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Eva Rem Hansen

Entering the Work

Artists' Appearances and Author-ity in Arte
Povera, 1965–1972

NTNU
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Thesis for the Degree of
Philosophiae Doctor
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Note on Images

This thesis is richly illustrated; it contains well over a hundred images of artworks. The images of works that are central to my discussions are presented as *figures* – in captions referred to by abbreviations of Fig. or Figs. – while images that serve a secondary, illustrative or contextualising function are presented as *illustrations* – which in turn are abbreviated to Ill. or Ills. in captions.

The image captions in the running text are sparse, restricted to artists' names, works' titles, production years, materials and/or techniques and size and/or duration. However, the “Catalogue”, pages 349–93, presents extensive information about the figures, including current owners, first exhibition contexts, cursory information and (far from exhaustive) bibliographical lists of sources and further reading. The “List of Illustrations” on pages 394–95 contains some additional information about the more illustrative images.

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From February 2020 onwards, the Covid-19 pandemic underlined the geographical distance from which I study Arte Povera. However, the pandemic also inspired new forms for mediating scholarly knowledge, and I am grateful to institutions like the Philadelphia Art Museum, Magazzino Italian Art, the Bibliotheca Hertziana and Sapienza Università di Roma for the possibility to follow current discussions on Arte Povera and post-war Italian art from my own living room. I have also received invaluable information, unpublished manuscripts, helpful advice and encouragement via email from numerous scholars and institutions. Thank you Rocco Mussat Sartor at Archivio Anselmo; Agata Boetti at Archivio Alighiero Boetti; Fondazione Calzolari; Silvia Fabro at Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro; Luisa Borio at Fondazione Merz; Maddalena Disch at Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini; Antonio Frugis at Fondazione Pino Pascali; Roberto Caterino at Archivio Giuseppe Penone; Marco Farano at Cittadellarte; Robin Hemmer at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein; Daniela Lancioni; Pasquale Fameli; Lara Conte; Luca Lo Pinto; Giovanni Lista; Nike Bätzner; Cornelia Lauf; Emilio Corti; Olivier Razac; Federico Luisetti; Vera Munro; Roman Grabner, Bettina Ruhrberg, Valentina Pero, and Friedemann Malsch. Closer to home, I am thankful to the University of Bergen for their online Continuing Education programme, which has allowed me to study the Italian language part-time from 2021. Ideally, I should have been familiar with Italian before undertaking this study, instead my studies of Arte Povera have introduced me to the language and motivated me to learn.

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Eva Rem Hansen
Trondheim, 2022

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Preparing what would become his 1971 Entrare nell'opera (Entering the Work), Arte Povera artist Giovanni Anselmo brought his camera and tripod to the top of a grass-covered hill in the province of Turin. There, he installed his photographic instruments and directed the viewfinder towards the grassy slope below. Anselmo then activated the camera's shutter release with a slight delay, ran into the field of view of the camera lens, and was captured inside his own photograph a few moments later.

The result of this action is a rather grainy black and white image reproduced on canvas, in which a modest play of light and shadow across the surface indicates certain areas of height and depth. The viewer can identify the motif as an undulating, vegetative landscape, but the highly elevated point of view dismisses any attempt at further specification. The slope fills the entire image frame, and the landscape seems to extend infinitely beyond the confines of the canvas. What is more, the composition lacks layers in depth; in this uniform environment, there is no decisive distinction between foreground and background. Only a single figure, appearing just above centre, disturbs the monotony of the image. This figure is not recognisable as any particular individual, but we know that the dark silhouette belongs to the artist who has left his place behind the camera and is now seen running into the image space. Here, his silhouette melds at certain points with the dark areas of the surrounding topography, which appears to absorb him. In addition, the figure is patterned by the woven texture of the canvas on which the photograph is printed, as if the artist is about to dissolve into the image's materiality. The artist is entering the work.

The Paradox of the Appearance of the Artist

Visual artists, curators and art institutions have in the first decades of the twenty-first century embraced posthumanist thinking.¹ The vogue of posthumanist thinking today responds to a growing awareness of how human interventions have left imprints on the natural environment and affected it in negative ways, and a number of contemporary artists engage directly with the sociopolitical aspects of human exploitation of the Earth's resources, thematising and documenting their destructive consequences.² However, posthumanism is firmly grounded in twentieth-century European philosophies with non-essentialist and anti-anthropocentric orientations, and its artistic adaptations also challenge established conceptions of the relationship between subjectivity and materiality in manners that are not explicitly tied to contemporary environmental politics. For instance, a common artistic response can be referred to as 'material vitalism'. Artists' studios and gallery spaces are currently filled with materials – such as living plants, microbes, metals and minerals – that develop and/or interact during a work's production process or in the course of an exhibition.³ Contrary to being perceived as passive matter, these non-human entities are allowed an active role in the production of artworks – a role traditionally reserved for the creative subject.

¹ The term 'posthumanism' here implies philosophical positions that question human claims to superiority over the non-human entities of this world, aiming to overturn the hierarchy that modern rationalism established between them. For definitions of posthumanism as I apply the term here, see for instance Francesca Ferrando, "Towards a Posthumanist Methodology. A Statement", *Frame Journal of Literary Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2012, 10; Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minneapolis Press, 2010), xxv.

² For examples, see for instance the blurb for "The Anthropocene Project" at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin in 2013–14, https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2014/anthropozaen/anthropozaen_2013_2014.php (accessed 10.03.2022).

³ One of numerous artists working in this manner, is Ane Graff (NO), who lists posthumanist thinkers such as Karen Barad as inspiring her sculptural practice, in which organic materials such as salts, plants, bacteria and human DNA are allowed to interact. See <https://www.anegraff.com> (accessed 17.07.2022).

The current interest in the vitality of materials gives new relevance to *Arte Povera* – meaning poor or impoverished art – a faction of post-war Italian art whose name was coined by Germano Celant in 1967, and now designates the artistic endeavours of roughly a dozen Italy-based artists in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is striking how well the opening lines of Celant’s essay in the publication *Art Povera* (1969), in which he observes that “animals, vegetables and minerals have cropped up in the art world”, apply to part of the contemporary art scene.⁴ Other critics and scholars also emphasise the distinct materiality of *Arte Povera* works – that is, their unconventional combination of commonplace matter from the natural or industrial sphere – such as soil, metals, alcohol, neon and Eternit – as well as the artists’ resistance to refine these materials in favour of presenting them ‘raw’. A number of ‘materially reductive’ readings even suggest that the adjective ‘povera’ refers directly to the ‘simple’ materials employed. Filiberto Menna, for instance, remarked in 1968 that “[t]he material that the young artists use is poor, it seems to be drawn from the scrap heap, from whatever the great industrial machine fails to catch in its gears or rejects as cuttings.”⁵ Today, the Tate website states similarly that “the term poor here refers to the movement’s signature exploration of a wide range of materials beyond the traditional ones.”⁶ In short, there is a marked tendency to regard the use of poor materials as *Arte Povera*’s defining feature.⁷

This accentuation of material *poorness*, in many ways, prefigures current notions of material *vitalism*, since the exposure of pure and unprocessed materials in *Arte Povera* is generally understood as an avowal of their inherent qualities and their potentiality. It seems paradoxical today, but what we now identify as an anti-anthropocentric or posthumanist ethos can be recognised in the critical literature’s characterisations of *Arte Povera* practices as “humanist” or “anthropocentric”.⁸ When used in reference to *Arte Povera*, the latter terms do

⁴ Germano Celant, “Arte Povera” [1969], in *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 1985); reprinted in *Arte Povera: History and Stories*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 119. Note that the original publication has a slightly different phrasing. See Germano Celant, *Art Povera* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 225.

⁵ Filiberto Menna, “An art of enthusiasm” [1969], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 97.

⁶ “Arte povera”, Tate, n.d. See <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/arte-povera> (accessed 09.03.2021). See also Alberto Boatto, “Pascali: A Great Inventor”, in *Pino Pascali*, ed. Marianne Brouwer (Otterlo: Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, 1991), 45; Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “Thrust into the Whirlwind: Italian Art before Arte Povera”, in *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962–1972*, eds. Richard Flood and Frances Morris (London/Minneapolis, MN: Tate Publishing/Walker Art Center, 2001), 22.

⁷ An ambiguity regarding materials is expressed by some of the *Arte Povera* artists, however. Alighiero Boetti announced that his early preoccupation with materials soon developed into “a feeling of nausea and saturation”. See Mirella Bandini, “‘Torino 1967/73’: Interview with Alighiero Boetti” [1973], quoted in Corinna Criticos, “Reading *Arte Povera*”, in Flood and Morris, *Zero to Infinity*, 77.

⁸ For such characterisations, see for instance Tommaso Trini, “A new alphabet for body and matter” [1969], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 113; Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “Arte Povera or the Space of Elements”, in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 20; Ada Masoero, “Zorio: Roots”, in Masoero et al., *Gilberto Zorio* (Turin:

not have the connotations they have now – of human instrumentalisation of the non-human world. Instead, they indicate a humble concern for and approach to the communities and environments one is part of, and a willingness to treat the natural world with the same respect and kindness as other human beings. As Tommaso Trini states in his 1969 essay “A new



Ill. 0.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Idee di pietra*, 2003. Bronze, river stone, 830 x 400 x 400 cm. Permanently installed in Staatspark Karlsruhe, in 2010, as part of dOCUMENTA13; Ill. 0.2. Giuseppe Penone, *Radici di pietra*, 2012. White Carrara marble, living tree, base 120 x 60 x 84 cm, cylinder 300 x Ø 30,5 cm. Permanent installation, Bagh-e Babur Gardens, Kabul.

alphabet for body and matter” (*Nuovo alfabeto per corpo e materia*), “the attitude of the artists towards nature and matter is marked with non-violence, in contrast with the idea of domination through scientific conquest that Western thought traditionally exercises on these entities.”⁹ While this sentiment for the material world is often comprehended as “poetical”, i.e. anti-political, the current interest in posthumanism opens up to an understanding of Arte Povera’s materiality as more politically progressive.¹⁰

The overlapping interests between Arte Povera and the materialist strain of contemporary art have already been indicated, particularly in reference to works made by Giuseppe Penone, the Arte Povera artist who engages most closely with nature. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev notably gave two of Penone’s sculptures prominent positions in her 2012 dOCUMENTA 13 exhibition: *Idee di pietra* (Ideas of Stone), a bronze sculpture cast after a tree with a two-ton river stone resting among its bare branches, was the first work installed in Kassel two years prior to the

Hopefulmonster, 2005), 169; Dieter Roelstraete, “Rhapsody of the Real. Mapping the Art of Jannis Kounellis”, in *Kounellis*, Jan Hoet and Dieter Roelstraete (Milan: Charta, 2002), 15–17.

⁹ Trini, “A new alphabet for body and matter”, 113. This is also a central aspect when analogies are made between Arte Povera and Saint Francis of Assisi’s asceticism. To Giovanni Lista Arte Povera is “a Franciscan aesthetics” whose impoverished objects and simple, poetic gestures harmonises with the Saint Francis ethos of serenity and of the human spirit as “steeped in the intensity and plenitude of universal life.” See also Christiane Meyer-Stoll, “When the Dreamer Dies, What Happens to the Dream??. On the Actions and Action-like Works of Pier Paolo Calzolari”, in *Entrare nell’opera. Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera*, eds. Nike Bätzner et al. (Cologne: Walther König, 2019), 129.

¹⁰ For comments summing up and problematising the understanding of Arte Povera’s materiality as ‘poetical’, see Elizabeth Mangini, “Arte Povera”, *Artforum*, Vol. 46, No. 3, November 2007; Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Hal Foster and Rosalind Krauss, “1967b”, in *Art Since 1900: Modernism. Antimodernism. Postmodernism*, eds. Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Hal Foster and Rosalind Krauss (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), 509–514.

opening; and *Radici di pietra* (Roots of Stone), in which a living tree supports a reclining marble pillar, was the last work realised for the venue in Kabul (Ills. 0.1–0.2).¹¹ Penone's works, which stages nature's encounter with human interference, were situated as framing devices for the exhibition, while the exhibition itself was framed by an extensive programme of texts and lectures centring on the agency of objects and materials, and thereby characterised as a prime example of the contemporary art scene's embrace of a posthumanist ethos.¹² Meanwhile, Elizabeth Mangini, who reads Penone's work from a phenomenological perspective, describes his practice as an effort to align man and matter in a way that resonates with contemporary posthumanist thought.¹³ Federico Luisetti likewise underlines the importance of Penone's production in an age concerned with human colonisation of the world: according to Luisetti, Penone's works attain a "degree zero of artistic significance" when replacing human intervention with "materialistic animism".¹⁴

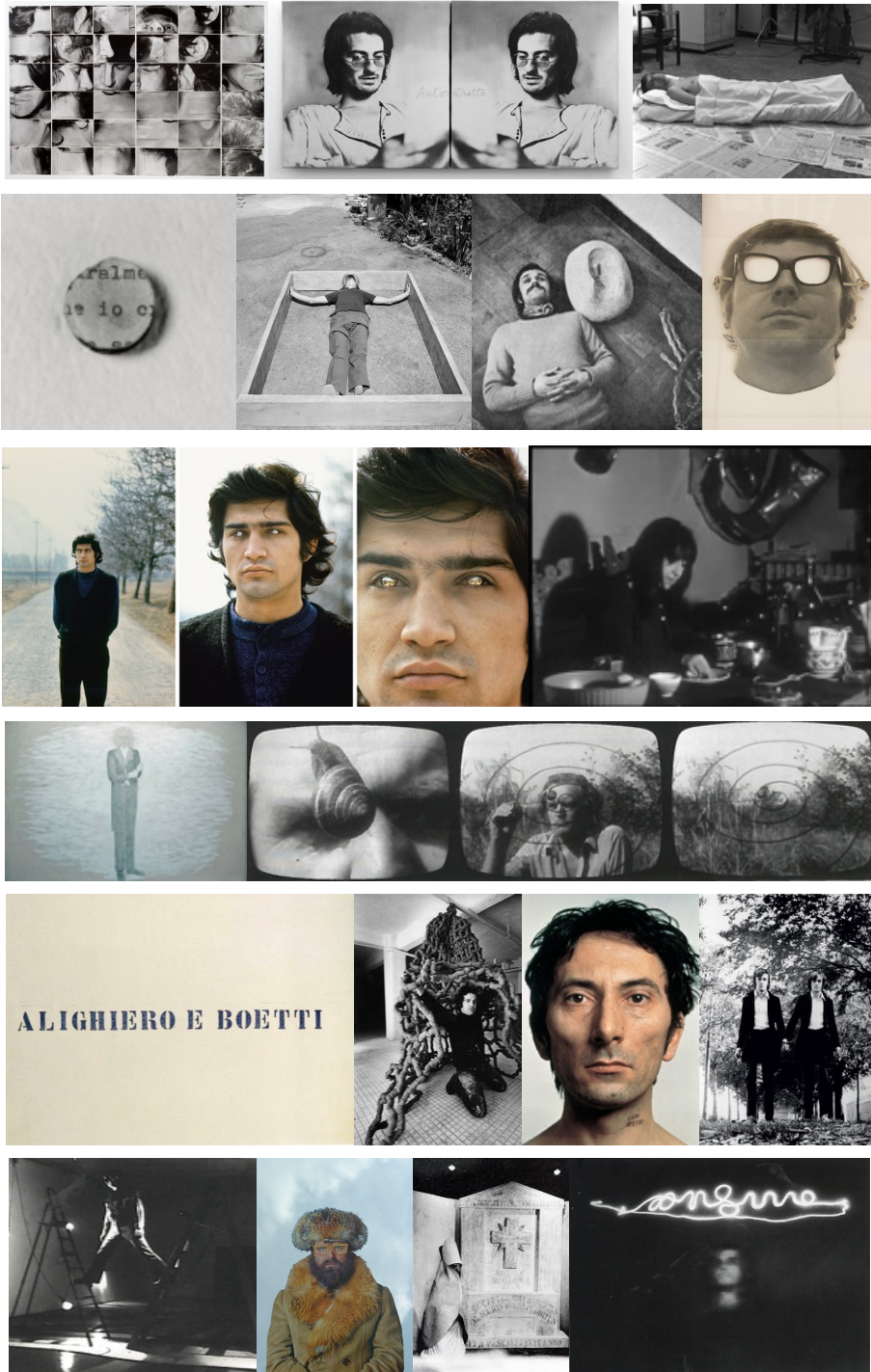
The initial plan for this thesis was to explore how the intersections between Penone's works and material vitalism in contemporary art extend to Arte Povera at large. However, when I started browsing through catalogues and monographs that document the associated artists' production around 1970, I was early on struck by the continuous reoccurrences of a particular type of human presence in the works, namely the presence of the artists themselves. The Arte Povera artists' faces appear in a number of portraits, their names are the main motifs in several works, and photographic documentation reveal how the artists interact with their sculptures and act in their performative works (Ill. 0.3). This observation was unsettling, because it is conventionally the artists' desire to *withdraw* from their works – which, in turn, allows the works to be seen as autonomous objects and the materials to be seen as active agents – that legitimises descriptions of Arte Povera as a "non-exploitive" art, as well as the current claims

¹¹ dOCUMENTA 13, 9 June–16 September 2012, Kassel/Kabul/Cairo/Banff. Convened by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. See Eva Scharrer, Katrin Sauerländer and Cordelia Marten, eds., *dOCUMENTA (13): Das Begleitbuch/The Guidebook. Katalog/Catalog 3/3* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012), 286.

¹² Regarding the conception of dOCUMENTA 13 as a posthumanist exhibition, see for example *Art Agenda*, "Reviews: Documenta 13, Manifesta 9, and Art Basel", E-flux announcement, 21 June 2012, <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/34012/reviews-documenta-13-manifesta-9-and-art-basel/> (accessed 26.02.2021). Examples of the theories I refer to are Karen Barad's "agential realism" and Graham Harman's "Object Oriented Ontology", with both scholars contributing to dOCUMENTA's "100 Notes – 100 Thoughts" booklet series.

¹³ See, for instance, Elizabeth Mangini, "Feeling One's Way Through a Cultural Chiasm. Touch in Giuseppe Penone's Sculpture c. 1968", in *New Perspectives on Italian Culture, Volume 2: The Arts and History*, ed. Graziella Parati (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013 [2012]); Elizabeth Mangini, *Seeing Through Closed Eyelids: Giuseppe Penone and the Nature of Sculpture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), particularly p. 107, in which Mangini makes references to philosopher Roberto Esposito and his *Persons and Things: From the Body's Point of View* from 2015. I also pursued this line of enquiry in reference to Penone's works in Eva Rem Hansen, "Siste hånd på verket. Giuseppe Penones forhandling med naturen", *Kunst og kultur*, No. 2, 2015.

¹⁴ Federico Luisetti, "*Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto*. Giuseppe Penone contronatura", in *Controculture all'italiana*, ed. Silvia Contarini (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2019), 163. My translation.



III. 0.3. Artists' appearances in Arte Povera works, montage. For more information about the individual artworks, see List of Illustrations, p. 394, or the figures in Chapters Three to Six and the corresponding catalogue entries.

for Penone's relevance to contemporary art with a posthumanist bent. The insistent reoccurrence of the artists themselves I suddenly found haunting Arte Povera's production seemed to represent the exact opposite of such a humble withdrawal, and cast doubt on the assumption that these artists were willing to give up their prioritised position as artistic/human subjects relative to the materiality of the work/world.

This compelling incongruity gave my project a new orientation. It spawned an interest in the diversity of artists' manifestations in Arte Povera works, and an awareness of the fact that these manifestations have not received much attention in critical reception so far and that further analysis of this part of Arte Povera's production was therefore warranted. Consequently, I decided to dedicate this study to the phenomenon of *artists' appearances in Arte Povera*. From now on, I use the enigmatic term 'appearance' to denote these different forms of self-(re)presentation, because it has such a broad coverage; it may imply both concrete visual manifestations and immaterial apparitions or semblances, while it also allows for a performative aspect or potentiality, thus opening up to emerging as well as enduring presences, and for presences that are not intended but still identifiable.¹⁵ The term can comprise artistic manifestations in the conventional form of self-portraiture and artists' presences in performative works, as well as other, more experimental forms of apparition that are found in a range of Arte Povera works of different media and materials. A main aim is to provide an overview of artists' appearances in Arte Povera's production – that accounts for their variations or 'types' – and in so doing, fill a gap in the existing critical literature.

My overview of Arte Povera artists' appearances, however, is not a mere cataloguing exercise. Respecting the incongruity that incited my interest in these appearances, my analyses are guided by and structured according to a specific question: *What positions do the appearing Arte Povera artists hold relative to (the materials/materiality of) the works in which they appear?* To approach the works with this question in mind makes it possible to clarify whether, by what means and to what degree the artists' appearances – individually, and as a wider phenomenon – can be seen to mark the authorial subject's dominance over the work and its materials/materiality, or, in contrast, contribute to the development of new and differently balanced relationships between the works' subjective and material components, as posthumanist readings of artworks would encourage. It is not until this question is answered that the legitimacy of burgeoning claims about Arte Povera's pertinence to a contemporary art scene with posthumanist inclinations can be determined.

¹⁵ "Appearance, n.", *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, n.d. See <https://oed.com/view/Entry/9555?redirectedFrom=appearance#eid> (accessed 09.03.2021).

To provide a theoretical framework for my analyses of the artists' positions in (relation to) Arte Povera works and their materials/materiality, I have abandoned the evolving field of contemporary posthumanist thinking and its broad focus on the relationship between human beings and the non-human world. I have turned instead to Arte Povera's own contemporaneity, to scholars who are considered precursors of current posthumanist thinking, but are also known for challenging the modern ideal of subjectivity through discussions centred on authorship and the relationships between *artist* and *work*.¹⁶ As is well known, the artist was a widely contested figure in Western intelligentsia around the mid-twentieth century; critical analyses of authorship had started to surface in a number of disciplines and academic milieus in Europe and America between the wars and after.¹⁷ There were certainly important contributions to the debates of authorship in Italy at the time – most notably Umberto Eco's 1962 *Opera Aperta* (The Open Work).¹⁸ However, Arte Povera also reverberates with another strain of this field of critique, which has exerted more influence on Euro-American art criticism – namely, what Seán Burke has referred to as the “discourse” of the ‘death of the author’.¹⁹ The most explicit articulation of this discourse is Roland Barthes's seven-paragraph essay “The Death of the Author” from 1967, characterised by Burke as “the single most influential meditation on the question of authorship in modern times.”²⁰ Over time, however, the ‘death of the author’ has also become a moniker denoting a handful of texts published by Barthes and other French scholars, mainly Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, around 1970.²¹ Combined, these texts

¹⁶ For a discussion of these scholars' relation to the broader anti-anthropocentric tendencies in European twentieth century philosophy, see Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011) [1992], 13-14, 101. For their relation to current posthumanist thinking, see for instance the introduction to Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*

¹⁷ Burke points to Russian formalism, Czech and French structuralism as part of this theoretical climate, and also points to the importance of the phenomenological tradition of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty in this context. See Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 10. One can also point to the discussion of auteurism in European and American film theory of the 1950s and 1960s, as outlined in John Caughie, ed., *Theories of Authorship: A Reader* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981). Influential schools and tendencies within literary research, such as ‘new criticism’ and ‘reader response theory’, are also relevant.

¹⁸ For discussions of Arte Povera's relations to the stances promoted by contemporaneous North-Italian philosophers like Eco, Enzo Paci, Luigi Pareyson, Nicola Abbagnano and Norberto Bobbio, see for instance Mangini, “Feeling One's Way Through a Cultural Chiasm”, 154; and Claire Gilman, “Arte Povera's Theatre: Artifice and Anti-Modernism in Italian Art of the 1960's”, PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 2006, 12–25.

¹⁹ Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 14.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18. Barthes's “The Death of the Author” was first published in the American experimental arts magazine *Aspen*, Nos. 5–6, 1967, and in French in *Mantéia*, No. 5, 1968.

²¹ In addition to “The Death of the Author”, classic texts are Barthes's “From Work to Text” (*De l'oeuvre au texte*), 1971; Foucault, “The Father's “No” (*Le 'non' du père*), 1962; Foucault, “What is an Author?” (*Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?*), 1969; Foucault, *The Order of Discourse (L'Ordre du Discours)*, 1971; Derrida, *Of Grammatology (De la grammatologie)*, 1967; Derrida, “Plato's Pharmacy” (*La pharmacie de Platon*), 1968; and Derrida, “Signature Event Context (*Signature événement contexte*), 1971. In emphasising Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, I follow Seán Burke and Jane Gallop, who have doubts about this delineation of the ‘death of the author’ discourse but end up using and/or confirming it. See Jane Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time*

are valuable sources for understanding how the artist's role and position relative to the artwork was comprehended and contested when Arte Povera entered the art scene in the late 1960s.

A shared feature in Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's texts on authorship is that they polemise against the biographical tradition of interpretation and criticism that dominated academic literary studies, and question the premise that literary works are indebted to and have to be explained in reference to their producers – i.e. the authors, understood as singular, stable and self-present subjects who express themselves in or through actions and utterances, such as the literary work. To accept this premise, they argue, means to accept the author as the text's cause or origin, and thus to establish an idea of the author as a “genial creator” (Foucault), a “God” (Barthes) or “father” (Barthes and Derrida, implicitly).²² What they all oppose, then, is the tendency to ascribe the author the status of *author-ity*.²³

Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's texts on authorship are often taken to suggest that a settlement with author-ity is achieved by virtue of the author/artist's withdrawal from the work. As Jane Gallop has pointed out, the French scholars' critique of established interpretative practices tend to be comprehended as a joint call for interpreters and critics to “rid the text of the author”.²⁴ Given the alternative formulations that Barthes, Foucault and Derrida offer on the constitution of texts and their significations in the late 1960s, they are instead found to encourage an emphasis on other sources contributing to the work's constitution and/or signification – such as the reader, the text itself, language more generally, or discursive and ideological undercurrents that point far beyond the author's control. Such readings of Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's ideas – which are also widespread outside the field of literature – have arguably affected critical conceptions of the material dealt with in this thesis. For one, they may partly explain the lacking interest in artists' appearances in Arte Povera's reception so far.

(Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2011), 4; Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, xvii-xix and 128.

²² Michel Foucault “What is an Author?” [1969], trans. Josué V. Havari, in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984. Volume 2: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, eds. Michel Foucault, James D. Faubion, and Paul Rabinow (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 221; Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” [1967/1968], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 145–46; Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text”, [1971], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text*, 160; Jacques Derrida, “Plato's pharmacy” [1968], in *Dissemination* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), trans. Barbara Johnson, 78 and further. See also Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 22 and 155.

²³ The hyphenated ‘author-ity’ is recurrent in reference to Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's discussions of authorship. See for instance Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 4; David Richter, “Structuralism, Semiotics, and Deconstruction: Barthes and Foucault”, in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David Richter (Boston: Bedford St. Martins, 1998), 824; Elinor Fuchs, “Presence and the Revenge of Writing. Re-thinking Theatre after Derrida” [1985] in *Performance. Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Philip Auslander (London: Routledge, 2003), 110; Linda S. Klinger, “Where's the Artist? Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theories of Authorship”, *Art Journal*. Vol. 50, No. 2, 1991, 39. I use it here when referring specifically to the authority that an author/artist holds relative to a work as its *origin*.

²⁴ Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author*, 1.

Under the influence of the prevailing understanding of the ‘death of the author’ discourse, critics and historians of visual art may have been led to overlooking the artists’ manifestations across Arte Povera works, emphasising instead how the artists revert to let the ‘poor materials’ take their place, or how they allow their audiences to activate and ‘fulfil’ the work, thus evoking the much quoted conclusion of Barthes’s essay, stating that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.”²⁵ Secondly, such readings of the ‘death of the author’ discourse have arguably shaped artists’ and critics’ understanding of what anti-author-tarian artistic strategies may be, promoting the artists’ withdrawal from the work while dismissing artistic presence as author-itarian.

In this thesis, however, I argue that Barthes’s, Foucault’s and Derrida’s writings amount to a critique of representation, and that their opposition to author-ity is not directed at the author/artist’s presence in the work, but at the hierarchical relationship that representational thinking poses between the artist who appears *in* the work and the *origin(al)* – that is, the modelling/producing artist *behind* the work. In other words, my reading of Barthes, Foucault and Derrida suggests the possibility of anti-author-itarian artists’ appearances, as long as these appearances challenge the ‘artist-of-the-work’ s affirmation of and subordination to the ‘artist-of-the-world’ as an origin, and thus as an author-ity. Such compromising of representational author-ity is exactly what I argue Arte Povera works offer. In the four main chapters of this thesis I focus on the various ways in which the artists are somehow ‘manifest in the work’ while at the same time problematising or refuting an affirmational liaison to the creative subject behind the work. My argument is that Arte Povera artists counter author-ity by dismissing the prioritised position of the origin behind the work, in order to ‘enter the work’ itself.

The thesis opens with two brief, preparatory chapters. Chapter One centres on Arte Povera, the term’s history and my own working definition of it, in order to delineate the overall body of works from which the approximately 70 examples of artists’ appearances that are presented throughout the four analytical chapters are chosen. This chapter also presents the criteria I have used when sifting through Arte Povera’s overall production between 1965 and 1972, looking for works containing artists’ appearances, and briefly mentions how artists’ appearances – in the limited sense of self-imagery or self-representation – have been addressed in the existing literature on Arte Povera.

²⁵ Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, 148. Such emphasis on the recipient is exemplified in the exhibition “Entrare nell’opera. Prozesse und Aktionen in der Arte Povera”, Kunstmuseum Vaduz, Liechtenstein, 07.06–01.09.19. For more on this, see Chapter One, p. 32 and Chapter Four, p. 167.

Chapter Two retraces how ‘anti-author-itarian’ strategies have been detected in Arte Povera by other scholars and critics, and argues that these strategies are based on the artists’ own distancing from the work. I then offer a reading of Barthes’s, Foucault’s and Derrida’s texts on authorship and visual representation, which suggests that artists’ exteriority is considered problematic in the ‘death of the author’ discourse.²⁶ This reading, and the basic distinction between exteriorising and interiorising strategies to oppose author-ity that it draws out, underpins my further understanding of what author-itarian and anti-author-itarian strategies/aspects are, and have enabled me to detect the latter in Arte Povera artists’ appearances in the chapters that follow.

The extensive main chapters demonstrate the great diversity of Arte Povera artists’ appearances. They are organised according to genre and/or media, and address artists’ appearances in the form of *self-portraiture* (broadly defined); in *performative works*; in Arte Povera’s *sculptural practice*; and in a category that I have termed *composite works*, referring to works with a complex structure composed of many individual elements, such as montages, image series and spatial installations.²⁷ The appearances presented in each chapter are of different kinds, responding to the respective genre/media’s traditions, conventions and potentials for artistic presence: they range from *iconic* appearances in self-portraiture, via *physical* appearances in performative practices and *indexical* appearances in the sculptural works, to *structural* presences in Arte Povera’s composite works.

In each of these chapters, the artists’ appearances are approached through a ‘contrast and compare’ method, which contributes to the contextualisation of Arte Povera in the wider field of post-war Euro-American art, and helps define the artists’ appearances’ position among contemporaneous artistic responses or as counterparts to the ‘death of the author’ discourse. The chapters are all built around the same structure, opening by introducing examples of how anti-representational and anti-author-itarian strategies have already been detected in post-war Euro-American art of the respective genre/media. Chapter Three deals with Craig Owens’s,

²⁶ The texts on visual arts and images that I draw on in Chapter Two are: Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message” [1961] and Roland Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image” [1964], both trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image, Music, Text*; Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000); Michel Foucault, “Las Meninas”, in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 1991 [1966]); Michel Foucault, *This is not a pipe* [1973], ed. and trans. James Harkness (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008 [1983]); Michel Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting* [1967–71], trans. Matthew Barr (London: Tate Publishing, 2011 [2009]); Michel Foucault, “Photogenic Painting” [1975], trans. Pierre A. Walker, in Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, *Gérard Fromanger: Photogenic Painting/La peinture photogénique* (London: Black Dog, 1999); and Jacques Derrida, “Restitutions of the truth in painting [*pointure*]”, in Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* [1978], trans. Geofferey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

²⁷ For more on the structuring of the works according to genre/media, see Chapter One, p. 37 and further.

Rosalind Krauss's and Douglas Crimp's discussions of Cindy Sherman's self-portraying practices; Chapter Four discusses Erika Fisher-Lichte's, Lea Vergine's, Paul Auslander's, Ellinor Fuchs's and Amelia Jones's accounts of performance and body art; Chapter Five concentrates on how Alex Potts relates Arte Povera to American Minimalism's 'disencumbering' of the art object; and Chapter Six presents Rosalind Krauss's phenomenological reading of spatially oriented art practices in the post-minimalist era, alongside Claire Bishop's survey of installation art. The theoretical accounts I present in each chapter have different views on how author-ity is best refuted, and Arte Povera artists' appearances tend to misalign with the most acknowledged and influential strategies. Nevertheless, by using Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's analyses of the figure of author-ity and how it can be overcome, I seek to determine the strength and weaknesses of the various strategies, and argue, through dedicated analyses of Arte Povera works, that the artists' appearances within them offer a number of relevant strategies for challenging traditional notions of author-ity, promoting relationships of proximity, integration and dependency between the artist and the materiality of the work rather than a hierarchical distance between them.²⁸ As a result, the four main chapters are parallel studies of artists' appearances and anti-authoritarian strategies in different media that can be read independently of each other. The order in which the chapters are presented, however, reflects the potentiality of the various genre/media for challenging author-ity; while the first study presents works that oppose representational author-ity by playing with the conventions of the most conventional form of artistic presence – self-portraiture – the complexity and abstractness of the appearances increases throughout the thesis, in line with the appearing artists' submission to the materiality of their works.

The choice to abandon my point of departure – posthumanist impulses in contemporary art and theory – at the start of this thesis, and to lean instead on theories of authorship and representation written half a century ago when approaching Arte Povera's works, may seem somewhat outdated. However, Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's attacks on representational thinking and on author-ity are recognised as relevant precedents of today's anti-anthropocentric philosophies. The anti-authoritarian strategies that I detect in Arte Povera works from the same period may have a similar relevance for posthumanist practices in contemporary art. Artists

²⁸ In addition to the texts already mentioned above, I draw on Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins* (Chicago, IL/London: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1990]), trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, in Chapter Three; and on Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" [1966], trans. Alan Bass, in Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge/Kegan Paul, 1978 [1967]) in Chapter Four.

who wholeheartedly subscribe to the posthumanist ethos will know that one cannot simply dismiss the figure of the artist to let the entities that have been repressed by the artist's authority come forth. Instead of such compensatory strategies, anti-anthropocentric art requires a rethinking of how the indispensable artist can produce works and presence within them without at the same time establishing as an authority to which the works and their materials are subordinate. Since this is exactly what Arte Povera artists' appearances offer, they may inform and inspire the further development of non-dominant artist/subject positions our own time demands.

Chapter One

Arte Povera – A Term that Made History

Delimitation of the Material under Scrutiny

The concept of Arte Povera – ‘poor’ or ‘impoverished art’, as the term translates into English – was launched by the young art historian Germano Celant when organising the exhibition “Arte Povera – Im Spazio” at Galleria La Bertesca in Genoa in September 1967.¹ Six Italy-based artists of Celant’s own generation – Alighiero Boetti, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali and Emilio Prini – presented their works in the Arte Povera section of this two-part exhibition.² As Celant states in the accompanying essay, everything inessential was removed from the works exhibited by these artists, which offered nothing but simple forms, archetypal signs and elementary situations. The works, Celant suggests, were poor in the sense that their aesthetic and semantic value – their contents and the viewers’ experience of them – was reduced to an absolute minimum.³

Celant remains the authority of Arte Povera today: over fifty years after the first exhibition, the term is seldom used without reference to him and his coining of the phrase. Still, such references are often made hesitantly. Some scholars and critics accept Arte Povera as a group of artists with shared interests and comparable practices, but find Celant’s position as the

¹ “Arte Povera – Im spazio”, Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, 27 September–20 October 1967. An exhibition titled “Arte Povera la prima mostra”, documenting the first Arte Povera exhibition, was curated by Linda Kaiser and Francesco Masnata (founder of Galleria La Bertesca) at Palazzo Ducale in Genoa in 2012. For an introduction to the 2012 event, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=211vz9TGADc> (accessed 04.01.2022). According to Jacopo Galimberti, Celant’s first use of the term Arte Povera was in a review of the San Marino Biennale in *Casabella* in autumn 1967, but Giulio Paolini spoke of an ‘impoverishment’ of art in reference to Jerzy Grotowski’s *Towards a Poor Theatre* even before that. See Jacopo Galimberti, “A Third-Worldist Art? Germano Celant’s Invention of Arte Povera”, *Art History*, Vol. 36, No. 2, April 2013, 420–21.

² According to Giovanni Lista, Michelangelo Pistoletto was also invited to participate in the exhibition but declined. See Giovanni Lista, *Arte Povera* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2006), 20.

³ Germano Celant, “Arte Povera” [1967], in *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 1985); reprinted in *Arte Povera: History and Stories*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 31–33.

group's 'father' unwarranted, as it overshadows other individuals, institutions and events contributing to the group's formation. Many of the associated artists were already acquainted and had exhibited together in different constellations before the term was launched, notably their gallerists had a key role in bringing them together.⁴ Other scholars and critics accept the term, but suggest that Celant's characterisations of the associated artists' works are reductive or biased, offering an unsatisfactory view of the oeuvres and of Arte Povera overall. Claire Gilman argues that Celant's writings are characterised by a "perverted form of modernism" that fails to recognise the anti-modernist tenets she finds in Arte Povera works.⁵ Since the discussions tend to centre "more on Celant's likes and dislikes than on the work itself", pace Gilman, we are dealing with a Celantian "colonization of Arte Povera".⁶

Since the characteristics that Celant applies to Arte Povera works are often vague, and his focus when presenting Arte Povera across numerous exhibitions and essays shifts, there is also confusion about his criteria for promoting certain artists under the Arte Povera banner while neglecting others.⁷ As Giuliano Sergio remarks, Francesco Bonami has stated that Celant's Arte Povera was "a train" that "only reached the international scene after leaving a number of Italian artists of considerable merit standing on the platform."⁸ For Dan Cameron, the problem is more encompassing: Celant's term awards "special historical status" to a particular "movement" or group of artists, but is not able to account for the formal, thematic or

⁴ Fabio Sargentini has polemically claimed that Arte Povera's starting point was the exhibition "Fuoco Immagine Acqua Terra" at his Galleria L'Attico in Rome three months prior to Celant's "Arte Povera – Im Spazio". See Fabio Sargentini, "From September to September", in *Pino Pascali*, ed. Marianne Brouwer (Otterlo: Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, 1991), 61. In Turin, Gian Enzo Sperone's gallery became a meeting place for several of the associated artists, and Tommaso Trini therefore promotes Sperone as "the real brain behind Arte Povera". See Tommaso Trini, "Die Totale Information", *Domus*, No. 489, August 1970, quoted in Anna Minola "Torino 1968–1972", in *Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York: 35 anni di mostre tra Europa e America*, Anna Minola et al. (Turin: Hopefulmonster, 2000), 43. For the gathering of artists at Sperone's, see Andrea Bellini, "Just one side that works", in *Paolo Mussat Sartor: Luoghi d'arte e artisti. 1968–2008*, ed. Andrea Bellini (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2008), n.p. See also Chiara Vecchiarelli, "Arte Povera: Notes on the Genesis of a Movement. The Cultural Function of Italian Galleries During the 1960s", in *Arte Povera: Seen by Ingvild Goetz*, ed. Ingvild Goetz (London/New York, NY: Hauser & Wirth, 2018), 204–23. The importance of collectors Marcello Rumma and Marcello Levi is occasionally emphasised, as well as critic Carla Lonzi's role in introducing Celant to several artists. See Bettina Ruhrberg, "Arte Povera: Geschichte, Theorie und Werke einer künstlerischen Bewegung in Italien", PhD Thesis, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1992, 147 n. 94. Artists Piero Gilardi and Michelangelo Pistoletto are also found to have key roles in the formation of Arte Povera. See Giuliano Sergio, "Arte Povera, A Question of Image", trans. James Gussen, *Études photographiques*, No. 28, November 2008; Lara Conte, *Materia, Corpo, Azione* (Milan: Electa, 2010), 187–89; Ruhrberg, "Arte Povera", 44–46, 59, 64, 68, 335–36 n. 146, 337 n. 148 and 340 n. 182.

⁵ Claire Gilman, "Arte Povera's Theatre: Artifice and Anti-Modernism in Italian Art of the 1960's", PhD Thesis, Columbia University, 2006, 30. See also p. 221, where Gilman describes the works of Pistoletto, Pascali and Kounellis as "starkly anti-Celantian".

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4 n. 6.

⁷ For accounts on the different perspectives in Celant's early writing on Arte Povera, see for instance Lista, *Arte Povera*, 20–24; Galimberti, "A Third-Worldist Art?"; Sergio, "Arte Povera, A Question of Image".

⁸ Sergio, "Arte Povera, A Question of Image", n.p. Sergio's statement paraphrases Bonami's introduction in the exhibition catalogue *Italics: Italian art between tradition and revolution 1968–2008*.

qualitative differences between Arte Povera works and those of other, like-minded artists and movements at the time. According to him, this problem must be solved by one of two pragmatic alternatives: we must acknowledge that “either Arte Povera happened in a dozen of places [...] or it simply never happened at all.”⁹

These controversies regarding Celant’s status in relation to Arte Povera and the status of Celant’s version(s) of Arte Povera call for a clarification of the use of the term in this thesis – what it denotes, how it is delineated, and how the term as I use it relates to Celant’s conception(s). What later critics often fail to consider, is that Celant’s position and purpose when programmatically attempting to articulate and promote a phenomenon he saw emerging around him in 1967 – and thus intervening in the unfolding of events – was different than their own position and purpose when trying to delineate or detect the characteristics of Arte Povera in hindsight. A brief overview of the term’s history demonstrates that Celant’s initial writings did not ‘colonise’ Arte Povera, but that that is a consequence of subsequent critique and curatorial practice, including Celant’s own. Acknowledging the historical layers makes it possible to accept the term as a construct, and allows us to bracket questions of what Arte Povera *really was* or *is*, as well as of Celant’s “likes and dislikes”. The term is nevertheless a useful tool to delineate a finite body of art historical material for the study of particular tendencies in post-war art – which is the function it serves in this thesis.

The Initial Arte Povera: Incoherency and Inclusion

In all of his essays on Arte Povera written before he temporarily denounced the term in 1971, Celant is concerned with the aesthetic qualities and the formal characteristics of the works.¹⁰ Like in his initial essay, he is never reluctant to point out the qualities that many Arte Povera works share. Still, Celant worked constantly and carefully against any coherent and comprehensive definition of Arte Povera. When elaborating on the concept in his essays, he never gives an essential definition – that is, a definition including and excluding works on the

⁹ Dan Cameron, “Anxieties of Influence. Regionalism, Arte Povera, and the Cold War”, *Flash Art*, Vol. 25, No. 164, May/June 1992, 75 and 81.

¹⁰ The texts published by Celant on the topic of Arte Povera within this initial period are reprinted in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*. So is Celant’s “Senza titolo”, which he wrote in response to the planning of the exhibition “Arte Povera”, curated by Eva Madelung at the Munich Kunstverein in May 1971. A controversy occurred in relation to the latter show, as Celant expressed a wish to title the exhibition after the names of the single artists rather than the generic Arte Povera, while the gallery and the artists allegedly opposed. Celant therefore published the essay – described by Nicholas Cullinan as “a suicide note for Arte Povera”, see Nicholas Cullinan, “From Vietnam to Fiat-nam: The Politics of Arte Povera”, *October*, No. 124, Spring 2008, 28 – claiming that the collective project had failed, and advising instead to pursue the singularity of each artist. For a survey of Celant’s related writings in the period immediately preceding the La Bertescia essay from 1967, see Galimberti, “A Third-Worldist Art?”, 20–21.

basis of formal characteristics or including and excluding artists on the basis of their subscription to a programme of common interests and intentions.

Celant does suggest that the artists to whom the term applied were led by a shared ‘attitude’, in that they all found modern human beings and their surrounding society to be fragmented, and sought to overcome this division through a conflation of art and life, in which society is not compartmentalised and individuals not defined according to criteria such as their occupation.¹¹ On a general level, applying to cinema, theatre and the visual arts, he argues that this attitude manifests as a replacement of the aesthetic ideal of imitation – based as it is on duplicity between original and copies, and thus on distance and division. With poor art’s direct and immediate presentation of the works, it is rather as if “the commonplace has entered the sphere of art”.¹² Beyond this general reluctance of Arte Povera to “oppose itself to life as art”, however, Celant does not point at specific formal characteristics that unite the production of the *poveristi*.¹³ On the contrary, he describes incoherency, between the works presented by the different proponents of Arte Povera, even within their individual oeuvres, as a main strategy to reach the aim of convergence between art and life. For the poor artist, it is a requirement to continuously change artistic practice and procedure: as Celant puts it in the agitated rhetoric of his 1967 manifesto “Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla War” (*Arte Povera. Appunti per una Guerriglia*), the artist strives “to choose his own battlefield, to possess the advantages of mobility, to make surprise attacks” in order not to become a mere mechanism that satisfies and confirms the idea of art as an autonomous, aesthetic ‘system’.¹⁴

Incoherency characterises Celant’s own approach to Arte Povera. In his exhibitions and essays between 1967 and 1971 he emphasises different aspects, or presents new characteristics shared among the works and artists under scrutiny. This is acknowledged as a quality by Luciano Fabro, who describes Celant’s attitude as “very flexible” and his definition of Arte Povera as “open ended”, in the sense that artworks that did not fit his conception were allowed

¹¹ Germano Celant, “Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla War”, 37. The idea that Arte Povera seeks to unify art and life runs through Celant’s early texts, but is most pronounced in a 1968 essay in which he adopts a statement from The Living Theatre claiming that “we are always divided [...] everything is at war with everything else. Our job, then, is to bring all these things together”. Germano Celant, “Arte Povera” [1968], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 49.

¹² Celant, “Arte Povera” [1967], 31.

¹³ Germano Celant, “Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla war” [1967], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 35.

¹⁴ Ibid. The ideal of incoherency is most pronounced in this essay, but also present in other texts. Celant holds, for instance, that “This art finds its highest degree of freedom for the purpose of creation in linguistic and visual anarchy, and in continuous behaviouralistic nomadism”, see Celant, “Arte Povera” [1968], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 49.

to modify his idea of the grouping as such.¹⁵

In “Notes for a Guerrilla War”, Celant emphasises how Arte Povera is evolving by commenting how the poor attitude is spreading like an epidemic among new artists at a pace he cannot keep up with. He notes that his texts are full of holes because as soon as they are written, new artists exemplify what he states and would therefore deserve mention.¹⁶ This aspect is neatly illustrated by the lists of participating artists in Celant’s Arte Povera related curatorial projects, which alter from exhibition to exhibition, and steadily include new names. While the first exhibitions of 1967–68 are reserved for a total of fifteen Italian artists, Arte Povera has expanded into an international phenomenon in the 1969 book-exhibit *Art Povera*, which, in addition to eleven of the previously exhibited Italians, comprise works by 24 artists from other countries, including Germany, the Netherlands, England and the US.¹⁷ As Raffaele Bedarida has pointed out, Celant’s term is thus related to another concept of his, “arte apolide” (stateless art), a term that underlines the lack of geographical anchoring and a boundless potential of the art of his time.¹⁸ In Celant’s early articulation of Arte Povera, then, the term is far from an all-encompassing or specific definition with a firm reference in the real (art) world. Arte Povera, at this stage, is rather a dynamic term to which a potentially inexhaustible number of new, artistic in(ter)ventions may be attached.

Two Stages of Consolidation

If Arte Povera initially was a ‘work in progress’, a gradual consolidation of the term can be seen with the renewed interest in Arte Povera in the mid-1980s, and in the first decade of the new millennium. I refer to these periods of renewed interest as ‘re-investments’ in Arte Povera, because they supply Celant’s original term with a definite content it was not previously

¹⁵ Rudolf Schmitz, “The Work Becomes the Subject. Interview with Luciano Fabro, 1997”, in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Rainald Schumacher (Munich: Kunstverlag Ingvild Goetz, 2001), 96.

¹⁶ See Germano Celant, “Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerilla war”, 37.

¹⁷ Germano Celant, *Art Povera* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969). Italian artists included: Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Giulio Paolini, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Emilio Prini, Gilberto Zorio, Lo Zoo. Foreign artists included were Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Joseph Beuys, Marinus Boezem, Walter De Maria, Jan Dibbets, Barry Flanagan, Hans Haacke, Michael Heizer, Eva Hesse, Douglas Huebler, Stephen Kaltenback, Joseph Kosuth, Richard Long, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, Reiner Ruthenbeck, Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Keith Sonnier, Ger van Elk, Franz Erhardt Walther and Lawrence Weiner.

¹⁸ Celant used the term ‘arte apolide’ in “Per una biennale apolide”, *Casabella*, No. 328, September 1968, 52. See Raffaele Bedarida, “Transatlantic art”, in *Postwar Italian Art History Today: Untying ‘the Knot’*, eds. Sharon Hecker and Marin R. Sullivan (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2020 [2018]), 279. In addition to Celant’s 1969 publication *Art Povera*, a firm attempt to locate Arte Povera within an international context of progressive, young art was made in the exhibitions “Arte povera più azione poveri”, Amalfi, 1968, and “Conceptual Art Arte Povera Land Art”, curated by Celant, Aldo Passioni and Lucy Lippard at Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna in 1970. See Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 79–87 and 141 for details.

restricted to, and thus paradoxically establishes Arte Povera as the historical phenomenon or style it hardly ever was.

Immediately after Celant dismissed Arte Povera in the early 1970s to continue his work with the associated artists individually, his term stopped attracting attention. According to Giorgio Maffei, it was not until 1982 that any other gallerist or curator used Arte Povera as a title for an exhibition involving the artists Celant had referred to.¹⁹ In the mid-1980s, however, Celant reintroduced Arte Povera on the European and North American art scenes with a series of exhibitions. At PS1 in New York he presented Arte Povera as “a knot art”. Given that a knot, in Celant’s words, represents “uncontrolled growth caused by countless thrusts and strokes in all directions”, the expansiveness of Arte Povera as he initially articulated it seems preserved. The “knot art” simile underlines that there are no single characteristics unifying the designated works or artists and no limits to Arte Povera’s further development.²⁰

However, Celant’s own work with Arte Povera did lose some of the inclusiveness that characterised his initial involvement with the group. He was no longer presenting the artists as part of an international vanguard, but emphasising their ties to European history and culture. Their art, Celant argues, is “an enigma between past and present, between traditional and contemporary”, and the artist himself is a “hermit” who “moves through the forest of ruins and materials, creating means of subsistence from the network of factors marked by vast times and distances.”²¹ With this focus on cultural roots, the foundations for a geographical delineation of Arte Povera were laid, which is also reflected in Celant’s choice of artists: despite the long decade that had passed since he last organised an Arte Povera project, and the international orientation and recognition Celant now had, not a single new artist was added to his lists of exhibitors in the three survey shows he curated in 1984–85.²² The twelve reoccurring

¹⁹ See Giorgio Maffei, ed., *Arte Povera 1966–1980: Libri e Documenti/Books and Documents* (Mantua: Maurizio Corrarini, 2007), 202–39. In 1982, Galerie Vera Munro in Hamburg set up an exhibition using Arte Povera as its title. See Maffei, *Arte Povera 1966–1980*, 228–39 for a demonstration of how Arte Povera reoccurs in exhibition titles from 1986–2005.

²⁰ Germano Celant, “A Knot Art” [1985], in Celant, *Arte Povera: History and Stories*, 114. Laura Petican also reads the knot simile thus, when claiming that “Celant pondered the legacy of Arte Povera as an anthology of ‘uncertain and changing signs’, the metaphor of the knot provided an image of cultural entanglement, crossed references, discontinuities, and contradictions”. See Laura Petican, “‘Yes, but are you Italian?’ Considering the legacy of Italianità in Postwar and Contemporary Italian Art”, in Hecker and Sullivan, *Postwar Italian Art History Today*, 21.

²¹ Germano Celant, “A Knot Art” [1985], 114–117. Note that Celant’s statement about the artist is related specifically to Jannis Kounellis.

²² “Coerenza in coerenza. Dall’arte Povera al 1984”, Mole Antonelliana, Turin, 1984; “Del Arte Povera a 1985” Palacio de Cristal, Palacio de Velazquez and Parque del Retiro, Madrid, 1985; and “The Knot. Arte Povera at P.S.1”, PS1, New York, 1985. With Jean Louis Froment, Celant had also organised the exhibition “Arte Povera, antiform” at Centre d’Arts Plastiques Contemporains in Bordeaux in 1982, including Anselmo, Kounellis, Merz and Zorio as representatives of Arte Povera. According to Maffei’s overview, this was his first use of Arte Povera as a title in his work since the 1970 “Conceptual Art Arte Povera Land Art” exhibition.

participants – Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto and Gilberto Zorio – all represented the core of Celant’s earlier engagement with Arte Povera. So did Emilio Prini, who was added to the list of twelve when Celant summarised the complete history of Arte Povera in the 1985 publication *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*.²³

This relaunching of Arte Povera as a term reserved for a specific group of Italy-based artists from the same generation and/or milieu was adopted by numerous institutions, exhibition-makers and commentators at the time, applying the term exclusively to the Italian artists who gained Celant’s attention. Thus, contradicting the initial idea of Arte Povera as an evolving and stateless art, the first re-investment in Arte Povera in the 1980s involved a geographical delineation. As Sharon Hecker puts it, the new narrative established in the 1980s, described Arte Povera as “a unified, nationally based movement rooted in Italian identity and cultural continuity.”²⁴ This was a first step towards a consolidated conception of Arte Povera, based on extraneous selection criteria rather than the overlapping qualitative characteristics and the shared attitudes that had tied artworks and artists to Arte Povera in its previous phase.

If the re-investment in Arte Povera in the 1980s went far in reserving the term for the group of Italian artists announced by Celant, neither Celant nor others working with Arte Povera in this period defined it historically.²⁵ All three of Celant’s own exhibitions in the mid-1980s displayed new works by the artists in question, as did most of the gallery exhibitions he was not responsible for. The idea that Arte Povera was continued within the oeuvres of associated artists was also present in what can be referred to as a second re-investment in Arte Povera

²³ *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists* contains an overview of group shows involving the 13 artists between 1967 and 1971, including important catalogue essays and critiques, as well as an overview of the individual artists’ endeavours between 1972 and 1984. Among the other artists reoccurring in Arte Povera-related exhibitions *before* Celant launched Arte Povera as a term, *during* the first period that Celant worked actively with Arte Povera, and *after* his dismissal of the term, but now excluded are: Vincenzo Agnetti, Enrico Castellani, Mario Ceroli, Giuseppe Chiari, Francesco Clemente, Gino De Dominicis, Mimmo Germanà, Piero Gilardi, Giorgio Griffa, Paolo Icaro, Francesco Lo Savio, Renato Mambor, Eliseo Mattiacci, Fabio Mauri, Aldo Mondino, Ugo Nespolo, Claudio Parmiggiani, Luca Patella, Gianni Piacentino, Vittorio Pisani, Salvo and Mario Schifano.

²⁴ Sharon Hecker, “Isolated Fragments? Disentangling the Relationship Between Arte Povera and Medardo Rosso”, in Hecker and Sullivan, *Postwar Italian Art History Today*, 229. Galimberti suggests distinguishing between ‘*arte Povera*’, which refers to Celant’s original idea of an artistic movement with political aspirations, and ‘Arte Povera’, referring to an ‘art trend’ canonised in the 1980s and 1990s. See Galimberti, “A Third-Worldist Art?”, 419. I am not as concerned as Galimberti is with the shift from a political to an apolitical understanding of Arte Povera in Celant’s own texts or in its reception generally, but – as demonstrated below – I do agree with the idea of a substantial shift between Celant’s initial descriptions of Arte Povera and what the concept has come to denote in the discourse of art history over the years.

²⁵ Cullinan, however, points out that the idea of Arte Povera as a historical phenomenon was already implied by Celant’s text “A Knot Art” in the 1980s, in which he distances himself from the events through a “shift in authorial voice, from first person to third, present tense to past, active to passive, prediction to recollection”, see Cullinan, “From Vietnam to Fiat-nam”, 29.

around the turn of the millennium. This is demonstrated in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's influential 1999 Phaidon survey, which includes works to date, and in a telling statement by Ida Gianelli, then director of Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, who proclaimed in connection to a 2002 survey exhibition that included new works: "at the beginning, everybody was thinking that it was just a moment [...] After 35 years, it's there. You cannot say that it doesn't exist."²⁶

Nevertheless, it became more common to approach Arte Povera as a historical phenomenon in the first decade of the new millennium. This is seen, for instance, in the titles of extensive survey exhibitions like "Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962–1972" organised by Tate Modern and Walker Art Center in 2001–02, and "Che Fare? Arte Povera – The Historic Years" at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in 2010, which had a slightly broader scope, including works made between 1964 and 1978, but with a focus on the period 1967–71.²⁷ The historical delineations may have been introduced for practical reasons, but can also be grounded in qualitative assessments, such as art historian Alex Potts's:

Arte Povera's object-making may largely have run its course by the very late 1960s and early '70s, with the artists involved either going conceptual, as Alighiero Boetti did, or more commonly losing it with empty elaborations of their earlier ideas, frequently burdened by an aestheticizing portentousness at odds with their earlier informal gestures.²⁸

In the history of Arte Povera, one can thus distinguish three different stages: in the first, the term is adhesive and self-generating, referring to a variety of works with overlapping qualities but no essential common feature. In the second, Arte Povera indicates the artistic endeavours of specific artists with a shared background, while the third also closes the term off historically by tying it to a limited period. Across half a decade, Arte Povera became a term with a distinct reference: works made by roughly a dozen Italian artists within a five-to-ten-year period around 1970. While the referenced content is largely the same as Celant's term pointed at, the principles determining this content have changed so significantly that the term no longer confirms its own conceptual origin in Celant's early writings.

²⁶ Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, ed., *Arte Povera* (London: Phaidon, 1999); Ida Gianelli quoted in Michael Fitzgerald, "Italy's Wild Child Grows Up", *TIME*, 25 January 2002, see <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2048097,00.html> (accessed 17.09.2021).

²⁷ Richard Flood and Frances Morris, eds., *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962–1972* (London/Minneapolis, MN: Tate Publishing/Walker Art Center, 2001); Friedemann Malsch, Christiane Meyer-Stoll, Valentina Pero, eds., *Che Fare? Arte Povera – The Historic Years* (Vaduz/Heidelberg: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein/Kehrer Verlag, 2010). These shows include Gilardi and Gilardi and Salvo, respectively, in addition to the 13 artists included by Celant.

²⁸ Alex Potts, "Disencumbered Objects", *October*, No. 124, Spring 2008, 170. See also Gilman, "Arte Povera's Theatre", 33.

Arte Povera Today – and in this Thesis

Around its fiftieth anniversary in 2018, one can again speak of a renewed interest in Arte Povera, with exhibitions that mark different views on the definition that consolidated during the two periods of re-investment. Some exhibitions – such as “Un arte povero” at Centre Pompidou in 2016 – confirm the historically conventionalised understanding, and present survey shows with more or less the same delineation as “Zero to Infinity” and “Che Fare?”.²⁹ Others slightly challenge the conventionalised definition: in three 2017 exhibitions that independently focused on the female collectors Margarita Stein’s, Ilena Sonnabend’s and Ingvild Goetz’s affiliations with Arte Povera, for instance, the limited selection of artists was largely upheld, but the historical delineation was undermined by the inclusion of recent works.³⁰ Other exhibitions are more radical in their reopening of the term Arte Povera, when enquiring after influences and ‘parallel practices’ in international art of the subsequent decades and in contemporary art.³¹

A third alternative is to accept the conventionalised understanding of Arte Povera as the construct it is and exploit the possibilities thus opened up. If Celant’s initial understanding of Arte Povera was “open-ended”, the works’ unifying characteristics were nevertheless a key issue, since thematic or stylistic bonds tied them together and legitimised their status as Arte Povera works. The conventionalised understanding of Arte Povera, on the other hand, makes any attempt at defining the group and their works by virtue of shared characteristics superfluous: Arte Povera is already given as a repository of singular works made by specific artists within a limited timeframe.

Since the works comprised by the conceptual construct ‘Arte Povera’ cannot be located together physically, it might be best to refer to them as the ‘Arte Povera catalogue’. The clear

²⁹ “Un arte povero”, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 8 June–29 August 2016, comprised works by 12 of the 13 key artists, in addition to works by a few contemporaries and forerunners, and focused the period 1964–74. Other recent exhibitions contributing to sediment the historical approach to Arte Povera are the ones marking the fiftieth anniversary of “Arte povera più azioni povere” at Arsenali in Amalfi, such as the archival exhibit “Ottobre 1968, ‘arte povera più azioni povere’ agli Arsenali di Amalfi” at Castello di Rivoli, and “Arte Povera: Homage to Amalfi ’68” at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, both 2018.

³⁰ The three New York exhibitions with the lens of female collectors are: “Margherita Stein: Rebel With A Cause”, *Magazzino Italian Art*, 28 June 2017–15 January 2018; “Arte Povera. Curated by Ingvild Goetz”, Hauser & Wirth, 12 September–28 October 2017; “Ileana Sonnabend and Arte Povera”, Levy Gorvy, 2 November–23 December 2017. The latter exhibition, curated by Celant, only included work from the historical heydays, but featured a substantial publication on Arte Povera exhibitions up until 2014.

³¹ The exhibitions “Fattig kunst – rik arv. Arte Povera og parallelle praksiser 1968–2015”, the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, 13 March–14 August 2015; “Poor Art/Arte Povera: Italian Influences, British Responses”, Estorick Collection, London, 20 September–17 December 2017; and “Contingencies: Arte Povera and After”, Luxembourg & Dayan, 23 October–16 December 2017, are cases in point. The 2017 *Artissima* art fair in Turin honoured Arte Povera as a historical phenomenon in two side events dedicated to the Arte Povera venues Deposito d’Arte Presente and the Piper Pluriclub, but reframing them in a contemporary context.

confines of the catalogue fundamentally contradict the inclusiveness and constant expansion of Celant's initial Arte Povera. However, when the works are assembled on the basis of artists' names and date of works' production instead of their inherent qualities, the catalogue allows an overwhelming hybridity between the works it comprises – in terms of media, materials, dimensions, style and themes. In that sense, it preserves the ideal of incoherency that characterised Celant's conception of Arte Povera in the nascent years and in the 1980s, when he relaunched it as a "knot art" characterised by "uncontrolled growth caused by countless thrusts and strokes in all directions."³² Taken as a whole, Arte Povera remains a "knot art", since the works are conceptually tied together, while formally and thematically pointing in all possible directions. As a result, researchers, critics and curators approaching Arte Povera are awarded freedom: they are encouraged to seek "alternative histories within the framework the term provides", as Elisabeth Mangini has put it.³³ They may, for instance, browse the catalogue with keywords reflecting their own interests and concerns and thus point out new 'family resemblances' between the works. Various academics have chosen this approach: Arte Povera's 'artificiality' is accounted for by Gilman, the significance of 'energy' has been outlined by Cynthia Bulk, and baroque aspects are discussed by Laura Petican.³⁴ An example from the field of exhibitions is the comprehensive survey "Entrare nell'opera. Prozesse und Aktionen in der Arte Povera" (Entering the Work. Processes and Actions in Arte Povera), produced by Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in cooperation with MAMC+/Musée d'art moderne et contemporain in Saint-Étienne in 2019–20, which sought to balance the focus on the materiality of Arte Povera artworks by displaying works that "eclectically interwove elements of process, performance and theatre".³⁵

In my enquiry, it is also the conventionalised idea of Arte Povera as an art historical category consolidated through exhibitions and critical texts over several decades that forms the point of departure: Arte Povera here refers to the totality of artworks made by the thirteen Italy-

³² Celant, "A Knot Art", 114.

³³ Elisabeth Mangini, "Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978: Contextualizing Artistic Strategies During the Anni di Piombo", PhD Thesis, The City University of New York, 2010, 17.

³⁴ Gilman, "Arte Povera's Theatre"; Cynthia Bulk, "Die Bedeutung der Energie in Natur und Kultur in Werken der Künstler der Arte Povera", PhD Thesis, Universität zu Köln, 2001; Laura Petican, *Arte Povera and the Baroque: Building an International Identity* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2011). A less extensive contribution, which examines the aspect of 'time', is Christiane Meyer-Stoll, "On the phenomenon of time in Arte Povera", in *Arte Povera: The Great Awakening* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012), 18–31.

³⁵ "Entrare nell'opera. Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera. 7.6–1.9.2019", Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, n.d. See <https://www.kunstmuseum.li/index.php?page=21&aid=469&&lan=en> (accessed 09.03.2021); Nike Bätzner et al., eds., *Entrare nell'opera. Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera* (Cologne: Walther König, 2019), 16. The show brought together over a hundred historical works by the 13 key Arte Povera artists and Eliseo Mattiacci, as well as a vast amount of documentation from the period 1959–78.

based artists listed above between 1965 and 1972. The list of artists corresponds with the names reintroduced by Celant in the 1980s, and that most frequently occur in other overviews of Arte Povera. The timeframe is somewhat narrower than the ones used in the comprehensive exhibitions at Tate Modern and Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in this millennium's first decade. The year 1965 serves as a starting point, because in 1962 and 1964 – the years from which these museum surveys depart – mere exchanges between the involved artists exist, while in 1967 – the year when Celant coined the phrase Arte Povera – substantial bonds were already established between several of the proponents.³⁶ My understanding of Arte Povera thus stems directly from Celant's term and corresponds historically with the first 'Celantian period' of 1967–71, broadening it with the immediately surrounding years when many of the artists worked closely together. This does not mean that I am committed to Celant's outlining of Arte Povera's *features*. When it comes to the characterisation of the works, Celant is only one reference among many.

Legitimate objections can be raised against the definition of Arte Povera as a distinct body of historical works. For one, Arte Povera becomes a static entity closed to further inclusions, with the exception of newly discovered works made by the artists concerned in the given period. Such discoveries, particularly within the media of photography, drawing and artists' writings, are occasionally made as the artists' foundations and archives are becoming professionalised and their holdings are opened up through proper cataloguing. However, I have not seen it as my task to search for yet unknown archive material: my interest is in publicly presented works that have contributed to the established conception of Arte Povera used in this thesis. I leave the archive searches to scholars closer to Arte Povera's 'origins', and more committed to the issue of representability.³⁷

To think of Arte Povera as a catalogue of works also means to detach the works from their larger contexts of origin and presentation, which approach tends to reduce the works to static records or 'stills'. This may downplay the fact that many Arte Povera works originally had a more dynamic character – they were ephemeral, processual, or closely tied to the other works with which they were exhibited or to the sites in which they were presented – and it devalues the authenticity often connected to the physical first-hand encounter with an artwork. On the other hand, when thought of as catalogue entries, works of different media and durability

³⁶ For the activities predating Celant's coining of the term, see note 4 above, or consult Giorgia Botinelli, "Timeline, 1962–1972" in Flood and Morris, *Zero to Infinity*.

³⁷ Francesco Guzzetti is an important scholar in this regard; some of his research is focused on drawings, and many of his articles broaden the understanding of Arte Povera works by offering thorough discussions of archive material, such as sketches.

– such as paintings, sculptures, photographic works, temporary installations and performances, including those that are available only through photographic reproductions, verbal descriptions and other forms of documentation – are juxtaposed. A promotion of physically enduring works – typically, the materially strong ones – at the cost of works with an ephemeral character or works that have been lost is thus avoided. They are all experienced at an equal distance from a contemporary researcher like myself who approaches Arte Povera from a temporally and geographically remote position.

Searching for Artists’ Appearances

Since the Arte Povera catalogue does not actually exist – no full record of the associated artists’ production has been assembled and made public – the first stage of this study consisted of compiling a rough overview of the implicated works, primarily through the use of publications.³⁸ I turned to the existing *catalogi generali* on Boetti, Paolini and Pascali, and accessed official records of certain sections of the Arte Povera catalogue – the individual artists’ oeuvres.³⁹ In order to map the remaining artists’ production, I have consulted a number of monographs, exhibition catalogues and reviews from solo shows and important group exhibitions, the websites of artists’ foundations and representing galleries, and a few of the artists and their archives in Turin. It would be wrong to claim that my overview is complete, but it should be sufficiently comprehensive to have an informed opinion of the Arte Povera artists’ total production in the given years, and to form a foundation from which to derive telling examples of Arte Povera artists’ appearances.

The appearance of the artists across Arte Povera’s works has not been systematically explored before. The general focus on the works’ materiality has tended to prioritise sculptural works and installations, works in which the artists’ presence is not always easily discernible. In recent years, there have been attempts to supplement the material focus, for instance by emphasising the performative aspects of Arte Povera, like in the exhibition “Entrare nell’opera” mentioned above. The focus on performative practices is suitable for considering artistic

³⁸ During my research, the project “Arte Povera Domani. Archivio di memoria orale per la storia e la conservazione” was initiated, which aims to document the intentions behind and the original installations of Arte Povera works, so that they can be correctly preserved and presented to future audiences. Such a platform has the potential of becoming a virtual Arte Povera catalogue. See <https://www.artepoveradomani.it> (accessed 06.11.2019).

³⁹ Jean Christophe Ammann, ed. *Alighiero Boetti: Catalogo Generale: Tomo Primo. Opere 1961–1971* (Milan: Electa, 2009); Maddalena Disch, ed., *Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo 1960–1982* (Milan: Skira, 2008); Marco Tonelli, ed. *Pascali. Catalogo generale delle sculture 1964–1968* (Rome: De Luca Editori d’Arte, 2011). In the case of Pascali, there is also a catalogue which I have not had access to: Céline Charissou, “Pino Pascali: catalogue raisonné (1935–1968)”. Phd Thesis, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2008.

presence, and the Liechtenstein exhibition presented a range of works in which the artists themselves appear. Still, the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue did little to address the phenomenon of artists' appearances.⁴⁰ Instead, the emphasis was how performative strategies engage the audience: on performances that involved audience participation, and sculptures and installations made for the gallery visitors to interact with. One of the exhibition's subsections, also titled "Entrare nell'opera", focused on how "[t]he Arte Povera artists wanted to reduce the distance between the work and the viewer" and how "the aspect of participation played a new and crucial role for the Arte Povera artists."⁴¹ Here, the phrase 'entering the work' referred primarily to how the perceiving subject, traditionally thought of as a viewer situated outside the work, becomes an integral part of the work, rather than the artists' own entries into their works.

Admittedly, the artists' reoccurring appearances in Arte Povera works have not gone unnoticed by previous scholars and critics: a number of articles and catalogue essays discuss Alighiero Boetti, Giulio Paolini and Michelangelo Pistoletto's (extended) self-portraying practices.⁴² However, the existing literature's focus on particular oeuvres is problematic from my project's perspective, which seeks to discuss how the relationship between artist and work plays out in Arte Povera artists' appearances. This project needs an open-minded approach to the artist-work relationship, while ordering works under the individual artists' names subsumes them under artists' personae. Moreover, the focus on specific artists may undermine the fact that extensive experimentation with self-(re)presentation is far from limited to a few oeuvres: as I will demonstrate, it characterises Arte Povera artists as such. Only a few scholars, like Lara Conte, have at any length considered that the practice of incorporating one's own image or

⁴⁰ An exception is Lara Conte, "Measure and Autobiography in Arte Povera", in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 87–96.

⁴¹ Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, ed., *Entrare nell'opera: Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera* (Vaduz: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2019), 18. Interactive works in this section include Anselmo's 1975 *Particolare*, Fabro's 1966 *In cubo*; Pistoletto's 1965–66 *Struttura per parlare in piedi*, and Zorio's 1969 *Microfoni*.

⁴² See for instance the chapter "The Artist according to Alighiero e Boetti", in Mark Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2011), 73–117; Giulia De Giorgi, "Autoritratti di Boetti alla Galleria De Nieubourg", *Senzacornice*, No. 10, 2014; Stefania Portinari, "Alighiero & Boetti: sulla firma come identità e duplicazione", *Venezia Arti*, No. 26, December 2017; Germano Celant, *Giulio Paolini* [1972] (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2003), particularly 70–100; Michele Dantini, "Gradus ad Parnassum. Giulio Paolini, 'Autoritratto', 1969", *Palinsesti*, No. 2, 2011; Bente Küllerich, "Self-Portraiture in Contemporary Italian Art: Giulio Paolini and Carlo Maria Mariani", in *Immagine e ideologia. Studi in onore di A. C. Quintavalle*, eds. Arturo Calzona, Roberto Campari and Massimo Mussini (Milan: Mondadori Electra, 2007); Marta Dalla Bernardina, "Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini", in *Ligeia*, Nos. 29–32, 1999–2000; Carlos Basualdo, "Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974" and Angela Vettese, "From the Early Paintings to the First Reflective Surfaces", both in *Michelangelo Pistoletto. From One to Many, 1956–1974*, ed. Carlos Basualdo (Philadelphia, PA/New Haven, CT/London: Philadelphia Museum of Art/Yale University Press, 2010). For Paolini and Fabro, see also Laura Vecere, *In assenza: Appunti sull'autoritratto contemporaneo* (Pisa: University of Pisa Press, 2017).

references to one's own body is a feature common to several of the associated artists.⁴³

Much of the existing literature tends to restrict its focus to conventional forms of self-representation. However, to speak of self-portraiture or self-imagery in this context is hardly sufficient. To capture the various ways in which the artists manifest in Arte Povera works, a broader concept is required. My choice of the term 'artists' appearances' is an attempt to provide such a concept.⁴⁴ When sifting through the Arte Povera catalogue in search of artists' appearances, I have regarded as relevant works that are presented as traditional self-portraits, works that comprise an image identifiable as the signatory artist, performances in which the artists' presence is indisputable, photographs or films documenting such performances, and sculptural works that carry visible traces of the artists' bodies. I have also detected appearances that extend far beyond already recognised and easily recognisable cases of artistic presence. Some works indicate the artist's presence in their title, others preserve traces of artistic intervention, while a portion of the works merely imply the artist's presence as a point of reference between the works' components. Some of these appearances were not immediately evident; it was only by looking closer at the works' production processes or measurements that they could be identified.

Ogni pittore dipinge sè (Every painter paints himself) is an art historical proverb, which indicates that every work of art contains elements of self-portrayal – either in the sense that its style can identify an artist, choices of motif, material etc. can reveal the artist's inclinations, or that the artist's own physiognomy is unconsciously inserted in the faces he crafts. Where, then, can we draw the line that separates relevant appearances from irrelevant ones? In this study, I have not searched for nor included works that point towards artists' personalities in the sense of reflecting their temper, style or preferences for subject matter, media and materials. It is certainly possible to speak of individual preferences and styles among the Arte Povera artists, particularly when viewing their entire production with the benefit of hindsight. As I will show in the next chapter, however, the artists of the late 1960s and early 1970s are better characterised by their attempts to undermine any sense of individual style. Secondly, I have not included works on the basis of explicit references to the artists' life events. Such works do exist – Marisa

⁴³ In addition to "Measure and Autobiography in Arte Povera", mentioned in note 40 above, I thank Conte for sharing her unpublished papers "Autobiografia e misura nei primi lavori di Marisa Merz" and "Misura del corpo e azione nella ricerca di Paolo Icaro tra il 1967 e il 1969. Una visione eccentrica dell'Arte Povera", presented at MAXXI in December 2012 and at the "Arte Povera, 50 ans après" conference in Grenoble in November 2017, respectively. See also Ruhrberg, "Arte Povera", 168–70; Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti*, 87–88; and Karen Pinkus, "Dematerialization: From Arte Povera to Cybermoney Through Italian Thought", *Diacritics*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2009, 65.

⁴⁴ See Introduction, p. 16.

Merz's knitted nylon sculptures shaped to form the name of her daughter Bea(trice) is a case in point – but they are exceptions, and, as Merz's work shows, they tend to include (references to) family members rather than directly involve the artists themselves.⁴⁵ Finally, I have not included works on the basis of their thematisation of the role of the artist, such as Giulio Paolini's and Jannis Kounellis's 'homages' to other artists.⁴⁶ Leaving aside works that *make references* to the creative subject and the role of the artist, I rather define as relevant the cases in which the artists' presence is detectible in the *works themselves* – cases in which the artists, intentionally or not, manifest within their works.

Presenting the Appearances

It is important to recognise that while the period around 1970 was one in which artists in Europe and America struggled to liberate themselves from the hegemony of painting and the modernist ideal of medium specificity, they were also formed by and working in dialogue with these traditions. This is evident in Arte Povera, not least in the sense that the artists' way of appearing in their work happens in response to formal conditions within the respective media. The works are therefore presented in four extensive chapters, organised according to genre/media. Starting with the examples that relate most closely to conventional forms of self-representation, the thesis' third chapter is devoted to Arte Povera *self-portraits*, primarily two-dimensional images produced with photographic techniques. The chapter includes works that comprise a motif identifiable as the signatory artist, alongside 'conceptual' self-portraits that lack the artists' image, but nevertheless relate to the genre by announcing the word '*autoritratto*' (self-portrait), the artist's name, or the personal pronoun '*io*' (I) in their title or as a written element within the work itself. The following chapter focuses on *performative works* in which the artists themselves act, and on photographic records of these events, whereas the subsequent chapter addresses *sculptural works* in which aspects of the artist's body (in)form the sculptural shape. Finally, the next chapter presents what I call *composite works* – that is, works with a complex structure composed of many individual elements, such as montages, image series and spatial installations, in which the artist is implied as a shared point of reference between the various

⁴⁵ Among other examples are Marisa Merz, *Altalena per Bea* (1968), Luciano Fabro, *Vera* (1969), Jannis Kounellis, *A Damiano Rousseau* (1972), Alighiero Boetti, *Calligrafia* (1971) and Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Day after Day – a Family Life* (1972–74).

⁴⁶ See for instance Jannis Kounellis, *Omaggio a Morris Louis* (1971). Among Paolini's many works with references to other artists or other artists' works are *Cy Problem* (1967), *Poussin che indica gli antichi come esempio fondamentale* (1968), *L'invenzione di Ingres* (1968); *Apoteosi di Omero* (1970–71) and *Un quadro (di Morris Louis)* (1969). See also the discussion in Chapter Three, p. 114 and further.

components that make up the works. The four different genres/media tend to breed four different ‘modes’ of appearances. The artists’ appearances in Arte Povera self-portraits are *iconic*: the artists appear as motifs that, in most cases, are easily identifiable as the artists themselves, or they play with this basic convention of the genre. In the performative works, the artists’ appearances are *physical*, since the artists’ acting bodies are central parts of the works or, again, they play with performative arts’ convention of strong physical presence. The appearances in the sculptural works are *indexical*: they are based either on a direct encounter between the artists’ and the sculptures’ bodies, or on a transference of the artists’ bodily dimensions to the sculptural volumes, and thus preserve traces of the artists’ bodies in their forms. In the composite works, the artists make *structural* appearances: they do not (primarily) have an iconic, physical or indexical presence, but are evoked as a central point in the works’ fragmented structure, as the factor that keeps its components together as a unity.

The choice of sorting Arte Povera works according to media may admittedly draw attention away from the fact that the *poveristi* worked across a range of media and techniques, combined them, invented new intermediate ways of presenting the works, and – in some cases – abandoned the question of medium and materiality in favour of a conceptual approach to art. For instance, Giuseppe Penone makes photographic presentations of performative actions that involve his own body, artefacts and/or nature. Works of this kind have a hybrid nature; they range between sculpture, land art, performative intervention and photographic self-imagery. Unwilling to downplay the cross/intermedia aspect of Arte Povera, I have allowed such works in each of the chapters, emphasising different qualities in the various contexts. In addition, the medium of photography plays a significant role across the chapters: it is the main technique used in Arte Povera self-portraits; an aid for documenting performances; a rhetorical supplement to the sculptural works; and a component in some of the ‘composite works’. Rather than a medium, it might be appropriate to say that the Arte Povera artists use photography as a “technical support”, a term Rosalind Krauss introduces to characterise how artists in the ‘post-medium condition’ choose between a spectrum of materials and techniques to realise their projects.⁴⁷

Throughout the four analytical chapters around 70 works are presented and discussed in varying levels of detail, while other works of relevance are mentioned in the footnotes, and further examples for each chapter are listed in the Catalogue appendix. The degree to which the presented works correspond to the actual extent of Arte Povera artists’ appearances within the

⁴⁷ See Rosalind E. Krauss, “Two Moments from the Post-Medium Condition”, *October*, No. 116, Spring 2006, 52–53; Rosalind E. Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010), xii, 89.

given genre/medium varies from chapter to chapter. The final chapter discusses only seven (series) of works, but comprises all the examples I have found of the particular kind of artistic presence characteristic of 'composite works'. The chapters on self-portraiture and sculptural works do not contain all, but a solid share of the existing examples of artists' appearances within these genres/media. The chapter on performative work, on the other hand, presents but a limited number of the Arte Povera works in which the signatory artists are central performers, and is thus, quantitatively speaking, the least comprehensible. When selecting what works to present, I have prioritised those I deem to be most exemplary. A consequence of this approach is that no works by Jannis Kounellis have been included in my presentation. Although Kounellis appears in interesting ways in both performative and sculptural works, other works better exemplify the tendencies I seek to outline. However, I have examined Kounellis's practice and make occasional references to his works/practice throughout the text.

The correspondences between media and modes of artists' appearances support the overall categorisation of the works in the four chapters. The further categorisation of the works within each chapter, however, reflect the different strategies they use to refute author-ity. Thus, a presentation of how author-ity is conceived in this thesis is now required, before the analyses are presented in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two

The Death of the Author as Artist

Anti-Authoritarian Strategies in the Visual Arts

When Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida critically analysed the notion of ‘authorship’ in the late 1960s, they mainly addressed contemporary practices of literary interpretation and criticism. Still, their texts also influenced scholars and critics occupied with the visual arts. For instance, French theory – and, with it, the ‘death of the author’ discourse – was an important impulse in the American journal *October* in the late 1970s and the first part of the 1980s. It was thus a potent point of reference when Arte Povera was absorbed by the Euro-American narrative of (post)modernist visual arts in the mid 1980s.¹

Some suggest that the question of *author-ity* – of authors’ and artists’ roles and positions in relation to their works – was not merely a theoretical issue regarding the interpretation of artworks, but that it also engaged visual artists active around 1970 and affected their practices. In the article “From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After ‘The Death of the Author’?” Craig Owens suggests that the “widespread crisis of artistic authorship that swept the cultural institutions of the West in the mid-1960s” was of immense importance for artists of the following decades.² Quoting artists’ statements, he argues that professional distress was provoked in some of them. Robert Smithson regretted that “the artist is estranged from his own production” and deprived the control over its value.³ Others felt inspired to question and rethink their own status. Contrary to Smithson’s defensive position, Daniel Buren stated that “it is time

¹ This interest in “French theorists, those who had come to be called poststructuralists” is emphasised by the editors of *October* when summarising the journal’s first decade. See Annette Michelson et al., eds., *October: The First Decade, 1976–1986* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press/ October Magazine, 1988 [1987]), x.

² Craig Owens, “From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After ‘The Death of the Author’?” [1985], in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994 [1992]), 123.

³ Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 122. For Smithson’s original statement, see Bruce Kurtz, ed., “Conversation with Robert Smithson on April 22nd 1972”, in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1979), 200.

for [the artist] to step down from this role he has been cast in or too willingly played, so that the ‘work’ itself may become visible, no longer blurred by the myth of the ‘creator’.”⁴ Owens describes this self-critical stance as more prevalent, and more rewarding. He indicates that the theoretical debate on authorship incited a broad scepticism of the status traditionally ascribed to the artist, and that progressive artists worked to attain a destabilised artist’s status. In other words, one can say that *anti-author-ity* established as an ideal among practicing artists. Owens even suggests that the ‘death of the author’ discourse dictated the shift from modernist to postmodernist art. Postmodernism, in his opinion, is best defined as “a response or series of responses” to the question of who or what the source of a work’s meaning and value is after “the death of the author”.⁵

Some visual artists may certainly have been directly influenced by contemporaneous literary theory and philosophy, but that anti-authoritarian positions were *strategically* sought by artists of the late 1960s and early 1970s as a *response* to the ‘death of the author’ discourse is not a premise in this thesis. As Euripides Altintzoglou has remarked, the relationship between art and philosophy can be characterised as “syntagonistic”; since the two disciplines have “a common reflective nature”, they also tend to share “similar paths in their development”.⁶ Shared attitudes between the scholars who debated authorship at the time and contemporaneous visual artists who dealt with the relationship between artist and work in their practice is therefore to be expected. Irrespective of the artists’ explicit stances and intentions when making their works, it should be possible in retrospect to detect anti-authoritarian strategies that compare to the propositions developed in the ‘death of the author’ discourse in parts of the period’s artistic production – potentially also in Arte Povera works.

In order to recognise these strategies, a brief account of the main issues in Barthes’s, Foucault’s and Derrida’s problematisation of authorship is in place, as is a presentation of the anti-authoritarian strategies already detected by other scholars in Arte Povera. As it turns out, the latter strategies cannot account for the artists’ reoccurring appearances in Arte Povera works, rather they indicate that there is no room for the artists’ appearance if author-ity is to be questioned. It is therefore necessary to return to Barthes’s, Foucault’s and Derrida’s own writings. Approaching their texts on authorship anew but turning mainly to their comments on visual art and images, I seek to clarify what the key aspects of a settlement with author-ity

⁴ Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 131. For Buren’s original statement, see Daniel Buren, “It rains, it pours, it paints”, n.d., in Daniel Buren, *5 Texts*, trans. Suzanne Ruta (New York, NY: John Weber Gallery, 1973), 25.

⁵ Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 123.

⁶ Euripides Altintzoglou, *Portraiture and Critical Reflections on Being* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 4.

amounts to in their thinking, and what role artists' appearances are allowed to play in such a settlement. These clarifications provide the guidelines for my analyses of anti/authoritarian aspects in Arte Povera works in the subsequent chapters.

Author-ity and Representation

As Seán Burke remarks in his treatise on the 'death of the author' discourse, "[a]nti-authorialism has always found itself in complicity with anti-representational poetics."⁷ Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's main issue with the then current conceptions of the author/work relation is their understanding of the work as a *medium* through which authors, intentionally or not, express themselves and the related conviction that the work's meaning is found by tracing it back to its originator. These convictions rely on a way of conceiving the world that can be characterised as *representational thinking*, which Barthes, Foucault and Derrida all problematise.

Derrida's "Sending. On Representation" (*Envoi*) from 1980 is a pointed analysis of representational thinking. Derrida argues that the idea of representation is based upon a ground structure, that of the *envoi* or sending. Representation always presumes that a given someone or something is dispatched from someone or something, for whom/which it functions as a representative. It can be defined as "the repetition which restitutes thanks to a substitute".⁸ In establishing an asymmetrical relation between the original sender and representatives that merely maintain the original in its absence, representation exemplifies what Derrida describes as the "metaphysics of presence" – the characteristic trait of Western philosophy to pose the question of *what is* employing the categories of presence and absence, where the latter is understood as an inferior lack-of-presence.⁹

The representational logic of presence and absence also underlies the Western conception of writing, Derrida argues across a number of texts. The priority of *logos* (reason, thought) that dominated philosophy "from the pre-Socratics to Heidegger" assigns the

⁷ Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011 [1992]), 40.

⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Sending: On Representation" [1980], trans. Peter and Mary Ann Caws, *Social Research*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1982, 309. Derrida points out that the *envoi*-structure is reflected in the Latin term *repraesentatio* and its Germanic 'equivalent' *vorstellen*: The Latin *pre-* and the *vor-* of *vorstellen* refers to a presence or present that pre-exists, while *stellen* and the added *re* of representation refers to an act of rendering, re-possessing or re-positioning that which was already there (307–08).

⁹ See, for instance, Jacques Derrida, "*Ousia et grammé*: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*" [1968], trans. Alan Bass, in *Margins of Philosophy* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1982), 34; Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" [1970], trans. Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David Richter (Boston, MA: Bedford St. Martins, 1998).

enunciating subject the status of an originary presence. As the source of reason, his thoughts and spoken words are “the symbols of mental experience” of meaningfulness.¹⁰ Written words, on the other hand, are considered “the symbols of spoken words”.¹¹ They are thus removed from the original presence, and confined to “a secondary and instrumental function: translator of a full speech that was fully *present* (present to itself, to its signified, to the other, the very condition of the theme of presence in general).”¹² The accepted notions of writing as a form of communication, a vehicle for the transportation “of a *meaning*, and moreover of a *unified meaning*” – illustrates this scheme.¹³ According to such notions, writing itself will “never have the slightest effect on either the structure or the contents of the meaning (the ideas) that it is supposed to transmit.”¹⁴ Its function is to re-state the original message, a neutral container that bridges the distance between the sender and the receiver of the written statement. In doing so, the written word/work is a subordinate that fully answers to the enunciator-turned-author.¹⁵

To Derrida, the privileging of an originary presence is a false premise, since any supposed origin, even the idea of presence itself, is always threatened by *dissemination* – that is, “by divisibility and dissention”.¹⁶ In “Sending. On Representation”, he introduces the alternative concept *renvoi* – denoting return, sending back, or a system of references – to point out how any “original” withers or decays. *Renvoi*, rather than referring back to a single, solid origin or sender, refers back to that which nevertheless does not precede it, in “many different traces referring back to other traces and to traces of others.”¹⁷ Representational thinking, Derrida argues, is a compensatory strategy to conceal this process of dissemination, and serves to confirm and consolidate an origin even if (or rather, *because*) an original sender never existed in the first place.

Writing, which is based on “this distance, divergence, delay, this deferral” between a sender and a receiver necessarily entails *iterability*, the possibility of being repeated or cited in “an infinity of new contexts”, from which both the sender and intended receivers may be

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* [1967], trans. Gayatri C. Spivak, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016 [1976]), 3 and 11. In the latter quote, Derrida quotes Aristoteles’s *De Interpretatione*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11. Again, Derrida quotes Aristoteles’s *De Interpretatione*.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³ Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context” [1972], trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, in *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵ As Derrida formulates it, the written sign is “a mark that subsists [...] in the absence and beyond the presence of the empirically determined subject who, in a given context, has emitted or produced it.” See Derrida, “Signature Event Context”, 9.

¹⁶ Derrida, “Sending: On Representation”, 323.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

radically absent.¹⁸ “For a writing to be a writing it must continue to ‘act’ and to be readable even when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he seems to have signed.” It is characterised by a “force of rupture” that cuts the written “off from all absolute responsibility, from *consciousness* as the ultimate authority.”¹⁹ Moreover, Derrida’s claim is that there is no logos – no thought or speech – independent of writing. He has famously summed up his position with the formula “*Il n’y a pas de hors-texte*” (there is no outside-text), indicating that reason is not prior to writing, never fully present in/to itself.²⁰ On the contrary, logos always requires and necessarily turns to writing in order to compensate for the lived experience of lack and absence. The function of writing is to continuously supplement reason. Since logos is always already inscribed, and writing contributes to its coming-into-presence, a written text cannot be explained as the secondary expression of an original thought or utterance. Derrida concludes that reading “cannot legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, toward a referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psychobiographical, etc.).”²¹ The author – the speaker whose utterance a written text is understood to represent – is thus a compensatory figure, an originary presence constructed in order to conceal the confusion raised by the lack of a self-identical, intentional origin preceding the written words.

Barthes’s and Foucault’s various texts on authorship also seek to overturn the representational subordination of the work to its producer. Like Derrida, they argue that the author is more a product of representational thinking’s need to clarify, classify and categorise, than a ground from which meaning springs in the form of text-works that speak for them in their absence. Explicit on this point, Foucault states that “the author does not precede the works” as is commonly thought.²² In order to “entirely reverse the traditional idea of the author”, he claims it is necessary to analyse the author-name and its functions, and finds that the author is “an ideological figure” that serves to protect and promote certain interests in discourse.²³ The

¹⁸ Derrida, “Signature Event Context”, 7 and 12.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 172. The meaning of Derrida’s “*Il n’y a pas de hors-texte*” is disputed. Referring to a statement in Christopher Norris’s *Derrida* (London: Fontana Press, 1987), Burke notes that Derrida refutes having said that there is nothing beyond language. Burke also admits that Derrida never says that there is nothing outside or prior to writing, but nevertheless finds him to “irresistibly imply it”, and sums up Derrida’s position as claiming that “life itself, in its materiality, even as it was lived, is writing.” Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 122–23 and 246 n. 11.

²¹ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 172.

²² Michel Foucault “What is an Author?” [1969], trans. Josué V. Havari, in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984. Volume 2: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, eds. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinow (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 221. See also p. 205, where Foucault describes the author as “this figure that, *at least in appearance*, is outside it [the text] and antecedes it”. My emphasis.

²³ Foucault “What is an Author?”, 221.

author-name thus signals particular kinds of legal, economical and institutional ownership, and since the specific author-names are constructions based on the overlapping characteristics between the works ascribed to them, they also announce a constant level of quality, conceptual continuity and stylistic unity among the works, bestowing a special status upon them, and guiding our reception of them.²⁴ The author-name, then, is “a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses.”²⁵ As Foucault puts it in “The Order of Discourse” (*L'Ordre du discours*), it is a “principle of rarefaction” that “limits the chance-ement in discourse [...] by the play of an identity which has the form of individuality and the self.”²⁶ The notion that positions the author as the source of literary works and considers the works themselves representations inverts the ontological order: rather, the author is an entity constructed after the fact, on the basis of given works and given needs.

In “The Death of the Author” Barthes states that the act of writing “can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, ‘depiction’”, and further argues that to claim the author as the text’s origin is “to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing.” Barthes instead proposes that the text is “a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” and that writing is a sacrificial act in which the writing subject dissolves into “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.” In that sense, writing “is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin” and the text is a negative space in which “all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.”²⁷ The idea of the text as a representational medium, then, is misguided, and any attempt to trace it back to the author as an origin behind the text is doomed to fail. Using Barthes’s own vocabulary from an earlier essay, the current conception of the author as the work’s ‘origin’ is a *myth*, a meta-signifier invested with historically and culturally bound values – in this case, the modern ideas of originality.²⁸ The notion of ‘works’ here produces ‘alibies’ that confirm this origin’s existence,

²⁴ Ibid., 211–16 and 220–21.

²⁵ Ibid., 221.

²⁶ Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse. Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France, given on Dec. 2, 1970” [1971], trans. Ian McLeod, in *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston, MA: Routledge, 1981), 58–59.

²⁷ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author” [1967/1968], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 145, 147, 146 and 142, for the quotes in this paragraph. This sacrificial act is the ‘Death of the Author’ that Barthes announces in his text.

²⁸ In “Myth Today” (*Le mythe aujourd'hui*), Barthes extends the semiological analysis with a second level: in the semiology of myth, the sign of a first-level semiological analysis takes the status of a signifier, and is referred to as a ‘form’. The signified of mythology is a cultural value or ‘concept’ invested in that form, and thus make a mythological signification. See Roland Barthes, “Myth Today” [1957], in *Mythologies* [1957], trans. Annette Lavers (St Albans: Paladin, 1973). In “From Work to Text” (*De l'oeuvre au texte*), Barthes explicitly refers to “the

rather than the other way around. The representational idea of the author/work relation naturalises the contingent values of originality and individuality, presenting them as eternal and universal truths.²⁹ Barthes's own discussion of authorship, on the other hand, serves as a 'demythification' that exposes the author as a myth.

Common to Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's discussions of authorship is that their critique is directed at the representational idea of the author as an origin of given texts, whom the texts mediate and to which they answer. Their questioning of the author/work relation thus reveals a spatio-temporal relation. It is the writing subject's role as an "extratextual referent" – positioned *before* and *behind* the text itself – that assigns an unwarranted author-ity to the writing subject.³⁰ It is this prioritised positioning of the author outside the text legitimating it by speaking through it that Barthes, Foucault and Derrida primarily oppose in the referenced texts, and that is the decisive point of critique in the 'death of the author' discourse.

Anti-Author-itarian Strategies *Behind* Arte Povera Works

When discussing the significance of the 'death of the author' discourse for contemporaneous visual art, Owens emphasises how the discourse encourages a "shift [of] attention away from the work and its producer and onto its *frame*".³¹ Leaning on Foucault's statement that "we should reexamine the empty space left by the author's disappearance", he suggests that a relevant approach is to identify other possible contributors and conditions of art's production.³² In Owens's opinion, the most efficient artistic response is found in the many artworks that engage in institutional critique, acknowledging and investigating the complex structures and collaborative efforts involved in the production of artworks and exhibitions, rather than promoting the idea of the artist as the sole genius behind a work. By pointing beyond the artist to the composite framework of production, the artist's status as the work's origin is destabilised – the idea of an origin decays, so to speak.

In reference to Arte Povera works, (at least) five different strategies for refuting strong authorship recur in critical studies. References to Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's texts are

myth of filiation", which credits authors with ownership over their work. See Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text", [1971], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text*, 160. My emphasis.

²⁹ Barthes, "Myth Today", 128–29, 142.

³⁰ I borrow the term 'extratextual referent' from Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 15, where it is used without further explanation.

³¹ Owens, "From Work to Frame", 126.

³² Owens, "From Work to Frame", 125. The original statement is found in Foucault, "What is an Author?", 209, but with a slightly different wording than in Owens's quote, since he relies on another translation.

not necessarily explicit when the claims for anti-authoritarian aspects in Arte Povera works are made, but the links to the ‘death of the author’ discourse are evident enough.

A first strategy is that of *self-annihilation*, which primarily refers to Emilio Prini’s explicit renouncing of authorial power. Prini has refused to have his works documented, his biography printed in catalogues and to give interviews. He has also been reluctant to turn art into commodities, instead creating “hypothetical actions”. In 1970, he sent a telegram reading “Confermo partecipazione mostra” (I Confirm Participation in the Exhibition) as his contribution to the exhibition “Processi di pensiero visualizzati” at Kunstmuseum Luzern, and in 1975 he presented “Mostro. Una Esposizione di oggetti non fatti non scelti non presentati da Emilio Prini” (I exhibit/Monster. An exhibition of objects not made not chosen not presented by Emilio Prini) at Galleria Toselli in Milan, a vitrine displaying objects the artist denied having chosen or wanting to present.³³ Rather than promoting his own presence and status as artist, it is “as if he were increasingly interested in his own absence from the art world”, Celant says.³⁴

Another anti-authoritarian strategy recognised in Arte Povera is that of *artistic collaboration*. The will to challenge individual authorship is reflected in the artists’ general acceptance of Celant’s group label, their constant exchange of ideas, and their tendency to exhibit their works mixed together in venues like Deposito d’Arte Presente (Warehouse of Present-Day Art). According to Robert Lumley, this artist-run storage/studio/gallery “was organised as a single continuous space rather than subdivided for the purposes of showing individual pieces”, with the result that “[o]ne can imagine dialogues and conversations between the artworks just as there were between the artists.”³⁵ The strategy of collaboration/co-

³³ Jean-Christophe Ammann, ed., *Processi di pensiero visualizzati. Junge Italienische Avantgarde* (Luzern: Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1969), n.p.; Cornelia Lauf, ed., *Emilio Prini: A Visual Bibliography* (Rome/Paris: NERO/Les presses du réel, 2018), n.p.; Emilio Prini, “Mostro. Una Esposizione di oggetti non fatti non scelti non presentati da Emilio Prini”, Galleria Franco Toselli, Milan, 26 November–23 December 1975. Comparable examples are Fabro’s contributions to the exhibitions “Campo Urbano” in Como, 1969, where he instead of performing an action asked to use his production money/fee to buy property on which he could do artistic activities at a later stage, and “Amore Mio” in Palazzo Ricci, Montepulciano, in 1970, where he placed a loudspeaker in the gallery, which repeated the sentence “Cittadini, ritenetemi irrisponsabile di quanto succede” (Citizens, don’t consider me responsible for what is happening), and ceded his pages of the catalogue to Carla Lonzi. For more on these works, see Nike Bätzner et al. eds., *Entrare nell’opera: Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera* (Cologne: Walther König, 2019), 413 and 415–16, and Romy Golan, *Flashback, Eclipse: The Political Imaginary of Italian Art in the 1960s* (New York: Zone Books, 2021), 119 and 239–43.

³⁴ Germano Celant, “Emilio Prini” [2010], in *Arte Povera: History and Stories*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 290–291.

³⁵ Robert Lumley, “Arte Povera in Turin: The Intriguing Case of the Deposito D’Arte Presente”, in *Marcello Levi: Portrait of a Collector*, eds. Robert Lumley and Francesco Manacorda (Turin: Hopefulmonster, 2005), 97–98. The collaborative attitude is also seen in Michelangelo Pistoletto’s call for other artists to exhibit in his studio in 1967, and to participate in his section of the 1968 Venice Biennale. For these announcements, see for instance Carlos Basualdo, ed., *Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974* (Philadelphia, PA/New Haven, CT/London: Philadelphia Museum of Art/Yale University Press, 2010), 18 and 131. For the continuous change of

authorship is particularly significant in Alighiero Boetti's practice. From the early 1970s, Boetti outsourced parts of his production – for instance, he let Afghan embroiderers produce textile works like his “Mappe”, and had students fill in pen strokes in his ballpoint drawings. As a result, “[t]he artist himself has in no way touched or even detailed the design of the work that bears his name and signature”, Norman Rosenthal remarks.³⁶ In the same period, Boetti began signing his works “Alighiero e Boetti” (Alighiero and Boetti), giving the impression that they were manufactured by two individuals, or bringing associations to a corporate entity.³⁷ Thus, Barry Schwabsky refers to Boetti as one of many artists that “have exercised their indifference to the mythos of the artist as an isolated but autonomous individual”, and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev claims that “Boetti attempted to ‘impoverish’ the authority of the ‘author’ and all egocentric self-expression [...] creating a relational and communicative subjectivity.”³⁸ In seeing Boetti's collaborative efforts as opposing author-ity, these critics evoke Barthes's claim that “the principle and the experience of several people writing together” among Surrealist writers is one of the literary strategies for loosening “the sway of the Author”.³⁹

An anti-authoritarian attitude is also recognisable in the willed *incoherency* of Arte Povera artists' individual oeuvres. Many critics, like Celant himself, have remarked how the artists' individual production is characterised by a great diversity – as if the works were made by numerous artists.⁴⁰ Alex Potts, for instance, notes how this diversity makes it “difficult to locate a common reference back to the mind of the single artist”, and sees it as an attempt to

ideas, see for instance Andrea Bellini, “Just one side that works”, in *Paolo Mussat Sartor: Luoghi d'arte e artisti. 1968–2008*, ed. Andrea Bellini (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2008), n.p.

³⁶ Norman Rosenthal, “Recognizing Alighiero Recognizing Boetti”, in *Alighiero e Boetti*, ed. Norman Rosenthal (New York, NY: Gagosian Gallery, 2001), 7. For Boetti's collaborative projects, see Nike Bätzner, “Alighiero e Boetti: Active Interaction”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*.

³⁷ The first public use of the split name was for the title of Boetti's exhibition “Alighiero e Boetti” at Galerie MTL, Brussels, 18–30 June 1972.

³⁸ Barry Schwabsky, “Alighiero e Boetti: The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole”, in *When I is 2: The Art of Alighiero e Boetti*, ed. Polly Koch (Houston, TX: Contemporary Arts Museum, 2002), 37; Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “Survey”, in *Arte Povera*, ed. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (London: Phaidon, 1999), 41. See also Paola Morsiani, “Alighiero e Boetti: Halving to Double”, in Koch, *When I is 2*, 20; Bätzner, “Alighiero e Boetti: Active Interaction”, 115. Other interesting cases of collaboration is between Mario and Marisa Merz, commented on in Lucia Re, “The Mark on the wall: Marisa Merz and a history of women in postwar Italy”, in *Marisa Merz: The Sky Is a Great Space*, ed. Connie Butler (Los Angeles, CA/New York, NY: Hammer Museum and DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2017), 55; Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “You Can Make Shoes out of Brains”, in Butler, *Marisa Merz*, 276–78; Tommaso Trini, “Marisa Merz” [1975], in Butler, *Marisa Merz*, 281–83; Germano Celant, “Marisa's Swing”, in *Marisa Merz*, ed. Catherine Grenier (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1994), 243; Bettina Ruhrberg, “Arte povera: Geschichte, Theorie und Werke einer künstlerischen Bewegung in Italien”, PhD Thesis, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1992, 192; and between Michelangelo Pistoletto and Vettor Pisano, commented on in Maurizio Calvesi, untitled text [1971], in *PLAGIO. Vettor Pisani, Michelangelo Pistoletto* (Rome: Marlborough Galleria d'Arte, 1973), n.p.

³⁹ Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, 143–44.

⁴⁰ For incoherency as characterising Celant's initial comments on Arte Povera, see Chapter One, p. 26.

“break the spell of a ‘signature style’.”⁴¹ In stating so, Potts is in line with Owens, for whom to disobey the principles of conceptual coherence and stylistic uniformity through an intentionally disparate production is one of the most adequate responses to the turn from work to frame.⁴²

A fourth anti-authoritarian strategy found in Arte Povera is *audience activation*. The processual and performative aspects in many Arte Povera works are often considered to mark a shift of focus from the production to the reception of art, as mentioned in reference to the “Entrare nell’opera” exhibition in 2019.⁴³ It is also evident when the works are interpreted with reference to John Dewey’s *Art as Experience*, Merleau-Ponty’s *The Phenomenology of Perception (La Phénoménologie de la Perception)* and Umberto Eco’s *The Open Work (Opera aperta)*.⁴⁴ These oft-cited scholars in the critical reception of Arte Povera are not those primarily associated with the ‘death of the author’ discourse, but nonetheless related to the same interpretative turn from author/artist to recipient that Barthes is found to advocate.

Finally, there is the aspect of *material vitalism* in Arte Povera, which allows materials to change exhibited artworks in ways that the artists themselves cannot foresee, and thus also let them support or supplant the artist as the work’s main protagonist or agent. This approach to materials links to the most established notion of the artist in Arte Povera’s reception, namely that of the ‘artist-chemist’. The term was introduced by Celant in a 1969 essay to denote the artist who “organizes living things in magical ways [as he] eagerly searches for essences, rediscovers them, and brings them out.”⁴⁵ Admittedly, the analogy between artist and chemist

⁴¹ Alex Potts, “Disencumbered Objects”, *October*, No. 124, Spring 2008, 172. See also Karen Pinkus, “Dematerialization: From Arte Povera to Cybermoney Through Italian Thought”, *Diacritics*, Vol. 39, No. 3, 2009, 64.

⁴² Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 124. Owens credits painter Gerhard Richter with this approach.

⁴³ See Chapter One, p. 34–35.

⁴⁴ Among many such references, see for instance Christov-Bakargiev, “Survey”, 24 and 26; Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “To cross that sunlit landscape for a little longer – particles and particulars”, in *Giovanni Anselmo*, ed. Marcella Beccaria and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (Milan: Skira Editore, 2016), 65; Elizabeth Mangini, *Seeing Through Closed Eyelids: Giuseppe Penone and the Nature of Sculpture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 48–49 and 72; Elizabeth Mangini, “Feeling One’s Way Through a Cultural Chiasm. Touch in Giuseppe Penone’s Sculpture c. 1968”, in *New Perspectives on Italian Culture. Volume 2: The Arts and History*, ed. Graziella Parati, (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013 [2012]), 156.

⁴⁵ Germano Celant, “Arte Povera” [1969], in *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, ed. Germano Celant (Milano: Electa, 1985); reprinted in Celant, *Arte Povera: History and Stories*, 119. For other mentions of Arte Povera and alchemy, see, for instance, Tommaso Trini, “A new alphabet for body and matter”, 113; Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 123; Antje von Graevenitz, “Alchemical Promises in Arte Povera”, in *Che Fare? Arte Povera—The Historic Years*, eds. Friedemann Malsch, Christiane Meyer-Stoll and Valentina Pero (Vaduz/Heidelberg: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein/Kehrer Verlag, 2010), 29–41; Cynthia Bulk, “Die Bedeutung der Energie in Natur und Kultur in Werken der Künstler der Arte Povera”, PhD Thesis, Universität zu Köln, 2001, particularly section 3.3; Karen Pinkus, *Alchemical Mercury: A Theory of Ambivalence* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 162–65; Sharon Hecker and Martin R. Sullivan, “Introduction”, in *Postwar Italian Art History Today: Untying ‘the Knot’*, eds. Sharon Hecker and Martin R. Sullivan (New York, NY: Bloomsbury, 2020 [2018]), 15; Elizabeth Mangini, “Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978: Contextualizing Artistic Strategies During the Anni di Piombo”, PhD Thesis, The City University of New York, 2010, 148 and further.

opens up to an understanding of the artist as someone who has the power to perform actions on the materials, to combine and compose them, and whose artwork has the capacity to transform base materials into ‘gold’.⁴⁶ Indeed, Celant’s choice of words when describing the artist-chemist as one that “organises living things in magical ways” is a modification of his rhetoric in other essays, where the relationship of the artist to the world of materials is sometimes described in overtly violent terms, and the entities of the world considered slumbering, relying on the aid of artistic interference to come to life.⁴⁷ Therefore, as Claire Gilman claims, Celant may be “[f]ar from emphasising authorial submission” in *Arte Povera*, and rather presents “the artist as someone who orders and manipulates the world”.⁴⁸ According to Elizabeth Mangini, however, such undertones were primarily introduced with later critics, who came to imbue the analogy with “a sense of supernatural mystery in regard of the artistic process” that substantiated a romantic view of the artist’s magic touch.⁴⁹ A more common understanding of the use and alchemical elevation of poor materials in 1960s literature is that it marks a weak subjective/authorial position, as seen in Tommaso Trini’s description of *Arte povera* as “non-violent”.⁵⁰ Celant adheres to this view when claiming that the artist-chemist’s motivation is to substantiate an experience of belonging to the material world: the alchemist artist “mingles with the environment” to identify and become one with the events and entities of nature.⁵¹

The strategies of self-annihilation, collaboration, incoherency, audience activation and material vitalism challenge the artist’s role as the work’s (sole) producer by rearranging the power hierarchies behind the work itself. It is by virtue of diminishing the artist’s contribution to and responsibility for the work’s existence and meaning, and/or by handing the capacity to form the works or make them meaningful over to other contributors with shared responsibility, like colleagues, institutional structures, audiences or vivid materials, that *Arte Povera* works are recognised as anti-authoritarian. In thus letting the supposed origin behind the work disappear or dissolve, these strategies arguably exemplify what Owens calls a shift in attention from the artist/work relation to the framework of production.

⁴⁶ *Arte Povera* is, for instance, seen to consist of “artists who turned low materials into high art”. See “A Movement in a Moment: *Arte Povera*”, Phaidon, n.d. <http://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2017/march/23/a-movement-in-a-moment-arte-povera> (accessed 05.03.2021).

⁴⁷ See for instance Germano Celant, “*Arte povera*. Notes for a Guerilla war” [1967], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 37.

⁴⁸ Claire Gilman, “*Arte Povera*’s Theatre: Artifice and Anti-Modernism in Italian Art of the 1960’s”, PhD Thesis, Columbia University, New York, NY, 2006, 10.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Mangini, “Gilberto Zorio’s Radical fluidity”, in Hecker and Sullivan, *Postwar Italian Art History Today*, 247.

⁵⁰ See Introduction, p. 13.

⁵¹ Celant, “*Arte Povera*” [1969], 119–21.

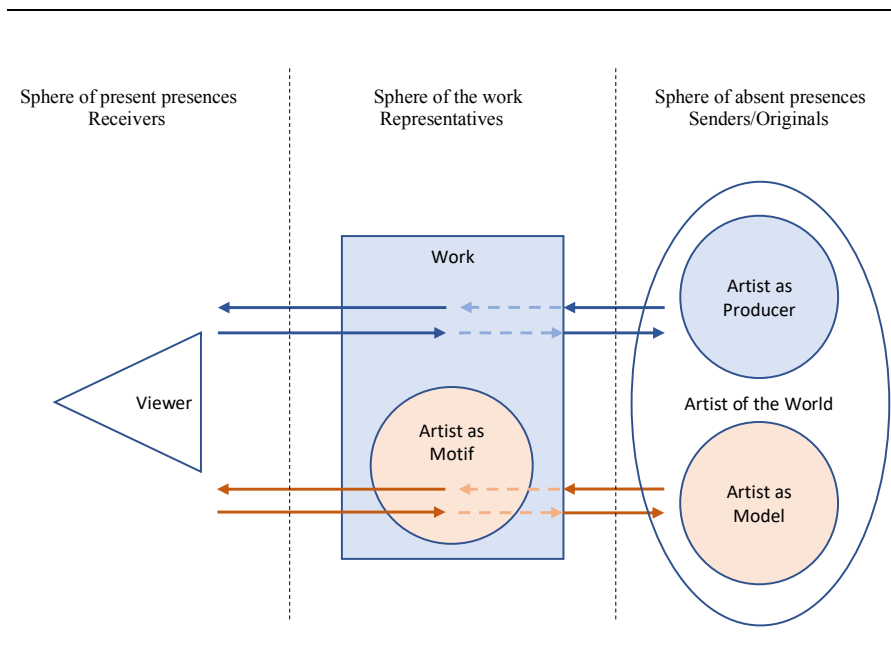
Author-ity and Visual Representation

In focusing on the *frameworks* of artistic production and on adjusting the power hierarchies *behind* the work, these strategies are of limited relevance for this enquiry into anti/author-itarian aspects in Arte Povera artists' appearances, as my focus here is on the artists' presence *within* their works. In fact, the inclination among Arte Povera artists to make appearances within their works seem utterly conservative from Owens's perspective; given their recurring appearances in the works, the artists will easily be taken to reject "the shift [of] attention away from the work and its producer" and to insist instead on their own importance with respect to their works. As Owens himself indicates when commenting the aspect of self-staging in Giulio Paolini's 1965 *Delfo* (Delphi), such artists' appearances anchor Arte Povera within a modernist practice that has not yet internalised the consequences of the 'death of the author' discourse.⁵²

It does seem puzzling, however, that the artists' appearances should radically contradict (the critical reception of) Arte Povera's overall practice on the issue of authorship; that five different anti-author-itarian strategies are detectable in Arte Povera works, while the artists' appearances mark the opposite. It is also hard to accept the implicit premise that author-ity should be refuted by 'exterior' strategies that distribute authorial power across more than one originator's hands, whereas the presence of the artist within his work necessarily indicates the work's indebtedness to the artist. The reasoning behind the latter must be based on the idea that works containing artists' appearances represent the 'artist-of-the-world' with enforced strength because they do so *doubly*. Not only does the work as such confirm the artist as its *producer*; the artist-motif within the work also confirms the artist as a *model*. This line of thinking surfaces in a statement by Joanna Woodall, claiming that "[t]he clearest instance of the presence of the artist in the work is self-portraiture, where the lifelikeness, there for all to see, is of both the model and the painter, the object of representation and the creative subject".⁵³ So, behind a work in which the artist figures reigns the artist-as-producer and the artist-as-model as a double author-ity – as two sides of the 'extratextual' 'artist-of-the-world' (Ill. 2.1). Alternatively, in cases where strategies like self-annihilation, collaboration, incoherency, audience activation and material vitalism challenge the work's link to the artist-as-producer, the artists' appearances within their own works will nevertheless point back to the artist-as-model, and thus reinstate the artist-of-the-world's author-ity over the work.

⁵² Owens, "From Work to Frame", 123–26 for the quotes in this paragraph. For more on Owens's discussion of Paolini's *Delfo*, see Chapter Three, p. 70 and further.

⁵³ Joanna Woodall, "'Every painter paints himself': Self-portraiture and creativity", in *Self Portrait: Renaissance to Contemporary*, eds. Anthony Bond and Joanna Woodall (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005), 27.



III. 2.1. Artists' appearances as double representation.

The currency of such a representational understanding of the relationship between motif and model, where the first is taken to point towards and give access to the latter, is addressed in Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's texts on visual arts and images.⁵⁴ In *Camera Lucida (La chambre claire)* Barthes notes that "what is hidden is for us Westerners more 'true' than what is visible", thus pointing at a general desire in our culture for something essential behind what we see or immediately grasp.⁵⁵ Barthes holds that this desire for 'truth' convinces us that "it suffices to clean the surface of the image in order to accede to *what is behind*".⁵⁶ Foucault is more concrete in his lectures on Édouard Manet, in which he remarks that the representational presumption of transparency between motif and model has reigned in art history "since the *Quattrocento*", as the material qualities of painting have been negated in a strive for perfect

⁵⁴ Here, I use the term 'motif' to indicate a formal element on an image surface, without further connotations. An image (a painting, a photograph) usually has one overall motif, and I sometimes refer to this motif as the 'image'. The overall motif may consist of several motif elements, which I also refer to as 'motifs'. I use 'model' and 'referent' interchangeably. An image may have an overall referent (a landscape painting has a particular landscape as its model), and each motif element have their referents (like one of the persons modelling for group portrait).

⁵⁵ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), 100.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

illusion.⁵⁷ Moreover, Foucault postulates in *This is Not a Pipe* (*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*) that two principles have governed the production and interpretation of painting in Western modernity: the first requires visual resemblance between an image and what it represents, while the second principle “posits an equivalence between the fact of resemblance and the affirmation of a representative bond.”⁵⁸ In other words, the principle of affirmation claims “What you see is *that*”, pointing from the motif towards “a ‘model,’ an original element that orders and hierarchizes the increasingly less faithful copies that can be struck from it.”⁵⁹ Resemblance, then, “predicates itself upon a model it must return to and reveal.”⁶⁰

Derrida addresses visual representation in “Restitutions of the truth in pointing [*pointure*]”, the last chapter of *The Truth in Painting* (*La vérité en peinture*), in which he argues that Meyer Schapiro’s interpretation of a Vincent van Gogh painting of old shoes is guided by a search for *truth*, and an attempt to reveal the painting’s truth by pointing beyond the painting itself.⁶¹ As Derrida puts it, Schapiro relies on “propositions of the type ‘this is that’” when he sets out to reattach the depicted shoes to the real shoes on which they were modelled, a process involving the identification of the shoes’ rightful user or owner, and the reattribution of the shoes to that subject – Van Gogh. In order to reconstitute the truth of the painting, Schapiro “tightens the picture’s laces around ‘real’ feet”.⁶² Indeed, Schapiro awards portrait qualities to the painting, and states that the shoes he attributes to Van Gogh “were a piece of his own life”, “inseparable from his body and memorable to his reacting self-awareness”.⁶³ Derrida argues that following this reasoning “the painted shoes are no longer only the real and really present shoes *of* real and present Vincent; they do not only come back to his feet: they *are* Vincent van Gogh from toe

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting* [1967–71], trans. Matthew Barr (London: Tate Publishing, 2011 [2009]), 29.

⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe* [1973] ed. and trans. James Harkness (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008 [1983]), 34. For the first principle, see p. 32. See also Catherine M. Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 71.

⁵⁹ Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 34 and 44. As Foucault’s translator remarks, ‘original’ must here be understood “in its most transitive sense, that is, not only ‘first’ but also ‘generative’” (p. 62 n. 2). Note also that Foucault’s French term here translated to ‘model’ is ‘patron’.

⁶⁰ Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 44.

⁶¹ Jacques Derrida, “Restitutions of the truth in pointing [*pointure*]”, in *The Truth in Painting* [1978], trans. Geofferey Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1987). Note that the first part of this text was first published in *Macula*, No. 3, 1978. The referenced texts are Martin Heidegger, *Die Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, developed as lectures in 1935–36, and published as Martin Heidegger, *Die Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1950), and Meyer Schapiro, “The Still Life as Personal Object – A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh”, in *The Reach of Mind: Essays in Memory of Kurt Goldstein*, ed. Marianne L. Simmel (New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 1968). Derrida argues that the disagreement between Heidegger and Schapiro – which evolves around the question “whose are the shoes?” – is ostensible, and that their real problem is a shared search for truth.

⁶² Derrida, “Restitutions”, 313.

⁶³ Meyer Schapiro, “The Still Life as Personal Object – A Note on Heidegger and Van Gogh” [1968], in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 430–31.

to toe.”⁶⁴ In Schapiro’s interpretation “[t]he real referent of the picture, the model [...] has now grown to take over the totality of the subject”, and his reading thus announces “the step of Van Gogh returning [as a ghost], passing into the picture”, Derrida argues.⁶⁵

In these texts on visual art and images, Barthes, Foucault and Derrida all address a general tendency to claim that a given motif represents what it looks like – a model. With this claim, the hierarchical schism between a sphere of absent presences or originals and a realm of secondary representations that sustain the originals in their absence is upheld. The *envoi*-structure from Derrida’s text on representation here appears in a new form: while the literary text mediates between the author who enunciates and the reader who receives his message, as visual artworks do between their producers and subsequent viewers, visual artworks/images also serve a subordinate, mediating function in bringing the models behind their motifs to presence for the viewers before them. One can object that there are key differences between the way a work represents its producer and the way a motif represents its model: a model is, for instance, not efficacious in the same way a sender or producer is, and the relationship between a motif and a model is more exhaustive in the sense that the motif is commonly taken to represent the model in its essence, while a work is but one of its producer’s many representatives. Nevertheless, the same ground structure, which opposes an absent original to a representative medium that brings the original to presence for the one who encounters it, underlies and sustains both relationships.

Opposing Author-ity from *Within*

The parallels between the work’s debt to its producer and the motif’s debt to its model seemingly substantiates the claim that an artist’s appearance as a ‘motif’ in his own artwork makes the work represent its artist doubly, and thus contributes to uphold author-ity.⁶⁶ In turn, these parallels legitimise the view that artists should withdraw from their works’ surfaces to let the opposition against author-ity concentrate on compromising the artist’s position as the work’s producer. However, this would be a misconception of what the “anti-representational poetics” in Barthes’s, Foucault’s and Derrida’s thinking amounts to. The three scholars do not

⁶⁴ Derrida, “Restitutions”, 370.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁶⁶ When relating Barthes’s, Foucault’s and Derrida’s writing on the visual arts to Arte Povera artists’ appearances in the following chapters, I am not suggesting that the appearances are ‘motifs’ in a conventional sense. In some cases, notably in the works presented in the next chapter, they are. In other cases, the appearances can arguably be referred to as ‘motifs’ because they rely on the works’ materiality, and thus manifest with the works as their ‘background’.

simply suggest to rid artworks/images of motifs in order to release them from their presumed debt to an original model behind. Each different ways, they rather address and problematise the representational relationship claimed between motif and model, as they question the notion of the work's debt to a prior author in their analyses of authorship. In neither case do their alternatives to representational thinking involve a mere separation of the entities traditionally conceived as 'represented' (author/artist and model) and 'representing' (artwork and 'motif'). On the contrary, their alternatives involve elements of proximity and mutual dependency that complicate and counteract the categorisation and hierarchical ordering of these entities.

The problem addressed in the analyses of authorship was the author's prioritised position *before* and *behind* the work. The overcoming of this position must entail a 'deposing repositioning' of authors that removes them from the prioritised position that representational thinking ascribes to them. This does not necessarily mean the expelling of the writing subject from the text – exteriority characterises the position already occupied by the artist as authority. On the contrary, the required repositioning tends towards a more entwined relationship between the writing subject and the text than representational thinking postulates. This is indicated by Foucault's suggestion that the author-name is a construction whose singularity regulates the characteristics of the works to which it refers; by Derrida's suggestion that the writing subject is already in-scribed in and continuously produced by language; and by Barthes's suggestion that the ones who write give themselves over to the text. Most eloquently, it is demonstrated in Barthes's notion of the modern *scriptor* – the enunciating 'I' who distinguishes from the author and is accepted by Barthes because (s)he is "born simultaneously with the text", and thus produces a text of which "there is nothing beneath".⁶⁷ It is also demonstrated in the author's return that Barthes allows in texts following his "Death of the Author" essay. The returned author is "no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological", but a "guest",⁶⁸ and one that is "lost in the midst of a text (not *behind* it, like a *deus ex machina*)."⁶⁹ Each in their own way, Barthes, Foucault and Derrida thus oppose author-ity by proposing a levelling of the representational hierarchisation of author and work, advocating instead a form of coincidence between the author and the work's materiality.

⁶⁷ Barthes, "The Death of the Author", 145 and 147.

⁶⁸ Barthes, "From Work to Text", 161.

⁶⁹ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* [1974], trans. Richard Miller (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1975), 27. As Jane Gallop has discussed at length, Barthes also speaks of an "amicable" or "friendly" return of the author in *Sade, Fourier, Loyala* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971). See Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author*, particularly "Part One. The Friendly Return of the Author". This aspect of Barthes's writing is also discussed in Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author*, 26 and further. See also Chapter Five, p. 282 and further.

Regarding the visual arts, Barthes, Foucault and Derrida seem to concur, *grosso modo*, that the idea that a given motif points towards a model, and, moreover, that the motif has the ability to convey the presence of that model to a spectator, is ontologically no more valid than the representational relationship presumed between producer, work and receiver. In various ways, they (discuss artworks that) question the representational idea of the motif as mediating between an absent and a present presence, in turn destabilising representational notions about the relationship and order between original and representation, model and motif.

For Foucault, Manet pioneers a modernist break with representation by emphasising the materiality of the medium.⁷⁰ Manet stresses the canvas's object-character by repeating the vertical and horizontal lines of its shape and woven texture, underlining its flatness by decreasing the distance from foreground to middle ground, and often blocking the view into the background. The effect is to break the illusion of transparency. Rather than offering a view through the motif towards that which it is modelled upon, Manet presents an opaque painterly surface, depriving its mediating function. Manet also orchestrates his subjects' gazes to look out of the canvas in various directions, illuminates his scenes with exterior light, and plays with specular effects. When locating similar strategies in Diego Velazquez's *Las Meninas* (The Maids of Honour), Foucault pointed out that such arrangements of gazes, lighting and mirror reflections bring awareness to the distinction between the pictorial space and the real space exterior to it.⁷¹ For Foucault, these various effects underline the fact that the canvas is "a surface of two faces, a verso and a recto" that one encounters in real space, rather than a medium one sees through.⁷²

Foucault also credits René Magritte for challenging the situation where resemblance "serves representation".⁷³ In *La Trahison des images* (The Treachery of Images) – in which the written sentence "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" (This is not a pipe) appears below a realistically painted pipe – Magritte offers visual likeness while at the same time negating the representational function.⁷⁴ To explain the paradox that the painting's motif *looks like*, but does not represent, a pipe, Magritte puts into play, Foucault suggests, a difference between two forms

⁷⁰ Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting*, 79.

⁷¹ Michel Foucault, "Las Meninas", in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 1991 [1966]). Note that a slightly different version of this text was first published as "Les Suivantes", *Mercure de France*, Nos. 1221–22, July – August 1965.

⁷² Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting*, 49.

⁷³ Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 44. Foucault also mentions Paul Klee and Vassilij Kandinsky in this respect, see pp. 33–34.

⁷⁴ René Magritte, *La Trahison des images* (The Treachery of Images), 1929. Oil on canvas, 60 x 81 cm, LACMA – Los Angeles County Museum of Art. For Foucault's comments on Magritte's paintings of pipes, see also Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting*, 69, and Joseph J. Tanke, *Foucault's Philosophy of Art. A Genealogy of Modernity* (London/New York, NY: Continuum, 2009), "Chapter 3. Nonaffirmative Painting", 93–122.

of likeness: *resemblance* and *similitude*. Resemblance affirms and represents an original, while similitude refers to images that “obey no hierarchy, but propagate themselves from small differences among small differences”, and that may “develop in series that have neither beginning nor end”. A painting like *La Trahison des images* “demolish the fortress where similitude was held prisoner to the assertion of resemblance”. It demonstrates that a mimetic painting “is no longer the finger pointing out from the canvas in order to refer to something else.” It is thus an example of what Foucault terms *nonaffirmative* paintings – that is, paintings that are not tied to nor answer to an originary model before or behind them, and that “inaugurates a play of transferences that run, proliferate, propagate, and correspond within the layout of the painting, affirming and representing nothing.”⁷⁵

In the French painter Gérard Fromanger’s practice, Foucault emphasises the artist’s “method of work”, where he projects a random photograph onto a canvas, and “bring[s] into existence” a specific scene from the photograph by applying paint directly on the canvas, “without the intervention of drawing and form”.⁷⁶ Foucault calls the result “photogenic painting”, alluding to photograms – also referred to as “photogenic drawings” – that are produced without camera, by simply exposing objects placed on photo-paper to light, thus rendering their silhouettes. Like in Fromanger’s process, where the model-image is projected onto the canvas, such ‘primitive’ photographs are based on an indexical relation between the object itself and its manifestation on paper – indeed, “instantaneous photographs” or photograms are Charles S. Peirce’s main examples of the indexes, which separates from the icon and the symbol by having a “real connection” with its “object”.⁷⁷ The bond between the resulting motif and the model is thus contiguous in the sense that it is based on physical contact and/or causality. However, the connection between motif and model is also short-lived, as Foucault makes clear by bringing attention to the “the most intense and disturbing moment” when Fromanger has finished his work and “turns off the projector, causing the photograph he has just painted to disappear and leaving his canvas to exist ‘all by itself’”.⁷⁸ At this decisive moment, the “photographic substrate” is lost: the painted image loses contact with the source image it derived from, and is set free, with the possibility to take on a life of its own. As Foucault

⁷⁵ Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, 44 and 49. ‘Nonaffirmative painting’ is Foucault’s own term, and the title of the sixth and final chapter of *This is not a pipe*.

⁷⁶ Michel Foucault, “Photogenic Painting” [1975], trans. Pierre A. Walker, in Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, *Gérald Fromanger: Photogenic Painting/La peinture photogénique* (London: Black Dog, 1999), 92–93. For a discussion of this text, see Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting*, 108 and further; Tanke, *Foucault’s Philosophy of Art*, 135 and further.

⁷⁷ Charles Sanders Peirce, “Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs” [c. 1900], in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1955 [1940]), 109.

⁷⁸ Foucault, “Photogenic Painting”, 94. Foucault here refers to a statement by the artist.

puts it, Fromanger's paintings "do not capture images: they do not fix them, they pass them on. They bring them forward, attract them, open paths for them, provide them with short-cuts, allow them to press on without a halt and scatter them to the winds."⁷⁹ They thus come to exemplify a situation in which images are allowed a new freedom of "transposition, displacement, and transformation, of resemblance and dissimulation, of reproduction, duplication and trickery of effect", and to circulate and take on new references and meanings relating to the media and contexts within which they appear.⁸⁰

Derrida and Barthes counter representation by suggesting a more entangled relationship between motif, model and material. In "Restitutions of the truth in pointing [*pointure*]", Derrida does not join Schapiro in taking a full step out of the painting towards an exterior 'truth', but finds that the shoes painted by Van Gogh attach to the painting itself: they "might well be made in order to remain-there" and "might well not come back to anyone".⁸¹ When subsequent interpretations attempt to tie the painted shoes to real shoes and owners, however, a play of references opens up around the image surface. Derrida indicates that this 'dialogue' between the interpreters in front of the painting and the supposed references behind it is illustrated by the depicted shoelaces' meandering movement in and out of the painted shoes' eyelets, as if punctuating the canvas.⁸² The alternation between visible and invisible will "sew the leather onto the canvas" – stitch supposed 'models' to the concrete manifestation of the motif.⁸³ What Derrida implies is that the supposed model is not a presence existing prior to the motif; on the contrary, a material or medium is required for a 'model' to come to presence in the first place. Rather than stemming from a model, the motif is the base from which references emanates, and since the supposed 'motifs' and 'models' are interlaced and sewn to the surface, any attempt to trace a motif back to a model will disintegrate into a number of loose ends.

Barthes objects to the idea that verisimilitude entails neutral representations of reality in his early semiology of images, when arguing that an image's materiality is a complicating factor through which meaning is invested in the motif. Choices of medium, technique and style reveal how the image producers and their society comprehend the objects rendered, as well as aesthetic and ideological conventions in the historical and cultural situation in which the image

⁷⁹ Ibid., 94–95.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 83.

⁸¹ Derrida, "Restitutions", 260. See also p. 283. Derrida suggests that this is emphasised in the painting itself, as the two shoes, which may not even be a pair, are outworn, unlaced, taken off the feet they once served, and abandoned – thus relieved from any function, including a representative one.

⁸² As he puts it, "the parergon has here perhaps the form of this lace that attaches the inside to the outside." See Derrida, "Restitutions", 331.

⁸³ Ibid., 304.

was produced.⁸⁴ These connotative layers distance the motif from what it depicts. This also goes for the photographic image, due to what Barthes refers to as the “photographic paradox”. The photograph is purely denotational by virtue of rendering indexically, but nevertheless imbued with meanings that disturb the analogy between motif and model. Techniques and effects related to lighting and exposure, for instance, are indicative, like when a blurry image suggests movement, and the depicted objects and their arrangement within the photograph may have specific connotations that make the photograph – like the cultural objects Barthes analysed in *Mythologies* – “signify something different to what is shown”.⁸⁵

In the later *Camera Lucida*, Barthes maintains the notion of the “photographic paradox”, and redefines what the ‘true referent’ of the photograph is in a way that further affects its representational function. He suggests that the photograph’s “testimony bears not on the object but on time”, meaning that it refers not to a model, as in the particular thing that it depicts, but rather to what one could call its *moment*. What the photograph attests to is the fact that the referent once existed, that “someone has seen the referent (even if it is a matter of objects) in *flesh and blood*, or again *in person*.” Thus, photography’s *noeme* – as opposed to ‘what you see is *that*’ or ‘this is *that*’ – “is *that-has-been*”. In a peculiar superimposition of reality and time, the photograph presents us with a past and passed present, or a presence past and passed.⁸⁶

Although the photographic act separates the image itself from the photographed ‘model’ which continues to exist within the sphere of the real, it is also “as if the Photograph always carries its referent within itself”. It is, as Barthes puts it, as if the “referent adheres” to the photographic film and paper. The photograph can thus offer a glimpse of the photographed subject’s life. A dedicated spectator may experience what Barthes famously names a “punctum”, a touching detail that lies within the photograph, and that a devoted spectator may invest in and incite so as to sense the ‘air’ of the photographed subject. However, pace Barthes, this experience is rare, and says nothing general about the photographed subject, as the ‘truth’ of the subject is different to everyone who knew it. He explains that when, after browsing through numerous photographs in which he can recognise his recently belated mother “differently, not essentially”, finds a photograph that for him represents her, it is an image of her as a child, at an age which he had never met her. For others, “it would be nothing but an

⁸⁴ See for instance Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message” [1961] and Roland Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image” [1964], both trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image, Music, Text*.

⁸⁵ Barthes, “The Photographic Message”, 16 and 19. For *Mythologies*, see note 28.

⁸⁶ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 89, 79, 77 and 99 for the quotes in this paragraph. See also Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image”, 44.

indifferent picture”.⁸⁷ It is thus not tied to affirmation of the model in any conventional sense.

Barthes, Foucault and Derrida are far from suggesting a turn to abstraction or non-figuration – that is, a removal of the motif from the work’s surface – in order to overcome the representational idea that motifs answer to their models. Indeed, Foucault explicitly regrets how “[g]loomy discourses” on art “have tried to convince us that the image, the spectacle, resemblance and dissimulation, are all bad, both theoretically and aesthetically, and that it would be beneath us not to despise all such folderols.” He dismisses the idea of “an art without images”, and encourages the creation of “new images of every kind”.⁸⁸ The three scholars rather question the representational ideal of mediation from ‘represented’ through ‘representative/representation’ to ‘receiver’, and point out artistic and interpretative practices that undermine this mediating effect, such as various technical and conventional investments (Barthes), the exposure of the medium’s materiality (Foucault, on Manet) or the play of reduplications and transferences (Foucault, on Fromanger). They propose alternatives to the relative positioning that representational thinking draws up between ‘represented’ and ‘representative’: a motif can be liberated from and/or exist independent of the modelling ‘origin’ that it resembles, as in Foucault’s notion of non-affirmative images, alternatively a motif is explained as dependent on and embedded in the work’s/image’s materiality, as in Barthes’s notion of how a passed present adheres to the photographic film/paper, or Derrida’s idea of the motif as sewn to the painterly surface. Their perspectives suggest that the work/image itself allows a coming-to-presence, and that the work/image is a site for that presence to dwell or a platform from which it may migrate.

The possibility that images/motifs do not point back to what they resemble challenges the stance that (Arte Povera) artists’ appearances are author-itarian. It allows that artists’ authorial status can be compromised despite, or even by virtue of, their appearances within their own works. If artists who appear as ‘motifs’ within their works – whether in a strict iconographic sense, or more broadly defined – do not affirm the artist-of-the-world as the model from which they originate, their appearances do not corroborate the bond that the representational logic presumes between the work itself and the artist-as-producer, nor uphold the work’s indebtedness to the artist-of-the-world in cases where the relationship between work and producer is destabilised through other means (such as self-annihilation, collaboration, incoherency, audience activation and material vitalism). On the contrary, if the artist-motif does

⁸⁷ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96, 6, 51–60, 107–09, 73, 71 and 66 for the quotes in this paragraph. ‘Air’ is described by Barthes as “a kind of intractable supplement of identity” that expresses the truth of a subject, but only in a glimpse.

⁸⁸ Foucault, “Photogenic Painting”, 88–89.

not establish an affirmational relationship to the artist-as-model, a breach between the sphere of representations, to which the work itself belongs, and the sphere of absent presences, where the artist-as-producer belongs alongside the artist-as-model, as two different sides of the artist-of-the-world, is indicated. Indirectly, non-affirmative artists' appearances thereby refute the work's affirmation of the producing artist as an 'extratextual' author-ity.

Artists' Appearances as Anti-Authoritarian Strategy

The anti-authoritarian strategies already discussed in Arte Povera are all 'exterior'; they address the framework of artistic production by questioning the artist's role as the work's (sole) producer. There are, however, a few indications in Arte Povera's critical reception of anti-authoritarian practices that centre around the artist. Celant describes the project of redefining the artist's role as crucial to Arte Povera. He argues that the artist has become a jester that, captured by the expectations of the prevailing aesthetic "system", "satisfies refined tastes [and] produces objects for cultivated palates".⁸⁹ In order to escape this "acquired dimension", the poor artist "abolishes his role as artist, intellectual, painter, and sculptor": he sets out to discover himself as a mere human being instead, by "[t]aking himself as the only instrument of interrogation and stimulation".⁹⁰ In several texts, Celant mentions the artistic strategy of *self-projection* when thematising how Arte Povera artists redefine their role. He distinguishes between the artist-jester who "never projects himself", but assimilates and integrates within the "system" by sticking to his role and doing what is expected of him, and the proponent of poor art, who exercises "the free self-projection of human activity".⁹¹ In another context, he describes "free self-projection" as "a tying-in to the rhythm of life in order to exhaust experience in action, in fact, and in thought, in an immediate and contingent manner."⁹² Related to particular artists, Celant claims that Pistoletto "continuously 'projects himself'" in the sense of defining himself anew at each moment,⁹³ while "[a] discovery of the world made possible by the free mental and physical self-projection has led Boetti to realize, in just a few years, innumerable 'figures' of his existence."⁹⁴ No matter how obscure the term remains in Celant's texts, the act of self-projection seems to centre on the artists themselves in order to achieve balance between the expectations to which they are subjected and the power the artists

⁸⁹ Celant, "Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla War", 35.

⁹⁰ Celant, "Arte Povera" [1969], 121; see also Celant, "Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla War", 35.

⁹¹ Celant, "Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla War", 35.

⁹² Celant, "Arte Povera" [1969], 123.

⁹³ Germano Celant, "Arte Povera" [1968], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 53.

⁹⁴ Celant, "Arte Povera" [1968], 57.

themselves exert in the world. In that sense, it makes a case against the presumption that anti-author-ity equals a shift of attention away from the artist. This presumption is also challenged in a few lines written by Elisabetta Trincerini, on Giulio Paolini's works. Trincerini remarks that "[s]ince the 1960's, Giulio Paolini has been a spokesperson in many of his works for an artistic poetics that can be defined as being of the an-author (in the sense of anti-author)." Importantly, she underlines that this "has not, however, hindered the marked manifestation of his presence."⁹⁵ Similarly, when discussing the role of the artist with reference to Alighiero Boetti's production, Mark Godfrey sees no contradiction between Boetti's self-portraying practice and anti-authoritarian attitudes.⁹⁶ In Arte Povera's reception, then, there are already hints and explicit utterances opening up to a combination of artistic presence and an anti-authoritarian "artistic poetics". It is this possibility that I investigate further in this thesis.

Many contemporaneous artists experimented with appearances in their own works and may have done so to problematise author-ity, consciously or not. Relying on a conventionalised definition of Arte Povera, I cannot and will not rule out that the strategies I identify in Arte Povera works are used by others. On the contrary, I believe that a number of artists experimented with power relations in the encounter between the artistic self and the (materials/materiality of the) work along similar lines within the same period, and that comparable procedures can be detected in art from other historical periods.⁹⁷ However, I make no attempt to investigate this self-(re)presenting approach to the issue of authorship in its full breadth by locating works that complement Arte Povera artists' appearances. I rather seek to encircle and characterise Arte Povera's strategies through a method of comparison – or, more correctly, a method of contrasting – that contextualises Arte Povera works among other anti-authoritarian efforts in Euro-American art from the 1960s and 1970s.

The already acknowledged anti-authoritarian strategies with which I open each chapter are 'exterior' in the sense that they advocate the artist's withdrawal from the work and/or point to other factors contributing to the work's realisation, just like the anti-authoritarian strategies

⁹⁵ Elisabetta Trincerini, *Giulio Paolini*. Delfo IV, 1997 (Mantua: Corraini Edizioni, 2015), 62.

⁹⁶ See the chapter "The Artist according to Alighiero e Boetti", in Mark Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁹⁷ Among many relevant artists, I suggest to approach Bruce Nauman, Robert Morris, Valie Export, Ana Mendieta, Vito Acconci, Bas Jan Ader, Klaus Rinke and Joseph Beuys when searching for examples that compares to or parallels Arte Povera's strategies. From the Arte Povera artists' own milieu, selected works by Salvo and Cecare Tacchi are interesting cases. For studies that address the relationship between artists' presence and anti-author-ity focusing on other artists, see for instance Beatrice von Bismarck, *Auftritt als Künstler* (Köln: Walther König, 2010); Maria Bremer, *Individuelle Mythologien. Kunst jenseits der Kritik* (Munich: Editions Metzler, 2019); Gerhard Silk, "All by Myself: Piero Manzoni's Autobiographical Use of His Body, Its Parts, and Its Products", in *True Relations. Essays on the Autobiographical and the Postmodern*, eds. G. Thomas Couser and Joseph Fichtelberg (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998); Mark Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti*, 89–91.

already recognised in Arte Povera do. In contrast, Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's texts on authorship and the visual arts mention anti-representational strategies such as an active questioning of the motif's mediating function and an exploration of the work/motif's relationship to the medium/materiality that brings it forth. I draw on these texts, and on art critical positions that have seen similar anti-representational strategies in post-war art as anti-authoritarian, when arguing that Arte Povera's experiments with artistic self(re)presentation offer adequate alternatives to the most acknowledged 'responses' to or variations of the 'death of the author' discourse within the visual arts. These alternatives can be characterised as 'interiorising', since they centre on the artists' appearances within their works, and on their reliance on the works' materiality.

My use of Barthes, Foucault and Derrida varies from chapter to chapter. In Chapter Three, on self-portraits, I make reference to various texts by all three scholars. In Chapter Four, which deals with performative artworks, I draw on Derrida's "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" (*Le theatre de la cruauté et la clôture de la représentation*).⁹⁸ In Chapter Five, devoted to Arte Povera sculptures and the photographic images that accompany them, Barthes's *Camera Lucida* is the main reference. Finally, in Chapter Six, I point to (the reception of) Foucault's essays on painting when discussing how Arte Povera's 'composite works' oppose perspectival author-ity. In all chapters, however, the main difference that I have already pointed to in Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's texts, between author-ity as an exterior position and anti-author-ity as an act of interiorising, is an underlying premise.

Less attention is paid to the comparative/contrasting strategies than to Arte Povera: the former are discussed without reference to actual works, while my arguments in reference to Arte Povera are built on close readings of particular works and their critical reception. As a result, my objections against the contrasting strategies and the theorists that promote them will have a certain bias. In-depth analyses of particular works that resonate with the contrasting positions in light of Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's conceptions of author-ity and representation would surely add more nuance to the debate, but falls beyond the scope of this thesis. The aim here is to characterise Arte Povera's way of dealing with the issue of author-ity through artists' appearances, and to distinguish this 'interiorising' strategy for refuting author-ity from other, 'exteriorising' strategies.

⁹⁸ Jacques Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation" [1966], in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978 [1967]).

Chapter Three

Leaving the Referent Behind

Arte Povera's Non-Affirmative *Autoritratti*

The conventional form of an artist's appearance is the self-portrait, and the most conspicuous examples of artists' appearances in the Arte Povera 'catalogue' belong to this genre – which is closely associated with the manifestation of author-ity. In pre- and early modern times, self-portraits were inserted into larger tableaus as 'signatures', revealing the identity of particular artists in collaborative and commissioned works. The acknowledgement at around 1500 of self-portraiture as a genre in its own right indicated that craftsmen gained the recognition their historical colleagues sought when inserting their portraits into works conducted as part of a guild. The establishment of genre itself was a manifestation of artistic status.¹

As a matter of principle and common sense, the self-portrait also serves a representational function, based on resemblance between motif and model. The lexical definition of the self-portrait is “[a] painting, photograph, piece of writing, etc., depicting the person who created or produced it”,² and as Catherine Soussloff puts it, “the expectation that we can potentially or actually recognize an individual in the portrait makes the genre what it is.”³ In line with the representational structure discussed in the previous chapter, traditional self-portraits point beyond themselves to spatio-temporally absent models – the signatory artists – and function to bring these artists to presence for subsequent viewers. In that sense, the self-

¹ See, for instance, Shearer West, *Portraiture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 163. For an interesting account of the emergence of the self-portrait genre and its relationship to a changed conception of the artist in post-medieval era, see Michel Foucault, “The Father's ‘No’” [1962], trans. D.F. Bouchard and S. Simon, in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954–1984. Volume 2: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, eds. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinow (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 8–10.

² “Self-portrait, *n.*”, entry in Oxford English Dictionary Online, n.d., <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/175392?redirectedFrom=self-portrait#eid> (accessed 04.04.2020).

³ Catherine Soussloff, *The Subject in Art* (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2006), 5–6.

portrait awards an author-itarian position to the modelling/producing artist; it affirms the artist as its origin and ground.

Self-portraiture's modern history is marked by accelerating self-questioning: when Arte Povera emerged in the late 1960s, the idea of a coherent, represent-able self, as well as self-portraiture's 'author-ising' function – i.e. its purported ability to represent such a self and to confirm that self as an author-ity – had long been problematised. For instance, painters had since the late nineteenth century questioned the criterion of resemblance by depicting themselves in the language of expressive abstraction. In so doing, they disputed the idea that the self is purely given in appearance, but tended to uphold the idea of an essential self and the possibility to summon this self through the acts of introspection, specular self-scrutiny and self-portrayal.⁴ The medium of photography, which became more widely accepted as an artistic medium in the post-war era and is actively used in the Arte Povera artists' self-portraying practices, further challenges the genre's premises. Arguably, photography has the capacity to represent a model more truthfully than painting: as a mechanical and indexical form of representation, it is not seen as 'coded' or 'invested' with style in the same way as other art forms.⁵ This means that the photograph can be thought of as released from the artist's hand: it can be seen to represent in the form of *ritrarre* – “the unmediated copying of external appearances” – as opposed to *imitare* – the “creative imitation in which the essential or ideal character of things is rendered visible by the genius of the artist.”⁶ Seen this way, photography allows more objective while at the same time less author-itarian self-portraits than the medium of painting offers.

It is not the medium's capacity to objectively represent that informs photographic self-portraying practices around 1970. On the contrary, photographically based self-portraits from this period are commonly found to play with or exploit the medium's characteristics to problematise self-portraiture's representative function, and in so doing also compromise the

⁴ As pointed out by various scholars, introspection and self-scrutinising were dominant motivations behind self-portrayal in the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, which indicates that the self was not considered immediately given at its outside or already present to itself, but possible to detect in the self-portrait itself. See, for instance, T.J. Clark, “The Look of Self-portraiture”, in *Self-Portrait. Renaissance to Contemporary*, eds. Anthony Bond and Joanna Woodall (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005), 64; Edward Lucie-Smith, “The self-portrait – a background”, in *The Self-Portrait: A Modern View*, eds. Sean Kelly and Edward Lucie-Smith (London: Sarema Press, 1987), 22; Michael Wilson, “Rebels and Martyrs”, in *Rebels and Martyrs: The Image of the Artist in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Alexander Sturgis and National Gallery (London: National Gallery Company, 2006), 10; Joanna Woodall, “Introduction: Facing the Subject”, in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 11 and further.

⁵ As noted in Chapter Two, this is a topic of discussion in Barthes's theories of photography – see p. 59–60.

⁶ Woodall, “Introduction: Facing the Subject”, 16.

genre's author-ising function.⁷ A case in point is the series of works often highlighted as the most emblematic example of postmodernist self-portraiture – Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills" (1977–80). As is well known, this series comprises 69 photographs of the artist using costumes, facial expressions, scenery and props to pose as housewife, *femme fatale*, victim, career girl and other stereotypical female roles known from cinematic pop culture.⁸ From the vast body of critical reception of Sherman's series, it is possible to extract (at least) two different accounts of how postmodernist self-portraiture question author-ity through a critique of representation. In the following, I will briefly present these accounts, emphasising how one of them – put forward by Craig Owens – explicitly dismisses both painted and photographic self-portraits by Arte Povera artist Giulio Paolini as modernist examples of the genre, mourning the artist's loss of status in the post-war era. Owens's account also implies the same lack of relevance for other Arte Povera self-portraits. The other account, outlined by Rosalind Krauss and Douglas Crimp, presents alternative strategies for refuting author-ity through self-portrayal – strategies that can be recognised in historical artworks that the scholars associated with the 'death of the author' discourse have highlighted for their anti-representational aspects, and in Arte Povera's *autoritratti*. Seen from this perspective, Arte Povera self-portraits deserve a more pronounced position in the genre's history – that is, in self-portraiture's established tradition of questioning its own representational and author-ising functions.⁹

Anti-Author-itarian Strategies in Postmodernist Self-Portraiture: Two Accounts

As mentioned in Chapter Two, Craig Owens suggests that author-ity is best counteracted by turning focus away from the artists themselves towards other factors contributing to the

⁷ See, for instance, Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 6, 10–11 and 14; Erika Billeter, ed., *Self-Portrait in the Age of Photography: Photographers Reflecting Their Own Image* (Bern: Benteil Vorlag, 1985); Gerald Silk, "All by Myself: Piero Manzoni's Autobiographical Use of His Body, Its Parts, and Its Products", in *True Relations. Essays on the Autobiographical and the Postmodern*, eds. G. Thomas Couser and Joseph Fichtelberg (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998), 138; Euripides Altintzoglou, *Portraiture and Critical Reflections on Being* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 1.

⁸ Whether Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills" rightfully belong to the genre of self-portraiture is a debated issue. Among many other sources, see Frances Borzello, *Seeing Ourselves: Women's Self-Portraits*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 1998), 171.

⁹ For a discussion of the more specific context of Italian post-war photography, see, for instance, Giuliano Sergio, "Art is the copy of art: Italian photography in and after Arte Povera", in *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977*, ed. Matthew S. Witkovsky (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago/Yale UP, 2012); and Antonella Russo, "Fotografia e neoavanguardia a Roma negli anni Settanta (circa)", in *Anni 70. Arte a Roma*, ed. Daniela Lancioni (Rome: Iacobelli Editore, 2013). For a discussion of whether Italian artists of Arte Povera's generation – exemplified by Vettor Pisani – are rightfully associated with American photographers of the "Pictures" generation to which Sherman arguably belongs, see Maria Bremer, *Individuelle Mythologien. Kunst jenseits der Kritik* (Munich: Editions Metzler, 2019), 63.

production of artworks. Implicitly, his essay thus disregards the artists' presence in their works, and certainly the function of self-portraiture as a means for self-promotion or self-scrutinising. Across several of Owens's texts, however, Sherman's series of "Untitled Film Stills" figure as an exceptional example of how a strong authorial position can be refuted within the genre itself.

Central to Owens's argument is a distinction between a modernist and a postmodernist settlement with representation. Modernism, Owens contends in one essay, "presupposes that mimesis, the adequation of an image to a referent, can be bracketed or suspended, and that the art object itself can be substituted (metaphorically) for its referent."¹⁰ In another essay, he states that modernist art seek to liberate the signifier from the "tyranny of the signified" by presenting the former as free and autonomous.¹¹ Postmodernism, on the other hand, is characterised by a "deconstructive impulse" – it "neither brackets nor suspends the referent but works instead to problematize the activity of reference."¹² Rather than seeking to liberate the signifier from the signified, "postmodernists instead expose the tyranny of the *signifier*, the violence of its law" – which, to Owens, impacts on how some are allowed to be represented, while others are denied this privilege.¹³ A main concern of postmodernist art is thus "the legislative frontier between what can be represented and what cannot", and its aim is to "expose that system of power that authorizes certain representations while blocking, prohibiting, or invalidating others."¹⁴

To Owens, postmodernism thus involves a politicisation of the issue of representation, with him declaring that "representational systems of the West admit only one vision – that of the constitutive male subject." Consequently, women have been excluded and/or objectified, but now return "as a figure for – a representation of – the unrepresentable." One of his examples is Sherman, whose presence in "Untitled Film Stills" is described as "an acting out of the psychoanalytic notion of femininity as masquerade, that is, as a representation of male desire [...] to fix the woman in a stable and stabilizing identity."¹⁵ Owens remarks that there is no point in exhibiting a single image from this series; "[t]o do so is meaningless, for the significance of Sherman's work resides in the artist's permutations of identity from one photo

¹⁰ Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism, Part 2" [1980], in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994 [1992]), 85.

¹¹ Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism" [1983], in Owens, *Beyond Recognition*, 168. Note that Owens's use of the terms 'signifier' and 'signified' is not particularly considerate of the semiotic tradition of understanding them as two components of the sign itself. I understand his use of the terms 'signifier' and 'signified' as interchangeable with his use of the terms 'representation'/'image' and 'referent', and that is how they must be understood here.

¹² Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse", 85.

¹³ Owens, "The Discourse of Others", 168

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 167, 168 and 183.

to the next.”¹⁶ By radically changing appearances between the various photographs, introducing “a trembling around the edges” of the model’s identity, Sherman illustrates how the (female) self is defined by exterior gazes, and so unsettles what Owens describes as the established representational system, defined by the male gaze.¹⁷ In this reading, Owens is in line with the general reception of “Untitled Film Stills”, and ties Sherman to what is considered the marked tendency within the genre of self-portraiture in the second half of the twentieth century; namely, a vital experimentation with issues of identity and its production through masquerade, role play and serialisations of the self.¹⁸

Owens ties Sherman’s politicised critique of representation to the questioning of authority and presents her “Film Stills” as advancing Barthes’s own solutions to the issues raised in “The Death of the Author”. He leans on Michel Foucault’s polemic response to Barthes’s text, quoting that “we must reexamine the empty space left by the author’s disappearance”, and concludes with Foucault that the alternatives Barthes has to offer in the author’s place – the reader and language itself – are insufficient. These alternatives are “recognisably modernist” in the sense that they simply substitute the author, and – in Foucault’s words – “have merely served to arrest the possibility of genuine change.”¹⁹ The change sought for is what Foucault would call a turn to discourse, and what Owens describes as a shift of attention “away from the work and its producer and onto its *frame*.”²⁰ He reckons that “Untitled Film Stills” activate this shift, because Sherman’s “investigation of authorial identity” involves an aspect of sexual difference and thus addresses the oppressive structures underlying representation. In being made by and displaying a female artist testing established norms of self-representation, Sherman’s photographs do not primarily deal with her personal self nor with the role of the

¹⁶ Craig Owens, “Allan McCollum: Repetition and Difference” [1983], in *Beyond Recognition*, 119. See also Craig Owens, “From Work to Frame, or, Is There Life After ‘The Death of the Author?’” [1987], in *Beyond Recognition*, 124.

¹⁷ Owens, “The Discourse of Others”, 183; see also Owens, “The Allegorical Impulse”, 83–84.

¹⁸ As Jui-Ch’I Liu has pointed out, some scholars (such as Margaret Iversen and Mira Schor) find Sherman’s stills to confirm the objectification of women by the male gaze, but most critics (like Laura Mulvey, Abigail Solomon-Godeau and Amelia Jones) read her artwork as a successful feminist project. See Jui-Ch’I Liu, “Female Spectatorship and the Masquerade: Cindy Sherman’s Untitled Film Stills”, *History of Photography*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2010, 79. The use of role-play to problematise issues of identity is also found in earlier self-portraits – for example within the oeuvres of Rembrandt, Delacroix, Courbet, Countess de Castiglione, Marcel Duchamp and Claude Cahun – but there is a scholarly agreement that the staged play of identity became the dominant category of self-portraiture from the 1970s on. See, for instance, Marco Pierini, “Das malt ich nach meiner Gestalt. The self-portrait from the 1960s to the present, a quick tour”, in *Self-Portrait*, ed. Michael Juul Holm (Humblebæk: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2012), 26–31; Susan Bright, *Auto-Focus: The self-portrait in contemporary photography* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010).

¹⁹ Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 125; Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?” [1969], trans. Josué V. Havari, in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984. Volume 2: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, eds. James D. Faubion and Paul Rabinow (London: Allen Lane, 1998), quoted in Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 126.

²⁰ Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 126. See also Chapter Two, p. 47.

artist, but rather with the broader and more politicised questions opened up by the ‘death of the author’ discourse – namely “who is free to define, manipulate and, ultimately, to benefit from the codes and conventions of cultural production?”²¹ The central position of the artist in “Untitled Film Stills”, then, is acceptable to Owens because self-representation in this instance serves to problematise the ‘frame’ – the premises of self-representation itself.

It is against this background that Owens dismisses Giulio Paolini’s self-portraits as a failed response to the ‘death of the author’ discourse. He makes reference to a handful of works: two cases in which Paolini presents historical self-portraits by Nicholas Poussin and Henri Rousseau as his own²²; *Hi-Fi* from 1965, a work in which the silhouette of an artist’s body is placed before a canvas, as if working on it, but covered by the same gestural brushstrokes as the canvas itself (Ill. 3.1); and *Delfo* (Delphos), a 1965 photograph printed on emulsified canvas, in which a life-sized image of Paolini, dressed in dark attire with a white-collar shirt and eyes covered by sunglasses, is seen behind the bars of a wooden canvas



Ill. 3.1. Giulio Paolini, *Hi-Fi*, 1965. Enamel on primed canvas, enamel on canvas mounted on wooden silhouette, easel, 300 x 230 cm.

stretcher (Fig. 3.1). What Owens finds characteristic about these works is that the artist tends to appear partly concealed by elements of the work itself, so that “the work of art functions primarily as a screen or mask for its Producer.”²³ Owens describes Paolini as “a kind of magician who performs a disappearing act”, and the works as *staging* the author’s death or dethroning.²⁴ Accordingly, he implies that Paolini here illustrates the work’s release from the “tyranny of the signified”, which is characteristic of what he considers a modernist critique of representation. Paolini even does so with a certain melancholy, Owens claims.²⁵

²¹ Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 125-26. Leaning on the premise that “when women are concerned, similar techniques have very different meanings”, Owens argues that when appropriating old masters’ works, female artists are not (only) performing a general critique of the ideal of originality and the rules of artistic ownership, but also of the gendered bias involved, openly announced in the notion of the artist as the *father* of his work. See Owens, “The Discourse of Others”, 182.

²² For a discussion of these works, see p. 116 and further.

²³ Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 123. Another work by Paolini with a similar effect is *Monogramma* (1965). Exceptions to the tendency of partial self-concealment in Paolini’s self-portraits are found in his *Autoritratto col busto di Eracito e altre opera* (1971–72) (see pp. 114–16) and in “*Elegia*” in *una scena di duello* (1972).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.



Fig. 3.1. Giulio Paolini, *Delfo*, 1965. Photo emulsion on canvas, 180 x 95 cm.

Paolini's *autoritratti* lack the potential that Owens finds in Sherman's self-portraits, that is, the potential to use the image of the self in a broader questioning of representational injustice or "violence", and to confront representation as a discursive issue concerning the more fundamental premises of the production of artwork and identity. This is also the case for other Arte Povera self-portraits, in so far as the responsible artists are not speaking from positions marginalised by "the representational systems of the West". With the exception of Marisa Merz, none of the Arte Povera artists are "women, queer-identified, or not aligned with normative Euro-American whiteness", which is how Amelia Jones characterises the identity of postmodernist artists successfully using photographic techniques to question the premises for self-representation through self-portrayal.²⁶ Following Owens's line of reasoning, the appearances of these artists in their works would easily come to represent the representational system itself and the 'one vision' it traditionally has adhered to, rather than being put forth as 'representations of the unrepresentable' challenging the sedimented ideals of art and identity production, as he finds the 'death of the author' discourse to demand.

Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills" also gained the interest of other critics associated with the journal *October*, notably Douglas Crimp and Rosalind Krauss. They contend that Sherman counteracts self-portraiture's author-ising function by problematising "the activity of reference" in a manner that is less politicised. In so doing, they offer an alternative notion of how photographically based self-portraying practices of the post-modernist era can accommodate the issues raised by the 'death of the author' discourse.²⁷

Crimp and Krauss both emphasise how Sherman's work is based on a double lack of reference: in each image, the artist poses as some film character, but the characters are not taken from actual films, they are fictional stereotypes. Thus, they involve a two-stage distancing of motif from 'model'. In addition, Krauss argues that the "Film Stills" draw attention to the representational medium's role in producing meaning: in Sherman's images, the photographed subject's presumed identity is constructed by virtue of stylistic aspects of the composition – such as choices of "framing, lighting, distance, camera angle, and so forth." This indicates that

²⁶ Jones, *Self/Image*, 40–41. Her examples of such artists, in addition to Sherman, are Andy Warhol and Yayoi Kusama, as well as earlier artists who use photographic techniques in their self-portraying practices, such as Countess de Castiglione, Adolph de Meyer, Florence Henri and Claude Cahun,

²⁷ The distinction I draw between Owens and these other critics is not absolute. Owens's own emphasis on the political aspect of Sherman's series varies – it is, for instance, strong in "The Discourse of Others", but less pronounced in "The Allegorical Impulse". Moreover, both Crimp and Krauss acknowledge the political aspect of Sherman's photos – see Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism" [1980], in *Cindy Sherman*, ed. Johanna Burton (Cambridge, MA: October Files, 2006), 35; and Rosalind E. Krauss, "Cindy Sherman: Untitled" [1993], in Burton, *Cindy Sherman*, 106 – but pay far less attention to it. Krauss even suggests that Sherman's film stills are part of a chain of references that "has nothing in it of the theorization of the male gaze and the psycho-politics of sadistic control", see Krauss, "Cindy Sherman: Untitled", 113.

the image precedes and produces the subject it supposedly represents, rather than the other way around.²⁸ In articles discussing the “Untitled Film Stills”, Krauss declares that the series points to the photograph as a false copy that bears no essential resemblance with its model, and instead “takes up the idea of difference or nonresemblance and internalizes it.” “The condition of Sherman’s work in the ‘Stills’ – and part of their point, we could say – is the simulacral nature of what they contain, its condition of being a copy *without* an original”, Krauss posits.²⁹

To Krauss, the “simulacral nature” of Sherman’s works does not primarily consist in rejecting the existence of an origin(al), but in deconstructing – unsettling – the basic oppositions between origin(al) and copy on which Western art and culture rely. Notably, Sherman’s photographs do so by playing with and inciting confusion about the breach between the image space and its exteriority: the mirrors Sherman often incorporates in her compositions both mark and dissolve the borders between these spaces, as they reflect the image’s outside and establish contact between the portrayed woman and the viewers who sometimes encounter the eyes of her mirror-image, while at the same time underlining that the viewers, who will not find themselves reflected, are viewing from the outside. Distance is also marked by other compositional elements in Sherman’s stills, such as the doorframes that tend to appear in the foregrounds, which marks “a severing of the psychic space of the watcher from that of the watched”; the graininess that diffuses some of her motifs; flattening light effects; or the “nimbus that washes around the frame of the image, repeating in the register of light the sense of barrier that the door frame constructs in the world of physical objects” (Ills. 3.2–3.4). In some cases, lighting effects enforce the contrast between positive and negative form and turn Sherman’s silhouette into an abstracted shape on the image surface, which further complicates the question of the interiority and exteriority of representation, and the artist’s position relative to these spheres (Ill. 3.5).³⁰ In using these technical and compositional strategies to occlude the distinction between real and representational space, Krauss finds Sherman’s series to question the photograph’s role as a medium that eliminates spatio-temporal distance by bringing the photographed subject behind the work to presence for the viewers in front of it.

To Krauss, the fact that Sherman herself is the model and the producer of her photographs is crucial. When operating as the artist behind as well as the motif within her images, Sherman is both a subject and an object relative to her works. The presence as object

²⁸ Krauss, “Cindy Sherman: Untitled”, 103.

²⁹ Rosalind Krauss, “A Note on Photography and the Simulacral”, *October*, No. 31, Winter 1984, 62; Krauss, “Cindy Sherman: Untitled”, 98.

³⁰ Krauss, “Cindy Sherman: Untitled”, 109.



From left: Ill. 3.2. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #2*, 1977. Gelatin silver print, 24.1 x 19.2 cm; Ill. 3.3. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #81*, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 24.1 x 16.7 cm; Ill. 3.4. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #39*, 1979. Gelatin silver print, 24 x 15.4 cm; Ill. 3.5. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #36*, 1979. Gelatin silver print, 24 x 19.2 cm.

is underlined by the framing of the artist within the image space and the abstraction of her figure on the image's surface, while the presence as subject is downplayed by the two-stage distancing of artist-as-motif from artist-as-model. "Untitled Film Stills" thus rejects a main premise of Western art, Krauss argues – the idea of the artist's mind as "a reserve of consciousness that is fundamentally different from the world of appearances", "both anterior to the world and distinct from it." The photographs are therefore also in opposition to notions of the artist as "a source of originality, a fount of subjective response, a condition of critical distance from a world which it confronts but of which it is not a part", and rather mark "a revelation of the artist herself as stereotypical."³¹ Consequently, Sherman is to Krauss "a mythographer, like Barthes – a demystifier of myth, a de-myth-ifier" problematising current conceptions of artists and their privileged role relative to work and world.³²

To Douglas Crimp, Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills" are emblematic of a postmodernist art in which photography is embraced, not "as an art medium traditionally conceived", but "as a reproductive technology through which images can be transferred from one place in the culture to another."³³ The remarkable thing with the "photographic activity of postmodernism", Crimp states, is that "[t]he peculiar presence of this work is effected through absence, through its unbridgeable distance from the original, from even the possibility of an original." In showing photography's claims to originality for "the fiction they are", postmodernist photography marks opposition to Walter Benjamin's notion of aura, which, in Crimp's reading of Benjamin, "has

³¹ Krauss, "A Note on Photography and the Simulacral", 59.

³² Krauss, "Cindy Sherman: Untitled", 99.

³³ Douglas Crimp, "Appropriating Appropriation", in *Image Scavengers: Photography*, ed. Paula Marincola (Philadelphia, IL: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1982), 34.

to do with the presence of the original, with authenticity”.³⁴ This opposition also affects the relationship between the work and its artist: when aura is dispensed with, Crimp argues, “[t]he fantasy of the creative subject gives way to the frank confiscation, quotation, excerptation, accumulation, and repetition of already existing images”.³⁵ The images presented by postmodernist photographers, Crimp continues, “are purloined, confiscated, appropriated, *stolen*. In their work, the original cannot be located, is always deferred; even the self that might have generated an original is shown to be itself a copy.”³⁶

According to Crimp, the notion that even artists themselves are fakes or copies is marked particularly well in the “Untitled Film Stills”, where Sherman figures both as “actor in the narrative and creator of it”, and as separated from the ‘original’ artistic self through the layers of masquerade and through serialisation. Thus,

the fiction Sherman discloses is the fiction of the self. Her photographs show that the supposed autonomous and unitary self out of which those other “directors” would create their fictions is itself nothing other than a discontinuous series of representations, copies and fakes.³⁷

Crimp suggests that Sherman’s “photographs reverse the terms of art and autobiography. They use art not to reveal the artist’s true self but to show the self as an imaginary construct”: in the “Untitled Film Stills”, “[t]he pose of authorship is dispensed with not only through the mechanical means of making the image but also through the effacement of any continuous, essential persona or even recognizable visage in the scenes.”³⁸ What is argued in Crimp’s reading of Sherman’s work, then, is that the layering and serialisation that Sherman exposes herself to *as model* also implies a distancing and dissolvment of herself *as producer*. Crimp suggests that Sherman, by seeding doubt about the existence of a continuous and essential artist-model also questions the idea of the artist-producer as a solid origin behind the work. Sherman’s “ersatz film stills”, he argues, “implicitly attacked authorism by equating the known artifice of the actress in front of the camera with the supposed authenticity of the director behind it.”³⁹

The “Untitled Film Stills” as discussed by Krauss and Crimp seem to exemplify what Owens refers to as a reactionary, modernist questioning of representation, seeking simply to “bracket or suspend” the image referent. Crimp remarks, however, that the photographic

³⁴ Crimp, “The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism”, 28, 33 and 28. See also Crimp, “Appropriating Appropriation”, 33.

³⁵ Crimp, “Appropriating Appropriation”, 33.

³⁶ Crimp, “The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism”, 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

³⁹ Crimp, “Appropriating Appropriation”, 34.

activity that Sherman exemplifies is no longer concerned with repressing representation, rather it *addresses* representation and “use the apparent veracity of photography against itself”.⁴⁰ To question the representational and author-ising function of self-portraiture by exploiting the means of representation itself – to work “either *on* or *with* the signifier”, as Krauss puts it – is in line with the ‘deconstructive impulse’ that Owens attributes to postmodernist art.⁴¹ Krauss and Crimp do not claim that Sherman’s works seek or achieve the absolute autonomy of the image from its origin; as noted earlier, Krauss’s discussion of the simulacral aspect in Sherman’s work centres more on the complexity of the relation between origin(al) and representation than on fully releasing the representing entity, and her discussions of Sherman’s mirrors underline the photographs’ play with the image’s ‘in/dependency’. In these accounts, Sherman’s “Film Stills” do “problematise the activity of reference”, but they problematise representation as an issue of affirmation, not as an issue of representability.

Drawing on the reception of Sherman’s work, one can identify two different accounts of how postmodernist self-portraying practices can challenge the genre’s author-ising function. On the one hand, the self-portrait can challenge the artist’s author-itarian position by a “turn to the frame” – that is, by broadening the critique of representation towards the politicised issue of what and whom is allowed to see and to be seen (Owens). On the other hand, self-portraits can challenge author-ity by rejecting affirming the modelling/producing artist as their origin (Krauss/Crimp). This is achieved through a conscious use of the photographic medium itself through formal, technical, compositional and stylistic strategies, as demonstrated in Krauss’s and Crimp’s accounts of Sherman’s works. Masking and serialisation, for instance, distance the motif from the model and question the function of the image in representing its artist, while another strategy is to bring attention to the distinct spheres of representation – to the spaces behind/before, inside and in front of the work. As a result, the established notion of the producing/modelling artist’s position behind/before the work is challenged. Owens’s position promotes self-portraits that either explicitly problematise issues of identity and self-formation or works that implicitly do so by speaking on behalf of a marginalised group. Therefore, it cannot acknowledge Arte Povera self-portraits, like Paolini’s, as anti-author-itarian. Krauss’s and Crimp’s argument that author-ity can be counteracted by problematising the image’s affirmative and mediating functions through technical and compositional means opens up to the possibility of also locating anti-author-itarian aspects in Arte Povera self-portraits.

⁴⁰ Crimp, “The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism”, 34; also Crimp, “Appropriating Appropriation”, 27.

⁴¹ Krauss, “Cindy Sherman: Untitled”, 101.

Non-Affirmative Aspects in Arte Povera Self-Portraits

The Arte Povera ‘catalogue’ comprises a number of works that can be categorised as self-portraiture, broadly defined. Some are images that portray the signatory artist in the manner of conventional self-portraiture; others display a recognisable image of the artist as a less central motif; some works are presented as self-portraits without containing any recognisable image of the artist; and yet others announce their status as self-portraits by displaying the artist’s name rather than an image.⁴² Common to the various forms of self-portraiture, is that the artists’ appearances within them are *iconic*: the artists appear as motifs in two-dimensional images primarily produced with photographic techniques, and, in most cases, these motifs are easily identifiable as the artists themselves. The self-portraits that present the artist’s name or a personal pronoun instead of a portrait image are apparently exceptions. However, the written words that announce the artists’ presence in these works are presented as motif images, and play with self-portraiture’s convention of iconic reference.

A broad selection of these works is presented in three subsections below, which reflect three striking features of Arte Povera self-portraiture. First, many of the self-portraits refer to the act of seeing by displaying spectacles, sunglasses and lenses, or by playing with the gaze or mirror effects. Second, several self-portraits are based on multiplication of the artist’s image. Finally, there is the tendency to replace the artist’s image with names and pronouns. My presentation reveals, however, that these are not mere characteristics: the display of optical instruments/effects hint at the works’ representational character; multiplication of the image serves to fragment the artist, and verbal references serve to distance the artist’s image from the artistic subject/body. The *exposure of the means of representation*, *self-fragmentation* and *conceptualisation* are all distinct strategies through which Arte Povera’s *autoritratti* question the genre’s representational function, and implicitly affect its author-ising function.

Exposing Representation – Objectifying Oneself

The work that best exemplifies the tendency to expose the means of representation in Arte Povera self-portraits has already been introduced: Paolini’s *Delfo*. In this self-portrait, a canvas stretcher – which Paolini held before him while being photographed, and subsequently used to mount the canvas on which the resulting photograph was printed – rises in front of the artist’s

⁴² In addition to the primarily photo-based works discussed in this chapter, Arte Povera artists also made a few sculptural self-portraits between 1965 and 1972. I have chosen to discuss these in Chapter Five, which is dedicated to artists’ appearances in Arte Povera’s sculptural works.

image and conceals most of his face and central parts of his body. The positioning of the stretcher at the self-portrait's surface has the same effect as the doorframes Krauss comments in "Untitled Film Stills", but unlike the frames in Sherman's images, it alludes to the painterly tradition. In fact, *Delfo*'s combination of the motif-elements 'self-portrait' and 'exposed canvas stretcher' evokes a painting from the art-historical canon with a particular standing in theoretical discussions of representation: Diego Velazquez's 1656 *Las Meninas*. This large-scale oil painting, which Paolini knew well and paraphrased in other



Ill. 3.6. Diego Velazquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656. Oil on canvas, 320.5 x 281.5 cm.

works, has a comparable set-up: it displays a stretcher in its foreground, and a self-portrait immediately behind it (Ill. 3.6).⁴³ The relative positioning of stretcher and artist is not identical in the two works: Paolini is seen directly behind, thus *through* the empty stretcher, whereas Velazquez appears to the side of a stretched canvas. Nevertheless, the constellation 'artist behind work' is a central motif in *Las Meninas*, as Foucault underlines when opening his analysis of this work with the telling observation that "[t]he painter is standing a little back from his canvas."⁴⁴

Paolini's *Delfo* was produced before Foucault's analysis of *Las Meninas* was widely known, and it is far from clear whether Paolini intended to summon Velazquez's painting when presenting himself behind an exposed stretcher.⁴⁵ Still, Paolini's self-portrait stresses some of the same points that Foucault makes in his analysis of the painting. Foucault rhetorically asks if Velazquez's painting – due to its exposure of the elements of representation, such as the artist, the viewers, the play of gazes between them, the exterior light, the wall-hung paintings and the

⁴³ In Paolini's *L'ultimo Quadro di Velazquez* (1968), the two figures seen in the mirror depicted inside *Las Meninas* are blown up to life-size and inverted, thus recreating the view of the painter depicted within *Las Meninas*. See Maddalena Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo 1960–1982* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2008), 175; and Germano Celant, *Giulio Paolini* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2003 [1972]), 79.

⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, "Las Meninas", in *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 1991 [1966]), 3.

⁴⁵ Foucault's essay was first published in 1965, before a slightly revised version appeared in *Les mots et les choses* the following year (also in Italian, by Rizzoli, Milan). To my knowledge, Paolini's engagement with *Las Meninas* dates back to 1968, when he produced *L'ultimo Quadro di Velazquez*. The following year, he cited Foucault's analysis of *Las Meninas* in the exhibition catalogue *Giulio Paolini, L'ultimo Quadro di Velazquez*, (Milan: Galleria De Nieubourg, 1969).

mirror – is a “representation, as it were, of Classical representation”.⁴⁶ However, I have already indicated in Chapter Two that this exposure is an anti-representational feature, since the representational ideal of mediation requires that the means of representation remain unexposed.⁴⁷ In his lectures on Manet, written a few years after the analysis of *Las Meninas*, Foucault refers to the representational ideal of Western painting as an attempt to conceal the material qualities of the canvas in favour of providing access to the ‘reality’ behind, and sees Manet’s practice as a counter-strategy that distorts this access by emphasising the material qualities of the medium.⁴⁸ *Las Meninas* likewise breaks with representational transparency when bringing attention to the act of representation, and to the schism between the representational and the real space to which viewers belong. In Foucault’s analysis, the protruding rear-sided canvas is regarded as one of several elements in Velazquez’s painting that make manifest an absolute schism between the represented space internal to the painting and the ‘real’ space external to it. Like the mirror seen in the painting’s background – which would logically reflect the viewers who position themselves in front of *Las Meninas*, but instead elides them in favour of the image of the royal couple who presumably stood in the viewers’ current position when the painted Velazquez portrayed them on the canvas in front of him – the inverted canvas in *Las Meninas*’s foreground contributes to highlight the distance between the viewers and the depicted scene, and makes them aware that they do not belong to the same space as the represented figures.⁴⁹

In his analysis, Foucault also discusses the painter’s ambiguous position relative to the representational space. He is both inside and outside of the painting itself, as *Las Meninas* reveals by indicating reflexivity between the Velazquez depicted within the painting, and the real Velazquez who once stood in front of *Las Meninas*, painting it. Foucault notes how the painter within the painting is “[e]merging from that canvas beyond our view” and “moves into our gaze.” He is visible to us now, because he has laid down his work for a moment and taken

⁴⁶ Foucault, “Las Meninas”, 16.

⁴⁷ Foucault does not speak about visual representation when making his comment, but about the “Classical age” when the painting was made, in which representation was an ordering principle. When returning to Foucault’s discussion of this painting in Chapter Six (p. 310), however, I suggest that the painting, as Foucault analyses it, also breaks with representation in the sense that it exceeds the representational premises of the Classical age.

⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting* [1967–71], trans. Matthew Barr (London: Tate Publishing, 2011 [2009]), 29–30 and 79.

⁴⁹ Foucault’s presumption that the mirror inside *Las Meninas* geometrically corresponds with the point of view outside the painting is disputed. See Joel Snyder and Ted Cohen, “Reflexions on ‘Las Meninas’: Paradox Lost”, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1980, 440 and further. So is Foucault’s idea of the painting’s plot, that the painting depicts Velazquez in the process of portraying King Philip IV and his wife Mariana. See Svetlana Alpers, “Interpretation without Representation, or, the Viewing of Las Meninas”, *Representations*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1983, 33.

a step back to contemplate it or to study his models. But “the tall canvas [...] may soon absorb him, when, taking a step towards it again, he returns to his task.” As also demonstrated by the background mirror, which – in addition to *Las Meninas*’s viewers – elides the real Velazquez who initially occupied the central position, the *point of view*, in front of the painting, it is “as though the painter could not at the same time be seen on the picture where he is represented and also see that upon which he is representing something. He rules at the threshold of those two incompatible visibilities.”⁵⁰ The point Foucault thus makes is that the painter is either *seeing* or *seen*, either *representing* or *represented*.

Foucault’s analysis highlights that power is distributed differently between the one who sees and/or represents and that which is seen and/or represented. In *Las Meninas*, this is signalled by the fact that the mirror reflects the sovereigns at the point of view – which reminds us that the world is ordered according to their views. By virtue of ordering the representational space and bringing things forth as representations, the painter also holds power when occupying the central position outside the painting itself. The artist’s “sovereign gaze”, Foucault writes, will soon “seize hold” of what he observes and project it onto the “vast cage” of the canvas.⁵¹ The painter figuring within *Las Meninas*, on the other hand, has already been caught by the gaze of a producing artist and captured on the “motionless canvas”, where he will be forever subjected to the gazes of the viewers who take the producing artist’s position in front of the work. A key difference between the artist-as-producer and the artist-as-motif is thus established: one is the exterior, author-itarian source who conjures the represented world, while the other is subordinated to the one who has observed him, created him in/as representation, and defined his position within the representational space.⁵² In that sense, Foucault’s analysis of *Las Meninas* shows that the act of self-representation involves a (partial) giving up of the authority of the exterior gaze, and a subordination of the self to that gaze.

The stretcher in *Delfo* also functions as a distancing factor, as a barrier secluding the representational space from the real space in front of it, and the depicted artist from those positioned opposite him in that exterior space. These include current viewers, whose access to the artist-as-motif is hindered by the stretcher’s presence. As Germano Celant puts it in a

⁵⁰ Foucault, “Las Meninas”, 3–4, for all quotes in this paragraph.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 5 and 4.

⁵² When thematising the hierarchy between the roles of seer/representer and seen/represented, Foucault does not explicitly point to the painter, but exemplifies by pointing to the sovereigns. They are “the palest, the most unreal, the most compromised” and also “the most ignored” of the painting’s images when appearing as *representations* within the painting, but when positioned outside it, at the point of view, they “provide the centre around which the entire representation is ordered” (p. 14). The hierarchy between the painter as a representation and as a representer, can be understood in a similar manner.

comment to *Delfo*, “the diaphragm placed between author and spectator has about it all the impenetrability of an oracle.”⁵³ As Velazquez’s enigmatic painting and Foucault’s analysis indicate, the space in front of the painting also includes the representing artist who first occupied the point of view. In Foucault’s reading, the inverted canvas in *Las Meninas* incites a reflexive play between the painted artist inside the representational space and the producing artist in front of the work. When presenting Paolini directly behind the stretcher, *Delfo* more abruptly distances the artist’s image from the producing artist’s position.

The stretcher exposed in front of *Delfo*’s main motif is the very same stretcher that holds up the canvas and the image itself. Attention is thus drawn to the material element of the work that lies *behind* the represented figure, and *between* the represented figure and the modelling artist behind it. By evoking the physical barrier between the artist-as-motif and the artist-as-model, Paolini’s work seeds doubt about the representational idea of transparency between them, which awards the model the status as the motif’s origin. The insertion of the photographically reproduced stretcher that echoes the functional stretcher points to the medium’s own role in originating a motif – to the medium as the ground that sustains the representation. By presenting the artist behind the stretcher – or, in fact, *between* stretchers, *Delfo* thus also problematises the idea of the producing artist as originator. Underlined here is the artist-as-motif and his status as mere representation; as caged and objectified within representational space.

The dark sunglasses worn by Paolini in *Delfo* serve a complementary function. Like the stretcher, they form a physical barrier that deprives viewers of a full encounter with the photographed artist’s face. But the opaque glasses also activate the separation between seeing and seen that Foucault addresses in his analysis of *Las Meninas*. In a related self-portrait – *Delfo II* (1968) – Paolini holds a bust of Sappho before his face in order to “cancel out my own gaze”, as he puts it.⁵⁴ The sunglasses in *Delfo* similarly cancel the artist’s gaze out and thereby mark a rejection of the role as seer/representer. Equipped with these glasses, the artist-as-motif is presented as one with the power to see and represent, but as distanced from and at the same time subjected to the gaze of the producing artist that once found himself in front of the work, and the viewers who subsequently find themselves occupying the point of view.

Few Arte Povera self-portraits expose the materiality of representation as explicitly as Paolini does when presenting the canvas stretcher in front of his own image, evoking the

⁵³ Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 53.

⁵⁴ Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 74. Celant here quotes a statement Paolini made in Carla Lonzi, *Autoritratti* (Bari: De Donato, 1969). For *Delfo II*, see Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato*, 165.

painterly tradition and its representational ideals.⁵⁵ This is not surprising, given that most of the self-portraits are realised using photographic techniques, which are commonly associated with an *im-mediate* representation of the real. Arte Povera self-portraits, however, tend to contain elements that hint at representation more broadly: they include optical aids, such as (sun)glasses, lenses and mirrors or mirror effects, and therefore draw attention to representation's most fundamental premise – the act of seeing. Five of these works are presented below, and another work by Paolini is the first example.

Paolini's *Autoritratto* from 1970 has the form of a diptych, in which a black and white photograph of the artist, seen in half-profile from the chest up, is displayed twice, but inverted along the vertical central axis (Fig. 3.2). While the two photographs are like mirror images of each other, duplication is also counteracted in this self-portrait, by the photographed artist's instructive gaze and a pencil inscription on the work's surface. The eyes of the two Paolinis, which are emphasised by the round glasses that frame them, are staring intensely at an unidentifiable object the artist is holding in his hand, of which we only see the rear side as a white sheet or screen. At the centre of the diptych, the white areas from each image combine into one rectangular shape across the centre fold. This shape's undermining of the work's double nature is further underlined by the hand-written inscription that runs across it from left to right, reading – in correspondence with the work's title – "*Autoritratto*".

Maddalena Disch finds the inscription "*Autoritratto*" to suggest that what Paolini is holding in his hand(s) is a self-portrait with its title written on the back.⁵⁶ Indeed, this self-portrait may correspond to the photographic image that is duplicated in/as Paolini's *Autoritratto*. It is also possible that Paolini is seduced by a mirror; the little reflection in his glasses certainly indicates that what faces him is something light and shiny. In any case, what remains hidden on the other side of the white surface is most likely the image of Paolini himself. In that sense, the work could be argued to take the form of a triptych, one whose three images face each other so as to indicate a three-dimensional space interior to the work, rather than being folded out as a two-dimensional display before viewers.

The white screen in the very foreground of Paolini's double self-portrait is located between the photographed artist and those looking at his image, and in that sense marks the border between the image space and that of the onlookers. In fact, this screen is not only making

⁵⁵ The exposure of the material means of painting, however, is a recurrent theme in Paolini's own images of the artist/self, like in *Hi-Fi* and *Monogramma*, both 1965 and, arguably, in the 1968 "self-portraits" in which he appropriates other artists' self-portraits, inserting them as a layer in front of his own self. For these works, see p. 113 and further.

⁵⁶ Disch, *Giulio Paolini Catalogo ragionato*, 212.



Fig. 3.2. Giulio Paolini, *Autoritratto*, 1970.
Photograph on canvas, pencil handwriting, 40 x 80 cm.

it difficult for the spectators' gazes to enter *Autoritratto*, it can also be seen to return those gazes. The juxtaposition of the two photographs of Paolini creates an illusion: it seems as if the hands that hold the inverted "autoritratto" in the work's foreground belong to the spectator. Consequently, the blank screen – which promises a self-portrait – also opens up for the portrait of the spectator who faces it. Instead of being led across the work's surface towards the artist inside – and potentially behind – the image, spectators may project their own image onto the blank screen. Whereas that screen serves to unify the two photographs of Paolini across its breadth, it also marks a schism in depth: at the work's surface, it distinguishes between the image space behind and the exterior space in front of it. Not unlike *Delfo*, *Autoritratto* presents the artist within an image space that is closed off – one that spans from one photograph of the artist and follows his gaze to the screen in front of him, where his gaze is returned to point back to the other photograph of the artist – and an image space from which the spectator's gaze is reflected/rejected at the exterior side of the work's surface.

Further examples of Arte Povera self-portraits that expose representation through a play of reflections and gazes are found within the oeuvre of Michelangelo Pistoletto, whose long-lasting engagement with self-portraiture is rooted in the painterly tradition. Pistoletto's first oil paintings, dating from the mid 1950s, are frontal views of his face, presented as an organic

shape made of countless layers of colour, and thus not recognisable as the artist himself.⁵⁷ An encounter with Francis Bacon's distorted human figures, experienced by Pistoletto as imprisoned within the paintings, allegedly altered his style: his move around 1960 was, as



Ill. 3.7. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Il Presente. Autoritratto in camicia*, 1961. Acrylic and paint on canvas, 200 x 150 cm.

Claire Gilman describes, “to empty his work of all emotional content by presenting expressionless figures in banal poses against equally arid grounds.”⁵⁸ This is seen in *Il Presente. Autoritratto in camicia* (The Present. Self-Portrait with Shirt) from 1961, in which Pistoletto painted his own reflection as it appeared in the varnished surface of his black-painted canvas (Ill. 3.7). Thus, Pistoletto addressed the “simultaneous attraction and repulsion” between his “literal presence as proposed by the mirror” and his “intellectual presence proposed by my painting” – and managed to bring these opposing poles together in a single work.⁵⁹

In connection to the series of *Il Presente* paintings, Pistoletto also describes a moment of epiphany in which he experienced the painted figure springing towards him, as if detaching itself from the background.⁶⁰ This effect is further developed in his “Quadri specchianti” (Mirror Paintings), in which photographically rendered motifs – mostly of people, and often himself – are printed on reflective metal surfaces. The artist has remarked how these figures “seemed to come forward, as if alive, in the space of the gallery”, thus marking a stark contrast with Bacon's imprisoned figures.⁶¹ The aim of Pistoletto's self-portraying images, then, is not to ‘capture’ himself within his work, nor to “double himself as a means of attaining self-knowledge” – a common motivation behind self-representation that he himself dismisses.⁶² On the contrary, he announces his project as an attempt to release the artist-as-motif from the ground on which it appears, in order to bring this motif to life in the real space of the viewer.

⁵⁷ Pistoletto's own website provides a good overview of his production and descriptions as well as images of these early works. See “The early works: research into the self-portrait”, <http://www.pistoletto.it/eng/crono02.htm> (accessed 02.02.2020).

⁵⁸ Claire Gilman, “Pistoletto's Staged Subjects”, *October*, No. 124, Spring 2008, 56.

⁵⁹ Michelangelo Pistoletto, “Famous Last Words” [1967], in *A Minus Artist* (Florence: Hopefulmonster, 1988), 18.

⁶⁰ Michelangelo Pistoletto, “Il rinascimento dell'arte” [1979], quoted in “The present” <http://www.pistoletto.it/eng/crono03.htm> (accessed 26.05.2021).

⁶¹ Michelangelo Pistoletto, “The Minus Objects”, in *A Minus Artist*, 12.

⁶² Pistoletto, “Famous Last Words”, 17.

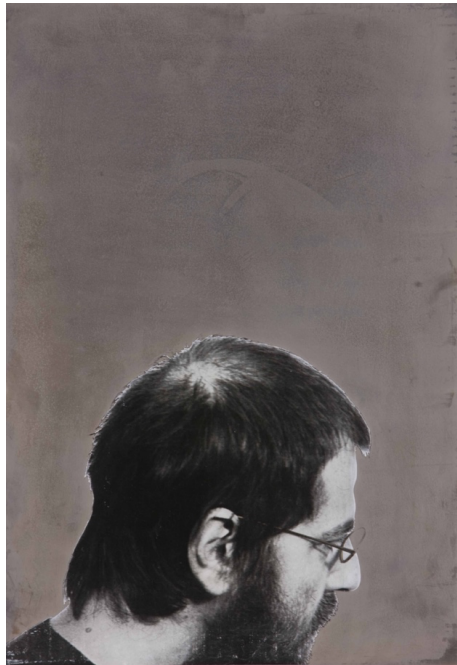
Pistoletto's desire to accentuate the presence of the represented figure/self in the gallery space can on the one hand be seen as accommodating the representational idea of mediation – of bringing the represented model to presence for current viewers. On the other hand, the figure's release from the pictorial ground into real space can be seen as a liberation from the task of representing something original behind the work: Carlos Basualdo is among those who refers to Pistoletto's mirror paintings as 'simulacra'.⁶³ If understood as such, they exemplify the "suspension of the referent" that Owens dismisses as a modernist settlement with representation. However, neither Pistoletto's oil paintings nor his mirror paintings fulfil the promise of releasing their figures from the sphere of the work. As Angela Vettese has pointed out, a characteristic feature of Pistoletto's painted self-portraits from around 1960 is that the full figures are cut at their ankles. To her, this indicates that "the self that is portrayed wants to come down from any pedestal or elevated plane; it has no intention of passing above the life of others, but rather seeks to join in – to place itself at the viewer's level."⁶⁴ I would rather argue that the abrupt cropping of the figures separates the depicted Pistoletto from the sphere of the viewer: it deprives him of a full entry and draws him back to the representational space.

A similar withholding of represented figures to representational space is also established in the mirror paintings, by virtue of the contrast between the photographed and the reflecting parts of these works. This is well illustrated in Pistoletto's self-portraits on reflective background, such as the 1969/70 *Autoritratto* and the 1973 *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli*, which are two further examples of Arte Povera self-portraits that expose the means of representation.⁶⁵ The first of these works is a modestly sized metal plate, of which the upper half is left empty, showing it as a reflecting surface, while a photographic print of the artist's head dominates the lower foreground (Fig. 3.3). As in his painted, full-figure self-portraits, Pistoletto's image is abruptly cropped, cut at the chin by the edge of the frame. In addition, the photographic image is rich in flattening effects. The contour around the artist's head is sharp, so that the technique of printing the image onto the plate is revealed, and the difference between the reflective background and the superimposed motif underlined. The perspective on the artist is from slightly behind and above. Combined with the close-up framing and the high contrast,

⁶³ Carlos Basualdo, "Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974", in *Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974*, ed. Carlos Basualdo (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2011), 9.

⁶⁴ Angela Vettese, "From the Early Paintings to the First Reflective Surfaces", in Basualdo, *Michelangelo Pistoletto*, 39.

⁶⁵ Note that the dating of the latter work is disputed. Relying on sources dating it to 1970–72 I included it in my discussions. The Archivio Pistoletto has informed me that the correct date is probably 1973, which would place it outside the timeframe of my project. Since details regarding the original photograph and the exact dating of the edition are unclear, I have chosen to keep it.



Top: Fig. 3.3. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto*, 1969/1970. Lithography and silkscreen on nickel-plated copper, 50 x 35 cm. Edition of 100 by Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, printed by Colophon Moltiplicata, Milan; Below: Fig. 3.4.1. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli*, 1973. Serigraph on steel, 100 x 70 cm. Edition of 200 by Galleria Multipli, Turin, printed by Multicenter, Milan.

this contributes to reducing the motif to pseudo-geometrical forms; a little piece of visible clothing appears as a dark triangle in the left corner, which opposes the highlighted and curved shape of the artist's ear, this curved shape is repeated in both the artist's glasses and in the blank area of the illuminated scalp, which reveals his incipient hair loss. These flattening effects underline the artist's status as form and image, and thus mark his appearance as different from the reflected appearances that will occur in the metal surface that surrounds it.⁶⁶ As Bernd Krimmel puts it, Pistoletto's mirror paintings elucidate the contrast between the specular and the photographic way of representing – namely, that “the mirror always reflects the flowing present, while the photograph captures a moment slowly sinking into the past.”⁶⁷ While the task Pistoletto assigned himself as a self-portrayer within the medium of painting was to bring his “literal presence as proposed by the mirror” and his “intellectual presence” proposed by painting together, the combination of specular and photographic presence in a work like *Autoritratto* rather demonstrates how the photographically represented artist separates from the “literal presence” of mirror appearances. In correspondence with the reality it reflects, a mirror appearance is constantly changing, whereas an appearance as motif is secluded both from reality and its reflection, locked to the moment and the medium of rendering.

This contrast is also at play in *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli* – a mirror painting in which the bearded artist is seen from the waist up in a frontal view. While such a framing corresponds with the conventions of the portrait genre, the artist's outfit is a distancing element in this work. Pistoletto wears a yellowish suede sheepskin coat with fur collar, a fluffy fur hat, and a pair of yellow (sun)glasses through which his eyes are staring straight out of the image, directly at the viewer (Fig. 3.4.1).⁶⁸ The Archivio Pistoletto assures us that Pistoletto's clothes are those he regularly wore when living in the mountain village San Sicario.⁶⁹ However, the flashy attire has been read as an ironic comment on the social realities of working as an artist: it is “a parody of the artist as celebrity”, one critic puts it.⁷⁰ Others have remarked that Pistoletto's clothing is a reference to a 1908 *Autoritratto* by Umberto Boccioni, and thus a way

⁶⁶ Admittedly, Basualdo underlines that *Autoritratto* is Pistoletto's first serigraphic mirror painting and suggests that the flattening of the motif may be an unintended effect of little experience with the technique. See Basualdo, “Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974”, 8.

⁶⁷ Bernd Krimmel, “Spiegelungen”, in *Michelangelo Pistoletto*, eds. Bernd and Elisabeth Krimmel (Darmstadt: Mathildenhöhe, 1974), n.p. My translation.

⁶⁸ Note that the shades of the glasses differ in various reproductions of the work. I have not been able to clarify why these discrepancies occur; whether the various shades were added to the works by Pistoletto, or if they were caused by reproduction techniques. Considering Fig. 3.4.2 below, however, it is clear that Pistoletto experimented with the opacity of the glasses. Given the uncertainty, I refer to the glasses as (sun)glasses and (semi-)transparent.

⁶⁹ Marco Farano, Archivio Pistoletto, private e-mail correspondence, 11.02.2022.

⁷⁰ Jonathan Jones, “Smoke and Mirrors”, *the Guardian*, 22 May 2007, see <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2007/may/22/art> (accessed 26.02.2020).

of making his self-portrait point beyond himself, towards the painterly tradition.⁷¹ However, the attire in which Pistoletto figures is also a distancing factor in that it serves to sustain the tension between literal/specular and mediated presence, as it activates the oscillation of the artist-as-motif between being attached to and liberated from the image surface. By virtue of its photographic realism and the firm gaze directed towards the viewers, the image gives Pistoletto a strong presence in the room in which it is exhibited, but the heavy fur clothing in which the artist is wrapped up prevents him from becoming familiar and ‘at home’ in the real space of a gallery or in the residencies of the private collectors to whom the serigraph were distributed. The attire thus reminds us that the Pistoletto we encounter belongs to another time and space. In this work the artist detaches himself from the mirrored background, but it is the background, rather than the figure, that communicates with the real space of the viewers. The artist himself is held back as a representation situated in a sphere between the literal space and its mirrored extension.

The separation between the artist-as-motif and the viewer is further underlined by the play of gazes that Pistoletto’s mirror paintings set in motion. The view from behind on the artist’s head in *Autoritratto* reveals more about the artist than he can see with his own eyes. Admittedly, Pistoletto may have had himself photographed in this manner to provide a more insightful image than his own two eyes can offer, in line with self-portraiture’s traditional function of truthfully representing its model and the photographic medium’s capacity to fulfil this function – as some critics comment, the photographic medium enables artists to make self-portraits without consulting the intermediary mirror image, and opens up to the possibility of making “surprising discoveries” of oneself when looking at one’s own self-portraits.⁷² However, such a motivation is at odds with Pistoletto’s own dismissal of self-portraiture as an act of “doubling to attain self-knowledge”. It is more adequate to emphasise how the rear and elevated perspective serves to present the artist in the vulnerable position of being seen, as opposed to the author-itarian position of the one who sees and represents.⁷³ The flattening

⁷¹ Paolo Fossati, *Autoritratti, Specchi, Palestre. Figure Nella Pittura Italiana Del Novecento*, paraphrased in Orazio Lovino, “81. Michelangelo Pistoletto. *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli*, 1973”, in *Lo stato dell'arte l'arte dello stato. Le acquisizioni del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo. Colmare le lacune. Ricucire la storia*, eds. M. G. Bernardini and M. Lolli Ghetti (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2015), 238.

⁷² Dawn M. Wilson, “Facing the Camera: Self-portraits of Photographers as Artists”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 2012, 62. As Wilson remarks, this capacity of photography has been exploited by artists as diverse as Francesca Woodman, in *Self-portrait at 13* (1972), Andy Warhol, in *Self-portrait (Eyes closed)* (1979) and Gavin Turk, in *Portrait of something that I will never really see* (1997). Presenting their artists from behind or with eyes closed, all of these self-portraits relate to my discussion of Arte Povera self-portraits in this section.

⁷³ The artist is also depicted from behind in Pistoletto’s works *Autoritratto con Soutzka* (1966) and *Autoritratto di schiena* (1968), as well as in other Arte Povera works like Alighiero Boetti, *Per una storia naturale della*

effects of the photograph accentuates this self-objectivising tendency, and the centring of the growing baldness – which is associated with ageing and the corresponding lack of vitality, and often more apparent to others than to the person undergoing the process – underlines Pistoletto's status as vulnerably exposed to the gazes of others.

The play with gazes in *Autoritratto* also involves the photographically rendered artist's own gaze. Pistoletto's head is seen in profile, as if turning away to study something located below and behind the image itself. His eyes are not visible to the viewer, but the glasses that frame them are. These are standard spectacles that Pistoletto may have worn on a daily basis, and whether it is right to place emphasis on their presence in the self-portrait is debatable. Nevertheless, their presence in place of the eyes draws attention to the fact that the artist is looking away rather than establishing eye contact and gazing towards something that is not accessible to our own eyes.

In terms of gazes, *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli* immediately announces itself as *Autoritratto*'s opposite. Pistoletto seems comfortable with the *en face* view; the gaze with which he confronts the viewer is self-assured and gives the impression of direct eye contact. The glasses Pistoletto wears are not only prostheses, but also embellishing attributes that bring attention to his open eyes and can facilitate the encounter between the artist and viewer. On the other hand, they insert a layer between artist and viewer – a layer that is penetrable, but nevertheless hints at the schism between the image space that the artist inhabits and the viewer's real space. This function of the glasses is taken to its full potential in a version of *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli* printed on the cardboard cover of an exhibition catalogue from 1974.⁷⁴ Here, the lenses of the *occhiali* are no longer semi-transparent, but covered with reflecting foil (Fig. 3.4.2). The foil allows viewers to see their own eyes in the artist's visage, and thus arguably to identify with Pistoletto – or, with



Fig. 3.4.2. Cover of exhibition catalogue, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt Museum, 1974.

stabilizzazione (AB) (1970), see p. 106; Emilio Prini, *Tre parenti salgono una salita, Tre aprenti scendono una discesa, Tre parenti attraversano una pianura* (1969) and Giovanni Anselmo, *Entrare nell'opera* (1971), discussed as a performative work in Chapter Four.

⁷⁴ Bernd and Elisabeth Krimmel, eds., *Michelangelo Pistoletto* (Darmstadt: Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt Museum, 1974).

the character he poses as. However, the foil also returns the gaze of the viewers, and thus dismisses any attempt at establishing contact.

While Pistoletto's mirror paintings have been described as "doors that allow the viewer to enter the work and makes communication between art and life possible again", my analyses of Pistoletto's two self-portraits indicate the opposite.⁷⁵ The viewers are brushed off: either, like in *Autoritratto*, by the artist's reluctance to meet their gaze and instead pass it on towards an empty and undefined spot in a peripheral part of the work where the reflective surface will return it. Or, as is the case in the two versions of *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli*, by a (semi-) transparent or reflecting screen between the artist's and viewers' eyes. This observation resonates with an observation made by Bernd Krimmel in connection with another mirror painting by Pistoletto – *Sacra conversazione*.⁷⁶ Krimmel registers that since the photographed subjects of this work are not facing the viewer, the latter will feel "uncomfortable, like an uninvited intruder, trying to get acquainted [...] before being overwhelmed by stifling supposition of disturbing someone illustrious."⁷⁷ When excluding the viewer by virtue of a play of gazes and mirror effects, the mirror painting in question reminds Krimmel of Velazquez's *Las Meninas* and Edouard Manet's *Bar aux folies Bergères*, another work that interested Foucault because it uses mirror effects to make viewers aware of their exteriority relative to the image space.⁷⁸ Krimmel's observation thus links my analysis of Pistoletto's works to that of Paolini's *Delfo*: whether putting the stretcher up as a physical barrier around the artist or reflecting/returning/rejecting the viewers' gazes at the works' surfaces, these self-portraits have in common that they activate the schism between the interior and the exterior of the representational space. A key difference between my own account of Pistoletto's self-portraits and Krimmel's experience of his *Sacra conversazione*, however, is that I see illustriousness parodied rather than embodied in *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli*, and the artist presented as vulnerable rather than illustrious in *Autoritratto*. In that sense, the self-portraits acknowledge Foucault's distinction between the author-itarian status of the one who *sees* and the precarious position of the *seen*, and present Pistoletto in the latter position.

⁷⁵ Marco Farano, "Michelangelo Pistoletto and Creative Collaboration", in *Entrare nell'opera: Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera*, eds. Bätzner et al. (Cologne: Walther König, 2019), 225.

⁷⁶ Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Sacra conversazione (Anselmo, Zorio, Penone)*, 1963. Silk screen on polished stainless steel, 230 x 125 cm.

⁷⁷ Krimmel, "Spiegelungen", n.p. My translation.

⁷⁸ Edouard Manet, *Bar aux folies Bergères*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 96 x 130 cm. Courtauld Gallery, London. For Foucault's discussion of the painting, see Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting*, 73 and further. See also Chapter Six, p. 311–12.

In 1970, a few years before Pistoletto exchanged the semi-transparent lenses of his *occhiali gialli* with reflective foil, Giuseppe Penone had done something similar in *Rovesciare i propri occhi* (Reversing One's Eyes) – my fifth example of an Arte Povera self-portrait that exposes the means of representation. The fulcrum of this work is a pair of contact lenses the artist had custom made, with the extraordinary feature that instead of being transparent and fulfilling the function of improving the wearer's vision, they have a mirrored surface.⁷⁹ Penone wore the lenses in public several times, and *Rovesciare i propri occhi* had a performative character when the lenses were worn in contexts in which Penone had an official role, such as at the opening of “Arte Povera: 13 Italienische Künstler” at Kunstverein München, where he was one of the exhibitors, and for a presentation of his works during the “Incontri Internazionali d'Arte” exhibition in Rome, both 1971.⁸⁰ On these occasions, the mirror surfaces would serve much the same function as Pistoletto's sunglasses do on the cover of his exhibition catalogue. Viewers approaching the artist would necessarily encounter their own eyes rather than the artist's, and thus have their own gaze returned instead of establishing eye contact.

Rovesciare i propri occhi's main form of presentation, however, is not that of a performance, but photographs documenting Penone wearing the lenses. A well-known version consists of a looping slide show comprising a title slide and five to six succeeding images (Fig. 3.5).⁸¹ Penone is initially seen from afar, standing on Via Lepetit in Garessio, a rural road flanked by trees, while each new image gradually zooms in on his face. The last images in the sequence reveal that the artist's eyes are covered by the mirrored lenses, which reflect the landscape Penone is situated in, as well as the photographer who stood opposite him when the photographs were taken. The photographic presentation of *Rovesciare i propri occhi* thus exteriorises the viewer more forcefully than the work does as a live event: rather than confirming viewers' (exterior) presence in a mirror reflection, the photographs completely omit viewers from the work, failing to reflect them. The effect of the lenses when appearing inside

⁷⁹ When it comes to the mirrored eye, Paolini's *Elegia* from 1969 is an even earlier example. This work falls outside the category of self-portraiture, however, since it consists of a mirror pupil inserted in the fragment of a plaster cast of Michelangelo's *David*. As noted by Francesco Guzzetti, Stephen Kaltenbach's *Mirrored Contacts*, 1969, is also an obvious reference. See Francesco Guzzetti, “Information 1970: alcune novità sul lavoro di Giuseppe Penone”, *L'Uomo Nero. Materiali per una storia delle arti della modernità*, Vol. 15, Nos. 14–15, 2018, 225. Guzzetti's article also gives an unprecedented overview of Penone's experiments leading up to the work with the physical lenses.

⁸⁰ Daniela Lancioni, “Giuseppe Penone's Actions: Towards a Definition”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 216. For a list of the various occasions on which Penone wore the lenses, see Daniela Lancioni, “*Rovesciare i propri occhi* (Reversing One's Eyes)”, in *Giuseppe Penone. The Inner Life of Forms*, ed. Carlos Basualdo (New York, NY: Gagosian, 2018), n.p.

⁸¹ The Archivio Giuseppe Penone presents the work as a six-slide sequence, including the title slide, whereas the Marian Goodman Gallery has a version with a total of seven slides, with an additional close-up image of the artist.



Fig. 3.5. Giuseppe Penone, *Rovesciare I propri occhi*, 1970. Sequence of 6 slides.

the photographs is similar to the mirror's effect in Velazquez' *Las Meninas*: it highlights that viewers belong to another sphere and another time than the image itself and the artist who figures within it.

A key difference between *Rovesciare i propri occhi* and *Las Meninas*, however, is that Velazquez's painting addresses the artist's double position within and outside the work, whereas Penone's work more definitively deprives the artist of the role as producer and of the exterior position at the point of view. Paolo Mussat Sartor, Paolo Pellion and Claudio Basso are responsible for the various photographic versions of *Rovesciare i propri occhi*. Penone thus makes use of a peculiar feature of the photographic medium; the option for the artist to hand the representing gaze over to another photographer or to the camera itself, and himself to figure only in the role of the observed subject. In wearing the mirrored lenses when letting his images be taken, Penone further removes himself from the role as producer. As he puts it, a central point of this work is that "[t]he image that an artist in the representative tradition perceives, memorizes, and re-transmits at a later time by way of the work is, in this case, transmitted from the work before the artist has seen it."⁸² Rather than fulfilling the traditional role of mediating the artist's own view and experience of himself, the portrait of the artist in *Rovesciare i propri occhi* offers another's view on the artist, as well as the artist's view of the world, in the sense that the lenses display what is seen from his specific point of view. This is a view, however, of which the artist himself is unaware, and to which he lays no claim.

⁸² Giuseppe Penone, *Rovesciare i propri occhi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977), quoted in Germano Celant, *Giuseppe Penone* (Milan: Electa, 1989), 58.

A last, and most intricate example of how the Arte Povera artists address the means of representation in their self-portraits is found in Giovanni Anselmo's 1971 *Lato destro* (Right Side). Admittedly, this work does not incorporate spectacles, telling gazes, or an actual or depicted mirror, but nevertheless relies on mirror effects. At first glance, the life-size colour photograph of Anselmo, which offers a close, frontal view of his face, looks like a conventional passport portrait (Fig. 3.6). However, a puzzling element in this self-portrait is the inscription that appears in the right half of the photograph, on the artist's neck, reading "lato destro", or 'right side'. What is puzzling is the relationship between the position this inscription states and the position in which it appears. For, when a person is photographed, it is his left side that appears on the image's right side – just as the left side of another person will be to your right in any personal encounter. The inscription, however, insists that what a viewer experiences as the photographic artist's right side is also the actual artist's right side. Producing this work, then, Anselmo initially wrote 'right side' on the right side of his neck (in a manner that would seem mirrored for those encountering him) and then had his photograph taken. Before the negative was developed, it was inverted, so that Anselmo's actual right side appears on the right side of the photograph, precisely as the inscription, now appearing in the correct manner, left-to-right, suggests.

The achievement of the process of double inversion – first by the camera's opposing view, then by the flipping of the negative – is that the self-portrait presents the artist as he experiences himself in the mirror, where the right side of one's face is reflected in the mirror's right side. As Anselmo himself puts it, "[i]nverting the negative I show my face *as it feels*, as it is, not *as it seems*."⁸³ Stating this, Anselmo speaks as if the intention behind his self-portrait is to capture himself in his essence, to represent his 'true' self. And, given its reversal of the camera's opposed view, *Lato destro* manages more truthfully than any ordinary photograph to present to the viewer the image that the self-portraying artist has of himself. As Jean-Christophe Ammann puts it, the reversing of the negative can be seen as "a short-cut to the self-portrait as practiced in art history (with a mirror)."⁸⁴

On the other hand, Anselmo's choice of inverting the photographic negative counteracts the representational idea of mediation, as it induces a folding over between the viewer who

⁸³ Statement by Anselmo in Andrea Villani, "Torino, 15 giugno 2006. In conversazione", in *Giovanni Anselmo*, eds. Gianfranco Maraniello and Andrea Villani (Turin: Hopefulmonster, 2007), 221, quoted in Francesco Guzzetti, "'Note sulla spettatore' per Giovanni Anselmo: *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale*", *Studi di Memofonte*, no. 21 (2018), 49. My translation.

⁸⁴ Jean-Christophe Ammann, "Giovanni Anselmo", in *Giovanni Anselmo*, eds. Jean-Christophe Ammann, Giovanni Anselmo and Margrit Suter (Basel/Eindhoven: Kunsthalle Basel/Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1979), 22.



Fig. 3.6. Giovanni Anselmo, *Lato destro*, 1971. Photograph on paper from inverted negative, 50 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 by Edizioni Multipli, Turin.

stands in front of the image and the artist within it. The artist-of-the-work does not confirm/confront the viewer as another opposite himself. Rather, Anselmo has turned around before manifesting in the work, and the rightful position of the viewer in relation to the artist-of-the-work would thus be coinciding with or placed right behind him, as if looking into his mirror image with the artist's own eyes or from just behind his shoulder. Anselmo says, "[t]he goal is to make the point of view of the spectator coincide with my own point of view",⁸⁵ and "... it is as if a person looked at me through me."⁸⁶ However, the viewer is prohibited from seeing Anselmo's self-portrait from this point of view behind the artist: this point is interior to the work itself, behind it, rather than in front, where the actual viewer is situated. Like the other works discussed in this section, *Lato destro* thus engenders the experience of being exteriorised from/by the work.

To sum up, this first category of Arte Povera self-portraits is characterised by displaying elements of representation, like the stretcher in Paolini's *Delfo*, which refer to the representing medium's materiality; optical instruments such as (sun)glasses, lenses and mirrors, and/or complex plays of gazes and reflections, which address the key premise of representation – sight.⁸⁷ The main effect of these works' exposure of the elements of representation is the attention brought to the relationship between the artist-motif and the image space within which he figures on the one hand, and the real space of the works' viewers on the other. The stretcher in Paolini's *Delfo*, the (semi-)shaded glasses in *Delfo* and *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli*, as well as the opaque lenses of Penone's *Rovesciare i propri occhi* come up as physical screens before the artists' eyes, and between them and the viewers. The ordinary spectacles that Paolini and Pistoletto wear in their respective *Autoritratto* bring attention to eyes looking in other directions, to sites where the viewers' gazes are returned by the works' (semi-)reflective surfaces. Moreover, each in their own way, Paolini's *Autoritratto* and Anselmo's *Lato destro* mirror the photographs of which they are made, and so create an internal logic that excludes the viewer – as illustrated most poignantly by the blank screen that rises in front of Paolini's self-portrait. The reflecting surfaces that surround Pistoletto in his self-portraits do not mark a

⁸⁵ Giovanni Anselmo, "Giovanni Anselmo", *DATA 2*, No. 2, 1972, 60–61.

⁸⁶ Statement by Anselmo in Villani, "Torino, 15 giugno 2006. In conversazione", 221, quoted in Guzzetti, "'Note sulla spettatore' per Giovanni Anselmo", 49. My translation.

⁸⁷ Beyond the timeframe of this study, there are further examples of self-portraits that address the eye and/or sight in related manners, such as Alighiero Boetti *Specchio cieco* (1975), a photograph in which the artist poses before a mirror with eyes closed; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto* (1975), a photomontage depicting the artist behind a mounted magnifying glass; and Emilio Prini, *Manifesto per una sua mostra (Da Goya)* (1979), an off-set print in which the artist is seen from the side holding a metal rod before his face so that the triangle at its end underlines the shape of his eye. Moreover, the topics of vision and blindness occur in some Arte Povera works, such as Boetti's *I vedenti* (1967) and Paolini's *Vedo* (1969) (see Chapter Six, p. 301 and further for the latter).

schism between image space and an exterior space as distinctively; they let the viewers' space reflect on the works' surfaces, as if the boundary between that space and the image space did not exist. But they do separate the artist's image from the communal sphere of viewer and background. Similarly, the reflective surfaces that cover the artist's eyes in the modified version of *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli* incorporate the viewers when reflecting their eyes within the work itself, while also returning their gaze at the work's surface. The same is true of *Rovesciare i propri occhi* as performative event, whereas the photographic versions of the work deny the viewer's gaze altogether. The references to the means of representation in Arte Povera's self-portraits address the border between the sphere of the work and the sphere of the viewer in a manner that is comparable to the stretcher's and the mirror's function in *Las Meninas*, and the mirrors and the doorframes' functions in Sherman's work, as Krauss describes them.

The exteriorising of the viewer in Arte Povera's self-portraits is centred on the gaze – on the return of the viewers' gaze at the work's surface and on the concealment of the portrayed artists' eyes. These self-portraits' reluctance to establish eye-contact between viewer and artist is at odds with an idea that is firmly rooted within the genre of (self-)portraiture; that of the penetrating gaze. In modernity's dualist understanding of the self, the outer body is considered a mere container for the inner self, but the face – and the eyes in particular – are given a special status in opening a passage towards that self. As Soussloff puts it, “the face was commonly held to be a window to the soul” in the beginning of the twentieth century, and she quotes Georg Simmel stating that the eye “epitomizes the achievement of the face in mirroring the soul.”⁸⁸ Consequently, specular self-scrutinising became a popular activity for modern artists who sought to represent themselves; the mirror was no longer cherished for its ability to reflect their outer characteristics, but rather for its transcendent qualities. It served as a window through which the artists, by virtue of the encounter with their own eyes, could see into their own depths.⁸⁹ The resulting self-portrait would be the mirror's extension: characteristic of modern self-portraits is a centring on the artists' head rather than their full figure, illumination of their faces, and eyes that stare straight out of the painting, so as to reactivate the artists' specular view into their own depths in the encounter between the self-portrait and its viewers.⁹⁰ The self-portrait, then, served as an *inter-face* in which the eyes of the artist-motif would meet the eyes

⁸⁸ Soussloff, *The Subject in Art*, 8; Georg Simmel, “The Aesthetic Significance of the Face” [1901], quoted in Soussloff, *The Subject in Art*, 8. See also Eleanor Nairne, “Know Thyself”, in Holm, *Self-Portrait*, 10–11, and Bia Mankell, “Självpporträtt. En bildanalytisk studie i svensk 1900-talskonst”, PhD Thesis, University of Gothenburg, 2003, 9.

⁸⁹ For references, see note 4 above.

⁹⁰ Woodall, “Every painter paints himself”, 28; Pierini, “Das malt ich nach meiner Gestalt”, 27; Altintzoglou, *Portraiture and Critical Reflections on Being*, 2, 10.

of the spectators, and give them the impression of penetrating the image so as to access the ‘real’ self behind the work.

This idea of the penetrating gaze firmly relates to the medium of painting. Specular self-scrutinising is not the premise for photography, which is generally based on a mechanical logic of representation. As already discussed, photography relieves self-portraying artists from the need to see themselves and offers them an exterior and extended view of themselves. To describe the exposure of representation in Arte Povera’s photographic self-portraits as opposing the idea of the penetrating gaze, then, may seem unwarranted. On the other hand, it is clear that when artists of the 1960s turned to ‘new media’ like photography, it was often as a reaction to the historical hegemony of painting, and a rejection of the penetrating gaze could be part of that turn. Moreover, Pistoletto’s photographic self-portraying practice developed directly out of his engagement with painting, and Paolini’s photographic self-portraits repeatedly make reference to the painterly tradition, as illustrated by the exposed canvas stretcher in *Delfo*.⁹¹ Their positions in the extension of traditional, representational painting substantiates the stance that the concealing of the artists’ eyes and the rejection of the viewers’ gazes in Arte Povera’s self-portraits signal opposition to the idea of the penetrating gaze, and to the presumption that an eye encounter with the self-portrait gives viewers access to the modelling artist behind.

In questioning the role of the artists’ eyes in mediating between an inner self and an outer appearance, as well as the ability of the viewers’ eyes to penetrate the image surface to access the model behind it, the Arte Povera self-portraits relates to points Derrida later made in *Memoirs of the Blind. The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins (Mémoires d’aveugle: L’autoportrait et autres ruines)*.⁹² Eyesight plays a central role in Derrida’s essay on the self-portrait as *ruin* – that is as a residue that exists and is valued in its own right rather than dependent on its origin, and where the rendered figure or face “sees its visibility being eaten away; it loses its integrity without disintegrating.” Derrida notes that the eyes are “the only part of the face at once seeable” and therefore recalls the notion that the eyes can serve as a transition point leading through the surface on which they appear – whether a mirror or a self-portrait – towards the self

⁹¹ Reference to the painterly tradition is also found in Paolini’s two *Autoritratto* from 1968, in which historical self-portraits within the medium of painting are reproduced and presented as Paolini’s own. I discuss these works in the section below, p. 113 and further.

⁹² Jacques Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Chicago, IL/London: University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1990]). The book was published to accompany the exhibition “Mémoires d’aveugle” organised by Derrida at the Louvre, Paris, in 1990. Note that Derrida’s book does not primarily discuss self-portraiture in a conventional sense; it also considers drawn portraits of blind men as self-portraits, because Derrida sees a correspondence between the blind man’s hands’ fumbling in thin air, and the draftsman’s way of working with the hands on the blank paper, and in the way both the blind man and the draftsman must rely on an internal(ised) impression of the world.

behind. However, the works Derrida discusses in *Memoirs of the Blind* are drawings of blind men, as well as self-portraits of artists who are asleep, looking away, occupied by the canvas on which they are working, or wearing glasses, whose function, Derrida notes, is to supplement eyes that are malfunctioning.⁹³ The works he discusses all underplay the eyes' seeing function, and underline instead their corporeal nature and their status as parts of the body surface. In Derrida's account, the closed, inaccessible and malfunctioning eyes of the depicted persons serve to enclose them within their own bodies and close them off from the outside world.

In representing the limits of sight and eyes that abstain from the act of seeing, Derrida argues that the works he discusses point to the true function of the eyes in the "anthropological discourse" he deals with in his essay, namely "to have imploration rather than vision in sight, to address prayer, love, joy, or sadness rather than a look or gaze."⁹⁴ The illustrations of biblical and apocryphal stories of blind men analysed in *Memoirs of the Blind* all point to the same theme; how the dysfunctional eye is considered a means for seeing the spiritual light within.⁹⁵ In the essay, the representation of optical aids and of eyes that permanently or temporarily fail to see and fulfil the promise of eye contact comes to represent a break with the idea of art as mimetic representation; it implies that artists find inspiration within themselves rather than in the external world. In that sense, the rejection of the penetrating gaze also entails a rejection of the idea that a motif answers to a worldly model.

On the other hand, Derrida's emphasis on imploration awards the artist a special status as the knower and mediator of a more profound truth; like the blind men in religious stories, artists become witnesses of the spiritual and visionaries who may open others' eyes.⁹⁶ By dismissing eye contact, Arte Povera self-portraits can be seen to promote the same idea of the artist as witness and visionary. Certain critics advocate this stance, like when Penone's blocking of eye sight in *Rovesciare i propri occhi* is described as an "investigation into self-discovery" and a "journey into himself".⁹⁷ However, when using the mechanical technique of photography to present themselves, and when activating mirror reflections in their self-portraits, Arte Povera artists disclaim this role of mediating an inner, as opposed to a worldly, truth. This is precisely what Penone stresses when stating that *Rovesciare i propri occhi* produces images that the artist

⁹³ Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 65–73 for the quotes and points in this paragraph.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁹⁵ Derrida emphasises that blindness in these stories is often a punishment to the ones who have closed their eyes to God and that it has the function of opening their eyes to the spiritual light within.

⁹⁶ According to Derrida, the blind in the religious and apocryphal stories becomes a witness of the spiritual and thus also a visionary who may open the eyes of others, either because the state of being blind allows him to see the inner light, or because he has his sight restored by a sending from God.

⁹⁷ Bernhard Mendes Bürgi, ed. *Arte Povera: The Great awakening* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012), 100.

himself has not seen. Here, Penone distances himself from the idea that artistic creativity is based in the artist's depths, and from the idea of his self-portrait as a form of introspection; the self-portrait he offers to the viewer is absolutely separated from the artist's inner self.

Derrida also points out that the lack of sight affects one's status in the eyes of others. When the other meets our gaze – whether in an artwork or in real life – we tend to forget that the eyes are part of the body surface that encloses the presumed inner self. As Derrida puts it, “we are all the more blind to the eye of the other the more the other shows themselves capable of sight, the more we can exchange a look or gaze with them.” But when the other is incapable of looking back, like the blind men in the religious drawings he discusses, he is presented in his nakedness and becomes an object for our gaze. Thus, we can “stare at a blind man, and right up to the point of indecency”, and grasp him in his helplessness, as underlined by the drawings that depict the blind men stumbling, with hands groping in the air before them and eyes turned upwards towards the light, exposed to the eyes of others. Derrida finds that the self-portraits with optical aids serve the same objectifying function. Wearing glasses to sharpen his sight, the depicted artist's “face does not show itself naked, especially not that; and this, of course, unmasks nakedness itself.”⁹⁸

The denial of eye contact in Arte Povera self-portraits similarly underlines the artist-motif's status as objectified and exposed. When hidden behind shaded glasses or looking a(nother)way, the artists do not establish as subjects in front of the viewer. Rather, viewers are forced to see the eyes as part of the overall body, and the impenetrable materiality of the body itself. The artists are presented as closed entities, as objects for the exterior eyes of camera and viewers to look *at* rather than *into*. By playing with and making references to the optics of representation, Arte Povera self-portraits deny their artists the role of the seer/representer that concerned Foucault in his analysis of *Las Meninas*, in favour of revealing themselves as objects to be seen.⁹⁹ Thus, the artists are put in an exposed position, as opposed to the author-itarian position behind the work. At this point, Arte Povera works are arguably more consistent than Cindy Sherman's. As Krauss points out, Sherman employs a series of means to mark the ruptures between motif, model and viewer and to underline the motif's status as mere representation. Sherman's photographs, however, often maintain the eye encounter, which

⁹⁸ Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 106 and 72 for the quotes in this paragraph.

⁹⁹ Comparable strategies are pointed out by Amelia Jones, who argues that photographic artists working with self-imagery post 1960s reject the opposition between seeing subject and object seen by activating the screen and presenting themselves as “potentially trapped by an external gaze”. See Jones, *Self/Image*, 10–11.

opens a passageway from viewer through motif to the model behind, and for the viewers' recognition of that model as a subject.

In presenting the artists as objects seen, separated from the sphere of the present in front of the works and the sphere of absent presences behind the works, it may seem as if the artists who appear in Arte Povera self-portraits are captured in the "vast cage" of the canvas/work, as Foucault finds the represented figures in *Las Meninas* to be. Rather than being interfaces between the two spheres of reality past and present, however, Arte Povera self-portraits open up as a voluminous spaces around the depicted artists. This is seen in *Delfo*, where the stretcher before the artist's image echoes the one behind him. The artist is thus captured within the work, but since the stretcher behind him is not visible, the space occupied by the artist has an undefined depth, which can be understood to indicate freedom and flexibility. Volume is also an aspect of Paolini's *Autoritratto* and Anselmo's *Lato destro*: in the first case, a spatial relation is established between the photographs of which the work is composed; in the latter case, an imaginary space opens up between the photograph and its inverted negative. In Pistoletto's *Autoritratto*, the image's flattening effects makes the artist appear smeared to the work's surface, but since he stares into a void behind him, a surrounding space inaccessible to viewers is also indicated in this work. Moreover, Pistoletto's mirror paintings activate a spatial tension by virtue of the illusion that the artist's image separates from the background and springs into the viewers' space, but the contrast between photographic image and reflecting background calls the artist back to the static image sphere. However, he is not locked within the work in the way Pistoletto finds Bacon's figures to be; he oscillates between the states of being fastened and moving in free space. Finally, the work's volume is underlined in Penone's *Rovesciare i propri occhi* in the sense that the performative version of the work can be seen to coincide with Penone's own body. What is more, in the slide-photographs, the depth of the image space is marked by the strong perspectival effect of the track that runs behind the artist. The track is also reflected in the artist's lenses, and so indicates a comparable distance between him and the interior side of the work's surface. Thus, whereas self-portraits in the representational tradition establish relationships between artist, work and viewer in depth, the Arte Povera self-portraits that expose the means of representation deny such relations, focusing instead on the schisms between the respective spheres and underlining the depth of the work itself. In so doing, they present the work not as a representational surface or space to which motifs are attached for the purpose of mediation, but as a space for the motif – the figure of the artist – to inhabit.

Fragmenting the (Image of the) Self

Another group of Arte Povera *autoritratti* – here exemplified by a number of works by Giulio Paolini and Alighiero Boetti – are characterised by the way they exploit the photographic medium’s possibilities for appropriation, montage, reproduction and serialisation to multiply the artist’s image. By extension, they also question the genre’s author-ising function.

Boetti used the medium-specific possibilities of photography to produce self-portraits that engage with the artist’s duality or multi-sidedness years before he thematised these aspects through the strategy of split authorship and the division of his own signature into ‘Alighiero e Boetti’.¹⁰⁰ For his solo exhibition “Shaman/Showman” at Galleria de Nieubourg in Milan in spring 1968, he made a photomontage that functioned as the exhibition’s advertising poster. Here, Boetti appropriates an illustration from Éliphas Lévi’s 1856 book *Histoire de la Magie* (The History of Magic), which depicts Adam Kadmon, the primordial man in the Kabbalistic *Zohar*.¹⁰¹ As pointed out in Lévi’s discussion, Adam is created in God’s image and has a dual nature, spiritual as well as carnal.¹⁰² The illustration in his book reflects this two-sidedness by depicting two male figures: one is highlighted and facing us, while the other is his opposite – a black silhouette, seen from behind and turned upside down (Ill 3.8).¹⁰³ The two figures intersect at the centre, with a shared loincloth covering their hips. Around this central point, their two bodies form a symmetrical shape.



Ill. 3.8. ‘Le grand symbole kabbalistique du Sohar’, illustration from Eliphas Lévi, *Histoire de la Magie*, 1856.

¹⁰⁰ For Boetti’s practice of split authorship and his name division, see Chapter Two, p. 49. Boetti also worked with duality more generally, like in the works *Ping Pong* (1966), *Strumento musicale* (1970) and his various performances writing simultaneously with right and left hand. Boetti made self-portraits throughout his career, but this thesis only deals with examples from the time frame 1965–72. Interesting examples exceeding this period are *Guatemala* (1974), *Specchio Cieco* (1975) and the full-size bronze sculpture *Autoritratto* (1993).

¹⁰¹ Éliphas Lévi, *The History of Magic: Including a Clear and Precise Exposition of Its Procedure, Its Rites and Its Mysteries* [1856/1860] (London: Rider, 1982), 63. According to his former wife, Boetti bought the book at a second-hand bookstore in Paris. See Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, *Alighiero e Boetti: Shaman/Showman* (Cologne: Walther König, 2003), 54.

¹⁰² Lévi, *The History of Magic*, 64.

¹⁰³ The illustration can also be understood to depict Adam Kadmon and what in other sources is described as his counterpart, Satan. However, Lévi makes no point of this near the page on which the image appears, and I have therefore chosen to see the illustration as depicting the dual nature of Adam, which Lévi discusses.



Fig. 3.7. Alighiero Boetti, *Shaman/Showman*, 1968. Lithography, 70 x 50 cm. Edition of 35.

In Boetti's poster, the only alteration made to the appropriated illustration is the superimposing of his own face onto Adam's (Fig. 3.7). Paola Morsiani finds that Boetti thus merges "the shaman – a spiritual reference to a visionary world drawn from esoteric, premodern, and non-Western thought" with "the figure of the artist himself and his intellectual grasping of postwar contemporary life and its new dynamics."¹⁰⁴ She finds this juxtaposition to illustrate the possibilities of the artist in a society in which culture and mass-production go hand in hand, and presents a more positive reading of the *Shaman/Showman*-figuration than Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, who holds that "the play of words was a bitter, pointed protest." According to Sauzeau Boetti, her former husband's poster and the title of his exhibition indicated that the artist is nothing but a showman in modern society, "a degraded version of a jester", echoing the vocabulary and the oppositional aspects of Celant's early characterisation of Arte Povera. "At best", she continues, the artist "can aspire to the double role of shaman and showman", which is what she finds Boetti to do in his duplication act.¹⁰⁵

Whether seen as a critique or an embracing of the possibilities of a new relationship between high and popular or mass-produced culture, both Morsiani and Sauzeau Boetti describe *Shaman/Showman* as part of Boetti's critical investigations of the role of the artist. In my view, however, Boetti's questioning of author-ity is not fully developed in this work. This is not because he inscribes his own face on that of Adam, the primordial man who serves as an image of divine power, and thus symbolically elevates himself. Rather, it is because the *Shaman/Showman* poster suggests a composite being – two aspects or natures combined in one form, illustrated by the symmetrical shape formed by the two 'Boettis-as-Adam', and by the loincloth that unites them. The image of Boetti as Adam does not entail the more fundamental split of one being into separate entities that is later opened up by the adding of an 'e' (and) between Boetti's forename and surname, and that characterises his further engagement with self-representation.

Boetti's *Gemelli* (Twins), a photomontage that was printed in postcard format and sent to 50 of the artist's acquaintances some months later, marks a more radical break with the idea of a unique and unified self (Fig. 3.8). The motif on the postcard's front shows two almost identical young men holding hands as they stand in the Corso Peschiera in Turin, flanked by

¹⁰⁴ Paola Morsiani, "Alighiero e Boetti: Halving to Double", in *When 1 is 2: The Art of Alighiero e Boetti*, ed. Polly Koch (Houston, TX: Contemporary Arts Museum, 2002), 16.

¹⁰⁵ Sauzeau Boetti, *Alighiero e Boetti: Shaman/Showman*, 55 for all quotes in this paragraph. For Celant's comments on the artist as a "jester", see Chapter Two, p. 62.



Fig. 3.8. Alighiero Boetti, *Gemelli*, 1968. Photomontage, 15 x 10 cm. Edition of 50.

trees bathed in sunlight.¹⁰⁶ The dandyish clothes are the same on both figures, a dark attire with a long blazer over a white shirt with the top button open, and what seems to be worn-out leather shoes (only one visible on each man) with coarse laces. The main differences between the two figures are found in their hairstyles, their facial expressions and their hand grips: the curls of the figure to the left curve elegantly around his face, while the right figure's hair is less styled. Furthermore, the latter smiles reluctantly and has the leading hand, while his 'twin', looking more serious or nervous, is the one being lead. Still, both men are unmistakably Boetti himself.

Sauzeau Boetti describes the twins as a new implementation of the 'double role' she found Boetti to stage in *Shaman/Showman*.¹⁰⁷ However, to indicate that Boetti's duplication is expressing the "doublesidedness" of his own personality or of artists in general, is to read his work in representational terms; it is to seek correspondence between the two artists who appear as motifs within the work and the layered or multifaceted personality of the artist-model. Such a reading is admittedly allowed by the *Shaman/Showman* poster, in which Boetti presents himself as two contrasting figures contained within one form, but not as easily so by *Gemelli*, which presents Boetti as two separate figures. This act of doubling, which resonates with Boetti's pun of splitting his signature into two names, puts far more pressure on the idea of the self-portrait as a representation of the model it resembles. While an image displaying the two natures or layers of the artist as shaman and showman traces back to a single, if complex, individual, the image of the duplicated artist causes distress when it comes to establishing identity between the image and its model(s). The resemblance between the two images of Boetti within *Gemelli* suggests on the one hand that the two figures stem from the same real-life model. In which case one accepts a dissymmetry between the single model and its dual representations, which problematises the idea of transparency between a real/represented and a representing realm. Alternatively, the double self-portrait implies two referents, two separate artist-models to which each of the artist-images could refer transparently. Such an implication, however, allows the representation to dictate the world it represents, in direct opposition to the priority of the represented that underpins representational thinking. Rather than reflecting the two-sidedness of the artist's personality, Boetti's self-portraits are characterised by the way they play with the duplication of his image in order to unsettle the structures of representational thinking and the ideal of the singular origin in precisely this manner.

¹⁰⁶ According to a catalogue entry by Nike Bätzner, the photomontage is composed of two separate photographs taken of Boetti on each side of the wide street and juxtaposed so that the artist seems to be standing in a narrow area flanked by trees. See Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 385.

¹⁰⁷ Sauzeau Boetti, *Alighiero e Boetti: Shaman/Showman*, 58.



Fig. 3.9. Alighiero Boetti, *Per una storia naturale della stabilizzazione (AB)*, 1970.
8 Polaroid photographs, 9 x 87 cm.

The claim that Boetti's self-portraits work to destabilise the idea of a singular self as the modelling/producing origin behind artworks, rather than merely reflect the dual character of Boetti or of artists in general, is supported by a number of self-portraits in which Boetti's image is not simply divided or doubled, but multiplied several times.¹⁰⁸ Among these are *Per una storia naturale della stabilizzazione (AB)* (Towards a Natural History of Stabilisation [AB]) from 1970, a series of Polaroid photographs of the artist's head (Fig. 3.9). Boetti has taken the first photograph of the series by simply raising his arms above his head while pointing the camera's viewfinder downwards, so that the resulting image displays his hair and shoulders.¹⁰⁹ The Polaroid is then attached to the wall and photographed, before the new polaroid is hung and photographed, and so on, until the work comprises eight photographs, mounted beside each other along a horizontal axis. In this series, there is an indexical bond between the very first photograph and the artist it depicts, while the succeeding photographs relate not to the artist, but to the previous images of him. Frame by frame, the image is led further away from the artist-model – a movement also illustrated as the size of the first image of the artist decreases each time a new photographic layer is added to the series. The artist's part of the work is thus gradually minimised in favour of the image of the image itself.

Other examples of self-portraits in which Boetti's image is multiplied are found among those he made with the help of a Xerox machine, such as *Autoritratto* (Self-portrait) from 1969. This work consists of twelve sheets of vertically oriented paper, on which parts of Boetti's photocopied face are discernible (Figs. 3.10.1–3.10.2). In front of the partly visible faces appears Boetti's hand, which spells out the twelve-letter word *a-u-t-o-r-i-t-r-a-t-t-o* (s-e-l-f-p-o-r-t-r-a-i-t) in sign language across the same number of pages. *Autoritratto* thus relate doubly

¹⁰⁸ At this point I am at odds with Bettina Della Casa, who finds that the double is a basic category for Boetti, while multiplication, by contrast, is an engagement of Boetti's colleague Salvo. Bettina Della Casa, "Boetti and Salvo: 'Living Working Playing'", in *Boetti/Salvo: Vivere lavorando giocando/Living Working Playing*, ed. Bettina Della Casa (Bellinzona: Casagrande, 2017), 316.

¹⁰⁹ Note that this work thus also exemplifies how Arte Povera self-portraits tend to dismiss eye contact, as discussed in the previous section. It also exposes the means of representation when depicting the photographic image itself. I present it in this section, however, because it is a good example of the strategy of self-fragmentation.

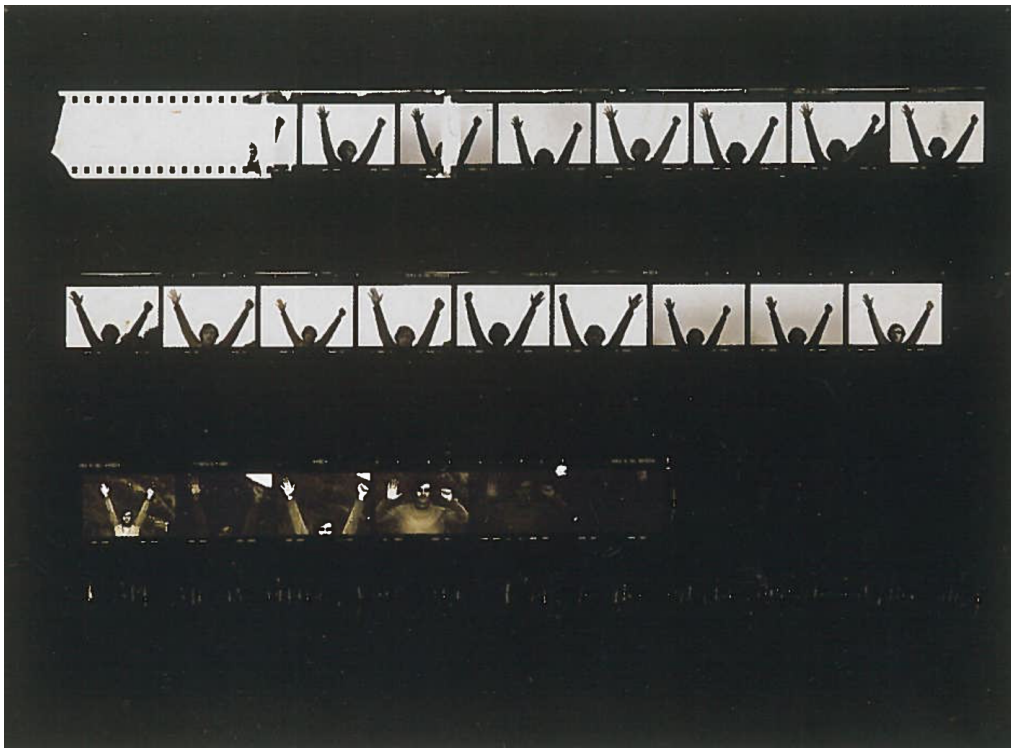
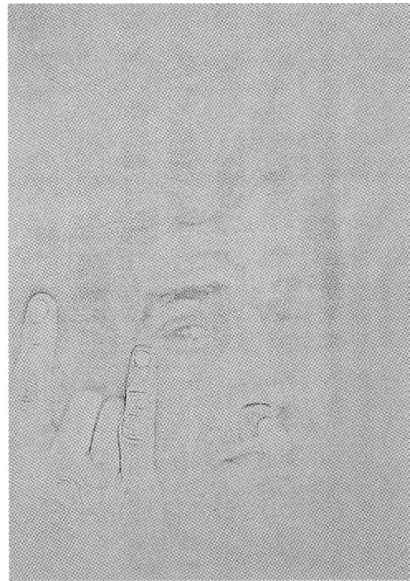
to the genre of self-portraiture: through the recognisable images of the artist, and through the spelling that announces the work's status as a self-portrait.

The spelling of the word '*autoritratto*' across the work's pages underlines that the self-portrait is not the single image but the series as such. In the sequence of self-portrait images, Boetti changes slightly, and therefore *Autoritratto* indicates a key aspect of its model: he is subject to change, and as manifold as the potential images of him are numerous. If the self-portrait was to live up to the genre's promises of representing the model, it would have comprised all the aspects that lie in-between the artist's visible appearances. *Autoritratto* thus exposes the contradictions on which self-portraiture is based, and the limits of the genre. What the work suggests is that a disparaged self constellates only by virtue of its portrait, like in this case, in which the self is held together and structured by the spelled out '*a-u-t-o-r-i-t-r-a-t-t-o*'.

A similar point is made in Boetti's 1969 *I AM AN IN-DIVIDE-YOU-ALL*. The work is a photographic contact sheet that presents three strips of film above each other. The strips show the unexposed and perforated end of the photographic film itself, followed by over twenty small frames containing the artist's image (Fig. 3.11). While there are certain differences between the images – most notably, those of the two upper strips present Boetti against a light sky, whereas the lower ones capture him with a dark background against which he is gradually harder to discern – the artist's pose is largely the same in all of them: an expressionless Boetti is seen chest up with both of his arms raised in the air, one hand fully open and the other a closed fist.

The two distinctive hand gestures are often taken to express the duality that is commonly associated with Boetti's self-presentations. Giovan Battista Salerno, for example, states about Boetti's posture that "[t]he right hand has the fingers open like the rays of the sun; it is the hand that gives and that is given when you shake hands. The left hand is a closed fist, it closes on obscurity; it is the hand that contains and retains", thus referencing Boetti's own statements about his name division as indicating an official side of himself and a less accessible, private side.¹¹⁰ However, the inscription Boetti has written below the image strips – "I AM AN IN-DIVIDE-YOU-ALL I'M A NO UN (I.E., NUN, NO-UN, NO ONE)" – implies further dissolvment. The inscription, which is also the source of the work's title, is itself a case of dissemination: Boetti probably borrowed the phrase from Norman O. Brown's 1966 *Love's*

¹¹⁰ Giovan Battista Salerno, "Manuale di conoscenza", in *Alighiero e Boetti: Insicuro Incurante*, ed. Franz Kaiser (Villeurbanne: Le nouveau Musée, 1986), 84, translated and quoted in Sauzeau Boetti, *Alighiero e Boetti: Shaman/Showman*, 47.



Above, left: Fig. 3.10.1. Alighiero Boetti, *Autoritratto*, 1969. Photocopy on Xerox paper, 12 elements of 32 x 20.5 cm; Above, right: Fig. 3.10.2. Alighiero Boetti, *Autoritratto*, 1969 (detail); Below: Fig. 3.11. Alighiero Boetti, *I AM AN IN-DIVIDE-YOU-ALL*, 1969. Photographic contact sheet, graphic inscription, 30 x 40 cm.

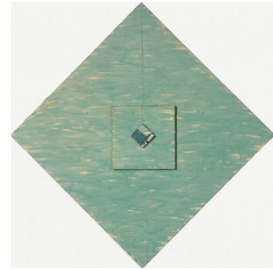
Body, a book he also cited on other occasions.¹¹¹ Brown, in turn, has paraphrased it from psychiatrist R.D. Laing's 1959 *The Divided Self: An existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, in which it is presented, in turn, as a statement by Laing's schizophrenic patient Julie, right after she exclaims "I am thousands".¹¹² Boetti's "in-divide-you-all" suggests that the depicted self is constantly shifting, even between all the images of the current photo session, and thus escaping both the single image and the series. The exposure of the film strip as part of the work both underlines the development of the self over time, and the technology that allows the self to be captured as a still image. Just like the hand-spelled word 'a-u-t-o-r-i-t-r-a-t-t-o' structures the composite self and holds it together in *Autoritratto*, the film strip in *I AM AN IN-DIVIDE-YOU-ALL* points at the work itself as the site in which the continuous self can take a coherent form.

A comparable multiplication of the self happens across a number of Giulio Paolini's self-portraits. Paolini's first photographic work, *1421965* from 1965, depicts the artist in his studio, carrying a primed canvas with a width corresponding with his arm span (Fig. 3.12). Paolini is seen from behind, and his status as subjected to the gaze of others is underlined by the silhouette of the photographer Franco Ascheri in the image's left foreground. The photographer's presence makes viewers aware of the fact that there is another camera behind him, which shot *1421965* with a self-timer. It thus announces that there are several layers of mediation between the modelling artist and the artist who appears as the motif of Paolini's work.¹¹³ Moreover, three of Paolini's works from the following year – *Capitemi!* (Understand Me!), *Atlante* (Atlas) and *Anna-logia* (Anna-logy) – incorporate the image of the artist from *1421965*, either exposing it in negative, tilting it, covering it with oil paint, or re-photographing the artist holding *1421965* (Figs. 3.13–3.15). A similar re-presentation of the self-portrait takes place between Paolini's 1965 work *Diaframma 8* (Aperture 8) and *D867*, made two years later. The first of these black and white photographs depicts the artist, barely recognisable due to the blurring effect of a slow shutter, walking across Turin's Via Lagrange with a canvas in his hand

¹¹¹ Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990 [1966]), 160. In *Besprechungsvortrag* at Aktionsraum 1, Munich, in 1970, Boetti read aloud from *Love's Body*. Brown's writing has also been described as a source for Boetti's idea of the fragmented self, see Carlotta Sylos Calò, "Identità e 'alterità' negli Autoritratti di Alighiero Boetti", paper at L'VIII Ecole de Printemps Firenze, May 2010, 6, https://www.academia.edu/7263243/IDENTITA_E_ALTERITA_Negli_AUTORITRATTI_DI_ALIGHIERO_BOETTI?auto=download (accessed 14.09.2021).

¹¹² R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965 [1959]). Note that Massimiliano Gioni does not trace this line of references, claiming that the phrase stems from James Joyce, based on an analogy Brown makes in *Love's Body*. See Massimiliano Gioni, "Fiona Tan. 'San Sebastian'. Video Installation", *Flash Art*, Vol. 34, No. 221, November–December 2001, 75.

¹¹³ Given the rear view onto the artist, and the inclusion of the photographer within the photograph, which hints to the act of seeing and to the photographic act, this work could also have been discussed in the previous section, "Exposing Representation – Objectifying Oneself".



Top left: Fig. 3.12. Giulio Paolini, *1421965*, 1965. Photograph mounted on panel 200 x 150 cm; Top right: Fig. 3.13. Giulio Paolini, *Capitemi!*, 1966. Photo emulsion on canvas, polyethylene, stretcher, primed canvas, 6 elements of 40 x 40 cm; Top right centre: Fig. 3.14. Giulio Paolini, *Atlante*, 1966. Oil on photographic print on canvas, oil on canvas, nylon monofilament, 3 elements, 150 x 150 cm, 50 x 50 cm, 13.5 x 13.5 cm; Top right bottom: Fig. 3.15. Giulio Paolini, *Anna-logia*, 1966. Primed canvases, photo emulsion, nylon monofilament, 3 elements, 150 x 150 cm, 90 x 90 cm, 30 x 30 cm; Bottom left: Fig. 3.16. Giulio Paolini, *Diaframma 8*, 1965. Photo emulsion on canvas, 80 x 90 cm; Bottom right: Fig. 3.17. Giulio Paolini, *D867*, 1967. Photo emulsion on canvas, 80 x 90 cm.

(Fig. 3.16). In the second photograph, the artist is again seen walking in the cityscape – now in Corso Re Umberto – carrying *Diaframma 8*. The artist thus has a second appearance inside *D867* (Fig. 3.17). Like in Boetti's *Per una storia naturale della stabilizzazione (AB), 1421965* and *Diaframma 8* breed new photographs of the artist that are further removed from the original referent.¹¹⁴ The difference is that the artist's dispersion in Paolini's case happens *across* works rather than within a single work.¹¹⁵

Another self-portrait by Paolini, which is not photographic but interesting in this context because it involves appropriation and also indicates the artist's dissolution across his works, is *Autoritratto col busto di eraclito e altre opere* (Self-Portrait with Bust of Heraclitus and Other Works) from 1971–72. The central motif of this approximately life-sized pencil drawing on canvas is a well-dressed man. Paolini has copied this figure from a section in Antonio Sandre's 1954 publication *Il costume nei tempi* devoted to 1920s fashion, but altered the original by changing the jacket into a tailcoat and by replacing the figure's face with his own.¹¹⁶ He is easily recognisable by his half-length hair and characteristic round glasses (Fig. 3.18).

The drawn artist is inscribed in a white-coated area of the otherwise unprimed canvas, with twelve rectangular shapes outlined inside it. Given the title, these shapes are taken to represent a selection of Paolini's own works – among them a lost 1963 work, on the back of which a picture of a bust of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus was attached.¹¹⁷ However, because the rectangles surrounding Paolini are white and undefined, they can refer to any of his works, including as yet unrealised ones. Based on the fleeting reference of the blank squares, the potentiality they invoke, and on the nod to Heraclitus in Paolini's title, Celant suggests that the self-portrait demonstrates “the Heraclitian principle of the incessant becomingness of things”, revoking the philosopher's idea that everything flows and constantly changes.¹¹⁸

The only seemingly stable factor in Paolini's self-portrait is the artist himself, who stands firmly among his products. Paolini's dark-shaded full figure stretches across the motif's

¹¹⁴ A similar play with the artist's image is also found between Paolini's *1/25* from 1965 and *1/25/71* from 1965/1971, as the latter work combines different exposures from the negative of the first photograph. See Disch, *Giulio Paolini Catalogo ragionato*, 110 and 238.

¹¹⁵ *Académie 3* from 1965 is an example of a work in which a relation between several photographic images of the artist is staged within a single work, as the artist here appears in a double exposure. See Disch, *Giulio Paolini Catalogo ragionato*, 112. So is Paolini's *Autoritratto*, discussed on pp. 82–83.

¹¹⁶ Antonio Sandre, *Il costume nei tempi* (Turin: Scuola Taglio Moderno, 1954), 268. I have not consulted the book, but since the section from which this figure is taken is “Da ‘Minister's Gazette of Fashion' 1925–30”, it is likely that the original source is *Minister's Gazette of Fashion*. I read about the source image in Maddalena Disch, ed. *Giulio Paolini, Catalogo Ragionato, online version*, <https://www.fondazionepaolini.it/eng/artwork/GPO-0234?searchid=e1a8a2c248f5f&i=0> (accessed 14.02.2022).

¹¹⁷ For this work, which is lost and lacks a known exhibition history and title, see Disch, *Giulio Paolini Catalogo ragionato*, 69.

¹¹⁸ Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 109.



Fig. 3.18. Giulio Paolini, *Autoritratto col busto di eraclito e altre opere*, 1971–72. Tempera, pencil and coloured pencil on unprimed canvas, 200 x 300 cm.

centre from the lower to the upper edge, dividing the pale, horizontally oriented canvas vertically. Despite filling less than one fifth of the frame, the artist thus rises monumentally within the work. The *en face* view and the captivating gaze underline his importance, as does his formal attire; this is a ceremonial outfit – a penguin-tailed smoking jacket with white ribbon and gloves – which presents Paolini in the role of the conductor, meticulously adjusting his gloves before lifting his arms to wake the works from their current, compliant positions and order them to act according to his will. Like traditional painters posing as *gentiluomi* rather than artisans to force identification with the intellectual and economic elite of their time and so enhance the status of their craft, Paolini can be taken to use his self-portrait to manifest his own status as artist.¹¹⁹

However, Celant notes a peculiar feature in Paolini’s work that contradicts its authorising function: the elevated vanishing point of the composition, “placed beyond and above the

¹¹⁹ As Edward Lucie-Smith has noted, the seventeenth-century artist was “expected to commemorate his own appearance, as part of his claim to be a member of the professional class, rather than an artisan.” To emphasise the intellectual labour involved in picture making at the expense of manual labour, artists would pose as a *gentiluomo* or “man of the world” with fine clothing and aristocratic attributes in sober surroundings, rather than with craftsman’s tools in a workshop or studio. See Lucie-Smith, “The self-portrait – a background”, 14.

picture”. On this basis, he remarks that

the self-portrait is no longer determined from the point of view of the author or of the artefact or of the spectator but by a focal point which lies outside them and inside the work – in such a way that, given its position, the author, the artefact, and the spectators can themselves all move in perspective.¹²⁰

For Celant, the positioning of the vanishing point right above the depicted artist’s head marks his subordination to the composition. Moreover, the depicted artist’s priority relative to the works that surround him is questioned by the fact that the central part of the self-portrait, Paolini’s face/head, blend almost inseparably with the vibrant field on which his works emerge. They are both part of this ‘Heraclitian river’, where “[a]ll entities move and nothing remains still,”¹²¹ In this self-portrait, Paolini presents (his) identity as floating, dissolving himself in an overarching and over-individual field of being/becoming. The artist is presented as someone who constantly becomes anew with and from his works, rather than as a stable source behind them. Arguably, the title’s reference to Heraclitus – a thinker who is known to us only through fragments of his work – underlines this notion of identity and of the creative subject’s relation to his products.

Yet other Paolini self-portraits present the artist as embedded or entangled; not in relation to his own works, but to the artistic milieu surrounding him and the tradition of which he is part. Paolini’s attachment to this larger context is, for instance, thematised in the series of appropriated works he made in the late 1960s by replicating canonised artworks, some of which are self-portraits.¹²² One example is *Autoritratto* from 1968, a photographic reproduction on canvas of Nicolas Poussin’s 1650 *Autoportrait*. The original work shows the middle-aged Poussin, at the time a highly esteemed artist and resident of Rome, in a dark gown in front of several framed and stacked paintings (Ill. 3.9.). He is seen from the waist up and depicted at an angle, but with his solemn face turned directly towards the viewer. His right hand, with a

¹²⁰ Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 108.

¹²¹ Heraclitus paraphrased by Plato. See Plato, *Cratylus*, 401d, Perseus Digital Library, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0172%3Atext%3DCrat.%3Asectio%3D401d> (accessed 07.01.2020).

¹²² The re-presentation and re-working of works from the art historical canon is recurrent in Paolini’s oeuvre. The best-known examples are his 1975–76 sculptures *Mimesi*, each juxtaposing two identical duplicates of Antique and Classicist sculpture, like Praxiteles’s *Hermes*, the Medici *Venus* or Bertel Thorvaldsen’s *Hebe*. Among examples using photographic techniques within the time frame of this study it is worth mentioning *Saffo* (1968), *L’ultimo quadro di Diego Velazquez* (1968) and *Lo studio* (1968). Paolini also repeatedly ‘plagiarises’ his own works, notably in *Un Quadro* (1970). For a discussion of this practice, see Ilaria Splendorini, “Apocryphie, tautologie et vertige de la multiplication. *Se una notte d’inverno un viaggiatore* et l’œuvre de Giulio Paolini”, *Italies*, No 16, 2012. *Autoritratto* from 1969 is another example of a self-portrait in which Paolini does not depict himself, but another person – an elderly man with beard and turban. This time, however, the source of the work is not drawn from the canon of art history, but from a popular magazine.

substantial ring placed on the outward-facing little finger, is given a prominent place in the painting's picture plane, holding on to a sketchbook or portfolio. Poussin presents himself in his working environment, in the studio surrounded by his own works, as is demonstrated by the signature on the reversed canvas seen right behind him. Still, it is not the artisan-artist he is aspiring to present, but the free intellectual. The painting is a perfect example of how the genre of self-portraiture has been used to underline and underpin the status of the individual artist and his discipline.



III. 3.9. Nicolas Poussin, *Autoportrait*, 1650.
Oil on canvas, 78 x 94 cm.

In his appropriated version of the work, Paolini has not altered Poussin's original image, but reproduced it twice in black and white on stretched canvases (Fig. 3.19). One canvas copies Poussin's composition at its original size, while the second canvas, which is considerably smaller, has room only for a little section of the painting, centring Poussin's head. The smaller canvas is mounted over the larger one, not disturbing the original image, but adding a new layer to the composition's arrangement of rectangular shapes.

When commenting on the choice of presenting an altered self-portrait by Poussin as his own, Paolini states that it is useless to reinvent what can be found in the past.¹²³ In stating this, he apparently honours Poussin's self-portrait as an exemplary model of the genre, a model he is unwilling, possibly regarding himself unable, to challenge. Paolini's choice to present himself through Poussin's can thus be interpreted as an identification with him or an indebtedness to him as a source of inspiration – as an homage to this particular artist. References to historical artists are common in Paolini's practice, however, and not necessarily about confirming the predecessor's status.¹²⁴ As Bente Kiilerich has pointed out when discussing examples from Paolini's oeuvre, "Ingres quoted Raphael and Poussin, Paolini quotes both Ingres and Raphael

¹²³ Statement by Paolini in Achille Bonito Oliva, "Dentro il linguaggio" [1971], in *Paolini: Opere 1961/73*, ed. Achille Bonito Oliva (Milan: Studio Marconi, 1973), n.p., quoted in Disch, *Giulio Paolini Catalogo ragionato*, 173.

¹²⁴ Paolini's works paraphrase artists as different as Diego Velazquez, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Giorgio de Chirico, Man Ray, Morris Louis and Cy Twombly. Examples of works containing references to other artists or other artists' works are *Cy Problem* (1967), *Poussin che indica gli antichi come esempio fondamentale* (1968), *L'invenzione di Ingres* (1968), *Un segreto* (1969), *Apoteosi di Omero* (1970–71), *Un quadro (di Morris Louis)* (1969), *Et.quid.ambo.nisi.quod.cenigma.est?* (1969) and *Contatto* (1969).

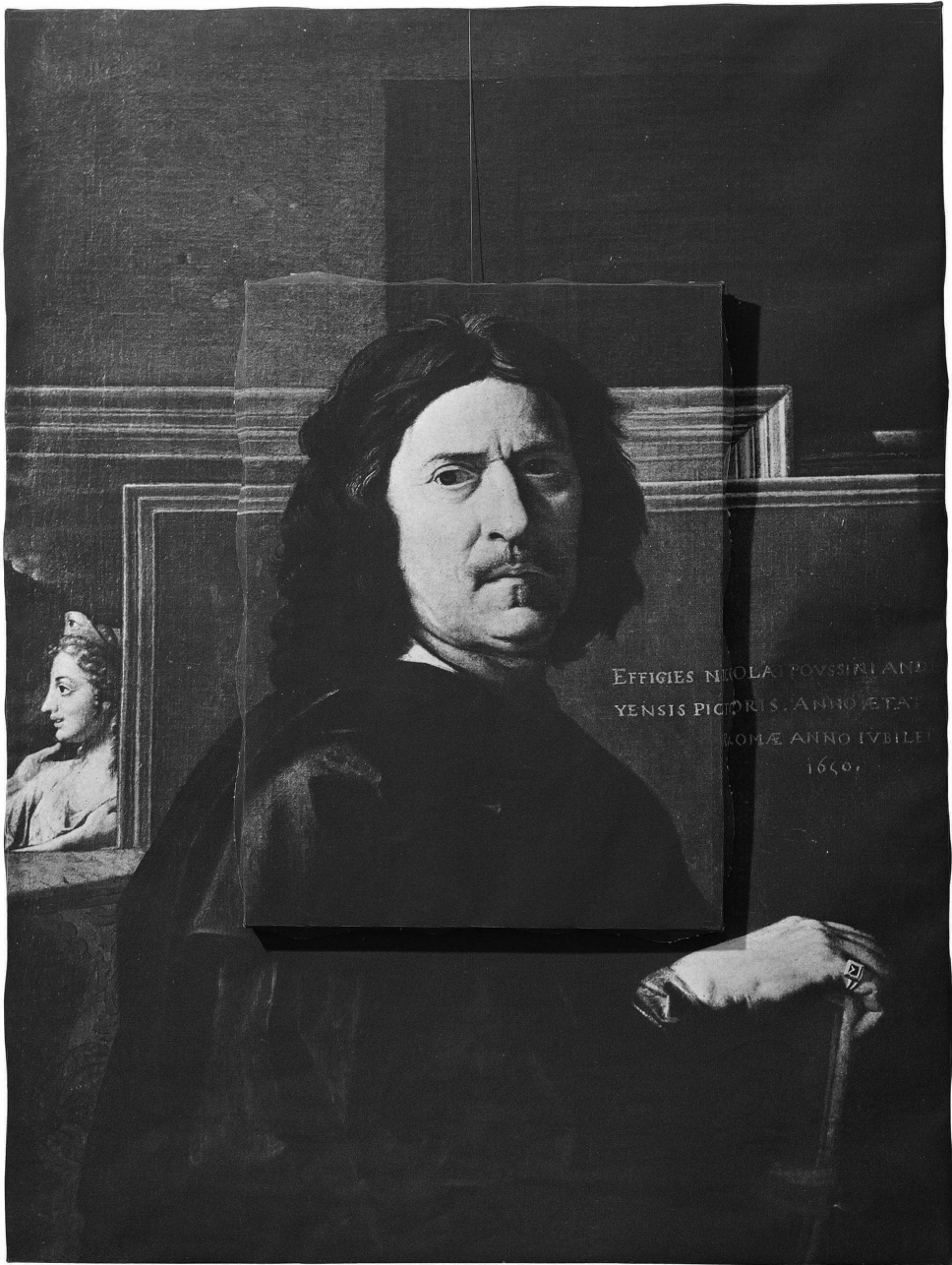


Fig. 3.19. Giulio Paolini, *Autoritratto*, 1968. Photo emulsion on canvas, nylon string. 2 elements, 98 x 74 cm and 50 x 37 cm.

as well as Poussin”, and such “image chains” spawn the question of originality and authorship: “[a]uthorship can be questioned: Poussin/Paolini, Raphael/Ingres/Paolini, Lotto/Paolini, Praxiteles/Paolini, and authorship can be transferred: from Poussin to Paolini, from Ingres to Paolini, from Lotto to Paolini, and so on”.¹²⁵

It is more common among critics to see Paolini’s engagement with his predecessors’ work as expressing an interest in ‘the artist’ as a category than as an identification with particular individuals from the art historical past. Marta Dalla Bernardina argues when Paolini adds a new element to Poussin’s painting, it is the general figure of the artist he re-presents on the overlaid canvas: the inscription that identifies the French artist’s work in the original painting remains outside Paolini’s superimposed element, she points out. This leads Bernardina to conclude that Paolini “renounces his personal ‘I’ in favour of the ‘I’ of the universal artist.”¹²⁶ The point she makes is in line with Celant’s description of Paolini’s works from this period as searching for “identification of author with author [...] to offer a generic image of the author without adding the new identity (Paolini himself).” By presenting himself in “the roles of long-dead predecessors”, Celant states, Paolini abstracts his own identity to identify with them within the overarching category of the artist.¹²⁷ Paolini has also stated that the aim of his appropriated self-portraits “is to abstract my identity from its role and to give it an elective, historical, and hypothetical role instead.”¹²⁸ Thus, the remake of Poussin’s self-portrait is not an homage to the elder artist nor an attempt to elevate Paolini himself to the status of his predecessor, rather it presents a dismantling of the artist’s singularity, a giving over to the tradition of artist and artworks that Paolini considers himself a product of. The self-portrait may thus draw on an idealistic conception of ‘the artist’, but by acknowledging the single artist’s debt to those who came before him and therefore his own compositeness, it also rejects the idea of the artist as the single source “from which meaning begins to proliferate”, to cite Foucault’s critique of the established notion of the author.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Bente Kiilerich, “Self-Portraiture in Contemporary Italian Art: Giulio Paolini and Carlo Maria Mariani”, in *Immagine e ideologia. Studi in onore di A. C. Quintavalle*, eds. Arturo Calzona, et.al (Milan: Electa, 2007), 606-607. See also Germano Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 79 for these lines of influence.

¹²⁶ Dalla Bernardina, “Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini”, 5. My translation. For a discussion of other Italian artists who represented themselves by way of historical references and image appropriation in the 1970s, see Denis Viva, “Verso la meta pittura. Quadro e autoritratto a Roma negli anni Settanta”, in *Anni 70. Arte a Roma*, ed. Daniela Lancioni, (Rome: Iacobelli Editore, 2013), 59–60.

¹²⁷ Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 75. See also Italo Calvino, *La squadratura* [1975], in *Semiotiche della pittura. I classici. Le ricerche*, ed. Lucia Corrain (Rome: Meltemi, 2004), 231.

¹²⁸ Paolini quoted in Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 75. See Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 123 for a slightly different translation.

¹²⁹ Foucault, “What is an Author?”, 221.



Ill. 3.10. Henri Rousseau, *Moi-même. Portrait-paysage*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 146 x 113 cm.

In another *Autoritratto* from 1968, Paolini uses a strategy of appropriation similar to the one used in his self-portrait as Poussin, but with Henri Rousseau's *Moi-même. Portrait-paysage* (Myself. Portrait-Landscape) from 1890 as his point of departure. In a naïve painterly language, the appropriated work depicts Rousseau in dark suit and beret holding on to his palette and brush, while looming monumentally in front of an urban landscape identified as Paris (Ill. 3.10). The garment ties the autodidactic artist to the milieu of Academic painters, and the new technologies that surround him – represented by the iron construction of the

Eiffel tower, the nearby bridge and the air balloon to his right – idealises innovation and progression.¹³⁰ So does the genre Rousseau has chosen for his self-portrait, namely the 'portrait-landscape' that he purportedly claimed to have invented.¹³¹ This self-portrait, then, must be seen as a vindication of the personal efforts and status of an artist who lacked the recognition from and was often ridiculed by his contemporaries.

When appropriating Rousseau's work, Paolini is less loyal to the original than he was to Poussin's. In the black and white photographic reproduction of the colourful oil painting, he has magnified the original motif and cropped the full-length figure of Rousseau just below the waist, so that the artist appears in the lower part of the image rather than centred (Fig. 3.20). Moreover, Rousseau's landscape is replaced by a photomontage of prominent people from the contemporary Italian art scene, such as artists Lucio Fontana, Carla Accardi, Luciano Fabro and Alighiero Boetti; critics Giulio Carlo Argan, Carla Lonzi, Marisa Volpi and Maurizio Calvesi; and gallerists Luciano Pistoï and Plinio de Martiis.¹³² Rather than figuring alone, the artist now blends in with a crowd of colleagues.

¹³⁰ Andrew Graham-Dixon, "Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris", *The Telegraph*, 6 November 2005, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3647765/Henri-Rousseau-Jungles-in-Paris.html> (accessed 07.01.2020).

¹³¹ See Tate, "Henri Rousseau: Jungles in Paris: Room Guide: Room 3", <http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/henri-rousseau/henri-rousseau-jungles-paris-room-guide/room-three> (accessed 07.01. 2020).

¹³² For a complete list of identified persons in the work, see Disch, *Giulio Paolini Catalogo ragionato*, 172.



Fig. 3.20. Paolini, *Autoritratto*, 1968. Photo emulsion on canvas, 151 x 126 cm.

As Joanna Woodall has pointed out, it has been common practice within the genre of self-portraiture to include figures that “can be understood as mirror images or alter egos contributing to the constitution of the artist as a perfect subject.”¹³³ An interesting example in relation to Paolini’s *Autoritratto* is Édouard



Ill. 3.11. Édouard Manet, *La Musique aux Tuileries*, 1862. Oil on canvas, 76 x 118 cm.

Manet’s 1862 *La Musique aux Tuileries* (Music in the Tuileries Gardens), because this work, like Paolini’s, combines self-portraiture with references to historical and contemporaneous masters (Ill. 3.11). In the painting, Manet appears surrounded by Parisian cultural profiles like Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire and Henri Fantin-Latour. In addition, when reserving the specific position at the front left of his painting for himself, Manet has been found to quote Velazquez’s *Les petits Cavaliers*, in which the Baroque master has inserted his self-portrait in the same position.¹³⁴ According to Nils Gösta Sandblad, Manet’s insertion of his own portrait among the cultural elite of Paris was a way of “reserving for himself the place of a Velazquez in his society.”¹³⁵

Following Sandblad’s line of reasoning, Paolini’s self-portrait *as Rousseau among* colleagues can be seen as an identification not only with the artist behind the appropriated self-portrait, but also with the cultural elite of the time, and as a sort of apotheosis of the artist centred in the motif’s foreground – whether seen as Rousseau, Paolini or ‘the artist’ as such. On the other hand, Paolini’s *Autoritratto* deprives the depicted artist of effects that emphasise his elevated status: the monumentality with which Rousseau figured in the painted self-portrait is contested in Paolini’s cropping of it, while the singularity of the artistic subject is questioned

¹³³ Joanna Woodall, “Every painter paints himself”: Self-portraiture and creativity”, in *Self Portrait: Renaissance to Contemporary*, ed. Anthony Bond and Joanna Woodall (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005), 20.

¹³⁴ Nils Gösta Sandblad, *Manet: Three Studies in Artistic Conception* (Lund: CWK Gleerup Lund, 1954), 45. Sandblad sees this kind of paraphrasing as a recurrent topic in Manet’s art, starting with “the unexpressed self-identification” of his copy of Velazquez’s *Les petits Cavaliers*, continuing in “the open, paraphrased self-portrait” that Manet inserted in his *La Pêche* in reference to Rubens’s inserted self-portrait in *Der Schlosspark*, and ending in “the conscious but obscured parallelism of situation in *La Musique aux Tuileries*.”

¹³⁵ Sandblad, *Manet*, 39. For a contrasting view of Manet’s positioning in the painting, see Catherine M. Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 53.

when the portrayed artist is positioned in the midst of his colleagues. When including fellow artists, critics and gallerists, the self-portrait suggests that the artist is not a unified, demarcated individual behind his work. Rather, an artwork is the creation of the network that surrounds the artist. This view of the artistic self as indebted to and dependent on something outside itself might be what Celant had in mind when he stated in 1972 that Paolini's recent works demonstrate how this artist was developing "a full awareness of his being within the artistic context."¹³⁶

Common to the self-portraits by Boetti and Paolini presented in this section of the thesis is that neither use photography as a medium in the traditional sense – that is, for the purpose of objectively rendering or portraying. In line with Crimp's definition of the "photographic activity of postmodernism", they rather exploit photography's capacity as a technology of reproduction to appropriate, manipulate and serialise images to shatter the image and the idea of the unified (artistic) self. Converse strategies are employed, however. Boetti's self-portraits use techniques like photomontage and Xerox copies, as well as *en abyme* and sequencing effects, to present the artist as a spectre of selves within each of his works. They split the image of the self into fragments and present their artist as fundamentally *fragmented*. When Paolini appropriates Poussin and Rousseau's paintings, on the other hand, the artist is presented as part of a historical lineage or/and a larger artistic collective. Rather than fragmented, he is a secreted *fragment* of beyond-individual structures.

Whether the self-portraits suggest a subdividing of the self or inscribes the self in a larger totality, they all indicate that the (artistic) self is composite and/or in constant change, rather than coherent and continuous. Boetti's images of himself as fragmented can be seen to visualise an experience of the self that Barthes later verbalised in *Camera Lucida*. Barthes here reveals that when looking at photographic portraits of himself, he expects that they will represent his profound self.¹³⁷ However, he rather experiences that "[a]ll I look like is other photographs of myself, and this to infinity" and concludes that "'myself' never coincides with my image."¹³⁸ One reason for the lacking correspondence between image and identity in portraiture, Barthes argues, is that modelling subjects tend to engage in a play of self-imitation in front of a lens, taking on affected poses adjusted to who they think they are, want to be, and expects others to see in and want from them. In suggesting that the model turns into an image

¹³⁶ Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 101.

¹³⁷ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* [1980], trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000), 11.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 102 and 12.

even before the shutter releases, Barthes questions the existence of any stable and self-identical model prior to the photograph; he describes identity as “imprecise, even imaginary”, and his own self as “light, divided, dispersed”. It is the photograph itself that is stable and stabilising; it is “heavy, motionless, stubborn”, and makes the photographed subject appear with a single, signifying expression. A photographed portrait, then, is not a truthful rendering of a person behind the image, but an image of a subject that is already an image and/or in constant change, an image that serves to sustain the myth of the self-identical self. It is thus something Barthes relates to “a sensation of inauthenticity, sometimes of imposture”.¹³⁹

This fraudulent character of the photographic portrait is precisely what Sherman is credited with disclosing in the “Untitled Film Stills” by critics such as Krauss and Crimp. When mimicking stereotypes rather than actual people or film characters, she demonstrates how the photographic image refers to imagery and ideals rather than reality, and when letting herself appear as ever-new ‘selves’ across the series, she demonstrates how the self is divided and dispersed. Boetti’s works also disclose the imposture of the photographic self-portrait: when fragmenting Boetti’s image within a single self-portrait, they reveal the composite and changing nature of the artistic self, and when exposing elements that keep the various images together – the hand-spelled ‘*a-u-t-o-r-i-t-r-a-t-t-o*’ and the film strip – they suggest that it is the self-portrait itself that unifies and stabilises the self as a coherent whole. In that sense, the self-portraying Boetti is “a demystifier of myth, a de-myth-ifier” just as Krauss finds Sherman to be.

When multiplying the artist’s image, Boetti’s self-portraits illustrate, and in that sense arguably *represent*, the idea of a fragmented self. But since the self-portraits discussed here indicate that the model they refer to is subject to continuous change, they also imply that it far exceeds what the singular image or work can capture. In that sense, the self-portraits suggest a dissymmetry between image and model, which challenges the idea of self-portraiture as corresponding with and pointing seamlessly back to its model. So do the self-portraits by Paolini in which the artistic self is related to a beyond-individual structure comprising the evolving canon of historical artists and/or a network of colleagues. If trying to trace these self-portraits back to an ‘original presence’, they will reveal how that presence is threatened by “divisibility or dissension”, as Derrida formulated it in his most explicit critique of representation, and lead on to “other traces and traces of others”, to other selves and to the self

¹³⁹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 100 and 12–13 for the latter quotes. It should be noted that Barthes does allow the photographic portrait to reveal the photographic subject’s *air*. However, this glance into the model’s ‘true’ self is subjective and occasional. For more on this, see Chapter Two, p. 60.

as other.¹⁴⁰ The result will be a number of loose ends, whether sub- or over-individual. Instead of fulfilling self-portraiture's conventional function of confirming the modelling artist as their unified origin, these self-portraits insist on a state of inconsistency and misrecognition between the self-portrait itself and the modelling/producing artist, and so escape a positioning under that artist's author-ity.

In challenging the idea of the coherent individual, Boetti and Paolini's self-portraits also question the ground on which artists' author-ity relies. Both Barthes and Foucault underline in their contributions to the 'death of the author' discourse how the established idea of the author relates historically to the modern idea of the individual as a self-coherent and stable subject. Foucault states, for instance, that "[t]he coming into being of the notion of 'author' constitutes the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences", and posits that the author "has the form of individuality and the self."¹⁴¹ Barthes in turn states that "[t]he author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'.¹⁴² The dismissal of this individual is reflected in the alternative notion of writing that Barthes offers as part of his critique of the traditional idea of the author: the written text is not an individual's genial invention, rather, the writing act consists in letting one's own voice blend in with other voices in the larger structure of language. Paolini's act of presenting Poussin and Rousseau's *autoritratti* as his own has a comparable effect: when the artist aligns himself with historical artists and contemporaneous colleagues, he dissolves the artistic self in a blend of voices and in structures that exceed him.

Several of the works discussed in this section – Boetti's *Shaman/Showman*, Paolini's *Autoritratto col busto di eraclito e altre opera* and his self-portraits as Poussin and Rousseau – exemplify the "photographic activity of postmodernism" when employing the strategy of appropriation. Crimp explicitly links appropriation to an anti-authoritarian stance; it avoids the "conventional notions of artistic creativity", as he puts it.¹⁴³ While his main example is Sherrie Levine's photographic re-presentations of masterworks from the art historical canon,

¹⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida, "Sending: On Representation" [1980], *Social Research*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1982, 323–24. See also Chapter Two, p. 43–44.

¹⁴¹ Foucault, "What is an Author?", 205; Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse. Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France, given on Dec. 2, 1970" [1971], trans. Ian McLeod, in *Untying the Text: A Poststructuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston, MA: Routledge, 1981), 59.

¹⁴² Roland Barthes "The Death of the Author" [1967/1968], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 143.

¹⁴³ Crimp, "Appropriating Appropriation", 30.

Sherman's "Film Stills" are also appropriated images, in the sense that they refer to typical film characters. Indeed, the film stills are a particularly forceful critique of the cult of authenticity, given Sherman's double remove from origin; what she appropriates are not real characters, but cultural stereotypes that do not actually exist. Since Boetti's and Paolini's appropriations rely on specific, historical source images, they immediately seem less radical than Sherman's, and more dependent on the idea of the origin(al). On the other hand, Paolini's works offer a more focused critique of author-ity, since the images he appropriates are self-portraits. When presenting the appropriated self-portraits as his own, Paolini does not let his image dissolve in stereotyped models and idealised conceptions of the *self*, he lets the figure of the *artist* dissolve in a line of traditional artists and/or a milieu of cultural profiles. His self-portraits thus use appropriation to question the consistency of the artist not only as model, but also in the role of producer. As Robert Lumley has already stated about Paolini's overall production, when "systematically neutralising the ideas of originality or authenticity associated with traditional aesthetics", Paolini is "interpreting in visual form contemporary debates on the 'death of the author'."¹⁴⁴

In various ways, Boetti's and Paolini's self-portraits focus and problematise the image's indexical dependency upon the referent, which is characteristic to the photographic medium. The indexical relation is particularly intimate in Boetti's Xeroxed *Autoritratto*, since the process of photocopying involves direct, physical contact between the artist's hand/face and the recording device. Boetti has pressed himself against the printer's glass plate, rather than merely letting his image emerge as a result of the intermediate drawing of light, as happens in camera-based portraits. However, Boetti's *Autoritratto* also exposes the image's detachment from the referent on which it is modelled. This is illustrated in the way certain parts of the artist's features – like his nostrils and facial hair – are meticulously rendered, while the details tend to fade around these centred parts; the faces are without contour and open towards a void from which they cannot be separated. It is as if the self-portrait depicts a model that is about to leave the image, or an image about to separate from its model. In that sense, the photo-based self-portraits make a point that Derrida, in *Memoires of the Blind*, describes as typical for the drawn self-portrait – but potentially also for the photographic portrait, drawn by light – namely, that the self always escapes. Derrida underlines that when an artist starts drawing a line [*trait*], this line soon becomes an outline, and the outline, in turn, withdraws [*retrait*] as it gives life to a figure. Since the outline withdraws as the figure arises, the figure that manifests on the blank surface

¹⁴⁴ Robert Lumley, *Arte Povera* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), 26.

is independent of its origin, Derrida implies.¹⁴⁵ Boetti's *Autoritratto* openly displays the withdrawal itself. As Bettina Della Casa argues, his Xerox portraits engage with "the figurative residue" and make us "lose sight of the identifying origin."¹⁴⁶ In that sense, *Autoritratto* is a self-portrait as ruin.

Since photography is a technique of reproduction that allows an unlimited number of copies of the initial, indexically based motif, the detachment of motif from model through reproduction is arguably as characteristic of photo-based media as the indexical relation between motif and model is. This paradoxical relation between the motif's dependency on and separation from the model is thematised by Foucault in his essay on Gérard Fromanger.¹⁴⁷ Although Fromanger makes paintings, Foucault describes them as "photogenic" because they have an indexical relationship with their source: a photographic image is projected upon Fromanger's canvas and reproduced in paint "without the intervention of drawing and form".¹⁴⁸ However, Foucault also emphasises how the painting's motif is independent of its source and allowed to circulate freely within a sphere of images as soon as the projector is switched off. The same is true of other photographically produced images: as soon as the shutter is released, the image is detached from its referent and itself a source for reproductions.

Foucault's discussion of Fromanger includes a series of paintings in which an image of the painter himself appears: in "Le peintre et le modèle" (The Painter and the Model), Fromanger occasionally "represent himself as a grey shadow" against strongly coloured street scenes.¹⁴⁹ The dark silhouette equals the shadow cast by the artist's body on his canvas in the process of painting projected photographs. In being images of the artist's shadow rather than his physical body, one could say that Fromanger's 'self-portraits' doubly remove from the model, as Krauss and Crimp find Sherman's stills to do through different means. To Foucault,

¹⁴⁵ See Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 36, 53 and 60, for instance.

¹⁴⁶ Bettina Della Casa, "The Image of the Void", in *Image of the Void: An Investigation of Italian Art 1958–2006*, ed. Bettina Della Casa (Milan: Skira, 2006), 17. An example that compares to Boetti's *Autoritratto* in this respect is Susan Stilton's *Self Portrait #6* (1995), a digital scanner image in which the characteristics of the artist's face are left distorted and blurred. Amelia Jones says of this and similar Stilton works that "Stilton's self images also deny the belief in the presence of the body/face as 'ground' for the representation through an almost parodic shuffling of electrons mimicking the indexical properties of analogue photographic imaging practices. Her face was 'there' but always already distorted through the very process of representation, which (it seems) does not precede the face but substantiates it", and so they "mark the disappearance of the Enlightenment myth of the self as a knowable thing". See Jones, *Self/Image*, 32 and 30.

¹⁴⁷ For my presentation of Foucault's essay "Photogenic Painting", see Chapter Two, p. 58 and further. Foucault also speaks of the detached and circulating image in *Ceci n'est pas une pipe*, but that discussion concerns painting alone and does not thematise the indexical relation between image and model and is therefore of less relevance here.

¹⁴⁸ Foucault, "Photogenic painting", 93.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 99. My description of Fromanger's paintings rely on Foucault's texts, and Soussloff's discussion of Foucault's text in Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting*, 108 and further.

however, the painter's "sombre presence" evokes "a sort of intermediary moment, the point where photograph and canvas were pinned together."¹⁵⁰ Such a presence anchors the image to its source and is no longer needed when we accept the idea of the image as freely circulating, Foucault argues. He illustrates this by pointing to a later series by Fromanger in which a single photograph forms the basis of several different paintings, demonstrating how motifs can migrate, spread out and pass at a speed that does not even allow a glance of the painter's shadow. Such proliferate transition between images have no place for the painter that produced them – at least, Foucault says, "painters can no longer be alone", they will have to share their position as creator of images with a "crowd of amateurs, artificers, manipulators, smugglers, robbers, looters of images."¹⁵¹ What Foucault thus indicates is that the type of self-portrayal found in Fromanger's "Le peintre et le modèle" is a residue from a time when the image served a representative function in respect of its producer, and therefore no longer relevant.

Contrary to Foucault's conclusion regarding the artist's presence in his work, I find his analysis of Fromanger's practice suggesting the artist's image may just as well remain in his works, since the bond between the image and the artist behind is nevertheless cut off. At the decisive moment when the projector is switched off, it is not only the painting that is detached from the photographic image, thus able "to exist 'all by itself'", as Fromanger puts it. The artist who figures as a shadow within the painting is also separated from the artist-of-the-world who gave him form. He is allowed to take on a life of his own, as motif. While Foucault argues that the painter seen in Fromanger's paintings is "remaining in the end on the canvas", I find his analysis opening up to the idea that when manifesting as a motif on a work's surface, the artist becomes part of the "dispersion of events" that evolves around the free image, with the possibility of migrating into other images. The surface of the work, then, is not – like in a representational understanding of images – one on which a motif is captured and fixed in an affirmative relation to what it depicts, but a platform that the motif – including of the artist – can enter and be transported from by other images that spin from it. In that sense, a self-portrait can be a plane onto which artists-of-the-world can project themselves as motifs, in order to freely proliferate: it is a point of departure for a further migration as motif within the sphere of images.

The self-portrait's departure from the artistic self is precisely what Boetti's and Paolini's works exhibit when reproducing the artists' images. Indexicality is underlined in Boetti's *I AM AN IN-DIVIDE-YOU-ALL* by the display of the film strip, but the repetition of the motif also

¹⁵⁰ Foucault, "Photogenic painting", 99.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 102–03.

counters the uniqueness of the moment of contact between artist and image, and hints at the motif's release from the model. Better examples still are works that *re-present* an existing image of the artist – that is, that let a given image multiply within a single work, as is the case in Boetti's *Per una storia naturale della stabilizzazione (AB)* – and those that let the motif migrate across works – like those comprising the image of Paolini from *1421965* and *Diaframma 8*. In Boetti's work, the initial Polaroid relates indexically and intimately to the depicted artist, but the subsequent images illustrate how the artist's image is gradually released from the artist himself. In Paolini's case, the self-portraits appearing in *1421965* and *Diaframma 8* are already at one remove from the indexical relation between motif and model, since that relationship belongs to the light-sensitive film from which they are developed. The reappearance of these images in other works further underlines how the portrait takes on a dynamic life of its own within a sphere of images, where it is reworked, reproduced and/or represented in new contexts.¹⁵²

Foucault indicates that the play of images is anti-authoritarian because the images refer directly to each other, without the artist's intervention. In Boetti's and Paolini's works this is not the case, since it is the artists themselves who *re-present* them. Here, the artists do not hand the responsibility for their images over to "amateurs", "manipulators" and "looter of images", questioning authorship through the exterior strategy of shared authorship.¹⁵³ However, Boetti's and Paolini's migrating images do have an anti-authoritarian aspect to them, because when creating chains of images in which 'new' images of the artist refer to completely or nearly identical preceding ones, they not only disrupt the idea of uniqueness and the originality invested by the artist's hand, as is commonly pointed out in connection with reproductive technologies. They also establish the older images as sources for subsequent copies, and thereby let the source images themselves take on the authoritarian status of the origin(al) that a representational understanding of self-portraiture attributes to the artist-as-model. As a result, the representational hierarchy between artist-as-model and the artist-as-motif is evened out.

Krauss found a relationship of in/dependency between motif and model in Sherman's "Film Stills" by virtue of the confusion they create concerning the schism between the image

¹⁵² Note that some of the self-portraits discussed in the previous section "Exposing Representation – Objectifying Oneself" comprise a similar release of the image. This release of the image from the ground echoes the general development of Pistoletto's self-portraiture practice, from a painterly interrogation of himself towards the emancipation of his image from its ground – the literal background and implicitly also from the self on which it was modelled. Basualdo points out that Pistoletto's use of serigraphy in the mirror paintings announces "the possibility of endless reproductions that looms over a series destined to extend itself indefinitely", and the mirror images thus "become less of a presence and more of a simulacrum". See Basualdo, "Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974", 9.

¹⁵³ For the distinction between exterior and interior strategies for challenging strong authorship, see Chapter Two.

space and its exteriority and the depicted artist's position relative to these spaces. In exposing the artist's image detaching from the referent – either by letting the image blur like in Boetti's Xeroxed *Autoritratto* – or by adding new images further removed from the initial image that holds an indexical relation to the artist – Boetti's and Paolini's self-portraits as/in fragments also demonstrate such a relationship of in/dependency. By displaying this in/dependency – in visualising the image's relation to its referent as well as its gradual removal from it – Boetti's and Paolini's self-portraits avoid the full “suspension of the referent” that Owens dismisses as a modernist rupture with representation. Rather than proposing a lack of referent or a total breach between image and referent, Boetti and Paolini create image chains that “problematised the activity of reference” itself, in line with Owens's idea of a postmodernist critique of representation.

Conceptualising the Artist

Most of the self-portraits discussed so far comprise motifs that resemble the producing artists. Like Sherman's “Untitled Film Stills”, they rely on the photographic medium's veracity, while also challenging the presumed link between resemblance and representation. The third category of Arte Povera self-portraits discards visual resemblance altogether. It comprises a number of works in which the artist's name is the dominant motif, and a work in which a personal pronoun – “*Io*” (I) – points to the artist. In these works, the name or pronoun “becomes an image in its own right”, as one critic has observed, and takes the place traditionally reserved for the artist's image in self-portraits.¹⁵⁴ So even if the absolute abandoning of visual resemblance between motif and model makes their status as self-portraits disputable, various voices in the literature tend to regard them as artists' images and do indeed refer to them as self-portraits.¹⁵⁵ In the following section, I refer to them as “conceptual self-portraits”.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Dalla Bernardina, “Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini”, 4. My translation.

¹⁵⁵ See Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato*, 190; Friedemann Malsch, Christiane Meyer-Stoll and Valentina Pero, eds., *Che Fare? Arte Povera – The Historic Years* (Vaduz/Heidelberg: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein/Kehrer Verlag, 2010), 88; Giovan Battista Salerno, “Die Kunst der Kopie und die Geheimnisse der Reproduktion”, in *Alighiero Boetti 1965–1994*, ed. Jean-Christoph Ammann (Vienna: Mazotta, 1997), 49. These comments do not necessarily relate to works I discuss here, but to comparable examples.

¹⁵⁶ In addition to the works discussed here, there are also other conceptual self-portraits in the Arte Povera ‘catalogue’. Jannis Kounellis's *Senza titolo* (Untitled) (1971), which lights up the artist's surname with propane gas; and Boetti's *Ghise* (Cast Iron) and *Ghise (ABoetti)* (Cast Iron [ABoetti]) (both 1968), in which the artist's surname is cast in iron slabs after a piece of corrugated cardboard into which Boetti scratched the name with his finger, should be mentioned. I have excluded these highly interesting works from the discussion because of their sculptural nature, and mention them briefly in Chapter Five, p. 258. Arguably, Boetti's Xeroxed *Autoritratto* presented above, which spells ‘*Autoritratto*’ in sign letters, is a conceptual self-portrait. So is Giuseppe Penone's *Alfabeto*, a silkscreened poster announcing his exhibition-event at the Aktionsraum 1 in Munich in 1970, in which 14 close-up photographs show Penone's face while pronouncing each of the 14 letters in the artist's full name.

The turn from visual to verbal self-presentation does not necessarily entail a break with self-portraiture's representative and author-ising functions. In "What is an Author?", Foucault stresses how the artist's name differs from other proper names: rather than merely designating a particular individual, it serves a descriptive and classificatory function. It "permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others", and it establishes "a relationship of homogeneity, filiation, reciprocal explication, or concomitant utilization" between the designated texts. Furthermore, it establishes certain rights and responsibilities concerning ownership, attestation and quality, and thus characterises "a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status."¹⁵⁷ The artist's name thus serves an author-ising function: it imposes the producing subject's stylistic characteristics and rights onto objects, distinguishing them from other objects and assembling them within an oeuvre. To display the artist's name as a work's motif, then, can be seen to signal the artist's position as the work's origin and rightful owner.

When displayed as motif, the artist's name arguably also serves the representational function of a signature. Derrida thematises the signature in "Signature Event Context" (*Signature événement contexte*), describing it as a product of Western metaphysics that compensates for its writer's absence: It corresponds to "that oral 'signature' constituted – or aspired to – by the presence of the 'author' as a 'person who utters,' as a 'source,' to the production of the utterance."¹⁵⁸ When the artists' names appear as motifs in Arte Povera works, they can be seen to point back to and confirm the artist-of-the-world, albeit in the role of producer rather than model: the names identify the artists, keep them present in their absence, and thus award them author-ity over the objects marked by their name.

Among Arte Povera works, there are certainly examples in which the artists' names serve such an author-ising function. Allegedly, Emilio Prini once wrote his name on a gallery floor, and so "takes 'possession' of the container", as Celant put it.¹⁵⁹ Luca Lo Pinto also refers to the occasion when Prini "signed the white floor of an empty room in a gallery with a blue felt-tipped marker", and finds in that act a reference to two slightly older artists known for taking things into their possession as works. The play on the signature refers to Piero Manzoni, who in the early 1960s converted bodies into artworks by signing them, and the colour of the

¹⁵⁷ Foucault, "What is an Author?", 210–11.

¹⁵⁸ Jacques Derrida, "Signature Event Context" [1972], trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman, in *Limited Inc.* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 20. As I make clear below, however, this is a conception that Derrida problematises.

¹⁵⁹ Germano Celant, "Arte Povera" [1968], in *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 1985); reprinted in *Arte Povera: History and Stories*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 53.

pen refers to Yves Klein, who patented International Klein Blue and in so doing formalised the idea of artistic ownership, Lo Pinto holds.¹⁶⁰ Another work in which the name serves an authorising function is Luciano Fabro's 1969 *Vera* (Wedding Ring/True), a leather folder comprising a wedding photograph and a gold ring inscribed with the artist's name and his wedding date.¹⁶¹ As noted in a comment on the work, the signature here serves a dual function: it is a private pledge – as it once confirmed the marriage – and it is a symbol of artistic originality – as it authenticates the artwork, a multiple produced in an edition of 250.¹⁶² A final example is the 1972 version of Penone's *Scrivo, legge, ricorda* (Writes, Reads, Records).¹⁶³ In the original version, Penone slammed an iron wedge embossed with the letters of the Italian alphabet and the numbers 1–9 into a living tree, so that the letters and numbers would become part of the tree's structure as it grew. In the 1972 multiple version, photographs of the first action were combined with a wedge carrying the artist's full name and the year of the action, indicating that Penone physically marked the tree with his own name, as his work. In Prini's space-signing, Fabro's *Vera* and Penone's *Scrivo, legge, ricorda*, the artists' names posit the power to “limit, exclude and choose”, to classify random objects – whether a space, living nature or mass-produced artefacts – as artworks, thus endowing them a particular status.

When the artist's name appears as a motif within Arte Povera's conceptual self-portraits, it does not in the same way authenticate given objects as works of art and affirm the artist-of-the-world as their author-ity. On the contrary, the conceptual self-portraits provide their own ways of unsettling representational structures, and complement the Arte Povera self-portraits discussed in the previous sections in problematising the genre's author-ising function. A telling example is Paolini's 1971 *Giulio Paolini* – an unbound book composed of twelve sheets of paper, each folded four times and signed with the artist's signature in pencil and a year spanning between 1961 and 1971 (Fig. 3.21). The combination of the artist's name and the year indications allude to signatures already written on works produced by Paolini from 1961 to date – as Celant puts it, they refer to “all the various moments of [Paolini's] research up to the time when the book was produced”.¹⁶⁴ When signing the pages of his book in this manner, Paolini seems to award each page the status of a separate artwork, and to use his name to exert author-

¹⁶⁰ See the section “Luca Lo Pinto on the ineffability of Emilio Prini's art” in Luca Lo Pinto, Pierre Bal Blanc and Alfredo Aceto, “Three hypotheses for a Text on Emilio Prini”, *Flash Art*, No. 306, 2016.

¹⁶¹ Luciano Fabro, *Vera*, 1969. Leather folder, photograph, gold ring, 24 x 30 cm, edition of 250.

¹⁶² Malsch, Meyer-Stoll, and Pero, *Che Fare?*, 130.

¹⁶³ Giuseppe Penone, *Scrivo, legge, ricorda*, 1972. Iron wedge 42.5 x 6.5 x 4 cm, 3 photographs of 19 x 19 cm, edition of 50. The common English translation of this work is “Writes, Reads, Remembers”, but I use “Writes, Reads, Records” to underline the physical process through which the letters are printed into the tree.

¹⁶⁴ Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 100.

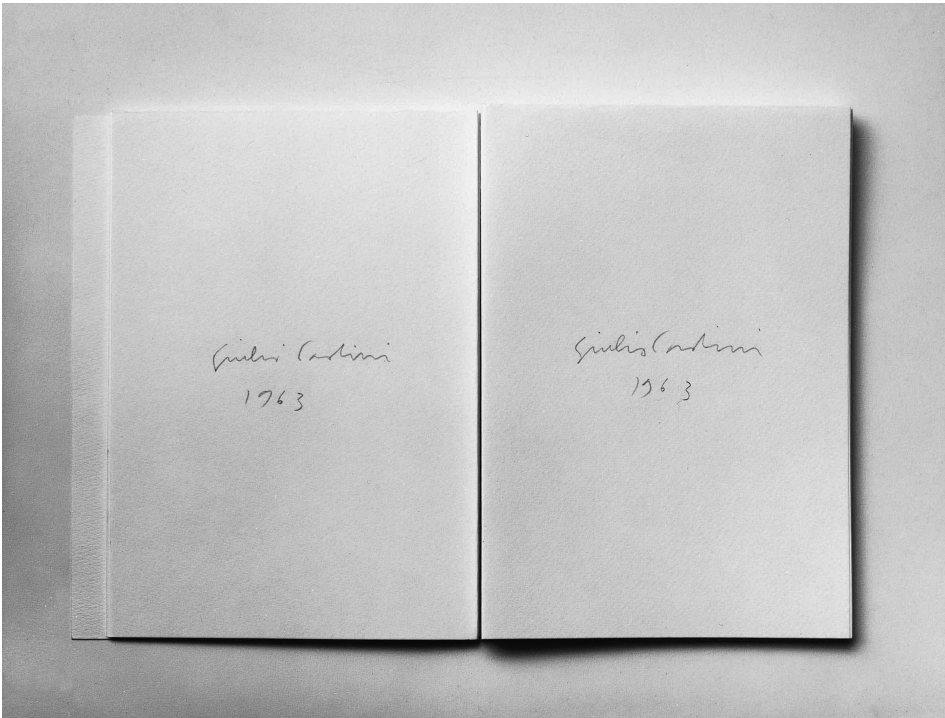


Fig. 3.21. Giulio Paolini, *Giulio Paolini*, 1971. Pencil on paper/carton, 24.5 x 18/36 cm.

ity upon and authenticate these pages. However, when being repeated and serialised, Paolini's signature also comes to address an anti-authoritarian aspect of the signature that occupied Derrida around the same time. In "Signature Event Context", he points out that the signature's function is paradoxical: on the one hand, it is thought of as singular and authentic, identifying the person behind it and recalling the particular situation in which it was written. As a written sign, however, it is also based on the premise of iterability, or as Derrida puts it, "it must be able to be detached from the present and singular intention of its production", which is at odds with its presumed authenticity and its ability to seal or represent the original situation.¹⁶⁵ When repeating old signatures out of context, *Giulio Paolini* underlines the latter aspect of the signature, and thus undermines its representative and authorising function.

As some scholars have pointed out, the signature's *form* itself posits the paradox Derrida addresses, in the sense that each person is presumed to have a uniquely shaped signature through which they can be identified, while the written signature will necessarily change its character

¹⁶⁵ Derrida, "Signature Event Context", 20.

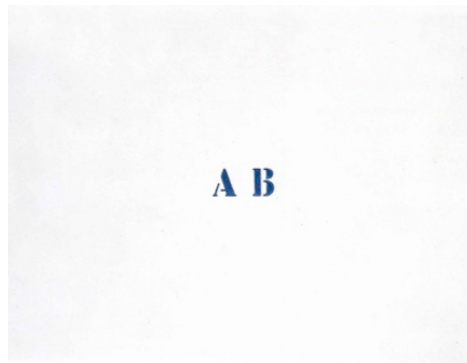
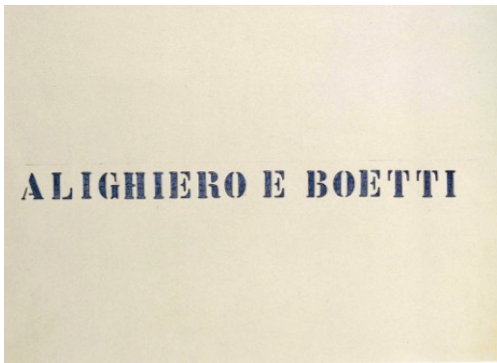
slightly every time it is repeated.¹⁶⁶ While these slight changes verify the signature's authenticity, they also counter the idea of the signature as the individual's unique and self-identical sign, and may thus raise questions about the signatory's identity, and of forgery. When presenting Paolini's signatures side by side, *Giulio Paolini* illustrates this Derridean point; it exposes their dissimilarities and thus seeds doubt about their origin rather than affirming a single signatory as its author-ity.

Paolini's book also raises intriguing questions regarding the relationship between the singular work, the overall corpus and the artist who produced them. While the signatures and dates repeated across the book's pages imply that each page is an individual work, it is the totality of the pages that make up *Giulio Paolini*. If the eponymous title implies a coincidence between the artist and the book, the composite nature of the book also relates to the nature of the artist: the artist would be a function of the individual works he has produced, as I also found Paolini's *Autoritratto col busto di eraclito e altre opera* to indicate above. Such an understanding of the relationship between artist and work chimes with Foucault's view of the author/work relationship in "What is an Author?", in which he argues that the author-name differs from the proper name precisely in referring to the sum of the works attributed to or associated with it, and thus implies that the author is a product of his works, rather than the other way around. The alignment of Giulio Paolini and *Giulio Paolini* may similarly suggest that the artist is a name whose function is to order given works, rather than the source from which these works originate.

Alighiero Boetti experiments with his name in a series of ballpoint pen drawings on paper from 1971. In these, the name is decomposed in various ways, and its letters presented in a number of combinations and compositions: in one drawing, the name is divided into 'ALIGHIERO E BOETTI', another reduces it to 'A B', a third sorts it alphabetically into 'ABEEGHIILORTT', a fourth drawing merely indicates the name by commas placed below the corresponding letters in the alphabet (Figs. 3.22–3.25). The literature associates these works with Boetti's performative two-sidedness: allegedly, it was Boetti's experimentation with his name in these drawings that led to the idea of a name split, a pun that was introduced with the exhibition "Alighiero e Boetti", at Galerie MTL in Brussels in 1972, where several of the drawings were exhibited for the first time.¹⁶⁷ Like in some of Boetti's photographs, however,

¹⁶⁶ This is a main topic in Michaela Fišerová, "Pragmatical Paradox of Signature", *Signata. Annales des sémiotiques/Annals of Semiotics*. Vol. 9, No. 9, 2018.

¹⁶⁷ Eva Menzio and Fabrizio Moretti, "Alighiero Boetti", Moretti Fine Art, Monaco, 21 June–20 July 2018, n.p., see https://morettigallery.com/usr/documents/exhibitions/list_of_works_url/39/catalogo_boetti.pdf (accessed 06.05.2021).



Top left: Fig. 3.22. Alighiero Boetti, *ALIGHIERO E BOETTI*, 1971. Pen on paper, 48 x 68 cm; Top right: Fig. 3.23. Alighiero Boetti, *A B*, 1971. Pen on paper, 48 x 68 cm; Below left: 3.24. Alighiero Boetti, *ABEEGHIILOORTT*, 1971. Pen on paper, 47 x 67 cm; Below right: Fig. 3.25. Alighiero Boetti, *ABEEGHIILOORTT*, 1971. Pen on paper, 47.5 x 68.5 cm.

the splitting of the self in these drawings far exceeds duality: the artist's name is not only divided into the double 'alighiero' and 'boetti' or 'A' and 'B', but into the fourteen separate letters of which it is composed, and into marks that represent these letters. The coincidence that his initials, A B, correspond with the first letters of the alphabet further indicates Boetti's dissolution into the overarching system of language. The dissolving of the self continues across the works: the way in which Boetti's name is represented in each of the works – whether by the totality of its letters, or by its initials – suggests that he is fully present within each of them, but the repeated act of representing his full name suggests that Boetti is realised anew with each work. Like Paolini's *Giulio Paolini*, this series of drawings indicates that the artist-as-name both coincides with his realised works and expands as the number of realised works increases.

Like in *Giulio Paolini*, there is an indexical relation between artist and work in Boetti's name-drawings, given that their motifs are drawn by hand. However, the manufactured letters of the latter works have little left of the artist-hand's signature style: they appear to be shaped by stencil, whereas pencil helplines from the construction process are still visible around them.

The pen marks that fill each letter are evidence of the artist-hand's laborious process, but the meticulous regularity with which they are conducted reveals nothing of personal expression or style. Since the handwritten names in this series of works strive towards the opposite of individuality and uniqueness, they counteract the idea of the signature as a personal seal. Their depersonalised style makes them unfit for the task of identifying a signatory, and for the function of author-ising the paper on which they appear. More than signatures, these letters resemble stamp prints, which are also used as seals, but again, their manual origin and the helplines separate them from the stamp. The drawings, then, play on the authenticating functions of the signature, stamp and seal, but also distance themselves from them, and wilfully fail to author-ise Boetti as their origin and owner. This is underlined by another work from this series, which distinguishes itself from the others in replacing the artist's name with the word 'ononimo' – a construct that combines 'anonimo' (anonymous) and 'omonimo' (homonym) – as its main motif, and thus announces an ambiguity regarding the motif's relation to a signatory.¹⁶⁸

Emilio Prini's *Emilio Prini 1970* is another example of an Arte Povera 'self-portrait' that replaces the artist's image with his name. The work is a print in which the artist's full name and the year of the work's realisation stand out as black, bold capital letters centred against a white background (Fig. 3.26). The combination of the artist's printed name and the specified year of production makes the work take the appearance of a caption or an enlarged exhibition wall label. Seen as such, it serves the same author-ising function as Prini's space-signing, to declare the wall or the space in which it is hung a work of art, in the artist's possession.

However, several aspects of Prini's work underline the distance and discrepancies between the producing artist, on the one hand, and his name and the work in which it appears on the other. Some scholars point out that it is common to presuppose continuity between the signatory and the written name, thereby underscoring that the act of giving one's name a written form is also an act of exteriorisation; it announces the signatory's presence in/as a written form 'out there'.¹⁶⁹ To sign something is thus a way of manifesting the self, but one that involves a separation of the signed object from the signing self. In Prini's work, the text has the form of an artist's signature in that it combines the artist's name with a production year, but the

¹⁶⁸ Alighiero Boetti, *ONONIMO*, 1971. Pen on paper, 48 x 68 cm. See Jean-Christoph Ammann, ed., *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo* (Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2009), 296. As Mark Godfrey has remarked, this construct also evokes the term 'eponymous' and thus the eponymic character of the other works of the series. See Mark Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti* (New Haven, CT/ London: Yale University Press, 2011), 111.

¹⁶⁹ Sonja Neef and José van Dijck, "Sign Here! Handwriting in the Age of Technical Reproduction. Introduction", in *Sign Here! Handwriting in the Age of New Media*, eds. Sonja Neef, José van Dijck and Eric Katelaar (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 9.

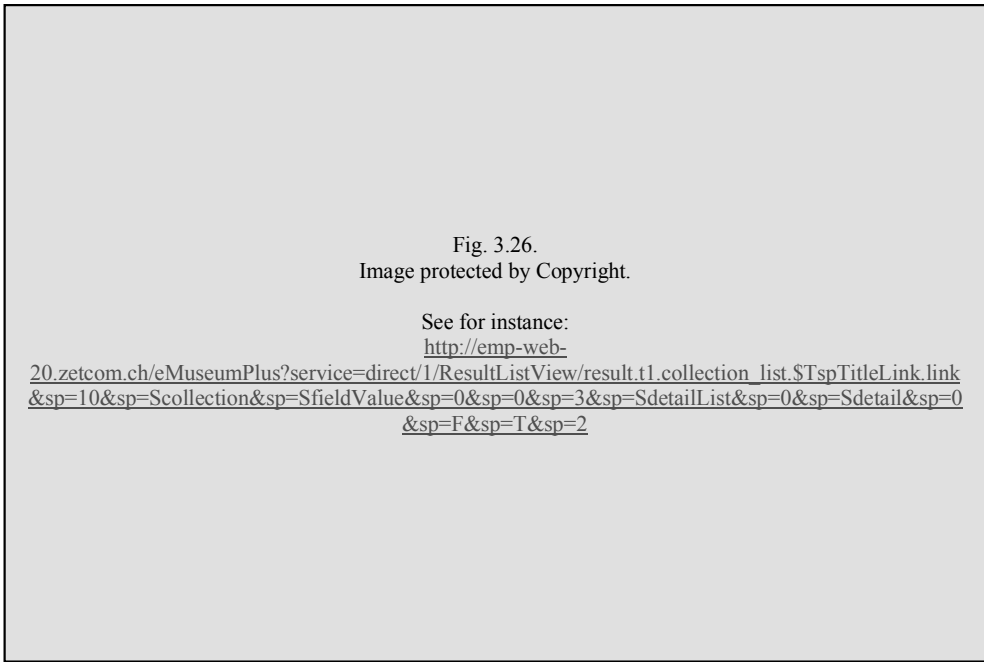


Fig. 3.26. Emilio Prini, *Emilio Prini 1970*, 1970.
Letterpress on cardboard, original frame by the artist, 25 x 40 cm.

mechanical technique with which it is produced completely abolishes the signature's aspect of continuity: being printed, the name that appears in *Emilio Prini 1970* carries no trace of the artist's hand, and cannot point back at the unique individual by virtue of indexicality or personal style. The technique chosen for Prini's work rather suggests a full separation between the name/work and the artist who wrote the name and produced the work. The framing of the name (and the work's current owner, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, emphasise that the substantial frame is the artist's own inclusion) further underlines the separation between the producing artist and the motif.¹⁷⁰ In physically enclosing the name, the frame marks a physical schism between the name and its carrier, and in announcing that what it contains is a work of art, the frame implies that that its contents is the *image* of a written name or signature, which is further removed from the self that once wrote it, and that the name-motif has value in its own right. Finally, the year indication behind the name in *Emilio Prini 1970* has a similar function as the year indications has in Paolini's book of signatures, and the serialisation of the name has in Boetti's drawings. Contrary to coincidence between the artist and the single work in which his

¹⁷⁰ See for instance Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, *Entrare nell'opera: Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera* (Vaduz: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2019), 40.

name occurs, it indicates that the artist will materialise again, in/as other works in other years, and expand as new works emerge. Thus, the ‘image’ of the artist provided by *Emilio Prini 1970* is not pointing back to the artist-of-the-world who carries that name, rather it is a momentary and fragmentary realisation of the artist-as-name, which points back to the totality of works associated with it.

As a final example of Arte Povera’s conceptualised self-portraits, I turn once more to Paolini, and his *Io (frammento di una lettera)* (I [Fragment of a Letter]) from 1969. This miniature work consists of a circular cut-out from a machine-typed letter, displaying the first personal pronoun ‘io’ (“I”) at its centre, as the only decipherable word (Fig. 3.27).¹⁷¹ Personal pronouns like ‘I’ belong to the grammatical category of deictic words or ‘shifters’, words whose referent and meaning vary with the context of their pronunciation. A work displaying the personal pronoun as its motif seems less bound to the specific artistic subject than those including the artist’s name, and thus further removed from representative and author-ising functions. In the case of *Io*, the Archivio Giulio e Anna Paolini has informed me that the letter from which the ‘io’ stems is written by Paolini, and the pronoun is thus likely to refer to the artist himself.¹⁷² This is not communicated by the work itself, so if the work is experienced without additional information, the ‘io’ could, in principle, stem from any source.

Because the context of the written ‘io’ is undetermined, the reference is left in suspension – somewhere between an unknown sender and an unknown addressee – with the consequence that ‘Io’ is just *an* or *any* ‘I’, or even a transitory ‘I’. Accordingly, Italo Calvino has referred to the ‘I’ of *Io* as “cartesian, categorical, grammatical, anonymous”, freed from “the corpulent heaviness of individual self-biography”.¹⁷³ Calvino’s reference to the ‘I’ of the work as a Cartesian ego upholds the idea of the self as something prior to and opposite of material manifestation, and thus, implicitly, of the artistic self as preceding the work. His claim that the work involves a shift away from “individual self-biography”, on the other hand,

¹⁷¹ The pronoun ‘Io’ also appears in the original title of Paolini’s 1967 work *Icaro* (Icaros), which was *I(car)o*. See Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato*, 146. Other Arte Povera’s works that could be characterised as conceptual self-portraits portraying the artist via a personal pronoun are found within the oeuvre of Calzolari, such as *IOMEMECOMEPUntICARDINALI* (1969), *IO MIO NOME* (1970) (see Chapter Four, pp. 171–72), *Elevazione myself* (1969) and *Io e i miei 5 anni nell’angolo della mia reale predica*. Other works that refer less directly to Calzolari by virtue of pronouns, are *Un flauto dolce per farmi suonare* (1968), *Oroscopo come progetto della mia vita* (1968), and *Il mio 25° anno d’età* (1968). I have chosen not to include these works in my discussion because they tend towards three-dimensionality rather than image and are therefore further removed from the self-portrait genre than the other works in this chapter.

¹⁷² Maddalena Disch, Archivio Giulio e Anna Paolini, private e-mail correspondence, 08.12.2021.

¹⁷³ Italo Calvino, “La Squadratura”, 230. My translation. Calvino’s text does not mention *Io* – nor any other work by Paolini – by title, but the link between this particular passage in the text and *Io* is indicated in the layout of publications and in commentary texts like Splendorini, “Apocryphie, tautologie et vertige de la multiplication”.



Fig. 3.27. Giulio Paolini, *Io (frammento di una lettera)*, 1969.
Fragment of typewritten letter on adhesive rubber support, Ø 1.5 cm.

suggests that *Io* repeals author-ity in a manner similar to the *autoritratti* in which Paolini appropriates Poussin's and Rousseau's self-portraits, which dissolves the personal self in a beyond-individual structure – not the structure of tradition or cultural milieu this time, but of language. The indeterminacy of 'io' in Paolini's *Io* also allows anyone to claim it, and individual viewers to imagine themselves being the 'I' of the work. As Dalla Bernardina has noted, the 'io' – “becomes impersonal, referring to the universal 'I' of the spectator” both because it is a shifter and because it is written by the anonymising typewriter rather than by hand.¹⁷⁴ The work can therefore be seen to demonstrate an often emphasised point from Barthes's text on authorship, namely how “the death of the author” corresponds with “the birth of the reader”.

In “What is an Author?” Foucault underlines that the personal pronouns or 'shifters' appearing in a text refer to “an alter ego whose distance from the author varies, often changing in the course of the work.” The 'I' of a text does not refer to a single individual in the real world, but gives rise to a number of disparate selves, belonging to different individuals – like the fictive narrator or the characters of a novel – or to the introducing, arguing and concluding 'I' of a

¹⁷⁴ Dalla Bernardina, “Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini”, 4.

treatise, which is never the same self.¹⁷⁵ To him, this plurality of the writing subject serves as an argument against the practice in literary discourses to categorise, interpret and evaluate texts by relating them to biographical authors. In “The Death of the Author”, Barthes announces that the literary ‘I’ is “empty outside of the very enunciation which defines it”, since “language knows a ‘subject’, not a ‘person’.” He also describes the deictic character of the ‘I’ as a quality that authors can make deliberate use of when crediting Mallarmé, Valéry and Proust for creating confusion concerning the referent of the literary ‘I’. Proust, Barthes argues, is “concerned with the task of inexorably blurring, by an extreme subtilization, the relation between the writer and his characters.”¹⁷⁶ One can add that Derrida makes practical use of a similar strategy when composing his texts as if they are dialogues between unidentifiable speakers, and Seán Burke remarks how commentators tend to relate this compositional structure in Derrida’s work to a dismissal of strong authorship; it is seen as “a tactic that prevents any one authorial voice from gaining control.”¹⁷⁷ What Barthes’s, Foucault’s and Derrida’s different approaches to the issue all indicate, then, is that the literary ‘I’ separates from the real-world referent and blurs with other textual voices, obscuring the representational function that relates the written ‘I’ to the writing person. Seen this way, the unspecified ‘io’ in *Io* points to the indeterminacy of its referent, and makes a case against the idea of tracing the work back to an individual artist behind and subjecting it to that artist’s author-ity.¹⁷⁸

However, in my view Paolini’s *Io* is not as inclusive as it first seems, rather, the ‘io’ of the work – like the artists’ names in other conceptual self-portraits – points exclusively to the work’s signatory artist. Paolini does release the ‘io’ from its original referent when separating it from the rest of the letter and presenting it as an artwork. But in the act of attaching the ‘io’ to the wall and duplicating it in the work’s title, he ties a new referent to it, since the *Io* of the work’s title from that point on will appear in combination with the artist’s name, like in the standard caption “Giulio Paolini, *Io (frammento di una lettera)*, 1969”. Consequently, the

¹⁷⁵ Foucault, “What is an Author?”, 215–16.

¹⁷⁶ Barthes, “The Death of the Author”, 144–45. This point is elaborated and problematised in William H. Gass, “The Death of the Author”, *Salmagundi*, No. 65, Fall 1984.

¹⁷⁷ Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011 [1992]), 164. Burke exemplifies this by pointing to Christopher Norris, *Derrida* (London: Fontana Press, 1987), but problematises the stance in the following pages of his book. See also Bernadette Guthrie, “Invoking Derrida: Authorship, Readership, and the Specter of Presence in Film and Print”, *New Literary History*. Vol. 42, No. 3, Summer 2011, 529. Note that Derrida’s mixing of voices should not be related to narrative theory or *narratologie*, which was influential in France at the time. The discussion of the literary voice in the field of literary theory is expansive, especially in structuralist theory, but not one I find relevant to pursue here, where it suffices to state that *Io* creates confusion regarding the identity of the enunciator.

¹⁷⁸ For an account of how other visual artists, notably Duchamp, use the shifter to address “the problem of naming an individuated self”, see Rosalind E. Krauss, “Notes on the Index. Seventies Art in America”, *October*, No. 3 Spring 1977.

specific artist's name inflects itself onto or folds itself over the *Io* in the work's title. Since the 'io' in the work is indisputably the referent of the title's *Io*, it further inflects itself onto that seemingly impersonal, machine-written 'io' on the disc of white paper that constitutes the work. A representational relation is thus established between the work's 'io' and the discursive 'Giulio Paolini, *Io*', as a result of which the artist's name is projected upon 'io'. This series of projections – of name through title to work – justifies the characterisation of *Io* as a self-portrait.

Paolini has uttered himself critically against the practice of attribution that serves as a premise for my understanding of the work as a self-portrait. In bringing a work to an exhibition and giving it a title, Paolini argues, "the artist will end up believing that *he* is the originator of such a prodigy and that he can thus do anything he wants with it". In doing so, "he commits his own original sin and falls from grace, forgetting that it is the work itself that grants him a name, that temporarily lends him its authenticity."¹⁷⁹ In characterising *Io* as a self-portrait, I do not claim that the work is at odds with Paolini's stance, on the contrary, I suggest that Paolini's work elucidates the conventions of attribution to demonstrate how author-ity itself is a projection. In relying on the work's title and the caption's juxtaposition of title and artist's name to mark the artist's presence in the work, Paolini makes a point Derrida later verbalised in *Memoirs of the Blind*; he demonstrates that self-portraiture's representational character is hypothetical, and "depends on the juridical effect of the title, on this verbal event that does not belong to the inside of the work but only to its parergonal border."¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the artist to which the 'io' of the work is connected, through the *Io* of the title, is 'merely' the artist-as-name – the caption's 'Giulio Paolini' – and not the biographical artist. In order to connect the 'io' with the 'real' Giulio Paolini, another referential inference is required, from 'Giulio Paolini' as the name appearing beside the work's title in a caption to the man carrying that name. This involves not only taking a step out of the work itself to the parergonal elements of title and caption, but also a leap out of the work-and-caption constellation that is a conventional given in the exhibition or publication context. *Io* can be argued to expose the schisms and the overall distance between the work and the artist-of-the-world, and so problematises the notion that a self-portrait is based on an essential identity with its model/maker.

¹⁷⁹ Giulio Paolini, "A constellation, an indeterminate mosaic, a sole and single form", in *Arte Povera in collezione/in collection*, eds. Ida Gianelli, Marcella Beccaria and Giorgio Verzotti (Milan: Charta, 2000), 199.

¹⁸⁰ Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind*, 64. The title is also a determining factor when Paolini presents Poussin and Rousseau's self-portraits as his own, as in the two *Autoritratto* from 1968. This "juridical effect" of the title is also something Foucault finds Magritte playing with and challenging in his paintings, when introducing negating "non-relations" between their visual contents and their titles. See Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe* [1973] ed. and trans. James Harkness (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008 [1983]), 36 and further; and Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting*, 71.

While separating the motif ‘io’ from the living artist Giulio Paolini, the relationship that *Io* poses between the artist-as-name and the work is nevertheless one of physical intimacy. As Ilaria Splendorini has pointed out, the motif’s ‘io’ also designates the little paper disc on which it is presented – that is, the work itself. If merging that insight with the stance that the artist’s name is projected onto the motif ‘io’ through the corresponding title, Paolini gives the artist-as-name a material substance in *Io*. Rather than replacing the “corpulent heaviness” of the biographical self with a cartesian ego, as Calvino suggests, I would contend that *Io* allows the artist-as-name to materialise in and as the little paper disc. With Splendorini, I conclude that the written element of *Io* marks an “inclusion of the author in the work”, and that this inclusion is “effectively eliminating the distance between work and author: the work is the author and vice versa.”¹⁸¹ But what *Io* offers is not a work in which the artist is present as a biographical person or as an originator, rather, and in line with Paolini’s own statement above, it is a work that ‘lends him authenticity’ by tying to his name – and by giving that name a form. Literally, *Io* presents the artist as a “paper-*I*” – a term used by Barthes in “From Work to Text” to denote the kind of authorial presence he welcomes, in which the life of the author “is no longer the origin of his fictions but a fiction contributing to his work.”¹⁸² *Io* presents the artist as an ‘I’ that (e)merges with the work.

Neither the artists’ names nor the personal pronoun in Arte Povera’s conceptual self-portraits serve to represent the artist-of-the-world. First, the *mechanisation* of the writing process works against representation: the repetition of the signature in Paolini’s *Giulio Paolini* and the abandonment of the handwritten signature in favour of stencilled, printed, or typed names/pronoun in Boetti’s drawings, Prini’s print and Paolini’s *Io* counter the idea of the written name as a mark of unique identity. Second, the Arte Povera artists generally tend to approach the *formal qualities* of language, often to the extent that it challenges language’s representational function.¹⁸³ This aspect of their practice is also seen in some of the conceptual

¹⁸¹ Splendorini, “Apocryphie, tautologie et vertige de la multiplication”, n.p. My translation.

¹⁸² Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text” [1971], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 161. Admittedly, Barthes here speaks of cases in which references to the authors’ real life are part of the works, in a manner that they are not in *Io* or any other of Arte Povera’s conceptual self-portraits. The point that the ‘I’ is “written forth”, however, holds also for Arte Povera’s conceptual self-portraits.

¹⁸³ The *poveristi*’s approach to language as form is seen, for instance, in Kounellis’s “alfabeto paintings” produced from 1958 onwards, in which individual letters, marks and signs make indecipherable patterns against white grounds, or in the letter grids that Boetti started producing from 1970 on, such as the series of *EMME I ELLE ELLE E...*, in which Boetti distributes words and sentences into colourful grids, and at the same time complicates the reading act. Calzolari has stated that in his works, “the writing becomes an icon: an image far away from painting, but always an image”. See statement by Pier Paolo Calzolari in Germano Celant, “Toward the Sublime”, in *Pier Paolo Calzolari*, ed. Germano Celant (New York, NY: Barbara Gladstone Gallery/Urbanas, 1988), 12.

self-portraits, like Boetti's series of drawings, which disassembles the name and presents it as more or less free-standing letters or points. In disassembling the name, they fragment the image of the self in a manner comparable to the photographic self-portraits discussed in the previous section. Finally, the way Arte Povera's conceptual self-portraits *stage* the artist's name – for instance in Prini's framing of his name in *Emilio Prini 1970* – underline the name's exteriority and autonomy relative to the self that carries and writes it, undermining its representative function. Arguably, the choice to represent the artist by name rather than a resembling image can itself be seen as a 'double distancing' of motif from model, like the one Sherman performs through other means.

Rather than representing the artists-of-the-world and confirming them as author-ities, Arte Povera's conceptual self-portraits are in line with the ideas Foucault presents about authors and their work in "What is an Author?", in which he speaks of the author as a name that does not point to an individual like the proper name does, but to the variety of works associated with it. In that sense, Foucault inverts the representational idea of the relationship between author and work: the author-name does not have priority relative to the works, rather it rises from and relies on them. In presenting the artist's name in the position self-portraiture traditionally reserves for the artist's image, Arte Povera's conceptual self-portraits immediately seem to present tautologies of the artistic self, indicating that the artist = the name = the work, and thus claim a 1:1 relationship between the artist and the single work.¹⁸⁴ If so, they would comply with the representational idea of correspondence and symmetry between a self-portrait's motif and the singular model behind it. However, factors hinting at seriality or multiplication in many of the conceptual self-portraits indicate another relationship between artist and works. The repetition of the personal signature in Paolini's book, the reoccurrence of the name across Boetti's drawings and the year indication in *Emilio Prini 1970* suggest that the respective artists' names point to a number of manifestations – to the already realised works in which they appear, but implicitly also to new works potentially realised in the future. In line with Foucault's conception of the author-name, the conceptual self-portraits present the artists as names that relate to the totality of works with which they are associated, and so come to challenge both the representational idea of correspondence between motif and model, and the author-itarian idea of the artist's priority relative to the work. Moreover, in portraying the artist's name or the

¹⁸⁴ Arte Povera artists are often credited for their interest in tautology, understood as a 'truism' or a statement expressing the same thing twice in different forms, thus having no exterior referents and being an antithesis to representation understood as something pointing beyond itself. However, tautology tends to be related to Arte Povera's presentation of unworked materials as artworks, thus proclaiming "what you see is what you get".

singular first-person pronoun, these works give the name – which, in Foucault’s understanding is a discursive function with no physical presence apart from the hybrid presence compiled by the totality of works associated with it – an instantaneous shape or form, a momentary manifestation in the form of the singular work.

Self-Portraiture at a Crossroads

As noted before, Owens’s writing on the visual arts involves a logic of progress, where the ‘death of the author’ instantiates a shift from a modernist critique of representation – which seeks to detach representations from their referents – to postmodernism – which rather addresses the politicised premises of representation or issues of representativeness, such as the question of who and what is considered worthy of being seen and represented. To Owens, Sherman’s “Untitled Film Stills” are successful examples of postmodernist self-portraiture because they expose how female self-identity is formed according to the male gaze and popular culture’s maintaining of the male perspective on women. Paolini’s self-portraits, on the other hand, are dismissed as modernist by Owens because they simply stage the artist’s disappearance from his work, and illustrate the liberation of the motif/work from its model/artist.

Among the Arte Povera self-portraits presented in this chapter, some arguably satisfy Owens’s requirements of postmodernist art. A few of the works presented in the first section, for instance, present the artist in costume-like attires; in Paolini’s *Delfo*, the artist’s sunglasses and dark clothes, combined with his spread out legs and arms folded over his chest, make him look self-assured and secretive. He poses as an unapproachable celebrity or a secret agent, and thus takes the appearance of a stereotypical masculine character, comparable with the fictive female characters that Sherman embodies in her “Untitled Film Stills”. As mentioned, the outfit worn by Pistoletto in *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli* has made critics interpret the work as parodying the artist as a celebrity. Not addressing sexual difference, these works can nonetheless be seen to raise questions of representativeness, exploring the expectations around the role of the artist and the structures that award some artists recognition and not others. From the second section, Paolini’s appropriated self-portraits as Poussin and Rousseau stand out; here Paolini presents himself and his works as products of a collective tradition and milieu, of the art historical canon and a compilation of contemporaneous collectors, curators and critics. The works thus bring attention to the “framework” of artistic production, as Owens requires. Finally, Arte Povera’s conceptual self-portraits address conventional attribution practices like the signature, the frame (Prini) and the caption (Paolini’s *Io*), and so expose “that system of power

that authorizes certain representations while blocking, prohibiting, or invalidating others”, as Owens characterises postmodernist art.¹⁸⁵

A turn to the politicised aspects of representation, however, is not the defining feature of Arte Povera’s self-portraits and their critique of author-ity. These works rather perform a self-critical and medium-oriented critique of self-portraiture’s representational function, which in turn affects the genre’s author-ising function. Rather than examining the framework of production, as Owens advises, Paolini’s strategy in *Delfo* is to expose the actual framework of his self-portrait – the stretcher. A similar *exposure of the means of representation* is found in the other self-portraits discussed in the first section above, when emphasising the gaze and optical aids such as glasses, lenses and mirrors. By virtue of this exposure, Arte Povera’s *autoritratti* point to schisms between the spheres of viewer, motif and model. They question the self-portrait’s mediating function and the idea of a seamless passage from the viewer through the image towards the real-life artist behind it, and hinder the motif from affirming that artist. The artist-model is thus deprived of the priority relative to the image commonly awarded in a representational understanding of self-portraiture, and the artist, presented as motif within a secluded image space, appears instead in a vulnerable position, fully exposed to the gazes of others. In the works discussed in the second section, Boetti and Paolini exploit the inherent possibilities of photographic techniques to *multiply the image of the self*, and so decompose the artist within the sphere of images. In that sense, they question the idea of a coherent, representable self, which anchors both the genre of self-portraiture and the modern idea of the artist as author-ity. Moreover, these self-portraits are based on an indexical connection between the artist-motif and the artist-model, but their strategies of sequencing and serialising dilute this connection and demonstrate a gradual distancing of the artist-motif from its origin; the motifs leave their referents behind. The conceptual self-portraits presented in the last section above abandon the principle of resemblance altogether and *portray the artist as a name* rather than an individual. By employing or hinting at seriality or repetition they indicate that the artist as name manifests as and is composed of numerous works, and so propose an inverted hierarchy, where artists emerge from and are given substance by their works, rather than the other way around. Their play with the conventions and practices of attribution, which elucidates the elements through which artists are granted author-ity over their works, cast further doubt on the presumption that artists precede their work, and substantiate the alternative idea that artists are products of their works and of conventions tied to their presentation. By virtue of this self-

¹⁸⁵ Owens, “The Discourse of Others”, 168.

reflexive and medium-attentive experimentation with the means and limits of representation, the anti-authoritarianism of Arte Povera's self-portraits relate to Crimp's and Krauss's accounts of Sherman's "Film Stills", which also emphasise how various formal elements and technical effects objectify the artist as motif and establish distance between artist-model, artist-motif and viewer, thus disputing the self-portraits' capacity to affirm their model and confirm the artist in the role of originator.

In emphasising non-affirmational aspects, Arte Povera's self-portraits can be seen to strive for liberation from the "tyranny of the signified", and to promote the autonomous motif/work as an alternative to the idea of the artist as origin. This is what Owens considers a non-progressive modernist problematisation of representation and author-ity. However, Arte Povera's self-portraits do not present the motifs/works as independent of their models/producers. The self-portraits' relation to their artists is openly acknowledged in these works, whether in the form of recognisable images, indexical relations or the spelling out of the artists' names. When the artist-motifs are presented as detaching from their origin – as is the case in Pistoletto's mirror paintings or Boetti's and Paolini's image series – there are always elements that hold them back in the representational sphere, like with the cropping of Pistoletto's figures or the film strip in Boetti's work. More than promoting the autonomy of the images in respect to their models, Arte Povera's self-portraits present the artist-as-motif – that is, as detached from its model, but adhering to the materiality/medium of the work. One can argue, then, that Arte Povera self-portraits "problematise the activity of reference", but, like Krauss and Crimp, in a manner that considers representation a relationship between motif and model, and that centres on the questions of mediation and affirmation, rather than addressing representation as a wider, socio-political issue.

Owens presents the shift he promotes in the visual arts – from art-specific concerns to socially pressing issues – as provoked by the 'death of the author' discourse, and as a continuation of Foucault's analysis of authorship in particular. Certain aspects of his account of Sherman's works, however, don't align with Foucault's thoughts on the topic. This is seen in the disparate understanding of what it entails to *be seen* that arises between Owens's description of Sherman's stills, on the one hand, and Krauss's alternative account of Sherman's series, as well as my own discussion of Arte Povera self-portraits, on the other. Owens argues that the 'death of the author' discourse requires a focus on the structures of representation in order to address the injustice that some are seen and regarded representable, while others are denied a similar recognition. He finds this focus in Sherman's work: in representing women, the film stills lift a marginalised group to the centre of representation and challenges the

structures that make this marginalisation possible. In Owens's account, then, visibility in/as representation is a token of the portrayed person's recognition as a subject.¹⁸⁶ In Krauss's account of the "Film Stills", on the other hand, Sherman's presence in the photographs ties her to the surface/image space, as underlined by effects like framing, blurring and flattening light. In this case, visibility in/as representation is objectifying. This is also the case in my reading of Arte Povera self-portraits: when the Arte Povera artists expose the means of representation, and oppose the idea of seamless transition from image to referent, they also expose themselves in/as representation, as mere motifs, belonging to the image sphere. Their self-exposure does not compensate for representational biases by bringing the previously overseen into focus, rather the Arte Povera artists abandon the author-itarian position outside and prior to the work, where the representing gaze is located, in favour of the subordinate position of the object seen. In so doing, they remain true to the distinction Foucault indicates in his analysis of *Las Meninas*, between seer/representer and seen/represented, and clearly mark their rejection of the former position. The mere expansion of the field of the visible/representable that Owens finds Sherman's "Film Stills" to offer, on the other hand, fails to problematise the relation between what is seen/represented and the artist as seer/representer: Sherman's own role as the one with the power to see/represent remains underexplored.

Owens sees the shift from the artist/work relation to the frameworks of artwork production, and to the frameworks of self-presentation in Sherman's case, as a response to Foucault's claim that one should investigate "the space left empty by the author's disappearance". Foucault himself never suggests leaving the question of the author's role behind. On the contrary, his contribution to the 'death of the author' discourse consists of an analysis of the author-name as a discursive function, based on the conviction that any attempt to simply replace the author with alternative sources of meaning are compensatory. Owens's reading of "Untitled Film Stills", which escapes the question of Sherman's own role as producer and introduces the male gaze as a constituent behind female self-expression, tends towards establishing the male gaze as an alternative source behind particular appearances. Dealing directly with the question of the artist's position relative to the work – as Sherman does according to Krauss's and Crimp's commentary on her work, and the Arte Povera artists do in their self-portraits – is more in sync with Foucault's analysis of what the author is, if not the origin behind a work. Owens argues with reference to Foucault that the practice and critical analysis of self-portraiture should address social injustice and skewed power structures, but

¹⁸⁶ This is also indicated in another text, in which Owens argues that the subject of a self-portrait "poses as an object *in order to be a subject*". See Craig Owens, "Posing", [1985] in *Beyond Recognition*, 215.

does not take into account the power structures in which artistic (self-portraying) practices are most intimately embedded – namely, the representational ones between model and motif and between artist and work.

Two different options for self-portraiture are suggested by Owens's account of Sherman's "Film Stills" and the alternative account represented here by Krauss's and Crimp's discussions of the same series and my own discussion of Arte Povera's *autoritratti*. Owens's account establishes an ambiguous relationship between Sherman's photographs and the self-portrait genre. By implying that the success of her self-portraits consists in heightening the societal recognition of the responsible artist-model and the group to which she belongs – women marginalised by the male gaze – Owens actually diminishes the radicality of Sherman's work. This key example of postmodernist self-portraiture comes to fulfil the nascent function of the genre – namely, to reflect and substantiate the status of the portrayed artist and the social group to which (s)he belongs – which, in the early modern period was tied to artists' profession, rather than sex/gender. One can also argue that Owens's reading of Sherman's works foregrounds a political discourse over that of art art/visuality at self-portraiture's expense. Sherman's problematisation of self-representation, as Owens discusses it, reveals female self-constitution as a form of fictionalisation, but this fictionalisation is not restricted to self-representation in images or artworks: it also takes place when women shape their identities as social beings. As Owens puts it, Sherman's typological self-portraits "treat the subject of mimesis, not simply as an aesthetic activity, but as it functions in relation to the constitution of the self".¹⁸⁷ As a result, their problematisation of self-representation does not concern the particular figure of the artist and the doubly author-itarian role as the work's model and producer. In this account, the self-portrait is used to address structures and power relations that exceed the realm of art; the self-portrait is a suspended form, invested with a new, extra-artistic content.

Arte Povera *autoritratti*, on the other hand, challenge the self-portrait's conventional form, as an image resembling the artist. When exposing the means of representation, the Arte Povera artists tend to hide and make themselves inaccessible behind these means: when fragmenting their images they oppose the idea of the self-portrait as an essentialised image of a coherent self and when avoiding the artist's image in their conceptual self-portraits, they balance on the very edge of what can be characterised as self-portraiture. While doing so, they continue to pursue the issue that self-portraiture has critically engaged with throughout the

¹⁸⁷ Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse", 83–84.

genre's modern history – that is, the character of the relationship between the artist-of-the-work and the artist-of-the-world, or whether and how the artist's image represents the artist in the double role of model and producer. Thus, whereas Sherman, in Owens's interpretation, activates the self-portrait as an empty form, Arte Povera self-portraits challenge and tend to abandon that form, while continuing to address questions regarding the status of the artist relative to his image and the work in which it occurs, i.e. questions that directly concern the issue of author-ity. The following chapters demonstrate how the Arte Povera artists continue on this trajectory, exploring the relationship between the executing artists and their artwork-appearances also within works that exceed the genre of self-portraiture.

Chapter Four

Between Presence and Representation

The Performing Arte Povera Artist

Joanna Woodall's claim that *self-portraiture* offers "[t]he clearest instance of the presence of the artist in the work" is challenged by the *performative practices* that were embraced and developed by Euro-American visual artists around 1970.¹ Whether defined as 'performances', 'body works', 'happenings', 'events', 'actions' or 'interventions', these performative practices offer time-based presentations of human action – often enacted spontaneously before and in direct contact with a live audience with the signatory artist as the sole or main performer.² In all these cases, the artist's presence in performative art is *physical*, and arguably as essential to the single work and to the discipline as artists' iconic appearances are within the genre of self-portraiture.

Performativity is central in Arte Povera's production. Typically, the artists exploit the performative aspects of materials to produce objects that gradually change over the course of an exhibition. In processual sculptures and installations ice melts and water evaporates at room temperature, hardened wax turns soft when exposed to the heat of a neon tube, plants grow and

¹ Joanna Woodall, "'Every painter paints himself': Self-portraiture and creativity", in *Self Portrait: Renaissance to Contemporary*, eds. Anthony Bond and Joanna Woodall (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2005), 27.

² I prefer the open terms 'performative practices', 'performative works' and 'performative art' when discussing Arte Povera works. The concepts listed above are either too expansive or too narrow to comprise the works I engage with. For instance, 'performance' includes works in which the signatory artist does not appear and strongly indicates a live staging before audience; 'happening' (Allan Kaprow, "The Demi-Urge. Something to take Place: a Happening", *The Anthologist* 30, No. 4, 1959), 'action' and 'intervention' indicate that the artist and/or work interfere with a given milieu or public; 'body works' (Willoughby Sharp, "Body Works: A Pre-critical, Non-definitive Survey of Very Recent Works Using the Human Body or Parts Thereof", *Avalanche*, No. 1, Fall 1970) suits my purposes in that it distinguishes a genre of works focused on the artist's body, its gestures and features from more theatrical performances involving several actors, props and/or a stronger narrative. However, both 'body works' and the more common 'body art' tend to be associated with the abject and the liminal, which is not my focus here. When I occasionally use the latter terms to discuss Arte Povera works, it is either because they are appropriate to the particular work under discussion, or because I refer to scholars who use them in a manner that is not at odds with my own understanding of Arte Povera's performative works.

picked leaves wilt over time, and sulphates and acids affect the form and colour of metals.³ A vast number of Arte Povera works also involve human action, and many of them evolve around the acts, gestures and bodily expressions of the artists themselves.⁴ The current chapter is devoted to the latter, ‘artist-centred’ performative works, and discusses how the issues of representation and author-ity are related and dealt with when the Arte Povera artists appear as performers in their own works.⁵ The focus is therefore not on the narratives of the performances, but on the artists’ presence and position within or relative to their performative works.

In the history of the visual arts, the increasing interest in performative practices around 1970 is often explained as related to and following the work of ‘action-painters’ like Jackson Pollock towards a cultivation of the gesture itself.⁶ However, early performance art also drew on theatre practice and theory, and Arte Povera is no exception. As is well known, Germano Celant borrowed the concept ‘povera’ from a theatre context; it stems from Jerzy Grotowski’s 1965 essay “Towards a Poor Theatre” (*Ku teatrowi ubogiemu*).⁷ But connections between the associated artists and the most agitating proponents of experimental theatre existed before the term Arte Povera was coined. The Rome-based artists Pino Pascali and Jannis Kounellis were exposed to theatre practices during their studies at the Accademia di Belle Arti around 1960, where Pascali was enrolled in the scenic design department.⁸ Both artists came under the

³ I have works like the following in mind: Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Senza titolo (Malina)* (1968), Gilberto Zorio, *Tenda* (1967), Mario Merz, *Sitin* and *Che fare?* (both 1968), Jannis Kounellis’s *Senza titolo (Cacti)* (1967), Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Rapsodie inpete* (1969) and Gilberto Zorio, *Piombi II* (1968). The incorporation of animals as materials and/or performers in Arte Povera works is a topic that I would like to address in a future study.

⁴ For a broad survey of actions and performances by the Arte Povera artists between 1959 and 1978, see Nike Bätzner et al., eds., *Entrare nell’opera: Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera* (Cologne: Walther König, 2019), 381–531. Among exhibitions with a performative profile in Italy at the time were “Museo Sperimentale d’Arte Contemporanea”, organised by Eugenio Battisti at Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna in Turin, April–September 1967, particularly the related programme “Les Mots et les choses. Concert Fluxus art total” at Galleria il Punto and Teatro stabile during the opening days; “Il percorso”, organised by Mara Coccia at Galleria Arco d’Alibert, Rome, March–April 1968; and “Teatro delle mostre”, organised by Plinio De Martiis at Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, May 1968. For more on these exhibitions, see Claudio Zambianchi, “‘Oltre l’oggetto’: qualche considerazione su Arte Povera e performance”, *Ricerche di storia dell’arte*. Vol. 114, No. 3, 2014.

⁵ I focus on works in which the Arte Povera artist is the sole or main performer. Michelangelo Pistoletto, with his troupe Lo Zoo, Pier Paolo Calzolari and Jannis Kounellis are the Arte Povera artists who have worked most extensively with performance; they are not the centre of this study since their work tend to include others.

⁶ See Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock”, *ArtNews*, Vol. 57, No. 6, October 1958; Barbara Rose, “Namuth’s Photographs and the Pollock Myth”, in *Pollock Paining*, ed. Barbara Rose (New York, NY: Agrinde Publications, 1980); Mary Kelly, “Re-viewing Modernist Criticism” [1981], in *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York, NY: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984); and Amelia Jones, “The ‘Pollockian Performative’”, in Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis, MN: Univesity of Minnesota Press, 1998).

⁷ Jerzy Grotowski, “Towards a Poor Theatre” [1965], trans. T.K. Wiewiorowski, in *Towards a Poor Theatre*, ed. Eugenio Barba (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002). As noted by Nike Bätzner, Grotowski was well known in Italy at the time, due to the journal *Sipario*’s issue on Polish theatre (*Sipario*, Nos. 208–09, August–September 1963) and Grotowski’s lectures across Italy in the summer of 1965. See Nike Bätzner, “Jerzy Grotowski’s ‘Poor Theatre’”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 304.

⁸ Pascali was at the academy between 1955 and 1959, under Peppino Piccolo, Fabio Vergoz and Toti Scialoja. See Martina Rossi, “La firma dell’artista nel contest dello *happening*: Joseph Pascali fecit anno in Requiescat in Pace

influence of abstract painter Toti Scialoja, who taught at the academy while also having an extensive practice as scenographer and costume designer in Roman theatres. In the 1960s, Pascali assisted as set designer for various TV productions, while Kounellis made set designs for a number of theatre productions.⁹ Common to Pascali and Kounellis is also their affiliations with The Living Theatre, the experimental American troupe established by Judith Malina and Julian Beck in 1947, which first visited Rome in June 1961, and returned occasionally throughout the decade.¹⁰ It is reported that Kounellis donated work to the auction arranged by Roman artists in support of The Living Theatre during their 1965 stay in the city.¹¹ Regarding Pascali, some sources indicate that he worked as the troupe's assistant, while others merely report that he frequented its Italian residencies.¹² In any case, The Living Theatre's work is to have made a great impression on him: the performance of *Mysteries and Smaller Pieces* at Teatro Eliseo in 1965, and particularly its abandoning of narrativity in favour of non-sequential, playful rituals, allegedly inspired Pascali's own performance *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus* (Rest in Peace Conradin) later that year.¹³

The North Italian Arte Povera artists were also engaged in theatre productions. For instance, Giulio Paolini made scenography for several pieces played at Turin's Teatro Stabile between 1968 and 1974, while Michelangelo Pistoletto co-established Lo Zoo – a theatre troupe that assembled a number of artists, writers, actors, musicians and intellectuals, and performed around a dozen of actions, street plays, gallery and theatre performances between 1968 and 1971.¹⁴ Pistoletto claims that there was no connection between his performative practice and

Corradinus di Pino Pascali alla Mostra a soggetto della galleria La Salita”, in *Venezia Arti*, No. 26, 2017. Kounellis enrolled at the academy in 1956, and studied painting, engraving and stagecraft under Franco Gentilini, Mino Maccari and Toti Scialoja, respectively.

⁹ For more on Kounellis's designs for *A(Iter) A(ction)* (Egisto Macchi, Teatro Olimpico, Rome, 1966), *I Testimoni* (Carlo Quartucci, various theatres, 1968) and *Il lavoro teatrale* (Carlo Quartucci, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 1969), see Salvatore Margiotta, “A Strategy for a Different Stage Writing. Carlo Quartucci and Jannis Kounellis' Work in the '60s”, in *Anglistica AION an interdisciplinary journal*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2016; and Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 144–55 and 418–40. See also www.sciami.com and <https://archivio.teatrostabiletorino.it>. Note that many of Kounellis's “materiali scenici” were also exhibited as artworks.

¹⁰ For more on The Living Theatre's activities in Italy, see John Tytell, *The Living Theatre: Art, Excite, and Outrage* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1995), 208, 211, 214, 218 and 272; Pierre Biner, *The Living Theatre* (New York, NY: Horizon Press, 1972), 89–91 and 235–248. See also Nike Bätzner, “The Living Theatre”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*.

¹¹ For details on the auction of 26 March 1965, see Rossi, “La firma dell'artista”, 250. For Kounellis's relation to The Living Theatre, see also Daniela Lancioni, “Perché Jannis Kounellis ha consegnato la realtà della vita alla fissità del quadro?”, *Ricerche di storia dell'arte*. Vol. 114, No. 3, 2014, 48.

¹² See Nike Bätzner, “Pino Pascali: Wild Games and Wild Ideas”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 196 and 207 n. 3; Anna Paparatti, *Arte-Vita a Roma negli anni Sessanta e Settanta* (Rome: De luca editore d'arte, 2015), quoted in Rossi, “La firma dell'artista”, 248.

¹³ For the link between The Living Theatre and Pascali's performance, see Rossi, “La firma dell'artista”. For more on Pascali's *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus*, see pp. 168–69.

¹⁴ For more on Paolini's contributions to *Bruto Secondo* (Gualtiero Rizzi, 1968); *Atene Anno Zero* (Gualtiero Rizzi, 1970) and *Il trasloco* (Vittorio Gassman, 1972), see <https://archivio.teatrostabiletorino.it>. See also Bätzner et al.,

Italian avant-garde theatre, but he and other northern Arte Povera artists were also exposed to The Living Theatre, which visited Turin numerous times in the 1960s.¹⁵ Most relevant was probably their 1967 performance of *Mysteries...* at the Piper Pluriclub, an experimental discotheque which was an important venue for Arte Povera artists. It is noted that Pistoletto, the Merz couple and Calzolari, like Pascali, “maintained an active dialogue with members of The Living Theatre”, and that Pistoletto’s studio at times served as their headquarter when visiting Turin.¹⁶ The appreciation of the American troupe’s work is manifest in Arte Povera’s work: a 1967 mirror painting by Pistoletto depicts the artist embracing one of the troupe’s female members, and Calzolari titled a 1968 work *Malina* after The Living Theatre’s founder.¹⁷ Finally, the association between Arte Povera and The Living Theatre is sedimented in Celant’s choice to open his 1968 essay “Arte Povera” by quoting Beck and Malina.¹⁸

Arte Povera’s name relates to Grotowski’s ‘poor theatre’, but the artists’ affiliations with The Living Theatre also reveal an indirect line of influence from Antonin Artaud’s theories of “The Theatre of Cruelty”. It is primarily to Artaud that Beck and Malina turn when seeking theoretical support for their projects. The Living Theatre’s founders allegedly read Artaud’s 1938 essay collection *The Theatre and its Double (Le théâtre et son double)* in 1958, and cited him in the programme note for one of their plays.¹⁹ Artaud also had a prominent position in *Mysteries...*: apparently, a long extract from his collection of essays was quoted in the

Entrare nell’opera, 460–65; and Nicholas Cullinan, “Towards a Poor Theater. Giulio Paolini’s Scenographies in the 1970s”, in *TV70: Francesco Vezzoli guarda la RAI*, ed. Chiara Costa (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2017). For more on Lo Zoo, see for instance Andrea Bellini, *Facing Pistoletto* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2009); Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 483–518; Marco Farano, Christina Mundici and Maria Teresa Roberto, eds., *Michelangelo Pistoletto. Il varco dello specchio. Azioni e collaborazioni* (Turin: GAM, 2005); Claire Gilman, “Pistoletto’s Object Theatre”, in *Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974*, ed. Carlos Basualdo (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Contemporary Art, 2010).

¹⁵ Andrea Bellini, *Facing Pistoletto*, 79. Pistoletto here remarks that his troupe had more contact with American performance artists, such as the music group MEV, who contributed to the happening *Soup* at Galleria L’Attico in 1968 and *Play* at Desposito d’ Arte Presente the same year.

¹⁶ Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, *Entrare nell’opera: Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera* (Vaduz: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 2019), 27; Nike Bätzner, “Sculptural Performance – Performative Sculpture”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 86 n. 14; Carlos Basualdo, “Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974”, in Basualdo, *Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974*, 14–15. See also Museo MADRE, “Michelangelo Pistoletto and Lo Zoo”, <http://www.madrenapoli.it/en/collection/michelangelo-pistoletto-e-lo-zoo/> (accessed 09.04.2019).

¹⁷ Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto con Souzka* (1967); Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Senza titolo (Malina)* (1969). Calzolari has also stated that his own work is indebted to The Living Theatre, see Luciano Marucci, “Pier Paolo Calzolari. Tra l’essere e il divenire”, *Juliet*. Vol. 35, No. 168, 2014, 42.

¹⁸ Germano Celant, “Arte Povera” [1968], in *Arte Povera: Histories and protagonists* ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 1985); reprinted in *Arte Povera. Histories and Stories*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2011), 49. For further discussions on Arte Povera’s relation to theatre, see for instance Barbara Satre, “‘Vers un théâtre d’artiste’. Les incursions théâtrales des membres de l’Arte Povera”, *Historie de l’art*, No. 69, 2011.

¹⁹ According to Biner, Malina and Beck were introduced to the English translation of Artaud’s book in summer 1958, before it was published. See Biner, *The Living Theatre*, 51. For information about the citation of Artaud in the programme note for *The Connection*, see Tytell, *The Living Theatre*, 199.

programme for the presentation at Teatro Eliseo in Rome, and the play, according to Pierre Biner, ended with a thirty-minute painstaking acting out “inspired by Artaud’s description of the great plague that devastated Marseilles in 1720.”²⁰ Arte Povera artists may also have been exposed to Artaud’s work through a 1965 theme issue of *Sipario*, which was dedicated to the Theater of Cruelty and contained the first of Artaud’s manifestos, and by the publishing of Artaud’s *Le théâtre et son double* in Italian in 1968.²¹

In theoretical accounts of the performative art that emerged around 1970, Artaud and Grotowski are both central figures. In the context of this thesis, it is interesting to note that their ideas of experimental theatre have inspired (at least) two distinct conceptions of how performative art breaks with representational author-ity. For one, a phenomenologically oriented account of performance, represented here by Erika Fischer-Lichte and Lea Vergine, finds Artaud and Grotowski’s avant-garde theatre to introduce pure and immediate physical ‘presence’ as a quality that abolishes the representational hierarchy that traditionally has reigned between artist, work and viewer. The other ‘deconstructive’ account of performance leans on Derrida – on general points in his philosophical writings as well as on his reading of Artaud – when claiming that performative presence can never escape representation. Attempts to displace author-ity must therefore acknowledge how presence and representation are dependent on each other and always in tension. I will now give a more detailed account of the respective views, before discussing – with reference to these distinct understandings of performative art and performative presence – the main characteristics of Arte Povera’s artist-centred performative works, and the strategies with which these works refute author-ity.

Performance as Pure Presence: Phenomenological Readings of Grotowski and Artaud

Theatre historian Cormac Power notes that classical theatre has a representational component in its relation to a given text, and an extra-representational component that concerns the ‘here and now’ of the performance.²² According to Power, the latter component gained currency in twentieth-century theatre practice and theory at the cost of representation. Concordantly, performance theoretician Erika Fischer-Lichte emphasises in *The Transformative Power of*

²⁰ Biner, *The Living Theatre*, 90–91.

²¹ The *Sipario* issue on “Il teatro della crudeltà” was No. 230, June 1965. Artaud’s book was published in Italian as *Il teatro e suo doppio* by Einaudi in Turin. Kounellis was also exposed to Artaud’s thinking when working with scenography for Marco Diacono’s *Studio per A(lter) A(ction)* at Teatro Olimpico in Rome in spring 1966, as this play was based on Artaud’s letters.

²² Cormac Power, *Presence in Play: A Critique of Theories of Presence in the Theatre* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2008), 8–9. See the first chapter, “Making-Present: The fictional mode of presence”, for more on this.

Performance (Ästhetik des Performativen) how a ‘performative turn’ in theatre studies around the middle of the century encouraged performative practices that opposed the theatre’s representational aspects. Fischer-Lichte argues that performance artists since the 1960s have “based their performative experiments on a radical opposition between presence and representation, which allowed them to isolate and magnify the phenomenon of presence.”²³

In this shift “from pretence to presence”, Artaud and Grotowski are key references: as Power puts it, they have “become synonymous with the concept of presence in theatre.”²⁴ Both directors express discontent with the idea of the text as the theatre’s ‘ground’. In the preface to *The Theatre and its Double* Artaud addresses representation when speaking of a “rupture between things and words, between things and the ideas and signs that are their representation”, and regrets this schism between life itself and the systems our culture use to express it.²⁵ The idea of theatre as representation involves a hierarchisation, a “subjugation of the theatre to the text”, that Artaud intends to put to an end.²⁶ Grotowski also calls for a shift away from theatre’s representative function because, as he formulates it in “Towards a Poor Theatre”, “we know that the text per se is not theatre, that it becomes theatre only through the actors’ use of it.”²⁷ Artaud and Grotowski’s influential thinking can thus be characterised as a rejection of authority: both directors, states Power, “felt that theatre should be governed by its own immediate energies rather than the prescriptions of an absent playwright” – their motivation was “to rid the theatre of that author-figure”, and, arguably, replace it with the pure presence of the performer on stage.²⁸

Artaud’s and Grotowski’s strategies for the intensification of performative presence differ. Artaud’s is a strategy of excessive expressions: to compensate for the distance between life itself and the ‘civilised’ forms of language and art, one should replace any “artistic dallying with forms” with a forceful, engaged and authentic cultural practice closer to lived experience. He aims to recover a “unique language half-way between gesture and thought”, spoken through a spectacular scenography and the physical body expressions of the artist. He advises to “feed and furnish” the theatrical space with light effects and “enormous masks” to enforce its expression and “make it speak”.²⁹ Grotowski, on the other hand, advocates a “poor theatre” that

²³ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* [2004], trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London: Routledge, 2008), 97.

²⁴ Power, *Presence in Play*, 12.

²⁵ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double* [1938], trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1958), 7–8.

²⁶ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, 89; see also Power, *Presence in Play*, 54.

²⁷ Grotowski, “Towards a Poor Theatre”, 21.

²⁸ Power, *Presence in Play*, 56–57 and 125.

²⁹ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, 8, 96 and 98 for the quotes in this paragraph.

relieves the theatre of all that is extraneous or superfluous; he advises the elimination of costumes, music and lighting effects to make theatre “without make-up”. Acting, he argues, must aim for “via negativa”; it must take the form of sacrifice, as the actor “makes a total gift of himself” by peeling off “the life-mask” – that is, the naturalised layer consisting of both socially imposed behaviours and the artificial idea of individuality – to “get at those psychic layers behind the life-mask”. In this naked state, the actor is freed “from the time-laps between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction”, he finds a concurrency between consciousness and bodily expressions.³⁰

Whether suggesting to feed the theatre with effects or stripping it bare, scholars tend to point at a common goal between Artaud and Grotowski: both downplay theatre’s representational function of portraying a character in favour of the performing body’s deculturalised and ‘im-mediate’ expressions. Rather than re-presenting, the performer is to be self-present. Fischer-Lichte emphasises how Grotowski, in striving for alignments between inner impulse and outer reaction, develops a new concept of embodiment. Where embodiment in traditional theatre referred to the actualisation of a dramatic character through the acting body, always at the service of and processed through the mind, Grotowski’s thinking promotes a notion of embodiment in which the performer is understood as embodied mind. In so doing, he leaves the cartesian mind-body dualism obsolete and grants the body agency, she argues, claiming striking similarities with the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who dismissed mind-body dualism “in favour of the sensual body”.³¹ To Fischer-Lichte, it is precisely this idea of the performer liberated from the dramatic character and figuring as embodied mind that characterises performative art’s *radical* concept of presence.³²

A comparable reading of Artaud – albeit presented with a vocabulary more reminiscent of Grotowski’s – is found in the writings of the Italian critic Lea Vergine. In the 1974 essay “Body as Language. Body Art and Like Stories” (*Il corpo come linguaggio. Body art e storie simili*), Vergine claims that performance art works against the tendency of civilised culture to alienate individuals from life, from nature and from themselves. “Like Artaud”, Vergine argues, performance artists “want an intimate acquaintance with all of the possibilities of self-

³⁰ Grotowski, “Towards a Poor Theatre”, 16–23 for the quotes in this paragraph.

³¹ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 83.

³² Fischer-Lichte distinguishes the radical concept of presence from a *weak* concept of presence, which refers to the presentness of the acting body before its audience, thus to a situation happening *hic et nunc*, with the ability to affect the audience emotionally and physically, and a *strong* concept of presence, which explains presence as the capacity of actors to command not only “the stage, but the entire auditorium” in which they perform, and to hold the attention of their audience, thus also making the members of that audience aware of their own presence. See Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 84 and 97–99.

knowledge that can stem from the body and the investigation of the body. The body is stripped bare in an extreme attempt to acquire the right to a rebirth into the world.”³³ Also for Vergine, avant-garde theatre inspired post-war performative practices to reject the duality of representation in favour of the actor’s full and pure self-presence in the performative act.

According to Vergine, performance artists work against alienation by bringing the regressive aspects of current culture to acute attention when staging precariousness, danger and pain, thus exposing “a state of anguish for the *being-in-the-world*, and the pain that results from the impossibility of finding a real relationship with it.” The artists address liminal experiences, for “[o]nly by experimenting a little at a time with death does one come to understand a little bit more about life.” The artists’ search for a rebirth into the world also results in an excessive need to externalise themselves – to project, double, camouflage or idealise themselves in the performative artworks. With reference to Merleau-Ponty, Vergine states that the artist is “obsessed by the obligation to act as a function of ‘the other’, obsessed by the obligation to exhibit himself in order to be able *to be*.” Externalisation, she implies, is a strategy artists use to verify and know themselves. In this, there is an anti-authoritarian aspect: “the artist’s attempt to function in a *different* or *alternative* manner is an expression of the desire to eliminate the habitual position of prestige that his role comports”.

Central to Artaud’s and Grotowski’s ideas of theatre is not only the performers’ presence to themselves, but also the performers’ presence to their audience. Artaud criticises how the theatre’s stage/auditorium divide transforms the audience into “Peeping Toms”, and exclaims that his theatre will replace the traditional arrangement “by a single site, without partition or barrier of any kind” in order to re-establish direct communication between the actor and the spectator, who, “placed in the middle of the action, is engulfed and physically affected by it.”³⁴ Grotowski recommends physical arrangements that reflect “the proper spectator-actor relationship for each type of performance”; sometimes it is right for the actors to move among the audience, with the effect that the latter “begins to play a part in the performance”.³⁵ While many critics argue that viewer participation was not key to Grotowski, or that this aspect of his methodology was not accomplished in practice, Fischer-Lichte holds that many of his plays offered an “extreme proximity between actors and audience”, so that “the audience could feel

³³ Lea Vergine, “Body as Language. Body Art and Like Stories”, trans. Henry Martin, in *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language* [1974] (Milan: Skira Editore, 2007 [2000]), 8–9, 15 and 23 for all quotes in this paragraph and the next.

³⁴ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, 84 and 96.

³⁵ Grotowski, “Towards a Poor Theatre”, 19–20.

the actors' breath and smell their sweat."³⁶

To Artaud, the excessive stage effects and the actors' body expressions open a direct dialogue with the spectators, by evoking in them "sensations of heat, cold, anger, fear etc." Doing so, the performances "put the spirit physically on the track of something else"; they direct their audiences towards metaphysical ideas "which touch on Creation, Becoming, and Chaos", and may thus have "a therapeutic effect".³⁷ Grotowski is primarily concerned with how actors, by establishing contact between the psychic and bodily levels of the self, will experience contact between themselves and a "universal" or "common human truth". However, his writings do open up to the idea that such a contact with "the roots" is also experienced by the audiences who witness this "strikingly theatrical transubstantiation" of the actor's body.³⁸ At least, Grotowski underlines that theatre "cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, 'live' communion."³⁹ This makes Power conclude that the idea of the performer as "a channel through which spiritual energies could be transmitted to an audience" is common to both Artaud and Grotowski.⁴⁰

To Fischer-Lichte, such ideas of the live act's potential to incite transgressive moments of unification between actor and audiences is the most valuable legacy of avant-garde theatre theory in performance art. She finds Artaud's notion of "spiritual therapeutics" to indicate that theatrical performances have a "transformative power", introducing the spectator to liminal states where ideas of the logical, the rational and the individual dissolve. This is the main argument of her own aesthetics of performance art, claiming that performers have the ability to "bring forth their body as energetic" before an audience which "perceives the circulating energy as a transformative and vital energy." More concretely, spectators will have their ethical standards challenged when witnessing artists hurting themselves and exposing themselves to danger, debating whether to intervene or not. Confronted with such dilemmas, intensified by psychic reactions like pleasure, ambivalence and guilt, or by physical reactions like sweat, goose bumps or nausea, spectators will – like the performers – experience themselves "as embodied mind in a constant process of becoming."⁴¹ This bodily and energetic co-presence

³⁶ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 111. For the opposing views on Grotowski's audience involvement, see Biner, *The Living Theatre*, 100–01; Tytell, *The Living Theatre*, 224; Philip Auslander, "'Holy theatre' and catharsis", in *From Acting to Performance: Essays in modernism and postmodernism*, ed. Philip Auslander (London: Routledge, 1997), 22 and 25.

³⁷ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, 95, 84 and 90–91.

³⁸ Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre", 23 and 21. See also Philip Auslander, "'Just be your self'. Logocentrism and différance in performance theory", in Auslander, *From Acting to Performance*, 34.

³⁹ Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre", 19.

⁴⁰ Power, *Presence in Play*, 61.

⁴¹ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 194 and 98–99. Fischer-Lichte refers to this circulation of awareness and energy as "auto-poetic feedback".

between performer and audience, “this encounter – interactive and confrontational”, produces the performance as a transformative event.⁴²

Vergine fronts a slightly different view on the relationship between performer and audience, emphasising their mutual dependence. As she puts it, “[t]he artist offers his hand to the spectator and the success of the operation depends upon how and how much the spectator is willing to accept it.” The act “acquires significance only if his actions are met by an act of *recognition* on the part of the spectator”, and in so far as the performer is “*confirmed* in his identity” by the receptiveness and co-operation of the audience. Thus, “[t]he behaviour of the spectator is a gratification for the artist just as the behaviour of the artist is a gratification for the spectator.”⁴³ While Vergine conceives the audience as the performer’s “other” and describes the performer’s aim to be one of self-confirmation, her account presents performance as inciting an experience of co-existence that is fundamental in life. Thus, the performers’ complete presence to themselves in performances, and the self-present performers’ physical presence before their audience – which, in turn, entails the self-effacing co-presence of the respective parts – are central in both Fischer-Lichte and Vergine’s theories of performance.

Roland Barthes’s statement that the ‘death of the author’ corresponds with a ‘birth of the reader’ is often emphasised when the main points of the ‘death of the author’ discourse are outlined.⁴⁴ Similarly, the deaths of the playwright and the character in performance art, as Fischer-Lichte and Vergine describe it, entail a new role for the audience in bringing the work to completion. In Artaud’s and Grotowski’s writings, actors are to present themselves “naked” to an audience that is also stripped bare, in the sense of being open and receptive. In the encounter, the two parts merge and create the event together. For Vergine, the performers do not hold a superior position in this encounter, as they are dependent on the audience response to have themselves confirmed and to complete the work. To Fischer-Lichte, too, the transformation of and interrelations between the identities participating in the performative event is in opposition to an idea of the artwork as an object that arises “from the activities of the creator-subject and is entrusted to the perception and interpretation of the recipient-subject.” That idea is replaced by an idea of the artwork as “an event, set in motion and terminated by the actions of all the subjects involved – artists and spectators”, she posits.⁴⁵

⁴² Ibid., 38. See also p. 32.

⁴³ Vergine, “Body as Language. Body Art and Like Stories”, 26.

⁴⁴ Roland Barthes “The Death of the Author” [1967/1968], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 148.

⁴⁵ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 22.

In Chapter Two, I argued that an artist's appearance in his work is author-itarian in so far as it is representational, because representationalism entails that the artist-of-the-work answers to the artist *behind* the work – that is, the artist-of-the-world – as its ground/source. Accounts of performative work that emphasise pure presence suggest that the actor is one with the work during the performance; that the artist-of-the-world and the artist-of-the-work coincide in the artist's contingent appearance *as work*. In that sense, they offer an alternative to the representational hierarchy between origin and substitute, and the priority it gives to the artist-of-the-world over the work and the artist who appears in it. In addition, accounts like Fischer-Lichte's and Vergine's suggest that the performative work comprises its audience. Rather than re-presenting that which is prior and 'more real' *in front of* an audience, the performance is an action that takes place within the spectator's own realm. As Vergine states, the performing body is "chiselled into the world".⁴⁶ One can thus argue that performative work rejects the three separate spheres of artist, work and viewer presumed by representational thinking, and replaces them with a nonhierarchical and all-encompassing *one-dimensionality*, in which the artists, as works, situate themselves with the spectators in the realm of the real.

Vergine and Fischer-Lichte, then, find Artaud's and Grotowski's avant-garde theatre to inspire a performative art centred on pure presence, characterised by the immediate self-presence of the performers to themselves and by the "bodily co-presence of actors and spectators", which has the potential of fundamentally transforming both.⁴⁷ According to this view, performative art emerged by releasing theatrical performance from its representational function, to blend in with life itself. Performative presence is considered more authentic, immediate and intense than the artist's appearance in conventional self-portraiture: the artist depicted in a self-portrait is compensatory, since the image points back to a more originary, but physically absent artist, whereas artists in performative work are physically present in, or even *as*, the work they play part of. Performative presence can thus be described as anti-author-itarian: rather than presenting the artist as prior, it has the potentiality to make the artist, work and spectator momentarily coincide, aligning them. The concrete strategies that this strain of performance theory find to counteract author-ity are therefore the ones that increase the performers' bodily presence before their audience, that favours the primal or universal over the biographical or culturally specific, and that exert physical challenges to the performer's body,

⁴⁶ Vergine, "Body as Language. Body Art and Like Stories", 19. Vergine here quotes Edmund Husserl, but without sharing information about the quote's source.

⁴⁷ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 32.

converging their own limits and confronting the physical patience and the ethical standards of the audience that is positioned with the performers at the centre of events.

Performative Work and Impurity: Deconstructive Readings of Artaud

Another strain of theatre and performance scholars, such as Philip Auslander, Elinor Fuchs and Amelia Jones, dismiss what they characterise as a cult of presence in the commentary on performative art. Jones, for instance, explicitly rejects the “[c]laims of presence and authenticity [that] are extremely common in discussions of performance art both from art historical and performance studies point of view”, and the many “heroic claims for body art’s status as the only art form to guarantee the *presence* of the artist.”⁴⁸ Rather than promoting presence as an alternative to representational author-ity, these theorists argue that performance and body art produced since the late 1960s refute author-ity by questioning and challenging the ideal of pure presence.⁴⁹

This ‘deconstructive’ account of performance does not align Artaud’s and Grotowski’s thoughts and practices like the phenomenologically oriented accounts of performative work tend to do. Auslander rejects Grotowski as a modernist proponent of pure presence, claiming that his practice exemplifies a “holy theatre”, whose spokesmen “assume that the actor’s self precedes and grounds the performance and that it is the presence of this self in performance that provides the audience with access to human truths.”⁵⁰ For Auslander, Fuchs and Jones, Artaud’s status is less problematic, and Jones defines her own theory of body art as a continuation of his theories of theatre.⁵¹ Notably, it is not the Artaud described in Fischer-Lichte’s and Vergine’s texts that inspires her understanding of performance, rather, Jones’s, Fuchs’s and Auslander’s accounts of performative work harmonise with and/or draw on an alternative reading of Artaud’s cruel theatre, offered in Derrida’s 1966 essay “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation” (*Le theatre de la cruauté et la clôture de la représentation*).⁵²

⁴⁸ Amelia Jones, “‘The Artist is Present’: Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence”, *TDR*, Vol. 55, No. 1, Spring 2011, 17 n. 1; Jones, *Body Art*, 33.

⁴⁹ See, for instance, Philip Auslander, “Introduction”, in Auslander, *From Acting to Performance*, 4.

⁵⁰ Auslander, “‘Just be your self’”, 30. As Auslander notes, “Holy theatre” was coined by Peter Brook in 1969 to describe “performance that aspires to the communication of intangible, universal levels of experience”, Auslander, “‘Holy theatre’ and catharsis”, 13. In “‘Holy theatre’ and catharsis”, Auslander also describes Artaud as a representative of “holy theatre”, but in “‘Just be yourself’”, he tends to see Grotowski as a proponent of presence, while emphasising Derrida’s reading of Artaud.

⁵¹ Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, 1.

⁵² Jacques Derrida, “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation” [1966], in *Writing and Difference* [1967], trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978). Note that Auslander’s, Jones’s and Fuchs’s texts do not only/necessarily refer to this particular text, but to Derrida’s writing more generally, and directly to Artaud. Their understanding of Artaud may also be formed by Derrida’s discussions of Artaud in other

Like Fischer-Lichte and Vergine, Derrida acknowledges that Artaud calls for a non-representative theatre to escape the author-ity of the playwright and his text. Artaud “wants to have done with the *imitative* concept of art”, states Derrida, which in the case of theatre involves that whatever happens on stage is dominated by the playwright, that “primary logos” or “author-creator who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text” and forces the directors and actors to figure as his “enslaved interpreters”. Since Artaud aims to exterminate the playwright, “there is always a murder at the origin of cruelty” – or, more specifically, a *parricide*, argues Derrida, who speaks of the playwright as a God, a master or a father. Artaud’s idea, he recounts, is that when “released from the text and the author-god, *mise en scène* would be returned to its creative and founding freedom”, and the “director and the participants (who would no longer be actors *or* spectators) would cease to be the instruments and organs of representation.” Artaud’s “non-theological theatre” is an alternative to classical theatre, aiming not to “*re-present* a present that would exist elsewhere and prior to it, a present that would be older than it, absent from it, and rightfully capable of doing without it”, but instead for “the purity of a presence without interior difference and without repetition.” In that sense, cruel theatre strives to “make itself the equal of life”, argues Derrida quoting Artaud, and to establish a space “produced from within itself and no longer organised from the vantage of an other absent site, an illocality, an alibi or invisible utopia.” Derrida refers to this theatrical space, which precedes mediation and embraces the immediacy of life itself, as a “multidimensional milieu”.⁵³ The description, however, has similarities with what I described above as the all-encompassing *one-dimensionality* of performative work as pure presence, where artist, work and audience coincide in the realm of the real.

The similarities between Derrida’s account of cruel theatre and Fischer-Lichte’s and Vergine’s readings of Artaud come to an end when Derrida points at a paradox in Artaud’s writings.⁵⁴ He underlines that the non-theological space of cruel theatre is a *closed* and *produced* space, meaning that the supposed immediacy or presence of this space is given a representational form. What we experience in theatre, also in cruel theatre, is itself an

contexts, such as the 1965 “La Parole soufflé” and the lecture he gave at Moma in 1996, later published as Jacques Derrida and Kaira Marie Cabañas, *Artaud the Moma: Interjections of Appeal* [2002], trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2017). Nevertheless, it is “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation” that I follow here.

⁵³ Derrida, “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”, 234–39 and 249 for quotes in this paragraph.

⁵⁴ ‘Paradox’ is Power’s concept, see Power, *Presence in Play*, 5 and 138. My understanding of Derrida’s Artaud is informed by and indebted to Power. For more on Derrida’s reading of Artaud, see also Allen Thiher, “Jacques Derrida’s Reading of Artaud: ‘La Parole soufflée’ and ‘La Clôture de la représentation’”, *The French Review*, Vol. 57, No. 4, March 1984.

interpretation of what pure presence or being is, and a visual or sensual re-presentation of that idea. The element of re-presentation is even found in the main motif of Artaud's cruel theatre, Derrida indicates. Basing itself on parricide, on the violent rejection of its own father figure, theatre of cruelty repeats a motif that lies at the very origin of the discipline – it has only transferred that motif from the contents of the theatre to its form, where it seeks in vain to abolish the father figure, as author/playwright, once and for all. Given these dependencies on and endless returns to representation, Derrida can state that “the theatre of cruelty neither begins nor is completed within the purity of simple presence, but rather is already within representation.”⁵⁵

Derrida does not accuse Artaud of being unaware of the inconsistency inherent in the theatre of cruelty. On the contrary, Artaud is well aware that while desiring pure presence, his theatre requires representation in order to appear as presence, since a complete abolishment of representation would also entail the abolishment of theatre itself. This is why, Derrida claims, Artaud refers to the theatre of cruelty as an event yet to come: the director knows that a dissolution of theatre into life is impossible, and consequently, that the rupture with representation, the parricide, has to be performed anew in each performance. According to Derrida, Artaud also indicates how this can be achieved: theatrical practice can provide an encounter with the simultaneous “possibility and impossibility of pure theatre” by holding presence and representation in tension.⁵⁶ As he suggests in “La parole soufflée”, this is exemplified in Artaud's attempts to develop a stage language – “a rigorous textuality of shouts, a codified system of onomatopoeias, expressions, and gestures.”⁵⁷ This language is still within the realm of representation as speech composed by signs, but since these signs precede the consolidation into words with fixed meanings, they also defy representation. Thus, theatre can balance at the very limit of representation, which is as far as it can go towards staging parricide without eradicating itself.

By staging the interdependency between presence and representation, Artaud's theatre becomes an arena for demonstrating in practice the main point of Derrida's “metaphysics of presence”, namely that presence is never achieved in its purity, but always contaminated by its other.⁵⁸ In contrast, one can say that the accounts of performance as pure presence – that is, of performance as an unmediated intervention in the realm of the real – seek to reject the ‘extra-

⁵⁵ Derrida, “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation”, 248. See also pages 235, 238 and 249 for the points made in this paragraph.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, “La Parole soufflée” [1965], in *Writing and Difference*, 191.

⁵⁸ See Chapter Two, p. 43.

ordinary' or 'other' in/of art in favour of the real itself. In doing so, they do not rid art of its representational debt to the original, on the contrary, they abolish the aspect of otherness in order to fully embrace the presence that is considered ordinary in representational structures. As Derrida states in "Sending: On Representation", "a criticism or a deconstruction of representation would remain feeble, vain, and irrelevant if it were to lead to some rehabilitation of immediacy, of original simplicity, of presence without repetition or delegation [...]" – this will only enforce the representational belief in a primary presence.⁵⁹ Derrida's alternative is to acknowledge and incorporate in art practices the insight that the realm of the real, ordinary or present and the realm of the representative, fictional or absent, which we are accustomed to think of as separate, mutually supplement each other, and the insight that the present always is presented/presents itself in a form. This is precisely what Derrida finds Artaud to demonstrate in his theatre of cruelty.

Derrida's point about the unavoidable impurity of presence is absorbed and concretised in Auslander's, Fuchs's and Jones's dismissals of performative theories and practices centred on the quality of presence. Jones notes how the idea of performance as pure presence presupposes an "unmediated co-extensivity in time and place of what I perceive and myself; it promises a transparency to an observer of what 'is' at the very moment at which it takes place." She objects by referring to Derrida's remark that "the presence of the perceived present can appear as such only inasmuch as it is *continuously compounded* with a nonpresence and nonperception", and by pointing out that the medium of performance is durational.⁶⁰ Since performance is always experienced in passing, the enacting body will not be experienced as fully present, but as "always already escaping into the past". The body in action will be recorded and preserved on the audience's personal "memory screens", meaning that "there cannot be a definitively 'truthful' or 'authentic' form of the live event even at the moment of its enactment."⁶¹ As Jones puts it, "it becomes painfully clear that there is no original event – or that there was, but it was never 'present'."⁶² Rather, the experience of the performance is itself representational.

⁵⁹ Jacques Derrida, "Sending: On Representation" [1980], trans. Peter and Mary Ann Caws, *Social Research*, Vol. 49, No. 2, Summer 1982, 311.

⁶⁰ Jones, "The Artist is Present", 18 and 19 n. 4. Jones here quotes Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena (La Voix et le Phénomène* [1967]) from 1973.

⁶¹ Jones, "The Artist is Present", 18–19. For the term "memory screen", see Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation", *Art Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 4, Winter 1997, 12.

⁶² Jones, "The Artist is Present", 19. Jones here refers specifically to Marina Abramović's performances, but the point she makes applies generally.

The theoreticians I associate with a ‘deconstructive’ account of performance all find that the idea of performance as pure presence assumes the acting body as self-present and given, supporting an essentialist view of the self. When the “the old duality between author and director will be dissolved”, Auslander argues, and the playwright and the text as the authoritarian grounds of the performance are abolished, these author-ities will merely be “replaced by a sort of unique Creator upon whom will devolve the double responsibility of the spectacle and the plot.” With performance, the *actor* establishes as a new ground, or a new “logos of performance”.⁶³ Such a positing of the actor’s body as “an absolute, originary presence beyond signification” is “neither accurate nor theoretically defensible”, Auslander suggests.⁶⁴ Leaning on Derrida, he notes that “every mental or phenomenal event is a product of deference, is defined by its relation to what it is not rather than by its essence.” Even the physical body is constituted by difference, rather than “an organic, undifferentiated presence”. Auslander concludes that “[p]ure physical expression of and by the body is impossible for a body which is differentiated within itself and not present to itself”, and reasons that “[i]f nothing can legitimately claim to possess a stable autonomous identity, then there is nothing which can be invested with the authority of *logos*.”⁶⁵ Performative art counteracts rather than confirms the ideal of the self-present body, primarily by exposing abject aspects such as bruising, spit, sweat and sperm. Doing so, it also “exposes the existence of social structures designed to make us forget all those things”: presenting the body as impure, as other, reveals “that the body is absorbed into a cultural economy of representation that emphasises cleanliness and order.”⁶⁶ Contrary to performance theoreticians like Vergine, who regards the staging of pain to express basic, universal experiences, Auslander finds the confrontational use of the body insisting on its “status as a historical and cultural construct”, ideologically produced, and thus refuting the conception of the body as a naturally given presence.⁶⁷

Jones finds post-war performance artists to work against the ideal of the self-present self when presenting themselves both as author and object of the work, thus demonstrating that subjective and bodily existence is mutually contingent, and when establishing the performance as a co-relation between artist and spectator and locating the potential meaning of the work within this intersubjectivity. Contrary to Fischer-Lichte, who thinks of self-embodiment and intersubjectivity as leading to a higher unity and towards a more profound experience of being,

⁶³ Auslander, “‘Just be your self’”, 30.

⁶⁴ Auslander, “Introduction”, 8.

⁶⁵ Auslander, “‘Just be your self’”, 28 and 35.

⁶⁶ Philip Auslander, “Vito Acconci and the politics of the body”, in Auslander, *From Acting to Performance*, 93.

⁶⁷ Auslander, “Vito Acconci and the politics of the body”, 92.

Jones understands these aspects of performative art as strategies for staging the unavoidable rupture and tension between the ideal of self-presence and the qualities of non-presence that necessarily supplements and infiltrates it. In this, Jones relies on Artaud, reminding her readers that in his “‘Theatre of Cruelty’, the performance of subjects in a ‘passionate and convulsive conception of life’ would correspond ‘to the agitation and unrest characteristic of our epoch’.” She finds post-war performances doing the same, through the intimate encounters they establish between subjects they “exacerbate, perform, and/or negotiate the dislocating effects of social and private experience in the late capitalist, postcolonial Western world” – addressing the pressing experience of being decentred.⁶⁸ Body art “refuses to ‘prove’ presence”, and rather demonstrates “the insufficiency and incoherence of the body/self (or the body-as-subject) and its inability to deliver itself fully (whether to the subject-in-performance herself or himself or to the one who engages with this body).”⁶⁹ In being the “locus of a ‘disintegrated’ or dispersed ‘self’”, body art dislocates the “Cartesian subject who is centered and fully self-knowing in his cognition”, Jones claims, and so opposes the “modernist assumption of authorial plenitude”, which regards the artist’s body as an “unmediated repository of selfhood”.⁷⁰

Fuchs similarly argues that performances and performance theories that centre the quality of presence have “enshrined the (apparently) spontaneous speaking character at the center of action”, upholding “the Renaissance humanist program of cartesian self-centered signification.”⁷¹ Instead she points to and promotes an “aesthetics of Absence” that “disperses the center, displaces the Subject, destabilizes meaning.” Fuchs lists a number of concrete strategies employed in this move from presence towards its other: performative work can involve amateur actors, thus depriving the audience of the “enlarged personal ‘presence’ of the professional”, or they can deprive the audience of *any* bodily presence, by letting them see the actors only as mirror reflections, for instance. Furthermore, the actors can use their voices appearing to be reading rather than speaking spontaneously, or their voices can be separated from their physical bodies by use of microphones and loudspeakers “in such a way that it is not easy to associate a particular voice with the body from which it emanates, nor to be certain

⁶⁸ Jones, *Body Art*, 1. In this, Jones claims that body art is an artistic version of the critique poststructuralist theory directs against the idea of the self-present subject, see p. 11. For a comparative view, see Claire Bishop’s approach to installation art in Chapter Six, p. 298–99.

⁶⁹ Jones, *Body Art*, 36 and 34; Jones, “‘Presence’ in absentia”, 13.

⁷⁰ Jones, *Body Art*, 13 and 10; Jones, “‘Presence’ in absentia”, 14.

⁷¹ Elinor Fuchs, “Presence and the Revenge of Writing. Re-thinking Theatre after Derrida” [1985] in *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Philip Auslander (London: Routledge, 2003), 111–12 and 116–17 for all quotes in this paragraph and the next. For Power’s critical comments to Fuchs’s position, see Power, *Presence in Play*, 7 and 131–35.

whether that voice is live or taped”, and in these ways question the performers’ presence to themselves and to the audience.

The main threat to the ideal of performative presence, Fuchs argues, is the incorporation of (references to) texts and the activity of writing in the performance itself. This is done in many ways: writing can be thematised as something the characters on stage are occupied with and formed by, a book can be a central object around or from which a plot evolves, plays can be composed out of quotes from other literary texts and include references to art theory and criticism, or the text can be literally staged, like when images of text, writing and reading appear as elements of scenography and visual design. Through these strategies, writing re-asserts itself at the cost of pure presence, but since the writing “has emerged uncloaked”, this is not a return to the text as the performance’s author-itarian origin. Rather, the staging of the text – an element that is held outside the performance in classical theatre, where it is considered the originating author-ity *behind* the live act, and in performances that abolish the textual ground in favour of pure presence – demonstrates “in a motion that parallels Derrida’s deconstruction of speech and writing”, that “there is no primordial or self-same present that is not already infiltrated by the trace.” By bringing the element that has been considered the absent ground onto stage – by “an opening of the ‘inside’ of the moment to the ‘outside’ of the interval” – that absent presence both loses its privileged position as origin and contaminates the purity of the *hic et nunc* that has come to replace the absent text as the performative work’s origin.

Different from phenomenological accounts of performance, which draw on Artaud *and* Grotowski to promote the anti-representational and anti-author-itarian qualities of performative presence, the ‘deconstructive’ strain of performance theory turns to Artaud in particular, and considers his cruel theatre a key influence for art practices that question the ideal of pure, performative presence and its ability to coneract representation and author-ity. The proponents of this view find support in Derrida’s writing when implying that ‘presence’ is a metaphysical ideal that presupposes a definitive distinction between itself and its other, which is impossible since every positive quality of presence is always haunted by the impurity of its other. Performance as pure presence, then, is no abolishment of representation, but an intensified search for the same unattainable truth that underlies both representation and the concept of author-ity: original being. It can be described as a cultivation of representational logic, in the sense that that completely extinguishes the work in favour of its ground. Against this, the ‘deconstructive’ strain of performance theory suggests that anti-author-itarian performative strategies are those that destabilise (the ideal of) pure presence by revealing its dependence on representation, or its tense relationship to absence. By withholding the body from stage or

separating it from its own expressions, for instance, performance artists can refuse to offer themselves as immediately accessible and co-inciding with the work in the realm of the real. Following these strategies, performance amounts not to an aesthetics of presence, but an aesthetics of absence, or rather, of the impure in-between.

Arte Povera's Acts of Withdrawal

The critical reception of performative Arte Povera works, from Celant's first essays to the present, tends to emphasise aspects that align with the phenomenologically oriented account of performance, and its idealising of pure and immediate presence. Arte Povera artists are often found to seek contact with the basic levels of existence through an all-encompassing and 'one-dimensional' art. Notably, Celant finds the motivation behind 'poor art' to be an experience of life as compartmentalised and a will to reunite its disparate aspects. This is evident from The Living Theatre quote which opens his 1968 essay on Arte Povera:

The main problem is to come together. We are always divided, our mind is divided from our body, our work from our love, our passion from our intellect, the state by the masses, the church from the spirit. Nothing agrees with anything else. We are always and completely in a state of war; everything is at war with everything else. Our job, then, is to bring all these things together.⁷²

In Celant's conception, one way of counteracting the divide between art and life is to dismiss representational duality and pursue immediate expressions instead. Already from his first essay on Arte Povera, he outlines that the Italian artists use strategies that are comparable to what Grotowski advises when rejecting imitative theatre in favour of a more authentic "theatre without make-up". According to Celant, poor cinema, theatre and visual art "aspire to record reality and the present univocally" by "taking away, eliminating, downgrading things to a minimum, impoverishing signs to reduce them to their archetypes."⁷³ To achieve the quality of "anti-pretence", the artist performs "a free, almost intuitive action", and "mingles with the

⁷² The Living Theatre quoted in Celant, "Arte Povera" [1968], 49. The quote is taken from an interview published in *Il Verri*, No. 25, 1967. Celant's understanding of Arte Povera's performative actions is also supported in statements by some of the artists. For instance, Anselmo has spoken of art as a "way of being and participating in the world." Anselmo quoted in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 100. For a critique of this aspect of Celant's Arte Povera, see Kelly, "Re-Writing Modernist Criticism", 96.

⁷³ Germano Celant, "Arte Povera" [1967], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 31. For discussions of how Celant's idea of Arte Povera relates to Artaud's and Grotowski's ideas, see for instance Valentina Valentini, "La politica dell'esperienza: Il teatro tra le arti a Roma", in *Anni 70. Arte a Roma*, ed. Daniela Lancioni, (Rome: Iacobelli Editore, 2013), 109–10; and Maria Teresa Roberto, "Arte Povera e scrittura scenica", in *Arte Povera 2011*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 631.

environment”.⁷⁴ This is emancipatory because it “sets up a ‘man-nature identity’”, and so accommodates a felt, albeit suppressed, need “to be in the world and to feel its movement and its vicissitudes.”⁷⁵

Performative gestures are suitable for the infiltration of art into life that Celant promotes. In his earliest accounts, such as “Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla War”, he suggests that the artists are guerrilla warriors fighting consumerist and bourgeois culture, which are responsible for closing art off from wider society, as a system with its own internal logic.⁷⁶ In the essay written for the “Arte povera più azioni povere” event in Amalfi the following year, Celant remarks that the making of material objects – which can be distributed within the established consumerist system and satisfy established tastes and expectations of style – is not sufficient: The production of new objects upholds the prevailing system instead of challenging it. A turn to actions and gestures is thus required.⁷⁷ The aim is not to “justify oneself or reflect oneself in one’s work or in one’s product”, Celant underlines in his next essay. Rather, one should “live as work”:

By thinking and perceiving, fixing and showing, feeling and exhausting sensation in an event, everyone can become language and be language through his own individual gestures, actions, body, territory, and memory: through the reality of his daily life and through that of his fantasy.⁷⁸

When Celant – as briefly mentioned in Chapter Two – highlights “self-projection” as a common artistic strategy among Arte Povera artists, the term must be understood in reference to this ideal of a conflation between art and life.⁷⁹ Self-projection here indicates that the artists throw themselves into the everyday, where they act as creative beings – like in performances in which the artist’s body/gestures coincides with the work itself in the sphere of the real. Celant also remarks how this melding of art and life promotes authentic experiences in which “the corporeality of material and gesture [...] are brought into relation with our own bodies.”⁸⁰ It thus implicates/incorporates the ‘audience’ in the sense that Fischer-Lichte and Vergine find characteristic of performance art. Celant’s early conception of Arte Povera’s practice, then, is not as fixed on the material aspect of the works as subsequent commentary tends to claim.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Celant, “Arte Povera” [1968], 49; Germano Celant, “Arte Povera” [1969], in Celant, *Arte Povera: History and Protagonists*, 119.

⁷⁵ Celant, “Arte Povera” [1968], 53.

⁷⁶ Germano Celant, “Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla War” [1967], in Celant, *Arte Povera: History and Protagonists*, 35.

⁷⁷ Germano Celant, “Azione Povera” [1968], in Celant, *Arte Povera: History and Protagonists*, 89.

⁷⁸ Celant, “Arte Povera” [1969], 121.

⁷⁹ For self-projection, see Chapter Two, p. 63. See also Chapter One, p. 26.

⁸⁰ Celant, “Arte Povera” [1967], 33.

⁸¹ For the emphasis on materials in Arte Povera’s reception history, see Introduction, p. 12.

There are clear affinities between his characterisation of Arte Povera and accounts of post-war performance work that emphasise the quality of pure presence.

This aspect of presence in Arte Povera performances was also underlined in the exhibition “Entrare nell’opera. Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera” at Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein in 2019, which sought to compensate for the focus on material in Arte Povera’s reception by surveying the associated artists’ performative works. In the accompanying catalogue, one of the curators states that

Azioni Povere [Poor Actions] were intended to widen the possibilities of perception and to reduce the distance from the viewer. Moreover, this intensity of experience had a therapeutic function: creativity was to become a general potential, no longer to be treated as the elitist aspiration of individual artists.⁸²

Even 50 years after Celant wrote his initial texts about Arte Povera, then, the claim that the performative works uphold the ideals of pure presence and one-dimensionality, in which the performer’s entry into the world as work repeals established hierarchies between artist, work and viewer, are still current.

My study, however, suggests that Arte Povera’s artist-centred performative works are characterised by the way they repeatedly compromise pure, performative presence. To prove this point, I will demonstrate how three different ‘acts of withdrawal’ can be traced in these works: the *disappear-in’ acts*, in which the artists depart from or into the work itself; the *decentring acts*, in which the artists perform their works outside traditional art institutions like the museum and gallery; and the *document-in’ acts*, in which the artists distance themselves from their audiences by performing before camera. Leaning on Derrida’s reading of Artaud, and on Auslander’s, Fuchs’s and Jones’s understandings of how performance can challenge author-ity by keeping presence and representation in tension, I argue that the compromised presence in Arte Povera’s performative works is not a drawback, in the sense that it prevents the works from fulfilling performance’s potential to dissolve established hierarchies in the *hic et nunc*. In Arte Povera’s withdrawal acts, the compromising of presence is a strategy for overcoming representational author-ity.

Disappear-in’ Acts

The previous chapter presented a number of self-portraits in which the Arte Povera artists covered themselves behind the means of representation and thus complicated the spectators’

⁸² Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 380.

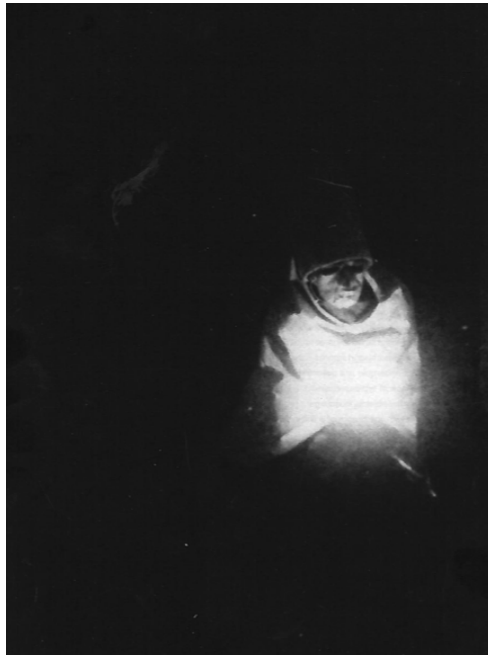


Fig. 4.1.1–4.1.2: Pino Pascali, *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus*, 1965. Performance at Catello Sangallo di Torre Astura, Nettuno, 22 July 1965.

access to a ‘true self’ behind the work. Comparable masking effects occur in Arte Povera’s performative works, like when Jannis Kounellis appears with a plaster mask of Apollo in front of his face, or with gold casts covering his lips, in performances from the early 1970s.⁸³ This section, however, centres on a number of Arte Povera works that more radically stage the artist’s disappearance, and in two ways at the same time. First, these works thematically connote death, in some cases the death of the artist. More importantly, the works involve the artists’ absence or disappearance from stage. Thus, they are *disappear-in’ acts* – that is, acts during which the artists partly or fully dis-appear from or into the work itself.

An early example of a disappear-in’ act is Pino Pascali’s 1965 *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus* (Rest in Peace Conradin). It was conceived for the exhibition “Mostra a sogetto. Corradino di Svevia 1252–68” at Castello Sangallo in Torre Astura, which had a historical theme quite unusual at the time: the exhibition was to commemorate Conradin, the Hohenstauffer who became Duke of Swabia, King of Jerusalem and King of Sicily as a two-year old, and whose asylum in Torre Astura ended in the arrest that led to his beheading at the age of 16. For the performance, Pascali installed an altar or tombstone-like sculpture, also titled *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus*, in a dark crypt.⁸⁴ Wearing a mask and a costume resembling liturgical vestments, he allegedly performed a funeral-like ritual lasting for hours, involving medieval music, the ringing of bells and the spreading of an intensely smelling incense that fogged the narrow space in which the audience enjoyed local food and drinks (Figs. 4.1.1–4.1.2). The performance makes use of pathos-laden and highly stimulating effects to commemorate Conradin’s demise, however, it also stages the disappearance of Pascali himself, who was covered by his costume, acting in the dark and increasingly hard to see due to the incense smoke – thus withdrawing into the work.

Another relevant work – which most explicitly touches on the topic of death and demonstrably visualises the disappearance of the artist from the work – is Luciano Fabro’s 1969 *Apparecchio alla morte di S. Alfonso Maria dei Liguori* (Preparation for Death by Saint Alphonsus Liguori), which was performed as part of the project “Azioni sceniche” at Palazzo

⁸³ Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo*, Sonnabend Gallery, New York, October 1972; Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo*, at “Roma Mappa 72”, Rome, 11 December 1972. See Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 151, 432 and 433; Germano Celant, *Jannis Kounellis* (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2019), 110 (ref. ST67 and ST68); Ortrud Westheider and Helmut R. Leppien, *Jannis Kounellis: Die Eserne Runde* (Zurich/Bern: Parkett Verlag and Verlag Gachnang und Springer, 1995), 34–35. Masked works were also performed by Kounellis in subsequent years.

⁸⁴ *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus* is a large wooden structure (249 x 165.5 x 54 cm) covered with fleece and canvas painted with enamel. It is marked with the latin phrases “REQUIESCAT IN PACE CORRADINUS; REX SUEDORUM: SAECULA SAECULORUM AMEN; DECAPITE OBTRUNCTUS ALICUIUS OPERA PRODITUS; JOSEPH PASCALI FECIT ANNO”. See Marco Tonelli, ed., *Pascali. Catalogo generale delle sculture dal 1964 al 1968* (Rome: DeLuca Editori d’Arte, 2011), 117.

Estense in Varese on 16 June 1969. When performing this work, Fabro entered a stage in front of an audience, approached a microphone and apparently read a text, which while appearing to be uttered live what was heard was in fact a recording. After his mimicked reading was over, Fabro left the stage and found himself a seat among the approximately 200 members of the audience. The stage was lit again, and the recording broadcast once more without his presence behind the microphone.

The text read aloud in Fabro's performance was from the 1758 book *Preparation for Death (Apparecchio alla morte)*, in which the Catholic bishop and spiritual theologian Alphonsus Liguori gives advice on how to prepare for eternal life. According to Fabro himself, "the progressive decay of the corpse is described with grim realism" in the paragraphs he recited.⁸⁵ Fabro's performance touches on the topics of death and physical degeneration through its use of the Jesuit book, but also through the staging itself: when describing the event, Fabro emphasises how the bodiless voice of the second broadcast appeared as a ghost in front of the microphone.⁸⁶ Catherine Grenier similarly points out that Liguori's text, when repeated in Fabro's performance, was issued "over an empty stage, like words from the tomb". To Grenier, this means that Fabro's performance did not simply thematise the end of life as a universal topic. On the contrary, she finds that the tale of death on an empty stage "gave rise to a particular form of theatre, a theatre of disappearance" from which the performing artist himself disappears.⁸⁷ In other words, since *Apparecchio alla morte di S. Alfonso Maria dei Liguori* connects the theological commentary on death to the physical withdrawal of the artist from stage, the work is found to stage the 'death of the author/artist'.

A further example of an Arte Povera 'disappear-in' act is the week-long performative exhibition that Pier Paolo Calzolari presented in Galleria Sperone's premises in Turin in April 1970, "1^o e secondo giorno come gli orienti sono due" (1st and Second Day as the Orientals are Two). From one day to the next, Calzolari intervened and changed the exhibition in accordance with a cryptic description of the respective days, which was announced on the invitation card and with bronze letters on the gallery floor (Fig. 4.2.1). On the first and the second day – described by the sentence making up the work's title – the metal letters appeared on the floor,

⁸⁵ Luciano Fabro, *Attaccapanni* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editors, 1978), 83, quoted in *Luciano Fabro*, eds. John Caldwell and Margit Rowell (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 131. The topic of death is one that Fabro, discussing his works in *Attaccapanni*, admits to having returned to in other early works. He emphasises the 1970 video *In questo modo vorrei fare la mia autobiografia*, in which he presents his works, but dates them wrongfully and illogically, even outside of his own life-span. See Catherine Grenier, "Dwelling in Space", in *Luciano Fabro*, ed. Catherine Grenier (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1996), 209–10 and 297.

⁸⁶ Fabro, *Attaccapanni*, 83, quoted in Caldwell and Rowell, *Luciano Fabro*, 131.

⁸⁷ Grenier, "Dwelling in Space", 297.



Figs. 4.2.1–4.2.4: Pier Paolo Calzolari, “1 e secondo giorno come gli orienti sono due”, 1970. Processual exhibition at Galleria Sperone, Turin, 22 April–5 May 1970; Top left: Fig. 4.2.1. Exhibition view showing six sentences composed of bronze letters, spread on the gallery floor for the exhibition’s first day; Top right: Fig. 4.2.2. Exhibition view showing the sentence ‘IO MIO NOME’, composed of metal letters inserted in the gallery wall and fastened with lime for the exhibition’s third day; Below left: Fig. 4.2.3. Exhibition view showing lit candles placed in a square on the gallery floor, installed for the exhibition’s fourth day; Below right: Fig. 4.2.4. Exhibition view showing a corner of the gallery floor painted with black tempera, installed for the fifth day.

while glass and frames were removed from the gallery windows, allowing a fresh breeze to flow through the exhibition space. On the third day, referred to as “3 The Picaro’s day”, metal letters spelling “*io mio nome*” (I my name) were inserted in the gallery wall, and – as emphasised by Mirella Bandini – partly covered by lime (Fig. 4.2.2).⁸⁸ On the following day, described as “Fourth day as 4 long months of absence”, lit candles were situated on the floor in the shape of a square, allowing the intersecting air currents to fight over the flames (Fig. 4.2.3) On day five, “5 contra naturam”, a corner of the gallery floor was painted with black tempera (Fig. 4.2.4). The “6th day of reality” presented a tape recorder on the gallery floor, playing a song by Adriano Celentano, while the seventh and final day, listed as “7 – seventh – with usura – contra naturam”, made no changes to the existing set-up. It was a day of rest, described by commentators either as a concluding summary of the exhibition, or as a repetition of its first day, thus – quite conversely – indicating an infinite cyclical process.⁸⁹

Calzolari’s exhibition is not a performance proper, given its week-long duration and the fact that the artist did not make the alterations described above in front of an audience. However, it can be characterised as an artist-centred performative work because the exhibition’s development depends on the artist’s intervening presence in the gallery space.⁹⁰ In this work, the alternation between artistic presence and withdrawal is central. When entering the gallery to change the exhibition outside of its opening hours, Calzolari secludes himself from his audience. However, the exhibition gives its visitors access to the physical traces the absent artist leaves behind from day to day; they can sense his former presence while acknowledging his current absence. Moreover, the work that Calzolari made for the third day of the exhibition, *Io mio nome*, connotes the presence of the artist through a personal pronoun.⁹¹ However, by letting the work and its ‘*io*’ be absorbed by the gallery wall and partly wiped out by lime it counteracts the artist’s presence. As a *mise-en-abyme*, then, *Io mio nome* also acts out the alternation between presence and withdrawal.

While less explicit in its thematisation of death than Pascali’s funeral ritual and Fabro’s reading, Calzolari’s processual exhibition have allegorical elements that hint at the beginning and end of life. For one, the seven-day time span evokes the seven days of creation. Moreover,

⁸⁸ Mirella Bandini, “Mostre a Torino”, *Gala*, Vol. 7, No. 42, June 1970, 70.

⁸⁹ Germano Celant, ed., *Pier Paolo Calzolari* (New York, NY: Barbara Gladstone Gallery/Urbanas, 1988), 54; Bandini, “Mostre a Torino”, 70.

⁹⁰ Another example of an “evolving exhibition”, altered by the artist from day to day, was Emilio Prini’s “Pesi Spinte Azione” at Galleria La Bertesca in Genoa in 1968. See Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 321 and 521.

⁹¹ This work could have been discussed alongside Paolini’s *Io* in Chapter Three, as an example of Arte Povera works that indicate the presence of the artist by use of shifters.

the lit candles struggling against the wind can be seen as a struggle between the forces of life and death, and the black-painted corner is reminiscent of a total void, or of ashes, evoking associations with the afterlife and material remains of the dead body. A statement by Calzolari, which was written on a sheet of paper at the gallery entrance, relates to this blackened corner. It reads “Organicism and Pragmatism kill Pollock. After 15 years of attempts in the opposite direction, it is abstraction, however, that kills Rothko.”⁹² This element of the exhibition is tied to the tragic deaths of the two American abstractionists. While Calzolari arguably compares himself to God when presenting his exhibition as a seven-day creation, his work also thematises the misfortunes of the potent artist genius.

A final example of Arte Povera’s ‘disappear-in’ acts is Pistoletto’s first performative event, *La fine di Pistoletto* (The End of Pistoletto), arranged at the Piper Pluriclub on 6 March 1967. In this collective action, some twenty to thirty people were equipped with a mask and a sheet of reflecting metal each. They moved around the space while holding the sheets in front of them, before lining up in a row and bending the sheets to make sound, accompanying the band that played throughout the event (Figs. 4.3.1–4.3.4).⁹³ Subsequently, the performers would place the sheets on the floor for the audience to dance on, where they would again make sound when being tapped on.

Whether Pistoletto himself played a part in this performance or not was not easy for the audience to determine, because the performers’ faces were all covered by masks. Nevertheless, the work must be considered an artist-centred performance; not only because Pistoletto’s name occurs in its title, but also because the performers’ masks all depicted the artist (Fig. 4.3.5). On the one hand, one could say that the many masks and their reflections in the metal surfaces served to evoke the presence of Pistoletto at the club, even intensifying his presence, for as Pistoletto has stated, *La fine di Pistoletto* was “a group action that related to the idea of multiplying the individual.”⁹⁴ However, as discussed in relation to Boetti’s self-portraits in the previous chapter, the act of multiplying oneself also involves a dissolving of the coherent self. In that sense, the ubiquitous visual presence of Pistoletto at the Piper that night would also seed doubts about his physical presence and be read as “a collective celebration of the end of Pistoletto as an ‘individual artist’”, as Marco Farano and the work’s own title suggest.⁹⁵

⁹² Celant, *Pier Paolo Calzolari*, 54. See also Bandini, “Mostre a Torino”, 71. Regarding the position of the paper, Fondazione Calzolari, private e-mail correspondence, 20.12.2021.

⁹³ According to Francesco Guzzetti, who refers to an announcement in *La Stampa*, a beat group called Epoca 70 played at the Piper that night. See Francesco Guzzetti, “Yéyé Style. Les night-clubs en France et en Italie: artistes, architectes et culture de la jeunesse dans les années 1960”, *InSitu*, No. 32, 2017, n. 41.

⁹⁴ Bellini, *Facing Pistoletto*, 41.

⁹⁵ Marco Farano, “Michelangelo Pistoletto and Creative Collaboration”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 226.



Top and middle: Figs. 4.3.1–4.3.4. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *La fine di Pistoletto*, 1967. Performance at the Piper Pluriclub, Turin, 6 March; Left: Fig. 4.3.5. Mask used in *La fine di Pistoletto*.

Pascali's *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus*, Fabro's *Apparecchio alla morte di S. Alfonso Maria dei Liguori*, Calzolari's "1 e secondo giorno come gli orienti sono due" and Pistoletto's *Le fine di Pistoletto* all touch on the topic of death – in general, and/or the death of the artist, more specifically. Doing so, one could claim that the works address liminality, which is central to Vergine's and Fischer-Lichte's accounts of performance. However, when speaking of the liminal in performance art, Vergine refers primarily to practices in which the artists expose themselves to physical pain and extreme endurance, while Fischer-Lichte has in mind how witnessing such events challenges spectators by placing them in a position of indeterminacy, between aesthetic disinterest and the ethical standards of the everyday. There are elements of the cultic and the grotesque in Arte Povera's disappear-in' acts, such as Pascali's tedious funeral ritual and Fabro's recitation of the "grim realism" of physical decay. But apart from the reported possibility that Pascali would intoxicate himself with incense, no attempts are made to physically challenge the actor's body in terms of pain or endurance.⁹⁶ There are also efforts to approach the audience in these works, like when Fabro leaves the stage to sit among the spectators halfway through his performance, or when the masked performers mingle with the Piper clubbers in Pistoletto's piece. However, with the single exception of Fabro's recitation, with which the audience allegedly was uncomfortable and reacted with restlessness, impatience and screams directed towards the empty stage, the Arte Povera works are not agitating or confrontational in the way emphasised by Fischer-Lichte.⁹⁷ The state of liminality is one that the Arte Povera artists seem to have addressed with a certain distance, and not primarily to achieve heightened knowledge of the fundamental levels of existence, as Fischer-Lichte and Vergine claims of contemporaneous performance art.

All of Arte Povera's disappear-in' acts are characterised by shifts between artists' presence and absence. These shifts can be related to Fischer-Lichte's concept of 'radical presence'. Leaning on Grotowski's statement that his aim is to reach a point where the actor's "body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses", Fischer-Lichte argues that performance artists strive to turn their bodies into energy, which will in turn be absorbed by the spectators.⁹⁸ In Calzolari's performative exhibition, the artist's physical presence is arguably echoed in the form of pure energy: the flames and breezes that vibrate in the exhibition space can be seen to recall the artist's movements while passing unnoticed

⁹⁶ Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale*, 161.

⁹⁷ Fabro, *Attaccapanni*, 83–84, quoted in Caldwell and Rowell, *Luciano Fabro*, 131.

⁹⁸ Grotowski, "Towards a Poor Theatre", 16; Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 82 and 99.

through the exhibition to alter it. In Fabro's work, the voice remains as a bodiless spirit on stage after the artist's removal, which eventually "pacified" the souls of the audience, according to Fabro himself.⁹⁹ By letting the artist approach the spectators in the form of a vital and transmitting energy, the works can be seen to enhance performative presence, understood as an intense and extra-individual state of being.

On the other hand, the physical withdrawal or abstaining from the stage in Arte Povera works also relates to the deconstructivist understanding of performance as *questioning* the ideal of pure presence. Some of the 'disappear-in' acts even exemplify the strategies Fuchs lists for an "aesthetics of absence". For instance, Calzolari's exhibition is a performative work that completely deprives the audience of bodily presence, whereas *La fine di Pistoletto* presents the artist indirectly, through masks and mirror reflections. Fabro – when mimicking the recital of a text – demonstrates how actors can separate their voice from their body through the use of loudspeakers and microphones, thus making it difficult to determine whether the voice is spoken live or not, seeding doubt about the im-mediacy of the performance. In addition, Fabro's performance comes close to what Fuchs describes as an incorporation of text and writing in the theatrical arts; by simply reciting Liguori's book, he brings the text onto stage, which in the representational logic belongs outside the performance itself, at its origin. In line with Fuchs's reasoning, Fabro's performance thus acknowledges that not even the seemingly direct speech of the theatre escapes representation. The text is exposed also in Calzolari's exhibition, where the 'performance score' is laid out as sentences on the floor, and the interpretative act of relating the black-painted corner to the deaths of pioneering abstract expressionists relies on a line of text on a sheet of paper. In these works, the text that traditionally serves as an origin prior to the work has lost its prioritised position and entered the representational sphere.¹⁰⁰

The artists' disappearances that are staged in each of the discussed works is their most effective rejection of the ideal of performative presence. By never letting their artists appear on the scene, by having them step down from the stage, or by concealing the artists with masks and/or smoke, the works challenge the purity of the artist's presence, which is so important in the phenomenologically oriented accounts of post-war performance work as a strategy to refute representational author-ity. With the 'disappear-in' acts, distance is marked between the artists

⁹⁹ Fabro, *Attaccapanni*, 83, quoted in Caldwell and Rowell, *Luciano Fabro*, 131.

¹⁰⁰ The incorporation of text and writing is also found in other Arte Povera artist-centred performative works, such as Boetti's *Besprechungsvortrag* at Aktionsraum 1, Munich, in April 1970 (see Chapter Three, p. 109 n. 111). A subordination of speech as a quality of presence is also central to Kounellis's many speechless performances and the pieces in which the artist physically mutes himself, for instance in the abovementioned *Senza titolo* with gold lips performed at "Roma Mappa 72".

and their abandoned works. The distance is not a representational one, where the artist is fixed in a position behind the work at/as its origin. Rather, the artists who (dis)appear here are presented as part of their works, while also as detaching themselves from them, leaving them to their own devices and their audiences. In that sense, the performances take the form of sacrifices, as Grotowski requires of the performative arts. The sacrifice in these cases, however, does not consist in “making a total gift of oneself”, in giving up the socialised self in order to acquaint a truer self that connects to an underlying universal truth, as Grotowski suggests. Rather, the sacrifices staged here are the artists’ gradual withdrawal from or leading into their works, their disclaiming of ownership and/or priority. In that sense, the works present parricides, abolishments of their own origins, as Derrida finds required by performative arts in order to challenge representational hierarchies.

Decentring Acts

Another characteristic feature of Arte Povera artist-centred performative works is that many of them are situated ‘off-stage’ – that is, outside of museums or galleries. Some works are performed in private spaces such as studios or workshops, others in places that are not reserved for art, like the landscape or the cityscape. Thus, whereas the artists withdraw from or into the works in the disappear-in’ acts, the works presented in the current section have in common that the artists withdraw (with) the works from established art institutions: in that sense, they are *decentring acts*.¹⁰¹ The question here is whether the decentring acts are attempting to commune art and life, and to attain the ideal of pure and one-dimensional presence that phenomenological accounts of post-war performance uphold, or if their turn from traditional art spaces to public spaces has conflicting motivations and/or effects.

A first type of decentring acts comprises works performed in the artist’s studio. Pistoletto is the Arte Povera artist that most manifestly abandoned the art institution in favour of the studio, when installing for his solo exhibition at Galleria Sperone in December 1967 nothing but the sculpture *Pietra miliare* (Milestone), while announcing on posters that his

¹⁰¹ The Arte Povera artists’ will to withdraw from the established art institutions is evident also by their presentation of works in experimental, alternative exhibition venues, such as the Piper Pluriclub in Turin, the Antique Arsenale in Amalfi, the garage-turned-gallery space of L’Attico in Rome, and the former factory premises of Aktionsraum 1 in Munich. The Arte Povera artists were active participants in the organisation of Deposito d’Arte Presente (Warehouse of Present-Day Art) – a 450 square-metre exhibition space established in a former showroom for cars – where they could work on, exhibit and store their large-scale and often processual sculptures. Moreover, key exhibitions when it comes to the ‘decentring’ of art, which involved some of the Arte Povera artists, are “24 Ore di Non-Stop Theatre”, organised by Studio 970 2 in Luvinata, July 1968, and “Campo urbano. Interventi estetici nella dimensione collettiva urbana”, curated by Luciano Caramel in Como, September 1969.

studio was now open to young artists who wanted to show their work and “do things together”.¹⁰² However, Calzolari and fellow artists had established a space with a similar function in 1965: their Studio Bontivoglio in Bologna was a workshop located in a mannerist, sixteenth-century palace which became a site for artistic experiments and hosted a number of exhibitions by associated artists and invited guests, as well as performative events on the threshold between the public and the private sphere.¹⁰³

Among the performances conducted at Studio Bentivoglio is Calzolari’s *Il ponte* (The Bridge) from 1969, presented as an open studio event.¹⁰⁴ In *Il Ponte*, the artist placed unfolded cardboard boxes on the floor, positioning two stepladders on top with the steps facing each other. Cables with lightbulbs were attached to at least one of the ladders, stretching towards the wall and further on to the floor, with the purpose of lighting the scene of action. In the best-known photographs documenting the performance, the artist has climbed up to the fourth step of each ladder, which is as far up as he can go on the increasingly reclining ladders without splitting his legs so wide as to fall down. He thus performs what has been called an “impressive and also precarious balancing act” (Fig. 4.4).¹⁰⁵

Calzolari’s studio-performance can be characterised as intense and physically challenging: it requires the performer’s full concentration, and – depending on its duration – potentially causes him pain. This work is among the closest Arte Povera comes to ‘body art’, in so far as the term denotes practices that “test the limits of the body”.¹⁰⁶ In that sense, it is close to the ideals of performance as pure presence described by Vergine and Fischer-Lichte, who emphasise how the confrontation of one’s bodily limits can provide increased self-knowledge as well as a transgression of the self.

Calzolari’s choice to stage his performance in the semi-private space of his own studio arguably also accommodates the ideal of performance as pure presence. The established art

¹⁰² Michelangelo Pistoletto, “Con questa mostra io ho liberato il mio studio...”, Galleria Sperone, Turin, 22 December 1967–January 1968. Note that Pistoletto supplied more works during the last days of the exhibition. See Bellini, *Facing Pistoletto*, 47–49; Anna Minola et al., eds., *Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York. 35 Anni di mostre tra Europa e America* (Turin: Hopefulmonster, 2000), 116–17; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 485.

¹⁰³ Calzolari established Studio Bentivoglio, which occupied two large rooms at the ground floor of Palazzo Bentivoglio, with Vasco Bendini, Nino Ovan and subsequently Maurizio Maolozzi and Bruno Pasqualini. The space is mentioned in Renato Barilli, *Prima e dopo il 2000. La ricerca artistica 1970-2005* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2006), 32–33, and was given attention in Barilli’s exhibition “Bologna dopo Morandi 1945–2015” at Palazzo Fava, Bologna, in 2016. It is also discussed in Pasquale Fameli, “Fatti dello studio Bentivoglio”, *Intrecci d’arte*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ The fact that the performance was an open studio event is confirmed by the Fondazione Calzolari, private e-mail correspondence, 15.04.2019.

¹⁰⁵ Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 396.

¹⁰⁶ Tate, “Body Art”, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/b/body-art> (accessed 27.05.2020).



Fig. 4.4. Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Il ponte*, 1969. Performance, duration unknown, Studio Bentivoglio, Bologna.

institution – a space associated with the presentation of already conceived art objects – is here dismissed in favour of a space that is dedicated to the *making* of art, to art in progress. This is a perfect site for the realisation of a performance, given Vergine’s and Fischer-Lichte’s idea of the performative artwork as being (in) a process of becoming. Moreover, the studio setting provides an actor-audience encounter that is exclusive and intimate. Whereas Pistoletto opened his studio to facilitate artistic collaborations, Calzolari’s studio-project tends to be more reserved; the performance is centred on the single artist’s work, and seems to involve a limited audience – at least, not a single person is visible in the photographs of his action. The combination of the work’s intensity and the setting have probably provided an experience of close contact, in which the spectators’s slightest movements had the potential to pull the performer on the stepladder off balance. This resonates with Christiane Meyer-Stoll’s description of Calzolari’s performative works, more generally: “[k]ey to the narrative of his actions is the intellectual and physical integration of the viewer.”¹⁰⁷ Such an actor-audience encounter, in which the artist commands space and physically “affects, even tinges” the

¹⁰⁷ Christiane Meyer-Stoll, “‘When the Dreamer Dies, What Happens to the Dream?’ On the Actions and Action-Like Works of Pier Paolo Calzolari”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 125.

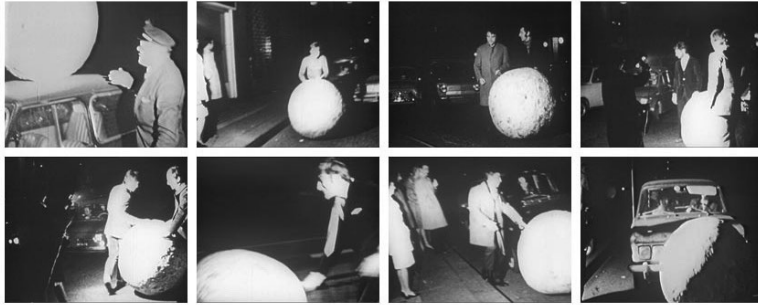
spectators, also matches with what Fischer-Lichte describes as a “strong” or “auratic” artistic presence in the performative arts.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, it qualifies as the “radical presence” that Fischer-Lichte, inspired by Grotowski, requires in her account of performance in order to be a “transformative event”. Inner qualities such as willpower and stamina are expressed through the artist’s tense muscles so that the presence of the actor may be experienced as ‘embodied mind’, and the audience’s ethics may have been challenged when confronted with the choice of intervening to support the artist if losing balance, or to let him fall.

Against the impression that Calzolari’s performance is seeking the quality of presence, using the private setting of the studio to enhance it, I would like to point out that *Il ponte* contains a strong element of ‘presentism’. The performance is acted out on an improvised ‘stage’ – namely, the cardboard layer beneath the stepladders. This element of staging suggests a sentiment of the Artaudian/Derridean stance that performance cannot escape representation without extinguishing itself. The cardboard stage here challenges the ideal of pure presence and the experience of the artist/work as present in the same dimension as audience members themselves. By virtue of this element, which hints at the work’s representational character, *Il ponte* stages a tension between presence – exemplified by the real-life artist’s presence in his studio – and representation – exemplified by his elevated position in/as work, underlined by the cardboard stage. The same tension could not have been achieved if the work had been performed in an art institution, where the setting itself attributes the artist/work an elevated position and the element of the real or non-representational is therefore absent. The improvised stage that frames Calzolari’s work, then, suggests that the decentred studio presentation of the performance is not made as an attempt to pursue pure presence. Rather, the combination of setting and staging in *Il ponte* serves to address the border between presence and representation, like Derrida’s reading of Artaud advises.¹⁰⁹

Another type of decentring acts are staged right outside the institutions’ walls. An example is Pistoletto’s *Scultura da passeggio* (Walking Sculpture), performed for the first time as part of the group exhibition “Per un ipotesi di con temp l’azione” (For a Hypothesis on Contemplation/With-Time-Action), which was shown at Galleria Sperone, Galleria Christian Stein and Il Punto in December 1967. At the opening night, Pistoletto rolled his sculpture *Sfera*

¹⁰⁸ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 97–98. See also p. 153 n. 32 above.

¹⁰⁹ A similar tendency is found a work like Kounellis’ *Senza titolo* (1969–70), in which a person, covered in a woollen blanket with a blazing gas burner attached to the one foot that sticks out from underneath the cloth, lies on top of a metal plinth. I have not included the work in my discussion of artist-centred decentring acts because sources report that it was only in the 1970 *public* version of the work, performed at the “Amore mio” exhibition in Montepulciano, that Kounellis himself performed. In the 1969 *studio* version, the performer was a woman. See Westheider and Leppien, *Jannis Kounellis. Die eiserne Runde*, 32; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 427–28.



Top: Fig. 4.5.1. Ugo Nespolo, *Buongiorno Michelangelo*, 1968. 16 mm film, 10'38" 8 stills documenting Michelangelo Pistoletto's performance *Scultura da passeggio*, Turin, 1967, duration unspecified; Bottom: Fig. 4.5.2. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Scultura da passeggio*, 1967. *Sfera di giornali*, 1966, at the entrance of Galleria Sperone.

di giornali (Newspaper Sphere) in the streets between the three galleries, which were located near each other in Turin's historic city centre. The stroll soon turned into a parade that involved not only the artist himself, but also other artists participating in the exhibition, visitors to the vernissage and curious passers-by, who contributed to leading the spherical sculpture through the streets of Turin (Figs. 4.5.1–4.5.2).

The intention behind this decentring act is clear: Pistoletto considers it an inversion of Marcel Duchamp's introduction of the urinal to the sacred spaces of the art institution in *Fountain* (1917) and has stated that

Sfera di giornali is a work that comes out of the temple – from the artist's studio, the gallery, or the museum – in order to enter into the dimension of common things which are part of human society; this is what is achieved each time the performance is completed.¹¹⁰

Scultura di passeggio, Pistoletto continues, is about “the fusion and involvement between the people in the artistic world and those you may encounter on the street, who are part of the common and daily life.” Thus, the artist declares, “[t]here is a ritual in this performance: that of the artwork that derives from the sacred place of art in order to activate itself in the heart of society.”¹¹¹

Pistoletto's aim of letting the work of art unfold as a collective undertaking at street level is compatible with how theories of performance as pure presence find the performative work to unite the performer and the public in the sphere of the present. As proponents of these theories remark, the artist reduces his own hold of the work and lets the audience become participants in the constitution of the work. In the case of *Scultura di passeggio*, Marin R. Sullivan has also noted how authorial power is transferred to the sculpture itself, for “while it was engendered by and dependent on external forces, the sphere possessed a certain level of independent agency” in the performance, when allowed to roll around like “a sculptural flaneur”.¹¹² It seems that in Pistoletto's street act, the representational divide between the authoritarian artist, his artwork and its audience is abolished as these three elements go up in a temporary state of equality and co-presence, in accordance with the idea of performance as pure presence.

Against the notion that *Scultura di passeggio* upholds the ideal of pure presence, I would like to underline that it is only by virtue of its close tie to art institutions that the performative act is experienced as a turn to presence. As Pistoletto himself reveals, the very act of *stepping*

¹¹⁰ Magazzino Italian Art, “‘Walking Sculpture’ Performance, November 4, 2017, 12:30pm, Village of Cold Spring, New York”, <https://www.magazzino.art/events/walking-sculpture-performance> (accessed 26.05.2020).

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Marin R. Sullivan, *Sculptural Materiality in the Age of Conceptualism: International Experiments in Italy* (Oxon/NewYork, NY: Routledge, 2017), 75.

out of “the temple” or “the sacred sphere of art” is a central premise to the performance; the work is dependent on and comprises the galleries as examples of the secluded representational spheres it takes distance from. In that sense, *Scultura di passeggio* contains a layering – an element of historicity and development – that counteracts the idea of the immediate here and now. Rather than a wholehearted embrace of one-dimensional presence – which seems to be Pistloetto’s own conception of the work – the ‘ritual’ of the performance is a staging of the actual outbreak from the sphere of representations to the sphere of the present – and over and over again in the many re-enactments of this work. When taking to the street in each of these enactments, *Scultura di passeggio* can therefore be said to repeatedly stage the work’s abolishment of its own origin – which is what Derrida describes as a parricide.

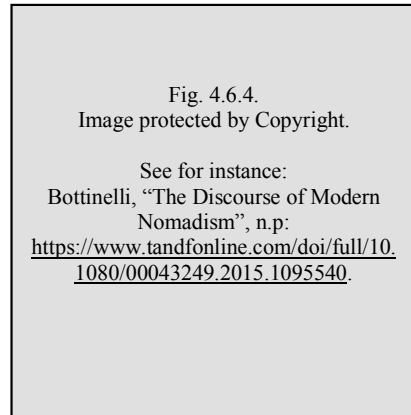
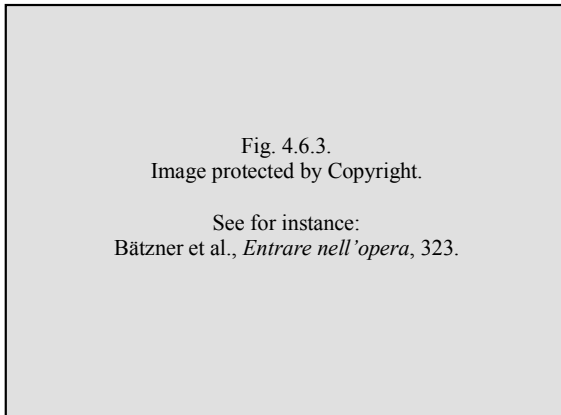
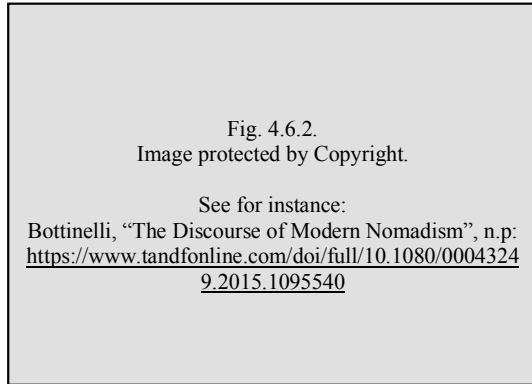
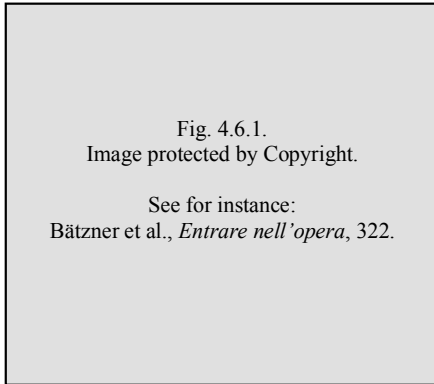
Another work that literally took to the streets, is Emilio Prini’s action *Camping* from 1969. The work was conducted for the exhibition “Op Losse Schroeven” (On Loose Screws), arranged by Wim Beeren at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in March that year. Beeren’s initial plan was to house Prini’s work within the museum, but the artist decided to situate an extensive tent camp on the sandy ground of an adjacent parking lot instead.¹¹³ As Beeren recalls, “the terrain where the Van Gogh Museum now stands [was] completely filled with tents.”¹¹⁴

One part of Prini’s project is a list describing the different steps involved in the *Camping* action, later published in Celant’s 1985 *Arte Povera* survey. The list consists of twelve points, indicating how the site was chosen and outlining some of the actions to be performed there, including photographing and writing on sand and leaves with candle wax. The list also suggests that the camp was to infiltrate or be reflected inside the museum: as Prini writes under points ‘I’ and ‘L’, “[I]later, through topographical correspondence bring the perimeter of the camp into the stairway-entrance of the museum and put microtelephones on the ceiling in correspondence to the points of the tents”, and “[h]ave the phrase written in the tent repeated constantly and wet the floor beneath the microphone for the width of the tent.”¹¹⁵ Considering Prini’s interest in “hypothetical actions” at the time, it is not likely that all these points were actually realised. It is reported, however, that Prini settled in his camp in the two weeks before “Op Losse Schroeven” opened, observing the other artists installing their works in and around the

¹¹³ As Christian Rattemeyer points out, Beeren’s first, hand-drawn floor plan reserves a place for Prini in the exhibition space dedicated to Pier Paolo Calzolari, Jannis Kounellis and Paolo Icaro. See Christian Rattemeyer, ed., *Exhibiting the New Art: “Op Losse Schroeven” and “When Attitudes Become Form”, 1969* (London: Afterall Books, 2010), 31.

¹¹⁴ Beeren cited in Rattemeyer, *Exhibiting the New Art*, 29. The statement is originally from Bart De Baere and Selma Klein Essink, “Op Losse Schroeven. An interview with Wim Beeren”, in *Kunst & Museumjournaal*, Vol. 6, No. 6, 1995, 45.

¹¹⁵ Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and protagonists*, 106–07.



Figs. 4.6.1–4.6.4. Emilio Prini, *Camping*, 1969. Intervention outside the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

Stedelijk, as well as construction workers doing their jobs in the neighbourhood. Allegedly, Prini was engaging in dialogues with these different types of workers and taking photographs of them as well as of himself (Figs. 4.6.1–4.6.4).¹¹⁶

Prini's demonstrable settling in a parking lot opposite the Stedelijk tends to be seen as part of a line of anti-institutional gestures running through his practice. Despite this overall tendency, it is interesting to note that Prini's decentring act is explained both as upholding and counteracting author-ity. Beeren, for instance, suggests that Prini's project was a protest against the curatorial request to plan his work in advance of the exhibition, because in Prini's opinion it was not possible for artists to "decide what to do with the rooms made available to them [...]"

¹¹⁶ See Silvia Bottinelli, "The Discourse of Modern Nomadism: The Tent in Italian art and architecture in the 1960s and 1970s", *Art Journal*, Vol. 74, No. 2, Summer 2015, 72; Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Stories*, 288–89. According to Celant, Prini photographed Italian artists such as Marisa Merz, Paolo Icaro, Pier Paolo Calzolari and himself from behind, in front of the tents. This corresponds to point 'D' of Prini's list: "Take a picture from behind of a person sitting in his place, in his field, with emphasis on his head or the back of his neck in the foreground."

before they are actually present and working in the space.”¹¹⁷ Christian Rattemeyer also interprets the camping action as a comment on the new relationship between the artist and the emerging ‘curateur’, indicating that when Prini is placing himself “literally and figuratively, spatially and temporally ‘before’ the exhibition”, he is performing a silent and sceptical protest, or at least expressing ambiguity against this new creative function.¹¹⁸ What Beeren and Rattemeyer point at, then, is not an institutional critique directed at the art institution’s upholding of outmoded aesthetic values or a commodified view of art, but a critical gesture defending the artist’s spontaneous actions against the creative initiatives of the exhibition organiser. They indicate that Prini’s action is a call to preserve the artist’s hold over his work.

Other interpreters find *Camping* to oppose the idea that art is a sphere separated from life, since the art museum, which Prini demonstrably avoids, is the physical manifestation of this idea. To Celant, for instance, Prini’s action was an attempt “to transform what was finite about the event [Op Losse Schroeven] to what was infinite about it, so that the boundary of the constraint that confined everything to the full of the institution and not to the void of its surroundings was dissolved.”¹¹⁹ A similar focus is found in Silvia Bottinelli’s account, stating that *Camping* “multiplies the nodes of cultural production and questions the authority of the museum as a demarcated place closed off to those extraneous to the art world.”¹²⁰ Such interpretations, suggesting that Prini’s decentring act sought to confront and conflate the autonomous sphere of the art museum with the public street, and artistic work with labour in general, indicate that Prini is rejecting not only the authority of the curateur, as Beeren and Rattemeyer emphasise, but of art as such, including the artist’s own. They see the decentring act as a call for an anti-authoritarian artistic position.

The latter approach to the work suggests that the intentions behind *Camping* are comparable to those expressed by Pistoletto in reference to *Scultura di passeggio* – namely to detach the work from “the sacred place of art” and activate it “in the heart of society”, in order to fuse “the people in the artistic world and those you may encounter on the street.” Thus, both works accommodate the ideal of establishing a co-relation between artist and audience. Like in Pistoletto’s *Scultura di passeggio*, however, it is the demonstrable positioning of *Camping* in

¹¹⁷ Wim Beeren, “The Exhibition” [1969], trans. Charles Esche and Steven ten Thije, in Rattemeyer, *Exhibiting the New Art*, 125. Beeren thus confirms Harold Szeemann’s impression of Prini: Szeemann describes in his working notes that “Prini and Icaro do not even want to show me their studios and earlier works” because of a shared “selection phobia” and a need for “preservation of their private spheres”. See Harold Szeemann, “How does an Exhibition Come into Being?” [1969–70], in Rattemeyer, *Exhibiting the New Art*, 186.

¹¹⁸ Rattemeyer, *Exhibiting the New Art*, 29.

¹¹⁹ Germano Celant, “Emilio Prini” [2010], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Stories*, 289.

¹²⁰ Bottinelli, “The Discourse of Modern Nomadism”, 72.

the museum's immediate surroundings that makes the work such a counterstatement. It is the close relation of the works to the art institutions, rather than any decisive break with it, that gives the works their momentum. Both works need the institution as a ground from which to stand out, and in that sense they demonstrate what Derrida finds the cruel theatre to acknowledge – namely, that a performance must comprise an element of representation in order not to abolish itself completely.¹²¹ These works balance on the edge between the representational sphere and pure presence, which prevents them from dissolving into life itself, and help them uphold the status as artworks even if their artists retract among other partakers contributing to the works' realisation.

A third category of decentring acts are staged in nature. Key in this respect are Giuseppe Penone's works, and particularly his "Alpi Marittime" series, which consists of a number of interactions in the woods outside of the artist's native village, Garesio. While the "Alpi Marittime" works may be characterised as land art or sculptural interventions involving the materials and forces of nature, they can also be categorised as artist-centred performative works, because they are based on the artist's physical intervention, and preserve his presence over time.¹²²

One example is *Alpi Marittime. Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto* (Maritime Alps. It Will Continue to Grow Except at That Point). In this work's first stage, Penone folded his right hand around the branch of an ash tree, as is demonstrated in a photographic presentation of the work in Celant's 1969 publication *Art Povera* (Fig. 4.7.1). Subsequently, Penone attached a metal version of his hand in the same position, so that the tree would incorporate the metallic hand as it grew.¹²³ The tree was cut down in 1985 to make place for a powerline, but is now preserved as a wooden sculpture titled *Trattenere 17 anni di crescita* (Holding on to 17 Years of Growth, 1968–1985), in which the trace of the artist's hand is visible as a cavity in the chopped branch (Fig. 4.7.2).

¹²¹ Another example of an Arte Povera decentring act that sustains an element of representation is Marisa Merz's performance *Roma – Urbe* (1970) in which the artist took off with a pilot in a 1959 Cessna 175 plane from Rome's Urbe airport. On ground was a representative of the institution, L'Attico's Fabio Sargentini. From the air, Merz reported altitudes to Sargentini, who inscribed them in a chart that was exhibited in the gallery as part of Merz's solo exhibition, which opened at L'Attico the same evening. The details concerning Merz's untitled performative work at the "Gennaio '70" exhibition in Bologna are unclear, but this work may also be a case in point. Here, Merz is to have made a telephone message to a person, allegedly the critic Tommaso Trini, who marked Merz's message on an exhibited sheet of paper. For this work, see Achille Bonito Oliva, "Lavoro estetico e comunità concentrate", *Marcatre*, Vol. 8, No. 56, 1970, 76.

¹²² For broader overviews of Penone's "Alpi Marittime" series, see Germano Celant, *Art Povera* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 168–73; Daniela Lancioni, "Alpi Marittime (Maritime Alps)", in Carlos Basualdo, ed., *Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms* (London: Gagosian, 2018).

¹²³ The first hand attached to the tree was made of iron wire, but it was replaced at a later point by a steel cast.



Above, left: Fig. 4.7.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime. Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto*, 1968. Intervention in the woods outside Garessio, as presented in Celant, *Art Povera*, 1969; Above, right: Fig. 4.7.2. Giuseppe Penone, *Trattenere diciassette anni di crescita (continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto)*, 1968–1985. Ash trunk carved in time, 500 x Ø 25 cm; Below, left: Fig. 4.8.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime. L'albero ricorderà il contatto*, 1968. Intervention in the woods outside Garessio, as presented in Celant, *Art Povera*, 1969; Below, right: 4.8.2: Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime. L'albero ricorderà il contatto*, 1968–1978. Photograph documenting the tree 10 years after Penone's interaction.

Another example is *Alpi Marittime. L'albero ricorderà il contatto* (Maritime Alps. The Tree Will Remember the Contact). The departure point of this work is the artist's act of embracing an alder tree with his whole body – again, an act that is photographically documented and presented in Celant's *Art Povera* (Fig. 4.8.1). The embrace is also documented in the tree itself, since Penone marked the outline of his clinging body with iron nails and zinc wire on the alder's bark, as the two remaining photographs in Penone's presentation of the work show. Like in the previous work, the metal would be incorporated into the trunk when the tree grew, and the embrace would thus be recalled as a furrow in the trunk itself (Fig. 4.8.2).

When discussing Penone's performative experiments in the woods where he grew up, Daniela Lancioni explains his choice of site as a return to the land that provided his "formative experiences", motivated by a desire to "find his own identity".¹²⁴ Penone, however, does not speak of the search for his own identity as motivating these works, rather he presents the interventions as motivated by a desire to identify with something larger than himself. Penone repeatedly makes artworks outdoors, in collaboration with the materials and forces of nature, to express his own experience of being part of the world at large, and to present his own artistic production as an equivalent to the work of nature. This is confirmed in one of his statements about the man-nature relationship:

I don't believe [that] a clear distinction can be drawn; there is human material and there are materials called stone and wood, which together make up cities, railroads and streets, riverbeds and mountains. From a cosmic point of view the difference between them is irrelevant.¹²⁵

Penone's turn to nature, then, seem to mark a vision of the work and its artist as participants in ongoing natural processes. Penone's desire to define himself and his acts as part of a larger cosmos, and his specific interventions – in which he literally embraces nature and tends to become one with it – can be taken to exemplify how performance artists of the late 1960s, according to Vergine, continued Artaud's project of seeking a "rebirth into the world".¹²⁶ The dissolving of the self and the work in nature, in accordance with a "cosmic point of view", also relates to the main aim of Grotowski's poor theatre – namely, to connect with universal truth – and to Fischer-Lichte's ideals of transgression. Thus, in going so far towards dissolving himself

¹²⁴ Lancioni, "Alpi Marittime (Maritime Alps)", n.p.

¹²⁵ Germano Celant, *Giuseppe Penone* (Milan: Electa, 1989), 19, quoted in Elizabeth Mangini, "Feeling One's Way Through a Cultural Chiasm. Touch in Giuseppe Penone's Sculpture c. 1968", in *New Perspectives on Italian Culture. Vol. II. The Arts and History*, ed. Graziella Parati (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013 [2012]), 161.

¹²⁶ Vergine, "Body as Language. Body Art and Like Stories", 8.

and his work in the sphere of the real, Penone's decentering acts apparently accommodate the ideals of performance as pure presence.

It may be objected that when Penone turns to the woods to create decentred performative works, he breaks with a key aspect of performance as pure presence; that of the physical encounter between artist and audience. As mentioned above, an effect of Calzolari's studio-performance and Pistoletto and Prini's street actions is a more intimate or engaging relationship with their audiences. Penone's decentering acts, on the other hand, distance the artist from his audiences. However, Penone's interventions in the woods do allow passers-by to coincidentally stumble upon the works, and such a surprise encounter may incite a feeling of bafflement and privilege. Thus, even though Penone's acts avoid the physical encounter between artist and audience, the traces of his presence in the trees may have a kind of transformative effect, as Fischer-Lichte calls it, on the people who approach the work. A transformative encounter with a work in/of nature, without the physical presence of the artist to mediate it, may be regarded even less author-itarian than the performances in which the artist's presence is palpable.

In Penone's turn to nature, the work is about to dissolve in the sphere of the real, to be extinguished in the course of life. However, these works also comprise elements that counteract the quality of pure presence. The photographic re-presentation of the work is one example, but important here are also duration and the collision of different time scales.¹²⁷ As noted above, Amelia Jones listed duration as a quality inherent to performance, and one that counteracts the ideal of pure presence: an enduring work will necessarily be experienced in sequences, and thus never be fully present in a viewer's mind. In Penone's works, this aspect is underlined by the extensive time frame. The works are initiated by simple and shortlived artistic gestures – such as gripping or embracing a trunk – which are preserved in the metal arrangements added to the respective trees. But they also comprise the alterations made to the artist's arrangements by the trees' growth over years – developments so slow that they are imperceptible to the naked eye. Nevertheless, the certainty that the tree will grow adds an aspect of non-present time – a future – to the work at the time of execution, while the traces of the artist's body add an element of non-present time – the past – to the work when experienced thereafter. The works, then, are never fully present to potential viewers, nor to themselves. This is also the case when the works solidify as sculptures in the form of chopped trunks, since the sculptures carry traces of the preceding phases.

¹²⁷ How photographic representations of performative events counteract the ideal of pure presence is discussed below, in the section "Document-in' acts".

Shifts of author-ial power follow the various phases of Penone's works. In the works' first phase, the artist approaches the tree and establishes contact in a friendly way, by way of a handshake or embrace, but also in a most violent manner, by inserting nails. In the second phase, nature is allowed to respond and to work on the tree alone, while in a third phase, the tree is cut down and presented as a work of art with Penone as the signatory artist. The shift from the first to the second phase may be conceived as a gesture from the artist to nature, a surrendering of author-ial power in accordance with Penone's own statements about the equality of man and nature. The final, violent cut can be explained as a coincidence forced by practical circumstances that do not concern the work itself. On the other hand, the works' phases stage an extended struggle over author-ity: Penone first conquers nature to make a work, nature then takes back the power to form, but subsequently has to surrender to the will of human intervention. Penone's works thus stage a measuring of forces between man and nature, and demonstrate that the question of author-ity is but a version of that overarching struggle. In that sense, the works support Jones's claim that rather than seeking a harmonic one-dimensionality, performative works address the most pressing ruptures of our time.¹²⁸

In his programmatic essays on the "Theatre of Cruelty", Artaud exclaims that "abandoning the architecture of present-day theatres, we shall take some hangar or barn" in order to establish "direct communication [...] between actor and spectator".¹²⁹ When abandoning the contemporary art institutions in favour of the studio, a city street, a parking lot or woodlands, Arte Povera artists also open up to close encounters with their audiences. In Calzolari's studio, visitors are physically confronted with the performing artist and arguably have the potential to affect his performance; in the streets of Turin and the parking lot in Amsterdam, city dwellers and construction workers become active participants in performative works. Penone's interactions in the woods do not facilitate physical artist/ audience-encounters, but allow an interplay between the artist and nature, which – like the audience in the other works – becomes an active participant, and in turn opens up to the most intimate rendezvous between nature, as a co-producer, and the people who potentially discover the hidden remains of the withdrawn actions. In being realised in society or living nature instead of staged inside the art institution's elevated spaces, Arte Povera's decentring acts apparently fulfil the ideals of the performative work as an event in which the distinctions between the sphere of the work and the sphere of the world dissolves. They can also be described as anti-author-itarian, in the sense

¹²⁸ Here I think of the current concern with human domination of the natural world, expressed through the popularity of posthumanist theories, as mentioned in the Introduction, p. 11.

¹²⁹ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, 96.

that the artists dismiss their privileged positions as the works' originators, and allow the individuals traditionally categorised as 'artist/actor' and 'audience' to transgress these roles and momentarily become one with/in the work.

Nevertheless, I would claim that Arte Povera's decentring acts have a closer affinity with the aesthetics of absence. This is not simply because they withdraw from the art institution. On the contrary, it is because they maintain a distinction between the institution as an autonomous, alternative space and the ordinary world outside it, or address that distinction. When operating outside the institution, the street and studio performances uphold their relationships to it, and so avoid taking a full step into the realm of the everyday to become pure and immediate presences in the course of life itself. The means used to sustain the works' relations to the representational spaces vary: Calzolari performs his studio work on an improvised stage, and so alludes to the art institution's mechanisms for presenting and elevating artworks, as well as the elevating function of the institutional space itself. Pistoletto's and Prini's street actions maintain a physical relationship to the museum/gallery institutions when taking place in their immediate surroundings. They are negating gestures, dependent on the institutions they dismiss. Penone's works more radically give themselves over to the everyday when engaging in an intimate dialogue – or tense negotiation – with nature. However, the works also stage encounters between two time scales – the human and the natural – and so introduces elements of non-presence. Through these various means, the Arte Povera artists and their works avoid being extinguished in the sphere of the real: their status as sole originators and autonomous works are compromised as the institutional sphere is abandoned, but an undifferentiated presence in the real world is also hindered by the remains of and references to representation in these performances. Here, the works and the artists who appear within them oscillate between presence and representation.¹³⁰

Document-in' Acts

A final characteristic of Arte Povera's artist-centred performative works is that many of them are *mediated*. As already revealed in the previous chapter, the Arte Povera artists socialised

¹³⁰ It is worth mentioning that among Arte Povera works are also examples of artist-centred performances in which artists and work do blend into 'life itself'. This is the case with Marisa and Mario Merz's action at a beach in Fregene in 1970, and with the football match that Emilio Prini improvised at the Arsenal in Amalfi, as part of "Arte povera più azioni povere" in 1968 (see Costantino D'Orazio and Federica Pirani, eds., *Marisa e Mario Merz. Sto con quella curva di quella montagna che vedo riflessa in questo lago di vetro. Al tavolo di Mario* (Rome/Imola: MACRO Museo d'Arte contemporanea Roma/Manfredi Edizioni: 2016), 93–107; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 458–59 and 522). The status of these actions as artworks has therefore long been disputed.

with some of post-war Italy's most advanced photographers and experimental film-makers. They occasionally contributed to the making of Arte Povera's *autoritratti* but were also engaged in documenting their exhibitions and performative works.¹³¹ In addition, the *poveristi* utilised the camera themselves in relation to their actions and interventions. Within the Arte Povera archive there are a number of works that can be characterised as 'photo performances', 'performed photography' or 'living pictures' – that is, pieces that were performed by the artists exclusively for camera.¹³² Since this entails that the performative actions are presented to audiences only in the mediated form – as photograph, film or video – I consider these camera-based performances another example of Arte Povera's strategies of withdrawal.

An issue of concern when performative actions are presented in mediated form, is the relationship between the performative events themselves and the media through which they are presented. Since theories of performance as pure presence advocate the coinciding of the work and the performing artist's body and idealise the physical encounter between performer/work and audience, they have, in principle, no room for mediation of the performative act. As Fischer-Lichte puts it, attempts to visually or audially record performances “are bound to fail and only highlight the unbridgeable chasm between the performance and a fixed reproduceable artefact.”¹³³ Scepticism was also expressed by Artaud, who claimed that movies are “murdering us with second-hand reproductions which, filtered through machines, cannot *unite with* our sensibility”, as opposed to the “serious theatre”, which “acts upon us like a spiritual therapeutics

¹³¹ Among the photographing artists, photographers and film-/video-makers associated with Arte Povera are Claudio Abate, Claudio Basso, Giorgio Colombo, Italo Bressano, Mimmo Capone, Luciano Giaccari, Gianfranco Gorgoni, Mimmo Jodice, Ugo Mulas, Ugo Nespolo, Luca Patella, Paolo Pellion di Persano, Paolo Mussat Sartor and Gerry Schum. For more on the relationship between artists and photographers in post-war Italy and Arte Povera's experiments with photography and film, see Joshua Shannon, “Light years: Uninteresting pictures: Photography and fact at the end of the 1960's”, in *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977*, ed. Matthew S. Witkovsky (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago/Yale UP, 2012); Christiane Meyer-Stoll, “The Photographers: Claudio Abate, Giorgio Colombo, Paolo Mussat Sartor”, in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Rainald Schaumacher (Munich: Kunstverlag Ingvild Goetz, 2001); Christiane Meyer-Stoll, “Träger der Erinnerung. Fotografien als Documente”, in *La Poetica dell'Arte Povera*, ed. Annegret Laabs (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2003); Francesca Pola, “Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto. Fotografia e film nell'Arte Povera”, in *Arte Povera 2011*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2011); Christiane Meyer-Stoll and Valentina Pero, “A Conversation with Giorgio Colombo”, in *Che Fare? Arte Povera – The Historic Years*, eds. Friedemann Malsch, Christiane Meyer-Stoll, Valentina Pero (Vaduz/Heidelberg: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein/Kehrer Verlag, 2010); Giuliano Sergio, *Information, document, oeuvre. Rarours de la photographie en Italie dans les années soixante et soixante-dix* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris, 2015), 87–175; Christiane Meyer-Stoll and Valentina Pero, “It was a Job That Had to Be Done. Failing That, the Art of Those Years Would Have Been Lost”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 274–83.

¹³² The term 'photo-performance' is used in Giovanni Lista, *Arte Povera* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2006), 6; for 'performed photography', see Susan Bright, *Auto-Focus: The self-portrait in contemporary photography* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010), 183; 'living pictures' – or 'lebende bilder' is from the title of Uwe M. Schneede, “Lebende Bilder. Die Aktionen und die aktionsähnlichen Arbeiten des Jannis Kounellis”, in Westheider and Leppien, *Jannis Kounellis. Die eiserne Runde*.

¹³³ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 75.

whose touch can never be forgotten.”¹³⁴ From this perspective, the mediated version of a performance is understood as documentation of the live event, and as secondary to it.

Among Arte Povera’s photographed and recorded performances, there are several examples of works in which the photograph or film does indeed serve as documentation, when simply recounting the narrative of the live act. Some of Prini’s performances are cases in point: in the 1967–68 work *Identico Alieno Scambiato* (Identical Alien Exchanged), for instance, Prini wrote the first two words of the work’s title in construction dust on the floor of his studio apartment. There was no audience, except Nicola Trentalance, who photographed the action. The artist takes no notice of the camera, which operates as a passive witness testifying in retrospect that the event – which would otherwise pass unnoticed to the public – took place.¹³⁵ From the sphere of living images, a film that merely documents is Giovanni Anselmo’s *Senza titolo* from 1970, which records the artist installing his 1968 sculpture *Torsione*.¹³⁶

It is not documentation, however, that characterises the use of camera in Arte Povera’s artist-centred performances. On the contrary, the main tendency when these actions are staged for camera is that the recording medium plays an important part in the work: the camera is something the performing artists actively engage with and position themselves in relation to. To underline that the process of mediation is an integral part of these performances, I characterise them as *document-in’ acts*.

Well known examples of Arte Povera document-in’ acts are the photo-performances in which Pascali playfully interacts with his sculptures. Although the *Catalogo generale* concludes that the abovementioned *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus* is Pascali’s only live act staged in front of an invited audience, there is wide consensus that performativity was central to Pascali’s practice.¹³⁷ This is based on the vast number of photographs resulting from arranged photo sessions, in which the artist himself appears beside, upon or within his works.¹³⁸ For

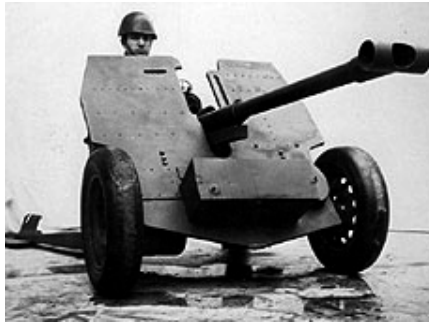
¹³⁴ Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, 84–85.

¹³⁵ Emilio Prini, *Identico Alieno Scambiato*, 1967–68. Performance for camera at Villa Margherita, Genoa. For images see Celant, *Art Povera*, 217; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 238–39. This is also the case in Emilio Prini, *Senza titolo* (1968), action with cat in Prini’s apartment, Genoa, and arguably in Emilio Prini, *Senza titolo* (1966–67) and Emilio Prini, *Azioni di compartamento: alzarsi e andare al lavaro* (1969–74), unannounced actions in the city of Genoa.

¹³⁶ Giovanni Anselmo, *Senza titolo*, 1970. 16mm film, b/w, sound, 1:20 min.

¹³⁷ Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale*, 159. The performative aspect of Pascali’s practice was highlighted in the exhibition “Pascali performer”, curated by Fabio Sargentini at his Galleria L’Attico in 1991.

¹³⁸ Photographs include Claudio Abate, Pascali with *Araba Felice* (1959), artist’s studio, Rome, 1964; Plinio di Martiis, Pascali with *Colosseo* (1964), Galleria La Tartaruga, 1965; Pascali with *Ruderi su Prato* (1964), see Marco Tonelli, *Pino Pascali: Il libero gioco della scultura* (Monza: Johan & Levi editore, 2010), 16; Plinio di Martiis, Pascali with *Muro di pietra* (1964), Galleria La Tartaruga, 1965; Claudio Abate, Pascali with *Il Mare e fulmine* (1966), artist’s studio, 1966; Claudio Abate, Pascali with *32 m² di mare circa* (1967), “Lo Spazio dell’Immagine”, Palazzo Trinci, Foligno, 1967; Andrea Taverna, Pascali with *Banchi da setola* (1968), outdoors, 1968; Ugo Mulas, Pascali with *Cavaletto* (1968); Andrea Taverna, Pascali with *Attrezzi agricoli* (1968), artist’s studio, 1968.



Top left: Fig. 4.9.1. Pino Pascali with *Missile (Colomba della pace)*, 1965. Photograph by Claudio Abate; Top right: Fig. 4.9.2 Pino Pascali with *Cannone Bella Ciao*, 1965. Photograph by Claudio Abate; Middle: Fig. 4.10. Pino Pascali with *Vedova Blu*, 1968. Photograph by Claudio Abate; Below: Figs. 4.11.1–4.11.2. Pino Pascali with *Trappola*, 1968. Photographs by Andrea Taverna.

instance, Claudio Abate's widely distributed images of Pascali with "Le Armi" (The Weapons), taken in the courtyard behind Pascali's studio, depicts the artist dressed in military uniform and helmet, posing around his weapon-like sculptures with a sense of humour – like when climbing on top of a missile to ride it – or in all seriousness, as if Pascali was a real soldier standing behind a cannon awaiting orders to fire (Figs. 4.9.1–4.9.2).¹³⁹ A few years later, Abate also photographed Pascali interacting with *Vedova Blu* (Blue Widow) – a gigantic spider made of blue acrylic fur, exhibited for the first time at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome in February 1968.¹⁴⁰ In the most frequently reproduced photograph, the artist is seen lying on his back on the stone floor beneath the spider, while bending his body so that his legs stretch out above his torso and tap the floor behind his head (Fig. 4.10). Both Giovanni Lista and Valerie Da Costa indicate that the acrobatic posture is part of a dance ritual that Pascali enjoyed performing around the sculpture in reference to a myth of tantrism from his native Puglia, stating that if bitten by a tarantula one ends up in a trance that must be exorcised by particular dance moves.¹⁴¹ Also in 1968, Pascali performed with *Trappola* (Trap) – a soft structure made of braided steel wool and suspended from the ceiling to look like a hunting net.¹⁴² In images from a photoshoot with Andrea Taverna he is seen both captured within the net, and looking out of it (Figs. 4.11.1–4.11.2). When these images are displayed together as *Trappola aperta* (Open Trap) and *Trappola chiusa* (Closed Trap), it is as if they present the artist playing peek-a-boo with his work.¹⁴³

The photographs of Pascali interacting with his works appeared in ephemera related to his exhibitions, such as posters, invitation cards and catalogues – in other words, they were used for promotional purposes. After Pascali's early death following a motorcycle accident in 1968, the photographs continued to promote his oeuvre and contributed to the mythologisation of the

¹³⁹ Pino Pascali, *Le Armi*, series of eleven sculptures made of car parts and pieces of metal, plastic and wood to look like real missiles, machine guns and other military gear. First displayed at Pascali's breakthrough exhibition "I falsi giocattoli di Pino Pascali" at Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone in January 1966. See Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale*, 121–24 and 160. For images from the Sperone exhibition, see Minola et al., *Gian Enzo Sperone*, 98–99.

¹⁴⁰ Pino Pascali, *Vedova Blu*, 1968. Acrylic fur on wooden structure, 152 x Ø 280 cm. First exhibited at "the Sesta biennale Romana. Rassegna delle arti figurative di Roma e del Lazio", now in the collection of MUMOK, Vienna. See Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale*, 121–24 and 140.

¹⁴¹ See Lista, *Arte Povera*, n.p.; and Valerie da Costa, "Pino Pascali, l'eau, la terre, l'image", *Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, No. 143, Spring 2018, 46. As Valerie Da Costa indicates, Pascali's ritual may be inspired by ethnologist Ernesto De Martino's 1961 book *La terra del rimorso* (The Land of Remorse), studying tantric rituals in Southern Italy, and the tarantula dance in particular.

¹⁴² Pino Pascali, *Trappola*, 1968. Steel wool, 300 x 200 x 200 cm. First exhibited in "Pino Pascali. Bachi da setola ed altri lavori in corso", Galleria L'Attico, Turin, March 1968. See Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale*, 121–24, 138.

¹⁴³ See Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 471.

deceased artist.¹⁴⁴ Pascali's photo-performances seem to exemplify the phenomenon of "self-performative advertisements" that Amelia Jones finds emerging in art magazines such as *Artforum* in the late 1960s. They are "advertisements that include the body of the artist, often in facetious or ironic poses and humorous settings." Here, "the body of the artist plays a central role in promoting the exhibition of the artist's work: the body is itself commodified but also dispersed across the field of meanings and values attributed to the works."¹⁴⁵ Mary Kelly argues that such self-promotional practices among artists in the late 1960s occur in response to the period's less personalised aesthetics, where works without any trace of the artist's hand were made. Photographs that document artists interacting with their works are an alternative means to underline the work's relation to its artist, she suggests.¹⁴⁶ According to Jones and Kelly, then, the function of photo-performances like those conducted by Pascali is to relate art objects to their artist and mark his author-ity over them.

Some comments related to Pascali's work chime with Jones's and Kelly's stance, when underlining how the recurring appearance of the performing artist beside his sculptural works downplays the latter's autonomy. Evert J. van Straaten, for instance, states with reference to Pascali's photo-performances that "[t]he presence of the artist as 'metteur en scene' of his own work was very important", while Bruno Corà claims that "Pascali's personal presence and the performances he made around his works were an important contributing factor, lending them an extra dimension."¹⁴⁷ Maurizio Calvesi indicates another relation between artist and work in Pascali's performances: in reference to the interactions with "Le Armi", he emphasises how Pascali camouflages himself among his works. In Calvesi's account, the camouflaging act is not only literal, concerning how the uniformed Pascali partly disappears among the military gear. Describing Pascali's performance with "Le Armi" as "a prolongation of the work and an interpretation of it", and as "an action that is a re-action, and a chain reaction in combination with the object", Calvesi argues that the objectual work and the performing artist camouflage,

¹⁴⁴ For examples, see the catalogue of the commemorative exhibition at Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome, Palma Bucarelli, ed., *Pino Pascali* (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1969), and a 1969 issue of *L'Uomo Vogue*, in which Pascali appears with his 1968 sculpture *Cavaletto*. According to the information sheets produced for the exhibition "Pino Pascali: Teatro delle visioni", curated by Giuseppe Armogida and Rocco Sciaraffa for the L'Off/Off Theatre, Rome, in 2019, it was the March issue that contained the article "Sette più sette: artisti d'oggi, le loro opere e i loro abiti", which presented the works and personal style of Pascali, along with artists such as Tano Festa and Aldo Mondino. See also Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale*, 163.

¹⁴⁵ Jones, *Body Art*, 243 n. 13. See also Amelia Jones, "Dis/Playing the Phallus: Male Artists Perform Their Masculinities", *Art History*, Vol. 17, No. 4, December 1994, 549–53, in which "self-performative advertisements" by Robert Rauchenberg, Judy Chicago and Ed Ruscha are discussed.

¹⁴⁶ Kelly, "Re-Writing Modernist Criticism", 94–95.

¹⁴⁷ Evert J. van Straaten, "Foreword", in *Pino Pascali*, ed. Marianne Brouwer (Otterlo: Rijksmuseum Kröller Müller, 1991), 5; Bruno Corà, "Pino Pascali: the reconstruction of self in the lost garden", in Brouwer, *Pino Pascali*, 71.

cover over, or disappear within each other; neither work nor artist operate at the cost of the other, they exist on equal footing.¹⁴⁸ The performing artist and his work conceal and complement each other also in Pascali's performances with *Trappola* and *Vedova blu*. The interaction with *Trappola* stages a play of absence and presence, as Pascali hides behind and emerges from the sculpture's braided net. The performance thus alternately presents the steel wool sculpture and the artist as the protruding figure. In the case of *Vedova blu*, it has been noted that the two legs of the athletic artist add to the sculpture's six legs, and that only in this configuration with the artist does the sculpture resemble a proper eight-legged spider.¹⁴⁹ In that sense, the performative encounter between artist and sculpture unifies and completes them.

In staging an encounter between the artist and an already existing work, Pascali's performances deviate from the ideal of performance as pure presence, which posits the performance as a work coinciding with the artist's body. Surely, Pascali's live acts also involve the unification of artist and work, but where theories of performance as pure presence pose the one-dimensional equation 'performance = work = artist', Pascali's acts are based on the formula 'performance = work + artist'. His performances do not follow the rationale of the artist and/as work but are a staging of these entities as synthesised. The performances thus add to the artist and the work as an exterior, unifying layer – as a form to which the work and the artist are both integral – and proposes a relationship of equality and interrelation between them.

Theories of performance as pure presence idealise the live event and presuppose that the performance culminates in the bodily co-presence of performing artist and audience. A photograph merely records the momentary amalgamation of artist and/as work in the live act, without giving the spectator access to this past event in a manner comparable to the physical incorporation of the audience in the performance itself. Pascali's photographs are also documentary, in the sense that they record momentary encounters between the artist and a work, brief moments of equation between them, and thus relate to the performances as consecutive layers. However, Pascali's photographs also add something to his performances; in the case of *Trappola*, the live act stages an alternation between the artist and his work, but if performed before a live audience, this alternation act would have been interrupted when the artist decided to end the act and leave the sculpture. When the photographs are displayed together, on the other hand, they present the alignment between artist and work as a permanent condition. Similarly, Pascali's interaction with *Vedova blu* presents a momentary alignment of artist and

¹⁴⁸ Calvesi, "Pascali's Eros", in Brouwer, *Pino Pascali*, 36.

¹⁴⁹ Fiona Kearney, "The Artist's Eye", in *The Artist's Eye: Photographic Portraits of Artists from the Galleria Civica di Modena Collection*, eds. Fiona Kearney and Marco Pierini (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2013), 10.

work, but a potential audience would necessarily witness them come together and leave each other as separate entities. It is only within the photograph that the connection between artist and work is perpetuated. Thus, Pascali's performances explore the structures of power and dependence between the artist and his work and the photographs – by virtue of their capacity to (di)still particular moments of this investigation – make statements about that relationship in a way that the durational 'medium' of performance cannot: they advocate ideas of artist and work as co-inciding (*Vedova blu*) or entangled (*Trappola*).

The photographic medium is also a crucial part of Giovanni Anselmo's work *Entrare nell'opera* (Entering the Work) and Gilberto Zorio's *Fluidità Radicale* (Radical Fluidity) and *Confine* (Border). At first sight, Anselmo and Zorio's camera-based performances seem rather different. *Entrare nell'opera* is a black-and-white photograph depicting the artist as a dark silhouette in the midst of an undefinable terrain (Fig. 4.12). The image is based on an action conducted without audience, where Anselmo, after installing his camera at the top of a hill and activating its shutter release, runs down the hill to let himself be captured by the camera. In the resulting photograph, he is the only figure standing out against the uniform background. In both of Zorio's photographs, on the other hand, the shadowlike silhouette of the artist's upper body is barely discernible against the dark background of the black and white photographs taken by Paolo Mussat Sartor. The motifs that stand out in these images are the text lines appearing above the artist's head, spelling the works' titles in light italics (Figs. 4.13–4.14). Both photographs result from the same simple action: Zorio stands in a darkened room and writes the given words in the air above his head with a lit cigarette. Thus, Anselmo is running away while being the only discernible motif in his image, Zorio is standing still but barely seen in the photographs.

Despite the contrasts, a common feature in Anselmo's and Zorio's works is that they establish an intimate relationship between performative act and photograph. Both artists exploit and rely on the photographic medium's specific qualities when perpetuating their actions. In Anselmo's case, the downfacing and flattening angle of the viewfinder and Anselmo's position relative to the viewfinder's frame make him the centre of the work, and the photograph's grainy effect makes the artist's contour partly dissolve in the surroundings and their scattered shifting between shadow and highlight. It is by virtue of these photographic effects that Anselmo is experienced as 'entering the work', whereas such an entry would not be perceived by an audience witnessing Anselmo's act of running into the terrain. In Zorio's case, the light-writing would hardly be comprehensible in the live act itself. For one, the words would appear mirror-wise to anyone standing opposite the artist, which issue is compensated for in some of the

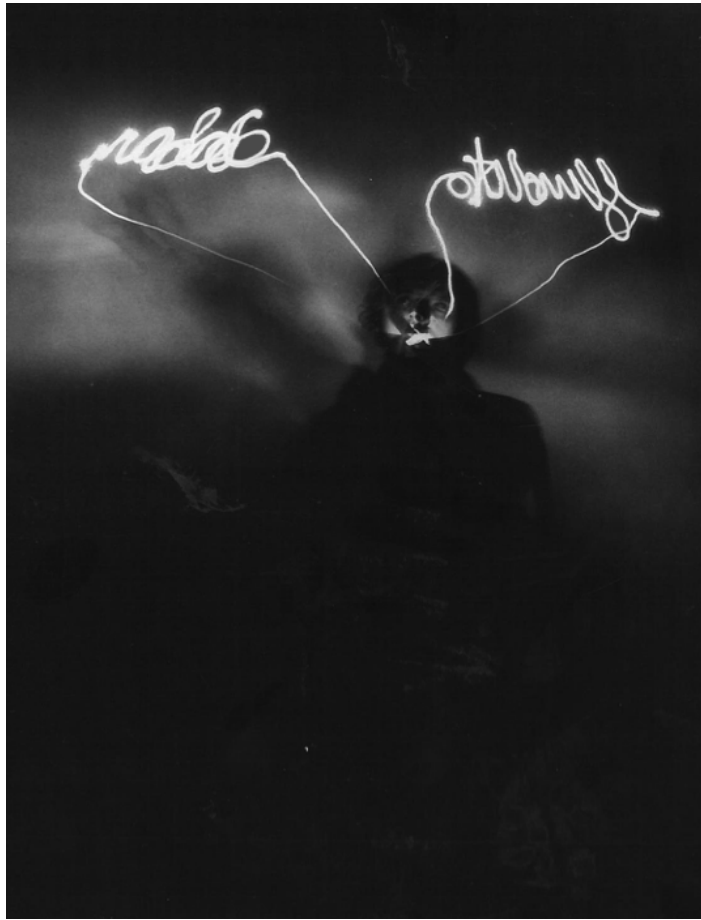


Fig. 4.12. Giovanni Anselmo, *Entrare nell'opera*, 1971.
Self-timer photograph reproduced on canvas or paper, varying dimensions.

photographs, where the negatives were inverted before the images were developed.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, a live audience would perceive the lit end of the cigarette as a minor speck moving in dark air. The writing would be wiped out before it came to form letters, and surely before the full word/phrase was finished and the act complete. Given the camera settings of slow shutter speed and long exposure time, it is only a photograph that can capture and condense the whole trajectory of the lit cigarette in a single image, and thus reveal the light's movements as a comprehensible text segment. In Anselmo's and Zorio's projects, the action reaches its culmination – the appearance of the artist's entry into the work and the announcement of the works' titles, respectively – only in its photographic manifestation.

Since the performative event is closed off or completed only when the photographic realisation takes place, *Entrare nell'opera*, *Fluidità Radicale* and *Confine* suggests a continuity between event and photograph. It is as if the performance develops and establishes as a work

¹⁵⁰ In fig. 4.14, the word 'confine' is decipherable when reading left to right, which suggests that the negative is inverted (or that the artist wrote mirrored). This is the case in most presentations of these works. In fig. 4.13, it seems as if 'radicale' reads left to right, whereas 'fluidita' appears mirrored. This suggests either that the artist has written 'radicale' mirrorwise, and 'fluidita' in the conventional manner, or that the photograph is a double exposure in which only one half is inverted. I have contacted Zorio for clarification but have not received an answer.



Top: Fig. 4.13. Gilberto Zorio, *Fluidita radicale*, 1970. Action for camera. Photograph by Paolo Mussat Sartor;
Below: Fig. 4.14. Gilberto Zorio, *Confine*, 1971. Action for camera. Photograph by Paolo Mussat Sartor.

only on the surface of the photographic film; as if the action is destined towards the photograph or aiming for the still. Anselmo acknowledges the photograph's status as the end result of his action when exhibiting the image as a work in its own right. The status of the photographs in Zorio's works is more ambiguous. In monographs on Zorio, these works are described as "lettering written in the dark by the movement of a lit cigarette", that is, as actions existing independently of the photographs.¹⁵¹ Such a listing supports a notion of photographs as mere documentation. So does the display of these photos in publications related to Mussat Sartor, where they are presented as *his* photographs of Zorio's *Fluidità Radicale* and *Confine*.¹⁵² However, the fact that there are no audiences, and that a live experience of Zorio's light-writing would have been significantly different from the photographs that (di)still the whole act in a single image, support the idea that *Fluidità Radicale* and *Confine* are the *photographs*, rather than the acts themselves. In rejecting a clear distinction between the performative event and the photograph in this manner, Anselmo's and Zorio's works pose a challenge to the idea of photography as documentation of a prior event, and thus also to the representational hierarchy between original and representation.

Like Pascali's photo-performances, Anselmo's and Zorio's works reject the ideal, upheld in theories of performance as pure presence, of the performing artist and the work as coinciding in the sphere of the real. Pascali presents the artist's body as existing alongside, and thus separated from, the sculptural works during the performance, but the photographs – at least the one of *Vedova Blu* – propose that the artist and the work are incomplete until preserved as one within the photographic image. In *Entrare nell'opera*, *Fluidità radicale* and *Confine*, no work exists independent from the photographs. In Zorio's case, it is also likely that the artist's face would not be visible for a potential live audience, in which case there is no manifest artist either prior to the photographs. In that sense, one can say that the artist who appears in Zorio's works coincides with the works themselves. However, there is a crucial difference between the artist/work consolidation in Pascali and Zorio's photo performances and the consolidation idealised in theories of performance as pure presence: the latter finds the unification of artist and work to happen in the sphere of the real, while in the Arte Povera performances, the artist and work come to co-exist only within the photograph, in a representational sphere separate from the real.

¹⁵¹ Klaus Wolbert, ed., *Gilberto Zorio* (Turin: Hopefulmonster, 2005), 180.

¹⁵² See Achille Bonito Oliva, ed., *Paolo Mussat Sartor. Fotografo 1968-1978. Arte e artisti in Italia* (Turin: Stampatori Editore, 1979), 266; and Andrea Bellini, ed., *Paolo Mussat Sartor: Luoghi d'arte e di artisti. 1968–2008* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2008), n.p.

Given the precarity that these photo performances ascribe to the artist – suggesting that he is incomplete or non-existent before manifesting with/in the work – they do not exemplify Jones’s notion of “self-promotional advertisements”. Rather than promoting the production of esteemed artists, photography here serves as a means through which the artists can explore their own constitution and demonstrates the artists’ dependency on their work. The artists’ appearances in Arte Povera’s photo performances are more in sync with what Jones describes as a “narcissistic focus” in body art, about which she states that it “hardly confirms in any simple way the heroic genius (and ‘transcendence’) of the artistic subject”, it “splinters rather than coheres the self”, and thus “enacts narcissism as contingency”.¹⁵³ The self-centredness of the body artist, Jones holds, reveals the fundamental insecurity and instability of a self that is dependent on others – namely, the individuals who witness the performance – to manifest as a subject in the world. At this point, Jones’s understanding does not seem different from that of Vergine, who argues that the body artists have a need to externalise and confirm themselves. The difference is, however, that while Vergine believes that the performative act can give the artist a feeling of unity and wholeness, Jones’ artists seem to have no hope or intention of such coming to completeness. Arte Povera photo performances, as opposed to both Vergine’s and Jones’s emphasis of the observer’s role, avoid the audience, but rely on the photographic medium (and on the sculptural work, in Pascali’s case) when seeking compensation for the lacking coherence of the self. The artists do not appear in their works as “metteur en scène” or as the origin and fundament of the work; their positions – even Pascali’s, though brazen as he may seem – are subordinate relative to the material of the work rather than author-itarian.

The *living* image was also embraced by Italian visual artists around 1970.¹⁵⁴ Arte Povera artists experimented with the media of film and video individually, and as part of two ambitious exhibition projects: “Gennaio ’70. Comportamenti, progetti, mediazioni” (January ’70. Behaviors, Projects, Mediations) in Bologna,¹⁵⁵ and “Identifications”, the ‘television exhibit’

¹⁵³ Jones, *Body Art*, 51.

¹⁵⁴ Experimental film and video from the US, in particular, had a strong presence in the milieu surrounding Arte Povera. In May 1967, Jonas Mekas and the Unione Culturale arranged the week-long festival “New American Cinema Group Exposition” in Turin. This festival was ‘recreated’ by Germano Celant for Fondazione Prada in Milan in 2017, as “The New American Cinema Group. Torino 1967”. Also in 1967, Celant makes references to Andy Warhol’s *Sleep* and Thom Andersen’s *Melting* in the opening lines of his first Arte Povera essay, and in 1970 he includes video works by artists such as John Baldessari, Joseph Beuys, Dennis Oppenheim, Richard Serra and Keith Sonnier in the exhibition “Conceptual art, arte povera, land art” at Turin’s Galleria Civica d’arte moderna (GAM).

¹⁵⁵ “Gennaio ’70” was the third edition of the “Biennale internazionale della giovane pittura”, and on show at the Museo Civico Archeologico in Bologna in January–February 1970. The exhibition surveyed new works by young Italian artists, including all the Arte Povera artists, except the deceased Pascali. Its main organiser was Renato Barilli, but Maurizio Calvesi, Andrea Emiliani and Tommaso Trini are commonly credited for their critical contributions. See Renato Barilli, ed., *Gennaio ’70. Comportamenti progetti mediazioni* [Bologna: Edizioni Alfa,

commissioned and produced by Gerry Schum and Ursula Wevers to broadcast at the regional TV station Südwestrundfunk in November 1970.¹⁵⁶ A number of the film and video productions include performances by the artists themselves, and three of them are presented here, as my final examples of Arte Povera's document-in' acts.

Like the relationship between performance and photography, the relationship between the film/video/TV media and the performative event is a debated issue, and the initiators behind "Identifications" and "Gennaio '70" have partly differing views on the topic. Maurizio Calvesi, who contributed to the organisation of "Gennaio '70", found the goal of videorecording to be "above all that of documenting in the most adequate and anonymous way, this new expressive medium, which is the artist's action, without transforming it into a work of direction."¹⁵⁷ Silvia Bordini concludes that Calvesi did not think of the "Gennaio '70" videos "as autonomous works of art, but as subordinate to the happening of the behavioural work."¹⁵⁸ The main organiser, Renato Barilli, has a more ambiguous stance: on the one hand, he describes media such as photography, film and video as external to authentic art expressions focused on "the direct meeting with the audience", and that the use of such media thus "implies a certain amount of hypocrisy". Still, he finds that "the method of video recording causes less disturbance than its close competitor, the cinematographic filming", because it does not require extra arrangements such as light devices, and because it allows a perfect analogy between the action and the monitor display, which can be experienced simultaneously. Video recording is applauded by Barilli because it offers "major agreement and homology with the fresh and spontaneous nature of action". On the other hand, Barilli also questions the documenting capacities of video when underlining that the videotape shares the performative event's real-time and no-return character: it must be recorded in one take, can hardly be cut and edited, and has an ephemeral character,

1970] (Bologna: Edizioni MAMbo, 2020). For an account of included Arte Povera works in other media than video, see Oliva, "Lavoro estetico e comunità concentrate".

¹⁵⁶ "Identifications" was a 36-minute "collective exhibition" made for TV, comprising works by the Arte Povera artists Anselmo, Boetti, Calzolari, Merz and Zorio (Penone did not realise his project for Schum at the time), and a number of other European and American artists. A preview screening was held at the Kunstverein Hanover, 20 November 1970, before it premiered on SWF/ARD at 10.50 pm, 30 November 1970, with an introduction by Schum. For more on "Identifications", the activities of Schum and Wevers, and their relation to the Italian art scene, see Dorine Mignot, ed., *Gerry Schum* (Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1979); Ulrike Groos, Barbara Hess and Ursula Wevers, eds., *Ready to Shoot: Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum / Videogalerie Schum* (Düsseldorf: Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2003); Christiane Meyer-Stoll, "Fernsehgalerie Gerry Schum", in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*.

¹⁵⁷ Maurizio Calvesi, "Schermi T.V. al posto dei quadri" [1970], reprinted as "Azioni al video", in Maurizio Calvesi, *Avanguardia di Massa*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978), 226, as quoted in Silvia Bordini, "Memory of Video: Italy in the Seventies" [2006], in *REWINDItalia. Early Video Art in Italy/I primi anni della videoarte in Italia*, eds. Laura Leuzzi and Stephed Partridge (London: John Libbet & Co. Ltd., 2016), 46.

¹⁵⁸ Bordini, "Memory of Video: Italy in the Seventies", 45–46.

since it can be deleted immediately without leaving any trace.¹⁵⁹ When Barilli celebrates the “homology” between video and “spontaneous action”, then, he is not speaking of the video medium’s capacity to objectively represent and preserve an action, but of video and performance as parallel media, sharing the key characteristic of contingency and offering comparable, exclusive experiences of pure presence. As Bordini concludes, the use of video recording in “Gennaio ’70” “aimed to substitute live performance in front of an audience” and became an event in its own right.¹⁶⁰

Gerry Schum also goes far in equating film/video recordings and performance. Explaining the vision behind his *Fernsehgalerie*, he rejects the documentary function of film and video, and underlines that he sought to produce projects created especially for the television format.¹⁶¹ Such “TV objects”, he holds, cannot be presented as the autonomous result of an artist’s action; rather, the work must present the artistic process itself, and the artistic process must be presented as a work in its own right. As Schum says in his introduction to the broadcast of “Identifications”, “the title of this television exhibition points to the correlation between the work of art and the artist in the artistic process.”¹⁶² Schum’s stance at this point tends to uphold the ideal of coinciding of the work and the artist’s body/gestures. Regarding the audience-relation, Schum’s films have the capacity to bring the artist/work to presence before an audience within their very own living room, and has thus been seen to fulfill the ideal of intimate, if not physical, co-presence.¹⁶³ Finally, when arguing that “[f]ilm and especially television offer the artist the possibility of avoiding the materialization of his ideas to some extent”, Schum points at another characteristic that the living image arguably shares with performance: immateriality.¹⁶⁴ Barilli and Schum largely agree that the new media of TV and video are

¹⁵⁹ Renato Barilli, “Video Recording in Bologna” [1970], in Leuzzi and Partridge, *REWINDItalia*, 22–24. The ephemeral character of the medium is emphasised also by Lisa Parolo, who argues that the inconsiderate loss of the “Gennaio ’70” videos demonstrates that the works were considered “labile and of immediate consumption”. See Lisa Parolo, “Le fonti, i metodi e le narrazioni della storia delle videoarte in Italia negli anni Settanta. La Terza Biennale Internazionale della Giovane Pittura, Gennaio ‘70”, *Sciama*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2017, n.p.

¹⁶⁰ Bordini, “Memory of Video: Italy in the Seventies”, 45. The idea that the Arte Povera artists were interested in the direct an immediate experience of the living image as an event in its own right is also indicated in Pola, “Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto”, 613.

¹⁶¹ This is a recurring point when Schum speaks of his projects, see his exposés and introductions, as well as the interviews with him in Groos, Hess, and Wevers, *Ready to Shoot*.

¹⁶² Gerry Schum, “Introduction to the II. Television Exhibition of ‘Video Galerie Gerry Schum’ TV Gallery”, in Groos, Hess, and Wevers, *Ready to Shoot*, 160.

¹⁶³ Eric de Bruyn claims that “[t]he objective of the Fernsehgalerie, in short, was to abolish the separation between the art work and the general public that had been installed by force of the marketplace”. See Eric de Bruyn, “Land Art in the Mediascape: On the Politics of Counterpublicity in the Year 1969”, in Groos, Hess, and Wevers, *Ready to Shoot*, 135.

¹⁶⁴ Schum, “Introduction to the II. Television Exhibition of ‘Video Galerie Gerry Schum’ TV Gallery”, 160.

similar to the medium of performance in being immediate, immaterial and precarious, as well as in unifying artists with their work in close contact with its audiences.

In an undated letter, Mario Merz endorses how Schum avoids reducing his recordings of artworks to documentary presentations, or – in Merz’s own words – how the director presents “something without a shadow of exhibitionism”.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, there is a difference between Barilli and Schum’s implications that TV and video productions sustain qualities of pure presence, and what a number of Arte Povera’s artist-centred films, videos and TV productions demonstrate in practice, because the medium through which the performative actions are presented plays such an important role in Arte Povera experiments with living images, like it does in their photo-performances. Admittedly, the medium’s materiality in these works stands out more today, when the recording techniques and screening devices have changed so significantly, but Arte Povera artists’ engagement with the screens of the recording and monitoring devices proves that the medium’s materiality was of concern also to them.

A first example is found in Mario Merz’s *Lumaca* (Snail), which was made for Schum’s “Identifications” in 1970.¹⁶⁶ The opening image of the 16mm film is a close-up of the artist’s face, concentrated on his right eye. At the image centre, in front of and partly covering the artist’s face, is a shelled snail. As the camera zooms out, Merz starts to draw in front of him, from the image centre, a spiral that evolves around the snail and echoes the form of its shell, until reaching the image frame (Fig. 4.15). Subsequently, the artist draws a horizontal line from centre to the frame at his right and marks the intersections between the spiral and the line with Fibonacci numbers 1,2,3 and 5, before departing from the image while a voiceover continues to announce the numbers of the Fibonacci sequence up until 10,946.

Although Merz seems to be writing in thin air – like Zorio does with the lit cigarette in *Confine* and *Fluidità radicale* – his writing remains part of the image, revealing that there is a glass screen in front of the artist. The snail, which slightly moves during the short film sequence, also underlines the presence of this screen. The outer edges of the glass are not visible, and it is therefore not perceived as a separate object, rather, the glass aligns with the transparent screens that belong to the TV medium – including the camera lens and the television screen.

¹⁶⁵ Undated letter from Merz to Schum. Exhibited in “Entrare nell’opera. Prozesse und Aktionen in der Arte Povera”, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, 7 June–1 September 2019, in “Showcase Gerry Schum”.

¹⁶⁶ Among the five Arte Povera contributions to Schum’s programme, Merz’s is the one that most literally addresses the recording medium, accompanied by Gilberto Zorio, *Fluidità Radicale* (1970, 16mm film, b/w, silent, 1:01 min.), in which the artist points a rod straight at the camera. Giovanni Anselmo, *Senza titolo* (1970, 16mm film, b/w, sound, 1:20 min.) and Alighiero Boetti, *Giovedì ventiquattro settembre millenovecentosettanta* (1970, 16mm film, b/w, sound, 2:08 min.) simply record the artists installing a sculpture and writing with both hands extending from a central point, respectively. Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Senza titolo (6th day of reality)*, 1970 (16mm film, b/w, sound, 2:12 min.) does not centre the artist.



Fig 4.15 Mario Merz, *Lumaca*. 1970. Stills from 16mm film, b/w, sound, 1:30 min.

Merz's act of writing makes viewers aware of the screens that separate them from the artist, and thus counteracts the illusion of direct transmission between artist and viewer. The fact that the numbers written by Merz appears mirrored to the viewer, further substantiates the experience of separation. What Merz's performance does, then, is to define the artist's sphere and the viewer's sphere as distinct, and to demonstrate that the sphere of the work – if existing as a separate sphere at all – must be located somewhere between the rear side of the camera lens (relative to the artist) and the rear side of the television screen (relative to the viewer), in other words, the sphere of the work is the medium through which it is disseminated. The performing artist does not enter that sphere, but positions himself outside of it, and is thus doubly removed from the living room or the gallery in which *Lumaca* is screened, as he also underlines when abandoning the camera's field of vision towards the end of the film.

Marisa Merz's *La conta* (Counting) from 1967 was not part of the two larger film/video commissions but made as an autonomous work. In this 16mm film, Merz is seen in half-profile from a fixed camera position, while sitting behind a kitchen table full of bowls, jars, casserole dishes and bottles. She opens a can of peas, pours the brine out, and picks the peas – one by one, with a repetitious hand movement – from the can in her left hand to a plate right in front of her (Fig. 4.16). Although the film is silent, the movements of Merz's hand and mouth, as well as the work's title, reveal that the artist is counting the peas.

The location of the film is the kitchen in the Merz couple's private home in Turin, from where Marisa worked while raising their daughter, Beatrice. The mixed character of home and studio is revealed by her 1966 *Scultura vivente* (Living Sculpture), which is seen suspended from the ceiling.¹⁶⁷ Based on statements by the artist, this sculpture – consisting of a huge

¹⁶⁷ Marisa Merz, *Senza titolo* (also referred to as *Scultura vivente*), 1966. Wood and aluminium, variable dimensions. For an account of the sculpture's presence in the Merz's residence, see Oliver Basciano, "Marisa Merz's Living Sculptures", *ArtReview*, 17 April 2020, https://artreview.com/previews/artwork_of_the_week_4_17_april_2020_marisa_merz/ (accessed 27.04.2020).



Fig. 4.16. Marisa Merz, *La Conta*, 1967. Still image from 16mm film transferred to video, b/w, silent, 2:44 min.

amount of aluminium foil strips formed into rings and stapled together to form a meandering, multi-tentacled structure – is described as “an index of the time spent caring for Beatrice, as if the sculpture could somehow quantify the labour involved in childcare.”¹⁶⁸ *La conta* has also been seen as commenting on the situation of being a woman artist restricted to the domestic sphere, and on the oppression, loneliness and tedium this entails.¹⁶⁹ However, the video is not necessarily to be read biographically, as a comment on the artist’s personal life with a feminist bent. To Nike Bätzner, Merz’s staging of the mundane chore of sorting peas does not primarily concern the artist’s personal situation, but more generally serves to “defy the gesture of genius by negating all grandiose claims to artistic importance.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Teresa Kittler, “Marisa Merz: Actions, Interactions and Performative Sculpture”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 179. Kittler refers to Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, “Lo specchio ardente – interviste a Marisa Merz, Carla Accardi, Iole de Freitas”, *Data*, Vol. 5, No. 18, 1975, 53.

¹⁶⁹ Connie Butler, “Marisa Merz: Alien Culture”, in *Marisa Merz: The Sky is a Great Space*, ed. Connie Butler (Los Angeles, CA/New York, NY: Hammer Museum and DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2017), 20.

¹⁷⁰ Bätzner, “Sculptural Performance – Performative Sculpture”, 80.

Merz's approach to and use of the film medium in *La conta* is a weighty argument against tying the performing artist to her biographical person. It is possible to describe the work as a performance before the camera and consider the steady camera lens as merely documenting the event. If that were the case, it would be easy to claim identification between the biographical artist and the performer situated among the houseware in her kitchen. But such a stance does not account for the effects that filming adds to the performance. The camera here narrows the wide scope that a viewer would have in front of the live act, like the viewfinder frames Anselmo running into the terrain in *Entrare nell'opera*. In the case of *La conta*, it is primarily the camera settings that create the feeling of isolation that is emphasised in interpretations of the work. This effect of isolation is enhanced when *La conta* is displayed on a monitor: the (prior to flat screen) television set appears like a box theatre housing the performing artist, its screen like a window offering a view into this peepshow cabinet. In other words, the medium here transforms Merz's real kitchen into a separate space for the performing artist to inhabit. In that sense, she is separated from the biographical artist and operating in the sphere of the work, where she is also separated from the viewer. Merz's work thus upholds the stage/auditorium divide that, as Artaud puts it, turns the audiences into "Peeping Toms".

My last example of Arte Povera's document-in' acts, Pistoletto's *Riflessioni* (Reflections), was made for the video programme of "Gennaio '70" – a programme that is commonly regarded as the introduction of video art in Italy, but now lost.¹⁷¹ However, written accounts indicate that Pistoletto's piece opened with a view into the reflective surface of a mirror, where the image of the artist himself – allegedly dressed in a rain coat and a sugar-loaf hat – emerged and gradually came closer. Subsequently, Barilli describes in his account of the work, "the body in the flesh" also appeared in the frame and sided with the mirror double before turning around to face the spectators (Fig. 4.17).¹⁷² According to the commentary, the recorded artist's body seemed real in comparison to the one appearing in the mirror, even though being nothing but a mediated image. The play of reflections and *en abyme* effects continued as the camera left the artist's body and its reflection and started filming a monitor, which displayed the camera filming the monitor, and thus opened for what Barilli describes as a "burning tête-à-tête with its partner". The camera then moved around the room "with long and slow tracking shots", before it re-established the short-circuit with its receiver, the monitor.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ For references and a critical discussion of "Gennaio '70"'s status in Italian video art, see Parolo, "Le fonti, i metodi e le narrazioni della storia delle videoarte in Italia negli anni Settanta".

¹⁷² Barilli, "Video Recording in Bologna", 28–29. There are discrepancies in the accounts of this lost work, but I have chosen to rely on Barilli's description, which is the most detailed account of the work from that time.

¹⁷³ Barilli, "Video Recording in Bologna", 28–29.



Fig. 4.17. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Riflessioni*, 1970.
Video, probably 9 min.

While many Arte Povera contributions to the video programme of “Gennaio ’70” appear to have been either mere documentation of performative work or self-referential investigations of the medium, Pistoletto’s piece addresses the relationship between performance and mediation.¹⁷⁴ Barilli describes the work as a sort of “metatheatre”, “establishing a complicated game of mutual cross-references” between reality and mediation, while Luciano Caramel holds that Pistoletto’s *Riflessioni* is a particularly successful example of how video recording can become “more than a simple method of registration”.¹⁷⁵ His remark is based on how Pistoletto’s use of video advances the experiments with specular reflections that characterise his artistic production, and so indicates an analogy between the mirror and the lens of the camera, which echo each other in Pistoletto’s work. *Riflessioni* seems to have engaged the camera lens as a screen relative to which the artist can experiment with various positionings, also suggesting various positions relative to the work itself. The mirror reflection of the artist in this work might initially have seemed to offer the “body in the flesh” but is subordinated as a mere reflection as soon as the ‘real body’ enters the

¹⁷⁴ In Alighiero Boetti, *Numerazione* (1970), Jannis Kounellis, *Fiori di fuoco* (1970) and Gilberto Zorio *Fluidità radicale* (1970), the camera seems to have merely documented the artists’ actions. Giovanni Anselmo, *Nell’istante in cui appaiono queste scritte è trascorso il tempo che un giorno la mia ombra partita all’alba dalla cima dello Stromboli ha impiegato per percorrere una distanza pari a quella fra il Sole e la Terra* (1970), Giuseppe Penone, *Lettere d’alfabeto* (1970) and Emilio Prini, *Magnete/Proiezioni TV Programmazione di elementi a proiezione miniaturizzata con cancellazione alterna nel Quadro* (1970) are pointing strongly at the medium itself and are not in any way artist centred. The other Arte Povera contributions to the programme were Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Io e i miei cinque anni della mia reale reale predica* (1970), Luciano Fabro, *Quid nihil nisi minus?* (1970), Mario Merz, *La serie di Fibonacci* and Marisa Merz, *Antibiotico/Registrazione con oggetto di cera e sintesi elettrica* (1970). Little information exists about Calzolari’s work, the Merz’s works were not centred on the artist, whereas part of Fabro’s work – a montage of approximately twenty short recordings – either pictured or addressed the artist and could have been discussed in this section of the thesis. Since so little is known about the work, I have chosen not to pursue it here, and refer to Irene Boyer’s ongoing doctoral research on Italian videoart at Sapienza Università di Roma for details on this video.

¹⁷⁵ Barilli, “Video Recording in Bologna”, 28; Luciano Caramel, “Due vie (Biennale dei giovani a Bologna)”, *NAC*, No. 32, March 1970, 5. My translation.

frame. With the ‘hoax’ from the first artist’s appearance in mind, however, the viewer will be attuned to the fact that the second appearance of the artist is also a mediation. Moreover, while the artist appears twice within the single work, he is also excluded from it as soon as the *tête-à-tête* is established between the camera and the monitor, and the work thereby centres the medium itself. In *Riflessioni*, the absence of the real-life artist from the work is firmly underlined, while the artist-of-the-work seems to have had an oscillating presence – partly included in, partly excluded from the work.

In her critique of performance as pure presence, Jones emphasises how the durational aspect of performance necessarily brings an element of non-presence to performative works; they are already recorded in the viewers’ minds while performed. The media of film, TV and video share the quality of duration, and the Arte Povera artists do – to some extent – exploit this time-based aspect to challenge the ideal of pure presence when working with performance and the living image. Mario Merz abandons his work while the voice-over continues to count; Marisa Merz tediously counts peas, and is still in the process of doing so when her film ends; Pistoletto plays with the contrast between the slow rotation and full overview of the panorama and the immediate, but limited view of the short-circuit set-up in his video. In these ways they all indicate that the works fail to present a full course of events, and that there is more going on than the works allow us to see.

A more characteristic feature of *Lumaca*, *La conta* and *Riflessioni* is that they all underline the materiality of the medium by making references to the lens and/or monitor screen, and that the artists experiment with their own positions relative to the lens/screen, and therefore also to the works as such and their audiences. In *Lumaca*, Mario Merz accentuate the screens that separate the artist and the viewer, and situates himself on ‘the other side’, behind and shut out from the artwork itself; in *La conta*, Marisa Merz isolates herself behind the monitor screen, as if contained within the work; and in *Riflessioni*, Pistoletto dives around the edges of the work – sometimes absent and sometimes seen, in various forms and degrees of mediation. By alluding to the screen and actively positioning themselves relative to it, the three Arte Povera productions bring attention to the works’ layers in depth, to the schisms between the spheres behind the work, of the work itself, and in front of the work. Doing so, they challenge the idea of mediation as seamless representation, just as some of Arte Povera’s self-portraits did when exposing the means of representation.¹⁷⁶ They also challenge the idealised conception of the performative work as a point of direct and intimate contact between artist (as work) and

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter Three, the section “Exposing Representation – Objectifying Oneself”, p. 77 and further.

audience, instead advancing the stage/auditorium divide that performance as pure presence seeks to overcome. Here, the performing artists are always seen relative to a screen that marks distance between them, their works and the viewers. Thus, rather than aligning film and video with performance by pointing to the shared capacity of these media to create experiences of co-presence, as Barilli and Schum tend to do, the Arte Povera works exploit the film and video media to state the opposite; to highlight that the work itself is a separate and impenetrable sphere.

In Arte Povera's photographed and filmed document-in' acts, the artist is present to the audience only as an image – whether still or moving. Relative to the state of pure presence that Fischer-Lichte and Vergine advocates, the *poveristi* thus present themselves as distant or withdrawn. From the perspective of performance as pure presence, this marks a drawback: the performative acts that depend on mediation uphold an aspect of representation that is necessary to abolish in order to replace the author-itarian position of the artist behind the work with an anti-author-itarian state of co-incident between work and artist immediately before an audience. Against this view, I posit that Arte Povera's use of photography, film or video recording in combination with performative acts serves to compromise representational thinking and the idea of the artist as an author-ity behind works. On a practical level, Arte Povera artists' involvement of artistically minded photographers and film makers in the mediation of their performances – Pascali and Zorio let Abate and Mussat Sartor photograph their actions, whereas Mario Merz makes a film for and with Schum – demonstrates a willingness to reduce their authorial control over the work. Christiane Meyer-Stoll has discussed how the personal style and photographic interpretations of Abate and Mussat Sartor are vital contributions to Arte Povera's performances, and how their involvement challenge the performing artist's role as the works' rightful origin/author.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, Alice Maude-Roxby remarks that in mediated performances, it tends to be “difficult in retrospect to dissociate the photographer's signature from the look of the work of the artist pictured.”¹⁷⁸ This is also the case in Arte Povera document-in' acts, where Zorio's *Fluidità Radicale* and *Confine* are alternately presented as Zorio's and Mussat Sartor's works. Regarding Mario Merz's film for

¹⁷⁷ Meyer-Stoll, “The Photographers: Claudio Abate, Giorgio Colombo, Paolo Mussat Sartor”, 196.

¹⁷⁸ Alice Maude-Roxby, “Live Art on Camera: An Introduction”, in *Live Art on Camera: Performance and Photography*, ed. Alice Maude-Roxby (Southampton: John Hansard Gallery, 2007), 4. See also Simon Baker, “Performing for the Camera”, in *Performing for the Camera*, eds. Simon Baker and Fiontàn Moran (London: Tate Publishing, 2016), 15.

“Identifications”, the artist himself has stated that one “cannot say that *Lumaca* was by Merz, nor that it was by Schum, it was the work of two artists, it was a co-production”.¹⁷⁹

On a more principal level, one can argue that the theories of performance as pure presence are the ones that uphold representational thinking. If they dismiss photographs of performances and/or photo-based performances because these forms of mediation fail to give a ‘truthful’ account of the performed event, they subscribe to the representational hierarchy between original and copy. Given Jones’s Derridean point that performance continually escapes its audience and that the live act is therefore ‘documented’ in memory while experienced, it makes little sense to dismiss the photographs of performance as secondary to the mental images of the event. Jones further argues that the capacity of photography and other media to alter the original act is so extensive that even the ‘having-been-there’ of the depicted subject or the ‘having-happened’ of the depicted event can be questioned.¹⁸⁰ She thus rejects the claim, upheld by theoreticians like Fisher-Lichte, that “one had to be there – in the flesh” to fully experience a performance, and rather speaks about the mediating image’s status as an integral part of the work.¹⁸¹ This is well exemplified in document-in’ acts such as *Fluidità Radicale* and *Confine*, in which the resulting photographs reveal something more and other than a potential audience would observe, or in *Entrare nell’opera*, where it is the artist’s position within the image, not within the terrain, that creates the experience of Anselmo’s ‘entry’.

Jones argues that post-war performative practices reject “the metaphysical coherence of the body-in-presence” by actively using photography to underline the character of the self as split and deferred: when incorporating documentation in the performative event itself, body art practices and performative art plays with the state of being lost.¹⁸² They demonstrate that the act and the record are mutually dependent on and constitute each other, in the simple sense that

¹⁷⁹ Merz, statement from 1979, quoted in Robyn Farell, “Network(ed) TV: Collaboration and Intervention at Fernshegalerie Gerry Schum and Videogalerie Schum”, *Afterimage*. Vol. 43, No. 3, 2015, 17. The Fondazione Merz even regards Gerry Schum the artist behind this work, rather than Merz himself (private e-mail correspondence, 26.11.2021). However, common practice is to ascribe the “Identification” films to the respective artists, and I therefore credit it to Merz. For the collaborative aspects of Schum’s/Wevers’s productions, see also Ursula Wevers, “Love Work Television Gallery”, in Groos, Hess and Wevers, *Ready to Shoot*, 26 and 35; Beatrice von Bismarck, “All for One, One as All: Gerry Schum’s Model for Collective Production”, in Groos, Hess and Wevers, *Ready to Shoot*. For a similar statement by Pistoletto regarding the ten films that were by other artists/film makers in his studio in 1968, see Michelangelo Pistoletto, “Between” [n.d.], in *A Minus Artist* (Florence: Hopefulmonster, 1988), 22.

¹⁸⁰ Jones, “‘Presence’ in absentia”, 15.

¹⁸¹ Jones, “‘Presence’ in absentia”, 11–12.

¹⁸² Jones, *Body Art*, 35, 107; Jones, “‘Presence’ in absentia”, 15. At this point, Jones finds post-war practices to depart from the live acts of the early avant-garde, which were designed to be performed before an audience, and to last for a brief moment before being forever lost. See Jones, *Body Art*, 13. The integration of documentation in post-war body art and performance is also indicated in Sharp, “Body Works”, and emphasised in Carrie Lambert-Beatty “Documentary dialectics: Performance lost and found”, in Maude-Roxby, *Live Art on Camera*, 94–5.

the photograph depends on the act as the “ontological ‘anchor’ of its indexicality”, while the act conversely relies on the photograph as a necessary means for being recalled, but also in the sense that the photograph is “a supplement to the inescapable lack that founds subjectivity.” The photograph has the corrupting function of exposing “the performing body itself as supplementary, as both the visible ‘proof’ of the self and its endless deferral.”¹⁸³ Indeed, Jones argues that “it is precisely the relationship of these bodies/subjects to documentation (or, more specifically, to re-presentation) that most profoundly points to the dislocation of the fantasy of the fixed, normative, centered modernist subject.”¹⁸⁴ By initiating “an ‘infinite chain’ of supplements”, from “the body ‘itself’, the spoken narrative, the video and other visuals within the piece” towards “the video, film, photograph, and text documenting it for posterity”, post-war performance artists reject the coherent self that relates to the artist’s position as authoritarian origin, and replaces it with an idea of the self as shattered and contingent.¹⁸⁵

When discussing this aspect of post-war performance, Jones refers to other artists’ work, but Arte Povera’s document-in’ acts also serve to exemplify how photography, film and video can be used to question the idea of the artist as a coherent subject separated from and prior to the work.¹⁸⁶ In Pascali’s photo performances, the photographs stage a unifying encounter between the artist and existing works, and so imply their respective incompleteness and their mutual co-dependence. In Anselmo’s and Zorio’s photographed actions, the performances aim at the still image, in which the artist and the action are perpetuated as an inseparable unity. Finally, the three film/video productions emphasise the material means of the recording media and play with different artistic positions relative to the work. In isolating herself within the work, Marisa Merz rejects the position of the artist as the work’s source and origin and presents herself as restricted to the sphere of the work itself; in departing from the work or changing positions within/around it, Mario Merz and Pistoletto present themselves and their relation to the works as relative and impermanent instead of fixed. Rather than using photographic media to document an original event, Arte Povera’s document-in’ acts let the artists withdraw into or behind photography, film and video to mark distance from the ideal of the artist as coinciding with the work and being purely present before its audiences in the sphere of the real.

¹⁸³ Jones, *Body Art*, 37 / Jones, “‘Presence’ in absentia”, 16; Jones, *Body Art*, 35 / Jones, “‘Presence’ in absentia”, 14.

¹⁸⁴ Jones, “‘Presence’ in absentia”, 12. For a critical response to Jones’s stance, see Catherine Elwes, “On Performance and Performativity”, *Third Text*. Vol. 18, No. 2, 2004, 194–95.

¹⁸⁵ Jones, *Body Art*, 107.

¹⁸⁶ Jones’s examples in “‘Presence’ in absentia” are (the photographs of) Marina Abramović and Ulay, *Relation in Space* (1976), Carolee Schneemann, *Interior Scroll* (1975), Yayoi Kusama’s various self-portraits from around 1960 and Annie Sprinkle, *Post Post Porn Modernist* (1990–93).

Lingering With/In the Work

When Germano Celant argues that Arte Povera artists seek “anti-pretence” and that they turn from the production of art objects to simple gestures in order to live as works, he relates Arte Povera’s performative works to the ideals upheld by the phenomenologically oriented accounts of performance as pure presence. My analyses show that Arte Povera’s performative works only exceptionally employ strategies that are typically found to enhance the quality of pure presence, such as physically challenging exercises of pain or endurance, confrontational approaches to the audience, or the abolishment of aspects of materiality and mediation. Against the conventionalised Celantian stance that Arte Povera’s performances are motivated by an urge to unify art and life, I have identified a tendency to counteract the artist’s presence in the sphere of life through various acts of withdrawal. In the *disappear-in’ acts*, the artists refuse to fully coincide with the works before the audiences: Calzolari never appears on ‘stage’ in ‘1 e secondo giorno...’; the artist’s presence is indeterminable in *La fine di Pistoletto*; Fabro becomes a part of the audience only when abandoning the work in *Apparecchio alla morte...*, and the audience lose sight of Pascali as he disappears into the smoke-filled air of a darkened room in *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus*. In the *decentring acts*, the artists move their performances from art institutions to mundane or remote settings, abandoning the art-sphere in favour of reality itself. However, there is always an element of reluctance involved, as the works insist on maintaining some kind of relation to the sphere of representation. Pistoletto’s *Scultura da passeggio* and Prini’s *Camping* depart into urban culture, but physically confront the institutional spaces; Calzolari keeps *Il Ponte* within the studio instead of bringing the work into the museum or gallery, but he introduces an element of presentism when conducting his performance on an improvised stage that marks distance between the work and the world as such; Penone takes his work to nature, but by inserting sculptural elements that represent him into trees, he measures forces rather than coincides with nature. He points to the different temporalities of human and natural life, and to how human acts intervene in and restrict the continuously evolving nature. Finally, all of the *document-in’ acts* comprise withdrawal in the sense that the artists appear mediated through photography, film or video rather than immediately, and experiment with different artistic positions relative to the work’s materiality. Pascali’s, Anselmo’s and Zorio’s photo-performances indicate that artists coincide with their works only in/as photographic images, whereas Mario Merz’s, Marisa Merz’s and Pistoletto’s (video)films draw attention to the medium that separates the artist/work from the audience, and present their artists as closed off behind (Mario Merz), locked inside (Marisa Merz) or surfacing around the work (Pistoletto).

Through these various acts of (partial) withdrawal, from the sphere of the real into the sphere of representation, Arte Povera's performative works dismiss the ideal of artist and work as perfectly coinciding before an audience and unsettle the experience of "bodily co-presence" that is essential to theories of performance as pure presence, and that Celant by and large accepts. Rather than fully entering the sphere of life itself, Arte Povera artists use their performances to point at the work as a representational sphere that separates from the real, and to which the artists themselves can have different relations. The sphere of the work can be one to depart and distance from – as Fabro does in *Apparecchio alla morte...* and Mario Merz does in *Lumaca*; it can be a sphere to oscillate around – like Calzolari does in '1 e secondo giorno...', Prini does in *Camping* and Pistoletto does both in *La fine di Pistoletto*, *Scultura da passeggio* and *Riflessioni*; or it can be a sphere to disappear into or settle within – like Pascali does in *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus*, Anselmo in *Entrare nell'opera*, Zorio in *Fluidità radicale* and *Confine* and Marisa Merz does in *La conta*. By insisting on these various relationships to the work as a separate sphere, Arte Povera artists deny Celant's ideas of 'self-projection' and 'living as work', insofar as these refer to an artistic way of everyday living. When presenting themselves as partly or temporarily positioned inside the work, as disappearing into or settled within it, the Arte Povera artists rather open up to a projection on/into the *work*, for a 'living in work' – that is, for an occasional or perpetuated coinciding of artist and work within the representational sphere of the work itself, as opposed to the realm of the real.

Arguably, the Arte Povera artists' continuous insistence on materiality in favour of giving over to the pure gesture and to "'living art' as a fantasy in continuous variation with everyday reality" was a reason for Celant's (temporary) dismissal of the group term in 1971.¹⁸⁷ In a catalogue essay, he acknowledges how activist intellectuals infiltrate society to "breach behavioural and procedural norms" so as to counter repressive structures in labour, marked and information distribution, thus making art, theatre, cinema and other instances that have an extradimensional relation to reality redundant.¹⁸⁸ In accentuating the representational sphere and the work as an material entity – in their performances as in their self-portraits – the Arte Povera artists seem reluctant to engage in the fight against repressive societal structures, and more intent on defending art as an autonomous sphere.

¹⁸⁷ Celant, "Arte Povera" [1969], 121.

¹⁸⁸ Germano Celant, "Untitled" [1971], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and protagonists*, 155–63. Worth noting is also that Piero Gilardi, who is associated with Arte Povera, gave up traditional production of art in favour of political activism. For a broader contextualisation of art as social practice in the period, see Sara Catenacci, "Dalla distruzione dell'oggetto all' 'ambiente come sociale'. Esperienze italiane tra arte, architettura e progettazione culturale, 1969-1978", PhD Thesis, Sapienza University of Rome, 2015–16, which I have briefly consulted, but not read in full.

In theories of performance as pure presence, performance's potential for breaking with author-ity lies in its capacity to create moments of co-existence and equality between artist, work and audience. In those moments, the performer sacrifices the status traditionally ascribed to the artist *behind* the work, in order to exist *as* work *in* the world, *among* people traditionally conceived as audiences. Arte Povera's withdrawal acts challenge such one-dimensional communion, and may thus be seen as failing to fulfil the anti-representational and anti-authoritarian potential of performance art. By addressing the sphere of representation and insisting on its separation from life itself, these performative acts seemingly uphold dichotomies such as absence/presence, (corpo)reality/mediation, artist/work and artist/audience, and arguably maintain the representational duality on which the positioning of the artist as author-ity relies.

On the other hand, Arte Povera's performative works do question author-ity in a number of ways. The *disappear-in*' acts all address death, and hint more or less directly at the death of the artists themselves; the *decentring* acts aims at democratising art; and the works discussed as *document-in*' acts dismiss the qualities of originality, singularity and authenticity. From a Derridean/deconstructive point of view, there is no contradiction between these efforts to problematise a strong authorial position and the remains of representation in Arte Povera's withdrawal acts. On the contrary, in his texts on Artaud Derrida claims that pure presence is an illusion, and implies that the pursuit of pure presence will result in a total surrendering to the 'true' presence that representational thinking considers the work's ground, and so intensify the status of the origin(al presence) rather than depose it. The performative arts have to balance on the threshold between presence and representation to avoid such a surrender to metaphysics: they have to stage or incorporate elements of 'impurity' to demonstrate how the quality of presence is interwoven with and contaminated by contradicting qualities – by absence and representation – and thus perform parricide, the execution of the pure origin as ground, anew in each work. When they insist on upholding a relation to the sphere of representation, such an offensive against the idea of pure presence is found in Arte Povera's performative works. When letting the artists oscillate between appearance in and withdrawal from their works, activating tension between the artists' immediate, physical presence and their representational presence as a differentiated, extra-ordinary artist-of-the-work, Arte Povera's performative works avoid the artist's author-itarian position in representational thinking, outside the work as an absent presence, as well as the resurrection of this absent presence in the performative *hic et nunc*, that phenomenologically minded theories entail. In repeatedly staging the artist at the threshold between life and work, they perform parricide over and over again and so mark a decisive stance against the idea of the artist as an originating author-ity behind his work.

Chapter Five

Selves in Shape

Tracing the Artist in Arte Povera's Sculptural Work

October's 2008 special issue on 'Postwar Italian Art' includes an article by Alex Potts about Alighiero Boetti, Pino Pascali and Michelangelo Pistoletto's three-dimensional artworks.¹ The article is titled "Disencumbered Objects", and this title phrase offers a starting point for the discussion of anti-authoritarian strategies in sculptural practices of the late 1960s.² When accounting for his notion that 'disencumbering' was a central feature in post-war sculptural practices, Potts claims that by the early 1960s, it was

conventional wisdom among experimentally minded artists that viable new work would need to rid itself of the cultural baggage associated with modernist conceptions of a dense, symbolically resonant, aesthetically charged art object and also to cast off late Romantic encumbrances of the art work as being expressive of an artist's individuality or distinctive creative urge.³

According to Potts, the burdens from which progressive artists sought to liberate their works were many: he suggests that they were of a 'logical', 'material', 'cultural' or 'aesthetic' kind. As the quote indicates, however, a key objective in the process of disencumbering the art object was to refute theories claiming the artwork's debt to the producing artist – that is, to disprove "a cult of the art work as embodying some unique but also fixed quality that the individual artist possessed."⁴

¹ Alex Potts, "Disencumbered Objects", *October*, No. 124, Spring 2008, 169.

² Artists of the late 1960s challenged the sculptural tradition to such a degree that the term 'sculpture' became insufficient, and alternative terms like 'objects' and 'primary structures' were launched. Arte Povera artists, however, did not actively refute the term 'sculpture', and the works discussed in this chapter all comply with a broad definition of sculpture as "an artistic form in which hard or plastic materials are worked into three-dimensional art objects." Leonard R. Rogers, "sculpture", *Encyclopedia Britannica*, available at <https://www.britannica.com/art/sculpture> (accessed 13.10.2021). I therefore allow the terms 'sculpture' and 'sculptural practices' here.

³ Potts, "Disencumbered Objects", 169.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

Potts posits that this desire to unburden the art object emerged in opposition to “the idea of the heavily invested modernist art work propagated by theorists of modern art in the immediate postwar period”, hinting at mid-century abstract painting in Europe and the US, and the critical commentary associated with it.⁵ In the US, Harold Rosenberg’s influential writings had described the *painting-acts* of figures like Jackson Pollock as tied to a “transforming process in the artist” through which he had the potential to “realize his total personality”. To Rosenberg, the stroke was “inseparable from the biography of the artist” as he is “living on the canvas”.⁶ In Europe, comparable ideas were launched by Michel Tapié, who situated the canvas as a place for the “authentic Individual” to liberate himself, and held that the “extremely heavy impasto” and the graffiti scribblings of *l’art informel* artists like Jean Dubuffet, Jean Fautrier and Georges Mathieu “convey an expressive content”.⁷ At the same time, Toti Scialoja in Italy argued that “making pictures meant manifesting oneself, leaving a personal imprint, entrusting your most secret and irreducible and reluctant and subjugated self to the work”, and so coined the term “confessional painting”.⁸ Abstract painting practices make their own contribution to the process of unburdening the art object: in abolishing iconic representation, they deprive the artwork of human figuration – including self-imagery that ties the work to the producing artist by virtue of visual resemblance. Hal Foster, however, points out that the theories associated with these practices – which emphasise the expressiveness and existential drama of the painterly gesture – describe the stroke itself as representative, if “oriented not to reality (the coded, realist outer world), but to expression (the coded, symbolist inner world).”⁹ In claiming the marks left

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Harold Rosenberg, “The American action painters”, *ARTnews*, Vol. 51, No. 8, December 1952, 23 and 48. American Abstract Expressionism was highly present on the Italian art scene in the late 1950s, for example through the major MoMA-produced presentation of Jackson Pollock’s works at Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna in Rome in 1958, and a series of exhibitions at the Roman gallery La Tartaruga. For the activities of Plinio de Martiis’ gallery, see Ilaria Bernardi, *La Tartaruga. Storia di una galleria* (Milan: PostMedia Books, 2018), particularly Part II.

⁷ Michel Tapié, “A New Beyond” [1952], trans. Jerrold Lanes, in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968), 604 and 603. Tapié was well known to the artists of Turin, as he established the International Center of Aesthetic Research there with architect Luigi Moretti in 1960. ICAR housed exhibitions and a permanent collection of modern art, facilitated the study of art, and published art theoretical texts until it closed in 1987. For the differences between Tapié’s and contemporaneous Italian philosophers’ ideas of art and their respective influence on Celant’s *Arte Povera*, see the introductory chapter of Claire Gilman, “Arte Povera’s Theatre: Artifice and Anti-Modernism in Italian Art of the 1960’s”, PhD Thesis, Columbia University, New York, 2006, particularly p. 20.

⁸ Toti Scialoja, excerpt from *Giornale di pittura* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1991 [1956]), quoted in *Roma – New York, 1948–1964*, eds. Germano Celant and Anna Costantini (Milan/Florence: Charta, 1993), 120. Admittedly, this statement was made in reference to American painting and not published until later, but the text “Per Gorky”, published in *Arti Visive* in 1957, promoted similar ideas. Besides, it is likely that Scialoja also shared his enthusiasm for the expressionist aspects of painting when teaching at the Accademia di Belle Arti, where Pascali and Kounellis acquainted him.

⁹ Hal Foster, “The Expressive Fallacy”, *Art in America*, Vol. 71, No. 1, January 1983, 80.

by the artist's hand on a painting's surface as symbolic of the artist's personality, impulses and emotions, these influential 1950s theories of abstract art exemplify what Potts describes as modernism's upholding of "late Romantic encumbrances", where the artwork is indebted to and interpreted with reference to the producing artist.

On the other hand, Potts finds that the will to make 'disencumbered objects' was "widespread in the art world of the mid 1960s". He argues that "two broader tendencies", in particular, were "informed by these imperatives": the drive to relieve the artwork of Romantic and modernist 'baggage' underlies "the informal kind of work" produced by the Arte Povera artists, as well as "the radical abstraction and literalism of American Minimalism".¹⁰ In his *October* article, Potts's remarks on minimalism are parenthetical.¹¹ A brief elaboration of what the two characteristics that define the minimalist strategy of means in this context of disencumbering – *radical abstraction* and *literalism* – and of how they serve to liberate the art object from the artist's encumbrances, is nonetheless important here. This is because Potts, in my view, tends to read Arte Povera works through the lens of minimalist disencumbering, while my argument is that Arte Povera sculptures offer alternative – indeed, inverse – strategies for the liberation of the art object from the encumbrances of their originators.

Potts's 'Disencumbered Objects' and the Premise of Artists' Detachment

The first characteristic that relates minimalist artworks to the status of disencumbered objects in Potts's article is *radical abstraction*. Minimalist objects are certainly abstract in the sense that they tend to avoid figuration, where the associated artists utter themselves as particularly critical against human figuration or *anthropomorphism*. Carl André, for instance, recalls that as a young artist, he dedicated himself "to the creation of work utterly free of human associations".¹² Donald Judd generalises this attitude in "Specific Objects", when claiming that the new, three-dimensional practices negate any figuration suggestive of the human body. According to Judd, the "part by part" composition of multiple elements that characterises modernist sculpture tends to result in an "anthropomorphic imagery", whereas artists of his own

¹⁰ Potts, "Disencumbered Objects", 169.

¹¹ For Potts's more extensive theorisation of minimalism, see Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹² Carl André, "It is impossible to make work devoid of human associations..." [1979], in *Cuts: Texts 1959–2004*, eds. Carl André and James Meyer (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 291. André here acknowledges the "absurdity" of this juvenile motivation: "If I had known that it is impossible to make art devoid of human associations because the essence of art is human association, I never would have been able to do what I have done. Human beings, alas, are the one indispensable necessity of art." I was led to this text via Susan Best, *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 137.

generation avoid human references by replacing composition with indivisible form.¹³ In a similar way, in his “Notes on Sculpture” Robert Morris contends that “[s]urfaces under tension are anthropomorphic: They are under the stresses of work much as the body is in standing.” He suggests to make objects with plane surfaces devoid of tensions between expansion and recession, which “state most clearly their separateness from the human”.¹⁴ Robert Smithson, in turn, promotes systematic regularity in order to overcome “a lurking pagan religious anthropomorphism”.¹⁵ The American minimalist artists produce uniform, geometrically abstracted volumes in order to free the work from the human image – and with it, images of the artists themselves.

The denial of human figuration and the anathema of the artist’s image was not new; it also characterised abstract painting of the post-war era. But, as noted by Hal Foster, the denial of figuration did not make abstract painting anti-representational. Minimalism’s abstraction is not *radical* unless it also avoids the ‘symbolic’ kind of anthropomorphism, where a mark on the painterly surface is taken to represent the personality of the artist who jotted it down. This was certainly a project the minimalist artists engaged in: Judd speaks of minimising the emotive qualities of art, and Morris exclaims that “such things as process showing through traces of the artist’s hand have obviously been done away with” in contemporary sculpture.¹⁶ In the minimalist objects, a machine-like finish allows no or few physical traces of the artist’s hand, and they are thus commonly found to deny access to the producing artist’s psyche. As Susan Best writes in reference to the Minimalist procedure of placing “one thing after another”,

[t]here is no specific artistic personality arranging materials according to this conveyor-belt logic. Industrial methods, materials and ready-made modules were deployed to disable the traditional aesthetic questions of expression, design and purposiveness.¹⁷

Foster also describes the programmatic “suppression of anthropomorphic images and gestures” in minimalist sculpture in terms of unburdening: he sees it as a rejection of the idea of “the artist

¹³ Donald Judd, “Specific Objects” [1965], in *Complete Writings 1959–1975* (Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design, 2005 [1975]), 183 and 188.

¹⁴ Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 3: Notes and Nonsequiturs”, *Artforum*, Vol. 5, No. 10, June 1967, 29. Morris was not as sceptical of anthropomorphism as many of his colleagues, and made works that share qualities with the Arte Povera sculptures I discuss below, like *Untitled (Box for Standing)* (1961) and *I-box* (1962).

¹⁵ Statement by Robert Smithson, from Paul Cummings, “Interview with Robert Smithson for the Archives of American Art/Smithsonian Institute” [1972], in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1979), 147, quoted in Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1993 [1990]), 69.

¹⁶ Judd, “Specific Objects”, 189; Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2”, *Artforum*, Vol. 5, No. 2, October 1966, 21.

¹⁷ Best, *Visualizing Feeling*, 14. The strategy of placing “one thing after another” is mentioned with reference to Frank Stella’s paintings in Judd, “Specific Objects”, 184.

as existential creator”, and thus claims a parallel to literary theory’s ‘death of the author’.¹⁸ Minimalism’s ‘radical abstraction’, then, is considered disencumbering because it involves a depersonalisation of the artwork, an eradication of the traces of its origin: the rejection of anthropomorphism, both in terms of iconic resemblance and symbolically invested indexes, such as the brushstroke and other traces of the artist’s hand, liberates the art object from any ties to the producer. The result, as Best has commented, is that the artwork, understood as the product of an artistic genius, is replaced by an object with no author-ity behind it: through the means of radical abstraction, the minimalist objects are “orphaned”.¹⁹

Literalism, the other feature that characterises unburdened minimalist objects according to Potts, stems from Michael Fried’s essay “Art and Objecthood”, in which the label ‘literalist art’ is a preferred alternative to ‘minimalist art’. In a central part of this essay, Fried refutes minimalist artists’ claims of making non-anthropomorphic objects. He contends that a “latent or hidden naturalism, indeed anthropomorphism” is found “at the core of literalist theory and practice.” This anthropomorphism reveals itself through three concrete aspects of the works in question: first, the *scale* of minimalist objects “compares fairly with that of the human body”; second, Fried argues that minimalism’s *non-relational unity* is not derived from abstract scientific principles, as Judd once suggested, but echoes the symmetry of nature, including that of the human body; last, he concludes in reference to minimalism’s cubic structures that “the apparent *hollowness* of most literalist work – the quality of having an inside – is almost blatantly anthropomorphic.” Hollowness, in Fried’s view, is a consequence of the minimalist strive for singular and constant shape, but what is gained in the rejection of relational compositions, he reckons, is duality; a dichotomy between an outer, immediately graspable unity and an inner emptiness. To Fried, this duality is unmistakably human. Given these relations/ references to the human body, Fried finds that the minimalist objects have a straightforward or literalist appearance: they appear with “the silent presence of another *person*” before those who approach them.²⁰

¹⁸ Hal Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism”, in *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), 40 and 50.

¹⁹ Susan Best, “Minimalism, subjectivity, and aesthetics: rethinking the anti-aesthetic tradition in late-modern art”, *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1996, 128. Note that the idea of the minimalist artwork as free of expression and personal references is highly disputed, also by Best herself. See, for instance, reference to Lawrence Alloway in Anne Wagner, “Reading Minimal Art”, in *Minimal Art. A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1995 [1968]); Anna Chave, “Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power”, *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 64, No. 5, January 1990.

²⁰ Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood” [1967], in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago, IL/London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 155–56.

Frances Colpitt has pointed out that Fried's use of the term 'anthropomorphism' is inaccurate, since the characteristics he points to are not based on the recognition of bodily form. He emphasises how Fried, rather than dealing with representation, ascribes human *presence* to the art object, and summarises Fried's stance as follows: "the total abstractness of minimal art resulted in a personification of its objects. The objects are not formally similar to human beings, yet their complete self-sufficiency encouraged the critic and spectator to treat them as other beings."²¹ Potts' notion of minimalist disencumbering – emphasising the radical abstraction of the American artists' dismissal of anthropomorphism and Fried's conception of literalist presence – must be based on a similar reasoning: it is by virtue of the artist's retraction from the work – both as a recognisable image or form, and in the form of an invested trace on the work's surface – that the art object is awarded a non-representative self-presence and allowed to be situated as an autonomous and equivalent *other* before those who encounter it in a gallery setting. In Potts's account, then, the disencumbering of the art object is inextricably linked to the *artist's detachment* from his work.

According to Potts, there is a slightly different motivation behind the 'disencumbered objects' presented by Arte Povera artists like Boetti, Pascali and Pistoletto. In accordance with Germano Celant's emphasis on the incoherency of Arte Povera work, and with Celant's description of how the artists seek to make "surprise attacks" to avoid satisfying the expectations of the market, Potts claims that Arte Povera artists consciously shunned attempts to establish a consistent artistic self.²² He leans on the artists' own utterances when arguing that they sought to constantly redefine or reinvent themselves by producing works of great diversity. Potts points, for instance, to Pistoletto's statements about the series "Oggetti in meno" (Minus Objects), where the artist claims to have "abolished the continuity that derives from a personal style." Potts notes that the works of Pistoletto's highly heterogeneous series bear "no necessary relation to earlier ones or to any identity ascribed to him as an artist"; these quasi-functional structures even seed doubts regarding their status as works by an artist's hand versus objects of "an openly experienced, disencumbered everydayness."²³ Important to Potts is also Pascali's analogy in the poem *Ritornello* (Refrain) between himself and a snake that repeatedly sheds its skin. In one of its lines, Pascali writes "Quel che ho fatto di recente / già da tempo mi repelle",

²¹ Colpitt, *Minimal Art*, 72.

²² Germano Celant, "Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerrilla War" [1967], in *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 1985); reprinted in *Arte Povera: History and Stories*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 35. See Chapter One, p. 26 for more on Celant's emphasis on Arte Povera's incoherency. See also Chapter Two, p. 49.

²³ Potts, "Disencumbered Objects", 172–177. The origin of Pistoletto's statement is Michelangelo Pistoletto, "Between" [undated], in *A Minus Artist* (Florence: Hopefulmonster, 1988), 22.

translated by Potts as “what I just made now / it’s what long since repels me.”²⁴ To Potts, the poem indicates that Pascali’s steady production of new series of works is motivated by a disregard for stylistic unity and for the finished work as such, because the work is subjected to reifications and deprived the possibility of further change when “taken into the ambit of the art world.”²⁵ Pascali thus sheds his work like a snake sheds its skin; he separates from and rejects them, Potts argues. On the basis of Pistoletto’s heterogeneity and Pascali’s declared repulsion for what he has already made, Potts concludes that these Arte Povera artists’ works are “products of simple one-off gestures”, and “informal” in the sense of lacking a unified style. Their discontinuity counteracts the impression of “a reasonably consistent artistic persona” behind, and thus liberates the objects from their artists’ encumbrances.²⁶

Potts acknowledges that Arte Povera’s works “remained to a degree figurative or imagistic”, and that they were “still evidently fabricated or put together by the artist, unlike most Minimalist art.” Nevertheless, he finds that Arte Povera sculptures complement minimalism in “eschewing the motif of the human figure that had dominated earlier modern sculpture”, that they display a self-sufficiency or singularity comparable to the minimalist objects, and that they were “realized in a seemingly casual take-it-or-leave-it manner that negated expressive authenticity and ideas about the touch of the artists as insistently as, if less systematically than, the more formalized procedures of the Minimalists.”²⁷ In the end, then, Potts finds the Arte Povera artists to unburden the art objects through similar means as minimalism does: their rejection of anthropomorphist imagery, of personal style, and of the invested artists’ touch allow the works to stand forth as a singular, self-sufficient objects, detached from the artists that produced them.

Artists’ Adhesions in Arte Povera Sculptures

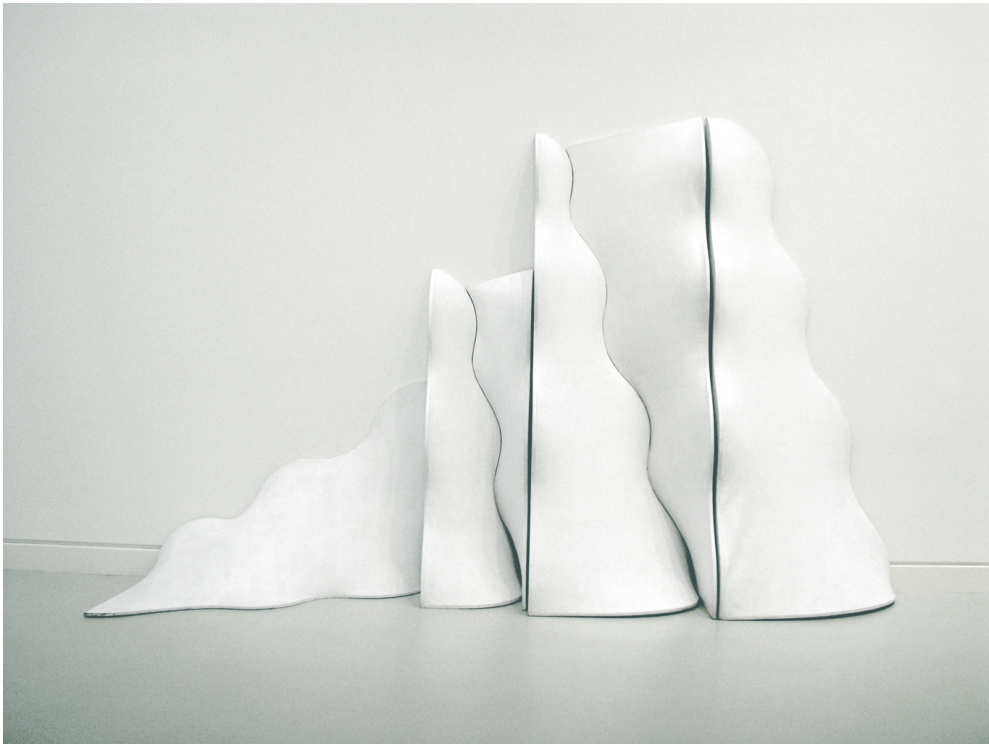
Potts’s study is based on analyses of a few groups of Arte Povera sculptures: Pistoletto’s “Oggetti in meno”, Pascali’s “feigned sculptures” and a selective excerpt of Boetti’s production

²⁴ Potts, “Disencumbered Objects”, 181. “Ritornello” is one of two poems that Pascali presented in connection to his exhibition “Nouve sculpture” at Galleria L’Attico, Rome, October 1966. For the Italian version, see Pino Pascali, “Ritornello” [1966], in *Pino Pascali*, ed. Anna d’Elia (Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2010), 64. For an English version, with a slightly different translation than Potts’, see Marianne Brouwer, *Pino Pascali* (Otterlo: Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, 1991), 89.

²⁵ Potts, “Disencumbered Objects”, 181. Note that Potts also builds his argument on Carla Lonzi and Pino Pascali, “Pino Pascali in conversation with Carla Lonzi” [1967], in Brouwer, *Pino Pascali*, 14.

²⁶ Potts, “Disencumbered Objects”, 177 and 172.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 169–70.



Top left: Ill. 5.1. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Colonne di cemento*, 1965. Concrete, 4 elements, each 240 x 45 x 45 cm; Top right: Ill. 5.2. Alighiero Boetti, *Sedia*, and Alighiero Boetti, *Scala*, both 1966. Wood, 89.5 x 37 x 39 cm and 172.5 x 111 x 48 cm; Below: Ill. 5.3. Pino Pascali, *Cascade*, 1966, from the series "Finte sculture". Painted canvas stretched over six wooden structures, 260 x 460 x 102 cm.

between 1966 and 1968.²⁸ Works from these series tend to share minimalism's formal vocabulary; they display geometrical reduction, monochrome planes and systematic regularity, and thus hint of "radical abstraction and literalism" (Ills. 5.1–5.3). The question is whether such a limited scope suffices to characterise Arte Povera's sculptural practice as such, as Potts arguably attempts to, or if certain aspects of Arte Povera artists' sculptural production are overlooked in Potts's desire to categorise Arte Povera sculptures as "disencumbered objects" alongside those made by the American minimalists.

To Potts's defence, Arte Povera practices tend to be explained as a reaction against the hegemony of expressionist painting, precisely like minimalism is. A number of the artists started their careers as painters, and some of them – like Mario Merz and Pistoletto – in a manner that evokes the *l'art informel* style.²⁹ As Celant recounts, many painters of the 1960s, including ones later associated with Arte Povera, turned towards the production of "anti-heroic painting" as a "rejection of the existential and gestural protagonism typical of art informel."³⁰ The subsequent turn to sculpture among the Arte Povera artists who initially identified as painters, and the general interest in the sculptural medium among the remaining *poveristi*, can also be seen as marking a stance against the dominance of expressionist (conceptions of) painting. Bettina Ruhrberg notes that Giulio Paolini, Jannis Kounellis and Mario Merz considered the rejection of subjective, painterly gestures in favour of a language of pure materials to be a common, if not defining, trait among Arte Povera artists.³¹ Achille Bonito Oliva, for his part, includes Arte Povera in what he defines as an "Italian Minimalia", a tendency within which the artist is "protecting himself from the pathos of subjectivity" as he "eschews any process of projection or affective identification", and thus creates objects that are "autonomous with respect to its author".³² Giovanni Lista even claims that Celant's idea of poor

²⁸ Note that Potts does not reserve the term 'feigned sculptures' for the series of sculptures known under that title. Rather, he uses it to denote a larger part of Pascali's sculptural production. Of Boetti works, Potts mentions *Rotolo di cartone ondolato* (1966), *Sedia* (1966), *Scala* (1966), *Catasta* (1966/67), and *Colonne* (1968). Of Pistoletto's 'minus objects', he mentions *Quadro da pranzo*, *Casa a misura d'uomo*, *Mobile*, *Colonne di cemento*, *Struttura per parlare in piedi*, *Semisfere decorative*, *Scultura lignea*, and *Lampadina*, all from 1965-66.

²⁹ For a telling introduction to Merz's early paintings, see Dieter Schwarz, "The Artist and his Material: From Notizie to Sperone, 1962–1968" (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 19 October 2011), available at <http://www.henry-moore.org/research/online-papers/2011/10/19/the-artist-and-his-material-from-notizie-to-sperone-1962-68> (accessed 23.05.2019). For Pistoletto's early works, see "The early works: research into the self-portrait", available at <http://www.pistoletto.it/eng/crono02.htm> (accessed 02.02.2020).

³⁰ Germano Celant, "Rome – New York 1948–1964", in Celant and Costantini, *Roma – New York*, 32.

³¹ Bettina Ruhrberg, "Arte Povera: Geschichte, Theorie und Werke einer künstlerischen Bewegung in Italien", PhD Thesis, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn, 1992, 156–60.

³² Achille Bonito Oliva, "Minimalia", in *Minimalia: An Italian vision in 20th-century art*, ed. Achille Bonito Oliva, trans. Paul Metcalf (Milan: Electa, 1999 [Rome: Bocca Editori, 1997]), 19. The idea of an Italian "Minimalia" was developed by Oliva in two exhibitions, and involves works spanning across the whole century, from Futurism via Arte Povera to the exhibition year 1997. The quotes above relate to the practice of Giacomo Balla, but since he is considered the initiator of this "movement", they are also characteristic of Minimalia as such. For a further

art implied a “stripping down to essentials and impersonality as practiced by Minimalist artists.”³³ All of these critical remarks demonstrate the currency of Potts’s stance; that Arte Povera artists released their sculptural works from artistic encumbrances by detaching themselves from them.

To some degree, the Arte Povera ‘catalogue’ confirm this stance. Some works are realised by virtue of ‘distancing’ techniques comparable to the ones employed by the minimalist artists, such as outsourced production – which is particularly relevant in Boetti’s oeuvre – and seriality/mass-production, like in the *multiplies* Arte Povera artists produced with Giorgio Persano and Gian Enzo Sperone between 1966 and 1980.³⁴ The ‘catalogue’ also contains a number of sculptural artworks with formal characteristics that match those of the works Potts presents: many works include unprocessed, industrial materials and exclude framing elements such as base or pedestal, and thus appear as self-sufficient and as detached from their artists as minimalism’s “orphaned” objects do.

Contrary to Potts’s claim that Arte Povera artists are “eschewing the motif of the human figure” and distancing or detaching from their own works, however, I argue that the Arte Povera ‘catalogue’ comprises a number of sculptural works that contain artists’ appearances. These appearances are not necessarily displaying the “motif of the human figure”, for they are not (primarily) based on iconicity. Rather, the artists’ more or less concealed appearances in these works are based on indexicality. As I will demonstrate in the three following sections, the artists make appearances in their works either by *transferring measurements* from their own bodies to the sculptural forms, by *leaving impressions* of their body parts in the sculptures’ surfaces, or by building their sculptures around their own bodies, to *enclose themselves*. The works discussed in this chapter all contain traces that are indicative of their artists’ former presence,

contextualisation of the rejection of expressionist practices and notions of painting in the post-war era, see Michael Darling, ed., *Target Practice: Painting Under Attack 1948–78* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Art Museum, 2009), particularly Elizabeth Mangini, “This is not a Painting: Space Exploration and Postwar Italian Art”.

³³ Giovanni Lista, *Arte Povera* (Milan: 5 Continents, 2006), 38. For further comparisons between minimalist and Arte Povera aesthetics, more inclined to remark their differences, see for instance Marisa Volpi, “Arte Americana e arte italiana. Nuove tendenze”, in *Flash Art*, Vol. 2, No. 7, March–April 1968; Celant, “Arte Povera. Notes for a Guerilla war”, 35; Germano Celant, “EuroAmerica: From Minimal Art to Arte Povera”, in *Breakthroughs: Avant-Garde Artists in Europe and America 1950–1990*, ed. John Howell (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1991); Francesco Bonami, “Now We Begin”, in *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962–1972*, eds. Richard Flood and Frances Morris (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 2001), 112; and Francesco Poli, *Minimalismo, Arte Povera, Arte Concettuale* (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2010 [1995]).

³⁴ For more on Arte Povera’s engagement with multiples, see Gilbert Perlein, ed., *Arte Povera. Les multiples* (Nice: Musée d’art moderne et d’art contemporain, 1996), or consult material related to the exhibition “Arte Povera and ‘Multipli’, Torino 1970–1975”, curated by Elena Re for Sprüth Magers in 2014 and revised for ICA Milano in 2019–20. Note that Enrico Pedrini argues that Arte Povera’s multiples were not motivated by an idea of artists’ detachment, but “intended to conserve even as they increased in number, the creative moment that had generated them.” Enrico Pedrini, “The Multiples of Art Povera as Process Art”, in Perlein, *Arte Povera. Les multiples*, 6.

and thus bear witness to how the artists, rather than detaching from their sculptures, have been close to, and, in a sense, still adhere to them.

Before turning to individual Arte Povera works, it is worth noting that Rosalind Krauss, in the two-part essay “Notes on the Index” from 1977, has argued that photography, by virtue of the indexical relation it establishes between the object photographed and the photograph’s motif, came to serve as “a functional model” for artworks in other media in the 1970s. Like photographs, Krauss argues that 1970s artworks tend to establish indexical relationships to their worldly referents – rather than, or in addition to, iconic or symbolic relationships.³⁵ Given the indexicality that characterises the artists’ appearances within them, I suggest that the Arte Povera sculptures presented below can be regarded as early examples of the same tendency – as ‘voluminous photographs’ carrying indexical traces of their respective artists. The indexical relations I claim between artist and work in Arte Povera sculptures are seemingly at odds with Potts’s presentation of Arte Povera’s sculptures as ‘disencumbered objects’ detached from their artists. However, I have already argued in Chapter Three that when presenting themselves in photographic works, Arte Povera artists manage to release their images from their referents, i.e. from the artists themselves. There is no reason to assume that a similar release cannot be issued between the ‘voluminous photographs’ discussed in this chapter and their referents – the artists. Roland Barthes’s reflections on photography, on which Krauss also draws, offer arguments against the idea that the photograph’s indexicality entails the photographed ‘object’s’ continuous hold over the image. I find support in these reflections in the chapter’s concluding discussion, when arguing that the proximity between Arte Povera artists and their sculptures does not compromise their status as ‘disencumbered objects’ and anti-authoritarian works of art.

In the meantime, it is worth noting that Krauss accepts Barthes’s stance that the photographic image requires investments in order to have meaning: Barthes’s idea of the ‘photographic paradox’ entails that a photograph comprises two messages: in addition to the un-coded, denotative reference rooted in the indexical relationship between image and referent,

³⁵ Rosalind E. Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 1” [1977] and Rosalind E. Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 2” [1977], both in Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986). Krauss’s key example is the exhibition “Rooms”, PS1, New York, June 1976, with emphasis on works by Gordon Matta-Clark, Lucio Pozzi and Michelle Stuart. For an interesting, but critical account of Krauss’s texts, see Kathrin Schöneegg, “Kalkulierte Distanz. Zur Autopoiese, Abbildung und Abstraktion in Fotografien nach 1970”, in *Jenseits der Repräsentation. Körperlichkeiten der Abstraktion in moderner und zeitgenössischer Kunst*, eds. Olga Moskatova, Sandra Beate Reimann and Kathrin Schöneegg (Paderborn: Brill, 2019).

which is necessarily deprived of meaning, it may also contain coded or connoted messages.³⁶ When discussing indexically based artworks of the 1970s, Krauss emphasises that they likewise need a “supplemental discourse” that restates the index’s denotational “message of pure presence in articulated language.” But rather than being supplemented by “written text and caption” as photographs often are, artists of the 1970s found complex ways of internalising such supplements in the works themselves.³⁷ In the case of Arte Povera, their sculptures strikingly often incorporate or relate to photographic material. The photographs have different statuses relative to the sculptural works – they may be portraits of artists beside their work, or footage documenting the sculpture’s production or instalment process; they may be archive material or be presented as works in their own right. However, a common feature is that they display the artist engaging with the sculptural work. I find that these photographs provide a ‘supplemental discourse’ for the Arte Povera sculptures and serve a rhetorical function relative to them.³⁸ Consequently, I repeatedly consult these photographs in the following presentation of Arte Povera sculptures, asking what they, and the sculptural works they relate to, state about the author-ity of the artists’ appearances within them.

Transferred Body Measures

The first category of Arte Povera sculptures presented here comprises works in which the artists’ appearances are based on a transferal of body measurements: The sculptural forms are informed by and reflect measurements that relate to the artists and their bodies, such as the height or weight of their overall body or a single limb, or their age at the time of production.³⁹ The artists’ appearances in these sculptures are not immediately discernible – indeed, some of them look very similar to the abstracted, geometricised objects of minimalist aesthetics.⁴⁰

³⁶ Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message” [1961], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 16 and further. See also Chapter Two, p. 60.

³⁷ Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 2”, 211 and 218.

³⁸ The photographs relating to Pascali’s photo-performances, discussed in Chapter Four, p. 193 and further, have a similar function.

³⁹ Arte Povera artists’ tendency to use body measures when sculpting is discussed in Lara Conte, “Measure and Autobiography in Arte Povera”, in *Entrare nell’opera. Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera*, eds. Bätzner et al. (Cologne: Walther König, 2019); Lara Conte, “Misura del corpo e azione nella ricerca di Paolo Icaro tra il 1967 e il 1969. Una vision eccentric dell’Arte Povera” (unpublished manuscript, November 2017); and Lara Conte, “Autobiografia e misura nei primi lavori di Marisa Merz” (unpublished manuscript, December 2012), kindly shared with me by the author. However, Conte makes no strict distinction between measures relating to the human body in general, and those referring directly to the artists’ bodies.

⁴⁰ There are more examples than those I discuss here, and I would particularly like to emphasise Calzolari’s *Il mio letto così come deve essere* from 1968 as a work that would have deserved more attention in this context. I have not included it here because it combines the transferral of measurements (the artist’s height and the diameter of his wrist to a log) with a mimicking of human shape (the log curves like a spine). In addition, this work is among the Arte Povera sculptures that most obviously distinguishes from the minimalist aesthetics, and thus not the best

Examples are Boetti's 1966 and 1967 versions of *Catasta* (Pile), both made of semi-square tubes of Eternit. The first of these sculptures displays thirty-four of the prefabricated Eternit elements, all one metre long, systematically stacked on top of each other in a simple tower construction: two initial beams lie parallel on the floor with a distance between them that matches their length, on top, two new beams cross the first pair so as to form a square, and so on (Fig. 5.1.1). The construction technique is repeated in the second *Catasta*, but this time with twelve Eternit tubes of increased size: They measure 1.5 metre in length and have an opening of approximately 30 x 30 cm, as opposed to the opening of approximately 10 x 10 cm in the first sculpture's tubes. Consequently, the second *Catasta* amounts to a far more colossal pile than its predecessor (Fig. 5.1.2).

The principle of stacking industrially produced modules 'one after another' gives the sculptures a machine-like finish and makes them appear as simple, geometric volumes with regular, monochrome surfaces. The formal appearance of the two *Cataste* corresponds with the minimalist aesthetic, and it is thus no wonder that the first *Catasta* is among the highlighted examples in Potts's article on Arte Povera's 'disencumbered objects'. Leaning on a statement by Boetti himself, Potts states that works like *Catasta* "were not meant to bear the weight of any logical, cultural, or artistic baggage."⁴¹ However, an inconspicuous relationship between the sculptural form and the artist's body is revealed by the sculptures' height, which – despite their differences in length and breadth – is approximately the same in the two *Cataste*, 192 and 187 centimetres, respectively. This measure is not random: as Christopher Bennett, among others, has pointed out, the sculptures' height is based on the artist's decision to stop stacking when he was unable to lift a new layer of Eternit beams on top of the others.⁴² The final form of each sculpture, then, is determined by and reflects the specific body of the artist, as the height measure is transferred from the artist's body to the sculptural body.

Another series of sculptures based on a similar construction principle is Boetti's 1968 series of "Colonne" (Columns). The prefabricated material employed this time is confectionery paper doilies from a bakery shop; plate-sized pieces of circular, elliptical or square card with decorative, perforated edges. Boetti provided each sheet with a hole at its centre, and stacked them on iron poles, thus giving them the form of columns (Fig. 5.2.1).

example for the discussion of similarities and differences between minimalism and Arte Povera that underlies this chapter.

⁴¹ Potts, "Disencumbered Objects", 177. The statement referred to is Alighiero Boetti, "Intervento" [1967], trans. John Stephen, in Flood and Morris, *Zero to Infinity*, 191.

⁴² Christopher G. Bennett, "Substantive Thought? The Early Work of Alighiero Boetti", *October*, No. 124, Spring, 2008, 84.



Top: Fig. 5.1.1. Alighiero Boetti, *Catasta*, 1966. 34 elements of Eternit, 100 x 100 x 192 cm; Below: Fig. 5.1.2. Alighiero Boetti, *Catasta*, 1967. 12 elements of Eternit, 150 x 150 x 187.

Being based on the stacking of monochrome and geometrically shaped ready-made elements, these sculptures – like the *Cataste* – have an appearance that evokes the minimalist aesthetics. On the other hand, the “Colonne” also hint at classical marble columns. As pointed out in Alessandro Diotallevi’s commentary on these works, the idea of connoting the archetypal classical column while using a material as frivolous and fragile as the doilies “playfully undermines the austerity and apparent seriousness of American Minimalism.” Diotallevi concludes that it rather “encapsulates much of the essence of the Arte Povera aesthetic”, involving the use of ‘poor’ materials and its way of addressing of quotidian life.⁴³

The “Colonne” also dismiss the minimalist drive to disencumber the art object – that is, to present it as a self-sufficient entity deprived of any traces from the production process and the artist’s hand. This was evident in the exhibition in which the three first sculptures of this series were shown: “Il percorso” (The Path) was an experimental group show at Galleria Arco d’Alibert in Rome in spring 1968, in which the participating artists installed their work across three evenings, in front of gallery visitors. As part of this process, Boetti invited the people present to write greetings on the doilies, inserting a few statements of his own, which were all hidden within the sculpture as soon as Boetti stacked the paper sheets.⁴⁴ In that sense, both visitors and the artist himself put their mark on the work.

Boetti’s various “Colonne” all rise about 200 centimetres above ground – from 169 to 220 cm, to be exact. This makes it probable that Boetti also broke with the principle of detaching from the work in another way: namely, by stacking until limited by his own height, as he did in his *Cataste*. A series of photographs by Mario Cresci supports this hypothesis. The photographs show Boetti installing his sculptures at the “Il percorso” exhibition and presents the relationship between artist and sculpture as one of intimacy. They demonstrate how the artist uses his extended body height to pull the paper doilies over the iron poles, whose height roughly matches that of Boetti’s, with arms stretched above his head (Figs. 5.2.2–5.2.3). The photographic documentation thus indicates that the “Colonne” reiterate a defining aspect of the artist’s body; his height.

In Boetti’s two series of sculptures, a single, characteristic feature of the artist’s body determines the same feature of the sculptural body. Since the artist’s feature is directly transferred to the sculptural form, a pseudo-causal relationship is established between artist and

⁴³ Alessandro Diotallevi, “Alighiero Boetti, *Colonna*, 1968. Lot Essay” (2014), available at <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5834540> (accessed 19.10.2021).

⁴⁴ For Boetti’s own statements and statements by Pistoletto and other anonymous artists and/or visitors on one of the *Colonna* in question, see Diotallevi, “Alighiero Boetti, *Colonna*”, n.p.



Top: Fig. 5.2.1. Alighiero Boetti, *Colonne*, 1968. Confectionery paper doilies, iron structure; 5 elements of 183 x Ø 27.3 cm, 196.7 x 24 x 24 cm, 201,3 x 16 x 16 cm, 197,6 x Ø 30 cm, 201.6 x Ø 14 cm; Below: Figs. 5.2.2–5.2.3. Boetti installing *Colonne* in the group exhibition “Il percorso” at Galleria Arco d’Alibert, Roma, 1968. Photographs by Mario Cresci.

work, which arguably can be categorised as indexical.⁴⁵ This bond between artist and sculpture breaks with Potts's idea of the 'disencumbered object', but it is worth noting that the transferral of the artist's height to the sculpture does not reveal anything significant about him, like representational theories find iconic resemblances or pencil strokes do by virtue of their loaded symbolism. The arbitrary relationship between body measure and subjectivity is neatly illustrated by the two versions of Boetti's *Catasta*: both sculptures relate directly to the artist's height, but the varying sizes of the prefabricated elements make them different. They come across as two distinct appearances; one slim and stacked high, the other rather squat. The two individual versions of *Catasta* thus make clear that if a sculpture absorbs its artist's body measurements, it is neither bound to nor capable of representing that artist as he *is*. Boetti's sculptures are informed by the artist's body, but do not reveal the essence nor aspects of their artist's subjectivity.

Boetti also distances himself as subject from the *Cataste* and "Colonne" when reducing his creative investment in the works. The sculptures are composed of prefabricated elements – chosen, but not formed by Boetti. In the case of the "Colonne", the artist admittedly made scribbles on the paper doilies – including a declaration of his feelings for Annemarie Sauzeau, and a statement incorporating his own signature and the year of production – and thus announced himself as the sculpture's origin.⁴⁶ In *Catasta*, on the other hand, the "signature" that reappears throughout the work does not refer to the artist and the year of the work's execution: each of the prefabricated elements is 'signed' with the Eternit trademark and the respective production dates, underlining their independence with respect to the artist.

The transferred body measure further reduces the artist's subjective investment in the work, as it replaces an act of intention. The only artistic treatment the prefabricated elements are exposed to is the repetitive and dissociate act of stacking. Only one significant decision

⁴⁵ The sculptures in this section may not be indexical in the strictest sense, since there is no direct or physical imprint of the artists' bodies in the sculptural forms (like in the photogram – Charles Sanders Peirce's main example of an indexical relation). A broader definition of indexicality, however, does not require such intimate contact. For instance, Peirce distinguishes indexes from the icon and the symbol by having a "real connection" with its "object". See Charles Sanders Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs" [ca. 1900], in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1955), 109. Krauss allows phenomena like medical symptoms and shadows within the category of indexes, and she regards the photograph as the key example of an index, even if the contact that photography establishes between the photograph and its object is mediated by light rather than based on direct physical touch.

⁴⁶ His inscriptions read "Adoro Anne Marie Sauzeau. Boetti" (I love/adore Anne Marie Sauzeau. Boetti) and "Uno dei mille e mille fogli che compongono la Colonna realizzata a Torino nel sessantotto, fuori e in silenzio dalla furiosa contenzione alighiero e boetti" (One of the thousands and thousands of sheets that make up this column created in Turin in '68, in silence and far from the furious protests alighiero and boetti). See Jean-Christophe Ammann, ed., *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo* (Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2009), 197; Diotallevi, "Alighiero Boetti, *Colonna*", n.p.

affecting the sculptures' outcome is left for the artist who executes them: when to stop? Boetti's decision is as unintentional as an artistic act can be, he stops stacking when it is impossible for him to continue without considerable effort or instrumental support, and thus abstains from making an artistically informed choice based on considerations of compositional balance, symbolic connotations, etc. He rather leaves the outcome to his bodily limitations. Thus, the *Cataste* and "Colonne" are not only void of the physical investments of the artist's handwork, but also of formal deliberations that may reveal preferences or offer an interpretative key to the artist's intentions. Despite their connection to the artist based on shared height, then, Boetti's sculptures are not more encumbered by the artist's subjectivity than the typical minimalist object is.

Another series of works that evoke minimalist aesthetics and seemingly comply to Potts's idea of the 'disencumbered object' is made by Emilio Prini. His "Passi" (Steps) from 1967 comprise a number of white plywood volumes, shaped as raised triangles with a metre-long base and a breadth of roughly 15 centimetres, all with their top cut off so as to form a semi-square plane, and equipped with a slightly altered wooden protrusion at both sides of the base. These sculptures were first exhibited as part of the collective exhibition "Collage 1" at the Institute of Art History at the University of Genoa in December 1967. While seldom exhibited, a variation of the "Passi" was recreated for the solo exhibition "Emilio Prini. Fermi in dogana" in Strasbourg in 1995: *3 passi da un metro* (3 Steps of One Meter) is an arrangement combining three single 'steps' on a tilted plywood ramp (Fig. 5.3.1).

Despite the minimalist 'look' of *3 passi da un metro*, the Strasbourg exhibition's contextualisation of Prini's sculpture implicitly questions its status as a self-sufficient object. In the exhibition catalogue, the "Passi" are presented as part of a larger series of works from 1967, referred to as "Rilevamenti" (Detections).⁴⁷ The "Rilevamenti" represents details from an urban environment, like sections of a wall or a staircase, in plywood. The presentation of the "Passi" as part of the larger series thus indicate that the sculptures point beyond themselves to an exterior world from which their forms derive. Indeed, the "Passi" differ from the other "Rilevamenti", and contrast with the typical minimalist object, in that they relate directly to the human body: the triangular volumes that make up these sculptures are, as the title suggests, made so as to correspond to the void between two legs when taking a one-metre step.

⁴⁷ For more on the "Rilevamenti", see Adachiara Zevi, "Emilio Prini – Fermi in dogana", in *Emilio Prini: Fermi in dogana*, ed. Friedemann Malsch (Strasbourg: Éditions Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, 1996). The translation of 'Rilevamenti' into 'Detections' is my own, and tentative. In the exhibition catalogue, the translation into French and German, respectively, is 'Relevés' and 'Vermessungen' (see p. 8 and p. 11).

Fig. 5.3.1.
Image protected by Copyright.

See for instance:
Malsch, *Emilio Prini: Fermi in dogana*, 39.

Fig. 5.3.2.
Image protected by Copyright.

See for instance:
Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 243;
Luca Lo Pinto, Pierre Bal Blanc, and Alfredo Aceto,
“Three hypotheses for a Text on Emilio Prini”, *Flash Art*,
No. 306, 2016, 51–59;
<https://flash-art.com/article/three-hypotheses-for-a-text-on-emilio-prini-published-on-flash-art-306-january-february-2016-pp-51-59/>;
<https://www.mlfineart.com/artists/110-emilio-prini/>

Top: Fig. 5.3.1. Emilio Prini, *3 passi da un metro*, 1967/1995. Plywood, 130 x 120 cm; Below: Fig. 5.3.2. Emilio Prini with his “Passi”, probably 1967. Photograph probably by Antonio Leale.

The one-metre step is a standardised way of taking rough measurements. However, the actual shape of the negative space between a pair of legs with a base distance of one metre will alter according to the particular body taking that step. A photograph that relates to the “Passi”, taken when the sculptures were new, reveals that their specific form corresponds to the negative space between the artist’s own legs. Here, Prini is seen standing over one of his sculptures, with one leg on each side of it, demonstrating how it fits between them (Fig. 5.3.2). The arranged photograph underlines that the sculptures’ shape is derived from the body of the artist himself.

In his first solo exhibition, “Pesi Spinte Azioni” (Weights Forces Actions) at Galleria La Bertesca in Genoa half a year later, Prini further experimented with the relationship between the sculptural body and his own, now focusing on weight.⁴⁸ This is indicated in the exhibition’s cryptic title, but a hint is also given in the image printed on the invitation card; a black and white photograph showing the naked artist stepping onto a bathroom scale (Ill. 5.4).⁴⁹

One of the exhibited works was *Fermacarte* (Paper Weight), which itself combines photography and sculptural elements. In the large-scale black and white photographs that are part of the work, Prini’s presence is manifest: they show his dark and blurry silhouette while moving around a cityscape on foot, carrying out what he later described as “azionecondizione-tipo” or “different types of actions”, such as walking up a stair or jumping from a height.⁵⁰ When exhibited, the photographs were

Ill. 5.4.
Image protected by Copyright.

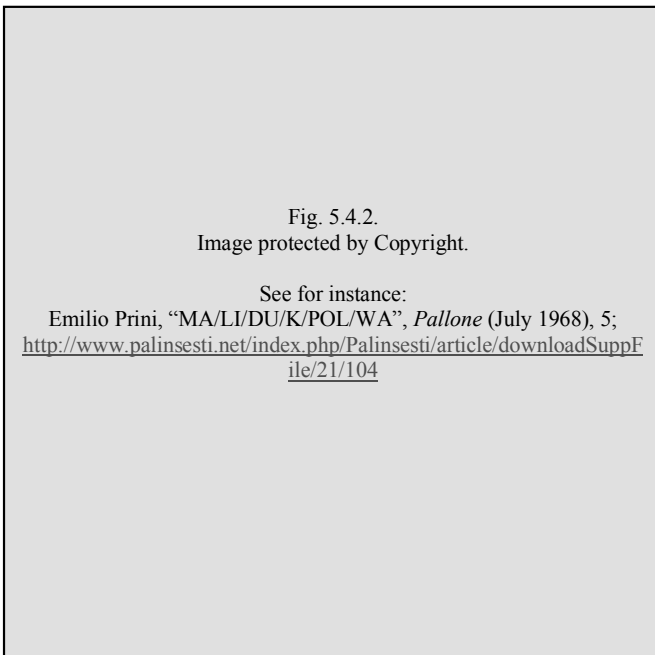
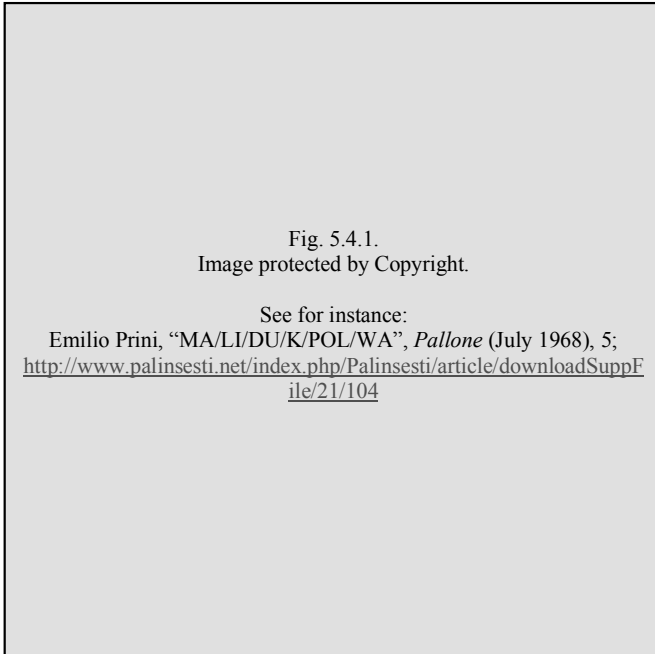
See for instance:
Malsch et.al., *Che fare?*, 280;
Bätzner et.al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 91;
<https://www.finanzaonline.com/forum/investimenti-in-arte-e-collezionismo/1702241-emilio-prini-7.html>.

Ill. 5.4. Emilio Prini, *Senza titolo*, 1967–68. Invitation card for Prini’s solo exhibition at Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, Spring 1968. Photograph probably by Antonio Leale.

⁴⁸ Note that there are discrepancies regarding the title of Prini’s exhibition. I use the title “Pesi spinte azione”, which appears in hand-writing on the invitation card, and rely on Celant’s translation into English, see Germano Celant, “Emilio Prini” [2010], in Celant, ed., *Arte Povera: History and Stories*, 286. A title variation is “Piombi. Pesi. Spinte. Azioni Scritte”, see Giorgio Maffei, *Arte Povera 1966–1980: Libri e Documenti/Books and Documents* (Mantua: Maurizio Corrarini, 2007), 192. Descriptions of this exhibition’s contents and layout are vague, at times contradictory, and not always in sync with photographs reported to document the exhibition, probably due to its evolving character. For some accounts of the exhibition, see Celant, “Emilio Prini”; Friedemann Malsch, “The Paradox of Presence. Attempting to Fathom Emilio Prini”, in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997); Pasquale Fameli, “Il peso del vuoto. Emilio Prini ieri e oggi”, in *Intrecci d’arte*, Vol. 5, No. 5, 2016; Valentina Pero and Christiane Meyer-Stoll, “I Do Not Care to Be Remembered in the Future. Grazia Austoni and Timotea Austoni Prini in conversation with Valentina Pero and Christiane Meyer-Stoll, Chiavari, 5 February 2019”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*.

⁴⁹ Obviously, this photograph was taken before the exhibition opened, but Grazia Austoni claims that similar photographs were taken within the exhibition. See Pero and Meyer-Stoll, “I Do Not Care to Be Remembered in the Future”, 321.

⁵⁰ Emilio Prini, “MA/LI/DU/K/POL/WA”, *Pallone*, July 1968, 5.



Top: Fig. 5.4.1. Emilio Prini, *Salire (spinte distribute)*, a variation of *Fermacarte*, 1968, as presented in *Pallone*, July 1968; Below: Fig. 5.4.2. Emilio Prini installing *Saltare un'altezza (Superficie corpo in peso totale)*, a variation of *Fermacarte*, 1968, as presented in *Pallone*, July 1968.

placed on the gallery floor, with lumps of trapezium-shaped lead weights on top of them. Prini has no recognisable presence in these lead lumps, but they do relate to him: the total weight of the lumps placed upon a photograph matches the artist's own body weight.⁵¹ In a presentation of the work in Celant's 1969 publication *Art Povera*, Prini indicates that he chose to work with lead because it provides an extreme concentration of weight in form, and is thus the material best suited for a maximal reduction of the body.⁵² Despite having a completely different size and form, the sculptural elements of *Fermacarte* are perfectly aligned with the artist's body by virtue of their shared weight.

Photographs of five different *Fermacarte* arrangements were reproduced in La Bertesca's experimental magazine *Pallone* later that year, and presented with specific titles: one example is *Salire. Spinte distribuite* (Ascend. Distributed Forces), which depicts Prini while walking up an outdoor stair, and has the lead weights partitioned between the artist's two feet (Fig. 5.4.1). Another is *Saltare da un'altezza. Superficie corpo in peso totale* (Jumping from a height. Body surface in total weight), in which Prini's outstretched body is captured by camera in the middle of a jump. In the resulting work, the artist's body is seen as an elongated dark shade, covered by lead weights (Fig. 5.4.2). The works' main titles, then, reflect the type of action performed in each photograph (ascending, jumping), while the subtitles reflect the distribution of lead lumps/body weight relative to the photographic image of the artist's body (distributed to certain parts of the body, or covering the body surface as such).

According to Friedemann Malsch, Prini combined pieces of lead matching his own weight with photographs of himself in action to demonstrate "the separation of body and mind [...]: while the 'body' weight remains on the ground, the artist is ascending to lofty heights."⁵³ *Fermacarte* can therefore be argued to stage a sort of *self-separation*, where the photographs relate to the spiritual/subjective sides of the artist they render, while the material components form counterpoints into which the artist's physical body is invested.

⁵¹ This is indicated by Prini when describing the first step in the process of making *Fermacarte* as taking "un peso (il mio corpo sul/in piombo)" ("a weight [my body on/in lead]"). See Germano Celant, ed., *Art Povera* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1969), 216. The relation is also confirmed by other sources, like Friedemann Malsch, "Emilio Prini", in *Che Fare? Arte Povera – The Historic Years*, eds. Friedemann Malsch, Christiane Meyer-Stoll and Valentina Pero (Vaduz/Heidelberg: Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein/Kehrer Verlag, 2010), 278; and Dietmar Rubel, "Das Als-ob das formlosigkeit und die fotografie", in *Formwerdung und Formentzug*, eds. Franz Engel and Yannis Hadjinicolaou (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 209.

⁵² Prini writes "Il piombo come forma arbitraria di riduzione del corpo. Il piombo come massima concentrazione della forma peso" (Lead as an arbitrary form of body reduction. Lead as the maximum concentration of weight in form). See Celant, *Art Povera*, 216.

⁵³ Malsch, "Emilio Prini", 278. Note that this comment relates to Prini's *Un piccolo film*, 1968/95, but concerns photographs of *Fermacarte*, which are included in that work.

Another work included in the same 1968 exhibition was *Ipotesi d'azione* (Action Hypotheses). The work consists of square sheets of lead placed on the gallery floor, accompanied by sheets from Prini's notebook (Figs. 5.5.1–5.5.3). On the sheets appear punched and written statements, generally formulated as descriptions of performed or potential actions: according to Celant, examples include “I read *Alice in Wonderland!*”; “I Met a Storm and Saluted It”; “The Surroundings Are Not Transitory”; and “Make a Mask Like Energy”.⁵⁴

The past tense of many of the statements indicates the absence of the artist in the *hic et nunc* of the exhibition space, and the encouraging or imperative tone of other statements can be taken to indicate that the artist here steps aside to let the gallery visitors fulfil the works, whether actually or in their imagination. However, when presenting the work in Celant's *Art Povera*, Prini reveals that he is not as absent from *Ipotesi d'azione* as he initially might seem. A photograph of the work at Galleria La Bertesca is overwritten with captions in Italian, later translated by Celant as “I prepared a series of hypotheses of action punched on lead in the weight of my arm as it writes. 67/68”, and “I prepared a series of slogans by punching them in the weight of my arm that writes. 67/68”.⁵⁵ With these captions, Prini clearly indicates a relationship between the lead sheets and the weight of his own arm.

The exact character of the relationship between the exhibited lead sheets and the artist's arm is unresolved in the reception of Prini's work. Most comments on the topic are vague: Celant, for instance, states that the writing “was punched on a series of lead plates with the weight of Prini's arm”, while Malsch holds that the lead plates are “embodying the weight of Prini's arm, which had physically hammered and engraved short statements into them.”⁵⁶ Both formulations open up to the possibility that the weight and force of Prini's writing arm is transferred to the lead sheets through the act of punching the given letters, as if the depth of the impressed letters bears witness to the strength of the arm that punched them. This is also suggested by Jean-Christophe Ammann, who reports that texts were “engraved on lead plates, the weight of the plates corresponding to that triggered off by the hand as it writes on the plate.”⁵⁷ Such an interpretation is not unreasonable, since contemporaneous Italian artists – like Gilberto Zorio and Eliseo Mattiacci – made works that elucidates the contrast between the soft

⁵⁴ Germano Celant, *Book as Artwork, 1960/1972* (New York, NY: 6 Decades Books, 2010 [1972]), 44.

⁵⁵ Celant, “Emilo Prini”, 285. The original captions read: “Ho preparato una serie di ipotesi d'azione a punzone su piombo nel peso del mio braccio che scrive. 67/68”, and “Ho preparato una serie di appunti frasi slogan a punzone su piombo nel peso del mio braccio che scrive. 67/68”, see Celant, *Art Povera*, 213.

⁵⁶ Celant, *Book as Artwork, 1960/1972*, 44; Malsch, “The Paradox of Presence”, 182.

⁵⁷ Jean-Christophe Ammann, “The Exhibition (Visualized Thinking Processes)” [1970], in *Arte Povera in collezione / Arte Povera in collection*, ed. Ida Gianelli (Milan: Charta, 2000), 66.

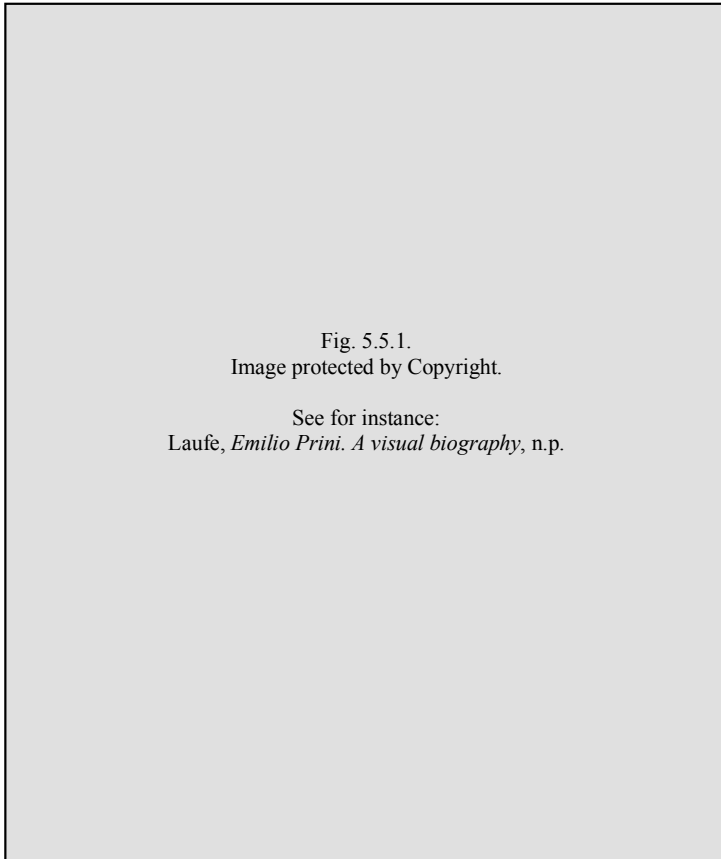


Fig. 5.5.1.
Image protected by Copyright.

See for instance:
Laufe, *Emilio Prini. A visual biography*, n.p.

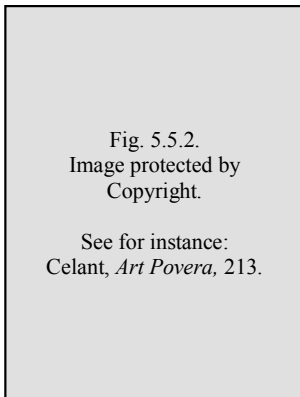


Fig. 5.5.2.
Image protected by
Copyright.

See for instance:
Celant, *Art Povera*, 213.

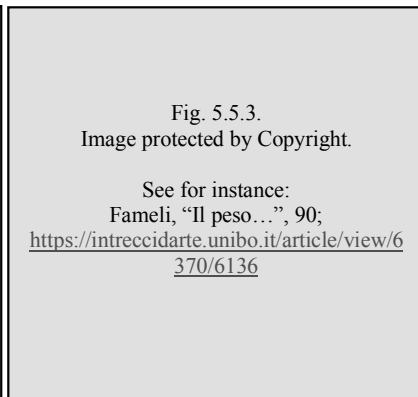


Fig. 5.5.3.
Image protected by Copyright.

See for instance:
Fameli, “Il peso...”, 90;
<https://intreccidarte.unibo.it/article/view/6370/6136>

Top: Fig. 5.5.1. Emilio Prini, *Ipotesi d'azioni*, 1967–68. Inscribed lead sheets, 36 x 40 cm. Note that the current image is from “Processi di pensiero visualizzati”, Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1970; Below left: Fig. 5.5.2. Emilio Prini, *Ipotesi d'azioni*, 1967–68. Installation photograph of *Ipotesi d'azioni*, as published in Germano Celant’s *Art Povera*, 1969; Below right: Fig. 5.5.3. View of Prini’s exhibition “Pesi Spinte Azioni” at Galleria La Bertesca, 1968, or the installing of it. Possibly an alternative lay out of the *Ipotesi d'azioni* lead sheets in the background.

material of lead and the force of the human hand.⁵⁸ Luca Lo Pinto, however, claims that Prini's "annotations were pressed into a sheet of lead that weighed as much as his arm", i.e. that each lead sheet weighed as many kilograms as Prini's own arm.⁵⁹ This idea of the lead sheets as equalling the weight of the artist's arm is more in line with Prini's own approach to lead, as seen in *Farmacarte*, where his weight is transferred to the lead pieces. If trusting Lo Pinto's interpretation, both of Prini's works are based on the artist's measurements – the weight of his whole body in the one case, and of a single limb in the other.

The way Prini's measures are transferred to his sculptures differs from the way Boetti's measures shape the "Colonne" and the *Cataste*. In Boetti's pilea and columns, the height is directly transferred from artist to sculpture, in the sense that the proportional relation this single feature has to the artist's body matches the relation it has to the whole sculptural body: height is but one characteristic of the artist, and the artist's height only determines the sculpture's height, no other parts of its form. In Prini's case, there is not such a correspondence. Rather, a displacement and a change in the measure's significance happens as it is applied to the sculpture. Prini's weight and the stretch between his legs are two of the artist's many physical characteristics, but in the sculptures, these measures serve more defining functions: here, the artist's weight or leg span comes to condition the sculptural size and/or form as such. Prini works thus involve a 'metonymic transference', in which a mere aspect of the artist's body becomes an all-encompassing and emblematic element of the sculptures.

This form of transference of artist's features to sculpture seems overpowering, and further complicates the characterisation of Arte Povera sculptures as disencumbered objects. Arguably, the metonymic relationship between Prini's body and his sculptures compares to the relationship claimed between the artist and his work in expressionist theories of painting: the artist's appearance in the work is in both cases grounded in minute details – the bodily measures and the strokes, respectively – which come to define the work. However, in expressionist

⁵⁸ In Gilberto Zorio's 16mm film *Fluidità Radicale* for Gerry Schum's "Identifications", and the 1971 frieze of photographic stills with the same title, the artist's hand is impressed with the word "Radicale", which is embossed on the handle of a lead rod he has held in his hand; in Eliseo Mattiachi's 1978 *Essere*, gallery visitors are allowed to punch a lead sheet with a hammer embossed with the word "Essere", thus printing that word onto the lead sheet.

⁵⁹ Luca Lo Pinto, Pierre Bal Blanc and Alfredo Aceto, "Three hypotheses for a Text on Emilio Prini", *Flash Art*, No. 306, January–February 2016, available at <https://flash---art.com/article/three-hypotheses-for-a-text-on-emilio-prini-published-on-flash-art-306-january-february-2016-pp-51-59/> (accessed 04.03.2020). Pondering on the possibility of Lo Pinto's claim, I have made the following equation: size of lead plates (36 x 40 x appr. 0.3 cm =) 432 cm³ x density of pure lead 11,34 g/cc = 4.9 kg. An arm allegedly weighs 6.5 percent of a man's total weight. If Prini weighed between 70 and 80 kg (this seems likely in reference to the *Farmacarte*, if each lead piece weighs 5 kg), his arm would be approximately 4.5-5 kilos. Some of my measures – such as the thickness of the sheets and the artist's weight – are not verified, but the estimation shows that Lo Pinto's claim cannot be dismissed. I have tried to reach the Archivio Emilio Prini to clarify this issue, but I have not been able to establish contact.

theories, the stroke on a painting's surface is found to concentrate a painterly gesture that, in turn, carries within itself the artist's personality – the artist's temper, mood or psyche. The actual stroke thus points to the artist as something other and more than itself; it represents symbolically. Prini's measure-based sculptures negate this form of representation doubly: first, the physical point of contact between the work and its artist, which is key in expressionist theories of the symbolic stroke, is not key in Prini's works. The artist's features are transferred to the sculptures, but not by virtue of the physical touch – not even in *Ipotesi d'azioni*, if De Pinto's understanding of the work is correct. Second, the features transferred to Prini's sculptures – quantitative and conditional measures such as weight and leg span – do not relate to nor express the artist's subjectivity in the manner that the painterly gesture is supposed to do. Prini's works do not allow the artist's personal investments to enter the works' surfaces via his gesture, and make no claim for identification between artistic subject and work.

Prini's *Ipotesi d'azione* can also be taken to repudiate expressionist ideas of the invested artistic gesture in a more forceful way, regardless of how the relationship between the artist's arm and the lead sheets is understood. If the sheets actually weigh as much as the arm, this significant part of the artist's body is duplicated, and passivised/pacified: in this form, the arm becomes a surface into which potential works, the “action hypotheses”, are punched. Like *Fermacarte*, one could say that this work stages a sort of self-separation, a split between the artist's actual, acting arm, and the passivised arm preserved in lead. If allowing an allegorical reading of the work, it could be found to present the artist's arm as a dead limb, and thus question the idea of the genial *manufacturer*. Alternatively, if the lead sheets record the physical force exercised on them by the artist's arm, the work loses this aspect of cleaving the artist's body into an active and a passive part. Still, the marks left by the artist on the lead surfaces are mechanically repeated punches schematically reporting conducted actions or proposing future ones, far from the invested impasto of abstract expressionist painting.

Turning to Giuseppe Penone's works, one will find sculptures that have less of the minimalist appearance than Boetti's – and Prini's, to some extent – do. Penone's works are often organic and invested with symbolic contents; they have, for instance, titles that are far more implicative than those of Boetti's and Prini's works. Nevertheless, some of Penone's works relate to the artist's defining measures like the abovementioned works do, albeit concentrating on the artist's age rather than his height or weight.

A first example is *Il suo essere nel ventiduesimo anno di età in un'ora fantastica* (His/Its Being in the Twenty-Second Year of Age in a Fantastic Hour) from 1969, one of the first in Penone's “Alberi” (Trees) series. In this body of work, the artist makes use of a particular



Fig. 5.6. Giuseppe Penone, *Il suo essere nel ventiduesimo anno di età in un'ora fantastica*, 1969. Wood beam, wax, 800 x 20 x 12. Exhibition view "Anselmo, Boetti, Calzolari, Griffa, Maini, Merz, Penone, Prini, Zorio", Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone, Turin, October 1969.

method of carving: he starts out with an industrially reworked wooden beam, from which he partly excavates the tree's original form by carefully following the outline of one of its annual rings. While looking more or less like the other works of the series, *Il suo essere...* differs from the others in that the artist has traced an annual ring of particular significance: Penone here chose to follow the ring that represented the tree's 22nd year, so that the tree raising from the beam would be of the same age as the artist himself at the moment of production (Fig. 5.6).⁶⁰

In reference to the "Alberi", Daniela Lancioni has remarked that Penone intervenes in an industrially produced object – the beam. She argues that by reworking the industrial product with manual craftsman's techniques, Penone disregards the minimalist procedure of replacing artistic endeavours with industrial production, or at least "addresse[s] it in dialectical terms".⁶¹ In doing so, Lancioni seems to imply that Penone compromises the artist's encumbrances on his work less efficiently than minimalist artists do. However, while the artistic treatment of the wooden material is time-consuming and physically demanding – as was demonstrated when Penone presented the process of carving out a tree as a ten-day performative event at Aktionsraum 1 in Munich in 1970 – the process is not guided by the artist's temper nor his emotional ties to the particular material with which he is engaged.⁶² Rather, the process and the work's final form is determined by the measure of 22 years – which certainly relates to the artist but it is not imbued with and cannot reveal any of his inner qualities. By relying on this measure, Penone avoids subjective investments in the work, and abdicates from aesthetic decisions in a similar manner as Boetti does when letting his height determine when to stop stacking.

Like in Boetti's *Cataste* and "Colonne", the artist's measure in Penone's *Il suo essere...* is simply transferred to the sculpture, and has a role within it that corresponds to its role relative to the artist's body: the artist's age determines the 'age' of the sculpted form, like Boetti's height determines the height of his sculptures. On the other hand, *Il suo essere...* also differs from Boetti's works: when Penone's age – one of the artist's many characteristics – is transferred to his sculpture, it guides the whole process of excavating the tree, and comes to define the sculpture's overall form. In that sense, Penone's sculpture, like Prini's above,

⁶⁰ Elisabeth Mangini points out that the practice of aligning his own age with that of trees was recurrent in Penone's production at the time. She particularly mentions the unrealised project for Konrad Fischer's 1969 "Konzeption/Conception" exhibition, in which a text referring to Penone's 8161 lived days was to be inserted into a tree. See Elisabeth Mangini, *Seeing Through Closed Eyelids: Giuseppe Penone and the Nature of Sculpture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 121, 200–01 n. 13. Archivio Penone remarks that the only additional example is the tree made at Aktionsraum 1, Munich, in 1970 (Roberto Caterino, Archivio Penone, private e-mail correspondence, 26.01.2022).

⁶¹ Daniela Lancioni, "Alberi (Trees)", in *Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms*, ed. Carlos Basualdo (London: Gagosian, 2018), n.p.

⁶² Giuseppe Penone, "Baum", Aktionsraum 1, Munich, February 1970. See Eva Madelung, ed. *Aktionsraum 1 oder 57 Blindenhunde* (Munich: A1 Informationen Verlagsgesellschaft, 1971), 72–73.

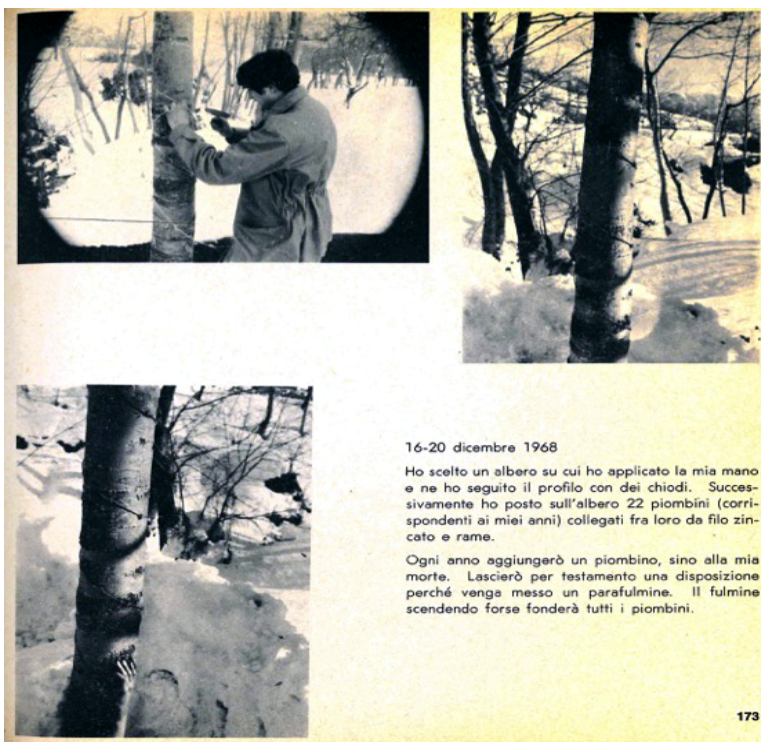
involves a metonymical displacement that disturbs the representational idea of identification between artist and work. In addition, a temporal displacement is introduced with Penone's sculpture, because the measure that grounds the sculptural form – the artist's age – is in constant change. The sculpture's age/form does match the artist's at the moment of execution, but since the sculptural form is stabilised at the age of 22, the correspondence or alignment between them will gradually decrease as Penone himself ages.⁶³ Arguably, this gradual distancing between artist and sculpture can be read as a *memento mori* motif, as a mourning the passing time. More important in this context, however, is that the temporal element of *Il suo essere nel ventiduesimo anno di età in un'ora fantastica* further decreases the overlap between the artist and his sculptural companion, and thus contributes to problematising representational notions of the artist's continuous presence in his work and the work's continuous tie to its artist.

Another work by Penone that incorporates his age is *Alpi Marittime. I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame* (Maritime Alps. My Years Linked by a Copper Wire) from 1968. For this work – an action performed in nature, but with a sculptural component – Penone approached a living ash tree and marked the outline of his hand on its base with iron nails. From this hand, a line of copper wire with lead weights attached to it winds its way up, around the tree. The number of lead weights – again 22 – corresponds with Penone's lived years at the time of the work's execution.

Like all the “Alpi Marittime” works, *I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame* incorporates photographs – sometimes presented as works in their own right, sometimes merely as documentation of the (inter)action. Penone's presentation of the work in Celant's *Art Povera* consists of three photographs and a caption, in which Penone announces that a new lead weight will be inserted in the tree each year until his death, and that he will demand in his will – or, alternatively, in a 1969 sculpture called *Testamento* – that a lightning rod be placed in the tree after his death, so as to fuse the wire and weights, and thus probably fire up the living sculpture (Fig. 5.7.1).⁶⁴ In *I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame*, then, Penone sought to avoid the temporal displacement that characterises *Il suo essere...*, which gradually separates the artist from his work. With the plan of inserting new weights and having the tree demolished within the year of the artist's own death, the analogy between the artist's life and the sculpture is

⁶³ On a more modest and less predictable scale, the same is true for Prini's *Farmacarte* and *Ipotesi d'azioni*: in these works, the correspondence between the lead and the artist himself will change if Prini's body weight changes.

⁶⁴ Celant, *Art Povera*, 173 (“Ogni anno aggiungerò un piombino, sino alla mia morte. Lascierò per testamento una disposizione perché venga messo un parafulmine. Il fulmine scendendo forse fonderà tutti i piombini”). Daniela Lancioni indicates that Penone's wish is carved into the wood panel of his 1969 sculpture *Testamento*, and that it will surface as the wax covering the plate ages, see Daniela Lancioni, “Alberi (Trees)”, n.p., and Daniela Lancioni, “Alpi Marittime (Maritime Alps)”, n.p., both in Basualdo, *Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms*.



Top: Fig. 5.7.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime. I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame*, 1968, as presented in Germano Celant's *Art Povera*, 1969; Below: Fig. 5.7.2. Exhibition view from "Prima materia", Fondation François Pinault, Punta della Dogana, Venice, 2015, with *Alpi Marittime. I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame* in the foreground, far right.

sustained, and the *memento mori* aspect strengthened, if not parodied.

The outline of the artist's hand is marked at the base of the branch in *I miei anni collegati*, and arguably signals the artist's continuous hold over his product. Penone's wish to light up the tree after his own death, moreover, is an invitation to interpret the work as forever subjected to the artist's hand. Indeed, Penone has written in reference to the tree in question that "[t]o its 'strength', has been added another 'strength': mine."⁶⁵ Two of the three photographs in Celant's book support the idea that Penone seeks to manifest his own power over his sculpture's living material: one of them displays the artist in the act of attaching the wire around the tree, the other displays the trunk with the artist's hand placed within the iron nails, revealing the link between the tree 'sculpture' and the artist's body. The third photograph problematises this idea; here Penone presents the tree alone, abandoned by the artist's hand that figured in the previous photograph, and with the metal nails and wire as the only traces of his touch. Thus, the photographic sequence demonstrates the artist's gradual departure from the work, which, in the end, is allowed an autonomous presence as artwork. In that sense, it is as if the photographs foresee the work's faith: Penone did not, as planned, return to insert new weights, and an abrupt separation of artist and work happened in 1985, when the instalment of a new powerline in the area required the tree to be felled, further obstructing Penone's plan of aligning the course of life of the tree and his own. Since then, the tree has existed as a wooden sculpture, released from the artist's intentions, and with a trace of the copper wire winding its way up around the bark as a "furrow with raised edges" as the only visible proof of its previous relation to the artist's body (Fig. 5.7.2).⁶⁶

Common to the sculptural works discussed in this section is that artists' bodily measures are transferred to the sculptural bodies, and partly or fully define their forms. In that sense, there is a causal relationship between the artist's body and the sculptural body, and the relationship can thus be characterised as indexical; in Peirce's theory of signs, the index distinguishes from the icon and the symbol by having a "real connection" with its "object".⁶⁷ When discussing how photography – as an indexical art form – becomes a model for post-war art practices, Krauss evokes Barthes's writings on photography, and how he claims a total overlap between a photographed object and the photographic motif by virtue of the indexical relation between them. The overlap is of a factual kind, however, and cannot reveal anything more about the

⁶⁵ Giuseppe Penone, "Untitled text (1968)", in *Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968–2008*, eds. Gianfranco Maraniello and Jonathan Watkins (Birmingham/Bologna: Ikon Gallery/MAMbo, 2009), 23. The original statement is from a work sketch, filed at the Archivio Penone as object no. D0426.

⁶⁶ Lancioni, "Alpi Marittime (Maritime Alps)", n.p.

⁶⁷ Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs", 109.

photographed objects. The same applies to Arte Povera's measure-based sculptures: their relation to the artist is based on measures/features that are quantitative rather than qualitative, and individual but not unique. In these sculptures, the artist's measures even replace informed decisions regarding the works' form, therefore the features transferred to the sculptures do not reveal much about the artist's subjectivity. The measure-based sculptures also counteract full overlaps with their artists by letting the transferral acts include displacements. As pointed out, the artists and their sculptures separate from each other because the measures transferred from the artists to the sculptures are subject to metonymic displacements, where their role relative to the overall bodies' changes. In addition, the measures are contingent rather than essentially tied to the artists, which means that the relationship between artists and sculptures are also subjected to temporal displacements, where the proximity between them decreases as the artists alters and ages. At most, the sculptures capture and hold on to aspects of the artists that may soon be lost.

Both the separation between quantitative and qualitative – or bodily and subjective – aspects of the self, and the gradual separation of artist and sculpture over time, are topics of the photographs that accompany Arte Povera's measure-based sculptures. The clearest instance is found in Prini's *Fermacarte*, which contrasts the photographically rendered figure of the artist with the manifestation of the artist in lead, presenting the former as free to depart through acts like jumping and ascending, whereas the latter rests heavy and immobile on the ground. With the sequence of photographs that makes up the presentation of *Alpi Marittime. I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame* in Celant's book, Penone illustrates the intimate relation between artist and sculpture, but also the artist's withdrawal from the work. In a sense, the other photographs mentioned above, related to Boetti's "Colonne" and Prini's "Passi", serve a similar function. These photographs are not, as the ones just mentioned, part of the works themselves; they merely document the production process and/or the works' instalments. However, they testify of the proximity between artist and work, and thus reveal that the sculptures are material forms that retain traces of the artists' bodies within them. At the same time, their exposure of the close relations that once existed between the sculptures and their artists also lead to the insight that matters have changed: the sculptures are autonomous objects from which the artists have now fled.

Bodily Impressions

A second category of Arte Povera sculptures consists of works that are further removed from the minimalist aesthetics, and from the idea of the art object as disencumbered by virtue of their

artists' detachment. These sculptures carry, or pretend to carry, physical impressions of the conducting artists' body parts: some of them preserve the image of their artist's face, while others are impressed by their artist's hands.

Turning first to the sculptures rendering the artists' faces, a key example is Gilberto Zorio's 1972 *Autoritratto* (Self-Portrait): a black cow's skin, outstretched and hung on a wall, with a face rising as a convex form in an area below the skin's centre (Fig. 5.8). The title of the work indicates that the face is Zorio's, but the physiognomy of the artist is not rendered with a striking resemblance and one can thus not determine whether the skin has veiled the artist's face and taken its form directly from it, as its title indicates. Furthermore, the eyes introduce a non-mimetic element, since they are shaped like five-pointed stars, from which a red, incandescent light shines.

Another example of a sculpture carrying the impression of its artist's visage (or giving the impression of doing so) is Boetti's 1968 *Autoritratto in negativo* (Negative Self-Portrait). Details about the production of this work – which is characterised by Ammann as a “reconstructed stone”, and long since lost – are not known, but the Archivio Alighiero Boetti suggests that the sculpture was cast in sand dust after a river stone.⁶⁸ Within the resulting ‘stone’ is a recession that seems to be the direct impression of a human face – and, given the work's title, that of Boetti himself (Fig. 5.9.1). Like in Zorio's work, however, resemblance is not striking, and whether the negative form is actually an impression, or Boetti instead has carved it out, is not clear.⁶⁹ Even if uncertainties exist regarding the production processes, both works encourage the idea that the artists' faces have been in direct contact with and therefore shaped the sculptural material.

The two *autoritratti* decisively break with the key principle in the minimalist strategy for unburdening the artwork: ‘radical abstraction’ particularly centred on the abolishment of anthropomorphism. Zorio's *Autoritratto* and Boetti's *Autoritratto in negativo* include human figuration, which – to some extent – visually resembles their artists. Due to their relative lifelikeness and their indicative titles, the two sculptural works can be categorised as self-portraits, and so establish or evoke the same representational hierarchy between an authoritarian model and its secondary image/imprint – between the artist- of-the-world and the artist-

⁶⁸ Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 199; Agata Boetti, Archivio Alighiero Boetti, in private e-mail correspondence, 22.11.2021.

⁶⁹ Most sources tend to indicate – possibly based on assumptions – that the artist's face is impressed on the sculpture. Tenley Bick, however, posits that *Autoritratto negativo* is carved. See Tenley Bick, “Figure as Model: The Early Work of Michelangelo Pistoletto, 1956–1966”, PhD Thesis, University of California, 2016, 91, available at <https://escholarship.org/content/qt5tf31549/qt5tf31549.pdf> (accessed 20.06.2022).



Fig. 5.8. Gilberto Zorio, *Autoritratto*, 1972 (Detail). Leather mould, electrical resistances, 120 x 140 cm.



Top: Fig. 5.9.1. Alighiero Boetti, *Autoritratto in negativo*, 1968. Reconstructed stone (negative cast), probably sand dust, 50 x 35 x 15 cm; Middle: Fig. 5.9.2. Alighiero Boetti, *Ritratto e autoritratto in negativo*, 1968. Photograph by Paolo Bressano after Boetti's instructions; Below, left: Fig. 5.9.3. Exhibition view, Alighiero Boetti, "Shaman/Showman", Galleria di Nieubourg, Milan, spring 1968; Below, right: Fig. 5.9.4. Alighiero Boetti, *Shaman/Showman*, 1968. Installation, various objects. Exhibition view, "Arte povera più azioni povere", Amalfi, 4–6 October 1968.

of-the-work – as traditional self-portraits are found to do. When the minimalists explicitly reject human figuration, they avoid such a subordination of the art object to a pre-existing subjectivity. When retaining an iconic image of the conducting artist, on the other hand, Zorio and Boetti's sculptures disprove Potts's claim that Arte Povera artists, like the minimalists, rejected human imagery. From Potts's and minimalist artists' point of view, this clearly represents a drawback when it comes to liberating the artwork from the encumbrances of the artist.

Zorio's and Boetti's appearances in these sculptures also hint at historical honouring practices that are based on indexicality – on physical contact between a model and a material. Zorio's work, in which the artist's face appears to have been covered by an animal's skin that takes up his features, echoes early shrouding rituals and religious shroud cults. In that sense, the artist can be taken to present himself as an elevated, divine or spiritual figure, whom the work represents in his absence. Celant offers an interpretation along these lines, when suggesting that the light that radiates from behind the sculpture through the star-shaped eyes illustrates “the mystery of the inner and intimate energy that passes through the threshold of the gaze”, while also keeping the artist ‘alive’ by presenting his private sphere as something distant and inaccessible.⁷⁰ Boetti's work has also been referred to as a shroud.⁷¹ Given its material denseness, however, it more naturally associates with the death mask-tradition: this sculpture preserves the artist's features in a solid material – indeed, in a “stone” that itself may represent a headstone. The (apparent) physical impressions in these works may connote death, but in so doing serve votive functions in respect of the faces they preserve, celebrating and commemorating the artists and their lives.

Georges Didi-Huberman has pointed out, however, that in religious shrouding practices, it is not the technique of impression itself, but the preestablished status of the person whose features are impressed and the symbolism invested in the impressed object that converts “the trace of the face to grace”.⁷² Didi-Huberman also remarks that a quality that substantiates the holiness of a shroud is its *uniqueness*.⁷³ This quality is counteracted by both Zorio's and Boetti's works, by way of multiplication: the former sculpture exists in more than one version, and a

⁷⁰ Germano Celant, “The ‘Star Towers’”, in *Gilberto Zorio: Torri Stella/Star Towers*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Skira Editore, 2009), 21. Note that Celant here speaks about Zorio's “Torre Stella” (Star Tower) structures, made from 2004 onwards, but compares them with *Autoritratto* on this matter.

⁷¹ For the description of the “sindone d'artista” (the artist's shroud), see Tommaso Trini, “Le pietre di Boetti”, *Domus*, No. 464, July 1968, 47, quoted in Giulia De Giorgi, “Autoritratti di Boetti alla Galleria De Nieubourg”, *Senzacornice*, No. 10, 2014, n.p., available at <http://rivista.senzacornice.org/#!/articolo/64> (accessed 01.11.2019).

⁷² Rather than quoting, I paraphrase Georges Didi-Huberman here from “Near and Distant: The Face, its Imprint, and its Place of Appearance”, *Kritische Berichte*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 2012, 58–59.

⁷³ Didi-Huberman, “Near and Distant”, 54.

1978 terracotta variation, while Boetti's *Autoritratto* is reported to have existed in 3 to 7 versions.⁷⁴ Didi-Huberman further argues that religious shrouds require an element of *distancing*: in order to be experienced as a representation of the divine, the face has to be rendered as if caught in a process of disappearance or emergence, disfigured and/or lacking contour, or alternatively as absolutely secluded from the background on which it appears. Zorio's and Boetti's sculptures do not have the element of gradual distancing, rather they are – or appear to be – straightforward impressions that preserve the artists' features in a play of positive/negative form. Neither do they pose an abrupt distinction between figure and ground, since the imprints raise from or recede in the homogeneous materials of the respective sculptures.

Boetti's 'negative self-portrait' offers a recession, and in so far as it relates to the death-mask tradition, it shows the rear side of the mask. As a result, the sculpture reveals that there is a void rather than an original presence behind the cast image, and so points to the distinction between the imprint and its source rather than their connection. This distinction is further highlighted in a photograph of the sculpture, which Boetti first presented in the catalogue published in connection to Harald Szeemann's legendary exhibition "Live in Your Head: When Attitudes become Form". The photograph, *Ritratto e autoritratto in negativo* (Portrait and Negative Self-Portrait), 'portrays' the sculpture beside the artist, who is lying on the floor with the negative face of the stone placed right next to his own (Fig. 5.9.2). Like the photographs discussed in the section above, this photographic work emphasises the proximate relationship between the sculpture and its artist, but it also points to the fact that the sculpture, in and by itself, is an object abandoned by the artist.

Zorio displays his *Autoritratto* on the wall. His face is thus in an elevated position, at the height of the spectator's face, or above it.⁷⁵ Such a hanging complements the idea of the work as serving commemorative and celebratory functions. Boetti's presentations of *Autoritratto in negativo*, on the other hand, counteract attempts to elevate and commemorate the artist. On display for the first time in Boetti's solo exhibition "Shaman/Showman" in Milan, *Autoritratto in negativo* was placed among real river stones on the gallery floor. Admittedly, the other stones were of a smaller scale than the "reconstructed stone", but given their similar

⁷⁴ Regarding Zorio's work, I have not found reliable information about the number of versions, but images suggest that there are at least two different versions of this work. Regarding Boetti's work, Ammann's *Catologo generale* reports that either 3 or 7 versions of this sculpture existed. A listing in Boetti's notebook, offered to me in private e-mail correspondence with the Archivio Alighiero Boetti 22.11.2021, indicates that 7 versions of the work were made, or at least intended.

⁷⁵ Images suggest that the work is sometimes installed at the intersection between wall and ceiling.

shapes and colour nuances, Boetti's impressed face would have passed nearly unnoticed in the environment that made up the exhibition (Fig. 5.9.4). The same is true in reference to the sculpture's second public display, when exhibited among a number of other objects in Boetti's installation at "Arte povera più azioni povere" in Amalfi later that year (Fig. 5.9.4). In addition, Boetti's former wife, Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, recalls that the artist threw the sculpture into the river Po immediately after exhibiting it. To her, this act indicated the possibility that "a fisherman would glimpse it in the sparkling reflections of the water, like the face of God."⁷⁶ Giulia De Giorgi, on the other hand, has argued that in *Autoritratto in negativo* Boetti seeks to establish contact with the material he is working with, and concludes that "[t]he excavated stone is the sign of humanity in nature, it is the artist's intervention on reality."⁷⁷ In my opinion, this aspect of the sculpture is underlined by Boetti's act of throwing the 'stone' into the river. In lowering the stone that comprises his image into water, where it will probably dissolve in due course, Boetti does not promote the idea of *Autoritratto in negativo* as a sanctifying cultural object which preserves the artist's image for a cultural posterity, as the death mask associations suggest. Rather, the lowering act allows the artist (as trace, in sculpture) a direct encounter with and dis-appearance in nature; it opens up to "hiding, withdrawal, and self-cancellation" as Mark Godfrey puts it in his description of Boetti's work.⁷⁸

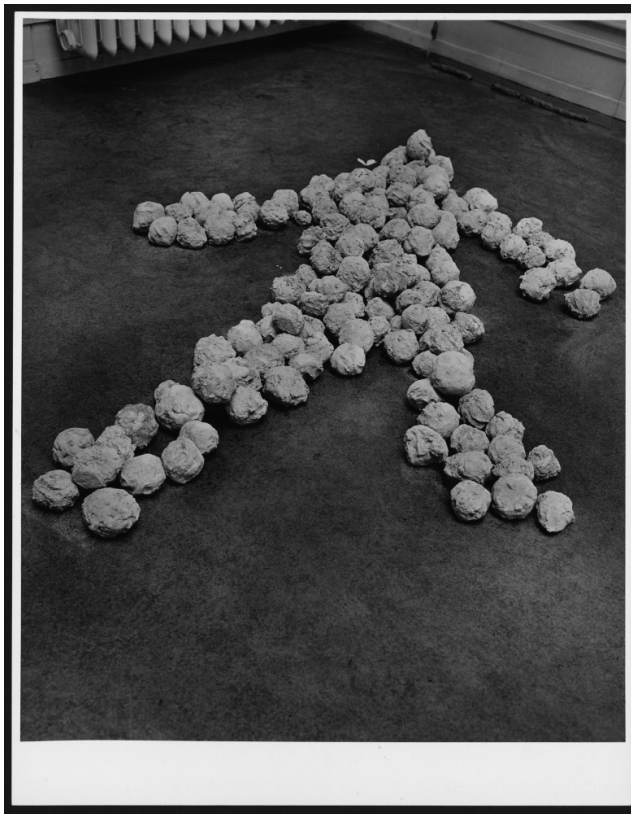
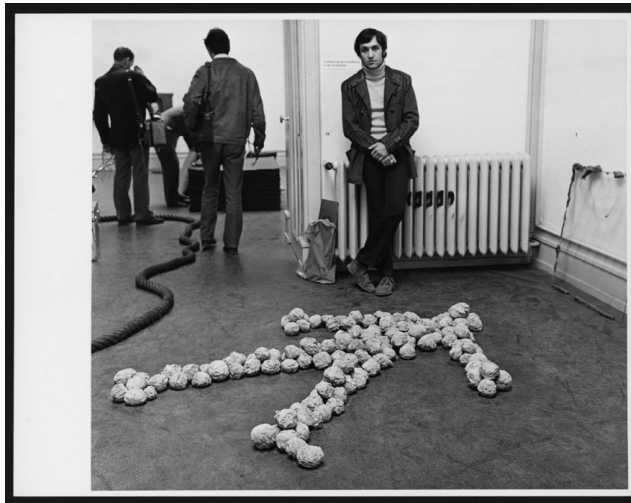
Boetti's production also include a sculpture that carries impressions of the artist's hands; *Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969* (Me Sunbathing in Turin on 19 January 1969). The work consists of 111 small lumps of fast-drying cement, arranged on the floor in the shape of a human being lying flat with arms and legs outstretched, and with a butterfly resting on its chest/shoulder (Figs. 5.10 – 5.11). Again, the human shape is quite indefinite, but in correspondence with the work's title, it is commonly regarded as a self-portrait. This is also supported by comments on the work's instalment process: Giovanni Lista reports that Boetti insisted on lying beside the sculpture when it was installed to ensure the figure resembled his measures as closely as possible, while Briony Fer claims that Boetti marked the outline of his own body with chalk on the floor before installing the sculpture within the contour.⁷⁹ However, the shape of the human body is not the prime element of self-portrayal in *Io che prendo il sole*.... This work's relation to the artist is marked in each of the cement balls, which are shaped by the pressure of Boetti's hands closing around them, preserving the impressions of his hands.

⁷⁶ See Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, *Alighiero e Boetti, Shaman/Showman* (Cologne: Walther König, 2003), 52.

⁷⁷ Giorgi, "Autoritratti di Boetti alla Galleria De Nieubourg", n.p. My translation.

⁷⁸ Mark Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2011), 73.

⁷⁹ Lista, *Arte Povera*, n.p.; Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line: Re-Making Art After Modernism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 181.



Above: Fig. 5.10. Alighiero Boetti with *Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969*, 1969. Exhibition view, “Live in Your Head. When Attitudes become Form”, Kunsthalle Bern, March 1969; Below: Fig. 5.11. Alighiero Boetti, *Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969*, 1969. 111 elements of hand-molded, quick-setting cement, butterfly, ca. 177 x 90 cm.

The traces of the artist's hand are also the main motif of Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra* (To Unroll One's Skin – stone) from 1971. For this work, Penone poured acid onto a stone he had collected from a riverbed, following which the stone corroded. However, the parts where grease had been transmitted to the stone from the artist's hand were spared, and his handprint was thus preserved on the stone's surface. Penone subsequently tossed the 'sculpture' back into the torrent, with the intention of letting the water fill the acid-induced furrows in the stone and "momentarily acquire [...] the pattern of his skin".⁸⁰ This act was documented in a series of three photographs by Paolo Mussat Sartor (Fig. 5.11.1), which is always exhibited beside the resurfaced stone itself (Fig. 5.11.2).

Like the two *Autoritratti* discussed above, the two works impressed by their artists' hands evoke practices that connote a strong presence in and hold over the object. For one, the fingerprint has long held the status as the emblematic mark of human identity, and served authenticating purposes. Consequently, the act of marking a work of art with the impression of one's own fingers may be compared to the act of signing a work – a highly encumbering act, which involves claiming ownership over the work and facilitating the attribution of the work to its producing artist.⁸¹ Moreover, the traces of the artist's hand relate to the artists' appearances claimed by expressionist-existentialist interpretations of post-war painting, in which traces left by artists on the canvas surface are found to represent them and provide access to their inner depths. In that sense, *Io che prendo il sole...* and *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra* appear less opposed to gestural expressionism and less purged of references to the producing artists than minimalist objects, whose machine-produced finish and "conveyor-belt" seriality leave the impression of being untouched by the artist's hand.

However, there are also reasons to question these associations between Boetti's and Penone's works and the author-itarian traditions tied to fingerprints and the touch of the artist's hand. A significant difference between the physical artist/work relation established by Boetti's and Penone's handprints and the physical artist/work relation proposed by the expressionist-existentialist understanding of the painted mark is that the latter is not based solely on direct transmission, but also on the symbolic investment in the physical mark, based on qualities like the stroke's 'temper' or 'intensity'. Like the body measures transferred to the works discussed in the previous section, the handprints left on the surfaces of Boetti's and Penone's works avoid qualities of this kind: they are contact images that merely distinguish between positive and negative form, and not loaded with qualities that enable them to point beyond themselves.

⁸⁰ Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 480.

⁸¹ See Chapter Three, p. 128 and further, for more on the signature's author-ising function.



Fig. 5.11.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra*, 1971. 3 b&w photographs with silver salts toned with selenium on baryta paper, stone; Fig. 5.11.2. Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra*, 1971. Exhibition view, “Penone: Rétrospective”, Centre Pompidou – Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris, April 2004.

Rather than exemplifying the invested touch, I find that the hand- and fingerprints in *Io che prendo il sole...* and potentially also *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra* are part of a general tendency among artists of the 1960s to question the value system that requires the authentication of artworks, and the idea that the artist’s subjectivity is invested in his gesture and in the physical marks it leaves. I have already mentioned Piero Manzoni as a main proponent of this critique, and a deconventionalisation of the fingerprint was one of his means in conducting it: in his series of “Impronte” – prints in which the artist’s enlarged or serialised fingerprints are the sole motif – the bodily signature becomes pure form, and in his “Uova” – boiled eggs prepared by the artist, signed with his fingerprint, and given to gallery visitors with the permission to devour – the authenticating function absurdly dissolves within the recipients’ digestive systems.⁸² As Benjamin Buchloh has pointed out, Lucio Fontana was Manzoni’s predecessor at this point: Fontana had signed paintings with thumbprints, an act read by Buchloh as “a sign of ostentatious negation” of the “expressionist and subjectivist attitudes”

⁸² Piero Manzoni, *Impronte* and *Impronta* (1960) and Piero Manzoni, *Consumazione dell’arte Dinamica del pubblico* *Divorare l’arte*, Galerie Köpcke, Copenhagen, June 1960 and Filmgiornale SEDI, Milan, July 1960. For the previous mention of Manzoni, see Chapter Three, p. 128.

upheld in post-war gestural painting.⁸³ Rather than attempting to claim the works as their property or expressing themselves by putting their identity mark on them, Boetti and Penone extend Fontana's and Manzoni's critical approach to the issue of authorship when turning the fingerprint into a 'motif' in their works.

Admittedly, Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra* has little of the irony that characterises Manzoni's work, and there are poetic elements that encourage allegorical readings in both Boetti's and Penone's works. These elements, however, refute rather than support the idea of the sculptures as encumbered by their artists. The butterfly on the sculpted artist's chest – a white cabbage butterfly – is, as Carlotta Sylos Calò remarks, commonly associated with the passage and/or renewal of the soul.⁸⁴ Given its symbolism, it arguably suggests a split between the artist's subjective or spiritual self, about to flee, and the material self that remains as/in the sculptural form. The work thus stages self-separation in a manner comparable to Prini's *Farmacarte*, as Friedemann Malsch described this work. This is also the case in Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra*. Like his "Alpi Marittime" works, Penone presents this action, which turns an element of nature into a sculptural form, in a sequence of photographs. With an even clearer narrative than the "Alpi Marittime" presentations, this sequence illustrates how the sculptural element relates to the artist, but also how they part. The exhibited stone, isolated within a vitrine, bears witness of the artist's withdrawal.

Parenthetically, it is worth mentioning that the Arte Povera 'catalogue' also comprise other sculptural works based on the same logic of intimacy/indexicality and release. Boetti's *Ghise (Boetti)* and *Ghise (ABoetti)*, both 1968, are based on the artist's use of his index finger to inscribe a piece of corrugated cardboard with his name. However, through the process of casting the cardboard in iron so that the name appears both in negative and positive form, Boetti stages the work's gradual release from the indexically marked original. The work thus involves a process of self-separation in which the artist is partly invested in, while also abandoning the work, like many of the sculptures discussed in this chapter. Jannis Kounellis's *Senza titolo* (Untitled), 1971, is another example. This work – consisting of steel letters corresponding to the artist's surname, pierced so that gas from an attached propane tank can seep out and be lit – does not have a comparable indexical relation to the artist. However, a photograph by Paolo Mussat Sartor relates to the work, depicting the artist igniting the letters, lighting up his name.

⁸³ Benjamin Buchloh, "Formalism and Historicity" [1977], in *Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 60–61.

⁸⁴ Carlotta Sylos Calò, "Identita e'alterita' negli Autoritratti di Alighiero Boetti", (unpublished manuscript, May 2010), 4, available at <https://www.academia.edu/7263243> (accessed 14.09.2021).

As many of the other photographs discussed here, Mussat Sartor's image of Kounellis underlines the connection between artist and work, but also evokes the sculpture's status as an object abandoned by the artist. It summons a contrast within the work itself, between the two forms through which the artist's name is materialised: the solid steel and the flickering flames. If inclined to allegory, one could argue that the lit work illustrates the intense, but also precarious presence of 'Kounellis' within it, while the steel letters represent how one part of the artist remains *as work* after the flames are extinguished. The relationship between photograph and sculpture indicates a similar schism, but without relying on the symbolism of materials.⁸⁵

If returning to my main examples, both Boetti and Penone also work against artistic encumbrances when letting the personal marks they leave on their sculptures meld with and/or dissolve into the material sphere. Penone's decision to throw the stone marked by his hand back into the river echoes Boetti's act when he allegedly threw his *Autoritratto in negativo* into the Po. While Penone's real stone is less likely to dissolve in water than Boetti's sand dust reconstruction, the lowering act provides Penone (again; as trace, in sculpture) an unremarkable appearance in the natural world. In Boetti's *Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969*, the grips of the artist's hand may seem overpowering since the clay lumps are deformed after being squeezed between the artist's fingers. In a symbolic sense, however, the artist's grips lose their strength by the fact that the small lumps – as Godfrey has pointed out – are reminiscent of "ossified snowballs".⁸⁶ Seeing them as snowballs, they are also likely to melt when exposed to the Turin sun announced in the work's title, and following this line of thought, the marks of the artist's hand will soon disseminate and meld with the material that carried them in a puddle on the floor. Although it requires/encourages more interpretative investment than the works in which the artists' impressions are literally lowered into water, this work can also be seen to hint at a disbelief in the artist's touch as marking and preserving his hold over his work, serving instead as a point of contact between artist and material world.

A final example of a bodily impressed Arte Povera sculpture is Marisa Merz' 1968 *Impronta* (Imprint). The work is a brick-formed clay sculpture from which the lower, central part is excavated, so that the little sculpture takes the appearance of a massive bridge (Fig. 5.12).

⁸⁵ The reason for the brevity of my discussion of these highly interesting works is that they combine the strategy of conceptual self-portraiture that I discussed in Chapter Three, by virtue of presenting the artists' names as their motifs, with the medium of sculpture, which is the topic of this chapter. In order to present Arte Povera's main strategies as clearly as possible, I did not make them key examples in any of the chapters.

⁸⁶ Mark Godfrey, "Giving time to time. Alighiero Boetti at Tate Modern 1", *Tate Etc*, No. 24, 2012, available at <http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/giving-time-time> (accessed 05.03.2021).



Top: Fig. 5.12. Marisa Merz, *Impronta*, 1968. Clay, pigment, copper, 16 x 23 x 15 cm; Below: Ill. 5.5. Marisa Merz with a pair of *Scarpette*, Galleria L'Attico, Rome, March 1975. Photograph by Claudio Abate.

While the clay was still wet, a number of prints – probably made by the artist’s thumb(s) – were impressed across the top of the bridge-like structure.⁸⁷ As if inducing the impression that someone has walked over the bridge, one of Merz’ *Scarpette* – small shoes knitted from nylon thread or, as in this case, copper wire – is placed on top of the sculpture. This separate element of *Impronta* preserves the form of the artist’s foot within it. The little shoes are stretchable and thus not of one specific size, and some were customized for the artist’s daughter while others were made for exhibition purposes alone, but it is widely acknowledged that Merz mainly knitted shoes of her own size, and that she actually wore them. As she puts it, “all the shoes I do fit me”.⁸⁸ The close relationship between the artist’s own body and the exhibited shoe-sculptures was manifested in her 1975 exhibition at L’Attico, in which a pair of *Scarpette* was hung below a window pane, at the very spot where Merz had rested her feet at night during the exhibition’s instalment period (Ill. 5.5).⁸⁹ Even if the artist is not a discernible part of *Impronta*, the sculpture records her former presence twice; her fingerprint is preserved in the contorted clay surface, while the shape of her foot is preserved by the copper shoe.

Like Boetti’s handprints in *Io che prende il sole...*, Merz’s impressions in *Impronta* immediately seem overpowering; the artist appears to have pressed down the clay and thus forced herself on the work’s material. However, the excavation through the lower part of the work, which makes the sculpture resemble a bridge, demonstrates that the material can bear the artist’s pressure. It is uncertain whether this excavation was made before or after the impressions, but when the impressions and the excavation occur together in the sculpture, the material is presented as resistant and powerful: it is not pushed down, rather it is the ground that carries the artist.

Zorio’s *Autoritratto*, Boetti’s *Autoritratto in negativo* and his *Io che prende il sole...*, Penone’s *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra* and Merz’s *Impronta* are all sculptures whose forms have (or mimic) a most intimate relationship with their artists. The proximity between artist and

⁸⁷ The Fondazione Merz cannot provide information on how Merz made the recessions on the sculpture’s surface but finds it probable that they were made with the thumb(s) (Luisa Borio, private e-mail correspondence, 26.11.2021).

⁸⁸ Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, “Lo specchio ardente – Intervista a Marisa Merz, Carla Accardi, Iole Freitas”, *DATA*, No. 18, September–October 1975, trans. Lucian Henry Comoy, quoted in *Marisa Merz: The Sky is a Great Space*, ed. Connie Butler (Los Angeles, CA/New York, NY: Hammer Museum and DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2017), 117.

⁸⁹ Marisa Merz, “Ad occhi chiusi gli occhi sono straordinariamente aperti”, L’Attico, Rome, opening 21 March 1975. See Sauzeau Boetti, “Lo specchio ardente”, 117; Teresa Kittler, “Marisa Merz: Actions, Interactions and Performative Sculpture”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 182–83. Also other works in this exhibition – as described in Christopher G. Bennett, “By Way of Declaration: The Art of Marisa Merz”, in *A proposito di Marisa Merz*, ed. Carolina Italiano (Rome/Milan: MAXXI/Mousse Publishing, 2011), 53; Sauzeau Boetti, “Lo specchio ardente”, 117–18; Butler, *Marisa Merz: The Sky is a Great Space*, 50, for instance – related to the artists body in ways that are interesting in the context of this chapter, and particularly within the section “Transferring Body Measurements”. I have not included them in my discussion, because they exceed the timeframe of this study.

work that they all (pretend to) result from counters the minimalist strategy of disencumbering and Potts's understanding of Arte Povera as an art of disencumbered objects, which are based on the artist's detachment from the work. However, it is worth noting that proximity between artist and work does not necessarily lead to the artists encumbering their works with author-ity. On the contrary, Didi-Huberman argues that the direct imprint (*empreinte/Abdruck*) was embraced by twentieth-century artists as a main strategy to refute classical representation. This is because imprints subvert the "appropriate distance" essential to visual representation.⁹⁰ Didi-Huberman here refers to the optically required distance between a represented object and the artist, who needs to step back in order to oversee the object before representing it. However, I have discussed in Chapter Two how distance between the represented object and the representing form is a fundamental premise to representation more generally, and a key factor in upholding the status of the producing artist as the origin *behind* his work. Expressionist-existentialist theories of art – despite their emphasis on the artist's physical relation to the canvas surface by virtue of the painted mark – uphold such an "appropriate distance" between represented and representing entity when claiming that a simple stroke points symbolically to the personality of the artist behind. Minimalist artists also uphold this distance as they withdraw from the work, and let it stand forth with a straight-forward, 'literalist' presence. By replacing symbolism and detachment with physical immediacy, on the other hand, Arte Povera's impressed sculptures collapse the distance between represented and representing form.

Other aspects of Arte Povera's impressed sculptures also problematise the idea that proximity between artist and work equals an author-itarian relation. By displaying the rear side of the mask, Boetti's *Autoritratto in negativo* discloses the imprint as a binary form of representation that differentiate between positive and negative form, presence and absence, rather than pointing to something beyond itself. As Boetti's *Io che prende il sole...* indicates by virtue of the butterfly, and Penone demonstrates through the photographs documenting *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra*, the artists are about to or have already abandoned the objects that preserve physical traces of their presence. The sculptures' actual giving over to the water in *Autoritratto in negativo* and *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra*, and the potential turn to water in *Io che prende il sole...*, suggest that the impressed sculptures are means through which the artists can approach and become part of the material work/world, rather than objects through which the artists seek to manifest their take on the work/world. Finally, as demonstrated by the material resistance in *Impronta*, the artist is not a force superior to the forces of the material,

⁹⁰ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ähnlichkeit und Berührung: Archäologie, Anachronismus und Modernität des Abdrucks* (Cologne: DuMont, 1999), 191.

but one grounded in/by materiality. These various aspects contribute to release the impressed sculptures from what one, with Potts, can refer to as the encumbrances of the artist, and to position the sculptures within an artistic tradition that questions rather than confirms ideas of the artwork as an authentic expression of its artist subjectivity.

Sculptural Enclosures

The third category of artist's appearances in Arte Povera's sculptures combines the previous two: we are dealing with sculptures that are based on the artists' body measures and that echo the artists' whole bodies as negative spaces within their overall form – that is, with sculptures that are made to enclose the artists' bodies.

One example of such a sculpture is Luciano Fabro's 1966 *In cubo* (In Cube) – a translucent cubic volume measuring 178 x 178 x 178 cm, composed of five panels of unprepared canvas fastened on the four sides and on the top of a wooden framework (Fig. 5.13.1). Fabro has once stated that a more correct title for this work would be *In cubo per* (In Cube For) because “this work was made for everyone else and not for me.”⁹¹ When exhibiting the work – or a replica, in more recent shows – the artist also allows visitors to lift the light cube and enter it through the open base. As a result, critical commentary tends to present the sculptural volume as a universal and inclusive space. Catherine Grenier, for instance, states that *In cubo* displays “dimensions that could be those of the spectator”, indicating it is a form that relates to and belongs to anyone.⁹²

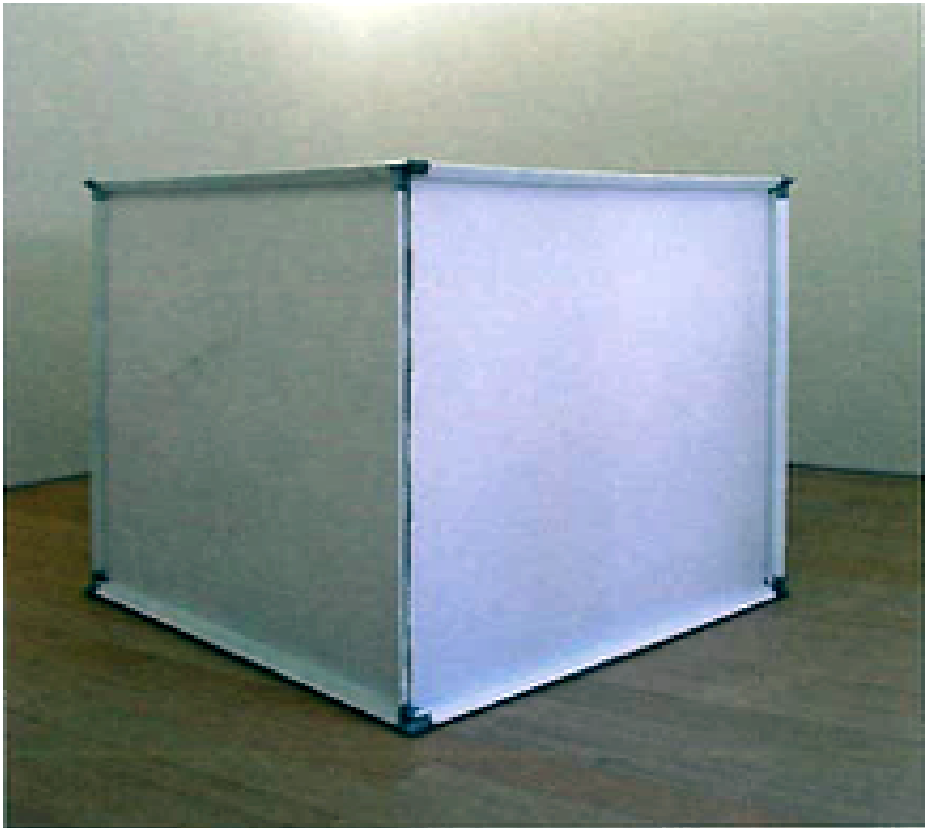
In further discussions of the work, however, Fabro describes his aim as that of creating “an environment in which every detail of one's own person reveals itself”, explaining that in order to experience such a revelation, every person will need a customised sculpture – a sculpture “ad personam”.⁹³ Only if the top of a person's head is about to touch the interior upper plane does the cube confirm the inhabitant's body in such a way that he finds the calm required for a true experience of himself. As Fabro puts it, “even a person who suffers from claustrophobia does not suffer from being enclosed if the cube fits them”, while he will feel hampered, constrained or like losing control if the cube is too small or too big for him.⁹⁴ Therefore, everyone should have their own cube based on their own body measurements –

⁹¹ Germano Celant, “Conversation with Luciano Fabro, 1971”, in *Luciano Fabro*, ed. Philippe Bidaine (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1996), 305.

⁹² Catherine Grenier, “Dwelling in Space”, in Bidaine, *Luciano Fabro*, 293.

⁹³ Luciano Fabro, *Attaccapanni* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editors, 1978), 24–25.

⁹⁴ Celant, “Conversation with Luciano Fabro, 1971”, 305–06.



Top: Fig. 5.13.1. Luciano Fabro, *In cubo*, 1966. Wood, canvas, 178 x 178 x 178 cm; Below left: Fig. 5.13.2. Luciano Fabro entering *In cubo*. Below, right: Fig. 5.13.3. Luciano Fabro inside *In cubo*. Photograph presented in a Galleria Notizie invitation folder for the exhibition "Opere di Luciano Fabro", January 1967.

indeed, Fabro made a small version adjusted to the body of critic Carla Lonzi.⁹⁵ The first cube, however, echoes and exists for the body of its artist, for Fabro himself.

The cube appears in a series of photographs by Giovanni Ricci, some of which were printed on the poster-format catalogue for Fabro's 1967 solo exhibition at Galleria Notizie, where it had its first display (Figs. 5.13.2–5.13.3). Here, a man is seen entering and inhabiting the cube, stretching his arms out and demonstrating how his body fits perfectly within its centre.⁹⁶ By virtue of his poses, the man has been compared to Leonardo Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, a comparison that substantiates the notion of the cube as a universal form.⁹⁷ However, the figure seen inside *In Cubo* is not an anonymous, archetypal man, it is the artist himself. In that sense, the photographs underline that *In Cubo* is a cabinet customised for its artist's body.

Zorio's 1969 *Cerchio di terracotta* (Circle of Clay) is another example. This sculptural work consists of a terracotta circle placed bluntly on the floor, with a lump of tin smelt on a circular crystal plate suspended from the ceiling above the circle's centre (Fig. 5.14.1). Little about this work suggests an artist's appearance; the striking feature is its exposure of contrasting base materials. The heterogeneity of the natural materials, in terms of colour, texture, size and form, gives the work a very different appearance than the typical minimalist object, often monochrome and uniform, or based on regular seriality. Zorio's work also contrasts with the machine-like finish of much minimalist art: numerous fingermarks on the terracotta reveal how the circle is formed by the artist's hands, and hints of an intimate relationship between the work and its artist.

A photographic component relates to *Cerchio di terracotta*: in a rare black and white photograph, Zorio is sitting with bent knees within the sculpture, stretching his arm out towards the circle that surrounds him (Fig. 5.14.2). The photograph suggests that the circle on the floor was formed by the artist's hand on the wet clay, while sitting in its centre and slowly rotating. It reveals that the diameter of the circle equals the length of the artist's arm span with hands bent, and that the sculptural form is perfectly adjusted to his body. In the photograph, the glass plate with tin smelt rests on top of Zorio's head, underlining the relation between this element of the sculptural work and the artist's body. This relation is preserved when the work is exhibited: the glass plate is suspended at about 170 cm above ground, corresponding to Zorio's

⁹⁵ Luciano Fabro, *In cubo per Carla Lonzi* (alternate title: *In cubo misura Carla Lonzi*) 1966. Wood, Canvas, 165 x 165 x 165 cm. Collection of the artist.

⁹⁶ For an image of one whole side of the catalogue poster, see Giulio Paolini, *Per L.F.* (1967) – a photographic work that depicts Paolini partly hidden behind Fabro's poster.

⁹⁷ Joel de Sanna, "Le nous artistique de Fabro", in Bidaine, *Luciano Fabro*, 48; Conte, "Measure and Autobiography in Arte Povera", 88. Conte remarks that the Vitruvian pose is recurring in other works by Fabro, such as the 1963–64 sculpture *Raccordo anulare*.



Fig. 5.14.2.
Image protected by Copyright.

See for instance:
Masero et al., *Gilberto Zorio*, 32.

Top: Fig. 5.14.1. Gilberto Zorio, *Cerchio di terracotta*, 1969. Terracotta, lead, glass, aluminium, 185 x 180 cm;
Below: Fig. 5.14.2. Gilberto Zorio inside in *Cerchio di terracotta*, 1969.

own height when standing up.⁹⁸ As the photograph announces, the sculptural work takes its form after the artist's body.

Zorio has pointed out that *Cerchio di terracotta* is not reserved for him. He states that it is possible for others to enter the work and thus take his place at its centre, but he also admits that “no one has ever done it”.⁹⁹ Whereas Fabro's *In Cubo* is inhabitable for anyone in practice – that is, in an exhibition setting – but in principle reserved for Fabro himself, Zorio's work relates in an inverse way to the artist: the sculpture's centre may not be reserved for the artist himself, but in practice, he still occupies it.

Another sculpture-based Arte Povera work built up around the artist's body is Penone's *Alpi Marittime. La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello* (Maritime Alps. My Height, the Length of My Arms, My Girth in a Brook). For this work, the artist made with cement slabs a frame measuring 175 x 152 x 30 cm, which he subsequently lowered into a stream bed (Fig. 5.15.1).

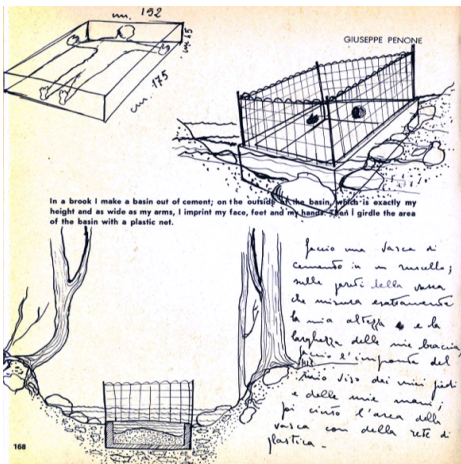
As part of the “Alpi Marittime” series, *La mia altezza...* was presented in Penone's section of Celant's *Art Povera* publication. As opposed to the other works of the series, however, the current work is not presented by photographs, but through drawings and text. In the caption, Penone announces that the simple, geometric cement basin “is exactly my height and as wide as my arms”.¹⁰⁰ This is also confirmed by one of the sketches, which illustrate how the construction relates to the artist's body; the 175 cm length corresponds to Penone's height, and the 152 cm width corresponds to that of his his outstretched arms (Fig. 5.15.2). As the work's title makes clear, the frame's height – which is listed as 45 cm in the sketch but reduced to 30 cm in the final construction – corresponds to the artist's girth, so that the sides of the frame fully enclose his body.¹⁰¹ The relation is further underlined in a photographic presentation of the work, in which Penone himself is seen lying within the frame (Fig. 5.15.3). This photograph also makes clear that Penone's frame – as opposed to Fabro and Zorio's works, which relate approximately to the bodies of their respective artists and arguably also fit other

⁹⁸ Note that measures given for this sculpture slightly vary across different sources. In the exhibition catalogue for “Gilberto Zorio”, Milton Keynes Gallery, October 2008, for instance, *Cerchio di terracotta* is listed as 170 x 160 cm, while Tate lists the work as measuring 185 x 180 cm. See Emma Dean and Michael Stanley, eds., *Gilberto Zorio* (Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Gallery, 2008), 16; and “Gilberto Zorio. Terracotta Circle. 1969”, available at <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/zorio-terracotta-circle-t12951> (accessed 16.11.2021). The discrepancies may be due to the difference between internal vs. external measures.

⁹⁹ Germano Celant, “Gilberto Zorio in conversation with Germano Celant. Milan, 30 September 2007”, in Celant, *Gilberto Zorio: Torri Stella/Star Towers*, 51.

¹⁰⁰ Celant, *Art Povera*, 168.

¹⁰¹ Archivio Penone cannot state with exactness why the frame's height was reduced. I suggest that the frame was not yet planned to correspond to the artist's girth when the sketch was drawn, since no mention of this specific correspondence occurs in the text lines in *Art Povera*.



Top: Fig. 5.15.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime – La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello*, 1968. Frame of cement slabs, 175 x 152 x 30 cm, installed in riverbed. Photograph on paper, 40 x 40 cm; Middle: Fig. 5.15.2. Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime – La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello*, 1968, as presented in Germano Celant's *Art Povera*, 1969. Below: Fig. 5.15.3. Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime – La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello*, 1968. Photograph, 40 x 40 cm.

people of their size – is marked in ways that allow no exchange of inhabitant. On the interior sides of the frame’s cement slabs are cavities, tracing in negative the form of Penone’s head and his extremities: as he puts it in the *Art Povera* text, “I imprint my face, feet and my hands”.¹⁰² Penone has made an enclosing structure that is absolutely reserved for the artist’s own body.

In another text associated with *La mia altezza*, which harmonises particularly well with the photograph of the artist within the sculpture, Penone writes that “[t]o make a sculpture, the sculptor must settle down on the ground”, so that “stretched out, he can concentrate his attention and the forces upon his body which, pressed against the earth, allows him to see and feel earthly things”. After lying there for a while,

the cold of the earth cuts him in half and enables him to see quite clearly and precisely the point which divides the part of his body which belongs to the emptiness of the sky and the part which belongs to the fullness of the earth. This is when sculpture comes into being.¹⁰³

Penone’s words indicate that the process of making a sculpture involves a dividing process, in which the artist unites with his sculpture as earthly body, while spiritually ascending from it. As Elizabeth Mangini notes after commenting on the text, Penone “identified a split between the mind (indicated here as that part of the body belonging to the sky) and the body (belonging to the earth) as a fundamental dialectic of making sculpture.”¹⁰⁴ If that is the case, the act of investing his body in the sculptural form is tied to a self-separation like the one pointed out in reference to Prini’s *Farmacarte*, Boetti’s *Io che prendo il sole...*, and the photographs that accompany other Arte Povera sculptures, in which the artists’ bodily forms are absorbed by the sculptural materials that retains their physical traces, while the artist as spirit, soul or subjectivity escapes them.

When Penone subsequently lowered the cement frame into a stream bed, it was empty, but still echoing the shape of the artist’s body. Of the latter act, Lara Conte has remarked that “[t]he water, flowing past, filled the void left by the body and made its trace fluid”, and she thus sees in the work a reference to “the Heraclitan passage of life”.¹⁰⁵ The Heraclitan idea that everything is connected in a constant process of becoming also applies to the other Arte Povera

¹⁰² Celant, *Art Povera*, 168.

¹⁰³ Giuseppe Penone, “Untitled text (1968)”, in Maraniello and Watkins, *Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968–2008*, 56.

¹⁰⁴ Elizabeth Mangini, “Feeling one’s way through a cultural chiasm. Touch in Giuseppe Penone’s Sculpture c. 1968”, in *New Perspectives on Italian Culture, Vol. 2. The Arts and History*, ed. Graziella Parati (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 163–64.

¹⁰⁵ Conte, “Measure and Autobiography in Arte Povera”, 94.

sculptures in which traces of the artist's bodies are immersed and/or suggested to dissolve in water, and Conte's reference substantiates the idea that these works establish proximity between artist and sculptural material not in order to encumber the work, but in order to align the artists with the material world and make them part of it.

A final example of a sculptural work that encloses its artist's body is Fabro's 1968–73 *Lo spirato* (The Expired One). This rarely exhibited marble sculpture – which draws on the baroque tradition rather than minimalist aesthetics – is formed as a bed, in which the lower part of a human body is clearly discernible underneath draped sheets. However, if tracing the form of the body towards the upper part of its torso, the voluminous indications decrease, and where the sheets end at shoulder height, no sculpted head emerges. Instead, a negative imprint of the skull is indicated in the marble pillow that forms part of the arrangement (Fig. 5.16.1).

Like the (seemingly) impressed *autoritratti* by Zorio and Boetti, *Lo spirato* evokes the theme of death. Unsurprisingly, the work is commonly found to represent a deathbed; Morad Montazami, for instance, relates it to a tradition of funerary sculpture dating back to the Middle Ages.¹⁰⁶ Frances Morris has argued against interpretations of *Lo spirato* as an image of death, but still sees the work as representing a transition from the physical to the spiritual. For her, the work is “an image of the transformation of the body into something else: of body into spirit, of matter into void and of past into present.”¹⁰⁷ Similarly, for Véronique Goudinoux, *Lo spirato* presents “a transformation, of the passage from a form to a non-form”.¹⁰⁸ Whether emphasising the topic of death or not, comments that find the work to thematise transition from physical presence to spirituality, immateriality or absence are consistent with Fabro's own statements. In various interviews he has claimed – contrary to the death theme – that the work in question “is the image of life, of the transformation of matter into spirit”,¹⁰⁹ and that “the body under the cloth has disappeared (*sparito*), as though it was exhaled (*spirato*), or even inhaled (*spirato fuori*), with only the sheet remaining as though it was suspended.”¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the

¹⁰⁶ Morad Montazami, “Body, Mould Trace: The Figurability of Experience in Luciano Fabro's work”, in *Luciano Fabro. Habiter l'autonomie/Inhabiting Autonomy*, ed. Bernard Rüdiger (Lyon: Éditions École nationale des beaux-arts de Lyon, 2010), 237–38.

¹⁰⁷ Frances Morris, “Luciano Fabro: In virtue of References”, in *Luciano Fabro*, eds. Luciano Fabro and Frances Morris (London: Tate Gallery publishing, 1997), 8.

¹⁰⁸ Véronique Goudinoux, “Luciano Fabro. Du corps comme instrument”, *Les cahiers du Musée d'art moderne*, No. 47, Spring 1994, 109. My translation.

¹⁰⁹ Fabro's statement in Jan Braet, “Jan Braet spreekt met Luciano Fabro”, in Jan Braet, Luciano Fabro and Arturo Martini, *Na de regen gaat een bloem open*, (Antwerp: Openluchtmuseum Middelheim, 1994), 89, quoted in Sharon Hecker, “I Represent the Encumbrance of the Object in the Vanity of Ideology. The Expired One”, in *Luciano Fabro*, ed. Silvia Fabro (Milan: Galleria Christian Stein, 2017), 86.

¹¹⁰ Fabro's statement in Luciano Fabro and Achille Bonita Oliva, “Interview with Achille Bonita Oliva (Rome, 1977)”, in *Dialoghi d'artista. Incontri con l'arte contemporanea 1970/1984*, ed. Achille Bonita Oliva (Milan: Electa, 1984), quoted in Montazami, “Body, Mould Trace”, 235.



Top: Fig. 5.16.1. Luciano Fabro, *Lo Spirato*, 1968–73. Pavonazzo marble, 190 x 90 cm; Middle: Fig. 5.16.2. Luciano Fabro, *Lo spirato, primo gesso*, 1968. Photograph by Paolo Mussat Sartor; Below: Figs. 5.16.3–5.16.4. Luciano Fabro, *Studi per Lo spirato (Studies for Lo Spirato)*, 1973. Photographs by Giovanni Ricci, manipulated by Luciano Fabro. 6 elements, each 69.5 x 50 cm / 50 x 60.5 cm (Details).



comments are consistent with a phrase Fabro connects to *Lo spirato*, reading *Dal pieno al vuoto senza soluzione di continuità* (From plenitude to emptiness without any solution of continuity).¹¹¹ The phrase is enigmatic, but seems to hint at a transformation from the material to the immaterial or spiritual. All of these discursive supplements to the work suggest that *Lo spirato* presents a negative image of a physical body, and that the sculpture is a material entity from which a spirit has ascended, or “expired”. However, it is worth noting that when *Lo spirato* is presented in a catalogue from 1986, Fabro’s latter phrase is – consciously or not – turned on its head, so as to read “[f]rom void to fullness without interruption”.¹¹² Inverted, it comes to describe a becoming-physical rather than, or in addition to, a transition towards the immaterial. This inverted statement is more consistent with the inscription Fabro etched into the bottom of *Lo spirato*, which also served as the work’s original title: *Io rappresento l’ingombro del’oggetto nella vanità dell’ideologia* (I represent the encumbrance of the object in the vanity of ideology).¹¹³ This inscription is equally enigmatic, but it does seem to value the physical aspect of the work, and it may indicate that the sculpture physically preserves the body it once enclosed, pointing to the lingering adherence of the body to the work.

The proximity between the body and the sculpture in *Lo spirato* is highlighted by Montazami, who stresses how a number of plaster casts are part of the process leading up to the final marble work. Despite the facts that the human form is but vaguely indicated in *Lo spirato*, and that Fabro has explicitly rejected any identification between himself and the sculpted body, the production process that Montazami emphasises suggests an intimate relationship between artist and sculpture.¹¹⁴ According to Montazami, Fabro placed himself “several times under the sheet”, and thus “acclimated his body to the plaster coating covering it”, in “repeated attempts [...] to obtain the right imprint of his body”.¹¹⁵ Fabro’s work is not based on the same kind of physical encounter between the artist’s body and the sculptural material as the impressed works discussed above (seemingly) are, since the final marble version is modelled after the plaster

¹¹¹ There exists some confusion regarding the phrase’s relation to the sculpture. It is sometimes claimed to be the work’s title, etched on the sculpture’s bottom. However, Sharon Hecker contends that this is an error for which Joel de Sanna is responsible, and makes clear that the phrase first appeared in the 1978 presentation of *Lo spirato* in Fabro, *Attaccapanni*, 115. See Hecker, “I Represent the Encumbrance of the Object...”, 86 and 90 n. 13. There are variations in translation of the phrase, the one I use is from Montazami, “Body, Mould Trace”, 235.

¹¹² See Luciano Fabro, *Luciano Fabro: Works 1963–1986* (Edinburgh: The Fruitmarket Gallery/Umberto Allemandi & C, 1987), 171. The section in which the phrase appears is titled “Notes on Images, by Luciano Fabro”, but the inversion may very well be a slip for which the unnamed editors/translators of the catalogue are responsible.

¹¹³ According to Hecker, *Lo Spirato* was a title given to the work at a later point, in sale shares from 1974. See Hecker, “I Represent the Encumbrance of the Object...”, 83, 86 and 90 n. 2.

¹¹⁴ Hecker, “I Represent the Encumbrance of the Object...”, 86, with reference to Luciano Fabro, Joao Fernandez and Margit Rowell, *Luciano Fabro* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2015), 81.

¹¹⁵ Montazami, “Body, Mould Trace”, 238.

casts, rather than cast directly from them. Neither is Fabro's solid stone sculpture formed around the artist's body, like *In Cubo*, *Cerchio di terracotta* and *La mia altezza* are. Nevertheless, Montazami argues that the sculpture is based on a physical relationship to its artist, comparable to the direct artist/work relation established by bodily impressions, and thus speaks of *Lo spirato* as offering an "experience of incarnation" in which "the sculptor [is] entering the sculpture" in order to experience for himself "the experience of taking shape".¹¹⁶

Paolo Mussat Sartor's photograph of the first plaster cast hints at the relationship between the sculpture and the artist, since the silhouette of Fabro's body is seen on the left side, as if framing the sculpture (Fig. 5.16.2). Moreover, the idea that *Lo spirato* is shaped directly after the artist's body is supported by Didi-Huberman's choice to include Fabro's work in the exhibition "L'empreinte" (The Imprint), organised at the Centre Pompidou in 1997. Here, the work was represented by *Studi per Lo Spirato* (Studies for *Lo Spirato*), a constellation of six black and white photographs/photomontages taken in studio in the early 1970s and published in Fabro's 1978 publication *Attaccapanni*.¹¹⁷ The photographed scene has the same set-up as the sculpture: on a newspaper-clad floor lies a mattress with a pillow and a sheet on top. Three photographs are manipulated and share the sculpture's mystery of alternating bodily presence and absence: in the folds and draperies of the sheets, the volume of a body is indicated, but where the sheets end and an identifiable face is expected, there is nothing but an empty pillow (Fig. 5.16.3). The remaining photographs of the series correspond accurately to the ones just described, with the crucial exception that the artist has entered the scene: they depict Fabro while lying on his back on top of the mattress. His body, with the two arms resting along its sides, is tucked in the white bedsheets from the naked chest down (Fig. 5.16.4). The photographs do not document the parts of the production process that involves casting, but they illustrate a line of transpositions leading from the enclosed artist's body, by way of the empty enclosure, to the marble sculpture. They suggest that the body enclosed by the sculpture's marble sheets – which echo those of the photographs – is that of the artist himself, and that the solid sculptural volume is a container built up around the artist's body on the basis of (transferred) physical contact.

Given the intimate relation between the artist and the sculpture, and the themes of embodiment and ascendancy that are generally ascribed to the work and illustrated by the photographs that relate to it, *Lo spirato* also bear witness of self-separation. The artist leaves his bodily self – or part of it – with the sculpture, while abandoning it as subject or spirit. What

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 236 and 238.

¹¹⁷ Fabro, *Attaccapanni*, 115.

the commentary on *Lo spirato* demonstrates particularly well is that this abandonment does not necessarily mean that the sculpture is dead and passive matter. As Sharon Hecker underlines, the Italian ‘*spirare*’ from which the work has its title, while connoting death also “alludes to exhalation, emanation, and diffusion, to the idea of something that is liberated and moves continuously like the wind and breath.”¹¹⁸ She thus opens up to the possibility that the abandoned sculpture may have a potential for life, for taking on an independent existence. Montazami, for his part, emphasises in his essay on *Lo spirato* how works based on the technique of imprinting/impression releases from the artist’s hand and gains autonomy, as an ‘automaton’.¹¹⁹ These statements are compatible with Fabro’s own ideas of the draped sheets as ‘suspended’ and of the sculpture as ‘an image of life’, of matter transformed into spirit. In contrast to minimalist works, which are found to manifest with the independent presence of a person because every trace of the artist’s image and touch is removed, this work may gain independency because the trace of the artist it once enclosed also testifies to his retraction, as the photographs that aligns the artist’s presence and absence from the scene also does.

Excepting *Lo spirato*, Arte Povera’s enclosing sculptures are more or less geometric forms. By virtue of the conical shape implied in Zorio’s *Cerchio di terracotta*, the rectangular cement frame in Penone’s *La mia altezza...* and the cubic form of Fabro’s *In Cubo*, in particular, the sculptures arguably relate to the ideal of abstraction, which is emphasised in minimalist aesthetics.¹²⁰ However, more defining traits – like the use of materials such as clay, glass, tin, cement, fabric and marble, the impressions left on the works’ surfaces, and their enigmatic titles – immediately separate the enclosing sculptures from the more anaemic objects of American minimalism. Moreover, there is a disclosed – or, as in *Lo spirato*, an openly announced – aspect of anthropomorphism in the enclosing sculptures. Indeed, these works display the qualities that Fried finds anthropomorphic in the abstracted forms of minimalist sculpture more forcefully than the minimalist objects themselves do. For one, the enclosing sculptures are of a human scale, and not only in the sense that their size lodges somewhere between the monument and the object, and thus “compares fairly closely with that of the human body”.¹²¹ Rather, the dimensions of the enclosed sculptures are determined by the specific bodies of the producing artists. Secondly, the fact that a seemingly “non-relational, unified and wholistic” object like *In*

¹¹⁸ Hecker, “I Represent the Encumbrance of the Object...”, 86.

¹¹⁹ Montazami, “Body, Mould Trace”, 238.

¹²⁰ For a comparison between Fabro’s *In Cubo* and Robert Smithson’s cubic works, emphasising their differences, see Philippe Louis Rousseau, “Why Luciano Fabro isn’t Robert Smithson”, in Rüdiger, *Luciano Fabro. Habiter l’autonomie/Inhabiting Autonomy*.

¹²¹ Fried, “Art and Objecthood”, 155–56, for all quotes in this paragraph.

Cubo adopts its form from a human being illustrates Fried's point that "the literalist predilection for symmetry" has its base in (human) nature rather than abstract principles. Finally, all of the works – and this also goes for *Lo spirato*, if thinking of this solid mass as preserving within itself the void left after the artist's withdrawal – are empty containers, and thus display the quality Fried describes as "almost blatantly anthropomorphic" – hollowness.

However, there are important differences between Fried's use of the term 'hollowness', and the negative spaces of Arte Povera's enclosures. To Fried, it is the absolute distinction drawn up between an outer surface and a closed-off inner kernel, that makes minimalist objects anthropomorphic. He implies that there is a disturbing distance or discrepancy between the appearance and the essence of human beings, and that minimalist objects raise a comparable unease concerning the degree to which the surface is representative of what is hidden behind it. In Arte Povera's sculptural enclosures, there is no comparable distinction between the object's inside and its outside. For one, the sculptures' insides are not hidden from the beholders' view: Zorio's and Penone's works are open structures, and if *In cubo* seems closed, Fabro explicitly invites visitors to enter. What is more, the relationship between outside and inside in these sculptures is *continuous*: the outer forms are given from the inside, as extensions of the bodily forms that once inhabited them. This is implied by Fabro when announcing that the aim of *In Cubo* was to make an environment that enhances the inhabitant's attention to and awareness of himself. Fabro speaks of a tension between the sculptural structure and the inhabiting body and finds that a structure of the right size and shape *confirms* its habitant. The sculptures' inner kernels, then, are not in conflict with their outer appearance. Rather, one could argue that the artists' physical forms are transferred to the sculptures' overall structures, which reveal the inner on the outside, and thus offer neither representational duality nor representational distance.

Since the enclosing sculptures extend their artists' bodily forms, and thus keep the artists' presence in suspension, these sculptures seemingly enforce the artists' hold over their works. However, the sculptures also openly announce the artists' current absence. The shift from presence to absence is best illustrated by *Lo spirato*, in which Fabro's body raises beneath the marble sheets and impresses the marble pillow, but disappears into the air, and in Penone's *La mia altezza...*, which contains impressions of the artist's body parts, but no actual body between these traces. The absence of the artist is also demonstrated for the gallery visitors who tips *In Cubo* over and finds nothing but an empty space. In *Cerchio di terracotta*, the sculpture's relation to the artist is best illustrated by the photograph that documents the artist inside his work: like the photographs published and/or exhibited with the other enclosed sculptures, this

image serves to establish a narrative around the sculptural work – a contrast between a past moment, when the artist was physically present with/in his sculpture, and a current now, in which the artist has gone and left the sculpture to itself.

Amicable Presences

In a number of statements American minimalist artists insist on removing the(ir) image and on eliminating physical traces of the production process from their works. Given this strategy of detachment, minimalist objects tend to be seen as liberated from artists' encumbrances, as exemplified by Alex Potts's brief remarks in the article "Disencumbered Objects". Potts finds a similar strategy in Arte Povera, but the sculptural works I have presented here offer the exact opposite: the artists transfer their own measures to these sculptures, physically impress their bodily features on the sculptural material, and combine these strategies by letting the sculptural forms enclose their own bodies. As a result, various forms of indexical relations are established between the artists' and the sculptural bodies.

The Arte Povera sculptures discussed here can be described as *automorphic* rather than anthropomorphic. The 'auto' of this term – like in the term 'autobiography' and the Italian '*autoritratto*' – acknowledges that the sculptures' forms stem from and evoke the bodies of the specific, producing artists, rather than human bodies in general, as anthropomorphic images do. From Potts's perspective, where 'disencumbering' implies artists' detachment, and from the perspective of minimalist artists, who require anti-anthropomorphism to achieve 'radical abstraction', the automorphism of Arte Povera's sculptures is likely to be dismissed as an intensified subcategory of anthropomorphism. Not only are the art objects burdened with references to humankind – their forms are directly dictated by the corporeal forms of their originators. In that sense, Arte Povera artists' relationships to their sculptures seem to fail when it comes to the works' liberation from artists' encumbrances.

Things look differently, however, when we take into consideration how Arte Povera's automorphic sculptures relate to photography – the indexical art *par excellence*. The sculptures are accompanied or supplemented by photographs, and one specific function of these photographs is to shed light on the correspondence between the photographic medium's way of representing, and the sculptures' way of pointing to their referents. The sculptures establish relationships between artist and work that tend to be as intimate and immediate as the relationship established by physical contact between the photographed object and the photographic paper in a photogram, or by the mediating light in other photographs. In Barthes's

reflections on photography, the intimate relationship between the photograph and its object is foregrounded, but he does not speak of this relationship as representative, encumbering or authoritarian. On the contrary, he introduces a number of arguments that counter the idea that a photograph answers to its object. My claim is that these arguments also apply to Arte Povera's 'voluminous photographs', that is, to the sculptures in which the artists themselves are the 'photographed' or indexically referenced 'objects'.

In his early texts on photography, Barthes emphasises how the medium involves the reduction – if not abolishment – of artistic investments in the work, arguing that the photograph does not in the same sense as traditional artistic images have *style* as a mediating layer between itself and its object. He acknowledges that photography “involves a certain arrangement of the scene” in terms of “framing, reduction, flattening”, as well as changes of proportion and colour, but underlines that such arrangements entail no *transformation* of the photographed object/scene.¹²² In *Camera Lucida* Barthes also posits that photography is not really mediated, or, at least, that its mediation is invisible. Its referent, he states, is not “encumbered [...] by the way in which the object is simulated.”¹²³ To Barthes, the purely denotational aspect of the photographic image establishes a confirming relationship to its object, but it does not tell anything about the object it depicts. All that the photographic indexicality itself attests to is that “someone has seen the referent (even if it is a matter of objects)”, and thus the simple fact that the referent has existed, while it fails to – or abstains from – revealing or commenting on the photographed object's qualities or essence.¹²⁴

Leaning on Barthes's notion that photography objectively denotes, Rosalind Krauss suggests that the use of indexical techniques in art after 1970 often “demands that the work be viewed as a deliberate short-circuiting of issues of style.”¹²⁵ This is adequate also for Arte Povera's automorphic sculptures: in my examples, the artists' appearances are based on quantitative measurements rather than subjective qualities, the artists' body measures replace informed artistic decisions about the sculptural form, and the invested brush stroke is abandoned in favour of mere impressions of body parts. Given the lack of artistic and personal investments in Arte Povera's sculptural artists' appearances, the works have a relation to their referents that is similar to the one Barthes finds characteristic in photography. The works merely

¹²² Roland Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image” [1964], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text*, 36. See also Barthes, “The Photographic Message”, 17; and Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 2”, 211.

¹²³ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 6 and 5.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹²⁵ Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 1”, 208.

denote their artists but fail to say anything significant about them as individuals, beyond their (temporary) physical features.

The Arte Povera artists' use of immediate techniques with little room for stylistic investments – *transferral*, *impression* and *enclosure* – adds a new layer to the term with which I describe their sculptures, which is 'automorphic'. The first part, 'auto', does not only point back at the performing subject, it also connotes the *automatisation* the artists allow when using their measures and impression techniques to abstain from aesthetic decisions and investments, and to the *autonomy* awarded to the objects. As discussed above, minimalist objects are considered autonomous because they are or appear automated – that is, machine-produced, as opposed to made and marked by the artists' hands. Arte Povera's sculptures, on the other hand, are far from untouched by their artists, but can nevertheless be characterised as automated, in the sense that the traces of the artists within them stem from processes with a minimum of intellectual or emotional investments. In that sense, they also have a certain autonomy relative to their artists – at least in comparison to the heavily invested paintings of the abstract expressionist tradition, which are Potts's main examples of encumbered artworks.

Against the stance that the 'automatist aspect' of indexical reference contributes to weaken the artist's hold over the work, one could claim that the uninvested production process instead strengthens the artist's relation to and presence in the work because the conflation between the artist, as represented entity, and the work, as representing entity, is absolute. Krauss suggests that is the case for photography, when arguing that the artist's "formal intervention in creating the work" is revoked by the "overwhelming physical presence of the original object".¹²⁶ In stating this, Krauss leans on André Bazin, who holds that the photographic image "shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it *is* the model."¹²⁷ She also draws on Barthes, who claims a "perfect analogy" between photographic image and reality in "La Message Photographique", and who utters in *Camera Lucida* that the "photographic referent" is "not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph."¹²⁸ As Barthes puts it, "the photograph possesses

¹²⁶ Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 1", 208.

¹²⁷ André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" [1945], in *What is Cinema?*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1967), 14, quoted in Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Part 1", 203.

¹²⁸ Barthes, "The Photographic Message", 17; Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 76. Krauss actually refers to "Rhetoric of the Image", in which Barthes states that "the relation of signified and signifier is quasi-tautological" or "quasi-identical" in photography. I have nevertheless chosen references in which Barthes speaks of the relation between model/referent/reality and image rather than signified and signifier which are of another order in the Saussurean sign theory that Barthes leans on. I have done so because Krauss herself does not seem to take into consideration

an evidential force” – it “never lies”, but is “credible *down to the root*”.¹²⁹ What he apparently suggests, is a full overlap between the image’s motif and the recorded object, and the image’s absolute debt to that object, which it serves to authenticate or ratify. Arte Povera’s automorphic sculptures are not characterised by the “overwhelming physical presence” of the referent that Krauss finds in photography. However, the “perfect analogy” between referents and their appearance in the work is found in many of these sculptures, notably the impressed ones. If Barthes’s emphasis on the denotational aspects of photography is transferred to Arte Povera’s ‘voluminous photographs’, it would be as if they were completely correspondent with their artists, and as if their function was to verify and authenticate the artists they represent.

However, Barthes also finds the photographic act to introduce a spatio-temporal separation between the photographed object and the photographic image itself. Krauss emphasises the schism that Barthes draws up between the referent, on the one hand, and the photograph itself and those who observe it, on the other, when quoting a passage from “Rhetoric of the Image” (*Rhetorique de l’image*) in which Barthes claims that photography offers

not a perception of the *being-there* of an object (which all copies are able to provoke), but a perception of its *having-been-there*. It is a question therefore of a new category of space-time: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority. Photography produces an illogical immediacy of the *here* and the *formerly*. [...] We possess, then, as a kind of precious miracle, a reality from which we are ourselves sheltered.¹³⁰

As discussed in Chapter Two, the idea of the photograph as introducing a spatio-temporal schism is found also in *Camera Lucida*, in which Barthes argues that photography’s *noeme* is *that-has-been*. In consequence, “Photography is the living image of a dead thing”, for, at the very moment the photographer presses his finger on the release and takes a shot, what he aims at is transformed into the photographic *that-has-been*. We are painfully aware that what it attests to is inaccessible and intractable for us, that what we see “has been here, and yet immediately separated; it has been absolutely, irrefutably present, and yet already deferred.” “[E]very photography is this catastrophe”, Barthes contends, it is this incident where the empirical referent goes out of time only to be buried as a motif inside the image.¹³¹ To Barthes, photography involves death and/by separation, as the referent, or a part of it, fastens with the frozen, material image in the form of a trace, while the rest of him continues on his life’s course.

the distinction between signifier/signified and image/referent; it is the latter relation that she addresses in the passage where she quotes Barthes. See Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 2”, 212.

¹²⁹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 88, 87 and 97.

¹³⁰ Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 2”, 217. Here I cite Barthes through Krauss. For an alternative translation, see Barthes, “Rhetoric of the Image”, 44.

¹³¹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 79, 77, 99 and 96 for the latter quotes.

This also evokes what Barthes describes as the “Death of the Author”, which involves a giving over of the self, or of one’s voice, to the work and to language.

A comparable spatio-temporal separation is found in Arte Povera’s sculptural works. These ‘voluminous photographs’ are formed in reference to the artists’ bodies at an actual *here and now*, preserving that moment in their forms. At the same time, the ‘photographed objects’ – the artists’ whole body, the measures that characterises it, or the limbs that are part of it – are ‘immediately separated’ from the sculptures, which turn into documents or traces of a passed/past presence. The separation between the artists and the works carrying their traces is evident in the impressed and enclosing sculptures, in which the artists’ features are impressed in a once mouldable, but now solidified material, and in which the artists’ appearances are negative, in that they take the of form void spaces and so display an absolute absence. The sculptures thus illustrate the character of the indexical mark that Barthes points to in photography, and that Didi-Huberman relates to physical impressions when remarking that such traces entail that the object is “*nicht mehr da*”.¹³² The separation is also echoed in the measure-based sculptures that stabilise contingent features of the artists in sculptural form, so that an anachronistic discrepancy between artist and sculpture increases as the artist alters and ages. The contrast between the solidified trace and the impermanence of life is further actualised by the sculptures that are given over to flowing water. The “Heraclitean passage of life” that water is found to represent in some readings of these sculptures associates with the continuously passing reality that Barthes finds behind the realm of the frozen moments captured in photographs. They thus mark the sculptures themselves as extractions from the flowing course of things. Like the photographic act, Arte Povera artists’ sculptural acts involve the ‘catastrophe’ in which the artist referent is turned into a factual ‘that-has-been’ and buried within the steadily present sculptural form. The sculptures are “living images of a dead thing”, as Barthes puts it.

Not only the indexical trace-character of the artists’ appearances, but also other aspects of the automorphic sculptures underline the separation between the works themselves and the subjects that simultaneously modelled for and produced them. For instance, some of the sculptures hint at the artists’ ascendants from the work by evoking the theme of death, like in the measure-based sculptures that relate to Penone’s age, which arguably has a *memento mori* symbolism. The theme of death is also noted in the critical commentary on Arte Povera’s

¹³² Didi-Huberman, *Ähnlichkeit und Berührung*, 190. Pierce also indicates such a withdrawal, when suggesting that the photogram is an image “of the ghostly traces of departed objects”, see Pierce, “Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs”, 106.

sculptural works, like when Boetti's *Autoritratto in negativo* and Zorio's *Autoritratto* are related to shrouding and death mask-traditions, or when Boetti's *Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969*, as Briony Fer argues, was installed within an outline of Boetti's body marked with chalk on the floor, thus taking the appearance of "an accident victim".¹³³ These connotations are invested in the sculptures by critics, or by the artists themselves, as a layer of meaning that adds to the denotational relation established by the indexical form of representation, but they are not merely supplied contents. The death-theme corresponds to or complements the character of the indexical relation itself, as one that captures, but fails to keep.

A supplementary layer of meaning that underlines the index's paradoxical character is also added to the sculptures by the accompanying photographs. Some of the photographs that are presented *as part of* the sculptural works or *as works* in their own right are arranged so as to show the artists' gradual departure from the sculptural objects: In Prini's *Farmacarte*, a contrast is drawn up between the heavy representation of the artist in lead, and the photographs' blurred rendering of the artist in movement, while the photographs incorporated in Penone's *I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame* and *Svolgiere la propria pelle – pietra*, and the ones relating to Fabro's *Lo spirato* present narratives in which the artists' presence in/by their sculptures decreases. Boetti's portrait of himself beside *Autoritratto in negativo* bears witness to a more abrupt and definite abandoning of the work; in the photograph, the artist is there with his sculpture, but from the sculptural work as such, the artist is gone. Other photographs are not as closely tied to the sculptural works; they have the status of artists' portraits and/or installment documentation. Nonetheless, they serve a similar rhetorical function in relation to the sculptures: the images of Boetti with "Colonne", of Prini with "Passi", of Marisa Merz with the *Scarpette*, of Fabro in *In Cubo* and of Zorio in *Cerchio di terracotta* all present the artists as positive presences beside or inside their sculptures, and simultaneously proclaim their absence from the material work as experienced on its own. In relation to Arte Povera's sculptures, the photographs announce that the artists *were* there, with/in their sculptures, but they also reveal that the artists subsequently have abandoned their works. They expose the relationship between artist and work as one alternating "between touch and distancing", as Didi-Huberman characterises the indexical relationship, or rather, as a shift from proximate presence to departure and absence.¹³⁴ The photographs further underline that Arte Povera's automorphic

¹³³ Fer, *The Infinite Line*, 181.

¹³⁴ Didi-Huberman, *Ähnlichkeit und Berührung*, 190. Didi-Huberman is speaking of impressions/imprints in particular, but his point extends to indexical marks.

sculptures entail what Barthes calls a ‘catastrophe’; namely that a referent – in these cases, the artist himself – is partly preserved as a material trace, while having disappeared with/in time.

Like the ‘voluminous photographs’ I discuss here, some of the photographic self-portraits I presented in Chapter Three, particularly the fragmented images of/by Boetti and Paolini, issued a separation between image and model. The self-portraits did acknowledge the indexical relation between the self and its image, but the artists exploited the possibilities of the photographic medium – like appropriation, reproduction and serialisation – to make their works springboards that allowed the artist-motifs to be carried away from the artist-models. The sculptural works discussed in this chapter and the photographs that accompany them emphasise instead the indexical bond between the physical trace and its referent, how “the referent adheres”, or how the indexical mark “always carries its referent within itself”, as Barthes puts it.¹³⁵ In these works, it is not as if the image flees from its referent, it is rather as if the artists’ ‘image’ is preserved as a physical trace in the sculptural material, while the real artists themselves move on. The accompanying photographs are reminders of how the sculptures store the artists’ presence within them. Rather than springboards, the sculptures are sites for a part of the artists to establish as motif/trace. In that sense, the automorphic sculptures have more in common with the photographs relating to Anselmo and Zorio’s *Entrare nell’opera*, *Fluidità radicale* and *Confine*, discussed in Chapter Four, in which cases the artists utilised the photographic medium to preserve themselves, preventing them from disappearing in the course of life.

As sites for the artists to establish as motif/trace, Arte Povera’s automorphic sculptures relate to Barthes’s idea of an ‘amicable return’ of the writing subject, and to his notion of a comparable amicable presence of the photographed subject in photographic images.¹³⁶ In texts following “The Death of the Author”, Barthes allows a resurrection of the writing body that is not author-itarian, “no longer privileged, paternal, aletheological”, as he puts it.¹³⁷ Jane Gallop remarks that the author returns neither as the institutionalised figure of literary history, nor as a “real person” in the sense of an abstracted “civil or moral entity”, but as a *body* that is sensate, mortal, and plural more than unified, and that bodily affects future readers, despite the spatio-

¹³⁵ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 6, 85–86. Note that Barthes in the latter quote speaks specifically about photography. However, I find that his point extends to the indexical trace too.

¹³⁶ Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, trans. Richard Miller (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1976 [1971]), 8.

¹³⁷ Roland Barthes, “From Work to Text”, [1971], trans. Stephen Heath, in *Image Music Text*, 161. See also Chapter Two, p. 56.

temporal distance that reigns between them.¹³⁸ From an object of pleasure, like a text admired by a devoted reader, the writer emanates as a “plural of ‘charms’” or as a set of “biographemes” – that is, as fragmentary references to or traces of lived life, through which parts of the artist’s disseminated being can be accessed. In Barthes’s own words, the ‘biographemes’ are “a few details, a few preferences, a few inflections” of life “whose distinction and mobility might go beyond any fate and come to touch, like Epicurean atoms, some future body, destined to the same dispersion.”¹³⁹ Gallop thus summarises that Barthes “gives back to the writer a kind of immortality, not the heroic, monumental immortality of the person, but a bodily immortality, an ability to touch bodies after death.”¹⁴⁰

A comparable revival of the photographed body is suggested by Barthes in *Camera Lucida*. The photograph, as Barthes sees it, is not only or not necessarily a motionless image in which the represented figures “are anesthetized and fastened down, like butterflies.” As long as the viewer who beholds a photograph finds in it a “punctum” – a touching detail that the beholders “add to the photograph”, but that “is nonetheless already there” – the photograph is also a way of making “the past [...] as certain as the present, what we see on paper [...] as certain as what we touch.” For, when such a detail reveals itself, the captured past magically emerges:

The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here; the duration of the transmission is insignificant; the photograph of the missing being, as Sontag says, will touch me like the delayed rays of a star. A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed.¹⁴¹

For Barthes, what is photographed also posits a kind of immortality comparable to that of the writing body, and the photograph itself is mediating contact between passed/past and present beings, not by virtue of bringing the absent to presence through resemblance or symbolism, but in being an interface with which they are both in immediate contact.

Various aspects of Arte Povera’s ‘voluminous photographs’ open for a similar “amicable return” of the “photographed objects”, namely the artists themselves. For one, the artists’ appearances in these sculptures are *bodily*, as opposed to appearances as ‘real persons’

¹³⁸ Jane Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time* (Durham, NC/London: Duke University Press, 2011), 39–40 and 46. Gallop primarily refers to the preface of Barthes’s *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, but her analysis also draws on his *The Pleasure of the Text (Le Plaisir du Texte)* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1974) and *S/Z* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1970).

¹³⁹ Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, 9.

¹⁴⁰ Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author*, 46.

¹⁴¹ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 57, 55, 88 and 80 for the quotes in this paragraph.

– which in this context means as biographical or institutionalised subjects.¹⁴² The sculptures, as we have seen, involve artistic self-separations, in which the artists convert their features into sculptural form, and let themselves reside as motif/form/trace within, while their existence as subjects, as ‘civic and moral entities’, are drained from the works. In addition, the characteristics with which the artists appear in the measure-based sculptures – height, weight, age – are fragments of the artists’ characteristics, and not essential or definitory features. This is also the case with the impressed sculptures, in which the artists’ appearances are signalled by the marks left by a body part, such as the face, hand or finger. In basing their relationships to the artists on such fragments, the sculptures evoke the artists’ presence through ‘biographemes’: The measures and imprints can be described as details of their lived lives, physical traces that hint at the artists who left them there.

Arte Povera’s automorphic sculptures also comply with Barthes’s description of the work’s surface as a skin shared by referent and viewer. Admittedly, the Arte Povera artists are less concerned than Barthes with the “umbilical cord” that “links the body of the photographed thing” to the viewer, but their sculptures do open up to a physical encounter between the artists and gallery visitors, facilitated by the works. In principle, visitors could place their faces in the cavity (seemingly) left after Boetti’s face in *Autoritratto in negativo*, or step across one of Prini’s “Passi”, and they are explicitly allowed to enter Zorio’s *Cercio di terracotta* and Fabro’s *In Cubo*.¹⁴³ In that sense, the sculptures offer the visitors direct contact with the bodies of the now absent artists. What is more, the Arte Povera artists insistently experiment with the “emanation of the referent” towards the representing entity – that is, with the points of contact between their own skin and the sculptural surfaces. This is seen in the way they tend to treat the sculptural materials not as dead matter onto which they apply or project form, but as ‘living’ substances with which their own bodies interact in a negotiation of taking and giving shape. The idea of an intimate, reciprocal relationship between artist and material is also present when Penone and Zorio, for instance, discuss their sculptural practices. Penone suggests that the sculptor, when modelling, is “obliged to adapt his hands and movements to the material in order

¹⁴² It should be noted that there are examples of Arte Povera sculptures that do relate to the artist’s biographical life, and, most notably, to their family life. For instance, Kounellis makes the shoes of his son Damiano part of *Untitled (A Damiano Rousseau)* (1972), and Marisa Merz’s *Altalena per Bea* (1968) is dedicated to and may function as a swing for her daughter. However, artists’ appearances are not a central part of these works, except if the references to the artists’ children are seen as ‘biographemes’ that provide access to their parents’ life.

¹⁴³ In Zorio’s case, this permission is given by the artist (as noted on p. 267), but not upheld when the sculpture is exhibited today. In Fabro’s case, the Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro has made a replica to allow the intention of letting visitors enter the sculpture.

to obtain a form. In that sense, he's the negative of his own sculpture."¹⁴⁴ Zorio speaks similarly about working with clay, the material with which he formed *Cerchio di terracotta*, and with which he made a variation over his *Autoritratto* in 1978. He states that ceramics "force you to take care of your work as though it were a flower, because it is transforming at every moment, in a never-ending process", and points out that "[t]erracotta 'copies' you", probably referring to the way wet clay responds to touch and preserves the marks of contact when dried or burnt.¹⁴⁵ Both in their works and in their statements about them, Arte Povera artists tend to emphasise the direct, reflexive contact between their own bodily surfaces and the works' material surfaces, and so come close to the idea of the work's surface as a skin against theirs.

Bringing these insights into the comparison between Arte Povera's sculptures and minimalist objects, one can argue that a main difference between them is how and where a distinction between artist and work is drawn. The minimalists, as outlined above, tend to choose a strategy of detachment that promotes an absolute schism between themselves and their work. They exemplify what I, in Chapter Two, have called 'exterior strategies' in the settlement with author-ity, in which the artist's hold over the work is dismissed by way of distancing. Arte Povera sculptures draw a schism elsewhere: the sculptures and the photographs and statements that supplement them suggest a basic division of the artists themselves – into a bodily self, which is invested in the work, and a subjective or spiritual self, which escapes it. By virtue of this self-separation, Arte Povera artists also detach from their works, or, rather, adhere to them in a manner that is not author-itarian. The artists' appearances in these sculptures are based on the act of investing a physical part of oneself into the work and leaving it 'out there' when separating from it, thus giving a part of oneself over to the work/world before passing on.

In carrying traces that the artists have cast off, the automorphic sculptures arguably comply with Potts's description of Arte Povera sculptures as "simple one-off gestures" – that is, as a variety of products that are no more tied to their maker than a shed skin to its snake. However, Potts's description is based on another set of works than I have studied, and detects in those works anti-author-itarian strategies based on detachment, like the rejection of (self-) imagery, "seemingly casual take-it-or-leave-it" compositions, and heterogeneous oeuvres. These findings support an understanding of the sculptures as 'disencumbered objects' abandoned by their artists. Potts's reference to Pascali's analogy between the artwork and the

¹⁴⁴ Benjamin Buchloh, "Interview with Giuseppe Penone", in *Giuseppe Penone*, ed. Laurent Busine (Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2012), 18.

¹⁴⁵ Germano Celant and Gilberto Zorio, "Una traversata nel crogiuolo delle irradiazioni artistiche" [1987], in *Gilberto Zorio*, ed. Germano Celant (Turin: Hopefulmonster, 1992), quoted in Ada Masoero, "Zorio: Roots", in Ada Masoero et al., *Gilberto Zorio* (Turin: Hopefulmonster, 2005), 172 and 171.

shed skin thus presumes that the skin is absolutely separated from the snake. But aren't shed skins remains of the originating bodies? It is along these line that I understand Pascali's analogy and Arte Povera's automorphic sculptures: as objects into which the Arte Povera artists have invested themselves and take part. The presence of the artists as traces in these sculptures is not of an encumbering kind, though: since the remaining traces of the artists are bodily, and as fragmentary as Barthes's 'biographemes', they do not overpower the works. When the spiritual and subjective aspects of the artists – intentions, characteristic personality traits, temper, and biography – are downplayed in or drained from the sculptures, they hardly *represent*, in the sense of referring back to and providing access to the artists as the intellectual or emotional selves responsible for the works. Rather, these sculptures function as sites allowing the artists, as bodily forms, to make amicable approaches to the materiality of the work/world. In that sense, they serve to lower Arte Povera artists from the authoritarian position traditionally ascribed to artists as subjects elevated over the material world with which they work.

Chapter Six

Working in 360°

Arte Povera Artists' Structural Extensions

In the autumn of 1969, Alighiero Boetti initiated a new artistic project; he designed 25 imaginary itineraries spanning the globe, and dedicated them to artists, critics, gallerists, collectors, and a few people from his personal life.¹ Route A, for example, was dedicated to Giulio Paolini, and stopped at places Boetti had lived; gallerist Arturo Schwarz was to follow route K to sites at the four corners of a fragmentary map of Italy; along route L, Marcel Duchamp would visit the eight places lacking proper postal service listed at page 113 and 114 of the Italian post code catalogue (even though he had passed away the previous year); along route Q, Leo Castelli, was sent on an organised tourist trip around Morocco; while route V, dedicated to Boetti's new-born son Matteo, remained unspecified.² An envelope containing an overview of the planned itinerary was then sent to each of the chosen acquaintances, addressed to the first stop of their fictive journeys. Of course, the letters never reached their recipients in the given locations, and returned, full of stamps and written notes from puzzled post officers, to Boetti's address in Turin. Upon return, Boetti photocopied the envelopes on both sides, put them inside a new envelope, and sent them to the same person again, but addressed to the next destination of their fictive journey. The process continued in the same manner until the letters returned unopened from the last destination along each route, or were considered lost, as six of them still are today.

¹ As I outline below, Boetti's initiative resulted in works with two different titles. When speaking of parts of the process that relate to both works, I refer to Boetti's initiative as a 'project'. The same rule applies in other cases discussed below, in which one overarching project results in several different manifestations as works, notably Giuseppe Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle*.

² For full lists of all itineraries, see Tommaso Trini, "Alighiero Boetti. I primi 1000 fiumi più lunghi del mondo", *DATA*, Vol. 4, No. 11, Spring 1974, 48–49.



Top: Fig. 6.1.1. Alighiero Boetti, *Viaggi postali*, 1969–70. 19 envelopes with stamps, 11 x 22 – 26 x 40 cm each; Centre, left: Fig. 6.1.2. Alighiero Boetti and Penelope Coleman among the files included in Boetti's *Dossier postale*, Milan, 1970; Centre, right: Fig. 6.1.3. Alighiero Boetti working on *Dossier postale*, Milan, 1970; Below, left: Fig. 6.1.4. Alighiero Boetti, *Dossier postale*, 1969–70. Photocopies ordered in 181 printed and stamped cardboard folders, each 35 x 25.5 cm, unbound. Edition of 99.

Boetti's project resulted in two different works. The returned envelopes – each of which contained the former envelopes from the respective itinerary – were presented as *Viaggi Postali* (Postal Voyages) in the exhibition “Gennaio ’70. Comportamenti, progetti, mediazioni” in Bologna at the beginning of 1970.³ To my knowledge, no detailed description or documentation of this installation exists, but when the work is exhibited on other occasions, the envelopes are presented beside each other in a loose, grid-like pattern with varying intervals between them, either hung on the wall or lying in a vitrine (Fig. 6.1.1).⁴ In the months that followed, Boetti continued to work with the archive of photocopies, which he sorted into 181 cardboard files designed by his friend, Clino Trini Castelli (Figs. 6.1.2– 6.1.3). These files, which were made in an edition of 99, are known as *Dossier postale* (Postal Dossier), and examples were first exhibited at the 7th Biennale de Paris and at the “Incontri Internazionali d’Arte” in Rome the autumn of 1971.⁵ Some sets were subsequently bound – either in three, chronologically ordered volumes, or as series of 25 books devoted to each of the fictive journeys – while some remain unbound (Fig. 6.1.4).

In a presentation of *Dossier postale* in the art magazine *DATA* in 1974, Tommaso Trini emphasises the peculiar structure of Boetti's project. He remarks how the dispatched envelopes repeatedly return to their sender, like a boomerang returning to its thrower, before being relaunched, only to come back again. Trini suggests that the project opens up a “boomerang space” between the artist and the various, widely spread out “points of return”. His metaphor conjures the image of Boetti in his studio or in front of a post box in Turin, sending envelopes in different directions, to locations near and afar, attempting to establish points of contact around him. Since his letters never reach any recipient but return to the artist himself, what Boetti achieves is a sense of the dead-ends that mark the limit of his own reach. The ‘boomerang space’ opened up is one that expands between a number of nodes in a communicational space, which all relate and point back to the artist who is centred among them. As Trini suggests when paraphrasing Boetti's statement “voglio lavorare a 360°” (I want to work in 360°), Boetti here

³ The exhibition was organised for the Terza Biennale Internazionale della Giovane Pittura by Renato Barilli, Maurizio Calvesi, Andrea Emiliani and Tommaso Trini, and shown at the Museo Civico Archeologico, Bologna, 31 January – 28 February 1970. See also Chapter Four, p. 202 and further.

⁴ An exhibition catalogue exists, but reveals little about the exhibited works: Renato Barilli, ed., *Gennaio ’70. Comportamenti progetti mediazioni* (Bologna: Edizioni Alfa, 1970). For a record of the event, mentioning Boetti's work, see Achille Bonito Oliva, “Lavoro estetico e comunità concentrate”, in *Marcatre*, Vol. 8, No. 56, 1970, 74–75.

⁵ Septième biennale de Paris. Manifestation biennale et internationale des jeunes artistes, Parc Floral-Bois de Vincennes, Paris, 24 September – 1 November 1971; “Incontri Internazionali d’Arte”, Palazzo Taverna, Rome, 25 November – 18 December 1971, here with *Viaggi postali*. For a recent discussion of the first of these exhibitions, with photograph of Boetti's installed work, see Giulia Cappelletti, “Un cambio di passo: la partecipazione italiana alla VII Biennale di Parigi del 1971”, *Studi di Memofonte*, No. 24, 2020, 128 and 136 fig. 13.

works circularly.⁶ More specifically, the postal project has a stellar pattern, evoking the artist at/as the centre among lines extending from the work's widely spread components. With his description of Boetti's project, Trini points to a new type of artist's appearance – one in which the artist is not (necessarily) discernible, but nevertheless *structurally* present. When sifting through the Arte Povera 'catalogue', I have found a handful of other 'composite works' – works composed of numerous more or less identical components – which centre and thus evoke their artists in a comparable manner. I present these works in this chapter, and discuss whether the structural artists' appearances within them are author-itarian, or rather extend the vital experimentation with anti-author-itarian forms of manifestation that I have detected in Arte Povera works of other media.

Commenting on *Viaggi Postali*'s first display in Bologna, Achille Bonito Oliva remarks that the presentation of Boetti's hand-written envelopes' "emotional paths" tend to "restore the breath and the continuous presence of the author."⁷ This comment suggests that the project builds under the artist's author-ity. Trini, on the other hand, claims that even if the work's components all point back to Boetti and thus imply the artist's position at the work's centre, *Dossier postale* does not entail the "simple narcissism of the artist as *caput mundi*". Trini also makes another comment that is interesting when it comes to determining how Boetti's project and comparable composite works deals with author-ity: he rhetorically asks what the "establishment of an unhindered point of return" proposes "if not to essentially displace the optics of observation?"⁸ Trini neither clarifies what "optics" he has in mind, nor elaborates on how Boetti's works actually displace it. Nevertheless, the comment proved fruitful to me, because it made me ponder how Arte Povera's works relate to the "optics of observation" that dominated and regulated the Western way of perceiving and representing the world from the Renaissance onwards, namely that of central perspective.⁹ This question relates to the issue of artist's author-ity, since twentieth-century art critics tend to align perspectival art and its organisation of space with a strong artistic/subjective position, while arguing that anti-author-itarian alternatives were offered by art practices in Arte Povera's contemporaneity. Notably, the 1960s witnessed a 'spatial turn' in the visual arts, in which the long-lasting hegemony of painting was challenged by an increasing interest in the art object's relationship with, extension

⁶ Trini, "Alighiero Boetti. I primi 1000 fiumi", 40 for the quotes in this paragraph. My translations.

⁷ Oliva, "Lavoro estetico e comunità concentrate", 75. My translations.

⁸ Trini, "Alighiero Boetti. I primi 1000 fiumi", 40. My translations.

⁹ For such a conception of central perspective's status in Western culture, see for instance Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity", in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1998), 4–5.

into, and distribution across the physical environment in which it is presented.¹⁰ As Claire Bishop makes clear in her 2005 survey *Installation Art: A Critical History*, artists and critics perceived this orientation towards physical space – which arguably emerged with minimalism in the 1960s, and comprises ‘environmental art’ and ‘installations’ from the following decades – as a fundamental rejection of art grounded in the perspectival tradition.¹¹ Admittedly, the critical discourse that promotes spatially oriented art as a counter to perspective’s illusion of space does not focus particularly on the issue of the artist’s author-ity. Author-ity remains a key issue though, since the distinctions drawn between perspectival and spatially oriented artworks concern the contradictory relationships they establish between the artist, the work, the world, and the perceiver. My aim here is to clarify how the composite works and the artists’ structural appearances within them relate to the widely accepted understandings of perspectival author-ity and of spatially oriented art as its assumed antithesis. Before analysing the artists’ appearances and positions within Arte Povera works, it is necessary to briefly account for the author-itarian aspects that are ascribed to the perspectival structure’s positioning of producing and perceiving subjects relative to each other, to the work, and to the world, and for the alternative, allegedly anti-author-itarian, positioning of these entities in spatially oriented art.

The Subjects’ Positions in Perspectival and Spatially Oriented Art

In the perspectival tradition negated by spatially oriented art from the 1960s onwards, the picture plane is described as the cross-section of a vision pyramid formed by rays extending from the apex in an observer’s eye into the world at which the observer’s gaze is directed.¹² A ‘point of view’ is thus located directly opposite the picture plane, which is also reflected within the perspectival image itself: as Leon Battista Alberti puts it when explaining the method of perspective construction in his 1436 manual *Della Pittura* (On Painting), the “centric point” on the composition’s horizon line “occupies that place” within the picture “where the central ray

¹⁰ Although clearly related, this general spatial turn in the visual arts of the 1960s should not be confused with Italian “Spazialismo”, which is a more specific and programmatic vision for the arts launched in a number of manifestos by Lucio Fontana in the late 1940s.

¹¹ Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008 [2005]), 11–13. Other precedents of the spatially oriented art of the 1960s exist. As Bishop remarks, the 1938 “Internationalist Surrealist Exhibition” in Paris is commonly seen as an especially important precursor, while El Lissitzky offers another example (20, 80–81). In the genealogies of installation art that Bishop outlines, the disorienting environments of artists like Lucas Samaras and James Turrell, and Joseph Beuys’ socially engaged works are early examples of spatially oriented art that rely on other philosophical impulses than minimalist art does.

¹² See Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting* [1436], trans. John R. Spencer (New Haven, CT/ London: Yale University Press, 1966 [1956]), 47, 52 and 56.

strikes”, and all of the composition’s orthogonal lines lead towards it.¹³ This point is the observing eye’s counterpart on the picture plane, and echoes the apex of the vision pyramid in the image’s illusory depth. What is more, in Albertian perspective construction, a supporting “distance point” located outside the picture plane indicates the distance between the observing eye and the image surface, and decides the interval of the transversals’ recession within the image.¹⁴ As a result, the entire composition is organised with reference to the exterior point of view. Although located outside the image itself, this point is the composition’s structural centre. A fundamental distinction between seer and seen thus characterises the perspectival structure, given that the subject who sees is positioned outside and opposite the image world.¹⁵

Twentieth-century theoreticians found interest in the structure of Renaissance perspective and the relations it indicates between the human subject and the world. Erwin Panofsky’s 1924/25 lecture “Perspective as Symbolic Form” (*Die Perspektive als ‘symbolische Form’*) is a significant theorisation of Renaissance perspective – or the *costruzione legittima*, as Panofsky calls it.¹⁶ Panofsky remarks how the image of space it offers differs from Antique representations of space: the ancients held the immediate *Sehbild* – i.e. the visual image provoked in the viewing artist’s eye on the basis of sense impressions – as the true object of representation, while Renaissance perspective is unfaithful to psychophysiological perception when accounting for a “peculiar stabilizing tendency within our consciousness”, which “ascribes to perceived objects a definite and proper size and form.”¹⁷ The image of space offered by Renaissance perspective is therefore based on individual sensation, but processed by the

¹³ Alberti, *On Painting*, 56. Note that what Alberti here refers to as the “centric point” is now more commonly referred to as the ‘vantage point’.

¹⁴ Alberti, *On Painting*, 56–57, 110–112 n. 48. As John R. Spencer remarks, Alberti is accused of not satisfactorily explaining how he determines the distance point’s position, see Alberti, *On Painting*, 112.

¹⁵ Note that some scholars, especially those influenced by Jacques Lacan’s thinking on vision and subjectivity, argue against the idea that perspective positions the viewer outside and opposite the painted world, and emphasise instead how the subject is implied in or drawn into the image. Amelia Jones points to Joan Copjec, “The Strut of Vision: Seeing’s Somatic Support”, *Qui parle?*, Vol. 9, No. 2, Spring/Summer 1996, as one example, see Amelia Jones, *Self/Image: Technology, Representation and the Contemporary Subject* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 7–9. Another key example is Hubert Damisch, *The Origin of Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* [1924–25], trans. Christopher S. Wood (New York, NY: Zone Books, 1991), 62. Panofsky uses the term “costruzione legittima” to underline the mathematical exactness of the method, and to distinguish Renaissance perspective from other perspectival schemes. He does not list the source of the term. Francis M. Naumann stresses that it was not in common use in the *Quattrocento*, and traces it from Panofsky via Guido Joseph Kern and Constantin Winterberg to Heinrich Ludwig’s writings in the late nineteenth century. See Francis M. Naumann, “The ‘costruzione legittima’ in the Reconstruction of Leonardo da Vinci’s ‘Last Supper’”, *Arte Lombarda: Rivista di storia dell’arte*, No. 52, 1979, 64 n. 7.

¹⁷ Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 31. It should be noted that Panofsky has been accused of going too far in his presentation of the Antique perspective as “intuitive”. See Margaret Iversen, “The Discourse of perspective in the Twentieth Century: Panofsky, Damisch, Lacan”, *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2005, 197; and Christopher S. Wood, “Introduction”, in Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 22.

universal capacities of human cognition and reconstructed by virtue of equally universal mathematical rules. As a result, it is a rationalised image of space – a ‘systematic space’ or *Systemraum*, which is “purified of all subjective admixtures”, “foreign to direct experience”, and characterised by “homogeneity and boundlessness”.¹⁸

Panofsky speaks of *costruzione legittima* in terms of technical advancement, but the impetus of his essay is the connection of various representational schemes from Antiquity to the Renaissance to “basic attitudes”: the representational schemes are “symbolic forms”, which correspond to specific ways of perceiving, understanding and approaching the world, and, consequently, to specific understandings of the relationships between man and world. Whereas Antique schemes of representation – which focus on the individual bodies in a composition and disregards the pictorial space between them – corresponds to an Aristotelian worldview, with its conception of the world as “something radically discontinuous” and as “a cosmos with the middle of the earth as its absolute centre and with the outer most celestial sphere as its absolute limit”, the Albertian perspective corresponds to, or anticipates, the new scientific conception of infinite space that is theorised in the projective geometry of Girard Desargues, “rationalized by Cartesianism and formalized by Kantianism.”¹⁹

Panofsky makes clear that this new perspectival/scientific conception of space marks a shift in man’s status relative to the world. The representation of space in Antiquity reflects an understanding of the world as *given*, as divinely defined. *Costruzione legittima*, on the other hand, signals how modern man rather than finding himself within such a pre-defined, Aristotelian world, stands in front of an empty and open-ended space made up by the potentially endless coordinates of the *Systemraum*. How this world appears is “determined by the freely chosen position of a subjective ‘point of view’”, and every appearance within it is subordinated to that view. As Panofsky puts it, it is the Renaissance perspective’s ability to define “the apparent size of any object, the size corresponding to its actual magnitude and its position *with respect to the eye*” that marks its “enormous advantage” and explains “why it was so passionately pursued”.²⁰ Panofsky contends that

[t]he history of perspective may be understood with equal justice as a triumph of the distancing and objectifying sense of the real, and as a triumph of the distance-denying human struggle for control; it is

¹⁸ Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 58, 70 and 31.

¹⁹ Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 44, 65–66 and 70. Regarding Panofsky’s “awkward chronological coordinations of art history and intellectual history”, see Wood, “Introduction”, 18.

²⁰ Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 67, 40. My emphasis.

as much a consolidation and systematization of the external world, as an extension of the domain of the self.²¹

In other words, the Albertian perspectival model “expands human consciousness into a vessel for the divine”, and so marks “the sign of a beginning, when modern ‘anthropocracy’ first reared itself.”²²

Panofsky does not elaborate on the exact links between the construction codified by Alberti and seventeenth-/eighteenth-century science and philosophy, but the analogy between perspective and Cartesianism has been emphasised by subsequent scholars. Tellingly, Karsten Harries states that “the Cartesian world-picture assumes an I placed before and thus outside it”, just as “[t]he Albertian picture assumes an eye placed before and thus outside it”, and Martin Jay holds that “Descartes was a quintessentially visual philosopher, who tacitly adopted the position of a perspectivalist painter using a camera obscura to reproduce the observed world.”²³ Consequently, influential twentieth-century scholars with an anti-Cartesian bent would spur opposition against the perspectival structure’s rationalist and anthropocentric aspects. French phenomenology, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s thinking in particular, was the “decisive influence”, Bishop suggests, when an increasing discontent with the “hierarchical relationship” that perspective establishes “between the centred viewer and the ‘world’ of the painting spread before him” raised among American artists and art critics from the 1960s onwards.²⁴

The artists and critics in question were, on the one hand, concerned with the way perspective awards the subject a privileged position as a distanced observer opposite a passive world. On the other hand, they regretted the way in which perspective makes the viewing act passive.²⁵ These concerns form the basis of Rosalind Krauss’s “Sense and Sensibility. Reflection of Post ’60s Sculpture”, a 1973 essay that further discusses the analogy indicated by Panofsky between Albertian perspective and Cartesian philosophy.²⁶ In Western illusionism,

²¹ Ibid., 67.

²² Ibid., 72.

²³ Karsten Harries, “Origins of the Modern World Picture: Cusanus and Alberti”, 16, available at <https://campuspress.yale.edu/karstenharries/files/2012/09/Origins-of-the-Modern-World-Picture.-Cusanus-and-Alberti2-1abyk3t.pdf> (accessed 30.08.2021); Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994 [1993]), 69.

²⁴ Bishop, *Installation Art*, 50, 11. Merleau-Ponty’s influence in this respect runs contrary to his declining status among French thinkers from the 1960s onwards, who found his thinking “too ocularcentric”. See Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 325 and further.

²⁵ See for instance Bishop, *Installation Art*, 11, 54 and 73.

²⁶ Note that this essay represents another phase in Krauss’s writing than those I have drawn on in Chapter Three and Chapter Five. “Sense and Sensibility” was written in 1973, while Krauss was a co-editor of *Artforum*, and is openly influenced by phenomenological philosophy. The other essays I rely on were written later, from 1976 onwards, when Krauss had abandoned *Artform* to establish *October*, and was more inclined to French poststructuralism. I have not found the time, but it would be interesting to discuss if/how the tendencies towards self-reflection and self-enclosure that Krauss finds to characterise video art in her first, 1976 *October* essay “Video:

Krauss remarks, evoking the tradition of perspectival painting, the image space is the ground on which figures and objects are allowed to appear. Thus, “space itself operates as a precondition for the visibility of the pictorial events” and “functions as a category which exists prior to the knowledge of things within it.” In this, “traditional picture making” echoes the Cartesian presumption of human consciousness as “the ground against which objects are constituted”, and the Cartesian notion of “the Self [...] as constituted prior to its contact with the space of the world.”²⁷

According to Krauss, this notion of the disembodied and detached subject, existing prior to the world as such, is far from abolished in art produced around 1970. Paintings in the Abstract Expressionist vein display the same “entrenched Cartesianism” that perspectival paintings do, when typically understood as projections of the artist’s inner self. Conceptual art too, which emphasises that artworks’ meanings are private, established “within the minds of each of their separate viewers”, upholds the idea of a separate and prior mental space, while “implying that no outside verification is possible.” As Krauss sees it, a true “attempt to undermine illusionism” and the model of the subject that it reflects requires:

the disavowal of the notion of a constituting consciousness and the protocol language of a private Self. It is a rejection of a space that exists prior to experience, passively waiting to be filled: and of a psychological model in which a self exists replete with its meanings, prior to contact with its world.²⁸

According to Krauss, this is precisely what minimalist art offers. Pointing above all at Robert Morris’s 1965 *L-beams* – a number of identical sculptural volumes, always spread out across the exhibition spaces in various positions and angles (Ill. 6.1) – she argues that minimalism introduces a new way of thinking about the work’s relation to space, corresponding to an alternative model of the subject.²⁹ Since the beams are “[s]ituating themselves within the space of experience, the space to which one’s own body appears”, Krauss notes, they “suspend the axiomatic coordinates of an ideal space.”³⁰ The perceiving subject is invited into the work as a full body, allowed and expected to move freely between the individual components in order to

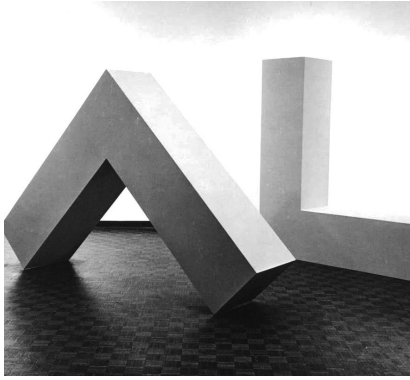
The Aesthetics of Narcissism”, compares with the tendency towards self-enclosure that I detect in Arte Povera’s composite work.

²⁷ Rosalind Krauss, “Sense and Sensibility: Reflection on Post ‘60s Sculpture”, *Artforum*, Vol. 12, No. 3, November 1973, 46–47 for the quotes in this paragraph.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, for all quotes in this paragraph.

²⁹ Indeed, Robert Morris himself had already implied the potential to fundamentally change the relationships between the work, the viewer and the world when pointing out how minimalist work take part in and open up to “an extended situation”, in which relationships are taken out of the work, and made “a function of space, light, and the viewer’s field of vision.” See Robert Morris, “Notes on Sculpture, Part 2”, *Artforum*, Vol. 5, No. 2, October 1966), 21.

³⁰ Krauss, “Sense and Sensibility”, 50.



Ill. 6.1. Robert Morris, *L-Beams*, 1965. Plywood structures, each 243.8 × 243.8 × 61 cm. Installation shot from “Primary Structures”, Jewish Museum, New York, 1966.

make sense of the work – no longer a disembodied I/eye positioned at a point exterior to the rational, represented world. When finding oneself among the beams, Krauss remarks, it is impossible to experience them as the same: despite the knowledge that they are identical, they appear different depending on their placement in the gallery space and the physical position from which they are perceived. As Bishop summarises Krauss’s point, this experience demonstrates that “perceptual experience precedes cognition”.³¹

What works like Morris’s offer when making the experience of art a physical and

temporal event, is the notion that (the artwork’s) meaning is far from restricted to the private self; it is rather “a function of external space”, dependent on the body and its continuous interaction with other physical entities, thus “lodged within public space”. In addition, as perceiving subjects move within the work and see it develop, they will experience “a continual coming into coherence of the body”, a “sense of coalescing in experience and of a realization of the self as it achieves externality.” As a result, minimalism “becomes a metaphorical statement of the self understood only in experience.” In this, Krauss finds minimalist sculpture to complement Merleau-Ponty’s thinking, which advocates a human/world reciprocity in which the self is embedded in the world. In particular, the experience of minimalist art harmonises with his idea of “double-perspective”, which entails, in Krauss’s words, that “the self is understood as completed only after it has surfaced into the world”, and that “the very existence and meaning of the ‘I’ itself is “dependent upon its manifestation to the ‘other.’”³² As Hal Foster has remarked, Krauss presents “Minimalism as phenomenology” – as an art intent on overcoming the “metaphysical dualisms of subject and object”, thereby offering an alternative to the epistemological stance of Cartesian rationality, which the tradition of perspectival painting is found to uphold.³³

³¹ Bishop, *Installation Art*, 54.

³² Krauss, “Sense and Sensibility”, 47–50 for quotes in the latter sentences.

³³ Hal Foster, “The Crux of Minimalism”, in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996), 42.

In her theoretical survey, Bishop argues that a comparable, anti-perspectival “rhetoric of democracy and emancipation” informed the production and criticism of installation art in the following decades. For one, installations are characterised by being site-responsive, they treat an entire space as “a single situation”, across which the work is distributed. This entails a fragmented work structure, as opposed to perspectival painting, which opens out to a work’s world restricted to the confines of the canvas. Secondly, since installation art spreads across ‘real’ space, it is “a type of art into which the viewer physically enters.” In contrast to perspectival works, which excludes the viewers from the self-contained world of the work and leaves them in the paradoxical role of distanced observers and passivised contemplators, Bishop notes that installations are found to have an open and inclusive structure that is continuous with the world itself. When entering the work, the discourse on installation art claims, perceiving subjects will find themselves bodily present and embedded in the world. Finally, by inviting the perceiving subject to navigate within a fragmented work structure, installations add multiple viewpoints and a temporal dimension to the perception of art. As a result, perceiving subjects will experience themselves as part of an interdependent and reflexive process of identification and coming into being. The discourse on installation art claims therefore that a new model of the subject itself is offered; the subject is *decentred*, meaning that it will recognise itself and find itself confirmed only in reference to the exterior world. This model signals that perceiving subjects “are no longer afforded a single position of mastery from which to survey the art object”, and installation art thereby “subvert[s] the Renaissance perspective model”.³⁴

Krauss’s article on minimalism and the phenomenologically inspired understanding of spatial art that Bishop accounts for in her book focus on the hierarchy between perceiving subject and perceived work/world, and on how spatially oriented art unsettles it. Nevertheless, spatial art, as they present it, also challenge the perspectival structure in terms of author-ity. In perspectival art, the point of view is defined by the artist, as Norman Bryson underlines when pointing to a chronology in the experience of paintings, where the original or “founding perception” of the artist precedes “the moment of viewing”.³⁵ According to Bryson, when contemplating a perspectival painting the viewer repeals this temporality, eclipses his body, and “unites his gaze with the Founding Perception, in a perfect recreation of that first epiphany.”³⁶ In that sense, one could argue that the artist still occupies the point of view, and

³⁴ Bishop, *Installation Art*, 118 (see also 54), 10, 6, 13 and 71 for the quotes in this paragraph.

³⁵ Norman Bryson, *Vision and Painting: The Logic of the Gaze* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1983), 94. See also pages 171 and 130. I was led to Bryson’s book by a reference in Jay, *Downcast Eyes*, 56.

³⁶ Bryson, *Vision and Painting*, 94.

that when entering it, the viewer merely takes over the artist's (over)view of the (work's) world. The viewer is thus allowed a privileged position relative to that world, but not admitted an independent view of it. Artists, on the other hand, are awarded double author-ity; they reign at the composition's structural centre, from where they subordinate the world, as well as the viewers who subsequently position themselves at their works' point of view, to their gaze.

Arguably, when making the viewer's experience an integral part of the work, spatial art dismisses the representational notion of the work as a medium of communication, through which a prior view is handed over from artist to viewers, and conflates the two distinctive moments of production and perception. The idea that works come to completion only when viewing subjects interact with them indicate a distributed nature of art production, in which every viewer is allowed to operate in the role of creator, and supplement or even replace the artist as producing subject. Hal Foster therefore notes that Krauss, when claiming the artwork's meaning "to be public, not private, produced in a physical interface with the actual world, not in a mental space of idealist conception", evokes Roland Barthes in positing a "Death of the Author" and "at the same time a birth of the viewer".³⁷ In the phenomenologically inspired understandings of spatial art that Krauss's account exemplifies, then, a settlement with the perspectival structure's author-ity is achieved by virtue of an open and inclusive work structure that extends into the world and invites the perceiving subject in as the work's co-producer.

In emphasising how the work extends into the world and in promoting the perceiver's role in realising the work, the phenomenologically inspired accounts of spatially oriented art evoke the phenomenological account of performance art discussed in Chapter Four. As noted there, however, scholars informed by Jacques Derrida's thinking and his understanding of Artaud's theatre presented alternative accounts of performative practices that emphasised the paradoxical relationships between presence and representation instead, characterised by both interdependency and rupture. Likewise, it is worth noting that Bishop, drawing on poststructuralism, distances her own view of installation art from the general conceptions that she surveys in her book. She criticises the way in which the discourse on spatial art relies on phenomenological theory that finds the human subject to be fundamentally decentred, while also suggesting that installation art reflects a shift from a centred to a decentred model of the subject, presuming centeredness as the basic mode. She also points to the contradictions in claiming that spatially oriented art reflects an idea of a "dispersed or decentred subject" *and* requires "activated spectatorship". Her objection is that "decentring implies the lack of a unified

³⁷ Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism", 40 and 50.

subject, while activated spectatorship calls for a fully present, autonomous subject of conscious will (that is, a ‘modern’ subject).” Departing from the “ideal or philosophical model of the subject as decentred” in the phenomenological sense – that is, the notion that the subject will find itself confirmed in/by the exterior world – Bishop emphasises instead how installation art decentres the subject in terms of *fragmentation*. She argues that installation art is a “mechanism of subjective fragmentation”, which, as one enters it, momentarily and by occasion produces decentred subjects: When insisting “on our centred presence in order then to subject us to an experience of decentring”, installation art is itself decentring because it “structures an irresolvable antagonism” between two different ideas of the subject. When thus questioning “our sense of stability in and mastery over the world” and revealing the “‘true’ nature of our subjectivity as fragmented and decentred”, installation art as Bishop understands it, holds up a model according to which we can adjust “our actions in the world and with other people”, abandoning a privileged position relative to the world in favour of a decentred/fragmented presence within it.³⁸

Bishop here opens up to an alternative way of dismissing perspectival author-ity and anthropocentrism, based not on the experience of recognising oneself in and being continuous with the exterior world, but on the separation from the normal course of life as one enters the work and finds oneself drawn between centeredness and fragmentation, identification and seclusion. In my view, it is this form of antithesis to perspectival anthropocentrism and author-ity that Arte Povera’s ‘composite works’ exemplify and enrich, albeit centring more on the artists themselves than on the perceivers’ experiences.

Arte Povera’s Boomerang Structured Works

The Arte Povera ‘catalogue’ comprises numerous works that can be characterised as installations – works that are oriented towards and/or distributed across physical space, and that invite the perceiving subjects into a fragmented work structure, within which their experience of themselves as centred subjects is likely to be challenged.³⁹ Edward Lucie-Smith emphasises

³⁸ Bishop, *Installation Art*, 128–33 for quotes in this paragraph.

³⁹ Marisa Merz’s 1966 *Senza titolo*, also known as *Scultura Vivente* (Living Sculpture) – structures made of aluminium foil strips curved and stapled together as tubes and hung so as to vividly meander from the ceiling – is a telling example. Another example is Michelangelo Pistoletto’s “Quadri specchianti” (Mirror Paintings) – the series begun in 1962, in which Pistoletto prints photographic images on reflecting backgrounds so that the subjects who approach them will have problems distinguishing a ‘space of the work’ from the ‘real’ exhibition space and find themselves between these spaces. For *Scultura Vivente*, see Chapter Four, p. 206–07, for “Quadri specchianti”, see Chapter Three, p. 84.

that an important aspect of Arte Povera “was the way in which it displaced the spectator’s attention from the single object to the setting”, and accordingly finds Arte Povera to represent “the initial phase of an attempt to alter the nature of art, and to change its relationship with the public.”⁴⁰ Elizabeth Mangini concurs when suggesting a link between Arte Povera’s activation of the perceiving subject and contemporaneous Italian theories of recipients’ response, placing Arte Povera within the “death of the author/birth of the reader” discourse, as Foster finds Krauss to be doing with the spatially oriented works of American minimalism.⁴¹

Other Arte Povera works have structures resembling Boetti’s *Viaggi postali/Dossier postale*. They do not (necessarily) consist of voluminous objects distributed across physical space, like minimalist artworks and installations do. Still, they consist of numerous components spread across a plane or a space, and thus have a composite and fragmented structure, in which structural relationships are established between the respective components, the spaces they relate to, and the subjects they engage – that is, the producing and the perceiving subjects. Unlike the spatially oriented works, however, they are characterised by the way they centre the artist between the works’ individual components, rather than inviting perceivers to enter. I will present three types of ‘composite works’ here. In contrast to the previous chapters, in which each subsection presents a different strategy for making artists’ appearances, my aim here is to demonstrate that the artists hold the same position relative to the work’s structure in all of the composite works – the strategy of *extending* between the work’s components is the same. It is rather the character of the components that that vary: the first section presents works whose components relate to and/or represent the artists’ own bodies; the components of the second section represent social contacts (as the envelopes of Boetti’s *Viaggi postali* do); whereas the components of the last section represent nature and its forces. In all cases, the positioning of artist and perceiver relative to the components invert spatial art’s positioning of artist and perceiver in relation to the works’ structure. Even so, I argue that Arte Povera composite works offer an alternative to the author-itarian structure of perspectival artworks.

Extending One’s Bodily Contours

The first category of composite works comprises works whose components relate to their artists’ bodies. One of the two works that serve as examples here is by Giulio Paolini, the Arte

⁴⁰ Edward Lucie-Smith, *Movements in art since 1945: New Edition*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 172–73.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Mangini, “Feeling One’s Way Through a Cultural Chiasm. Touch in Giuseppe Penone’s Sculpture c. 1968”, in *New Perspectives on Italian Culture. Vol. II. The Arts and History*, ed. Graziella Parati (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013 [2012]), 154.

Povera artist who most explicitly and consistently analyses the gaze, the relationship between artist and spectator and the perspectival image space.⁴² Particularly interesting in this context is a work in which Paolini examines the confines of his own field of vision: *Vedo (Decifrazione del mio campo visivo)* (I see [The Deciphering of My Visual Field]) from 1969. Making this work, Paolini pinned fifteen sheets of paper to the wall of his studio and marked an elliptical area of approximately 200 x 350 cm with a multitude of pencil-drawn dots. The area roughly corresponds with a human visual field and thus, as Paolini himself puts it, to “the ‘quantity’ of space” covered by his sight when standing in front of the wall (Figs. 6.2.1–6.2.2).⁴³

In letting the work’s surface coincide with his field of vision, Paolini’s *Vedo* evokes the structure of perspectival art and Alberti’s idea of the picture plane as “an open window through which I see what I want to paint.”⁴⁴ However, where Alberti proceeds by marking a single ‘centric point’ on the picture plane where the central ray strikes, Paolini fills his entire work with dots, which all indicate where his visual rays strike the work’s surface. Whereas Alberti’s centric point serves to guide the further construction process and organise the represented space as well all appearances within it, Paolini’s procedure does not establish an ordered image space. His work has no foreshortening or other rationale to structure a represented world and instead presents a grey mass of fleeting punctuations. Paolini’s work makes no attempt to dominate the outer world, as perspectival art is accused of when subordinating the representation of the world to a subjective point of view and adjusting it according to rational standards.

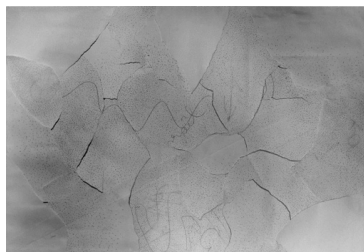
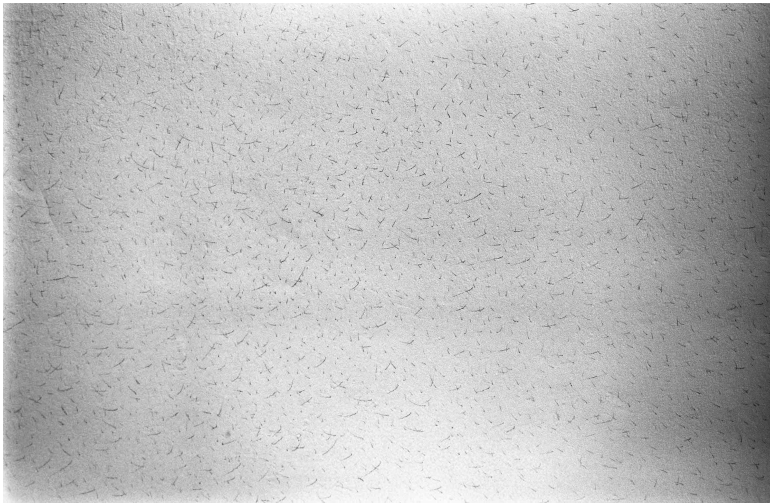
Despite these differences, the hierarchy between artist and work seem enforced in *Vedo*. Perspectival paintings tend to veil the fact that the entire composition is ordered according to the artist’s point of view, which is underlined in Paolini’s work. The work’s title highlights that *I* – which, by convention, refers back to the artist himself – is the one who sees.⁴⁵ Moreover, Paolini presents – as the only ‘motif’ of his work – the numerous points from which imaginary lines corresponding with the artist’s visual rays run from the work’s surface back towards the artist’s eye. *Vedo* therefore comes to emphasise the artist’s position at/as the work’s structural

⁴² For Paolini’s interest in these issues, see for instance Jacinto Lageira, “Giulio Paolini. Ut pictura poesis”, in *Regard oblique. Essais sur la perception* (Brussels: La Lettre volée, 2013); Elisabetta Trincherini, *Giulio Paolini. Delfo (IV), 1997* (Mantua: Corraini Edizioni, 2015); Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, ed., *Giulio Paolini. Vedo e non vedo* (Mantua: Corraini Edizioni, 2014).

⁴³ Giulio Paolini in interview by Achille Bonito Oliva – Achille Bonito Oliva, “Dentro il linguaggio” [1971], in *Paolini: opere 1961/73* (Milan: Studio Marconi, 1973), n.p. – quoted in Maddalena Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo 1960-1982* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2008), 202. Note that the work measures 225 x 375 cm in total, but the artist’s visual field does not fill the sheets to its edges, as is shown in the second version of the work with corresponding dimensions. See Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato, Tomo primo*, 203.

⁴⁴ Alberti, *On Painting*, 56.

⁴⁵ See the discussion related to Paolini’s *Io (frammento di una lettera)* in Chapter Three, p. 135 and further.



Above: Fig. 6.2.1. Giulio Paolini, *Vedo (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo)*, 1969. Pencil on paper, wall or canvas, 225 x 375 cm. Middle: Figs. 6.2.2–6.2.3. Giulio Paolini working on *Vedo (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo)*, the artist's studio, Turin, 15 July 1969. Below, left: Fig. 6.2.4. Giulio Paolini, "*Vedo*" (15 luglio 1969), 1971. Collage on prepared canvas, 120 x 180 cm. Below, right: Fig. 6.2.5. Giulio Paolini, "*Vedo*" (15 luglio 1969), 1971. Paper fragments mounted between Plexiglas plates, 20 x 25 cm.

centre. On the other hand, it is important to note that Paolini does not figure as a detached and disembodied subjectivity relative to his work, as twentieth-century criticism accused the perspectival painter of doing. By presenting dots rather than a furnished image space, Paolini emphasises the indexical character of the work's 'motif' over its iconicity, and its haptic qualities over its optic: this 'motif' is not a view upon/into a world, but rather marks left on the work's surface by the artist's hand.

The haptic qualities of the work are emphasised in a series of photographs that documents *Vedo*'s production process, photographs that were printed on the poster-format catalogue made for Paolini's solo exhibition at Galleria Notizie in 1970. The images display Paolini's head and the glasses that frame his concentrated gaze, but their undisputed focus is the artist's hands, one of which is drawing, while the other carefully touches the work's surface to help the artist keep his balance. The photographs also reveal how close to the work's surface Paolini was positioned while making it. There is a discrepancy between this intimacy between artist and work, and the idea of the centred and static point of view: in order to make the dots – at least to mark the left and right extremes on the work's 350 cm longitudinal axis – it is obvious that the artist must have abandoned the centred point of view and repositioned himself at the work's flanks. Thus, the imaginary lines that run between *Vedo*'s dots and the point of view do not only correspond to the visual rays extending from the artist's eye at a fixed position, they correspond to the artist's flexible movements from the centre in front of the work towards and between the various points on the work's surface.

In letting the dots mark the artist's physical extensions from the point of view, Paolini's *Vedo* comes to open a 'boomerang space' similar to the one Tommaso Trini describes in Boetti's *Dossier postale*, spanning between the artist positioned at the work's structural centre and the components that mark its extremities. In *Vedo*, the multitude of dots' status as 'points of return' is underlined by the fact that they are marked on paper fastened to the wall. Different from perspectival artworks, which offer a view *through* the work towards the illusory world behind it, the gazes and movements extending from the point of view in Paolini's work are not allowed to penetrate the work's surface; they are stopped as they encounter the impenetrable paper and the wall behind. In "proposing only the front curtain of a stage or the frontispiece of a book", as Paolini puts it, instead of a glance towards a content behind the work, Maddalena Disch finds *Vedo* to exemplify a recurrent theme of Paolini's, that of "blind vision".⁴⁶ Rather

⁴⁶ See Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo*, 202. My translation.

than overview and a penetrating gaze, Paolini's work addresses the limits of sight and the viewers' restricted access to their surroundings.

One can argue against my comparison between *Vedo* and Trini's notion of the 'boomerang space' that Paolini's work does not have a circular or stellar structure; *Vedo* upholds the triangularity of perspectival art, positioning the artist at the apex of the work's structure, distributing the work's components in front of him rather than letting them surround him. On the other hand, Paolini has been willing to spread the dots that mark his 'points of return' across a much larger area than the one initially corresponding to his field of vision. After having exhibited them a few times, he tore the paper sheets from the first version of *Vedo* apart, and the pieces were re-presented in other works. Pieces of the original drawings, overwritten by scribbles made by a visitor when the work was first exhibited at the 6th Biennale de Paris in 1969, were re-combined in a wall-hung collage from 1971 (Fig. 6.2.3). Other pieces appear in an assemblage-like object from the same year, in which they are pressed between plexiglass plates along other paper fragments related to the work, such as a handwritten description of the work and an envelope from the gallery that organised the exhibition where *Vedo* was first shown (Fig. 6.2.4). By releasing the dots from their position within the field of vision and redistributing them in autonomous works with separate exhibition histories, the artist metaphorically expands the breadth of his field of vision and of the 'points of return' that defines the limits of his perceptual outreach. It is as if the components, which represent both his vision rays and his presence through touch, will continue to point back to him from new, widely spread-out locations. The act of distributing the dots across new works allows *Vedo* to be considered as an example of "working in 360 °", and of a work that evokes the artist at its structural centre.

Vedo also establishes an alternative relationship with the perceiving subject, relative to the relationship established between work and viewer in perspectival art. Certainly, *Vedo*'s viewers have the opportunity to detect the spot at which the multitude of dots correspond to their own field of vision, and to position themselves at the 'correct' point of view in front of the work, predefined by the artist. However, since no image is offered, they are not awarded the perspectival overview that subordinates the world to the human gaze, nor inherit the artist's view of the world, but are confronted instead with the work as a solid surface before them. The artist is not positioned as the owner of a prior 'founding view', superior to viewers who come after. Regarding the inheritance of a founding view, Paolini has uttered himself critically against a tendency to consider the artist as a visionary, based on the idea that "his gaze is given to others to see". He fears that the gaze is lost in a "totalizing dimension", which makes artist and

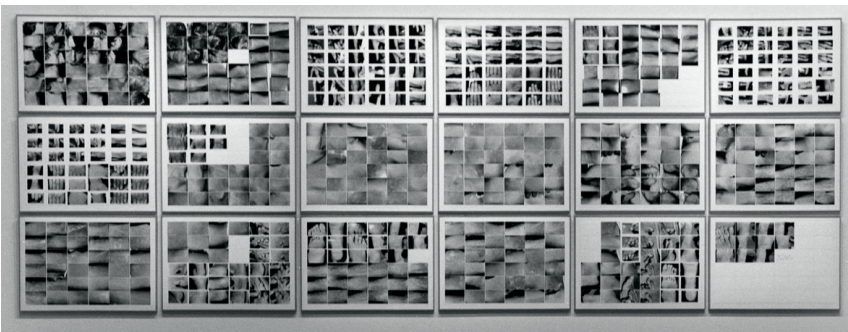
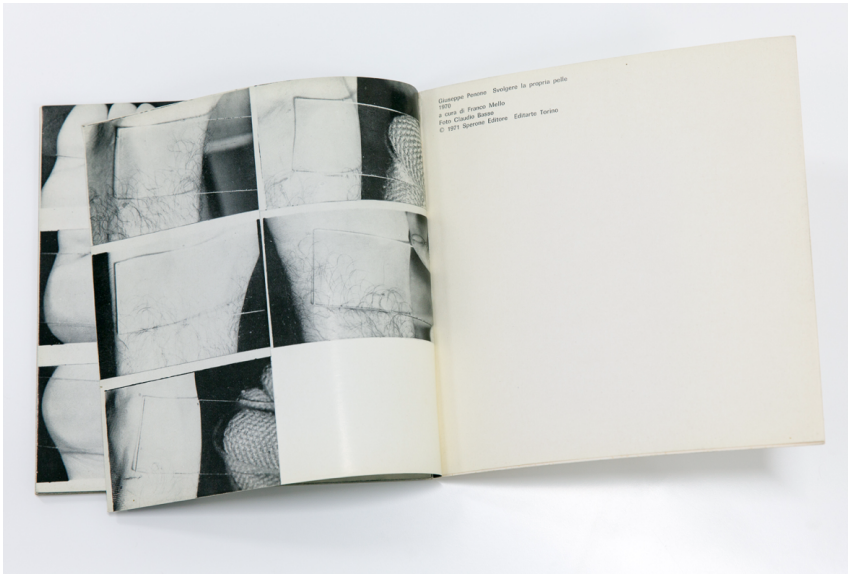
observer lose contact with each other.⁴⁷ To the extent that this work takes notice of and addresses its viewers, it is encouraging them to repeat the movements between the point of view, from which they can experience the artist's visual field corresponding with their own, and the work's surface on which they can study the small dots. This entails a certain orchestration of the perceiving subjects, but since they are invited to engage with the work with their whole body, since they are free to move from the point of view towards the work's surface at any angle without distorting a 'correct view' of the image, and since they are allowed to take a step back and establish a view point that exceeds the artist's field of vision in order to ensure that they can see the whole work, the perceivers are granted a bodily presence and an individual flexibility that relates to their role in spatially oriented art.

Some of the works that Giuseppe Penone presents under the title *Svolgere la propria pelle* (To Unroll One's Own Skin) can also be categorised as composite works which centre the artist between components that relate to his body. In these works, Penone systematically records the entire surface of his own body by pressing a small glass plate successively against every part of his skin, while having Claudio Basso photograph the arrangements.⁴⁸ The resulting photographs are presented as black-and-white montages, but in numerous combinations and formats. Among the best-known versions is a 1971 artist's book combining approximately six photographs on each of its 104 pages (Fig. 6.3.1), and a series of wall-hung planches (Figs. 6.3.2–6.3.4).

In presenting photographic images of Penone's skin, *Svolgere la propria pelle* relates both iconically and indexically to the artists' body. However, the element of iconicity or visual resemblance is counteracted by the photographs' myopic view and the works' fragmented character. When represented by over 600 individual close-up images, the artist is hardly recognisable for others than those who know him most intimately. On the other hand, the indexical relationship between the artist and the images of which the works consist is

⁴⁷ See Lageira, *Regard oblique*, 130. The idea of the 'founding view' is also counteracted by the way Paolini reuses *Vedo* in new works – particularly in *Da "Vedo (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo)"* from 1969, in which Paolini combines clippings of the dotted sheets from the first version of *Vedo* with a cut photograph of himself making the work, itself marked with new dots. Maddalena Disch states that "the pencil points on the photograph repeat and renew that original moment", echoing Paolini, who states in reference to the work that "[t]he author's hand 'draws' the same work in two distinct times: the first time is captured by the photographic lens, the second 'decodes' an instant that has already taken place." See Maddalena Disch, "Da "Vedo (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo)", 1969, available at http://www.fondazionepaolini.it/files_opere/Da_Vedo_1969.pdf (accessed 31.08.2021).

⁴⁸ Note that the title *Svolgere la propria pelle* also applies to works made through other procedures than the pressing of glass against skin. For example, *Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra* preserves an impression of the artist's hand with the help of acid (see Figs. 5.11.1–5.11.2), whereas *Svolgere la propria pelle – finestra* consists of photographs of adhesive tape that had been exposed to graphite and pressed against the artist's skin (see Ill. 6.4).



Above: Fig. 6.3.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle*, 1971. Photographic artist's book, 21.6 x 21.1 cm, 104 pages. Edited by Franco Mello, Sperone editore/Editarte Torino; Middle, left: Fig. 6.3.2. Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle*, 1970. 36 b&w photographs with silver salts toned with selenium on baryta paper and applied on paper, framed in a single panel, 42 x 36 cm; Middle, right: Fig. 6.3.3. Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle*, 1970. 11 b&w photographs with silver salts toned with selenium on baryta paper and applied on paper, framed in a single panel, 42 x 36 cm; Below: Fig. 6.3.4. Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle*, 1970. 607 b&w photographs with silver salts toned with selenium on baryta paper and applied on paper, framed in 18 panels, each 42 x 36 cm.

underlined. To see Penone's body parts pressed against the glass evokes the outmoded technique of glass-plate photography, in which the indexical relation between subject and motif is arguably more comprehensible than in the automated techniques of the day. Not least does Penone's glass plate procedure recall the traditional way of collecting fingerprints by use of inked slabs of glass – an indexically based method developed for the purpose of identification.

The fragmentation of Penone's portrait into 600 images documenting all parts of the artist's body – including the soles of his feet, his armpits, his navel and the top of his head – disturbs the idea of the singular point of view. The artist, in this work, is seen from a multitude of directions; the numerous points of view are below, at the sides, in front, behind and above the photographed artist. *Svolgere la propria pelle* does not comply with the perspectival structure, in which a viewer stands immobile before the work and sees through it, towards a potentially boundless represented world. Rather, the viewer is designated to points of view that surround the represented artist completely. Even if the images are folded out across book spreads and planches, viewers are encouraged to imaginatively reposition themselves in order to construct a coherent image of the modelling artist and conceive the works as the exhaustive portraits they are. This act requires no physical effort and is thus no source for the experience of bodily presence that spatially oriented art is found to incite. However, the experience of being decentred, both in the sense of being confronted by and losing mastery over all that which lies before one's eyes, and of finding the outer world and one's own conception of it to gradually develop as the experience of the work unfolds, is offered also by this work.

Given the multiple viewpoints in *Svolgere la propria pelle*, a number of sight lines can be imagined to be running from the various points of view through the photographs, as if searching for the model behind. The work's structural centre forms in the area where all these sight lines meet. This centre corresponds with the position held by the artist when the photographs were taken, and, by virtue of the intersecting sight lines, his presence is still implied there. This means that the artist is not located in front of his work, like the perspectival painter is, or simply behind it, like the models of representative images are thought to be. Rather, the artist resides *between* the photographs that together make up the work. It is therefore as if the set of photographs forms an exterior layer – a shell, or an extra skin – around the artist's body. Penone has stated in a text related to *Svolgere la propria pelle* that he experiments with the act of “unrolling one's skin against air, water, earth, rock, walls, trees, dogs, handrails, windows, roads, hair, hats, handles, wings, doors, seats, stairs, clothes, books, eyes, sheep,

mushrooms, grass, skin..."⁴⁹ The photographs can in that sense be thought of as 'points of return' in respect to the photographed artist they surround; they mark (the limits of) his extension with respect to the exterior world, and draw up a 'boomerang space' between them, in the centre of which the artist resides and to which he is restricted – as the images of his body pressed up against the glass plates suggest.

In *Svolgere la propria pelle*, the same set of photographs is the source of a number of works/versions, and it is problematic to identify one of these manifestations as the original work.⁵⁰ The unclear status of the images relative to the modelling artist does not mean that the artist's structural presence is compromised: he is evoked between the works' components, and his appearance relies on the relationship between the components rather than the components' relationship to the artist as model. Thus, each of the books and montages will with equal force evoke the artist at the structural centre to which their components point. One can therefore argue that Penone offers a different way of extending himself than Paolini does when ripping the sheets of *Vedo* into pieces and spreading the dots. In the latter case, Paolini uses the work to physically extend himself, to stretch his outreach, like Boetti also extends himself towards the physical sites to which the envelopes of *Viaggi postali* were addressed. Penone's works/versions, on the other hand, indicate that the artist can have multiple presences, at the centre of each manifestation of his work. The artist here expands by virtue of multiplication, coming into presence again each time the work is presented anew, as Boetti also does between the files in each of the 99 editions of *Dossier postale*.⁵¹

Common to *Vedo* and *Svolgere la propria pelle* is nevertheless that both works – like Boetti's – evoke the artist at their structural centre: Paolini resides at this point because the work's 'motif' corresponds with his field of vision, and all of its dots point back to his point of view; Penone is evoked because all lines leading from the multiple points of view towards the photographs of his body, if extended, will intersect at an area that corresponds with the area occupied by the artist when being photographed. Common to both works is also the indexical relationship they indicate between the bodies of the artists who once occupied and still are

⁴⁹ Statement by the artist from 1970, in Gianfranco Maraniello, Giuseppe Penone and Jonathan Watkins, eds. *Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968–2008* (Bologna/Birmingham: MAMbo/Ikon Gallery, 2009), 69. See also Germano Celant, *Giuseppe Penone* (Milan: Electa, 1989), 63.

⁵⁰ For other works/versions than the book and planches, see for instance Cappelletti, "Un cambio di passo", 128. See also the Catalogue, p. 388.

⁵¹ Arguably, Paolini also appears anew between the dots of the new versions of *Vedo* that he made on canvas in 1969, and directly on the wall from 1970 onwards. These versions are not distributed across new works like the original version of *Vedo* was, however, and the circularity of their structure and their ability to centre the artist can therefore be called into question. For the later versions of the work, see Disch, *Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo*, cat. nos. 189, 276, 512 and 608.

evoked at the works' structural centres, and each of the works' components. In Paolini's *Vedo*, the dots represent the artist's visual rays, but they are also physical marks that document his movements from the work's structural centre to its periphery; in Penone's works, each component illustrates the artist's physical encounter with the glass plate, and so alludes to photography's status as an indexical medium that traces and registers its model's presence by virtue of light. This proximity between the centred artists' bodies and the components of their works allows the idea that the components are extensions of the artists' bodies, and the idea that a space opens up between the distributed components, within which the artist resides.

The perceiving subject's position differs slightly between *Vedo* and *Svolgere la propria pelle*. The works of the latter project unfold between the photographs and the artist who is implied at the centre between them. The photographs surround the artist entirely, and although openings are indicated where some of the planches have grid-like spacing between the photographs or empty slots as if certain photographs were missing, they allow no entry. If the photographs form an extra skin around the artist, and the blank openings offer no insight. In exteriorising the viewer, *Svolgere la propria pelle* can be compared to perspectival art, which structurally positions the point of view outside the work. Penone's work arguably enforces this effect when reinstating the exteriorised point of view from all angles around the motif. In Paolini's work, on the other hand, the dots – whether when appearing on the initial sheets of paper, or when torn apart and distributed across new works – do not establish an equally dense confinement. Here, viewers are allowed to position themselves at the work's structural centre, and take the artist's position. However, when looking towards the work, they are not granted a view into a(n illusionary) world behind it; rather they find their gaze returned as it encounters the wall. In that sense, they are situated within the confines of the work's structure. In so far as one accepts the premises that *Vedo* – by virtue of the distribution of the torn paper sheets across new works – has a stellar pattern and is (semi-)circular in structure, the viewer is interiorised rather than exteriorised. But an effect of separation between the work's space and the world is achieved as the viewer's gaze is returned at the work's (inner) surface. In this, *Vedo* establishes as an antithesis to the spatially oriented art discussed above, which is found to establish a work's world continuous with the real world.

Since it is primarily by virtue of spatially oriented artworks' open and inclusive structures that critics like Krauss consider them anti-perspectival and anti-authoritarian, the tendency of *Svolgere la propria pelle* and *Vedo* to close the works' structure off suggests that these Arte Povera works are less opposed to perspectival author-ity than spatial art is. A return to (the critical reception of) Foucault's discussions of Velazquez's and Manet's paintings,

however, makes it possible to suggest that the exteriorisation of viewers is an anti-perspectival strategy on a par with spatial art's openness and inclusion. As noted in Chapter Three, Foucault suggests in his analysis of Velazquez's *Las Meninas* that this painting is a "representation of Classical representation" because it displays the premises and elements of representation.⁵² In this context, Foucault is not (only/primarily) referring to visual representation, he indicates that the painting sheds light on 'representation' as the ordering principle of the "Classical age", which spans from the mid seventeenth to the late eighteenth century, and more or less coincides with the age of 'anthropocracy' that Panofsky finds theorised by Desargues, Descartes and Kant, and anticipated by the *costruzione legittima*. The Classical age, as Foucault presents it in *Les mots et les choses*, comprehended the mind as a neutral *tabula* on which sense impressions were projected and the entities of the world ordered as representations. It thus presumed absolute *transparency* between *what is* and human ideas/representations of what is, and an absolute distinction between those with the power to represent and that which is represented.⁵³ In suggesting that *Las Meninas* is pointing to the means of representation, Foucault's analysis arguably implies that Velazquez's painting exposes, as opposed to confirms, the rules of the Classical age.⁵⁴ As noted, Foucault emphasises how viewing subjects are elided from the painted scene in *Las Meninas*: the painting's actual viewers soon discover that they do not appear in the painting's mirror, which logically would show them in the mirror's reflection, but instead displays a reflection of King Philip IV and his wife. Velazquez's painting thereby grants viewers *awareness* of their own presence in front of the represented world, and of how a superior, 'founding view' precedes their own view of the world that opens up in front of them. This awareness of one's own, exterior position relative to a world that is already represented is a first precondition for an alternative epistemology that allows conceptions of the world based on individual experience.

Awareness of oneself and of one's own position as a result of the encounter with an artwork is also a topic in Foucault's posthumously published lectures on Édouard Manet's paintings, and in the critical reception of these lectures. Foucault credits Manet for refuting representational illusionism by underlining the materiality and the object-character of the

⁵² Michel Foucault, "Las Meninas" in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London/New York, NY: Routledge, 1991 [1970] [1966]), 16. See Chapter Three, p. 79.

⁵³ See Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xvii, as well as Chapter 3, "Representing".

⁵⁴ Foucault's stance in the question of visual artworks' ability to exceed the rules of the period or discourse within which they were made is disputed. I rely on Catherine Soussloff, who refers to Daniel Arasse's claim that paintings for Foucault are "anachronic in relation to [their] own time" and insists that they can visualise still unrecognised truths and "make visible what otherwise could not be expressed by language". See Catherine M. Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 14–18.

canvas: in Foucault’s own words, Manet is “[f]ar from wishing the viewer to forget the rectangle on which he paints, he does nothing but reproduce it, insist on it, double it and multiply it in the very interior of his picture.”⁵⁵ In emphasising the “material elements of the canvas”, Foucault finds Manet to (re)invent the “object-painting” – i.e. “the painting as materiality, the painting as something coloured which clarifies an external light and in front of which, or about which, the viewer resolves.”⁵⁶ The painting’s status as a physical object with which viewers are confronted and through which they are made aware of their own physical presence, is demonstrated in Manet’s 1882 *Un bar aux Folies-Bergère* (A Bar at the Folies Bergère) (Ill. 6.2). Foucault claims that this painting, of a barmaid behind her counter, opposes the painterly tradition’s practice of assigning viewers to a “precise”, “fixed” and “constant” point that the painter occupied before them, because the depicted barmaid is seen “absolutely face-to-face”, while the reflection of her body in the mirror immediately behind her is seen from the side. “The painter therefore occupies – and the viewer is therefore invited to occupy after him – successively or rather simultaneously two incompatible places: one here and the other over there.” What is more, the mirror reflection reveals that the barmaid is talking to a man. His position right opposite the barmaid is the same as the painter’s when representing her face-to-face, and that a viewer holds when approaching the painting. However, the man in the mirror looks down at the barmaid rather than straight at her, and thus implies a third, elevated point of view. Since the painting’s mirror shatters the point of view in this way, Foucault remarks that “it is not possible to know where the painter has placed himself in order to paint the picture as he has done it, and where we must place ourselves in order to see a spectacle such as



Ill. 6.2. Édouard Manet, *Un bar aux Folies-Bergère*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 95 x 130 cm.

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting* [1967–1971], trans. Matthew Barr (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 67.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 79, 31. Regarding Foucault’s terms *le tableau-objet* and *la peinture-objet*, I have chosen to rely on Soussloff’s translation of both into ‘object-painting’, rather than Matthew Barr’s ‘picture object’ and ‘painting object’. The latter quote thus also relies on Soussloff, rather than Barr. See Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting*, 54.

this.” With this, he indicates that Manet’s painting shifts attention from what happens within the image to what happens in front of it: “The picture appears like a space in front of which and by rapport with which one can move around”, and thus makes “the viewer mobile before the picture”. Whereas Velazquez’ mirror makes viewers aware of their own presence in front of the work’s world, the mirror in Manet’s painting also releases the viewers from the fixed position they are assigned in the perspectival structure.⁵⁷

Peter Brix Søndergaard has argued that the multiple points of view that Foucault detects in Manet’s painting reflect a changed understanding of the subject: the subjects that relate to Manet’s painting – both the mirrored barmaid and the viewers who find themselves split between the various points of view and identification with the conversing man – are fragmented. In his analysis, Foucault further remarks that there is no trace of the conversing man’s shadow on the barmaid’s face, as the composition’s lightening would suggest.⁵⁸ According to Søndergaard, the multiple viewpoints and this lack of shadow makes the painting incite an experience of loss, a loss of oneself.⁵⁹ Following this line of thinking, one can argue that Foucault’s analysis of Manet’s painting – or its reception – suggests that a dethroning of the perspectival tradition’s centred subject can be achieved through a strategy of exteriorisation, in which the viewing subjects find themselves expelled from and shattered by the work. This alternative involves the experience of fragmentation and loss, as opposed to the experience of finding oneself confirmed by and co-existent with the work/world which is emphasised in the phenomenological discourse on spatial art. As such, it prefigures Bishop’s understanding of spatially oriented art as a “mechanism of subjective fragmentation”, excepting her focus on the viewer’s entry into the work.⁶⁰ Like Bishop’s position, the strategy of exteriorisation/fragmentation nevertheless involves an element of freedom. It releases viewers from a superior ‘founding view’ and grants them the possibility to establish their own positions in the world and their own views on it.

A comparable, paradoxical experience of exteriority/fragmentation and freedom is offered viewers of Paolini’s *Vedo* and Penone’s *Svolgere la propria pelle*. Paolini’s work abruptly return the viewers’ gazes as they encounter the dotted wall, but it also allows them to depart from the artist’s point of view enabling them to inspect the work up close and see it from

⁵⁷ Foucault, *Manet and the Object of Painting*, 76–79 for the quotes in the latter half of this paragraph.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁹ Peter Brix Søndergaard, “Hvad spejlerne spejlede: spekulationer over tre reflekser i historiske rum”, *Passage: tidsskrift for litteratur og kritik*, Vol. 4, No. 7, 1989, 84.

⁶⁰ Bishop does mention poststructuralist thinking in general, and lists Foucault as a main example, when accounting for her understanding of the term ‘decentred’ as tied to fragmentation rather than self-confirmation. See Bishop, *Installation Art*, 13.

a distance; it awards them mobility. *Svolgere la propria pelle* presents the numerous photographs as a closed confinement around the artist's body to which the viewers have no access, and encourages them to distribute themselves across some 600 points of view in order to construct a coherent image of the modelling artist behind the work, thus releasing them from a fixed and predefined position in front of the work. *Vedo* and *Svolgere la propria pelle* do not idealise a symbiosis between perceiver, work and world, where the work is situated in and continuous with real space, where the perceiving subject is invited in, and where work and perceiver both come to completion during the act of perception, with the result that the autonomous self is given up in favour of co-emergence and co-existence with the work, and, by extension, with the world itself. Rather, they suggest that perceiving subjects experience a process of differentiation, in which they measure themselves against and must redefine and relocate themselves relative to the works that expel them.

Extending Through Social Networks

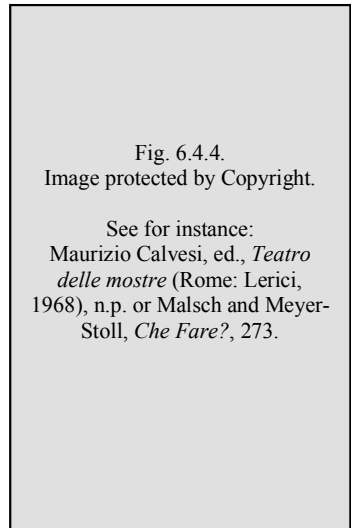
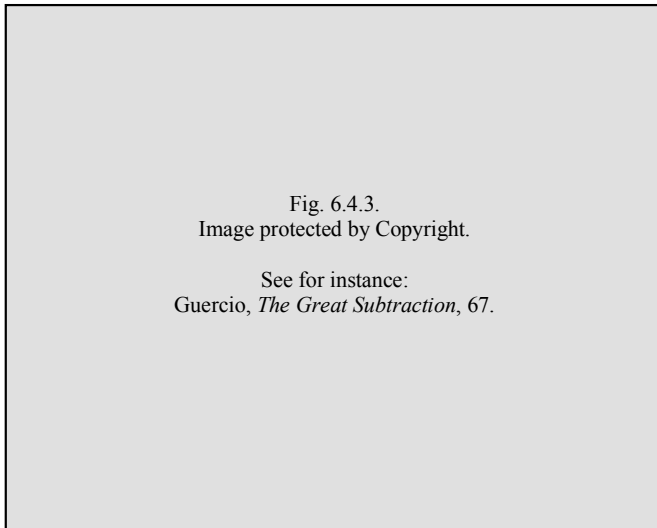
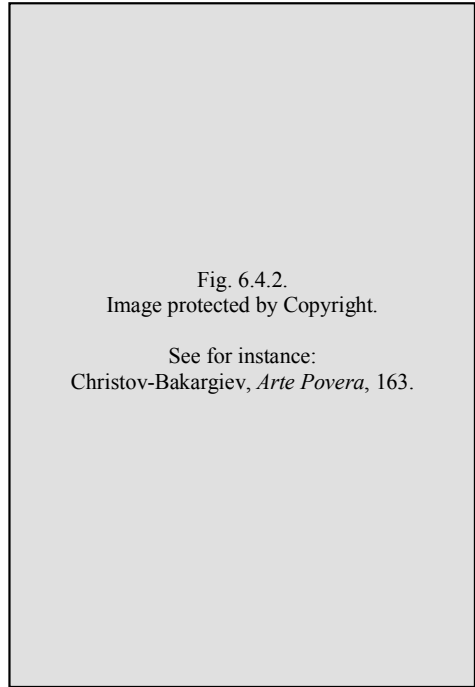
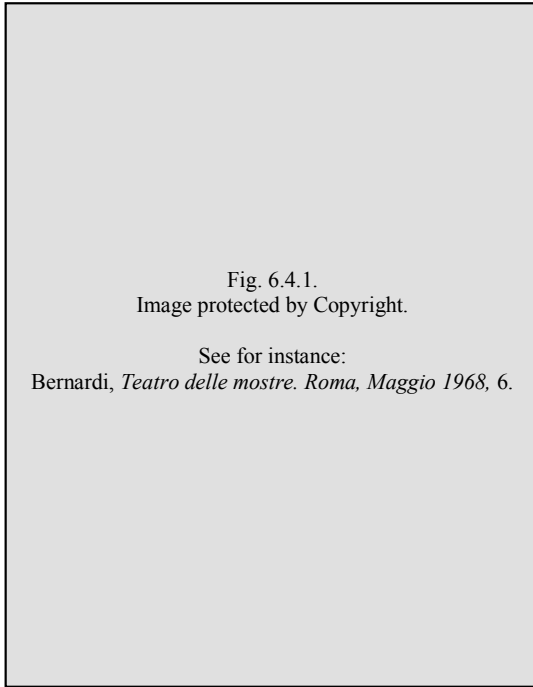
The second group of composite works are made of components that relate to the artists' social networks; to personal, professional or random acquaintances. Boetti's *Viaggi postali* and *Dossier postale* are cases in point. In what follows I will bring two further 'work-complexes' into the discussion.

Emilio Prini's contribution to the exhibition-event "Teatro delle mostre" (Theatre of Exhibitions) at the Roman Galleria La Tartaruga in May 1968 is a complex compilation of works.⁶¹ The exhibition, curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, was organised as a series of events, and invited different artists to fill the gallery space each night. Prini's contribution overlapped with Paolo Icaro's *2 pomeriggi in 3 o 4* (2 afternoons in 3 or 4), which divided a gallery space with transparent vinyl pierced by numerous holes in regular grids.⁶² The autonomy of Prini's and Icaro's respective contributions remains contested, but I rely on Icaro's insistence that they were planned separately, focusing solely on Prini's.⁶³ The latter's contribution was itself manifold: as the announcing poster indicates, his *2 oggetti di rimbalzo* (2 Rebound Objects) was a combination of two individual works that partly converged (Fig. 6.4.1). First, the installation *Perimetro* (Perimeter) comprised a total of 25 lead sheets in stacks of 5, piled on

⁶¹ "Teatro delle mostre", Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, 6 May – 31 May 1968. Organised by Plinio De Martiis and Achille Bonito Oliva.

⁶² For Icaro's work see the exhibition poster and the poster announcing the particular event, as well as a written description in Ilaria Bernardi, *Teatro delle mostre. Roma, Maggio 1968* (Milan: Scalpendi editore, 2014), 6, 28–30 and 182–185.

⁶³ See Bernardi, *Teatro delle mostre*, 183.



Above, left: Fig. 6.4.1. Poster announcing Emilio Prini's and Paolo Icaro's contributions to "Teatro delle mostre", Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, May 1968; Above, right: Fig. 6.4.2. Emilio Prini, *Perimetro*, 1967. Serigraphy on 25 lead sheets, each 25 x 25 cm; Below, left: Fig. 6.4.3. Emilio Prini with *Perimetro*, 1967. Exhibition view from Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, spring 1968; Below, right: Fig. 6.4.4. Emilio Prini with (*LEGNI*) "Gente del 9 maggio 1968", "Teatro delle mostre", Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, May 1968.

the floor at the centre and in the corners of the exhibition space (Figs. 6.4.2–6.4.3).⁶⁴ Within the confines of *Perimetro*, Prini placed the second work, referred to as (*LEGNI*) “*Gente del 9 maggio 1968*” ([Wood] “People of 9 May 1968”).⁶⁵ It consisted of a jute sack filled with wooden bricks, on which the artist had written the names of people he encountered along the way from his hometown Genoa to the gallery in Rome, a journey undertaken in a Fiat 600 together with Icaro and their respective partners (Fig. 6.4.4).

Prini’s contribution also comprised a third, performative element: the artist read out a self-composed text that was screen-printed in fragments onto *Perimetro*’s lead sheets. Gabriele Guercio reports that the text comprised “statements on the themes of space, light, and sound”, as a photograph of one plate also suggests (Fig. 6.4.2).⁶⁶ Prini had to move between the five stacks to make a coherent recitation, and sources indicate that he did so by jumping. Occasionally, he stopped by the burlap sack, pulled up pieces of wood and read the names inscribed out loud, the performative element further intertwining the two works installed.⁶⁷

In all of his three contributions to “Teatro delle mostre”, Prini tends to be “working in 360 °”. In *Perimetro*, the compositional elements – the piles of lead sheets – are positioned so as to repeat the shape of the exhibition space and to emphasise its centre. As the title *Perimetro* indicates, the corner piles come to define the room’s and the work’s perimeter: it is as if an imaginary confinement is drawn up between the peripheral piles, so as to encircle the lead sheets positioned at the work’s centre. In examining the perimeter of the gallery space, *Perimetro* resembles other Arte Povera works, notably Paolini’s *Lo Spazio*, exhibited in the first Arte Povera show at La Bertesca in Genoa in 1967 (Ill. 6.3).⁶⁸ Paolini’s work consisted of 8 wooden elements, each 10 cm high, shaped like the capitalised letters of the work’s title. The letters were distributed evenly across the four walls of a gallery at an approximate eye height. To experience the work, visitors would ideally position themselves at the room’s centre and turn 360°. However, where the letters of Paolini’s work form a meaningful word when being read

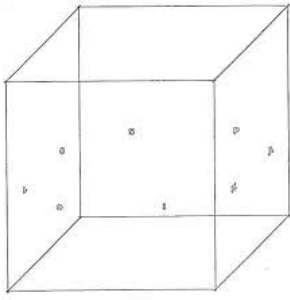
⁶⁴ For colour images, see Ingvild Goetz and Rainald Schaumacher, eds., *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection* (Munich: Kunstverlag Ingvild Goetz G.m.b.H, 2001), 184.

⁶⁵ To speak of (*LEGNI*) “*Gente del 9 maggio 1968*” as a separate work is admittedly problematic, both because it – to my knowledge – has only been exhibited in the complex constellation at “Teatro delle mostre”, and because the hierarchy between works, materials and other characterisations is ambiguous on the announcement poster. It seems to me, however, that (*LEGNI*) “*Gente del 9 maggio 1968*” holds the same status as *Perimetro* – definitively an independent work – on the poster. I thus treat (*LEGNI*) “*Gente del 9 maggio 1968*” as a work in its own right.

⁶⁶ Gabriele Guercio, *The Great Subtraction* (Brussels: ASA Publishers, 2011), 66.

⁶⁷ In reference to Prini’s (*LEGNI*) “*Gente del 9 maggio 1968*”, the event poster announces the phrase “Il terzo salto dei punti” (the third jump of the points). Ilaria Bernardi takes this to indicate that Prini read the names out loud on his third jump from one of the corners. See Bernardi, *Teatro delle mostre*, 29.

⁶⁸ Another example is Prini’s own *Perimetro neon* (also known as *Perimetro d’aria*), 1967, which consisted of sound-activated neon lights installed on the floor at the four corners and in the centre of another room in the same La Bertesca exhibition and filled the defined space with white light and scattering noise.



Ill. 6.3. Giulio Paolini,
Progetto per Lo Spazio, 1967.

consecutively, and thereby establish a continuous sequence between the work's components, Prini's work activates and structurally incorporates the work's centre. The text fragments printed on the lead sheets establish a textual relationship not only between the peripheral sheets, but also between those sheets and those at centre. The work thus opens (as) a space spanning between the sheets at the room's/work's centre and those in each corner, and establishes a stellar pattern comparable to the one Tommaso Trini indicates between the artist-sender

and the addresses that marks the works' spread 'points of return' in Boetti's *Dossier postale* and *Viaggi postali*. A key difference between *Perimetro* and Boetti's works, however, is that the latter centre the artist, since it is by virtue of intermediate returns to him that the works' components are held together. In contrast, the compositional elements in *Perimetro* establish physical and textual relationships directly between each other and do not require or evoke the artists' presence at/as the structural centre between them. In and by itself, *Perimetro* is thus not an artist-centred composite work.

Prini is present in the other two parts of his threefold "Teatro delle mostre" contribution, and in two different ways. The performative action, in which Prini jumped between the lead sheets, reading their text fragments out loud, complements *Perimetro*'s structure: Prini substantiates the connection between the text fragments in his continuous recitation, and the physical connection between the components when moving between them. In the performance, the importance of the artist as the one who binds the work together is underlined. On the other hand, Prini's active movements between centre and circumference are at odds with the artist's appearance in *Viaggi postali* and *Dossier postale*, in which the artist resides inconspicuously and statically as/at the works' centre, from where he dispatches the works' components and to which they point back. In the "Teatro delle mostre" performance, Prini appears with a strong physical presence, and moves his own body towards the work's peripheral 'points of return'. Here, the artist dispatches himself to hold the work's components together, rather than holding the work together as/at its structural centre.

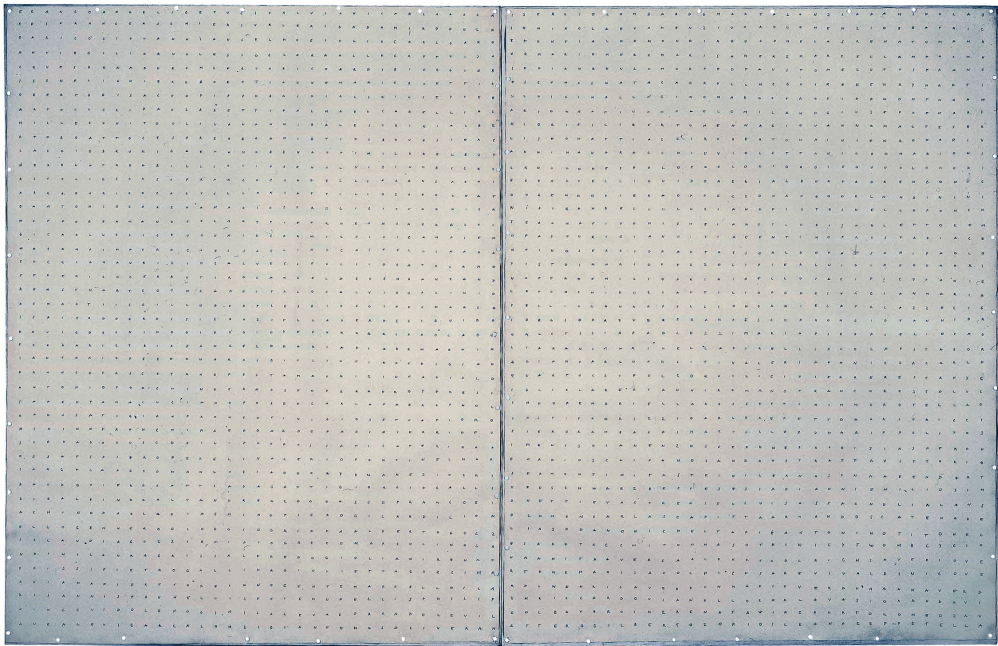
The part of Prini's contribution that best exemplifies the boomerang structure is therefore (*LEONI*) "*Gente del 9 maggio 1968*". Between the components of this particular work, Prini has a presence that is akin to Boetti's between the components of his postal project.

The personal encounter with Prini on the route from Genoa to Rome is the criterion for each name to be written on a brick and become a component of the work, making Prini the common denominator between the persons referred to by the bricks. When exhibited, these persons may be spread in all kinds of directions. Nevertheless, their shared relation to the artist continues to hold the bricks – and, in turn, the people represented by them – together. Because the shared relation to the artist is the factor that provides the work a logical unity and keeps it together as a totality of connected parts, the work’s components point back to the artist, and evoke his presence as/at the structural centre among them. Prini’s contribution to “Teatro delle mostre”, then, has a triple-layered structure, in which one layer is independent of the artist’s presence (*Perimetro*), one layer exposes the artist’s presence (the performance), and one layer implies the artist’s appearance structurally (*LEGNI*), through which it can be categorised as an artist-centred composite work among the others discussed in this chapter.

A compilation of works by Giulio Paolini also implies the artist’s presence between compositional elements that relate to his social network. *Titolo* (Title), which was made in 1967–68, is a largescale diptych comprising two sheets of white carton attached to canvas. As Germano Celant has pointed out, it therefore alludes to the pages of an open book.⁶⁹ On the two “pages” are the full names of roughly 150 persons appearing in Paolini’s personal notebook, most of them connected to Turin’s art scene at the time, hand-written in semi-alphabetical order. The listing of names follows the conventional left to right logic of Western writing, and runs uninterrupted across each page. No hyphen indicates when a name is split over two lines, and since all letters are uppercase, no initials signal the beginning of a new name. Neither extra spacing nor punctuation separate the name of one person from that of another, nor a first name from a surname. Given their even distribution on the pages, the letters come to form a grid-like structure, where reading downwards, diagonally and across the pages are equally encouraged. In this uniform layout, no single name is allowed to stand out from the overwhelming totality of letters (Fig. 6.5.1).

Paolini’s 1968 artist’s book *Ciò che non ha limiti e che per la sua stessa natura non amette limitazioni di sorta* (That which has no limits and by its own nature admits no limits of any kind) follows the same logic as *Titolo*: starting from the upper left of the first of its 128 pages, names are spelled out continuously, with twenty characters – this time type-written – evenly distributed across each page (Fig. 6.5.2). The book’s title equals an encyclopaedic definition of “infinity” and could indicate that the list of names is potentially ever-evolving. At

⁶⁹ Germano Celant, *Giulio Paolini* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2003 [1972]), 83–84.



Above, left: Fig. 6.5.1. Giulio Paolini, *Titolo*, 1967–68 (detail). Ink on paper, primed canvas, drawing pins, 2 elements of 160 x 250 cm; Above, right: Fig. 6.5.2. Giulio Paolini, *Ciò che non ha limiti e che per la sua stessa natura non amette limitazioni di sorta*, 1968. Printed bound volume, 128 pages, each 24 x 18 cm. Edition of 50 in Arabic numerals plus 6 artist's proofs in Roman numerals; Below: Fig. 6.5.3. Giulio Paolini, *Titolo (II)*, 1968–71. Ink on paper, affixed to primed canvas with white drawing pins, 2 elements of 160 x 250 cm.

least, that seems to be the case if taking Paolini's second version of the *Titolo*-diptych into consideration. *Titolo (II)*, dating from 1971, is identical to the previous version in terms of material and format, but with a higher density of letters (Fig. 6.5.3). This density demonstrates how Paolini's network has increased by nearly a hundred acquaintances – and lost only a few – over the course of three years.⁷⁰

When Celant comments on Paolini's book, he emphasises that proper names cannot be structured relative to each other so as to compose an overarching statement, like the words of meaningful sentences. To make sense of the listed names, Celant suggests, they must be traced back to their referents – that is, to the individuals to which they belong. For the reader unfamiliar with the particular persons that make up Paolini's network, the book is experienced as nothing but “a chain of signs and words” and “a vocabulary of completely abstract and senseless terms.”⁷¹ Celant finds Paolini's book to reveal that proper names are “personal and subjective term[s], without any universal or linguistic character”; they are terms of “abstract classification, inseparable from the person.”⁷² *Ciò che non ha limiti...*, Celant argues, exemplifies a tendency in artists' books at the time to demonstrate the lack of objectivity of language and of prose. However, Celant's positioning of Paolini's work within the context of artists' books and the discourse of *verbal* representation does not take into consideration the fact that Paolini used the same method in two wall-hung ‘images’, *Titolo* and *Titolo (II)*, in those cases addressing the *pictorial* manner of representation. In addition and contrary to Celant's claim, the evenly distributed letters of Paolini's works establish an internal dynamic independent of the names' real-world references, and rather point from the pages of the book and the surfaces of the diptychs back to the artist himself. For the grid of letters to take on a referential function, they need to be linked to Paolini's notebook; it is this knowledge that makes the separate letters assemble as proper names before the reader/viewer. Although tracing these names back to their real-life carriers would add depth to the works, there is no need to take such a step out of the works in order to make them coherent: each work already has an internal logic in the sense that all of their components (the letters) form into units (the names) that point back to the artist who is their common link and thus holds the works together.

A comparison between Paolini's appearance in this threefold of works and in the 1968 *Autoritratto* discussed in Chapter Three, in which Paolini appropriates a self-portrait by Henri

⁷⁰ For full lists of the names that appear in *Titolo* and *Titolo II*, see Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato*, 166 and 225, respectively.

⁷¹ Germano Celant, *Book as Artwork 1960/1972* [London, Nigel Greenwood, 1972] (Brooklyn, NY: 6 Decades Books, 2010), 33–34.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 34.

Rousseau and populates it with people from his own milieu, is in place.⁷³ On the one hand, *Autoritratto* evokes the artist in the same manner as the letters of *Titolo*, *Titolo (II)* and *Ciò che non ha limiti...* do; through acquaintances and professional affiliations. On the other hand, Paolini has another form of presence in *Autoritratto* than in the letter works. In the former, he aligns himself with Rousseau by virtue of the work's title, and thus projects himself into the picture, where he is evoked in Rousseau's figure. In that sense, his presence is *visually* implied. By contrast, Paolini is visually absent from the letter works, since his own name does not appear among those listed. Rather, his appearance in these works is *structural*: since all of the works' components point back to him, and since their shared relationship with him legitimates their co-presence in the work, the artist is evoked at/as the works' structural centre.

Boetti's *Viaggi postali* and *Dossier postale*, Prini's (*LEGNI*) "*Gente del 9 maggio 1968*", and Paolini's *Titolo*, *Titolo (II)* and *Ciò che non ha limiti...* are all built up in the same way: each work is composed of elements that refer to the artist as a social/professional being, and he is the common reference or contact point between them. Although some of the persons whose names appear on the works' envelopes, bricks and pages may have relationships of their own, irrespective of the artists, the connection between the compositional elements as such is not immediate or direct. Rather, the relation between them runs through the artist, centred as the shared point of reference. These works establish a different relationship between the centred artists and the works' peripheral components than *Vedo* and *Svolgere la propria pelle* do. Since the components of the latter works represent aspects of the artists – Paolini's field of perception and Penone's skin – they can be seen as extensions of the artists' bodies, and the 'boomerang space' opened by these works as continuous with the artists themselves. The works, in that sense, draw up the artist's outline relative to the exterior world. In the works presented in this section, on the other hand, the components represent *others*. This means that the spaces that open up between the artists and the components in each work are not in the same way direct extensions of the artists themselves. Nevertheless, these works also come to define the artists' outreach: since the components mark the artists' contact points with others, they also mark their counterpoints – i.e. how far the artists extend unhindered before encountering others. Rather than defining the artists' extension by virtue of their own bodily confines, the components that represent their social contacts are 'points of return' that define the artists' extension in the social world negatively and from the outside. Via the components of each work, one can draw a

⁷³ See Chapter Three, p. 117 and further.

circumference that encloses the artist and secludes a space that corresponds to the artist as ‘the spot that others are not’.

In positioning their artists as/at the works’ structural centres, and in marking the works’ spaces as the artists’ own, the works discussed here appear author-itarian. Paolini’s way of distributing the names of other people in uniform grids may serve to illustrate how the artists arrange the world around themselves. However, the arrangements are not as rigid as the grids of Paolini’s works immediately indicate. The names that make up the works are presented in slightly altered positions in *Titolo*, *Titolo (II)* and *Ciò che non ha limiti...*: a few names disappear and many are added, and these subtractions and additions affect the overall layout and the internal relations between the components. The order in which the names were presented in Prini’s work must have been random, as he is to have pulled them up from the jute sack where they were mixed together. Boetti presents *Viaggi postali* and *Dossier postale* in various formats and according to different structural principles – sorted by date or alphabetically, for instance – and thereby allows the relationships between the respective components to be altered. In addition, the works in question all tend to cut or undermine the referential link between the names incorporated in the works and the real people they relate to. This is an aspect of Prini’s (*LEGNI*) because the artist, most likely, had briefly met and knew little about the referenced persons he encountered on his journey. In Paolini’s works, a separation between name and referent is encouraged as the names are dispersed into single letters and distributed, making the names nearly indiscernible. In Boetti’s works, separation is activated when the artist gives the real persons fictive addresses, through which there is ‘no one home’ where he seeks to establish contact. These tendencies towards separation between the representing and the represented entity suggest that the works do not regulate social contacts, they merely use their names to stake out a terrain that the artist can consider his own. The proper names listed in these works are released of their descriptive and designating functions and serve the alternative function of defining the extensions of the artistic selves.

In letting other people play an important function in the works by virtue of their names, Arte Povera’s composite works with social components have in common with the spatial artworks discussed above that they rely on other people than the artist to fulfil them. In the current works, however, it is not a case of welcoming other subjects into the work and trusting them to realise the work in their perception. On the contrary, a key factor of Arte Povera works is the process of differentiating the work itself from the world of others on which it relies to create a private space which the artists can define as theirs. The choice of privacy over the inclusion of others, however, does not necessarily mean that the Arte Povera works are more

authoritarian than the spatial works are. Rather than a point of priority, situated in front of and overlooking a potentially infinite world, as the artist of the perspectival tradition is found to do, we are here dealing with an idea of the artistic self as situated among others, an artistic self whose constitution is defined and limited by those who are already found out there.

Boetti's, Prini's and Paolini's works are far from presenting the stable and self-coherent self that is associated with perspectival art: the inclusion of the deceased Duchamp and the newborn son, whose itinerary is open-ended, among the others that Boetti defines himself relative to in the postal project, and the expanding list of contacts across Paolini's works, suggest the exploration of an evolving self, whose constitution and character changes as the world changes. This is similar to the dynamic understanding of the self that is hinted at in Paolini's *Vedo*, when the dots of the original work are redistributed in new works, and the artist's extension is thereby altered. By defining the artist's presence relative to a most limited geographical and temporal span (the route from Genoa to Rome), Prini's (*LEGNI*) implies that he may take on a variety of appearances in different contexts, like Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle* also suggests when evoking the artist anew between different sets of photographs in different manifestations of the work. Whether exploring a dynamically evolving or shifting constitutions of the self, all works suggest a certain precariousness regarding the figure of the artist. This is also indicated in statements made by Paolini in reference to *Titolo*. He explains that "the names which recur in the picture are a sort of frame for my own activity",⁷⁴ and admits that he here "verifies his existence as a subject" as he "qualifies his own identity via the extension of the names of people who acknowledges it."⁷⁵ The statements illustrate that the position and presence of the artistic self is not taken for granted, and that the works are the results of the artists' search for themselves and for their place in the (social) world.

Extending as Acting Force

The last category of composite works consists of works in which the artists make structural appearances between components that relate to nature and natural forces. A serial work and a series of works by Giovanni Anselmo serve as examples.

The first work, *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale* (Documentation of human interference in universal gravitation) comprises twenty photographs

⁷⁴ Giulio Paolini quoted in Carla Lonzi, *Autoritratto* (Milan: et.al, 2020 [1969]), 152, quoted in Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 84.

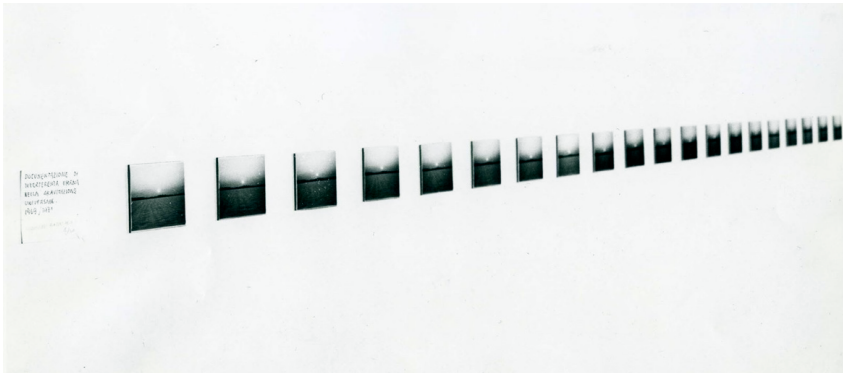
⁷⁵ Giulio Paolini in conversation with Maddalena Disch, December 2001, quoted in Disch, *Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo*, 166. English translation from Archivio Giulio e Anna Paolini website, see <https://www.fondazionepaolini.it/eng/artwork/GPO-0147?searchid=2298fec54abda&i=16> (accessed 13.12.2021).

taken with Instamatic camera in 1969, and hung successively so as to form a horizontal line on the gallery wall when exhibited for the first time at Galleria Multipli in Turin two years later (Fig. 6.6.1). The motif in each of the grainy black and white images is the same: a distant line of dark trees separates the lower half of the image – a snow-covered field on the outskirts of Turin – from the upper half, where the sun is the only discernible element on an otherwise clear sky. Albeit not immediately conspicuous, slight differences do occur between the frames. For example, the sun decreases in size from image to image, and steadily sinks towards the horizon (Figs. 6.6.2 and 6.6.3). The photographic sequence documents sunset on a winter afternoon.

The natural cause behind the experience of the setting sun – that is, Earth’s slow rotation – cannot explain all the minor alterations that the motif undergoes from photograph to photograph. The fact that the line of trees comes gradually closer to the foreground throughout the image sequence, making the trees appear more dominant in the last frame than in the first, reveals an element of ‘human interference’, as suggested by the work’s title. To be more specific, Anselmo took the sequence’s first photograph before moving twenty steps towards the West – that is, in the direction of the line of trees and the setting sun – took a new shot there and repeated the procedures of walking twenty steps and photographing until he had shot the twenty frames.

Through the alternating actions that form the base of *Documentazione di interferenza umana...*, Anselmo both simulates and distances himself from natural forces. On the one hand, his act of gradually moving in a single direction echoes the slow rotation of Earth herself. In that sense, one can agree with Marcella Beccaria that this work relates to the “awareness of being an ‘energy situation’ in constant rapport with other immensely greater forces”, which is recurrently thematised in Anselmo’s statements and in many of his works.⁷⁶ As Beccaria notes, Anselmo’s photographic work *La mia ombra verso l’infinito dalla cima dello Stromboli durante l’alba del 16 agosto 1965* (My own shadow towards infinity from the top of Stromboli at dawn of 16 August 1965) – which is considered to document the formative and “epiphanic moment” at which Anselmo saw his shadow projected into the infinite sky, and thus experienced himself as belonging to a universal whole – was also on display at Galleria Multipli when *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* was exhibited. The juxtaposition of the two

⁷⁶ Marcella Beccaria, “Interference in universal gravitation”, in *Giovanni Anselmo*, eds. Marcella Beccaria and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (Milan: Skira Editore, 2016), 174. Beccaria refers particularly to Anselmo’s statement “I, the world, things, life – we are all situations of energy. The point is not to fix the situations, but to keep them open and alive – like processes”, from Germano Celant, *Art Povera* (Milan: Mazotta, 1969), 109. Note that Beccaria’s translation is from Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 233, and that the translation in Celant’s book is slightly different.



Top: Fig. 6.6.1. Giovanni Anselmo, *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale*, 1969. Photography on paper, 20 elements, each 3 x 3 cm. Edition of 20 by Edizioni Multipli, Turin, 1971. Exhibition view, Galleria Multiple, Turin, 1971; Middle, left: Fig. 6.6.2. Giovanni Anselmo, *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale*, 1969, image #1; Middle, right: Fig. 6.6.3. Giovanni Anselmo, *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale*, 1969, image #20; Below: Fig. 6.6.4. Giovanni Anselmo, *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale*, 1969. Photography on emulsified canvas, 20 elements, each of 30 x 30 cm. Exhibition view, Castello di Rivoli, 2016.

works, Beccaria argues, incites the idea that both document the same experience of energetic entanglement and environmental embeddedness.⁷⁷

On the other hand, Anselmo presents his work as an ‘interference’, and has underlined at a later stage that the purpose of the action “was to have *autonomous movement* with respect to that of the Earth and the stars; to *interfere*, by means of this small trajectory of mine, with the incessant movement of the universe”.⁷⁸ His walk literally is a countermovement, in the sense that he moves in the opposite direction of Earth’s rotation. By moving against the Earth and towards the setting sun, Anselmo attempted to postpone the moment of the sun’s disappearance below the horizon. He sought to slow the speed of the passing of the day, and, in the artist’s own conception, *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* “lengthened the day by a breath”.⁷⁹ Beccaria concedes and elaborates by stating that the work achieves the “epic result” of “securing a tiny, extra fragment of life”. In that sense, the work is “countering the inescapable passing of time” and grappling with the finitude of human life, she argues.⁸⁰ More than documenting an artist who dissolves into the natural environment, *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* thus documents an artist who strives to establish himself as an autonomous force among or against the natural forces that surround him.

Since Anselmo’s images, when exhibited, are distributed along a horizontal line, they share some of the characteristics of a panoramic view: as Elizabeth Mangini has pointed out, the long line of photographs “create a horizon for the viewer that extends beyond one’s peripheral vision”, and the sequence “acts as a filmstrip when ‘read’ from left to right”, as if the viewers’ eyes could slide from one image to the next.⁸¹ However, the presentation “does not employ serialization just as ‘one thing after another’”: the slight changes between the respective images break the illusion of continuity between them, so that “the viewer can replicate the changing perspectives of the artist as he performed the action.”⁸² As Beccaria notes, the separateness of the images is further underlined in later installations of the work –

⁷⁷ Beccaria, “Interference in universal gravitation”, 174. For Anselmo’s experience at Mount Stromboli, see for instance Jean-Christophe Ammann, “Giovanni Anselmo”, in Giovanni Anselmo, eds. Jean-Christophe Ammann, Giovanni Anselmo and Margrit Suter (Basel/Eindhoven: Kunsthalle Basel/Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1979), 15.

⁷⁸ Giovanni Anselmo in conversation with Marcella Beccaria, February 2016, quoted in Beccaria, “Interference in universal gravitation”, 173. My emphasis.

⁷⁹ Giovanni Anselmo, written statement in Renato Barilli, ed., *Gennaio '70. Comportamenti progetti mediazioni* [Bologna: Edizioni Alfa, 1970], n.p. This statement is linked to *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale* in Francesco Guzzetti, “‘Note sullo spettatore’ per Giovanni Anselmo: *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale*”, *Studi di Memofonte*, No. 21, 2018, 43.

⁸⁰ Beccaria, “Interference in universal gravitation”, 173.

⁸¹ Elizabeth Mangini, “Form as Social Commitment: The Art of Giovanni Anselmo during the *Anni di Piombo*”, *Enthymema*, No. 7, 2012, 568.

⁸² *Ibid.*

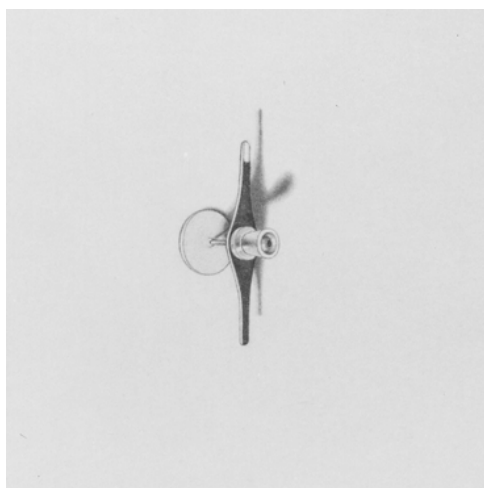
most notably the one at Castello di Rivoli in 2016, where the distance between each of the enlarged photographs was increased to stretch the work across the 140-metre-long wall of the Manica Lunga gallery, allowing fields of empty wall as well as window views to appear between the photographs (Fig. 6.6.4).⁸³ According to Beccaria, this makes the viewer re-experience Anselmo's original act of moving between each shot. In suggesting that viewers replicate the artist's perspective and re-experience his original act, Mangini and Beccaria imply that they inherit the artist's view, as viewers do before perspectival paintings. However, Mangini also emphasises how the work, by virtue of its serialisation of a multitude of viewpoints, "give viewers access to new conceptions of subjectivity by transforming and restructuring everyday habits of looking", conceptions that replace rationality with irrationality and that subjects the human cosmos to "macrocosmic occurrences".⁸⁴ In that sense, she suggests that the work has the capacity to decentre the viewer in the manner that spatially oriented art is found to do – that is, in the phenomenological sense of finding resonance in the exterior world.

Both Mangini and Beccaria are interested in how the interruptions of the image sequence affect the work's viewers, but what I see summoned by the gaps between the photographs is not primarily the perceiving subject. Because the installed work denies the viewers' eyes the opportunity to slide directly from one image to the next, it prompts a return from each photograph back to the moment of origin and the artist's act of moving twenty steps. Despite being based on a longitudinal walk, and despite being presented on a horizontal line, the work's structure is therefore stellar-like: the artist and his act are centred among the work's components, as that what issued them and that they all point back to. The photographs form 'points of return' and so come to circumscribe a 'boomerang space' in/through which the artist extends as an acting force.

A comparable, if more complex example of an artist-centred composite work with components relating to the forces of nature is "Direzioni" (Directions), a series of sixteen pencil drawings that Anselmo produced in 1967. In each of them, a two-armed magnetic needle is the sole motif that occupies a modest area at the centre of the square piece of paper, accompanied only by its own shadow. What separates one drawing from the next is merely the direction of the compass needle relative to the square paper, and the drawn shadow's position and angle relative to the needle. The titles of the particular drawings also differ, recalling the four cardinal points, as well as the intercardinal and second-intercardinal directions – *Nord* (North); *Nord*

⁸³ Beccaria, "Interference in universal gravitation", 174–75.

⁸⁴ Mangini, "Form as Social Commitment", 568.



Above: Fig. 6.7.1. Giovanni Anselmo, *Nord*, 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm (detail); Middle, from left: Fig. 6.7.2. Giovanni Anselmo, *Nord nord-est*, 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm; Fig. 6.7.3. Giovanni Anselmo, *Nord-est*, 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm; Fig. 6.7.4. Giovanni Anselmo, *Est nord-est*, 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm; Fig. 6.7.5. Giovanni Anselmo, *Est (East)*, 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm; Below: Fig. 6.7.6. Giovanni Anselmo, "Un particolare a sud. Trecento milioni di anni a ovest nord-ovest. Quattordici diegni intorno", Sperone Westwater Fisher, New York, 1978. Exhibition view with *Direzione*, 1967, surrounded by 8 of 14 exhibited drawings from the "Direzioni" series.

nord-est (North North-East); *Nord-est* (North-East); *Est nord-est* (East North-East); *Est* (East), and so on (Figs. 6.7.1–6.7.5).

When exhibited together for the first time at Sperone Westwater Fischer in New York in 1978, the “Direzioni” – now fastened to stretched canvases – accompanied one of Anselmo’s *Direzione* sculptures.⁸⁵ These sculptures are realised with a range of different materials, but resemble each other in that they all have a pointed or elongated form, and in having a magnetic needle, similar to the one depicted in Anselmo’s drawings, inserted in them.⁸⁶ The small needles guide the orientation of the sculptures within the exhibition venues, where they are usually instructed to point towards the cardinal North or be positioned along a South-North axis. Thus, the needles also orient the sculptures according to the larger space that exists outside the confines of the gallery. As Anselmo himself puts it, a *Direzione* sculpture “begins where it stands and ends where the earth’s magnetic fields begin, in the centre of the earth, etc., that in turn link us to other poles and centres of the universe.”⁸⁷

Within the given exhibition, *Direzione*’s compass needle also guided the installation of the “Direzioni”. The drawings were hung in different rooms of the gallery, at different distances from the sculpture, but at positions corresponding to the cardinal, intercardinal and second-intercardinal directions indicated by *Direzione*’s compass. As I understand it, the drawing titled *Nord nord-ovest* (North North-West), would be hung to the north north-west of *Direzione*, and so on. To get the positions of the exhibited drawings as exact as possible, they were attached to flexible support arms extending about 25 to 30 cm from the wall, which made it possible to tilt their angles. While the drawing *Nord* would be tilted so as to transverse the south-north axis marked by *Direzione*, *Nord nord-ovest* would be tilted so as to cut at a right angle the imaginary line drawn from *Direzione* towards north north-west. Consequently, the drawings all faced the sculpture, and surrounded it in 360° (Fig. 6.7.6).

In terms of structure, this installation of “Direzioni” consists of numerous components, between which a bulky circumference can be drawn. *Direzione* occupies the position in which imaginary lines spanning from the drawings that are positioned opposite each other – such as

⁸⁵ Giovanni Anselmo, *Direzione*, 1967. Compass needle and stone. My further description of the installation is based on Ammann, “Giovanni Anselmo”, 25, the photographs in Ammann, Anselmo and Suter, *Giovanni Anselmo*, 174–79, and e-mail correspondence with Rocco Mussat Sartor, Archivio Anselmo. Note that the installation exceeds the time frame of my study, but I allow myself to include the exhibition in the thesis, because the drawings themselves were conceived at an earlier point.

⁸⁶ Anselmo made several *Direzione* sculptures in the 1960s and 70s, in materials such as stone, formica, wood, fabric, cement, terracotta and soil. For an overview, see the Archivio Anselmo’s website, http://www.archivioanselmo.com/it/opere/sessanta/direzione_01.asp. See also Marcella Beccaria, “While the Earth finds its bearings”, in Beccaria and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *Giovanni Anselmo*.

⁸⁷ Giovanni Anselmo, “Giovanni Anselmo”, *DATA*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1972, 55. English translation Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera*, 233.

Sud and *Nord*, *Est* and *Ovest* – intersect, and the sculpture thus forms the installation’s centre. The drawings all relate to this centre because their hanging is guided by it, and they confirm their relation to the centre by facing it, and by repeating its central motif – the compass needle – at their own centre. The “Direzioni” installation is therefore a boomerang-structured work with a stellar pattern, since all components tie to the centre among them. The current installation of “Direzioni” seemingly differs from the other boomerang-structured works, however, when making a sculptural object its centre, rather than the artist himself. Moreover, the space drawn up between the exhibited drawings is open for gallery visitors to enter. Visitors are invited to take the central position beside *Direzione*, to walk up the imaginary tracks leading from the sculpture towards each drawing, or to trace the outline that runs between them. The artist seems to have abandoned the “Direzioni” installation, and to have left the space to the perceiving subjects, as spatially oriented art is often credited for doing.

The matter looks a bit differently, though, if one takes into consideration how the “Direzioni” series was conceived, as well as the changes it has undergone in the process from production to presentation. To make this series, Anselmo placed a compass needle on top of a table, with light falling in from south-west.⁸⁸ Sixteen square sheets of paper were distributed at regular intervals around the needle, so that the needle’s north would extend through the centre of one sheet, while the other cardinal, intercardinal and second-intercardinal directions would pierce the centres of the fifteen remaining sheets. Then, Anselmo positioned himself before one of these sheets and drew the compass needle, before moving 22.5° to the side in order to draw the next image of the series, and so on. The result is a circle of drawings depicting the same north-pointing needle, seen from sixteen different points of view. The structure of “Direzioni” at the moment of production thus appears similar to the drawings as installed in the gallery: at centre is the compass needle to which all drawings relate, while the artist – rather than being centred within the work – has a presence exterior to the circle’s circumference, where he holds sixteen different positions.

On the other hand, the production process also allows the idea that the series of drawings is punctuated by constant returns to the artist and his gesture of repeatedly moving 22.5°. It is by virtue of this modest act that the work comes into existence, and takes the form of a compass rose. The act is the factor that binds the drawings together as one work, and the artist who

⁸⁸ My description of the production process, the exhibition layout, and the relationship between them relies on Ammann, “Giovanni Anselmo”, 25, the presentation of the drawings on Archivio Anselmo’s website, my own efforts to reconstruct the layouts, and e-mail correspondence with Rocco Mussat Sartor, Archivio Anselmo. I have not consulted the artist himself, and misconceptions may therefore occur in my outline of this complex project.

performs it becomes the structural centre of the work, like he is in *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* by virtue of moving twenty steps. This centring of the artist is reflected when the drawings are exhibited. As far as I can tell, there are two alternative ways to understand the relationship between the production situation and the installation of this complex work, depending on which of these situations the drawings' titles refer to. In both alternatives, the 'original' arrangement of the drawings is inverted in the gallery setting. On the one hand, the drawings' titles may refer to the situation in which they were produced. Looking at the individual drawings, the needle of the drawing presented as *Est*, for instance, points towards the left relative to the drawing's base line. This means that Anselmo must have been looking at the compass needle from the west when making this drawing, thus having north to his left. The titles, then, do not announce the drawings' own position relative to the centred needle, nor the actual point of view – that is, the artist's physical position relative to the needle that served as his model. Rather they would indicate the orientation of the artist's body and the direction of his gaze when drawing the needle in front of him. In that case, if the drawings were hung in the positions announced by their titles (*Est* to the east of the *Direzione* sculpture), their locations relative to the centred compass needle would have undergone a double change: their positions relative to the centre would be the opposite (*Est* moved from the west to the east of the centre); and their surfaces would be arranged so as to face the centre rather than the artist standing outside the circle of drawings. When it comes to the relation between the respective drawings, and their relation to the cardinal North, the two changes would outweigh each other. The other alternative is that the drawings were hung at the same position relative to the centred needle as they had when being drawn, and then given titles according to their positions in the exhibition setting (thus, *Est* to the east of the needle). In that case, they would not physically change positions, but their orientation would be different: the drawings would be raised to face the sculpture inside the circle rather than the artist outside it, making what was the upper side of each drawing when produced their base in the exhibition setting. In both alternatives, the inversions affect the artist's position relative to the drawings: all of the artist's sixteen exterior viewpoints are gathered in the composite installation's centre, in which the compass figures. One can say that the artist is projected into the centre between the drawings, where he himself figures as/at the point of orientation. In both cases, moreover, the viewer is left perplexed if trying to "unite their gaze with the Founding Perception", as Bryson put it, or to locate an 'original' point of view. The "Direzione" drawings may have the compass as their main motif, but they have a highly disorienting effect, creating confusion about the distinctions between

here and there and here and now in a way the perspectival ordering of artist, work and viewer does not allow.

Both of Anselmo's projects – *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* and the series of "Direzioni" drawings – resemble the composite works discussed in the previous two sections in that they consist of components that are equal and almost identical. Furthermore, the similarity between the components induces the impression that they relate directly to each other, but closer inspection reveals that the artist is an intermediate point between them, and thus the work's structural centre. Still, Anselmo's works differ from most of the other composite works in two central aspects: the character of the artist's intervention and the components' character. Regarding the first of these aspects, one can argue that the artist's intervention between the single components in *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* and "Direzioni" consists in a changed point of view, as each motif is seen from a new position – which, admittedly, is also the case in Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle*. The constant change of view is something phenomenologically informed critics value in spatial art: as discussed above, Krauss considers the practice of multiplying the point of view a contributing factor to the decentring of perceiving subjects. In Anselmo's works, however, the focus is on the decentring of the *artistic* subject, and arguably, the distribution of the artistic subject across numerous viewpoints in his works can be more easily compared to a shattering or fragmenting of the self, as promoted in (the reception of) Foucault's lectures on Manet and in Bishop's account of spatially oriented art, than to the recognition of the self in the exterior world that characterises the phenomenological concept of decentring.

It is also worth emphasising that the change of viewpoints is caused by the artist's physical movements; either the act of moving the twenty steps to the west, or the act of moving 22.5° to the side, with the artist here appearing as an *acting force*. Again, this likens the way Penone in *Svolgere la propria pelle* moves the glass plate between each photograph of the series, as well as Boetti's role in *Viaggi Postali* and *Dossier postale* as the dispatcher who repeatedly mails envelopes. In Anselmo's case, however, the artist's role as an acting force is more automated since the acts themselves are performed at a regular pace. It is also more decisive to the works as such, because the differences between their respective components rely solely on the artist's movements: in contrast to the other two projects, in which the artists' presence is implied also by virtue of their body (*Svolgere la propria pelle*), or their social networks (*Viaggi Postali* and *Dossier postale*), the artist in *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* and "Direzioni" is evoked only as the force that provokes a change of motif.

Regarding the components themselves, those of Anselmo's works represent forces of nature: the Earth's rotation and geomagnetism. The artist, who is present as acting force, measures forces with nature in these works: out on the meadows, making *Documentazione di interferenza umana...*, Anselmo strives in vain when trying to rewind rotation and to prolong the day, for he cannot prevent the Earth from spinning and the day from turning into night. In the work's structure, on the other hand, he is the centre of a space of his own, of a field that defines his extension as an acting force, against nature. *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* defines an area in which the artist, different from exterior forces, reigns. It thereby provides the autonomy that Anselmo, in the quote above, admitted to seeking relative to the greater forces that surround him. On the other hand, he is also subjected to nature, given that the images that represent the sunset mark his limits; they are 'points of return' where the artist's action must bow to the natural forces.

In the "Direzioni" drawings, it is also clear that the artist's movements cannot affect the natural forces. By repeatedly moving 22.5° to produce the works, the artist rather adjusts to the power of the Earth's poles. In the exhibition setting, the artist's subordination to the greater forces is demonstrated as he is replaced as/at the centre by the compass needle, which in turn guides the installation of the drawings. Moreover, the white tips of the drawn compass needles all point beyond the centred sculpture, towards the superior centre of the geomagnetic north, while the needles' shadows reveal that the needles are also subjected to a light source exterior to the work itself. This subordination to exterior forces is further underlined by Anselmo's choice to let two gallery windows which were located at the cardinal/intercardinal/secondary-intercardinal axes replace two of his drawings. Rather than defining the installation as an entirely closed and autonomous space, Anselmo here eliminates some of the 'points of return', underlining how the work is linked to the poles which "in turn link us to other poles and centres of the universe", and that the work and the artist who resides at its centre is defined by nature, and stretches into it. As Jean-Christophe Ammann puts it, "de-limitation measures itself against limitation" in this work by Anselmo.⁸⁹ Both *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* and "Direzioni" experiment with space, spatial relations and spatial positions in order to investigate the relation between individual, artistic force and the fundamental forces of nature, and addresses the question of where the artistic self ends and the universe begins.

⁸⁹ Ammann, "Giovanni Anselmo", 25.

A World of One's Own – The Composite Work as a Boomerang Space

The composite works are made of components with highly diverging characteristics. In terms of medium, they span between drawn dots and written letters, envelopes, wooden bricks and photographic images. To the extent that they have motifs, they depict vision rays (Paolini's *Vedo*), body parts (Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle*), proper names (Boetti's postal projects, Prini's (*LEGNI*), Paolini's *Titolo*), compasses (Anselmo's "Direzioni" drawings) and nature (*Documentazione di interferenza umana...*). The components are arranged differently when the works are exhibited. Some works hide their components between the covers of a book or within a jute sack. Other works openly display them, whether in the form of montages with a uniform, grid-like order, or arranged so as to offer a semi-panoramic view: the dots of Paolini's *Vedo* fold out before the viewer in front of the work, Anselmo's *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* presents its components on a horizontal line that varies in length between exhibitions, and Anselmo's "Direzioni" drawings indicate a 360° circle in the gallery space.

Despite these differences, the works are built upon the same basic structure: each of them consists of numerous equivalent and more or less identical components, spread across a plane and/or a space. These components do not only or not primarily relate to each other, but to a shared point of reference that comes to form a centre between them. This point, in turn, relates to the artist, but in different ways in the various works: in *Vedo* and the "Direzioni" drawings, the centre equals the artist's point(s) of view when making the works, whereas the centre in (*LEGNI*), *Titolo*, *Titolo (II)*, *Ciò che non ha limiti...*, *Viaggi postali* and *Dossier postale* corresponds to the artists' positions in a social context. As Trini points out, *Viaggi postali* and *Dossier postale* also centre the artist as the dispatcher and receiver of the works' components, and thus point to his actions in the process of executing the work. The same goes for Anselmo's *Documentazione di interferenza umana...* and "Direzioni" drawings, in which all components point back to the artist's regularly repeated movements while making the works. In *Svolgere la propria pelle*, the components centre around the artist as the model behind all 600 frames, but also around his procedure of repositioning the glass plate on his skin before each photograph is taken. A common feature of all works is that their components point to a position that the artist once occupied and/or an act that he once performed. Consequently, the artist is a common denominator and a mediating factor between them, an attractor that holds the various parts of the work together, and a prerequisite for the works' coherency.

Even if the works' components all refer back to the artists, they also point to each other by virtue of their resemblance or equality, their seriality or sequential order. A line can thus be

imagined as running between them, as if marking the works' circumferences. In the area indicated between the centred artists and this outline, each work opens up (as) a negatively defined 'boomerang space': as discussed, the circumferential components are 'points of return' – endpoints that mark how far the artists reach. The character of the 'points of return' and the spaces they open up differs between the three types of composite works: the components of the two works presented in the first section represent the artist's field of vision and his skin, respectively, and thus mark the extension of the artists' own bodies in physical space; the components of the second type of composite works represent acquaintances, and mark the artists' extensions as persons in a social network; the components of Anselmo's works represent natural forces, and mark the artist's own extension as an acting force. In none of the cases can the artists be absolutely separated from the works' components or from the space that opens up between them; it is by virtue of and between the components that the artists' presence is evoked. One can therefore say that the composite works are spaces that the artists permeate, and that define their extensions opposite and against what/who is other, differentiating a space that is reserved for the artists (as bodies, social subjects or acting forces) from the surrounding physical world, the surrounding society or surrounding natural forces.⁹⁰

The artists are not physically or visually present in Arte Povera's composite works – with the exception of *Svolgere la propria pelle*, in which the artist is visually present, but hardly recognisable. This indiscernible presence does not necessarily indicate a weak artistic position relative to the work. In making the artists the structural centres of spaces reserved for the artistic selves, the composite works seem akin to perspectival artworks, which are also composed so that all basic lines lead towards a point that represents the artist: the centric point as a reflection of the artists' point of view. Indeed, the composite works can be taken to enforce perspectival author-ity, since the subject commonly associated with *costruzione legittima* conquers the world with its distanced gaze, whereas the Arte Povera artists permeate and thus fully occupy their work-worlds.

On the other hand, the procedure of establishing the works' components as 'points of return' hints at a need to have one's own presence in the world confirmed. As noted above, Paolini acknowledges that he was out to "verify his own existence as a subject" when making

⁹⁰ The enclosing sculptural works discussed in the previous chapter, most notably Fabro's *In cubo*, can also be described as spaces reserved for and evoking the artistic self, in that they serve to confirm the artist inside it by secluding him from the physical space outside the work. Those works, however, are not boomerang spaces, as they as take the form of solid volumes rather than being composed by spread-out 'points of return'. The artists' relations to them, moreover, are indexical rather than structural.

Titolo.⁹¹ This indicates that the artists are uncertain about their own positions, and that the process of making the composite works starts with a fumbling and insecure search for themselves. The works may be made to find or define the artistic self, thus with a certain acceptance of the idea of the subject as centred and self-contained, but the works are not made to represent and solidify such a pre-existing artistic self. Rather, they are testament of an experience of precariousness, of a lack of the self-presence and self-coherency that is associated with the subject of perspectival art.

When proceeding by defining themselves and their territory in contrast to the social or natural world, the Arte Povera artists do not simply separate themselves from these contexts, but also acknowledge that they are constituted by them. The artists rely on the components that represent the natural or social world to manifest themselves, since they have no presence in the works independent of their relationship to the components that mark the circumferences of the works'/artists' spaces. The artists can only appear as extending between these components. Despite their indiscernible presence at/as the works' structural centres, then, the 'selves' that are found in the composite works are not distanced and disembodied points, as the subject associated with perspective is, but extended and dispersed across the work itself. The artists here appear physically outstretched, as opposed to the centred eye/I of the perspectival tradition.

The worlds in which the artists reign, moreover, are but limited sections of a whole over which they have no control. The dots on the wall that Paolini's gaze encounters in *Vedo* mark the points in which the artist's visual rays meet an object/obstacle and returns to the artist's retina. Thus, they mark how far the artist extends in the world by virtue of his sight and distinguishes the world accessible to him from the parts of the world that are visually *inaccessible* to him. The photographs in *Svolgere la propria pelle* document Penone's bodily contour – how his skin unrolls “against air, water, or earth” – and emphasise the limits of Penone's own body, the border between himself and the parts of the world that are *not him* and *not his*. In the works of the second section, the artists' work-worlds are contrasted with networks of changing social relations, which, in turn, are nothing but *segments* of the incomprehensible and ever-evolving totality of the Earth's population. Finally, in Anselmo's works, the artist

⁹¹ Other Arte Povera artists also express that a motivation behind their artwork production is a search for the self, and a desire to find oneself with/in the work. Marisa Merz, for instance, exclaims that she has to “realize for myself!” that she is alive, and implies that she does so through her work. Pascali states in reference to his sculptures that “these objects give me courage, they are the proof that when all is said and done, I actually exist!” See Annemarie Sauzeau Boetti, “Lo specchio ardente – Intervista a Marisa Merz, Carla Accardi, Iole Freitas”, *DATA*, No. 18, September–October 1975, trans. Lucian Henry Comoy, quoted in *Marisa Merz: The Sky is a Great Space*, ed. Connie Butler (Los Angeles, CA/New York, NY: Hammer Museum and DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2017), 116; Carla Lonzi, “Pino Pascali, ‘In Conversation with Carla Lonzi’” [1967], in *Pino Pascali*, ed. Marianne Brouwer (Otterlo: Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, 1991), 12.

extends as force only until he has to *bow* to stronger forces; the images that make up the works' 'points of return' are the effects of his actions and draw up a minute area where his effects are not limited by forces greater than him. In acknowledging that the artists are restricted to the work-worlds' finite spaces, Arte Povera's composite works oppose the perspectival notion of a boundless space that extends infinitely before the producing subjects, and over which they have a dominating overview.⁹²



Ill. 6.4. Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle – finestra*, 1970–72. Installation view, documenta 5, Fridericianum, Kassel, 1972.

documenta 5 in 1972. About half of the windowpanes were covered by images of the artist's skin, and the other half left blank so that the images of the artist's body were combined with views into the outside world (Ill. 6.4). Likewise in Anslemo's works: in the Manica Lunga installation of *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale*, windows were allowed to punctuate the horizontal presentation of the photographic sequence, and in the 1978 installation of the "Direzione" drawings, two of the drawings that indicated a 360°

The boomerang spaces are not entirely closed off from the world at large. I have mentioned that some of the Arte Povera artists express the desire to become part of a larger whole, and describe their works as means to reach a feeling or state of coexistence with the natural world, rather than means for seclusion. In accordance with this idea, the artworks' confines are not impenetrable. The works that are organised in grids – like Paolini's *Titolo* and Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle* – do allow blank space between the works' components, and thus also the idea that the confinement they draw up around the centred artist is perforated. This is particularly outspoken in a version of Penone's *Svolgere la propria pelle* which was mounted on small panes of window for

⁹² For the rejection of perspectival space in Arte Povera, note also that Mario Merz distinguishes between "straight space and 'curved space'". As Maddalena Disch recounts, the former is "organised by reality, the space of orthogonal architecture, of calculation and functionality, subject to the laws of economy", whereas the latter "is the space of the igloo; an imperfect dome, an approximate hemisphere, [...] a space without dominant axes, a non-hierarchical, autonomous, utopian space; the space of projects and ideas". See Maddalena Disch, "The Concept of 'Action' in the work of Mario Merz", in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 172.

compass rose around the centred sculpture/artist were replaced by window views, and thus offered openings between the centred space indicated by the installed drawings and the space exterior to it. One could argue that the works are investigating and experimenting with the border between self-constitution/self-coherency, on the one hand, and dissolution of the self into the surrounding social or natural environment, on the other. In letting the artists extend between components and in allowing openings to further dissolve them, the composite works present their artists weakened. As remarked in a slogan attributed to the North-Vietnamese general Vo Nguyễn Giáp, which Mario Merz cited in one of his best known works: “If the enemy masses his forces, he loses ground; if he scatters, he loses strength.”⁹³ Such a loss of strength is precisely what Arte Povera artists impose on themselves when extending with/in their works and towards the world rather than defining themselves as a centred and disembodied point of view.

The composite works can be taken to enforce perspectival author-ity in the relationships they establish with their viewers. The viewers are not physically expelled from the work-worlds that the composite works outline; in some cases – most notably, in Anselmo’s installation of the “Direzione” drawings, but also in Paolini’s *Vedo* – they are allowed to enter the area that spans between the works’ components and to approach its centre. However, the circumferences that establish between the works’ various components leave the perceivers outside the works’ structural confines. In this, Arte Povera’s composite works are at odds with the anti-perspectival and anti-author-itarian ideals upheld in phenomenological accounts of spatially oriented art, which requires an open and inclusive work structure that invites perceivers in, accepting them as co-producers of the artworks and the artworks as co-producers of the perceiving selves. Seemingly, the exteriorisation of viewers in Arte Povera’s composite works have more in common with central perspective’s structural positioning of the viewer in front of the work-world, overlooking it from a distance. Where artists of the perspectival tradition willingly hand their view of the work/world over to subsequent viewers, the artists of the composite works seclude themselves within their work-worlds and dismiss contact with the viewers who approach them. Arte Povera’s works thus seem even more intent to defend the artists’ position as the founders and the rightful owners of the world they open up than artists of the perspectival tradition are accused of being.

It is worth noting, however, that the inclusion of the viewer promoted in the discourse on spatially oriented art also has problematic aspects. Commenting on Krauss’s

⁹³ Mario Merz, *Igloo di Giap*, 1968. Iron framework, plastic bags filled with clay, neon, batteries, accumulators, Ø 120 cm. Centre Pompidou, Paris.

phenomenologically minded approval of minimalism, Hal Foster argues that minimalist art, as Krauss describes it, merely substitutes the artist's "I express" with the recipient's "I perceive", and thus continues to "leave meaning lodged in the subject".⁹⁴ In Foster's view, Krauss's own account of minimalism fails to overcome the stance that she criticises in perspectival art, namely that the world, represented by the work, exists *for* the human subject and its experience of meaning. The artwork, as Krauss describes it, is at the perceiving subject's service, as it contributes to the process of gaining heightened knowledge of oneself and one's own existence. Arguably, Arte Povera's composite works are at the *artistic* subject's service, when functioning as means through which the artists define themselves and their positions in the social/natural world. However, when denying their artists a visible presence, letting them appear only as extended among the components that mark their counterpoints against the world, the composite works indicate that meaning cannot be "lodged in the subject", understood as a pre-existing and self-coherent self. If meaning exists, it is found in the self-dissolving encounter/confrontation with the material world.

The relationship between artist, work and viewer in the phenomenologically inspired account of spatial art, moreover, does not definitively break with the representational understanding of art as mediation of meaning. Critics like Krauss do not understand spatial art as communicative in the sense that specific messages are transferred from the artist to perceiver as from sender to receiver. Nevertheless, Krauss locates a potential for meaning in the perception of art – that is, in the encounter with a group of objects that have already found their form, as artwork. Like the viewers who approach a perspectival space that has already been perceived and/or construed by the painter, then, the subjects who engage with a spatial work enter a milieu of objects that is *arranged*.⁹⁵ Their experiences of meaning within that milieu may be individual, but are facilitated by the artist. In that sense, the perceiving subjects are subordinated and subjected to the artist's (view of the) world, like the viewer in front of a perspectival painting is.

When establishing (as) boomerang spaces that (structurally) enclose their artists and exteriorise their viewers, Arte Povera's composite works indicate that the world is different for – or, at least experienced differently by – each person, and point towards a loss of collective meaning. To Trini, Boetti's *Dossier postale* is characterised by departing from the standard act

⁹⁴ Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism", 43. This is a point that Bishop absorbs in her critique of the current discourse on spatially oriented art, when pointing to the inconsistency in upholding an idea of a "dispersed or decentred subject" while also requiring a self-present and attentive spectator.

⁹⁵ Bishop presents a related critique in reference to "relational aesthetics" in Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *October*, No. 110, Fall 2004, 62.

of communication. The boomerang effect, he reminds us, is already figuring as a metaphorical term in discourses on communication, where it designates an unsuccessful dialogue, in which a message, instead of following a straight line from sender to receiver, fails to establish contact with a recipient, and thus bounces back or circulates restlessly. “The same happens in art” Trini exclaims in reference to Boetti’s work.⁹⁶ The failure or unwillingness to reach their recipients characterises all of Arte Povera’s composite works and the relationship they establish with their viewers. The works make no attempt to inflict the artists’ world views on others, as perspectival artists are found to do, and spatial art arguably does. They announce instead that it is not in the artist’s power to define the world for others, and thereby break with the representational idea of art as mediation, and with the artist’s prioritised position relative to the perceiver/receiver.

The composite works establish another relationship to their viewers. Leaning on (the reception of) Foucault’s analyses, I suggested above that Velazquez’s and Manet’s play with mirrors and distancing effects make viewers aware of and possibly uneasy with their own position(s) in front of these artists’ paintings. Like the viewers who find themselves elided and exteriorised when they fail to find their reflection in *Las meninas*’ mirror, or those who struggle to find a suitable position in front of Manet’s *Un bar aux Folies-Bergère*, those who encounter one of Arte Povera’s composite works may become attentive to the structural relationship between the works’ components and between the components and the works’ centre, thus also of their own, undefined position(s) exterior to the spaces that the works open up. The works allow gallery visitors to physically enter and approach their centres, but structurally exteriorise them, and should therefore have the potential to incite in the individual viewer feelings of loss and fragmentation comparable to those Foucault – or commentators like Brix Søndergaard – describes in reference to Manet’s works. The composite works may thereby expose those who approach them to the paradoxical experience of being centred – both as physically positioned within the works, and as attentive, perceiving subjects – as well as dispersed and exteriorised, when finding themselves outside the works’ structural confines and fragmented between multiple viewpoints.

The composite works establish (as) boomerang spaces that the artists appear in and viewers encounter only to find themselves alone, and drawn between the states of centeredness and fragmentation. This is in line with Bishop’s alternative understanding of the spatially oriented art that developed from the 1960s onwards as structuring “an irresolvable antagonism” between two different notions of the subject. According to Bishop, this decentring experience

⁹⁶ Trini, “Alighiero Boetti. I primi 1000 fiumi”, 40.

will in turn make those who engage with the artwork question the commonly accepted idea of their own prior and privileged position relative to the world. To the extent that Arte Povera's composite works issue such contradictory experiences, they should have the potential to displace the anthropocentrism associated with the perspectival "optics of observation" as efficiently as spatial art is found to do in Krauss's account. The significant difference is that the phenomenological discourse on spatial art that Krauss represents in "Sense and Sensibility", as well as Bishop's own account, focus on the perceiving subject, and tend to bypass the question of the artist's position relative to the work. Arte Povera's composite works, on the other hand, emphasise and investigate the artist's role and position in the work's structure. They therefore can be argued to challenge perspectival authority more directly, and more insistently pursue an alternative presence in (relation to) the work, in which the artist is deposed from the superior position that twentieth-century criticism finds the artists of the perspectival tradition to hold opposite the world, their works and their viewers.

Conclusion

Notes for a Posthumanist Poetics

The departure point for this thesis was a renewed interest in critical reception for intersections between Arte Povera and anti-anthropocentric impulses in contemporary art. The general idea is that Arte Povera and contemporary art both promote the autonomy of artistic materials in the production of artworks, often at the cost of the presence and involvement of the artistic subject. However, closer scrutiny reveals that Arte Povera artists are far from absent their works from the late 1960s and early 1970s. This simple observation was the starting point for my exploration of the phenomenon of artists' appearances in Arte Povera, and of the artists' positions in (relation to) their works and the works' materials/materiality in particular.

I have found theoretical guidance in discussions of authorship from around 1970, now often referred to as the 'death of the author' discourse. Here I learned that the question of the artist's *position* relative to the materiality of the work is not only about metaphors, but also a most literal one. For Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, author-ity equals the positioning of the author as an origin *before* and *behind* the work.

Dominating ideas about responses or parallels to the 'death of the author' discourse within the field of visual art tend to suggest that the potential to overcome author-ity lies in a shift of attention from the artist/work relation to the frameworks of artistic production, as Craig Owens puts it.¹ From this perspective, an anti-author-itarian position is attained through ascertaining who or what the source of a work's form, meaning and value is, *if not the artist*.

¹ I here refer to the four 'contrasting' strategies proposed by Craig Owens (Chapter Three), Erika Fischer-Lichte and Lea Vergine (Chapter Four), Alex Potts (Chapter Three) and Rosalind Krauss (Chapter Six). Throughout the chapters, I have also presented and found support in accounts of post-war art that are more in line with my own reading of Arte Povera artists' appearances, such as Rosalind Krauss's and Douglas Crimp's discussions of Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills" (Chapter Three), Philip Auslander's, Ellinor Fuchs's and Amelia Jones's understanding of performative practices (Chapter Four), Georges Didi-Huberman's reflections on imprints (Chapter Five), and Claire Bishop's remarks on Installation art (Chapter Six).

The promoted strategies are ‘exterior’, emphasising how the artists distance themselves from their works, and/or how the period’s art production involves *other* and/or *alternative* contributors – such as discursive factors, fellow artists, institutions, audiences, and the works’ own materials. When distributing authorial power to others, however, one often ends up subordinating the work to new origins, instead of fundamentally questioning the (idea of the) origin itself, a point Barthes, Foucault and Derrida all insist upon. Not least, the question of what role and position the indispensable signatory artist holds among these alternative contributors tends to be circumvented.

Arte Povera artists’ appearances offer another approach to the question of author-ity and its abolishment. Rather than neglecting the artist, they problematise the work’s commitment to an origin by addressing the specific relationship between the artist-of-the-work and the artist-of-the-world (as producer and/or model), and by considering what alternative positions the artist may hold relative to the work, *if not behind it*, at/as its source. Consequently, a settlement with author-ity lies in a ‘deposing repositioning’ of the author, from the position prior to the work to one in which authors are integrated in and/or emerging from the works themselves.

The works discussed in Chapters Three and Four are characterised by a negating approach: they problematise and destabilise established ideas of a representational relationship between motif and model, work and producer. The self-portraits presented in Chapter Three question the link that a representational understanding of self-portraiture presumes between the artist-as-motif and artist-as-model, by inserting obstacles or identifying fissures. When using different reproduction technologies as tools to *fragment* the image of the self, the end results dispute the idea of a single, self-coherent subject on which the genre of self-portraiture relies, and the idea of a transparent and symmetrical relationship between motif and model, focusing instead on internal references between and within images. Other self-portraits underline the schisms between the spaces behind, within and in front of the work by *exposing* the means of representation – gazes, optics, mirror effects or the media’s materiality. The works thereby dismiss the role as mediators in-between and indicate instead the work’s existence as a secluded space. The artist, in turn, is cut off from the position of the originating model/producer before and behind it, and objectified as a motif within the work’s realm. Similar results are achieved in the *conceptualised* self-portraits: presenting the artist by name rather than a resembling image, the ‘portraits’ are distanced from their source. Additional distancing effects, such as framing, serialisation, dating and depersonalised production techniques, further underline the separation between motif and referent.

The performative works discussed in Chapter Four manifest a comparable tendency to mark the representational sphere as a separate area. They make references to the elements of representation – such as the stage, the institution and the camera/monitor screen – which mark the boundaries between the work and the world. Here, however, the artist-of-the-work is not separated from the artist-of-the-world, as the artist-as-motif is from the artist-as-model in Arte Povera's self-portraits. On the contrary, by virtue of their withdrawal strategies – that is, the *disappear-in'*, *decentring* and *document-in' acts* – the performing artists appear and/or alternate between the real and the representational sphere. Since the artists' positions in reference to these spheres cannot be properly determined, their appearances undermine the absolute and hierarchical distinction that representational logic establishes between a sphere of origin(al)s and a sphere of secondary representations, as well as the artists' status in representational thinking as a fully self-present origin behind the work. They claim instead the performer's dependency on the representational sphere to appear and act as artist. In this, the works activate a point verbalised by Derrida, about presence's dependency on the *non-present* – on absence and on representations.

The works presented in the two last chapters further develop the tendencies outlined in the first chapters, namely, the release of the artist-of-the-work from the artist-of-the-world, and the integration of the appearing artist with/in the work and its materiality. They also further develop alternatives to the representational relationship between artist and work. The sculptural works offer what one may call a *phenomenologically oriented alternative* to author-ity, because the artists' appearances within them are based on sensuous experience and physical contact, on intimate encounters between artists' bodies and the exterior world. What distinguishes this approach from the phenomenologically inspired aesthetics discussed in Chapter Four (Erika Fischer-Lichte's account of performative art) and Chapter Six (Rosalind Krauss's account of minimalism) is its focus on the artists' interactions with the works' materials. Instead of dismissing the material work as redundant or regarding it as a vehicle for the viewers' experience of co-existence, the work and its materiality are here important factors for the artists' encounters with the world; the work's material surface facilitates the contact between them.

Through strategies such as *bodily impression*, *sculptural enclosure* and *transfer of body measures*, the artists' bodily forms are given over to the sculptural shapes. The traces of their appearances are dependent on and determined by the materials' specific qualities of moldability and resistance, and/or on material responses over time to the artists' interventions. This reciprocity counters the distance that representational thinking presumes between work and artist and between motif and model, and the idea that artistic presence is the result of imitating

a prior model who is also the work's producer. The artists appear instead by leaving indexical traces of themselves in their works as part of the production process. These marks are physical and quantitative, and not invested in the manner that the painter's brushstroke is found to be in expressionist theories of painting from the immediately preceding years.

Many of the sculptural works are solids that hold the artists' imprints, or they have been built around the artists' bodies and remain enclosures after the artists have abandoned them. The negative presence that the artists have in most of these works, as traces and voids, signals an acceptance of the formerly present artists' remaining absence, rather than a submission to the conventional ideal of upholding the artists' presence. With reference to Barthes's phenomenology of photography, the works confirm their artist as someone or something *that-has-been*.² As the photographs that accompany these sculptures suggest, the artists are split into an escaping subjectivity and an enduring physical trace.

Meanwhile, Arte Povera's composite works offer a *structurally oriented alternative* to representational author-ity. The artists do not (necessarily) have a physical or visible presence in these works. Since all of the works' components point to the artists as the only shared reference point between them, they nevertheless can be argued to make an appearance. In each work, the artists form the centre of the spatial and/or structural environments that the works open up, and *extend* across these work-environments towards the components that mark the works' and their own joint circumference. Here, the representational hierarchy in which a work/motif points back to a pre-existing producer/model is inverted: the artist only appears *with* and *from* the work, originating from the work as a function of its material components.

The artist's secondary status as a function of the works' parts resonates with Foucault's understanding of the author-name as a function of the works associated with it.³ Notably, the artists in Arte Povera's composite works are not concepts/nouns that assemble certain works in oeuvres while dismissing others, but the artist serves a role and holds a position relative to the composite work that compares to the author-name's role/position relative to the oeuvre: the artists are structural reference points that assemble and unite individual components as works, as coherent, material environments separated from the world as such. The artists are not only structural reference points, however; as they emerge with the works, extend across them and share their confines, the Arte Povera artists are also given a specific and delimited material presence coincident with the work itself.

² See Chapter Two, p. 60.

³ See Chapter Two, p. 45–46. See also Chapter Three, p. 131.

A characteristic feature of the works discussed throughout this thesis, is how they bring attention to the artwork as a particular space, which the appearing artists in various ways approach, adhere to or emerge from. One defining trait of Arte Povera artists' appearances is their tendency to present the artists as having entered or as *entering their works*. In most of the self-portraits, the entry is 'staged', as the images or names appear behind the means of representation or encircled by a play of gazes or by specular effects. In most of the performative works, the entering acts are often probing, as the artists oscillate between the sphere of the work and that of the world beyond it. In the works discussed in the two last chapters, the artists' entries are more definitive. Producing artists exist exterior to these works too; someone has conceptualised, composed, constructed, presented and put their name to them, but the works do not (re)present the producing artists as self-coherent subjects existing prior to or independent of the work itself. The works rather imply that the producing artists are undefined, uncertain and fluctuating. In the sculptural works, the artists appear through a play of positive and negative form that strongly involves material responses, while the artists of the composite works emerge only in reference to and as a result of the distribution of the work's components. In both cases, the artists depend on the works' materiality and on the production process to make stable manifestations. When the artists in this way rely on the works to come into presence, their entry is complete.

My analyses of Arte Povera's self-portraits and performances demonstrate that authority can be refuted even if the artists have a strong, visible presence in their works. On the other hand, my study also reveals that aspects of being absent, withdrawal or self-negation are at play in all of Arte Povera's artists' appearances, and that their dismissal of authority relies on these aspects. The artists are conspicuously present in the self-portraits and performative works, but they partly hide behind the elements of representation, fragment themselves, or withhold their images in favour of their name, and compromise their physical presence in the performative works through acts of withdrawal, by which they distance themselves from the audiences' *here and now*. The active search for artists' appearances that my first observations of conspicuous appearances led to, revealed a number of cases in which the artists' appearances are, in fact, based on withdrawal. In the sculptural works, the artists' presence tends to be indiscernible and/or negative, and in the composite works, the artists are merely evocable in the empty space between the works' peripheral components. In that sense, one can argue that the anti-authoritarian claims for the artists' retraction is fulfilled in Arte Povera works. Importantly, however, the artists do not withdraw *from* the work, rather, they are withdrawn from the spheres of absent and present presences and enter *into* the sphere of the work itself. In some of the more advanced

examples I discuss, the artists are completely embedded and will only reveal themselves to devoted viewers searching specifically for artists' appearances – like myself – on the basis of the small traces or 'biographemes' that they have left behind.

With the artist's entry into the work, the conventional affirmative bond to a modelling and/or producing artist prior to the work is severed, and the appearing artist is subjected to a 'deposing repositioning', a move from behind the work to its interiority. As a result, Arte Povera artists' appearances counteract author-ity in a manner that more comprehensively complements the main insights of the 'death of the author' discourse than the 'responses' already attributed to visual art of the 1960s and 1970s, which tend to uphold the idea of an origin exterior/prior to the work, and/or to avoid the question of the artist's own relation to the work. Arte Povera's insistence on proximity and interdependency between artists and the material aspects of works are in accordance with Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's indications that there is no authorial exteriority, and with Barthes's idea of an 'amicable' authorial presence as one in which the producers are "lost in the midst of a text" – that is, inscribed in and given over to the medium and materiality with which they work.⁴

At the start of this study, I presumed that the striking prevalence of artists' appearances in Arte Povera's production conflicted with the overall emphasis on materiality in its reception. I have come to the conclusion that this is not the case: my analyses demonstrate that materiality is key in the experimentation with artists' appearances and positionings. In the more complex sculptural and composite works, it is only by virtue of the works' material components that the artists are allowed to *mate-realise*, and it is in (relation to) the works as material entities that the artists find their alternative, anti-author-itarian positions. In that sense, Arte Povera artists' appearances both confirm and challenge established ideas of Arte Povera's materiality. Rather than claiming that the materials employed are poor, as many simplified accounts of Arte Povera do, my study suggest that the discussed works present their *artists* as poor or impoverished relative to the works and the materials of which they are composed.

Given this tendency in Arte Povera to impoverish the appearing artists with respect to the materials/materiality of their works, it is clear that the recurring manifestations of the artists across Arte Povera's production do not oppose the 'material vitalism' that has been found to characterise Arte Povera works and to prove their relevance for a contemporary art scene influenced by posthumanist thinking. Instead one can claim that shared concerns, like those claimed among Barthes's, Foucault's and Derrida's questioning of the (artistic) subject in the

⁴ Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* [1974], trans. Richard Miller (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1975), 27. See also Chapter Two, p. 56.

late 1960s and contemporary posthumanist philosophy, exists among Arte Povera's production around 1970 and a contemporary art scene subscribing to a posthumanist ethos. The works discussed in this thesis are deeply engaged in the project of levelling the relationship between human and non-human entities that artists, curators and art institutions of the 2000s more consciously explore.

There is no reason to ignore the differences and developments that separate contemporary art from Arte Povera's endeavours over fifty years earlier. Contemporary visual art practices are, for instance, informed by more recent knowledge about the negative effects of human behaviour on the natural environment. A comparable ecological awareness cannot be assumed to have been prevalent among Arte Povera artists or the society they were part of. Today's artists also benefit from and find inspiration in numerous newly developed theories about the character of and the relationship between humans and nature, subjectivity and matter. However, one insight that the works discussed in this thesis can offer contemporary practices, is the following: that the settlement with anthropocentrism or human/subjective dominance over the non-human/non-subjective world depends on each privileged person/agent/entity's willingness to analyse their own positions relative to their immediate surroundings, and their efforts to reposition themselves in their everyday practice. In the arts, this implies the artists' openness to reposition themselves relative to their works and the works' materials/materiality. This basic insight is often neglected when contemporary artists document climate change and other negative consequences of human exploitation of nature to spread awareness and stimulate behavioural changes in the public more generally, while at the same time holding on to the prioritised position of the 'sender' behind the work, who utilises the work to mediate their message. Arguably, it is also ignored when contemporary artists – like Arte Povera artists did themselves in many of their 'materialist vitalist' works – underline the value and potentiality of materials by presenting them 'raw' and/or self-evolving, but without problematising their own role as presenters.

One may object against the alternative strategy of opposing author-ity through self(re-)presentation. If a recalibration of human/subjective dominance over the non-human/non-subjective world is centred solely on the relationship between the artist and their materials, even involving a withdrawal into the work as a secluded space, it can be seen as purely symbolic, without any impact on the actual state of affairs. This argument echoes elements from Arte Povera's reception history, which consider the artists' engagement with simple materials as 'poetical' rather than politically progressive, and the artists' entry into life itself as a required

step for the realisation of the political potential of their art practices.⁵ However, many of the works discussed in this thesis problematise this position: they present particular instances of an ongoing production process in which neither the identities of ‘artist’ and ‘artistic material’ nor the relationship between them are fixed, but are under negotiation. During this process, the contributors operate in double roles, as artists/individuals and as material of the work/world, respectively. They are not (only) artists who activate a set of artistic materials, but (also) individuals who engage with and attempt to define themselves relative to the materials of the world, such as sand dust, leather, clay, lead and wood, or relative to material components that represent the surrounding world, like the envelopes and the wooden bricks that represent social networks in Boetti’s *Viaggi postali* and Prini’s (*LEGNI*) “*Gente del 9 maggio 1968*”, or the magnetic arrows that represent geomagnetic force in Anselmo’s “*Direzioni*” drawings. When the works stabilise particular instances from this production process, the relationships between artist and material that they present do not simply *symbolise* levelled relationships between the corresponding macro-entities of human/subject and non-human/non-subjective world. Rather, they testify to the fact that rearrangements of the hierarchical relationship between ‘man’ and matter have already taken place.

What I suggest is not to promote the relationships established between artist and material in Arte Povera works as ‘images’ of balanced relationships between individuals and the world, nor as examples for contemporary artists to follow in their own pursuits to overturn human claims to superiority and to nurture non-hierarchical relationships between humans and non-human entities. Such approaches would position Arte Povera in the prioritised role of model and uphold the representational logic that both Arte Povera works themselves and the theoretical discourse I relate them to dismiss. The works in which the artists appear refuse to establish direct contact with their audiences, and activate instead intimate encounters and dialogues between the producing artists/individuals and the materials of the work/world. This gesture is instructive, even ethical: it leaves everyone who approaches the works to their own devices and signals that they are responsible for defining their own position within their immediate milieu. What they ask of artists who approach them today, then, is not to imitate them, but to be attentive to their own roles as producers and presenters, and continue the search for anti-authoritarian relationships with the material (components) they engage in their own works, contributing instances in their practices in which the world of matter is treated with humble respect.

⁵ See Introduction, p. 13, and Chapter Four, p. 166.

Appendix

Catalogue

This thesis separates between *figures* – images of Arte Povera works that are central to my argument – and *illustrations*, images that serve a secondary, contextualising function. This appendix only presents the figures. For more information on the illustrations, see “List of Illustrations”, p. 394–95.

The catalogue of works compiles available key information on the works analysed in this thesis, including artists’ names; works’ titles, production years, materials and/or techniques, dimensions and/or duration, current owners, first exhibition contexts, cursory information and sources and further reading. Please note that the latter sections are non-exhaustive, and that the references are abbreviated if the texts are mentioned elsewhere in the thesis – for full references, see “Bibliography”. Importantly, the catalogue also lists information on copyright and image credits.

The catalogue is ordered in accordance with the works’ appearance in the thesis (chapter, section), and figure numbers correspond to the numbers of the images throughout the thesis. In the exceptional case in which no image of the discussed work exists (Luciano Fabro *Apparecchio alla morte di S. Alfonso Maria dei Liguori*, 1969), information about the work is given in a separate listing among the works of the relevant chapter and section, but without figure number (between figures 4.1.2 and 4.2.1).

After each chapter listing follows a list of further works that can be seen as relevant examples of Arte Povera artists’ appearances within the same genre/medium, and that share characteristics with those analysed in the thesis. Future analyses of these works may come to confirm my conclusions, or add nuance, and in some cases possibly counter my arguments. The works have been omitted from the main body text for various reasons: they may, for instance, be produced outside the timeframe of this thesis, they may hold the status of ephemera rather than proper artworks, their origin may be disputed (like when a photo of the artist can be seen either as a self-portrait, or as a portrait by another photographer), or they may have less exemplary value than the works I do present here. The list may nevertheless be of interest to those who approach Arte Povera from an adjacent, slightly different angle than my own, and those interested in further pursuing specific aspects of this study.

Chapter Three

Leaving the Referent Behind. Arte Povera's Non-Affirmative *Autoritratti*

Exposing Representation – Objectifying Oneself



Fig. 3.1. Giulio Paolini, *Delfo (Delphos)*, 1965.

Photo emulsion on canvas, 180 x 95 cm.

Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

First exhibited: "Giulio Paolini", Galleria Notizie, Turin, November 1965.

Cursory information: The original photograph was taken by Francesco Aschieri in 1965. Within the time frame of this thesis, the work was also exhibited in "Giulio Paolini", Galleria dell'Ariete, Milan, April 1966.

Sources and further reading: Calvino, "La squadratura", 228–29; Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 48–49, 52–53; Germano Celant, ed. *Giulio Paolini 1960–1972*, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 148–52; Germano Celant, "Giulio Paolini" [1972], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Stories*, 56; Disch, *Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo*, 115; Doris von Drathen, "Giulio Paolini. Of seeing blindness", in *Vortex of Silence: Proposition for an art criticism beyond aesthetic categories* (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2004), 219–21; Lonzi, *Autoritratto*, 17; Lumley, *Arte Povera*, 26–28; Owens, "Giulio Paolini", n.p; Owens, "From Work to Frame", 123; Luca Palermo, "Il volto ritratto. L'assoluto dell'immagine nel XX secolo", in *La fantasia e la storia. Studi di Storia dell'arte sul ritratto dal Medioevo al Contemporaneo*, ed. Giulio Brevetti (Palermo: Palermo University Press, 2019), 192; Anne Rorimer, *New Art in the 60s and 70s: Redefining Reality* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 65–66; Trincerini, *Giulio Paolini. Delfo IV, 1997*, 14–18; Trincerini, *Giulio Paolini, Delfo (IV), 1997*, 14–15; Tommaso Trini, "Il vero e il visibile" [from "Giulio Paolini, un decennio"], in *DATA*, Nos. 7-8, Summer 1973, 60–67], in Tommaso Trini, *Mezzo secolo di arte intera. Scritti 1964-2014*, ed. Luca Cerizza (Cremona: Johan & Levi Editore, 2016), 103–09, 104.

Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.



Fig. 3.2. Giulio Paolini, *Autoritratto (Self-Portrait)*, 1970.

Photograph on canvas, pencil handwriting, 40 x 80 cm.


Private Collection.

First exhibited: "Giulio Paolini 1960–1972", Fondazione Prada, Milan, October 2003.

Cursory information: The original photograph was taken by Anna Piva. This work also exists as a graphic edition, see *Impressions Graphiques: L'opera grafica 1967–1992 di Giulio Paolini* (Turin: Marco Noire Editore, 1992).

Sources and further reading: Bernardina, "Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini", 8; Germano Celant, ed. *Giulio Paolini 1960–1972*, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 297; Germano Celant, ed., *Arte Povera 2011* (Milan: Electa, 2011), 387; Disch, *Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo*, 212; Wolfgang Max Faust, "Et quid amabo: Notizen zu Arbeiten von Giulio Paolini", in *Giulio Paolini. Del bello intelligibile*, ed. Erich Franz (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1982), 12–23, 14–15; Vecere, *In assenza*, 81–82.

Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Adam Reich © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.

	<p>Fig. 3.3. Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>Autoritratto (Self-portrait)</i>, 1969/70. Lithography and silkscreen on nickel-plated copper, 50 x 35 cm. Edition of 100 by Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, printed by Colophon Moltiplicata, Milan. Various owners. First exhibited: “New Multiple Art”, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, November 1970.</p> <p>Cursory information: Photographer of the original image unknown. In another version of this work, the photograph of Pistoletto is screen-printed on gold-plated copper. This alternative version has the same size and is also edited by Gabriele Mazzotta Editore and printed by Colophon Moltiplicata, Milan, but in an edition of 30.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Basualdo, <i>Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974</i>, 8–9; Arts Council of Great Britain, <i>3 to Infinity: New Multiple Art at the Whitechapel Art Gallery</i> (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1970), 61.</p> <p>Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo: © Archivio Pistoletto, Biella.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.4.1. Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>Autoritratto con occhiali gialli (Self-Portrait with Yellow Glasses)</i>, 1973. Serigraph on steel, 100 x 70 cm. Edition of 200 by Galleria Multipli, Turin, printed by Multicenter, Milan. Various owners. First exhibited: “Michelangelo Pistoletto”, Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover, November 1973.</p> <p>Cursory information: Title variation: <i>Autoritratto col colbacco</i>. Photographer of the original image unknown. In different sources, dating varies between 1970, -71, -72 and -73, and edition number between 25 and 200. The Archivio Pistoletto confirms that the edition number is 25, and that the production year is most likely 1973. The work appears in a modified version on the front cover of the exhibition catalogue made for “Michelangelo Pistoletto”, Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt Museum, 1974 (see Fig. 3.4.2), and on the invitation card for “Michelangelo Pistoletto”, Galleria Multipli, Turin, 1975.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Maria Grazia Bernardini and Mario Lolli Ghetti, eds., <i>L’stato dell’arte, l’arte dello stato</i> (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 2015), 238; <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 3, No. 9, 1973; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che fare?</i>, 270–71; Heinz Preute, <i>Arte Povera aus der Sammlung des Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein</i> (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2012), 84–85; Maria Sframeli, ed., <i>Artist’s Self-Portraits from the Uffizi</i> (Milan: Skira, 2007), 160–61.</p> <p>Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo: Archivio Pistoletto, Biella.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.4.2. Cover of exhibition catalogue, <i>Michelangelo Pistoletto</i>, Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt Museum, 1974.</p> <p>Cursory information: The image is a modified version of Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>Autoritratto con occhiali gialli</i>, 1971 (Fig. 3.4.1).</p> <p>Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo: Eva Rem Hansen.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.5. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Rovesciare i propri occhi (Reversing One’s Eyes)</i>, 1970 (details). Sequence of 6 slides. Various versions, various owners. First exhibited: “Informazioni sulla presenza italiana”, Incontri Internazionali d’Arte, Palazzo Taverna, Rome, November 1971.</p>

Cursory information: *Rovesciare i propri occhi* is realised 1) as performative actions in public 2) as photographs taken by Claudio Basso, Paolo Pellion and Paolo Mussat Sartor. Basso is the photographer behind the images in this particular version of the work. 3) as an artist's book; Giuseppe Penone, *Rovesciare i propri occhi* (Turin: Einaudi, 1977). Penone has kept a list over the occasions on which he wore the lenses, and Danela Lancioni summarises it as follows: "On September 19, 1970, Penone wore the lenses in Sperone's gallery, during a Hamish Fulton exhibition; he did so again on October 6, 1970, along the banks of the Po. On February 23, 1971, he performed in Piazza di Spagna in Rome, in the company of Gilberto Zorio and Cy Twombly, and, a few days later, on February 28, on the train from Ceva to Savona. He wore the lenses again on March 23 at the Galerie Paul Maenz in Cologne, and on May 26 at the Kunstverein in Munich, at the opening of a group show in which he participated, *Arte Povera: 13 italiane Künstler* [...] On March 9, 1971, Penone wore the lenses on Via Lepetit in Garesio, where Claudio Basso took slides of the action [...] On December 1, 1971, at a survey show titled *Informazioni sulla presenza italiana* at Incontri Internazionali d'Arte in Rome, he was photographed by Claudio Abate" (see Lancioni, *Rovesciare i propri occhi (Reversing One's Eyes)*, n.p).

Sources and further reading: Bätzner et. al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 36, 370, 478–79; Bürgi, *Arte Povera: The Great Awakening*, 100; Busine, *Giuseppe Penone*, 38, 96–101, 130; Cappelletti, "Un cambio di passo", 128; Celant, *Giuseppe Penone*, 58–59; Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera*, 40, 148–49; Ida Gianelli and Giorgio Verzotti, eds., *Penone* (Rivoli/Milano: Castello di Rivoli/Fabbro Editori, 1991), 79; Mario Codognato, "Pagine d'artista", in Germano Celant, ed., *Arte Povera 2011* (Milan: Electa, 2011), 596; Cullinan, "Towards a Poor Theater. Giulio Paolini's Scenographies in the 1970s", 217; Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti*, 88; Guzzetti, "Information 1970: alcune novità sul lavoro di Giuseppe Penone"; Lancioni, "Rovesciare i propri occhi (Reversing One's Eyes)", n.p.; Daniela Lancioni, "Giuseppe Penone's Actions: Towards a Definition", 214–16; Luisetti, "Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto. Giuseppe Penone contronatura", 168; Maffei, *Arte Povera 1966–1980: Libri e Documenti/Books and Documents*, 152; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, *Che fare?*, 26, 246–47; Mangini, "Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978", 124 and further; Mangini, "Feeling One's Way through a Cultural Chiasm", 164–67; Mangini, *Seeing Through Closed Eyelids*, 42 and further; Gianfranco Maraniello and Jonathan Watkins, eds., *Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968–2008* (Bologna/Birmingham: MaMbo/Ikon Gallery, 2009), 59–63, 332 and further; Eva Meyer-Hermann, "The place is the Memory of the place", in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 38; Oliva, *Paolo Mussat Sartor*, 192–93; Luca Palermo, "Il volto ritratto. L'assoluto dell'immagine nel XX secolo", in *La fantasia e la storia. Studi di storia dell'arte sul ritratto dal Medioevo al Contemporaneo*, ed. Giulio Brevetti (Palermo: Palermo University Press, 2019), 193–94; Pola, "Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto", 605–06; Christoph Schreier, "The Form of the Tree is its Memory. Interview with Giuseppe Penone", in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Rainald Schumacher (Munich: Kunstverlag Ingvild Goetz, 2001), 162.

Credits: © Giuseppe Penone/BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone, Turin.



Fig. 3.6. Giovanni Anselmo, *Lato destro* (Right side), 1971.

Photograph on paper from inverted negative, 50 x 38 cm. Edition of 50 by Edizioni Multipli, Turin.

Various owners.

First exhibited: Galleria Multipli, Turin, 1971.

Cursory information: The original photograph was taken by Paolo Mussat Sartor.

Sources and further reading: Anselmo, "Giovanni Anselmo", 59–61; Ammann, "Giovanni Anselmo", 22–23; Ammann, Anselmo and Suter, *Giovanni Anselmo*, 110–13; Bürgi, *Arte Povera: The Great Awakening*, 62–63; Guzzetti, "Note sullo spettatore" per Giovanni Anselmo: *Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale*, 49, 62; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, *Che fare?*, 68–69; Johannes Meinhardt, "Signs of a fluid

world. Giovanni Anselmo's indices of energy processes", in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 55–58; Eva Meyer-Hermann, "The place is the Memory of the place", in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 39; Oliva, *Paolo Mussat Sartor*, 25; Pola, "Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto", 605.

Image credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: © Archivio Giovanni Anselmo, Turin.

Fragmenting the (Image of the) Self



Fig. 3.7. Alighiero Boetti, *Shaman/Showman*, 1968.

Lithography, 70 x 50 cm. Edition of 35.

Various owners.

First exhibited: "Shaman/Showman", Galleria de Nieubourg, Milan, April 1968.

Cursory information: Boetti also used the title *Shaman/Showman* for his installation at "Arte povera + Azione povera", Amalfi, October 1968. The print reappears in Boetti's 1975 portfolio *Insicuro noncurante*.

Sources and further reading: Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 27–28, 198; Germano Celant, "Alighiero Boetti" [2001], in Celant, *Arte Povera. Histories and Stories*, 227; Giorgi, "Autoritratti di Boetti alla Galleria De Nieubourg", n.p.; Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti*, 100–01; Morsiani, "Alighieri e Boetti: Halving to Double", 16; Maria Teresa Roberto, "Alighiero Boetti 1966–1970, die Wörter und die Dinge", 28–29; Salerno, "Manuale di conoscenza", 14–15; Sauzeau Boetti, *Alighiero e Boetti: Shaman/Showman*, 54–57; Tommaso Trini, "ABEEGHIIIILOORTT", *DATA*, Vol. 2, No. 4, May 1972, 50–57, 54.

Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.



Fig. 3.8. Alighiero Boetti, *Gemelli (Twins)*, 1968.



Photomontage, 15 x 10 cm. Edition of 50.

Various owners.

Cursory information: This postcard format work was sent to Boetti's acquaintances. Each card has a written message on the back, most of them read either 'non marsalarti' or 'de-cantiamoci su'. These expressions relate to the aging of wine and mean "do not become impossibly sweet as you age" and "let us rest and savour it as what we have is good", respectively. The work reappears in Boetti's 1975 portfolio *Insicuro noncurante*.

Sources and further reading: Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 200; Bätzner, "Alighiero e Boetti: Active Interaction", 114–15; Bätzner et al, *Entrare nell'opera*, 385–86; Celant, *Art Povera*, 157; Germano Celant, "Alighiero Boetti" [2001], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Stories*, 227; Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera*, 83; Fer, *The Infinite Line*, 174; Giorgi, "Autoritratti di Boetti alla Galleria De Nieubourg", n.p.; Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti*, 99–100; Lumley, *Arte Povera*, 69–70; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, *Che fare?*, 86–87; Morsiani, "Alighiero e Boetti: Halving to Double", 20–21; Roberto, "Alighiero Boetti 1966–1970, die Wörter und die Dinge", 28–29; Salerno, "Die Kunst der Kopie und die Geheimnisse der Reproduktion", 49; Salerno, "Manuale di conoscenza", 18–19; Sauzeau Boetti, *Alighiero e Boetti: Shaman/Showman*, 58–59; Sergio, "Art is the Copy of Art", 167, 177; Tommaso Trini, "ABEEGHIIIILOORTT", *DATA*, Vol. 2, No 4, May 1972, 50–57, 54; Tommaso Trini, "A è il segreto e B l'uscita" [in *Alighiero e Boetti. Ammazza il tempo* (Genoa: Galleria Chisel, 1985)], in Tommaso Trini, *Mezzo secolo di arte intera. Scritti 1964–2014*, ed. Luca Cerizza (Cremona: Johan & Levi Editore, 2016), 56–59, 58.

	Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.
	<p>Fig. 3.9. Alighiero Boetti, <i>Per una storia naturale della stabilizzazione (AB)</i> (<i>For a Natural History of Stabilisation [AB]</i>), 1970. 8 Polaroid photographs, 9 x 87 cm. Antonia Mulas, Milan. First exhibited: “Cose (quasi) mai viste”, Centro Luigi Sarro, Rome, March 2007.</p> <p>Cursory information: Boetti also made another work with the same title, but depicting his wife, see Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 273.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 306.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.10.1. Alighiero Boetti, <i>Autoritratto (Self-Portrait)</i>, 1969. Photocopy on Xerox paper, twelve elements of 32 x 20.5 cm. Private collection, Milan. First exhibited: “Alighiero Boetti”, Kunsthalle Basel, March 1978.</p> <p>Cursory information: Boetti made several versions of the same work, see Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 237, 297–98. He used the same technique in <i>Nove Xerox Anne Marie</i>, 1969, and <i>Autoritratto (due profili)</i>, 1969, see Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 236–37. For an overview of Boetti’s work with Xerox print, see Hans Ulrich Obrist and Agata Boetti, eds. <i>Alighiero Boetti: Photocopies</i> (Florence: Forma Edizioni, 2017). For other artists using the Xerox at the time, see Celant, <i>Book as Artwork</i>, 37 and further.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 235; Alighiero Boetti, Cordula von Keller, Friedemann Malsch, Kristin Schmidt and Giovan B. Salerno, <i>Alighiero e Boetti. Niente tutto</i> (Cologne: Walther König, 2006), 35; Casa, “The Image of the Void”, 17; Godfrey, <i>Alighiero e Boetti</i>, 79 and further; Teresa Kittler, “Living Art and the Art of Living”, PhD Thesis, University College London, 2014, 217; Tommaso Trini, “ABEEGHIIIILOORTT”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 2, No. 4, May 1972, 50–57, 54.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.10.2. Alighiero Boetti, <i>Autoritratto (Self-Portrait)</i>, 1969 (Detail). For information, see Fig. 3.10.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.11. Alighiero Boetti, <i>I AM AN IN-DIVIDE-YOU-ALL</i>, 1969. Photographic contact sheet, graphic inscription, 30 x 40 cm. Private collection. First exhibited: “Alighiero Boetti. Quasi tutto”, Galleria d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bergamo, April 2004.</p> <p>Cursory information: The original series of photographs was taken by Roberto Cagnoli. Archivio Alighiero Boetti therefore speaks of <i>I AM AN IN-DIVIDE-YOU-ALL</i> as an appropriated work. One of the images from these test strips also appears as <i>San Bernardino</i>.</p>

	<p>1968; in an artists' portrait by Paolo Mussat Sartor, where Boetti is seen holding the portrait of himself (dated 1975 and 1978 in different sources); in the collage <i>Recuerdo</i>, 1978; in the 1979 collage series <i>San Bernardino</i>; and in Boetti's 1979 portfolio <i>Insicuro noncurante</i>.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 234; Godfrey, <i>Alighiero e Boetti</i>, 98–99; Sauzeau Boetti, <i>Alighiero e Boetti: Shaman/Showman</i>, 47.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Private Collection.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.12. Giulio Paolini, 1421965, 1965. Photograph mounted on panel, 200 x 150 cm. Centre national d'art et de culture Georges-Pompidou, Paris. First exhibited: "Giulio Paolini", Palazzo della Pilotta, Sala delle Scuderie, Parma, March 1976.</p> <p>Cursory information: Franco Aschieri is the photographer appearing in the photograph, which was taken with a self-timer. The artist's figure from <i>1421965</i> reappears, <i>en abyme</i>, in Giulio Paolini's <i>Capitemi!</i> (1966), <i>Atlante</i> (1966) and <i>Anna-logia</i> (1966), Figs. 3.13–3.15 below).</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bernardina, "Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini", 6; Calvino, "La squadratura", 228, 230; Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 48, 54; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 152–53; Germano Celant, "Giulio Paolini" [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera. Histories and Stories</i>, 56–57; Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 106; Maddalena Disch, "The Author, the Work and the Viewer: The 'Performative' Dimension in Giulio Paolini's Work", in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell'opera</i>, 192; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che fare?</i>, 196; Pola, "Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto", 603; Anne Rorimer, "Reconfiguring Representation. Mechanical Reproduction and the Human Figure in Conceptual Art", in <i>Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977</i>, ed. Matthew S. Witkovsky (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago/Yale University Press, 2012), 208; Sergio, "Art is the Copy of Art. Italian Photography in and after Arte Povera", 165; Giuliano Sergio, <i>Information, document, oeuvre. Rarours de la photographie en Italie dans les années soixante et soixante-dix</i> (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris, 2015), 81–83; Vecere, <i>In assenza</i>, 72.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Paolo Pellion © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.13. Giulio Paolini, Capitemi! (Understand Me!), 1966. Photo emulsion on canvas, polyethylene, stretcher, primed canvas, 6 elements of 40 x 40 cm. Collezione Calabresi, Rome. First exhibited: "Proposte 1. Giulio Paolini", Sala delle Colonne, Teatro Stabile, Turin, March 1967.</p> <p>Cursory information: Source photography is <i>1421965</i> (Fig. 3.12 above).</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 52, 57–58; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 148, 154–55; Germano Celant, "Giulio Paolini" [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 57–58; Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 138; Wolfgang Max Faust "Et quid amabo: Notizen zu Arbeiten von Giulio Paolini", in <i>Giulio Paolini. Del bello intelligibile</i>, ed. Erich Franz (Bielefeld: Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 1982), 12–23, 12–13; Giuliano Sergio, <i>Information, document, oeuvre. Rarours de la photographie en Italie dans les années soixante et soixante-dix</i> (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris, 2015), 84–85.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Photographer unknown © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>

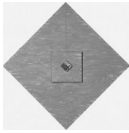


Fig. 3.14. Giulio Paolini, *Atlante (Atlas)*, 1966.

Oil on photographic print on canvas, oil on canvas, nylon monofilament, 3 elements, 150 x 150 cm, 50 x 50 cm, 13.5 x 13.5 cm.

Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.

First exhibited: “Proposte 1. Giulio Paolini”, Sala delle Colonne, Teatro Stabile, Turin, March 1967.

Cursory information: Source photography is *1421965* (Fig. 3.12 above).

Sources and further reading: Celant, “Arte Povera” [1968], 54; Germano Celant, ed. *Giulio Paolini 1960–1972*, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 143; Disch, *Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo*, 139.

Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Enzo Ricci © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.



Fig. 3.15. Giulio Paolini, *Anna-logia (Anna-logy)*, 1966.

Primed canvases, photo emulsion, nylon monofilament, 3 elements, 150 x 150 cm, 90 x 90 cm, 30 x 30 cm.

Private collection.

First exhibited: with uncertainty, “Proposte 1. Giulio Paolini”, Sala delle Colonne, Teatro Stabile, Turin, March 1967.

Cursory information: The work’s title refers to Paolini’s future wife, Anna Piva, who took the photograph incorporated in this work, of Paolini holding *1421965*, 1965.

Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 185; Bettina Della Casa, ed., *Collezione Christian Stein: Una storia dell’arte italiana* (Milan: Electa, 2010), 245; Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 53, 58–59; Germano Celant, ed. *Giulio Paolini 1960–1972*, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 148, 181; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Stories*, 58; Disch, *Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo*, 140; Malch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, *Che fare?*, 196–97; Anne Rorimer, “Reconfiguring Representation. Mechanical Reproduction and the Human Figure in Conceptual Art”, in *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977*, ed. Matthew S. Witkovsky (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago/Yale University Press, 2012), 208; Matthew S. Witkovsky, “The Unfixed Photograph”, in *Light Years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977*, ed. Matthew S. Witkovsky (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago/Yale University Press, 2012), 14–15, 18–19, 42.

Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Adam Reich © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.



Fig. 3.16. Giulio Paolini, *Diaframma 8 (Aperture 8)*, 1965.



Photo emulsion on canvas, 80 x 90 cm.

Private collection.

First exhibited: “Situazioni ‘66”, Galleria del Deposito, Genoa, December 1966.

Cursory information: The work’s title refers to the lens diaphragm used by the photographer Francesco Aschieri to take the picture. *Diaframma 8* also exists in a smaller version on paper, in the Marconi Collection. *Diaframma 8* reappears, *en abyme*, in Giulio Paolini, *D867*, 1967 (see Fig. 3.17 below). A version of the same motif – the artist carrying a canvas in a city street (but now seen from behind) – is found in Giulio Paolini, *1/25*, 1965. Within the time frame of this thesis, *Diaframma 8* was also exhibited in “Processi di pensiero visualizzati. Junge italienische Avantgarde”, Kunstmuseum Luzern, May 1970; “Elf Italiener Heute”, Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund, February 1971; “Arte Povera: 13 italiani e Künstler. Dokumentation und neue Werke”, Kunstverein München, May 1971.

Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 64; Bernardina, “Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini”, 6; Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 54; Germano Celant, ed. *Giulio*

	<p><i>Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 145, 148, 152; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera. Histories and Stories</i>, 56–57; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 133; Dantini, “Gradus ad Parnassum. Giulio Paolini, ‘Autoritratto’, 1969”, 6; Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini. Catalogo ragionato 1960–1999, tomo primo</i>, 111; Maddalena Disch, “The Author, the Work and the Viewer: The ‘Performative’ Dimension in Giulio Paolini’s Work”, in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 192–93; Flood and Morris, <i>Zero to Infinity</i>, 72–73; Johannes Meinhardt, “Seeing and being seen. Giulio Paolini and the gaze”, in Franz et al., <i>Giulio Paolini. Vedo e non vedo</i>, 79–113, 96, 102; Pola, “Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto Fotografia e film nell’Arte Povera”, 603–04; Tommaso Trini, “Giulio Paolini, un decennio. Parte prima”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 3, Nos. 7–8, Summer 1973, 62.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Photographer unknown © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.17. Giulio Paolini, <i>D867</i>, 1967. Photo emulsion on canvas, 80 x 90 cm. Private collection. First exhibited: “Giulio Paolini”, Galleria Notizie, Turin, April 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: Original photograph by Francesco Aschieri. The photograph that appears, <i>en abyme</i>, in <i>D867</i> is <i>Diaframma 8</i> (Fig. 3.16 above). Within the timeframe of this thesis the work was also exhibited in “Processi di pensiero visualizzati. Junge italienische Avantgarde”, Kunstmuseum Luzern, May 1970; and probably in “Arte Povera: 13 italiani e Künstler. Dokumentation und neue Werke”, Kunstverein München, May 1971.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 65; Calvino, “La squadratura”, 229–30; Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 53, 60; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 145, 148; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera. Histories and Stories</i>, 58; Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and protagonists</i>, 139; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Arte Povera 2011</i> (Milan: Electa, 2011), 386; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 133; Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 162. Maddalena Disch, “The Author, the Work and the Viewer: The ‘Performative’ Dimension in Giulio Paolini’s Work”, in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 193; Johannes Meinhardt, “Seeing and being seen. Giulio Paolini and the gaze”, in Franz et al., <i>Giulio Paolini. Vedo e non vedo</i>, 79–113, 99, 102; Giulio Paolini, “Boun Compleanno”, Celant, <i>Arte Povera 2011</i>, 386; Pola, “Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto Fotografia e film nell’Arte Povera”, 603–04; Tommaso Trini, “Giulio Paolini, un decennio. Parte prima”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 3, Nos. 7–8, Summer 1973, 62; Vecere, <i>In assenza</i>, 72–73.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Photographer unknown © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.18. Giulio Paolini, <i>Autoritratto col busto di eraclito e altre opera</i> (Self-Portrait with the Bust of Heraclitus and Other Works), 1971–72. Tempera, pencil, and coloured pencils on unprimed canvas, 200 x 300 cm. Private collection. First exhibited: “Giulio Paolini”, Sonnabend Gallery, New York, November 1972.</p> <p>Cursory information: Paolini has copied the figure from Antonio Sandre, <i>Il costume nei tempi</i> (Turin: Scuola Taglio Moderno, 1954), 268, replaced the original face with his own, and modified the original jacket.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 106, 108–09; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 375–76; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 67; Germano Celant, <i>Ileana Sonnabend and Arte Povera</i> (New York, NY: Lévy Gorvy, 2017), 204;</p>

	<p>Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 242; Oliva, <i>Paolo Mussat Sartor</i>, 167; Vecere, <i>In assenza</i>, 82–83.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Photographer unknown © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.19. Giulio Paolini, <i>Autoritratto</i> (Self-Portrait), 1968. Photo emulsion on canvas, nylon string. 2 elements, 98 x 74 and 50 x 37 cm. Angelo Baldassarre, Bari. First exhibited: “Giulio Paolini 2121969”, Galleria de Nieubourg, Milan, February 1969.</p> <p>Cursory information: Source image is Nicolas Poussin, <i>Autoportrait</i>, 1650. Oil on canvas, 78 x 94 cm. Louvre, Paris.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Nike Bätzner, <i>Arte Povera: Zwischen Erinnerung und Ereignis: Giulio Paolini, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Jannis Kounellis</i> (Nürnberg: Verlag für modern Kunst, 2000), 72–73; Bernardina, “Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini”, 9–10; Calvino, “La squadratura”, 233–34; Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 75–78; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 219, 234; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Identité italienne: L’art en Italie depuis 1959</i> (Paris/Rome/Florence: Centre Georges Pompidou/Incontri Internazionali d’Arte/Centro Di, 1981), 315; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Arte Povera 2011</i> (Milan: Electa, 2011), 388; Cullinan, “Towards a Poor Theater. Giulio Paolini’s Scenographies in the 1970s”, 220; Dantini, “Gradus ad Parnassum. Giulio Paolini, ‘Autoritratto’, 1969”, 4; Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 173; Kiilerich, “Self-Portraiture in Contemporary Italian Art: Giulio Paolini and Carlo Maria Mariani”, 605; Johannes Meinhardt, “Seeing and being seen. Giulio Paolini and the gaze”, in Franz et al., <i>Giulio Paolini. Vedo e non vedo</i>, 79–113, 98, 100; Owens, “Giulio Paolini”, n.p.; Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 123; Pola, “Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto Fotografia e film nell’Arte Povera”, 603–04; Vecere, <i>In assenza</i>, 75–76.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Mario Sarotto © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.20. Paolini, <i>Autoritratto</i> (Self-Portrait), 1968. Photo emulsion on canvas, 151 x 126 cm. The George Economou Collection, Athens. First exhibited: “Teatro delle Mostre”, Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, May 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: Source image is Henri Rousseau, <i>Moi-même. Portrait-paysage</i>, 1890. Oil on canvas, 146 x 113 cm. National gallery, Prague. Paolini’s work is occasionally referred to as <i>Autoritratto con il Doganiere</i>.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bernardi, <i>Teatro delle mostre. Roma, maggio 1968</i>, 178; Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 73, 75; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 233–34; Dantini, “Gradus ad Parnassum. Giulio Paolini, ‘Autoritratto’, 1969”, 4; Michele Dantini, “Giulio Paolini e l’Autoritratto con il Doganiere Rousseau (1968)”, <i>Doppiozero</i>, 27 November 2013, see https://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/carla-lonzi/giulio-paolini-e-l-autoritratto-con-il-doganiere (accessed 26.02.2020); Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 172; Kiilerich, “Self-Portraiture in Contemporary Italian Art: Giulio Paolini and Carlo Maria Mariani”, 605; Teresa Kittler, “Living Art and the Art of Living”, PhD Thesis, University College London, 2014, 218; Owens, “From Work to Frame”, 123; Portinari, “Alighiero & Boetti: sulla firma come identità e duplicazione”, 257–58.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Elisabeth Bernstein © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>

Conceptualising the Artist



3.21. Giulio Paolini, *Giulio Paolini*, 1971.

Pencil on paper/carton, 24.5 x 18/36 cm.

Private collection.

First exhibited: “Giulio Paolini”, Galleria Notizie, Turin, January 1972.

Sources and further reading: Bernardina, “Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini”, 9; Calvino, “La squadratura”, 230; Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, 96–97; Germano Celant, ed. *Giulio Paolini 1960–1972*, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 324, 351; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Stories*, 65; Disch, *Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo*, 239; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, *Che fare?*, 205.

Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Mario Sarotto © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.

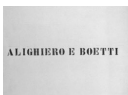


Fig. 3.22. Alighiero Boetti, *ALIGHIERO E BOETTI*, 1971.

Pen on paper, 48 x 68 cm.

Giorgio Marconi, Milan.

First exhibited: “Alighiero Boetti, Jorge Pardo, Grazia Toderi”, Galleria Giò Marconi, June 2003.

Cursory information: Ammann’s *Catalogo generale* indicates that this work was first exhibited in 2003. However, the work figures on the invitation card to “ALIGHIERO E BOETTI”, Galleria Multipli, Torino, 1972. Note also that Boetti exhibited other works from the same series in “Alighiero e Boetti”, Galerie MTL, Brussels, 1972, where he used the name split for the first time. In addition to figures 3.23, 3.24 and 3.25, *ALIGHIERO BOETTI MADE IN ITALY* and *AELLEIGIACCAIEERREOBIOETITII* also belong to this series. See Jean-Christophe Ammann, ed., *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo* (Milan: Mondadori Electa, 2009), 293-94.

Sources and further reading: Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 294; Luca Massimo Barbero and Cecilia Widenheim, ed., *Time & Place: Milano-Torino 1958–1968* (Stockholm: Moderna museet/Steidl, 2008), 129; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 390; Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti*, 87.

Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022 Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.

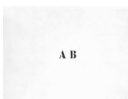


Fig. 3.23. Alighiero Boetti, *A B*, 1971.

Pen on paper, 48 x 68 cm.

Gian Enzo Sperone, New York.

First exhibited: “Alighiero e Boetti”, Galerie MTL, Brussels, June 1972.

Sources and further reading: Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 293; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 390.

Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022 Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.





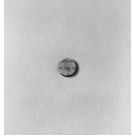
3.24. Alighiero Boetti, *ABEEGHIILOORTT*, 1971.

Pen on paper, 47 x 67 cm.

Private collection, Geneva.

First exhibited: “Alighiero e Boetti”, Galerie Guy Bârtschi, Geneva, June 1996.

Sources and further reading: Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 295; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 390; Fer, *The Infinite Line*, 175. Albeit not discussed

	<p>in this text, this work and others with the same title (see Fig. 3.25 below) have probably given the title to the article Tommaso Trini, “ABEEGHIIILOORTT”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 2, No. 4, May 1972, 50–57, 54.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022 Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.25. Alighiero Boetti, <i>ABEEGHIIILOORTT</i>, 1971. Pen on paper, 47.5 x 68.5 cm. Antonio Rava, Turin. First exhibited: “Alighiero e Boetti”, Galerie MTL, Brussels, June 1972.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 295; Bätzner et.al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 390; Fer, <i>The Infinite Line</i>, 175. Albeit not discussed in this text, this work and others with the same title (see Fig. 3.24 above) have probably given the title to the article Tommaso Trini, “ABEEGHIIILOORTT”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 2, No. 4, May 1972, 50–57.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022 Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>3.26. Emilio Prini, <i>Emilio Prini 1970, 1970</i>. Letterpress on cardboard, original frame by the artist, 25 x 40 cm. Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz. First exhibited: unknown.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Kunstmuseum Lichtenstein’s online catalogue, available at http://emp-web-20.zetcom.ch/eMuseumPlus?service=ExternalInterface&lang=de.</p> <p>Image protected by Copyright. See, for instance, Kunstmuseum Lichtenstein’s online catalogue (link above).</p>
	<p>Fig. 3.27. Giulio Paolini, <i>Io (frammento di una lettera) (I [fragment of a letter])</i>, 1969. Fragment of typewritten letter on adhesive rubber support, Ø 1.5 cm. 2 versions: Catia Campestre Collection, Modena; Castello di Rivoli Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Turin. Long-term loan from Private collection. First exhibited: “Giulio Paolini. Vedo”, Qui Arte Contemporanea, Rome, January 1970.</p> <p>Cursory information: In the timespan of this thesis the work was also exhibited in “Giulio Paolini. Vedo”, Galleria Notizie, Turin, February 1970; “Processi di pensiero visualizzati. Junge italienische Avantgarde”, Kunstmuseum Luzern, May 1970; probably “Arte Povera: 13 italianiische Künstler. Dokumentation und neue Werke”, Kunstverein München, May 1971; and “De Europa”, John Weber Gallery, New York, April 1972. The second version of <i>Io</i> was made in 1979, after the first one was considered lost. The two works are distinguished by slight differences in the fragmentation of the outline.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bernardina, “Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini”, 9; Calvino, “La squadatura”, 230; Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 80, 84; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 270, 285; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 60; Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists</i>, 162; Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 206; Doris von Draten, <i>Vortex of Silence: Proposition for an art criticism beyond aesthetic categories</i> (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2004), 223; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che fare?</i>, 202–03; Splendorini, “Apocryphie, tautologie et vertige de la multiplication”, 335; Tommaso Trini, “Giulio Paolini, un decennio. Parte prima”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 3, Nos. 7–8, Summer 1973, 61, also available in reprint, Tommaso Trini, <i>Mezzo secolo di arte intera. Scritti 1964–2014</i>, ed. Luca Cerizza (Cremona: Johan & Levi Editore, 2016), 103–09, 106.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Enzo Ricci © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>

Other Works of Relevance, Chapter Three

Giovanni Anselmo, *La mia ombra verso l'infinito dalla cima dello Stromboli durante l'alba del 16 agosto 1965*, 1969; Giovanni Anselmo, *Entrare nell'opera*, 1971; Alighiero Boetti, *Ghise*, 1968; Alighiero Boetti *Ghise (ABoetti)*, 1968; Alighiero Boetti, *Autoritratto (due profili)*, 1969; Alighiero Boetti, *Senza titolo*, 1967 (session photographed by Anna Paolini at a barber's shop, printed in catalogue for Boetti's solo show at La Bertesca in 1967); Alighiero Boetti, *Ritratto di Alighiero Boetti da Pietro Gallina pittore, aprile-maggio 1970*, 1970; Alighiero Boetti, *ALIGHIERO BOETTI MADE IN ITALY*, 1971; Alighiero Boetti, *AELLEIGIACCAI EERREOBIOETITII*, 1971; Alighiero Boetti, *Specchio cieco*, 1975; Alighiero Boetti, *San Bernardino*, 1976–78; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *IOMEMECOME PUNTI CARDINALI*, 1969; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Elevazione Myself*, 1969; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Io e i miei 5 anni nell'angolo della mia reale predica (I and My Five Fish-Hooks in the Corner of My Real Real Sermon)*, 1969/70; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *IO MIO NOME*, 1970; Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo*, 1971 (sculpture with the letters of the artist's surname cast in steel, and connected to a propane gas tank allowing the name to light up in flames); Giulio Paolini, *Académie 3*, 1965; Giulio Paolini, *Hi-Fi*, 1965; Giulio Paolini, *Monogramma*, 1965; Giulio Paolini, *1/25*, 1965 (related to Giulio Paolini, *1/25/71*, 1965/1971); Giulio Paolini, *To L.F.*, 1967; Giulio Paolini, *Giovane che guarda Lorenzo Lotto*, 1967; Giulio Paolini, *Delfo II*, 1968; Giulio Paolini, *Et. quid. amobo. nisi. quod. aenigma. est?*, 1969; Giulio Paolini, *Cadre*, 1971; Giulio Paolini, *"Elegia" in una scena di duello*, 1972; Giulio Paolini, *Controfigura (critica del punto di vista)*, 1981; Giuseppe Penone, *Alfabeto*, 1970; Giuseppe Penone, *Il mio vedere futuro*, 1970; Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle*, 1970 (see Chapter Six); Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle – Finestra*, 1972 (see Chapter Six); Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto con pianta*, 1965; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto con Soutzka* 1966; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto di schiena*, 1968; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Lui e lei abbracciati*, 1968; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Gli amanti*, 1968; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Il barocco e le maschere*, 1969; Michelangelo Pistoletto and Vettor Pisani, *Plagio*, 1971–73; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *I voyeurs*, 1972; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto di Stelle*, 1973–75; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto*, 1975; Emilio Prini, *Senza titolo*, 1967–68 (photographic self-portrait from behind, reproduced in Celant, *Arte Povera. Histories and Stories*, 285); Emilio Prini, *E.P. / Autoritratto*, 1968; Emilio Prini, Poster announcing solo exhibition at Galleria La Bertesca, Genova, spring 1968 (Photograph of Prini stepping onto a bathroom scale); Emilio Prini, *Tre parenti salgono una salita, Tre aprendi scendono una discesa, Tre parenti attraversano una pianura*, 1969; Emilio Prini, *Introduzione alla statue*, in *Casabella*, No. 356, 1971; Emilio Prini, *Manifesto per una sua mostra (Da Goya)*, 1979; Gilberto Zorio, *Odio*, 1971 (Photograph of the artist with the word 'odio' impressed on his forehead).

Chapter Four

Between Presence and Representation. The Performing Arte Povera artist

Disappear-in' Acts










Fig. 4.1.1. Pino Pascali, *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus (Rest in Peace Conradin)*, 1965. Performance, comprising Pascali as performing artist, costume (cloak, hat, mask), sculpture (Pino Pascali, *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus*, 1965), music, bells and incense, duration unknown (sources indicate a couple of hours).




Performed at Castello Sangallo di Torre Astura, Nettuno, 22 July 1965, as part of "Mostra a soggetto. Corradino di Svevia 1252–68", exhibition organised by the Roman gallery La Salita.






Sources and further reading: Basualdo, "Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974", 17; Bätzner, "Pino Pascali: Wild Games and Wild Ideas", 197–99; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 21, 468; Calvesi, "Pascali's Eros", 37; Anna D'Elia, ed., *Pino Pascali* (Milano: Electa Mondadori, 2010), 25, 186; Daniela Lancioni, "Pino Pascali a Torre Astura", *Quaderni di scultura contemporanea*, No. 10, 9–18; Rossi, "La firma dell'artista"; Antonella Soldaini, "Pino Pascali nell'Arte Povera", in Germano Celant, ed., *Arte Povera*

	<p>2011 (Milan: Electa, 2011), 418; Tonelli, <i>Pascali. Catalogo generale delle sculture dal 1964 al 1968</i>, 101, 105, 117; Tonelli, <i>Pino Pascali. Il libero gioco della scultura</i>, 27–28.</p> <p>Credits: © Pino Pascali / Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. Photo: Photographer unknown © Archivio Bioiconografico e Fondi Storici GNAM, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.1.2. Pino Pascali, <i>Requiescat in Pace Corradinus (Rest in Peace Conradin)</i>, 1965. For information, see Fig. 4.1.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Pino Pascali / Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. Photo: Photographer probably Ugo Mulas © Archivio Giuseppe Garrera, Rome.</p>
	<p>Luciano Fabro, <i>Apparecchio alla morte di S. Alfonso Maria dei Liguori (Preparation for Death by Saint Alphonsus Liguori)</i>, 1969. Performance, comprising Fabro as performing artist, magnetic tape, tape recorder, microphone, duration unknown. Performed at Palazzo Estense, Varese, 16 June 1969, as part of “Azioni sceniche” in the festival Esperimento di Nuovo Teatro, part of the performance organised by Studio 970 2 for the Università popolare di Varese.</p> <p>Cursory information: No image of this performance is known to exist. There are certain discrepancies in descriptions of this work. For instance, Catherine Grenier posits that words were “first spoken by the physically visible artist”, as if the artist actually read aloud, while Fabro himself has stated that he did “mimic the recorded reading”. See Grenier, “Dwelling in Space”, 297, and Caldwell & Rowell, <i>Luciano Fabro</i>, 131 / Fabro, <i>Attaccapanni</i>, 83.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 412; Caldwell & Rowell, <i>Luciano Fabro</i>, 131; Fabro, <i>Attaccapanni</i>, 83–84; Grenier, <i>Luciano Fabro</i>, 206–07; Grenier, “Dwelling in Space”, 296.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.2.1. Pier Paolo Calzolari, “1^o e secondo giorno come gli orienti sono due” (1st and second day as the orient is two), 1970. Processual exhibition, Galleria Sperone, Turin, from 22 April 1970, duration 14 days. Exhibition view showing six sentences composed of bronze letters, spread across the gallery floor for the exhibition’s first day.</p> <p>Cursory information: The six sentences read a) ‘1^o e secondo giorno come gli orienti sono due’ b) ‘3 The Picaro’s day’ c) ‘Fourth day as 4 long months of absence’ d) ‘5 contra naturam’ e) 6th day of reality f) ‘7 – seventh – with usura – contra naturam’. Mirella Bandini indicates that all the sentences were placed on the floor the first two days, while in Celant’s description, it seems as if each sentence appeared on the relevant day (see Bandini, “Mostre a Torino”, 70; Celant, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i>, 54). In private e-mail correspondence of 15.04.2019, the Fondazione Calzolari confirms that the phrases were installed on the first day as a key for the events that would take place. The sentences also appear in other works by Calzolari, for instance in <i>Untitled (6th day of reality)</i>, 1970, a film made for Gerry Schum’s “Identifications”, and in <i>Il treno (Telegrammi)</i>, 1976.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Nike Bätzner, Christiane Meyer-Stoll and Valentina Pero, “Everything Became Alive, Everything Took Shape. A conversation between Tucci and Lisa Rosso, Nike Bätzner, Christiane Meyer-Stoll and Valentina Pero, Turin, 27 February 2017”, in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 325; Bandini, “Mostre a Torino”, 70; Bertoni et al., <i>Day after Day</i>, 11–12, 22–23, 37, 72–82; Pier Paolo Calzolari, Catherine David, Bruno Corà, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i> (Paris: Éditions du Jeu de Paume / Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994), 85–91; Celant, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i>, 54–57; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Arte Povera 2011</i> (Milan: Electa, 2011), 166; Gianelli, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i>, 173–74; Minola et al., <i>Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York</i>, 164–65; Oliva, <i>Paolo Mussat Sartor</i>, 62–</p>

	<p>65; Denys Zacharopoulos, “The Nomad carries his home permanently inside himself. Interview with Pier Paolo Calzolari, 1997”, in <i>Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection</i>, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 87.</p> <p>Credits: © Pier Paolo Calzolari / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.2.2. Pier Paolo Calzolari, “1^o e secondo giorno come gli orienti sono due” (1st and second day as the orient is two), 1970.</p> <p>Processual exhibition, Galleria Sperone, Turin, from 22 April 1970, duration 14 days. Exhibition view showing the sentence ‘<i>IO MIO NOME</i>’, composed of bronze letters inserted in the gallery wall and fastened with lime for the exhibition’s third day.</p> <p>Cursory information: The letters have also been exhibited as a separate work, titled <i>Io mio nome</i>, for instance in “Conceptual Art, Arte Povera, Land Art”, Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna, Turin, June 1970.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: See Fig. 4.2.1. See also Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists</i>, 143.</p> <p>Credits: © Pier Paolo Calzolari / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.2.3. Pier Paolo Calzolari, “1^o e secondo giorno come gli orienti sono due” (1st and second day as the orient is two), 1970.</p> <p>Processual exhibition, Galleria Sperone, Turin, from 22 April 1970, duration 14 days. Exhibition view showing lit candles placed in a square on the gallery floor, installed for the exhibition’s fourth day.</p> <p>Cursory information: Bandini holds that the candles – of which she finds 42, arranged in rows of 6 x 7 – appeared on the fifth day. Celant, by contrast, claims that the candles – in a number of 27 – appeared on the fourth day (see Bandini, “Mostre a Torino”, 70; Celant, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i>, 54; Gianelli, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i>, 173). In private e-mail correspondence of 15.04.2019, the Fondazione Calzolari confirms that Celant is right about the chronology. Photographs prove Bandini right regarding the number of candles.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: See Fig. 4.2.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Pier Paolo Calzolari / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.2.4. Pier Paolo Calzolari, “1^o e secondo giorno come gli orienti sono due” (1st and second day as the orient is two), 1970.</p> <p>Processual exhibition, Galleria Sperone, Turin, from 22 April 1970, duration 14 days. Exhibition view showing a corner of the gallery floor painted with black tempera, installed for the fifth day.</p> <p>Cursory information: Bandini holds that the painted corner appeared on the fourth day, while Celant claims that it appeared on the fifth day (see Bandini, “Mostre a Torino”, 70; Celant, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i>, 54; Gianelli, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i>, 173). In private e-mail correspondence of 15.04.2019, the Fondazione Calzolari confirms that Celant is right about the chronology. A statement relates to this part of the exhibition. There are slight differences between sources regarding its phrasing. From Bertoni et al., <i>Day after Day</i>, 78: “Organic nature and pragma suicide Pollock after 15 years of contrasting attempts, abstraction suicides Rothko”; From Celant, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i>, 54: “Organicism and Pragmatism kill Pollock. After 15 years of attempts in the opposite direction, it is abstraction, however, that kills Rothko.” In private e-mail correspondence of 20.12.2021, the Fondazione Calzolari explains that this statement has been declared verbally and in public by the artist himself, and that it was written on a paper sheet on the entrance of Galleria Sperone during the exhibition.</p>

	<p>Sources and further reading: See Fig. 4.2.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Pier Paolo Calzolari / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.3.1. Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>La fine di Pistoletto</i> (The End of Pistoletto), 1967. Performance, comprising approximately 25 performers, masks of Pistoletto’s face, and reflecting metal sheets, duration unknown. Performed at Piper Pluriclub, Turin, 6 March 1967.</p> <p>Cursory information: The title of Pistoletto’s action is a play on the Piper Pluriclub slogan, “Piper. É la fine del mondo” (Piper. It’s the end of the world). Sources dispute the number of performers, ranging from 20, via 25 to 30. In the exhibition “Le Stanze” at Galleria Stein in Turin in 1975 the masks and reflective sheets from this performance were used in a series of photographs titled <i>Le maschere</i>.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Basualdo, <i>Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974</i>, 15–16, 360; Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 268–70, 483; Bellini, <i>Facing Pistoletto</i>, 40–41; Carlotta Sylos Calò, <i>Corpo a corpo. Estetica e politica nell’arte italiana degli anni Sessanta</i> (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2018), 203; Germano Celant, “Michelangelo Pistoletto” [1988], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 154; Germano Celant, <i>Pistoletto. Palazzo Grassi/Venezia. 16 giugno/28 luglio 1976</i> (Milan: Electa Editore, 1976), 28–29; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 36; Riccardo Cuomo, “Spazi Intermediali. Club Culture e arti visive in Italia: Il Piper di Torino”, <i>Flash Art</i>, No. 347, 2020, see https://flash-art.it/article/spazi-intermediali-club-culture-e-arti-visive-in-italia-il-piper-di-torino/; Farano, Mundici and Farano, <i>Michelangelo Pistoletto. Il varco dello specchio</i>, 64–65, 151; “Michelangelo Pistoletto and Creative Collaboration”, 226; Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, <i>Entrare nel’opera</i>, 13; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che Fare?</i>, 76; Roberto, “Arte Povera e scrittura scenica”, 630–31.</p> <p>Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photograph by Renato Rinaldi © Archivio Pistoletto, Biella.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.3.2. Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>La fine di Pistoletto</i> (The End of Pistoletto), 1967. For information, see Fig. 4.3.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photograph by Renato Rinaldi © Archivio Pistoletto, Biella.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.3.3. Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>La fine di Pistoletto</i> (The End of Pistoletto), 1967. For information, see Fig. 4.3.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photograph by Renato Rinaldi © Archivio Pistoletto, Biella.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.3.4. Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>La fine di Pistoletto</i> (The End of Pistoletto), 1967. For information, see Fig. 4.3.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photograph by Renato Rinaldi © Archivio Pistoletto, Biella.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.3.5. Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>La fine di Pistoletto</i> (The End of Pistoletto), 1967. For information, see Fig. 4.3.1. Mask worn by performers in <i>La fine di Pistoletto</i>.</p>

	<p>Credits: Photograph of exhibition display in the exhibition “Entrare nell’opera. Processes and Performative Attitudes in Arte Povera”, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz, 2019 © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo: © Eva Rem Hansen.</p>
<p>Decentring Acts</p>	
	<p>Fig. 4.4. Pier Paolo Calzolari, <i>Il ponte</i> (The Bridge), 1969. Performance, comprising Calzolari as performer, cardboard boxes, ladders, light bulbs, duration unknown. Performed at Studio Bentivoglio, Bologna, 1969.</p> <p>Cursory information: A photograph of <i>Il ponte</i> appears in Calzolari’s work <i>Molto molto presto di mattina</i> (1974). In private e-mail correspondence of 15.04.2019, the Fondazione Calzolari states that the performance was to result in photographs and a film, but the film is now lost.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 396; Bertoni et al., <i>Day after Day</i>, 64–65; Bruno Cora, Pier Paolo Calzolari and Catherine David, <i>Pier Paolo Calzolari</i> (Paris: Éditions de Jeu de Paume, 1994): 214; Fameli, “Fatti dello studio Bentivoglio”, 83–84.</p> <p>Credits: Photo: Lamberto Calzolari © Pier Paolo Calzolari / BONO 2022.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.5.1. Ugo Nespolo, <i>Buongiorno Michelangelo</i>, 1968. 16 mm film, 10’38”. 8 stills documenting Michelangelo Pistoletto’s <i>Scultura da passeggio</i> (Walking Sculpture), 1967. Performance, comprising Pistoletto and a group of other people, and sculpture (Michelangelo Pistoletto, <i>Sfera di giornali</i>, 1966), duration undefined. Performed in the city centre of Turin, as part of the group exhibition “Per un ipotesi di contemp-l’azione”, Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone, Galleria Christian Stein and Galleria Il Punto, December 1967.</p> <p>Cursory information: Ugo Nespolo’s film <i>Buongiorno Michelangelo</i> (1968) is accessible through Nespolo’s website (available at https://www.nespolo.com/eng/cinema-dettaglio.php?id=43). Note that only the night-time shots are from the first performance in December, while day-time footage is from a re-enactment in January 1968. For a written account of the film, see Sullivan, <i>Sculptural Materiality in the Age of Conceptualism</i>, 56, 75–77. Since 1968, new versions of the sculptural walks have been arranged, with or without Pistoletto’s presence, several times, like by Tate Modern in London (2009), the Philadelphia Museum of Art (2010), the Louvre Museum in Paris (2013), Magazzino Italian Art in Cold Spring (2017) and the “Reiseziel Museum!” across Liechtenstein, Austria and Switzerland (2019).</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Basualdo, <i>Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974</i>, 15–17, 67–69, 94–96; Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 66, 313, 483–84; Bellini, <i>Facing Pistoletto</i>, 42–46; Tenley Bicks, “Figure as Model: The Early Work of Michelangelo Pistoletto, 1956–1966”, PhD Thesis, University of California, 2016, Los Angeles, 203–06, 372–74; Celant, <i>Arte Povera. Histories and Protagonists</i>, 41; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 156; Sullivan, <i>Sculptural Materiality in the Age of Conceptualism</i>, 56 and further, 73 and further; Farano, Mundici and Farano, <i>Michelangelo Pistoletto. Il varco dello specchio</i>, 66–67; Farano, “Michelangelo and Creative Collaboration”, 226; Fer, <i>The Infinite Line</i>, 164 and further; Flood and Morris, <i>Zero to Infinity</i>, 92–94; Minola et al., <i>Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York</i>, 114–15; “‘Walking Sculpture’ Performance, November</p>

	<p>4, 2017, 12:30pm, Village of Cold Spring, New York”, Magazzino Italian Art, see https://www.magazzino.art/events/walking-sculpture-performance (accessed 26.05. 2020).</p> <p>Credits: © Ugo Nespolo / Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo: © Ugo Nespolo, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.5.2. Michelangelo Pistoletto <i>Scultura da passeggio (Walking Sculpture)</i>, 1967. <i>Sfera di giornali</i> at the entrance of Galleria Sperone. For information, see Fig. 4.4.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo: Paolo Bressano © Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.6.1. Emilio Prini, <i>Camping</i>, 1969. Intervention, comprising Emilio Prini, colleagues and passers-by, a number of tents, posters, photographs, duration approximately 2 weeks. Parking lot outside the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam on occasion of “Op Losse Schreeven: Situaties en Cryptostructuren”, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, March 1969.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 522–23; Bottinelli, “The Discourse of Modern Nomadism”, 71–73; Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists</i> 106–07; Celant, “Emilio Prini” [2010], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 288–89; Fameli, “Il peso del vuoto. Emilio Prini ieri e oggi”, 95; Pasquale Fameli, “Life as Performance: Action and Process in Emilio Prini’s Work”, in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 237; Teresa Kittler, “Living Art and the Art of Living”, PhD Thesis, University College London, 2014, 69; Meyer-Stoll and Pero, “I Do Not Care to Be Remembered in the Future”, 322–32; Hans Ulrich Obrist, “Emilio Prini. Un viaggio senza compromessi”, in <i>Arte Povera 2011</i>, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 540–41; Rattemeyer, <i>Exhibiting the New Art</i>, 29.</p> <p>Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 322.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.6.2. Emilio Prini, <i>Camping</i>, 1969. For information, see Fig. 4.5.1.</p> <p>Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Bottinelli, “The Discourse of Modern Nomadism”, n.p., https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00043249.2015.1095540.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.6.3. Emilio Prini, <i>Camping</i>, 1969. For information, see Fig. 4.5.1.</p> <p>Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 323.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.6.4. Emilio Prini, <i>Camping</i>, 1969. For information, see Fig. 4.5.1.</p> <p>Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Bottinelli, “The Discourse of Modern Nomadism”, n.p., https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00043249.2015.1095540.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.7.1. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Alpi Marittime. Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto (Maritime Alps. It Will Continue to Grow Except at That Point)</i>, 1968. Intervention in the woods outside Garesio, December 1968, as presented in Celant, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 1969.</p>



Cursory information: The interactions of the *Alpi Marittime* series were photographed by Claudio Basso and have been presented in various versions. They were first exhibited in “Disegni – progetti”, Galleria Sperone, Turin, May 1969. The first hand inserted to the tree was made of iron wire, but it was replaced at a later point by a steel cast.

Sources and further reading: Mirella Bandini, “Giuseppe Penone. Intervista con Mirella Bandini”, *DATA*, Vol. 3, Nos. 7–8, June 1973, 84–89, 84, 86; Carlos Basualdo, ed., *Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms* (London: Gagosian, 2018), 152; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 45, 473–74; Busine, *Giuseppe Penone*, 27, 35, 205–09, 230; Celant, *Art Povera*, 169; Celant, *Giuseppe Penone*, 30–31, 35–37; Germano Celant, “Giuseppe Penone: Memories of a Contact”, in *Giuseppe Penone: The Hidden Life Within*, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 42 and further.; Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera*, 146–47; Doris von Drathen, “Giuseppe Penone. Time leaps”, in Doris von Drathen, *Vortex of Silence: Proposition for an art criticism beyond aesthetic categories* (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2004), 232; Ida Gianelli and Giorgio Verzotti, eds., *Penone* (Rivoli/Milano: Castello di Rivoli/Fabbro Editori, 1991), 28, 30; Ida Gianelli, ed., *Arte povera in collezione/Arte povera in collection* (Milan: Charta, 2000), 232–33, 240–41. Hansen, “Siste hand på verket. Giuseppe Penone’s forhandlinger med naturen”, 114–17; Lancioni, “Alpi Marittime (Maritime Alps)”, n.p.; Lancioni, “Giuseppe Penone’s Actions: Towards a Definition”, 210–12; Luisetti, “*Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto*. Giuseppe Penone contronatura”, 166 and further; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, *Che fare?*, 228–30; Mangini, “Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978”, 110–21; Mangini, “Feeling One’s Way Through a Cultural Chiasm”, 157 and further; Mangini, *Seeing through Closed Eyelids*, 14–19, 114–15, 139–40; Gianfranco Maraniello and Jonathan Watkins, eds., *Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968–2008* (Bologna/Birmingham: MaMBo/Ikon Gallery, 2009), 26–33; Minola et al., *Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York*, 139; Christoph Schreier, “The Form of the Tree is its Memory. Interview with Giuseppe Penone”, in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Rainald Schumacher (Munich: Kunstverlag Ingvild Goetz, 2001), 158–60; Zambianchi, ““Oltre l’oggetto”: qualche considerazione su Arte Povera e performance”, 40–41.

Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone, Turin.



Fig. 4.7.2. Giuseppe Penone, *Trattenere diciassette anni di crescita (continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto)* (Maritime Alps. To Retain 17 Years of Growth [It Will Continue to Grow Except at That Point]), 1968–1985.

Ash trunk carved in time, 500 x Ø 25 cm.

GAM - Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin.

First exhibited: “Arte moderna a Torino. 200 opere d’arte acquisite per la Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna”, Società Promotrice delle Belle Arti, Turin, November 1986.

Cursory information: The sculpture stems from the intervention *Alpi Marittime. Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto* (Maritime Alps. It Will Continue to Grow Except at That Point), 1968, in which Penone inserted a metal hand in a tree. This tree was cut down in 1985 and became the current sculpture. Alternative translation of title: Holding onto 17 Years of Growth.

Sources and further reading: See Fig. 4.7.1.

Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo © Gérard Rondeau.



Fig. 4.8.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime. L’albero ricorderà il contatto* (Maritime Alps. The Tree Will Remember the Contact), 1968.

Intervention in the woods outside Gressio, December 1968, as presented in Celant, *Art Povera*, 1969.

Cursory information: Title variations occur: *Alpi Marittime. L’albero crescendo ricorderà i punti del mio contatto* (Maritime Alps. As It Grows the Tree Will Remember my Points of



	<p>Contact); <i>Alpi Marittime. L'albero crescendo ricorderà i punti del mio contatto/ Mi sono aggrappato ad un albero</i> (Maritime Alps. The Growing Tree Will Remember the Points of My Contact / I Clung to a Tree); <i>Alpi Marittime. L'albero ricorderà il contatto del mio corpo</i> (Maritime Alps. The Tree Remembers the Contact of my Body). The interactions of the Alpi Marittime series were photographed by Claudio Basso and have been presented in various versions. They were first exhibited in “Disegni – progetti”, Galleria Sperone, Turin, May 1969. The involved tree tree was cut down in 1985, and is now in Collezione Francois Pinault, Punta della Dogana, Venice.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Mirella Bandini, “Giuseppe Penone. Intervista con Mirella Bandini”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 3, Nos. 7–8, June 1973, 84–89, 84, 86; Carlos Basualdo, ed., <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms</i> (London: Gagosian, 2018), 117; Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell'opera</i>, 474; Busine, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 204; Celant, <i>Art Povera</i>, 172; Celant, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 34; Germano Celant, “Giuseppe Penone: Memories of a Contact”, in <i>Giuseppe Penone. The Hidden Life Within</i>, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 41–48, 42 and further; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 146–47; Ida Gianelli and Giorgio Verzotti, ed., <i>Penone</i> (Rivoli/Milano: Castello di Rivoli/Fabbro Editori, 1991), 28–29, 44; Ida Gianelli, ed., <i>Arte povera in collezione/ Arte povera in collection</i>, (Milan: Charta, 2000), 232–33; Lancioni, “Alpi Marittime (Maritime Alps)”, n.p.; Lancioni, “Giuseppe Penone’s Actions: Towards a Definition”, 210–12; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che fare?</i>, 228–30; Mangini, “Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978”, 110–21; Mangini, “Feeling One’s Way Through a Cultural Chiasm”, 157 and further; Mangini, <i>Seeing through Closed Eyelids</i>, 27–32; Gianfranco Maraniello and Jonathan Watkins, eds., <i>Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968–2008</i> (Bologna/Birmingham: MaMbo/Ikon Gallery, 2009), 34–35; Minola et al., <i>Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York</i>, 139; Oliva, <i>Paolo Mussat Sartor</i>, 185; Didier Semin, “What is it like to be a tree? What is it like to be a river?”, in <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Hidden Life Within</i>, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 181–87, 182–82; Zambianchi, “‘Oltre l’oggetto’: qualche considerazione su Arte Povera e performance”, 40–41.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 4.8.2. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Alpi Marittime. L'albero ricorderà il contatto</i> (Maritime Alps. The Tree Will Remember the Contact), 1968–1978. Photograph documenting the tree incorporated in the 1968 intervention <i>Alpi Marittime. L'albero ricorderà il contatto</i> 10 years after Penone’s interaction. For information, see Fig. 4.8.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor, Turin.</p>
<p>Document-in’ Acts</p>	
	<p>Fig. 4.9.1. Pino Pascali with <i>Missile</i> (<i>Colomba della pace</i>), 1965. Photograph by Claudio Abate from photo shoot outside the artist’s studio in Rome, 1965.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bätzner, “Pino Pascali: Wild Games and Wild Ideas”, 199–200; Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell'opera</i>, 335; Calvesi, “Pascali’s Eros”, 34, 36–39; Corà, “Pino Pascali: The Reconstruction of Self in the Lost Garden”, 80–82; Anna D’Elia, ed., <i>Pino Pascali</i> (Milano: Electa Mondadori, 2010), 25–26, 106–07, 188–90; Flood and Morris, <i>Zero to Infinity</i>, 70–72; Lista, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 14–15; Lumley, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 30; Meyer-Stoll, “The Photographers”, 198, 200; Potts, “Disencumbered Objects”, 182–83; Tonelli, <i>Pascali. Catalogo generale delle sculture dal 1964 al 1968</i>, 58–61, 71–72; Tonelli, <i>Pino Pascali. Il libero gioco della scultura</i>, 40–47, 52–55.</p> <p>Credits: © Pino Pascali / Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. Photo: Claudio Abate © Archivio Claudio Abate.</p>



Fig. 4.9.2. Pino Pascali with *Cannone Bella Ciao*, 1965.

Photograph by Claudio Abate from photo shoot outside the artist's studio in Rome, 1965.

Sources and further reading: See Fig. 4.9.1.

Credits: © Pino Pascali / Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. Photo: Claudio Abate © Archivio Claudio Abate.



Fig. 4.10. Pino Pascali with *Vedova Blu*, 1968.

Photograph by Claudio Abate from the exhibition “VI Rassegna di arti figurative di Roma e del Lazio”, Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, 1968.

Sources and further reading: Bätzner, “Pino Pascali: Wild Games and Wild Ideas”, 200; Costa, “Pino Pascali, l'eau, la terre, l'image”, 46; Anna D'Elia, ed., *Pino Pascali* (Milano: Electa Mondadori, 2010), 56, 212; Ida Gianelli, ed., *Del Arte Povera a 1985* (Madrid: Ministerio de cultura, 1985), 119; Walter Guadagnini, ed., *Storie dell'occhio/1: Fotografi ed eventi artistici in Italia dal '60 all'80* (Modena: Edizioni COOPTIP, 1988), 80; Kearney, “The Artist's Eye”, 10; Lista, *Arte Povera*, 23; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, *Che fare?*, 222; Meyer-Stoll, “The Photographers”, 198, 201; Antonella Soldaini, “Pino Pascali nell'Arte Povera”, in Germano Celant, ed., *Arte Povera 2011* (Milan: Electa, 2011), 418; Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale delle sculture dal 1964 al 1968*, 41; Tonelli, *Pino Pascali. Il libero gioco della scultura*, 115–16.

Credits: © Pino Pascali / Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. Photo: Claudio Abate © Archivio Claudio Abate.



Fig. 4.11.1. Pino Pascali with *Trappola*, 1968.

Photograph by Claudio Abate from the exhibition “Banchi da setola e altri lavori in corso”, L'Attico, Rome, March 1968.

Cursory information: Sources dispute whether the interaction with *Trappola* was conducted while the sculpture was exhibited at Galleria L'Attico, Turin, March 1968, or in the artist's studio. In private e-mail correspondence, the Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali confirms that the images were taken at the gallery. Some images from the photoshoot appear in the catalogue accompanying the group exhibition “Ceroli, Kounellis, Marotta, Pascali: 4 artistes italiens plus que nature”, organised by Maurizio Calvesi at Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, 1969.

Sources and further reading: Luca Massimo Barbero, “Rome: Borderlands. Fabio Sargentini's L'Attico”, in *Macroroots of the Contemporary. Fabio Sargentini's L'Attico, 1966-1978*, ed. Luca Massimo Barbero and Francesca Pola (Milan: Electa, 2010), 33–34; Luca Massimo Barbero, “Geologia e Geografia del nuovo: L'Arte Povera e il contest romano”, in *Arte Povera 2011*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 217; Bätzner, “Pino Pascali: Wild Games and Wild Ideas”, 203, 205; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 471; Calvesi, “Pascali's Eros”, 37; Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 236; Germano Celant, “Pino Pascali” [1992], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Stories*, 219; Germano Celant, Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale delle sculture dal 1964 al 1968*, 21; Anna D'Elia, ed., *Pino Pascali* (Milano: Electa Mondadori, 2010), 210; Antonella Soldaini, “Pino Pascali nell'Arte Povera”, in Germano Celant, ed., *Arte Povera 2011* (Milan: Electa, 2011), 418; Tonelli, *Pascali. Catalogo generale delle sculture dal 1964 al 1968*, 20; Tonelli, *Pino Pascali. Il libero gioco della scultura*, 101-02.

Credits: © Pino Pascali / Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. Photo: Claudio Abate © Archivio Claudio Abate.



Fig. 4.11.2. Pino Pascali with *Trappola*, 1968.

Photograph by Claudio Abate from the exhibition “Bachi da setola e altri lavori in corso”, L’Attico, Rome, March 1968.

Sources and further reading: See Fig. 4.11.1.

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Fig. 4.12. Giovanni Anselmo, *Entrare nell’opera* (Entering the Work), 1971.

Self-timer photograph on paper or canvas.

Various editions with varying dimensions, various owners.

First exhibited: Galleria Multipli, Turin, 1971.

Cursory information: A version on printed on paper, 46 x 61 cm, was made in an edition of 25 for Edizioni Multipli, Turin, in 1971. Within the time frame of this thesis, the work was also exhibited at “Giovanni Anselmo”, Galleria Sperone, Turin, April 1972; “Giovanni Anselmo”, John Weber Gallery, New York, October 1972.

Sources and further reading: Ammann, “Giovanni Anselmo”, 23; Ammann, Anselmo and Suter, *Giovanni Anselmo*, 118–19; Fabio Cafagna, “Artisti italiani alla John Weber Gallery. Strategie commerciali e curatoriali (1971–1975)”, *Ricerche di storia dell’arte*, No. 132, 2020, 44; Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera*, 80; Maddalena Disch, “Process as Vitality: Giovanni Anselmo’s Situations of Energy”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 103–06; Marcello Ghilardi, “Forms of the void. Philosophical perspectives om Contemporary Art”, in Casa, *Image of the void*, 55; Guzzetti, “‘Note sullo spettatore’ per Giovanni Anselmo: Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale”, 47–49, 62; Eva Meyer-Hermann, “The place is the Memory of the place”, in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 38–39; Minola et al., *Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York*, 205; Pola, “Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto”, 605; Rorimer, “Giovanni Anselmo: From here to Infinity, 1965–2015”, in Beccaria and Christov-Bakargiev, *Giovanni Anselmo*, 81–88, 84; Sergio, “Art is the copy of art: Italian photography in and after Arte Povera”, 168; Tommaso Trini, “In/Finito” [in *Arte Povera A-Z. Part 1* (Gent: Museumcultuur Strombeek, 2014), 370–71], in Tommaso Trini, *Mezzo secolo di arte intera. Scritti 1964–2014*, ed. Luca Cerizza (Cremona: Johan & Levi Editore, 2016), 267–69, 268; Lea Vergine, “Anselmo o della dilatazione temporale” [in *Art and artists*, 1973] in Lea Vergine, *L’arte come gioco* (Milan: Garzanti Editore, 1988), 309–12, 312; Matthew S. Witkovsky, ed., *Light years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977* (Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago/Yale University Press, 2012), 126–27, 208.

Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.



Fig. 4.13. Gilberto Zorio, *Fluidità Radicale* (Radical Fluidity), 1970.

Action for camera, photograph by Paolo Mussat Sartor.

Cursory information: Note that Zorio used this title for several from the same period. Photograph of Zorio writing *Fluidità Radicale* exist in different versions and are reproduced with different croppings.

Sources and further reading: Bellini, *Paolo Mussat Sartor*, n.p.; Francesco Guzzetti, “When Attitudes Become Action: Gilberto Zorio”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 256; Mangini, “Gilberto Zorio’s Radical fluidity”, 254; Maseero et al., *Gilberto Zorio*, 38.

Credits: © Gilberto Zorio / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.

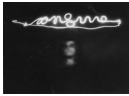


Fig. 4.14. Gilberto Zorio, *Confine (Border)*, 1971.

Action for camera, photograph by Paolo Mussat Sartor.

Cursory information: *Confine* exists in at least one 1970 version and a 1971 version with slight differences. Note that Zorio used the title for several works from the same period: in *Confine incandescente*, 1970, ‘*confine*’ is written with a suspended incandescent wire, in another work, ‘*confine*’ was written with luminous ink on a gallery wall.

Sources and further reading: Walter Guadagnini, ed., *Storie dell’occhio/1: Fotografi ed eventi artistici in Italia dal ’60 all’80* (Modena: Edizioni COOPTIP, 1988), 181; Francesco Guzzetti, “When Attitudes Become Action: Gilberto Zorio”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 257; Masoero et al., *Gilberto Zorio*, 39; Minola et al., *Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York*, 192; Oliva, *Paolo Mussat Sartor*, 266.

Credits: © Gilberto Zorio / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.



Fig. 4.15. Mario Merz, *Lumaca (Snail)*, 1970.

16mm film, b&w, sound, 1:30 min.

Archiv Gerry Schum und Ursula Wevers, Cologne.

First exhibited: “Identifications” preview, Kunsverein Hannover, 20 November 1970; first “Identifications” broadcast 1st Channel ARD (Südwestfunk Baden-Baden), 30 November 1970.

Cursory information: *Lumaca* is part of “Identifications”, a TV exhibition conceived by Gerry Schum and Ursula Wevers. An elongated version (2:35 min.) of *Lumaca* was issued in a video edition of four by the Videogalerie Gerry Schum, with the optional formats 16mm film or half-inch video. This “video object” was first presented at the Konrad Fischer gallery in October 1970. Note that the Fondazione Merz regards Gerry Schum the artist behind this work, rather than Merz himself (private e-mail correspondence, 26.11.2021). As practice is with the individual contributions to “Identifications”, however, I credit it to Merz.

Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 371, 455–56; Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 152; Germano Celant, “Mario Merz” [*Domus*, no. 499 (1971)], in Fondazione Merz, *Mario Merz*, 50-57, 54-55; Maddalena Disch, “The Concept of ‘Action’ in the Work of Mario Merz”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 168; Groos, Hess and Wevers, *Ready to Shoot: Fernsehalerie Gerry Schum / Videogalerie Schum*, 190–91, 230–31; Lumley, *Arte Povera*, 38–39.

Credits: © Mario Merz / BONO 2022 / Archiv Gerry Schum und Ursula Wevers, Cologne. Photo: Archiv Gerry Schum und Ursula Wevers, Cologne.



Fig. 4.16. Marisa Merz, *La Conta (Counting)*, 1967.

16mm film, b&w, silent, 2:44 min., later transferred to video.

Fondazione Merz.

First exhibited: Connie Butler suggests that the film probably was screened during Michelangelo Pistoletto’s exhibition at Galleria L’Attico, February 1968. See Butler, “Marisa Merz: Alien Culture”, 20. However, the Fondazione Merz underlines that the occasion of the first exhibit is not known (private e-mail correspondence, 26.11.2021).

Sources and further reading: Bätzner, “Sculptural Performance – Performative Sculpture”, 80; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 458; Butler, “Marisa Merz: Alien Culture”, 20–21; Kittler, “Marisa Merz: Actions, Interactions and Performative Sculpture”, 178–79.

Credits: © Marisa Merz / BONO 2021. Photo: © Fondazione Merz.



Fig. 4.17. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Riflessioni (Reflections)*, 1970.

Video, probably 9 min.

Cursory information: Alternate title: *Circumnavigazione*. I use *Riflessioni*, in accordance with a program chart published in *Marcatrè*, no. 58-60 (1970), 144-45.

Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 501; Barilli, "Video Recording in Bologna", 28-29; Bordini, "Memory of Video: Italy in the Seventies", 47; Caramel, "Due vie (Biennale dei giovani a Bologna)", 4-5; Germano Celant, *Pistoletto. Palazzo Grassi/Venezia. 16 giugno/28 luglio 1976* (Milan: Electa Editore, 1976), 49-50, 104; Germano Celant, ed., *Identité italienne: L'art en Italie depuis 1959* (Paris/Rome/Florence: Centre Georges Pompidou/Incontri Internazionali d'Arte/Centro Di, 1981), 315; Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 129-30; Parolo, "Le fonti, i metodi e le narrazioni della storia delle videoarte in Italia negli anni Settanta", n.p.; Pola, "Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto", 611.

Credits: © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo © Paolo Mussat Sartor.

Other Works of Relevance, Chapter Four

Giovanni Anselmo, *Senza titolo*, 1970 (16mm b&w film with sound of 1'20", made for Gerry Schum's "Identifications"); Alighiero Boetti, *Senza titolo*, 1967 (session photographed by Anna Paolini at a barber's shop, printed in catalogue for Boetti's solo show at La Bertesca in 1967); Alighiero Boetti, *Senza titolo (Stella performance)*, 1969; Alighiero Boetti, *Numerazione*, 1970; Alighiero Boetti, 'Besprechungs-vortrag', Aktionsraum 1, Munich, 1970; Alighiero Boetti, *Puntopuntinozerogocciagerme(Dopointzerodropper)*, 1970 / *Oggi è venerdì ventisette marzo millenoveventosettanta*, 1970 / *Oggi è giovedì ventiquattro settembre millenoveventosettanta*, 1970 / *Ciò che sempre parla in silenzio è il corpo*, 1974; Alighiero Boetti, *Manifesto*, 1970 (mimetic comment on the poster *Manifesto*, 1967, at Galleria Franco Toselli, photographed by Paolo Mussat Sartor); Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Senza titolo*, 1970 (performance at Studio Bentivoglio, Bologna, photographed by Lamberto Calzolari); Pier Paolo Calzolari, *6th day of reality*, 1970; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Poi Ancora*, 1972; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Day after Day. A Family Life*, 1972-74; Luciano Fabro, *Quid nihil nisi minus*, 1970; Luciano Fabro, *Cittadini, consideratemi irresponsabile di quanto succeed*, 1970; Luciano Fabro, *La creazione dell'artista*, 1972; Luciano Fabro, *Tempo*, 1972; Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo*, 1960 (performance with the "Alfabeto" paintings in the artist's studio and at La tartaruga, Rome); Jannis Kounellis, contribution to Marcello Grossetti and Paolo Matteucci's *Esperienze in uno spazio non teatrale*, 1968; Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo*, ("Amore mio"), Palazzo Ricci, Montepulciano, 1970); Jannis Kounellis, *La sinfonia del nuovo mondo, Omaggio a Morris Louis*, 1971; Jannis Kounellis, *Passione secondo S. Giovanni*, 1971; Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo (Apollo)*, 1972; Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo*, 1972 ("Incontri Internazionali d'Arte - Centro d'Informazione Alternativa", Palazzo Taverna, Rome); Marisa and Mario Merz, Action at the beach, Fregene, 1970, photographed by Claudio Abate; Marisa Merz, *Senza titolo*, 1970 (performative work at "Gennaio '70", Bologna, in which Merz is to have telephoned critic Tommaso Trini, who marked Merz's message on a sheet of punctuated paper); Marisa Merz, *Roma - Urbe*, 1970; Giulio Paolini, *Vedo (Decifrazione del mio campo visivo)*, 1969 (see Chapter Six); Pino Pascali, interaction with *Araba Felice* (1959), Rome, 1964, photographer unknown; Pino Pascali's role in Luca Patella's film *Terra animata*, 1967; Pino Pascali and Jannis Kounellis's role in Luca Patella's film *SKMP2*, 1968; Pino Pascali, interaction with *Attrezzi agricoli* (1968), Rome, 1968, photographs by Andrea Taverna; Pino Pascali with Bambara Komo, *Senza titolo*, 1968; Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime - La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello*, 1968 (see Chapter Five); Giuseppe Penone, *Rovesciare I propri occhi*, 1970 (see Chapter Three); Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Taglio dei capelli*, 1967; Michelangelo Pistoletto with Maria Pioppi, *Le trombe del giudizio*, 1968; Michelangelo Pistoletto's role in 10 films made for his exhibition at L'Attico in February 1968 (Ugo Nespolo, *Buongiorno Michelangelo*; Plinio Martelli, *Maria Fotografia*; Tonino De Bernardi, *La vestizione*; Pia Epremi, *Pistoletto & Sotheby's*; Renato Ferraro, *Comunicato speciale*; Renato Dogliani, *Il giornale*; Mario Ferrero, *Michelangelo andrà all'inferno*; Marisa Merz, title unknown; Gabriele Oiani, *Float*; Paolo Menzies, *Frankenstein Prossimamente*); Michelangelo Pistoletto with Lionello Gennero and Maria Pioppi, *Labirinto e megafoni*, 1969; Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Operazione subacquea*, 1970; Michelangelo Pistoletto with Maria Pioppi, *Tutte le donne*, 1970; Emilio Prini, *Senza titolo*, 1966-67 (action in the streets of Genoa, photographed by Antonio Leale); Emilio Prini, *Ipotesi della scultura*, 1967; Emilio Prini (with Grazia Austoni), *Punti - Ipotesi sullo*

spazio totale, 1967; Emilio Prini, *Identico Alieno Scambiato*, 1968; Emilio Prini, “Pesi Spinte Azioni”, 1968; Emilio Prini, *Senza titolo*, 1968 (action with cat in Prini’s apartment, Genoa); Emilio Prini, *Senza titolo (vampiro sui tetti)*, 1968; Emilio Prini, *Lupo*, 1969; Emilio Prini, *Azioni di compartamento: alzarsi e andare al lavaro*, 1969–74; Emilio Prini, *Représentation des ouvriers du Parc Floral*, 1971; Gilberto Zorio, *Odio* 1969; Gilberto Zorio, *Trasciniamo un po’ di...*, 1969; Gilberto Zorio, *Fluidità radicale*, 1970 (“Gennaio ’70”); Gilberto Zorio, *Fluidità radicale*, 1970 (“Identifications”).

Chapter Five.

Selves in Shape. Tracing the Artist in Arte Povera’s Sculptural Works

Transferred Body Measures



Fig. 5.1.1. Alighiero Boetti, *Catasta (Pile)*, 1966.

34 elements of Eternit, 100 x 100 x 192 cm.

GAM – Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin.

First Exhibited: “Alighiero Boetti”, Galleria Christian Stein, January 1967.

Sources and further reading: Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti, Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 146, 172; Bennett, “Substantive Thought? The Early Work of Alighiero Boetti”, 79, 84–85; Boetti, “Intervento”, 191; Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 30; Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera*, 51; Anna Costantini, “La vita è una serie di azioni. ‘Arte Povera’ a Genova e a Bologna”, in *Arte Povera 2011*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 295, 197; Flood and Morris, *Zero to Infinity*, 78; Ida Gianelli, ed., *Arte povera in collezione / Arte povera in collection* (Milan: Charta, 2000), 116; Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti*, 32–35; Potts, “Disencumbered Objects”, 177.

Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.



Fig. 5.1.2. Alighiero Boetti, *Catasta (Pile)*, 1967.

12 elements of Eternit, 150 x 150 x 187 cm.

Private collection.

First Exhibited: “Arte povera – Im Spazio”, Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, September 1967.

Sources and further reading: see Fig. 5.1.1.

Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.



Fig. 5.2.1. Alighiero Boetti, *Colonne (Columns)*, 1968.





Confectionery paper doilies, iron structure; 5 elements of 183 x Ø 27.3 cm, 196.7 x 24 x 24 cm, 201.3 x 16 x 16 cm, 197.6 x Ø 30 cm, 201.6 x Ø 14 cm.


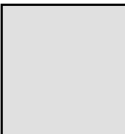
Collezione La Gaia, Cuneo.





First exhibited: The “*Colonne*” on this photo were first exhibited at “Shaman/Showman”, Galleria de Nieubourg, Milan, April 1968. However, the first versions of the “*Colonne*” were exhibited in the group exhibition “Il percorso” at Galleria Arco d’Alibert, Rome, spring 1968.



Cursory information: Boetti made 9 versions of *Colonna*, all in 1968. The “*Colonne*” appear in Boetti’s film *Untitled (Radical turnable, zenithal turnable)*, 1969.



Sources and further reading: Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 27, 196–97, 318; Jean-Christophe Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti 1965–1994*, (Vienna: Mazotta, 1997), 88–89; Mirella Bandini, “About the beauty of dates and the order of the alphabet. Interview with Alighiero Boetti, 1973”, in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds.

	<p>Ingvid Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 73; Luca Massimo Barbero, “Geologia e Geografia del nuovo: L’Arte Povera e il contest romano”, in Germano Celant, ed., <i>Arte Povera 2011</i> (Milan: Electa, 2011), 216; Bätzner, <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 385; Bellini, <i>Paolo Mussat Sartor</i>, n.p.; Germano Celant, “Alighiero Boetti” [2001], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 227; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 56; Diotallevi, “Alighiero Boetti, <i>Colonna</i>, 1968. Lot Essay”, n.p.; Fer, <i>The Infinite Line</i>, 177; Godfrey, <i>Alighiero e Boetti</i>, 54–56; Fiona Kearney and Marco Pierini, eds., <i>The Artist’s Eye: Photographic Portraits of Artists from the Galleria Civica di Modena Collection</i> (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2013), 59–61; Morsiani, “Alighiero e Boetti: Halving to Double”, 14.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.2.2. Boetti installing his <i>Colonne</i> in the group exhibition “Il percorso”, Galleria Arco d’Alibert, Rome, 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: Comparable photographs exist of Boetti installing some of the “<i>Colonne</i>” in his solo exhibition “<i>Shaman/Showman</i>”, Galleria de Nieubourg, Milan, April 1968, taken by Enrico Cattaneo.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo © Mario Cresci.</p>
	<p>5.2.3. Boetti installing his <i>Colonne</i> in the group exhibition “Il percorso” at Galleria Arco d’Alibert, Roma, 1968.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo © Mario Cresci.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.3.1. Emilio Prini, <i>3 passi da un metro</i>, 1967/1995. Plywood, 130 x 120 cm Location unknown.</p> <p>Fist exhibited: The current version of the “<i>Passi</i>” was first exhibited in “<i>Emilio Prini. Fermi in dogana</i>”, Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, November 1995. However, the first versions of “<i>Passi</i>” were first exhibited in “<i>Collage 1</i>”, Istituto di Storia dell’Arte, Università di Genova, December 1967.</p> <p>Cursory information: The sculpture was exhibited with the exhibition label lying on top of its highest element.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bätzner, <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 243; Celant, “<i>Emilio Prini</i>”, 283; Fameli, “<i>Il peso del vuoto. Emilio Prini ieri e oggi</i>”, 87–88; Friedemann Malsch, ed., <i>Emilio Prini: Fermi in dogana</i>, (Strasbourg: Éditions Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, 1996), 12, 31, 39; Pinto, Blanc and Aceto, “<i>Three Hypothesis for a Text on Emilio Prini</i>”, n.p.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Malsch, <i>Emilio Prini: Fermi in dogana</i>, 39.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.3.2. Emilio Prini with his <i>Passi</i>, probably 1967.</p> <p>For spurces and further reading, see Fig. 5.3.1.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 243; Luca Lo Pinto, Pierre Bal Blanc and Alfredo Aceto, “<i>Three hypotheses for a Text on Emilio Prini</i>”, <i>Flash Art</i>, No. 306, 2016, 51–59, available at</p>

	<p>https://flash--art.com/article/three-hypotheses-for-a-text-on-emilio-prini-published-on-flash-art-306-january-february-2016-pp-51-59/, or https://www.mlfineart.com/artists/110-emilio-prini/. Photograph probably by Antonio Leale.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.4.1. Emilio Prini, <i>Salire (spinte distribute)</i>, a variation of <i>Farmacarte</i>, 1968. Photograph of the work as presented in <i>Pallone</i>, Edizioni la Bertesca, Genoa, July 1968. First exhibited: <i>Farmacarte</i> was first exhibited in “Pesi Spinte Azione”, Galleria La Bertesca, spring 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: With reference to Prini’s own presentation of this work in Celant, <i>Art Povera</i> (1969), Celant claims that the work is rightfully titled <i>Statue</i>. Celant translates the subtitle of <i>Spinte distribute</i> as “forces distributed below” rather than “distributed forces” because “the assemblage of pieces of lead is concentrated at his feet” (Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 286). I use the direct translation because it better indicates the distribution of lead between the two feet. The number of photographs included in <i>Farmacarte</i> and its various installations varies between sources, probably because the photographs are placed on top of each other: Malsch and Fameli claims twelve photographs, Godfrey claims five. Celant argues that there were six constallations, but the <i>Pallone</i> magazine presents only five, Celant’s <i>Art Povera</i> book three. Malsch further reports that the images were not only of Prini, but of “people and animals” (Malsch, “The Paradox of Presence”, 182). <i>Farmacarte</i> has been shown in other variations. For instance, when <i>Saltare un’altezza</i> was shown at Galleria Sperone in 1969, the lead weights were replaced by tin rods around the edge of the photograph. The involved photographs, and photographs of <i>Farmacarte</i> installed, which have been used in other works, such as <i>Un piccolo film</i>, 1968/95.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Celant, <i>Art Povera</i>, 216; Celant, “Emilio Prini”, 286; Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists</i>, 255–57; Celant, “Emilio Prini”, 286–87; Germano Celant, ed., <i>When Attitudes Become Form. Bern 1969 / Venice 2013</i> (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2013), 575, 628; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 30; Fameli, “Il peso del vuoto. Emilio Prini ieri e oggi”, 90–91; Pasquale Fameli, “Life as Performance: Action and Process in Emilio Prini’s Work”, in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 237, 240; Godfrey, “Giving time to time. Alighiero Boetti at Tate Modern 1”, n.p.; Malsch, “The Paradox of Presence”, 181; Friedemann Malsch, ed., <i>Emilio Prini: Fermi in dogana</i>, (Strasbourg: Éditions Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, 1996), 12–13; Meyer-Stoll and Pero, “I Do Not Care to Be Remembered in the Future”, 321; Minola et al., <i>Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York</i>, 146; Pinto, Blanc and Aceto, “Three Hypothesis for a Text on Emilio Prini”, n.p.; Pola, “Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto”, 606–07; Emilio Prini, “MA/LI/DU/K/POL/WA”, <i>Pallone</i>, July 1968, 5; Dietmar Rübél, “Das als-ob der formlosigkeit und die fotografie”, in <i>Formwerdung und Formentzug</i>, eds. Franz Engel and Yannis Hadjinicolaou (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 209 and further; Sergio, “Art is the Copy of Art. Italian Photography in and after Arte Povera”, 167; Giuliano Sergio, <i>Information, document, oeuvre. Rarours de la photographie en Italie dans les années soixante et soixante-dix</i> (Paris: Presses universitaires de Paris, 2015), 161–62; Giuliano Sergio, “Forma rivista. Critica e rappresentazione della neo-avanguardia in Italia (<i>Flash Art, Pallone, Cartabianca, Sanzamargine, DATA</i>)”, <i>Palinsesti</i>, No. 1, 2011, 89–90.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Emilio Prini, “MA/LI/DU/K/POL/WA”, <i>Pallone</i>, July 1968, 5, available at http://www.palinsesti.net/index.php/Palinsesti/article/downloadSuppFile/21/104.</p>
	<p>5.4.2. Emilio Prini installing <i>Saltare un’altezza (Superficie corpo in peso totale)</i>, a variation of <i>Farmacarte</i>, 1968. Photograph of Prini installing the work, as presented in <i>Pallone</i>, Edizioni la Bertesca, Genoa, July 1968. For information, see Fig. 3.4.1.</p>

	<p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Emilio Prini, “MA/LI/DU/K/POL/WA”, <i>Pallone</i>, July 1968, 5, available at http://www.palineseiti.net/index.php/Palineseiti/article/downloadSuppFile/21/104.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.5.1. Emilio Prini, <i>Ipotesi d'azione</i> (Action Hypotheses), 1967–68. Inscribed lead sheets, 36 x 40 cm. First exhibited: “Pesi Spinte Azione”, Galleria La Bertesca, spring 1968. Note that the current image is from “Processi di pensiero visualizzati”, Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1970.</p> <p>Cursory information: Prini presented his <i>Ipotesi d'azione</i> also in other versions and formats, as in <i>Pallone</i>, July 1968, 5. Sources disagree regarding the number of statements and/or lead sheets that were part of the work, varying between 34, 44 and 46. In addition to the lead sheets, the work also comprised a number of notebook sheets, each 12 x 16 cm, with “action hypotheses” written on them. Allegedly, Prini completed/performed many of the hypothetical actions.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Jean-Christophe Ammann, “The Exhibition (Visualized Thinking Processes)” [Sulla mostra, in <i>Processi di pensiero visualizzati</i>, Kunstmuseum Luzern, 1970], in <i>Arte povera in collezione / Arte povera in collection</i>, ed. Ida Gianelli (Milan: Charta, 2000), 66; Bätzner, <i>Entrare nell'opera</i>, 521; Celant, <i>Art Povera</i>, 213; Celant, <i>Book as Artwork</i>, 44; Celant, “Emilio Prini”, 285–86; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 30; Lauf <i>Emilio Prini. A visual biography</i>, n.p.; Lumley, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 42; Malsch, “The Paradox of Presence”, 181; Friedemann Malsch, ed., <i>Emilio Prini: Fermi in dogana</i>, (Strasbourg: Éditions Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, 1996), 13; Meyer-Stoll and Pero, “I Do Not Care to Be Remembered in the Future”, 321; Pinto, Blanc and Aceto, “Three Hypothesis for a Text on Emilio Prini”, n.p.; Lea Vegine, “Arte vome difesa [in <i>L'uomo e l'arte</i>, December 1971], in <i>L'arte come gioco</i> (Milan: Garzanti Editore, 1988), 35.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Lauf <i>Emilio Prini. A visual biography</i>, n.p.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.5.2. Emilio Prini, <i>Ipotesi d'azione</i>, 1967-68. Exhibition view of <i>Ipotesi d'azioni</i> in “Pesi Spinte Azione”, Galleria La Bertesca, spring 1968, as published in Germano Celant’s <i>Art Povera</i>, 1969.</p> <p>Image credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Celant, <i>Art Povera</i>, 213.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.5.3. Exhibition view, Emilio Prini, “Pesi Spinte Azioni”, Galleria La Bertesca, 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: The work in the image foreground is <i>Pesi</i>. An alternative layout of the <i>Ipotesi d'azioni</i> lead sheets may be found in the image background. If the photograph documents an alternative or temporary view of <i>Ipotesi d'azione</i>, it may suggest a grid of 4 x 11 = 44 sheets, which matches the number of lead sheets listed in Celant, <i>Book as Artwork</i>, 44.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Fameli, “Il peso...”, 90, available at https://intreccidarte.unibo.it/article/view/6370/6136.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.6. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Il suo essere nel ventiduesimo anno di età in un'ora fantastica</i> (His/Its being in the Twenty-Second Year of Age in a Fantastic Hour), 1969. Wood beam, wax, 800 x 20 x 12 cm. Exhibition view, “Anselmo, Boetti, Calzolari, Griffa, Maini, Merz, Penone, Prini, Zorio”, Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone, Turin, October 1969. Work destroyed</p>

	<p>First exhibited: “Anselmo, Boetti, Calzolari, Griffà, Maini, Merz, Penone, Prini, Zorio”, Galleria Gian Enzo Sperone, Turin, October 1969.</p> <p>Cursory information: In addition to the Sperone exhibition, this work was exhibited once more, at “La ricerca estetica dal 1960 al 1970”, X Esposizione Nazionale Quadriennale d’Arte di Roma, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, May 1973, where it was vandalised. Title variations occur: Mangini, for instance, uses <i>Il suo essere nel ventiduesimo anno di vita in un’ora fantastica</i>. My English translation of the title is a combination of the more common title and Mangini’s translated title: I keep ‘age’ rather than ‘life’ but rely on Mangini when underlining the double meaning ‘his/its’. The work is one of the first in the series “Alberi”, which Penone initiated in 1969. For a solo presentation at Aktionsraum Munich in 1970, Penone carved <i>Albero di 12 metri</i> live before audience over the course of 10 days (5–15 February 1970). This tree was also carved following the annual ring corresponding to Penone’s age at the time. Several of Penone’s “Alberi” have been exhibited together under the title “<i>Ripetere il bosco</i>”.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Busine, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 32–33, 332; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 40; Lancioni, “Alberi (Trees)”, n.p.; Mangini, “Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978”, 134 and further; Mangini, <i>Seeing through Closed Eyelids</i>, 2–3, 12, 121; Minola et al., <i>Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York</i>, 146; Matthew Teitelbaum, ed., <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Hidden Life Within</i> (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 78.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.7.1. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Alpi Marittime. I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame</i>, (Maritime Alps. My Years Linked by a Copper Wire), 1968. Intervention in the woods outside Garesio, December 1968, as presented in Celant, <i>Art Povera</i>, 1969.</p> <p>Cursory information: The interactions of the “Alpi Marittime” series were photographed by Claudio Basso and have been presented in various versions. They were first exhibited in “Disegni – progetti”, Galleria Sperone, Turin, May 1969. Penone declared that he would insert new sinkers into the tree involved in this specific intervention each year, but he did not execute his plan. The tree was cut in 1985, and now in Collezione Francois Pinault, Punta della Dogana, Venice.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Mirella Bandini, “Giuseppe Penone. Intervista con Mirella Bandini”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 3, Nos. 7–8, June 1973, 84–89, 84, 86; Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 474; Busine, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 209, 273; Celant, <i>Art povera</i>, 173; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Identité italienne: L’art an Italie depuis 1959</i> (Paris/Rome/Florence: Centre Georges Pompidou/Incontri Internazionali d’arte/Centro Di, 1981), 274; Germano Celant, “Giuseppe Penone: Memories of a Contact”, in <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Hidden Life Within</i>, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 42 and further; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 146–47; Ida Gianelli and Giorgio Verzotti, eds., <i>Penone</i> (Rivoli/Milano: Castello di Rivoli/Fabbro Editori, 1991), 28, 31, 44; Ida Gianelli, ed., <i>Arte povera in collezione / Arte povera in collection</i> (Milan: Charta, 2000), 232–33; Lancioni, “Alpi Marittime (Maritime Alps)”, n.p.; Lancioni, “Giuseppe Penone’s Actions: Towards a Definition”, 210–12; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che fare?</i>, 228–30; Mangini, “Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978”, 110–21; Mangini, “Feeling One’s Way through a Cultural Chiasm”, 157 and further; Minola et al., <i>Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York</i>, 139.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.7.2. Exhibition view from “Prima materia”, Fondation François Pinault, Punta della Dogana, Venice, 2015, with <i>Alpi Marittime. I miei anni collegati da un filo di rame</i> as a chopped trunk in the foreground, far-right.</p>

	<p>Cursory information: The exhibited trunks relate to Penone's <i>Alpi Marittime</i> interactions, in the woods outside Garessio in December 1968. In 1985, some of the involved trees were cut down, and presented as sculptures. The sculptures in the image are all in the Collezione Francois Pinault, Punta della Dogana, Venice.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Palazzo Grassi, ORCH orsenigo_chemollo.</p>
<p>Bodily Impressions</p>	
	<p>Fig. 5.8. Gilberto Zorio, <i>Autoritratto</i>, 1972. Leather mould, electrical resistances, 120 x 140 cm. Private collection, Athens.</p> <p>Cursory information: <i>Autoritratto</i> exists in more than one version – different versions have slight variations in size, form and colour. The combination of leather, the convex shape of the artist's face, and the glooming, star-shaped eyes is the same in the different versions. Zorio also made a related <i>Autoritratto</i> in 1978, sculpting his face in terracotta instead of leather.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Celant, "The 'Star Towers'", 21, 23; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Arte Povera 2011</i> (Milan: Electa, 2011), 568; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 174–75; Mangini, "Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978", 185–86; Masoero et al., <i>Gilberto Zorio</i>, 41; Oliva, <i>Paolo Mussat Sartor</i>, 267.</p> <p>Credits: © Gilberto Zorio / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.9.1. Alighiero Boetti, <i>Autoritratto in negativo</i> (Negative Self-Portrait), 1968. Reconstructed stone (negative cast), probably sand dust, 50 x 35 x 15 cm. 3 or 7 versions, all lost. First exhibited: "Shaman/Showman", Galleria di Niebourg, Milan, April 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: According to Ammann's <i>Catologo generale</i>, either 3 or 7 versions of this sculpture existed. A listing in Boetti's notebook, offered to me in private e-mail correspondence with the Archivio Alighiero Boetti 22.11.2021, indicates that 7 versions of the work were made, or at least intended.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti. Catologo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 199; Boetti, <i>Alighiero and Boetti. Shaman-showman</i>, 51–52; Fer, <i>The Infinite Line</i>, 175; Giorgi, "Autoritratti di Boetti alla Galleria De Nieubourg", n.p.; Godfrey, <i>Alighiero e Boetti</i>, 73 and further; Teresa Kittler, "Living Art and the Art of Living", PhD Thesis, University College London, 2014, 216–17; Lumley, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 70; Morsiani, "Alighiero e Boetti: Halving to Double", 20; Maria Teresa Roberto, "Alighiero Boetti 1966–1970, die Wörter und die Dinge", in <i>Alighiero Boetti 1965–1994</i>, ed. Jean-Christophe Ammann (Vienna: Mazzotta, 1997), 23–32, 28–29; Sauzeau Boetti, <i>Alighiero e Boetti. Shaman/Showman</i>, 51–53; Trini, "Le Pietre di Boetti"; Jan Verwoert, "Jokes in the Index: On the Signature of Congenial Passions and Common Wit", in Germano Celant, ed., <i>When Attitudes Become Form. Bern 1969 / Venice 2013</i> (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2013), 532–33.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.9.2. Alighiero Boetti, <i>Ritratto e autoritratto in negativo</i> (Portrait and Negative Self-Portrait), 1968.</p>

	<p>Cursory information: The image was first published in the catalogue produced for Harald Szeemann's exhibition "Live in your head. When attitudes become form", Kunsthalle Bern, March 1969. The Archivio Alighiero Boetti informs (via private e-mail correspondence, 22.11.2021) that there is uncertainty regarding who the photographer of this image is.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: See Fig. 5.9.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.9.3. Alighiero Boetti, "Shaman/Showman", Galleria di Nieubourg, Milan, spring 1968. Exhibition view.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Fotografico Enrico Cattaneo.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.9.4. Alighiero Boetti, Shaman/Showman, 1968. Exhibition view, "Arte povera più azioni povere", Amalfi, October 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: Some sources indicate that there were two versions of <i>Autoritratto in negativo</i> among the exhibited objects. For a rare colour photograph of this installation, not showing <i>Autoritratto in negativo</i>, however, see Godfrey, <i>Alighiero e Boetti</i>, 67.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: Bruno Manconi © Archivio Lia Rumma.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.10.1. Alighiero Boetti with <i>Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969, 1969.</i> Exhibition view, "Live in Your Head. When Attitudes become Form", Kunsthalle Bern, March 1969.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: Shunk-Kender/J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.R.20). Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in Memory of Harry Shunk and Janos Kender. Downloaded from Getty Digital Collections, https://rosettaapp.getty.edu/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE2482444 (accessed 16.11.2021).</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.10.2. Alighiero Boetti, <i>Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969 (Me Sunbathing in Turin 19 January 1969), 1969.</i> 111 elements of hand-moulded, quick-setting cement, butterfly, ca. 177 x 90 cm. Private collection, Turin. First exhibited: "Live in your head. When attitudes become form", Kunsthalle Bern, March 1969.</p> <p>Cursory information: According to Stefania Portinari, the date 19 January 1969 corresponds with the date the Czechoslovakian dissident Jan Palach died after having set fire to himself three days earlier in St. Venceslav Square in Prague in protest against Muscovite oppression. A version of the sculpture was exhibited in "Alighiero Boetti", Galleria Sperone, April 1969, with the alternative title "Io prendo il sole a Torino il 24-2-1969". Giovanni Lista refers to the butterfly as a <i>Pieris brassicae</i>, a species attracted to the colour white. Most sources mention a yellow cabbage butterfly, but it is orange/black in some photos. Most sources describe the butterfly as positioned on the figure's chest or shoulder, while Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev states that it is fastened to the figure's nose (Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 83).</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ammann, <i>Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo</i>, 222; Jean-Christophe Ammann, ed., <i>Alighiero Boetti 1965-1994</i> (Vienna: Mazotta, 1997),</p>

	<p>94-95; Bätzner, “Alighiero e Boetti: Active Interaction”, 110–11; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Identié italiane: L’art en Italie depuis 1959</i> (Paris/Rome/Florence: Centre Georges Pompidou/Incontri Internazionali d’Arte/Centro Di, 1981), 287; Germano Celant, ed., <i>When Attitudes Become Form. Bern 1969 / Venice 2013</i> (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2013), 78–80, 100–04, 332–33, 335, 389, 407, 479, 493, 516, 553; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 83; Fer, <i>The Infinite Line</i>, 181–83; Giorgi, “Autoritratti di Boetti alla Galleria De Nieubourg”, n.p.; Godfrey, <i>Alighiero e Boetti</i>, 72 and further; Minola et al., <i>Gian Enzo Sperone. Torino, Roma, New York</i>, 136; Morsiani, “Alighiero e Boetti: Halving to Double”, 19; Oliva, <i>Paolo Mussat Sartor</i>, 35; Portinari, “Alighiero & Boetti: sulla firma come identità e duplicazione”, 259; Rattemeyer, <i>Exhibiting the New Art</i>, 38, 140–41; Maria Teresa Roberto, “Alighiero Boetti 1966–1970, die Wörter und die Dinge”, in <i>Alighiero Boetti 1965–1994</i>, ed. Jean-Christophe Ammann (Vienna: Mazotta, 1997), 23–32, 29; Norman Rosenthal, ed., <i>Alighiero e Boetti</i> (New York, NY: Gagosian Gallery, 2001), 11–13; Salerno, “Manuale di conoscenza”, 82–83.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: Shunk-Kender/J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.R.20). Gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation in Memory of Harry Shunk and Janos Kender. Downloaded from Getty Digital Collections, https://rosettaapp.getty.edu/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE2482444 (accessed 16.11.2021).</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.11.1. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra</i> (To Unroll One’s Own Skin – Stone), 1971. 3 b&w photographs with silver salts toned with selenium on baryta paper, stone. Possession of the artist. First exhibited: “Penone: Rétrospective”, Centre Pompidou – Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris, April 2004.</p> <p>Cursory information: This work relates to the project <i>Svolgere la propria pelle</i>, see Figs. 4.3.1– 4.3.5 below.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Carlos Basualdo, ed., <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms</i> (London: Gagosian, 2018), 90; Bätzner, <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 480; Busine, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 134–39, 182; Celant, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 66–67; Daniela Lancioni, “Svolgere la propria pelle (To unroll one’s skin)”, in <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms</i>, ed. Carlos Basualdo (London: Gagosian, 2018), n.p; Lancioni, “Giuseppe Penone’s Actions”, 215–19; Gianfranco Maraniello and Jonathan Watkins, eds., <i>Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968–2008</i> (Birmingham/Bologna: Ikon Gallery/MAMbo, 2009), 160–64; Penone, <i>Rovesciare i propri occhi</i>, 84–85.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.11.2. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra</i> (To Unroll One’s Own Skin – Stone), 1971. Exhibition view, “Penone: Rétrospective”, Centre Pompidou – Musée National d’Art Moderne, Paris, April 2004.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.12. Marisa Merz, <i>Impronta (Imprint)</i>, 1968. Clay, pigment, copper, 16 x 23 x 15 cm. Tucci Russo Studio per l’Arte Contemporanea. First exhibited: first known occasion is “A proposito di Marisa Merz”, MAXXI, Rome, January 2012. Whether the sculpture was exhibited before is unknown.</p>

	<p>Cursory information: At least two versions of this work were made. One of them, made of cement, pigment and nylon, is now lost, but depicted in Grenier, <i>Marisa Merz</i>, 38. Alternative translation of title: Fingerprint.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bennett, “By Way of Declaration: The Art of Marisa Merz”, 65–66; Grenier, <i>Marisa Merz</i>, 38; Flood and Morris, <i>Zero to Infinity</i>, 265.</p> <p>Credits: © Marisa Merz / BONO 2022. Photo: © Tucci Russo Studio per l’Arte Contemporanea.</p>
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Sculptural Enclosures



Fig. 5.13.1. Luciano Fabro, *In Cubo (In Cube)*, 1966.

Canvas, steel, wood, Velcro, internal measures 178 x 178 x 178 cm.

Private collection.






First exhibited in “Opere di Luciano Fabro”, Galleria Notizie in January 1967.

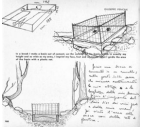


Cursory information: The sculpture’s measurements vary in the literature; the measurements listed here are provided by Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro. Within the time frame of my study, *In Cubo* also appeared in important group exhibitions such as “Lo spazio dell’immagine” at Palazzo Trinci in Foligno (1967), and “Vitalità del negativo” at Palazzo delle Esposizione in Rome (1970). Another version of the sculpture was also made in 1966, with internal measurements of 165 x 165 x 165 cm based on art critic Carla Lonzi’s measurements. Some interpreters of the work emphasise that its title, *In Cubo*, evokes ‘*incubo*’ (nightmare).




Sources and further reading: Bick, “Figure as Model: The Early Work of Michelangelo Pistoletto, 1956–1966”, 93; Caldwell and Rowell, *Luciano Fabro*, 96–97, 126–27; Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Protagonists*, 150; Germano Celant, “Luciano Fabro” [1971], in Celant, *Arte Povera. Histories and Stories*, 43–44; Germano Celant, “Luciano Fabro” [1978], in Celant, *Arte Povera: Histories and Stories*, Germano Celant, 134; “Luciano Fabro: The image that isn’t there”, *Artforum*, Vol. 27, No. 2, October 1988, available at <https://www.artforum.com/print/198808/luciano-fabro-the-image-that-isn-t-there-34680>; Christov-Bakargiev, *Arte Povera*, 42; Conte, “Measure and Autobiography in Arte Povera”, 88; Nicholas Cullinan, “La ricostruzione della natura: gli imperative artigianali e rurali dell’Arte Povera”, in *Arte Povera 2011*, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 70–71; Maddalena Disch, “Luciano Fabro: Action as the ‘Construction of Consciousness with Things’”, in Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell’opera*, 137–39; Fabro, *Attaccapanni*, 22–27; Fabro, *Luciano Fabro. Works 1963–86*, 47–49, 167; Flood and Morris, *Zero to Infinity*, 74–75; Grenier, *Luciano Fabro*, 136, 194–95, 304; Giovanni Lista, “Specificità e percorso storico dell’arte povera”, in Giovanni Lista, *Arte Povera. Interviste curate e raccolte da Giovanni Lista*, (Milan: Ascondita, 2011), 159–04, 178; Lista, *Arte Povera*, 19; Lonzi, *Autoritratto*, 165–66, 218; Lumley, *Arte Povera*, 23–24; Margit Rowell, “Luciano Fabro et l’Arte Povera”, *Les Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne*, No. 143, Spring 2018, 49–57, 52; Rüdiger, *Luciano Fabro. Habiter l’autonomie/Inhabiting Autonomy*, 112, 123–24, 283; Sanna, “Le nous artistique de Fabro”, 48; Didier Semin, “Les artistes pauvres: ‘fruit de la tradition et fils de leur époque’”, *Les Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne*, No. 143, Spring 2018, 59–65, 62; Giuliano Sergio, ed., *Ugo Mulas. Vitalità del negativo: Documenting the seminal exhibition of the Italian avant-garde* (Cremona: Johan & Levi Editore, 2011), 32, 98–99; Zambianchi, “‘Oltre l’oggetto’: qualche considerazione su Arte Povera e performance”, 39–40.

Credits: © Luciano Fabro / Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro. Photo: © Silvia Fabro.

Fig. 5.13.2. Luciano Fabro entering *In cubo*.

	<p>Credits: © Luciano Fabro / Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro. Photo: Giovanni Ricci © A. Guidetti and G. Ricci Photographic Archive.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.13.3. Luciano Fabro inside <i>In cubo</i>.</p> <p>Cursory information: This photograph was published with six other photographs of Fabro inside <i>In cubo</i> in the poster-format catalogue for Fabro's solo exhibition at Galleria Notizie, Turin, January 1967, where the work had its first display.</p> <p>Credits: © Luciano Fabro / Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro. Photo: Giovanni Ricci © A. Guidetti and G. Ricci Photographic Archive.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.14.1. Gilberto Zorio, <i>Cerchio di terracotta</i> (Terracotta Circle), 1969. Terracotta, lead, glass, aluminium, 185 x 180 cm. Tate, London First exhibited: Information not found.</p> <p>Cursory information: The English translation of the work varies; it is sometimes referred to as <i>Circle of Clay</i>. Various catalogues list the sculpture with varying dimensions. In the catalogue for Zorio's exhibition at Milton Keynes Gallery, October 2008, for instance, <i>Cerchio di terracotta</i> is listed as 170 x 160 cm, whereas the sculpture is listed as 190 x 150 cm in Masoero et al., <i>Gilberto Zorio</i>. I use the measurements given by Tate.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Celant, "Gilberto Zorio in conversation with Germano Celant. Milan, 30 September 2007", 51; Emma Dean and Michael Stanley, eds., <i>Gilberto Zorio</i> (Milton Keynes: Milton Keynes Gallery, 2008), 16, n.p.; Masoero et al., <i>Gilberto Zorio</i> (Turin: Hopefulmonster, 2005), 32, 49; Tate, "Gilberto Zorio. Terracotta Circle. 1969", https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/zorio-terracotta-circle-t12951 (accessed 11.05.2022).</p> <p>Credits: © Gilberto Zorio / BONO 2022. Photo © Tate.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.14.2. Gilberto Zorio inside in <i>Cerchio di terracotta</i>.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Masoero et al., <i>Gilberto Zorio</i>, 32.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.15.1. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Alpi Marittime – La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello</i> (Maritime Alps. My Height, the Length of My Arms, My Girth in a Brook), 1968. Frame of cement slabs, 175 x 152 x 30 cm, installed in riverbed. Intervention in the woods outside Garesio, December 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: The interactions of the "<i>Alpi Marittime</i>" series were photographed by Claudio Basso and have been presented in various versions. They were first exhibited in "Disegni – progetti", Galleria Sperone, Turin, May 1969. Slight differences occur in listings of the frame's height. I rely on the measurements given in Daniela Lancioni's texts. An alternative translation of the title is "Maritime Alps. My Height, the Length of My Arms, My Thickness in a Stream".</p>

	<p>Sources and further reading: Mirella Bandini, “Giuseppe Penone. Intervista con Mirella Bandini”, <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 3, Nos. 7–8, June 1973, 8489, 84, 86; Carlos Basualdo, ed., <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms</i> (London: Gagosian, 2018), 159; Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 94, 475; Busine, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 38, 256–61; Celant, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 168; Celant, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 38; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Arte Povera 2011</i> (Milan: Electa, 2011), 482; Germano Celant, “Giuseppe Penone: Memories of a Contact”, in <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Hidden Life Within</i>, ed. Matthew Teitelbaum (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 42 and further; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 146–47; Conte, “Measure and Autobiography in Arte Povera”, 93–94; Nicholas Cullinan, “La ricostruzione della natura: gli imperative artigianali e rurali dell’Arte Povera”, in <i>Arte Povera 2011</i>, ed. Germano Celant (Milan: Electa, 2011), 70; Flood and Morris, <i>Zero to Infinity</i>, 80–82; Ida Gianelli and Giorgio Verzotti, ed., <i>Penone</i> (Rivoli/Milano: Castello di Rivoli/Fabbro Editori, 1991), 28, 31; Ida Gianelli, ed., <i>Arte povera in collezione / Arte povera in collection</i> (Milan: Charta, 2000), 232–33; Lancioni, “Alpi Marittime (Maritime Alps)”, n.p.; Lancioni, “Giuseppe Penone’s Actions: Towards a Definition”, 210–12; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che fare?</i>, 228–30; Mangini, “Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978”; Mangini, “Feeling One’s Way through a Cultural Chiasm”, 157 and further; Mangini, <i>Seeing through Closed Eyelids</i>, 22–27; Gianfranco Maraniello and Jonathan Watkins, eds., <i>Giuseppe Penone: Writings 1968–2008</i> (Bologna/Birmingham: MaMbo/Ikon Gallery, 2009), 157–59; Zambianchi, “‘Oltre l’oggetto’: qualche considerazione su Arte Povera e performance”, 40–41.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: Claudio Basso © Archivio Penone, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.15.2. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Alpi Marittime – La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello</i> (Maritime Alps. My Height, the Length of My Arms, My Girth in a Brook), 1968. Intervention in the woods outside Garessio, December 1968, as presented in Celant, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 1969.</p> <p>For information, see Fig. 5.15.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.15.3. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Alpi Marittime – La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello</i> (Maritime Alps. My Height, the Length of My Arms, My Girth in a Brook), 1968. Photograph documenting interaction by the artist. Presented in various versions.</p> <p>Cursory information: This image is part of a series of six photographs of the work, now in the Collezione MAMbo – Museo d’Arte Moderna di Bologna. For all images, see the museum website, available at http://www.mambo-bologna.org/collezioneonline/collezionecontemporanea/opera-1099/. For further information, see Fig. 5.15.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: Claudio Basso © Archivio Penone, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.16.1. Luciano Fabro, <i>Lo Spirato</i> (The Expired One), 1968-73. Pavenazzo marble, 190 x 90 cm. Collective property. First exhibited: “Contemporanea”, curated by Achille Bonito Oliva, Parcheggio di Villa Borghese, Rome, November 1973.</p> <p>Cursory information: The sculpture’s title has a complex history; as Sharon Hecker has pointed out, Fabro initially titled it <i>I represent the encumbrance of the object in the vanity of ideology</i>, whereas <i>Lo Spirato</i> was a title given in sale shares from 1974. The sculpture</p>

	<p>has also been referred to as “Dal pieno al vuoto senza soluzione di continuità”, because Fabro presented photographs of the process leading up to <i>Lo spirato</i> under this title in his <i>Attaccapanni</i>. An alternative translation of the title is “The Deceased”.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Germano Celant, “Luciano Fabro” [1978], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 135, 138–39; Germano Celant, “Luciano Fabro: The image that isn’t there”, <i>Artforum</i>, Vol. 27, No. 2, October 1988, available at https://www.artforum.com/print/198808/luciano-fabro-the-image-that-isn-t-there-34680; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 43, 68, 103; Michele Dantini, <i>Arte Contemporanea. Ecologica. Sfera Pubblica. Scritti scelti 2007–2009</i> (Rome: Aracne, 2012), 91–92; Georges Didi-Huberman, <i>L’empreinte</i> (Paris: Editions Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997), 305; Fabro, <i>Attaccapanni</i>, 115–17; Fabro, <i>Luciano Fabro: Works 1963–1986</i>, 102–05, 170–71; Greiner, <i>Luciano Fabro</i>, 74, 204, 224, 296; Goudinoux, “Luciano Fabro. Du corps comme instrument”, 109–12; Hecker, “I Represent the Encumbrance of the Object in the Vanity of Ideology. The Expired One”; Giovanni Lista, “Luciano Fabro. La forma è sempre il risultato dell’atto” [1998], in Giovanni Lista, <i>Arte Povera, interviste curate e raccolte da Giovanni Lista</i> (Milan: Ascondita, 2011), 38; Montazami, “Body, Mould Trace”, 238–41; Morris, “Luciano Fabro: In virtue of References”, 8–9; Oliva, <i>Paolo Mussat Sartor</i>, 84–87; Maria Rossa, “Luciano Fabro, <i>Iconografie (Bacinelle)</i>: alcune possibili di lettura”, <i>Studi di Memofonte</i>, No. 21, 2018, 200–01; Schmitz, “The Work Becomes the Subject”, 93; Didier Semin, “Les artistes pauvres: ‘fruit de la tradition et fils de leur époque’”, <i>Les Cahiers du Musée national d’art moderne</i>, No. 143, Spring 2018, 62–63.</p> <p>Credits: © Luciano Fabro / Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro. Photo: Agostino Osio © Galleria Christian Stein, Milan.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.16.2. Luciano Fabro, <i>Lo spirato, primo gesso</i> (The Expired One, first plaster cast), 1968. Plaster, 170 x 60 x 30 cm. Private collection. First exhibited: Not exhibited, other than in the artist’s studio.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: See Fig. 5.16.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Luciano Fabro / Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro. Photo: Paolo Mussat Sartor.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.16.3. Luciano Fabro, <i>Studi per Lo spirato</i> (Study for Lo Spirato), 1973 (Detail). Photographs by Giovanni Ricci, manipulated by Luciano Fabro. 6 elements, each 69.5 x 50 cm / 50 x 60.5 cm. Musée des Beaux Arts, Nantes. First exhibited: “Luciano Fabro”, Lucio Amelio Modern Art Agency, Napoli, April 1974.</p> <p>Cursory information: The dating of the photographs varies in different sources between 1971 and 1973. The correct dating of the work <i>Studi per Lo spirato</i> is 1973.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: See Fig. 5.16.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Luciano Fabro / Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro. Photo: Giovanni Ricci © A. Guidetti and G. Ricci Photographic Archive.</p>
	<p>Fig. 5.16.4. Luciano Fabro, <i>Studi per Lo spirato</i> (Study for Lo Spirato), 1973 (Detail). Photographs by Giovanni Ricci, manipulated by Luciano Fabro. 6 elements, each 69.5 x 50 cm / 50 x 60.5 cm. For information, see Fig. 5.16.3.</p> <p>Credits: © Luciano Fabro/Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro. Photo: Giovanni Ricci © A. Guidetti and G. Ricci Photographic Archive.</p>

Other Works of Relevance, Chapter Five

Alighiero Boetti, *Ghise*, 1968; Alighiero Boetti *Ghise (ABoetti)*, 1968; Alighiero Boetti, *Alighiero Boetti 16 dicembre 2040 11 luglio 2023*, 1971; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Il mio 25 anno di età*, 1968; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Il mio 25 anno di età*, 1969; Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Il mio letto così come dev'essere*, 1968; Luciano Fabro, *Ricordo anulare*, 1963–64; Luciano Fabro, *Impronta*, 1964; Luciano Fabro, *Io (L'Uovo)*, 1978; Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo*, 1971 (sculpture with the letters of the artist's surname cast in steel, and connected to a propane gas tank allowing the letters to light up in flames); Jannis Kounellis, *Senza titolo*, 1972 (performance at "Roma Mappa 7, Incontri Internazionali d'Arte, centro d'informazione Alternativa", Palazzo taverna, Rome 11 December 1972, with a central sculptural element: the gold cast lips of the performing artist); Marisa Merz, *Senza titolo*, 1975 (work made for the solo exhibition "Ad occhi chiusi gli occhi sono straordinariamente aperti" at L'Attico in 1975, of copper wire running in horizontal strands around one of the rooms of the exhibition, up to the height of the artist's own body); Marisa Merz, *Senza titolo*, 1975 (work made for the solo exhibition "Ad occhi chiusi gli occhi sono straordinariamente aperti" at L'Attico in 1975, in which a tray is turned upside down and given supplied with wooden legs, so as to become a table of the same height as the tray when Merz carried it); Giulio Paolini, *Vedo (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo)*, 1969 (see Chapter Six); Giulio Paolini, *Proteo III*, 1971; Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle*, 1970–71 (see Chapter Six); Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle – dita*, 1971; Giuseppe Penone, *Guanti*, 1972; Giuseppe Penone, *Calco in gesso*, 1972; Giuseppe Penone, *Piede*, 1972; Giuseppe Penone, *Torace*, 1972; Giuseppe Penone, *Occhi*, 1972; Giuseppe Penone, *Libro/polvere trappola/mano*, 1972; Giuseppe Penone, *Patate*, 1977; Giuseppe Penone, *Zucche*, 1978/79; Giuseppe Penone, *Soffio di creta*, 1978; Giuseppe Penone, *Soffio di foglie*, 1979; Giuseppe Penone, *Cocci*, 1979; Gilberto Zorio, *Per purificare le parole*, 1968; Gilberto Zorio, *Odio*, 1971 (photograph of the word 'odio' impressed in the artist's forehead).

Chapter Six.

Working in 360°. The Arte Povera Artists' Structural Extensions.



Fig. 6.1.1. Alighiero Boetti, *Viaggi postali* (Postal Voyages), 1969–70.




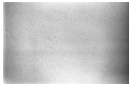
19 envelopes with stamps, 11 x 22 – 26 x 40 cm each.



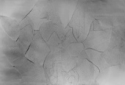
The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York.




First Exhibited: "Gennaio '70. Comportamenti, oggetti e mediazioni", Museo Civico, Bologna, January 1970.





Cursory information: Note that this work belongs to the section "Extending Through Social Networks" below. Within the timeframe of this study, *Viaggi postali* was also exhibited at "Incontri Internazionali d'Arte", Rome, November 1971. The work is exhibited with certain shifts in layout, for images of other layouts, see for instance MoMA's website, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/137301> (accessed 12.10.2021). *Viaggi postali* and *Dossier postale* (see Figs. 6.1.2– 6.1.5 below) are two different results of the same project.

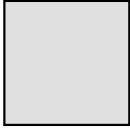



Sources and further reading: Jean-Christophe Ammann, "Der Zeit Zeit geben", in *Alighiero Boetti 1965–1994*, ed. Jean-Christophe Ammann (Vienna: Mazotta, 1997), 15–21, 19–20; Ammann, *Alighiero Boetti. Catalogo generale. Tomo primo*, 29, 82, 238–39, 325; Mirella Bandini, "About the beauty of dates and the order of the alphabet. Interview with Alighiero Boetti, 1973", in *Arte Povera from the Goetz Collection*, eds. Ingvild Goetz and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (Munich: Sammlung Goetz, 1997), 72–73; Bätzner, "Alighiero e Boetti: Active Interaction", 116–17; Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 388–89; Cappelletti, "Un cambio di passo", 128, 136; Maurizio Cattelan, "Exercises in schizophrenia: a tribute to Alighiero and Boetti", *Zoo*, No. 9, 2001, 71; Mario Codognato, "Pagine d'artista", in Germano Celant, ed., *Arte Povera 2011* (Milan: Electa, 2011), 594; Flood and Morris, *Zero to Infinity*, 190; Godfrey, *Alighiero e Boetti*, 194–97; Walter Guadagnini, ed., *Storie dell'occhio/1: Fotografi ed eventi artistici in Italia dal '60 all'80* (Modena: Edizioni COOPTIP, 1988), 126–27; Maffei, *Arte Povera 1966–1980: Libri e Documenti/Books and Documents*, 51; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, *Che fare?*, 91–93; Friedemann Malsch, ed., *Arte Povera aus*

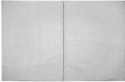

	<p><i>der Sammlung des Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein</i> (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2012), 34–35; Morsiani, “Alighiero e Boetti: Halving to Double”, 19–20; Oliva, “<i>Lavoro estetico e comunità concentrate</i>”, 72–75; Barry Schwabsky, “Imaginary itineraries: Alighiero Boetti’s ‘Dossier postale’”, <i>The Print Collector’s Newsletter</i>, Vol. 26, No. 3, 1995, 91; Schwabsky, “Alighiero e Boetti: The Desire and Pursuit of the Whole”, 37–38; Trini, “Alighiero Boetti. I primi 1000 fiumi più lunghi del mondo”, 40, 48–49.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.1.2. Alighiero Boetti and Penelope Coleman among the files included in Boetti’s <i>Dossier postale</i>, Milan, 1970</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Giorgio Colombo, Milan.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.1.3. Alighiero Boetti working on <i>Dossier postale</i>. Milan, 1970. Photograph by Giorgio Colombo.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Giorgio Colombo, Milan.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.1.4. Alighiero Boetti, <i>Dossier postale</i> (Postal Dossier), 1969–70. Photocopies ordered in 181 printed and stamped cardboard folders, each 35 x 25.5 cm, unbound. Edition of 99. Various owners. First Exhibited: Septième biennale de Paris. Manifestation biennale et internationale des jeunes artistes, Parc Floral-Bois de Vincennes, Paris, September 1971.</p> <p>Cursory information: Note that this work belongs to the section “Extending Through Social Networks” below. Within the timeframe of this study, <i>Dossier postale</i> was also exhibited at “Incontri Internazionali d’Arte”, Rome, 25 November – 18 December 1971. <i>Dossier postale</i> is a result of the same project as <i>Viaggi postali</i> (see Fig. 6.1.1 above). An alternative title is <i>FASCICOLO 104 Dossier postale</i>, of which the first part refers to a post officer’s note on the last envelope addressed to Bruce Nauman.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: See Fig. 6.1.1 above.</p> <p>Credits: © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Alighiero Boetti, Rome.</p>
<p>Extending One’s Bodily Contours</p>	
	<p>Fig. 6.2.1. Giulio Paolini, <i>Vedo (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo)</i> (I see [The Deciphering of my Visual Field]), 1969. Pencil on paper, wall or canvas, 225 x 375 cm. Various versions/various collections. First exhibited: VI Biennale de Paris, Musée d’Arte Moderne de la Ville de Paris, October 1969.</p> <p>Cursory information: The initial version of the work, from 15 July 1969, was drawn on 15 sheets of drawing paper pinned to the wall of the artist’s studio. One version has been realised on primed canvas. Since 1970, new versions of the work were drawn directly onto the wall. For the other versions of the work, see Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, cat. nos. 189, 276, 512, 608, as well as 209 and 214. Within the timeframe of this thesis, <i>Vedo</i> was also exhibited in “Giulio Paolini. Vedo”, QUI arte contemporanea, Rome, 1970; “Giulio Paolini. Vedo”, Galleria Notizie, Turin, February 1970; “<i>New Italian Art 1953–71</i>”, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.</p>





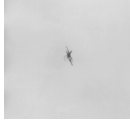

	<p>July 1971; documenta 5, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, June 1972. Paolini made a print edition relating to <i>Vedo</i> for <i>Bolaffiarte</i>, Vol. 4, No. 31, June–July 1973.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bernardina, “Les autoportraits de Giulio Paolini”, 8; Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 82, 85 and further; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i> (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 282, 292–93; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera; Histories and Stories</i>, 60–61; Germano Celant, ed., <i>Identité italienne: L’art en Italie depuis 1959</i> (Paris/Rome/Florence: Centre Georges Pompidou/Incontri Internazionali d’Arte/Centro Di, 1981), 315; Christov-Bakargiev, “Arte Povera 1967–1987”, 59, 69; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 37, 134; Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 202; Maddalena Disch, “The Author, the Work and the Viewer: The ‘Performative’ Dimension in Giulio Paolini’s Work”, in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 190–191; Doris von Drathen, “Giulio Paolini. Of seeing blindness”, in <i>Vortex of Silence: Proposition for an art criticism beyond aesthetic categories</i> (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 2004), 221; Erich Franz, “‘Vedo e non vedo’”, in Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, <i>Giulio Paolini. Vedo e non vedo</i>, 26; Ida Gianelli, ed., <i>Arte povera in collezione / Arte povera in collection</i> (Milan: Charta, 2000), 310; Tommaso Trini, “Il vero e il visibile” [from “Giulio Paolini, un decennio”], <i>DATA</i>, Vol. 5, Nos. 7–8, Summer 1973, 60–67], in Tommaso Trini, <i>Mezzo secolo di arte intera. Scritti 1964–2014</i>, ed. Luca Cerizza (Cremona: Johan & Levi Editore, 2016), 105–07; Elena Volpato, “L’île enchantée. Vision is Blind”, in Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, <i>Giulio Paolini. Vedo e non vedo</i>, 60–64, 102.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.2.2. Giulio Paolini working on <i>Vedo</i> (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo), the artist’s studio, Turin, 15 July 1969.</p> <p>Cursory information: Six images of Paolini working on <i>Vedo</i> were published in the poster-format catalogue for the exhibition “Giulio Paolini. Vedo”, Galleria Notizie, Turin, February 1970.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Anna Piva © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.2.3. Giulio Paolini working on <i>Vedo</i> (la decifrazione del mio campo visivo), the artist’s studio, Turin, 15 July 1969.</p> <p>Cursory information: Six images of Paolini working on <i>Vedo</i> were published in the poster-format catalogue for the exhibition “Giulio Paolini. Vedo”, Galleria Notizie, Turin, February 1970.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Anna Piva © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.2.4 Giulio Paolini, “<i>Vedo</i>” (15 luglio 1969) (“I see” [15 July 1969]), 1971. Collage on primed canvas, 120 x 180 cm. Private collection, Pescara. No recorded exhibition history.</p> <p>Cursory information: This work is composed of fragments of sheets from Paolini’s first version of <i>Vedo</i> (Fig. 6.2.1 above)</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 220.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Photographer unknown © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>




	<p>Fig. 6.2.5. Giulio Paolini, “Vedo” (15 luglio 1969) (“I see” [15 July 1969]), 1971. Paper fragments mounted between plexiglas plates, 20 x 25 cm. Location unknown. First exhibition: “Giulio Paolini”, Galleria Notizie, Turin, January 1972.</p> <p>Cursory information: This work is composed of fragments of sheets from Paolini’s first version of <i>Vedo</i> (Fig. 6.2.1 above). In addition to those fragments, this work comprises fragments of handwritten notes about the work, and fragments of an envelope from the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome – the institution who organised the Italian delegation to the 1969 Paris biennale, where <i>Vedo</i> was first shown.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 224.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Mario Sarotto © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.3.1. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Svolgere la propria pelle (To Unroll One's Own Skin)</i>, 1971. Photographic artist book, 2.6 x 21.1 cm, 104 pages. Edited by Franco Mello, Sperone editore/Editarte Torino.</p> <p>Cursory information: The original photographs for this project were taken by Claudio Basso. Different variations of the English translation occur; “<i>svolgere</i>” is translated as “to unroll”/“unrolling”, “to unravel”/“unravelling” and “to develop”/“developing”. Galleria Multipli, Turin, made a multiple edition of <i>Svolgere la propria pelle</i> in 1970–71, consisting of seven zinc-plate photo collages, in 25 copies. Among works relating to <i>Svolgere la propria pelle</i> are <i>Svolgere la propria pelle, coincidenza di imagine</i>, 1970, collage; and <i>Svolgere la propria pelle (Pressione su carta)</i>, 1974, drawing. See also <i>Svolgere la propria pelle – pietra</i>, Figs. 5.11.1–5.11.2 above.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Cappelletti, “Un cambio di passo”, 128; Busine, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 36, 39, 182–83; Celant, <i>Giuseppe Penone</i>, 60–63; Germano Celant, “Giuseppe Penone” [2007], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 251; Mario Codognato, “Pagine d’artista”, in Germano Celant, ed., <i>Arte Povera 2011</i> (Milan: Electa, 2011), 596; Guzzetti, “<i>Information 1970: alcune novità sul lavoro di Giuseppe Penone</i>”, 221 and further; Daniela Lancioni, “<i>Svolgere la propria pelle (To unroll one’s skin)</i>”, in <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Inner Life of Forms</i>, ed. Carlos Basualdo (London: Gagosian, 2018), n.p.; Lancioni, “Giuseppe Penone’s Actions: Towards a Definition”, 216–19; Maffei, <i>Arte Povera 1966–1980: Libri e Documenti/Books and Documents</i>, 150–51; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che fare?</i>, 239–0; Mangini, “Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978”, 129 and further; Mangini, “Feeling One’s Way through a Cultural Chiasm”, 167; Mangini, <i>Seeing Through Closed Eyelids</i>, 60 and further; Gianfranco Maraniello and Jonathan Watkins, eds., <i>Giuseppe Penone. Writings 1968–2008</i> (Bologna/Birmingham: MaMbo/Ikon Gallery, 2009), 66–69; Pola, “Media immateriali per materializzare il tutto”, 606; Matthew Teitelbaum, ed., <i>Giuseppe Penone: The Hidden Life Within</i> (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 244–47.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.3.2. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Svolgere la propria pelle (To Unroll One's Own Skin)</i>, 1970. 36 b&w photographs with silver salts toned with selenium on baryta paper and applied on paper, framed in a single panel, 42 x 36 cm. Tate, London.</p> <p>For cursory information and sources and further reading, see Fig. 6.3.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone.</p>

	<p>Fig. 6.3.3. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Svolgere la propria pelle (To Unroll One's Own Skin)</i>, 1970. 11 b&w photographs with silver salts toned with selenium on baryta paper and applied on paper, framed in a single panel, 42 x 36 cm. Tate, London.</p> <p>For cursory information and sources and further reading, see Fig. 6.3.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.3.4. Giuseppe Penone, <i>Svolgere la propria pelle (To Unroll One's Own Skin)</i>, 1970. 607 b&w photographs with silver salts toned with selenium on baryta paper and applied on paper, framed in 18 panels, each 42 x 36 cm. Tate, London.</p> <p>First exhibited: In its complete assembly of 18 panels, the work was first exhibited in “Skin deep. Il corpo come luogo del segno artistico”, MART Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, October 2003.</p> <p>For cursory information and sources and further reading, see Fig. 6.3.1.</p> <p>Credits: © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Archivio Penone.</p>
<p>Extending Through Social Networks</p>	
<p>Note that Figs. 6.1.1–6.1.5 above, which relate to Alighiero Boetti’s <i>Viaggi postali</i> and <i>Dossier postale</i>, also exemplify the practice of “Extending Through Social Networks”.</p>	
	<p>Fig. 6.4.1. Poster announcing Emilio Prini’s and Paolo Icaro’s contributions to “Teatro delle mostre”, Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, May 1968.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Bätzner et al, <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 521; Bernardi, <i>Teatro delle mostre. Roma, Maggio 1968</i>, 6, 28–30, 182–85; Maurizio Calvesi, ed., <i>Teatro delle mostre</i> (Rome: Lerici, 1968), n.p.; Celant, “Emilio Prini”, 287; Fameli, “Il peso del vuoto. Emilio Prini ieri e oggi”, 92; Pasquale Fameli, “Life as Performance: Action and Process in Emilio Prini’s Work”, in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 237.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Bernardi, <i>Teatro delle mostre. Roma, Maggio 1968</i>, 6.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.4.2. Emilio Prini, <i>Perimetro (Perimeter)</i>, 1967. Seriegraphy on 25 lead sheets, each 25 x 25 cm. Collection of Carlo Cattelani, Modena.</p> <p>Cursory information: This photograph is from Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, spring 1968. <i>Perimetro</i> is sometimes presented as <i>Piombo</i>, <i>Perimetro di piombo</i> or <i>Perimetro d’aria</i>. The latter title, however, better applies to Prini’s work in the first Arte Povera exhibition at the same gallery in 1967.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Germano Celant, ed., <i>Identité italienne: L’art en Italie depuis 1959</i> (Paris/Rome/Florence: Centre Georges Pompidou/Incontri Internazionali d’Arte/Centro Di, 1981), 277; Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 163; Flood and Morris,</p>

	<p><i>Zero to Infinity</i>, 84–87; Guercio, <i>The Great Subtraction</i>, 15, 66–67; Friedemann Malsch, <i>Emilio Prini. Fermi in dogana</i> (Strasbourg: Éditions Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, 1995), 12, 26–27; Malsch, “The Paradox of Presence”, 182, 184.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Arte Povera</i>, 163.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.4.3. Emilio Prini with <i>Perimetro</i> (Perimeter), 1967. Exhibition view from Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, spring 1968.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Guercio, <i>The Great Subtraction</i>, 67.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.4.4. Emilio Prini with (<i>LEGNI</i>) “<i>Gente del 9 maggio 1968</i>”, “<i>Teatro delle mostre</i>”, Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, May 1968. First exhibited: “Teatro delle mostre”, Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, May 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: Sources dispute the relationship between Prini and Paolo Icaro’s contributions to “Teatro delle mostre”. Some treat them as independent works with independent titles, others indicate a close collaboration and refer to their contributions with the shared title “Due oggetti di rimbalzo e due pomeriggi in tre o quattro”.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: See Fig. 6.4.1.</p> <p>Credits: Image protected by Copyright. See for instance Maurizio Calvesi, ed., <i>Teatro delle mostre</i> (Rome: Lerici, 1968), n.p.; or Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che Fare?</i>, 273.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.5.1. Giulio Paolini, <i>Titolo</i> (Title) 1967–68 (detail). Ink on paper, primed canvas, drawing pins, primed canvas, 2 elements, each 160 x 125 cm. Private collection, Turin. First exhibited: “Giulio Paolini”, Galleria Notizie, Turin, April 1968.</p> <p>Cursory information: Within the timeframe of this thesis, the work was also exhibited in “Arte povera più azioni povere”, Arsenali dell’Antica Repubblica, Amalfi, 1968.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ilaria Bernardi, “Conversazione con Giulio Paolini”, in Bernardi, <i>Teatro delle mostre Roma, maggio 1968</i>, 179; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 60; Lara Conte, <i>Materia, corpo, azione. Ricerche artistiche processuali tra Europa e Stati Uniti 1966–1970</i> (Rome/Milan: MAXXI Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI secolo and Mondadori Electa, 2010), 54–55; Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 166–67; Flood and Morris, <i>Zero to Infinity</i>, 281; Lonzi, <i>Autoritratto</i>, 152.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Photographer unknown © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.5.2. Giulio Paolini, <i>Ciò che non ha limiti e che per la sua stessa natura non amette limitazioni di sorta</i> (That which has no limits and by its own nature admits no limits of any kind), 1968. Printed bound volume, 128 pages, each 24 x 18 cm. Edition of 50 in Arabic numerals plus 6 artist’s proofs in Roman numerals.</p> <p>Cursory information: Slight variations occur in the translated title, an alternative is “What does not have limits and what of its own nature does not allow limitations of any kind”.</p>

	<p>Sources and further reading: Celant, <i>Book as Artwork</i>, 33–34; Celant, <i>Giulio Paolini</i>, 83–84; Germano Celant, ed. <i>Giulio Paolini 1960–1972</i>, (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 2003), 264–65, 270; Germano Celant, “Giulio Paolini” [1972], in Celant, <i>Arte Povera: Histories and Stories</i>, 60; Mario Codognato, “Pagine d’artista”, in Germano Celant, ed., <i>Arte Povera 2011</i> (Milan: Electa, 2011), 596; Maffei, <i>Arte Povera 1966–1980: Libri e Documenti/Books and Documents</i>, 122–23.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.5.3. Giulio Paolini, <i>Titolo (II) (Title [II])</i>, 1968–71. Ink on paper affixed to primed canvas with white drawing pins, 2 elements, each 160 x 250 cm. Gian Enzo Sperone, New York. First exhibited: “Minimalia. Da Giacomo Balla da...”, Palazzo Querini Dubois, Venice, June 1997.</p> <p>Cursory information: The work was erroneously exhibited as <i>Agenda</i> in “Minimalia. Da Giacomo Balla a...”, Palazzo Querini Dubois, Venice, 1997.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Disch, <i>Giulio Paolini: Catalogo ragionato. Tomo primo</i>, 225; Oliva, <i>Minimalia: An Italian Vision in 20th Century Art</i>, 95.</p> <p>Credits: © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Giuseppe Schiavinotto © Fondazione Giulio e Anna Paolini, Turin.</p>
<p>Extending as Acting Force</p>	
	<p>Fig. 6.6.1. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale (Documentation of Human Interference on Universal Gravitation)</i>, 1969. Photography on paper, 20 elements, each 3 x 3 cm. Edition of 20 by Edizioni Multipli, Turin, 1971. Various owners. First exhibited: Galleria Multipli, Turin, 1971.</p> <p>Cursory information, Anselmo made five subsequent versions of the work, printed on paper or canvas, measuring 6.5 x 6.5 cm, 5 x 5 cm, 10 x 10 cm, 9 x 9 cm, 30 x 30 cm. For the various installments of the work, see Beccaria and Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Giovanni Anselmo</i>, 176–79.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ammann, “Giovanni Anselmo”, 20–21; Ammann, Anselmo and Suter, <i>Giovanni Anselmo</i>, 90–95; Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 103, 107 n. 7; Beccaria, “Interference in universal gravitation”, 173–75; Beccaria and Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Giovanni Anselmo</i>, 176–83; Christov-Bakargiev, “To cross that sunlit landscape for a little longer – particles and particulars”, 67–68; Maddalena Disch, “Process as Vitality: Giovanni Anselmo’s Situations of Energy”, in Bätzner et al., <i>Entrare nell’opera</i>, 103; Flood and Morris, <i>Zero to Infinity</i>, 184; Guzzetti, “Note sullo spettatore” per Giovanni Anselmo: <i>Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale</i>; Malsch, Meyer-Stoll and Pero, <i>Che fare?</i>, 66–67; Mangini, “Arte Povera in Turin, 1967–1978”, 97–100; Mangini, “Form as Social Commitment: the Art of Giovanni Anselmo during the <i>Anni di Piombo</i>”, 568–69; Meyer-Stoll, “On the phenomenon of time in Arte povera”, 26–27; Anne Rorimer, “Giovanni Anselmo: From here to Infinity, 1965–2015”, in Beccaria and Christov-Bakargiev, <i>Giovanni Anselmo</i>, 81–88, 84; Lea Vergine, “Anselmo o della dilatazione temporale” [<i>Art and artists</i>, 1973] in Lea Vergine, <i>L’arte come gioco</i> (Milan: Garzanti Editore, 1988), 312; Matthew S. Witkovsky, ed., <i>Light years: Conceptual Art and the Photograph, 1964–1977</i> (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago/Yale University Press, 2012), 124–25, 168.</p>

	<p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: Paolo Mussat Sartor © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.6.2. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale</i> (Documentation of Human Interference on Universal Gravitation), 1969, image #1.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.6.3. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale</i> (Documentation of Human Interference on Universal Gravitation), 1969, image #20.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.6.4. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Documentazione di interferenza umana nella gravitazione universale</i> (Documentation of Human Interference on Universal Gravitation), 1969. Photography on emulsified canvas, 20 elements, each 30 x 30 cm. Exhibition view, Castello di Rivoli, 2016.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: Renato Ghiazza © Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.7.1. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Nord</i> (North), 1967 (Detail). Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm. First exhibited: “Un particolare a sud, Trecento milioni di anni ad ovest nord-ovest, quattordici disegni intorno”, Sperone Westwater Fischer, New York, December 1978.</p> <p>Cursory information: Re-editions of this series of works exist. The series is also published as an artist's book, Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Direzioni</i>, 2016, edition of 50 by Juxta Press. For a recent installation at the Noire gallery in Turin, see the gallery website at https://www.noiregallery.com/exhibition/giovanni-anselmo-direzioni/.</p> <p>Sources and further reading: Ammann, “Giovanni Anselmo”, 25; Ammann, Anselmo and Suter, <i>Giovanni Anselmo</i>, 174–79; Beccaria, “While the earth finds its bearings”, 188, 191–92.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: Bevan Davies © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.7.2. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Nord nord-est</i> (North North-East), 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: Bevan Davies © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.7.3. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Nord-est</i> (North-East), 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: Bevan Davies © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>

	<p>Fig. 6.7.4. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Est nord-est</i> (East North-East), 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: Bevan Davies © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.7.5. Giovanni Anselmo, <i>Est</i> (East), 1967. Pencil on paper, 36 x 36 cm.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: Bevan Davies © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>
	<p>Fig. 6.7.6. Giovanni Anselmo, “Un particolare a sud. Trecento milione di anni a ovest nord-ovest. Quattordici diegni intorno”, Sperone Westwater Fisher, New York, 1978. Exhibition view with <i>Direzione</i>, 1967, in centre, surrounded by 8 of 14 exhibited drawings from the “Direzioni” series.</p> <p>Credits: © Giovanni Anselmo. Photo: Bevan Davies © Archivio Anselmo, Turin.</p>
<p>Other Works of Relevance, Chapter Six</p>	
<p>Alighiero Boetti, <i>Manifesto</i>, 1967; Alighiero Boetti, <i>Città di Torino</i>, 1967; Alighiero Boetti, <i>Calligrafia</i>, 1971.</p>	

List of Illustrations

Note that this thesis distinguishes between *figures* – which are images of Arte Povera works that are central to the discussions – and *illustrations* – which serve a secondary, contextualising function. The list below comprises illustrations only. For details on the figures, see the Catalogue, pages 349–93.

- III. 0.1. Giuseppe Penone, *Idee di pietra*, 2003. Bronze, river stone, 830 x 400 x 400 cm. Permanently installed in Staatspark Karlsruhe, Kassel, from 2010. © Giuseppe Penone. Photo: © Archivio Penone, Turin.
- III. 0.2. Giuseppe Penone, *Radici di pietra*, 2012. White Carrara Marble, living tree, base 120 x 60 x 84 cm, cylinder 300 x ø 30.5 cm. Permanent installation, Bagh-e Babur Gardens, Kabul. © Giuseppe Penone. Photo: © Archivio Penone, Turin.
- III. 0.3. Artists' appearances in Arte Povera, montage. Works, from upper left: Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle*, 1970 (Fig. 6.3.2); Giulio Paolini, *Autoritratto*, 1970 (Fig. 3.2); Luciano Fabro, *Studi per Lo spirato*, 1973 (Detail) (Fig. 5.16.4); Giulio Paolini, *Io (frammento di una lettera)*, 1969 (Fig. 3.27); Giuseppe Penone, *Alpi Marittime – La mia altezza, la lunghezza delle mie braccia, il mio spessore in un ruscello*, 1968 (Fig. 5.15.3); Alighiero Boetti, *Autoritratto in negativo*, 1968 (Fig. 5.9.1); Michelangelo Pistoletto, *La fine di Pistoletto*, 1967 (Fig. 4.3.1); Giuseppe Penone, *Rovesciare i propri occhi*, 1970 (details) (Fig. 3.5); Marisa Merz, *La Conta* (Counting), 1967 (Fig. 4.16); Giulio Paolini, *Autoritratto col busto di eracito e altre opera*, 1971–72 (Fig. 3.18); Mario Merz, *Lumaca*, 1970 (Fig. 4.15); Alighiero Boetti, *ALIGHIERO E BOETTI*, 1971 (Fig. 3.22); Pino Pascali with *Trappola*, 1968 (Fig. 4.11.2); Giovanni Anselmo, *Lato destro*, 1971 (Fig. 3.6); Alighiero Boetti, *Gemelli*, 1968 (Fig. 3.8); Pier Paolo Calzolari, *Il ponte*, 1969 (Fig. 4.4); Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Autoritratto con occhiali gialli*, 1973 (Fig. 3.4.1); Pino Pascali, *Requiescat in Pace Corradinus*, 1965 (Fig. 4.1.1); Gilberto Zorio *Confine*, 1971 (Fig. 4.14). Please consult the Catalogue for more information and photo credits.
- III. 2.1. Artists' Appearances as Double Representation. Figure by Eva Rem Hansen.
- III. 3.1. Giulio Paolini, *Hi-fi*, 1965. Enamel on primed canvas, enamel on canvas mounted on wooden silhouette, easel, 300 x 230 cm. Klassik Stiftung Weimar/Neues Museum Weimar. © Giulio Paolini. Photo: Paolo Mussat Sartor © Fondazione Anna e Giulio Paolini
- III. 3.2. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #2*, 1977. Gelatin silver print, 24.1 x 19.2 cm. MoMA, New York. Image protected by copyright, see for instance MoMA's website, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/56515>.
- III. 3.3. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #36*, 1979. Gelatin silver print, 24 x 16.7 cm. MoMA, New York. Image protected by copyright, see for instance MoMA's website, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/56899>.
- III. 3.4. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #39*, 1979. Gelatin silver print, 24 x 15.4 cm. MoMA, New York. Image protected by copyright, see for instance MoMA's website, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/56949>.
- III. 3.5. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #81*, 1980. Gelatin silver print, 24 x 19.2 cm. MoMA, New York. Image protected by copyright, see for instance MoMA's website, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/57224>.
- III. 3.6. Diego Velazquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656. Oil on canvas, 320.5 x 281.5 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid. Photo: Wikipedia. Artwork in public domain, photograph reproduced with reference to the fair use rationale and the Norwegian Copyright Act §37.1.
- III. 3.7. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Il Presente. Autoritratto in camicia*, 1961. Acrylic and paint on canvas, 200 x 150 cm. Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella. © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo: Paolo Pellion © Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella.

- III. 3.8. Adam Kadmon, from Éliphas Lévi, *The History of Magic: Including a Clear and Precise Exposition of Its Procedure, Its Rites and Its Mysteries*, 1856. Photo: Project Gutenberg License, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/21013/21013-h/21013-h.htm>, 52.
- III. 3.9. Nicolas Poussin, *Autoportrait*, 1650. Oil on canvas, 78 x 94 cm. Louvre Museum. Photo: Wikimedia commons. Artwork in public domain, photograph reproduced with reference to the fair use rationale and the Norwegian Copyright Act §37.1.
- III. 3.10. Henri Rousseau, *Moi-même. Portrait-paysage*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 146 x 113 cm. National Gallery, Prague. Photo: Wikipedia. Artwork in public domain, photograph reproduced with reference to the fair use rationale and the Norwegian Copyright Act §37.1.
- III. 3.11. Edouard Manet, *La Musique aux Tuileries*, 1862. Oil on canvas, 76 x 118 cm. National Gallery, London and Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin. Photo: Wikimedia commons. Artwork in public domain, photograph reproduced with reference to the fair use rationale and the Norwegian Copyright Act §37.1.
- III. 5.1. Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Colonne di cemento*, 1965. Concrete, 4 elements, each 240 x 45 x 45 cm. © Michelangelo Pistoletto. Photo: Paolo Pellion © Cittadellarte – Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella.
- III. 5.2. Alighiero Boetti, *Sedia* and Alighiero Boetti, *Scala*, both 1966. Wood, 89.5 x 37 x 39 cm and 172.5 x 111 x 48 cm. Proprietà Fondazione per l'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea CRT in comodato presso Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino. © Alighiero Boetti / BONO 2022. Photo: Paolo Pellion © Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino.
- III. 5.3. Pino Pascali, *Cascade*, 1966. Painted canvas stretched over six wooden structures, 260 x 460 x 102 cm. Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Strasbourg. © Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali. Photo © Musées de Strasbourg, N. Fussler.
- III. 5.4. Emilio Prini, *Senza titolo*, 1967–68. Invitation card for Prini's solo exhibition at Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, spring 1968. Image protected by copyright, see for instance Bätzner et al., *Entrare nell'opera*, 91, or the following link, <https://www.finanzaonline.com/forum/investimenti-in-arte-e-collezionismo/1702241-emilio-prini-7.html>.
- III. 5.5. Marisa Merz wearing a pair of *Scarpette*, L'Attico, Rome, 1975. © Claudio Abate/ Archivio Abate.
- III. 6.1. Robert Morris, *Untitled (L-Beams)*, 1965. Plywood structures, 240 x 240 x 60 cm. Exhibition view from "Primary Structures", Jewish Museum, New York, 1966. © Robert Morris / BONO 2022. Photo: <https://www.pinterest.es/pin/85427724160598438/>, reproduced with reference to the fair use rationale and the Norwegian Copyright Act §37.1.
- III. 6.2. Edouard Manet, *Un bar aux Folies-Bergère*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 95 x 130 cm. Courtauld Institute Galleries, London. Photo: Wikimedia commons. Artwork in public domain, photograph reproduced with reference to the fair use rationale and the Norwegian Copyright Act §37.1.
- III. 6.3. Giulio Paolini, *Progetto per Lo Spazio*, 1967. Sketch for a spatial installation consisting of 8 letter-shaped plates of painted plywood, each 10 x 10 x 0.5 cm. © Giulio Paolini. Photo: © Fondazione Giulio a Anna Paolini, Turin.
- III. 6.4. Giuseppe Penone, *Svolgere la propria pelle – finestra*, 1970–72. Installation view, documenta 5, Fridericianum, Kassel, 1972. © Giuseppe Penone / BONO 2022. Photo: © Paolo Mussat Sartor.

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