

ABSTRACTS AND AUTHORS

ENGLISH ANNEX

EDITORIAL

Eva di Stefano

The issue is devoted to a large extent to the rediscovery of mediumistic art, its role in surrealist poetics and its presence in Dubuffet's collection: in addition to the best-known artists, less well known female protagonists are illustrated, down to the amazing and till now unpublished Marta Orecchioni. There are also new discoveries in the other sections of the journal: the radiant pictorial irony of Giovanni Piazza, the cosmic message of the Sicilian ex-blacksmith Franco Cassarà, the graphic ideality of Costante Pezzani, a new documentary film on Filippo Bentivegna and an interesting contribution to the history of art brut that discloses the intense relationships between Dubuffet and the Cuban artists.

Eva di Stefano taught *History of Contemporary Art* at the University of Palermo from 1992 to 2013, and in 2008 she founded the 'Osservatorio Outsider Art' that she directs together with the journal of the same name

DOSSIER - MEDIUMISTIC ART

Eva di Stefano

Voices and faces of elsewhere

Going over the recent London exhibition *The medium's medium* (The Gallery of Everything), the text ponders on the analogies between mediumistic activity and the concept of artistic inspiration, continuing with some reflections on the history and context of European spiritism from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1950s; on the role of mediumistic art in the vicissitudes of the artistic avant-garde and in the birth of abstract art; on contemporary interpretations of the phenomenon and on the possible present-day reasons for the renewed socio-cultural interest in the creations of medium artists.

Turhan Demirel

When the spirit leads the hand

What do we mean by mediumistic art? This is an easy-to-read introduction to the topic, followed by some famous examples like Madge Gill and Heinrich Nüsslein and by a repertoire of the main medium artists from 1876 to the present. The author also traces the general outlines of a history of its aesthetic reception: from the psychologists Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862-1929) with his researches on "hidden aesthetics", and Théodore Flournoy (1854-1921), the author of the famous monograph *Des Indes à la planète Mars* (From India to the planet Mars), published in 1900 and devoted to the medium Hélène Smith, to the appreciation by Breton and surrealism, down to its integration in Jean Dubuffet's universe of Art Brut.

Turhan Demirel was born in Turkey and lives in Wuppertal. A neurosurgeon, he is one of the most passionate collectors of Outsider Art in Germany, and he seeks to promote it through conferences, publications, and exhibitions.

Alba Romano Pace

"Entrée des médiums" into the surrealism of André Breton

This is an in-depth essay on the cultural origins of Breton's fascination with mediums and on its role in the genesis of surrealism, underlining the secular vision,

which excludes all external intervention of spirits. In the surrealist practice of the trance mediumistic automatism indeed becomes psychic automatism, free and unconditional stream of unconsciousness at the basis of poetic writing experiments, and in painting an inspiration for internal landscapes that veer towards free abstract art. At all events, Breton was very much fascinated by the enigma of spiritualist drawing artists like Lesage and Crépin, and in *Nadja* (1928) chose to set alongside his protagonist, almost overlapping her, the famous medium Hélène Smith.

Alba Romano Pace, a PhD in History of Art at the University of Paris 1-Sorbonne, an expert on surrealism (among her publications is 'Jacqueline Lamb'a, Gallimard 2010), and a curator of contemporary art exhibitions, currently teaches at the Fine Arts Academy in Palermo.

Lucienne Peiry

Dubuffet and spiritistic works. Lesage, Crépin, Simon

The theme of the essay is the centrality of mediumistic art in the collection of the founder of Art Brut and his research in French spiritist environments. As long ago as 1948 Dubuffet purchased and displayed the works of Fleury Joseph Crépin, but his investigation was to become really methodical in the first half of the 1960s, above all regarding Augustin Lesage: Dubuffet recognized how exceptional this artist was and also succeeded in purchasing his first big enigmatic canvas; he also collected abundant documentation. The present text, already in the catalogue of the exhibition on Lesage, Crépin, Simon (LaM, Lille 2019), is republished here by kind concession of the museum.

Lucienne Peiry is an international expert on Art Brut who directed the museum *Collection de l'Art Brut in Lausanne* from 2001 to 2011. She currently teaches at the University of Lausanne. Among her several books, the essential *L'Art Brut* (Flammarion, Paris, 1997) has been translated into many languages – including Chinese – and an extended and updated version edition was published in 2016.

Pilar Bonet Julve

Of the occult and the marvellous: Jane Ruffié, Margarethe Held and Gertrude Honzatko-Mediz

The presentation of the three artists, different from one another in graphic style but united by a common spiritistic leaning, is preceded by an interesting historical introduction to spiritist culture and its relationships with modernism and positivistic science. Its ideal, libertarian and utopian scope is underlined, which in the case of the women also becomes a tool of emancipation and a demand for subjectivity. This is a social dimension that, starting from 1930, was to be rejected and turned into para-science, parapsychology or pure superstition and ignorance secluded in clandestinity, while today the rediscovery of it – in our anxious reality – opens up new interpretations.

Pilar Bonet Julve, an art historian, teaches at the University of Barcelona and deals with texts, drawings and embroideries by European women born before 1918 and connected to visionary spiritism and healing; she curated the exhibition *ALMA. Médiums y Visionarias*, Museum Es Baluard de Palma, 2019; she belongs to the Visionary Women Research Group and is the president of the *Asociación Josefa Tolrà* (www.josefatolra.org).

Pavel Konečný

Cecilie Marková: "Painting is a rite understandable only to me myself"

In the past century spiritism and spiritualism strongly connoted the culture of the Czech Republic. In this context the refined mediumistic art of Cecilie Marková (1911-1997) developed with her elegant astral inflorescences and diluvial landscapes. The article is a personal testimony by a person that met and for a long time frequented, with friendship and admiration, the reserved painter, who showed her works, but preferred to keep silent on their spiritistic character, entrusting it to the secret of her diaries.

Pavel Konečný has been a scholar and a collector of Outsider and Folk Art of Eastern Europe since the 1970s. He curates exhibitions and edits publications that often focus on those Italian talents he has enthusiastically discovered. For many years, he has also organized the international Art Brut Film festival in Olomouc (Czech Republic), where he lives.

Daniela Rosi

The celestial people of Maria Orecchioni

This is about the case, set in the scenario of rural Sardinia and till now unknown, of a mother that suddenly became a 'painter of souls'. She sees around herself, even on rose petals, hundreds of faces that urgently ask to be drawn precisely by her, though she knows nothing of pens and pencils. She invented her own method, dipping dusters and other household cloths in blessed rosewater, and edging with felt-tip pens the stains that are thus formed. As if by magic, the pieces of cloth are filled with crowds of faces but also with numbers and mysterious writings, and little by little also with colour. The feeling of the sacred permeates these works that the creatress accompanies with her prayers.

Daniela Rosi, a curator of outsider art and contemporary art, teaches at the Fine Arts Academy in Verona; after studies in the field and active experiences on artistic practices in 'care places', in 2014 she founded LAO, which she now directs; it is a project for research on, support for and promotion of outsider artists.

EXPLORATIONS

Alfonso Leto

Giovanni Piazza/TOM and the saving ark

A new Sicilian discovery, Giovanni Piazza (born 1968) lives almost like a foreigner in the small village of Santo Stefano di Quisquina, his birthplace, to which he returned as an adult after growing up in Germany with his emigrant parents. Self-taught and a recluse in his garage-studio, he devotes his days to doing paintings with a fable-like and ironic character. They are populated by small animals and a crowd of characters, among them Tom (acronym of The Other Man), an outline shape that represents his alter ego. Despite some figurative reminiscences going from Picasso to Thierry Noir, probably due to his activity in Germany as a stagecraft worker for a theatrical group, the disinterested attitude of the artist, who constantly paints for himself, corresponds to the profile of an irregular and clandestine figure (till now) in art.

Alfonso Leto, one of the main contemporary Sicilian artists, integrates and combines painterly virtuosity with other materials and objects, provoking a conceptual short-circuit; also a water diviner of border talents, he lives at Santo Stefano di Quisquina (Agrigento province), where he teaches at middle school.

Valentina Di Miceli

The universe is a moving merry-go-round. Frank Cassarà the 'artificer'

Born Alcamo in 1930, Cassarà, a clever iron craftsman, discovered at a late age how to put his craft at the service of creative thought. His is an artistic vocation that matured in the work of reconstruction of the village of Gibellina, destroyed by the 1968 earthquake, and in the meeting with the famous sculptor Pietro Consagra: for the latter he materially realized the project for the gates of the new cemetery. Afterwards he began to create for himself mechanisms and big kinetic sculptures devoted to the harmony of the cosmos, the cyclicism of time, and the order of nature in its infinite combinations.

Valentina Di Miceli, an art critic, journalist and publicist, is the editor in charge of the journal "Osservatorio Outsider Art."

Cristiano Ferrarese

The ideal world of Costante Pezzani

This is the story of marginalized and suffering man in the context of a small town, Sabbioneta, a jewel of Italian Renaissance architecture, which becomes a temporal and spatial archetype in his drawings. For Pezzani (1910-1987), who danced with dolls and used a hospital stretcher as a worktop, drawing is cathartic: his town is the place of harmony and grace, the place where pain doesn't exist, the stage of a fable out of time. The Hassbecker couple appreciated these works, and collected 400 of them: today they can be viewed at the Haus Caieth Museum in Heidelberg.

Cristiano Ferrarese, a writer from Liguria, has had various work experiences, and since 2015 has lived and worked in Bristol; he has published four novels and various literary translations from English and has curated some exhibitions.

Lucienne Peiry

Art Brut. The mysterious strength of the late vocations

The third and fourth ages are particularly creative in the field of Art Brut, as is also demonstrated by the stories of some of the artists presented in this issue. The author, recounting the works and method of Gaston Teuscher, Hans Krüsi and Eugenio Santoro, who work in Switzerland, reflects on the ability of older people to connect up with childhood fancy and to create a parallel imaginary universe with makeshift means. The striking rise of these late vocations can be seen as a reaction to the indifference, and even contempt, that contemporary western society shows towards elderly people.

IN-DEPTH

Andrea Dal Lago

Dubuffet and Cuba: a story of art and friendship

Beginning from the 1950s, Jean Dubuffet followed with great interest the emerging

artistic reality in Cuba through an epistolary relationship with the writer and artist Samuel Feijòo, a versatile scholar studying Cuban popular culture. The essay reconstructs and documents the collaboration of the French artist, through texts and drawings, with the magazines created and edited by Feijòo, around whom there formed a group of irregular artists similar to Art Brut, who were to be collectively displayed in 1983 in the Collection de the Art Brut. An unpublished message of 1968 from Dubuffet to Fidel Castro enriches the documentation.

***Andrea Dal Lago**, a great bibliophile and an adventurous globetrotting researcher, from 1990 to 2001 managed the Derbylius Gallery, which he himself founded in Milan. In 2002 he moved to Camogli, where he manages the Caficute gallery and since 2015 together with his children has watched over the Cibarte 2.0 Gallery.*

Gabriele Mina

Heads on film. A film on the “Castello incantato” of Filippo Bentivegna

The recovery of another documentary film enriches the already ample documentation related to the Castello incantato of Sciacca and to the thousand of heads that Filippo Bentivegna carved there. It deals with a 16-mm film from 1958 that stages a sort of *fabula* with a child going through the garden and silently conversing with the stone characters. The person that recovered the film and wrote the article reconstructs the story, at the origin of the film, of the self-taught camerawoman and photographer Marcella Pedone, who, on the basis of an agreement with the Ferrania firm, made a rhapsodic and fragmentary documentary about a trip in Italy in the 1950s.

***Gabriele Mina**, an anthropologist, lives in Savona; he created the online and in-progress archive ‘Constructors of Babel’, devoted to video and photographic documentation regarding irregular environments in Italy, some of which are already present in his pioneering volume (Eléuthera 2011).*

Traduzione di Denis Gailor