

My adventure is a desire between art and life, with all the contradictions and weaknesses this represents. With humor, affection and love for art. It is an exploration of vanity as selfishness and an aversion for existence, and thus a striving for the elsewhere, alienation, that only art can give me

—Luigi Ontani

The contents of Ontani's performances – the Orient, history, art history, craftsmanship, etc. – are genetically merged with the figure of the artist, who thus becomes an actor

—Corrado Levi

Kayu – Lucie Fontaine's branch in Bali, Indonesia – is pleased to present its second project, "IdeTriBali," a solo exhibition by Italian artist Luigi Ontani. One of the protagonists of the art scene over the last four decades, Luigi Ontani is a multifaceted figure who uses various forms of expression, from sculpture to painting and from photography to performance.

The title of the exhibition *IdeTriBali* is a portmanteau word; a portmanteau is combination of two or more words or their sounds (morphemes) and their meanings into a single new word. Following the system of the Matryoshka doll – also known as Russian nesting doll – a portmanteau is a combinatorial word that adds meaning to meaning.

IdeTriBali contains four words: Idea, Ideali (Ideal), Tribal and Bali. The title underlines the intense mental and physical, and therefore "tribal," collaboration that the artist had with the local Balinese community. The use of portmanteau words in Ontani's artistic practice confirming the importance of his titles, which are not simply playing with words, but rather responding and corresponding to the need for a hybrid figuration, highlighting an essential part of his research.

Since the late '60s, Ontani's art has been reflecting on the concepts of hybrid state and of being altrove [elsewhere]. His research into hybrid aesthetics involves the poetics of the body, interpreted as body-as-double, body-as-mask, the myths of the body, body language as well as body time. In the seminal series *Tableaux Vivant* (1969-ongoing) the artist employs photography in order to reenact antique icons taken from art, religion, mythology, and history and reallocate them in our contemporary world, giving them a space without time. As Ontani describes, a *Tableau Vivant* is conceived for "an audience formulated in immobility, with minimal repetition, through simulacra, with specific signs, symbolic synthesis of the apparition, constructing a context of cultural alibis, and completed with repetitive noise, sound, and music."

In these works Ontani continuously changes identity, giving life to controversial and ambiguous figures, sometimes with an ironical or vaguely kitschy tone. The transformation of Ontani's body has been sustained by the use of the mask. For the artist, the mask is an emblem and a metaphor, an object that "doesn't completely cover; it brings along others symbols that our senses cannot express."

The mask is the main tool for Ontani's witty exploration of what lies beyond his own personality; his interest in the mask began in the '70s and it is related to his fascination with the Commedia dell'arte and its characters. In the early '80s his research on masks brought him to travel throughout the world and led him to identify himself with cultural expressions in Tyrol, Lecce, Venice, Faenza, Vietri, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mexico, New Mexico, Guatemala, Japan, Yemen, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Bali.

In Bali the artist has been collaborating with the excellent local artisans Ida Bagus Anom, Tangguh I Wayan, his son Sukarya and Made Lopang, who craft his masks in pule wood since 1981. Ontani's interest in Balinese culture gives him the possibility to mix his personal artistic practice with the tradition of Balinese art. Following these premises, Ontani, alongside Lucie Fontaine's employee in Bali, developed the exhibition as a response to the surrounding environment and for this occasion the exhibition will not only take place in Kayu's space but in all the six Joglos* of the Rumah Topeng Dan Wayang compound**, juxtaposing its permanent historical collection to Ontani's exhibition, which will include a selection of Ontani's new masks and wayang kulit, as well as projections of Tableaux Vivant and four new performances that will happen on different areas of the compound: *Ogoh-ogoh*, *Music Performance*, *Tavolozza RifioRITO*, and *Wayang Kulit*.

The traditional *Ogoh-ogoh* statues are usually built for the Ngrupuk parade, which takes place on the eve of Nyepi day*** in Bali; commonly the Ogoh-ogoh statues have the features of mythological creatures, mostly demons. Based on Balinese Hinduism, the creation of the *Ogoh-ogoh* statues represents spiritual aims inspired by Hindu philosophy. Created in collaboration with local Balinese artisans, Ontani's Ogoh-ogoh is the forth one he designed and it represents a human pyramid in which some elements of Ontani's practice, such as Grillo Dante, mix with Hindu and Balinese symbols. During the exhibition opening, twenty men will lift and carry *Ogoh-ogoh* around the Rumah Topeng Dan Wayang compound. This procession is accompanied by orchestral music performed by some Balinese Gamelan musicians.

Since 2006, Ontani has collaborated with Balinese artists in order to create kitsch and surrealistic

Balinese pop music videos. Made by two Balinese musicians, Bogam – a singer – and Made Bahama – a composer – the songs speak about Balinese daily life and love. Music Performance will consist of a short music concert in which two Balinese singers – Bogam and Suparsa – play within a set created by Ontani.

Tavolozza RifioRITO is part of Ontani's most recent body of work based on performance. In contrast to the intimacy of the Tableaux Vivant these performances involve several people. Tavolozza RifioRITO will involve twelve people wearing Ontani's masks, I Komang Suarnata, a Balinese child playing traditional music with the rindik**** and the artist. Representing twelve different colors, the twelve participants will perform inside a flower composition with the shape of a palette. Tavolozza RifioRITO is inspired by ritual processions and it goes from Kayu's space – where the twelve masks are displayed – to the entire Rumah Topeng Dan Wayang compound.

Wayang Kulit is a unique form of theatre employing light and shadow. The puppets are usually crafted from buffalo hide and mounted on bamboo sticks. Their shadows are cast on the screen. The plays are usually based on romantic tales, especially adaptations of the classic Indian epics, such as the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Some of the plays are also based on local events. It is up to the dalang [conductor, master puppeteer] to decide the direction of the play. Wayang Kulit will close the opening night of *IdeTriBali*, and it will be performed by Candra Mas, which is a Wayang Kulit group composed of Balinese children that intensively collaborated with Ontani on this project. The dalang will be I Wayan Anom Candra Yana and the story of this specific Wayang Kulit is a mixture between traditional Arjuna stories and contemporary elements conceived by the artist.

IdeTriBali will be on view from March 17 to April 8, 2015. Please check the performance program on the map included in the invitation and if you need further information you can either contact Lucie Fontaine's employee in Bali through the email kayu@luciefontaine.com or connect through its website www.kayuluciefontaine.com

* A traditional Javanese vernacular house, Joglo consists of two parts: the pendopo or front section that has a large roofed space with columns and no walls; the dalem refers to the inner sections including the bedrooms and kitchen. Pendopo is the living room, while the dalem is more private. The term "Joglo" usually refers to the distinctive roof with a rising central part supported by four or more main wooden columns, while the outer row of columns with a rectangular plan creates expansion spaces. It is said that this kind of roof is constructed to mimic a mountain. Joglos mostly originate from Middle Eastern Java and are made of teak wood.

** Rumah Topeng dan Wayang is an intimate place in Mas, Bali, Indonesia that aims to preserve

and show Indonesian traditional culture through a collection of masks and puppets (approximately 4660 pieces) displayed in in four different Joglos. Currently it also hosts Kayu, Lucie Fontaine's branch in Bali.

*** According to the Balinese calendar, Nyepi [Day of Silence] is a commemoration recurring every Isakawarsa [Saka new year]. A Hindu festivity mainly celebrated in Bali, Nyepi is also a public holiday in Indonesia and a day of silence, fasting and meditation for the Balinese people.

**** Rindik is one of Balinese traditional musical instruments. It is made by bamboo canes and used to accompany dance and wedding ceremonies.

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