

Arte Povera: The Beauty of Essence

Opening
Thursday, April 17, 5.30pm

FLORENCE, Lungarno Benvenuto Cellini 3

Press release

On Thursday, April 17, 2025, Tornabuoni Arte will open the exhibition *Arte Povera: The Beauty of Essence*, a tribute to the movement theorized by art critic Germano Celant, which profoundly marked the art of the second half of the 20th century. The project brings together historical masterpieces by its leading figures, including Alighiero Boetti, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Michelangelo Pistoletto, and Gilberto Zorio.

The term “Arte Povera” was first coined by Germano Celant in 1967 in the article “Arte Povera. Appunti per una guerriglia”, published in Flash Art magazine. This provocative text described a group of artists working in Turin whose practice pushed the boundaries of art and its institutions, challenging the post-war cultural hegemony and the commodification of the art world. These artists, despite their diverse practices, were driven by similar motivations and stimuli, united by a search for the essential and a deep questioning of the relationship between man and nature. Though they never signed a manifesto, many continued to exhibit together under the movement’s aegis. Even as some distanced themselves from the Arte Povera aesthetic over time, their work continued to bear the influence of those formative years.

Organized by Tornabuoni Arte, *Arte Povera: The Beauty of Essence* evokes the revolutionary spirit that permeated the movement and profoundly changed the nature of art. The exhibition highlights the radicalism of its participants, who challenged conventional painting techniques and revealed the poetry of the everyday.

The “poverist” artwork is characterized, from an organic and physical perspective, by the simultaneous presence of emptiness and wholeness, as highlighted by Bruno Corà, art critic and president of the Fondazione Alberto Burri, in his contribution to the publication produced for the occasion (2024, Forma Edizioni). It is an “open work” that leaves room for the viewer’s intervention, contributing to the definition and completion of its aesthetic message, as seen in the work of Pino Pascali, Michelangelo Pistoletto, and other artists showcased on this occasion. A visual language that is both heterogeneous and inclusive, protest-driven and poetic, it anticipated some of the most pressing issues of our time—such as the notion of fine arts, ecology, and colonialism—and continues to have a significant impact on contemporary artistic creation.

TornabuoniArte

The exhibition features a core selection of works by **Alighiero Boetti**, created between the late 1960s and the late 1970s, emblematic of that period and demonstrating his absolute creative freedom expressed through unpredictable techniques and materials. These include *Mimetico* (1967)—exhibited in the first Arte Povera show organized by Germano Celant at La Bertesca gallery in Genoa in 1967—and *Mettere al mondo il mondo* (1975), a composition of letters, words, and symbols created with ballpoint pen. As Agata Boetti, director of the Alighiero Boetti Archive, emphasizes, “If we look closely at the works from the 1960s, we see that the fundamental concepts of Boetti’s work were already all present.” The themes of chance, time, and writing also appear in his later, well-known *Mappe* series.

Mario Merz is present through a series of paintings on paper and cardboard from the early 1980s. He was among those who most deeply explored the artistic potential of the surrounding world, combining political awareness with a profoundly militant attitude. The artistic journey of **Pier Paolo Calzolari** is documented through works from the late 1960 created with both natural and perishable “poor” and unconventional materials such as salt, tobacco, leaves, and candles, as well as later pieces such as *Eroe* (1986) and *Specchio* (1990).

The exhibition also focuses on figures who were not part of the canonical Arte Povera group but shared its ideals, particularly in the early years, such as **Gianni Piacentino** and **Mario Ceroli**. The latter was invited by Celant to Genoa in 1967 and is considered a precursor of the movement for his use of rags, cardboard, and wood—materials that defined his artistic language. The works featured in this context, from *Gloria eterna ai caduti per la pittura* (1972) to *Serata di gala* (1981) and *Squilibrio* (1988), exemplify his extraordinary creativity and emotional power.

Arte Povera: The Beauty of Essence, will be open to the public until June 27, 2025.

Info:

Tornabuoni Arte

Florence, Lungarno Benvenuto Cellini, 3

Tel. +39 055 6812697 | info@tornabuoniarte.it - www.tornabuoniarte.com

Press Office:

Davis & Co | Lea Codognato and Caterina Briganti

Tel. +39 055 2347273 | e.mail: info@davisandco.it - www.davisandco.it