

# Aldo Mozzini

# **Curator's introduction**

**Noah Stolz**

**When Museum Director Sébastien Peter invited me to curate three exhibitions of artists from Ticino, my thoughts immediately turned to Aldo Mozzini (Locarno, 1956) and his vernacular installations – they would have beautifully inhabited the evocative spaces of Casa Rusca, while bringing out a sense of immanence already present in the building as well as a complex relationship with the concept of modernity. I therefore decided to combine Mozzini's retrospective exhibition with solo exhibitions by Lisa Lurati (Lugano, 1989) and Karim Forlin (Locarno, 1977), two talented artists from Ticino, whose productions contain several correspondences with Aldo's work and whose paths deserve to be under the spotlight also here, in Ticino, where they have not had an institutional exhibition yet.**

**Despite being three separate exhibitions, they were in fact conceived concurrently. The idea of a shared spirit between the three started to take hold – partly due to an affinity of content, partly for the sake of creating a matching game that would have benefited the overall atmosphere. The three artists willingly accepted this challenge and helped me figure out the polarities around which connections could emerge between one work and the other. The end result honours the initial intuition, as several coincidences happened spontaneously, without any premeditation. For example, both Karim Forlin's and Lisa Lurati's exhibitions ideally open and close the display itinerary with an utterly impressive and energetic video installation, almost as if they stood as the two polarities of a shared discourse. We leave it to the public to identify the other potential connections between the works.**

**Casa Rusca Museum's regular visitors are used to following a route that is circular and ascending. On this occasion, we had a much more intuitive approach and we created a greater dialogue between exterior and interior spaces, suggesting the idea of a maze-like path in which one is allowed to get lost. For this reason, it also seemed natural to provide each visitor with a guide that allows them to navigate the space independently, following their own rhythm and choosing what to give priority to: whether to a critical reading or rather to their own intuition. It is also for this reason that the texts have been developed to provide some overall prompts and interpretations, rather than accompany the visitors room by room.**



Aldo Mozzini, *Balcone*, 2021

# **Quasi una retrospettiva**

**Aldo Mozzini**

## INTRODUCTION

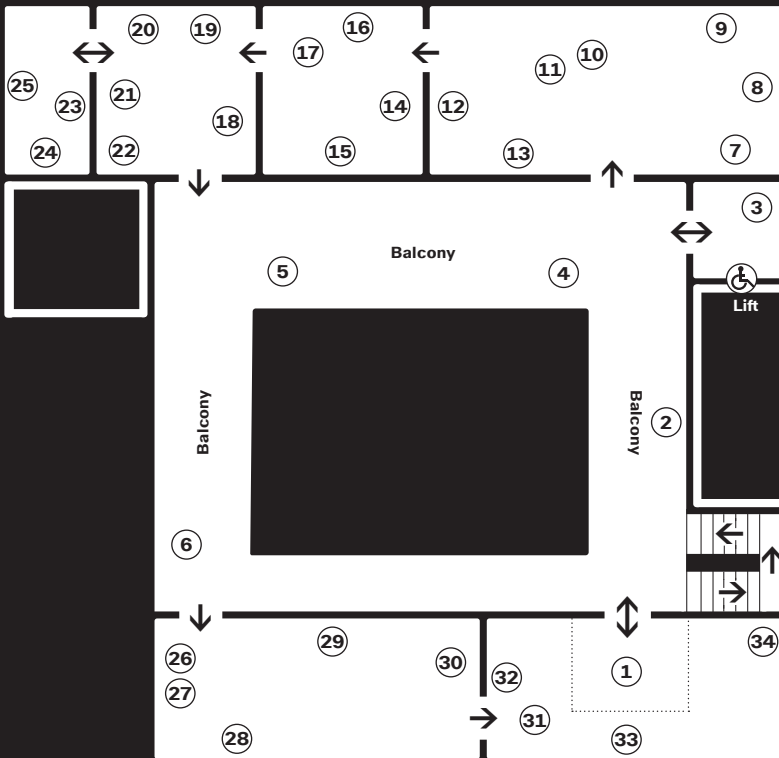
The word “quasi” (translated in English with “almost”) is what is known to be a false friend. Since 2018, Aldo Mozzini has titled some of his artworks using this prefix – this is the case, for instance, with the series *Quasi cani*, *Quasi una cattedrale*, *Quasi una villa*, *Quasi un'apparizione* and *Quasi un pupazzo* – all of which are featured in the exhibition.

Mozzini was born in Locarno, his father was a Ticino customs officer and his mother a housewife and self-taught painter of Onsernone and Bernese origins. By calling his most important exhibition *Almost a Retrospective*, Aldo Mozzini intends to reveal the deep roots in his way of conceiving the relationship between biography (or reality) and representation. Far from being an ironic gesture, this exhibition is “almost” a home-coming. The uncertainty of one's own identity often involves a traumatic experience because it does not allow one to lay the foundations for becoming rooted in the host culture and in some ways ends up making even one's homeland origins alien. Mozzini refuses the idea of allowing himself to be integrated into a dominant culture, he reacts by defending himself, carving out a role for himself as an outsider, on the margins of the Swiss art scene. Being on the margins, however, does not necessarily mean being marginalised, and in fact Mozzini teaches at the Zurich art school and actively participates in the cultural life of the Zurich scene.

This retrospective aims at exhibiting for the first time a representative portion of the artist's graphic and pictorial work, the many facets of which are compared here to the path most familiar to the public in the field of environmental installation.

Having left painting behind (1994), Mozzini began a cycle of sculptures and installations composed of the remains of objects, building materials and waste mostly related to his life or his acquaintances. This process of upcycling, i.e. the reuse of materials to obtain objects of higher quality, goes far beyond a moral or ideological gesture. For Aldo Mozzini, recycling discarded materials means embracing the memory with which each fragment is imbued. Each installation is therefore made in situ and according to the materials available, which in turn are disassembled at the end of the exhibition and can be used to create new installations

# FLOOR 1



- 1 Aldo Mozzini, *Grottino (IV)*, 2023  
installation, mixed media,  
variable dimensions
- 2 Aldo Mozzini, *Schatten*, 2004  
wooden construction, 66.5×52×67.5 cm
- 3 Aldo Mozzini, *Quasi una villa*, 2023  
mixed media, 54×106×148 cm
- 4 Aldo Mozzini, *Rotonda*, 2009/2023  
different types of wood, lamps, cables, acrylic  
colour, wood and plaster sculpture, discarded  
flowers, variable dimensions
- 5 Aldo Mozzini, *Garitta*, 2023  
plywood sheets, window, lamp, plastic veil,  
variable dimensions
- 6 Aldo Mozzini, *Zoccolette*, 2005/2023  
wood and cardboard, variable dimensions
  
- 7 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1988  
acrylic on canvas, 170×150 cm
- 8 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1988  
acrylic on canvas, 170×190 cm
- 9 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1988  
acrylic on canvas, 150×200 cm
- 10 Aldo Mozzini, *Cattedrale bianca*, 2023  
installation with recycled windows and  
wooden beams, variable dimensions
- 11 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1991  
acrylic on canvas, 80×56 cm
- 12 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1988  
acrylic on canvas 125×90 cm
- 13 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1988  
acrylic on canvas, 150×200 cm
- 14 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1990  
acrylic on canvas, 150×120 cm
- 15 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1990  
diptych, acrylic on canvas, 2x 140×100 cm  
(140×200 cm)
- 16 Aldo Mozzini, *Armadio (Wardrobe)*, 2023  
recycled woods, 270×47.5×63 cm
- 17 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1989  
acrylic on canvas with glued fabric, 150×190 cm
  
- 18 Aldo Mozzini, *Barella (Stretcher)*, 1995  
wood and acrylic paint, 236×88×25 cm
- 19 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1991  
acrylic on canvas, 150×125 cm
- 20 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1991  
acrylic on canvas, 150×120cm
- 21 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled (CCCP)*, 1991  
acrylic on canvas, 140×100 cm
- 22 Aldo Mozzini, *Les misérables*, 2018/2023  
bronze, 26×10×10 cm; 23×10×10 cm;  
30×22×12 cm; 27×7×6 cm
- 23 Aldo Mozzini, *Black magazine*, 1992-94  
black painted magazines, different techniques,  
A4 format ande 23.5×17 cm
- 24 Aldo Mozzini, *Flag*, 2009  
piece of wardrobe, acrylic painting, 187×42 cm
- 25 Aldo Mozzini, *Ex Voto*, 1990-93  
painting and pastel on canvas, on cardboard,  
fabric and upholstery, 134 elements, variable  
dimensions
  
- 26 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1991  
acrylic on canvas, 120×80 cm
- 27 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1991  
acrylic on canvas, 120×80 cm
- 28 Aldo Mozzini, *Balcone (Balcony)*, 2021  
double bed elements (wood and metal),  
80×200×50 cm
- 29 Aldo Mozzini, *La città divisa (II)*  
(*The Divided City (II)*), 2023. Installation,  
mixed media (wood, acrylic paint, laminate,  
lamps), variable dimensions variabili
- 30 Aldo Mozzini, *Quasi cani (Almost dogs)*, 2018  
installation, mixed media (rags, printing ink,  
glue, newspapers), variable dimensions
- 31 Aldo Mozzini, *Les conspirateurs*, 2009/2010  
mixed media (wood, fabric, acrylic paint),  
variable dimensions
- 32 Aldo Mozzini, (*Bastone rosso*), 1984  
tempera on canvas, 150×100 cm
- 33 Aldo Mozzini, *Untitled*, 1984  
tempera on canvas, 150×100 cm
- 34 Aldo Mozzini, *Dietro la tela (Behind the Canvas)*,  
1985. Acrylic on canvas, 150×200 cm



## FIRST FLOOR. GROTTINO AND BALCONY

The first version of Grottino is characterised by Aldo Mozzini's reuse practices. Conceived in the early 2000s for his studio in his house cellar, Aldo Mozzini's Grottino emulates the stereotypical Ticino concept that was fashionable a few decades ago. Since it was compulsory in Switzerland to build a bunker for every new household, it became fashionable for families to create in those cramped cellars a surrogate Ticino grotto, which usually roughly resembled a chalet style. In these rooms, families would gather to drink and eat in the illusion of inhabiting a secondary home for a few hours. Mozzini's Grottino has now gone through four different stages of evolution. The one created for Casa Rusca embodies the various previous stratifications and thus becomes the quintessence of the entire exhibition concept – some sort of self-portrait.

What is usually the entrance to the first exhibition room on the first floor actually becomes a kind of think tank, a dark antechamber scattered with mysterious clues we don't know much of, but which point to the artist's biography. As it was originally intended by the shepherds who went to the alpine pasture throughout the summer, the Grottino here becomes a place where one can rest and meet at the beginning and end of the visit.

A series of sculptures and installations are arranged on the balconies and in the niches, transforming the loggia into a saturated environment full of life, where inner and outer space have uncertain boundaries.

## FIRST FLOOR. EXHIBITION ROOMS

The actual monographic itinerary becomes more definite in the six rooms on the first floor where, walking through the spaces in an anti-clockwise direction, one discovers the evolutions of a restless path in painting that started in 1984 and ended in 1994.

In these rooms, the artworks are arranged in an attempt to maintain a chronological order, yet the paintings here coexist with a series of sculptures that aim to establish a relationship between two and three dimensions. At the turn of the second half of the 1980s and the early 1990s, Mozzini confronted himself with his troubled relationship with painting, bringing out the areas of conflict within the medium itself.

Clearly, the masters Mozzini willingly or unwillingly refers to hover in the background – his first mentor is Flavio Paolucci from Ticino, but Mozzini is interested in Francesco Clemente and Enzo Cucchi's trans-avantgarde.

It is interesting to notice how Mozzini in this period tends to impose strict limitations on himself, in terms of both aesthetics and expression. Whereas only a few months earlier his paintings were overflowing with wildly overlapping symbols, the series of white paintings stems from the idea of letting the colour act in a controlled manner from under a blanket of white paint, spread like lime on the wall. However, this vernacular style was soon overlaid with a new operational concept: the drawing is no longer led by the gesture, but is the result of the blank spaces between the white-painted areas. The black line is therefore what actually remains of the painting underneath.

The "white paintings" are followed by the grey series. What distinguishes the two series is essentially the refinement of the "bait subject"<sup>5</sup> that makes up the layer of white or grey paint. While in the early days domestic elements typical of bedrooms and living rooms emerge – with the exception of the painting with the inscription "cccp" depicting a glimpse of a train compartment – in the later series the spaces depicted are those of a bomb shelter dormitory, and, in the dark paintings, textures and structures that tend towards an increasing level of abstraction are portrayed.

Alongside the white and grey paintings is the impulse to create layers, a principle that would soon become fundamental in his sculptural work. The "rags", which later take the name *Ex Voto*, ritualise the gradual abandonment of pictorial practice and open to a new phase. *Ex Voto*, *Black Book*<sup>6</sup> and the black paintings on pavatex testify to a new kind of restlessness. When Mozzini makes notebooks by erasing magazines with black paint, he performs an iconoclastic gesture, showing the need to lower the tone and rhythm of excess visual information. With *Black Book*, some of the precepts in his drawings take unprecedented forms. This is the case, for example, of the subjectless comic strip in the exhibition, entitled *Black magazine*.

5) The "bait subject" is a subject that has no other function than to evoke a narrative perspective or to indicate a context within which the human element can be included, even latently.

6) A series of magazines painted black and then used to form hybrid visual narratives somewhere in between the pictorial dimension, the conceptual statement and the comic strip.

In the early 1990s, drawing took over and became the starting point of all Mozzini's main theoretical elaborations, who put them to the test in his notebooks before putting certain operational strategies into practice. In some cases, it takes up to ten years for these strategies to be applied to space and three-dimensional objects; but this is how Armadio, Barella and, later, Cospirateurs and other objects in the exhibition were born. Also, in these notebooks there is a weaving of elements coming from architecture, cinema and town planning. First among these elements is certainly the use of light. In this exhibition, Mozzini constructs his narratives by hijacking the museum's lighting system. Often he resorts to only one or two spotlights to create a theatrical atmosphere, or else he exaggerates their use by pointing all the available spotlights to the ceiling to obtain a diffuse light at eye level.

This atmosphere is accentuated by ghostly elements: Quasi una figura, Quasi un pupazzo, o Quasi cani were all made by means of rags used during Mozzini's calcography course at the Zurich School of Art. The daily practice of teaching alongside his artistic career has profoundly marked his way of approaching techniques and materials. Perhaps in order to distinguish these two polarities in his life, Mozzini began to use the scraps and the offcuts of materials produced by the school. This aspect took over, turning into a kind of artistic dogma, so much so that every drawing in the exhibition is made on discarded sheets.

The chair is the most recurring object in the artist's vocabulary. Usually made on a small scale – not out of cuteness, but so that one cannot sit on them – they are often presented in such a way as to become a threatening obstacle for the visitor. Their title is Les conspirateurs and they can be found in the last room on the first floor. An anthropomorphic object par excellence, the chair embodies the shadow of an individual, the monstrous and spiteful creature hiding behind a funny and incongruous appearance.

Aldo Mozzini, *Barella*, 1995



## SECOND FLOOR. ROOMS ON THE LEFT

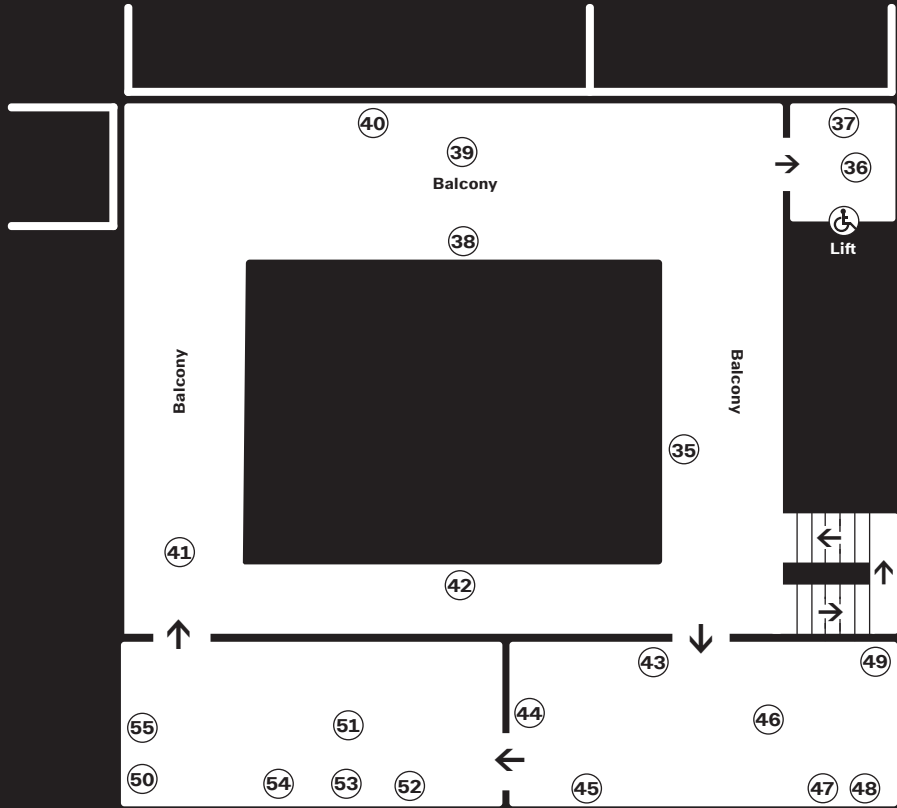
The elements that make up *Muro* on the second floor are pictorial artworks on pavatex from the early 1990s that the artist reckoned would be more appropriate to an up-cycling principle by transforming them into a large collage, a modular wall that fits into the exhibition space. Mozzini decided to light the artworks using all the defective spotlights found in the same room of Casa Rusca Museum. The result is vaguely reminiscent of a 1980s disco. In a corner behind the wall there is a very small golden chair and, in front of it, a series of small golden wooden pieces (*Ohne Titel*, 2023) positioned in the shape of a circle as if to indicate the idea of a fireplace. Mozzini's main personality traits are to be found in this room: the artist describes a motion that is hostile to the materialisation of the object, that dismantles and distorts the shapes. This motion can be likened to the idea of violence and abandonment; yet the process also allows for a second force to come into being – a welcoming, uplifting impetus that transforms the fragments into energy.

The last room – or the penultimate room, depending on the route one takes to visit the exhibition – offers a series of urban visions: here, all the stages of Mozzini's path somehow come together and become one vast and very articulated urban view. An architectural model, an insight into the inner world of Aldo Mozzini, who makes a rather peculiar cosmogonic metaphor out of urban design and planning. Aldo Mozzini is quasi-obsessed with the representation of an urban reality that compresses epochs by overlapping their flaws and excesses. "My little houses", as the artist likes to call the set of housing structures in the exhibition<sup>7</sup>, relate to architecture and town planning almost as if to represent a reaction to the hostile norms and boundaries that traditional culture imposes.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 35 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Tourelle</i> , 2000/2023<br>plywood, chipboard, window, spotlight 220×98×85 cm  | 45 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Teschi (Skulls)</i> , 2016<br>bronze, four pieces, 9×7×6 cm; 9×6×7 cm; 10×7×7 cm; 16×6×6.5 cm   |
| 36 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Lustre (III)</i> , 2020<br>various woods, electric cables, lamps, light bulbs, 155×85×85 cm                                     | 46 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Mela (Apple)</i> , 2016, bronze 11×5×6 cm   |
| 37 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Panca (Bench)</i> , 2021<br>various woods, 50×87×27 cm  | 47 Aldo Mozzini, <i>L'erba del vicino (The Neighbour's Grass)</i> , 1992<br>acrylic paint and pastel on pavatex, 100×80 cm  |
| 38 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Quasi un pupazzo (Almost a puppet)</i> , 2021. Intaglio rags, newspaper sheets, variable dimensions                             | 48 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Untitled</i> , 1992<br>acrylic painting and pastel on pavatex, 100×80 cm  |
| 39 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Forèt (Forest)</i> , 2010/2023, installation, laths and acrylic paint, variable dimensions                                      | 49 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Ohne Titel (Untitled)</i> , 2009<br>wood, gilding, variable dimensions  |
| 40 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Himmelsleiter (Sky ladder)</i> , 2021<br>various woods, domestic cladding sheets, 52×52×44 cm                                   | 50 Aldo Mozzini, <i>FatThaus</i> , 2006<br>plastic, acrylic, sawdust, 10×19×27 cm   |
| 41 Aldo Mozzini, <i>La maison bleue (The blue house)</i> , 2023.<br>Laths, EU tarpaulin, fabric, chipboard, recycled neon lamp, variable dimensions | 51 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Quasi un paesaggio (Almost a Landscape)</i> , 2021/2023<br>museum pedestals, truck tarpaulin, different woods, different materials and lamps, variable dimensions |
| 42 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Tre bandiere (Three Flags)</i> , 2023<br>wood, acrylic glass, variable dimensions   | 52 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Sotto sopra (Below Above)</i> , 2023<br>acrylic on canvas, 150×170 cm   |
| 43 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Quasi un'apparizione (Almost an Apparition)</i> , 2022<br>mixed media, 140×80×70 cm   | 53 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Sotto sopra (Below Above)</i> , 2023<br>acrylic on canvas, 150×150 cm   |
| 44 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Lasciate (Leave)</i> , 2021<br>wood, neon light, 45×130×35 cm   | 54 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Sotto sopra (Below Above)</i> , 2023<br>acrylic on canvas, 150×125 cm   |
|   | 55 Aldo Mozzini, <i>Untitled</i> , 2019/2023<br>drawings on paper, various sizes, 4x (28×37.5 cm), 5x (32×38 cm), 3x (56×76 cm)   |

7) Garitta, *Tourelle*, *La cattedrale bianca*, *La città divisa*, *La maison bleue* and *il Grottino*.

FLOOR 2



## ALDO MOZZINI

Aldo Mozzini, born in Locarno in 1956, lives and works in Zurich. In 1977 he attended the *Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst in Zurich*, where he graduated in visual arts in 1980. His artworks have been exhibited in Switzerland and abroad, in galleries and museums such as Kunsthau Zürich, I sotterranei dell'Arte Monte Carasso, Spazio 5 B Bellinzona, MACT/CACT Bellinzona, La Rada Locarno, Walcheturm Zürich, Haus der Kunststruktur Zürich, Kunst(Zeug)Haus Rapperswil, Kunsthau Grenchen, Haus für Kunst Uri, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Glassbox Paris, La Villa du Parc Annemasse, Florence and Museo MAGA in Gallarate.

Aldo Mozzini won the *Swiss Art Award* in 2012 and in 2019, and has held residencies in Paris and Bucharest. His artworks are part of numerous collections, including those of the City of Zurich, the Graphische Sammlung ETH, the Sammlung Peter Bosshard and the Kunsthau Grenchen.



Aldo Mozzini, *La città divisa (II)*, 2023

**City of Locarno**  
**Alain Scherrer**  
**Mayor**

**Nancy Lunghi**  
**Head Department of Culture**

**Sébastien Peter**  
**Director of Cultural Services**

**Curated by**  
**Noah Stolz**

**General Coordination**  
**Alessia Bottaro**

**Cultural mediation**  
**Giada Muto**

**Secretary**  
**Daniela Dresti**

**Graphic Design**  
**Atelier CIAO, Nicolas Polli**  
**with Samira Gollin**

**Insurance**  
**Assimedia SA, Locarno**  
**AXA ART Versicherung**  
**AG, Zurich**

**Exhibition prints**  
**Atelier 3 SA, Locarno**

**Booklet printing**  
**Arti Grafiche Salvioni,**  
**Bellinzona**

**Craftworkers**  
**Graniti Buzzini Sagl,**  
**Brione Verzasca**  
**Falegnameria DiEffe Sagl,**  
**Claro**

**Transport**  
**Artsolutions, Ginevra**

**Management of works**  
**and setting up**  
**Artifex Restoration work-**  
**shop, Valeria Malossa,**  
**Locarno**

**Realisation**  
**Setting up and reception**  
**Abdullah Al-sheikh**  
**Joshua Althaus**  
**Zaccaria Giannini**  
**Giuseppina Grandinetti**  
**Michele Mazzi**  
**Giordano Pellanda**

**Translation**  
**Sara Cuono**



**Supported by:**

Repubblica e Cantone Ticino  
DECS

**SWISSLOS**



fondazione svizzera per la cultura  
**prohelvetia**

LANDIS & GYR STIFTUNG

