

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Amy Sherlock, "Around Town: Turin,"
Frieze, December 4, 2015

frieze

Around Town: Turin



Paloma Varga Weisz, 'Root of a Dream', installation view, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, 2016.

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The walls and frescoed ceilings of the former apartments of the Dukes of Savoy in Castello di Rivoli have many stories to tell. On the site of an ancient medieval fortress, on a hill just outside of Turin, the castle was expanded in a late-baroque flourish in the early 18th century by Victor Amadeus II of Savoy, King of Sardinia. For a sorry couple of years at the end of his life, Victor Amadeus was held prisoner there – with his morgantic wife, a former mistress – by his own son. A number of these rooms currently house Paloma

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Varga Weisz's 'Root of a Dream', one of a number of exhibitions that opened to coincide with Artissima art fair in November, and in which history and storytelling commingle, as in the Italian word for both: *storia*.

Varga Weisz's first institutional solo exhibition in Italy has been thoughtfully and sparsely installed by the artist and curator Marianna Vecellio. Stepping into every room feels as though you are intruding upon the characters of the artist's dark, fairytale bestiary worked in carved wood and ceramic, so at home do they seem among the Castello's ghosts of dynastic drama, love and betrayal. And home – particularly in relation to Freud's concept of the uncanny, or unheimly – is key here. The show opens with *Magazin* (Warehouse, 2012), which looks like an ominously over-sized and unadorned, grey-painted cuckoo clock, whose side panels extend to cover the length of the wall as well as a dusty open-sided dolls' house, with yellowing, stained lace curtains (*House*, [37.71], 2012). Screening in the same room on a small monitor is what looks like a home video from the 1980s (*Two Artists*, 1986): a touching piece in which a young, beautiful Varga Weisz and her father, the artist Feri Varga, dance together and pose for the camera in grimacing carnival masks.



Paloma Varga Weisz, *Untitled (A Glorious Man)*, 2008/15, installation view, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, 2016. © Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli, Turin; photograph: Stefan Hostettler, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

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The exhibition's circular, Hansel-and-Gretel-like logic of fathers and woodcutters and getting lost in enchanted forests concludes with *Untitled (A Glorious Man)* (2008/15), a pale wax figure with an enormous, penis-shaped proboscis that nearly touches the table in front of him. Father or figment, he is a reminder of the sexual connotations of the word 'root' and the Oedipal desires that surface in dreams.



Bernd Ribbeck, *Untitled*, 2015, acrylics ballpoint pen on mdf, 28 × 40 cm. Courtesy Norma Mangione Gallery, Turin; photograph: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

The labyrinths of the unconscious recur at Galleria Norma Mangione in the small-scale works on board by Bernd Ribbeck. Though directly referencing the impossible, M.C.-Escher-like levels of the game app *Monument Valley* (2014), his stylized, axonometric architectures also recall the oneiric, endless spaces of Giorgio de Chirico, Alberto Savinio and later surrealists. Created by building layers of acrylic paint and dense drifts of biro lines, these works constantly play a trick of flatness and depth, reminding us that things are never quite as they first appear.

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Darren Bader, *Proposta per le 9 Sinfonie (Proposal for Nine Symphonies)*, 2015, installation view at Piazza Carignano 2

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In the centre of town, in an elegantly crumbling second-floor apartment overlooking the Palazzo Carignano – dating from the same period as the Castello, and commandeered as a temporary outpost of Galleria Franco Noero for the duration of Artissima – Darren Bader conjured the sounds of all nine of Beethoven's symphonies, recorded by different orchestras and each playing in a different room. *Proposta per le 9 Sinfonie* (Proposal for Nine Symphonies, 2015) is billed as a project proposal, which Bader is searching for someone to finance. The realized version would involve nine orchestras playing live in nine different rooms. As so often with Bader, with such an Quixotic undertaking you sense he's deadpanning – not that this detracted from the unadulterated pleasure of standing in the sun-bathed Piazza Carignano (built, incidentally, for Emmanuel Philibert of Savoy, older second cousin of Victor Amadeus, who was both deaf and mute) listening to Beethoven, brilliant in nine ways simultaneously.



Paul Etienne Lincoln, *The Glover's Repository*, installation view, 2007-2015, mixed media, 200 × 370 × 50 cm. Courtesy Guido Costa Projects, Turin

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At Guido Costa Projects, Paul Etienne Lincoln's *The Glover's Repository* (2007–15) is a large, illuminated vitrine filled with 24 slowly rotating gloves. These represent historical figures famous for a great deception, either as perpetrators or victims. Through a wondrous clockwork mechanism, continually tweaked by the artist in his role as mad inventor on opening night, each glove rotates one full circle for every year of the characters life (like the orbiting planets in an orrery).

In English idiom, hands are typically proof of authenticity, as in 'to see first hand', while the glove implies duplicity: the corrupt overtones of being 'hand in glove with' someone, and 'the velvet glove that conceals the iron fist'.

The tales of each character are detailed on information cards that line the walls: Gabriele D'Annunzio, Mata Hari, General Tom Thumb, La Castaglione. (The latter pleaded the case for Italian unity, orchestrated in Turin, to her lover Napoleon III.) These include a preponderance of *belle époque* courtesans and *demi-mondains*, reflecting, to be sure, a burlesque, almost steampunk sensibility that inflects Lincoln's *oeuvre* although, less generously, affirming an age-old stereotype of the *femme fatale* and female betrayal through seduction.



Ed Ruscha, 'Mix Master', 2015, Installation view Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin. Pictured: collections from Museo Franchetti del Collegio San Giuseppe, Turin, Museo della Frutta "Francesco Garnier Valletti", Turin and Accademia di Agricoltura, Turin. Courtesy Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin.

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In a venue built for Piedmontese industrial royalty, the Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli – a futuristic Renzo-Piano-designed glass box on top of the family’s former Fiat factory in Lingotto – hosts a magical *Wunderkammer*-like presentation. Working with curator Paolo Colombo, Ed Ruscha – an artist whose career is tinged with the smell of gasoline – has explored some of Turin’s more esoteric institutions, including the Fruit Museum, the Museum of Criminal Anthropology and the Agriculture Academy; in ‘Mixmaster’ their finds are displayed alongside a select survey of Ruscha’s own work, much of it from his personal collection. Grouping the pieces under straightforward headings such as ‘Cars’, ‘Anatomy’ and ‘Cinema’, the show finds unexpected resonances between such curious pairings as a preserved dissected hand from the mid-19th century and Ruscha’s photograph *Self-Portrait of my Forearm* (2014), and the contour portraits that the artist has been making since the 1970s and early shadow-theatre puppets from the National Cinema Museum.



Carlo Mollino, *Leo Gasperl skiing downhill*, black and white print on photographic paper. Courtesy Politecnico di Torino, Archivi della Biblioteca Centrale di Architettura ‘Roberto Gabetti’, fondo Carlo Mollino

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Writing critically of the artist-curated show format in an article earlier this year, Claire Bishop dismissed it as producing ‘an ambience that you just kind of *feel* rather than understand’; here, looking from Ruscha’s painted *Skier* (1987) to archival photographs of (sometime-ski instructor) Carlo Mollino (and friends) on the slopes and beyond to the snow-tipped Alps, it seemed to me that feeling is its own way of understanding.