PRESS RELEASE

METAMAGICO
Claudio Costa

curated by **Marco Scotini**

Opening May 15th 2026, 6:30 pm
16.05.26 – 11.10.26

PAV Parco Arte Vivente in Turin presents a major solo exhibition dedicated to **Claudio Costa**, one of the most singular and least explored artists of the Italian late twentieth century. ***Metamagico***, curated by **Marco Scotini**, explores Costa's central body of work from the 1970s, revolving around his founding obsession: the relationship between material culture, biological memory, and anthropological origins. The exhibition follows a path that revisits the archive, the museum, and the ritual as sites where this relationship manifests.

The exhibition is part of PAV's historical research program dedicated to the roots of the relationship between art and the ecosystem—a direction it has cultivated since its foundation but which, in recent years, it has sought to extend to those pioneers who, as early as the 1960s and 1970s, anticipated the questions now central to the debate on ecology, biodiversity, and the memory of the living. Within this framework, Claudio Costa occupies a unique position: he does not represent nature; he uses it as an archive, as a system of signs, as material that carries within itself the traces of biological and cultural time, convinced that the natural past is not lost but always latent, capable of being exhumed through the artistic gesture.

Claudio Costa trained between Milan and Paris, where he attended S.W. Hayter's famous graphic workshop, Atelier 17, and met Marcel Duchamp, who would remain an essential reference for him. From the late 1960s, moving in contact with the experience of **Arte Povera** without ever fully absorbing its coordinates, his research developed in an autonomous and radical direction: that of a visual anthropology blending tools from ethnography, palaeontology, and alchemy into what he defined as "Work in Regress." This concept, a play on James Joyce, served as his primary inspiration: a journey always in the making, but moving backwards toward the origin of humanity. Costa is not an artist who speaks "about" primitive culture, but rather one who adopts its method: collecting, classifying, burying, exhuming, and transforming.

From his earliest works in the 1960s, Costa worked with organic and elementary materials—slate, clay, wax, terracotta, bones, plant elements—constructing objects that inhabit a threshold between the artefact and the work of art, between the natural history museum and the ritual display case. A prominent figure in the **Arte Povera**, Conceptual, and Fluxus circuits, he participated with a solo room at documenta 6 in **Kassel (1977)** and in several editions of the Venice Biennale, including the “Art and Alchemy” section in 1986. In the final phase of his career, he combined art and social commitment, founding the Museum of Unconscious Forms at the former psychiatric hospital of Quarto in Genoa, stemming from his relationship with psychoanalysis.

Metamagico, which cites a 1978 work in the exhibition, is the title Marco Scotini has chosen to indicate Costa’s operational plan: a reflection on magical thought that dialogues with the philosophers Deleuze and Guattari, using the logic of ritual and myth as a cognitive tool alternative to Western modernist rationality. It is a thought that, in the words of the anthropologist Ernesto de Martino, inhabits the border between the “collapsing presence” and its redemption: the place where the artist and the shaman operate together. The exhibition brings together a heterogeneous range of works from his 1970s production—panels, display cases, installations, photographic series—held together by a single thread: a dogged insistence on searching for the origin, however immanent it may prove to be. The Metamagico exhibition is divided into three areas: Reburied Anthropology (dedicated to his 1977 Kassel solo room), the Museum of Man, and the Museum of Active Anthropology of Monteghirfo.

As part of Claudio Costa’s solo exhibition, AEF/PAV (Education and Training Activities) is presenting the *AgriPittura* workshop, a neologism denoting an expressive experiment derived from the constituent materials of the landscape: earth, grass and any other natural or cultivated product. For a more socio-anthropological exploration, Marina Arienzale will lead Workshop_88 / *Gira Voce 03*, a collaborative initiative designed to engage in dialogue and reflect on communication as a giant game of Chinese whispers, where participants will leave the PAV spaces to listen to the voices of the neighbourhood and gather their opinions.

Claudio Costa, who was born in Tirana in 1942 and died in Genoa in 1995, was a multifaceted artist and an original figure on the global scene. He studied in both Milan and Paris and frequented SW's Atelier 17. Hayter meets Marcel Duchamp. Since the late 1960s, his research has focused on palaeontology and anthropology ("work in regress"), exploring the origin of man through organic and unconventional materials (clay, acids, photocopies). In 1975, he founded the Museum of Active Anthropology in Monteghirfo. A prominent protagonist in the Arte Povera, Conceptual and Fluxus circuits, he has participated in prestigious exhibitions such as Documenta 6 in Kassel (1977) and several editions of the Venice Biennale (the “Art and Alchemy” section of 1986 is famous). In the final phase of his career, he combined art and social commitment, founding the Active Museum of Unconscious Forms in Genoa at the former psychiatric hospital in Quarto.

Metamagico exhibition is organised with the support of Compagnia di San Paolo, Fondazione CRT, the Piedmont Region, and the City of Turin.

The exhibition is in collaboration with the Claudio Costa Archive and C+N Gallery CANEPANERI.

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