



Press Release – January 2015

The exhibition “Slip of the Tongue”
by Elisabeth Lebovici

“Slip of the Tongue” at Punta della Dogana
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PINAULT COLLECTION



Danh Võ has been invited to collaborate with Palazzo Grassi – Punta della Dogana – Pinault Collection not only as an artist but also as a curator, working with the collection in conjunction with a number of invited artists. Indeed, it is the first time that the foundation invites an artist as a curator at Punta della Dogana in Venice.

In the Roman Empire, the *curator* was the civil servant and public administrator of public utilities such as transport, hygiene, policing, sewer and drainage systems, aqueducts, navigation, roads, games, even accounting. They had the responsibility of “repairing” things in a culture that values reuse and recycling over *tabula rasa*. In the Middle Ages, their mundane activities acquire a spiritual meaning, at a time when “solicitude” can be applied to both the souls of the people and their worldly affairs. Without a doubt, these practices have provided the framework for the duties of the modern-day curator.

The vicissitudes of conservation, circulation, trade, dismemberment, dispersal, tinkering, restoration, collecting and exhibiting are not specific to the care for the “well-being” of works of art. They are intrinsically part of their stories, composing a history *in transition* that is sometimes broken by ruptures and shaped by destruction.

Venice is an environment that is particularly appropriate for an exhibition that looks into such challenges, which are part of our cultural histories. It is significant that the Charter of Venice was signed here in 1964. This international treaty on heritage was instigated, among others, by Italian art historian Cesare Brandi, who also founded the Central Institute for Restoration of Rome. Indeed, according to Brandi, “Any intervention that seeks to restore a product of human activity” [is] “an act of criticism” and a methodological inquiry. In this line of thought, the exhibition foregrounds what happens to the objects beyond their fabrication or creation.

Hence, the historical core of the exhibition consists of pieces from Venetian institutions such as the Accademia Gallery and the Cini Foundation. These works of art bear scars attained during their various preservation processes, which ultimately changed their shape. At times, brutal remodeling was inflicted. There are, for example, fragments of paintings that were mutilated or reduced in order to be “adapted” to a new setting. Or the miniature paintings that are the products of the cutting of choir books illuminated by artist monks. Following the suppression of monastic orders in the Napoleonic era, the London market had a voracious appetite for these selected pages.

“Slip of the Tongue” addresses these historical mishaps. The title of the exhibition is borrowed from the artist Nairy Baghramian (born in 1971), who has been in active conversation with Danh Võ. Three of her installations are presented. Indeed, the exhibition can also be seen as an attempt at mapping friendship, as several other artistic interlocutors are included in the exhibition as well as in its production. Its beating heart consists in two extraordinary ensembles by American artist Nancy Spero (1926-2010). First of all, the magnificent *Codex Artaud* (1971-72), which consists in 34 fragile rolls made of strips of paper covered with a hybrid form of writing-drawing-painting; they can be read as an attempt by the American artist to “restore” the fury and frustration that reached the point of incandescence in the language of French author Antonin Artaud. In *Cri du Coeur* (2004), her last monumental installation, Spero “adapts” the intimate pain of mourning by conjuring thousands of people who are, at the same time, hit by the disaster of war or environmental catastrophes, all anonymous and unnamed individuals with whom she establishes a link.



Other curatorial projects by Danh Võ combine both the personal and social dimensions of relationships around artists, some of whom he never met, such as Felix Gonzalez Torres (2009, Wiels Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels), Martin Wong (2013, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York), as well as his friend Julie Ault (2013, Artists Space, New York). Some objects presented also carry both an individual and a collective meaning, such as the chandeliers of the Paris Majestic Hotel, which were silent witnesses to the negotiations on the future of Vietnam, in 1975 - the same year the artist was born in Vietnam. In the light of this notion, one can also liken Danh Võ's work "as artist" to the different kinds of caretaking that have sprung from this root word over the centuries.

Each of the objects and works of art (around 120) presented in the exhibition "Slip of the Tongue" seem to partake in this idea that the activity of the artist is aimed at the preservation and afterlife of objects rather than of their interpretation. These notions constitute also a thread between the selected works of the Pinault Collection - by Bertrand Lavier, Tetsumi Kudo, Lee Lozano... The conversation begins and continues among the 35 artists invited by Danh Võ, to which a photograph by Robert Manson gives an emblematic twist. It shows a grasshopper and the hand on which it stands, supporting it, both fixed in their mutual attention.



Slip of the Tongue

Punta della Dogana presents, from April 12, 2015, the exhibition “Slip of the Tongue”, curated by Danh Võ, in collaboration with Caroline Bourgeois.

List of artists

Leonor Antunes
Julie Ault
Nairy Baghramian
Giovanni Bellini
Constantin Brancusi
Marcel Broodthaers
Giovanni Buonconsiglio, detto il Marescalco
Hubert Duprat
Elmgreen & Dragset
Luciano Fabro
Fischli & Weiss
Felix Gonzalez-Torres
Petrit Halilaj
David Hammons
Roni Horn
Peter Hujar
Tetsumi Kudo
Bertrand Lavier
Zoe Leonard
Francesco Lo Savio
Lee Lozano
Harald Thys and Jos de Gruyter
Robert Manson
Piero Manzoni
Sadamasa Motonaga
Jean-Luc Moulène
Henrik Olesen
Pablo Picasso
Sigmar Polke
Carol Rama
Charles Ray
Auguste Rodin
Cameron Rowland
Carlo Scarpa
Andres Serrano
Nancy Spero
Sturtevant
Alina Szapocznikow
Paul Thek



Danh Võ
David Wojnarowicz
Martin Wong

Anonyme, Ombrie, XIII-XIVème siècle
Anonyme, Bologne, XIVème siècle
Anonyme, Bologne, XIIIème siècle
Anonyme, Maestro Olivetano
Anonyme, Nerio, XIII-XIVème siècle
Anonyme, Florence, XVème siècle
Anonyme, Abruzzes, XIVème siècle
Anonyme, Maestro Lattanzio Riccardiano
Anonyme, Pérouse, XIVème siècle
Scuola di Tiziano