



CASTELLO DI RIVOLI

Museo d'Arte Contemporanea

Piazza Mafalda di Savoia, 10098 Rivoli (Torino)

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PRESS RELEASE

EXHIBITION

**QUOTIDIANA. IMMAGINI DELLA VITA DI OGNI
GIORNO NELL'ARTE DEL XX SECOLO
THE CONTINUITY OF THE EVERYDAY IN 20TH
CENTURY ART**

CURATORS

DAVID ROSS
NICHOLAS SEROTA
IDA GIANELLI
GIORGIO VERZOTTI
JONATHAN WATKINS

PRESS OFFICE

MASSIMO MELOTTI

OPENING

FEBRUARY 4, 2000
PRESS CONFERENCE 12AM
VISIT WITH THE CURATORS
FOR THE PRESS 5PM
VERNISSAGE 7PM

DATES

FEBRUARY 5 – MAY 21, 2000

MUSEUM HOURS

FROM TUESDAY TO FRIDAY 10AM-5PM
SATURDAY AND SUNDAY 10AM-7PM
FIRST AND THIRD SATURDAY
OF THE MONTH 10AM-10PM
CLOSED ON MONDAY

EXHIBITION SITE

CASTELLO DI RIVOLI
MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA
PIAZZA MAFALDA DI SAVOIA
10098 RIVOLI (TO)

CATALOGUE

CHARTA, MILAN



PRESS RELEASE

Quotidiana

The Continuity of the Everyday in 20th Century Art

February 5 – May 21, 2000. Opening February 4

Over 200 works by masters of modern art and leading figures in contemporary art movements are being shown at Castello di Rivoli, in an exhibition that presents an exhaustive look at art of our century and how it has interpreted everyday life. With the opening of the museum's new exhibition spaces, this survey show, which includes works by artists who are also from countries outside Europe, confirms Castello di Rivoli's international role.

In fact this exhibition inaugurates the exhibition space of the **Manica Lunga**, the 17th-century pinacoteca of the House of Savoy, which takes its name from the unusual dimensions of the space, 140 by 7 meters, resulting in a building that is original, if not unique. With the recent opening of new amenities for the public and the new installation of the **Permanent Collection**, the museum structure of Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea is now complete. The museum will be able to accommodate conservation activities and promote contemporary art on an international level. Exhibition activity encompassing approximately six shows each year, the Permanent Collection and the innovative methods of the Education Department are the tools that make Castello di Rivoli the principal venue in Italy today where it is possible to see contemporary art in all its manifold complexity.

Quotidiana is intended as one of these tools, in that it introduces the public to a theme that traverses all the visual arts of the twentieth century, namely the relationship between avant-garde culture and everyday life.

The art of the avant-garde is seen as a cultural activity removed from the "banal" reality of everyday existence. Its principal characteristic seems to be the elaboration of an initiatory language that is difficult to understand fully. However this does not correspond to the artists' true intentions, as this exhibition demonstrates. Ida Gianelli, director of Castello di Rivoli, has stated that "the quotidian, existence understood in its most commonplace aspects, has been central in many of the most important artistic investigations of our century."

Castello di Rivoli proposed this exhibition concept as a point of departure to a team of internationally renowned curators:

David A. Ross, director, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art

Sir Nicholas Serota, director, Tate Gallery, London

Ida Gianelli, director, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea

Jonathan Watkins, director, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, England

Giorgio Verzotti, curator, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea.

For David Ross, "*Quotidiana* will offer an important opportunity to reflect on the multiple ways in which art tends to pull down the boundaries that separate it from everyday life, in a utopian vision of the esthetic transformation of reality in all its aspects, wielding the significance of a political revolution."

At the suggestion of Nicholas Serota, the curatorial team decided to have the exhibition open with works by the masters of Italian Futurism, beginning with the paintings of **Giacomo Balla** and **Umberto Boccioni**. This Italian artist is an emblematic example of the spirit of the exhibition. He developed his revolutionary language on themes from ordinary, if not domestic, reality, such as portraits of his mother, which unexpectedly become symbols of the "modernity" celebrated by the Futurists.

The quotidian also appears in the adoption of the common object in Dadaist and Surrealist work, beginning with **Kurt Schwitters'** so-called "Merzbilder" and **Duchamp's** "ready-mades," which so greatly influenced subsequent art.

Beginning with the period following the Second World War, New Dada was exemplified by **Robert Rauschenberg**, whose work was based on the adoption of banal images and objects, by "underground" films often dedicated to the recording of everyday events in real time, and by the "pop" images of **Andy Warhol**, along with those of **Claes Oldenburg**. In the Sixties, **Michelangelo Pistoletto** depicted ordinary and anonymous men and women on mirror surfaces that interact with real time and space. **Gerhard Richter's** portraits both refer to and contradict photo-realism.

During the Seventies, the everyday and existential dimension became a material of poetic elaboration in **Gilbert and George's** photographs and in **Christian Boltanski's** objects of affection. It became an object of critical reflection for **Dan Graham** and **On Kawara**, who have dedicated themselves to experimental processes, without ever abandoning references to the most ordinary reality.

Present-day movements are represented by works by artists such as **Nan Goldin**, **Thomas Struth** and **Jeff Wall**. There are also examples of work from the most recent generation, where a critical reflection on reality is mixed with elements of fantasy, and where linguistic choices are extremely varied from **Beat Streuli's** slides projected in dark spaces to **Mario Airò's** light installations, from **Felix Gonzalez-Torres'** candy accumulations to **Grazia Toderi's** video projections, and to **Richard Billingham's** domestic photographic portraits.

In addition to being exhibited in the Manica Lunga, works are also shown on the third floor of the Castello, and in other spaces, both inside and outside the museum. In keeping with the guidelines of the exhibition, which focuses on the involvement of an ever-vaster public, certain works and installations are located at sites that are emblematic of the urban fabric of the city of **Rivoli** and of **Turin**. During the exhibition, there are **video** and **film** screenings and an **internet** site is also accessible.

On the occasion of the exhibition the **Education Department** is organizing a series of specific activities, including a refresher course and preparatory visits for teachers, laboratories, specific programs for schools of every type and level, and family weekends. For information, call +39 011 9565 213.

From the text in the catalogue
Giorgio Verzotti

(...) The neo-avant-gardes from the postwar period on were marked by the generous utopian view that art could be overcome as a separate dimension, as something elitist and incapable of transforming life. In the exemplary case of On Kawara, the work is based entirely on the registration of existence itself, captured in its mere becoming in time and space, created through the simple accumulation and cataloguing of data. A similar attitude presupposes a liberated time, measured in discontinuous fashion and independent from any constriction, since it embodies a utopia, conveyed by art. Here the fusion between art and life becomes complete and literal and does not entail dramatically disruptive acts. The Promethean pathos of the neo-avant-gardes thus is somewhat cooled in the choice of an action that is completely rooted in everyday time, but this does not diminish its value. Nevertheless the "life" that absorbs within itself the "Art" polarity and becomes one and the same with it, as in a movement of dialectical overcoming, remains an uncriticized category, in this and in much contemporary research. It remains like an idealistic residue that hypothesizes life as a free territory, thus capable of allowing the full realization of the *de-definition* of art, without opening up contradictions with the social and political aspect. We also can ascribe this ideological boundary to Joseph Beuys, who in this sense is the most significant figure.

More than in behavioral experiences, a truly anti-idealistic instance (with legitimate exceptions, embodied – and this is no accident – by women artists, from Martha Rosler to Yayoi Kusama to Valie Export), is manifested in an analytical approach. Here artists address the art system, probing its functioning, as an integral part of the more general information system, in its turn understood as an ideological legitimization of the social-economic structure. If, in 1971, Hans Haacke proposes a work dealing with building speculation in New York (4), Dan Graham goes back to the standardized language of working class architecture, understood as a system of rules conditioning the experience of the inhabitants of the limitless American urban periphery. In his interventions in art magazines and then in his photographs he compares those constructed modules with contemporary minimalist poetics. Jeff Wall moves within an analogous perspective when he sets up significant structures that are incongruous with each other, such as the technical means employed by advertising, refined references to the painting of Poussin or Cézanne, and, particularly in his early works, contents related to the conditions of life of the suburban proletariat or social outcasts. Thus the contradiction emerges in the foreground and, one might say, underlies the very construction of the work. The light of the light-box, instead of materializing the aura that envelops the commodity, emphasizes its back-side, representing the effects of the social division of work on the level of the everyday life of the city of late capitalism.

Alongside the surviving trees on an embankment that supports the bridge of a highway, the tale of the *Storyteller* unfolds, with a narrator whose words restore an identity to his emaciated public of outcasts. It is in the name of the conditions of life that the subject becomes aware of his own social position, and through this of his own historicity. And it is a life story that deals with the subject in its biographical uniqueness, which cannot be reduced to any generalization or category. (5) The awareness of the uniqueness of every *I* matures in the face of the everyday and only in this way finds an organic tie to the community of which it is a part. The narration of self joins with the history of many and with, simply put, history, without any "residue" whatsoever continuing to be silenced. *Each can be his own historian*: Jean-Luc Godard's prediction at the end of his film *Tout va bien* is the same as that of many artists who have worked with the excavation of individual memory in order to reassemble a collective memory. Christian Boltanski has brought together images and objects that reconstruct his childhood, without differentiating between events that are salient and ones that are without importance, thereby intensifying the public's processes of identification. Mixing truth with fiction, memoir with narrative, documents with allusive objects and signs, his work has opened the way to a reflection on a recent collective history that sees in the Holocaust, in its reality as well as in its value

as negative metaphor, a sorrowful and still unresolved point. He has done this using significantly neutral language, which is generic, anonymous and non-expressive (6), the better to make reference to the collective whole. It is no accident that Jeff Wall's *Storyteller* makes use of only the word, the simplest expressive means, to communicate, unchallenged by the excess of mass-media messages. At the very heart of performance society, artists adopt simple, sometimes immediate means in order to construct narrations. Today's art often attempts to recount, to establish itself on narrative structures that refer to existential realities, perhaps in opposition to the sense of de-realization that the reigning culture of virtuality entails, and in contrast to the immateriality of digital technology.

This sort of sensibility pushes artists such as Nan Goldin or Wolfgang Tillmans to use photography to represent real life, as if in an uninterrupted visual diary. What their images give us is a subjectivity based almost entirely, and constructed day by day, on a totality of relationships with others, with the other that, by its mere existence, determines the I. Here too, photography restores the sense of everyday time, in the subversion of every scale of values that distinguishes between events, between personalities. In fact, other evaluative criteria are necessary, beginning with knowledge based on affectivity. Thus the image becomes a testimonial to an intimate relationship, shared uniquely by the representatives of the community whose life styles are portrayed; at the same time it becomes a document of a historically connoted social dynamic.

There is a messianic tendency in modern and contemporary art, and there also is an opposing tendency, from Kazimir Malevich and Yves Klein to Anselm Kiefer. The frame of reference for the first is the cosmos, myth, the transcendent or, in its secularized variations, views of the organic world, grand traditions and ideologies. The latter, in contrast, refers to the earth, understood as the worldly horizon captured in its inevitable banality, to matter, to the body and to sexuality, to everyday life, and, in its extended import, to scientific knowledge. From Expressionism to Body Art many artists have attempted to reintroduce into contemporary art the primordial dimension of the sacred and its correlated violence, offering the experience of the ceremonial, which brings about psychophysical shock. In other cases the artist-martyr, embodying the heroic figure of the subversive and the outcast, has chosen, by his own example, to bear witness to the true meaning of life. Many other artists, in contrast, have knowingly rejected both the heroicizing roles and encompassing ideologies, and they have built an equal relationship with the public. In the name of the latter, artists have debated the very concept of the avant-garde, understood as a realm aristocratically separate from the world's current languages, and they have resorted to simple and broadly socializable linguistic practices, from the playful use of real space and time, open to the involvement of the public. Examples can be seen from the Happenings of Kaprow, Rauschenberg and Oldenburg, to Vito Acconci's actions of recognition of his own and others' bodies. In Europe, Pistoletto used his *Oggetti in meno* (*Minus Objects*) to establish the basis for a reversal of the individualistic and heroicizing vision of the artist-demiurge. In more recent years this has led to an activity that is based in part on collaboration. Franz West creates sculptures that assume a utilitarian function, such as chairs, armchairs, sofas and other furnishings with rough materials and with the construction ability of a neo-primitive bricoleur. Thus the work radicalizes every "esthetic of reception," in that the user becomes the active factor that attributes meaning to the work, that establishes it as such, simply by using it, imposing nothing other than his or her own being. In this case one might say that artist and observer together redefine the artistic work, beginning from the realm of needs, of the most immediate everyday reality.

Many younger artists find precedents in the work of Pistoletto and West, and are moving in directions pointed out earlier by them. Andrea Zittel, Jorge Pardo and others create devices that induce relationships with the public, which, through the work, is invited to weave practices of interpersonal communication, where the motivating factor is emotionality, grasped in its immediacy, still this side of the possibility of becoming thought.

The continuity of realism and the everyday **Jonathan Watkins**

Nineteenth century realism, and the subsequent unstoppable impressionist march, was an unequivocal repudiation of romanticism and academicism in art. It exemplified a sort of aesthetic agnosticism and at the same time an increased belief in the significance of experience beyond the confines of a self-conscious art world. Conventional figures in imaginary landscapes gave way to a here-and-now-ness, to depicted events that one might actually have seen, involving individuals that were all-too-human. In short, the everyday was asserted as necessary and sufficient.

A similar paradigm shift has occurred at the end of the twentieth century. To some extent, this is in reaction to the excesses of early postmodernism, its theatricality, its esoteric and symbolic tendencies, and what now, in retrospect, seems an absurd deference to post-structuralist theory. The liberation supposed to be intrinsic to the advent of post-modernism rapidly became a cul-de-sac of nostalgia and gratuitous mediation compromising artistic gestures with a tendency always to qualify and cross-reference. The recent artistic revival of interest in the everyday, in correspondence with the nineteenth century realist movement, constitutes an antidote of directness and economy.

This exhibition, *Quotidiana*, is especially valuable as it juxtaposes contemporary visions of the everyday with modernist antecedents. Although it would be misleading to suggest that realism was always predominant throughout the sequential history of modernism, clearly it featured as an unbroken thread. Previously its incidences were isolated, making Goya and seventeenth century Dutch painting, for example, so remarkable. In its nineteenth century manifestations realism eventually became undermined by a romanticist backlash, in the forms of art for art's sake and other aestheticisms, and then waited in obscurity until the stirrings of the First World War. Not only recovered, but hardened and set by this unprecedented cataclysm, realism was then effectively propelled through the following modernist decades.

The continuity in the history of realism is analogous to the continuities by which realism is itself defined, and these came into focus clearly with the war. It is almost a truism that the most radical modernism happened at the beginning of the modern movement, and the exact form it took, to a significant extent, was determined by the aestheticist dogma it superseded. In their various ways artists such as Giacomo Balla, Umberto Boccioni, Gino Severini, and Marcel Duchamp were emphatically denying the conventional distinctions between art and life - based on notions of inherent and transcendental artistic quality - between artists and philistines, between hallowed places for art and the vulgar world beyond. Realism aspires to the erasure of the lines drawn between these assumed opposites.

The Italian futurists, including Balla, Boccioni and Severini, espoused a hyper-modernism which was particularly aggressive in its dismissal of artistic tradition. They called for the demolition of museums as their work at once absorbed the everyday in terms of subject matter - energetic scenes of urban life - and embodied the impulse to extend futurism into non-high art realms such as everyday dress, street furniture and cookery. Politically located somewhere between immature megalomania and sympathetic idealism, these artists were historically vital not because of their will to power, but rather because they insisted that art needed a chance to start again and have ordinary human relevance. In many ways they were forerunners of contemporary artists exhibited here such as Andrea Zittel and Daniel Buren.

Duchamp's dadaist gestures were ostensibly less extravagant, but in terms of modern art practice, directly much more influential. His "readymades", such as *Porte-Bouteille (Bottle Rack)*, 1914, subverted any idea that works of art were the result of artistic intention, sensibility and touch, thereby throwing the gates of the art world open. The everyday flooded in. As a subject, it was fused with the means of its representation - in other words, the everyday and the means of its representation became one and the same thing - and consequently artistic medium was apprehended as continuous with the stuff of everything else, not precious and apart.

The readymade has become commonplace, featuring here also in the work of Tony Cragg, Bill Woodrow, Sarah Lucas, Ceal Floyer and Felix Gonzalez-Torres, and essential particularly to our understanding of the work of Richard Artschwager, Andy Warhol, Robert Gober, Jorge Pardo, Charles Ray and Fischli & Weiss. As with the proposition of futurism, Duchamp's introduction of the readymade engendered a realism involving two-way traffic between art and non-art, but it was more far reaching, having implications for every conceivable artistic experience. A work of art thus is to be understood fundamentally as a human invention which takes its place alongside all other terrestrial phenomena, to be appreciated on the same terms.

It was no coincidence that collage, with its incorporation of readymade objects, pointing up the material nature of the work overall, made its debut during the development of futurism and dada. Thai artist Udomsak Krisanamis, now working in New York, uses collage with the same implications and also to communicate his everyday experience as a recent immigrant. Cut-up pages from newspapers and magazines, meticulously covered with paint - except for the voids of the letter "o" - suggest the painstaking process of learning to live in an alien culture.

Collage functions virtually in the same way as appropriated imagery - appropriated imagery is virtually collage, virtually readymade - and both feature in pop art. Dada's challenge to conventional notions of artistic authorship was embodied in this movement as, at the same time, it recast the relationship between high art and popular culture. At once a celebration and critique of the latter, pop paradoxically asserted artificiality and superficiality, the real disguises of other realities, again reflecting a philosophical scepticism at the heart of realism. Images of soup cans, car crashes, electric chairs, celebrity portraits, for example, all get essentially the same treatment from Warhol, and reiterate the fact that the everyday is not necessarily on the street, abject or mundane.

Richard Hamilton's pop was more clearly ironic and less deadpan than Warhol's, revealing ultimately an unambiguous social commitment. This tendency, together with the use of collage and other pop strategies, reached a climax in the "counter-cultural" work of other artists during the late 1960s and 70s, perhaps most notably Martha Rosler. Owing something also to the anti-Nazi imagery of John Heartfield, and at a time when Marxism still had currency, Rosler addressed issues of war and patriotism, sexual politics, class difference, homelessness and consumerism. Concerned to maximise the accessibility of her work, appealing as much as possible to a non-specialist audience, Rosler subscribed to a realism which counterbalanced its everyday media with messages of political radicalism - in an effort to actually change everyday life. Rosler and many artists of her generation not only used photography but also were responsible for pushing it into the artistic mainstream. Here, in this exhibition, photographic work - as opposed to the work derived from photography - first dates from 1966, being Dan Graham's series of *Tract Houses*. Also from this time, with the exception of the (unpainterly) work by Udomsak Krisanamis and On Kawara, painting disappears from the selection, suggesting that, within the history of artistic realism, painting was usurped by photography. This is of course an oversimplification, particularly as process painting and painting within the concrete tradition now thrives, but indubitably an important conclusion has been reached lately in art practice, and this probably has more to do with the requirements of realism rather than the redundancy of painting.

Realism has been quickened by the continuity of imagery automatically achieved through photography, and similarly through film and video - again the imagery itself is "readymade" - and a reversal of this development is surely inconceivable. The role of painting has been adjusted accordingly through various phases and movements, the most reactionary of which perhaps was neo-expressionism - once seemingly the inevitable style of post-modernism and the antithesis of realism - an extreme form of romanticism. The rhetoric that accompanied neo-expressionism stressed individualism through a "return" to painting, the general impression it created being one of tortured and profound (male) solipsism.

Early post-modernism was also characterised by a cut-and-paste aesthetic which was quite distinct from modernist collage and pop appropriation - even perhaps in counter-distinction as it was informed by a conviction, courtesy of current aesthetic philosophy, that artistic innovation was no longer

possible, and that western culture was doomed to a future full of its own past. Thus it conformed with the neo-expressionist tendency to be inward looking and disconnected. The appropriation of imagery from art history was pervasive, as much in painting as it was in computer-generated photo-montage, so that artistic gestures were explicitly confused with gestures previously made by others - it was an academic post-modernism, very free within narrow limits. It was a *fin de siècle* post-modernism, finished by 1990. Painting now is considerably less hidebound. Minimalism and abstraction, almost outlawed not so long ago, fit naturally within a more authentic post-modern diversity, and, generally speaking, there is room for work which is more direct and less overtly theory-based. In the case of photography, this is signified particularly by the recent prevalence of single-shot images, in colour, of unposed subjects. Nan Goldin, Fischli & Weiss, Richard Billingham, Wolfgang Tillmans and Beat Streuli particularly are exponents of this kind of realism. Other recent photographic work here, by Maria Hedlund, Sam Taylor-Wood, Hannah Starkey, Sarah Jones, Thomas Struth and Gillian Wearing, is more contrived but equally concerned to engage the viewer with its familiarity. Photography, video and film lends itself obviously to such representation. Considered on its own perhaps it would encourage a too literal idea of contemporary realism, as if we were looking simply for people like us in pictures. The value and challenge of realism resides rather in the continuity which it asserts at a number of levels, including the pictorial, towards an authentic integration of art with the everyday. The work in this exhibition suggests that it is possible.

Barcelona, October 1999

List of the artists in exhibition

Mario Airò
Richard Artschwager
Giacomo Balla
Richard Billingham
Umberto Boccioni
Christian Boltanski
Georges Braque
Marcel Broodthaers
Daniel Buren
Sophie Calle
Vija Celmins
Larry Clark
Bruce Conner
Tony Cragg
Guy Debord
Philip-Lorca diCorcia
Marcel Duchamp
Fischli & Weiss
Ceal Floyer
Katharina Fritsch
Giuseppe Gabellone
Gilbert & George
Robert Gober
Nan Goldin
Felix Gonzalez-Torres
Dan Graham
Richard Hamilton
Maria Hedlund
Edward Hopper
Sarah Jones
Ilya Kabakov
On Kawara
Udomsak Krisanamis
El Lissitzsky
Sharon Lockhart
Sarah Lucas
Tracey Moffatt
Giorgio Morandi
Bruce Nauman
Claes Oldenburg
Yoko Ono (con John Lennon)
Jorge Pardo
Pablo Picasso
Jack Pierson
Michelangelo Pistoletto
Sigmar Polke
Robert Rauschenberg
Charles Ray
Gerhard Richter
Martha Rosler
Ed Ruscha
Julia Scher
Kurt Schwitters
Hannah Starkey

Beat Streuli
Thomas Struth
Sam Taylor-Wood
Wolfgang Tillmans
Grazia Toderi
Rosemarie Trockel
Cecilia Vicuña
Jeff Wall
Nari Ward
Andy Warhol
Marijke Van Warmerdam
Gillian Wearing
Richard Wentworth
Franz West
Bill Woodrow
Zhu Jia
Andrea Zittel