**Omar Galliani. Il disegno nell’acqua/**

**Omar Galliani. The drawing in water**

**CITY AQUARIUM**, Viale G.B. Gadio 2, Milan

15 September – 11 October 2015

*Grand opening on Monday,14 September at 6pm*

**CONCA DELL’INCORONATA**, Via San Marco, Milan

15 September – 25 October 2015

*Grand opening on Monday, 14 September at 7.30pm*

*press release, 14.09.15*

The project “Omar Galliani. Il disegno nell’acqua/Omar Galliani. The drawing in water” is made up of **an exhibition divided into two venues** in Milan, at **the City Aquarium** where there will be on display a substantial number of works made from 1979 up until today by Omar Galliani (many of which never seen before), and at the **Conca dell’Incoronata** in Via San Marco with **a *site specific* installation**.

**The event is promoted and produced by the Council of Milan, Culture Department for the City Aquarium, in co-operation with the Omar Galliani Archives and the Society of Navigli Lombardi; it also benefits from the patronage of the City of Locarno.**

It is curated by **Raffaella Resch** and is part of **Expo in città**, the series of events that will accompany the cultural life of Milan during the six months of the Universal Exposition.

Through his works Omar Galliani creates a link between the old and the contemporary, between art and multiple disciplines, drawing inspiration from Leonardo, from the history of Milan and the careful observation of nature and man.

The two venues, which are connected to the theme of water, are the most apt locations to present the public with the artist's works, who has been expressing his art through this natural element for years. The preference for drawing, the attention to the naturalistic and symbolic representation of the surrounding universe bring us back to Leonardo and, at the same time, the refined technique of the Renaissance, inspirational to Galliani, expresses itself through a touching burst of symbols, chiaroscuros, deconstructions of the universe and landscapes of the soul that are burdened with apprehensions.

“The exhibition *Omar Galliani. Il disegno nell’acqua* continues what begun at the City Aquarium of Milan with the exhibition *Leonardo e l’acqua* which aimed at investigating the role that water had in the development of Leonardo da Vinci's creative skills. For his work Omar Galliani indeed starts from his studies on Leonardo Da Vinci, examining the very close relationship that Leonardo had with our city, through the design of water canals; water also became the main theme of his later work”. In his statement, the Council Member responsible for the Department of Culture of the Council of Milan, **Filippo Del Corno**, highlights a fundamental feature of the exhibition, that is the strong relationship of the artist's contemporary language with Da Vinci's work.

There are also several cross references that draw together the works by Galliani and a more recent past: to Symbolism, Art Nouveau, oriental and arabesque themes, always enriched by linguistic and formal novelties, that are completely personal and original.

**The works on display at the Aquarium** - one of the more important buildings left in Milan by the International Exposition of 1906 - the set-up of which is curated by the Architect **Mario Botta**, are placed next to the water tanks, where there are the different water ecosystems, from the mountain springs to the sea. The meaningful selection consists of works made on several materials, such as **paper**, **poplar wood**, **rubberised canvas**, **copper** and **stone.** They are obtained through the use of personal and original techniques, where **water** becomes a fundamental part, not only as art fascination but also as an expressive means through which the artist leaches the drawings made by pencil, charcoal, sanguine and ink.

In the **section** “**Immersioni/Immersions**”, which unwinds through the garden, the ground floor and the basement, there are works created by immersion in this liquid, such as the *Aquaticus Liber* (1978), a book consisting of works enclosed in plastic envelopes together with the remains of the drawing *Ophelia d’après Millais*, that is put in water and unified to organic and plant sediments; *Nelle stanze di Ophelia/In the rooms of Ophelia*, the large painting on rubberised canvas sized 5x5m, worked *in progress* from 2010 to 2015, and settled in the outside garden.

Water-related works are also present in the “precious” notebooks of journeys, *Carnets de Voyage/Travel journals*, made at seaside locations throughout the years.

The action of water brings about changes and finalizes the work itself, adding to it a further aesthetic and symbolic value. A particular interpretation of this artistic way of expression is given by the curator Raffaella Resch in the catalogue of the exhibition: “the work of art in Galliani is an independent organism made up of parts that dissolve in the ecosystem, thus recomposing through the cycle of water and, in a manner of speaking, reproducing themselves, as nature does”.

In the evocative **section** “**Riflessi e rispecchiamenti/Reflections and mirrorings**”, placed on the first floor in the Winter Garden, there are works focused on the study of symmetry and reflection on a liquid surface as in the 15 never seen before drawings of *Il quaderno delle acque/The notebook of waters* (1978-1979), or in the series *In rame/In copper* (1989), where Galliani uses an original technique of chalcographic impression where water is united with acid. In other works on canvas and in the drawing on board *Fluire/To flow* (2014), that portrays a female face scattered with wedding rings and mirrored on the surface of a pond, the artist creates effects of transparency and wavy movement through the use of water.

In the catalogue Alessandra Tiddia presents a captivating interpretation of this section: “As in a sort of infinite game of mirrors, where each reflection is enriched by the previous one, the theme of water comes from the past to the large drawings here on display, that disclose a series of visual inputs and memories, more or less unconsciously determined by hints to the art of the past, especially the Symbolist, and that perhaps became part of the artist's life experiences. […]Before him many other great artists loved the use of black as a place of interaction with the most hidden dimension, from Piranesi to Goya, Redon, Seurat, Kubin and Sironi. Galliani becomes part of this world bringing in some novelties, from the linguistic point of view […] and also from the way of creating, which both characterize his graphic work in a very personal and original way”.

During the exhibition at the Aquarium there are projected two **videos**: *Omar Galliani*, *Fluire/Omar Galliani, To flow,* soundtrack by Erich Galliani, where the artist talks about the Po river while watching an overflow close to his birthplace and where he still lives, and he tells how the poplar trees reflecting on the water evoke themes that are very dear to him, such as the Double, the Siamese, or the reflecting image.

In the video-installation *Omar Galliani, Loop* the visitor can see a projection on the surface of water, in a fast "hypnotic" succession of the images of 500 works (24 per minute) made from the 1970s to the year 2000, accompanied by J. Pachebel's “Canon”. Both videos are directed by Massimiliano Galliani, and focus on the theme of the memory of water, very dear to the artist.

With the installation *Aquatica. La memoria dell’acqua/Aquatica. The memory of water*,especially made for its final location, the **Conca dell’Incoronata** - a part of the *Naviglio/Canal* of *Tombon de San Marc* which is still uncovered, featuring a system of original sluice gates designed by Leonardo and recently restored -, Galliani meaningfully expresses the relationship between water and work, that together interact in a process *in progress* before the visitor's eyes.

The large polyptych is made up of four poplar wood boards: two are made by brush with a mix of Himalayan salt crystals and egg whites, and define a female face with a hairstyle that reminds the observer of the female models in Leonardo, such as the lost painting of Leda or the sketch preserved at the Sforza Castle; the other two boards are painted in solid colour to represent the earth and sky.

Thanks to the rain and weather the installation is defined in its final form and dissolution. The visitor will witness an event empowered with a strong symbolic charge, where the formal perfection of Galliani's drawing will be erased and will merge with water, meant as a rejuvenating source, a new configuration of art.

Through this work of public art Galliani enriches his research experience on water and its processes of immersion and evaporation, that he begun to experiment with in 1977, with *Ophelia*,and then in 1979 with the performing act *La dea levò la fronte/The goddess raised her head* at theAretusa Spring in Sicily.

The exhibition is accompanied by a **catalogue** published by Silvana Editoriale, which represents both the reprint of the works on display at the Aquarium and the projects and images of the installation at the *Conca dell’Incoronata*, with a critical text by Alessandra Tiddia and essays by: Flavio Caroli, Omar Galliani and Raffaella Resch, with biographical notes by Nadia Stefanel.

**Short biography**

The artist has been on the international scene for many years now. In 1979 he was awarded a prize at the 1st international Triennial of Drawing at the Kunsthalle, in Nuremberg, and after that he was invited to Italian as well as international exhibitions and Biennials; for years Galliani has been carefully followed and admired by critics, nationally and internationally, for his formal creative talent and the exquisite flair of his works.

[Omar Galliani](http://www.omargalliani.com/) was born in 1954 at Montecchio Emilia (RE). After he obtained the Diploma at the Academy of Fine Arts of Bologna and his conceptual experiences during the 1970s, he became one of the main representatives of the group of the Anachronists and of the *Magico Primario*, taking part in three Biennials of Venice (1982, 1984, 1986), some side events (2007, 2013), the Biennials of Sao Paolo of Brazil, Paris and Tokyo (1982), as well as two *Quadrennials* of Rome (1986, 1996). He made public works such as *Sipario/Curtain* at the Valli Theatre of Reggio Emilia, 1991, and a large drawing for the Chamber of Deputies at Montecitorio, 1996. Many of his works are in the permanent collections of the most important museums from around the world. In 2003 he was invited to the 1st Biennial of Beijing with his work *Breve Storia del Tempo/Short History of Time*, where he was awarded the first prize. In China between 2006 and 2008 the touring exhibition “Disegno italiano/Italian Design” was hosted by the main museums of contemporary art: Beijing, Shanghai, Xian, Nanjing, Jinan, Chengdu, Dalian, Hangzhou, Ningbo and Tientsin. In 2007 the Chinese project was concluded with the exhibition “Tra Oriente e Occidente/Between East and West” at the Querini Stampalia Foundation, among the collateral events of the 52nd Biennial of Venice. In 2012 “The Male, the Female, the Sacred. Omar Galliani in Dialogue with the Drawing Tradition” opened at the new CAFA Art Museum, designed by Arata Isozaki, in Beijing. From recent years we can mention the main solo exhibitions: in 2013 at the State Historical Museum in Moscow and in 2014 at GAM in Turin; and in 2015 the group exhibition “Imago Mundi - Luciano Benetton Collection: Praestigium Italia” at the Giorgio Cini Foundation in Venice and the solo exhibtion “Omar Galliani… a Oriente/Omar Galliani... in the East” at CAMeC in La Spezia.

Invited by major museums and institutions, he held solo exhibitions in Europe, America, Asia and Africa.

Today he teaches Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera.

EXHIBITION DETAILS

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**15 September - 11 October 2015**

**City Aquarium of Milan**, Viale Gadio 2 - underground M2 stop at Lanza

Grand opening on Monday, 14 September at 6pm

**15 September - 25 October 2015**

**Conca dell’Incoronata**, via San Marco, Milan - Tram 33, Bus 94 or 43, underground M2 stop at Moscova

Grand opening on Monday, 14 September at 7.30pm

**Opening hours** from Tuesday to Sunday 9.30am-7.30pm (last admission 30 mins before the closing time). Closed on Mondays.

**Entrance fees** with Aquarium ticket: full price €5, reduced €3

**Info** Ph. +39 02 88 46 57 50 - [www.acquariocivicomilano.eu](http://www.acquariocivicomilano.eu)

**Guides and learning activities** Verdeacqua ONLUS

**Catalogue** Silvana Editoriale - www.silvanaeditoriale.it

**For info and bookings**

- groups and schools, ph. 02 88465754 - segreteria@verdeacqua.org

- families and single visitors, ph. 02 804487 - [eventi@verdeacqua.org](mailto:eventi@verdeacqua.org)

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text and image downloads from [www.irmabianchi.it](http://www.irmabianchi.it/mostra/omar-galliani-il-disegno-nell%E2%80%99acqua-expo-2015)

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