



Art and Market in Bologna in the 1970s. The first steps of Arte Fiera

Clarissa Ricci

Alma Mater Studiorum, Università di Bologna
Dipartimento Arti Visive

Contact clarissa.ricci3@unibo.it

The first contemporary art fair in Italy was launched in Bologna in 1974, at the end of what can be called the first wave of fairs. This paper aims to reconstruct the history of its beginnings, filling an existing gap in scholarly publications. More specifically, the paper deals with the first years up to 1979, when Arte Fiera was temporarily suspended.

The first section repositions the role of Arte Fiera in relation to the Fair infrastructure, followed by the reconstruction of its first years, which saw a rapid rise and fall of Arte Fiera. In the last part, the paper examines the specific conditions of Bologna's art fair, which was caught in a dichotomy between trying to become international and competitive on the one hand and responding to the strong anti-commodification culture of the 1970s on the other. This led the event to invest at an early stage in creating many ancillary events and investigating alternative market possibilities in the direction of democratizing the market.

Keywords: Arte Fiera, contemporary art market, art market, Bologna, 1970s, art fair, Art Basel, EBMA

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The first steps of Arte Fiera

Clarissa Ricci

In the early 1970s, Bologna's contemporary art scene was thriving, offering a platform for cultural debate, experimentation and encounters at various levels, from independent activist organizations to academic institutions. Bologna's cultural environment was characterized by an open and collaborative approach that inspired various events, including the Bologna Biennials such as *Gennaio 70* (1970) and the successful *Rivolta e Rivoluzione* (1972) edition.¹ The latter event aimed to involve a wider audience beyond the insider circle and featured art, architecture, cinema, theatre and music. Bologna was not the only city to embrace a multidisciplinary cultural approach, but its local administration's promotion of various attempts in this direction made it a hub for innovation and research. The symbol of such a vibrant scene was the creation of a new degree course, called DAMS, at the University of Bologna in 1971.² DAMS was a multidisciplinary course that embraced contemporaneity, offering courses in dance, ethnography, semiotics, and visual art studies. Many notable figures participated in this foundational cultural experience, including Umberto Eco, who championed the idea of the open work, influencing the thinking and practice of many artists.

In this scenario, Arte Fiera was established in 1974 as the first contemporary art fair in Italy, following the success of similar events in Europe in Cologne (1967) and Basel (1969). Although these fairs started small, they quickly gained popularity, with the number of participating galleries increasing rapidly. In Germany and Switzerland, the creation of art fairs addressed the issue of a dispersed network of agents, including galleries and dealers, and provided a platform for greater visibility and networking opportunities.³ While the concept of art fairs existed before the 20th century, the significant increase in the number of fairs since the 1970s has made it a phenomenon in its own right.⁴

Moreover, Arte Fiera was not Italy's first international art market. The Venice Biennale Sales Department has served as a sales platform since 1895. Like many other large-scale exhibitions, such as Carnegie in Pittsburgh and La Quadriennale in Rome, the Biennale sold artworks. However, this practice gradually stopped as these exhibitions after the second world war increasingly focussed on legitimizing contemporary

art. At the same time, the rise of galleries devoted to emergent art, what Raymond Moulin called «une galerie pilote»⁵ – gradually made biennials unsuitable for direct commerce. Not by chance, sales in Venice did not continue after 1972.⁶

However, hosting the market in a city like Bologna, which played a relevant role in the radical anti-bourgeois debate in all areas, from art to politics, challenged the understanding of the relationship between the market and culture, and hindered the development and recognition of the event abroad. The aim of this essay is therefore to reconstruct how Arte Fiera was born, how it interacted with the different realities of the city and how it was perceived locally.

1. *Arte Fiera's infrastructure*

Arte Fiera, which is usually mentioned as part of the latest group of fairs part of the first wave of this sort of events that from Cologne onwards gained immediate consensus, was directly inspired in particular by Art Basel.

According to the memories of the director of Galleria De' Foscherari, Franco Bartoli, who was one of Arte Fiera's pivotal protagonists, the propulsive thrust for the foundation of the fair came from Maurizio Mazzotti, organizer of Bologna's Sample Fair.⁷ To start the project Mazzotti initially relied on Giorgio Ruggeri, an art journalist from the local paper «Il Resto del Carlino» and correspondent of «Bolaffiarte», the Italian art market journal published from 1970 to 1982.

Ruggeri enthusiastically subscribed to the idea, letting Mazzotti know that similar events were already being successfully held in Basel.⁸ This detail of Ruggeri informing Mazzotti about the existence of an art fair in Basel might seem to demonstrate naiveté.⁹ However, Mazzotti was far from being gullible.

The Sample Fair was the core exhibition of Bologna's Trade Fairs company, which itself was in a moment of great expansion propelled by municipal developmental plans. In 1958 the city council deliberated on the zoning plan of the city¹⁰ for the development of a business and cultural area which had to accommodate: new fair buildings, a finance centre, apartments for students, the Congress centre, a theatre, and a cultural centre with a newly designed Gallery of Modern Art (GAM).¹¹ Bologna, which has a great commercial vocation dating back to the Middle Ages, held the first trade fair in 1901 at the Eden Kursal palace.¹² In 1947 the Autonomous Body of the Bologna Fairs was established, but it lacked a fixed exhibition venue. It was not until 1964 that the first stone of a new site for the Fair was laid.¹³ At the



1. Entrance to *Arte Fiera* '75, Bologna, 1975. Photo Courtesy Arte Fiera - BolognaFiere S.p.a.

same time, multiple projects for specialized fairs were launched: the Children's Book Fair (1964), SAIE (International Building Exhibition, since 1965) and Cosmoprof (International Exhibition of Perfumery, Cosmetics, Hairdressing, Aesthetics since 1967). The project for the new Fair site took on new force in 1966 with an agreement between Finanziaria Fiere¹⁴ and the municipality for a further development of the exhibition centre, entrusted to the Japanese architect Kenzo Tange and Urtec-Urbanists Architects.¹⁵ It was this phase which encompassed the completion of the GAM and the Conference centre that served as the background to the events of the foundation of Arte Fiera. Therefore, even if Mazzocchi might not have known about Basel, he was well aware of the development of cultural and artistic infrastructures on the fair ground which were, in 1974, near to completion.¹⁶

Initially Mazzotti believed that an art fair might attract more people, and not only those going to the future museum next door. Bologna's Trade Fair had a tradition of organizing entertaining side events: sport competitions, shows and art exhibitions were customary since the beginning of the XIX century.¹⁷ In a photographic history about Bologna's trade fair, images such as Domenico Modugno singing in

front of a very large public and Sofia Loren signing shoes, iconically exemplify the tradition of popular attractions on the occasion of trade fairs.¹⁸

Alongside attracting more of the public, Mazzocchi believed that an art fair could also serve dealers. If contemporary art in the gallery did not seem within everyone's reach, as no one dared, according to Mazzotti, to enter the gallery, a fair, would make it possible to browse art through the stands more freely.¹⁹ Being popular and democratic, as well as market supportive, were key features in Arte Fiera's rhetoric from its inception.

The capacity of art investments to get through financial crisis might have been an inspiration to Mazzotti as he attempted to renovate the Sample Fair by adding an art fair.²⁰ As Morgner has demonstrated, art fairs inherit existing business structures and respond to the different needs of the art market.²¹ However, it is crucial to underline that the interests of people involved in the fair in making art a new sector, proved a decisive factor in the foundation of fairs. Looking at the first wave of art fairs development, a notable role was played by people who were not strictly affiliated with the art world, such as the collaboration of Emil Bammatter from the Swiss Sample Fair²² in the development of Art Basel, or Danièle Talamoni whom strongly pushed for the foundation of FIAC (Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporaine). In Bologna too, Arte Fiera was an initiative by the Fair together with the galleries owners and their national union.

From another perspective, the growing importance of specialization in sample fairs was clearly understood by art world people as a business opportunity. As Ruggeri points in the first sentences of his text for the 1974 Arte Fiera catalogue, the specialized fair answers commercial purposes better than any other format as it allowed for a suitable place to qualify and operate. Comparing one's activity with a solid network of national and international relations – based on personal knowledge – is one of the fundamental premises that every art dealer reasonably sets.²³

Bologna already had a strong tradition of fair and, similarly to other European commercial hubs such as Frankfurt, after the Second World War the rapid economic growth made trade fairs reliable means for stimulating business and increasing diversity. Deliberately separating and focusing on strong industry sector themes brought new and independent trade fairs onto the market. The belief thus was that the art market could find a suitable place to qualify and operate within a specialized fair. The demonstrable success of other European art fairs



in Basel or Cologne (even if Cologne moved from the Kunsthalle to a Fair setting only in 1974)²⁴ made specialized fairs attractive models for the impetuous expansion of the contemporary art market.²⁵

The aim of Arte Fiera was thus that of positioning itself on the map of already existing art fairs in an area where there were none, and, as Ruggeri points out, in a country where preceding ones had been unsuccessful. To say that Arte Fiera was the first contemporary art fair in Italy is, in fact, a partial statement. As it was for Art Cologne, these were not the first art fairs 'per se' but were those which lasted and offered a model, or countermodel, and that today we can recognize as trailblazers of a successful format for selling contemporary art. In Italy several examples can be mentioned as precedents: Mostra-mercato d'arte contemporanea (Exhibition-sale for Contemporary Art)²⁶ in Florence which took place at Palazzo Strozzi in 1963 and 1964 (while in 1968 it opened to English galleries), or the art shows that were taking place at the side of the Trade Fair of Bari at the Fiera del Levante. Moreover, it must be underlined that until the 70s hybrid formats

2. Conference *I problemi del mercato dell'arte* (Art Market Problems) at Palazzo dei Congressi on the occasion of *Arte Fiera '75*, Bologna, 1975. Photo Courtesy Arte Fiera - BolognaFiere S.p.a.

were still operating. Biennial type exhibitions, for example, still offered sales services and competitive market places, albeit on a smaller scale. In Europe, the most famous example of a proto-contemporary sales format was the *Salon de galerie pilotes*, organized in 1963 and 1966 in Lausanne and then in Paris 1970 by René Berger.²⁷ In this case, selected galleries would exhibit and sell in a museum setting. In these exhibitions, and similarly in biennials, sales were not the core activity. However, they serve as testimony also as attempts to find suitable business pathways for the growing cultural importance of galleries of contemporary art.

After the Second World War in Europe, galleries became pivotal players for emerging contemporary art. When discourses around commodification peaked in 1968 and radicalized towards the end of the 1970s after finance speculation around 1973, it became increasingly difficult to address art business within the cultural discourse. In Italy, the most famous example of these critiques affected the sales department at the Venice Biennale, which after attempts at rethinking its selling format re-naming it «servizio vendite» (sales service), was finally terminated in 1973.²⁸

The issue of which was the best way to sell art was shortly but clearly addressed as the second point of the introduction of the 1974 Arte Fiera catalogue:

[Fairs...] are where the market is expected to stand revealed for exactly what it is. The kind of would-be cultural beating about the bush that mars certain art events gets short shrift at an art fair. Relieved of embarrassing mumbo-jumbo, the public seems to thrive there. Let there be no mistake. A fine exhibition of the *Seicento* in Lombardy at Milan's Palazzo Reale is one thing; the Basel *Kunstmesse* is another. But what are we to make, for example, of the Kassel Documenta which the market is surreptitiously backing?²⁹

In Bologna discussions about the best way to organize sales for artworks were raised several times in the conferences and discussion panels which accompanied Bologna Biennials (1965-1972), a discourse that somehow allowed for the hosting of the first contemporary art fair in Italy in the most leftist and anti-commodification city in Italy. This was not by chance, since the first edition in 1974 Arte Fiera had the clear mission to:

organize an event that involves the Italian and foreign markets in order to fill the existing gap in Italy and create a market tool that could promote a balancing action in the much discussed contemporary art market with respect for all.³⁰

2. *Arte Fiera beginnings*

The first edition of Arte Fiera was realized in 1974. Regardless of the fact that Arte Fiera happens to be mentioned as already a competitive fair from its inception,³¹ this was not the case. From the oral history collected on the occasion of the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Arte Fiera³² Foundation, the contours of the so-called «edizione zero» (edition zero) are undoubtedly those of a pilot event meant to be in the making.

While Mazzotti may not have been familiar with the art market, Giorgio Ruggeri was well-versed in navigating it. The first thing he did was put together a core group of galleries. The earliest people he got involved were Franco Bartoli and Pasquale Ribuffo of the Galleria de Foscherari and Tiziano Forni of the Galleria Forni. Together with the Gallery G7, directed by Ginevra Grigolo who joined Arte Fiera later, these were the galleries most devoted to young generations of artists in Bologna in those days.³³ Ruggeri also succeeded in involving well-established galleries focused on modern art, such as Il Cancellino and Galleria La Loggia, which were the protagonists of the Informale in Bologna during the 1950s.³⁴ Other local galleries included in this first group were Galleria Stivani by Paolo and Daniela Stivani, Galleria Duemila, and Galleria San Luca directed by Marilena Camerini Mai and Giuseppina Scardovi. Outside the local context, Ruggeri also brought in the Giulia gallery in Rome, La Bussola in Turin, and the Vinciana gallery directed by Dagoberto Pavia. These strategic choices were clearly directed to those galleries which could attract other participants in the future. Dagoberto Pavia, for example, was the only gallerist already experienced with an international fair as he was in Basel in 1973 and 1974. Another key figure was surely the director and founder of the gallery in Turin, La Bussola, Giuseppe Bertasso, who was the president of *Sindacato dei Mercanti d'Arte Moderna* (Union of Modern Art Merchants).

With the exclusion of galleries more interested in early modern artists (i.e. La Loggia, Stivani and Il Cancellino) the 1974 participating galleries would be the first nucleus that would take part in Arte Fiera's inception and development during its first phase of activity.

Held from 5-16 June, it consisted in a little area of the Sample Fair, on the edge of the exhibition halls behind the food section. No mention was made in the press, not even in specialized journals such as *Bollaffiarte*, which included Arte Fiera in their reports on fairs from 1975 onwards. A few lines in the local papers mentioned Arte Fiera as an «art corner», an «experimental event destined to



grow».³⁵ This inexistent press coverage might have been a calculated risk considering that even Ruggeri addressed this event as a «future» art fair.³⁶

Putting up a fair was a gamble. The challenge was to open a market for art in Bologna without subsidies or political support. Regardless of Mazzotti's proposal being accepted by the Fair board, the necessary support was not given. The conditions were as follows: not to use space already allocated to other Sample Fair's sectors and no additional costs. Mazzocchi found his way. For the boots he made an agreement with the building fair SAIE, which owned the annex buildings, to loan them to the Arte Fiera. For electricity and display costs he was able to rely on the economic investment of the self-taxing galleries themselves, while Ruggeri also found the support of a publisher for the production of a rudimentary catalogue. With these foundations it was possible to start with the first edition. Held at the side of the 38th Sample fair which encompassed the Salone dell'Alimentazione (Food fair) and Giò 70 (a fair dedicated to young people focused on sport, employment, traveling, theatre, fashion and free time), and with only ten galleries, Arte Fiera was launched.

3. View of the exhibition *Dalla parte dell'artista* (On the Artists' Side) curated by Luigi Carluccio at *Arte Fiera '75*, Bologna, 1975. Photo Courtesy: Arte Fiera - BolognaFiere S.p.a.

The aim in 1975 was thus to create a proper sized fair able to position Arte Fiera on the map of art fairs. To do so a delegation of the Ente Fiera organized a trip to Art Basel, which was held shortly after the first fair. How Arte Fiera were inspired by Art Basel was immediately visible, from the organization, which encompassed an advisory board, to the catalogue which was edited in three languages. The format worked well and the 202 exhibitors fully occupied three exhibition halls. In 1975 Arte Fiera was a corner event of the Sample Fair no longer.

The advisory board, in addition to the initiators Giorgio Ruggeri, Franco Bartoli, Tiziano Forni and Giuseppe Bertasso, whom were part of the project since the very beginning, were Renato Cardazzo, owner of the gallery il Cavallino in Venice and Giuliano de Marsanich, founder of the gallery Don Chisciotte in Rome. In addition, the board also included art critics and curators: Giovanni M. Accame, who was involved in the Bologna Biennials and Luigi Carluccio who directed the La Bussola gallery in Turin (1947-1955) and curated the first volumes edited by Bolaffi which collected prices and information on contemporary art with the aim to be a tool for collectors and also a more general public. This annual publication demonstrated an interest in getting to grips with an expanded art market which had no clear criteria for controlling prices. Alongside the Sindacato Nazionale Mercanti d'Arte Moderna (National Union of Modern Art Merchants) was founded in 1964 with a similar scope.

From its first fair, in 1975, Arte Fiera presented an interest in photography and graphics. A special exhibition, organised by Luigi Carluccio, titled *Dalla parte dell'artista* (On the Artists' Side), featured contemporary photographers including Mario Cresci, Ugo Mulas and Franco Vimercati³⁷ with the openly declared ambition to show the value of photos as 'opera' (art works). This effort to promote photography in its own right and not as ancillary to painting was the aim also of an earlier exhibition curated by Carluccio, in 1973 in Turin, *Combattimento per un'immagine*,³⁸ which the small exhibition in Arte Fiera was inspired by.³⁹

Thanks to the 202 participants Arte Fiera '75 was a great success for the advisory board and Giulio Cesare Alberghini, the general secretariat of the Ente Fiera, who strongly supported the inaugural art fair. Invitations were made to Italian galleries and art publishers only. As it had been for Art Basel, the presence of art editors, art journals and art books was an integral part of the event.⁴⁰

The galleries featured in the exhibit were primarily from central and northern Italy, including major cities such as Milan, Turin, and

Florence. The exhibition showcased a wide variety of artists, ranging from established and well-known names in the industry to up-and-coming contemporary artists. However, as Staniszewski notes, what is omitted reveals as much as what is recorded.⁴¹ In this case those who were missing in Arte Fiera in 1975 were Italian galleries more devoted to or already engaged with, international art and clientele, who were taking part in others' fairs. Galleria Dell'Ariete, Bonomo Marilena, La Bertesca, studio Morra – with the exception of galleria Vinciana – were all exhibiting in Basel but not in Bologna. In the interviews, which were part of Bolaffi arte's survey of art fairs in 1975,⁴² most of the Italian gallerists hopefully saluted Arte Fiera's inception but remained weary about fairs mushrooming around the world. Foreign gallerists, instead, even when appreciative of Italian art, were less favorable towards another fair and besides lamented that Bologna was not the right place for it.⁴³

The aim for Arte Fiera was to grow and become international. This was accomplished in 1976. Two gallery owners, Giorgio Marconi

4. *View of Pavilion D during Arte Fiera, Bologna 1976.* Photo Courtesy Arte Fiera - BolognaFiere S.p.a.



and Arturo Schwartz, were added to the advisory board. Even if none were foreign galleries, both were well acquainted with the international art panorama and clientele. The event featured 80 exhibitors, including Italian and international galleries mainly from Europe, including for example, Denise René from France, Gimpel Fils, Nigel Greenwood, Bernard Jacobson and the Lisson Gallery from Great Britain. There were also some galleries from the United States, i.e. André Emmerich from New York, Polly Friedlander from Washington, and the Mexican Artes Visuales. However, only a few of these galleries returned for the following year. The first two years of the art fair were a trial for all participants, with many Italian galleries only participating once.⁴⁴

Arte Fiera had separate sections for unique paintings and sculptures, multiple graphic and sculptural works, and art-related books and publications. While this strategy was perceived positively, it did not lead to a significant increase in visitors.⁴⁵ If in the local press it could be praised when considering that no other cultural event was able to attain such numbers, the detractors compared numbers with those of the Sample Fair, which were nearly double.⁴⁶ Undoubtedly, comments in the local press were biased as Ente Fiera was connected to the Cristian Democratic Party (DC), the rival political party of the communist Party (PCI), the major political party in Bologna since 1946.⁴⁷

Although faced with opposition from the local community and increased competition from events like Expo Arte in Bari, Arte Fiera had a significant year in 1977. Having already been introduced on a national level in 1975 and an international level in 1976, the third year of the event offered the opportunity to strengthen its successes. Additionally, the art market was more favorable, which further encouraged this goal. Arte Fiera's birth in 1974 coincided with an international economic crisis and regardless of the fact that many collectors' safe-haven assets were valued more, the art market suffered decreasing credibility. In 1977, the general feeling was that the present year could signal a recovery, given also that the conditions for a return to trust in the market existed in Italy.⁴⁸

This positive approach was clearly embraced by the advisory board, which was further enriched by other personalities such as Umbro Apollonio, the art historian Giuliano Briganti, the gallery owners Ettore Gian Ferrari, Giuseppe Morra, Pasquale Trisorio and the curators Tommaso Trini and Hélène Sutton. This richly talented group no longer corresponded to the galleries of the fair's previous edition, with the exclusion of Bertoli of De Foscherari, Forni and art historian Accame.

There were 264 exhibitors in total, coming from 82 cities and 21 countries. The Italian presence was remarkable, especially when considering galleries and publishers taken together. The lion's share of art was made in Bologna, Milan and Rome. Meanwhile, the international presence of galleries was slightly less than in the previous Arte Fiera (35 in 1977 and 45 in 1976): from various European countries, with France taking the lead, followed by the United States, Canada and Eastern European countries.⁴⁹

The reasons why many foreign galleries did not exhibit after 1976 might have been connected to those lamented by Wolfgang Bessenich:

In Bologna the new tendencies dominated, in Basel they will still not be able to move completely out of the shadow of the classics. Business in Bologna was bad, [...] there were also strikes, [...] Basel [...] has shown that all service facilities work reliably (even if not as cheap as in Bologna).⁵⁰

Also Italy faced competitiveness challenges compared to Switzerland due to high taxes and VAT laws.

While the number of international galleries participating in the fair decreased, there were still some major ones present, including Castelli/Sonnabend and Parisian galleries Yvon Lambert and Lara Vincy. The impressive presence of these galleries was highlighted in the catalogue, where they were listed before any other exhibitor and in a non-alphabetical order. This not only showed a sense of reverence from Italian counterparts but also proudly advertised the fair's inclusion of the best and most famous contemporary art dealers.⁵¹

The fair also featured specialized galleries of photography from various cities, including Amsterdam, Milan, Geneva, New York, Barcelona, San Francisco, Toronto, Montreal, and Washington.⁵² Inspired by the resonance of Herman Nietzsche, who created scandal with his performance at the Pari e Dispari gallery's booth at the previous Arte Fiera,⁵³ in 1977 a *Performance* week was organized.

3. *Democratizing the Market*

Arte Fiera organizers aimed to not only achieve financial success but also cultural significance. They believed that hosting events could bring in a diverse audience and promote art to a wider community. It's important to note that while the number of deals made at the event is essential, the cultural aspect is equally vital. This is because it determines the participation of artists and the public.⁵⁴ The press has emphasized the need to consider both aspects when measuring the success of Arte Fiera.

From its very first editions, Arte Fiera has organized exhibitions and events that showcase the aspects of contemporary art that cannot be contained in stands, such as performances and installations. These events were intended to attract a diverse audience. A similar experiment was already attempted at Art Basel in 1973 when it was decided to dedicate a special area for exhibiting new tendencies in contemporary art. Each year, a specific aspect was focused on, such as *American Art* in '73, *English Art* in '74, and *Italian Artists* in '75, and each gallerist would adhere to the project.

Arte Fiera did similarly. As an example, *La settimana della performance* (Performance Week), held at the close by Gallery of Modern Art in 1977, although conceived and curated by Renato Barilli with Francesca Alinovi e Roberto Daolio,⁵⁵ included artists proposed by the participating galleries. The clause was suspicious but, according to Barilli,⁵⁶ allowed the participation of international artists such as Laurie Anderson which was proposed by Holly Solomon. The performance week was an unmitigated success and the image of people walking through Marina Abramovic and Ulay in *Imponderabilia*⁵⁷ at the entrance of the museum GAM (Galleria d'Arte Moderna) was destined to become an icon of performance art. Also, during the *Performance Week*, there was an 'open space' for performances that were freely proposed. This was in line with Arte Fiera's cultural mission to educate the public and create an inclusive event. In addition to traditional painting and sculpture, graphical reproduction played an important role in promoting the concept of 'multiplied art', which aims to disseminate the message of art to a wider audience at more affordable prices. The goal of Arte Fiera '77 was to increase awareness of etchings, lithographs, serigraphs, and other multiples, as well as objects and sculptures, to make art more accessible to a wider audience.⁵⁸

After the mid-seventies, the cultural life in Bologna had a slight shift. In the first five years of the seventies, the city's vitality would be demonstrated by the constant presence of diversified and international personalities from all disciplines. In the mid-seventies, the cultural scene in Bologna underwent a subtle change. During the first five years of the decade, the city was buzzing with a diverse array of international personalities from various fields, showcasing its vitality. Accounts of those days tells us that in few days it was possible to attend a conference by the Argentine writer Manuel Puig or by Alberto Moravia, while also getting a chance to meet renowned figures like filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, the talented Carmelo Bene, or Julian Beck and Judith Malina, who were leaders of the iconic American theatre group The

Living Theatre.⁵⁹ However, in 1977, the student movement entered a new phase, embracing a more creative, hedonistic, and rebellious wing. This era was marked by numerous displays of energy and creativity, from the comics of Andrea Pazienza to the concerts of the Skiantos. But it was also characterized by occupations, assemblies, demonstrations, and Radio Alice, which sometimes escalated into violence and civic unrest.

In 1978 the cultural thrust of Arte Fiera continued and intensified. In the aftermath of violent clashes following the Red Brigade-influenced student uprisings in Bologna, an open debate between the '77 Movement and the Communist party began.⁶⁰

At Arte Fiera these political debates were not addressed openly – in the press release it was written «The political and economic conditions of the country are what they are»⁶¹ – but were exemplified by the attempt to make it a democratic event which seemed to answer also the question around the commodification of art.⁶² At a more general level criticism towards the art market intensified. In Italy, the most evident case of the so-called 'moralizzazione' (moralization) was the renunciation by the magazine *Domus* of the art market column by Willi Bongard.⁶³

Arte Fiera responded to this controversy in several ways. On the one hand, expanding the knowledge of the market by developing a report on the art market by Tommaso Trini.⁶⁴ This report, which was similar to those of the newsletter of *Art Aktuelle*, was included in the catalog. And, on the other hand, by creating a space for young artists not represented by the market. *Stand / one - Alternative space for young artists*, curated by Tommaso Trini and Hélène Sutton,⁶⁵ was a free space where 30 artists were invited to directly manage a space, free of charge, for the promotion and sale of artworks for the purpose of financing their research. An attempt to imagine an alternative market format which found sheer opposition by the dealers.

The press release of Arte Fiera 1978 also emphasized how the event originated owing to the interest of the newly founded (during Arte Fiera 1977) Italian Association of Galleries of Contemporary Art in sustaining the avantgarde and promoting the cultural figure of the art dealer to the public.

In line with the cultural policy of previous editions of the fair, a section dedicated to photography was enriched by *Current Photography since 1955*, an exhibition curated by leading expert, collector and dealer, Harry H. Lunn. The exhibition brought together 250 works by 75 artists, who represented international currents and reflected the importance of photography from the previous 20 years.⁶⁶

As was now customary it was also organized a conference dedicated to *Multiplied graphics, research and the market* conceived by Pier Giovanni Castagnoli. In addition, the second *Performance Week* was organized on the occasion of Arte Fiera, which had less success and funding, but would be repeated every year until 1982.⁶⁷

Arte Fiera '79 was the last edition of the first phase of the art fair. Symptoms of the great difficulties in continuing the event were immediately visible in the reduced number of exhibitors (120 galleries and 22 art magazines against the 198 galleries and 35 magazines of the previous year). This was probably owing to the shrinking number of visitors, which in 1978 fell to 200 thousand and may have deterred many galleries. There was also a turnover in board members. Of the remaining initiators Franco Bartoli, Renato Cardazzo, Ettore Gian Ferrai, Tiziano Forni together with H el ene Sutton which were flanked by Claudio Bruni Sakraischik, Ugo Ferranti, Nina Grossetti, Edoardo Manzoni, Giorgio Marconi (who had already been on the board in 1976), Rinaldo Rotta and Luigi Toninelli. An ample proportion of the fair buildings⁶⁸ were also devoted to an exhibition which hosted the large installation-type works *Sistina societ  per le arti*, curated by Tommaso Trini⁶⁹ and with the collaboration of many galleries which took part at the selection of the artists. The exhibition focused on patronage and the collaboration between private collectors, dealers and institutions as one of the nodes that connects art and economy, a topic that showed how much the relationship between the economy and art was still under discussion.

In the investigation of the crisis of the art market conducted by Alfredo Paz in his column 'Nel mercato dell'Arte' (Inside the Art Market), it is possible to detect a heartfelt unease on the part of the interviewed gallery owners. Among the various interventions, the position of the artist Concetto Pozzati should be noted, which positively shows the function performed by the market and which points the finger at the fact that despite the criticisms about commodification, Arte Fiera performed an important orientation function:

Art lives a schizophrenia: it criticizes itself and therefore also the apparatus that makes it become a commodity. But in the long run, the market never makes a mistake and over time establishes certain and real values (not just mercantile ones). The market was also a criterion of 'truth' and, now that it is in crisis, everyone hopes for a purifying collaboration with public institutions as if they were not also the other side of the market, as if the Museum were not a commodity . [...] the institution that has contributed the most to liven up art exchanges (not information) was Arte Fiera, an exhibition born from the market and for the market, with open windows, which at times was more fun than the same museum exhibits.⁷⁰

The interview with Pozzati, who was not only from Bologna but a prominent figure on national and local artistic scenes, sheds light on the atmosphere during Arte Fiera and explains why the event received little press coverage. Instead, the focus was on the conference *Artists International Conference Critical Autonomy of the Artist* (June 7-8, 1979), funded by the EBMA (Ente Bolognese Manifestazioni Artistiche), which saw significant participation of artists and critics.

The emergence of a market event ruled by gallerists in Bologna was at odds with the cultural policies of EBMA,⁷¹ which was losing power but still held cultural influence in the city. This tension was evident in the local press, particularly in *Bologna Incontri*, the EBMA monthly magazine, which ignored Arte Fiera while covering other fairs, such as *Cosmoproof* or the Children's book fair. The only article mentioning Arte Fiera was the one written in 1975 by the Gallery of Modern Art director, Franco Solmi, who wrote about problems affecting the art market for a conference he organized at GAM on the occasion of Arte Fiera '75.⁷²

1979 saw the final edition of the first phase of the Arte Fiera. Due to the political difficulties of the lead years, which in Bologna had an even gloomier picture, and the significant decrease in participating galleries, it was decided to avoid repeating the edition in the following year. Arte Fiera would reopen in 1982, changing dates, repositioning itself from summer to the beginning of the year and becoming a completely independent event.

In Bologna, making art accessible to everyone was seen as a cultural issue rather than a strategic one in the ongoing discussions surrounding the commercialization of art. However, the emergence of contemporary art fairs – using Arte Fiera as an example – highlights the need for both commercial specializations in contemporary art and a democratic determination of art's value (addressing the art market and taking it out of museums and galleries). Despite its temporary closure, Arte Fiera reopened in 1982 because it had previously provided Italian galleries greater visibility and networking opportunities through an exchange platform.

¹ 3. *Biennale internazionale della giovane pittura, gennaio 70: comportamenti, progetti, mediazioni*, curated by Ente bolognese manifestazioni artistiche, exhibition catalogue (Museo Civico Archeologico, Bologna, 31 January-28 February 1970), Alfa, Bologna, 1970; *Tra rivolta e rivoluzione: immagine e progetto. Arte-iconografia politica, cinema, comunicazioni di massa, musica, teatro, urbanistica e architettura. Documenti*, curated by Ente bolognese manifestazioni artistiche, exhibition catalogue (Bologna, November 1972-January 1973), Grafis edizioni d'arte, Bologna, 1972. For Bologna Biennials see Grazia Maria Restuccia, *L'Ente Bolognese Manifestazioni Artistiche. Un fondo riscoperto al Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna*, «Figure. Rivista della scuola di specializzazione in Beni Storico-Artistici dell'Università di Bologna», 1, 2013, pp. 157-167; on *Rivolta e Rivoluzione*, see Sara Catenacci, *Documenti d'arte impegnata. Tra Rivolta e Rivoluzione: immagine e progetto. Bologna 1972-1973*, in *Effimero. Il dispositivo espositivo tra arte e antropologia*, edited by Francesca Gallo and Alessandro Simonicca, CISU, Roma, 2016, pp. 164-165.

² DAMS, which stands for Discipline delle Arti, della Musica e dello Spettacolo (Disciplines of Art, Music and Entertainment), was started by the philologist and greediest, Benedetto Marzullo. Among the many personalities from different cultural areas it gathered Renato Barilli, Adelio Ferrero, Luciano Anceschi, Tomás Maldonado and Gianni Celati.

³ Christian Herchenröder, *Die Kunstmärkte*, Econ Verlag, Düsseldorf, 1978 [trad. it. *Il mercato dell'arte*, Bompiani, Milano, 1980].

⁴ Christian Morgner, *The Art Fair as Network*, «The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society», 44,1, pp. 33-46; Tamar Yogev and Thomas Grund, *Network*

Dynamics and Market Structure: The Case of Art Fair, «Sociological Focus», 45, 1, 2012, pp. 23-40; Christian Morgner, *The Evolution of the Art Fair*, «Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung», 39, 3, 2014, pp. 318-336. <https://doi.org/10.12759/hsr.39.2014.3.318-336>.

⁵ See René Berger *Preface* and Raymond Moulin's text *Un Type idéal la galerie pilote* in *1er Salon international de Galeries pilotes Lausanne. Artistes et découvreurs de notre temps*, curated by René Berger, exhibition catalogue (Lausanne, Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, 20 June-22 September 1963), Jean Bron, Lausanne, 1963, pp. 7-9 and pp. 10-20.

⁶ Maria Mimita Lamberti, *1870-1915: I mutamenti del mercato e le ricerche degli artisti*, in *Storia dell'arte Italiana*, volume 7 «Il Novecento», Einaudi, Torino, 1982; Claudia Gian Ferrari, *Le Vendite alla Biennale dal 1920 al 1950. Appunti per una storia del gusto attraverso l'analisi del mercato*, in *Venezia e la Biennale. I percorsi del gusto*, edited by Giandomenico Romanelli et al, Fabbri Editori, Milano, 1995, pp. 69-94; Marilena Vecco, *La Biennale di Venezia, Documenta di Kassel: esposizione, vendita, pubblicizzazione dell'arte contemporanea*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2002. Clarissa Ricci, *To sell or not to sell? Attempts at reopening the Sales Department*, «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», 26, 4, 2021, pp. 459-48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2021.1943206>.

⁷ Marika Jessica Farina, *Le dodici cose che forse non sapevi di Arte Fiera*, «Artslife», 27 January 2017 [online]. Available at: <https://artslife.com/2019/01/27/le-12-cose-che-forse-non-sapevi-sulla-storia-di-artefiera-bologna/> (Last accessed: June 2023).

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ On the Italian press Art Basel was mentioned as the largest art fair, see Daniela Palazzoli, *Arte Moderna:*

il mercato più grande del Mondo, «Bolaffiarte», 5, 42, 1974 p. 102.

¹⁰ *Piano Regolatore della città di Bologna* (29 July 1955) was approved by the President of the Italian Republic on 18 April 1958 (registro 51, Lavori Pubblici, Foglio 31). Available online at: <http://www.comune.bologna.it/storiaamministrativa/facts/detail/39515> (Last Accessed: June 2023)

¹¹ GAM was designed by Leone Pancaldi. See Luigi Vignali and Alfredo Leorati, *Regesto degli architetti bolognesi membri effettivi o corrispondenti dell'Accademia Clementina*, Grafis, Casalecchio di Reno, 1995; Giancarlo Bernabei, Glauco Gresleri e Stefano Zagnoni, *Bologna moderna, 1860-1980*, Pàtron, Bologna, 1984, p. 235.

¹² *BolognaFiere. Fiere internazionali di Bologna*, Grafiche Zanin, Bologna, 1988.

¹³ Ufficio stampa del Comune di Bologna, *Posata nel Quartiere Fieristico la prima pietra del palazzo dei congressi e della galleria d'arte moderna*, «Il comune di Bologna. Notiziario settimanale», IX, 21, 1969, pp. 1-4.

¹⁴ The transition of the Fair Company from an 'Autonomous Body' to a 'Finance Company' was realized in 1964, see Lorella Grossi and Simonetta Raimondi, *Dalle esposizioni universali alle fiere specializzate*, «Il Carrobbio: rivista di studi bolognesi», 17, 1991, pp. 194-219, here p. 200.

¹⁵ For the project by Tange see *Verbale n. 10*, Consiglio Comunale di Bologna, 27 February 1970; Giulio Maccarferri, *I colori del Fiera District. Il risolutivo contributo all'immagine dell'opera di Kenzo Tange nel complesso fieristico di Bologna, 1978-1983*, Pendragon, Bologna, 2016, pp. 21-22.

¹⁶ See *BolognaFiere. Fiere internazionali di Bologna* (1998), Bologna: Grafiche Zanini; *Una vetrina sul mondo. Storia per immagini della Fiera di Bologna*, edited by Ente Autonomo per le Fiere

di Bologna, Ente Autonomo per le Fiere di Bologna e L'Inchiostroblu, Bologna, 1991.

¹⁷ See *Bologna 1965, Bologna 1975. La Finanziaria Fiere per lo sviluppo della città*, Finanziaria Fiere, Bologna, 1975, pp. 55, 92-99; *Il futuro fuori porta. Storia del Centro fieristico direzionale di Bologna*, Finanziaria Fiere di Bologna S.p.A., Bologna, 1986.

¹⁸ Ufficio stampa, *Il comune di Bologna*, cit., pp. 51-53.

¹⁹ Farina, *Le dodici cose*, cit.

²⁰ *Più di mezzo milione di visitatori in Fiera*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 17 June 1974.

²¹ Morgner, *The Evolution of the Art Fair*, cit.

²² Genoni, «*Just What Is It That Makes It So Different, So Appealing?*», cit.

²³ *Arte Fiera*, 1974, cit., p. 1.

²⁴ Zentralarchiv, *ART COLOGNE 1967-2016*, cit., p. 105.

²⁵ This is still one of the recognized peculiarities of art fairs' expansion see Alain Quemin, *International Contemporary Art Fairs in a "Globalized" Art Market*, «European Societies», 15, 2, 2013, pp. 162-177, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616696.2013.767927>.

²⁶ The definition in Italian of 'mostramercato' (exhibition-market) was the subtitle of *Arte Fiera* until recently.

²⁷ For a reconstruction of the three Salons see *Inside the Sixties: g.p. 1.2.3: le salon international de galleries-pilotes à Lausanne 1963 1966 1970*, Lausanne, Musée cantonal des beaux-arts, 2002.

²⁸ Clarissa Ricci, *Between a Fair and a Biennial: Comparing the End of Sales at the Venice Biennale and the Beginning of the Arte Fiera in Bologna*, in *Double Trouble Exhibitions facing Fairs in Contemporary Art*, edited by Cristina Baldacci, Clarissa Ricci, Angela Vettese, Scalpendi Editore, Milan, 2020, pp. 55-69.

²⁹ *Arte Fiera*, 1974, cit., pp. 1-2, my translation.

³⁰ Ivi, p. 1, my translation.

³¹ Ivi, p. 105.

³² *Arte & Fiera 40*, edited by Claudio Spadoni and Giorgio Verzotti, Corraini, Mantova, 2016.

³³ *Not so private. Gallerie e storie dell'arte a Bologna*, Edisai, Ferrara, 2009.

³⁴ *L'informale a Bologna, formidabili quegli anni*, «La Repubblica», 21 November 2002.

³⁵ *Due aspetti che si integrano: commercio e promozione. La presenza dei giovani in Giò '70 e valgono dell'arte*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 5 June 1974, p. 20.

³⁶ *Arte Fiera*, exhibition catalogue (Bologna, Fair Center, 5-16 June 1974), Grafis, Bologna, 1974, p. 2.

³⁷ *Arte Fiera*, exhibition catalogue (Bologna, Fair Center, 28 May-8 June 1975), Grafiche Zanin, Bologna, 1975, pp. 403-412.

³⁸ *Combattimento per un'immagine. Fotografi e pittori*, edited by Luigi Carluccio and Daniela Palazzoli, exhibition catalogue (Torino, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, March-April 1973), Amici dell'Arte Contemporanea, Torino, 1973.

³⁹ Ivi, p. 403.

⁴⁰ The legacy between galleries and art publishing cannot be analyzed here but its recurrence in the art fair and then the organization of the art fair by art magazines, famously by Frieze and more recently by Art Africa, points to the circle of value production in contemporary art played by galleries, exhibitions and printed matter, please see Gwen Allen, *Between Page, Market, and Exhibition: Art Magazines in the Context of Art Fairs and Biennials*, in *Double trouble in Exhibiting the Contemporary: Art Fairs and Shows*, edited by Cristina Baldacci, Clarissa Ricci and Angela Vettese, Scalpendi Editore, Milan, 2020, pp. 141-156.

⁴¹ «What historian omit from the past reveals as much about a culture as hat is reconstructed as history and circulates as collective memory». Anne-Marie Staniszewski, *The power of display: a*

history of exhibition installations at the Museum of modern art, MIT press, Cambridge (Mass.), 1998, p. xxi.

⁴² Carlo Accorsi, *Le fiere di Basilea e di Bologna: C'era una volta Venezia*, «Bolaffiarte», VI, 52, 1975, pp. 44-51.

⁴³ Bolaffi reports encompassed reviews of art fairs in Basel, Cologne, London, Teheran and New York, see *Gli speculatori restituiscono il vero mercato ai collezionisti* (1975), «Bolaffiarte», VI, 51, 1975, pp. 60-63.

⁴⁴ For recurrence of galleries at *Arte Fiera* between 1974 and 1992 see *Arte fiera 74/92: sedici anni dalla parte dell'arte*, Gruppo editoriale Faenza editrice, Edizioni C.E.L.I., Faenza, 1992.

⁴⁵ Visits were around 280 thousand against the 300 thousand of the 1975 *Arte Fiera*.

⁴⁶ Roberto Canditi, *In mezzo milione alla Fiera di Bologna*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 1 June 1976, p. 4.

⁴⁷ This is evident reading the minutes of Bologna's Town council meetings and was confirmed in the interview to Renato Barilli via mail (14 September 2020).

⁴⁸ *Bolaffi Catalogo nazionale*, 1977, p. V.

⁴⁹ *L'arte in Fiera è internazionale*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 3 May 1976, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Wolfgang Bessenich, *Art 7'76: Aussicht*, «National-Zeitung», 2 July 1976 (my translation).

⁵¹ On the hierarchy between nations, see Alain Quemin, *The Impact of Nationality on the Contemporary Art Market*, «Sociologia&Antropologia», V, 5, 2015, pp. 825-956.

⁵² Lorenzo Cavallini, *Una occasione speciale di verifica della produzione artistica mondiale*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 2 June 1977, p. 10.

⁵³ *Sangue e musica ad Arte Fiera '76*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 30 May 1976.

⁵⁴ *Il mercato dei quadri*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 26 May 1976, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *La performance oggi: settimana internazionale della performance*,

exhibition catalogue (Bologna, 1-6 June 1977), *Altro/La nuova Foglio*, Pollenza, 1977.

⁵⁶ Renato Barilli, Interview with the author via email, 14 September 2020.

⁵⁷ *Toccare il Prossimo*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 11 August 1977.

⁵⁸ *Accogliere le avanguardie rispettando la tradizione*, «Il Resto del Carlino», 1 June 1977, p. 10.

⁵⁹ *No Dams. 50 anni del corso di laurea in Discipline delle Arti della Musica e dello Spettacolo*, a cura di Claudio Marra, Pendagrone, Bologna, 2021.

⁶⁰ *Emilia rossa. Immagini, voci, memorie dalla storia del PCI in Emilia-Romagna (1946-1991)*, edited by Lorenzo Capitani, Vittoria Maselli Editore, Correggio 2012.

⁶¹ *The Cultural Role of the Art Dealer*, Arte Fiera Press Release, 23 May 1978, Willi Bongard Archive, Getty Research Institute (GRI), Los Angeles.

⁶² Karel Teige, *Jarmark umění*, F.J. Müller, Praha, 1936 [trad. it. *Il mercato dell'arte: l'arte tra capitalismo e rivoluzione*, Einaudi, Torino, 1973, 2^a ediz. 1978].

⁶³ Pierre Restany, editor-in-chief of the magazine, invoked the moralization of the art world to explain to Bongard the end of the collaboration. See Paul Restany letter to Willy Bongard, 1976, Willi Bongard Archive, Getty Research Institute, (GRI), Los Angeles.

⁶⁴ *Arte Fiera, 1978: mostra mercato d'arte contemporanea*, exhibition catalogue (Bologna, 1-6 June), Grafiche Zanini, Bologna, 1978, pp. 203-231.

⁶⁵ Ivi, pp. 196-201.

⁶⁶ Ivi, pp. 194-195.

⁶⁷ Renato Barilli, Interview with the author, cit.

⁶⁸ The exhibition was held in the pavilions C and D.

⁶⁹ Tommaso Trini, curated, *Sistina*

Società per Arte: Arte Fiera 79, Grafis, Bologna, 1980.

⁷⁰ Alfredo Paz, *Il mercato della crisi: la parola a Concetto Pozzati*, «Bologna Incontri», X, 5, 1979, p. 53 (my translation). See also Concetto Pozzati, *Bologna artistica anni Sessanta e Settanta*, in Gianni Sandoni, *Bologna. Discorso sulla città*, Cappelli, Bologna, 1986, pp. 80-82.

⁷¹ Elena Gottarelli, *Un museo inserito nella vita della città*, «Bologna incontri. Mensile dell'Ente provinciale per il turismo di Bologna», V, 2, 1974, pp. 10-11.

⁷² Franco Solmi, *I problemi del mercato*, «Bologna Incontri», VI, 7-8, 1975, p. 25. Franco Solmi was the right-hand man for culture of Renato Zangheri, for the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and major of Bologna from 1970 to 1983. See Renato Barilli, *L'arte di comune' a Bologna*, «il Mulino», January-February, 1973.