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### **Bertozzi & Casoni**



Giampaolo Bertozzi, born in Borgo Tossignano in 1957, and Stefano Dal Monte Casoni, born in Lugo di Romagna in 1961, met while studying at the Gaetano Ballardini Ceramic Art Institute of Faenza, Italy. In 1980, they founded a ceramics production company called “Bertozzi & Casoni s.n.c.,” thereby inserting themselves into the workshop tradition. Their work was featured in the Italian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2009 and 2011. Recent museum exhibitions include a survey at the Castello Sforzesco and Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza (2008-2009), a solo show at Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali, Polignano a Mare, Italy (2011-2012); and “Bertozzi & Casoni: Timeless” at the Museum Beelden aan Zee, Den Haag, Netherlands (2013). Bertozzi & Casoni currently live and work in Imola near Bologna, Italy.

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**Bertozzi & Casoni**  
**Selected Press**

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Ebony, David. "David Ebony's Top Ten New York Gallery Shows for June." *news.artnet.com*  
(Artnet), 26 June 2015.

artnet®



Bertozzi & Casoni, *Brillo & Archie*, 2001-2005.  
Photo: Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York.

## 6. Bertozzi & Casoni at Sperone Westwater, through July 24

The Italian ceramics duo Bertozzi & Casoni are known for technical prowess and sculptural wit. This dazzling exhibition, an overview of their works from the past decade, shows the full range of their aims and endeavors. There is preponderance here for images of industrial waste and consumerist detritus, the verity of which can be astounding.

*Composition No. 12 (Cicogne)* (2008) shows tall stacks of plastic crates, and leaky oil barrels topped by a huge bird's nest and two roosting storks, all rendered in ceramics. *Brillo & Archie* (2001-2005) comes across as Bertozzi & Casoni's sincere homage to New York and Pop art, showing in a characteristically realist mode Warhol's landmark "Brillo Box" sculptures, one of which has been converted to a dog house for Warhol's beloved dachshund, depicted here life-size, in glazed ceramic, proudly posing amidst the ceramic cardboard.

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Mattioli, Massimo. "Italiani in transferta. Betrozzi & Casoni protagonisti da Sperone Westwaeter Lugano, in attesa della grande mostra mantovana di Palazzo Te." *artribune.com* (Artribune), 17 April 2014.



È un momento d'oro per **Betrozzi & Casoni**, i maestri della scultura in ceramica policroma, della quale hanno saputo riscoprire la grande tradizione innestandola nelle temperie contemporanee. Mentre le straordinarie sale di Palazzo Te a Mantova si preparano ad ospitare – dal 7 giugno al 20 agosto – la loro esposizione dal titolo *Dove Come Quando*, curata da Marco Tonelli, le luci della ribalta si aprono per il duo al di là delle Alpi, con la mostra *Appunti*

*recenti (contrappunti)* appena inaugurata alla Galleria Sperone Westwater di Lugano, dove resterà visibile fino al 12 luglio.

Undici opere in ceramica realizzate dal 2002 al 2014, con “*un’ironia sempre controbilanciata da un inossidabile virtuosismo esecutivo*”. Da *Ossobello*, un ordinato accumulo di ossa realizzato nel 2002, a *Ma*, del 2010, una sedia con testa di capriolo su una pila di piatti sporchi, fino a agli accumuli di libri di *Still life*, del 2014. *Artribune* non ha perso l’occasione per l’escursione transfrontaliera, ecco e immagini dall’opening...



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Tansini, Laura. Review. "Milan: 'Italian Sculpture of the XXI Century', Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro." *Sculpture*, November 2011, Vol. 30, No. 9, p. 71.

**MILAN**

**"Italian Sculpture of the XXI Century"**

Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro

For "Italian Sculpture of the XXI Century," curator Marco Meneguzzo selected works by 80 artists, ranging from elder statesmen (Nunzio and Dessi) to mature artists of the next generation (Cattelan, Bartolini, Dynys, Arienti, Moro, Beecroft, Cecchini, Sissi, Demetz, and Cuoghi), to younger, up-and-coming artists (Sassolino, Simeti, Previdi, and Gennari). His choices highlight the different expressions and languages of the so-called "new tendencies" in sculpture today and demonstrate how much boundaries have changed, if they even still exist.

For decades, artists have felt free to use any kind of material. For instance, Francesco Arena's *Testa di Lenin nella fodera* (*Lenin's head inside the lining*) bestows a strong title on a floor-strewn coat that hides a mysterious object within its folds, and Maurizio Savini's *Last Call* renders a crucified, cell-phone-speaking corporate manager in pink chewing-gum. Perino & Vele make a camping tent from papier-mâché in *Don't Disturb*; Erica Borghi uncrusts a life-size dummy with plastic nails; Bolla creates a *Vanitas—Suicide* from thousands of Swarovski crystals; and Cattelan and Vedovamazzei make use of taxidermy and stuffed animals. Classic materials such as marble and bronze, however, are still in use. Vanessa Beecroft (better known for her performances, videos, and photos) contributed a pair of black marble female legs, while Gerhard Demetz presented two bronze scul-



tures representing Hitler and Mao as children in shorts.

I recognize the hybridization of languages in sculpture, but I am not so concerned about "labels." For me, the real question is: Is it art? I have a very simple and basic answer. If I feel an emotion, if my heart, head, or stomach gets upset, if the memory of what I have seen keeps me company or persecutes me, if what I have seen has changed my way of thinking, then yes, it is art. I did not see much art in this show, but I did sense a lot of "meaning," "concern," and "sharing." It was also extremely interesting to take note of the changes in what artists present as sculpture. Many of the works in this show offered bitter, ironic, or

accusatory comments on our times and the too many injustices that we pretend not to see.

I will not forget the light irony pervading the juxtaposition of Canevari's *Hanging Around* (the work is reminiscent of a guillotine) and Bolla's *Vanitas—Suicide*; nor will I forget the sad loneliness of Adrian Paci's *Home to go* (a life-size plaster man walking slowly under the weight of a roof tied to his back). Before leaving and because I needed beauty, I immersed myself again in the magic of Nunzio's monumental *Attraverso* (*Across*), the wall that welcomes visitors at the entrance to the Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro.

—Laura Tansini

Above: Bertozzi & Casoni, *Madonna scheletrita*, 2008. Polychrome ceramic and silver, 200 x 354 x 241 cm. Right: Gerhard Demetz, *Hitler Mao*, 2010. Bronze, 2 elements, 168 x 37 x 37 cm. each. Both from "Italian Sculpture of the XXI Century."

Pryor, John-Paul. "Vanitas: The Transience of Earthly Pleasures." *Dazed & Confused* (dazeddigital.com),  
12 October 2010.

## Dazed Digital

### Vanitas: The Transience of Earthly Pleasures

Dazed talk to the curators of one of the standout shows taking place during Frieze week to talk about the fleeting nature of existence

Text by [John-Paul Pryor](#)

There is perhaps no greater question than that of what awaits the soul in the proverbial undiscovered country, and the Vanitas tradition in art has always been there to remind us that what we accumulate in this world will mean little when we have returned to dust. In the All Visual Arts show *Vanitas: The Transience of Earthly Pleasures*, leading contemporary artists, such as Wolfe von Lenkiewicz, Paul Fryer and The Chapman Brothers exhibit work that explicitly explores the language of the Vanitas tradition and to some degree updates it, reminding our own consumer-driven culture of Shakespeare's assertion in *Richard II* that "nothing can we call our own but death, and the small model of the barren earth that serves as paste and cover to our bones". Here, we talk to the exhibition's curators Joe La Placa and Mark Sanders about life, death and the purpose of art in a godless society.

#### **Dazed Digital: Why did you choose to explore Vanitas, and why do you think it is relevant now?**

**Joe La Placa:** From prior conversations we have had, you know that I have been working on *The Art Imperative* and making the argument that art is imperative to human survival. In that model, we have that skeleton of anxiety – our anxiety about what it is to be human, our anxiety about what it is to be a man, our anxiety about what it is to be a woman and then, of course, the big one, our anxiety about death and impermanence... so a show that concerns itself with those issues naturally leads us to the tradition of Vanitas. The original Vanitas works were kind of a response to the culture of conspicuous consumption in Holland in the 17th century, and a reminder that you can make all the money you want, but you can't take it with you when you go. There's a funny contradiction there though, because these are works of art about value and transience that actually become valuable.

**Mark Sanders:** I think the starting point for the show came to us when Joe and I went to a Vanitas show in Paris, and the general theme was skulls. We were a little frustrated by that because Vanitas can have a far broader language than the motif of the skull, and we wanted to try and explore that language through contemporary art. The artists we've commissioned in this show have really grasped hold of the theme and investigated the depth of the language...

#### **DD: In a post-religious society, where does Vanitas tip over into nihilism?**

**Mark Sanders:** That's an interesting question because the original Vanitas pieces had a connection to



religion, and served as reminder of this idea that it is 'easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the gates of Heaven'. They were created in order to prepare you for the shedding or stripping down of 'you' in order that you could enter the next stage, but it's true – what role does Vanitas take in a society without religion?

**Joe La Placa:** Well, I don't think it's just a 'fuck it all' thing. I mean, in another way, maybe Vanitas is just saying to us that it's okay to accumulate these objects but just don't take it all too seriously, and that's something in contemporary consumer-driven culture that is very important. The show is definitely also about the evolving language of Vanitas, which has become richer and more subtle over the years. It was important to me to make a clear relationship to history, and what Vanitas might come to mean in a society where in 30 years people may not even die..

**Mark Sanders:** It's certainly interesting that surrounding your self with objects can become a golden cage, and you can come to a place where you are not free in your head. You can see that with extremely wealthy mean – i mean, what do you do with your immense wealth? Do you go and buy another yacht, or car, or house, or do you build yourself a beautiful art collection or foundation, and test yourself in a way that hopefully helps you to evolve. I think when I am on my death bed, I won't have found out the answers to anything, but it's important to know you tried and tested yourself and that you didn't fall into someone else's pattern. For me, that is basically the art imperative – art asks questions of you all the time and it gives you a starting place from which to begin to reflect and contemplate, and we all really need that space.

**DD: The contemplation of impermanence doesn't always leave people in a good place...**

**Mark Sanders:** Well, we live in a culture that is all about being young, and death is something we often tend to sweep under the carpet. Many of the artists that All Visual Arts work with, and that we have commissioned for this show, have a real understanding of history and the past, and I love that. If you look at what The Chapmans have done with those paintings from the 1700s, you are looking at a 250-year-old collaboration. I'm very interested in artists who push the boundaries – there are no rules.

**DD: Do you think we are in a state of shock at the accelerated pace of the times we live in...**

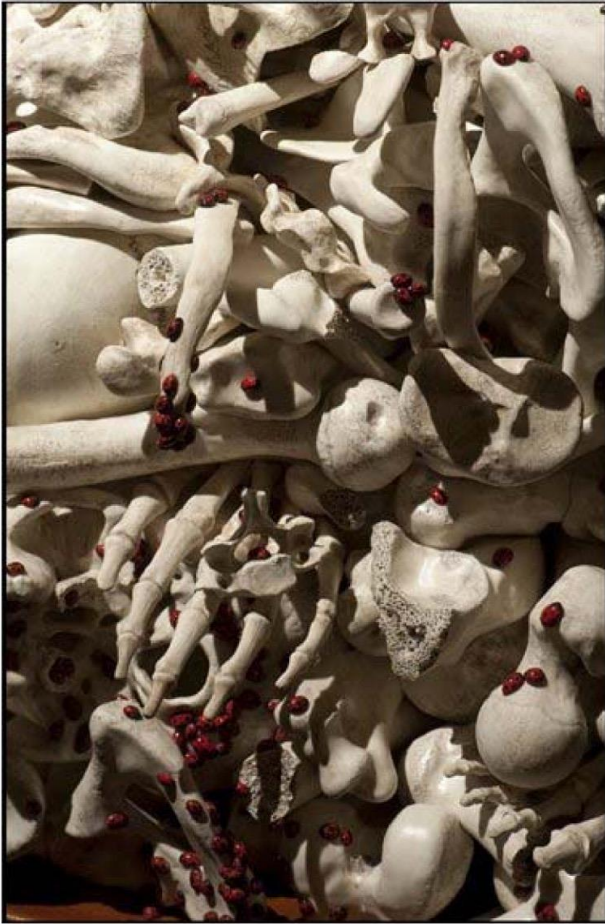
**Joe La Placa:** We are going faster, and maybe we are losing something in that, but we are gaining something too. Just yesterday, I was looking at the work of Ai Weiwei, who is ecstatic at the way he can communicate with the world through Twitter and so on. He thinks of ideas of seeds, and in this work he has made at The Turbine Hall with these 100 million hand-crafted porcelain sunflower seeds, he is saying, 'I am planting the seed of art in your head.' People are going to take those seeds home, and each one of them will have this tiny unique piece of art.

**Mark Sanders:** Time is certainly a key thing in this show. In the piece by Paul Fryer you have a Muon that has travelled through space for billions of years, and all you see of its life is this split second flash at the end of its journey, which is why when you look at that piece, it's very contemplative. Sure, there are all these things going on in there about how these Muons cause cell disintegration and ageing when they pass through you, but it's even more than that: it's actually about seeing all those billions of years disappear in a split second.

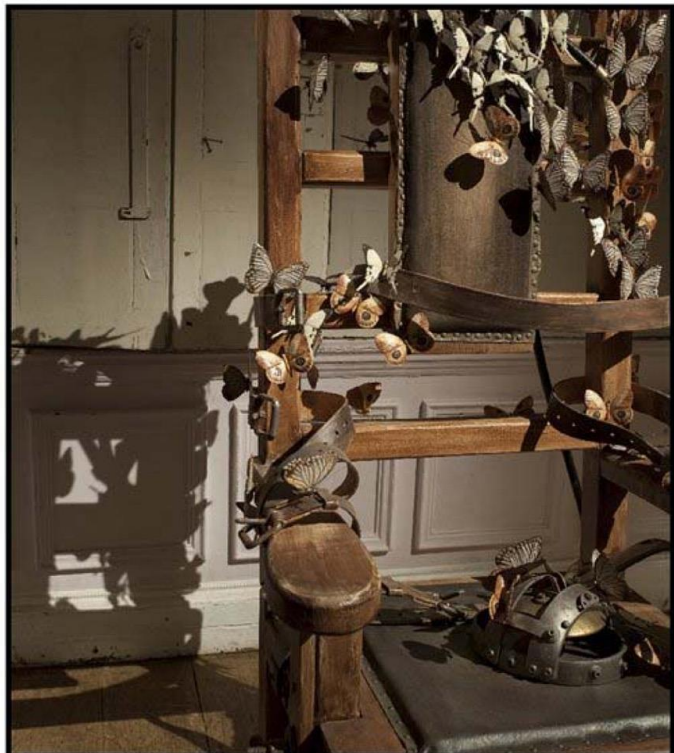
*Vanitas is on at 33 Portland Place, London W1B 1QE, from Oct 12 2010 - Nov 17, 2010*



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Vanderbilt, Tom. "Grand Illusion." *WSJ Magazine*, June 2010, p. 40-41.

40 GATHERER

HOW MUCH IS IT WORTH?

## GRAND ILLUSION

Trompe l'oeil—possibly one of the oldest, and certainly one of the most obvious, examples of humor in the art world—is undergoing a resurgence

BY TOM VANDERBILT

Artists have long been muddling truth and viewers' expectations with the techniques of trompe l'oeil—French for "trick the eye." Subjects seem to step out of paintings, works themselves appear to be peeling away from the frame or under cracked glass, and love letters and paper money look tantalizingly within reach. Trompe l'oeil flourished in antiquity (Pliny the Elder tells a story of birds swooping in to devour a depiction of fruit), went missing during the Middle Ages and then bloomed in the Baroque. "The age of resemblance is drawing to a close," wrote Michel Foucault of the departure from Renaissance norms. "It is leaving behind it nothing but games."

There's been a recent uptick of interest in trompe l'oeil—last year, Sotheby's Amsterdam sold Johannes Leemans's "The Property of a Gentleman," a painting that appears to be a collection of hunting gear mounted on a wall, for more than twice its estimate at \$192,000. Trompe-themed gallery shows are booming too, though contemporary artists more often than not build their visual double takes through sculpture, creating objects—frequently out of the detritus of consumer society—that are not as they seem. Whether it is the virtuoso craftsmanship of the work, or something suggestive about the current moment, collectors are taking notice.

As an investment, trompe l'oeil's crowd-pleasing ways make it a good bet, and the value in the momentary thrill of being had transcends genres and centuries alike. "As long as I've been in this business, there's always been a great interest in trompe l'oeil," says Christopher Apostle, head of the Old Masters Painting department at Sotheby's. A work owned by designer Bill Blass, a Jacobus Biltius canvas depicting an array of weaponry, sold at Sotheby's New York in 2004 for \$344,000, nearly twice its high estimate. "People find them very easy to live with," Apostle says. "I've seen trompe l'oeil in serious collections of 17th-century Dutch painting, and also in collections that don't focus on Old Masters, just because they're so witty and interesting."

In a June Sotheby's New York auction, a number of trompe-l'oeil works were for sale, including a painting of an open cupboard by 17th-century Flemish artist Cornelius Norbertus Gijsbrechts, with a high estimate of \$180,000. Many pieces, Apostle says, functioned like vanitas work,



**Clockwise from top left:**  
 Richard Haden's "Distinguishable," wood, 2007;  
 Pere Borrell del Caso's "Escaping Criticism," oil on canvas, 1874;  
 Bertozzi & Casoni's "Intervallo," glazed ceramic, 2008



emphasizing the ephemerality of life, but another famous Gijsbrechts painting faithfully depicts the back of a canvas, which Apostle calls "a joke on connoisseurship and looking at the backs of paintings for provenance."

The self-referential art joke is not new, but it is surprising that it keeps finding novel ways to goof on its audience. Take Susan Collis, this year's "Commissioned Artist" at the Armory Show, who has assembled what seem to be the remains of a just-concluded installation: hanging screws, ringed Rawlplug anchors, bits of wood studded with nails. But in the tradition of trompe l'oeil as luxury object, the hardware is made of gold, gems flash out of screw heads and splattered paint is in fact embossed lapis lazuli. Her low-key work has been bought by high-profile collectors ranging from Anita Zabłudowicz to designer Paul Smith.

"The work needs to be missed at first," says David Hoyland, of London's Seventeen Gallery—otherwise it falls conceptually flat. Pricing varies, from a couple thousand dollars for a pair of screws

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF NICHOLAS ROBINSON GALLERY; COURTESY OF BUCERIUS KUNST FORUM; COURTESY OF SPERONE WESTWATER

THERE IS A  
'MOMENT OF  
DISCOVERY,  
NOT ALWAYS  
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LEVEL'

**Clockwise from top:** Jud Nelson's "Shirts 1-Cardin," Carrara marble, 1985; Victor Spinski's "Box of Four Paint Cans," white clay, 2008; Edwaert Collier's "Trompe l'Oeil Still Life of a Letter Rack Holding Newspapers, Letters, a Comb, Scissors, Wax, a Letter Opener, a Magnifying Glass and Other Objects," oil on canvas, circa 1699



with the banal, becomes topical in Alison Elizabeth Taylor's recent show, "Foreclosed," at New York's James Cohan Gallery. Taylor, a Nevada native based in New York City, presents what seem at first glance to be graphic trompe-l'oeil paintings of vandalized houses—cut wires spilling out of sheetrock, bulging puffs of pink insulation, a shotgun blast in a wall. A closer look reveals another twist: The works (drawn from photographs Taylor took in real houses in Nevada damaged by their foreclosed-on owners) are actually rendered in the ancient art of marquetry, or inlaid wood. Gallery co-owner Jane Cohan says that while the approach runs the risk of gimmickry, "the landscape and the people that she's depicting are really all enriched by using the material—if she did paintings of the same scenes, it wouldn't have the same power."

Just as the 19th-century American painter John Haberle's trompe paintings of paper money reflected contemporary concerns about the stability of the currency system, Taylor's trickery seems of the age—for what was the financial crisis but the revealing of a massive gap between appearance and reality? "The damage that people were doing to their homes was the tangible physical evidence of this process where there's unseen bankers and mortgage brokers," Taylor says. Inspired by the Duke of Urbino's trompe-l'oeil marquetry "Studiolo"—a sort of walk-in trophy cabinet touting the Duke's accomplishments that is now installed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art—Taylor's similarly scaled "Room" portrays what could be a cinder-block house. The irony is not lost on her. "There's a reason marquetry was used on Marie Antoinette's console table," she says of the luxury of the intricate inlay work. There's something poignant in the fact that "Room," which last sold in the range of \$150,000, is undoubtedly worth more than the houses she depicts. ♦

to as much as \$50,000 for what Hoyland rather unself-consciously describes as a "pile of rubbish." An entire wall that Collis crafted for her show at Birmingham, England's Ikon Gallery—the joke is you walk through and miss the show's biggest act—is likely to sell well above that. Though perhaps not without some eye-rolling in certain quarters, as with the sale, for \$20,000, by Christie's New York of Gavin Turk's "Brillo 5," a seemingly ordinary cardboard box actually cast from bronze.

Andy Warhol's Brillo box—albeit tipped over and housing a dead bird—is also referenced by the Italian sculptors Bertozzi and Casoni, who have moved in their exquisitely crafted ceramics toward an increasing realism, underpinned with what David Leiber, a partner at

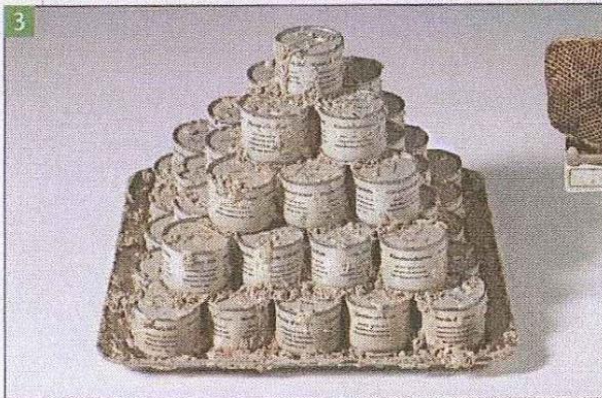
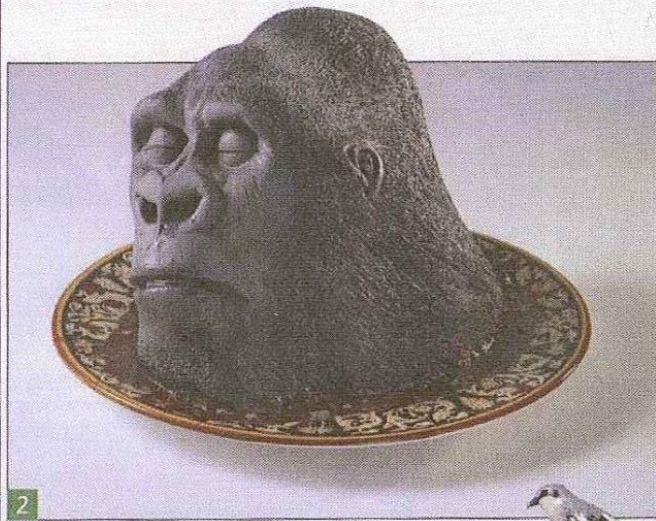
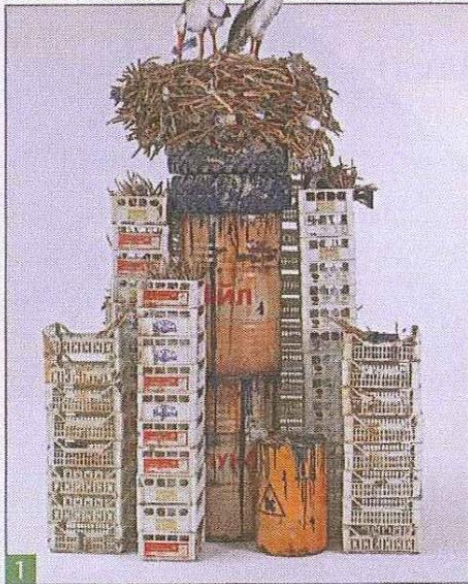
Sperone Westwater gallery in New York City, calls an almost Felliniesque humor. "They once made this wonderful statement: 'We love garbage as long as it doesn't smell,'" Leiber says. "They're rendering permanent these objects that you would associate with degradation." When viewers first encounter the work, Leiber says, they assume it is bricolage, something real—"the composition alone holds people's interest"—but there is a "moment of discovery, not always instantaneous, that just brings it to another level." The duo's work (with larger pieces selling for upward of \$500,000) has increasingly caught the eye of collectors like Marty Margulies and Beth DeWoody.

The idea of blending illusion and reality, mixing luxury

“Arte & Mercato: Il prezzo della ceramica.” *Arte Mondadori*, May 2010, p. 172.

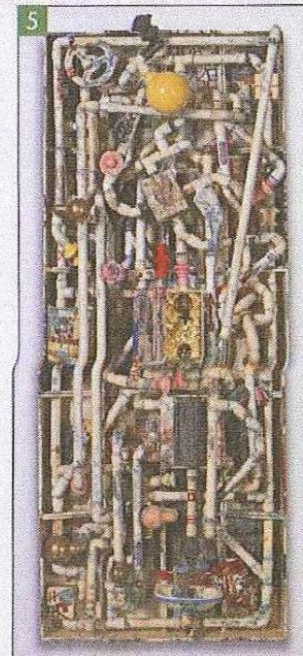
A R T E & M E R C A T O

IL PREZZO DELLA CERAMICA



- 1 **Composizione n. 12 (Cicogne), 2009.**
- 2 **Grottesca (Testa di gorilla su piatto), 2009.**
- 3 **Per Manzoni, 2009.**
- 4 **Adesso non è più adesso, 2009.**
- 5 **Composizione e scomposizione, 2007.**

**BERTOZZI & CASONI.** Nei mesi scorsi le loro opere hanno riscosso uno strepitoso successo a New York, ospiti, per la seconda volta, della galleria Sperone Westwater (tel. 001212-9997337). Giampaolo Bertozzi (Borgo Tossignano, 1957) e Stefano Dal Monte Casoni (Lugo di Romagna, 1961) si sono fatti notare riproducendo meticolosamente in ceramica gli avanzi della società dei consumi. Una loro opera monumentale, presentata nel padiglione italiano dell'ultima Biennale, attirava i visitatori, che si fermavano a osservarne i più minuti dettagli. I loro assemblaggi erano stati protagonisti anche di un'altra mostra a Venezia, nelle sale di Ca' Pesaro, durante la Biennale del 2007. La produzione di Bertozzi & Casoni, trattata in Italia dalla galleria Cardì (tel. 02-29003235), è stata offerta da Sperone Westwater tra i 25 e i 200mila euro, a seconda del formato e della difficoltà del lavoro.



Capelli, Pia. "Art for two." *Elle (Italian Edition)*, March 2010, p. 374.

*In alcuni casi, il numero perfetto è il due. Ma se nella vita essere metà di una coppia è un fatto abituale, nell'arte può rappresentare una straordinaria eccezione. Proprio là dove il talento va di pari passo con l'ego, ecco che creatività fa rima con fedeltà. Assoluta*

di PIA CAPELLI

# ART FOR *two*



Ceramica per due: l'opera *Barile con Tucano*. A fianco, Stefano Casoni e Giampaolo Bertozzi.

## Ceramisti anticonformisti **BERTOZZI E CASONI**

È stata la "beata incoscienza" a mettere insieme Stefano Casoni e Giampaolo Bertozzi nel 1979, quando ventenni frequentavano l'Istituto d'Arte per la Ceramica Ballarini di Faenza. Amici, condividevano molti gusti, perché non aprire un laboratorio insieme? Trent'anni dopo, litigando e battibeccando, sono diventati due star internazionali, con le loro creazioni nate da un'idea comune di "anticonformismo e di continuo rinnovamento estetico e tecnologico" in un campo che è in perenne evoluzione («Oggi i ceramici avanzati fanno navette spaziali», fa notare Casoni).

Le baruffe di allora non si sono mai placate. «Contrasti di personalità, zuffe continue. Ma se all'inizio ci vedevamo solo in laboratorio, con il tempo si finisce per condividere tutto, persino le vacanze». Oggi l'uno è la "coscienza critica" dell'altro, e in laboratorio con loro c'è una struttura di dieci collaboratori («una

specie di galera», dicono ridendo) con una stretta tabella di marcia, perché mostre e biennali chiamano in tutto il mondo. Ma, riflette Casoni: «Dopo una vita passata a minacciarci a vicenda, il bilancio è più che positivo, perché il confronto continuo obbliga a mettersi in discussione. Certo bisogna metabolizzare l'idea di non essere mai del tutto protagonisti. Ma i Beatles insegnano: non è detto che da soli si sia più forti, anzi».

Aiuta un approccio ironico alle cose, un umorismo alla Sandra e Raimondo: quando parli con uno dei due, senti l'altro sotto che borbotta («Non posso rispondere adesso, mi si secca tutto...», «Cosa ti si secca? Dai qua, che pulisco io»). E alla fine con un sorriso che si riflette nella voce, la resa. «Veide? Siamo ancora due esagitati».

Dove li vediamo: fino al 20 marzo con la mostra "Intervallo" a New York da Sperone Westwater Gallery, [www.speronewestwater.com](http://www.speronewestwater.com).

Laster, Paul. "Bertozzi & Casoni, 'Intervallo.'" *Time Out New York*, 18-24 February 2010, p. 45.

# Art

Edited by Howard Halle  
art@timeoutny.com

## Reviews

### Bertozzi & Casoni, "Intervallo"

★★★★★

**Sperone Westwater**, through  
Mar 20 (see Chelsea)

Italian artists Giampaolo Bertozzi and Stefano Dal Monte Casoni—better known as Bertozzi & Casoni—make fantastic ceramic sculptures that are so true to life, they belie their earthy materials. Collaborating on works in clay for the past 30 years, the duo has perfected their techniques to the point of rendering objects as thin as paper currency or as complex as a beehive with absolute accuracy. Their second solo show at the gallery—which includes a severed gorilla's head on a platter, a stork's nest atop a pile of junk and a tray stacked with cans of Piero Manzoni's *Merda d'artista*—continues Bertozzi & Casoni's irreverent fusion of tradition and experimentation.

*Grottesca (testa Gorilla su piatto)*



*piatto*) offers a realistic rendition of a massive primate's head, resting in congealed blood on an ornate serving tray. Reminiscent of depictions of the beheading of John the Baptist, it's frightening to behold. Equally bizarre, *Composizione n. 12 (Cicogne)* portrays a pair of storks in a nest, made of twigs and refuse, high above an accumulation of tires, oil barrels and crates. Ironically, these two symbols of childbirth are breeding on a garbage heap. Meanwhile, the artists' play on Manzoni's legendary cans of crap centers on a tale of a restaurateur who, given a supply of the

tins, cast them into the sea in disgust.

The duo's tray of tins is covered in barnacles, as if they had washed ashore.

Meticulously made, these—and the other marvelous works in the show—flaunt the mastery of artists fascinated with a surrealistic vision of life and death.

—Paul Laster



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WSJ. Editors. "Sightlines: Exquisite Trash—the art of Bertozzi & Casoni." *WSJ Magazine Daily*, 8 January 2010.

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## Sightlines: Exquisite Trash—the art of Bertozzi & Casoni

By WSJ. Editors



Bertozzi & Casoni "Composizione n. 12 (Cicogne), 2008"

installation of more than 100 first aid kits. Inside the ceramic cabinet doors, which open on hinges, are ephemeral objects of life – beehives, pills and soiled toothpaste tubes. In *Composizione n.12* we see two storks atop oil barrels, and a feast that includes empty beer cans and a severed foot. "Plastic" crates appear lightweight and crumpled tin cans with shiny tops don't betray their true medium even upon close inspection. The piece operates like a garbage dump memento mori and while it is clearly indicting humanity—elegantly—for its wasteful ways, their weird take on the medium insures that it doesn't come across as a simple trompe l'oeil stunt.

Bertozzi & Casoni: Intervallo

January 8 through March 20

At [Sperone Westwater Gallery](#)

415 West 13th st New York, open Monday through Friday, 10am to 6pm

This duo harness traditional methods of Italian ceramics for more ominous purposes: Giampaolo Bertozzi and Stefano Dal Monte Casoni, who joined forces while training at the Gaetano Ballardini Ceramic Art Institute in Faenza, Italy, operate a factory outside of Bologna turning out objects that hopscotch between convention-bound applied arts and cheeky, anything-goes contemporary art—last year their work was featured in the Italian pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

From across a room their life-size sculptures appear to be elaborate assemblages of found objects, it takes closer inspection to appreciate the fact that they are exquisitely crafted ceramics. Even the most decayed objects have seductively glazed surfaces. *Composizione n. 13* is a visually stunning wall-mounted

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Mirko, Nottoli. "Bertozzi & Casoni." *53<sup>rd</sup> International Art Exhibition: La Biennale di Venezia. Padiglione Italia*. Ed. Luca Beatrice and Beatrice Buscaroli. Trans. Darcy Di Mona and Felicity Lutz. Milan: Silvana Editoriale Spa, 2009, pp. 80-84.

**G**iampaolo Bertozzi and Stefano Dal Monte Casoni, known as Bertozzi&Casoni, met when they were students at the National School of Ceramic Art in Faenza. Once they completed their studies, they embarked on what would become a long partnership. Ceramics became their material of choice, and they would never stray from it: it allowed them to shift back and forth between tradition and innovation, dismissing, often with a sizable dose of irony, all the prejudices and conformism that surrounded the applied arts in the art world. In place of a traditional artist's studio, they preferred a factory, where they experimented with technique with their characteristic rigour and concision, in order to rethink the medium of painted ceramic sculpture.

From the very beginning, Bertozzi&Casoni adopted a realism so accurate as to virtually disguise the material with which the works were made. And despite the apparent lightness of heart that pervaded their art, with its riot of colours and glazes, the theme they addressed was that of the existential malaise inherent to the human condition. The classic *topoi* of "vanitas" and "memento mori" that recur in Bertozzi&Casoni's work are reinterpreted, however, in a sarcastic, even surreal vein, both linguistically and semantically, and the meticulous hyperrealism of the scenes serves only to sharpen the contrast, in a hyper-calibrated, yet nevertheless subtle understatement.

The project presented in the Italian Pavilion is a conceptually unified work in two parts. The work is composed, in fact, of roughly six hundred first aid kits, which could theoretically be infinite, grouped together in a monumental installation, to form a large rectangular panel. The kits - which symbolise the common, all too human attempt to exorcise pain and death - contain hundreds of figures and faces that describe a humanity by turns bowed, defiant, shocked, naïve, and confused. Most of the figures have been sculpted by a number of people who are not necessarily artists, so that the stylistic differences and the uneven results actually correspond to the variety of human types and ideas. The stacks of self-portraits, or the search for one particular 'participant', can be accessed or denied by closing the flaps on the kits partially or totally.

The more minute the elements that compose the panel installation, the more gigantic and physically imposing the composition of the second work: a large Christmas tree, richly decorated with traditional Christmas ornaments that boast a wholly original iconography, has been flung to the ground by a powerful hurricane. On the top of the tree, and on the gnarled roots, two colourful parrots have been placed to symbolise human vanity. Perhaps it is just the futility and transitory nature of this flashy display, so similar to that of art itself - the Christmas tree as an emblem of affluence - that characterise not only an attempt at exorcising melancholy and the ever-present awareness of that sole certainty, death, but also the upper limit of our investigations.

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“The 20 ‘Azzurri’ at the Biennale.” *Inside Art International*, no. 1, June 2009, p. 56.

EVENTS

# THE 20 “AZZURRI” AT THE BIENNALE

**BERTOZZI  
& CASONI**  
Rebus, 2009



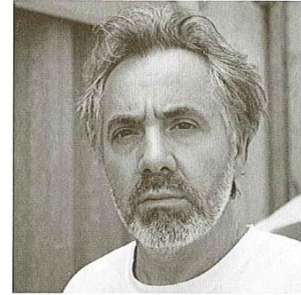
Giampaolo Bertozzi, Borgo Tossignano (Bologna), 1957. Stefano Dal Monte Casoni, Lugo di Romagna (Ravenna), 1961. They work and live in Imola. They invented a new way of working with ceramic materials using images and pop and media culture icons connected to ancient techniques. By inventing photo-ceramics they work on the brink of kitsch; a grotesque world made of fairy tales with objects taken from the contemporary society. They are represented by the Cardi gallery in Milan.

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Beatrice, Luca and Beatrice Buscaroli, *La Biennale di Venezia - 53<sup>rd</sup> International Art Exhibition.*  
*Padiglione Italia: Collaudi.* Milan: Silvano Editoriale Spa, 2009.

Materiale eletto mai più abbandonato, la ceramica, è elemento che permette loro di muoversi continuamente tra tradizione e innovazione, liquidando in maniera spesso ironica i pregiudizi e i conformismi legati al concetto di arte applicata invalso nel sistema dell'arte. Al tradizionale atelier d'artista sostituiscono un opificio dove, con una serrata e rigorosa sperimentazione tecnica, rinnovano il linguaggio della scultura dipinta.

Ceramics became their material of choice, and they would never stray from it: it allowed them to shift back and forth between tradition and innovation, dismissing, often with a sizable dose of irony, all the prejudices and conformism that surrounded the applied arts in the art world. In place of a traditional artist's studio, they preferred a factory, where they experimented with technique with their characteristic rigour and concision, in order to rethink the medium of painted ceramic sculpture.



Giampaolo Bertozzi,  
Borgo Tossignano (BO), 1957.  
Stefano Dal Monte Casoni,  
Lugo di Romagna (RA), 1961.  
Vivono e lavorano a/Live and  
work in Imola (BO)

bertozzi  
& casoni

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Giampaolo Bertozzi e Stefano Dal Monte Casoni, in arte Bertozzi&Casoni, si conoscono studenti alla Scuola d'Arte Ceramica di Faenza e, terminati gli studi, decidono di dare inizio a un sodalizio che si rivelerà vincente. Materiale eletto mai più abbandonato, la ceramica, elemento che permette loro di muoversi continuamente tra tradizione e innovazione, liquidando in maniera spesso ironica i pregiudizi e i conformismi legati al concetto di arte applicata invalso nel sistema dell'arte. Al tradizionale atelier d'artista sostituiscono un officio dove, con una serrata e rigorosa sperimentazione tecnica, rinnovano il linguaggio della scultura dipinta.

Fin dagli inizi, propongono un realismo talmente accurato da celare quasi la materia di cui è costituita l'opera. Nonostante l'apparente leggerezza che lo pervade, in un tripudio di colori e smalti, il loro lavoro si sviluppa intorno al tema del disagio esistenziale proprio della condizione umana.

I topoi classici della "vanitas" o del "memento mori", ricorrenti nell'opera di Bertozzi&Casoni, vengono però riletti in chiave sarcastica e surreale, sia linguisticamente che semanticamente, laddove il rigoroso iperrealismo della figurazione funziona come amplificatore per contrasto, in un sottile understatement iper-calibrato.

Il progetto presentato al Padiglione Italia è un'opera concettualmente unitaria ma compositivamente bipartita.

A formare il racconto concorre un insieme, teoricamente illimitato, di circa seicento cassette da pronto soccorso in un'installazione monumentale montata su un grande pannello rettangolare.

Le cassette – forme simboliche di un diffuso tentativo di esorcizzare il dolore e la morte – contengono centinaia di figure e volti tesi a tratteggiare un'umanità via via piegata, indomita, attonita, ingenua, frastornata. Gran parte delle figure è stata modellata da persone diverse, e non necessariamente artisti, affinché le differenze esecutive e stilistiche corrispondano alla effettiva varietà delle tipologie e dei pensieri umani. L'accumulo di autoritratti, o la richiesta di una presenza in particolare, può essere svelato o annullato mediante la chiusura totale o parziale delle ante delle cassette.

Quanto è infinitesimo o piccolo nel pannello si ingigantisce e assume consistente presenza fisica nella seconda opera: un grande albero di Natale, riccamente ornato da tradizionali palle natalizie reinterpretate nella loro decorazione iconografica, scaraventato a terra da un violento uragano. Sulla cima e sulle scabre radici sono posati due variopinti pappagalli, simboli ideali della vanità umana. Forse, è proprio nell'inutilità e nella transitorietà di questo sfarzo simile a quello dell'arte – l'albero di Natale quale emblema dell'opulenza – che consiste non solo un tentativo di esorcismo dal male di vivere e dalla sempre presente coscienza della sola certezza, ma il più alto grado di quanto ci sia concesso esperire.

M.N.

Giampaolo Bertozzi and Stefano Dal Monte Casoni, known as Bertozzi&Casoni, met when they were students at the National School of Ceramic Art in Faenza. Once they completed their studies, they embarked on what would become a long partnership.

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*Pagina precedente/previous page:*

*Composizione non finita-infinita (particolare/detail), 2009, ceramica policroma/Polychrome ceramic, cm 285 x 1000 x 25, courtesy Galleria Cardì, Milano*

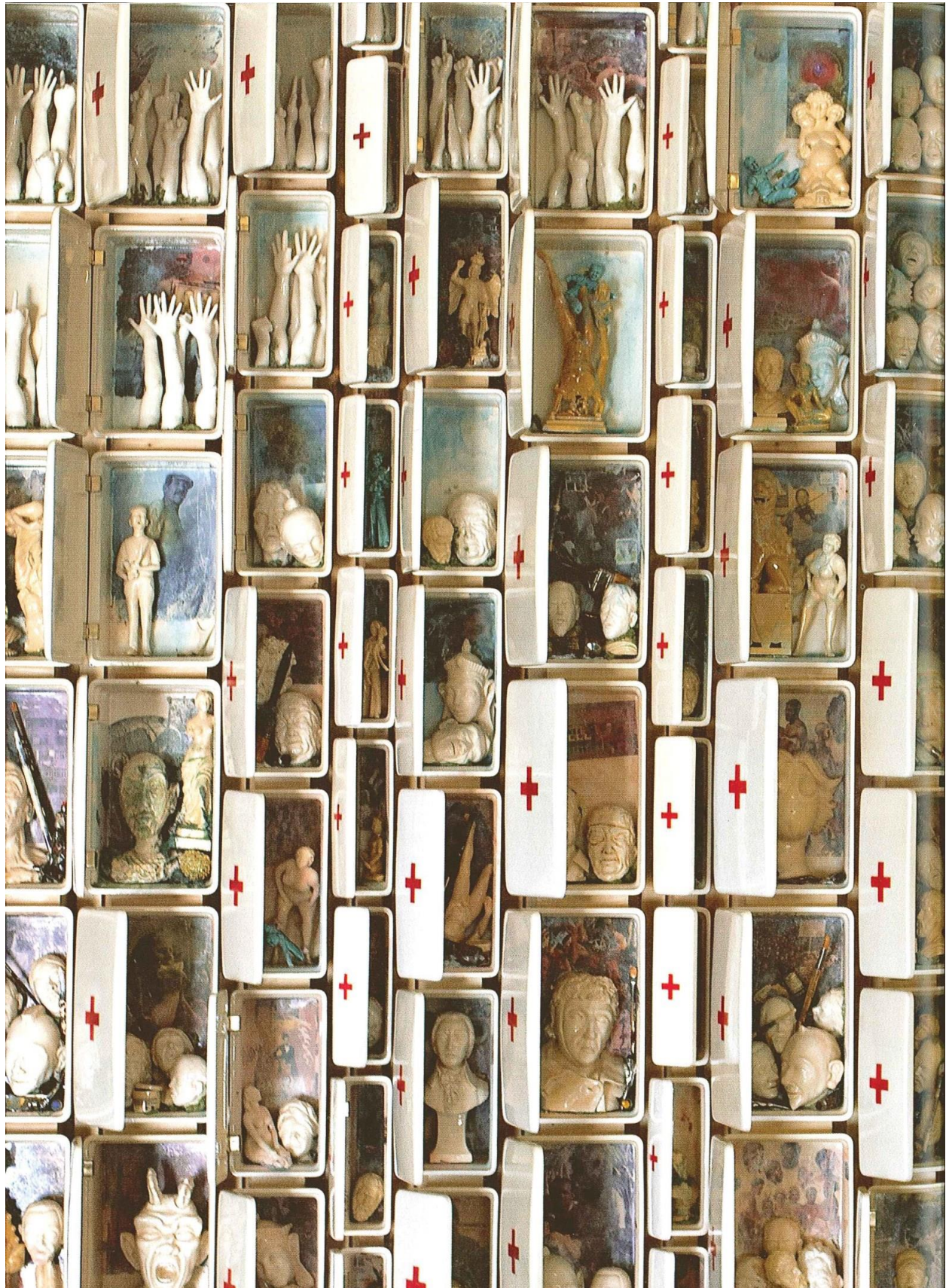
*Rebus (particolare/detail), 2009, ceramica policroma, bronzo dipinto/Polychrome ceramic, painted bronze, cm 150 x 415 x 175, courtesy Sperone Westwater Gallery, New York*

*Pagine successive/following pages:*

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Johnson, Ken. "Bertozzi & Casoni." *The New York Times*, 15 April 2005, p.E34.

The collaborating Italian ceramists Giampaolo Bertozzi and Stefano Dal Monte Casoni are amazing craftsmen. Whether they are as compelling as artists is another question.

Philosophically, Mr. Bertozzi and Mr. Casoni belong to the family of cheerfully pessimistic moralists that includes Damien Hirst and the Chapman Brothers. In the center of the main gallery is a raft of more than two dozen beat-up cardboard Brillo boxes faithfully rendered in glazed clay. A doghouse made of cut-up boxes stands on this Warholian platform and a life-size dachshund is next to it - the source of the numerous little piles of droppings scattered about. Thus the artists mock the pretensions of modern art. (Incidentally, Bertozzi & Casoni are not as good with animals as they are with inanimate things.)

"Skeletal Madonna" depicts a lifesize human skeleton, made entirely of silver, cutting through a bed of ceramic daffodils with an industrial-strength mower. "Pot Pourri" features an ape sitting on a traveler's trunk studying a paperback copy of Darwin's "Origin of Species." There are also dirty medicine cabinets stocked with pill bottles, art supplies, pornographic photographs and other odds and ends; full-size oil barrels leaking garbage and toxic waste; and a white ape sitting on a faux marble cafe table partly covered by disgustingly realistic vomit.

Bertozzi & Casoni's symbolism is crude, and their message, that humankind is in a devolutionary spiral, is sophomoric. Nevertheless, their work is absorbing to study for its attention to detail, and their ingenuity and industry are undeniable.

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“Bertozzi & Casoni.” *The New Yorker*, 18 April 2005.

A team of ebullient Italian sculptors, formed in 1980, débuts in New York with teeming assemblies of life-size, almost but not quite fool-the-eye eggshells, Brillo boxes, chimpanzees, daffodils, and hand grenades, among many other things, all in sumptuous glazed ceramic. Giampaolo Bertozzi and Stefano Dal Monte Casoni dote on textures of crud and decay and like to razz canonical art, as with a reproduction of Botticelli’s Venus in a dog dish. High artifice and ardent squalor might seem an unpromising brace of qualities, but these artists put it across with the heart-melting gladness of kids finding, under the Christmas tree, exactly what they always wanted. Through April 30. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 212-999-7337.)

**BERTOZZI & CASONI**

*Biography*

Giampaolo Bertozzi                      Born Bologna, 1957  
Stefano Dal Monte Casoni              Born Ravenna, 1961

Selected Solo Exhibitions:

1998                      “Bertozzi & Casoni S.N.C.,” 1000 Eventi Gallery, Milan, 3 – 23 December  
1999                      “Bertozzi & Casoni. Pot-pourri,” Sperone Jr. Gallery, Rome, 21 December  
2001                      “Bertozzi & Casoni,” Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Spazio Aperto, Bologna, 2 October – 11  
November  
2001-02                      “Bertozzi & Casoni,” Cardi Gallery, Milan, 20 November 2001 – 19 January 2002  
2003-04                      “Bertozzi & Casoni, Studio d’Arte,” Raffaelli, Trento, December 2003 – February 2004  
2005                      “Bertozzi & Casoni,” Sperone Westwater, New York, 1 April – 30 April  
2007                      “Bertozzi & Casoni: Le Bugie Dell’Arte,” Galleria Internazionale d’Arte Moderna - Ca  
Pesaro, Venice, 7 June – 2 September  
2008-09                      “Bertozzi & Casoni,” Castello Sforzesco, Milan, Italy, 5 July – 2 September 2008; Museo  
Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza, 20 September 2008 – 11 January 2009  
2009                      “Bertozzi & Casoni,” Galleria Cardi, Milan, 5 February – 21 March  
2010                      “Bertozzi & Casoni: Intervallo,” Sperone Westwater, New York, 8 January – 20 March  
2011                      “DisGRAZIE,” FaMa Gallery, Verona, 1 October – 12 November  
2011-12                      “Bertozzi & Casoni,” Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali, Polignano a Mare, Italy, 29 October  
2011 – 15 January 2012 (catalogue). Winner of Premio Pino Pascali 2011 – XIV  
Edizione  
2012                      “Bertozzi & Casoni: Regeneration,” All Visual Arts, London, UK, 13 October – 10  
November  
2013                      “Bertozzi & Casoni: Timeless,” Museum Beelden aan Zee, Den Haag, The  
Netherlands, 25 January – 19 May (catalogue)  
“Bertozzi & Casoni: Waiting,” Beck & Eggeling, Dusseldorf, Germany, 13 April – 1 June  
“Bertozzi & Casoni,” Galleria Cardi, Pietrasanta in collaboration with Galleria Tega Milano,  
6 July – 14 August  
2014                      “Bertozzi & Casoni. Appunti recenti (contrappunti),” Sperone Westwater Lugano,  
Switzerland, 16 April – 12 July (catalogue)  
“Bertozzi & Casoni: Dove Come Quando,” Palazzo Te, Mantua, 7 June – 7 September  
2015                      “Bertozzi & Casoni: Non Ricordo,” Galleria Tega, Milan, 23 February – 11 April  
“Bertozzi & Casoni: Tracce,” Claudio Poleschi Arte Contemporanea, Lucca, 23 May – 11  
July  
“Bertozzi & Casoni: Selected Works,” Sperone Westwater, New York, 13 June – 24 July

Selected Group Exhibitions:

1998                      “Eccentrica, Rocca Sforzesca,” Imola; Sala Cassero, Castel San Pietro; Ex-Scuola  
Elementare, Varignana (Bologna), 27 September – 24 October  
1999                      “30 Basel,” Galleria Sperone Westwater, Fair, Basel  
2000                      “The Armory Show 2000,” Gian Enzo Sperone, Fair, New York, 24 –28 February  
“Art 31 Basel,” Sperone Westwater, Fair, Basel, 20 – 26 June

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- 2000-01 “Luci in Galleria. Da Warhol al 2000. Gian Enzo Sperone: 35 Anni di Mostre fra Europa e America”/ “Lights in the Gallery: From Warhol to 2000, Gian Enzo Sperone: 35 Years Between Europe and America,” Palazzo Cavour, Turin, Italy, 6 October 2000 – 14 February 2001 (catalogue)  
“Il volto felice della globalizzazione. Albissola. Biennale di ceramica nell’arte contemporanea,” First edition, Museo Civico d’Arte Contemporanea, Albissola Marina e Museo della Ceramica Manlio Trucco, Albissola Superiore, 21 July – 31 August  
“Céramiques d’artistes II. Première Biennale de céramique dans l’art contemporain d’Albissola,” Musée Ariana, Genève, 27 June – 2 September 2002
- 2002-03 “Masterpieces/capolavori. L’artista artigiano tra Picasso e Sottsass, Celebrazione del Centenario della Esposizione Internazionale di ArteDecorativa Moderna di Torino del 1902,” Palazzo Bricherasio (Sala FIAT), Turin, 5 December 2002 – 26 January 2003
- 2003 “No Canvas,” Cardi & Co. gallery, Milan, 25 February – 19 April  
“Cover Theory,” Officina della luce, Piacenza, 11 May – 29 June  
“Biennale di ceramica nell’arte contemporanea,” Second edition, Villa Groppallo, Vado Ligure, 27 September – 9 November
- 2004 “Oddesign!,” Fiera internazionale del libro, Lingotto Fiere, Turin, 6 – 10 May  
“A secret history of clay, from Gauguin to Gormley,” Tate Liverpool, 28 May – 30 August
- 2004-05 “Impermercati dell’arte. Il consumo ironizzato. Il consumo rappresentato. Il consumo contestato,” Palazzo Pubblico, Magazzini del sale, Siena, 9 October 2004 – 9 January 2005
- 2006 “Eccentrics,” Ursula-Blickle-Stiftung, Frankfurt, Germany, 3 September – 15 October (catalogue)
- 2008 “Bertozzi e Casoni, Domenico Bianchi, Alighiero Boetti, Nico La De Maria, Mario Merz, and Mimmo Paladino,” Galleria Cardi, Milano, October
- 2009 “Padiglione Italia.” Biennale di Venezia, 53<sup>rd</sup> Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte della Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy, 7 June – 22 November
- 2010 “Bertozzi & Casoni, Bianchi, Canevari, Nunzio, Roig, Wuthrich,” Galleria Cardi, Milan, Italy, 16 March – 30 April  
“2 electric chairs,” Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche in Faenza, Faenza, Italy, 12 June – 17 October  
“Vanitas: The Transience of Earthly Pleasures,” organized by All Visual Arts (AVA), 33 Portland Place, London, England, 12 – 17 October
- 2011 “Pino Pascali. Ritorno a Venezia,” Palazzo Michiel, Venice, Italy, 3 June – 7 August  
“TRA: Edge of Becoming,” Palazzo Fortuny, Venice, Italy, 4 June – 27 November  
“Padiglione Italia,” 54<sup>th</sup> Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte della Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy, 4 June – 27 November
- 2011-12 “mémoires du futur, la collection Olbricht” / “memories of the future, the Olbricht’s collection”, la maison rouge, Paris, France, 22 October 2011 – 15 January 2012
- 2012-13 “WONDERFUL: Humboldt, Krokodil & Polke,” Die Olbricht Collection, Berlin, Germany, 29 November 2012 – 28 April 2013  
“Untitled (Giotto’s O),” Sperone Westwater, Lugano, 30 November 2012 – 15 February 2013
- 2013 “Renaissance Reloaded,” Beck & Eggling Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany, 2 February – 23 March (catalogue)  
“Maestri moderni e contemporanei,” Sperone Westwater, Lugano, 22 October – 23 November

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- 2007 Terzian, Peter. "Treasure Hunt." *Culture + Travel*, April/May 2007, 90.  
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- 2009 Cavina, Luciana. "Bertozzi & Casoni." *Corriere di Bologna*. In *Corriere della Sera*, 25 February 2009.  
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- 2010 Laster, Paul. "Bertozzi & Casoni, 'Intervallo.'" *Time Out New York*, Issue 751, 18-24 February 2010, 45.  
"Artlog: Exploring the Meatpacking District." *nbcnewyork.com*, February 2010.  
"Arte & Mercato: Il prezzo della ceramica." *Arte Mondadori*, May 2010, 172.
- 2011 *TRA: Edge of Becoming*. Exhibition catalogue. Milan: Skira, 2011.  
"Polvere: L'arte di Bertozzi & Casoni, Viaggio tra Venezia e New York," video documentary, *VIDEO TRACCE: Italy*, 2011.  
Quattrone, Raffaele. "Modernity and Art Field: living in a consumer world." *EQUIPèCO*, no. 28, 2011, 16 – 21.  
Laura, Tansini. "Italian Sculpture of the XXI Century." *Sculpture*, November 2011, p. 71.  
*Premio Pino Pascali 2011: Bertozzi & Casoni*. Exhibition catalogue. Polignano a Mare: Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali, 2011.
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