

## PRESS RELEASE

**Aldo Giannotti**

*Safe and Sound*

Curated by Lorenzo Balbi with the assistance of Sabrina Samorì

Istituzione Bologna Musei | MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

5th May - 5th September 2021

Preview for the press on Thursday 5th May at 11.00 am

*Bologna, 5th May 2021. Safe and Sound*, a solo exhibition by **Aldo Giannotti**, curated by **Lorenzo Balbi** with the curatorial assistance of **Sabrina Samorì**, is hosted in the Sala delle Ciminiere of **MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna**, from **5th May to 5th September 2021**, after the postponements and a long wait caused by the Covid-19 emergency.

The project, the winner of the 8th edition of the **Italian Council** competition, devised by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity (DGCC) of the Ministry of Culture to promote Italian contemporary art around the world, contemplates notions of **safety** and **security** considered from different perspectives.

Ranging from the fundamental, existential aspect of safety, to regulations of the social sphere, to the technological impact on the field of security, the exhibition invites visitors to reflect upon their own position towards these concepts.

Regulations, laws and given behaviour settings of different social contexts provide the content to Giannotti's confrontation with said notions.

The exhibition welcomes visitors into a space for exercising potential alternatives and challenges them to bend their perception of regulations and their own behaviour and decision-taking processes within deeply embedded structures.

Security is defined as the freedom of danger. Giannotti asks what freedoms we give up in order to obtain our safety and probes the paradoxical nature of this negotiation between freedom and security.

Our current reality turns precisely such questions into a daily practice and forces us to find answers collectively. Investigating these topics, the exhibition merges the museum's microcosm with the broader social environment.

Drawings lie at the core of Giannotti's artistic practice. However, the activation or realization of such concepts often take shape in the form of installations, performances, video works or the readaptations of spatial structures.

*Safe and Sound* is partly set up as an intervention on the architectural structure of the museum itself in order to rethink the museum space and the way visitors interact with it.

The paths created by Giannotti's structural interventions within the museum take account of the specific nature of the building whilst producing a completely personalized adaptation,

which forced the museum institution itself to participate in the reshaping of norms, both conceptually and literally.

The exhibition however is not just an intervention on the spatial structure of the building but also a way to explore the network of relations that define a museum experience as such.

It is also strange to realise how a project conceived in 2019, when the Covid-19 threat was an unimaginable scenario for everyone, had already prophetically identified its main theme of investigation in the **dialectic between the concepts of security and freedom**, in a horizon that extends from the microcosm of the museum to the wider social context.

When the restrictions linked to controls, prescribed routes, social distancing and protective equipment were still reserved for specific and limited areas, and no one could foresee their explosion and consequent spread into every aspect, however banal, of everyday life, Aldo Giannotti and the exhibition curators thought of a layout that would provide "forced routes", establishing a precise order in a space normally experienced with minimal limitations, with the possibility of constructing a completely personal experience from the (potentially) infinite ones available. Creating a forced route that includes supporting materials and sets of rules in addition to the works aids in the successful orientation and comprehension of the location.

The exhibition thus raises a series of questions about how a museum can be experienced and what interactions take place within it, in an experience that is never "objectively determined", but is experienced subjectively and inevitably influenced by the role played from time to time by the individual players: central to Aldo Giannotti's work in this sense are the **museum stewards**, the embodiment of the concept of safety, the protagonists of the most immediate relationship with the public, bearers of the "can" and "cannot" do. The museum stewards and a "manual" of instructions on how to relate to visitors, created by Aldo Giannotti, are the constituent elements of **The Museum Score**, the performance-work that won an award from the Italian Council and is destined for the MACRO in Roma. The theme of these individuals protecting places and people also returns in other works, such as **Vis a Vis**, which exchanges the position of two different types of guards (Swiss Guards and Russian Soldiers) in front of their respective places of worship, or **Security I**, a large-scale photograph depicting the artist in an embrace with a security guard.

What strikes the visitor are undoubtedly some **large-scale works** that substantially deconstruct and modify the space, again focussing on safety issues. **The Column**, which from inside the hall appears to be an inaccessible **room-column**, can in fact be visited by entering directly from Via Don Minzoni, through an unusual route that mixes inside and outside, general public and specialist public, pushing the limit that a museum must necessarily set between inside and outside. Moreover, the works set up in "other" spaces such as the atrium and the foyer also play on the inside/outside relationship, and if on the one hand they recall museum practices, on the other they question them, starting with the writing on the reception desk, a veritable loop for curators and contemporary artists: *make another exhibition in order to be able to make another exhibition in order to be able to make another exhibition...* Just behind the crates the ideas rejec-

ted for the exhibition are shown, while in the space above the lockers you are invited to leave your work inside one of the available compartments in order to be able to say that you have exhibited at MAMbo. The theme of the loop is also proposed just before entering the exhibition space, with two neon lights inside the round alcoves that remind us of the old façade of the Ex Forno del Pane.

One of the most impressive interventions is **the staircase around the inner chimney** of the Sala delle Ciminiere. This new architectural element, which can be accessed by visitors, invites us to cross a well-known boundary in museum spaces, the boundary between temporary exhibitions and permanent collections, suddenly and unexpectedly making it permeable.

The staircase has a reference (though not in terms of its form) to the original redevelopment project of the Ex Forno del Pane designed by Aldo Rossi, in which the ground floor communicated with the upper floor of the MAMbo through a staircase located in this very area: the idea was later abandoned in favour of a separation between the two levels. In Giannotti's case, the staircase will be demolished at the end of the exhibition, but it will leave a trace of itself, as the passage to the collection will not be walled up again but will remain transparent, thanks to a sheet of glass that will preserve visual communication between the two floors of the building.

On glancing up, the public will be able to observe a series of large **site-specific drawings** that the artist will create in the bays of the room, while there are several **video** stations in the smaller areas of the exhibition space. Among these, **Mutual Surveillance** prompts us to reflect on how surveillance can be a mutually shared action. The work is realised in a specular game of **collaboration** with a museum on the other side of the world that bears the same name as MAMbo: **MAMBO, Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá**, currently under the direction of Eugenio Viola. In the two museums a video-surveillance system has been put in place that allows us to monitor from Bologna, 24 hours a day, what is happening in a room of the Colombian museum, and vice versa, in Colombia, we will be able to observe what is happening here.

In a different way, the **gallery** in the first room, from which one can observe the projection of a similar exhibition space, where other visitors enter, take their seats and in turn stop to watch a similar projection, also returns to the theme of reciprocal surveillance. It is only later that we understand who and what we are really looking at.

Visitors to the exhibition will be continually prompted to **take action** in the exhibition space: in **Filling Time**, it will be possible to tick off the boxes of the days in a huge calendar, marking the passage of time and one's presence; with **Chainsaw** you are challenged to take the work away using an electric saw; in **The Staircase** small drawings placed at a great height can only be approached and seen by climbing up special wheeled ladders; **The stationary point in the**

*evolution of a system*, through a series of statistics and a tilting platform, offers a representation of the impossibility of a real balancing of social differences.

*Performing the Museum* also relates to the public through 12 boxes, arranged in the exhibition and in the collection, containing a series of postcards giving detailed instructions on actions to be taken, contrary to the rules normally applied in a museum, questioning not only the prescribed rules but also oneself, one's role as a visitor and one's established relationship with the works.

The visiting experience thus maintains its own dimension of autonomy, but at the same time expands the space for sharing, and therefore for comparison, between the place's different users. Starting from an exercise within the museum, an **alternative meaning of the concept of safety** is outlined, in contrast to that imposed by media communication and political practice.

Finally, the exhibition space also includes a **performance area** that will host the **Collateral Events** curated by Giannotti himself, who has invited other artists to present their work in relation to the theme of the exhibition. Leaflets will be available in the exhibition space announcing the dates of the interventions, which will take place throughout the duration of the exhibition in compliance with the anti-Covid-19 regulations. They will also be announced on the website [www.mambo-bologna.org](http://www.mambo-bologna.org).

The performance space will be extended to Linz (Austria), where Aldo Giannotti will realise *Performing the Museum* thanks to the collaboration with **OÖ Landes-Kultur GMBH**.

In parallel with the exhibition, *Welcome & Goodbye* (304 pp, in English with Italian translation), **monograph** on Aldo Giannotti, published by Mousse Publishing. Alongside a selection of his main works, critical essays by Emanuele Guidi, Elsy Lahner and Giorgio P. explore the poetics and career of the artist, while Lorenzo Balbi's interview concludes with a focus on the Bologna exhibition. It is precisely from the latter that it is worth quoting a brief consideration by Balbi on Giannotti's work, constantly changing in time and context, difficult to expose and based on processuality: "(...) *they never end and undergo continuous and infinite evolutions that take them from drawing to performance, photography, video, even many years after the initial idea, and this is a unique identifying feature*".

The originality of *Safe and Sound* leaves us with the knowledge that the most important thing has in fact already happened, before it was set up and opened: the impact that the design idea itself has had on the conventions that dominate the museum environment, which have been questioned, challenged, brought into play and, perhaps, surpassed.

The exhibition is part of the institutional calendar of **ART CITY Bologna**, programme of exhibitions and special initiatives promoted by the **Municipality of Bologna** which in 2021 takes place as part of **Bologna Estate**.

## Artist biography

**Aldo Giannotti** (Genoa, 1977) is a visual artist who has lived and worked in Vienna since 2000. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Carrara, the Wimbledon University of Arts in London and the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. His works have been exhibited and created in collaboration with numerous institutions, including: Albertina Museum, Vienna; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz; OK-Zentrum, Linz; Kunsthaus Graz; Kunstraum Niederösterreich, Vienna; ar/ge kunst, Bolzano; Künstlerhaus Dortmund; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; Austrian Cultural Forum, London; Donaufestival, Krems; Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź; Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb; MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna. He is represented by Projektraum Viktor Bucher, Vienna.

He has received multiple awards and grants, such as the Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant (2020), the first prize of the Austrian Graphic Art Competition, Kunsthalle Innsbruck (2019), the Pomilio Blumm Prize, Milan (2015) and the STRABAG Artaward Recognition Prize, Vienna (2016).

## TECHNICAL SHEET

### Exhibition:

*Aldo Giannotti. Safe and Sound*

### Curated by:

Lorenzo Balbi with the assistance of Sabrina Samorì

### Promoted by:

Istituzione Bologna Musei | MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

### Site:

MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna  
via Don Minzoni 14 | 40121 Bologna

### Opening dates:

5th May - 5 September 2021

### Opens:

Thursday 5th May 2021 at 16.00  
on the occasion of ART CITY Bologna 2021

### General information:

MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna  
via Don Minzoni 14 | 40121 Bologna  
tel. +39 051 6496611  
www.mambo-bologna.org - info@mambo-bologna.org  
Facebook: MAMboMuseoArteModernaBologna  
Instagram: @mambobologna  
Twitter: @MAMboBologna

### Opening times:

Tuesday - Friday h 16.00 - 20.00  
Saturday and Sunday h 10.00 - 20.00 **Reservations are obligatory** and must be made online the day before the visit at the latest.

### Entrance:

Full ticket 6 euros, reduced ticket 4 euros, with advanced purchase on the site: <https://ticket.midaticket.it/aldogiannotti/Event/2962/Dates>  
During ART CITY Bologna (5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2021) free entrance



**Safety:**

All installations involving interaction with the public are carried out in accordance with Covid-19 standards and equipment.

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