

MATHILDE HATZENBERGER GALLERY

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
CARLA BONI & L'AVO**

IS DELIGHTED TO ANNOUNCE

**PAOLO BONI & CUCHI WHITE
AN ITALO-AMERICAN COUPLE OF THE XXTH CENTURY**



Paolo Boni, *Tutto corre*



Cuchi White, *Lydia's Beauty Haven*

// MARCH 5TH > MARCH 11TH 2018 //

OPENING: MONDAY 5TH MARCH: 5 TO 8 P.M.

GALLERY OPEN: TUESDAY 6TH TO SATURDAY 10TH MARCH: NOON TO 6 P.M.

SUNDAY 11TH MARCH: NOON TO 4 P.M.

CLOSING PARTY: SUNDAY 11TH MARCH: 4 TO 6 P.M.

ZÜRCHER GALLERY

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**All pictures
are available
on high
definition**

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On the occasion of the *carte blanche* offered by Gwenolee Zürcher, Mathilde Hatzenberger Gallery, in partnership with Carla Boni and L'AVO, has the great pleasure to announce *Paolo Boni & Cuchi White - an Italo-American couple of the XXth Century* which shall be held from 5th to 11th March next at the Zürcher Gallery in New York.

In 1949, Cuchi White was nineteen when she travelled in Europe with her mother and her brother. Paolo was born in Vicchio, Italy, in 1925 and they met with Cuchi in a sculptor's studio in Florence where he painted. They had a single common language: art. It was love at first sight. When she came of age in 1952 she could at last come to live with him in Florence. As they found the Italy of the time too provincial they moved to Paris in 1954. At first Paolo Boni worked in an apartment next door to theirs and later in a artist's studio at Alesia in the 14th district of Paris and also in his studio in Vallauris on the French Riviera. For her, the world is to be observed in black and white until 1958 and in color when she returned to photography in the mid-1970s with the photographs of *trompe-l'œil*. With those photographs, she became known following an individual exhibition at the *Rencontres Photographiques Internationales* in Arles, France. After a serious car accident in 1997, Cuchi stopped taking photographs and Paolo brought his artistic activity to an end in 2004 when the Alzheimer's disease of his wife's claimed his attention.

This invitation to the Zürcher Gallery provides an opportunity to bring them back together in a city where both of them met with considerable success. As early as 1948, Cuchi took part in the last exhibition of the *Photo League* when she was eighteen years old. Later Paolo came to the attention of Peter H. Dietsch, an influential dealer, thanks to whom he made his first sales to major American museums and undertook a command based on Giovan Battista Bracelli's book *Bizzarrerie* for the collector Lessing J. Rosenwald.

This exhibition allows us to discover them together, something which happened all too rarely during their lifetimes: in a wonderful, unpublished series of photographs taken by the young Katherine Ann White, before becoming Cuchi White, mainly in New York between 1948 and 1952, and a selection of Paolo Boni's works from every period which were shown in the retrospective exhibition of his work held in Paris in January 2018 after his death in March 2017.

We shall also have the great pleasure of presenting for the first time *New York Echoes*, a Cuchi White portfolio published by J-P. Bourgeno, and a bilingual English-French catalogue of Cuchi White's American series shown here with contributions from Michel Nuridsany, Carla Boni and myself.

L'AVO

Established in 2006 by Paolo and Carla Boni, the only daughter of the two artists and herself a photographer, *L'Association pour la valorisation de l'œuvre de Paolo Boni et Cuchi White* (Association for the valorisation of the work of Paolo Boni and Cuchi White) aims to showcase this immense artistic heritage. L'AVO is now administered by Carla Boni, her wife Marie-Laure Picard and their daughters, Giulietta, Luana and Zelina Picard-Boni.

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Mathilde Hatzenberger Gallery

The MHG was founded in 2011 with the aim of promoting artists, generally living artists, who are insufficiently represented despite their considerable quality. Underlying this there was also a second thought to create a meeting point between upper side and low side of arts, East and West, different media and materials, excluding none of them and breaking loose from any restrictive concept of specialization, line or hierarchy.

A few illustrations



PB, *Dit Olivi nel Mugello*, 1950-53, oil on canvas, 66x80,5cm - photo JL Losi



PB, *Derrière la Colline*, 1960s, metal on wood, 65x140,5 cm- photo JL Losi

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Left: *Untitled*, 1969, stainless steel on wooden core, 65x50x45 cm, Inv. No. 1035R,
 Right: *Cadence*, 1969, graphisculpture, 105x75 cm inv. ongoing , photos JL Losi

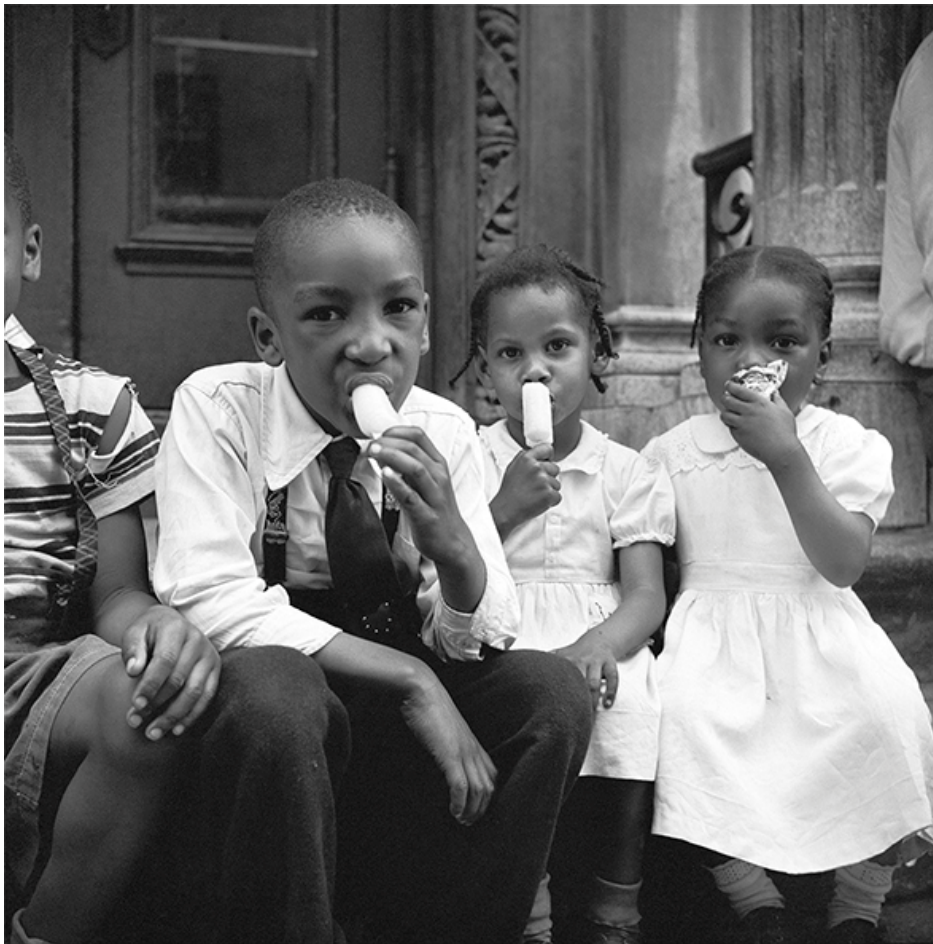


PB, *La Città*, triptych, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 3x 162x114 cm - photo JL Losi

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Cuchi WHITE, *Boat under the bridge* © L'AVO



Cuchi WHITE, *Ice cream kids* © L'AVO



Cuchi WHITE, *Freeman Street* © L'AVO



Cuchi WHITE, *Street game* © L'AVO

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Paolo BONI (1925 – 2017)

Paolo Boni was born in 1925 in Vicchio in the Mugello valley, north of Florence. Until the end of the Second World War he lived in Vicchio where he worked in an optical factory. Following an air raid which almost cost him his life he decided to dedicate himself entirely to painting and he became a student at the *Liceo Artistico* in Florence.

One of his teachers, the sculptor Corrado Vigni, gave part of his studio to this talented son of a country worker so that he could paint. In 1949 he was twenty-four years old and that year he had his first exhibition in Florence. During the same year he met the nineteen year old American photographer Katherine Ann White who was visiting Europe. Following several years of assiduous correspondence, and having completed her studies and come of age, the young woman travelled to Italy to be with him. The couple married in 1953 and decided to move to Paris in 1954. Paolo became friends with the futurist painter Gino Severini who wrote the preface to his first individual exhibition at the *Galerie Voyelle* in 1954.

In 1957, while continuing his painting and sculpting, he decided to learn engraving in Stanley Hayter's studio. However, the traditional method using acid did not suit him so he started piercing the metal plates. He later made his first engravings in relief which he obtained by using molds composed of stratifications of different types of metal.

The couple's daughter Carla was born in 1958.

In 1961, following a trip to New York where the Brooklyn Museum, the New York Public Library and the Museum of Modern Art purchased his engravings, Paolo Boni began work on a series of bas reliefs with a wooden structure covered in copper, zinc and stainless steel, in addition to sculptures and bas reliefs in marble.

The couple became friends with Christine Boumeester and Henry Goetz, and later with Alberto Magnelli, painters of a previous generation who played an important bridging role in the mid-century. This friendship gave rise to this love of the south which was given concrete expression with the building of a combined home and artist's studio in Vallauris. On the Côte d'Azur they mixed with André Villers, Alexandre Istrati, Natalia Dimitriesco, Roger Collet, Robert Péro, Pierre Gastaud, Xavier Longobardi, Paul Revel, André Cottavoz, Pierre Theunissen and many other artists.

In 1965, a major individual exhibition of Paolo's work was held at the *Musée Picasso* in Antibes with paintings, sculptures, bas-reliefs and engravings showing the diversity of his production.

Over the years, his work concentrated on two axis: *graphisculpture*, a term the Milanese gallery owner Alfonso Ciranna coined in 1970 in order to define the special nature of Paolo's engravings, and painting, the one enriching the research of the other.

In 1971, Gayzag Zakarian, the dealer and publisher, published a catalogue of all the *graphisculptures* created up to then: *Oeuvre Gravé 1957-1970* (Engraved work 1957-1970). For artists' books illustrated with his *graphisculptures* Paolo worked with contemporary writers such as Michel Butor, Maurice Roche and Georges Perec, who became his friend.

In July 1969, man walking on the moon and the space conquest made a deep impression on Paolo Boni. The opening up of these horizons new, together with the invention of acrylic paint, enabled him to completely renew his subjects, which were before concentrated on human beings and landscapes, with the appearance of round targets, aircraft, arrows and later amazing flying objects incrustated in highly colored and surrealist spaces. This new style

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was accompanied simultaneously by work on perspective and stripes, obviously influenced by the works of the Italian Renaissance.

Between the late 1980s and 2004 his sense of space and his ingenuity concentrated mainly on painted cut wood which revisited all the classic *genres* which had appeared in his works down the years, from the oil paintings of his youth to his sculptures, *graphisculptures* and bas reliefs; these latter creations represent the result of his incessant investigation of the use of relief. Paolo Boni has left us with treasures of invention and originality.

The “engineer of the imagination”, as his friend the writer Perec called him, died on 29th March 2017 in Paris leaving a collection of about one thousand five hundred works.

He had many individual exhibitions in Europe and the United States since 1978 he also participated in major international art fairs like the former *Saga* and the *FIAC*. The collections of thirty-eight major museums throughout the world contain his works.

Cuchi WHITE (1930 – 2013)

Cuchi White, born Katherine Ann White, was an American photographer known internationally for her work in color produced since the 1970s. When, after a break between 1958 and 1974, she returned to photography she was very attracted by what was known as *trompe-l'œil* but not yet known as “Street Art”, with which she loved mixing their close precursors in the churches and palaces. In 1949, she met her future husband, Paolo Boni, a young Italian painter, in a sculptor’s studio in Florence, they moved to Paris in 1954, where they lived together for the rest of their lives, in go between with their house and artist’s studio in Vallauris south of France. Their daughter Carla was born in 1958.

Cuchi White photographic interests always swung between these two worlds, the old and contemporary, which she brought together at times, and she was always fascinated by the magic of old art which had drawn her like a magnet as soon as she arrived in Europe. The incongruous aspect of reality, the tricks vision plays became her favorite subjects. She gives us access to this world, which exists alongside visible reality, by telling more stories enriched by classic cultural references or simply by highlighting the upheavals which occur when one era intrudes upon another: false windows, sculptures, interiors of museums, castles and churches, doll collections, accumulations of objects but also industrial sites, items which are incongruous or unexpected, the play on light and shade which transforms places and streets.

She produced a book on the *trompe l'œil*, another on the sublime villas on the *Côte d’Azur* and a third on the perched villages on the Franco-Italian *Riviera*. Beginning in the Nineties, she completed a striking series on houses built to resemble ships, no doubt inspired by the transatlantic liners on which she travelled between United States and Europe. Several exhibitions were devoted to this work, *Navirland* (The land of ships) and *Demeures en Partance* (Homes ready to sail). For the national heritage in France she worked with a number of museums and took photographs of the Durance river and, in Brittany, of the *sentiers des douaniers* (the paths used by the customs officers).

Since her first exhibition at the Galerie Arena in 1980 at the *Rencontres internationales de la photographie* in Arles, France, (since renamed *Rencontres de la photographie*), and her work with the Réattu museum in the same town, she regularly attended this event. She was often with her Italian friends and

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photographers such as Giovanna Calvenzi, Gabriele Basilico, Luigi Ghirri, Mimmo Jodice and so many others. She shared those friendships all the more easily given that her husband, the artist Paolo Boni, was Italian and a large portion of their work, and many of the exhibitions of one or the other, took place in Italy. In 1984, Cuchi took part of an innovative and significant milestone in contemporary photography, the *Viaggio in Italia* (Travelling in Italy) with nineteen other photographers¹, project initiated by the photographer Luigi Ghirri. In 2012 was her last exhibition in Paris at the gallery In situ, where Fabienne Leclerc chose to show photographs of trompe l'oeil from the book *L'Œil ébloui* which preface was written by her friend the French writer Georges Perec.

Her first black-and-white photographs show that Cuchi White already had an excellent sense of framing and composition. As a teenager, she was an intern with the photographer of the Cleveland Museum of Arts. When she was fourteen, on her trips to New York, she soaked up the liberating atmosphere of the city with its exhibitions and museums which nurtured her abiding passion for art. In 1947 the Edward Weston exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York made such a strong impression on her that she travelled to Point Lobos to meet the photographer himself. At Weyhe's art bookstore on Lexington Avenue she bought copies of *Camera Work*, Dorothy Norman's *Stieglitz Memorial Portfolio* and Paul Strand's *Time in New England*. Cuchi was a student at the very progressive Bennington University in Vermont where, amongst others, Max Salvadori, Erich Fromm and Martha Graham taught and in 1951 the university awarded her a degree of Bachelor of Arts. When she arrived in Italy in 1952, the roman newspaper *Il Mondo di Pannuzio* bought fifty of her photographs for publishing.

As a great admirer of André Kertész, Edward Weston and Paul Strand, in 1948 she took part in one of the last exhibitions of the *Photo League* called *This is the Photo League* with photographs of broken statues taken around the sculpture workshop at her university.

New York was the American city closest to the heart of the young photographer Katherine Ann White who was born in Cleveland in 1930 and who later became known as Cuchi White. She availed of every opportunity to wander about the city armed with her 13 x 18 large-format view and Rolleiflex 6 x 6 cameras. Her favorite subjects were street life and its very special atmosphere. These pictures are stamped with the pursuit of humanist and social aspects, a pursuit which aims to show the multiracial reality of the city. A deep poetic fascination for urban places and architecture emerged at this time and continued, from the 1970s onwards, to infuse her work in color with a lively imaginative element.

Following a life-threatening accident in June 1997, Cuchi stopped taking photographs, just before she had begun working on superimposition of double images and on a series on accumulation in baroque interiors. "La Cuchi" as her friends used to call her with her amazing laugh which was so communicative and her outspokenness who blithely mixed French, Italian and English, left us at the autumn of 2013.

Carla Boni – Paris, February 2018

¹ *Viaggio in Italia*, Publisher: Il Quadrante 1984, with the photographs of Olivo Barbieri, Gabriele Basilico, Giannantonio Battistella, Vincenzo Castella, Andrea Cavazzutti, Giovanni Chiaramonte, Mario Cresci, Vittore Fossati, Carlo Garzia, Guido Guidi, Luigi Ghirri, Shelley Hill, Mimmo Jodice, Gianni Leone, Claude Nori, Umberto Sartorello, Mario Tinelli, Ernesto Tuliozi, Fulvio Ventura, Cuchi White.