

Play
EXHIBITIONS



From squares to courts

*Stories of games and shows
between the 18th and 19th centuries*

Narrated by **Arturo Brachetti**

Reggia di Venaria

9 April — 18 September
2022

In collaboration with



MUSEO
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 **La Venaria Reale**



RESIDENZE
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LA VENARIA REALE

FROM SQUARES TO COURTS

STORIES OF GAMES AND SHOWS BETWEEN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

Reggia di Venaria, Rooms of the Arts
From 9 April to 18 September 2022

Curated by Silvia Ghisotti and Andrea Merlotti

Directed and narrated by Arturo Brachetti

Staging by Peter Bottazzi.

**PLAY: LA VENARIA REALE DEDICATES THE YEAR 2022 TO THE THEME OF
“PLAY”**

2022 marks the **15th anniversary of the opening** of Reggia di Venaria and **25 years since UNESCO's listing** of the Royal Savoy Residences among the World Heritage Sites. In conjunction with these important anniversaries La Venaria aims to offer a journey through the world of amusement. **The exhibitions and cultural activities** of 2022 revolve around the **theme of play**, not only for the historical references contained inside the Reggia – the place of leisure, entertainment and playful moments of the sovereigns par excellence – but also with a view to focusing on the present time and everyone's desire to treat themselves to moments of lightheartedness.

The **first two exhibitions** on this theme will take place one after another at the Rooms of the Arts from **9 April to 18 September: *From squares to Courts, stories of games and shows between the 18th and 19th centuries* and *Pictures at Play! A tale by 18 Italian photographers*.**

THE EXHIBITION FROM SQUARES TO COURTS

"From squares to Courts, stories of games and shows between the 18th and 19th centuries" offers some significant **representations of games and shows that were held**

in the courts, theatres and squares of Turin, the Savoy capital, and the provincial cities. For this purpose, it presents **rare iconographic evidence from the 18th and 19th centuries** including paintings of the Savoy Royal Residences and exceptional posters from the Incisa Archive of the Library of the Asti Bishop's Seminary.

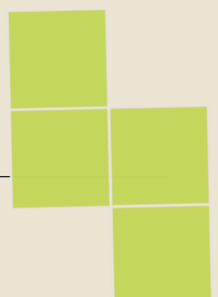
During the eighteenth century, before the French Revolution, **town squares and courts were not necessarily in a conflictual relationship**, although they expressed opposite poles of the society of the time. On the contrary, on many occasions, there were interactions and exchanges between these two worlds. **Games and shows** were the occasions for such connections: the Court often brought receptions and tournaments to the squares in which the citizens could participate. At the same time, town squares were constantly enlivened by a colourful multitude of jugglers, acrobats, illusionists, magicians, puppeteers, animal trainers and "monstrous" characters. There were also those who exhibited unusual objects such as magic lanterns, raree shows, wax sculptures and even the first hot-air balloons.

In Piazza Castello, **in Turin – the capital of the Savoy State** – in front of the current Palace of the Piedmont Region, one could watch the performances of **actors, singers, jugglers and tightrope walkers** or listen to **storytellers** who recited their tales in front of Palazzo Madama, as still happens today. Gazettes and journals of the time reported that the best and most original artists could be hired by the court to perform for the sovereigns and to amuse the princes. Unfortunately, there is no iconographic evidence of such activities inside the palaces of power, at least in Turin.

However, thanks to written sources, it is possible to retrace the tours of wandering artists who travelled all over Europe, often performing in the main capitals.

The **exhibition describes this variegated world of showmen and showwomen** through precious works preserved in the Royal Savoy Residences as well as in public and private collections across Piedmont.

Alongside the **paintings** from Palazzo Madama and the Racconigi and Agliè castles, very rare posters are exhibited that are normally kept in the Library of the Asti Bishop's Seminary. Examples of those first forms of advertising include **posters** that acrobats, jugglers, horse riders and street artists posted in the cities where they performed. Dating back to the years 1780-1820, these simple yet fascinating prints **document the main acrobatic or illusionistic performances shown to the public**.






Horsewoman of the Gautier Club. *Poster of the trampoline and carriage jump*, 1815, print. Asti, Library of the Bishop's Seminary, Incisa Archive

Among the posters, some refer to the "circus" (a word derived from the term "circle" because of the circular layout of the show), which was just taking its first steps in that period. Some of the works on display stand out for importance such as a **puppet show dating back to the end of the 18th century** and a section of the exhibition dedicated to **magic lanterns, peep boxes and fantascopes** set up in collaboration with the National Museum of Cinema in Turin.

The exhibition is enriched by the direction and narration of **Arturo Brachetti**, an international artist and a showteller who knows in-depth the performing arts that have their roots in town squares. Brachetti not only guides visitors around the exhibition but also brings them back to the time of the events illustrated in the works through stories, sounds, clamour and images of squares and courtyards.

Brachetti's contribution helps enhance the enchanting scenic setting in which the works are set, thanks to the engaging scenery project conceived and created by scenic designer **Peter Bottazzi**.

*In collaboration with the **National Museum of Cinema in Turin** and the **Library of the Asti Bishop's Seminary***



***Silvia Ghisotti** is an art historian and the Chief Conservator of the Consortium of Royal Savoy Residences. **Andrea Merlotti** is a historian and the Director of the Study and Research Centre of the Consortium of Royal Savoy Residences.*

***Peter Bottazzi** is an architect, a scenic designer and a planner. He collaborates with the main Italian cultural institutions working alongside international artists such as Steve McCurry, Robert Wilson and Peter Greenaway.*

***Arturo Brachetti** is an Italian artist, famous and acclaimed all over the world, uniquely considered The Legend of quick-change.*

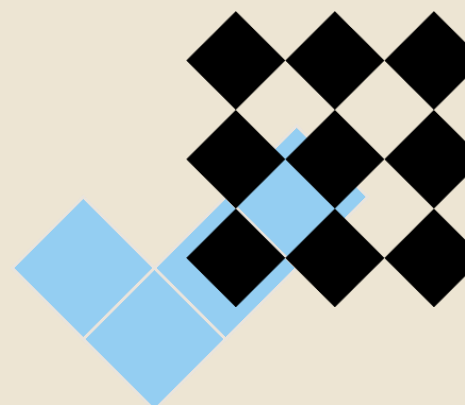
INFORMATION AND TICKET OFFICE

WHERE: Reggia di Venaria, Rooms of the Arts

WHEN: from Saturday 9 April to Sunday 18 September 2022

HOW: The exhibition is included in the tour of the Reggia

For more information: **lavenaria.it**



For Public Relations and media, please contact

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