



GIUSEPPE PENONE

Impronte di corpi nell'aria Bodies Imprinted in the Air

Opening reception: Thursday, September 16, 6–9pm
September 16–November 13, 2021
22 Anapiron Polemou Street, Athens

Giuseppe Penone, *Impronte di corpi nell'aria (Bodies Imprinted in the Air)*, 2021, white Carrara marble and bronze, 39 3/8 × 59 1/8 × 5 1/2 inches (100 × 150 × 14 cm) © 2021 Giuseppe Penone/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

September 13, 2021

When you work with any material, the material is leading. It is the artist's mission to coax out the vitality and show it. I want to make you understand what creation is, the chain of thoughts and actions.

—Giuseppe Penone

Gagosian is pleased to present *Impronte di corpi nell'aria / Bodies Imprinted in the Air*, an exhibition of works by Giuseppe Penone made between the early 1970s and 2021.

In an oeuvre spanning more than fifty years, Penone has continually expanded the parameters of art through a close examination of the interplay between the human body and nature. Since the beginning of his career in the late 1960s, as a proponent of the Arte Povera movement, he has employed and juxtaposed materials both ancient and modern, “raw” and manufactured—including bronze, leather, wood, stone, and acacia thorns. The exhibition’s title comes from a series of new sculptures in bronze and marble that evoke the growth of plant life out of stone, as though from earth.

Penone's early work is marked by an elemental simplicity. Investigating primary materials in his immediate surroundings, he often staged interventions in the forests around his Piedmont hometown. Arte Povera, distinguished by the use of "poor" and unconventional materials such as plant and vegetable matter, questioned cultural assumptions through the evocation of a preindustrial age. In critiquing the dehumanizing effects of mechanization, the movement countered other art genres, both earlier and contemporaneous, such as Surrealism, Pop, and Minimalism.

Penone frequently incorporates his own body and gestures into his work: the photographs *Libro / polvere trappola / mano* (*Book / Dust Trap / Hand*) and *Guanti* (*Gloves*) (both 1972)—the earliest in the exhibition—show the artist's hand. The motif recurs in more recent works such as *Rotazione* (*Rotation*, 2020), which depicts a hand in the act of making multiple imprints. In later works, the artist alludes to his bodily form less directly; in wall-mounted marble slabs such as *Pelle di marmo – oro* (*Skin of Marble – Gold*, 2006), veinlike networks blur the divide between animal and mineral, and emphasizing the transformative natural processes of birth and growth, death and decay.

Giuseppe Penone was born in 1947 in Garesio, Italy, and lives and works in Paris and Turin, Italy. Collections include Tate, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Louvre Abu Dhabi; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Museum of Modern Art, New York. Exhibitions include Musée des Arts Contemporains du Grand-Hornu, Belgium (2010); *Nelle Mani – In the Hands*, De Pont Museum, Tilburg, Netherlands (2010); *22 Opere a Versailles*, Château de Versailles, France (2013); *Ideas of Stone (Idee di Pietra)*, Madison Square Park, New York (2013–14); *Being the River, Repeating the Forest*, Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2015); *Sculpture*, Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto, Italy (2016); *Anafora*, Reggia di Venaria Reale, Italy (2016); and *Matrice / Matrix*, Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana, Rome (2017). Penone has received numerous accolades, including the Praemium Imperiale, Japan Arts Association (2014). In 2017, *Germination*, his permanent, site-specific installation for the Louvre Abu Dhabi, was presented at the inauguration of the museum.

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Press

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