



# TANZ AUF DEM VULKAN

## Tales from the Morra Greco Collection II

Candice Breitz | Adriano Costa | Lothar Hempel | Evan Holloway | Judith Hopf | Jonathan Horowitz  
Jim Lambie | Miltos Manetas | Win McCarthy | Ryan Mendoza | Helen Mirra | John Pilson | Henrik Plenge  
Jakobsen | Daniel Pflumm | Hannah Starkey | Simon Starling | Tim Rollins & K.O.S. | Hiroshi Sugito

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**Palazzo Caracciolo d'Avellino, Napoli**

**TANZ AUF DEM VULKAN** presents a selection of paintings, sculptures, installations, photographs and videos from the Morra Greco Collection. The works on show interrogate the legacy of modernism through a critical reading of art, society and individual life in late capitalism.

The title **TANZ AUF DEM VULKAN** refers to a 1938 German musical. Its title was inspired by a 1929 speech by the German foreign minister, Gustav Stresemann, who used the expression “danc(ing) on a volcano” to describe German society, back at the time in the midst of a turbulent change. The title was then used for a 1998 documentary film, *Berlin Techno Sex: Tanz auf dem Vulkan*, capturing Berlin’s techno gay scene, set within the musical subculture community, the world of clubbing, transgression and escape that characterised – more in general – the spirit of the early 2000s and the period after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

It was the time of a world nurtured by mass production, the first mobile phones, a growing wide-spread internet-use and the first post-human fantasies, all within the framework of a large, nascent, hyper-connected global village. It was the era of raves

and techno music, synthetic drugs and acetate tracksuits, threatened by the looming global AIDS crisis. It was also a time characterised by an increasing political activism, protests, and uprisings that contradicted the new, vast, and interconnected consumer society. Ultimately, it was the consolidating era of post-industrial capitalism where – in the aftermath of the great non-end of the world and the new millennium – it seemed as if time folded in on itself, repeating again and again.

**TANZ AUF DEM VULKAN**, therefore presents a look at international art from the early 2000s to the present day particularly emphasising the Morra Greco Collection’s bound to Central European and German art, as the exhibition’s title suggests. Part of the show also displays the projects carried out at Fondazione Morra Greco throughout its twenty year long activity, where several site-specific works were conceived specially for Palazzo Caracciolo di Avellino before its restoration in 2015.

These include **Judith Hopf’s** ceramics, realised in 2012, where the artist played with hallways’ scaffolding and support structures presenting them as fiction characters.

The temporary reinforcements were originally erected to secure the structurally unstable rooms, echoing the precariousness of Naples, which was struck by a violent earthquake in the 1980s. “Dancing on a volcano”, thus, symbolising the city of Naples and the tumultuous transition that defined the turn from one millennium to the next, embodying the precarious instability and perpetual work-in-progress that forever characterises the landscape of the city.

All the works on display somehow use symbols and icons that resonate with the spirit of modernity. It is through this postmodern language that this generation of artists came to problematise certain issues and concerns: from those related to form and artistic composition, such as **Evan Holloway’s** sculptural works or **Ryan Mendoza’s** painting; to others tackling the interstice between reality and fiction in consumer culture, as in **Jonathan Horowitz’s** collages; or the statute of the pictorial image in the digital world, as in the 1999 **POWERBOOK** series by **Miltos Manetas**, a painter, a pioneer of Post-Internet art and the founder of the cryptic movement “Neen”.

Some of the works on show thus represent the new universe of digital signs and codes that arose from the virtual realm, defining a distance of the online from the offline world. A tendency that finds a direct counterpart in **Helen Mirra's** meticulously crafted work in wool and wood, *Railroad Ties (Sleeper) IV* (2000). Something similar to the ironic, anti-modern reaction in the "poor" materials works of British artist **Simon Starling**.

Amidst the ruins of this self-confessed modernity are the pits left in the collective memory by pop culture, transfigured in the intimate one-take hummed by **Candice Breitz**, who films herself reflected in the windows of a train compartment on a journey in *Me Myself I*, 2001, from the title of a song by Joan Armatrading, or the installation *Garden Path Sentence*, 2021, by **Win McCarthy**, expressly adapted by the artist in occasion of *Tanz auf dem Vulkan*; a sort of portrait through personal objects, material culture, and the urban landscape elements that measure the perimeter of individual life.

All of this participate in outlining the more intimate and hidden dimension of the isolated individual in a global village, separated from the tumultuous world by the membrane of the personal sphere. An identity among many who is rendered anonymous behind a computer screen, connected, but isolated, as in a gigantic *Matrix*. Likewise, installed inside a display designed by architects **LAS RICAS**, **Jonathan Horowitz's** collages parade like a slideshow of images from the pages of lifestyle magazines like *LIFE* or appear like posters attached to the wardrobe doors of a small bedroom.

The separation between private and public, personal and collective blurs and fades; the symmetry of the grid that separates them is annihilated, as in the video *Above the Grid*, 2000 by **John Pilson** looping on the two televisions in the centre of the great hall on the second floor. Pilson's art evokes the idea of the office, the myth

of the city and that of the "wolves of Wall Street" in their suits and ties. Yet, his practice speaks out about a less quantifiable form of cognitive capitalism: an enormous machine of alienation that feeds our never-off-always-connected culture of estrangement.

It is this same sense of estrangement that is portrayed in the feminine universe of fashion magazines – such as in **Hannah Starkey's** glossy, stiffened poses – and which is part of another strand of the stereotyped image's reflection and use; this time however, it is a sense of estrangement enacted within the female sphere, a contamination between the languages of art, fashion and mainstream communication. Whilst a different discourse unites and distinguishes, at the same time, works by artists such as **Jim Lambie**, **Henrik Plenge Jakobsen**, **Daniel Pflumm**, **Tim Rollins & K.O.S. (Kids of Survival)**.

Both Henrik Plenge Jakobsen and Tim Rollins outline art within a relational and collaborative context, although in different ways. **Plenge Jakobsen** is historically embedded in Nicolas Bourriaud's "Relational aesthetics" theory. In 1996, Plenge Jakobsen participated in the exhibition *Traffic* at CAPC in Bordeaux, which set forth the momentum for relational art, from which he immediately distanced himself. While, **Tim Rollins & K.O.S.** is a collective that mainly operated in New York, formed from a collaboration between Rollins and a group of youths from the South Bronx, where they explored art as a form of collaboration and creativity as an agent of social change.

**Jim Lambie** and **Daniel Pflumm** reflect on art that starts from a premise of "community". However, the "community" from which their work takes its cue is more of an "escapist" and alternative community, that of subculture and music. The no-logo aesthetics and assumptions that dominate clubs and discos are integrated into Pflumm's works, such as those on show at the third floor of *Fondazione Morra*

*Greco*, which consist of light-boxes from major brands' logos, emptied from their titles and inscriptions. For example, on the *Panasonic* or *MasterCard* signs, only the empty, luminous silhouette remains in Pflumm's work. Somewhat similarly, the idea of music and celebration, community, intoxication and the psychedelic are recurring atmospheres in the work of Scottish artist **Jim Lambie**, which conceal an underground emptiness beneath the glittering façade.

The symbolic role of music and subcultures thus takes over to create transformative experiences that gives rise to narratives of mass community identity and social alternatives. Artists such as **Adriano Costa**, **Lothar Hempel** and – from another point of view – **Hiroshi Sugito** all do something similar. By subtracting the grandeur and other elements from everyday life, they redevelop modest objects or elements to reveal unexpected scenarios that magnify and make us reflect on the symbolic value attributed to art. Just like **Hiroshi Sugito's** series of paintings, which are created in a semi-abstract language and nourished by light and small gestural details that echo the elegance of traditional *Nihonga* painting. This series marks one of the most recent acquisitions by the *Morra Greco Collection* in a sign of continued growth towards a "contemporary" direction: capable of capturing the historic moment, but focused on directions and trajectories that remain partially overlooked.

Curated by Giulia Pollicita

The exhibition display located on the second floor of the building shows the exhibition, conceived as a kind of modified organism (Frank) that should shoot semantic stones (Stein). After an improbable relaxation zone in the adjacent rooms, one glimpses a giant and, above all, living bombshell.

'It is alive!' is, after all, the central caption of Mary Shelley's 1818 masterpiece.

Everything we see, the pieces that assemble the 'creature', amid Naples' body, was found on eBay, Subito, Facebook marketplace and around the city, pulled out of the homes of the individual owners of its surrounding fringes, knowing them one by one. This is why the giant overflows with humanity, as in tradition. Complex, compressed, and reassembled as in the Crispr techniques of today's genetics, in collaboration with the domestic intimacy of the city.

The monster encompasses all this and includes the works, a fundamental part of this transfiguration of the self and the we that each piece represents in different, subtle, and often intimate

ways.

The device - deliberately excessive - is the intermediary between house-road-disco that stages (as if it were also an unintentional tribute to certain sets of the local underground theatre of those years) the red thread of music and street culture.

An underlying thread, surprisingly present in a part of the Morra Greco collection, thus takes on a new energy and is immediately sucked into a gigantic, discombobulated extra-domestic display made of 'other' inhabited matter.

The clubbing of the 1990s and 2000s is overturned starting from its bowels. The wardrobe, the ample domestic wardrobe - a classic and domestic of those years - becomes the starting point: the preparation area, where the T-shirts to be chosen, the cargo and small, tight skirts, or the artfully ripped (and stitched, reassembled) jeans that precede leaving the house to go to the dance, the rehearsal of the rave armour in front of the mirror, the trans-formation.

The scraps of mirror-antenna and wardrobes that chase each

other through the rooms are the extroversion of these altered states reflected on the walls of the architectures of the night, theatre of many an extra-volatile one-night stand. A sweaty, transparent plexiglass screen tries to fix an image of this transformation of bodies and works.

Inside the grand halls of the institution appears - or perhaps reappears - a little lounge of those clubs reminding us of some defunct New York or Berlin spaces most likely well-known to some of the artists in the exhibition. Small places of stoned out-of-doors are necessary to revive oneself. The momentary re-entry of the subject to get up and become the collective body of raving again. The screaming, the joy, the temporary embrace of the evening and then the obscene night, to then return home where 'Everything is Wrong'. For this 'is alive'.

LAS RICAS