

This summer the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève is pleased to be hosting the first retrospective of Gianni Piacentino, one of the most inventive Italian artists of the second half of the 20th century. Initially associated with the Arte Povera movement, he went on to develop a vocabulary of his own that is constantly probing the boundaries and the complexity of the links between art and design. Between 1965 and 1968, Piacentino paved the way for minimalism in Italy – at the same time as, but independently and not in the wake of, the American minimalism of Judd, Lewitt, Morris and McCracken. He remains a figure of contemporary significance by virtue of the individuality and vision of his imagination. Piacentino's art is in the doing. His colour is material, physical: varnishes he selects and then tests repeatedly until he finds exactly the right shade for the desired optical (and tactile) effect – varnishes he applies in layers. Beyond pleasure in materials, Piacentino is inspired by a love of objects. The geometric symbols of his early works give way to everyday objects, and at the end of the 1960s his minimalist sculptures increasingly celebrate the dynamism of machines, the myth of speed, engines and movement: "vehicles" and "wings" reveal his passion for "The Aesthetics of Technique" that would become his trademark. Piacentino is both artist and constructor: his works are objects, prototypes even, and at the same time metaphorical representations of the object become symbol.

Born in Coazze (Turin) in 1945, today Gianni Piacentino lives and works in Turin.

The artist trained in the Turin of the mid-1960s, when Arte Povera was emerging. He took part in the movement's first exhibitions – that at Enzo Sperone's Turin gallery in 1966 and, especially, "Arte Povera più Azioni Povere" at the former arsenal in Amalfi in 1968 – and then in the "Prospect '68" exhibition at the Kunsthalle, Düsseldorf. His résumé also lists professional activities that are unusual for an artist: he has been a consultant to a manufacturer of special varnishes, and a designer and rider of racing motorbikes.

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