

APALAZZOGALLERY

GIORGIO CIAM ***Pittura, scultura, stratificazioni***

Curated by Elena Re

11 January – 15 March 2025

APALAZZOGALLERY is pleased to present the new solo exhibition of the Italian artist **Giorgio Ciam** (1941-1996) entitled **GIORGIO CIAM. Pittura, scultura, stratificazioni**, curated by Elena Re.

The exhibition – the second solo show of the artist's work in the gallery, highlights the most mature and vibrant part of Ciam's production, that from the 1980s. This was a period in which the artist achieved the all-round expression of his soul as a painter and sculptor, yet without abandoning the medium of photography. While working within the International Body Art context, throughout the '70s Ciam had addressed the theme of identity starting from his own body and most of all his face, adopting a form of performative photography through which to make tangible the boundless quest for the self. However, the freedom to 'layer' images, media, experiences and emotions emerged forcefully at the start of the '80s, proving itself over time to be a practice capable of adding particular depth to his research. Through a selection of more than forty works from the Giorgio Ciam Archive, the exhibition thus sets out to offer an outlook which is just as intriguing as it is original: painting, sculpture and stratification as the keys to the true identity of the artist.

As Elena Re states: "From the '80s onwards, Ciam developed his research on the theme of the body, exploring its ability to invade the space, to be sculpture. His chief concern over this period was with the face being projected ever more into matter, encountering form, light and shadow, expressing an action. Another self, a new labyrinth into which to venture." The works on show in the gallery bear witness to this sentiment. Indeed, Ciam's path is one based on an awareness of the inability to offer a single response, on the consciousness of his own multiplicity and relativity. For example, the artist chooses plaster casts of classical sculptures – those used in art academies for figure drawing. He therefore appropriates a form and makes it his own through sculptural technique. He adds layers of matter, disrupting the balance of the mass, abstracting from the specific subject, and thus breathing new life into the form itself, which is thereby transformed into a work of his such as *Classico nascosto*, 1983. On the basis of this experience, Ciam set off along a turbulent path, photographing these sculptures so as to generate new works. He sometimes intervenes on the photograph with drawing or painting, obtaining other works. In some cases, he then adds colour, gluing fragments of images onto the sculpture itself, thereby giving rise to a composition capable of pushing back the limits. And then he projects images of other works of his onto the sculpture before photographing the result, hence obtaining a further outcome from this synthesis: *Stratificazioni*, 1986. The works in the cycle *Ritratto in controluce*, 1989–1991 represent the pinnacle of this research, and the double dating marks a specific passage. These are photographic works made by the artist in 1989, which in turn had germinated from other works where Ciam sees himself over and over again. In 1991, nevertheless, the artist decided to go further, and carried out a pictorial intervention on these same works, letting them be 'swallowed up' by the colour black, and thus re-discovering another form of self. In commenting on this approach, Elena Re concludes by saying: "With these works, harsh yet ever so profound, Ciam states all the intensity of his emotion while also affirming his own need for painting, for existence. It is from these photographic works with interventions that a face then appears: that of Giorgio Ciam."

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Giorgio Ciam (1941, Pont-Saint-Martin, Italy – 1996, Turin, Italy) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Turin and debuted as a sculptor, experimenting with a performative approach. Research into his own identity is the theme that is to be found throughout his oeuvre. From the early '70s, he used photography as a leading figure of Body Art. In the '80s, his performative photography was closely coupled with painting and sculpture. He never ceased to experiment and renew his work, despite remaining forever faithful to his core values. After his death, his work was presented in various exhibitions including: *1968-1998 fotografia e arte in Italia*, curated by Walter Guadagnini and Filippo Maggia, Galleria Civica, Modena (1998); *Ars Photographica. Fotografie und Künstlerbücher*, curated by Anne Thurmann-Jajes, Neues Museum Weserburg, Bremen (2002); *Geografia senza punti cardinali. La fotografia nell'arte degli anni '70 in Italia*, curated by Elena Re, Galleria Giorgio Persano, Torino (2010); *Giorgio Ciam. Sulla pelle*, curated by Elena Re, APALAZZOGALLERY, Brescia (2013); *Giorgio Ciam*, curated by Elena Re, Sotheby's – Palazzo Broggi, Milan (2015); *Surprise. Giorgio Ciam*, curated by Gregorio Mazzonis and Maria Teresa Roberto, GAM – Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin (2015); *Giorgio Ciam. In Dialogue with Bacon*, curated by Artuner, Istituto Italiano di Cultura, London (2016); *Tutto. Perspectives on Italian Art*, curated by Ingvild Goetz, Leo Lencsés, Karsten Löckemann, Letizia Ragaglia and Elena Re, Museion, Bolzano (2018-2019) – Sammlung Goetz, München (2019-2020).

Elena Re is an art critic and independent curator. She explores Italian art through cultural projects, exhibitions and publications. Her research ranges from conceptual photography to radical architecture and the notion of the multiple. On the latter theme, she presented the exhibition *Arte Povera and "Multipli", Torino 1970–1975* at Sprüth Magers gallery (Berlin, 2014) and at the Fondazione ICA (Milan, 2019–2020). She is the scientific director of the Archivio Giorgio Ciam; she follows the careers of numerous artists, and has contributed to the international recognition of Luigi Ghirri's work. Her books include *Luigi Ghirri – Project Prints. An Adventure in Thinking and Looking* (JRPIRingier, Zürich 2012), published on the occasion of the exhibition at Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea. She co-curated the exhibition *Tutto. Perspectives on Italian Art* at Museion (Bolzano, 2018–2019) and at Sammlung Goetz (Munich, 2019–2020) with a catalogue published by Hatje Cantz. She curated the exhibition *Gilardi: Tappeto-Natura* at Magazzino Italian Art (Cold Spring, NY, 2022–2023) with a catalogue published by the Magazzino Italian Art Foundation. She presented the exhibition *150 Years of Homage to Ingenuity. Mario Cresci for Jacobacci & Partners* at La Venaria Reale (Venaria Reale, Turin, 2022–2023). Since 2003, she has curated Jacobacci & Partners' *Arte e Progetto* collection.

APALAZZOGALLERY was founded by Francesca Migliorati and Chiara Rusconi in 2008 in Palazzo Cigola Fenaroli in Brescia, as a meeting and conversation place to promote contemporary art in all its manifold manifestations. The gallery offers an inclusive multidisciplinary and multicultural programme, supporting international and Italian, institutional and young emerging artists. Each project is designed and constructed through a long and careful dialogue between the space and the artist, the product of which is a solo or group exhibition that engages the space and its architecture innovatively. The gallery also supports this dialogue through art residencies and the promotion of artists through art fairs and international and local curatorial projects. The gallery represents Sonia Boyce, Ann Iren Buan, Edson Chagas, Giorgio Ciam, Raül De Nieves, Nathalie Du Pasquier, Em'kal Eyongakpa, Estate of Larry Stanton, Paolo Gonzato, Ibrahim Mahama, Eva & Franco Mattes, Olivier Mosset, Servane Mary, Estate of Jonas Mekas, Lucia Pescador, Marta Pierobon, Nathlie Provosty, Alan Reid, Olympia Scarry, Augustas Serapinas, Alexandra Sukhareva, The Reader, Francesco Vezzoli and Luc Ming Yan.

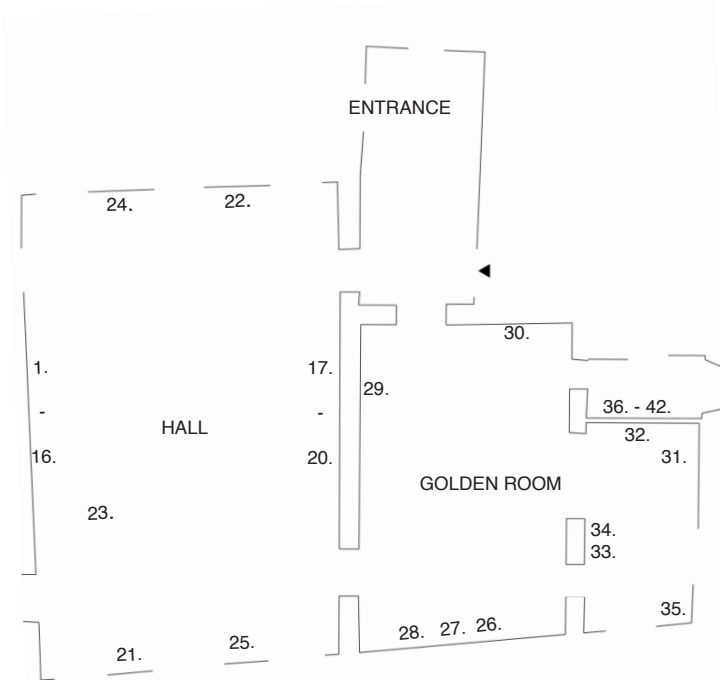
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GOLDEN ROOM

26. *Ritratto in controluce* (Backlit Portrait), 1989 - 1991
colour photograph with pictorial intervention
101.5 x 101.5 cm
27. *Ritratto in controluce* (Backlit Portrait), 1989-1991
colour photograph mounted onto canvas with pictorial intervention
118 x 116 cm
28. *Ritratto in controluce* (Backlit Portrait), 1989-1991
colour photograph with pictorial intervention
101.5 x 101.5 cm
29. *Ritratto in controluce* (Backlit Portrait), 1989-1991
colour photograph with pictorial intervention and décollage
104.5 x 102.5 cm
30. *Ritratto in controluce* (Backlit Portrait), 1989-1991
colour photograph mounted onto canvas with pictorial intervention and décollage
118 x 116 cm
31. *Stratificazioni* (Layerings), 1986
colour photograph
104 x 102 cm
32. *Stratificazioni* (Layerings), 1986
colour photograph
51.5 x 51.5 cm
33. *Autoritratto* (Self-Portrait), 1985
from the *Stratificazioni* (Layerings) series
colour photograph with pictorial intervention
12.5 x 12.5 cm
34. *Autoritratto* (Self-Portrait), 1985
from the *Stratificazioni* (Layerings) series
colour photograph with pictorial intervention
12.5 x 12.5 cm
35. *Stratificazioni* (Layerings), 1985
plaster and scagliola sculpture, collage, pictorial intervention
28.5 x 19.5 x 26.5 cm
36. – 42. *Stratificazioni* (Layerings), 1986
painting and collage on paper, mixed media
18.5 x 13 cm (36.–41.); 16 x 13 cm (42.)

GIORGIO CIAM HALL

1. - 16. *Classico nascosto* (Hidden Classic), 1983
black and white photograph
50.5 x 50.5 cm each
- 17.- 20. *Autoritratto* (Self-Portrait), 1979
mixed media on canvas
150 x 100 cm each
21. *Classico nascosto* (Hidden Classic), 1984
drawing on black and white photograph with décollage
30.5 x 22.5 cm
22. *Classico nascosto* (Hidden Classic), 1984
drawing on black and white photograph
30.5 x 24 cm
23. *Classico nascosto* (Hidden Classic), 1983
plaster sculpture with scagliola intervention
26 x 19 x 25 cm
24. *Classico nascosto* (Hidden Classic), 1983
plaster sculpture with scagliola intervention
32 x 19 x 15 cm
25. *Classico nascosto* (Hidden Classic), 1983
plaster sculpture with scagliola intervention
24 x 20 x 17.5 cm

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PAINTING

Through his work, Giorgio Ciam explores the condition of the post-modern individual. Indeed, his research is one based on the awareness of his inability to provide a single answer, and on the acknowledgement of his own multiplicity and relativity. His representation of the self thus embraces what is not representable: the immaterial dimension of existence. Towards the end of the '70s, Ciam produced a number of self-portraits which brought this interior aspect of his to the fore. This was when Christian Norberg-Schulz was speaking of *genius loci*, and thus Ciam's face seemed to reflect a possible place. It was during that same period that the artist also began to sense the need for painting, and indeed the Transavanguardia phenomenon was just around the corner. And so he continued to use photography, but like in this case, he often abandoned it in favour of his old love: drawing and the material nature of painting. *Autoritratto* (Self-Portrait) 1979 [17.–20.] is a cycle of works in which Ciam seems to want to fuse matter with the idea: I am this place, and this place is part of me.

SCULPTURE

Starting from the '80s, Ciam set about developing his research into the theme of the body, exploring its potential to invade space, to be sculpture. During this period, he became completely bound up in the idea that the face might be projected ever further into matter, so as to encounter form, light and shadow, to express an action. Another self, another labyrinth to venture into. In order to do this, the artist took a number of plaster casts of classical sculptures – those used in art academies for life drawing. He would then take possession of a form and make it his own through his sculptural work. He added matter to matter, upsetting the balance of the mass, abstracting from the specific subject and thus endowing the very form with new life, which would thereby be transformed into a work of his: *Classico nascosto* (Hidden Classic), 1983 [23.–25.]. On the basis of this experience, Ciam embarked on a winding path where he would photograph these sculptures, generating new works as part of the same cycle [1.–16.]. Sometimes he would intervene on the photographs using drawing, hence giving rise to yet more works [21.–22.].

What comes into play is the total dispersion of the self – a fluctuating unity which is converted into a range of possible faces.

LAYERINGS

Giorgio Ciam continued along this path, moving ever further into the field of experimentation. In some cases, he would add paint and glue fragments of images onto the sculptures themselves, leading to a composition capable of challenging all boundaries: *Stratificazioni* (Layerings), 1985 [35.]. And once more, he would project images of other works of his onto these sculptures and photograph the outcome, obtaining a further result from this synthesis: *Stratificazioni*, 1986 [31. and 32.]. On a number of occasions, he would even carry out pictorial interventions on the photographs themselves, to the point that painting and photography begin to merge to form the same matter: *Autoritratto* (Self-Portrait), 1985, from the *Stratificazioni* series [33. and 34.]. On the basis of this experience, Ciam produced a number of small collages on the pages of books, with pictorial interventions, traces of drawings and fragments of photographs: *Stratificazioni*, 1986 [36.–42.]. To be part of a whole, the artist views and re-views himself in an ongoing cut-up which leads him to imagine his own face as a potential 'map'. Work after work, cutting, recomposing and layering the matter along with his very essence, the journey undertaken by the artist is undoubtedly a never-ending one.

The five works from the *Ritratto in controluce* (Backlit Portrait) cycle, 1989–1991 [26.–30.] represent the pinnacle of this research, and their double dating marks a precise passage. These are photographic works from 1989, in some cases mounted onto canvas, in turn arising from other works in which Ciam sees himself and then looks back anew. In 1991, however, the artist decided to go even further: he carried out a pictorial intervention on these same works, almost swallowing them up in the blackness and thereby rediscovering another self. With these works, he states all the drama and intensity of his emotions, but also imposes his need for painting, for existence. From these photographic works that he might appear to have wished to cancel, in actual fact a face appears. The face of Giorgio Ciam.