

Carlo Mollino

Maniera moderna

"Carlo Mollino is not only diverse, but also contradictory. Yet it is not the individual excentricism, but rather the programatic mannerism, which makes Mollino a reflexive representative of modernity. Mollino opposes the heroic postulates of a Le Corbusier or Gropius with a complex processing of concrete situations in their contradictions. Exemplary for this is his handling of traditions, such as the Alpine log cabin structure, which he reinterprets by combining it with contemporary reinforced concrete construction, or his use of new techniques, including bentwood, which were constructed according to a low tech method that he invented and patented in order to develop his furniture.

By appropriating found objects and materials by means of suprising montages and processes, Mollino has a greater affinity to the form language of contemporary art between 1930 and 1960 than to the contemporaneous architectural discourse that actually paid him little heed. His use of photography is an expression of this approach: It is not the photograph itself that is important to Mollino, but rather how it is processed during extensive post production. Out of the combination of darkroom, retouching and photomontage, he creates a new image. The result of his work – be it a building, piece of furniture or a picture – is always a hybrid.

Carlo Mollino is contemporary. His interdisciplinary work is important for architects and designers and photographers. The offensive processing of opposites, such as traditions and the newest technologies, is decisive for the artistic production. His handling of found objects demonstrates a way of understanding architecture beyond the competition of styles and the newest determination of forms, as a conceptual work within situations and contexts. The resulting mannerism is not mannered. It represents the ability to create a piece of work out of any fragment of reality, regardless of how trivial or inappropriate it initially may seem, a work that can assert itself as a contextually operating art form.

The exhibition was intentionally prepared by a curatorial team, which includes different areas of competence and experience. It initially developed out of a transdisciplinary work by myself, Armin Linke, students of exhibition design and photography students at Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design. The results led to further research, which was deepened together with the former director of the Haus der Kunst, Chris Dercon, and in cooperation with Luciano Bolzoni, the Archivio Carlo Mollino of the Faculty of Architecture Turin (Sergio Pace and Elena Tamagno), as well as Fulvio and Napoleone Ferrari of the Museo Casa Mollino in Turin.

The aim of the exhibition is a contemporary look at a body of work that asks more questions than it provides answers. On journeys and field trips, Linke photographed Mollino's few remaining buildings and interiors for the exhibition. Together with the two installations by Nairy Baghramian und Simon Starling which relate directly to Mollino, the photographs, films and displays form a presentation that is the point of departure for a new examination of Mollino's work."

Wilfried Kuehn, July 2011