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At Magazzino, Social Distancing Devices Vibrate. So Does the Art.

A Hudson Valley oasis of Italian art debuts eight up-and-coming artists — and new wearable safety tech — upon its reopening.



By Ted Loos

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COLD SPRING, N.Y. — I've been cheating, and it's likely you have been too: Six feet apart is a lot farther away than most people seem to hope it is.

I know this because at the recent reopening of Magazzino Italian Art, the museum of postwar and contemporary work here in the Hudson Valley, I wore a piece of social-distancing hardware called an EGopro Active Tag. It was attached to a lanyard around my neck.

The tag is required for all visitors, and it's programmed to vibrate for a few seconds every time the wearer is closer than six feet to a tag worn by another person.

Mine buzzed a lot.

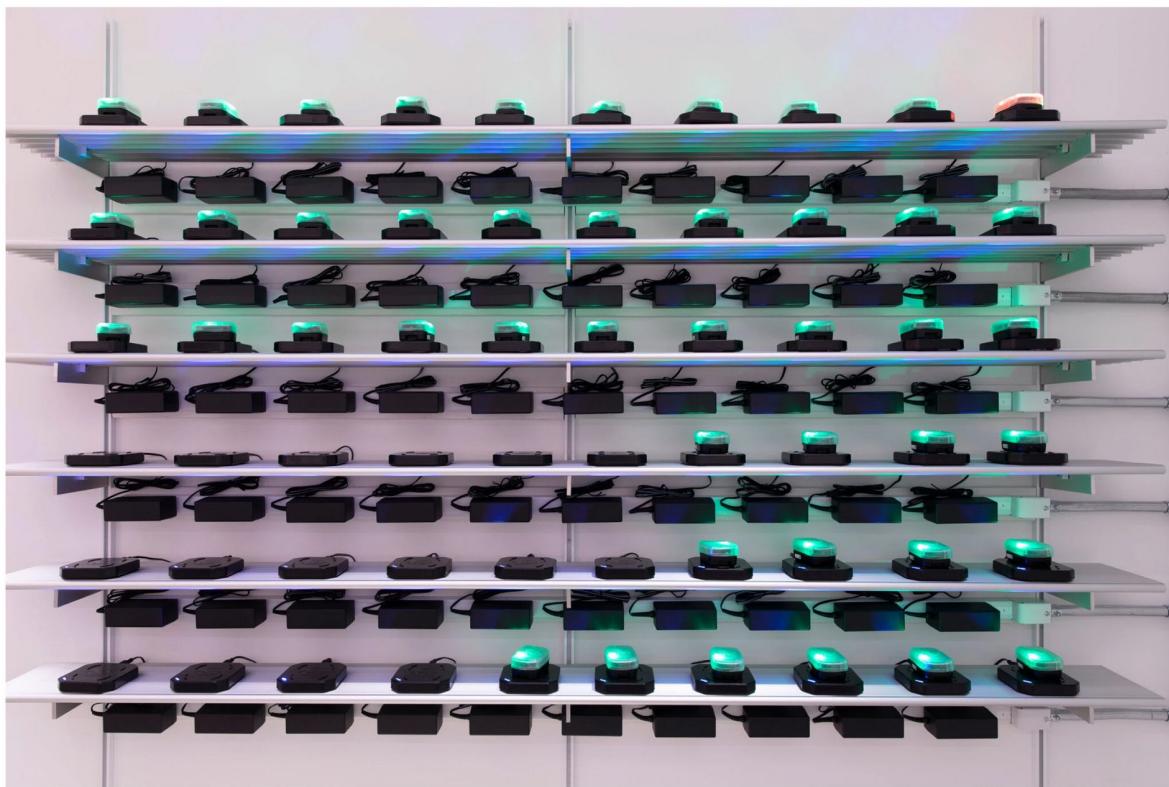
I misjudged my spacing quite a few times, and the incessant buzzing was annoying. But that's the point, of course. It made me retreat, and quickly.

"The technology makes a lot of sense to me," said Harry Wilks of Plattekill, N.Y., one of the visitors I encountered. "It would make even more sense on the weekend, when it's more crowded."

My interviews weren't exactly helping the situation. Mr. Wilks added, "Mine didn't go off until you came up to me to talk."

Magazzino, founded in 2017 by the collectors Nancy Olnick and Giorgio Spanu, is the first museum in the United States to use the technology.

That Magazzino takes pandemic safety seriously is clear from the beginning of a visit there. Temperature checks are now required for all visitors, administered in a little tent outside the entrance. "Nobody's fussing about it so far," said Jay Nicholas, a visitor services assistant, who took mine. Masks are required, too.



This is not an artwork: Small wearable buzzers, in their charging stations, will go off when someone gets closer than six feet to another viewer (not to the art). Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

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Temperatures are checked before visitors enter the building. Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

The museum, which was closed for four months, is admitting 10 people per half-hour via advance reservation, and it assumes a 90-minute visit. It could have more visitors, according to state and county guidelines, but they decided to start cautiously.

“We wanted to find a way to have a new normal,” said Vittorio Calabrese, Magazzino’s director. “Art does not stop.”

It was roomy and very quiet inside the high-ceilinged white galleries, arranged in a ring; the 20,000-square-foot building was designed by the Spanish architect Miguel Quismondo. In galleries four and five, of eight, there are several artworks that incorporate neon, and I could distinctly hear the neon humming.

Highlights from the collection assembled by Ms. Olnick and Mr. Spanu fill most of the galleries, part of an ongoing exhibition called “Arte Povera,” dedicated to the Italian movement of the same name from the 1960s and ’70s, when pioneering Italian artists voiced their dissent about the direction of society.

Works by the movement’s greatest names are on display, including Alighiero Boetti, Giuseppe Penone, Jannis Kounellis, Luciano Fabro, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz and Michelangelo Pistoletto.

The collection shows how Arte Povera encompassed many different media and styles, with a conceptual approach that frequently addresses nationality, immigration and geography; some of the practitioners worked until very recently, or are still at it.

The current selection starts in the lobby, with Mr. Pistoletto's reinterpretation of the Italian tricolor flag, made with rags, "Stracci italiani" (2007). Inside the galleries, his cheeky "Adamo ed Eva" (1962-87) is a portrait of a naked couple on polished stainless steel, so that the viewer can't help but enter the picture when standing in front of it. At 87, he is still working.



View from Magazzino's lobby, from left: Mario Merz, "Senza titolo" (1984); Giulio Paolini, "Mimesi" (1976-88); Michelangelo Pistoletto, "Stracci italiani" (2007). Alexa Hoyer, via Magazzino Italian Art

Mr. Boetti (1940-1994) is represented by several works, including "Mappa" (1983), an embroidered work that he commissioned Afghan artisans to help him make, and "Pannello luminoso" (1966), a Color Field-style red rectangle.

Scattered throughout are works by Mr. Kounellis, who died in 2017, on the theme of travel and on the journey of memories. He gets his own dedicated gallery, too. It has a 1960 untitled painting mixed with several later sculptures in steel and iron (one of them incorporates coffee, which you can smell before you get to it).

Ms. Merz — the only prominent woman in the group, who died last year — is represented by several pieces including "Senza titolo (Untitled)," a 2009 small, upward-facing head on a pedestal. Made of raw clay, it almost appears to cry and retains traces of the artist's touch around the eyes, nose and mouth.



"Senza titolo (Untitled)," by Marisa Merz, who died last year.

Now, there's also a special show, "Homemade," in the last gallery, featuring work made by eight Italian artists quarantined in New York during the pandemic. It began as an online and Instagram invitational, and morphed into a real exhibition.

"Magazzino wanted to support artists making new work during this time," Mr. Calabrese said.

He added, "Some of these artists had to deal with a lot of anxiety and stress. And the common sentiment was that this kept them going. We called our regular video meetings 'Zoom apperitivi.'"

One of the artists in "Homemade," Alessandro Teoldi, was on site when I visited. To keep our buzzers calm, we circled each other at a remove as we chatted.



During the pandemic, Alessandro Teoldi created a studio in his living room where he devised a method of creating concrete casts from paper collages. “Untitled (hug)” gets at an essential feature of the pandemic — the lack of physical intimacy. Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

Mr. Teoldi, who hails from Milan and lives in Brooklyn, talked about his 2020 piece “Untitled (Delta, Norwegian, COPA, Lufthansa, Thomas Cook Airlines, Hawaiian and Iberia),” which is an abstract assemblage of stretched airline blankets that looks from afar like a painting. He made it just before the pandemic hit.

“I buy them on eBay or I steal them when I travel — or when I used to travel,” Mr. Teoldi said. I think his phrasing made us both a little wistful.

His commissioned works, a series of four reliefs called “Untitled (hug),” gets at an essential feature of the pandemic — the lack of physical intimacy. The four panels, cast in cement after starting out as a paper collage, all show people hugging.

The material, Mr. Teoldi said, helps underline “being home but not being able to move, stuck in a building made of cement.”

Having a commission to work on “was a great experience for me,” Mr. Teoldi said. “Quarantine was such a scary time.”

The other artists in “Homemade” are Andrea Mastrovito, Beatrice Scaccia, Danilo Correale, Davide Balliano, Francesco Simeti, Luisa Rabbia and Maria D. Rapicavoli.

The EGopro Active Tag that was making my viewing of their works extra-safe is an adaptation of technology that has been around for a while, using ultra-wideband radio waves.

The tags were developed by the Italian company Advanced Microwave Engineering, which then partnered with the American company Advanced Industrial Marketing, nicely mirroring the married union of the Sardinia-born Mr. Spanu and Ms. Olnick, who is from New York City.

The technology is currently in use at the Duomo in Florence, Italy, and the Leaning Tower of Pisa.



An aerial view of Magazzino Italian Art in Cold Spring, N.Y., which is hoping to expand with a pavilion for rotating exhibitions as well as a children's program. Tony Cenicola/The New York Times

"Proximity detection was developed to keep people away from machines, for safety," Rob Hruskoci, the founder of Advanced Industrial Marketing in Indianapolis, told me. "Until March, no one cared about keeping people away from other people."

Mr. Hruskoci said that two other U.S. museums had purchased the system.

José Pazos, a New York City-based artist who had come up for the day, said that the system worked well for him.

"This is by far the most responsible approach I've seen," Mr. Pazos said. "This is the standard until we have a vaccine. As citizens of New York, we have to protect each other."

Mr. Spanu and Ms. Olnick were on hand for the reopening — they live about five minutes away in Garrison — and were sitting in Magazzino's big, open courtyard, around which the galleries circle.

I wondered about the high-tech approach and whether it was somehow out of place, given that Arte Povera — literally "impoverished art" — had commonplace materials as one of its core tenets.

Ms. Olnick had a thoughtful answer.

"Arte Povera artists were expressing their times — the big transitions they all lived through, the freedom and idealism," she said. "Their motto was, 'Art is life.' And this" — she gestured at a small, distanced circle of people all wearing masks and attached to buzzers — "is life now."

Mousse Magazine

EXHIBITIONS

Marion Baruch and Alessandro Teoldi at Viasaterna, Milan

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Viasaterna presents a new exhibition project that for the first time creates a dialogue between the work of two artists: the radical figure of Marion Baruch (Romania, 1929), active ever since the end of the 1960s in Italy and France, and the young, emerging artist Alessandro Teoldi (Italy, 1987), who has been resident in the US for many years and here is staging his first solo show in Italy.

With a view to recounting to a choral tale made up of assonances and dissonances, of surprises and unexpected revelations, the artists have been called upon to lead a multi-voice dialogue, one both intuitive and at the same time as complex as the weaves of the fabrics that they both use and the consumption that they both undergo.

In an interplay of hyperbolic and free associations, capable of condensing – or vice versa expanding – the gallery spaces, the exhibition brings together a selection of works produced over the last two years, largely unseen before, offered as real ‘windows to look out of’, openings through which to view the world with an ever-new gaze. The result is a visual and emotional tale that unfolds at a syncopated rhythm amid brief pauses and sudden accelerations, in search of the harmony that may arise from the contrast.

Despite the fact that the work of both artists shares a profound and expressive essentiality made up of gestures that are as simple as they are decisive – coupled with a particular sensitivity towards shape, colour tones, the tactile and volumetric natures – their approach to material is very different. Marion Baruch opts to entrust it to chance and recoups the scraps of fabric discarded by fashion ateliers so as to endow them with a new dignity, while Alessandro Teoldi methodically tracks down, purchases and collects the covers produced and distributed by major airlines, receptacles of a series of meanings linked to belonging, detachment and identity. Whereas the former, as a matter of principle, never alters the original material but, working on the alternation between fulls and voids, frees a new shape, letting it emerge and expand in space, the latter on the other hand cuts, sews and overlaps various layers of fabric, revealing a series of faces, hands and bodies, set within carefully framed spaces. While Baruch exploits the creative act to strengthen the bond between the word and the image, associating a title with each work which will then turn out to be of key importance for its interpretation, Teoldi makes use of a generic ‘Untitled’ followed by the name of the airline that the covers used come from, objectivising the specificities of the fabric while at the same time transforming the individual subjects into figures bereft of any identity.

Visionaries, be they abstract or figurative, both the works of Baruch and Teoldi have the power to join and blur the borders that normally separate reality, memory and the imagery, coming across as intimate narratives with a universal sense to them, calling on onlookers to become participants in turn in the stories they tell. Ambiguous and at the same time seductive, they maintain a sense of restlessness and mystery, just as restless and mysterious are the characters that exist within them. Living, throbbing presences, forever on the verge of coming to life.



“Baggage Claim”

Art, Contemporary art



Photograph: Courtesy the artist and Klaus von Nichtssagend Gallery

TIME OUT SAYS**DETAILS****USERS SAY**

Up in the air might be the best description for the tone of this show in which baggage, both literal and emotional, is the unifying thread tying together eight artists whose work makes a metaphorical connection between travel and angst. Michael Mahalchick clear-plastic storage cases filled with personal items are the fairy direct on that score; so, too, are Alessandro Teoldi's images of nervous hands sewn together out of pieces of airline blankets. Joy Curtis and Cheyenne Julien are among the other artists here.

“Baggage Claim,” *Time Out*, July 2017.