

MASSIMODECARLO

ANDRA URSUTA

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to present three solo presentations by Andra Ursuța, Maria Lai, and Carl Andre. Spanning several generations and countries, the exhibition explores three unique and idiosyncratic voices in various trajectories of art history, with each artist displaying a distinct approach to their practice, unified by a level of intensity towards the subject matter chosen.

Romanian artist Andra Ursuța works primarily within the bounds of sculpture and installation. Her visual language of abjection is provocative, frequently touching upon political controversies with an artistic vocabulary that varies from grotesque, tragicomic, and satirist. For this presentation, Ursuța has based her research on the extremist group known as “ISIS”, titling the show *Vanilla Isis*. This series of works were first shown at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin in 2018.

Vanilla Isis casts an irreverent glance at the extremism prevalent in our modern world, which manifest itself in very different contexts, from terrorist groups to youth subcultures. Through a thorough analysis of the various propaganda strategies of the self-styled Islamic State; which borrows heavily from Western media and popular culture to target a vulnerable demographic of western youth, the exhibition observes the way in which aesthetic trends migrate, or are exploited. In the works on display, Ursuța distorts and transforms these aesthetic tactics, exploring the mixture of promotion, seduction and machismo of which the language of recruitment that Isis airs to the foreign public.

Taking on the perspective of an impressionable and dissatisfied youth, Ursuța uses them as the starting point of the exhibition, referring to them as "vanilla" youth. Culturally, this generation of youth can be distinguished by obscurity in entertainment, niche music, sport-like aesthetics – all of which conflates the playful and the warlike, the fun and the lethal, making them indistinguishable to the ‘vanilla youth’. With her signature wry and iconic tone, Ursuța repurposes the Isis flag into a series of pool inflatables, transforming the lower ground floor into a gripping meditation on the fine line between violent messages disguised as innocent toys, and the vulnerable eyes perceptive to it.

Ursuța’s work has been exhibited in various institutions and private collections worldwide, including the Venice Biennale (2019), Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2018), Massimo De Carlo, Milan, (2018), The New Museum, New York (2016), and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, (2014).

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ANDRA URSUTA

Andra Ursuța was born in 1979 in Salonta, Romania; she lives and works in New York.

Her solo exhibitions include: *May You Live In Interesting Times*, 58th Venice Biennale, Venice (2019); *Vanilla Isis*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2018); *The Man from the Internet*, Massimo De Carlo, Milano (2017); *Alps*, the New Museum, New York (2016); *Whites*, Kunsthalle Basel, Steinenberg (2015); *Hammer Projects: Andra Ursuța*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014); *Solitary Fitness*, Venus Over Manhattan, New York (2013).

Her group shows include: *Experience Traps*, Middelheimmuseum, Antwerp (2018); *People*, Jeffrey Deitch, New York (2018); *High Anxiety: New Acquisitions*, Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2016); *La Vie Modern*, 13th Lyon Biennale, Lyon (2015); *Now At the Latest*, Kunsthalle Krems, Krems an der Donau (2015); *The Encyclopaedic Palace*, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice (2013); *Expo 1*, MoMA PS1, Long Island City (2013); *Ostalgia*, New Museum, New York (2012); *Pure Freude*, National Museum, Berlin (2011).

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MARIA LAI

Massimo De Carlo is pleased to present three solo presentations by Andra Ursuța, Maria Lai, and Carl Andre. Spanning several generations and countries, the exhibition explores three unique and idiosyncratic voices in various trajectories of art history, with each artist displaying a distinct approach to their practice, unified by a level of intensity towards the subject matter chosen.

Born and raised in Sardinia, Lai's hometown, Ulassia, proved to be a lifelong source of inspiration for her multifaceted practice. For this presentation of Lai's work, Massimo De Carlo is pleased to present a series of works unified by the usage of thread.

This literal and metaphorical 'thread' is woven through Lai's entire career; as Lai exhibited profound artistic talent from a young age, going on to become the first woman to study sculpture in the Accademia di Belle Arti under Arturo Martini. During the tumultuous early half of the 20th century, Lai toyed with various artistic movements such as Arte Povera, Conceptual Art, and Art Informel, and developed a long-standing interest in materials in their organic forms. Additionally, Lai's passion for literature and poetry spiked, developing highly symbiotic relationships with many poets and writers including Giuseppe Dessì and Salvatore Cambosu, who was the artist's teacher and mentor.

Through harbouring these relationships, Maria Lai increasingly gravitated towards Sardinia, rediscovering and finding much inspiration in the customs, traditions and stories of the lives of the people there. Cambosu once gave the artist a crucial word of advice – to “follow the rhythm.” Although Cambosu was referring to harmony and scansion in poetry, these words of counsel take shape in Lai's work, in the precise technique, and the clarity and occasional edgy lines of Lai's aquarelle and drawings, as well use of textiles in sculptural pieces.

Thread as a material is found in every single work presented, from *Spazio e telaio*, a sculpture of a distressed loom, abstracted with wood, thread and twine, to *Nostalgie*, part of her Sewn Books series. The thread's significance to Lai's oeuvre is unmeasurable, symbolising the harmony and coming together of elements, the alternating rhythms of words and silences, full and empty spaces, spoken and written words and the exploration of the infinite and the unknown. In all of Maria Lai's work, the gesture of weaving becomes a meditation conducted in solitude, an intimate reflection on the meaning of community, history and tradition, a poetic attempt to recreate a bond between an archaic past and a present in which memory and its transmission appear to have lost their value.

Over the course of Maria Lai's illustrious sixty-year career, work was shown extensively in solo exhibitions throughout Italy and Europe, and was invited to participate in group shows across the globe, including in the Venice Biennale of 1978. In addition to Lai's visual and social arts practice, Lai collaborated with several theatre companies, including Fueddu and Gestu. Most recently, Lai's work was included in documenta14 in Athens and the Venice Biennale, both in 2017.

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MARIA LAI

Maria Lai was born in September 27th, 1919 in Ulassai.

Her solo exhibitions include: *Maria Lai*, MAXXI, Rome, (2019); M77 Gallery, Milan, (2018); Uffizi Galleries, Palazzo Pitti, Florence (2018); Museo della Scultura Contemporanea Matera (MUSMA), Matera (2014); Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin, (2010); Galleria L'elefante, Treviso (2008); Inaugurazione Stazione dell'arte, Ulassai (2006); Museo d'Arte Provincia di Nuoro (MAN), Nuoro (2002); Istituto Internazionale per l'arte Contemporanea, Rome, (1996).

Her work has been part of various group exhibitions including: Massimo De Carlo, Milan/Ventura, Milan (2019); Fondazione MACC, Calasetta (2018); Venice Biennale 2017: VIVA ARTE VIVA, Venice (2017); documenta 14, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens, GR and Neue Museum, Kassel (2017); Triennale di Milano, Milan (2017)

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CARL ANDRE

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Massimo De Carlo presents, for the first time in London, a selection of essential works on paper from the earlier period of Carl Andre's extensive and wide-ranging career. Regarded as a pioneer of the Minimalist movement, Andre is recognised for changing and creating a new language of sculpture by his contemporaries.

The works on paper (or poems) were executed in the late 1950s, with the exhibited works dating from 1958 to 1963, at a time when Andre lived in New York and shared a studio with Frank Stella. Each poem, typed on a manual typewriter, reflect many of the aesthetical and conceptual ideas of the wider minimalist movement by rebelling against the dominance of structured language and focusing on "objecthood".

The artist utilises every typed letter, each achieving a multitude of forms; as a part of a poem, or a cell of a sculpture, kept in formation by the boundaries of the A4 page. The works touch on a variety of occurrences and experiences of the artist, some inspiring scenes of colour, others echoing sounds and vocal intonations. The works have a graphic identity: evoking blocks, scatter pieces, columns, zigzags, while others have a distinct literary reference: the sonnet, the opera, or even historical or autobiographical subjects.

Thinking through the materiality of words, in relation to the form of language and matter, Andre works within a historical development, by actively disrupting and decoding assumed truths, and proposed an alternative perspective on viewing present conditions.

Andre's work has been shown in solo exhibition in prestigious institutions around the world such as, amongst the most recent: the itinerant show *Sculpture as Place, 1958–2010*, MOCA - The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA, USA (2017), Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, F (2016); *Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart*, Berlin, D (2016); *Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía*, Madrid, E (2015); *Dia:Beacon*, Dia Art Foundation, Beacon, NY (2014).

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CARL ANDRE

The renowned American Minimal sculptor and poet Carl Andre was born in Quincy, Massachusetts. He lives and works in New York, USA. Andre's work has been shown in solo exhibition in prestigious institutions around the world such as, amongst the most recent: the itinerant show *Sculpture as Place, 1958–2010*, MOCA - The Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, Los Angeles (2017), Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2016); Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (2016); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2015); Dia:Beacon, Dia Art Foundation, Beacon, NY (2014); *A Friendship: Carl Andre's Works on Paper from the LeWitt Collection*, The Dan Flavin Art Institute, Bridgehampton, NY (2014).

Carl Andre's work is hosted in prominent public collections such as the Tate Modern in London, Centre George Pompidou in Paris, Peggy Guggenheim Museum in Venice, Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the MoMA in New York.

Hard Facts:

Massimo De Carlo, London
55 South Audley Street, London W1K 2QH
From April 26th until May 23rd, 2019
Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 6pm
Opening: Thursday April 25th, 2019, 6pm to 8pm

For further information and materials:

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