

examples
new italian art



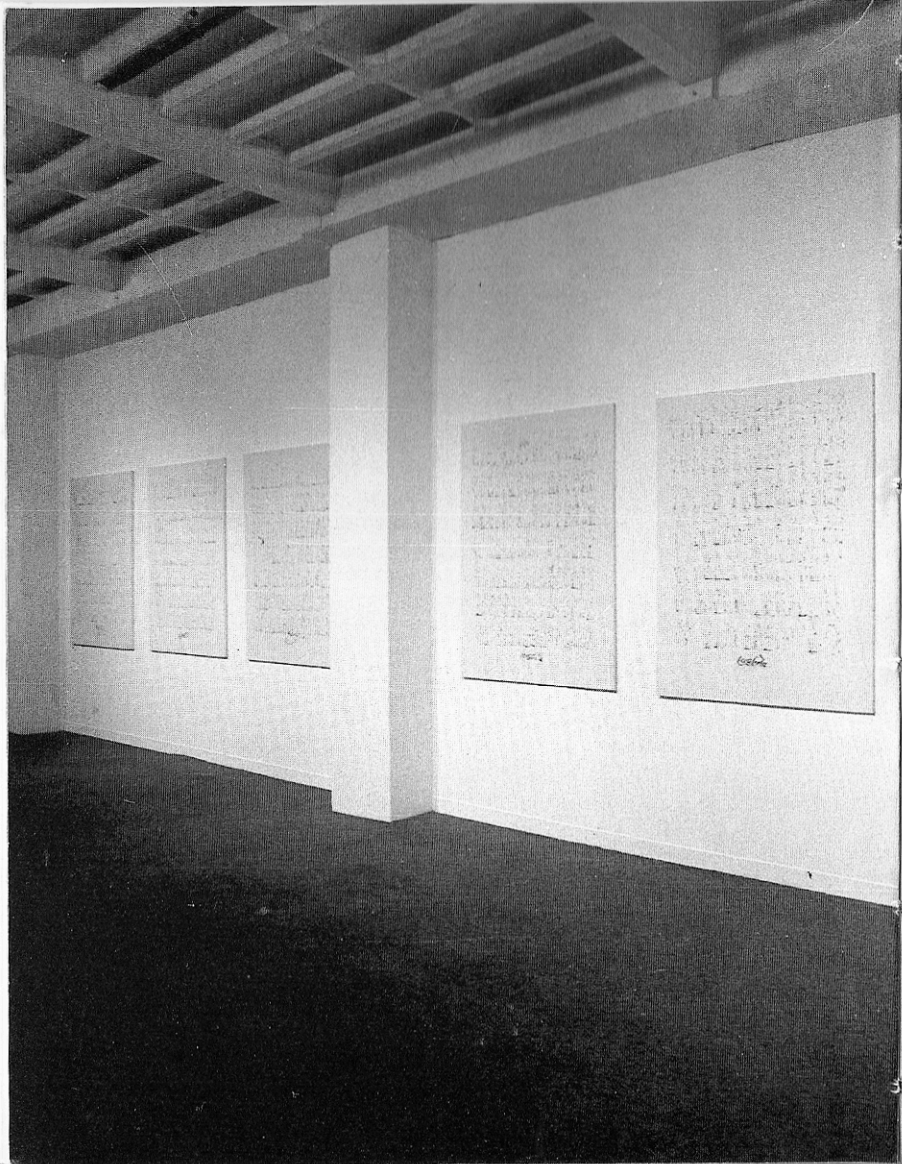
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12 April 14 May 1989

Stefano Arienti
Umberto Cavenago
Vittoria Chierici
Amedeo Martegani
Marco Mazzucconi
Paola Pezzi
Pierluigi Pusole



examples: new italian art attempts to provide a prosthesis, (for both audience and curators) to the recent glossary of 'Italian Art in the 20th Century' at the Royal Academy. It was that shows co-selector – Norman Rosenthal – who pointed Riverside in the direction of Milan to investigate the tremors of rampant artistic activity he had detected there while working on the Royal Academy show.

Milan in January '89 lived up to its promise. A proliferation of pertinent and diverse work by a scattered array of young Italian artists; a network of support for this production through various energetic galleries and critics; an excellent exhibition of Arte Povera at the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea; the hospitality of Giò Marconi and Corrado Levi.

I found the myriad of artistic production impossible to define or label, as Corrado Levi had indicated. Coherence comes through a freshness and directness to be found in all the work. 'Happy: No Illusions' was a title considered for the show to suggest an attitude to life shared by these young artists (and by their British counterparts) which is embodied in their work. This title seemed too light and flippant for work which possesses great integrity and displays an ability to present pertinent images which have a very real affect on their audience.

Hopefully examples: new italian art reopens some of the conclusions provided by the epic Royal Academy show. The exhibition indicates this small selection of

artists' fusion with the moment, the present, which in a volatile world is all they can count on. In this respect, Paola Pezzi's work stands apart; the contemporary, synthetic materials she uses to construct her antiquated fragments suggest remnants of our civilization rather than that of our predecessors.

We would like to thank the galleries who represent these seven artists – Galleria Franz Paludetto, Galleria Matteo Remolino and Guido Carbone in Turin; and Galleria Massimo De Carlo, Studio Marconi, Studio Claudio Guenzani in Milan – for this publication, and particularly Franz Paludetto who has personally followed its realization.

Special thanks to Marina Bassano, Valentina Bassano, Gail Cochrane, Norberto Cappello, Simonetta Fraquelli, Gondrand Fine Arts Dept. of Turin, Claudio Guenzani, Anthony Iannacci, Anna Achilli-Jarvis, Corrado Levi, Giò Marconi, Norman Rosenthal and of course the artists.

Kate Macfarlane
Zoë Shearman

opposite page

Pierluigi Pusole, *Untitled*, 1988
acrylic on canvas, 24 parts each 30×30 cms

Stefano Arienti, *Untitled*, 1988
folded books

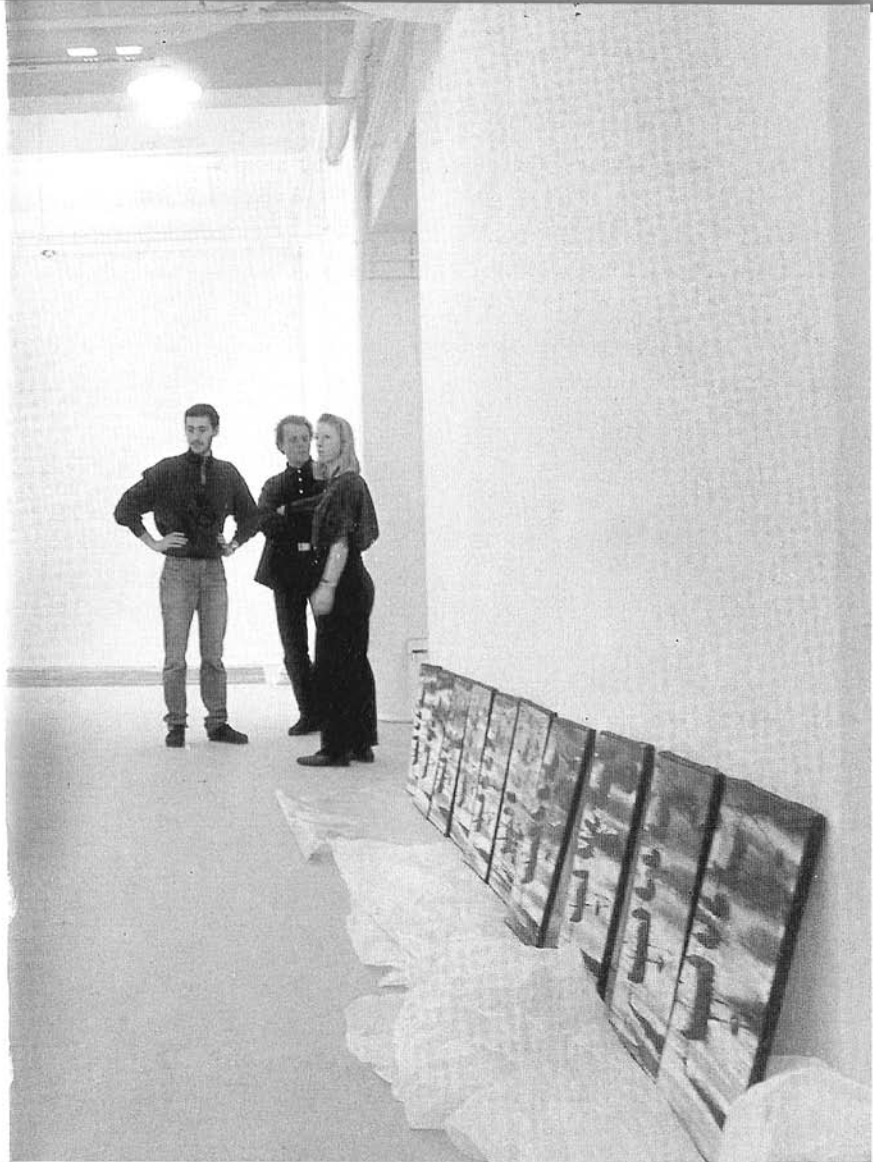
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Vittoria Chierici, *Untitled*, 1988
vinyl on canvas, each 170×130 cms

Organising a big exhibition such as *Italian Art in the 20th Century* is both an exercise in defining certain pre-conceptions and also a learning process. In any case, a settled and serious institution such as the Royal Academy is for the most part a place for demonstrating certainties – and heaven knows there are still enough critics and other observers of art who are able to doubt such certainties as Mario Merz and Jannis Kounellis, Francesco Clemente and Enzo Cucchi. In such context it is impossible to go further. Nonetheless running around Italy as I did, often in the company of colleagues and friends, in frenzied search of this Boccioni or that Morandi, I became aware of a new generation of Italian artists who, though very much part of a general attitude towards the making of art amongst young creative thinkers in Europe, have a very particular touch, flavour, that is identifiably Italian – that special elegance and fundamental culture that instantly separates those artists of Arte Povera and Transavanguardia from their American, German or British contemporaries, despite obvious affinities. Those artists I noticed in Turin and Milan especially. I came into contact with close observers of the scene there, Corrado Levi, Giò Marconi and Germano Celant especially, who led me to certain galleries where I saw for the first time the work of artists like Umberto Cavenago, whose conceptual notions of transportation seem elegant reflections of Italian design and life, or for instance the linguistic conceptions given visual form by Marco Mazzucconi. These were just two of the artists I noticed, there are others, not all of them included in this exhibition. These artists are making art that reflects the spirit of Italy today at the end of the

80's. I was delighted to pass the message to Kate Macfarlane and her colleagues at Riverside and was even more pleased that she found, with the imagination that is characteristic of Riverside (no money but masses of energy), the means to bring a sampling of this *goût*, this taste, of Italian art to London. I suggest, I hope, these artists will develop even further into something more substantial and all the observers of the art scene could do worse than to keep their eyes trained in this direction.

Norman Rosenthal
May 1989



opposite page
Stefano Arienti, Umberto Cavenago, Kate Macfarlane
and a work by Pierluigi Pusole

examples: new italian art, at Riverside Studios

When seen together the works of Stefano Arienti, Umberto Cavenago, Vittoria Chierici, Amedeo Martegani, Marco Mazzucconi, Paola Pezzi and Pierluigi Pusole, chosen as "examples" of "new Italian art" for the exhibition at Riverside Studios, seem to rigorously avoid claiming an italianità, or a national identity. Within the current historical availability of this work it is very interesting to note that such nationalistic labels or identities, which constituted an integral part of the artistic production of the last internationally available generation of Italian artists, seem to have lost their significance. If generalisations can be made about the work of this current generation, generalisations which, with its surprising developments and constant rejection of critical and commercial predictions, are becoming increasingly difficult to make, one might arrive at a perception of this work grounded in its attempt to function within an arena of production where art is not about personal or nationalistic isolation, but about its opposite. As this "new Italian art" moves towards a position of international availability artists, critics, and curators alike must start to think about what sort of relationship this production will have to its fatherland. Will this work, like other Italian products and commodities, simply bear the label "Made in Italy" as it prepares itself for export? Or will the work of this generation naturally abandon such institutionalisation? examples: new italian art, therefore, provides us with an opportunity to question whether such nationalistic labels are appropriate for this work, and if not what about the work

avoids such labelling.

Recently exhibitions of young Italian artists, from the forty-person group show in Milan that accompanied the Saatchi & Saatchi Prize for Young Artists to the smaller manifestations of artists working in Naples, Rome, Florence, Milan or Turin, have confirmed what appears to be the artistic abandonment of the traditionally "painterly" or "expressive". With this current Italian production much of the fascination with, and romanticisation of, the transparency of the seemingly unmediated aesthetic practices that the previous generation of Italian artists possessed seems to have been abandoned for the acceptance of art as a coded, quasi-linguistic structure. Perhaps this shift from the exclusively "expressive" towards works based on their means of production as an organisational function with the capacity to introduce discourses which move beyond the personal or nationalistic isolation of the work's producer, enable this work, when it is at its best, to discourse outside of its national boundaries. By embracing both the minimal and the conceptual, but here without fear of being categorised as ephemeral or "light", the current generation of Italian artists produce works which are often intentionally non-monumental and aggressively humanistic.

Each of the artists presented in Riverside Studios' examples: new italian art, uses appropriation, appropriation of materials, images and even stylistic approaches, as a means of providing spectators with some information that is already known, information that can be read by spectators as almost pedestrian as opposed to sublime, abstract or distant. Arienti's manipulation of puzzles, books, and other printed materials, Cavenago's theatrical use of the vehicle, Chierici's appropriation of logos and brand names, Martegani's intervention over found or common objects, Mazzucconi's abstraction and reproduction of found language and ima-

ges, Pezzi's reproduction of the organic or Pusole's reinvention of painting through a domestic language all quickly encourage an interactive participation. In each of these works the artists present a decisive starting point from which spectators can enter into and unfold the works often complex relationship to communication. Here the artist is not presented as the isolated figure mired in the sentimental crisis that led to the creation of his or her work, but in a communicative position which seems to have as its ultimate goal the opening of direct discourses between the spectator and the work, the means of production, here the minimal and the conceptual, and the works organising or communicative function.

As the recent history of art has shown, when the distance between viewer and producer is widened, when the work moves into the realm of exclusively visual or "expressionistic", for example, its capacity to adopt a nationalistic label or identity is equally broadened. examples: new italian art establishes this current generation of Italian artists as an ever-growing, ever-changing group of individuals producing works which will most probably resist nationalistic labelling.

Anthony Iannacci
May, 1989

opposite page
Marco Mazzucconi, Pierluigi Pusole, Stefano Arienti

following pages
works by Stefano Arienti and Umberto Cavenago



Vittoria Chierici
born in Bologna, 1955. Lives in Milan.



Senza titolo
(Untitled)
1989
vinyl on canvas
170×130 cms