

T·H·E K·I·T·C·H·E·N

484 Broome St New York City

March 30, 1983

LUIGI ONTANI

«...ba'OCCHI...»



Tonight Luigi Ontani will present «...bal'OCCHI»..., a tableau-vivant giving life to the masks from Bali recently shown at the Serra-diFelice gallery in New York.

....New York
My Lord
 orda balorda
Neve sorda
 Corda balla*
 Ora farfalla
 *«bal'OCCHI»...

Preceding Luigi Ontani to this country was a little book, representative of his performances and tableaux vivants in which the artists re-creates Renaissance mythological imagery and the endless iconographic motifs of Italian art by playing the parts of saints and other characters. his magnificent booklet alone created a small, devoted, and chic group of fans. The reason is obvious: transformations, even if mythological, are camp...What is specific to Ontani's use of cultural cliches is that they are located in the marginal generalities where differing cultures meet...The work is a kind of nationalist, historical Pop with a conceptual updating, since Ontani exhibits with one of the most ephemeral of media, the slide projection. The form has quite a few practitioners in Europe, but none exhibits quite such bravura, care and complexity as Ontani...The Marcissus in Ontani is the introvert who is totally capable of amusing himself by himself; the magic of the work is that it remains always so carefully contained within its contours, folding back into its own introspection. Hence the appeal of his crystal ball images....

Edit deAk
Artforum, December 1977

Luigi Ontani resembles a wanderer who travels through time. Intact like an apparition he enters the most splendid palaces, gardens inhabited by birds of paradise, and the most humble homes. He is an asingular artist who loves glamour and who needs very little. It's not that he loves contrasts: he does not know them. Because he personifies within himself the mythic images of time. Can one be effectively ingenious? Real ingenuity is hierarchizing and stylizing knowledge and experience.

Luigi Ontani goes through walls ever closer to our time and at the same time goes through himself. Did you ever visit him in his home in Rome? For an artist whose home is the world, the world of continents, of images, and ideas, the possession of few things and the activity of silence constitutes a fixed point. Luigi Ontani's road runs on the edge of myths - on one side the sea under the bright summer sun, on the other, the clouds clustering over valleys - and corresponds to the constant search of an equilibrium in personification, in giving body to these myths. He lives these myths, and lives therefore the fragility of their way of revealing themselves.

Jean Christophe Amman
from the catalogue of Ontani's
show at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna
di Bologna - November 1982

The tableau-vivant, being static, does not develop: it has neither beginning nor end. Ontani believes that art has an eternal presence, and thus should assume a non-temporal structure. This structure may be likened to the timeless dimension of dreams where figures float back and forth, appear and disappear without regard for rational thought and order. Not only linear but historical time as well ceases to exist for Ontani. He regards myth, fable and history from a contemporary, personal point of view, so that he does not copy the subject, but rather re-creates, reinterprets and recycles it. Once recycled, the story becomes an actual even and thus lives a parallel existence with its original incarnation...Ontani's reincarnations are voyages of sorts, visits to other lands, cities and cultures under assumed identities. However, real travel has been an important impetus for Ontani's art. He considers a voyage to be a creative experience.....

Diane Waldman
from the catalogue of the
1982 Exxon International Exhibition
at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

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