



fiera internazionale d'arte
moderna e contemporanea
international exhibition of
modern and contemporary art
3-5/02/2023
Bologna

Arte Fiera 2023 / Opus novum

Alberto Garutti *What happens in rooms when people leave?*

In 2023, **Opus novum**, the commission of a **new work** to be presented at the fair, awarded to a mid-career Italian artist, will go to an acknowledged master: **Alberto Garutti**. Beyond the artist's merit, the choice also celebrates his bond with Bologna, where in the early '90s he chaired the Painting faculty at the Academy of Fine Arts and became a reference point for a generation of younger artists.

The work, entitled *Che cosa succede nelle stanze quando le persone se ne vanno?* (*What happens in rooms when people leave?*) consists of the application of a coat of phosphorescent paint on some normal furniture (benches, tables, chairs) in the fair, both in the common spaces and in the stands of the galleries. Barely distinguishable from the ordinary furnishings in daylight (the paint has a pale straw colour, similar to the original white), the things that the artist painted light up in the dark – but by then, as the title suggests, everyone has already left and can't see them. This paradox is the core of the work, which the artist describes as follows:

When the halls of Arte Fiera close, the lights are off, and the guards leave, some of the furniture (seats, benches and tables) already in the fair and distributed throughout the exhibition space light up because they're coated in phosphorescent paint. These ordinary, daily objects blend into their surroundings and aren't recognized as art. To the public, they're only simple furnishings; the shining furniture can be seen only in the photograph published elsewhere, considered an integral part of the work. In this way, the public's perception of the work is changed: it can only be imagined, thought about, expected. The work's nature is revealed in this intangible tension: it's created only when encountered by the observer, who has to look for it, patiently.

Che cosa succede nelle stanze quando le persone se ne vanno? is part of a series of works of the same title, the first of which dates back to 1993, and is linked to Bologna: it is called *Opera per camera da letto* (*Work for bedroom*), a work he conceived for the diffused exhibition *Territorio Italiano*, curated by Giacinto di Pietrantonio: a large crystal plate coated on the back with phosphorescent paint and installed in room 402 of the Palace Hotel in Bologna, where Garutti normally stayed when he taught painting at the Academy of Fine Arts (and where the work is still exhibited).

That first phosphorescent work, at the limit between visibility and invisibility, was fully revealed only when the room's occupant switched off the lights (Garutti described it as a work that "creates a relationship of complicity, full of expectation, close to the person about to go to sleep, in other words, a love story between the viewer and the work. If this love story is missing, the work doesn't exist").

In the decades to follow, the work at the Palace Hotel generated *Che cosa succede nelle stanze quando le persone se ne vanno?*, a series of phosphorescent installations going mostly to art institutions (galleries, museums, foundations, etc.): places full of people during the day but closed and deserted at night, in which the paradox of the work achieves its maximum consequences.



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This choice is in line with Garutti's conviction that in the city's spaces it's the artist who has to "go toward" the public – unaware spectators -, but in places of art it's legitimate to ask viewers to pay attention and heighten their imagination to seek out the work. It's the artist's way to reaffirm the responsibility, gaze, and thought of viewers regarding the existence of the work itself.

Alberto Garutti's installation for Arte Fiera is the largest created so far in this series. The original idea of *Opera per camera da letto* is recreated in Bologna, thirty years later, on an unprecedented scale: the halls of a fair.

At the conclusion of the exhibition, some pieces of furniture (the benches for the common areas) modified by the artist will be purchased by BolognaFiere and presented – on long-term loan – to MAMbo - Museo d'arte moderna di Bologna. This decision relaunches BolognaFiere's commitment to art and culture and confirms the solid bond among the fair, the city, and its cultural institutions.

The work was created with the support of Henoto, a leader in the setup sector.

Details:

Alberto Garutti,

Che cosa succede nelle stanze quando le persone se ne vanno?

1993-2023

Phosphorescent paint, furniture, ambient dimensions

Common spaces and stands of Arte Fiera 2023



Alberto Garutti (b. 1948 in Galbiate), artist and teacher, was Chair of the Painting course at the Bologna Academy of Fine Arts from 1990 to 1993 and at the Brera Academy in Milan from 1993 to 2013; he also taught at IUAV in Venice and at Politecnico in Milan.

He has participated in large international exhibitions such as the Venice Biennial, the Istanbul Biennial, Arte all'Arte (2000 and 2005) and the Memory Marathon at the Serpentine Gallery in London (2012).

His research in open dialogue between contemporary artwork, viewer and public space has earned him invitations to create works for cities and museums throughout the world. Among his best-known works are: "*Ai nati oggi*" for the cities of Bergamo, Gand, Istanbul, Moscow, Plovdiv, Rome; "*Piccolo Museion*" in Bolzano; "*Dedicato agli abitanti delle case*" for the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa; the permanent installation for the Zegna Foundation in Trivero; "*Tutti i passi che ho fatto nella mia vita mi hanno portato qui, ora*" installed in Siena, Anversa, Milan, Florence, Lugano, Kaunas, Loreto Aprutino, Copenhagen, and Tokyo, and a work in piazza Gae Aulenti, in the Porta Nuova district of Milan.

The book "*Alberto Garutti, didascalia/caption*" was published in 2012 for his solo show at PAC in Milan, curated by Paola Nicolini and Hans Ulrich Obrist.

In 2019, three large public works were inaugurated in Ca' Corniani, near Caorle (VE), commissioned by Assicurazioni Generali – Genagricola S.p.A.; also in 2019, the work "*Ai nati oggi*" was installed in Piazza del Popolo in Rome as part of the exhibit "*The Street. Where the World is Made,*" curated by Hou Hanru for the MAXXI Museum.



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In 2021, the Ministry of Culture commissioned Garutti to create a work for the MAXXI Museum's new site in L'Aquila.

The complete monograph by Germano Celant, curated by Antonella Soldaini (Studio Celant) and with scientific research by Eva Fabbris, will be published in the near future.

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