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## MARIA LAI

TENENDO PER MANO IL SOLE / HOLDING THE SUN BY THE HAND

TEXTS BY DI MARIA ALICATA, ANTONELLA ANEDDA, DAVIDE FARINELLI, DAVIDE MARIANI, AND ELENA PONTIGGIA

*Maria Lai (Ulassai, September 27, 1919 – Cardedu, April 16, 2013) is without a doubt one of the leading figures in contemporary Italian art. Not only due to the content of her works, but also thanks to the diversity of her artistic approach, ranging as it does across many media—public art, embroidery, weaving, sculpture, drawing, and writing: all are grist for her poetics.*

*The book is published to coincide with the exhibition at the MAXXI Museum in Rome (June 19, 2019 – January 12, 2020), which presents to the general public nearly two hundred works by the Sardinian artist, many of which never displayed before, dating from the early 1960s to her very last endeavours. With the contribution of experts, it explores various themes dear to the artist: the locations, the creation and publication of art books, her public art events, and her relationship with the written word and her own writing. Her entire oeuvre is marked by its powerful visual impact, revealing a “way of doing art” that is no less than an instrument of thought.*

*The structure of the book reflects the thematically arranged sections of the exhibition, the titles of which are representative of Lai’s oeuvre as a whole: Essere è tessere. Cucire e ricucire; L’arte è il gioco degli adulti. Giocare e raccontare; Oggetto paesaggio. Disseminare e condividere; Il viaggiatore astrale. Immaginare l’altrove; L’arte ci prende per mano. Incontrare e partecipare. (To be is to wave. Sewing and mending; Art is adult’s play. Playing and Storytelling; Landscape Object; Spreading and sharing; The astral traveller. Imagining the elsewhere; Art takes us by the hand. Meeting and participating.)*

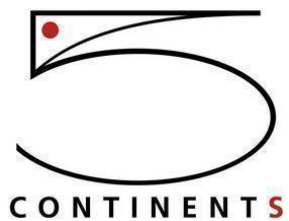
The title of the book and of the exhibition—*Holding the Sun by the Hand*—is a tribute to the first fairy tale the artist sewed in 1983 and creates a kind of symbolic bridge with Ogliastra, the area of Sardinia from which Maria Lai, where simultaneously the exhibition *Tenendo per mano l’ombra* (*Holding the Shade by the Hand*) will be held at the Stazione dell’Arte in Ulassai.

**Maria Alicata** is an art historian and exhibition curator. She was head of the Art, Architecture, and Town Planning section at the Olivetti Foundation.

**Antonella Anedda** trained as an art historian and has worked in the field of literature and translation. She also writes essays and poetry.

**Franco Farinelli** is a geographer and has taught in some of the world’s most illustrious universities: Geneva University; UCLA – University of California, Los Angeles; UCB – University of California, Berkeley; and at the Sorbonne in Paris. He is Professor of Geography at Bologna University and has been president of Associazione Geografi italiani (Society of Italian Geographers).

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**Elena Pontiggia** is an art historian with a particular interest in Italian and international art from between the two world wars. She teaches at the Accademia di Brera and at the Politecnico di Milano.