

BOBINSKA BROWNLEE NEW RIVER

Jacob Wolff : BAL TIK TAK

An unprecedented discovery: about 80 square metres of original paintings have re-emerged – after almost a century – on the walls and ceilings of the ground floor of the Bank of Italy building at Via Milano 24 which, in the early 1920s, hosted the first futuristic cabaret, Bal Tik Tak, decorated and furnished by Giacomo Balla.

(Press Release, Banca D'Italia, 2018)

The surviving paintings - in which the shades of red, blue and yellow dominate - correspond to what was thought to be the entrance to the club. One reporter at the time described the club's decor as "a triumph of skilful imagination", at once clashing, playful and exuberant: "The very walls seem to dance... They create a luminosity that looks like a carnival in the sky."

The stairs led up to the ballroom, which no longer exists. According to the preparatory drawings and photographs, Balla decorated it with figures of dancers in blue-green tones.

Famous, and still missing today, is the luminous neon sign, seized on the first evening by the Fire Brigade, who saw it as an outrage to the aesthetics of the Rome streets. Each of the capital letters is formed by a stylised dancer with zigzag legs and arms raised up.

The Bal Tik Tak was the first of a new wave of cabaret clubs that aimed to unite the dynamic, experimental style of painting being developed by Balla and other Futurists with the new kinds of music pioneered in the US. The jazz orchestra created a sensation when it introduced the saxophone to Roman nightlife.

At the opening, Balla wore a tie made of celluloid plastic illuminated by a light bulb. It quickly became one of the most fashionable nightspots in Rome with its inventive musical programme, wild dancing and reputation for hedonism. According to the leader of its house band, a sign hung over the entrance to the room where they performed said: "If you don't drink champagne, go away!"

Jacob Wolff was invited to visit the mural while it was being restored. This experience, along with the surviving photographs and sketches of Balla's designs provide the framework for this exhibition. There will be a performance by the saxophonist Wes Frankel at the PV on July 15th.

Works List -

BAL TIK TAK, Neon sign, 2023, 36 x 94 cm

Vortex, Spray paint on aluminium panel, 2023, 150 x 120 cm

Axis, Spray paint on aluminium panel, 2023, 150 x 90 cm

Mural, Dead flat emulsion paint, 2023

Camica, Handmade shirt, 2023

Danza, Aluminium, wire, ferrules, 2023, 260 x 110 x 90 cm

Jacob Wolff (b.1986, Winchester) studied at The Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford, before receiving an MA from the Royal College of Art in 2015. In 2019 he was awarded the Fellowship in Contemporary Art at the British School at Rome.

For more information, contact Monika Bobinska on 07866063663 or info@bbnrgallery.com.



1. Study for luminous sign of the Bal Tik Tak, 1921
2. Ceiling of the entrance to the Bal Tik Tak, 1921
3. *Dynamic Expansion + Speed*, 1913
4. Futurist jacket hanging in Casa Balla, 1920
5. Light fitting outside Balla's studio
6. Name plate on the door of Casa Balla