

SPIKE

ARTIST'S FAVOURITES

By
Tania Bruguera

These are artists who have used reality as art and artists who made art that prophesied reality. Some of these artists had ingenious ideas but a technique that condemns their work to disappear; some didn't care much for what they left behind or that their ideas were stolen because they enjoyed life. These are visionaries we still have much to learn from. — Tania Bruguera



Photo: Claudio Fuentes

Tania Bruguera is a Cuban performance artist and activist known for socially engaged art that often combines pedagogy, useful art, and illegality. She's taught behavioural art at Cuba's fine art academy and fought against the censorship of art in the same country. One of her most memorable performances, *Self-Sabotage* (2009), involved playing Russian Roulette with a 38-caliber pistol while doing a performance-lecture on political art. She also has a large body of work focusing on immigration reform, including the long-term project *Immigrant Movement International*, in Queens, NY, and her 2018 Tate Turbine Hall commission. Her adaptation of Brecht's play *Galileo* will premier at the 2020 Wiener Festwochen in Vienna.

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Rape Scene (1973) or Moffitt Building Piece (1973) are not of the kind that can be easily reproduced in nostalgic postcards, where you are reminded that you can do art anywhere (at the beach or while camping). My professor Juan Francisco Elso Padilla, who was Ana's friend, always said that art is what you don't see. Over the years, I have tried to understand if this is because art is intangible or because it's a reminder of a reality that you don't want to see.

*1948 in Havana, † 1985 in New York

PINO POGGI

"Arte Utile" manifesto

In general, our ideas are far more advanced than anything we build. Objects and things are prisoners of the available technology, while words are freed from technology. This happened to Pino Poggi's oeuvre. His "Arte Utile" manifesto (1965–66) is a great document to consult today. It was written when Poggi was physically close to Joseph Beuys, but, in actuality, he was closer

to us today. Seeing into the future is easier if you are not caught up in how your presence influences others around you, if you resign yourself to admiration and easy positioning. The fact that Kant couldn't convince us all about the uselessness of art (and other details), that there is a bloodline of practitioners of what I call "Arte Útil" that starts around the end of the 18th century. That we have all called what we do or aspire to do with the same exact name is no coincidence. Our DNA carries a sequence of forgotten and underrated aesthetic moments and ethical aspirations.

*1939 in Genoa, lives in Italy

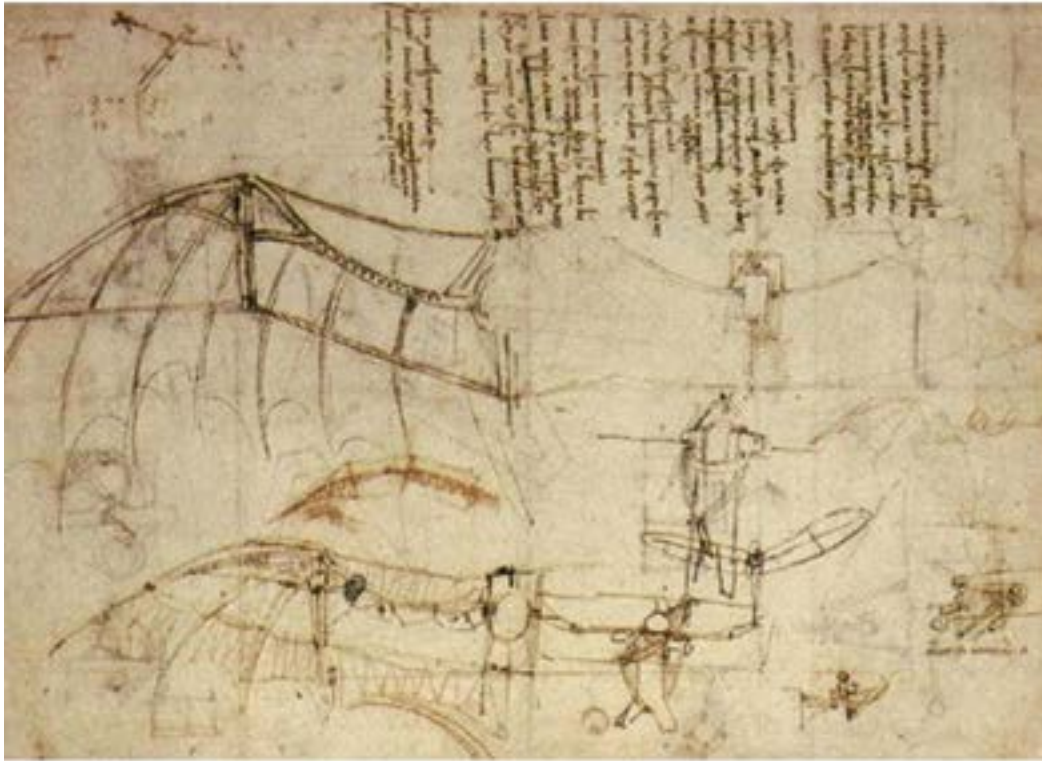
LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON

Lynn Hershman Leeson discovered the cultural importance of narcissism, which is why she anticipated Instagram and Facebook. The search inside us always ends with a technological translation as its reminder. Lynn cannot be a genius because this is a male-exclusive category, but she would qualify. She is a prolific



Lynn Hershman Leeson with the Lynn Hershman anti-body

Photo: Novartis / Laurids Jensen



Leonardo da Vinci's design for a flying machine, ca. 1488

artist who has kept her faith in art no matter what comes her way. I'm convinced that she is a glitch on our cosmic timeline. She made a machine speak to us before Siri and Alexa even existed, she coined the term "anti-body" to refer to her work on virtual identity and developed an actual antibody before scientists did, she was Roberta Breitmore before we were able to see avatars on the internet, she documented women's revolution before #MeToo and before activism was respectable. Lynn's artistic generosity is so open that you want to be swallowed up by her.

*1941 in Cleveland, Ohio, lives in San Francisco and New York

LEONARDO DA VINCI and
ELSA VON FREYTAG-LORINGHOVEN

Despite all the productivism around us, one artwork is all you need. Leonardo da Vinci focused on science to make art (and vice

versa). Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, like any exemplary Dadaist, focused on arbitrary fun to make art (and vice versa). For both, art had other uses. It was never an end in itself; they never felt like they had achieved a finished product, no matter how we look back upon them today. Art was always part of research: for him it was nature, for her it was life. Both left one piece that was enough: him, an androgynous small portrait, and her, a misogynistic urinal. Both of similar size – maybe they discovered human-size art? Despite all the pressure for success around us, what is art without joy? Why can't we fail anymore? This is why I don't like Picasso: he inundated us with work that had too much self-importance. I prefer Leonardo's and Elsa's work. They are full of doubt and joy. Leonardo da Vinci, *1452 in Anchiano, Italy, † 1519 Amboise, France
Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *1874 in Swinemünde, Germany, † 1927 in Paris