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AL DIO ORTOPEDICO  
ENRICO DAVID, GOSKA MACUGA, PALOMA VARGA WEISZ

curated by Rita Selvaggio

# Al dio ortopedico (To the Orthopaedic God)

ENRICO DAVID, GOSHKÀ MACUGA, PALOMA VARGA WEISZ

*curated by Rita Selvaggio*

*Al dio ortopedico* is a joint exhibition presenting the works of Enrico David (1966), Goshka Macuga (1967) and Paloma Varga Weisz (1966). In a sort of theatrical device and with “an apparent normality of the things represented” as if they were part of everyday reality, the exhibition sets out to explore the question of inner landscape. The title is borrowed from that of an article published in *Il Tempo* on 22 February 1919 and written by Roberto Longhi (1890-1979), at the time still only nineteen years old, for Giorgio de Chirico’s first solo exhibition in Rome, at Anton Giulio Bragaglia’s Casa d’Arte. “[...] Therein the ‘homo orthopaedicus’ recites his impossible part in the creaking voice of a pulley to the disinherited statues of ancient Greece,” runs the text. It must have been intended as a pitiless mocking, and a very modern one for the times, of de Chirico’s use of mannequines, a question that had greatly excited the young scholar’s linguistic imagination. Over the course of history, it has turned out to be one of the most penetrating interpretations of Metaphysical painting.

Giorgio de Chirico had developed a particular conception of the world through his reading of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer and Heraclitus and this strong link with philosophy found expression in a manner that was closely bound up with an existential condition. In 1928 Jean Cocteau would describe the artist as a *dépaysagiste*, not a painter of landscape but someone who disorients.

Florence: de Chirico moved there in 1910, staying for about a year, and the city, with its urban structure exercised a profound influence on his imagination. It was here that he mapped out his themes of mysterious poetic magic: architectural visions, squares of Italy, solitary statues, disquieting mannequins. And it was in Florence that he painted pictures like *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon*, *The Enigma of the Oracle*, *The Enigma of the Hour* and *Portrait of the Artist’s Brother*, all dating from 1910. As de Chirico himself wrote, his Böcklinian period was over. He had begun to depict subjects in which he sought to express the powerful and mysterious feelings he had discovered in Nietzsche’s books: the melancholy of fine days in autumn, the afternoon in Italian cities. In fact *The Enigma of an Autumn Afternoon* regarded as his first Metaphysical painting, stems from a vision that he had in Piazza Santa Croce in Florence. It is autumn, a light breeze is blowing and the first yellow leaves are covering the ground, while the artist is seated on a bench gazing at the enormous statue of Dante Alighieri. The long shadows cast by the monument, the mark of an image taken from reality, stir in him the doubt that reality itself is no more than the shadow of something deeper.

The enigma of images, the suspension of time, mystery and disorientation, the appearance of another reality perceived in a world of silence: the exhibition brings together human countenances stripped of identity, mute and inexpressive under windswept and hazy skies. In the exhibition, Goshka Macuga’s assemblage of busts of philosophers and thinkers is emblematic of her imagination of the post-hu-

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man world. Made of a variety of materials, they are arranged in such a way as to create a silent spatial dialogue, symbolizing the concept of the free exchange of ideas, and belong to the group of works entitled *International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation*. The works by Enrico David in the show offer further confirmation of his multifarious and decentralized, dissective and dispersive vision, in which everything signifies incessantly and repeatedly. Always at grips with the unobjectifiable, and expressing an unavoidable impulse that perennially configures spaces of dissent. Paloma Varga Weisz's *Lazlo's Dream* (2018) and *Multiface* (2018) are part of a recent series of lime-wood sculptures and in addition to alluding to the beginning of the artist's career, when she was carving wood in Bavaria at the end of the '80s, reflect a personal and multi-layered iconography that is surreal, mythological and modernist.

We are in autumn, when the sun starts to remain lower in the sky and shadows lengthen out of all proportion; in the sharp light of the early afternoon, the sense of reality seems to elude the stability and certainties of an objective representation of existence.

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Enrico David was born in Ancona, Italy, in 1966. In the 1990s, he studied Fine Arts at Central Saint Martin's College in London and has since exhibited in galleries and museums worldwide. In 2009, David was shortlisted for the Turner Prize. His first solo exhibition, *Head Gas*, was organized by the New Museum, New York in 2012. In 2013, David presented a major installation of paintings, tapestries and sculptures as part of *The Encyclopedic Palace*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni for the Venice Biennale. His works span from painting to drawing, from sculpture to installation, often employing craft techniques and a variety of media. Among his most recent exhibitions: *Enrico David: Gradations of Slow Release* (2018) at MCA Chicago, Chicago and the two solo shows at Michael Werner Gallery, New York and Blum & Poe, Los Angeles both in 2018. David is one of the three artists selected by Milovan Farronato for the Italian Pavilion of the 2019 Venice Biennale. He currently lives and works in London.

### SOLO SHOWS

2018

*Enrico David: Gradations of Slow Release*, MCA Chicago, Chicago

*Enrico David*, Michael Werner Gallery, New York

*Enrico David*, Blum & Poe, Los Angeles

2017

*Enrico David*, Michael Werner Gallery, London

2015

*Body Shop*, Michael Werner Gallery, London

*Enrico "La Caduta" David*, Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia

### GROUP SHOWS

2018

*If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*, Michael Werner Gallery, New York

Goshka Macuga was born in 1967 in Warsaw, Poland. A graduate of Central Saint Martin's and Goldsmiths in London, she was one of the four nominees for the 2008 Turner Prize. Artist, curator, archivist, collector and researcher, Macuga works across mediums from woven tapestries to sculptures and robotics, and her complex installations often include other artists' works. Her oeuvre, characterized by a multilayered narrative, mixes historical documentation, politics, sociology and ethnography with personal events and references to other authors. Among her recent exhibitions: *Goshka Macuga: Intellectual Co-Operation* (2018) at Neues Museum, Nürnberg, Germany; *Goshka Macuga & Ahmet Ögüt Episode 1 and 2* (2017) at Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Netherlands; *To the Son of Man Who Ate the Scroll* at Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy and *Time as Fabric at New Museum*, New York, both in 2016. Macuga participated at the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, at DOCUMENTA 13 and at the 2009 Venice Biennale. She currently lives and works in London.

#### SOLO SHOWS

2018

*Goshka Macuga: Intellectual Co-Operation*, Neues Museum, Nürnberg, Germany

2017

*Goshka Macuga & Ahmet Ögüt Episode 2*, Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Netherlands

*Goshka Macuga & Ahmet Ögüt Episode 1*, Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, Netherlands

2016

*On the Other Side of Tomorrow*, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York

*Now this, is this the end... the end of the beginning or the beginning of the end? (part 1)*, Schinkel Pavilion, INDEX Berlin, Berlin, Germany

*Time as Fabric*, New Museum, New York, USA

*To the Son of Man Who Ate the Scroll*, Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy

Paloma Varga Weisz was born in 1966 in Mannheim, Germany. In 1998, she graduated from the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf with Tony Cragg and Gerhard Merz after being trained in traditional woodcarving, modelling and casting in Bavaria. Her practice primarily includes sculpture, drawing and watercolour painting. Textured and tactile, her sculptural works challenge traditional iconography and handcraft representing hybrid figures that mix anthropomorphic qualities and disturbing grotesque aspects. Among her recent solo exhibitions: *Wild Bunch* (2018) at Sadie Coles HQ, London; *Skulpturenhalle* (2017) at Thomas Schütte Stiftung, Neuss, Germany; *Kabinetstück* (2016), *Fürstenberg Zeitgenössisch*, Donaueschingen, Germany; *Root of a Dream* (2015) at Castello di Rivoli, Italy. She currently lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany.

#### SOLO SHOWS

2018

*Wild Bunch*, Sadie Coles HQ, London

2017

*Paloma Varga Weisz*, Galeria Pedro Cera, Lisbon

*Skulpturenhalle*, Thomas Schütte Stiftung, Neuss, Germany

2016

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*Paloma Varga Weisz*, Gerhardsen Gerner, Oslo  
*Kabinettstück*, Fürstenberg Zeitgenössisch, Donaueschingen, Germany

GROUP SHOWS

2018

*Von fremden Ländern in eigenen Städten*, MAP Markus Ambach Projects, Düsseldorf, Germany  
*[IM]MATERIELL. Über das Geistige im Stofflichen*, Galerie Altes Feuerhaus, Städtische Galerie Bad Reichenhall, Bad Reichenhall, Germany

*I Self Collection: Bumped Bodies*, Whitechapel Gallery, London

*The Beautiful Escape*, CFHILL, Stockholm

*A Mind of Winter*, Fundaziun de Planta Samedan, Samedan, Switzerland

2017

*At Sea. Works from the Kunsthalle Bremerhaven Collection*, Städtische Galerie Delmenhorst, Germany

*NO MAN'S LAND: Women Artists from the Rubell Family Collection*, National Museum of Women in the Art, Washington

*Dreamers Awake*, White Cube, London