

Interview: Artist and Curator, Paolo Chiasera



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by Diana d'Arenberg

For this year's edition of Art International, artistic director, Stephane Ackermann, has curated a series of performances, installations and interventions. The programme will present works by seven artists, including by the Italian-born Berlin-based artist, writer and curator, who will curate *Alternatives*, a section of the fair dedicated to independent art initiatives.

Chiasera's practice is diverse and expansive. Challenging curatorial practice and norms has become something of an MO for this artist-curator. Encompassing sculpture, painting, architectural interventions, photography, film and performance, he weaves in influences from cinema, philosophy, literature, mythology and history to create stories that demand more of viewers than passive observation. Often his works draw on collective memory and encourage participation. For *Alternatives*, Chiasera will gather non-profit art groups and projects to present eight initiatives from Turkey and the UK, including Participating institutions are: **Protocinema, Proto5533, Masa, Near East, Torun, Spot, Nesin Sanat Köyü, David Roberts Foundation.**

Taking the form of a rite of passage-like game, *The Hunter-Gatherer* will engage fair visitors in a

citywide game in order to search out its non-profit institutions. Participants will enter into direct dialogue with each non-profit space in order to learn and understand the role of each institution. Only by answering questions and tasks set by each will the visitor be able to pass through the different stages of the treasure hunt and be able to re-enter *The Garden of Sardinia, Cyprus and Jerusalem* to claim the reward.

Here he chats to us about his practice and his upcoming exhibition for Art International.

Describe what you do?

Recently I'm in Real Estate in the sense that I intend to colonize the imaginary.

In my free time I'm an amateur writer and on Sunday I like to paint.

When we chatted in Basel, we were discussing books and book collecting. You have written extensively and have also published books. What is the relationship of the written word to your visual work?

Writing helps me to clarify my work; it's an internal urgency that I can't really control. I wrote 3 books and all of them are the result of my research on some philosophical issues.

'Painting 1: Analysis and Convergences' that I wrote as a commission for the Oslo University in 2011, address questions related to the studio-practice. Can we talk of the living world (Lebenswelt) of which the pictorial work is an outcome? The experience of the artist as the trace of thought makes the work a sign of his or her action. Whether or not he is aware of this legacy, the artist becomes dispersed in the painting and in its phenomenological cognitive experience, which – as possibly in no other discipline – becomes a fundamental experience.

The second book, 'The Horizon After Commodity - Notes on Perversion' (2011), asks a big question: what is an act of freedom nowadays in art? Referring to the evolution of art from Minimalism to today 'The Horizon after commodity - Notes on Perversion' aims to describe how it could be possible for an artist to articulate a form of resistance towards the destruction of sense defined by speculative capitalism.

Recently I've been working on a new essay that investigates the relationship between the contemporary and archeology. To be more specific, it's a synchronic study between the evolution of Roman painting in the late republican period and contemporary art from color-field to today.

Secondo Stile is your 'nomadic canvas based Artist Run Exhibition Space'. How and why did the idea come about and what have been some of the projects the space has supported?

Secondo Stile is a Nomadic canvas-based Artist Run Exhibition Space founded by me in 2013, focusing on new, experimental modes of production, presentation, promotion of contemporary art and culture. It is painting and at the same time an exhibition space.

The imaginary is the main aspect of the 2nd style of Roman painting, the *Secondo Stile*, which facilitates a definition of a new space, a new productive meeting place and new modes of collaboration.

The goal of *Secondo Stile* is to activate a counter-discourse in the form of a sustainable definition of an exhibition space, or an institution, taking advantage of the nomadic qualities of the portable canvas to explore collaborative modes within the framework of a painting through ideas of fluidity, independency and architectural mobility.

At the moment there are three canvas-spaces, entitled “Wedding”, “Mott” and “Tent” that function as nomadic institutions under the temporary directorship of appointed curators. The curators function as storytellers, defining their specific program for each space, activating the painting as a curatorial platform, producing texts, talks, performances and exhibitions with invited artists in different locations; from artist studios to apartments, the street to the art institution. The three painted spaces travel globally (Mumbai, Burma, Cairo, Lisbon, Madrid, Leicester, Paris).

Since its foundation *Secondo Stile* has produced eighteen events and exhibitions involving more than thirty agents.

Two other larger canvas-spaces, titled “The garden of Sardinia, Cyprus and Jerusalem” and “Urmutter” are functioning as display systems for larger groups of works, mostly museum-collections (such as Man Museo Arte contemporanea Nuoro in Sardinia Italy or De Vleesahl in Middelburgh, Holland) in order to activate new narrations and serendipitous encounters the re-contextualization provided by *Secondo Stile* as an experimental, possibly emancipatory painted-space.

One of my favorite exhibitions has been by *Wojciech Fangor*, who is a Polish painter, graphic artist, sculptor. Stanislaw Zamecznik, a pioneer of Polish exhibition-design, used to collaborate a lot with Fangor in the ‘50s and ‘60s for several international exhibitions. I was intrigued by the possibility to reactivate this dialogue after the death of Stanislaw by exhibiting Fangor’s pieces in Berlin in an exhibition design produced by ZAMAAS, a collective formed by Oystein Aasan and Marianne Zamecznik.



The garden of Sardinia Cyprus and Jerusalem, 2014, oil on canvas 450 x 2524 cm
photo credit: Serge Domingie

You're presenting a work called 'The Hunter Gatherer' for Art International. Can you briefly tell us about the exhibition?

THE HUNTER-GATHERER will take place within the framework of the Garden of Sardinia Cyprus and Jerusalem, one of my Secondo Stile spaces.

Depicting a nocturnal garden dedicated to the Paleolithic culture of the mother goddess, the exhibition will focus on the activity of 8 non-profit organizations in Turkey and UK, including: **Protocinema, Proto5533, Masa, Near East, Torun, Spot, Nesin Sanat Köyü, David Roberts Foundation.**

The exhibition will be structured like a game engaging the viewer in a treasure hunting in order to encourage aspects related to orality, nomadism, pseudomorphism, use, imagination, displacement and commonalities of interest.

The treasure hunt will be framed by the institutions and their resemblance to classical aspects of fairy tales, which represent the sphere of action of the game.

The section Alternative as the name suggest, proposes an alternative to the market encouraging strategies of trading defined by personal experience, dialogue, application and knowledge.

Each day an artwork by the artist will be devoted to treasure hunting that will engage the viewers in a game that will accompany the players from the Garden of Sardinia Cyprus and Jerusalem to the city of Istanbul and it's non-profit organization in a sort of rite of passage.

As part of the game the viewer has to enter in direct dialogue with each non-profit spaces, discovering them trough the city, talking with them about their activities and so accomplishing a serious of trial that will accompany is rite of passage.

Once the viewer has successfully accomplished the different stages he will be able to get the magic card representing Dionysius and so the passage will consummated the ritual subject. Having completed the rite and assumed his "new" identity, one re-enters the Garden of Sardinia Cyprus and Jerusalem and get his reward.

Each day there will be only a few Dionysius cards around the city and getting them will not be easy. Each non-profit space will develop his part of the game and like in a fairy tale the player will encounter hindering figures and adjuvants ones.

The starting point is at the Garden of Sardinia Cyprus and Jerusalem.

In this first phase, the viewer withdraws from his current status and prepares to move from one place or status to another thanks to the help of a narrator, Francesco Gori, that will introduce the game and the description of the hunter gatherer.

In the garden will be displayed a map of the game and a series of printed matters publicizing the activities of the 8 invited institutions representing 8 different stages of the treasure hunting game.

As a hunter gatherer the viewer will need enthusiasm, knowledge and orientation to accomplish the different stages of the game that will enable hum to discover the reality of non-profit spaces in the city of Istanbul.

We decided to rent a suite at Grand hotel Londra Buyuk in order to give a place to 2 institution that are not from Istanbul.

On the evening of the 5th September DRAF will organize a performance, and on the morning of the 6th a teacher from the Nesin Sanat Köyü will introduce the public to the pedagogical 's mission of the art school that they have initiated as a pilot project this summer.

The two events will be framed by my nomadic canvas-based institution SECONDO STILE MOTT and WEDDING

Can you talk a little about the role of ritual and hermeticism in your work as it seems to be a recurring theme?

Depicted in the Garden of Sardinia , Cyprus and Jerusalem there is a Hermetic book that I wrote on curating. It's titled "The Magic Power of Curating". I like that the 70 pages are hidden and somehow the 26 meter painting can be interpreted as a frame for the magic book.

What esoterism addresses is not a collective experience but an individual one. The secret is hidden and it's all about personal engagement. I want to believe that I'll have a reader.

You're a curator as artist, and artist as a curator. How does the role of one feed into the other?

Like a dream in a dream

What are you looking forward to seeing at Art International this year?

Niccolò Cusano, (15th century German philosopher, theologian, mathematician, and politician), was sent as ambassador to Constantinople in the 1430s to accomplish some political 'issue concerning Christianity'. During that time Cusano was able to discover in the library the hermetic book by **Hermes Trismegistus** that gave rise to all the Italian Renaissance. Art historians are talking about how the magic wind of Dionysius was introduced into the Gothic European style thanks to the trip of Cusano.

So to answer your question: Dionysius!

What do you hope participants will take away from their experience of Hunter Gatherer?

I hope participants will have the feeling of knowing something more about Istanbul and its people. The project is constructed around the idea of meeting and conversations not only at the fair, but also outside. The map will drive you from place to place...lets see.