

CONVERSATION PIECE PART III

(Take an object / Do something to it / Do something else to it)

JONATHAN BALDOCK, PIERO GOLIA,
MAGALI REUS, CLAUDIA WIESER

Curated by Marcello Smarelli | December 17, 2016 – April 2, 2017
Fondazione Memmo, Rome

1. JONATHAN BALDOCK

Now We Look to the Future, 2016
Felt applique on hessian

Inside Out, 2016
Felt applique on hessian

Stick in the Eye (Blue), 2016
Bronze, epoxy resin

Stick in the Eye (Brown), 2016
Bronze, epoxy resin

Mr. Sandman, 2016
Sand, wood

2. MAGALI REUS

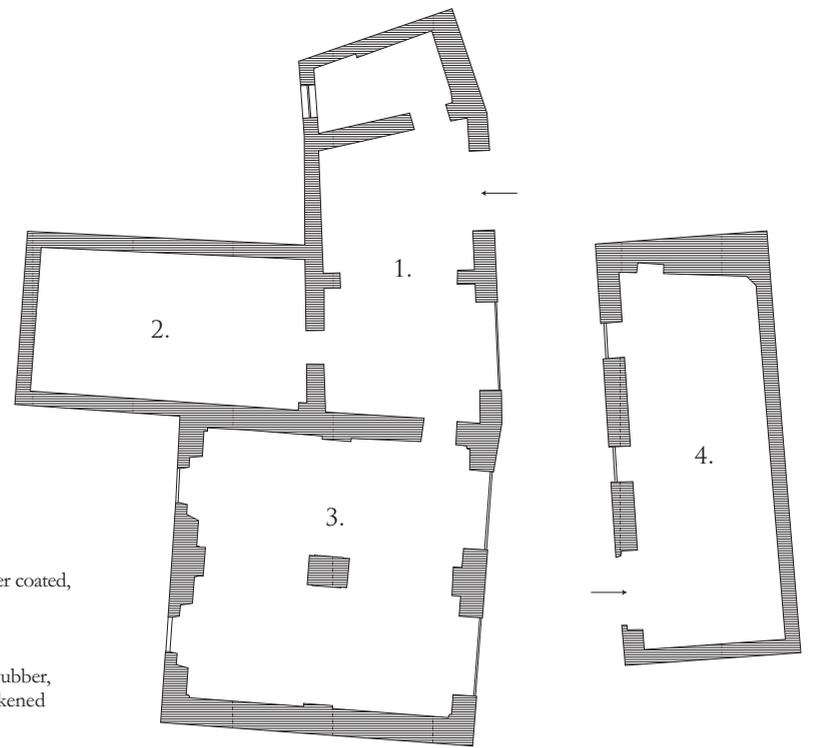
Leaves (Max Bars, June), 2015
Milled and sprayed model board, aluminium tube, silicone rubber, pigments, powder coated, zinc plated, blackened and anodized laser cut aluminium and steel, bolts

Leaves (Ivy Tranche, December), 2015
Milled and black waxed model board, phosphated aluminium tube, polyurethane rubber, pigments, powder coated, zinc plated, anodised, phosphated, brushed and blackened aluminium and steel, brass, perspex

Leaves (Shell Drake, November), 2015
Jesmonite, sand, wax, phosphated aluminium tube, polyurethane rubber, pigments, powder coated, zinc plated, anodized and laser cut aluminium and steel, bolts

Leaves (Even Green, January), 2015
Milled and sprayed model board, phosphated aluminium tube, polyurethane rubber, polyester resin, aluminium powder, powder coated, zinc plated, anodised, atched and brushed laser cut aluminium and steel

Leaves (Harp, January), 2015
Milled and sprayed model board, aluminium tube, silicone rubber, pigments, powder coated, zinc plated, blackened etched and anodized laser ut aluminium and steel, bolts



3. CLAUDIA WIESER

All That Is, 2016
Ceramic, wood, mirrors,
MDF, copper, digital print

4. PIERO GOLIA

The Painter, 2016
Motion control robot,
paint, canvas

Fondazione Memmo Arte Contemporanea is proud to present *Conversation Piece | Part 3*, the third exhibition in a series curated by Marcello Smarelli, and intended to chart the presence of Italian and foreign artists currently living in Rome or particularly attached to the city. The artists invited to this third exhibition are: Jonathan Baldock, Piero Golia, Magali Reus (Dutch fellow at the American Academy in Rome), Claudia Wieser (fellow at the Accademia Tedesca di Roma Casa Baldi).

The project was conceived with the aim of continually reviewing the contemporary art scene in Rome which is difficult to understand for the general public, but is a surprisingly active panorama dominated by the continuous activity of galleries, foundations, Academies and foreign cultural institutes where new generations of artists from all over the world, traditionally complete their education. Through these exhibitions and other activities, such as talk, workshops and performances, the Fondazione Memmo aims to support these institutions, which are considered vital in the maintenance and development of the contemporary visual arts and culture in Rome.

The project's title is inspired by one of the most famous movies by Luchino Visconti: *Gruppo di Famiglia in un interno* (*Conversation Piece*, 1974). In turn the film's title referred to a specific genre of Dutch painting – became popular in the XVII and XVIII centuries – showing scenes of genteel conversation and everyday domestic life. This exhibition is an opportunity to discuss on the work of different artists, who offer a great variation in research, poetry, and techniques, but it is also a moment of dialogue with Rome and its ancient and contemporary history.

As for the previous editions, also for *Conversation Piece | Part 3* artists have been asked to reflect on a specific suggestion, linked to the nature of objects and their specific use in the artistic practice. «Perhaps the immobility of the things that surround us – noted Marcel Proust – is forced upon them by our conviction that they are themselves, and not anything else, and by the immobility of our conception of them», so if we would approach things from other points of view, we should learn different and new answers that would otherwise remain unknown. This is one of the main themes of the most radical avant-garde movements of the twentieth century, such as Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism, up to the end of the fifties to the New Dada, actually based on a new interest in the everyday object that the junk culture, revived through a process of *détournement*, leaving this interest as an inheritance to the movements born soon after: Pop Art, Minimalism, Conceptual Art.

It is about that principle of defamiliarization of an object proposed again by Jasper Johns in the early sixties with the statement: "Take an object / Do something to it / Do something else to it", that gave birth to a phenomenon that will be the *leitmotiv* of an entire generation of artists and critics.

The use of items borrowed directly from the everyday life reopens an ever-present issue within the discussion on the contemporary, revitalized by philosopher Arthur Danto in 1964 when, visiting the exhibition where Andy Warhol was exhibiting for the first time the series of Brillo boxes, concluded that arts have – by that time – reached the maximum point of self-consciousness, because the work of art was no longer distinguishable from a commercial product: any object can be a work of art, even if not every work is separable from its time and if its "value" does not exclusively depend on the intrinsic or observable properties. The works presented in this exhibition, want to give their opinion within this historical and complex debate by expressing, each one with its own language, the amazing and unexpected power of an everyday object that, thanks to the artist, enters into the "other" dimension of an exhibition space.

The exhibition itinerary starts with the project by artist Jonathan Baldock (United Kingdom, 1980) [1], whose multidisciplinary practice uses, painting, sculpture and evocative installations. He finds inspiration in the magical worlds of mythology, masks, tribal rituals and folkloristic traditions.

In the sculptures-objects, as in the embroideries, the artist seems to recall classical motifs of the past, contaminated by particular disturbing elements, that are able to transform the figure into uncanny artefacts that remind us of distant cultures. On the occasion of *Conversation Piece | Part 3*, Baldock decided to focus on transforming elements of the human body into objects, leaving out the symbolic dimension of the fragmented body in the era of objectification. The eyes and mouth are metaphorical doors capable of communicating with the inner parts of the body to the outside world, these being the main channels through which man feeds his mind and his body, but something dramatically appears and, as in a fairy tale, a forest of branches grows around the works preventing these vital organs to properly perform their functions.

Following, the room dedicated to Magali Reus (The Netherlands, 1981) [2], whose sculptural *Leaves* series, act as smaller moments of specific architecture, which might become means of classical organisation. As deeply mechanized objects which act as metaphors for content that is just out of reach, the lock (or padlock) could be considered a signifier for concealed information, domestic privacy and social security. Inflated to a just uncomfortably proportioned larger scale, these wall-based sculptures, intersperse the industrial language of lock manufacture with something more colloquially diaristic as the traditional calendar. Comprising of multiple levels of engineered metals, plastics and cast components, these works use the calendar as a model for repetition and speed: days of the week, numbers and seasonal implications in varying colour, materiality and density are all housed within a larger enveloping casing. As intensely decorative forms, these lock works act as framing devices for personal information: the time of a dentist appointment; when to water the plants; birthdays, anniversaries, deadlines, deaths. Like archaeological markers, the works become enigmatic containers for a type of cryptic numerical shorthand that only the author can translate.

The exhibition continues with the project by Claudia Wieser (Germany, 1973) [3] who has interacted with the space in a scenographic and illusionist way, in the wake of the great Roman decorative cycles of the late Renaissance tradition. In the room are unfurled geometric and Modernist shapes composed of straight lines, triangles, circles, influenced by the compositions of the great masters of abstraction, and from which emerge figurative elements inspired by the motifs of classical art or simple objects. On the occasion of this exhibition the artist has designed a series of new sculptures, mirror's pieces and a large wallpaper, which are characterized by an accurate chromatic research, and which intersect each other creating images immediately recognisable to the eye of the visitor. Some of the images chosen for the wallpaper come from photographs that date from the early twentieth century, collected by the artist over the years, as the elaborate Greek vases and the Charioteer of Delphi found during the excavations of the sanctuary of Apollo or the woman's effigy in Byzantine style, with marked lineaments, and adorned with a precious crown. Through the use of different materials and languages such as ceramics, collage, photography and sculpture, the artist seems to be halfway between classicism and modernity, in the attempt to analyze the fundamental elements of the creative language: space, light, color.

At the end of the exhibition itinerary, the room dedicated to Piero Golia (Italy, 1974) [4] who has been living and working in Los Angeles since many years. Through a variety of different languages and materials, his research is distinguished by a radical and biting approach, with the aim of questioning the usual dynamics of the art market and art system. The work, titled *The Painter*, especially conceived for Fondazione Memmo, is an ironic and irreverent metaphor for the classic figure of the painter and his work made up mostly of expectations, reflections and rapid moments of performance to create an artwork which at the same time is the mark of the time necessary to produce it. The robot observes, produces, stops and repeats itself.