

June 6–September 7, 2025

Carol Rama:  
THE TONGUE, THE EYE,  
THE FOOT

Aspen Art Museum

*Carol Rama: THE TONGUE, THE EYE, THE FOOT* explores the human figure and its complex, psychological associations in the work of the celebrated Italian artist. Carol Rama (1918–2015) created art for over seventy years, producing disparate bodies of work that reflect the turns of her own life and that of the zeitgeist. This focused exhibition centers on a singular theme: the fragmented body as a site of fantasy and resistance in Rama's work from the 1930s to the 1980s. The show examines eroticism as an expressive throughline that pierces Rama's practice in overt figurative scenes and abstract forms. While Rama's work has been exhibited widely throughout Europe since her death, this presentation marks the artist's first significant American museum exhibition since her ICA Boston exhibition, *Carol Rama*, in 1998, and her New Museum retrospective, *Antibodies*, in 2017.

Rama was born as Italian fascism came to power, and her earliest pieces made under this regime are deeply radical, as they depict forbidden obscenities. Looking to her surroundings and life experiences, each era of making—from abstract and figurative painting to assemblage, clothing, and sculpture—represents her visceral mode of perception under changing social and political conditions. Self-taught and balanced on the periphery of the art world until the late 1970s, the artist brushes up against several key movements of the twentieth century, including Arte Povera, assemblage, and the Italian literary neo-avant-garde, although she evaded strict association with any one group.

Rama's watercolors from the late 1930s and early 1940s depict lascivious scenes. Born to a bourgeois family that underwent drastic economic and psychological hardship, the artist reflected her ensuing personal tragedy through her art. Many of Rama's figures from this period portray the institutionalized and mentally ill. In these compositions, sexuality is linked with disability and illness: women appear nude except for their shoes, tongues hanging from their mouths. Snakes emerge from exposed orifices and unspoken fantasies come alive. With these unrestrained erotic gestures, the artist renders the privacy of lust overt.

The abject reappears in her bricolage assemblages from the 1960s, in which splattered bodily fluids function as mark-making devices. In her works made during these years, Rama often incorporated prosthetic limbs, syringes, and other medical instruments. The bricolage pieces in this exhibition share a preoccupation with the eye, either singular or multiple, emerging in clusters. Collaging inanimate human-like forms, Rama constructs morbid, almost hallucinatory monsters that mirror the global political tumult witnessed in the mid-twentieth century. Her creatures meet the viewer's gaze, and peer back with unnerving alertness and desire. In this gallery, Rama's human forms—in whole, abstract, and formless incarnations—take shape as individual entities but impart a deeper sense of collective disobedience. Strange and often psychosexual, they foreground a sense of the forbidden, recalling sublimated truths and recessed memories. The fetishized and fragmented figure becomes more than a sum of its parts. Here, it becomes a lens to examine Rama's radical depictions of the transgression, madness, joy, and defiance that defined her world.

From left to right:



*Untitled*, 1968  
Oil paint and lacquer on Masonite  
in original artist's frame  
19 × 26 in.  
Collection of Lonti Ebers, New York



*Opera n. 11 (Renards)*, 1938  
Watercolor on paper  
28 × 18 in.  
Private collection, New York



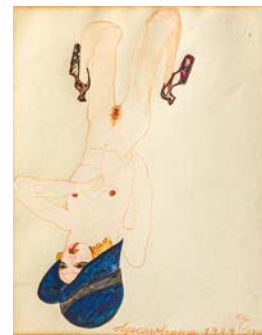
*Bricolage*, 1967  
Mixed media on canvas  
14 × 18 in.  
Collection of Jack and Shirley Silver



*Dorina*, 1944  
Watercolor, tempera, and colored pencil  
on paper  
3 × 10 in.  
Private collection, courtesy Lévy Gorvy Dayan  
Photo: Guido Lovisolo



*Untitled*, 1944  
Watercolor and colored pencil on paper  
12 × 8 in.  
Private collection, courtesy Lévy Gorvy Dayan



*Engi*, 1939  
Watercolor, ink, and colored pencil  
on paper  
8 × 8 in.  
Collection of Marguerite Steed Hoffman  
Photo: Pino Dell'Aquila



*Corso Francia 179 1930-1931 (Appassionata)*, 1939  
11 × 9 in.  
Watercolor and colored pencil on paper  
Private collection



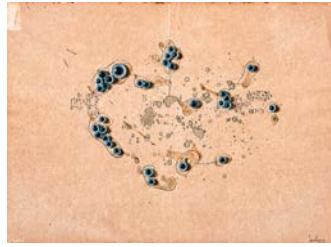
*Dorina*, 1945  
Watercolor, tempera, and colored pencil  
on paper  
6 × 9 in.  
Collection of Amy Gold and Brett Gorvy  
Photo: Paolo Robino



*Untitled*, 1986  
Doll's eyes and glue on glossy black  
cardstock  
19 × 12 in.  
Private collection, courtesy Dominique Lévy



*Untitled*, 1966  
Glue, ink, and taxidermy eyes on paper  
18 x 13 in.  
Private collection  
Photo: Pietro Scapin



*Bricolage*, 1966  
Taxidermy eyes, vinyl glue, and ink on paper  
12 x 17 in.  
Private collection



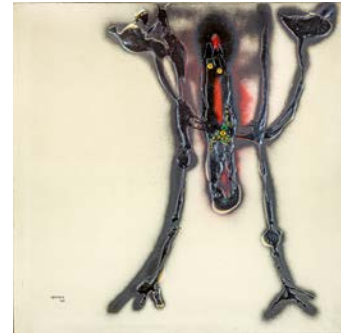
*Bricolage*, 1968  
Synthetic paint, gesso, and doll's eyes on canvas  
63 x 47 in.  
Collection of Eleanor Heyman Propp



*Untitled*, 1967  
Ink, glue, and doll's eyes on cardstock  
15 x 11 in.  
Fergus McCaffrey, New York and Tokyo  
Photo: Pino Dell'Aquila



*Autorattristatrice n. 9 (Self-distressing portrait no. 9)*, 1969  
Spray paint, glue, and taxidermy eye on canvas  
39 x 32 in.  
Fergus McCaffrey, New York and Tokyo  
Photo: Gianni Ingrosso



*Cluster bonbs [sic] units ce ne sono certe che sanno di polvere da sparo, altre di aglio (Cluster Bonbs Units There Are Some the Taste of Gunpowder, Some of Garlic)*, 1969  
Spray paint, glue, and taxidermy eyes on canvas  
Private collection, courtesy Lévy Gorvy Dayan  
Photo: Cristina Leoncini

Carol Rama (1918–2015, Turin, Italy) was an Italian artist whose work explores themes of sexuality, the body, and psychological states through painting and assemblage. Largely self-taught, she gained broader recognition in the 1980s when curator Lea Vergine included her in *L'altra metà dell'avanguardia 1910–1940* (The Other Half of the Avant-Garde, 1910–1940) at the Palazzo Reale in Milan. Her work has been the subject of retrospectives at such institutions as the Stedelijk Museum

Amsterdam and ICA Boston (1998), the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin (2004), the Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (2015), and the New Museum in New York (2017). Rama received the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003. Her work is held in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art, among others. Rama passed away in Turin in 2015.

Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums in 1979, the Aspen Art Museum is a thriving and globally engaged non-collecting contemporary art museum. Following the 2014 opening of the museum's facility designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Shigeru Ban, the AAM enjoys increased attendance, renewed civic interaction, and international media attention. In July 2017, the AAM was one of ten institutions to receive the United States' National Medal for Museum and Library Services for its educational outreach to rural communities in Colorado's Roaring Fork Valley and its fostering of learning partnerships with civic and cultural partners within a 100-mile radius of the museum's Aspen location.

## Aspen Art Museum

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Hours  
Tuesday–Sunday, 10 AM–6 PM  
Closed Mondays

Admission to the AAM is free courtesy of Amy and John Phelan.

*Carol Rama: THE TONGUE, THE EYE, THE FOOT* is curated by Simone Krug, Curator.

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