

CARDI GALLERY

## JANNIS KOUNELLIS

19 September – 22 December, 2023

Cardi Gallery is proud to present in its Milan premises an official solo exhibition of works by Jannis Kounellis, one of the most prominent voices of Italian Arte Povera.

A central figure of international contemporary art, Kounellis' oeuvre has been a critical reference point for generations of artists and is found in the permanent collections of major art museums worldwide.

The exhibition, held from 19 September to 22 December 2023, It brings together a series of seven wall-mounted iron panels the artist made in 1991, each dotted with coal elements arranged along regular horizontal lines, almost suggesting an archaic visual alphabet.

The works, displayed on the gallery's ground floor in an austere yet impressive setting, exemplify the monumental nature of Kounellis' wall reliefs, perfectly capturing his fascination with raw, everyday media that fuelled his practice beginning in the 1960s.

Since its earliest iterations in the late 1960s, Kounellis' work has stood out for its quest towards a new spatial awareness. While calling himself a painter, he used materials long considered non-pictorial and departed from traditional concepts of representation. Towards the end of the Twentieth Century, Kounellis developed an increasingly architectural language, creating labyrinthine environments that manipulated the exhibition space and the viewer's experience, while using the materials that had become part of his vocabulary over the decades. Permeating the viewer's space and activating all the senses, his works still hold the power to collapse the boundaries between art and life.

To accompany the exhibition, Jannis Kounellis, Cardi Gallery will publish a comprehensive volume on the artist's work and his life in Milan, curated by Studio Celant with texts by Vincenzo De Bellis and Elizabeth Mangini. A special thanks to Archivio Kounellis and Gladstone Gallery, in particular to Simone Battisti and Giulia Ruberti.

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**SOCIAL NETWORKS:**  
@cardigallery

**INFO:**  
Da lunedì a venerdì dalle 09:30 alle 18:00  
Sabato dalle 11:00 alle 18:00

**PRESS:**  
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## BIO

Greek-born Italian artist Jannis Kounellis (1936-2017) was a pioneer of post-war European art and a leading figure in the Italian art movement "Arte Povera". Seeking to disrupt the commercial value of art, "Poveristi" often combined organic and mundane materials to comment on the shifting relationship between humankind and the natural environment. Kounellis's practice encompassed ephemeral pieces and material objects, perfectly exemplifying the radical age of Arte Povera: the work of art existed to reject any representative form.

Kounellis quickly moved beyond the medium's constraints after starting his career as a painter. He began incorporating in his works materials such as fire, earth, gold, and burlap sacks, an homage to fellow artist Alberto Burri. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Kounellis continued introducing new elements, such as smoke, shelving units, trolleys, blockaded openings, mounds of coffee grounds, coal and other materials, particularly from the shipping and manufacturing industries. Imbued in these diverse fragments of everyday life, Kounellis saw a narrative of the past alongside the foundations of modern civilisation. Converging and colliding in the artist's new poetic vocabulary, these elements reveal the rupture between the former and the latter.

Kounellis nonetheless referred to his works as paintings, even though his art sought to break down and transcend the medium's boundaries.

*"Everything I do is painting, even if I don't touch a brush," he said. "I tell my truth as a painter."*