

## GIUSEPPE PENONE

## MAMBO - BOLOGNA

The imposing solo show of Giuseppe Penone is a well assembled retrospective, which doesn't follow a chronological progression, but rather re-traces the artist's favorite themes in varied ways.

Among the several works on show there are some that are more significant, such as *Ribaltare i propri occhi* (Turning One's Eyes Inside Out) (1970): a series of slides projected onto the wall which show the artist wearing mirror-finish contact lenses. The reflection of the surrounding landscape participates in a condition of blindness and introspection.

In a large room, three huge graphite works on the wall display a black weave, which are gigantic testimonies to the epidermis of the hands. The focus on this tactility recurs also in two adjacent bronze sculptures, which show the enlarged casts of the furrows made by hands into malleable material. A metallic minimalist shape has been fixed by way of contrast to this shapeless mass, which in turn houses a small vacuum in its middle, again a cast of hands.

In the next room, four pictures are endowed with a micro-forest of acacia thorns on their surface. Their placement follows the enlarged weave of several sensitive portions of body skin. Then, a decision to risk redundancy, through a prolongation of many similar actions, leaves the viewer doubtful. However, it's one of the artist's most intense works being repeated: the shape of a log with branches partially derives again from a "minimalist" wooden board, carved by following the gnarls and grains.

Close to the corridor a small room hosts other extensively historicized works. In this case, rather than produce sculptures, Penone documents with photographs a series of aestheticized actions in the natural environment. For example, in one photo a bronze fist has been placed into a tree and as such curbs the tree's growth; in another, an orthogonal cage is placed on a young tree and will be lifted up during the tree's growth. Furthermore, in the last room, the viewer is stunned by a work composed of two big stones that are seemingly identical;



GIUSEPPE PENONE. *Geometria nelle mani* (Geometry in the Hands). 2007. Bronze and stainless steel sculpture, 195 x 120 x 103 cm. Courtesy Marian Goodman, New York/Paris.

instead, one is a river stone marked by the passage of water, the other is a sculpted simulation.

The enthralling aesthetic of these actions is loaded with the burden of reality, whereas more recent sculptures/installations sometimes indulge in more affected compositional games.

(Translated from Italian by Francesca Cogoni)

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