

CHAPTER 2

THE BEGINNINGS

I T A Le origini sono spesso un territorio dominato dal caos, dove realtà e immaginazione si mescolano. La memoria non sempre segue un criterio fedelmente cronologico. In questa sezione si è quindi voluto dare espressione ai momenti fondativi dello spazio di Viafarini, step di per se stessi nebulosi poiché risposte a esigenze del momento; a necessità, non del caso, ma della *Situazione Italia* che ancora poco, se non del tutto, conosceva l'importanza e la dicitura di nonprofit. E ancora: si è cercato, in modo variegato, di raccogliere documenti e testimonianze iconografiche delle persone che hanno contribuito a definire l'identità dello spazio. Al di là dell'iniziale cronistoria di Patrizia Brusarosco, fondatrice e animatrice di Viafarini da sempre, sono stati selezionati gli estratti più significativi della prima rassegna stampa attraverso cui contestualizzare la ricezione dello spazio. Sono state raccolte le documentazioni dei primi due progetti espositivi e dei loro protagonisti, attraverso cui lo spazio si è connotato al pubblico e ha fidelizzato un'audience inedita unitamente a un grande numero di artisti che hanno aderito con entusiasmo. I primi dibattiti, i primi manifesti, i primi animatori... le prime avventure congiuntamente alle prime divagazioni, tutto datato inizio anni novanta.

E N G Origins are often dominated by chaos, where reality and imagination merge. Memory is not always faithful to a chronological criterion. This section presents the founding moments of Viafarini – nebulous steps in as much as they were a response to the needs of a particular moment, not of mere chance. In other words, it was a reaction to the *Italian Situation*, which knew little, if anything at all, of the importance and wording of the term nonprofit. In time, we have gathered varied documentation and iconographic testimonies of those who have contributed towards defining the space's identity. Besides the chronological account by Patrizia Brusarosco, founder and driving force of Viafarini, we have selected the most significant extracts from the first press-clippings to get a sense of the initial response to the exhibition space. We have also gathered documentation on the first two exhibition projects and their participants, which interacted with its public and inspired commitment amongst the new audience, along with a great number of artists who adhered with enthusiasm. The first debates, the first manifestos, the first animators... The first adventures along with the first digressions, all date back to the early nineties.

ITA PATRIZIA BRUSAROSCO All'“epoca” ero stata folgorata dai musei americani, e non solo: c'erano gli spazi non profit, in particolare Artists Space e White Columns, che mi avevano affascinato per il carattere strutturato e nello stesso tempo dinamico e flessibile della loro organizzazione. Anche a me interessava un'organizzazione del lavoro più corale rispetto a quella della galleria. Ritenendo deprimente la situazione dell'arte contemporanea nel mio Paese - opinione che purtroppo conservo tuttora, volevo fare qualcosa per... l'Italia. Avevo soprattutto una certa idea per così dire “anni settanta” del mondo dell'arte, desueta all'inizio degli anni novanta ma proprio per ciò efficace. Mi sono trovata, per caso e per empatia, amica di qualche artista e assieme abbiamo cominciato a pensare un luogo nuovo per l'arte per Milano; presto mi si sono affiancati i critici più seri di allora, e, poiché probabilmente sono una buona mediatrice, non ho dovuto fare altro che la sintesi fra i suggerimenti di molti. Quando si vuole ascoltare, i consigli sono abbondanti, sinceri e utili.

Ricordo un incontro alla galleria di design Dilmos, accolti da Lella Valtorta, una sessantina di artisti, la più parte oggi noti e stimati, a pensare a cosa doveva essere il nuovo spazio: forse ora certe situazioni potrebbero ripetersi, c'è una nuova energia fra i protagonisti, ma ci sono voluti vent'anni! All'inizio degli anni novanta per Milano si voleva banalmente uno “spazio espositivo” ricettivo alla ricerca, una project

room, un luogo adatto a installazioni site specific; si voleva un luogo in cui incontrarsi, “connettersi” e segnalarsi anche rispetto al resto del mondo. Gli artisti miei coetanei erano convinti di volersi impegnare in prima persona per emergere, attivando rapporti artista-artista; erano anche convinti di non avere tante possibilità nel nostro Paese; i curatori erano convinti che vi fosse bisogno di una “voce critica” capace di chiarire il senso del lavoro di una nuova generazione; i galleristi volevano dimostrare di poter diventare più internazionali della generazione precedente. Io pensavo che quello che mancava fosse un metodo di lavoro e mi veniva spontaneo cercare di “fare sistema”, come si usa dire ora. Soprattutto mi sono trovata a dare fiducia a tante persone che mi hanno ricambiato con la fiducia.

Con Maurizio Cattelan si pensava di aprire Viafarini con *Fondazione Oblomov*, un progetto che prevedeva l'assegnazione di una borsa di studio a un artista che si impegnasse a non fare mostre per un anno. Maurizio ha pensato di assegnare la borsa a se stesso e di presentare il lavoro all'Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, mentre è parso più congeniale inaugurare Viafarini con il progetto di fondazione dell'Archivio elaborato da due artiste, Laurie Palmer e Federica Thiene.

Subito dopo è seguito Membership Viafarini dove 80 artisti hanno donato altrettante opere-manifesto che dichiaravano ciò che Viafarini sarebbe dovuto essere. Così è cominciata l'attività espo-

sitiva, programmata all'inizio tramite le segnalazioni degli stessi artisti, con molti dei quali ancora si collabora. Quasi subito però ho preferito affidare la programmazione a curatori esterni e mi sono avvalsa della consulenza di coloro che rappresentavano la generazione critica di allora. Si è creato una specie di comitato scientifico informale, che negli anni avrebbe coinvolto le voci più rappresentative del panorama critico italiano dell'ultimo ventennio.

Nel frattempo un giorno un gallerista mi ha consigliato di andare a visitare Careof, spazio artistico che operava a Cusano Milanino già dal 1987 con finalità simili, poiché costruiva la propria programmazione grazie ad un attento ascolto del panorama artistico non ancora rappresentato dalle gallerie, e ho conosciuto Zeffirina Castoldi e Mario Gorni che sarebbero diventati di lì a poco i miei non-partner.

CHAPT # 2 - THE BEGINNINGS

ENG PATRIZIA BRUSAROSCO At the time I was struck by American museums, as well as non-profit organizations such as Artists Space and White Columns. I was fascinated by the structured yet also dynamic and flexible features within their organisation. I, too, was interested in a more collective approach to work than that of a gallery. Since I considered the contemporary art scene in my country rather dismal, which unfortunately is still the case, I had the urge to do something for... Italy. Above all, I had a certain idea of the artworld, let's say "from the seventies", that was outdated in the early nineties and as a result efficacious. I found myself by chance and out of empathy befriending some artists and so together we began to think about a new place for Milan. I was soon after supported by noted art critics, and since I am probably a good mediator, I only had to make a synthesis of many suggestions. When one is willing to listen, advice is abundant, sincere and useful.

I recall a meeting at design gallery Dilmos, hosted by Lella Valtorta, with about sixty artists, most of whom are nowadays well regarded, in search of what was meant to be the new space. Perhaps certain situations could now repeat themselves since there is a new energy amongst the protagonists, but it has taken twenty years! In the early nineties in Milan we simply wanted an "exhibition space" which was apt for site-specific installations, where one could meet, "connect", and be singled out to

the rest of the world. The artists from my generation were convinced that in order to emerge, they had to commit in first person by establishing a rapport with other artists, since they did not believe they had many possibilities in our country. Curators were convinced that a "critical voice" was necessary to give meaning to a new generation, and gallery owners were keen to prove that they were more international than the previous generation. I thought that a work methodology was missing, and spontaneously sought "system-building", as is often said nowadays. Above all, I found myself trusting many people who in turn trusted me.



FIG 1

With Maurizio Cattelan we planned to open Viafarini with *Fondazione Oblomov*, a project that granted a scholarship to an artist if he made the one-year commitment not to exhibit. Maurizio granted himself the scholarship and subsequently presented his work at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera. Meanwhile, and seemingly more congenial, Viafarini was inaugurated with the exhibition of the Archive's foundation project by two artists, Laurie Palmer and Federica Thiene.

Immediately, Membership Via-

farini followed, where eighty artists donated eighty artwork-manifestos stating what Viafarini should have been. And so the exhibitions began, programmed since the beginning through the artists themselves, many of which are still collaborating with us. However, it was not long before I realised that it was better to entrust the projects to external curators, and so I began consulting with the new generation of art critics of the Nineties. A sort of informal scientific committee was created, which in time would involve the most prominent voices of Italian critics in the last twenty years.

In the meanwhile, a gallery owner advised me to visit Careof, an artist space active near Milano since 1987 with similar aims, which based its projects on an awareness of the artistic scene that was not yet represented in galleries. And so I met Zeffirina Castoldi and Mario Gorni, who have since then become my non-partners.

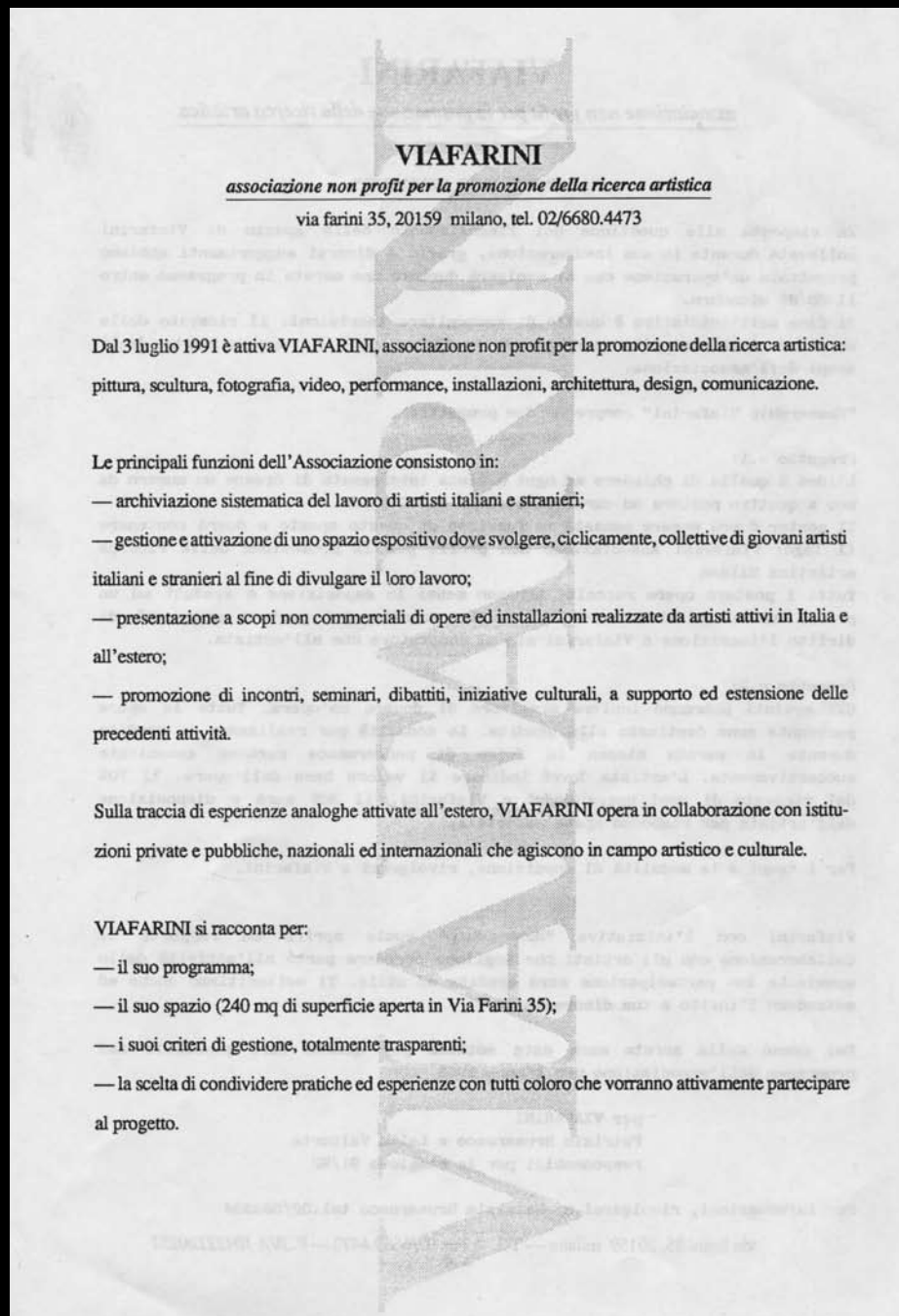
FIG 1

Maurizio Cattelan, Fondazione Oblomov, 1992, sand-blasted engraved glass, 100

x 100 x 3 cm

Una lapide commemorativa - con il nome di 100 persone che hanno dato ciascuna 100.000 lire per costituire il fondo di una borsa di studio - è stata appesa abusivamente alle pareti dell'Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera. La borsa era destinata ad un giovane artista a patto che non facesse mostre per un anno.

A commemorative plaque, with the names of the 100 people who each gave the artist 100.000 lire to realize a scholarship fund, was illegally hung on the walls of the Brera Art Academy. The scholarship was intended for a young artist, one-year committed not to exhibit.



F I G 2

F I G 2

Viafarini's mission in the first press release

The mission focuses on three fundamental aspects: to facilitate the debut of young Italian artists in the contemporary art world, as first step towards their professional growth and the consequent interest in curators, art critics and museum professionals; to foster young artists' mobility and to support them in raising funds, as conditions to forward their careers, also at international level; to widen the public interest in contemporary art through exhibitions, as well as educational and training activities.

In detail, Viafarini's goals are:

_ to create a place for information and serv-

ices about contemporary visual arts, including an exhibition space to offer young artists opportunities to exhibit their work in solo or group shows, as well as to produce projects by internationally known artists, giving the Milanese public the chance to get to know the main protagonists of the international art scene; as well as documentation services on visual arts, such as the Artists Archive, in order to offer means of information and documentation for the public with easy access to the materials;

_ to offer a variety of orientation and consulting services, as well as educational and training activities;

_ to promote an art organisation and exhibition space favouring exchange in the field of

visual arts, also at international level;

_ to start a non profit organisational model new to Italy;

_ to support the artistic message as a potential innovator in contemporary society.

CHAPT # 2 - THE BEGINNINGS

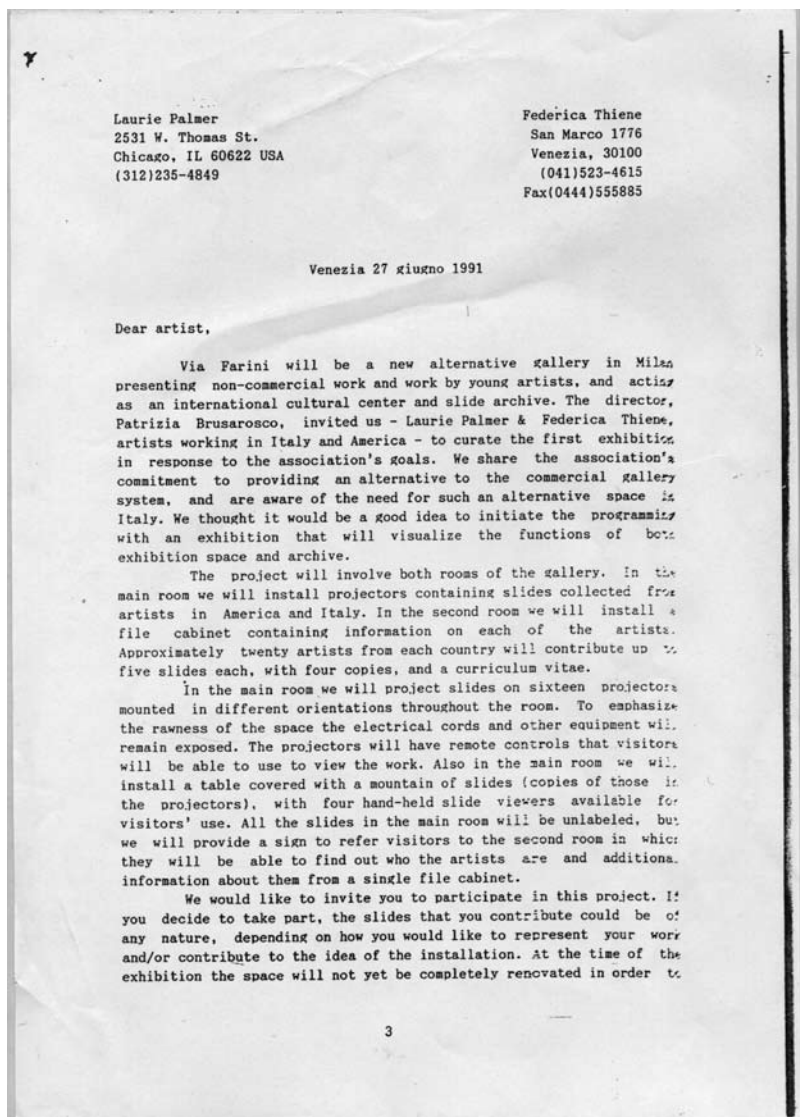


FIG 3

FIG 3 - 4 *Immagini proiettate*, 1991, curated by artists Laurie Palmer and Federica Thiene; with artists Mario Airò, Ivo Bonacorsi, Mary Brogger, Michael Burns, Mary Ellen Carroll, Paul Chidester, Gianluca Codeghini, Daniela De Lorenzo, Stefano Dugnani, David Dunlap, Jeanne Dunning, Susan Eder, Emilio Fantin, Andrea Fogli, Laurel Fredrickson, Bernardo Giorgi, Kate Glaser, Hossein Golba, Mitchell Kane, Massimo Kaufmann and McManus, Dimitris Kozaris, Jin Lee, Marcello Maloberti, Eva Marisaldi, Liliana Moro, Jennifer Parker, Marco Paternostro, Alessandro Pessoli, Salvatore Falci, Stefano Fontana, Pino Modica, Cesare Pietroiusti, Massimo Poldelmengo, Luca Quartana, Isabel Ronchietto, Bernhard

Federica Thiene
San Marco 1776
Venezia, 30100
(041)523-4615
Fax(0444)555885

Venezia 27 giugno 1991

Dear artist,

Via Farini will be a new alternative gallery in Milan presenting non-commercial work and work by young artists, and acting as an international cultural center and slide archive. The director, Patrizia Brusarosco, invited us - Laurie Palmer & Federica Thiene, artists working in Italy and America - to curate the first exhibition in response to the association's goals. We share the association's commitment to providing an alternative to the commercial gallery system, and are aware of the need for such an alternative space in Italy. We thought it would be a good idea to initiate the program with an exhibition that will visualize the functions of both exhibition space and archive.

The project will involve both rooms of the gallery. In the main room we will install projectors containing slides collected from artists in America and Italy. In the second room we will install a file cabinet containing information on each of the artists. Approximately twenty artists from each country will contribute up to five slides each, with four copies, and a curriculum vitae.

In the main room we will project slides on sixteen projectors mounted in different orientations throughout the room. To emphasize the rawness of the space the electrical cords and other equipment will remain exposed. The projectors will have remote controls that visitors will be able to use to view the work. Also in the main room we will install a table covered with a mountain of slides (copies of those in the projectors), with four hand-held slide viewers available for visitors' use. All the slides in the main room will be unlabeled, but we will provide a sign to refer visitors to the second room in which they will be able to find out who the artists are and additional information about them from a single file cabinet.

We would like to invite you to participate in this project. If you decide to take part, the slides that you contribute could be of any nature, depending on how you would like to represent your work and/or contribute to the idea of the installation. At the time of the exhibition the space will not yet be completely renovated in order to

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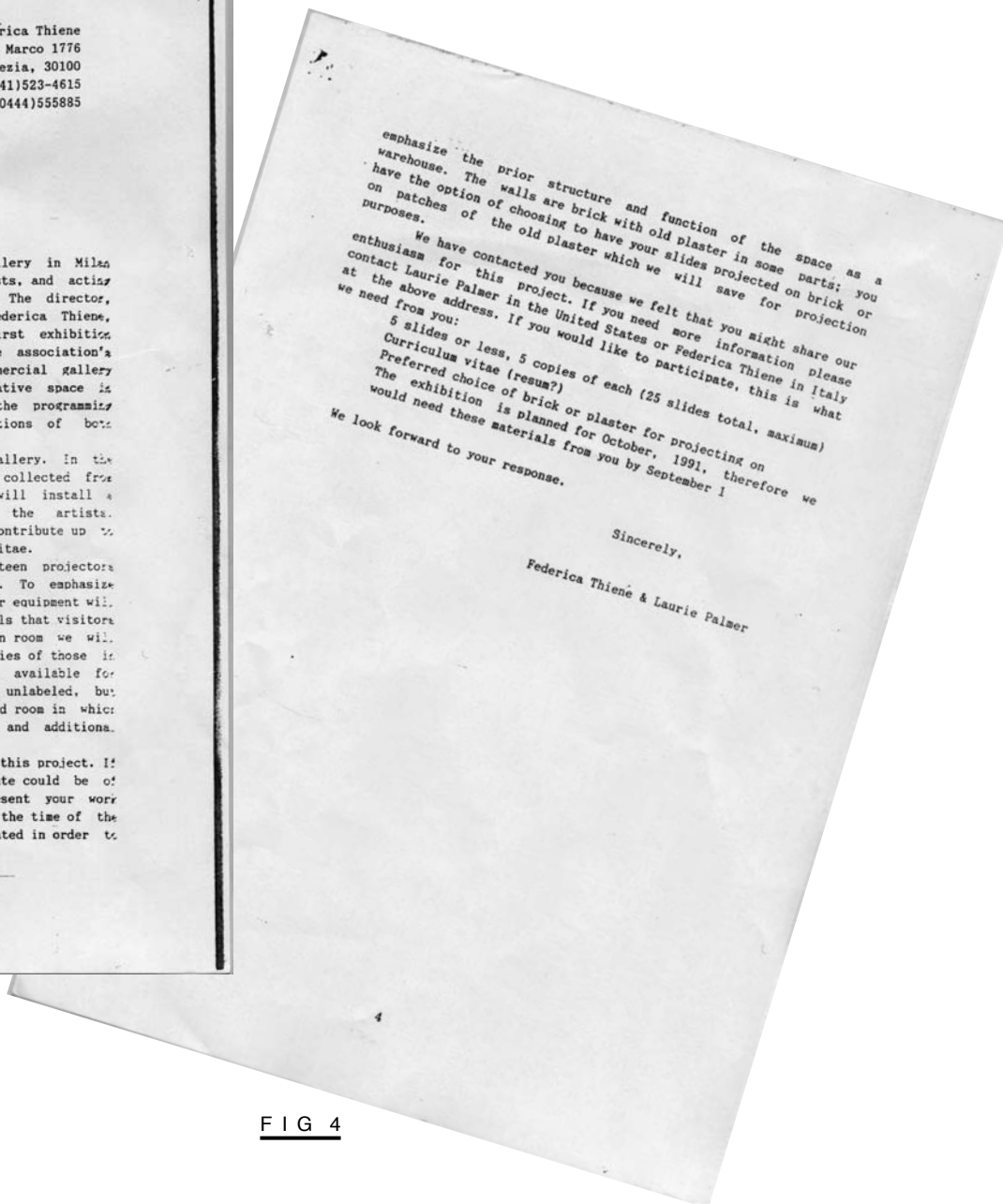


FIG 4

Rüdiger, Laura Ruggeri, Treasure Smith, Tony Tasset, Anna Tassini, Massimo Uberti, Uno al Quadrato (Piero Almeoni, Manuela Cirino, Massimo Donzelli and Roberto Marossi), Yamaoka, Alberto Zanazzo and Andrea Zago.

Lettera di invito da parte delle curatrici Laurie Palmer e Federica Thiene, entrambe impegnate in progetti di arte pubblica; Laurie Palmer era nel comitato dello spazio nonprofit N.A.M.E. di Chicago e membro del collettivo artistico Haha, Federica Thiene avrebbe poi fondato artway of thinking; per la fondazione dell'Archivio le curatrici richiesero ad alcuni artisti italiani e americani materiale documentativo delle proprie opere; Immagini proiettate è stata la proiezione delle

diapositive fornite dagli artisti.

Invitation letter by the curators Laurie Palmer and Federica Thiene, both of them engaged in public art projects; Laurie Palmer took part in the committee of the nonprofit artist space N.A.M.E. in Chicago and member of Haha artists collective; Federica Thiene founded artway of thinking. On the occasion of the foundation of the Archive, they asked a number of Italian and American artists for documentation material of their work; Immagini proiettate was the projection of the slides provided by the artists.



CHAPT # 2 - THE BEGINNINGS







VIAFARINI

associazione non profit per la promozione della ricerca artistica

"MEMBERSHIP VIAFARINI"

In risposta alla questione del finanziamento dello spazio di Viafarini sollevata durante la sua inaugurazione, grazie a diversi suggerimenti abbiamo progettato un'operazione che si svolgerà durante una serata in programma entro il 20 di dicembre.

Il fine dell'iniziativa è quello di raccogliere iscrizioni. Il ricavato della serata è destinato alla gestione di Viafarini per il raggiungimento degli scopi dell'associazione.

"Membership Viafarini" comprende due progetti:

Progetto n.1:

L'idea è quella di chiedere ad ogni artista interessato di creare un numero da uno a quattro posters su carta dimensioni cm.70 x 100.

Il poster dovrà essere pensato in funzione di questo spazio e dovrà contenere il logo: Viafarini Associazione non profit per la promozione della ricerca artistica Milano

Tutti i posters opera raccolti saranno messi in esposizione e venduti ad un prezzo simbolico di Lire 80.000 cad. La vendita dei posters procurerà di diritto l'iscrizione a Viafarini sia al compratore che all'artista.

Progetto n.2:

Gli artisti potranno inoltre scegliere di donare un'opera. Tutte le opere pervenute sono destinate alla vendita. Le modalità per realizzare la vendita durante la serata stessa in forma di performance saranno comunicate successivamente. L'artista dovrà indicare il valore base dell'opera. Il 70% del ricavato di ogni opera andrà a Viafarini, il 30% sarà a disposizione dell'artista per rimborso spese materiali.

Per i tempi e le modalità di spedizione, rivolgersi a Viafarini.

Viafarini con l'iniziativa "Membership" vuole aprire un rapporto di collaborazione con gli artisti che vogliono prendere parte all'attività dello spazio. La tua partecipazione sarà gradita ed utile. Ti sollecitiamo anche ad estendere l'invito a tua discrezione.

Nel corso della serata sarà data notizia per quanto sarà possibile del programma dell'associazione per l'anno 1992.

per VIAFARINI

Patrizia Brusarosco e Lella Valtorta
responsabili per la stagione 91/92

Per informazioni, rivolgersi a: Patrizia Brusarosco tel.02/653334

via farini 35, 20159 milano — Tel. & Fax 02/6680.4473 — P. IVA 10432120151

CHAPT # 2 - THE BEGINNINGS



FIG 5

Membership Viafarini. 80 posters for Viafarini, 1991

80 artists were asked to realise a unique piece in the form of a poster 70 x 100 cm, based on the idea of a manifesto for the organisation, which were given to the

new members who adhered during the fundraising event. The project was initiated by a group of artists, who joined Viafarini from its beginnings

to give a message for the future. The participants were: Piero Almeoni, Stefano Arienti, Francesco Bernardi, Ivo Bonacorsi, Davide Bonasia, Carlo Buzzi, Alberto Callari, Pasquale Campanella, Pietro Capogrosso, Manlio Caropreso,

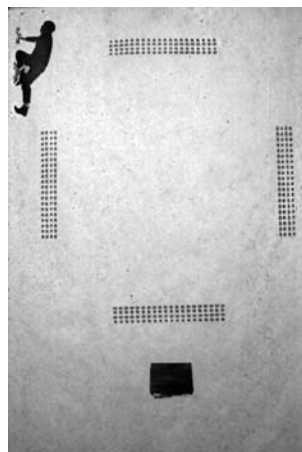


FIG 6

Gabriella Casiraghi, Maurizio Cattelan, Loris Cecchini, Vittoria Chierici, Marco Cianciotta, Marco Cingolani, Gianluca Codeghini, Piergiorgio Colombara, Cinzia Cozzi, Antonio Cravera, Paola Di Bello, Gabriele Di Matteo, Chiara Dynys, Fac-Simile, Salvatore Falci, Emilio Fantin, Peter Fend, Carlo Ferraris, Dino Ferruzzi, Andrea Fogli, Antonia Fontana, Federico Fusi, Marcel-



FIG 7



FIG 8

lo Gianoli, Bernardo Giorgi, Hossein Golba, Mariangela Gramolini, Nazzeno Guglielmi, Komagata Kazuza, Massimo Kaufmann, Li Chi Choi, Emanuela Ligabue,

Mauro Maffezzoni, Mala.Arti Visive, Marcello Maloberti, Miltos Manetas, Silvia Marcacci, Eva Marisaldi, Anna Mazzara, Maurizio Mercuri, Liliana



FIG 9

Moro, Roberto Orlandi, Antonella Ortelli, Laurie Palmer, Pierluigi Pellegrini, Alessandro Pessoli, Luca Quartana, Sandro Ristori, Mariagrazia Rosin, Cristina Ruffoni, Laura Ruggeri, Rul-

lo, Francesco Sangiovanni, Sante Scardillo, Roberto Scala, Franco Silvestro, Gregorio Spini, Giovanni Tagliavini, Maurizio Taioli, Anna Tassini, Gaetano Terranova, Federica Thiene, Alessandra Tortarolo, Adriano Trovato, Silvia Truppi, Maurizio Turchet, Massimo Uberti, Enzo Umbaca, Vedovamazzei, Carla Vendrami, Wurmkos, Alberto Zanazzo and Mirko Zandonà.



FIG 10



FIG 11

FIG 5
Luca Quartana

FIG 6
Eva Marisaldi

FIG 7
Marco Cingolani

FIG 8
Liliana Moro

FIG 9
Laurie Palmer and Federica Thiene

FIG 10
Maurizio Cattelan

FIG 11
Paola Di Bello

□ Un contenitore di immagini d'arte, senza confini, contratti, mercato e manipolazioni. Non c'è bianco alle pareti, né incontri con l'autore. Mancano prezzi e parole, mancano le opere. Non si fanno personali, non si fanno collettive. Pochi secondi per guardare e molti per pensare. Scegliere. In via Farini troverete **VIAFARINI**. Troverete computer e proiettori, immagini e biografie. In un linguaggio così simile a quello della musica. In un linguaggio da capire e da guardare, da leggere e da parlare. Notizie su di loro come notizie su di noi. Noi guardiamo loro perché loro hanno guardato noi. Uno spazio di neutra parzialità. Un luogo dove passano messaggi e informazioni. Non basta più pensare l'arte, né farla, né esporla. Non bastano le idee senza un modo per farle viaggiare, entrare e uscire. Le idee vogliono indietro la loro natura leggera. Gli artisti non vogliono più data titolo anno e materiali. Non vogliono nome, né recensioni. Vogliono fare che produca altro fare. Vogliono essere protagonisti e sottofondo, visibili e invisibili. A Milano nasce un posto come questo. Nel 1991.



Arte & Cultura, giugno 1992

GLI SPAZI D'ARTE ALTERNATIVI: VIAFARINI DI MILANO

Quasi a voler sottolineare l'impersonalità del progetto per cui è nato, questo spazio prende nome semplicemente dalla strada in cui è ubicato. In un vecchio cortile dell'Isola, appena al di là della ferrovia che separa questo quartiere dal resto della città, ha trovato posto VIAFARINI, nato per la volontà di più persone per facilitare la presentazione del lavoro artistico, indipendentemente da considerazioni commerciali.

Infatti, se dal punto di vista organizzativo opera con i metodi tipici di una galleria, istituzionalmente è una associazione senza scopo di lucro, col solo fine di fornire un servizio, sia a livello espositivo, sia come archivio. Quest'ultima è la particolarità più interessante di questo progetto: l'archivio della documentazione del lavoro di artisti italiani e stranieri, inteso come luogo di informazione sulla sperimentazione artistica contemporanea, come strumento operativo per gli interessati, come momento di incontro e di relazione.

Questa archiviazione permette quindi di rap-



Flash Art

THE LEADING EUROPEAN ART MAGAZINE • VOL. XXIV - N° 161 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1991 • US\$7

ViaFarini: Milan's New Public Art Space

ViaFarini (located at Via Farini 35, 20159 Milan, tel. and fax 2-66804473) is a recently formed non-profit foundation for the promotion of the arts. The center offers a permanent archive of slides, catalogues, and video work by young Italian and foreign artists, a 240 square meter exhibition area which will be devoted particularly to installations, as well as a conference center. ViaFarini hopes to emulate the best examples of such alternative institutions which abound abroad—such as New York's Artists' Space—and invites artists to send documentation of their work. ViaFarini opened October 19 with "Projected Images," a show curated by artists Laurie Palmer and Federica Thiene presenting slide projections of work by twenty American and twenty Italian artists. Patrizia Brusarosco is the foundation's founder and director.

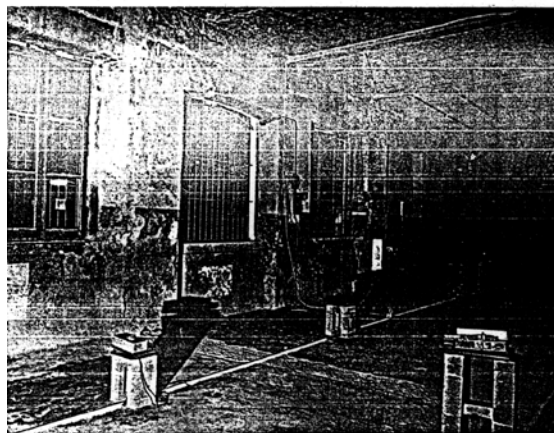


PROJECTED IMAGES. VIAFARINI OPENING, OCTOBER 19. PHOTO ALBERTO CALLARI.

ARTE & CULTURA

presentare una situazione artistica generale, senza una presa di posizione di parte. Può inoltre favorire lo scambio di informazioni all'interno del sistema dell'arte, tramite un'organizzazione non concorrenziale, stabilire contatti fra diversi luoghi geografici in Italia e all'estero, e raccogliere materiale documentativo del lavoro di giovani artisti che non hanno ancora avuto opportunità espositive.

mances, dibattiti, a curare esposizioni e altro. Non si fanno distinzioni in merito all'utilizzo di media differenti, ma si cerca di promuovere la discussione di svariate scelte di impegno artistico. Dopo pochi mesi di attività, VIAFARINI può vantare diverse iniziative interessanti, tra cui la mostra dell'iraniano Hossein Golba e quella dello svizzero Not Vital; una serie di conversa-



VIAFARINI vuole essere dunque uno spazio destinato all'opera in sé, un luogo dove si presentano lavori e si produce documentazione sulla ricerca artistica italiana ed estera. Per raggiungere questi obiettivi, VIAFARINI utilizza la formula associativa come momento di aggregazione tra forze molteplici, usufruendo della collaborazione attiva di altri spazi con simili affinità elettive, di istituzioni pubbliche, delle gallerie e dei media.

Attraverso uno scambio anche con il mondo esterno, cerca di potenziare l'ascolto del messaggio artistico e permettere maggiori confronti a chi ha parte attiva nel progetto. Per la programmazione, VIAFARINI si avvale dei criteri valutativi provenienti dagli stessi artisti che attivano lo spazio, così che esso stesso diventi parte di un processo creativo. Ecco che artisti e critici vengono invitati ad organizzare perfor-

zioni a cura del critico Marco Senaldi sul tema "Il bello e il brutto del tempo"; il progetto espositivo di "Wurmkos design", teso a indagare il rapporto tra idea progettuale e realizzazione di oggetti.

È Wurmkos, un gruppo creato nel 1980 dall'artista Pasquale Campanella con persona con disagio psichico, e sperimenta, a partire da situazioni di marginalità sociale, una pratica in cui si intrecciano solidarietà, socialità, partecipazione popolare, terapia e iniziativa culturale. Questo laboratorio non ha solo finalità didattiche e terapeutiche, ma si presenta come dinamica che, a partire dalle singole individualità, si avvia a un libero processo creativo all'interno del quale l'opera è l'effettivo tramite con l'altro.

Nadia Nava

Patrizia Brusarosco

ALESSANDRA GALASSO: *Come e quando nacque l'idea di creare Viafarini?*

PATRIZIA BRUSAROSCO: Questo progetto è nato in virtù dell'apporto soprattutto di artisti e curatori con l'idea di creare a Milano, un'organizzazione che potesse sopperire a determinate esigenze come accade all'estero, vedi Stati Uniti e Germania, dove all'attività espositiva è affiancata quella di servizio post-terziario nel sistema dell'arte. L'idea è di rendere tale servizio attraverso un archivio, una biblioteca, una libreria, in cui si possano acquistare libri, riviste, multipli ed edizioni. Abbiamo scelto la denominazione di Associazione *non-profit* intendendo un'attività espositiva non a scopo commerciale e per la quale gli associati pagano un servizio. Parte del progetto prevede che a livello finanziario partecipino anche le aziende e vari enti con la sponsorizzazione di singole iniziative.

ALESSANDRA GALASSO: *Dopo un anno di attività quali sono stati gli obiettivi raggiunti e quali restano ancora da realizzare?*

PATRIZIA BRUSAROSCO: L'obiettivo che siamo riusciti a raggiungere è stato innanzitutto a livello di programma. Ci eravamo prefissi di presentare dei progetti installati da artisti già internazionalmente noti e dare luogo a progetti particolari. Avevamo a cura la presentazione di lavori di giovani artisti. L'obiettivo che non è stato ancora raggiunto è la creazione della libreria e la videoteca.

ALESSANDRA GALASSO: *Esiste un frequentatore tipico di Viafarini?*

PATRIZIA BRUSAROSCO: Abbiamo registrato soprattutto un pubblico di artisti. Era importante che si restituisse un certo potere all'artista e che lo si coinvolgesse a livello di programma. Abbiamo poi assistito a una partecipazione del pubblico diversificata a seconda dell'iniziativa. Ci prefiggiamo tuttavia di avere un pubblico sempre più vario, cosa che è già accaduta rispetto alle gallerie milanesi.

ALESSANDRA GALASSO: *Ritieni che l'attività di Viafarini interferisca o possa "dare fastidio" alle istituzioni convenzionali quali gallerie o musei?*

PATRIZIA BRUSAROSCO: Vogliamo offrire la possibilità di fare incontrare l'artista e la galleria e inoltre forniamo servizi. Era interessante che questo luogo non si proponesse come un'ennesima galleria in concorrenza ma che potesse promuovere delle collaborazioni, come è in effetti accaduto con alcune di esse.

ALESSANDRA GALASSO: *Per quanto riguarda i progetti futuri?*

PATRIZIA BRUSAROSCO: Per l'anno venturo cercheremo di dare spazio a progetti che coinvolgano artisti stranieri e italiani. Mentre l'istituzione galleria rappresenta singole personalità, qui diamo più importanza all'opera e al progetto.

INTERVISTE

Patrizia Brusarosco
Viafarini, Milano



A ben guardare non è stata affatto aperta una galleria, bensì è stata fondata un'associazione denominata "Viafarini", che con il sistema delle gallerie potesse interagire più a complemento che in concorrenza. La "crisi disettore"?

La costituzione di Viafarini non è dipesa da considerazioni di carattere congiunturale, ma semmai strutturale: l'associazione per statuto è rivolta alla promozione della ricerca artistica e quindi si pone l'obiettivo di partecipare al potenziamento delle attività che nel settore dell'arte contemporanea in Italia possano essere create, sostenute, finanziate. Viafarini è finalizzata alla presentazione di progetti curatoriali speciali o di opere per il luogo di artisti già noti ed attivi in Italia e all'estero, a procurare opportunità espositive ad artisti all'inizio del loro percorso, alla raccolta e diffusione della ricerca artistica tramite archiviazione di materiale illustrativo (cataloghi o altro), all'organizzazione di mostre, incontri, conferenze, seminari ecc... in sede o fuori sede.

L'associazione è rivolta anche a promuovere contatti fra diversi luoghi geografici, all'informazione ed al servizio.

L'attività è sostenuta tramite l'utilizzo della formula associativa: si finanziano la realizzazione di progetti espositivi e la gestione di un servizio tramite contributi ed interventi privati e pubblici a tale scopo esistono diverse modalità per aderire, collaborare o promuovere Viafarini, che vanno dall'iscrizione annuale di quarantamila lire, per avere accesso al mailing e ai servizi di documentazione, al contributo che dà diritto a multipli o progetti d'artista, fino al vero e proprio contratto di sponsorizzazione.

L'idea dell'associazione è importante anche per quanto riguarda la stesura del programma, che viene utilizzato dando spazio a proposte diversificate, provenienti in primo luogo dagli artisti e dalla critica: l'intera attività è realizzata grazie alla collaborazione di artisti, curatori, gallerie, appassionati d'arte.

Riteniamo che la nostra competenza debba esser di carattere organizzativo, quindi lavorare sulle strutture operative: favorire rapporti sinergici e di interscambio, adoperarsi per permettere una libertà di elaborazione a chi ha invece una responsabilità creativa e culturale (artisti e curatori, appunto). Domanderemo a loro in che direzione sta andando la ricerca artistica. Noi operatori potremmo adoperarci per fornire strumenti di lavoro e di informazione.

• A lato/opposite: Della Vittoria & Co, Vedova, Mazzei, Gatto Silvestro, Il Cieco, happening con nebbia/ The Blind Man, happening with fog, VIAFARINI, giugno/June 1992.

Non-profit art

MARIA GRAZIA TORRI REYNOLDS. È questo un momento particolare per la ricerca artistica in Italia. Si potrebbe definire una sorta di pausa o di battuta d'arresto nella crescita del talento, corrispondente alla crisi economica in atto; ma non è così. Troppo spesso si sono voluti collegare forzatamente i fatti della borsa e quelli dell'arte, troppo spesso si è paragonato il costo del barile a quello dell'opera. Invece proprio nel clima di incertezza dei primi anni Novanta sono nati anche in Italia alcuni spazi per l'arte *non-profit* (letteralmente, "non a scopo di lucro"): diversi però da quelli d'oltreoceano, che hanno spesso contribuito proprio al profitto e alle continue informate di talento buono e cattivo, negli yuppissimi anni Ottanta.

Gli artisti oggi si stanno invece togliendo un po' alla volta i collari costruiti per loro dai critici. Si sono organizzati in gruppi e hanno cercato luoghi indipendenti per riunirsi. A Milano uno di questi luoghi "non deputati" è VIAFARINI, associazione *non-profit* per la promozione della ricerca artistica: duecentoquaranta metri quadrati di superficie aperta, con l'aria dell'antica fabbrica. Qui, con una quota di iscrizione irrisoria (40.000 lire l'anno), gli artisti che diffidano dei soliti sistemi di reclutamento culturale hanno diritto a usufruire dei servizi di documentazione (archivio, biblioteca, eme-roteca) e a partecipare alle molte

iniziative: incontri, convegni, seminari. Qui si è tenuta nell'aprile '92 una delle mostre più particolari, quella di Wurmkos: non un gruppo di tendenza, ma persone che stanno insieme perché emarginate da disturbi psichici.

Come Viafarini, sono nati a Milano e nell'*hinterland* altri centri culturali di genere *non-profit*: Care Of (C/O) per esempio, a Cusano Milanino, è uno spazio che si dedica da tempo alla sperimentazione e dove confluiscono gli artisti più provocatori e versatili. "Occorre imparare a leggere, come occorre imparare a vedere, a vivere", dice il direttore, Mario Gorni, citando Van Gogh. Anche qui porte di ferro e labili segni di riconoscimento: come un fac-simile di "ciak si gira", dipinto proprio sotto la porta; cortili scabbi, loft confinanti con discariche, periferie poco invitanti ma piene di vita.

Altri spazi *non-profit*: ancora a Milano, il Portnoy, caffè letterario dedicato soprattutto alle nuove leve della poesia, dove presentazioni di artisti inediti e performance fanno da sfondo per i readings; lo Zelig, in viale Monza, che a sua volta promuove nuovi talenti e iniziative diverse dalle solite mostre; il Centro Culturale Bertolt Brecht, in via Padova, frequentato soprattutto dagli studenti dell'Accademia; il San Fedele di via Hoepli e il Contatto Europa, che privilegia le artiste donne. Fuori Milano ci sono l'Opera di Perugia, l'Aura di Brescia e la Cooperativa Porta Rossa di Catania. Da sottolineare: mentre gli spazi *non-profit* americani sono egregiamente finanziati dallo stato, quelli italiani nascono e crescono esclusivamente dalla buona volontà e dalla disponibilità di chi li gestisce. E non è poco.



CRITICHE *Brutte mostre senza interesse, istituzioni paralizzate. La città è in piena depressione culturale*

Milano: l'arte non abita più qui

di LEA VERGINE

Se è vero che «le città, come i Paesi e le filosofie, hanno un loro ciclo» (Luciano Pistoï), Milano sta concludendo quasi trent'anni di protagonismo nell'ambito delle arti visive contemporanee. Già da tempo non esercitava più l'attrazione di una volta e, in questi ultimi mesi, sta uscendo di scena a velocità impressionante. Agli inizi dell'anno, su il *manifesto*, si osservava che la vivacità delle imprese culturali cittadine ricorda quella del cimitero di Berna. Innegabile per quanto concerne le mostre. Basta riflettere sul grottesco della stagione '92-'93, quella «ufficiale». Comune e Regione danno gran rilievo a due colpi sparati — ahinoi! — con cartucce bagnate: la chiacchierata e ambigua celebrazione di un epigono del futurismo lombardo in Palazzo Reale, e il primo omaggio italiano al tedesco Joseph Beuys nell'Accademia di Belle Arti, mostra contestata da Lucio Amelio (amico e collezionista di Beuys) e poi finita con uno strascico di azioni legali. Non male, per cominciare.

Non saranno certo le buone mostre di David Tremlett al Pac o di François Morellet alla galleria di Cilena e Cavellini, o poche altre, del tutto causali però, a rendere credibile la dimensione che, fino a poco fa, si voleva europea per un'ex capitale della cultura che somiglia sempre più a una sciatta proliferazione del Canton Ticino. Una città, si badi, che elenca dieci Istituzioni deputate al contemporaneo, tre Fondazioni, più di centocinquanta gallerie private. Perché, cosa succede? Milano — si scrive e si deplora — è una metropoli in ginocchio. Ci dispiace. Ma cosa fa, in ginocchio? Supplica, col capo cospirato di cenere, si batte il petto e si strappa le vesti?

Niente di tutto questo. Piuttosto risulta un luogo indementito; peg-



Esposizioni dedicate a personaggi provinciali. L'omaggio a Beuys finito in tristi polemiche. E per il futuro? Niente



Un'immagine di Joseph Beuys. A lato, il Bar Giamaico di Milano in una foto di Ugo Mulas degli anni '50, quando quel ritrovo a Brera costituiva una vera «cittadella» dell'arte. Ora è rimasto solo il mito

gio, quel che in termini clinici si dice «a rapida evoluzione demenziale». (Se appena potete, leggete l'acuto libro di Giovanni Carlo Zapparoli, apparso per le edizioni Bollati-Boringhieri e intitolato *Paranoia e tradimento*. È un libro che aiuta a capire i nostri disturbi comportamentali e, di conseguenza, quelli di un morbo cui Milano non è estranea).

E cosa fanno gli intellettuali, i mercanti e tutta quella flora e quella fauna impiegate nella grande cucina dell'arte? Si concentrano a pensare i pensieri? No. Con la faccia di chi è affaticato dall'insostenibile peso di una goccia di rugiada, di giorno strolagano tra fax e computer e, al primo accenno della sera, tutti a incanaglirsi davanti agli schermi televisivi. Corpi separati, rassegnati all'agonia, autarchici, autoreferenziali, demotivati, vedovi di incontinenti: in un clima che

si fa sempre più fosco e miserrimo.

Ora la città invoca una mostra (e la solita solfa della rilettura critica) per onorare Giovanni Muzio (1893/1982), nume locale del Novecento architettonico, autore dell'Arenario, se non erro. Audace proposta! Scomparsi il desiderio di progettare, l'opposizione, le polemiche; le stroncature, tutti si sentono soli; e lo sono.

La metropoli degli anni '60 e '70 annaspa, è sbigottita, patetica; colonna incalfonita dai «lumpenoperatori», i nuovi interlocutori che, nei Musci, nelle gallerie, nella stampa e nelle case editrici, decidono del destino dell'arte al di sopra delle teste di chi la propone.

Certo, ci sono quelle che sociologi ed economisti definiscono «le esperienze collettive di delusione». Le illusioni aiutano a vivere, le delusioni a morire (G.C. Argan). E la massa delusa diventa indifferente,

apatica, cachettica, quando non cinica. Ma i tipi da medicalizzare, i megalomani deliranti, quelli tenuti in piedi dalle superfetazioni dell'io sono tutti qui a combinare disastri? No, per certo. Ma né Roma né Napoli — pur fatiscenti da secoli —, né Firenze, né Torino o Bologna, sono così mal messe.

Si delinea all'orizzonte, forse, uno spiraglio di luce. Pare che le forme di appiattimento comincino a diminuire presso i giovani (parlo di quelli che non superano i trenta, facciamo trentacinque anni, via!). Lo dice Franco Fortini. Ora, è vero che negli ultimi anni l'arte è stata ridotta alla traccia di ciò che è scomparso.

È vero che si è cavalcato il quotidiano come surrogato di eventi trascorsi, che si è cercato di tenere a bada paure e conflitti per ignorare la terribilità del mondo. Ma sembra che la visione del futuro ricominci

sione così tragica e futile al tempo stesso, rifà capolino tra le spoglie di un sistema di inganni e di autocensure?

Pare di sì. Ce lo indica l'attività dello spazio di via Farini, dove si tenta di tornare a una visione critica del

l'esistere. Ce lo indicano gli ambienti poveri, ma affollati di giovani, accanto a Musocco, dove, lo scorso gennaio, tre critici — Giacinto Di Pietrantonio, Elio Grazioli e Gianni Romano — sotto il titolo di «Documentaria», hanno messo insieme tre rassegne da una parte rivolte al discorso estetico sull'uso del terri-

torio e, dall'altra, testimonianza di un privato sofferente nel dilagare del disagio. Così lo Studio Guenzani e «Le Case d'arte» hanno preparato una mostra sulla produzione di artisti americani che denunciano le profonde malattie del loro Paese.

Forse anche chi perde può riportare le cose alla giusta misura. Se non ora quando?

Siamo già *borderline*, siamo già alla cronicizzazione, o no? ●

REPORT FROM NORTHERN ITALY

Art in the Maelstrom

As the country reels from political scandal to economic crisis, the private museums and galleries of northern Italy struggle to preserve the region's once lively contemporary art scene.

BY MEYER RAPHAEL RUBINSTEIN

"Northern Italy" is a zone about whose borders no two Italians will easily agree. Does it comprise just the regions of Lombardy, Piedmont, the Alto Adige and the Veneto? Or should one include Liguria, on the coast near Monaco, and Emilia Romagna? And what about Tuscany—surely that is not part of the south? The question is further complicated by the fact that for Italians "northernness" is determined not only by geographic but also by subtle economic and cultural distinctions. For the moment, let's provisionally adopt the idea that northern Italy extends as far south as Florence, but no farther.

As a glance at Italian history will tell you, the question of regional boundaries is not an idle one. In 1849 Metternich called Italy, which was then divided into more than a half-dozen states and duchies and whose citizens spoke in twice that many dialects, a mere "geographical expression" rather than an identifiable nation. By the mid-20th century, Italy seemed to have left its fragmented history behind. In spite of nagging economic and cultural discrepancies between north and south, its national identity and unity seemed indisputable. Today, however, Italy's very existence as a nation is being seriously questioned, bringing Metternich's once outdated witticism back into currency. And as the country struggles through its most difficult political period since the Second World War, the cultural sector has also been caught up in what many are beginning to call the "Italian revolution."

A Country in Crisis

The past 12 months have seen Italy reeling from one crisis to another. The dramatic assassinations in Sicily of two leading anti-Mafia investigators suggested that the government had effectively lost control of a whole section of the country. If this weren't bad enough, in late March Giulio Andreotti, a former prime minister who has been a continuous member of every Italian government since 1947 and who is arguably the dominant political figure of postwar Italy, announced that he was under investigation for ties to the Mafia. In the north, the victories in regional and local elections of political maverick Umberto Bossi's Lega Nord (Northern League), a party that initially advocated the separation of northern Italy from the rest of the country, raised the specter of secession. As he draws closer to real power, though, Bossi has tempered his message to calling for German- or Swiss-style federalism, with Italy divided into a small number of autonomous regions. In essence the Northern League, a largely middle-class movement, proposes to rid the prosperous north of the burden of paying taxes to support the poor, Mafia-ridden south.



The Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato, as seen from its amphitheater.

In the past year the League has gotten a big boost from *Operazione Mani Pulite*—Operation Clean Hands—the sensational corruption investigation based in Milan that has now touched figures as prominent as Bettino Craxi, prime minister for most of the 1980s and head of the Socialist Party, part of the ruling coalition with the Christian Democrats. What began as an inquiry into the misdeeds of local government has now led to so many indictments against politicians, heads of public utilities and leading businessmen that public administration has practically ground to a halt. Add to this a deepening economic crisis—the Italian national debt is proportionally larger than that of the U.S., and the lira has lost more than 50 percent of its value against the dollar in recent months—plus the desperate measures being employed to bring Italy's economy into compliance with the strict guidelines of the European Community, and you have what seems like a recipe for disaster.

What has all of this meant for the contemporary Italian art world? At first glance, surprisingly little. In contrast to the rest of western Europe, the state in Italy does little to support contemporary art. According to Christian Stein, whose Turin gallery

was crucial in promoting the early Arte Povera artists, "Italy is so rich in works of the past that it has no intention of spending money to buy contemporary art or even to promote it." To understand how low on the agenda modern art is in Italy, one only has to visit Rome's Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, a generally deserted building with moldy ceilings and grave security problems, which has recently suffered from the theft of a Cézanne, the unexplained collapse and shattering of a sculpture by Fausto Melotti and a mysterious basement fire.¹ Things are not better in the north. In Milan, 20th-century art is relegated to a few cramped, dimly lit rooms in the Palazzo Reale, while Turin's Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, a major force in the 1960s, has been kept closed since 1975 by local political feuding, and its extensive collection left to languish in the basement.²

Times may not be very good for public collections of modern art in Italy, but they were hardly any better before the current crisis. There is, however, some hope on the horizon in a new law governing Italy's 800 state museums, only half of which are open at present. Known as the Ronchey Law, after the minister of culture Alberto Ronchey,

In Turin, an older generation of artists such as Mario Merz and Alighiero Boetti still dominates the cultural landscape. Not much has been done to encourage potential successors.

it will allow for better organization and funding and increased autonomy for museums. Even so, these would only be preliminary measures in the battle to overcome decades of neglect.³

Private Museums for Contemporary Art

Because of this history of official neglect, the exhibition spaces that do exist for modern and contemporary art in Italy tend to be privately funded; not surprisingly, they are likely to be located in the more prosperous north. On the outskirts of Turin, the Castello di Rivoli regularly mounts retrospective exhibitions of Italian artists like Luciano Fabro and Piero Manzoni, and last year it played host to "Post Human," a traveling extravaganza of contemporary art about the body. The museum is housed in an unfinished but elegant 18th-century royal palace and is jointly funded by Fiat and the Piedmont regional government. In Turin, Fiat also funds the Lingotto, a building originally built for automobile testing and now transformed into an exhibition center. In Venice the automaker supports the Palazzo Grassi, the only Italian museum which regularly hosts blockbuster exhibitions. In April, under the aegis of Pontus Hulten, the Palazzo Grassi opened a major Duchamp exhibi-

tion. The other important museum for contemporary art, the Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato, outside of Florence, is supported by wealthy local patrons and by business contributions.

But while institutions like the Pecci Center and Rivoli are well funded and have generally interesting exhibition programs, they both suffer from problems of accessibility. Rivoli is located on a large hill overlooking the outskirts of Turin, with no direct public transportation from the center of the city; even traveling by car can take half an hour. The Pecci museum, a 20-minute drive from Florence, lies some distance from the nearest train station; bus service is available but connections are tricky. Thus both museums are often empty, patronized only by the traditionally small public for contemporary art. When Milan-based critic Anthony Iannacci likens them to "castles in the desert," he highlights the isolated position of modern and contemporary art in Italy.

It is precisely this isolation that the new director of the Pecci museum, former *Artforum* editor Ida Panicelli, is hoping to overcome with a program designed to involve the surrounding community. Panicelli, who arrived in Prato in November 1992, also proposes to introduce art that deals with gender, sexuality and politics, so as to counter what she sees as the over-estheticization of recent Italian art.⁴ In late March, Panicelli mounted her first show. Called "Inside Out: Museum, City, Events," it presented works by Giulio Paolini, Karen Knorr, Barbara Kruger, Tadashi Kawamata and Fabio Mauri. Responding to Panicelli's invitation, Kruger created a large image-and-text work on fabric that covered the wall of a factory along a highway near the museum. The choice of material was in response to Prato's long history as a textile center. In contrast, Kawamata employed wood-and-metal scaffolding to create a series of above-ground passageways through the historic center of Prato.



Installation view of Alessandro Pessoli's Maelstrom, 1992; at Via Farini, an alternative space in Milan. Photo Armin Linke.

June 1993

These active outdoor works were in marked contrast to the neo-classical poise of Knorr's photographs and Paolini's installations within the museum.

Apart from private ventures like the Pecci museum, there is a certain amount of regional support by local governments for temporary exhibitions. Bologna and, more recently, Bolzano have museums devoted to modern art, and since 1979 Milan's PAC (Padiglione per l'arte contemporanea), a public exhibition space located in a park in central Milan, has mounted regular shows of artists like Jannis Kounellis, Pino Pascali and Cindy Sherman as well as exhibitions devoted to fashion and design. To this list one could add spaces like the Galleria Civica in Modena and the Palazzo Martinengo in Brescia. Recently these two institutions collaborated on an impressive retrospective of the late Gastone Novelli, an Italian painter of the 1960s whose work deserves wider exposure. Working with varying shades of white paint and pencil inscriptions, Novelli created deceptively casual-looking paintings filled with graffiti-like marks at once more specific and more sensuous than those of Twombly.

Occasionally special exhibitions will come out of nowhere, like the splendid retrospective of Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio organized in Turin last winter by Francesco Poli in the spacious galleries of the privately owned Promotrice delle Belle Arti and sponsored by the regional Piedmont government. Pinot-Gallizio, who died in 1964, is one of the great creators of postwar Italian art. He was a retired pharmacist who invented a machine that turned out abstract paintings by the yard; he composed massive canvases with his eyes blindfolded and assisted in the founding of the Situationist movement [see A.J.A., Oct. '89]. Somewhat unexpectedly, he also turns out to have been a brilliant painter.

Turin: Living on Past Glory

Fascinating as the Novelli and Pinot-Gallizio exhibitions were, they also served as reminders that Italy remains far from creating modern-art institutions on the scale of Madrid's Reina Sofia or Amsterdam's Stedelijk. In contrast to the uneven museum situation, northern Italy is rich in commercial galleries, even if some of them are having a hard time in the present economic climate. One of the most renowned is Turin's Christian Stein Gallery, which for the past 20 years has been located in a gracious apartment overlooking the Piazza San Carlo in the center of the city. Supplemented by a more industrial-style space in Milan (and, until its recent closing, by the SteinGladstone Gallery in New York), Stein continues to concentrate on Arte Povera artists like Giulio Paolini, Luciano Fabro and Mario Merz. At the age of 71, Stein is also devoting more time to her probably unsurpassed collection of postwar Italian art, a part of which was recently shown in France in successive exhibitions at museums in Villeurbanne and Toulouse. It is perhaps no accident that Stein's collection is being shown in France rather than Italy. For several years Stein unsuccessfully attempted to donate her collection to the city of Turin, in order to create a museum where it could

The privately funded foundation, the first of its kind in Italy, relies on a group of contributing members as well as corporate sponsors for specific exhibitions. But the idea of private as opposed to government support for such projects has yet to take root in Italy. Combined with the current political chaos, this makes for difficulties. For instance, after much preparation, two planned exhibitions, one of early Rauschenberg, the other a multidisciplinary show on Milan in the 1950s, never materialized. With the Milan show di Maggio had hoped to remind the public that the city had once been the cultural capital of Italy. Milan's heyday will be recalled instead by a forthcoming show on the activities of Arturo Schwartz—dealer, impresario, scholar, friend of Duchamp and Man Ray and self-appointed archivist to the Surrealists.

Milan also boasts two active alternative spaces. ViaFarini and Care/of, both of which concentrate on exhibiting young artists. Patrizia Brusarosco, who founded ViaFarini in 1991, admits that hers is "a utopian project within the reality of the Italian art system." In a notable installation last year, some thousand drawings by 29-year-old Alessandro Pessoli explicitly challenged the esthetic status quo in Italy by addressing specific social and political problems like the Mafia. In the traditionally discreet atmosphere of Milan, the enthusiasm and dedication of figures like Brusarosco—as well as Zefferina Castoldi and Mario Gorni, who jointly run Care/of—will be vital if the city's art world hopes to weather the current malaise.

From Brescia to Bolzano: A Dispersed Gallery Scene

While unable to compete in quantity with Turin or Milan, several smaller northern Italian cities are able to support one or more interesting galleries. In Brescia, for instance, Massimo Minini consistently mounts important shows by artists of the caliber of Sol LeWitt and Ettore Spaletti, as well as featuring young Italians like Paula Pezzi, whose wall sculptures of simulated stone wrapped in colored cloth seem like relics of some primitive religion. In nearby Verona, the long-established Studio la Città has recently shown Richard Tuttle and Lynn Davis as well as younger artists like painters Robert Feintuch and Luigi Carboni. Bologna, renowned for the efficiency of its Communist-run city government, boasts a few galleries in addition to the Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna. Bologna is also the annual site of Arte Fiere, long Italy's most important art fair.

Since 1980 the city of Genoa has supported a major gallery, Locus Solus, which shows a wide range of artists including John Baldessari, Maurizio Mochetti, Richard Deacon and Jan Vercruyse. For younger artists, Genoa's Galleria Pinta is an important presence. Down the coast, in the small port of Livorno, Galleria Peccalo is currently concentrating on long-established American artists like George Sugarman and Norman Bluhm.

Bolzano, in the largely German-speaking section of Italy near the Austrian border, boasts the public and privately funded Museo d'Arte Moderna Museum, which since 1987 has mounted thematic exhibitions (such as an homage to Ezra Pound)

and a Fluxus survey curated by an American long based in Italy, the critic-translator Henry Martin.

In response to the difficulties that plague institutional art activity in Italy, critic Giacinto di Pietrantonio has recently launched a novel project. *Territorio Italiano* involves some 30 artists who have been invited to select a site somewhere in Italy and propose a work of art for permanent installation there. The results range from Thomas Schütte's proposal for a museum in memory of Pier Paolo Pasolini—to be located in Ostia, in a 16-century tower near the place where the filmmaker was killed—to the tiny sculptures that Enzo Cucchi plans to hide in ancient Roman ruins. Swiss artist John Armleder intends to install a cylindrical sculpture in the riverbed of the Po, where it will be visible only during the summer. While one or two of the proposals are clearly hypothetical—two eccentric Russian artists want to slap the Pope with dead fish—the majority are already on their way to completion, with different sponsors for each work. Cannily mixing art-tourism with esthetics, di Pietrantonio's project seems an authentically Italian one.

Where To Now?

If the Italian state does little to support contemporary art, this does not mean that the political parties are not indirectly involved in the art scene. Under Italy's notorious system of *lottizzazione*, which translates roughly as "apportionment," everything from the staffing of the three state-run television channels to (allegedly) the makeup of symphony orchestras is part of the patronage system administered by the dominant political parties. Inevitably certain artists, galleries and critics profit handsomely from public commissions obtained via political connections.

Nonetheless, in the absence of established institutions dealing with contemporary art, there is much scope in Italy for individuals to wield considerable power. Prominent figures in this regard are Achille Bonito Oliva, who is currently the visual-art director of the 1993 Venice Biennale, and Giancarlo Politi and Helena Kontova, husband-and-wife publishers of *Flash Art* magazine. (Kontova is one of the curators of the Aperto section of this year's Biennale.) Although his job as curator at the Guggenheim Museum in New York keeps him out of the country, Germano Celant still exercises considerable influence on the Italian scene, not least through his ability to introduce artists like Ettore Spaletti in U.S. exhibitions.

Before the current crisis, one of the most flamboyant individuals in Italy was politician Gianni de Michelis, whose passion for nightlife is such that he once wrote a guide to the country's best discotheques. This former foreign minister and vice president of the Socialist Party is also an active supporter of contemporary art and a member of the Guggenheim Museum's board of trustees. Now, however, like many of his fellow Socialists, de Michelis is under a cloud, as investigations have linked him to the ever-widening government bribery scandal. It is in de Michelis's former fiefdom, Venice, that the Guggenheim Museum is currently expanding from its longtime base in the Peggy



Installation view of Alfredo Pirri's *For Us, 1992*; at the Galleria Tucci Russo, Turin. Photo Enzo Ricci.

tional promotion of their artists, the young Italian artist is left adrift. And there has been no individual critic/promoter to do for younger Italian artists what Achille Bonito Oliva did for the "trans-avant-garde" in the early '80s.

While di Carlo and Guenzani are the most prominent, there are a number of other galleries in Milan that show the younger generation, including Casoli (which occupies Lucio Fontana's old studio space), Valeria Belvedere, Paolo Vitolo and the Bordone Gallery. For several days in early 1993 Bordone became an isolation chamber where visitors could observe (through a two-way mirror) Milan artist Luca Quartana's round-the-clock 72-hour performance. As he carried out mundane activities—eating, sleeping, staring into space—Quartana attempted to communicate something of his state of mind to his invisible audience by using various types of audio and video devices.

Since its founding in the 1960s, Marconi has been one of the most prominent galleries in Milan, successfully promoting a generation of European artists that includes Valerio Adami, Richard Hamilton, Mimmo Rotella and Enrico Baj. In recent years, founder Giorgio Marconi has passed the reins to his son Gio, who has sought to bring in new energy with shows of irreverent young neo-conceptual artists from England, France and Italy. He has also given large exhibitions to young painters like the Italian abstractionist Alberto Gaiutti. For the moment, however, reflecting the uncertain situation in Italy, Marconi is concentrating on its established stable.

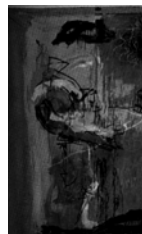
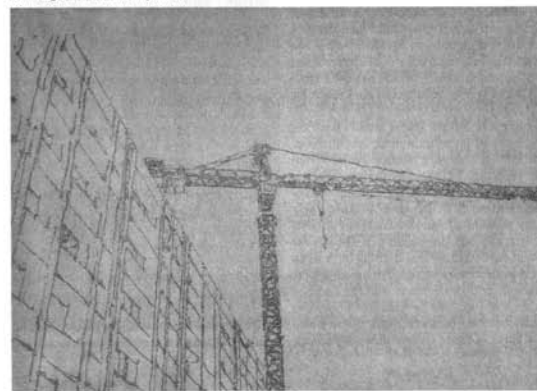
Lamenting the failure of Milan to nurture its own modern museum, Gio Marconi says that it often falls on the galleries to "make culture, because the city isn't able to." Marconi is now occasionally collaborating with the Fondazione Mudima, a four-story space just down the street, on large-scale shows like the recent display of paintings by the unlikely team of Enrico Baj and Mark Kostabi. Since its opening in 1989, the Fondazione Mudima, run by former publisher Gino di Maggio, has used its generous space for extensive shows of artists like Nam June Paik, Yoko Ono, Daniel Spoerri, Allan Kaprow and Wolf Vostell, who in 1989 installed a permanent swimming pool in the basement of the foundation. Although initially constituted in 1980,

Milan's galleries often show both hot young international artists and up-and-coming Italians. But the traffic is mostly one-way, with the Italians rarely getting similar invitations from abroad.

Mudima had to struggle for years to win the right from the local authorities to open its exhibition space. Founder di Maggio, a long-time supporter of Fluxus artists, wanted to be able to give artists a chance "to do a show at least once without thinking of the market."



Above, Luca Vitone: *Atopical Map, 1988-92*, mixed mediums, 32 1/2 by 45 inches. Courtesy Galleria Paolo Vitolo, Milan.
Below, Stefano Arenti: *Untitled, 1982*, silicone on paper, 29 1/2 by 39 1/2 inches. Courtesy Studio Guenzani, Milan.



Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio was included in his 1980...

be on permanent display. She thoroughly disdributes to her persin contemporary art in If one must descriably" the best of the situation in Italy terground. Not only ardonations to museum in which a collector tion only to receive a authorities, curious might contain and came from. Not surprate involvement minimum.

Quite different in Russo's gallery, locatrial buildings in a qu early supporter of the mount extensive sh Cragg, Daniel Buren Italian Alfredo Pirri, which to work out t intimate space of Gi shows Michelangelo among other artists. name reflects the d Turin as well as th recently been showin painters such as Fa and Nicholas Howey. young Italian artists dealer Franz Palude picturesque Castello with the Castello di ating a kind of artist several years.

The strength of T be the subject of ar Rivoli called "Un'avv e le Arte 1950-1970." Paolo Fossati and Idator, the exhibition hospitality to intern war art. The city wa much avant-garde ar own avant-garde mov tant factor in Turin Gallery. Founded in who today continues and New York, Sper



Christian Stein's *The Blind Night, 1962*, (oil on canvas, approx. 7' by 32 feet, collection Musée National d'Art Moderne) at the 1992 retrospective at the Promotrice delle Belle Arti, Turin.

play. The experience has left disillusioned and clearly connoisseur about public support for art.

Stein's collection as "problematic" period, it's because the tax laws to keep collectors under the table, but there have been cases where no tax incentives for artists, but there have been cases where a work to an exhibit—subsequent visit from the tax authorities to what else the collection where the money to build it. Interestingly, such stories keep appearing in public exhibitions to a

style from Stein's is Tucci in a group of former industrialist corner of Turin. Russo, an "avant-garde," likes to show of artists such as Tony and the imaginative younger offering them large spaces in their ideas. In contrast is the orgio Persano, who regularly Pistoletto and Franz West. A newer gallery, In Arco (its distinctive arched porticos of the gallery's own design), has young New York abstract artist Marcaccio, Lydia Dona

The highest concentration of art in Turin is to be found around the studio, who operates out of the via di Rivara—not to be confused with Rivoli—which has been operating as a colony/exhibition space for

Turin's recent artistic past will be exhibited at the Museo di Arte Contemporanea Internazionale, Torino. Curated by Germano Celant, and Gianelli, the museum's director will review Turin's early international developments in post-war Italy, eventually giving birth to its movement, Arte Povera. An important openness was the Sperone, 1964 by Gian Enzo Sperone, to operate galleries in Rome. The first gallery brought Pop art,

Minimalism and Conceptual art to Turin through a series of timely exhibitions by American artists and then-emerging Italians like Michelangelo Pistoletto. Sperone also showed the Arte Povera artists early on.

Despite this history and the current activity of newer Turin galleries, a seasoned observer like Christian Stein doesn't see that her hometown holds much for young artists. At least for the immediate future, she sees Milan offering them more room to develop. Paradoxically, Stein's success in developing the careers of Turin-based artists like Merz, Paolini and Alighiero Boetti may be one of the reasons that the city is such a difficult place for young artists. This older generation still dominates the cultural landscape and, perhaps jealous of its power, has not done much to encourage its potential successors. One should also add that the social and economic climate of Turin, a city caught between the persistent snobbishness of its aristocratic past and the all-pervasive contemporary presence of Fiat, is far less conducive to the activities of individual artists than the rough-and-tumble capitalism of Milan. That it's not a place for the young is confirmed by the fact that even though Paludetto has established his gallery as one of the major venues for younger artists in northern Italy, nearly all of the Italian artists he shows live in Milan rather than Turin.

Milan: Young Galleries Arrive

Until recently, Milan was best known as an international center of finance and high fashion. Its new status as corruption capital of Italy—they call it *tangentopoli* (kickback city)—now threatens to replace that image, if Jane Kramer's recent article on Milan in *The New Yorker* is any indication.⁵ While the rich and powerful in Milan these days live in constant fear of an arrest warrant from the crusading judge Antonio di Pietro, the rest of the city's smog-bound inhabitants worry about who is going to pay for decades of mismanagement.

Despite the forbidding political and economic situation, a number of galleries have recently opened in Milan, augmenting a medium-voltage art scene exemplified by established galleries like Toselli, Gian Ferrari, Feno and Galleria Milano. While the programs of the new galleries vary, many happen to be run by women. Giancarla Zanucci's gallery, Transepoca, opened its first season with

solo shows by American artists Jane Hammond and Rona Pondick; it will incorporate younger Italians like Bologna's Alessandro Pessoli into a schedule including foreign artists like Iranian-born Fariba Hajamadi, who works out of Paris and New York. Close to Transepoca, near two of Milan's three surviving canals, is Galleria Emi Fontana. With an emphasis on women artists, Fontana also opened her season with an American, Nancy Dwyer, and will be showing a rising star of Italian art, multimedia artist Lilliana Moro. Across town, Monica de Cardenas shows established foreign artists like Jean-Frederic Schnyder and Thomas Struth in addition to the Italian Maurizio Arcangeli.

These new spaces are probably hoping to repeat the success of galleries such as Studio Guenzani, which has fostered the careers of younger Italian artists Stefano Arienti and Massimo Kaufmann as well as hosting New Yorkers such as Cindy Sherman and Peter Nagy and L.A.'s Lari Pittman. Arienti, like many Italian artists of his generation, works in a number of mediums. He approaches painting obliquely, as when he dabs colored Play-Doh onto a poster reproduction of a Manet, but his real interest lies in utilizing fragile materials; he engraves Styrofoam with heated metal and makes nearly invisible drawings with silicone on translucent paper. Guenzani also shows longtime New Yorker Salvatore Scarpitta, who is enjoying something of a revival in Italy with his inclusion in this year's Venice Biennale.

Another prominent younger dealer is Massimo di Carlo, who for several years mounted challenging shows in a small space on the Via Castaldi, alternating international artists such as Cady Noland with young Milanese like Mario Airo. In 1991 di Carlo opened a second, much larger space on Via Bocconi, where his program for the first half of 1993 included Matt Mullican and John Coplans, while the young Italian conceptual artist Maurizio Cattelan and American Jessica Diamond have forthcoming shows scheduled in the old space.

The strategy of exhibiting both attention-getting international artists and lesser-known young Italians is a smart one, but the danger is that the traffic is too often one-way. Hot young artists from New York or Cologne get shows in Milan, but their Milanese counterparts rarely receive similar invitations from abroad. It is here, perhaps, that Italy suffers most from its lack of governmental support for contemporary art. While Great Britain, France, Germany and Spain allocate funds for the interna-

Recent Italian art has seemed barely to notice the chaos of the society around it. Wary of the Byzantine web of Italian politics, artists seek to maintain their own "clean hands."

Guggenheim villa on the Grand Canal. The museum has leased an adjacent villa, which after a million-dollar renovation will be able to take over some of the functions associated with the Peggy Guggenheim Collection. Guggenheim director Thomas Krens is happy to have won permission to carry out the renovations—Venice is notoriously strict about such matters—and says that the expansion will "take some of the pressure off" the original building. Major difficulties have arisen, though, with the Guggenheim's other Italian project, the proposed transformation into a museum of the villa of Count Panza de Biumo in Varese, near the Swiss border [see "Front Page"].

With the apparent demise of the old power structure, dominated by the Christian Democrats and Socialists, in which political figures like de Michelis exercised great influence on cultural affairs, no one is quite certain how to proceed, and the prospect of victories by the Northern League in upcoming local elections in Milan and elsewhere only increases the uncertainty. Given the state of the economy, Milan dealer Claudio Guenzani expects a hard time for Italian galleries and artists in the coming years, but he also believes that the changes currently being enacted—these include electoral reform, privatizations and elimination of kickbacks for publicly funded construction projects—may make possible a more open and honest way of doing business. "The old way is finished," he says bluntly. Less optimistic, Christian Stein says that before even thinking about contemporary art, "we have to put the finances of our country in order."

The struggle between the old and the new is already visible in the polemics surrounding the makeup of the new advisory board for the Venice Biennale. Immediately after the appointees were announced in January, there was a storm of newspaper editorials denouncing the fact that the board members owed their selection to the old *lottizzazione* system rather than to any expertise or achievement in the realm of culture.⁶ Three board members resigned. Art historian Federico Zeri expressed the indignation of many when he observed that those responsible for choosing the board must have been "living on the moon" not to realize that "Italy is changing." In any case, Zeri added, the Biennale itself is "a relic from an era that no longer exists."

As Italy proceeds through this extremely difficult period of transformation, it will be interesting to see if Italian artists feel compelled to respond to the country's troubles. Recent Italian art, in marked contrast to that in the U.S., has

seemed barely to notice the society around it. Particularly in the north, contemporary art involves an often chilly blend of conceptualism and formalism that seems light years away from the chaos of the surrounding society. Is it the memory of the alliance between the Futurists and the Fascist Party that makes artists shy away from social commentary? Or is it simply that artists are understandably wary of entanglement in the Byzantine web of Italian politics, and regard socially disengaged work as a way to maintain their own "clean hands"?

Although much recent Italian art is notable for its silence about the state of the nation, two recent works by young Milan artists seem to acknowledge, if obliquely, the current crisis. At Galleria Paolo Vitolo, Luca Vitone presented *Atopical Map* both as a folded map and as a print measuring 32 1/2 by 48 inches. In this piece, Vitone has erased all the names from a scale map of a section of Italy—he is careful not to say which part—and carefully reworked the lines of the map so that the missing names initially go unnoticed. Another artist, Carlo Ferraris, recently presented an installation in which he blocked off the entranceway of Valeria Belvedere Gallery with two old armchairs, cutting out the back of each so that you could step through their doors into a room that contained five coffin-

like boxes filled with black confetti. Once you closed the doors of the shabby armchair behind you, you found yourself in a room with no visible sign of how you had entered it—an unexpected and disturbing sensation. Claustrophobic and funereal, Ferraris's installation captures the way that Italy must feel to the old power elite currently on its way out, while Vitone's cryptic, nameless map suggests a country wanting nothing so much, right now, as to start over from scratch. □

1. "Un incendio nel museo dannato," *La Repubblica*, Jan. 5, 1993.
2. See Catherine Franchin, "L'aventure artistique de Madame Christian Stein," in *La Collection Christian Stein: un regard sur l'art italien*, Villeurbanne, Le Nouveau Musée, 1992.
3. See Antonio Cederna, "Miracolo, risorgono i nostri musei," *La Repubblica*, Jan. 12, 1993.
4. See Paolo Vagaggini, "Siamo esteti delle belle forme," *La Repubblica*, Jan. 19, 1993.
5. Jane Kramer, "Letter From Europe," *The New Yorker*, Sept. 21, 1992.
6. See "Biennale: Dimissioni!" *Corriere della Sera*, Jan. 11, 1993; "La Fenice, direttore per autonomia," *La Repubblica*, Jan. 12, 1993; and Simone Fiori, "Sottobosco in Laguna, che vergogna," *La Repubblica*, Jan. 12, 1993.

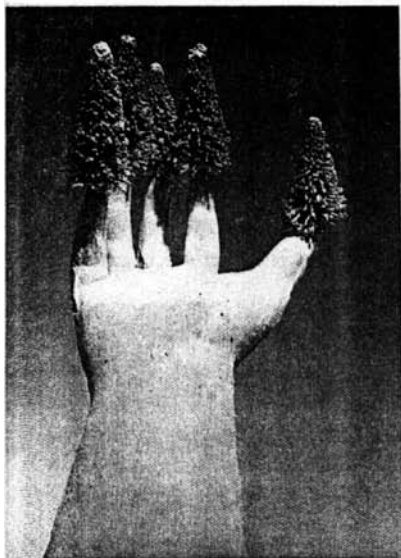
Author: Meyer Raphael Rubinstein is a critic who divides his time between New York and Milan.



Lilliana Moro: *No One, 1993*, mixed medium installation with the artist's voice. Courtesy Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan. Photo Roberto Marassi.

ARTFORUM

SUMMER 1997



Left to right:
Mario Cattelan,
Infidel, 1996,
 latex and maquette
 tires, ca.
 13 1/2 x 6 1/2 x 5 1/2".
Massimo Bartolini,
Comer, 1995,
 Coachrome, ca.
 19 1/2 x 27 1/2".



GIORGIO VERZOTTI ON PRIVATE MILAN

Party Lines

ON THE NIGHT of July 16, 1993, the Pavilion of Contemporary Art (PAC) in Milan became the first target in a string of bombings that were later attributed to the Mafia. The Uffizi in Florence and a Roman church were damaged by explosives a few days later, and the PAC, an already fragile building, was razed when a car bomb set off a subsequent explosion in nearby gas lines. The city of Milan claimed that the pavilion would be rebuilt within a year, although it refused monetary aid from the central government in Rome. Milan had recently come under the rule of the Northern League, the federalist and now openly secessionist party that wants to cut ties with southern Italy, which is less prosperous than the northern region, and also with "thieving Rome." Because of this, it wasn't until last summer—on the third anniversary of the bombing—that Milan's only civic space dedicated to contemporary art was reopened to the public. Except for new lighting, a ventilation system, and modifications for handicap access, Ignazio Gardella, the architect who had built the PAC in 1943 over the war-torn stables of the Villa Reale, essentially re-created what was and still is an

extremely beautiful building (save for the inexplicable white wallpaper throughout).

The PAC's inaugural show last summer was an homage to Leo Castelli, the American gallery owner born in Trieste. This was somewhat surprising given the longstanding contempt of Italy's public institutions—including those in Milan—for the art market and its agents, who are considered emissaries of the devil. Yet were it not for the city's thriving core of commercial galleries and nonprofit spaces, Milan would hardly be an obligatory stop on the art lover's tour of Europe. The public sector of Milan's art scene is in the midst of a long decline. Even at the PAC, the number of truly interesting shows in the past decade can be counted on one hand. Almost a year after its reopening, no exhibition schedule has been officially announced, and besides the Castelli tribute, the only other show mounted was a display of work from a famous private collection. Worse still, a director has yet to be named, and one even wonders if there are plans to do so: the PAC falls under the jurisdiction of the Civiche Raccolte d'Arte (Civic Art Collections),

which directs all city museums, and whose head, Maria Teresa Fiorio, is a distinguished scholar of ancient art.

The show dedicated to Castelli was conceived by Milan's commissioner of culture, Philippe Daverio, who has made it clear that, unlike his predecessors, he will participate directly in curating exhibitions. A former gallery owner in Milan who also made a brief, unsuccessful go of it in New York, Daverio is not interested in the avant-garde (though he loves figurative art, from de Chirico to Sandro Chia's painted teacups). So it's possible that Robert Morris' felt pieces and Andy Warhol's Brillo boxes from the Castelli show, which date back some thirty years, will be the most experimental art visitors to the PAC will see.

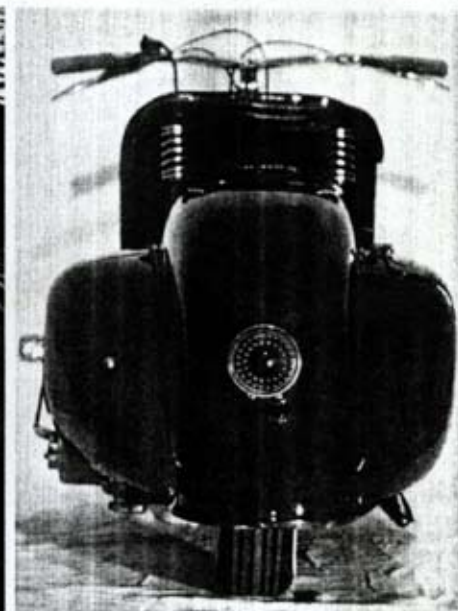
Ultimately, the stagnation at the PAC is just one facet of a scene in which politics and bureaucracy have led to widespread cultural decline. Many intellectuals accuse Daverio of being lazy, snobbish, and prejudiced; for his part, Daverio accuses his critics (including artists such as Luciano Fabro) of colluding with former civic governments supported by the Socialist Party. As with most other parties, the Socialists have now disappeared, after coming under attack from the judiciary which, starting right in Milan, arrested numerous political figures, public administrators, and well-known business people throughout Italy on charges of corruption. Overlooking the

antipathy, justified or not, that Daverio has inspired in certain quarters, his accusations may have some basis in truth. (For the record, Fabro was never involved with the Socialists, and his significant contribution to cultural policy in the city is no mere recent phenomenon.) Nevertheless, the Northern League has not made good on its promises to improve urban life. Transportation and sanitation services remain inefficient, even as charges of corruption have landed on the doorsteps of some of the Northern League commissioners—who are, by their own definition, incorruptible.

One of the cultural consequences of this less-than-edifying discovery: an exhibition of international scope planned for the city's central Castello Sforzesco was abruptly canceled without its chief curator, Adelina von Furstenberg, being notified. Then there's the case of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, whose funding, in its fiftieth anniversary year, was decreased by about a billion lire—a perfect example of public officials' disinterest in cultural affairs. Moreover, construction of a new building for the Piccolo has been

on hold for almost a decade. The project, backed by the theater's former director Giorgio Strehler, was blocked midway by bureaucratic snags and a lack of funds. The city's new government quickly resumed construction, but work soon stopped again and Strehler was dismissed, resulting in a scandal and a request that the Ministry of Culture resolve the decades-old problem. Walter Veltroni, the new minister of the center-left government (despised by the Northern League), intervened directly, appointing none other than Jacques Lang, the former French minister of culture, as the acting director of the Piccolo; yet it's doubtful that Lang can accomplish anything before stepping aside for a permanent director. So much for the Northern League's promise to streamline bureaucracy; compare this situation with the construction of the Bastille Opera in Paris, which took but a few short years despite the controversy that preceded it.

Over the long haul, the decline of Milan's civic support of the arts is reflected predominantly in the exhibition policies of its public spaces. During the corrupt Socialist era, large shows of

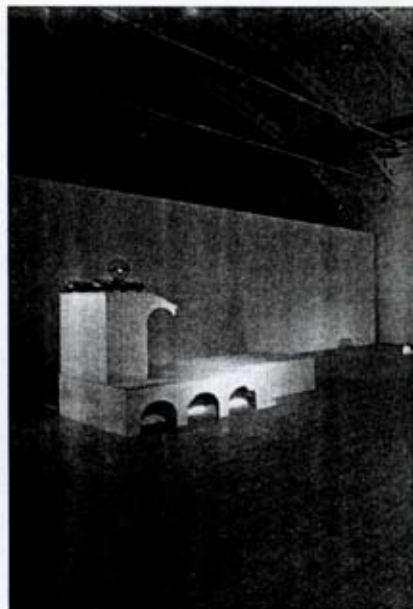
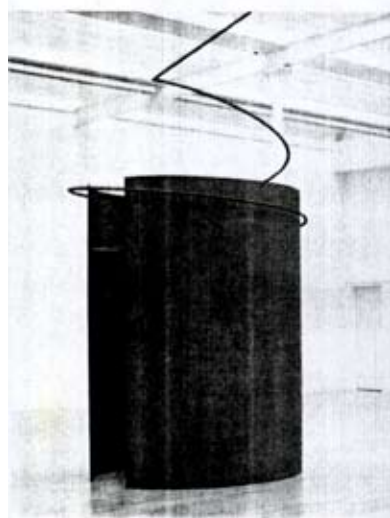


ancient and Modern art were mounted at the Palazzo Reale, next to the Duomo. Despite suspiciously inflated budgets, these were almost always favorably received by both critics and the public. However, the past three years have brought only scaled-down exhibitions of equally diminished significance. Even those devoted to masters such as Malevich and Giacometti put Milan in a bad light, since these artists received more exhaustive retrospectives elsewhere in Europe—at Paris' Musée d'Art Moderne, the Stedelijk, and Cologne's Ludwig Museum.

Meanwhile, a paltry exhibit of Enzo Cucchi's work, shown for the first time in a public space in Milan, was installed in a wing of the Palazzo Reale. And a recent survey of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painting at the same venue, sponsored by Giorgio Armani, got a very poor write-up from prominent art critic Albert Arbasino. In his amusingly harsh review, Arbasino asked Armani why the awful colors used for the exhibition walls—lilac and lemon yellow for Picasso and Van Gogh—don't turn up in the fashion designer's showrooms or on his

Left to right:
Jonathan De Pa,
Donato D'Urbino,
 and **Paolo Lorenz**,
"Blow", 1967,
 inflatable arches in
 polystyrene chairs
Corrado D'Avant,
Piaggio "Vespa"
 scooter, 1946.

LETTER FROM ITALY



runways. In the end, Arbasino voiced a question many of us continually ask: Why can't Milan manage to successfully compete with Paris, London, and Berlin?

There are a few public institutions in Milan that function efficiently, or compare favorably with those abroad. The Triennale is responsible for a recent historical survey of the past thirty years of contemporary Italian design as well as a major exhibition of Giuseppe Terragni, a master of Rationalism. Under a new director, the Accademia di Brera has initiated a strong exhibition program (although the commissioner of culture refused to finance one important show, a survey of Milanese sculpture from Canova to Fontana). A school for museum curators similar to the one that used to exist at the Magasin in Grenoble was established this year. Of course, there is also the Teatro alla Scala. Indeed, one might say that La Scala has been responsible for the only truly noteworthy cultural event in recent years, one that has been written up in both the Italian and the international press: the discovery of a new *Traviata*. No soprano has come close to

Maria Callas' legendary 1956 interpretation of the opera (directed by Carlo Maria Giulini, produced by Luchino Visconti), though Mirella Freni and Anna Moffo made valiant efforts in 1964. It was only in the early '90s that the young Tiziana Fabbricini was able to measure up to Callas in terms of both vocal range and interpretive capacity. Fabbricini was discovered by Giovanni Tenconi, a tireless organizer of musical events and president of the Associazione dei Loggionisti (members' association), which brings together the music lovers of Milan. Tenconi pointed her out to maestro Riccardo Muti. In 1990 Muti's passion for sticking to the original score resulted in the staging of a full-length version of *La Traviata* (which not even Callas had attempted) under the direction of Liliana Cavani. Fabbricini's performance was received with acclaim, and numerous repeat performances have been insufficient to satisfy public demand.

Still, what is said about Italy in general also applies to Milan: only those institutions managed by the private sector function properly. This is especially true of the visual arts, when one con-

siders the number of thriving nonprofit spaces, foundations, and galleries. Care of Viafarini, a computerized archive of young artists working in Milan that is especially helpful to critics and curators organizing shows of emerging artists, was conceived and organized by two existing nonprofit spaces—Viafarini, named for the street on which it's located; and Care of, in Cusano Milanino, on the outskirts of Milan. Elsewhere in Italy, similar initiatives to promote contemporary art and "local" culture are proving effective; and in some cities—Venice, for one—this sort of activity has received the encouragement it deserves. Yet Milan's cultural commission has refused to grant funding for the archive, although moneys have been found for the sports and youth commissions.

Private foundations for Modern and contemporary art are perhaps the most interesting innovation in Milan, and date back only a few years. Considering its small exhibition space, the Fondazione Antonio Mazzotta, directed by the publisher of exhibition catalogues, has already sponsored some ambitious events since its

Left to right, top to bottom: Elio Petrucci, *Catenaccio*, 1992-93. Curves, steel, bronze, silicon wire. Museo Aldo, Satellite of Lava, 1997. Wood, burnt pine, mirror, CD player, and speakers. ca. 67 x 109 x 69". Installation view. Filippo De Pisis, *Natura morta con i melograni* (Still life with pomegranates) 1933. Oil on canvas. ca. 39 1/2 x 25 1/2". Anish Kapoor, *Tuning The Wind Inside Out*, 1995. Steel. ca. 47 1/2 x 47 1/2 x 47 1/2". Installation view.



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Clockwise from left: Alex Piana, *Mil è un gatto (I think I see a pussycat)*, 1997. Dyed feathers and cage. Installation view. Library of Care of, Cusano Milanino (Milan). "Interplace Area," 1996. Installation view. Viafarini, Milan.

founding in 1988. Shows have been devoted to Boccioni, never-before-shown works by Chagall, Andy Warhols from a private collection, the husband-and-wife team Mikhail Larianov-Natalia Goncharova, the Bauhaus, and most recently, the '60s as seen through visual art (design, architecture, and photography). The Fondazione Prada focuses exclusively on contemporary art, and the designer's showroom has featured exhibitions of work from Elio Mattiacci, David Smith, Anish Kapoor (a particularly beautiful installation that included some site-specific sculptures), and Michael Heizer, who radically transformed the space with his gigantic stone slabs.

As for the private galleries, they constitute the most positive and stimulating cultural force in the city, affording the art public firsthand information about the current international art scene. In recent months several galleries, including Salvatore Ala, have reopened; others, such as Gian Enzo Sperone, have inaugurated new spaces; and still others—Lia Rumma, for instance—plan to follow suit.

Claudia Gian Ferrari has completely reorga-

nized. Transforming the gallery inherited from her father into a Novecento archive, she has collaborated with public institutions to organize exhibitions of the works of Mario Sironi, Filippo De Pisis, and Arturo Martini, while devoting her own gallery space to the work of Julian Schnabel, Lawrence Carroll, and, soon, David Salle. Ferrari is also collaborating with Sperone on his new Milanese venture. The well-established Marconi galleries have been passed down from parent to child: Gio Marconi, who succeeded his father Giorgio, has exhibited recent work by Emilio Vedova and soon will present the work of Joan Miró, but he also shows the more provocative work of the Chapman brothers and early Robert Mapplethorpe. Christian Stein is now located in the Palazzo that houses Lucio Fontana's studio and the foundation named after the artist. In this new space we have been treated to a splendid show of Giulio Paolini's work and a selection of Antoni Tàpies' recent pieces.

A few less blue-chip venues merit particular mention, having changed the face of the city with an international perspective that public

institutions persistently ignore. Veterans such as Massimo De Carlo, Le Case D'Arte, and Studio Guenzani have brought us the work of Marlene Dumas, Felix Gonzales Torres, Paul McCarthy, Cindy Sherman, Matt Mullican, and Charles Ray, and recently have shown younger artists such as Lisa Yuskavage. It is thanks in part to these galleries that Italians Maurizio Cattelan and Mario Airò have received international recognition.

Recently, other galleries have followed their example. Monica De Cardenas quickly gained the necessary prestige to dedicate shows to Thomas Struth, Gabriel Orozco, Richard Wentworth, and Chiara Dynys, and Emi Fontana (who shows the work of very young artists, such as the Lovett-Codagnone team) exhibited Renée Green, Rirkrit Tiravanija, and Olafur Eliasson. Fontana must also be credited with mounting an especially significant solo exhibition of the work of Robert Smithson—the only private European gallery to have done so in many years. □

Giorgio Verzotti writes regularly for Artforum. Translated from the Italian by Marguerite Shore.



FIG 12

FIG 12

Patrizia Brusarosco, fondatrice di Viafarini, fotografata da Davide Bonasia all'inaugurazione della mostra di Miltos Manetas *Different Opinion*. Arte degenerata nel 1992. Il pubblico doveva indossare dei baffetti stile Hitler all'ingresso dell'installazione realizzata con le opere scartate da 100 artisti.

Patrizia Brusarosco, founder of Viafarini, photographed by Davide Bonasia at the opening of

Miltos Manetas' exhibition *Different Opinion*. Arte degenerata in 1992. The public had to wear Hitler-style moustache at the entrance of the installation consisting of the discarded works of art by 100 artists.



FIG 13 Patrizia Brusarosco con l'artista Alessandro Pessoli

all'inaugurazione della sua mostra personale *Maelstorm* nel 1992. L'installazione consisteva in 1900 disegni raggruppati nelle serie Giudici e mafia; Cosa nostra; Socialisti; Partitico; Vita sociale; Affari sociali; Voti; Pollaio; Liquidi; Terzo mondo; Vermi; Sacro cuore; Rumori di fondo; Accorpamenti; Scorie; Militari; Comik killer; Storia naturale; Spartizioni territoriali.

Patrizia Brusarosco with the artist Alessandro Pessoli at the opening of his solo show *Maelstorm* in 1992. The installation consisted of 1900 drawings grouped into the series Giudici e mafia; Cosa nostra; Socialisti; Partitico; Vita sociale; Affari sociali; Voti; Pollaio; Liquidi; Terzo mondo; Vermi; Sacro cuore; Rumori di fondo; Accorpamenti; Scorie; Militari; Comik killer; Storia naturale; Spartizioni territoriali.

FIG 13

FIG 14



FIG 15



FIG 14 Lella Valtorta, co-founder of Viafarini, interviewed by Tiziana Ricci for Radio Popolare at the opening of Immagini proiettate in 1991.

Lella Valtorta, co-fondatrice di Viafarini, intervistata da Tiziana Ricci per Radio Popolare all'inaugurazione di Immagini proiettate nel 1991.

FIG 15 della mostra personale di Francesco Lauro, Novocento, a Careof nel 1995.

Zeffirina Castoldi and Mario Gorni – founders of Careof, partner of Viafarini – at the opening of Francesco Lauro's solo exhibition, Novocento, at Careof in 1995.

Zeffirina Castoldi e Mario Gorni – fondatori di Careof, partner di Viafarini – all'inaugurazione

CHAPT # 2 - THE BEGINNINGS



FIG 16



FIG 17

FIG 16

I primi critici che hanno sostenuto Viafarini: da sinistra, Marco Senaldi, Alessandra Galletta e Francesca Pasini.

The first critics who supported Viafarini: from the left, Marco Senaldi, Alessandra Galletta and Francesca Pasini.

FIG 17

Il critico Angela Vettese, membro del comitato scientifico di Viafarini dal 1994; sulla sinistra, gli artisti Vanessa Beecroft e Marco Vaglieri.

Critic Angela Vettese, member of Viafarini's advisory board since 1994; on the left, artists Vanessa Beecroft and Marco Vaglieri.



FIG 18

FIG 18

ITA Il critico Alessandra Pioselli, all'epoca collaboratrice di Viafarini, durante l'inaugurazione della mostra di Maurizio Mercuri Cultura e Società nel 1992. Dettaglio dell'installazione con ritagli dalle brochure aziendali della compagnia di assicurazioni Alleanza.

Critic Alessandra Pioselli, at the time working at Viafarini, during the opening of Maurizio Mercuri's exhibition Cultura e Società in 1992. Detail of the installation with cut-outs from corporate brochures of the Alleanza insurance group.

ENG Paola Di Bello, Framing the Community, Milano, #4, 2006, photographic print, 100 x 70 cm; Courtesy and

FIG 19

Copyright © the artist

Monica Thurner ha collaborato con Viafarini dal 1996. Qui Monica e la sua famiglia sono ritratti dall'artista Paola Di Bello nell'ambito del progetto Framing the Community.

Monica Thurner has been working closely with Viafarini since 1996. Here Monica and her family photographed by the artist Paola Di Bello, within the project Framing the Community.

FIG. 19





FIG 20



FIG 21

FIG 20 - 21 Cartolina inviata da Maurizio Cattelan, 1995

Postcard from the artist Maurizio Cattelan, sending Viafarini "Another saint for your protection", 1995