

CLEGG & GUTTMANN

Modernismo italiano

Opening: Wednesday 3 July 2019, 6.30 p.m.

Galleria Lia Rumma | Via Stilicone 19 | MILAN

Gallery opening hours: Monday-Friday 11 a.m. - 1.30 p.m. / 2.30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

On 3 July 2019, the Galleria Lia Rumma in Milan opens *Italian Modernism*, a new solo exhibition by Clegg & Guttmann. Michael Clegg and Martin Guttmann return to the city with a new project commissioned by the gallery, where they exhibited in 2008 (*Studiolo Nuovo*) and in 2001 (*Falsa prospettiva*), as well in the historic premises in Naples in 1987 and again in 2007.

Clegg & Guttmann's constant artistic research, which draws on the archives of history to give shape to complex ideas and concepts, recreates the context in which Modernism developed in Italy, and it does so with powerful emotional overtones on the three floors of the gallery. It examines a period of great scientific discoveries and philosophical speculation, of social and political change, of rapid industrial progress, and of creativity in art and literature, but also of ideological uncertainties and the rise of populism - many aspects that overlap with what we see in the world today. "A hundred years after the birth of Modernism", the artists explain, "we find ourselves in a state of profound uncertainty about what answers to give to the most fundamental questions of ethics, aesthetics and politics".

Clegg & Guttmann's "modernist" reconstruction appears in a choral visual format with texts, images, objects and sounds that go back to some of the great names of the time. It starts in 1890 with Segantini's Divisionism and then moves on to Luigi Russolo's Futurist sound experiments, to the literary experiments of Giovanni Papini and Italo Svevo, reaching all the way to the visionary mathematician Bruno de Finetti's theory of probability in the 1930s.

The exhibition forms part of a group of installations that the duo refers to as *art-essay shows*, in which the aesthetic aspect of the work of art helps the viewer experience the documentary aspect of history, in complex, unconventional ways. From the artists' perspective, a truly historical form of representation means piecing together the meaning of events and the relationships between them, creating links that form a clear set of representations in the eyes of the viewer. In other words, creating an image or, better, in this case, a "collective portrait" of a particular historical context.

The installation unfolds on all three floors of the Gallery. The space on the ground floor is divided into seven environments, and visitors are invited to take part in as many interactive "cognitive exercises" that trigger a combination of sensory, intellectual, and emotional stimuli. Each room contains furniture and objects, creating a different setting - artistic, literary, political, philosophical, and so on. This is created by large black-and-white documentary photos of some of the key figures of Italian Modernism, projected onto the walls. The visual journey is also accompanied by the audio reproductions of readings from their texts or writings about them, as well as by musical motifs and odes from the cultural and political world of the time. The sounds tend to bring about a series of musical interferences and noises that spread into each of the seven environments. When the viewer goes up to an audio file, he or she will be able to concentrate on the individual recordings that that environment contains, thus embarking on an authentic journey through time and space. The journey continues on the first floor, where a series of photographic portraits of Italian collectors are on display, together with some still lifes inspired by the modernism of Cézanne's apples and of Van Gogh's sunflowers. The exhibition ends on the second floor with a 2006 video-projection relating to the Viennese Secession movement, which was the offspring of the modernist experience in Austria.

Thanks go to the gallerist Michel Leo for his outstanding contribution to the exhibition.

Michael Clegg (b. 1957) and Martin Guttmann (b. 1957) have been working together since 1980. Their art features a highly original use of photography, which they consider as a key medium for capturing the profoundly (and historically) encoded information contained in simple images, at times deceptively mute, empty, or easy to interpret. Clegg & Guttmann, who are both former students of Joseph Kosuth, work mainly with three types of image: portraits, still lifes and landscapes. One constant factor is the use of settings with an almost Caravaggesque light source from the side, making the subjects stand out in a solemn, authoritative manner. In February 1987 they were invited to exhibit for the first time in Italy, at the Galleria Lia Rumma in Naples, where they showed a series of portraits of well-known personalities from Campania. Major solo exhibitions have been devoted to their work by important private galleries and museums, including the Israel Museum, (Jerusalem, 1987); Württembergischer Kunstverein, (Stuttgart, 1988); CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain (Bordeaux), Kunstverein Bremerhaven, (Bremerhaven, 1989); Kabinett für Aktuelle Kunst (Bremerhaven), Museum Schloss Hardenberg, (Velbert-Neuiges, 1990); Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum, (Graz, 1993); Landesmuseum Mainz, (Mainz 1994); The New School for Social Research, New York (1995); American Fine Arts, (New York, 1996); Galleria Civica di Arte Contemporanea, (Trento, 1999); Sigmund-Freud-Museum, (Vienna, 2004); Museion, (Bolzano, 2006); MUMOK (Vienna, 2010); GFLK Galerie für Landschaftskunst, (Hamburg, 2011); BAWAG Contemporary (Vienna, 2012); DKW Kunstmuseum, (Cottbus, 2012); and Kunstmuseum Basel (Basel, 2017).



