Beyond being an Italian sculptor
The exile of Fred Carasso in the Low Countries after the rise of fascism, 1928-1958
Huiskens, M.D.H.P.

Publication date
2023

Citation for published version (APA):
Huiskens, M. D. H. P. (2023). Beyond being an Italian sculptor: The exile of Fred Carasso in the Low Countries after the rise of fascism, 1928-1958. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Università degli Studi di Salerno].

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Summary: Beyond Being an Italian Sculptor. The Exile of Fred Carasso in the Low Countries after the Rise of Fascism, 1928-1958.

With the rise of Fascism in 1922, many Italian citizens left and went into exile in Paris, antifascist capital of Europe, yet others also moved north towards the Low Countries, with one of them becoming known as a sculptor in the Netherlands. The present study considers this context of exile through the scholarly introduction of Federico ‘Fred’ Antonio Carasso, who was born in Carignano on 2 June 1899 and died in Amsterdam on 7 September 1969. Carasso has thus far been regarded as a minor sculptor, exclusively in Dutch historiography, yet this dissertation argues that viewing him as an individual in exile first, and an artist second, illuminates the impact of exile on a broader scope of activities, focusing on his most active period between 1928 and 1958. Methodologically, this case study proposes that preserved primary materials on less successful and understudied artists enable more perspectives on artistic production and identity formation. Through an understanding of the processes of Carasso’s becoming, rather than essentially being a sculptor, the endured impact of his politics on activities beyond the medium of sculpture and his Italian national identity are examined.

Chapter 1 discusses the conceptual framework of art, migration, and identity. Chapter 2 provides the background of Carasso’s earlier years against the background of the First World War and its aftermath, which marked the rise of Fascism and Communism in Italy. Chapter 3 examines Carasso’s works on paper made in Brussels and his work under the Fred Deltor pseudonym as anti-fascist artist, whereas Chapter 4 focuses on his arrival in Amsterdam in 1934 against the background of the emancipation of the sculptor-artisan. Chapter 5 concerns Carasso’s contributions to the Dutch memorial culture after the war, with Chapter 6 turning the focus to the journal Voce Italiana aimed at Italian emigrants in the Netherlands. Chapter 7 finally proposes to reconsider the figurative nature of Carasso’s sculptural practice through investigating his renewed engagement with Italy after the war through writings and exhibitions. Perceiving his identity as an Italian sculptor in the expanded field of his exile ultimately gives us more insight into the changing meanings and functions of sculpture as interrelated with the politics that were foundational to his forced dislocations.

Con l’avvento del fascismo nel 1922, molti cittadini italiani lasciarono e andarono in esilio in Parigi, capitale antifascista dell’Europa, ma altri si spostarono anche a nord, verso i Paesi Bassi, e uno di loro divenne noto come scultore in Olanda. Il presente studio prende in considerazione questo contesto di esilio attraverso l'introduzione accademica di Federico "Fred" Antonio Carasso, nato a Carignano il 2 giugno 1899 e morto ad Amsterdam il 7 settembre 1969. Carasso è stato finora considerato uno scultore minore, esclusivamente nella storiografia olandese, ma questa tesi sostiene che considerarlo prima di tutto un individuo in esilio, e poi un artista, illumina l'impatto dell'esilio su un ambito più ampio di attività, concentrandosi sul suo periodo di maggiore attività tra il 1928 e il 1958. Dal punto di vista metodologico, questo case study propone che i materiali primari conservati su artisti di minor successo e poco studiati permettano di aprire nuove prospettive sulla produzione artistica e sulla formazione dell'identità. Attraverso la comprensione dei processi che portarono Carasso a diventare, piuttosto che essere, uno scultore, si esamina l'impatto duraturo della sua politica sulle attività al di là del mezzo scultoreo e sulla sua identità nazionale italiana.

Il capitolo 1 analizza il quadro concettuale di arte, migrazione e identità. Il capitolo 2 presenta il contesto dei primi anni di Carasso sullo sfondo della Prima guerra mondiale e delle sue conseguenze, che segnarono l’ascesa del fascismo e del comunismo in Italia. Il capitolo 3 esamina le opere su carta di Carasso realizzate a Bruxelles e il suo lavoro sotto lo pseudonimo di Fred Deltor come artista antifascista, mentre il capitolo 4 si concentra sul suo arrivo ad Amsterdam nel 1934 sullo sfondo dell’emancipazione dello scultore-artigiano. Il capitolo 5 riguarda i contributi di Carasso alla cultura memoriale olandese del dopoguerra, mentre il capitolo 6 si concentra sulla rivista *Voce Italiana* rivolta agli emigrati italiani nei Paesi Bassi. Il capitolo 7, infine, propone di riconsiderare la natura figurativa della pratica scultorea di Carasso indagando il suo rinnovato impegno con l'Italia nel dopoguerra attraverso scritti e mostre. Percepire la sua identità di scultore italiano nel campo allargato del suo esilio ci permette di comprendere meglio i significati e le funzioni mutevoli della scultura, in quanto interrelata con la politica che fu alla base della sua forzata dislocazione.

Met de opkomst van het fascisme in 1922 gingen veel Italiaanse burgers in ballingschap in Parijs, hoofdstad van het antifascisme, maar anderen trokken ook noordwaarts naar de Lage Landen, waarbij een van hen bekend werd als beeldhouwer in Nederland. De huidige studie beschouwt deze context van ballingschap aan de hand van de wetenschappelijke introductie van Federico 'Fred' Antonio Carasso, die op 2 juni 1899 in Carignano werd geboren en op 7 september 1969 in Amsterdam overleed. Carasso is in de Nederlandse geschiedschrijving tot nu toe uitsluitend beschouwd als een minder belangrijke beeldhouwer, maar dit proefschrift stelt dat de impact van zijn ballingschap op een breder scala aan activiteiten duidelijk wordt wanneer we hem in de eerste plaats bekijken als een individu in ballingschap en in de tweede plaats als een kunstenaar, tijdens zijn meeste actieve periode van 1928 tot en met 1958. Methodologisch laat deze case study zien dat bewaard primair materiaal van minder succesvolle en bestudeerde kunstenaars meer perspectieven biedt op artistieke productie en identiteitsvorming. De blijvende impact van zijn politiek op activiteiten voorbij beeldhouwkunst en zijn Italiaanse nationale identiteit worden onderzocht door te kijken naar Carasso’s wordingsprocessen tot beeldhouwer, in plaats van hem in essentie als zodanig te beschouwen.

Hoofdstuk 1 bespreekt het conceptuele kader van kunst, migratie en identiteit. Hoofdstuk 2 geeft de achtergrond van Carasso's vroegere jaren tegen de achtergrond van de Eerste Wereldoorlog en de nasleep daarvan, die de opkomst van het fascisme en communisme in Italië markeerde. Hoofdstuk 3 onderzoekt Carasso’s werken op papier die hij in Brussel maakte en zijn werk onder het pseudoniem Fred Deltor als antifascistische kunstenaar, terwijl hoofdstuk 4 zich richt op zijn aankomst in Amsterdam in 1934 tegen de achtergrond van de emancipatie van de beeldhouwer-kunstenaar. Hoofdstuk 5 onderzoekt Carasso’s bijdragen aan de Nederlandse herinneringscultuur na de oorlog, terwijl hoofdstuk 6 zich richt op *Voce Italiana* gericht op Italiaanse emigranten in Nederland. Hoofdstuk 7 stelt tenslotte voor om de figuratieve aard van Carasso's beeldhouwpрактиjk te heroverwegen door zijn hernieuwde betrokkenheid met Italië na de oorlog te onderzoeken door middel van geschriften en tentoonstellingen. Door te kijken naar zijn identiteit als Italiaanse beeldhouwer in de grotere ruimte van zijn ballingschap wordt meer inzicht verkregen in de veranderende betekenissen en functies van beeldhouwen, in relatie tot de politiek die ten grondslag lag aan zijn gedwongen verplaatsingen.
Acknowledgements

The process of writing this PhD dissertation has been a formative, joyful, challenging, and humbling experience. Having received the opportunity to embark on this project so soon after completing my master’s studies has been thanks largely to my supervisor Dr. Arnold Witte. I deeply thank him for him for his faith, continuous support, formidable criticism, and willingness to become my supervisor, guiding me towards accomplishing the daunting task of completing this dissertation within the designated time. Many thanks also go to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Mia Lerm Hayes, who has always been so kind and supportive of my work ever since I was still an undergraduate student, and who continues to inspire me with her creative approaches to art history. Thanks finally go to my supervisor Prof. Stefania Zuliani for broadening my horizons, introducing me into the exciting critical debates in Italian art history, and welcoming me into the vibrant academic community at the university of Salerno.

At the DISPAC department in Salerno, it was such a pleasure not only to meet new colleagues but also to make new friends. What a welcoming environment it has been, and how grateful I am that people supported me in finding my way and helping to understand Italy as a foreign doctoral candidate. My heartfelt thanks go to my colleagues Giuliano Colicino, Gianpaolo Cacciottolo, Lucrezia Not, and Giada Policicchio, to Prof.ssa Francesca Dell’Acqua for her support, and to Prof.ssa Loredana Lorizzo and Prof.ssa Antonella Trotta for their kindness.
The present dissertation has benefited greatly from fellowships I received at the Royal Dutch Institute in Rome (KNIR) and the Dutch Institute for Art History (NIKI). I want to thank the respective academic directors, Prof. Dr. Tesse Stek and Prof. Dr. Michael Kwakkelstein, for welcoming me at the institutes, and I extend my gratitude to all the wonderful staff members who make these places into absolute gems. At these institutes, I’ve had the pleasure to meet companions who have stimulated my thoughts, many of whom I now also consider as friends. My thanks here go to Dr. Martijn van Beek, Dr. Nicolò Bettegazzi, Dr. Anita Casarotto, Dr. Pepijn Corduwener, Dr. Matthijs Jonker, Eva van Kemenade, Lex Kuil, Elisa Martini, Dr. Gloria Moormann, Michaela Young, Martina Panizzutt, Dr. Koen Scholten, Joost Snaterse, Dr. Klazina Staat, Dr. Rens Tacoma, Dr. Maria Bonaria Urban, and Clim Wijnands.

Back in the Netherlands, many colleagues have been equally supportive yet in many different ways. I want to thank especially Dr. Linda Boersma, Dr. Alexander Dencher, Dr. Eveline Deneer, Dr. Laura Overpelt, Dr. Patrick van Rossem, and Dr. Helen Westgeest. It was thanks to Helen’s lectures that I was gripped by the study of modern and contemporary art when I was only a first-year undergraduate student at Leiden University. She is my inspiration in becoming the best possible person, scholar, and teacher. After my first year, I decided to pursue my academic ambitions in Amsterdam, where I studied under the guidance of excellent art historians. I am grateful that two of them, Dr. Rachel Esner and Dr. Arjan de Koomen, have agreed to examine my dissertation.

Regarding the study of Carasso, I have to mention that this would never have been possible without the preliminary, precise, and careful work of his sons Dedalo Carasso and
Marino Carasso and his life partner Martje Carasso-Lammers in preserving his works and personal documents. Without their historical eye, the present dissertation could not have been written. The same holds true for the members of the Federico Carasso Stichting, his granddaughters Deirdre Carasso and Vera Carasso, and Dr. Jan Teeuwisse, who supported my application for a fellowship at the NIKI in Florence in his role as director of Museum Beelden aan Zee, where curator Dr. Dick van Broekhuizen has also been of great help. A special mention is for Marijke Carasso-Kok. Without her willingness to invite me to her house in Abcoude several times, the third chapter of this dissertation could not have been written. It has been a true inspiration to meet someone with so much experience and knowledge without being imposing, and while maintaining to be very curious about the world. Whereas Carasso was from Italy, I did not speak a word of Italian a few years ago, and it is thanks to my teacher and, I dare say, friend, Giulia Cartini, that I learned to speak Italian in Amsterdam through also learning so much more about the culture.

Finally, I want to say thank you to my friends and family. In particular, I want to thank Dr. Floris Burgers, for having become such a good, caring, witty, and intellectual companion and friend. Thanks to Frank de Morrée for the endless conversations and huge support during the last stages of the writing process, and to Jana Riedel for always making me feel at home, which I shared previously and elsewhere with others, of whom I want to thank Errol Boon, Bram Bossink, Bram Korte, Lieke Kuiper and Victor Strengers. I want to thank Myrna Rood for helping me so much. Matthijs de Ridder has never stopped inspiring me ever since I was a teenager who wanted to become a professional musician. The Marx family has shared the warmth of their home and are always so kind. I’m thankful
that my sister and her partner have never seized to cheer me up. The home where I grew up, in the Hague, was where my parents have always enabled and encouraged me to pursue my dreams, even if these take me far away to different cities and countries. Thank you so much for letting me flourish. Last of all, I thank Lizzie Marx. I cannot express how grateful I am for us to be together. Je geeft mij eindeloos veel geluk, inspiratie, en hoop bij alles dat ik vermag. Dankjewel voor alles.

*

381