

MICHEL REIN PARIS/BRUSSELS

PIERO GILARDI

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ARTWORKS

ŒUVRES



Conchiglia spiaggiata, 2020
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
40 x 40 cm (15.75 x 15.75 in.)
unique artwork
GILA21092



Acero e Dalie, 2020
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
40 x 40 cm (15.75 x 15.75 in.)
unique artwork

private collection



Aporrhai, 2020
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
40 x 40 cm (15.75 x 15.75 in.)
unique artwork
GILA21089



Eucalyptus in riviera, 2020
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
150 x 150 cm (59.06 x 59.06 in.)
unique artwork
GILA21082



Tucano in volo, 2020
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
51 x 51 x 20,5 cm (20.08 x 20.08 x 7.87 in.)
unique artwork
GILA20058



Mele e zucca, 2020
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
51 x 51 x 20,5 cm (20.08 x 20.08 x 7.87 in.)
unique artwork

private collection



Strombus su malachite, 2020
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
51 x 51 x 20,5 cm (20.08 x 20.08 x 7.87 in.)
unique artwork
GILA20057



Biodiversità, 2019
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
50 x 70 x 20 cm (19.69 x 27.56 x
7.87 in.)
unique artwork
private collection



Spiaggia corallina, 2019
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
100 x 70 cm (39.37 x 27.56 in.)
unique artwork
GILA21084



Neve in scioglimento, 2019
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
150 x 150 x 21 cm (59.06 x 59.06 x 8.27 in.)
unique artwork

private collection



Papaja in giardino, 2018
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
100 x 50 cm (39.37 x 19.69 in.)
unique artwork
GILA21086



Costiera di Laigueglia, 2018
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
50 x 70 cm (19.69 x 27.56 in.)
unique artwork
GILA21087



O.G.M Free, 2014
polyurethane foam, bamboo, fabric
mousse polyuréthane, bambou, tissu
250 x 200 x 60 cm (98.43 x 78.74 x 23.62 in.)
unique artwork

FRAC Bretagne collection (FR)



Aigues Tortes, 2007
polyurethane foam, sound work
mousse polyuréthane, oeuvre
sonore
70 x 350 x 70 cm (27.56 x 137.8 x
27.56 in.)
unique artwork
GILA19014



Kossiga-Dracula, 1991
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
80 x 50 cm (31.5 x 19.69 in.)
unique artwork
GILA19016



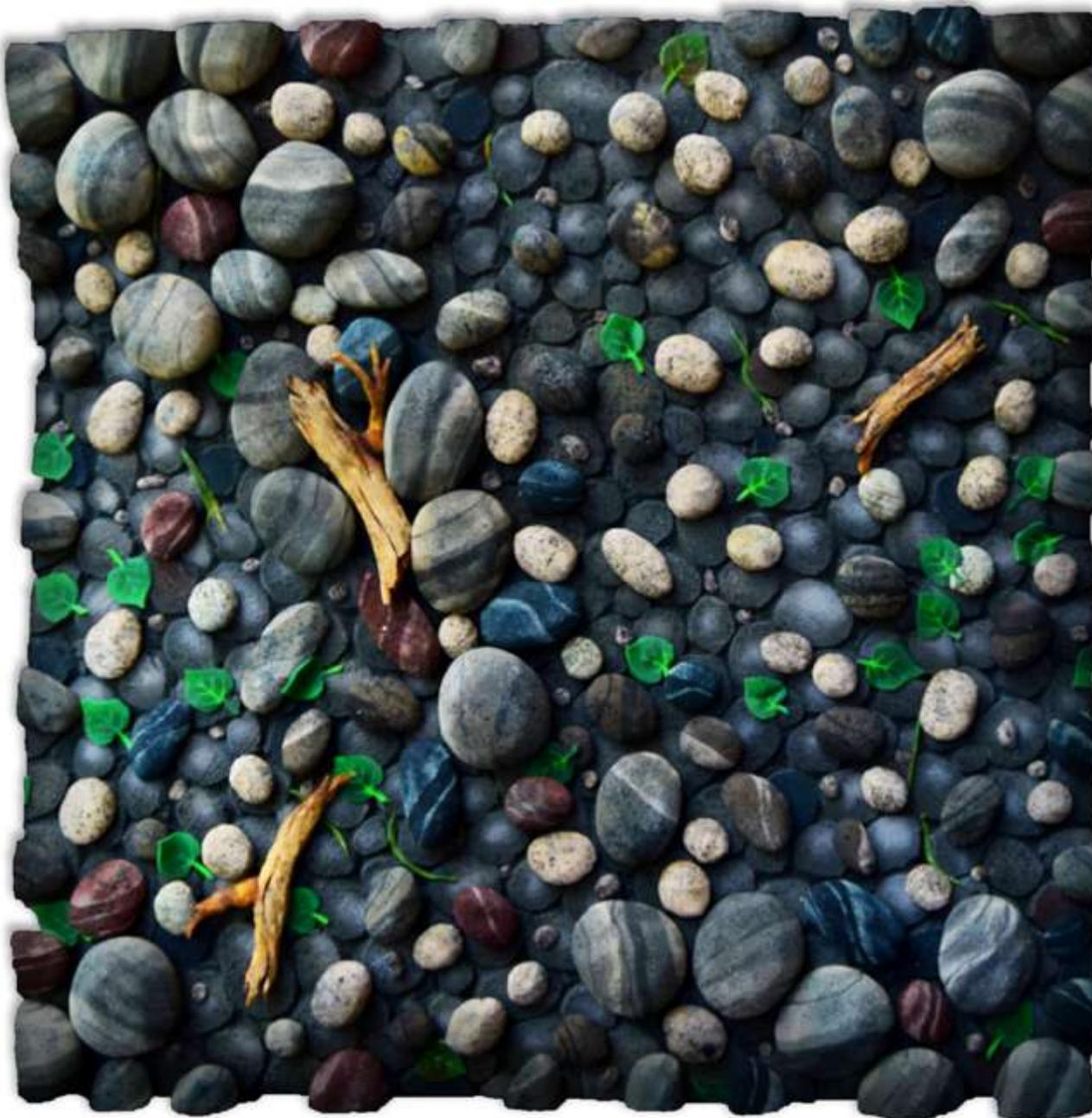
Maschera di Agnelli collaudatore, 1986
polyurethane foam
mousse polyurethanique
50 x 50 x 60 cm (19.69 x 19.69 x 23.62 in.)
unique artwork
GILA19024



Le Donne di Siano, 1980
 serigraphy
 sérigraphie
 70 x 50 cm (27.56 x 19.69 in.)
 unique artwork
 GILA19019



NO ALLA REPRESSIONE, 1969
serigraphy
sérigraphie
70 x 50 cm (27.56 x 19.69 in.)
unique artwork
GILA19017



Greto di torrente, 1967
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
150 x 150 x 18 cm (59.06 x 59.06 x 7.09 in.)
unique artwork

Centre Pompidou collection (FR)



Greto di montagna, 1967
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
50 x 50 x 20,5 cm (19.69 x 19.69 x 7.87 in.)
unique artwork

private collection



Vestito-Natura Anguria, 1967
polyurethane foam
mousse polyurethanique
180 x 70 cm (70.87 x 27.56 in.)
unique artwork

Private Collection, BE



Zuccaia, 1966
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
50 x 65 cm (19.69 x 25.59 in.)
unique artwork
GILA19013



Tronco sedile, 1966
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
60 x 10 cm (23.62 x 3.94 in.)
unique artwork
GILA19012



IGLOO, 1964
polyurethane foam
mousse polyuréthanique
200 x 200 x 130 cm
(78.74 x 78.74 x 51.18 in.)
unique artwork
GILA19006

EXHIBITIONS

EXPOSITIONS



Parco Arte Vivente, Car Crash, Turin, Italie, 2023



Parco Arte Vivente, Car Crash, Turin, Italie, 2023



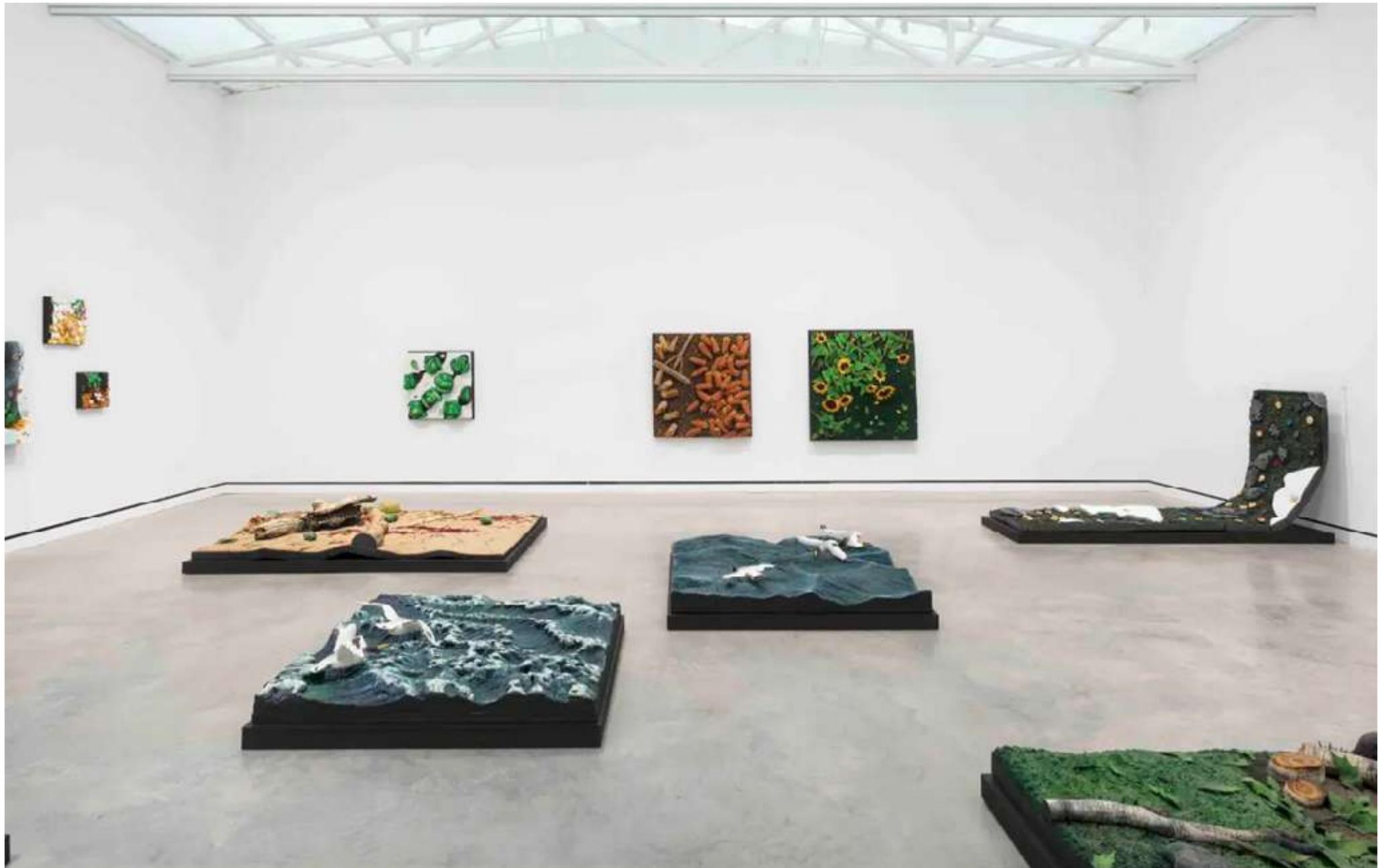
Parco Arte Vivente, Car Crash, Turin, Italia, 2023



MAMAC, *Vita Nuova. Nouveaux enjeux de l'art en Italie 1960-1975* (cur. Valérie Da Costa), Nice, France, 2022



Museo della Città, *Tutto ciò che é, é nella natura*, (cur. The Musketeers & Gianni Schiavon), Livourne, Italia, 2022



Magazzino, *Tappeto-Natura* (cur. Elena Re), New York, États-Unis, 2022



Michel Rein, *Dalla Natura all'Arte* (cur. Valérie Da Costa), Paris, France, 2020



Michel Rein, *Dalla Natura all'Arte* (cur. Valérie Da Costa), Paris, France, 2020



Michel Rein, *Dalla Natura all'Arte* (cur. Valérie Da Costa), Paris, France, 2020



Michel Rein, *Dalla Natura all'Arte* (cur. Valérie Da Costa), Paris, France, 2020



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Michel Rein, *Dalla Natura all'Arte* (cur. Valérie Da Costa), Paris, France, 2020



Robert Heald, *Piero Gilardi & Joshua Petherick - Pastorale*, Wellington, UK, 2019



Robert Heald, Piero Gilardi & Joshua Petherick - *Pastorale*, Wellington, UK, 2019



Frankfurt am Main, *Biopolitics*, Berlin, Germany, 2018



Frankfurt am Main, *Biopolitics*, Berlin, Germany, 2018



Biennale di Anren, view of *World Wide Protest*, China, 2018



Biennale di Anren, view of *World Wide Protest*, China, 2018



MAXXI - Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, *Nature forever* (cur. Hou Hanru, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi and Marco Scotini), Rome, Italy, 2017



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Guido Costa Projects, *Piero Gilardi - Mezzo secolo di ecologia della mente*, Torino, Italy, 2014



Guido Costa Projects, Piero Gilardi - Mezzo secolo di ecologia della mente, Torino, Italy, 2014



Nottingham Contemporary, *Collaborative Effects* (cur. Andrea Bellini & Diana Franssen), Nottingham, UK, 2013



Nottingham Contemporary, *Collaborative Effects* (cur. Andrea Bellini & Diana Franssen), Nottingham, UK, 2013



Nottingham Contemporary, *Collaborative Effects* (cur. Andrea Bellini & Diana Franssen), Nottingham, UK, 2013



Nottingham Contemporary, *Collaborative Effects* (cur. Andrea Bellini & Diana Franssen), Nottingham, UK, 2013



Van Abbemuseum, *Collaborative effects 1963 - 1995* (cur. Andrea Bellini & Diana Franssen), Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 2012



Van Abbemuseum, *Collaborative effects 1963 - 1995* (cur. Andrea Bellini & Diana Franssen), Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 2012



Van Abbemuseum, *Collaborative effects* 1963 - 1995 (cur. Andrea Bellini & Diana Franssen), Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 2012



Castello di Rivoli - Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, *Piero Gilardi. Collaborative Effects 1963-1985* (cur. Andrea Bellini & Diana Franssen), Torino, Italy, 2012



CCCOD - Centre de Création Contemporaine Olivier Debré, *Leçon de Choses*, Tours, France, 2010



CCCOD - Centre de Création Contemporaine Olivier Debré, *Leçon de Choses*, Tours, France, 2010



CCCOD - Centre de Création Contemporaine Olivier Debré, *Leçon de Choses*, Tours, France, 2010



Tiktaalik, interactive installation, 2010, Collezione Fondazione Gilardi



View of Work shop *O.G.M. FREE*, Milano, Italy, 2014



View of Work shop *O.G.M. FREE*, Milano, Italy, 2014



45th Biennale de Venice, Italy, 1993



Galleria Sperone, view of *Inverosimile* installation, New York, USA, 1991



Demonstration of the «Teatro politico di strada» against the G8 Summit in Venice, Italy, 1988



Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie de La Vilette, *Ninfee*, Paris, France, 1988



Performance during a demonstration against nuclear power, Caorso, Italy, 1987



Galleria EVA Menzio, view of *HE HAL* installation, Turin, Italy, 1987



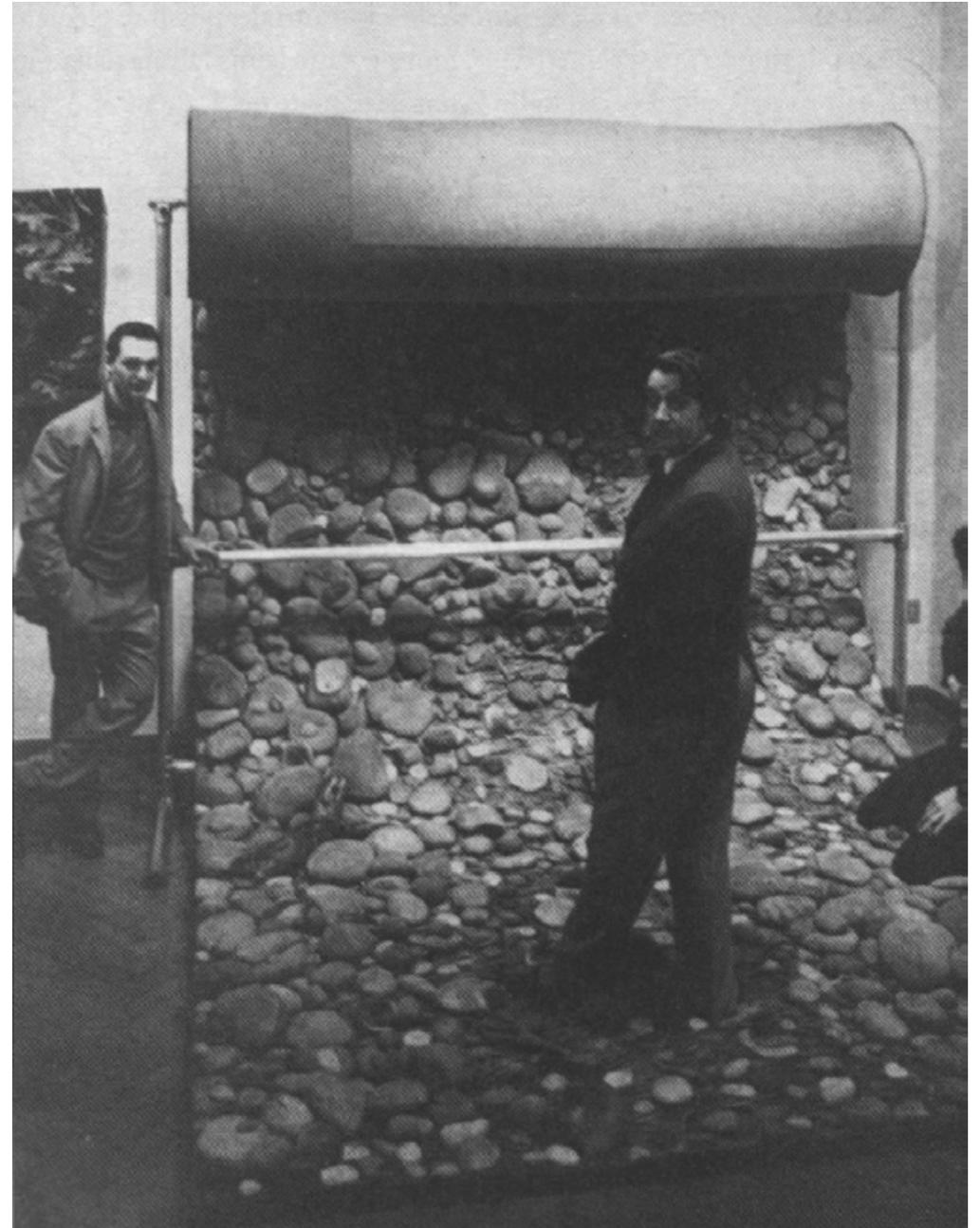
Galleria EVA Menzio, view of *HE HAL* installation, Turin, Italy, 1987



Galerie Michael Sonnabend, Paris, France, 1967



Gilardi at work, Galleria Sperone, 1966



Ettore Sottsass Junior with Piero Gilardi

PRESS PRESSE

artnet

PIERO GILARDI
Artnet
August 18th, 2022
By Christine Ajudua

Italian Artist Piero Gilardi's Radical Carved-Foam 'Nature Carpets' Were Decades Ahead of the Curve. His First Solo U.S. Show Demonstrates Why

The exhibition is on view at Magazzino Italian Art through January 9, 2023.

Christine Ajudua, August 16, 2022



Piero Gilardi, *Alone*, 1967. Piero Gilardi Collection of Galleria Civica, Turin.

One Sunday circa 1965, while strolling along the Sangone river in his hometown of Turin, Italy, the artist [Piero Gilardi](#) stumbled upon something all too ordinary that would inspire an extraordinary new direction in his practice: a pile of trash. This was just a few years after the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, but a few decades before "sustainability" became a global buzzword—and the resulting series of works was nothing short of radical.

Believing that "art is life," Gilardi hoped to catalyze a cultural "re-enchantment" with nature in its ideal, unspoiled state. For his *Tappeto-Natura*, or "Nature-Carpets," the artist used intaglio carving techniques to sculpt scenes of pristine seascapes, sunflowers in bloom, ripening papaya and pitaya into highly pigmented, high-pile rolls of polyurethane foam. They were, he explained, "aesthetic objects of practical use," merging the natural and the artificial, indoors and outdoors, art and design.



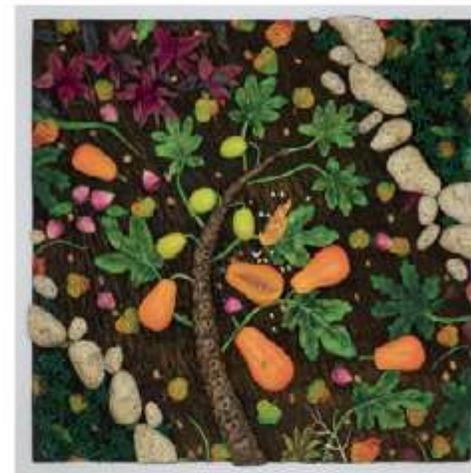
A 1967 exhibition of Gilardi's *Tappeto-Natura*, or "Nature-Carpets," at Galerie Ileana Sonnabend in Paris. Courtesy of the artist.

Gilardi first exhibited his "Nature-Carpets" in 1967 at avant-garde galleries of the era, such as New York's Fischbach and Paris's Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, as well as alternative spaces like Turin's Piper Club, where he hung them on the walls as a backdrop for experimental performances featuring his *Vestiti-Natura* (that would be "Nature-Clothing"). In the 1980s, Italian gallerist and art collector Margherita Stein adorned her Turin home gallery with a Gilardi rug that looked like a riverbed.

Now, the artist's carpets and clothing are on display together at Magazzino Italian Art in Cold Spring, New York, as the subject of "[Gilardi: Tappeto-Natura](#)" (through January 9, 2023). While Gilardi is known as a protagonist of the Arte Povera movement and as a founder of the International Association Ars Technica, as well as Turin's Parco Arte Vivente (PAV), an experimental center for contemporary art in nature, this is his solo debut in the U.S.



Gilardi's "stone" and "birch" dresses, on display at Magazzino. Photo: Marco Anelli / Tommaso Sacconi ©.



Piero Gilardi, *Papaya e patate* (2016), © Piero Gilardi, Magazzino Italian Art Foundation, Cold Spring, New York. Photo: Marco Anelli.

Gilardi has long aimed to remove the "frame of artistic representation." At Magazzino, you'll find 29 works of his sculpted flora covering walls and floors without frames. To celebrate the opening, dancers from the local Gold Spring Dance Company engaged with the carpets while activating the artist's stone-like *Vestito-Natura (Sassi)*, one of his two wearable "Nature-Dresses" on display.

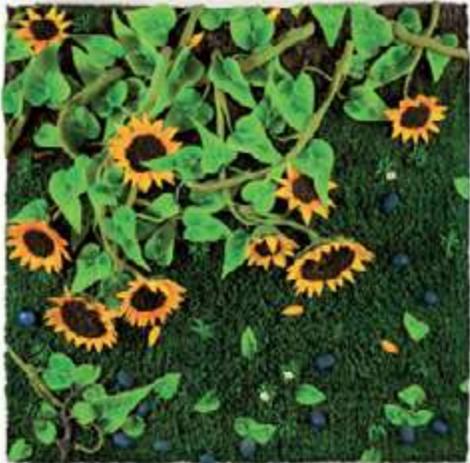
Anyone is welcome to sit on Gilardi's rock-shaped cushions in the lobby, even play catch with them, nodding to early exhibitions where visitors were invited to walk atop and lie down on his rug creations. As curator Elena Re said in a statement, "Overcoming the aesthetic dimension of the product, the art called its audience into play, or, better, people became a lasting part of the artistic process."



Piero Gilardi, *Cavoli sotto la neve* (1974), © Piero Gilardi, Collection of Galleria Gilardi, Livorno.



Piero Gilardi, Greta di torrente (1967). © Piero Gilardi. Collection of the Centre Pompidou, Paris.



Piero Gilardi, Girasoli caduti (1967). © Piero Gilardi Private Collection, Photo: Cristina Leoncini.

EXPOSITION
CULTURE

La Vita nuova, quand les artistes italiens s'engageaient

À Nice, le musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain propose de revisiter une période cruciale de la société transalpine. Quinze années de création, de 1960 à 1975, au cœur de l'agitation qui parcourait la péninsule, encore hantée par les spectres du fascisme et de la guerre.

PAR PIERRE BARBANCEY, CRITIQUE SPÉCIAL

Pour tout dire, voilà une exposition dont on se demande bien pourquoi elle s'a pas vu le jour plus tôt. Revisiter ses années 1960. Ou plus exactement, aborder les « nouveaux enjeux de l'art en Italie », de 1960 à 1975. Vita nuova. Voilà la belle invitation du musée d'Art moderne et d'Art contemporain (MAMAC) dans la capitale azuréenne. La période retenue ne doit rien au hasard. Quatre ans après la fin de la guerre, pas totalement débarrassée du fascisme mais occupée par l'armée américaine et rongée par une mafia... Italo-américaine, la péninsule tente de se débarrasser de ses oripeaux. L'agitation est générale, tant dans le domaine social que politique et artistique. Quinze années de création, de 1960 - les premiers pas publics d'une nouvelle génération d'artistes - à 1975, années marquées par le mort de Pier Paolo Pasolini.

LE CORPS DEVIENT OBJET POLITIQUE

Valérie Da Costa, commissaire de l'exposition, a choisi une approche en trois parties. C'est d'abord la société de l'image, signe de nouveaux modes de représentation pour des sujets jusqu'ici tabous ou peu traités. Avec, au centre, la femme (sujet ou artiste). « WBH » (1962), de Maria Brusani - une combinaison, comme en mouvement, fluide, placée sur des plaques en bois noies -, donne l'idée à la fois de la liberté et du danger, du désir et de la passivité. La beauté qui se dégage est asphyxiante. Tout aussi révolutionnaire pour l'époque, la série de photos de LUIGI CARMI « I Traversati » (1965-1970). D'autres plasticiens répondent à la violence. C'est le cas de Luciano Palmi avec « Italia del dolore » (1973). Des villes trop peu parcourues : reconstruire la nature. Ou l'en s'apercevoir, à l'instar de Pino Pascali (et sa



toile peinte tendue sur six structures de bois citrines, « Cancais », de 1966), qu'une prise de conscience avait lieu dès la fin des années 1960. Laura Gelbi étudie la vitesse du vent, « The Measuring of Time » (1969), alors que Piero Gilardi propose, en 1967, les premières « Vestiti natura ». Avouons ici une préférence pour la dernière partie. Mémoire des corps. Cette trace toujours indéchiffrable, qui file comme du sable à travers les doigts. Le corps comme élément de référence. Objet politique qui interroge sans cesse, trop souvent caché : « Ritardi » (1973), où Euseo Mattiacci s'enduit le visage de boue. Carol Rama préfère des yeux sans visage (avec Françoise) avec « Vedo... vedo », 1967. Un corps peut sortir d'une « orphédie » (1972), comme le fait Claudio Cinnoli. Le corps, encore, et le corps-à-corps, de sa propre histoire dans la grande histoire, clame aussi la mise en scène performative de Fabio Mauri intitulée « Che cosa è il fascismo » (1971). Un regain de tension socio-politique qu'on aurait aimé retrouver à la villa Arson, dans « Le futur derrière nous », qui serote « l'art italien depuis les années 1990 ». La comparaison est rude. La dichotomie entre les artistes d'aujourd'hui et la société dans laquelle ils sont restés crée ici, elle, est en permanente évolution est terrible. La Vita nuova, la vie nouvelle, reste pourtant un manifeste artistique d'une brillante actualité. ■

« Vestiti natura »
Angeles, Piero
Gilardi, 1967
en résine
polyuréthane, 100x70



« Italia del dolore »
Luciano Palmi, 1973
en résine
VITA NUOVA
de Maria Brusani,
catalogue sous la
direction de Valérie
Da Costa, 175 pages,
22 euros.
Villa Arson, Nice
jusqu'au 28 août.

PIERRE BARBANCEY
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MOUVEMENT

Piero Gilardi
Mouvement
Juin 13^e 2022
By Alain Berland

ARTS

VITA NUOVA

Trop souvent réduit à l'Arte Povera, l'art italien des 60-70's a bien plus à offrir. L'exposition *Vita Nuova* en fait la preuve, en proposant une nouvelle lecture esthétique de ces années-là.



C'est dans la continuité de ses travaux sur l'art italien, il faut citer parmi ses nombreuses publications les essais sur *Lucio Fontana* (2013), *Pino Pascali* (2015), *Fabio Mauri* (2018) et plus récemment *L'Espace des images. Art et culture visuelle en Italie 1960-1975* (2022), que l'historienne de l'art Valérie Da Costa propose au MAMAC de Nice *Vita Nuova. Nouveaux enjeux de l'art en Italie 1960-1975*. Une exposition qui démontre la vitalité d'un chapitre temporel qu'on a longtemps réduit à l'Arte Povera. Avec près de soixante artistes, dont un tiers de femmes, et cent-trente œuvres, *Vita Nuova* s'organise en trois sections et rassemble un choix d'œuvres rares qui appartiennent aux institutions italiennes et françaises mais surtout à des collections privées peu connues du grand public.

La première section intitulée *Une société de l'image* nous accueille avec trois courts extraits de films emblématiques d'un moment de l'histoire du cinéma où les réalisateurs italiens étaient parmi les plus créatifs au monde. Les séquences choisies de *La Dolce Vita* (Federico Fellini) à *Accattone* (Pier Paolo Pasolini) en passant par *Le Désert rouge* (Michelangelo Antonioni) montrent trois aspects de la société italienne du début des années 1960 à travers le regard de trois femmes. On y rencontre de nombreux et nombreuses artistes encore trop peu vus, voire inconnus sur la scène internationale (c'est d'ailleurs une constante dans les trois sections) à l'exemple de Marisa Busanel et ses troublantes œuvres d'assemblage, de Lisetta Carmi et ses surprenantes photographies des travestis du port de Gênes, ou encore des intimes films d'animation de Rosa Foschi.

La seconde section s'empare du thème de la nature (*Reconstruire la nature*) en faisant la part belle à la sculpture et en mettant en dialogue les œuvres faites de plumes de Maria Lai et de Claudio Parmiggiani avec, pour ce dernier, un magnifique cercle de plus de deux mètres de diamètre fait entièrement de plumes colorées

(*Cercle de plumes, cercle de feu*, 1969). Plus surprenant, on trouve dans cette section des œuvres qui mêlent une réflexion sur le design et les œuvres d'art. Ce sont les sculptures à vivre ou à porter en mousse polyuréthane de Piero Gilardi ou encore les fauteuils largement inspirés de la nature des collectifs d'architectes et de designers des groupes Strum et Archizoom.

La dernière section s'attache aux traces du corps individuel ou collectif (*Mémoires des corps*). Pour le premier, l'œuvre *Particolare* (1972) de Giovanni Anselmo est une projection du mot « particolare » (détail) que le spectateur est invité à recevoir sur une partie de son corps. Les *Scarpette* (1975) de Marisa Merz sont quant à elles des sculptures en fil de cuivre faites aux mensurations des pieds de l'artiste qui rappellent la fragilité de l'humain. Le corps collectif, quant à lui, est toujours politique dans les œuvres gonflables de Franco Mazzucchelli laissées dans l'espace public pour que la population puisse se les approprier (*A. to A. Priori Square, Volterra*, 1973).

L'exposition se termine par plusieurs œuvres d'un artiste rare, Fabio Mauri dont le travail critique et politique est bien souvent ignoré. C'est ainsi l'occasion de découvrir pour la première fois en France l'une de ses plus remarquables installations : *Intellettuale* (1975) que l'artiste dédie à son ami d'enfance Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975) ; renaclément d'une performance réalisée en mai 1975 à la Galerie d'art moderne de Bologne où le célèbre réalisateur reçu sur son torse, devenu unique écran, la projection intégrale de son film *L'Évangile selon saint Matthieu* (1964). L'installation reste bouleversante car elle condense la dimension christique et politique des deux artistes qui résonne avec l'assassinat de Pasolini en novembre 1975, date qui clôt cette magistrale exposition.

arte critica

Piero Gilardi
arte e critica
October 12th, 2020
By Roberto Lambarelli

PIERO GILARDI. CARTES D'INVITATION

by / di Roberto Lambarelli

Harold Rosenberg once said that the artistic styles and their manifestations had become part of nature and that there were people who only in front of modern art let themselves be carried away by nostalgia: a meadow in the style of Bonnard seen from a window, the Broadway "surrealist" signs, the "monoplasticism" of a partially dismantled building. If he had made such a reflection about ten years later, I am convinced that he would have added a portion of "nature" preserved under plexiglas, a *Tappeto-natura* [Nature Carpet], by Piero Gilardi.

In those ideas expressed at the end of the fifties there was a widening of the way of understanding the artistic process; at the time of advanced modernity, the artwork was naturalized, nature was aestheticized. Art got into life, changing the relationship between man and the world. Those statements, as is known, were an important lesson, which then had the value of a mortgage that allowed *Action* to push painting beyond its contemplative dimension, to take it away from the dominion of pure art, to which abstract painting is subjected, and to bring it back to reality. The canvas had become "an arena in which to act", so it was no longer that thing understood, in Maurice Denis' famous words, as a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order; it was no longer, in Rosenberg's words, the support of a painting but of an event. And if it was to be an event, then all reality, be it natural or naturalized, came into play in the formation of the work.

When it was possible to technically think of an explanted and still pulsating heart as current life and to become aware that the artificial was now firmly implanted within our natural horizon, when the historical meaning of being in the late phase of the cycle of modernity became clear, precisely at that point Gilardi's work began. Having taken note of the fact that art understood as pure aesthetic dimension had been superseded, he proposed à tout le monde to lie down on an artificial meadow and thus determine an *Event*. Producing natural constructions or artificial natures having acquired the lesson that the era brought with it meant measuring oneself with another of the transformations, maybe the most radical that art would undergo: the passage from the aesthetic to the political, the latter understood, by the artist himself, as the moment of application of the commitment to anthropological change. It was the subsequent degree to art that got into life. From the original biomorphic forms of *Tappeti-natura* [Nature Carpets], expression of a new way of conceiving the function of art, a long path began that was enhanced by gradually adopting new technologies and incorporating the results of the new scientific knowledge. In this way the dialectics between art and nature expanded to include biopolitics and the "maxibattles", it extended to find its epicenter in the relationship with technosciences.

The result is a gigantic *Environment* where the political theatre and shared creativity, demonstrations and picket lines, neighborhood parties and the membership of collectives, the participation in antipsychiatry groups but also the intense critical and information activity, have found their place over time. An *Environment* of which the PAV is a significant institutional testimony.

Even if the list of the mentioned fields is not without some lapsus, it conveys sufficiently well the complexity of a position that has spread from art to life, as Gilardi openly declared already at the beginning of his artistic adventure, in tune both with the tradition of the avant-garde and with the generation protagonist of the Contestation, but with the awareness of the new terms proposed by the difficult contemporary historical phase. He once said: "Even artists are committed to inventing and prefiguring

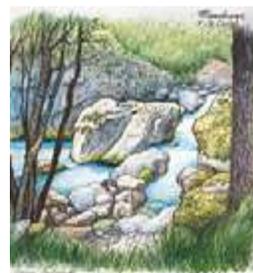
Una volta Harold Rosenberg ebbe a dire che gli stili artistici e le loro manifestazioni erano entrati a far parte della natura e che c'era gente che soltanto di fronte al moderno si lasciava prendere dalla nostalgia: un prato alla Bonnard visto da una finestra, le insegne "surrealiste" di Broadway, il "monoplasticismo" di una costruzione parzialmente smantellata. Se tale riflessione l'avesse fatta una decina di anni dopo, sono convinto che avrebbe aggiunto anche una porzione di "natura" conservata sotto plexiglass, un *Tappeto-natura*, di Piero Gilardi.

In quelle idee pronunciate alla fine degli anni Cinquanta c'era un ampliamento del modo di intendere il processo artistico; all'epoca della modernità avanzata, l'opera si naturalizzava, la natura si estetizzava. L'arte entrava nella vita cambiando il rapporto tra uomo e mondo.

Quelle affermazioni, come è noto, furono una lezione importante, ebbero allora il valore di un'ipoteca che permise all'*Action* di spingere la pittura oltre la sua condizione contemplativa, di sottrarla alla fin fine al dominio dell'arte pura, cui l'astratto è sottoposto, e di riportarla alla realtà. La tela era diventata "un'arena in cui agire", non era più dunque quella cosa intesa, secondo le celebri parole di Maurice Denis, come una superficie piana coperta di colori assemblati in base ad un determinato criterio; non era più, secondo le parole di Rosenberg il supporto di una pittura bensì di un evento. E se di evento si doveva trattare, allora tutta la realtà, naturale o naturalata che fosse, entrava in gioco nella formazione dell'opera.

Quando fu possibile pensare tecnicamente un cuore espantato e ancora pulsante come vita corente e prendere coscienza che l'artificiale era ormai impiantato saldamente dentro il nostro orizzonte naturale, quando si chiari il significato storico dell'essere nella fase inoltrata del ciclo della modernità, proprio a quel punto iniziò il lavoro di Gilardi. Preso atto dell'avvenuto superamento dell'arte intesa come pura dimensione estetica, egli propose à tout le monde di sdraiarsi su un prato artificiale, e determinare così un *Event*.

Produrre costruzioni naturali o nature artificiali avendo acquisito la lezione che l'epoca portava con sé significava cimentarsi con un'altra delle trasformazioni, forse la più radicale, che avrebbe subito l'arte: il passaggio dall'estetico al politico, inteso quest'ultimo, dallo stesso artista, come il momento di applicazione dell'impegno al cambiamento antropologico. Era il grado successivo all'arte che entrava nella vita.



Piero Gilardi, some drawings currently exhibited at IAge - Collection Storage, Todi, Courtesy Atelier Piero ardi



Dalle originali forme biomorfiche dei *Tappeti-natura*, espressione di un nuovo modo di pensare la funzione dell'arte, ebbe inizio un lungo percorso che si potenziò adottando via via nuove tecnologie e incorporando i risultati del nuovo sapere scientifico. Così la dialettica tra arte e natura si ampliò fino a comprendere la biopolitica e le "maxilotte", si estese fino a trovare il proprio epicentro nel rapporto con le tecnosciences. Il risultato è un gigantesco *Environment*, dove hanno trovato posto nel corso del tempo il teatro politico e la creatività condivisa, le manifestazioni e i cortei di protesta, le feste di quartiere e l'adesione ai collettivi, la partecipazione ai gruppi di antipsichiatria ma anche l'intensa attività critica e di informazione. Un *Environment* di cui il PAV è una significativa testimonianza istituzionale.

Seppure l'elenco degli ambiti menzionati non è privo di qualche dimenticanza, rende sufficientemente bene la complessità di una posizione che dall'arte si è propagata alla vita, come Gilardi professava apertamente già all'inizio della sua avventura artistica, in sintonia tanto con la tradizione dell'avanguardia quanto con la generazione protagonista della Contestazione, ma con la consapevolezza dei nuovi termini proposti dalla difficile fase storica contemporanea.

Una volta egli ha detto: "Anche gli artisti sono impegnati a inventare e prefigurare soluzioni per praticare un nuovo equilibrio nell'interazione tra il corpo e il mondo".

Il corpo trova posto dentro quell'*Environment* che si fa mondo. Non il corpo-uomo che emerge dall'antropologia esistenziale ma, come ci ricorda l'artista, un corpo con il cervello volontario e l'inconscio cerebrale, e ancora, un corpo a metà strada tra il nostro cervello e il mondo, un corpo che, appunto, incorpora informazioni nello stesso momento in cui si esprime.

Si potrebbe compendiare il lavoro di Gilardi ricalcando il più importante slogan dell'avanguardia, come un processo che fonde l'arte e la vita, ma con la consapevolezza della partita doppia. Dall'arte alla vita, dalla vita all'arte è infatti il titolo che l'artista scelse per un libro apparso al principio degli anni Ottanta che, riassumendo l'esperienza precedente, marcava un passaggio importante nella sua storia di artista e di militante. E non è certamente un caso che quel libro venisse presentato da Mirella Bandini, che sul tema del rapporto tra estetica e politica aveva lungamente lavorato.

Ma potremmo anche tentare di approssimarci alla comprensione del suo percorso pensandolo come una progressione verso il *biopolitico*, inteso come la connessione stretta e vincolante tra la dimensione della politica e quella della vita biologica.

Che questa in fondo sia l'energia che anima l'intera sua opera lo testimonia anche il titolo della

solutions to practice a new equilibrium in the interaction between the body and the world".

The body finds its place within that *Environment* that becomes world. Not the body-man that emerges from existential anthropology, but as the artist reminds us, a body with the intentional brain and the cerebral unconscious, and again, a body halfway between our brain and the world, a body that, precisely, incorporates information in the same moment in which it expresses itself.

One could summarize Gilardi's work by repeating the most important slogan of the avant-garde, as a process that merges *art and life*, but with the awareness of the dual game. *Dall'arte alla vita, dalla vita all'arte* [From Art to Life, from Life to Art] is in fact the title that the artist chose for a book that appeared in the early eighties and which, summing up the previous experience, marked an important passage in his history as an artist and a militant. And it is certainly no coincidence that the book was presented by Mirella Bandini, who had worked for a long time on the theme of the relationship between aesthetics and politics.

But we could also try to get closer to understanding his path thinking of it as a progression towards *biopolitics*, meant as the close and binding connection between the dimension of politics and that of biological life. The fact that this is the energy that animates his entire work is also proved by the title of the exhibition that Gilardi is opening in the next few days at the Michel Rein gallery in Paris: *Dalla Natura all'Arte* [From Nature to Art]. A title that could be followed, as subtitle, by his own words: "...the opposition nature/culture dissolves in the continuum of the phenomenology of the body lived in first person, both in actions and in representations".

The thirty drawings presented at CollAge, the Collection Storage of Matteo Boetti in Todi, made by the artist between a trip and a vacation, belong to a private dimension; they are not projects for future works, although they have an immediate evident correlation with *Tappeti-natura*. In fact, they belong to the same modality of representation that makes nature an artifice that dissolves into culture. They have no aesthetic intent, it is not a matter of playing with gouaches, as he once recommended to the students of Brera. After all, what place could these drawings have within Gilardi's *Environment* if not a marginal one? And then, in consideration of the condition in which the artist made them, *en plein air*, they could refer to a realist and/or impressionist attitude, in any case to a contemplative and dialectic approach, whether nature is impressionistically fixed on the subject or its opposite, of the subject that expressionistically affirms itself on nature. In this sense there would be nothing more conventional, and therefore marginal to its artistic construction, if it were not for the fact that the relationship that is established between Gilardi's body and the object Nature is extremely distant from the dynamics that formed the basis of that impressionistic/expressionistic dialectical motion. For a long time, the artist has been showing us the structuralist path along which the subject has become body and nature has become world.

Imagine Piero and his life companion, during a long excursion, committing himself to observe, to reflect, to draw by performing a series of actions starting from his own body, halfway between the brain and the world. A body that, in fact, incorporates information in the same moment in which it expresses itself.

Merleau-Ponty's words echo here strongly: "The enigma derives from the fact that my body simultaneously sees and is seen. That which looks at all things can also look at itself and recognize in what it sees *the other side* of its power of looking [...]. It sees itself seeing, it touches itself touching, it is visible and sensitive for itself".

And if we were to think of these drawings as *cartes d'invitation*, as an invitation to immerse ourselves in the same contemplative/active condition in which the artist has put himself? And so, maybe, to experience a new modality of body-world relationship?

mostra che Gilardi inaugura nei prossimi giorni presso la galleria Michel Rein di Parigi: *Dalla natura all'arte*. Un titolo cui potremmo far seguire, come sottotitolo, le sue stesse parole: "...l'opposizione natura/cultura si dissolve nel continuum della fenomenologia del corpo vissuto in prima persona, nelle azioni come nelle rappresentazioni".

I trenta disegni presentati recentemente presso CollAge, il Collection Storage di Matteo Boetti a Todi, realizzati dall'artista tra una gita e una vacanza, appartengono a una dimensione privata; non sono progetti per future opere, seppure hanno una immediata evidente correlazione con i *Tappeti-natura*. Infatti, appartengono alla stessa modalità di rappresentazione che fa della natura un artificio che si dissolve nella cultura. Non hanno alcuna intenzionalità estetica, non si tratta di giocare con le gouache, come ha raccomandato una volta rivolto agli studenti di Brera. Del resto, quale collocazione potrebbero avere questi disegni all'interno dell'*Environment* gilardiano se non marginale? E poi, in considerazione della condizione in cui l'artista li ha eseguiti, *en plein air*, potrebbero rimandare a una postura realista e/o impressionista, comunque ad un atteggiamento contemplativo e dialettico, sia che la natura si fissi impressionisticamente sul soggetto sia il suo contrario, del soggetto che espressionisticamente si affermi sulla natura. In tal senso non ci sarebbe nulla di più convenzionale, e dunque marginale alla sua costruzione artistica, se non fosse che la relazione che si stabilisce tra il corpo Gilardi e l'oggetto Natura è abissalmente lontana dalle dinamiche che costituiscono la base di partenza di quel moto dialettico impressionistico/espressionistico. È da molto tempo che l'artista ci indica la via strutturalista lungo la quale il soggetto si è fatto corpo e la natura mondo.

Si immagini Piero con la sua compagna, durante una lunga escursione, impegnarsi a osservare, a riflettere, a disegnare compiendo una serie di azioni a partire dal proprio corpo, a metà strada tra il cervello e il mondo. Un corpo che, per l'appunto, incorpora informazioni nello stesso momento in cui si esprime.

Riecheggiano qui prepotentemente le parole di Merleau-Ponty: "L'enigma sta nel fatto che il mio corpo è insieme vedente e visibile. Guarda ogni cosa, ma può anche guardarsi, e riconoscere in ciò che allora vede *l'altra faccia* della sua potenza visiva [...]. Si vede vedente, si tocca toccante, è visibile e sensibile per se stesso".

E se pensassimo questi disegni come *cartes d'invitation*, come un invito a immergerci in quella medesima condizione *contemplativa/attiva* in cui si è messo l'artista? E così, magari, esperire una nuova modalità di rapporto corpo-mondo?



Ciottoli di un letto torrenziale, pesche cadute dopo un temporale in un frutteto, gabbiani in volo sul mare, vegetazione bruciata di foreste incendiate, un sottobosco innevato, un campo di angurie, di mais o zucche, questi sono alcuni dei temi dei *Tappeti-natura* di Piero Gilardi.

Dalla metà degli anni '60 a oggi, egli ha reso i *Tappeti-natura* (a metà strada tra pittura e scultura) un segno di riconoscimento del suo lavoro, un oggetto di riflessione per parlare di una natura intima e familiare che risuona in ognuno di noi collettivamente e personalmente.

Ben prima di certi problemi ecologici, che sono oggi al centro del nostro mondo attuale, Gilardi si preoccupava di rappresentare la natura nostra sotto forma di paesaggi ma piuttosto di frammenti, non attraverso una visione panoramica ma adottando uno sguardo orizzontale più vicino alle cose per mostrarci una natura (a volte addomesticata, a volte no) catturata nei suoi minimi dettagli e per attirare la nostra attenzione su ciò che non guarderemmo altrimenti.

Protagonista delle prime mostre di Arte Povera alla fine degli anni '60, Gilardi ha privilegiato parlare della natura non utilizzando materiali elementari (acqua, terra, fuoco...), ma usando un materiale industriale e

all images: Piero Gilardi, *Dalla Natura all'Arte*, installation views, Michel Rein, Paris, 2020. Photo Florian Kleinfenn. Courtesy of the artist and Michel Rein, Paris/Brussels

contemporaneo, il poliuretano espanso, che taglia, sistema, incolla e dipinge per rivelare una natura spinta oltre la realtà con i suoi colori brillanti, vibranti e gioiosi.

Da Piero Gilardi la natura si vive. Ci sediamo su dei tronchi d'albero (*Aigues Tortes*, 2007) per ascoltare i loro rumori, la indossiamo come un indumento da trasformare (*Vestito-Natura Anguria*; *Vestito-Natura Sassi*; *Vestito Natura Betulle*, 1967; *OGM Free*, 2014). Il suo *Igloo* (1964), mostrato per la prima volta a Parigi, è un pezzo storico che deve essere letto nel desiderio di tornare a una forma primitiva di vita lontana dalle sfide della società dei consumi dell'epoca, problematica che condivide soprattutto con l'amico Pino Pascali (1935-1968).

Questa coscienza politica, che è al centro del lavoro di Gilardi, si esprime non solo nei suoi disegni, nei manifesti e nelle maschere con l'immagine dei politici prodotti ogni anno per la parata del Primo Maggio a Torino, ma anche in questa profonda riflessione di consapevolezza della natura che ha occupato l'artista per oltre cinquant'anni.

ARTFORUM

Piero Gilardi
Artforum
September 22nd, 2020
By Mara Hoberman



Piero Gilardi, *Temporale e pesche cadute* (Thunderstorm and Fallen Peaches), 1967, polyurethane foam under Plexiglas cover, 5 9/10 x 5 9/10 x 7.

and a stony creek, respectively—are displayed on the floor. The remainder, which includes five smaller tondos produced while the artist was in coronavirus confinement in his native Turin, decorate the walls.

Though some earlier works are protected by Plexiglas, Gilardi intended these carpets to be walked, slept, and picnicked on as one would do on the terrains they represent. The artist's chosen material—a synthetic foam used in mattresses and couch cushions—helps his landscapes merge comfortably into a domestic setting. Luckily, visitors to the current exhibition can physically experience *Algues Tortes*, 2007. Not a carpet, but a foam bench in the form of a log, this work, titled for a park in the Pyrenees, emits bird chirps if someone sits on just the right spot.

Illustrating Gilardi's equally important role as an activist, curator Valérie Da Costa has included examples of the artist's workers' rights posters as well as a few of his protest props. *Kossiga-Dracula*, 1991, a giant mask depicting a grotesque caricature of President Francesco Cossiga with vampire teeth, was confiscated by the police during a 1991 demonstration in Turin and only returned to Gilardi in 2011. In *O.G.M. Free* (O.M.G. Free), 2014, three ears of corn with jack-o'-lantern-style faces carry a banner promoting nongenetically modified crops. Here displayed on mannequins, the costumes were originally worn during Milan's "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life" World Expo in 2015. Amid the current backdrop of plentiful and overlapping environmental and political crises, Gilardi's art-as-activism appears more vital than ever.

—Mara Hoberman

PARIS

Piero Gilardi

MICHEL REIN | PARIS
42 rue de Turenne
September 5–October 24, 2020

Piero Gilardi is best known for the polyurethane "Nature Carpets" he has made since the mid-1960s. Depicting realistic landscapes such as seashores, agricultural fields, and woodlands, these rugs vary widely in size, format, and orientation. Of the fifteen such works on view here, two five-foot squares—*Temporale e pesche cadute* (Thunderstorm and Fallen Peaches) and *Greto di torrente* (Riverbed) (both 1967), a peach-littered lawn

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EXPOSITIONS REVIEWS



PARIS

Piero Gilardi

Galerie Michel Rein / 5 septembre - 17 octobre 2020

Nous avons tous fait l'expérience d'une bûche de Noël sur laquelle a été déposé un fruit (disons une pomme) en massepin. C'est là une pomme idéale à la peau brillante, et pourtant ce petit élément de décor comestible, une fois grignoté, se révèle décevant, trop douxereux. L'univers de Piero Gilardi, artiste italien, théoricien, critique d'art, activiste, proche de l'arte povera dans les années 1960 comme du bio art une vingtaine d'années plus tard, n'est pas très éloigné de l'apparence synthétique des fruits en massepin. Ses *Tapis-nature* en mousse polyuréthane, qui l'ont fait largement connaître, fleurissent bon l'excès et le facile. L'exposition présentée galerie Michel Rein (commissaire: Valérie Da Costa), qui réunit des œuvres historiques de Gilardi (notamment un *Igloo* de 1964) et d'autres très récentes, dont certaines produites pendant le confinement, révèle bien toute l'ambiguïté de ce travail. D'un côté, il y a des sculptures volontaire-

ment molles, aux couleurs saturées, qui reprennent le plus souvent des formes issues de l'observation de la nature: plage de galets, paysage enneigé, champ de courges, etc. Mais l'esthétique est celle de décors d'aquariums domestiques, avec des galets trop ronds, des coquillages trop nacrés, des rainures de feuilles d'arbre trop régulières ou de la neige trop blanche. Il est étrange de voir cette exposition dans une période post-confinement où nos déplacements sont restreints, car ces *Tapis-nature*, de la fin des années 1960 ou de l'année dernière, ont une allure d'images léchées passées par le tamis des filtres Instagram, ou de dessins animés Disney. Ils rappellent par exemple les forêts de *la Belle au bois dormant*, la jungle du *Livre du même nom* ou l'île de *Peter Pan*. À l'origine, on pouvait se vautrer sur ces tapis, destinés à être exposés au sol, mais la conservation préventive est passée par là, et la plupart se contemplent aujourd'hui en respect

des gestes barrière, derrière leurs coffrets de plexiglas. Seule œuvre figurant un immense tronc sombre recouvert de mousse très verte, *Algues Tortes* (2007), permet que l'on pose son fessier sur elle, générant immédiatement un bruit de forêt, qui s'arrête sitôt le popotin relevé. Il y a donc bien chez Gilardi, derrière les couleurs acidulées, une forme de mélancolie liée à une impossible quête du paysage, constamment transformé par nos regards en quête d'une fiction de nature. Mais, de l'autre côté, il y a aussi, révélée par des séries de dessins politiques et de masques réalisés par l'artiste pour des manifestations et autres actions militantes (dont de formidables épis de maïs géants et grimaçants, dénonçant les OGM), une énergie explosive qui refuse que l'on réduise ce travail à une apparence mortifère.

Gilardi, ancien membre d'Avanguardia operaia dans les années 1970, au sein de laquelle il défendait les droits de travailleurs, lutte aujourd'hui aux côtés de Fridays for Future ou Extinction Rebellion. Né pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, Piero Gilardi est en réalité un petit jeune, sans naïveté et à la joie contagieuse.

Camille Paulhan

We have all had that Christmas log experience, with a piece of marzipan fruit (say an apple) popped upon the festive dessert for decoration: an ideal apple with a shiny skin, and yet this small edible decorative element, once nibbled, turns out to be disappointing, too sweet. The world of Piero Gilardi, Italian artist, theorist, art critic, activist, close to arte povera in the 1960s and to Bio Art some twenty years later, isn't far removed from the synthetic appearance of marzipan fruit. His polyurethane *Nature Carpets*, which have earned him wide recognition, smack of excess

and fakery. The exhibition presented at Galerie Michel Rein, which brings together Gilardi's historical works (notably a 1964 *Igloo*) and very recent ones, some of which were produced during lockdown, clearly reveals the ambiguity of this work.

On the one hand, there are deliberately soft sculptures with saturated colours, which most often take forms derived from observations of nature: pebble beach, snowy landscape, squash field, etc. But the aesthetics are those of domestic aquarium decorations, with pebbles that are too round, shells that are too pearly, tree leaf grooves that are too regular or snow that is too white. It is strange to see this exhibition in a post-lockdown period where our movements are restricted, because these nature carpets, from the late 1960s or last year, look like polished images passed through the sieve of Instagram filters, or Disney cartoons. They recall, for example, the forests of *Sleeping Beauty*, the jungle of the eponymous *Book* or Peter Pan's Island. Initially, one could loll on these carpets, which were originally intended to be displayed on the floor, but preventive conservation has stepped in, and most of them are nowadays to be contemplated in keeping with preventative measures, behind their Plexiglas cases. Only one work, *Algues Tortes* (2007), which features a huge dark trunk covered with very green moss, allows one's backside to rest upon it, immediately generating a forest sound, which stops as soon as the behind is lifted. So behind the bright colours, Gilardi's work is a form of melancholy linked to an impossible quest for landscape, constantly transformed by our gaze in search of a fiction of nature. But on the other hand, there is also, revealed by the series of political drawings and masks made by the artist for demonstrations and other militant actions (including fantastic giant, grimacing corn cobs denouncing GMOs), an explosive energy that refuses to reduce this work to a dismal appearance. Gilardi, a former member of the Avanguardia operaia in the 1970s, where he defended workers' rights, is now fighting alongside Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion. Born during the Second World War, Piero Gilardi is in fact a young man, without naivety and with contagious alacrity.

This page / this page: « Dalla Natura all'Arte ». Vues d'exposition / exhibition views. (Court. l'artiste; Ph. Florian Kleinlenn)



JULIET

Piero Gilardi
 Juliet
 September, 2020
 By Marta Dellagiacomma

Piero Gilardi

Galerie Michel Rein, Paris/Brussels

by Marta Dellagiacomma



Michel Rein in una foto di Valeria La Cusma

A selection of Piero Gilardi's works will be on view from September 2020 at Michel Rein's Parisian gallery situated in the historical Le Marais district. Founded in Turin in 1992, Michel Rein represents prestigious artists, supporting French and international artistic scenes. In 2000 Michel Rein moved to Paris, and in 2013 it opened a second independent space in Brussels. Gilardi has always been related to the French contemporary art panorama, in particular to the ecological and political committed practices. His personal exhibition in Paris (September 5th - October 10th), curated by Valérie de Costa, will have an anthological approach, presenting works from the 60's to the present day. On the occasion of Gilardi's exhibition, Michel Rein agreed to answer a few questions about his relationship with the Italian artist work.

What are the research guidelines of your galleries? Since we started the gallery in 1992, poetics and politics are our main guidelines. We always were interested in politically or socially committed artists working in a poetic way whatever are their practices, nationalities, generations. We are representing emerging as well as established artists. We also focus on French artists as we are keen to promoting our local artistic scene.

What are your relations with contemporary art museum institutions? We try to have the best possible relations with private and public collections. Both activities are rewarding. We obviously consider as our prior goal to promote our artists to museum directors and international curators. We were lucky that most of our artists are collected by international museums and participated to major exhibitions as Venice Biennial, Documenta Kassel... It is mainly due to the incredible relevance of our artists.

How does Gilardi's work relate to the artists that you represent? I was always close to Italian artists. Since 1993, we exhibited a lot of Italian artists, Lilliana Moro, Grazia Toderi, Bernhard Rüdiger, Alfredo Pirri. Our gallery is now representing Michele Ciacciofera, Luca Vitone. Starting a collaboration

with Piero Gilardi is a great chance. I like the Arte Povera, a major movement in the twentieth century history of art. Piero Gilardi was always in advance: the ecological imperative a few decades before many others, the presentation of divided societies by supporting the struggling Turin workers in the 70's. Then, more recently the passion for new interactive technologies. This commitment to social and artistic ecology will give him the idea of the Parco d'Arte Vivente in Turin (where his Foundation is located) an open space for established and young artists that he invites with an unfailing support. All this is so important in our today's world. I love the shape of Piero Gilardi's works «pleasant», colourful, approachable almost seductively attractive like the «Tappeti-Natura» that he developed since the 60's. Piero Gilardi is incredibly



close to artists we are already representing as Maria Thereza Alves, Allan Sekula, Jimmie Durham, Enrique Ramirez, Luca Vitone...

What dynamics are at work in the international art market? Unfortunately globalization generates

financial concentration and mega galleries. Art shouldn't only become a department of the luxury industry. At our tiny scale, we are trying to be faithful to our commitments. We are optimistic, future is unpredictable.

Piero Gilardi seduto sull'opera "Agos, fortes" d'2007, polyurethane foam, unique artwork, 70 x 428 cm



Piero Gilardi, azione di strada all'interno di una protesta contro l'impiego dell'energia nucleare, Catro Italy, 1987

Inrockuptibles

Piero Gilardi
les Inrockuptibles
September 29th, 2020
By Ingrid Luquet-Gad

Un artiste plastique

Célébré pour ses tapis-nature en polyuréthane, l'italien **PIERO GILARDI** anticipe les luttes écologistes à venir. Une nouvelle exposition éclaire ses racines militantes plongées dans un réalisme de l'infiltration.



Courtesy of the artist and Michel Rein, Paris/Brussels. Ph. Florian Kleinfenn

URBAINS QUI SUFFOQUEZ, ON VOUS PROPOSE DE VOUS ÉVADER. QUE CHOISIREZ-VOUS ? Un rivage constellé de coquillages, un sous-bois tapissé d'un lit de feuilles, ou peut-être un champ d'arbres fruitiers à l'abondante récolte ? Poussez la porte de la galerie Michel Rein à Paris, et tout devient possible, du moins dans la limite des choix disponibles. Au même format carré s'alignent au mur des morceaux de nature en pleine gloire. Nos sens sont parfaitement comblés, car cette nature, c'est la nature en mieux : fabriqués en mousse polyuréthane taillée puis peinte, les *tapis-nature* (*tappeti-natura*) de l'artiste italien Piero Gilardi sont assurés de ne jamais faner, flétrir ni dépérir.

Au milieu des années 1960, lorsqu'il entreprend la série qui lancera sa carrière, il raconte avoir été frappé par les déchets plastiques envahissant les glets d'une rivière. Aujourd'hui, la vision est devenue si banale qu'elle qualifie parfois notre époque, ère du Plastocène qui teinte les *tapis-nature* d'ironie tragique : l'abondance édenique y est simulée par la raison de sa perte, ce matériau polluant issu de la pétrochimie qui demeurera la signature de l'artiste.

Lorsque Piero Gilardi l'utilise pour première fois en 1964 avec *Igloo*, œuvre présentée à la galerie, le geste n'a pas les mêmes résonances. S'il anticipe les luttes écologistes, il réagit alors à un contexte social. À Turin, sa ville natale, le rejet de la société de consommation naissante gronde parmi les jeunes artistes : décidés à briser avec l'iconologie consumériste du pop art, ils elles optent pour l'emploi de matériaux périssables. Ce sera l'arte povera, dont Piero Gilardi accompagne l'émergence avant de s'en dissocier lorsque le mouvement s'institutionnalise en 1967.

Chez lui, le militantisme et la mobilisation collective resteront cruciaux, et l'usage de son matériau s'y réfère : il n'est pas tant synthétique qu'il est industriel ; pauvre, alors, non pas au sens naturel comme chez les autres artistes de l'arte povera, mais au sens d'un rebut de la société. En se l'appropriant par ses *tapis-nature*, ses *éléments-nature* et ses *semblis-nature*, Gilardi affirme qu'un usage alternatif est possible. Il le reconecte au corps, au repos et au loisir, alors même que dans les années 1960 le système de production tayloriste rend la cadence

intenable et déshumanise les ouvriers.

En dialogue avec les œuvres-plaisir, l'historienne de l'art et commissaire d'exposition Valérie Du Costa a choisi d'accorder une grande place aux œuvres-lutte. Trois épis de maïs grimaçants à taille humaine brandissent une banderole anti-OGM dès l'entrée. Cette œuvre récente, placée parmi les *tapis-nature* comme une première suggestion d'un autre niveau de lecture, sera prolongée, à l'étage, par une partie dédiée aux activités militantes de l'artiste. On y trouve un ensemble méconnu de dessins politiques, d'affiches sérigraphiées et de masques de la même mousse qui furent portés lors de manifestations des années 1980-90 à Turin. Plutôt qu'une révolutionnaire, Piero Gilardi est un réaliste. Il sait qu'il est plus facile d'imaginer la fin du monde que celle du capitalisme, refuse la paralysie ou l'escapisme, et plutôt que de lâcher la proie pour l'ombre, choisit d'infiltrer le système de l'intérieur pour en réorienter le cours. Ingrid Luquet-Gad

Piero Gilardi, *Dalla Natura all'Arte* jusqu'au 24 octobre, galerie Michel Rein, Paris



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CULTURE/ ARTS

Piero Gilardi, mousses pour les temps futurs

Faussement naïfs, les tapis et sculptures de l'italien témoignent de son activisme en faveur de l'écologie sociale et politique.

En voilà, sans cesse qui fleurit le pécher ! Je suis tellement pauvre que, justement, en y trouvant des péchés, plus vives que nature, tombées dans un sous-bois de mousse en polyuréthane sous l'œil d'un trou d'arbre couché (un visage sans passé par là). Dans le monde de l'italien Piero Gilardi, né en 1921, inventeur en 1965 des « tapis-nature » (*tappeti natura*), petits objets de paysages hyper-réalistes composés de matière totalement éphémère. Il y a des portraits accrochés dans un cadre qui brille, des glets de rivière semblant au bord de sécher, des arbres nus en hiver dont les branches s'élancent contre des bois de cerf, soit une nature au

carrié aux contours étonnantes, alligée dans des vitraux de plexi, éblouissante par la lumière du kit et tout à fait totalement oxygénée. Si elle est étonnante malgré l'artifice, c'est que cette nature-là fait déjà référence à un archétype connu, avant qu'elle ne devienne une expérience réelle, des illustrations de ce que nous pourrions être ou de ce que nous sommes, une nature vivante et étonnante, éblouissante par la lumière du kit et tout à fait totalement oxygénée. Si elle est étonnante malgré l'artifice, c'est que cette nature-là fait déjà référence à un archétype connu, avant qu'elle ne devienne une expérience réelle, des illustrations de ce que nous pourrions être ou de ce que nous sommes, une nature vivante et étonnante, éblouissante par la lumière du kit et tout à fait totalement oxygénée.

Art. Le titre d'une exposition géographique tenue en 2017 au Musée de Rome, « Piero Gilardi : Nature-Peuvres », était ainsi aussi bien porteur d'engagement continu de l'artiste en faveur de l'écologie sociale et politique qu'il faisait expérimenter la possibilité d'une nature éternelle, incontrôlable par ce matériau issu du pétrole. « C'est du jour partie de la vie, mais la vie était éternelle, il faut



Vue de l'exposition « Dalla Natura all'Arte », de Piero Gilardi. PHOTO: GIANLUIGI ALBERTINI

se décider à la faire et à la détruire», dit-il. Dans la première salle de la galerie Michel Rein, à Paris (11^e), cinq petites œuvres circulaires réalisées par l'artiste pendant le confinement entourent un épais bloc de mousse de polyuréthane, aux formes toutes humaines. Une figure se tient sur un qui nous paraît marcher pendant un regard muet et arbuté, un T-shirt blanc en plein vol (Gardroyd), un coquillage rose. Sur au fond de l'écran, des épis de maïs et de la vigne. Tout ce bloc nous avertit de ce que, avec, la nature et la fiction nous ont en effet de notre séparation radicale du monde naturel. Piero Gilardi, qui fut associé à de ses

premières heures au mouvement de l'arte povera dont il resta le plus influent, dit souvent les lettres qu'il écrivait à son père pour le rassurer, le rassurant sur sa production artistique pendant les années 70 pour se concentrer sur des actions militantes et artistiques collectives, avant de revenir aux « tapis nature » dans les années 80 et de créer, en 2008, un parc expérimental d'art vivant à Turin, en pleine friche industrielle.

Références. Il y a dans la galerie des œuvres très pertinentes de son militantisme, les beaux épis de maïs colorés ayant servi à des manifestations anti-OGM qu'on se verrait bien profiter, juste là, ou de gigantesques masques servant à carac-

teriser des politiques très contrastées de manifestations, mais il ne faudrait pas que l'on se laisse tromper par son apparence délicate. Il suffit de l'observer, si, aller-y ! Sur ces pages, il y a des photos d'œuvres aux couleurs et formes de vrais. Agence Joris (2007), musée, un plaisir de mentir à l'histoire. Ne faut pas se laisser tromper par son apparence délicate de réactions éphémères, nous les appelle-t-il, tous habitants du monde au même titre ?

ELISABETH FRANCK-DUMAS

PIERO GILARDI
DALLA NATURA ALL'ARTE
Galerie Michel Rein, 75005
jusqu'au 24 octobre.


Collezione da Tiffany
DIRETTORE GENERALE: ARTI, CONTEMPORANEA E MODA - 10121

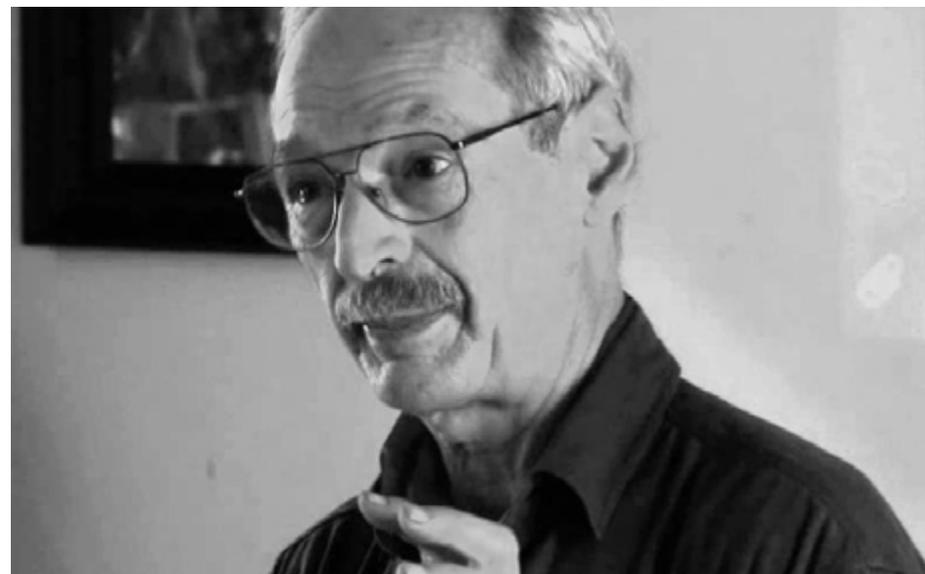
Piero Gilardi
Collezione da Tiffany
June 2019
by Benedetta Bodo di Albaretto

— DENTRO L'OPERA: INCONTRO CON PIERO GILARDI —



Piero Gilardi è nato nel 1942 a Torino, dove vive e lavora. Nel 1963 ha allestito la sua prima mostra personale *Macchine per il futuro*, e solo due anni più tardi realizza le prime opere in poliuretano espanso, i *Tappeti-natura* che ha poi esposto a Parigi, Bruxelles, Colonia, Amburgo, Amsterdam e New York. **A partire dal 1968 interrompe la produzione di opere** per partecipare all'elaborazione delle nuove tendenze artistiche della fine degli anni '60: *Arte Povera*, *Land Art*, *Antiform Art*. **Ha collaborato alla realizzazione delle due prime rassegne internazionali delle nuove tendenze allo Stedelijk Museum di Amsterdam e alla Kunsthalle di Berna e nel 1969 comincia una lunga esperienza transculturale diretta all'analisi teorica e alla pratica della congiunzione "Arte Vita".**

Nel 1981 riprende l'attività nel mondo artistico, esponendo in gallerie delle installazioni accompagnate da workshops creativi con il pubblico. A partire dal 1985 inizia una ricerca artistica con le nuove tecnologie attraverso l'elaborazione del Progetto IXIANA che, presentato al Parc de la Villette di Parigi, prefigura un parco tecnologico nel quale il grande pubblico poteva sperimentare in senso artistico le tecnologie digitali. Nel corso degli anni '90 ha sviluppato una serie di installazioni interattive multimediali con una intensa attività internazionale. Insieme a Claude Faure e Piotr Kowalski, ha costituito l'associazione internazionale Ars Technica ed in qualità di responsabile della sezione italiana, promuove a Torino le mostre internazionali *Arslab. Metodi ed Emozioni* (1992), *Arslab. I Sensi del Virtuale* (1995), *Arslab. I labirinti del corpo in gioco* (1999).



Ha pubblicato due libri di riflessione teorica sulle sue varie ricerche: *Dall'arte alla vita, dalla vita all'arte* (La Salamandra, Milano 1981) e *Not for Sale* (Mazzotta, Milano 2000 e Les Presses du réel, Dijon 2003). Ha promosso il progetto del PAV - Parco Arte Vivente, che si è aperto a Torino nel 2008, nel quale si compendiano tutte le sue esperienze relative alla dialettica Natura/Cultura.

Project Marta - Monitoring Art Archive lo ha incontrato per *Collezione da Tiffany* al fine di approfondire le conoscenze tecniche e materiali, in particolare, di *Tronco-Sedile*, una scultura del 1997 misurante 280 cm (lunghezza) x 65 cm di diametro, realizzata intagliando e lavorando il poliuretano (PUR), successivamente dipinto. La scultura raffigura un tronco d'albero ed è stata pensata dall'artista per essere utilizzata come seduta, ed infatti la sua proprietaria ci ha contattato per una manutenzione straordinaria - della quale si sono occupate la nostra consulente tecnica Fabiola Rocco e la collega Melissa David, restauratrici specializzate nell'ambito del contemporaneo - per ricevere indicazioni per mantenerla al meglio nel tempo, pur continuando a farne l'utilizzo previsto da Gilardi.

Benedetta Bodo di Albaretto: La sua ricerca in ambito artistico inizia intorno agli anni '60 e si concentra soprattutto sulla riproduzione di scorci e frammenti di paesaggi ed elementi naturali, un esercizio tecnico che punta ad ottenere un effetto molto realistico ed a porre l'attenzione su uno stile di vita che, col passare del tempo, diventa sempre più artificiale. Le opere in questione sono conosciute come *Tappeti-natura*, sono realizzate in poliuretano espanso dipinto e sono state esposte in tutto il mondo. Vuole raccontarmi più nel dettaglio il suo percorso artistico?

Pietro Gilardi: «I *Tappeti-natura* ho incominciato a farli nel 1965, in un periodo conosciuto come post Pop Art. Gli anni Sessanta sono stati molto fecondi in termini di progettualità nuove, penso al 1966 con la *Minimal Art*, poi evoluta nella *Land Art*, due movimenti che nascono in un contesto di passaggio tra Pop Art e Arte concettuale. In questo periodo si va oltre la dimensione classica del quadro e della scultura per entrare nella dimensione installativa, entrando nello spazio e nel vissuto delle persone. Il *Tappeto-natura* è pensato per essere vissuto dai suoi proprietari. Il tappeto accoglie il nostro corpo, ci cammini sopra ma volendo potresti accoccolartici, no? Il *Tronco-sedile* è un'evoluzione dello spazio del vissuto domestico. Siamo di nuovo fuori dalla dimensione dell'estetica canonica. Da un lato è un oggetto, dall'altro contiene un'immagine evocativa di una problematica che è l'abuso dell'industrialismo nei confronti dell'ambiente. Come sono nati? Una mattina durante una passeggiata sul Sengone, non lontano da Torino, ho avuto una sensazione di ribrezzo alla vista di tutti i rifiuti sul greto del fiume, ed ho voluto ricostruire quello scorcio ripulito dalle tracce inquinanti umane. Basta fiumi inquinati, volevo vedere un greto di fiume così com'è in natura».



Una vista di *Naure Forever* al MAXXI di Roma (2017) con i celebri *Tappeti-natura* di Pietro Gilardi

B.B.: Potrebbe raccontarmi le sue preferenze in termini di materiali utilizzati nelle sue opere? Mi riferisco non solo alle tipologie di poliuretano ma anche ad esempio alla materia pittorica solitamente realizzata con una miscela a base di lattice di gomma ("Mescola Gilardi"), pensato per proteggere il poliuretano dal degrado indotto dalla luce, ed agli adesivi che utilizza per assemblare gli elementi che compongono le sue opere.

penso a come fosse possibile fare una cosa del genere. Ho pensato a cosa accoglie il nostro corpo: sedie, poltrone, letti...sono arrivato così alla gommapiuma. Questa è un prodotto organico, composta al 60% a base di caucciù, una linfa che raggiunge la forma a noi conosciuta tramite processo di vulcanizzazione, però era molto cara ed anche molto deteriorabile. La miscela Gilardi contiene una percentuale di lattice di gomma, mescolato ad un catalizzatore a base di zolfo che serve per la vulcanizzazione, ed un'altra decina di elementi tra cui l'ossido di zinco che filtra i raggi UV. Il poliuretano è gommapiuma sintetica, dopo la guerra dall'utilizzo militare siamo passati all'utilizzo civile. Utilizzo il Plextol B500 come lattice sintetico, la Mescola Gilardi è una miscela di più componenti».

B.B.: Nel caso della scultura *Tronco-sedile* vi è una struttura di sostegno interna all'opera, ma non è possibile appurare come sia stata realizzata visionandola esteriormente. Potrebbe descrivermela?

P.G.: «Nel caso della scultura *Tronco-sedile* vi è una struttura di sostegno interna all'opera, una centina iniziale di compensato spesso, a seguire altre tre centine tagliate nel compensato. Poi ho applicato un foglio di masonite che segue la curva delle centine, e sulla struttura ho avvolto una lastra da 8-10 cm di poliuretano, fissandola con Bostik 99, appositamente per la gommapiuma. [...] Sulla forma così sbazzata intervengo con una lama - rasoio da conciatore - per ritagliare una forma o realizzare le fenditure del legno, oppure con le forbici quando devo ottenere delle sfrangiature, strappando i materiali, oppure la levigatrice orbitale quando devo lisciare le superfici. I lavori più grossi possono richiedere anche una settimana di lavoro».



Pietro Gilardi, *Tronco-Sedile*, 1997. 280 cm (lunghezza) x 65 cm di diametro

B.B.: Conservazione e manutenzione preventiva: esistono delle misure per la conservazione in generale delle sue opere che raccomanda di adottare ai suoi collezionisti/galleristi? Penso ad esempio all'accortezza di non esporre le opere vicino a fonti di calore o in ambienti troppo umidi.

P.G.: «Per approfondire l'aspetto cognitivo sui materiali mi sono servito di tante collaborazioni. Alla fine degli anni Sessanta ho lavorato con la ditta Gufram, che produceva oggetti in poliuretano espanso verniciati con lattice di gomma. La formula di quest'ultima miscela l'avevo concessa io, ma loro hanno messo in campo ingegneri e una tecnologia sviluppata per migliorare la composizione, studiando quali componenti aggiungere alla miscela e soprattutto utilizzando un forno – una cabina che lavora a 60° – per rafforzare la vulcanizzazione del lattice, rendendo gli oggetti più resistenti. Sono stato assistito dai tecnici della Gufram e della EOC per quanto riguarda i materiali, mi sono confrontato con loro sulla possibilità di aggiungere l'ossido di zinco per proteggere dagli UV, oppure sulla tipologia di teche che è possibile utilizzare per le mie opere, nello specifico penso al plexiglass anti UV».

B.B.: Alcuni artisti hanno integrato nella loro opera il concetto di temporalità, di effimero, così l'idea alla base del progetto prende forma anche attraverso l'utilizzo di elementi che ne causeranno – consapevolmente – il degrado e, in alcuni casi, anche la scomparsa. Lei è favorevole alla testimonianza del passaggio del tempo sull'opera?

P.G.: «Ti faccio un esempio. Il Museo di Gallarate ha una mia opera, uno scoglio sonoro, con all'interno un meccanismo abbastanza complesso, che suona quando le persone lo ribaltano, il rumore di un masso che cade in mare. Ovviamente questa manipolazione ha portato a un deterioramento consistente, ed ora il Museo mi ha chiesto di realizzare una exhibition copy per salvaguardare il pezzo originale. Non è qualcosa con cui sono d'accordo, volevo fosse un'opera da utilizzare, effimera, destinata a perdersi. Però mi sono adattato e ho agito per favorire la durata dell'opera. Bob Morris nel 1967 ha realizzato un'opera alla cui base era posto un registratore, dentro una scatola di legno. Dal suo interno si sentiva il rumore di falegnameria prodotto dall'artista per costruire la scatola. Allo stesso modo le testimonianze dei processi di realizzazione delle opere possono essere sostitutivi delle stesse. Da qui la mia conservazione di disegni e progetti, fotografie e video».



cui bisogna far mantenere una certa distanza? Nel caso di Tronco-sedile è appunto pensato perché ci si possa sedere.

P.G.: «Per molte opere è prevista la manipolazione e l'interazione, però da parte del pubblico spesso c'è ineducazione, quasi una sorta di violenza. Per questo, per quanto riguarda i Tappeti natura, mi è capitato spesso che si decidesse di permettere di toccare una sola delle opere all'interno di una mostra, le altre invece si mettono sotto teca, in modo da poter controllare quell'unica e avere sott'occhio la situazione».

B.B.: Rilascia informazioni a collezionisti, galleristi, allestitori in merito all'installazione dei suoi lavori? Ad esempio l'inclinazione o tipologia delle luci, una distanza specifica dalle altre opere, una collocazione a centro sala?

P.G.: «Quando consegno una delle mie opere fornisco la documentazione necessaria, un dossier con le schede dei materiali perché possa essere esposta in sicurezza, soprattutto quelle molto tecnologiche, per cui addirittura consegno con un hard disk con il programma necessario a farla funzionare. In questi casi consiglio comunque di cambiare il computer ogni 4 anni, per non correre il rischio di non avere più pc compatibile con l'hard disk. Per un'opera tecnologica devi tenere conto che bisogna aggiornarla, perché dopo al massimo 15 anni non trovi più i pezzi di ricambio. Io fornisco il ricambio per ogni pezzo, ma è da mettere in conto un cambio di interfaccia. Nel dossier c'è la descrizione dell'apparato tecnico, la lista degli elementi necessari per il trasporto, le istruzioni per l'uso, relazioni di precedenti restauri, riferimenti di tecnici ci fossero problemi informatici, schemi di montaggio delle opere. Così sono tranquillo quando consegno i miei lavori».

Artribune

Piero Gilardi
Artribune
July 2015
by Davide Dal Sasso

Dialoghi di Estetica. Parola a Piero Gilardi

NEGLI ANNI SESSANTA PIERO GILARDI HA IMPOSTATO LA SUA RICERCA INCENTRANDOLA SUGLI SVILUPPI DELLE SCIENZE POSTNEWTONIANE E LA RELAZIONE FRA ARTE E NATURA. IN SEGUITO SI È CONCENTRATO SULLE PRATICHE RELAZIONALI E PARTECIPATIVE E L'ESPLORAZIONE DELLE POTENZIALITÀ PROVENIENTI DALLE SPERIMENTAZIONI BIO-TECNOLOGICHE. ALLA LUCE DI QUESTI TRATTI SALIENTI DELLA SUA POETICA, QUESTO DIALOGO VERTE SUL RAPPORTO TRA NATURA E ARTIFICIO, IL SUPERAMENTO DEL TRADIZIONALE MODELLO RAPPRESENTAZIONALE E LA POSSIBILITÀ DI RIPENSARE ALL'ARTE IN UNA PROSPETTIVA ANTROPOLOGICA.



Piero Gilardi nell'Ecoagora, 2015 – PAV, Torino - photo Valentina Bonomonte

Negli Anni Sessanta arte e natura costituivano una coppia oppositiva. Il lavoro di allora era principalmente di carattere empirico. Si procedeva cercando di mettere insieme il mondo artificiale, quello delle macchine, con quello naturale. Lo sforzo era perciò rivolto a trovare una possibile conciliazione. Si cercava di condensare questi due mondi.

Di questa potenziale ibridazione mi è sempre interessato soprattutto l'aspetto antropologico: il tentativo di superare l'antinomia tra natura e artificio, riconoscendo l'evoluzione dell'uomo. Come ci insegnano anche le più recenti ricerche scientifiche, l'uomo nel corso della sua evoluzione si ibrida continuamente con ciò che è differente. Questa ibridazione ha perciò contribuito alla stessa evoluzione dell'uomo. Se ci pensiamo, per millenni questo ha voluto dire attuare uno scambio.

Ci fai un esempio?

Il canto degli umani trova molti dei suoi riferimenti nell'osservazione del canto degli uccelli. Lo stesso gesto estetico sembra in qualche modo rifarsi ai comportamenti proto-estetici degli animali.

Per mezzo secolo ho seguito gli sviluppi di questa coppia oppositiva che rimandano anche al rapporto tra arte e cultura. Considerata l'evoluzione della tecnoscienza e il suo integrarsi alla vita, penso che oggi il divario tra i due poli oppositivi si sia ridotto. Forse possiamo dire che la distanza tra natura e artificio sia stata ormai superata. Negli Anni Sessanta, il mio lavoro prendeva avvio proprio dalla ricerca di una possibile soluzione. Oggi mi sembra che quest'ultima sia stata trovata.

Questo approccio è anche all'origine del tuo abbandono del modello classico della rappresentazione – penso in particolare ai tuoi *tappeti-natura* – per procedere in direzione di un'arte incentrata sulla relazionalità. In un certo senso, anche la *Macchina per discorrere* che hai realizzato nel 1963 mostrava già questa direzione del tuo lavoro.

Anche i tappeti-natura erano già un'offerta relazionale, poiché sono pensati per essere soffici giacigli che si offrono al corpo. Proprio questo aspetto rivela anche l'altra dinamica parallela del mio lavoro: compiere un superamento della natura iconica dell'arte per portarla su un registro relazionale.

In questo caso, all'origine delle mie ricerche vi è anche una riflessione sui sensi e la mente, ossia sulla antinomia tra mente e corpo che tuttavia non possono essere scissi. Sono inestricabili. La stessa vita relazionale è basata su questa inscindibilità. Rispetto a questo potenziale superamento (dalla produzione iconica a quella relazionale), sono però convinto che il ciclo si sia quasi compiuto.

Quasi?

Sì, perché vedo nell'arte i residui di una produzione ancora basata su una logica iconica. Si fanno ancora monumenti e l'icona ha tutt'oggi una forza sorprendente soprattutto in ambito mediatico. A ben vedere, le icone sono ancora surrettiziamente valide.

Però l'evoluzione novecentesca dell'arte si deve sia alla produzione di immagini sia alla trasmissione delle idee. Il concettualismo si aggiunge alle tradizionali forme d'arte visiva e plastica, che privilegiano tutt'oggi la produzione iconica. Che cosa ne pensi?

Indubbiamente gli aspetti cognitivi e di elaborazione concettuale sono stati importanti per me e per tutta la nostra generazione. Il lavoro sui concetti e le categorie è stato decisivo. In quegli anni, quello che ci appariva chiaro era proprio che il gesto estetico era la conseguenza di una diversa visione del mondo.

Certo, il mio lavoro, così come quello di altri artisti attivi negli stessi anni, può essere riconosciuto innanzitutto come concettuale. C'è un periodo in particolare della mia ricerca che lo conferma: quello sull'arte microemotiva, che per me corrisponde a un momento di profondo travaglio concettuale.



Piero Gilardi, *Macchina per discorrere*, 1963 - C.C.C. TOURS - photo Francoçis

comunità e le relazioni umane, lasciando supporre che tu abbia compiuto un passaggio dal concettualismo alla relazionalità.

L'elaborazione concettuale per me è avvenuta a partire da una riflessione sul gioco esistenziale sia dell'individuo sia della comunità umana. Questo ha avuto anche un risvolto politico: trovare una nuova connessione tra l'individuo e la comunità, ovvero poter situare le due entità in un nuovo modo. Penso allora all'arte politica come incentrata su questa possibilità: garantire all'individuo un potenziale di libertà e, allo stesso tempo, mirare a ottenere quella sinergia che si crea nella comunanza e nella condivisione sociale. Credo che il nodo del gioco esistenziale sia questo.

Il lavoro concettuale per me ha avuto a che fare prima di tutto con la possibilità di garantire lo scambio mirando ad accogliere la differenza individuale all'interno del cerchio della comunanza. Possiamo intendere tutto questo nei termini di un discorso di apertura dei cerchi: una comunità accoglie la diversità dei suoi componenti individuali nella stessa misura in cui è aperta al dialogo con altri cerchi esterni, ossia con altre comunità. Si tratta dunque di un problema esistenziale che considero, prima di tutto, proprio nei termini di un approccio antropologico.

Forse è proprio in virtù di una riflessione antropologica – ossia di ricerche incentrate sulle relazioni e gli scambi comunitari, l'accoglienza delle diversità – che l'arte, anziché essere sfiorita, è rinata proprio grazie alle ricerche condotte a partire dagli Anni Sessanta. Ti sembra una prospettiva condivisibile?

Sì. Ci sono stati diversi preannunci, spesso di carattere utopico, fatti in ambito artistico in questa direzione. Penso, per esempio, all'annuncio della scultura sociale fatto da Beuys. Un concetto sul quale sono tornato più volte anch'io. L'arte è di tutti. Non dimentichiamo infatti che lo scambio dell'arte, dunque della produzione simbolica, è fondamentale tanto per l'evoluzione delle società quanto per quella degli individui. La stessa costruzione della soggettività è legata alla produzione simbolica e alla condivisione dell'arte a livello comunitario. L'arte è, in fondo, un bene comune. Ma, messa in questi termini, la questione diventa ancora più complessa. Perché, se possiamo dire che l'arte non sia degli artisti o di chi la acquista – supponendo che essa abbia funzioni progettuali, simboliche, terapeutiche ecc. – allo stesso tempo, dovremmo anche esser maggiormente capaci di riconoscerla come potenziale veicolo del cambiamento, come portatrice di nuove speranze.



Piero Gilardi, Akwesasne – Canada – photo Piero Gilardi, 1983

Questa concezione dell'arte si traduce direttamente negli sviluppi successivi delle tue ricerche, penso in particolare all'attivismo sociale e agli interventi di riattivazione creativa che hai attuato in diversi contesti urbani. Quale potrebbe essere un aspetto saliente che ha contrassegnato queste tue attività?

Per me ha voluto dire concentrarmi soprattutto sul mondo pulsionale. Per otto anni ho fatto l'arte-terapeuta. Avevo aperto quattro atelier in cui svolgevo attività insieme a pazienti psichiatrici con patologie diverse. Queste attività mi hanno reso più consapevole del fatto che nell'espressione artistica c'è sempre un'energia libidica. Proprio negli Anni Sessanta si discuteva di due diversi orientamenti teorici della psicoanalisi. Per Freud la produzione di rappresentazioni è espressione censurata delle pulsioni, mentre secondo la concezione junghiana la rappresentazione è piuttosto il costruito progettuale della pulsione. Questa seconda visione credo che permetta di comprendere meglio il compimento della liberazione dell'estetica da qualsiasi valenza normativa.

Spiegaci meglio quest'ultimo concetto.

Oggi in arte non c'è più un canone. E questo permette anche di capire meglio l'attuale eclettismo diffuso nell'arte. Prima di tutto, però, dev'esserci un medium. Sia esso il linguaggio, una macchia di colore, un gesto... È necessario un medium perché vi sia produzione simbolica.

Quello che intendo è che gli Anni Sessanta hanno contribuito a depotenziare la valenza normativa del medium. Ti faccio un esempio che potrebbe essere più calzante. Proprio in quegli anni ho lavorato molto realizzando diverse animazioni artistiche, sia in Italia sia all'estero: sono stato in Africa, in Nicaragua... Queste esperienze mi hanno permesso di individuare una sorta di procedura che si ripeteva con frequenza, ossia le diverse fasi che componevano l'attività creativa, che prevedeva il coinvolgimento dei partecipanti in quella che, in fondo, era un'opera d'arte totale. L'attività prendeva avvio con un gioco liberatorio al quale seguiva un momento rituale con caratteristiche estetiche – ad esempio, il coordinamento coreutico dei partecipanti o lo svolgimento di un'attività teatrale. Alla fine, questo rito tornava di nuovo al gioco. Questa liberazione di cui ti dicevo non può prescindere dal medium, e la penso proprio nei termini di questo momento liberatorio successivo alla fase del rituale. Un momento di elaborazione della rappresentazione che viene abbandonata in modi diversi per tornare alla libertà creativa.



Piero Gilardi, Connected Es – Galleria Civica di Modena, 1999

Quali potrebbero essere allora le conseguenze di questo superamento della rappresentazione in arte?

Questa trasformazione dell'arte rientra in un grosso movimento di trasformazione antropologica che può contribuire alla costituzione di una nuova mente. In questo modo, l'arte offre risorse creative e possibilità relazionali che potrebbero aiutarci ad affrontare le complessità del mondo contemporaneo.

La mostra che è stata recentemente inaugurata al PAV, in cui vengono esposti lavori di tre collettivi di artisti agro-ecologici, è una dimostrazione di questa possibilità: il lavoro in campagna lascia emergere la componente creativa. Si tratta allora di poter intravedere nelle continue trasformazioni dell'arte le offerte di diverse possibilità di salvezza.

La nuova funzione sociale dell'arte potrebbe allora trarre origine da un incremento della portata simbolica nelle pratiche creative e, parallelamente, da una riduzione di quella rappresentazionale?

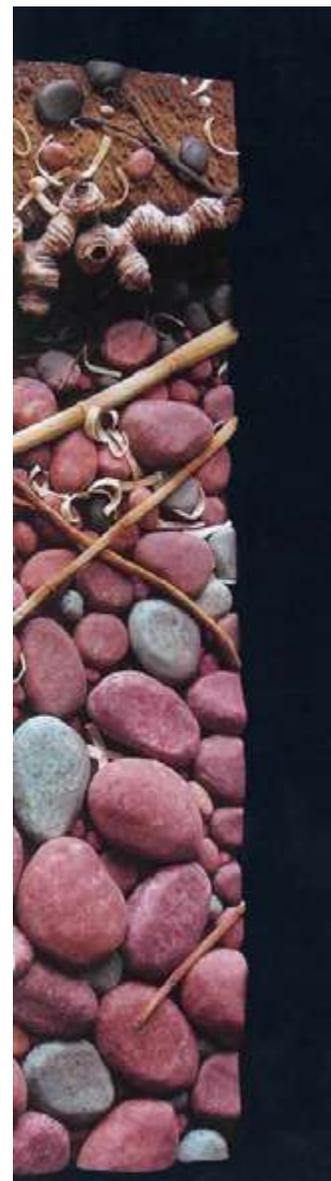
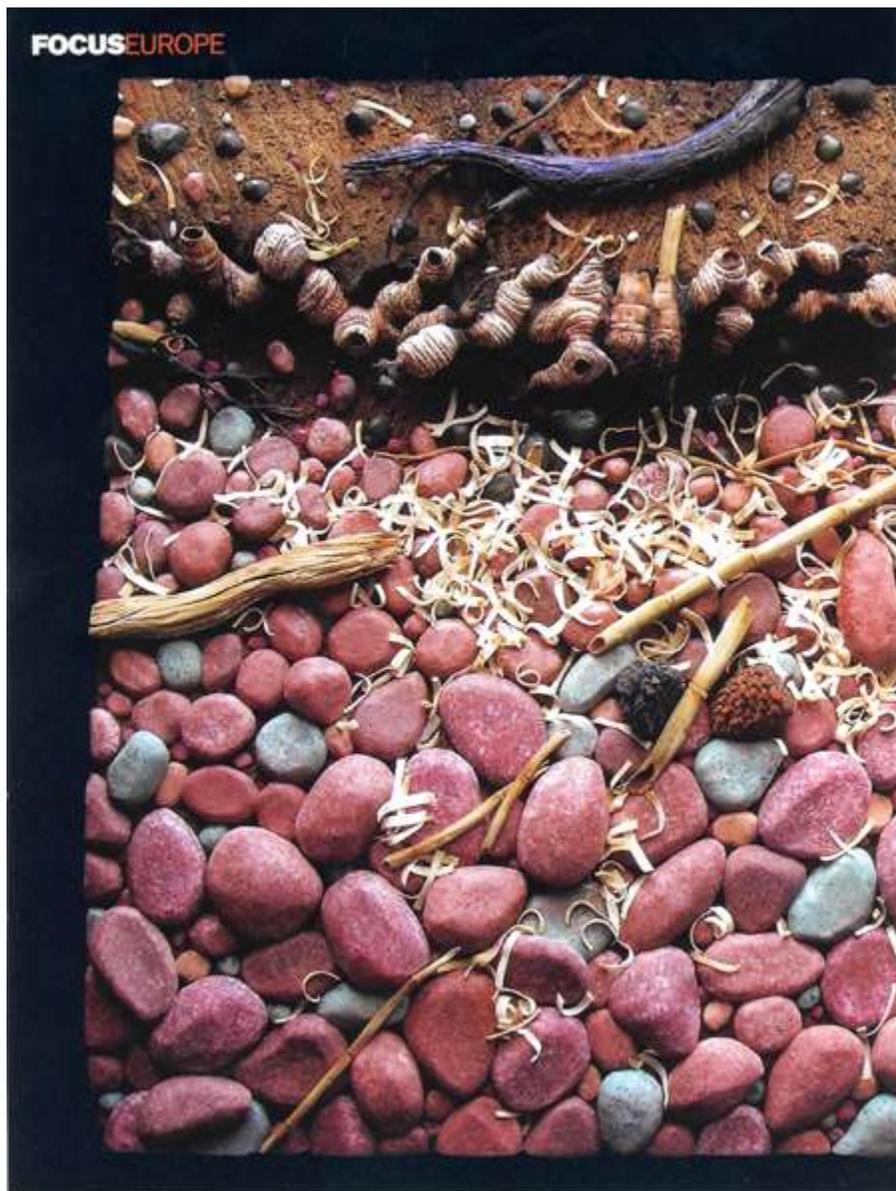
Nell'interazione simbolica tra gli individui vi sono diversi aspetti da considerare: lo scambio delle pulsioni, l'empatia della speranza, la condivisione di un progetto. Credo che siano fattori che rientrano anche nella produzione artistica e che sono decisivi anche per la sua continua trasformazione.

Questo mi fa anche pensare a tutte le teorizzazioni sulla morte dell'arte. Le ho sempre considerate come metafore per l'elaborazione del lutto per la morte dell'arte umanistica. Ossia, di quella basata sulla rappresentazione e sull'antropocentrismo. Ma queste teorie rivelano l'esigenza, in parte consapevole, di dare un senso non a un lutto ma a una trasformazione. Attraverso diverse esperienze transculturali, l'arte si è trasformata. Le diverse forme di possibile ibridazione sono all'origine di tutto questo. Credo che attraverso di esse l'arte sia fuoriuscita dalla sua torre d'avorio per entrare nel vivo dello svolgimento dell'antropologia culturale.

Davide Dal Sasso

Art in America

Piero Gilardi
 Art in America
 June/July 2010
 By David Ebony



PIERO
 ORGANIC TECHNOLOGY
 GILARDI

A pioneer of Italy's Arte Povera movement who left the art world in the early 1970s, Piero Gilardi is in the midst of a revitalized career, with new works and a "living art" park in Turin.

BY DAVID EBONY

ONE OF THE MOST IDEALISTIC—and elusive—figures associated with the early Arte Povera movement, Turin-based artist Piero Gilardi was widely recognized in the early 1950s for his experiments with unorthodox materials and sculptural forms that radically diverged from the avant-garde mainstream. His much-acclaimed and often controversial "Tappeti-natura" (Nature-carpets)—floor installations and wall reliefs made of meticulously molded and painted polystyrene foam that take the form of rocks, plants and a wide variety of nature studies—brought him substantial critical and commercial success through the '60s. He grew disillusioned with the art world, however, and, by the early 1970s, ceased making art, abruptly exiting the scene.

Gilardi (b. 1942) spent the next 10 years traveling in Italy and abroad, writing theoretical analyses of society and culture, the focus of his thinking during this period of civil upheaval. A number of these essays appeared in *Flash Art*, *Arts* and other art publications. He organized street theater, actions and protests in factories, and participated in various community outreach programs and political initiatives, particularly during extended stays in Nicaragua and Kenya, as well as in the U.S., on the Akwesasne Reservation of the Mohawk Nation in northern New York State, along the Canadian border.

Just as suddenly as he had disappeared, Gilardi reentered the art world in 1983, to begin a new series of works and also to prepare for retrospective exhibitions held the following year at Galleria Toselli, Milan, and the Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara. He worked on a fresh series of Nature-carpets, although his main focus was on new-media works, including virtual reality pieces, interactive installations and what would now be called relational art projects that encompass political activism and community-based endeavors, all centered on the precarious bonds between nature

Piero Gilardi: Beach Floor, 2002, polystyrene foam, 59 by 59 by 9 1/4 inches. All photos, unless otherwise noted, courtesy Blaudin & Blaudin, Turin.

CURRENTLY ON VIEW

Early works by the artist in "This Day! Arte Povera: The Historical Years," at the Kunstmuseum Lichterberger in Vaduz (May 2–Sept. 13); "The Lesson of the Things," a Piero Gilardi survey, opens at the Centre de Création Contemporain (CCC), Tours, France (June 20–Nov. 1).

PHOTO: ARTS AND HERITAGE, INC.

THE ARTIST MAINTAINS THAT THE CONCEPT FOR THE NATURE-CARPETS WAS TO MERGE TECHNOLOGY AND NATURE— NOT TO SET THEM IN OPPOSITION.



Above: "Nature-carpet" in Gilardi's 1987 exhibition at Galerie Renaud Simonard, Paris. Photo courtesy the artist.

Near right, Gilberto Zorio lying on stone-foam, polyurethane foam, 78 1/4 by 39 1/4 by 11 1/4 inches, in Gilardi's Tavin studio, 1992. Photo courtesy the artist.

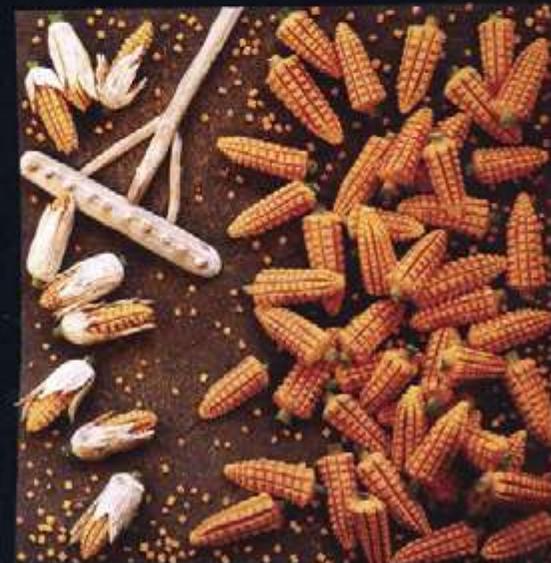
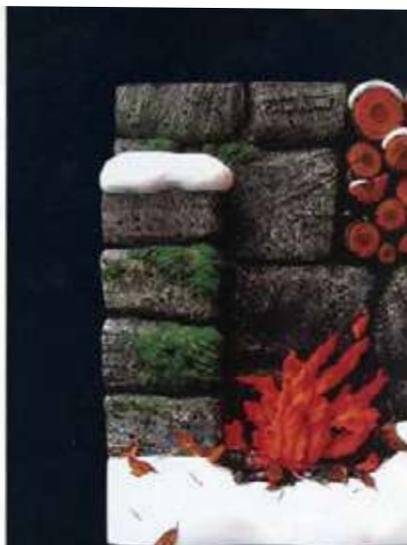


Far right, four "Nature-carpet" all polyurethane foam. Clockwise from top left: Fire Mountain, 2008, 30 1/4 by 30 1/4 by 9 1/4 inches; Bamboo Forest, 2004, 20 1/4 by 10 1/4 by 11 1/4 inches; Corn, 1986, 68 1/2 by 55 by 11 1/4 inches; and Undergrowth, 1987, 35 1/4 by 52 by 9 1/4 inches. Undergrowth courtesy Galerie Simonard, Paris.

and society. Critics and public alike have found new relevance in his environmentalist themes. As his interests have shifted toward Bio-art, or what he terms "living art," Gilardi has settled into his new roles as a "rediscovered" doyen of Arte Povera and a mentor for younger artists. Since the mid-1980s, he has had numerous gallery shows throughout Italy and abroad (including a 1991 exhibition at New York's Spacino Westwater), featuring interactive installations and performances as well as the Nature-carpets. Earlier this year, the Nature-carpets were on view at Galleria Russo venues in Rome and Milan (Mar. 9-Apr. 6). A Gilardi career survey, "The Lesson of the Things," opens this summer at the Centre de Création Contemporain (C.C.C.), Tours, France. His early works are included in "Che fare? Arte Povera: The Historical Years," now at the Kunstmuseum Lichtenstein in Vukur.

For the past eight years, Gilardi has been preoccupied by Parco Arte Vivente (Park of Living Art), or PAW, his most ambitious endeavor to date. In late 2009, Gilardi unveiled the work in progress, and last year a series of educational programs

THE ARTIST'S WORKS © 2011 BY PIERO GILARDI





Above: Igloo, 1994 (foreground). Mare con Corzani, 1967 (left wall); Anguine, 1967 (back wall); and Nature Dress of Beines, 1967 (right).

Right: view of the installation "Shroom in the Show," 2006, polyurethane foam and Plexiglas cases, 10 parts, each 39 1/4 inches in diameter.

Far right: Tronco Sonoro, 2000. Interactive sound installation, polyurethane foam and audio equipment.

Opposite top: Gilardi's freestit in his studio with Mountain, 1967, polyurethane foam, asphalt, 10 by 26 by 10 feet overall. Photo courtesy of the artist.



were launched. A collaborative effort that he conceived and designed (he currently serves as its artistic director), PAV is a monumental undertaking situated on an approximately 8-acre green space in the heart of the Lingotto section of Turin. Surrounded by high-rise housing and industrial buildings, PAV encompasses a new museum and study center with laboratories, workshops and spaces for temporary and permanent exhibitions, including "Bioma," a permanent, multi-gallery, new-media installation by Gilardi. The grounds are reserved for sprawling earth art and ecologically engaged outdoor installations by an international group of invited artists, with a special focus on young and emerging talent. This season, PAV hosts a variety of exhibitions, outdoor installations and performances [details available on the park's website, www.parcocartevents.it].

GILARDI'S CAREER HAS had a unique trajectory. In his early 20s, he garnered substantial critical attention as a participant, with Michelangelo Pistoletto and Gianni Piacentini, in the exhibition "Arte Abitabile" (Live-in Art), held in 1966 at Sperone Gallery, Turin.¹ With its emphasis on reductive forms and mundane materials, the show was perceived by many Italian observers as marking a clear break with the pervasive consumerist iconography of Pop art, which then dominated the international scene. The exhibition featured a large rectangular Nature-carpet that resembles a dry rocky riverbed. After experimenting with polyurethane foam to produce a sculpture in the form of an igloo (1964), Gilardi, with the help of assistants, adapted the material for the Nature-carpets. The works have an interactive element, as the artist invited viewers to walk across or lie down on the soft pieces in an attempt to evoke the experience of being in nature.

Gilardi's work in the Sperone exhibition was lauded by influential critics such as Maurizio Calvesi, Tommaso Trini and, most significantly, Germano Celant, who recognized Gilardi's kinship with a new movement in Italian art he dubbed Arte Povera (Poor Art) in 1967. Included in major Arte Povera exhibitions with Alighiero Boetti, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Giulio Paolini, Jannis Kounellis, Gilberto Zorio, Giovanni Anselmo and Pistoletto, Gilardi's sculptures were attuned to the movement's radical efforts to merge art and life in a wide variety of mediums and materials, and in live performances.

Much was written at the time about Gilardi's ironic choice of high-tech industrial materials to evoke organic forms and natural environments. This ambiguous nature/artifice dichotomy still lends the works a certain degree of tension and contributes to their provocative allure. The artist maintains, however, that his concept was to merge technology and nature—not to set them in opposition—and to suggest a homeostasis whereby industrial processes and materials could actually help in focusing society on the nascent environmentalist movement.² Also misunderstood is the work's relationship to hyperrealist sculpture, whose Pop art roots are far removed from Gilardi's thematic concerns.

Surprising some of his peers, the Nature-carpets (at times delivered to the galleries in huge rolls and sold to collectors by the yard) had broad commercial appeal. Life-size and lifelike sculptural renderings of bucolic scenes, such as a leafy garden of ripe tomatoes, a cornfield at harvest time, tangled

GILARDI CONTINUED TO ORGANIZE EXHIBITIONS, BUT BY 1969 HIS DIFFERENCES HAD GROWN WITH EUROPE'S CURATORIAL ELITE.



strands of snowed undulating above a sandy ocean floor, a bamboo forest, a cabbage patch and a verdant field of meadows proved irresistible to collectors. In the two years following "Arte Abitabile," Gilardi presented Nature-carpets in over a dozen solo shows in Italy and abroad, including major exhibitions in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Cologne and New York.

One of the more peripatetic Italian artists of the time, Gilardi traveled extensively throughout Europe to gather information about experimental art and artists, and to help organize shows of their works in Italy. He is widely credited with introducing Italian viewers to the work of, among others, Richard Long, Eva Hesse, Bruce Nauman, Jan Dibbets and, perhaps most notably, Joseph Beuys, whom he met in Düsseldorf. Gilardi advocated artists' autonomy within the art system and resisted the commercialization of the Arte Povera movement. Feeling increasing pressure from dealers to produce more of the ever-in-demand Nature-carpets, he tried to expand the scope of his work. Gilardi created a costume resembling tree branches and a series of folkloric tricolored pieces, such as a wheelbarrow and sandals made of found materials, as well as polyurethane foam sculptures of logs and tree stumps that serve as seats and benches, all in keeping with the initially self-effacing tone of Arte Povera. After one of his principal dealers, Ileana Sonnabend, rejected these pieces for a 1968 solo show in Paris, demanding instead another series of Nature-carpets, Gilardi decided to call it quits. He continued to organize exhibitions, but by 1969 his differences had grown with Europe's new curatorial elite, including Celant and Harald Szeemann, who, he felt, were allowing commercial interests to infiltrate too far into the exhibition process. Gilardi withdrew his support and assistance for a number of exhibitions when corporate sponsors like Philip Morris were allowed to dictate details of museum shows, and collectors and dealers, such as Leo Castelli, to buy out entire gallery exhibitions prior to public openings.³ He felt that the revolutionary spirit and idealistic purpose of Arte Povera were

THE PAV GROUNDS ARE RESERVED FOR EARTH ART AND ECOLOGICALLY ENGAGED OUTDOOR INSTALLATIONS BY AN INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF INVITED ARTISTS.

fast being diffused and diluted. So began Gilardi's long self-imposed exile from Italy and the art world.

GILARDI DREW ON his "real world" experiences of the previous 10 years when he re-launched his art career in the early 1980s. He favored collaborative art projects aimed toward stimulating community involvement. Working with scientists and engineers, he developed elaborate installations incorporating virtual reality, interactive video and other electronic devices to stress the importance of technological research in raising environmental awareness. He has also revisited the Nature-carpets, and continues to produce increasingly elaborate and fanciful compositions in that series. The recent pieces are typically shown as wall reliefs of varying sizes enclosed in Plexiglas boxes. "Ruscetto nella neve" (Stream in the Snow), a 2006 installation, features 10 circular Nature-carpets, some hung on the wall, others placed on the floor. Counter to the artist's initial aims, the works no longer have an interactive element, since one cannot walk or lie on them. Presented as ramified art objects, they continue to be the works for which the artist is best known. Gilardi bluntly admits to feeding the marketplace with the Nature-carpets by fulfilling collectors' demands. Although to some degree compromising his youthful ideals, he directs the proceeds from the Nature-carpets toward his less marketable but more challenging new-media pieces, Bio-art experiments and other endeavors.

He also continues to be engaged to a certain extent with writing (particularly for PAV's growing series of publications), performing and street theater. He presents a new theater piece in Turin each May Day and sometimes on other special occasions. Last year's May 1 presentation, for example, addressed the worldwide banking crisis. Several performers on bicycles weaving through the May Day rally wore artist-designed animal costumes. According to Gilardi, the savvy Turin audience grasped the point that the costumes in the form of crocodiles, wolves and snakes referred to local banks and multinational financial institutions.



Above, view of Parco Arte Vivente (PAV), showing (left) Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's earthenwork *Trefle*, 2006, and (right) the brick building.



AFTER SEVERAL YEARS of negotiations, the Turin government in 2004 accepted Gilardi's proposal for an art and education facility and a recreational area accessible to the surrounding working-class community. It occupies abandoned industrial park, and is financed through a combination of local government funding and private donations. Working with a team of conservationists, landscape designers and curators, Gilardi commissioned for the park an expansive site-specific earthwork, *Trefle* (2006), by French artist and landscape architect Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. The first work completed for the park and still the most prominent of the half-dozen outdoor installations at PAV, *Trefle* features an enormous clover-leaf-shaped earthen-and-stone mound several feet high. Gonzalez-Foerster based her overall design for the PAV installation on the floor plan of a medieval Coptic church in the holy city of Lalibela in Ethiopia.

Covered with grass and bordered by tall, meticulously manicured wall-like hedges, the artist's quiet green enclosure is accessible by means of two stone paths on opposite sides of the mound. One passage leads from the park's ground level, while the other meanders alongside the mound, gently sloping for part of the way some 12 feet into the ground. A meditative stroll along this path is enhanced by the cascades of vines, flowering shrubs and other vegetation that have been carefully planted on the mound's steep sides. The piece's title ("three-leaved" in French) refers, in part, to the three elevations at which one can experience the work.

A more recently completed earthwork, *Scavo* (2009) by Spanish-born, Rotterdam-based artist Lara Almaraz, is similarly engrossing. The work, a large (approximately 250-square-foot) trench, appears to be remnants of an archeological dig. The artist, who specializes in urban excavations, painstakingly



Left, view of Lara Almaraz's earthwork *Scavo*, 2009, 15-foot deep and 250 square feet oval. Courtesy PAV, Turin.

AFTER THE GRITTY AMBIENCE OF THE WORKS OUTSIDE, THE INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE THAT GILARDI OFFERS IN "BIOMA" SEEMS OTHERWORLDLY.



removed layers of soil to investigate the various strata, and to analyze the natural and social history they reveal. In the process, she uncovered in successive layers of earth the ruined foundations of an early 20th-century factory, a 19th-century brick fountain, a medieval well, fragments of an ancient Roman wall and evidence of a Neolithic settlement. Finally, Almaroqui reached a level of "natural terrain" some 15 feet below the surface that is uncontaminated by human-made debris. As suggested in press material, visitors are to make their way down gradually into the pit to view the earth's Ice Age stratum as part of a metaphorical exploration of memory and the unconscious.

Echoing these earthworks, the largest structure at PAV, the Bioma building, is surrounded by berms. Making it appear to be a subterranean structure. Designed by Gilardi with architect Gianluca Cosmacini and interior designer Massimo Venegoni, the 9,500-square-foot facility features a 17-foot-high entrance hall off the main parking lot. The earthen berms are planted with grass and other vegetation so that, from a distance and certain angles, the structure completely melds with the landscape. Earthworks are planned for the structure's grassy rooftop, and a large central courtyard is to be used for performances during the spring and summer.

Tall windows on two sides fill most of the interior with natural light. But one area of the building contains Gilardi's "Bioma" (in the artist's translation, "hybrid"), which is installed in an interconnected series of six small darkened galleries. Visitors part heavy black curtains to move from one intimate chamber to the next, each containing a large video screen built into one wall and, in the center of the room, a cluster of miscellaneous objects and electronic equipment. After the gritty ambience of the works outside, the interactive experience Gilardi offers here seems otherworldly. A sign above the entrance to "Bioma" invites visitors to "Please Touch." At times, "Bioma" recalls the zany museum of curiosities assembled by the eccentric science professor Martial Canterelli, the protagonist of Raymond Roussel's 1914 novel *Locus Solus*. Each of five segments of Gilardi's multifaceted installation, developed in collaboration with software designer Riccardo Colella, is devoted to one of the senses: *Vegetal Mutation* (sight), *Odor Essences* (smell), *Nature Reliefs* (touch), *Mutable Sounds* (hearing) and *Waterplay* (taste); a sixth display, *Invisible Energies*, imaginatively addresses the workings of the brain and extrasensory perception.

In *Vegetal Mutation*, the visitor finds a tiny video camera mounted on a pole set before a tall, leafy plant. Nearby is a touch-sensitive computer screen attached rather incongruously to a large terra-cotta pot—designed by the artist—which resembles an ancient artifact. Placing a finger on a leaf image on the screen, the viewer activates another video projected on one wall in which the struc-

This spread, three multimedia installations from Gilardi's "Bioma" series, 2008.

Left, *Odor Essences*; light, *Vegetal Mutation*. Both courtesy PAV.

Below, *Nature Reliefs*. Photo: David Ebony.



ture and contours of the leaf are transposed into a mesmerizing, psychedelic-colored series of morphing fractal images. According to the artist, the images represent a detailed analysis of the plant's cellular structure.

A group of organic objects in *Nature Reliefs*—a sponge, a cactus, a conch shell—is placed in shallow pans of water set on a table. Touching the items triggers electrodes that send signals to a computer, which in turn gauges the pressure and heat of the touch, and transposes it into a colorful and frantically morphing series of abstract video images projected on a large screen.

Perhaps the most haunting installation of all is *Mutable Sounds*. Feeling their way into a completely dark room with only tiny pinlights in the floor as a guide, visitors arrive at a small circular enclosure with shelves of objects all around. One can grasp faintly

illuminated items such as branches or piles of small stones. Thanks to some unseen electronic rigging of phonic sensors, rubbing the stones together, for instance, causes the room to fill with loud amplifications and reverberating mutations of the subtle sounds the action would normally emit. Also surprising are the bunches of sticks embedded in one area of the floor that, when stepped on, instigate an echoing clatter. Of all the installa-

tions, this one seems to engage the body fully in the way the artist intends.

In the most ambitious works of his nearly 45-year career, "Bioma" and PAV, the artist offers a unique experience of nature within the context of art. Remaining steadfast to the idealism of his youth as well as the innovative spirit of *Arte Povera*, but with the addition of electronic-age implements, Gilardi succeeds in merging art and life. □

1 See *Arte Povera* by Carolyn Christy-Flaeger (New York and London: Phaidon, 1998, p. 49, for more information on this key exhibition). 2 This and other Gilardi comments are from the author's conversations with the artist in Turin, Nov. 7, 2008. 3 See Piero Gilardi: *Intenzionalità/Intentionality*, Angelo Veronesi, ed. Milan: Silvana Editore, 2006, p. 26.

Piero Gilardi
Zérodeux
2010
By Antoine Marchand

Piero Gilardi au CCC de Tours

par Antoine Marchand



Près de cinquante ans de carrière. Cinquante ans de lutte, de choix, sans compromissions. Cinquante ans dictés par une seule et même volonté : réunir l'art et la vie. Si cette antienne paraît aujourd'hui galvaudée, elle n'a pourtant jamais été aussi juste que pour qualifier la production de Piero Gilardi : « Au fond, dans mes expériences, on retrouve constamment deux idées – toujours les mêmes – entrelacées et pourtant complémentaires : élargir la créativité et l'entremêler avec les problèmes de la vie 1 ». L'exposition *Leçon de choses*, qui se tient actuellement au CCC de Tours, est l'occasion de jeter un regard rétrospectif, non pas sur la carrière, mais bien sur la vie de cet artiste italien. Impossible de séparer l'une de l'autre. Sans vouloir jouer les anciens combattants, il est essentiel de revenir aux origines de son travail pour en comprendre la richesse. Piero Gilardi commence à exposer en 1963 et produit ses premiers tapis-nature dès 1965, fragments de paysage réalisés en mousse de polyuréthane. Il est rapidement repéré par plusieurs critiques influents, au premier rang desquels Germano Celant, qui l'expose aux côtés de Merz, Boetti, Pistoletto ou Zorio et regroupe leurs pratiques sous le terme d'*arte povera*.

Néanmoins, malgré le succès grandissant, Piero Gilardi prend assez rapidement ses distances avec le monde de l'art, cherchant notamment à fuir la logique marchande des galeries. À l'inverse de certains de ses contemporains, il estime que critiquer le système de l'intérieur est impossible et préfère donc s'en démarquer. Débute alors une longue période, de 1969 à la fin des années 1970, durant laquelle il s'investit dans la vie de la Cité, arrête de produire des œuvres pour le monde de l'art et travaille dans l'espace social. À une époque où la contestation étudiante et ouvrière est forte, il s'implique tout naturellement dans les mouvements activistes et de contre-culture : « [...] il y avait chez moi l'intention de faire sortir l'art des schémas conventionnels et de le faire vivre au sein de l'expérience du quotidien, avec une fonction et un

mécanisme interne de type ludique 2 ». Piero Gilardi y développe notamment une réflexion autour de la notion anthropologique de « créativité collective », de l'œuvre d'art plurale. Ce n'est qu'au début des années 1980, quelque peu désabusé par la répression des mouvements contestataires et la domination croissante du système capitaliste, qu'il revient dans la sphère de l'art, toutefois animé des mêmes intentions qu'à ses débuts.

L'exposition du CCC balaie l'ensemble de sa production protéiforme et permet de faire le lien entre ces différentes périodes. Outre les incontournables tapis-nature, ceux des années 1960 comme les plus récents, on retrouve ses premières sculptures, comme cet igloo de 1964 – rappelons que le premier igloo de Mario Merz date de 1968 – mais également des créations plus récentes, telles que *Phosphor* (2008), déjà présentée à la galerie Semiose l'année dernière, ou *Tiktaalik*, installation interactive spécialement produite pour l'occasion. Démonstration par l'absurde de la théorie de l'évolution, cette œuvre nous place, dans une position assez ridicule et inconfortable, face à l'un de nos plus vieux ancêtres, chaînon essentiel du passage de la vie aquatique à la vie terrestre. Toute l'exposition navigue ainsi dans cet entre-deux, entre fantaisie et interrogations plus profondes. Elle permet surtout de constater que l'œuvre de Piero Gilardi traverse de nombreux courants de l'histoire de l'art récent, du Pop art (à une époque, les tapis-nature étaient produits en rouleaux, avant d'être découpés et vendus au mètre) à la performance (on retrouve dans *Leçon de choses* des objets ayant été utilisés lors d'actions et manifestations des années 1970) en passant par l'esthétique relationnelle (trente ans avant qu'elle soit théorisée) ou l'art multimédia avec *Connected ES* (1998), installation censée amener ses participants « [...] à un état de conscience qu'on pourrait définir comme hallucination collective lucide 3 ».

Piero Gilardi est aujourd'hui totalement investi dans son projet de Parco Arte Vivente (PAV), un parc installé à Turin, dont on peut découvrir la maquette à Tours. « Jardin en mouvement 4 » et laboratoire permanent, cette *Gesamtkunstwerk*, au sens gilardien du terme, permet à l'artiste de faire le lien entre les expériences utopiques des années 1960 et 1970, l'aménagement urbain tel qu'il s'impose aujourd'hui dans les villes modernes et des préoccupations plus personnelles – l'écologie, l'inscription de l'art dans la Cité, le travail avec le vivant et cette volonté jamais désavouée d'œuvrer dans une perspective fédératrice et communautaire.

Le Monde

Piero Gilardi
Le Monde
October, 2009
By Emmanuelle Lequeux

CULTURE

Piero Gilardi

Par Emmanuelle Lequeux - Publié le 31 octobre 2009 à 13h08 - Mis à jour le 31 octobre 2009 à 13h08

Longtemps confiné à ses années 1970, l'Arte Povera italien a de nouveau le vent en poupe, comme le montrent de nombreuses expositions à travers le monde. La galerie Sémiose en offre une nouvelle démonstration, paradoxale : si Piero Gilardi a participé au mouvement dès ses prémices, il s'en est vite lassé. Ecologiste dans l'âme, collectiviste de l'art, Gilardi a préféré consacrer ses années 1970 à des actions militantes. Agé de près de 70 ans, voilà qui revient en force. On retrouve ici ce qui a fait le succès de Piero Gilardi, ses "tapis-nature" qui composent végétaux, champignons et fleurs en des parterres de mousse à la frontière du design. La galerie en présente un exemplaire historique, daté de 1964, mais aussi de nombreux récents : des micro-paysages où le kitsch bataille avec la mélancolie, où l'artifice ultime d'une mousse née du pétrole revient aux origines, à la terre. Un arbre mort, sculpté dans la mousse lui aussi, se transforme en refuge technologique : dès qu'un visiteur entre en son cœur, des loupiotes vertes dessinent sa silhouette, symboles du phosphore qui est le seul élément partagé par tous les êtres vivants, selon l'artiste. Une manière ironique de rappeler que tout combat, même celui de l'écologie, a besoin de ses poètes autant que de ses tragédiens.

Piero Gilardi

ENTRETIEN AVEC FRANÇOIS COADOU

E.C. : La question qui se pose premièrement, et pour ainsi dire à l'arrière-plan, c'est de savoir comment vous réagissez au fait que les tapis-nature sont aujourd'hui présentés, dans la plupart des cas, de manière muséale, en ex-galleria, avec un conservateur en plastique, accrochés au mur, comme des tableaux.

R.G. : Les tapis-nature étaient des actes créatifs vivants dans les années 60. Après, c'est fini. Mon énergie s'est portée ailleurs. Je me suis mis à travailler comme plasticien, comme sculpteur de performances. À partir de ce moment, le tapis est devenu un objet. Et c'est ainsi que le marché de l'art le gère aujourd'hui : comme le signe d'un succès, de l'histoire de l'art, les années 60. C'est à ce titre qu'il connaît l'histoire. C'est ainsi, et cela ne me dérange pas.

E.C. : De sorte qu'il s'est créé une différence entre ce signe et ce dont il est ou était le signe, et qui a conduit à l'oubli ?

R.G. : Oui, et qui, d'ailleurs, a conduit à l'oubli en lien avec le mouvement de la pensée dans son ensemble. Les tapis-nature sont liés à un moment où moi et d'autres artistes avons l'impression que la culture humaine, la société industrialisée, et la nature étaient en conflit. Mais on voyait en même temps qu'il y avait la possibilité d'un rapport positif de l'un à l'autre. C'est le point que j'ai continué d'approfondir depuis, en adoptant un point de vue relationnel holistique.

E.C. : C'est ce que vous appelez, je crois, la question du post-humain.

R.G. : Oui. Évident, pour autant qu'on puisse le résumer rapidement, est qu'il faut dépasser l'humanisme, en tant que c'est la pensée sur laquelle repose l'anthropocentrisme. Je défends, au contraire, une conception horizontale du être, où la notion de personnalité joue le premier rôle : pour le dire autrement, l'idée est que l'homme est en communication incessante, non seulement avec les technologies intelligentes, mais aussi avec l'ensemble des vivants.

E.C. : D'évidence, cela s'inscrit en lien avec une certaine idée de la rationalité occidentale, qui fait de l'homme « un être dans un empire », qui le place au surplomb. Or, ce qu'il y a d'intéressant, c'est de voir comment cela se traduit, dans votre recherche, par la quête d'une forme artistique qui ne soit pas peinte, non plus, dans une toile blanche. C'est le sens, je crois, et par-delà les seuls tapis-nature dans mon venant de parler, de ce que vous appelez des tentatives d'un relationnel, ou collectif, sous la figure, d'abord, d'un art en prise avec le social - c'est le rôle d'animateur de performances que vous proposez tout à l'heure - ou, un peu plus tard, à partir des années 80, avec vos expériences

R.G. : Oui. On peut dire que, dans la mouvance des avant-gardes, j'ai cherché à pratiquer l'hybridation de l'art et de la vie. Cela s'est d'abord matérialisé par la volonté de sortir du monde de l'art - dans les années 70, j'ai travaillé, comme thérapeute, dans des hôpitaux psychiatriques, j'ai été médiateur, impliqué dans les luttes, comme les écoliers ou comme les étudiants. Par la suite, cependant, à partir des années 80, en relation avec le développement de la pensée scientifique, j'ai repris et approfondi ma réflexion sur la forme artistique. Je suis passé à une conception dynamique, et intégrative de la forme. La forme n'est pas fixe, diminue une fois pour toutes, mais elle se développe dans le temps, et dans l'interaction avec ce qui l'entourne. C'est alors que je me suis engagé dans les recherches multimédias, ce sont ces autres préoccupations, toujours, qui m'ont amené depuis à m'occuper du film.

E.C. : Prenez-vous, pour terminer, pour dire un mot de ce projet, le MIA Parc d'Art Vivant.

R.G. : Le MIA existe depuis maintenant 2 ans. Il est basé à Paris. C'est un centre qui accueille des artistes qui travaillent sur l'art écologique, ou sur les bio-techs, mais aussi les technologies. Un réseau national est organisé sur le concept d'un atelier ou sur la morpho-général par exemple. Le public, lui aussi, est invité à participer, par le biais de workshops. L'un de nos projets est d'échanger le PARC et la Forêt qui s'y trouve, en tant qu'échange, afin de contribuer à cette question, à laquelle nous faisons déjà allusion tout à l'heure, du post-humain, du rapport



Piero Gilardi, Tapis-nature, 2009 - œuvre de polytechnique - 90 x 70 cm

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nouveau qui vise à inventer entre l'art et la nature.

E.C. : Pour vous, les artistes de votre génération ont-ils donc pas eu de succès ? Ce sont aussi des espoirs.

R.G. : Oui. Ils se tiennent de préférence de nouvelles associations futures d'œuvres.

E.C. : Piero Gilardi, merci !

REPÈRES

- 1962 *Histoire de Piero Gilardi à Turin*
- 1963 *Preziosa espositiva personale. Machine pour le futur. galerie l'Immaginazione, Turin*
- 1965 *Preziosa Tapis-nature*
- 1966 *Preziosa Arte abstratta avec Pierluigi et Fausto. galerie l'Immaginazione, Turin*
- 1967 *Preziosa Tapis-nature, galerie Bruno Zevi, Turin*
- 1968 - 1980 *Le temps vers une pratique performative de l'art. Fougère, de par le monde, dans de nombreux projets pour la défense de l'écologie et l'usage politique multimédia.*
- 1985 *Donner un nouveau développement à sa diffusion de l'art internationalement à travers la recherche technologique et multimédia.*
- 1993 *Participation à la Biennale de Venise. Parcilles Italiane*
- 2001 *Exposition temporaire Zone de contact. Arte Nuova Moderna. Londres et le Musée des Connaissances.*
- 2007 *Imagination, à Turin, de Parc d'Art Vivant, avec il est l'initiative.*

Piero Gilardi
Cat. Musée des Arts Décoratifs
1989
by Pierre Restany

IXIANA SELON PIERRE RESTANY

La condition post-moderne nous décrit un futur imminent sous les couleurs les plus angoissantes du progrès. Les nouvelles technologies et les mutations bio-génétiques consécutives nous font peur et nous semblent se présenter comme des phénomènes de rupture locérateurs et traumatisants. La folklore mécaniste de la première et de la seconde révolution industrielle cherche à arrêter le cours de l'histoire ou tout au moins à le ralentir. Il en résulte un maniérisme fin de siècle, dernier avatar de l'aventure de l'objet au XXe siècle.

Piero Gilardi, connu d'après les années 60 par sa nature artificielle en polyuréthane, témoigne d'une vision extrêmement lucide de cette situation et il nous présente une proposition optimiste susceptible d'amorcer avec autant d'humanité que d'humour la solution du rapport entre l'intelligence humaine et artificielle.

Pour lutter contre la lente hémorragie de notre identité culturelle, Piero Gilardi nous propose une nouvelle œuvre d'art qui est à la fois une structure plastique formelle, un parcours psycho-sensoriel et un dispositif de connaissances.

Ce projet, qui prend la forme d'une "poupée bionique" de 40 m de long sur 14,50 m de haut se nomme IXIANA. Elle est la cousine de BIBA, la première version du projet culturel de Piero Gilardi. IXIANA évoque aussi la légende d'IXION, le héros malheureux théssalien, roi des Lapites, fameux rivaux des Centaures.

IXIANA se situe donc au point de rencontre étymologique entre la biologie des tropiques et la mythologie de l'Olympe. C'est tout un programme pour cet être à la fois petit et grand, de sexe féminin, qui pense, agit et vit, utilisant la plénitude de sa conscience sensorielle dans un

Postmodern conditions describe the imminent future with the most anguishing colours of progress. New technology and associated bio-genetic changes scare us and appear to present locating and traumatic breaking points. The mechanistic folklore of the first and second Industrial Revolution tried to stop the course of History - or at least to slow it down. This turned into a freudesiècle mannerism, the ultimate bulwark of object adventure into the 20th Century.

Piero Gilardi, known for his polyurethane artificial nature since the 60s is the witness of the extremely lucid view of this situation and presents us an optimistic proposition full of humanity and humour: a potential solution of the relationship between human and artificial intelligence.

Piero Gilardi proposes a new work of art against the slow haemorrhage of our cultural identity. It is a formal plastic structure, a psychosensorial itinerary and a way for knowing. All at one time.

The project - a 40 meter long and 14.5 meter high doll - is named IXIANA. She is the first cousin of BIBA, Gilardi's first idea.

IXIANA evokes IXA: A small hot water crustacean with short and fine cylindrical claws. Also IXALE: A red brown-lined Indian frog. IXIANA also evokes the legend of IXION. The unlucky Thessalian hero, king of the Lapites - the famous rival of the Centaurs.

So IXIANA is the etymological point of encounter between the biology of the tropics and the Olympian Mythology. A whole program to be - at once small and great - a female who thinks, acts and lives in the fullness of sensorial consciousness in a futurist and science fiction environment. The harmonic peacemaking between nature and culture. And this is why IXIANA is sweet and laid on the earth.

The body with all its bio-genetic accessories that feel the ground is comfortably on its belly. Its expression evokes both

contexte à la fois futuriste et futurible, celui de la pacification harmonique du rapport nature et culture. Voilà pourquoi IXIANA est douce et détentée.

Son corps, muni de tous les accessoires bio-génétiques qui lui permettent de franchir le seuil de la perception normale, est confortablement allongé sur le ventre. Son expression gestuelle évoque à la fois la tendresse de l'enfance et la sagesse de l'adulte. Sa main droite repose sur une sphère de couleur bleue métallisée au symbolisme évident, tandis que sa main gauche, légèrement ouverte et dressée, marque la position de l'ouverture et du contact.

La chair d'IXIANA est de couleur rose fuchsia phosphorescente et elle est munie de tous les accessoires bio-génétiques fondamentaux. Auriculaires, relais articulés, fenêtres sensorielles qui lui permettent de fonctionner en elle-même et vis à vis des autres.

Car IXIANA renferme dans les replis de sa chair de bébé toute une série d'espaces de la communication et de la perception qui constitue un modèle de connaissances psychosensorielles ouvertes à tous les usages humains, hommes, femmes, enfants, d'un âge compris entre 5 et 65 ans.

Le public se promène ainsi dans le corps et la tête d'IXIANA et y effectue différents transferts sensoriels, tactiles, sonores, visuels, olfactifs. Ces transferts trouvent leur conclusion et leur assimilation à travers le soft-ware du programme IXIANA, un véritable cerveau virtuel qui permet à l'usager de s'identifier à son propre portrait robot individualisé et hautement personnalisé à la suite des transferts sensoriels.

Il est facile de concevoir tous les usages socio-culturels auxquels une telle structure est susceptible de se prêter. La recherche didactique se mêle aisément au divertissement, au spectacle et à la rééducation physique et mentale.

IXIANA nous propose un véritable bain d'humanité, une recharge affective et mentale à l'orée de l'an 2000. Et comme nous devons affronter toutes les inconnues de la post-modernité du troisième millénaire, IXIANA entend voyager, se déplacer dans le monde entier. Elle entend être le lieu de toutes les fêtes, de tous les spectacles, de toutes les expérimentations psychologiques et socio-culturelles de

the tenderness of infancy and the knowledge of elder age. The right hand lays on a metal blue ball of obvious symbolism. The open left marks openness and contact.

IXIANA's skin is phosphorescent pink with all basic bio-genetic accessories, such as ears, articulations and whatever else allows it to work with other beings.

IXIANA's body contains a whole series of communications and perceptions. A model of psychosensorial knowledge open to all users - whether male or female - from 5 to 65 years of age.

The public moves both in IXIANA's body and head. With different sensory, tactile, hearing, visual and olfactory transfers. They are concluded and assimilated through the IXIANA program - software - a real and proper brain that allows the viewers to identify with it.

It is easy to conceive all the socio-cultural uses this structure can lend itself to. Teaching research adds itself to amusement as well as to mental and psychological education.

IXIANA proposes a real and proper "bath" into humanity, and an affective and mental recharge at the eve of the year 2000. Just as all of us have to face the unknowns of the 3rd millennium post-modernity, so IXIANA travels throughout the world. IXIANA is the place for all feasts, spectacles, psychological and socio-cultural experiments of changing mankind.

IXIANA is the companion, witness and guardian angel of this changing man. Its motivations are rational and not transcendental - more and more human.

This dimension of humanity inside new technology is the great moral teaching we must draw from IXIANA. The new laboratory for our brain, the permanent fuel for our dreams.

IXIANA, a modest gift of technology and tenderness, is a sign of humanity and continued renovation. It will help us to better live the difficult moment of the end of a century and millennium.

Best wishes to IXIANA. Best wishes to all of us. This is what it means.

Pierre Restany

ARTFORUM

Piero Gilardi
Art Forum
Summer 1989

REVIEWS



Piero Gilardi, *Banana Structure*
Studio Marconi, 1989, mixed media,
10 x 107 x 117 x 117

MILAN

PIERO GILARDI
GALLERIA TOSELLI
STUDIO MARCONI

Piero Gilardi's recent exhibitions constituted an abbreviated retrospective. At Toselli, Gilardi displayed sculptural works from 1964 to the present and at Studio Marconi, he installed costumes and props from his 1983 performance work, called "Sleep Pollution." Gilardi has been working in the *arte povera* vein for more than 25 years. But the seductive softness of his materials (painted polystyrene foam and plastic), coupled with his dependence on a real-to-life representation of the naturalism, invites direct participation in the work. This accessibility distinguishes Gilardi's production from most *arte povera* work. Gilardi abandons the traditionally cultivated distance between viewer and artwork to ease the scales of the interactive and the social. Thus, which is then embraced is the work's capacity to initiate and maintain an active relationship to the viewer, while functioning within the context between the artificial and the real.

The display at Toselli was *Banana Structure* (Dancing banana, 1989), a life-sized, brightly colored banana tree made of polystyrene foam. The *Danceyrague*, hyperreal tree differs in the changing hue of a music that might best be described as a mixture of James Brown film soundtrack and Caribbean Afro-funk. Flashing lights accompany the music and the gestures of the long fanlike leaves, and occasionally the tree's stalk of bananas seems to wig, as the pods of each of the bananas open and close like mouths. Gilardi's entire circular production stands in the center of a rectangular base which,

via

through its relationship to Modernist structures, reminds us that what we have been drawn into is indeed a sculpture. As a certain point the music stops and a strong female voice prevents itself as the voice of the tree. "If you want to play together," she announces, "take your hand between my flowers." Though his use of voluptuous forms, provocative music, and an alluring female invitation to play, Gilardi employs a kind of seduction that is both intriguing and humorous.

Gilardi's "Zappari natura" ("Zappari naga," 1980), soft polystyrene objects intended to be used as sculptural naga upon which one can sit, were here presented as wall pieces. One such work, *Trombe-Banana* (Burst tree-trunk), depicts a three-dimensional, life-sized charred tree-trunk lying on rich, dark soil and covered with vibrant green ferns, ivy, and occasional bright red spores. The massive, almost carbonized tree, set amidst the fragile leaves and flowers, recalls the cycle of life and death, as the tree returns to the soil from which new life grows. In the older *Trombe-Banana* (Elements system, 1964), three polystyrene foam and plastic tree trunks form a tripod structure from which a foam boulder is suspended by a thick rope; the latter appears about to give way. The comic suspense and vivacity of the work calls to mind animal cartoons.

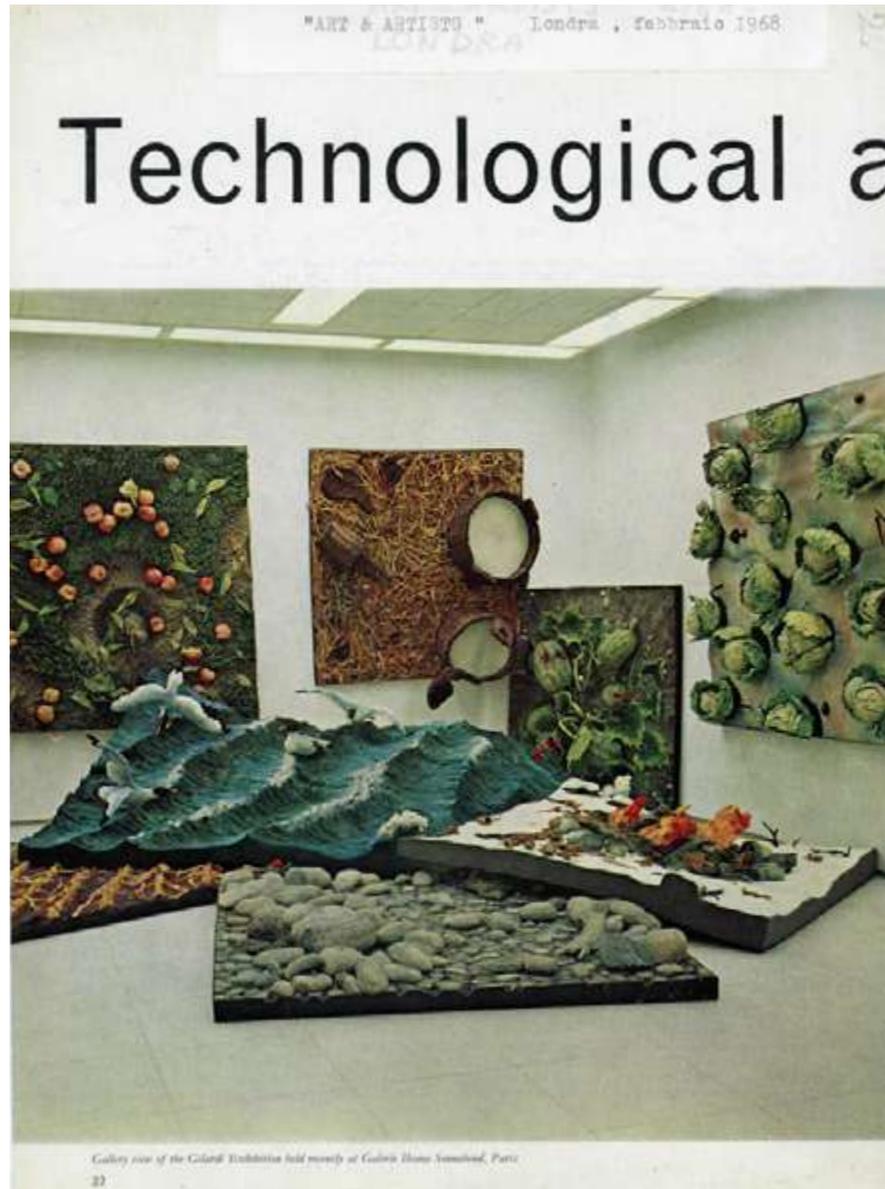
For his installation at Studio Marconi, Gilardi scattered pine needles on the gallery floor. In an accompanying text, he described the original performance of "Sleep Pollution," which was written for and performed by members of the Miqhuak tribe of Native Americans. The work reads as a blunt allegory of nature intruding upon pollution. The comments of the piece here—pine needles, tree trunks, branches—evoked a culture being disrupted by human industry.

The artist's production is grounded in

a rigorous commitment to the accessibility of his works, an accessibility which serves against Modernist currents of difference and distance. Gilardi produces work that manifests a belief in the functionality of creation and in the power of art to bring people together.

—Anthony Amadori

Piero Gilardi
 Technological Arcadia su Art & Artist
 February 1968
 by Henry Martin



Gallery view of the Gilardi Exhibition held recently at Galerie Hlomo Szwarcwald, Paris.

cadia

HENRY MARTIN

PHOTOGRAPHS OF PIERO Gilardi's work have appeared on several occasions in magazines dedicated to architecture and interior decoration, and on every one of these occasions he has subsequently received letters from department stores and wholesalers wanting information – not having realised that these are works of art – about manufacturer's specifications, norms for gross purchases, sizes of possible shipments, the range of subject matters, and the dimensions in which each might be made available. When people have not been warned beforehand, these objects very easily appear to have been made not for contemplation but for some other kind of use. And the name which Gilardi has given them – he calls them 'nature-carpets' – was created, it would seem, to facilitate such a misunderstanding; it surely does nothing to discourage it. The possibility of this misunderstanding is, in fact, one of the things that these works are about; it is a part of the way in which they function. This name that they bear is but one small part of a whole structure of ambiguities.

The ways in which we ordinarily use a thing are determined by a perception of the category to which it belongs. This is one of the things that Richard Wollheim means when he tells us that all seeing is 'seeing-as'. His statement might well be modified to read that all understanding is 'understanding-as', a principle of which every good industrial designer is highly aware. The difference between good design and bad design is a matter of the quality of the information that an object transmits, about precisely how it is to be understood. A well designed object usually contains whole networks of indications about the character of its proper use. But this is not so with Gilardi's indications about what we should do with his nature-carpets are something that he very carefully avoids. In the sense that no part of his work creates a context that defines it, it is quite entirely abstract. In a catalogue note that Gilardi wrote for his last show at the Galleria Sperone in Milan, he advised the viewers to do with

his work whatever they might happen to desire. 'Cut them into squares, put them onto stands of polished marble, and display them under glass! Have your tailor turn them into cocktail frocks! Take them into the country for ant-free picnics! We can do what we want with these objects since we don't know what they are in the first place. They are not paintings since they are perfectly at home when lying on the floor; they are not sculptures since they are equally at home when hanging flat against a wall. And then again, they are made of synthetic foam rubber, a material that has hardly any associations with fine art at all.

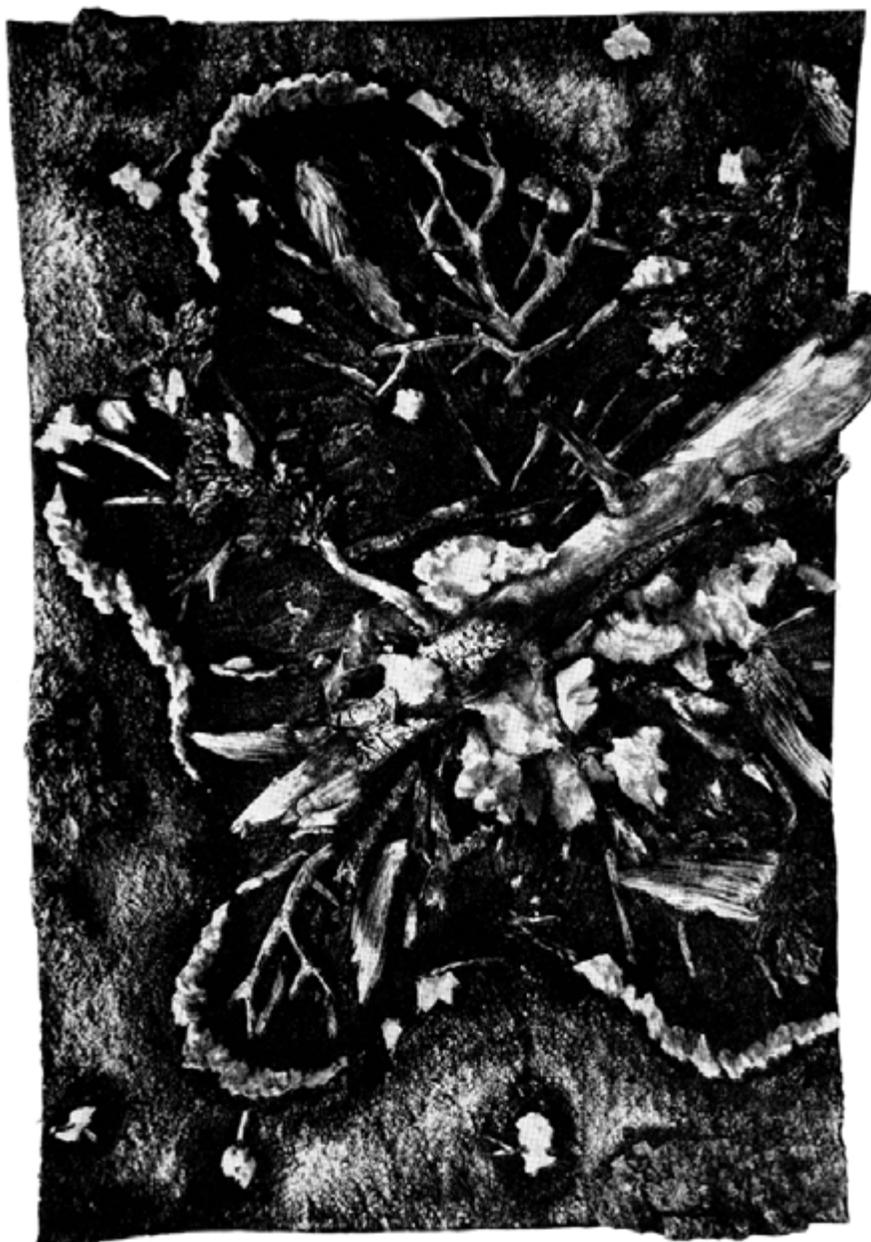
The fact that Gilardi uses this material is of course secondary to the way in which he uses it. Chamberlain too employs foam rubber, and there is no question about his works being sculptures. Among the many artists who now use materials that have no art history, Gilardi is perhaps unique in that he does so without any of the rhetoric of transformation. Gilardi would give the impression of wanting to make a statement *with* materials and not *about* materials. He seems to work with foam rubber in the way that Rembrandt worked with paint. As far as meets the eye, his awareness of his medium is technical rather than metaphorical. Foam rubber belongs to window dressers, to decorators of model-train layouts, and to Cinecittà. Gilardi does nothing to take it away from them. He makes a product with foam rubber that is not at all alien to our notions of what a product in foam rubber ought to be. He simply presents us with this foam rubber world and asks us if we like it. Buyers for department stores naturally say 'yes'.

As we have gone busily about the task of reassessing the world, extending consciousness and preparing the way for a technological fulfilment of the Book of Revelations, Nature has become the great forgotten subject. Romanticism possessed itself of Nature so thoroughly that the baby seemed almost to have become the bathwater.

Nature now belongs to the people who are worried about 'highway beautification' – expensive and profitable projects for lining Route 66 with penunas and weeping-willow trees. When Frank Lloyd Wright began to talk about the possibility of linking business centres to rural living areas in which every house would nestle privately within its own little acre, both the 'good' guys and the 'bad' guys began to call him senile. Progress, no matter who is defining it, has all become a matter of asphalt and steel, stress-resistant plastics and electronic communication. In an attempt to avoid a reactionary involvement with Nature, we have come to prefer no involvement at all. We allow it to be destroyed, both within our cities and within our minds, by the very instruments that we have chosen for our own salvation. The cure is unreasonably similar to the illness.

But surely McLuhan should have learned from Jung that the entire history of the race is preserved within the minds of all the individuals who make it up. And Claude Lévi-Strauss deftly demonstrates that concepts which cease to be active in a language may still continue to manifest themselves through the changes that their very passage from the language may effect upon the language's structure. The task then is not to change but to re-form consciousness, not to give up the typographic past but rather to incorporate it into the electronic future. Electronic man, if he is to be successful, will carry typographic man around inside him. If electronic man is alienated from typographic man, he will be alienated from himself.

Precisely where Gilardi stands in relationship to all of this is something that his work will not allow us to say. Has he rehabilitated Nature for the rehabilitated man, or is he showing us Nature unredeemed for mankind unredeemed? Is he showing us man's relationship to Nature as it is, or as it will be, as it should be or as it shouldn't be? Is his work naturalism or romance, lyricism or satire? Since it cannot be all



Feu de Forêts 1966 Foam rubber 80" x 120"

of these things, perhaps it is none of them. Gilardi has not chosen to solve our problems for us, but simply to show us where some of them are. Part of the power of his work comes from the way in which its meaning and its valence seem continuously to shift – from the way in which it so delicately hangs between the hallucinatory and the real.

The sheer size of Gilardi's work is also important. Since he has always worked on natural scale and without any principles of formal or spatial composition within the individual pieces, there is no logical limit to the proportions that they can assume. Every piece implies the possibility of whole meadows of foam rubber grass dotted with toes of autumn-ripe foam rubber apples; whole mountainsides of foam rubber snow laced with foam rubber snowballs; endless miles of dry stony foam rubber stream-bed flecked with fallen foam rubber leaves. The new pieces, which measure up to five or six metres long, are limited only by the exigencies of the rooms in which they are displayed. Gilardi seems to be saying that our ideas about Nature can be as big as, if not bigger than, we want them to be. The size of the works becomes the emblem of the enormity of his problem's implications.

To exhibit these pieces, Gilardi has struck up the device of coiling them up on large stands made of plexiglass and tubular aluminium. The tail ends of the pieces hang off the stands and sprawl across the floor like yardage unwound from a bolt of cloth. These stands do more, though, than simply facilitate the exhibition of works of a particular dimension; in their own way, they give the works still another dimension. When the nature-carpets are wound upon their stands, more or less rolled up as occasion demands, they have become as large as the imagination will allow. We cannot see where they finish, and if we like we can assume that they do not finish at all. Moreover, the stands, cold and efficient looking, like the trappings of hardware stores, seem to be the last link in a chain of endless factory production, factory production on the scale of the paint company that advertises its desire and its capability to cover the world. Gilardi has discovered that the non-ironic use of a medium can, in itself, be one of the finest of ironies. □

An exhibition of Gilardi's work was recently held at the Galleria Speriore, Milan, and at the Galerie Ilana Samobrod, Paris. Photographs courtesy of the latter.



Pommes Tombées avec Echelle 1966 Foam rubber 80" x 136"



Bond de la Mer 1966 Foam rubber 80" x 120"

TEXTS

TEXTES

Dalla Natura all'Arte

05.09-24.10.2021

Michel Rein, Paris

Text: Valérie Da Costa

Michel Rein, Paris is pleased to present Piero Gilardi's first solo show at the gallery. The exhibition presents recent and historical works by the artist and a collection of drawings and political works.

« Pebbles in a torrent bed, peaches on the ground after a storm in an orchard, seagulls on the sea, burnt vegetation after a forest fire, undergrowth covered in snow, a field of watermelons, sweetcorn, or pumpkins, these are some of the subjects of Piero Gilardi's « nature-carpets ».

From the mds-1960s to the present day, Piero Gilardi has been making nature-carpets (halfway between painting and sculpture), a sign whereby his work can be recognized, an object of reflection for talking about a close and familiar nature, which echoes in each one of us, both collectively and personally. Well before certain ecological challenges, which nowadays lie at the heart of our current world, Piero Gilardi has been concerned with representing nature not in the form of landscapes, but rather as fragments, not by way of a panoramic vision, but by adopting a horizontal way of looking at things, situated flush with things, in order to show us a nature (at times domesticated, at others not) caught in its smallest details, and attract our attention to things we would not otherwise look at.

As one who took part in the first Arte Povera shows in the late 1960s, Piero Gilardi preferred talking about nature by using not elementary materials (water, earth, fire...), but an industrial and contemporary material, polyurethane foam, which he cut up, arranged, glued and painted, to present a nature pushed beyond reality with its bright, dazzling and joyful colours. With Piero Gilardi, nature is something experienced and lived. You sit on tree-trunks (*Aigues Tortes*, 2007) to listen to their noises, you wear nature like a piece of clothing to transform yourself (*Vestito-Nature Anguria*; *Vestito-Nature Sassi*; *Vestito-Natura Betulla*, 1967; *O.G.M. Free*, 2014). His *Igloo* (1964), which was first shown in Paris, is an historical piece which should be read with a desire to return to a form of primitive life, well-removed from the challenges of the consumer society of that time, an issue he shared in particular with his friend Pino Pascali (1935-1968).

This political awareness, which lies at the heart of Piero Gilardi's oeuvre, is expressed not only in his drawings, posters, and masks of politicians made every year for the May 1st procession in Turin, but also in this far-reaching line of thinking involving a consciousness of nature, which has been exercising the artist for more than 50 years.»

Michel Rein, Paris est heureux de présenter la première exposition personnelle de Piero Gilardi à la galerie. L'exposition présente des œuvres récentes et historiques de l'artiste et un ensemble de dessins et d'œuvres politiques.

« Galets d'un lit de torrent, pêches tombées après un orage dans un verger, mouettes sur la mer, végétation brûlée de forêt incendiée, sous-bois enneigé, champ de pastèques, de maïs ou de citrouilles, tels sont certains sujets des tapis-nature de Piero Gilardi.

Depuis le milieu des années 60 et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, Piero Gilardi a fait du tapis-nature (à mi-chemin entre la peinture et la sculpture) un signe de reconnaissance de son travail, un objet de réflexion pour parler d'une nature proche et familière qui résonne en chacun de nous collectivement et personnellement. Bien avant certains enjeux écologiques, qui sont aujourd'hui au cœur de notre monde actuel, Piero Gilardi s'est préoccupé de représenter la nature non pas sous la forme de paysages, mais plutôt de fragments, non pas à travers une vision panoramique, mais en adoptant un regard horizontal qui se situe au ras des choses pour nous montrer une nature (parfois domestiquée, parfois pas) saisie dans ses moindres détails et attirer notre attention sur ce que nous ne regarderions pas.

Protagoniste des premières expositions de l'Arte Povera à la fin des années 60, Piero Gilardi a privilégié de parler de la nature en utilisant non pas des matériaux élémentaires (eau, terre, feu...), mais un matériau industriel et contemporain, la mousse polyuréthane, qu'il découpe, agence, colle, peint pour donner à voir une nature poussée au-delà du réel avec ses couleurs vives, éclatantes, réjouissantes. Chez Piero Gilardi la nature se vit. On s'assied sur des troncs d'arbre (*Aigues Tortes*, 2007) pour écouter leurs bruits, on la porte comme un vêtement pour se transformer (*Vestito-Natura Anguria* ; *Vestito-Natura Sassi* ; *Vestito-Natura Betulla*, 1967 ; *O.G.M. Free*, 2014). Son *Igloo* (1964), montré pour la première fois à Paris, est une pièce historique qui doit se lire dans un désir de revenir à une forme de vie primitive loin des enjeux de la société de consommation de l'époque, problématique qu'il partage notamment avec son ami Pino Pascali (1935-1968).

Cette conscience politique, qui est au cœur de l'œuvre de Piero Gilardi, s'exprime non seulement dans ses dessins, affiches et masques à l'effigie des hommes politiques réalisés chaque année pour le défilé du 1er mai à Turin, mais aussi dans cette réflexion profonde d'une conscience de la nature qui occupe l'artiste depuis plus de cinquante ans. »

(Texte publié à l'occasion de l'exposition « Piero Gilardi Nature Forever », MAXXI, Rome, 2017)

« J'espère pouvoir réunir un jour tous les tapis que je suis en train de réaliser dans un lieu spacieux et plein, fermé par un dôme informe et opalescent : dans cet environnement raréfié l'image de chaque tapis commencera à se dilater et à se déformer selon un rythme organique incompréhensible, mais acceptable¹. »

Piero Gilardi écrit ce texte lors de sa première exposition chez Gian Enzo Sperone en 1966 où il montre ses tapis-nature, nés un an auparavant, en 1965, qui feront sa reconnaissance et qui appartiennent en premier lieu à une réflexion menée sur la société du futur (*Macchine per il futuro*, Galleria L'Immagine, Turin, 1963) où ces sculptures en mousse polyuréthane trouveraient place dans des cellules d'habitation individuelle. L'heure est à une réflexion sur une société cybernétique dans laquelle la technologie triompherait sur l'humain, sujet qui intéresse aussi dans ces mêmes années l'artiste Nicolas Schöffer (1912-1992).

En réfléchissant à ce que serait le paysage du futur, Piero Gilardi construit l'image d'une nature artificielle tout en recherchant paradoxalement un fort effet hyperréaliste. Les tapis-nature sont des fragments de paysage et représentent la mer avec des mouettes, un champ labouré recouvert d'épis de maïs ou encore un feu de bois ; sujets, dont il dit qu'ils sont pris « dans le subconscient collectif et les souvenirs d'enfance². »

L'année suivante, exposé à la galerie Sonnabend à Paris, l'une des galeries les plus importantes et influentes du moment, Gilardi poursuit sa typologie en montrant, entre autres choses, un champ de choux, un champ de pastèques, le sol d'une étable, le lit d'un torrent. Il place ces surfaces au réalisme kitsch à la verticale comme des tableaux, selon peut-être l'esprit des tableaux-pièges d'un Daniel Spoerri (né en 1930), ou, au contraire, les pose ou les superpose à même le sol telle que la nature se donne à voir : une surface horizontale de mer, de sous-bois ou de rivière.

Vivre l'art

Il s'agit de concevoir l'exposition non comme une succession de pièces, mais comme un environnement pensé comme un espace participatif qui prône une expérience relationnelle de l'art. Cette volonté de faire entrer l'art dans la vie croise les idées du philosophe américain John

(*L'arte come esperienza*) en 1951, mais réédité en 1964 et en 1967³. La pensée de Dewey connaît, notamment, en Italie dans ces années un large succès auprès des artistes et rencontre les théories d'Herbert Marcuse et son *Homme unidimensionnel* (1964), qui paraît aussi en 1967⁴, texte qui remet en question l'influence de la culture urbaine et industrielle, de la société de consommation et des *mass media* sur la construction de l'identité humaine.

Substituts de la nature, les tapis-nature parlent d'une nature quotidienne, souvent domestiquée par l'homme, mais ils convoquent les enjeux formels de la société industrielle moderne des années 1960 c'est-à-dire l'univers du plastique qui est entré dans la vie courante et par extension dans la création.

Dans un texte paru dans la revue *Domus*, en décembre 1966, Ettore Sottsass n'hésite pas à qualifier la nature que représente Gilardi de misérable car c'est une nature de la chute, profondément banale, loin de toute représentation sublime :

« La nature de Gilardi n'est ni hygiénique ni confortable. Ce n'est pas un alibi, mais c'est un rite. Ce n'est pas une nature victorieuse, ce n'est pas une nature violente, elle n'est ni sauvage ni heureuse. C'est une nature misérable, de la chute. Une nature de pommes tombées, de citrouilles de potagers de périphérie, quand les fleurs de petits pois et de haricots, les zinnias et les dahlias sont fanées et les fruits ont été récoltés, une nature d'épis de maïs quand les coquelicots de juin, le blé de juillet et les pêches d'août sont terminées et qu'il ne reste plus dans les champs que des ronces et des racines, une nature de la chute. »

Cette nature humanisée (*Campo di grano, Angurie*, 1967) ou parfois encore intacte (*Sottobosco, Gabbiano sul mare, Sassi*, 1967) est commune à celle de l'ami Pino Pascali (1935-1968) dans le désir d'en reconstruire son image même si formellement les moyens mis en œuvre divergent. C'est, pour Pino Pascali, l'utilisation de matériaux élémentaires comme l'eau et la terre qui entrent en 1967 dans son œuvre et deviennent la matière même de ses installations *9 mq di pozzanghere, 32 mq di mare circa, Campi arati e canali di irrigazione* à travers lesquelles l'artiste relit et interprète certains paysages de son enfance, ceux de sa région des Pouilles⁶. Quand, pour Piero Gilardi, il s'agit d'utiliser un matériau industriel et contemporain, de la mousse polyuréthane, qu'il découpe, agence, colle et peint, avec une précision infinie, en vue de donner naissance à sa vision de la nature au-delà du réel.

Cette « industrialité » est poussée à son extrême lorsque certains tapis-nature ne se présentent plus sous la forme de structures indépendantes de taille rectangulaire ou carré, mais en rouleaux à acquérir au mètre comme un morceau de moquette ou de tissu (*Greto di fiume*, 1966) car ce sont d'abord des œuvres à vivre, donc à mettre dans les habitations et à utiliser quotidiennement,

ne sera pas sans citer les peintures industrielles de son aîné piémontais Giuseppe Pinot-Gallizio (1902-1964) qui, à la fin des années 1950, avait choisi de remplacer la main de l'artiste au profit d'une conception impersonnelle et globale de la peinture. Mais à l'inverse de Pinot-Gallizio, Piero Gilardi, lui, abolira tout procédé mécanique pour créer entièrement à la main ses tapis-nature déjouant ainsi toute reproductibilité technique.

Dans cette œuvre d'expérience, les *Vestiti-natura*, réalisés pour une soirée performative au Piper-Club de Turin en 1967, dans la continuité des *Vestiti stato d'animo* (1964) voient naître des femmes-bouleaux (*Vestito-natura Betulle*), des femmes-pastèques (*Vestito-natura Anguria*), des femmes-cailloux (*Vestito-natura Sassi*). Les performeuses endossent à proprement parler la (fausse) nature comme moyen de signifier à la fois notre rapport originel à la nature, mais aussi l'ouverture du champ de création à la mode (*Borsa Zucca*, 1967) ou encore au design (*Tronco sdraio*, 1966 ; *Natura Letto*, 1967), à l'image de certaines réalisations contemporaines du groupe florentin d'architectes, Archizoom (1966-1974).

Un artiste dans son temps

Les propositions de Piero Gilardi trouvent place parmi les expositions collectives qui anticipent l'Arte Povera. Il s'agit d'*Arte Abitabile* avec Michelangelo Pistoletto, Gianni Piacentino, Mario Merz et Giovanni Anselmo à la galerie Sperone (Turin) en juin-juillet 1966 où chacun des artistes s'attache à montrer comment la création doit rentrer dans l'espace du vécu et du relationnel. Puis, un an plus tard, de sa participation à l'exposition « Fuoco, Immagine, Acqua, Terra » à la galerie L'Attico (Rome) de Fabio Sargentini en juin 1967 qui confronte « lo spazio degli elementi » (Maurizio Calvesi) et « lo spazio dello spettacolo » (Alberto Boatto). C'est cette dialectique entre l'image et la réalité, la nature et l'artifice, l'espace et l'environnement qui se jouent dans l'ensemble de ces réalisations, entre l'interprétation de la nature que donne Piero Gilardi avec son rouleau de *Caduta di frutta* et celle de Pino Pascali avec ses *9 mq di pozzanghere* et au-dessus ses *1 mc di terra* et *2 mc di terra*.

Lo spazio dell'immagine, exposition historique sur l'art de installation et de l'environnement en Italie qui se tient de juillet à octobre 1967 au Palazzo Trinci (Foligno) est une réflexion supplémentaire sur la conception participative et environnementale de l'œuvre d'art à laquelle participe Piero Gilardi en montrant des tapis-nature à déplier et à utiliser pleinement. Mais Piero Gilardi participe en partie à l'aventure engagée par Germano Celant dans les mois qui suivent, entre autres à cause de divergences idéologiques entre lui et Celant⁷. Il ne participe pas à la

septembre 1967), ni à celle qui suit à Bologne (« Arte Povera », galerie De'Foscherari, février-mars 1968), mais expose dans celle de Trieste (« Arte Povera », Centro Arte Viva Feltrinelli, mars-avril 1968). Ces années correspondent à des voyages qu'il fait à travers l'Europe et les États-Unis en quête d'artistes qui développent un travail marqué d'une forte subjectivité, loin du système du marché de l'art ; Gilardi, qui finance ses séjours, en partie avec l'aide de Gian Enzo Sperone, devient à ce moment-là le correspondant pour la jeune revue *Flash Art* de Giancarlo Politi s'adonnant pendant deux ans à une intense activité critique. Ces années correspondent aussi à la création du Deposito d'Arte Presente, *artist run space* dont il est l'un des instigateurs. Cherchant à créer un réseau d'artistes animé par des préoccupations communes autour des notions d'« individualité », d'« énergie primaire » et de « perception », il forge le terme d'« arte microemotiva » (art micro-émotif) pour parler des travaux de Bruce Nauman, Eva Hesse, Ger van Elk, Richard Long, Mario Merz et Gilberto Zorio, quand Germano Celant, lui, utilise le concept d'« Arte Povera » d'abord dans une perspective italienne qui va très vite devenir internationale.

L'activité de Piero Gilardi comme artiste-critique et théoricien, position rare pour un artiste, est centrale en cette fin des années 1960 dans le contexte élargi de l'art italien ; il est celui qui connaît le mieux la scène internationale. Ce travail théorique, qu'il n'a jamais dissocié de sa production artistique, ne sera pas circonscrit à ces années, car il ne cesse de l'occuper jusqu'à aujourd'hui comme en témoigne l'impressionnant recueil de ses écrits complets¹⁰.

À l'invitation de Marcello Rumma, il participe indirectement à l'exposition « III Rassegna di arti figurative : Arte Povera + azioni povere » qui transforme pendant trois jours en octobre 1968 la petite ville d'Amalfi en un véritable laboratoire de réalisations et d'actions. C'est par son intermédiaire que participent Richard Long, Ger van Elk et Jan Dibbets, rencontrés lors de son tour européen, mais Gilardi livre surtout un texte fondamental, sorte de journal de bord, dans lequel il consigne dans les moindres détails l'activité de ce moment historique de l'aventure de l'Arte Povera¹¹. Son rôle s'étend au-delà de la péninsule avec son action auprès du projet d'Harald Szeemann, *When Attitudes Become Form* (1969) duquel, en définitive, il se retire pour cause de désaccords¹² alors qu'à la même période le projet d'une exposition véritablement collective et collaborative est accueillie par Wim Beeren (*Op Losse Schroeven*) au Stedelijk Museum d'Amsterdam, exposition pour laquelle Gilardi livre un long texte analytique sur la situation de l'art actuel sur fond de contexte politique¹³.

Son rôle d'activiste et de militant politique prend le dessus dès 1969 et ce jusqu'aux années 1980 où Piero Gilardi cesse toute activité artistique. Son retour sur la scène de l'art se fait après

1989-90 ; *Incendio*, 1990) qui parlent de notre rapport à la nature et au monde en offrant au visiteur la possibilité d'être partie prenante de l'œuvre. Ces propositions cherchent notamment à faire prendre conscience des enjeux écologiques en se saisissant de l'apport de la technologie et de la science dans le monde de l'art ; avec Piotr Kowalski et Claude Faure, il est cofondateur de l'association Ars Technica à Paris en 1988.

En proposant des œuvres d'expérience, Piero Gilardi invite les visiteurs à se mettre en scène pour responsabiliser leur rapport au monde. De son *Igloo* (1964), qui rejoue une habitation primitive, à son œuvre *Ipogea* (2010), qui est aussi une forme d'igloo, mais qui offre la possibilité de revivre l'expérience d'être dans une grotte, Piero Gilardi signifie que l'art n'est pas un moyen de parler de l'art mais bien du monde.

¹ Piero Gilardi, « I tappeti-natura », Galleria Sperone, Turin, mai 1966. Republié dans Piero Gilardi, *La mia biopolitica*, Prearo Editore, Milan, 2016, p. 43.

² *Ibid.*

³ John Dewey, *L'arte come esperienza*, Nuova Italia, Florence, 1951, réédité en 1964 et en 1967. (Traduit par Corrado Maltese).

⁴ Herbert Marcuse *L'Uomo a una dimensione : l'ideologia della società industriale avanzata*, Einaudi, Turin, 1967.

⁵ Ettore Sottsass, « Piero Gilardi », *Domus*, n°445, décembre 1966.

⁶ Sur cette question, voir Valérie Da Costa, *Pino Pascali : retour à la Méditerranée*, Les presses du réel, Dijon, 2015.

⁷ Voir à ce sujet la lettre adressée aux critiques Pietro Bonfiglioli et Vittorio Boarini (Turin, 25 janvier 1969) in Piero Gilardi, *La mia biopolitica, op. cit.*, p. 223.

⁸ Le premier texte de Piero Gilardi publié dans la revue *Flash Art* s'intitule : *Diario da New York* (n° 5, novembre-décembre 1967, p. 1-2). Republié dans Piero Gilardi, *La mia biopolitica, op. cit.*, p. 209-210.

⁹ Piero Gilardi, « Primary Energy and the Microemotive Artists », *Arts Magazine*, n°43, septembre-octobre 1968, p. 48-51. Republié dans Piero Gilardi, *La mia biopolitica, op. cit.*, p. 329-331. Ce texte a été republié par Germano Celant dans *Preconistoria 1966-69*, Centro Di, Florence, 1976 puis dans *Arte povera. Storie e protagonisti*, Electa, Milan, 1985, p. 100-103.

¹⁰ Piero Gilardi, *La mia biopolitica*, Prearo Editore, Milan, 2016, 346 p. Certains textes de Piero Gilardi avaient été précédemment publiés dans : *Dall'arte alla vita, dalla vita all'arte*, La Salamandra, Milan, 1981 ; *Not for sale*, Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, Milan, 2000.

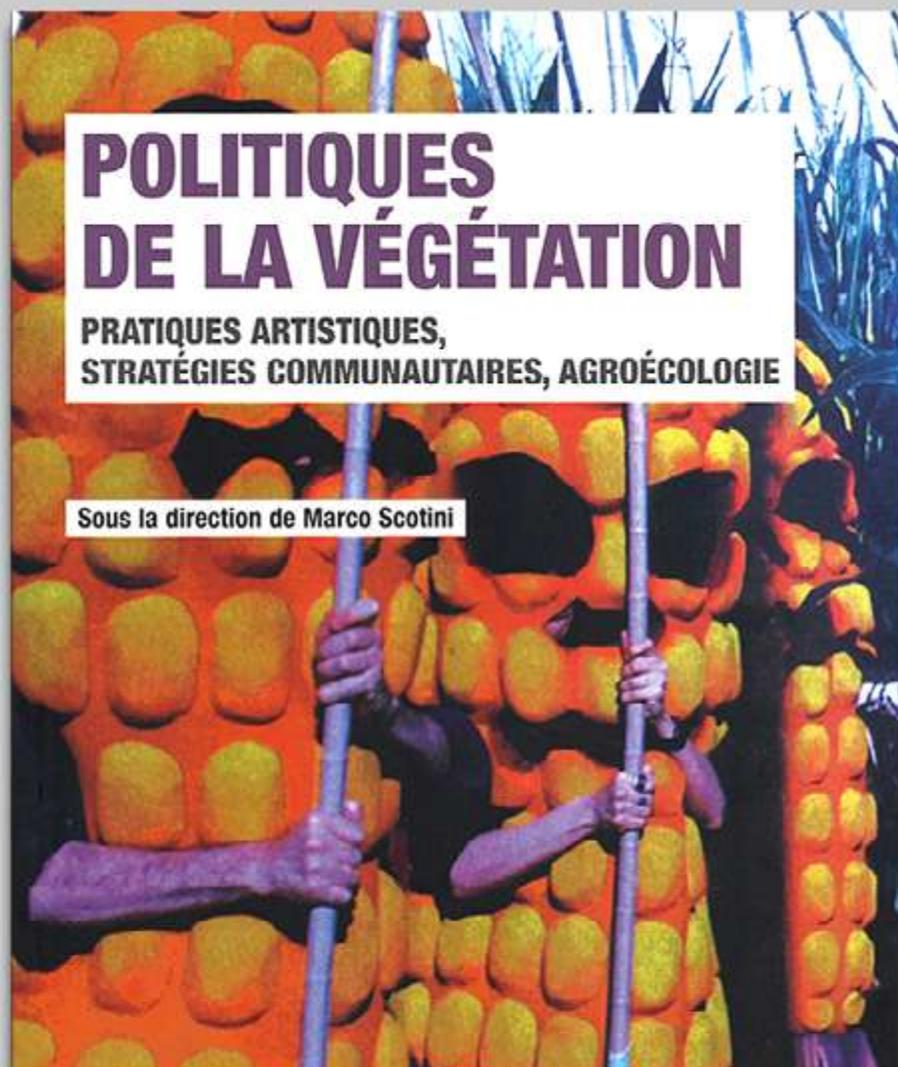
¹¹ Piero Gilardi, « L'esperienza di Amalfi » in Germano Celant, *Arte povera + azioni povere*, Rumma editore, Salerno, 1969. Republié dans Piero Gilardi, *La mia biopolitica, op. cit.*, p. 220-223.

¹² Sur cette question, je renvoie au très informatif entretien entre Piero Gilardi et Andrea Bellini in Piero Gilardi, JRP|Ringier, Zurich, 2012.

¹³ « Politics and Avant-garde » in *Op Losse Schroeven*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1969, np. Republié dans Piero Gilardi, *La mia biopolitica, op. cit.*, p. 228-233.

PUBLICATIONS

PUBLICATIONS



POLITIQUES DE LA VÉGÉTATION

PRATIQUES ARTISTIQUES,
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Sous la direction de Marco Scotini



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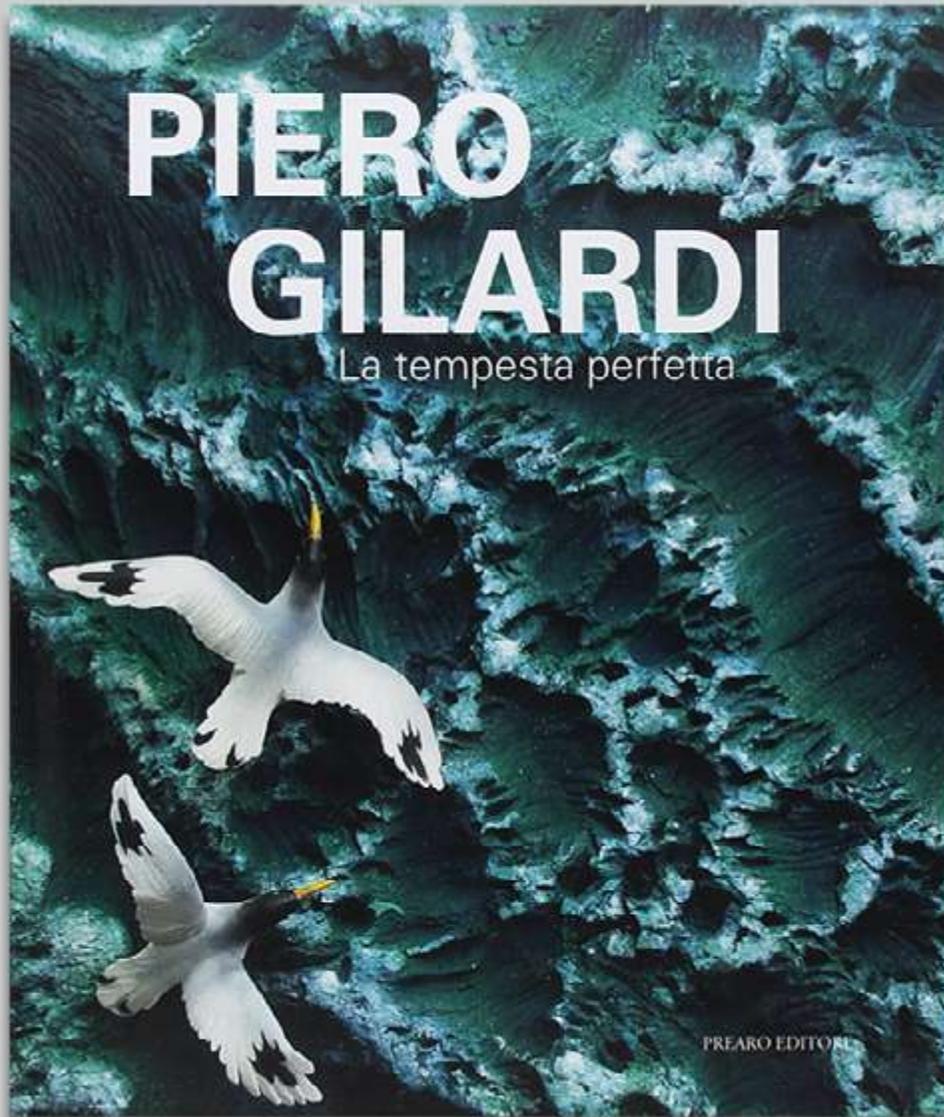
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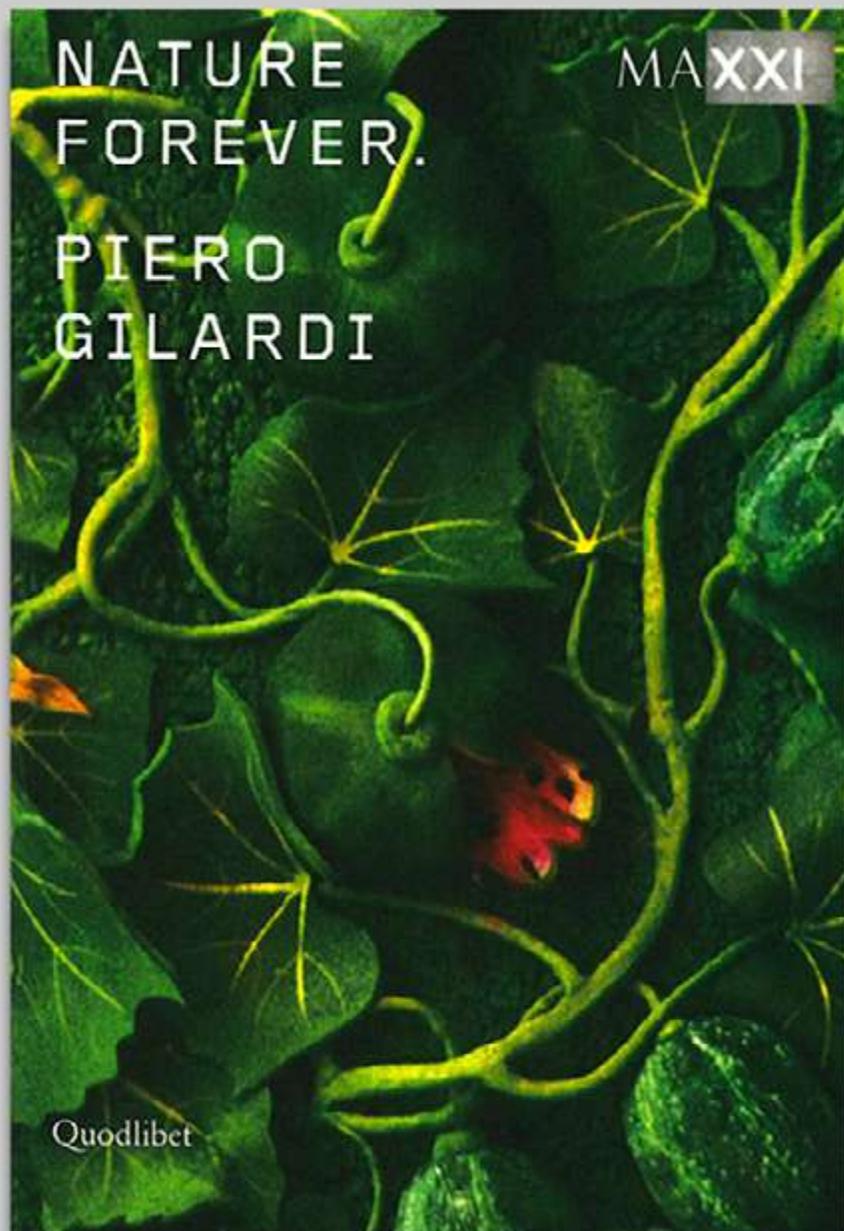
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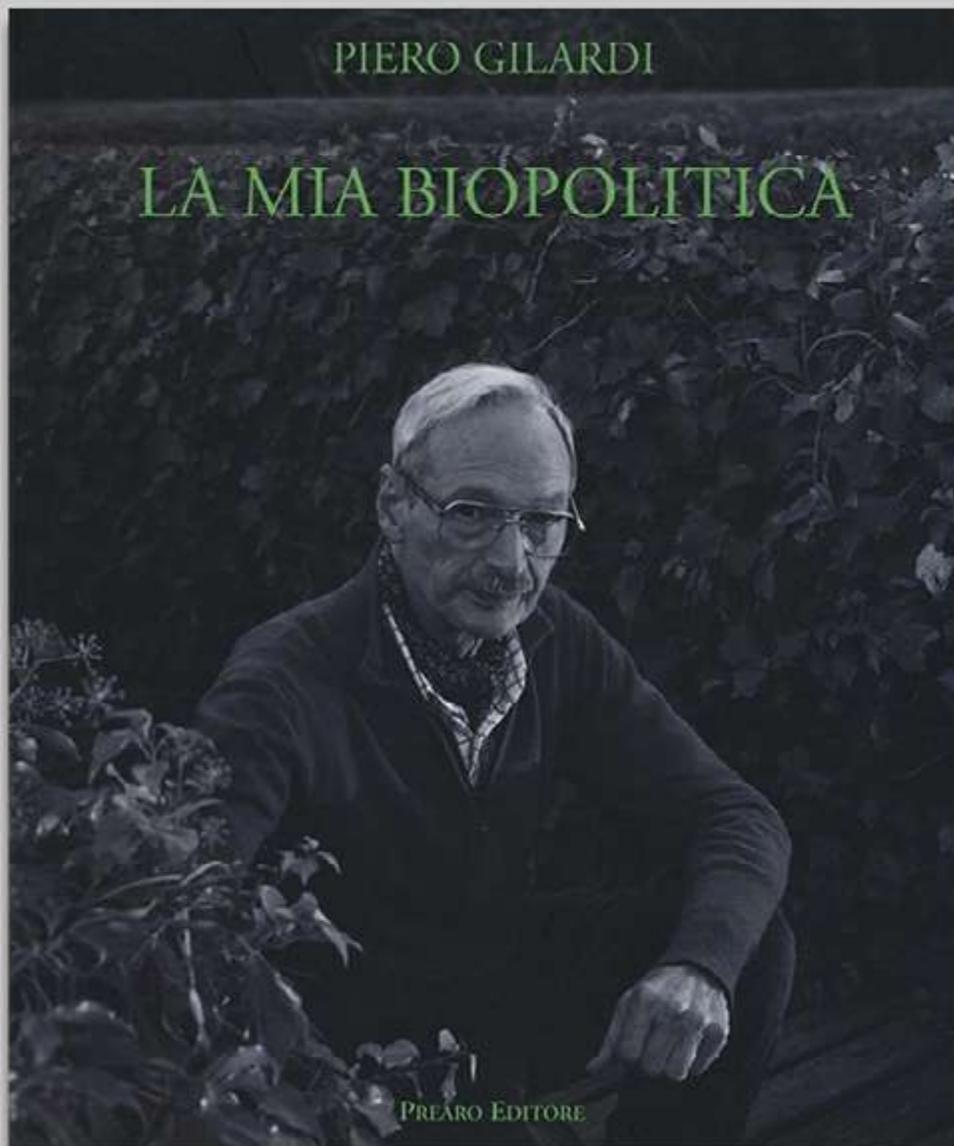
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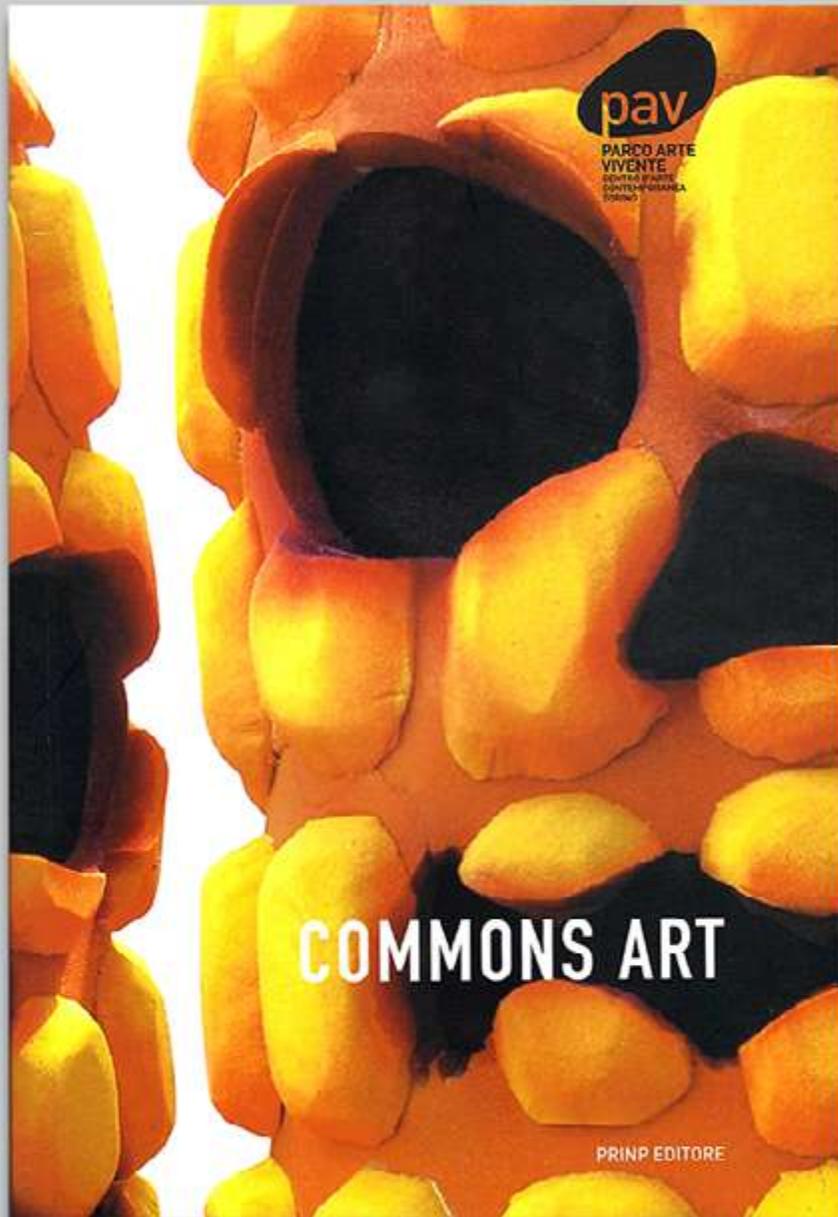
Piero Gilardi. La tempesta perfetta, 2018
Texts by Piero Gilardi
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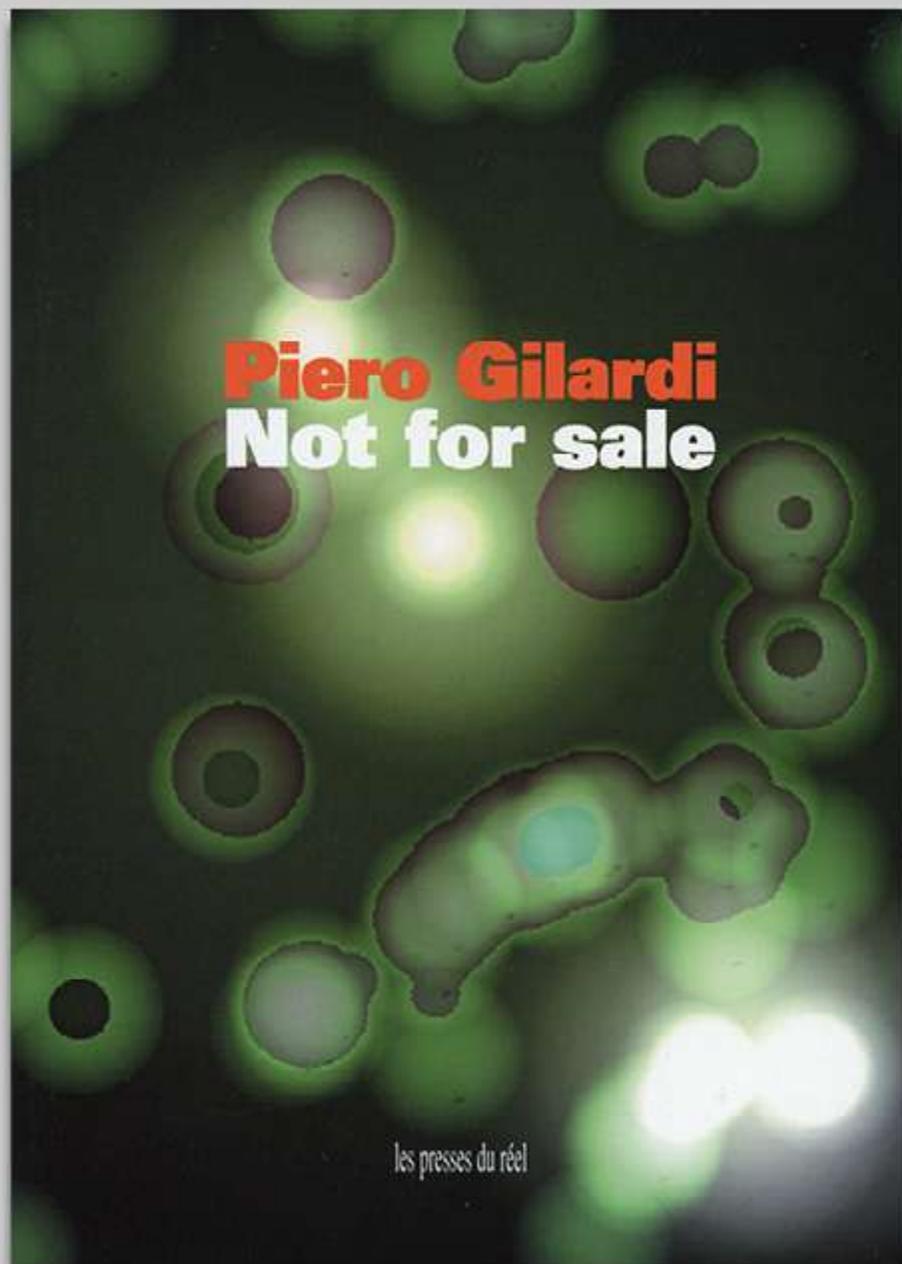
Piero Gilardi. *Nature forever*, 2017
Texts by Hou Hanru, Bartolomeo Pietromarchi, Valérie Da Costa, Marco Scotini
& Piero Gilardi
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Piero Gilardi. *La mia biopolitica*, 2016
Texts by Piero Gilardi
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Italian
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Commons Art, 2014
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120 pages
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BIOGRAPHY

BIOGRAPHIE



Piero Gilardi was born in Turin in 1942. He produced his first nature-carpets (tappeti-natura) using polyurethane foam, and showed them at the Sperone gallery (Turin) in 1966, then in 1967 at the Sonnabend gallery (Paris) and the Fischbach gallery (New York). In 1968, he ceased producing artworks and embarked on a career as an art critic, becoming the correspondent for the magazine *Flash Art*. Travelling around Europe and the United States, he introduced Italy to the works of Richard Long, Eva Hesse, Jan Dibbets, and Bruce Nauman, and helped put on two major international shows: *When Attitudes Become Form* (Bern, 1969) and *Op Losse Schroeven* (Amsterdam, 1969), which both presented the art tendencies of the moment (Arte Povera, Land Art, Antiform Art).

The year 1969 saw the start of a lengthy activist and transcultural experience aimed at theoretical analysis, and the "Arte Vita" (Art Life) conjunction. As a political militant and an organizer of young culture, he undertook different experiments involving collective creativity in urban and "worldwide" peripheral areas, in Nicaragua and in Indian reservations in the United States, as well as in Africa. He resumed his artistic activities in the 1980s, producing interactive installations talking about our relation to nature and the world, offering visitors a chance to be part and parcel of the work. Those proposals sought in particular to raise awareness about ecological challenges, making use of the contribution of technology and science in the art world; with Piotr Kowalski and Claude Faure, he was the co-founder of the association Ars Tecnica in Paris in 1988. In 2003, he promoted the City of Turin's Park of Living Art project, which summed up all his experiences and experiments to do with the Nature-Culture dialectic. In 2012, his work was shown in a large travelling show (Castello di Rivoli, Turin; Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven; Nottingham Contemporary Art, Nottingham, UK). In 2017, the MAXXI in Rome held a retrospective exhibition, *Piero Gilardi. Nature Forever*, showing the various aspects of his work.

Piero Gilardi est né à Turin en 1942. À partir de 1965, il réalise ses premiers tapis-nature (tappeti-natura) en mousse polyuréthane qu'il expose à la galerie Sperone (Turin) en 1966 puis en 1967 à la galerie Sonnabend (Paris) et à la galerie Fischbach (New York). En 1968, il interrompt sa production d'œuvres en s'engageant dans la voie de la critique d'art et en devenant le correspondant de la revue *Flash Art*. Circulant en Europe et aux États-Unis, il fait connaître en Italie les travaux de Richard Long, Eva Hesse, Jan Dibbets, Bruce Nauman, et collabore à la réalisation de deux expositions internationales : *When Attitudes Become Form* (Bern, 1969) et *Op Losse Schroeven* (Amsterdam, 1969) qui montrent les enjeux artistiques du moment (Arte Povera, Land Art, Antiform Art).

En 1969, commence une longue expérience activiste et transculturelle qui vise à l'analyse théorique et à la conjonction "Arte Vita" (Art Vie). En tant que militant politique et animateur de la jeune culture, il mène différentes expériences de créativité collective dans les périphéries urbaines et "mondiales" au Nicaragua et dans les réserves indiennes des États-Unis, ainsi qu'en Afrique. Il reprend son activité artistique au cours des années 80 réalisant des installations interactives qui parlent de notre rapport à la nature et au monde en offrant au visiteur la possibilité d'être partie prenante de l'œuvre. Ces propositions cherchent notamment à faire prendre conscience des enjeux écologiques en se saisissant de l'apport de la technologie et de la science dans le monde de l'art ; avec Piotr Kowalski et Claude Faure, il est cofondateur de l'association Ars Tecnica à Paris en 1988. À partir du 2003, il promeut le projet du Parc d'art vivant de la Ville de Turin où se résument toutes ses expériences relatives à la dialectique Nature-Culture. En 2012, son travail est exposé lors d'une grande exposition itinérante (Castello di Rivoli, Turin ; Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven ; Nottingham Contemporary Art, Nottingham). En 2017, le MAXXI à Rome, lui consacre une rétrospective *Piero Gilardi. Nature Forever* qui montre les différents aspects de son œuvre.