

Pier Paolo Calzolari

HYPNOS

20 May – 20 September 2025

Via Mottalciata 10/b, Torino

Galleria Franco Noero is honoured to present a solo exhibition by Pier Paolo Calzolari, for the first time in the Gallery's spaces in Via Mottalciata. The artist has conceived an exhibition of works belonging to his latest production or from recent years, brought together for the first time in Italy, tracing a trajectory that tells of his constant interest in a topical subject such as painting and the elements that constitute it, in such a way as to propose a completely unconventional interpretation of it, as has always been testified by his artistic practice in its entirety.

The materials used are those that distinguish the artist's production and constitute his signature, materials that make direct reference to the primary elements - air, fire, earth, water - and their specific characteristics of essentiality, purity and transformative dynamism, to which are added those highly evocative tactile qualities that are specific to the individual material. The crisp, crystalline roughness of salt, the soft, smooth thickness of the cotton of the melton cloth, the thin sheets of moulded metal revealing their ductility are the surfaces on which a narrative is grafted, punctuated by tonal elements such as shells, flames, feathers, flower petals and dried fruits, all of which participate in a poetic reading of the cosmos of which we are a part.

There is a great skill in managing the dimensional scale, grasping and conferring the appropriate proportional dignity to the chosen objects, both within the space of the work of which they are a part, and in the reverberation they create within the larger and broader space in which they are located. One has the sensation of being constantly urged into the suspension between two and three dimensions, in a space that can be seen as equally horizontal and vertical, the third dimension conferred by what is placed on the ground or on the plane of the work on the wall. This is a negation of perspective space, in favour of a dimension and a representation preceding it that emphasises the grain and texture of the surfaces, perceived in their exact and frugal elegance, the colour used as a flat field or as pure pigment powder gesturally arranged on it, and the objects that participate in the work simply by presenting themselves as they actually are, and consequently three-dimensionally.

Three large-scale works dominate the space in the main gallery room, illuminated by the large central skylight. *Valori Plastici* cites the movement of the same name and encapsulates both the characteristic elements of its beginnings in the 1960s, such as the changing and transformative energy of the icy elements, and those that refer more directly to the citation and deconstruction of painting and its encroachment into the third dimension. A *tableau vivant* similar in layout to an abstract still life, in which the absolute forms of an egg stand out, perhaps in homage to Piero della Francesca, and an enigmatic black sphere, against the background of a flesh-pink canvas activated by the naturalistic arrangement of a copper wire that, almost as if it were a bramble, plunges into the frost of an icy tube. Similarly, in the other two works in the same room, a pair of slender copper bottles are interpenetrated in a silvery shower of cut flowers that cross the canvas vertically. Next to it, in the deep luminescence of a black salt background, coloured dots appear that light up like tiny stars on the flowery tips of a branch, quilted in a celestial firmament and reflected in the multicoloured texture of a juxtaposed ceramic vase.

On the last wall, and on those in the room to follow with the ribbon windows overlooking Via Mottalciata, a selection of works on a monochrome background are the scene of surprising epiphanies: pigments alluding to floral landscapes, the whitish ripple of sea waves on the depth of blue in which an oyster's valve is embedded, small spherical flowers between the quick oblique brush strokes like raindrops, a reed stuck on the bias in the bright yellow of a flower's corolla, as if it were its pistil. The monochrome of yellows and blues is thus the theme of the room on Via Mottalciata, in which two large works exploring the expressive possibilities of these two colours face each other: the coarse weave of a background warp allows what appear as the flattened contours of a lemon on a tablecloth, or perhaps the ridge of a jug with a long neck, to appear in the foreground and centre, while in the opposite work, the sinuous, organic shape and winding branches of a monumental bonsai seem to cross the earth and sky.

Earth and sky also meet in *Trittico Haiku* in the last room, in which a slender meadow of essential stems and ethereal petals is one-dimensionally described by liquid and milky colours, a permeable surface like that of the painting next to it, quilted with golden drops and populated with transparent jugs. Opposite is a theory of variations on red, culminating in a painting in which an explosive pastiness of violet pigments bursts forth, chromatically powerful like an iris or like the gas of a burning flame, against an intensely saturated background.

Pier Paolo Calzolari (Bologna, 1943) is a leading figure of the Arte Povera movement, his work strongly characterized by the use of unconventional and dynamic materials, such as light from burning candles or neon, salt, moss, leaves, ice and refrigerator coils, metals and felt. Anchored in Arte Povera, Calzolari's research nevertheless distinguishes itself through an introspective approach in searching for poetry in objects of his personal daily life.

His work has been exhibited three times at the Venice Biennale in 1978, 1980 and 1990, as well as in Documenta in Kassel in 1992.

In 1994 an important retrospective was dedicated to him at the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume in Paris and at the Museo Castello di Rivoli, Torino.

Calzolari's work is exhibited in important museums worldwide, such as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and the MAXXI – Museo delle Arti del XXI secolo, Rome, Palazzo Grassi, Punta della Dogana, François Pinault Foundation, Venice.

In 2019, Calzolari was the subject of a major retrospective, *Painting as a Butterfly*, at the MADRE Museum in Naples, Italy, curated by Achille Bonito Oliva and Andrea Villani.

More recently, in 2023-24, *Casa ideale, a major solo exhibition on the artist's work has been held* at the Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Villa Paloma, Monaco, while *Arte Povera*, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev at the Bourse de Commerce, Pinault Collection in Paris, France, has featured a large installation focusing on earlier works of his. The artist currently lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal.