

A tale

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Foreword

Le Grand Verre, notoriously, is the alternate title of one of Marcel Duchamp pivotal works, *La Mariée mise à Nu par ses célibataires, même* (1915-23). Made of various materials, the work consists of two panes of glass with a series of different elements floating between them: lead wire, lead foil, varnish and oil paint. According to Duchamp, such articulated visual machine, a sort of magnetic field whose completion was determined by chance, lay unfinished in the atelier for a long time, before a fortuitous breakage of the glass lead the artist to declare it completed.

Arturo Schwarz's interpretation of the scene created by these suspended mechanic figures is heavily based on alchemy.

Le Grand Verre also constitutes the mysterious landscape buried under a layer of dust in a photograph titled *Élevage de poussière* (1920), acknowledged by Duchamp and Man Ray as the work of each and both of them, so that different versions are signed by either one of the artists, or even both.

These are the element to keep in mind: the mutation of matter, chance, and indifference toward individual authorship.

A Chronology

Le Grand Verre is also the name of a group originating from the collaboration between Marco Grassi, a.k.a. Pho, and photographer/filmmaker Matteo Bologna. The formation debuted in 2014 in Berlin, in the inaugural event of Cicle Culture Gallery; on that occasion, they presented two large rayographs and *Composizione 0* (2013), a sequence of 40 slides made up of several different materials showing their hidden, inner world on the projection screen.

May 30, 2015 marked another important step in the history of the group, augmented in the meantime by the addition of Berlin-based artist Jaybo Monk: Marco Grassi's atelier in Via Tertulliano, 70 was opened to the public, becoming an enormous darkroom where tools, materials and equipment could interact with rayographs on paper, slide shows, installations made with found and assembled objects, in a game of unmistakable Neo-Dada flavor. Next to *Composizione 0* and several works documenting the technical process through different states of the rayographs, Jaybo showed his *assemblages*, generated by the combinations of found objects, particularly recording tape, photographs, lenses and fragments of obsolete technologies, mostly instruments for visual projection and supports connected to the duplication of sound and image.

Because of the dim light in the room, the viewer had the impression of entering the backstage of creativeness, somehow becoming part of the obscure process of image-making.

However, let us go back and see how and when this team of artists was formed.

Matteo and Marco met in High School, at Liceo Artistico Santa Marta, in the early 1990s; after sharing the experience of graffiti art together with one of Milan's historic crews (*16K*), they began a closer collaboration upon Matteo's return from Brasil in 2011. The driving force of their common research was a shared interest for practices aimed at testing materials and contaminating different media. Marco had graduated in painting from the Brera Academy, where he was mentored by Luciano Fabro; his pictorial

language was highly articulated, abstract and gestural, often based on the aggregation of found materials. Matteo, who had graduated from the Civica Scuola di Cinema (School of Filmmaking) in Milan in 1999, worked to test the boundaries of audio-visual languages through various forms of experimentation, often embracing the influence of chance.

Jaybo Monk, who joined the group more recently, had met the two colleagues in Berlin. He shared their drive towards a research of the surprising elements hidden behind the prosaic surface of everyday life, often revealed through the energy released by errors¹.

From November 12, 2015, Marco and Jaybo will remember Matteo, who has passed away in the meantime, with a second exhibition in the Via Tertulliano atelier and the nearby Galleria Avantgarden, showing works conceived individually or collectively in the last few months.

Matteo contributed inadvertently to one of the pieces, *Stop Bath*, a basin for fixing baths which he was supposed to clean out. By not completing this task, he produced a chemical reaction resulting in a very interesting geography, a sky filled with salt-crystal galaxies. The basin, enriched by outcroppings and blooming, is ideally close to the *Breeding of Rust* series by Marco Grassi, a viral growth of rust on rayographs and found images.

Together with his totems, Jaybo will present a series of found photographs, which he tore apart and subsequently sewed back together, leaving an irregular profile around the human subjects. As a consequence, these figures acquire an uncanny, destabilizing, horrific, even painful character, similar to that displayed by the many variants of Hans Bellmer's *La Poupée*.

Next to the works by the group *Le Grand Verre*, the exhibit includes those of other artists with whom Matteo collaborated through the years: Alberto Caffarelli of Alterazioni Video, will present the remake of a public art intervention, consisting in a series of posters with Matteo's portrait (*Hola, mi nombre es Bolo*, 2003). Filmmaker Stefano Obino reused some of Matteo's experiments with materials from the early 1990s, based on the insertion of concrete objects into projection screens; Obino turned the slides into a work of multimedia re-interpretation (*REM. dell'uomo falena e altri mondi*, 2015).

The Via Tertulliano atelier, which housed the editing of such materials, will have one more element contributing to its immersive, evocative ambience: the pieces will glitter in the darkness of an acoustic environment created for the occasion by DJ and composer Nic Sarno.

And the story goes on... although nothing remains the same.

¹ On this subject, see Clément Chéroux, *Fautographie: Petite histoire de l'erreur photographique*, Paris: Éditions Yellow Now, 2003.