

“In the late 1960s I noticed that what I was doing did not fit into any art categories in use at the time: installations, happenings, environments, performance. The terms that identify a piece of work are extremely important because, amongst other things, they clarify the artist’s perception of what he is doing.”  
(Franco Vaccari, 2010)

## **Franco Vaccari** **A Collection**

**Inauguration: 21 February 2017 at 18.00**  
**Exhibition period: 22 February - 14 April 2017**

Franco Vaccari rose to fame after presenting the installation *Leave a Photographic Trace of Your Passing on These Walls* at the 1972 Venice Biennale, whose theme was “Work and Behaviour”. His association with Studio Marconi began in 1977.

Modena-born Vaccari is the creator of the aesthetic formula he named “Exhibitions in Real Time”, part of his highly original experimentation that confirmed him as the forerunner of a unique and resonant current in the history of contemporary art. His work can be described as Conceptual Realism, distinguished by the use of techniques that leave the traditional idea of a work of art far behind, and likewise its relationship with the public.

“The difference between happenings, performances and Exhibitions in Real Time is a difference in structure. While the first two forms develop linearly, and in their various phases follow precise, predetermined programmes, Exhibitions in Real Time are characterised by the possibility of retroaction, that is to say, feedback.” (Vaccari, 1978)

In fact, Franco Vaccari’s work is never completed but always in a state of becoming, a work in progress in continuous transformation, open to the unexpected and chance. Moreover, many of his works include the viewers’ direct involvement: we are asked to participate in the creation of the work so that the artist, as the unique and original author, becomes the one who triggers an event without necessarily controlling the outcome.

“‘Exhibition in Real Time’ is Vaccari’s way of emphasising the need to create art that is contingent on the moment and actively engaged with the place, the public and the uniqueness of the context,” writes Luca Panaro in his essay published in the exhibition catalogue, adding: “Nowadays we know how much the term ‘real time’ has become a part of our lives; we are connected round the clock to information on the web or on television, which even has a dedicated ‘real-time’ channel for following events in a delivery room or in the home of a celebrity.”

In this sense, Vaccari is a true pioneer with regard to the contemporary use of media, especially photography, the common denominator in many of his works.

Sometimes the author uses it as a useful tool for documenting reality, as he did for his “minimal journeys”: to a daytime hotel in Milan: *Viaggio per un trattamento completo all'albergo diurno Cobianchi* [Journey for a full treatment at the Cobianchi daytime hotel] (1971); during the 700 km journey between the cities of Modena and Graz: *700 km di esposizione* [700 km of Exhibition] (1972); on a sightseeing cruise on the Rhine: *Viaggio sul Reno* [Rhine Journey] 1974; or a short ride through an anonymous landscape, documented by purchasing a postcard, taking a Polaroid and posting them to the museum hosting the exhibition: *Omaggio all'Ariosto* [Tribute to Ariosto], 1974.

At other times, Vaccari has handed over authorial power to the viewers, as in the case of *Exhibition in Real Time No. 4*, requesting their active involvement in interpreting and completing the work. At that event, visitors found themselves in front of an automatic photo-booth where they could immortalise themselves in four passport photos, which they then had to attach to a wall.

Vaccari took a step back, leaving visitors with the task of bringing the work to life in a random and unpredictable way, letting it take shape in “real time” and spread into the space according to how the public received it, with the aesthetic experience of each visitor contributing to determine the form and meaning.

“One of the fundamental differences between a painting and a photograph is that the latter contains more involuntary information, parasitic information, niches of mystery where the relationship between the elements is largely unknown, structured without our knowledge by the very medium we use; it is for this reason that we can speak of the ‘technological unconscious’.” (Franco Vaccari, 1979)

The concept of the “concealment of the author” combined with “technological unconscious” is still today one of the leitmotifs of Franco Vaccari’s research in art. Both themes deal with redefining the identity of art and the role of the artist, as well as with promoting the creative autonomy of the machine that is able to capture “a collective unconscious”.

The works from the Marconi collection are able to provide a broad overview of Franco Vaccari’s oeuvre, from the first experiments of *Visuelle Poesie* (1966) to *Viaggio per un trattamento completo all'albergo diurno Cobiانchi* (1971), and as far as *Photostrip from the Gwangju Biennale* (Korea, 2010) via some of the many “Exhibitions in Real Time”.

Luca Panaro’s essay in the catalogue that accompanies the exhibition, published by Skira, thoroughly illustrates the works on display. It emphasises the process of participation and critical reflection on the media that Vaccari always calls for from his public, underlining the striking relevance of his art today.

“Vaccari puts the viewers at the centre of the work: he makes no judgement, he leaves each one free to act, giving them their much-desired moment of fame, even to the extent of being able to leave a picture of their face attached to the walls of the biggest art event of the day. Not so very different from what we seek nowadays through social media.” (Luca Panaro, *Franco Vaccari. A Collection*, 2017)

### **Biographical notes**

Franco Vaccari was born in Modena in 1936. After a science-based education, he earned a degree in physics. He made his debut in the arts as a visual poet with his first works *Pop esie* (1965), *Entropico* and *Le traces* (1966), the last of these was particularly significant for the way he used photography to present graffiti as anonymous, found poetry. The theme of traces and the use of photography are two constants that run through all his work.

From the outset, Vaccari has never used photography to produce mimetic or analogical images, but as the mark of a presence, signal, or physical trace, an attestation of “being there” that derives its true meaning from the existential, often opaque relationship that links it to what caused it.

He held his first solo show at the Galleria dell’Elefante in Venice in 1966. His project for the Venice Biennale in 1972, *Exhibition in Real Time No. 4: Leave a photographic trace of your passage on these walls*, remains emblematic. In 1977 he began working with Studio Marconi, exhibiting at the gallery in 1979, 1984 and 2011.

His art has touched on diverse areas, but perhaps the definition Conceptual Realism best expresses its essential nature. He is recognised as the originator of the concept “Exhibition in Real Time”, which he has explored both theoretically and through his art.

Franco Vaccari’s work has always been accompanied by his theoretical reflections. Among his publications are *Duchamp e l’occultamento del lavoro* (1978) and *Fotografia e inconscio tecnologico* (1979), considered fundamental critiques on contemporary photography. In 2010 he published *Duchamp messo a nudo - Dai ready-made alla finanza creativa*. He has taught courses at the École Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Strasbourg, and from 2004 to 2014 at the Faculty of Architecture, Milan Polytechnic. In addition to his personal show at the 1972 Venice Biennale, he also had his own room at the Biennale of 1980 and 1993. In 1984, the Museum of Modern Art in Vienna held an anthological exhibition of his work. In 1999 he participated in the *Minimalia* show at PS1 in New York. As a result of his video work, he was invited in 2003 to the Locarno Film Festival. In 2007, Spazio Oberdan in Milan held a retrospective exhibition titled *Franco Vaccari: Col Tempo*, which transferred in 2008 to the Museo Cantonale d’Arte in Lugano. In 2010 he was assigned a personal room at the Biennale of Gwanju (Korea) and at the exhibition *Strange Comfort* at Basel Kunsthalle. Further solo shows were held that year at Galleria Emilio Mazzoli in Modena and at Galleria Michela Rizzo in Venice. In 2011 he exhibited at Fondazione Marconi with the show *Meta-Critic Art*. To date, he has created forty-five Exhibitions in Real Time, made numerous videos, and produced twenty-eight artist’s books. Franco Vaccari lives and works in Modena.

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