

AN IDEA OF BEAUTY



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centro di cultura contemporanea a palazzo strozzi

Florence, Palazzo Strozzi, Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozzina, 29 March–28 July 2013

AN IDEA OF BEAUTY

Vanessa Beecroft, Chiara Camoni, Andreas Gefeller, Alicja Kwade, Jean-Luc Mylayne, Isabel Rocamora, Anri Sala and Wilhelm Sasnal
29 March to 28 July 2013

An Idea of Beauty, on view at the **Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozzina (CCCS)** at Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, sets out to explore the work of eight contemporary international artists – **Vanessa Beecroft, Chiara Camoni, Andreas Gefeller, Alicja Kwade, Jean-Luc Mylayne, Isabel Rocamora, Anri Sala and Wilhelm Sasnal** – and will encourage visitors to reconsider the concept of beauty and to question not only the 'need' for it but also its function, value and purpose.

Today's world is heir to an historical and philosophical process that has separated art from beauty, in the sense of a world vision incapable of expressing the complexity and inconsistency of the modern era. At the same time, the term 'beauty' in daily use has become more trivialised and debased, and is often used as a synonym for appreciation (like/don't like) or as the mark of a hedonistic and superficial approach typical of today's trend towards extreme aestheticisation.

In order to rediscover an idea of beauty, we need to adopt a different approach to our sense of reality, to our search for a value, a spiritual moment or to explore an intellectual intuition in greater depth. Thus beauty arises anew from our ability to look at it differently, to grasp and recognise it even in a mundane object, moment or gesture.

Visitors to the exhibition will be confronted with works of art soliciting their physical and emotional participation. Through their work the artists seek to highlight the subjectivity with which a person views art, triggering individual responses that can become a tool for forging new connections with other people and with the world at large. On the one hand, they address and revisit such traditional artistic techniques and genres as the themes of landscape and the human figure while, on the other, it is almost as though they are attempting to listen to nature, capturing its moments and its fragments, or reflecting on the power of beauty in its social dimension or in the power to transform that it exercises on each and every one of us.

The work of a master of contemporary painting such as **Wilhelm Sasnal** (Poland, 1972) testifies to an artistic output focusing on the value of the painted image. Almost as though he were seeking to be a painter of historical pictures in the contemporary world, Sasnal addresses strongly heterogeneous themes and content ranging from intimate images pregnant with the emotional quality of his family life, to depictions and compositions of abstract nature, and the development of subject matter and models drawn from art history and from the modern mass media.

Chiara Camoni (Italy, 1974) offers a reflection on our ability to discover beauty through 'encounters' with everyday people and things. Her video-installation entitled *Mefite* relates the experience of the Ansanto Valley, a place of death and beauty, an environment as atmospheric and alluring as it is death-ridden and destructive. In *Mosaico*, the artist uses marble offcuts for an installation that becomes a kind of anti-monument in which she pits the ephemeral nature of the human effort against the eternal cycle of nature. Her drawings in the *Capolavori* and *Amanuense* series, on the other hand, are the result of her work with her ageing grandmother, Ines Bassanetti. Every day Chiara asks Ines for a different drawing: copies of major works from art history or the transcription of philosophical texts bear witness to the development of an art that becomes a lifestyle, in a process of mutual growth and enrichment.

Man's relationship with nature is also crucial for photographer **Jean-Luc Mylayne** (France, 1946). The leading players in his works are invariably birds, captured in images that are seemingly spontaneous. In fact, they are the result of a meticulous and erudite study of nature and its rhythms, coupled with an expert construction of points of view and a skilled use of focus. Thus his photographs offer an in-depth philosophical reflection on man's relationship with nature, prompting us to reflect on the eye's ability not only to discover beauty but also to build it.

The often discreet and minimalist work of **Alicja Kwade** (Germany/Poland, 1979) can subvert gravity, turn stones into jewels, liquefy a solid object or material, hybridise organic and inorganic elements and create unexpected symmetries or consonances. The artist plays with her audience's perception and imagination, seeking to reactivate our gaze and forcing us to rethink our way of looking at reality and to discover the hidden meaning and beauty within it that we may fail to grasp.

In *Japan Series*, photographer **Andreas Gefeller** (Germany, 1970) merges digital manipulation with the artistic tradition of Japanese calligraphy. Such ordinary items as lamp posts, street lights or farm plantations are shot from unusual viewpoints and processed in the post-production phase. These photographs force us to rethink our customary relationship with reality, to re-imagine the world we know, discovering ties, images and hidden designs that are potentially always there before our very eyes.

In this exhibition **Vanessa Beecroft** (Italy, 1969) offers an example of the rich development of her artistic career. She declines the construction of her *tableaux vivants*, populated with her celebrated reclining female nudes, in a variety of different media: performance art, video art, photography and sculpture. The theme of the female body, echoes of Classical sculpture and the contrast between different moments in time are just some of the elements that come together in a reflection on the relationship between a work or art and its audience and on the expectation of, and search for, beauty in art and in the world.

Isabel Rocamora (United Kingdom/Spain, 1968) addresses the relationship between the body, space and identity in accordance with a personal form of expression taking its cue from performance art. In her video-installation entitled *Body of War*, the artist creates a choreography based on a hand-to-hand fight between two pairs of British soldiers. The deconstructing of the rhythm of their movements, the close-up shots of their bodies or the wide-angle shots of the landscape and the lyrical nature of the soundtrack all involve the spectator in a strongly physical experience which transforms these gestures of mechanical and inhuman violence into a sublime dance.

The work of **Anri Sala** (Albania, 1974) explores social, cultural and political issues found in contemporary society, often setting out from individual points of view to create symbols or narratives that take on a collective value. His video *Dammi i colori*, which is also part of the Tate Modern collection in London, records the transformation of the city of Tirana in the wake of an initiative promoted by artist Edi Rama, who became mayor of the Albanian capital in 2000. The artist and mayor became the proponent of a controversial rebellion made of colours and vitality with which to counter the city's grey social and urban decay. Thus Sala prompts us to reflect on the real or utopian strength of art in creating a collective and social beauty capable of transforming the daily life of an entire community.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue published in Italian and English by Mandragora.

An Idea of Beauty will show concurrently with the exhibition *The Springtime of the Renaissance. Sculpture and the Arts in Florence 1400-1460* at Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, from 23 March to 18 August 2013.

Location: Centre for Contemporary Culture Strozzi (CCCS)
Palazzo Strozzi, 50123 Firenze, Italy

Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00 to 20.00; Thursday 10.00 to 23.00; Monday closed

Admission: (ticket valid one month): €5.00
€4.00 concessions (university students and other concessions)
€3.00 schools; Thursday, admission free from 18.00 to 23.00
Combined ticket with *The Springtime of the Renaissance. Sculpture and the Arts in Florence, 1400-1460*: €12.50; concessions €10.00; schools €5.00

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Vanessa Beecroft, Chiara Camoni, Andreas Gefeller, Alicja Kwade,
Jean-Luc Mylayne, Isabel Rocamora, Anri Sala e Wilhelm Sasnal

29.03 – 28.07 2013

Centro di Cultura Contemporanea Strozzina, Palazzo Strozzi, Firenze



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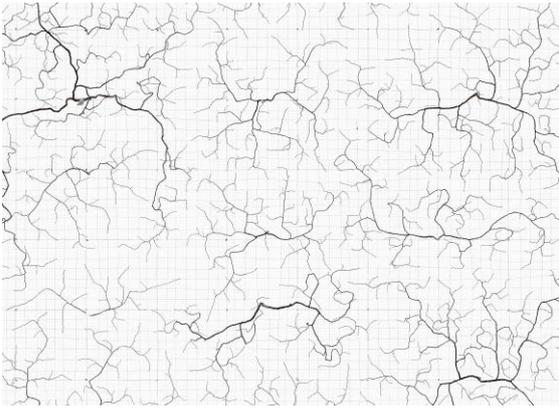
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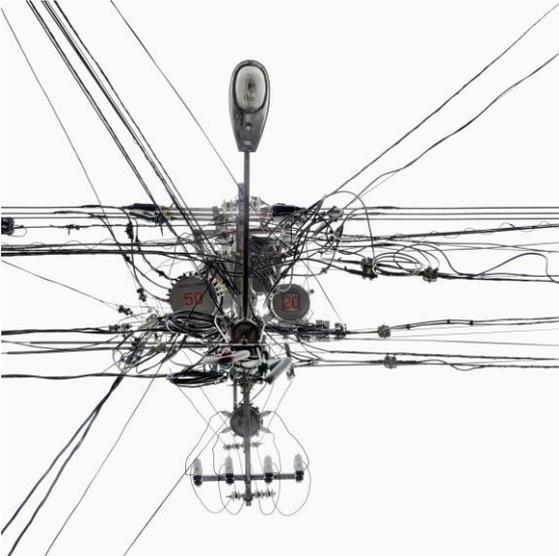
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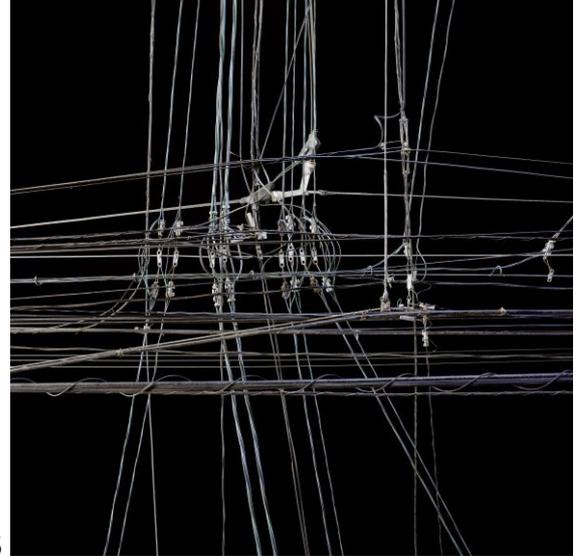
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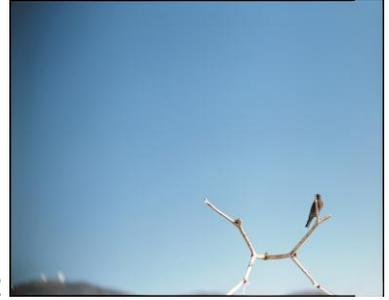
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1

Vanessa Beecroft

Miki Torso Nero

2011

Black Belgium trunk

26 x 42 x 81 cm

Base material: wooden base, green marble wedge, pink marble wedge

Photo: Stefano Lanzardo

Courtesy Galleria Lia Rumma Milano/Napoli

2

Vanessa Beecroft

VB66.141.VB

2010-2011

C-Print with Diasec

127x173 cm

Courtesy Galleria Lia Rumma Milano/Napoli

3

Vanessa Beecroft

VB66.164.VB

2010-2011

C-Print with Diasec

127 x 375 cm

Edition of 6

Courtesy Galleria Lia Rumma Milano/Napoli

4, 5, 6

Vanessa Beecroft

VB66

2010-2011

Video still

Blu-ray, Producer: Max Brun, Cinematographer: Kyle Kibble, Editing: Bella Erikson

Music: The Naming by Philip Glass ©1986 Dunvagen Music Publishers Inc. Used by Permission.

Duration 14'04"

Courtesy Galleria Lia Rumma Milano/Napoli

7

Chiara Camoni - Ines Bassanetti

Beato Angelico, Pala dell'Annunciazione

2004

Pencil on paper

31 x 31 cm

Courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia

8

Chiara Camoni - Ines Bassanetti

Leonardo Da Vinci, La Gioconda

2004

Pencil on paper

31 x 31 cm

Courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia

9

Chiara Camoni - Salvatore Esposito

Mefite

2005

Video, 4'00"

Video still

Courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia

10, 11

Chiara Camoni

Senza titolo, mosaico

2011-2012

Marble

390 x 430 x 45 cm (variable size)

Courtesy SpazioA, Pistoia

12

Andreas Gefeller

Untitled (Grape Plantation)

from "The Japan Series"

2010

Pigment Print on Fine Art Paper

diptych, 2 pcs. 200 x 138 cm

Courtesy Thomas Rehbein Galerie Cologne and Hasted Kraeutler New York

13

Andreas Gefeller

Untitled (Plant on Wall)

from "The Japan Series"

2010

Pigment Print on Fine Art Paper

130 x 222 cm

Courtesy Thomas Rehbein Galerie Cologne and Hasted Kraeutler New York

14

Andreas Gefeller

Poles 07

from "The Japan Series"

2010

Pigment Print on Fine Art Paper

150 x 150 cm

Courtesy Thomas Rehbein Galerie Cologne and Hasted Kraeutler New York

15

Andreas Gefeller

Poles 31

from "The Japan Series"

2010

Pigment Print on Fine Art Paper

100 x 100 cm

Courtesy Thomas Rehbein Galerie Cologne and Hasted Kraeutler New York

16, 17

Alicja Kwade

Teleportation (54° 55' 24.524" N / 12° 10' 33.132" E)

2011

Vetro, lampade Kaiser-Idell / Glass, Kaiser-Idell lamps

Variable dimensions

Exhibition view "Die Gesamtheit aller Orte", Kunsthal 44 Moen, Denmark, 2012

Courtesy the artist and Johann König, Berlin

18, 19

Jean-Luc Mylayne

N° 295, Mars - Avril 2005

2005

C-Print – Dittico / Diptych

123 x 153 cm ognuno / each

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers Berlin London and Gladstone Gallery, New York, Brussels

© Jean-Luc Mylayne

20

Jean-Luc Mylayne

N° 407, Avril - Mai 2006

2006

C-Print

153 x 300 cm

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers Berlin London

© Jean-Luc Mylayne

21

Jean-Luc Mylayne

N° 428, Novembre - Décembre 2007

2007

C-Print

123 x 153 cm

Courtesy the artist and

Sprüth Magers Berlin London and Gladstone Gallery, New York, Brussels

© Jean-Luc Mylayne

22

Jean-Luc Mylayne

N° 520, Février - Mars - Avril 2007

2007

C-Print

185 x 230 cm

Courtesy the artist, Sprüth Magers Berlin London

© Jean-Luc Mylayne

23

Isabel Rocamora

Body of War

Moving image single-channel installation

S16 mm transferred to HD

20', color, stereo

Video still

© The artist, UK, 2010. Courtesy Galeria SENDA

24,25,26,27

Isabel Rocamora

Body of War

Moving image single-channel installation

S16 mm transferred to HD

20', color, stereo

Production stills in collaboration with Mari Luz Vidal

© The artist, UK, 2010. Courtesy Galeria SENDA

28, 29, 30

Anri Sala

DAMMI I COLORI

2003

Video, stereo sound

15' 25"

Courtesy the artist and Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris;

Galerie Rudiger Schottle, Munchen; Hauser & Wirth Zurich London; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York;

Johnen Galerie, Berlin

31

Wilhelm Sasnal

Anka in Tokyo

2006

Olio su tela / oil on canvas

35 x 50 cm

Collection Broere Foundation

32

Wilhelm Sasnal

Anka

2012

Olio su tela / oil on canvas

55 x 70 cm

Collezione private / Private collection, Monaco

Photo: Marek Gardulski

33

Wilhelm Sasnal

Anka and Me

2012

Olio su tela / oil on canvas

40 x 35 cm

Courtesy the artist

34

Wilhelm Sasnal

Kacper and Anka

2009

Olio su tela / oil on canvas

180 x 220 cm

Photo: Sadie Coles HQ

Private Collection, London

35

Wilhelm Sasnal

Kacper

2009

Olio su tela / oil on canvas

85 x 105 cm

Courtesy the artist

Photo: Marek Gardulski

36

Wilhelm Sasnal

Untitled (Swiniopas/Swineherd)

2008

Olio su tela / oil on canvas

200 x 220 cm

Defares Collection, Amsterdam

Photo: Marek Gardulski

37

Wilhelm Sasnal

Untitled

2012

Olio su tela / oil on canvas

45 x 60 cm

Collection Andrew and Stephanie Hale

Photo: Marek Gardulski

38

Wilhelm Sasnal

Untitled

2012

Olio su tela / oil on canvas

80 x 100 cm

Courtesy the artist

Photo: Marek Gardulski