

LA PITTURA È FINITA

Poses and impostures of Alberto Greco in Italy

Unpublished photographs by Claudio Abate

Curator Fernando Davis

april - june 2021

delinfinito

LA PITTURA È FINITA

Alberto Greco travels to Italy, probably in July 1962. In Genoa, he published his Manifesto Dito dell'Arte Vivo in Italian, dated July 24 and printed on posters that he pasted on the walls of the city:

"Living art is the adventure of the real. The artist will teach to see not with the painting but with the finger. He will teach to see again what happens in the street. Living art searches for the object but leaves the found object in its place, does not transform it, does not improve it, does not take it to the art gallery. Living art is contemplation and direct communication. It wants to end the premeditation that gallery and exhibition mean. We must get in direct contact with the living elements of our reality. Movement, time, people, conversations, smells, rumors, places and situations. Living art, Dito movement".

Greco had started his live art actions a few months earlier, in Paris. Exhibiting a poster with the text "Première Exposition Arte Vivo" Greco points out people and objects with a chalk circle and his signature, inaugurating a type of intervention that he will later extend in Rome, Madrid, Buenos Aires and New York.

During his time in Italy, Greco pushed the poetic program of the vivo dito to the limit, expanded it and transformed it into different forms of action. In Rome he meets the photographer Claudio Abate, who accompanies him on his tours to the historic center of the city, in which Greco walks with colored chalk, according to Francisco Rivas (1), covering streets and walls with ephemeral graffiti: "La pittura è finita. vivo-dito art by Alberto Greco. Live art and the adventure of the real". At that time he refers to his friend Lila Mora: "I have written all the walls of Rome. Great scandal. I don't know why I am considered a propaganda genius here." (2) The street becomes a space for the inscription of a writing that is drawn and scrawled between the pose and the imposture of the body.

Abate photographs Greco in action, while he writes the words VIVO ART on the street, interrupting or diverting the traffic of cars, calling the attention of the people who walk through the place. In another photograph, he registers Greco standing, posing in front of a brick wall on which we read, in large letters: "Alberto Greco ma chi è? Un genio". We do not see Greco during the development of the action, as in the previous photographs, but at the moment of its conclusion, in front of the wall that he has just written. It is possible to interpret this and other vivo ditos made by Greco in Rome, in dialogue with a previous action that took place in Buenos Aires, in November 1961. During this action, Greco covered some central walls with the slogans "Alberto Greco ¡¡Qué grande sos! !!" and "Alberto Greco. The most important informalist painter in America", but not through the chalk line, but through the printing of typographic posters used in urban advertising.

In a later vivo dito, also recorded by Abate, Greco dresses as a nun, one year after his emblematic exhibition at Pizarro gallery in Buenos Aires, embodying the violation of the limits of the painting that he proposed in that exhibition.

On January 4, 1963, together with Carmelo Bene and Giuseppe Lenti, Greco premiered an experimental play, entitled Cristo 63, at the Laboratorio Theater, an independent room directed by Bene. Conceived as "Spettacolo Arte Vivo", the work had to take place, according to Greco, "in the middle of the street or inside a tram or on the subway platform,... with all the adventure of the real, incorporating the unforeseen". The public, for their part, could "act whenever they please and tell a story, if it is their own, much better." (3) The work resorted to improvisation, with a structure not defined in advance, although it incorporated references to the passion of Christ and fragments taken from James Joyce's Ulysses and Genet. The very night of its premiere, the police intervened, closing the play and closing the theater. Greco, who represented the apostle John, wore a blue-green velvet robe, which he got up at a certain point in the play and, according to some testimonies, urinated in the stalls, where the Argentine ambassador was. The graphic media recorded the scandal of Cristo 63 and characterized the work as vulgar and blasphemous, with a "bizarre symbolism" typical of those characters that "psychopathology treatises define as exhibitionists." (4)

After the hasty closure of Cristo 63, Greco must leave Italy. His next stop is Madrid.

(1) Francisco Rivas, "Alberto Greco [1931-1965]. The novel of his life and the meaning of his death", Alberto Greco, Valencia, IVAM Center Julio González, 1992.

(2) Cited by Francisco Rivas, ob. cit.

(3) The quote belongs to Alberto Greco's Great Vivo-Dito art manifesto-roll, made in Piedralaves in 1963.

(4) Marta Marchetti, "Cristo '63 by Carmelo Bene. Omaggio a Joyce", Acting Archives Review, year VIII, n° 16, November 2018.

Fernando Davis

Arte Vivo
Rome circa 1962



Transcription of handwritings on wall:

V V ALBERTO GRECO/
MA CHI ES? /
UN GENIO

...

"VV" (stands for "VIVA el ARTE VIVO)
ALBERTO GRECO/
BUT WHO IS? /
A GENIUS

Untitled (La pittura è finita. Viva el Arte Vivo-Dito).

30 x 30 cm.

Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.

Circa 1962 / Print 2020.

Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Transcription of handwritings on wall:

LA PITTURA È FINITA
W ARTE "VIVO"-DITO
DE ALBERTO GRECO
ARTE VIVO E L'AVVENTURA DEL
REALE
VV ARTE VIVO

...
PAINTING IS OVER
W ARTE "VIVO"-DITO
BY ALBERTO GRECO
LIVE ART (ARTE VIVO)
AND THE ADVENTURE OF THE
REAL
VV ARTE VIVO

Untitled (La pittura è finita. Viva el Arte Vivo-Dito).

30 x 30 cm.

Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.

Circa 1962 / Print 2020.

Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.

Reproduced in the book *La aventura de lo real.*

Escritos de Alberto Greco.

Paula Pellejero y Eduardo Pellejero.

Ediciones Julián Mizrahi, 2020.

Vivo Dito
Rome circa 1962

Set 1



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
Set of 5 photographs. 30 x 30 cm each.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).

30 x 30 cm.

Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.

Circa 1962 / Print 2020.

Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.

Vivo Dito
Rome circa 1962

Set 2



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
Set of 5 photographs. 30 x 30 cm each.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Vivo Dito / Arte Vivo, Rome).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Circa 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.

Albertus Grecvs
Rome 1962

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Untitled (Albertus Grecvs).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Year 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.
Reproduced in the book Alberto Greco.
IVAM, Valencia, Spain, 1991. Page 81.
Reproduced in the book Alberto Greco
¡Qué grande sos!. Museo de Arte Moderno
de Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2016. Page 135.



Untitled (Albertus Grecvs).
30 x 30 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Year 1962 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.
Reproduced in the book Alberto Greco.
IVAM, Valencia, Spain, 1991. Page 83.
Reproduced in the book Alberto Greco
¡Qué grande sos!. Museo de Arte Moderno
de Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2016. Page 134.

Cristo'63
Rome 1963

delinfinito

**AL
TEATRO
LABORATORIO**

IN VIA ROMA LIBERA, 23 (San Cosimato)

da
Venerdì
4
Gennaio
ore 21,30

SOLO PER POCHI GIORNI

Carmelo BENE-Giuseppe LENTI-Alberto GRECO

presentano
in uno
spettacolo
ARTE VIVO

**CRISTO
63**

Omaggio a
**JAMES
JOYCE**

Riduzioni
I. N. R. I.

Grafiche S.T.A.M.P.A. - Tel. 580.057 - ROMA

DIREZIONE - REDAZIONE
AMMINISTRAZIONE
Indirizzo giornale
Roma - Via degli Astalli, 15
Telefono 67.28.48

TELESERA

QUOTIDIANO INDIPENDENTE

QUINTA
VIA CARICO
MADRID - PORTUGAL
Sabato 5 - Domenica 6 gennaio 1963
SPEDIZIONE IN ABBONAMENTO POSTALE

DIREZIONE - REDAZIONE
AMMINISTRAZIONE
Indirizzo giornale
Roma - Via degli Astalli, 15
Telefono 67.28.48

MARTEDI RIUNIONE AL VERTICE DEI PARTITI AL GOVERNO

Soltanto l'abilità di Fanfani potrà evitare la crisi



Disgusto

Particolarmente la-
toriosa è stata la giu-
stata di ieri per gli esor-
santi dei partiti della
coalizione governativa.
In vista del « processo
vittoriano di martedì
prossimo, Saragat, Nes-
si e Hone si sono in-
contrati da loro. C'era
per questo un clima
molto pesante e tutti
sono rimasti a lungo
in silenzio. Saragat
ha parlato di « processo
vittoriano » e di « crisi
governativa ». Nessi
ha parlato di « crisi
governativa » e di « crisi
governativa ».

Spogliarello sulla neve



La giovane tedesca Ingrid Scheller, non manca di ispirarsi. Profittando del fatto di trovarsi in Italia per interpretare un nuovo film, ha raggiunto durante una pausa della lavorazione i più vicini campi di neve. Ed ussando sul « paese del sole » ha ritratto se stessa e alcuni in un audace « spogliarello ».

Un neonato sepolto vivo salvato dal cane

LONDRA, 5
Palla d'oro per un neonato salvato dal cane.
Un neonato è stato salvato dal cane di una donna di nome Palla d'oro. Il cane ha abbaiato e ha fatto scappare la donna che stava per sepolire il neonato vivo.

Capo dell'ufficio presidenziale...
L'ufficio per il controllo dell'ordine pubblico...
L'ufficio per il controllo dell'ordine pubblico...

Continua nel Katanga l'azione dell'ONU

L'azione dell'ONU nel Katanga continua. L'ONU ha inviato una forza di mantenimento della pace nel Katanga.

Il «giallo in farmacia»
Accertamenti sui «consulenti»
L'azione dell'ONU nel Katanga continua.

Le estrazioni del Lotto

| | |
|----------|----------------|
| Bari | 77 23 27 46 13 |
| Cagliari | 21 37 47 44 2 |
| Firenze | 22 51 52 59 49 |
| Milano | 9 44 13 3 24 |
| Napoli | 75 82 85 5 75 |
| Palermo | 81 49 53 23 75 |
| Roma | 1 35 44 77 3 |
| Torino | 50 42 41 45 74 |
| Venezia | 30 49 4 34 82 |

ENALOTTO
2 1 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2

La nostra inchiesta sull'O.A.S.
«SIAMO FRANCESI» dicevano gli «ultras»
L'inchiesta sull'O.A.S. continua. Gli ultras dicono che sono francesi.

La nostra inchiesta sull'O.A.S.
«SIAMO FRANCESI» dicevano gli «ultras»
L'inchiesta sull'O.A.S. continua. Gli ultras dicono che sono francesi.

Con una revolverata
Uccide la moglie
Un uomo ha ucciso la moglie con una revolverata.

VII
L'ufficio per il controllo dell'ordine pubblico...

VII
L'ufficio per il controllo dell'ordine pubblico...

VII
L'ufficio per il controllo dell'ordine pubblico...

Cristo 63

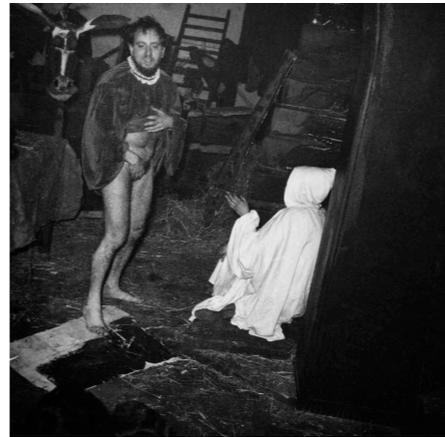
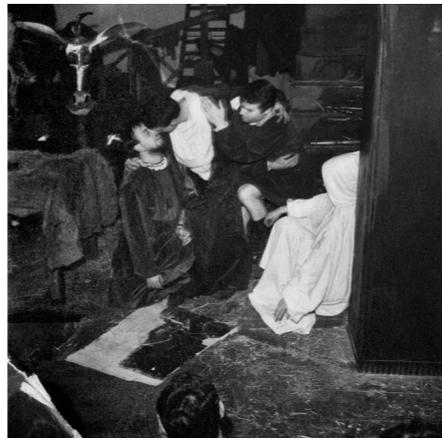
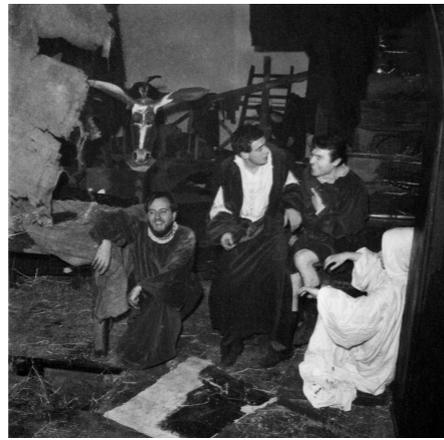
Greco met theater director Carmelo Bene through his friend Giuseppe Lenti in Rome. Bene directed an independent venue called "Teatro Laboratorio". In a meeting Alberto Greco and Carmelo Bene devised an experimental theatrical piece that it would be called *Cristo 63*.

On January 4, 1963 the play was performed. The participants came on stage dressed up but also overwhelmed by the situation, since neither did what the other expected. Insults occurred between the actors, between the actors and the public, and among the general audience. Greco by then had completely undressed himself and had hurt his foot with a nail. Carmelo, who performed Christ, fed up with being left to die without killing him, went alone to the cross and nailed himself. Meanwhile, those who played apostles, drunk, began to throw themselves with food.

The police cancelled the play the premises. Greco was imprisoned with a straitjacket in a nun hospital, from where he escaped the next day with the help of Bene. After these events he had to leave Italy.

A few days later Greco wrote to some of his friends that they play "... could last an hour or five... three days or ten minutes. The idea was to abolish the dressing rooms - but without thinking about it - everything had to happen right there. We also tried to finish with the distant relation with the public in relation to us, and intended to end up all together in a kind of round bed on stage. The real Judas was the public, who did not want to go up. "

In the Great Roll Manifesto, Greco detailed how the preparation and presentation of this first *Vivo-Dito Art Show* were: "In a *Vivo-Dito* show, of course, public can intervene whenever they feel like and can also tell a story, if it is theirs, much better. / We tried that anyone were professional actors, nor vocational. Carmelo Bene convoked those who wanted to act for Christ 63, unless they were actual actors. /... I wanted to perform the *Vivo-Dito* in the middle of the street, inside a tram or, on the subway platform,... with all the adventure of the real, incorporating the unforeseen. / Every night we gathered together to talk about the show ... but we always ended up talking about something else ... we ate... We made the posters... At the end, already tired, we went to sleep. When we left, Carmelo shouted at us "Porca miseria !! Tomorrow come early to the theater since we have to prepare the text! "... But the next day the same thing happened to all of us and so on / We have to write the text! What we didn't know is that the text should not be written and we would never write it, never... "



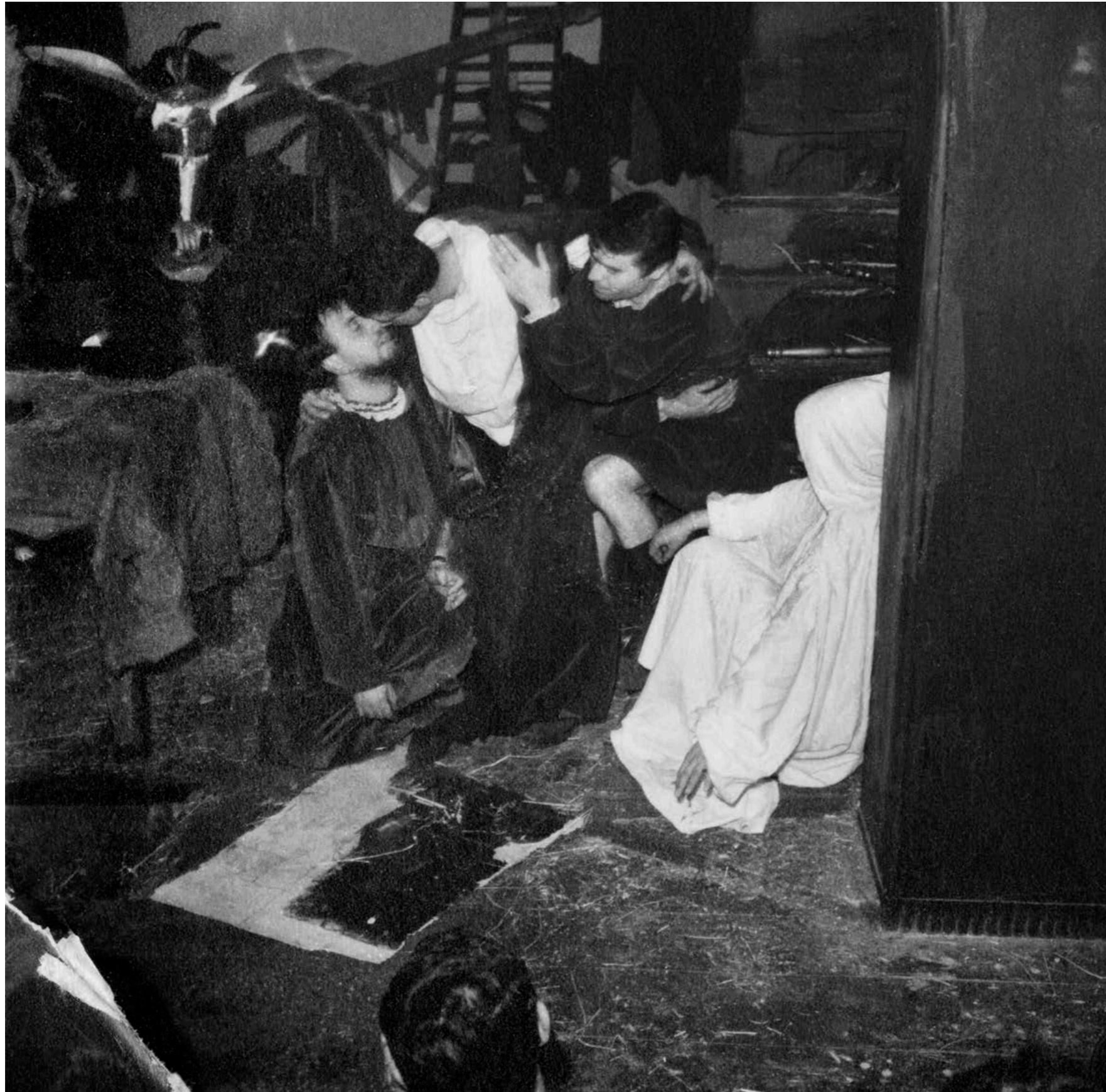
Untitled (Cristo'63 play in Rome).
Set of 10 photographs. 24 x 24 cm each.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Year 1963 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



Untitled (Cristo'63 play in Rome).
24 x 24 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Year 1963 / Print 2020.
Edition of 5 + 1 studio proof.



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24 x 24 cm.
Gelatin silver print on fiber paper.
Year 1963 / Print 2020.
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Alberto Greco

He was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1931. He died in Barcelona, Spain in 1965.

Alberto Greco studied for a brief period at the Manuel Belgrano National School of Fine Arts and then, from 1947 to 1948, he attended the workshops of Cecilia Marcovich and Tomás Maldonado. In 1950 he published his book *Fiesta*. In 1954 he made his first trip to Europe with a scholarship from the French government and settled in Paris. He held his first individual exhibition in that city in 1955, at the La Roue gallery. He returned to Buenos Aires the following year and exhibited his Parisian works at the Antígona gallery.

In 1957 he traveled to Rio de Janeiro and the following year to São Paulo, Brazil, where he exhibited individually at the Museum of Modern Art. In 1959 he joined the Argentine informalist movement together with Kenneth Kemble, Enrique Barilari, Olga López, Towas, Fernando Maza, Luis Alberto Wells and Mario Pucciarelli. In 1961 he presented his exhibition *Las Monjas* at the Pizarro gallery in Buenos Aires and covered the walls of downtown Buenos Aires with posters with the text "Alberto Greco, qué grande sos."

In 1962, again in Paris, he held the "Première Exposition Arte Vivo" in the streets, circling with chalk and signing people, objects and situations. That same year, in Genoa, he published his "Manifiesto Dito dell'Arte Vivo" in Italian, which he posted on city walls. There he says: "Living art is the adventure of the real. The artist will teach to see not with the painting but with the finger. It will teach us to see again what happens on the street [...] We should get in direct contact with the living elements of our reality: movement, time, people, conversations, smells, rumors, places, situations". He coined the concept of *Vivo-Dito* to refer to his live art actions.

At the beginning of 1963 he presented his *vivo-dito* play *Cristo 63*. Omaggio to James Joyce, at the Teatro Laboratorio in Rome, in collaboration with Carmelo Bene and Giuseppe Lenti. The scandal generated by the play precipitates his departure from Italy. He traveled to Madrid, Spain and later to the town of Piedralaves, located in the province of Ávila, where he carried out a series of actions photographed by Montserrat Santamaría. Also in Piedralaves he made his *Great Vivo-Dito* art manifesto-roll. He writes in Madrid the "police story" "Guillotine died guillotined" and calls for a "vivo-dito moment", which consists of a trip on foot on the subway from Sol to Lavapiés and a visit to the market. He works in collaboration with Antonio Saura and Manolo Millares.

In 1964 he exhibited at the Juana Mordó gallery in Madrid and returned to Buenos Aires, where he presented "My Dear Madrid". *Vivo-dito* show painting, with the participation of the Spanish dancer Antonio Gades. The action is called in the Bonino gallery, but due to the massive attendance, it is moved to San Martín Park. In 1965 he participated in New York in an action organized by Arman, Robert Filliou and Daniel Spoerri, called by Greco *Rifa Vivo-Dito* in Central Station. He returned to Spain and spent a season in Ibiza, the city where he began to write his novel *Besos Brujos*, which ended in Madrid.

In October 1965 he settled in Barcelona, where he ended his life before he was thirty-five years old. In 1991 the Valencian Institute of Modern Art (IVAM) presented the largest exhibition of Alberto Greco, curated by the Spanish critic Francisco Rivas; a year later the exhibition took place at the National Museum of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Claudio Abate

He was born in Rome, Italy in 1943. He died in Rome, Italy in 2017.

From a very young age, Claudio Abate showed interest in the world of art and photography. As the son of a painter friend of De Chirico, he grew up in the art world. He started working very early and at the age of 16 he collaborated with the Press Service Agency. From 1961 to 1963 he worked at Life Magazine as an assistant to Eric Lessing. For a long time he continued his collaboration with Play Man. In those same years he began to work for Sipario, becoming a witness to the avant-garde theater of Carmelo Bene. From 1963 are some photographs taken during the representation of *Christ 63*. The show causes the definitive closure of the Laboratorio Theater and the conviction in absentia of Carmelo Bene, because Giovanni Apostolo (Alberto Greco) urinated on the head of the Argentine ambassador. At that time, the photographs of Abate were the decisive test for the director's acquittal.

Collaboration with artists occurs and Claudio Abate naturally becomes the "eyewitness", as many have defined him, of the artistic ferment from the mid-sixties to the entire avant-garde of the following decade. Memorable is the photograph of Kounellis's *Horses in The Attic*, 1969, or the photograph representing *The Zodiac* by Gino de Dominicis in *The Attic*, 1970.

In the eighties, Abate confronted color for the first time, maintaining that intimate dialogue with the work and the artists, leaving aside the faithful description of reality, which is one of the main characteristics of color, and accentuating its mystery. From 1986 is a series of shots on the works of Joseph Beuys kept at the LandesMuseum in Darmstadt, with an installation designed and cared for in every detail by Beuys himself. The photographic project so desired by Eva Beuys, wife of the German artist, and carried out after his death, was later merged into a publication of Joseph Beuys called *Block Beuys*, published by Schirmer & Mosel in 1990, the photographs were first exhibited in 2006 at the Galleria dell'Oca in Rome.

His photographs have become the subject of numerous national and international exhibitions. Like the solo show in the Italian Pavilion at the 1993 Venice Biennale; the retrospective *Twenty Years* at the Atelier in autumn 2001 at the French Academy of Villa Medici Rome, to continue at the Museum of Belgrade in 2002; the photographs exhibited at MACRO, Rome, in 2002; at the Moscow Photography Biennale in 2004; at the *Maison de la Photographie* in 2006; and recently at the MART in Rovereto and at the French Academy in Rome in 2007; at the Pino Pascali Museum and at the El Ponte di Firenze gallery in 2008; just to name a few.

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