



Palinsesti 2021

Claudio Borghi
Nane Zavagno

Gianni Asdrubali
Annibel Cunoldi Attems
Bruno Querci

Massimo Bottecchia
Livio Schiozzi

Jérémy Berton
Hella Gerlach
Francesco Pozzato

Maria Walcher

Maria Elisabetta Novello

Palinsesti
2021

Palinsesti 2021

30th September 2021 – 9th January 2022
San Vito al Tagliamento (PN)

a project by Luca Pietro Nicoletti

Mappe dell'astrazione

curated by Luca Pietro Nicoletti
in collaboration with Magali Cappellaro, Serenella Todesco, Alberto Vidisconi
Antico Ospedale and the Church of Santa Maria dei Battuti

Premio In Sesto 2021

curated by Michela Lupieri
in collaboration with Alice Debianchi
Antiche Carceri

Maria Walcher

GO GO GO
curated by Giada Centazzo
Palazzo Tullio-Altan

Punto Fermo

Maria Elisabetta Novello
curated by Antonio Garlatti
Essiccatoio Bozzoli

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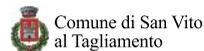
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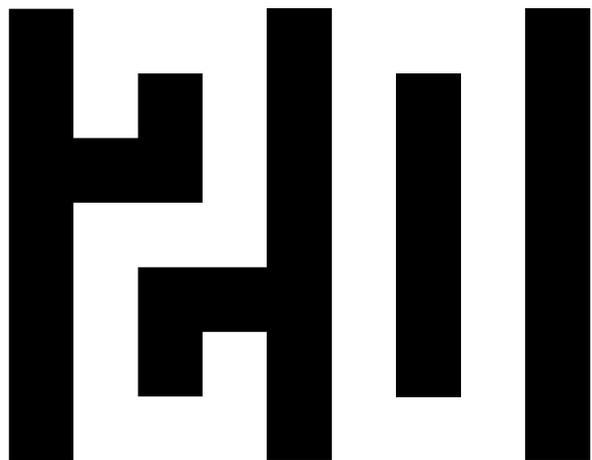
Palinsesti: the sixteenth edition. It has been precisely sixteen years since September 2006, when this exhibition project was first unveiled in the historical sites of San Vito al Tagliamento, “city of art, music and culture”. 2021 also marks a significant milestone: thirty years of contemporary art festivals in San Vito, starting with *Hic et Nunc*. Year after year, the city has successfully become, with ambition and foresight, Friuli’s reference point for the creative research of artists, authorised personnel, scholars, and enthusiasts, by constantly and firmly nurturing this artistic disposition – which comes from afar: Culòs, De Rocco, Michieli, Tramontin, Zuccheri. Even the viewers appreciated its growth, characterised by consistency and perseverance. In greeting this “new normality” edition, my heartfelt wish for *Palinsesti* is to maintain and strengthen its relationship with citizens and visitors after the pandemic, as a symbol of rebirth and definitive cultural renewal, which are also happening in many other sectors this autumn. This means being fully involved in the national recovery and resilience plan, with culture being one of its integral parts.

The present edition carries on the focus on the *Punto Fermo* collection, and aims to enhance its research value with Maria Elisabetta Novello’s solo exhibition at the *Essiccatoio Bozzoli*. The exceptional and unique *In Sesto Prize*, a contemporary art contest for public artwork, comes to its thirteenth edition this year. As usual, the event crosses national borders by involving international competitors. The participants selected to design proposals for the *Foro Boario* are Francesco Pozzato (Italy), Jérémy Berton (France), and Hella Gerlach (Germany). This year, San Vito al Tagliamento will also host the solo exhibition of Maria Walcher, last year’s *Prize* winner, in the spaces of Palazzo Tullio–Altan, a long-time location of the festival. While the sections described above reflect the most recent experimentations by young Italian and foreign artists, the collective exhibition hosted at the Antico Complesso dei Battuti is characterised by a retrospective focus on the paths of historic artists, who conducted their research on abstractionism in our territory as well as throughout Italy. In the second half of the 20th century, the protagonists are Nane Zavagno, Massimo Bottecchia, Livio Schiozzi, and Annibel Cunoldi Attems from Friuli, and Bruno Querci and Gianni Asdrubali from elsewhere in Italy. Lastly, a solo exhibition of Claudio Borghi has been set up at the *Chiesa di Santa Maria dei Battuti*: the artist from Lombardy has recently created a monument to celebrate the centennial anniversary of San Vito al Tagliamento’s scouting group.

In the spirit of these exhibition proposals, *Palinsesti – Festival of contemporary art* reaches this year the important goals mentioned above. Considering the good results achieved in the past and the progress that has been made so far, my wish for the flourishing path undertaken by San Vito al Tagliamento in discovering, enhancing and exhibiting contemporary art is that it may continue successfully over the years.

Mayor On. Antonio Di Bisceglie

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Palinsesti 2021

A general preface

The sixteenth edition of *Palinsesti* offers, as always, four exhibitions dedicated to contemporary art, and confirms the close collaboration between the municipality of San Vito al Tagliamento and the University of Udine, where many of the curators of this edition studied, thus giving the festival an important educational value as well: the production of *Palinsesti* – since its conception by Alessandro Del Puppo in 2006 – has been an opportunity for university students to gain hands-on experience with practical issues during the development and planning of an exhibition. Some of them, after their experience as trainees, become part of the curatorial staff that works for the festival, and which is enriched with new faces from edition to edition, emphasizing the vitality of this contemporary event.

So is the case with this year's exhibition, held – as it was last year – at Antico Ospedale and the church of Santa Maria dei Battuti. *Mappe dell'astrazione*, curated by Luca Pietro Nicoletti (who also serves as general curator of the 2021 edition), is a collective exhibition created jointly by many people. In particular, Serenella Todesco has curated the section dedicated to abstract sculpture, with a tribute to Nane Zavagno who will soon turn 90 years old, and with an installation by Claudio Borghi in the church. Magalì Cappellaro, on the other hand, gave form to an exhibition on the past research of the *Astrazione povera* group, active in the 1980s. Finally, Alberto Vidisconi has shown the complexity of the artistic paths of Massimo Bottecchia and Livio Schiozzi through a posthumous homage dedicated to highlighting two artists who will certainly merit further study in the future.

Luca Pietro Nicoletti



At the Antiche Carceri it will be possible to see the projects selected for the *In Sesto Prize*, curated by Michela Lupieri in collaboration with Alice Debianchi, which, in this edition, have been commissioned for the placement of an artwork in the former Foro Boario, recently redeveloped into a green space. The participants are Jérémy Berton from France, Hella Gerlach from Germany, and Francesco Pozzato from Italy.

A focus on the art of Maria Walcher, the winner of the last edition of the *Prize*, accompanies the installation of the work *Tocca a te* in the green space near the Elio Susanna parking lot. This year, the solo exhibition, curated by Giada Centazzo, is moving from the spaces of Fondazione Ado Furlan in Pordenone to those of the Palazzo Tullio–Altan in San Vito. Finally, the usual in-depth analysis of the works of the artists present in the *Punto Fermo* collection is carried on at the Essiccatoio Bozzoli. The exhibition, curated by Antonio Garlatti, proposes an installation especially conceived by Maria Elisabetta Novello. With her work *L'angolo di riposo*, the artist has reimagined the spaces of the main room dedicated to the exhibition, transforming the view that opens to the city with her well-known artistic medium, ash.

As every year, visitors to *Palinsesti* will be able to appreciate the proposals of artists with different methods and approaches to the image, without privileging one style and indeed confirming the pluralistic dimension of the project itself.

Mappe dell'astrazione

Tracing 'maps of abstraction', as named by the Italian title of the exhibition - *Mappe dell'astrazione* - can help us navigate such a vast archipelago, only partially explored, and whose borders are ephemeral and little inspected. This is especially true as we proceed towards the last decade of the 1900s and the beginning of the following century, marked by a wavering between leaps forward and mannerisms, which reformulated the founding lesson in accordance with new horizons of meaning.

Therefore, this exhibition proposes a core sample of a wider scene, by selecting the experiences of abstract art that took place in Friuli Venezia Giulia carried out by artists born between the 1930s and the 1950s, with particular attention to what happened from the mid-1970s to the second decade of the 2000s. The result is an exhibition mainly in black and white, or in two colours, giving space to artists whose choice of a reduction and simplification of the palette was a necessary step to reaching a close relationship with the issues of form and drawing.

It is in that context that the homage to Nane Zavagno opens the exhibition: the doyen of abstract sculpture, he has always been active in the Pordenone area, but also attentive to the developments of international minimalist sculpture and of its Italian version. The artist proposes, thanks to the use of iron mesh, a further development around the transparency of the form which, in the dense weave of the overlapped metal meshes, filters the light and highlights an otherwise unpredictable internal play of the form.

The elementary volumes and mixtilinear profiles of Zavagno's sculpture, then, generate a dialectical relationship between complementary and permeable forms and in their extreme architectural simplification they preserve a natural dimension. The combination of curvilinear and angular profiles, in fact, alludes to the relationship between male and female that can be read as a real coupling, even as in sexual intercourse. At the same time, even as he went through stages of research on modularity as a metaphor for industrial uniformity, Zavagno has never lost his attention for the world around him, as proved by his painting activity, which has always stood side by side with his three-dimensional projects. The profiles that are drawn in backlight using acrylic on large canvases, and also the last works characterised by visionary geometrical phantasmagorias, can be seen as mountains, huge nocturnal masses of spreading black colour suddenly crossed by a split -recalling the one appearing on the sculptures and thus offering a closer examination of them as well- and they sometimes assume even more explicit anatomic allusions.

Similar considerations can be pointed out as far as Claudio Borghi's research is concerned, having in mind the diversity between the culture of a mountain landscape and that of a valley, lying between forests and moors.

Luca Pietro Nicoletti

The artist from the Lombardy region has in fact recently visited Friuli Venezia Giulia, where in 2021 he designed and erected a monument for the centennial anniversary of San Vito al Tagliamento's scouting group. His volumes in welded weathering steel, where geometry is bent by the wringing of the oxyhydrogen flame thus reacquiring tactile and vibrant effects, and which is programmatically anti-industrial in terms of aesthetic premises, bear the memory of that information of nature. It is even possible to imagine these sculptures as steles conceived with that landscape as a backdrop, even when, from a closer look, the intersection of the planes reminds viewers of urban developments, or one of Sironi's sculptural scenes, rich with suggestion.

On the other hand, the case of the artists who joined the *Astrazione povera* group, supported from the beginning of the 1980s by the critic Filiberto Menna, is different. These are the painters who chose as a matter of principle, at least in that situation, to paint exclusively in black and white, or more rarely white and red, illustrating backlit figures with a plastic, even projecting, effect: in a world of art overflowing with bright colours they chose precision. The choice of black and white was a reduction to the essential, to the absolute minimum of the necessary means to soften eventual chromatic enthusiasm and frivolousness. Their centre of gravity was Rome, even if not all members were originally from the capital, but their exhibitions travelled around Italy. One of these was *La soglia*, held in Pordenone in 1985: the group was wider and many artists adhered to it, more than the few who would later be recognised as true "astrattisti poveri," real representatives of the group. After all, not all of them were devoted to that intransigent rigorism, which defended the reasons of painting, but at the same time clarified its own opposition to the surrounding context. The peculiar expressions of this common need of the group - the rectangular volumes, ready for the three-dimensional constructions of Bruno Querci, the energetic rays of Gianni Asdrubali and the solid structures of a "city that rises" from Annibel Cunoldi Attems -, do not cancel out the poetic and stylistic individualities of each artist. At the same time, this shared attitude did not prevent them from dealing with the long tradition of abstract painting, which was already showing its new masters who to look up to as models. Their place was that of heirs to a famous tradition, to which they gave a plastic, plain, restless emphasis, as often happens in a season of crisis.

However, despite choosing precision, none of them chose the path of pure geometric drawing and of the certainty of the design made possible by the rational intersection of straight lines, that restrained the instinct to experiment and placed the research of the images under the discipline of the project. This is what happened with Massimo Bottecchia's works, whose research was interrupted at the beginning of the 1980s due to his premature death; and with those by Livio Schiozzi, who on the other hand, worked in that decade and would bring with him the experiences matured in the following stages of his work. The former developed a thick reticulum with a light and shadow effect of lines, from which circular or square figures come to life as a tension field: the inventions made by the reflection on the limits of the visual perception in vogue in the 1970s. In both cases, the weaving of the lines inscribed into a geometrical elementary figure, traced from one side of the paper to the other, caused an effect of centripetal or diaphragmatic movement, according to the direction of

the signs, in which the transition from the rigour of the black and white to the more complete weaving of coloured inks determines a significant discontinuity. On the contrary, Livio Schiozzi had the chance to develop a more complex relationship with geometry, also undergoing the trial of the sculptural research on primary forms. All of this led him to a complex design also in terms of craftsmanship: heavy frames built as a support to his previous works in ink and paint from the 1970s, all of which played on the dialogue between lines and curvilinear shapes to establish the style of defined forms inside a regular structure. The idea to work in terms of paradigms, however, didn't abandon him later on, even when he would work on large woodworks of architectural inspiration, and when these would in their turn create the bases that would shortly serve as a support to lighter allegorical programmes, all based on Boulée's utopian projects. And even this, after all, was the return to a visionary past, where architecture could become a field of abstract and mental invention.



Livio Schiozzi,
Orizzontale grigio, 1981
acrylic, dye
60x60 cm each



Claudio Borghi

Claudio Borghi's artistic research is presented in this exhibition with a unified sculptural group, composed of four individual structures which can be read as a single work and, depending on the position in the space, can be seen as an environmental installation of autonomous works or a homogenous whole. This is a typical trait of the artist from Brianza: as an abstract sculptor, he follows the artistic tradition of the Lombardy region, which for years has reflected on basic shapes, with an architectural vocation, without abandoning the relationship between the surrounding space and nature that is often evoked rather than represented.

The work displayed here has a double title: *Hazness (frontone)*. *Hazness* consists of a recurring term in Borghi's works and writings. It comes from a play on words originating with the term "senza nome" (which can be translated as 'untitled'), widely used by contemporary artists. The word "senza" ('without') is often altered in different ways by Borghi, written backwards or by adding different letters such as the "h", thus creating a linguistic and communicative ambiguity. For example, the meaning of the English term *haziness*, which can be translated in Italian as *nebulosità*, has a very important meaning for Borghi's artistic production, and it gives us an idea of the importance that the sculptor places on the titles for his works, which are never accidental.

The second title is *frontone* ('pediment') which explicitly resumes the idea behind the composition of the work; that is, the starting image that led to the definition of the whole complex, divided into four irregular and inclined sections but conceived to eventually be approached together to form an ideal tympanum. Exhibited inside a modern temple – the church – Borghi's sculptures are referred to as the pediment of an ancient Greek temple, an architectural structure that inspires the whole creative process. However, every part of the whole unit has its own autonomy that allows each element to be exhibited freely and to seek its own balance and its own expression of the space. This process is similar to the way we now admire parts of the remains of Phidias's masterpiece – the Pantheon – with its forms and fragments assuming an almost abstract value. Thus, the four sculptures, if read within an ideal pediment of a temple, reveal to the spectator an anthropomorphic inheritance to the point of assuming the status of a modern ruin in the same space of the church. The artist, active since the end of the 1980s, seems to refer to artistic experiences from the post-war period, especially those of certain great artists. In fact, Borghi isn't the only one to be inspired by ancient architecture, transforming it into sculpture; we can mention, among many others, some of the most evocative works of the British artist Anthony Caro. The lesson learnt from antiquity is therefore fundamental in the work of the artist and Borghi himself reveals that the first time he understood the importance

Serenella Todesco

Hazness (Frontone), 2020
weathering steel
4 elements: 186x110x50 cm; 185x90x50 cm;
155x115x65 cm; 160x115x85 cm

of emptiness in sculpture was in high school when he was shown the spaces between the fingers and beard hairs of the Riace bronzes.

The importance of emptiness and silence as the very origin of Borghi's creative process has already been highlighted several times. This is a necessary condition for the creation of his works, emptiness defining the space in which the volumes are formed and coming into relation with each other. The exhibited sculptures, in this case, compose a unitary cycle within a rich and significant environment, which enter into relation not only with the spectator but also with the paintings of Pomponio Amalteo present in the church and surrounding spaces. In this way, a complex dialogue is established in which also the blank spaces around the works acquire relevance for the visual textures that intertwine painting and architecture with the contemporary sculptures. The reason that Borghi's works find a way to be contextualised in the space in which they are placed is because, for him, what surrounds the material and the elements is just as important as the forms of the sculptures. In this case the four works are characterised by surfaces made of weathering steel welded together to form different planes overlapped with cubic volumes. On this occasion, the preferred material used by the artist is iron, from which he composes his structures.



Hazness (Frontone), 2020
weathering steel
4 elements 186x110x50 cm; 185x90x50 cm;
155x115x65 cm; 160x115x85 cm



Nane Zavagno

The room dedicated to Nane Zavagno seeks to provide the spectator with the full view of the long career of the artist from Friuli Venezia Giulia. In fact, the four works that are presented testify to the artist's activity in both painting and sculpture, equally important in terms of his very versatile artistic production, and highlight similarities and convergences in his artworks, created with different materials.

At Palinsesti, two sculptures can be admired, both made in the first decades of the 2000s. The small iron sculpture consists of two modular elements shaped as a thunderbolt, which intersect at the highest point, creating a semicircle staggered on two different levels, hollow on the inside and only defined by its perimeter. Despite its small dimensions, it still resonates with the monumental nature typical of Zavagno's works: even in this case, one could imagine the sculpture being transformed into a bigger installation. The idea of monumentality particularly characterises the second sculpture (2001), which constitutes the perspective and visual crux of the whole exposition.

This installation consists of three different iron mesh modular blocks with well-defined geometric volumes, following a structure typical of the last decades of Zavagno's work. The three modules are defined by regular straight and curved lines, which create three elements of different dimensions that recall the members of a family: a real Holy family translated into the more abstract form of sculpture. The most suggestive and personal characteristic of the sculpture consists of the contrast between the volumetric structure of the whole and the transparency of the surface, made possible by the iron mesh.

This enables a total permeability; the gaze of the spectator goes through the structure, which is in close connection with the surrounding space. The texture of the structure, thanks to the mesh, creates a living and complex dialogue with the light and with the viewer's gaze, resulting in an ongoing process of becoming.

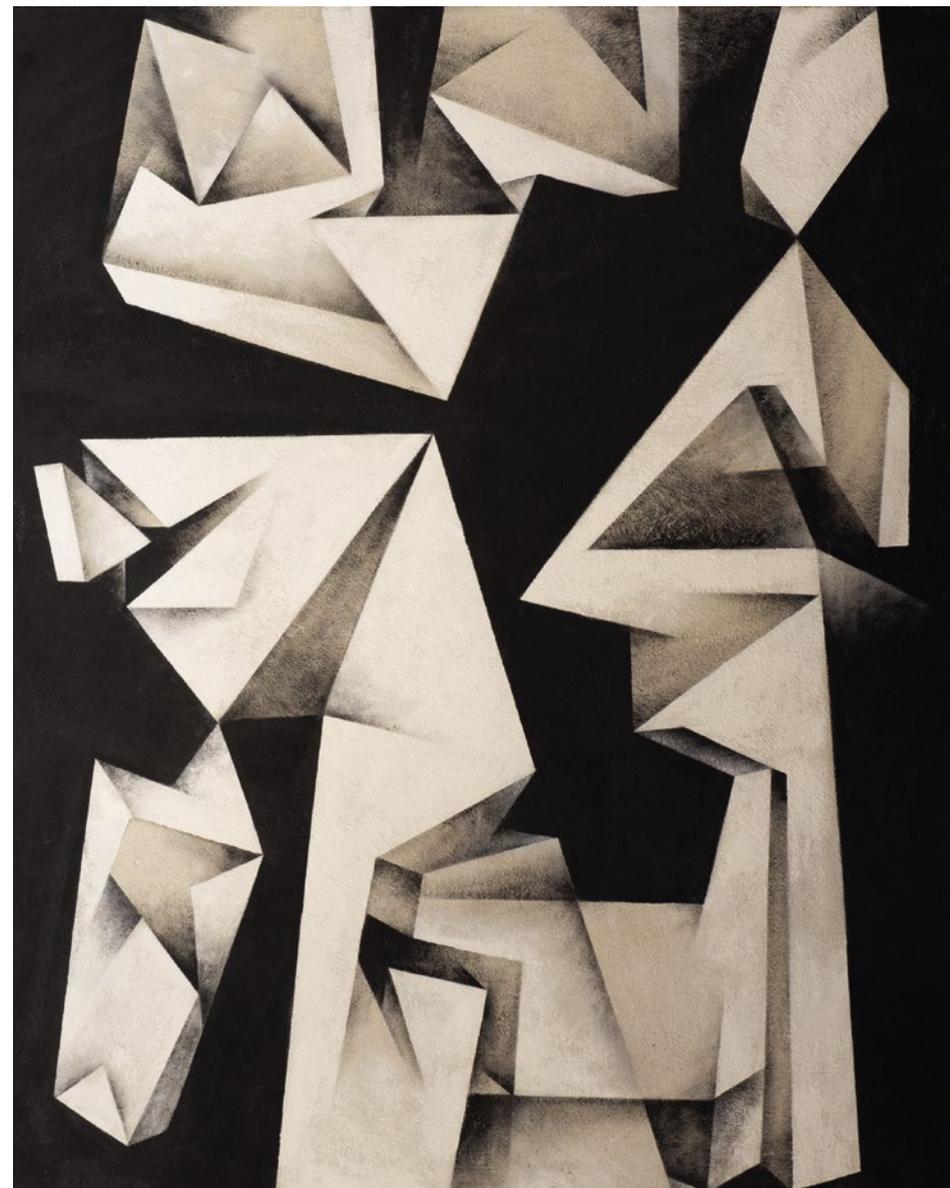
The essential volumes, sculpturally proposed by Zavagno, and the modular systems that come from his artistic experiences inspired by optical art, enter into relation with the organic concept of nature. On many occasions, these kinds of installations were placed outdoors, creating a close relationship with the surrounding environment, without filters. As Enrico Crispolti observed in the introduction to the catalog of a retrospective of Zavagno's art held in 2012: «The new structures no longer hide [...] the environmental components (buildings, landscapes, etc), but I would rather say that they enclose them, each time, in different ways and in different (occasional) semantic intentions» (*our translation*).

As can be seen, monumentality is also achieved on canvas: if we observe carefully, Zavagno's experiments with acrylic painting do not differ from those pursued within the three-dimensionality of sculpture. As the spectator can see in the large horizontal painting of 2005, the same monumental volumetric

Serenella Todesco

Senza titolo, 2001
three galvanized mesh elements
300x200x50 cm

structures encountered in the sculpture are transferred onto the two-dimensional space of the canvas and reduced into the two-tone of black and white. Once again, Zavagno's geometric, almost architectural forms tend to recall the organic world, which have led many critics and art historians to see elements recalling the sexual organs in these figures. In the second painting from 2020, a series of pyramidal irregular figures overlap one over the other, standing out against the surface of the canvas almost like mountain peaks. Painted with the usual two-toned effect obtained by the use of black and white, the abstract figures appear to be extremely plastic thanks to a clever and persistent use of shadowing.



Senza titolo, 2020
acrylic on canvas
130x160 cm



Magali Cappellaro

Bruno Querci
Lugo, 1986
acrylic on canvas
70x100 cm

Astrazione povera: Three protagonists

The decade-long story of the *Astrazione povera* group is a particularly interesting example for understanding the dynamics surrounding the world of abstract painting in the 1980s. It is especially so when considered in relation to the Roman context, which was blinded by the commercial and mass media successes of Achille Bonito Oliva's neo-expressionist *Transavanguardia*. In that period, in Rome, many artistic experiences met to restore the concept of image, surpassing some sort of conceptualism. Such realities grew within a group and were the results of a critique system and market that served to facilitate social recognition of a specific artistic language, provided it was under the flag of the same expressive purpose.

Within these dynamics, and in complete contrast with the trends of the time, a unique line of abstract research found space and, from the end of the seventies and for the next ten years, it evolved into the practice of essential painting, exclusively in black and white (with some strokes of red), and which claimed the importance of the construction process that was to predate the making of the work. The artists, who gathered willing to define this new painting trend, were Gianni Asdrubali, Antonio Capaccio, Mariano Rossano and Rocco Salvia at first, later joined by Annibel Cunoldi Attems, Mimmo Grillo, Bruno Querci and Lucia Romualdi: the painters of *Astrazione povera* (whose Italian name recalls its essential aesthetics, meaning, literally, 'poor abstraction').

Beginning with practical and theoretical experimentations in their self-managed space in via Sant'Agata dei Goti in Rome, the group's first core path was formed through dialogue with perceptive critics and gallerists, such as Simonetta Lux, Fulvio Abbate and above all Gian Tommaso Liverani, who was the long-time owner of La Salita Art Gallery and among the first to open the doors of his gallery to these artists. However, it is Filiberto Menna's contribution that was the most substantial. Menna (Salerno, 1926 – Rome, 1989) was a historian and a militant critic, who from 1985 took the responsibility of being the theoretical guide for the new movement that would soon take the name *Astrazione povera*. He promoted a series of exhibitions and publications of national appeal that not only defined the activity area of the group, but tried to include the *Astrazione povera* in a line of continuity with the Italian abstract tradition.

The dynamics of the group did not nullify the unique disposition of each individual work; this is well expressed in works by Asdrubali, Cunoldi and Querci, whose research spanned many topics and techniques, from works and panels of small size to large-scale paintings reminiscent of the *telero*, a technique typically used in Venice in the fourteenth century.

Gianni Asdrubali, for example, has explored the *sign-space-colour* trio since the late seventies, focusing on the relationship between action-tension of the

artistic act. In *Aggroblanda*, a work belonging to a series with the same name created between 1983 and 1984, Asdrubali developed the themes of lack, absence, and emptiness through large black-filled areas painted with a parabolic movement, which alternate with areas where the preparation layer of white is left visible. Despite the gesture's speed, which is a predominant characteristic of Asdrubali's artistic practice, the lines are traced with a controlled and clear movement. Similarly controlled and clear is the movement that forms the painting *Nemico* (1987), the symbol of a transition period characterised by a change in the gesture's speed and with the canvas's space welcoming lines from an increasingly concise movement. This transition is concluded with the creation of the series of works called *Eroica* (1988), where the quickened gestuality of the sign speaks through "quantum" vocabulary.

Annibel Cunoldi Attems's artwork has its foundation in drawing and especially in graphic design, since her earliest studies in the artistic field during the seventies in Paris. The many editions containing her engravings, which were created in the famous *Atelier Lacourière-Frélaut*, belong to her Parisian period. In the 1980s, her research moved towards an abstract line that aims for a synthesis of the sign structure, which is carried out through minimalist elements such as clear lines, crossing and overlapping with one another. A fine example of this technique is the series of engravings named *Alibi* (1985), where the artist uses symmetrical images and the element of positive-negative to emphasise how there are always two different sides from which to observe the very same situation. In the works *Significazione*, *Comunicazione* and *Diversificazione* the choice to use triangles stands out: this geometric shape, crucial in Cunoldi Attems's production, is being used both to express and to point out the *tension* between elements, and to avoid that the work is delimited in the standard format of the canvas. In the eighties, the artist started working on large canvases characterised by complex abstract patterns that also acquired an architectural value, like in the monumental triptych named *Vitalità*, the only work of the section that differs from the strict black and white format to give space to the red-white combination, as Cunoldi Attems used red to indicate "another" contrast.

Lastly, Bruno Querci's works show well the gradual shift from the minimalist-oriented early archaic shapes, such as *Figura* (1985) and *Convergere* (1985), to more structured works created through the overlapping of the two combinations of black-white and figure-background, clearly noticeable in the works entitled *Luogo* (1986) and *Progetto minimo* (1987). In fact, the two paintings from the mid-eighties still show a hierarchical relationship between figure and background: large black shapes prevail on the canvas surface. The shapes with their irregular contours seem to expand from the center towards the sides of the support, and the same shapes seem to detach by contrast from the light-toned ground which is left at the early stage of *imprimatura*. In works such as *Progetto minimo* and *Luogo*, Querci deepens the study of surface and starts to think of the ground as an active component of the composition: he does not leave it empty, but instead paints it white so as to perfectly balance the relationship with black. This leads the viewer to activate a figurative perceptive logic which alternates surface and depth due to the irregular cuts crossing the canvas in its length. The introduction of the concept

of light is crucial during this phase: compared to Querci's Impressionist period (1980-1984), when the bright component was entrusted to the use of yellow, here the artist understands that "light" is shown thanks to the interaction between the chromatic shades of black and white.



Bruno Querci
Convergere, 1985
acrylic on canvas
70x100 cm



Gianni Asdrubali
Aggroblanda, 1984
acrylic on canvas
160x223 cm



Annibel Cunoldi Attems
Vitalità, 1988
oil on canvas
trittico, 200x600 cm



Gianni Asdrubali
Nemico, 1987
acrylic on canvas
190x223 cm



Annibel Cunoldi Attems
Significazione, 1990
acrylic on canvas
157,5x157,5x157,5 cm

From geometric construction to abstractionism: Massimo Bottecchia and Livio Schiozzi

Massimo Bottecchia and Livio Schiozzi chose, within abstractionism, the path of geometric and impersonal drawing, free from any external references. In different forms, they employed the most absolute executive rigour to tackle any project with obsessive precision and formal neatness.

More than thirty years after the great retrospective of Massimo Bottecchia (1928-1980) was held in Pordenone in 1989, there haven't been many occasions to reflect on the personality of an artist who worked independently of and parallel to the artistic movements of the second half of the twentieth century. Unlike that occasion, here it is not our goal nor our presumption to show an exhaustive overview of examples from his entire career, but merely to reintroduce a series of his works after a long period of silence: they surely testify to systematic research on topics such as colour and light, where the image is controlled by the application of rules that, from time to time, find their own way of construction.

While the kinetic art and *arte programmatica* groups welcomed art historian Giulio Carlo Argan's invitation to use new technological materials, while not adhering to the industrial capitalist system and still keeping a critical and "revolutionary" attitude, Bottecchia substantially ignored it. As a matter of fact, it was not in printed and quadrionda glass, nor in drilled, punched or milled surfaces, nor in an electrical mechanism that moves the components of his works that Bottecchia found the expressive possibilities of his own artistic language, but rather in India ink and tempera used with fine and precise strokes on cardboard or wood.

Nevertheless, in accordance with the principles of Op art, Bottecchia suggested the movement of the figures on the static and flat surface of the canvas support. A circle seems to transform into a sphere; it seems to assume a plastic consistency almost as if it were ready to shrink, to expand and emerge from the two-dimensionality of the paper. In dizzying perspectives, the sequence of the planes seems to have neither a beginning nor an end: it moves forward and looms menacingly, progressively expanding the field; a focus to infinity that disappears into an unapproachable distance, or in other cases the vanishing points become two.

An untitled work, probably created in the second half of 1970, illustrates not only the kinesthetic nature of the forms, but perhaps even more so the genesis of the artist's work in that period. What enchants the eye is the illusion of concentric circles that expand like waves inside a circumference, while over them a spiral that creates a rotation and accentuates the dynamic push is engaged. In an exercise of extreme patience and rational control, extended and prolonged over time, Bottecchia created a thick lacework.

Alberto Vidisconi

Livio Schiozzi
Torre, 1986
painted wood
150x50x50 cm

It is impossible to count the number of coats placed one on top of the other in a twist that cannot be disentangled, in which the stratification of the sign hides the smallest white part of the paper almost completely.

The artist approached the large format only in the last three years of his work, shortly before his death in 1980; before this, his paintings had never exceeded seventy centimetres on one side. The strokes like threads of colours stitched together, the juxtaposition of complementary colours and the effects of simultaneous contrast were an opportunity to think about the heritage and to reflect on the ongoing relevance of the works of George Seurat, Gaetano Previati and Giovanni Segantini, to whom Bottecchia declared his allegiance. He would later move to refer to the works of Piero Dorazio between 1959 and the early 1970s. The different orientations of nets created by coloured lines, overlapping and mixed together, give a certain rhythm to Bottecchia's works, which were from 1977 the result of a painting style that wanted to simulate optical perceptual vibrations.

Among the most beautiful photos that portray Livio Schiozzi (1943–2010) are undoubtedly those taken by Sergio Scabar. Thanks to their close friendship, between 1974 and 1975 the photographer joined the artist in his studio. Scabar portrayed Schiozzi at work, absorbed in thought, sitting on a chair or observed from behind, in front of a large painting. On the walls, the enlargement of an Italian poster of *Sussurri e gridi* ('Cries and Whispers') by Ingmar Bergman; the poster of an exhibition of Walter Valentini with whom Schiozzi was in constant dialogue; that of an exposition in Lucerne of the Ludwig collection of American art, with *Colored Maze* by Frank Stella standing out. When Schiozzi did not appear in the picture, his absence was well counterbalanced by the drawing table in the centre of the scene, equipped with every professional tool.

The commitment to the architectural studio of Umberto Nordio in Trieste dates back to his formative years. In Milan, where he arrived in 1966, he met Richard Sapper.

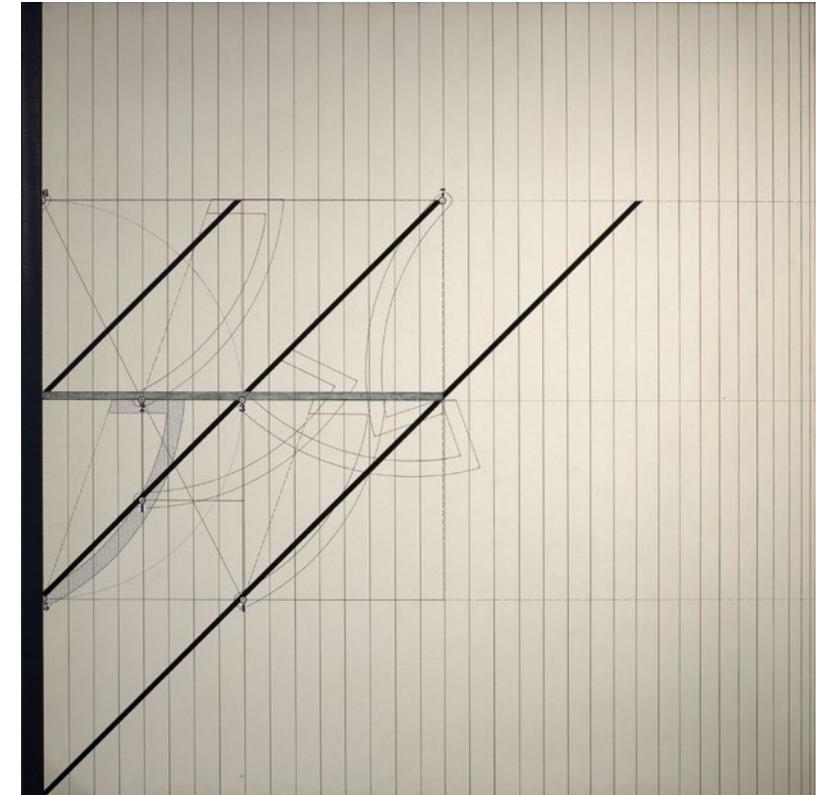
Schiozzi draws starkly impersonal lines, obtained by using India ink without any personal additions or emotional suggestions. With the aid of a French curve and a lettering guide, he created *Momento di entrata diagonali I* 1974, showing the movement of seven mechanical elements. Secured on pivots, the connecting rods–cranks rotate clockwise. The artist said that he had the idea for the painting after having traced some photos he had taken as a design sketch.

On the transparent paper he carefully examined the image until the shapes seemed to gradually dissolve. These, almost distilled to the point of penetrating their intimate structure, were thus reduced into minimal elements. The practice described above resulted from continuous tests to confirm the formulated hypothesis to «arrive – as he declared in 1974 – to a form of objectivity of the meanings, [...] to fathom apparent nonsense» (*our translation*).

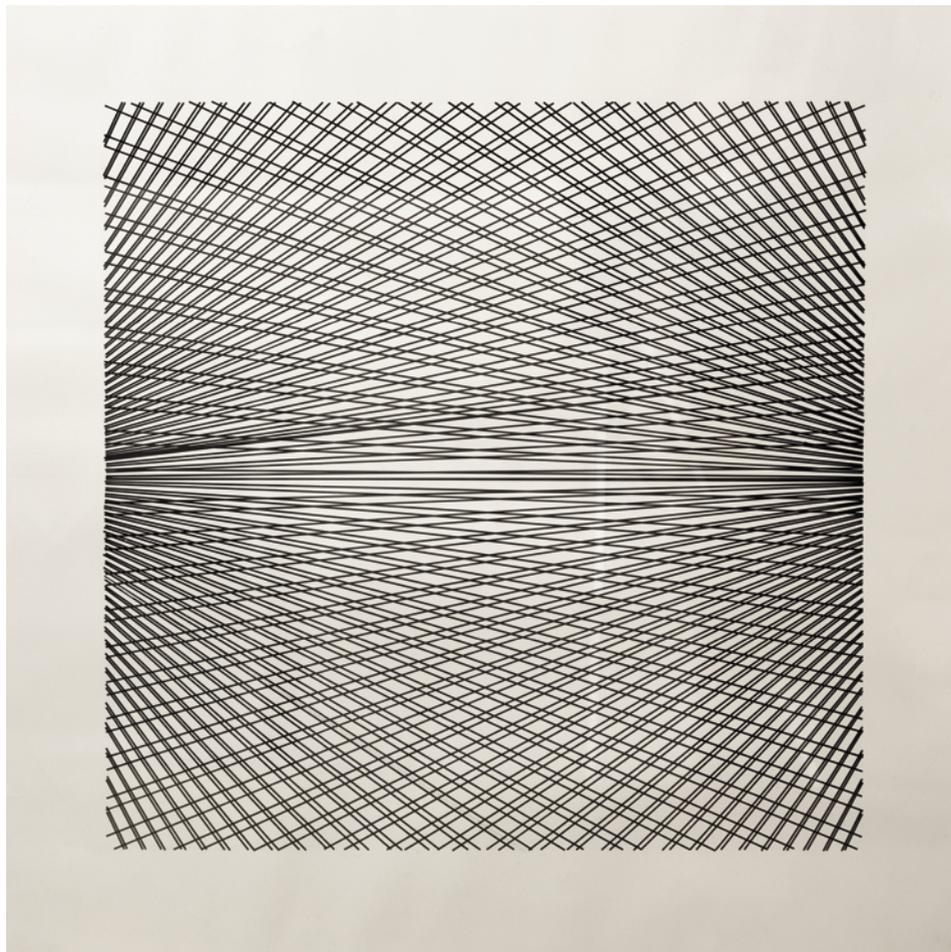
Schiozzi's works all share the same format and compositional laws that were established before their material execution. Thus, in the next development of research, roughly until 1980, Schiozzi always chose a square support and limited himself to use only horizontal, vertical, and diagonal painted backgrounds defined by a regular layout. He removed areas of the painting by erasing portions of variable sizes from the corners of the canvas. He added volumes to the surface, whose three dimensions vary and enter into relationship with the bands of colours. He then reflected on the relationship between colour and width of the

coats of paint. Left exposed or painted, made vibrant by the light, the fabric reveals its texture and grain: the eye perceives what can be felt only by touch. In the long distance, Schiozzi was inspired, according to Giuseppe Marchiori, by experiences such as that of *Abstraction-Création*, while the artist himself identified Max Bill as a possible term of reference by explicitly quoting from him.

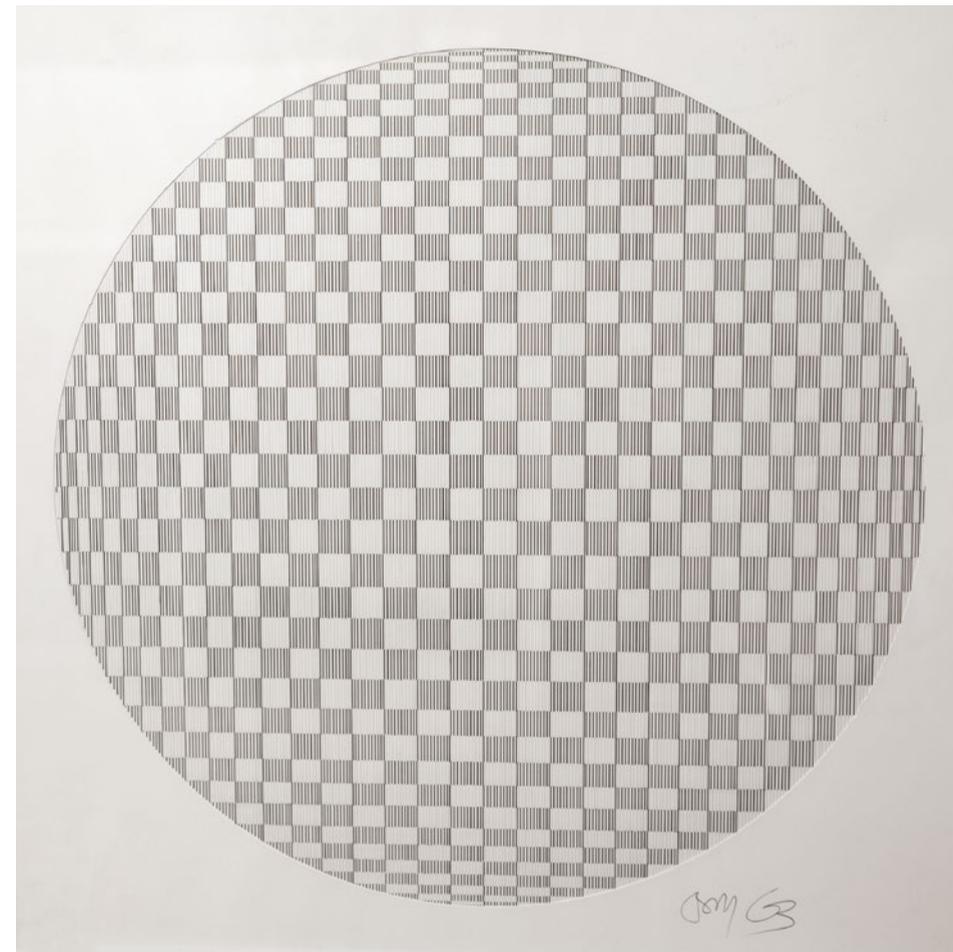
«I had a new idea: that is to propose an architecture of shadows» (*our translation*). Schiozzi gave form to Boullée's idea, as explained in the latter's writings, with a cycle of works made between 1985 and 1988. Following the indications, he represented pyramids and cenotaphs, painted niches and doors, and built towers. We are, perhaps, there, in Babel: the city to which the "Rassegna" magazine, which the artist used to read, had dedicated an entire issue to a few years before. Are the shadows those which surrounded the ruins of Piranesi, as Pietro Cordara pointed out in a commentary of the artist's works? Those – described by Boullée – of the winter days and of a night illuminated by the moon? Or those of an "autumn afternoon"? The quick and cursive painting reveals the complexity of steps with a tonal effect. Darkness dissolves, making room for a cerulean vent and is crossed by a shaft of light. A door is left ajar.



Livio Schiozzi,
Momento di entrata diagonali I, 1974
India ink, nitro-acrylic clear paint on canvas
mounted on honeycomb wood
100x100 cm



Massimo Bottecchia
Senza titolo, s. d.
India ink on cardboard
69,5x69,5 cm



Massimo Bottecchia
Sfera a scacchi, 1963
India ink on cardboard
61,8x61,8 cm

In Sesto Prize

Place As Art

To explain the rationale behind the selection of this year's competing artists, and to give an overview of their practises, I step back in time and quote the American artist Barnett Newman, a painter, sculptor, and major figure in abstract expressionism. Trying to define sculpture, maybe univocally and with a sort of axiom, Newman said that it is "something you bump into when you back up to look at a painting". To think about it, the obviousness of his thought almost makes you smile. I guess everybody, myself included, found themselves taking a few steps back to enjoy with a single glance the width of a painting displayed on the wall in front of us. As for actually bumping, well, who knows!

From this definition the word "something", apparently incomprehensible and abstract, an empty sound, undeterminable and undefined, brings before us the very essence, the intrinsic element of contemporary sculpture.

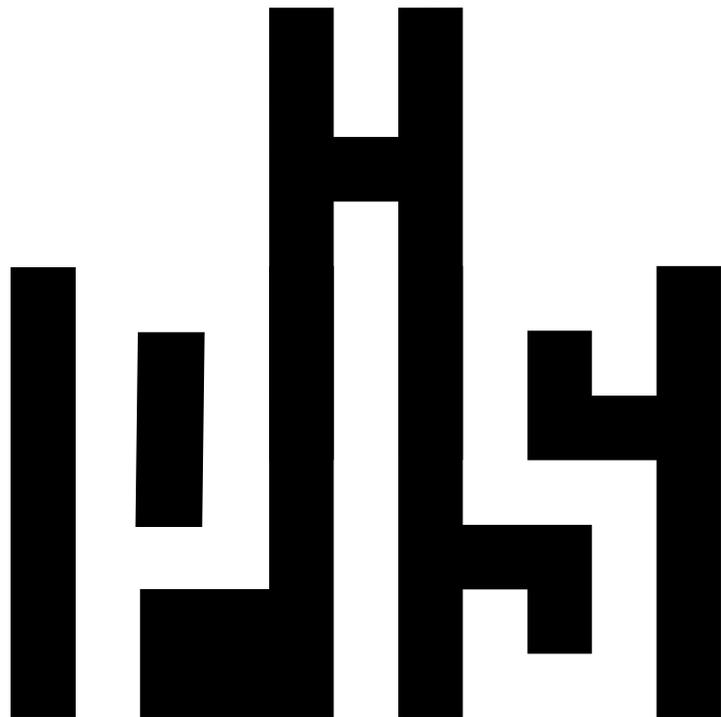
Sculpture, or better defined as installation, colloquially is "something standing there": coming with different materials, shapes, dimensions, relationships with time, with context and people approaching.

Try to think about how the artists, from all over Europe, might feel when asked to participate: many of them have never been to San Vito del Tagliamento, have never even visited Friuli, and therefore in most cases, they have no personal experience with the territory. They do not know its history, anecdotes, nor its distinctive traits and geographical characteristics. Imagine their reactions when asked to design a project for a public artwork to be permanently installed somewhere in the city, which they have not seen before the invitation. You may think they panic. Not at all. As a curator, I have always been surprised at their enthusiasm and their getting involved despite the challenges of such an endeavour: first of all, because of the short time available and also because, due to external factors, they usually cannot see the site themselves before the final project delivery.

It was at the beginning of summer when the curatorial team, together with the city administration, walked through the city in its many directions, under the mid-June scorching sun, looking for a suitable place to host this year's installation. We took many into account, but the triangular-shaped area between via Mercato and viale del Mattino, named Foro Boario, soon proved ideal. The place was once a market for livestock, especially cattle, and has now been redeveloped into a public garden, where previously there was a gas station. It is an area that, for over a hundred years, has witnessed processes of transformation of its history. And again, surfing this wave of transformation, in the future it will also become an exhibition site.

As it does every year, the search for the artists lasted several days, during which I was utterly absorbed in this imaginary bubble.

Michela Lupieri



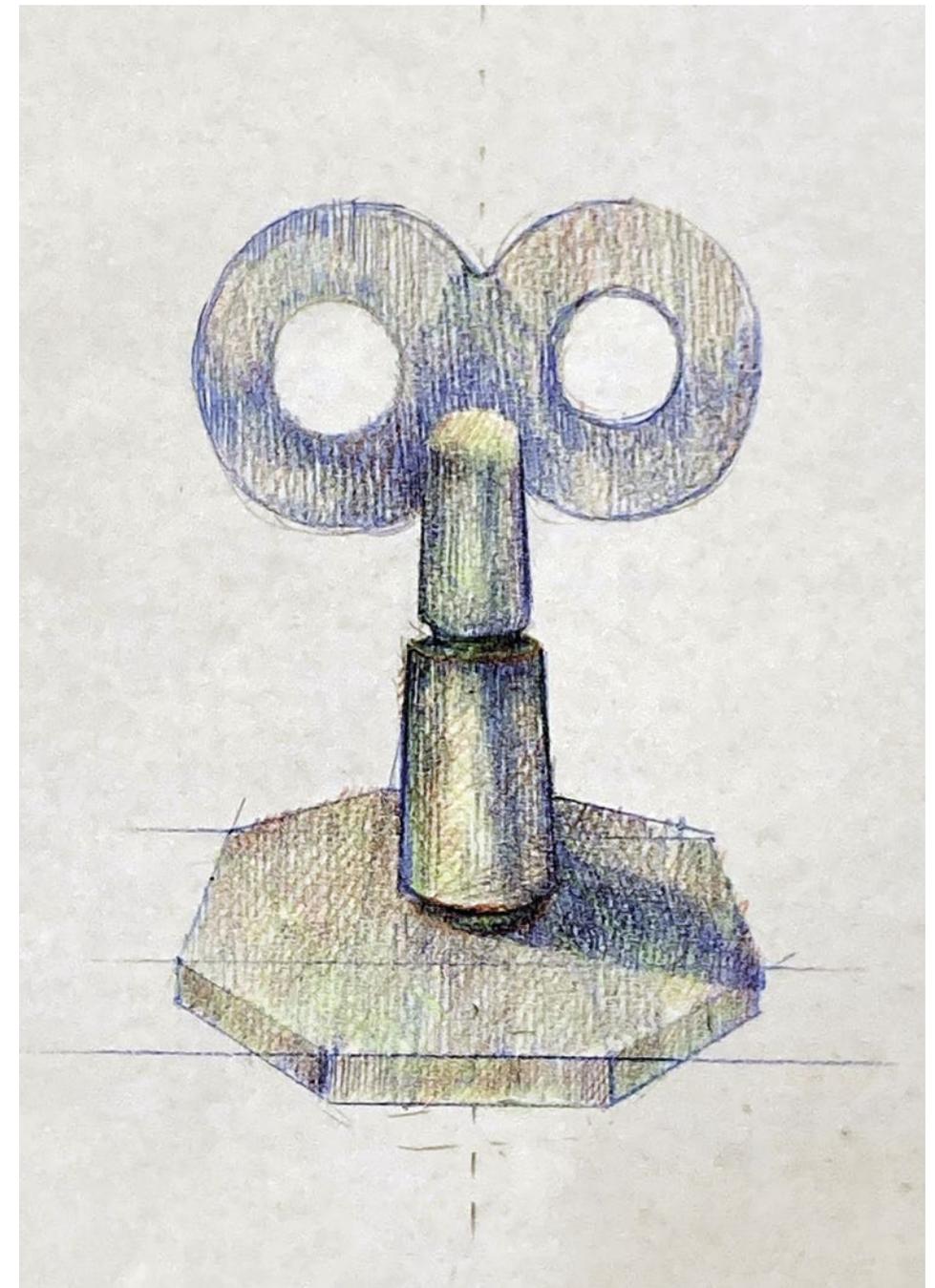
It is one of the moments I relish. It is an overlapping of a mental journey through the memories of *studio visits* to the artists over the years, and of a more physical one: among papers and archival materials collected over the years, such as invitations, catalogues, press releases of exhibitions visited around the world, and enriched with – extremely thorough, neverending – internet research, that makes you feel like you are spinning around in circles on the net, knowing where you started but unsure about where you will arrive. You often feel totally lost, but experience has taught me that there is always a surprise around the corner. I do not know how to piece together the story of how I researched and found this year's artists, but I remember vividly the feeling I had when I looked at pictures of their works; and the moment I found out more about their practises, I immediately realized that they were going to be the protagonists of this edition.

Jérémy Berton from France, Hella Gerlach from Germany, and Francesco Pozzato from Italy – they all employ in their research the concept of sculpture/installation with different intents, manifesting the range of meanings included in the very same definition.

Jérémy Berton's sculptural research is a journey through the history of art, Cubist compositions, Surrealist irony, comics and pop culture. The artist works with shapes and objects of everyday life and turns them into sculptures, often painted in a single hue, like white or neon colours. First, in a process of abstraction and then formalization, the artist turns the objects' utility into uselessness, functional only as aesthetically pleasant items. His frozen-in-time works are detached from the context and seem to be floating in the space they occupy. His proposal for public artwork is *Lock and Key*, a large key made of cast iron with a granular surface, that seems to belong to a past time. The artist seems to give a chance to the passersby, a chance to turn its handle and enter – who knows – an actual place, phantasmagorical and imaginative, which witnessed the site's past.

Hella Gerlach's artistic practice is different, characterised by mobility and flexibility, both in a physical and theoretical way, by elements stretching in space and by joints: her composite artworks, as well as her performances and curatorial contributions, convey the idea about sculpture as a relational object. It was the Brazilian artist Lygia Clark who used this definition first, and Gerlach's objects are indeed designed to engage with viewers, to activate their ideas, senses and reactions, to motivate their actions and imagination. Therefore, sculpture is a process that is part of a collective rhythm involving physical movement and thought. Her proposal *Le Gambe di Tagliamento* is a tangle of legs ('gambe', in Italian) at child's height, an unusual object with a bark-like surface that invites discovery and seems to plunge its roots right into the spot where a plane tree has been removed. With this sculpture, the process of growing occurs through social interaction, the creator of unexpected ideas born from a shared time.

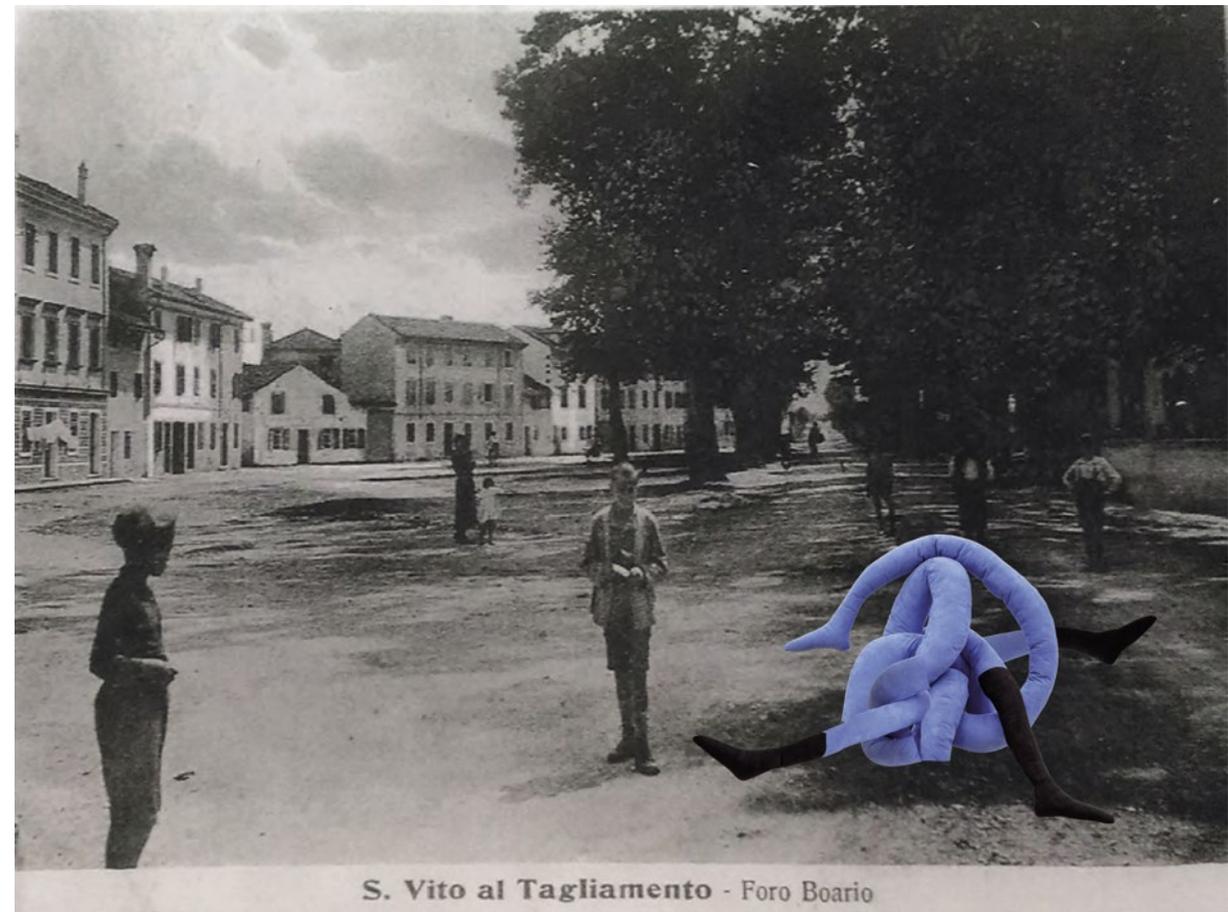
Conversely, Francesco Pozzato's works, being mainly installations, are a bridge between two temporalities, at the opposite extremes and vastly distant: ancient history – the artist's field of interest – and contemporaneity – the present time and period when he is working. Every art, as every period, has been contemporary and his works seem to give shape to Agamben's thought: "Contemporariness is irrelevant [*inattuale*] ..., then, a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and, at the same time, keeps a distance from it".



Jérémy Berton
Lock and Key, 2021
sketch
125x60x50 cm



Francesco Pozzato
Leoni mansueti all'ombra dei tigli, 2021
 (collage), iconographic references
 450x350x50 cm



Hella Gerlach
Le Gambe di Tagliamento, 2021
 collage on archival photograph
 100x130x140 cm

Hella Gerlach thanks Francesca Popaiz for dialogue about the process and atmosphere in San Vito, family, trees, childhood, gardens as playgrounds and needs.

In fact, Pozzato looks at the past to consider the marginalisation of the defeated and overturn the idea of a single great history in favour of a combination of different co-existing perspectives. His proposal *Leoni mansueti all'ombra dei tigli* is a bench without a back, conceived of as a kind of allegory for the Friulian town that hosts *Palinsesti*. Its shape reminds one of the Tagliamento river and the surface carries the iconographic elements belonging to San Vito: lions, hens, palm trees... With this work, the artist combines the etymological origins of the hydronym Tagliamento (probably connected to the Italian word for lime tree, *tiglio*) and the symbols that characterise the patron saint of the city (St. Vito), in an ongoing dialogue between hagiography and geography, public context and cultural identity.

Jérémy Berton

Villeneuve Saint Georges, 1986

Jérémy Berton works with objects of everyday life and reinvents them to question reality and its representations. Through a meticulous and systematic approach, he transposes tables, brooms, easels and umbrellas onto a new poetic dimension. His sculptures are a subtle mixture of compositions, balance, and tricks of scale and illusion that manage to catch the viewer's eye and overturn their perspective. The humor that characterises his works comes from intertwining the thoughtful approach and the sharp, creative, unexpected mode the artist uses to re-elaborate the objects of his study.

Berton's artistic approach originates in his passion for drawing, in studying surfaces, perception and illusion. His dynamic and colourful universe manages to catch images to transform and reactivate them in space, with humor, lightness and accuracy. Sculpture becomes a means to make the objects bigger and clearer in reality.

For the *In Sesto Prize* the artist exhibits three works, which were all created in 2021 and share a common theme: the human being. Starting with an analysis of the "inner self", Berton explores the never-ending human scheme of rising to a higher social status, while not always being respectful of nature and other living beings. The sculpture series *Your true self is a false mirror* originated from the intangible world and how we psychologically and magically refer to the mirror, a household object. The pattern on the elliptical shapes, recalling human-like dimensions, confers a vibrant stylised reflection on the resin surface; while the mirrors, resembling portholes on a wall, offer empty images to the viewers.

Hope is inspired by a photograph of unknown origins which shows the world's largest diamonds and questions the representation of their economic value. The plaster blocks refer to the synthesized appearance of an armored truck, which has a resin hand on it that gives us, or takes away, the diamonds. Ironically, "hope" is the name of one of the encrusted diamonds.

The enigmatic sculpture *Loot* is a mask, possibly an accessory of thievery and guarding, which is floating on a pile of coins of abandoned loot. The small composition suggests an epic robbery.

Alice Debianchi



Hope, 2021
Plaster, epoxy resin, polyester
21x10x16 cm

Hella Gerlach

Gummersbach, 1977

Hella Gerlach's artistic research explores correlations that exist between architectural, physical and social spaces. The artist's approach is based on the very same nature of corporeality: her aim is not some kind of accurate formal final result, but to make the intermediate moments that shape her works stand out, leaving room for an open and flexible perspective which softens its static dimension. The objects' intangible traits are what hint at the given final form. Her sculptures are frequently made from padded fabric of previously worn clothes, which manage to show the idea of social space and create a unique form of different energies: the fabrics carry the memories that make us grow and transform. The artist becomes the spokesperson of a community state, by laying bare the intertwinings and feelings the body expresses when it comes to interpersonal relationships. Connection between bodies is the main focus of Hella Gerlach's works.

The series *Let's take a moment to let that settle II* includes as many as twenty-eight sculptures, each of them titled HANGOVER and marked with a number. For the *In Sesto Prize*, Gerlach specifically created a new shape, by intertwining and wrapping three pre-existing pieces – *HANGOVER #2*, *HANGOVER #3*, *HANGOVER #17* – into a brand new sculpture. These tube-like padded forms hang from the ceiling and rotate smoothly around their axes, and by doing so, the sculpture embraces the viewers' presence. Each colorful piece is a vehicle for physical and psychological states that are determined by the mood expressed in their appearance – heaviness, union, contortion – and the materials they are made of – rigidity, softness, smoothness. The viewer is invited to smell, as well as touch, the installation, which is lightly scented due to the padding made of wool, ash, perforate St John's-wort, and belladonna. With this work, the artist describes a state of excess: waking up hungover, the moment when the unconscious inner self comes out and one feels like they are hanging from the ceiling and spinning around their spine. The dramatic theme is minimized by the irony of the shapes, which evoke the silhouettes of children's toys.

Alice Debianchi



Let's take a moment to let that settle II, 2021
mixed fabric, wool, feathers, metal, twine,
honeysuckle, engine mechanism
353x21,5x9,5 cm

Francesco Pozzato

Vicenza, 1992

In Francesco Pozzato's artistic research, the theme of history is crucial, especially ancient history, the 12,000-year-long time span which started from the last ice age. His work originates from a critical and analytical eye examining facts, datas, archeological findings, and peculiar hidden aspects, which allow him to analyze the past to propose a new trustworthy narrative of history. The artist re-elaborates his own knowledge in relation to our times and, by doing so, he creates temporal connections, offering new insight on the present. His narrative is not that of a single great story, but the combination of different perspectives that coexist together: the narrative of the beaten and the memories of the defeated. By connecting antiquity and the past through building invisible bridges, Pozzato creates a frozen-in-time "contemporary section", which the viewers can observe in every detail. The human past influences and meets the Western contemporary world: symbols from our everyday life are, in fact, evolutions of past technologies that recur in the present.

The digital print *Dal Tigri al Tevere I* (2021) portrays two historical events that are connected to each other through the intentional destruction and unexpected fates that have characterised them. The installation describes the discovery of a clay archive in the Near East, as well as the discovery of the "grotesque", an ancient Roman wall decoration. As the title implies, both events occurred along the Tigris and Tiber rivers. Close to the Tigris, the ancient royal archive of Ebla was recently uncovered, which survived from 2,500 B.C. to the present day because the city's acropolis was destroyed: the fire baked and preserved the clay slabs.

One of the retrieved texts is the mythological tale *Enuma Elish*, often depicted along the Tiber shores in its decorative "grotesque" form: the typical ancient wall decoration depicting Chimeras and colourful geographical and natural elements. Even its discovery comes from an intentional destruction: in 68 A.D., after the death of the Roman emperor Nero, the Senate first officially enacted *damnatio memoriae*, literally 'condemnation of memory'. Trying to erase him from collective memory, Nero's *domus aurea* was buried and turned into foundations for later buildings, which permitted the later conservation, discovery and diffusion of its decorative scheme in the Renaissance period. Pozzato began with the study of two different events that are historically and geographically distant, and created newer temporal connections by graphically unifying the elements which characterise the two histories: destruction, luck and the conservation of historical and artistic heritage.

Alice Debianchi



Dal Tigri al Tevere I, 2021
Print on blockout polyester fabric and
cast iron transmission
320x320x320 cm



Maria Walcher

GO GO GO

«La loupe virale grossit les traits de nos contradictions et de nos limites.
C'est un principe de réel qui cogne à la porte de principes de plaisir.»
– Jean-Luc Nancy

«Wenn die Zeit kommt, in der man könnte, ist die vorüber, in der man kann»
– Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach

54 small wooden blocks, stacked in 18 layers of 3 blocks each, forming a tower. Two or more players take turns to remove one block of their choice and then place it with care on the top of the structure, trying not to drop it on the floor; building, block by block, a more and more unstable structure. The game ends when the tower collapses. Or else, the winner is the one who successfully repositions the block as the last: «Jenga! ».

For the work *Tocca a te* (2020 – literally 'it's your turn'), Maria Walcher was inspired by the famous game of skill created in the 1980s. However, in the sculpture designed for San Vito al Tagliamento, the players are not humans, but the trees surrounding the installation, which are gathered around a concrete tree trunk and challenge each other. This is a project that alludes to human vulnerability, the complexity of the interaction between nature and men, and the precariousness of the global situation in which we are currently living. But it also recalls the responsibility everyone must take on together.

The game, as a metaphor of individual and collective engagement, returns in many of Maria Walcher's works. It happens for instance in *7x4: out of order* (2014) in which a carpet with a classic decorative motif turns into a puzzle to be solved: the "Game of Fifteen". The playful activity is an invitation to reflect on pre-established schemes, structures and paradigms, and on their subversion and reconstruction. Thus, the artwork becomes an intellectual provocation that well expresses, simultaneously, both the artist's aesthetics and the trajectories of her research: art in public space, participatory action, experimental practice in which the use of everyday objects – modulated, semanticized and contextualized anew – is transformed with the involvement of diverse artisans and other professionals in the creative process. Walcher's research aims at questioning the role of the artist in contemporary society, but also at addressing gender issues, the relationship between tradition and innovation, the dichotomy between nature and artificiality, and the dialectic between craftsmanship and conceptuality. These are urgent and ethically sensitive socio-political issues, tackled in a playful and gently provocative way, meant to stimulate discussion and reflection.

Giada Centazzo



Building a physical and metaphorical itinerary in the space of Palazzo Tullio-Altan with several works, designed recently during the pandemic, Maria Walcher accompanies us along a narrative path that is personal, but with which we can empathize. The work *Tempo* (2020) is conceived as a double conceptual reversal, handcrafting a mass produced item originally manufactured on an industrial scale: the disposable paper tissue. The two handmade *Taschentücher* are made of fabric and are finished with hemstitch embroidery. In a provocative twist, instead of a unique and personal monogram, they bear the embroidered name of a well-known German brand that patented in 1929 the paper tissue which quickly supplanted the fabric version. Here the tissue, a recurrent motif in Walcher's work – as in *Knoten* (2015) and then in the porcelain series *Knoten* (2017) – is no longer a symbol of memory (the "knot in the tissue" that grabs the thought and holds it), but becomes a clot of questions that have accompanied the artist during this period of pandemic on the sense of time in its different meanings: rhythm of life, succession of events, duration, uncertain forecast for the future.

With the sound installation *walkwork* (2021) – in which the artist rhythmically repeats the word "walk" and "work" as in a *mantra* – and the lenticular print *Schritt* (2021) – a visual *divertissement* that shows the artist's bare feet in the



←
E chi me lo fa fare, 2021
artificial grass carpet
100x1000x4 cm

Schritt, 2021
lenticular printing on Alu-Dibond
118x80 cm
edizione 2/3

act of “taking a step” – Walcher emphasizes the dynamics of everyday life, such as the coexistence between living and working spaces and the dialectic between leisure and commitment, which have been exacerbated by the health crisis and the consequent forced confinement.

The *site-specific* installation *E chi me lo fa fare* (2021) seems to make the green carpet of the Italian garden facing the Palazzo burst into the room. The handwritten *lettering* in artificial grass laid on the floor is in dialogue with the landscape views of the walls, playing on the attempt of overcoming the indoor/outdoor dichotomy. This previously unreleased work – whose title echoes the question ‘why should I bother?’ – seems to mark a landing point of a precise emotional (and expository) trend: from resilient breath to disillusioned perplexity.

Even more alienating is the exhortation – of uncertain origin and destination – with which the artist settles in Palazzo Tullio-Altan: GO GO GO.

Where to? And why?



Maria Walcher

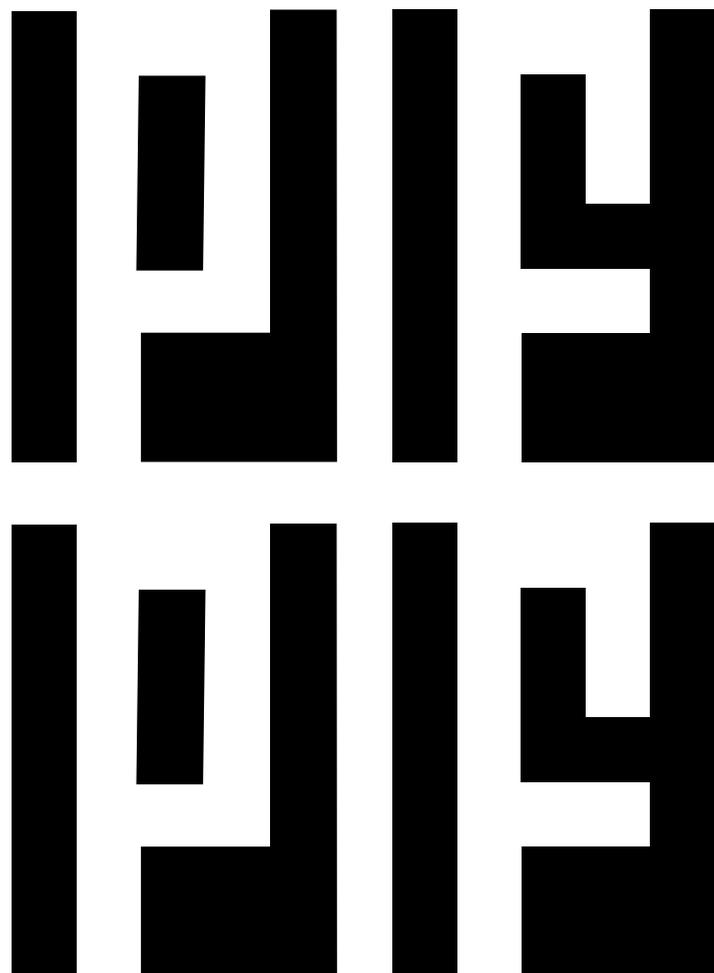


Fuge, 2018
photographic print on
Alu-Dibond
3 pictures 40x60 cm each
edition 1/5

←
Tocca a te, 2020
project mockup



Palinsesti



Antonio Garlatti

Punto Fermo

Maria Elisabetta Novello

L'angolo di riposo

Maria Elisabetta Novello's artistic research conceptually tends to existential reflections and questions. Her poetics is inspired by life's impermanence and its characteristics: doubts, uncertainty, and the endless flow of time.

The artist says about her work that it «attempts to extract the eternal from the ephemeral to fix a moment of existence and fully understand what otherwise time would simply flow on toward infinity» (*Maria Elisabetta Novello. Limen*, Catalogo della mostra (Roma, 14 gennaio – 20 febbraio 2016), a cura di L. RESPI, Roma, Gangemi Editore, 2015, p. 12).

Novello makes use of different techniques to create her works – photography, installation, performance, drawing – but only one medium, ash, to which soot and dust can be added.

Ash, found in nature as solid remnants of fires, conveys archaic symbolic meanings, which belong to the culture and religion of many Eastern and Western communities. Ash symbolises change, death and rebirth, but it is also a sign of surrender and purification.

According to Lucretius «(...) Thus naught of what seems perish utterly, since Nature ever upbuilds one thing from other, suffering naught to come to birth but through some other's death.» (Tito Lucrezio Caro, *De Rerum Natura*, I, v. 262-264, Eng. tr. by William Ellery Leonard, E. P. Dutton, 1916).

And so the artist, as a demiurge, reuses and readjusts this evanescent material to create something new, a thought, an inner feeling she might have.

In the video-installation *Causa-Effetto* (2007 – lit. 'cause-effect') the sound emission of the artist breathing, amplified by the vibration of a subwoofer, rhythmically uplifts the ash particles into the air, and results in continual and repeated forms, which the artist reproduced in a series of prints.

The on-ground installation *Filare secondo* (2008, lit. 'Spinning, the second') represents a patient work of embroidery, similar to handmade crochet. The fragile geometries are, however, evanescent, subject to change because of time and people.

In the artwork *Paesaggi* (2010, lit. 'landscapes'), present in the *Punto Fermo* collection, two plexiglass cases are partly filled with layers of ash. Like the lieutenant Drogo in *The Tartar Steppe*, we stare at the barren and uninhabited land waiting for something to happen in that emptiness. And deep within, in our inner landscapes, we feel that «(...) the desert is not an objection, it has always been the birthplace of heavenly visions (...)» (R. MUSIL, *The man without qualities*, Eng. tr. by Burton Pike, Vintage International, 1996, p. 1188.)

Since 2014, Maria Elisabetta Novello has developed an artistic project titled *Sopralluoghi*, by traveling and exploring a few cities. During these geographic explorations – the 'surveys' of the title – the artist collects material findings, usually ignored by everyone, to understand the changes that occurred over



Causa-Effetto, 2007
video installation, ash,
subwoofer, video camera,
projector
full-scale

time through the analysis, classification and study of the findings. *Sopralluoghi* is the attempt to cross the borders of space and time to discover new worlds.

In *Opacità* (2015, 'opacity'), Novello spreads a patina on mirrors with dust or acid, making the view of those gazing on it clouded and fogged. With this series of works, the artist suggests we direct our gaze towards what is within us, and not towards the outer things and appearances. It is an invitation to take the path towards inner consciousness.

In the performance *Sursum corda* (2017), which is a Latin locution meaning "lift up your hearts" or literally "lift hearts" that comes from the liturgies of the Christian church, Novello causes some dancers to move rhythmically to the amplification of her heartbeat. The heartbeat rhythm is life's rhythm. But sometimes we experience no feelings. Novello's performative action becomes a stimulus to regain emotional sensitivity, our human dimension, our place in the universe.

In *Notturni* (2018), ash, soot and coal, applied on plexiglass and paper sheets, create starry nights and firmament: the 'nocturnals' alluded to by the title. The fear of the dark, of the unexpected, and the unknown, which has always tormented human beings, now makes room for the possibility of discovering new realities thanks to the guide these star charts provide.

In the art installation *L'angolo di riposo* (2021), a site-specific project conceived for the Essiccatoio Bozzoli, many themes of Novello's artistic research are noticeable. It feels like time stands still. Ash and dust have settled everywhere in the hall that was once used for the storage and processing of silkworm cocoons. They accumulate on the walls, on the beams of trusses, in the wall recesses, and inside the windows, thus drawing orographic maps whose three-dimensional effect is enhanced by the different shades of colour of the ash. In pharmacology and other scientific disciplines, the term "angle of repose" (as the Italian title of the work translates) is used to refer to

the flow properties of granular solids and the maximum angle at which powder can rest on an inclined plane without sliding down. A feeling of instability permeates this immersive installation. A careless movement or a breath of wind are enough to break its precarious balance and create something new. Therefore, one is prompted to recall Aristotelian philosophy and the dynamic principles of reality, which are described by the complementary terms of "potentiality" and "actuality". In this precarity, ash symbolises the potentiality that is able to create newer forms, the actuality.

A silent metamorphosis, a breath of life, *L'angolo di riposo* contains within itself an uncontrollable desire for knowledge, an invitation to stop, to take a break to find our own place in the world, where ash, as the artist reminds us, is «(...) an evanescent and transient element that brings with it the contemporary fragility and the insatiability of existence itself.» (D. VIVA, *Mettere una lente d'ingrandimento sul mondo*, in *Maria Elisabetta Novello / Chris Gilmour. Fragjil, anzit resistant*, Catalogo della mostra (Villacaccia di Lestizza, 3 agosto - 10 settembre 2013), a cura di A. BERTANI, Villacaccia di Lestizza, Associazione culturale Colonos, 2013, p. 46. Our translation.)



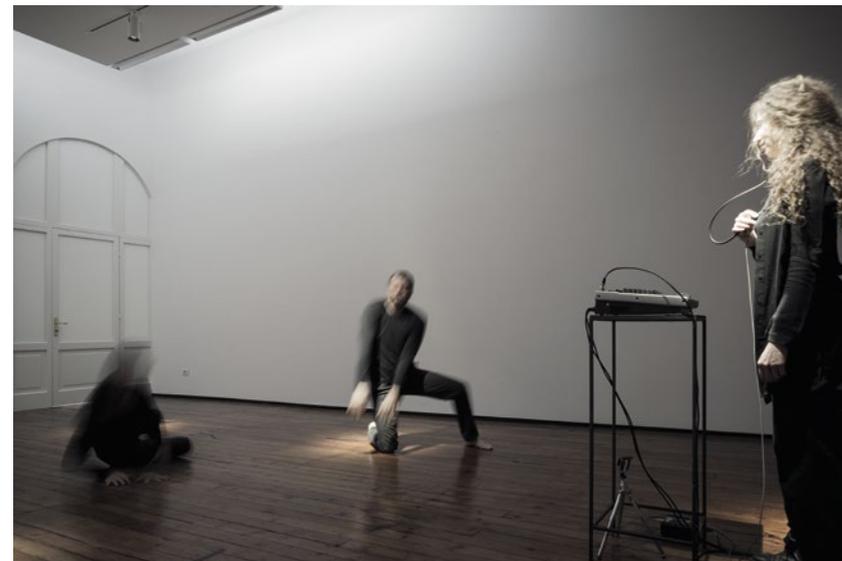
Filare secondo, 2008
(detail)
ash
full-scale



Paesaggi, 2010
ash, plexiglass and iron
2 cases 40x60 cm each



Sopralluoghi (ROMA), 2015
Photographic print in iron box
42x560 cm



Opacità, 2015
Ash on a mirror
48x30 cm

Sursum corda, 2017
performance with Roberto
Cocconi and Luca Zampar

Notturmi, 2018
ash, soot and charcoal on
plexiglass and paper
52x37,5 cm





L'angolo di riposo, 2021
ash
full-scale

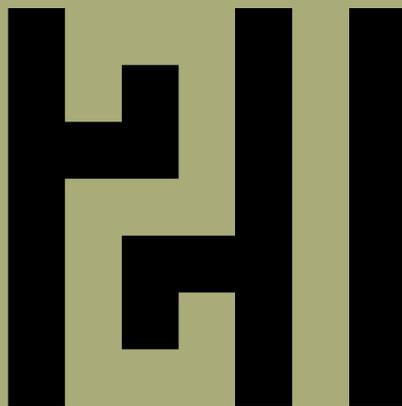


Punto Fermo



Palinsesti

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