

*I took a liking to those decorative motifs, to the arabesque,  
the squiggle, to the curved and contorted line  
which wraps around itself and gets tangled up,  
to then unwind again (if it unravels).*  
Enrico Baj

## Enrico Baj

“Art is freedom”

Opening: 7 November at 18.00

Exhibition dates: 8 November 2017 - 27 January 2018

On the occasion of the exhibition held at the Fondazione Marconi and devoted to Enrico Baj **Studio Marconi '65** presents a selection of multiples and graphic work.

A prominent figure in the contemporary artistic perspective, heir to the Surrealist-Dadaist spirit and an experimenter in original techniques and styles, in 1951 he promoted the Nuclear Movement together with Sergio Dangelo. In 1953 he met Asger Jorn, with whom he founded the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, opposing the forced rationalisation and geometrisation of art. From the 1950s on, he was a figure on the international scene and exhibited regularly, especially in Paris. His debut in the United States came with an exhibition in 1960. In 1967 he began to work with Studio Marconi. André Breton in France invited him to exhibit with the Surrealists and in 1963 wrote an essay about him, published in Rosamond and George Bernier's magazine *L'oeil*.

Brilliant at collage, which for him had literary origins, Baj applied it in the way of Alfred Jarry, who in his writing “introduced fragments of other texts, using them in contexts that differed from the one they had been written for.”

A distinguishing hallmark of Baj's work are the *Ladies* and the *Generals*: imaginary characters he created in order to make a barely concealed political critique, later unmistakably evident when he began to create his *Rallies* and *Military Parades*.

A frequent presence at Studio Marconi, Enrico Baj was one of the most represented and beloved artists of his friend and gallerist Giorgio Marconi.

The exhibition at **Studio Marconi '65** returns to the topics of the works displayed at the Fondazione Marconi and has a decisively political thrust; it emphasises the Milanese artist's social denouncement of any form of power and oppression.

From nuclear danger to that of militarism, from the abuse of power to the many evils of modern world, all the major fears of our time pass before us in the works on show, some of them sadly all too real at the present time. Moreover, the word “baj”, as the artist liked to recall, means “balladeer” in Polish.

Baj's entire oeuvre, in fact, narrates and demonstrates why ultimately, as he used to put it: “Painting is a road – a road I chose – to freedom. It's the practice of freedom.”

### **Biographical notes**

Enrico Baj was born in Milan in 1924. After studying at the Brera Academy, he became one of the leading figures of the Italian avant-garde. Following his first solo exhibition at Galleria San Fedele in Milan in 1951, he founded the Nuclear Painting Movement with Sergio Dangelo.

An heir of the Surrealist-Dadaist spirit and an experimenter of original styles and techniques, Baj created collages and multi-material assemblages using the most diverse materials, among them textiles, haberdashery and upholstery items, mattress covers, medals and metallic fragments, mirrors and coloured glass.

He debuted in New York in 1960 as part of the *Surrealist Intrusion in the Enchanters' Domain*, organised by Marcel Duchamp and André Breton at the D'Arcy Galleries.

The following year, his works were included in the historic exhibition *Art of Assemblage* (1961) at the MoMa in New York, curated by William Seitz. In 1964 he was assigned a room at the 22nd Venice Biennale.

From 1967 on, he regularly exhibited at Studio Marconi, and in the 1970s held his first important retrospectives (Palazzo Reale, Milan; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels).

In 1971, three important exhibitions were held at Palazzo Grassi, Venice; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; and the Musée de l'Athénée, Geneva.

Following the artist's death on 16 June 2003, a major retrospective was held involving a number of Milanese galleries: Spazio Oberdan, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Giò Marconi Gallery and Mudima Foundation.

Some of the most recent exhibitions were held at the following venues: the Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome (2001-2002); the Marconi Foundation, Milan (2008, 2009, 2013); Palazzo Reale, Milan (2012); the 55th Venice Biennale and the Arnaldo Pomodoro Foundation, Milan (2013); Giò Marconi Gallery, Milan (2015); the Regional Archaeological Museum, Aosta and the Luxembourg & Dayan Gallery, New York, (2016); the Cobra Museum, Amstelveen, Netherlands (2017).

Works by Enrico Baj have been part of prestigious collective exhibitions: *Italia Pop. Art During the Boom Years*, Fondazione Magnani Rocca, Mamiano di Traversetolo, Parma; *Artists and Stars: The Story of Art During the Boom Years*, Museo del Novecento, Milan; *Cobra: A Great European Vanguard (1948-1951)*, Fondazione Roma, Palazzo Cipolla, Rome (2016); *Postwar: Art Between the Pacific and the Atlantic, 1945-1965*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2016-2017).

### **Studio Marconi '65**

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**Exhibition duration:** 8 November 2017 - 27 January 2018

**Opening Hours:** Tuesday-Saturday 15-19 (closed on 7 and 8 December and from December 23 to January 8)

**Free entrance**

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