

PINACOTECA CIVICA DI COMO

via Diaz 84

Mario Radice: il pittore e gli architetti. La collaborazione con Cesare Cattaneo, Giuseppe Terragni, Ico Parisi

curated by Roberta Lietti and Paolo Brambilla

14 June - 24 November 2019

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The **Pinacoteca Civica of Como** presents, from 14 June to 24 November 2019, the important exhibition entitled “Mario Radice: il pittore e gli architetti. La collaborazione con Cesare Cattaneo, Giuseppe Terragni, Ico Parisi” [*Mario Radice: the painter and the architects. His collaboration with Cesare Cattaneo, Giuseppe Terragni and Ico Parisi*], curated by Roberta Lietti and Paolo Brambilla.

*“It is an important exhibition – comments **Carola Gentilini, Councillor for Culture at the Municipality of Como** – that takes a close look at a great artist from Como through an examination of his synergistic relationships with the renowned architects of the time, and also through the exhibition of unpublished documents from the Archives of the Pinacoteca of Como”.*

The exhibition is divided into three sections and investigates the large body of painting and sculptural works of **Mario Radice** (Como, 1898-1987), who must rank as one of the most complex figures of early Italian abstractionism. He was also a designer, theorist, art critic, exhibition curator and essayist, and this exhibition seeks above all to reconstruct what has subsequently been lost of his art. He was highly prolific, and did not limit his activities to painting, exploring as he did the new world of design, particularly through his collaborations with architect friends who included **Giuseppe Terragni, Cesare Cattaneo and Ico Parisi**.

The exhibition, conceived by Roberta Lietti, focuses therefore **for the first time on the synergic work between Radice and the three Como architects**, as an expression of the three arts of sculpture, architecture and painting, also thanks to the exhibition installation designed by Paolo Brambilla, that provides the context with **vintage photographs, models, writings, preparatory drawings and studies on paper**. These include many **unpublished works** from the archives of the Pinacoteca of Como, mostly from the Mario Radice Fund which was donated to the Municipality by his heirs and contribute to shed light on the collaboration relationship between the protagonists of the exhibition.

The first section of the exhibition concentrates on the relationship between **Mario Radice and Cesare Cattaneo**, focusing mainly on one of the most significant works coming out of this art and design synergy, i.e. the *Camerlata Fountain*. This was designed between 1934 and 1935 for Como’s Camerlata square, and was built the following year on the occasion of the 6th Milan Triennale. It was placed in the centre of Parco Sempione, on the axis between Sforzesco Castle and the Arch of Peace, but was demolished at the end of the

exhibition in 1937, and not rebuilt until 1960 in Como. Around this work, in the first of the Pinacoteca's rooms given over to the exhibition, the **original model** of the *Fountain* - coming from the Cesare Cattaneo Archive in Cernobbio - can be seen, together with drawings, design studies, postcards and the original project report signed by the designers, together with documents and journals of the time on the monumental sculpture.

The second section moves on investigating the relationship between Radice and **Giuseppe Terragni**, particularly through a presentation of two major joint works. The first is the ***Casa sul lago per artista***, the house on the lake for artists, shown at the 5th Milan Triennale in 1933, with a blow-up of the interior of the studio acting as backdrop for a reconstruction of the working space, where there stands the original Columbus stool in wood and tubular chrome-plated steel, matching the **life-size sketch** of the Nude Woman fresco, one of the two large frescoes made by Radice for the room.

The second work considered is the ***Casa del Fascio*** in Como, for which Radice had created, between 1932 and 1936, two large bas-reliefs for the Sala del Direttorio on the first floor, as well as eight frescoes in the Salone delle Adunate on the ground floor. An accurate model by the curator Brambilla can be seen in the exhibition, with Radice's pictorial interventions reproduced to scale as works truly central to the birth of Italian abstractionism, and much admired by Lucio Fontana. There are also two **studies on paper, an oil on canvas**, and other works on paper that illustrate the motifs on the panels, and additionally the **design project of the chandelier** created by Radice. Numerous photographs complete this exhibition section.

The third section is dedicated to the relationship between **Radice and Ico Parisi**, with colour **sketches** for the *Casa Carcano* frescoes in Maslianico and for the *Casa Notari* in Fino Mornasco, works from 1950, both destroyed, as well as a blow-up of Radice at work, and a number of original photographs.

A particularly evocative feature of the final section of the exhibition is a **life-size projection**, by the young video-makers of the OLO Creative Farm, of one of the **mosaics** made by Radice for the façade of the Casa Bini in Monteolimpino, a villa designed by Parisi and built in the years 1952 and 1953.

The exhibition has an in-depth bilingual **catalogue**, in Italian and English, published by **Silvana Editoriale**, with contributions from Roberta Lietti, Roberto Dulio and Stefano Andrea Poli.

Clubs that serve the city are also involved, namely the **Como Host Lions Club**, of which Mario Radice and Ico Parisi were founding members in 1953, as well as its presidents (Radice in 1962, Parisi in 1967), the **Como Lions Club Plinio il Giovane** and the **Lions Club Como Lariano**. These have all joined forces to support **collateral activities** at the exhibition, aimed at broadening its accessibility for the community at large, and especially for children, the elderly, the disabled and the sight-impaired. Running parallel to the exhibition there are educational workshops, entertaining and dramatized tours, creative walks, guided visits and witness experiences on the *Camerlata Fountain* and its construction.

Biographical notes. Mario Radice was born in Como on 1 August 1898. He was best known as a painter, but was also a sculptor and designer, as well as essayist and art critic. He was the leading figure of the historical abstractionist group of Como and was in the

Thirties one of the founders of the *Quadrante* magazine. He took part in the 5th, 6th and 9th Milan Triennale, and sat on its executive committee of its tenth edition. He was also invited in 1955 to take part in its Study Center, and appointed to the Administrative Council for the 11th edition.

In addition he took part in the 3rd, 4th, 7th, 8th, 10th and 11th editions of the Rome Quadriennale and then continuously from the 22nd to the 29th Venice Biennale, to which he returned in 1966 for the 33rd edition, as well as being invited in 1968 to be sit on the subcommittee for figurative arts at the 34th edition.

His work was awarded in 1964 the Medaglia d'Oro (Gold Medal) for artistic merit by the Provincial Council of Como.

His work was shown in solo and group exhibitions in major galleries and public and private spaces in Italy and abroad, including in Como, Milan, Monza, Rome, Geneva, Münster and Hamburg. Central to his career was his work with architects and designers for villas, houses, exhibitions and public and private monuments. In 1973 Guido Ballo published the first monograph dedicated to his work and was awarded the "Ambrogino d'oro" for major artistic merit from the City of Milan.

He died in Como on 25 July 1987.

Details of the exhibition

Title Mario Radice: il pittore e gli architetti. La collaborazione con Cesare Cattaneo, Giuseppe Terragni, Ico Parisi

Conceived by Roberta Lietti

Curated by Roberta Lietti and Paolo Brambilla

Venue Pinacoteca Civica di Como, via Diaz 84 - Como

Dates 14 June - 24 November 2019

Opening hours Tuesday - Sunday 10am-6pm

Catalogue published by Silvana Editoriale - cover price € 15, at the exhibition € 13

Entrance fee included in the Pinacoteca entrance ticket

Full rate € 4 | Reduced / group rate € 2 | Three-museum pass € 10 | Family pass € 10

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