

# The Gendering of Men: Masculinity and Countercultures in the Work of Sottsass, Baruchello and Echaurren

## Abstract

Since the mid-1990s, scholars active in North America and the United Kingdom have pioneered the integration of masculinity studies into the art history of the twentieth century. In Italy, however, the exploration of the male gender from a historical perspective has taken longer to gain purchase in academia. As a result, art historians have thus far hesitated to engage with the insights offered by the research conducted within this area of study. This article seeks to remedy this lacuna, aiming to open new vistas onto topics that currently occupy a blind spot in the history of Italian art. In particular, the analysis concentrates on the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s as a social space that, for all its foibles and unresolved contradictions, allowed for a collective critique of what sociologist Raewyn Connell has defined as “hegemonic masculinities”. Conceptual tools derived from gender and masculinity studies are here deployed in order to shed light on the work of two artists deeply influenced by 1970’s countercultural milieus, Gianfranco Baruchello and Pablo Echaurren, as well as the architect/designer Ettore Sottsass, who shared with them a pronounced interest in, and a sustained dialogue with, countercultural groups, especially in the 1960s. Through a focus on the motif of domesticity (in its material and imaginary dimensions) and a careful examination of the visual, medial and intellectual environments within which these three men operated – from 1977 fanzines to *Rosso* and from the Beat generation to the gay movement – this research will highlight semantic strategies, intellectual shifts, differences and similarities in the work of three artists whose production partly responded to the powerful and unsettling emergence of the second wave of feminism.