

MASI Lugano

Museo d'arte
della Svizzera italiana,
Lugano

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PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Tra le ciglia

6 September 2020 – 28 March 2021

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano

MASI | LAC

Curated by Cristina Sonderegger

Press Conference: Friday 4 September 2020, 10.30

PRESS RELEASE

Lugano, 4 September 2020

From 6 September 2020 to 28 March 2021, the Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana pays tribute to Ticino-based artist PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli with the exhibition titled *Tra le ciglia*. Brought to life in close partnership with the artist, it traces the various stages of his career with around 150 works, including the monumental *Lettere dall'Europa* cycle for which he was awarded the Federal Fine Arts Grant.

Born in 1954, Mazzuchelli is one of the most representative Ticino artists of his generation. An attentive observer of the contemporary art scene, he has spent his artistic career in Ticino, where he has chosen to live and work, while upkeeping close artistic exchanges in other regions, particularly other parts of Switzerland and Italy. Initially a calligraphic painter working with thick impasto, he was influenced by Surrealism, Expressionism and Informalism. His work also owes much to the Beat Generation, psychedelic art and underground literature.

The various stages in Mazzuchelli's career are explored in the *Tra le ciglia*, an exhibition presenting a corpus of around 150 mainly large-format paintings dating from the 1970s to the present day. Deliberately not arranged in chronological order, but rather grouped according to recurrent themes and subjects, the exhibit includes motifs from the plant kingdom, dreamlike scenes, apocalyptic landscapes, and the human figure. The exhibition also examines the different techniques used by the artist, particularly the use of mixed media on canvas and cardboard; charcoal and Indian ink on paper; and various engraving techniques.

The exhibition narrative commences with a work from Mazzuchelli's early career entitled *Quello che rimane* (1976–77), in which daring perspective and vibrant brushstrokes are used to depict some abandoned toys on top of a cupboard. It continues with a series of key works: *Rhinoceros* (c.1990) and *Lophophora Williamsii* (1990–91), both of which started out as body prints, which the artist subsequently elaborated. They document both the performance dimension of his work produced during the early 1990s and the insertion of writing into the image – two aspects that were to become a constant in his subsequent expressive choices. *Carta geografica* (1991), on the other hand, was made using Indian ink, in numerous shades of black – a colour that was to dominate the artist's oeuvre for over a decade – to

create an obscure map. The first room is completed by a series of abstract works from the mid-1980s; *Perché non da Z* (1996–97), composed as a sequence of frames recalling the traditional comic-strip layout; and particularly *Da dove veniamo? Chi siamo? Dove andiamo?* (2002), a tribute to Goya and Gauguin that is one of the monumental polychrome prints that marked Mazzuchelli's return to colour. Indeed, the central part of the exhibition is introduced by a section featuring large-format prints in bright colours: *Lamera* (2002) and *Stele delle ciliegie* (2002), which are reflected in the "psychedelic" *Battilamera* (1996/2015) encountered further on. The central space of the exhibition is dominated by the large charcoal drawings of the cycle dedicated to Brazilian activist Chico Mendes, for which Mazzuchelli won the Federal Fine Arts Grant in 1993 for the second year running. In a sort of journey through the dark depths of the unconscious mind, they portray dreamlike worlds and apocalyptic scenarios filled with fanciful figures and landscapes. The work *Vomir charognes* (2014) diptych illustrates the artist's return to the depiction of the human figure using a caustic, condemning language that has characterized his work over the past five years, as is evident in the final part of the exhibition.

An apparently more amenable style, associated with the wonders and mysteries of nature (a recurrent theme in the artist's works from 1992 onwards) can be found in the two series *Giardini immaginari* (2013) and *Naga e Hiro* (2008), whose title evokes dark moments in 20th-century history, while *Ancora una stagione per riflettere* (2018/2019) is a cycle that brings together the artist's most recent printed works in a series of tributes to his deceased friends.

The exhibition's narrative ends with around 50 drawings in different formats, in which Mazzuchelli portrays severed and unnaturally contorted bodies to condemn the various forms of violence that characterize contemporary society.

Works by PAM are featured in many public art collections – particularly that of the Museo Villa dei Cedri in Bellinzona, which includes an important archive group – and selected private collections. The Credit Suisse art collection comprises around 20 of his works, some of which are displayed in the bank's offices in Switzerland and abroad (Chiasso, Bellinzona, Singapore, New York), a tangible testament to the importance of the artist.

Biographical overview

Paolo Mazzuchelli was born in Lugano on 27 January 1954. Like many Ticino-based artists, he attended the CSIA (Centro Scolastico Industrie Artistiche) art school in Lugano, followed by the Brera Academy in Milan, where he studied until 1975. In 1982, he won the drawing competition held by the Municipality of Chiasso and had his first important solo show at the Galleria Mosaico, also in Chiasso, where he exhibited his work again in 1985, 1990 and 1993. After completing his artistic training, he lived and worked in Ticino, where he became part of a network of lively exchanges. He was awarded the Federal Fine Arts Grant in 1992 and 1993.

During the 1990s, Mazzuchelli started forging relationships with artists and writers who gravitated around the visual poet Franco Beltrametti, giving rise to crossover experiences between images, music and poetry that were presented in Venice, Locarno, Milan and Zurich, among other locations. In 2000, the Museo Villa dei Cedri in Bellinzona put together a collection of his works, presented in 2002 and still housed in the museum today, consisting of an extensive selection of works on paper that fully document the growing importance of graphic art in Mazzuchelli's work, from the drawings made at the beginning of his career to the large-format Indian ink and charcoal works, and the huge polychrome prints displayed at the Museo Epper in Ascona in 1998. In 2002, the Museo Villa dei Cedri in Bellinzona and the Elisarion Cultural Centre in Minusio staged an exhibition of his works from the period 1982–2002. In 2010 and 2013, he

exhibited at the Galerie Carzaniga in Basel, and his work was displayed at the Galleria Carlo Mazzi in Tegna in 2015 and 2019. Paolo Mazzuchelli lives and works in Tegna.

The Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a bilingual catalogue in Italian and German with approximately 200 pages, including 120 colour plates. Essays by Daria Caverzasio Hug, Paolo Mazzuchelli, Fabrizio Scaravaggi and Cristina Sonderegger. Curation by Cristina Sonderegger. Graphics by Massimo Prandi. Edizioni Casagrande, Bellinzona.

The catalogue was produced with the support of the Sophie and Karl Binding Foundation. It represents the 88th project selected for the "Binding Sélection d'Artistes", aimed at promoting Swiss artists.

MASI Lugano

Founded in 2015, in the space of a few years the Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana (MASI Lugano) has become one of the most visited art museums in Switzerland, forming a cultural bridge between the north and south of the Alps, linking Latin and Germanic Europe. Through its two venues – the LAC cultural centre and the historical Palazzo Reali premises – it offers an extensive programme with temporary exhibitions and ever-changing collection presentations, accompanied by a multilingual educational programme for visitors of all ages. It is further enriched by close collaboration with the Giancarlo and Danna Olgiati Collection, which is part of the MASI network, entirely dedicated to contemporary art. MASI is one of the Swiss museums supported by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture and is also one of the "Art Museums of Switzerland", the group of museums selected by Switzerland Tourism to promote the country's cultural image worldwide.

Current Exhibitions

La Collezione

MASI | Palazzo Reali (permanent collection)

Shunk-Kender

Art Through the Eye of the Camera (1957–1983)

MASI | Palazzo Reali, until 20 September 2020

Vincenzo Vicari Photographer

Ticino in the Tide of Change

MASI | Palazzo Reali, until 10 January 2021

Upcoming Exhibitions

What's New?

19 September–13 December 2020

Giancarlo and Danna Olgiati Collection

Hans Josephsohn

19 September 2020 – 21 February 2021
MASI | LAC

Gabriela Maria Müller

Anima Naturae
Bally Artist of the Year Award 2019
24 September 2020 – 1 November 2020
MASI | Palazzo Reali

Marta Margnetti

Prix Manor 2020
28 November 2020 – 14 February 2021
MASI | Palazzo Reali

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MASI | Palazzo Reali
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Press images

01.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Iguana

1990-1991

Mixed media on paper

150 x 100 cm

Photo credits: © Maurizio De Marchi



02.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Rhinoceros

1990-1991

Mixed media on paper

150 x 200 cm

Private collection



03.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Europa (per Chico Mendes)

1992

Mineral coal on paper

220 x 400 cm

Photo credits: © Stefania Beretta



04.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli i

Lettera dall'Europa (per Chico Mendes)

1993

Mineral coal on paper

209 x 496 cm

Photo credits: © Stefania Beretta



05.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Zen sotterraneo

1995

Indian ink and coloured pencil on paper

148 x 80 cm

Museo Villa dei Cedri, Bellinzona.

Deposit of the artist 2000-2002

Photo credits: © Museum Villa dei Cedri, Bellinzona, photo

Roberto Pellegrini



06.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Paolo Mazzuchelli

Da dove veniamo? Chi siamo? Dove andiamo? (det.)

2002

Polychrome xylograph, monotype

150 x 690 cm ca.

3 sheets, 150 x 230 cm each

Photo credits: © Maurizio De Marchi



07.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Paolo Mazzuchelli

Da dove veniamo? Chi siamo? Dove andiamo? (det.)

2002

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PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Da dove veniamo? Chi siamo? Dove andiamo? (det.)

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09.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Novantanove haiku

2007

Different engraving techniques on paper

99 sheets, 17 x 17 cm each

Ascona, Comune di Ascona, Museo comunale d'arte moderna, CCA 0-0-413

Photo credits: © Maurizio De Marchi



10.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Novantanove haiku

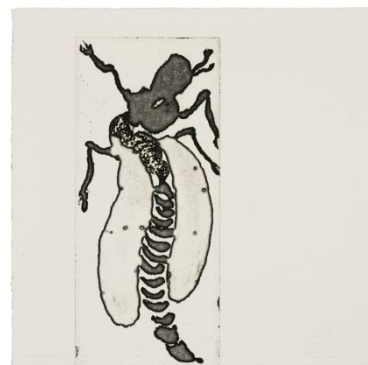
2007

Different engraving techniques on paper

99 sheets, 17 x 17 cm each

Ascona, Comune di Ascona, Museo comunale d'arte moderna, CCA 0-0-413

Photo credits: © Maurizio De Marchi



11.

Naga e Hiro (diptych)

2008

Mixed media on canvas

174 x 520 cm

2 elements, 174 x 260 cm each

Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano. Collezione Cantone Ticino

Photo credits: © Alexandre Zveiger



12.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Tra le labbra (Ribulez le Kick. Allmanegreta 4/4)

2013

Mixed media on canvas

226 x 370 cm

Photo credits: © Maurizio De Marchi



13.

PAM Paolo Mazzuchelli

Ancora una stagione per riflettere

2018/2019

Mixed media on canvas

152 x 100 cm

Photo credits: © Maurizio De Marchi

