Guided tour for the press
(preview version)  

**Wednesday 18 September 2019, 11am**

at the Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

Booking: sophie.guyot@lausanne.ch

**Address**

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This solo show features works by the historic and leading Art Brut creator Carlo Zinelli (1916-1974), aka "Carlo." Jean Dubuffet acquired several of the latter's pieces as of 1963, thanks to Vittorino Andreoli, the first person to champion Carlo's artistic output. Today, the Collection de l'Art Brut holdings include ninety of his pieces, enabling this public institution to boast the greatest number of that Italian creator's works in museological possession. Furthermore, since Carlo often painted and drew on both sides of his supports — indeed, doing so consistently as of 1962 — this body of works comes to one hundred and sixty gouaches, including some of his rare collages.

Carlo's graphic language is unique and instantly recognizable, distinguished as it is by both the repetition of certain motifs and numerous changes of viewpoint and scale. Right from the start, Carlo added writings to his gouaches; between 1966 and 1969, writing even became central to his compositions. Year after year his works came to feature ever more confident strokes and more assertive spatial initiative.

This show features all of Carlo's works belonging to the Collection de l'Art Brut holdings, and covers the entire time span — from 1957 to 1972 — of his creative output. It features both sides of his numerous front-and-back pieces, almost all of which are on an equal par in quality and intensity. Above and beyond this major trove of works, the show also features sculpture pieces and documents supplied by this creator's family, together with recordings of his voice. Photographs by John Phillips attest to the special conditions surrounding the works produced: those of the psychiatric hospital San Giacome alla Tomba in Verona, where Carlo resided from 1947 to 1969. Also shown is the free expression workshop instigated by the Scottish sculptor Michael Noble and that Carlo attended. The photos portraying Carlo at work reveal all his pleasure and concentration, as well as the lighthearted atmosphere reigning among all the workshop participants (for instance, on outings such as to Lake Garda). It was thus in an unusual context of this sort that Carlo was able to link up with his deepest inner self, which he went on to convey to us in bits and pieces thanks to his magnificent and strange paintings.

Exhibition Curator: Anic Zanzi, Museum Curator for the Collection de l'Art Brut
EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

The exhibition catalogue presents several monographic articles signed by specialists in various fields. As such, it brings to light various to-date little handled aspects of this particularly rich and diverse body of works. For example, it sheds light on the writings that Carlo's graphic composition features.

Anic Zanzi, Pauline Mack, Valérie Rousseau, Florence Millioud-Henriques, Marta Spagnolello, et al., Carlo Zinelli, recto verso, under the direction of Sarah Lombardi, Lausanne/Milan, Collection de l'Art Brut/5 Continents Editions, 2019 (192p./180 ill.).

Documentary film: Che cos’hai per la testa, by Sara Pigozzo and Enrico Meneghelli, 30 min. 2016, produced by ArtCam and Fondazione Culturale Carlo Zinelli, Vérone, 2016, will run during the exhibition. French subtitles by Collection de l'Art Brut.

Carlo Zinelli and Michael Noble in the workshop of the San Giacomo alla Tomba hospital, Verona, 1959
Photograph by John Phillips
EVENT LINKED TO THE EXHIBITION

October 30, 2019, at 7PM
Cinéma Bellevaux, Lausanne:
Screening of the film *Les heures heureuses* (lucky hours) by Martine Deyres, 2019, 77’.
With the filmmaker in attendance.

45,000 patients died in French psychiatric hospitals between 1939 and 1945. A single site escaped this carnage: the asylum in Saint-Alban, an isolated village in Lozère. What happened there for it to be an exception? Retracing several decades in the history of this important site of psychiatry, using precious archival films and the accounts of those who worked there, Martine Deyres answers this question and, in doing so, shows how the political courage and poetic audacity that were practised there contributed to changing medicine and society’s perception on madness. Intersecting in the crucible of this movement called “institutional psychotherapy” were members of the Resistance, artists, doctors and philosophers—including Paul Eluard, Tristan Tzara and Georges Canguilhem. Alongside doctors, nurses, inhabitants and the patients, all were part of a human adventure whose unveiling is not a gesture of nostalgia, but rather a necessary and urgent appeal to demonstrate the same courage and the same inventiveness in today’s struggles. *Céline Guénot (Visions du Réel)*

January 15, 2020, at the Collection de l’Art Brut:
6PM - guided tour of the exhibition by Anic Zanzi
7:15PM - Lecture by Riccardo Bargellini, artist and leader of the *Blu Cammello* creative workshop in Livorno (IT).
BIOGRAPHY

Carlo Zinelli, known as Carlo (1916-1974) was born in San Giovanni Lupatoto, a small town near Verona in Italy. The sixth of seven children, he lost his mother at the age of two. A few years later his father sent him to work on a farm in a village nearby. He then moved to Verona, where he worked in the municipal slaughterhouse, while nurturing a growing passion for music. In 1938 he was called up and was sent to fight in the Spanish Civil War as a "volunteer". During the war, Carlo began to display mental problems that became increasingly incapacitating. Diagnosed with schizophrenia upon his return, he was finally committed to the San Giacomo alla Tomba psychiatric hospital in Verona in 1947. Noticing that he was always carving the walls of the hospital, a doctor suggested he attend the institution's art workshop, opened in 1957. Carlo would spend up to eight hours a day there, and by his death he had painted over two thousand works in gouache. His distinctive style consists of a repetition and accumulation of figurative elements and changes in point of view and scale. Although he inserted inscriptions into his gouache works from the very beginning, the period from 1966 to 1969 saw writing take on a central role in his compositions.
A constellation favourable, by Anic Zanzi, Museum Curator for the Collection de l'Art Brut and exhibition curator

[...] The name Carlo Zinelli is often linked to those of two other major figures of Art Brut, Aloïse Corbaz (1886–1964), better known by his given name alone, and Adolf Wölfli (1864–1930). All three are represented in the original core of the Collection de l'Art Brut, comprising all the pieces acquired by Dubuffet and bequeathed to the City of Lausanne in 1971, and now part of the Lausanne museum’s collections. Links and analogies can be identified in both the work and its promotion, and in the individual biographies of these artists. After chaotic lives and, for different reasons, a diagnosis of schizophrenia, all three were hospitalised in their early thirties and spent the rest of their days in a psychiatric institution. In these places that might initially seem unfavourable to creativity, they nevertheless made hundreds of drawings and paintings. At that time, in both Switzerland and Italy, life in psychiatric hospitals was particularly harsh; the restriction of movement, promiscuity and poverty often went hand in hand with violent treatments. Nevertheless, the “official” recognition of their illness and rejection by society meant that the insane were no longer considered responsible for their madness, and in some cases might “not only regard the psychiatric hospital as a place of welcome, but also feel gratitude towards psychiatry, which alone defines and names them without any apparent reference to moral or religious categories, and indeed protects them, albeit at the price of (physical or verbal) imprisonment.” In a way, for the likes of Aloïse, Wölfli, and Carlo, the institution proved to be a kind of refuge. Isolated from the world and freed from social constraints, they were looked after by an organisation and relieved of many duties. In the opinion of Thévoz, hospitalisation sometimes played a positive role in providing an alternative to a social existence that they perceived as even more unbearable. Before they were hospitalised, for these three artists life in society had become intolerable. Upon being locked away in a psychiatric institution, after several difficult years of adjustment, they started to give vent to their creativity, and from that point on interment seems to have offered them the opportunity of a form of inner exile, autonomy, and deliverance. Moreover, the three artists found themselves in conducive surroundings, thanks to the benevolence, attention and consideration of the people who supported and indeed encouraged their creativity and artistic work. The influence of doctors Alfred Bader, Hans Steck, and Jacqueline Porret-Forel was key for Aloïse, as was that of Dr Walter Morgenthaler for Wölfli. In Carlo’s case, the attention he received from his psychiatrist Andreoli was fundamental, both for the artist as a person, and for the recognition of his work. However, other people and particular circumstances also proved helpful to Carlo as an artist. Crucially, he was able to attend the studio funded by Contessa Ida Borletti, wife of the sculptor Noble, who, because he was himself an artist, ensured that it was a space of quiet and freedom. He was able to establish the atmosphere and conditions necessary for Carlo to produce some 2,000 paintings. Among his memories of this experience, Noble has described Carlo’s pleasure and concentration when he was working. He also describes light-hearted moments shared with other members of the studio, on rare excursions to the shores of Lake Garda, for instance. From his account
we learn that Carlo dived headlong into the pool and that he would sing and dance. The photographs by John Phillips show the artist serene and elegant, for example lying under a tree in the grounds of the Villa Idania; Carlo seems to have regained the imposing presence of his youth, and perhaps he had attained a kind of peace. Surrounded by a favourable constellation of supporters, in an unusual context, Carlo found the means to connect with his inner self, of which he gives us snatches through his strange, magnificent compositions.

Memories of Carlo, by Michael Noble, scottish sculptor who created the workshop in the psychiatric hospital of Verona.

[…] but Mengali took Carlo to the studio. As though this were the moment he had always been waiting for, Carlo immediately set out on his extraordinary journey, filling large sheets of paper one after the other, with total concentration, occasionally declaiming words in his sonorous voice and a language all his own. He seemed happy and peaceful, aside from very occasional outbursts when he was exasperated by unwanted interruptions that he regarded as interference. As a result Mengali always made sure that no one disturbed him and gradually, as though a knot had been untied, Carlo began to allow himself a pause, when he would smile, hum and joke in dialect with Mengali, before turning serious once more and taking up his brush.

The studio was open Monday to Friday, 8–11.30 am and 1–5 pm, and also on Saturday mornings. Carlo kept a jealous watch over his brushes; no one could touch them and he used them all down to the last hair. Sometimes, when he was inspired to paint on the back of the sheets of paper, Mengali tried to give him two sheets lightly glued together. But it was no good. His refusal was polite but categorical. Mengali was a veteran of the “Torino” infantry division. He had survived three years in a Russian prison, where he had also managed to work as a nurse. He had the gift of understanding and inexhaustible patience. Like the others, Carlo trusted him to an extraordinary degree. This relationship of trust became the key to the successful functioning of the studio.

[…] The “expeditions” to Verona and Lake Garda (and as far as Como and Milan for the exhibitions) always went wonderfully well. Trabucchi and Marini had to be very brave to undertake activities of this kind, which were revolutionary in themselves. Imagine the scandal (and worse still, the consequences) in those days if there had been some kind of incident. Of course, as a precaution Mengali was accompanied by other nurses.

[…] At Lake Garda Mengali panicked the first time Carlo dived into the swimming pool, but he was an excellent swimmer and it was Mengali who found himself in trouble when he dived in after him. Usually, towards the end of these days out, before they got back on their bus to return to the hospital, we would spend an hour in a tavern with musicians and people we knew in Garda. We would sing and dance. Carlo, who had good taste
and a fine voice, would sing old songs from the mountains, remembering all the words, and sometimes gallantly danced a waltz with Ida.

When writing a piece for a catalogue and pondering the mystery that was Carlo, Professor Trabucchi said that he was one of the most dissociated, regressive cases he had ever seen in the “chaos we call schizophrenia”. That’s not something I am qualified to judge. For nearly seven years, 1957–1964, I was lucky enough to see Carlo fairly regularly. I say “see” rather than “know” or “be in contact with”. But is there anyone of whom I can say “I know him”? For me it was as though Carlo distanced or dissociated himself—yes, we can say that—from the everyday reality around him, with a firm yet friendly kindliness and a degree of irony. But he was able to give his opinion, when he wanted to. In 1964 Trabucchi and Marini were the driving force behind a major exhibition, proposed by the International Society of Psychopathology of Expression—which had been founded at the “Giornate lombrosiane” in Verona in 1959—and funded by the City of Milan. It was bursting with paintings sent by hospital studios from all over Europe, many of which were modelled on our studio in Verona. As I went round the exhibition with Carlo, he was surrounded by journalists, who kept asking him about his paintings saying, “What does it mean?” Carlo would always unhesitatingly point at the wall and say, “Look, if you’re not stupid”.

Carlo words and signs, by Marta Spagnoletto, graduate in heritage conservation and history of art at the Universities of Trento and Turin in Italy.

From his earliest works, writing inhabits Carlo’s art, discreetly and unpredictably. Initially it accompanies images as a caption or occupies a limited space unrelated to the subject of the drawing. Later, notably around the years 1966–69, writing takes on a major role. In the works from this period, more than simply a means of conveying information, writing becomes a form with its own visual and aesthetic qualities. In an important essay on Carlo published in 1982, Vittorino Andreoli describes his works as a poetic, tragic photograph of his times. The terms “poetry” and “tragedy” are key elements of Carlo’s writings, whether or not the writings themselves are readable. In the readable writings, we are surprised by certain associations, unfinished phrases and exclamations that could be described as “poetic”, and which always reflect their author’s sensitive, delicate eye. Other terms relate to very different semantic fields, such as fear or obscenity: we move back and forth (in Dantean fashion) between the “high” register of paradise and the “low” register of hell. In the unreadable writings, the poetry lies in the rhythmic assonance of some sequences of letters. However, as these series are indecipherable, they reflect an evident dissociation from reality which, regardless of any possible positive consequences, remains tragic.

How Carlo writes
Carlo writes phonetically, transposing the sound of words heard but unknown, or disregarding the rules of grammar. He makes unpredictable use of double consonants, uppercase and lowercase letters. […]
Seeing but not seen, leading a cohort of passers-by, by Florence Millioud Henriques, culture journalist specializing in the visual arts for the Lausanne daily newspaper 24Heures.

[...]

Carlo Zinelli is not one of the spiritualist artists of Art Brut who believed they were obeying a medium, or one of those who create a means of escape in order to abscond or avoid some kind of summons. And while he shatters certain norms of figuration, he does not force his art to the point of absolute extravagance, nor does he stage his personal inner turmoil. Instead he acts as a demiurge, shaping his subjects and putting them through implausible genetic mutations, piercing and crossbreeding them, making them fertile and reproductive, but always starting from his own base of knowledge. From his roots. As though, brush in hand, the former soldier, the “madman” banished from society, was merely liberating memories that neither ECT nor sedatives had managed to erase. The countryside—where the youngest son of the San Giovanni Lupatoto carpenter ran and where he worked as a farmer’s boy—reappears throughout his work. But what about warfare? Its artillery, its wounded and its dominance are surely linked to the proud soldier of the Alpini, whom Mussolini sent alongside volunteers to Franco and the Spanish front. And while the religious elements undoubtedly pertain to Italy’s Catholic backdrop, the figure of the saxophonist adds to the portrait of the music-lover Carlo Zinelli, who never stopped singing. But then there are the boats and fishermen, an iconography that harks back to his walks by the River Adige or through Verona, with its fine cars and ladies of the night. The action portrayed in all these diverse beings is overseen by the hand of someone with real experiences. This is Carlo Zinelli’s life, or at least the first thirty years of it.

What does he do with all this later? Just as his creations trace their existence without describing it, their freedom to be melting into inconsequentiality, we must accept not knowing whether he was constantly reliving his life or whether he was drawing another life on the basis of his own landmarks. As a man he had already suffered, as a military stretcher-bearer he witnessed things that would have overwhelmed even the most hardy, but to say that as an artist he was driven solely by the need for catharsis would be an oversimplification. Imbued with a strength that is renewed with every breath, his epic nature of his output defies ready-made ideas and belies all contradiction, leaving him to live his work as it emerges, without having to make recourse to any chronology. His first tentative expressions drew upon his childhood, to which he ultimately returned in naive leaps of fantasy; in between lies his time as a soldier and the mutilations of war, bringing an almost mimetic confusion of stylistic energies. But there is also the final eruption, and when this occurs the artist is fifty-six years old, and has already spent sixteen years in solitude investigating his world, exploring his impassive, anonymous people, giving them the advantage of seeing without being seen and perhaps of saying without having to explain. Then suddenly, after sixteen years of freedom to decide what to draw of this human adventure, the shadows turn to solid flesh and the faces drop their mask of inscrutability, open their eyes, smile, and show amazement. Finally, his figures have features! Bizarre traits of fantasy yes, but human features nonetheless, and show a readiness to recognize the outside world...
IMAGES AVAILABLE TO THE MEDIAS
All images: Atelier de numérisation – Ville de Lausanne (AN)
Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

untitled, ca. 1962
collage of cigarette paper packaging, tobacco packaging, pliage, and gouache on paper
50 x 35
photo: Olivier Laffely, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

untitled, 1963 (recto)
gouache on paper, 70 x 50
photo: Claudine Garcia, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

untitled, 1967 (verso)
gouache and graphite on paper, 70.5 x 50
photo: Arnaud Conne, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

untitled, 1969 (verso)
gouache on paper, 70 x 50
photo: Arnaud Conne, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne
untitled, ca. 1960 (recto)
gouache on paper, 35 x 50
photo: Claudine Garcia, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

untitled, 1962 (verso)
gouache on paper, 50 x 70
photo: Arnaud Conne, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

untitled, 1967 (recto)
gouache and coloured pencil on paper, 50 x 70
photo: Arnaud Conne, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

untitled, ca. 1963 (recto)
gouache on paper, 35 x 50
photo: Olivier Laffely, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne

untitled, 1967 (verso)
gouache and coloured pencil on paper, 70 x 50
photo: Arnaud Conne, AN – Collection de l’Art Brut, Lausanne
EVENTS

Guided tour (preview version) for the press
Wednesday 18 September 2019, 11am
at the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne
Booking: sophie.guyot@lausanne.ch

Opening Reception for the Public
Wednesday 18 September 2019, 6:30pm
at the Collection de l'Art Brut, Lausanne

Free guided tours
Saturday 5 October, 2019 at 2:30pm
Saturday 25 January, 2020 at 2:30pm
Guided tours for the public at large are scheduled for the same times as the Young People's workshops.

Young People's Workshops (ages 5-8)
Saturday 5 October, 2019 at 2pm
Saturday 9 November, 2019 at 2pm
Saturday 25 January, 2020 at 2pm
Duration: 1h45
Fee: 10.-/child

Free guided tour for teachers
Thursday 26 September, 2019 at 5pm
A teaching pack can be downloaded at www.artbrut.ch – visites -- groupe-classe

Activities book for the exhibition
For children ages 6-10
Offered free of charge with a box of crayons.

Guided tours
For classes (from age 4) and groups, in French, German, English and Italian.
Upon request

Guided tours for classes
Advance booking required
Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 11 AM to 6 PM
Thursdays from 9 AM to 6 PM

Contact and bookings for all tours and workshops
at www.artbrut.ch > calendar or phone 021/ 315 25 70
Limited numbers on a first come first served basis
PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Press kit Illustrations and a Press Kit can be downloaded at www.artbrut.ch under the heading: media

Media contact Sophie Guyot
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Opening hours Tuesday thru Sunday from 11am to 6pm including holidays
Closed on December 25 2019 and 1st of January, 2020
On December 24 and 31 open from 11am to 5pm
No entrance fee the first Saturday of every month

Entrance fee Fr. 10.–
Reduced price: Fr. 5.–
Groups of 6: Fr. 5.–
Unemployed persons and youngsters up to 16: free admittance

Access By bus
From St-François : bus no. 2, Beaulieu-Jomini stop.
From the railroad station (gare CFF) : bus nos. 3 and 21, Beaulieu-Jomini stop.

By foot: 25 min. from the station; 10 min. from Place de la Riponne.

By car: highway exit Lausanne-Blécherette, follow Palais de Beaulieu. Car park: Parking de Beaulieu.

Wheelchair accessibility:
During the summer of 2019, the Collection de l’Art Brut will be adding an elevator to its premises. We look forward thenceforth to welcoming wheelchair users to all our upcoming temporary exhibitions.

THE COLLECTION DE L’ART BRUT THANKS THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR SUPPORT: