

Art Viewer

Michele Ciacciofera

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August 15, 2024

Michele Ciacciofera at Passerelle Centre d'art contemporain

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Artist: Michele Ciacciofera

Exhibition title: Condenser l'Infini

Venue: Passerelle Centre d'art contemporain, Brest, France

Date: June 21 – September 14, 2024

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Michele Ciacciofera (1969, Italy) is offering Passerelle an experience which may appear impossible, that of 'Condensing the Infinite'. From his native Sardinia to the Alps and then Brittany and Scotland, he has observed the ancient sculptural forms, such as memorial stones and menhirs, on which human civilisations are based. In his European journey, he considers the inevitable end of us all and the infinite potential of our visual culture to go beyond the world dreamed up by our ancestors. 'Condensing the Infinite' is an attempt to write a common history, a history of the forms that our brains all recognise to a greater or lesser extent.

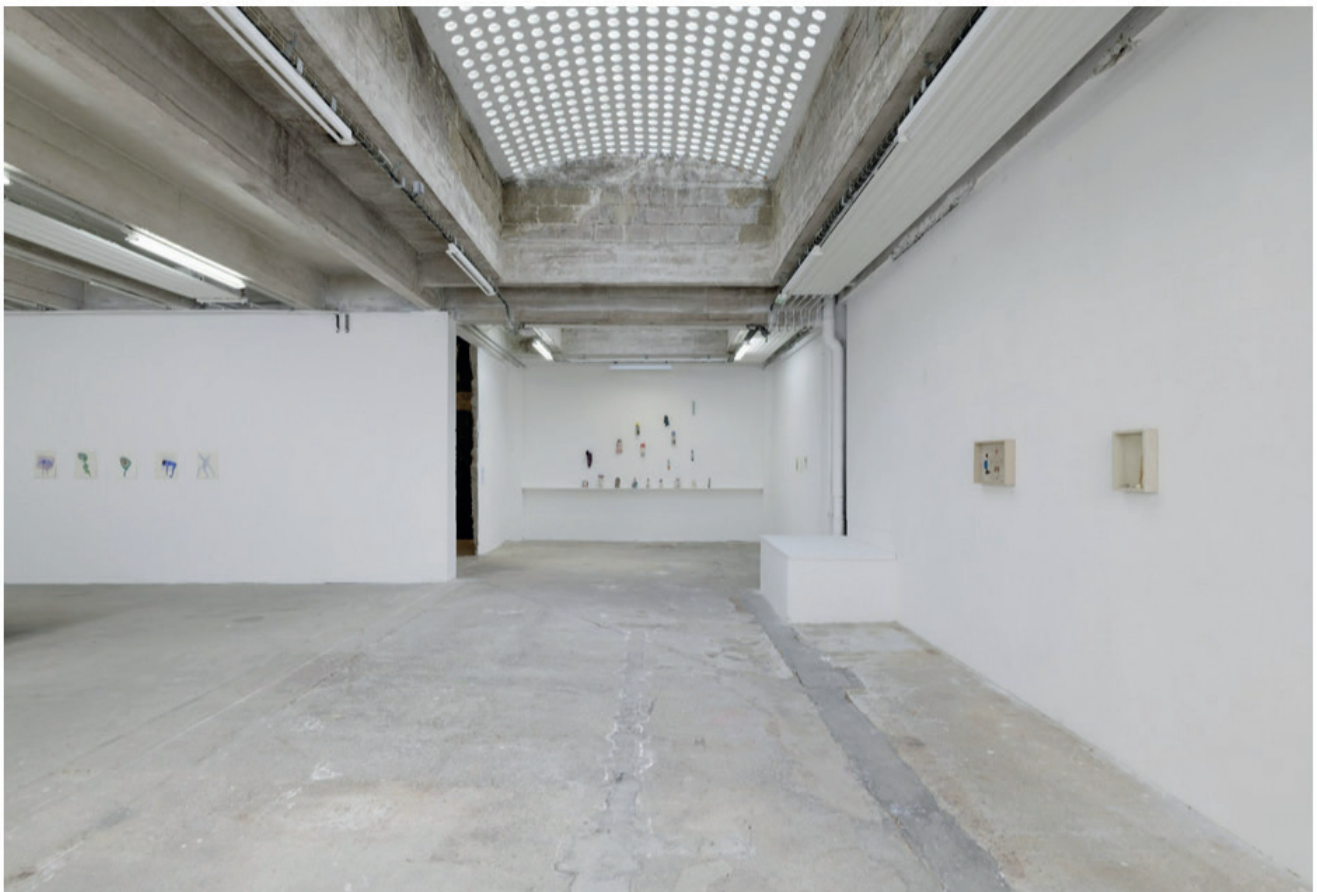
The body of works presented in the Passerelle patio has been entitled 'Menhirs' by the artist. Ciacciofera is fascinated by megalithic art, yet decided to work from fragile, modest materials, essentially workshop waste including paper and cardboard, the very opposite of the eternity of stone. In this sense this series recalls the work of the Arte Povera artists, an Italian artistic movement that began in the late 1960s. It was characterised by the use of ordinary humble materials, often natural or salvaged, and reflected a desire to reconnect with original simplicity and authenticity as well as a rejection of overconsumption. This heritage is never claimed or stated but it seems essential to consider some of Ciacciofera's creations through the prism of a 'new poor art'. Recycling and the use of natural materials have become as much an aesthetic necessity for the artist as they are a political and militant requirement. His sculptures abound in poetic details such as little ceramics or painted organic elements, evoking at times the style of the Cycladic idols, at times the shapes of plants or fungi, and are sometimes painted in bright colours and act as altars dedicated to art. They function both as platforms or plinths for art and as sculptures in their own right, joyous and reassuring, wise and primitive.

The second central series of the exhibition is *Pathosformeln*, gouaches on paper inspired by the theory of art historian Aby Warburg (1866–1929). The latter invented this term for the recurrent formal configurations used to express basic emotions. These formulae are not limited to mere representations, but constitute fragments of collective memory, echoes of ancestral rituals and original myths. *Pathosformeln* constitute a precious tool to decipher the meaning of the images and understand the emotions conveyed by them. Following on from Warburg's research, Ciacciofera reproduces pieces of iconic Gothic and Renaissance painting like close-ups, erasing some parts including all the faces. Strangely, this does not result in the compositions being disembodied, nor devoid of feeling, and the presence of the characters is strongly felt, like ghosts waiting in the space between two realities. Rocks, pebbles, gems and fossils float through the drawings, creating an effect that could be either magic or a sign of out-of-control quantum physics. It is up to the spectator whether to try to reconstruct an image or remain satisfied with what the artist presents.

The possibility of condensing the infinite posited by Ciacciofera may lie in this search for an active synthesis of the human history from prehistoric art to the art of today.



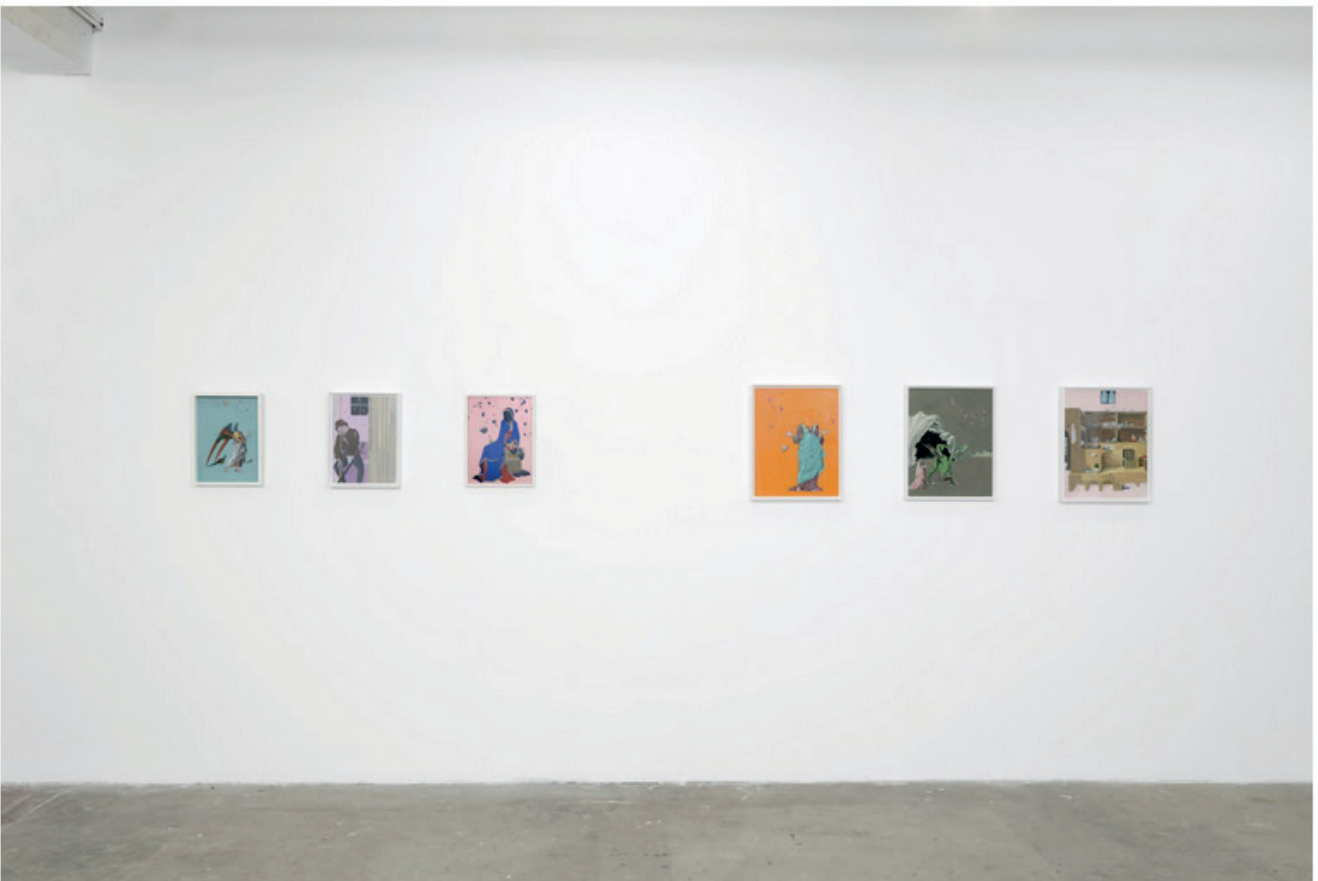
Michele Ciacciofera, *Condenser l'Infini*, 2024, exhibition view, Passerelle Centre d'art contemporain, Brest ©photo: Aurélien Mole – Courtesy the artist and Michel Rein, Paris / Brussels



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■ Exhibitions

- 📍 Brest, France, Michele Ciacciofera, Passerelle Centre d'art contemporain
- ◀ Johanna von Monkiewitsch at Leopold-Hoesch-Museum
- ▶ Inside Job at eastcontemporary