

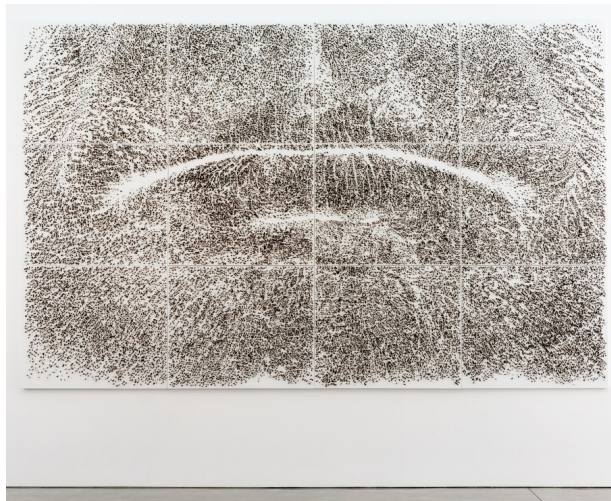
## GAGOSIAN GALLERY



### Giuseppe Penone at Gagosian

*Hunter Drohojowska-Philp talks about the first West Coast exhibition of the respected Italian artist.*

Hunter Drohojowska-Philp



*Giuseppe Penone, Spine d'acacia-Contatto, aprile 2006, 2006  
Canvas, acrylic, glass microspheres, acacia thorns  
118 1/2 x 189 1/2 x 2 inches, (301 x 481.3 x 5.1 cm)*

Arte Povera was the term coined in the late 1960s by influential curator Germano Celant to describe a group of young Italian artists who worked with natural materials, systems and, at times, the human body. One of the younger members was Giuseppe Penone. In recent years, in both exhibitions and auctions, there has been a resurgence of interest in this group and the powerhouse gallery Gagosian Beverly Hills now shows Penone's recent work through Oct. 18.

This is the first West Coast show of the artist's work and it is a rewarding presentation of Penone's long-term pursuits. He uses the form of trees in particular as analogous to the human body and especially his own body. In some cases, he carves into the trunks of trees to reveal the life hidden within, the ways in which light and water stimulate growth. A particularly powerful sculpture in this exhibition is *Zenithal Light* (2012). The artist cast an entire tree trunk in bronze and then gilded the hollow interior. Golden light emanates from the holes in the trunk where branches once grew and lends an alchemical reference to a glowing spirit potentially abiding within.

Penone also has a long history of working with marble, the most traditional of sculptural materials, but he carves the surfaces to reveal the effects of water and other elements. This show includes *Anatomy/Anatomia* (2011), a 23-ton block of marble, the scale of something you might see at the Parthenon, that Penone has carved on one side to bring out thick cords, veins that echo the shapes of the trees as well as the natural development of the stone. The massive column of abstract form released recalls thoughts of Michelangelo releasing figures from similar chunks of the white stone.

Slabs of white marble abraded by the artist also hang on the gallery walls along with his pieces of stretched silk covered in patterns made by the tiny points of acacia thorns.

A small catalogue published by Gagosian to accompany the exhibition is titled *Ramificazioni Del Pensiero*. Ramifications mean consequences. Penone's thoughts translate through elaborate physical labor to transform the materials of marble or wood into artistic forms as to bring first his attention and then ours to the meanings of material itself, the rings of wood, the process of growth, the importance of light. For more information, go to [gagosian.com](http://gagosian.com).