

I Go to the Max:
Chronicles from Postmodern Italy

Curated by
Luca Beatrice

with

Stefano Arienti, Alighiero Boetti, Maurizio Cattelan, Francesco Clemente, Cuoghi Corsello, Riccardo Dalisi, Gino De Dominicis, Daniela De Lorenzo, Massimo Iosa Ghini, Missoni, Aldo Mondino, Nunzio, Luigi Ontani, Mimmo Paladino, Giulio Paolini, Salvo, Oliviero Toscani, Antonio Trotta.

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20. 06 – 30. 09. 2020

Galleria Enrico Astuni is pleased to present *I Go to the Max: Chronicles from Postmodern Italy*, an exhibition curated by Luca Beatrice.

Any restart is complex and difficult. We are in 2020 and this is not the first time that our nation is faced with the urgent need for a concrete and determined reaction. Republican Italy has faced political and economic crises, terrorism and massacres, social conflicts and environmental disasters, yet each time a new and surprising motivation and unexpected energy has emerged from its remarkable population. Art, indeed culture in general, often anticipates the future precisely because it is experimental and not always subject to a dual mandate with reality.

In recent months the design of this exhibition has been obliged to change its standpoint several times: events, the news and prevailing mood were bound to influence its approach and choices, but it has always been evident to everyone who has worked on it that we were more than eager to recommence and present it to the public. This assessment of the 1980s from a distance of forty years takes its cue from the explosion of energy from the twenty to thirty-year-olds of that time; the desire to change gear and introduce a new idea of youth culture that, not surprisingly, was to bring us one of the most creatively interesting decades of the latter half of the twentieth century.

As for art, in 1979 came the first signs of change with the advent of the Transavanguardia movement. In Venice in 1980, the Biennale at long last inaugurated a section dedicated to young artists: *Aperto '80*, curated by Achille Bonito Oliva and Harald Szeeman, provided the first international stage for the young who had rediscovered painting. 1980 also saw the launch of the first Architecture Biennale, signalling the definitive transition to the postmodern era and a new relationship with history, tradition, and the foreseeable end of the great ideologies. 'Young Italy' emerged; it exported design, fashion and restaurants to America and ended the long season of the DC-PCI political party duopoly (for the first time a socialist, Sandro Pertini, became President of the Republic, while Giovanni Spadolini was the first non-Christian Democrat prime minister). Private TV companies were set up and MTV was born. In 1982 the Azzurri, Italy's national football team, won the World Cup, and the Italian championship, with players Maradona, Platini, Falcao and Zico, was the finest in the world. In this climate art enjoyed an exhilarating season, a constant remix of high and low styles, academic disciplines and new forms of communication.

In 1982, the year of the night in Madrid and of the Rolling Stones' concert in Turin, Vasco Rossi released an album whose title we have taken by right to express the mood: **Vado al Massimo** [I Go to the Max]. Let's hope the 'Komandante' won't mind, but this tribute seemed appropriate given that the exhibition is here in Emilia.

On display is the work of eighteen Italian artists, all of them active during the eighties. The term 'art' also embraces fashion by Missoni, Oliviero Toscani's advertising photography, and the design and architecture of Massimo Iosa Ghini and Riccardo Dalisi, selected without privileging any particular direction or expressive style, but rather aiming to recapture the diversity of the period by casting a relaxed, wide-ranging and liberal eye. But beware: this is not an attempt at revival, nor nostalgia for a taste of vintage flavour, because that same desire for freedom has not aged a bit.

Alongside testimonies to Transavanguardia by Francesco Clemente and Mimmo Paladino, and to the Nuova Scuola Romana by Nunzio, are works by artists already active in earlier decades, but who in the 1980s developed essential aspects of their personal style. Salvo definitively took up painting; Luigi Ontani turned his gaze towards the East; Antonio Trovati filled sculpture with cultured and literary quotes; Aldo Mondino proposed a model of syncretic religion that combined Judaism and Islamic culture; Alighiero Boetti transformed Arte Povera's conceptualism into amused lightness; Giulio Paolini concentrated on recovering the elegance of history; while Gino De Dominicis chose the inscrutable enigma of antiquity.

The focus on the 1980s continues with an analysis of several artists who emerged in the latter half of the decade and represent a greater fragmentation of experiences across the nation: Stefano Arienti from Milan, Cuoghi Corsello and Maurizio Cattelan (temporarily) from Bologna, and Daniela De Lorenzo from Florence. Their work represents the transition towards the twenty-first century, while in the meantime new revolutions were taking place: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the demise of communist regimes and the invention of the internet. But by that point we arrive at 1989 and a different story unfolds, all still to be written.