

CHAMP LACOMBE

Sylvano Bussotti

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Collaging, to **Sylvano Bussotti** (b.1931–d.2021), was not an autonomous act. From the outset of his career, Bussotti – visionary Italian composer, artist, and theatre innovator – rejected the idea of scores as a transparent vehicle for musical execution. Instead, he embraced them as a collage of complex, yet conceptual beliefs, operations and designations. His graphic scores famously operate as intricate visual constructions, oscillating between instruction and autonomy, as between legibility and opacity.

Collage formed a structural principle running through Bussotti's entire oeuvre: from set design, to painting, to writing, each operation possessing a dramaturgical spirit that defined his avant-garde practice. The works on view here are not discrete visual objects, they must instead be read as sites where notation, image, body, and desire converge in composition.

The works do not simply represent theatricality; they perform it. The collage functions as a condensed stage on which disparate elements encounter one another, collide, overlap, and sometimes even efface each other. Figures are cut, truncated, eroticised; symbols are displaced from their original contexts; musical signs lose their purely functional role and acquire a sensual, almost corporeal presence.

What emerges is a visual dramaturgy in which the act of looking mirrors the act of listening to Bussotti's music: attentive, unstable, and prone to interruption.

Eroticism plays a crucial role in this dramaturgy. Bussotti's collages are imbued with a frank and often transgressive sensuality that cannot be separated from their formal construction. Bodies appear fragmented, stylized, or partially concealed; desire is suggested through gesture, posture, and proximity rather than narrative. This erotic charge is not decorative. It is structural. It reflects Bussotti's conception of composition as a corporeal practice and his resistance to any division between formal invention and lived experience.

Equally this logic of collage extends beyond the page and into Bussotti's cinematic practice, most notably in his film first feature *Rara* (1969), made to be shown with an Ensemble of musicians. Shot in Rome and made in the years immediately following Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*, *Rara* is an experiment in combining the ambient and the purposeful. Destabilising narrative and eroding all forms of sequencing, the film contains an innocence - a type of pure, unrestrained, happiness, while also digging into the erotic. Bodies, gestures, symbols, and rhythms are all juxtaposed without continuity, producing meaning only through amalgamation, almost like a graphic score in motion, where images are read rather than followed, and where perception oscillates between attention and disorientation.

All Bussotti's works are decisively layered: their inundated forms are purposeful. There is no resolve, only abundant interpretations.

Sylvano Bussotti (Florence, 1931–2021) was an Italian multidisciplinary artist whose practice spanned music, visual art, and theatre. He collaborated with leading cultural figures including John Cage, Pierre Boulez, Federico Fellini, Filippo de Pisis, Carmelo Bene, and Cathy Berberian. In 1964–65, he was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation grant in New York City, followed by a Ford Foundation DAAD fellowship in Berlin in 1972. Bussotti served as Artistic Director of Teatro La Fenice in Venice, the Venice Biennale, and the Puccini Festival in Torredel Lago. His operas, ballets, and concerts were staged at prestigious institutions such as Teatro Regio in Turin, Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Arena di Verona, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, and Teatro Lirico di Palermo. Among his most celebrated theatrical works are *La Passion Selon Sade* (1965), *Lorenzaccio* (1972), *Oggetto Amato* (1975), *Rarafonia* (1977), and *L'Ispirazione* (1988), all of which integrated innovative set design and multimedia elements. As a visual artist, his first exhibition was held in 1962 at Galleria Numero in Rome with Giorgio Chiari. More recently, his multidisciplinary practice was featured in a dedicated monographic section at the XVII Quadriennale in Rome (2020), curated by Sarah Cosulich and Stefano Collicelli Cagol.