



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').

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

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