

**An interview with Prof. Walter Guadagnini
President of the Scientific Commission of UniCredit & Art**

Professor Guadagnini, five years after the launch of the UniCredit & Art Project, what conclusion can you draw?

- I believe it is an utterly positive conclusion. The project was launched with the purpose of building a contemporary art collection, as well as of giving a strong sign to the entire Italian contemporary art sector through a set of organic and non-occasional actions. Moreover, the project was aimed at communicating within the Group using a new and, in many respects, surprising language – namely, contemporary art. Both our in-house counterparts and other third parties reacted positively to the stimuli offered by the Project, and I think this is now deeply rooted both among its operators and among all those that work in the Group.

Can you describe the main steps of this activity?

- So many actions have been performed that a selection is hardly possible... One top event is the partnership established with MAMbo, the contemporary art museum of Bologna, a brand new co-operation model for our Country. The decision to acquire works to expand the museum's collection sharing choices with the Institute's Director meant sending a strong sign in view of a true partnership, where each party offers its own skills and specificities in view of a shared achievement. Today, thanks to this partnership, MAMbo is internationally recognized as the reference museum for young Italian art. I also wish to mention support to Italy's participation to the 2007 edition of "Paris Photo", which offered a unique showcase for Italian gallery owners and photographers in such an important venue. Finally, the project "Acrobazie", which places young artists in touch with such an entity as Atelier di Pittura Adriano & Michele of San Colombano al Lambro; this was, I think, one more expression of the energizing spirit that is a crucial part of the project's philosophy.

The project started with the intention to promote the awareness of Italian contemporary art, and this is how it was characterized at its early stages. What happened and what will happen as the Group expands at an international level?

- This is the main issue we are now addressing. The expansion of the Group's reach suddenly allowed us to rely on unique collections of works – particularly from HVB and Ba.Ca. – that somehow forced us to reconsider the strictly national character of our own collection. At the same time, opening up to new European Member States suggests and allows to take a close look at the art shows organized in those cultural regions, which are now definitely among the busiest in the whole world scenario. In short, these are great opportunities that need to be taken, however sticking closely to our origins. By the way, our origins are strengthened by recent integrations with the former Capitalia Group (Banca di Roma, Banco di Sicilia, BIPOP Carire), which owns surprisingly beautiful collections.

Another feature of the Project's early stages was a focus on contemporary photography. Is this going to continue?

- It is, for at least two reasons. First because photography is still one of the languages that best reflect contemporary life, a language that by now has its own history, but at the same time keeps evolving along with society. Secondly, the HVB and Ba.Ca collections include in turn important historical and contemporary photography sections, which offer the opportunity to build an invaluable set of works, perhaps in view of exhibitions or publications.

What can we expect for the future?

- A basic continuity with the achievements made so far, an expansion of our scope and interest at an international level, and a greater ability to participate to the Group's daily life, hoping to provide that intangible and hardly definable, however so important *plus* represented by art of all times, from old days to the present.