



PRESS RELEASE

Carta Bianca *Capodimonte Imaginaire*

From an idea of Sylvain Bellenger and Andrea Viliani
12 December 2017 – 17 June 2018

Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte
via Miano 2, Naples

The *Carta Bianca* exhibition is the brainchild of Sylvain Bellenger, Director of the Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, and Andrea Villiani, Director of the Madre Museum in Naples. The Exhibition is organized with the Electa Publishing House. *Carta Bianca* is a unique exhibition in Italy, as well as the history of museums, because it has given full freedom, or “carte blanche” to ten international personalities involved in different fields of knowledge to reinterpret in key, personal ways, the wonderful collection of Capodimonte. These personalities have chosen around ten works from the Capodimonte’s collection of nearly 47,000 artworks. They each then curated their works in their own room within the exhibition.

Each “curator” thus gives a subjective but public reading of the museum and its collections, with the only constraint being that they must explain their choices. Video interviews and other multimedia content is available via the App designed by the company Arm23 (see the *Carta Bianca* App).

The themes and cultural motivations of the curators open a reflection on how the museum can be a 21st century institution: A museum of imagination, freedom, participation, and creativity.

These are the “curators” who accepted the challenge proposed by the Capodimonte:

Laura Bossi Régnier, Neurologist and Historian of Science

Giuliana Bruno, Professor of Visual and Environmental Studies, Harvard University

Gianfranco D’Amato, Industrialist and Collector

Marc Fumaroli, Historian and Essayist, Member of the Académie française

Riccardo Muti, Music Director

Mariella Pandolfi, Professor of Anthropology, Université de Montréal

Giulio Paolini, Artist

Paolo Pejrone, Architect and Landscape Architect

Vittorio Sgarbi, Critic and Art Collector, Writer, Lecturer

Francesco Vezzoli, Artist

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The ethical, aesthetic and methodological prologue of this exhibition begins with the initial room dedicated to Joseph Beuys, where one of his works from 1981 is presented (*Alcune richieste e domande sul Palazzo nella testa umana*). Documentation of the artist's solo exhibition entitled Palazzo Regale (including the original artwork) is also present in this gallery, made in pencil on newspaper, that was held at Capodimonte from 23 December 1985 – 30 March 1986.

This prologue strikes to reaffirm the legitimacy of free individual choice, including the right to expression, judgment, curiosity, fantastic invention the foundations of subjective tastes and inclinations. These aspects are placed in a dialogue within civilization, with respect to others. So if this is a Palazzo Regale, in reference to the title of Beuys' exhibition, then it belongs to the moral conscience and cultural awareness of every woman and man...the only queens and kings of today of this Palace and Museum.

ROOMS AND THEMES

The first room curated by **Vittorio Sgarbi** expresses how his art historical biography intertwines with the Capodimonte collection. He describes his approach as neither historical nor rhapsodic. It is interested, presumptuous, vain, among the great masterpieces of the Museum (Lotto, Parmigianino, Guido Reni...). These works have all in their own way informed his training and personal collection.

Marc Fumaroli focuses on a selection of 17th century Neapolitan works, and reflects upon the dualism of misery and poverty, of the aristocratic and popular. The comparison is between the paintings of Bernardo Cavallino and Massimo Stanzione - whose works are elegant, refined, and aristocratic – and Jusepe Ribera, whose works are 'popular' and expressed a modern interpretation of realism in a Caravaggesque mode.

Paolo Pejrone focuses his gaze on landscapes and views, starting from the theme of shadow and woods. For his room, the architect asked to open a 'gap' in a wall that hides a window. The carved frame and the size of the canvas represents a natural outlet to see one of the Museum's greatest masterpieces from the room: the Real Bosco or Royal Wood.

The choices of **Gianfranco D'Amato**, perhaps among the most intimate, are inspired by the emotional sphere: pleasure and love, hatred and violence, and the importance of culture and knowledge. The collector cites these values by combining ancient and contemporary art (Carlo Alfano, Louise Bourgeois, Mimmo Jodice), thus confirming its universality.

The Monkey and Humankind is the theme of **Laura Bossi Régnier's** room, which returns to the "question that philosophers have pondered for centuries: what makes us human? How do we define man in respect to animals? Close, yet at the same time infinitely distant, the monkey offers us the mirror of our animality." The Capodimonte's collections offer numerous iconographic opportunities, from different eras and styles, to explore the relationship between man and animal. This includes some 18th century representations of primates, disguised and content amidst their own human activities. Examples include paintings by Agostino Carracci and Paolo de Matteis, Giovanni Stradano's engraving entitled *Caccia alla scimmia*, and numerous examples of decorative art.

With the occasion of this exhibition, **Giulio Paolini** creates an ad hoc work that ideally encloses all the works of the Capodimonte's collection. "I therefore voluntarily abstained from choosing those works, numerous and excellent, which could suggest many unpredictable 'dialogues' between them." That is, I have observed a painful renunciation of the staging of that 'personal museum' that I was allowed to create, instead favoring a theoretical point of view: to formulate an absolute, even if it is an unfounded and unsustainable synthesis of the idea of art.

Giuliana Bruno's room reproduces the personal experience of a curator in creating a narrative from the artworks in storage at the museum, inaccessible to the public. She rediscovers, like an archaeologist of the emotional knowledge, works related to Naples, to the 'baroque' taste, as well as everyday objects including food and pottery (intact and in fragments of majolica). These works and objects have been selected with particular attention to the materials of construction, the compositions of their surfaces and the state of conservation.

Mariella Pandolfi reflects on the dimension of temporality as dissonance, and the indefinite time of an event as defined by Gilles Deleuze. The anthropologist chooses four works – scenes of of struggle or amorous tension, which tell other stories besides that of the linear time of history or myth – stories that belong to an indefinite time of the event that even escapes the event itself. Objects presented include the enormous tapestry of the *Battle of Pavia*, the *Massacre of the Innocents* by Matteo Di Giovanni, the *Persues and*

Medusa by Luca Giordano, and the *Rinaldo and Armida* by Annibale Carracci. At the center of the room is a collection of weapons, armor, swords, knives and arquebuses, creating a disorderly composition evoking dissonance and discontinuity.

Riccardo Muti chooses only one work for his gallery, Masaccio's *Crucifixion*, set up in a dark room with a chair inviting contemplation. For a long time, the small painting, among the marvelous works of the museum, struck Muti to the extent that he had to seek out the reasons for his 'attraction' to the tormented history of the painting, with non-expert eyes nurturing a profound passion for all forms of art. Here, Riccardo Muti gives us an impassioned interpretation of the Magdalene: "The figure that is most dismayed is the irruption of the Magdalene. It really seems that in the static nature of the Madonna, St. John, and the collapsed body of Christ, that the Magdalene enters furiously, or even imperiously, into the painting. She seems to belong to a world completely different from the world of love and passion, even in a certain way physical passion, because first of all the colors that Masaccio invested the Magdalene with are in strong contrast with the other two figures, and with Christ himself. The Magdalene has a fiery red mantle and is unusually blond with unfettered hair. She seems to come from the world of passion, towards Christ, towards God, towards man. And she does so with arms completely open as if to embrace the dying Christ."

Finally, **Francesco Vezzoli** traces a path in line with his recent works on sculpture. Ten couples of busts (from different periods and materials) face each other in a corridor establishing dialogues based on the intersections of their glances, in a game of impossible encounters. A plaster by Canova of Napoleon's mother opens the room, with an *Apollo and Marsyas* by Luca Giordano. A self-portrait of Vezzoli closes the arrangement, like Apollo who killed the satyr Marsyas. This sculptural group was inspired by the ancient myth but ironically subverts the philology, in its use of materials, like in a scenic composition.

The themes of the 10 rooms – their oscillation and determination for the passion of collecting – shapes this "liberated" experience of the museum, revealing its interpretive potential and evoking the possibility of multiple narratives. Bringing out many points of view, *Carta Bianca* recognizes and showcases what happens with viewers in the galleries everyday in the museum: a personal appropriation of heritage, objects, values, and common stories.

Through various perspectives and multiple gazes projected onto the collection, the project took the form of a polyphonic exhibition that questions the theme of museum organization and classification. At the same time it calls into question the exclusive confinement of the work within the territory of art criticism.

Opening 'hierarchies' and breaking down museum barriers, giving voice to other disciplines and skills, all have 'imposed' a reconsideration of the relationships between the works of the collection – international masterpieces presented in unpublished dialogues – and in the future, of the logic of exposition within the 126 galleries at Capodimonte. The Baroque galleries, on occasion of *Carta Bianca*, have been reimagined and reinstalled.

Carta Bianca reports on the museum and its meaning today, as well as its history, with a particular focus on its evolution in new directions. In this sense, as Sylvain Bellenger and Andrea Villiani write, the project is in a line of continuity with other 20th century reflections by curators, artists, and writers. André Malraux's *Museum Without Walls*, Marcel Duchamp's *Miniature Museum* with his *Boîte-en-valise*, the *Musée d'Art Moderne*, Département des Aigles of Marcel Broodthare, the *Museum Garden* of Daniel Spoerri with his collection of eternal becoming, the *Museum of Obsessions* by Harald Szeeman, of the *Museum of Innocence* by Orhan Pamuk, are all examples.

Imaginary museums, museums in suitcases, sentimental museums, obsession museums, and finally, subjective museums.

THE APP, THE ELEVENTH CURATOR AND THE CATALOG

The curators explain their choices in video interviews, accessible via your smartphone through the Carta Bianca App, conceived by Arm23. The App is a digital extension of the exhibition experience. You can save contents and review them at home.

Finally, the exhibition includes the active and direct involvement of the public: The 'Eleventh Curator' of *Carta Bianca*. Each visitor can imagine his own exhibition hall, photographing ten works from the Capodimonte's collection, in order to participate in the #LamiaCartaBianca contest on the museum's social media. The best selection of works, judged by the 10 curators of Carta Bianca and chaired by Director Bellenger, will be set up in one of the museum's galleries.

The exhibition is also accompanied by a catalog that includes photos of the exhibition installation, ready for purchase upon the exhibition's opening, published by the Electa publishing house.

The exhibition was overseen by Lucio Turchetta.

The Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte would like to thank the Campania Region, Arm23, Erco srl, Amici di Capodimonte non-profit, and Feudi di San Gregorio.



DATA SHEET

TITLE

Carta Bianca
Capodimonte Imaginaire

LOCATION

Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte,
via Miano 2, Napoli

DATES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

12 dicembre 2017 – 17 giugno 2018

AN IDEA OF

Sylvain Bellenger e Andrea Viliani

CURATED BY:

Laura Bossi Régnier, Giuliana Bruno,
Gianfranco D'Amato, Marc Fumaroli,
Riccardo Muti, Mariella Pandolfi,
Giulio Paolini, Paolo Pejrone,
Vittorio Sgarbi, Francesco Vezzoli

PROMOTED BY

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Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte

IN COLLABORATION WITH

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per le arti contemporanee

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Carta Bianca Capodimonte Imaginaire

The Carta Bianca exhibition is conceived as a celebration of the contemporary museum, which is a complex, polysemic, and polyphonic space and time - where memory is organized and history is told. History is a permanent interpretation of many individual stories, reflecting the present, and acts on the future.

In an art museum, the leitmotif is the history of art. But art history can be written in many different ways. At Capodimonte, following the model put forth by the historian Francis Haskell, a vision of the collection was chosen that privileged collecting, where the work of art is linked to the territory and to chronology.

Writers such as André Malraux, Umberto Eco, and Orhan Pamuk; or artists like Marcel Duchamp and Marcel Broodthaers; or curators like Harald Szeemann – each in their own way, have tried to rethink the logic of the museum. Following their invitation, we decided to deepen the semantics of our gaze and open the collections to a diversity of experiences. This is why we have invited ten ideal visitors – intellectuals, artists, collectors and entrepreneurs...each one with their own independent universe of knowledge, interests, inclinations, sensibilities and training, some far from the museum universe – to tell us, following their gaze, another vision and history of the museum, art, and the world.

There are ten rooms in which each invited “curator” has had “carte blanche” to choose from one to ten works among the 47,000 that make up the collection of Capodimonte’s artworks and artifacts. They were able to conceive their gallery in absolute freedom, and give us their own interpretation of the proposed theme, with the sole obligation to argue their choice and the meaning of their room/exhibition. Each interpretation is then told in a video interview, accessible through an application that can be downloaded from your smartphone, scanning the photographs of the curators at the entrance to each room.

We invite you to look at the Capodimonte’s collections with the sensitive and varied gaze of our ten curators. We also invite you, as a sign of your great freedom and imagination, to propose on your museum website your own eleventh Carta Bianca room, choosing from one to ten works of art, from the entire collection. A work of art, when carefully contemplated, enters our mind, becomes part of ourselves - as happens with a gripping tale, and adds another life to our own.

You will discover, as the Carta Bianca Capodimonte Imaginaire reveals, that there are infinite ways of reading, looking, and imagining.

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THE EXHIBITION

Vittorio Sgarbi

My journey through the rooms of the Capodimonte is neither historical nor rhapsodic. It is interested, presumptuous, and vain. I cannot compete with the Farnese and the Bourbons, but fate has placed on my path, as a scholar and hunter, some fundamental pieces of Capodimonte's collections.

Marc Fumaroli

Many years ago, I spent a month during the summer in Ischia, and my neighbor and her son worked together at the Capodimonte. One day I said to them both: "My favorite Neapolitan painter is Bernardo Cavallino," and they both looked at me like I was a monster! To them, my taste was wretched; and naturally they preferred Ribera and the Neapolitan painters who had adopted this extremely forceful, even violent, popular style, which appeared to them to be the pictorial equivalent of Pasolini or modernism.

Paolo Pejrone

This room is the result of a day of walking through and choosing elements of the Capodimonte's collection. It was July and there was an oppressive heat – a profound heat. There was talk of the Royal Wood, not the Royal Park or the Royal Garden. The Royal Wood signifies a place of shadow and recollection. And it is for this reason that right in the middle of July, I have chosen to exhibit shadowy paintings - both shadowy and cool. The gardens of the Mediterranean must be shaded, cool areas, unlike the English, Dutch, or French, whose gardens are full of light and openings. For the Mediterranean, instead, they are enclosed and fresh. The choice was simple.

Gianfranco D'Amato

Each of the works I have put together summarizes some of the values and emotional spheres of life: maternal love, knowledge and culture, which are fundamental in life. Tragedies and pain, and the love chosen accompany [...] And the story of Naples, the city that I love most, and in which, even if my work takes me out of Italy, I chose to live.

Laura Bossi Régnier

In 2005, Nature magazine published the results of a chimpanzee's DNA analysis, which showed that humans share 98% of the genetic "coding" material with this extraordinary primate. Although in itself the finding does not mean much (we share 35% of our genome with certain flowers), it still poses the question that philosophers have posed for centuries: What makes us human? How do we define humankind in respect to animals? Proximal, but simultaneously distant, the monkey offers us the mirror of our animality.

Giulio Paolini

Select, reunite, separate, associate, set up...with what judgment (my "taste") could I ever put my hand to something inviolable, consecrated to the perennial, distant and perfect by definition.

I therefore voluntarily abstained from choosing those works, numerous and excellent, that could suggest many unpredictable "dialogues" among most of them. That is, I have observed a painful renunciation of the staging of that "personal museum" that I was allowed to realize, in favor of a theoretical point of view: to formulate an absolute, even if the synthesis of the idea of art is unfounded and unsustainable.

Giuliana Bruno

I imagined a journey linked to the history of the city, its baroque "taste," its everyday objects, including food and pottery, bringing to light works conserved in storage. I explored the storage facilities of the museum as if they were geological layers, or layers of time, putting me in the shoes of an archeologist careful to find even the works worn down by time, ruined or even shattered. Here then is the "plot" and the texture of forgotten or worn canvases, dusty frames, still lifes, memory as memento mori. Art to touch with the hand. Works of the past that speak to the present, asking for material contact in this virtual age. That is why I arranged the works in sequence in the space as if it were an installation of contemporary art. Enlivened by tapestries, the design of this exhibition invites the visitor to follow a narrative path, I would say almost cinematographic, through material surfaces.

Mariella Pandolfi

Like a child who impulsively casts aside or throws away his toys with capricious innocence, the artist produces continuity out of discontinuity, always implicating new worlds. In this reading of the works chosen for “Carta Bianca,” I was strongly inspired by a fragment of Heraclitus: “Aion, the temporality of human life is like a child moving pieces in a game. He alone holds sovereign power.”

Riccardo Muti

I always went to the museum (of Capodimonte) and was fascinated by the quantity and wealth of masterpieces there. One day after seeing many masterpieces, I happened in a dark room where a small picture was “shining” on the bottom, so will say for now. It could have gone unnoticed if it had not been put in this extraordinary situation where gold, blue, and red – incredible colors – shone on a completely dark, black wall. I was very struck by this work, and then passed on. Upon returning to the museum, I became interested again. I directly avoided all of the wonderful rooms, in order to go directly to that painting that had impressed me so much, having photographed it with my old mobile phone. I was enchanted, observing this incredible, unusual masterpiece.

Francesco Vezzoli

A parade of sculptures from different eras and styles all coming from the historic apartments, exhibition galleries, and museum storage: Works, eras, and styles that have never met, finally turn their gaze, recognizing themselves in a game of impossible couples introduced by an apprehensive mother.

THE CURATORS

Laura Bossi Régnier

Laura Bossi is a neurologist, essayist, and historian of science. Born and raised in Milan, she has been living and working in Paris for over thirty years. She has written numerous articles and books on epilepsy and neurodegenerative diseases. For the past fifteen years she has devoted herself to the history and philosophy of science, and in particular to the history of neurology and evolutionary biology of the 19th century. She has participated in numerous exhibitions on the subject of the relationship between art in science exhibited in Paris, Berlin, and Ottawa.

Giuliana Bruno

*A native of Naples, since 1990 she has been a professor of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard University, and is considered one of the most influential voices in the visual arts. In her research she explores the intersections between cinema, the visual arts, and architecture. She is involved in this international debate by demonstrating how the most significant way of analyzing cinema should not be limited to language, but should refer to the categories of art and architecture, given their emphasis on space. Her philosophical theory of emotional geography is an interpretive category that has spread throughout the world thanks to her book entitled *Atlas of Emotions: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film*. In it she considers many artistic practices from painting to photography, cinema to architecture, cartography to design, and fashion to advertising.*

Gianfranco D'Amato

A graduate in Economics from Naples, Gianfranco D'Amato is the head of the Seda International Packing Group with his brother Antonio. The company is a market leader in the world of packaging ice cream (gelato), food services, and confectionary, with twelve plants in Europe and America. His greatest passions are contemporary art and underwater photography.

Marc Fumaroli

*Marc Fumaroli was born in Marseilles on 10 June 1932 and is a member of the Académie Française. He is a historian, essayist, and French academic specializing in the 17th century. As a Professor at the Sorbonne, he was elected to the Académie on 2 March 1995, succeeding Eugène Ionesco. Presented by the poet Yves Bonnefoy and the historian Jean Delumeau in 1996, Fumaroli joined the Collège de France where he held the Chair of "Rhetoric and Society in Europe (16th – 17th centuries)." Since 1996 he has also been a Professor at Large at the University of Chicago with an appointment in the Romance Languages and Literature Department of the Committee on Social Thought. Marc Fumaroli considers Italy to be his second home. Most of his works have been translated into Italian for the Adelphi Editions, in particular: *Lo stato culturale*, 1993 (*The Cultural State*); *La scuola del silenzio*, 1995 (*School of Silence*); *Chateaubriand*, 2009; *L'età dell'eloquenza*, 2002 (*Age of Eloquence*); and *Parigi-New-York e ritorno*, 2011 (*Paris-New York and Back*) which is dedicated to contemporary art. Between 1996 and 2016 he was President of the *Société des Amis du Louvre* (*Society of the Friends of the Louvre*).*

Riccardo Muti

Born in Naples, where he attended Liceo Classico Vittorio Emanuele and studied piano under Vincenzo Vitale at the Conservatorio San Pietro a Majella, he moved to Milan where he received a diploma in Composition and Conducting. During his extraordinary career Riccardo Muti has directed many of the major Music Festivals and the most prestigious orchestras in the world, and was Director of Maggio Fiorentino, the Philharmonic Orchestra of London and the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as the Orchestra of the Teatro alla Scala of Milan and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, of which he has been Music Director since 2010. His attention to young talent led him to found the “Luigi Cherubini” Youth Orchestra in 2006 where he developed a project aimed at the rediscovery and enhancement of the musical, operatic, and sacred heritage of the Neapolitan 18th century. He holds many honorary degrees conferred by prestigious universities, and has received honors for his artistic and civil merit in Italy and all around the world.

Mariella Pandolfi

A graduate in Philosophy, studies in Psychology, Mariella Pandolfi obtained a doctorate in Anthropology from Paris, and exerts constant attention to interdisciplinary dialogue. She has introduced North American medical anthropology and French ethnopsychiatry to Italy. Since 1994 she has been a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Montreal, and for over twenty years she has collaborated with numerous Italian and European Universities, international organizations, and private foundations. Her research activity concentrates on post-communist regions, especially Albania, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Giulio Paolini

Genovese by birth, Giulio Paolini's adopted city is Turin. He is one of the leading exponents of conceptual art. His poetics focuses on issues that question the conception, manifestation, and vision of the work of art. After his initial investigations into the building blocks of painting, his attention turned to the nature of the exhibition, the consideration of the work as a catalog of its own possibilities, and on the figure of the author and his lack of contact with the work - pre-existing and transcending it. He has held innumerable exhibitions in galleries and museums around the world, establishing an old and constant relationship with Naples. Since 1969 he has also created scenes and costumes for theatrical performances, including the sets for two works by Richard Wagner at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples (2005, 2007). A graphic designer, he has always had a particular interest in the field of publishing and the written page, accompanying his artistic research with reflections told in books curated in the first person.

Paolo Pejrone

A graduate in Architecture from the Polytechnic University of Turin, Paolo Pejrone was a pupil of Russell Page, one of the greatest English landscape architects of the 20th century, and of Roberto Burle Marx in Rio de Janeiro. He is a founding member of the Italian Association of Landscape Architecture, and President of the Piedmontese Academy of the Garden. Since 1970 he has worked as a garden architect and, starting from the firm point that “plants are increasingly important in design,” he has designed some of the most beautiful gardens in the world. Pejrone has designed nearly eight hundred gardens for private individuals in Italy, France, Switzerland, Greece, England, Germany, Spain, and Belgium, as well as the Princedoms of Monaco, Austria, and Saudi Arabia.

Vittorio Sgarbi

A graduate and specialist in art history between Bologna and Florence, Vittorio Sgarbi undertook a brilliant research career in academia at the Universities of Bologna, Udine, and Perugia, where he still teaches. He also works in the peripheral administration of cultural heritage, where he was Inspector, Director, and Head of the Special Superintendency of Venice. He is a curator of important exhibitions and the author of fundamental monographs as well as more educational and popular texts. Sgarbi joins his activity as an art historian with his frequent TV appearances, making him one of the best-known commentators in Italy. He is also deeply engaged in politics as a Deputy of the Italian and European Parliament, and Undersecretary to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage. He has also been Mayor and Councilor for the cultural heritage of numerous Municipalities.

Francesco Vezzoli

Francesco Vezzoli was born in Brescia, and he lives and works in Milan. Trained at Central Saint Martin's School of Art in London, he is considered one of the greatest Italian artists of international renown. His artistic production ranges from serigraphs with inserts of embroidered pieces, short films, photographs, and extemporaneous live performances. More recently, his classical sculptures explore the power of contemporary popular culture. By closely emulating various media formats such as advertising and cinema, Vezzoli addresses continuing concerns regarding the fundamental ambiguity of truth, the seductive power of language, and the instability of the human person. Since 2001 he has participated in five editions of the Venice Biennale of Art and Architecture, and exhibitions of his work have been organized by many important museums in Italy and abroad.