

# 60's



In 1960, Adami exhibited at the Galleria l'Attico in Rome, where his essay Referto (Report) was featured in the catalog:

*"To paint today is to create a narrative: to communicate our daily life, from the events we see with our own eyes around us, to those that are recounted to us; from mass communication: newspapers, television images, to news of war, hunger, disorders; to testify to the experience of this reality, beyond any vague conception, any 'psychological painting,' any mystifying and confused stance, thus beyond paintings produced by states bordering on neurosis, sensual excitements, ostentation of power; we must seek methods to establish an order."*

Enrico Crispolti, in the same catalog, writes that the main theme of Adami's work concerns contemporary man in society: his encounters, his condition, and his interdependent relationship with others. Quoting from the text:

*"Adami has a typical descriptive curiosity for mass events, a field of a wide range of forms of demagogic intervention and sometimes notorious mass means."*

He participated in the exhibitions Young Italian Painters at the Museum of Modern Art in Kamakura, Japan, and Ultime Tendenze at the Pagani Gallery in Milan. These were the years when Adami began painting between Italy, where he had a studio on Lake Orta, Paris, and London.

Valerio & Camilla in his London's studio



Valerio & hi brother Giancarlo

In 1961, he was present at the Italian Artists exhibition at the Cambridge Art Association in Boston and participated in the Anti-procés exhibition at the Brera Gallery in Milan curated by Alain Jouffroy. Meanwhile, his painting gradually began to abandon the "black backgrounds," and the iconography of American comics entered his compositional language.

Adami wrote:

*"To provide our reality with a composition and a way to use it: to find all the elements that compose it. To use the languages that speak to us every day, found among people at the café, in supermarkets with the shop assistants who only read the price, one after the other.*

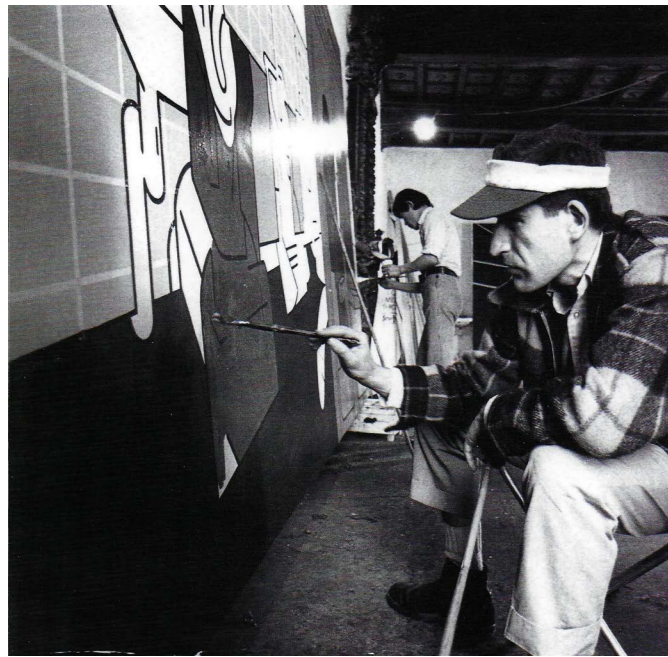
*[...] To seek the concrete origin of the most intimate impulses. To take into account the complexity of facts, the experiences of others, the values of the past, etc."*

Despite not being passionate about comics, in the sixties Adami used those graphic signs to enhance the structure of his works and accentuate their sound effect, as in the painting "Blam" from 1962. This attention to sound is also influenced by reflections stemming from his musical listening (experiences?). As the artist himself will affirm:

*"My attempt to find a figural transposition to dodecaphonic language corresponded to the desire to encapsulate a thought on the tragic within the form."*

He participated in the exhibition Alternative Attuali in L'Aquila, curated by Enrico Crispolti, the exhibition that seals the new figurative language of Italian painting. On June 9, 1962, Valerio and Camilla married in Maggiora at the villa of Camilla's mother's family. From then on, they would spend summers in the large phalanstery house in Arona, Villa Cantoni, an important building rich in history, where Camilla spent her early childhood and which, after the deportation of her father Victor and grandmother Irma by the SS, was occupied by Nazi troops and immediately after the war was transformed into a school.

After rearranging part of the existing seventy rooms, Camilla and Valerio began to host artist and intellectual friends from all over the world, such as Eduardo Arroyo, Titina Maselli, the writer Édouard Glissant, and the philosopher Jacques Derrida. In this context, discussions were held, in the midst of the years of protest, about



Valerio e il suo assistente Keizo Morishita, mentre dipingono Latrine in Times Square a villa Cantoni \ ©Ugo Mulas

the change in reality and how to represent it. Thanks to the spaciousness of the villa, Valerio began to paint on large canvases. The role of assistants in Arona became fundamental for Valerio, with Keizo Morishita (whose son Luca Taro has been Valerio's assistant since 2014), Christopher Kilmartin, and Denis Masi an artist and photographer, who remained a fraternal friend.

Before leaving, all guests had to participate in a ritual: they had to be photographed in two poses. In the first, they lined up on the stairs at the entrance. In the second, the most fun, they had to imitate a famous painting, recreating a real Tableau Vivant. One unforgettable moment was in 1975 with Derrida, his wife Marguerite, their son Jean, Camilla, Valerio, and the dog Blondie, staging Nicolas Poussin's "The Massacre of the Innocents."

"Arona. My lacustrine love. A place marked by questions and answers."

In London, he met Graham Sutherland, frequented Jim Dine and Richard Hamilton.

In Paris, he formed a friendship with the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes and Julio Cortázar.

Here he participated in a happening at Bus Palladium with his friend Jean-Jacques Lebel, an artist and collector. At the invitation of Roland Penrose, he exhibited at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London the following paintings "Glance directed at," "Bowling," "The food," "Shower," and "Zebra."

In 1963, he participated in the Salon de Mai in Paris and the International Directory of Contemporary Art in Venice. He painted "L'ora del sandwich" and the series "Alice nel paese della violenza" where a clear compositional tendency towards the metamorphosis of forms emerges. In relation to this, Alain Jouffroy observes that: "Adami integrates, merges, reconciles: he wants to link what is separate, resolve antagonisms."

In 1964, he participated in Documenta in Kassel, where Werner Haftmann dedicated a personal room to him, and he painted "Autolavaggio mentale" In 1965, he presented "Private Massacres" at the Schwarz Gallery in Milan. Divided into four sections, The Rooms, The Zoos, The Sphinxes, Toys, the exhibition owes its title to a line by Wystan Auden:

*"Behind every sociable eye, loving its home, private massacres occur."*

In the catalog, Adami inaugurates the habit of



accompanying the paintings with corresponding "sinopias," brief personal and philosophical reflections on drawing, line and his work. Subsequently, these reflections were collected in the book titled Sinopie published in 2000 by SE editions.

Adami's Milanese studio, in Via Daniele Crespi, had become a meeting place for foreign artists passing through the city. Friedensreich Hundertwasser, the Austrian painter, worked there on a series of drawings that would make him famous.

In 1966, Adami drew "The Portrait of Nietzsche," the first of a long series of "literary portraits" representing his soul masters, which he continues to portray with a freer style that brings him back to his master Kokoschka.

During the winter, he moved to New York. A friendship was born with Saul Steinberg, to whom he was bound by love and a life dedicated to line and drawing. He frequented the painter Ray Johnson, the actor Taylor Mead, the poets Andrei Voznesensky and Allen Ginsberg, and the New York underground.

He painted "Hotel Chelsea Bathroom," a painting that captures the period Valerio and Camilla spent in New York, at the Chelsea Hotel, in Midtown. In the past, the neighborhood was a real metropolitan jungle, far from reassuring and safe, but Valerio and Camilla loved that unconventional and risky side of 1960s New York. Today the Chelsea Hotel has been renovated and transformed into a luxurious hotel.

It was also the time when Adami created "Latrines in Times Square," a large emblematic painting that reflects his distinctive technique, influenced by his observational approach in both drawing and photography. With the camera in the 1960s, he captured serial glimpses of the city, a true visual archive from which he would draw for many of his future works, along with the thousands of images he had cut out from newspapers and various books throughout his life.

In 1967, he won the Lissone Prize with the work "Camel," which is now part of the historical collection of the Lissone MAC.

In Paris, he met Carlos Franqui, a poet and journalist who played an important role in the Cuban Revolution, together with Fidel Castro, by setting up Radio Rebelde. Before breaking with the regime and leaving into exile as a dissident, Franqui in 1967 organized the Salon de Mayo in Havana, where the most important artists from all over the world exhibited.

Franqui remained firm in the belief that he could instill a glimmer of hope in his country



Mural in Cuba from the group show, 1967

through culture, and on the occasion of the Salon de Mayo, he invited a delegation of artists and intellectuals. It was Wifredo Lam who organized the group that came from Paris. The famous Cuban painter involved Valerio and Camilla, and they stayed for three months in Havana with Erró, Gilles Aillaud, and Eduardo Arroyo. Unforgettable was the organization in Havana of a great show in which the invited artists to the Salon participated (among many others, César Rebeyrolle, Piotr Kowalski, Augustin Cárdenas) and the Tropicana dance troupe. The dances lasted three days and two nights, without interruption. Above the stage, to leave a mark of this event, an immense canvas was mounted on which the Salon painters, the Cuban painters, the invited poets, and writers created a collective mural.

Each of the hundred participants' spaces was drawn by lot by Camilla. Space No. 26 was assigned to Fidel Castro. Adami painted number 3. He shared a studio with Erró, which was set up in an apartment at the Hotel Nacional, where he painted a series of Cuban landscapes. He visited Ernest Hemingway's house in Cuba, the Finca Vigia, to which he dedicated the painting "Hemingway's Study."

In Cuba, Valerio and Camilla found a population living in anticipation of an imminent American attack and still believing in the Revolution, despite the economic difficulties.

Valerio then participated in the São Paulo Biennale in Brazil and created a collaborative drawing with Sebastian Matta.

In 1968, at the invitation of Alan Solomon, the famous critic of pop art who was very interested in his work, Adami exhibited in the exhibition Young Italians. This exhibition from the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston was then transferred to the Jewish Museum in New York.

But Adami resisted attempts to affiliate his compositions with the experiences of not only surrealist but also pop avant-gardes. "I have always strongly rejected the label of pop" he declared in a conversation with Carlos Franqui.

*"Fortunately, today it is a term almost fallen into disuse. If we take a bottle of Coca-Cola, even if it has never appeared in one of my paintings, but it is a clear term of pop comparison; therefore, if I had introduced a bottle of Coca-Cola into one of my paintings, it would have been that precise bottle that was in relation to a moment of my life, that Coca-Cola that*



Studio Marconi \ ©Enrico Cattaneo

*I had in front of me the day a girl picked it up. And it does not at all reflect, in the pop sense, its being a symbol of a society."*

Also, in 1968 at the Venice Biennale, the great Biennale of protest, a room was dedicated to him where he exhibited, among others, the paintings made from drawings during his stay in New York, but which he later decided to withdraw. As stated in the following writing:

*"I absolutely do not want my paintings to constitute even the smallest element that enters the dimension of violence that has been created around the Venice Biennale. In the continuation of this state of affairs, I have decided to withdraw from the exhibition."*

The catalog accompanying the paintings begins with a text by Carlos Fuentes, Líneas para Adami. Ugo Mulas took beautiful photographs of that cancelled exhibition.

The trip to Caracas on the occasion of his personal exhibition at the Mendoza Foundation was the discovery and the beginning of a great love for Latin American culture and landscape.

With Carlos Fuentes, who in Latin America was considered a star even by the poorest population, aboard a ship, the Virgen de la Churruga, he set off on a long journey to Puerto Rico. He reached Mexico City, where he formed a friendship with the Mexican writer and Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1990 Octavio Paz. From here, he began a long journey by car, train, and makeshift means through Mexico to Guatemala.

In the spring, he was in Flanders, where he worked in a new studio near Ostend and painted the following works: "Interno pubblico", "Sala d'aspetto alla Paddington Station" (drawn in London), "Interno con travestito su poltrona" and "The Ring" (painted as a backdrop for a boxing match held later at the Marconi Studio in Milan during an exhibition of the artist).



New York's studio