

ITALIAN NEO-AVANT-GARDE

INTERMEDIAL VISUAL ARTS

CHINA

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RESEARCH INTERESTS: Intermediality in Visual Arts, Political aesthetics, Italian and European avant-garde movements, Italian counterculture

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Intermediality can refer to the integration of different art forms, such as poetry and painting, video and performance, it can also refer to the collage of different material media, such as paper, stone, screen printing, etc. It also includes other meanings such as the perception of time and space media. After the 1960s, artists have increasingly tended to break the boundaries of traditional art categories and create a state of "between media" works, making the audience feel that art is not only a display of form, but also the tension between mediums and perceptual experience.



Poor Art Sculpture, Mario Ceroli, the Great China, 1968

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Italian society from the 1960s to the 1980s was in a state of high tension and drastic changes. Left-wing intellectuals and student groups became the vanguard of change. Their criticism of the capitalist system, reflect on colonialism and the Cold War, and support for the "Third World Liberation Movement" radicalised the student movement since 1968. In this context, art became a field for social voice and a medium for ideological struggle. The student movement was full of experimental images, posters, poetry, and street performance art, and art exhibition spaces began to incorporate political critical discourse. Artists were both inspired and faced difficulties in the left-wing cultural climate: they had to constantly find new ways of expression between formal innovation and political loyalty, between self-disciplined aesthetics and mass mobilisation.



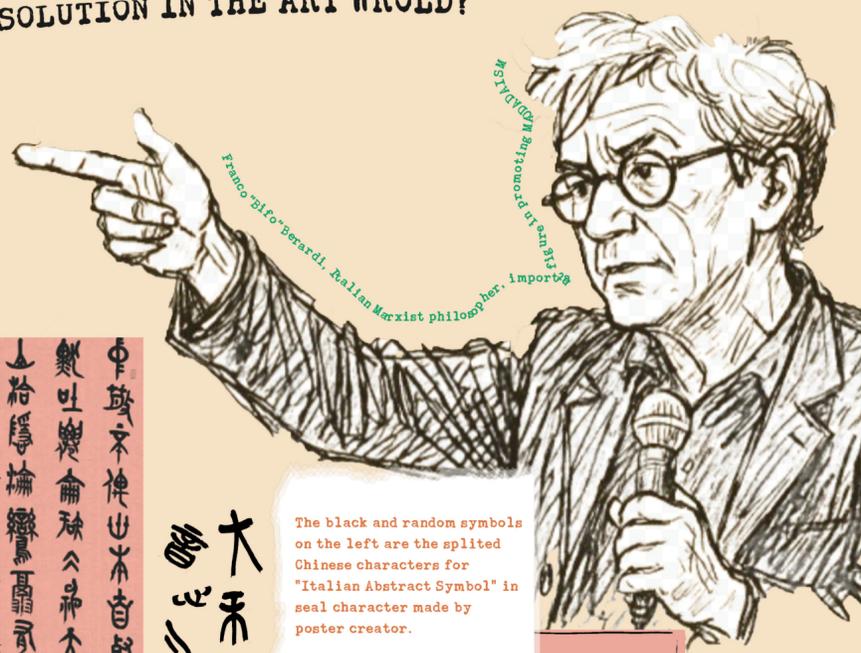
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Gruppo 63,
 Gruppo 70,
 Gruppo N,
 Gruppo T,
 Scuola di Piazza del Popolo
 Gruppo Forma 1,
 Radical Design,
 Poor Art



"CAN MAODADAISM BE A NEW RESOLUTION IN THE ART WROLD?"

"I BET IT CAN."



The black and random symbols on the left are the splited Chinese characters for "Italian Abstract Symbol" in seal character made by poster creator.

Seemingly unrelated artistic practices show unexpected parallels in terms of formal structure, media fusion, and even the imagery of writing. Beyond Maoism, is this similarity just an accidental resonance? Or does it reflect the convergence of a deeper cultural structure?



Selected works from Giuseppe Capogrossi, compared with Chinese Seal Characters, public domain images, via Wikimedia Commons

Why did Italian neo-avant-garde visual artists adopt an intermedial strategy to respond social and political issues?

"NOT SURE ABOUT IT, BUT WE ARE DOING IT."



Made in Italy, inspired by China?

School of The People's Square (Scuola di Piazza del Popolo) is an Italian Pop Art group in the 1960s, and it is also an important case in my research. Members of this group, such as Franco Angeli and Mario Schifano, come from left-wing circles. They also have close ties with left-wing cultural thinkers such as Alberto Moravia, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Emilio Villa, and etc. Some scholars argue that their artistic practice is based on American Pop Art, but its essence is closer to a kind of "Italian style reportage", which records and comments on traditional Italian culture through intermedial techniques. They want modernity, and their works present exactly a perception and reproduction of the anxieties of Italian modernity.

But there is something that has been left out in the discussion, which is the absorption of Maoist visual language and the romanticisation of Mao's ideas. Therefore, my research is to understand where the acceptance of Maoism came from, and why these neo-avant-garde art groups displayed this characteristic.

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