

LORD FINGER

13.07.2024 - 18.08.2024

Opening Saturday 13 June 2024 | 16.00 - 20.00

GALLERIA CONTINUA is pleased to host the exhibition by Armando Testa (1917-1992) entitled *"Lord Finger"* in its San Gimignano spaces. The title of the exhibition immediately highlights a strong interest in what the artist has defined as a splendid and exciting architecture: the finger.

The exhibition brings together various works that span from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. Photographs, sculptures, works on paper and canvas, all explore the theme of the finger and its infinite expressive possibilities. The idea that inspired this specific artistic production was to "[...] take one of the most common objects and make something happen to it, transform it in such a way as to remove it from the sphere of automatism and restore its vitality." A provocation and at the same time a creative challenge.

During an interview, when asked why he chose the finger as the subject of his works, Armando Testa replied: *"Well, if we want to be banal, because the finger is a graphic element that I have used many times, attached to the hand or detached as a standalone, in many of my advertising drawings. But, upon closer inspection, the reason is another. Because for me the finger also has symbolic value, as well as an anatomical one. The finger is used to point, to specify, and also to touch. The finger is a kind of body in itself within the human body. With fingers, you can make beautiful figures, shadows, even performances. And then, if you really think about it, the idea of the finger did not come to me first. Think of all of surrealism, think of Man Ray, Max Ernst."*

We then think of photographs portraying the finger with a bowler hat, among cars like a vigilante, or rising from the ground like a sprout, with clear influences from Dada and Surrealism. Or consider the sculpture 'Il tempo' (The Time), a bronze tree in the shape of a hand whose branches are represented by increasingly smaller hands connected to each other, symbolizing the eternal relationship between humans and the constant search for dialogue. The series 'Il cerchio si stringe' (The Circle Tightens) instead plays on the meeting of the thumb and index finger, creating a frame of variable dimensions, a truly lively space on canvas and a privileged observation point.

Often the protagonists are the thumb and the index finger: *"The middle finger doesn't really do much. While the thumb is authoritative, robust, a commander. And the index finger is adventurous in its form and always involved in everything,"* declares the artist.

Sometimes giants, sometimes clenched in a fist, other times embraced in dances evoking Matissean memory, or anthropomorphized into a part representing the whole, transforming them into human bodies; whether dispersed in a mock photographic process or graffitied white on black, Armando Testa's fingers unfold and animate in multiple forms, giving life to a comprehensive portrait of mankind.

About the artist:

Armando Testa (Turin 1917-1992) left an indelible mark on the history of contemporary

visual culture. Ca' Pesaro, the International Gallery of Modern Art in Venice, whose permanent collection now includes 17 of his works, pays homage to him with a monographic exhibition that traces his career, which straddled art and advertising. Armando Testa began working very young, at only 13 years old. In the evening, he attended the Giuseppe Vigliardi Paravia typography school, where he was influenced by the teachings of Ezio D'Errico, who introduced him to abstract painting (on view until 15 September).

In 1937, at only twenty years old, he won his first competition with a poster featuring a geometric and essential design for the Milanese printing company ICI. In 1946, he founded Studio Testa in Turin, obtaining his first contracts from important clients such as Pirelli, Borsalino, Carpano, and Martini & Rossi. At the beginning of the 1950s, he was the Director of the School of Graphic Advertising in Piazza Vittorio Veneto in Turin, where Michelangelo Pistoletto was among his students. Between the 1950s and the 1970s, Testa created images and animated films that became part of the Italian collective imagination and the history of advertising. From the poster for Digestivo Antonetto (1960) to Punt e Mes (1960), to the posters for brands like San Pellegrino (1979) and Simmenthal (1963). The 1960s were the years of caroselli: unforgettable characters were created for Lavazza, Paulista, Caballero and Carmencita (1965), the spherical inhabitants of the Pianeta Papalla for Philco (1966), the blue hippopotamus for Lines (1966), and the blonde visions of Peroni beer (1968), to name a few.

Testa also designed posters for cultural events and institutions such as the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto (1984) and the Regio Theatre in Turin (1989), as well as posters for social campaigns like Amnesty International (1979) and the Red Cross (1981). He also created logos for entities such as the Turin International Book Fair, the Turin Youth Film Festival, and the Rivoli Castle. Alongside his poster production, he continued his ironic and playful photographic research on food, animals, and fingers, exploring various languages and materials while always maintaining simplicity. Painting, his true passion and source of inspiration, never left him, and was where he expressed himself freely from commercial and thematic constraints.

He received numerous recognitions in Italy and abroad. From 1965 to 1971, he was invited to chair Drawing and Composition at the Polytechnic University of Turin, and in 1968 he received the Gold Medal from the Ministry of Public Education for his contribution to Visual Arts. In 1989, he became an Honorary Laureate at Colorado State University in Fort Collins. In 1978, Studio Testa became

Armando Testa S.p.A., with branches opening worldwide. Italian and foreign institutions have dedicated exhibitions to Armando Testa exploring his artistic activity, with notable exhibitions held at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence in 1993, the Museum of Rivoli and Castel Sant'Elmo in 2001, MART in 2017, and the Royal Museums - Sale Chiabrese in Turin in 2018. His works are in the permanent collections of important museums, including MoMA in New York, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, the Study and Communication Archive Center of the University of Parma, and many others. The artist died in Turin on March 20, 1992. A public sculpture, Sintesi '59, was inaugurated to pay tribute to him in Piazza XVIII Dicembre.

About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locations to Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Rome, Paris and Dubai.

GALLERIA CONTINUA represents a desire for continuity between times and a desire to write a current history. Thanks to its investment in forgotten and unconventional sites, the gallery has always chosen unexpected locations, developing a strong identity and an original positioning in over thirty years of activity. The home of Galleria Continua, an ex-cinema, it has hosted many prolific exhibitions and installations over the last 34 years. It is a unique and exciting space for artists and the gallery to have to consider when planning and executing exhibitions.

GALLERIA CONTINUA / San Gimignano

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