



fiera internazionale d'arte
moderna e contemporanea

international exhibition of
modern and contemporary art

2/4.02.2024
Bologna

“Praticamente nulla da vendere”
[Practically nothing to sell]
Performance at Arte Fiera in 1976

Curated by Uliana Zanetti

Arte Fiera, Bologna, 2-4 February 2024

Everyone knows the black and white photo of Marina Abramović and Ulay, naked, facing each other in the entrance, in the performance *Imponderabilia*. Some may remember the setting of that performance: the historic International Performance Week held at the Gallery of Modern Art in Bologna in 1977 and produced with the support of Arte Fiera. On the other hand, very few know that the fair/performance partnership was created even earlier. Performance has been a part of Arte Fiera since its earliest editions: in 1976, it presented performances by artists such as Vincenzo Agnetti, Geoffrey Hendricks, Sanja Iveković, Urs Lüthi, Hermann Nitsch, and Franco Vaccari – not as part of the program of events, but as daring and visionary proposals of a few galleries. Our exhibit provides a first look at this little-known and almost undocumented story.

Created for Arte Fiera 2024 to celebrate its 50th anniversary and set up in Hall 25, “Praticamente nulla da vendere” is created in collaboration with MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna and offers an opportunity to expand the wide-ranging performance research project undertaken by the Museum in recent years. It is curated by Uliana Zanetti, director of Collections at MAMbo, where she has set up the section on performance in Bologna and in Emilia-Romagna in the '70s and has curated the book “La performance a Bologna negli anni Settanta”, Settore Musei Civici Bologna | MAMbo 2023, to be presented at a Book Talk during Arte Fiera. The book merely hints at the debut of performance at Arte Fiera: the original documentation is patchy, many of the galleries no longer exist, and the artists' archives are not always accessible. Starting from a few unpublished photographs stored in the fair's archive, Zanetti has significantly broadened our knowledge of the performances at the 1976 edition of Arte Fiera, calling attention to documents not yet studied that highlight aspects often ignored in the history of performance.



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The results offer details of a fascinating event: already included in Arte Fiera's pilot edition in 1974 (although not live), performance was one of the key elements of the 1976 edition, at which the Pari&Dispari Gallery and Studio Morra on the one hand, and Galleria del Cavallino with Ronald Feldman Fine Arts on the other, launched two performance programs presented daily (independently but simultaneously) for the duration of the Fair. The facts revealed by the study of these initiatives highlight aspects that are often overlooked in the historiography of performance: the research conducted by private galleries at a time in which contemporary art museums were not only rare, but also lacking conditions appropriate for radically innovative events; the enthusiastic participation of artists in initiatives created in commercial contexts, even if without any plausible commercial opportunities; the determination of the most enterprising galleries to challenge long-standing practices (the title derives from a statement by Rosanna Chiessi, founder of the Pari&Dispari Gallery, on its participation in the 1976 fair: "We had practically nothing to sell"); the formation of support networks among the various players in the art system, able to penetrate institutional armor.

This initial study makes it clear that the bond between Arte Fiera and performance dates back to the exhibition's origins, in harmony with the context of Bologna, one of Italy's most important cities with regard to performance in the 1970s. Over the last 50 years, Arte Fiera has continued to cultivate performance, always an essential part of its identity.

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