



Cortesi Gallery



**ARCHIVIO
GIANFRANCO
PARDI**

*Like on an empty screen, the figure deletes space
and makes room for itself. Elbowing its way, it
occupies the space. Always, on the background
of the canvas, signs, pigments and images
remain like shadows.*

Gianfranco Pardi, 1986

Gianfranco Pardi

Autoarchitecture

23 March – 12 May 2018

Opening: March 22 from 18.00

Fondazione Marconi and Studio Marconi '65, together with the Cortesi Gallery in Milan, are dedicating a large retrospective exhibition to Gianfranco Pardi, 85 years after the artist's birth.

Promoted by the Gianfranco Pardi Archive and curated by Bruno Corà, the project will fully represent the artistic career of the Milanese artist, which centred on the study of space and the relationship between abstraction and construction.

Pardi began to reflect on architecture as early as the late 1960s. What the artist meant by "architecture" was a procedure, a creative process, a means by which he was able to concentrate on the constructive possibilities of form, of investigations into three-dimensionality, which clearly refer to avant-garde utopias, Russian Suprematism, Constructivism and Dutch Neoplasticism.

Reinterpreting Malevič, Tatlin, El Lissitzky and other key exponents of these movements allowed Pardi to take the still vital elements of these artistic directions and become one of the most active and qualified representatives of the history of contemporary painting and sculpture.

This extensive retrospective illustrates the development of Pardi's explorations at every phase, from the first depictions of architectural interiors and exteriors of the 1960s, such as the *Environments* and *Hanging Gardens*, to subsequent works from the 1970s, which he named *Architectures*.

The series *Diagonals* are from the early 1980s and consist of straight lines whose tight rhythm oscillates between black and white to a search for new montages and movements. These are followed by the works *Plants* and *Apses*, and the cycles *Cinema* and *Body Building*. The 1990s saw the series *Masks* and *Montagne Sainte-Victoire*, the latter a clear reference to Cézanne and a total reflection on painting.

The following *Nagjma* series, meaning 'star' in Arabic, are the fruit of the artist's long periods in Tangier, a sort of re-enactment of Paul Klee's or Henri Matisse's journey to the south, and the series entitled *Box*, made from cardboard boxes, which show Pardi's increasing interest in painting, although still combined with geometric elements and architectural references.

The exhibition concludes with the *Untitled* works from 2011: a series of acrylics on canvas in which the colour range restricted to tones of white, black and grey seems redolent of fresco painting.

Gianfranco Pardi's work is present in important collections and museums in Milan, such as the Gallerie d'Italia and the Museo del Novecento, which, together with the substantial number of public works and sculptures scattered throughout the city, document the close link between the artist and his city.

Among these works is the large environmental sculpture *Dance* in Piazza Amendola, donated by Farmafactoring in 2006 to mark the firm's twenty-year anniversary.

Fondazione Farmafactoring is also contributing to the current project, not only through its important collection of works by Pardi, but above all for the perfect accord there is between Pardi's work and the spirit of the Farmafactoring foundation: the desire to combine rigour and seriousness with innovation and attention to change.

The exhibitions will be accompanied by a video that documents the presence of public works by Gianfranco Pardi located around the city, and a book that will be jointly published by Fondazione Marconi and the Cortesi Gallery. Edited by Skira and curated by Bruno Corà, the monograph will contain colour images of all the works on display, together with an extensive selection of photographic documents, critical commentary and source material, all of which illustrate Gianfranco Pardi's long and fertile creative career. The monograph is intended as a future reference work on the artist, whose art, though apparently straightforward and essential, reveals multiple meanings and unexpected complexities.

Biographical notes

Gianfranco Pardi was born in 1933 in Milan. From the outset his art was based on space and a constructivist organisation, which led to works of great formal rigour, where drawing, painting and sculpture were integrated into a spatial dimension that was architectural in scope.

In 1959 he held his first solo exhibition at Galleria Alberti in Brescia, and the following year at Galleria Colonna in Milan. In 1965 he participated in the group exhibition *La figuration narrative dans l'art contemporain* in Paris.

In 1967 he began his collaboration with Studio Marconi in Milan, focusing on creating works that were a new interpretation of historical avant-gardes, such as Abstractionism, Suprematism, Constructivism and Neoplasticism.

His *Architectures* from the 1970s demonstrate his desire to build and establish a space through painting, since he saw this as a means of expression that could immediately realise the 'idea'. His works are developed through signs and geometric gestural forms that, together with a limited range of colours, helped him to express the constructivist concept.

First in 1974, and later in 1993, he took part in the Biennale at Palazzo della Permanente in Milan. In 1981 his work was presented at two major group exhibitions: *Linee della ricerca artistica in Italia 1960/1980* at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, and *Il luogo della forma* at the Museo di Castelvecchio in Verona. In 1984, the University of Parma organised a major retrospective of his work, and two years later he held solo exhibitions at the Venice Biennale, the Milan Triennale and the Rome Quadrennial. Between the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s he produced three series of works: *Cinema*, *Monk* and *Masks*, concentrating on the use of iron supports.

Subsequently, influenced by the works of Cézanne, he addressed the theme of *Montagne Sainte-Victoire*; then came the cycles *Najjma*, inspired by the light and night-time in Tangier, and *Box*, a series of works made from cardboard boxes.

In 1998 he held a solo exhibition at Palazzo Reale in Milan. The following year a number of important exhibitions were organised in Germany: at the Frankfurter Kunstverein in Frankfurt, the Bochum Museum in Bochum, and the Kulturhistorisches Museum in Stralsund. In 2000, his solo show *Homeless* was held at Galleria Giò Marconi in Milan.

In 2002 the retrospective *Sheets* was hosted by Galleria Fumagalli in Bergamo, and in 2003 he exhibited once again at Galleria Giò Marconi with a series of works entitled *Dance* and *Restoration*.

Over the course of his career he made numerous sculptures for public and private spaces: Albergo Bellevue, Malcesine (Verona) 1988; the General Command of the Guardia di Finanza, Via XX Settembre, Rome, 1995; the ship *Costa Victoria*, Genoa, 1996; *Soundtrack*, SNAM San Donato Milanese (Milan), 1999; *Box*, Cascina Mangiagruppa Zeme Lomellina (Pavia), 2001; *Dance*, Piazza Amendola, Milan, 2006; *Releases*, Negombo, Bay of San Montano (Ischia), 2015.

Pardi was a member of the National Academy of San Luca from 2008.

He died in Milan on 2 February, 2012. In October 2013, the Gianfranco Pardi Archive was established in memory of the artist with the aim of promoting and disseminating his work and reputation.

Some of the most recent venues to hold solo exhibitions of his work include: Fondazione Marconi, Milan (2014), Galerie Balice Hertling, Paris (2015), the premises of the Cortesi Gallery in Lugano (2016) and those in London (2017).

Fondazione Marconi Arte moderna e contemporanea

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Opening hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10-13, 15-19 (open April 15; closed March 31, April 25, May 1) / **Free entrance**

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Opening hours: Monday-Friday 10.30-19.00 (open April 15; closed April 25, May 1) / **Free entrance**

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