

PINO PASCALI

assemblages and paintings



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**Special thanks to Carla Maria Ruta
and Maurizio Moriconi**

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On the cover

MISSILE 3S – 1964 – assemblage on metal sheet – cm. 82 x 28,5

MISSILE K3 – 1964 – assemblage on wood – cm. 109 x 31

MISSILE – 1964 – assemblage on cardboard – cm. 64,5 x 17

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Pino Pascali in his study, 1967, Rome – Photo by Marcello Colitti

“I was born in 1935. The first games I played were based most of all on war. My toys were piles of objects found in the house, which represented weapons. For example, a bean became a bullet, a broomstick and a box held together with a rubber band became a rifle, a rolled-up piece of paper tied to a stool was a cannon, a saucepan was a helmet, two pieces of wood nailed together were a sabre, three pieces of wood an aeroplane and so on. The way I played with other children was largely based on the war-heroism representation of the grown-ups“.

Pino Pascali was born in Bari on 19 October 1935. His father, a police officer, was transferred with his wife and son to Tirana in Albania between 1940 and 1941. The war, seen from close up, was to remain one of the strongest impressions of his childhood. Afterwards the family moved back to Polignano a Mare, Bari. In 1955 Pino left the science-oriented school in Bari that he was attending to go to Naples, where he took his leaving certificate at a secondary school specialised in the arts.

In 1956 he enrolled at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome, on the scenic design course held by Pepino Piccolo with the help of his assistant Fabio Vergoz. Pino Pascali was a pupil of Toti Scialoja, a teacher who was capable of captivating the attention of his students and stimulating them to think not only about the theatre, but about figurative art in general, literature and contemporary philosophy. During his time at the Accademia, he began to frequent the artists of the Piazza del Popolo group, as it was named by Lorenza Trucchi and Alberto Arbasino. In those years Pascali took part in a number of collective shows for young artists: 1956, the Painting Exhibition at the Istituto Tormaseo in Tivoli; 1956, Second Exhibition "Pennello d'argento" at the Circolo Culturale delle Vittorie in Rome; 1959, Scenic Design Show, at the 2nd Festival dei Due Mondi in Spoleto. He loved paradox, being unconventional, gestures designed to stun; he went round Rome in an old banger, always dressed in black, explosive and intolerant of rules; he would stand entranced before the cages at the zoo or toy shop windows. He kept assiduously up to date with the cultural life of the city, attending the series of lectures on contemporary art at the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna. Even before he graduated in 1959 with top marks, he had already begun working as an assistant scenic designer in various RAI productions as well as collaborating with the Studio Saraceni, Lodolofilm and Incom as a set designer, graphic designer, scriptwriter and creative writer for television advertising, making sketches, creating characters and shorts for the ads. He collaborated with Lodolofilm right up to the

year of his death, partly because of his great friendship with Sandro Lodolo. In the studios, first in Via dell'Orso and later in Via Boccea, he experimented with the most varied materials and techniques, such as plastic and polystyrene treated with acids, sheet metal, and papier mâché in the precarious set construction workshop.

With a blithely sacrilegious approach, in the realisation of advertising films he employed and exploited reminiscences and speculations conducted on painting. Between 1960 and 1964 he produced new dada works, most of which were destroyed by his father after his death, at the wish of Pino himself who had always refused to display them. At this time he was intimate with Plinio De Martiis, the owner of the Galleria La Tartaruga, who introduced him into the circle of artists. On 5 January 1965 marked the first exhibition of the "new" Pascali, when at the Galleria Ferrari in Verona he presented Grande come un cucciolo (Big as a puppy), a sort of animal vacuum cleaner, now destroyed. The vast Genoa collective show was called "La critica e la giovane pittura italiana" (Criticism and young Italian painting); Presenting Pino Pascali was Cesare Vivaldi, with a 1963 essay by him reproduced in the catalogue (La giovane scuola romana, which appeared in "Il Verri"), with at the bottom a note dated December 1964 noting the very recent emergence on the Roman art scene of two young artists, Ceroli and Pascali. In 1964 he created five murals on hunting, fishing, agriculture and sheep farming, now lost, for the F.A.O. building in Rome. In January 1965 he displayed his works at the Galleria La Tartaruga (including Pezzi di donne (Pieces of women), Muro di pietra (Wall of Stone) and Ruderisul prato (Ruins on the lawn), in April he presented the Teatrino at the "Realtà dell'immagine" (Reality of the Image) show held at the Feltrinelli bookshop in Rome, and in the summer, for the theme competition "Corradino di Svevia" at Torre Astura di Nettuno and the La Salita Gallery, he created the installation-performance Requiescat: funerale di Corradino di Svevia e dell'arte del momento (funeral of Conrad of Swabia and the art of the time), in which

he himself celebrated a sort of funeral rite in a crypt suffocating with incense. Also in 1965 he held a one-man show "Revort 1" in Palermo and took part in a series of collectives: Premio Termoli, Premio Michetti in Francavilla a Mare, Luna Park in Florence and "Art actuelle en Italie" at Cannes. After a long period of working in seclusion and without official acknowledgement, Pascali suddenly felt the urge to give timely account of all progress in his work, and so in 1966 he enthusiastically accepted Sperone's invitation to take part in the show at his Gallery in Turin. The exhibition of the weapons, introduced by Calvesi and Rubiu, comprised the Cannon "Bella Ciao", the Self-propelled cannon, the Uncle Tom and Uncle Sam missile launchers, the "Dove of Peace" missile, the Machine guns, a few Hand grenades (one of which he donated to De Martiis himself), and camouflage nets. "More than Pop Art – Calvesi wrote of the Cannon – they verge on scenic design (...) here the poetics of the object – found, assisted, integrated – unfurls in an entirely unpredictable manner, in the elementary conditions of scenography.... Clearly there is no aesthetic end (still less sculptural or pictorial); it is a narrative display, a pacifist meeting, an afternoon of play, a nasty trick of the imagination; it is a happening entrusted purely to the objects, a performance on a full-empty stage".

It was at this time that Pino started working on the first works in white canvas stretched over wooden frames; he competed in the Premio Avezzano presenting Bucranio and Trofei di caccia (Hunting Trophies), and in the Premio Spoleto with Due code di balena (Two Whale Tails).

In the autumn he had a show with Fabio Sargentini displaying the animal cycles and the trophies, Il mare (The Sea), Barca che affonda (Sinking Ship), Balene (Whales), with essays in the catalogue by Boatto and Calvesi. Boatto underscored how in Pascali the unification of "the subject is clarified in that of castration, launching the motif of the projective alleviation of mutilation"; this is the line along which Boatto traces a "coherence and necessity" in Pascali's production from the very start of his mature

work, that is from the "Reliefs of women", they too "fragments of bodies" deprived of wholeness, congruity and functionality; and so we have the "mutilation [that works] on the organic, the psychism, the subconscious which in Pascali gives birth to women and archaeosaurs, weapons of war and cetaceans". Calvesi describes Pascali's universe as a world "where the imagination [...] encounters form. It is the form that, taking over the divergent and rarefied approaches of the fable, translates them into a showy substantiality, it is the form that sets the seal, with its flowing but closed lines, on a reality similarly flowing and closed: fluid and fabulous, that is, but contested and offered up whole to contemplation, the reality of art". Above all, what is striking is the convergent intention of both critics to point up the continuity rather than the diversity of Pascali's research. In the same year he also made an appearance at the Libreria Guida in Naples in a show with Renato Mambor, organised by Topazia Alliata and curated by Achille Bonito Oliva and Maurizio Fagiolo. Again in Naples, the Galleria Il Centro in collaboration with Il Quadrante, proposed "Tendenze confrontate" (Trends compared), a collective show organised in two sections: "L'arte visuale" (Visual Art) curated by Menna and "Figurazione oggettuale" (Objective figuring) curated by Boatto; in the latter section Pascali displayed Torso di negra al bagno (Torso of black woman bathing); accompanying him in the section curated by Boatto were Adami Bignardi, Ceroli, Del Pezzo, Fioroni and Schifano.

The exhibition then had a second edition in Stockholm. He also displayed at the Obelisco and at the Tartaruga in Rome; at the "Troisième Exposition Internationale de Sculpture Contemporaine", held in the Musée Rodin in Paris; at the VI Annual Yugoslavia-Italy in Porec, in which the Italian group was introduced by Carandente, and at the Galleria Deposito in Genoa. 1966 saw the publication of the first pieces on Pascali by Apuleo, Boatto, Bonito Oliva, Bovi, Brandi, Bucarelli, Calvesi, Carandente, Celant, Dorfles, Lonzi, Mendes, Miccini, Pinto, Sinisgalli, Valsecchi, Venturoli and Vergine. In 1966 he

was invited by Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna in Rome to take part with two works in the itinerant exhibition “Aspetti dell’arte italiana contemporanea” (Aspects of Italian contemporary art), which was presented first at Cannes and later in Rome, Dortmund, Cologne, Bergen, Oslo, and in 1967 in Belfast and Edinburgh.

On 12 May 1967, through the good offices of the Galleria L’Attico of Rome, Pascali had his first one man show abroad at the Thelen Galerie in Essen in Germany, introduced by Udo Kultermann. In June he presented a cycle of new works “elements of nature”: Pozzanghere, 1 metro cubo di terra e 2 metri cubi di terra (Puddles: 1 cubic metre of earth and 2 cubic metres of water), which he presented again at the show curated by Germano Celant “Arte povera – Im spazio” in Genoa. In July in Foligno he presented the work 32 metri quadrati di mare circa (Approximately 32 square metres of sea). In 1967 Pascali’s talent was recognised by the jury of the International Art Critics Association – Italian Section at the 6th Biennale of San Marino, which assigned him the Premio Fabbri in September.

At the “Exhibition of Contemporary Italian art” in Tokyo and Kyoto, he presented Ricostruzione della balena (Reconstruction of the Whale). In October he displayed Campi coltivati (Cultivated Fields), Cornice di fieno (Hay frame) and Canali di irrigazione (Irrigation Channels) at the Galleria Jolas in Milan, presented by Cesare Brandi, who in the introductory essay was concerned to distinguish Pascali from Pop Art: the latter moving through a creative mechanism comparable to the metaphor, whereas in Pascali the image arises “through contiguity, and hence through synecdoche: in metonymy”. In December, at the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna di Roma, together with Eliseo Mattiacci he again presented Campi arati and Canali di irrigazione. Again in 1967: Premio Modigliani in Livorno; “Realtà dell’immagine e strutture della visione”(Reality of the image and structures of vision) at the Cerchio in Rome; “Oltre la scultura” (Beyond Sculpture) in Pescara, Expo ‘67 in Montreal; “Salone internazionale dei giovani”

(International Young Artists Exhibition) at Palazzo Ancarani in Spoleto; “Proposte Uno” in Avezzano; Exhibition of Contemporary Italian Art in Tokyo; the “Cinquième Biennale de Paris-Manifestation Internationale des Jeunes Artistes”, organised by the Galleria Nazionale of Rome, opened in Paris at the Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris, at which Pascali exhibited along with Ceroli, Festa, Kounellis, Mattiacci, Pistoletto, Schifano; III Rassegna arte del Mezzogiorno (Third Southern Art Festival) in Naples; “Artistas italianos de hoje”, held within the framework of the 9th Biennale of Sao Paulo at the Museu de Arte Moderna of Sao Paulo in Brazil, promoted by the Biennale di Venezia; “Art Objectif” in Paris. In the course of this year the critics who wrote about Pascali for the first time were, inter alia: Apollonio, Argan, Berenice, Briganti, Finch, Hahn, Kultermann, Marchiori, Natali, Politi, Sala, Trini, Vinca Masini and Volpi.

In January 1968 he displayed at the Galleria Ars Intermedia in Cologne. In February he presented Vedova blu (Blue widow), a work from a new cycle conceived for the 6th Biennale of Rome at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni. Again in February at the Galleria ‘De Foscherari in Bologna, he took part in the exhibition “Arte povera” curated by Germano Celant. Another edition of “Arte povera” was inaugurated at the Centro Arte Viva Feltrinelli of Trieste, again curated by Celant. In March, at the Jolas Galerie in Paris, with a presentation by Giulio Carlo Argan, he displayed the Bachi da setola (Bristle worms) for the first time; here Argan offered a cue to reading intended to distance Pascali’s work from the forms of “new realism”: “The coloured plastic brush is not displayed or used as a brush”, but assumed “as a form or structure, knowing that in the end the structure is none other than an intuition of space and time that men inevitably insert into the things they make... Pascali’s imagination has nothing of the arbitrary or irrational: it is a legitimate procedure for the retrieval of a spatiality that, even if only for the fact of being contested and repressed by the underlying anti-historicism of consumer society, can rightly be

defined as historic: to the point of assuming that the ultimate object of this designer rebelling against the rules of the shop floor, and which is undoubtedly at work in the leading ranks of the experimental avant-garde, is still redemption from the inflation of signs and signals of consumer society of the intrinsic historicism and structuralism of the form". In May he displayed at the Extra Stadt Museum in Wiesbaden; in June he was present at the XXXIV Biennale di Venezia with his own room: *Pelo*, *Contropelo*, *Cesto* (Basket), *Stuoia* (Mat), *Le penne d'Esopo* (Aesop's feathers), *Archetipo* (Archetype), *Solitario* (Solitary) and *Liane* (Lianas). In Venice he rebelled against the ideological impositions of the students, the regression of the police and refused to close his room, holding forth at the top of his voice for hours on end in defence of his work and his right to make it known. This was the gesture of a man who experienced the protest in the mythical role of a hero of antiquity. The others gestured to motives of commitment and politics, while Pascali instead claimed the reasons of art and the past, drawing the response to the conflicts of the present not from the tangibility of things but from the absolute of the myth. In October, when Pascali was already dead, the International Sculpture Prize awarded to him by the Biennale arrived: it was his consecration. Pino Pascali, together with Kounellis and Mattiacci took part in a film made by Luca Patella, with the help of Fabio Sargentini owner of the L'Attico Gallery in Rome; the title of the film was made up of their initials SKMP2. He also took part in a film by Alfredo Leonardi *Libro dei Santi di Roma Eterna* (Book of Saints of Eternal Rome) with Kounellis, Mattiacci, Rosboch, Hartmann and Schifano. In the same year: "Young Italians" at the Institute of Contemporary Arts of Boston and at the Jewish Museum of New York, curated by A. Solomon; "Arte viva" at the Galleria Feltrinelli in Trieste. Starting off at Palazzo Zacheta in Warsaw, a historic show on the Italian art of the last fifty years arrived at the Galleria Nazionale in Rome, taking the title "Cent'opere d'arte italiana dal Futurismo ad oggi" (A hundred works of Italian art from Futurism to the

present); after Warsaw the itinerant show travelled to various European museum sites: Bochum, Malmö, Cologne and Stockholm. Also in 1968 he prepared a new series of works related to a rustic setting for the show scheduled in New York for early 1969. On 11 September 1968 he died in Rome following a motor-bike accident on 30 August.

In May 1969 the first major retrospective was organised for him at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome.

PINO PASCALI
works



SWORDFISH

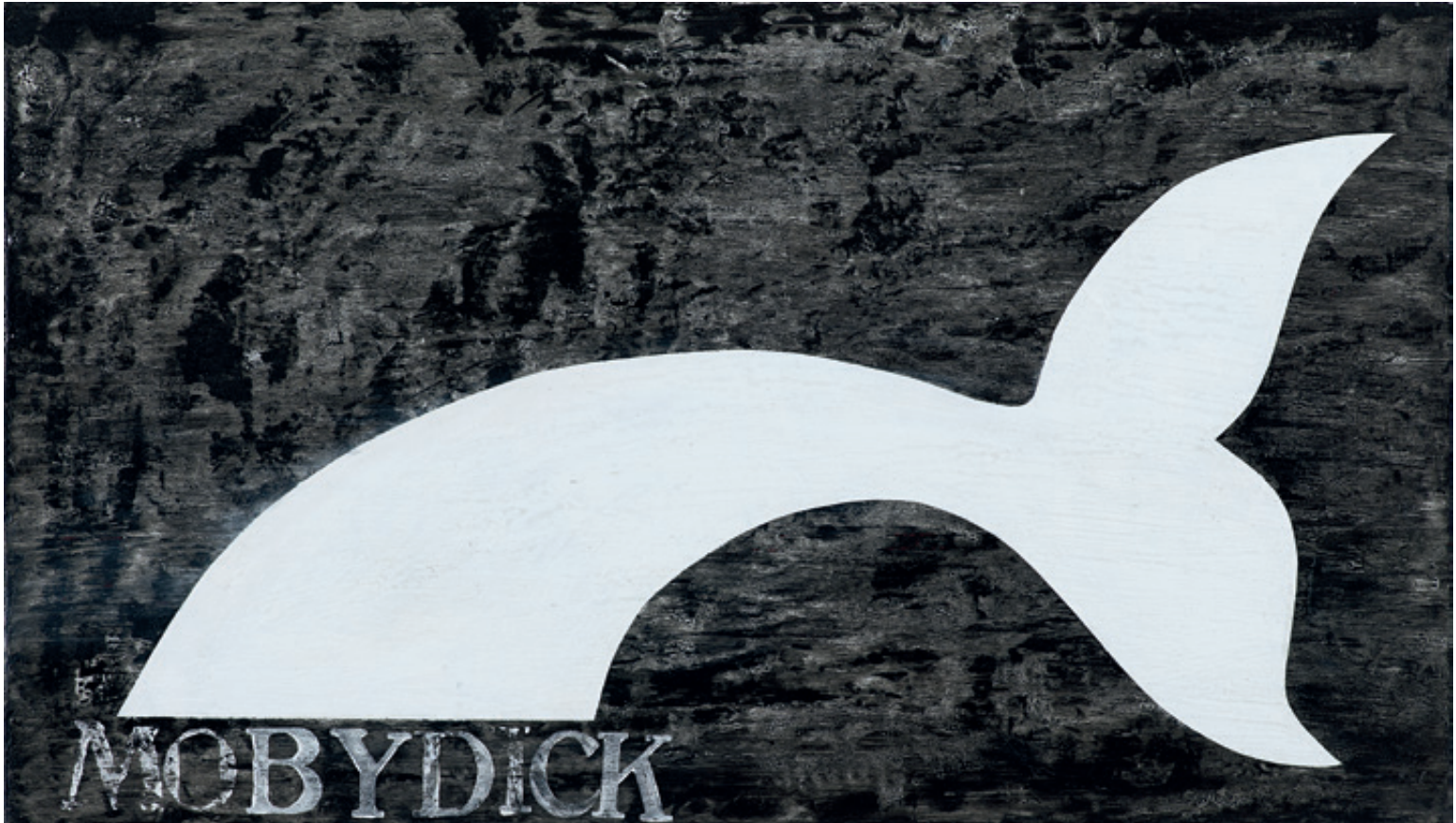
1960

bitume on metal sheet

cm. 31.8 x 68.2



TAIL (MOBY DICK)
1964/65
enamels on wood
cm. 43 x 75



WHALE
1964/65
assemblage on wood
cm. 43 x 90



AFRICAN MASK
1964
painting on wood
cm. 43.5 x 36.5



TOTEM
1965
painting on wood
cm. 48 x 36.3



ROBOT
1964/65
bitume on metal sheet
cm. 85 x 55



MOLD
1963
painting on cardboard
cm. 35 x 48



NEW YORK
1964
painting on cardboard
cm. 45 x 59



NEW YORK
1966
painting and collage on cardboard
cm. 35 x 100



LETTERS
1964
painting on cardboard
cm. 36 x 48



LETTERS
1964
painting on wood
cm. 48 x 48



MISSILE 3S
1964
assemblage on metal sheet
cm. 82 x 28,5



MISSILE K3
1964
assemblage on wood
cm. 109 x 31



MISSILE
1964
assemblage on cardboard
cm. 64.5 x 17



US ARMY
1964
painting on cardboard
cm. 35 x 55.2



US ARMY
1964
painting on wood
cm. 51.8 x 51.5



KY

A5X3

FORCES 584 K

US ARMY

BOAT (VESSEL)
1964
oil on masonite
cm. 130 x 126



SELECTED COLLECTIONS

MoMA – Museum of Modern Art, New York, United States

Tate, International Modern and Contemporary Art, London, UK

Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, France

MAMCS – Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg, France

Musée Départemental d'Art Ancien et Contemporain, Epinal, France

MUMOK - Museum Moderner Kunst Ludwig Stiftung, Vienna, Austria

Osaka City Museum of Modern Art, Osaka, Japan

Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Toyota, Japan

Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Salonico, Greece

Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, Liechtenstein

GAM - Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin, Italy

GNAM - Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy

MACRO – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rome, Italy

Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori, Livorno, Italy

Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Spoleto, Italy

Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Polignano a mare, Bari, Italy

Pinacoteca d'Arte Moderna, Avezzano, Italy

Pinacoteca Provinciale Corrado Giaquinto, Bari, Italy

“Sono nato nel 1935. I miei primi giochi erano basati soprattutto sulla guerra.”