

Press release

## **SANDRO BONGIANI CONTEMPORARY ART**

### **Ray Johnson & Coco Gordon in "Collaborative collaborations"**

#### **Presentation by Sandro Bongiani with the collaboration of Coco Gordon**

On the occasion of AMACI 18th Giornata del Contemporaneo 2022, the exhibition of "Ray Johnson & Coco Gordon, Collaborative collaborations" is presented in Salerno with 76 original works still unpublished from the Coco Gordon Archive of Colorado (USA).

With this latest exhibition there are 5 important events and an international project realized this year between April and November 2022, from the Bongiani Art Museum Collection dedicated to the artist Ray Johnson. The exhibition curated by Sandro Bongiani with the collaboration of the American artist Coco Gordon intends to emphasize the awareness and adaptability of the two American artists to a sustainable and necessary collaboration to dialogue together and reformulate the course of the contemporary art system. A collaboration that lasted over twenty years of contacts and assiduous frequency, from the 70s until 1995, the year of Ray Johnson's death, actively collaborating together in interesting creative exchanges that we believe it was only right to make known.

A continuous frequentation of contacts between the two artists supported with daily meetings, phone calls, appointments, mailings, photos, walks, group outings, dinners, participation in meetings and related telephone notes by Coco Gordon. This allowed Coco to keep and annotate for some time much of the material received from Ray, with an interesting documentation to be made known if you want to understand a little better the thought and the work of Ray that he was carrying out in the various years of work. through the innovative experience of the New York Correspondence Art School.

Exemplary and in some ways illuminating are the numerous annotations made over time by the artist Coco Gordon, now presented on the sidelines of this event with a sort of much more lucid and rigorous analysis of the work done by Ray, he writes: "I had no still made a collection of ideas by collecting the answers I received from friends of Ray's Pre Pop Shop until recently, which I have now done to be shared in this important Ray Johnson event in Italy at the Sandro Bongiani Vrspace Gallery, collecting the characteristics and personal nuances of Ray Johnson for a portrait as faithful as possible, made up of words, notes, phone calls, objects and thoughts now finally declared.

60 years after the birth of Mail Art (1962) and exactly 50 years (1972) from the first and only exhibition in Italy by Ray Johnson at the Galleria Schwarz in Milan by Arturo Schwarz, another important event of the American artist characterized by exchanges and relationships between individuals in an interpenetration of ideas, attitudes and reflections, in a decidedly fluid and

evolving process that is fully revealed by examining the works, writings and performative actions carried out by the American artist. Today, 27 years after his death, his experimental work from the 1960s onwards is considered by official critics to be an integral part of the Fluxus movement and even an original forerunner of American Pop Art.

**After this other important event, about 500 works in the Gordon Collection in Colorado (USA) will be cataloged and will soon be officially made visible online, in a stable manner for dissemination and consultation purposes at the web startup "Sandro Bongiani Arte Contemporanea" of Salerno, <https://www.sandrobongianivrspace.it/> for appropriate studies and insights on the innovative work done by this important American pre-pop artist.**

### **Ray Johnson (1927-1995)**

Born on October 16, 1927 in Detroit, Michigan, his early life included sporadic lectures at the Detroit Art Institute and a summer at the Ox-Bow School in Saugatuck, Michigan. In 1945, Johnson left Detroit to attend progressive Black Mountain College in North Carolina. During his three years on the program, he studied with a number of artists, including Josef Albers, Jacob Lawrence, John Cage, and Willem de Kooning. Moving to New York in 1949, Johnson befriends Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, developing an idiosyncratic form of Pop Art. Over the following decades, Johnson became increasingly engaged in performance and Zen philosophy, merging artistic practice with life. On January 13, 1995, Johnson committed suicide by jumping off a bridge in Sag Harbor, New York, then swimming in the sea and drowning. In 2002, a documentary on the artist's life called *How to Draw a Bunny*, makes us understand his research work. Today, his works can be found in the collections of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

**We thank the Coco Gordon Archive of Colorado (USA) for allowing the realization of this other important European event on Ray Johnson.**

### **SALERNO / Sandro Bongiani Contemporary Art**

Opening 2 October 2022 h. 18:00

From 2 October to 26 November 2022

TITLE: Ray Johnson & Coco Gordon in "Collaborative collaborations"

PLACE: Sandro Bongiani Vrspace

CURATORS: Sandro Bongiani and Coco Gordon

ADDRESS: Via S. Calenda 105 / D

HOURS: every day from 00.00 to 24.00

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