

**BALICE  
HERTLING**

**Enzo Cucchi, *I maschi***

11.10. - 16.11.2024



## BALICE HERTLING

"I maschi" marks Enzo Cucchi's third solo show at Balice Hertling, bringing together several series of works created between 2005 and 2023. At the entrance, sixteen panels sculpted in bronze and waxed in black evoke the history of Venice: pilgrims advance toward a Viking ship that appears to float above the waters, the city's emblematic lion roars, dominating the waves, and Ezra Pound's imprisonment is also depicted. A bronze mooring post stands at the center of these Venetian scenes.

Other bronze sculptures punctuate the space. Two bells nestle in the corner of a wall, revealing two dogs holding hands and kissing. On the staircase, a Madonna is installed, both as a ship's figurehead and a gargoyle. Recognizable by her iconic attributes, here she is dressed as a cat, with her tail tucked between her legs. The title of "Buco di culo" (2017) is tongue-in-cheek, and the work, also placed in a corner, evokes both an anal orifice and a fountain.

The exhibition also includes works from "Per Cecco!", presented for the first time in January 2024 at Forte Malatesta in Italy, a former fortified and religious site now turned museum. This project explores the figure of Cecco d'Ascoli, a medieval philosopher, astronomer, and alchemist persecuted for his beliefs. Through this project, Cucchi reinterprets the history and memory of these spaces, imbuing them with new dimensions. His paintings and ceramics are embedded in metal structures, responding to the architectural constraints of the Malatesta historic site and its prison history.

A large painting on wood occupies an entire gallery wall. It features a skeleton, a recurring motif for Cucchi, which serves as a memento mori symbolizing good fortune for the artist. For this painting, Cucchi reused wooden boards from the Italian film studios at Cinecittà. These boards, once used as backdrops, now testify to the accumulated layers of paint from years of use.

A self-taught poet and painter, Cucchi has been a key figure in Italian art since the 1970s. Known for his highly expressive, lyrical paintings, he continues to explore materiality, experimenting with different media and contexts to push back the boundaries of his work.

Enzo Cucchi (b. 1949, Ancona, Italy) currently lives and works in Rome. Since the 1970s, Cucchi has presented numerous solo exhibitions in institutions worldwide. Among these stand out the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1983), The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (1986), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1986), Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, München (1987), Wiener Secession, Vienna (1988), Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg (1992), Castello di Rivoli, Turin (1993), Sezon Museum of Art, Tokyo (1996), Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Hamburg (1999), Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv (1999 and 2001), Villa Medici, Rome (2006) and MAXXI, Rome (2023).

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“The wheat is the most important thing. Harvested in summer, in the past, violinists and organ grinders would follow the reapers as they worked in a line, cutting wheat with their sickles while singing to the music. The reapers worked long hours, forming sheaves of wheat, tying them with cords made from wheat stems. The whole scene was suffused with the warm smell of wheat, and the workers sang of love, often daring songs.

In the 19th century, a violinist would accompany the reapers, playing music, not only for harvests but also during Easter or New Year, going from cottage to cottage, receiving food in exchange for his music. During the grape harvest, although there were no musicians, workers would sing while pressing the grapes with their feet, filling the air with a sweet yet tart perfume.

Stories like these were passed down by grandfathers, like the tale of the robin redbreast, named for the blood of Christ. During the war, I wrote to my family using these old tales to both communicate and confuse the censors. When I returned from the war, it was difficult to find my way home, but finally, I did, and we celebrated all night.

The life of a peasant is hard—working in the fields, enduring the heat and cold, and dealing with the unpredictable forces of nature that could ruin months of labor. The fog and the changing winds could sneak into your bones, making work even harder. Everything had its smell: the earth, the plants, the animals. Smells tied everything together, linking us to the land and each other.

Families lived closely connected. The elderly would sit by the fire, offering advice. They knew their wisdom was valuable, even if their physical strength had waned. In our house, we bathed once a week in the stalls, warmed by the heat of the cows. The cows, too, were attuned to the changes in weather, often sensing the wind shift before we did.

In July, fields were threshed, and by August, even young boys of eight or nine led the cows to plough. I remember oversleeping once, and my father, frustrated, made me plough three furrows alone. It was hard work, for us and for the cows, whose tongues hung out in exhaustion.

In war, children took over the men’s work, getting up at dawn to cut hay by moonlight. We worked in bare feet or clogs, saving shoes for Sundays. When we could afford it, a shoemaker would come to our home to make and repair shoes. The seamstress also came to sew new clothes when ours were worn out.

In winter, we butchered pigs, saving every part for different uses—salami, sausages, prosciutto, and lard. The process was intense, from draining the blood to preserving the meat in salt and hanging it in the cellar to eat during the summer when food was scarce.

Spring brought sowing, waiting for rain, and pruning the vines. In summer, wheat was harvested. Every grain of wheat was believed to show the face of the Madonna and child, and fireflies appeared, ripening the wheat with their lights. It was believed that the fireflies shone their lights on the wheat, helping it grow and ripen.”

Morro D’Alba, Summer 2001

Giuseppe Cucchi, Brunella Antomarini

Giuseppe Cucchi, the narrator, was born in Morro D’Alba (Ancona) in the region of the Marche, on the Adriatic sea. In the 60s he moved to Brescia in Northern Italy to find a better work but he came back after a few years as he couldn’t breathe well there. He lived in Ancona for many years and now he has come back to live in his native village, Morro D’Alba, with his wife Chiarina.

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**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled, 2005*  
Bronze  
25 x 40 x 2.5 cm  
9 7/8 x 15 3/4 x 1 in



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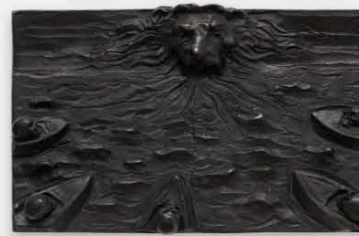
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**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Religion*, 2023  
Bronze  
60 x 80 x 65 cm  
23 5/8 x 31 1/2 x 25 5/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2017  
Bronze  
20 x 20 x 20 cm  
7 7/8 x 7 7/8 x 7 7/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on canvas  
21 x 34 x 3 cm  
8 1/4 x 13 3/8 x 1 1/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on brick  
21 x 21 x 3 cm  
8 1/4 x 8 1/4 x 1 1/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on canvas  
23 x 34 x 3 cm  
9 x 13 3/8 x 1 1/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on brick  
21 x 21 x 3 cm  
8 1/4 x 8 1/4 x 1 1/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on canvas  
22 x 37 x 3 cm  
8 5/8 x 14 5/8 x 1 1/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on panel  
21 x 37 x 3 cm  
8 1/4 x 14 5/8 x 1 1/8 in



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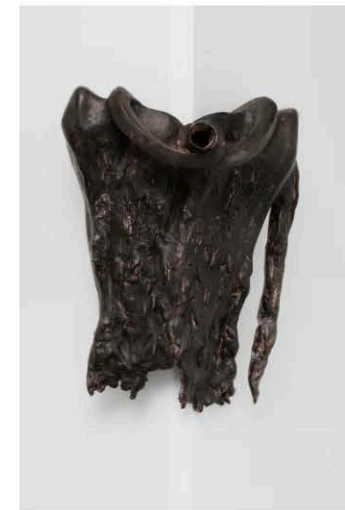
**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on canvas  
21 x 35 x 3 cm  
8 1/4 x 13 3/4 x 1 1/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*La quadra*, 2021  
Oil and ceramic on wood  
270 x 180 x 9 cm  
106 1/4 x 70 7/8 x 3 1/2 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled*, 2018  
Bronze  
80 x 20 x 25 cm  
31 1/2 x 7 7/8 x 9 7/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Buco di culo*, 2017  
Bronze  
20 x 40 x 30 cm  
7 7/8 x 15 3/4 x 11 3/4 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Campana)*, 2023  
Ceramic  
45 x 45 x 30 cm  
17 3/4 x 17 3/4 x 11 3/4 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Parallelepipedo con galli)*, 2023  
Ceramic  
35 x 30 x 25 cm  
13 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 9 7/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Uccelli)*, 2023  
Ceramic  
50 x 30 x 30 cm  
19 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 11 3/4 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Fiore rosso)*, 2023  
Ceramic  
15 x 50 x 45 cm  
5 7/8 x 19 3/4 x 17 3/4 in

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**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Fiore con scheletro), 2023*  
Ceramic  
35 x 40 x 40 cm  
13 3/4 x 15 3/4 x 15 3/4 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Cani), 2023*  
Ceramic  
10 x 65 x 50 cm  
4 x 25 5/8 x 19 3/4 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Borgo con scheletro), 2023*  
Ceramic  
15 x 65 x 30 cm  
5 7/8 x 25 5/8 x 11 3/4 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Fiore con scheletro), 2023*  
Ceramic  
10 x 70 x 35 cm  
4 x 27 1/2 x 13 3/4 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Tubo con scheletro giallo), 2023*  
Ceramic  
25 x 100 x 20 cm  
9 7/8 x 39 3/8 x 7 7/8 in



**Enzo Cucchi**  
*Untitled (Mascherone), 2023*  
Ceramic  
15 x 65 x 30 cm  
5 7/8 x 25 5/8 x 11 3/4 in



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Exhibition view Enzo Cucchi 'I maschi', Gallery Balice Hertling, 2024

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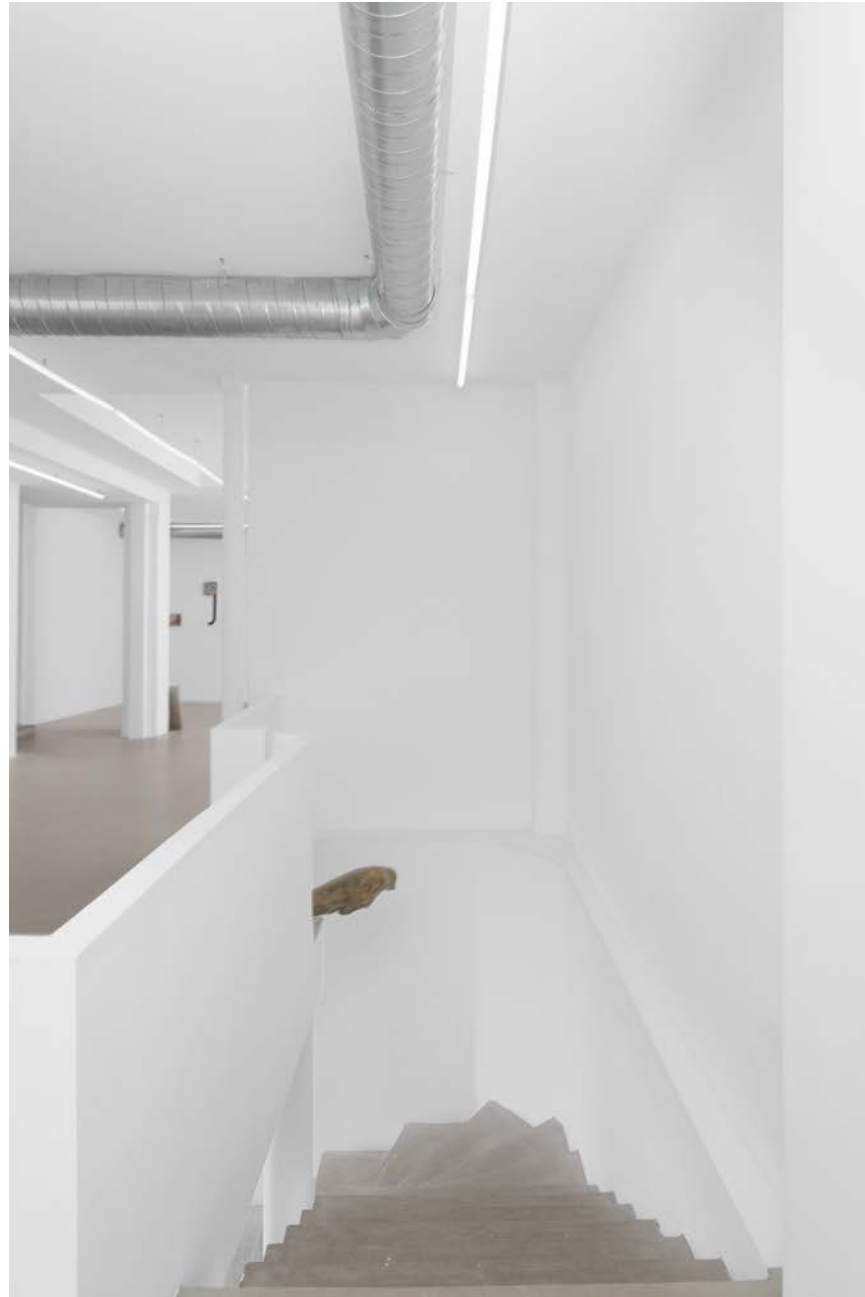


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