

GALLERIA
ALBERTA
PANE

A FORM OF DELUSION

CHRISTIAN FOGAROLLI (IT, 1983)

Curated by Pier Paolo Pancotto

12 February

2 April 2022



OPENING: Saturday, 12 FEBRUARY, from 12 to 8pm

in compliance with current anti-Covid regulations

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Opening days & hours: Tuesday-Saturday, 10.30am -6.30pm

A Form of Delusion, curated by Pier Paolo Pancotto, is Christian Fogarolli's first solo exhibition at the Venetian venue of Alberta Pane gallery.

The exhibition offers the public the possibility of interacting with a *corpus* of works, many of which are installations, conceived specifically for the gallery spaces.

In Christian Fogarolli's artistic practice past and present intertwine in photographic works, installations, sculptures and videos; traces and fragments of an indefinite time are linked to glass, mirror, metal, organic and technological materials.

Starting from a historical and archival investigation and through direct collaborations with scientific research centres, the artist works following an interdisciplinary approach, looking at medical, psychiatric, psychological, anthropological and natural science studies.

For almost a decade Christian Fogarolli has been consistently realising works in which he questions the separation between body and mind, senses and intellect, normality and deviance, with the aim of stimulating a reflection on the normative attributions of disease, marginalisation and categorisation in today's society.

Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) came into contact with Balinese theatre at the *Exposition coloniale internationale* in Paris in 1931 and was greatly impressed by it. This circumstance was at the basis of his theories on the *Théâtre de la Cruauté* collected in *Le Théâtre et son double* (1938), where the term cruelty indicates an act of disturbance, of acute inner discomfort in which to involve the spectator so that, through the theatrical performance, he can achieve a sort of catharsis. This experience, as in Balinese theatre, takes place through a kind of ritual with a multi-sensorial dimension, thanks to which it is possible to raise one's level of knowledge of reality.

In some ways, although with due differences, the creative action of Christian Fogaroli (Trento, 1983) develops in similar terms. From the very beginning, he has accompanied the viewer in an investigation of the human being, in the meanders of his intellect, often involving 'uncomfortable' subjects in his creations and arguments, capable in some cases of provoking a sense of discomfort. Thus, by subjecting people to visual and thematic shocks, he draws attention to and induces them to reflect on subjects that are apparently far from his personal experience but, in the end, much less than he can imagine since they focus on the analysis of the mental, emotional and behavioural capabilities of the human being. That is to say, a dimension within which anyone, in one way or another, can find his or her own reason of interest on a subjective and objective level, and sometimes even identify with it.

Having received an unusual education for a visual artist (degrees in archaeology and art history followed by a master's degree in diagnostics and restoration instead of regular academic studies), for about a decade he has devoted himself to the creative practice with an approach that is almost more that of an intellectual - or collector, archaeologist, philologist, as the case may be - than that of a traditional artist. Fogaroli bases his work firstly on theory and on the study of various disciplines - from history to art history, from science to philosophy, from psychology to psychiatry, from anthropology to taxonomy, from the conservation of artistic heritage to the analysis of materials - and later on practice.

This is an approach that not only makes him an atypical figure in the contemporary art scene, but that also renders his research as free as possible, distancing it from the criteria that could bind it to a specific category. Drawing inspiration from studies conducted in museums, archives, libraries and research centres, as well as from an in-depth study of the work of authors of different periods and fields of expertise (including Jean Martin Charcot, Charles Darwin, Gian Battista Della Porta, Cesare Lombroso, Oliver Sacks, Aleksandr Lurija, Georges Canguilhem, Francesco Remotti, Clifford James Geertz...), Fogaroli's research lies halfway between the scientific disciplines and the plastic arts, allowing, as in a game of communicating vessels, the theoretical assumptions contained in the former to merge with the declined linguistic systems of the latter, visually explicating concepts, ideas and thoughts that would otherwise be accessible only on a written or documentary level.

So, relying on various expressive techniques such as sculpture, video, photography and installation, often mixed together, Fogaroli gives form and voice to subjective or collective realities that often have none, or never had any. In particular, by focusing on the study of the mind/brain relationship, he reflects on the semantic value of the concepts of normality and deviance viewed in connection with different historical epochs and social contexts in relation to contemporary life.

His investigations in various European psychiatric hospitals and health care centres and his reading of ancient and modern texts are crucial in this respect, underlining the importance of intellectual, rather than active, work processing in his creative procedure.

The Venice exhibition *A Form of Delusion* proves this. It consists of a series of works - environmental installations, sculptures and photographs - inspired by the condition known as 'Glass Delusion', a psychiatric disorder widespread in Europe, especially between the 15th and 19th centuries, which leads those affected to believe they are made of glass and, therefore, liable to shatter. This incredible phenomenon is reflected in the literary field (there are traces of it, for example, in Miguel de Cervantes' *El licenciado Vidriera*, 1613; in Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621; in Constantijn Huygens' *Costly Folly*, 1622; in *Meditationes de prima philosophia* by René Descartes, 1641) and in history (it afflicted, among others, Charles VI, King of France, who refused to allow people to touch him and wore reinforced clothing to protect himself from being accidentally 'shattered'; Alexandra Amalia, Royal Princess of Bavaria; the composer Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, who feared that his head might break when conducting the orchestra). The glass man syndrome, like the terracotta or concrete man syndrome, is characterised by a dissociation between imagination and reality, with the sufferer believing that his body is vulnerable to the point of disintegration, due to the material it is made of. It reflects, emblematically, a state of profound intellectual and emotional fragility, the same that, to different degrees and in different forms, affects much of the contemporary society. 'Glass Delusion' is an allegory of the present time, a metaphor for an affliction that, nourished by the cultural turmoil that marked the turn of the millennium and by the daily news, plagues our days.

Therefore, once again, Fogarolli relies on historical memory to address the problems of the present, opening a new chapter in his very personal praise of folly (paraphrasing the title of Erasmus of Rotterdam's text of 1511). The new works presented in Venice are characterised not only by a thematic *leitmotif*, but also by a remarkable ability for dialogue with the architectural context that hosts them and for which they have been specifically conceived.

This *praise* is expressed in various ways: plastic-photographic compositions aimed at allegorically examining the fragility of the human mind (*Blue Monday, Emerald, Sanguine, Aquamarine*, 2021); images of the artist's own brain (*My Brain in lockdown 1/2*, 2020/21, which shows an MRI of the artist's brain during lockdown); the possible consequences of using drugs and various types of substances (*Roulette*, 2021 and *Not Toxic*, 2020/21). From the mind, to the brain, to the face (*Cristal man, Cristal woman, Invisible mask*, 2022) and to the body. The latter is celebrated in a large installation, called *Evidence US7* (2022). A body made of glass, with part of the skeletal, muscular and vascular apparatus of an imaginary individual, is lying on a surface, inside a crate, and seems to recall, in its scarce essentiality, an archaeological finding without chronological references, rooted in the distant past, or in a near future yet to be decoded.

These works are intended to evoke the fragility that has always afflicted human beings. A sense of profound precariousness, symbolically testified by the works on show and which, today as in the past, always finds new ways of manifesting itself and reaffirming its relevance.

Fogarolli gives an account of this and, in doing so, adds a new chapter to his research into human existence and the conditioning to which it seems cyclically doomed.

Christian Fogarolli

(IT, 1983)

Born in Trento in 1983, Christian Fogarolli obtained a degree in archeology in 2007. He then continued his historical-artistic studies with a master's degree in 2011 at the University of Trento and a master's degree in diagnostics and restoration of works of art at the University of Verona. Since 2011 she has been studying and researching artistic, philosophical and historical practices.

His theoretical and field research unfolds in archival and museum contexts, from which he draws inspiration with the aim of enhancing little-known heritages. His practice develops at the intersection of visual art and scientific disciplines, investigating how the latter have used the artistic medium to progress. Through historical and archival research, he attempts to deconstruct the binary condition that separates deviance and normality, reflecting on the normative attributions of disease, marginalization and categorization in contemporary society.

He works with different media, from installation to photography, from sculpture to video.

His works encourage a critical thinking about the relationship between the mind and the brain, raising questions about how the latter's functional processes interact with the subjective ones of the mind and investigating how these thoughts develop into behaviors that are considered lawful or prohibited.

The results of his research have been displayed in events such as dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel (2012); the Mart, Museum of Modern and Contemporary art of Rovereto (2013); The Maison Rouge in Paris (2014); Museum of the Foundation Miniscalchi-Erizzo, Verona (2015); de Appel arts centre of Amsterdam (2015); 5th Moscow International Biennale (2016); the Hunterian Museum in Glasgow (2017); Gaîté Lyrique of Paris (2017); Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin (2017); Mart/Galleria Civica di Trento (2014-18); Les Rencontres de la photographie d'Arles (2018); MAXXI, Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome (2018); Fortuny Palace Museum, Venice (2018); Musée de Grenoble (2019). He received research and residency awards at the College of Physicians and Mütter Museum of Philadelphia (2018); Futura center for contemporary art in Prague (2018); Boghossian Foundation Villa Empain a Bruxelles (2022). In 2019 he got the prestigious Italian Council award granted by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism. 2020 works by Christain Fogarolli have been exhibited at Musée d'histoire de la Médecine, Paris; MARE Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest; at STATE Experience Science in Berlin; Löwenbraukunst Art Center and schwarzescafé Luma Westbau in Zürich; Etablissement Gschwandner Reaktor in Vienna; GAM Galleria di Arte Moderna in Turin; MAMM Multimedia Art Museum in Moscow.

Pier Paolo Pancotto

(IT, 1968)

Pier Paolo Pancotto is an independent curator and author of the exhibition programme *Art Club*, Académie de France à Rome, Villa Medici (2016-still ongoing; artists include: Adrian Ghenie, Cyprien Gaillard, Martin Creed, Claire Fontaine, Ciprian Mureşan, Adriana Varejão, Wilhelm Sasnal, Cy Twombly, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Marinella Senatore, Enzo Cucchi, Liliana Moro, Bruna Esposito, Eva Marisaldi, Piero Golia, Paola Pivi, Giuseppe Penone...). He curated, among others, the series of exhibitions *Fortezzuola* (Museo Pietro Canonica, Rome, 2016-18; among the artists: Claire Tabouret, Ciprian Mureşan, Şerban Savu, Landon Metz...), a series of shows at La Fondazione, Rome (2019-2021: *Geta Bratescu, Adrian Ghenie, Ciprian Mureşan, Serban Savu | Mateusz Chorobski; Piero Golia | Radu Oreian; Claire Fontaine-Pasquarosa-Marinella Senatore* then at Museo di Villa Pignatelli, Naples; *Nico Vascellari*) and exhibition projects at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (Eddie Peake; Nasan Tur; Nico Vascellari), Mairie du 4me, Paris (Claire Fontaine; Daniele Puppi), Estorick collection of modern Italian art, London (Alberto Di Fabio; Nico Vascellari; Eva Marisaldi), National Art Gallery, Tirana (Nico Vascellari), Lateral Art Space, Cluj (Greffes), National Gallery of Modern Art, Rome (Alberto Di Fabio); H. C. Andersen Museum, Rome (Nico Vascellari). C. Andersen, Rome (Carsten Nicolai; Nick Oberthaler), Museo Carlo Bilotti, Rome (Carla Accardi; Günther Förg), Nomas Foundation, Rome (Dove Allouche), Casa Scatturin, Venice (*Prego signori, si accomodino*), Chiesa delle Scalze, Naples (Namsal Siedlecki-Mateusz Chorobski), Salone Margherita, Rome (Collezione Banca d'Italia). He teaches at LUISS University, Rome. His publications include: *Artiste a Roma nella prima metà del '900* (2006); *Arte contemporanea: dal minimalismo alle ultime tendenze* (2010); *Arte contemporanea. Il nuovo millennio* (2013).