

# Art Quadriennale 2020

**FUORI**

curated by Sarah Cosulich and Stefano Collicelli Cagol

Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni

30 October 2020

17 January 2021

## EXHIBITION PATH

(by Sarah Cosulich and Stefano Collicelli Cagol)

The 2020 Art Quadriennale begins with the works of **Cinzia Ruggeri**, which introduce to the visitor the multidisciplinary and intergenerational nature of the exhibition, but also the important presence of women in it. Artist, fashion designer and product designer, Ruggeri reinterprets the products and icons of “made in Italy” with sarcasm and inventiveness. Through clothes, objects and artworks, she disrupts artistic traditions and cultural imagery with a glam and post-punk attitude, pointing towards an all-female way that unwinds along the main axis of Palazzo delle Esposizioni.

**Irma Blank**'s work, *Blue Carnac*, composed of her *Radical Writings* and originally presented in 1992 at the PAC in Milan, inhabits the room historically dedicated to sculpture in the first editions of the Quadriennale. The paintings underline an idea of control, gestural writing and the body that are inherent in the artist's *modus operandi*.

In the centre, the bakelite circuit by **Micol Assaël**, on which small groups of white marble dice are scattered, conveys a mental landscape, a way in which the artist implicitly confronts the uncontrollable, invisible and opposite forces of nature and investigates their potential connections. In a room built specifically for this

purpose, **Lorenza Longhi** intervenes on the architecture, commenting on its magniloquence as well as on its display signs and features. She does so by disguising, contaminating and partially concealing the architectural symbols of representation to reveal the logic of power they contain.

At the end of this trajectory, **Isabella Costabile**'s sculptures, made up of discarded elements and supported by fragile balances, populate an indefinite space-time dimension, transmitting throughout the exhibition energies and narratives which seem to come from different planets.

The work dialogues with *Erotismo e autoritarismo a Staglieno* (Eroticism and Authoritarianism at Staglieno), the series of photographs taken in the 1960s by **Lisetta Carmi** in the Staglieno cemetery in Genoa, and corresponding to one of the most relevant works in her artistic production. Funerary monuments from the late nineteenth century are observed and dissected by Carmi's lens to underline the celebration of patriarchy and the reduction of the female body to an object of desire, even in funerary representation.

The new set up of *Respiro* (Breath) from 1968-'69 by **Cloti Ricciardi**, originally created for the spaces of a Roman theatre, places the relationship between body and architecture in the centre of the exhibition, while also quoting the notion of *pneuma*, a problematic theme in recent months. At the same time, the fabrics pulled by the visitors seem

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to liquefy the white walls of a white cube, that neutral, regulated space that has imposed itself as the privileged way of exhibiting artworks in the 20th century.

**Nanda Vigo**'s works are authentic devices that expose the senses to alternative space-time dimensions – different from the ones we perceive daily – testifying to the artist's search for parallel universes and to the exhibition's wish to open up to unthinkable and immeasurable imageries.

Vigo's attraction for design is declined in a more 'domestic' version by **Alessandro Agudio**, who transforms tools used by climbers into sculptures that evoke the shapes of erotic games. **Cuoghi Corsello**'s experience as street writers intertwines with that of painting in their long roll of dark carpeting which reveals a magic sequence of images, as in a sort of gigantic photographic roll. The black background re-emerges in the film *Monelle* by **Diego Marcon** shot in Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del fascio in Como, where intermittent flashes of light reveal indolent girls being threatened by adult figures created by the artist in CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery). The unconscious of the Palazzo delle Esposizioni and of the Quadriennale, both strongly marked by the history of the 1930s, transpires here as in several other works displayed in the exhibition. The itinerary continues with **Monica Bonvicini**'s drawings inspired by Puccini's *Turandot* and with two of her sculptures that bear witness to her desire to break with patriarchal society and its cages. The same strength is present in the video *No Man Heads*, where the white cube is destroyed once and for all and sculptural shapes emerge from the performance held in space by men in ties.

**Bruna Esposito**'s drawings for utopian public toilets that do not use potable water are exhibited for the first time in an institutional context. Created in Berlin at the end of the 1980s and on the occasion of her participation in the Istanbul Biennial in early 2000s, they convey the urgency of conceiving

alternative solutions for the sustainability of the planet.

The first part of the itinerary ends with the series *Il parto* (The Birth) by **Lisetta Carmi**, where the eternal circuit of generation, with its crude corporality, takes the visitor – through Assaël and Blank – back to **Lydia Silvestri**'s room. In **Silvestri**'s research, male and female bodies, phalluses, navels, buttocks and breasts merge through abstraction, in a radical rethinking of the statuary tradition as the artistic means by excellence that defined for centuries the representation of gender and sexuality. In the next room, for the first time at the Quadriennale, an 'exhibition within the exhibition' constitutes the work: a group show curated by the collective of non-binary voices **TOMBOYS DON'T CRY**, with works and materials that reflect on the transformations of bodies, with particular attention to the theme of the tear.

The community dimension is also present in **Chiara Camoni**'s approach. She creates works in collaboration with others, in a sort of sisterhood, generating so-called pre-existing forms through the use of natural elements of such as soil or fluids of plants and flowers. A demiurgic, almost magical, dimension is evoked by the ceramic letters that make up the slogan *We Are The Granddaughters of the Witches You Were Never Able to Burn* – presented each time in different ways by **Raffaella Naldi Rossano** – and emerges also in the triptych by painter **Diego Gualandris**. The artist paints following the traces left by his own life on the canvas, reinterpreting the iconographic tradition of the Garden of Eden in a diabolic key which liberates art seductive power.

**Giulia Crispiani** also makes herself a spokesperson of this very power, as she responds to the limitations of quarantine. By creating a choral project that leads in and out of the Palazzo, she proposes a call to an erotic avant-garde, capable of transforming language and its traditional systems of thought.

**Michele Rizzo**'s sculptures, resting on palanquins, reflect on the condition of trance of the raver's body after

a performance. The works are brought inside the building through a procession apparently inspired by the religious ones of the Italian south, as if to question the sacred role of the museum in relation to the spiritual and introspective aspiration of dance.

The exhibition path continues along the first corridor accompanied by **Giuseppe Chiari's** *statements*, a conceptual work that reflects on the value of art and how it is perceived. Approaching the staircase leading to the second floor the visitor encounters **Petrit Halilaj and Alvaro Urbano** bouquet of giant flowers, a project that reveals the two artists' love story: the lily offered on the occasion of the marriage proposal, the forget-me-nots and the quince flowers, as gifts shared during the quarantine. They are a celebration of love in all its forms and of a new way of being a family beyond the limits of identity and national recognition.

**Francesco Gennari, Simone Forti** and **Benni Bosetto** investigate the body's animal nature in different ways. **Gennari** with photographic and sculptural self-portraits that evaporate his subjectivity. He employs different alchemical materials that reveal his demiurge spirit and the deeply seductive power of the created images.

**Forti**, an exponent of the post-war neo-avant-garde, has continued her research as an artist, choreographer and dancer reflecting on postures and gestures that free the body from its usual constraints. She fled Italy due to the passing of racial laws in 1938, moving with her family first to Switzerland and then to the USA. At the end of the Sixties her presence to Rome was decisive for her research while it also built a bridge with American artists by means of events she introduced at Fabio Sargentini's L'Attico gallery.

**Bosetto** immerses visitors in a room where sounds and noises inspired by the artist's past and future lives interpenetrate with the drawings, matter, dust, organic and inorganic elements. Hers is a continuous passage between different material states inspired by quantum physics.

Two non-windows by **Giuseppe Gabellone**, created through a long process of working with surfaces, open up onto abstract imageries, to decorative phytomorphic and architectural signs that evoke ancient civilisations.

The relationship between the former African colonies and Italy is investigated by **DAARs - Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti**, who propose the creation of an Italian decolonization unit starting from the appointment of Asmara as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, for its rationalist buildings dating back to the Fascist era and coeval with the establishment of eight villages in Sicily that are uninhabited today. In the next room, **Caterina De Nicola** uses the musical technique of mash-ups to blend elements from different fields which, while remaining recognizable, give life to de-functional objects, such as frames with pornographic stories or flowers shaped by a coat hanger. An atmosphere of destabilising ambiguity permeates an installation composed of sculptures and projections by **Tomaso De Luca**, who proposes a grammatical analysis of the space of power, from modernist pavilions to prefabricated buildings, reflecting on the structuring and maintenance of privilege and social inequalities present in architecture.

**Luisa Lambri's** photographs investigate Lucio Fontana's cuts as well as the openings in Marcel Breuer and Oskar Schindler's architecture with a sensitivity that is highly attentive to light and to the display of the works themselves, which in their turn shape unique immersive spaces around them.

Also the film *Pays Barbare* by **Yervant Gianikian and Angela Ricci Lucchi** questions the context in which modernism flourished. The film investigates the relationship with Italy's former African colonies in the 1930s through the manipulation of frames from archival film footage. The re-enchantment of the world proposed in **Salvo's** psychedelic canvases seems to respond to this plunge into history. They accompany visitors along the gallery on a

spectacular and conceptual journey into painting.

The light in his works dialogues in a unique way with **Daide Stucchi's** light sculptures which confront the magniloquent spaces of the Palazzo through anthropomorphic and domestic references or by suggesting imaginary furtive encounters.

**Zapruder Filmmakersgroup's** film recounts the twelve labours of Hercules and updates the genre of peplum cinema which was in vogue at Cinecittà after World War II providing an unusual image of the Italian province. Walking down the second staircase, **Amedeo Polazzo's** mural delicately updates the tradition of this artistic medium which was in vogue in Italy in the first half of the twentieth century yet – through an iconography of temporary and coercive structures, metal fences, walls, gratings – overturns its propagandistic assumptions about the ennoblement of work in human life. Downstairs, the last section of the exhibition opens up to approaches that interpret painting in a broader sense, transcending the boundaries of this medium.

**Valerio Nicolai** creates a giant strawberry inside which – during the opening days of the exhibition – a pirate silently observes the visitors exhibition; through ceramic tiles and sculptures, **Alessandro Pessoli's** *pictorial commedia* dell'arte reflects on Italian politics of the '90s and 2000s. **Sylvano Bussotti's** homoerotic drawings, collages and paintings, together with stage costumes and scores, reveal his historical and artistic apprenticeship and the influence of painting and miniature art in his oeuvre. With unbalanced and inclined postures, **Guglielmo Castelli's** sinuous and melancholic creatures occupy the pictorial space as on a stage rich with details. **Romeo Castellucci - Societas** reassembles elements taken from two different moments of his theatrical research, underlining the influence that visual arts had in his path of questioning stage space and language.

In the next room, **Maurizio Vetrugno's** rutilant glam conceptualism is

exemplified by a selection of embroidered portraits of fashion and music icons, as well as of people close to him. For the first time he exhibits them together with his collections of 18th-century Chinese glass and jewellery produced for high fashion houses. The room highlights the artist's casting methodology, as well as his voracious need to collect and select fragments of beauty from reality, as fleeting as fashion or youth.

The exhibition path ends in the second corridor where, before reaching the exit, a series of wigs used for drag shows whirl around in vigorous movement. The work is a screenless animation, the research focus of artist and videomaker **Anna Franceschini**, who investigates display, mechanical prostheses and the history of movement in the pre-cinema era.

**FUORI** continues from dusk to dawn outside the exhibition venue: artist **Norma Jeane** modified the lighting system of the building's archway so that it responds to her breathing, measured by a special device capable of collecting data even while a person is moving. For the entire duration of the exhibition the intensity of the lighting in the arch will be determined in real time by the artist's breathing pace, thus creating a connection between the building and the city, the architectural body and the human and digital body.