

This one-day international symposium considers Rome as a transnational contact zone for abstract women artists in the decades following the Second World War, from the 1950s through the 1970s. These artists stayed for various periods of time, 'crossing over' from the UK and the US, but also also from Brazil, Turkey, Iran, and other countries around the world. What drew them to Rome and how did their stay there affect their work? Taking into consideration individual artistic trajectories, as well as the geopolitical circumstances framing artistic production in Italy of the time, the speakers at the symposium reflect on such questions in view of the simultaneous trend among the Rome-based Italian abstract women artists to live and work abroad.

The symposium is organised by Dr Jelena Stojković, Senior Lecturer in Critical Theory at the School of Arts, Oxford Brookes University, and is supported by the British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship as part of her research project Illumination: Transnational Routes of Abstract Art in the Cold War. It is organised in partnership with the British School at Rome and will accompany a retrospective exhibition of Carmengloria Morales at the BSR, curated by Dr Daniel Sturgis, Professor in Painting at the University of the Arts London and Chair of the Faculty of Fine Art at the BSR.

\* The organisers awarded a bursary for a young Italian art historian to Sonia Chianchiano, enabling her to attend the symposium.

## PROGRAMME

9.30	<b>Arrivals</b>
10.00	<b>Opening remarks</b>
10 – 11.30	<b>Panel 1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Sandra Blow: Performed Materialism</i>   Jennifer Johnson (Oxford)</li><li>• <i>In-betweenness of Transcultural Reflection in Tess Jaray's Abstract Art</i>   Yu Xiao (RCA)</li><li>• <i>When kinetic abstraction becomes plastic: Lia Drei's research in the late 1960s in Rome</i>   Caterina Molteni (MAMBo) – This lecture will take place in Italian</li><li>• <i>Lauretta Vinciarelli: Artistic Reflections between Rome and New York</i>   Dr Francesca Romana Forlini (New York Institute of Technology)</li></ul>
11.30	Coffee Break
11.50 – 13	<b>Panel 2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Negotiating Cultural and Artistic Identities in 1960s Rome: Mary Shaffer and Edith Schloss</i>   Roberta Munnucci (Hertziana)</li><li>• <i>Revisiting Marcia Hafif's 1975 exhibition in Rome</i>   Maria Alicata (Sapienza)</li><li>• <i>Un'artista americana a Roma: Adele Plotkin</i>   Giuseppina Petruzzelli (Accademia di Belle Arti di Bari) – This lecture will take place in Italian</li></ul>
13:00	Lunch
14.15 – 15.30	<b>Panel 3</b>

- *Rosemary's Mayer's Passages* | Amy Tobin (Cambridge)
- *Claire Falkenstein in Postwar Rome* | Peter Benson Miller (Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio)
- «*When everything began*». *Il primo soggiorno di Barbara Chase-Riboud a Roma (1957-1958)* | Biancalucia Maglione (Siena) – This lecture will take place in Italian

15.30 Coffee Break

15.50 – 17.00

**Panel 4**

- *Behjat Sadr: An Iranian in Rome* | Pia Gottschaller (Courtauld)
- *Abstract art in transit: immigrant artist Maria Bonomi between Brazil and Italy in the 1950s* | Ana Avelar (Brasilia) and Renata Rocco (Palácio do Governo do Estado de São Paulo)
- *Gencay's Italian Chapter: A Passage of Becoming* | Ahu Antmen (Sabancı)

18 – 19.30

**Keynote Lecture**

*Carla Accardi and the Moroccan art scene: 1972-1975* | Maud Houssais

**BIO & ABSTRACT**

***Sandra Blow: Performed Materialism* | Jennifer Johnson (Oxford)**

Jennifer Johnson is an art historian working on materialities and process in French and British art in the late 19th and 20th centuries. She has held lectureships in art history and English literature at the University of Oxford, and was a Junior Research Fellow in History of Art at St John's College, Oxford. Her first book, *Georges Rouault and Material Imagining* was published by Bloomsbury in 2020. In 2024/5 she will be the Paul Mellon Fellow at the British School in Rome, working on the British abstract painter, Sandra Blow.

**Abstract**

This paper considers the work of Sandra Blow (1925-2006), an abstract painter working in Britain in the second half of the twentieth century. However, finding art education in London unsatisfactory, Blow spent 1947 in Rome, where she met Alberto Burri. From this association, Blow learned the processes and materialities of 'matter painting' and art informel. However, where Burri's material realism lent weight to the political resonances of matter and material, Blow remained wedded to an exploration of aesthetic qualities such as line and form, as well as to core questions about the energy and emotive presence of a painting. In this, her work remained detached from associations with landscape or figuration that were forming different schools of abstraction in Britain. Instead, her process continually explored the expression of a kind of formalism – wholly different in kind from abstract expressionism or action painting. This paper looks at the significance of 1947 and Blow's experience of Italy and Burri's art, as a moment that committed her work in the 1950s -1970s to matter and materialism as a way of pursuing abstraction in a manner that has not been comfortably associated with female painters in Britain.

***In-betweenness of Transcultural Reflection in Tess Jaray's Abstract Art* | Yu Xiao (RCA)**

Yu Xiao is an abstract artist, art researcher and educator. Born in China, she graduated with a master's

in fine arts from Central Saint Martins in London in 2010. She is a practice-led PhD candidate at the Royal College of Art in the UK and based in London. Yu authored the book *Interviews with Well-Known British Contemporary Artists* and has contributed to various art research publications such as *Muttering* and *Earthwise*. Her art practice primarily revolves around painting, but also includes painting-related installations and performances. She has held five solo exhibitions and has been invited to participate in numerous significant group exhibitions worldwide. Such as 'The Declaration of Independence' at Today Art Museum in Beijing in 2011, the Royal Academy of Arts in London (Curated by Tess Jaray RA) in 2012, the 'Meta-forms'—the public section of Miami Art Basel (Curated by Nicholas Baume) in 2015, and 'Elsewhere/Here' at the He Xiangning Art Museum in Shenzhen in 2018.

## Abstract

This paper investigates Tess Jaray's abstract painting through an Asian lens, employing in-betweenness thinking. It argues that the aesthetics of Jaray's work reflects the Asian yin-yang paradigm, a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamic balance and reciprocal relationship between contrasting elements. Jaray's artistic vision was significantly influenced by her Abbey Minor Traveling Scholarship in 1960, overlaying her Austrian background, which allowed her to experience the substance of Rome's 'space between' with her original Austrian culture. In this context, she began to extract patterns from Italian architecture, and the interpretation offered here suggests that their resemblance to Buddhist mandalas inadvertently lends her work an implicit sense of transnational thinking. The idea of how the feminine identity and hybridity in culture may be imprinted in geometric abstract form is further pursued. The focus on Jaray's artistic practice is analysed through the prism of interstitiality, which challenges the gender binary and embraces the liminal spaces between dichotomies to develop a very contemporary practice of abstraction.

This paper not only foregrounds the visual vocabulary of making that resonates with both Western and Eastern philosophical thoughts but also underscores the importance of a multicultural perspective in art interpretation. Its primary aim is to transcend geographical, gender, and cultural confines.

## ***When kinetic abstraction becomes plastic: Lia Drei's research in the late 1960s in Rome* | Caterina Molteni (MAMBo)**

Caterina Molteni is Curator at MAMBo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna. From 2016 to 2019 she was Coordinator of Public Programmes and Digital Content at Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Rivoli-Turin. In 2014, she founded Tile Project Space, a non-profit space dedicated to research on Italian art. Her texts have appeared in *Flash Art*, *CURA.*, *Nero Editions*, *Kabul Magazine* while her recent curatorial projects include: *Yvonne Rainer: Words, Dances, Films* (MAMBo, 2023); *The Floating Collection* (with Lorenzo Balbi, MAMBo, 2022); *Perchè lo faccio perchè. La vita poetica di Giulia Niccolai* (with Allison Donahue, MAMBo, 2022); *Dear you* (MAMBo, 2021); *Per un rinnovamento immaginista del mondo* (with Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Alba, 2019); *String Figures. Narration Practices* (Baruchello Foundation, Rome, 2018). For MAMBo she conceived and edited several publications including the first complete monographs dedicated to the work of Italo Zuffi (Corraini Edizioni, 2021) and Ludovica Carbotta (Edizioni MAMBo, 2024).

## Abstract

One of the founders of Gruppo 63, Lia Drei is one of the lesser-known protagonists of Italian kinetic art, active in the 1960s in Rome after a degree in Literature from the Sapienza University and a period of training and teaching in New York.

If between 1962 and 1967 the artist dedicated her painting to the optical and reticular research of colour, producing some of the most emblematic works of her production, in 1968 she met the literary and poetic neo-avant-garde linked to the newly-born Gruppo 63, which had its headquarters in the capital,

the magazine "Quindici". Drei's encounter with Adriano Spatola and Giulia Niccolai led her to 'open' outcomes in her work, espousing the phenomenological premises of 'total poetry', in which there is an 'uncontrollable equivalence between the level of transmission and the level of listening' (A. Spatola, 1975). The intersubjectivity and plasticity of words, which led several female artists of the time to work in the field of visual, concrete and sound poetry, was translated by Lia Drei into object-books, such as *Iperipotenusa* (1969) and environmental installations activated through happenings (Rieti, 1968). The contribution intends to investigate the relationship between the artist and the literary neo-avant-garde, emphasising how specific formal choices in the expansion of the work are the result of adherence to a phenomenological vision that places the perceptive process of the spectator at the centre. Particular attention will be paid to Giulia Niccolai's critical (and poetic) reading and curatorial activity on Drei's work, which draws her practice into the feminist debate of the time.

### ***Lauretta Vinciarelli: Artistic Reflections between Rome and New York* | Francesca Romana Forlini (New York Institute of Technology)**

Francesca Romana Forlini is an architect, Ph.D., educator, and editor. She teaches history and theory of interior design and architecture as Visiting Assistant Professor at New York Tech. Francesca previously held the positions of lecturer and researcher at Parsons The New School, University of Hertfordshire, Middlesex University, Harvard University, and the Royal College of Art (RCA). Her research has been presented in various international conferences and published in several journals and magazines, most recently on Urban Planning, Interiority, *Interiors: Design/Architecture/Culture*. She was the first chief editor of *KoozArch* magazine and contributor and editor of the AIA-awarded journal *Oblique*, *Critical Conservation* Vol. 1. She is a Fulbrighter and an alumna of the Royal College of Art, where she completed her Ph.D. in architectural history and theory supported by the SNF STEAM Scholarship. She holds a Master in Design Studies from Harvard Graduate School of Design, and is a Sapienza University alumna.

#### **Abstract**

According to numerous American scholars Lauretta Vinciarelli (1943–2011) left an indelible mark on the history of art and architecture. Roman architect, Vinciarelli earned a Ph.D. in architecture at Sapienza University in Rome (1971) and settled a few years earlier in New York, in 1969. It was in the American metropolis that she was able to distinguish herself, she was indeed among the first women who taught design studios at Columbia University (starting from 1978), she was also a faculty professor at Pratt Institute and Rice University among other prestigious American universities. Vinciarelli was also the first woman whose drawings were acquired by the Architecture and Design department of MoMa (1974), and her work is part of the permanent collections of numerous important museums, where it has been exhibited as well. Throughout her prolific artistic career she played a significant role as collaborator in the architectural and design works of the artist Donald Judd. Her intellectual activity, as well as her creative contributions stand out for the strong Italian, Roman imprint of her spatial and theoretical investigations. Both her typological studies, her landscape explorations and the "anti-Modernist" grid that generates her evanescent architectures of water and paper are imbued with colours and shapes reminiscent of her Italian past and roots. This paper will thoroughly investigate the contribution of Lauretta Vinciarelli, a Roman architect and artist in New York. Testimonies from colleagues and friends will be incorporated, as well as archival material from the institutions where she worked.

### ***Negotiating Cultural and Artistic Identities in 1960s Rome: Mary Shaffer and Edith Schloss* | Roberta Minnucci (Hertziana)**

Dr. Roberta Minnucci is an art historian whose research focuses on Italian and American post-war art through the lenses of performative and feminist practices, artistic identity and international dialogue.

After gaining her PhD from the University of Nottingham, she was a Rome Award holder at the British School at Rome and a Postdoctoral Fellow at Bibliotheca Hertziana – Max Planck Institute for Art History in Rome. At Magazzino Italian Art (Cold Spring, New York), where she was the 2022-23 Scholar-in-Residence, she worked on a research project on the transatlantic artistic dialogue between Italy and the United States in the post-war period for which she was also awarded a Library Research Grant by the Getty Research Institute (Los Angeles) and a Research Grant by the Ragusa Foundation for the Humanities (New York). She recently published a study on the work of Italian abstract artist Carla Badiali entitled *Ritagliare l'astrazione. I collage di Carla Badiali* (Arbor, 2022).

#### Abstract

Mary Shaffer (b. 1947) and Edith Schloss (1919–2011) both arrived in Rome in the 1960s. In the Italian city the former, who had just graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design, started to experiment with abstract painting and light, before devoting herself to glass sculpture in the early 1970s. Schloss began painting in New York during the 1940s in the Abstract Expressionist circle, and her experience of Italian landscape and light had an important influence in her works. From 1968 to 1986, she was the Art Editor for the International Herald Tribune, documenting the Roman artistic scene with a focus on American artists. Belonging to different generations and different circles of American expats in Rome, Shaffer and Schloss' paths officially never crossed. Their experience of the artistic and social scene of Rome in the 1960s, however, provides an important case study in relation to the transnational artistic networks gravitating around two women abstract painters who negotiated their cultural and artistic identities between Europe – where they had both lived for a long time before arriving in Rome – and the United States – their main country of residence. In addition to reconstructing the context in which they operated through archival material and oral histories, my paper will examine the condition of women artists moving to Rome from the United States in relation to the challenges presented by professional and personal circumstances, the influence of the city in their works, and their role in the artistic transnational networks.

#### **Revisiting Marcia Hafif's 1975 exhibition in Rome | Maria Alicata (Sapienza)**

Maria Alicata holds a PhD in contemporary art history. Her research focuses on artistic practices from 1945 to present day, with a special interest in Italian postwar art, primarily on issues related to intermediality, the archive as an artistic practice, and the history of exhibitions. She is a lecturer in Contemporary art at Sapienza University of Rome and the School of Specialization in Historical-Artistic Heritage. She recently co-curated the solo exhibition Maria Lai, Woven Writings, at the Es Baluard Museum in Palma di Maiorca, and Cosmic Garden by artists Madhvi Parekh and Manu Parekh at the 60. Venice Biennale. Recent publications include *Archivio Ugo Ferranti. Roma 1974-1985* (Quodlibet, Rome, 2022); *Olivetti ispira i giovani. Le ragioni della mostra Arte Programmata. Arte cinetica, opere moltiplicate, opera aperta*, Milano 1962 (2023); *Francesca Alinovi and the First International Performance Art Week, Bologna 1977* (2023); *Suzanne Santoro and the censorship Per una espressione nuova* (2024).

#### Abstract

Marcia Hafif (Pomona 1929-2018), lived and worked in Rome between 1961 and 1969 before returning to the United States, where she had begun exploring a new approach to abstraction. Even after settling in New York, the connections and travelling to Rome will remain a constant for her professional and personal network. Starting from the exhibition at d'Alessandro Ferranti Gallery in June 1975, the contribution will focus on Hafif's practice of that time through a transnational perspective. In that occasion the artist exhibited for the first time in Italy works from the Mass Tone series resulting from her recent researches on painting and space. At d'Alessandro's suggestion, she decided to show monochromes on canvas in different formats, some executed in Rome, along with a series of drawings and watercolors. Hafif's

investigation on painting becomes a paradigm, a rigorous working method aimed at rediscovering the essence of things: a response to the crisis of the medium and her person. A young woman and painter, as she used to define herself, daughter, wife, mother and artist, Italian-American, not of origin but of adoption. Through the analysis of original documents from the artist's archive and that of the Gallery, the paper aims to re-frame her research in the broader Roman context of the Seventies where art, feminism and political commitment intertwined in personal and professional relationships with personalities such as Carla Accardi and Marisa Volpi. In so doing, it considers what is the specificity of her work; how it inscribes itself within her practice and how this might square with Hafif's relationship to feminism?

***Un'artista americana a Roma: Adele Plotkin* | Giusy Petruzzelli (Accademia di Belle Arti di Bari)**  
– This lecture will take place in Italian

Giusy Petruzzelli (Bari, 1961), professor of History of modern and contemporary art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bari, graduated both in Literature and Philosophy and holds a PhD (University of Bari), a Diploma in Museum Teaching (University of Roma Tre), a D.E.A. in Literature (University of Geneva). With scholarships she attended the courses of: Cini Foundation in Venice, Banfi Institute in Reggio Emilia, Palladio International Centre of Architecture Studies in Vicenza, Italian Institute for Philosophical Studies in Naples, Research Institute on Canova and the Neoclassicism of Bassano del Grappa. She is a member of the Italian Society of Aesthetics.

She has devoted various studies to iconology and the relationship between modern and contemporary art and in the autobiographical writings of artists. She participates in conferences in Italy and abroad and has published numerous essays. She is also an art critic and curator of exhibitions.

Main publications in: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7022-0223>

**Abstract**

From her native Newark, New Jersey, Adele Plotkin (Newark 1931-Bari 2013), thanks to Fulbright grants from the US Government, was able to stay in Italy from 1957, first in Venice where she met Vedova and Tancredi, then in Ischia and Rome. She then moved to Bari where, from 1971, she held the position of professor of Theory of Perception and Psychology of Form at the Academy of Fine Arts and continued her artistic career.

In the United States, she had been a student of Josef Albers at Yale University and that study marked her poetics in an abstract sense, although in her Roman years she developed a path closer to that of Arshile Gorky. During the period in which she lived in Rome, between the end of the 1950s and 1970, she participated in group exhibitions (Schneider Gallery in 1958 and 1959, Trastevere Gallery in 1960) and held a solo show (Schneider Gallery in 1970 curated by Cesare Vivaldi).

This paper intends to shed light on this Roman phase of Adele Plotkin's life, a phase whose paintings are well known, published in two texts - *Adele Plotkin, Immagini ed echi*, Dedalo 2008 and Clemente Francavilla, *Un sottile margine blu*, Dedalo 2013 - but little is known about the cultural debate underlying the artist's relationships with artists, gallery owners and critics.

***Rosemary's Mayer's Passages* | Amy Tobin (Cambridge)**

Amy Tobin is Associate Professor in the Department of History of Art, University of Cambridge and Curator, contemporary programmes at Kettle's Yard, the University's modern and contemporary art gallery. She is also Fellow and Director of Studies in History of Art of Newnham College, Cambridge. She has curated numerous exhibitions at Kettle's Yard including Linderism and Making New Worlds: Li Yuan-chia & Friends. In 2023, she published a major article on the artist Candace Hill-Montgomery in Art History as well as her first monograph *Women Artists Together: Art in the Age of Women's Liberation* with Yale University Press.

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the American artist Rosemary Mayer's time in Rome, part of an extended research trip to Europe in 1975 during which she pursued her twofold interests in pre-nineteenth century histories of women and Mannerist and Rococo art. Working across many media, Mayer is associated with her post-minimal experiments in abstract painterly objects, often made from diaphanous textiles and tensile structures, named for figures tangential to history. This body of work developed in close relation to the women's art movement in the US but was deeply informed by Mayer's preoccupations with metaphysical questions of being and belonging. She felt a particular kinship with the artist Jacopo da Pontormo and while on her trip to Europe began to translate Pontormo's 1554–56 diary, produced while he was working on the San Lorenzo commission in Florence, as well as an artist book *Passages*, which condenses her research into a new theogony.

I consider Mayer's journey to Europe and especially her time in Rome as a conscious misalignment with the critical terms of the New York art world. Rather than understand this as a retreat, I see her research as a mode of refusal of the terms of cultural feminism and an assertion of the value of historical artistic experiment for understanding ontological contingency from a feminist perspective. This paper is part of a larger project I am scoping, which considers Mayer's work in relation to other American artists who made journeys into Europe and Rome, to hone their practice, and bring their feminism into the heart of art's histories. These include Ana Mendieta, Carolee Schneemann and Francesca Woodman.

## ***Claire Falkenstein in Postwar Rome* | Peter Benson Miller (Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio)**

An art historian and curator, Peter Benson Miller is curator at the Fondazione Nicola Del Roscio in Rome. Recent exhibition projects include Paul Thek. Italian Hours, and Ellsworth Kelly: Line, Form, Color. From 2013 to 2019, he was the Andrew Heiskell Arts Director at the American Academy in Rome, where he organized exhibitions of work by Yto Barrada, Paolo Gioli, Prabhavathi Meppayil, Charles Ray and Cy Twombly, among other artists. In 2010, he curated the exhibition Philip Guston, Roma for the Museo Carlo Bilotti in Rome and the Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C. His book *American Artists in Postwar Rome: Art and Cultural Exchange* is forthcoming from Bloomsbury Visual Arts.

## Abstract

Foregrounding exchanges between American and Italian artists in postwar Rome shaped by the ideological tensions and aesthetic debates in a Cold War "contact zone," this paper explores aspects of Claire Falkenstein's abstract direct metal sculpture. The model of entanglement – histories, trajectories, individuals, and objects intertwined together emphasizing a multiplicity of sources, numerous directions of influence and modalities of intercultural connectedness – underlines the international dialogue informing Falkenstein's work. Falkenstein lived principally in Paris in the 1950s, she wrote to Betty Parsons "I'm so excited about Rome I don't ever want to leave." Her connections to Rome and its artistic community offer new insights about her sources, working methods, and critical reception.

Pioneering new abstract sculptural forms and methods of display, Falkenstein was championed by Michel Tapié as exemplary of Art Autre. Exhibited at the Rome-New York Art Foundation, the Galleria Il Segno, and Luigi Moretti's Galleria Spazio, her sculptures emerged as lightning rods in politicized debates about abstraction, the synthesis of the arts, independent womanhood, and other American incursions in Italy. Focusing on Falkenstein's work in a variety of media – the *Suns*, her *Object-Gravures*, a "stair screen" installed at Spazio, and a gate commissioned for a private villa outside Rome designed by Moretti – I explore how her affinities with ideas and forms engaged by other artists working in Rome, including Carla Accardi, Mirko Basaldella, Lee Bontecou, Alberto Burri, Piero Dorazio, Bruno Munari, and Beverly Pepper. In the context of "Cold War cosmopolitanism," Falkenstein's work offers new insight into the hybrid forms generated by transnational artistic identity.

## **«When everything began». Il primo soggiorno di Barbara Chase-Riboud a Roma (1957-1958) | Biancalucia Maglione (Siena) – This lecture will take place in Italian**

Biancalucia Maglione is Research Fellow at the University for Foreigners, Siena, where she works on the reception of non-European arts and cultures in Italy (1945-2000). In 2023 she received her PhD in Art History from the University of Florence; her dissertation focuses on Italian collector Carlo Frua De Angeli (1885-1969) within the context of international art market between 1920 and 1960. In 2017 Maglione obtained a MA (cum laude) in Modern and Contemporary Art History at the University of Pisa, with a dissertation on the Italian painter Osvaldo Licini (1894-1958), and a BA (cum laude) with a thesis on the Italian contemporary artist Loris Cecchini (published in 2017: Loris Cecchini. Testing effects, dancing reactions, Pacini Editore). In 2021 she was Research Fellow at the Center for Italian Modern Art, NYC. Her recent publications include essays on sculpture, Surrealism and the inter-war Italian art. Maglione is currently working on a book about the American sculptress Mary Callery (Editions FAGE – Fondation Giacometti, Paris).

### **Abstract**

For Barbara Chase-Riboud, a sculptor born in Philadelphia in 1939, the inclination to travel has always been an essential element, almost a necessity: “the need to define, explore, and encounter those I have never dreamed existed”. At just eighteen years old, thanks to the contribution of the John Hay Whitney Foundation Fellowship, she spent a year at the American Academy in Rome, “when everything began”, as the artist herself stated. It was indeed in Rome that Chase-Riboud began her career in earnest, exhibiting in both solo and group shows and defining her creative language. In the capital, the artist created her first bronze sculpture, thanks to the support and collaboration with local foundries, and began to dedicate herself increasingly exclusively to abstract production. It is also from Rome that, at the end of 1957, the sculptor embarked on a trip to Egypt, which exposed her, for the first time and with fruitful consequences, to non-Western art.

The aim of my paper is to thoroughly investigate that ‘Roman’ year, crucial for the sculptor’s formation, by systematically analyzing the contacts she established in the capital, the first exhibitions she took part in (at the Festival dei Due Mondi in Spoleto, at the Galleria l’Obelisco, and at the American Academy itself) to better contextualize the significance that the Roman experience—often cited almost anecdotally—had on her creative and artistic journey.

## **Behjat Sadr: An Iranian in Rome | Pia Gottschaller (Courtauld)**

Pia Gottschaller is a Reader at The Courtauld, London, where she teaches across art history, conservation and curatorial programmes. Prior appointments include Senior Research Specialist at The Getty, Los Angeles, Paintings Conservator at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and Associate Curator at Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich. Pia is the recipient of a number of research grants and scholarships, most recently from the Getty Foundation (2021). Her publications on artists and movements of the postwar and contemporary period focus on artistic practice.

### **Abstract**

Behjat Sadr (1924-2009) was a pioneer of non-geometric abstraction who moved peripatetically between her home country, Iran, and Italy and France, in a life punctuated by the upheavals of the student protests of 1968 and the Iranian Revolution of 1978. My talk will focus on Sadr’s four formative years at the fine arts academies of Rome and Naples, where she studied with an Italian government grant between 1955 and 1958. The years in Rome impacted Sadr’s future artistic path in crucial ways: in 1956 she began to show at Il Pincio and La Bussola galleries, was awarded the San Vito Romano prize, and



participated in the Venice Biennale; she also met and married her second husband, Iranian composer Morteza Hannaneh. The critical, historical and material framework within which I will situate Sadr's Italian paintings, which are formally indebted to Informel, centres around a momentous process-based discovery in 1955, when a long piece of string she had held fell to the mosaic floor of her room, collecting in "tangled lines with expressive curves." Subsequently, Sadr said, she replaced her paint tubes "with large paint containers used in the construction industry. I also bought large palette knives and scrapers. I would spread my canvases on the floor [and] stopped using an easel." This Pollock-inspired approach changed how she related to her own body, in a society that disadvantaged her due to her gender and nationality, and informed the work she became best known for in the 1960s: black 'oil-slick' like paint shaped with wood-graining tools on aluminium panels.

### ***Abstract art in transit: immigrant artist Maria Bonomi between Brazil and Italy in the 1950s | Ana Avelar (Brasilia) and Renata Rocco (Palácio do Governo do Estado de São Paulo)***

Ana Avelar is a professor of Theory, Criticism and History of Art at the University of Brasília. She has held exhibitions in various institutional spaces and participates in juries and commissions in the area. In 2019, she was selected by the Exchange of Curators, promoted by the Latitude project, of the Brazilian Association of Contemporary Art-ABACT in partnership with the Getty Research Institute, USA. She writes regularly about abstract art produced in Brazil in the second post-war period and currently.

Renata Rocco obtained her postdoctoral at the Museum of Contemporary Art at the University of São Paulo - MAC USP (2023), has a master's degree (2013) and a doctorate (2018) from the Interunit Postgraduate Program in Aesthetics and History of Art at USP holding grants in all stages. She was a collaborating professor at the same museum (2021-2022) and participated in the curatorial team of the exhibitions: "Projetos para um Cotidiano Moderno no Brasil, 1920- 1960" (2021-2022), "Art Déco Brasileiro. Donation Fulvia and Adolpho Leirner" (2022-2023) and "4 in 1 - USP museums" (2023-2024). She is the author of articles and book chapters published on modern art in Brazil and Italy on the first editions of the São Paulo Biennial.

#### **Abstract**

Born in 1935 in Meina and settled in São Paulo during World War II, Maria Bonomi has a central role in contemporary Brazilian art. In 1952, she returned to her homeland, studied with Enrico Prampolini in Rome and worked with him on a set design project. Their professional relationship continued over the years through correspondence discussing art and its concepts. At that time, Bonomi visited exhibitions and artists such as Marino Marini, Alberto Magnelli and Mario Sironi. She met Emilio Vedova in São Paulo, in 1954, thanks to a grant he received at the São Paulo Biennial. Years later, Bonomi studied and collaborated with him in Venice, and together, they travelled around Europe, visiting museums and art galleries. According to Bonomi, with Prampolini she became interested in polymeric work, whereas with Vedova, she came into contact with his "free stroke, the explosion of gesture and the explosion of paint". Both lessons are evident in the artist's work. Thus, our proposal is to explore Bonomi's body of work and its circulation in Rome, Milan, Venice and São Paulo, in the the 1950s. We will discuss her contacts with Italian artists and how they appear in her pioneering and experimental abstract production, developed in the Brazilian art scene from the mid-20th century onwards. To this end, we will use, as theoretical foundations, feminist studies by South-African theorist Griselda Pollock and Brazilian curator Sheila Leirner, whose ideas help to understand Bonomi's unprecedented place in the Brazilian abstract art scene, and, at the same time, provides a transnational view of similar cases.

### ***Gencay's Italian Chapter: A Passage of Becoming | Ahu Antmen (Sabanci)***

Dr. Ahu Antmen is a professor of modern and contemporary art at Sabanci University Faculty of Arts and

Social Sciences in Istanbul. Her research is based on issues of modernity, identity and gender in modern and contemporary Turkish art. Her publications include *20. Yüzyıl Batı Sanatında Akımlar* [Trends in 20th Century Western Art]; *Kimlikli Bedenler: Sanat, Kimlik, Cinsiyet* [Bodies with Identities: Art, Identity, Gender]; *Memory of Time: The Life and Art of Ali Teoman Germaner*; *İçerdeki Yabancı: Hale Tenger* [Stranger Within: Hale Tenger]; and the edited volume *Sanat/Cinsiyet: Sanat Tarihi ve Feminist Eleştiri* [Art/Gender: Art History and Feminist Critique]. She has contributed to various international publications, including *Mapping Impressionist Painting in a Global Context*; *Globalising Impressionism: Reception, Translation, and Transnationalism*; *Curatorial Challenges: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Contemporary Curating*; *Unleashed: Contemporary Art from Turkey*; and *Beyond Imagined Uniqueness: Nationalisms in Contemporary Perspective*. Her curatorial work includes *Nur Koçak: Our Blissful Souvenirs at Salt* (2019); *Bare, Naked, Nude: A Story of Modernity in Turkish Painting at the Pera Museum* (2015); *Second Eye: Women Photographers from Turkey at Sismanoglu Megaro* (2013), and *Turkish Painting from the Tanzimat Era to the Republic* (2012) at the Sabancı Museum, Istanbul.

### Abstract

This paper focuses on the Turkish artist Gencay Kasapçı (1933-2017) whose formative years were spent in Italy during the years 1959-1966. In these years, she studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence on an Italian state scholarship, then moved to Rome and became an active member of a transnational group of avantgarde artists. During her years in Italy, she participated in various exhibitions and received prizes at the International Premio Gubbio painting and drawing competitions, and worked as an illustrator for Mondadori and Vallecchi publications. Her work was shown in Venice at the Il Cavallino Gallery, in Milan at the Cadario Gallery, and in Rome, at the "Zero Avantgarde" exhibition in 1966 at Il Segno Gallery alongside Abe Nobuya, her teacher, and Alberto Burri, Lucio Fontana, Günter Uecker, Piero Manzoni, Otto Piene and others.

The primary aim of this paper is to trace Gencay Kasapçı's presence within a transnational network of artists that was active in Rome in the 1960s, and how her travel to Italy after her education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul transformed her practice. This experience changed her understanding of art and her practice immensely, but so did her return to Turkey; hence Gencay's work of different periods reveals how local and/or transnational environments can effect artistic production. In this framework, how a young Turkish woman artist in the 1960s played a role within European avantgarde circles, and how the artistic milieu of the Italian avantgarde reflected upon her work are obvious questions to consider, as well as her contribution to the abstract art of the era as a woman artist. Gencay's work is also interesting because it encapsulates not only issues of gender but of culture: Coming from a place where abstraction and abstract symbolism carry historical weight, her work opens questions in relation to Western/non-Western interpretations of languages of abstraction, as well as issues regarding the use of alternative materials for painting, such as beads for example, and the deliberate confrontation of hierarchical divisions of art and craft.

### ***Carla Accardi and the Moroccan art scene: 1972-1975 | Maud Houssais***

Maud Houssais is an independent researcher and curator based in Rabat, Morocco. Her research focuses on questions related to the making of the city by artists during the 1960s and 1970s. She is particularly interested in the emergence of a visual culture applied to the city, collectively supported by an artistic community of visual artists, designers, architects, filmmakers and writers.

She is currently co-editing a forthcoming book on the Casablanca School of Fine Arts under the direction of Farid Belkahia, published by Zaman Books & Curating (to be published in 2025). In 2024, she is curator associated to the exhibition *The Casablanca Art School. Platforms and Patterns for a Postcolonial Avant-Garde 1962-1987*, presented at the Sharjah Art Foundation and the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt. In 2018, she is assistant curator of *bauhaus imaginista*, an art and research program exhibited among

other venues to SESC Pompei, Sao Paulo (2018), and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2019).

## Abstract

This research is part of a more general Mediterranean cultural history. The work and the person of Carla Accardi constitute a case study of transnational artistic networks between Italy and Morocco, in the specific political and cultural context of the 70s. This period saw the emergence of an artistic and societal upheaval, with abstraction as both an aesthetic and political language. In this respect, Carla Accardi embodies a Mediterranean feminism and is a key figure in an artistic network established between Rome and Morocco.

It's no coincidence that Carla Accardi comes to Morocco from Rome. Indeed, the Italian capital is home to a network of Moroccan artists who have come to study at European art schools, notably the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome. Several of these artists, such as Mohamed Melehi and Mohammed Chabâa, gravitated around and exhibited at the Trastevere gallery, created and founded by Topazia Alliatta, which brought together the Roman and international art scene of the time. Another up-and-coming gallery owner from Morocco, Pauline de Mazières, came to Rome in the late 1960s to draw inspiration from the city's artistic ferment. Pauline de Mazières had not yet opened *l'Atelier*, but the idea of opening an art gallery was ripe in her particularly after meeting Carla Accardi in Rome in 1969 at the Trastevere gallery, where the artist promised an exhibition at *l'Atelier*.

Two years later, in 1971, Pauline de Mazières opened the *l'Atelier* gallery, where Carla Accardi presented her recent work on rhodoid in 1972. This first visit foreshadowed many other artistic exchanges to come, which had a decisive impact on Carla Accardi's life and work, not only because the encounter with the Moroccan cultural sphere opened a new perspective to Accardi's research on signs in relation to the Hurufiyya (lettrism) movement, but also because of her involvement in artistic debates on the function of art. In this respect, the wood panel created at the Hotel Tarik, Tangier, in 1975, is of particular interest to us, as it constitutes a fundamental vector between art and the public space.