

Versione italiana

The chessplayer reveals his inner melancholy. Towards the end of 1912 Marcel Duchamp stopped being a painter to become an artist. The independence of solitude, together with the vast potential of thought, would transform pictorial action into visual elaboration. Everyday objects would change their identity through the metamorphosis of a conceptual title that simultaneously raised them to the status of ready-mades. Thenceforth his untrammelled and independent explorations would be aimed at overturning conventions and would lead him to knock art from its traditional pedestal, declaring that it should not be a purpose in life, but merely a means of expression.

Pier Luigi Olivi has now taken things a daring step further, creating ready-mades of ready-mades, consciously dismantling the simulacrum and making it an artefact within the reach of all. In this procedure there is none the less no eclipsing of the demiurgic notion of the creative act, in so far as even here while the object remains available to anyone, it is the artist who proposes and achieves its transformation into a work of art.

Pier Luigi Olivi marks out a clear boundary that he establishes in a reworking of the image and consequently in the redefinition of the title appropriate to it, or inappropriate in a different way. Halfway between the philosophical and the ironic, Olivi proposes a personal *modus operandi* that places the object in a conceptual system within which he explores the interpenetration of contraries: is this art or simply what we imagine art should be? Working towards the revelation of a new code that enables a different framework of seeing.

In this context, Pier Luigi Olivi has set himself the task of triggering every vibration, as often as not imperceptible, that dwells within each of us. The cerebral tension, the gestural intelligence that delves into our passions, leads the artist to locate a point of view on the boundary between the image and its antithesis. The titles – seemingly nonsensical – highlight the absolute radicality of the transformation in itself. The ‘open-endedness’ of his titling manages to transcend the material of the work; the ineffable fascination of the word, that breath that sometimes gets lost in the mysterious and resonant labyrinth of memory is the very essence of an order of composition rooted in the *logos*: in the give-and-take of the relationship between what we see and what we think we see.

Ceci n'est pas un ready-made, is naturally ironic play, but at the same time adopts the same negation that René Magritte formulates in the work: *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, where the object is both undermined and undermining at the same time, so that its function depends first of all from an action and consequently from the reaction that this will provoke in the visitor.



Moveable Still-Life.

The Magician plays instead with a re-elaboration of Duchamp's *Rose Sélavy* (no doubt the surname was an ironic nod to the French phrase *C'est la vie* and this becomes Pier Luigi Olivi's countermove in presenting himself to the art world in borrowed clothes, which nonetheless reveal - beyond the ludic provocation - an urge to conceal himself behind the mirror of an illusory personality.

The interplay of identity and otherness we find again in *Fleeting Self Portrait*, with mirrors facing both outwards in the gallery window for passers-by and inwards within, so that visitors are reflected and become themselves images of a contemporary Narcissus. Here, Olivi, investigates the figure of the Other, the stranger, and the self-portrait becomes a visible fragment of shared otherness, but as often or not the mirror is illusory.

Every title belongs to the sphere of the word and demands to be uttered with simplicity and conviction: it is *verbum*, and therefore signpost: it is a variable, a turning point, and must be purged of any attempt at ornamentation or playful allegorical pathos, of any digression or careless distraction; only thus can it fulfil its purpose.

But things are rarely as they seem, and the dual identity of the artist/Platonic demiurge effects a disruption in the work: it is true that a urinal is a urinal and that its primary function remains that; but its deciphering will result, through conceptual intervention, in calling it *Fountain*. The slanting

reference to *Fountain* in Pier Luigi Olivi's work, on the other hand, starts further back, as far indeed as Brueghel the Elder and his 1558 painting 'Whatever I do is in vain. I piss at the moon', in which a little man in a heavy overcoat (a bourgeois Fleming, perhaps) is depicted pissing at the moon. In his reworking, Olivi takes the figure of the little man and multiplies him, flaunting a series of national flags, in a work entitled: *All the poets of the World*.

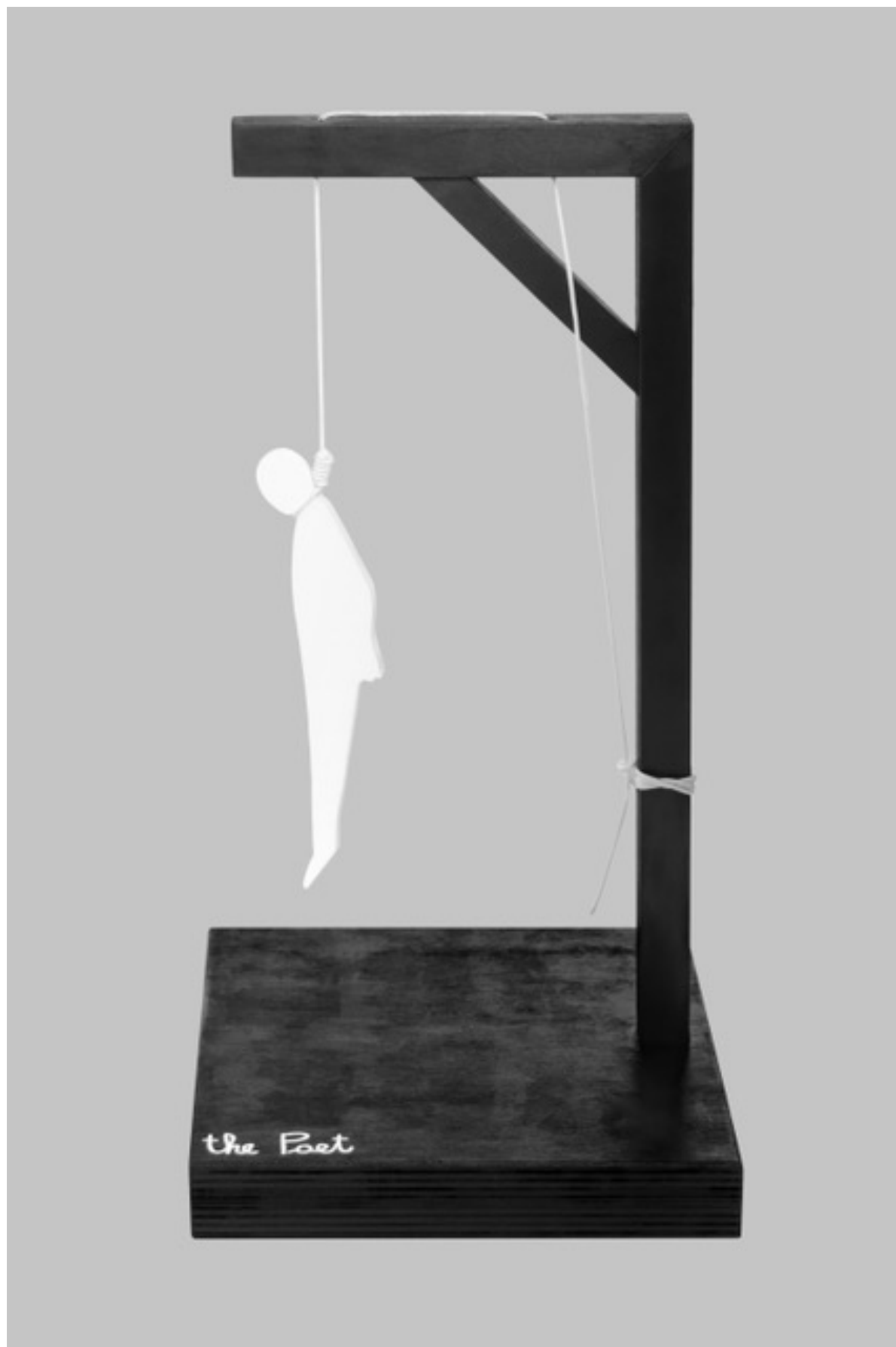


All the poets of the World.

Here, the artist visits a violent and illicit displacement on Brueghel's original painting, but this serves to trigger the visitor's curiosity and imagination and to stimulate a process of investigation that must go well beyond the visible, the title serving to shake our certainties and determine the direction of thought. The keynote of Olivi's entire oeuvre is certainly an undercurrent of mimesis; there is a persistent search to modify or reread, not without irony, some of the great changes undergone and induced by art in the last century - first engaging with American Pop Art and now with the revolution brought about from 1912 by Marcel Duchamp.

Of course, the chessboard is par excellence the arena of strategies and guile - the players' most skilful moves are often deceptive - but Olivi's work also owes a debt to Dadaism, in his wanting to go beyond the limit, that going-beyond confirming that there is always a different way of seeing things, perhaps dictated by chance, or by an unpredictable ordering, and he consistently opts for the most immediate means of de-contextualising and rendering the more surprising a different angle of vision.

Art, as Olivi intends it, is a continuous metamorphosis of itself, and the essence of his work is that this metamorphosis is always under constant observation: at first glance, his works might almost seem static, yet each time we look at them they seem different. Their *nonchalance* lies in the beguilement of imagination, the richness of whimsy and the indefinite play of suggestions they provoke.



The Poet.

The artist in general is almost by definition a melancholic figure, and as such possesses the imagination and intelligence typical of melancholics, who tend to be able to simultaneously accommodate in their mindsets both the swiftness of the future and the nostalgia of the past. Even the most illusory of realities is never enough, the artist always needs to create another one, a parallel existence inhabited by the giddiness of doubt.

Pier Luigi Olivi

The name of the galaxy

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