

***Thinking with hands, thoughts as images***

**Curated by Ilaria Bignotti**

**Marignana Arte, Venice**

**ArtVerona 2017**

**Pavilion 12 – Booth L1**

The exhibition project Marignana Arte is proposing for ArtVerona 2017 involves six of the gallery's artists: Mariella Bettineschi (Brescia, 1948); Maurizio Donzelli (Brescia, 1958); Aldo Grazzi (Pomponesco, Mantova, 1954); Laura Renna (San Pietro in Vernotico-Brindisi, 1971); Verónica Vázquez (Treinta Y Tres, 1970); Arthur Duff (Wiesbaden, 1973).

They share a particular creative process focused on manual ability, contamination between different materials, freedom of intuition, and esthetic revision of pre-existing objects and materials, leading to perpetual metamorphosis, intrinsic to the work's compositional process as well as its visual result. Thinking with your hands implies verifying in the course of the work the interdisciplinary character of languages and unexpected relations between different compositional elements. The works, of the utmost quality, many being created especially for the exhibition project, were directly selected by Marignana Arte from the artists, who were even associated in defining the project.

Active since the 1980s, Mariella Bettineschi carries out an interdisciplinary research, eclectic in its formal results and consistent with her poetics and purpose. In the last decade it has given rise to *The Next Era* project: an unquiet atlas "of woods, ponds, landscapes made evanescent by breaths of void or inhabited by mysterious disturbing presences; precious libraries invaded by a gassy dilatation that floods and thwarts architectural boundaries; portraits of women, large icons of art history, to which I double the eyes to indicate that it is to women, able to see far ahead, that I entrust the difficult passage lying before us," the artist wrote. This recent cycle, still in progress, features multimedia works produced by overlaying and combining photography and digital painting, prints on Plexiglass and mirror, collages, blurring, fading, and blank (white as visual zeroizing). On each icon Bettineschi performs operations of aggression and iconic mutations, through painting and digital collages, making each picture ahistorical and disturbing, drawing it out of a remote and fossilized past or an imaginary and decanted future, and placing it on the anatomy table of the potential present.

Her work method converges with that of Donzelli, Grazzi and Vázquez. Maurizio Donzelli's work arises from a struggle between his boundless and prehensile imagination ranging through cultures, languages, millennial iconographies and visual alphabets, and his work approach that puts together on the anatomy table intuition and chance, possibility and method. The drop of watercolor falling on the sheet and tracing a hypothesis that the artist must pursue; the more or less light petal of fabric or colored paper that, after being brought into the world by the artist, rests on the support and becomes garden, face, arm, shadow, here withdrawing into a corner of the work, there imposing itself at its center. Donzelli's entire work asserts its own presence with respect to the beholder, heightening the simultaneous impression of bewilderment and attraction by the use of prismatic lenses that turn the surfaces of many of his works into reflecting mirror or translucent membrane. His sensibility erases historic distances and in each work succeeds in concentrating the power to appear that is inherent to the image but would be nothing without the Other receiving it. Hence his work on mirrors that only gives us the image at a certain distance from the work, and with a certain gaze.

The potential of images is also explored by Aldo Grazzi, an artist of great poetic and intellectual stature. His work consists of intangible iconographies made out of utterly simple elements that the artist composes, carves, develops, and embroiders with obsessive precision. Grazzi's slow process is confronted with the convulsive, volcanic speed of Verónica Vázquez, an artist to whom Marignana Arte is devoting her first solo show in Italy in a private gallery. A sculptress who is receiving particular attention on the international scene, including the National Museum of Visual Arts of Montevideo, Uruguay, Vázquez concentrates most of her research on found materials like iron, cardboard, paper, threads of various thicknesses. With care and passion, she weaves, overlays, interrogates, and puts in dialog these plastic elements, doing and undoing the original forms to produce vibratile webs, hospitable installations, little theaters of a personal, private story stirred by memories and secrets. Laura Renna, to whom Marignana Arte is offering *The Project Room* during Vázquez's solo show, performs an interdisciplinary and poetic investigation, endowed with a sophisticated and occasionally tormenting elegance. She explores the potential of gestures and materials, doing and undoing by hand with a meticulous levity that flows and lingers between one medium and the next without ever falling into the vice of form: interlacing of metal wools, alchemical natures, metamorphic visions are the landscapes created by Laura Renna's expert handiwork, dialoguing with the two other artists presented by the gallery in a thought-provoking cultural and geographic confrontation.

Like Laura Renna, Arthur Duff carries out a multidisciplinary research that tackles different materials, knotting them, perforating them, composing and

amassing them in space, often in site-specific mode, and involving the beholder in a layered interpretation. His works become alphabets of a temporary or very ancient law, undecipherable or polysemous messages, solid laws on tables tested by fire and wind, words denoted by light that thickens and expands on variable rhythms, in closed or open spaces, in an embrace of micro- and macro-organisms. When all is said, this is precisely what the six artists endeavor to achieve with a dexterity steeped in evocative and semantic intensity.