ALMINE RECH

Arcimboldo face to face

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Born from a collaboration between artist Maurizio Cattelan and Chiara Parisi, director of the Centre Pompidou-Metz, along with curator Anne Horvath, the exhibition "Face à Arcimboldo" offers a unique and non-chronological exploration of the enigmatic 16th-century painter's thoughts, delving into the relevance of his artistic vocabulary in the present.

The exhibition presents a contemporary perspective through the works of 130 artists, carefully selected based on the influence—whether intentional, subconscious, or imagined—that the Lombard master has had on their art and thinking. Each of the 250 artworks on display bears the mark of Arcimboldo's creative freedom and follows a common thread that connects the centuries leading up to the present day.

The scenography, designed by architects Berger&Berger using cellular concrete, creates a cartographic representation of a citadel where generations, geographies, and artistic mediums intersect and collide.

Upon entering the Grande Nef of the Centre Pompidou-Metz, visitors are greeted by Mario Merz's installation, which has been reconstructed with its three parts reunited for the first time since 1987. "Homage to Arcimboldo," "Cono," and the "Table of Chagny" present a succession of fruits and vegetables that mirror the rhythm of daily life. Nearby, Francis Bacon's "Head VI" (1949) is juxtaposed with Hannah Höch's collages, Wolfgang Tillmans' "Anders (Brighton Arcimboldo)" (2005) stands alongside Otto Dix's "Study in the Catacombs of Palermo" (1924), and Cindy Sherman's "Untitled (#155)" (1985) engages in dialogue with Hans Bellmer's "The Doll" (1935-1936). In another section, frescoes from Pompeii illuminate the masks of the shop that James Ensor frequented throughout his life.

The architectural layout provides wide openings, allowing encounters with new creations by Fernando and Humberto Campana, the monumental phosphorescent fountain "Hills and Clouds" (2014) by Lynda Benglis, the impressive "Garden Guardian" (17th century), the only existing sculpture in the style of Arcimboldo, and the secret Prague cabinet by legendary contemporary surrealist filmmaker Jan Švankmajer. Further along, Lavinia Fontana's portrait of Antonietta Gonzalez (1594-1595) from the Royal Castle of Blois, Pierre Huyghe's video "Untitled (Human mask)" (2014), and Zoe Leonard's portraits of the bearded woman from the Orfila Museum (1991) coexist harmoniously.

Just as the Surrealists found Arcimboldo to be an endless source of inspiration, the exhibition showcases a selection of masterpieces from the Centre Pompidou's collections. This face-to-face encounter with Arcimboldo continues to influence the contemporary art scene. Works by Kerstin Brästch, Felix Gonzàlez-Torres, Rashid Johnson, Ewa Juszkiewicz, Cally Spooner, Hans-Peter Feldmann, and Ed Ruscha testify to the enduring impact of Arcimboldo's vision on past and present generations of artists.

In the Forum of the Centre Pompidou-Metz, the installation "Le désir attraperé par le masque," created specifically for the exhibition by Annette Messager, takes the form of a procession of masked animals, evoking the strange and unknown, the grotesque and alluring, and prompting contemplation on the concept of hybridization.

As the visitor wanders through the unexpected confrontations, he or she is invited to experience, in an intuitive way, the paradoxes between the human being and the animal, the vegetable and the mineral, the natural and the artificial, the brutality and the refinement, the invention and the nostalgia, the rootedness and the desire to leave. Extremes that seem more necessary today than ever, as is the spirit of Arcimboldo, to be able to navigate the complex universe of artistic creation.

With the complicity of the Château royal de Blois.