

BOOKHOUSE

The Book Shape

curated by Alberto Fiz

May 4th - October 5th 2013

The entrance is occupied by a Tower of Babel of 8 thousands volumes, while a literature cascade hangs down from the window on the façade. A little further away, can be found an exploded bookcase and a bedroom made up of book covers and bookmarks. These are just some of the surprising and unpredictable installations that characterize *Bookhouse*. *The Book Shape*, an especially challenging and unique exhibition where the infinite forms of art develop around one single element: The book. In the most critical phase of its existence, precisely when technological revolution presents us with the new Gutenberg era, book in contemporary art has never been so modern and the display at the MARCA is the most comprehensive homage to this magical mean, which has been keeping its physiognomy basically unaltered for more than 500 years.

Furthermore, books as well as archives and libraries are the focus of the contemporary artistic debate: The 2012 edition of *Documenta* devoted a significant part of its works to this subject and the title of this year's Venice Biennale is *The Encyclopedic Palace*. *Bookhouse*. *The Book Shape* is organized by the Province of Catanzaro with the contribution of Calabria region and is part of the project POR Calabria FESR 2007/2013. The exhibition, conceived and curated by Alberto Fiz (MARCA Art Director), includes 50 of the most important artists on the national and international artistic scene, who question each other on the miraculous shape of the book, such a perfect object that Umberto Eco compared to the wheel.

Alberto Fiz declares: "The meaning of the book lies in its thinking shape. If it were simply a container of texts or images, it would have already been swept away. On the contrary, it still has a primary role as sensitive object that can create a symbiotic relationship with the reader and, at the same time, has the ability to organize the thinking. The message books offer is participatory, polysemous and fixes provisional in permanent. It is the place where physical unity assumes sense unity."

Also Wanda Ferro, the President of Catanzaro Province with culture portfolio, underlines the experimental and innovative nature of the exhibition displayed at the MARCA: "*Bookhouse*. *The Book Shape* deals with a central issue in our society through the eminent voice of an exceptional group of artists in a context involving the major contemporary languages from pop-art to *Arte Povera*, from *Transavanguardia* to video installations and the most innovative technologies. Their works, without any rhetoric, show the regeneration power of books, as well as their vitality. The MARCA considers this exhibition a captivating challenge that will definitely be echoed abroad".

In opposition to a system where inert objects- often derived from the consumer society- prevail, the book is a modular object in itself with a relational nature and its presence alone can evoke its content. The large exhibition expands in the Museum's three floors establishing a connection also with the collection of ancient art.

For the first time within an Italian public institution, the book interpreted like a physical space for research, symbolic dimension and projection of group memory, is the protagonist of such a complex cross-exposition which ranges from Claes Oldenburg to Michelangelo Pistoletto; from Anselm Kiefer to Pier Paolo Calzolari; from William Kentridge to Irma Blank; from Pierre Alechinsky to Jiri Kolar; from Jannis Kounellis to Candida Höfer; from

Giulio Paolini to Dennis Oppenheim; from Mimmo Paladino to Airan Kang; from Enzo Cucchi to Emilio Isgrò; from Vincenzo Agnetti to Rashid Rana; from Michael Rakowitz to Ceal Floyer; and from Pierre Alechinsky to Jiri Kolar. The display could not leave out a series of spectacular *site-specific* works like *Idiom*, the four-metres-high installation made up of 8 thousand books by the Slovak artist Matej Krén, where a game of mirrors creates an endless spiral of volumes in a deeply intimistic labyrinth of colours and shapes. In addition to this, outside the Museum is situated the cascade of books designed by the Spanish artist Alicia Martín, which involves the viewer in a physical and emotional experience. Both works with high impact were possible thanks to the cooperation of Rubbettino publishing house, which provided for this purpose more than 10 thousand volumes from its own depository.

Such a varied cross-exhibition could not leave out the dancing book immersed in a solution of 800 litres of water by the Korean artist Kibong Rhee and a bedroom entirely developed around books, book covers and bookmarks especially created for this exposition by the Swiss artist Peter Wüthrich to be an ironical environmental hypothesis. The work *Hanging Book*, the installation by the American Richard Wentworth, should be observed from the bottom to the top. On this occasion, the artist re-elaborates a project he had displayed at the Venice Biennale in 2009.

From Documenta 13 arrives the stone book by Michael Rakowitz, which is intended to be a hopeful consideration on the horrors of history.

Although in some cases the visitor will find logical meeting points, the exhibition at the MARCA gets rid of the hypothesis of the artist's book. It rather focuses on an extension of the work of art where the book itself becomes sculpture, installation or environment and is interpreted as the part which includes the whole, a metonymy on which develops the meaning of the work of art.

In 1970 Germano Celant, in his famous essay *Book as Artwork*, defined the book as a self-signifying medium. In this case, book imposes its own reason on the work of art, which wonders on the permanence of signs in a perspective where the content and the container can in many ways be assimilated. The journey around books involves libraries and archives, passing from the horse-library by Mimmo Paladino, which contains the volumes of James Joyce's *Ulysses* illustrated by Paladino himself, to the photography of Candida Höfer dedicated to Naples National Library, where history and architecture come into contact. The work of art standing out on this subject is *From The Entropic Library*, the extraordinary nine-metres-long sculpture by Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen coming from Saint-Etienne Museum. In this work dated back to 1989, the great master of American pop-art sets a bookcase off and wanders about the linguistic and cultural chaos. Anselm Kiefer suggests a library of memory through an installation in which lead books come into contact with the enigmatic prism of Albrecht Dürer's work. While Michelangelo Pistoletto considers the book as an extension of space, Pier Paolo Calzolari represents an hanging element which undergoes continual metamorphosis. The book physical image is the focus of Enzo Cucchi and Giulio Paolini's works, whereas Jannis Kounellis dwells on the primary dimension of the sign.

In the digital universe, the book requires a renovated attention as it is a material tool with a huge evocative power. In the exhibition, the book is displayed as sculpture; treasure-chest of memory; code without words; shadow; plurality of books; non-material space; and white book.

The task to explain the technological experimentations of the third millennium was entrusted to ZKM (Karlsruhe), the most important international centre for art and media directed by Peter Weibel, which faces the challenge imposed by a system where the book is not a solid body any more, but rather a liquid matter in progressive movement.

The endless charms and topics of the exhibition include Dennis Oppenheim's sculpture-dentures; Claudio Parmiggiani's smoke library; the *Cristo cancellatore*, Emilio Isgrò's capital works made up of 38 books created in 1968, just one year before another crucial work, *Libro dimenticato a memoria*, by Vincenzo Agnetti. The path also incorporates the mysterious video by the Russian artist Dmitry Prigov titled *The Evangelist* and the video *Big Legs Don't Cry* by Gary Hill, who back in 1985 had already suggested the sensory presence of the book. The visitor can also admire the awesomeness of the armchair-book by Art & Language; the paper micro-sculptures by Sabrina Mezzaqui; Stefano Arienti's collection of books on Vincent Van Gogh, Paolo Canevari's disturbing video in which *Mein Kampf* slowly burns down; and Gianfranco Baruchello's accumulations. New questions spring up from the book that waits to be written by Gregorio Botta; from the re-writings by Irma Blank and Robert Rauschenberg's burnt book; and from the dreamlike projection of *Lettura* by Jean-François Guiton.

The exposition also displays Clegg & Guttman's fake architectures; the drawings of the cancelled book in the video titled *Anti-Mercator* by William Kentridge; the landscape-book by Ceal Floyer; Maddalena Ambrosio's archaeological sedimentations; the digital icons by Davide Coltro; Per Barclay's submerged library and the tissue book by Maria Lai, the ninety-three- years-old artist who died a few days ago.

They constitute an extraordinary and provocative collection of images which allows to carry out a journey through contemporary art, where the book is completely re-written. Within such a wide project, co-operations with public and private institutions both in Italy and abroad have been numerous, among these there are the Musée d'Art Moderne of Saint-Etienne Metropole, the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, the Archivio Agnetti, the association Zerynthia-Ram radioartemobile and the Dena Foundation.

The exposition is completed by a catalogue in Italian and English published by Silvana Editoriale with writings by Achille Bonito Oliva, Alberto Fiz, Lorand Hegyi, Lea Vergine and Peter Weibel. In addition to the unreleased essay by Emilio Isgrò and Mimmo Paladino's interview with Marco Vallora, the volume also includes the artists' accounts of their relationship with books.

The artists displaying in the exhibition are:

Vincenzo Agnetti, Pierre Alechinsky, Maddalena Ambrosio, Stefano Arienti, Art & Language, Per Barclay, Gianfranco Baruchello, Irma Blank, Gregorio Botta, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Paolo Canevari, Clegg & Guttman, Davide Coltro, Enzo Cucchi, Ceal Floyer, Maria Friberg, Jean-François Guiton, Gary Hill, Candida Höfer, Emilio Isgrò, Airan Kang, On Kawara, William Kentridge, Anselm Kiefer, Jiří Kolář, Jannis Kounellis, Matej Krén, Anouk Kruithof, Maria Lai, Alicia Martín, Sabrina Mezzaqui, Claes Oldenburg & Coosje Van Bruggen, Dennis Oppenheim, Mimmo Paladino, Giulio Paolini, Claudio Parmiggiani, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Dmitry Alexandrovich Prigov, Michael Rakowitz, Rashid Rana, Robert Rauschenberg, Kibong Rhee, Gerhild Rother, Lisa Schmitz, Richard Wentworth, Peter Wüthrich.

Bookhouse. The Book Shape

Catanzaro, MARCA
curated by Alberto Fiz

May 4th - October 5th 2013
Catalogue by Silvana Editoriale

Exhibitions promoted by the Culture Department (Assessorato alla Cultura) of the Catanzaro Province with the contribution of Calabria region POR Calabria FESR 2007/2013, Municipalities of Borgia and Zagarise, Accademia di Belle Arti di Catanzaro (Catanzaro School of Fine Arts), Eosud.

MARCA
Catanzaro
Via Alessandro Turco, 63
from Tuesday to Sunday from 9:30 am to 1 pm and from 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm.
Closed on Mondays. Admission Fee: 3 Euro. Tel. +39 (0)961 746 797

info@museomarca.com
www.museomarca.info