use like spices, herbs, cotton textiles and indigo to items of luxury like ivory and precious stones, while a major export was wine. In the Gabinetto Segretto of the National Archaeological Museum in Naples, one can find the ivory statuette of a 'Yakshi', a female tree spirit that symbolises fertility in Indian mythology. It was excavated from a merchant's house in Pompeii. Likewise, in India, in places like Arikamedu off the coast of Pondicherry, excavations have revealed items like Amphorae and fine Arretine pottery, establishing it as a key port for trade with ancient







▲ David Zwirner, Installation View, courtesy of David, 2020 ©

Rome. Today the site unfortunately lies neglected, under constant threat from predatory sand miners and the sweep of urbanisation. A good starting point would be acknowledging the same and initiating a dialogue for joint excavation, conservation and exhibition projects at the site. Another ideal starting point can also be a joint exhibition on Indo-Roman trade and shared histories co-curated by the National Museums of both countries. Institutions like the Uffizi Gallery and the Capitoline Museum are rich repositories not just in their collection of art and antiquities but in the knowledge of their conservation and exhibition, sharing of which would greatly benefit the Indian museums in their effort to preserve and showcase their own.

The Kochi Muzhiris Biennale in India was started in 2012 and receives more than 600,000 visitors making it one of the most popular art event destinations in Asia. A sister partnership with the Venice Biennale, which was one of its inspirations (reflected also in the fact that the creators chose to adopt the suffix 'Biennale' rather than the expected English 'Biennial') would be highly synergistic. While Kochi would benefit from learnings on areas on how to globalise its design and appeal and use the event to promote tourism, Venice can take a leaf out of Kochi as to how to take it self more inclusive and diverse while improving its access to the pool of emerging artists from South Asia. Collaborations can be artistic, curatorial, administrative or strategic with its respective mutual benefits. Likewise, on the commercial front, the India Art Fair, which was till recently co-owned by Art Basel presents an opportunity to MIART in Milan or Artissima in Turin to explore partnerships with, which will allow Italian collectors access to the best of Indian contemporary art and galleries and vice versa.

Art Residencies are another underrated but very useful means to encourage cultural exchange and cross-pollination of ideas. They provide an opportunity for artists from both countries to visit each other

and incorporate cross cultural influences into their artistic practice while fostering appreciation of each other's cultures. In 1960, Francis Newton Souza, one of India's foremost modern artists, once attended a residency on an Italian government scholarship but such initiatives have been rare on either side. Both countries today have well established art foundations, privately run museums and independently run art residencies which can come together to further this aspect.

Since the lockdown, there has been an exponential growth in virtual platforms online and use of digital technologies which can act as a catalyst for international collaborations by eliminating geographic boundaries. Virtual Reality based tours like the ones recently started at the Domus Aurea in Rome are a clear opportunity for Indian archaeological sites and museums to replicate and integrate into their experiences. India is a globally recognised technology hub and collaborations can help the art and culture sector in both countries identify the right partners who can deliver technology solutions at lower costs, while incorporating insights on visitor experiences. Using 3D projection techniques or immersive technologies like VR and AR will enable Italian museums to make their art and cultural objects accessible to Indian audiences in an engaging way, while reciprocally the Italian public can experience Indian history and culture.

In conclusion, cultural diplomacy between Italy and India has been relatively unexplored in the past but offers immense possibilities going forward. It will require long term commitment, funding and the involvement of the respective ministries of culture and tourism as well as museums and departments of archaeology; but the outcomes can make the effort worthwhile. When the pandemic subsides to usher in a new normal, a good starting point would be to identify pilot projects of symbolic value like excavation and conservation of historic sites with shared history or a joint exhibition on Indo-Roman



trade. Finally, it also needs to be kept in mind that cultural diplomacy is not the exclusive domain of the government. On the contrary, it is fertile ground for private institutions, art patrons and citizen diplomats to make a lasting difference.

Anindya Sen

▼Francis Newton Souza, 2020 ©



# A Thread between Yesterday and Today, Looking at Tomorrow: the Ceramics of Icheon.

Korean pop culture is achieving unprecedented popularity all over the world as part of the phenomenon called ‘hallyu’ (‘Korean Wave’), in which ‘made in Korea’ is trendy and sought after, ranging from skin care, pop music, dramas, to fashion trends and more.

Nonetheless, Korean pop culture, despite its quality and appeal, is not all that South Korea has to offer and showcase to an international audience. The art scene in the East Asian country is lively, and it embraces tradition as much as it welcomes contemporary and modern sensibilities. Seoul and Busan, respectively the capital of South Korea and its second largest city, regularly host international art fairs and are home to galleries and museums of international prestige.

But, away from the buzzing big city life, in the outskirts of Seoul, a little town called Icheon is actively and steadily producing year after year some of the most exquisite ceramics one may ever cast their sight on. It does not take a lot of expertise in the field of ceramic production or some hands-on experience as a potter to appreciate and be struck by the beauty of such works.

In the city, which is designated as UNESCO City for Crafts and Folk Art, the Ceramic Masters of Icheon tirelessly pursue beauty, elegance and the highest quality of work, leading to the creation of pieces of exceptional craftsmanship, which are imbued with age-old techniques and traditions. An outstanding characteristic of these pieces is the resilience of such

of such ancient tradition, which is not merely a replication of the past in a passive way, but is instead a celebration of the legacy of the artists who came before. The tradition is preserved and passed on to the younger generations and is shared with the world while, at the same time, the approach is that of actively looking at the present and the future, seeking a continuous communication with the modern world.

There are about 400 studios in Icheon in which the practising artists and Ceramic Masters spend hour upon hour working on their pots and eventually giving life to eternal beauty. Traditional Korean shapes and techniques are preserved and passed on, together with fundamental aesthetic principles that are typical of Korean ceramic art.

Traditionally, ceramic production in Korea shows a rather understated quality: vivid colours and bright decorations leave space to a ‘quieter’ character.

Plain surfaces, abstract designs or even figurative decorations do not communicate with the viewer as a bold statement, but rather in a more restrained fashion. When the surface is plain, the glaze and the quality of the clay function as decoration, highlighting the shape of the pot and guiding the eye to the work’s entirety. When decoration is present the subjects, patterns or designs do not overwhelm the pot, even when intricate, leaving, instead, room for an inclusive and balanced appreciation of the work of art.

There are several traditional shapes that are easily recognisable, but among these the perhaps most iconic one is the so-called 'moon jar'. The name derives from its Korean equivalent *dalhangari*, which indeed means 'moon jar', as the jar is traditionally white or near-white and rounded in shape, resembling the moon. It is made of two halves joined in the centre and normally presents a relatively tall foot and mouth rim. Because of the way it is created, in most cases it is easy to notice a horizontal line running across the jar, where the two halves have been joined.

Moon jars come in many different sizes, from very small -about the size of a hand- to very large - with a diameter of even about half a metre.

Together with moon jars, common pieces are vases and wine flasks with a rounded body, faceted or flattened pots, tea sets, tea bowls and nesting bowls, together with boxes, plates and more.

Decorations are created with different materials and come in the form of abstract designs or as figurative decorations, representing different subjects: frequent themes are bamboo and chrysanthemums, landscape designs and dragons.

There are three main techniques employed: white porcelain, celadon, buncheong. White porcelain can sometimes take on a shade depending on the glaze and it is either left plain or it can be decorated with painted subjects. There are stunning examples of cobalt blue design on white porcelain both among antiques and contemporary pieces. Icheon



▲ *Kim Panki, Moon Jar; Ye Studio, Courtesy Icheon Ceramic and Han Collection ©*



▲ Kim Seyong, *Céladon*, Ye Studio,  
Courtesy Icheon Ceramic and Han  
Collection ©

Ceramic Master Ji Suntak, a key figure in Korean ceramic research and production, crafted wonderful white porcelain pieces adorned by fine cobalt blue decorations, which showed his mastery not only as a potter but also as a painter.

Celadon is characterised by a glossy green appearance on which, occasionally, decorations such as floral motifs are added. Haegang Yoo Geunghyung, a Living Treasure, Masters Choi Inkyu and Kim Seyong specialised in celadon alongside other artists. On the other hand, buncheong stoneware shows earthy colours on which white slip is applied as a decoration in both abstract or figurative forms or as

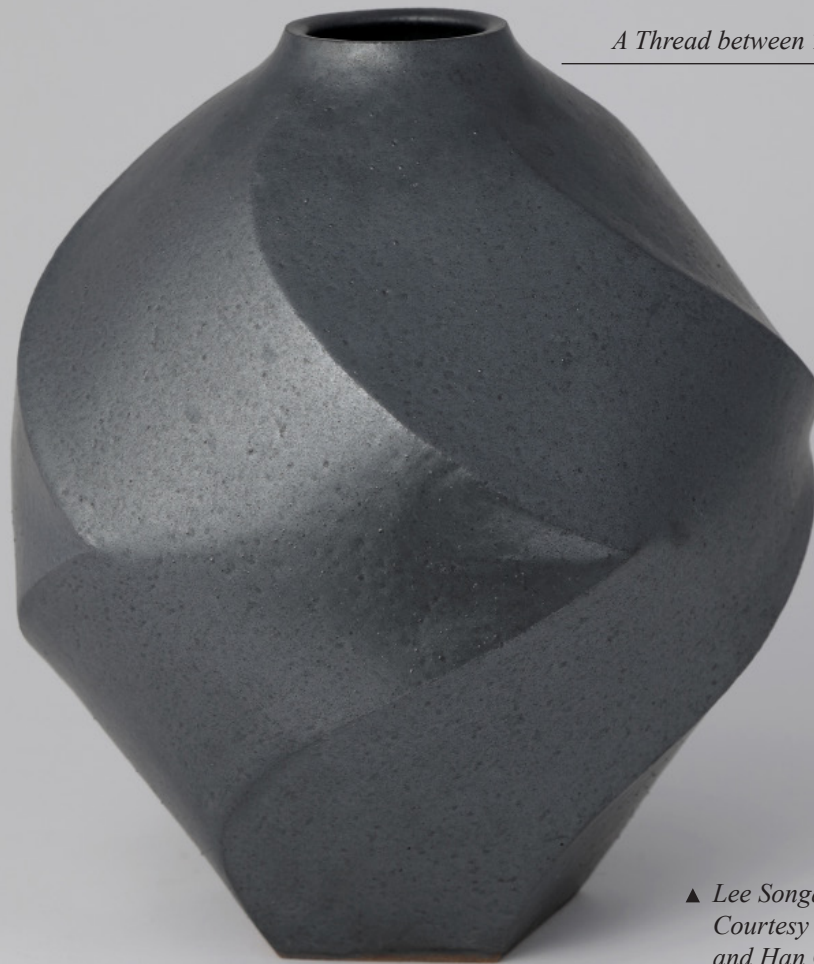
a pattern. In the case of abstract decorations, pots are either dipped in white slip or painted on with dynamic brushstrokes, creating a unique work of art.

The production is vast and it leads to the reinterpretation of recurring themes or ancient techniques. An example that stands out in this regard is the body of work by Icheon Ceramic Master Kim Panki in which celadon and comb-pattern (a decorative technique of neolithic origins, which consists of a series of lines engraved onto the surface of the pot) are combined and applied in the creation of tableware.



▲ Kim Panki, *céladon e comb-pattern*, Ye Studio,  
Courtesy Icheon Ceramic and Han Collection ©





▲ *Lee Songam, Ye Studio,  
Courtesy Icheon Ceramic  
and Han Collection ©*

Icheon Ceramic Masters and artists all have different creative approaches to ceramics and craft. Given the level of achievement and craftsmanship one might assume that these artists have been practising for decades, but surprisingly some of them are also quite young and, yet, display maturity and command of the techniques used to create their works.

One of the youngest artists, Lee Songam, was born in 1990 and is a maker capable of exceptional results. Choosing black as his signature colour, Lee trims the surface of the pot, hence achieving an especially dynamic look.

The ceramics of Icheon are exhibited in prestigious art fairs and in several occasions internationally, celebrating the beauty and excellent craftsmanship of Korean art all around the world.

Federica Ionta





# Focus on





# the Artist

# Ren Hang (1987-2017), an ‘ordinary’ photographer.

2014.07.16 the gift

Life is indeed  
A precious gift  
although I often ask myself  
if it wasn't given to the wrong man.  
《礼物》

生命的确是一份  
珍贵的礼物  
可是我时常觉得  
它好像送错了人

The exhibition *Ren Hang, photography* at the Sozzani Foundation in Milan ended on November 5, 2020. A retrospective dedicated to the Chinese photographer who tragically died just three years ago, in 2017, at the young age of 29.

Ren Hang was born in the province of Jilin, north of China, on March 30, 1987. It was during his university studies in Marketing that the need arose in him to find an escape from the repetitiveness and monotony of lessons and daily routine. He begins to photograph out of need, to give shape to his thoughts, to give voice to his imagination, to evade the network of rules and impositions of a severe society that does not look at anyone and that was so close to him. He simply photographed “what he saw”, and the first thing he saw through the lens of his Minolta 110, a Japanese analog camera, was the naked body of his roommate. Since then, nudity will be his most significant source of inspiration. Hang did not portray models, he preferred to have his friends, relatives, and later his fans pose. Never strangers. For him it was essential to establish a bond of tacit trust and mutual respect with the subjects of his photographs, it was essential to talk to them before

taking the shot, to get to know them so much that he could tell something about himself through them. If not, he would have ended the photo shoot. His shots were carefully composed, but never premeditated. Ren Hang, in fact, let himself be guided by his own instinct, photography because he wanted and never because he had to. He directed the stripped bodies in unnatural poses, in twisted forms, in compositions of white skins like marble statues. Although the images are infused with an element of transience and evanescence, the result of the artist's quick way of working, everything seems to be where it should be.

The result are works that are impossible to trace back to precise classifications, poised between photography, performance and sculpture that are the result of a way of making art that knows no boundaries. Ren Hang's subjects stand out against the blue of the sky on the roofs of Beijing skyscrapers, float in a pond of lotus flowers, mingle with the tall trunks of trees whose green shines in the night, or simply appear in an empty room. Elegant, saturated, provocative, the immortalized figures seem almost frozen by the enveloping light of the flash, an author's signature and a constant element of Hang's works. In his photos, the bodies waver between object and subject. Sometimes they are form, others are color, sometimes they are landscape, but never non-human.

Although the images are characterized by the brightness and aesthetics typical of fashion photography, the subjects portrayed are not deprived of their fragility or their personality. The irreverent faces of young boys and girls look straight into the room without shame. It is always the spectator who is the first to look away. The almost expressionless



▲ Ren Hang, Untitled.  
Estate of Ren Hang. Courtesy of Estate of Ren Hang and  
Stieglitz.©

eyes, apparently empty, conceal the restlessness and suffering of a generation. Tense bodies lie between reality and fiction, floating in the balance between purity and desire. Ren Hang's shots communicate a delicate sensuality through poses and colors without leaning towards vulgarity.

Yet the young photographer was arrested several times, and his works were victims of the strict censorship rules imposed by the People's Republic of China from the start. The images he proposes are labeled as obscene and licentious. What is condemned is not only the content of the photographs, considered pornographic material, but also the explicit affront to the representative canons and rigid traditions of his native country. There are no gender hierarchies in Ren Hang's photographs, sexuality is described as fluid, indefinite and indefinable, and the human body assumes the appearance of abstract forms, losing its connotations and showing itself without any fear. Photos are defaced during exhibitions or confiscated by officials, and the photographer's website is repeatedly shut down.

When the authorities threaten to cancel one of his first exhibitions on suspicion of "suspected sex offense", Hang decides to display empty frames. "I don't consider my work as taboo, because I don't think about the cultural or political context in which I act. I don't intentionally defy the law. I just do what I do." Ren Hang photographed during the day, because he was convinced that his art had nothing to hide, nothing to blame, nothing to be condemned for. He shot on the street, on the rooftops in the sparkling sunlight and for all to see. His disobeying, however, his not conforming is not an act of rebellion, but

an act of profound freedom. A personal and artistic freedom that has nothing to do with politics.

The one developed over the years by the photographer is an uncontaminated creative language, far from the influences of contemporary Western art, and which at the same time draws on but reworks the visual vocabulary of East Asia. And here is that recurring elements of tradition follow one another in images that subvert their meaning. Peacocks, lotus flowers, swans merge with entangled bodies that show themselves for what they are, giving back images that are sometimes surreal. Hips, thighs and white faces are interspersed with the bright red of a lip dye, nail polish, or cloth; color culturally linked to youth and femininity, vigor and politics, is emptied of its original meaning to become a symbol of a change that questions the pillars of a millenary tradition. Ren Hang's photographs have been exhibited and appreciated all over the world, in France, Russia, Italy, Israel and beyond.

However, the Chinese photographer was aware that his works, provocative and dramatically different from the traditional aesthetics of social realism, propaganda art or ink painting, would have struggled to be accepted and understood where he wanted most: in his country. Hang's desire to live an ordinary life and mingle with that same majority ready to point the finger at the "obscenities" staged by his photographs never came true. He remained part of an excluded and too often misunderstood minority. The young photographer took his own life on February 24, 2017 by jumping from the 28th floor of a building in Beijing. His life was as short as the suffering lines of his poems, which told of his depression and which he himself shared with the public in the form of a diary. However, the iconic images taken by Ren Hang,



playful and controversial, survive him as a rare ode to the human being, his body, sexuality, beauty and vulnerability, as a testimony of an existence, as the maximum affirmation of freedom. .affermazione di libertà.

Greta Meregalli



▲ Ren Hang, Untitled.  
Estate of Ren Hang. Courtesy of Estate of Ren Hang and BlindSpot Gallery.©



▼ Ren Hang, Untitled.  
Estate of Ren Hang. Courtesy of Estate of Ren Hang and BlindSpot Gallery.©



▼ Ren Hang, Untitled, China, 2015.  
Estate of Ren Hang. Courtesy of Estate Ren Hang and OstLicht Gallery©

# Elisa Montessori.

## Between signs and drawings

Entering Elisa Montessori's studio, you can immerse yourself in her gaze, in her brilliant intuitiveness, in her chaotic and creative living environment. You are greeted by music that fills the air together with the smell of incense. Countless catalogs, books of poems, papers, scrolls and canvases are leaning one against the other on overflowing bookcases. The work tables are filled with objects that recall the canvases. The drawers hold photographs, objects of all kinds, old works on stand-by and even brushes, pencils, scissors that every now and then accidentally end up cutting works, placed casually in one corner or another. In this fascinating environment Elisa Montessori produces daily, alternating a meditative attitude with the creative impetuosity that is perceived as soon as one gets to know her; her eyes are lively and cunning, her smile amused: "I love this house of mine because it is an intelligent space, where all the corners come together. And then, above all, it is clear: things, here, can live as they are born".<sup>(1)</sup>

Elisa Montessori's gaze investigates literature and music, is interested in botany and metamorphosis, and dwells on the role and shapes of women. These themes are interpreted now through the clear and incisive linear lines of the 1970s, now through the explosion of color that appears from the 1980s onwards. A continuous and incessant production of paintings, books, mosaics, transparent sheets in sicofoil and above all papers: Chinese, Japanese, plaited, folded and tarred. A profound need to live the studio space where work becomes a saving force and a refuge to exorcise mourning during the negative phases of life: "Even art is a living organism, it involves the body. I have a physical relationship with paper, colors, shapes".<sup>(2)</sup>

The spontaneous gesture - the thinking hand, she says - realizes ample sign visions on the white support of paper, through which the natural element - the blade of grass, the wooden sticks, the leaves - is related to the artificial one of the artistic stroke.

In botany there is a phenomenon called tropism that indicates that specific force, present in the movement of plants, capable of predisposing the orientation of roots, rhizomes and branches. A directional energy, intrinsic to the plant world; an intention of matter whose most striking example is the movement of sunflowers. An automatism of biology that corresponds to the automatism of the artist's hand when she finds herself using the techniques of monotype, serigraphy, and sign writing. Thus Montessori borrows this term and entitles the series of works produced in the 1970s: collages of cardboard and photographs on gauze, which translates into the dimensions of the sign details of the natural world, thus generating large geographies. Those same natural elements that activate the artistic process, are collected, ordered and studied within the numerous herbariums in search of a "physicality of abstraction". To each leaf, branch, blade of grass Montessori attributes the corresponding abstract sign.

As Anne Marie Sauzeau - who used to spend afternoons with the artist in the pinewood of Fregene finding pine cones, dry wood, lilies and palms - has observed: "if the vegetable (*objet trouvé*) were not ennobled by its similarity to the (mental) sign, it would not be significant; it would be lost in the shapeless physicality of the soil where it lay".<sup>(3)</sup>

With her attentive, curious and inquiring eye, capable of understanding both the beauty and the impermanence and harshness of the world, the artist developed an aptitude for researching and ennobling minute and unusual details, an attitude that she

<sup>1</sup> R. Rocco, *Dietro la tela di Elisa Montessori*, Corriere della Sera, 11 dicembre 2008, p. 27

<sup>2</sup> A.M. Sauzeau, *Sotto il segno di Dafne. Indagine sull'opera di Elisa Montessori*, Punctum, Roma, 2014

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem

▼ Elisa Montessori, *China II*, 1984, grafite, tempera, collage su carta/graphite, tempera, collage on paper, 75x100 cm, Courtesy Elisa Montessori e Monitor Roma, Lisbona Pereto, Photo credits: Giorgio Benni ©



found again in the course of her life when she met the oriental culture from which she was strongly attracted and fascinated.

From the Chinese culture, known through her first husband, the engineer Mario Tchou, she learns the importance of rigor, the fundamental mastery of drawing, the dignity of the sign and the handwriting. She immediately adopted a personal and self-imposed discipline in her approach to art. A practice similar to a ritual, in which time, patience, attention and recurring gestures combine to alleviate what she herself calls the 'neuroses of everyday life'.

Japan introduced her to the philosophy of Wabi-Sabi: an aesthetic based on the acceptance of the transience and imperfection of things. The impulse is to trace beauty in the imperfect, atypical and impermanent, structuring the investigation of truth through the observation of nature in its most discreet and hidden details, getting rid of the superfluous and ignoring any hierarchy between materials.

A tendency to search for the significant in the details of the surrounding world, which is also poured into the domestic space, becoming a true philosophy of look and relationship.

Cups, teapots, shoes, slippers and jewels, brushes large and small enter by right as protagonists in the canvases and large papers. A new definition of man and his relationship with things. Describing the external object becomes a way of defining the contextual emotion that it arouses.

The relationship with poetry and literature is important. Several works are dedicated to Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickinson, Ingeborg Bachmann, Marianna Moore, Francis Ponge, Johann Wolfgang

Goethe. Goethe's work *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (1790) and the contextual theorization of *Urpflanze* - the unitary, primordial element of all plants, capable of generating the synthesis between the individual and the universe - will be fundamental.

Browsing through some of her authors of reference, it happens to come across real figurative abecedari of recurring images. For example, between the lines of Francis Ponge's 'Le papillon'<sup>(4)</sup>, several key elements emerge: the verticality of flower stalks, which become the vertical, abstract signs of the artist; the flight of butterflies, which animates with red the production of watercolors of the early 2000s (fig.); the flying match, an organic element, slender, light that moves carried by the wind.

In a 2019 video, Elisa Montessori recounts that Emilio Vedova had once revealed to her that every artist has his or her own sign; hers is wind. A physical force, capable of creating a dynamic and intangible space-time. The same space that Elisa Montessori constructs within her works and first and foremost in the book-system, where visions, reflections, quotations and annotations are permanently captured: "Turning the pages, looking at one thing on the right and the other on the left, you spend your time. Therefore I capture, 'steal', your time. Mine is a real theft, in a positive sense of course. I steal your attention, because without it there is no exchange. And it is not an exchange of beauty and wonder, but an exchange in which you, the spectator, put yourself at stake. We are often used to an advertising form of offering, to a poster set up so that the observer filters the message according to the author's eyes. On the other hand, I make a startup available to the viewer."<sup>(5)</sup>

Arianna Paragallo



▲ Elisa Montessori, *Danza*, 2004, grafite e tempera su carta/graphite and tempera on paper, 100x150 cm, Courtesy Elisa Montessori e Monitor Roma, Lisbona Pereto, Photo credits: Giorgio Benni ©



▲ Elisa Montessori, *Natura morta con pennello*, 1983, grafite, pastelli su carta da spolvero/graphite, pastels on tracing paper, 50x70 cm, Courtesy Elisa Montessori e Monitor Roma, Lisbona Pereto, Photo credits: Giorgio Benni ©





# Art & E





cology

# **The reflection on Nature in contemporary artistic practices:**

## **three autonomous cases by Roberto Ghezzi, Giulia Manfredi and Samantha Passaniti.**

The need to renegotiate the relationship between human survival models and natural cycles, or the rewriting of the correlation between man and nature, is one of the most pressing issues of today. Contemporary art, not indifferent to the worsening of this instance, is metabolizing this problem according to several declinations, proposing it again through expressive manifestations that summarize some peculiarities. The investigation of the artists into natural entities, in addition to conducting the research activity outside the places canonically delegated to it, allows to better focus, through the lens of aesthetics, the complexity of the phenomenon. In this perspective, their point of view could sensitize a new conception of the natural within society, in contrast to today's dominant one, drastically technocratic.

The growing interest of artists in this direction, both thematic and operational, would seem a correspondence of our current condition, where science demonstrates that the intelligence of nature is everywhere and that life also lurks in the portions of the world considered previously inanimate. Perhaps even in the face of this, theoretical and artistic modules have been developed over the last few decades, aimed at analyzing the permeability of creativity with the biological, environmental and plant universe. In this regard, we cite the studies by Alan Sonfist, Barbara Nemitz, Sue Spaid and Heike Strelow, aimed at theoretically arguing the link in question. The Eco-Art, Bio-Art and Ecovention movements were born on the effects of this line of investigation, all aimed at exploring the alternatives of interaction between art, organic code and ecosystem.

To correctly understand the meaning of the aforementioned, as well as the consequent effects in the reality of artistic practice, in order to obtain a limited but exhaustive extract of the scenario concerning the combination of art / nature, it is appropriate to examine the work of three authors: Roberto Ghezzi, Giulia Manfredi and Samantha Passaniti, who, for years, have been studying the possible ways of aestheticization of the natural component, electing it as the narrative subject of their respective languages.

Through a targeted selection of the works of each interpreter, this discussion intends to return an artistic paraphrase of that phenomenal attribute which, perhaps more than any other, identifies the perennial circularity of natural processes and, therefore, its most irreducible and distinctive essence. In fact, the incessant becoming that oversees the emergence of any natural system, relative to the choices of the three artists considered, is recognizable in the use of pure components of nature, as well as in the sublimation of its properties, recoded as the cause of artistic exercise, sometimes emphasizing their congenital biological inclinations, others trying to discipline them or make them the conceptual reference point of the entire operation.

Therefore, it should be remembered that diversified realizations have been selected, with the intention of having more angles from which to scrutinize the degrees of variability of the concept now exposed. Roberto Ghezzi, with the *Naturographies*, tries to outline an artistic intervention in close contact with nature, such as to reflect the effects of its action, of its becoming. The term *Naturography* allows us to understand its creative primacy in the birthright of the

work and, therefore, contains the founding concept of the author's poetics. La di lui is a first conceptual approach methodology, with an initial design phase (Fig. 1) of the initial study of the characteristics of the site where the canvases will be positioned. Based on the findings, the artist establishes the times and methods of displaying the supports, already envisioning what the final configuration will be. During this period, the nature of the chosen place, in the heart of his rhythms, acts on them, altering them in the surface, in the fiber, leaving visible traces of his impermanence. From the symbiosis between the materially understood work of art and the habitat in which it is inserted, a coherent translation of the phenomenal derives; a total mimesis. The aspect of the works in question, therefore, is the consequence of a procedure devoid of formal objectives, which coincides with the reaction of the support to the action exerted by exogenous environmental agents, mainly water, earth and air, from which a consideration of the nature as a living system that interacts with the individual.

See, therefore, how the "Naturography of the navigable canal of Trieste" (Fig. 2), of 2020, born in an environmentally critical place, reports the effects of human presence, visible in the black traces of the fuel of the hulls left on the surfaces of the canvases; indelible sign of the anthropocentric era.



▲ Roberto Ghezzi, Progetto per installazione di naturografie nel canale navigabile di Trieste, 2020 ©



▲ Roberto Ghezzi, Naturografia nel canale navigabile di Trieste, 2020 ©

▼ Giulia Manfredi, Euridice, 2019 ©



Giulia Manfredi works with natural parts, such as resins or plant organisms, making them the main expressive tool of her works. The search for her is equivalent to a path towards the deepest mystery of nature. The artist enhances, in some cases, its formal character and, in others, she investigates its necessity; the ananke of the Greek tradition. As a result, such as “Euridice” (Fig. 3), of 2019, as well as in all those attributable to this typology, the natural element is as if forbidden and inaccessible, forced inside claustrophobic transparent geometric resin cages, which now appear immortalize it, now suffocate it.

Here, a sort of suppression of the spontaneous life processes is evident, which preside over the ordinary progression of the natural datum, as it is stigmatized in the axiomatic acidity of the resin, which prevents any evolution and condemns it to the static typical of the icon. In the subsequent results, the author seems to reverse her own subjective of speculation, highlighting the inevitability of biological courses, rather than mortifying them through an act of violence. In “Still waters run deep” (Fig. 4), dating back to the same year, for example, the boundaries - in this case in marble - which inhibit the normal development of the botanical agent, however, allow for a minimal but disciplined growth, underlining its atavistic and unavoidable vital propulsive force in perpetual repetition. Although it is indeed a nature with symbolic implications, at the same time, it is sensibly real; revelation of ancestral and invisible



▲ Giulia Manfredi, Still waters run deep, 2019 ©



archetypes. Manfredi, in the overall organicity of her corpus, outlines an extremely enigmatic profile of the natural datum, centered on the antithesis of life and death. She exalts its beauty and suffering.

Samantha Passaniti, author of a consolidated research based on the analysis of the hypothetical reciprocity between natural data and implications from the existential reflection, inserts in her works, recursively and, sometimes, combined with materials of other extraction, partiality or integrity of the plant world. The latter, analyzing two works from 2020, seem essential for the semantics of the works and always appear commensurate with the boundaries of a calibrated aesthetic apparatus, to qualify, as an objective correlative, both the formal and metaphorical values, reaching a point of symmetry between object and message. “Resilience” (Fig. 5) combines the harshness of the acute form below, which marks the whole operation with a certain sense of instability, and the irregular extremity corroded by rust to the silent poetry of the plant which, docile and delicate, is caught in the act of resisting. It is the impalpable factor of time that connects the diversity of two very distant solutions, just like the natural specimen and rusty iron. With “Coexistences” (Fig. 6), an installation made of earth, resin, wood, mineral dust and a plant element, the artist, in the two supporting structures, evokes buildings without windows from whose tops the plants gush out which, pushed by the innate vital energy, they

go to join in the middle of the space that separates the two parallelepipeds. The latter, equivalent to the alienation of contemporary man, counterbalance the vitality of the botanical element, the depositary of a symbolism referable to a condition of authenticity and incorruptibility. The work, through essential expedients and imbued with meaning, addresses the contradiction of a society increasingly distant from its original demands. Thanks to the contribution of these three artists, it is possible to record by means of which forms art is revising one of the most urgent needs of today, developing a language where time, perishability, the use of organic materials and partial delegation of the definition of the work to the automatisms of nature appear to be, albeit respecting the specificities of each author, the shared terms of an alphabet that is combined according to an aesthetic opposite to that of the dominant culture of media inflation, overexposed and of the hyper-visible.

Davide Silvioni

▼ Samantha Passaniti, Coesistenze, 2020 ©





# What's on:





## Foundation's Current Events



# “ROMA ÆTERNA”

50 characters of Contemporary Rome.

Works of the artist Edmondo Cudic.

Paolo Ducci (alias Edmondo Cudic) from time to time photographs friends who are close to him by a deep and shared familiarity of work, study, political and cultural activity through the Foundation that he authoritatively presides over and to which he dedicates himself, between the headquarters of Rome, that of the Castello di Goro in Montebenichi and that of Fez, with remarkable and inexhaustible energies now culminating in a series of initiatives, of which this exhibition is an integral and indispensable part, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary that falls this year. The photographs are portraits

to which Ducci / Cudic imprints a sort of highly personal unitary imprint through a simple but refined process of processing the images such as to make those who are represented like all brothers, implicitly expressing a peculiar conception of friendship.

A concept naturally emanating from images which must make us reflect. These are personalities who in various ways have animated the city of Rome for a long time, each being endowed with outstanding managerial and organizational attitudes, often incomparable. Intellectuals, artists, executives, owners of activities crucial to the life of our city,

▼ Edmondo Cudic, Marchesa Marisela Federici, 2020 ©



all those who are present in this exhibition are first and foremost, beyond the acclaimed merits of everyone in their field and known to the world universe, true friends. of the author and often they are among themselves. This is an exhibition that cultivates, therefore, the affections, mutual respect, the attention we really pay towards the other species when we see it in many ways similar to ourselves. There is something imperative and strong in the procedure implemented by Paolo Ducci. It is as if the author of the photographs wanted to make it clear to the viewer how much all the people represented

are really close to him and to each other, not in a relationship of subordination, of course, but in a bond based exclusively on esteem and recognition of the objective relevance of the role of each, fixed in the images in a peremptory way. And it is precisely here that the author’s amiable and at the same time acute gaze takes over. He wants to give each of us represented a peculiar nuance that enhances the subtlety of soul, the delicacy of feeling, the nobility of expression, the vigor of ideas, the friendliness of the face. Elements of hardness, of any harshness, disappear in these images of severity, which also well

▼Edmondo Cudic, Corrado Augias, 2020 ©









▲Edmondo Cudic, 2020 ©


exist in each of us, but they come to us blunted and redeemed by a kind and understanding gaze as well as by virtues even by human weaknesses.

There is, therefore, also a sort of constraint that the author makes to his own images, in order to homologate them in a continuous, elegant, benevolent flow, like a disenchanted Jupiter who holds everyone in his hand but for their good, for satisfaction. of those who stop to look at the photographs thinking of the person represented whom they immediately recognize, even if placed in a perceptually minimal distance but conceptually as distant, as the bearer of affection, quiet, calm and pleasure of the company, all the more regretted now, in this historical moment of forced separation and calculated distance. It is precisely the principle of *Æternal Rome* that these personalities express. Alongside great artists, we


have distinguished writers and critics, alongside leading politicians in national life we have organizers of culture and worldliness.

People who know how to be in this world and who, so politely represented by Paolo Ducci, can be a happy warning to push us to appreciate the very idea of living in good company in the simpler and more spontaneous world.

Claudio Strinati



# Throwback to #tbt





## A retrospective of the artistic events of the Ducci Foundation



# Gil Topaz: a German sculptor in Italy.

Retracing the artistic evolution of Gil Topaz from the 2000 exhibition organised in 2000 by the Ducci Foundation.

Always interested in art in all its expressions, since 2000 the Ducci Foundation has begun to deal more systematically with this sector, organizing exhibitions aimed at promoting artists with international origins and backgrounds. For this purpose, the Foundation's Art department curated the exhibition "Men" by the German sculptor Gil Topaz, held starting from July 15, 2000, at the Castello di Goro exhibition site in Montebenichi, as part of the presentation events of the "Encounters with European Culture in Tuscany". Born and raised in Lower Franconia, from 1989 to 2000 the artist lived in Italy

and studied sculpture at the State Academies of Fine Arts of Carrara and Rome, graduating with honors in Rome in 1994. Thanks to this type of training, the artist successfully incorporates in his poetics both the centuries-old Italian artistic tradition and that of his own German origins. This miscellaneous taste, always aimed at promoting different cultures and styles, is notoriously the cornerstone of the declaration of intent of the Foundation, which has rightly chosen to dedicate the first major art event to this promising artist. Discovering it in its formative years and launching it on the Italian and interna-



▼ Gil Topaz, Maria Gehrig ©



tional art scene. Until 1992, Gil Topaz was mainly involved in creating heads, producing a series of sculptures inspired by the Bildungsroman *Parzival*, written by the German poet Wolfram von Eschenbach. Through his work, the poet intended to promote a better inner humanity, embracing the ideals of courtesy, professed by the knights of the 1200s. The artist is interested in the human soul in the same way and translates this analysis into the production of faces, which inevitably allow the most hidden manifestations of man to shine through.

The first “Italian commission” of the artist dates back to 1995, by the Italian director Sergio Leone, for whom he produces a bronze portrait, for his mausoleum in Pratica di Mare, near Rome, also creating a second version in terracotta for the private collection of the Leone family. Anthropocentrism, a leitmotiv within Gil Topaz’s artistic production, clearly returns in the “Uomini” exhibition, where it is no longer exclusively the head that is proposed but the entire human body. The installation created, composed of statues characterized by a surreal and in a certain sense “eccentric” taste, which is often typical of contemporary art, establishes an unprecedented dialogue with the magnificent setting of the Castle of Goro, which from a medieval fortress becomes the realization of an imaginary, dreamlike, timeless place.



▲ Locandina della mostra di Gil Topaz “Uomini” organizzata dalla Fondazione Ducci ©



▼Galerie Am LindenPlatz ©



▲Galerie Am LindenPlatz ©

Regarding the artistic evolution of Gil Topaz, starting from 2002, it is possible to notice how the concrete figures have become thinner than at the beginning of his career, while the aggressive colors (such as the bright blue that characterized the statues of “Men”) have given way to earthy and brown tones. The presence on the Italian art scene continues and is expressed to the point that, in 2003, Topaz is compared to famous artists such as Giò Pomodoro, Francesco Somaini and Giacomo Manzù, selected for the “XXXIII Forme nel Verde” in San Quirico d’Orcia. After a brief return to Germany, since the mid-2000s the artist feels the strong lack of the art

scene in Italy, from which he feels extremely valued, and returns to the Bel Paese. Since 2011 he has lived alternately in Carrara and in Alsace, where the Swiss entrepreneur and patron Georges Frey has made a studio available to him. From 2004 to 2009 the sculptor mainly devoted himself to two major projects. The first was “The Resurrection” for the Suter Art Collection in Tuscany. After a fresco by Luca Signorelli in Roccatoderighi he staged 38 life-size concrete figures in a three-dimensional and contemporary interpretation. The comparison and examination of the ancient masters of the history of Italian art also found expression in his second major



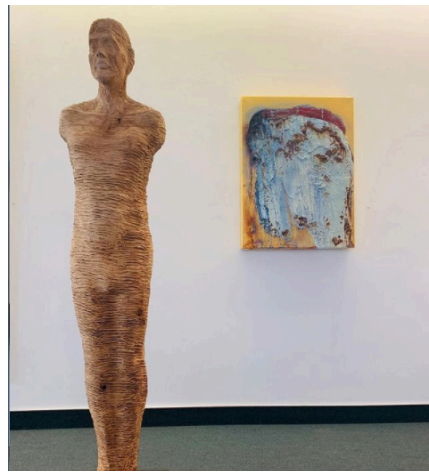
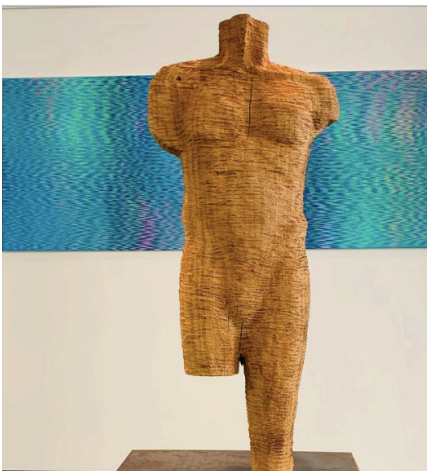




project. With "Streams of Thought" he made eight monumental natural stone heads up to twelve tons in the Mediterranean, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. The sculptor has always created the works on site, where they have

also been permanently installed. The artist's works are currently on display at the Lindenplatz Gallery in Vaduz, Lichtenstein.

▼ [Galerie\\_am\\_lindenplatz](#) Instagram account



#### CAREER (source: ArtFacts)

Gil Topaz's first exhibition was "Art Cologne 1996" at Koelnmesse GmbH in Cologne in 1996, and the last exhibition was "Gil Topaz at the Galerie am Lindenplatz", in 2020. Gil Topaz is mainly exhibited in Switzerland, but has also had exhibitions in Germany and Liechtenstein. Topaz has held two solo exhibitions and 5 group exhibitions in the last 24 years,

Topaz has also been in an art fair and in 3 biennials. The most important exhibition was "Topaz - Menschen" at the Galerie Barbara von Stechow in Frankfurt am Main in 2002. Other important exhibitions were at the Schweizerische Triennale della Scultura, Bad Ragaz und Vaduz in Bad Ragaz and at the Raab Galerie in Berlin. Gil Topaz has been exhibited with Daniel Spoerri and Pavel Schmidt.

Chiara Aluigi

# Contributors

## Paolo Ducci



He entered the diplomatic career at the age of 23, after having perfected his preparation by attending post-graduate courses in Italy and abroad, he has held positions in diplomatic offices in Europe, Latin America and Australia and in 2019 inaugurated a section of the Ducci Foundation in Fes. Founder and President of the “Francesco Paolo and Annamaria Ducci Foundation”, established in 1999, in memory of the cultural and social commitment of his parents, who in particular promoted exhibitions of young contemporary artists in the cultural salon of Via Fauro. Deep connoisseur of art, of which he is a passionate collector, of architecture and music, he has always cultivated his strong interest in photography.

His passion for contemporary art led him to establish close relationships with leading exponents of the art scene such as Jannis Kounellis, Mimmo Paladino, Pino Pinelli, Anselm Kiefer and many others and to cultivate close friendships with famous art critics, including which Achille Bonito Oliva and Claudio Strinati. As consul general of Italy in Cologne, he carried out a significant promotion of Italian contemporary art, organizing a major exhibition every year as an Italian contribution of Art Cologne.

## Claudio Strinati



Claudio Strinati is a famous historian and art curator. He directed the Roman museum complex from 1991 to 2009 and organized exhibitions both in Italy and abroad dedicated, among others, to Caravaggio, Raffello, Tiziano and Tiepolo. Appreciated popularizer of art history, he hosted some successful radio and television broadcasts, such as *Divini Devoti* (2014) on Rai5 in ten episodes. He is part of the Board of Directors of the National Galleries of Ancient Art of Palazzo Barberini and Corsini in Rome. He chairs the Society “Dialogues, narrating art” active since 2017.

He collaborates with the newspaper “La Repubblica” and with the monthly “Il Giornale dell’arte”. He is the official of merit of the Italian Republic and has received the Legion of honor of the French Republic, having carried out with merit for some years, between the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the 2000s, a conspicuous work of collaboration in exhibitions and cultural activities of considerable importance, especially at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris, under the aegis of the Senate of the French Republic.

### **Anna Coliva**



Anna Coliva studied at the Sapienza University of Rome with Giulio Carlo Argan, Angiola Maria Romanini, Maurizio Calvesi. At the same university she completed the School of Specialization in the History of Art. She won her first national public competition starting her career at the National Gallery of Parma. She has then held the position of Director of the Borghese Gallery since 1997; she is therefore the General Manager since 2015 and is considered the greatest expert of that Collection and of the Villa Borghese. Her activity as Director of the Borghese Gallery is recognized as completely original and based on international models, able to combine scientific study, research, conservation and dissemination activities, with enhancement and promotion activities and with a capillary involvement of business and financial realities, national and foreign, in the support and support of the Museum. During her Direction she made 14 major monographic exhibitions - including Bernini and Raffaello; 12 editions of Contemporary Commitments since 2006, an exhibition project that introduced contemporary art for the first time in an Italian state museum of ancient art. Her specialized studies concern in particular Roman and Emilian Mannerism and the seventeenth century. You have dedicated essays and monographic works to Bernini and Caravaggio, of which you are considered among the greatest experts.

### **Chiara Aluigi**



Her academic career takes place entirely in London, ranging from literature to history and the art market. With a solid background ranging from Old Masters to Modern and Contemporary Art, through an educational experience in South Korea she specializes in both traditional and minimalist art of the country. After the annual employment at the London office of the Assouline publishing house, she obtained a master's degree in Art Business at the Sotheby's Institute in London and then worked for a Swiss art investment fund. Currently, she is in charge of the direction of the Art Department of the Ducci Foundation, for which she created the art magazine you are reading.



### **Lucia Signore**



Graduated with honors in Art History at the La Sapienza University of Rome, she obtained a master's degree in "Management of cultural and creative industries" at the Management Academy Sida Group in Bologna. She is the author of various publications, some of which are the result of research projects in which she took part, at the La Sapienza University. In particular, the contributions published in the volumes *The Esquiline district of Rome, Readings, representations and practices of a polysemic urban space* and *The Art Collection of the Rome Foundation, Paintings, sculptures and graphics from the 15th to the 21st century* are included.

### **Arianna Paragallo**



Graduate in History of Art, Arianna studied and trained in the historical-artistic field between the La Sapienza University of Rome and the University of Leiden, Holland. She subsequently specialized in the field of management and enhancement of contemporary art, in particular in the field of costumer relation and branding management. You work as a Gallery Manager at the Roman branch of the Monitor gallery (Rome, Lisbon, Pereto).

### **Federica Ionta**



Federica lives and works in London, in the art and creative industries. You studied Architecture and Design in Italy and Media and Communications in London, focusing on issues related to art and entertainment, in both of your degree theses. Through her studies and work experience he has developed specialized knowledge in the fields of South Korean art and entertainment, marketing and graphic design. Her work experiences include the Victoria and Albert Museum, Korean Cultural Center UK and Han Collection, a gallery specializing in Korean art and antiques.

### **Olimpia Saccone**



Her academic experience, focused on art and economics, takes place between Rome, Venice and London. After earning a master's in Art Business at the Sotheby's Institute of Art, he further specializes in Communication for Cultural Heritage and then holds the role of business development manager for an emerging artists agency, dealing with partnerships with well-known commercial brands. Currently, she leads the Ashurst Emerging Artist Prize marketing team and is a member of The International Art Market Studies Association.

### **Jacopo di Lucchio**



The passion for art guides him towards the achievement of the First Level Academic Diploma at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts. He continues his training at the Catholic University of Milan where he obtained a Master's Degree in Economics and Management of Cultural Heritage. Deeply interested in modern and contemporary art and the dynamics of the art market, he follows and frequents this sector with interest. His professional experience includes collaborations with museums and auction houses.

### **Filippo Durante**



After a bachelor's degree in Literature and a master's degree in Art History at the Catholic University of Milan, he completed his academic career with a master's degree in Economics of Art and Cultural Heritage at the 24 Ore Business School and began his career. at the Milan branch of the Sotheby's auction house, dealing with evaluations and cataloging both for the Department of Modern and Contemporary Art and for that of Decorative Arts. Currently, he works as consultant for private clients and national auction houses.

### **Greta Meregalli**



Greta graduated in Economics of Cultural Heritage at the Catholic University of Milan. She then moved to London to attend the Master in Art Business at Sotheby's Institute of Art where she specialized in Emerging Markets and Photography. She has collaborated with collectors, auction houses and galleries to support the talent of young emerging photographers, expanding their network within the art world, guiding them to new opportunities through advisory sessions, organizing exhibitions and giving them a voice through publications. She has contributed articles to magazines such as Art & Law and Photo London Magazine.

### **Anindya Sen**



Originally from Calcutta (India), he completed his MBA from Delhi University in 2004. Over the course of his 15-year career, he has worked with ITC and Star TV, the largest FMCG and media companies in India respectively, in a managerial role in divisional management committees. Always passionate about art and culture, with particular consideration for the Italian one, he recently completed a Master in Art Business at the Sotheby's Institute of Art in London, writing a thesis on the potential uses of technology to transform visitor experiences.

### **Davide Silvioli**



Davide Silvioli, contemporary art critic and curator, has curated exhibitions in galleries, independent and institutional spaces. He has participated in projects promoted by Paratissima, CYLAND MediaArtLab, MAXXI Museum, Swiss Institute. He has lectured in Italy and abroad. His texts and research are published in catalogs, sector magazines, gallery editions and monographs. He is the curator of artist archives, contributor to specialized magazines and press offices. He collaborates with foundations, public museums, publishing houses and universities on research and curatorial projects.



**Yesenia Munoz**

Yesenia lives in London and is the co-Editor for this issue.

Originally from California, she holds a Bachelor's degree in Art History and a Master's degree in Art Business from Sotheby's Institute of Art, London. Her background in Latin America as well as her academic background in art history and professional experience in finance, has permitted her to explore art within a broader geopolitical context to get a better understanding of emerging art markets outside the current art world's framework.



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