

LÉVY GORVY

LÉVY GORVY TO EXHIBIT WORK BY CAROL RAMA, ILLUMINATING ENGAGEMENT WITH RICH CULTURAL LIFE OF TURIN

Carol Rama: Eye of Eyes

January 24 – March 23, 2019

Lévy Gorvy
909 Madison Avenue
New York



Carol Rama. *Bricolage*, 1967. Oil, household paint, resin, and doll eyes on Masonite, 20 1/16 x 16 1/8 inches (50.9 x 40.9 cm). © Archivio Carol Rama, Torino. Photo: Elisabeth Bernstein.

New York, NY—Lévy Gorvy is pleased to present *Carol Rama: Eye of Eyes*, an exhibition that expands and enriches narratives attending the work of this celebrated figure of the Italian avant-garde. Curated by art historian Flavia Frigeri, *Eye of Eyes* turns to the city of Turin, where Rama was born and lived until her death in 2015. Siting her work in the context of the exhibitions she visited, the artists she was in conversation with, and the formal and conceptual concerns she encountered in the efforts of her contemporaries, the exhibition makes vivid the artistic landscape Rama occupied.

Throughout her remarkable seven-decade career, Rama explored the subject of the body as a site of desire and resistance. She employed unconventional and personally significant materials, both organic and industrial, to give form to her idiosyncratic vision. In so doing, she not only defied the orthodoxies of her time and surpassed available critical vocabularies, but she anticipated present-day debates on the aesthetic intersections of sexuality, representation, and power.

It is well-known that Rama rarely left Turin during her lifetime; but as Frigeri here reveals, the city itself opened Rama up to the world. During the artist's life, Turin became the site of an industrial renaissance centered on the auto industry. As the city's population diversified to reflect both its legacy of privilege and its active working class, a complex and vibrant cultural community emerged. Famously, this cultural terrain produced the Arte Povera movement, but it also cultivated a strong network of galleries and institutions that were dedicated to hosting exhibitions by international artists, many of whom would become protagonists of 20th century art. Indeed, Rama counted among her friends such figures as Felice Casorati, Pablo Picasso, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Italo Calvino, and Carlo Mollino.

With assistance from the Rama archives, Frigeri has illuminated Rama's deeper level of engagement with the art world by identifying the artist's collection of catalogues for Turin-based exhibitions.

These include shows by such artists as Francis Bacon, Hans Bellmer, Alberto Giacometti, Paul Klee, Yves Klein, Meret Oppenheim, Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, and Kazuo Shiraga. At Lévy Gorvy, documentation of these findings guides the viewer through the exhibition.

Among the works on view will be a selection of Rama's early figurative watercolors, including *Opera n. 18* (1939) and *Appassionata* (1941). Arriving from a raw, youthful perspective, this series of unabashedly sexual images was censored in the artist's first solo exhibition, at Turin's Gaber Gallery in 1945. Also featured is a sequence of the artist's *Bricolage* works dating from 1964 to 1968. Rama began this series of assemblages on canvas, titled by her lifelong friend, the poet Edoardo Sanguineti, in the 1960s, following her brief engagement with the Milan and Turin-based Concrete Art Movement (MAC). The densely arranged compositions feature such unusual and specific objects as taxidermy and doll eyes, surgical tools, fur, and rifle cartridges. The rubber inner tubes that recur in a related series of abstract, Minimalist works composed throughout the '70s refer to the artist's father, who owned a factory that manufactured bicycle and automobile parts. When the artist was 24, her father's business went bankrupt, plunging her family into poverty and driving her father to commit suicide. The inner tubes and tires, typically cut and flattened by the artist, might resemble flaccid phalluses, or aged skin that has been composed in the language of geometric abstraction.

Considered in the broader context of Turin's cultural scene, the visionary quality of Rama's art only comes into greater focus. Working among and in response to her peers, Rama forged an artistic practice that was radical, essential, and ahead of its time.

The exhibition is presented in collaboration with Valentina Castellani.

About the Curator

Curator and art historian Flavia Frigeri is a Teaching Fellow in the History of Art Department at University College, London, and a Course Leader at the Sotheby's Institute of Art, London. Frigeri has previously served as Curator, International Art at Tate Modern, where she co-curated *The World Goes Pop* (2015), a reassessment of pop art from a global perspective. Her specialty is in European and American post-war art with an emphasis on Italian art and design. Other projects have included *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs* (2014) and *Paul Klee: Making Visible* (2013). Her forthcoming book, *Women Artists*, will be published by Thames & Hudson in the spring of 2019.

About Lévy Gorvy

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Founded by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains gallery spaces at 909 Madison Avenue in New York and in Mayfair, London. In 2017, Lévy Gorvy opened an office in Shanghai, and in March 2019 the gallery will open a new exhibition space in Hong Kong. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates it represents and pursues a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. Lévy Gorvy also produces ongoing art historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications.

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