

# MARGINI

---

GIORNALE DELLA DEDICA E ALTRO

Diretto da Maria Antonietta Terzoli



14  
2020

### **Direzione**

Maria Antonietta Terzoli

### **Comitato scientifico**

Alberto Asor Rosa  
Andreas Beyer  
Mario Lavagetto  
Helmut Meter  
Salvatore Silvano Nigro  
Marco Paoli  
Giuseppe Ricuperati  
Sebastian Schütze

### **Comitato di redazione**

Muriel Maria Stella Barbero  
Roberto Galbiati  
Sara Garau  
Anna Laura Puliafito  
Vincenzo Vitale

### **Segreteria di redazione**

Vincenzo Vitale

### **Supporto informatico**

Laura Nocito

### **Saggi**

ANGELA FERRARI

*Note sull'uso della virgola ai margini della scrittura  
letteraria e saggistica tra Sette e Ottocento*

FLAVIO FERRI-BENEDETTI

*"Dell'opra eccitator primiero": Metastasio, Farinelli  
e Ferdinando VI nelle dediche gemelle per la Nitteti del 1756*

MURIEL BARBERO

*Ai margini del discorso artistico: il sonetto della Sistina  
di Michelangelo Buonarroti*  
*Abstracts*

### **Biblioteca**

LUIGI MATT

*La lettera dedicatoria [2015]*

### **Wunderkammer**

*Il decimosettimo libro di Lettere dedicatorie di diversi  
(Bergamo, 1604)*

a cura di ANNA LAURA PULIAFITO

EMANUEL EICHBERG

*Una ristampa non ufficiale della seconda edizione  
del Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca (1686)*

MARIA ANTONIETTA TERZOLI

- *Corona ai margini delle strade: disegni dal lockdown*
- *Corona am Rande der Strassen: Zeichnungen aus dem Lockdown*
- *Corona on the street: drawings from the lockdown*



I margini del libro

MARIA ANTONIETTA TERZOLI

## Corona on the street: drawings from the lockdown

From the 16<sup>th</sup> of March to the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, a lockdown was in place in Switzerland in order to stem the spread of the coronavirus. As was the case in other countries which had adopted this drastic measure, social life was stopped overnight: interpersonal contact and travel were reduced as much as possible, all activities were interrupted and came to a halt, universities, schools and kindergartens were closed, and all cultural events and sports were suspended. The uncontrollable spread of the epidemic suddenly confronted us with a tragedy of proportions never imagined, along with the very real risk of the loss of values accrued and consolidated over centuries. It was a dramatic watershed for our entire civilization.

In these months of forced seclusion and necessary asociality we have all developed, with unthinkable speed, new forms of communication: directly from a very private room into everybody else's, equally private, rooms. It soon became evident that reflections on what was happening – its verbalization, its fixation in words, oral or written – was an imperative necessity.

There was however an age group in Switzerland that seemed less dramatically affected by the isolation measures. In these months, children were not able to attend school but could play with each other in parks and on the streets, which were left suddenly empty and without cars. The lessening of rules, the playing with peers instead of attending school, and the suspension of all activities could have been received by children, at least in the beginning, almost with euphoria – like a strange, unreal form of a holiday. Walking cautiously through the surreal streets of the neighborhoods of an almost deserted Basel, one met many children who had come out at unusual times from their houses where the adults were confined.

However, even for them it had to be necessary to try to understand what was happening, to express what they felt in this situation of unexpected and fearful freedom. I do not know if this was attempted verbally in their homes. On the streets, I realized that they were doing so with drawings – appropriating all manner of possible surfaces, drawing familiar or distressed figures, decorating every available space: streets and sidewalks (Figs. 1, 2 and 3), garden walls and flowerbeds (Figs. 4 and 5), ping pong tables (Fig. 6), remains of felled trees (Fig. 7) and even manholes (Fig. 8).

It was above all an unexpected pastime for an unusual, suspenseful time, but it was also a form of expression, a necessary sublimation of emotions as well as old and new fears. Some drawings were very simple, while others were more complex and elaborate in their form, coloring and even in their iconography. All, however, belonged to an

ephemeral art, entrusted to the asphalt of the streets and sidewalks, erasable by the rain, street cleaners and whoever walked over these colored expanses, as well as a thousand other accidents and unexpected events. They were drawings destined for a short survival (and have not existed for months now): One day I began to photograph, collect and categorise them according to themes. Here, I will present the most interesting from this collection.

The most frequent depictions are of animals: domestic, wild, imaginary, monstrous. This is how we find a peaceful coming together of a hedgehog, snail, mouse, bird, fish and flamingo (Figs. 9 and 10). Other drawings include cats (Figs. 11 and 12), sharks (Fig. 13), imaginary horses (Figs. 14 and 15), but also an elephant (Fig. 16), a crocodile (Fig. 17), and a likeable dinosaur (Fig. 18). More disturbing are the drawings with a mocking mouse (Fig. 19), a monster with strange patches of color (Fig. 20), a large dragon resembling a basilisk, the symbolic animal of Basel (Fig. 21), and two jellyfish, one of which is next to human heads (Figs. 22 and 23).

A delightful stork – potentially inspired by those that sometimes settle on nearby fields – holds in its beak a bag with a baby, of whom only the head is visible (Fig. 24). Another frequent theme is that relating to human figures: some are depicted with animals (Figs. 25 and 26) or in rural settings (Fig. 27), while others appear engaged in various activities (Figs. 28, 29 and 30) or group conversations (Fig. 31). Some, on the other hand, appear isolated, even though there are multiple figures, and seem to be rendered with sinister strokes: these are almost inert bodies abandoned on the asphalt (Figs. 32 and 33) or even outlines of bodies traced after an accident (Fig. 34).

This year, Easter and other holidays took place during the lockdown. As everyone knows, there were no religious or collective celebrations. Each person, in their own home, passed these days as best they could, often in complete solitude. But in those painful and surreal days, the thresholds of houses and the edges of gardens catered to many festive greetings in the form of drawings: eggs (Fig. 35), Easter bunnies (Figs. 36 and 37), and imaginative shapes of Easter figures (Fig. 38). In this way, personal events such as birthdays, which could not be celebrated with friends, were signalled with sumptuous and colorful signs on the sidewalks in front of the houses (Figs. 39 and 40).

Among the images relating to human beings, there is a beautiful and complex drawing (Fig. 41) which depicts a country house and its inhabitants, portrayed with great vivacity. To the right of the scene appears Pippi Longstocking, with her polkadot horse and her monkey on her shoulder, next to two children who become her friends in the book (Fig. 42). In front of the house there are some children holding hands on a flowery meadow, illuminated by the sun. At first glance, it would appear to be a depiction of a serene instance of family life, but one detail instantly recalls the difficult reality of this period: on the left, separate from the others, an adult man sits behind the line of the wall with his arms opened disconsolately and wearing a mask (Fig. 43), as someone who should protect others from their own illness. It is probably the father, if the first figure is the mother, larger than the others, in the row of people holding hands

in front of the house. The reality of illness and isolation thus bursts into the rural idyll and provides the dramatic key to interpreting an otherwise happy scene.

It is precisely to this anguished theme of illness and death, obsessively present in those lockdown days, that some of the most impressive drawings I photographed are dedicated. Two drawings schematically represent a man and woman with their lungs highlighted, namely the bodypart that could be most severely affected by the coronavirus (Figs. 44 and 45). But in this singular childhood iconography it is not to be overlooked that the shape represented at the height of the lungs could be a giant, frightening representation of the virus itself.

Another drawing with extraordinary expressive power depicts two skeletons, an adult and a child, who seem to be desperately trying to take each other by the hand, one moment before the tragic leap into emptiness (Figs. 46 and 47): almost the abbreviated and schematic version of a *danse macabre*. The drawing, done by a sure hand on the side of the road, seems to scarily adapt the traditional sequence of the characters (adults) accompanied dangerously by death for the world of children. This scene recalls the famous frescoes of an ancient *Totentanz*, once painted on the walls of the cemetery of the Predigerkirche, of which only a few impressive fragments survive, and are kept in a room of the Historisches Museum in Basel.

M.A.T.

(translated by Jeanne Muguette Müller)

**Images:**

The photos published here were taken by Maria Antonietta Terzoli in Basel, in the neighbourhoods of Bachletten, Gotthelf and Iselin, between the 12th of April and the 17th of May 2020.

**Fig. 1****Sidewalk decoration**



Fig. 2



Floral and geometric elements

Fig. 3



Rain, umbrella and flowers



Fig. 4



On a garden wall

Fig. 5



On the edge of a flower bed

Fig. 6



On a ping pong table



Fig. 7



On a log rest

Fig. 8



On a manhole



Fig. 9



Hedgehog, mouse, bird and snail

Fig. 10



Fish and flamingo



Fig. 11



Pink cat

Fig. 12



Blue cat



Fig. 13



Two sharks



Fig. 14



Horse with pink mane and tail

Fig. 15



Pegasus

Fig. 16



Elephant

Fig. 17



Crocodile



Fig. 18



Dinosaur



Fig. 19



Mocking mouse

Fig. 20



Monster

Fig. 21



Dragon



Fig. 22



Jellyfish



Fig. 23



Jellyfish next to two heads

Fig. 24



Stork



Fig. 25



Female figure with animals



Fig. 26



Female figure with animals (particular)

Fig. 27



Child, flowers and bees

Fig. 28



Astronaut with a flag



Fig. 29



Astronaut with a caterpillar

Fig. 30



Skier

Fig. 31



Female conversation



Fig. 32



Three children

Fig. 33



Two children

Fig. 34



Outlines on the asphalt



Fig. 35



Happy Easter

Fig. 36



Easter bunny

Fig. 37



Easter bunny (particular)



Fig. 38



Easter figure

Fig. 39



Happy birthday

Fig. 40



Happy birthday (particular)



Fig. 41



House

Fig. 42



House: Pippi Longstocking, with a horse, monkey, and children (particular)

Fig. 43



House: man with mask (particular)



Fig. 44



Sick male figure (?)

Fig. 45



Sick female figure (?)

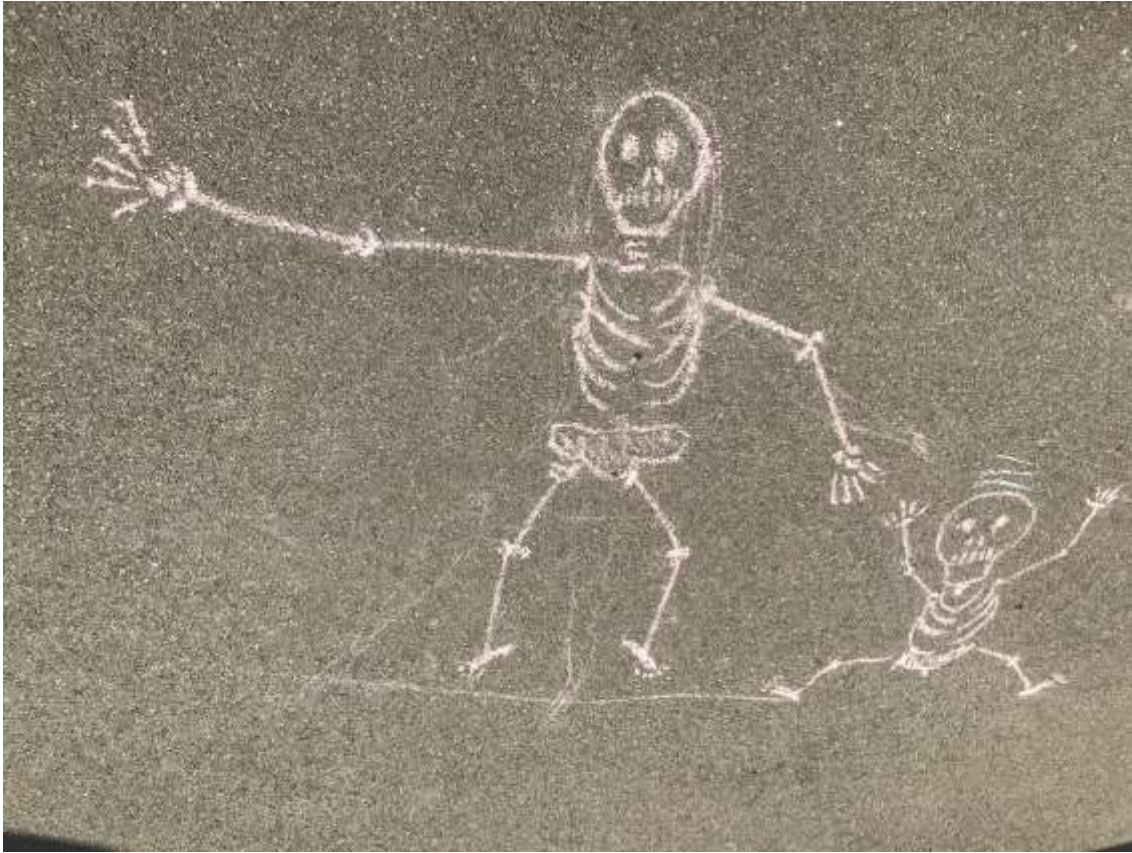
Fig. 46



Two skeletons



Fig. 47



Two skeletons (particular)

