



Emilio Tadini, *Viaggio in Italia*, 1971

Emilio TADINI

Viaggio in Italia

Opening: Thursday, February 3, 2022

February 4 – March 5, 2022

From Tuesday to Saturday; 11am-7pm

Gió Marconi is very pleased to announce *Viaggio in Italia*, an exhibition with works from Emilio Tadini's homonymous series from the early 1970s. The exhibition will be staged 20 years after the artist's decease and over half a century after the body of work was first shown at the Studio Marconi in 1971.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the new Fondazione Marconi / Mousse Publishing publication *Emilio Tadini. The Reality of the Image 1968-1972* by Francesco Guzzetti in collaboration with Archivio Emilio Tadini will be presented.

Emilio Tadini's whole oeuvre, seemingly simple and straightforward, offers multiple layers of meaning with its dreamlike elements, everyday objects and fragmentary, often faceless and anonymous figures. He is unique in the Italian art scene, as he had adopted aspects of the Pop language when the movement was already on the wane and conceptual art and Arte Povera came into fashion. Although British Pop has been the artist's point of departure with everyday objects playfully populating his canvases, his interest in the unconscious and the irrational induced him to depict scenes of fragmentation and alienation reminiscent of Surrealism.

Prompted by a profound interest in Freud's psychoanalysis and especially his *Interpretation of Dreams*, he developed paintings with multiple layers of meaning which focused not solely on the depicted objects per se but much rather on the relationships between them. He called this new representation *integral realism*, a term that included both the conscious as well as the unconscious

Tadini has always had a serial approach to painting. Each new work cycle became a new chapter within his serialized novel of paintings in which the laws of space, time and gravity have been totally suspended.

Omnipresent in the *Viaggio* series are Tadini's solitary, headless figures that have already been part of some of his earlier work cycles, like *L'uomo dell'organizzazione* or *Vita di Voltaire*: Tadini's figures consist of bodies, movements and gestures but they are lacking both their faces and heads. Reminiscent of Brecht's epic theatre, these headless creatures add to the alienation effect of his works.

For a well-read person like Tadini, it seems almost impossible to look at *Viaggio in Italia* without thinking about Johann Wolfgang Goethe's homonymous travelogue in which the author describes his Italian stay from September 1786 to May 1788. A noteworthy similarity between both *Italian Journeys* is that Goethe as well as Tadini rely considerably on their self-produced images and their own visual repertoires: while he visits Italy, Goethe sketches and produces watercolours extensively, whereas Tadini harks back to a myriad of photographic images he has taken and neatly archived



Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein, *Goethe am Fenster der römischen Wohnung am Corso*, 1787



Emilio Tadini, *Viaggio in Italia*, 1970

in preparation for his paintings. These preparatory drawings and photos are first references of what will ultimately be translated into text and onto canvas.

In one of the large scale paintings from the *Viaggio* series, Tadini forthrightly quotes a well-known Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein graphic *Goethe am Fenster der römischen Wohnung am Corso* depicting a standing Goethe from behind who is gazing out of his window. Tadini's version shows both the open and closed windows and endows the headless standing figure with the exact same set of clothes -long socks, a pair of knickerbockers and shirt- as in the original.

In his journal, Goethe has been particularly interested in Italy's antique architecture, its geography, geology and botany and he made multiple mineralogical observations. Tadini seems to mirror that interest in his recurrent depictions of architectural forms, columnar shapes, cubes and pyramids out of different kinds of marbles and rocks.

As in previous bodies of work, Tadini uses recurring motives like a black and white striped pyramidal element, a headless standing female figure, a telephone, a beige sun helmet or red lipsticks. Through his choice of objects, Tadini transfers his journey more into the presence. His Italian journey is very much about contemporary everyday life as the phone, the letters (ci)nema, the stylish female outfits, the various design objects or the Calder sculpture clearly suggest.

While including references to antiquity, Tadini's *Viaggio* comprises also the realms of design, art, culture, fashion and style. His Italian vision combines the past with modernity.

This object-based point of view, in which the meditation on different kinds of objects leads to one's better self-knowledge, very much connects Goethe's *Italian Journey* with Tadini's which ultimately is also a depiction of various objects, or as Tadini has noted: "Art as a means to intensify the perceptibility of things".

Georg F. Schwarbaner puts it in a nutshell: "Each object, each symbol, every fragment of a sentence and of a word has its specific meaning. Tadini's compositions resemble an image-encyclopaedia of our century."

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