

Exorcizing the Atomic Bomb Through the Arts in Italy: From Eaismo to Senzatomica

Massimo Introvigne

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)

maxintrovigne@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: The success of anti-nuclear-weapon campaigns such as those promoted by Senzatomica in Italy may owe something to a post-Hiroshima artistic tradition translating into works of art both the new principles of atomic physics and the horror of the bombs. Salvador Dalí's painting *Uranium and Atomica Melancholica Idyll*, which he started in 1945 as soon as he learned of the bombings in Japan, had an important role in this process. However, two Italian artistic groups, the Nuclear Art Movement around Enrico Baj in Milan, and Eaismo around Voltolino Fontani in Livorno, asserted a priority against Dalí's claim of having invented "atomic painting," and legal cases followed. While questions of copyright were mostly a distraction, the atomic art movements remained a significant feature of Italy's artistic scene, and a precedent for the contemporary aesthetics of Senzatomica.

KEYWORDS: Atomic Art, Eaismo, Nuclear Painting, Nuclear Art Movement, Enrico Baj, Dalí's Mystical Manifesto, Voltolino Fontani, Senzatomica, Luca Barcellona.

Introduction

The Italian Soka Gakkai campaign Senzatomica has always used art, performances, and innovative graphics to spread its message. It is an important component of its success. The hypothesis of this article is that, among the different reasons of Senzatomica's achievements, is the fact that Italy has a specific tradition of artists reflecting on nuclear weapons. Also because of a sensational court case, this tradition became known to the non-specialized public as well.

A possible objection is that the court case happened some seventy years ago, and that only a cultivated fraction of the Italian population attends art exhibitions

and is familiar with artistic avant-gardes. However, based also on my personal observation of its events, I would suggest that Senzatonica caters mostly (although not exclusively) to a cultivated and culturally savvy segment of Italian citizens.

The article discusses the importance and influence in Italy of a specific painting by Salvador Dalí (1904–1989). It then examines two Italian artistic movements that reacted both to the atomic bombings in Japan and to the new scientific discoveries on atomic energy, the Nuclear Art Movement in Milan and the Eaismo in Livorno.

It concludes with some comments on the aesthetics of Senzatonica.

Dalí's Uranium and Atomica Melancholica Idyll

The 2022 exhibition “Surrealism and Magic: An Enchanted Modernity” at Venice’s Peggy Guggenheim Collection (Subelytė and Zamani 2022) presented in Italy a work that is crucial for our story: Dalí’s *Uranium and Atomica Melancholica Idyll*, from Madrid’s Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.



Figure 1. Salvador Dalí, *Uranium and Atomica Melancholica Idyll* (1945).

Uranium and Atomica Melancholica Idyll may well be the first painting by a leading artist following the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (August 6–9, 1945). Dalí wrote that

The atomic explosion of August 6, 1945 shook me seismically. Thenceforth, the atom was my favorite food for thought. Many of the landscapes painted in this period express the great fear inspired in me by the announcement of that explosion (Dalí 1976, 216).

When he learned about the bombing, Dalí immediately started the painting. A first feature of the work the audience may note are the elephants on the upper right. Those who have been close to an elephant know that they drop excrements almost non-stop. Their action here is a metaphor of dropping atomic bombs, an act that is as “dirty” as it is tragic.

Dalí also included obelisks, which allude to the bloody wars between the Romans and the Carthaginians, and the terror created among the inhabitants of Italy in 218 BCE when Hannibal (247–182 BCE) crossed the Alps with his elephants and invaded the peninsula. Dalí had an interest in Hannibal as evidenced by his late watercolor *Hannibal Crossing the Alps*, now at The Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida (Taylor 2016, 11). The meaning of the allusion in *Uranium and Atomica* is that the horrors of war always repeat themselves.

In *Uranium and Atomica*, we immediately see the consequences: the nuclear explosion directly invading the human body, and a victim reminiscent of classical depiction of slaves but also deformed by the radiations. The painting could not omit to mention that it had been the United States that had dropped the bombs in Japan. Dalí disseminated in *Uranium and Atomica* images of quintessentially American Little League baseball players. He was also aware that “Little Boy” was the codename for the Hiroshima bomb.

After *Uranium and Atomica*, Dalí’s career went through two dramatic changes. First, he broke with Surrealism, claiming that atomic physics required an entirely new way of painting (Nigro 2010). Second, Dalí, a former anticlerical, reconciled with religion, claiming that the new physics proved a divine design in the universe (Roncalli 2019; Introvigne 2022) and called for a “nuclear mysticism.” He was received by Pope Pius XII (1876–1958) on November 23, 1949, and showed the Pontiff a first version of his *Madonna of Port Lligat* (Tapié 1950; Schemeil 1952).

One main source for Dalí's idea that the new atomic physics supported a "nuclear mysticism" was the book *God and the Atom*, published in 1945 by English Catholic priest and theologian Ronald Knox (1888–1957: Knox 1945). Dalí decorated the copy of the 1948 Spanish translation he owned (Knox 1948) with drawings of explosions and atoms (Taylor 2016, 6). This religious enthusiasm, however, should not be misunderstood. Both Knox and Dalí described nuclear weapons as terrifying and sinister, while supporting peaceful research on the atom.

In *Leda Atomica* (1949) Dalí revisited the myth, often portrayed in the Renaissance and beyond, of Zeus mutating into a swan to seduce the Queen of Sparta, Leda (the painter's wife Gala, 1894–1982: Maurell 2000). Leda is "atomic" in the sense that, in accordance with the new atomic physics, there is no gravity. The figures are dematerialized and float in the air.

In 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of Mary, i.e., that the Mother of Jesus was taken up to Heaven with her physical body. Dalí wrote in the Catholic journal *Études Carmélitaines* that this definition was "the most important historical theme of our epoch," and can only be explained scientifically and represented artistically by his own "nuclear mysticism" through atomic de-materialization and recomposition (Dalí 1952, 71–2), as he tried to do with his painting *Assumpta Corpuscularia Lapislazulina* (1952).

In 1951, Dalí had published a *Mystical Manifesto* on his new religious approach to atomic physics and the arts (Dalí 1951). The "conversion" (although the religious turn of Dalí was more complicated: see Roncalli 2019; Introvigne 2022) of a famous former anticlerical artist, his enthusiasm for Pope Pius XII, and his announcement that a new "nuclear art" was coming as the only true modern art were largely covered by media in Italy. Not the Catholic media only: on April 28, 1952, the influential *Corriere Lombardo* of Milan published a long article on Dalí, atomic issues, and the Pope (Schemeil 1952).

This upset some Italian artists, who believed Dalí had stolen the expression "nuclear art" from them, and the matter ended up in Italian and French courts of law (making in the process all the artists involved even more famous). A main character in this controversy was Milan painter Enrico Baj (1924–2003).

“Nuclear Painting” in Milan

In 1951, Baj exhibited his own “nuclear paintings” at the Galleria San Fedele in Milan. He claimed he had already written at that time a “Manifesto of Nuclear Painting” and created with fellow painter Sergio Dangelo (1932–2022) a Nuclear Art Movement, although they were officially launched in Brussels only in February 1952 (Anzani 1980, 7–8; see Appendix A).

The Nuclear Art Movement was not born in a vacuum. Lucio Fontana (1899–1968), Roberto Crippa (1921–1972), and Cesare Peverelli (1922–2000) never became members of the movement but their dialogue with Baj and Dangelo was crucial for its development (Anzani 1980; Corgnati 1998). Dangelo’s outbursts of forms and colors were clearly indebted to Jackson Pollock (1912–1956), who had indeed alluded to atomic explosions (Sauvage 1962, 55–6).

With Baj and Dangelo, the third musketeer of the Nuclear Art Movement was designer Cesare “Joe” Colombo (1930–1971), better known for his visionary “atomic era” furniture. The movement was genuinely successful in the decade of the 1950s and attracted to his exhibitions organized throughout Europe luminaries such as Asgern Jorn (1914–1973), Piero Manzoni (1933–1863), and Yves Klein (1928–1962).

Jorn saw in the Nuclear Art Movement a continuation of sort of COBRA (the Copenhagen–Brussels–Amsterdam avant-garde), in which he had been involved. In 1953, he wrote to Baj:

It is with great pleasure that I have received documentation as to your artistic work, which appears to me to correspond with that of “COBRA,” whose activity has ceased (Sauvage 1962, 226).

Eventually, Jorn moved to Italy to be closer to his friends Baj and Dangelo, and in 1957 settled in the seaside resort town of Albissola Marina, famous for its production of ceramics (Sala and Debord 1974).

But what was the relationship of the Nuclear Art Movements with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Just like Dalí, the Milan Nuclearists were both fascinated by new physics and terrorized by the bomb. As Baj later reminisced,

We wanted to represent, and even give an artistic embodiment, to the [atomic] energy; but also to its destructive effects, or on the contrary its creative effects—the former as horrific as the plague, the others beneficial for the human beings, their lifestyles, their world. Our interests were never far away from humans (Corgnati 1998, 11).

When it came to the effects of the atomic bombs, Baj was more than an amateur. Although he eventually graduated in Law, he attended the course and passed the exam on Nuclear Physics at the University of Milan with the famous Italian scientist Giovanni Polvani (1892–1970: see Corgnati 1998, 11, where Polvani is mistakenly called “Luigi”). The ambivalence towards the atomic energy was expressed in the Manifesto of 1952 (Appendix 1), and even more in Baj’s painting of the same year *Manifesto bum*:

The forms disintegrate. The new forms of humans are those of the atomic universe. The heads of humans are charged with explosives; every atom is about to burst. The blind, that is, the non-nuclear, ignore this situation. Boom: thoughts=forces. Forces are electric charges; everything is electric charge (Baj 1952).

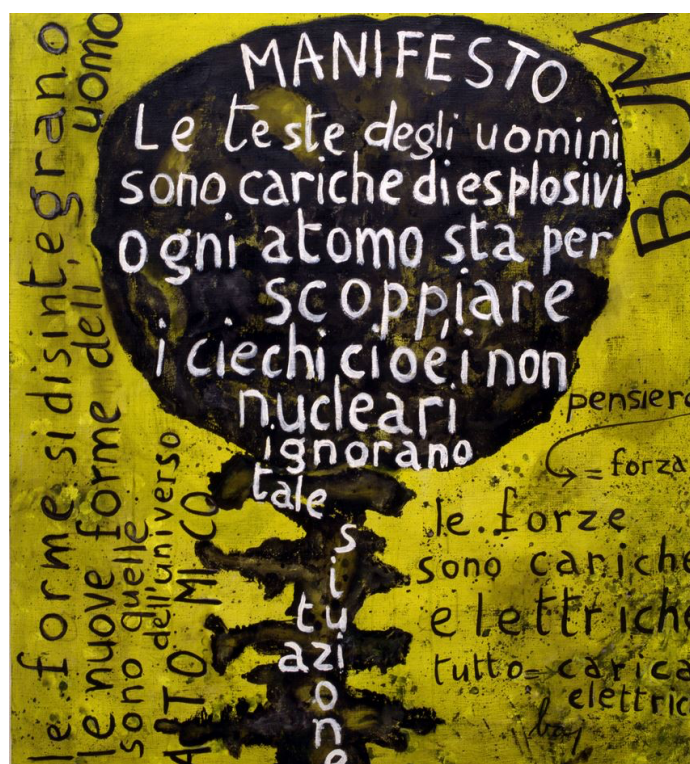


Figure 2. Enrico Baj, *Manifesto bum* (1952).

Baj was indeed the key figure of the movement, and one important for creating in Italy a long-lasting culture scared and suspicious of nuclear weapons. He produced dozens of paintings warning that the proliferation of nuclear weapons could only create a planetary annihilation. *Two Children in the Nuclear Night* (1956) is one of Baj’s most terrifying paintings, and a good example of his anti-nuclear-weapons position.



Figure 3. Enrico Baj, *Two Children in the Nuclear Night* (1956).

Several paintings by Baj represent crazy generals. They anticipate the 1983 hit song by the German singer Nena *99 Luftballons*, where a crazy general mistakes balloons for spacecrafts and orders what looks like a nuclear attack. Indeed, Baj paintings have been often exhibited in Germany and might have inspired the lyricist of the song, Carlo Karges (1951–2002).

But who had invented the terms “nuclear painting” and “nuclear arts”? When he sued Dalí, Baj obtained a preliminary ruling in his favor from the Justice Court of Milan in 1954, mostly because the Spanish artist had not cared to appear. A Paris court refused to enforce the decision against Dalí, and in 1957 the Justice Court of Rome, where the case had been transferred, finally found in favor of the Spanish painter. By that time, however, he had already agreed that he would humor Baj and not refer to himself as “the inventor of nuclear painting” any longer (Taylor 2016, 8–9).

Both parties were also more inclined to settle after their lawyers became aware that the term “nuclear painting” had also been used in manifestos published in 1950 by Germaine Joumard (1898–1950: Taylor 2016, 9) and Italian Futurist Fortunato Depero (1892–1960: Depero 1950).

Baj was also hearing from the lawyers of somebody who had an even earlier priority, Livorno painter Voltolino Fontani (1920–1876), the leader of an artistic movement called *Eaismo* (Era-Atomica-ismo, or Atomic-Era-ism). Although lawyers exchanged letters and promised to fight (Cagianelli 2002, 37; Fontani 2005–6, 23), it seems that in the end there was no court case (Fontani 2005–6, 24).

“Eaismo” in Livorno

Two painters, Angiolo (Angelo) Siro Pellegrini (1908–1997) and Aldo Neri (1911–2003), and two poets, Marcello Landi (1916–1993) and Guido Favati (1920–1973), joined Fontani from Livorno and nearby Cecina when he founded *Eaismo* on September 3, 1948, and organized a first exhibition in Florence, at the House of Dante, in May 1949.

Fontani was an interesting character. In 1937, at age 17 and already a painter, Fontani wrote “On Theosophy,” which remained unpublished and showed his familiarity with the works of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) on perception and the arts (Fontani 2005–6, 37). Fontani was continuing a tradition inaugurated in the city of Livorno with the presence there between 1908 and 1923 of Belgian symbolist painting Charles Doudelet (1861–1938), who was in contact with the Theosophical Society and other esoteric organizations. The presence of Doudelet in Livorno was the catalyst for the flourishing of a generation of local artists interested in Theosophy, Rosicrucianism, and Spiritualism (Cagianelli 2009, 2021).

This was the generation of Livorno artists before Fontani. In the city, however, another strong tradition was the landscape painting, often compared to Impressionism, of the so-called *Macchiaioli*. The tradition persisted long after the death of its most illustrious representatives, Silvestro Lega (1826–1895), Telemaco Signorini (1835–1901), and Giovanni Fattori (1825–1908), and by the time of World War II had become somewhat repetitious and academic. Mario Puccini (1869–1920), a pupil of Fattori and an “involuntary Van Gogh” (Marchioni 2021) who spent time in psychiatric hospitals, had still been a creative voice in the wake of the *Macchiaioli*, but he had also died in 1920.

In 1945, a “Modern Artistic Group” (Gruppo Artistico Moderno, GAM) was founded in Livorno “with the specific aim of opposing the Macchiaioli tradition and prepare the way for the avant-garde” (Fontani 2005–6, 9). One of GAM’s founders was Fontani. The GAM organized three exhibitions, in 1945, 1946, and 1948. During the third exhibition, in October 1948, the Manifesto of Eaismo was launched by Fontani, Pellegrini, Neri, Landi, and Favati (Favati et al. 1948; see Appendix 2).

Dalí started painting *Uranium and Atomica* immediately after the Hiroshima bombing, but as an organized movement devoted to an “atomic art” Eaismo predates all the others (Cagianelli 2002, 36). While Dalí was both terrorized by the atomic bomb and enthusiastic about the mystic potential of nuclear physics, and Baj ended up focusing on the risk of annihilation, the artists from Livorno were somewhere in the middle. Fontani and his friends were even accused by critics such as journalist and artist Milziade Torelli (1910–1989), in the predominantly left-wing Tuscany of their time, of being in favor of nuclear weapons (Torelli 1948), while they were in fact trying to exorcize them through the arts.

Torelli and other critics might have overlooked (Fontani and Battisti 2020, 15) that, in the conclusion of their Manifesto, the Eaists had written that

It should be clarified, however, that the movement does not extol the atomic age, tremendous and evil, nor is it inspired by the phenomenon of that tragic human progress that generated it in its external and mechanical aspects. EAISM will express the tragedy of the 20th century by being inspired by the sense of that tragedy, that is, the sense of humans plunged to live in it, seeking to restore again in humans, and translate into works, the shattered balance of the equation humanity-world (Favati et al. 1948, 11).

Indeed, Fontani himself believed that after Hiroshima there was no room for the sweet Spiritualism inspired by Theosophy of his pre-World-War-II works. Fontani’s 1948 work *Grafodinamica (Dinamica di Assesamento o Frattura e Coesione)* [Graphodynamics (Dynamics of Settlement or Fracture and Cohesion)] was a manifesto of Eaismo in itself, and a statement of its persuasion that both the bombings and the new science of the atom required a new way of painting.

Several other paintings, including *Nuclear Composition* of 1954 and *Nuclear* of 1958, are representative of Fontani’s continuing focus on the atomic theme.



Figure 4. Voltolino Fontani, *Grafodinamica*
(*Dinamica di Assesamento o Frattura e Coesione*) (1948).

The meditation on the consequences of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was shared by the other Eaists. Pellegrini's *Macerie* (Rubble, 1949), on the disasters left by the bombs, is known only through a black-and-white reproduction, but his more famous *A Dove Is Shot* (1950) also symbolically denounces the wars.

Not much is known of the Eaist period of Neri, except a picture of him and his paintings at the inaugural Eaist exhibition in Florence. But he maintained a similar style in later works after he moved to Busto Arsizio, Lombardy. Although Landi was primarily a poet, encouraged by his Eaist colleagues he also started painting the anguish of the atomic era, including in his 1949 *Obsession*.

The third Eaist exhibition at the Galleria Pascucci, Grosseto, in 1959—after the second organized in Livorno in 1953—was the last one in the history of Eaismo as an established movement. By then, it has recruited some new artists, including Giuseppe Roffi (1911–1991), Corrado Carmassi (1893–1982) from Collesalvetti, Danilo Gedè (1911–1996) from Livorno, and sculptor Giulio

Guiggi (1912–1994) from Pomarance (Pisa), whose women are reminiscent of those caught by the Vesuvius eruption in Pompeii—or by a nuclear explosion (Micieli 2014). Germano Fontani (1917–1998), Voltolino’s brother, joined the ranks of the Eaist poets (Fontani 2005–6, 22–3).

Giancarlo Cocchia (1924–1987), from Livorno, was among those who participated in the Eaist exhibitions as “independent” artists. His *Fear of the Atomic Bomb* is dated 1965, but still maintains the Eaist spirit. It does not express only the fear mentioned in the title, but the dissolution of the bodies hit by the atomic blast.

In fact, as an organized movement, Eaismo lasted until 1959 only, but even in his later “oneiric” production (Romano 2002) Fontani continued to allude to atomic scenarios. Just like Dalí, Fontani also turned to Catholic religious painting, most notably in the church of Saint Giovanni Gualberto in Valle Benedetta, Livorno (Romano 2002, 59–60).

The same did other Eaists. For example, Neri designed and directed the painting of frescoes on the walls of the “oratorio” (youth center) of Sacconago in Busto Arsizio, today unfortunately almost destroyed (*Varesenoi.it* 2021). Guiggi worked in the church of the Arciconfraternita della Misericordia in Livorno (now the Romanian Orthodox church of the city). Cocchia decorated the church of Our Lady of Lourdes in Livorno’s borough of Collinaia (*La chiesa di Collinaia e la pittura di Giancarlo Cocchia* 1987). Church work was well paid, but it may also indicate that religion was perceived as a source of hope after the Eaists’ confrontation with the threat of the atomic bomb.

Conclusion: The Aesthetics of Senzatomica

As American curator Michael R. Taylor noted, while they might have made the atomic art movements more well-known to the general public, ultimately the court cases were a distraction and contributed to their demise (Taylor 2016, 10). While until a recent re-discovery, where the studies of Francesca Cagianelli played a key role, Eaismo was mostly a local Tuscan phenomenon, Baj’s anti-nuclear-weapons paintings were always popular, not to mention the Italian continuing success of Dalí.

When Senzatmica came, reminiscences of these Italian artistic movements may have played a role in making its campaigns more immediately understandable. Even children through their drawings exhibited at its events contribute to giving to Senzatmica an artistic touch.

There is always something new in how Senzatmica uses the arts to convey its message. What has happened in the last few years is a cooperation with Luca Barcellona, one of the leading international names in the world of calligraphy, who teaches at the Italian Calligraphy Association and has held workshops in Europe, the U.S., Canada, Japan, and Australia. Christopher Calderhead, the editor of the specialized *Letter Arts Review*, wrote in 2009 that

Energy and the virtuosity are the two words that come immediately to mind when I see the work of Luca Barcellona. There are few lettering artists working today with such an artistic range and light, easy control of their tools. Luca manages to straddle two worlds—formal, calligraphic lettering and the street-savvy demi-monde of graffiti—and to work expertly in both (Calderhead 2009, 17).



Figure 5. Luca Barcellona, Senzatmica logo, 2021.

Barcellona designed Senzatmica’s new logo and brand identity. The logo deliberately looks like “handwriting,” emphasizing that each volunteer should “handwrite” the project and create it daily through a personal participation.

In his 2015 encyclical letter on ecology *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis wrote that the cultural “settings” we are surrounded by, of which art is certainly a part, “influence the way we think, feel and act” (Francis 2015, no. 147). Both for the “nuclear” artists and for Senzatmica, art can contribute to change our way of thinking, feeling, and acting, which is also the only path to realistic results in the difficult field of nuclear disarmament.

Appendix I

Manifesto of Nuclear Painting (1952)

The NUCLEAR want to break down all the “isms” of a painting style that inevitably falls into an academicism, whatever its genesis.

They can and they want to reinvent painting. The forms disintegrate: the new forms are those of the atomic universe. The forces are electric charges.

The ideal beauty does not belong to a caste of stupid heroes or robots. But it coincides with the nuclear representation of humans and their space.

Our consciousnesses charged with unforeseen explosives prelude to a FACT.

The nuclear lives in this situation, which only humans with extinguished eyes cannot grasp. The truth does not belong to you, it is inside the ATOM. The nuclear painting documents the search for this truth.

Brussels, February 1, 1952

Enrico Baj

Sergio Dangelo

Appendix II

Manifesto of Eaismo (1948)

On September 3, 1948, at the “Amedeo Modigliani” School of Art [in Livorno] VOLTOLINO FONTANI, ANGIOLO SIRO PELLEGRINI, and ALDO NERI (painting), MARCELLO LANDI, and GUIDO FAVATI (poetry) laid the foundation for the EAIST movement.

EAISM wants to bring art back to its supreme values, that is, to express with essentiality and intimacy our presence in the world. It therefore aims to free artistic expression from the cerebralism in which it has become entangled in the last fifty years. We want to lead it back to the necessary naturalness, intended to express with the greatest humanity of commitment and expressive coherence the problems that press within us, first as human beings and then as artists.

It is called EAISM, that is, Atomic Age Movement (E, A, ism) because the discovery of atomic energy is regarded by EAISTS as the acquisition of a principle that will revolutionize our conception of the universe. It will thus alter that sentimental balance and the morality that found its support and justification in it. Therefore, it is capable of confronting us with problems of incalculable magnitude, such as those posed by the inadequacy and mismatch existing today between the truth and freedom achieved by scientific thought and the retrogressive and traditional stage of our sentimental and moral life.

EAISM therefore does not share, except in certain aspects of them, the programs of other contemporary movements. They do not perceive the urgent need of pursuing with sincerity of purpose and depth of introspection the human values capable of standing firmly (as the only certain points of reference) in the new conception of the universe. Nor do they perceive the new values that announce themselves to us. They conceive art as a refuge for the initiates and as an oasis where they remain enclosed, far away from the complex travails of humanity. In particular, we denounce:

I - FUTURISM, because it proposes to illustrate only the external visual aspects of reality, suggesting a trivial superposition of planes as the mechanical result of a succession of optical images on the retina, rather than the intimate problematic nature of reality.

II - CUBISM, which intends to celebrate only the physical aspects of reality or, in particular cases, pass on it a subjective and partial judgment, without understanding its richness of suggestions, and emptying it of its deep sense of divinity.

III - FAUVISM, because it expresses only the external splendor of the reality, in a funambulistic game of abstract candor, without bothering to penetrate its human motives.

IV - SURREALISM, because it conceives artistic expression as an experiment of automatism of a subconscious nature, instead of employing the means of expression as a conscious way of translating a dominating feeling of the soul into word and figure.

V - EXISTENTIALISM, because it wants to conceive human presence in the world as the effect of a cruel play of forces foreign to us, without bothering instead to affirm the value and essence of humanity, while it is only by pursuing the latter that we can escape bewilderment, vertigo, and nausea.

VI - HERMETICISM, because it reduces the word to a pure phonic and musical fact, denying its natural function as the signifier of a concrete reality, which alone gives to it consistency and value.

VII - ABSTRACTISM, because, in a way similar to what hermeticism does with the words, it adopts signs and colors as elements of a merely arbitrary play, no longer capable of signifying the humanity of the vision, nor of communicating it to the audience.

VIII - LETTRISM, and its closest progenitor, DADAISM, which, in the deliberately elementary nature of their puerile sounds, express of the modern age only the aspect of bewilderment and babbling, instead of seeking what fundamental values of modernity are capable of surviving the disintegration, including spiritual disintegration, which threatens us.

EAISM therefore proposes a new content to artistic inquiry, inviting artists to assess the consistency and solidity of the myths of our perilous humanity, convinced as it is of the need for art to reconnect with the reality of life and its feelings with commitment and sincerity. It also proposes, on a technical level, to express the poetic and figurative results of that investigation with essentiality, conciseness, and intuitiveness.

The above is expressed more distinctively in the answers to the following questions.

Can aspects of Eaism be universally acceptable? May they perhaps have points of contact with other recent movements? Does EAISM constitute only a polemic stance in opposition to other “isms,” or is it the effect of a spontaneous conviction arising from the particular needs of our age? Does it respond to latent needs in our century, or do we forge new isolated and ahistorical ideas? Is the true face of EAISM a formulary of propositions deliberately asserted for the purpose of

distinguishing it from what already exists, or does it derive from an unequivocal logic? Finally: will the realization of Eaist painting and poetry be linked to the enunciation of a particular technical and dialectical procedure, or will it be enacted in total freedom of expression?

The Eaist movement (EAISM), which wants to affirm the need for art to be consistent with the spiritual needs and fundamental problems of the age in which it flourishes, proclaims the need for artistic manifestation to be adequate to the aspects of human thought and human sensibility consequent to the technical-dynamic and philosophical evolution of humanity. The mechanical progress, the great scientific discoveries, and above all the atomic disintegration, constitute the latest milestones of human thought at the end of the second millennium A.D. However, all this so far had no relations with art, notwithstanding the common claim that art needs to be progressive and in tune with the present era.

As for painting, [Pablo] Picasso [1881–1973], [Georges] Braque [1882–1963], [Henri] Matisse [1869–1954], [Marc] Chagall [1887–1985], and to some extent [Amedeo] Modigliani [1884–1920], [Massimo] Campigli [1895–1971], and [Mario] Sironi [1885–1961], only partly felt the need to grasp and express with exhaustive commitment the complex sense of the evolving humanity. More often than not, they took refuge in a refined tasting of the primitive expressions of humanity: Egyptian, early Christian, Negroid [sic], and so on—heedless of the spiritual travail of the age in which we live. This is a symptom warning us of how there are those who may act more because they are driven by snobbish and bourgeois prejudice, than as a result of thoughtful reflections. However, only the latter can put us in a position to identify the irrecusable truths and the needs of our suffering humanity. Indeed, to return to the origins, to the virgin motives of the past, is tantamount to secluding themselves from the evolutive history of humanity, not grasping its meaning in terms of art—which is illogical as well as immoral from an artistic point of view.

The age of the world is in the air and in all things. We carry our oldness in our blood from the time we are children, and a grown man or woman can never be a child again.

Against such positions stands EAIST art, which asserts the urgency of expressing the meaning of our age even in the character it has of no longer allowing for a calm and absorbed mental processing of the data of our sensitivity. It is thus not at odds with today's impressive speed of mechanics, physics, and

chemistry. It also disavows the literary aberrations and fashionable deformities in order to restore art to its universal values.

EAISM will have no points of contact with today's artistic movements because, contrary to what they do, it will always express, and demandingly, in essentiality and intimacy, the human presence in the world, while making use, to express it, of all the contributions, cultural and technical, which this epoch can put at our disposal.

We no longer have, for painting and writing, the calm worldview of a Titian [1489–1576] or of a [Ludovico] Ariosto [1474–1533]. The restlessness brought about by progress, and even the physiological shortcoming effects of the biological changes of the species, make us different.

Nevertheless, the EAIST movement wants to reaffirm the universality of artistic expression, while asserting that art must adapt to the particular needs of our current age, and this without imbuing the works we create with polemical meanings.

In this sense, EAISM stands as a historically valid movement, insofar as it seeks to express the reality of our time and combat all the deliberate abstractions and artistic oddities, which are not art, but cerebralism.

The EAISM is not a list of prescriptions. It advocates the most sincere and free manner of expression, which will enable the artist to grasp and fix the fleetingness and energy of pictorial or poetic emotion. Pictorial emotions, that is, which will not be deflected or vitiated by formulas or technical impediments, because the very need for directness and immediacy of the work's realization will facilitate the artist's task.

The fleeting pictorial or poetic emotion will be realized so virgin and essential that it will still have the energetic appearance of the idea. Indeed, so much is the expressive freedom left by EAISM to the artists, that if the EAIST painters, to render with the necessary essentiality and immediacy the idea that has enlightened them, will feel it unnecessary to dwell on painting certain anatomical details of a figure, because dwelling on them would distract them from their core realization, then they will be authorized to omit these details. The part of the figure they will represent will be able to suggest in itself the existence of what has not been painted.

So what if the EAIST painters will abolish some lines or even a face, or if, in order to express a nude, will trace only the linear harmony of a pelvis or a single shoulder? The amateurs, when confronted with this, may be puzzled or bewildered, may even think that the painting is missing three quarters of the execution, but they will never be able to condemn the EAISTS, as their easy judgment will be, this time, just genuine ignorance. The EAISTS who are truly EAISTS must, through what is expressed, suggest the presence of what they have not paused to realize. The audience could not fail to perceive it, that presence.

It follows that the EAISTS must abolish all complacency for any form of trappings and rhetorical superstructures. They will always seek in painting and writing that bare essentiality, which will enable them to express their intuition according to the universal values of painting and poetry with adherence and consistency, the result of education and sensitivity. To do this, today's humans, thanks to technical-publishing progress, have at their disposal an abundance of cultural materials: publications, monographs, color reproductions, and so on. They can thus achieve for the education of their taste and sensibility a complete knowledge of what has been done in art, and this will facilitate their cultural enrichment. This is appropriate, because the EAISTS must also be masters of technique, capable of expressing fully and comprehensively their vision.

The EAIST painters and poets are not pleased with abstract and difficult modes, much less with impenetrable languages. Since, moreover, the artists, before being artists, will also have to be human in the most complete sense of the word, they will need to express themselves with a richness of different forms.

Looming, in what is said above, is the answer to the asserted need to make art consistent with the dynamism of the world, the need for an EAIST coherence.

It should be clarified, however, that the movement does not extol the atomic age, tremendous and evil, nor is it inspired by the phenomenon of that tragic human progress that generated it in its external and mechanical aspects. EAISM will express the tragedy of the 20th century by being inspired by the sense of that tragedy, that is, the sense of humans plunged to live in it, seeking to restore again in humans, and translate into works, the shattered balance of the equation humanity-world.

And this will necessarily happen: not only because art, if you will, has always, at all times, expressed the sense of the age in which it flourished, but more because

EAISM programmatically proposes to grasp and express the sense of the century in which it flourishes, in elevation of spirit.

VOLTOLINO FONTANI

MARCELLO LANDI

ANGIOLO SIRIO PELLEGRINI

GUIDO FAVATI

ALDO NERI

Livorno, October 1948

References

- Anzani, Giovanni. 1980. "Il 'Movimento Nucleare': origini, cronaca e storia." In *Arte nucleare 1951–1957. Opere—testimonianze—documenti*, edited by Elio Santarella, 1–36. Milan: Comune di Milano, Ripartizione Cultura e Spettacolo, and Galleria San Fedele.
- Baj, Enrico. 1952. *Manifesto bum*. Painting with text.
- Cagianelli, Francesca. 2002. "Voltolino Fontani. Oltre il Novecento, verso l'Eaismo." In *Voltolino Fontani 1920–1976 autoritratti spirituali*, edited by Francesca Cagianelli, 17–55. Livorno: Debate Otello.
- Cagianelli, Francesca, ed. 2009. *Charles Doudelet pittore incisore e critico d'arte. Dal "Leonardo" a "L'Eroica"*. Florence: Leo S. Olschki.
- Cagianelli, Francesca, ed. 2021. *Dans le Noir. Charles Doudelet e il simbolismo a Livorno*. Ospedaletto (Pisa): Pacini Editore.
- Calderhead, Christopher. 2009. "An Interview with Luca Barcellona." *Letter Arts Review* 23(3):14–31.
- Corgnati, Martina. 1998. "Il Movimento Nucleare." In *Arte a Milano 1946–1959 Movimento Nucleare*, edited by Martina Corgnati, 11–88. Sondrio: Credito Valtellinese and Comune di Sondrio, Assessorato alla Cultura.
- Dalí, Salvador. 1951. *Manifeste mystique*. Paris: Robert J. Godet.
- Dalí, Salvador. 1952. "Reconstitution du corps glorieux dans le ciel." *Études Carmélitaines* 1952/2:171–72.

- Dalí, Salvador. 1976. *The Unspeakable Confessions of Salvador Dalí (as Told to André Parinaud)*. New York: William Morrow.
- Depero, Fortunato. "Manifesto della pittura e plastica nucleare." *Il Nuovo Caffè* 2 (6, November–December): 12–5.
- Favati, Guido, Voltolino Fontani, Marcello Landi, Aldo Neri, and Angiolo Siro Pellegrini. 1948. *Manifesto dell'Eaismo*. Livorno: Tipografia Società Editrice Italiana.
- Fontani, Adila. 2005–6. "Il Movimento Eaista nel panorama culturale livornese del Secondo Dopoguerra." M.A. Diss. University of Pisa.
- Fontani, Maria Grazia, and Leonardo Battisti. 2020. *L'aspetto energico dell'idea in Voltolino Fontani. Analisi di opere significative e di percorsi artistici*. Livorno: Vittoria Iguazu Editore.
- Francis [Pope]. 2015. Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* on Care for Our Common Home. Accessed August 20, 2022. <https://bit.ly/3AHwyas>.
- Introvigne, Massimo. 2022. "Dalí: Against and for Religion." *Bitter Winter*, February 12. Accessed August 20, 2022. <https://bit.ly/3cf9cje>.
- Knox, Roland A. 1945. *God and the Atom*. New York: Sheed and Ward.
- Knox, Roland A. 1948. *Dios y el átomo*. Spanish translation by Gustavo Weigel and R. Tejada Laurence. Santiago de Chile: Zig-Zag.
- La chiesa di Collinaia e la pittura di Giancarlo Cocchia*. 1987. Livorno: Il Gabbiano.
- Marchioni, Nadia, ed. 2021. *Mario Puccini "Van Gogh involontario"*. Pisa: Pacini Editore.
- Maurell, Rosa Maria. 2000. "Referències mitològiques en l'obra de Salvador Dalí: el mite de Leda." Accessed August 20, 2022. <https://bit.ly/3ccqnSq>.
- Micieli, Nicola. 2014. *Giulio Guiggi: segno e forma plastica*. Livorno, Fondazione Livorno; and Pontedera: Bandecchi & Vivaldi.
- Nigro, Francesco. 2010. "La materia metamorfica. Percorsi nel Surrealismo di Salvador Dalí." Ph.D. diss. University of Parma.
- Romano, Giacomo. 2002. "Da l'Ineluttabile all'onirico: il viaggio allegorico di Voltolino Fontani." In *Voltolino Fontani 1920–1976 autoritratti spirituali*, edited by Francesca Cagianelli, 57–61. Livorno: Debatte Otello.
- Roncalli, Marco. 2019. "Perché ero sacrilego e ora sono un mistico." *La Stampa/Vatican Insider*, January 21. Accessed August 20, 2022. <https://bit.ly/3QY7gu0>.
- Sala, Alberico, and Guy Debord. 1974. *Jorn: Le Jardin d'Albisola* [sic]. Turin: Edizioni d'arte Fratelli Pozzo.
- Sauvage, Tristan. 1962. *Arte nucleare*. Milan: Galleria Schwarz.

- Schemeil, Jack. 1952. "Salvador Dalí presenterà al Papa una 'Madonna atomica.'" *Corriere Lombardo*, April 28.
- Subelytė, Gražina, and Daniel Zamani. 2022. *Surrealism and Magic: Enchanted Modernity*. Munich, London, and New York: Prestel.
- Tapié, Michel. 1950. "À propos de la Madone de Port-Lligat de Salvador Dalí." *Études Carmélitaines* 1950/2:286–87.
- Taylor, Michael. 2016. "God and the Atom: Salvador Dalí's Mystical Manifesto and the Contested Origins of Nuclear Painting." *Avant-Garde Studies* 2:1–13.
- Torelli, Milziade. 1948. "Eaismo questo sconosciuto. Esprimerà il bisogno di evadere dalla moderna tragedia dell'umanità oppure ne sarà la pedestre apologia?" *Il Tirreno*, November 23.
- Varesenoi.it. 2021. "A Sacconago eccesso di zelo nella pulizia al vecchio oratorio: via metà degli storici murales." September 18. Accessed August 20, 2022. <https://bit.ly/3wo5Lxw>.