

Trimini Rising

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Trimini Rising started with a couple of coup de foudre, a growing fascination and long-term observation. When Julia Muggenburg saw a sculpture by Luisa Gardini at Guimarães in Vienna in 2016 she felt as if she had found a pearl in an oyster. How was it possible that she had never come across Luisa's work before? And yet Luisa is an artist who, over the past sixty years, had been constantly active, producing a rich body of work using various media and materials in her studio in Rome. Luisa immediately appeared to Julia as a mystical figure. Over several months, Julia started enquiring about Luisa's practice through her Roman connections, and she was finally able to get in touch with the Italian artist thanks to gallerist Ilaria Leoni.

Things went slightly differently with Stano Filko, a Slovakian artist who was operating on a similar timeline but in a different geographical and political context. Stano, who mainly lived and worked in Bratislava (he emigrated to Germany in 1981 and went in exile to the US from 1982 to 1990), had a life of almost compulsive, non-stop making. The artist, who passed away in 2015, had already departed for the 'fifth dimension' — to put it on his own words — when Julia discovered his work. Julia was particularly intrigued by his early production, and by how he related to time and connected with historical events through his drawings, paintings, collages, sculptures, installations and performances.

In order to present these two artists to the Belmacz audience in London, whilst also engaging with a wider intergenerational and translocal conversation around the relationship between form and material in arts practice over the past fifty years, we chose Magdalena Drwiega, a Polish-born, London-based artist. Despite coming from different art historical contexts and generations (Magdalena was born more than three decades later than Luisa and Stano), the three artists have been exploring, through their practices and with various outcomes, the possibilities opened up by gathering and juxtaposing elements in a playful yet nostalgic manner.

These possibilities, together with the creation of new relationships between existing shapes and materials, are some of the aspects that we are looking at through Trimini Rising. Understanding the complexity of Luisa's and Stano's work, with Magdalena adding a further temporal and spatial context to the exhibition; our aim is to create a London standpoint from where to observe the timeless connections that emerge from the encounter of these three practices.

Luisa's recent works were selected directly from her studio in the historical centre of Rome, my home town, where she received me — enchanting and mysterious, friendly and detached all in one. I had the chance to meet her three times in a week in order to go through different works from the past sixty years. Sadly, most of the sculptures from the 1960s have been lost, as the materials she was using then were perishable: "The choice of materials was due to a need for ephemerality I had back then" she quickly dropped in conversation, making it clear it is not something she tends to discuss. At that time Luisa was not exhibiting her art, she started only a couple of decades later, when her mentor and former teacher Toti Scialoja asked her to: "Surprisingly I started exhibiting only after I had my children" she mentions.¹

Stano's contributions to the exhibition are early works from the '60s and '70s, from the time he elaborated his 'extensive and multi-faceted lifelong programme' and still had a positive and committed approach to art.² Through his utopic initiative HAPPSOC I — meaning happening and society all together — Stano declared the entire city of Bratislava as a work of art from 2 – 8 May 1965.³ By doing so 'he shows how you can, as an artist and thinker, tactically claim a world (totality) as your point of departure, medium and mode of address — and, in doing so, create zones of autonomy that liberate you to act artistically, go big or go small, and freely negotiate the value of artefacts and ideas.'⁴

Magdalena's sculptures exhibited at Belmacz for Trimini Rising are some of her latest works. The artist believes that in the universe everything is naturally connected, "but you have to find the right shapes, materials, colours to make it work and create something concrete and meaningful".⁵ To do so Magdalena regularly frequents warehouses where she buys building materials, pipes and cables, as well as all kinds of handles, hooks or hinges. In order to create her smooth, nonsensical compositions, and transform these familiar, everyday objects in something extraordinary, she magically embeds them within one another or fixes them together with concrete, that she prepares and shapes herself.

This is how and why the exhibited artists and works came together for Trimini Rising. In order to further investigate conceptual and aesthetic connections through this publication, we asked Luisa and Magdalena to respond to some questions that had been asked to Stano a few years before his death. In fact, while researching the Slovakian artist I came across an interview by Hans Ulrich Obrist who had been taken to Stano's studio by Roman Ondak, having known his work for many years. The interview had the spontaneity of a studio visit, but the depth of an investigation, and some of the themes raised by Hans Ulrich and Stano in Bratislava in 2006 came back during the conversations I was having in Rome and London with Luisa and Magdalena. This is why I felt that enquiring on Luisa and Magdalena's views on some of these topics would broaden the conversation and draw out further similarities and differences between these three artists.

1. These conversations happened during Luisa Gardini's studio visits I did in Rome in June 2018.
2. Lucia Gregorová Stach, 'Stano Filko. Reality of Cosmos', cat. of the solo exhibition at Mayor Gallery, London, 2017
3. HAPPSOC I is an art piece, in which Stano Filko and Alex Mlynárčik designated Bratislava as a work from 2 to 8 of May 1965.
4. Jan Verwoert, 'World As Medium on the work of Stano Filko', Jan Verwoert, 'World As Medium on the work of Stano Filko', e-flux Journal #28, October 2011. www.e-flux.com/journal/28/68020/world-as-medium-on-the-work-of-stano-filko/
5. This conversation happened at Belmacz London during one of the Trimini Rising's meeting in April 2018.