

## GIUSEPPE PENONE

*Impronte foglie parole*

Inauguration: Thursday 23 March from 6 to 8 pm

Until 20 May 2023

From Wednesday to Saturday 11 am-1 pm | 3-7 pm

The relationship between Giuseppe Penone and Antonio Tucci Russo began in 1969. *Impronte foglie parole* (Imprints leaves words) is the artist's sixth solo exhibition with the Galleria Tucci Russo and the first hosted in the Turin venue. The exhibition consists of works of various types such as sculptures, works on canvas and a corpus of drawings.

In 1970, Giuseppe Penone began to realise a cycle of works entitled *Svolgere la propria pelle* (Unwrapping one's own skin). The skin has the property of delimiting and at the same time separating: the skin as a sensitive surface, capable of relating to the world. The action of contact becomes a primary source of knowledge, and this is what gives rise to the sculpture. Contact is a knowledge that occurs continuously and spontaneously, and the IMPRINT is the consequence of the primary function of touch and a sign of identity.

Linked to this concept is the important work presented in the exhibition, *Svolgere la propria pelle – Dita* (Unfolding one's own skin – Fingers, 1971) consisting of ten photo-emulsions on mirror. Each photograph frames a different finger of the artist's hands pressed on a transparent surface. At the point of pressure the fingertip appears white, giving the mirror the necessary transparency for refraction. In the area affected by the contact, the skin of the finger disappears and there, at the point of tactile encounter, the passage of light occurs.

Giuseppe Penone leads us "by the hand" through the exhibition presented at the Galleria Tucci Russo in Turin. The exhibition places creative experiences in dialogue, creating parallels that, starting from the primary experience of touching as the principle of knowledge, relate the action of the sculptor in touching matter and that of the writer who leaves his imprints on the first published copy of one of his books, whereby for both the first imprint is followed by another and yet another. By manipulating the material, the sculptor creates the work; the writer, by touching and leafing through his book, allows the words to highlight his thoughts.

"A landscape of imprints, thoughts, words impressed  
on the surface of the world.

They envelop it like a continuous sound, modulated by the intensity  
of the words of the poet who entrusts to the surface of the pages  
of his first book expectations, hopes, fervours, illusions,  
and, having published his book, covers it with fingerprints, caresses it,  
leafs through it, opens it as he opens his hand and, touching it,  
collects on his fingers ink traces of his words,  
the forest of his thoughts."

Giuseppe Penone, *Scritti*, Electa, Milan, 2022

This text clarifies the concept expressed in three of the works presented, *Canti* (Songs, 2013), *Fervore de Buenos Aires* (Fervour of Buenos Aires, 2015) and *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (The metamorphosis of plants, 2014), which are inspired by the eponymous writings of Giacomo Leopardi, Jorge Luis Borges and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, whose first editions are also on display in the exhibition. Penone, as mentioned, considers the fingerprint, or imprint, or touch, as the start of knowledge, which he conceives as «*sign, order, thaumaturgic gesture, or projection of a thought*». To an initial imprint the artist progressively adds others until he reaches thousands of accumulated imprints that, all differing from each other, recall the foliage of trees. In the centre of each canvas is a small terracotta sculpture, the imprint of his grip.

Also on display are the frottage of the cover of the first edition of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, which brings the artist back to a technique he used in both historical and more recent works, and the drawings entitled *Foglie* (Leaves, 2014), which renew the concept of the landscape as an expanse of imprints, representing for the artist «*a drape of forest leaves, each one unique, absolute, unrepeatable, covering the body of the forest like a skin*».

Two other works on display further extend the concept of how sculpture springs from the action of contact:

*Gli anni dell'albero più uno* (The Years of the Tree Plus One, 2020), a bronze sculpture that ties in with the historical work presented in 1969 in which the artist, proceeding by addition and not subtraction (as in the *Alberi* – trees – stripped of their bark), exploring the bark by touching and caressing it with his fingertips to spread a layer of wax around it corresponding to a growth ring of the tree, and *Avvolgere la terra - corteccia* (Wrapping up the earth bark) (2014): «*I enlarged with clay the earth that I had wrapped and clutched in my hands. Handful by handful, I compressed and smoothed it in an action that involved my whole body and attention*». The sculpture rests on the ground on a bronze casting of tree bark.

The video *Ephemeris* accompanies the viewing of the exhibition, highlighting some of the artist's creative processes.

Giuseppe Penone (Garessio (Cuneo), 1947) lives and works in Turin. In recent years, he has had solo exhibitions at the Galleria Borghese, Rome (2023), the Voorlinden Museum, Wassenaar (2022), the Couvent de La Tourette, Éveux (2022), the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2022), the Frick Madison, New York (2022), the Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence (2021), the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (2021), Villa Medici, Rome (2021), the Saarlandmuseum, Moderne Galerie, Saarbrücken (2020), Centre Pompidou Metz (2020), Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield (2018), Château La Coste, Le Puy-Sainte-Reparate (2017), Palazzo della Civiltà, Rome (2017), MART, Rovereto (2016), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (2016), Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2015), Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2015). In 2013 he exhibited his monumental sculptures at the gardens of the Palace of Versailles and Madison Square Park, New York, and in 2014 at the Boboli Gardens in Florence. There are numerous permanent installations by him, including the *Giardino delle Sculture Fluide* at the Reggia della Venaria Reale, Turin. In 2017, on the occasion of the opening of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, four works by the artist entered the museum's permanent collection. Awarded the McKim Medal in 2017 and the *Praemium Imperiale* for Sculpture by the Japan Art Association in 2014, he represented Italy at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, having also exhibited there in 1995, 1986, 1980 and 1978. He took part in Documenta in Kassel in 1972, 1982, 1987 and 2012.