



The Museo Civico of Castelbuono
in collaboration with the Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali
presents

Pino Pascali, the African

San Giorgio Hall
Museo Civico di Castelbuono
29th March – 28th June 2015

Virginia Ryan and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré *Sirens*

Ex Castle Stables
Museo Civico di Castelbuono
29th March – 28th June 2015

curated by Laura Barreca and Santa Nastro

OPENING: SUNDAY 29th MARCH 2015 AT 12.00 NOON

The Museo Civico of Castelbuono (Palermo) is pleased to present two exhibitions organized in collaboration with the Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali of Polignano a Mare (Bari). ***Pino Pascali, the African*** is the first exhibition ever in Sicily devoted to one of the protagonists of Italian art of the Twentieth century. His work will be shown at the 56. International Art Exhibition of the Venice Biennale curated by Okwui Enwezor.

Sirens presents an installation by Australian artist Virginia Ryan, together with a group of works by the African artist Frédéric Brouly Bouabré, centred on the myth of mermaids. The project, curated by **Laura Barreca**, Director of the Museum and **Santa Nastro**, for the Fondazione Pino Pascali showcases part of the production of Pino Pascali (1935 - 1968) inspired by the myth of savages and primitivism, with the intent of the re-contextualizing his research intimately related to the issue of the Mediterranean and African cultures, with their shared mythologies.

The exhibition ***Pino Pascali, the African*** illustrates the artist's interest towards the search for origins and lifestyles more in contact with nature, as opposed to modern society's myth of technological and industrial progress. These issues attracted the attention of artists and intellectuals in the Sixties, like the philosopher Claude Lévi-Strauss. The protagonist of the films dedicated to Tarzan presents the hero "par excellence" of the time. Already in production since the early decades of the twentieth century, in response to the great demand, the Tarzan series are distributed in Pino Pascali's time. He is particularly sensitive to these issues and loved to be photographed dressed as a 'savage', making no mystery to be inspired directly by the fantastic character of Tarzan.

The interest in the "primitive" is present in several works by Pascali: from the commercials in which he depicts savannah animals for the Lodolo-Saraceni advertising studio - exhibited in Castelbuono - to the fake sculptures representing fragments of dinosaurs and whales; the lianas, the bridges made in steel wool and the series of farm tools. These latest works, many of which used as elements of performative actions, are documented in the exhibition by the photographs of the Fondazione Pino Pascali Archive. Also on show the short film *Africa*, made in the sixties for RAI Television, where Pascali worked as assistant set designer for the most successful TV programmes of the time. The exhibition also presents the series of Totems made in the mid-sixties with mixed media techniques and materials, from the Fondazione Pino Pascali and from a private collection.

An educational section of the exhibition will be dedicated to the screening of documentaries that give a survey on the figure of the artist and the great influence that his work continues to exert today, with film materials produced by the

Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. Among them, the rare and precious TV movie produced by RAI TRE *Pino Pascali o le Trasformazioni del Serpente* directed by Marco Giusti and productions made within the project arTVision - a live art channel (www.artvision.agency) - that recount Pino Pascali's seminal work and his influence in contemporary art.

As a "counterbalance" to the work of Pino Pascali, a double solo show by artists Virginia Ryan and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré is set in the former stables of the Ventimiglia Castle, combining past and present, through the relationship with Africa and its myths. On display are the great *Sirens* by Australian artist **Virginia Ryan** who – for several years now - works between Italy and Africa, investigating the issues of migration, memory, loss and transformation. During her stay in Ghana and the Ivory Coast Ryan she has created installations through which the culture and spirituality of indigenous peoples are reinterpreted in a perspective linked to contemporary living.

Water as an element of origin and destruction - with which man always confronts himself, finding in it his most intense existential metaphors - emerges in Virginia Ryan's **Surfacing**. This installation consists of seven sculptures made of iron and hair extension, retranslation of the myth of Mami Wata (from English 'Mammy Water'), with which the local inhabitants of Anglophone coastal West Africa called the images of a deity half woman and half fish. This divinity is comparable, in its ambivalence of seductive power – both creative as destructive - to the Mediterranean myth of the mermaid, whose sweet song bewitched sailors. The *Mare Nostrum*, element of ancestral myth, is today the scene of daily tragedies related to migration.

The series of drawings of mermaids by **Frédéric Bruly Bouabré**, the most important artist of the Ivory Coast –who died last year- are exhibited alongside the great tails of long black hair with which Virginia Ryan depicts the African deities, as emerged from the depths of the sea and floating in the air. These drawing were especially made by Bouabré for Virginia Ryan in 2010, as testimony of their elective affinities. It is a series of small works in pencil on paper, in the typical format adopted by Bouabré: a small image drawn in pen and pencil on a postcard, surrounded by a text that runs along the rim. With this same technique Bouabré has made thousands of "cartes postales" on which he always made colourful designs with a text running around them. And writing is "a remedy that fights oblivion" that Bouabré has used to tell us a story, an impression, to bring us through the revelation of the signs, the universal knowledge.

The catalogue of the exhibition *Pino Pascali, l'africano*, published by Kalòs, with an introduction of the curators Laura Barreca and Santa Nastro, contains essays by: Rosalba Branà, director of the Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali; Marco Tonelli, author of the book *Pino Pascali. Il libero gioco della scultura* (Johan&Levi, 2011). The brochure of the exhibition *Sirens di Virginia Ryan e Frédéric Bruly Bouabré* contains an interview with Virginia Ryan by Valentina Bruschi.

During the period of the exhibition the Museum will run educational workshops curated by Giulia Gueci, related to Pino Pascali's "African practices", and a calendar of theatrical performances will be organised in relation to Virginia Ryan's installation, entitled *La strada verso Itaca*, curated by Associazione teatrale *Fiori di Carta*.

Biographies of the artists

Pino Pascali (Bari 1935 - Rome 1968), an artist who was able to anticipate the most important trends of contemporary Italian art, died tragically in Rome at the age of 33. His research is considered fundamental in the artistic and cultural scene of the sixties, when he had his short, but brilliant, career: from the first solo show at the Galleria La Tartaruga in Rome in 1965 to his participation in the Venice Biennale of 1968. A student of Toti Scialoja at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, Pascali devoted himself largely to stage design for advertising, collaborating with RAI and Lodolo-Saraceni Films, a production company of animated films, carousels, commercials and television themes. Pascali was an important but fleeting presence in the art scene of the Rome of the sixties. Together with Boetti, Schifano, Festa, Kounellis and other famous exponents of the Arte Povera movement, or Roman Pop, his work was influenced by foreign trends such as New Dada, Pop Art, Land Art and Conceptual Art, therefore it is still difficult to place Pascali's research in a precise artistic movement. His environmental installations and sculptures are generally composed using "poor" materials, which combine creatively archaic and natural forms of the Mediterranean culture (agriculture, sea, land and animals) with infantile shapes taken from the imagery of games and adventures, along with the icons and the fetishes of mass culture. For more information: <http://www.museopinopascali.it>

Virginia Ryan (Canberra, Australia, 1956. She lives between Italy, the Ivory Coast and Ghana) born in Australia but an Italian citizen since 1981, graduated from the National Art School in Canberra (1979) and specialized in Art Therapy at the University of Edinburgh (1995). She lived and worked in Egypt, Brazil, Scotland and in the Ex-Yugoslavia. Since 2000 Virginia Ryan divides her time between her studio in Trevi (province of Perugia) and the one in Accra (Ghana) where she established the Foundation of Contemporary Art (www.fcaghana.org). Since 2009 when she started working also in the Ivory Coast, first with a studio in Abidjan then, from 2013, in the city of Grand-Bassam, the old colonial capital, now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Virginia Ryan uses

painting, photography, sculpture and installation, and often works on collaborative projects with artists, musicians and anthropologists to investigate issues related to territory, identity and memory. Since 2008 she has participated in the Biennials of Dakar, Malindi and Venice and in 2014 the Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali Museum dedicated a solo show to her, *Fluid Tales*. For more information: www.virginiaryan.com

Frederic Brouly Bouabré (Zéprégühé, Ivory Coast, 1921 - Abidjan, Ivory Coast, 2014) known as a poet, writer, storyteller, archivist and artist, from the 1940s Bouabré began his research on the Universe intended as a great text to be interpreted in order to reveal the intrinsic connections between all things. From there, his work focused on drafting a manuscript that addresses universal themes through great cycles of analysis. Subsequently, the artist began to transcribe these topics in graphic form, drawing in pencil and pen, creating his famous postcard size works, developing a thesis on the relationships between language, symbols, natural phenomena and African lifestyles. In over a hundred manuscripts, the artist expressed his open formula of the world, embracing even local superstitions, the interpretation of the clouds and his own colour system with its relative meanings. A comprehensive work which has the ambition to unite the diversity of the world. His simple designs are normally surrounded by an explanatory text. Since the '50s Bouabré, convinced himself that African self-awareness needed a different language than that imposed by the colonial powers, and so developed a new Bété alphabet (referred to his ethnic group), to preserve an oral tradition, today collected in his encyclopaedic series of works entitled, *La Connaissance du Monde*. His curiosity led him to reinterpret the shapes and symbols that surround us, creating allusive objects that became part of a language capable of giving a new perspective to our continuous attempt to interpret the world around us. After participating in the seminal exhibition *The Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in 1989, the artist participated in numerous exhibitions and biennials such as Johannesburg and Kwangju (1997), Sidney (1998), Istanbul (2001) and Documenta 11 (2002).

INFORMATION

Exhibitions: *Pino Pascali, the African and Sirens* by Virginia Ryan and Frédéric Brouly Bouabré

In collaboration with: Fondazione Pino Pascali, Polignano a Mare (BA).

Curated by: Laura Barreca and Santa Nastro

Catalogue design: Paolo Di Vita

Catalogue editions: Kalòs

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Address: Museo Civico di Castelbuono, Ventimiglia Castle - P.zza Castello – Castelbuono (Palermo), Italy.

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Opening times: from Tuesday to Sunday 9:30 a.m – 1:00 p.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Tickets: € 4,00; reduced € 2,00 (for people 65 years old or over and from 8 to 18 years old, schools and groups of 12 people or more); free entrance for children under 7 years of age.

Web site: www.museocivico.eu

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