



44 Jeune fille Guanai

Guanita, Capitaine Mor  
Des Guanais.

# MOUSSE

tion and geometric painting; thus in the gallery/cooperative of his ex-students, figures coexisted like Allan Kaprow, George Segal and Richard Stankiewicz, who were shifting radically towards assemblage, as well as others like Jane Wilson and Wolf Kahn, who Bonnardianly painted portraits and scenes of everyday life. The vitality of these co-existences seems to be one of the aesthetic and existential triggers for the passage towards "The City as Muse," the part of the exhibition that describes the activity of no longer cooperative spaces, hosted in venues which are also studios, lived-in and not only exhibition spaces. Among these there was the Reuben Gallery, opened in 1959 with the first event ever to have been defined as a "happening": the renowned *18 Happenings in Six Parts* by Kaprow, who was the founder along with Anita Rubin. The artist stated that the model of the si-

multaneity of events, so crucial and disarming in this work, is a circus on three levels.

The following steps in the exhibition itinerary show how painting and sculpture on one hand and dance, poetry and music on the other intercept and influence one another to the point of merging together to seek out aesthetic formulae capable of composing space and time. And then, in an almost perfect historical coincidence with the election of John F. Kennedy, the decision taken by certain spaces—including The Center—to dedicate themselves to practices addressing an openly political dimension marks a further vital novelty in the definition of this phenomenon. The conclusion is a homage to the remarkable activity of the Green Gallery, founded as an undertaking of a commercial nature, yet capable of promoting the most radical and

adventurous artistic positions, with Mark di Suvero, Claes Oldenburg, Lucas Samaras and Minimalism. Richard Bellamy, the gallery director, had trained working at the Hansa Gallery.

"In the history of art, happenings, figurative painting, assemblage, early Pop art, and Minimalism are often treated as separate tendencies when, in fact, as the study of artist-run organizations shows, a plethora of strategies coexisted and drew from one another," we may read in the preface to the catalog. And in fact, the exhibition offers an incredibly wide-ranging and articulated opportunity reconsider this period. The white cube seen from here looks like science fiction. After all, we are talking about the start of a real "new era" in which artists—circus performers—tried to lay down a number of democratic and open fundamentals for the art system, with all their nice primitive rules.

## Hercule Florence: Le nouveau Robinson

Text by Barbara Casavecchia

NMNM Villa Paloma  
56 Boulevard du Jardin Exotique, 98000  
Monaco, Principality of Monaco  
From March 17  
nmnm.mc

In his *Primo Libro delle Favole* (First Book of Fables, 1952), Carlo Emilio Gadda tells of how an archbishop of the past, while listening to the chirping of sparrows and starlings outside his window, is certain they are singing praise to the Lord for having created them. Nevertheless, writes Gadda, had those hearing them been "the glottologists of the infidel nineteenth century," they would have grasped only a cascade of insults cast from one beak to another—in an operatic crescendo of dialectal voices—in order to establish the pecking order, the right to perch on the most comfortable branch. Scientific curiosity, as we know, leads to unexpected discoveries.

Among the above-mentioned glottologist, we might well also find Hercule Florence (1804–79), a painter and self-taught inventor born in Nice into a Monegasque family, who at the age of just nineteen set sail from Monte Carlo heading for Brazil, in order to take part in the naturalist expedition of the baron Georg Heinrich von Langsdorff to Mato Grosso (1825–9), sponsored by the Tsar. Armed with notepad and paints, Florence recorded images of landscapes, native populations, plants and animals, developing what he would call "zoophony": a system for classifying the voices of birds and predators through sound, translating them into graphics that resemble musical scores, precise to this day. When he wrote *O Echo dos animaes irracionaes* (1831), Florence had no idea of the revolutionary scope of his work. In the meantime, however, he realized that he had an aim: to capture and reproduce mechanically the most immaterial things he encountered. After sound, the clouds. And after the clouds, light.

Retracing his life and works (an individual *epopee* which includes a pile of manuscripts, drawings and correspondence sent to the scientific academies of Paris and Turin, in the vain attempt to have his discoveries acknowledged, as well as two marriages, twenty children, a modern

school for girls and the management of the *Fazenda Soledade* in Campinas), the exhibition *Le nouveau Robinson* is on show at the NMNM Villa Paloma in Monaco, curated by Linda Fregni Nagler and Cristiano Raimondi. It brings together the results of a five-year research project, which included the digitalization of a great deal of archive material, mostly from two collections housed in São Paulo: the Cyrillo Hercule Florence Collection and that of the Instituto Hercule Florence.

Fregni Nagler is an artist who loves to rummage through the archaeology of photography. In this case, she worked on various levels, not only delving into the images but also the writings of Florence, brought together in the substantial monograph (published by Humboldt Books, Milan) which accompanies and integrates the exhibition. "The manuscripts were an obsession for him. Of *L'inventeur au Brésil* (The Inventor in Brazil), for example, he left behind eleven different versions, covering an autobiographical period of almost forty years. But the decisive encounter as far as I'm concerned was with *Photographie Ou Imprimerie à la Lumière* (Photography or Impression Through Light), 1833, which I transcribed myself. It's here that this word appears for the first time in history. The first to use it was Florence, although at that same time it was Niépce, Daguerre and Fox Talbot, in Europe, who were officially establishing the medium. Reading the words of an artist who invented—alone, in complete isolation—the idea of photography, it was like entering a new mental mechanism, trying to understand what drives you to seek a medium unlike all those available to you."

The exhibition follows two parallel paths. One is thematic and chronological: on the first floor, the iconographic materials concerning the expedition to Amazonia and Mato Grosso (where the images of the Bororo people drawn by Florence are placed in comparison with the photos shot by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in the 1930s, a century later) are on display, while on the second floor we may examine all of Florence's inventions, like the "hydrostatic noria" (a pump for perpetual movement), the "papier inimitable" (a special kind of paper that was supposed to be used for the watermark for a new, unique Brazilian banknote),

the "polygraph" (a sort of proto-photocopier). And lastly, photography, which Florence splits up into *photographie* (the reproduction drawing or a writing, similar to a *cliché-verre*) and the *fixation des images dans la chambre obscure* (what to all effects and purposes we call photography), obtained using auric chloride. A special section is given over to the *Atlas Pitoresco Celeste* (begun in 1830), a series of watercolours of views of clouds in the Brazilian skies, which Florence conceives as a repertoire useful for young artists; here, it is placed in comparison with the *Essay on the Modification of Clouds* by the English chemist and pharmacist Luke Howard, with the studies on clouds by Edward Muybridge and with the "cyanometers" (to measure the blue of the sky) of the Swiss naturalist Horace Bénédict de Saussure, later used by Alexandre von Humboldt during his travels through Brazil, thus ideally closing the circle.

The other part of the exhibition is contemporary, unfolding through the works of the artists who—without philological obligations—have come to terms with Florence and his constant research into new ways of copying, reproducing and multiplying images.

As well as Fregni Nagler herself, who performed an almost forensic examination of the manuscript of *Photographie*, exploiting chemical analyses and magnifications, there are Lucia Koch, Jochen Lempert, Leticia Ramos and Daniel Steegman Mangrané. Koch makes use of the often psychedelic colors of the skies of the Atlas in order to construct a digital pattern transferred onto fabric, making up a curtain that cuts through and redesigns the spaces on the third floor. Ramos uses microfilm to construct the tale of an imaginary exploration. Lempert documents and reinterprets another of Florence's visionary projects, the definition of a sixth architectural order, the "Brazilian or Palmian," as he entitled his essay sent to the Royal Academy of Sciences of Turin in 1852. Mangrané immerses the onlooker in the green of the Amazonian rainforest, with a giddy variety of plant shapes and animal sounds. Chronologies and historiographies aside, the aims appear to remain the same: to capture the fragility of our eco-systems on a stable support, one capable of crossing time, along with the amazement of our gaze before the spectacle of nature.