

Follia Continua ! 25 YEARS OF GALLERIA CONTINUA

We have decided to begin the tale with this catalogue, realized on the occasion of the exhibition ***Follia Continua !*** following the kind invitation of the City of Paris and the Centquatre – Paris.

But the story will continue in a more detailed second volume that will include all our friends, artists, curators and all the co-workers who have shared with us these mad years of Continuity.



GALLERIACONTINUA
SAN GIMIGNANO BEIJING LES MOULINS HABANA

Book realized on the occasion of
the exhibition

**Follia
Continua !**

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Follia Continua !

25 YEARS OF
GALLERIA CONTINUA

Gli
Ori



Prelude

Many days and journeys have gone...

We all remember we tried not to allow ourselves to be crushed by circumstances, so when you've finished or you're about to finish your studies you're already prepared to say, "Right, I'll settle down now, and see my friends once a week to remember the good old days..." No, instead, we piled into a car into a car borrowed from Maurizio's sister, and as for various reasons all three of us were attracted by the French Revolution, we set off. There are some people in life who ask themselves "why?" and then let things drop, and others who say "why not?" and then do everything they can to see what happens... The discussion livened up when we arrived in Paris and saw Pei's Pyramid in front of the Louvre. It seemed incredible to us, living as we did in Tuscany, that a 'graft' like that was right there in front of our eyes, and that everything seemed as if it had always been there, perfectly together. If it could be done there, why not where we were? That was already the beginning of a series of 'why not?', to which we would add others over the years...

We have always had, and still do today, different ideas about a lot of things, but the passion for art and for our friendship were the things we did not want and continue not to want to lose, and on which we were prepared to bet our very few, but for us very precious, trump cards. That is how we came to found, in the following months, a gallery and a cultural association inspired by the ideas of corporate social responsibility. And so, in October of the same year, we were ready to go, and we held our first exhibition in the gallery, which at that time was in via della Rocca 1.



Luciano Pistoï, Giulio Paolini,
Mario Cristiani, Silvia Pichini, 1994

Our idea has always been to devote our lives, without resigning ourselves, to something that could also be better. It is for this reason that Galleria Continua and Associazione Arte Continua were the tools we armed ourselves with to build our competence, to defend our proposals in the art world and to create a synergy between public and private. What we have always aimed for with our interlocutors is

clarity in our dealings and an international spirit in the ideas we wish to develop: in our gallery, with 25 years of exhibitions, always conceived on site with the artists present, in San Gimignano from 1990, Beijing from 2005, Les Moulins from 2007 and Havana as of 2014; in projects developed together with our private clients; and in initiatives run in conjunction with different public administrations, such as *Arte all'Arte*, *Rinascimento Nascimento*, *Arte Pollino* and *Arte x Vino = Acqua*.

Even if we did not have financial resources, families with art collections, experience of the art world or big political backing, we wanted to put into practice our ideas about initiating an action of international standards in San Gimignano, starting from exactly where we were. We wanted somehow to do in San Gimignano what we had seen in front of the Louvre.

We wanted to try – and we are still insisting today – to give an electric shock, a life up-date, a wake-up call to a place or places that we loved, and love, but which for too many reasons – and we are still convinced that the lack of personal actions is a significant cause – did not have, and unfortunately still do not, the level of which they were really capable. That is why we are stirred and driven by what we might call a continual search, or a continual tension, or a continual need, to enjoy ourselves in order to retain our commitment.

But returning to San Gimignano, we wanted to make people understand that for us the past was not an obstacle but the search for the level with which to look in the art world for what might aspire to continue its history in the present and in our on-going action...

We wanted to try to give an electric shock, a life up-date, a wake-up call to a place that we loved

As we have three heads and a great desire to keep them alive, and we do not always move in the same direction and at the same speed, we trust and rely on each other. And so, very often, the outcome of our actions is not the sum of what each of us has in mind at the beginning, or an exactly detailed and pre-established plan for how a given situation will work out. Perhaps if everything were completely predictable we might have got bored, and perhaps we would not have kept it up for long. For this reason an artist friend, ever since he has known us, calls us *KaosPiloten* – and perhaps he's right!

We held a constant stream of exhibitions in the gallery, and in galleries, and right from the start we always liked it. We've never renounced and indeed we've always been proud of coming from a small country town, because it has a wealth of art and fabulous food products.

We pursued the idea that Italy would never be the nation of a few great contemporary art museums, but it could be one of a 100 art cities... contemporary as well.... Who knows if we'll manage it... Anyway, the first person who came to visit us and took notice of us, despite everything, was Elio Grazioli, who came to see us in 1991. Lorenzo had read his book *La metà dell'arte*, and he passed it on to us. And our long friendship started right from that first meeting.

It must be said that with a context like ours, with very few collectors, or even none at all, a long way away from large cities, the possibility of trying to bring about "a continual growth of sensibility" without taking part in international fairs would have been even more problematic. And again it was Luciano Pistoï, who used to organize the wonderful art festival in Volpaia every autumn, and very generously made his house, packed with art works, available to us, and offered us his time beautifully and with a light touch, tried to make us understand, with his famous quip "the best critique of an artwork is its purchase", that we had to try to harmonize a positive and constant connection between the two things. And that's what we have tried to do, more or less successfully, in these 25 years.

The best critique of an artwork is its purchase

Luciano Pistoï



Maurizio, Lorenzo and Mario ,
1989.



Jacques Morrens,
Maurizio and Mario, 2003

Among the most beautiful gifts Luciano Pistoletto gave us, we want to remind the project we conceived together *Arte all'Arte. Arte, Architettura, Paesaggio*. For ten years, once a year, this project has connected with the thread of international contemporary art seven cities of art and countryside like San Gimignano, Volterra, Poggibonsi, Colle di Val d'Elsa, Siena, Buonconvento, Montalcino.

Thanks to the artist's generosity and a hard work together, we succeed to donate to these towns who welcomed our project, twenty works that are now part of the local communities heritage. This initiative has finally increased the art patrimony of this beautiful part of Italy for the next generations. Our first international fair was in Belgium, where we met Jacques Morrens, Hilde and other friends. We formed a close and lasting friendship with Jacques, and it was with him, who followed us with great enthusiasm, that we organized some *Arte x Vino = Acqua* fundraising evenings in Belgium, and he introduced us to people he esteemed, including curators, collectors and artists.

Our 25 years of activity really have been years of offering hospitality to and of feting artists, curators and lovers of art, food and wine in our gallery and in the small art cities in which we grew up. We opened ourselves up to the world here, and we have tried to show and see things where it was not thought possible to do so. We have brought artists' visions of the world to galleries we have opened in places where we felt there was a need and we liked the place, asking them to produce works so as to regenerate places originally designed for other purposes. We are trying to find a way to build, by way of affinity and once again with something lying between a public and a private dimension, a small new ideal city founded on art and on every form of expression, including architecture, theatre, food...but more about this in the coming years; and finally, in Cuba.

A big and heartfelt thank you to all the warm and kind people who have helped us – to the artists, curators and collectors;

to all the people who have come to our parties and engaged with art. To our co-workers, from the directors to the set-up crew and the kitchen staff. To our women and children, who, through their love, enable us to go on taking what we believe in around the world, with joy, lightness, generosity... and a certain fatigue, but always with immense pleasure. To Art, Love and Friendship, the only great treble to which it is worth committing the magnificent gift of being in the world.

Mario, Lorenzo and Maurizio

Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Simbolo del Terzo Paradiso*, 2012-2013, installation view, Musée du Louvre, Paris



Our 25 years of activity really have been years of offering hospitality to and of feting artists, curators and lovers of art





ETEL ADNAN

How and when did you meet Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo?
I first met Lorenzo and Alicia. It was 2012, for *Documenta* in Kassel, to which I had been invited. They came to see me in a Chinese restaurant I used to go to in the afternoon, to be available for anyone who wished to talk to me, as I was also “a writer in residence”! After that I met Maurizio and Mario, and now I call them privately *les trois mousquetaires*.

Which work (or project or exhibition) done with them do you remember with most pleasure?

I remember with most pleasure my first exhibition in San Gimignano. I had only visited the place once, some twenty years previously. The whole town struck me as a place of secrets. Its big towers look like some sacred geometry, sacred and not religious; military defences, probably, but much more. The show gave me the chance to be there again, and with a purpose, and it made the three of them friends of mine. I stayed quite a few weeks, and they are part of my most memorable experiences.

Is there an anecdote or a story that binds you to Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo and that you would like to share?
An anecdote? Many anecdotes? Oh, this one! Next to the gallery (which is itself a small village), there’s a restaurant whose lady owner, Elena, is the most charming person you can dream of. And I loved going there, to see her working, and just to be around. In fact she also came to a poetry reading I gave during the show, and she was the best audience I could wish for. Poetry moves her, and that’s wonderful. And the funny thing is that whenever I wanted to pay for my lunch or my dinner, the thing was done. The three guardian angels had done something about it. Thankfully!



ETEL ADNAN

*le Soleil amoureux
de la lune*

2014

Hand-painted ceramic on matt rough polish
9 panels: 390 x 220 cm each
overall dimensions: 77m²

Site-specific installation
Galleria Continua,
Les Moulins, 2014



AI WEIWEI

How and when did you meet Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo?
I've known Mario, Maurizio, and Lorenzo for about fifteen years. I visited San Gimignano. It's a small town, but unique in terms of architecture. Their gallery was very impressive. For as long as I have known them, they have been close and caring friends.

Which work (or project or exhibition) done with them do you remember with most pleasure?
It was not until much later that I had my first solo exhibition in San Gimignano. I exhibited many of my works there in a variety of spaces. I remember that it was very well installed. On the occasion of Galleria Continua's 10th anniversary in Beijing, I organized my first solo exhibition in China since my return from New York in 1993. That took quite an effort.

Is there an anecdote or a story that binds you to Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo and that you would like to share?
They come to see me whenever they visit China. They came to see me even during the most repressive period, when I was placed under heavy restrictions. They never forget to bring wine and cheese, and we always hug each other.



AI WEIWEI

Ordos 100 Model

2011

Pine wood, video
80x1511x1357.3 cm, 1h 0m 57s
Presented with texts and images from 100 architects.

Installation view
Galleria Continua,
Les Moulins, 2013



AI WEIWEI

*Wang Family
Ancestral Hall*

2015

Pieces of various wooden building elements from late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) with original carvings and painted replacements
2100x1680x942 cm

Installation view
Galleria Continua,
Beijing, 2015



JONATHAS DE ANDRADE

How and when did you meet Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo?
I met Maurizio and Verusca when I first visited San Gimignano; we were discussing ideas for an exhibition I would do together with André Komatsu and Marcelo Cidade in the gallery in February 2014. Later on, in the installation days for the show, I had a chance to meet Mario and Lorenzo, and I could understand how the personality of each one peculiarly puts together the personality of the gallery itself.

Which work (or project or exhibition) done with them do you remember with most pleasure?

I had a chance to develop *Maré*, a work I've been idealizing for quite a while and I could finalize specifically for the show at Continua. It was very special to count on the effort of the staff to work on several tests and types of woods and prints until getting to the final solution of 111 UV prints on maple wood pieces. The show also included the installation *What's left of the 1st horse race of downtown Recife*, and it was very interesting to see it presented in that context.



**JONATHAS
DE ANDRADE**

*What's left of the 1st horse
race of downtown Recife*

2012-2014

Maquette in mdf (210x110 cm), pins, 47 photographs on Dibond, 15 contracts on A4 paper, 1 index on Dibond, 20 Portuguese texts printed on canvas, 20 English translations in vinyl, 85 acrylics engraved numbers, pamphlet of the horse race, newspaper mounted on Dibond

Installation view
Galleria Continua,
San Gimignano, 2014



JUAN ARAUJO

How and when did you meet Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo?

I heard about the gallery through the work of artists I am interested in, like Anish Kapoor, Jorge Macchi and Carlos Garaicoa.

Which work (or project or exhibition) done with them do you remember with most pleasure?

I travelled to London and Florence in May 2014 for the exhibition at the Stephen Friedman Gallery and for the project at Galleria Continua. I had three intense days – after all, it was my first time in London – and I was to travel on to Florence the next day to meet with Verusca. But before leaving I went to Tate Modern. On the second floor I saw a Rothko painting, and realized what I had forgotten to see. I had been longing for that moment for more than twenty years. I gazed, photographed and wrote notes about each of the Seagram paintings that Rothko had made in the late 1950s, and which for many reasons are an icon of Modernist painting. Tired and bad-tempered – because I had got distracted by far less important things during most of my visit – I had to get up and leave, but just before I did I read the text in the room. I then knew what my project for Continua was going to be. In the second paragraph I read: Rothko was influenced by Michelangelo's Laurentian Library in Florence, with its blind windows and deliberately oppressive atmosphere. Rothko commented that Michelangelo achieved just the kind of feeling I'm after – he makes the viewers feel that they are trapped in a room where all the doors and windows are bricked up, so that all they can do is butt their heads forever against the wall!

Is there an anecdote or a story that binds you to Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo and that you would like to share?

In June 2014, during a dinner party at the gallery in San Gimignano for the preview of Kiki Smith's and Pascale Tayou's exhibition, I was chatting with Verusca and Maurizio. We were standing on the wooden stage at the back of the cinema, and as we contemplated the huge room I explained to them my concern about the amount of time and labour my paintings required, and also about their scale. Maurizio replied, and right through to today it has resonated as a truism: "If your paintings are strong enough, and concentrate all that labour with only three small works, displayed in the right way, you will fill this space."



JUAN ARAUJO

Conference hall PCF

2015

Oil on Canvas
89x116 cm



KADER ATTIA

How and when did you first meet Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo?

I don't remember, but I believe it was in front of one of my installations or mirrors called *Holy Land...*

Which work (or project or exhibition) that you have realized with Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo do you remember with greatest pleasure?

All of them! Each time it's a unique experience, with the emergence of new ideas.

Is there an anecdote or story relating to Mario, Maurizio and Lorenzo that you would like to share?

There are a lot, but I will never forget Mario singing *O sole mio* to more than 300 people at the *Documenta* dinner.