

Enrico Castellani, Jannis Kounellis, Chiara Lecca

SPACES AS PLACES AS STAGES

Curated by Lóránd Hegyi

Opening: Thursday 26 October, h 17-21
Until 20 December, 2023

Galleria Fumagalli presents the eighth and final chapter of the exhibition series **“MY30YEARS – Coherency in Diversity”**.

Conceived by art historian **Lóránd Hegyi** for Galleria Fumagalli, the exhibition program pays homage to the thirty-year career of gallery owner Annamaria Maggi. Through the joint exhibition of the works of three artists followed or represented by the gallery, each exhibition invites to overcome traditional categorizations, to reread the works of established masters, to offer new dialogues and to reveal some hidden parallels between research and artistic orientations of different generations.

“Spaces as Places as Stages” intends to revisit the challenges and aesthetic perspectives materialized in the oeuvre of **Enrico Castellani** (Castelmassa, 1930 – Celleno 2017) and **Jannis Kounellis** (Piraeus, Greece, 1936 – Rome, 2017) in the context of re-defining space as a stage of happenings, as a place of imaginary actions, movements and changes. This encounter is enriched by two works by **Chiara Lecca** (Modigliana, 1977), who interprets the transformation of space into a place of appearance of emotional and imaginary subjects, emphasizing certain dramatic and surrealist expressions.

The surprising narrative richness and multi-layered complexity of Chiara Lecca's oeuvre meet the formal purity and silent rigor of the sculptural status of the work of the two masters Enrico Castellani and Jannis Kounellis, who were protagonists of a radical rethinking of the artistic strategies in the early Sixties, and of the redefinition of the relationship between space and time, between material and immaterial realities, emotional and ideal spheres.

While Enrico Castellani intensifies the inner tension between sculptural realities and optical effects, expanding the latent dynamism of the visual structure in order to direct the imagination towards a virtual space that functions as a real place, Jannis Kounellis creates an extreme concentration of explosive, dramatic and cathartic energies, providing a stage-like place for confrontations and imaginary events of encounters and fights. In her personal stage, Chiara Lecca expands the ambivalent and unidentifiable character of her forms which come to life in the fields of fantasy, improbability and indefinability.

By confronting the works of the three artists in a form of provocative and liberating dialogue, new areas of critical rethinking of the historically established categories of art get their chance for free development. The questioning of the categorizations of the “Great Masters” such as Enrico Castellani and Jannis Kounellis opens the way of a creative and subversive revisiting of the art examples of the Sixties, Seventies, Eighties and, at the same time, reveals new possible parallels and unintentional exchanges between different intellectual approaches towards the world.



Biographies

Enrico Castellani was born in Castelmassa (province of Rovigo) in 1930, and died in Celleno in 2017. In the early 1950s he studied art and architecture in Belgium at the Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts and the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. Active in Milan since the late 1950s, he established a friendship and collaboration with Piero Manzoni, with whom, in 1959, he founded the magazine *Azimuth* (published in only two issues). They also founded the almost homonymous Galleria *Azimuth* (exhibiting internationally renowned artists such as Giovanni Anceschi, Agostino Bonalumi, Gianni Colombo, Dadamaino, Heinz Mack, Enzo Mari, Almir Mavignier...), proposing a total rethinking of the previous artistic experience and undermining the dominance of Art Informel. It was in 1959 that he created his first monochrome shaped canvas: the combination of double-curved elements made with nails and planks allowed him to probe the potential of the canvas in maximum tension and to create unprecedented perspectives and shadows. This entirely original venture earned him the title, "father of minimalism" from Donald Judd. Enrico Castellani exhibited in some of the most famous institutions worldwide, and in 2010 received the Praemium Imperiale for Painting from Prince Hitachi, Honorary Patron of the Japan Art Association.

Since 1997 he collaborated with Galleria Fumagalli which held three solo exhibitions (1997, 2001, 2006), some important projects including the presentation at the Pushkin Museum in Moscow (2005), a special monograph documenting his work from 1959 to 2000, and the anastatic reprint of the two issues of *Azimuth* magazine.

Jannis Kounellis was born in Piraeus, Greece in 1936 and moved to Italy in 1956, settling in Rome where he died in 2017. During his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, stimulated by Toti Scialoja, he approached the experiences of American abstract expressionism and European Informal. Even though he did not intend painting in a traditional way, he had always considered himself as a painter. He used to replace the canvas with the iron sheet, where he juxtaposed materials, such as jute, wax, coal, glass, fabrics, coffee powder, etc..., through which the human existence is evoked in its routine and conflict. From the late 1960s, Jannis Kounellis started to be involved in the exhibitions of *Arte Povera*, founded by Germano Celant in 1967. In those years even theatre and scenography became essential features of his research.

The collaboration with Galleria Fumagalli started in 2003 with the first solo show, which was followed in 2005 by the participation in the group exhibition "Visioni" curated by Annamaria Maggi at the ex Chiesa di Sant'Agostino in Bergamo. Dates back to 2009 the second solo, in collaboration with Museo Bernareggi, followed by a volume published by Silvana Editoriale with a text by Franco Fanelli. In 2010 the Gallery actively contributed to the realization of the solo show at Teatro Margherita, Bari; on that occasion a sculpture was commissioned for Piazza del Ferrarese. The exhibition was accompanied by a volume published by Silvana Editoriale with texts by Bruno Corà, Vito Labarile and Annamaria Maggi. On 28 December 2015 at the Scatola Magica - Piccolo Teatro Strehler, the performance *Die Hamletmaschine* by Heiner Müller took place – directed by Theodoros Terzopoulos, with a scene by Jannis Kounellis and curated by Annamaria Maggi and Alexandra Papadopoulou. The following year, the video of the performance and parts of the scene were exhibited at the Gallery. In 2022 director Theodoros Terzopoulos paid homage to Kounellis with the theatre performance "lo" by Etel Adnan at the Scatola Magica – Piccolo Teatro Strehler; the film of it was projected at the Gallery in December 2022.

Chiara Lecca was born in 1977 in Modigliana (Forlì-Cesena), where she lives and works. Since the beginning, she has been experimenting with installation and sculpture, as well as photography and video art. In close contact with nature and the animal realm in her family farm since childhood, she has been aiming to highlight the fracture between nature and human being, made by contemporary society. The animal element, in particular, becomes subject for a semiotic alteration process, resulting in alienating and ironic forms. In 2016 she was a finalist in the XVII Cairo Prize and exhibited at Palazzo Reale in Milan. In 2020 she founded the collective *Clarulecis*. Her works have been exhibited in various institutions in Italy and Europe: in 2019 she was artist in residence at MACRO Asilo in Rome, in 2018 at the Italian Cultural Institute in Madrid, in 2012 in the county of Kassel on the occasion of EUARCA – International European Art Camp, and in 2008 at the Fondazione Spinola Banna per l'Arte in Turin. She had solo exhibitions held in institutions such as: Museo Statale di Mileto (2021); Museo Carlo Zauli, Faenza (2017); Collezioni Comunali D'Arte – Palazzo D'Accursio, Bologna (2017); Ghisla Art Collection, Locarno (2016); Naturkundemuseum Ottoneum, Kassel (2015); Villa Rusconi, Castano Primo, Milan (2013); Palazzo del Monte – Banca di Romagna, Faenza (2013); MAR – Museo d'Arte della Città, Ravenna (2010); Kunst Meran, Merano (2009).

She has been represented by Galleria Fumagalli since 2008, when her solo exhibition "...Del maiale non si butta niente", followed in 2010 by the publication of "Quintoquarto" with texts by Martina Cavallarini and Valerio Dehò. In 2023, on the occasion of the Milan Design Week, the collective *Clarulecis* brought to the gallery the sound & dance performance "Animals & Trees" with a workshop for printing on fabric.

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