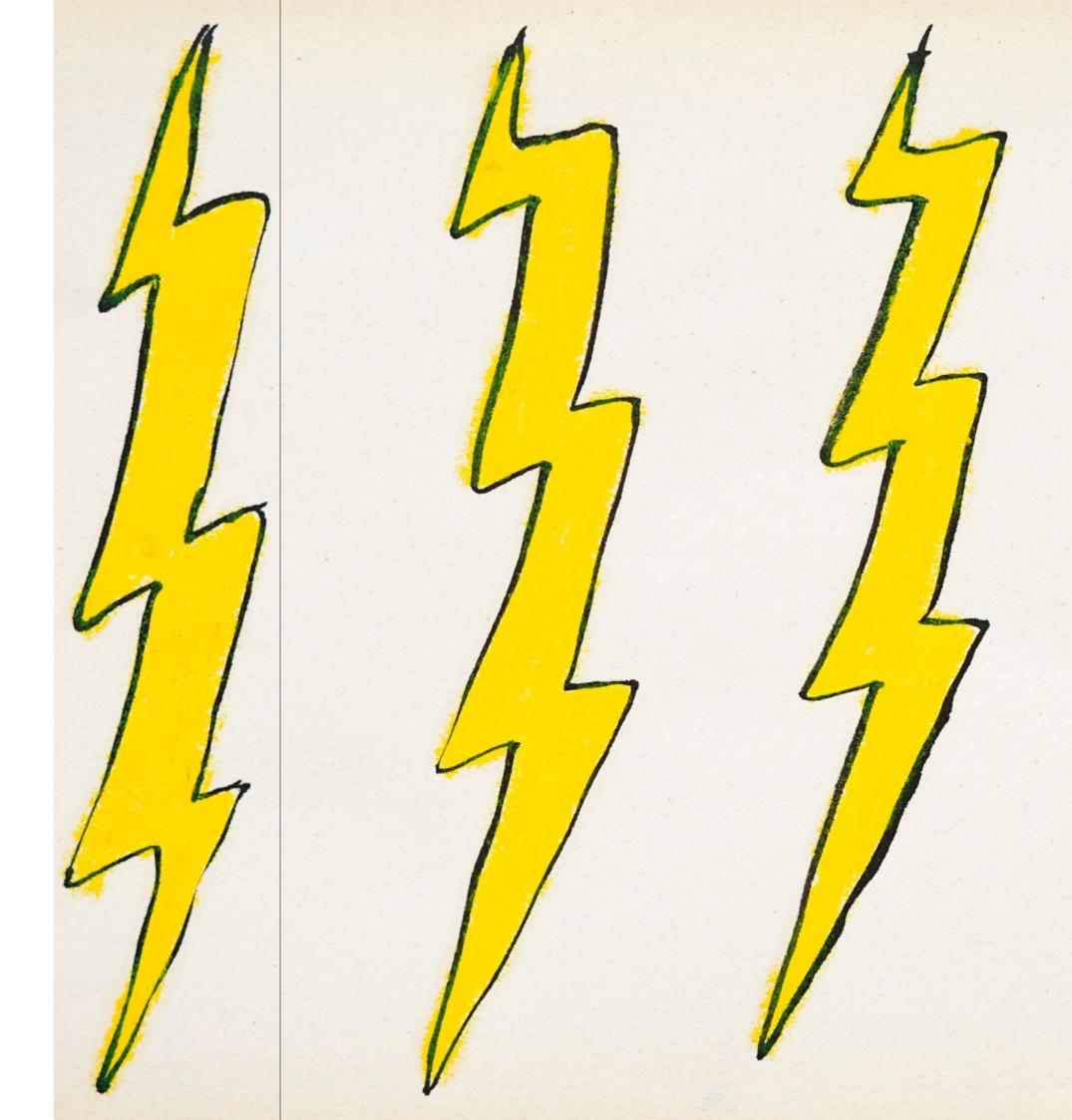


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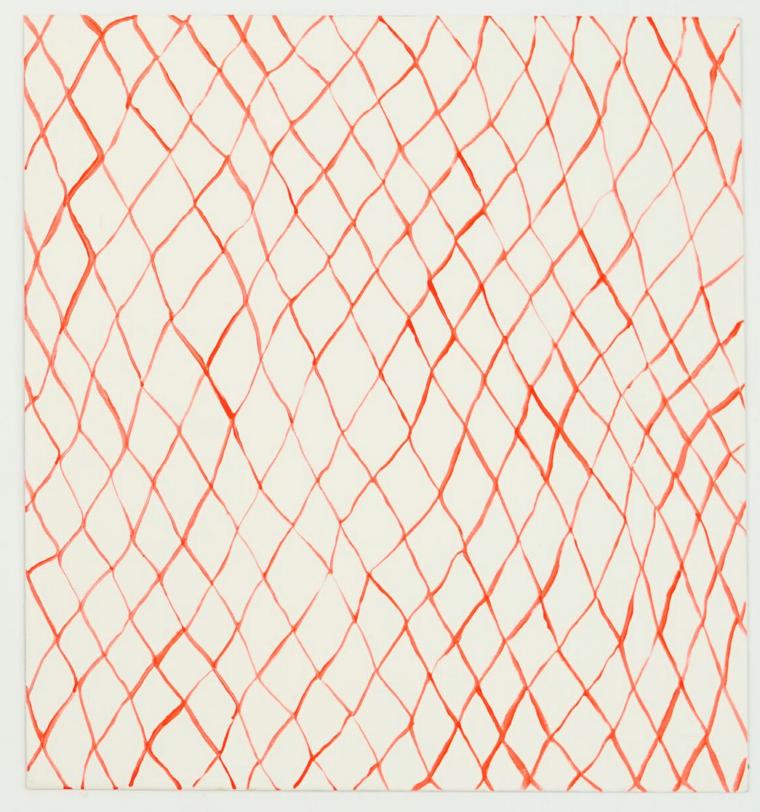
The problem with feminism is the same as the problem with painting flowers. Just as you cannot not be feminist you cannot not paint flowers.

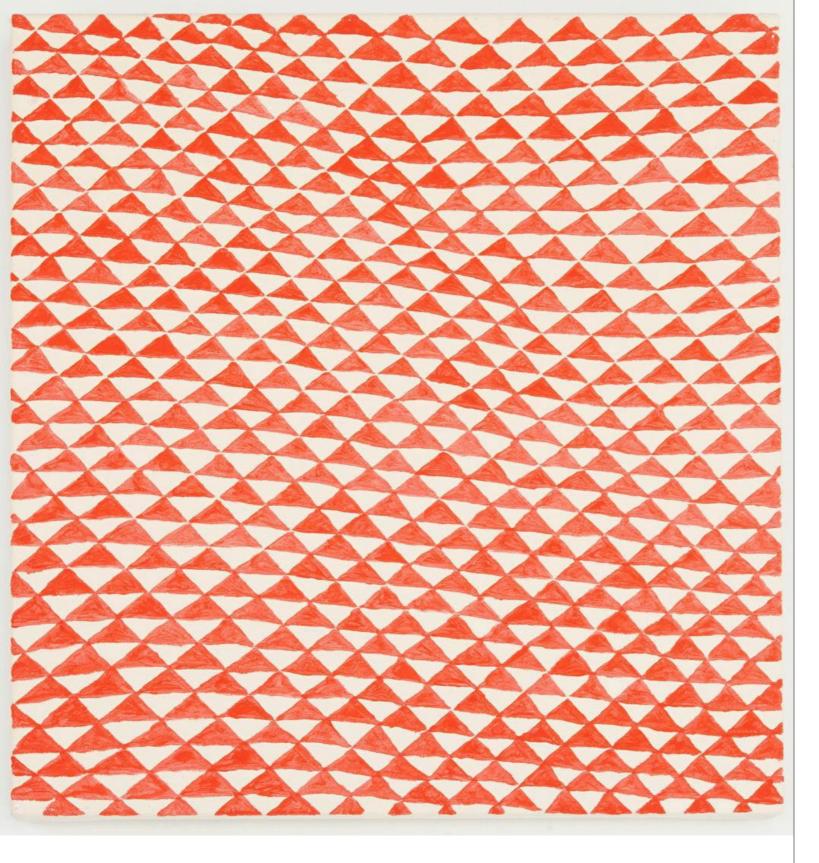
This is true both for women and for men. A woman, in the first place, cannot not be feminist. Because if she's not feminist she's not a woman. And a man too cannot not be feminist. Because if he's not feminist he's not a woman. Whereas a man is a woman, and I, being a woman, am also a man. Am I a man too? More. I am a young man. (The problem is sex, desire, that thing which makes you wonder, am I hitting on this person?, and viceversa. Sex stands in the way. Sex is that thing which stands in the way and sends free circulation of thought out of kilter. We shall have to deal with it. Because in the end we all want to paint a sense of sex. And the flowers too.)

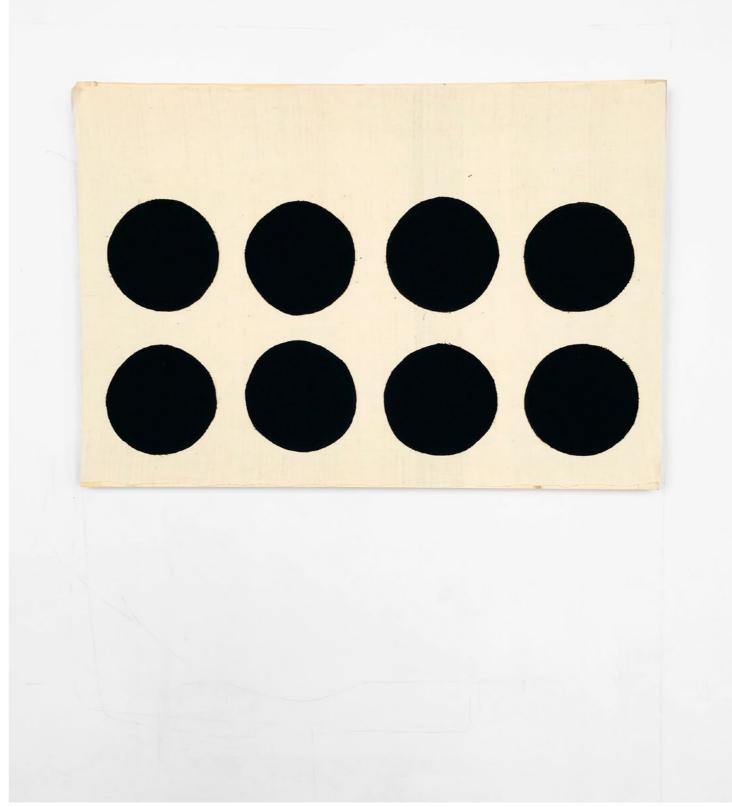
Beside all the rest, to be feminist means to defend that part of you which has a different voice, another syntax, another way of imagining the world. To be a woman, in a world that has been shaped and told by men, means to be an outsider, a presence which is ultimately incomprehensible, and which is in constant need of a translation. And since all of us, women and men, bear within ourselves something singular, an irreducible difference, we cannot not be feminist. Feminism is also this for me, respecting and defending difference, including my own, and all other voices, and every attempt at translation.



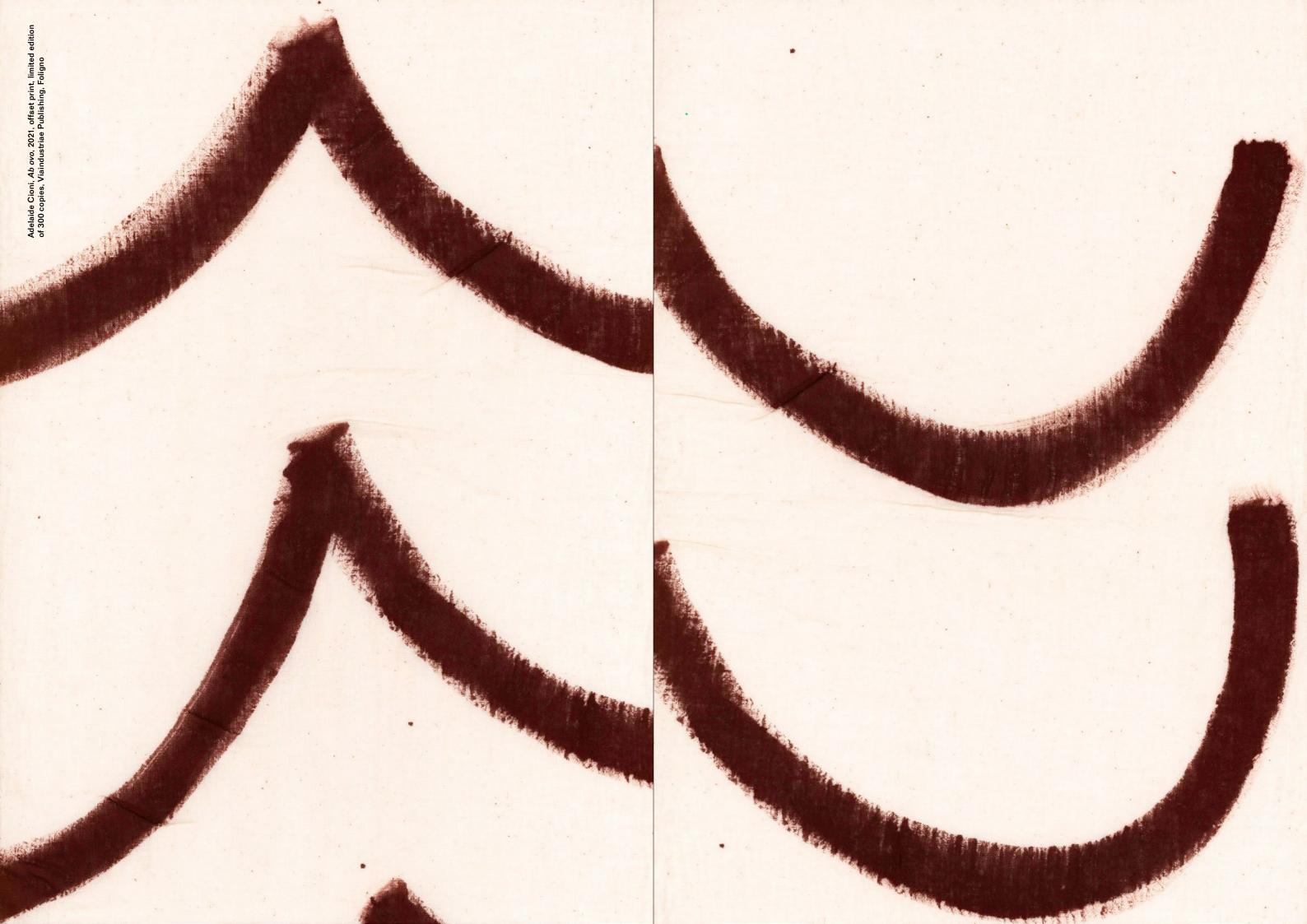








I am interested in decoration because it virtually goes on forever, and yet it never narrates anything. So what is it talking about? If I am not narrating anything, but I talk for hours, what am I saying? What is beyond storytelling? For an ex-literary translator like me these questions are interesting. Are we able to speak without narrating? Storytelling is a way of being-in-time, of giving time (and therefore death) meaning, and order. If I stop narrating I go into abstraction, an out-of-time dimension. It is a strange anaerobic lightness.







AB OVO / ON PATTERNS

In the exhibition *Ab Ovo / On Patterns* Adelaide Cioni explores the importance of patterns in painting, performance, music and dance. The focus of *Ab Ovo* (meaning 'from the egg, from the very beginning') is the recurrence of abstract patterns – stripes, triangles, grids, circles, stylized leaves and stars – both in artefacts and in nature.

These recur throughout history and across geographical areas, from early non-western visual imagery to present-day systems. *Ab ovo* is a song of the margins, these images have no voice and no story, yet they are deeply rooted in our memory. *Ab ovo* is a lens through which we can look at our way of using language and narration, at our relationship with nature and objects, at the way we experience time and difference and marginality, and our sense of community.

Cioni says, 'Patterns are the visualisation of a rhythm in space. This rhythm takes on different shapes and colours to express the different vibrations of whoever is creating it. And it is repetitive and constant because that is the basis of life. The heart and our internal organs are repetitive and constant. They are the bass line of our existence. So, patterns are a portrayal of the bass line of our existence. Making or drawing a pattern is like singing a song. Projecting out your own rhythm, your own vibration. To see it double itself, to have confirmation of your being real.'

Song for a square, a circle, a triangle is a performance with original music composed by Dom Bouffard, costumes by Adelaide Cioni, performed by Temitope Ajose-Cutting, Typhaine Delaup and Evelyn Hart.

Project supported by the Italian Council (11th edition, 2022) the programme aimed at supporting Italian contemporary art in the world promoted by the Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity within the Italian Ministry of Culture. In partnership with Fondazione Memmo, Rome and in collaboration with Gasworks.

Photo credits

Single works: Stephanie Black Installation views: Lewis Ronald Performance: Tim Smyth



Project supported by:



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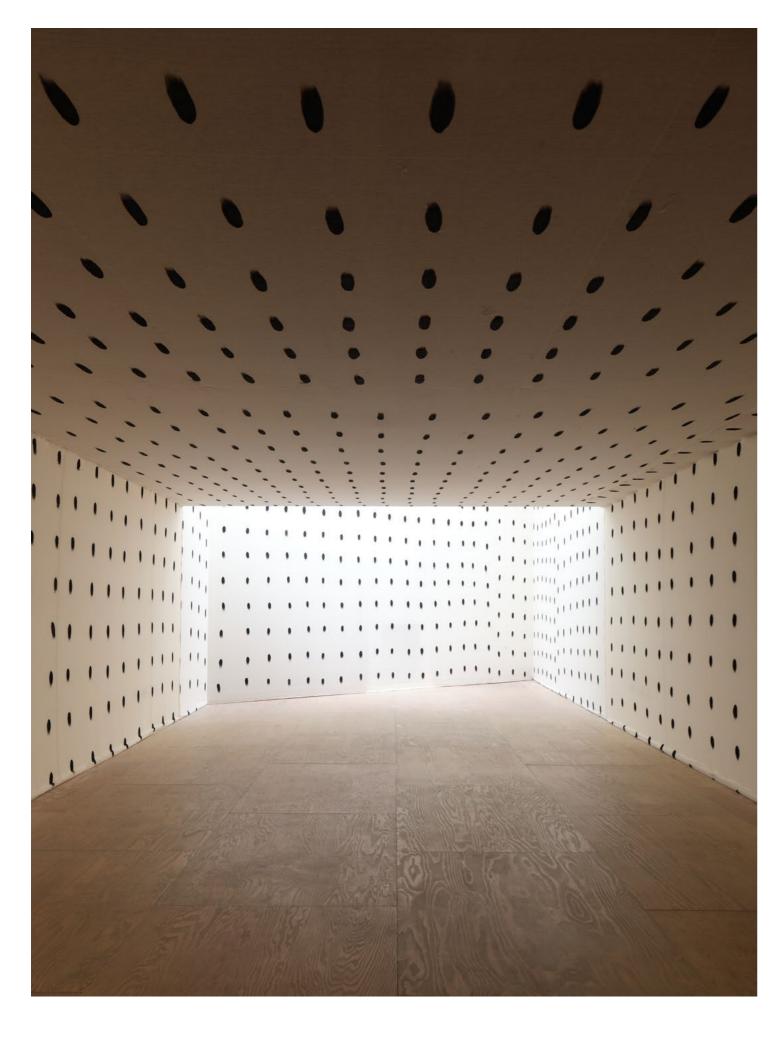


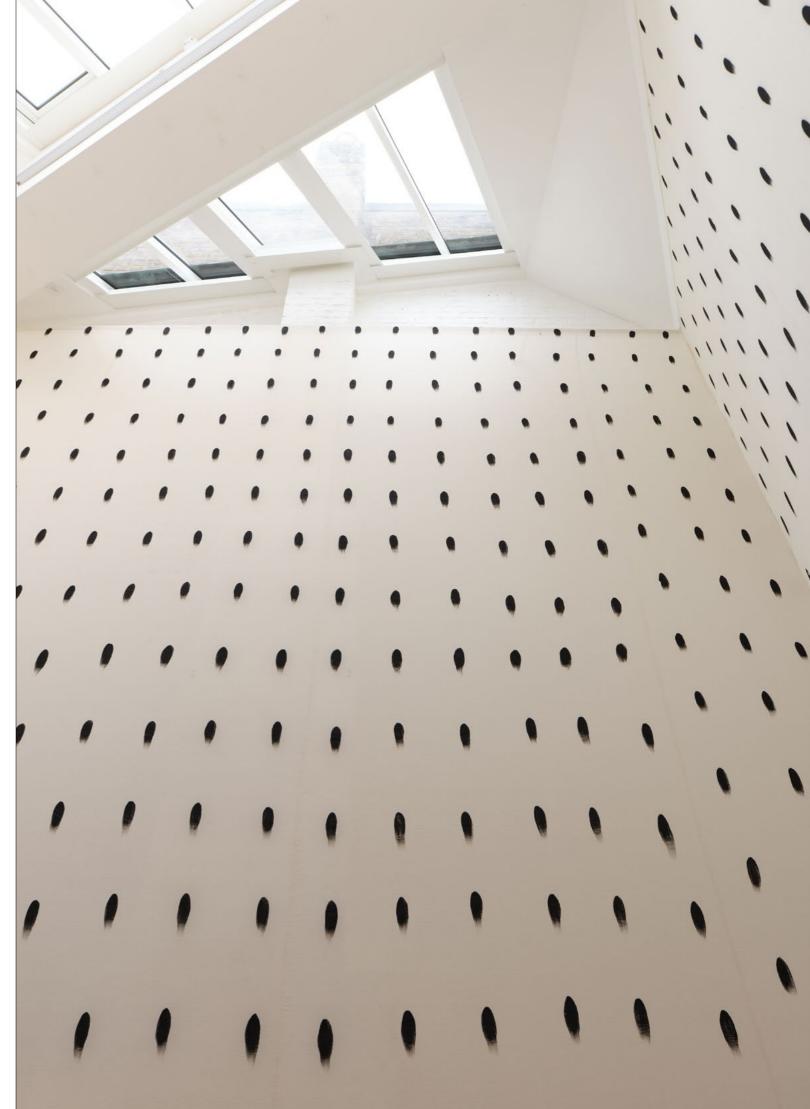


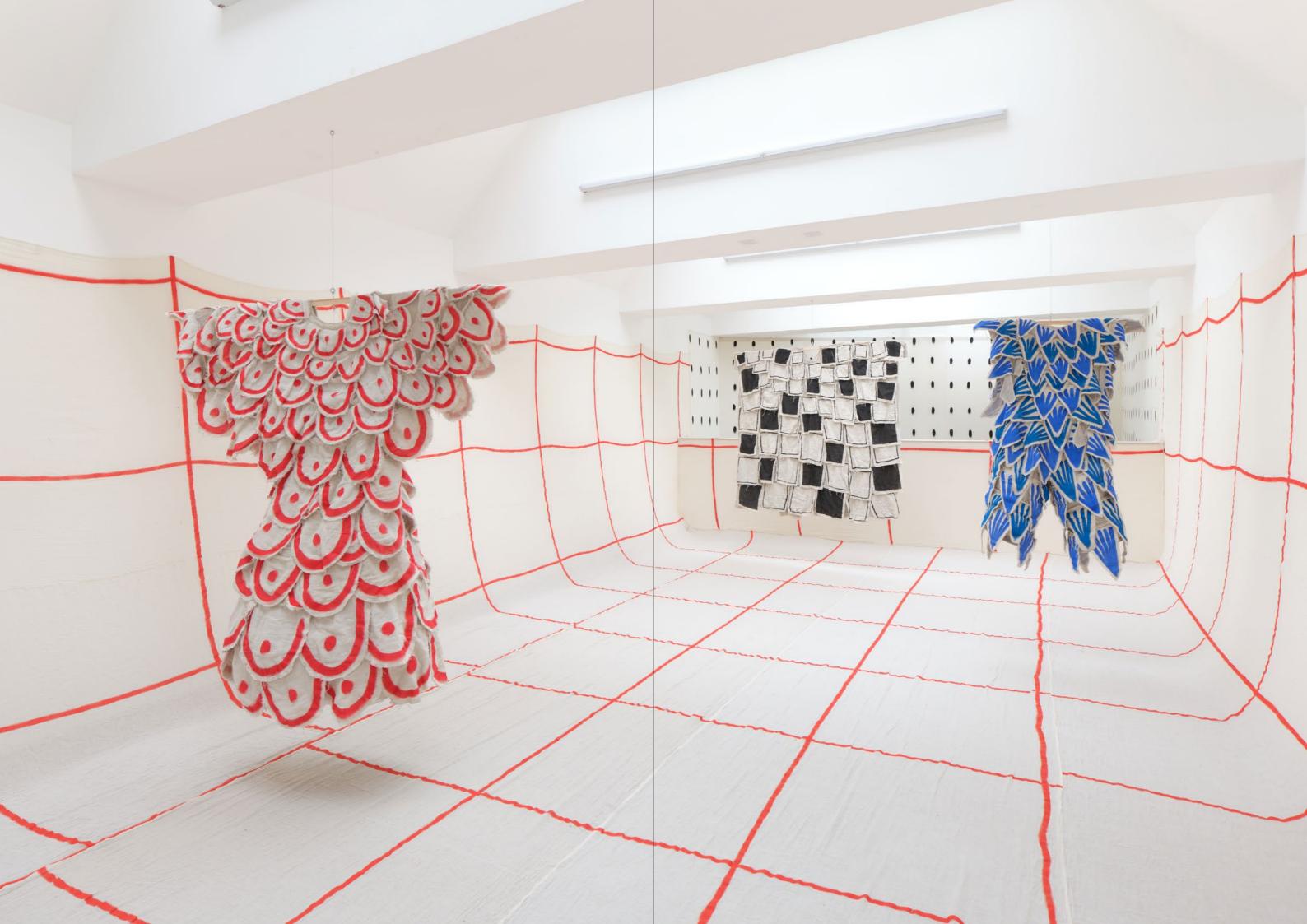






















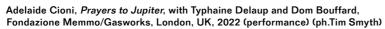




PRAYERS TO JUPITER

A need to erase myself in the simplest shapes. Abstract but also part of a common heritage. In the end the six circles are dice. Grids. Stripes. Why do them over again? Why do anything else? This is what is worth doing for me now: stripes, circles,

This is what is worth doing for me now: stripes, circles, squares, triangles, modules, large drawings that one can wear. I am looking for an opening to flow out, beyond painting. A point where drawing can go into the three dimensions, but not in stone, not in iron, not in bronze. It's not sculpture, it's space. Space that links itself to the drawing sign, to colour and to the most common and inoffensive material. At any moment fabric can be folded up. Wood can be dismantled and if necessary burnt.







On Jupiter the other day
Somebody saw a sheep
It was grazing fire
And didn't care at all
Of passers-by and on-lookers
It just went on and on
Grazing, doing its own thing

A pear fell A fickle-tell A ruby An army An excavator A roaring-heart I saw you You saw me

A bird's flight
With ghostly might
Scared us out
with such a spout
hollering
we were hollering
for what
we didn't know

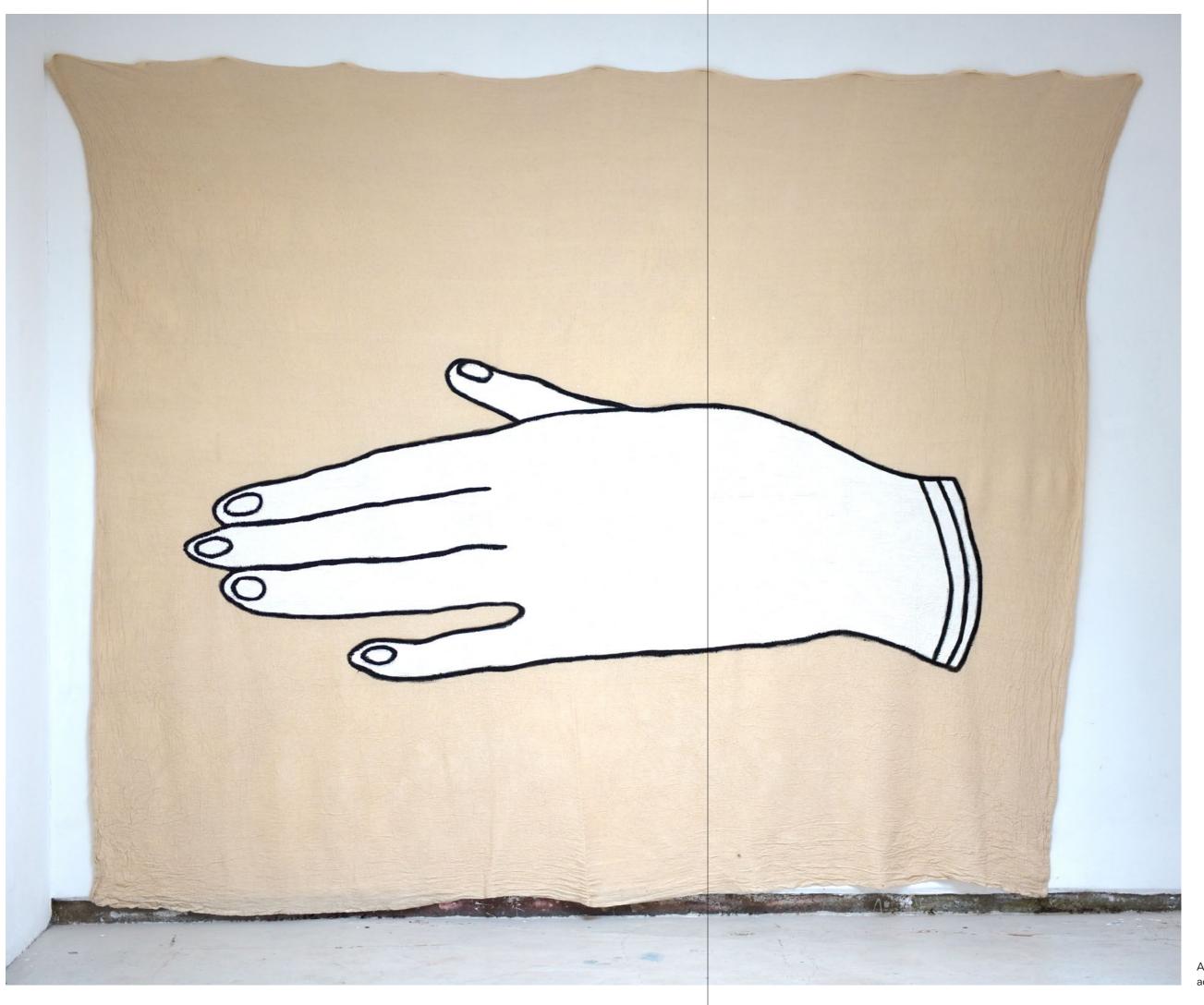
And turning in turning and turning and turning and turning and turning and turning and turning we sank and ba ba baba ba ba













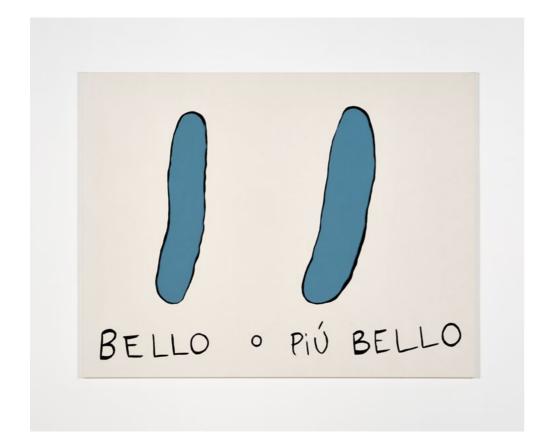
Rebecca gave me a drawing the other day. She made a portrait of me. It's me with Cosimo the cat and Marcel the dog. I have brown hair, long eyelashes and big boobs, but I don't have any hands nor feet. Is this a woman to Rebecca? Somebody who doesn't have feet to go nor hands to do?

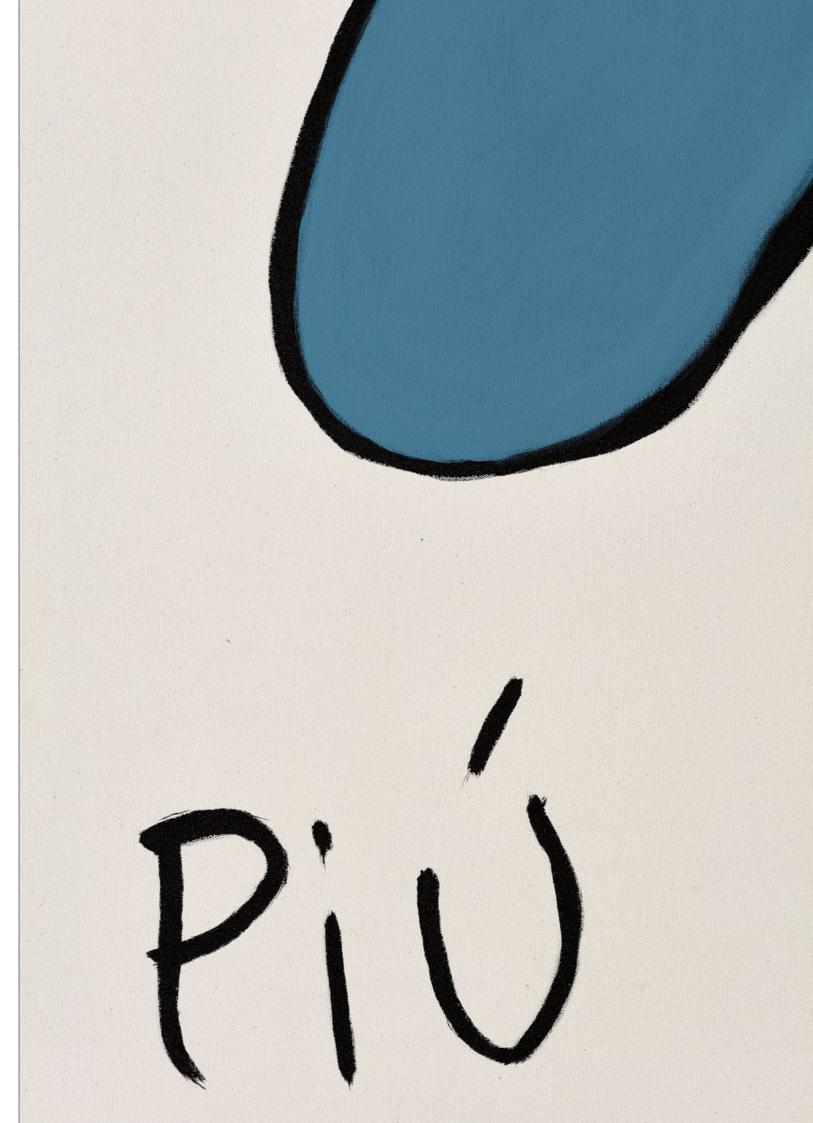
This image triggered a short-circuit in my mind when I put it next to the images of tiny clay sculptures I saw in so many archeological museums, women's bodies without feet nor hands nor head. Sometimes it's the result of time and breakage, sometimes the statuettes were conceived like that. There is so much in and around the iconography of women's bodies, so much insistence upon the reproductive and sexual parts of it, even today, in the drawing of a ten-years-old girl. I decided to portray these figurines, in large format, to see them better. Sometimes we create an image just because we want to question it. The image is open and the question unsolved.

BELLO O PIÙ BELLO

Jokes require timing and precision. More often than not the articulation of a joke is brought about by a swiftness, as if the joke itself were unrehearsed, flippant. This skill, in which lightness of touch becomes humour, is simplified to precision in Adelaide Cioni's three works Bello o Piu Bello, Kant o Heidegger, Lungo o Lunghissimo. Four adjectives, two names and six languid beans are all that is necessary for Cioni to synthesize her feminist wit and invert the male dominated field of minimalism. Yes, you could say it is not a laugh that has you in painful fits, it is more subtle and conversational, a snigger, but it is necessary, in that it aims to lighten the pathos found embedded in male thought, subtly asserting a clear humourist position. The paintings transform these "monoliths" of masculine profundity into silly aphorisms, using joy, simplicity, and glibness to reveal a feminist pulse, that also wishes to expose the arbitrariness rooted in male ambition. After all, few people have the patience to hear long exhausting lectures comparing theories of Kant and Heidegger. Nor do we still need to witness more comparative conversations or hear about how important it is to make things bigger and advocate for this urge with grandiose penis extending purchases. In fact, in these simple paintings Cioni has managed to expose the essential failure in traditionalist male thought, deflating male egoism, using wit to say so much with so little, while revelling in the pleasure of being able to say, "who cares?"

text by Joshua Leon

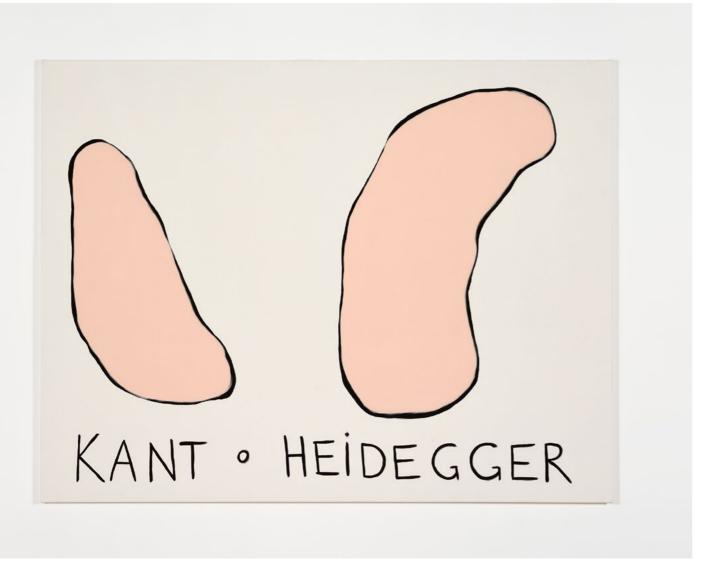




Adelaide Cioni, Bello o più bello, 2022 Indian ink and vinyl paint on canvas, $155 \times 200 \text{ cm}$







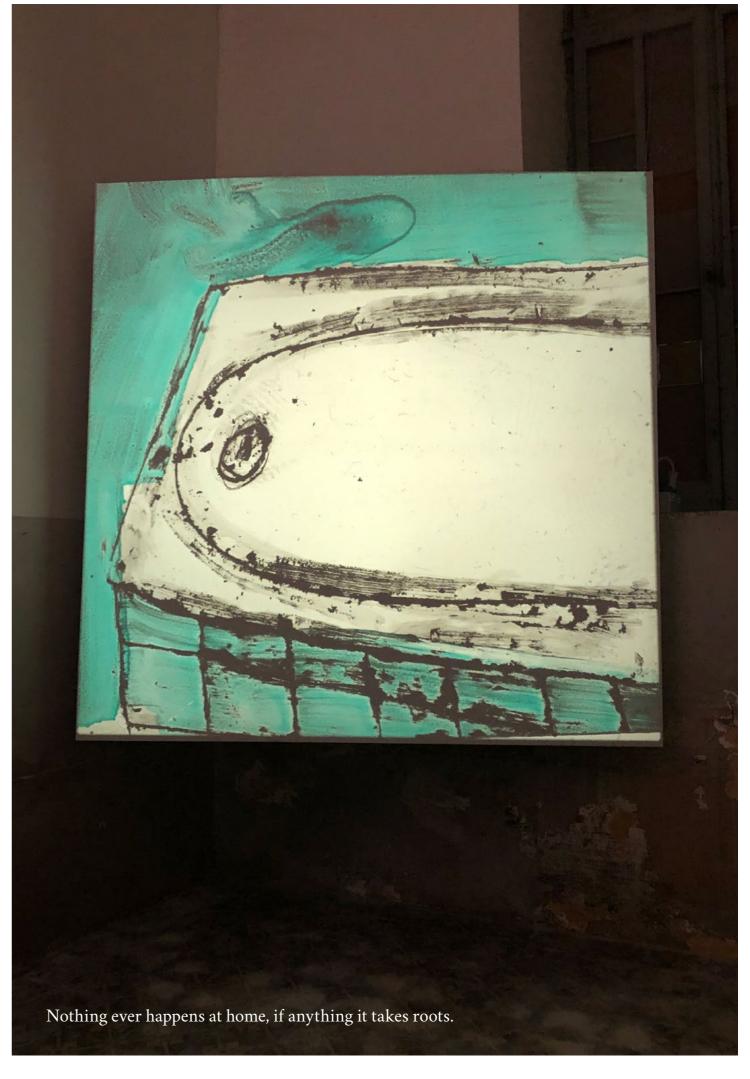


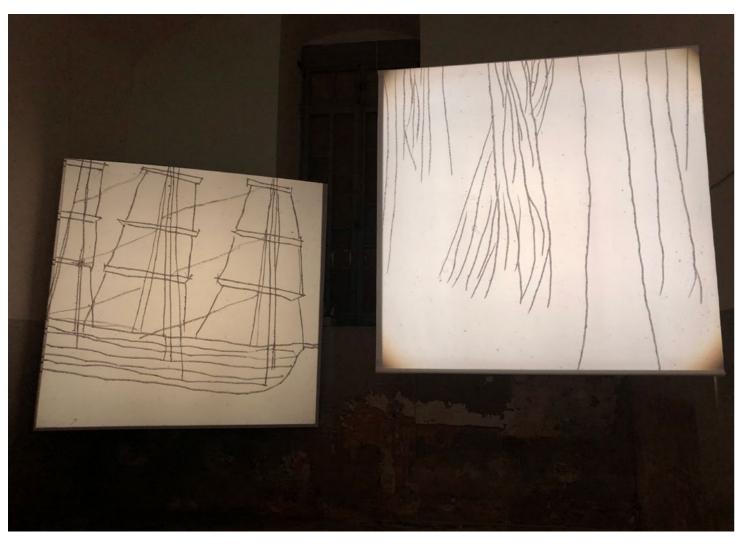
À PROPOS DE BACCHELLI 5

à propos de Bacchelli 5 is an installation with three Kodak Carousels, each projecting 80 etchings on diaposlides, 240 drawings flowing on three different screens. The images portray details of the objects in the house where the artist's family lived for more than thirty years. Before leaving the house for good, Cioni sketches and measures a few meaningful elements: a radiator, the light-switch, the bathroom tiles, but also the cyclamens and trees in the woods surrounding it. The installation includes the publication of a text written by the artist, On Homes.

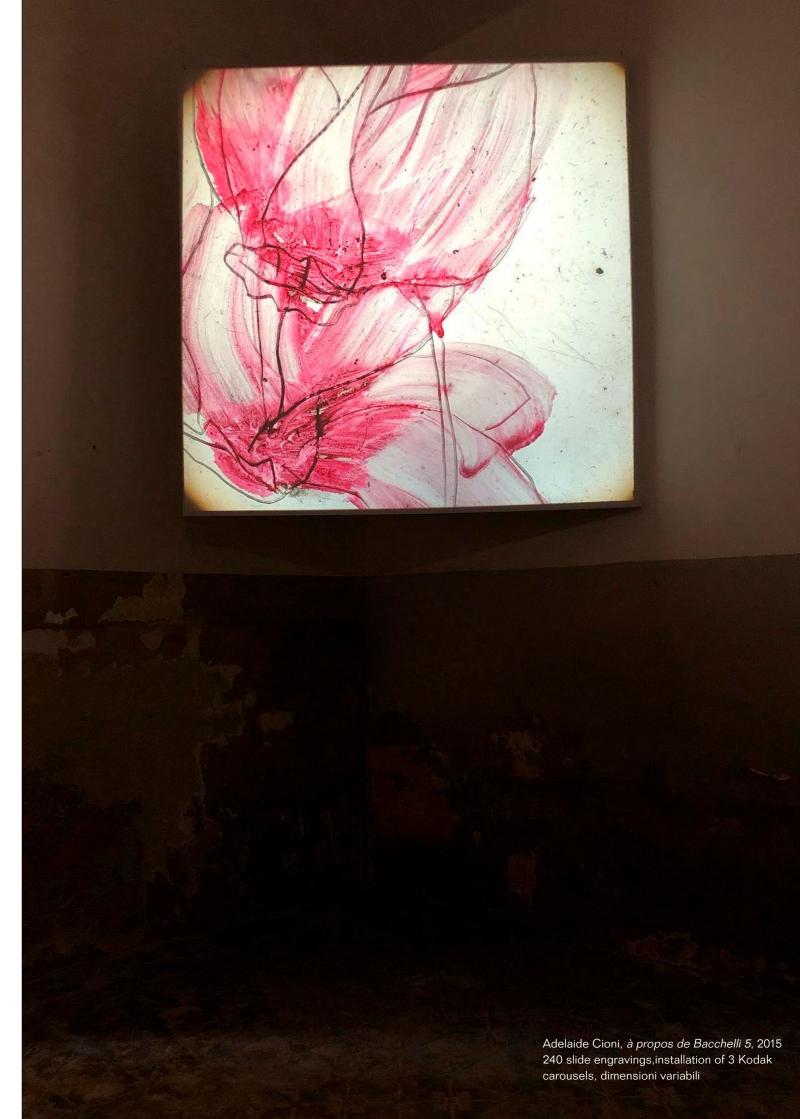












CAPES AND MODULES

Restart from a point-zero of drawing, the line and the circle, black, white, and red, investigating possibilities of further involvement of the audience with the works. An architectural module which creates a bathing-hut sort of structure which can accomodate more and more people by attaching several modules together. A series of wearable pieces made of old handwoven fabrics on which different decorative patterns are stitched. The texture of the fabric, the sheer weight of it, takes whoever wears it back to the physical dimension of who we are. These are devices for our bodies, with these we give shape to space, and take part in a play with no parts and no plot.







Adelaide Cioni, *Module*, 2020 acrylic on fabric, wood, $180 \times 72 \times 72$ cm

If you work with space you must be ready to do mobile works. Works that are, with space, in a dialogic relationship, open, made of possibilities, of change. Because life is change.

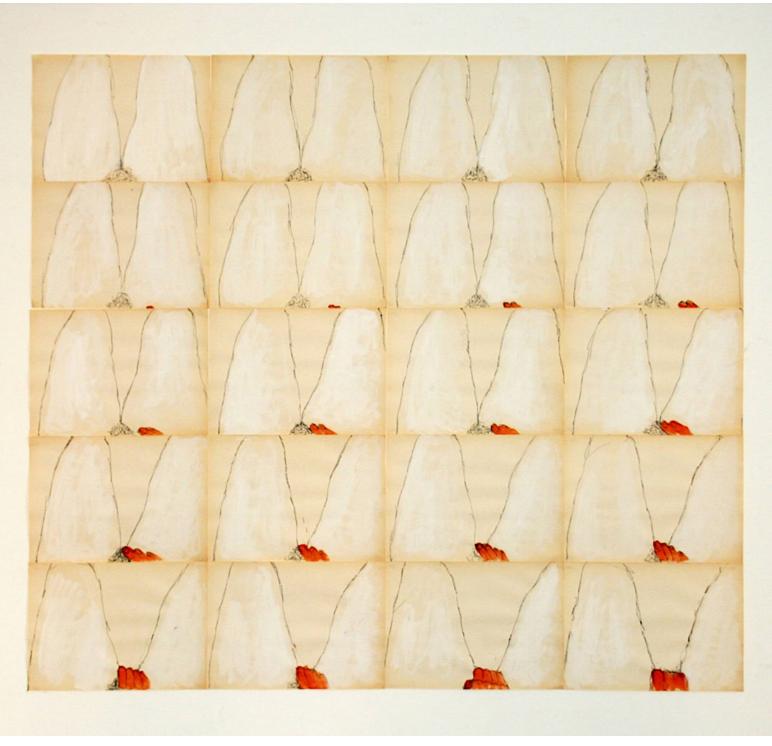
Space is the body. Or rather, to work with space means to work with the body, with the negative of the body, whatever surrounds it. Open modules at MAMbo, Bologna, IT, 2020





Adelaide Cioni, *Study for a red headdress*, 2020 wool stitched on canvas, 112 × 92 cm

TO BE NAKED



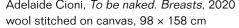
Adelaide Cioni, Self-portrait with the red hand, 2017, ink and acrylic on paper, 105×120 cm

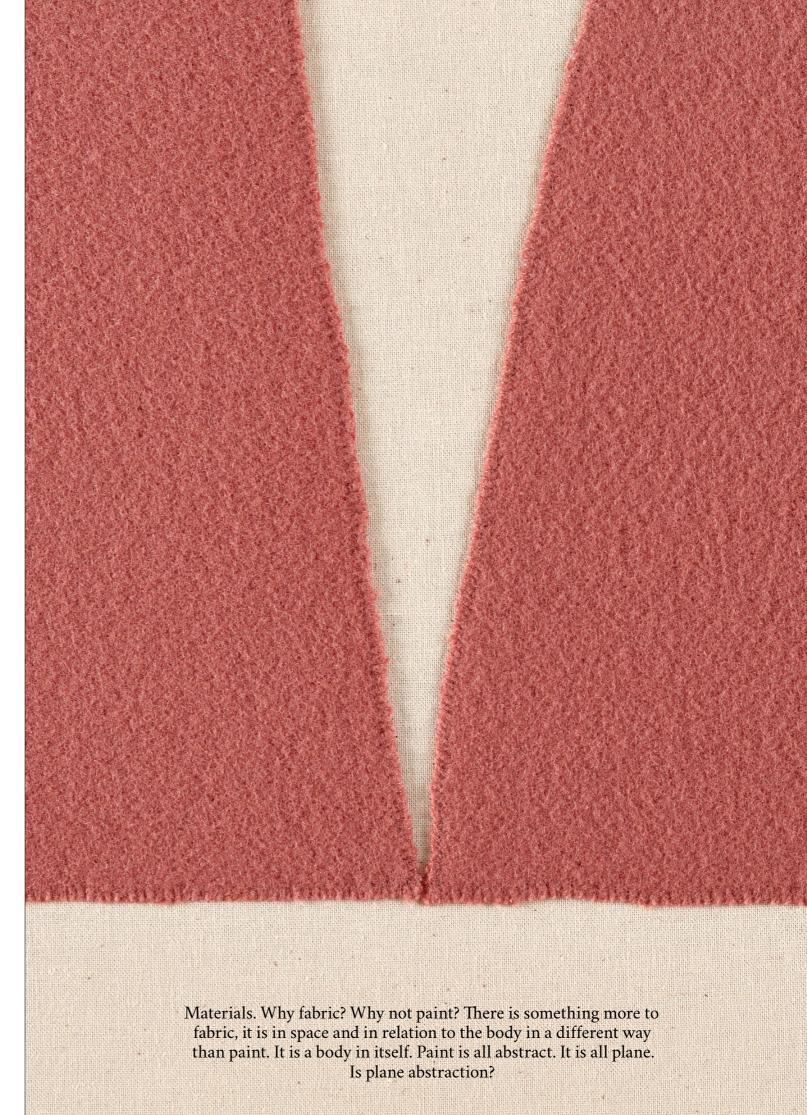
To be naked groups a series of works (canvases, drawings, sculptures) that revolve around the concept of nudity, which reflect on the body and on that sensitive point which is the unavoidable datum of sex. What does it mean to undress, to see oneself, to represent oneself pink? Where does shame come from? Sex as an unsolicited complication, as a burden of the soul, which makes a choice. And art? What does art think of male-female categorizations etc.? It blissfully ignores them, it is above. This is also why it frees us all.



Adelaide Cioni, *To be naked. Basics*, 2017 fabric, 104 × 72 cm

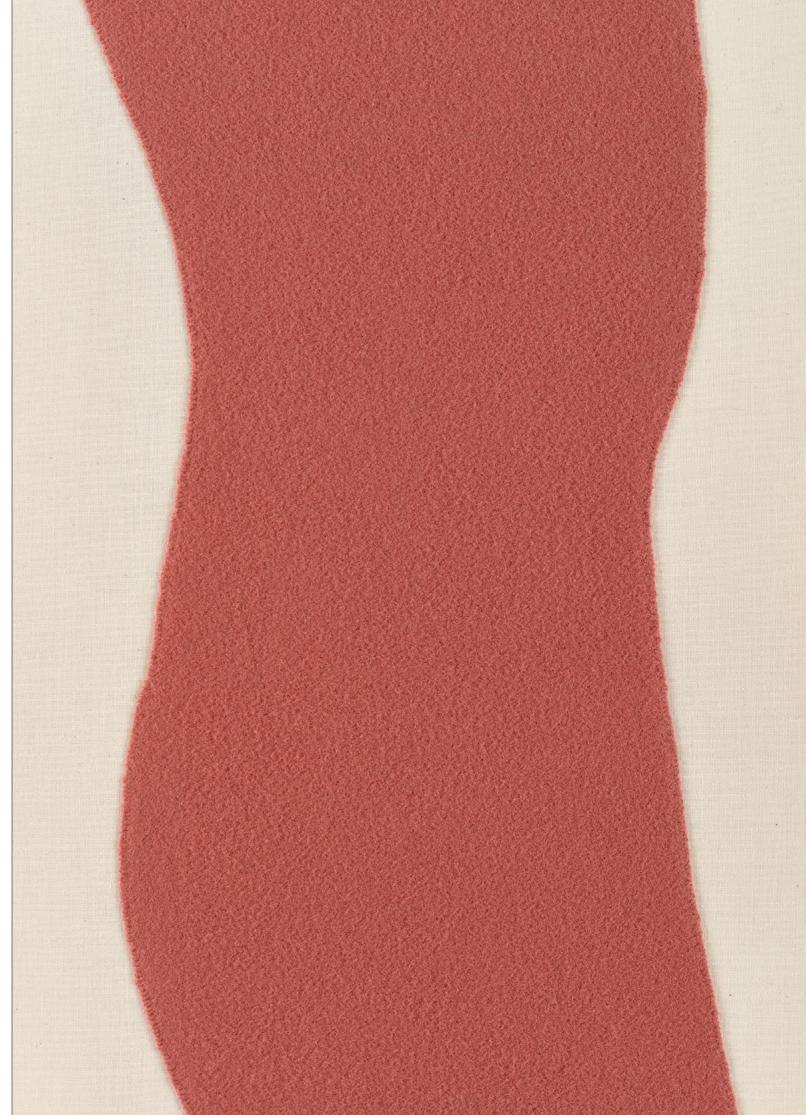


















To be naked as an exercise in self-discipline, self-disclosure.

To be naked to be pink. To be vulnerable.

Nothing needed except much bravery.

To dream of being naked in a public place and be ashamed.

What is shame? How is it connected to being naked? Exposing your own sexual attributes. Being blunt. Being explicit. Being unavoidably sexual. Sex as something you can't avoid. You can't escape your own body. How cumbersome. You can change it though. Sex as a feeling.

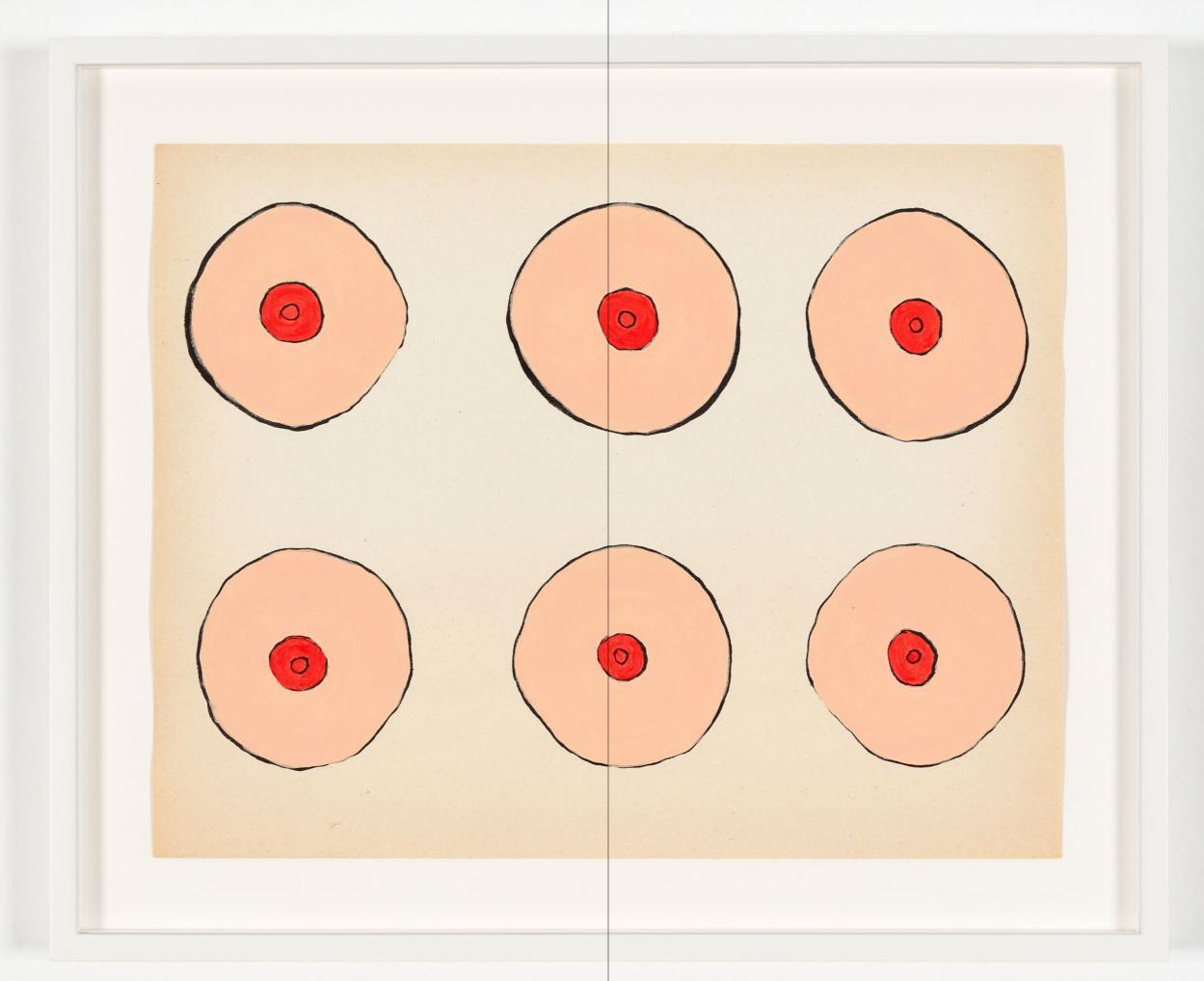
The naked body is beyond the categories of beauty.

The naked body is beyond the categories of beauty.
Just like art is beyond the categories of sex.



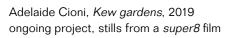
Adelaide Cioni, Pink Punk Piece, 2017 costume for Pink Punk Performance, fabric, variable dimensions

Pink Punk Performance, 2017, with Fabio Giorgi Alberti, Da Franco senza appuntamento, Roma

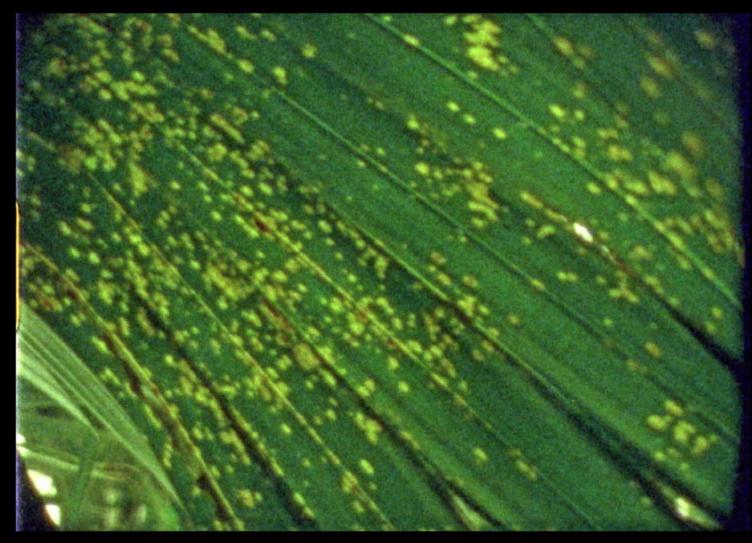


KEW GARDENS

Filming the palms in Kew Gardens, recording all the hues of a single colour, green, as it takes on different shapes. I use *super8* to have deeper colour, it is more physical. It is closer to the way I see. Ongoing project.











SIX OR SEVEN

An installation for the tiny church of Madonna del Pozzo, via Monterone, Spoleto, August 2019





It has to do with living in Umbria. Working close to Giotto. Watching Sol LeWitt and speaking with people who spoke with him.

It has to do with Mary, virgin or not. The power and energy of Mary, of being a woman among men. Of being a woman and holding a mystery within her body. Of speaking through her body, almost no words.

It has to do with decoration as an awkward attempt to point towards infinity and nature.

It has to do with drawing as a trace of the soul left by the body – whose body, whose drawing?

I am the body, the drawing is by Bernardino.









Installing

I created a room within the tiny church of Madonna del Pozzo in Spoleto for this installation reflecting on the body of Mary, as a stand for the body of all women. Mary only ever speaks six or seven times in the *New Testament*, and yet the whole story lives off the mistery of her body.

All this fundamental story comes from her body. There

All this fundamental story comes from her body. There weren't words left from her, only the simulacrum. So I decided to cover it up, to underline the fact that we look at her body but we are trying to see what's inside, behind the surface of her skin. Being a woman upon men can be quite difficult.

First of all you are a body. Secondly you are a mistery. Thirdly you want to be a person.

The Ab ovo* series focuses on decorative motifs discovered during travels, reading, visits to museums; motifs from prehistoric artifacts, Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan, Polynesian, Middle Eastern, Native American in origin, along with others that are artistic expressions from more recent centuries, all the way to the present. Some are botanical, others geometric and abstract, or celestial.

Ab ovo is therefore an investigation on the recurrence of certain decorations, from prehistory to the Renaissance to the present, and it springs to some extent from an interest in language: these images narrate nothing, there are no protagonists, no story, no words of reference or symbols to decipher. These decorations are a pure attempt to fill space with a repeated sign, to tame the material nature of the world, of objects, our everyday settings, taking them back to a code that entirely lives on a visual level. They are codes, but they have no meaning; for a former translator like me, this is interesting because it hints at an aspect of the mind that is capable of abstraction, but not verbal. An all-visual dimension where the mind simply wants to organize space, to dress it in signs, to take possession of it, prior to any language. Since some of these patterns – like the blocks or the stripes – are found in countless regions of the world, in all time periods, I go so far as to think that these are visual codes tacitly inscribed in each of us, which are universal like geometry, like abstraction.

Decorative motifs are also interesting as an attempt to come to terms with nature and to replicate its methods of proliferation: every pattern contains the idea of infinity, because it can ideally be repeated forever, just as nature multiplies itself infinitely in modules that are endowed with identical functional characteristics, but are incarnated in individual bodies, each with its own more or less marked variations with respect to the original canon. There are millions of leaves on a tree, but no two of them are precisely alike. Every incarnation has individual, unique characteristics, because becoming body means becoming matter, and matter inevitably implies accident. *Ab ovo* is therefore also an ode to diversity, a defense of the deviance of bodies.

* Ab ovo is a Latin expression that literally means "from the egg" and indicates "from the beginning," where beginning is seen as something very ancient, the origin of all history. In particular, the egg referred to is the one from which Helen of Troy was born, the egg laid by Leda after the intercourse with Zeus, who had taken on the guise of a swan.

Adelaide Cioni, *Ab ovo*, installation view, Arte Fiera 2020, Bologna, IT





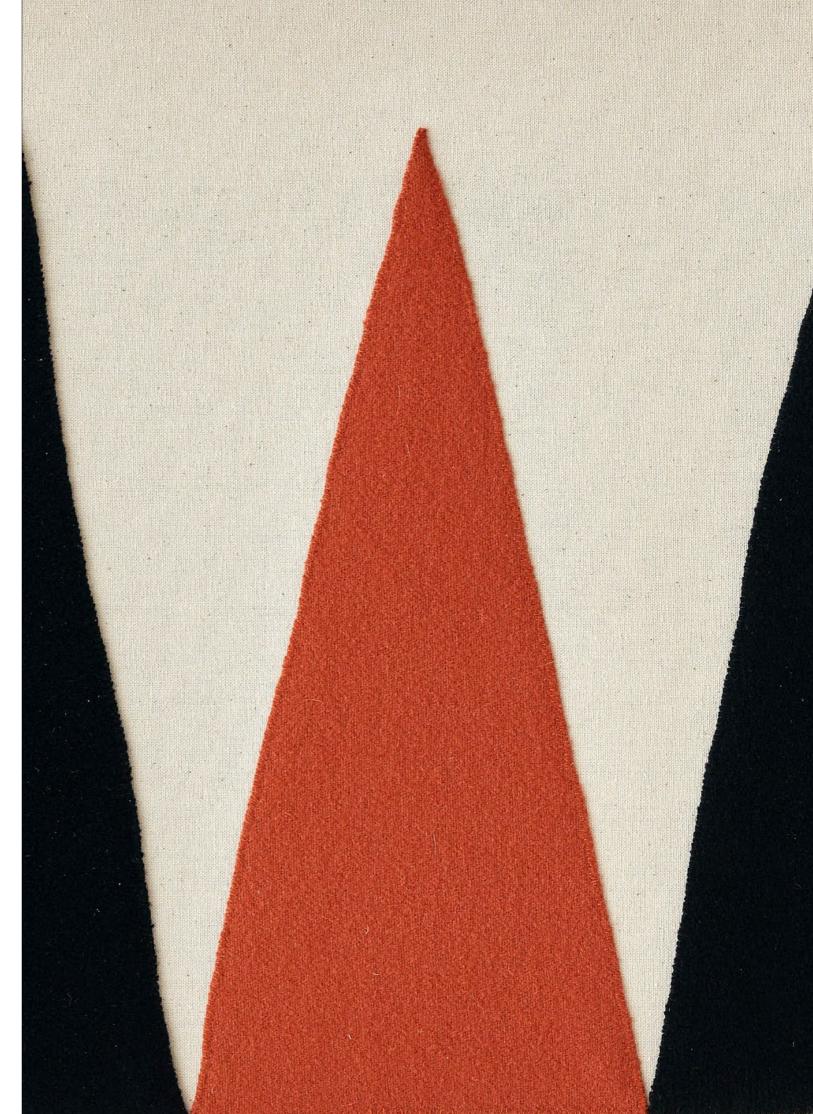


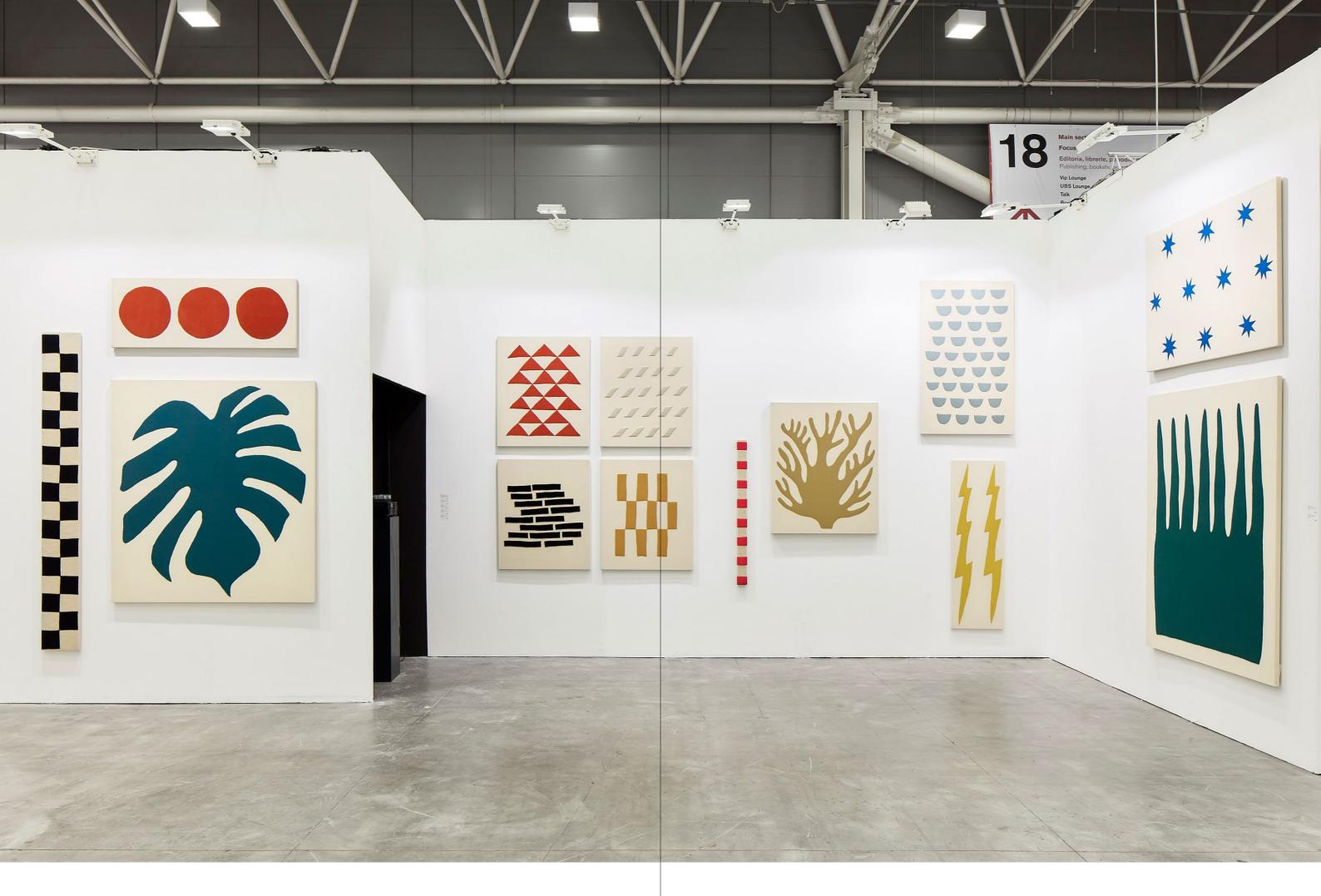


Adelaide Cioni, *Ab ovo. White egg*, 2020 wool stitched on canvas, 34 × 24 cm

Adelaide Cioni, *Ab ovo. Blue stripes*, 2020 wool stitched on canvas, 76×56 cm











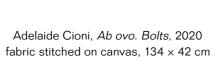


fabric stitched on canvas, quadriptych, 88×74 cm each, 176×156 cm overall

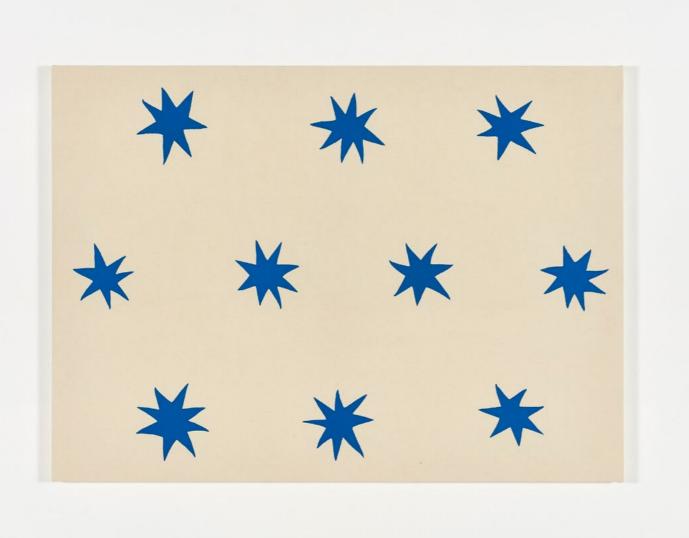




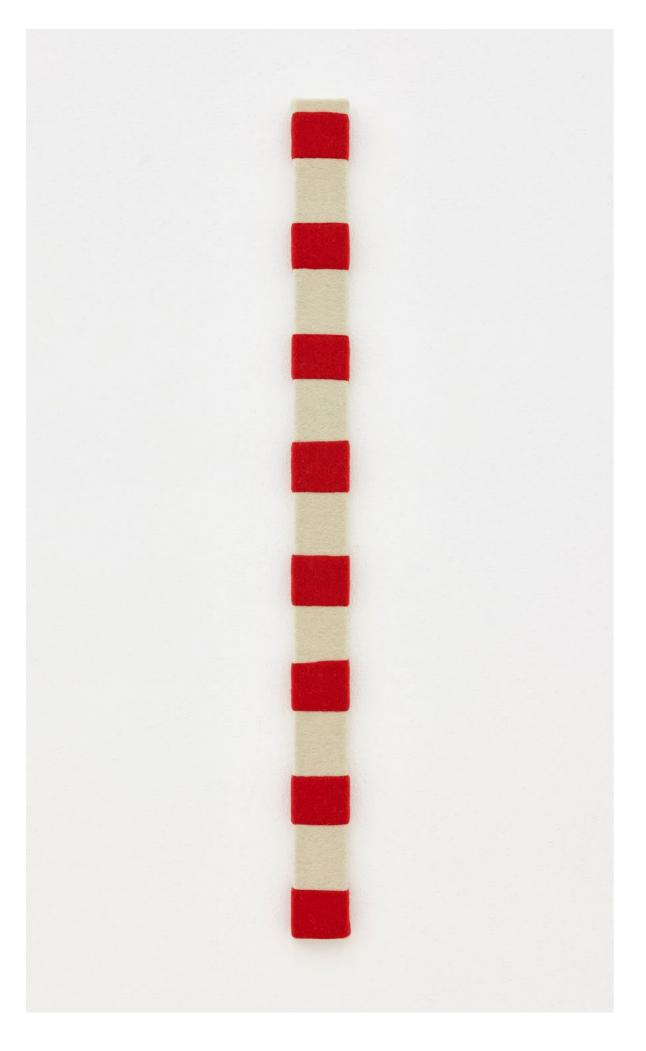


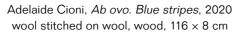








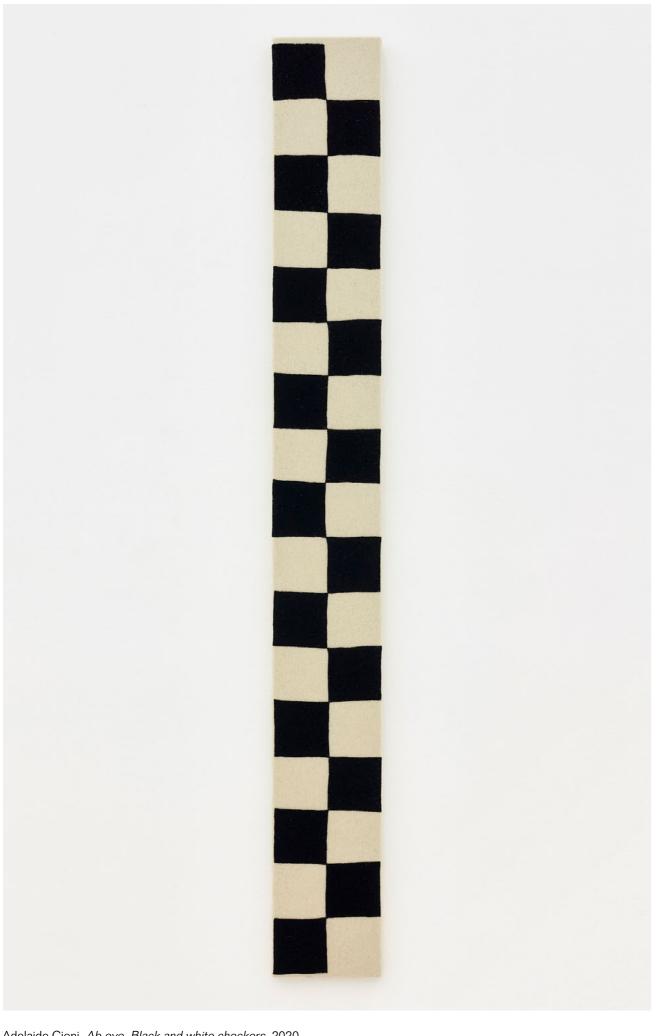


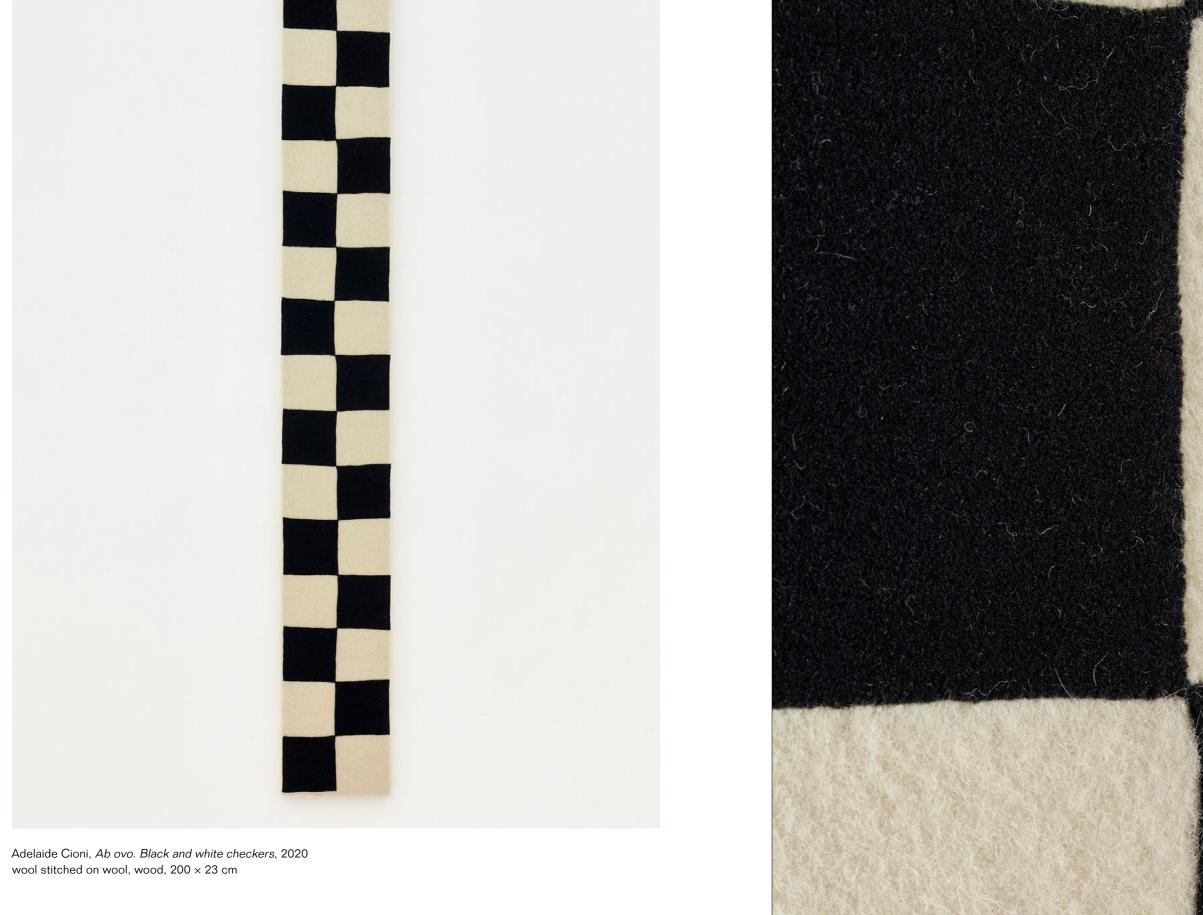






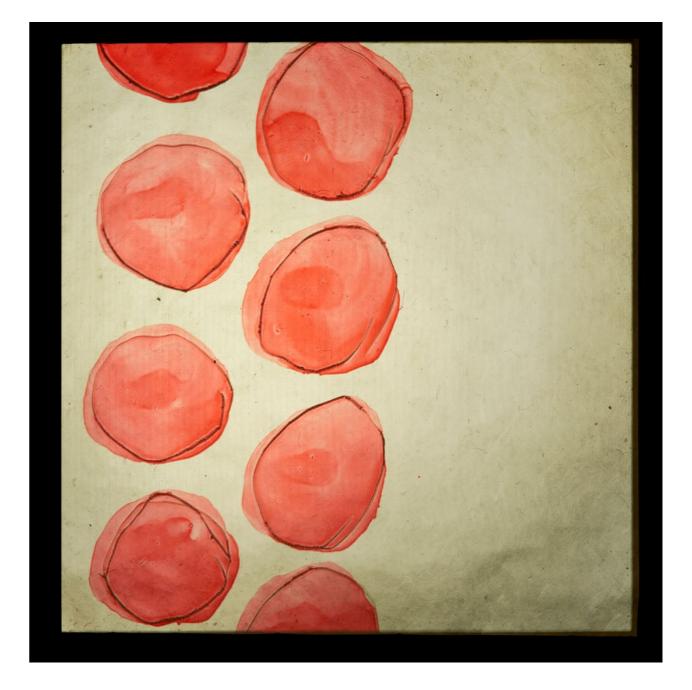


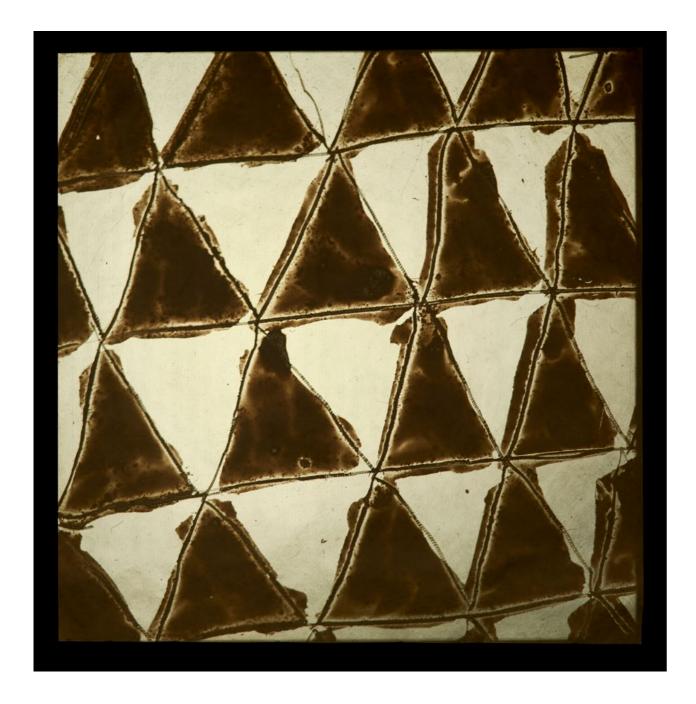








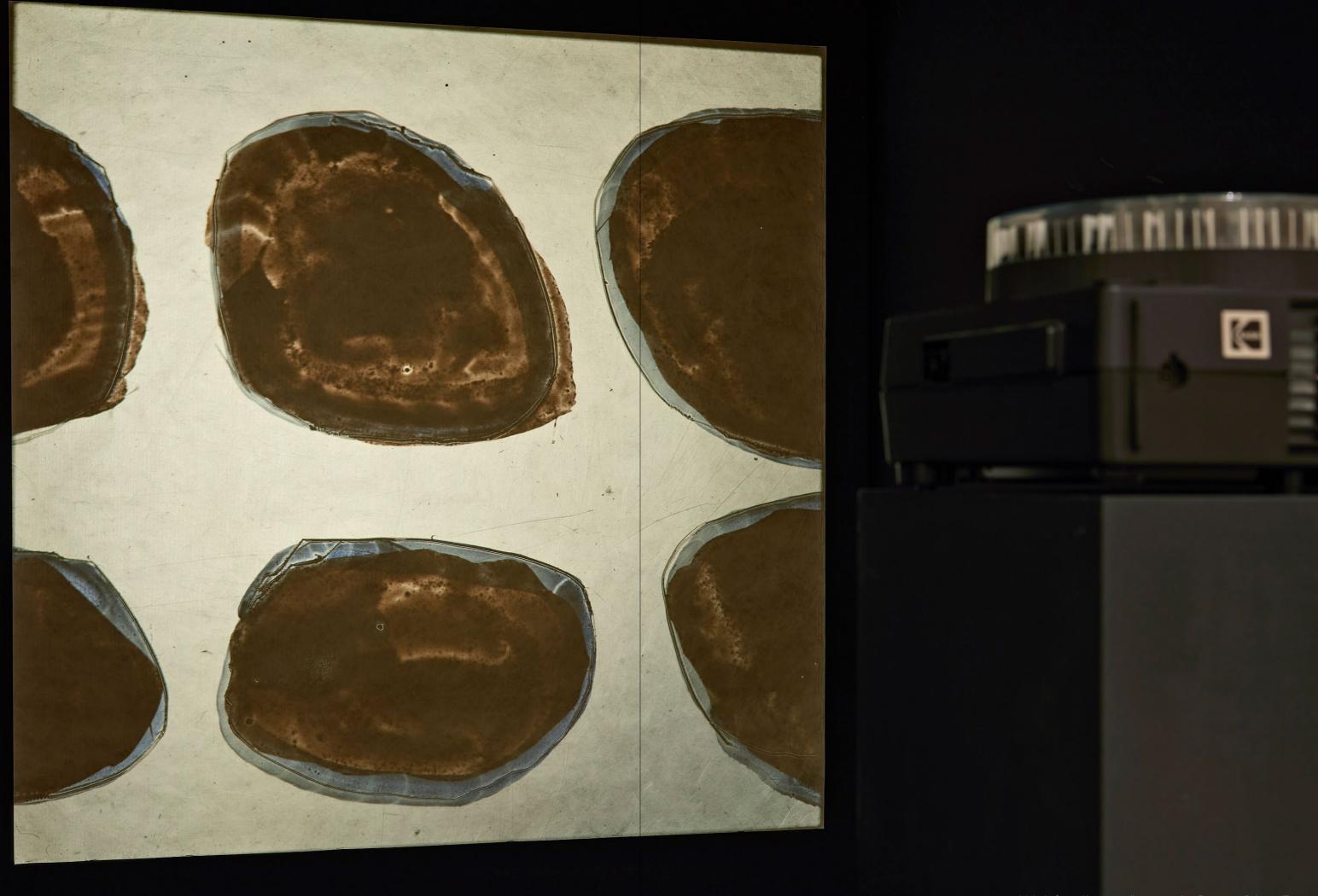










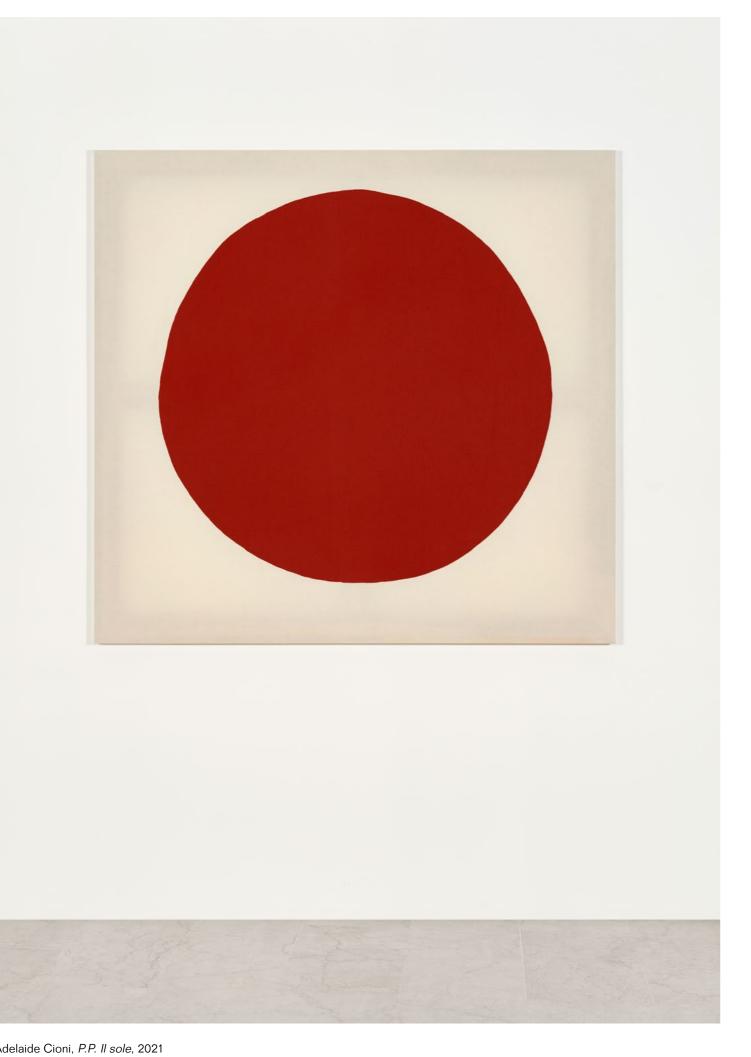


P.P.

The Sala Quadrata presents three works by Adelaide Cioni. It is a series of "sewn paintings", in line with the language that characterizes the artist's poetics. Made for the occasion, these works are comparable to enormous "collages" of fabrics of different colors applied on canvas, to form simple, almost elementary, yet universal, archetypal images. Cioni paints a playful landscape: the sun, a palm tree, a strip of sea are the elements that make up this Mediterranean scenario, capable of referring to an imagery in which childhood memories and nostalgia merge. Synthetic and expressive, the artist's works dialogue with the external part of the building, which opens into the garden.

text by Saverio Verini

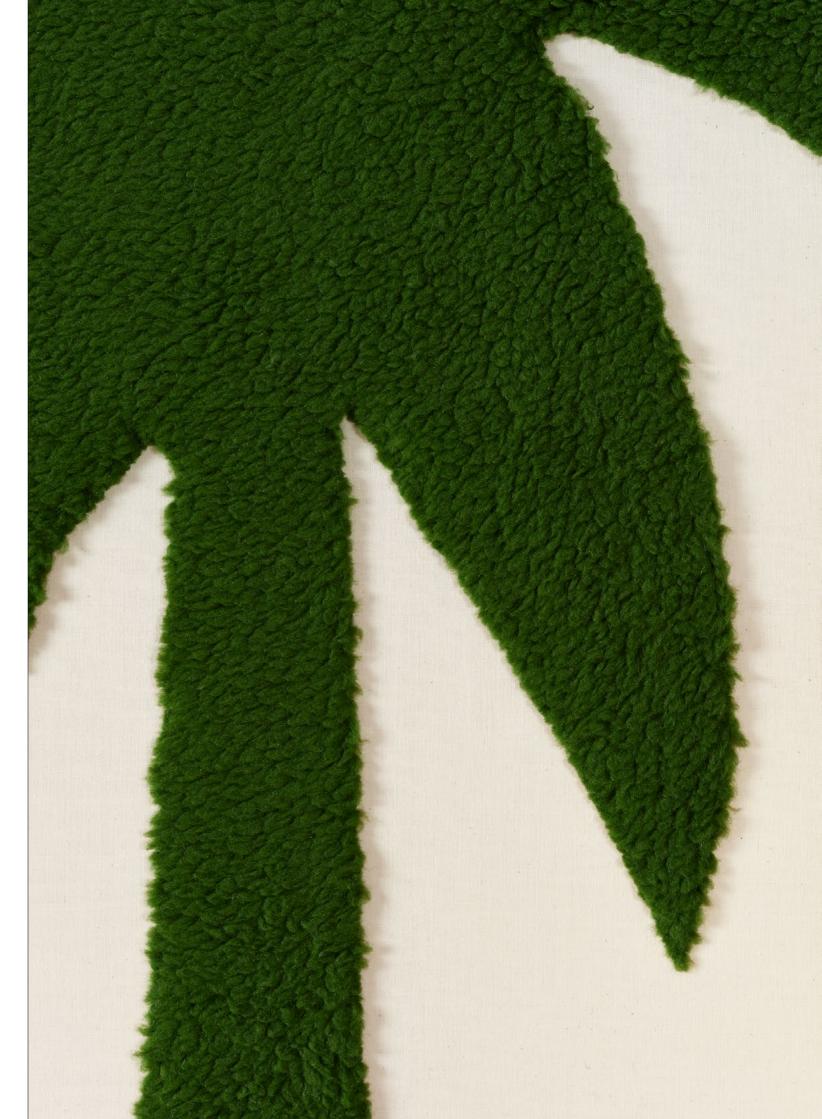














Adelaide Cioni, *P.P. II mare*, 2021 wool stitched on wool, wood, 15 x 188 cm



GO EASY ON ME

Go Easy on Me results from the possible permutations and multiplications of color within a given form. The forms have outlines – revealing the extent to which her practice is rooted in drawing - that are filled with solid pure seductive color.

Flat and matte on paper, this modern-day color squeezed straight from the tube and asked to fill in a simple – and happy – ice cream surprisingly reminds us of a fresco: the pink occupying a nondescript popsicle shape is the same pink that was used by Giotto, the same pink that was chosen by Piero della Francesca. And because this shape is precisely that of something as mundane as an ice cream, I view it not as subject but rather as vehicle, color as means, therefore, in all its seductiveness.

Thus, it becomes possible to even abstain and refrain from painting the canvas, and therefore wield scissors in place of brush and trace a form by snipping it out from a swathe of color and sewing it onto a support. The qualities of the color are summed to the qualities of a finer or thicker weave, a harder or a softer texture, and then reproduced on large scale. In this passage, color "takes form" as material, object, as space, or better, as *thing*.

text by Cecilia Canziani









Adelaide Cioni, Go easy on me, one white with red stick, 2020 wool stitched on canvas, 156×98 cm



Adelaide Cioni, Go easy on me, one black with red stick, 2020 wool stitched on canvas, 156×98 cm









Adelaide Cioni, *Go easy on me, one pink*, 2019 fabric on canvas, 192 × 144 cm

Adelaide Cioni, *Go easy on me, one green*, 2018 fabric on canvas, 192 × 144 cm







SECONDARY IMAGES

In the Secondary Images series. The subjects of the four works on the wall and the one sculpture are archetypal images that are parts of both vernacular language (tarot cards, emblems, and coats-of-arms are all images Adelaide Cioni investigates) and Modernist culture (the grid, repetition, sequencing). Aby Warburg calls these occurrences Nachleben: survivals, and in the same way as the chessboard, the waves, the column, the circle, the oval, they are subjects that we recognize without bothering to ascribe meaning of any kind, neither literal nor metaphoric or even figurative. These images are even more available and familiar and less surprising than an ice cream cone, and it is precisely because they are so recognizable and require no further interpretation that they hit us so directly, in the same way that an icon never describes an idea but invariably positions itself as the impossible incarnation of an idea.

A circle can be a sun or a black hole. A chessboard is an alternation of red and white, and the waves of the sea repeated in sequence are another possible version. In each of these works, the choice the artist makes lies in giving a color, giving that alone and nothing else, and in giving it one precise form and not another. (It takes courage to state complex things simply and to declare that all painting is an abandonment to color).

text by Cecilia Canziani















Adelaide Cioni, I buchi neri, 2019 fabric on canvas, 150×120 cm



Adelaide Cioni, Colonna, 2019 fabric and wooden structure with mesh, $200 \times 45 \text{ø}$ cm











