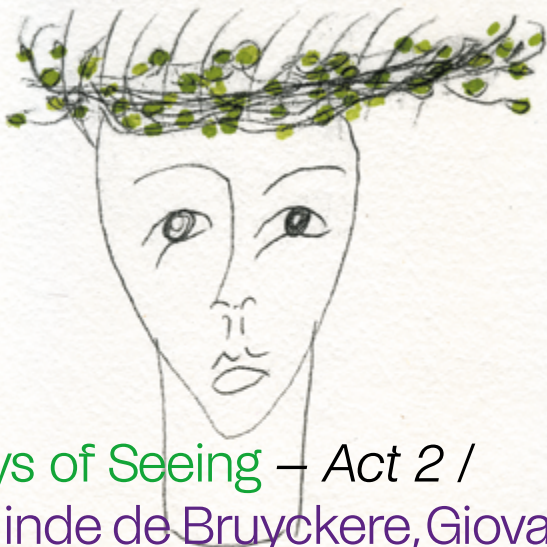


XNL Arte

02.03.24

30.06.24



Ways of Seeing – Act 2 /

Berlinde de Bruyckere, Giovanni  
Angelo Del Maino, Carol Rama

In collaboration with the Office for  
Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage of the Diocese  
of Piacenza-Bobbio and the Conservation and  
Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale



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*Ways of Seeing – Act 2 /*

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*"Now that I'm older, I have the impression that I'm calmer, but it's not true. As soon as I'm on a job, I feel like I'm Chagall drawing, soaring through the skies.*

*It's incredible, this self-image I hold is both exhilarating and terrifying. But that's enough, you'll see."*

Carol Rama to Corrado Levi, 1993 in: *Edoardo Sanguineti - Carol Rama*, edited by Luigina Tozzato and Claudio Zambianchi, Franco Masoero Publishings, Turin, 1998

*"I want to show how helpless a body can be. Which is nothing you have to be afraid of - it can be something beautiful...[...]"*

B. De Bruyckere, in S. Douglas, *The Way of All Flesh: Berlinde De Bruyckere's Waxen Corpus*, p. 22-23, in *Modern Painters*, Summer 2009, p. 23

# Ways of Seeing – Act 2 /

## Roberto Reggi

Artists offer communities a unique lens through which to perceive reality and envision future possibilities.

This dynamic is evident in each instalment of the *Sul Guardare (Ways of Seeing)* exhibition series, where emerging artists, informed by diverse perspectives and global experiences, engage in dialogue with the collections of Piacenza's museums.

Thanks to their efforts, our perspective is revitalized, allowing us to rediscover the potency, relevance, and boundless meaning embedded within paintings, sculptures, and artistic artefacts that may have faded from view due to familiarity or relegation to storage or peripheral spaces.

This interplay between contemporary and museum art, memory and innovation, and artistic heritage and new identities seeks to reclaim our history by illuminating it through the lens of the present. It aims to construct a cohesive and interconnected museum experience that bridges Piacenza's collections with contemporary art.

Following the first act featuring Massimo Grimaldi, who engaged in dialogue with works from the Ricci Oddi Gallery of Modern Art, the series *Ways of Seeing* continues with two new instalments. These chapters unfold concurrently, emerging from a fruitful collaboration forged with the museums of the Diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio and their director, Manuel Ferrari.

The focal point of Act 2 is a statue recently attributed to the renowned sculptor Giovanni Angelo Del Maino from Pavia.

It originates from the Church of St. Eufemia in Piacenza and depicts a figure of sorrow. On this regard, we express our gratitude to the Conservation and Restoration Centre La Venaria Reale for their collaboration on the project, specifically for their assessment of the restoration needs of the artwork. Concealed by layers of paint accumulated over the centuries, the statue showcased in the exhibition engages in a dialogue with impactful sculptures by contemporary artist Berlinde de Bruyckere and a selection of precious engravings by Carol Rama. This interaction provides visitors with an evocative exploration of themes such as resilience in the face of pain, fragility, and the strength of the human spirit.

In Act 3, the focus is artist Andrea Sala, whose invaluable research within the diocesan museum's archives has paved the way for a captivating series of works. Sala's exploration involves engaging with objects traditionally used in religious ceremonies, offering profound insights into the significance of rituals within communities, the deep symbolism inherent in these practices, and the fundamental connection between sacred and domestic objects.

# Ways of Seeing – Act 2 /

## Manuel Ferrari

Without knowledge and the ability to interpret our history, there is no prospect of effectively navigating the future. If we accept this premise, little else needs to be added in reflection to the exhibition *Ways of Seeing*, presented by Fondazione di Piacenza and Vigevano at XNL. This conviction prompted the Diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio, with a keen focus on the cultural assets housed within local museums and parishes, to participate in the project by contributing items from its archives. Many of these objects have long since ceased serving their original purpose but still carry layers of meaning, some more overt than others. The interpretation of these meanings depends on the observer's perspective and approach.

This fresh perspective has sparked discussions about restoration as a process intertwined with the revelation of concealed meanings. The Diocese's heritage includes artworks spanning centuries, preserving traces of history, and reflecting evolving tastes and sensitivities. Some pieces may show signs of wear, damage, relocation, or alteration, yet they retain their devotional essence for long-time observers, while appearing distant and in need of care to newcomers. Sometimes, it is necessary to remove superficial layers to reveal the original authenticity and essence of an artwork, symbolically re-establishing a link between the spiritual (heaven) and the physical (earth). As part of a series of exhibitions aimed at reconsidering artworks and acknowledging their endur-



ing relevance, restoration has emerged as a pivotal theme. The catalyst for this narrative, is a statue recently attributed to renowned Renaissance sculptor Angelo Giovanni Del Maino, titled *Dolente* (Figure of Sorrow) displayed above one of the side altars at the Church of St. Eufemia in Piacenza. This serves as an apt case study to initiate and potentially complete a comprehensive restoration, aiming to revive the work in its full expressive vigour as envisioned by the artist, while acknowledging the contributions and alterations made by the communities safeguarding it over the centuries. Restoration thus presents an opportunity to delve into the artifact's history, intertwined with the community that has preserved it, aiming to restore its identity and value to its rightful place.

Through a meticulous examination of the material, the restoration process conducted in collaboration with the prestigious Conservation and Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale has unveiled layers of interventions and repainting, revealing the original essence of the artwork. The connection between this narrative — marked by pain, resilience, fragmentation, and the quest for redemption and beauty — and the artistic practices of extraordinary figures like Berlinde de Bruyckere and Carol Rama presents an ideal amalgamation, confirming that reality often surpasses fiction and that the world, experienced in its tragic beauty, serves as a gateway to the sacred.

# The Exhibition / Paola Nicolin

*Ways of Seeing - Act 2. Berlinde de Bruyckere, Carol Rama, Giovanni Angelo Del Maino* is the second instalment in the exhibition series dedicated to reinterpreting the rich artistic heritage of the city and its surroundings.

Loosely inspired by the television series of the same name created by John Berger in 1971 for the BBC, the project continues its mission to cast a new light on lesser-known works from city repositories and collections by connecting them with contemporary themes and topics. On this occasion, the exhibition collaborates with the *Office for Ecclesiastical Heritage of the Diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio* and the *Conservation and restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale*, and through the works of three extraordinary artists, it provides a glimpse into the evolution and continuity of artistic expression over a long span of time.

For the second act of the series, XNL Piacenza presents an unprecedented dialogue between two sophisticated and incisive 20th-century artists, *Berlinde de Bruyckere* and *Carol Rama*, centred around an important work from the Diocese collections entitled *Dolente* (Figure of sorrow), recently attributed to Renaissance sculptor *Giovanni Angelo Del Maino*.

Renowned for his expertise in wooden sculpture within the Duchy of Milan, Giovanni Angelo Del Maino was an influential figure in Piacenza from the early decades of the 16th century. Alongside his brother Tiburzio, he left behind a wealth of artistic legacies in the city, which conferred honorary citizenship upon him in 1529, recognizing his talent and stature. *Figure of Sorrow* (early decades of the 16th cent.) reflects the artist's contempo-

rary sensibility. It is a wooden sculpture from the church of St. Eufemia in Piacenza, and the director of the Office for Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage of the Diocese, Manuel Ferrari, pointed it out as a valuable yet unknown work, suitable to be reinterpreted within a new framework.

*Figure of sorrow* immediately became an occasion to talk about time, beauty, the evolution of taste, the representation of resilience to pain, and the desire for authenticity, while build a subjective relationship with the research and works of contemporary artists.

In this context, Del Maino's sculpture became the focus of a restoration study conducted by the Conservation and Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale.

The Centre analysed the soul of the work, trying to provide its authentic appearance hidden under the patina of time, the "great sculptor" that Marguerite Yourcenar recounted in one of her most felicitous anthologies of essays on the inexorable passing of time, which wears and shapes, and whose action is strikingly analogous to that of the sculptor.

The occasion thus aims to provide the Piacenza community with a deeper understanding of the **authentic beauty** of this artwork, while also reflecting on **resilience to pain, vulnerability,** and **strength**, drawing from the theme of Renaissance sculpture.

The theme and temperatures suggested by this art history engage in a dialogue with the works of two artists who anticipated the inquiries and sensibilities of following generations (**Carol Rama**, Turin 1913 – 2015) and delved into the relationship between brutality and dignity, abstraction and physicality, harmony and deformity, solitude, and intimacy, juxtaposed with the public dimension of sculpture, which more than ever is a testimony of

resilience amid adversity (*Berlinde de Bruyckere*, Gent 1964). The *interplay* among the wooden sculpture, *Berlinde de Bruyckere's* sculptures, and Carol Rama's engravings and graphic works provides an opportunity to engage with contemporary themes, such as *the representation of pain* and how it can be transformed or liberated in the process of creating beauty.

When it comes to *Carol Rama*, the selection of artworks is drawn from private collections, generously made available for this occasion, with a particular emphasis on engravings. The Turin artist, who passed away almost 10 years ago, had engraving as a constant element in her creative process, as highlighted by the words of Edoardo Sanguineti, Corrado Levi, and Franco Masoero. Whether she was drawing, painting, cutting out, or gluing, Rama consistently used engraving to narrate stories from her past as she developed her compositions.

"Carol Rama was not an engraver", writes Alexandra Wetzel, who curated the selection. "Her focus was on the surface before her, awaiting her creative touch. The plate would be transformed into a black canvas when coated with smoked wax, or into a gleaming metal sheet when ink mixed with sugar was applied for aquatint.

Using either a point or a brush, she worked with complete freedom. The technical intricacies such as biting, aquatints, and printing were expertly handled by Franco Masoero, her printer and collaborator. The artist experienced a profound mixture of joy and astonishment upon finally beholding the proof prints.

Overwhelmed, she frequently reached for watercolours or nail varnishes to directly enhance the printed sheet.”

The graphic works unveil a nuanced yet strong aspect of Rama’s artistic expression: flowers, hands, fists, Fates, and faces emerge from the shadows of the gallery, carrying significant resonance, despite being somewhat side-lined. Conversely, **Berlinde de Bruyckere’s** sculptures and drawings delve into intimate and domestic realms, despite their monumental scale. Beds adorned with layers of blankets and figures undergoing metamorphosis between human and natural forms punctuate the ground floor gallery space, evoking themes of protection and confinement- and intimacy, beauty, and anguish.

Here, and in every exhibition, the artist’s works evoke a profound emotional response. They possess the remarkable ability to convey the duality of sculpture, existing both within and beyond the constraints of time., and to represent both monumentality and fragility, fragmentation and solidity, stillness and motion, pain, and profound beauty, all at once. The Belgian artist, who will be featured in a solo exhibition at the Abbey of St. Giorgio Maggiore in Venice for the upcoming Art Biennale and previously represented the Belgian Pavilion in the 2013 edition, has developed a distinctive sculptural language over the years and has crafted her personal vocabulary working with materials such as wax moulds, animal skins, hair, fabrics, metal, and wood. The theme of the metamorphosis of living beings serves as a key to understanding her work, where the distortion of organic forms often reaches lyrical heights.

Deeply influenced by Flemish Renaissance traditions, De Bruyckere frequently draws inspiration from the works Old European masters, Christian iconography, mythology, and cultural traditions. The artist overlays existing narratives with new

stories inspired by current events, forming a psychological landscape characterized by pathos, tenderness, and unease. In this context, the dialogue with the hidden history of Giovanni Del Maino gains strength through the resonance of the works of the artists, who has explored the universal dimension of the theme of duality (love and suffering, danger and protection, life, and death) throughout her career.

# The artworks / Berlinde de Bruyckere

The exhibition features two pairs of artworks that revisit the same subject with subtle yet significant variations in detail. Two beds and two sculptures (one standing alone and complemented by two drawings, and the other showcased in a semi-open display case) are strategically placed throughout the space, imbuing it with an unsettling atmosphere through their silent presence. They beckon the audience to navigate the space, evoking a mixture of curiosity, unease, and disturbance. A sculptor by nature, [Berlinde De Bruyckere](#) has not only embraced the medium but reinvented it, achieving a unique balance between fragility and power. Central to her artistic exploration is the fragment, the detail, and particularly the notion of laceration. She meticulously crafts her aesthetic vision through the manipulation of pliable, delicate, and sensual materials such as wax, fabric, animal skins, branches, and natural elements. Her installations and displays often evoke the aesthetics of natural history museums, with beauty and transience serving as recurring themes. In her monumental works, bodies intertwine, blankets are layered, and branches droop, giving rise to a universe that is simultaneously solemn and profoundly human. The works *Aanéén-genaaid* (1999) (“stitched together” and then “reassembled,” 1999) and *20, 2007* (2007), both depicting motionless, contorted bodies, either without limbs or lacking a presumed lost unity, belong to this realm of contemplation. Using wax and fabric—where the blanket emerges as a recurring motif—the artist meticulously sculpts

the human form with an abundance of realistic detail: from muscles to bone structure to complexion. Everything appears suspended yet realistic: identity, time, origin. Whose bodies are these, and what do they signify? They exude an existential beauty at once stark and potent, solitary yet gathered, in constant metamorphosis, inviting contemplation of our eternal yearning for protection and reconciliation. While the body stands as the focal point of the artist's oeuvre, it is never singular: the exposed, unclothed, prone body always represents a complex intersection of various cultural and aesthetic influences. From Flemish Renaissance painting to the surreal visions of masters like Hieronymus Bosch, James Ensor, and Paul Delvaux, Berlinde De Bruyckere's works forge a fresh taxonomy of the body, or rather of living beings. The viewer is drawn in, both physically and psychologically, encountering a realm of disturbance, unease, and fluidity, reminiscent of sculptures like Medardo Rosso's *Ecce Puer*, housed in the nearby Ricci Oddi Modern Art Gallery.

The other pair of works (*Walburga 16 November '18*, 2019 and *16 November '18*, 2019), is part of a series created in 2019, where the artist employed a combination of materials including blankets, wax, wood, iron, polyurethane, and resin to shape large beds.

This period marked the first appearance of the blanket element in the artist's oeuvre, revealing its dual significance of intimacy and refuge, alongside repression and suffocation. It holds a sacred place as an icon in the artist's memory, while also resonating deeply within the collective consciousness, offering intimate insights into individual experiences through patterns,



discolorations, folds, and stains that bear witness to a specific period, place, and duration of use. Originally, these beds were layered with numerous blankets, each revealing unique characteristics through round holes punctured throughout the layers as fabric, as though by a giant parasite.

The motif of the bed and the blanket also reflects a facet of the artist's personal history, having grown up in a secluded boarding school. However, in the exhibited works, the blankets are approached differently: exposed to the outdoor elements for several months, they look weathered, torn, and mouldy. They now exist in a state of deliberate neglect, devoid of their iconic features and individual traits. Their distinctiveness has dissolved, the individual has been erased, and the protective function they once served has failed. The only reminder of the iconic image of a neatly made bed is the perfectly folded and clean white sheet. In this poignant setting, the wax trees are buried, much like the human bodies depicted, naked and fragile.

Both pairs of works thus establish a meaningful connection with the restoration study undergone by Del Maino's statue and with its subject — Figure of sorrow — urging visitors to engage in an empathetic dialogue with the artworks, pondering the many facets of suffering and resilience as a sublime force.



Berlinde de Bruyckere, *16 November '18*, 2019, fabric, wax, wood, iron, resin, polyurethane, courtesy of the artist & Galleria Continua.  
© Photo by Mirjam Devriendt



Berlinde de Bruyckere, *Walburga 16 November '18*, 2019, fabric, wax, wood, iron, resin, polyurethane, courtesy of the artist & Galleria Continua.  
© Photo by Mirjam Deviriendt



Berlinde de Bruyckere, *Aanéén-genaaid*, 2001, watercolour on paper, cm 32×45, E. Righi Collection. © Photo by Antonio Maniscalco



Berlinde de Bruyckere, *Aanéén-genaaid*, 2001, watercolour on paper, cm 45×32, E. Righi Collection.

© Photo by Antonio Maniscalco



Berline de Bruyckere, *Aanéén-genaaid*, 1999, wax, polyester and blankets, cm 170×63×64, E. Righi Collection. © Photo by Antonio Maniscalco



Berlinde de Bruyckere, *20 2007, 2007*, display cabinet, epoxy resin, cm 299×149,3×73, E. Righi Collection. © Photo by Antonio Maniscalco

# Berlinde de Bruyckere

Berlinde De Bruyckere was born in Ghent, Belgium in 1964, where she currently lives and works.

Berlinde De Bruyckere's work deals with the transformation, transcendence, and reconciliation of bodies in the face of mortality. These bodies are often animal, human or inanimate. De Bruyckere is often inspired by the legacies of the European Old Masters and Christian iconography, as well as mythology and cultural lore. She plays on existing histories and imagery with new narratives that are suggested by the artist's choice and then manipulation of materials.

Since her first exhibition in the mid-eighties, De Bruyckere's sculptures and drawings have been the subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions in major institutions: *No Life Lost*, Artipelag, Stockholm, Sweden (2024); *Crossing a bridge on fire*, Centro Cultural de Belem, Lisbon, Portugal (2023); *City of Refugee I*, Commanderie de Peyrassol, Flassans sur Issole, France (2023); *City of Refugee II*, Diocesanum Museum Freising, Freising, Germany (2023); Berlinde De Bruyckere. *PLUNDER/ EKPHRASIS*, MO.CO, Montpellier, France (2022); Berlinde De Bruyckere, *PEL/ Becoming the figure*, Arp Museum, Remagen, Germany (2022); Berlinde De Bruyckere. *Engelenkeel*, Bonnefontenmuseum, Maastricht, The Netherlands (2021); *Aletheia*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2020); *It almost seemed a lily*, Hof Van Busleyden, Mechelen, Belgium (2019); *Il Mantello* (5x5x5 event for Manifesta 12), Church of St. Venera, Palermo (2018); Berlinde De Bruyckere, Sara Hilde Art Museum, Tampere, Finland (2018); *Embalmed*, Kunsthall Aarhus, Denmark





Photo by © Mirjam Devriendt

(2017); *Berlinde de Bruyckere. Suture*, Leopold Museum, Wien, Austria (2016) *Berlinde De - Bruyckere. No Life Lost*, Hauser & Wirth New York (2016); *Berlinde De Bruyckere. Penthesilea*, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporaine, Strasbourg, France (2015); *Berlinde De Bruyckere. The Embalmer*, Kunsthaus Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria (2015); *Berlinde De Bruyckere. The Embalmer*, Kunstraum Dornbirn, Dornbirn, Austria (2015); *Berlinde De Bruyckere, Gemeentemuseum The Hague, The Netherlands* (2015); *Berlinde De Bruyckere. In the Flesh*, Kunsthaus Graz, Graz, Austria (2013); Philippe Vandenberg & Berlinde De Bruyckere. *Innocence is precisely never to avoid the worst*, De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands (2012), which travelled to La Maison Rouge – Fondation Antoine de Galbert, Paris, France (2014); *We are all Flesh*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, Australia (2012); *The Wound*, Arter, Istanbul, Turkey (2012); *Mysterium Leib. Berlinde De Bruyckere im Dialog mit Cranach und Pasolini*, which opened at Kunstmuseum Moritzburg, Halle, Germany, and travelled to Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland (2011); DHC / ART Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montreal, Canada (2011); and 'E.n', De Pont Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tilburg, The Netherlands (2005).

In 2013 De Bruyckere was selected to represent Belgium at the 55th Venice Biennale where she unveiled her monumental work *Kreupelhout – Cripplewood*, a collaboration with Nobel Prize novelist J.M. Coetzee.

Recently De Bruyckere has extended her field of activity towards the performing arts as a scenographer, in close

collaboration with photographer Mirjam Devriendt. Her projects include: *Mariavespers*, Holland Festival, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2017); *Nicht Schlafen Les Ballets C de la B*, Ruhrtriennale, Bochum, Germany (2016), touring to Sadler's Wells, London (2017), and *Penthesilea La Monnaie*, Bruxelles, Belgium (2015).

# Figure of Sorrow / Giovanni Angelo Del Maino

By [Susanna Pighi](#) – Office for Ecclesiastical Cultural Heritage of the Diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio

This intriguing sculptural piece, usually situated in a niche in the fourth chapel on the left side of the Church of St. Eufemia in Piacenza, is attributed to the renowned sculptor Giovanni Angelo Del Maino from Pavia who, along with his brother Tiburzio, was active in Piacenza during the early decades of the 16th century. Unfortunately, the wooden statue has undergone extensive repainting and replastering over time, to the extent that it was previously believed to be a recent creation. This heavy repainting also complicated its stylistic interpretation.

As noted by Davide Gasparotto in 2010, only a restoration could unveil the true nature and quality of the sculpture of St. Eufemia, which has been so “disfigured that it appears almost like a nineteenth- or twentieth-century reproduction”. A recent restoration work, undertaken by the restorer Silvia Ottolini under the guidance of the local superintendency, has revealed original layers of 16th-century paint on the robes, complexions, and hair beneath the heavy repainting.

The artwork, whose original placement is uncertain, has been attributed to Giovanni Angelo by Casciaro and Binaghi (Casciaro 2000; Gasparotto 2010). There is speculation that it could represent St. Giovanni, Maria Maddalena, or a figure

of sorrow that once formed part of an ancient *Lamentation* alongside other statues (Albertario, Perotti, 2010; Gasparotto 2010); maybe it belonged to a famous Lamentation commissioned in 1529. The *Figure of Sorrow* that was displayed at the 2005 exhibition at Castello Sforzesco might be part of the same sculptural group (Casciaro 2005). The statue has been compared to the St. Giovanni, part of the Lamentation group housed in the parish church of Gambolò, near Pavia. The *Figure of Sorrow* of the Church of St. Euphemia is depicted raising both arms in despair, with the distraught face framed by hair falling to the shoulders. The eyes gaze heavenward, and a glimpse of teeth is revealed by the open mouth. The figure wears a long, collared robe with pleats on the bust and wide sleeves, heavily repainted in green. The tunic, falling over the bare feet, is partly covered by a cloak painted in light brown and ivory white. The statue is supported by a slender base.

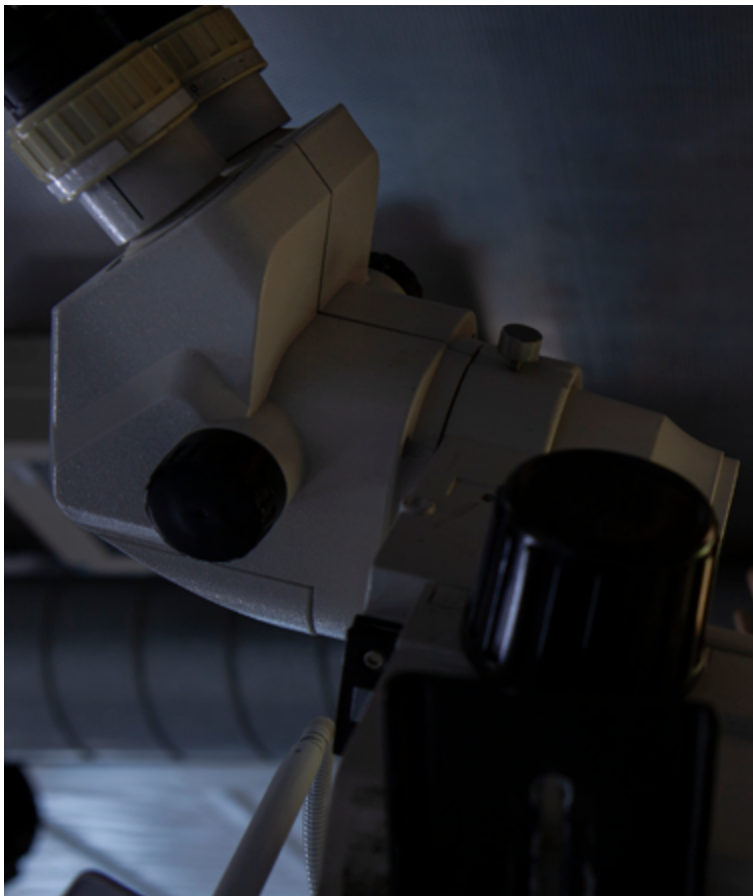
Giovanni Angelo Del Maino emerged as a prominent figure in wooden sculpture during the early 16th century within the Duchy of Milan. Alongside his brother Tiburzio, he was active in Piacenza during the same period. Del Maino's introduction to local patronage occurred on 16 January 1496 when, representing his father Giacomo, he signed a contract with the Congregation of the Cross of the collegiate church in Castel San Giovanni, and sculpted the renowned *Jesus Crucified*, which is displayed on the facade of the church to this day. In a later stage of his career, spanning from the late 1520s to the early 1530s, Del Maino and his brother Tiburzio undertook an extended residency in Piacenza.

This period of stay was likely fruitful and well-regarded, leading to both sculptors being awarded honorary citizenship on 30 July 1529. On 13 January of the same year, the two broth-

ers, living near the church of St. Brigida, were commissioned to sculpt a *Deposition in the Sepulchre* for the monastery of the SS. Annunciata. Regrettably, this work has since been lost, but the *Altar of the Passion*, which they sculpted for the church of St. Agostino in Piacenza, has endured to this day, and is currently exhibited in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. A St. Rocco sculpture dating back to 1524 and currently located in the church of St. Anna (Arisi 1987), has been attributed to Giovanni Angelo. The work is notable for its meticulous attention to detail and realistic depiction of anatomy and nuances. Through this, the expression of pain is transformed into mystical resignation. A stunning signed replica of this artwork has been discovered in the church of Sant'Antonio a Trebbia (Loda 2000). Additional local works have recently been credited to Giovanni Angelo, including the magnificent Crucifix located in the church of St. Francesco (Casciaro 2000), indicating his lasting presence in the town. Similarly, the St. Antonio Abate housed in the Collegiate Church of Castel San Giovanni and the *Madonna and Child* located in the Parish Church of Pievetta (Castel San Giovanni), both reflecting the sculptor's mature style, have been rightfully attributed to Giovanni Angelo (Gasparotto 2010).



*Figure of Sorrow*, from the Church of St. Eufemia, Piacenza, undergoing diagnostic investigations at the Conservation and Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale.  
© Photo by Daniele Signaroldi



*Figure of Sorrow*, from the Church of St. Eufemia, Piacenza, undergoing diagnostic investigations at the Conservation and Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale (detail).  
© Photo by Daniele Signaroldi







*Figure of Sorrow*, from the Church of St. Eufemia, Piacenza, undergoing diagnostic investigations at the Conservation and Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale (detail).

© Photo by Daniele Signaroldi



*Figure of Sorrow*, from the Church of St. Eufemia, Piacenza, undergoing diagnostic investigations at the Conservation and Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale (detail). © Photo by Daniele Signaroldi



*Figure of Sorrow*, from the Church of St. Eufemia, Piacenza, undergoing diagnostic investigations at the Conservation and Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale.  
© Photo by Daniele Signaroldi



# Giovanni Angelo Del Maino

The woodcarver from Pavia, likely born in Milan around 1475 and passing away in Pavia in 1536, hailed from a renowned lineage of artisans. His father, Giacomo, and brother, Tiburzio, were esteemed masters of wood sculpture.

Originally established in Milan, their workshop later relocated to Pavia, earning widespread acclaim from the late 15th century onwards. The workshop specialized in crafting a notable collection of works, many of which have endured through the ages. Among the sculptures attributed to Giovanni Angelo, notable pieces include the *Christ at the Column* in San Giovanni in Monte, Bologna (1533), the altarpiece in Ardenno, Valtellina, and the *Lamentation* in the parish church of Gambolò, Pavia, all from the artist's later years. In 1946, the artist and his father had also crafted the renowned *Crucifix* of the collegiate church of Castel San Giovanni (PC), which remains in its original location.

Giovanni Angelo and his brother Tiburzio were particularly active in Piacenza and its vicinity during the 1520s and 1530s. Commissioned for the sculptural group of the Deposition in the Sepulchre for the city monastery of Santissima Annunciata, they also created the magnificent Altar of the Passion, now housed in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London but once residing in the Piacenza church of St. Agostino.

Over time, numerous other works in Piacenza have been attributed to Giovanni Angelo.



Giovanni Angelo Del Maino (attr.), *Figure of Sorrow*, first decades of the 16th cent., carved and painted wood (original location: Church of St. Eufemia, Piacenza), undergoing diagnostic investigations at the Conservation and Restoration Centre of La Venaria Reale. © Photo by Daniele Signaroldi

# The artworks / Carol Rama

By [Alexandra Wetzel](#)

Carol Rama was not an engraver; her focus was solely on the surface before her, awaiting her creative touch. The plate would be transformed into a black canvas when coated with smoked wax, or into a gleaming metal sheet when ink mixed with sugar was applied for aquatint.

Using either a point or a brush, she worked with complete freedom. The technical intricacies such as biting, aquatints, and printing were expertly handled by Franco Masoero, her printer and collaborator. The artist experienced a profound mixture of joy and astonishment upon finally beholding the proof prints. Overwhelmed, she frequently reached for watercolours or nail varnishes to directly enhance the printed sheet.

By [Edoardo Sanguineti](#)

(from: *Exile and Return*, in Carol Rama, edited by Lea Vergine, Duomo Square, Mazzotta, Milan, 1985)

“Before me are three reproductions of Carol’s recent works. And I am reflecting on her radical re-engagement with certain aspects of her past artistic practice. This includes not only the visual elements and themes but also the graphic and compositional techniques she employed in her earliest artworks. [...] I like to envision Carol as embodying the archetype of an artist who experiences a mix of fear and awe upon witnessing the



initial realization of their deepest imaginings. They then embark on a prolonged journey of meticulous exploration, seeking to temper and neutralize these visions. Through skilful manipulation and abstract objectification techniques, they render these visions manageable, even painless [...]”

By [Edoardo Sanguineti](#)

(from: *The Pathos of the Object*, interview by Claudio Zambianchi, Genoa, 9 February 2002, in *Edoardo Sanguineti, Carol Rama*, Franco Masoero Publishing, Turin 2002)

“What I wasn’t aware of then, but came to appreciate later, was an earlier period of Carol’s work that she seemed to keep somewhat hidden. This phase consisted of a collection of erotically charged images, engravings, drawings, and watercolours. Although this graphic aspect played a significant role in her early career, she chose not to exhibit it publicly, perhaps due to self-censorship. This self-censorship wasn’t necessarily driven by thematic concerns but rather by the expectation in the artistic community that artists must align themselves either with figurative or abstract art. Carol probably set aside this figurative aspect, which was quite natural for chronological reason and for her predominant training. [...]

There’s a typical phrase of Carol’s that I’ve heard her say countless times regarding something used, worn, or old. For instance, if something is stained or broken, Carol would say, almost consolingly, “Well, that’s lived in”. In other words, Carol seems to exhibit a subtle discomfort towards what is new and intact, while being drawn to things that bear traces of use, existence, and even hints of injury, affliction, or mortality.”

Franco Masoero interviewed by Mara Folini

(from: *Carol Rama, Beyond Her Graphic Work*, Museum of Modern Art, Ascona, 2013)

"I had encountered Carol Rama several times at the gallery of her friend Giancarlo Salzano in Turin, where she frequently showcased her art. I was captivated by both her and her work, and I suggested to her on multiple occasions that we collaborate on some engravings. Having seen a few of her sheets from the 1940s (including some of the Fates), I was keen for her to further explore this medium with me. [...] It was Corrado Levi who convinced her, making her recognize that, as an artist, she lacked a thorough understanding of graphic techniques. He complimented her by highlighting that she was being presented with an opportunity to venture into new artistic-, and that for many great artists of the 20th century, graphic art was an integral component of their oeuvre. [...] Carol gradually grew more confident with me and began visiting my workshop more frequently, until we established routines, almost like rituals: twice a week, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, I would pick her up by car from her home, just two streets away. She always arrived in the afternoon, as she didn't typically wake up until two or three o'clock... We would start chatting often she would reminisce about episodes from her past, but she would also discuss current events that had left an impact on her. Meanwhile, I would prepare materials to present to her, such as proofs of works I had previously completed. We would go over them

together, and I would explain the various possibilities for proceeding... She was more interested in the outcome than the process, which she found tedious. When presented with these proofs, Carol often expressed enthusiastic amazement, as if witnessing magic or a spell that she had cast with joy...

She enjoyed wielding the brush when painting with "India ink and sugar" on the plate, just as she relished tracing the pencil drawing on the matrix prepared with "soft varnish" and covered with a thin sheet of paper. But perhaps what intrigued her most was the sharp mark of pure etching executed with a simple point that she delicately held instinctively, without applying force. Before starting to engrave, she would collect herself for a moment, focused, and then her hand would begin with assurance, the mark flowing without hesitation..."

## The Fates

During the 1940s, Rama produced a small series of eight etchings, all created using a single, rather extended biting process. At that time, she was visiting the studio of the painter and engraver Pier Antonio Gariazzo (1879-1964), and she had access to all the necessary materials. In the first engraving, the female figures appear withdrawn, almost blending into the background. However, in subsequent etchings, they emerge prominently against the rhythmic interplay of lines. One of the etchings was displayed at the 1948 Venice Biennale under the title *The Mothers*.

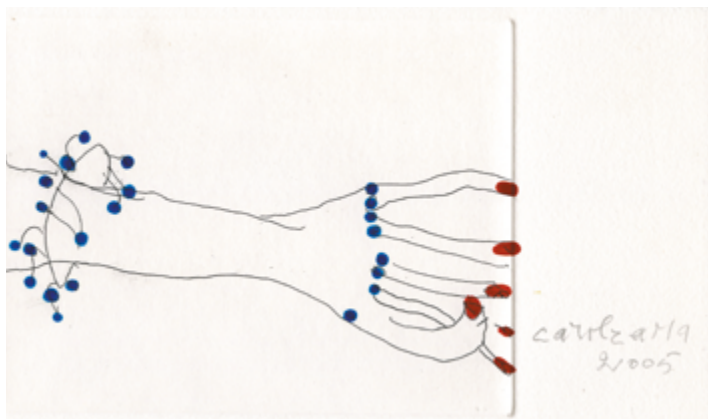


Carol Rama, *The Fates*, III, 1947, etching on zinc (proof), mm. 118×125, private collection, Turin. © Carol Rama Archive, Turin

## The Artist's Book

The collaboration with poet Edoardo Sanguineti began shortly after the war in Turin, a city he described as a

"city of painters Sanguineti not only authored critical texts for his friend but also engaged in a mutually enriching relationship that resulted in several collaborative works. Among them is the artist's book titled *The White Hand*, featuring a stark yet graceful etching accentuated by the vibrant colours of nail polish and accompanied by a Haiku composed by Sanguineti.



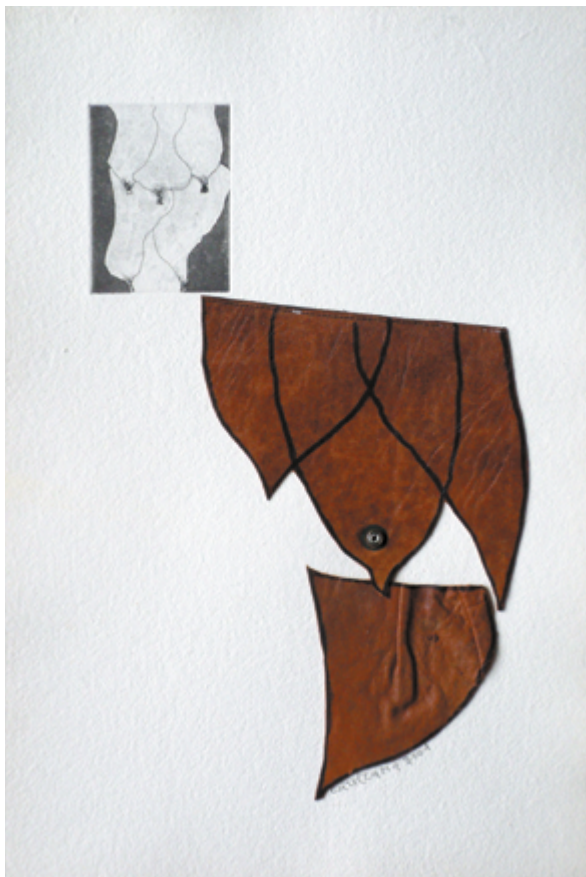
Carol Rama, *The White Hand*, 2005, etching on zinc in Artist's Book, copy 22 of 29, mm. 132×172, private collection, Turin.

© Carol Rama Archive, Turin

## Mad Cow

Rama loved painting on unconventional canvases that bore the marks of previous use, from jute sacks to architectural plans. Through engraving, she crafted a series of distinctive works on backgrounds she personally etched. The udders of her *Mad Cow* come to life, dancing across the sheets, fostering a dialogue between the engraved linear image, nestled within parallelepipeds, and stamped in unexpected nooks, and the layered, rhythmic, and whimsical collage.





Carol Rama, *Mad Cow*, 2001, leather collage, etching, and aquatint on paper, cm. 44x33, private collection, Turin.  
© Carol Rama Archive, Turin

## Hands

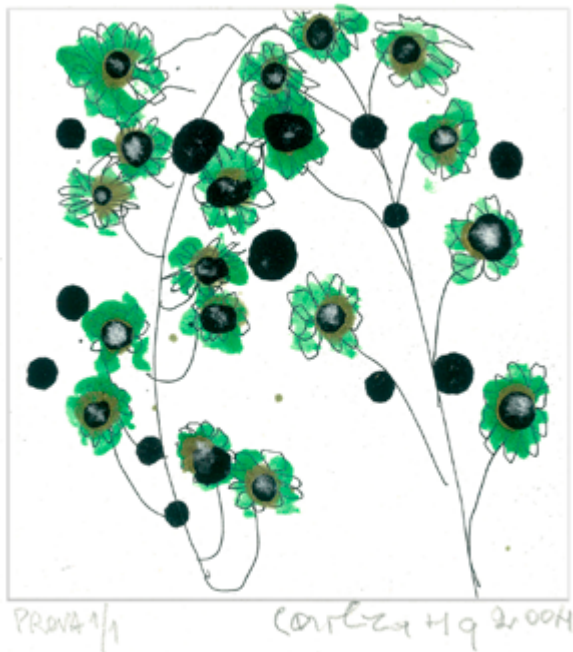
Hands and feet held a profound fascination for Rama: she deemed them seductive, expressive, and allegorical. Her etched hands are depicted as bare and essential, occasionally truncated or distorted by the passage of time. In pieces coloured with watercolour and nail varnishes after printing, despair transforms into provocation, and fear evolves into playfulness.



Carol Rama, *Seduction (The Fist)*, 2004, etching on zinc, mm. 132×112, copy 22 of 50 private collection, Turin.  
© Carol Rama Archive, Turin

## Flowers

Offering Carol Rama a bouquet of cut flowers was a risky move indeed! She would promptly discard it to avoid feeling "intimidated by such beauty". Conversely, she cherished wildflowers, the same ones her mother adorned her hair with during their walks on the psychiatric hospital's lawn. These flowers captivated her, and she depicted them countless times, whether portrayed individually, as crowns, or as bracelets. Even in this case, upon seeing the initial proofs, Rama felt compelled to enhance those humble blooms with the most vibrant colours.



Carol Rama, *Seduction (not the flowers)*, 2004, etching on zinc, mm. 120×112, unique copy, private collection, Turin. © Carol Rama Archive, Turin

# Carol Rama

Carol Rama (Turin, 1918–2015) is an autobiographical artist. Each character and object depicted in her works reflects of Rama's personal history and memory. In her early watercolours created between 1936 and 1946, Rama depicted truncated female bodies, dentures, beds, wheelchairs, animals, shoes, and various other subjects. Due to their anachronistic nature, these works were initially deemed unacceptable. They serve as a portrayal of the anxieties and fantasies experienced by a young woman who, after a sheltered childhood in her father's home, was suddenly confronted with life's most traumatic aspects. During this period, she also started working on a series of etchings titled *The Fates*.

In the 1950s, she felt compelled to move beyond her autobiographical focus and became involved with the MAC (Movimento Arte Concreta, Concrete Art Movement) group in Turin, where she developed her unique interpretation of abstraction. By the 1960s, her artistic exploration circled back to her personal experiences, blending everyday objects with her innate artistic sensibility. This phase gave rise to a series of paintings, dubbed "bricolages" by her friend Edoardo Sanguineti, who accompanied Rama and her work with authentic and unconventional poems and presentations. Carol's circle of friends, starting with those she encountered in Turin such as Felice Casorati, Albino Galvano, Italo Calvino, Massimo Mila, Carlo Mollino, and many others, played a significant role in her life and artistic journey. During the 1970s, while residing in Paris and New York with her art dealer Anselmino, she encountered



Carol Rama at the presentation of her two multiples at Franco Masoero stand during Artissima in Turin, November 2004. © Photo by Alexandra Wetzel.

prominent figures such as Andy Warhol, Orson Welles, and notably Man Ray, with whom she maintained a close association until his passing.

Her artistic output during this decade is characterized by its intimacy and diversity. Working on large canvases, Rama arranges bicycle inner tubes, evoking memories of her father's bicycle factory. These inner tubes, often showing signs of wear and repair, form a dynamic and textured surface, resembling the texture and appearance of human skin.

In 1980, the artist had a significant encounter with Lea Vergine, who included her in a travelling exhibition showcasing prominent women artists of the 20th century, titled "L'altra metà dell'avanguardia" (The Other Side of Avant-garde). This exhibition featured numerous works dating back to the 1930s and 1940s. Her first major retrospective, curated by Lea Vergine, took place in 1983 in Milan, just outside of the Duomo. It was during this time that the early works of Carol Rama gained recognition, which may have influenced her return to figuration in the early 1980s. Her later works from this period are characterized by their imaginative storytelling, whimsical elements, and references to myths and legends. In the 1990, alongside drawings, collages, and paintings, Rama ventured into the realm of printmaking, thanks to a fruitful collaboration with printer, gallery owner, and publisher Franco Masoero. Despite not entirely forsaking figuration, Carol Rama's approach evolved over time. The figures and characters, deeply rooted in her personal history, took on a more essential quality, almost akin to emblems. In late 2005, Rama concluded her artistic career with her fi-



nal works. She passed away on 24th September 2015 at her home in Turin. Throughout her lifetime, Carol Rama received prestigious accolades, notably the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale in 2003 and the President of the Republic Award, conferred at the recommendation of the Academy of St. Luke in Rome in 2010. Additionally, her works were featured in anthological exhibitions across various cities, including Milan, Turin, Rovereto, Genoa, Ulm, Innsbruck, Barcelona, Paris, Dublin, and New York.

# Public program

The exhibition *Ways of Seeing. Act 2. Berlinde de Bruyckere, Giovanni Angelo Del Maino, Carol Rama* is complemented by a series of in-depth discussions exploring its content. The first confirmed guests for these discussions are listed below. The full program will be announced within the first month of the exhibition's opening.

## Giorgio Verzotti

*Art critic*

15.03.2024, h.18.30

Discussion on the Artistry of Carol Rama

## Francesca Tasso

*Director, Castello Sforzesco, Milan*

Date tbc - info: [xnlpiacenza.it](mailto:xnlpiacenza.it)

Discussion on Lombard Wooden Sculpture from the 15th to 16th Centuries

## Sara Abram

*Art historian*

*Director, Fondazione Centro di Conservazione e Restauro*

Date tbc - info: [xnlpiacenza.it](mailto:xnlpiacenza.it)

Roundtable discussion on the Restoration of Giovanni Angelo Del Maino's *Figure of Sorrow*.

# Workshops

In alignment with XNL Arte's identity and its commitment as a museum-school, dedicated to the dissemination of knowledge, the educational component of the exhibition is refreshed with a series of workshops designed for primary and secondary schools.

Info and bookings  
[edu@xnlpiacenza.it](mailto:edu@xnlpiacenza.it)

# Guided tours

Our diverse schedule of exclusive openings and interactive programs has something for everyone. From cultural mediation with XNL Mondo, guided tours for high school students, and hands-on workshops for families.

Info and booking  
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# Ways of Seeing – Act 2 /

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### *Acknowledgements*

Collezione Enea Righi  
Galleria Continua  
Margherita Tinagli  
Franco Masoero  
Maria Cristina Mundici  
dell'Archivio Carol Rama  
Giovanni Bordino  
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# XNL Piacenza

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