

PRESS RELEASE

Lawrence Carroll
Ghost House
curated by Gianfranco Maraniello

MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna
December 12, 2014 – April 6, 2015
Opening: December 11, h 7 p.m.

Lawrence Carroll, one of the main exponents of contemporary painting, will be featured at **MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna** in an exhibition entitled *Ghost House*, which opens to the public on **12 December 2014**. The show traces Carroll's artistic evolution over more than 30 years through around 60 works produced between the mid-1980s and the present, many of which have never been exhibited before and some realized expressly for the occasion. Particularly significant is the contiguity with the **Museo Morandi**, the largest public collection of the works of Giorgio Morandi, one of Carroll's stated models and great master of 20th century painting.

Ghost House is installed in the temporary exhibition galleries where, rather than following chronological criteria, it creates environments that the artist describes as "**built on memory**", in which works from different periods are placed in dialogue with one another and with the museum context in the conviction that meaning can be found not only in the individual works but in their relationships, considered collectively and through time, like the narrative overlappings of a story.

Lawrence Carroll defies the critical and interpretive categories associated with the 'avantgarde', but works on the modes and times of perception, placing the work and the viewer in a constant interrogation of the meaning of composing and then allowing a pictorial image to appear. The artists from whom he has drawn inspiration are many, including Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Marc Rothko, Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Cy Twombly and Sean Scully. But prevailing over all of them is **Giorgio Morandi**, with whom Lawrence Carroll shares a love for the intimate, private dimension, as well as a constant quest to penetrate the complexity of reality through the epiphany of everyday objects, seemingly simple yet imbued with inexhaustible possibilities of interpretation in their multiple combinations.

Like the objects of Morandi, Lawrence Carroll, since the beginning of his artistic career, has meticulously studied the different possibilities of positioning his canvases, which become no longer surfaces but 'bodies' with multiple faces. The stretchers thus take on different forms and volumes, concave or convex, elements and objects of different kinds are assembled and added such that the painting assumes the characteristics of sculpture, the canvas becomes skin, the wax is ointment, the cuts are drawn lines but also openings into a deeper interior dimension.

Carroll's use of color is apparently monochromatic, where there prevails a particular shade of white obtained with successive layers of paint that allow imperfections, weaves and traces of previous interventions to show through, a neutral non-color, saturated with memory, which Carroll calls simply "**off white**". It is a white that strives to be as close as possible to that of the canvas itself, which often covers a previous paint layer, providing the artist with the possibility of going back to ground zero for a new beginning. Carroll started doing this at the beginning of his career, without knowing that it would become a constant for the next three decades, and still today he has not yet exhausted the possibilities.

The **MAMbo exhibition** opens with a room that brings together a small group of early works that were seminal for the artist's subsequent enquiry and that will orient the visitor with regard to the range of themes explored throughout the exhibition with works from different periods. Among the introductory works: a painting on the theme of **breath**; another on the fundamental theme of "**shedding skin**" as a way of giving life to a new beginning; a "**cut painting**", in which the artist uses overlapping and recomposed cuts to introduce drawing into the work while at the same time making visible its history, anticipating the works of twenty years later, the "**table paintings**", airy structures of wood and newspaper or cardboard of which one exemplar is shown here; and one of Carroll's "**stacked paintings**", essentially the overlapping of wood and painted canvases.

Moving on from the first gallery and past the subsequent developments of the themes investigated there, we encounter other typologies: the "**box paintings**" which, like a body, exposes both the interior and exterior of the painting, with the canvas functioning like skin; the "**page paintings**", mounted perpendicularly to the wall, rendering them impossible to view in their entirety from a single viewpoint; the "**calendar paintings**", variations on the stratification of the stacked paintings; the "**slip paintings**", constituted by two solid, interpenetrating forms; the "**light paintings**", which incorporate one or more light sources; the "**erasure paintings**",

which derive from Carroll's experience as an illustrator and from his desire to move beyond that phase, inserting illustrations into the painting and then erasing them, almost as if erasing himself; and lastly, the suggestive "**freezing painting**", where artistic creativity and engineering are combined to generate the suspension of a material – in this case 900 liters of frozen water – , which can return at any moment to its previous state. The work draws inspiration from the season cycle, where rigid winter covers everything in ice, while beneath this layer life is suspended only to then resume with the coming of spring. This cycle is assimilated in Carroll's vision with artistic practice which, in a similarly cyclical way, takes something from its predecessors and passes it on to those who come after. The work was exhibited at the 2013 Venice Biennale in the pavilion of the Holy See.

Several **new works**, shown for the first time and created by Lawrence Carroll expressly for the exhibition, are interspersed throughout the installation. Among them are two large-scale, predominantly yellow paintings and others that incorporate a light source. They all share the theme of light, whose multiple facets and dimensions have characterized Carroll's work from the outset. Using the metaphor of light that is extinguished and then returns, Carroll explains his relationship with the artists he loves: inviting the spirit of Giorgio Morandi into a contemporary work shines new light on the master's oeuvre – which also benefits the public – from the viewpoint of an artist of 2014. Another of the artist's reflections on light concerns his studio and how it modifies its character: the natural light of the morning, artificial illumination, the darkness of night that envelops the paintings, casting them into a suspended, sleeping state.

The two yellow paintings hark back to certain works from the '90s, where Carroll uses a canvas to completely cover the painting beneath, like a veil, an action which in turn echoes the idea of erasing oneself in order to move beyond, to transpose oneself into a new physical, psychological, metaphorical space, to leave oneself behind in order to start again.

The title of the exhibition, *Ghost House*, derives from the eponymous poem by **Robert Frost**, and indeed Carroll has talked about the part that poetry plays in his work, sometimes influencing him. *Ghost House* immediately seemed the right poem to provide the title for an exhibition that brings to light his earliest works, the 'ghosts' of Carroll's artistic enquiry, which still reverberate in the works he has created since and will create in the future.

The exhibition will be open to the public **until 6 April 2015**.

In concomitance with Arte Fiera and ART CITY Bologna 2015, a **catalogue** will be published, with texts by Gianfranco Maraniello and Angela Vettese and extensive photographic documentation of the show.

Special **educational activities** conducted by the MAMbo Education Department will be offered throughout the duration of the exhibition.

Lawrence Carroll **Biographical notes**

Lawrence Carroll was born in 1954 in Melbourne, Australia. In 1958 his family emigrated to the United States and set up residence in California. From 1976 to 1980 he attended the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles, where he took his degree and began working as an illustrator and drawing instructor. With scarce resources for materials, he learned to assemble his own canvases, though not from scrap materials as is often erroneously thought, a practice that he would continue and develop in his later work.

In 1984 he moved to New York, where in 1987 he had his first museum shows at the Bronx Museum and the Queens Museum. In 1990 he showed at the Musée des Beaux Arts in Brussels and 1992 participated in *Documenta IX* in Kassel, where he returned in 2005, at that point one of the most established contemporary artists. Fundamental for Carroll was his encounter in the '90s with Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, a major collector who would acquire a large number of his works and provide him with the opportunity to exhibit in spaces of particular architectural importance: Villa Panza in Varese, Palazzo Ducale in Gubbio, Palazzo della Gran Guardia in Verona, the Karmelitenkirche in Munich, S. Agostino in Bergamo.

In 2013 he was among the artists invited to exhibit in the Pavilion of the Holy See at the Venice Biennale.

His works are in the collections of numerous museums around the world, including the MoCA in Los Angeles, the Guggenheim in New York, the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo, MART in Rovereto and the Galerie der Stadt Stuttgart.

The artist has taught painting at the IUAV in Venice. He lives and works between the United States and Italy.

Further information:

www.mambo-bologna.org

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