



PRESS RELEASE | April 2021

ALBERTO BIASI

La visibilità dell'invisibile (The visibility of the invisible)

Curated by Alberto Salvadori

17 May 2021 -19 September 2021

M77

Via Mecenate 77, Milan

M77 presents *The visibility of the invisible*, an exhibition project dedicated to the artist **Alberto Biasi** (Padua, 1937), curated by **Alberto Salvadori** and specially devised for the spaces of this gallery. The exhibition will be open to the public **from Monday 17 May to Sunday 19 September 2021**, compatibly with the possible restrictions due to developments in the pandemic.

Alberto Biasi is one of the most important personalities of post-war Italian art: **Programmed Art** pioneer and co-founder of the historic Gruppo N, Biasi has focused his artistic quest on optic-kinetic research extending to the creation of installations, ambient settings, and more recently, sculptures.

With this exhibition, M77 and curator Alberto Salvadori wished to return to the origins of the Padua-born artist's very long career, highlighting primarily its **gestalt and experiential aspects**, along with the revolutionary role that he performed to introduce the concept of **ambient/artwork** into Italy.

The four ambient settings and the installation exhibited at M77 are not based just on space and light, but also, and above all, on the people who visit the worlds that the artist has prepared for them: spectators, with their reactions and responses to the artist's estranging proposals, are the true protagonists of the work.

"I chose *The visibility of the invisible* as the exhibition's title", explains Salvadori, "because what I want to focus on, in Biasi's work, is the centrality of the **spectator's co-creative participation** by means of the phenomenological structuring of the experiences proposed by the artist in an authentically personal itinerary, rather than his exploration of visual perception in its most specific sense, important though this is. When studying Biasi's early oeuvre, it is impossible to over-estimate the almost Dada approach and the playful pleasure with which his ambient-installations were devised and presented; the same can be said of the influence of Eco's *Opera Aperta* (Open Texts), which was truly decisive".



At the entrance of the M77 building in Via Mecenate, visitors will be welcomed by *La mostra del pane* (The bread exhibition), a **1961** installation demonstrating clear links to Duchamp, in which the **bread rolls made by an imaginary baker**, named Giovanni Zorzon, a reference to Giorgione, whose birthplace was not far from Biasi's, are exhibited.

The ambient settings *Proiezione di luce e ombra* (Projection of light and shadow, 1961) and *Light Prism* (1962), without doubt Biasi's first works of programmed kinetic art, are on the other hand works that share the characteristics of *real kineticism*, in other words incorporating small electric motors that introduce a programmed movement into the space in which visitors move, and into its lighting.

With the 1974 piece *Eco* (Echo), the spectator's active role as a fundamental part of the artistic operation is even more obvious: this is an **environment that steals the observer's image**, by generating a mark/shadow of the person interacting with a photo-sensitive wall. In this way, an ephemeral, evanescent work is created, destined to disappear a few moments after its creation.

The fourth environment in the show, *Io sono, tu sei, egli è* (I am, you are, he is, 1973) is profoundly **conceptual**: it subdivides the space into a sort of triptych in which the artist's reflections on his identity and nature as a physical being possessing senses are expressed. The *he is* constitutes painting, the *you are* is the happening, and the *I am* represents the tautology.

The exhibition is accompanied by a **catalogue** constructed around a text in which curator Alberto Salvadori develops and reconnects the themes developed during a detailed discussion with the artist. The volume comprises archive materials on the works exhibited, a carefully-researched biography of Biasi, and a bibliography. The images are provided by installation views of the exhibition itself.

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INFO

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ALBERTO BIASI (Padua, 1937)

Alberto Biasi was born in Padua on 2 June 1937. During the war he moved for a short period to his paternal grandmother's in Carrara San Giorgio, a small village near Padua. A motherless orphan, at the end of the war he returned to Padua where he went to junior and secondary school and later enrolled in the classical high school. His attitude towards art disciplines, however, impelled him to complete his high school art diploma and to enrol, in 1958, in the architecture institute in Venice and, in 1962, the higher industrial design course. In this period he taught drawing and art history in state schools and, from the early 1970s until 1988, he was professor of advertising graphics in the Padua professional institute.

His career in art coincided with the formation of the Gruppo Enne, an association of students of architecture with whom Biasi took part in such art events as the IV Biennale Giovanile d'Arte di Cittadella, where he was awarded a prize personally conferred by Virgilio Guidi. In 1960 he took part in the series of exhibitions at the Galleria Azimut in Milan, and with Enrico Castellani, Heinz Mack, Piero Manzoni, and Manfredo Massironi he exhibited in the show *La nuova concezione artistica* organised at the Circolo del Pozzetto in Padua. During his frequent visits to Milan, at the time the crossroad of internationally-known artists, Biasi and Massironi developed the idea of founding the Gruppo N, that in a short time was to become a protagonist of the main national and international shows of Kinetic art. Besides opening a gallery in Padua, the Gruppo N joined the movement "New Tendencies" and exhibited at Zagreb, Paris, and Venice, coming into contact with other European experimenters. In 1962 the Gruppo N exhibited in the travelling show *Arte Programmata* – a title referring to computer software – organised by Bruno Munari and hosted in the Olivetti shops in Milan, Rome, and Venice, and in galleries and museums in London and America. In 1964 the Gruppo N was invited to the XXXII Venice Biennale and, in the following year, the MoMA, New York, to take part in the famous show *The Responsive Eye*. The brief history of the Gruppo N concluded in September 1964, despite the attempt by Biasi to create in the following year, together with Landi and Massironi, the Gruppo Enne 65. In 1967 the Stzuki museum, Łódź, devoted an important retrospective show to the Gruppo N, which was presented by critical essays by Giulio Carlo Argan and Umbro Apollonio. After these group experiences, Biasi continued alone with his art, taking up coherently the results already achieved and bringing them up to date with new expressive solutions. His artistic output was constantly turned towards perceptive inquiry, through series of works and investigated problems relative to visual perception and interaction with the work. In 1959 Biasi began as an artist with his *Trame*, the results of his observation of nature and consisting of the superimpositions of perforated paper, cotton gauze, and metallic mesh which, by creating a modulated network, interact with the light to generate an optical-kinetic effect. Another result of visual effects were the optical-dynamic *Rilievi*, created by superimposing two levels in which the first consisted of bladed structures that, distanced from each other, create segments from which there emerges the image of the second level, often represented by linear or curved forms. Only with the participation of the viewers do these works give up their dynamism and their continuous mutation. The same phenomenon comes about in the *Torsioni*, these too studied to "provoke" the eyes of those who look at them. Made with blades that converge towards the centre, these works create an optical dynamism that stimulates the viewers to shift their own viewpoint. Again from the early 1960s, Biasi began to plan the *Ambienti*, works that wedded together with the exhibition space to completely enclose the public which became an "actor" and part of the work. If with *Light Prisms* the spatial dimension is constituted by rays of coloured light activated by electrical motors, in such other



environments as *Eco* and the triptych *Io sono, tu sei, egli è*, the public is called on to take part and to interact directly with the installation. From the 1970s the artist developed a new personal language through the *Politipi*, characterised by their geometric forms and shimmering colours, to which in the 1990s he juxtaposed painterly inserts with figurative allusions. In about 2000 he began the series *Assemblaggi*, in which Biasi juxtaposes and joins various canvases which are then “assembled” together and find a balance in their own “breaking point”. These three-dimensional works in a dialogue with space, with an apparent rigidity of geometric forms and of a uniform colour, transmit, however, a sensation of irregularity given by the blades that violently enter to become a part of the work, interrupting the homogeneity of the painted part.

Alberto Biasi’s art research continues after almost sixty years thanks to the redevelopment of formal solutions that continue to offer new possible readings of his art, a visual art that transmits awareness and knowledge through the eyes. He has taken part in numerous group shows and important national and international exhibitions, such as the XXII and XLII Venice Biennales, the X, XI, and XIV Rome Quadrennials, the XI Sao Paulo Biennale, and various well-known graphic biennales, and has received such awards as that of the World Print Competition ’73 of the California College of Arts and Crafts in collaboration with the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Tributes have been made to his artistic activity by Italian and foreign private galleries and public museums, such as the Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, Il Museo Civico agli Eremitani, the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg, the Museu Diocesà, Barcellona, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino, Palazzo dei Priori, Perugia, MACBA in Buenos Aires, MAC, Santiago in Chile, MARCA, Catanzaro, Palazzo Reale, Genoa, and Palazzo Pretorio, Cittadella. The works by Alberto Biasi are part of the most beautiful and authoritative Italian and foreign public and museum collections, among which the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Galleria Nazionale, Rome, the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, as well as many other prestigious exhibition venues.

ALBERTO SALVADORI (Vinci, 1969)

He got a degree in Art History at the University of Pisa, where he also graduated in History of Modern and Contemporary Art of the European Countries. He was awarded scholarships at Sussex University and Reading University. In 2001 he attended the Master in Curatorial Studies at Accademia d’Arte di Brera in Milan. He has worked at Galleria d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Torino and from 2003 to 2009 he has curated the catalogue of the collection of Galleria d’Arte Moderna Palazzo Pitti in Florence. Between 2009 and 2016 he has been director of Museo Marino Marini in Florence. Since 2017 he is curator of the Established Masters and Decades sections for MiArt, the modern and contemporary art fair of Milano. He is currently director of OAC, a project by Fondazione CR Firenze and since 2019 he is director of ICA Milano, a private not-for-profit foundation established by Salvadori himself, together with Bruno Bolfo, Giancarlo Bonollo, Enea Righi and Lorenzo Sassoli de Bianchi, who is currently president of the institution.