

CARLA TOLOMEO & FABRIZIO PLESSI

two ways of creating Art



From September 18th through November 15th the Contini Art Gallery will honor two important contemporary Italian artists, Carla Tolomeo and Fabrizio Plessi, both outstanding in their respective arts and who have affirmed themselves artistically on an international level. The exhibition, entitled *due modi di creare Arte* (*two ways of creating Art*) is set-up in the Venice location near Campo Santo Stefano and the Academy bridge, an area of the city known for its museums and the lively artistic and cultural atmosphere.

The exhibition is focused on celebrating the long and productive careers of Tolomeo and Plessi, directing attention towards the capability of these artists to mould, innovate and remodel their art by embracing it and taking possession of the ever-changing instruments and expressions of contemporary art.

Both masters possess a rich curriculum of experiments, studies and research through which they explore means of expression that best represents them; on one hand the refinement of an object used in our daily lives - the chair – by Carla Tolomeo and on the other hand, the combination of nature and digital devices which distinguishes the art of Fabrizio Plessi.

Both have similarly chosen a method of support - a medium - that pertains to day to day life: a seat and a television.

Technique, the experimentation with materials and the expressive originality characterizes the work of Carla Tolomeo, artist who has succeeded in setting herself apart through her sophistication and sumptuous creativity.

Her artistic career moves between numerous techniques, such as painting and sculpture, but what she is immediately recognized for are her original chair-sculptures.

In Carla Tolomeo's art, like Fabrizio Plessi's, the projectual aspect is fundamental for the realization of her artwork: the creative procedure begins with salvaging an antique chair or with the creation of an inedited structural form developed through phases of studies followed by the selection of modules and fabrics, a task that the artist equates with choosing colors for a painting. The modules are drawn, cut and assembled with the main objective being the creation of the sculptural forms that characterize her creativity; designs enriched and personalized with exclusive brocades, lampas and moiré silks.

Tolomeo's creations, again like Plessi's, derive inspiration from nature, but with a totally different vision, preferably a more dream-like and magical approach.

Through skillful dexterity, the precious fabrics are whimsically transformed into a universe of forms and iridescent colors that narrate a fairy-tale world, an enchanted garden populated by oversized flowers and imaginary animals.

One example is the work *The Goldenparrots Harmchair* (2019) composed of a chair-back decorated with parrots in orange tones of iridescent velvets and a seat in delicate embossed Hermès fabrics, or *The Roses Garden* (2019), a loveseat enriched with soft roses in delicate tones as if it were an explosion of springtime.

An elegant combination of baroque and surrealism derived from constant research on Borges' stories and Japanese painting has allowed the artist to meander freely between painting, sculpture and writing, as proof that there is no real border between different art expressions.

The highly appreciated personal exhibition organized by the Contini Art Gallery at the Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation in Venice in 2019 and entitled *Never Rest* was conceived from this approach to total art. The visitor could admire the pictorial production, characterized by delicate brushstrokes and full-bodied colors and the famous armchairs that, no longer being limited to a simple piece of furniture, become works capable of conveying a dimension of totemistic immersion with nature and life. *Blueturtles* (2019), is the result of this artistic and aesthetic research: the velvety and intense blue of the fabrics, inlaid with swatches of Bevilacqua fabric, wraps around the backrest made up of various sized turtles which, positioned to form an embrace, create a spectacular peacock's tail.

Her art features an astonishing modernity, to be admired and interpreted in the round, with continuous surprises, unexpected constructions, unusual colors and evocative shapes. A courageous art form that presents itself in a very personal way, transmitting something magical with it, almost a reference to a rediscovered childhood.

For Fabrizio Plessi, a contemporary alchemist, his goal is to break down the barriers between technology and art and he does so by exploiting the communicative and sophisticated potential of

the screen and the more poetic and emotional one of drawing. The connection between the two seemingly distant elements generates smooth works that address ever-present current issues such as the passage of time, the primordial and indissoluble relationship between man and the environment and social evolution. Among the geological elements, one of the preferred is water whose flow becomes a metaphor for purification and progress, a continuous, ancestral fluidity which transports man towards the future. For example, in his work *Up-Down*, a video-installation composed of four digital panels over two meters high, the continuous image of the flowing water puts the viewer in the condition of being an active observer, stimulating thoughts and emotional feelings.

Fabrizio Plessi's artistic research leads to video-installations which, however, are only a part of his entire creative process. Intimately linked to materials, gestuality and expert manuality, Plessi considers drawing to be an indispensable tool for the creation of his digital sculptures. The projects and studies, which can be admired in the exhibition, are a fundamental part of the artist's work.

An example of this can be seen in the splendid projects for *Digital Boats*, a series of drawings depicting a structure, reminiscent of a wooden canoe inside of which clear and bluish water flows incessantly and softly; it captures the observer and accompanies him towards a reflective and imaginative path. Just like water, the element of lava also characterizes the artist's imagination. In *Lava Project Digital Stone*, the viewer can admire the projects which were exhibited at the *Lava* exhibition in 2008, and organized by the Contini Art Gallery. In this case, the artist deftly created rocks from which lava flows and as if it were animated, hides under the surface until it spills onto the digital image. It flows across and becomes visible, showing itself as an artistic metaphor of the vital link between all the elements.

Biography

Carla Tolomeo was born in Pinerolo (Torino), but grew up and studied in Rome where she began her formation as painter. At an early age, she was encouraged by Giorgio de Chirico and later by Guttuso, Gentilini and Attardi. In 1971 she exhibited in Lugano, finding her source of inspiration in Japanese paintings. Later another illustrious person, Giovanni Testori, would introduce her to the Milanese Cavour Gallery that organized the exhibition, *Le storie di Erodiate (The Stories of Erodian)*.

It is in Milan that Carla began a new and fervid artistic moment by putting to use her studies on the works of grand classical artists such as Vittore Carpaccio, Albrecht Dürer and Leonardo. Between 1976 and 1980 she produced both drawings and oil paintings as well as etchings that she exhibited throughout Europe: Vienna, Geneva, Zurich and Athens. To the memoirist Giacomo Casanova she dedicated designs and etchings, with a text written by Leonardo Sciascia.

After returning from Paraguay, the artist found her center in Milan where alongside her creative work, she would also teach etching at the Academy of Brera and the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice. In 1995 she exhibited a series of *Variations* from works by Mantegna in Mantova. In 1997 Carla was invited to London's Leicester Galleries with an important exhibition: *A Tribute to Leonardo* and in 1999 her works were shown at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Rijeka, and later in Zagreb, guest of the Institute of Italian Culture and Heritage.

In 1997 she began to show her Chairs, which marked a turning point in her artistic production. With these creations, truly a pretext for amusement that became an immediate worldwide success, Tolomeo surprised her collectors. Her artistic philosophy consists in the mutation-transformation of a simple chair to an object of art. In 2002 she collaborated for the first time with the Contini Art Gallery at their location in Cortina d'Ampezzo in a collective exhibition entitled, *L'arte non è una sola (Art is Not Only One)*.

Since 2015 she is represented exclusively by the Contini Art Gallery that has held numerous exhibitions of her chairs in both their Venice and Cortina d'Ampezzo locations as well as promoted her artwork in other places of cultural interest. Amongst her most notable exhibitions, *Ti piacerebbe sederti su un'opera d'Arte? (Would You Like to Sit on a Work of Art? [2015, Venezia-Cortina])*, *The Pleasure Garden of Carla Tolomeo* (Museum of Theater and Music, St. Petersburg, Russia), *Tavolozze d'Autore (The Artist's Palette [2017, Padua, Italy])*, *L'arte di sedersi (The Art of Sitting Down [2018, Aimo Room Concept Store, Lugano])* and *Never Rest* (2019 Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation, Venezia – Contini Art Gallery, Cortina d'Ampezzo).

Biography

Fabrizio Plessi was born on April 3, 1940 in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Following the completion of his early studies at the Artistic Lyceum, he enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice where he would in later years become Head Professor of the Art Faculty. Beginning in 1968, he began to focus his artistic studies around the theme of water, which led to installations, films, videotapes and performances. His works were exhibited for the first time at the Experimental Pavilion of the 35th Art Biennial in Venice in 1970 and again in 1972.

In 1973, during his one-man exhibition at the Vinciana Gallery in Milan, he presented the theme *Acquabiografico*, a collection of many of his works with water themes.

During the following years, Plessi began to dedicate his energies to performances and to display his works in public spaces. 1982 was the year in which his artistic research began to lean more towards the possibilities allowed through the use of video, incorporating three-dimensional structures. This the illusionistic relationship between the representation and reality of a liquid element, amplified and reproduced through the use of mechanical and electronic technology.

In 1984 Plessi participated in the 41st Art Biennial in Venice with the video-installation *Water* and inaugurated the Museum of Contemporary Art in Villeneuve d'Ascq (Lille) with successful exhibition. The following year he inaugurated his first important anthological exhibition which could be defined as his first exhibition of environmental video-installations in Italy, held at the Rotonda della Besana in Milan.

In 1986 the artist represented Italy during the 42nd Art Biennial in Venice and for the occasion created one of his most suggestive works: *Bronx*. The final turning point towards international recognition came the following year with his presentation of the monumental installation, *Roma* held at Documenta 8 in Kassel, Germany.

From 1990 to 2000 Fabrizio Plessi was a professor of Humanization of Technology at the Academy for Media Arts in Cologne, Germany.

For the 51st Art Biennial in Venice Plessi realized a new version of *Mare Verticale (Vertical Sea)* and placed in at the Giardini in front of the entrance to the Biennial. 44 meters in height, it emerged from the waters of the lagoon becoming the symbol of that same Biennial.

In 2011 *Mariverticali*, with the support of Louis Vuitton, was shown at the 54th Art Biennial in Venice in the Venice Pavilion. Six vessels in black steel emerged from darkness while projected on the video screen of the hulls was water flowing with the sound of waves, a symbolism of the seas.

In 2012 with his exhibition *Monumenta* in the Archeological and Landscape Park of the Valley of Temples in Agrigento (Sicily) the artist displayed 9 digital installations while at the same time exhibiting his *LLaut Light* project designs in Venice at the Contini Art Gallery and in Padua, *Il flusso della ragione* at the Palace of Ragione.

On November 29, 2013 the Plessi Museum was inaugurated in the building which was once occupied by the customs house on the border between Italy and Austria. The innovative structure houses an internal hall with a permanent exhibition space dedicated to the art of the maestro, Fabrizio Plessi.

Currently, Fabrizio Plessi lives and works between Venice and Mallorca (Spain).

The exhibition will remain open daily from September 18 through November 15, 2020

Hours: 10:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m. / 2:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

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