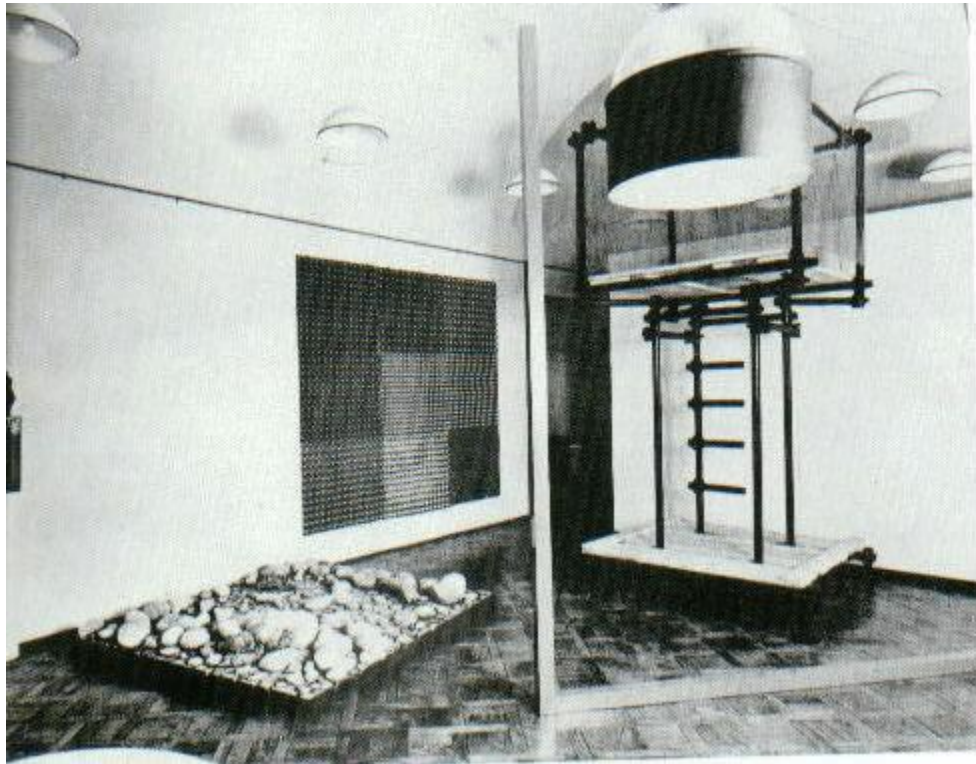


Lumley, Robert

Habitable Art: In and Around Piero Gilardi



Main Image: Installation view, "Gilardi, Piacentino, Pistoletto. Arte Abitabile", Galleria Sperone, Torino, June-July 1966 © Gian Enzo Sperone, Courtesy Sperone Westwater, New York

My purpose is very simple - to situate Piero Gilardi as a key figure at the genesis of what has come to be known as Arte Povera. Recently light has been thrown on a phase when Gilardi was a mercurial weaver of networks connecting artists across Europe and North America in the late 1960s, a moment marked by two landmark exhibitions of 1969. Christian Rattemeyer's *Exhibiting the New Art: 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form' 1969* contains interviews that point clearly to Gilardi's role as go-between, including Francesco Manacorda's interview with Gilardi himself^[1]. Less attention, however, has been paid to Gilardi's practice as an artist who was very much part of the art scene in Turin that by 1968 included not only members of an older generation, such as Mario Merz then aged 43, but young artists in their early twenties, such as Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Gianni Piacentino, and Gilberto Zorio.

In Germano Celant's account *Pre-cronistoria, 1966-69*, the year 1966 is treated as a watershed: in New York there were two exhibitions that marked both the affirmation of Minimalism and the emergence of Post-Minimalism, notably 'Primary Structures' at the Jewish Museum and 'Eccentric Abstraction' at the Fischbach Gallery. Meanwhile in Turin there was the exhibition 'Arte Abitabile' at the Gian Enzo Sperone Gallery^[2].

Much, of course, has been written about the New York shows. Significantly it was Piero Gilardi who reported on them, writing in Italian in the magazine Flash (later Flash Art) during one of his North American visits. Much less has been said about the Turin exhibition, even though it is given such significance in the first systematic history of the art to which Celant gave the name 'arte povera'. One can speculate on the causes for this lack. One reason may be the shortage of photographic records; to my knowledge, there is only one installation shot (see above) - a photograph of the exhibition used for the invitation card by the Sperone gallery.

No other photographs seem to have survived. The 'Arte Abitabile' show has, as a consequence, enjoyed less visibility. However, I would suggest that it might also have been side-lined as a consequence of the bracketing of the contributions of two of its three participants, namely those of Piero Gilardi and Gianni Piacentino. In Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's words, their work constituted a 'parallel practice' - parallel, that is, to the Arte Povera mainstream[3]. My argument, however, is that Gilardi was an active participant, in 1966-67 as a practitioner and, subsequently, as a vital interlocutor among his contemporaries in Italy and in Europe, while not denying that Gilardi took decisions that took him in a very different direction in terms of his art and his priorities in life[4].

After 1968: Gilardi and Carla Lonzi

Before addressing the 'Arte Abitabile' show, which is central to my analysis, I think it would be useful to confront the moment of rupture whereby Piero Gilardi abandoned his existing practice as an artist, and dedicated himself to political activism. The dramatic decision left an indelible mark, representing a choice that highlighted the relationship of politics and art at a time of extensive and intensive social conflict in Italy.

Following the crisis of left-wing ideas and organisations in subsequent decades precipitated by the rise of terrorism, the dissolution of the Italian Communist Party, and the electoral appeal of Berlusconi's alternative, the clear tendency had been to dissociate art and politics. Art has had to be saved from contamination. Since the economic crisis of 2008 and the American-led wars of intervention in the Middle East, there has, however, been a return to political engagement on the part of artists. One result has been a greater readiness to revisit the art of the 1960s in the light of political questions, a re-visitation that has touched Arte Povera too. One way of asking new questions rather than re-running old polemics is to use the space created by this return of the political to situate Gilardi in the 1968 'moment'. His radical gesture of renunciation can be illuminated when compared to that of his contemporary, Carla Lonzi.



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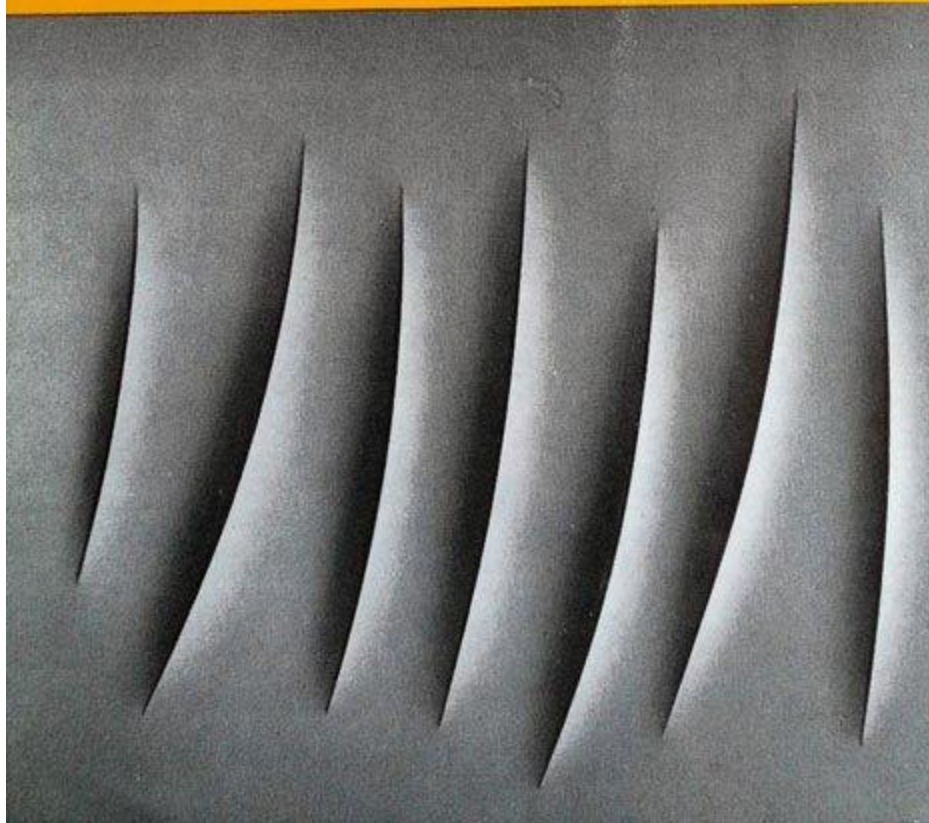
DE DONATO EDITORE

CARLA LONZI

AUTORITRATTO

ACCARDI ALVIA-
NI CASTELLANI

CONSAGRA FABRO FONTANA KOUNELLIS NIGRO PAOLINI
PASCALI ROTELLA SCARPITTA TURCATO TWOMBLY



Carla Lonzi was a familiar participant in the Italian art scene of the 1960s. A pupil of the art historian Roberto Longhi, her academic background was impeccable; but Lonzi reinvented the role and work of

the art critic. She distanced herself from its academic protocols and threw herself into the world of artists, living with Pietro Consagra and engaging in a continuous dialogue with artists that included established figures, such as Lucio Fontana, as well as the younger Giulio Paolini, Luciano Fabro and Pino Pascali. All were interviewed by her for the magazine *Marcatré*, providing the material for *Autoritratto*, her collected experimental collage of artist interviews, which came out in 1969.

It has become a classic text. Even today, no catalogue of an exhibition of Pino Pascali or Giulio Paolini is complete without extended quotations from Lonzi's *Autoritratto*. But at the time, the book seems to have received few reviews and little comment. Lonzi, it seems, resented the lack of recognition within an art world to which she had given so much. In *Autoritratto* she had edited out her own voice in order that the words of the artists should fully occupy the pages. Now Lonzi decided to remove herself altogether from the art scene, and to abandon art criticism. Instead, she decided to dedicate herself full-time to feminist activism. She wrote the founding manifesto of *Rivolta Femminile* and a number of other key feminist texts. When Carla Lonzi died 1982 she was known for her feminism[5]. Her work as an art critic was strangely overlooked.

Gilardi's case presents parallels. After 1968 he channelled his art into forms of collaborative making and working in conjunction with Franco Basaglia's anti-asylum movement, with neighbourhood organisations, and with grass-roots projects in Latin America and Africa[6]. His life had been totally immersed in art since childhood: he belonged to a family of artists with a genealogy that could be traced back to the 17th century. His five brothers worked as artists, restorers or graphic designers[7].

Gilardi did not abandon 'art' as such but he did exit from the art scene and the world of galleries and museums. His choice, moreover, was definitive at the time. He 'burnt his boats'. Moreover, Gilardi's choice had a stark and dramatic quality because it was taken against the backdrop of a 'successful career'. Ever since that rupture, Piero Gilardi has had to struggle to gain proper recognition for the part he played in the history of what has come to be known internationally as Art Povera.

'Arte Abitabile' – Gilardi, Piacentino, Pistoletto

Returning to the 'Arte Abitabile' exhibition, which was held in June 1966 at the Gian Enzo Sperone Gallery in Turin. Sperone had held a group show for the Nouveau Réalistes (Arman, Deschamps, Raysse) and several for Pop Art, largely of American artists but also with the participation of Michelangelo Pistoletto. Pistoletto had had a one-man show at Sperone's in February 1964 and Gilardi followed suit in May 1966. The 'Arte Abitabile' exhibition showed the work of three artists - Pistoletto, Gilardi, and Gianni Piacentino.[8]

Pistoletto's work all belonged to his Oggetti in Meno series (Minus Objects): *Lampada* (Lamp, 1965-66), *Semisfere decorative* (Decorative Semi-Spheres, 1965-66), and *Scultura lignea* (Wooden Statue, 1965-66). The artist commented on the installation, saying that the mercury lamp was hung just above head-height so that the spectator who walked under it was bathed in an intense yellow light; that the sheet of reflective plastic semi-spheres was of 'the kind of decorative surface widely used in shop-windows'; and that the statue in wood was a genuine early 13th century antique that he had at home.

He added that placing the statue in an open orange plexi-glass box created a situation that was completely 'outside' (fuori), that took away all familiarity.[9]

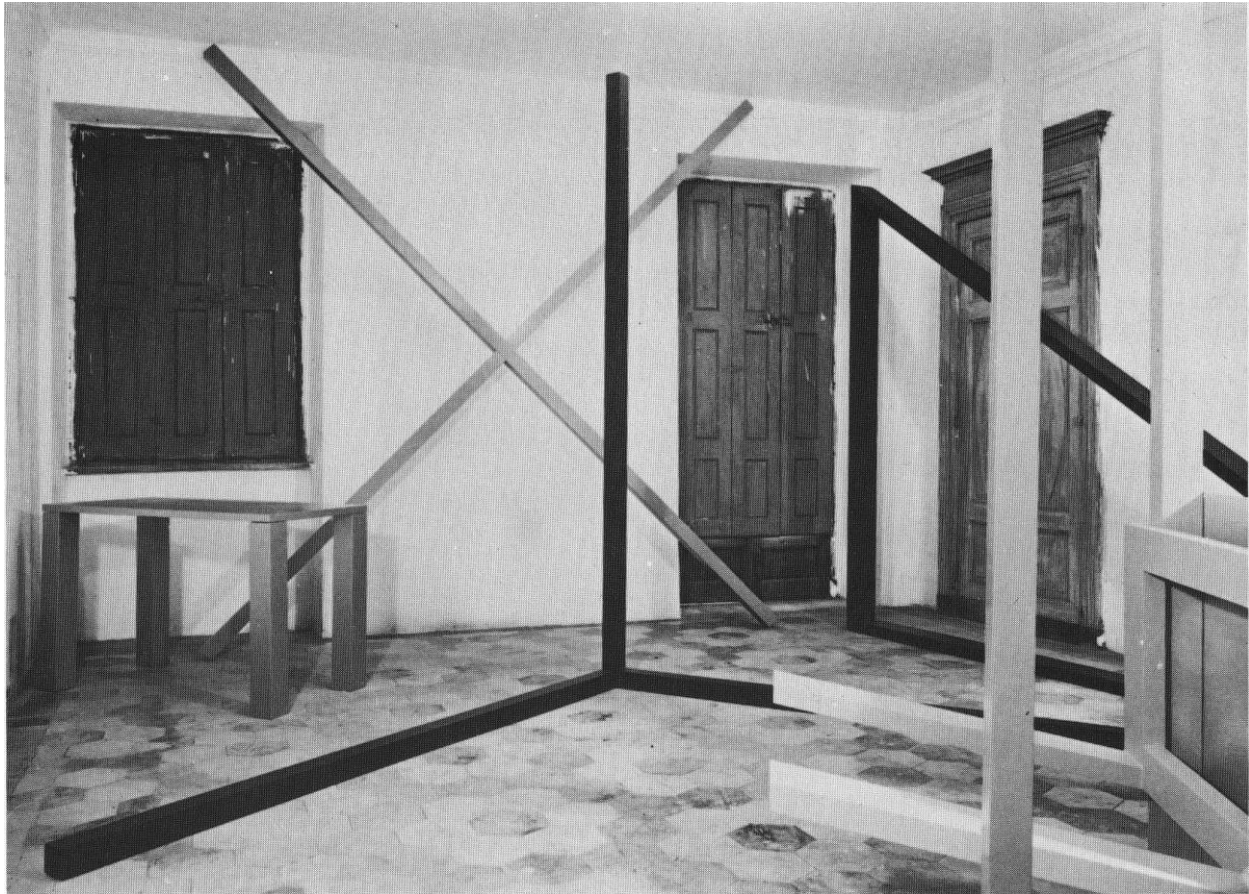
Piacentino exhibited three pieces, all made in 1966: Blue-Purple Big L, Dull-Amaranth Disk, and Violet-Red Pole I. Piacentino claimed that he preferred to call his work 'artigianato inutile' (useless craftwork) rather than sculpture. He thought of his work as aggressively inhabiting the space and spoke of the theme of the show as 'something that entered the environment by breaking the object' (rompendo l'oggetto): 'I measured the space with the L which from the centre went up to the height of three metres. The dish on the floor was the idea of the point of view, even scale, without entailing different points of view'.[10]



Piacentino, Blue-Purple Big L

Gilardi had only just finished his one-man show at Sperone when he embarked on the new installation. He showed one of the nature carpets that he had produced the previous year - a work that he thought transposed a piece of nature into synthetic materials which were then placed within an interior. The other work was made specifically for the 'Arte Abitabile' exhibition, namely his structure of metal tubes and canvas (see the installation shot above.). This balcony or soppalco is described by Gilberto Zorio as a 'space for viewing (uno spazio per vedere)'. It was also a space for 'thinking, for being alone, for seeing others from above'. Zorio suggested that Gilardi had travelled a great distance from the time of his 'Machines of the Future' exhibition of 1963, and he noted how the materials and the structures

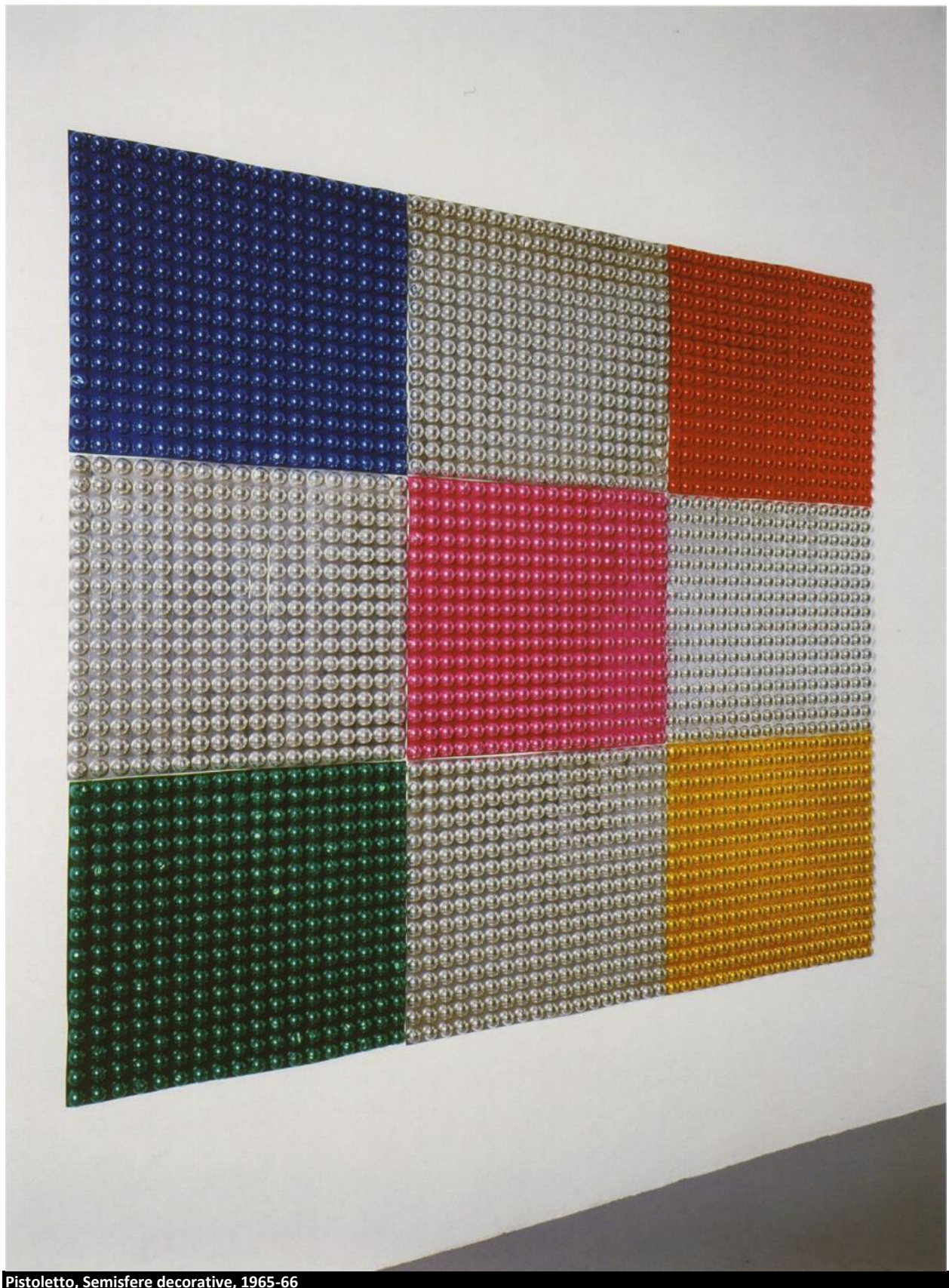
(strutture portanti) represented a new development in Gilardi's work that he could have taken in different directions had he chosen to.^[11]



Gianni Piacentino's studio, 1966

The radical implications of the 'Arte Abitabile' exhibition resonated in the art scene in Turin and beyond in ways that have not been adequately addressed in historical accounts. It marks an early point in the evolution of the themed group show that became synonymous with Arte Povera. Gianni Piacentino suggests that the title 'Arte Abitabile' might have been inspired by an earlier show at the Ileana Sonnabend Gallery in Paris called 'Electric Art' in which Dan Flavin's work in neon was displayed.

The idea of 'habitable' or 'inhabitable' art, articulated a new interest among the Turin artists with how art occupied space and how it related to everyday life. 'Habitability' sheltered the two senses under the same roof. Art was brought into an active relationship with the space in which it was installed. It could attack the peaceful coexistence of object and surroundings and produce disquiet, as in the case of the work by Piacentino. Or it could offer a more meditative space for looking and thinking, as suggested by Zorio's interpretation of Gilardi's balcony structure. On the other hand, the art was engaging with the everyday and with materials taken from the street or the home: Pistoletto's plastic decorative semi-spheres were the kind of thing commonly used for window-dressing in shops; Gilardi gave the name 'carpet' or tappeto to his work in polyurethane.



Pistoletto, Semisfere decorative, 1965-66

The adjective *abitabile* evoked the familiar, the domestic, and the world of home - references at odds with a more elevated conception of art as a separate sphere of detached contemplation of pictures or sculptures in a museum or gallery setting. Here the placement of the panel of plastic semi-spheres on the wall of the gallery 'as if' a traditional picture shows Pistoletto subverting the idea of the painting as self-expression and originality. Piacentino's minimal structures likewise call in question conventional notions of sculpture.

Gilberto Zorio

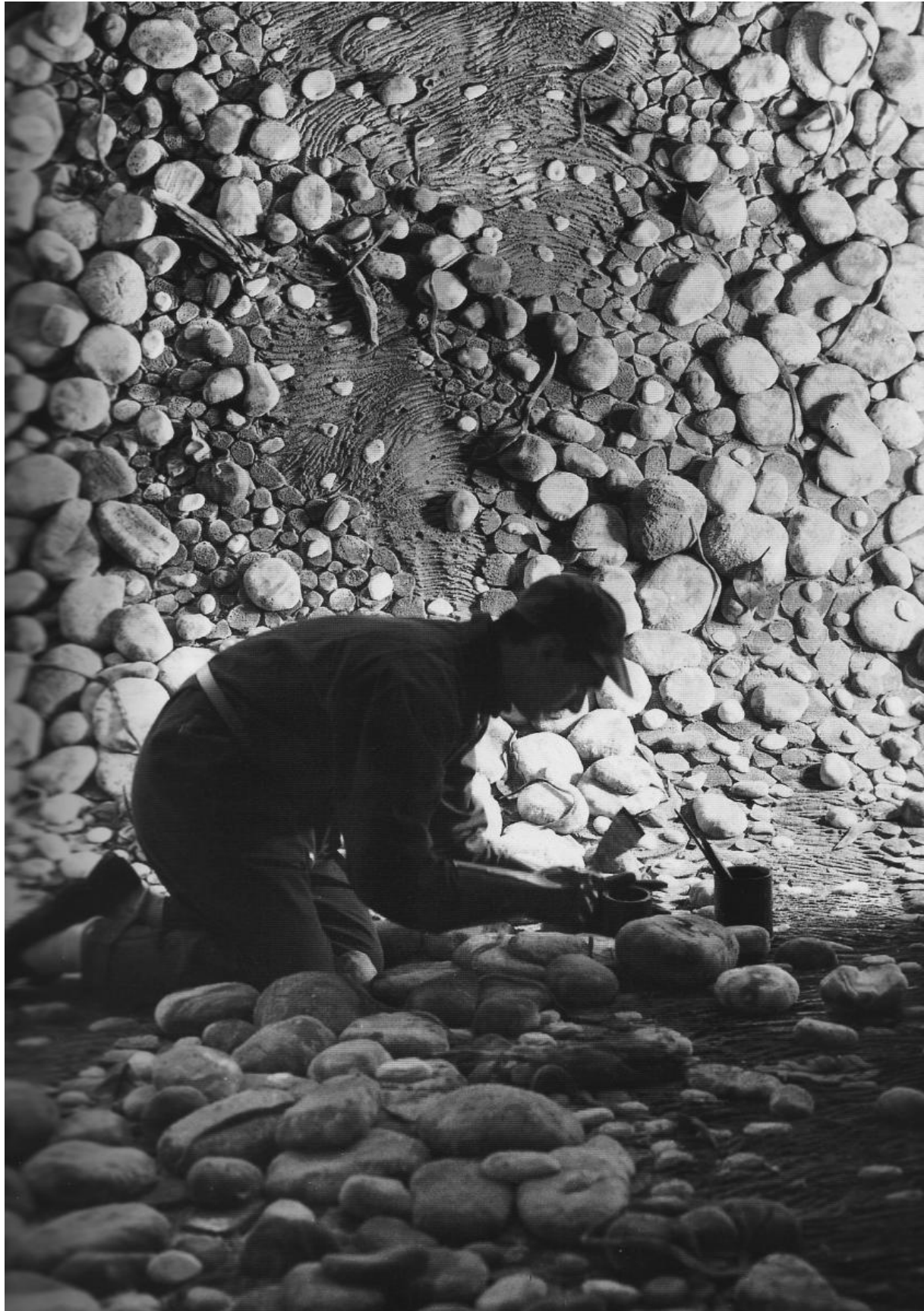
The speed with which a group dynamic developed and the radical nature of the practices it incubated can be seen in the activity of Gilberto Zorio. Zorio, aged 22, was Gilardi's assistant at the time. He often used Gilardi's studio in the evening and would return everything back to its place by the following morning. But on one occasion he was told not to worry and to leave all his work out. The next day Gilardi invited Sperone to the studio, who in turn invited Ileana Sonnabend to see the work. Within a year Zorio had a one-man show at the Sperone Gallery. The debt to Gilardi can be understood particularly in relation to the 'Arte Abitabile' show. Zorio made work that explored the theme even though it was never included in the show itself.^[12]



Take Untitled (1966) - a wooden beam thinly wrapped in coloured material and held up by two blocks of polyurethane foam. When a person sits on the 'seat', it is not the seat that gives in response to the body weight but the material of the supports at either end. One day when Giovanni Anselmo visited Zorio they sat together on the beam. Anselmo recalls that at that moment he felt an affinity with the work of the other artist^[13]. It is, of course, absolutely fitting, in their case, that a bodily action and reaction should embody the sense of a shared approach to making work. Take Sedia (Seat, 1967). Here a pile of coloured polyurethane off-cuts, in all likelihood discarded by Gilardi, are placed under a structure from which there swings a concrete weight. The space where a person might sit within the structure of metal tubes is directly threatened the suspended weight. Take Tenda (Tent, 1967). This work made of metal tubes and canvas is itself a structure in which the spectator could imagine taking up habitation.

Gilardi's Nature Carpets

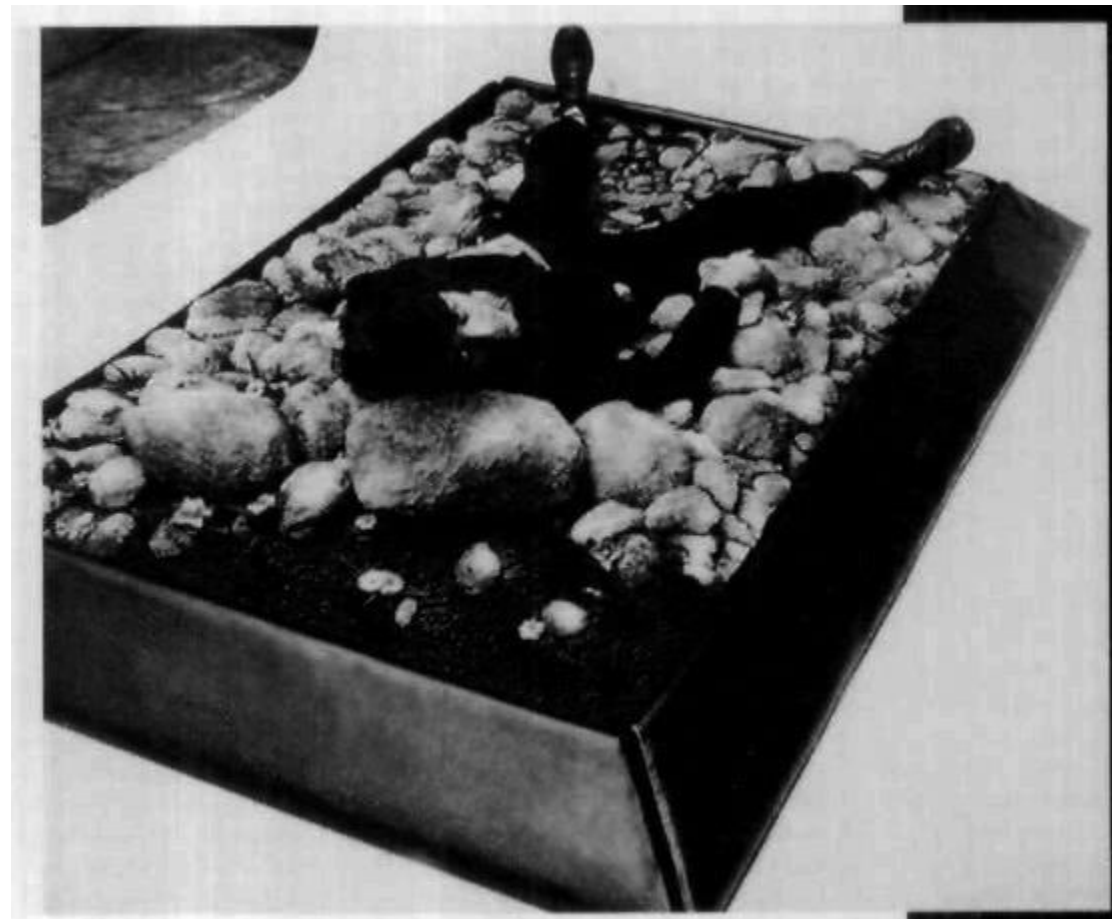
Zorio made art that shared in the notion that art should 'not be a comfortable armchair', to use Pistoletto's words. A collective rather than individualistic impulse suggested that the art should 'push people to live together'. For these artists, art was not all about furnishing the houses of the wealthy with beautiful objects. They were questioning the status quo and imagining environments at odds with what already existed. Piero Gilardi was among the first of the Arte Povera artists to explore this zeitgeist. The exhibition 'Machines of the Future' proposed the need for a man-made environment in which human senses were expanded. But it was with the invention of the tappetto natura or nature carpet that Gilardi expanded this idea and gave it material form. Significantly, a wall-panel of polyurethane in the 1963 exhibition provided a prototype for the subsequent work. However, the vertical installation was now replaced by the horizontal placement of the work on the floor.



Looking at the 'nature carpets' we can identify a number of the features of the new art:

Horizontality: the laying of the artwork on the floor instead of the hanging of the picture on the wall. A traditional painter by training, Gilardi took part in the move 'beyond painting' that was linked in Italy above all to the perforations of the canvas in work of Lucio Fontana. Frames and pedestals were eliminated. The transfer of the 'picture' to the floor entailed the wholesale re-thinking of spatial relationships explored by artists such as Carl Andre.

Occupation of 'real space': the work is no longer held at a distance and regarded as an object for contemplation. Instead, nature carpets, in some installations, cross the gallery floor, climb the walls, and take over the space. The spectator is placed in the work, s/he 'enters the work', to quote the celebrated phrase of the Futurists' 1910 manifesto.^[14]

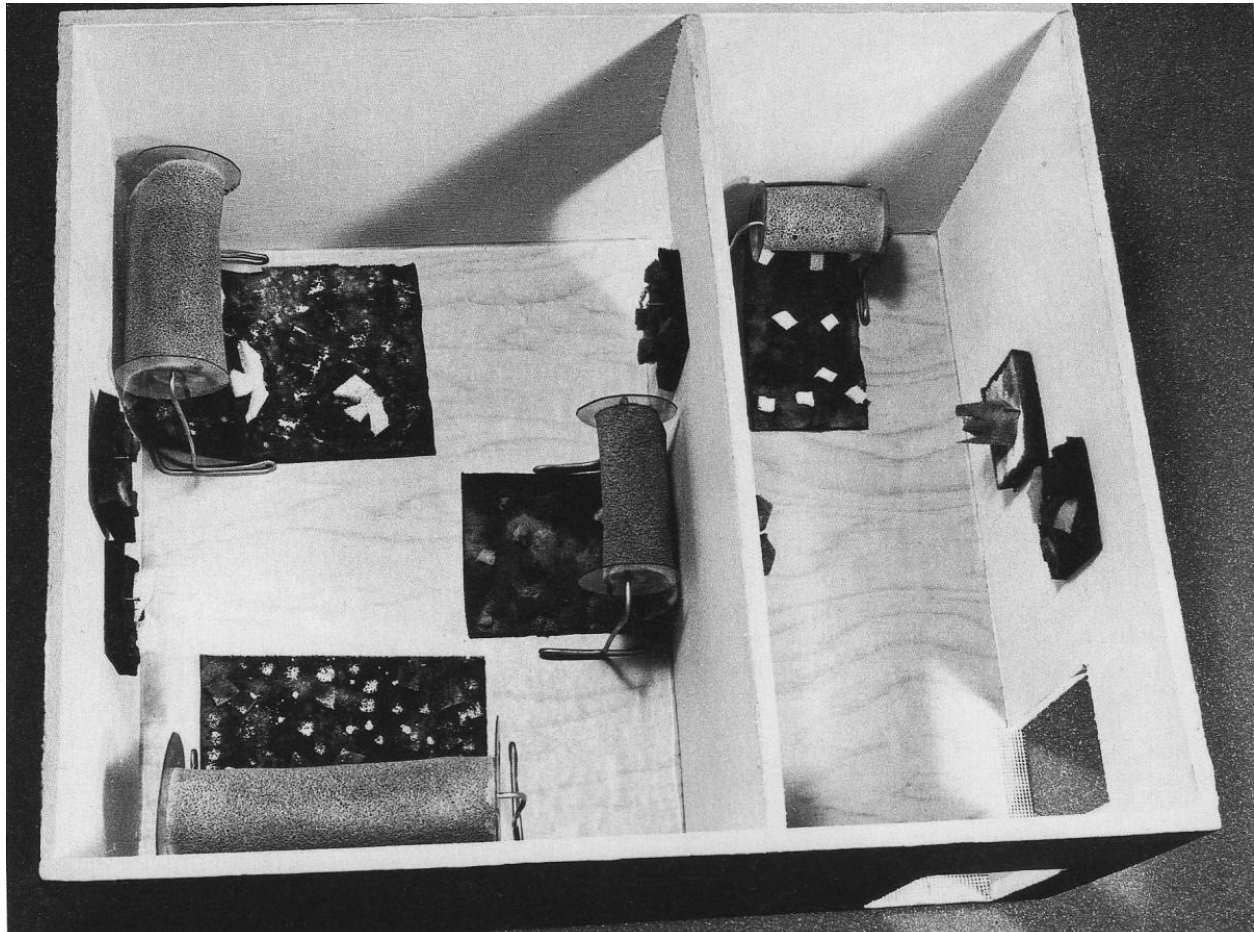


Zorio tests a 'mattress of stones' by Gilardi

Sensuous relationship of touch: Gilardi, a master technician with an extensive knowledge of the chemistry involved, worked with different densities of polyurethane foam (gommapiuma) according to the degree of pliability and thickness required and the corresponding 'give' or resistance to bodily contact^[15]. The nature carpets were designed for people to walk on, stand on, sit on, lie on, or even to

wear next to the skin. Publicity and installation shots show a range of postures. The body as a whole is asked to respond, not just the eyes. You do not have to be a critic to feel at ease on the nature carpet.

(Endless) reproduction: Gilardi's nature carpets carry a promise of being endlessly reproduced, artificial products without claim to uniqueness. A model for the installation in the Fischbach Gallery of November 1967 shows the nature carpets symmetrically placed around the walls on mounted spools of the kind used in furniture stores. While a yard or so of carpet is extended onto the floor, the rest is wound up as if 'the same' as the rest. At the group show 'Lo spazio dell'immagine' (space of the image) at Foligno in 1967, the carpets were folded as if on the shelves of a department store or in a market^[16]. As far as Gilardi was concerned, the nature carpet could be bought by the yard. Industrial in terms of the synthetic material of its manufacture, the carpets were, nonetheless, artisanal in their shaping and finishing into products of nature. Gilardi may not have been not directly influenced by Piero Manzoni and Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, but his deployment of a version of 'industrial painting' in the context of an art world still fixated with notions of authenticity was not artless and innocent.^[17]



Gilardi, model for 1967 exhibition at Fischbach Gallery

Figurative art: the nature carpet re-presents the natural world in a play of verisimilitude. Stones, pebbles, leaves, fruit, vegetables, tree-trunks, and slices of natural environments, such as river-beds and forest-floors, correspond in size to their equivalents in nature. Gilardi carried out detailed studies and observation in situ prior to work in the studio in Turin. Parallels can be found, perhaps, in the

contemporary work of Mark Boyle. A distracted or naive spectator might, on first encounter, mistake the polyurethane version for the real thing. Gilardi says that he himself was sometimes amazed at the verisimilitude he had achieved. He also noted that his adherence to figuration entailed a kind of continuity with the paintings of his father.^[18]

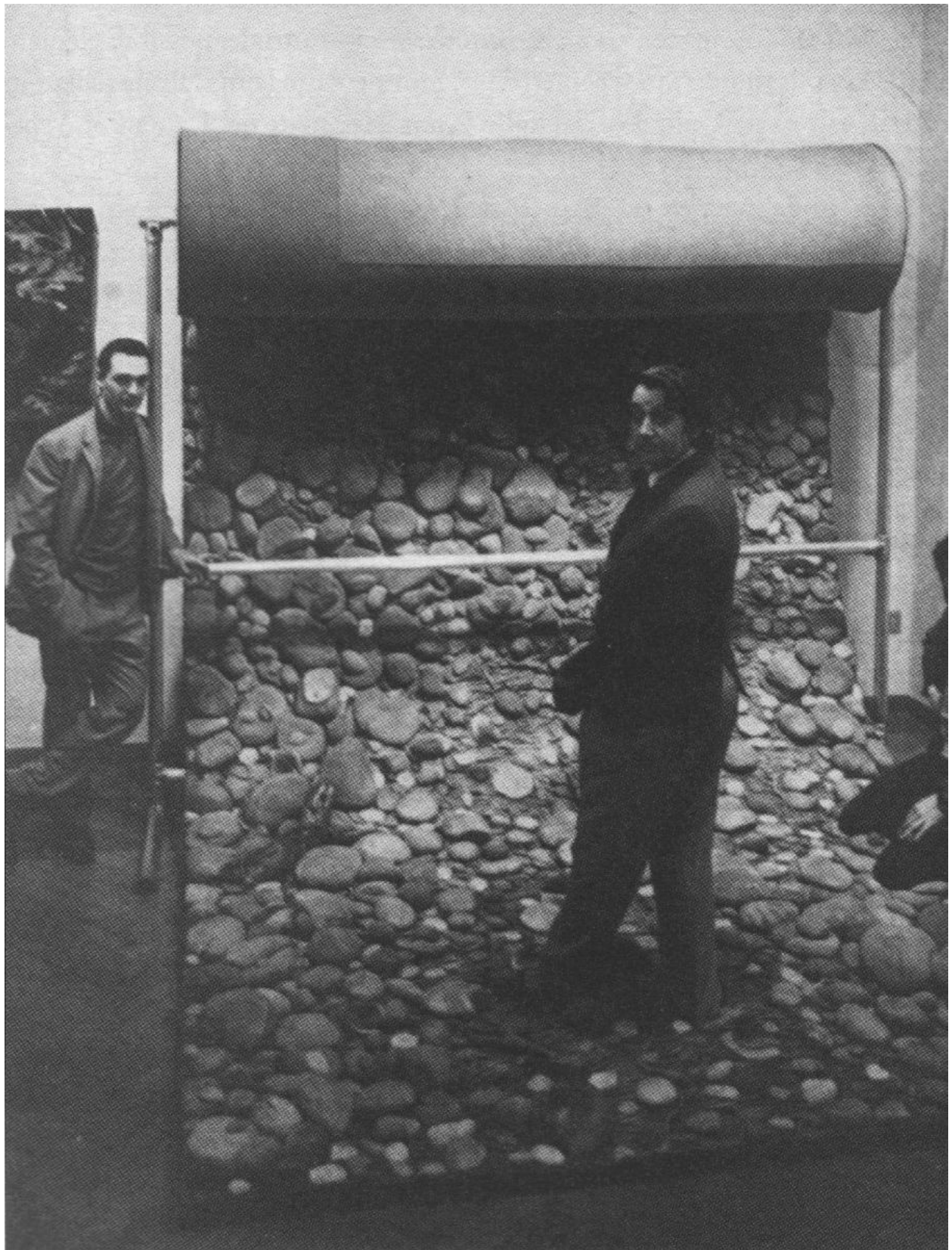
Play: at one level Gilardi's nature carpets ask not to be taken too seriously, or, to put it differently, are to be taken seriously when asked not to be. The artist has set up a game with the spectator, not to mention the gallery-owner and the critic. The stones that should be hard to the touch are soft and forgiving. The reality effect can be remarkable, as in the example of the glistening pebbles of the riverbed. But the illusion is subverted by a view of the cross-section in which a likeness becomes a display of solid grey material. On other occasions, the nature carpet that we expect to see on the floor has suddenly been hung in a plexiglass frame like a picture on the wall. Gilardi's playful attitude was shared with Pino Pascali whose *armi* at the Sperone Gallery exhibited 'military weaponry' that at first sight looked real, even though made of found materials, such as car radiators. Both artists were masters of 'lightness' in the sense meant by Italo Calvino.^[19]



Piero Gilardi, Sassaia di fiume, 1967

Nature and the man-made: Ettore Sottsass, who admired and followed the young artist's work, commented on the sense of loss that the nature carpets embodied; 'Gilardi's nature', he writes, 'is neither comfortable nor safe [....] It is a miserable nature of loss. A nature of fallen apples pumpkins from a suburban vegetable garden when the happy flowers of the peas and beans, zinnias and dahlias have withered and the fruit has been picked, a nature of ears of corn when the June poppies, July wheat and August peaches have gone, and the stumps and roots remain in the devastated fields, a nature at a loss'[20]. This has a biographical dimension too. Gilardi was evacuated to the countryside as young boy during the war to escape the Allied bombings and remembers the periods of intense reverie in fields in which he watched and drew grasshoppers. He refers to the close association of nature with childhood and with the unconscious. This sensibility belonged, moreover, to a generation that became adults at the height of the Economic Miracle, experiencing first-hand the rapid rise of an urban industrial landscape and the eclipse of 'peasant civilisation' that Nuto Revelli called the 'mondo dei vinti' (world of the defeated)[21]. But Gilardi's nature carpets are not nostalgic in the sense of embracing traditional

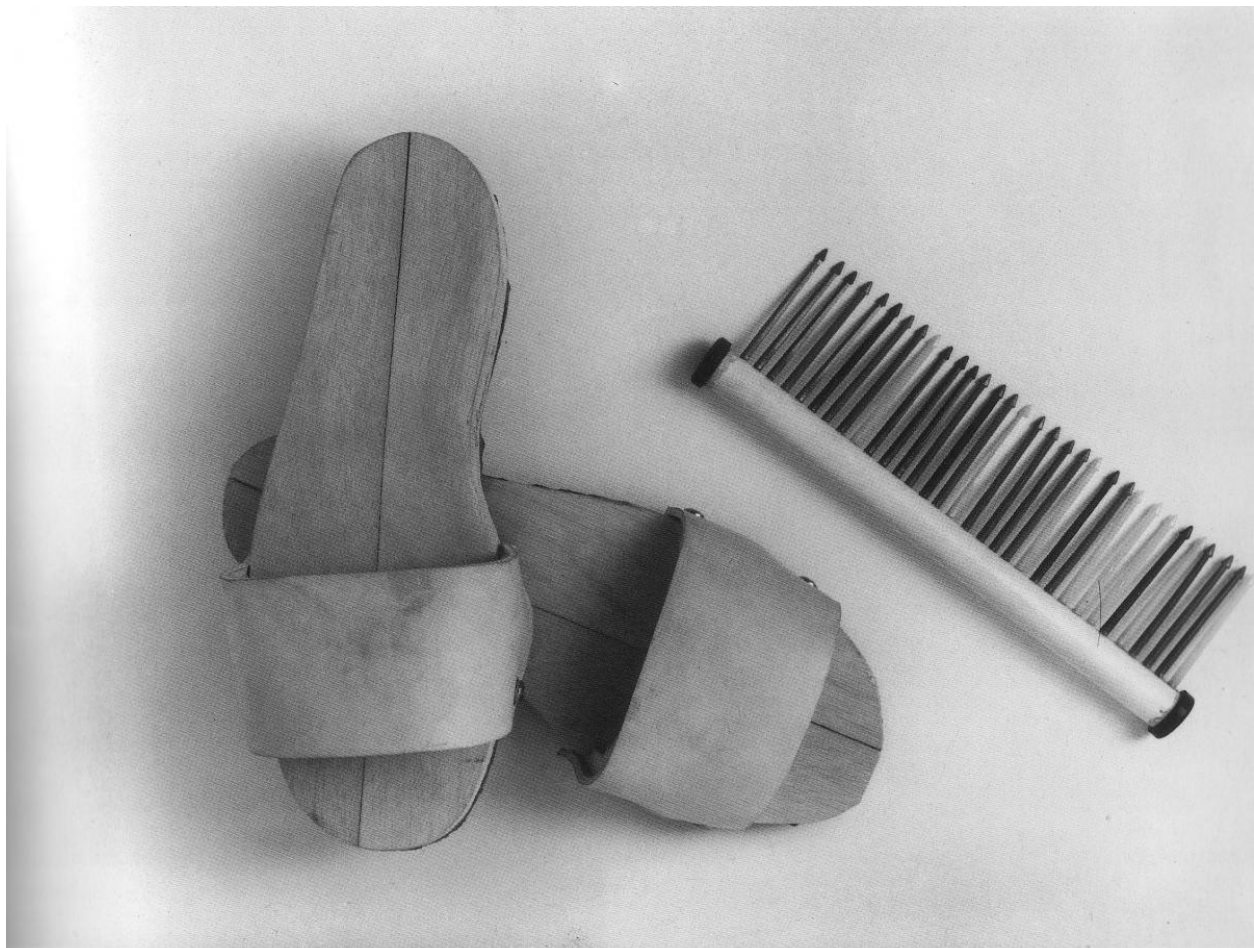
conceptions of art and craft. Aged twenty-one at the time of his show 'Machines of the Future', he began by welcoming the new technologies and the possibilities of transformation of nature and habitat that they offered. The artificial, whether chemical or digital, has continued to fascinate Gilardi^[22]. Nature is not lamented because it is ever changing and is independent of an anthropocentric mindset - an aspect that Sottsass overlooked because of his focus on melancholy he associated with Turin.



Ettore Sottsass Junior with Piero Gilardi

Gilardi after the Nature Carpets:1967 to 1968

Within a couple of years - in 1966 and 1967 - Gilardi's nature carpets went from being a local wonder to an international best-seller. Their commercial success rivalled that of Michelangelo Pistoletto's mirror paintings. But like Pistoletto, Gilardi reacted against the very works with which he had come to be associated. Again like Pistoletto, he rebelled at the prospect of forever producing one type of work and becoming enslaved to the demands of the Sonnabend Gallery and the art market[23]. The exact timing of this radical re-think on his part has yet to be properly established. In all likelihood he enjoyed the rapid rise from relatively unknown Turin artist to international artist with exhibitions across Europe and the United States. Promotional photographs show a confident figure.



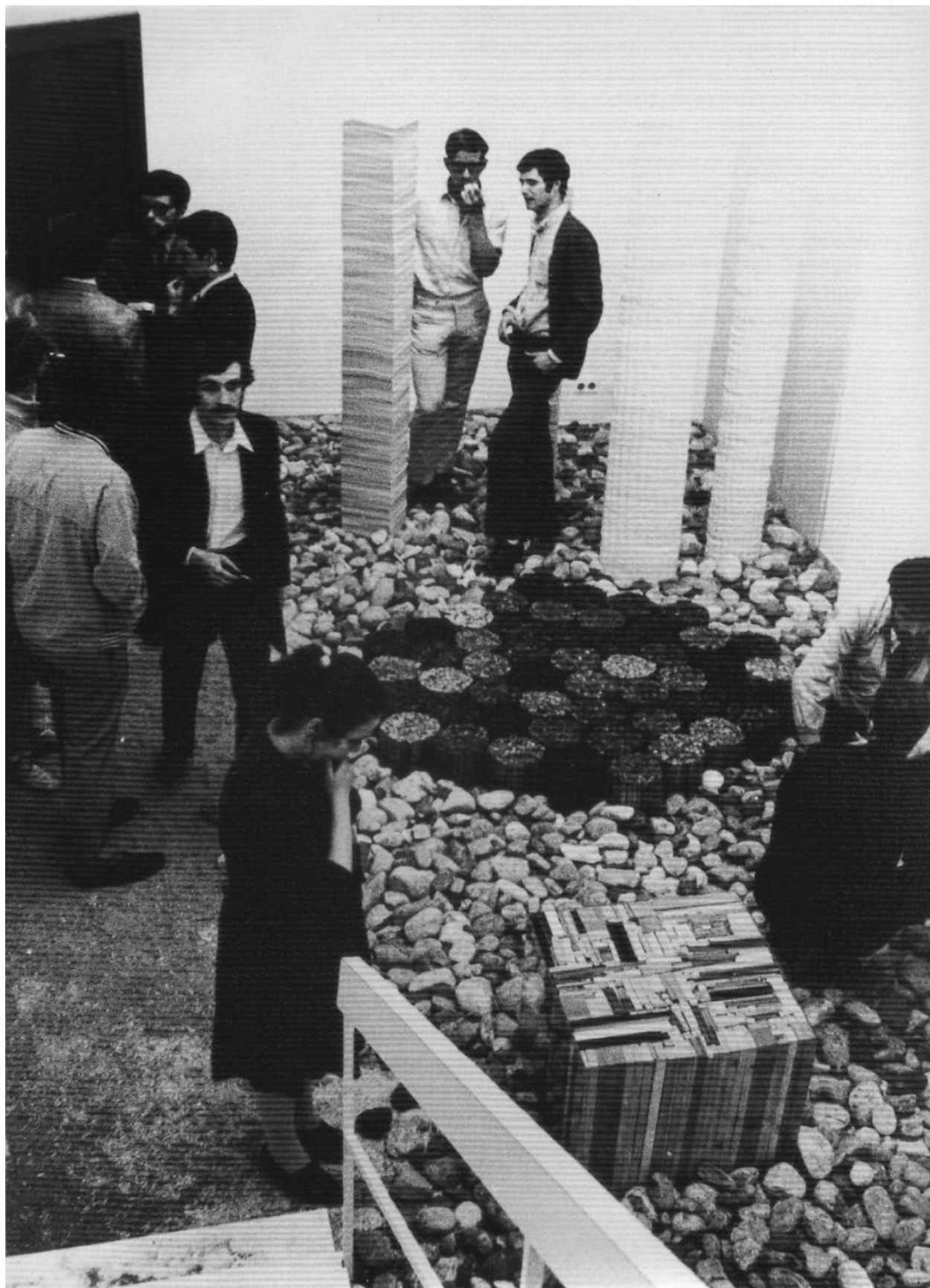
Sandali e pettine, 1967.
Materiali vari, 50 x 50 x 20 cm.

Gilardi, Sandali e pettine, 1967

Activities such as the modelling of his nature wear by beautiful women[24], the production of design objects for Gufram[25], and the creation of an environment for a luxury hotel reveal no reticence about working commercially. However, Gilardi was drawn to the political and social rebellion that exploded in 1968 in Italy, in Europe, and across the world. The rudimentary objects - the sandals, comb, and trolley -

that he made in late 1967 represented a turn away from the making of nature carpets. It was these stripped down artefacts that Celant illustrated in accompaniment to the text of his 'manifesto', 'Arte Povera: Notes for a Guerrilla War'. Subsequently Gilardi stopped making art objects altogether. Instead he dedicated himself to other tasks.

The historic importance of the part played by Piero Gilardi in forging the links between artists across Europe, and making connections between artists, critics and museum curators/directors prior to the international group exhibitions of 1969 is now widely acknowledged. Gilardi had already shown considerable intuition and generosity in his dealings with younger artists in Turin. A virtuous circle was put into motion whereby the help that, for example, Gilardi gave to Gilberto Zorio was repeated. A nucleus around Gilardi, Pistoletto and Sperone became the core of a continually expanding community of artists in the city of which Alighiero Boetti was to speak with admiration in years to come. The 'riverbed' of stones - 'real stones' - with which he carpeted the floor of the gallery and in which he installed his works at his one-man show in Milan in 1969 was a kind of act of homage towards Piero Gilardi, master of make-believe nature.



Although there were critics who followed developments and were attracted to this art scene, artists such as Pistoletto and, to a lesser extent, Gilardi were confident in their own abilities to act as critics, to discuss and write about their practice that of fellow artists. Gilardi's notion of 'micro-emotive art' represented a significant theorisation of current practice, while his 'interview' with five Turin artists (Anselmo, Merz, Piacentino, Pistoletto, Zorio) places them (and himself) alongside the 'matadors of the international avant-garde' also exhibited by Sperone, from Rauschenberg to Flavin[26]. It was Gilardi who was the first to identify what were subsequently called post-minimalist artists in New York whose practice converged in key aspects with that of contemporaries in Turin: time and energy - these, he wrote, was the shared preoccupations. The first symptoms of the emergence of this art in which energy, not structure, was 'primary' could already found, wrote Gilardi, in 1965, and he names Bruce Nauman (San Francisco) as the person who 'has been operating in this direction 'with extraordinary lucidity and clear-mindedness'[27]. Only with hindsight is it possible to see how prophetic Gilardi's articles in Flash were to prove.

The Deposito D'Arte Presente

Emblematic of the role of organiser adopted by Gilardi was his participation in the Deposito D'Arte Presente (Warehouse of Present-Day Art). Installation shots of an exhibition held there in June 1968 show the work of fellow artists - Alighiero Boetti, Giovanni Anselmo, Mario Merz, Gianni Piacentino, Gilberto Zorio, and others. However, there is no artwork by Gilardi to be seen. Yet (a little known fact) there is physical evidence of his contribution - the plastic curtain or separ  dividing the space at the end that has semi-transparent porthole windows (visible behind an igloo by Merz). Gilardi planned and furnished a space within the Deposito that was designated for meetings and guests. He made benches with plywood. For the soft furnishings, he used black synthetic material with his trademark polyurethane foam. Gilardi symbolically turned his manual skills to practical effect in order to make not artworks but a social space, channelling his energies into the transformation of the social and economic relations of art.[28]



Deposito D'Arte Presente, 1968

Gilardi had utopian hopes for the Deposito. For others, it had different uses: for Gian Enzo Sperone, it was an extension of gallery space; for Zorio, it was studio space; and for Pistoletto, a venue for theatre and electronic music performances. For Gilardi it represented the potential nucleus for establishing an international community of artists independent of the gallery system and market mechanisms^[29]. It was in the same spirit that he approached the preparations for exhibition at the Kunsthalle in Berne directed Harald Szeemann, later entitled 'When Attitudes Become Form'. Gilardi wanted the artists to organise, install and control the exhibition on their own terms. When Szeemann brought in Leo Castelli and accepted sponsorship by Philip Morris, Gilardi saw only betrayal. In miniature, similar differences of interest and ideas brought the Deposito project to crisis and disbandment. The extent of the gap that had opened up between Piero Gilardi and the core of the art scene in Turin is evidenced by events at the opening 'Conceptual Art Arte Povera Land Art' in Turin in June 1970. Hosted by the city's Gallery of Modern Art, supported by major collectors and private galleries including Sperone's, and curated by Germano Celant, the show saw the participation of many of his contemporaries in Turin, Italy and Europe, those who had earlier exhibited in Berne and Amsterdam. In retrospect this exhibition is viewed as a landmark event. Gilardi, however, was among a group that picketed the exhibition. It is not hard to see why this action, together with his rejection of the art and gallery scene at the time, should have been so painful, dramatic and carry such enduring consequences. It is one reason why it has taken so long to appreciate that Piero Gilardi was one of the key figures in the genesis and international presence of what came to be known as Arte Povera.

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Thanks to Piero Gilardi for permission to reproduce images of his work and for assistance in the project. Further information and images can be found [here](#).

[1] Christian Rattemeyer and other authors, *Exhibiting the New Art: 'Op Losse Schroeven' and 'When Attitudes Become Form' 1969*, Afterall Books, London, 2010.

[2] Germano Celant, *Pre-cronistoria, 1966-69*, Centre Di, Florence, 1976

[3] Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, ed., *Arte Povera*, Phaidon, London, 1999, pp. 178-81.

[4] Gilardi was included, however, in the main grouping in the exhibition 'Zero to Infinity, Arte Povera, 1962-72' held at Tate Modern, the Walker Art Center and MOCA in Los Angeles in 2001-02.

[5] In the words of Judith Russi Kirshner: 'citing the "paternal swindle" in which she found herself in postwar Italy, Lonzi chafed against privileged masculinist conceptions of history and culture that allowed no place for female subjectivity'; Judith Russi Kirshner, 'Voices and Images of Italian Feminism' in Cornelia Butler, ed., *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass., 2007, p. 394.

[6] Marco Meneguzzo, ed., *...Attraverso un cambiamento di natura*, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 1995; Piero Gilardi, *Dall'arte alla vita, dalla vita all'arte: Il percorso artistico, politico e umano dell'esperienza transculturale cominciata nel '68*, Paris, Prints Etc., 1981, pp. 13-17.

[7] *I Gilardi*, exhibition catalogue, Museo d'Arte, Mendrisio, 1986.

[8] Minola, Anna et al, *Gian Enzo Sperone: Torino, Roma, New York. 35 anni di mostre tra Europa e America*, hopefulmonster, Turin 2000.

[9] Mirella Bandini, *1972 Arte Povera a Torino. Interviste*, Umberto Allemandi, Turin, 2002, pp. 88-89 (my translation).

[10] Mirella Bandini, *1972 Arte Povera a Torino*, pp. 75-76.

[11] Mirella Bandini, *1972 Arte Povera a Torino*, 98-99.

[12] It was suggested by Sperone that he include work in the show, but Zorio did not feel ready to; Gilberto Zorio, interview with the author, 4 March 2000.

[13] Giovanni Anselmo, interview with the author, 8 November 1999.

[14] 'Painters have shown us the objects and the people placed before them. We shall henceforward put the spectator in the centre of the picture'; Piero Gilardi, who describes his earlier works as traversing Futurism along with Cubism and Dada, would have been familiar with such statements; Umbro Apollonio, ed., *Futurist Manifestos*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1973, p. 28.

[15] In 1980 Gilardi produced a pamphlet designed as a DIY guide on making works with foam rubber: *Piccolo manuale dell'espressione con la gommapiuma*, 1 August 1980.

[16] Martina Corgnati, 'Opere storiche (1964-69)' in Andrea Bellini, ed., *Piero Gilardi: Collaborative Effects, 1963-85*, jrp/ringer, 2012, p. 65.

[17] Mirella Bandini, *Pinot Gallizio, 1955-64*, Umberto Allemandi, Turin, 1984.

[18] Piero Gilardi, interview with the author, 4 June 1997.

[19] Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the Next Millenium*, Vintage, New York, 1993.

[20] Ettore Sottsass Jr., 'Piero Gilardi', *Domus*, December 1966.

[21] Nuto Revelli, *Il mondo dei vinti*, Einaudi, Turin, 1979.

[22] Marco Meneguzzo, ed., *...Attraverso un cambiamento di natura*,

[23] For Michelangelo Pistoletto's relationship to American galleries, see Robert Lumley, 'Michelangelo Pistoletto: Stepping Sideways, Changing Direction' in *Pistoletto Politico: Works by Michelangelo Pistoletto*, Luxembourg & Dayan, London, 2013, pp. 14-16.

[24] The association of women and femininity with trees or fruit in the display of Gilardi's nature wear reiterates a topoi that is embedded in Western culture. It was against this kind of stereotype that feminism mounted its critiques as manifested in the writings of Rivolta Femile.

[25] Gilardi worked for Gufram from 1967 to 1974 but regarded this as a way of financing his other activities; Piero Gilardi, interview with the author, 11 November 1999.

[26] Piero Gilardi, 'Sei artisti di Torino', January 1968.

[27] Piero Gilardi, 'Il mistero dell'energia', New York, 1968 in Marco Meneguzzo, ed., *...Attraverso un cambiamento di natura*.

[28] Piero Gilardi, interview with the author, 11 November 1999.

[29] 'Temporary Artistic Communities: Piero Gilardi in conversation with Francesco Manacorda' in Christian Rattemeyer and other authors, *Exhibiting the New Art* Robert Lumley, 'Arte Povera in Turin: The Intriguing Case of the Deposito D'Arte Presente' in R. Lumley and F. Manacorda, eds., *Marcello Levi: Ritratto di un collezionista/Marcello Levi: Portrait of a Collector*, Turin: hopefulmonster, 2005.