

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

Go See: Piero Manzoni Retrospective at Gagosian Gallery in New York, through March 21, 2009

March 17th, 2009



Piero Manzoni behind one of his 'Achromes' via [Gagosian](#)

Currently at Gagosian Gallery is the first major US retrospective of Italian Conceptual artist Piero Manzoni. Manzoni, who died of a heart attack at the age of 29 in 1963, is most notorious for his 'Merda d'artista,' 90 sealed cans purportedly containing his feces and sold for the market-value of gold at the time of purchase. The exhibition is curated by Germano Celant, who named the movement Manzoni belonged to, Arte Povera.



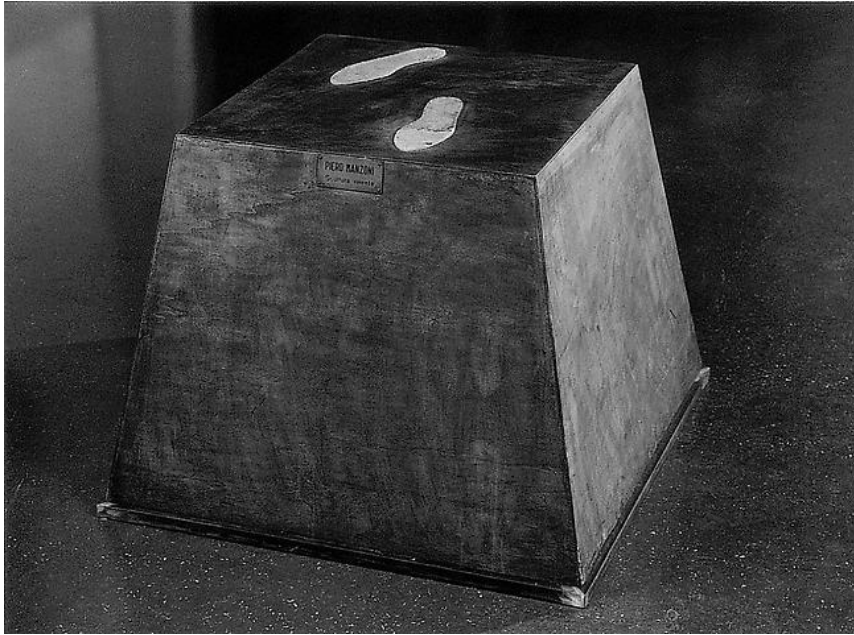
'Merda d'Artista' by Piero Manzoni via [Gagosian](#)



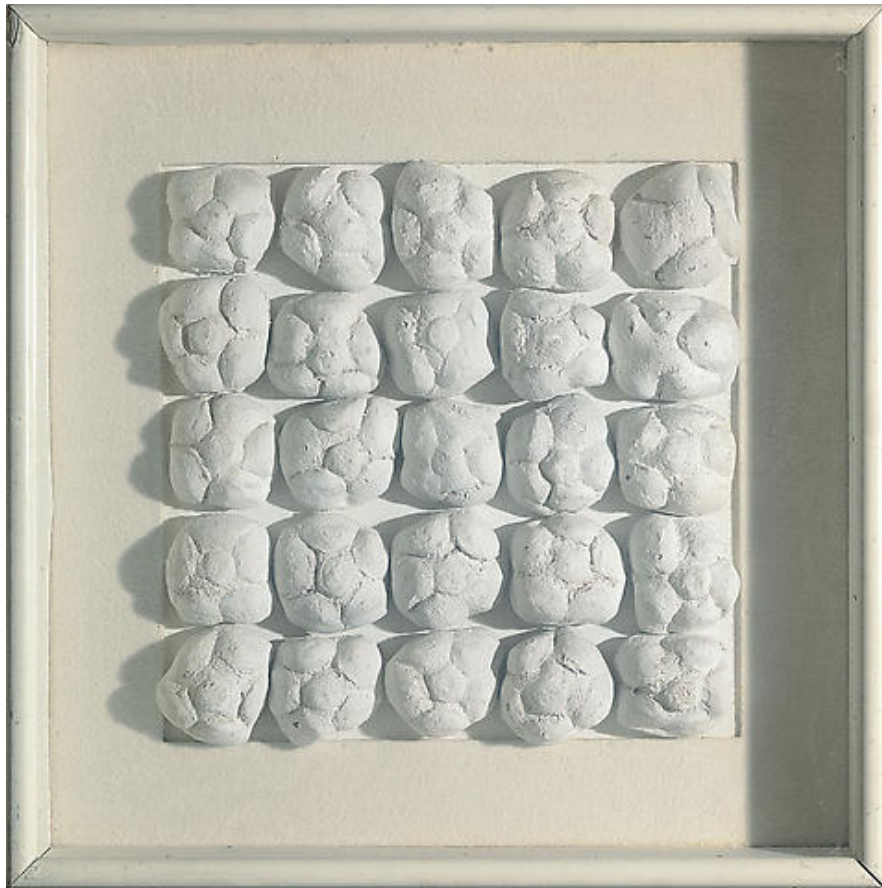
Installation view of the Piero Manzoni retrospective at [Gagosian](#)

The exhibition also includes works by Manzoni's contemporaries, including Yves Klein, Lucio Fontana, Frank Stella, and other European and American artists. By including works by these artists, the retrospective aims to contextualize Manzoni's work amongst the international art scene of the late fifties and early sixties, and to show how his

response to those artists influenced his development towards a radical conceptualism that playfully but bitingly poked at the art world supporting him.



Piero Mazoni's 'Base Magica-Scultura Vivente' via [Gagosian](#)



An 'Achrome' by Piero Manzoni via [Gagosian](#)

Given the artist's brief career - his first major group show was in 1956, seven years before his death - the retrospective is a broad survey of almost every point in Manzoni's oeuvre. Starting with a series of canvases stained with the imprint of everyday objects, made in oil or grease, Manzoni then moved on to his 'Achromes,' white canvases dipped in liquid clay, folded and pleated. Riffing on the monochromes produced by Klein, Robert Rauschenberg, and others at the time, paintings that claimed infinity in their seriousness, Manzoni's 'Achromes' claim absurdity with their sagging forms. Later, Manzoni created other 'Achromes' from various materials such as cotton, fake fur, and even bread rolls.



Piero Manzoni's 'Corpo d'Aria' via [Gagosian](#)

After this, Manzoni's practice turns more and more to a response to the growing commercialization of the art world, as well as Italy's own economic boom and capitalist transformation at the time. His 1959 work, 'Corpo d'Aria' (Bodies of Air), was an edition of rubber balloons to be inflated, though the artist's breath was extra. With 'Base Magica-Scultura Vivente' (Magic Base-Living Sculpture), the viewer became the art by stepping atop a plinth. Manzoni would even sign people's arms, thereby officially declaring them a work of art. In the 'Linea' series, Manzoni drew single lines of varying lengths, the longest measuring four and half miles, and placed them in sealed cylinders.



Piero Manzoni's 'Linea m 7200' via [Gagosian](#)

A highlight of the show is 'Socle du Monde' (Base of the World) a piece Manzoni created in 1962, placing an upside-down plinth on the ground in Hernings, Denmark, dedicated to Galileo, making the earth itself a work of art. The plinth has been relocated to Gagosian especially for the retrospective. 'Manzoni: A Retrospective' runs through March 21, 2009 at Gagosian Gallery in Chelsea.



Installation view of the Piero Manzoni retrospective at [Gagosian](#)