

Maxi Obexer

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Pino Pascali

# GOOD-BYE, MOTHER

**Maxi Obexer**  
Berlin

*Translated from the German*

She sits inconspicuously at a table for two, surrounded by larger, noisy tables that host the first of the groups that have begun to arrive for Easter vacations. The extra chairs have been removed from her little table and given to the bigger tables. When she looks up from her meal, she faces neither a table-mate nor an empty chair. She looks out at the room, and the whole room looks at her. You can tell that she comes from a good, bourgeois family. You see it in the slow-motion movement with which she carries her fork to her mouth and cleanly places the piece of meat in it. Avidity here is a long, sustained tug of the reins, and a sip from a glass a libation.

I observe her, since again and again she glances obliquely across the room in my direction. Her gaze might even be described as fixed. Whenever she ever so slightly drops her head in order to carry the fork to her mouth, her first glance on lifting it returns again toward me. Only once did she cast a look at the other two people at my table.

What can she now be thinking about me? What does she see? Or, simply, why is she always staring in my direction? She wants to see in me some person she hates, or loves, or both. Some person who now in her mind jumps first across one synapse, and then another, in all directions, again and again, and on landing always sparks some story. Once again, she's staring at me. I catch her at it and return the stare. She feels that she's been caught, abashedly lifts the corner of her napkin to her lips, and briefly nods.

Then she has finished. She empties her glass, lays her napkin beside her plate, clears her throat. She suddenly stands up and crosses the room in my direction. She bends forward and asks if she can briefly have a word with me. I offer her the chair next to mine. "Please excuse me for disturbing you. And forgive me too for staring. Surely you found that unpleasant. You remind me of my daughter. You see, I haven't seen her for many years. She has broken off all contact with me. I don't know where she lives, I don't know how she's doing. "I made mistakes that today I'm sorry for, every day. I didn't protect her when she needed it, and perhaps I never really told her that I love her. Forgive me for telling you all of this. I'd like to ask you

something. You so much resemble my daughter and... she never said good-bye to me, she just left. So would you do me a favor?" I briefly glanced at her. "What would that be?" "Would you accompany me to the door and say, "Good-bye, mother"? Then I'll leave the room and ask no more of you. I promise." "You want me to go with you..." "Just accompany me to the door. Please. And then say good-bye to me. The way a daughter would." I nodded. "Yes, I can do this favor." Then she returned to her table. She picked up her purse and went to the cash register, spoke briefly with the waiter, asked for her coat, and allowed him to help her on with it.

I rose from my chair, walked over to her, and accompanied her to the door. Departing, she bent in my direction and softly kissed my cheek. "Take care of yourself." I said, "Good-bye, Mother," and fleetingly placed a kiss on her cheek. I returned to my table, and she appeared again in the door, saying, "Good-bye, daughter," and waving across the room. "Good-bye, mother," I replied, surprised at just how easily the words crossed my lips. Then she left the room.

Shortly later, we too went to pay our bill. "Separate or together?" "Separate." My bill was a great deal more than I had expected: a hundred and fifty Euro. "Excuse me. We wanted separate bills." "I have given you separate bills." "But this is a bill for two meals. I only had one." "Your mother told us that you'd be taking care of hers as well." "But, that's not... that wasn't my mother." The waiter looked at me in astonishment. "But didn't you just say 'Mother' to your... mother?" I looked toward the door. "Okay. Everything's fine."

Issue 05  
April 2008  
Published by MUSEION  
Museum of modern and  
contemporary art  
Bozen/Bolzano

www.museion.it

Letters for possible publication are warmly welcomed and should be sent to journal@museion.it

Letters and unsolicited contributions will be published at the editors' sole discretion. The editors likewise reserve the right to edit, shorten and otherwise amend letters and contributions.

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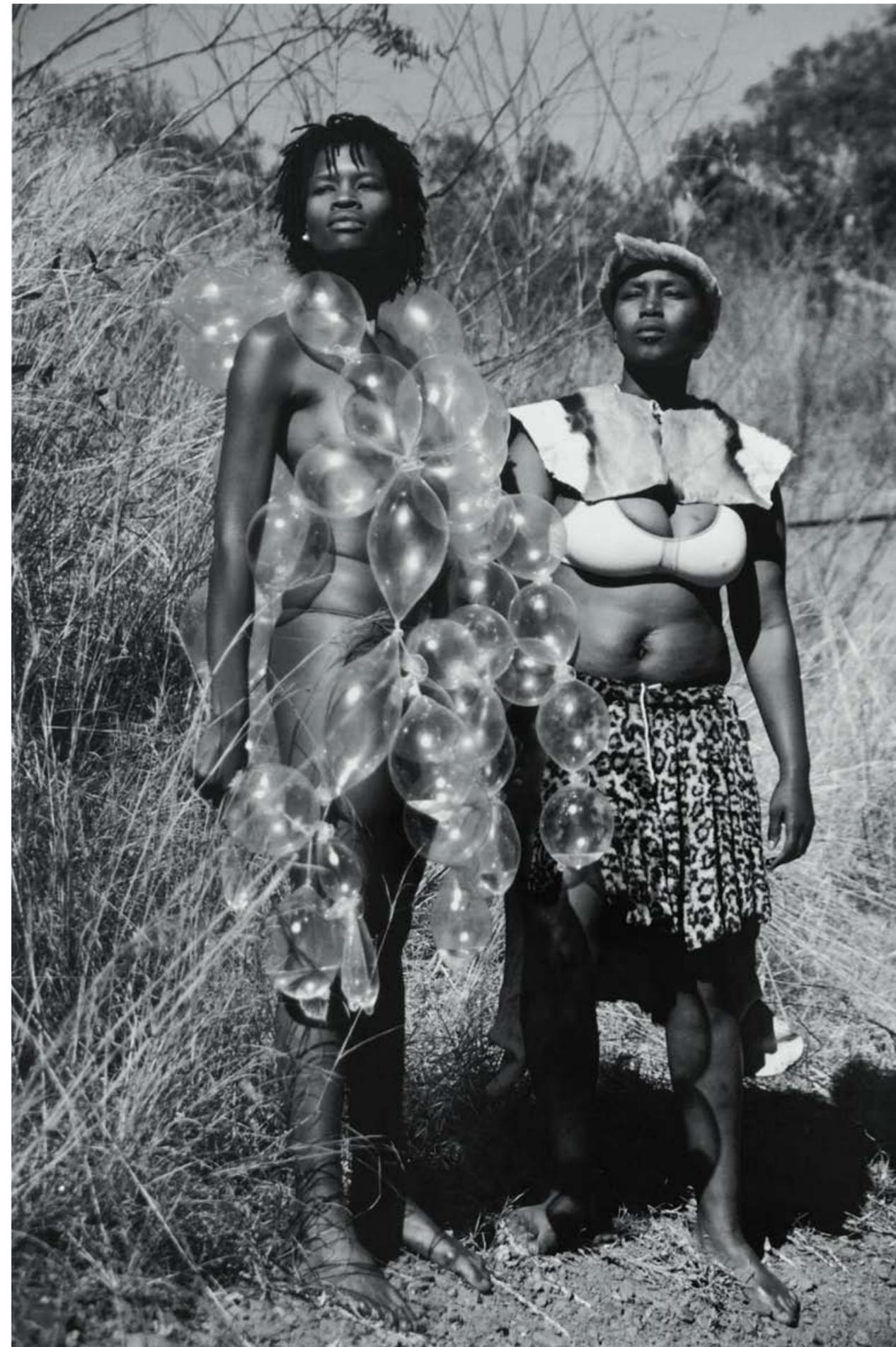
**Graphics**

typeklang - Bolzano

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Last page:  
Pino Pascali (1935 Bari – 1968 Rome)  
Invitation art intermedia Cologne, 1968



# A SUNDAY MORNING NEAR THE CENTRAL STATION IN MILAN

Fabrizio Gallanti  
Milan

*Translated from the Italian*

Milan's Central Station is surrounded by great open spaces which the city names “piazzas,” and which indeed are in line with such a term. All the same, they are very different from one another. The station's mastodontic building in white stone lies along the oblique north-east axis that governed the layout of the railroad tracks in the nineteenth century. Essentially, that layout has not since changed. Observing the station from outside, there's a vast stone-paved space called Piazza Duca d'Aosta where Via Vettor Pisani comes to an end directly in front of the station's main facade. There are other smaller open spaces on the building's flanks: on the left (the west), Piazza Quattro Novembre; on the right (the east), Piazza Luigi di Savoia. The names of these spaces are strange, since they remained unchanged in the passage from the Kingdom to the Republic of Italy, immediately after the Second World War. Strictly speaking, the Duca d'Aosta is no specific person, but the head of the Savoia-Aosta family, a collateral branch of the Savoia royal family. Piazza Quattro Novembre takes its name from the date of the armistice that concluded the First World War. Luigi di Savoia was the son of Amedeo di Savoia, king of Spain, at the end of complex maneuvers of succession, for only two years, from 1871 to 1873. Luigi di Savoia (Duca degli Abruzzi) was an explorer (the North Pole, China, Singapore, the Rwenzori Mountains between Uganda and the Congo—he was the first person to reach their summit, in 1906—and also Nepal) and in any case a paladin of the positivistic nineteenth-century vision that lent support to Europe's campaigns of colonization. He died in Somalia in 1933, and was buried there, as he explicitly had asked to be, in the model village that he founded in 1926, and to which he gave his name: Villaggio Duca degli Abruzzi. Today it is known as Giohar. There's a nearly ironic coincidence is the persistent dominance—even if reversed—of Luigi di Savoia's elitarian cosmopolitanism in the role that the piazza plays today: it's now the unofficial meeting place for foreign immigrants, generally illegal, and often in search of work. At the start of the twentieth century, Luigi di Savoia constantly proceeded from one exotic adventure to the next, and now the “peoples” he encountered are here in Milan.

I've heard it said on more than one occasion that on Sunday morning Piazza Luigi di Savoia turn into the meeting place of the Russian-speaking community, and overflows with all sorts of people and activities: hundreds of people, with impromptu barbers cutting the hair of clients seated on the benches, the sale of typically Russian produce, trucks and SUVs from all sorts of distant places, coming and going. Most of the people found there are women: Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Lithuanian, Estonian, Lettish, Moldavian. I left home at ten o'clock. It was drizzling, but I thought the weather would improve. It's a ten-minute walk to the piazza. In the streets adjacent to the station, I notice a number of groups of four or five women who might be Slavic. Generally middle-aged, with short hair, dyed blonde or copperish. Coats and raincoats are decorous, and reveal a certain taste, albeit achieved with limited resources. They wear no make-up, or at least no heavy make-up. As I listen to their talk, I seem indeed to recognize some Slavic language: soft tones, a drawl, musical rhythms. They seem to be in good spirits, and are dressed in what

most likely are their Sunday clothes. They look robust, not fat. Physically solid. I imagine that their visit to the area near the station is the start of a day off, a Sunday, a day to be spent with friends.

In addition to their purses, all of them carry some sort of bag, in cloth or plastic, stuffed full. The way they carry these bags around, close to their bodies, dangling from their bent arms and pressed against their bellies, seems old-fashioned. Their hair-dos, clothes and carriage seem in general to belong to bygone times. After walking about a bit, I'm once again in front of the building's east facade. A series of metal shed-roofs and parallel cement platforms define the pick-up areas for boarding taxis. To the right of this space, a painted fence, dark blue, hides the building site where work is being done on the station's renovation. Beyond this fence, which closes off a trapezoidal area that holds the base of a steel scaffolding, there's the true and proper space of Piazza Luigi di Savoia. It's empty. It's a rectangular area, about a meter lower than street level. The shorter sides of the rectangle, which measures some fifty by a hundred meters, sport two sort of modernistic fountains, each with a kind of giant cup that holds up something like a battery of Roman amphorae, in cement. The fountains are encircled by concentric stairs. One of the fountains is working, spewing water, the other is off. There are flowerbeds, with evergreens. At the edge of this rectangle, on the side nearest to the station, are three lanes for parking, and a couple for auto transit. One of these parking areas is for the busses to Milan's airports.

The only person in the piazza is a girl with long hair, and dressed in an elegant, violet-colored raincoat, a skirt that stops just above her knees, and tall, black boots. She talks excitedly into her mobile phone, speaking a language with much the same sound as what I'd heard from the women before. I begin to walk around the rectangle. After a while, I understand why the piazza is empty. There's a squad car parked at every corner: either the police, or the carabinieri, or the local traffic police. (That's what's written on the sides of the cars.) On the short side of the piazza, toward the south, there's a series of kiosks—newspapers, souvenirs, a small stand for coffee—and groups of policemen are stationed there, in anti-riot uniforms, as well as a number of traffic patrolmen. The traffic police wear various kinds of uniforms: a traditional sort of get-up with a large, white-brimmed hat; others are dressed in pale blue jumpsuits and hats that might be baseball caps. They're posted next to amphibious vehicles, and also wear pistols and billy clubs at their waists. They look a bit ridiculous, as though their uniforms and equipment had been designed to express a toughness that their faces, however, don't express. I catch a snatch of conversation between the state police and the traffic patrolmen on the features of the various different types of billy clubs they carry, and the kinds of physical damage they inflict. Instead of moving into the square, the Slavic women remain in the shade of a couple of plane trees, not far from the kiosks. They pull things out of their bags—clothes and skeins of cloth embroidered with Cyrillic letters—exchanging them with one another, or selling them. Some of them sit on the protective barriers around the trees, but always keeping a tight grip, even here, on their bags. At a certain point, three officers begin to amble amongst the women, asking for a look at the contents of their bags. The talk between the women and the officers remains

subdued; and having seen what the women's bags in fact contain, the officers withdraw. I begin to move around again. Shortly afterwards, I see that the whole scene is a giant choreography of slowly-paced movements, modulated by the comings and goings of the various forces of order. At every corner of the streets around the piazza, leaning against the walls of all the various buildings, including the station, there are small groups of men. They might be waiting for something, or somebody. They're all looking off in the same direction, which is the direction in which the cars are moving. There's no conversation between them. Mostly they're wearing jackets, jeans, and tennis shoes, and seem older and more mature than the police. Nearly none of them smoke. None of them carry a bag or wear a back pack. I couldn't define their nationality. Thy could just as easily be Italian, North African, Romanian, Kurds, Turks, or Slavs. There are no oriental faces among them, and you hear no Spanish. The only notable thing about them is the compact groups in which they stand. Every now and then a car comes to a halt, and two or three of the men climb into it. A few large SUVs are parked in an area with a gas station, and stocky men speak Russian into their mobile phones. They wear leather jackets and elegant black shoes, clearly more expensive than those on the feet of the men at the corners. A small white van is parked nearby. The door on the driver's side is open. Two men standing at the side of the van are speaking intensely with a couple of girls, who then climb into it. Its windows are covered by gray curtains, so you can't see inside it. After a couple of minutes, two more girls show up, and then move off after speaking briefly with the men. Then three more. The girls climb in, the van moves off, the men walk away. There's a post office on the other side of the piazza, the work of the very same architect who built the station, or the “travelers' hall,” as it's described in the station's official language. It has been abandoned for the last five years. About a hundred and fifty people, mostly men, some of them Africans, are standing on the sidewalk in front of the post office, as well as at the bus stops. All of them are looking in my direction, or towards Piazza Luigi di Savoia, which lies behind me, still empty.

Within the space of only a couple of minutes, all of these people move to one side of the building, forming a compact crowd on the sidewalk. The people at the edge of the crowd stand with their backs to the group, creating a kind of compact cohort. I cross the street, and slip into the crowd: within the circumference of the human barrier, an instant market has formed. Planks of wood covered with white cloth display accessories for cell phones, telephone cards, items of clothing. The language spoken is Italian, but the people are from various places. Beyond the area of the improvised kiosks, a group of people stands tightly packed around two men who speak with a Neapolitan accent, saying simply, “You, yes,” “You, no.” The ones who're told, “No” gesticulate and ask, “Why? What's wrong with me?” They all seem very angry. I move away quickly, before anyone notices me. Beyond this gathering, there were also other small groups, mainly men, speaking Italian, but with many different accents, and they seemed to be negotiating sexual encounters with much younger boys. A man graying at the temples says to one of them, “You say you don't want to any more, but every Sunday I find you here again.” A number of improvised couples leave the area, on foot, or in a car. I retrace my steps, towards the piazza. A small group of policemen and carabinieri

advance unhurriedly toward me, their plastic helmets clamped down on their heads. A number of plain-clothes officers walk along with them, carrying an enormous radio, with long black antennas that lazily oscillate. I stop at the island halfway across the street and turn around to look behind me. The crowd and the market are slowly dissolving; people slip away between parked cars and climb into busses. The carabinieri and policemen slowly cross the street. Nobody runs, nobody cries out, everything takes place in silence. The police have something to say to a couple of people, who reply by pulling out plastic cards, or folded pieces of paper, and then they move away. Others, at a nod of one of the agents, are ushered toward the post office. There's no physical contact. Many of the people who before were at the market are now standing close to me, on the island, and observing the scene. A few minutes later, seven or eight people are lined up against the side wall of the post office. A number of carabinieri, some of them huge, stand around and observe them. One by one, the persons standing against the wall are frisked, and then led off toward a paddy wagon—the police, not the carabinieri—and told to climb into it. One of the policemen imitates what looks like the movement of a soccer player, arousing the laughter of his colleagues, who don't seem much interested in what's taking place. At this point everybody is standing still, immobile: the police on one side of the street, on the other the immigrants (or foreigners? or illegal workers? or seasonal workers? or clandestines?). No one pays attention to anyone else. Another ten minutes slip by, suspended. Then I set out toward home. Close to my house, someone has hung a banner across the street, above the stripes where pedestrians cross, from one traffic light to another: “Italy for the Italians,” signed “Forza Nuova.”



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"ELLE", decembar 1975.



1967. Prag. Sa Jagodom na židovskom groblju.  
With Jagoda at Jewish graveyard in Prag.

# HISTORIAN OF DOUBT 6

Vincent Labaume  
Clichy, France

March 17, 2008

*Some people  
must be wondering  
what I'm doing here.*  
Eric Cantona

Translated from the French

I've been in this reduced routine of hackneyed proverbs and imitative gestures for so long that I wonder whether I haven't become totally stupid, narrow-minded and incapable of thinking.

My intellectual faculties being barely stimulated, they have become lax like the muscles of an athlete who abruptly stops competing. Generating if only a gratuitous hypothesis concerning even an insignificant fact or event that I happened to witness, requires an incomparably astounding effort on my part, as if I needed the energy of a nuclear power plant to boil an egg for myself. If my understanding is breaking down, my sense memory is not doing much better. I often remember the things that left a mark on me – astounding unspeakable things – because of their ferocity, scope, or mediocrity ... But aside from the fact that nothing comes to mind at the moment, I don't really know in what way their emotional charge concerns me. It's not so much the sharpness of their imprint on my memory that is lacking as their natural attachment to a particular intimate affection that is no longer there, and this causes me to rack my brain for hours on end wondering whether I really lived through the memories or whether they were plainly and simply accidental interferences in my cortex. Since I cannot seem to connect them directly to even punctually felt emotions, I'd rather not retrieve them at all. If I stir them up, I'm afraid people might take me for the kind of hardened criminal that a judge tries to move by reminding him that his sick old mother is present in the courtroom and who straightaway and unashamedly replies: *I'm not into sentiment.*

How long has it been since I was "into" sentiment? When I think of the gallons of tears that I used to shed at the mention of atrocities committed by barbarian regimes or the agony of a dog, I cannot help but wonder at my curt dry reaction to news of the death of people who are close to me or of the accelerated demise of entire species. Does nothing *felt* matter to me anymore? Have I lost the key to the garden of feelings that, deep down inside, each and every person obstinately cultivates? But is it even possible for a human being to live without this mental refuge, without this inner shell, secret and secreted like the outer shell of mollusks through the slow digestion of the bitter harshness

of life? Probably not ... although it is not impossible that some people, to subsist in the crowd, may not need the cerebral ties that connect them to the comforting but also embarrassing weight of affects. It suffices for them to be inhabited either by the detached rapture of angels or else, to the contrary, by the depraved dependence of demons. The steamless breath of the Most High or the stringless marionnettes of the Most Low.

Several years ago, I was interviewing a popular music artist for a radio show, and suddenly he broke down right in front of my eyes, right after I asked him a question about the meanders of his sensibility. His paced slowed, his voice thickened, and finally he uttered a few incomprehensible words before his face, as ghastly pale as a wax replica, froze altogether into a devastatingly painful smile. Taken aback and powerless, I felt like I was watching (inasmuch as such a phenomenon can be verified) the spatial and temporal collapse of a person who appeared to be glowing with health. What kind of abuse could he have done? Was a powerful molecule restructuring his DNA and reconfiguring it differently? I lost myself in conjecture. But more fascinated than alarmed by this abrupt fossilization, I dared not intervene lest I break such a curious spell; a hasty awakening could have had distressing consequences, in the way that snapping a sleepwalker out of his sleep can be devastating. So I let myself be gradually overcome by this odd lethargic resorption. My last question seemed to have been addressed to some forgotten interlocutor some years before.

I can't say exactly how long this shared fossilization lasted, long enough in any case for a slow procession of images, recalled from a variety of aesthetic sources, to flash by in a slideshow superimposed over my dumbfounded gaze. What appeared before my eyes first, if my memory serves me well, was an anatomically athletic Michelangelesque ephebe caught in a languid torsion; then one of these Caravaggesque *bardassi*, mouth half-opened, chest arrested in a movement of simultaneous advancing and recoiling; then a hooligan from the faubourgs photographed by Brassai in the thirties, standing backlit in a pose of pure bodily obstruction; then the image of the California performance artist Chris Burden, head shaven, dressed in a FBI uniform, trying to keep up appearances

when he had a star-shaped stud hammered into his sternum; and lastly, after a good many other pictures that I can no longer recall, an all too real waiter who, some years earlier, had abruptly fossilized in front of me, simpering as he tried to tell me something about his past – or maybe simply about problems with his identity documents ... He stood their frozen like suspended orgasm or like a being pending terrestrial layoff.

But by now this memory, aroused too long, is clouding my mind. A frenzied rhythm wells up from it that, if I don't watch out, would drive me to throw myself face down on the ground, with my hands holding my ankles, and set to rotating around the crushed axis of my solar plexus. I'd look like an upside down car, whose rear trunk has an exaggerated curve that calls to mind an ox ready for quartering ...

Good thing I don't know how to drive.

*to be continued ...*



Jean-Luc Moulène, *The Tree with a Ghost*, Paris, January 16, 2008

# THE ART SYSTEM IN SÃO PAULO AND NEW STAKES

Laymert Garcia dos Santos  
São Paulo  
Brazil

Translated from the French

This year, Brazil was the special guest at the ARCO fair in Madrid. In addition to the usual presence of Brazilian galleries, a joint effort was made by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture, Spanish art institutions, and the private sector to give Madrid the opportunity to show the diversity and the quality of our contemporary production, both at the fair and in several other places in the capital.

The operation was successful: several artists sold works to major museums (Tate, Reina, Sofia, MOMA) and business was brisk for art dealers. But it would be fantastic if the initiative and the success did not stop there, if instead it triggered the “awakening” of our art system in view of the growing interest in Brazilian and Latin-American art on the international scene. Indeed, the discussions that came up during the experts forum indicated that this system does not measure up to the events, that its actors do not fully comprehend the necessity of building a common strategy with the State, and that if the logic underlying the system does not change, it will soon be overwhelmed and outflanked.

Our art system does not work in creative spasms anymore, what Hélio Oiticica provocatively yet quite precisely termed “diarrhea” in reference to the irregular, even erratic, development of Brazilian visual output until the seventies. There is now a continuous production of quality art; there are museums and galleries in the country’s main cities, and there is a relatively organized market. Yet Brazil’s elite does not seem ready to seize the opportunities that are opened to them in a very rapidly changing world. They seem too narrow-minded and slow.

Let’s take a look at what’s going on in São Paulo, which is both the central pole of the Brazilian art system and an important nexus in the constellation of metropolises and cities that form an international

system now reconfigured as a globalized network. São Paulo appears to act as a sort of interface for the communication and transduction between the Brazilian system and the global network. But if we zoom in on São Paulo’s art system, what we see is a rather disturbing situation, despite the appearance of normality.

The art business in the city has been thriving in recent years, but an unavowed crisis of legitimacy has been gaining ground. There have been a string of scandals compromising some important figures, and, aside from the Pinacothèque, which is increasingly becoming the point of reference on the art scene, the main institutions seem to be sinking into paralysis and mediocrity: the São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP) is in a black hole (this became patent after the recent scandalous theft of paintings by Picasso and Portinari); the Museum of Modern Art, which once played an important role offering well-commissioned exhibitions, seems to be adrift; and the 28th Biennial of São Paulo, which should be opening its doors next October, would have collapsed altogether if it wasn’t for the courage and intelligence of its new commissioner, Ivo Mesquita, who proposes to turn the event into an opportunity to discuss the meaning and role of the institution in the city, the country, the continent and within the framework of the international visual arts agenda.

One must therefore admit that the issues being raised in the São Paulo’s art system are not of the same nature as those that other poles of the globalized network are addressing. In Germany and in France, for example, museum and contemporary art centers do not seem to have to fight for their survival. If I am not mistaken, their questions are, “What is the future of museums?” and “How should one conceive of the museum of the future?” Which means that, for them, the issue is not of survival, but of becoming – since, after all, everybody agrees that there is

a need to change parameters in order to be in tune with the demands of the new historical formation that is emerging.

Now, at the same time as São Paulo’s art system is grappling with its dilemma (Will it continue to turn away from its internal problems or will it take up the challenge raised by its crisis?) a deep-seated movement is taking shape that should be noted and taken seriously, for it can cause a redistribution of the cards and of the roles of all the actors in the game.

The question can be asked in the following way: How can we believe that São Paulo’s art system is solid when it is losing its capacity to promote its own aesthetic and commercial criteria with regard to contemporary output in Brazil? In other words: Is it possible not to see that the rules of the game are escaping its grasp, precisely when promotion is at stake?

We should start by admitting that neither the public nor the private sectors have given the legacy of the two most important Brazilian contemporary artists, Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, the treatment it deserves. Anyone looking for a far-reaching or systematic contact with Clark’s work will not find a permanent exhibition showing a representative selection of her oeuvre in any of the big Brazilian cities. Moreover, those who are acquainted with the Centro de Arte Hélio Oiticica in Rio know the difficulties and limitations that it has encountered since its creation in 1996. In my opinion, it was precisely this impotence on the part of public authorities and the lack of interest of the private sector that enabled Houston, Texas to become *the place* where one can see Oiticica, the center from which his work has started to exert its influence on the international scene.

Brazilians do not conceive of this transfer as the loss of an aesthetic, cultural and, in the case of Oiticica, environmental resource of utmost importance for their own experience of contemporary art. They do not realize that they are definitively yielding to foreign countries and that all that will be left to them is the bogus “ufanism” with regard to the “Brazilian-artist-recognized-in-the-First-World.” Thus, they don’t consider it odd that the critical catalogue of Oiticica’s work was published by the International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICCA) of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (the museum published the first volume on the occasion of its exhibition *Hélio Oiticica: The Body of Color* held in 2006; the year after, the exhibition traveled to the Tate Modern in London).

The transfer to the United States, and more specifically to Houston, of the power to promote Oiticica’s work, in both aesthetic and marketing terms, is not an isolated case. When we look at the list of the artist’s exhibitions, we can see that his works have been shown by North American galleries and museums every year since the end of the nineties. But it is Houston more than any other city that has gained a hold over the artist’s promotion, as if the leverage over the artist’s work was the starting point of a more extensive operation. The museum’s management

is quite clear as far as its objectives are concerned: “The Museum of Fine Arts’ mission is to promote the appreciation and comprehension of Latin America and of Latin American visual arts, in addition to its role in the development of modern and contemporary art.” Houston, the closest big North American city to Latin America has thereby become the center from which the meaning of the continent’s output and its place in the international circuit will be redefined.

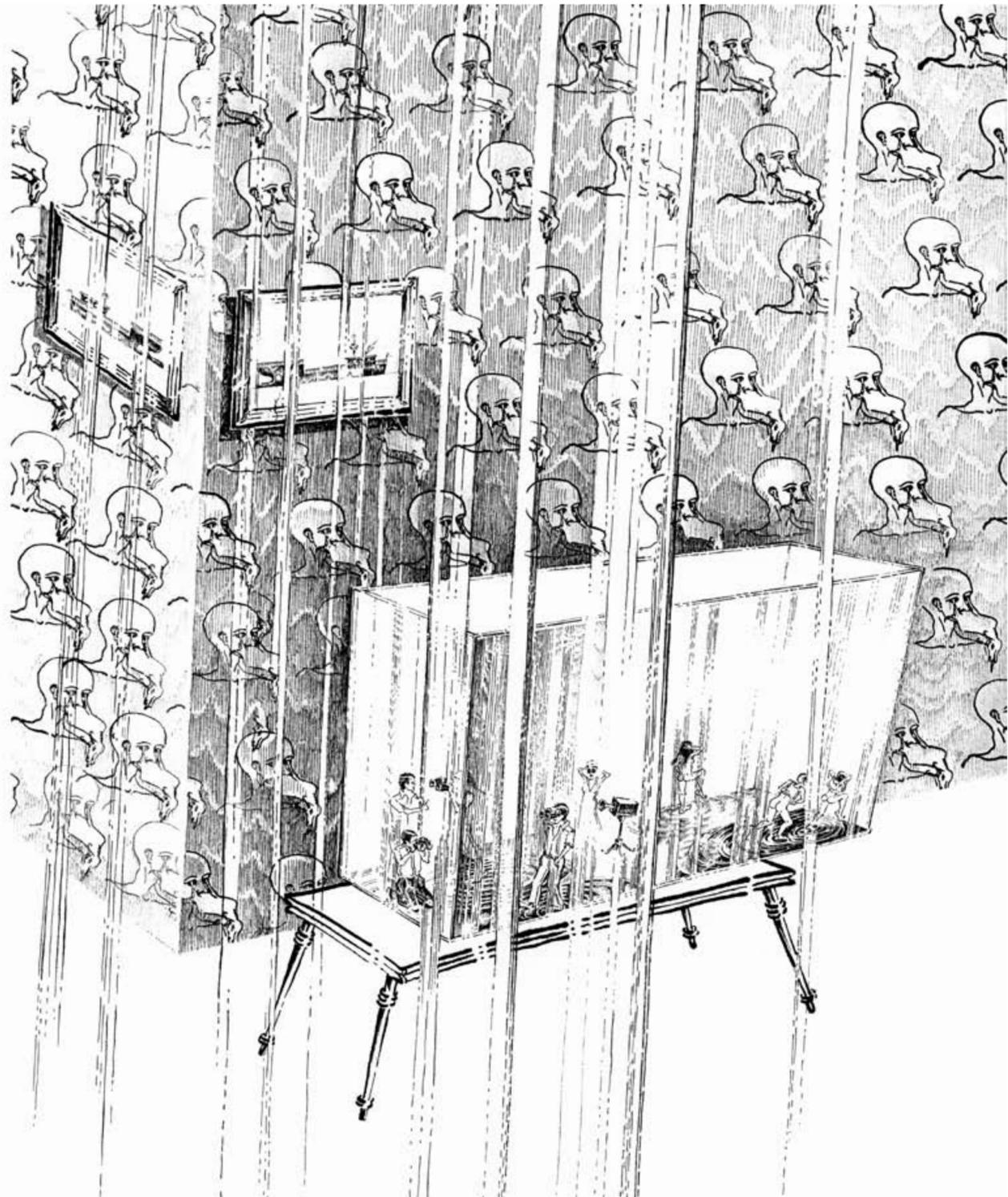
The next step was initiated in March 2007, when the Museum of Fine Arts bought the Adolpho Leirner collection, reputedly the most important collection of Brazilian constructive art. At the time of the transaction, a few dissenting voices protested against the departure of more than a hundred works of reference, essential for the comprehension of the post-war production and, above all, for the affirmation of the *specific difference* that characterizes the creation and place of Brazilian art within modern and contemporary production.

The Leirner collection was shown last year at the Museum of Fine Arts. But the museum did not restrict itself to the purchase and exhibition of works. In 2003 the ICCA started the project “Recovering the Critical Sources of Latin American/ Latino Art,” an international cooperation program led by the museum that brings together teams of experts from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, and the United States to restore, collect and digitalize all the important material concerning the continent’s twentieth-century art (about 6,000 documents including manifestos, letters, manuscripts, critical texts, etc.) and to do so in Houston. In Brazil, the University of São Paulo is in charge of conducting the project – a protocol signed by the Museum of Fine Arts and the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo set aside 500,000 euros over a period of two years for the Brazilian part of the project, which will restore, amongst other things, a book of collages handcrafted by Lygia Clark in 1963. All the material thus brought together will be available in 2008 in the Houston museum, in the form of a public data bank. The information will also serve as a base for a series of books on Latin American art (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese).

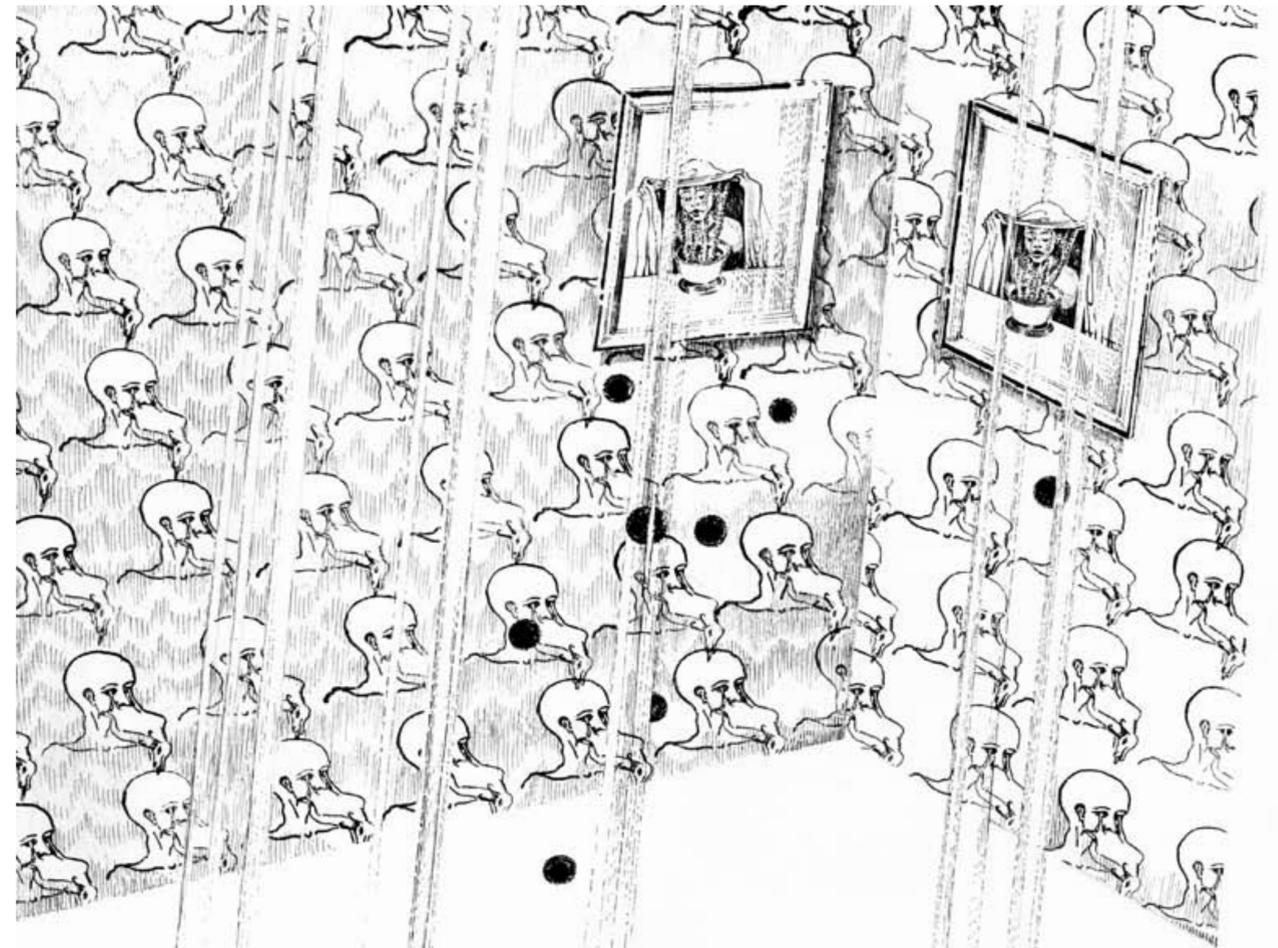
It is obvious that, as a whole, such an operation – engaging North-American and British museums, New York galleries, partnerships with Latin American institutions, in addition to scholars and critics – goes beyond the “leverage” over Clark and Oiticica’s work, here considered as paradigmatic cases. The scope of what is beginning to take shape is much more important. It is clear that the goal here is not to question the meaning or the quality of this work, which I consider to be a priority. But all the same one must admit that, in this enterprise, the role held by the Brazilian art system is limited to, at worst, that of a spectator, and, at best, that of a secondary actor in a game for which we bring the works, the expertise, and even the financial resources to promote somewhere else the development of a new niche explored by the “creative industries.”

We do not have the ability to conceive of such an operation in our own favor; worse still, we do not even suspect that such leverage is a part of the new business models of advanced capitalism and information societies. We are delighted with the fact that others undertake to “upgrade” Brazilian artistic production, through the internationalization and capitalization of Brazilian assets. And we do not wonder about the meaning of this reconfiguration.

A reconfiguration which, may I also add, is not the exclusive prerogative of visual arts: the literary critic Roberto Schwarz is, at this precise moment, finishing a book on the meaning of Machado de Assis’ transformation into a great universal writer, founded on the apparatus criticus built in American universities. It is evident that Machado deserves this “promotion” – that is not the issue. The Brazilian people must realize that the entry of the writer in the pantheon of universal literature is being accomplished by draining his work of its Brazilian nature and disqualifying the formulation of a Brazilian perspective on it.



these eyes are in discord whether they are doing it from behind or from before  
when crying, when drinking, when sleeping, when looking



every tear has been drunk before

# BURY ME DEAD

Jalal Toufic  
Istanbul  
Turkey

“Another disciple said to him, ‘Lord, first let me go and bury my father.’ But Jesus told him, ‘Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’” (Matthew 8:21-22). The grave problem with this is that very few dead people can legitimately assert: “I know when one is dead and when one lives” (Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 5.3.261). The dead are far less proficient than the living at detecting whether someone is definitely dead, and hence tend on a substantial number of occasions to bury the living too. With the coming of Jesus Christ, many people became alive. Jesus Christ, “the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25), made of burial alive at the moment of organic demise a fundamental condition. The two earliest examples are: Lazarus, since the latter, through his belief in Jesus, was alive (“He who believes in me will live, even though he die” [John 11:25]) when he was buried (“Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up” [John 11:11]); and, obviously as well as paradigmatically, Jesus Christ. “Jesus said, ‘This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation’” (Luke 11:29-30; cf. Matthew 12:40: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”). Basically, every real Christian is buried alive. Consequently Chesterfield’s “All I desire for my own burial is not to be buried alive” is a most unchristian statement and desire. From another perspective, a purely biological one, what if someone were to suffer a cardiac arrest or go into a coma? Will the dead know that he is not definitely dead, that he can still be successfully resuscitated? Most probably not. Consequently, they will proceed to bury him. In Hitchcock’s *The Trouble with Harry*, 1955, Captain Wiles fires three bullets while hunting rabbits. Looking for the rabbit or rabbits he hopes he has shot, he instead discovers that one of his bullets hit a “No Shooting Sign” and a second punctured a beer can. He then comes across a man lying on the earth, with blood seeping from his forehead. “What in Hades were you doing here anyway?” He searches through the jacket of the unconscious man and finds a letter with his name and address: Mr. Harry Worp, 87 Maple Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts. “Well, Worp, you’re a long way from home.” How far is Hades from Boston? “With the looks of it, you won’t get back for Christmas.” He decides to bury him incognito. But while dragging him to a secluded spot, he is seen by Miss Gravely. She asks him: “What seems to be the trouble, Captain?” “Well, it’s what you might call an unavoidable accident. He’s dead.” Is getting shot in the woods by a hunter firing at rabbits an unavoidable accident? Not really. What might be an example of an unavoidable accident? Dying of a heart seizure while lying half-naked in the bathtub. Lightly kicking the body and detecting no response, Miss Gravely replies: “Yes. I would say that he was—of course that’s an unprofessional opinion.” She leaves after promising to tell no one. On the point of resuming his task, he hears approaching voices. He hides and sees Mrs. Rogers along with her child, who had discovered the body before Captain Wiles and had immediately run to fetch his mother, head toward the body. Her child now asks her: “Why don’t he get up and do something?” “He’s asleep. He’s in deep sleep—a deep, wonderful sleep.” “Will he get better?” “Not if we’re lucky.” Exeunt mother and son... only for a tramp to appear. He notices the body, approaches it, kicks it, apparently to check that it is dead, removes its shoes, puts them on, then walks away. Enervated by so much stress, the captain is overcome by sleep. While he is in that state, a painter, Sam Marlowe, arrives on the scene, begins to draw a shrub, notices two feet sticking from behind it, yells to the person in question to remove them, then, getting no response, approaches him and, checking his pulse, comes to the conclusion that he is dead. This too is an unprofessional opinion, subject therefore to rectification. He starts a pastel portrait of the body. If he is truly an artist, then his pastel portrait, *once actually finished*, would give him a professional evaluation regarding “when one is dead and when one lives.” At this point, Captain Wiles wakes up and approaches the painter. The latter asks him: “Is this your body, little man?” Are all these moving people in Hades, the land of mistaken identities, where it is not uncommon to mistake others’ bodies for one’s own? In that case, the problematic of *The Trouble with Harry* would be akin to that of Philip K. Dick’s novel *Ubik* and Adrian Lyne’s film *Jacob’s Ladder*, since in all three works a person that is most probably dead thinks that he or she is still alive and views instead the living people as dead or as demons. Captain Wiles answers the painter’s question affirmatively and recommends burying Harry. The painter objects at first that “the authorities like to know when people die.” Since his words also imply that the authorities do not like to be inopportuned with false reports about someone’s death when he is still alive, it comes as no surprise that he shortly promises to help Captain Wiles bury Harry if Mrs. Rogers doesn’t intend to notify the police about the body. At this point they become aware that the doctor is walking in the direction of the body while engrossed in a book. They quickly hide. He trips over the body, looks for his glasses and

book, turns distractedly toward Harry and says: “Oh, I beg your pardon.” The doctor, who *can* give a professional opinion, has treated the body as that of a living person. He then resumes his engrossed reading while walking away. To Marlowe’s “We don’t know quite what to do with Harry. [We] thought you might have some suggestions,” Mrs. Rogers responds: “You can stuff him for all I care” (an advise the Norman Bates of *Psycho* will follow). She then tells Marlowe that Harry is the older brother of her late first husband, the uncle of her son, and her current husband. “I’ve wanted to explain about Harry a lot of times, but nobody would understand (...). But you—you’ve got an artistic mind. You can see the finer things. (...) As soon as Arnie was born, I moved away to where I thought Harry could never find me. I changed my name...” Did she move away to Hades? She tells him that Harry, with whom she is separated, managed to find her whereabouts that morning: “Did you see his mustache and his wavy hair?” “Yeah, but when I saw him he was dead.” “He looked exactly the same when he was alive.” She confesses that she hit him on the head with a milk bottle, and that he staggered up towards the woods. Her son shows up with a dead rabbit, which he then takes to Captain Wiles and gives it to him since he’s the one who shot it. Shortly, Marlowe and Captain Wiles, each carrying a shovel, meet again to bury the corpse. Surprised that the captain has sat nearby and is waiting for him to bury the body, Marlowe admonishes him: “Come on Captain, off with your coat. (...) It’s your body, isn’t it?” After finishing the burial of the body, Marlowe admonishes him: “If you must kill things from now on, I wish you’d stick to rabbits...” Remembering the dead rabbit the child brought to him, Captain Wiles comes to the conclusion that he didn’t kill Harry: “I only fired three bullets. (...) One for the shooting sign, one for the beer can (...) and one for the rabbit!” Captain Wiles decides to unearth Harry. “Even if you didn’t kill him, why go digging him up...?” “I’ll have the shakes whenever I see a policeman...” Once the body is unearthed, Marlowe ascertains that, indeed, the wound was not inflicted by a bullet, but by a blow with a blunt instrument. Worried that this may incriminate Mrs. Rogers, of whom he’s beginning to be enamored and who had admitted both that she wanted Harry dead and that she hit him on the head, he recommends that they rebury the corpse. Captain Willis decides to assist him out of gratitude for his previous help. Shortly after, while visiting Captain Wiles, Miss Gravely confesses to him: “I’m grateful to you for burying my body.” “*Your* body?” “The man you thought you killed... was the man I hit over the head with the leather heel of my hiking shoe.” It turns out that dazed from the blow on his head by his wife, Harry had mistaken Miss Gravely for her and pulled her into the bushes. “We fought... My shoe had come off in the struggle, and I hit him as hard as ever I could.” Notwithstanding Captain Wiles’ advice to the contrary, she is adamant that they should let the authorities know about the matter and therefore that they should first unearth Harry again. After she digs him up, the two go to see Marlowe and Mrs. Rogers to inform them about what they just did and that Miss Gravely intends to tell Calvin Wiggs, the Deputy Sheriff, that she killed Harry Worp in self-defense. Mrs. Rogers’ response is: “Frankly, I don’t care what you do with Harry, as long as you don’t bring him back to life.” When Marlowe points out that if this matter comes out, then all the details of Jennifer’s marriage will become public property, the four decide to rebury Harry. After doing so, for the third time, they meet again at Jennifer Rogers’ house, where she accepts Marlowe’s marriage proposal. But he comes to the realization that “before we can get married you’re gonna have to prove that you’re free! To prove that you’re free, you’ll have to prove that Harry...” “... is dead.” They decide to unearth him again so as not to have to wait seven years for the presumption of death. The doctor happens to pass by just as they finish digging him up again and sees the body. They arrange to meet him at Mrs. Rogers’ house to examine the body. They place Harry half-undressed in the bathtub then clean and iron some of his clothes. Jennifer then puts some adhesive tape on the cut Miss Gravely made on his head with her hiking shoe. But before the doctor arrives, the deputy sheriff does. He had come across the portrait Marlowe did of Harry and had been struck by its matching “the description of a tramp with stolen shoes and a wild story about a corpse.” “Sam, what I wanna know is where did you paint it and who is it?” “First of all, it’s not a painting. It’s a drawing. Matter of fact, it’s a pastel.” “Sam, I ain’t educated in fancy art [and I would add: in judging whether someone is definitely dead], but I do know the face of a dead man when I see one, and this is it.” “Calvin, perhaps I can educate you to ‘fancy art.’” He takes the portrait from the Deputy Sheriff’s hand. “See this? Portrait of a sleeping face: a man relaxed, far removed from earthly cares... Instead of creating a sleeping face, I could have chosen an entirely different set of artistic stimuli.” While sketching, he says: “Now, a raised eyelid, perhaps... a line of fullness to the cheek... [a] lip that bends with expression. There!” It is only now that the pastel is actually finished. He shows it to him: it is the

portrait of a living person. Has the painter “destroyed legal evidence,” as the Deputy Sheriff protests threateningly, or did he, who according to Mrs. Rogers’ earlier characterization has an artistic mind and therefore “can see the finer things,” uncover thus that the reason they keep unearthing Harry after repeatedly burying him is that he is not dead, but still alive? What’s the trouble with Harry? He is being (repeatedly) buried alive. At this point, the doctor comes in and the Deputy Sheriff leaves. Marlowe leads the doctor to the bathroom. Did the following words pass through the doctors’ mind on seeing Harry’s state, “With the looks of it, you won’t get back for Christmas.”? When Marlowe comes out, Mrs. Rogers asks him: “What did the doctor say?” “He said for me to get out. I didn’t like the look in his eyes, either. Something seems to be bothering him.” Aren’t these the words we would expect to hear were Harry in critical condition? After finishing his examination, the doctor’s diagnosis is: “It was his heart. He had a seizure.” That is how Harry died; he died of a seizure while lying half-naked in the bathtub. But what about the wound in his forehead? Judging by the adhesive tape covering it, it must have been suffered before his mortal seizure. When at the end of the film the words “The trouble with Harry is over” are superimposed on the image after Harry has once again been interred, this indicates that this is his final burial since he is now definitely dead. Hitchcock’s *The Trouble with Harry* and *Psycho* complement each other regarding problems with burial: while in the first someone is being buried alive, and consequently unearthed again and again, until he definitely dies; *Psycho* deals with the unearthing of someone who is definitely dead to carry through her, mummified, a vicarious, possessed life.

*Jalal Toufic, Two or Three Things I’m Dying to Tell You (Sausalito, CA: The Post-Apollo Press, 2005), pp. 83-88.*

<sup>1</sup> *The Trouble with Harry* too deals with the Hitchcockian theme of the *wrong man* or woman, in the form of the misrecognition by the dead of his or her corpse.

art intermedia  
5 Köln, 1 · Domstr. 81

PINO PASCALI  
bis 29. Februar 1968

SIE SIND HERZLICH EINGELADEN  
ZUM RENDEZVOUS FÜR KUNST-  
LER UND SAMMLER AM FREITAG,  
DEM 26. JANUAR 1968, 20.00 UHR



**BIOGRAPHISCHE NOTIZEN:**  
Pino Pascali wurde 1935 in Bari geboren. Er war Student an der Kunstschule in Neapel und beschloss seine Akademiezeit mit dem Diplom der Belle Arti. Zu seinen wichtigsten Ausstellungen zählen: Galleria La Tartagura, Rom, 1966; Galleria Sperone, Turin, 1966; Galleria L' Attico, Rom, 1966; Galerie M. E. Thelen, Essen, 1967; Alexandre Jolas, Rom, 1967.

Ferner wurden seine Arbeiten in Cannes, Tel Aviv, Stockholm, Dortmund, Paris, Spoleto und Livorno gezeigt. Er beteiligte sich an der IX. Biennale Sao Paulo, an der VI. Biennale San Marino und an der Biennale de Jeunesse Paris. Bevor die Exklusivrechte von Alexandre Jolas Inkraft treten, hat er seine letzte vertragsfreie Ausstellung in der Kölner Galerie art intermedia.

#### KATALOG DER AUSSTELLUNG

1 Bomba (La colomba della pace)	500 x 100 cm	1965
2 Cannone semovente	380 x 140 x 120 cm	1965
3 Quattro trofei di caccia	100 x 180 x 400 cm	1966
4 Testa di drago	40 x 30 x 80 cm	1966
5 Dinosaurio riposa	120 x 200 x 90 cm	1966
6 Muro del Sonno	200 x 300 cm	1966
7 Decapitazione della scultura	350 x 100 x 100 cm	1966
8 Un pocco di mare	210 x 210 x 4 cm	1967

#### Bombs and Mythical Animals Sculptures by Pino Pascali in Essen

Pino Pascali is one of those interesting artistic talents of which present-day Italy enjoys an abundance that no other country of western Europe can begin to match. A number of Pascali's sculptures—now on view at Essen's Galerie Thelen in the artist's first solo show in Germany—are strange and threatening presences even in spaces appointed to contemporary art. An impressively realistic replica of a bomb with the ominous title "The Dove of Peace" and a "self-activating cannon" are both subtitled "objects of daily use."

When Pascali consigned these objects in Rome for shipment to Germany, an officer of the Italian military was called in and asked to authorize the transport. This reaction on the part of the railroad personnel in Rome gave Pascali proof of his success: the viewer grows aware of the terrifying meaning of these otherwise familiar killing machines. Only the materials from which they're made—sheet metal and worn-out rubber tires—make Pascali's replicas harmless. But the non-functional imitation points all the more forcefully toward the reality to which it refers, and all the more forcefully renders it ridiculous. Satire is one of the moralist's most tried and trustworthy tools.

Satire and social commitment are characteristic traits of this thirty-two year old artist, born in Bari, who now lives and works in Rome. But Pascali, as well, never underestimates the power of poetry. The other works to be seen at the Thelen gallery are sculptures made of painted canvas, stretched over wooden frames, which in Italy is a fairly widespread technique. Artists of other countries generally prefer to execute such large, voluminous bodies out of plastic materials, which in England, for example, are more readily available. Pascali also presents a row of four white sculptures in white canvas, projecting from a wall, and collectively entitled "hunting trophies." His "Sleeping Dinosaur" and other giant reptiles are fabulous creatures that come to life from out of that poetic realm where unicorns roam between imagination and reality; and from there they enter the daily environment in which we negotiate as best we can with technology and the fear of the bomb. Pascali's mythical animals thus constitute an opposite pole to his deadly earnest imitations of war machines. His "Sound Barrier," which again is a white relief of juxtaposed, stuffed, and painted pillows—the paint stiffens the fabric—might lie at the mid-point between these poles: they might be fairy tales that human beings can't quite understand, but which nonetheless communicate with jet planes and the wonders of technology.

In formal terms, Pascali is quite autonomous in his sometimes softly modulated, at other times quite jagged-edged canvas sculptures. The smoothly elegant surfaces derive from the material itself, which likewise seems to generate the sense of freedom and generosity which these works give off.

Hans Strelow

(until June 15, Monday to Friday, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.; Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)

Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung, p. 10, Friday, June 9, 1967, no. 131.