



GALLERIA
RAFFAELLA
CORTESE

MARCELLO MALOBERTI

INCIPIIT

CURATED BY
GIULIO DALVIT

MARCELLO MALOBERTI

INCIPIIT

via a. stradella 7-1-4, Milan

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Three gallery spaces, all along the same street. Three identical four-lobed brass plates—typical of the Italian religious tradition, and beyond—engraved with the same phrase from the Martellate series: *IL PUBBLICO DEVE RIMANERE NELLA SUA FAME* (THE PUBLIC SHALL REMAIN IN THEIR HUNGER), lifted from a lecture discussing Pasolini's *Petrolio*. This is *INCIPIIT*. An exhibition with which Marcello Maloberti inaugurates a moment of radical essentiality: not a return to the image, but its subtraction. Here, the emptiness becomes a threshold, a condition to be inhabited, a device that does not illustrate but rather operates. *INCIPIIT* is an aniconic work that opens space to what has not yet taken place: it does not deny form; it prepares it.

The work itself does not change — what shifts is the gaze, ferrying the visitor-performer through the stations of a non-linear Via Crucis with no final destination. Here, repetition does not multiply, but insists: it does not produce excess, but an echo. It is the minimal grammar of insistence, a meter working by pressure, like a hammer-blow that vibrates on the same spot until the surface finally cracks.

In this pulsing void, the Sacred does not present itself as image but emerges as an operative tension. Even the Crucified Christ around a corner in the gallery is not the end of a story—it shies away from us, negating any conclusion or resolution. Generating surprise and discomfiture, the plaques mirror the public, returning them to themselves, inside and outside the work: the gallery, filling and emptying, almost organic in its breathing, becomes the true protagonist of the work. Unlike Piero Manzoni, who on July 21, 1960, offered the public hard-boiled eggs stamped with his fingerprint— as though a priest administering communion, mediating the divine in the communion between artist, work, and audience—Maloberti withdraws, and leaves the public “in their hunger.”

It is not artworks or figures that nourish the space, but the very bodies of the visitors passing through, unwitting protagonists of an unscripted theater. Like John Cage in *4'33"*, the artist

steps aside, simply holding a mirror to show the astonishment of the public elevated to the condition of artwork itself — an artwork one must listen to (or auscultate). One that risks feeling, perhaps, a little abandoned.

Yet Maloberti has built for the public a moment and a space in which to feel abandoned to the possible: *INCIPIIT* does not mark the artist's final withdrawal—as in Lee Lozano's *Dropout Piece* or Bas Jan Ader's disappearance during *In Search of the Miraculous*. It promises neither completion nor end: it is the suspended moment in which form remains unpredictable, ready to arise from the slightest gestures; from the coming and going of those who pass through. It is a beginning that coincides with its own enigmatic nature, with the freedom of possibilities—*Incipit* as opposite to *explicit*.

For, here to exhibit means to open, not to explain. This is not an exhibition that instructs, but one that interrogates—like an exhausted oracle, or a mantra that seeks to engrave itself on the very surface of the city through its audience, who become its conductor. The work does not shine on its own, but through those who traverse it; it does not accomplish, but awaits; it does not declare, but provides the space for questions.

Probably aware that, as Calvino writes, “every beginning is a moment of detachment from the multiplicity of possibilities,” Maloberti, after his major exhibition at PAC (2024–25), questions the point from which one can begin again. In contrast to that retrospective unfolding, *INCIPIIT* takes another stance: neither emphasis nor cataloguing, but concentration. A gesture that withdraws in order to flare with new intensity. Rarefaction as condensation, subtraction as opening. “I dwell in Possibility,” said Emily Dickinson: a house that is more hospitable than prose, more abundant in windows, more generous of doors.

Almost Montessori-like, Maloberti's proposal entrusts the viewer with a pedagogy of autonomy: he builds a house of possibilities in which one may safely attempt to grow; to recognize the ancestral hunger for art; to move by one's own criteria. And, like a mother who whispers “I'll be right back,” we know the artist too will come back - but then we would hope, then, to find ourselves changed: perhaps more autonomous, perhaps more self-aware, perhaps still hungrier.

Giulio Dalvit