Theatricality and the Endgames of Sculpture in the Work of Alik Cavaliere, 1960-1989

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Covid Impact Statement

As it happened to most, the Covid-19 pandemic significantly affected this research. From February to September 2020, during the second year of my PhD, I was stuck in Italy and unable to pursue my archival and bibliographic research as planned since libraries, archives, and galleries were closed, and there were no certainties as to when they would reopen. Thus, in September 2020, at the end of my second year, I changed the focus of my project, making it a critical interpretation of Cavaliere's work instead of a historical reconstruction of the Milanese art scene in which it was born and developed. Luckily, I had the transcriptions of Cavaliere's journals; thus, I could keep them as the primary source for my research. Although I was initially excited by the idea of changing the focus of the research project and overcoming the disruption caused by the pandemic, implementing it had been far more challenging than I expected, and it took me more than eight months to adjust.

Additionally, since September 2020 and throughout 2021, I was requested to stay in the UK to obtain a Settled Status. When I came back to Italy in early 2022, I was finally able to pursue part of my archival research, which, considering the turn that my project had taken, mainly consisted in gaining access to Italian bibliographic resources that were unavailable in the UK and cross-checking the transcriptions of the journals with the original notebooks to verify inconsistencies.

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Abstract

This thesis re-examines the practice of postwar Italian artist Alik Cavaliere (1926 – 1998), in light of the artist's private journals. The study constitutes the first substantial English scholarly examination of Cavaliere's work, with extensive excerpts from the journals translated here for the first time. Offering an unprecedented perspective on the development of Cavaliere's practice, the thesis investigates the extent to which the artist engaged with the broader landscape of contemporary art debates in Europe and the United States on the status of sculpture. From the 'death of sculpture' proclaimed by Arturo Martini in 1945 to the transformation of sculpture into monumental-anti-monumental environments in the practices of artists spanning Claes Oldenburg, *Arte Povera* exponents, and Louise Bourgeois, the study traces the evolution of the medium through the second half of the 20th century. This framework allows for an in-depth exploration of Cavaliere's work as a complex laboratory where contemporary questions concerning the status, boundaries, and ethical implications of sculpture as a semi-performative art form interacting with viewers and the surroundings are dissected and wrestled with. Ultimately, the thesis presents Cavaliere's practice as a case study for examining international developments in sculpture between 1960 and 1989 and for understanding these as a means of showing the contemporary significance of a medium that had been deemed outmoded.

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Introduction

This thesis investigates the work of postwar Italian artist Alik Cavaliere (1926-1998) and how it responded to specific dynamics in contemporary art discourses from the 1960s and late 1980s. Cavaliere was an Italian artist active in Milan from the 1950s to the 1990s. In the 1960s, he gained international recognition after representing Italy through his exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1964. However, since Cavaliere died in 1998, his legacy has been largely overlooked by scholarly art discourses – except for a few Italian exhibitions, a limited number of Italian scholarly theses, and a monograph by Italian art dealer and historian Arturo Schwarz.[1] Aside from these, the literature on Cavaliere only consists of catalogue essays and exhibition reviews. Therefore, this study constitutes the first substantial English scholarly examination of Cavaliere's practice.

As such, this thesis will fill a significant gap that exists within Cavaliere's literature. A gap that critics have overlooked in regard to his relationship with contemporary art; having mainly focused on his reworking of historical avant-gardes, principally Dadaism and Surrealism, and his interest in Classical literature.[2] Starting off from this lacuna, this study develops an extensive investigation into Cavaliere's practice in order to understand its position within the artistic discourse of his time; both locally and internationally.

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[1] Arturo Schwarz, *Alik Cavaliere. Poeta, filosofo, umanista e scultore, anche. Quasi una biografia,* Milan: Electa, 2008.

[2] This perspective is outlined in Elena Pontiggia, "L'universo verde", in Elena Pontiggia (ed.), *Alik Cavaliere. L'universo verde*, exhibition catalogue, 27 June – 9 September 2018, Milan and Cinisello Balsamo: Palazzo Reale and Silvana Editoriale, 2018; Elena Pontiggia, "Alik Cavaliere. Tra Lucrezio e Magritte", in Elena Pontiggia (ed.), *Alik Cavaliere. Taccuini 1960-1969*, Milan: Abscondita, 2015; Francesca Porreca, "Natura, artificio, rimandi e stratificazioni nella scultura di Alik Cavaliere" in Francesca Porreca (ed.), *Alik Cavaliere. Nei giardini della memoria*, exhibition catalogue, 12 April – 25 May 2008, Pavia and Cinisello Balsamo: Spazio per le Arti Contemporanee del Broletto and Silvana Editoriale, 2008; A. Schwarz, 2008. An exception is Francesco Tedeschi, who outlined brief parallels between the works by Cavaliere, Pop Art, Neo-Dada, and *Nouveau Réalisme.* For further discussion, see Francesco Tedeschi, "Nel segno della continuità. Per una definizione della poetica e sull'attualità dell'opera di Cavaliere", in Giorgio Cortenova (ed.), *Alik Cavaliere. Racconto, mito e magia*, exhibition catalogue, 16 October 2005 – 29 January 2006, Verona and Padua: Palazzo Forti and Marsilio, 2005, pp. 58-59.

While there is no necessary contradiction between an artist being inspired by the cultural models of the past while engaging in contemporary developments, Cavaliere's attunement towards the national and international debates of his time has been widely underestimated. This thesis will thus explore how Cavaliere's practice can be seen as an answer to specific issues that have taken centre stage since the 1960s, such as those of objecthood and theatricality in relation to the medium of sculpture and the development from sculpture to installation art.

Methodology

What resources are available to determine these interestions nd connections? Together with a close reading of selected artworks, this investigation is primarily based on Cavaliere's private journals, archival material much of which will be revealed here for the first time (fig. A-B). The journals evidence Cavaliere's well-informed knowledge of the contemporary art world and interest in the New York art scene – 'I am the "American" artist in Italy!', Cavaliere wrote in 1963.[3] The journals are fifty-nine hand-written notebooks spanning over more than four decades – from 1950 to 1998. Over those years, the artist took notes about his work and life on a quasi-daily basis. The journals are stored in Cavaliere's house, which is currently occupied by his widow Adriana Cavaliere, who has also undergone the gruelling task of carefully transcribing them.[4]

Except for a selection from the 1960s and a few excerpts that are quoted in catalogue essays and Arturo Schwarz's monograph, the journals are mostly unpublished.[5] Considering the fragmentary and often re-edited nature of the published journals, a different impression will be given when research is based upon transcripts rather than the original source. In the few instances where I spotted syntactic and orthographic inconsistencies, I cross-checked the transcripts with the

[3] My translation from Italian: 'Sono l'artista "americano" in italia!', Alik Cavaliere's journal, January 1963. Here and in the following quotations, lowercase and capital letters are kept as in the original notebooks. All quotations from Cavaliere's writings are with kind permission of the Cavaliere Estate. From now on, the journals will be quoted with the wording 'Cavaliere's journal' for convenience.
[4] Italian curator Francesca Porreca assisted Adriana Cavaliere with the transcription when she was studying at Università di Pavia in 2003.
[5] E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2015; A. Schwarz, 2008.

journals and amended the former where appropriate. The study focuses on the journals from the 1960s to the 1980s as they are the years in which, as will be demonstrated, Cavaliere completed a radical process of revision and transformation within his practice.

'I write because it forces me to think twice and allows me to face the development of my ideas', Cavaliere wrote in an entry from 1974; 'words are an Ariadne thread inside my sculptures', he stated in 1990.[6] The idea that the journals could be an 'Adriane thread' to follow the genesis and development of Cavaliere's practice has been essential for this research. While Cavaliere's works appear heterogeneous and eclectic, his written reflections in many ways remain consistent over the years. By following Cavaliere's writings as a thread connecting his works, this thesis presents an original framework to explore his practice.

Relying upon private journals to investigate an artist's practice has a long history in art criticism, as it interlaces with a broader discourse regarding the relevance of the private life of the artist to understand their work.[7] Journals are subjective in a fundamental sense, and their pages are filled with personal details relating to their writers. Therefore, journals have been labelled as 'ego documents', and their subjective nature can be dealt with only speculatively or imaginatively.[8] Since the

[6] My adaptation from Italian: 'Scrivo perché ciò mi costringe a ripensare e a precisare da un lato, dall'altro mi permette il confronto con l'evolversi delle considerazioni rispetto a mutate situazioni o al tempo che scorre.', Cavaliere's journal August 1974. My translation from Italian: 'La parola è come un filo d'Arianna, […] interno alla mia scultura', Cavaliere's journal, October 1990.

[7] Early evidence for scholarly interest in Western personal writing can be found in Roman comments on the Royal Journal of Alexander the Great (see Nicholas G. L. Hammond "The Royal Journal of Alexander", *Historia*, no 37, 1988, pp. 129–150), Saint Augustine's *Confessions* from the fourth century C.E.; and John Beadle's diary and manual (See Augustine of Hippo (389), *Confessions*, Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 2008, trans. Henry Chadwick; John Beadle (1965), *The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian. Presented in Some Meditations upon Numb. 33. 2*, reprinted by London: Forgotten Books, 2018). Philippe Lejeune, Catherine Bogaert, and Desirée Henderson described how academic interest in personal writing did not establish itself until the mid-twentieth century (See Philippe Lejeune and Catherine Bogaert "The Practice of Writing a Diary", in Batsheva Ben-Amos and Dan Ben-Amos (eds.), *The Diary: The Epic of Everyday Life*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020, pp. 25-38. Desirée Henderson, *How to Read a Diary: Critical Contexts and Interpretive Strategies for 21st-Century Readers*, Abingdon, UK, and New York: Routledge, 2019, p. 17). Therefore, critical approaches to journals and diaries are not as mature as those to, for example, biographies and autobiographies. Academic recognition of personal writings began to be established in the 1970s and, since then, has become a battleground between the humanist tradition and ideas that are more in line with Structuralist and Postmodernist perspectives, according to which a work must be considered in its inherent properties regardless the author. For further discussion, see Charles G. Salas, *The Life & The Work. Art and Biography*, Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007, pp. 1-20.

[8] C. G. Salas, 2007, p. 14.

1960s, the issue over the relevance of the private sphere of an artist to investigate their work has become a battleground.[9] Scepticism towards individualistic modes of interpretation is based upon the rejection of the artist as a God-like source and the idea that their intentions are 'neither available nor desirable' for judging their work.[10] Therefore, 'attention should be paid to how the work is received, not its origin in the artist's putative self – in other words, the work possesses an 'objective status'.[11]

On the other hand, scholars who embrace the intentionalist approach base their theories on the idea that the biography and intention of an artist are determining to understand their work as the work and its author constitute a unit.[12] Within the camp of those advocating for the importance of the artist's intention, one perspective particularly resonates with the methodology used in this study. This perspective is called moderate actual intentionalism and claims that the study of the artist's intentions, while not determining a text's meaning, at the least serves to enrich and deepen an understanding of their work.[13]

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[9] During the 1960s, the trend of depersonalization took centre stage. Key figures were Roland Barthes, Martin Heidegger, and Michael Foucault, who outlined models of meaning severed from the claims of a private self. This attitude was part of a broader hostility to patriarchal, bourgeois society and its humanist idea of the subject (for further discussion, see Nicholas Green, "Stories of Self-Expression: Art History and the Politics of Individualism", *Art History*, vol. 10, issue 4, December 1987, pp. 527, 530-531). The rejection of intentions has implied a formalist approach to the work of art, an approach concerned with the transformation of visual qualities of objects and images (David Summers, "Intentions in the History of Art", *New Literary History*, no. 17, 1986, pp. 306-308.). The anti-biographical and anti-intentionalist position supported the rejection of any biographical overlap that could interfere with the visual life of the work (Clement Greenberg, "Autonomies of Art", lecture, Moral Philosophy and Art Symposium, Mountain Lake, Virginia, October 1980, in C. G. Salas, 2007, p. 6).

[10] William K. Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy", in William K. Wimsatt Jr. (ed.), *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954, p. 3.

[11] Robert W. Stallman, "Intentions", in Alex Preminger, Frank J. Warnke, and O. B. Hardison Jr. (eds.), *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965, s.v. "Intentions". A similar perspective was outlined by Charles Harrison, who claimed that 'it is always tempting to treat biographical information about the artist as a key to the meaning of a work of art, but we need to bear in mind that the formal and physical characteristics of the work are there to be perceived independently of what the information may suggest", Charles Harrison, "Block 1, Forum and Reading", in Charles Harrison (ed.), *An Introduction to the Humanities*, Milton Keynes, UK: Open University, 1997, p. 34. Of the same opinion is Rosalind Krauss, who stated that the biographical approach provides 'no addition but restriction' to the investigation of a work of art, Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985, p. 39.

[12] Eric D. Hirsch Jr., *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, pp. 2-3.

[13] For further discussion, see Sam Rose, *Interpreting Art*, London: UCL Press, 2022. For a philosophical discussion on contemporary developments, see Gianluca Lorenzini, "The Problem of Intentionality in the Contemporary Visual Arts", *Estetika: The European Journal of Aesthetics*, 56.2, 2019, pp. 186-205; Hans Maes, "Challenging Partial Intentionalism", *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, vol. 7, no. 1, 2008, pp. 85-94; Robert

In using Cavaliere's journals to investigate his practice, the present study adopts an approach in line with moderate actual intentionalism, investigating the extent to which the artist's intentions are successfully realised in his works and exploring the interpretative implications entailed by these correspondences.

The appeal to the traces of Cavaliere's thoughts is not foreign to the existing literature on his oeuvre. Most critics and academics who have written about Cavaliere knew him personally and have often considered his private life relevant towards understanding his work.[14] However, none have offered a sustained address to the fifty-nine journals themselves. Here, Cavaliere's writings are used as a kind of 'Ariadne thread' to explore the genesis and development of his eclectic practice. In this, however, the writings are not appealed to as an interpretive master key, an *ipse dixit* providing the truth of his work. The exploration of Cavaliere's intentions remains an experiment and will need to be weighed against the visual evidence of the works themselves: their significance and bearing upon the work is an open question but a fertile one, as this thesis intends to demonstrate.

The personal and spontaneous nature of the journals, however, presented some challenges to this investigation. Firstly, the correspondence between Cavaliere's written reflections and his work is not always linear or straightforward. Secondly, to an external reader, Cavaliere's writings could often appear as somewhat of a chaotic and obscure stream of consciousness. Thirdly, Cavaliere mentioned hundreds of artists but did not outline an aesthetic theory that is clear enough to assess the specific impact of those artists on his practice. This suggests that the attempt to construct a direct and deterministic relationship between Cavaliere's work and his contemporaries is untenable.[15] Therefore, the purpose of the investigation will not be

Stecker, "Moderate Actual Intentionalism Defended", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism,* 64.4, 2006, pp. 429-438.

[14] See A. Schwarz, 2008; Angela Vettese, "Un socievole solitario" in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, pp. 40-43; Dario Fo, "Alik l'imprevedibile", in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005. Arturo Schwarz, "Io intendo dirvi…", in Giuseppe Niccoli (ed.), *Alik Cavaliere. Il Paradosso della Natura. Sculture, 1951-1991*, exhibition catalogue, 20 February – 30 March 2002, Milan: Centro d'Arte Arbur, Palazzo Annoni, 2001, p. 181.

[15] A statement from the journals suggests that Cavaliere was self-conscious about the raw and unsystematic nature of his writings. 'I am not a theorist', he wrote in 1975. (My translation from Italian: 'Non sono un teorico'), Cavaliere's journal, December 1975.

to exercise inferential criticism and responsibility on Cavaliere's behalf but rather on my own account.

To deal with the chaotic and sometimes opaque nature of Cavaliere's journals, it is instrumental to approach them as a whole. In other words, while Cavaliere's thoughts seem obscure when considered individually, they gain meaning when thought of as part of a larger organic system. Cavaliere engaged with his own thoughts by restlessly dissecting, questioning, and revising them; he wrote down a thought, ruminated it for extended periods of time, and often clarified what it meant years later. His train of thought resembles the workings of a prism, whereby every thought is formed by multiple facades that inform one another.

Considering this, the thesis' approach to the complexity of the journals is twofold. In each chapter, the examination starts by following the flow of Cavaliere's thoughts, before analysing and interpreting specific points with reference to wider critical debates from the same period. The discussion focuses on critical theories that are particularly attuned to Cavaliere's reflections and can shed light on specific aspects of his practice that have been so far underdeveloped or overlooked by scholarly discourses. The examination explores the intersection between Cavaliere's private thoughts, his writings intended for public consumption, the literature on his practice, and critical theories that resonate with his written reflections.

Based on this methodology, each chapter outlines a constellation of artistic influences and alignments, to then apply the theoretical ground covered to the analysis of Cavaliere's works. Taking centre stage in the analysis will be how Cavaliere's practice engaged with specific art issues that were nationally and internationally debated in the 1960s-1970s. Among those, will be the issues of literalism and theatricality in sculpture, the crisis of monumental art, the transition from sculpture to installation, the deconstruction of the Modernist idea of the autonomy of the work of art, and the reconfiguration of the roles of the viewer and work in the context of the art experience. The investigation will outline a new and productive framework to survey the artistic substance of Cavaliere's practice.

Structure

The first chapter provides an overview of Cavaliere's biography and career, introducing the literature on his work and addressing the main discrepancies between existing critical interpretations and the information provided by the artist's journals. The analysis will show how these discrepancies, instead of being a limitation, offer valuable means to investigate Cavaliere's practice from a new angle, highlighting his position within postwar art debates. The discussion addresses Cavaliere's reworking of Dadaism and Surrealism as highlighted in the existing literature, before introducing the artist's interest in specific aspects of contemporary art discourses. In this regard, the examination focuses on Cavaliere's aversion toward monumental works and analyses how this resonates with debates active between the 1940s and the 1970s in Italy and the U.S.

The second chapter concentrates on Cavaliere's work from the 1960s. Drawing from the journals, the analysis investigates how Cavaliere's practice engaged with issues of objecthood and theatricality. In this respect, the examination highlights how, despite striking formal and aesthetic differences, Cavaliere's practice resonates powerfully with the theory about objecthood and theatricality outlined by American critic Michael Fried regarding 'literal' or Minimal art. Specifically, the discussion demonstrates how Cavaliere's works from the 1960s can be considered an answer to American literalist sensibilities and the issues they call into question, including their 'theatrical' challenge to the modernist idea of the work of art as an autonomous and discrete entity.[16]

The third chapter focuses on Cavaliere's theatrical installations from the 1970s. The analysis compares his practice with *Arte Povera*, by that time an established movement of international significance. *Arte Povera* involved an essential theatrical dimension and was born in the late 1960s as an Italian response to Minimal –

[16] 'Literalist art' is the name that Michael Fried used to refer to Minimal Art, in Michael Fried (1967) "Art and Objecthood", in Gregory Battcock (ed.), *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, New York: EP Dutton, 1968, p. 125. In the present study, I will use Fried's expression to refer to American experimental art practices from the late 1950s and 1960s that reworked the issue of literalism in various ways, from Jasper Johns' sculpture to Minimal Art.

literalist – art. The discussion examines overlooked affinities between the theatricality inherent to *Arte Povera* and Cavaliere's practice, illuminating the crucial role of theatricality in Cavaliere's shift from sculpture to installation art between the late 1960s and 1970s.

Lastly, the fourth chapter presents Cavaliere's lesser-known works from the late 1980s as a coherent summation of various tendencies that had begun to be engaged in the 1960s. The discussion examines how the works from the 1980s can be considered late reworkings of influences that Cavaliere was exposed to during the 1960s, such as American Neo-avant-garde practices by Claes Oldenburg and Allan Kaprow. Thus, the analysis compares Cavaliere's works from the 1980s to artistic equivalents from the 1960s and 1980s, which dealt with the endgame of Modernist formalism from different perspectives. This chapter concludes the investigation of Cavaliere's practice as an organic process that started in the 1960s, was developed in the 1970s, and was completed in the 1980s.

The four chapters are tied together by three common threads: the endgame of Modernist formalism, the crisis of the concept of monument, and the resulting reconfiguration of the relationship between the subject-viewer and the object-work. From Italian artist Arturo Martini to American art historian Rosalind Krauss, the issue of the crisis of Modernism and monumental art has fuelled arguments around the medium of sculpture from the 1940s to the 1970s. The debate reached its peak in the 1960s when literalist art and neo-avant-gardes exacerbated the object-like and environmental nature of three-dimensional representations. As Krauss pointed out, in the early 1960s, due to its potentially infinite range of configurations, the medium of sculpture entered 'a categorical no-man's-land' and became a form of 'ontological absence'.[17]

The thesis investigates how Cavaliere's practice, from the 1960s to the 1980s, dealt with such an 'absence' and the paradox of sculpture simultaneously being an object and a non-object. The analysis shows how Cavaliere turned the crisis of the medium of sculpture into a fertile ground to reassess Modernist conventions and transform

[17] Rosalind Krauss "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", *October*, Vol. 8, Spring, 1979, p. 36.

his sculptural practice into a layered, multifaceted, and theatrical experience involving viewers, the artist, and the surrounding space. Ultimately, this study aims to rescue an important career from historical neglect, showing its range, depth, and currency as regards some of the major debates in postwar sculpture as such.

To conclude, I would like to spend a few words on the title of this study – *Theatricality and the Endgames of Sculpture in the Work of Alik Cavaliere, 1960-1989* – as it allows for an introduction of the significance of this act of rescuing. In chess, endgames are the final stage of a game when the king stops hiding and starts fighting. The title is thus a metaphor, in which the king is the medium of sculpture in the hands of Cavaliere. By transgressing modernist formalism and becoming 'theatrical', Cavaliere's sculpture gets off the pedestal and gets its hands dirty by dealing with its own object-like presence and the presences of viewers and the surrounding space. In chess endgames, only a few pieces are left on the board; within the spatial and temporal frameworks considered by this study, only a few unexplored avenues are left to make sculpture, since everything has been tried since the 1960s.[18]

1967 is a crucial year for the discussion. From Michael Fried's essay *Art and Objecthood* to Germano Celant's theorisation of *Arte Povera* as a guerrilla and Jerzy Grotowski's theory of the *Via Negativa*, the study investigates how 1967 is the year in which, from Europe to the US, the visual arts and their discourses reached a tipping point. They broke the glass ceiling of modernist formalism and started engaging with the *surroundings* by questioning the idea of the work as an autonomous entity and calling viewers, the external environment, and the artist themself into question and into action.

This paves the way to broader discourses regarding how a work of art can engage with space, materials, and audience, addressing issues that have taken centrestage in today's art debates and demand to reconsider hierarchies and relationships between all the parties involved in the art experience. These issues include the

[18] For a provocative analysis of how 'rather surprising things have come to be called sculpture', see R. Krauss, 1979, pp. 30-35.

democratisation of art spaces, the blurred boundaries between artistic disciplines, and the role of art in determining and self-determining identities.[19]

Therefore, this study does not only enrich the understanding of Cavaliere's practice, but also of the evolution of sculpture over a period in which the latter underwent a radical process of revision and transformation with profound and enduring implications regarding its status, boundaries, and significance. Through the investigation of 'theatricality' as a form of subtle insurrection against the *status quo* – being the latter any assumption or trend about what 'true art' should be – this study investigates how Cavaliere questioned, manipulated, and reconfigured hierarchies and power dynamics by using his sculptural practice as a catalyst.[20]

This thesis thus revives the importance of Cavaliere's legacy by exploring how his sculpture – the king – has dealt with the other pieces left on the board of national and international discourses about the status of sculpture – a board that poses questions regarding spatial interactions, identity, structures of power, objectification, and self-determination.

In closing, Cavaliere's work is rescued as a testament to his creative experimentation, which opens new avenues for investigating postwar developments in sculpture and continues to present relevant questions for contemporary art landscapes. Starting from the case of Alik Cavaliere, this study offers a re-evaluation of sculptural paradigms between 1960 and 1989 and their wider implications, charting new courses of enquiry for interdisciplinary dialogues and cultural self-reflection.

[19] For further discussion on the contemporary significance and development of democratic interdisciplinary art spaces, see Anne Ring Petersen and Sabine Dahl Nielsen, "The Reconfiguration of Publics and Spaces through Art: Strategies of Agitation and Amelioration", *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, 13.1, 2021.

[20] The concept of 'true art' was particularly popular within the considered spatial-temporal framework (see, for example, M. Fried, 1967 in G. Battcock (ed.), 1968 and Germano Celant "Arte povera. Appunti per una guerriglia", *Flash Art, 5,* Rome, November-December 1967). Specific examples will be discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 1

Cavaliere's Career and 'Dialogue' with the Contemporary Art Scene

Introduction

The chapter introduces Alik Cavaliere's background, career, and written reflections upon art.

The first section outlines an overview of Cavaliere's biography and career, discussing his work and a summary of existing scholarly literature to provide needed context. Then, the second section delves into the contribution that Cavaliere's journals make to ongoing critical interpretations of his practice and explores how they can expand and enrich the discourse. The discussion focuses on how Cavaliere's written reflections engaged with contemporary national and international art scenes and addresses the following questions. What were the guiding principles of Cavaliere's thinking on art? With which art currents and tendencies did Cavaliere engage in developing his works? Can understanding these aspects of Cavaliere's practice allow for new paths of enquiry?

Section 1 – Cavaliere's Biography and Career: An Overview

I Cavaliere's Biography

Alik Cavaliere was born in Rome in 1926. His father, Alberto Cavaliere (1897 – 1967), was an anarchic-social-communist poet and journalist from Cittanova, Calabria, Italy, while his mother, Fanny Kaufmann (1896 – 1980), was a Jewish sculptor native of Yalta, Crimea.[1] Cavaliere's childhood was quite turbulent. As

[1] As part of the Russian upper middle class, Fanny Kaufmann and her family were forced to flee abroad during the Russian Revolution. Kaufmann arrived in Italy in 1921 and met Alberto Cavaliere in Rome in the same year. They had two children, Alik and Renata. The story of Fanny Kaufmann was told by her granddaughter Fania Cavaliere in Fania Cavaliere, *Il Novecento di Fanny Kaufmann*, Florence: Passigli, 2012.

Jewish and anarchic-social-communist, Cavaliere's family was often forced to flee abroad due to the rise of the fascist regime. In 1932, Cavaliere and his family moved to Paris, where they lived until 1936. In Paris, Cavaliere spent most of his time with his mother. As a sculptor, Fanny Kaufmann made Cavaliere familiarise himself with sculpture from a very young age by giving him clay to play with.[2] Cavaliere and his family returned to Rome in 1936 and permanently moved to Milan in 1938.

There is scant information about Cavaliere's childhood, except for the fact that, once in Milan, he and his family were still victims of the regime. Although Cavaliere's parents committed themselves to a low-profile life not to attract the regime's attention, they were still on the blacklist due to Alberto Cavaliere's political ideas and the racial laws that were approved in 1938. More than once, the fascist police visited Cavaliere's home looking for his parents. Cavaliere will remember his childhood as pervaded by the feeling of being 'wrong' and lonely.[3]

In Milan, Cavaliere attended two high schools; he started at the Liceo Classico Berchet in 1938 and, a year later, moved to the Brera Art Academy, a Milanese art institution comprising a high school and a university. In 1943, Cavaliere started his fine-art higher education at Brera University, where he studied until 1947. At Brera, Cavaliere attended classes chaired by renowned Italian artists, such as Giacomo Manzù and Marino Marini (sculpture), Achille Funi (fresco); and established art historians, such as Eva Tea and Guido Ballo. The latter would then become one of Cavaliere's most prolific commentators. Cavaliere's closest friends from Brera were Italian artist Enrico Baj, intellectual and playwriter Dario Fo, painter and writer Emilio Tadini, and visual artist Vincenzo Ferrari.[4]

In 1945, while studying at Brera, Cavaliere attended Philosophy, Literature, and Archeology classes at the University of Milan to broaden his education and satisfy his interest in the Humanities. While Cavaliere completed his degree in Fine Arts at

[2] Fanny Kaufmann's works were inspired by 19th Century Russian polychrome realist sculptures. Kaufman's works were made of painted cement and refractory clay and represented figures on the fringes of society, such as acrobats and beggars. The works are destroyed. Arturo Schwarz described Kaufman's works and discussed their possible influence on Cavaliere's practice in A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 14.
[3] Ibidem.
[4] For further discussion of Cavaliere's relationships with artists and intellectuals from Brera, see idem, pp. 22-42.

Brera in 1947, he never completed his studies at the University of Milan. However, as will be discussed in the following chapters, the Humanities left a noteworthy impact on Cavaliere's creative practice.

Between 1945 and 1965, Cavaliere took his first steps as an artist; in 1945 and 1952, he ran his first group and solo exhibitions. At the beginning of his career, Cavaliere's practice was considerably twofold. On the one hand, he experimented with theatre and performances; on the other hand, he focused on mastering the genre of realist sculpture. In his first group exhibition, Cavaliere showcased an experimental work consisting of a sort of scenery hosting theatrical plays featuring actors such as Adriana Asti and Romolo Valli.[5] On the other hand, in his first solo show at Galleria la Colonna, Milan, Cavaliere presented himself as a realist artist and showcased realist works made of cement.[6] The ambivalence between experimental performativity and realist representation would characterise the practice of Cavaliere throughout his career.

In 1950, Cavaliere met Arturo Schwarz, a young art dealer, specialising in Dadaism and Surrealism. Schwarz introduced Cavaliere to prominent figures of the two currents, such as Marcel Duchamp, André Breton, and Man Ray. The encounter with Schwarz was a turning point for Cavaliere, as Galleria Schwarz would play a crucial role in promoting his work nationally and internationally from 1961 to 1975. Moreover, Schwarz was more knowledgeable about the international art scene in the 1950s and 1960s and took Cavaliere on several art trips throughout Italy, Europe, and the US – starting with the XXVII Venice Biennale in 1954. Cavaliere carefully documented these trips in his journals; as will be discussed in the second section of

[5] Cavaliere's first group exhibition was organised by the antifascist organisation Fronte della Gioventù Comunista (FCG) in July 1945. FCG was one of the most famous Italian antifascist youth organisations. FDG was founded in 1944, and most members became Partisans. The catalogue of the exhibition has been lost. Adriana Asti (b.1931) is a theatre and cinema actress. Asti played primary roles in movies by Pier Paolo Pasolini, Louis Buñuel, and Bernardo Bertolucci. Romolo Valli (1925-1980) was a theatre and cinema actor who played primary roles in movies by Mario Monicelli, Luchino Visconti, Vittorio De Sica, and Bernardo Bertolucci. Exploring his interest in theatre, Cavaliere also worked as a scenographer for Vittorio De Sica's movie *Miracolo a Milano,* 1951 [Miracle in Milan]. Unfortunately, there is scant documentation about Cavaliere's first exhibitions and experience as a scenographer. For further information and discussion about Cavaliere first group and solo exhibitions, see A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 49-56.

[6] *Mondine* [Female Rice Weeders], 1951 (fig. 1); *Ragazza di campagna* [Country Girl], 1952 (fig.2); *Sorelle* [Sisters], 1952 (fig.3); *Bambini di Viareggio* [Childern of Viareggio], 1952 (fig. 4), in Raffaele De Garda (ed.), *Alik Cavaliere*, exhibition catalogue, February – March 1953, Turin: Galleria La Bussola, 1952.

the chapter, the journals suggest that these trips had a significant impact on the development of his practice.

Between 1956 and 1965, Cavaliere made significant steps forward in his career; in 1956, his professor Marino Marini nominated him as his assistant to the chair of Sculpture at Brera. On the same year, Cavaliere showcased his cement works at the *Italian Sculptors* group exhibition at the XXVIII Venice Biennale. In 1962, Cavaliere moved into a new studio in Via Bocconi, Milan, where he stayed until 1985. The studio was close to the Yomo factory from which Cavaliere used to take discarded industrial materials for his works.[7]

In 1964, Cavaliere ran his first exhibition at Galleria Schwarz and participated at the XXXII Venice Biennale with a solo show comprising fourteen arboreal-floral works that he made with melted metals from the Yomo factory.[8] The exhibition at the Venice Biennale made Cavaliere an international artist; in 1965 Cavaliere started exhibiting his work abroad – in Europe, Japan, and the US. [9]

In 1970, Cavaliere became Marini's successor as Chair of Sculpture at Brera and held the position until 1987, assisted by existential realist artist Mino Ceretti.[10]

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[7] Yomo is an Italian dairy factory founded by Czech-born entrepreneur Leo Vasely in 1947. At the factory, Cavaliere met Piero Marabelli, a worker who became his assistant in 1960 and worked by his side until Cavaliere died in 1998.

[8] 'Arboreal-floral works' is an expression firstly used by art critic Gillo Dorfles to refer to Cavaliere's sculptures made of various metals representing trees, bushes, and flowers (Gillo Dorfles, *Alik Cavaliere*, exhibition catalogue, November – December 1967, Turin: Galleria La Minima, 1967). From now on, I will refer to these works using the same expression for convenience. The catalogue of the exhibition at Galleria Schwarz is Alik Cavaliere (ed.), *Arbres*, exhibition catalogue, 8 February – 2 March 1964, Milan: Galleria Schwarz, 1967.

[9] Cavaliere's most important international exhibitions were at Gallery Twelve, Minneapolis (5 – 25 February 1965), Galerie Ad Libitum, Antwerp (15 October – 8 November 1965), Martha Jackson Gallery, New York (2 – 27 November 1965), Galerie Aujourd'hui, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (26 November – 8 December 1966), the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague (17 June – 30 July 1967), the Middelheim Museum, Antwerp (June – October 1973), Gallery Universe (9 – 28 September 1974) and Gallery Seibu, Tokyo (October 1974), Gallery Hanshin, Osaka (November 1974), and Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles (9 January – 11 February 1984).

[10] Mino Ceretti (b.1930) is an Italian painter from Milan. Ceretti completed his Fine Art degree at the Brera Academy in 1955. Along with other artists from Brera, such as Guiseppe Romagnoni, Aldo Carpi, and Francesco Messina, Ceretti took part in the art current of Existential Realism; the current took centre stage in Milan in the late 1950s. Italian critic Marco Valsecchi forged the name 'Existential Realism' in 1956 (Marco Valsecchi, "Un Gruppo di giovani", *Il Giorno*, 30 April 1956). Over the 1950s-1960s, Ceretti acquired national recognition by exhibiting his work in the VII, VIII, and IX Rome Quadriennals. For further discussion on Mino Ceretti and Existential Realism, see Mario de Micheli, Giorgio Mascherpa, and Giorgio Seveso (eds.), *Realismo esistenziale. Momenti di una vicenda dell'arte italiana 1955-1965*, Milan: Edizioni Gabriele Mazzotta, 1991 and Giogrio Kaisserlian, *Polemiche sul realismo*, Rome: Edizione 5 lune, 1956.

Significative events from the 1970s and 1980s were Cavaliere's third and last participation at the XXXVI Venice Biennale in 1972, his exhibitions in Antwerp, Tokyo, and Los Angeles, and his collaborations with Vincenzo Ferrari, a friend and colleague from Brera.[11]

In 1985, a snowfall destroyed Cavaliere's studio. Thus, Cavaliere moved to his last studio in Via Edmondo De Amicis, Milan, which was turned into an art centre in his memory in 2000.[12] From 1985 to 1989, Cavaliere reduced his international activities and focused on showcasing his work in Italy. In 1992, Palazzo Reale, Milan, hosted the first and only comprehensive exhibition of Cavaliere's installations to date.[13]

II Cavaliere's Oeuvre

II.I 1940 – 1959: Coexistences of Opposite Features

Cavaliere's early works that came down to us are sculptures from the second half of the 1940s representing Christian and working-class subjects. Cavaliere's religious works are made of wood and characterised by a Primitivist aesthetic;[14] on the other hand, the works representing working-class subjects are made of cement and characterised by a Social Realist aesthetic.[15]

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[11] Noteworthy outcomes of the partnership between Cavaliere and Ferrari are the series *Attraversare il tempo* [Passage Through Time], 1978 and the exhibition *Il Classico e le metamorfosi*, held at Palazzo delle Stelline, Milan in 1997. Over the 1980s, Cavaliere and Ferrari started working together on installations, such as *Pigmalione* [Pygmalion], 1986-1987. However, their partnership failed due to their too-different approaches to the work. For further discussion about the artistic partnership between Cavaliere and Ferrari, see A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 178-205.

[12] The Centro Artistico Alik Cavaliere (Alik Cavaliere Art Centre) is run by Cavaliere's daughter Fania Cavaliere. Cavaliere's former assistant Piero Marabelli looked after the Centre from 1998 to 2020. Marbelli was of invaluable help to this research as he assisted me in interpreting and archiving hundreds of early uncatalogued drawings by Cavaliere.

[13] Guido Ballo (ed.), *Alik Cavaliere. I luoghi circostanti,* exhibition catalogue, 21 May – 5 July 1992, Milan and Cinisello Balsamo: Palazzo Reale and Silvana Editoriale, 1992.

[14] Examples of religious works by Cavaliere are *Crocifissione* [Crucifixion], 1946 (fig. 5), *Crocifisso* [Crucifix], 1946 (fig. 6), *Bassorilievo con Cristo e figure* [Low Relief with Christ and figures], 1946 (fig. 7), *Calvario* [Calvary Scene], 1946-1947 (fig.8). Some examples of Cavaliere's social realist works from the 1940s-1950s are *Nudo* [Nude]*, 1948* (fig. 9), *Mondine* [Rice Weeders], 1951 (fig. 1)*,* and *Contadini* [Farmers], 1952 (fig. 10).

[15] Social Realism is an art current that developed in Italy between the two War Wars in response to the turmoil of that period. In line with Soviet Socialist Realism, one of the main purposes of the current was to make art intellectually accessible to a wider audience by representing anonymous everyday workers and members of

Italian critic Elena Pontiggia pointed out that Cavaliere's realist works were characterised by ambiguous features. An example is *Racconto* [Story], 1946/1947 (fig. 12), a relief representing a girl cuddling a doll or a baby. According to Pontiggia, Cavaliere represented the two characters in a subtly ambiguous way, casting doubts about whether the doll was a baby. Furthermore, Pontiggia highlighted how the title of the work – *Racconto* (story) – suggested the idea of a narrative development, clashing with its static appearance.[16] A further example of Cavaliere's ambiguous realism is *Via del Bottonuto* [Bottonuto Street], 1951 (fig.13), a relief depicting the Milanese Bottonuto neighbourhood and its inhabitants, including sex workers, gambling players, and outcasts.[17] In *Via del Bottonuto,* Cavaliere represented the characters and the urban landscape in altered proportions; some characters are significantly larger than others and even larger than buildings as to give a sense of perspective. However, the work appears as an estranging theatrical scene in which each element functions in relation to the others, and however, their relationships are obscure in their meanings.

Pontiggia observed that Cavaliere's works from the 1940s were often sculpted groups in which the 'characters' seemed 'engaged in silent dialogues'.[18] In this regard, Pontiggia suggested that Cavaliere's preference for sculpted groups was not driven by a formal interest but, instead, by his aim to explore existential issues, such as the importance of human connections.[19] In this sense, according to Pontiggia, Cavaliere anticipated the art current of Existential Realism, which would then take

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the lower classes. Social Realism aimed to highlight social and political issues by realistically representing working conditions and provoking critical reflection on the prevailing socio-political structures. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Partito Comunista Italiano (PCI) played a significant role in shaping the discourse around Social Realism in Italy, where the debates addressed by the art current were at their most urgent. Corroborating the link between Italian Social Realism and the communist party, one of the main commentators of the current was Soviet politician and ideologue Andrej A. Ždanov, who elaborated on it in Andrej A. Ždanov, *Arte e socialismo*, Milan: Cooperativa editrice nuova cultura, 1970. Cavaliere's interest in Social Realism was confirmed by my research at the Alik Cavaliere Artistic Centre and Adriana Cavaliere's house, where I found a hundred uncatalogued drawings depicting farmers and rice weeders. Although only a few drawings are dated, their homogeneity of style and subject convinced me that they are all from the 1940s.

[16] Elena Pontiggia, "Il teatro della scultura", in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 24.

[17] Bottonuto was a Milanese neighbourhood located behind the Duomo where Cavaliere had his studio in 1949. The Bottonuto neighbourhood was famous for being a dodgy area of the city, hosting underground casinos and brothels. In the 1930s, the City Council started demolishing it, and it took more than thirty years to complete the demolition. When Cavaliere had his studio in Bottonuto, the area was rundown.

[18] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 25. Other examples are *Marito e moglie* [Husband and Wife], 1954, and *Giovani sposi* [Young Married Couple], 1954. Images and captions in A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 55.

[19] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 26.

over the Milanese artistic scene from the second half of the 1950s to the early 1960s.[20] Not surprisingly, Cavaliere's assistant at Brera was Mino Ceretti, an exponent of Existential Realism.

Colloquio [Conversation], 1955 (fig. 14) is another work by Cavaliere in which the sculpted group resembles a theatrical scene.[21] The work is made of bronze and represents three human figures standing on a squared base and holding children. The three figures are sculpted down to the bones in a way that Pontiggia traced back to the style of Alberto Giacometti.[22] In contrast with the title – 'conversation' – the work expresses a sense of alienation, dismay, and misery.[23] By stressing the impact of Cavaliere's troubled childhood, Pontiggia and Schwarz highlighted how *Colloquio* could be seen as a reflection on the theme of isolation and the need to communicate.[24] In other words, *Colloquio* is another example of Cavaliere's ambiguous style as it simultaneously represents the idea of dialogue and its negation. Furthermore, Pontiggia pointed out that *Colloquio* had the appearance of a theatrical scene in which multiple characters 'interact' (are engaged in a conversation) within a spatial-temporal framework.[25] However, time seems frozen in *Colloquio,* and the contradictory features discussed give the work a disquieting appearance.

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[20] Elena Pontiggia outlined the roots of Existential Realism by linking the current to the circulation of seminal texts, such as *The Plague* and *The Stranger* by Albert Camus and *Sickness unto Death* and *The Concept of Anxiety* by Søren Kirkegaard. The texts were translated into Italian and published in Italy between 1948 and 1955 and had a significant impact on the intellectual and artistic Milanese scene. For further discussion, see E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 27.

[21] The date and title of the work are unconfirmed. Until 2012, the work was titled *Colloquio* and dated 1955 (E. Pontiggia, 2005, p. 27; A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 60). However, in the catalogue raisonné of Cavaliere's sculptures edited by Pontiggia, the work appears as *Colloquio. La famiglia*, 1961 – see *Alik Cavaliere. Catalogo delle sculture*, Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2012, p. 116. Pontiggia kept the caption of the catalogue raisonné in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 23. According to my analysis, the work is from the mid 1950s and preludes to Cavaliere's 'expressionistic turn' from the late 1950s. For further discussion of Cavaliere's 'expressionistic turn', see A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 60.

[22] F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, p. 20; Giorgio Cortenova, "La solitudine del linguaggio*",* in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 26. Despite remarkable similarities between the works of Giacometti and Cavaliere, I decided not to explore the practice of Cavaliere in relation to the work of Giacometti as Giacometti is not significantly mentioned in the journals. Instead, based on the journals, my argument investigates Cavaliere's practice in connection with 1960s American and Italian experimental practices, such as American neo-avant-gardes and *Arte Povera*.

[23] In Italian, 'colloquio' means 'conversation between a small number of parties', s.v. "colloquio", vv. Aa, *Enciclopedia Treccani*, Rome: Treccani, updated 2017.

[24] A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 61; E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 26.

[25] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 26-27.

From the late 1950s to the early 1960s, Cavaliere's practice took what Schwarz defined as an Expressionist turn.[26] Examples of such a turn are the series *Giochi Proibiti* [Forbidden Games] 1958-59 and *Metamorfosi* [Metamorphoses], 1959-1960.[27] Pontiggia and Schwarz highlighted how *Giochi Proibiti* and *Metamorfosi* were expressionists as characterised by tormented and violent shapes.[28] Each sculpture of the two series stages an interplay between humanness and beastliness. In *Giochi Proibiti*, the ambiguous appearance characterising Cavaliere's earlier works takes the form of a struggle between human and non-human – a man grabs a chicken, and the two bodies ferociously merge in a tangle of shapes, which also recalls the tactile sensibility of *Art Informel* (fig. 15).[29] On the other hand, in *Metamorfosi,* the interplay between human and non-human has no longer the appearance of a fight but of a transformation (a metamorphosis) in which human figures gradually morph into plants – arms become branches; although the figures are still monstrous, they are characterised by more linear and less tormented syntaxes (fig. 16).

II.II 1960 – 1969: Dialogues between Human and Nature

In the 1960s, Cavaliere developed his practice in two directions. On the one hand, he made the series *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* [Gustavo B.'s Adventures], 1960-1966, which critics considered a development of *Giochi Proibiti* and *Metamorfosi*;[30]

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[26] A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 59.

[27] *Giochi Proibiti* consists of thirteen pieces and fourteen studies. The series was first exhibited at Galleria Bergamini, Milan, in 1959 (Emilio Tadini, *Giochi proibiti*, exhibition catalogue, 21 November – 4 December 1959, Milan: Galleria Bergamini, 1959). *Giochi Proibiti* is a title inspired by a movie by Renè Clement titled *Jeux Interdits*, 1952. The movie, which won the *Golden Lion* as the best movie at the 13ª Venice Film Festival, is based on a novel from 1947 by François Boyer titled *Les Jeux Inconnus.* The plot of the movie revolves around two kids who build a little cemetery for dead animals for fun. The only elements of the story that are visible in Cavaliere's series *Giochi proibiti* are the representations of the interactions between human figures (often children) and animals. On the other hand, *Metamorfosi* consists of four pieces and six studies. The title – *Metamorfosi* – is inspired by the 15-book poem *Metamorphoses* by Latin poet Pūblius Ovidius Nāsō (8 AD). For further discussion, see A. Schwarz 2008, p. 62-69 and E. Pontiggia, 2005, p. 27.

[28] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 28; A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 62-69.

[29] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 27.

[30] *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* was exhibited for the first time at Galleria Levi in Milan in 1963 (Emilio Tadini, *Le avventure di Gustavo B.*, exhibition catalogue, March 1963, Milan: Galleria Levi, 1963). The only work of the series that was not included in the exhibition was *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*, [Gustavo B. a Paid Exhibitionist], 1960-1966.

on the other hand, Cavaliere made hundreds of 'arboreal-floral works', which are metallic cast reproductions of plants in various sizes.

II.II.I *Gustavo B.'s Adventures*

Le avventure di Gustavo B. is a series of works representing the story of a character in thirty-one episodes (thirty-one works). The character is the everyman Gustavo B. (abb. GB), dealing with life events, including moving from the country to the city, falling in love, and dying. Critics interpreted the figure of GB as the *alter ego* of Cavaliere.[31] Each piece of the series is a small-scale 'scene' staging a specific moment of GB's life. The works are geometric structures (averagely, 70 x 40 cm) mostly made of cement, and GB is represented as a sort of stick figure. (fig.17).[32] The only exception is the work closing the series – *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* [Gustavo B. a Paid Exhibitionist], 1962-1966 – which is a sort of wooden jukebox/slot machine one meter tall (fig.18).

Pontiggia described *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* as a sort of theatrical *piece*, showing the human parabola of the character in thirty-one acts; each work resembles a small-scale stage staging the actions of a play. The story of GB unfolds piece by piece.[33]

The interplay between humans and nature is still central in the series. Unlike *Giochi Proibiti* and *Metamorfosi*, however, in *Le avventure di Gustavo B.*, the interplay is no longer represented as a struggle and not even a transformation. Instead, it is represented as an encounter between the stick figure of GB, small-scale arboreal-floral works, and life-size apples.[34]

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[31] E. Pontiggia, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 24; A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 81; G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 78-79. The interpretation of the critics is probably based on an interview that Cavaliere gave to the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera* in 1992. In the interview, Cavaliere stated that Gustavo B. was a character in which he saw himself. (My adaptation from Italian: Gustavo B. è un personaggio in cui mi specchiavo', Sebastiano Grasso, "Cavaliere, musica e parole. Scene colorate", *Corriere della Sera*, Milan, 24 May 1992.

[32] The works of the series have a maximum perimeter of 100 cm. For pictures and captions, see E. Pontiggia, 2012, pp. 122-147.

[33] E. Pontiggia, 2005, p. 28.

[34] An example is *Gustavo B. incontra un albero e una mela* [Gustavo B. Meets a Tree and an Apple], 1962 (fig.20). For further discussion, see Chapter 2, pp. 84-89.

The work closing the series – *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* – is Cavaliere's first installation. The work is a sort of jukebox/slot machine with an operating instruction sign asking viewers to act – 'Introducing a 100 lire coin (or the equivalent in dollars) 2. Slowly cranking the handle 3. Peacefully waiting'.[35] If viewers follow the instruction, music will come out of the slot machine. As will be discussed in Chapter 2, *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* is the work with which Cavaliere started exploring the medium of installation and involving viewers as essential parts of the work.

II.II.II The Arboreal-Floral Works

In parallel with *Le avventure di Gustavo B.*, Cavaliere made a hundred arboreal-floral works.[36] The arboreal-floral works were showcased at Cavaliere's first solo show at the Venice Biennale in 1964 and became his most renowned works to date. In the review of the Biennale exhibition, Guido Ballo defined Cavaliere as one of the most interesting Italian artists of the time.[37]

Considering the importance that critics have given to the arboreal-floral works since the 1960s, it will be beneficial to compare different accounts by early and later critics to outline a thorough picture of the arboreal-floral works' critical reception.

Both early and later critics highlighted the ambiguous appearance of the arboreal-floral works, simultaneously expressing the ideas of life and death. Early and later critics unanimously described the arboreal-floral works as naturalistic and anti-

[35] My translation from Italian: '1. Introdurre una moneta da 100 lire (o equivalente in dollari) 2. Girare la manovella lentamente 3. Attendere serenamente', A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 82.
[36] The arboreal-floral works are about two hundred and fifty in total. Cavaliere made them throughout his career, from 1962 to 1997, with a peak in the 1960s.
[37] 'Cavaliere is one of the most innovative sculptors of our time, restless and extremely creative'. (My translation from Italian: Cavaliere è uno degli artisti più innovative del nostro tempo, instancabile e estremamente creativo), Guido Ballo, "Cavaliere", in V.v. A.a., *XXXII Biennale Internazionale d'Arte di Venezia*, exhibition catalogue, 20 June – 18 October 1964, Venice: La Biennale di Venezia, 1964, p. 125. Due to numerous national and international exhibitions, the arboreal-floral works are the works by Cavaliere on which early and later critics have focused the most. Not by chance, the exhibition that Pontiggia curated in 2018 in Milan for the twentieth anniversary of Cavaliere's death was mainly focused on the arboreal-floral works. The catalogue of the exhibition is E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018.

naturalistic at the same time.[38] Cavaliere made the works by mastering the lost-wax casting technique, an ancient method of metal casting in which molten metals are poured into a wax mould made on the original object – real plants, in the case of Cavaliere. Once the metal is poured in, the wax mould melts and is drained away.[39] Casts made with the lost-wax casting technique can be perceived as disquieting, as the original model is duplicated at the highest level of naturalism and, at the same time, denaturalised using artificial materials, like metals. In the arboreal-floral works, metals imprison the vibrant life of nature through their hardness and turn the original natural object into an artificial product that resembles a fossil.[40]

As Ballo pointed out, such a transformation of plants into their perfect artificial copies gave the arboreal-floral works a 'hallucinated' and 'ghosting' appearance that, according to the critic, was the hallmark of Cavaliere's works from the 1960s.[41] The same kind of 'ghostliness' was highlighted by Gillo Dorfles, who defined the arboreal-floral works as 'ready-deads' and drew a comparison with Marcel Duchamp's readymades.[42] Dorfles argued that, like readymades, the arboreal-floral works had the appearance of real objects – found things; however, their 'ghostly' appearance made them look like 'found-dead-things', natural fossils. Confirming the deathly

[38] E. Pontiggia, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 26; G. Cortenova, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 18; Pietro Bonfiglioli, *Cavaliere e la sostituzione della natura*, exhibition catalogue, 10 – 30 March 1967, Bologna: Galleria De' Foscherari, 1967; Enrico Crispolti, *Alik Cavaliere*, exhibition catalogue, 16 Mary – 12 June 1967, Milan: Galleria Schwarz, 1967; G. Dorfles, 1967; G. Ballo, 1964. Crispolti reiterated his perspective in E. Crispolti "Una riflessione sulla componente 'natura' nell'immaginazione labirintica e interrogativa di Alik", in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, pp. 14, 17.

[39] V.v. A.a., *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Global Edition, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Incorporated, 15th edition, 2009, s.v. "lost-wax process". The lost-wax casting technique (also called cire-perdue and *tecnica a cera-persa*) had been used by several ancient civilisations across the world to make funeral amulets and masks. The oldest known example is a gold amulet from 4,550-4,450 BC that was found at Varna Necropolis in Bulgaria. Other examples come from Mehrgarh, Pakistan (4,000 BC) and Nahal Mishmar hoard, Israel (3,500 BC). More recent examples are from Mesopotamia and Egypt (3rd Millennium BC), Nigeria (16th Century AD), pre-Columbian civilisations (13th Century AD), and Classical antiquity from the 8th Century BC. In Europe, the technique fell into disuse during the Middle Ages and was rediscovered during the Renaissance, when it was used by artists such as Donatello, Lorenzo Ghiberti, and Benvenuto Cellini. For further discussion, see Joseph Veach Noble, "The wax of the lost wax process", *American Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 79, issue 4, October 1975, pp. 68–69.

[40] G. Dorfles, 1967.

[41] G. Ballo, 1964, p. 124.

[42] G. Dorfles, 1967.

appearance of the arboreal-floral works, Pontiggia described them as a 'Pompei made of metal'.[43]

Early and later critics stressed the 'deathly' appearance of Cavaliere's works and, at the same time, highlighted their paradoxical liveness and lushness. Dorfles observed how even the smallest leaf of the arboreal-floral works kept the look of the 'alive' thing.[44] For her part, Pontiggia highlighted how the works could be seen as a representation of Lucretius' idea of '*natura naturans*' as outlined in *De Rerum Natura.*[45]

Earlier and later critical interpretations diverge on the meaning of the arboreal-floral works. Early critics stressed Cavaliere's focus on human existence, while later critics emphasised his interest in the natural world; both generations of critics addressed the existential feature of the works. However, early critics considered Cavaliere's representation of nature as a metaphor for tormented human existence, while later critics also underlined Cavaliere's interest in the plant world.

In 1964, Ballo claimed that the arboreal-floral works intensely looked at human existence's loneliness and dismay.[46] Ballo described the works as 'loaded with 'nightmarish tension', a sort of 'grief, lucidly imprisoning the human unconscious and evoking impossible escapes'.[47] Ultimately, Ballo considered the arboreal works metaphors for the human 'tangled mind' and existential anguishes.[48] On the other hand, in 2005, Pontiggia described the arboreal-floral works as an intricate forest, in which human beings were just 'negligible presences'.[49] Over the years, Pontiggia maintained and even reinforced this perspective by making Cavaliere's focus on the plant world the centre of the exhibition that she curated for Palazzo Reale in Milan in

[43] E. Pontiggia, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2015, p. 168.
[44] G. Dorfles, 1967.
[45] *De Rerum Natura* is a 6-book didactic poem from I Century BC written by Roman philosopher and poet Lucretius. The purpose of *De Rerum Natura* was to explain Epicurean theories of nature to the Roman audience. For the English critical edition, see John Evelyn's translation in Michael M. Repetzki, *John Evelyn's Translation of Titus Lucretius Carus De Rerum Natura. An Old-Spelling Critical Edition*, Pieterlen and Bern: Peter Lang, 2000. Pontiggia based her analysis on the fact that several arboreal-floral works are titled with verses from *De Rerum Natura by* Lucretius. E. Pontiggia, 2015, p. 168.
[46] G. Ballo, 1964, p. 123.
[47] Idem, p. 124-125.
[48] Idem, p. 123.
[49] E. Pontiggia, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2015, p. 167.

2018.[50] According to Pontiggia, the universe and the macrocosm were the main characters of Cavaliere's works, and human beings came into play as its microcosmic reflection.[51]

A further difference between early and later critics concerns the context in which they framed the arboreal-floral works. Although no text extensively contextualised Cavaliere's works within the art scene of his time, early critics drew parallels between Cavaliere and other artists of his generation, including Jasper Johns, Arman, and Jean Tinguely.[52] Moreover, early critics contextualised Cavaliere's practice within the Italian social context of the time, seeing the arboreal-floral works as a statement against the contradictions characterising the so-called 'economic miracle' and the related increase of consumerism in 1960s Italy.[53] For example, Italian critic Pietro Bonfiglioli considered the arboreal-floral works an ironic representation of how industrial society advanced to the point that industrial products silently replaced natural ones, without people even realising it.[54]

On the other hand, later critics emphasised Cavaliere's interest in the past rather than the present and considered the arboreal-floral works as the outcome of his 'dialogue' with Classical literature and historical avant-gardes such as Dadaism and, especially, Surrealism.[55] In this regard, Pontiggia specified that Cavaliere was not

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[50] The exhibition catalogue is E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018.

[51] Idem, pp. 25-27; E. Pontiggia, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2015, p. 167; E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 30.

[52] P. Bonfiglioli, 1967; Henry Martin, *Alik Cavaliere*, exhibition catalogue, April 1967, Rome: Galleria La Medusa, 1967; Pierre Restany, *Alik Cavaliere and Naturalist Determinism*, exhibition catalogue, 2 – 27 November 1965, New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1965. This perspective will then be reworked by Francesco Tedeschi in F. Tedeschi, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 58-60.

[53] 'Economic Miracle' is an expression used by historians and economists to designate a period of strong and fast economic growth that characterised Italy between the 1940s and the 1960s. In Chapter 3, I will discuss how the years of the Economic Miracle were characterised by sharp contradictions and how certain Italian artists responded to them. For further discussion on the Economic miracle from a historical perspective, see Nicholas Crafts, Gianni Toniolo, *Economic Growth in Europe Since 1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 and Duggan, Christopher, *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796*, London: Penguin, 2008. For a synthetic yet accurate discussion about how Italian artists responded to the Economic Miracle, see Flavia Frigeri, *BOOM: Art and Industry in 1960s Italy,* exhibition catalogue, 26 April – 16 June 2018, London and Florence: Tornabuoni Art and Forma Edizioni, 2018.

[54] P. Bonfiglioli, 1967.

[55] E. Pontiggia, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, pp. 25-28; E. Pontiggia, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2015, pp. 167-178; Susanna Zatti, "L'anima dei paesaggi di Alik Cavaliere", in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, pp. 9-11; F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, pp. 19-21; A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 94-104; E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 30-37. As mentioned before, an exception is the later critic Francesco Tedeschi, who outlined brief parallels

interested in Surrealist automatisms and the research on the nature of the sign but in representing illogical aspects of life. For Pontiggia, the Surrealist vein of Cavaliere's works resonated with André Breton's idea of escaping human boundaries and Max Ernst's concept of linking apparently incompatible realities.[56] Cavaliere himself also mentioned the latter idea in a journal from 1964 – 'Long live Ernst; linking opposite realities on a ground that is apparently incompatible with them'.[57]

Among the early critics, Ballo is the one who focused on Cavaliere's reworking of Surrealism the most. Particularly, Ballo highlighted how Cavaliere reworked 'hallucinated' and 'illusive' aspects of Surrealist aesthetics to represent human existential issues and dismay.[58] In line with this, Pontiggia subsequently added that the arboreal-floral works were the outcome of Cavaliere's reworking of Lucretius' idea of nature through René Magritte's aesthetics. According to Pontiggia, in the arboreal-floral works, Cavaliere represented Lucretius' majestic idea of nature by reworking the illusionist quality of Magritte's paintings and, especially, their ambiguity between the oneiric and the concrete. From Pontiggia's perspective, the arboreal-floral works represent nature as a force (Lucretius) that human beings cannot tame or understand as they are insignificant presences subjected to illusions, paradoxes, and conundrums (Magritte).[59]

Cavaliere's reworking of Dadaism was addressed by both early and later critics.[60] Both generations of critics focused on Cavaliere's reworking of the legacy of Marcel Duchamp. However, while later critics highlighted the influence of Duchamp in

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between the works by Cavaliere, Pop Art, Neo-Dada, and *Nouveau Réalisme.* For further discussion, see F. Tedeschi, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 58-59.

[56] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 28.

[57] My translation from Italian: "W Ernst: 'accoppiamento di due realtà inaccoppiabili sopra un piano che in apparenza non gli si confà', Cavaliere's journal, March 1964.

[58] G. Ballo, 1964, pp. 124-125. Ballo reiterated his perspective in Guido Ballo, "Alik Cavaliere o dei labirinti esistenziali", in G. Ballo (ed.), 1992, p. 26.

[59] Pontiggia speculated that Cavaliere's interest in the work by Magritte was sparked by the Venice Biennale Surrealist exhibition that he visited in 1954 and by the exhibition 'Magritte: Mostra Personale', held at Galleria Schwarz in December 1962 (the former's exhibition catalogue is V.v.A.a., *Biennale internazionale d'arte di Venexia (XXVII, 1954)*, unit 13, Venice: Soprintendenza alla Galleria Nazionale d'arte moderna e contemporanea, 1954; the latter's exhibition catalogue is René Magritte, *Magritte. Mostra personale*, exhibition catalogue, Milan: Galleria Schwarz, 1962). For further discussion, see E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 33.

[60] A. Vettese, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 42; F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, p. 20; A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 133-161; E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 36; Emilio Tadini, "Quando il cosmo è in miniatura", *Il Giornale*, 19 July, 1987; G. Dorfles, 1967.

Cavaliere's installations from the 1970s and 1980s, early critics explored Cavaliere's reworking of Dadaism in the arboreal-floral works. Particularly, Pietro Bonfiglioli, Henry Martin, and Pierre Restany emphasised Cavaliere's interest in questioning and reassessing the nature of the artistic sign and drew parallels between the arboreal-floral works and Neo-Dada practices, such as Jasper Johns'.[61]

The latter point introduces one of the main differences between the approaches of early and later critics to the arboreal-floral works. While later critics overlooked Cavaliere's interest in researching the nature of the artistic sign, early critics stressed Cavaliere's proximity with Neo-Dada explorations of the ontology of the artistic sign.[62] In this regard, Henry Martin raised a crucial question. What is the 'nature' that Cavaliere was interested in? Martin pointed out that the ambiguous appearance of the arboreal-floral works could be seen as a challenge to the 'nature' of three-dimensional representations. Specifically, Martin drew a brief parallel between the arboreal-floral works and Jasper Johns' *Flag,* 1954 – 1955 (fig. 21) and suggested that the works entailed a similar core issue. Is *Flag* representing a flag, or is it a flag itself? Are the arboreal-floral works representing plants, or are they plants themselves?[63] In Martin's view, Cavaliere's and Johns' works (re)present reality in literal ways, simultaneously suggesting that things might not be what they claim to be. In other words, Martin addressed a crucial point that has been then overlooked by later critics; like *Flag*, the arboreal-floral works can be seen as a questioning of the ontological nature of the three-dimensional representations.[64]

II.III 1969 – 1972: Cavaliere's Early Installations

In the late 1960s, Cavaliere's practice made a transition from sculpture to installations. Cavaliere's first installations are *Susi e l'albero* [Susi and the Tree],

[61] P. Bonfiglioli, 1967; H. Martin, 1967; Pierre Restany, 1965.
[62] G. Dorfles, 1967; H. Martin, 1967.
[63] Jasper John's *Flag*, 1954, 1955 is an object (a flag) and, at the same time, the representation of the object (an artwork representing a flag). For a full description of the work, see Glenn D. Lowry, *MoMA Highlights: 375 Works from The Museum of Modern Art, New York*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2019, p. 262.
[64] Affinities between the art practice of Cavaliere and Jasper Johns will be further discussed in Chapter 2, pp. 64-75.

1969 (fig. 22), *A e Z aspettano l'amore* [A e Z are Waiting for Love], 1971(fig. 23), *Apollo e Dafne* [Apollo and Daphne], 1971 (fig.24), and *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [*I Processi*: from William Shakespeare's English Stories], which Cavaliere made for the XXXVI Venice Biennale in 1972 (fig. 25).[65]

Susi e l'albero, *A e Z aspettano l'amore*, *Apollo e Dafne*, and *I Processi* are characterised by similar formal features. The works consist of life-sized theatrical sceneries inhabited by mutilated human figures. Later critics highlighted how the four works expressed a sense of loneliness, stillness, and inescapability, fetching back to Cavaliere's early works, such as *Colloquio.*[66]

As for the sources of inspiration for the installations, Schwarz and Pontiggia stressed the influence of Surrealism and Metaphysic works by Italian artist Giorgio de Chirico.[67] According to the critics, these influences are visible in the presence of *objets trouvés,* including suitcases, clothes, and shoes (especially, in *I Processi*) and enigmatic mutilated bodies and mannequins, often headless or with their body parts replaced by objects (such as a spindle and some branches, etc. – fig. 22; 24.1; 25.1).

Moreover, according to Pontiggia and Schwarz, the four works present noteworthy semi-theatrical features.[68] *Susi e l'albero* consists of a semi-human figure sitting inside a glass crate provided with a mechanism creating a sort of incessant rain inside the crate. The rain turns the work into a situation, and, in this sense, the work can be seen as a quasi-performance in which an 'actor' is incessantly wet by the rain. For its part, *Apollo e Dafne* is semi-theatrical in that the mirrors laid out on the

[65] *Apollo e Dafne* and *A e Z aspettano l'amore* were firstly exhibited at Galleria Schwarz in 1971, along with a series of arboreal-floral works titled *Un'avventura della natura. Le quattro stagioni* [An Adventure of Nature. The Four Seasons], 1970 (fig. 26). This choice suggests a continuity between the arboreal-floral works and the installations. For further discussion, see Jean Dypréau "Elements pour une confrontation et une rélation", in Jean Dypréau (ed.), *Alik Cavaliere. Trois Environents,* exhibition catalogue, 6 – 31 May 1971, Milan: Galleria Schwarz, 1971.
[66] A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 120; Ilaria Bignotti, "A e Z aspettano l'amore", in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 119; E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 35.
[67] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 34-35; A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 114-133.
[68] Ibidem.

ground of the work virtually expand the space of the work and allow viewers, who can walk around but not through the work, to enter and explore it with their gaze.[69]

A e Z aspettano l'amore and *I Processi* are the first works by Cavaliere in which viewers can walk through the space of the installations by becoming part of them.[70] Furthermore, the *A e Z aspettano l'amore* and *I Processi* are the opposite of site-specific works as they are designed to be installed in different ways according to different exhibition sites. Therefore, by changing according to space and time, the object-works themselves entail a sort of performative quality.

As for *I Processi*, Cavaliere thematised the performative quality of the work in line with its title. As Italian scholar Rossana Bossaglia pointed out, the Italian word 'processo' has two meanings, 'trial' and 'process'. In this sense, *I Processi* is a title expressing a twofold meaning. On the one hand, the title refers to the representation of different trials as told by the stories of William Shakespeare (that are the subject of the work); on the other hand, the title refers to the spatial-temporal process of experiencing the work.[71] Based on a similar analysis, Schwarz considered *I Processi* as the peak of Cavaliere's exploration of the theatrical potential of his practice. In this regard, Schwarz highlighted how the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's installations was the outcome of his exploration of the intersections between different media – painting, sculpture, installation, and performance.[72] These aspects will be extensively investigated in chapters 3 and 4.

II.IV 1972 – 1984: *Surroundings I-VII*

The theatrical quality of Cavaliere's practice takes centre stage in the series of installations *Surroundings I-VII,* 1972-1984 (fig. 27-33). *Surroundings I-VII* mark a

[69] As I will discuss in chapters 3 and 4, the mirror is a recurring element in Cavaliere's installations; in the works, mirrors are made of polished stainless steel. In my analysis of the works, I use the general term 'mirror' for convenience.
[70] For a detailed description of the works, see A. Schwarz, pp. 113-133.
[71] Rossana Bossaglia*, Alik Cavaliere*, *Le Storie: I Processi*, exhibition catalogue, January 1999, Milan: Fondazione Stelline, 1999. For an extensive discussion on *I Processi*, see Chapter 3 of the present work, pp. 110-117.
[72] A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 116-117. The same perspective was outlined by Francesco Tedeschi in Francesco Tedeschi, "<<Perchè non parli?>> Oltre la scultura alter ego della realtà", in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 34.

thematical turn in Cavaliere's practice – from the universality of nature, myths, and literature to ordinary stories. In this sense, *Surroundings I-VII* can be seen as a performative coming back to the theme of daily life that was previously addressed by Cavaliere in *Le avventure di Gustavo B.*

Surroundings I-VII is a series of seven reconstructions of ordinary life environments that Cavaliere turned into proper theatrical settings with real actors and spontaneous performances taking place. The performances were the interactions between the actors, public, and Cavaliere himself – who, in *Surroundings VII* (fig. 33), was literally part of the work by sitting inside the installation and discussing art with visitors. Al Nodal, who was the director of Otis College of Art, Los Angeles, where Cavaliere presented *Surroundings VII* in 1984, described the work as a 'performance in progress', constantly changing to contain all the events that happened during Cavaliere's residency.[73] Chapter 3 will offer an in-depth discussion of the theatrical and performative qualities of Cavaliere's installations, with a focus on *I Processi* and *Surroundings I-VII.*

II.V 1986 – 1998: Cavaliere's Late Environments

Cavaliere's last installations are *Pigmalione* [Pygmalion], 1986-1987 (fig. 34), *Le riflessioni di Narciso* [Narcissus' reflections], 1988 (fig. 35), *I giardini nel labirinto della memoria* [Gardens in the Labyrinth of Memory], 1990-1998 (fig. 36), and *Opere sull'Orlando Furioso* [Works on the Orlando Furioso], 1994-1996 (fig. 37.1-37.2). As indicated by the titles, the works are the outcome of Cavaliere's renewed interest in myths and literature.

Bossaglia pointed out that *Pigmalione* and *I giardini nel labirinto della memoria* could be considered autobiographical works structured, once again, as theatrical scenes. In both cases, the scenes are tangled and filled with different items lying on the ground. The items are arboreal-floral works, small-scale terracotta sculptures, and

[73] Al Nodal, *Alik Cavaliere, Il Modo Italiano*, exhibition catalogue, January – February 1984, Los Angeles: Otis Art Institute of School of Design, 1984, p. 7; Vv. Aa, *Il mondo italiano*, Turin: LAICA, Vol. II, 1983, p. 27.

objets trouvees, all coming from different phases of Cavaliere's career; their layout on the ground creates symbolic and autobiographical labyrinthine paths.[74]

In line with Bossaglia, Porreca stressed the psychological side of *Pigmalione* and *I giardini nel labirinto della memoria.* According to Pontiggia, the physical spaces of the works represent the 'space' of Cavaliere's mind, and the tangled structures of the works represent the artist's wish to get lost in the creative process.[75] In *Pigmalione*, the idea of getting lost is explicated by the myth of Pygmalion as the inspiration for the work. The myth of Pygmalion tells the story of a sculptor from Cyprus who loses his mind by falling in love with his work and ends up overlapping his own identity with it.[76] In line with the idea of losing their own identity and getting lost, *Pigmalione* consists of a tangled structure inhabited by evanescent human faces (fig. 34). Similarly, in *I giardini nel labirinto della memoria,* the idea of getting lost inside the artistic creation is represented by the labyrinthine structure of the work that is a sort of maze made of items and painted panels. According to Porreca, the labyrinth represents Cavaliere's memories, and the work represents Cavaliere's wish to take viewers to the labyrinth of his memories and get lost with them inside it.[77]

Le riflessioni di Narciso was considered by critics as the culmination of Cavaliere's reflections upon the involvement of viewers in the work of art. The work is a large-scale box-shaped installation surrounded by a sort of shield made of fragmented mirrors that reflects the contents of the box by visually multiplying and twisting them. While, in the previous works, Cavaliere used mirrors to make viewers able to see as many sides of the work as possible, in *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* mirrors complexify and twist the viewers' perception of the work. In line with the autobiographical interpretation of Cavaliere's later installations given by Bossaglia, Porreca and Pontiggia, the contents of the box are a collection of items from his previous phases, and viewers can only see their fragmented images reflected by the mirrors. In this regard, Crispolti argued that Cavaliere aimed to connect the artist's private

[74] Rossana Bossaglia, *Alik Cavaliere, Voyage*, exhibition catalogue, September 1987, Macerata: Pinacoteca e Musei Comunali, Macerata, 1987. Bossana's perspective was reworked by Francesca Porreca in F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, p. 32.
[75] F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, p. 32.
[76] For an extensive discussion of *Pigmalione*, see Chapter 4 of the present work, pp. 147-165.
[77] F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, p. 34.

experience with the public arena by complexifying the physical and intellectual involvement of viewers.[78]

Opere sull'Orlando Furioso [Works on the Orlando Furioso], 1994-1996 is Cavaliere's last immersive installation, and it is considered by critics as a sort of spiritual wish. The work consists of large-scale painted panels and bronze sculptures representing selected episodes from *Orlando Furioso,* an Italian chivalric poem written by Ludovico Ariosto between 1514 and 1532 (fig. 37.1-37.2).[79] *Orlando Furioso* is a poem about the mutability of reality, in which Ariosto described the world as constantly changing and with no barriers between the animate and inanimate realms. In a conference that Cavaliere held at the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome, in 1994, he highlighted how Ariosto succeeded in talking about a world in which every dogma, hierarchy, and idea of objectivity collapsed, and 'reality' became a perspective.[80] Ultimately, in Cavaliere's view, Ariosto was a timeless figure asking readers to reclaim control on their minds in order not to be 'rambling and powerless puppets'.[81]

Opere sull'Orlando Furioso won't be included in the present discussion since it focuses on Cavaliere's works and writings from 1960 to 1989. However, the idea of reality as relative, mutable, and non-dogmatic will be a central point of the analysis, and it will be argued that it characterises Cavaliere's practice as a whole. The following chapters will, thus, investigate how Cavaliere applied this perspective to his works from the decades in question.[82] Before that, the following section will explore the original contribution of Cavaliere's journals to the discussion.

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[78] Enrico Crispolti, "La scultura interrogativa di Alik", in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005*,* pp. 49-50.

[79] For an extensive description and analysis of the work, see A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 212. There are no photographs showing the whole work.

[80] Alik Cavaliere, *Ludovico Arioso, l'Orlando Furioso e la primavera del 1994*, conference held at the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome, 19 May 1994 (unpublished transcript stored at Adriana Cavaliere's house, pp. 13-14).

[81] My translation from Italian: '[…] fantocci erranti, disarmati […]', Ibidem.

[82] Between the 1950s and 1990s, Cavaliere made a few works that I decided not to include in the present overview. My decision was based on two reasons. In some cases, I considered the works as reiterations of the features and topics discussed as regards the works that I described. In other cases, I considered the works isolated experiments outside of the main threads of my discourse. Except for the drawings, which are mostly unpublished, all the works by Cavaliere are catalogued in E. Pontiggia, 2012. For thorough descriptions of Cavaliere's works, see E. Pontiggia, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, pp. 20-31; A. Schwarz, 2008; G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005.

Section 2 – The Original Contribution of the Journals. Cavaliere's 'Dialogue' with the Contemporary Art Scene

The previous section presented an overview of Cavaliere's biography and work through the existing critical literature. This second section investigates how and to what extent the journals can expand and enrich the discourse on his practice.

As discussed in the first part of the chapter, later critics stressed Cavaliere's engagement with the Classical and literary world and historical avant-gardes such as Dadaism and Surrealism. On the other hand, the examination of Cavaliere's journals provides information that, while confirming this perspective, also broadens the discourse about the art contexts with which Cavaliere engaged. [83]

Cavaliere's journals from 1960 to 1989 are rich in reflections on art and aesthetics. The journals do not provide an organic aesthetic theory as they are an unsystematic collection of notes and thoughts regarding various topics. Cavaliere's magmatic written observations upon art contain several references to artists and currents to which Cavaliere was paying particular attention. In this regard, the journals evidence that, although Cavaliere did not join any specific art current, he was curious about and aware of the main tendencies and forces at work in the contemporary art world – in Italy, Europe, and New York. Based on the journals, the following pages will thus outline a theoretical framework to expand the perimeter of Cavaliere's possible sources of inspiration for his work and identify further connections, influences, and convergences between his practice and the art scene of the time.

[83] Cavaliere confirmed the perspective of later critics in a journal from 1975, in which he explicitly stated that his practice was attuned with Dadaist and Surrealist purposes: 'My interest in Surrealist themes and my recovering of Dadaism'. (My translation from Italian: 'La mia convergenza su interessi surrealisti e Il mio recupero dadaista'), Cavaliere's journal, December 1975. Furthermore, in the interview with Sebastiano Grasso for *Corriere della Sera* in 1992, Cavaliere stated that his link with Dadaism and his friendship with Duchamp and Man Ray had saved him from the fate of becoming a naturalist artist. (My adaptation from Italian: SG: Qual è il lato negativo? AC: Il diventare naturalistico […] SG: Cosa l'ha salvata, sinora? AC: L'aggancio al Dadaismo. Che deriva dalla mia amicizia con Duchamp e Man Ray. Attraverso Schwarz'), S. Grasso, 1992.

III Cavaliere's Active Interest in the Contemporary Art Scene

The journals witness that Cavaliere had many occasions to explore the contemporary art scene during trips around Italy, Europe, and the US. On these occasions, Cavaliere visited international exhibitions and museums and met artists (mostly thanks to his connection to Schwarz) with whom he had stimulating intellectual exchanges. An example is Arman, who provided Cavaliere with a suggestion to improve his work: more reality and less imitation – 'I think he is right', wrote Cavaliere.[84] Overall, the journals have a considerable number of notes and comments on artworks by various artists that Cavaliere saw during his visits, which suggest that they might have had an impact on the development of his practice.

Furthermore, the analysis of the journals evidences a discrepancy between the image of Cavaliere outlined by later critics and Cavaliere's reflections upon his practice. The case of the arboreal-floral works offers an example to understand this point. Cavaliere gained international recognition with the arboreal-floral work exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1964. Overall, the literature on the arboreal-floral works is 80% ca. of the body of literature on his practice. A significative example of how critics emphasised the importance of the arboreal-floral works is the retrospective exhibition curated by Pontiggia in 2018 at Palazzo Reale, Milan – *Alik Cavaliere. L'universo verde* (Alik Cavaliere. The Green Universe). As expressed by the title, the exhibition focused on Cavaliere's interest in and poetic reworking of the plant world ('the green universe'), and most of the works showcased were arboreal-floral works.[85] Choices like Pontiggia's resulted in Cavaliere being mainly known for his arboreal-floral works.[86]

In a journal from March 1964, however, Cavaliere was quite explicit about his intention to expand his artistic horizons, and he expressed his irritation with the

[84] My translation from Italian: 'Arman mi chiede più realtà e meno imitazione. Penso abbia ragione', Cavaliere's journal, October 1965.
[85] E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018.
[86] The choice of focusing the exhibition on the arboreal-floral works also had logistical reasons. Most of the arboreal-floral works are part of private collections near Milan and have small-scale dimensions. Thus, they are readily available and transportable. On the other hand, Cavaliere's installations are large-scale and difficult to handle and carry. Furthermore, the installations are dismantled and would need substantial work of restoration to be exhibited to the public. As for *Le avventure di Gustavo B.,* most works of the series have unknown locations.

identification of his practice with the arboreal-floral works – 'nature is just a small part of what I am interested in', 'I do not want to end up castrating myself by making glum, miserable small trees', he claimed.[87] In other words, the journals suggest that, although Cavaliere reached the peak of his fame in the 1960s thanks to the arboreal-floral works, he was already in search of new avenues for his practice. For example, during his first visit to New York in 1965, Cavaliere wrote that he wanted to explore 'new artistic structures' inspired by what he had observed during his stay.[88] Unfortunately, the journals do not provide further information to interpret to which works Cavaliere was specifically referring. However, as will be discussed in the following pages and chapters, it is possible to advance concrete hypotheses based on a cross-analysis between the journals and the works.

The journals evidence that, between the 1960s and the 1980s, Cavaliere regularly visited major national and international museums and exhibitions, including the New York Museum of Modern Art, the Venice Biennale, Kassel Documenta, and the Antwerp Biennale.[89] The journals from the 1960s are rich in Cavaliere's written reflections upon the works that he saw during his visits. Moreover, the journals witness how taking notes about artworks was a way for Cavaliere to fuel his creativity. For example, on his way home from Kassel Documenta in 1964, Cavaliere wrote that observing contemporary artworks was extremely important to him.[90] In line with this, in 1965, Cavaliere claimed that visiting the MoMA in New York inspired him with new ideas for his works.[91]

[87] My translation from Italian: 'La natura è solo una piccola parte di ciò che mi interessa', Cavaliere's journal, July 1964. My translation from Italian: 'non voglio finire a castrarmi facendo tristi, miserabili piccoli alberelli', Cavaliere's journal, March 1964.
[88] 'I need my work to fit in the new artistic structures, and I want to invent new structures myself'. My adaptation from Italian: 'Occorre inserirsi nelle nuove strutture ed inventare strutture nuove', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.
[89] Crucial art trips that Cavaliere made in the 1960s were to Kassel in June 1964, where he visited Documenta 3, and to New York in January and October 1965, where he visited the MoMA and was introduced by Schwarz to artists such as Arman and Duchamp.
[90] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ma il punto più vivace e più giusto (più giusto per me oggi) è l'esame delle opere attuali, dei tentativi più recenti, delle mode e delle personalità singole', Cavaliere's journal, October 1964.
[91] My adaptation from Italian: 'Museum of modern art: vengono sempre delle idee', Cavaliere's journal, October 1965.

Almost fifteen years later, in a note from 1980, Cavaliere reiterated the importance of those visits for developing his practice, claiming that he had always visited museums and exhibitions with a sort of 'artisanal' perspective, focusing on grasping ideas for his works.[92] Considering this, it will be beneficial to explore Cavaliere's comments on the works that he saw during his visits as they provide helpful examples to clarify how he engaged with the contemporary art scene.

III.I Cavaliere's Reflective Engagement with the Contemporary Art Scene

The journals document that Cavaliere used to approach art through two main aesthetic categories – 'living' art and 'dead' art. Cavaliere applied the two categories to works by both contemporary artists and old masters. In short, Cavaliere considered 'dead' celebratory works confirming the *status quo* and not challenging the viewer. On the other hand, 'living' works were the ones that presented a specific feature, the feature of theatricality. Therefore, the concept of 'theatricality' that critics used to describe Cavaliere's works seems also to be a sort of critical category used by Cavaliere himself to approach art in general.

In 1964, Cavaliere loosely introduced his idea of theatricality, describing works by various artists that put a main 'character' at the centre of a 'scene' – from Francis Bacon to Paul Klee and Paolo Veronese, the works of which Cavaliere saw at Documenta 3, Kassel, in 1964.[93] Then, in January 1965, at the end of his first trip to

[92] My adaptation from Italian: 'Visito i musei con una strana attenzione "artigianale", volta solo a ciò che è da me utilizzabile.', Cavaliere's journal, August 1980.

[93] Cavaliere introduced his idea of theatricality in the comments that he wrote regarding a few paintings that he saw at Documenta 3 in Kassel in 1964. In this regard, Cavaliere defined the works in which it was visible the presence of a main character at the centre of a scene as 'theatrical'. For example, Cavaliere appreciated the talent of Francis Bacon to create a character and trap it in a suffocating space (my adaptation from Italian: 'Mi interessa Bacon. Il personaggio è al centro circondato e legato da spazi, fili dimensioni chiuse ed asfissianti', Cavaliere's journal, October 1964). Cavaliere highlighted the presence of a main character also in works by Chaïm Soutine and Paul Klee. According to Cavaliere, Soutine's painting celebrated 'the tragedy of a character', while Klee's represented the loneliness of a character that was 'lost inside a labyrinth of symbols'. (My adaptation from Italian: 'Klee trovo ancora spunti: l'uomo, il personaggio solo, perduto nel labirinto, il labirinto-personaggio, il segno ed il simbolo ecc […] Soutine: è la "pittura" che diviene dramma per il dramma del personaggio, Cavaliere's journal, October 1964). Cavaliere used the concept of theatricality also to approach works by old masters. For example, Cavaliere claimed that he appreciated a painting by Paolo Veronese that he saw in Naples in 1967 because it was like 'a painted theatre'. (My translation from Italian:

New York, Cavaliere wrote his first note regarding a correlation between the medium of sculpture and the concept of theatricality. In the note, Cavaliere claimed that sculpture should be 'a play' unfolding through space in order not to be just a 'dead monument'. Such play should involve viewers by taking them to the centre of the scene, likewise the theatrical paintings that Cavaliere saw at Documenta a few months earlier. [94]

Considering this, the feature of theatricality appears to be, in Cavaliere's writings a sort of antidote to 'dead' celebratory works. Through the observation and analysis of artworks by other artists – from Paolo Veronese to Francis Bacon – Cavaliere focused his reflections on the idea of a 'living' and 'theatrical' kind of art contrasting 'dead' (celebratory) works.

To better understand the distinction that Cavaliere outlined between 'living' and 'dead' art, it will be beneficial to analyse his reflections upon Surrealism and Dadaism.

III.II Invention and Disorientation: Cavaliere's Reflections upon Dadaism and Surrealism

The existing literature on Cavaliere's practice has extensively addressed the influence of Dadaism and Surrealism. As discussed in the first section of the chapter, the influence of Surrealism was mainly outlined by Ballo and Pontiggia in terms of nightmarish atmospheres (Ballo) and Magrittian illusionism, ambiguities, and oneirism (Pontiggia). On the other hand, critics who discussed Cavaliere's reworking of Dadaism (such as Dorfles and Schwarz) focused on the role of Duchamp's

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'Amo Veronese, perché vedo uno spettacolo, un teatro dipinto', Cavaliere's journal, June 1967). Previously, in 1964, Cavaliere described flowers painted by Van de Velde as 'cruel' – as they were evil characters of a story. (My translation from Italian: 'Basel – Museo di Losanna: Van de Velde: ecco i fiori asfittici e crudeli', Cavaliere's journal, October 1964).

[94] My adaptation from Italian: 'La scultura deve oggi necessariamente essere spettacolo prolungato nello spazio. Il monumento morto, il monolite – la colonna che tanti tentano – non ha più senso. Per essere valida deve portarci al centro di essa, al centro di una scena, e proporre una vasta serie di aspetti.', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965. My adaptation from Italian: 'La scultura che non può essere all'altezza di questi quadri, quando dovesse divenire invenzione e costruzione, può superarli.' Cavaliere's journal, October 1964.

readymade. The critics described the influence of Dadaism and Surrealism in Cavaliere's work by addressing specific formal and poetic features, including the presence of *objects trouvées* in Cavaliere's installations, his choice of elevating daily life to the level of art, and the subtly ironic, ambiguous, and oneiric qualities of Cavaliere's works in general.[95]

The journals play a twofold role in assessing the influence of Dadaism and Surrealism in Cavaliere's practice. On the one hand, the journals confirm the importance of Duchamp and Magritte. For example, in 1976, Cavaliere defined his work as in line with Surrealist and Dadaist perspectives by making specific references to Magritte and Duchamp.[96] On the other hand, the journals provide additional information to explore Cavaliere's reworking of Dadaism and Surrealism from a different angle. In this regard, Cavaliere's reflections upon the role of the Western cultural tradition provide valuable clues.

In 1965, Cavaliere expressed his appreciation for Dadaism by stating that the 'living buds' entailed by the current had the power to dispel 'false myths'.[97] Then, in a journal from 1980, Cavaliere claimed that Dadaism and Surrealism had the merit of recovering 'classical forms' by firstly destroying them. The bottom line of Cavaliere's perspective is that Dadaism and Surrealism succeeded in recovering 'classical forms' by freeing them from the cage of the tradition.[98]

The role of tradition is as central as delicate in Cavaliere's practice and writings. As discussed, prominent later critics, including Porreca and Schwarz, argued that Cavaliere's primary sources of inspiration came from Classical and literary

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[95] A. Vettese, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 42; F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, pp. 23-24; A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 137; E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 28; G. Dorfles, 1967.

[96] 'Today, my work appears to me in the wake of Surrealist and Dadaist perspectives, although with a few differences. Sometimes, like Magritte. Sometimes like Duchamp'. (My translation from Italian: 'Il mio lavoro mi appare oggi nella scia di un discorso surrealista e dadaista, sia pure diverso in parte. Cioè come un Magritte. Talora un Duchamp'), Cavaliere's journal, July 1976.

[97] My translation from Italian: 'Movimenti come il dada portano sempre con sé germi vitali che possono […] liberare il campo da falsi miti.' Cavaliere's journal, January 1965. The expression 'false myths' is problematic as it implies that there might be 'true' myths. Chapter 4, will discuss the role of mythology and the concept of 'truth' in Cavaliere's practice; the analysis will clarify what Cavaliere might have meant by 'false myths'. See Chapter 4, pp. 83-85.

[98] My adaptation from Italian: 'Il riferimento storico più tipico è al dadaismo e al surrealismo che solo quando varcano il confine dell'opera come canone, stile, genere possono ri-usufruire dell'opera stessa, nelle sue forme il massimo risultato.', Cavaliere's journal, September 1980.

tradition.[99] However, the journals evidence that Cavaliere's relationship with this tradition was more complicated than it might at first seem and shed a contradictory light on his interest in Classical literature.

In 1961, Cavaliere asked himself whether classical myths were an inescapable burden or could help seek 'new myths' that could help understand reality.[100] In 1963, Cavaliere provided an initial answer to the question, claiming that myths must be reinvented and updated to fulfil their gnoseological function.[101] In 1964, Cavaliere further reflected on the topic and stated that one should be careful not to be imprisoned by 'our magnificent culture'.[102] Therefore, the journals suggest that, for Cavaliere, the tradition was dangerous when it was treated as a limit – as a form of 'dead' celebration, conservation, and reinforcement of the *status quo* that, in his words, would not allow a 'direct participation in reality'.[103]

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Cavaliere reflected on the importance of Western culture from an ambivalent perspective summarised as follows. 'Our magnificent culture is unusable but also impossible to put away'.[104] As stated by Paul Valéry, which was quoted by Cavaliere in the journal, when it comes to art, everything that seems new always comes from an ancient need.[105]

[99] F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, pp. 19-36; A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 44-47.
[100] My adaptation from Italian: 'I miei miti classici sono un peso tremendo da cui non posso liberarmi, o sono uno stimolo per trovare nuovi miti più veri, più reali e aderenti a noi?' Cavaliere's journal, 1961. Since the journal has several undated and detached pages, I could not determine the month Cavaliere wrote the note.
[101] My adaptation from Italian: 'Con ciò non ho alcun rimpianto e non amo le cose vecchie, semplicemente il nuovo deve essere conquista e i miti vanno reinventati, ma non per distruggere i vecchi, ma per sostituirli con più validi, più aderenti alla realtà di oggi.' Cavaliere's journal, 13 December 1963.
[102] My translation from Italian: 'Bisogna fare attenzione a non farci imprigionare dalla nostra magnifica cultura', Cavaliere's journal, March 1964.
[103] My adaptation from Italian: 'La tradizione è positiva, ma anche negativa. Negativa per quella parte che forma uno schema mentale, schema che impedisce di vedere le cose nuove libero da preconcetti e pregiudizi, schema che se da un lato ci aiuta ad inquadrare facilmente i problemi, ci frena da atti incivili, dall'altro ci impedisce talora dal cogliere aspetti nuovi e ci impedisce di mutare rapidamente punto di vista per scoprire qualcosa in più, qualcosa a me ignoto od oscuro. Penso che il centro del problema sia la partecipazione alla realtà. (Può essere anche valida una posizione di rinuncia, però in rapporto con la realtà, e non astratta). Il rapporto con la realtà deve essere diretto.' Cavaliere's journal, March 1964.
[104] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] la nostra magnifica cultura non è né utilizzabile, né archiviabile in un cassetto', Cavaliere's journal, January 1980.
[105] My traslation from Italian: 'In arte quanto di meglio presenta il nuovo corrisponde sempre ad un bisogno antico', ibidem.

Considering this information, although it is a matter of fact that Cavaliere's primary sources of inspiration came from Western literature (including Ariosto, Shakespeare, and Lucretius), the journals suggest that, for Cavaliere, the literary tradition was more of a starting point or a means to an end rather than a final purpose.

In a journal from 1965, Cavaliere outlined a correlation between his conflicted relationship with Western culture and his appreciation for Dadaism and Surrealism. In the journal, Cavaliere stated that 'our cultural heritage' must be valued through 'anarchic solutions'. Considering the work covered, the expression 'anarchic solutions' is a valuable clue as it fetches back to Cavaliere's comments on the power of the avant-gardes to recover classical forms by freeing them from the cage of tradition.[106]

In the journals from the mid-1960s, Cavaliere reiterated his appreciation for Dadaist 'revolutionary power' to embrace contradictions and antinomies.[107] In this regard, Cavaliere referred not only to Duchamp but also to other Dadaist artists, such as Tristan Tzara – 'I like Tzara's love for dialectic, freedom. LIFE'.[108] As Tristan Tzara wrote in the 1918 Dadaist Manifesto, 'Freedom: DADA DADA DADA, a roaring of tense colours, and interlacing of opposites and all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies: LIFE'.[109]

The note about Tzara offers a first hint to investigate Cavaliere's idea of 'living' art. Moreover, the note suggests a correlation between Cavaliere's interest in Dadaism and Surrealism. Indeed, the note is in line with another note about Max Ernst that Cavaliere wrote a few months before – 'Long live Ernst; linking opposite realities on a ground that is apparently incompatible with them'.[110] Considering this, the journals suggest that the idea of 'living' art was, for Cavaliere, linked to the idea of coexisting

[106] My traslation from Italian: 'Difendiamo il nostro patrimonio culturale con soluzioni anarchiche', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.
[107] My adaptation from Italian: 'Comunque il movimento Dada è un movimento veramente libero, con forti aspirazioni. Le aspirazioni e le contraddizioni soprattutto lo rendono rivoluzionario', Cavaliere's journal, March 1964.
[108] My translation from Italian: 'Amo Tzara che afferma che l'arte è nella libertà e nella dialettica. VITA.', Cavaliere's journal, July 1964.
[109] Tristan Tzara (1918), *Dada Manifesto 1918,* published in Robin Walz*, Modernism,* London: Routledge, 2008.
[110] My translation from Italian: 'W Ernst: 'accoppiamento di due realtà inaccoppiabili sopra un piano che in apparenza non gli si confà', Cavaliere's journal, March 1964, previsouly quoted at p. 14.

opposite realities (or features) within a work of art; and it seems that Dadaism (Tzara) and Surrealism (Ernst) influenced his thinking.

The fragmentary nature of the journals makes it impossible to establish inferential correlations between Cavaliere's works and influences by other artists. However, the cross-analysis between the journals and critical literature outlines a constellation of names and themes that makes a theoretical map to explore Cavaliere's practice. Among these themes are the idea of 'living art' resulting from an interplay between opposites, the idea of recovering tradition through anarchic solutions, and the idea of inventing new structures to revive the medium of sculpture.

The concept of invention provides a useful angle to explore Cavaliere's interest in Surrealism. In 1962, Cavaliere wrote that he was not interested only in works by Magritte and Ernst but also in works by minor exponents of the current, such as Yves Tanguy and Roberto Matta, in view of their 'structural inventions'.[111] Cavaliere particularly appreciated the use that Matta made of archaic sources of inspiration, which Cavaliere saw as an 'original recovering' of the essence of aesthetics from the past through invention instead of imitation.[112] Moreover, Cavaliere claimed that he was not interested in the traditional features of Surrealism, such as its oneiric atmosphere, and, instead, he was inspired by its 'wrecking' function that put it closer to Dadaism.[113] Therefore, for Cavaliere, Dadaism and Surrealism had a similar

[111] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ripensando al surrealismo non mi interessano i quadri più legati alle teorie del sogno o ad altri schemi (Magritte, Ernst…), ciò che mi interessa sono le invenzioni costruttive, da Tanguy a Matta, per intenderci. Quindi il più vasto possibile repertorio, purché l'invenzione sia fisica, strutturale, continua, inventiva e non solo evocazione onirica.', Cavaliere's journal, 1962. There is not sufficient documentation to explore the possibility of specific influences by Tanguy and Matta on the work of Cavaliere. However, I decided to mention their names to provide evidence of the fact that, in the journals, Cavaliere showed himself to be interested in a wide range of art practices and reflected on the concept of invention, which will then be central in his works from 1965 to the 1980s. Unfortunately, since the journal has several undated and detached pages, I could not determine the month in which Cavaliere wrote the note.

[112] My adaptation from Italian: 'Nel museo etrusco ritrovo nei vasi alcune invenzioni dei gioielli di Matta, validi questi ultimi in quanto mai visti, copiati, ma inventati e recuperati sull'arcaico attraverso un senso profondo e semplice.', Cavaliere's journal, June 1976.

[113] My adaptation from Italian: 'Mi appassiona altresì la parte di rottura, quella più legata inizialmente al dadaismo. Credo quindi che il surrealismo che mi interessa sia qualcosa di diverso da quello classico. Qualcosa di nuovo come un nuovo capitolo. Più legato al vecchio dadaismo (nella parte più inventiva e non teorica)', Cavaliere's journal, 1962.

power to break free from the cage of tradition and invent 'different kinds of reality' apt to trigger a sense of 'disorientation'.[114]

In the following chapters, the idea of disorientation will take centre stage in the analysis of Cavaliere's works. Mainly, the discussion will examine how the correlation between Cavaliere's practice and Dadaist and Surrealist influences goes beyond his reworking of formal features characterising the two currents and involves the purpose of his practice, which is 'anarchically' reworking Western culture to open it to new possibilities of structure and meaning through invention. In this regard, the journals offer a further piece of the puzzle to investigate Cavaliere's concept of invention, which is Cavaliere's account of Pop Art.

III.III Cavaliere's Account of Pop Art

Cavaliere visited New York for the first time in 1965.[115] The journals document that the encounter with the 'new world' and its overwhelming dynamism significantly impacted Cavaliere's reflections. Visiting the New York art scene made Cavaliere feel the need to broaden his practice and make works apt to 'grasp' the 'plurality and multiplicity' of the 'swirling' world. In other words, the New York art scene sparked in Cavaliere the wish to think about his work from a 'wider perspective' and open it to new possibilities.[116]

Although the journals do not evidence which artists, works, and exhibitions Cavaliere was specifically referring to, they nevertheless offer a few valuable clues to investigate the impact that the visits to New York had on his reflections upon art. Observing the differences that he perceived between the European and American art

[114] My adaptation from Italian: 'il dadaismo ha intuito una sensazione di spaesamento dei valori tradizionali nella società odierna: una "realtà diversa". Lo "spaesamento" come situazione, come realtà quotidiana acquisita', Cavaliere's journal, April 1967.
[115] In both cases, Cavaliere was in the company of Arturo Schwarz, who took him to social events with figures such as Duchamp, Arman, and gallerist Martha Jackson. This information is provided by Cavaliere's journals from January and October 1965.
[116] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ciò che occorre è porre il nostro lavoro in una prospettiva più vasta, porlo al centro di un mondo turbinante e far sì che possa captare e cogliere in sé plurimi, molteplici aspetti di una nuova realtà', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.

scenes, Cavaliere wrote that he found European artists, such as Tinguely, Arman, and Spoerri, more ironic than Americans. On the other hand, Cavaliere observed that American artists made works that were permeated by 'a sense of impotence or disruption'.[117]

Assessing the knowledge that Cavaliere had of the New York art scene is quite a challenging task. The spontaneous and unsystematic nature of the journals often results in terminological inaccuracies and obscurities. For example, Cavaliere often used the expression 'Pop Art' to refer to American artists, such as Oldenburg, whose work is not 'Pop' in the strictest sense of the term. Possibly due to the unclarity of Cavaliere's observations regarding the American context, later critics overlooked the latter's significance in the development of Cavaliere's work in favour of a stronger focus on his reworking of Dadaism and Surrealism. On the other hand, from the analysis of the journals, it emerges that Cavaliere's interest in Dadaism, Surrealism, and the American context came from the same root: his need to reassess the role of the Western tradition.

The journals have evidenced that the issue of the tradition is a central knot in Cavaliere's reflections upon Dadaism and Surrealism. Similarly, the theme of tradition is central in Cavaliere's take on 'Pop Art'. Cavaliere's first observation about Pop Art is an appreciation of its power to free the visual arts from the limits of tradition – 'Lacking tradition, Americans tried to snub their sense of inferiority: Pop Art is one of the most valuable and successful examples of such a snubbing'.[118]

According to Cavaliere, the merit of Pop Art was to succeed in breaking social schemas through its 'iconoclastic power' and 'opening the door to new possibilities of

[117] My adaptation from Italian: 'Fra gli europei domina l'ironia: Tinguely, Arman, Spoerri ecc. Fra gli americani domina un senso di impotenza o distruzione' Cavaliere's journal, January 1965. The concept of disruption will be particularly beneficial to analyse Cavaliere's practice, and the present study will argue that the 1960s New York art scene might have subtly yet significantly influenced Cavaliere's thinking on art. For further discussion, see Chapters 2 and 4.

[118] My translation from Italian: 'Gli americani ignoranti di tradizione tentano di snobbare il loro complesso di inferiorità. La pop-art è uno dei più preziosi e riusciti di tali snobbamenti', Cavaliere's journal, July 1964. Considering Cavaliere's cultural background, it does not surprise that his perspective was limited to the Western world and did not consider Native American cultures when commenting on American 'lacking' of historical traditions compared to European and Italian cultural history.

expression'.[119] Reinforcing the correlation between the idea of breaking free from the burden of tradition and the concept of invention (that was previously introduced regarding Dadaism and Surrealism), Cavaliere claimed that 'nowadays, artists […] should invent in order to re-create [in their works] wider and more alive structures'.[120]

In the context of Cavaliere's reflections upon the concept of invention, the journals give particular importance to the figure of Claes Oldenburg.[121] The way in and the frequency with which Cavaliere mentioned Oldenburg in his writings suggest that the significance of Oldenburg's practice in the development of Cavaliere's work deserves further investigation. Thus, the following pages will introduce Cavaliere's reflections upon Oldenburg; then, Chapter 4 will examine specific affinities between Cavaliere's and Oldenburg's works.

The first comment that Cavaliere wrote about Oldenburg is from June 1964. In the note, Cavaliere wrote that Pop Art was too detached from 'the intimate reality of things', except for Oldenburg's work. In Cavaliere's view, Oldenburg was the only 'Pop' artist who managed to pursue in-depth investigations and express 'an ironic idea of the object'.[122] Although the journal does not document which works Cavaliere was referring to, considering that the note is from June 1964, he was likely referring

[119] My adaptation from Italian: 'Il pop ha a proprio vantaggio una distruttiva iconoclastia di un aspetto della nostra società che apre la porta a nuove possibilità espressive' Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.

[120] In the journals, Cavaliere frequently reflected on the theme of invention. For example, commenting on Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* (that Cavaliere probably saw in Philadelphia in 1965), Cavaliere wrote that he liked it because it gave birth to 'a million perfect and adventurous inventions.' (My translation from Italian: 'Ho amato la mostra del "box". La scatola ed i suoi derivati in mille invenzioni perfette e rocambolesche'), Cavaliere's journal, January 1965. Furthermore, Cavaliere observed how 'nowadays, artists should invent and make art to merge their personality and broader structures that could be more vital and total'. (My adaptation from Italian: 'L'artista oggi […] deve inventare e produrre per sommare, oltre la sua personalità, oltre lo stato d'animo e le impressioni, qualcosa di diverso, nella struttura intima e nell'idea generale, che divenga più ampio, più vitale in senso più totale'), Cavaliere's journal, January 1965. Chapter 3 will elaborate on Cavaliere's idea of 'total art'. Moreover, Cavaliere frequently used the idea of 'invention' to explain why he appreciated works by other artists, especially by Claes Oldenburg – examples are provided in the following footnotes.

[121] 'Only Oldenburg's objects are invented, while I find other American artists, such as Rauschenberg, more traditional'. (My adaptation from Italian: 'Fra i vari tentativi ho trovato inventati solo gli oggetti di Oldenburg mentre ho trovato gli altri e Rauschenberg pittori tradizionali'), Cavaliere's journal, March 1964. 'Who has not ever stolen? I steal from my friends. […]. From Oldenburg, [I have stolen] the ability to break the mould' (my translation from Italian: Chi non ha mai rubato? Rubo agli amici. […] Ad Oldenburg [ho rubato] la capacità di rompere gli schemi'), S. Grasso, 1992.

[122] My adaptation from Italian: 'Trovo il "Pop" un'arte distaccata dalla realtà più intima delle cose. Manca la nostra ansia, il nostro anonimo, un'ironia per gli oggetti [solo Oldenburg ci riesce], non ha un'indagine più profonda, limitandosi ad una constatazione della realtà naturalistica ed oggettiva delle cose (e anche degli avvenimenti)', Cavaliere's journal, June 1964.

to Oldenburg's exhibition at the 1964 Venice Biennale, in which Oldenburg showcased his 'Big Giant Foods', an installation reproducing various foods in enlarged dimensions.

Surprisingly enough, Cavaliere did not write about other American artists who participated in the Biennale and the Leone d'Oro, which Robert Rauschenberg controversially won. Instead, Cavaliere focused his reflections on Oldenburg. According to Cavaliere, Oldenburg was the most 'critically challenging' and 'ground-breaking' artist of the Biennale.[123] In a subsequent note, Cavaliere wrote his appreciation for Oldenburg's works, describing them as simultaneously realistic and invented.[124]

Considering the work covered, the coexistence of realism and invention that Cavaliere observed in Oldenburg's work aligns with the idea of disorientation that he outlined regarding Dadaism and Surrealism. The common thread is that, according to Cavaliere, certain kinds of art have the 'wreaking power' to break free from traditions and habits by questioning the appearance of reality through invention and, thus, disorienting viewers.[125] As argued by Julian Rose, Oldenburg's works are disorienting because they flaunt 'monumentality unhinged'.[126]

The concept of monumentality is centre stage in Cavaliere's idea of 'dead' art. In this regard, it will be helpful to examine Cavaliere's personal experience with monumental art.

[123] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ma dove sono le opere che criticano o squarciano o aprono una prospettiva? Solo Oldenburg', Cavaliere's journal, June 1964.
[124] My adaptation from Italian: 'Amo Oldenburg che è inventato e realista', Cavaliere's journals, January 1965.
[125] 'Oldenburg's greatest insight was to recognise that the inevitable failure of attempts to intervene in or control the increasingly chaotic system of objects and signs defining modern culture did not prevent him from treating the symbolic association of his objects in the same way as the objects themselves: as a given, a found condition.' Julian Rose, "Objects in the Cluttered Field: Claes Oldenburg's Proposed Monuments", *October* Vol. 140 (Spring 2012), p. 125.
[126] Ibidem.

IV Cavaliere's Writings and the Crisis of Monumental Sculpture

Cavaliere wrote his first note regarding monumental art during his first trip to New York. In the note, Cavaliere observed that 'the monument had completely lost his purpose'.[127] In line with the observations about the 'wreaking power' of Dadaism, Surrealism, and Oldenburg's works, Cavaliere subsequently claimed that he aimed to 'destroy myths' and create 'new monuments' that could work as 'wider structures for participation'.[128]

Cavaliere's written reflections upon monumental art reached their peak in 1974 when he was called to build a monument to celebrate Sayyid Muhammad ʿAbd Allāh Hassān in Mogadishu, Somalia.[129] Except for the unpublished journals that document Cavaliere's experience, there is no trace of these events in the literature on him. The journals report Cavaliere's daily experience and his thoughts about monumental art; these thoughts were fueled by the experience of working as a European artist in Africa. [130]

The experience sparked in Cavaliere a train of thought on the concept of monument and the development of monumental art in Western society. First, Cavaliere noticed that most monuments that he had seen across Europe and the US depicted white

[127] My adaptation from Italian: 'Il monumento, il monolite non ha più senso', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.
[128] My translation from Italian: 'Bisogna distruggere miti e nel tempo stesso (o più tardi) creare nuovi monumenti. […] se abbiamo un concetto più profondo ed un'aspirazione più vasta, dobbiamo ricreare una struttura più vasta nella quale inserire la nostra partecipazione', Cavaliere's journal, May 1967.
[129] Mohammed Abdullah Hassan (1856-1920) was a political and religious leader, who headed Somali armed resistance to British, Italian, and Ethiopian colonialism between 1896 and the 1910s. At the end of 1973, Cavaliere was tasked with making a monument to Abdallah Hassan by Mohammed Said Barre, the at the time president of Somalia. Until 1975, Mohammed Said Barre had the international reputation of being a progressive and enlightened anti-colonialist reformer; it is only after 1976 that the politics of Mohammed Said Barre drifted toward an increasingly dictatorial mode that reached its peak in the 1980s. The episode of Cavaliere in Somalia is particularly delicate as there is no trace of it in any publication; the only sources of information are the journals. Thus, this reconstruction and comment of the episode is entirely based on Cavaliere's writings. Furthermore, the episode is delicate *per se* as it concerns Cavaliere being tasked with making a celebratory monument in a former African colony: a Western artist tasked with making a monument to the man who emancipated Somalia from colonialism.
[130] At the end of 1974, after three trips to Mogadishu (for a total of 9 weeks), Cavaliere was removed from the assignment of making the monument as the idea that he developed for the monument was not in line with the government guidelines. According to the journals, the project that Cavaliere proposed for the monument was the opposite of what one would have expected from a monument in a traditional sense. Instead of proposing a symbolically crystal-clear celebratory statue, Cavaliere presented a collective project, the meaning of which was open to interpretation and changed from perspective to perspective. Ultimately, the journals evidence that Cavaliere did not want to celebrate the institutional figure of Abdallah Hassan but, instead, the different ideas that people from Mogadishu had of him.

men as glorified fathers and sons of colonialism and capitalism riding a horse.[131] Second, Cavaliere complained that those monuments were conceived as isolated figures for ordinary people to look up to, and, thus, they were detached from collectivity – 'our monuments were not born as the result of collectivity', claimed Cavaliere in March 1974 during his second trip to Mogadishu.[132]

In line with these reflections, Cavaliere conceived his proposal for the monument to Sayyid Muhammad ʿAbd Allāh Hassān as 'a mess' encompassing multiple perspectives that, in his intentions, would have allowed citizens to see themselves in it.[133] Cavaliere claimed that he wanted to make a 'multifaceted monument' resulting from a collective process.[134] According to the journals, Cavaliere aimed to make a monument 'to be explored and loved in multiple ways' – a monument to Sayyid Muhammad ʿAbd Allāh Hassān and to Somali citizens at the same time.[135] For this reason, Cavaliere interviewed several people from Mogadishu to gather as much witnesses as he could on how the figure of Sayyid Muhammad ʿAbd Allāh Hassān was perceived by citizens and shape his project for the monument accordingly.[136] Therefore, Cavaliere aimed to make a monument to celebrate collectivity, dialectics, multiple interpretations, mistakes, and ambivalences.[137] Ultimately, Cavaliere wanted

[131] My adaptation from Italian: 'Qualcosa ho visto: una quantità di monumenti in occidente, quasi tutti a cavallo. […] Tutti monumenti riferiti ad una glorificazione di un passato nazionale, tutti monumenti "coloniali" […] tutto appartiene ancora nel nostro secolo alla civiltà occidentale e capitalista. le nostre teorizzazioni, continue, monotone e parziali non escono da tale binario', Cavaliere's journal, March 1974.
[132] My adaptation from Italian: 'I nostri monumenti, nascono sempre come opere singole, non fatte, concepite, programmate dalla collettività e quindi non giuste al posto e momento più idoneo. […] nessun monumento di vita collettiva nasce al centro delle comunità come segno della nostra civiltà', Cavaliere's journal, March 1974
[133] My adaptation from Italian: 'Il mio monumento sarà un casino […], plurimo di informazioni, […] che dia la possibilità a ognuno di ritrovarsi, Cavaliere's journal, January 1974.
[134] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] nasce con stupenda fertilità un profilo multiplo', ibidem.
[135] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] da scoprire ed amare, in modo plurimo. il monumento al poeta, all'uomo di azione, ma contemporaneamente il monumento al popolo', ibidem.
[136] In the journals, Cavaliere took notes about the witnesses that he gathered in Mogadishu. A few examples are the following: 'The monument should show that he was a socialist who proposed ways for community life', 'he was a saint who lived his religious life accordingly', 'he must be depicted with the enemy that he defeated', 'he brilliantly found a way to achieve autonomy'. (My translation from Italian: 'Deve vedersi nel monumento che era un socialista dalle proposte attuate di vita comunitaria', 'era un santo e portava la vita religiosa a compimento', 'deve essere presente anche il suo nemico vinto', 'genialmente aveva creato una via per raggiungere l'autonomia'), ibidem.
[137] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ho portato il mio solito metodo di dubbio e di ipotesi, di incertezza e di pluralità, di soluzioni, tutte valide per alcuni aspetti, purchè connesse dialetticamente, scelte, relazionate fra loro', ibidem.

to spark a 'lively hunting to errors' instead of making a traditional and univocally symbolic celebratory monument.[138]

However, the project failed in a few months due to the too-open character of Cavaliere's proposal, which was more a radical questioning of the concept of monument rather than a celebratory monument.[139] Cavaliere's reaction to this experience was multifaceted. On the one hand, he naively complained about all the limitations that he faced.[140] On the other hand, Cavaliere questioned his *modus operandi;* does it make sense to export Western intellectualism and passion for crisis and controversies in a foreign country of which I do not know anything?[141] The question is rhetorical as Cavaliere immediately provided his answer: '[my idea] was stupid and presumptuous'.[142]

Despite its failure – or, maybe, thanks to its failure – Cavaliere's experience in Mogadishu is particularly significant for the present study, as it reveals Cavaliere's attitude towards monumental art and the dogmas it implies – not only traditional celebratory dogmas but also supposedly innovative and critical ones. In this sense, Cavaliere's experience in Mogadishu can be summarised with the following question. Why should someone impose their perspective (traditional, dogmatic, conservative, critical, revolutionary, groundbreaking, etc.) on others? In 1983, Cavaliere came back to the issue of monumental art by stating that he was committed to avoiding making monumental works.[143]

Cavaliere's perspective on monumental art is a crucial point of this study and will be progressively unfolded in the following chapters. Before that, the following pages will

[138] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] potrà innestare una viva caccia all'errore, un termine di paragone, una provocazione cerebrale, contorta e modesta, ma nella sua gracile fragilità, emblematica, spero', Cavaliere's journal, February 1974.
[139] In February 1974, Cavaliere wrote that he was leaving for his last trip to Somalia (My adaptation from Italian: 'Questo sarà il mio ultimo viaggio in Somalia'), Cavaliere's journal, February 1974.
[140] 'I am annoyed by this sort of "socialism" ruled by militaries and the police'. (My translation from Italian: 'Ho un senso di fastidio per questo "socialismo" fatto di generali e di polizia'), ibidem.
[141] My adaptation from Italian: 'è giusto fare questo discorso incerto, di crescita e di crisi, di impatto e di fuga riversandolo su un contesto estraneo ed impreparato a tale genere di problematica, tipicamente occidentale, decadente ed intellettualistico?', ibidem.
[142] My adaptation from Italian: '[Sono stato] stupido e presuntuoso', ibidem.
[143] My adaptation from Italian: 'Nessuna delle mie prossime opere dovrà essere […] monumento', Cavaliere's journals, March 1983.

investigate Cavaliere's idea of 'monumental' works; starting from the clues provided by the journals, the discussion will introduce specific aspects of the Italian debate around the topic of monumental art, which are the perspective of Arturo Martini and its reworking by Marino Marini.

IV.I Dead Language Sculpture

La scultura lingua morta (Dead Language Sculpture) is a seminal essay by Italian artist Arturo Martini, written in 1944 and published a year later. The text was well known among postwar Italian artists, and a few of them explicitly took it into account in developing their practices – among them were Cavaliere and his teacher and colleague Marino Marini.[144]

In *La scultura lingua morta,* Martini discusses how, in his view, the medium of sculpture was a 'dead language' because it was essentially bound to the representation of anthropomorphic or animal figures, although transformed and reworked. In other words, Martini criticised that while mere objects or pieces of inanimate nature gained dignity in painting, they had not in sculpture. According to Martini, between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, the medium of painting conquered the third dimension; on the other hand, he observed how sculpture had not conquered the fourth dimension yet.[145] Thus, Martini asked

[144] In a journal from 1973, Cavaliere explicitly mentioned Martini's essay by stating that sculptures showcased in museums (which are places in which art was celebrated and codified) spoke a 'dead language': 'I am now trying to explain why I am against museums, although I love them so much. [I love museums] as places to see things, not to celebrate and codify them: "dead-language sculpture"! (My translation from Italian: 'Cerco di spiegare perché sono contro il "museo" e perché sono contro pur amandoli molto. Cioè il museo per vedere le cose, ma non per celebrarle e codificarle: "scultura lingua morta"!'), Cavaliere's journal, January 1973. Giorgio Cortenova discussed the proximity between the works by Martini and Cavaliere in G. Cortenova, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 18-19. Pontiggia and Porreca outlined similar perspectives in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 18 and F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, p. 22. Marino Marini personally knew Martini and had a professional relationship with him, culminating in his being called by Martini to teach sculpture at the School of Art of Villa Reale in Monza in 1929.

[145] Arturo Martini, "La scultura lingua morta", in Mario De Micheli (ed.), "*La scultura lingua morta e altri scritti*, Milan: Jaca Book, 1982, p. 88.

the following question. Since the arts are now free from boundaries and limitations, why can sculpture make a Venus but not an apple? [146]

Martini considered the media of painting and sculpture as 'languages'. According to the metaphor, two-dimensionality was the 'Latin' of painting, and painting stepping into the third dimension was painting developing its 'vernacular'.[147] Latin is a dead language that mainly figures on gravestones and celebratory monuments. On the other hand, vernaculars were the evolution of Latin and allowed it to survive modern times and speak in daily contexts. Likewise, Martini considered the three dimensions as the 'Latin' of sculpture and argued that sculpture should find its vernacular in order to speak to modern times. According to the metaphor, the vernacular of sculpture would be its fourth dimension. In other words, for Martini, an art medium could develop into a living language (a vernacular) by expanding its boundaries to an additional dimension.[148] Why did painting succeed in finding its vernacular and sculpture still speaks Latin?[149] Why is sculpture still on a pedestal and not rebelling at conventional limits as the other art media did? asked Martini.[150]

Although the essay does not answer the questions, Martini outlined a possible solution to the *impasse*. As long as a sculpture is confined within the three dimensions in which it was born – 'just like the cast of the thing that it represents' – it would need to distinguish itself from mere objects.[151] Thus, sculptures were assigned the role of celebrating reality in three ways. First, by exaggerating the dimension of things; second, by standing on pedestals to rise above humans; and, third, by representing 'noble' subjects, such as anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures.[152] In other words, with the expression 'dead language sculpture', Martini referred to an idea of sculpture as a crystallised celebratory anachronistic three-dimensional

[146] My translation from Italian: 'Ora, se nessun confine delimita il dominio delle arti, perché la scultura non può fare un pomo? Perché la scultura che può fare una venere, non può fare un pomo?', idem, p. 103.
[147] Idem, p. 115.
[148] Idem, p. 90.
[149] My translation from Italian: 'Perché la pittura ha trovato il suo volgare mentre la scultura parla ancora greco e latino?', idem, p. 115.
[150] My adaptation from Italian: 'Perché in mezzo a tanta rivolta la scultura non si è ancora svegliata dal sonno dei secoli e dorme indisturbata nella sufficienza del suo piedistallo?', Ibidem.
[151] My adaptation from Italian: '[La scultura] vive ancora nel mondo superato delle tre dimensioni come un calco della cosa che rappresenta. Quindi si è creduto che l'unico compito della scultura fosse quello, per non sembrare un calco, di esaltare un soggetto e vedere in questo il suo unico compito', idem, p. 94.
[152] Idem, pp. 88, 90.

representation. For Martini, a sculpture could not engage with the public arena insofar as it was confined in its celebratory role – like a dead language.

For evolving into a living language (a vernacular), the medium of sculpture had to access the fourth dimension, namely, 'the environment surrounding it'. In Martini's view, a sculpture was a solid, 'like planet earth', and, like planet earth, it would find its dynamism – 'that is its life' – in the atmosphere surrounding it'.[153]

The latter point is particularly relevant if linked to a broader discussion regarding the boundaries of art media, which took centre stage in the 1960s when Cavaliere started his career. The reference to dead languages such as Latin was, for example, also used by Allan Kaprow to highlight how conventions separating one artistic medium from the others were obsolete 'like the study of Latin'.[154]

By remaining within the elastic boundaries of the medium of sculpture and the debate about the concept of monumental art, Martini's perspective aligns, to an extent, with the concept of the 'expanded field' theorised by American art historian Rosalind Krauss almost fifteen years later in 1979. In both cases, the issue of monumentality is central.

In 1944, Martini wished for the end of monumental sculpture in the sense of anachronistic celebratory sculptural symbols unable to communicate with people. In 1979, Krauss analysed how sculpture had been gradually evolved into 'the negative condition of the monument' over the 1960s. Krauss highlighted how 'the logic of sculpture' was traditionally 'inseparable from the logic of the monument'. By this logic, the medium of sculpture was doomed to be a celebratory representation, sitting in a specific place and communicating in a 'symbolical tongue the meaning of

[153] My adaptation from Italian: 'La scultura è un solido come la terra e si sa che questa trova il suo moto, cioè la sua vita nell'atmosfera che le gira intorno, e questo si chiama quarta dimensione. Io credo che questa sia la soluzione vitale della scultura, la quarta dimensione. Non si rinnova la scultura deformandola, ma trovandole il passaggio che ha scoperto la pittura per mutarsi da due a tre dimensioni', idem, p. 93.
[154] Allan Kaprow (1971) "The Education of the Un-Artist. Part I", in Jeff Kelley (ed.), *Allan Kaprow, Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1993, p. 106.

use of that place.'[155] From Krauss' perspective, pedestals played a crucial role as mediators between 'the actual site and representational sign'.[156]

Considering the above, the idea of sculpture as a dead language, the issues of monumentality, and the concept of symbolic representation were parts of the same issue that, from Italy to the US, radically questioned the status of three-dimensional representations since the 1960s. In this regard, Krauss looked at the 1960s as the moment in which the logic of the monument faded away, and sculpture stepped into the fourth dimension by developing into installations.[157]

The reason why the medium of sculpture, until the 1960s, was bounded to the logic of the monument in such an anachronistic sense was directly related to a specific feature inherent to it – its objecthood. Objecthood is the physical condition of objects, and, according to the Modernist perspective that dominated art debates since the early 1960s, it was a threat to art. In *Scultura lingua morta*, Martini is quite explicit about this subtext, arguing that small objects are items in the sense that they can be easily 'handled, used, and judged', nullifying their 'chance to be respected'. Conversely, large-scale sculptures standing on pedestals and representing – celebrating – 'noble' subjects (such as anthropomorphic or zoomorphic shapes) are no longer 'objects' and lead viewers to respect and worship them. For this reason, religions have always monumentally represented their gods to instil fear, respect, and devotion.[158]

Stressing the issue of the 'noble subjects', Martini also questioned the traditional use of symbols as hierarchic constraints bridling the medium of sculpture. Is there a difference between a marble-craved apple and an anthropomorphic or zoomorphic

[155] R. Krauss, Spring, 1979, p. 33.
[156] Ibidem.
[157] Idem, pp. 33-34.
[158] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ogni oggetto piccolo e maneggevole consente una libertà d'uso e di giudizio che annulla ogni possibilità di rispetto. Ma se quell'oggetto diventasse montagna lo sgomento delle mutate proporzioni indurrebbe l'uomo al rispetto e all'ammirazione, tant'è vero che le fedi, per incutere paura e devozione, hanno bisogni di essere rappresentate grandiosamente', A. Martini, 1945, in M. De Micheli (ed.), 1982, pp. 88-89.

figure beyond the symbolic superiority that the Western tradition has culturally ascribed to the latter?[159]

The role of symbols and tradition are as central as they are ambiguous in Martini's thinking on art. When asked about what tradition meant to him, Martini answered that tradition was like the blood in his vein – no one could change it.[160] However, Martini also claimed that art should always be transformation instead of interpretation.[161]

The following chapters will discuss how Martini's perspective constituted a precedent for Cavaliere's thinking on sculpture. Before that, it will be beneficial to investigate Martini's concepts of interpretation and transformation in the reworking by Marinio Marini, who was Cavaliere's teacher and mentor at Brera and an Italian artist who made the critique of monumental art the hallmark of his practice.

IV.II Cavaliere's 'Dialogue' with Marino Marini

From the perspective of this analysis, the figure of Marini is a missing link between Martini's perspective and Cavaliere's practice. Marino Marini was twenty-eight when Arturo Martini asked him to teach Sculpture at the School of Art of Villa Reale in Monza in 1929. Subsequently, from 1946 to 1980, Marini was Cavaliere's teacher and mentor for over thirty years.

Along with Cavaliere's interest in the contemporary art scene, the journals witness the influence of his teacher Marino Marini in his thinking. Marini is a recurring name in every text about Cavaliere's experience at Brera. However, the hypothesis that Marini might have plaid a role in the development of Cavaliere's practice has been overlooked by critics.[162] In this regard, Pontiggia even stated that, while the name of Marini was mentioned in all Cavaliere's biographies, he was not such a relevant influence as one could think since Marini was Cavaliere's teacher only between 1946

[159] Idem, p. 89.
[160] My adaptation from Italian: 'La tradizione è il sangue nelle vene, nessuno te lo può cambiare ', idem, p. 152.
[161] My adaptation from Italian: 'L'arte non è interpretazione ma trasformazione', idem, p. 118.
[162] An exception is the review of Cavaliere's exhibition at the XXXII Venice Biennale written by Guido Ballo, in which he asserted that Cavaliere essentially learned from Marini how to take materials down to the basics of bare bones. See G. Ballo, 1964, p. 123.

and 1947.[163] Conversely, the journals suggest that Marini was a central figure in Cavaliere's reflections and substantially influenced his thinking of art – not only during his time at Brera but throughout his life.[164]

'I have always taken notes about what Marini told me with a twofold purpose. Firstly, because I liked the way he spoke and because, in my heart, I have always thought of using this material to write a book about Marini himself'.[165] With this confession, Cavaliere opened his 1967 Summer Journal. Cavaliere never wrote a book on Marini; however, this statement of purpose unveils that he did not write down his thoughts about Marini just episodically but rather that he aimed to systematically gather impressions and evidence to draw a portrait of Marini.

While writing about Marini, Cavaliere's prose alternates personal observations with Marini's literal quotes, the latter introduced by the artist through the formula 'Marini says' that is a sort of *ipse dixit* meant to highlight the truthfulness and authority of the statements reported. Despite this, the personal nature of the journals makes it impossible to determine to what extent such quotes are entirely reliable. Nevertheless, the subjectivity inherent to the journals can be considered a richness instead of a limitation as it provides unique elements on Cavaliere's perception of Marini as a teacher.[166]

Cavaliere attended Martini's lectures in Sculpture in 1946; then, he became Martini's assistant in 1956 and his successor as Chair of Sculpture in 1970. Even years after the end of their professional relationship, Cavaliere kept writing about Martini by taking on the role of repository of his teaching legacy. In a journal from 1984,

[163] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 24.
[164] Even after Marini's death, Cavaliere kept writing about him by reporting thoughts about conversations that they had in the past. For example, in a journal from 1986 (six years after Marini's death and about fifteen years after their collaboration at Brera), Cavaliere confessed how, although Marini was no longer 'in his head', he was still 'in his heart', and so many statements and intuitions by his teacher kept coming back to his mind. (My translation from Italian: 'Marini è uscito dalla mia mente – resta gradevolmente latente nel mio cuore. Comunque talvolta mi tornano alla mente sue frasi o intuizioni') Cavaliere's journal, May 1986. This excerpt and most of the following ones are quoted in Marta Colombo, "Some Reflections on Marino Marini's Legacy through the Eyes of his Pupil, Alik Cavaliere", *Italian Modern Art*, issue 5, May 2021.
[165] My translation from Italian: 'Ho sempre negli anni preso appunti su quanto diceva Marini con duplice intento: perché mi piaceva, e perché ho sempre pensato in cuor mio di raccogliere questo materiale in un libro su Marini stesso', Cavaliere's journal, June 1967. Previously quoted in M. Colombo, 2021.
[166] For further discussion of how Cavaliere reworked the lesson of Marini, see M. Colombo, 2021.

Cavaliere claimed: 'I followed Marini in his work and teaching; I am thus the most reliable witness of his lesson'.[167]

In Cavaliere's perspective on Marini as a teacher, the theme of tradition immediately took centre stage. Cavaliere described Marini's teaching style as an inspiring combination of freedom and guidance meant to provide students with critical skills to simultaneously use tradition and escape from its cage. According to Cavaliere, Marini 'did not create an epigone school', as his way of teaching was free of any academic impositions.[168] Cavaliere described Marini's teaching style as poised between freedom from schematism and close guidance and as escaping prefabricated cultural cages. For this reason, Cavaliere always saw Marini as a teacher in the purest meaning of the word – a 'point of reference' who led his students by leaving them 'free from any institutional constraint'.[169] As will be discussed in the following chapters, such a delicate balance between honouring tradition and breaking free from its constraints profoundly influenced the development of Cavaliere's practice throughout his career.

Cavaliere reported Marini's judgment on his work in the journals by always using pairs of opposites. For example, Marini defined Cavaliere's art as simultaneously destructive and creative ('According to Marini, my art is characterised by different inputs: I am discontinuous but perforating, destructive but creative'[170]) and established a causal link between disruption and truth ('our world needs to be destroyed in order to be true'[171]). Furthermore, in his comments on Cavaliere's work, Marini put the accent on the need for art to be 'invented' ('Marini said that my work is

[167] My translation from Italian: 'Ho seguito Marini nell'insegnamento e nel lavoro. Sono quindi il testimone più attendibile per quanto concerne il suo insegnamento', Cavaliere's journal, March 1984. Previously quoted in M. Colombo, 2021.
[168] My translation from Italian: '[Marini] non creò uno stuolo di epigoni', ibidem.
[169] My adaptation from Italian: '[Marini] era un riferimento, la sua scuola creava un clima nel quale i giovani confluivano e in una totale libertà da schemi, vincoli, imposizioni accademiche o didattiche', ibidem.
[170] My adaptation from Italian: 'Marini dice che procedo in modo discontinuo ma incisivo, distruttivo, ma creativo', Cavaliere's journal, January 1962. Ibidem.
[171] My translation from Italian: 'Il nostro mondo deve distruggere prima per essere vero', Ibidem.

still too realistic, and, despite entailing subtle features, it is not yet invented enough. He is right').[172]

Marini's emphasis on the necessity for art to be invented is an element occurring not only in Cavaliere's journals, as Marini highlighted this point in his first public statement about his creative practice. On the occasion of the *Second Roman Quadriennale d'Arte Nazionale* in 1935, Marini claimed that he considered art only that which was initially inspired by nature and then could overcome through abstraction.[173] Suggesting that the concepts of abstraction and invention could be synonyms for him, Marini stated that 'invention' and 'transformation' were vital for artists; otherwise, they were just 'at the mercy of the real', which, in his view, lacked any sort of artistry at all.[174]

However, Marini's position regarding figurative and abstract art was more nuanced than that, and it is not difficult to find other statements by the artist apparently contradicting the previous ones. For example, in an interview from 1959, Marini claimed that abstraction had the major limitation of lacking the feeling of reality.[175] In light of this, Marini's comments about Cavaliere's work needing to be more invented and less realistic are revealed to be less self-evident than it might at first seem since Marini's position about invention and realism in art was, again, twofold itself, oscillating between the ideas of figurativeness and abstraction.

In line with Marini's ambivalent ideas, early critics and later studies on the subject highlighted how his works are characterised by qualitative antinomies that could be encompassed into a framework of duality – this is the coexistence of pure shapes (abstraction) and model truthfulness (realism).[176] This duality aligns with how the figure of Marini has emerged from Cavaliere's journals. From this perspective, the

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[172] My adaptation from Italian: '[Marini] ha detto che erano ancora legate ad un realismo osservato e, pur avendo cose sottili, non erano inventate', ibidem.
[173] V.v. A.a., *II Quadriennale d'Arte Nazionale. Catalogo Generale*, exhibition catalogue, 5 February – 31 July 1935, Rome: Palazzo delle esposizioni and Tumminelli & C.,1935, p. 88.
[174] Idem, p. 89.
[175] Marco Valsecchi (ed.), "Impariamo a conoscere gli artisti italiani. A Firenze toccai la barba di Rodin", *Il Giorno*, 8 September 1959.
[176] Flavio Fergonzi "Prima della fama internazionale. Temi della ricerca scultorea di Marini tra gli anni 30 e i 40", in F. Fergonzi (ed.)*, Marino Marini Passioni visive. Confronti con i capolavori della scultura, dagli Etruschi a Henry Moore*, Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2018.

concurrence of pure forms and model truthfulness reflects Marini's thoughts about the need for art to simultaneously be figurative (model truthfulness) and abstract (pure shapes). In other words, model truthfulness and pure shapes coexist in Martini's practice and pair with his idea that art should be imaginative without losing the sense of reality.

The conflictual interplay between model truthfulness and pure shapes reached its peak in Marini's sculptural production gathered under the name *Cavalieri* [Horsemen]. Marini exhibited his first *Cavaliere* [Horseman] (fig. 38) at the Venice Biennale in 1936, and critics harshly commented on it. Ugo Ojetti, for example, defined the work as the rough packaging of an equestrian statue.[177] More encouraging comments, such as the one by artist Carlo Carrà, defined Marini's style as a 'curious realism' – which is a wording that effectively expresses Marini's oscillation between realism and invention and resonates in the definition that Cavaliere gave to his own style – 'invented realism'.[178]

Marini's detractors particularly criticised his desecrating reworking of monumental art in its epitomic expression, the equestrian monument. The overly simplified shapes and twisted proportions characterising the gypsum figures of the horse and horseman make *Cavaliere,* 1936 explicitly anti-monumental and anti-heroic – a humoristic version of the grand equestrian iconographic trope. In this sense, Marini's *Cavaliere* subverted the rules of the monumental equestrian statue in its traditional and ancient sense. The work is the opposite of a traditional representation of majesty, grandiosity, and heroism. Indeed, it is a small, clumsy, and awkward figure which seems stuck, uncertain, and precarious on a stubby horse. Due to its small size and elementary shapes, *Cavaliere* has the appearance of a toy – a usable item that one could hold in one hand, to use Martini's provocative words.[179]

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[177] Ugo Ojetti, "La XX Biennale Veneziana. Scultori nostri", *Corriere della Sera*, 12 May 1936.
[178] Carlo Carrà, "Scultori italiani e stranieri alla XX Biennale di Venezia", *L'Ambrosiano*, 1 August 1936. 'Invented Realism' (Realismo Inventato) is an expression that Cavaliere used to describe his works in a journal from April 1967. The expression is quoted and commented by Schwarz in A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 93.
[179] In Italy, the knight became a popular sculptural subject during the First World War thanks to works by artists such as Carlo Carrà, Umberto Boccioni, and Gino Severini, who made it a symbol of heroism and belligerent energy. However, when the war was over, there was a turnaround. Knights and horses were no longer apt to represent contemporaneity and were seen as belonging to a previous era. Thus, horses and

Another example of Marini's ironic reworking of the equestrian trope is *Angelo della città* [Angel of the City], 1949 (fig. 39), a horseman currently installed in front of the entrance of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice. The horseman and the horse are made of bronze, and the shapes of the two figures are elementary and linear; the horse develops horizontally and the horseman vertically. The horseman stands in an ecstatic position on his horse with his arms wide open, recalling more of a puppet than a heroic knight. Stressing his desecrating purpose, Marini added a removable phallus to the horseman, making it a demountable and re-assemblable puppet for all intents – a sort of monumental puppet.

The heads of Marini's horsemen were inspired by ancient models, mainly Roman and Egyptian, that Marini had the chance to study in some seminal texts on the subject that were published in Italy in the 1930s.[180] This choice, as well as the use of gypsum and bronze to make his anti-monumental monuments, are eloquently aligned with Cavaliere's perspective on the role of the tradition. Marini aimed to question monumental art from the inside by using classical inspirations to disorient the public and question traditional ideas of sculpture – among which, the heroic symbolism related to the trope of the knight and the celebratory purpose of the equestrian statue.

Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti unintentionally established a further link between Marini's work and Cavaliere's perspective. According to Ragghianti, the sense of disorientation characterising Marini's work was caused by a subtle coexistence of opposite features that gives it an 'inquisitive' aura.[181] On the one hand, Marini's horsemen have the appearance of toys or puppets; on the other hand, they resemble weird archaeological finds fiercely and enigmatically looking at the viewer.

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knights started being represented by artists as atemporal and aseptic figures resembling toys – some examples of this tendency are *La Pulzella d'Orleans*, 1920 by Marino Martini and *Cavallo bianco*, 1919 by Mario Sironi. For an extensive discussion on the topic, see Adachiara Zevi, *Peripezie del dopoguerra nell'arte italiana*, Torino: Einaudi, 2006.

[180] The texts include Alessandro Dalla Seta, *Il nudo nell'arte antica,* Rome: Bestetti e Tumminelli, 1930 and Edoardo Persico (ed.), *Arte Romana*, Milan: Domus, 1935. Edoardo Persico was a colleague of Marini at the School of Art of Villa Reale in Monza.

[181] Carlo L. Ragghianti, "Il suo mondo ha maturatamente trovato la sua misura.", essay quoted in Barbara Cinelli, "Marino Marini e la critica. Qualche fonte, una mancata storiografia e una leggenda", in F. Fergonzi (ed.), 2018, pp. 113-114.

The following chapter will discuss how Cavaliere's works from the 1960s responded to a similar duality by questioning the concept of monument and reworking the perspectives discussed.

Conclusion

The idea of reworking tradition in unconventional ways, the focus on the problematic correlations between the medium of sculpture and the concept of monument, the interplay between contradictory ideas of art, and the concept of invention are the key themes that have emerged from the cross-analysis between the journals and literature on Cavaliere. The original contribution of the journals showed how these reflections resulted from Cavaliere's active observation of and reflective engagement with contemporary art discourses.

Throughout the journals, Cavaliere mostly maintained the same core ideas, especially regarding the importance of the concept of 'invention', which he assimilated with the ideas of 'life' and theatricality. Conversely, Cavaliere often associated monumental art with the idea of death. The journals evidenced that, for Cavaliere, the influences discussed – Dadaism, Surrealism, Oldenburg's work, Martini's ideas, and Marini's practice – responded in different ways to the dichotomy between 'living' and 'dead' art and to the idea of emancipating sculpture from its traditional limits and celebratory purposes.[182]

This chapter provided an overview of Cavaliere's attention to contemporary art discourses and an introduction to his reflections upon them. The following chapter will explore Cavaliere's reworking of the introduced influences, focusing on how he questioned monumental art by weaving together the ideas of invention and realism.

[182] 'Dichotomy: a division or contrast between two things that are or are represented as being opposed or entirely different', s.v. "dichotomy", V.v. A.a., *Oxford Dictionary*, Vol. VI, 3rd edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

CHAPTER 2

Cavaliere's Practice over the 1960s: Literalism and Theatricality

Introduction

The chapter investigates the development of Cavaliere's practice during the 1960s by closely examining the journals and body of work from the decade. Chapter 1 discussed how the journals evidenced Cavaliere's interest in the 'new artistic possibilities' that he observed in New York in 1965 and his attention to Arturo Martini's concerns regarding the crisis of sculpture. This chapter investigates how Cavaliere reworked these influences and challenged traditional notions of sculpture in tune with American neo-avant-garde practices from the late 1950s and early 1960s. Two concepts takes centre stage in the discussion: objecthood and theatricality.

The argument is structured in two sections. The first examines how Cavaliere addressed and reworked the issue of objecthood; the second analyses how he started exploring the theatrical potential of his work. The study focuses on the interplay between the theme of objecthood and the feature of theatricality in Cavaliere's practice, and it demonstrates how the latter can be interpreted as a challenge to the Modernist notion of the autonomous work of art.

The analysis integrates the examination of Cavaliere's works and writings with a close inspection of the perspective of Michael Fried on the concepts of objecthood and theatricality. The investigation highlights how Fried's account is unintentionally yet significantly reflective of Martini's idea of the fourth dimension. Despite the absence of Fried's mention in the journals, the complementarity between his perspective and Martini's will be highly beneficial to explore how Cavaliere engaged with contemporary national and international art discourses. Each section applies the ground covered to the analysis of Cavaliere's works from the 1960s, including the arboreal-floral works and *Le avventure di Gustavo B*.

Section 1 – Objecthood and Literalism

I Cavaliere's Journals: 'A New Object Era'

The journals evidence that Cavaliere's reflections upon art during the 1960s concentrated on the theme of the object.[183] In a journal from 1975, Cavaliere claimed that his work had been revolving around the theme of 'the object' since the 1960s.[184] In 1964, Cavaliere reiterated this point by claiming that the purpose of his practice was to investigate the object and or make fun of it.[185] Moreover, Cavaliere reflected on the idea of making a *De Rerum Natura* about artificial objects with his colleague and friend Emilio Tadini[186] *De Rerum Natura* is a Latin didactic poem by Lucretius investigating the ontology of nature. This information is particularly significant since, as will be discussed, Cavaliere's arboreal-floral works can be considered as an attempt to make a sculptural *De Rerum Natura* of the artistic object. In other words, it will be argued that the arboreal-floral works can be seen as Cavaliere's investigation of the 'nature' of the artistic object, using nature as the object of the investigation.

In this context, the journals document that the issue of the 'death' of sculpture addressed by Martini was always in the background of Cavaliere's mind. Based on this information, it will be argued that Cavaliere's reworking of Lucretius' idea of nature was his answer to the questions raised by Martini: 'Why can sculpture make a Venus but not an apple?' Is the medium of sculpture as 'dead' as a 'gravestone

[183] Cavaliere's interest in the theme of the object is also confirmed by later journals in which Cavaliere stated that the theme of the object was central in his earlier reflections upon art. In this regard, Cavaliere referred to his arboreal-floral works by calling them sculpture-objects. 'The research on the object… it is an important moment of my youth'. (My adaptation from Italian: 'La riflessione sull'oggetto…costituisce per me un importante momento di ricerca giovanile'), Cavaliere's journal, September 1983. 'At Minetto's place, I see the sculpture-object that I made for him'. (My translation from Italian: 'Rivedo in casa Minetto la scultura-oggetto che gli ho fatto'), Cavaliere's journal, March 1989. According to Adriana Cavaliere, in the last note, Cavaliere likely referred to one of the arboreal-floral works from 1968-1969.

[184] My adaptation from Italian: 'Io parlo di oggetto dagli anni Sessanta', Cavaliere's journal June 1975.

[185] My translation from Italian: 'L'arte deve tendere alla conoscenza dell'oggetto o alla sua ironia', Cavaliere's journals, March 1964.

[186] My adaptation from Italian: 'Emilio mi propone di trattare un De rerum natura dell'oggetto artificiale', Cavaliere's journal, May 1979. Emilio Tadini and Gianni Colombo were two artists from the Brera Academy who were particularly close to Cavaliere during the 1960s. In the quoted sentence, Cavaliere referred to the *De Rerum Natura* by Lucretius.

written in Latin?'.[187] As discussed, Martini complained that the medium of sculpture was traditionally bound to celebratory purposes. In Martini's view, the medium of sculpture was allowed only to represent 'noble' subjects, such as human beings or animals, and it was implicitly prohibited from representing inanimate objects, such as plants and everyday items. In line with Martini, Cavaliere claimed that Italian sculptural practices were 'monumental' even when they tried to scale the monument back to the size of an object.[188] In other words, for Cavaliere and Martini, the issue of monumentality was not just a matter of scale (large-scale monument vs small-scale objects) but concerned the choice of the artistic subjects – noble vs low.

Considering the interest the Cavaliere had in Dadaism and Surrealism, it will be beneficial to reframe the issue above within the discourse started by the two avant-gardes regarding the 'low' infecting the 'high' and questioning of the ontology of the work of art.[189] Cavaliere described the Dadaist merging of the high with the low as an 'apocalypse' and the beginning of an 'object era'.[190] In this context, Cavaliere reflected on a 'new idea of the object' developed by neo-avant-garde artists who reworked the readymade paradigm, such as Oldenburg.[191]

In this regard, Cavaliere suggested that the challenge to conventional distinctions between the low and the high started by Dadaism and reworked by American neo-

[187] My adaptation from Italian: 'Perché la scultura che può fare una venere, non può fare un pomo? La scultura […] una lapide scritta in Greco o in Latino', A. Martini, 1945, in M. De Micheli (ed.), 1982, pp. 103, 115.
[188] My adaptation from Italian: 'La nostra arte scultorea si inserisce in questo concetto di "monumento" anche quando si limita a ridimensionare il monumento in oggetto', Cavaliere's journal, June 1967.
[189] Two of the most famous and explicatory examples of this tendency are *Fountain,* 1917 by Marcel Duchamp and *La Trahison des Images* [The Treachery of Images], 1928-1929 by René Magritte. The former consists of an ordinary porcelain urinal signed 'R. Mutt'. The work was submitted as a readymade piece of art for the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists at the Grand Central Palace in New York in April 1917. The latter is a painting showing the image of a pipe above a statement: *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* (English trans: 'This is not a pipe'). Both *Fountain* and *La Trahison des Images* have problematised the concept of artistic representation. The former is an object instead of a representation of it (a readymade). The latter is the representation (the painting) of a pipe captioned with a statement that ambiguously denies it ('this is not a pipe') – thus, is it a pipe or the representation of a pipe? In other words, both *Fountain* and *La Trahison des Images* entail radical provocations concerning the limits of representation and undermine the boundaries between the fictional realm of art and the actual realm of life. For an extensive discussion, see Didier Ottinger and Marie Sarré (eds.), *From Magritte to Duchamp. 1929: the Great Surrealism from the Centre Pompidou*, exhibition catalogue, 11 October 2018 – 17 February 2019, Pisa and Milan: Palazzo Blu. Arte e Cultura and Skira, 2018.
[190] My translation from Italian: 'Il Dada, in realtà, preannuncia in maniera apocalittica l'avvento dell'era oggettiva', Cavaliere's journal, July 1963.
[191] My adaptation from Italian: 'Tentativo di introdurre una nuova visione dell'oggetto. (Questo aspetto si giova dei suggerimenti del movimento dada ed ha il suo rappresentante più valido forse in Oldenburg.)', Cavaliere's journal, October 1964.

avant-gardes could also affect the relationship between the viewer and the work. Applying this perspective to his practice, Cavaliere stated that he aimed to transform nature into an overwhelming 'object', more potent than humans and apt to overturn the hierarchy between dominating humans vs dominated nature.[192] Considering the above, it thus seems that the arboreal-floral works were part of Cavaliere's interest in responding to the challenges raised by such an 'object era', including the infiltration of the low (nature) in the high (sculpture) and the challenge to the role of viewers as 'interpreters and masters' of the work. If the work-object overwhelms viewers, viewers are no longer in a dominant position and become 'objects' themselves.[193] In other words, it seems that Cavaliere wanted to stage a sort of 'vengeance' of the work-object by putting a 'low' subject (nature) centre stage in his sculptural practice. This point, and especially the idea of viewers becoming 'objects', will be clarified by analysing the works in the following pages.

The journals provide a keyword to investigating how Cavaliere developed the idea of the vengeful work-object; this is the concept of the uncanny. In 1963, Cavaliere wrote that uncanny shapes could overcome the representative limits of the medium of sculpture.[194] Then, in 1964, Cavaliere further reflected on the role of the uncanny in his practice by stating that he was thinking about 'stirring his sculptural practice up' by making it 'uncanny', by 'hybridising it, and putting ghosts in it'.[195] In 1965, Cavaliere explicitly defined his practice 'uncanny', asking himself whether his 'uncanny practice' was the best choice.[196] Lastly, in 1966, Cavaliere suggested that he considered the uncanny quality of an artwork as a strength.[197]

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[192] My adaptation from Italian: 'In questa nuova fase ho inserito una osservazione della natura, una natura che diviene, si muove, travolge, sconvolge le cose, soprattutto assorbendole o dominandole. […] In questi giorni, in cui non lavoro, continuo a ripensare al senso della natura. E mi viene in mente ora una "natura naturante", lussuriosa, ora una natura "pulita" ora una natura che inghiotte e distrugge l'opera dell'uomo, una natura di lui più potente.', Cavaliere's journal, July 1964. My adaptation from Italian: 'La nostra posizione di fronte alla natura è di rapina', Cavaliere's journal, August 1968.

[193] My adaptation from Italian: 'Questo è l'elemento veramente nuovo. L'uomo diviene oggetto e non più interprete e padrone', Cavaliere's journal, July 1963.

[194] My adaptation from Italian: 'Le forme possono essere perturbanti e trasportare un messaggio che travalichi il loro limite', Cavaliere's journal, June 1963.

[195] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ora devo decidere: inquietare la mia scultura rendendola più ibrida, più stonata, inserire dentro dei fantasmi (perturbanti)', Cavaliere's journals, March 1964.

[196] My adaptation from Italian: 'Io spesso mi chiedo se i miei metodi perturbanti siano giusti', Cavaliere's journals, August 1965.

[197] My adaptation from Italian: '[artisti] che potrebbero avere forme perturbanti che entrano nel quadro purtroppo non lo desiderano', Cavaliere's journals, November 1966.

Additionally, Cavaliere explained how he intended to make uncanny works. According to Cavaliere, the uncanny was the outcome of a disorienting relationship between an (art) object and its surroundings, and this kind of relationship was a way to enable 'direct participation in reality'.[198]

Considering this, the journals suggest that the concept of the uncanny was, for Cavaliere, a tool to reflect on the potential of his sculptural practice in a historical moment in which the medium of sculpture was undergoing a significant revision. To better understand this point, it will be helpful to make a detour on the history of the concept of the uncanny as its theoretical nuances offer a valuable angle to examine Cavaliere's works from the 1960s.

II The Uncanny, according to Jentsch, Freud, and Mori

'Uncanny' is one of the English translations of the German word *'unheimlich'*. Its multifaceted meaning is expressed by different English words – 'unfamiliar', 'eerie', 'unhomely', and 'weird'. The concept of the uncanny was first theorised by Ernst Jentsch in 1906 and then by Sigmund Freud in 1919.

Jentsch defined the uncanny as a 'sensation of uncertainty' arising from unfamiliar experiences, a 'lack of orientation' caused by a thing (or an event) not responding to the expectations of viewers.[199] Examples of Jentsch's idea of the uncanny are anthropomorphic waxworks and hyper-realistic dolls that match the original likeness with human appearance to such an extent that they seem alive when they are supposed to be inanimate objects. The ambiguity between animate (alive) subjects

[198] My adaptation from Italian: 'Duchamp rompe in una sola direzione e con un gesto unico. Con l'oggetto spaesato', Cavaliere's journal, February 1964. My adaptation from Italian: 'Si può ironizzare su *detta* realtà accettandola, negandola, "spaesandone" la verità […] perchè vi sia partecipazione, rapporto con la realtà […] Due aspetti di natura in un "rapporto" spaesato fra loro', Cavaliere's journal, July 1964. The latter sentence appears in the journal as the description of a sketch for an arboreal-floral work. Unfortunately, the journal does not provide further information to infer what specific work the caption refers to.

[199] Ernst Jentsch (1906) "On the Psychology of the Uncanny", *Angelaki, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, vol. 2, Issue 1, 1997, trans. Roy Sellars, p. 4. Jentsch's perspective resonates also in contemporary discourses on the concept of the uncanny. Mark Windsor, for example, defines the uncanny as 'an anxious uncertainty about what is real caused by an apparent impossibility', Mark Windsor, "What is the Uncanny", The British Journal of Aesthetics, 59.1, 2019, p. 51.

and inanimate (lifeless) objects is central to Jentsch's theory of the uncanny. In other words, Jentsch defined the uncanny as a feeling of discomfort triggered by the suspicion that a supposedly inanimate object could be alive.[200]

For his part, Freud defined the uncanny as a kind of unease going back to what had long been familiar and is suddenly perceived as foreign. In short, for Freud, the feeling of the uncanny arises when something is simultaneously felt as familiar and unfamiliar. Freud framed his concept of the uncanny within the theory of suppression and described as 'uncanny' the hidden sides of an entity that are suddenly brought back to consciousness.[201] In this context, Freud looked at the concept of the copy and examined the figure of the double (or *alter-ego*) as the epitome of the uncanny among literary tropes. According to Freud, when a character faces their double, the character faces themself, and this is uncanny because it means that the character suddenly splits into a watching subject and a watched object.[202]

Overall, according to both Jentsch and Freud, the feeling of the uncanny results from the overlap between feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity and from a doubt as for the animate or inanimate nature of an entity, which triggers a sense of disorientation or estrangement. In other words, viewers feel uncomfortable because what they see undermines their certainties.

The latter point took centre stage in an experimental development of the theory of the uncanny from 1970 by Japanese roboticist Masahiro Mori.[203] The experiment is called 'Uncanny Valley' and evidences a significant correlation between the feeling of the uncanny and the degree of realism entailed by specific objects. Mori highlighted how a certain degree of realism could turn inanimate entities into ambiguously living presences. Applying his theory to robots, Mori showed that the level of familiarity suddenly dropped when the human likeness of a robot was high, but not high

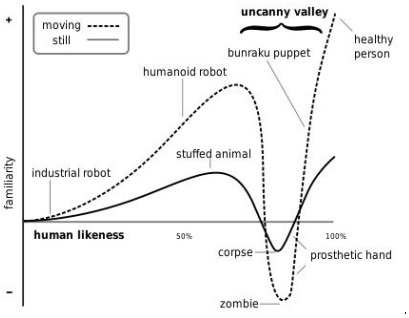
[200] Idem, p. 8.
[201] Sigmund Freud (1919) *The Uncanny*, London: Penguin, 2003, trans. David Mclintock, p. 124.
[202] Idem, p. 130.
[203] Masahiro Mori (1970) "The Uncanny Valley", *IEEE Robotics & Automation Magazine*, 2012, trans. Karl F. MacDorman, Norri Kageki.

enough to make it identical to human beings.[204] 'Uncanny Valley' is the name that Mori gave to this region of ambiguous unfamiliarity, which includes, along with robots, also zombies, corpses, and puppets – although the experiment proved that puppets were perceived familiar if they were part of a folkloristic tradition.[205]

Considering the ground covered, the concept of the uncanny essentially concerns an ambiguity between animate beings and inanimate objects. Such ambiguity particularly characterises realistic reproductions of animate beings that blur the distinction between the original and the copy. This information will now offer a valuable angle to investigate the uncanny quality of Cavaliere's works.

III The Arboreal-Floral Works: Animated Fossils

The journals evidence that, in the 1960s, Cavaliere referred to the uncanny as a way to revive his sculptures, which would otherwise be lifeless objects. Cavaliere specifically used the image of ghosts to describe how he aimed to 'stir his sculptures up' and make them uncanny.[206] The ambivalence between animate beings and inanimate things at the basis of the concept of the uncanny will be particularly beneficial to investigate Cavaliere's perspective, especially if reframed within the ambivalence between the concepts of 'life' and 'death' that critics used to describe his works and Cavaliere himself used to reflect upon art.



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[205] Mori specifically examined Bunraku Puppets, a form of traditional Japanese puppet theatre born in Osaka at the beginning of the 17th century and still performed in the present day.

[206] Cavaliere's journals, March 1964. Full quotation and translation at p. 52.

As discussed in Chapter 1, critics such as Dorfles and Pontiggia described Cavaliere's arboreal-floral works (fig. 19 and 40) as 'a Pompeii made of metal' and pieces of inert matter, [uncannily] keeping 'the look of the alive thing'.[207] Adding a further nuance to the discourse, Dorfles described the arboreal-floral works as fossils – fragile pieces of nature fossilised by time, in which the living organism is crystallised into an artificial object. [208] Fossils are inanimate objects bearing the trace of living organisms as residues, as 'ghosts' from the past that left their imprints. Fossils are ambiguous as they simultaneously express two opposite ideas: life and death. In other words, fossils are organic inanimate objects keeping traces of late lives.

The metaphor of the fossil offers a valuable angle to examine the uncanny quality of the arboreal-floral works. The vibrant life of nature was the starting point for Cavaliere, who captured it at the highest level of realism by using the lost-wax casting technique. However, the outcome of Cavaliere's operation is an army of ghostly replicas of former vibrant pieces of nature – enigmatic presences halfway between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead. Considering this, it is now possible to reframe the ambivalence between the ideas of life and death at the core of the arboreal-floral works and their critical reception within the theories of the uncanny. From this perspective, the arboreal-floral works are ghostly metal *alter-egos* of living entities (plants and flowers).

If observed more closely, most arboreal-floral works show disorienting features. Sometimes, their size is antinaturalistic, and sometimes they reproduce plants or flowers that cannot be found in nature. Every detail is hyper-realistically reproduced and often invented in terms of shape or size. The colours are unnaturally ferrous, and they evoke decay and decomposition. In other words, the ferrous colours evoke death. In this sense, the arboreal-floral works have a disorienting appearance that responds to the ambiguity between the ideas of familiarity and unfamiliarity at the basis of the concept of the uncanny. In other words, the realistic appearance characterising the works clashes with their overall outlandish look.

[207] E. Pontiggia, 2015, p. 168; G. Dorfles, 1967.
[208] G. Dorfles, 1967.

The titles of the arboreal floral works are noteworthily polarised. Sometimes, the works are titled with mere literal descriptions – such as *Piccolo cespuglio con fiorellino rosso* [small bush with red flower], 1964; other times, the works are titled with lines from *De Rerum Natura* – such as *Tamen id natura sua vi sentibus obducat* [nature, however, would cover it with brambles], 1963.

The implications of such polarisation will be examined in the following pages, specifically regarding Cavaliere's reworking of literalism and Martini's provocation about sculptures being 'like gravestones written in Latin'. Before that, it will be beneficial to analyse an arboreal-floral work that offers a valuable example to investigate Cavaliere's reworking of literalism. The work in question is *Rose?*, 1965.

III.I *Rose?*

Rose? (fig. 40) is a sculpture of six roses made of metal almost two meters tall. The flowers' appearance and monumental proportions are disorienting as they give the work the appearance of an 'invented plant' resulting from a cross of different plants (e.g., roses, cabbages, trees). Although every detail is hyper-realistically reproduced thanks to the lost-wax casting technique, the roses do not look familiar; they do not look like ordinary roses.[209] Providing a concrete example to Cavaliere's concept of 'invented realism' (*realism inventato*), *Rose?* is a simultaneously realistic and invented representation of roses. The work is characterised by a baroque hypertrophy of naturalistic details (veins, petals, thorns, etc.) that clashes with their invented shapes and sizes. In line with Marini's lesson, the work ambiguously stands halfway between figurative realism and imaginative invention. Furthermore, the high level of realism of the representation contrasts with the metallic and hand-made

[209] The rose is a recurring subject in Cavaliere's arboreal-floral works. Sometimes, the flower is represented as separated from the plant and inserted in an artificial structure (e.g., *La rosa le rose*, 1965, fig. 41); sometimes, the flower is part of a tangle of branches and leaves (e.g. *Piccolo cespuglio con fiorellino rosso*, 1964, fig. 19). Furthermore, in works such as *Piccolo cespuglio con fiorellino rosso*, Cavaliere has left ambiguous whether the leaves and petals are painted in green and red, or their colours are a natural effect of the metal used. The latter hypothesis would suggest that the plant is a 'found' piece of nature belonging to the realm of objecthood – a found-dead thing, to use the words of Dorfles. G. Dorfles, 1967.

appearance of the work, which reveals human intervention – the spectral presence of the artist's hands.

These features cast *Rose?* near the uncanny entities described by Jentsch, Freud, and Mori. *Rose?* has the appearance of a weird arboreal-floral corps that simultaneously looks familiar and unfamiliar, real and false, alive and dead. *Rose?* is too similar and not similar enough to the original model (real roses), and this calls into question the themes of copy and falsehood, which Cavaliere also discussed in his journals. Cavaliere wrote that his flowers must be mean, monstrous, intrusive, and false to be valid.[210] The estranging appearance of *Rose?* and its simultaneously literal and puzzling title express this intention.

Considering this, it seems that Cavaliere had a twofold purpose in mind. On the one hand, he wanted to make a provocation about the limits of three-dimensional representations as necessarily bound to the concept of the copy and its uncanny implications. On the other hand, Cavaliere aimed to indicate new avenues of discussion to reassess the range of expressive possibilities entailed by the medium of sculpture. Are three-dimensional works reproductions or representations? What are the problematic implications entailed by the medium of sculpture when it is considered a mere reproduction (a copy)? Can a reproduction have its own existence regardless of the original model?

III.II Ready-dead

The questions above bring the issue of the object that Cavaliere discussed in the journals back to attention. For an exploration of the theme of objecthood in Cavaliere's work, it will be helpful to go back to the definition that Dorfles gave to the arboreal-floral works: ready-deads – found-dead-things.[211] In his definition, Dorfles combined the reference to Dadaist readymade with the Surrealist reworking of it that

[210] My translation from Italian: 'I miei fiori devono essere o diventare cattivi, mostruosi, invadenti, falsi per essere validi.', Cavaliere's journal, July 1964.
[211] G. Dorfles, 1967.

was known with the name of *objet trouvé* (found thing).[212] The importance of the *objets trouvés* in Cavaliere's works was also highlighted by Pontiggia regarding works such as *Natura con scatola e rosa*, 1964, (fig. 42) and *Il fiore*, 1964 (fig. 43), in which Cavaliere integrated everyday objects, such as a box and a bottle, into the works. However, the analysis of *Rose?* demonstrated that, regardless of the presence of everyday objects as part of the work, the arboreal-floral works *per se* can be described as deathly readymades – found dead pieces of nature, *objets trouvés morts*.

In the journals, Cavaliere addressed the object-like nature of his works in two ways. On the one hand, he expressed the need to step into 'anonymity', like the artists who made 'walls', 'objects', and 'empty canvases'.[213] On the other hand, Cavaliere suggested that the arboreal-floral works were *objets trouvées* by claiming that he wanted his works to have the appearance of 'mysterious findings'.[214] Possibly inspired by Cavaliere's undergraduate studies in Archaeology, *Rose?* (as well as the arboreal-floral works in general) appears as unusual archaeological finds from past and lost civilisations. The arboreal-floral works flaunt their silent and outlandish objecthood, giving the impression of speaking for cultures or natural environments that are now lost.

Based on Cavaliere's interest in the New York art scene as documented in the journals, the present study considers his statement about 'anonymity' as a reference to American literalist practices – such as Minimal Art and Jasper Johns' sculptures – that Cavaliere might have seen in New York. Although the validity of this hypothesis cannot be proven by objective evidence, it will offer a fertile ground for exploring the implications of Cavaliere's reworking of literalism.

In this regard, the concept of the uncanny indicates a productive avenue of investigation. As it emerged from the discussion, neither Jentsch, Freud, nor Mori

[212] G. Dorfles, 1967.
[213] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ecco l'arte anonima, ecco il muro ripetuto per kilometri, metri di tela vuoti, oggetti. Occorre inserirsi nell'anonimato', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.
[214] My adaptation from Italian: 'Voglio fare un mistero di cose trovate', Cavaliere's journal, October 1966.

mentioned artworks in their lists of potentially uncanny objects.[215] The reason is that the uncanny is a quality of objects, and the three authors wrote their essays in a time (Jentsch and Freud) and place (Mori) in which the separation between art and objecthood was quite clear.[216] As pointed out by American art historian Hal Foster, the transformation of the medium of sculpture into a hybrid entity halfway between art and objecthood was the result of a process started by historical avant-garde (the readymade paradigm above all) and culminated with American literalist neo-avant-gardes in the 1960s – Minimal Art above all.[217]

The following sections will thus discuss how the arboreal-floral works can be seen as Cavaliere's reworking of 1960s international art debates about objecthood. The issue of objecthood will be investigated starting from the perspective that Michael Fried outlined in his essay *Art and Objecthood*, 1967. Although Cavaliere and Fried belonged to different contexts, Fried's examination of the uncanny potential of objecthood will be particularly beneficial to investigate the implications entailed by Cavaliere's reworking of literalism.

IV Art and Objecthood

Objecthood was a controversial affair in the second half of the 1960s. In his essay *Art and Objecthood*, 1967 Fried attacked Minimal Art – or, as he called it, 'literalist art' – based on its object-like essence.[218] The following analysis will refer to Minimal

[215] Jentsch is an exception, as he analysed waxworks as quintessentially uncanny. However, in the early 20th Century, waxworks were considered a form of craftsmanship that did not have the status of art. Even nowadays, waxworks reproductions stand in a grey area between art and objecthood. For further discussion, see Michelle E. Bloom, *Waxworks. A cultural obsession*, Chicago: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
[216] It must be specified that Freud published the essay on the uncanny two years after the exhibition of *Fountain*, 1917, by Duchamp. However, there is no reliable information on how long it took Freud to write his essay, and it is unclear whether Freud paid attention to Duchamp's work in the 1910s.
[217] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real,* Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996, p. 38. For an in-depth discussion on the development of the medium of sculpture through the 20th Century, see Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, New York: The Viking Press, 1977.
[218] M. Fried, 1967, in G. Battcock (ed.), 1968, p. 60.

Art by using the name literalist art as the feature of literalism will be central in this study.[219]

In Fried's view, objecthood was the main fault of literalist art. Fried described objecthood as the condition of simultaneously being a mere object and an artwork. According to Fried, such ambiguity was problematic as it gave rise to ontological issues. Since literalist works coincide with their mere physical shapes, they are nothing more than objects treated like art. [220] Fried's fundamental problem was that literalist works missed any purpose beyond their mere existence as objects. According to Fried, the purpose of literalist art was 'not to defeat or suspend its own objecthood, but to discover […] objecthood as such'.[221] Fried argued that literalist art took the Modernist investigation of the artistic medium too far, by becoming an empty and autoreferential spectacle undermining the traditional difference between art and non-art.[222] From this perspective, literalist works are alien to art as 'the demands of art and the conditions of objecthood are in direct conflict'.[223]

In this regard, Juliane Rebentisch highlighted that Fried was against an art 'offered to viewers not as an aesthetic representation, but by its literalness or mere objecthood*'.*[224] Literalist works are their shape and nothing more – they are what they are. Consequently, literalist artworks mislead viewers by blurring the boundaries between arthood and objecthood – art and ordinary materiality, the 'high' and the 'low'.

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[219] Although the perspective of Fried was influenced by local and political imperatives related to the New York art scene (such as the hope 'to drive a wedge between the high modernist art and the most admired and chose new tendencies within the New York art world that looked most likely to threaten it'), it nevertheless offers key theoretical elements for investigating the arboreal-floral works. These elements transcend the specific position of Fried within the New York art context. For further discussion regarding the relationship between Fried and the New York art scene of his time, see Joshua Shannon, *The Disappearance of the Object*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009, pp. 150-186.

[220] M. Fried, 1967, in G. Battcock (ed.), 1968, p. 119.

[221] Idem, p. 120.

[222] The name 'Minimal Art' was given by British philosopher Richard Wollheim, who stated that literalist works 'have a minimal art content: in that either they are to an extreme degree undifferentiated in themselves and therefore possess shallow content of any kind, or else the differentiation that they do exhibit, which may in some cases be very considerable, comes not from the artist but from a non-artistic source, like nature or the factory.' Richard Wollheim, "Minimal Art," Arts Magazine (January 1956). Re printed in Gregory Battcock (ed.), *Minimal Art*, London: Studio Vista, 1969, p. 387.

[223] M. Fried, 1967, in G. Battcock (ed.), 1968, p. 125.

[224] Juliane Rebentisch (2003) *Aesthetic of Installation Art*, Cambridge, Massachussets: MIT Press, 2012, p. 69.

Due to such disorienting effect, literalist works give rise to a substantial ontological indeterminacy – are they artworks or mere things? Fried ultimately considered this ambiguity 'uncanny' as causing a perceptive and cognitive uncertainty in viewers who feel confronted by the work because they do not understand what they are looking at.[225] Fried's attack on literalism is in line with the ideas of his mentor Clement Greenberg, who described literalist works as double legible – as things and signs. Greenberg argued that such enigmatic ambiguity made the experience of the work anxiously 'endless or inexhaustible'.[226] As rephrased by Hal Foster with words that evoke the theories of the uncanny, for Greenberg, 'the literalists confused the innovative with the outlandish and, so, pursued extraneousness effects rather than the essential [familiar] qualities of art'.[227]

V Cavaliere's Reworking of Literalism

Considering the above, the appearance of the arboreal-floral works aligns with the outlandish and interrogative quality of literalist works, although this quality is expressed through strikingly different aesthetics. The resistance to interpretation characterising the arboreal-floral works is explicitly addressed by the question mark figuring in the title of *Rose?*

All the arboreal-floral works have a simultaneously literal and invented appearance. However, *Rose?* is the only one in which Cavaliere explicated such ambiguity starting from the interrogative title – as if *Rose?* was a spokesperson for all the other arboreal-floral works. In this sense, *Rose?* explicitly thematises the ontological dilemma that Martin and Bonfiglioli highlighted regarding the arboreal-floral works as a whole – is it a rose or the representation of a rose?[228]

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[225] Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood. Essays and Reviews*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998, p. 42.
[226] Clement Greenberg (1957-1969) "Modernism with a Vengeance", *The Collected Essays and Criticism,* Vol. 4, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, p. 256.
[227] H. Foster, 1996, p. 38.
[228] See Chapter 1, pp. 15-16.

Fried's perspective on literalism will be instrumental in reframing the ontological dilemma entailed by the arboreal-floral works since the dilemma in question concerns a degree of unclarity characterising works that can be seen as representations of objects and objects themselves.

V.I 'It Is What It Is', until It Is Not. Objecthood and the Limits of Three-Dimensional Representations

Fried's argument is significant for the discussion if considered in a sense that transcends the specificity of Minimal Art and looks at 'literalism' in a broader sense. In other words, Fried's perspective is beneficial to examine the literal aspects of Cavaliere's practice and their implications within a broader context. In this regard, the arboreal-floral works will be examined as Cavaliere's response to the issue of objecthood that animated art discourses in Italy and the US in the 1960s. As for the Italian context, the discussion will refer to Martini's provocation regarding the death of the medium of sculpture. As for the American context, the analysis will refer to literalist neo-avant-garde practices that Cavaliere mentioned in the journals or the critics compared to his practice, including Jasper Johns' sculptures and Minimal Art.

From the perspective of this analysis, American literalist practices unintentionally made Martini's wish come true as they took the medium of sculpture down from its pedestal and repositioned it among objects. Foster rephrased this perspective highlighting how literalist practices continued the avant-garde programme of disintegrating the work.[229] One of the primary outcomes of this programme was what Krauss called 'the fading of the logic of the monument'.[230] As Greenberg pointed out, literalist works 'are readable as art as almost anything today – including a door, a table, or a blank sheet of paper'.[231] In this regard, art historian Joshua Shannon highlighted that the literalist challenge to the Modernist idea of art as elevated above

[229] Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Winnipeg, Manitoba: Bay Press, 1983, p. 173.
[230] R. Krauss, 1979, pp. 33-34, 42.
[231] Clement Greenberg (1967) "Recentness of Sculpture", in Maurice Tuchman, *American Sculpture of the Sixties*, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967, reprinted in Gregory Battcock (ed.) *Minimal Art. A Critical Anthology,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, p. 183.

ordinary reality was anticipated by Neo-Dada artists, such as Oldenburg and Johns, whose literal 'objects' prepared the ground for Minimal Art to come.[232]

Commenting on how literalist practices challenged Modernist conventions, Shannon observed how Greenberg was sympathetic to the inscrutability of Johns' paintings, while he disliked his sculptures, which he described as 'nothing more than cast reproductions of man-made objects' (an example is *Light Bulb I*, 1960 – fig. 44).[233] Therefore, Shannon highlighted a paradox since the literalness that made Johns' paintings so pleasantly inscrutable in the eyes of Greenberg was the same that made his sculptures despicable.

From the perspective of this analysis, the reason behind such a paradox goes back to Martini's complaint regarding the medium of painting, which had already stepped into the third dimension and the medium of sculpture that was still confined within the three dimensions. For Martini, insofar as the medium of sculpture was confined within the three dimensions, it would be required to represent 'noble subjects' with celebratory purposes; otherwise, it would be perceived as a mere object itself, like 'a cast reproduction'.[234]

The latter point was effectively expressed by a famous review of Donald Judd's works: "Box is a Box is a Box" by Grace Glueck. 'For Jud, a box is a box is a box, and nothing more', stated Glueck. [235] In other words, a box is a mere object. In line with this perspective, Stuart Peterson commented on Johns' sculpture *Flashlight III,* 1958 (fig. 45) by stating that 'a flashlight is a flashlight is a flashlight'.[236] Johns himself made a comment on his practice that unveils the genetic link tying it to literalism: 'I feel that what I am doing is quite literal'.[237]

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[232] J. Shannon, 2009, p. 57.
[233] Idem, p. 55. Quotation from Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism", *Art International,* VI, no. 8, Lugano, October 1962.
[234] A. Marini, in M. De Micheli (ed.), 1982, p. 94.
[235] Grace Glueck, "Box Is a Box", *The New York Times*, 22 March 1968, p. 54. A year later, Barbara Rose came back on the concept of tautology by claiming that: '[The] principal statement [of Judd's early Minimalist works] appeared to be the tautology that a box is a box is a box', Barbara Rose, "Don Judd: the Complexities of Minimal Art", *Vogue*, March 1969, p. 105.
[236] Stuart Preston, "Art: Jasper Johns Retrospective Show", *The New York Times*, 15 February 1964.
[237] Jasper Johns, interviewed by David Sylvester, in Kirk Varnedoe (ed.), *Jasper Johns: Writings, Sketchbook, Notes*, *Interviews*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1996, p. 121.

In the 1960s, however, literalism could not be as serene as it pretended or tried to be since at the core of literalist practices was a radical attack on the Modernist distinction between art and objecthood (art and non-art).[238] In this context, three-dimensional representations were in a delicate position as at the core of literalist attacks was the distinction between representation and reproduction.

The technique that Johns employed to make his literalist sculptures offers a valuable angle to investigate how the feature of literalism could be problematic as regards sculpture. Furthermore, the technique in question is the same that Cavaliere employed to make the arboreal-floral works, and this will indicate a productive avenue to delve into the parallel between Cavaliere's arboreal-floral works and Johns' casts.

The arboreal-floral works (such as *Rose?*) and Johns' sculptures (such as *Light Bulb I*, fig. 44) were made with the lost-wax casting technique. Considering the ground covered, the technique can be seen as a literal and provocative answer (although unintentional in the case of Johns) to Martini's perspective, according to which sculptures were prohibited from representing 'low' subjects not to become just cast reproductions of them. On the other hand, *Rose?* and *Light Bulb I* are literally cast reproductions of objects that are traditionally considered 'low'. Therefore, from this perspective, they are mere objects themselves.

Since the friction between art and objecthood was particularly problematic in the 1960s, the literal reproduction of objects through casting presented (and still presents) key interpretative challenges. As introduced in Chapter 1, the lost-wax casting technique consists in pouring molten metals into a wax mould of the original object. Thus, the lost-wax casting technique has the effect of making the ontological status of the work utterly ambiguous as the thing (the rose in the case of Cavaliere and the light bulb in the case of Johns) is not represented but is made directly from the wax mould. Moreover, the wax cast imprisons every detail of the original model by subtly betraying the manual application of the material, which is visible in some

[238] For an in-depth discussion on how neo-avant-garde practices attacked Modernist conventions, see Bart Vervaeck (ed.), *Neo-Avant-Gardes. Post-War Literary Experiments Across Borders*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021.

details such as little clumps and holes, fine lines, and some excess material on the edges.

Not by chance, Bonfiglioli did not fail to notice the proximity of the arboreal-floral works with Johns' practice.[239] Critics described Johns' sculptures with words that would be then echoed by the ones used to describe the arboreal floral works: 'ambiguous […] fossils' speaking of a fictive civilisation that has been lost for a long time; deathly as the castings from Herculaneum and Pompeii; 'puzzling' objects'; 'mysterious and outlandish findings'.[240]

Andrew Forge highlighted the ambiguous and slightly disquieting appearance of Johns' casts by stating that they 'have the dignity of certain Roman funeral portraits drawn from death masks'.[241] Along a similar line, Allan Kaprow pointed out that the conflict between art-like art vs life-like art (art and objecthood) that ignited art discourses in the 1960s was born in ancient Rome, where wax death masks were the most radical example of craftsmanship ambiguously standing in-between the realms of art and life.[242]

Although, from an archaeological perspective, the idea that Roman funeral portraits were drawn from death masks has been largely refuted in the past decades, Forge's comment nevertheless offers a valuable angle to investigate the uncanny implications entailed by the kind of objecthood characterising lost-wax casts, including the arboreal-floral works.[243]

An *excursus* on death masks in ancient Rome will clarify this point.

[239] P. Bonfiglioli, 1967.
[240] Fairfield Porter, "The Education of Jasper Johns", *Art News*, February 1964, p. 62; John Ashbery, "Paris Notes", *Art International*, 20 December 1962, p. 51; Stuart Preston, "Haseltine View of Italy at Cooper Union", *The New York Times*, 25 January 1958.
[241] Andrew Forge, "The Emperor's Flag", *New Statesman*, 11 December 1964, p. 38.
[242] Allan Kaprow (1983), "The Real Experiment", in J. Kelley (ed.), 1993, p. 201.
[243] The most accredited hypothesis argued that Hellenistic influences inspired Roman portraits. For further discussion, see Jan Bazant, "Roman Deathmasks Once Again," *Annali: Sezione di archeologia e storia antica*, vol. 13, 1991, pp. 209–218.

V.II Wax Castings and the *Imago Mortis*

Roman death masks were called *imagines mortis* [sing. *Imago mortis,* litt., the image of the dead, ancestor funeral mask].[244] The *imago mortis* was made of wax and, due to the perishability of the material, their existence has come down to us only through written records.[245]

As explained by Cassius Dio in *Historia Romana* (3rd Century BCE), the *imago mortis* was modelled on the face of the deceased and shown during funerals.[246] At funerals, the *imago mortis* was not only exhibited but also worn by trained actors called *mimetai*.[247] The purpose of the *imago mortis* was to make the deceased present to their families and social circle. An excerpt from *Historia Romana* clearly describes the use of the imago mortis. The excerpt is a description of the funeral of Emperor Pertinax:

> Upon this rested an effigy of Pertinax in wax, laid out in triumphal garb; and a comely youth was keeping the flies away from it with peacock feathers, as though it were really a person sleeping.[248]

This simple description effectively shows the complexity of the cultural meaning of the *imago mortis*, which was not just a commemorative tool but was considered and ritually cared for as the actual body of the deceased. Despite the disquieting potential inherent to the correlation between the *imago mortis* and the theme of death, the excerpt shows that this correlation was not perceived as disquieting or threatening by the Romans. Indeed, the young boy chasing flies away is not disturbed or upset, but he is careful, as if the *imago mortis* was the actual emperor. The uncanny ambiguity that a contemporary viewer might feel in front of a hyper-realistic waxwork would not be understood by a citizen of ancient Rome because, for

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[244] William Smith, William Wayte, G. E. Marindin (eds), *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities, 3rd edition, London: J. Murray, 1890-1891,* (reprinted London: Forgotten Books, 2022), s.v. "imago mortis".
[245] Examples of written records are Polybius, *Histories,* I, 53, trans. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, London and New York: Macmillan, 1889, available on perseus.tufts.edu (accessed on 30 April 2022). Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, LVI, 34, trans. Earnest Cary, available on Penelope.uchicago.edu (accessed on 21 November 2022). Plautus, *Amphitruo*, 456-457, trans. Paul Nixon, available on Project Gutenberg Ebook, 2005 (accessed on 13 December 2022).
[246] Cassius Dio, LVI, 34.
[247] In ancient Rome, *Mimetai* were professionals in charge of observing the deceased when they were still alive and studying their movements in order to be able to enact them during the funeral. The *Mimetai* enacted the *imago mortis* as it was the *alter ego* (*Sosia*, in Italian) of the deceased.
[248] Cassius Dio, LVI, 34.

them, the *imago mortis* was part of the tradition. In other words, the uncanny potential of the *imago mortis* was nullified by the traditional context of the funeral, which gave it a clear celebratory purpose grounded in conventions.

Despite the above, the ambiguity inherent to the *imago mortis* had potentially disquieting implications also in Roman culture. In this regard, a passage from Plautus' *Amphitryon* (also written in the 3rd Century BCE) gives an unprecedented perspective.

Amphitryon tells the story of Captain Amphytruo and Sosia, an enslaved person. The intricate plot revolves around the themes of deception and the double to the point that the character of Sosia has become the epitome of the double, and the name 'Sosia' entered the Italian language as a synonym for 'double' or *alter ego*. When Sosia sees his double in front of Amphitruo's *domus*, he is distraught and confused. Sosia thinks that he is seeing his *imago mortis*; thus, he thinks that he is dead.[249]

For, my word, this fellow has got hold of my complete image, mine that was.
Here I am alive, and folks carry my image more than anyone will ever do when I am dead.[250]

Compared with the description of Pertinax's funeral, the episode of Sosia shows that the *imago mortis* unleashed its uncanny potential when taken out of its conventional context. In this regard, Maurizio Bettini highlighted how the performative dimension inherent to the *imago mortis* radically blurred the boundaries between the realms of life and death as the *imago mortis* was worn and performed by actors in flesh and blood (*mimetai*). Furthermore, the *mimetai* were not in charge of simply 'representing the external form' of the deceased' but, instead, they 'became' the deceased.[251] In other words, the figure of the *mimetai* acted the uncanny paradox of the living deceased, which was unproblematic when conventions framed it and became

[249] According to Italian philologist Maurizio Bettini, Sosia's words ironically point to the correlation between the *imago mortis* and the theme of the double, which Freud considered the epitome of the uncanny. When Sosia sees his *imago*, he sees his double. The irony is eloquent. By saying: 'here I am alive, and folks carry my image more than anyone will ever do when I am dead', Sosia refers to the fact that, since he is an enslaved person, he would never have an *imago mortis* at his funeral because only patricians have the right to be celebrated in such manner. Maurizio Bettini, *The Ears of Hermes: Communication, Images, and Identity in the Classical World*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011 trans. William Michael Short, p. 179.
[250] Plautus, 456-457.
[251] M. Bettini, 2011, p. 180.

uncanny when it eluded them.[252] For Sosia, the ambiguity inherent to the *imago mortis* experienced out of context becomes intolerable to the point of representing a threat to his identity as a living human being.

VI Conventions and Indexicality

Based on the work covered, Cavaliere's arboreal-floral works can be seen as the *imago mortis* of plants and flowers (as much as Johns' casts can be seen as the *imago mortis* of industrial items). Notably, the discussion on the *imago mortis* brought to attention two concepts that are particularly beneficial to investigate the correlation between the concept of the uncanny and the literal quality of the arboreal-floral works. These are the concepts of convention and indexicality.

The concept of convention will be analysed starting from the theory about symbols by German philosopher Ernst Cassirer, which considers symbols as prototypes for conventions. On the other hand, the concept of indexicality will be analysed starting from the theory by American Semiotic Charles S. Pierce and its reworking in the field of aesthetics by Rosalind Krauss.

From Cassirer's perspective, symbols are tools to mediate between abstract concepts and concrete reality.[253] Cassirer developed his argument by delving into the etymology of the word 'symbol' and highlighted that the word 'symbol' comes from the ancient Greek *sumballo* (litt., to throw). *Sumballo* means throwing together two parts, and the *sumbolon* was a shard of pottery snapped in two parts used as a recognition tool between people bound to each other by a deal. The holder of one half would always be able to recognise and be recognised by the holder of the other half, and the *sumbolon* would always remind them of their pact. A symbol was, thus,

[252] Gillo Dorfles' remark about the arboreal-floral works resembling fossils implicitly calls the *imago mortis* into question. In a sense, a fossil is the *imago mortis* of nature as it bears the trace of a past life as a sort of cast. G. Dorfles, 1967.

[253] Ernst Cassirer (1924) "*Eidos* and *Eidolon*: The Problem of Beauty and Art in The Dialogue of Plato", in Ernst Cassirer, *The Warburg Years (1919-1933). Essays on Language, Art, Myth, and Technology*, trans. Steve G. Lofts and Antonio Calcagno, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013, p. 241.

a tool in charge of establishing a pact between two parts in an absolutely clear way.[254]

Considering the above, the symbol was a prototype of conventions, and transparency was the first essential condition for it to work. Like symbols, conventions only work on the condition of an explicit agreement between the parties involved. In this context, the role of tradition is crucial as the more rooted in a tradition a convention is, the more powerful it is. While a properly functioning system of conventions guarantees transparency and intelligibility, the collapse of the system causes opacity and uncertainty. As it emerged from the analysis carried out in the previous sections, the feeling of the uncanny is triggered by objects that do not respond to the conventional expectations that viewers have of them.

The second key concept to understanding the link between objecthood and the uncanny is the concept of indexicality. Charles S. Pierce explained indexicality as the phenomenon of a sign pointing to (or indexing) an object in the context in which it occurs.[255] Unlike symbols (the meaning of which is fixed and transparent as granted by conventions), indexicality considers an entity solely in its contingency – in the here and now that it carries with itself.[256] In this sense, the concept of indexicality focuses on the act and considers the object in its performative dimension bound up to a specific spatial-temporal context. An example of an index is the footprint, which is the trace of a departed physical presence. In other words, the concept of indexicality considers particular objects as traces of invisible presences. An index

[254] Idem, p. 242.

[255] The concept of indexicality is mainly used in the Anglo-American context. The modern concept of indexicality was born in Semiotics and, specifically, in the work of Charles Sanders Pierce at the end of the 19th Century. Pierce considered indexicality, iconicity, and symbolism the fundamental modalities to determine how a sign relates to its referent. In the 1970s, the concept of indexicality was introduced in anthropology and aesthetics. For further information about Pierce's theory, see Charles S. Pierce (1987) "Division of Signs", in Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (eds.), *Collected Papers*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1932. For further discussion about the use of the concept of indexicality in the fields of anthropology and aesthetics, refer, respectively, to Michael Silverstein, (1976) "Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description", in Basso, H. Keith and A. Henry (eds.), *Meaning in Anthropology*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, February 2017, pp. 11-55 and Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America", *October*, Vol. 3, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, Spring 1977.

[256] In Semiotics, indexically refers to a spatial and temporal frame, including the moment and the place in which the word is spoken. The same principle can be applied, in the field of aesthetics, to three-dimensional objects, which are experienced in a spatial-temporal framework highlighted by their three-dimensionality.

always points to a presence that is, however, absent. Moreover, as in the case of the footprint, the presence in question is present *because* of its absence – like a ghost.

In the field of aesthetics, Rosalind Krauss outlined the link between an index and a presence, highlighting that an index is a sign that is inherently 'empty' as it is a pure installation of presence. Krauss considered readymades and casts quintessentially indexical, and she described them as artworks being ceded to 'the imposition of things'.[257] Particularly, casts bear the 'overwhelming physical presence of the original object, fixed in the trace of the cast'.[258]

Krauss' lexical choices resonate with the words used by Greenberg and Fried to explain why literalist works are 'unfair' toward the beholder. The 'imposition' of the 'overwhelming' physical presence of the object alters the relationship between the artistic sign and its meaning and, thus, makes the work opaque.[259] In other words, literalist works are indexical and, when it comes to art, indexicality is the transgression of the Modernist pact of transparency between the work and the viewer.[260]

The concept of indexicality implies that there is no convention for meaning independent of or apart from the invisible presence evoked by the physical object. Considering the ground covered, this coexistence of emptiness (absence) and present-ness echoes the discussion on the uncanny, which is a feeling of uncertainty

[257] R. Krauss, 1977, p. 75.
[258] Idem, pp. 78, 80.
[259] According to Krauss, the readymade was the first example of an index in the visual arts, and, thus, it was the first problematisation of the concept of representation in 20th Century art. The readymade (such as *Fountain*, 1917) has been invoked to reject the Modernist principles that deny reference to the external world by focusing on style. Idem, p. 77. In line with this perspective, Fried considered literalist works 'uncanny presences' due to their genetic link with the readymade paradigm: literalist works are indexical and, thus, they rebel against the discrete a-temporality that art should entail, according to the Modernist principles demanded by Fried. See M. Fried, 1998, pp. 42, 56.
[260] Fried considered literalist works as uncanny due to their indexical nature, which he perceived as an attack on and a threat to the (Modernist) conventions on which he based his vision. At the core of the Modernist perspectives of Fried and Greenberg was the belief in the possibility of an absolute understanding that is an experience of complete transparency of the moment in which the artwork is received. For further discussion, see Jonathan Harris, *Writing Back to Modern Art. After Greenberg, Fried and Clark*, London: Routledge, 2005 and Diarmuid Costello and Jonathan Vickery (eds.), *Art: Key Contemporary Thinkers*, Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2007.

sparked by objects that stand in a grey area between the realms of life (presence) and death (absence).[261]

The image of the fossil that critics used to describe Cavaliere's arboreal-floral works (and Johns' sculptures) entails a similar ambiguity. A fossil embodies the decomposition of an organism and keeps it present as a trace. In this sense, a fossil entails a performative dimension that blurs the line between life and death (presence and absence). In other words, a fossil is an index, and it is uncanny as it suggests the simultaneous presence of life and death.

In all the cases discussed – from the arboreal-floral works to the theories on the uncanny, the episode of Sosia, Johns' sculptures, and Fried's perspective on literalist art – the critical point is the issue of intelligibility. By rejecting codification, the indexical nature of literalist works turns them into 'presences' confronting viewers.[262] Fried meant this when he accused literalist works of being 'unfair' toward viewers. If conventions exist to remember a 'pact', the indexicality characterising literalist artworks transgresses it – 'what you see is what you see', only that it is not.[263]

[261] In the introduction to his last book, *The Weird and the Eerie*, Mark Fisher focused on how there is a side of the uncanny that forces the beholder to return to the most basic question: existence and non-existence: 'Why is there something here when there should be nothing? Why is there nothing here when there should be something?', Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*, London: Repeater Books, 2016, p. 12.
[262] M. Fried, 1998, p. 42.
[263] "What You See Is What You See: Donald Judd and Frank Stella on the End of Painting, in 1966" is the title of a famous interview with Minimalist artists Donald Judd and Frank Stella by the critic and art historian Bruce Glaser. The interview was published in Lucy R. Lippard (ed.), "Questions to Stella and Judd", *ARTnews*, September 1966. In 1968, the critic John Ashbery questioned the apparently-serene literalism that characterises Minimal works: 'What is a box if not a coffin, a house, a treasure chest…', in John Ashbery, "Exhibition: Mathman's Delight", *The New York Times*, 22 March 1968, p. 54. Previously, in 1962, Ashbery highlighted the disquieting implications of literalism regarding the work of Jasper Johns, which 'has a tremendous – though silent – impact. It is *there*, though for what purpose it would be hard to say', J. Ashbery, 1962, p. 51.

VII The Low and the High: Blurring the Boundaries to Revive Three-Dimensional Representations

The work covered will now help understand in what sense Cavaliere's practice can be seen as a synthesis between American literalism and Martini's argument regarding the death of sculpture. In this regard, Hal Foster's perspective on American literalist art offers a valuable angle to approach the discourse. According to Foster, the purpose of the literalist paradigm was neither an abstract negation of art nor a romantic reconciliation of art with life but, rather, a perpetual testing of the conventional limits of art in a particular time and place.[264]

According to Martini, the 'death' of sculpture was caused by the fact that sculpture was limited by the conventional purpose of celebrating 'noble subjects' within a system of conventions. Thus, for Martini, sculpture was incapable of 'speaking' to the present and only capable of celebrating the past, like a 'gravestone written in Latin' – a dead language.[265] To evolve into a vernacular, for Martini, sculpture should break free from these limits by getting off the pedestal and reproducing 'low' subjects such as pieces of nature or industrial items. In other words, according to Martini, the medium of sculpture could be revived by the exploration of its object-like nature, which would knock it off the pedestal and make it engage with viewers, like a living language.

From Fried's Modernist perspective, Martini's idea was uncanny in a Freudian sense. Until the late 1950s, objecthood was the 'unconscious' of the medium of sculpture that Modernism had suppressed and that 1960s literalist art practices suddenly brought back to consciousness.

Based on the ground covered, the arboreal-floral works can be seen as a sophisticated exploration of the implications and potential of literalism in light of Martini's perspective. The titles of the arboreal-floral works mirror both sides of the discourse. Literal titles point to the object-like nature of the works. On the other hand, Latin titles fetch back to the idea of celebratory sculpture as a 'gravestone written in

[264] H. Foster, 1996, p. 16.
[265] A. Martini, 1945, in M. De Micheli (ed.), 1982, p. 115.

Latin'.[266] Moreover, the Latin titles come from the *De Rerum Natura* in which 'nature' is the object of Lucretius' investigation – like the medium of sculpture is the object of Cavaliere's. In this sense, the arboreal-floral works align with Foster's interpretation of literalism as testing the conventional limits of sculpture in a particular time and place.

Considering the ground covered, the literalist paradigm made Martini's wish come true and legitimised the possibility for sculpture to represent 'not-noble' subjects by maintaining the status of art. Minimalist artist Tony Smith explicated this point by stating that the status of his work was halfway between being an object and a monument.[267] Other examples of this tendency are the works of Johns and Oldenburg, which are, respectively, industrial items made by using a technique going back to Roman funeral masks and monumental works reproducing everyday objects. The analysis demonstrated that *Rose?* and the arboreal-floral works could be seen as Cavaliere's answer to this tendency.

The testing of the limitations of the medium of sculpture has been a common threads, tying the artistic examples examined so far together – from Cavaliere's invented *Rose?* to Johns' handmade archaeological findings, Minimalist geometric solids, such as Judd's boxes, and back to Marini's puppet-horsemen discussed in Chapter 1. In this context, the analysis of the arboreal-floral works evidenced that Cavaliere's practice explored the issue of literalism from various angles by reworking Martini's perspective and testing the boundaries between art and objecthood in tune with American literalist practices.

[266] Ibidem, p. 90.

[267] Q: Why didn't you make it larger so that it would loom over the observer
A: I was not making a monument.
Q: Then why didn't you make it smaller so that the observer could see over the top of it
A: I was not making an object . . .
Interview to Tony Smith, in G. Battcock (ed.), 1993, p. 11.

VII.I A New Space of Object-Subject Terms

A vital outcome of the exacerbation of literalism in the visual arts is the collapse of the distinction between 'the high' and 'the low', which overturns conventional hierarchies. When sculpture gets off its pedestal by reproducing 'low' subjects, the low becomes high and vice versa. One of the most significant effects of such an overturning is what literalist artist Robert Morris described as a revolution of the relationship between the viewer and the work and the creation of 'a new space of object-subject terms', in which the 'object' is the work, and the 'subject' is the viewer.[268] In the 1960s, the vengeance of the 'low' object in the visual arts resulted in a radical questioning of the role of the subject (the viewer) as 'interpreter and master' of the work.[269] If viewers cannot longer rely on a transparent system of interpretative conventions, the work becomes opaque and, in Fried's words, 'confrontational'.

A further comparison between the description of Pertinax's funeral and the episode of Sosia will offer a valuable angle to investigate this 'new space of object-subject terms'. This angle will then be central to directing the discussion from the arboreal-floral works to *Le avventure di Gustavo B*.

Despite being literal, Pertinax's *imago mortis* had a symbolic purpose rooted in traditional power hierarchies. Pertinax was an emperor, and when he died, people honoured his *imago mortis* as a symbol of what he was. On the other hand, Sosia is an enslaved person who would not be entitled to an *imago mortis* at his funeral. Since Sosia's *imago mortis* cannot have a symbolic meaning, it is purely indexical,

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[268] Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture Parts 1 and 2", in H. Foster, 1996, p. 50. The authors mentioned in this study considered the subject abstractly, before or outside history, language, politics, and sexuality. The authors did not regard the subject as a sexed body in a political, cultural, or symbolic system. For example, literalist artists tended to position the artist and the viewer alike as historically innocent and sexually indifferent. Since the 1970s, such an omission has been addressed by several feminist artists such as Mary Kelly, Barbara Kruger, Silvia Kolbowski, Sherry Lavine, Louise Lawer, and Martha Rosler. Chapter 4 discusses how, from the perspective of this analysis, Cavaliere's references to the body in his works are non-sexualised, and 'the body' is the 'body' of sculpture. Based on this consideration, the present study does not include a feminist critique. For further discussion on the role of the body in the work of Cavaliere, see Chapter 4, pp. 157-163. For further discussion on the issue of the abstract subject in 1960s literalist art, see Foster, 1996, p. 43. For further discussion of feminist criticism, see Joanna Frueh, Cassandra Langer, and Arlene Raven, *Feminist Art Criticism: An Anthology,* New York: Icon and Harper Collins, 1992.

[269] As Jasper Johns wrote in a sketchbook from 1960: 'An object that tells of the loss, destruction, disappearance of objects. Does not speak for itself. Tells of others'. The sketchbook is photographically reprinted in K. Varnedoe, 1996, p. 27.

and this overwhelms Sosia, who does not understand what is before him. In other words, Sosia's *imago mortis* not only eludes conventions but attacks them and the hierarchies of power that they imply.

Sosia's *imago mortis* is a three-dimensional wax work reproducing a subject traditionally considered 'low' – an enslaved person. Therefore, Sosia's *imago mortis* breaks free from its traditional celebratory context and steps into the world as a paradox – an animated object. The combination of these factors results in a threat for the viewer (Sosia), who feels confronted and disoriented as he cannot longer rely on the traditional system of conventions granting the distinction between the realms of life and death, presence and absence, the low and the high. When Sosia sees his *imago,* he splits into two, simultaneously becoming both the viewing subject and the viewed object. Thus, Sosia's *imago mortis* undermines the distinction between the subject-viewer and the object-work. Provocatively enough, viewing his own *imago mortis* is life-threatening for Sosia, who is overwhelmed by the physical presence of the original object indexed by the *imago mortis* because the original object is himself.

Considering the above, the episode of Sosia provides an extreme example of the potentially disquieting and disruptive implications of indexical literalism involving three-dimensional representations. This example is particularly significant for this study as the analysis demonstrated that the arboreal-floral works present a similar indexical form of literalism, although to a less extreme degree since they are the *imago mortis* of nature and not of viewers. The following section will discuss how Cavaliere developed the literal and indexical qualities of his work to the point of turning the latter into a sort of *imago mortis* of the viewer.

Section 2 – Theatricality and the Transition from Sculpture to Installation

Le avventure di Gustavo B. is a series of works that Cavaliere made between 1962 and 1966. The discussion will examine how, in the series, Cavaliere further developed his investigation of literalism and indexicality and how his investigation suggested a 'new space of object-subject terms'. The analysis will focus on how *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* stages a gradual yet radical transformation of Cavaliere's sculptural practice, a transformation that culminates in the work that closes the series – *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento,* 1962-1966, which is a semi-performative installation.

In this regard, Fried's essay *Art and Objecthood* provides a key concept to understanding the transformation of Cavaliere's practice – this is the concept of theatricality, which emphasises the dilemmas entailed by the transition from three-dimensional representations into interactive installations. Moreover, Fried's idea of theatricality unintentionally problematises key points of Martini's perspective, with which Cavaliere explicitly engaged.

The analysis will demonstrate that Fried's idea of theatricality entails an unintentional challenge to Martini's notion of the fourth dimension. Based on the intersection between the two perspectives, the discussion will examine how *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* can be considered an exploration of the dormant theatrical potential of the medium of sculpture that Martini wished for in 1945, and Fried questioned in 1967.

Before delving into the analysis of *Le avventure di Gustavo B.*, it will thus be helpful to introduce Fried's idea of theatricality and, second, Cavaliere's reflections on theatre. On these bases, the investigation will explore how *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* can be seen as connecting the uncanny indexical objecthood of the arboreal-floral works and Cavaliere's explicitly theatrical installations from the 1970s.

VIII The Concept of Theatricality, according to Michael Fried

In *Art and Objecthood*, Fried established inferential links between the concepts of literalism, uncanny, and theatricality. As discussed in the first part of the chapter, Fried considered literalist works uncanny presences confronting the beholder with their ontological ambiguity.[270] Fried defined these presences as 'stage presences', owing to their resemblance to the 'quiet presence of another person'.[271] In line with this, literalist artist Tony Smith stated that he did not think of his works as sculptures, but 'as presences of a sort'.[272] Fried defined the encounter between these presences and the viewer as 'theatrical'.[273]

A crucial point of Fried's argument is the theme of proportions. Fried claimed that the significant disparity in size between large-scale literalist works and viewers would cause the artwork to be perceived as a confrontational presence overwhelming the viewers.[274] This situation would thus overturn the conventional relationship between the active subject and the passive object and make the work 'theatrically' interacting with external circumstances, including viewers.

While in Modern art, 'what is to be had from the work is located strictly within it', literalist works are 'objects in a situation' – a four-dimensional situation unfolding through space and time and including viewers.[275] For Fried, literalist works are theatrical because they interact with the contingent circumstances. In other words, literalist three-dimensional works are, in fact, four-dimensional installations as they are one with what surrounds them (including the location and the viewers). Thus,

[270] M. Fried, 1998, pp. 42, 155.
[271] Idem, p. 155.
[272] Tony Smith quoted in idem, pp. 154-155.
[273] Fried circumscribed the field of his attack to Minimal installations as they exceed the boundaries of a specific medium. In his critique, Fried used the term 'theatricality' to refer to the contamination between different media and realms – such as art and objecthood, theatre and sculpture. In Fried's words, 'What lies between the arts is theatre', and 'theatre is now the negation of art'. M. Fried, 1998, pp. 153, 164.
[274] An example is *Die*, 1962-1968 (fig. 47) by Tony Smith, a steel cube almost two meters high. *Die* is mentioned by Fried as an example for his theory of theatricality in M. Fried, 1998, pp. 14-16.
[275] M. Fried, 1998, p. 153.

literalist works are theatrical because they are sorts of settings for viewers to encounter the work within a spatial-temporal framework.[276]

Anne Ring Petersen further elaborated on Fried's perspective, stressing the role of theatricality in the development from sculpture to installation. Sculpture develops in space, while theatre primarily unfolds through time'. [277] In this scenario, installations find themselves in the middle. [278] Installations evolved from sculptures, and thus they are primarily concerned with space. However, installations also entail a form of temporal development that is close to the one characterising theatre and performance arts: they cast viewers into the 'here and now' of a situation.[279]

Moreover, Ring Petersen highlighted the implicit and crucial indexical nature of installations. Installations are indexical as they 'represent fragments of reality by means of indexical signs' – signs that are 'traces or imprints of something'.[280] For Ring Petersen, installations are indexical because they are 'spatial structures laid out around viewers; they depend on the performative interaction with viewers and, thus, 'they are not 'self-sufficient'.[281] Installations are indexical as they are empty and their meaning depends on external factors. These factors are the surroundings and viewers' psycho-physical experience of the situation.[282] Like theatre, installations

[276] Fried used the word 'presentness' to identify the status of purity and wholeness that, according to Modernist principles, should characterise the experience of a work of art. The concept of presentness expresses the idea of an artwork that fully manifests itself in 'a single infinitely brief instant'. In this sense, presentness is contrary to theatricality, as the former denies the possibility of a spatial-temporal interaction between the viewer and the work. According to Fried's idea of presentness, the viewer is absorbed into the work in a single instant, and this is the condition of 'true art'. M. Fried, 1967, in G. Battcock (ed.), 1968, p. 146.
[277] Anne Ring Petersen, *Installation Art Between Image and Stage,* Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2014, p. 22.
[278] Ibidem.
[279] Ring Petersen used the concept of *chronotope* by Russian philosopher Mikhail M. Bakhtin to describe the spatial-temporal nature of installations in which reality is 'reconstructed and interpreted within the framework of artistic fiction' (Ibidem). *Chronotope* literally means 'timeplace'. The word *chronotope* comes from the ancient Greek word *Chrono* (time) and *Topos* (place). For further discussion on the concept of 'chronotope', see Mikhail M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics", in Michael Holquist (ed.) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, trans. Caryl Emerson.
[280] A. Ring Petersen, 2014, p. 15.
[281] Ibidem.
[282] The focus on the psycho-physical experience of the viewer led critics such as Rosalind Krauss and Thierry de Duve to investigate literalist works in phenomenological terms. This thesis does not to include a phenomenological analysis of Cavaliere's works since the topic is broad and complex, and it would have required a separate discussion. For a thorough examination on the phenomenological implications of Minimal Art, see Rosalind Krauss "Sense and Sensibility. Reflection on Post '60s Sculpture", *Art Forum*, November 1973,

require the presence of an audience, and such a co-dependency is described by Ring Petersen as indexical and by Fried as theatrical.

IX The Concept of Theatricality in Cavaliere's Journals

In the 1960s, Cavaliere's reflections about sculpture were remarkably attuned to the idea that a work of art *per se* was not self-sufficient. In a journal from 1965, Cavaliere stated that 'sculpture does not exist *per se* as it is always part of a process'.[283] Furthermore, Cavaliere made an explicit connection between the processual idea of sculpture and the idea of theatricality by stating that sculpture should be 'an ongoing play within a space', apt to take the viewers inside of it.[284]

The journals from the 1960s are rich in notes documenting Cavaliere's interest in theatre.[285] However, it is challenging to understand Cavaliere's idea of theatricality and its role in his practice as the journals do not provide an organic theory of it. As discussed in Chapter 1, the literature on Cavaliere's practice extensively addressed the theme of theatricality. The body of literature that explored the theatrical qualities of Cavaliere's works focused on their scenographic features and certain formal elements establishing 'theatrical' relationships. Particularly, critics described

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and Thierry de Duve, "Performance ici et maintenant: l'art Minimal, un plaidoyer pour un nouveau théâtre", *Alternatives théâtrales*, n° 6-7, January 1981. For a detailed overview of phenomenological interpretations of Minimal Art, see Alex Potts, *The Sculptural Imagination*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, pp. 207-234.

[283] My translation from Italian: 'La scultura presa in se stessa non esiste in quanto essa è sempre un risultato di un processo', Cavaliere's journal, March 1964.

[284] My adaptation from Italian: 'La scultura deve oggi necessariamente essere spettacolo prolungato nello spazio. Per essere valida deve portarci al centro di essa e proporre una vasta serie di aspetti.', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.

[285] E.g., 'My desire for theatre is now at its maximum.' (My translation from Italian: 'Il mio desiderio di teatro è al massimo'), Cavaliere's journal, July 1969. 'I always think about theatre.' (My translation from Italian: 'Ho sempre in mente il teatro'), Cavaliere's journal, December 1963. 'I felt like writing about theatre.' (My translation from Italian: 'Avevo voglia di scrivere di teatro'), Cavaliere's journal, July 1965. Cavaliere's appreciation for theatre is also documented in some journals from the 1980s and the 1990s, which show how theatre remained a topic of interest for Cavaliere throughout his life – 'I love theatre, always.' (My translation from Italian: 'Amo il teatro – sempre'), Cavaliere's journal, October 1984; 'Long live the theatre!' (My adaptation from Italian: 'W il teatro!'), Cavaliere's journal, December 1994.

installations such as *A e Z aspettano l'amore* and *I Processi* as 'stages' inhabited by silent characters.[286]

In order to understand the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's work, it is crucial to remember that Cavaliere consistently concentrated on the medium of sculpture throughout his career, even when his works exhibited distinctly performative qualities. In the journals, Cavaliere always referred to himself as a sculptor and to his works as sculptures.[287] Thus, this examination considers Cavaliere's exploration of the performative implications of his work as an exploration of the boundaries and possibilities of the medium of sculpture during a time in which the latter was undergoing a radical process of revision that resulted in a gradual transition from sculpture to installation.[288]

'Is it possible to express the contemporary world through theatre?', Cavaliere asked himself in 1961. His answer is positive; it is possible, on the condition of seeing the world as 'transformable'.[289]

The concept of transformation took centre stage in Cavaliere's reflections upon theatre since the beginning. A further example is provided by an early note in which Cavaliere outlined his ideas for a project about a 'scene' having the appearance of a 'stage wing' in which the space seems to expand and contract itself 'by giving the impression of a continuous change of size of the depicted images'.[290] Despite the lack of context and the fact that there is no further documentation on this project, the note provides two valuable clues to investigating Cavaliere's idea of theatre. Firstly, Cavaliere established a correlation between theatre and the idea of mystery. Cavaliere did not refer to a sound stage but to the wing of a stage that is usually hidden from the public gaze. Secondly, Cavaliere mentioned the ideas of perceptual

[286] E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 26.
[287] Cavaliere's journals, 1960-1989. The Italian word for 'sculptor' is *scultore*, and for 'sculptures' is *sculture*.
[288] For an in-depth discussion on the transition from sculpture to installation, see R. Krauss, 1977, pp. 266-267.
[289] My translation from Italian: 'E' possibile esprimere il mondo di oggi per mezzo del teatro? sì, a patto che il mondo sia visto come trasformabile' Cavaliere's journal, January 1961.
[290] My adaptation from Italian: 'Una sorta di quinta teatrale […] l'atmosfera è resa irreale dallo spazio che sembra contrarsi e dilatarsi di continuo cambiando le proporzioni delle figure ritratte' Cavaliere's journal, 1950 (unknown date). The note appears on a separate page from the journal. Thus, it is not possible to identify the month in which it was written.

illusionism and transformation. According to the note, Cavaliere wanted the scene to give the impression of expanding and contracting itself, affecting the perception of viewers.[291]

In 1963, Cavaliere rephrased the concept of transformation inherent to his idea of theatre by calling into question the idea of an overturning: 'theatre: upside-down images of an invented reality that is more real than reality itself'.[292] This sort of proto-definition was then followed by a second and a third one; theatre was, for Cavaliere, a way to allow some situation 'to speak' and a 'transmitting tool' to create 'worlds' that are not 'crystallised' but that 'happen'.[293] Considering this, the idea of theatricality outlined by Cavaliere appears to be a sort of tool to instil dynamism and liveness into the medium of sculpture, which, in Martini's words, would mean to make it step into the fourth dimension.

The analysis of *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* offers specific examples to illustrate how Cavaliere's idea of theatricality can be seen as inherently linked to the uncanny quality of his work, which functions as a catalyst to overturn traditional dynamics between the viewer and the work and create a new space of object-subject terms.

In a journal from 1964, Cavaliere penned a note establishing a correlation between the arboreal-floral works and *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* Within the note, Cavaliere expounded on how he had evolved his concept of nature into a proper 'character'. Additionally, Cavaliere accentuated the theatrical ramifications of this development and the resulting feeling of 'disorientation'.

'In the past years, I have been through two phases. First, I created nature: a character who sometimes was an actor, sometimes was a viewer, and sometimes was an object. I put the character in a wider and more complex scene – sometimes a scenographic one. Then, I involved the character in a direct relationship with the other items in the scene. Most of the time, those items were

[291] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] sembra contrarsi e dilatarsi di continuo cambiando le proporzioni delle figure ritratte', ibidem.
[292] My translation from Italian: 'Teatro: immagini ribaltate di una realtà inventata e più vera al tempo stesso'. Cavaliere's journal, May 1963.
[293] My translation from Italian: 'Far parlare delle "situazioni"', Cavaliere's journal, July 1967. My translation from Italian: 'Il teatro come strumento-trasmettitore… mondi che avvengano, che non siano fotografie congelate', Cavaliere's journal, February 1969.

disorienting sides of nature. Lastly, I gave more importance to those relationships, and I elevated them to the "authoritative" level of characters.'[294]

The excerpt provides a valuable angle to examine *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* as a development of the arboreal-floral works. The concept of disorientation is crucial in this perspective. In the note, Cavaliere wrote that he aimed to stage 'disorienting sides of nature' and 'elevate' them to the 'authoritative level of characters'.[295] Essentially, Cavaliere claimed that he aimed to transform a mere object into a character, and the resulting disorienting effect was demonstrated; nature was no longer considered an object but was promoted to a character's level. Based on these premises, the discussion will now analyse *Le avventure di Gustavo B*.

X *Gustavo B.'s Adventures*

As introduced in Chapter 1, *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* (abbr. GB) is a series of thirty-one works that Cavaliere made from 1961 to 1966. The works are rectangular, squared, and cylindrical structures made of different materials (ca. 70 x 40 cm) – mostly cement, lead, and wood. The work closing the series (*GB si esibisce a pagamento*) makes an exception as it is a one-meter-tall wooden jukebox/slot machine. Each work of the series resembles a 'scene' staging a specific moment of the life of GB.[296] As a character, GB is represented as a sort of stick figure. Although each work is about a moment of GB's life, GB's physical presence does not occur in each of them.

Commenting on the series, later critics highlighted three features that are particularly relevant to the present examination. First, Pontiggia described the works in explicitly theatrical terms, highlighting how each work resembled a little stage/scenography

[294] My translation from Italian: 'Negli ultimi anni ho avuto due o tre fasi: ho creato natura, da un personaggio che era ora attore, ora spettatore, ora oggetto e sempre inserito in una scena più vasta e complessa, talora scenografica […], sono passato a mettere questo personaggio in un rapporto diretto con oggetti e cose - il più delle volte con aspetti particolari e spaesati della natura - e infine ho fatto prevalere gli altri rapporti, che circondano il mio personaggio, elevandoli all'autorità di personaggi stessi.' Cavaliere's journal, May 1964.
[295] Ibidem.
[296] All the works have a maximum perimeter of 100 cm. Pictures and captions in E. Pontiggia, 2012, pp. 122-147.

showing the acts of a play (GB's life).[297] Second, Schwarz pointed out that the series staged an encounter between a main character (GB) and nature.[298] Thirdly, both Schwarz and Pontiggia illustrated how the series explicitly thematised a new feature that would then characterise Cavaliere's theatrical installations from the 1970s – this is the active involvement of viewers to complete the sense of the work (the fourth dimension discussed by Martini).[299]

The analysis will now highlight how these three features follow a development in *Le avvanture di Gustavo B.*, which, piece after piece, mirrors a gradual yet radical transformation of the relationship between the viewer and the work. In this regard, it must be noted that there are no indications as to the precise sequence of the works in the series, and even the journals do not provide significant clues.[300] Moreover, there is no body of literature that approaches the series as a unified entity with a cohesive internal logic.

On the other hand, the examination will highlight specific elements that will aid in identifying logical and chronological connections among the works. Furthermore, the ground covered in the previous section will provide essential elements for interpreting the series as a cohesive discourse.

Made in 1962, the first works of the series are proto-urban rectangular structures of medium size (ca. 80 x 40 cm). In some works, GB is not present in the scene.[301] In others, GB is the only human figure. Lastly, in some other works, the figure of GB is surrounded by other more miniature human figures, suggesting that GB is the only real character and the others are just part of the landscape.[302] *GB e i suoi fratelli* [GB and His Siblings], 1962 (fig. 51) is the first work of the series in which GB 'meets' his

[297] E. Pontiggia, in Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 28-30.
[298] A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 81.
[299] Idem, p. 82; E. Pontiggia in Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 28-30.
[300] The works are made between 1962-1963, except for *GB si esibisce a pagamento*, 1962-1966. *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* is mentioned only once and marginally in the journals. In a journal from 1965, Cavaliere wrote that he was thinking about making an artist book about the adventures of GB after his death: 'A volume about GB's adventure since his departure from planet Earth: a book made of zinc and plastic tables.' (My translation from Italian: 'Un volume con le storie di G.B. durante la sua assenza dalla terra: tirate in tavole e composte in libro di zinco o plastica'), Cavaliere's journal, September 1965.
[301] E.g., *Partenza per la città* [Leaving for the City], 1961 (fig.48), *GB nei meandri dell'arte* [GB in the Meanders of Art], 1962 (fig. 49).
[302] E.g., *Terza veduta della città di GB* [Third View of GB's City], 1962 (fig. 17).

peers. The idea of an encounter between equals is suggested by the other human figures being the same size as GB. The proxemic relationship between the figure of GB and the figures of the other humans results in a 'scenic composition' in which the figures resemble characters on a scene.[303] In parallel with the encounter between GB and the other humans, GB encounters a few natural elements, including small-scale arboreal-floral works and life-size apples.[304]

Four works of the series do not respond to the features described. The works in question are the ones in which the titles suggest that GB is dead. In the works, the death of GB is just suggested and not explicitly represented. The works in question are *La morte eventuale di GB*, 1962 [The Eventual Death of GB] (fig. 52), *L'eventuale sonno eterno di GB*, 1962 [The Eventual Eternal Sleep of GB] (fig. 53), and *Post Mortem*, 1963 (fig. 54).

La morte eventuale di GB and *L'eventuale sonno eterno di GB* consist of two cylindric structures. In the former, GB lies on the top of the structure as if dead. In the latter, GB is not visible, and the work resembles a funerary urn. On the other hand, *Post Mortem* consists of two human figures standing in the same position, one in front of the other; the shape of their arms and hands pointing upwards resembles branches; the human figure on the left is darker than the one on the right. Schwarz suggested that the work represented alive-GB facing dead-GB, a kind of situation that, considering the ground covered, hardly fails to recall the episode of Sosia facing his *imago mortis*.[305]

Lastly, between 1962 and 1966, Cavaliere made the last work of the series – *GB si esibisce a pagamento* [Gustavo B., a Paid Exhibitionist] (fig. 18). The work is particularly relevant for this analysis as it is explicitly performative. In the work, GB is nowhere to be seen; instead, his presence is just evoked by the title, creating a

[303] E. Pontiggia, in Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 26.
[304] E.g., *Gustavo B. e la natura, 1962* [Gustavo B. and Nature], (fig. 50); *Gustavo B. incontra un albero e una mela* [Gustavo B. Encounters a Tree and an Apple], 1962 (fig. 20).
[305] A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 82. As for the title of the work, there is a minor inconsistency. While Schwarz titled the work *GB post mortem*, in the catalogue raisonné, Pontiggia used the title *Post-Mortem.* I decided to use the title featuring in the catalogue raisonné for consistency. For further information, see A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 80 and, E. Pontiggia, 2012, p. 143.

short-circuit in the mind of viewers who expect to see GB performing, but GB is impossible to find. The implications of the performative quality of *GB si esibisce a pagamento* will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

XI The Confronting Object

From the perspective of this analysis, *Le avventure di Gustavo B*. presents a coherent narrative development that culminates in *GB si esibisce a pagamento.* The excerpt from the journals previously quoted offers a valuable angle to decipher the development of the narrative in the series.

In the excerpt, Cavaliere claims that in 'the last years' (over the 1960s), he developed a 'character' and put it in a 'transformed' relationship with other objects 'on a scene'; Cavaliere refers to these objects as 'sides of nature'. In the quote, Cavaliere describes this transformed relationship between the character and the objects in the scene as 'disorienting', and he explains how he 'transformed' the role of the 'character'; sometimes the character was 'an actor', sometimes 'a viewer', and sometimes 'an object'. Cavaliere ends the note by pointing out that he overturned the relationship between the character and the objects in the scene by 'elevating' the objects to the more-authoritative status of 'proper characters'. [306]

In other words, considering the ground covered, the note establishes a correlation between the concepts of objecthood, theatricality, and the uncanny. Such a correlation is translated in visual terms by the imbalanced proportions of the elements of the works. Work after work, the imbalanced proportions develop into a story. For example, in the first works, GB is three times bigger than the other human figures, which suggests that GB is the only proper 'character' of the work. Then, in other works of the series, GB is surrounded by other human figures of the same size, which suggests that these other figures have been 'elevated' to the status of 'proper characters', equal to GB. Lastly, GB is no longer surrounded by peers, and he is facing pieces of nature, such as small-scale arboreal-floral works and natural-sizes

[306] Cavaliere's journal, May 1964 (full quotation at p. 82).

apples.[307] The figure of GB is always proportionally smaller than the natural-sized apples, and the apples, thus, seem to become the actual characters in the scene. In other words, a mere object (the apples) becomes a character, and the character (GB) becomes an object.

According to this interpretation, elevating the status of the apples to that of 'more authoritative' characters entails two significant implications that fetch back to Fried's discourse on the uncanny and theatrical qualities of literalism, as well as to Martini's discourse on the crisis of monumental sculpture. First, the apples are disorienting presences confronting 'the viewer' GB – and this is uncanny and theatrical in the sense that Fried outlined regarding literalist art. Second, the apple-characters make a subtle reference to Martini's provocative question: why can sculpture only make monuments celebrating anthropomorphic figures and cannot make small objects, like apples?[308] In *Le avventure di Gustavo B.*, Cavaliere did not only make apple-sculptures but also made them outsize the viewer (GB) as it usually happens in monumental art. In other words, the apples become literal monuments confronting the viewer-GB.

Considering this, *Le avventure di GB*. can be seen as a development of the Martini-inspired discourse that Cavaliere initiated with the arboreal-floral works regarding the possibility for sculpture to represent 'not noble' subjects, such as plants and apples. *Gustavo B. tra natura vera e falsa*, 1963 [Gustavo B. between True and False Nature] (fig. 57) is a work from the series that offers a valuable example to clarify this point.

The work represents GB in front of eleven apples and a tree. The tree and the figure of GB are small-scale, while the apples are natural size. The title suggests that either the apples or the tree are 'true' while the other is 'false'. However, it is ambiguous which is 'true' and which is 'false'. Are the natural-size apples 'true'? In a sense, they are because they are natural size, like real apples. However, in another sense, the apples are anti-naturalistic (false?) because they are oversized compared to the

[307] E.g., *Gustavo B. e le mele* [Gustavo B. and the apples], 1963 (fig. 55); *Gustavo B. e la natura* [Gustavo B. and Nature], 1963 (fig. 56).
[308] A. Martini, 1945, in M. De Micheli (ed.), 1982, p. 103.

other elements in the scene (the small-scale figure of GB and the tree).[309] In this sense, the elevation of objects (the apples) to the status of characters generates doubts regarding the relationship between the elements in the scene and their roles. Mere objects (the apples) become 'presences' confronting the small viewer-GB.

The idea of the object that becomes a presence fetches back to Fried's attack on literalist art. Fried considered the large-scale dimensions of literalist works as one of the causes of their uncanny theatricality. In Fried's view, the large-scale object overwhelms the small viewer, creating an uncanny situation in which the viewer feels confronted by the work. A critical difference between Fried's perspective and *Le avventure di Gustavo B*. is that, in the latter, the actual viewer is not involved in the discourse. 'The viewer', as Cavaliere wrote in the note, is GB, who first becomes 'an actor', then a 'viewer', and lastly an 'object, according to the proportional relationships between its figure and the other elements in the scene. In other words, the disorienting overturning of the relationship between 'the viewer' and the 'work-object' occurs within the work; it does not involve actual viewers who stand in the surrounding space outside of the work.

To be involved, the viewer must wait for the culmination of the series – *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento.* The following section will thus analyse how the work marks a pivotal moment in the development from sculpture to installation that Cavaliere embarked upon in the late 1960s. This development will lead to a significative transformation of the relationship between the viewer and the work.

[309] The interplay between the concepts of 'true' and 'false' brought into play by the real-size apples echoes René Magritte's lithography *Ceci n'est pas un pomme*, 1964, which is a reworking of *The Treachery of Images,* 1928-1929. In 1963, Cavaliere made a work titled *Omaggio a Magritte. Ritratto di una mela ranetta* [Homage to Magritte. Portrait of a Pippin Apple], 1963 (fig. 58). Considering Cavaliere's interest in Magritte, there might be a relationship between the element of the apple in Cavaliere's works and Magritte's creative practice. In *The Treachery of Images*, Magritte addressed the paradox inherent to the representation of human-made items, such as a pipe; on the other hand, in *Ceci n'est pas un pomme*, Magritte addressed the same paradox regarding natural objects, such as apples. In both cases, the focus is on the challenges inherent to representing 'not-noble' subjects. For further discussion, see Harry Torczyner, *Magritte, Ideas and Images*, New York: H. N. Abrams, 1977.

XII *Gustavo B., a Paid Exhibitioner*

From the perspective of this analysis, *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* [Gustavo B., a Paid Exhibitionist] (fig. 18) marks a turning point in the development of Cavaliere's practice as it deals with the implications of theatricality in a literal sense.

Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento is stylistically different from the other works of the series. The work is a sort of jukebox or a slot machine one meter tall. If the name 'Gustavo B.' would not be in the work's title, there would be no chance to identify the work as part of the series. Although the work has nothing to do with the others on a formal level, based on the ground covered, it can be seen as the culmination of the issues introduced by the analysis of the previous works, including the uncanny implications of theatricality and the disorienting overturning of the relationship between the viewer and the work.

Completed in 1966, *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* is the work closing the series. Therefore, the viewer knows that GB is (probably) dead, as suggested by the previous works (e.g., *Post Mortem*, 1963). However, the title claims the opposite; GB is performing or will perform – thus, he must be alive.[310] In this sense, the work is paradoxical as GB seems to simultaneously be dead and alive. Such a paradox is uncanny in the sense discussed in the first part of the chapter. If GB is dead, *GB si esibisce a pagamento* is the performance of a deceased. The theme of death is also suggested by some hyper-realistic roses put in a sort of cage at the bottom of the slot machine – like a funeral offering. Although the tile claims that GB will perform, the figure of GB is nowhere to be seen.

By looking at the work more closely, viewers can see an instruction sign on top of the machine (fig. 18.1). The instruction sign asks viewers to act: 'Introduce one 100 lire coin (or the equivalent in dollars), slowly crank the handle, peacefully wait' (for GB to perform).[311] Therefore, the work suggests that the one who will perform is a viewer

[310] In Italian, the present tense 'si esibisce' can refer to an action that is happening in the present or to an action that will happen shortly.

[311] My translation from Italian: '1. Introdurre una moneta da 100 lire (o equivalente in dollari) 2. Girare la manovella lentamente 3. Attendere serenamente', A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 84. The instruction sign does not fail to

and not GB. If the viewer does what the instruction sign demands, the machine produces a piece of carillon music that invites the viewer to get closer and look for GB inside the machine. However, when the viewer gets close to the machine, they notice that the only thing inside it is a small mirror in which they can only see the reflection of their face (fig. 18.2).

Such a change of focus from the work to the viewer makes *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* indexical in the sense that was discussed in the previous section. The work points to an absence (GB), and the focus shifts from the object (the jukebox-slot machine) to the act (the performance). The work points to the absence of GB, which, in turn, points to the performative presence of the viewer to replace this absence. In other words, the viewer literally *becomes* the work. GB should perform, as claimed by the title. However, GB is not there; the work is just an inanimate object. The only subject that can act is the viewer; if the viewer refuses to do what the instruction sign asks, the performance does not happen.

Considering the ground covered, *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* can be seen as a reworking of Fried's idea of theatricality as a problematic co-dependent situation in which the work confronts the viewer. Furthermore, the work is quite literal in the way it approaches the implications of theatricality and the resulting overturning of the relationship between the viewer and the work. Such an overturning is uncannily disorienting for the viewer – who is performing? Is it the absent and supposedly dead GB or the viewer? Is the viewer reflected by the mirror the *alter-ego* of GB? Ultimately, the ambiguous overlap between GB's presence and absence – life and

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sound like a Dadaist parody of the instructions that were usually given to viewers before happenings. Examples are provided by Allan Kaprow in his essay "Performing Life", 1979:

'Alone, studying your face in a chilled mirror smiling, scowling perhaps

a microphone nearby
amplifying the sound of your breathing

a swiveling electric fan
directing the air around the room

gradually leaning closer to your reflection until the glass fogs over

moving back until the image clears repeating for some time
listening.'

Allan Kaprow (1979), "Performing Life", in J. Kelley (ed.), 1993, pp. 197-198.

death – makes the viewer ask themself the same question that Sosia asks himself when he sees his *imago mortis* – who is the dead one?

XIII From Sculpture to Installation

Based on the ground covered, it is now possible to illustrate how Cavaliere implemented his idea of theatricality in his work. In the previous sections, the analysis focused on how Cavaliere's practice evolved from sculptures into installations over the 1960s. The discussion highlighted that centre stage in this transformation is a specific idea of theatricality apt to question the roles of the viewer and the work. Furthermore, from the cross-analysis between the journals, the works, and Fried's concept of theatricality, the examination demonstrated that the idea of theatricality in question is closely linked to the concepts of literalism and the uncanny.

Moreover, the ground covered sheds light on Cavaliere's statement about theatre consisting of 'upside-down images of an invented reality more real than reality itself'.[312] The analysis that was carried out showed that the feature of theatricality served Cavaliere to make three-dimensional 'images' that were intentionally uncanny and meant to overturn (put upside-down) the relationship between the subject-viewer and the object-work. In this sense, Cavaliere implemented his idea of theatricality by making works that radically question the relationship between the work and the viewer to the point of overturning it (*Gustavo B. si esibsce a pagamento*).

In the arboreal-floral works, Cavaliere transformed natural elements into their artificial crystallised *alter ego* (or Sosia). In *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento,* Cavaliere literally turns the viewer into the *alter ego* of the work. In this sense, Cavaliere's practice from the 1960s addressed the nuances of the uncanny potential of literalism and its theatrical implications, nuances that Cavaliere used as 'tools' to create 'worlds that are not crystallised (death) but happen (alive)'.[313]

[312] For the full quotation, see Chapter 2, p. 81.
[313] Ibidem.

In this sense, Cavaliere's idea of 'a reality more real than reality itself' can be interpreted as an idea of a reality enigmatic and ambiguous, in which roles and conventions are not taken for granted but questioned and explored in their implications.[314]

Moreover, the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's work and its inherent uncanny overlap between the concepts of life and death support the hypothesis that Cavaliere's practice from the 1960s was a late response to the issue of the death of sculpture addressed by Martini in the 1940s. In line with Martini's perspective, Cavaliere claimed that the medium of sculpture has no value if considered as a 'static and celebratory monument'.[315] For Cavaliere, the only way to give sculpture its value back was to take it down from the pedestal and make it 'part of a living process' – a process involving the viewer and the work in ambiguously performative ways.

Cavaliere described such a 'living process' as 'an ongoing play within a space'.[316] In other words, the uncanny theatricality characterising Cavaliere's works can be seen as a tool that Cavaliere used to question and challenge the relationship between the viewer and the work. Ultimately, the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's work can be seen as his way of opening sculpture to the fourth dimension and saving it from the doom of being a dead language. By becoming a living (theatrical) process involving viewers, sculpture comes back to the realm of the living.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter proposed a hypothesis concerning the implications of the literal, theatrical, and uncanny qualities of Cavaliere's practice from the 1960s. Fried's concepts of literalism and theatricality and Martini's idea of the fourth dimension offered valuable coordinates to the investigation. The analysis illustrated in what sense the arboreal-floral works and *Le avventure di Gustavo B.* can be seen

[314] Ibidem.
[315] My adaptation from Italian: 'Il monumento immobile […] non ha più senso.', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.
[316] My adaptation from Italian: 'La scultura deve oggi necessariamente essere spettacolo vivo prolungato nello spazio', ibidem.

as consecutive moments in Cavaliere's exploration of the boundaries and potential of the medium of sculpture. This exploration culminated in a staging of the collapse of the idea of the autonomous work of art and in a transition from sculpture to installation (*Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*).

The following chapter will discuss how Cavaliere's practice from the 1960s paved the way for his performative environments from the 1970s, which will explicitly involve the viewer, the surroundings, and the artist himself.

CHAPTER 3

Cavaliere's Theatrical Installations from the 1970s: from Estrangement to Participation

Introduction

This chapter examines the development of the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's work, focusing on his installations from the 1970s and the journals from the decade. In the journals, Cavaliere outlined significant correlations between the concepts of theatricality and total art. Thus, the exploration delves into two main inquiries: what might Cavaliere have implied by the expression 'total art'? And what function might theatricality have served in this context?

The discourse is structured in two sections. The first section probes the idea of theatricality that Cavaliere outlined in the journals from the 1970s and discusses the idea of theatricality at the core of the contemporary art current of *Arte Povera*. The analysis examines specific features at the core of Germano Celant's theorisation of *Arte Povera,* which will prove beneficial to investigate Cavaliere's theatrical installations.

The second section applies this perspective to Cavaliere's installations: *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare,* 1972 (fig. 25) and the series *Surroundings I-VII* (fig. 27-33), 1972-1984. The chapter investigates how the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's installations from the 1970s transformed them into interactive 'total' experiences.

Section 1 – Art and Theatre in Cavaliere's Journals

I Cavaliere's Reflections on the Theatrical Practices of William Shakespeare and Bertolt Brecht

The relationship between Cavaliere's writings and works is not always linear. Instead of being a limitation, however, certain discrepancies offer valuable perspectives to this analysis. For example, in a journal from 1965, Cavaliere claimed that he aimed to make 'plays' being halfway between happenings and 'pocket theatres' (*teatrini tascabili*).[317] However, it is a matter of fact that none of the works that Cavaliere made in the 1960s respond to this intention (at least not visibly). In 1970, Cavaliere claimed that he was still keen to make the *teatrini,* and in 1972 he wrote that the *teatrino* was finally ready.[318] Based on this information, this chapter will investigate how Cavaliere's installations from the 1970s could be seen as an implementation of his ideas for the *teatrini*.

In the journals from the 1970s, Cavaliere focused his reflections on the role that art should have in society, and, in this context, the theme of theatre took centre stage.[319] Particularly, Cavaliere drew parallels between his political view and the theatrical practices of William Shakespeare and Bertolt Brecht. The reference to Shakespeare is quite explicit: 'Shakespeare is waiting for me. I need to focus on Shakespeare in

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[317] My adaptation from Italian: 'Lo spettacolo dovrebbe essere fra classico e happening, nel campo del "teatrino tascabile"', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.

[318] 'I am still excited about making storytelling-*teatrini.* I would like to make *teatrini* made of paper and large-scale sceneries with figures, real objects, doors, windows, mysteries, and complex situations to be quickly dissembled and reassembled.' (My translation from Italian: 'Mi diverte ancora l'idea dei teatrini racconto, vorrei fare i teatrini in carta e i grandi teatri, con figure, oggetti veri, porte, finestre, misteri e situazioni complesse. da smontare e montare rapidamente'), Cavaliere's journal, January 1970. 'The *teatrino* is ready.' (My translation from Italian: 'Il teatrino è montato'), Cavaliere's journal, March 1972

[319] 'Before being a cultural product, art is about ways of being, politics, and relationships between human beings, theatre!' (My adaptation from Italian: 'L'arte è, prima che arte e cultura, costume di vita e politica; rapporto fra uomini, teatro!'), Cavaliere's journal, July 1972. 'A citizen is a Shakespearian citizen, an isolated actor among the others.' (My translation from Italian: 'Il cittadino è un cittadino shakespeariano, attore singolo fra gli altri'), Cavaliere's journal, March 1974. According to the journals and the witnesses of people who personally knew Cavaliere, his political view was strongly left-wing. In the journals, Cavaliere generally called his political perspective 'anarchic-communist.' (My translation from Italian: 'Il mio comunismo-anarchico'), Cavaliere's journal, September 1983. However, according to the information provided by the journals, Cavaliere did not explicitly stand with any political party, and his 'anarchic-communism' was outlined in general terms. Considering this, the thesis does not to delve into the exploration of Cavaliere's political view.

order to make a point. The world is not just about little mediocre political parties. There are human matters that transcend slogans and advertising'.[320]

A few years later, in 1973, Cavaliere's reflections upon Shakespeare intersected with some observations about another playwriter that he particularly admired – namely, Bertolt Brecht. According to the journals, Cavaliere was interested in the works of Shakespeare and Brecht for the same reason, which is their ability to involve viewers in 'total' ways.[321] In this regard, Cavaliere explained that such a 'total' involvement resulted from representing 'contrasts'. As for Shakespearean theatre, Cavaliere pointed out that the 'total' involvement of viewers resulted from a contrast between the intensity of the drama and the exactitude of the narrative structure, triggering a psycho-emotional feeling of estrangement. In Cavaliere's words, 'viewers are completely caught by the story but cannot do anything to change the course of the events'.[322]

The correlation between total involvement and estrangement is also central in Cavaliere's reflections upon Brechtian theatre. The influence of Brecht in the practice of Cavaliere is more challenging to identify as it was not explicitly thematised in a specific work. However, Cavaliere made recurring and references to Brecht in the journals, which can hardly be ignored. Furthermore, the journals suggest that, while Shakespeare inspired Cavaliere on a thematic level, the influence of Brecht was more subtle yet pervasive and influenced Cavaliere's thinking on art.

From the perspective of this analysis, three features characterising Brechtian theatre are particularly beneficial to understanding in what sense Brecht might have influenced the work of Cavaliere. First, at the basis of Brechtian theatre is the staging of estranging situations resulting from representing conflicts between opposite

[320] My adaptation from Italian: 'Shakespeare mi attende. e devo farlo per riaffermare a me che non è tutto partitini, ma esistono dei fatti umani, fondamentali che trascendono gli slogan e la pubblicità', Cavaliere's journal, January 1970.
[321] My adaptation from Italian: 'Sia il teatro drammatico che quello epico di Brecht creavano o attraverso i sentimenti o attraverso una partecipazione dei pensieri nello spettatore, una "partecipazione" totale.' Cavaliere's journal, June 1973.
[322] My adaptation from Italian: 'Shakespeare: […] la struttura del dramma è sicura e precisa: ogni momento è un attimo di una costruzione e noi siamo parte – sia pure come spettatori avvinti, ma impotenti ad intervenire- di eventi.', Cavaliere's journal, March 1972.

features. Second, Brechtian theatre entails a radical challenge to the idea of objectivity, which is represented as essentially misleading. Third, Brechtian theatre emphasises the importance of singularities to oppose homogenisation.[323] Brechtian theatre represents reality in contradictory ways to estrange viewers and involve their critical thinking. Viewers are therefore asked to question the representation before them and take a critical distance from it. The purpose of the distance is to free the viewers from a supposedly objective idea of reality and restore their individual intellectual responsibilities. Centre stage in this perspective is the idea that art can free viewers from limiting, dogmatic, and massifying superstructures that are incorporated into the idea of 'objectivity'.[324]

The attack on the idea of objectivity is, thus, central in Brechtian theatre, which considers the concept of objectivity as a pervasive poison disempowering individual perspectives and enhancing single-minded masses. In this context, the antidote to such a poison is the idea of the object as a process instead of a thing. In other words, Brechtian theatre stages contradictory events rather than objective facts and asks viewers to explore them in their complexity. In this way, viewers are forced to detach themselves from the idea of objective truth and asked to question what they see. [325] Ultimately, Brechtian theatre aims to instil doubts and stimulate the viewers' critical abilities to question 'apparently natural (objective) things'.[326]

[323] Fredric Jameson, *Brecht and Method*, London and New York: Verso Books, 1998.
[324] 'Estranging effect' (sometimes trans. as 'alienation-effect') is the term that Bertolt Brecht used to refer to the power of art to show that the concept of 'natural' is an illusion. In Brecht's perspective, reality is a historical product. The 'estranging effect' was meant to show viewers that things that they consider 'timeless and eternal' are, in fact, 'deliberately caused and altered across time'. Brecht's purpose was 'political' as it 'aimed to overturn the paralysing sense that things have always been "this way" and, therefore, that nothing could be done to change them. Brecht's principal means of doing so were to stage theatre in such a way that the viewer is denied the habitual comfort of forgetting that they are watching a play and becoming […] sutured into the events on stage.', *Oxford Reference* https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095758798;jsessionid=CD18A39E9D881CAFA52BAA36BABBCBC7 (accessed 30 June 2022).
[325] Peter Hutchinson, "Uncomfortable, Unsettling, Alienating: Brecht's Poetry of the Unexpected", in Robert Gillett and Godela Weiss-Sussex (eds.) "*Verwisch die Spuren!" Bertolt Brecht's Work and Legacy: A Reassessment*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008, pp. 33-48.
[326] Turk, Horst, "Wirkungsästhetik: Aristoteles, Lessing, Schiller, Brecht. Theorie und praxis einer politischen Hermeneutik", *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft*, Stuttgart: Kröner Verlag, 1973, p. 522.

In the journals, Cavaliere defined as 'total' the kind of participation aimed by Brechtian theatre and implied (in his view) by Shakespearian theatre.[327]

Cavaliere's frequent use of the adjective 'total' requires further clarification, especially considering that he wrote his reflections in the 1970s when the idea of total art was living its gilded age. The journals evidence that Cavaliere was aware of the context in which the idea of 'total art' developed – from Allan Kaprow to Fluxus and the Living Theatre. However, Cavaliere mentioned these contexts in marginal ways and mainly used the adjective 'total' to refer to Brecht and Shakespeare.[328]

Furthermore, it seems that Cavaliere used the adjective 'total' to refer to an ethical purpose of art instead of aesthetic properties. In this regard, Brecht's concept of estrangement as an ethical tool to engage with viewers' individual critical skills takes centre stage. From the journals, Cavaliere's idea of 'total art' emerges as an antidote to single-minded masses and a way to develop a collective discourse in which every singularity could find its place.[329]

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[327] '[Shakespeare's] dramatic theatre and Brecht's epic theatre "involved" the viewer in a total way through feelings and thoughts.' (My translation from Italian: 'Sia il teatro drammatico che quello epico di Brecht creavano o attraverso i sentimenti o attraverso una partecipazione dei pensieri nello spettatore, una "partecipazione" totale'), Cavaliere's journal June 1973.

[328] In the journals, Cavaliere mentioned The Living Theatre, Allan Kaprow, and Fluxus too sporadically to elaborate on their hypothetical role in his practice. Cavaliere mentioned The Living Theatre in a journal from 1969 in which he distanced himself from it: 'I am not interested in the Living Theatre; I do not endorse its preaching ideas' (My adaptation from Italian: Living [Theatre]. […] Non mi interessa; le idee poi non le condivido […] non voglio tesi predicate'), Cavaliere's journal, February 1969. As for Fluxus, Cavaliere only mentioned that he went to a concert by John Cage in 1977. In this regard, Cavaliere sarcastically commented on Cage's 'priestly' attitude: 'I go to a concert by Cage. The concert is […] characterised by the priestly attitude of the officiant' (My adaptation from Italian: 'Vado a sentire Cage. Il concerto è […] dominato dal gusto sacerdotale dell'officiante'), Cavaliere's journal, May 1977. As for Allan Kaprow, Cavaliere mentioned him in a journal from 1984 when he was in Los Angeles for *Surroundings VII.* The full quote is: 'Kaprow, calendar with events'. (My translation from Italian: Kaprow, calendatio con avventimenti'), Cavaliere's journal, January 1984. Although the latter quote is not particularly significant *per se*, the investigation will draw a brief parallel between Kaprow's ideas and *Surroundings VII* based on similarities between certain statements by Cavaliere and Kaprow (see pp. 117-120). Pierre Restany was the first who highlighted affinities between the creative practices of Kaprow and Cavaliere. In 1967, Cavaliere had yet to make his installations, and Restany drew a prophetic parallel between how the arboreal-floral works 'filled the entire room' and the concept of environment outlined by Kaprow (see *Pierre Restany, Alik Cavaliere e il determinismo naturalista*, exhibition catalogue, January – February 1967, Brescia: Galleria Il Minotauro, 1967, p. 3). Chapter 4 will extensively discuss how Cavaliere's installations engaged with the idea of the artwork as an environment (see pp. 155-156).

[329] In the journals, Cavaliere used the expression 'collective accountability', which echoes Brecht's ideas of cooperation, autonomy and responsibility. (My adaptation from Italian: 'Arte totale, responsabilizzazione collettiva in cui l'individuo trova la sua voce', Cavaliere's journal, June 1974). For further discussion on Brecht's ideas of cooperation, autonomy, and responsibility, see Philip Glahn, *Bertolt Brecht*, London: Reaktion Books, 2014.

The interplay between the concepts of singularity and collectivity is central in Cavaliere's reflections upon the concept of 'total art'. For example, in 1970, Cavaliere stated that, while in the 1960s he made 'relationship-oriented' sculptures, he was now committed to making 'situational works' apt to encompass various perspectives.[330] Based on the ground covered in the previous chapter, it can be argued that with the expression 'relationship-oriented' Cavaliere referred to the one-to-one relationship between the viewer and the work that was implied by his works from the 1960s and culminated in *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*, 1962-1966. On the other hand, according to this interpretation, the expression 'situational works' referred, thus, to Cavaliere theatrical installations from the 1970s in which viewers were considered in their multiplicity.

Supporting this interpretation, in 1972, Cavaliere claimed that he aimed to make 'total' artworks apt to expand the boundaries of individual perspectives and widen the spectrum of the possible situations involving things, people, and events.[331] This idea of 'total' art aimed to restore the power of singularities and promote an idea of collective and non-dogmatic social reality.[332] During a conference at the University of Padua in 1975, Cavaliere reiterated that, for him, art and theatre were essentially connected, and theatre should be about multiplicity and collectivity, as Brecht's.[333]

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[330] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ho fatto negli anni scorsi una scultura "di rapporto", oggi faccio lavori "di situazione" dove dovrò tener conto oltre che di vari elementi di una serie di punti di vista plurimi.', Cavaliere's journal, January 1970.

[331] My adaptation from Italian: 'Totale vuol dire per me due cose: la prima ampliare al massimo […] il punto di osservazione, secondo dilatare in più direzioni il proprio rapporto con le cose e gli uomini e gli avvenimenti creando situazioni.', Cavaliere's journals, June 1972.

[332] My adaptation from Italian: 'Totale: intendo qualcosa di più ampio, fluente, meno contingente, meno legato al singolo avvenimento. Per quanto riguarda individuale, […] è un'epoca che può avanzare solo con […] l'apporto organico delle singole cellule. E' un ampio tessuto di cui ogni singola parte diviene indispensabile ed in rapporto con il tutto. E queste cellule sono l'individuo e io ne ho uno a mia portata […] da guidare nella ricerca di un tutto organico [..] non in relazione ad uno schema aprioristico, ma nel rapporto stesso fra me individuo ed una totalità sociale', Cavaliere's journals, June 1972. Although Cavaliere did not make explicit reference to the Years of Lead in the journals, his idea of a non-dogmatic society hardly ignored the Italian political context of the time, which was characterised by a dramatically dogmatic polarization between the left and right wings. In the journals from the 1970s, Cavaliere criticised both far-right and far-left dogmatisms and the fact that, in Italy, everything seemed to be reduced to a matter of what side one was on. For further discussion about the Years of Leads, see Alessandra Diazzi and Alvise Sforza Tarabochia (eds), *The Years of Alienation in Italy. Factory and Asylum Between the Economic Miracle and the Years of Lead,* London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

[333] 'I re-wrote the prologue about Brecht's theatre for [the conference in] Padua. Theatre is not about single images but about collective and multiple discourses that go in various directions using several tools. Art and theatre.' (My adaptation from Italian: 'Ho riscritto per Padova il prologo sul teatro di Brecht. Il teatro non è mai

From this interpretation of the journals, it emerges that Cavaliere forged his idea of 'total art' in the wake of Shakespearian and Brechtian theatres to propose a sort of artistic antidote to dogmatisms. While Shakespearian theatre inspired Cavaliere with the idea that human matters are more important and powerful than ideologies, Brechtian theatre fed Cavaliere's idea of total art as a tool to restore the power of individual critical skills and oppose dogmas.

Cavaliere's observations upon theatre indicate an avenue to investigate the possible proximity between Cavaliere's works from the 1970s and *Arte Povera*, which also worked on the intersections between visual arts and theatre and entailed an ethical function. The potential proximity between Cavaliere's practice and *Arte Povera* is alien to the literature on Cavaliere. Indeed, Cavaliere's practice has been mainly considered closer to artists from the first half of the 20th century than contemporaries.[334] Furthermore, the heterogeneous nature of *Arte Povera* makes it quite challenging to draw specific parallelisms. Despite these limitations, the journals offer a few clues suggesting that it will be beneficial to investigate Cavaliere's installations from the 1970s in comparison with certain theoretical features at the basis of *Arte Povera*, including the virtual dialogue with American literalist practices and the idea of sculpture as an interactive process.

II *Arte Povera* as an Italian Response to American Literalist Art

Cavaliere opened his 1970 journal by stating that he needed to reflect on the implications of 'Poor gesture and rituals'.[335] Considering the historical and geographical context of Cavaliere, the capitalised 'P' strongly suggests that he was referring to *Arte Povera*. The hypothesis that Cavaliere might have considered *Arte Povera* in developing his practice is then more explicitly supported by a note from

immagine singola, ma sempre corale e plurima in molte direzioni e con una vasta gamma di strumenti. Arte e teatro.'), Cavaliere's journal, March 1975.

[334] A. Vettese, in E. Pontiggia (ed), 2018, p. 40.

[335] My adaptation from Italian: 'Sul significato dei gesti e dei riti "Poveri" devo pensare', Cavaliere's journal, January 1970.

1973 in which he wrote about his appreciation for Luciano Fabro.[336] Then, in a note from 1974, Cavaliere stated his purpose to use 'poor materials' for his work.[337] Starting from these clues, the discussion will delve into specific features characterising *Arte Povera* that will be beneficial to investigate Cavaliere's installations as they responded to similar challenges posed to three-dimensional representations between the late 1960s and the 1970s.

Approaching *Arte Povera* in general terms presents a few challenges. Scholars even argued that 'no *Arte Povera* group as such ever actually existed'.[338] Italian critic Germano Celant, who theorised Arte Povera in 1967, stated that it is impossible to provide *Arte Povera* with an iconographic definition due to its heterogeneous nature. In Celant's view, the name *Arte Povera* expressed the attitude to use 'everything you could find in the natural world' to make art.[339] In line with this, Swiss critic Harald Szeemann preferred to call this tendency an 'attitude' in his seminal exhibition *Live in your head. When Attitudes Become Form* from 1969.[340] Even the choice of using the plural form – 'attitudes' – can be seen as a waiver of any attempt to gather the works under a single label.

Considering this, it will be beneficial to approach *Arte Povera* starting from the theorisation of Celant, which was part of a 'deep reflection on Italian identity in an international context'.[341] Particularly, Celant's theorisation of *Arte Povera* actively

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[336] 'A homage to Fabro: long live Italy!' (My translation from Italian: 'Omaggio a Fabro**:** W L'ITALIA'), Cavaliere's journal, June 1973.
[337] 'If I can use poor materials, it is even better!' (My translation from Italian: 'Se poi è possibile usare materiali poveri ancora meglio!'), Cavaliere's journal, January 1974.
[338] One of the signatures of *Arte Povera* practices is the combination of poor materials (such as wood, fabric, water, etc.) and traditional ones (such as marble and bronze). However, the mix between 'poor' and 'rich', 'unconventional' and 'traditional' materials cannot be considered an exclusive peculiarity of *Arte Povera* as it was a cleared-through-customs feature of several postwar art tendencies. Christiane Fricke, Klaus Honnef, Karl Ruhrberg, and Manfred Schneckenburger (eds.), *Art of the 20th Century*, Köln: Taschen, 2012, pp. 557-558.
[339] Germano Celant, interviewed by Antonio Gnoli, "Non dite che ho inventato l'Arte Povera", *La Repubblica*, 7 May 2017.
[340] Harald Szeemann (ed.) *Live in your head. When Attitudes Become Form*, exhibition catalogue, Bern: Kunsthalle and Stampfli et Cie Ltd., Berne, 1969.
[341] Sharon Hecker and Marin R. Sullivan (eds.), *Postwar Italian Art. Untying the Knot*, London: Bloomsbury, 2019, p. 277. The curator Alan Solomon addressed the issue of the biased attitude of American artists toward non-American art in his catalogue essay for the exhibition *Young Italians,* held at the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art (May-September 1968). Solomon stated in the essay that, 'during the past five or ten years, in a gradual and unconscious process, we in America have become accustomed to judging world art against American standards and American conditions. [. . .] We came more and more to turn in on ourselves,

engaged with the American context and, especially, literalist practices – Minimal Art above all.[342] This point will provide a valuable angle to outline a cohesive theoretical profile of *Arte Povera* and investigate its proximity with Cavaliere's practice, which, as discussed in the previous chapters, also actively engaged with the American context.

II.I *Arte Povera* from the Perspective of Germano Celant

Arte Povera was born in Italy on the 27th of September 1967.[343] In his seminal text *Arte Povera. Appunti per una guerriglia (Notes on a Guerrilla)*, Celant claimed that *Arte Povera* was 'fighting back' the American impoverishment of meaning that, in his view, was infecting the arts. Celant's perspective was, thus, quite belligerent. Even in some recent interviews from the 2010s, Celant maintained this position, explicitly stating that Minimal Art was the nemesis of *Arte Povera*.[344]

Celant claimed that *Arte Povera* aimed to propose an alternative to 'standard' and 'modular approaches' characterising increasingly dominant Minimal Art, which, in his view, was essentially bound to an idea of 'technological order'.[345] By officialising *Arte Povera* as an art movement with such a clear purpose, Celant aimed to dismantle what he considered as a cultural colonisation of Italy by American (Minimal) art.[346]

In 1966, American artists Frank Stella and Donald Judd claimed the superiority of symmetric, minimalist, and linear shapes *contra* the complex and 'baroque' intricacies characterising European art.[347] Celant's theorisation of *Arte Povera* was a

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becoming less and less interested in the contemporary art of other countries'. Alan Solomon *Young Italians*, Boston: Boston Institute of Contemporary Art, 1968, in S. Hecker, 2019, p. 279.

[342] Germano Celant (ed.), *Arte Povera*, Florence: Giunti, 2012, p. 26.

[343] On the 27th of September 1967, Galleria La Bertasca di Francesco Masnada, Genoa, opened the exhibition *Arte Povera – Im Spazio* curated by Germano Celant. The exhibition showcased works by Alighiero Boetti, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, and Emilio Prini. Excerpts from the exhibition catalogue are reprinted in Ida Agnelli, Germano Celant, and Tommaso Trini (eds.), *Arte Povera in collezione /Arte Povera in Collection,* Milan: Charta, 2000, pp. 27-30.

[344] G. Celant (ed.), 2012, p. 26.

[345] Idem, p. 27.

[346] Idem, p. 26.

[347] L. Lippard, 1966.

reaction to that provocation. Even the title of Celant's essay – 'Notes on a Guerrilla' – reflects his belligerent attitude. In Celant's view, Minimal Art celebrated the cultural impoverishment of the world (which was reduced to consumerism and industrialisation) through flat and oversimplified shapes. The perspective of Celant was clear; 'while Americans fell in love with the cube […], in Europe, we are attracted to wild vectors that lead towards unpredictable and chaotic directions, subvert expectations, and question boundaries'.[348] In line with this, Celant claimed that *Arte Povera* artists were not interested in linearity, and, instead, they looked for conflicts as conflicts are the triggers of history. In this sense, the provocation by Stella and Judd turned out to be a stimulus for Celant 'to revolt against Minimal Art and create an autonomous and independent linguistic territory' – that he named *Arte Povera*.[349]

The name *Arte Povera* (Poor Art) was inspired by the concept of Poor Theatre theorised by Polish director Jerzy Grotowski.[350] *Arte Povera* and Poor Theatre shared a similar idea of art as a social tool performing the ethical function of purifying reality from superstructures. For this purpose, the heterogeneous art practices gathered under the name *Arte Povera* employed two strategies that have noteworthy affinities with Poor Theatre. The first strategy is formal and consists of reducing the artistic sign to the essential by using materials traditionally considered 'poor'. As in a guerrilla, Celant aimed to defeat the enemy by camouflaging. In other words, *Arte Povera* embraced 'poverty' on a formal level to promote a 'richness' of contents and

[348] My adaptation from Italian: 'Se il continente americano ha seguito la linea retta e si è infatuato del cubo […], in Europa esiste l'attrazione per i vettori impazziti che prendono direzioni non programmate e tracciano percorsi disordinati, tali da sconvolgere le attese e i presupposti di un confine.' G. Celant (ed.), 2012, p. 27.
[349] My adaptation from Italian: 'Non interessava la linearità, ma il conflitto come molla della storia. […] la critica di Stella e di Judd risultò un ulteriore incentivo a distinguere il nostro fare per trovargli un territorio linguistico autonomo e indipendente.' Idem, p. 26.
[350] The concept of Poor Theatre was theorised by Jerzy Grotowski in a collection of essays from 1967-1968 that was published in 1968 with the title *Towards a Poor Theatre.* (Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre,* Holsterbro: Odin Teatrets, 1968). The essays were published in Italy in 1970 (Jerzy Grotowsky, *Per un teatro povero*, Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1970). A few essays about Poor Theatre were published in English, French, and Polish journals in the spring-summer of 1967. See, for example, Jerzy Grotowski, "He wasn't entirely himself", *Flourish*, London, summer 1967 (previously published on *Les Temps Modernes*, Paris, April 1967) and Jerzy Grotowski, "Methodical Exploration", *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, Warsaw, July 1967 trans. Amanda Pasquler and Judy Barba.

oppose the impoverishment of meaning celebrated (according to Celant) by Minimal Art.[351]

The second strategy is theoretical. For Celant (and Grotowski), 'poor' meant 'essential', 'essential' meant 'archetypical', and 'archetypical' meant 'out of the system'. In the context of *Arte Povera*, 'the system' was the impoverished approach to reality exported by American (Minimal) Art.[352]

Based on the work covered in Chapter 2, it can be argued that, although *Arte Povera* and Minimal Art were one against the other, they shared similar ideas of breaking free from the system by seeking for essentiality (respectively, 'poverty' and minimalism). The different temporal and geographic contexts in which Minimal Art and *Arte Povera* were born are central to understanding affinities and differences between the two currents. In the early 1960s, in the US, Minimalists questioned the system of Modernist conventions and the 'private' idea of art and reality implied by them.[353] Minimalists succeeded in their effort to represent an idea of reality as standard and objective. In Italy, between the second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s, *Arte Povera* questioned the reductive approach to reality exported by Minimalism.

In this regard, two concepts are particularly helpful to understand the conflictual interplay between *Arte Povera* and Minimal art. Those are the concept of tautology and the idea of essentiality, which were reworked by the two currents in opposite ways. Minimal Art expressed a disarming yet provocative tautological idea of art as undifferentiated from mere objecthood. On the other hand, *Arte Povera* conceived tautologies as ways to reduce the artistic sign to the essential and, thus, unveil archetypical meanings embedded in the cultural tradition.

As discussed in the following sections, Cavaliere's theatrical installations from the 1970s merged the two perspectives in sophisticated ways, combining various approaches, including Brecht's idea of theatre and Martini's idea of sculpture.

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[351] G. Celant (ed.), 2012, p. 4.
[352] G. Celant, 1967.
[353] M. Fried, 1967, in G. Battcock (ed.), 1968, p. 146. For further discussion, see R. Krauss, 1977, p. 253-266.

Before delving into the analysis of Cavaliere's works, two areas of discussion will be beneficial to introduce the proximity between *Arte Povera* and Cavaliere's practice. The first regards the historical context in which *Arte Povera* (as well as Cavaliere's installations) was born; the second concerns the influence of Grotowski's Poor Theatre, which was explicitly taken into account by Celant and presents specific features that will be valuable to investigate how Cavaliere implemented his idea of theatricality in his installations from the 1970s.

II.II Dialectics between Opposite Elements

Arte Povera flourished in Turin, Rome, and Milan, which were the Italian most industrialised and international cities between the 1960s and the 1970s. Furthermore, Turin, Rome, and Milan were the cities in which the financial and political power were centred. Italian critic Angela Vettese pointed out that, by using the word 'guerrilla', Celant unintentionally cast light on fundamental social contradictions characterising Italy at the time. These contradictions were caused by the coexistence of highly different socio-political realities, including rural societies and the near-colonialist interference of the United States, feeding consumeristic dreams and hopes.[354]

In line with the contradictory context in which *Arte Povera* was born, Celant described it in terms of contrasts (dichotomy) between opposites features, such as natural and industrial, the past and the present, stillness and motion, reality and simulacrum, materiality and immateriality, etc.[355] In Celant's view, the idea of *Arte Povera* as a 'guerrilla' against Minimalist cultural 'colonisation' reflected a dichotomy between Italian thousand-year-old culture and American lack of historical layering. In other words, Celant considered Italian and European layered historical background as an essential starting point for making meaningful contemporary art. For Celant, artists should 'go back and forth' and find a balance at the crossroad between

[354] Angela Vettese "Italy in the Sixties: a Historical Glance", in Mendes Burgi, Luca Cerizza, Ingvild Goetz, and Christiane Meyer-Stoll (eds.), *Arte Povera. The great Awakening,* exhibition catalogue, 9 September 2012 – 3 February 2013, Basel and Berlin: Kunstmuseum and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2012, p. 37.
[355] G. Celant, 2012, pp. 4-5.

different eras, lands, and languages.[356] Thus, Celant based his theorisation of *Arte Povera* on the idea that there must be a dialectic between the present and the past to move towards the future. In Celant's words, 'contemporary art is a never-ending fall into the vortex of ancient art'.[357] From this perspective, the 'richness' of Italian and European art depended on the fact that they resulted from a dialogue with a complex, rich, and layered cultural tradition.[358]

The idea of a dialectic between the past and the present and of an interplay between opposite features were common traits among works by *Arte Povera* artists. For example, *Untitled* (fig. 59), 1967, by Jannis Kounellis consists of a parrot standing on a flagstone, and it implies a dialectic between the natural and industrial worlds. A further example is The *Venus of the Rags* (fig. 60), 1967, by Michelangelo Pistoletto, which addresses the interplay between the past and the present on various levels. The work is a reproduction of the 1805 *Venus with Apple* by Danish Neoclassical sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen standing before a pile of colourful rags. While the Venus remains motionless and unchanged, the soft and light fabric of the rags is subjected to changes due to external forces. In this sense, the statue of the Venus can be seen as a spokesperson for the past and the stillness of History, while the rags represent the present and the motion of dailiness. A similar interplay between the present and the past is suggested by Giulio Paolini's *Elegia* (fig. 61). The work is a plaster cast of the eye of Michelangelo's *David* (the past, the History) with an uncanny mirror pupil that gives the impression of watching the viewer (the present, the dailiness). Lastly, 1969 *Albero di 8 metri [8-Meter Tree]* by Giuseppe Penone (fig. 62) is an emptied timber hiding a sapling at its core**,** which addressed the dualism between the

[356] My adaptation from Italian: 'La cultura Europea comporta il senso dell'enorme complessità della storia, affiancata dalla coscienza di un andare avanti e indietro per trovare una collocazione all'incrocio delle epoche, dei territori e delle lingue', G. Celant (ed.), 2012, p.27.
[357] My adaptation from Italian: 'L'arte contemporanea è una costante ricaduta nel vortice dell'arte antica', idem, p. 28.
[358] My adaptation from Italian: 'Di fatto ogni nuova scoperta consta di elementi frantumati e di rovine storiche, impregnate di memoria e di tradizione e attraversate da crepe', idem, p. 27. The limitations of the perspective of Celant can be better understood if contextualised within its historical and cultural background. In the 1960s, most Italian intellectuals (including Celant) were strongly Western and European-centric. Cavaliere, Celant, and most of the artists and intellectuals quoted in this thesis were aligned with the limited and dominant Western-centric perspective of the time. For a critique of Western-centric limitations in intellectual perspectives from the 20th century, see James Elkins (ed.), *The State of Art Criticism,* New York and London: Routledge, 2008.

concepts of reality and simulacrum, suggesting that reality lies behind the surface of appearances.[359]

Despite their formal heterogeneities, *Arte Povera* works share, thus, an interest in representing formal and theoretical ambiguities apt to stimulate viewers intellectually. In this sense, *Arte Povera* works are often slightly puzzling in ways that echo the discussion on the concept of the uncanny as 'the strange' creeping into 'the familiar'.[360] The works ask viewers to stay alert. In this sense, *Arte Povera* dialectically reassessed the dualistic relationship between the viewer and the work. The term 'dialectic' was used by Celant himself to describe the interplay between the past and the present at the core of *Arte Povera*.[361] In such an interplay, the viewer is called into question as a mediator to critically engage with the work and negotiate a way out from the contradictions staged. In this sense, the work becomes a process.

The processual nature of *Arte Povera* will be better understood by investigating its relationship with Poor Theatre.

II.III The *Via Negativa* Theory

Scholarly investigations of the intersections between *Arte Povera* and Poor Theatre mainly focused on the use of poor materials and the pursuit of aesthetic

[359] Giuseppe Penone's 'Trees' could be seen as the reverse of the arboreal floral works. The thesis does not explore the relationship between the arboreal-floral works and Penone's works based on two reasons. First, the investigation draws from the journals in which there are no significant references to Penone and his creative practice. Second, the works of Penone and Cavaliere revolve around different issues. The work of Penone (as well as of several *Arte Povera* artists, such as Piero Gilardi) often addressed environmental issues and the impact of human actions on nature. On the other hand, this analysis argues that the arboreal-floral works addressed issues regarding the medium of sculpture and the ontology of artistic representations, in the wake of Dadaism and neo-avant-gardes.

[360] See Chapter 2, pp. 52-53.

[361] 'L'arte povera: si porta dietro il quotidiano tanto quanto la storia. Poiché. Ha adottato la pratica di relazionarsi al contesto cercando di interiorizzarlo dialetticamente.' G. Celant (ed.), 2012, p. 20. The term 'dialectic' is rooted in ancient Greek philosophy and identifies a way to deal with contradictions, not in terms of still dualism but, conversely, in terms of dynamic interplays between opposites. 'People refer to the dialectic or dialectics of a situation when they are referring to the way in which two very different forces or factors work together and the way in which their differences are resolved.', s.v. "dialectic", Collins Dictionary, 13th edition, 2018.

essentiality.[362] However, in Poor Theatre, the ideas of 'poverty' and 'essentiality' are not only related to the kind of materials employed but also to the idea at the basis this choice. '*Via Negativa'* is the expression that Grotowski used to outline the essence of Poor Theatre; 'we do not work via the proliferation or accumulation of signs […]. Instead, we work by subtraction to erase those elements […] that obscure pure impulses', he stated. [363] From the perspective of this analysis, the *Via Negativa theory* is particularly beneficial to examine the concept of essentiality at the basis of *Arte Povera*. Furthermore, it will offer a valuable angle to investigate the idea of theatricality at the core of Cavaliere's installations.

According to the *Via Negativa* theory, the artistic sign is essentially twofold: gesture vs voice, voice vs word, word vs thought, will vs action, etc., and the ultimate dichotomy entailed by the artistic sign is the one between actors and the public. In Poor Theatre performances, the essentiality (poverty) of the scene aims to erase the distinction between actors and viewers. From this perspective, customs, scenographies, and props are avoided as they are considered superfluous superstructures, creating a duality between the scene and the public and hiding the essential archetypical unity between them.

According to the *Via Negativa* theory, theatrical performances are, thus, collective events involving actors and viewers on the same level – 'rituals', in Grotowski's words.[364] The purpose of these rituals is to unveil the original unity between actors and viewers, a unity that ultimately responds to the unity between the self and the other. In this sense, viewers no longer exist as such, but they are part of a collective event in which every singularity finds its place.[365]

On the other hand, *Arte Povera* artists engaged with an idea of reality as an undivided essence by thematising dualities, such as the ones between the past and the present, natural and artificial, real and false, the self and the others, etc. According to Celant, art should represent dualities in order to overcome them and

[362] V.v. A.a., *Anno Grotowski. Arte Povera – Teatro Povero: la rivoluzione etica degli anni '60*, unpublished transcript of the conceference held at Villa Médicis Académie de France à Rome, 17 November 2009.
[363] Eugenio Barba (ed.), *Jerzy Grotowksi*. *Towards a Poor Theatre,* London: Routledge, 2002, p. 18.
[364] Ibidem.
[365] Ibidem.

unveil that those dualisms are just superfluous superstructures. From this perspective, the artist was an 'alchemist', merging opposite elements to overcome the contradictions lying on the surface of reality and restore 'the marvellous' essential unity of the world.[366]

At the core of this perspective is the idea of the artwork as a process instead of an object.[367] Thus, *Arte Povera* favored the event over the form and focused on the performative essence of art, which unfolds through time and space. An example is *Direzione*, 1966-1967 (fig. 63) by Giovanni Anselmo, which is a block of marble with a compass on top, pointing to the North according to Earth's polarities. In this sense, the work can be seen as a living organ adapting itself to any site – the opposite of site-specific.

Similar perspectives were expressed by several Italian and international artists included in the catalogue *Arte Povera*, 1969. An example is German-born conceptual artist Hans Haacke, who, in line with Celant's view, stated that a sculpture that physically reacts to its environment and affects its surroundings is no longer to be regarded as an object but as 'a system" of interdependent processes' involving viewers and the surrounding space.[368]

II.IV Germano Celant and Michael Fried: the Concept of Theatricality and the Work as a Process

Considering the ground covered, two opposite ideas of theatricality took centre stage in late-1960s art discourses. Fried outlined one idea in his essay *Art and Objecthood* (see Chapter 2), and Grotowski's concept of Poor Theatre inspired the other.

Fried used the word 'theatricality' as a synonym for ambiguity, uncanniness, and unfairness. Essentially, Fried considered theatricality a sort of cognitive dissonance caused by Minimalist works that simultaneously present themselves as artworks and

[366] Germano Celant (ed.), *Arte Povera,* New York: Praeger Publishers, 1969, p. 6.
[367] G. Celant (ed.), 2012, p. 4.
[368] G. Celant (ed.), 1969, p. 179.

literal objects, while they actually are indexical signs pointing to external factors, including the time-space-bound presence of viewers. On the other hand, the heterogeneous art practices encompassed by Celant's definition of *Arte Povera* engaged with an idea of theatricality according to which works of art resulted from dialectic processes involving viewers and aiming to overcome the dualism between the subject-artwork and object-work.

Considering the ground covered, the perspectives of both Fried and Celant were based on an idea of art as 'pure' and 'true'. In this context, their concepts of theatricality played opposite roles. Fried aimed for purity in the sense of absolute transparency of the moment in which the artwork is received. In order to fulfil the principle of purity, the work should be structured in ways that fully manifest themselves in 'a single infinitely brief instant'. In Fried's view, this idea of purity was the essential requirement for 'true art'. Conversely, theatrical works were the ones that involve viewers, creating situations unfolding through space and time (a process).[369]

On the other hand, Celant embraced Grotowski's idea of theatricality as a tool to purify human perceptions of reality from superfluous and deceiving superstructures – such as the idea of duality. In Grotowski's theories, the process of purification works by subtraction (*Via Negativa*) and essentially unfolds through space and time, involving viewers and actors on the same level. Celant applied this perspective to *Arte Povera* and used the concept of tautology to illustrate the ultimate unity between the work and the viewer. For Celant, *Arte Povera* works are 'tautological' as they erase differences between the signifier (the viewer) and signified (the work). In Celant's view, being 'tautological' is the final goal of 'true art', and tautological artworks would show that differences and dualities are just superstructures to be overcome by the idea of an original unity that does not point to anything but itself.[370]

[369] M. Fried, 1967, in G. Battcock (ed.), 1968, p. 146.
[370] The titles of the following works provide concrete examples of the discussed idea of tautology. *Pavimento, tautologia [Floor, tautology], 1967* by Luciano Fabro, *Catasta [Stack], 1966* by Alighiero Boetti, *Spazio* [Space], 1967 by Giulio Paolini, *Metro cubo di terra* [Cubic Meter of Ground], 1967 by Pino Pascali, and *Perimetro d'aria*, [Perimeter of Air], 1967 by Emilio Prini.

In other words, for Celant, the work and the viewer are parts of the same team, and the art experience involves them as equals.

Considering this, it does not surprise that the target of both Fried and Celant was Minimal Art, which engages with viewers through a trick, essentially compromising the unity (Fried) and cooperation (Celant) between the work and the viewer – 'what you see is what you see' (tautology), only that it is not.[371]

Based on the ground covered, the second section of the chapter will explore how Cavaliere's theatrical installations from the 1970s engaged with the issues inherent to the different concepts of theatricality discussed and reworked the ideas of tautology and trueness.

Section 2 – *I Processi* and *Surroundings I-VII*: from Estrangement to Participation

Cavaliere's theatrical installations from the 1970s are *I Processi: dalle storie Inglesi di William Shakespeare*, 1972 and the series *Surroundings I-VII*, 1972-1984.[372]

As introduced in the first section of the chapter, the journals evidenced that Cavaliere's creative process was not always linear, and his written reflections sometimes anticipated the actual making of his works. For example, Cavaliere wrote the first note about *I Processi* and *Surroundings* in a journal from June 1964, when he showcased his arboreal-floral works at the Venice Biennale. The note states, 'an upside-down tree with the roots up in the air. A story to describe via Fioriscuri in a dynamic way'.[373] From the analysis of the works in the following pages, it will emerge that the 'upside-down tree' is a key element of *I Processi*, and 'Via Fioriscuri' is a key element of *Surroundings II*. It thus follows that Cavaliere started gathering his ideas

[371] L. Lippard, 1966.
[372] Although Cavaliere completed *Surroundings VII* in 1984, the analysis examines the series as part of Cavaliere's production from the 1970s. *Surroundings I-VII* will be considered a culmination of specific discourses that Cavaliere started in the previous six *Surroundings*, all made in the 1970s.
[373] My adaptation from Italian: 'Albero capovolto con radici al vento. Un racconto […] che descrive – possibilmente in maniera non statica- via Fioriscuri', Cavaliere's journals, March 1964. Via Fioriscuri is one of the most characteristic streets of the Brera neighbourhood in Milan.

for *I Processi* and *Surroundings* almost eight years before making them and was simultaneously thinking about the two works, as if they were related to each other.

In January 1964, Cavaliere claimed that he aimed to make works that 'someone could inhabit'.[374] As has emerged from the previous chapters, in 1964, Cavaliere was still far away from accomplishing his goal, which he will accomplish almost a decade later with *I Processi* and *Surroundings*. Therefore, from the perspective of this analysis, the nonlinearity between Cavaliere's writings and the actual making of his works, instead of being a limitation, offers valuable clues to investigate the continuity between *I Processi* and *Surroundings*, as well as the continuity between the two installations and the works from the 1960s.

III *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare*

Cavaliere made *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeare's English Stories] (fig. 25) for the XXXVI Venice Biennale in 1972. *I Processi* is the first work by Cavaliere that can be properly considered an installation.

The work consists of a large-scale wooden stage: ten meters per ten meters long and five meters high. The ground of the installation is made of mirrors that expand the space of the work by reflecting multiple and otherwise hidden sides. The work comprises about 100 items made of bronze, steel, reinforced polyester, polyurethane foam, paper, fabric, wood, and mirrors. In line with the *Arte Povera* aesthetics, Cavaliere combined traditional materials (such as bronze) with more experimental and 'poor' ones (such as wood, fabric, resin, and plastic). The work is also characterised by the presence of several *objets trouvée,* such as shoes, clothes, and a suitcase.[375]

[374] My translation from Italian: 'Pensavo alla possibilità di creare, costruire qualcosa che dia la possibilità di viverci dentro', Cavaliere's journal, January 1964.
[375] The picture shows the work installed at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte di Roma. The photographs are published in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, pp. 130-135.

The overall appearance of *I Processi* is quite disturbing – the work almost recalls an executioner's block. The lighting is also dramatic; a few sides of the work are lit, and others are hidden in the dark. Viewers are implicitly asked to 'discover' the hidden sides of the work by walking through it. As in the case of several works by *Arte Povera* artists, *I Processi* is the opposite of site-specific as it is meant to be dissembled and re-assembled by modifying its layout according to different exhibition sites.

The central wooden structure recalls an executioner block, a stage, and an Italian courtroom. However, despite the overall rich appearance of the work, the main structure is reduced to the bare bone – it resembles a scaffold, a skeleton, a sort of essential residue of what it once was.

The title of the work also suggests the idea of the courtroom. In Italian, '*processi*' is the plural form of the word *processo* (litt., process), which means both trial and process.[376] The intricate appearance of the installation responds to the idea of the work as a process; in order to see the whole work, viewers need to walk through it and catch as many angles as they can. The analysis will discuss how the ideas of the work as a process and a trial can be considered two sides of a coin. In other words, it will be contended that *I Processi* stages a trial to the validity of the idea of the artwork as a process in ways that present noteworthy affinities with *Arte Povera*. An in-depth description of the work will clarify this point.

Overall, *I Processi* appears as a theatrical setting. On the left side of the wooden structure is a large-scale wooden door (five-meter high) framed by a red drapery (fig 25.2). The door has an inscription with the title of the work and a baroque decoration on top. The door marks the 'entrance' of the scene and suggests viewers that they are entering a fictional space. On the 'scene', are four characters; these are a wooden mannequin sitting on a padded velvet chair at the centre of the main structure (fig. 25.1); a man with a split head standing inside a cage behind the mannequin (fig 25.3); a woman covered with a black scarf standing down the wooden structure and watching the scene from behind a grating (fig 25.4); and an

[376] A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 132.

arboreal-floral work standing upside-down inside a cage behind the sitting mannequin (fig 25.5).

In some set-ups, the mannequin is dressed as a judge (fig. 25.6), while, in other set-ups, it is 'naked', and the court dress is on the floor among other clothes or hangs on the coat rack.[377] The mannequin does not have a 'face', its head is just a plain wooden ovoidal shape – it is the only figure in the scene that is entirely inexpressive. The mannequin turns its back to the split-head man and the upside-down tree as a sign of blunt indifference.

The element of the cage is iterated three times: there is the cage containing the split-head man, the cage containing the upside-down tree, and the grating separating the woman from the scene, which can be seen as a variation of the theme. Each character is separated from the others by metallic bars, and 'the spectator' (the woman) is separated from the 'scene' by the metallic grating. As in *Le avventure di Gustavo B.*, the characters of the work seem to take the role of 'actors' (the mannequin-judge, the split-had man, and the upside-down tree) and 'viewers' (the woman). From this perspective, the work can be seen as a theatrical performance with actors and viewers, and 'real' viewers come into play as 'meta-viewers'.

A hypothetical meta-meaning of the work is also implied by the presence of mirrors on the floor and on a wall of the installation (fig.25.7). Both the mirror floor and the mirror wall illusionary multiplicate the space and project the images of viewers inside the work, as to suggest a meta-level of spectatorship.[378] However, the surface of the mirror-wall is not smooth, and, thus, reflections are twisted, implying that the involvement of viewers is more complicated than it might at first seem.

In the scene are several props (or *objets trouvées*) – a chair, military and church clothes lying on the floor, a coat rack, boots, stairs, and a suitcase. Leaning on the

[377] For example, in the exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1972, the mannequin-judge was naked, and the court robe hung on the coat rack. On the other hand, in the permanent installation at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna di Roma, the mannequin-judge is wearing the court robe. For photographic documentation, see G. Ballo (ed.), 1992, pp. 54-63, and A. Cavaliere, 1990, pp. 48-55.

[378] According to Schwarz, the mirror-floor can be seen as a reference to the myth of Narcissus, which is often interpreted as an allegory of art. From this perspective, *I Processi* can be seen as a 'trial against art'. For further discussion, see A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 133.

mirror-wall, is a stair that gives the impression of leading somewhere while, in fact, it is just an illusion given by the twisted reflection of the mirror. Considering this, *I Processi* stages sharp contrasts – or dichotomies – between opposite ideas that fetch back to the expressive modalities of *Arte Povera*. The shoes, the stairs, and the suitcase are all items related to the idea of 'going somewhere'. However, the whole installation conveys a sense of ineluctable stillness. The clothes and the shoes are unworn and lying on the floor, and all the characters in the scene stand in static positions – the mannequin-judge is sitting on a chair, the split-head man and the upside-down tree are imprisoned in a cage, and the woman is standing behind a grating. The upside-down tree also expresses an idea of stillness as the tree cannot grow because its roots are waving in the air instead of rooting in the ground. The split-head man evokes a sense of inescapable condemnation; he is stuck in his excruciating pain and will probably die soon.

Therefore, the work represents a fundamental contrast between the concepts of stillness and motion that can be seen as a reworking of the idea of the work as a dialectic process discussed in the first section. The idea of motion is suggested by the props (the shoes, stairs, and suitcase) and the title – process. However, the scene is dramatically still, and the contrast between the ideas of inescapability and escape results in an estranging and discomforting atmosphere.

The tortuosity of the scene also suggests the possibility of an escape as it gives the idea of a path to follow, and the stair leaning on the mirror-wall reiterates the contrast between the ideas of escape and inescapability. The jagged mirror gives the impression that there is a 'somewhere else' – an 'out of there' – that is, in fact, just a distorted reflection bouncing inside the work.

Nothing is moving in the scene except for the recorded voice of Italian poet Roberto Sanesi and music by Italian composer Bruno Canino. The sound is the only element 'flowing' in the scene. However, the text read by Sanesi is a sort of 'patchwork' written by Cavaliere by assembling fragments from Shakespeare's tragedies. Thus, the perception of storytelling is also an illusion; Sanesi's voice gives the illusion of telling the development of a story, while there is no narrative development in the

words that he reads – they are just fragments read in a loop. Shakespeare's stories are dissected and re-composed into an unrecognizable patchwork, as also visually represented by the written pages scattered at the foot of the judge-mannequin (fig. 25.1).[379] The possibility of storytelling is thus shattered in a million pieces.

III.I Symbols and Tautologies

Scholarly investigations of *I Processi* stressed the symbolic meaning of the work, seeing the latter as a denunciation of Italian poisoned dynamics of power.[380] According to this interpretation, Cavaliere wanted to represent Italy after the hopes placed in the 1968 riots were disappointed. From this perspective, the mannequin at the centre of the scene would symbolise centralised power; the church and military clothes would symbolise the leading forces with which Italian governments wielded their power; the upside-down tree would symbolise the overturning of justice in Italian politics; and the suitcase would symbolise the desire to leave 'a society that disqualified critical thinking'.[381]

Cavaliere's statements, however, suggest that the work might entail a literal side that critical interpretations have overlooked. In the press release for the Biennale, Cavaliere stated that he wanted to 'dissect' Shakespeare's texts and 'denaturalise' them.[382] Furthermore, Cavaliere claimed that, in *I Processi*, he 'played hibernating things and fossilizing them'.[383] These statements suggest a continuity between *I Processi* and the arboreal-floral works. This continuity is also indicated by the presence of the upside-down tree (which is precisely an arboreal-floral work). If the hypothesis of continuity is correct, *I Processi* could be seen as a further exploration

[379] The tragedies selected by Cavaliere are *Richard III*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*. Cavaliere used fragments from Shakespeare's texts translated into Italian. The fragments were cut and re-assembled by Cavaliere into a new text, which was published in Alik Cavaliere, *Lo studio*, Milan: Puntoelinea, 1990, pp. 36-41, 48.
[380] R. Bossaglia, 1999, p. 15; A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 133.
[381] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] una società che impedisce di pensare', R. Bossaglia, 1999, p. 39. Francesca Porreca outlined a similar symbolic interpretation of *I Processi*, in Francesca Porreca, "La scultura come spazio aperto in cui tutto può succedere", in E. Pontiggia, 2018, p. 45.
[382] My adaptation from Italian: 'A me interessa poter immergere la lama nel testo e nel dramma, snaturarlo, o meglio, naturalizzarlo.' Cavaliere's statement, published in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 130.
[383] My translation from Italian: 'Ho giocato a ibernare le cose, a fossilizzarle […]' in Adriana Cavaliere, *Doc. 3-D*, unpublished transcripts of Cavaliere's conferences and letters (1968 – 1978), p. 7.

of the uncanny and theatrical implications of literalism in the context of a proper installation. In other words, Cavaliere's statements suggest that his focus was not on the symbolic meaning of the work but on the work as an investigation of the artistic sign. In line with this interpretation, in the journals, Cavaliere described *I Processi* by stressing the 'false' and 'artificial' nature of the objects in the scene.[384]

The perspective suggested above offers a new angle to investigate *I Processi*. By taking a closer look, the symbolism of the work entails a significant degree of ambiguity. The figures in the scene simultaneously express power and powerlessness. In this regard, the choice of not always dressing the judge-mannequin in court clothes sparks questions about the kind of power that Cavaliere aimed to represent. Powerless lying on the floor, the clothes address a few dilemmas – what is power? Does it depend on the symbolic social meaning of someone's clothes? Do clothes make the man? Who is the judge when they are not wearing court clothes?

In this sense, *I Processi* could simultaneously represent the idea of power and its negation. In line with such ambivalence, the wooden structure recalls both a courtroom and a stage, and the latter interpretation suggests that the human figures are just characters playing their roles. From this perspective, the court dress would be a theatrical costume characterising a fictional role.

In line with such an enigmatic atmosphere, the meaning of the 'symbolic' characters in the scene remains opaque. Why does the man have a head split in half? Why is the tree put upside down? Might the latter be a reference to Luciano Fabro's *L'Italia*, 1968 (fig. 64), evoking Benito Mussolini's corpse hanging upside down in Piazzale Loreto in Milan?[385] This interpretation would definitively reinforce the dramatic tones and the strong political symbolism entailed by the work. However, the suggested symbolism of the work entails a substantial degree of opacity that makes it

[384] My adaptation from Italian: ' […] falsità ed artificiosità / il proscenio con la natura posticcia il piano con oggetti e natura perduti: le radici sopra e i fiori capovolti sotto / […] la falsa sedia / il falso tavolo', Cavaliere's journals, March 1972.

[385] This hypothesis is suggested by a statement that Cavaliere wrote in a journal from 1973: 'Homage to Fabro: W l'Italia', Cavaliere's journal, June 1973. However, the note is from 1973, while *I Processi* is from 1972. Thus, although fascinating, this hypothesis is not sufficiently supported by evidence to be further explored. Furthermore, the statement is the only reference that Cavaliere made to Fabro in the journals.

impossible to establish whether the message of the work is severe or ironic. Are the items in the scene symbolic or tautological? Might the clothes be just clothes instead of symbols?

The discrepancy between the title of the work – process – and the sense of stillness and inescapability that permeates it instils further doubts about its meaning. The contradictory elements in the scene can be seen as symbolically expressing a dramatic political situation, as much as, by contrast, ironically showing the nonsense of the drama. After all, the judge is just a mannequin, the entire scene is just a stage, the viewer can 'escape' anytime by simply exiting the installation, and the whole 'situation' is just a fictional scene (as indicated by the majestic door). Therefore, a literal-tautological interpretation of the work would radically compromise the drama, and Cavaliere's statements suggest that he left this option open.

The friction between the ambiguous situation staged by the work and the aesthetic sharpness of the scene mirrors Cavaliere's thoughts about Shakespeare. Based on this interpretation, the 'total' involvement of viewers is sparked by a contrast between the suggestion that the work represents a dramatic situation and the cold – almost ironic – exactitude of the (narrative) structure. Such a contrast causes a sort of intellectual and emotional *impasse* in viewers who cannot understand what is going on in the work.

The information provided by the journals reinforce the interpretative ambiguity. On the one hand, as introduced in the first part of the chapter, Cavaliere stated that he reworked Shakespeare's tragedies to highlight that there were majestic essential human matters beyond 'small political parties'.[386] On the other hand, Cavaliere described *I Processi* as 'false'; thus, based on the ground covered in Chapter 2, the outcome of his intention to 'play hibernating things' can be interpreted as a reference to his research on the nature of the artistic sign *per se*.[387] Therefore, there is no way out from the paradox, and the cryptic symbolism characterising *I Processi* can be seen as a political denunciation, as much as an artistic denunciation (a 'trial')

[386] My adaptation from Italian, previously quoted at p. 95 of the present study.
[387] My adaptation from Italian, previously quoted at p. 116 of the present study.

pointing to all the paradoxes and challenges raised by the intrusion of literalism in the visual arts and the idea of the work as a process.

The combination of these contrasting features makes *I Processi* 'estranging' in a sense that aligns with Brecht's idea of theatre as a discomforting experience apt to awaken the critical skills of viewers. The representation of contrasts also fetches back to the discussion of *Arte Povera*. However, *I Processi* suggests a sense of ineluctability and anguish that does not sit well with the spirit of *Arte Povera*. In this sense, *I Processi* and the analysed *Arte Povera* works reworked the concept of duality in two different ways: as a dialectic (*Arte Povera*) and an impasse (*I Processi*).

The following section will discuss how the series *Surroundings I-VII* developed the contrasts by explicitly involving viewers as active participants.

IV *Surroundings I-VII*

Surroundings is a series of works that marked a thematic shift in the practice of Cavaliere – from the majestic crypto-symbolic atmosphere characterising *I Processi* to dailiness and ordinary stories.

'Surroundings' is an English word that means 'environment' or 'the things, conditions, and influences that surround a given place or person'.[388] In Italian, 'surroundings' is translated with the words 'dintorni' and 'ambiente' (litt., environment).[389]

Between 1972 and 1984, Cavaliere made seven *Surroundings* – one scale model (1972), four life-size environments (1973, 1975, 1976, and 1983-1984), and two 'pocket-sized environments' (1975-1976 and 1976). Despite the different sizes of the works, all the *Surroundings* consist of reconstructions of ordinary life environments

[388] S.v. "surrounding", Vv. Aa. Collins Dictionary, 13th edition, 2018. Cavaliere's choice of the English word 'surroundings' as the title of the series further supports the idea that his practice engaged with the American art context.

[389] The journals evidence that Cavaliere's contacts with the Anglophone world until the 1980s were mainly limited to New York.

that Cavaliere turned into proper theatrical settings with real actors (*Surroundings III* and *V*) and spontaneous performances taking place and involving viewers (*Surroundings VII*).

Cavaliere explained his core ideas for *Surroundings* as follows:

> THE TOPIC: from daily life to the museum, from universality to dailiness.
> THE THESIS: the path of art is linear, and the choices are simple. Then the route stops, and the choices get complicated: the past affects the present and the future through memories. The unexpected kicks in as a surrounding factor. The work is, thus, shattered into various formal elements.
> THE TITLE: I chose to call it *Surroundings* […], and I want it to have a didactic feature (BRECHT). I consider dailiness 'true' and art 'false', and vice versa. I follow three different paths through the work.
> 1- True vs false.
> 2- Labyrinth between true and false.
> 3- Overturning (and mirror): the false true.
> THE EXAMPLE: I pick an art gallery and split the space between a neutral daily area and an exhibition space. The itinerary between the one and the other is not established. The room should have the most ordinary features.[390]

This sort of manifesto illustrates the key themes addressed by *Surroundings I-VII* and can be used as a map to explore the series. In the 'THESIS', Cavaliere stated his purpose of making an 'unpredictable' and complex work. Then, in the 'TITLE', Cavaliere provided further details about his idea.

First, Cavaliere outlines the idea of a contrast between the realms of art and daily life. Second, Cavaliere expands the contrast to the concepts of 'true' and 'false'. Third, Cavaliere complexifies the discourse by merging the two opposite ideas into a single concept ('the true false'). Lastly, Cavaliere states the intention of turning the

[390] My adaptation from Italian: 'IL TEMA dal quotidiano al museo, dall' […] universale al quotidiano
LA TESI il percorso dell'arte è lineare, le scelte semplici. Il percorso si interrompe le scelte si complicano: interviene sul presente il passato […] condiziona il futuro – soprattutto attraverso la memoria; interviene l'inatteso, il condizionamento circostante. L'opera, la sua realizzazione, si frantuma in una molteplicità di elementi formali […].
IL TITOLO l'operazione viene da me battezzata con il nome di SURROUNDINGS […]: impostando il lavoro con una caratteristica didattico/didascalica (BRECHT), considero il quotidiano come "vero" e l'artistico come "falso", o vice versa, e seguo tre itinerari all'interno dell'opera
1- Contrapposizione tra vero e falso
2- Labirinto tra vero e falso
3- Ribaltamento (e lo specchio): il 'falso vero'
L'ESEMPIO scelgo una galleria d'arte […]; una parte dello spazio viene allestita con una stanza molto comune e una parte […] viene destinata a delle proposte espositive, […] la *stanza* viene presentata il più possibile con un aspetto consueto, noto.', A. Cavaliere, 1990, pp. 70-72.

dichotomy in question (true-false) into a 'labyrinth'. Based on this, the analysis of *Surroundings I-VII* will investigate the concepts at issue, exploring how Cavaliere gradually complexified the discourse in each work of the series.

Before delving into the analysis of the works, it will be beneficial to address a proximity between the central ideas of *Surroundings* and the art form of the happening as Allan Kaprow conceived it in the late 1950s. Although the journals do not evidence a particular interest of Cavaliere in happenings, Cavaliere's 'manifesto' has significant similarities with Kaprow's description of his show at Hansa Gallery, New York – as if *Surroundings I-VII* could be a late reworking of Kaprow's perspective.

The description is the following:

> 'In the present exhibition, we do not come to look at things. We simply enter, are surrounded, and become part of what surrounds us, passively or actively according to our talents for 'engagement', in much the same way that we have moved out of the totality of the street or our home where we also played a part. We ourselves are shapes (though we are not often conscious of this fact). We have differently colored clothing; can move, feel, speak, and observe others variously; and will constantly change the 'meaning' of the work by so doing. There is, therefore, a never-ending play of changing conditions between the relatively fixed or 'scored' parts of my work and the 'unexpected' and undetermined parts. In fact, we may move in and about the work at any pace or in any direction we wish. What has been worked out is a form that is as open and fluid as the shapes of our everyday experience but does not simply imitate them. I believe that this form places a much greater responsibility on visitors than they have had before. The "success" of a work depends on them as well as on the artist. […] That work 'succeeds' on some days and fails on other days. It may seem to disregard the enduring and stable and to place an emphasis upon the fragile and impermanent.'[391]

Considering the above, the declarations of intents by Kaprow and Cavaliere revolved around the idea of the work as a fluid process in which there is no right (real) and wrong (false) but a multiplicity of perspectives. Furthermore, the analysis of *Surroundings I-VII* will demonstrate that, like Kaprow, Cavaliere considered the surroundings and the 'ordinary' physical presence of viewers as essential parts of the work.

[391] Allan Kaprow, *An Exhibition: The Hansa Gallery,* exhibition catalogue, 15 November – 13 December 1958 , New York: The Gallery, 1958.

In this regard, however, crucial differences between the perspectives of Kaprow and Cavaliere must be kept in mind. While Kaprow stressed the idea that the viewers' experience of the work was an ordinary-daily experience ('We simply enter, are surrounded, and become part of what surrounds us […] in much the same way that we have moved out of the totality of the street or our home'), fourteen years later, Cavaliere explored the complexities inherent to the concept of ordinariness-dailiness and showcased a multifaceted idea of the artwork as a daily experience, in which the idea of 'ordinary' is presented as the opposite of self-evident and natural.

Furthermore, while Kaprow focused on the new-born art form of the happening, Cavaliere, for his admission, always kept the medium of sculpture at the core of his practice.[392] In this sense, the art form of the happening plays a delicate role in Cavaliere's practice as, even when his works seem to be more similar to happenings than sculptures, the journals suggest that his focus on the performative side of the work was functional to his investigation of the boundaries of the medium of sculpture.

From the perspective of this analysis, Cavaliere blurred the boundaries between happening and sculpture to answer Martini's provocation and make sculpture step into the fourth dimension. Considering the ground covered, Martini's ideas anticipated, to an extent, the late 1950s-1960s international art debates. Like Martini, Kaprow drew a parallel between the conventions of traditional art and Latin and considered art galleries and museums as 'places of worship' limited to the conservation of antiquities.[393] For his part, Martini described three-dimensional celebratory sculptures as 'gravestones written il Latin' and pointed out that sculpture was like a dead language because it was incapable of escaping from the sacred places of worship and accessing dailiness.[394] Based on this, the analysis of *Surroundings I-VII* will focus on how Cavaliere reworked these issues and especially the idea of the work of art as a daily and impermanent experience involving the viewer and the surroundings.

[392] In the journals, Cavaliere always referred to himself as a 'sculptor' (*scultore*) and to his works as 'sculptures' (*sculture*), even in the 1970s-1980s, when his works, from a visual perspective, were more similar to installations than sculptures.
[393] Allan Kaprow (1958), "Notes on The Creation of a Total Art", in J. Kelley (ed.), 1993, p. 10.
[394] A. Martini, 1945, in M. De Micheli (ed.), 1982, p. 115.

IV.I *Surroundings I-II:* Art vs Daily Life, True vs False

Surroundings I (fig 27) is a miniature of an urban scene. The facades of the buildings are made with cardboard concavely bent to create spatial depth. The base of the model is a mirror that illusorily expands the space of the scene and reflects the image of the viewer inside the work. The setting is delimited by a few folded paper sheets that resemble the wings of a stage.[395] On the mirroring base, in front of the concave facades, are two *objets trouvées* – a real glass and a paintbrush. The two objects are the same size as the building facades surrounding them. Schwarz highlighted how the two items symbolise the realms of art (the paintbrush) and ordinary life (the glass). However, as always, Cavaliere left the meaning of his work ambiguous as the two objects might also be tautological items.[396] Considering the work covered, the literal representation of the realms of dailiness (the glass) and art (the paintbrush) could even be considered a development of the literalist paradigm and its challenge to the distinction between art and objecthood that was discussed regarding the arboreal-floral works.[397]

The representation of dailiness took centre stage in *Surroundings II*, which was the life-size reworking of *Surroundings I* that Cavaliere made for the XII Antwerp Biennial in 1973 (fig. 28).[398] The work was a natural-size reproduction of two walkable streets inspired by the Brera neighbourhood (one was probably 'Via Fioriscuri', which Cavaliere mentioned in the journal from 1964). The streets led to two indoor environments: an art gallery (fig. 28.1) and a private home (fig. 28.2).

The art gallery was called 'La mela' (an Italian word that means 'the apple') and showcased a few small arboreal-floral works through a window (fig. 28.3). While viewers could walk through the two streets and enter the studio flat, they couldn't enter the gallery; the arboreal-floral works were, thus, only visible through the window. In the journals, Cavaliere described the arboreal-floral works in the gallery as 'museificated', which is a word that Cavaliere often used as a synonym for

[395] The folded paper sheets are instructions sheets explaining how to assemble e dismantle the scale model.
[396] Cavaliere showcased the scale model along with its natural-size reproduction at the II Antwerp Biennial in 1973. Information and photographs in A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 134-137.
[397] See Chapter 2, pp. 54-70.
[398] After the Biennale, the work was dismantled and only photographs have come down to us.

'hibernated'.[399] The apartment was furnished with real furniture (a kitchen table, a fridge, a bed, and wallpaper). In the bedroom was a decorative small arboreal-floral work. For those who did not know Cavaliere's previous works, the arboreal-floral work seemed just an indoor plant. Regarding all these items, Cavaliere stated that they were '*real*' and 'everything was 'obvious'. In other words, the objects in the scene were 'anonymous' objects and not creative reworkings of objects.[400] The apartment was empty except for the furniture; however, the domestic space was 'animated' by recordings of noises made by people getting out of bed and having breakfast by using kitchen tools (such as glasses, cutlery, and plates).[401]

From the perspective of this analysis, the contrast between the inaccessible art gallery and the accessible apartment remarks the ambivalence between art and dailiness introduced by *Surroundings I*. Furthermore, the contrast between 'museificated/hibernated/inaccessible art and accessible/animated dailiness fetches back to the perspectives of Kaprow and Martini, according to which conventional places of worship were the 'grave' of art, and artworks should manage to access the realm of dailiness in order to gain a new life. However, the interplay between life (the apartment/dailiness) and death (the gallery/conventions/place of worship) represented by the work is not as symmetrical as it might at first seem.

According to this interpretation, in *Surroundings II*, Cavaliere developed the contrast (or the interplay) between the realms of art and dailiness by calling into question the ambivalence between the concepts of 'real' and 'false'. Is daily life (represented by the studio flat with real furnishing) more real than art (represented by the art gallery with real Cavaliere's arboreal-floral works)? Is an arboreal-floral work showcased inside an art gallery more 'real' art than a similar work put in a private home in which

[399] 'I played hybernating things, fossilising – museificating – them.' (My translation from Italian: 'Ho giocato a ibernare le cose, a fossilizzarle, museificarle') in A. Cavaliere, *Doc. 3-D,* p. 7.
[400] My adaptation from Italian: 'Tutto è "vero". Tutto sarà ovvio. Se vi sarà qualche oggetto "rifatto" sarà rielaborato per accentuarne le caratteristiche e la storia, ma in una dimensione spersonalizzata, generica, ancora anonima: in ogni caso non come rielaborazione artistica', A. Cavaliere, 1990, p.58.
[401] The description of the work is provided by Cavaliere himself, in idem, pp. 58-59.

it merges with the domestic environment and could even be mistaken for a real plant?[402]

The ceiling of the flat was made of transparent plastic painted with white clouds. On the wall was an open window from which viewers could see a real park surrounding the installation (fig. 28.4). Hanging between two trees in the park, there was a white bed sheet on which a silent film of a family having breakfast was screened. The screening was the 'visual version' of the situation of which viewers could hear the recorded noises inside the studio flat.[403] Viewers were, thus, called into question as proper active participants as they could decide whether to stop the screening and listen to the recording, stop the recording and watch the screening, or keep both the screening and recording on and have a complete however disjointed experience of the scene of the family having breakfast.

The journals provide valuable elements to interpret Cavaliere's artistic choices. Cavaliere claimed that he wanted to make a 'blatantly theatrical' installation and described it as a '*teatrino*' in which 'everything was obvious'.[404] In Cavaliere's intentions, viewers were 'called into play as actors themselves' whose ordinary lives (the ordinary lives of people visiting an exhibition and experiencing it – the noises that they made, their movements, and their voices) would become part of the work. For this reason, the setting of *Surroundings II* was not 'inhabited' by human sculptures or mannequins as, for example, is in *I Processi*. Instead, viewers were the only visible three-dimensional human characters performing inside the work; they overlapped and interacted with the two-dimensional narrative level of the screening and the ethereal-invisible narrative level of the recording.

[402] As discussed in the previous chapters, the contrast between the ideas of 'real' and 'false' is a recurring theme in Cavaliere's practice. The name of the art gallery ('La mela' – the apple) can be seen as a subtle reference to the ambiguity between natural-size apples and miniature trees discussed in Chapter 2, see pp. 84-87.

[403] Unfortunately, there is no photographic material documenting these details. The details are described by Cavaliere in A. Cavaliere, 1990, p. 58.

[404] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] teatrali in modo sfacciato, come dei teatrini', Cavaliere's journal, July 1978'. 'Everything will be obvious.' (My translation from Italian: 'Tutto sarà ovvio.'), A. Cavaliere, 1990, p. 57.

IV.II *Surroundings III-VI:* 'Me and the Others'

Surroundings III (1976), *Surroundings IV* (1976), and *Surroundings VI* (1975-1976) are parts of the same series called *Io e gli altri* ('Me and the Others'), which can be considered as a sort of subset of *Surroundings I-VII.*

Surroundings III (fig. 29) was a life-size environment that was set in Cavaliere's studio in Via Bocconi. The work reproduced a kitchen (that was similar to the one in *Surroundings II*) with real actors standing around an ordinary table. The actors acted as a family having breakfast (fig. 29.1). On the table, viewers could see some leftovers, including some bread, a milk carton, and cutlery (fig. 29.2). The room was furbished and decorated with real furniture (fig. 29.3).

Commenting on Cavaliere's interest in representing daily moments, Schwarz stressed the affinity between *Surroundings* and Duchamp's readymade.[405] Particularly, Schwarz highlighted that, while Duchamp elevated common items to the level of artworks, Cavaliere elevated common situations and their 'surroundings' to the level of art. In both cases, the central point was the questioning of the status and purpose of art and the ontological distinction between artworks and objects – art and objecthood.[406]

Surroundings III marked a key step forward in Cavaliere's exploration of the ambiguities between the realms of art and daily life. The presence of real actors as part of the work significantly affected the role of viewers and vice versa. Viewers could be seen as actors 'animating' the scene (as it was in *Surroundings II*) and merging with the real actors that were acting the ordinary situation of a family finishing breakfast. Thus, the real dailiness of viewers visiting the exhibition and the false dailiness acted by the actors coexisted. However, these two levels of 'reality' and 'falseness' overlapped with the real dailiness of actors just doing their job.

[405] A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 137.
[406] Before Schwarz, Allan Kaprow highlighted the genetic link between the happening and the readymade paradigm: 'Consider certain common transactions—shaking hands, eating, saying goodbye—as Readymades. Their only unusual feature will be the attentiveness brought to bear on them', Allan Kaprow (1977), "Participation Performance", in J. Kelley (ed.), 1993, p. 188.

In continuity with the discourse that Cavaliere started with the arboreal-floral works, *Le avventure di GB.*, and *I Processi*, in *Surroundings III* what was 'false' and what was 'real' was intentionally left ambiguous by Cavaliere (as he also stated in his 'manifesto'). Actors were real actors and a false family at the same time; viewers were real viewers functioning as actors without being real actors. The dailiness of actors was false but also real; they were a false family caught in an ordinary moment, but also actors caught in an ordinary moment of their real job. Similarly, the dailiness of viewers was both real and false; they simultaneously were ordinary viewers and 'extra-ordinary' presences interfering with the daily-life moment acted by the actors.

From the perspective of this analysis, in such an intricate overlap between different kinds of 'ordinariness', 'realities', and 'falsehoods', the concept of tautology is central – although significantly complexified. While a tautology should be the simplest approach to reality (it is what it is), it turned out to be one of the most problematic issues for the visual arts since the readymade paradigm and its exacerbation in the 1960s.[407] As discussed, tautological works were considered 'presences' indexing other presences (viewers); thus, *Surroundings III* could be seen as a dramaticisation of the idea of the work as a presence and the challenges that it involves.

Surroundings IV and *Surroundings VI* are both 'pocket-sized environments' dissembled and closed inside two small cardboard envelopes shaped like suitcases (30 x 40 x 10 cm) (fig. 30.1). *Surroundings IV* (fig. 30) is a miniature of Boulevard Saint Michel, Brussels. The model is made of paper, wood, leather, and brass.[408] Following the same idea, *Surroundings VI* (fig. 32) is a miniature of the hotel Internationaal Zeemanshuis, Falconrui 21, Antwerp, where Cavaliere used to stay during his visits for the Antwerp Biennale. The model is made of cardboard, and it reproduces an axonometric planimetry of the hotel room that gives the illusion that the inside and the outside of the room merge in an optical mix of shapes and colours.

[407] Hal Foster thoroughly outlined the genetic link between the practice of Duchamp and Minimal Art in H. Foster, 1996, pp. 35-70.

[408] The work consists of several pieces to assemble to build the miniature neighbourhood of Boulevard Saint Michel, Brussels. The miniature reproduces public places (such as buildings' facades, the street, a church, a public park, and a school) and private environments, such as private homes. Photographs in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2012, p. 301.

Cavaliere gave an additional title to the work: *Io e gli altri* (me and the others). In Cavaliere's intentions, once it was assembled, the model should resemble a '*teatrino*' called *Io e gli altri*.[409] The interplay between the self and the others introduced by *Surroundings IV-VI* will be particularly significant in the subsequent *Surroundings*, with a culmination in *Surroundings VII.* Furthermore, the interplay will be central in Cavaliere's installations from the 1980s that will be analysed in Chapter 4.

Surroundings V (fig. 31) marked a further step in the theatrical interplay between the work and the viewer and can be considered a synthesis of all previous *Surroundings*. The installation consisted in the reconstruction of two public streets and a private home inhabited by actors playing the usual family having breakfast (fig. 31.1). [410] This time, Cavaliere provided visitors with the catalogue of the exhibition, which was a miniature cardboard model of the installation that visitors could take home and assemble themselves.[411] The catalogue added a further level of meaning to the work. Viewers could access the home environment of the installation, and the miniature environment could access the viewers' homes. By taking the scale-model home, viewers took home a pocket-sized structure containing the memories of the experience that they had in the life-size environment. In the journals Cavaliere referred to the miniature as a 'pocket theatre'.[412] In this sense, *Surroundings V* came full circle with both *Surroundings II* (in which the home setting was inhabited only by the recorded noises and voices: memories) and the pocket-sized *Surroundings IV* and *VI*.

In the spring of 1987, Cavaliere reflected on the experience of *Surroundings I-VI* and stated that he had tried to make a 'theatrical kind of sculpture' affecting the surrounding space and shattering its own image into million pieces. According to the journals, the purpose of Cavaliere was to allow viewers to move inside the work and

[409] My translation from Italian: 'Dovrà sembrare un teatrino', Cavaliere's journal, January 1976. The title *Io e gli altri* appears in G. Ballo (ed.), 1992, p. 10.
[410] *Surroundings V* was the second work (after *Surroundings II*) that Cavaliere made for the Antwerp Middelheimmuseum. In *Surroundings V*, the urban landscape was inspired by the streets of Antwerp. In the 1980s, the work was disassembled, and only photographs have come down to us.
[411] Unfortunately, there is no visual documentation about this. The existence of the catalogue is mentioned in G. Ballo (ed.), 1992, pp. 18-19.
[412] My translation from Italian: 'Teatrino tascabile', Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.

put them in condition 'of being able to produce events'. Cavaliere aimed to 'involve' viewers, 'force' their attention, and make them rebel against the habitual inattention towards surrounding ordinary reality. Reiterating his intentions, Cavaliere claimed that, with *Surroundings I-VI*, he wanted to ask viewers about what forces ran their 'mind environment' and their ability to see the world.[413] Considering the ground covered, this point could be reframed within Brecht's perspective, and probably not by chance Cavaliere himself mentioned Brecht in the manifesto for *Surroundings*.[414] Were those forces habits, bias, and artificial superstructures, so well established in their minds to be considered 'natural' – or 'objective'?

Considering the above, *Surroundings III-VI* have taken the dualism between the subject and object to the level of the dualism between the private (*io* – me) and the public (*gli altri* – the others). The subtitle of *Surroundings III-VI – Io e gli altri* (me and the others) – mirrors this point. The pronoun 'me' expresses the realm of the private, while 'the others' refers to the interaction with an external public. In this sense, *Surroundings III, IV,* and *VI* developed the interplay between the self/private and the others/public by dynamically overlapping different kinds of private and public dailiness-es. The overlapping culminated in the possibility for viewers to take the miniature environment that they have just visited in a public place to their private homes. In this sense, the pocket-sized environment becomes an indexical trace pointing to both the public and private experiences.

Considering this, *Surroundings III-VI* can be seen the implementation of Cavaliere's idea of making *teatrini* and works 'halfway between a happening and a pocket stage'.[415] By reworking the idea of the artwork as a process and complexifying the discourse about tautologies and dichotomies also addressed by *Arte Povera*, Cavaliere explored and expanded the boundaries of the medium of sculpture by stressing its indexical and performative qualities and actively involving viewers.

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[413] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] per consentire allo spettatore di muoversi all'interno dell'opera/scultura e ponendolo […] in condizione di produrre avvenimenti; in pratica, cercando di coinvolgerlo, per forzare la frettolosa disattenzione di un pubblico abituato da troppa informazione culturale a non vedere, a non gestire liberamente il proprio "spazio" mentale', A. Cavaliere, 1990, p. 68.

[414] See p. 118 of the present study.

[415] My translation from Italian: 'Lo spettacolo dovrebbe essere fra classico e happening, nel campo del "teatrino tascabile"'. Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.

IV.III *Surroundings VII:* the Installation as a Collective and Democratic Process

In *Surroundings VII*, Cavaliere further developed the interplay between the self and the others*. Surroundings VII* (fig. 33.1 – 33.5) 1983-1984, was halfway between being an installation and a performance and was performed at the Otis College of Arts, Los Angeles in 1984.[416] *Surroundings VII* waved together the issues addressed by the previous works. Moreover, the work can be seen as a sophisticated reworking of the *Via Negativa* theory. Although the hypothesis that Cavaliere reworked the *Via Negativa* theory is not supported by evidence, the *Via Negativa* theory, which was very popular in Italy at the time, and especially in Milan, will offer a valuable angle to analyse the complex development of *Surroundings VII* and the series *Surroundings* as a whole.[417]

Surroundings VII consisted of four rooms inside the Otis Gallery in Los Angeles. The rooms were an office, a living room, an artist's studio, and an exhibition room. The office was empty, and it represented the mercantile aspects of artmaking, which are implicit in public exhibitions (fig. 33.1).[418] In the living room, Cavaliere hung out with visitors and students, talking about art with them (fig. 33.2). The artist studio was named by Cavaliere the 'day-book' and was a room in which Cavaliere, firstly, hung photographs of his arboreal-floral works and, secondly, made drawings inspired by the conversations that he had with visitors; every day, a new drawing replaced an old photograph. (fig. 33.3). [419] In the exhibition room, Cavaliere showcased four

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[416] In November 1982, Cavaliere presented a prototype of the work at the experimental cultural centre *Mercato del Sale. Mercato del Sale* was a cultural centre founded by Ugo Carrega in 1974 as a tribute to Duchamp, who used to be called 'Marchand du Sel' by French writer Robert Desnos. The centre closed in the 1990s. According to Schwarz, the first project for *Surroundings VII* is from 1973. Information provided by G. Ballo (ed.), 1992, pp. 140-141.

[417] Grotowski's theories were published in Italian in 1970 (Jerzy Grotowsky, *Per un teratro povero*, Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1970). Since then, Milanese experimental theatres, such as the Teatro Ricerche Teatrali (CRT), presented Grotowski's work and disseminated his idea of theatre, which was one of the most influential in Milan, Turin, Florence, and Rome between the 1970s and 1980s. For further discussion, see Antonio Attisani, *Un teatro apocrifo. Il potenziale dell'arte teatrale nel Workcenter of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards*, Milan: Medusa Edizioni, 2006 and Gabriele Vacis, *Awareness: dieci giorni con Jerzy Grotowski,* Milan: BUR, 2002.

[418] Cavaliere's statement, in G. Ballo (ed.), 1992, pp. 143-144.

[419] Ibidem. The Otis College currently holds most of the photographs of the exhibition. I contacted the College on 13 June 2019, and I was told that the College couldn't send me the pictures via mail or mail. I was thinking to go to Los Angeles to the Otis archives in 2020-2021, but my plans changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For further information about how the pandemic affected my research, see the Covid Impact Statement at p. I.

sculptures that he made by using four items that he was given upon his arrival, including a bamboo bird cage, a hat, a laundry soap box (probably a reference to Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box*), and a calendar with catholic images (fig. 33.4). Day by day, Cavaliere removed the sculptures and left their traces on the floor – indexical marks made with duct tape (fig. 33.4).

According to the photographic material available, the exhibition room also showcased an arboreal-floral work that was removed from the installation along with the other works. The photographs attest to the existence of an intermediate stage between the physical presence of the arboreal-floral work and its absence; at this stage, the work was removed and replaced with real dead leaves spread on the ground (fig. 33.5). The presence of the real dead leaves as the remains of the arboreal-floral work is particularly significant for this analysis as it fetches back to the interplay between art and non-art. In this case, the interplay overlaps with the interplays between other core concepts of Cavaliere's practice – life and death, true and false. The real leaves were dead; however, they were more 'alive' than the metallic arboreal-floral work – although the latter resembled a real living plant. Ultimately, the false liveness of the work was replaced by the real deadliness of the leaves, and the only thing that was left at the end of the process was an empty room with some traces on the floor. Cavaliere explained his choice by stating that he wanted to conclude the experience of *Surroundings* by 'using emptiness' and leaving only the traces of what happened during the performance. In this regard, Cavaliere explained that the choice had been democratically discussed with the visitors-participants, making the work the outcome of a collective process.[420]

[420] Regarding the experience at the Otis College, Cavaliere stated that he developed the project day by day by cooperating with visitors and students. Cavaliere specified that the choice to end the performance by employing 'emptiness' was a democratic decision. (My translation from Italian: 'Ho lavorato nello spazio espositivo dell'Istituto a contatto diretto con studenti e pubblico, realizzando il progetto giorno dopo giorno. La scelta di usare il vuoto a conclusione dell'esperienza è stata decisa collegialmente'), G. Ballo (ed.), 1992, p. 145.

V *Surroundings I-VII* and the *Via Negativa* Theory

Although it is not proven whether Cavaliere knew the *Via Negativa* theory, the latter proves beneficial to further investigate the series *Surroundings I-VII.* In this regard, the analysis will show how Cavaliere applied the ideas of the subtraction of the sign and reduction to essentiality to viewers and the physical works themselves.

Cavaliere started the series by addressing emptiness. In *Surroundings I*, no actors or viewers are in the scene; the work is a scale model, and viewers can only 'access' it through their reflections in the mirror. In *Surroundings II*, viewers could physically access the installation; however, actors were present only through their recorded voices or screened mute images – like ghosts and traces of invisible lives. Then, Cavaliere filled that emptiness by involving actors in flesh and blood as part of the installation (*Surroundings III* and *V*). Lastly, Cavaliere removed both actors, viewers, and himself and gradually removed the items that were part of the installation, leaving only their traces on the floor (*Surroundings VII*). Through this 'reduction of the sign', the work returned to a status of emptiness, which was even emptier than the initial one. At the end of *Surroundings VII*, only empty rooms and duct tape on the floor were left. However, considering the duct tape on the floor as an indexical trace pointing to all the experiences contained by the work, it can be argued that the empty rooms were filled by the invisible presence of the viewers' experiences.

Cavaliere stressed the centrality of the viewers' experience by explaining that the duct tape traces were like 'ghosts', aiming to stimulate the viewers' memory and 'their active participation'.[421] By reducing the sign to the essential, Cavaliere therefore aimed to involve viewers on a more subtle level, a level in which any dichotomy, including the one between the work and the viewer, ceased to exist as everything is turned into 'a ghost', a memory. In this sense, *Surroundings VII* achieved an outcome that is not far from the *Via Negativa* principle of overcoming

[421] My adaptation from Italian: 'Il vuoto, […] stimola la memoria e la partecipazione attiva del singolo spettatore. Il ricordo di qualcosa che in precedenza è accaduto: la "traccia", l'ombra evanescente che si trasforma, articolandosi nei ricordi di ognuno, diventando fantasma', A. Cavaliere, 1990, p.72.

the duality between the work and the public through subtraction and reduction to essentiality.

As introduced in Chapter 2, the theme of the viewer involvement is central to investigating Cavaliere's exploration of the boundaries of the medium of sculpture. Works such as *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* question the duality between the work and the viewer to the point that they swap roles. In this context, *I Processi* and *Surroundings I-VII* can be seen as the second and third stages of Cavaliere's exploration of the relationship between the work and the viewer. First, in *I Processi*, viewers are at the mercy of the work; then, in *Surroundings,* viewers become increasingly active. In *I Processi*, viewers are trapped by the hallucinated crypticism of the work; they cannot understand what the maybe-symbolic items stand for and can just listen to the estranging recording that goes in a loop. Then, in *Surroundings II*, viewers can enter the work and decide whether to listen to the recording or watch the video. Subsequently, in *Surroundings V*, viewers can take the pocket-sized reproduction of the environment at home. Lastly, in *Surroundings VII*, viewers can talk with the artist and take part in the decision about how to end the work, which thus becomes a collective-democratic process.

VI The Uncanny and the Active Participation of Viewers

Otis College director Al Nodal described *Surroundings VII* as explicitly 'theatrical', highlighting the centrality of the performative involvement of viewers. Notably, Nodal stated that 'leaving a ghost image of the installation was an effective artistic sleight-of-hand in keeping with Cavaliere's sense of theatre'.[422] Cavaliere himself stressed the theatrical feature of *Surroundings VII* by stating that he worked as a 'stage director'.[423]

The *Surroundings* 'manifesto' quoted at the beginning of the fourth section will be handy to further investigate the kind of theatricality that characterises the series. In

[422] Full quotation in G. Ballo (ed.), 1992, pp. 143-144.
[423] My adaptation from Italian: 'Così mi trovo ad essere "regista teatrale" del lavoro', A. Cavaliere, 1990, p. 59.

this regard, the 'THESIS' outlined by Cavaliere will offer valuable clues to investigate *Surroundings I-VII* as a development of the idea of theatricality discussed in Chapter 2:

> THE THESIS: art is linear, and the choices are simple. Then the route stops, and the choices get complicated: […] The unexpected kicks in as a surrounding factor. The work is, thus, shattered into multiple formal elements. [424]

Based on the work covered in Chapter 2, this quote implicitly calls into question the concept of the uncanny as a tool to shake the conventional and habitual order of things. The unexpected kicks in from the surroundings, and the work becomes an ambiguous non-familiar and familiar environment. This point resonates with the concept of the uncanny as 'the strange creeping into the familiar' and undermining the power of viewers to immediately understand the object of their experience.[425] Indeed, 'the unexpected' shatters the work 'into multiple elements', compromising the possibility of a clear understanding.

Moreover, the idea of the unexpected that comes from the surroundings suggests the idea of a 'centre' of the work that can be threatened. The centre could be the physical work (as it happens in traditional sculpture) or the viewer, whose perspective on the work can determine the work itself in terms of meaning and or shape (as it happens in neo-avant-garde sculpture).[426] When the work is 'the centre', viewers are in the surroundings; they can threaten the work as they can impose their perspective on it. On the other hand, when a viewer's perspective is 'the centre', the work is in the surroundings, and it can threaten the viewer by showing ambiguous features that challenge their perception and understanding. In the first case, the work is a passive object, and the viewer is an active subject; in the second case, the hierarchy is turned upside down. In both cases, any claim to a centralised idea of truth or objectivity is threatened by unexpected elements coming from the surroundings.

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[424] A. Cavaliere, 1990, pp. 70-72. For full citation in Italian, see pp. 118-119.
[425] S. Freud, trans. D. Mclintock, 2003, p. 129.
[426] For an extensive discussion about the evolution of sculpture in the expanded field and the role of the viewer, see R. Krauss, 1979.

In this attack on the idea of centralised truth, viewers can no longer take on the role of accepting spectators and become, as Brecht would have said, active mediators. This interpretation is supported by the journals. In 1973, Cavaliere launched to hypothetical viewers: 'use your minds! Stay alert! The situations that you experience are open because they include the surroundings. There is more than just the centre'.[427] This perspective sheds light on the development of the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's works, which evolved from the disquieting estrangement of viewers (*I Processi*) to their active participation (*Surroundings VII*). The sometimes-paralysing ambiguities staged by Cavaliere's works became, thus, opportunities for viewers to use their critical thinking, and in *Surroundings VII*, viewers were even actively involved in the decision regarding how to end the performance.

Cavaliere's words fetch back to both Brecht's idea of theatre as a tool to stimulate the critical skills of viewers and the 'guerrilla' mood characterising Celant's theories. Considering the ground covered, the uncanny and participative idea of theatricality developed by Cavaliere responded, in a Brechtian way, to Celant's idea of overcoming superfluous superstructures – including the difference between 'real' and 'false', art and objecthood – by making artworks apt to 'subvert expectations' and open to different interpretations.[428] Considering the work covered, the system of habits and conventions attacked by Cavaliere is the (Modernist) idea of the work as a serene and transparent experience, in which viewers could be absorbed in the contemplation of some truth.

In this sense, the kind of theatricality characterising Cavaliere's works (and its disorienting implications) can be seen as a sort of weapon (or a 'tool') that Cavaliere used for shattering the 'trueness' of the work into million pieces' – like he did with Shakespeare's texts in *I Processi* and the concept of dailiness in *Surroundings I-VII*. In other words, Cavaliere questioned the idea of objective truth by complexifying the concept of truth to the point that viewers are forced to use their brains and observe the existence of various 'truths' coexisting and interlacing.

[427] My adaptation from Italian: 'Pensate! State attenti! Usate il vostro cervello, […], vivete una situazione che non può non essere aperta, perché è quella dei dintorni – non del centro (surroundings)', Cavaliere's journals, June 1973.
[428] G. Celant (ed.), 2012, p. 27.

VII Critical Thinking and 'Total' Art

Considering the above, Cavaliere's works entail a sort of didactic purpose that could have been determined by his experience as a teacher. Cavaliere acknowledged such a didactic purpose himself and explicitly referred to it in the journals – 'the didactic feature of my work'.[429] Thus, the journals suggest that Cavaliere aimed to 'teach' a relativistic approach to reality through his works. If this is the case, this would be a further element of affinity between Cavaliere's intentions and Brecht's method, as they both aimed to awaken the critical skills of viewers. Not by chance, Brecht defined his theatre as 'didactic' and questioned the very idea of objectivity by staging contradictions forcing viewers to think critically. The idea of 'forcing' the viewer also echoes Fried's concept of theatricality, according to which theatrical works are the ones that are so ambiguous and enigmatic (uncanny) that they force viewers to interact and, thus, break the Modernist spell of absorption.

Considering the ground covered, the ideas of theatricality outlined by Brecht, Fried, and Celant resonate in different ways in the work of Cavaliere, who developed his own idea of theatricality by combining different perspectives that problematised the relationship between the viewer, the work, and the surroundings and called into play viewers as active participants. The active participation of viewers is a central theme also in the perspective of Nodal, who described *Surroundings VII* as a 'performance in progress' and a 'vessel' constantly changing to document the events that happened during Cavaliere's stay at the Otis College. According to Nodal, *Surroundings VII* created a 'community of active participants', and the work became a 'realisation in Time, Space, Memory, Chance, Environment and the Unexpected'.[430] Moreover, Nodal highlighted the crucial role of viewers for the development of the performance, highlighting how 'students and gallery visitors participated in a lively exchange of ideas and gained a deeper insight into Cavaliere's thinking'. According to Nodal, the avowed emphasis on the process created an environment where a high level of interaction took place.[431] In other

[429] A. Cavaliere, 1990, pp. 70-72.
[430] A. Nodal, 1984, p. 17.
[431] Ibidem.

words, Nodal described *Surroundings VII* as a sort of public engagement programme ahead of his time.[432]

In 1988, Cavaliere summarised the perspectives discussed by stating that 'art is in the surroundings'.[433] Based on the ground covered, Cavaliere's statement can be rephrased as follows. Artworks are no longer to be regarded as objects, and neither as outcomes of subjective creative impulses. Conversely, artworks are the outcomes of interactive processes involving physical works, the artists' intentions, and the viewers' experience in dialectic, sometimes disquieting, unpredictable, and democratic exchanges. In these exchanges, any dualistic distinction between the 'centre' and the 'surroundings', the viewer and the work, the artist and the viewer, etc. is replaced by interlacing perspectives. In other words, the work becomes a multifaceted process – 'wild vectors that lead towards unpredictable, chaotic directions and subvert expectations', in Celant's words.[434]

From the perspective of this analysis, the idea of 'total' art that Cavaliere outlined in the journals responds to the idea of the work as a process in the sense that was discussed. Cavaliere's idea of the work as a process and his distrust of any official and centralised truth go back to his attack on monumental art and the theory by Martini about the death of sculpture. For Cavaliere, the monument is 'dead' insofar as it represents a truth that is ensured by conventions and habits. Conversely, the (re)presentation of ambiguities encouraging viewers to think critically and explore the existence of multiple perspectives would make the work 'alive'.

From the arboreal-floral works to *Surroundings VII*, Cavaliere gradually transformed his sculptures into installations: from objects to be watched from the outside to immersive environments to be actively experienced from the inside (the centre) and

[432] 'When we talk about public engagement in the Arts Council, we are talking about people's encounters with or experiences of the contemporary arts. There is a huge range of ways in which this can happen – for example, as an audience member at a play or concert, through reading a novel, through taking part in an art workshop, through doing an art course, through voluntarily helping out on an arts festival or at an arts centre, or through being involved in a local youth theatre', The Art Council definition of Public Engagement Projects. https://www.artscouncil.ie/public-engagement/ (accessed 20 November 2022).
[433] My translation from Italian: 'L'arte è nei surroundings, nei dintorni', Cavaliere's journal, January 1988.
[434] '[…] wild vectors that lead towards unpredictable and chaotic directions, subvert expectations, and question boundaries' (My translation from Italian: '[…] vettori impazziti che prendono direzioni non programmate e tracciano percorsi disordinati, tali da sconvolgere le attese e i presupposti di un confine.'), G. Celant (ed.), 2012, p.27.

the outside (the surroundings) through a multifaced, dynamic, and sometimes paradoxical process resulting from the interlacing of potentially infinite perspectives.

Cavaliere's theatrical installations explicitly blurred the lines between sculpture and theatre and questioned the dualistic relationships between the viewer and the work, the work and the surroundings, the viewer and the surroundings, the artist and the viewer – ultimately, bettween art and objecthood. In this sense, Cavaliere's theatrical installations are settings for the interaction between an endless combination of equally important and influential factors. In other words, from the perspective of this analysis, Cavaliere's idea of total art resulted in a sophisticated attempt to free the medium of sculpture from the limits of the three dimensions and make it step into the fourth dimension.

Conclusion

To conclude, the analysis has shown how, in *I Processi* and *Surroundings I-VII*, Cavaliere completed a transformation of his three-dimensional sculptures into four-dimensional installations. Considering the ground covered, the way in which Cavaliere developed his practice in the two works mirrors the development from the arboreal-floral works to *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*; from a situation characterised by hallucinated stillness to a dynamic interaction actively involving viewers. From the perspective of this analysis, the 'hibernated' features of Cavaliere's installations represent conventional and 'fossilised' dualistic relationships between opposites (the work and the viewer, art and objecthood, the 'true' and the 'false', symbols and tautologies) implying the idea of an objective 'truth'. On the other hand, when Cavaliere stressed the dynamic side of his works (such as in *Surroundings II-VII*), he aimed to represent a possible way out from the imprisoning dualisms and the possibility of a new 'system' made of interdependent processes and multiple perspectives.

In this context, the discussion investigated the role and implications of the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's works and its development work after work. The examination

combined the analysis of the works with the information provided by the journals and the theoretical exploration of specific ideas of theatricality from the late 1960s, to which Cavaliere's practice seems to be particularly attuned. In line with a certain sensibility characterising *Arte Povera* and the ideas of Celant, Grotowski, and Brecht, *I Processi* and *Surroundings I-VII* reassessed and reconfigured the relationship between the work and viewers by also pointing to the ethical purpose of art of breaking free from the cage of objectivity and the idea of a single centralised truth. Cavaliere's ethical lesson could be rephrased as follows. The more one clings to the idea of an objective reality, the more their certainties will be undermined by reality behaving in unexpected, ambiguous, and paradoxical ways.

In this regard, the kind of theatricality developed by Cavaliere can be seen as a bridge between the ideas of stillness and dynamism, apt to turn 'inanimate' objects into animate presences inviting/forcing viewers to interact and reassess their systems of belief. In this sense, the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's works causes the collapse of the dualistic relationship between the viewer and the work and questions the distinction between authoritative 'centre' and irrelevant surroundings – art and objecthood.

The ground covered demonstrated that Cavaliere's practice addressed the interplay between art and objecthood since the 1960s. First, Cavaliere introduced the interplay in his ambiguously literal arboreal-floral works and *Le avventure di Gustavo B*. Then, in *I Processi*, Cavaliere staged the idea of 'Power' as symbolically dramatic (art) and literally ironic (objecthood). Lastly, in *Surroundings I-VII,* Cavaliere reframed the dualism between the concepts of art and objecthood within the interplay between the centre and the surroundings of the work; in this context, Cavaliere complexified the interplay to the point of dissolving the distinction between the two concepts. As Nodal pointed out, *Surroundings VII* was neither an artwork nor an object; it was a 'vessel', gathering various perspectives and making them flow from the centre to the surroundings and vice versa.

To use Cavaliere's words, 'the work invades the surroundings' and the 'theatre of sculpture' becomes '*corale*'.[435] In English, there is no word to correctly translate the concept expressed by the Italian word 'corale'. Corale means a synthesis between the concepts of collectivity and multiplicity – like in a choir, in which the collective outcome results from the organic interplay between single voices. In a choir, collectivity and singularities are equally important and inform each other. Considering the ground covered, the concept of 'corale' is closely related to Cavaliere's ideas of collectivity as the opposite of homogenisation, a place where every singularity matters. This perspective ultimately expresses Cavaliere's idea of 'total' art as it emerged from the analysis; the artwork is no longer to be regarded as an object, but it becomes 'corale' – a vessel containing an interlacing of multiple experiences.

[435] My translation from Italian: 'Lo spettacolo deve divenire corale', Cavaliere's journals August, 1967. Cavaliere reiterated this perspective in V.v. A.a., "Scultori d'oggi al festival dell'Unità", *Il manifesto*, Rome and Milan, 29 August 1975.

CHAPTER 4: The Self and the Others: Cavaliere's Later Installations

Introduction

This final chapter focuses on two of Cavaliere's installations from the late 1980s, which offer a culmination of the reflection upon his practice. The installations are *Pigmalione* [Pygmalion], 1986-1987 (fig. 34) and *Le riflessioni di Narciso* [Narcissus' Reflections], 1988 (fig. 35).

The analysis discusses how the two works can be seen as the apex of Cavaliere's reworking of the lessons of sculpture since the readymade paradigm in the wake of specific issues addressed by neo-avant-gardes practices from the early 1960s. Among these issues are radical attacks on medium specificity and the expansion of the boundaries of sculpture.

The discussion is structured in two sections. The first section inspects the journals from the 1980s as they witness the conclusion of Cavaliere's intellectual journey. Based on the journals, the investigation then delves into the analysis of *Pigmalione,* highlighting how the installation can be considered as a late reworking of influences that Cavaliere was exposed to in the earlier years of his career; particularly what he called *l'informale*.[436]

The second section focuses on *Le riflessioni di Narciso* and analyses how Cavaliere offered a model of the subject and the work experience as fragmented and multi-perspectival. Ultimately, it will be argued that this model is the final stage of Cavaliere's transformation of the medium of sculpture, which offers a sort of solution to the issue of the 'death of sculpture' by responding to the endgames of Modernist formalism.

Before delving into the analysis of Cavaliere's journals and practice, it will be helpful to introduce his concept of *l'informale* as it will be central to the exploration of the works.

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[436] '[…] I have unfinished business with a moment of my youth: *l'informale* […] and the use of the object'. My adaptation from Italian: '[…] non ho esaurito una tappa della mia gioventù: l'informale […] Così pure l'uso dell'oggetto.', Cavaliere's journal, November 1983.

The cross-analysis of the journals and the works will evidence that Cavaliere's idea of '*l'informale*' does not strictly refer to *Art Informel* as it was theorised by Belgian critic Michel Tapié. Rather, Cavaliere seems to refer to a broader anti-Modernist idea of art encompassing Tapié's theory as well as neo-avant-garde American practices that responded to a 'form-antiform' idea of the artwork.[437] More specifically, Cavaliere's concept of *l'informale* refers to a wide range of experimental sculptural practices from the early 1960s that challenged the Modernist idea of the work of art as an autonomous object and explored the idea of the work as an environment performatively involving the viewer, the artist, and the surroundings. Among these practices are Claes Oldenburg's, Jasper Johns', Allan Kaprow's, and Minimal Art, which responded in different ways to the endgames of Modernist formalism.[438]

The following sections will thus analyse how *Pigmalione* and *Le riflessioni di Narciso* can be seen as two late reworkings of aesthetics and principles that fetch back to this idea of *l'informale.* The examination will highlight how the two works are a culmination of the discourse that Cavaliere developed since the 1960s regarding the indexical, theatrical, and uncanny 'unconscious' of the medium of sculpture.

Section 1 – *Pigmalione* and the 'Remains' of the Sculptural Environment

I Cavaliere's Later Journals as a Culmination of the Reflection Upon his Practice

The journals from the 1980s conclude Cavaliere's intellectual journey. In December 1980, Cavaliere reiterated how writing was essential for developing his art practice and how the latter was the result of a 'constant accumulation of thoughts' about his

[437] The expression *Art Informel* was coined by Michel Tapié in 1952 to refer to abstract-gestural pictorial European movements from the 1940s-1950s. The definition also includes Abstract Expressionism as the American equivalent of European abstract-gestural pictorial tendencies (Michel Tapié, *Un art autre*, Paris: Giraud, 1952). *Arte Informale* is the Italian translation of Tapié's definition and includes both pictorial and sculptural practices from the same years that are characterised by a focus on the tactile and 'formless' qualities of the work of art. A few sources highlighted ties between *Art Informel* and later currents, such as Italian *Arte Povera*. For further discussion, see Roberto Pasini, *L'Informale. Stati Uniti, Europa, Italia*, Bologna: CLUEB, 1995 and Philip Cooper, *Art informel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. 'Form-antiform approach to art' is an expression used by Kaprow in Allan Kaprow (1974) "Formalism: Flogging a Dead Horse", in J. Kelley (ed.), 1993, pp. 160-161.

[438] For an extensive discussion of how Claes Oldenburg, Jasper Johns, and Donald Judd responded to the endgame of Modernist formalism, see J. Shannon, 2009, pp. 10-92, 150-192.

works.[439] The word 'autobiography' occurs a few times in the journals from the decade as if Cavaliere wanted his last works to be sorts of autobiographical archives.[440] Cavaliere returned to central topics from the previous journals as if to underline the cohesive character of his practice and the continuity among the different phases of his work.[441] Among these topics, are the questioning of monumental art and the theatrical and uncanny qualities of his works as tools to dismantle the idea of the work of art as a discrete and autonomous object.

In 1981, Cavaliere reiterated his commitment to fighting against monumental and celebratory sculpture. In this regard, Cavaliere stated that he aimed to avoid making isolated monuments and conceived his work as a sort of 'maze' in which 'the past' and 'the present' could merge in a spatial-temporal *continuum.* In the note, Cavaliere specified that he referred to the present and the past of his art practice ('my present work has absorbed my works from the past'), as well as to a 'universal' idea of the past symbolised by Classical mythology.[442]

In the journals, Cavaliere stressed the role of theatricality as a tool to affect the space and time of viewers' experience. Cavaliere claimed to be 'obsessed by the walkable space' and the temporal unfolding of the work and to want his works 'to

[439] My adaptation from Italian: 'Chiarisco: oggi non posso più lavorare senza analisi - tesi - progetto – verifica. […] dilatare lo spazio di ricerca. Una ricerca […] fatta per accumulo. […] riflessione costante […].' Cavaliere's journal, December 1980.

[440] 'I think that we hardly abandon our training. Thus, I'd rather to deal with my past artistic experiences – the blatant and…. occult ones – as in a laboratory. Is like writing my autobiography.' (My adaptation from Italian: 'Io sostengo che difficilmente ci si scosta dalla propria formazione. Quindi preferisco riaffrontare in termini di "laboratorio" le mie esperienze palesi e…occulte. E' come scrivere l'autobiografia'), Cavaliere's journal, September 1983. 'I hope that I still have time […] to achieve the autobiography!' (My adaptation from Italian: 'Ho ancora, spero, tempo, […] per arrivare all'autobiografia!'), Cavaliere's jounal, September 1982.

[441] 'I reconsider one of my previous works, I turn it upside down, I re-make it, I overturn it. And I do it again.' (My adaptation from Italian: 'Riprendo un vecchio lavoro e lo capovolgo, lo rifaccio, lo stravolgo. E ricomincio di nuovo'), Cavaliere, interview with Sebastiano Grasso, in S. Grasso, 1992. 'I thus recover myths and characters from my works from the 1950s.' (My translation from Italian: 'Recupero così miti e personaggi […] del mio lavoro più vecchio degli anni '50), Cavaliere's journal, October 1988.

[442] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ho inteso rompere il rapporto con la statuaria celebrativa, monumentale.', Cavaliere's journal April 1981. My adaptation from Italian: 'Nessuna delle mie prossime opere dovrà essere "sola", monumento. L'itinerario, labirintico, sarà nella complessità del presente, attraverso la memoria recente –personale- e passata –storia e mito. in tale pellegrinaggio, […] sarà […] assorbito tutto il mio lavoro passato e le mie "inquietudini" attuali. Il rapporto tra presente e passato oggi è […] "continuo", così come lo è il concetto di storia e mito.', Cavaliere's journals, March 1983.

force space and time'.[443] The way in which Cavaliere ended his train of thought suggests that the theatrical quality of his practice was a sort of slowly-matured answer to Martini's provocation about the need to revive the medium of sculpture by making it step into the fourth dimension – 'I conclude with Martini: long live sculpture!'.[444]

As discussed in the previous chapters, the crisis of monumental and celebratory art is central in the perspectives of Cavaliere and Martini. Martini complained that the medium of sculpture was only allowed to make anthropomorphic 'noble' figures entitled to stay on pedestals and was prohibited from representing mere objects, including pieces of nature.[445] In line with this, Cavaliere wrote that he wanted to make 'messy, illogical, and senseless works that couldn't stay on a pedestal – like the persimmon tree' in his garden.[446]

Chapter 2 analysed Cavaliere's perspective in relation to the arboreal-floral works and *Le avventure di Gustavo B.*, investigating how Cavaliere reworked the feature of literalism and questioned the concept of 'true' and 'false' in the context of three-dimensional representations. The analysis evidenced that Cavaliere's exploration of the literalist side of his work addressed the 'disorienting' (uncanny) side of his sculptural practice. Chapter 3 investigated how such exploration took a performative turn in Cavaliere's installations from the 1970s – a turn that, in line with the changes in the modes of spectatorship at work in Italy and the US at the time, blurred the boundaries between art and daily life and the concepts of 'true' and 'false' art.

In May 1981, Cavaliere came back to the concept of falseness by claiming that falseness was essential to his practice – 'everything is false'.[447] Cavaliere had previously explained his idea of 'falseness' in 1971 – 'falseness is a way to grasp a

[443] My adaptation from Italian: 'Sono ossessionato dallo spazio percorribile e dallo spettacolo.', Cavaliere's journals October 1985. My adaptation from Italian: 'La scultura deve forzare lo spazio, il tempo.', Cavaliere's journal, February 1989.
[444] My adaptation from Italian: 'Concluderò con Martini: W la scultura!', Cavaliere's journal, February 1989.
[445] A. Martini, 1945, in M. De Micheli (ed.), 1982, pp. 89-90, 115.
[446] My adaptation from Italian: 'Penso al caco nel mio giardino: se devo fare elementi […], devo farli senza base logica, ordine, senso… non devono essere collocabili su un piedistallo.', Cavaliere's journal, November 1989.
[447] My translation from Italian: 'Tutto è falso.', Cavaliere's journal, May 1981. Cavaliere first expressed this perspective in a note from May 1971: 'Falseness: I consider it an essential tool.' (My adaptation from Italian: 'Il falso: lo definisco strumento essenziale'), Cavaliere's journal, May 1971.

kind of reality that would otherwise be inaccessible to ordinary experience'.[448] As outlined in chapters 2 and 3, the concept of falseness and the feature of theatricality goes hand in hand in Cavaliere's practice. As discussed, theatricality was, for Cavaliere, a tool to make 'upside-down images of an invented reality more real than reality itself'. Considering the above, Cavaliere's idea of falseness appears as a key to accessing that kind of reality.[449]

Cavaliere often used mirrors as devices to implement his idea of (theatrical) falseness. Mirrors double and transform reality by expanding the spatial and temporal unfolding of the work. Furthermore, mirrors reveal sides of the work that would otherwise be out of reach. Moreover, mirrors can function as devices to merge the work and the surrounding space.[450] In other words, mirrors overturn (put upside-down) the idea that the work is a passive object at the mercy of viewers by playing with the uncanny theme of the double and engaging with viewers and the surroundings through reflection.

The following sections will analyse how Cavaliere's use of mirrors conjugates two key aspects of his attack on the Modernist idea of the autonomous work of art. The two aspects are the idea of the work as uncanny and the idea of the work as multi-perspectival. In 1983, Cavaliere outlined a correlation between these two aspects by stating that the (uncanny) ambiguity of his works did not depend on the work itself but on the context in which they were experienced.[451] For Cavaliere, mirrors make a work 'uncannily mysterious' as they open it to various interpretative possibilities, complexifying the experience of viewers. In this sense, the work shapeshifts

[448] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ho praticato il falso come metodo […] che mi permettesse di scorgere un reale non toccabile, non misurabile, non percorribile.', Cavaliere's journal, May 1981.
[449] My translation from Italian: 'Teatro: immagini ribaltate di una realtà inventata e più vera al tempo stesso.' Cavaliere's journal, May 1963.
[450] 'Everything is false. Everything is turned upside down and transformed into something else. Mirrors – polished stainless steel – double and expand the image and spotlight its imitative nature. Mirrors unveil sides of the work that would otherwise be out of reach. Mirrors are media to a non-real, non-measurable, non-touchable, and non-walkable dimension.' (My adaptation from Italian: 'E' falso tutto, tutto è ribaltato in altro. Lo specchio – acciaio specchiante: sdoppiano l'immagine e ne presentano l'aspetto imitativo e dilatato e ci rivela momenti che non potremmo altrimenti vedere o conoscere e che vediamo solo attraverso la mediazione in una dimensione non reale, non misurabile, non toccabile, non percorribile'), Cavaliere's journals, May 1971.
[451] My adaptation from Italian: 'L'ambiguità delle cose è nei contesti diversi nei quali si collocano.', Cavaliere's journal, July 1983.

according to different points of view; and this, from a Modernist perspective, is uncanny because it makes the wholeness of the work ungraspable.[452]

The previous chapters discussed how Cavaliere first employed mirrors to confront and disorient viewers through twisted reflections, projections, and illusions.[453] In this regard, it was examined how such use of mirrors turned the work into a disorienting experience in which the roles of the viewer and the work ambiguously overlap.

In *Surroundings I,* Cavaliere developed this point by employing mirrors to undermine another dualism entailed by three-dimensional representations. This dualism is the distinction between the centre and the surroundings of the work. Cavaliere brought the surroundings inside the work, dismantling the idea of sculpture as a celebratory object standing centre stage in the viewers' field of vision. *Surroundings II-VII* completed this process without the aid of mirrors by becoming theatrical settings for viewers and the artist to perform. As Nodal pointed out, the work became a 'vessel' containing multiple experiences.[454]

As discussed, the idea of the work as a vessel implies a reappraisal of the concepts of the 'centre' and 'surroundings' of the work, as well as of the roles of the viewer, the artist, and the work itself.[455] In the following pages, the focus will be on how Cavaliere's installations from the late 1980s further develop this reappraisal by returning from the theatrical installations of the 1970s to an object-based idea of sculpture.

The idea of the work as a vessel instead of a centralised object pairs with Cavaliere's reflections upon the crisis of traditional monumental art. Viewers are various, and

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[452] '[using] mirrors to make my sculpture more complex and mysterious – uncanny enough.' (My adaptation from Italian: ' [usare] gli specchi, per rendere […] molto più complessa, e misteriosa la mia scultura, […] sufficientemente perturbante'), Cavaliere's journal, August 1980. 'Complexity is not only a matter of delivering a message, but it is a matter of interpretative pluralism which does not respond to a formula.' (My adaptation from Italian: 'La complessità non è nella trasmissione, ma nella pluralità interpretativa che non è mai chiusa a formula'), Cavaliere's journal, April 1980. For further discussion about Fried's concept of wholeness, see Fried, 1998, pp. 150-151, 165.

[453] See Chapter 2, pp. 87-88, and Chapter 3, pp. 110-117.

[454] Vv. Aa, *Il mondo italiano*, 1983, p. 27.

[455] My adaptation from Italian: 'L'arte non è più né al centro, né isolata, ma ci circonda, ci avviluppa, ci giunge con un un rumore forse più attutito e diffuso, ma da più innumerevoli, talvolta imprevedibili parti.', Alik Cavaliere, "*L'artista…. Omissis", il Corriere del Ticino*, Lugano, 8 February, 1985.

they bring various perspectives into the work. Therefore, the work cannot symbolise a centralised and single 'truth' because its 'truth' is fragmented and shattered in the surroundings, which are the potentially infinite perspectives of viewers. In an interview from 1985, Cavaliere stated that the most significant turn that he had witnessed throughout his career was 'the decentralisation of art'. In other words, Cavaliere claimed that he had witnessed 'the meteoric rise and fall' of several 'myths' of art, including the myth of art as elevated above ordinary reality, the myth of art as a commodity and an ordinary experience, the myth of art as a key to reading the world, and the myth of art as a way to quickly communicate ideas and information. Cavaliere concluded that 'nowadays, art settled in the surroundings'.[456]

Considering the ground covered, Cavaliere's statements and written reflections from the 1980s evidence that the surroundings were a broad category that he used to address his idea of sculpture as decentralised, anti-monumental, and multi-perspectival. From the perspective of this analysis, the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's works played a vital role in his exploration of the 'surroundings' that, according to this interpretation, are the boundaries of the medium of sculpture.

In 1990, Cavaliere stated that he had used materials as 'a stage director' to create labyrinthine paths inside his works, in which he could 'meet' viewers and 'get lost with them – both psychologically and physically – within the tangled matter and varieties of all the possible angles'.[457] Cavaliere's last thoughts about his idea of theatricality are in line with this perspective. In an interview with Italian critic Sebastiano Grasso, Cavaliere claimed that theatre should involve, stimulate, and/or

[456] My adaptation from Italian: 'Il cambiamento più profondo al quale ho assistito, e partecipato, è costituito dal decentramento dell'arte. Nel mio ormai lungo percorso ho visto passare e cadere, in rapidissima successione, il mito dell'arte come chiave di lettura del mondo, come qualcosa di "altro", come strumento immediato di comunicazione, come informazione a breve termine e uso, come merce, come quotidianeità. Oggi mi pare di assistere ad una piccola tregua nelle successioni: l'arte si è assestata nei 'surroundings' nei dintorni.', ibidem.

[457] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ho sempre usato i materiali come un regista teatrale […] cercando di creare percorsi, labirinti dove potermi incontrare con l'eventuale visitatore/spettatore per poi perderci entrambi all'interno dell'opera stessa, oltre che psicologicamente anche fisicamente nella pluralità delle angolazioni o nei grovigli della materia.' A. Cavaliere, 1990, p. 67.

repel viewers.[458] Lastly, in a journal from 1987, Cavaliere reiterated his idea that theatre should involve viewers by representing the unrepresentable being of things'.[459]

Overall, the journals from the 1980s support the idea that Cavaliere developed the theatrical quality of his works as a tool to transform the medium of sculpture and question the Modernist idea of the autonomous object. This perspective was already documented in a journal from 1971, in which Cavaliere stated the intention of inviting viewers to 'break with the narrative of the work' by introducing 'variants' and 'changing or transforming the storyline'.[460] In 1981, Cavaliere reiterated this point by writing that he wanted the viewer to move inside the work and 'make things happen'.[461] In this sense, Cavaliere's uncanny and theatrical practice can be seen as a sort of 'therapy session' for the viewers and the works; they are first forced and then invited to question their positions and mutual behaviours by swapping roles and inherent responsibilities and privileges. The following sections will analyse how this perspective is beneficial to investigate *Pigmalione* and *Le riflessioni di Narciso*.

Il *Pigmalione*

Pigmalione [Pygmalion], 1987 (fig. 34) is the outcome of Cavaliere's reworking of a previous project that he started with his friend and colleague at Brera Vincenzo Ferrari.[462] The appearance of the work is halfway between conceptual and material; it is a sort of anthropomorphised landscape made of tangled metal matter. Cavaliere

[458] My translation from Italian: 'Il teatro coinvolge, stimola, o respinge.', Alik Cavaliere interviewed by Sebastiano Grasso, Sebastiano Grasso, "Alik Cavaliere, musica e parole. Per scene colorate", *Corriere della Sera*, Milan 24 May 1992.
[459] My adaptation from Italian: 'L'idea della teatralità per rappresentare l'irrappresentabile "essere" delle cose e coinvolgere.', Cavaliere's journal, November 1987.
[460] My adaptation from Italian: '[Le mie opere] possono subire una mutazione attraverso l'intervento esterno del fruitore che è libero di rompere lo schema fissato e di innestare varianti, sovvertire il racconto, […] mutarlo.' Cavaliere's journal, October 1987. The statement previously appeared in Alik Cavaliere, "Alik Cavaliere", in J. Dypréau, 1971.
[461] My adaptation from Italian: 'Consentire allo spettatore di muoversi all'interno dell'opera e ponendo "potenzialmente" in condizione di produrre avvenimenti.', Cavaliere's journal, March 1981.
[462] The work that Cavaliere made with Ferrari was titled *Pigmalione* as well, and it was showcased at the Mercato del Sale in Milan in 1995. On the other hand, Cavaliere's *Pigmalione* was exhibited at Museo Butti in Viggiù (VA) in 1997. *Pigmalione* by Cavaliere and Ferrari no longer exists.

explained the autobiographical nature of the work by stating that he originally wanted to title it *Viaggio* (journey) as he conceived it as 'a journey through his creative path'.[463]

At first sight, *Pigmalione* appears as a tangle of metallic wires. The hollow volumes and the visual prevalence of the line make *Pigmalione* more similar to a drawing than a sculpture; the sinuous, fine, and intricated metallic line stands out as the main character of the work.

Pigmalione is inspired by the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea in the version of Jean-Jacques Rousseau from 1770.[464] Originally, the myth was told by Roman poet Ovid in his text *Metamorphoses*. The myth is about a sculptor from Cyprus (Pygmalion) who falls in love with his wax sculpture, the statue of a woman that he called Galatea.[465] In Ovid's version, Pygmalion asks Aphrodite to transform Galatea into a woman in flesh and blood; once the goddess fulfils his wish, Pygmalion marries Galatea. In Rousseau's version, on the other hand, the relationship between Pygmalion and Galatea is less erotic and more psychological as it results in an overlap of identities between the creator and his creation. Once Galatea comes alive, Pygmalion suddenly becomes confused about his own identity and starts identifying himself with his creation. For her part, Galatea confirms such an overlap of identities by saying her famous line while pointing her finger to Pygmalion: 'me, not me, me again…'.[466] Therefore, Rousseau's version of the myth problematises the process of the art making. Is it the artist that makes the work or vice versa?

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[463] My adaptation from Italian: 'Potrei chiamare Pigmalione con un nuovo titolo: viaggio – viaggio in quello che è stato il mio lavoro'. Guido Ballo *Artisti allo specchio*, script for Mario Carboni (directed by) *Artisti allo specchio*, documentary, Milan: RAI 2, 1988, p. 2. Cavaliere's *Pigmalione* was preceded by five preparatory models that were shown at the Pinacoteca of Macerata in September 1987 – the show was titled *Voyage*, which means 'journey', indeed. For a discussion about *Pigmalione* scale models, see R. Bossaglia (ed.), 1987. Photographs of scale models no. 3-4 in E. Pontiggia, 2012, pp. 360-361.

[464] Alik Cavaliere, "Il Pimmalione", in Alik Cavaliere (ed.) *Alik Cavaliere*, exhibition catalogue, Viggiù: Museo Butti, 21 June – 6 September 1987.

[465] M. Bloom, 2003, p. 124.

[466] From a philosophical perspective, Rousseau's *Pygmalion* outlines a sort of ontology of the artistic creation. As Shierry M. Weber pointed out, Rousseau's perspective was based on an essential ontological overlap between the artist and the work. The dialogue between Galatea and Pygmalion when the statue becomes alive effectively expresses this perspective: Galatea indicates her body and then the body of Pygmalion and claims: 'Me'; Pygmalion confirms her claim: 'Yes, it's you, and only you: I gave you all my being'. According to Weber, Rousseau conceived the artist and the work in terms of consciousness and identity, although the relationship

From a visual perspective, *Pigmalione* is a large-scale hollow cubical structure filled with different items and metallic wires. The wires create sub-structures inside the main structure. The work appears as a chaotic and formless intricacy of metallic matter. However, by taking a closer look, it is possible to recognise a few shapes. The wires on two frontal sides of the main structure form hourglass shapes (fig. 34-34.1); furthermore, they provide the cubical structure with perspectival depth, converging toward an escape point at the centre of it.

Inside the main structure, different materials, textures, and items overlap. The viewer can spot an arboreal-floral work from the 1960s standing on a pedestal inside the structure; the arboreal-floral work stands behind an empty frame that Italian critic Francesca Porreca interpreted as a homage to René Magritte (fig. 34.3).[467] On the floor are several items, including pieces of bark painted in green, a stylised body made of metallic wires, and a terracotta bust (fig. 34-5). The objects form multiple paths going from the outside (the centre) to the inside (the surroundings) of the structure and vice versa. A dressing room is on the left side of the main structure. The dressing room is separated from the rest of the work by a wood panel depicting Galatea (fig. 34.4).[468] The female figure painted on the panel recalls an actress waiting to step into the scene. In line with this interpretation, behind the panel is a dresser with a mirror and theatre makeup.[469] Hung on the wall just above the mirror is a clock stopped at 12 pm/am (the brightest and darkest moments of the day). The clock looks imprisoned by a skein of red and pink wool.

The metallic wires inside the main structure form large-scale human profiles that recall evanescent ghosts (fig. 34 and 34.1). Critics interpreted the profile characterised by the aquiline nose as Cavaliere's and the ones characterised by more delicate features as Galatea's – as if Cavaliere overlapped himself with the

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between the two was often ambiguous. In other words, according to Weber, 'the work is the manifestation of the self of the artist, who takes a backseat and fades away behind his creation'. Full quotation in Shierry M. Weber, "The Aesthetics of Rousseau's Pygmalion", *Modern Language Notes* (*MLN*), Vol. 83, no. 6, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, December 1968, pp. 900-918.

[467] Francesca Porreca, "Sculpture as an Open Space, Where Everything can Happen", in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 134.

[468] The dressing room was separately tiled by Cavaliere: *Camerino-Memoria di Galatea* [Dressing Room-Memory of Galatea], 1986-1987. E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2012, p. 362.

[469] Ilaria Bignotti, "Alik Cavaliere-Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Gli (s)velati incanti", in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 149, F. Porreca, 2008, p. 32, A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 160.

figure of Pygmalion (the artist) and made a self-critical work about his relationship with his work.[470]

Porreca pointed out that *Pigmalione* embodies 'the identification of the artist with his work […] in a sort of mental labyrinth'.[471] This interpretation is supported by a note that Cavaliere wrote in 1987, in which he referred to *Pigmalione* as 'a tangled space that becomes a labyrinth in which the time stretches'; Cavaliere described the artist as 'a lost prisoner at the centre of this space'.[472] Considering this, the labyrinthine structure of *Pigmalione* physically recreates the core of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* – that is the overlap of identities between the work and the artist, who ends up physically dying to spiritually live in his creation. In a Rousseauesque sense, the work itself is, according to Porreca, the 'main character' of the story.[473]

While Porreca's observations provide valuable elements to approach the work, the following analysis will offer an additional angle of interpretation. By looking at the work more closely, the figures of Pygmalion and Galatea are not explicitly represented in terms of male and female characters; their representation is disembodied to the point that the association with the two characters of the story is only suggested by the title of the work more than the work itself. Moreover, the human figures inside the work are five, and only one has feminine features (the one drawn on the panel). The large-scale metallic profiles are gender-neutral and not identifiable as Pygmalion and Galatea; they could be the profiles of a child and an adult (young Cavaliere and old Cavaliere?) or the profiles of two people with noses shaped differently (the artist and the viewer? Two viewers?), etc.[474]

The third human figure is a stick body made of metallic wires lying on the floor just outside the main structure (fig. 34.5). The wires that form the silhouette of the body are painted in red, and the scene recalls a sort of crime scene showing the traces of a body that has been removed. The body is disembodied to the point that it gives the

[470] The wires are made of copper, brass, and iron, E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2012, p. 362.
[471] F. Porreca, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 134.
[472] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] uno spazio articolato che diviene labirinto, un tempo che si dilata e l'artista al centro dell'opera, prigioniero, perso.', A. Cavaliere, 1987.
[473] F. Porreca, in E. Pontiggia (ed.), 2018, p. 134.
[474] Porreca interpreted the profile with the pointed nose as representing Cavaliere. Porreca's interpretation was probably based on the fact that Cavaliere had similar facial features. Ibidem.

idea of being a reminiscence, an indexical trace pointing to an absence. The 'body' is still, cold, and evanescent except for its spiral-shaped abdomen, which suggests that something is happening behind such an apparent stillness. A small-scale terracotta half-bust stands on the right side of the body as if the body was keeping it in its right hand (fig. 34.5). Critics interpreted the half-bust as Cavaliere and the body on the floor as Galatea. From this perspective, the former would be engendered by the latter's spiral-shaped womb, as to suggest that is the work that makes the artist.[475]

However, the half-bust and the body on the floor are, again, not explicitly masculine or feminine. The half-bust resembles more a Roman putto than Cavaliere and could even recall Cavaliere's early social realist works; furthermore, it is unclear whether it has pectorals or a breast. Considering this ambiguity, the narrative relationship between the body and the bust could be the opposite of what the critics stated. In line with the overlap between the identities of the artist and the work that is at the core of Rosseau's *Pygmalion*, the body with the spiral-shaped abdomen could represent Cavaliere and the terracotta half-bust Galatea. From this interpretation, the spiral-shaped abdomen would represent Cavaliere's creative impulse and the half-bust the outcome of such an impulse – is it the artist who makes the work or vice versa?

The ambiguous nature of the four human figures opens the work to various and potentially unlimited interpretations. It is obscure who Pygmalion and Galatea are, and it is not even clear if the human figures in the scene are the characters of the story. Galatea could be the arboreal floral work on the pedestal (Cavaliere's creation); the terracotta bust could be a reference to Cavaliere's social realist works from the 1950s (and, thus, another 'Galatea'); the large-scale human profiles facing each other could be two visitors, Cavaliere and a visitor, or their 'ghosts' – as if they were sorts of remains of *Surroundings VII.*

In line with these interpretations, Cavaliere reflected on *Pigmalione* by describing it as 'a grid' to divide him from his practice and allow him to observe and reflect on it

[475] A. Schwarz, 2008, pp. 157-158. The idea that the terracotta bust is engendered by the spiral-shaped abdomen of the stick figure is also suggested by the presence of a piece of terracotta under the spiral-shaped abdomen (fig. 34.5).

from a little distance.[476] It seems that Cavaliere chose to rework the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea (which is the epitome of the ambiguous relationship between creator and creation) to examine and reassess his relationship with his own practice.[477]

As introduced in the first section, *Pigmalione* can be considered a sort of archive of Cavaliere's work. Objects from his artistic career and their placement inside the work create a labyrinth that can be seen as representing the development of Cavaliere's practice. From this perspective, the pieces of bark form a sort of Ariadne's thread showing possible connections among the different phases of Cavaliere's career and different parts of the installation. According to this interpretation, the stopped clock and the hourglass shapes made of metallic wires would represent the time passing by. Time goes by (the hourglass shapes), and the artist is stuck between his brightest (12 pm) and darkest (12 am) hours.

From the perspective of this analysis, the brightest hour is symbolised by the arboreal-floral work on the pedestal behind the empty frame. The reference to Magritte highlighted by Porreca supports this hypothesis since critics' interpretations of Cavaliere's arboreal-floral as a reworking of Surrealist aesthetics was a lucky one for Cavaliere at the beginning of his career.

The symbol of Cavaliere's darkest hour is more difficult to identify. It could be symbolised, again, by the reference to Magritte as an ironic kind of prophecy. Especially after Cavaliere's death, critics' interpretations of his works have focused on his debt to Surrealism, overlooking the other forces with which Cavaliere engaged. In line with this, the arboreal-floral work on the pedestal also recalls Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel,* 1913 (fig. 65), and this would support this interpretation

[476] My adaptation from Italian: 'Una griglia che si ponga fra me e l'oggetto artistico mio (tra pigmalione e galatea) consentendomi […] una comprensione e la possibilità di osservarsi.', Cavaliere's journal, February 1986.

[477] According to the journal, Cavaliere reflected on his path in order to 'build an inner architecture of his practice.' (My adaptation from Italian: '[…] il tentativo di una "riflessione"; il tentativo di una "precisazione" di percorso; […] il desiderio di "costruire" un'architettura interna al lavoro.'), ibidem.

as Duchamp was another lucky-unlucky influence that was stressed by critical approaches to Cavaliere's work.[478]

II.I Removal and Remains: Rousseau's *Pygmalion* and Cavaliere's *Pigmalione*

The events involving the representations of Rousseau's *Pygmalio*n in theatres offer a valuable angle for analysing *Pigmalione*. *Pygmalion* was staged for the first time at Fontainebleau for King Louis XV of France in 1772. In 1775, however, after a few replicas, Rousseau forbade the staging of his drama due to unclear reasons.[479] Belgian literary critic Georges Poulet interpreted Rousseau's choice of stopping the performance based on a previous text by Rousseau – namely, *Projet concernant de nouveaux signes pour la musique* (1742). Poulet noted how, in *Projet*, Rousseau reported the historical 'collapse' (*écroulement*) of the French musical language that he considered burdened by an excessive richness of signs, frills, and performative instructions. Poulet highlighted how Rousseau was concerned with the linguistic sign functioning as a mediator between ideas and their performed communication.[480] In short, Rousseau considered signs superstructures hiding and contaminating the truth of the work.

If concepts are signs for ideas, written words are signs for concepts, and spoken words are signs for written words. Therefore, spoken words are three stages away from the essence (the idea) of the work, which is, thus, reduced to a trace. In other words, Rousseau was concerned with the idea that the work would become just a residue when written on paper and then performed by actors on a stage. Therefore, for Rousseau, *Pygmalion* could exist only 'in negative' through the negation of the possibility of its performance.[481]

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[478] See Chapter 1, pp. 10-17, 25-29.

[479] Giovanni Morelli, Elvidio Surian, "Pigmalione a Venezia", in Maria T. Muraro (ed.), *Venezia e il melodramma nel Settecento*, Florence: Olschki, 1981, pp. 147-168.

[480] Georges Poulet, *Études sur le temps humain*, tome I, Paris: Plon, 1950, p. 40.

[481] In the last years of his life, Rousseau applied a similar perspective to his own existence by withdrawing from social life and living as a hermit to escape superstructures, social rules, and conventions. This information is provided by Rousseau's letters and, especially, Jean Jacques Rousseau, "A don Deschamps, 12 September

Rousseau's concern with the idea of the sign as a superstructure and his need to remove it to preserve the 'truth' (the essence) of the work has affinities with the *Via Negativa* theory. Although it would be inaccurate to draw specific parallels between the two perspectives as they belong to two different intellectual eras (respectively, the mid-18th Century Enlightenment and the 1960s), their proximity offers a beneficial angle to analyse Cavaliere's *Pigmalione*, which is a work explicitly inspired to Rousseau's *Pygmalion* and is, to an extent, in line with the principles of the *Via Negativa* theory.

The case of Rousseau's *Pygmalion* and the *Via Negativa* theory revolve around the idea of excess to remove. As for the *Via Negativa* theory (and its reworking by *Arte Povera*), the discourse concerns the reduction of the physical work to essential materials and shapes. In the case of Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, which is a theatrical piece, what had to be removed was the possibility for it to be embodied and acted.

In this context, the concept of the artistic sign as an indexical trace pointing to an absence is centre stage. In Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, the absence was determined by the negation of the possibility for the work to find a material shape without corrupting its truth. In Cavaliere's *Pigmalione*, the concept of absence is thematised through the representation of an idea of disembodiment; the work resembles a skeleton made of cryptic signs, inhabited by ghosts (the human profiles), and inaccessible to visitors either in physical or intellectual terms.

In Cavaliere's *Pigmalione*, the presence of human bodies is central; there is the body on the floor, the terracotta bust, and the human profiles inside the main structure. However, the work is a sharp, cold, and disembodied environment, and the characters are just evanescent presences. The structure of the work is hollow and filled with tangled shapes made of metal wire, and this gives the impression that the work is a sort of skeleton of a long-decomposed organism – Cavaliere's practice? The medium of sculpture?

1971", in Theophile Dufur (ed.), *Correspondance générale de J. J. Rousseau*, Vol. VI, Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1924-1934, p. 209.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the theme of remains had characterised Cavaliere's practice since the 1960s – from the fossil-like arboreal works to *Gustavo B.*, who dies and resuscitates through viewers' performances (*Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*). The theme of the remains is also part of *I Processi*, in which Shakespeare's texts are fragmented, and the main structure of the work resembles the skeleton of a stage. Then, in *Surroundings II, VII,* the theme of the remains is evoked by the idea of 'ghosts' inhabiting the house (the recorded voices and noises of a family having breakfast) and by the artworks that were progressively removed from the installation until only their traces were left. Therefore, Cavaliere consistently explored the function of the artistic sign as an indexical trace pointing to an absence.

Cavaliere explained his perspective in a note from 1984, in which he stated that he had used 'the void' to stimulate viewers' memories and active participation. [482] In this regard, Cavaliere insisted on the importance of not projecting the meaning of the work on the 'object', and, by 'object', he considered the physical work, words, signs, etc. – in short, everything that is supposedly passive and meant to be used by the viewer-subject. Conversely, Cavaliere highlighted the importance of seeking the meaning of the work in 'the links between the object and the real world'.[483]

Considering this, the kind of disembodiment pursued by Cavaliere goes in an opposite direction compared to the one pursued by Rousseau; the former is theatrical, while the latter is anti-theatrical. This difference is, however, more meaningful for my investigation if considered as a similarity. Indeed, both Rousseau and Cavaliere challenged and aimed to transcend the limits of a specific medium – the medium of sculpture in the case of Cavaliere and theatre in the case of Rousseau.

The challenge to medium specificities will be beneficial to examining a central aspect of Cavaliere's *Pigmalione* that will offer a productive ground to investigate his reworking of '*l'informale*'. This aspect is the theme of metamorphosis.

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[482] My adaptation from Italian: '[…] il vuoto, cioè l'assenza dell'opera creata in precedenza nello stesso spazio espositivo, per stimolare la memoria e la partecipazione attiva del singolo spettatore: la traccia.', Cavaliere's journal, March 1984, in G. Ballo, 1992, p. 145.

[483] My adaptation from Italian: 'Facendo attenzione a 'evitare l'errore di attribuire tutto il significato all'oggetto (alle parole) anziché al legame tra oggetto e mondo reale.', Cavaliere's journal, September 1985.

II.III Blurring the Boundaries between Art Media. From Painting to the Sculptural Environments

The word *Metamorphosis* comes from the Ancient Greek *meta* (litt., after, between) and *morphe* (litt., form). *Metamorphosis* means 'a process in which someone or something changes completely into something different'.[484] The theme of metamorphosis is not foreign to the critical literature on Cavaliere's practice, and Cavaliere himself addressed it in *Metamorfosi,* 1957-1961, a series of early sculptures recalling the tactile sensibility of *Art Informel*.[485]

In the late 1980s, Cavaliere recovered the topic of the metamorphosis and reworked it in *Pigmalione* and *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* which are inspired by two Greek myths about metamorphoses.[486] From the perspective of this analysis, it will be beneficial to examine Cavaliere's reworking of the theme of metamorphosis by investigating his late reworking of *l'informale* as the two inform each other. The analysis of the concept of the environment and its origin in art criticism will be particularly useful for the discussion. Moreover, the concept of the environment will help outline the transition from sculpture to installation undertaken by Cavaliere's practice from the 1960s to the 1980s. Additionally, the concept of the environment will clarify Cavaliere's reference to the medium of painting in *Pigmalione* (i.e., the arboreal floral work behind the empty frame).

In contemporary art criticism, the concept of the environment usually refers to installations; however, it was born in relation to painting. The first theory about the environment was outlined by Allan Kaprow to discuss Jackson Pollock's *informel* paintings. According to Kaprow, Pollock's canvases are environments as their formless quality erases the boundaries between the work and the external world. In this sense, Pollock's paintings 'give the impression of going on forever' as if the

[484] S.v. "metamprphosis", V.v. A.a., *Oxford Dictionary*, 2000.
[485] See Chapter 1, pp. 8. The series *Metamorphoses* was extensively analysed by Arturo Schwarz in A. Schwarz 2008, p. 62-69 and E. Pontiggia, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 27.
[486] The myth of Pygmalion tells of a sculptor from Cyprus (Pigmalion) who asks the goddess Aphrodite to transform one of his statues (Galatea) into a human being. The myth of Narcissus tells of a demigod (Narcissus), who falls in love with his image reflected by a pond, drowns by falling into the pond, and is then transformed by the gods into the homonymous flower. For the full stories, see Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, London: Cassel, 1968.

artwork was not the painted canvas but 'the experience of a *continuum* going in all directions'.[487]

Kaprow's concept of the environment is unintentionally yet significantly attuned to Martini's idea of the medium of painting stepping into the third dimension. The formless (*Informel*) quality of Pollock's paintings makes them overcome the two-dimensional limits of the canvas.

The intersection between the perspectives of Martini and Kaprow offers a valuable angle to explore *Pigmalione* as a sculptural environment. From this perspective, the arboreal-floral work on the pedestal behind the empty frame in *Pigmalione* can be seen as a reference to the juncture between the media of painting and sculpture in the development from three-dimensional sculptures to four-dimensional environments. According to this interpretation, the pedestal represents the celebratory purpose of sculpture, which, for Martini, has trapped sculpture into three dimensions. On the other hand, the empty frame can be seen as a reference to the medium of painting, which, conversely, has already found its way to overcome the limits of the two dimensions.[488] In other words, the presence of the arboreal-floral work on the pedestal behind the empty frame suggests that *Pigmalione* could be the outcome of Cavaliere's exploration of the boundaries between painting and sculpture, which resulted in the transformation of his three-dimensional sculptural practice into four-dimensional sculptural environments. In other words, *Pigmalione* can be seen as representing the metamorphosis of Cavaliere's sculptural practice.

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[487] Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollock"*, ARTnews,* October 1958*,* in J. Kelley (ed.), 1993, pp. 1-9. Kaprow outlined the theory of the pictorial environment as a theoretical ground for his happenings and to promote the idea that boundaries between different arts and media were obsolete. Kaprow's perspective was criticised by Modernist critics such as Michael Fried and Clement Greenberg, who, conversely, considered Pollock's canvases as one of the highest examples of Modernist formalism. For further discussion, see Hans Belting, *Art History after Modernism*, Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003 and Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone. Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*, Chicago-London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

[488] Kaprow specifically referred to Pollock's canvases, while Martini mentioned Cubism and Futurism as examples of painting stepping into the third dimension. For further discussion, see, respectively, A. Kaprow, 1958, in J. Kelly (ed.), 1993, pp. 1-9, and A. Martini, 1945, in M. De Micheli (ed.), 1992, p. 95.

II.IV Metamorphic Otherness: Oldenburg's *The Street,* 1960 and Cavaliere's *Pigmalione*, 1987

Germano Celant provided a valuable account of the sculptural environment, establishing a correlation between the latter and the theme of metamorphosis. In this regard, Celant drew a parallel between Pollock's pictorial environments and Oldenbug's early 'formless' installations. Celant's perspective highlights key features of Oldenburg's early works that resonate in Cavaliere's *Pigmalione,* as if the latter might be a reworking of the former. This hypothesis is based on the importance that Cavaliere's journals give to the figure of Oldenburg and will prove beneficial to investigate Cavaliere's reworking of '*l'informale*'.

According to Celant, Oldenburg's practice from the early 1960s can be considered a development of the discourse started by Pollock regarding the dissolution of the distinctions between the artist-maker, artwork-item, and viewer-participant. Pollock's canvases are shapeless, while Oldenburg's installations are shapeshifting; sometimes they are recognisable objects, and sometimes they are formless agglomerated of colours and textures, depending on the perspective of viewers.[489] In Oldenburg's work, the relationship between the artist, the artwork, and viewers is not erased as in Pollock's canvases; instead, it becomes fully horizontal – 'the object is no longer something under or above viewers, but it stands next to them, beside them; it is an object with a life of its own'.[490] Oldenburg's sculptural environments erode the dualism between the viewer and the work by making them part of a proteiform magma.

Chapter 1 discussed how the journals evidence that Cavaliere's reflections upon art paid particular attention to Oldenburg's work.[491] This chapter will advance the

[489] Oldenburg's sketchbooks provide examples of how Oldenburg conceived the shapeshifting nature of his works. In a sketchbook from 1963, for example, Oldenburg wrote the equation 'skyscraper = scissor' and sketched metamorphic figures, such as a triangular slice of pie becoming the trapezoidal shape of a typewriter in perspective. A copy of the notebook is held in the Ellen H. Johnson Papers, Archives of American Art. For further discussion, see J. Shannon, 2009, p. 31.

[490] Germano Celant, "Claes Oldenburg and the Feeling of Things", in Germano Celant, Dieter Koepplin, and Mark Rosenthal (eds.), *Claes Oldenburg, an Anthology*, New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1995, p. 12.

[491] See Chapter 1, pp. 30-32.

hypothesis that *Pigmalione* could be the outcome of Cavaliere's slow-digestion and late reworking of Oldenburg's influence. In this regard, it must be kept in mind, however, that the two artists developed their practices in response to two different socio-cultural contexts, and this will be visible in the two works that will be compared (Oldenburg's *The Street,* 1960 and *Pigmalione*).

As Joshua Shannon pointed out, in Oldenburg's work, and especially his early environments such as *The Street*, the representation of metamorphic environments was part of his attack on a vision of New York implemented through renewal and constructions aimed at controlling urban chaos and associated with class-based oppression.[492] On the other hand, it will be argued that, in *Pigmalione,* Cavaliere reworked the metamorphic quality of Oldenburg's work from an Italian-Humanistic perspective, addressing the Classical root of the concept of metamorphosis itself.

A close comparison between *Pigmalione* and *The Street* will aid with the examination of the metamorphic feature of *Pigmalione*.

The Street (fig. 66) was an installation consisting of silhouettes made of crinkled cardboard hanging from the ceiling, protruding from the walls, and spread out on the floor.[493] Critics, including Shannon, Celant, and Barbara Rose, described the chaotic nature of *The Street* as simultaneously pictorial and material and interpreted the work as a development of Pollock's formless pictorial environments and their refusal

[492] J. Shannon, 2009, pp. 10-48.

[493] The work no longer exists. Although I referred to the work as 'an installation' for convenience, it must be kept in mind that the term installation was not used by artists and critics in the 1960s. In 1960, Irving Sandler was the first to refer to *The Street* as 'an environment', in Irving Sandler, "*The Street* at the Reuben Gallery", *Artnews*, Summer 1960, p. 16. *The Street* was showcased for the first time at Judson Gallery, New York, in the winter of 1960, and it was redone later that year at Reuben Gallery, New York. Joshua Shannon described the work as follows: '*The Street* was a visual cacophony of cardboard, paper, newsprint, wood fragments, and black paint. The walls were covered with a brown and sooty-looking cardboard relief. […] Throughout close looking, viewers would have been able to make out at least nine major human figures and four small automobiles, among other forms […] The surviving exhibition photographs allow a fairly thorough reconstruction of the original installation. Entering the room and facing right, the visitor would have confronted a bearded man in a top hat, slumbering behind a shoe-shine stand […] farther to the left, but along the same wall, there stood mother figure, perhaps holding a gun in outstretched arms. As the viewer turned to her left, he would have approached a huge, silhouetted face looming in the corner and its hair of scrawled-out words. […] turning left again to face back toward the entrance, the viewer would have seen four major figures populating the remaining walls […] the last two, on the wall by the entryway, had indistinct bodies that seemed to merge.' J. Shannon, 2009, pp. 10, 16.

of legibility.[494] The work gathered scattered rotting bodies and illegible detritus belonging to a magmatic atmosphere that gave the impression that 'they dissolved in and among one another' – like a crowd of ghosts and shadows.[495]

The focus on the theme of death is central to examining *The Street*, as much as, with due differences, to examine *Pigmalione.* In *The Street,* the reference to death is quite violent, and it is expressed through semi-abstract representations of people holding guns and a 'cacophony' of shapes recalling rotting and decomposing corpses.[496] In *Pigmalione*, on the other hand, the reference to death can be evinced by the stick body lying on the floor and the skeletal appearance of the work, which suggests that the process of rotting ended, and now only remains are left – as if *Pigmalione* represented the aftermaths of the killing and rotting represented in *The Street*.

In *The Street* and *Pigmalione,* human characters and objects merge in a metamorphic architecture-landscape that erases the distinction between the inside and the outside – the centre and the surroundings of the works. In this sense, *The Street* and *Pigmalione* can both be seen as sculptural reworkings of the concept of environment in the sense that was outlined by Kaprow**.** However, since *Pigmalione* and *The Street* are installations and not canvases, the architecture, objects, and characters of the works are not dissolved as happens in Pollock's paintings. Indeed, the two installations create metamorphic environments in which the interplay between the different elements is configured and reconfigured in a never-ending process. This process simultaneously involves and repels viewers, who are compelled and confronted by the 'refusal of legibility' of the works, which, however, involve them both physically and intellectually by showing glimpses of recognisable shapes (such as the human figures and profiles that 'inhabit' both *The Street* and

[494] J. Shannon, 2009, p. 46; G. Celant, in G. Celant, D. Koepplin, and M. Rosenthal (eds.), 1995, pp. 12-30. Barbara Rose, *Claes Oldenburg*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1969, p. 41.
[495] G. Celant, in G. Celant, D. Koepplin, and M. Rosenthal (eds.), 1995, p. 23.
[496] The human figures holding guns can be seen as a reference to *Ray Gun,* which is probably the most important iconographical motif in Oldenburg's work. For further discussion on *Ray Gun* and its significance in Oldenburg's oeuvre, see Barbara Rose, "The Origins, Life, and Times of Ray Gun", *ArtForum,* November 1969, pp. 50-57.

Pigmalione like ghosts).[497] As for *The Street*, we can imagine viewers overwhelmed by the violent and magmatic chaos of the representation; as for *Pigmalione,* viewers are puzzled by the enigmatic and disembodied intricacy of the work. In both cases, the physical involvement of viewers is ambiguous. To an extent, viewers can walk through the installations, becoming part of them; however, a few parts of both the installations are separated from viewers, who can just watch from a distance.[498]

From the perspective of this analysis, the conflicted involvement of the viewer makes *The Street* and *Pigmalione* 'uncanny' in the sense that was discussed in Chapter 2. As for *The Street,* Celant highlighted how the magmatic and ghostly figures represented were 'pure otherness'.[499] They were pure otherness as the 'sign' that Oldenburg used to make them was reduced to its primordial shapeless and shapeshifting nature, threatening the viewer 'not to cohere, not to mean'. [500] Thus, viewers found themself immersed in an extraneous and disquieting magma of mysterious figures. Similarly, *Pigmalione* addresses the theme of otherness through its apparently shapeless appearance that forces viewers to pay more attention. When viewers look more carefully at the work, they will see human figures and profiles fluctuating like ghosts or lying on the floor like dead bodies.

From the perspective of this analysis, the human body lying on the floor in *Pigmalione* entails a meta-level of interpretation – a metal-level that explicates Cavaliere's reworking of the theme of objecthood and the idea of sculpture as a performative environment. According to this interpretation, the body can be seen as a reference to both the physical viewer and the object-like nature of the work of art. Differently from paintings, sculptural environments are essentially performative as they are fundamentally indexical; they always point to the physical presence of the viewer. As discussed in Chapter 2, the indexical quality of the medium of sculpture paved the way for the development from sculpture to installation. As discussed, the transition from sculpture to installation was perceived as 'uncanny' by a certain

[497] The present tense is used here for convenience. The most appropriate tense to describe *The Street* would be the past tense, as the work no longer exists.
[498] J. Shannon, 2009, p. 195. The information on *Pigmalione* comes from my analysis of the work based on photographs (fig. 34-34.5).
[499] G. Celant, in G. Celant, D. Koepplin, and M. Rosenthal (eds.), 1995, p. 23.
[500] J. Shannon, 2009, p. 33.

Modernist perspective (exemplified by Fried's *Art and Objecthood*) in that it 'killed' the principle of the discrete and autonomous work of art. From this perspective, *Pigmalione* can be seen as a 'crime scene' in which the body of the medium of sculpture is killed (the body on the floor) and resuscitated (the ghostly profiles inside the main structure) by the idea of sculpture as an environment.

II.V Visual Properties vs The Artist's Intention. *Pigmalione* Compared to Louise Bourgeois' *Cells*

The disquieting and tormented aesthetics of *Pigmalione* presents remarkable similarities with the series of works *Cells* by Louise Bourgeois (fig. 67-69). *Pigmalione* and the first *Cells* are contemporaries – the former is from 1986-1987, and the latter from 1987 to 2008. This section will examine similarities and differences between *Pigmalione* and the *Cells;* the friction between them and their critical receptions will add a further valuable level of interpretation to the analysis of *Pigmalione*.[501]

The *Cells* are large-scale cage-like environments made of metal and compiled with striking anthropomorphic or zoomorphic sculptural forms and everyday objects, such as pieces of furniture, mirrors, clothes, and fabric.[502] Curator Julienne Lorz highlighted the theatrical nature of the *Cells*, observing how they can be seen as a 'new sculptural category' that 'occupies a place somewhere between […] theatrical staging, environment, installation, and sculpture, which, in this form and quantity, is without precedent in the history of art'.[503]

The *Cells* and *Pigmalione* present noteworthy similarities. First, unlike other installations by their contemporaries, such as Joseph Beuys, the *Cells* and

[501] This study does not consider the *Cells* individually and does not delve into the analysis of Bourgeois' works. Therefore, the *Cells* are approached as a body of works, and the discussion only examines the recurring features that will serve for the analysis of Cavaliere's *Pigmalione*.
[502] Some sources consider *Articulated Liar* (1986) a precursor for *Cells*. See, for example, Monique Kawecki, *"The Champion Women Edition",* Ala Champ Magazine*, Issue 10, London-Tokio, November 2015, published online in May 2017:* https://champ-magazine.com/art/louise-bourgeous-structure-of-existence-the-cells *(accessed 15 September 2022).*
[503] Ibidem.

Pigmalione do not occupy an entire gallery space but are sorts of closed-off theatrical settings. Second, both the *Cells* and *Pigmalione* are architectural spaces resulting from the incorporation of pieces from the artists' previous works. Third, the works are characterised by Surrealist-evoking uncanny aesthetics and tormented references to the human body, which is often represented as a corpse or through dissembled body pieces.

Alex Potts highlighted how the *Cells* performatively engage with viewers and the surrounding environment in contradictory ways, which are similar to the ones discussed regarding *Pigmalione* and *The Street.* Viewers are prevented from physically entering the space of the installations, and yet the works invite them to explore their interiors through apertures, mirrors, and fence-like meshes.[504] The *Cells* and *Pigmalione* ambiguously interact with viewers, questioning and reassessing the relationship between an entity and the surrounding environment.[505]

The concept of the sculptural environment is brought into play by Bourgeois herself, who stressed the theatrical nature of the *Cells*:

> 'Two people constitute an environment, one person alone is an object. An object doesn't relate to anything unless you make it relate, it has a solitary, poor, and pathetic quality. As soon as you get concerned with the other person it becomes an environment, which involves not only you, who are contained but also the container. It is very important to me that people be able to go around the piece. Then they become part of the environment - although in some ways it is not an environment but the relation of two cells. Installation is really a form between sculpture and theatre […].[506]

Commenting on Bourgeois' statement, Potts pointed out that the theatrical quality of her work was in line with the one characterising Minimalist installations. Potts described the *Cells* as 'specific objects' juxtaposed in a contiguous way, explicitly rejecting formal Modernist compositions. Moreover, for Potts, Bourgeois' installations

[504] A. Potts, 2000, p. 367.
[505] Idem, p. 362.
[506] Louise Bourgeois*, Destruction of the Father, Reconstruction of the Father: Writings and Interviews 1923-1997*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1998, p. 210

demonstrate ‘a firm a grip’ on the formal logic of the viewer's interaction with the work as Minimalist.[507]

Differently from the disembodied aesthetics of *Pigmalione,* in which thin evanescent shapes are integrated with one another, the objects that form the *Cells* are a compact condensation of materiality and substance.[508]

As in the case of Oldenburg’s *The Street*, *Pigmalione* can be interpreted as the remains of the *Cells* and their reference to the human body as an uncanny presence. In other words, according to this analysis, *Pigmalione* shows the remains of Oldenburg’s and Bourgeois’ theatrical and anti-Modernist operations that resulted in the transformation of three-dimensional representations into four-dimensional environments engaging with viewers and the surrounding space in ambiguous and often disquieting ways.

II.V.I The Unconscious of the Artist and the Unconscious of Sculpture

Critical interpretations of the *Cells* agree on their strongly theatrical quality and highly emotional charge. However, interpretations diverge in assessing the significance of the emotional and psycho-dramatic nature of the works. The interpretative nuances of the theatrical and emotional qualities of the *Cells* will be beneficial to analyse *Pigmalione*.

Lorz based her interpretation of the *Cells* on Bourgeois’ statements, in which the artist linked her practice to her childhood traumas and stated the intention of transforming the process of art making into a cathartic experience. [509] In this regard, Lorz highlighted how the *Cells* were psychological microcosms expressing intense nuances of individual physical and phycological pain. According to Lorz, Bourgeois

[507] A. Potts, 2000, p. 361. A similar idea of environment was outlined by Donald Judd: '[A three-dimensional work] is something of an object, one single thing, [it is] open and extended, more or less environmental.’ Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959- I 975*, Halifax: Nova Scotia, 1975, p. 183.
[508] A. Potts, 2000, p. 369.
[509] Bourgeois underlined the emotional charge of her work by stating that ‘you have to tell your story and you have to forget your story. You forget and forgive. It liberates you.’ Monique Kawecki, May 2015 (accessed 15 September 2022).

aimed to express and process her personal experience by giving it a concrete shape that the public could experience.[510]

Conversely, Potts pointed out that Bourgeois' reference to personal obsessions and traumas was a provocation, and the stories represented in the *Cells* were allegories for the encounter between the viewers and the works.[511] Therefore, Potts argued that the psychodrama staged by Bourgeois regarded the viewer's engagement with the work and not the artist as an individual.

The friction between Lorz's and Potts' perspectives will now serve to examine the autobiographical quality of *Pigmalione*.

Critical interpretations of *Pigmalione* are in line with Lorz's approach. Francesca Porreca and Francesco Tedeschi, for example, contended that *Pigmalione* entailed an essential psychological and 'existential' side, according to which the work would represent Cavaliere's personal anxieties and desires as an artist.[512] Conversely, the present examination has considered *Pigmalione* as a reflection on the development of Cavaliere's practice from sculpture to the sculptural environment and, more broadly, on the aftermaths of the collapse of the Modernist idea of the discrete sculptural object. Therefore, this analysis is more in line with Potts' non-personal interpreting mode.

In the next pages, the discussion will compare *Pigmalione* and the *Cells* based on, first, Lorz's interpretation and, second, Potts' account of the latter. The comparison will be beneficial to clarify the central point of this analysis of *Pigmalione*.

Considering Lorz's interpretation of the *Cells*, Bourgeois and Cavaliere showcased two different kinds of traumas and 'biographies' in their works by using similar

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[510] The psychological-existential interpretation of the *Cells* was central to the 2015 Guggenheim exhibition. Julianne Lorz, the curator of the exhibition, pointed out how a sensitive relationship with her father became an important subject matter for Bourgeois later in her career. Bourgeois described her mother as 'an intelligent, patient and enduring, if not calculating, person', who would turn a blind eye to her father's infidelity with their English teacher and nanny. According to Lorz, Bourgeois' personal life became an instigator for Bourgeois' work, a way to aid her in the healing of turbulent moments and repressed memories. Julienne Lorz (ed.), *Louise Bourgeois. Structures of Existence: The Cells,* exhibition catalogue, 27 February 2015 – 2 August 2015, Bilbao and Munich: Guggenheim Bilbao and Prestel Publishing, 2015, p. 20.

[511] A. Potts, 2000, pp. 361-362.

[512] F. Porreca, in F. Porreca (ed.), 2008, pp. 32-33; F. Tedeschi, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 61.

structures and aesthetics and sophisticatedly exploring the juncture between sculpture and installation. The *Cells* address the development of the artist as an individual; on the other hand, *Pigmalione* addresses the development of the practice of the artist. While, according to Lorz, the theatrical nature of the *Cells* invites viewers to feel the artist's pain, according to this examination, *Pigmalione* stages how Cavaliere responded to the metamorphosis that the medium of sculpture has undergone since the 1960s. From this perspective, the surrealist elements that are visible in *Pigmalione* (i.e., the arboreal-floral work behind the empty frame) do not refer to the artist's unconscious as an individual; instead, they refer to the artist's aim of investigating the 'unconscious' of the medium of sculpture – namely, its indexical and interactive nature that is at the basis of the idea of the sculptural environment. The *Cells* primarily challenge viewers emotionally, while *Pigmalione* intellectually. Not by chance, Cavaliere chose Rousseau's version of the myth of Pygmalion, which, in line with the Enlightenment perspective, focuses on the cerebral side of the story instead of the sensual one (which, on the other hand, is more present in the Classical version of the myth in which Pygmalion marries Galatea).

Therefore, this analysis of *Pigmalione* is more in line with Potts' account of the *Cells*, which considers the uncanny and tormented aesthetic of the works as representing disquiets and anxieties inherent to the artist's practice instead of the artist as a person. However, while Potts pointed out that the psychodrama staged by Bourgeois concerned the intense relationship between the viewer and the work, I argue that, in *Pigmalione*, Cavaliere discussed the transformation of the medium of sculpture into an environment *per se*, leaving the role of the viewer in the background.

From this perspective, while the presence of viewers and the artist was centre stage in *Surroundings*, it is a sort of suppressed memory in *Pigmalione,* in which human presences are represented as evanescent and disembodied shapes, glimpsing to and disappearing from the viewers' gaze.

The following section will investigate how Cavaliere developed the interaction between the viewer, the work, and the artist's self in *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, which this analysis considers as a culmination of all the issues and perspectives discussed.

Section 2 – *Le riflessioni di Narciso*: Deconstructing the Box, Deconstructing the 'Self'

III Narcissus' Reflections

Le riflessioni di Narciso [Narcissus' Reflections], 1989 is an installation based on the myth of Narcissus as told by Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* The work is a squared structure two-meter high, resembling a magician or a treasure box of monumental proportions (fig. 35).[513] At the bottom of the structure is a bicycle wheel laying horizontally, which Schwarz interpreted as a homage to Duchamp – as he considered the arboreal floral work behind the empty frame in *Pigmalione* a homage to Magritte.[514] The box contains a collection of small items and is surrounded by several mirrors juxtaposed in the shape of a concave shield hiding the contents of the box from direct sight (fig. 35.1). Indeed, the contents of the box are both hidden and shown by the mirrors, which reflect and multiply them, visually augmenting the space of the installation and the time of viewers' experience. Viewers can only explore the contents of the box by looking in the mirrors. However, the concave shape of the mirrors fragments and twists the reflected images. Thus, the wholeness of the work is out of reach for viewers, who can just collect its fragments. Moreover, the mirrors reflect fragmented images of the viewers themselves and the surrounding space that become, thus, part of the installation through the reflection.

The title 'Narcissus' reflections' is a word game that refers both to the multiple reflections given by the mirrors and the intellectual kind of reflection that Cavaliere aimed to spark in viewers by simultaneously rejecting and involving them. The box contents are protected from the viewers' direct sight and offered to them through shredded mirror reflections. In turn, the mirrors offer the viewers the work as reflected images themselves. In this sense, the viewers share the same space as the

[513] F. Porreca in E. Pontiggia (ed. by), 2018, p. 44; A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 161.
[514] A. Schwarz, 2008, p. 165.

work while being excluded by it. The mirror shield makes the viewers view and be viewed at the same time and shreds all the images into million pieces.

The box looks like a treasure chest, a magic box, a space module, or an operating table on which Cavaliere's practice is being dissected. Furthermore, from the perspective of this analysis, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* can be seen as a development of *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*. The structures of both works are sorts of boxes (respectively, a magic box and a jukebox) that call viewers to act. In both cases, the action consists in getting closer and looking in the mirrors to disclose hidden parts of the work. As viewers do what the work is asking, they become part of the work. In other words, viewers are transformed by the works that simultaneously make them active subjects (viewing) and passive objects (viewed). In both cases, the identity of the viewers reflected by the mirrors overlap with the identities of the characters of the works – Gustavo B. and Narcissus. The two works also share some formal features, such as the presence of funeral-looking roses that give a funeral atmosphere to the works.

According to this analysis, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* is an installation that takes stock of Cavaliere's practice and its implications. The analysis of the contents of the box will clarify this point. Inside the box are one terracotta head, one chalk head, and two porcelain faces, eerily looking at viewers through the mirrors (fig. 35.1). Based on a remarkable likeness with Cavaliere, the terracotta head was interpreted as Cavaliere's self-portrait.[515] The head is three-faced, and each face looks in a different direction. On the left of the terracotta head stands the chalk head, which is characterised by a menacing expression raising questions about its identity – is it Cavaliere himself criticising his own work? Or a harsh art critic, perhaps? The heads are surrounded by four mirrors.

For their part, the two porcelain faces have painted uncanny eyes and hair made of red and blue gift-box ribbons; four of them lie on four plates as they are there to feed the viewer. Both the terracotta and porcelain faces are 'animated' by the mirrors as their expressions slightly shapeshift according to the angle from which viewers look

[515] Ilaria Bignotti, "Le riflessioni di Narciso", in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 154.

at them through the mirrors. Except for Cavaliere's, the identity of the faces is mysterious, and their shapeshifting nature makes them seem uncannily alive.[516]

At the bottom of the box is a sort of hidden compartment that is also made of mirrors. Inside, viewers can spot written sheets of paper and a photograph of *Surroundings V* – which is the first work by Cavaliere in which real actors come into play. Considering this, it seems that Cavaliere wanted to keep track of the genetic patrimony transmitted by his previous works, from the arboreal floral works (the roses on the edge of the box) to *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* (the uncanny play of mirrors and the reworking of the theme of the box), and *Surroundings* (the interaction between viewers and actors represented by the shapeshifting terracotta faces/masks).[517]

Moreover, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* can be interpreted as a further development of the discourse concerning the interplay between the centre of the work and its surroundings. In *Surroundings I-VII*, the interplay was addressed by the interaction between the actual works (which, in most cases, were walkable and inhabitable environments), the artist (who, in *Surroundings VII*, was physically present inside the work), and viewers (which are traditionally confined in the surroundings of sculptural works and, in *Surroundings*, were explicitly involved as central parts of the work).

Considering the ground covered, in *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* the interplay between the centre and surroundings of the work is activated on two different levels by the interplay between the box and the mirrors surrounding it. Viewers can access the contents of the box (the centre) through the shredded reflections of the mirrors (the surroundings). Furthermore, the mirrors reflect the images of the viewers standing around the installation and the exhibition site (the surroundings) inside the work (the centre). In both cases, the 'centre' and the 'surroundings' of the work become twisted and shredded images reflected by the mirrors.

[516] The information regarding the shapeshifting nature of the terracotta and porcelain heads is provided by Ibidem.
[517] Francesco Tedeschi analysed *Le riflessioni di Narciso* as a sort of 'portable museum' showcasing finds from Cavaliere's previous phases as a provocation against the idea of institutional art that was showcased in museums. F. Tedeschi, in Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 63.

From the perspective of this analysis, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* and *Pigmalione* can be seen as two parts of the same discourse. The works are inaccessible to viewers in a physical sense, but they are still eager to communicate with them through ghostly and sometimes uncannily animated anthropomorphic figures. Among these figures is Cavaliere himself, who is subjected to the effect of the *Via Negativa.* In *Surroundings VII,* Cavaliere was a physical and talkative presence in flesh and blood; on the other hand, in *Pigmalione* and *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* he progressively fades away and is replaced by what can be seen as his *imago mortis,* indexically pointing to his invisible presence (e.g., the human profiles and the terracotta faces).

In *Pigmalione*, the presence of Cavaliere is ambiguously suggested by the metallic human profiles, the terracotta bust, and the body on the floor. On the other hand, in *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, the presence of Cavaliere is suggested by the terracotta heads uncannily animated by the mirrors. Both in *Pigmalione* and *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* the self of the artist is ambiguously evoked and surrounded by other presences. Among these presences are viewers, which, in *Pigmalione,* are physically kept at a distance in the surroundings of the work and, in *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* are physically kept at a distance in the surroundings of the work and virtually projected at the centre of the work by the mirrors.

III.I Deconstructing the 'Box': *Le riflessioni di Narciso* as Cavaliere's Reworking of Robert Morris' Mirror Cubes

As discussed in the previous section, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* can be seen as a development of the theme of the 'box', which Cavaliere first addressed in *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento.* This point is particularly significant as it bridges Cavaliere's practice with the epitome of the changes involving three-dimensional representations and their models of spectatorship since the 1960s – namely, the box.

Since Glueck's review "Box is a Box is a Box" appeared in the *New York Times* in 1968, the box has become the quintessence of American neo-avant-garde

challenges to the Modernist idea of the work of art as an autonomous entity.[518] As discussed in Chapter 2, this challenge led to the acknowledgement of what Robert Morris called 'a new space of object-subject terms'.[519] According to these 'new terms', the work would result from its contingent relationships with viewers and the surrounding space.[520]

Among the several reworkings of the trope of the box, *Untitled*, 1965 – 1971 (fig. 70) by American Minimal artist Robert Morris and the mirror boxes (fig. 72-74) by Greek-born American eclectic artist Lucas Samaras offer valuable terms of comparison to analyse *Le riflessioni di Narciso.*

Samaras outlined a sort of kinship between the cube and the box: 'art has gone through many disguises in the past ten years, and the box, the cube (or their absence – cavity/excavation) have played a substantial role.'[521] The main difference between a box and a cube regards the roles played by the inner and outer spaces. The cube is impenetrable; it stands centre stage in viewers' fields of vision and divides the field of vision into two parts – a centre (the work) and its surroundings. On the other hand, the box is shaped like a cube (or like any geometric solid) but works as a container (or a 'vessel'). In other words, the cube is inaccessible, while the box is meant to be accessed because it has the function of containing things. Therefore, the cube has a seclusive and discrete nature similar to monuments, while the box belongs to the realm of everyday items because it has a practical purpose that implies a merging between the inside and the outside spaces. Based on these features, the trope of the box took centre stage in the revision of the medium of sculpture by neo-avant-garde practices.

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[518] G. Glueck, 1968, p. 54.

[519] Robert Morris (1968) "Notes on Sculpture Parts 2" quoted in H. Foster, 1996, p. 50. One of the goals of Minimal artists was to produce work that would engage the surrounding space and viewers, whose perception would shift as they move through space. Further discussion in V.v. A.a., "Constructing Space*", Moma Learning* https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/minimalism/constructing-space/ (accessed 24 January 2023). This perspective was extensively discussed by Robert Morris himself in Robert Morris, *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994.

[520] H. Foster, 1996, p. 50.

[521] Robert Doty (ed.), *Lucas Samaras*, exhibition catalogue, 18 November 1972 – 7 January 1973, New York: Whitney Museum of America Art, 1972, p. 54.

Morris' *Untitled* consists of four cubes (1 m ca.) covered by mirror panels standing in two rows at equal distances from each other. When nobody is around, the cubes are transparent; however, when viewers arrive, they turn into screens showing fragments of the viewers' bodies. The work plays with the themes of objectivity and subjectivity as the cubes reflect literal images of what stands in front of them by segmenting and fragmenting it. Depending on their position, viewers can see a portion of their own reflections. Furthermore, mirrors reflect each other by multiplying the reflected images and expanding the space of the work. Thus, the reflected images of the 'centre' (the cubes that reflect each other) and the surroundings (the viewers and the surrounding space) merge, and the work becomes the result of this merging.

In this sense, *Untitled* can be seen as a literal challenge to the Modernist principles of wholeness and a 'transparency' discussed in Chapter 2.[522] The work is literally 'transparent' when nobody is around and becomes a fragmented and twisted spatial-temporal experience when viewers come around. Viewers cannot grasp the whole work because the work comprises the infinite possible perspectives that can be gathered only by moving through the space of the installation. However, the space of the installation itself shapeshifts at any movement and as soon as someone else steps into the visual field.

Annette Michelson observed how *Untitled* questioned the seclusive nature of sculpture by merging the 'inside' with the 'outside' of the work and integrating the presence of viewers into the art object. In *Untitled*, mirrors function as semi-theatrical devices to expand the temporal and spatial dimension of the work and question the idea of sculpture as a discrete object standing centre stage in viewers' fields of vision. In other words, mirrors transform the work into an environment in which viewers can uncannily envision 'what it would feel like to be an object or to do things with these objects'.[523]

Considering this, mirrors entail the uncanny power to objectify viewers, animate the work, and blur the distinction between the subject and object of the work experience.

[522] See Chapter 2, pp. 70, 77.
[523] Annette Michelson, "Robert Morris – An Aesthetics of Transgression", in V.v. A.a., *Robert Morris*, exhibition catalogue, 24 November – 28 December 1969, Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1969, p. 35.

As literally staged in *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*, mirrors cast viewers into performative roles. In this sense, mirror-based sculptural works are both imprisoning and liberating. They are imprisoning as they cast viewers into the work, exposing them as 'objects' and 'forcing' them to perform; they are liberating as they open the work to multiple perspectives. Above all, mirrors allow viewers to break free from the binary distinction according to which they are active subjects looking at a passive object.

In 1989, Cavaliere wrote a comment about *Le riflessioni di Narciso* that, according to this analysis, is in line with Morris' idea of the 'new space of object-subject terms'. For Cavaliere, the mirror shield surrounding the box in *Le riflessioni di Narciso* expands the spatial-temporal framework of the work and transforms the latter into an interlacing of various perspectives.[524] It almost seems that Cavaliere meant the mirror shield as a dismantled mirror cube that he recreated in a two-dimensional shape as if he wanted to stress the pictorial origin of the concept of the environment and the new space of subject-object terms inherent to it. In *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* the work, the viewer, and the surroundings essentially inform each other; as soon as viewers change their point of view, the whole spectacle changes.[525] The work, therefore, results from the viewers' activity of gathering fragmented images, and viewers simultaneously are active subjects and passive objects (reflected images). In this sense, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* literally shatters the Modernist formalist idea of the autonomous work of art into million pieces – the million possible perspectives of the viewers reflected by the mirrors.

A key difference between the use of mirrors by Morris and Cavaliere is the role of the artist. In *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, the rejection of Modernist self-focused and private modes of spectatorship is achieved through the intersection between the presence of viewers and the presence of the artist inside the work (i.e., the terracotta heads). On

[524] 'The story expands in time and space; the viewer will get lost in all the "possible" perspectives that I put in the work.' (My adaptation from Italian: 'il racconto dilatato nello spazio, nel tempo, dove lo spettatore può perdersi là […] nei riferimenti "possibili.")', Cavaliere's journal, July 1989.

[525] My adaptation from Italian: 'un centinaio di immagini specchiate e non è mai possibile vederne la totalità, ma è possibile ricostruire con molta pazienza, da varie angolazioni, molti aspetti', Alik Cavaliere, *Alik Cavaliere. La scultura e i luoghi*, script for Antonia Mulas (directed by), *Alik Cavaliere. La scultura e i luoghi*, documentary, Milan: RAI, 1983, p. 9.

the other hand, the presence of the artist is mostly foreign to Minimalist works, which focus on the relationship between the work and the viewer – as if the work was an auto-generated entity (a 'presence' itself) rather than the outcome of a subjective impulse. Indeed, the purpose of Minimalist artists was not to express their impulses, fears, desires, or sensibilities but, instead, to investigate and question the medium of sculpture *per se*.

The previous section demonstrated that Cavaliere's practice could be seen as staging a metamorphosis of the medium of sculpture and related modes of spectatorship. Based on this, the following pages will explore how Cavaliere conjugated the purpose of exploring the medium of sculpture *per se* with the choice of inserting his presence as part of the work and calling viewers into play as mediators.

III.II The Self and the Other: *Le riflessioni di Narciso* Compared to Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Mirror Paintings*

From the perspective of this analysis, the deconstruction of the mirror box in *Le riflessioni di Narciso* marks a further step in the discourse that Cavaliere introduced in *Pigmalione* regarding the deconstruction and reconfiguration of the artist's self through the work of art. Indeed, both the myths of Pygmalion and Narcissus revolve around the issue of the self and the self-reflective interplay with others. In the myth of Pygmalion, the 'other' is the artist's creation (Galatea); on the other hand, in the myth of Narcissus, the 'other' is the image of Narcissus himself reflected by the lake. In both cases, the theme of the self comes into play through a projection on (Pygmalion) or a reflection of (Narcissus) the other.

To investigate how and with what purpose Cavaliere developed the interplay between the self and the others in his work, it will be beneficial to compare *Le riflessioni di Narciso* with works by two artists from the same period who made mirror-based works to reflect on the topic. These are Michelangelo Pistoletto's Mirror Paintings (*Quadri Specchianti*, 1962-2013 fig. 71) and the already-mentioned Lucas

Samaras' *Boxe*s (1963-1989 fig. 72-74). From the perspective of this analysis, the works of Pistoletto and Samaras offer two complementary examples to investigate Cavaliere's use of mirrors as semi-theatrical devices to mediate between the self and others.

The mirror paintings are bi-dimensional surfaces that Pistoletto transformed into multi-dimensional interactive environments.[526] In this sense, the mirror paintings bridge the media of painting and installation as they simultaneously are two-dimensional environments and four-dimensional installations, as to remember that the concept of the artwork as an environment originally comes from painting.

The mirror paintings are mirror-finished polished steel with applied images of animals and human figures ('noble subjects', Martini would say).[527] The still (painted or photographed) figures uncannily camouflage with the living and moving figures of viewers reflected by the mirror. Such a camouflage takes the Minimalist idea of the work as a 'presence' interacting with external circumstances to another level. Through reflection, viewers and the surroundings become parts of the work, and the work becomes, thus, a self-portrait of the surroundings. Therefore, art (the work) and non-art (the surrounding ordinary reality, including viewers) merge and overlap. The figures on the mirroring surfaces are surrounded by the reflected viewers and vice versa (fig. 71).

In the mirror paintings, the reflected images are not fragmented or distorted like in Morris' *Untitled* and Cavaliere's *Le riflessioni di Narciso*; conversely, the reflected images are clearly framed by square or rectangular spaces. In this sense, the mirroring surfaces are like stages for viewers to observe their own reflections surrounded by the still figures applied on the mirrors, as well as by the reflections of

[526] See for example Michelangelo Pistoletto, *I visitatori* [Visitors], 1978 (fig. 71).

[527] In the 1960s, Pistoletto started applying painted paper on mirrors; then, in the late 1960s, he experimented with images made by tracing enlarged photographs on film paper. In 1971, Pistoletto replaced the painted paper with a silkscreen process, in which the original photograph was transferred directly onto the mirroring surface – and that became the definitive technique. In the mirror paintings, six categories of activities are 'performed' by the figures: these are acts of self-reflection, voyeuristic contemplation, aesthetic immersion, ordinary encounters between people, artistic activities (such as drawing, dancing, or taking photographs), and political acts (such as demonstrations). For an extensive analysis of the mirror paintings, see Michael Auping, Pascal Gielen, Jeremy Lewison (eds.), *Michelangelo Pistoletto. Mirror Paintings: Mirror Works*, Berlin: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2011.

other viewers. Therefore, the mirror paintings question the idea of the self as an authority and suggest that the concept of identity itself results from an interplay with others.

The idea of the self as resulting from an interplay with other selves is central for an understanding of *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, which can be considered as a deconstructive reworking of Morris' *Untitled,* entailing a purpose close to Pistoletto's mirror painting.

In *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, the box is shattered into million pieces and transformed into a panel (or a shield), showing the coexistence of multiple perspectives. In this context, the configuration of the self (the self of the artist, of viewers, and of the work itself) results from the dynamic interlacing of gazes and reflections. From this perspective, the terracotta and porcelain faces inside the box have a similar function to the still figures applied on the mirror paintings. The heads and the still figures lead viewers to consider their relationship to more than a single protagonist or object of representation and question their authority, showing that their perceptions are partial and subjected to other perceptions. In this sense, in *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, the reflected images of the viewers and the artist (the terracotta head) are no longer self-referential as they become part of a quasi-performative infrastructure in which various (and potentially infinite) players are involved – the artist, the viewer, other viewers, the characters of the work, and the surrounding space. From this perspective, the deconstruction of the mirror cube in *Le riflessioni di Narciso* can be seen as a deconstruction of the narcissistic selves involved in the experience of a work of art (the self of viewers, of the artist, and of the work itself).

In line with the discourse that Cavaliere started with *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*, the presence of mirrors as quasi-theatrical devices in *Le riflessioni di Narciso* further undermines the idea of the work as a discrete object and implements the idea that the 'self' of the work, the self of the artist, and the self of viewers do not exist *per se*, but results from a complex and multifaceted interplay between each other. The various selves in question are multiplied by the mirrors and challenged by the potential intrusion of other selves. Based on the ground covered, such an

intricate interplay between various 'selves' can be seen as Cavaliere's invitation to viewers to engage in the process of dismantling the idea of the work of art as an autonomous object and the idea of the self as autonomous from others.

If this is the case, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* entails a purpose close to Cavaliere's ideas discussed in Chapter 3 regarding the aim of 'awaking' viewers' critical skills in order to develop a collective discourse in which every singularity would matter.[528]

Pistoletto expressed similar ideas regarding the mirror paintings: 'there is a community between us'.[529] However, while this perspective took an explicitly political turn in Pistoletto's works, the same did not happen in Cavaliere's. Indeed, in Cavaliere's works, the political side of the question of intersubjectivity is only implicitly suggested in general terms and without references to specific events.[530] One of these general terms is the idea of overcoming the self as the prime narcissistic mode of perception and acknowledging that there are multiple selves, and that 'reality' is made by the interrelations between all of them – in Cavaliere's words, 'a reality more real than reality itself'.[531]

III.III From Subjectivity to Intersubjectivity: *Le riflessioni di Narciso* Compared to Lucas Samaras' *Boxes*

As discussed, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* consists of two main parts: the mirroring shield (which can now be called 'the deconstructed mirror cubes') and the box. Since the contents of the box are fully accessible only through the mirrors, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* can be seen as a synthesis between the tropes of the cube and the box.

[528] See Chapter 3, pp. 96.
[529] Dave Hickey, "A Voice in the Mirror: Critical Reflections in the I/Eye of the Artist", in Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Mirror – Works*, exhibition catalogue, 16 February - 15 April 1979, Houston: Institute for the Arts, Rice University, 1983, p. 9.
[530] Examples of Pistoletto's political mirror paintings are *Vietnam,* 1965 and *No to the Increase of the Tram Fare,* 1965. As for Cavaliere's ethical idea of art, see Chapter 3, pp. 96-98, 101, 137.
[531] My adaptation from Italian: 'Una realtà inventata e più vera al tempo stesso'. Cavaliere's journal, May 1963.

In order to understand the implications inherent to this synthesis, it will be helpful to look at the work of Lucas Samaras, who reworked the trope of the box and the function of the mirror by stressing the focus on the artist's self.

Since the 1960s, Samaras has consistently explored the intersections between the theme of the self and the trope of the box, from his first mirror *Box,* 1963 (fig.72) to his Surrealist-inspired boxes from the late 1980s (e.g., *Box #124*, 1988, fig.73 and *Box #131*, 1989, fig.74).

Samaras' mirror *Box* can be seen as an exploration and questioning of the idea of the work of art as a vessel. While boxes are originally apt to contain things, Samaras' *Box* refuses its function of being a container and gives the impression of casting the inside outside through a play of mirrors. In this sense, Samaras' *Box* can be seen as the other side of the coin of the discourse started by Morris' *Untitled.* In *Untitled,* Morris questioned the seclusive nature of the sculptural object (exemplified by the cube) by making mirror cubes that could bring the surrounding space to the centre of the work. Samaras' *Box,* on the other hand, gives the illusion that the centre of the work is accessible (the box is open), while it is, in fact, just a reflection of what surrounds it – the box only contains the surroundings because it is entirely covered with mirrors. In other words, Samaras' *Box* gives the illusion of offering its contents to the gaze of viewers, while the only thing that viewers can see is themselves reflected by the mirrors.

In the subsequent boxes, Samaras developed the interplay between the centre and the surroundings of the work (the inside and the outside of the box) on the level of an interplay between the private and public spheres, addressing his wish to simultaneously expose to and hide himself from the public.

Over more than fifteen years, Samaras developed the theme of the artist's self by reworking the trope of the box: from the conflicted narcissistic impulse inherent to the mirror *Box* to the theme of autobiography characterising the boxes from the late 1980s.

Samaras' boxes are sorts of treasure chests displaying enigmatic objects cryptically evoking the themes of identity and personal experience (such as cropped photographs, mirrors, and limbs - fig. 72-74). Donald Kuspit emphasised the autobiographical side of Samaras' boxes and claimed that 'Samaras has mythologised his traumatic experience', and his boxes are 'like wombs with much evil and violence in them, and no hope at the bottom, except for Samaras' mirror image'.[532] In other words, for Kuspit, Samaras is present in his boxes as a wounded Narcissus, who wants to hide and yet cannot resist showing himself.

In the late 1960s, Samaras' boxes took a sort of psychedelic turn that is foreign to Cavaliere's aesthetics. However, based on the features discussed, Samaras' later boxes nevertheless offer a valuable angle to investigate *Le riflessioni di Narciso*.

Considering the ground covered, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* and Samaras' boxes share the same idea of reworking the theme of objecthood (of which the box is one of the epitomes) by playing with the limitations of two- and three-dimensional representations and the interplay between the self and the others. Samaras and Cavaliere transformed the trope of the box into a setting for the unfolding of spatial-temporal interplays between the inside and the outside of the work, the centre and the surroundings, the artist, the work, and the viewers. In other words, both Samaras' boxes and *Le riflessioni di Narciso* can be seen as settings to explore the interplay between the private space of the artist and the public space of the viewers (and vice versa). In Samaras' boxes and *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, the interplay is complexified by the use of layers, fragments, mirrors, and hidden compartments that break the flow of the images and question the centrality of the perceiving and perceived self.

[532] Donald Kuspit stressed the autobiographical nature of Samaras' works by making connections between them and the artist's experience of the Second World War and the Greek Civil War (1946–1949) as a child. Kuspit interpreted Samaras' boxes as representations of how the artist 'hunkered in on himself in a hostile world and created a small inner space, womblike and reclusive, where he could hold out against the world, a space not unlike the cave in which he hid from the Germans with his mother and aunts'. Donald Kuspit, "The Aesthetics of Trauma", in Marla Prather, *Unrepentant ego. The Self-Portraits of Lucas Samaras,* New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2004, pp. 46-47.

Despite these similarities, Samaras' practice has been frequently interpreted as a result of a narcissistic drive, while Cavaliere's as a re-negotiation of selfhood in relation to multiple others.[533] However, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* entails the theme of narcissism given the title, and this detail cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, a few public statements by Cavaliere highlighted that the theme of the self has a conflicted role in *Le riflessioni di Narciso*. On the one hand, Cavaliere claimed that he wanted to 'tell himself through a thousand of mirroring images'; on the other hand, he stressed the fragmented and ungraspable nature of those images that 'reflect other than themselves', 'imprisoning' him'.[534] Considering this, the following pages will elaborate on the parallel between Samaras' boxes and *Le riflessioni di Narciso* to investigate the role of the self in the latter.

III.III.I Who is Narcissus?

The modern concept of narcissism, which indicates one's obsession with themself, comes from the very myth of Narcissus, who falls in love with his own reflection to the point of dying for it. Cavaliere's use of the box as a treasure chest containing autobiographical items multiplied by the mirrors suggests that, at the end of his career, he was obsessed with his practice. However, in line with Cavaliere's ambiguous style, the narrative of the myth of Narcissus is subtly transformed by the work, and this suggests that its message is less expected than one might think.

In *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, the disposition of the two main fields of action involved in the myth – the lake and Narcissus – is overturned. Instead of being at the bottom,

[533] For further discussion on the narcissistic aspects of the work of Samaras, see Kim Levin, *Lucas Samaras,* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1975, p. 69 and Philip Tsiaras, "The world according to Samaras", in V.v. A.a., *Lucas Samaras: Me, Myself, And…,* New York: PACE Gallery, 2020, p. 30. For an alternative interpretation of Samaras' work as an exploration of the theme of the self as a portal to the exploration of otherness, see Cristina Abu, *Mirror Affect: Seeing Self, Observing Others in Contemporary Art,* Minneapolis: the University of Minnesota Press, 2016, pp. 55-57. For further discussion on *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, see I. Bignotti, in G. Cortenova (ed.), 2005, p. 154.

[534] My adaptation from Italian: 'Ho inteso frammentare per raccontare me stesso in un centinaio di immagini specchiate e non è mai possibile vederne la totalità ma è possibile ricostruire con molta pazienza, da varie angolazioni, molti aspetti.', A. Cavaliere, 1983, p. 9. My adaptation from Italian: ' […] gli specchi […] che mi tengono prigioniero, specchi anomali che guardanti e riguardanti riflettono altro da sé', Alik Cavaliere, *Alik Cavaliere. Riflessioni da Narciso*, exhibition catalogue, 27 April – 31 May, 1989, Venice: Studio d'Arte Arcobaleno, 1989.

the mirrors (which represent the lake in which Narcissus sees his reflection) are on top, while Narcissus-Cavaliere's face is on the bottom (inside the box). Furthermore, Cavaliere's terracotta face is surrounded by porcelain faces which, due to their mask-like anonymity, can be seen as representing others – perhaps the viewers that will then be reflected by the mirrors.

The choices of putting the mirror lake above the faces and including multiple viewers in the reflection suggest that Cavaliere explored the theme of self-reflection to re-negotiate the concept of identity in relation to others. In this sense, the work can be seen as an overturning of the concept of narcissism, which, instead of being a self-referential prison for the self, becomes the starting point to explore otherness. In other words, by involving multiple selves, *Le riflessioni di Narciso* points to the idea of intersubjectivity.

The Surrealist-inspired theme of otherness is centre stage in *Le riflessioni di Narciso* and Samaras' boxes and can be seen as a reworking of two different sides of the French current. Samaras explored the idea of the self as a collection of self-estranging hidden impulses and traumas; on the other hand, Cavaliere explored the idea that of self as always pointing to other selves and vice versa. The friction between Samaras' and Cavaliere's reworkings of the theme of otherness highlights how the kind of indexicality characterising *Le riflessioni di Narciso* points to many different selves (many different 'Narcissus') that coexist in the work. The selves involved are the self of Cavaliere, the selves of multiple viewers, and the 'self' of the work. More broadly, the 'self' of the work can be interpreted as the 'self' of Cavaliere's practice (since the work is also a collection of pieces from previous phases). Considering this, Cavaliere seems to have intentionally left ambiguous the identity of Narcissus; is Narcissus the artist, the viewer, the work, or Cavaliere's practice in general?

The last option is crucial since a central point of this study is the hypothesis that Cavaliere's works, despite looking disquieting and tormented, are not about the experiences lived by the artist but, instead, about the experiences lived by the medium of sculpture. It almost seems that, over the decades, Cavaliere put the

medium of sculpture within various 'traumatic' contexts to test its limitations and potential. If this interpretation is correct, it will mark a crucial distance between Cavaliere's work and Samaras', putting Cavaliere's practice closer to the Dada-inspired Minimalist purpose of testing and challenging the limits of three-dimensional representations and creating 'a new space of subject-object terms'. In such a new space, the dichotomy between the subject-viewer and object-work is overcome in two ways: first, by the idea that an object (a work) is also a subject (a viewer) and vice versa, depending on the perspective; secondly, by the idea that perspectives are various, contingent, and indexical as they always point to the physical, intellectual, and emotional position of the subject in question.

IV The Metamorphosis of the Box

The ground covered demonstrated how Cavaliere turned the 'object' of 20th-century three-dimensional art practices *par excellence* – the box – into an exploration of the indexical 'unconscious' of the medium of sculpture, according to which a box is not just a box. Retrospectively, Cavaliere's reworking of the trope of the box looks eerily attuned to John Ashbery's 1968 description of the uncanny implications of such an apparently harmless object: 'what is a box if not a coffin, a house, a treasure chest…", asked Ashbery.[535] In Cavaliere's works from the 1960s, the 'box' is a sort of coffin: it is a funeral urn (in *L'eventuale sonno eterno di Gustavo B.)* and a funereal jukebox (in *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento)*. Then, in Cavaliere's installations from the 1970s, the box is, first, a cage trapping the characters of the work (in *I Processi*) and then a house (in *Surroundings I-VII).* Lastly, in Cavaliere's works from the 1980s, the box morphs again: in *Pigmalione*, the box is the hollow metallic cube (a sort of room), and then it becomes a treasure chest in *Le riflessioni di Narciso*.

This transformation has two main outcomes. The first is the acknowledgement and exposure of the unconscious indexical nature of three-dimensional representations; the second is the demonstration that the relationship between the viewer and the

[535] J. Ashbery, 1968.

work is essentially indexical itself. Within such a 'new space of subject-object terms', one term always points to the performative presence of the other, and both terms point to the surrounding space and the role of the artist. In *Pigmalione,* the presence of Cavaliere and other characters (Pygmalion? Galatea? The viewer?) is ambiguously suggested by ghostly and evanescent shapes. In *Le Riflessioni di Narciso*, the selves of the artist, of the work, and of the viewers are disassembled and reassembled through the interplay between the box and the mirrors.

By putting the presence of viewers, the surroundings, and his own presence at the centre of the box, Cavaliere explored and tested the limits and potential of three-dimensional representations and suggested ways to open them to the fourth dimension wished by Martini, of which Morris' idea of the new space of subject-object terms can be seen as a rephrasing. In other words, Narcissus is the medium of sculpture itself that Cavaliere used as a catalyst to question the conventional roles of all the players involved in the experience of a sculptural work of art and to open it to the fourth dimension.

IV.I Defending Tradition through Anarchic Solutions: Cavaliere's Idea of Metamorphosis as an Antidote to Monumental Art

Considering the ground covered, Cavaliere's reworking of the sculptural environment pairs with his attack on monumental art. As discussed in the previous sections, in *Pigmalione* and *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, reality shapeshifts according to different (and potentially uncountable) perspectives and relationships between the elements involved. In this sense, the idea of metamorphosis at the basis of the two works refutes the idea of objectivity and a single truth. Thus, Cavaliere's sculptural reworking of the theme of metamorphosis can be seen as a further attack on the idea of sculpture as a monument representing 'noble subjects' that viewers can just contemplate. If the object of vision shapeshifts according to the perspective, viewers can only collect as many fragments as they can and surrender to the limits of their subjective perspectives.

According to this analysis, Cavaliere structured his attack on monumental art in two moments. First, Cavaliere transformed his sculptural practice into an interactive installation (from the arboreal-floral works to *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*). Second, Cavaliere developed his work into theatrical environments (*I Processi* and *Surroundings II-VII*). Third, Cavaliere reduced the theatrical environment to the essential until leaving only a wiry metallic 'corpse' (*Pigmalione*). Last, Cavaliere twisted, deconstructed, fragmented, and recreated the environment, turning it into a structure for metamorphoses to happen (*Le riflessioni di Narciso*).

The discussion analysed how such transformation can be seen as Cavaliere's answer to Martini's provocation, aiming to make sculpture step into the fourth dimension (the spatial-temporal performative and indexical relationship between viewers, the work, and the artist). In this regard, the examination considered Cavaliere's practice as attuned to certain American neo-avant-gardes that radically questioned the idea of the discrete work of art by addressing and exploring its uncanny potential – from Oldenburg's installations to Minimalism.[536]

Unlike Oldenburg and Minimalists, however, Cavaliere developed his work by engaging with his Italian Humanistic background and using Classical mythology as a provocation. Classical myths have traditionally been the subject of renowned monumental statues (e.g., Canova's *Amore e Psyche*, 1787-793) and they have been an essential part of Italian symbolic tradition, taught since primary school.[537] Like a guerrilla, Cavaliere worked on the very ground of one of the Italian cultural symbols *par excellence* – Classical culture and mythology – to attack conventions and the idea of an objective (shared) truth. Theoretically, Classical mythology should be a granted common ground between Cavaliere and his public. However, Cavaliere manipulated, fragmented, dissembled, and reassembled Classical myths to make their message ambiguous and defeat the idea of a single official narrative. In line with this perspective, Cavaliere stated his intention of 'breaking symbols' and making

[536] For further discussion on how American neo-avant-gardes separated 'the logic of sculpture from 'the logic of the monument', see R. Krauss, 1979, p. 33.
[537] In Italy, especially at Cavaliere's time when Eurocentric culture was dominant, Classic mythology was part of primary and high-school education programmes and was an essential part of Italian cultural tradition.

'illogical' works.[538] In other words, Cavaliere used a system of shared symbolic conventions (Greek myths) to make works of monumental proportions and ambiguous meanings.

In this regard, Cavaliere stated that he used classical symbols as a sort of deceiving Ariadne's thread meant not to guide viewers but, instead, challenge them and show that mistakes and inconsistencies are part of reality and that the idea of 'objective truth' is essentially 'false' because every truth is the result of a specific context.[539]

As documented in the journals, the viewer is invited to 'break with the narrative of the work' by 'changing or transforming the storyline' and 'make things happen'.[540]

Pursuing the purpose of 'defending [Italian] cultural heritage by using anarchic solutions', Cavaliere reworked Classic mythology to complete his transformation of the medium of sculpture. In this regard, it will be helpful to come back to Cavaliere's quotation in which he praised the potential of Dadaism to dispel 'false myths'.[541] The statement is from 1965, but its meaning remains obscure until 1985. In February 1985, Cavaliere wrote that a false myth is the myth of art as 'a key to reading the world', as something 'elevated above ordinary reality', as 'a tool to communicate', as a 'commodity', and as 'part of ordinary life'.[542] In other words, any assumption about the role, function, or meaning of art is, for Cavaliere, a myth – and his practice aimed to deconstruct it by using Classical myths as settings to stage his transformation (metamorphosis) of the medium of sculpture after Martini declared its death. In this

[538] My adaptation from Italian: 'Rottura del simbolo per passare al racconto narrato', Cavaliere's journal, August 1985. My translation from Italian: 'Senza base logica, ordine, senso', Cavaliere's journal, November 1989.
[539] My adaptation from Italian: 'Uso il simbolo come filo di Arianna. Connessione diviene arbitraria, assurda, gratuita più che dall'errore in agguato dalla inconsistenza delle regole assunte, appartenenti solo ad un effimero, gracile, inventato, inconsistente pseudo sistema […]', Cavaliere's journal, July 1989.
[540] My adaptation from Italian: '[Le mie opere] possono subire una mutazione attraverso l'intervento esterno del fruitore che è libero di rompere lo schema fissato e di innestare varianti, sovvertire il racconto, […] mutarlo.' Cavaliere's journal, October 1987. The statement previously appeared in Alik Cavaliere, J. Dypréau, "Alik Cavaliere", in J. Dypréau (ed.), 1971. My adaptation from Italian: 'Consentire allo spettatore di muoversi all'interno dell'opera e ponendo "potenzialmente" in condizione di produrre avvenimenti.', Cavaliere's journal, March 1981.
[541] My translation from Italian: 'Movimenti come il dada portano sempre con sé germi vitali che possono […] liberare il campo da falsi miti.' Cavaliere's journal, January 1965.
[542] My translation from Italian: '[…] il mito dell'arte come chiave di lettura del mondo, come qualcosa di "altro", come strumento […] di comunicazione, come merce, come quotidianità.', Cavaliere's journal, February 1985.

regard, the analysis has shown that Cavaliere engaged with both the American and Italian art scenes.

As for the American context, Cavaliere's practice focused on reworking literalism and the trope of the box, which was born to debunk a certain idea of celebratory and monumental sculpture and ended up replacing it. Furthermore, Cavaliere looked at Oldenburg's work as a successful example of critical reworking of the traditional idea of monument. In short, for Cavaliere, Oldenburg succeeded in promoting an idea of sculpture as essentially shapeshifting and, thus, eluding any kind of crystallised, official, and celebratory narrative.

As for the Italian context, Cavaliere engaged with Martini's perspective and pursued an ethical purpose that is close to the one of *Arte Povera*. In this context, Cavaliere engaged with the Italian cultural heritage in a sort of Neo-Dada way: from the arboreal-floral works made in series but titled with lines from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as settings to complete his neo-avant-garde-inspired metamorphosis of the medium of sculpture. In other words, Cavaliere's practice shows that the Modernist idea of the autonomous and discrete object, the idea of the medium of sculpture as bound to celebratory purposes, and the concepts of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity', and any assumption about what art should be are just myths.

Conclusion

Considering the ground covered, the theme of metamorphosis can be seen as a sort of *fil rouge* showing the cohesive development of the theatrical quality of Cavaliere's work.

The analysis demonstrated that, from the 1960s to the 1980s, Cavaliere's practice staged a metamorphosis of the medium of sculpture in various acts. By starting from the uncanny literalism characterising the arboreal-floral works and the deceptively literal titles of *Le avventure di Gustavo B.,* Cavaliere developed towards the hallucinated and 'broken' symbolism of *I Processi,* in which he turned the artistic sign into a simultaneously literal and symbolic fragmented narrative. In other words,

Cavaliere turned the art object into a process. Then, in *Surroundings,* Cavaliere turned the work into a vessel and progressively reduced it to a trace.

In line with this, Cavaliere made *Pigmalione*, which resembles a skeleton. From this perspective, *Pigmalione* can be seen as representing the remains of the experience of *Surroundings*. The artist, viewers, and characters are part of the work, but they are no longer physically present; instead, they are just metallic remains, and their roles and identities fade and merge into others.

Lastly, in *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* Cavaliere staged a sort of 'return to the object' as the work is an object (a magician/treasure box) filled with other objects. However, the 'object' is not just an object, but it is the result of the process of transformation that Cavaliere started with the arboreal-floral works. In *Le riflessioni di Narciso,* the box is fragmented into multiple pieces and is a place for the artist and viewers to reconfigure their selves in relation to each other. In other words, through three decades, Cavaliere dismantled the idea of sculpture as a monument celebrating a single and objective truth.

By staging his metamorphosis of the medium of sculpture, Cavaliere staged what Krauss called the fall of the idea that 'the logic of sculpture is inseparable from the logic of the monument'.[543] In 1967, Cavaliere claimed that he wanted to create new 'monuments' and described these as 'wider structures for participation'.[544] Following this purpose, Cavaliere gradually expanded the boundaries of his works and transformed his sculptures into environments inhabited by characters: nature, Gustavo B., Pygmalion, Galatea, Narcissus, Cavaliere himself, actors, and viewers. In work after work, these characters overlap and merge with each other by subtly eroding the distinction between fictional and real.

The analysis highlighted how the theme of the surroundings becoming part of the work aligns to the idea of overturning the relationship between the active viewer and passive work – that is, the Surrealist- and Dadaist-inspired 'anarchic solution' that

[543] R. Krauss, 1979, p. 33.
[544] My adaptation from Italian: 'Bisogna […] creare nuovi monumenti. […] ricercare una struttura più vasta nella quale inserire la nostra partecipazione', Cavaliere's journal, May 1967.

Cavaliere wrote in the journals.[545] From the uncanny arboreal-floral works to the ambiguous objectification of viewers through the mirror reflections in *Le riflessioni di Narciso*, Cavaliere's works stage the impossibility of dualistically defining the roles of the players involved by the art experience (e.g., subject – object, active – passive, viewer – artwork). In this sense, Cavaliere's practice makes antinomies and hierarchies collapse and invites viewers to suspend their judgment about the object of their vision and themselves. There is no object as such – the viewer themself can become an object from a certain perspective, as much as the work can become an animated presence.

Considering this, when Cavaliere stated that theatre should involve viewers by representing the 'unrepresentable being of things', he referred to the possibility of making works in which the parts involved could question and elude their conventional roles.[546] In this context, dichotomies between subject-object, false-true, active-passive, centre-surroundings, etc. are, first, overturned, and then overcome by the idea of sculpture as a pluralistic and metamorphic environment. From this perspective, *Pigmalione* and *Le riflessioni di Narciso* can be seen as the culmination of Cavaliere's idea of sculpture as a theatrical experience in the sense discussed. In line with the perspectives of Martini and Krauss, such a theatrical approach to the medium of sculpture dismantles the 'myth' of sculpture as a monument of which viewers can serenely enjoy the forms or the 'truth' that it represents.

[545] 'Our cultural heritage must be valued through anarchic solutions.' (My traslation from Italian: 'Difendiamo il nostro patrimonio culturale con soluzioni anarchiche'), Cavaliere's journal, January 1965. For further discussion, see Chapter 1, pp. 28-29.

[546] My adaptation from Italian: 'L'idea della teatralità per rappresentare l'irrappresentabile "essere" delle cose e coinvolgere.', Cavaliere's journal, November 1987.

CONCLUSION

Based on the journals, and with an eye on broader contemporary art debates of Cavaliere's time, this thesis investigated what was at stake in his practice from the 1960s to the 1980s. Particularly, how Cavaliere's works are, in some respects, attuned to some of the central concerns of his contemporaries – from Jasper Johns' sculptures to American literalism, Claes Oldenburg's installations, and *Arte Povera*. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated how Cavaliere's practice engaged with the art scene of his time in ways that often transcend the formal features of his works and regard their underlying logic and purpose instead.

The investigation of how Cavaliere's practice engaged with contemporary art discourses offered a new angle to examine his reworking of Dadaism and Surrealism. In this regard, the analysis intentionally overlooked formal similarities – already addressed by critics – between Cavaliere's works and the two currents and explored how they influenced Cavaliere's idea of art. Drawing from the journals, the discussion highlighted that Cavaliere did not rework Surrealism to discuss the human unconscious, but to explore the 'unconscious' of the medium of sculpture. According to the analysis, such an unconsciousness of the medium of sculpture is its object-like and indexical nature, essentially in between the realms of art and objecthood and pointing to the presence of viewers, the surroundings, and their contingencies (the 'fourth dimension' wished by Martini).

The object-like and indexical nature of sculpture was a sort of 'taboo' that was repressed by Modernist formalism and brought back to consciousness with a vengeance by neo-avant-garde practices during the 1960s. In this regard, the investigation demonstrated how Cavaliere reworked Surrealist influences with a purpose closer to Dadaist and neo-avant-garde ideas of questioning and reassessing the ontological status of the work of art. However, the study clarified that Cavaliere was not interested in the 'sweep and clean' logic of Dadaist destruction of the tradition. Indeed, the journals witnessed Cavaliere's purpose of defending tradition through 'anarchic solutions'. The analysis showed how Cavaliere's idea of

‘anarchic solutions’ refers to his aim of addressing contemporary art issues by using tradition in unconventional ways.

Among these issues, the investigation examined how Cavaliere dealt with the crisis of the concept of monument and the idea of the autonomous work of art, vis-à-vis the idea of the work as a process. In this respect, this study highlighted how Cavaliere’s practice could be considered an intentional answer to Martini’s provocation about the ‘death’ of sculpture, which resulted in his (probably unintentional) reworking of Krauss’ idea of the expanded field.

The theatrical quality of Cavaliere’s work was the cornerstone of the analysis, which demonstrated how Cavaliere developed it as a tool to revive his sculptural practice by taking a step into the fourth dimension. In this regard, the analysis examined how Cavaliere’s idea of theatricality took centre stage in the transition from sculpture to installation that his practice has undergone since the late 1960s. To investigate Cavaliere’s idea of theatricality, it proved beneficial to approach Cavaliere’s writings and works through Michael Fried’s influential theory of objecthood and theatricality. The analysis highlighted how, despite the different cultural contexts, Fried’s perspective on the theatrical quality of certain three-dimensional representations shares a vital point with the kind of theatricality implemented by Cavaliere in his works. The point is that three-dimensional representations are theatrical when they manifest their indexical nature; an indexical nature that implies that the work results from unpredictable, sometimes contradictory, and uncanny spatial-temporal interactions with viewers and the surroundings. In this sense, the theatrical quality of Cavaliere’s works played a crucial role in the development of his anti-Modernist idea of sculpture as a complex process resulting from the interactions between various presences and perspectives.

Guided by the purpose of reviving the medium of sculpture after Marini declared its death, Cavaliere made sculptural ‘theatrical’ environments that challenged the idea of the work of art as an autonomous entity and engaged with the critical skills of viewers, denying them the comfort of forgetting that they are looking at piece of art and being absorbed by it. This operation paired with Cavaliere’s attack on the

concept of monumental art, which, responding to a specific sensibility of his time, aimed to separate the logic of sculpture from the logic of the monument.[547]

Based on the idea that the monument 'has completely lost its value' because sculpture 'is always part of a process', Cavaliere developed his attack on two levels that are essentially interconnected in his works.[548] On the one hand, he attacked the idea of sculpture as an autonomous object standing on a pedestal stage in the viewer's field of vision. On the other hand, he attacked the idea of monument in the broader sense of an artefact elevated above reality and representing an official 'truth' that viewers can passively absorb. In this sense, a corollary to Cavaliere's attack on the idea of sculpture as a monument is an attack on the concepts of 'truth' and objectivity that aimed to unveil 'a reality more real than reality itself' – a reality in which the tradition, conventions, habits, and trends are not passively taken as 'natural' but are explored in their complexity.[549]

By weaving together different perspectives from different contexts – from Martini to Brecht, Oldenburg, Minimalism, and *Arte Povera* – Cavaliere pursued an idea of the work of art as a decentralised experience ('art is in the surrounding') in which assumptions about the work and the kind of reality that it expresses are dissected, overturned, and explored from different perspectives, as contingent fragments of a metamorphic and multifaceted environment.[550]

To an extent, Cavaliere's practice seems in tune with the concept of *Opera Aperta* that was theorised by Umberto Eco in 1962, according to which the work is an open process instead of a determined object.[551] However, the analysis highlighted how Cavaliere's practice engaged with the idea of the work as an open process in ambiguous and contradictory ways, as to investigate the complex implications of

[547] R. Krauss, Spring, 1979, p. 33.
[548] My translation from Italian: 'La scultura presa in se stessa non esiste in quanto è sempre il risultato di un processo', Cavaliere's journal, March 1964, previsouly quoted at p. 79.
[549] My adaptation from Italian: 'Una realtà inventata e più vera al tempo stesso'. Cavaliere's journal, May 1963, previously quoted at pp. 81, 178.
[550] My translation from Italian: 'L'arte è nei surroundings, nei dintorni', Cavaliere's journal, January 1988, previously quoted at p. 136.
[551] Umberto Eco (1962), *Opera Aperta. Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee*, in Riccardo Fedriga (ed.), Milan: Bompiani, 2013. For a detailed analysis of the concept of *Opera Aperta*, see Guy de Mallac, "The Poetics of the Open Form", *Books Abroad*, vol. 45, no. 1, Winter 1971, pp. 31-36.

such a prominent idea of art. On the one hand, Cavaliere's practice actively and explicitly explored the concept of the work of art as an open process resulting from an interlacing of multiple players and perspectives. On the other hand, however, Cavaliere's works present recurring formal features suggesting the idea that viewers, the artist, and the work itself are 'imprisoned' by the process, the flow of which is obstructed or fragmented – see, for example, the theme of the cage in *I Processi*, the intricate and closed-off space of *Pigmalione*, and the shattered mirrors involving and, at the same time, pushing the viewer-gaze away in *Le riflessioni di Narciso*. In fact, Cavaliere explicitly refused to adhere to any established or popular idea of art – whether traditional or groundbreaking. Furthermore, his works warn viewers against theories that explain what 'art' is or should be.

Cavaliere's practice has therefore emerged from the analysis as a knowledgeable attempt to stage different ideas of art, test them, and critically rework them. In this sense, the present study highlighted how Cavaliere's work could be seen as a sophisticated staging and critique of different moments of the transformation that sculpture has undergone since the ready-made paradigm and its exacerbation in the 1960s. Each 'act' of this staging debunked and reworked popular art theories that ignited debates and discourses between the 1960s and the 1980s - from the issue of literalism to the crisis of monumental art and the idea of the work as an open process.

To conclude, an observation by George Kubler offers a valuable angle to recapitulate the central point of this account of the worth and interest of Cavaliere's practice. According to Kubler, the crucial factor in an artist's career is timing: whether the artist enters an artistic tradition early, middle, or late.[552] From the perspective of this analysis, Cavaliere was not a precursor as a few critics argued, but an acute observer and an original, pondered, and knowledgeable reworker of prominent contemporary international art tendencies, including the dissolution of the idea of the autonomous work of art and the establishing of the idea of the work as an

[552] George Kubler, *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962, pp. 7-8.

environment. Cavaliere intercepted and critically reworked these tendencies, investigating and showcasing their complexities, vulnerabilities, and potentials.

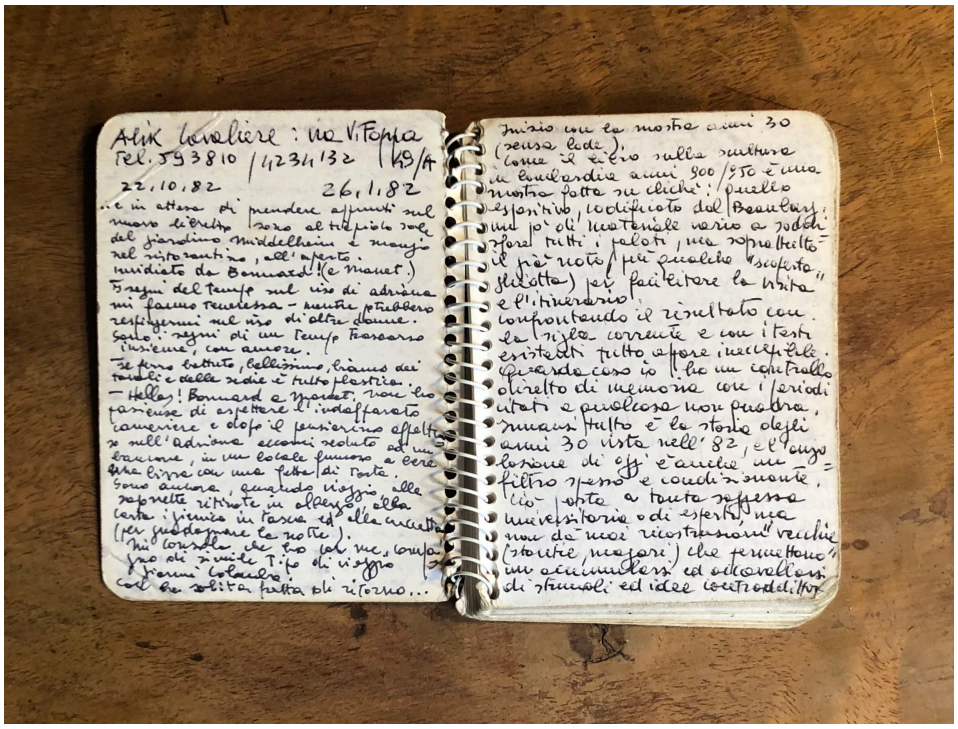
In this sense, this thesis recovered Cavaliere's practice as a powerful prism through which to view the development of sculpture from the 1960s to the 1980s – from an idea of sculpture confined into the three dimensions to an idea of sculpture as a performative environment that steps off the pedestal and asks viewers to critically engage with the complexity of the levels and references involved.

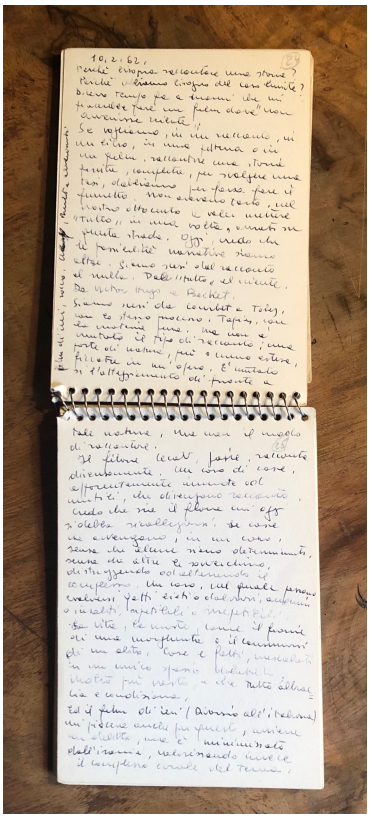
The latter point summarises my opinion of Cavaliere's stature as an artist. By staging complex contradictions, uncanny paradoxes, and cryptic ambiguities, Cavaliere asked viewers to 'stay alert' and use their minds.[553] In other words, this study demonstrated that Cavaliere's work can be seen as a cultured invitation to explore the complexity of things - from the roles of tradition and conventions to the implications of groundbreaking and anti-conventional artistic experiments, from the role of the artist to the positions of viewers, the ontological status of a work of art, and the idea of reality that it entails.

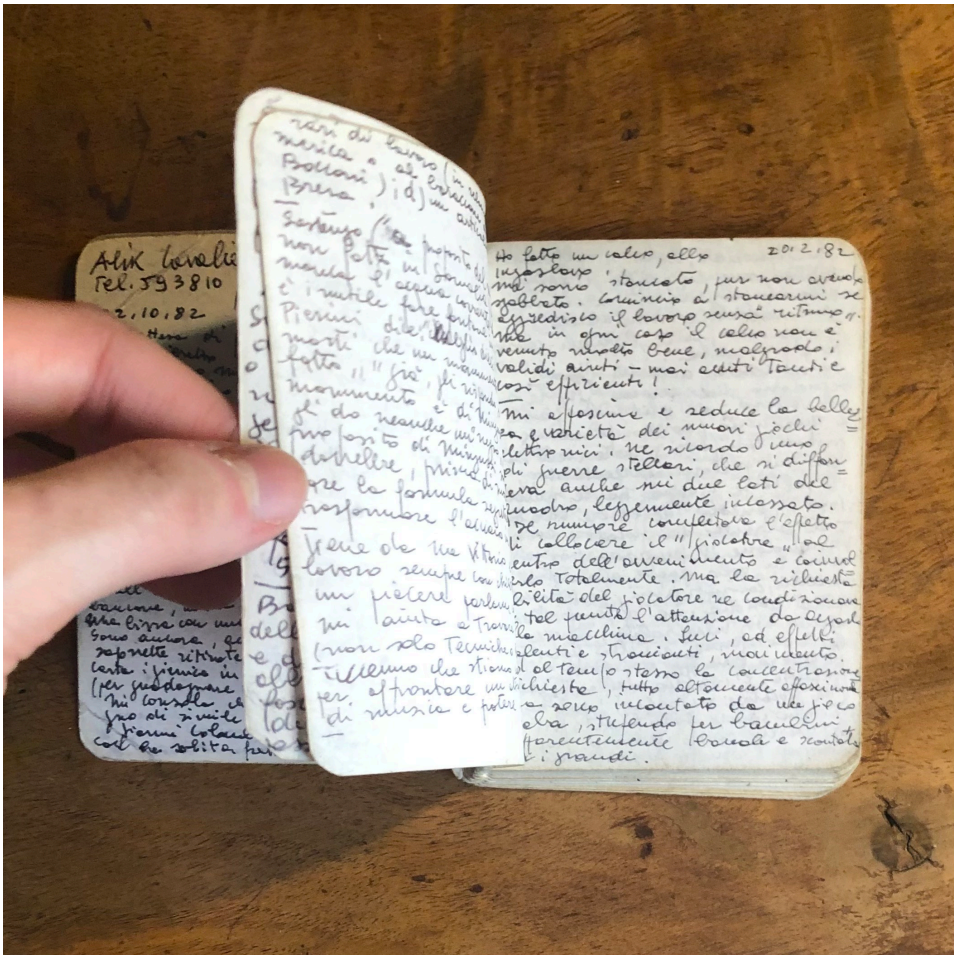
[553] My adaptation from Italian: 'Pensate! State attenti! Usate il vostro cervello, […], vivete una situazione che non può non essere aperta, perché è quella dei dintorni – non del centro (surroundings)', Cavaliere's journals, June 1973, previously quoted at p. 134.

Images

Fig. A
Journals of Alik Cavaliere, stored at Adriana Cavaliere's private home in Milan, Italy







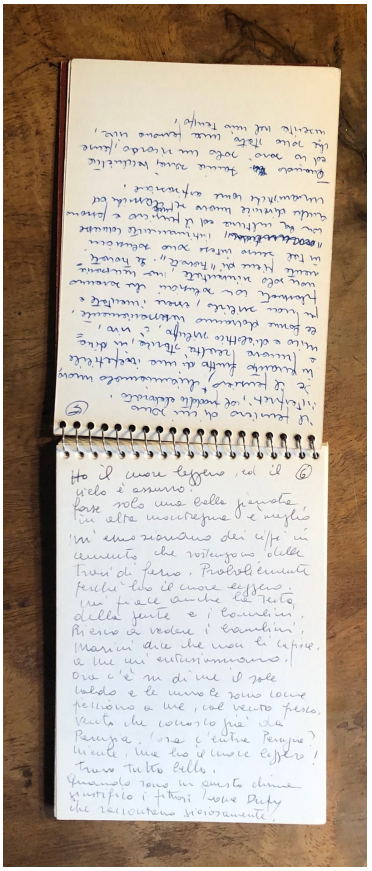


Fig. B
Examples of the pages of Cavaliere's journals

Fig. 1
Alik Cavaliere, *Mondine* [Rice Weeders], 1951.
Cement, h. 150 cm.
Unknown location

Fig. 2
Alik Cavaliere, *Ragazza di campagna* [Country Girl], 1952.
Cement, 132 x 53 x 32 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 3
Alik Cavaliere, *Sorelle* [Sisters], 1952.
Cement, 73 x 24,5 x 26 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 4
Alik Cavaliere, *Bambini di Viareggio* [Children from Viareggio], 1952.
Cement, h. 91 cm.
Unknown location

Fig. 5
Alik Cavaliere, *Crocifissione* [Crucifixion], 1946.
Marble, 44 x 32 cm.
Private collection, Milan

Fig. 6
Alik Cavaliere, *Crocifisso* [Crucifix], 1946.
Marble, fabric, wood 54 x 42 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 7
Alik Cavaliere, *Bassorilievo con Cristo e figure* [Low Relief with Christ and figures], 1946.
Terracotta, 58,5 x 58 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 8
Alik Cavaliere, *Calvario* [Calvary Scene],1946-1947.
Marble, wood, unknown dimensions.
Unknown location

Fig. 9
Alik Cavaliere, *Nudo [Nude],* 1948.
Cement, unknown dimensions.
Unknown location

Fig. 10
Alik Cavaliere, *Contadini* [Farmers],1952.
Fireclay, 49 x 44 x 34 cm.
Private collection, Milan

Fig. 12
Alik Cavaliere, *Racconto* [Story], 1946/1947.
Cement, 77,5 x 34 x 28 cm.
Private collection, Milan

Fig. 13
Alik Cavaliere, *Via del Bottonuto* [Bottonuto Street], 1951.
Clay, unknown dimensions.
Destroyed work

Fig. 14
Alik Cavaliere, *Colloquio* [Conversation], 1955.
Bronze, 37.5 x 59 x 32 cm.
Private collection, Milan

The title and the date are unconfirmed, the work also appears as
Colloquio. La famiglia, 1961.
Bronze, 37.5 x 59 x 32 cm.
Private collection, Milan

Fig. 15
Alik Cavaliere, *Giochi Proibiti* [Forbidden Games] 1958-59.
Cement, 165 x 102 x 70 cm.
Private collection, Milan

Fig. 16
Alik Cavaliere, *Metamorfosi* [Metamorphoses], 1958-1959.
Cement, 165 x 102 x 70 cm.
Private collection, Milan

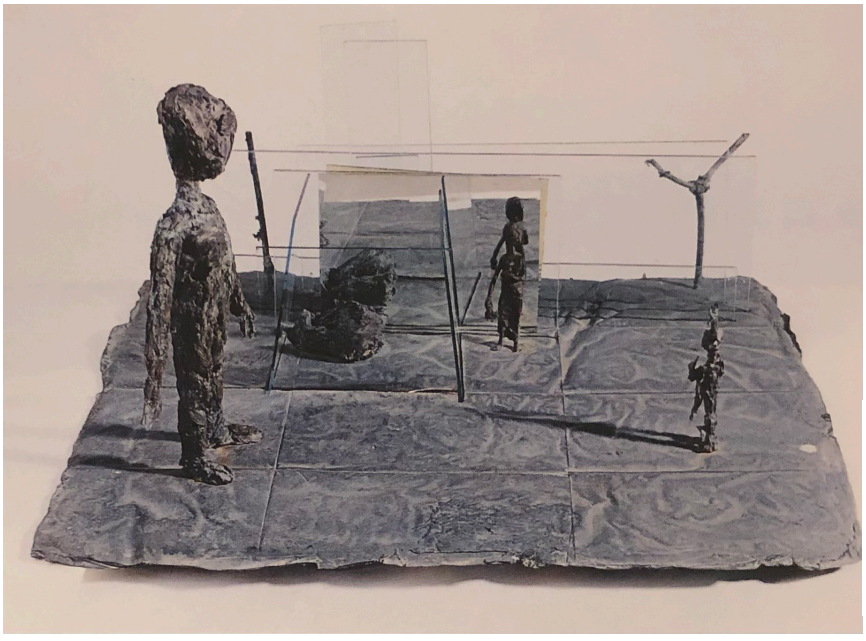


Fig. 17
Alik Cavaliere, *Terza veduta della città di Gustavo B.* [Third View of Gustavo B.'s City], 1962.
Bronze, glass, mirror polished stainless steel, 49 x 100 x 100 cm. Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 18
Alik Cavaliere, *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*
[Gustavo B., a Paid Exhibitioner]*,* 1962-1966.
Bronze, fabric, collage, porcelain, mirror polished stainless steel, glass, iron, engine, music, 112 x 31 x 35 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

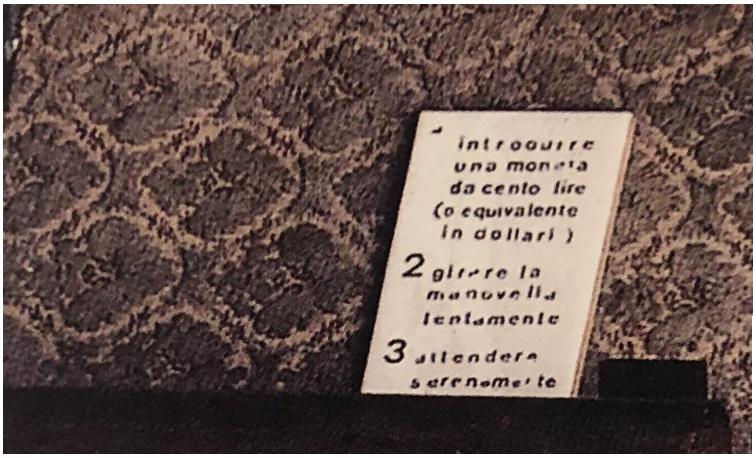


Fig. 18.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento*
[Gustavo B., a Paid Exhibitioner]*,* 1962-1966.
Detail

Fig. 18.2
Alik Cavaliere, *Gustavo B. si esibisce a pagamento* [Gustavo B., a Paid Exhibitioner]*,* 1962-1966.
Detail

Fig. 19
Alik Cavaliere *Piccolo cespuglio con fiorellino rosso* [Small Bush with Small Red Flower], 1964.
Bronze, 22 x 23,5 x 12 cm.
Private collection, Milan

Fig. 20
Alik Cavaliere, *Gustavo B incontra un albero e una mela* [Gustavo B. Encounters a Tree and an Apple], 1962. Wax, 50 x 38 x 30 cm.
Destroyed work

Fig. 21
Jasper Johns, *Flag*, 1954-1955.
Encaustic, oil, and collage on fabric mounted on plywood, three panels, 107.3 x 153.8 cm.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Fig. 22
Alik Cavaliere, *Susi e l'albero* [Susi and the tree], 1969.
Bronze, steel, resin, water, 188 x 150 x 90 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 23
Alik Cavaliere, *A e z aspettano l'amore* [A e Z are Waiting for Love], 1970.
Resin, bronze, aluminium, iron, brass, perspex, 247 x 300 x 300 cm.
The Adriana and Fania Cavaliere Collection, Milan

Fig. 24
Alik Cavaliere, *Apollo e Dafne* [Apollo and Daphne], 1971.
Bronze, polyurethane foam, mirror polished stainless steel, 385 x 600 x 450 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 24.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Apollo e Dafne* [Apollo and Daphne], 1971.
Detali

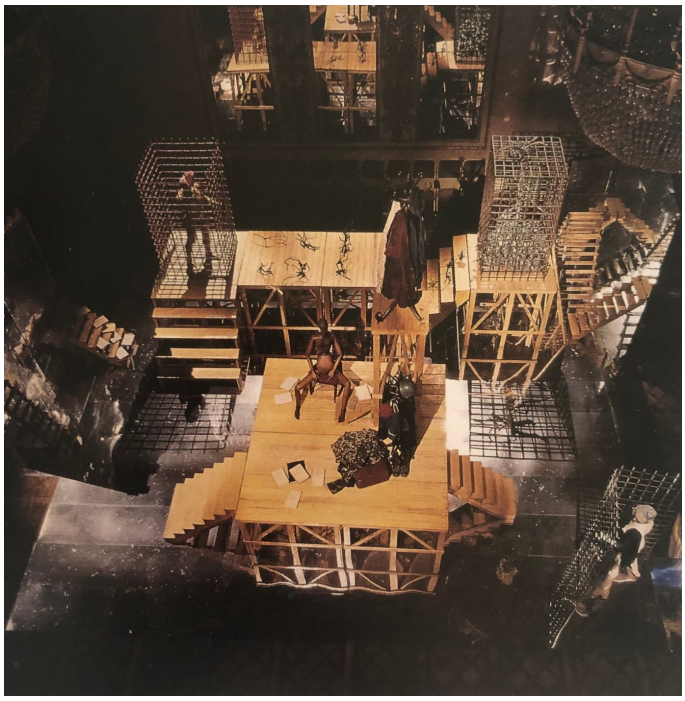


Fig. 25
Alik Cavaliere, *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeares's English Stories], 1972.
*B*ronze, steel, reinforced polyester, polyurethane foam, paper, fabbric, wood, mirror polished stainless steel. Recorded voice by Roberto Senesi; music by Bruno Canino, 570 x 1000 x 1000 cm.
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome

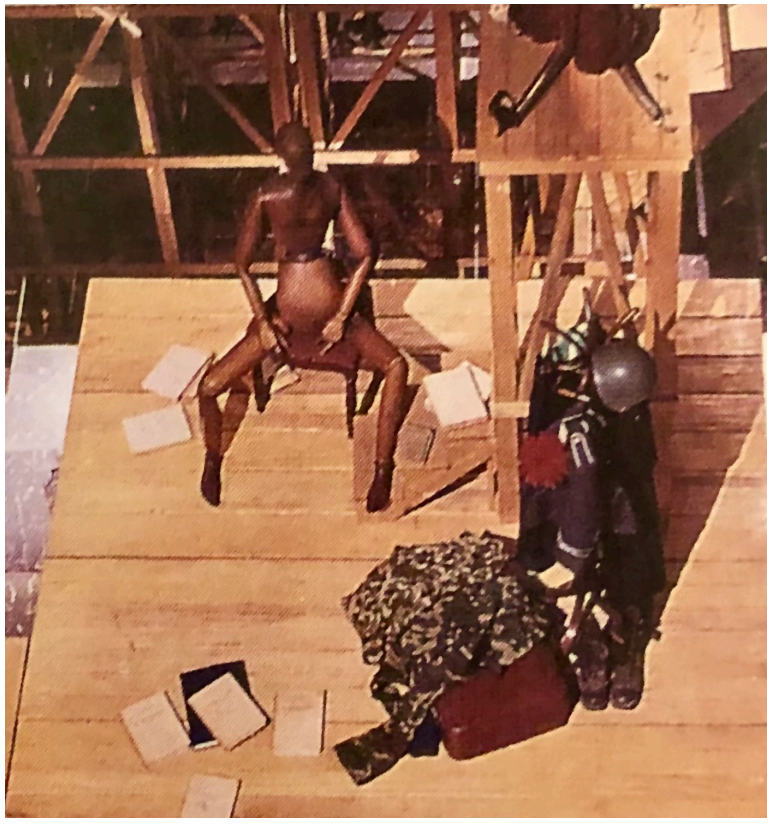


Fig. 25.1
Alik Cavaliere, *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeares's English Stories], 1972.
Detail

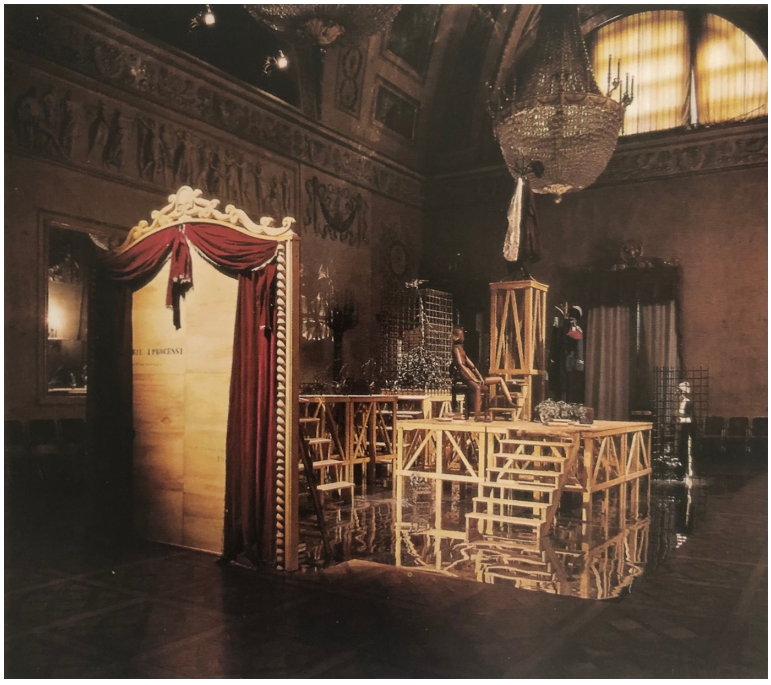


Fig. 25.2
Alik Cavaliere, *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeares's English Stories], 1972.
Detail

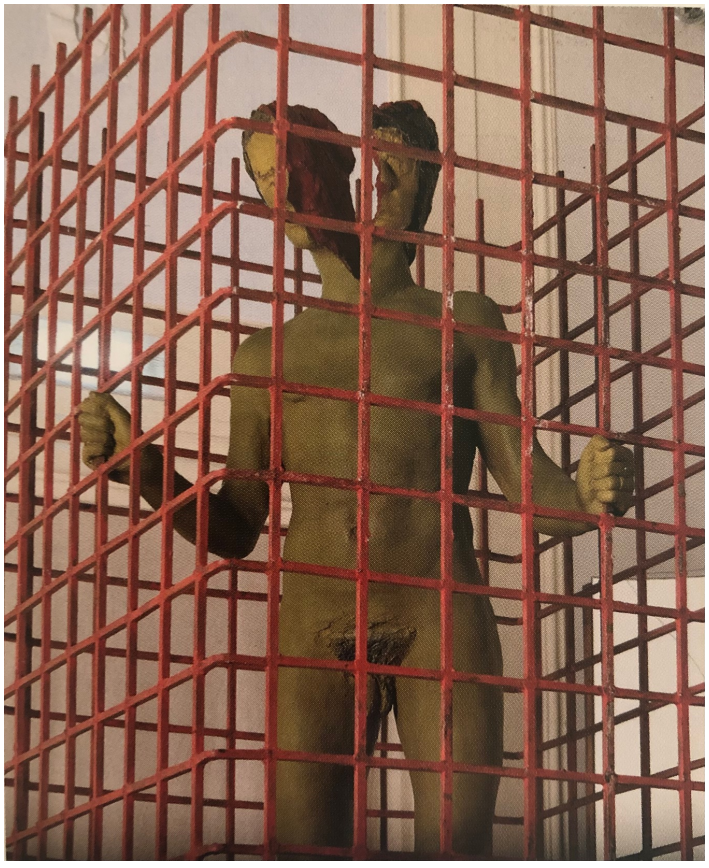


Fig. 25.3
Alik Cavaliere, *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeares's English Stories], 1972.
Detail

Fig. 25.4
Alik Cavaliere, *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeares's English Stories], 1972.
Detail

Fig. 25.5
Alik Cavaliere, *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeares's English Stories], 1972.
Detail

Fig. 25.6
Alik Cavaliere, *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeares's English Stories], 1972.
Detail

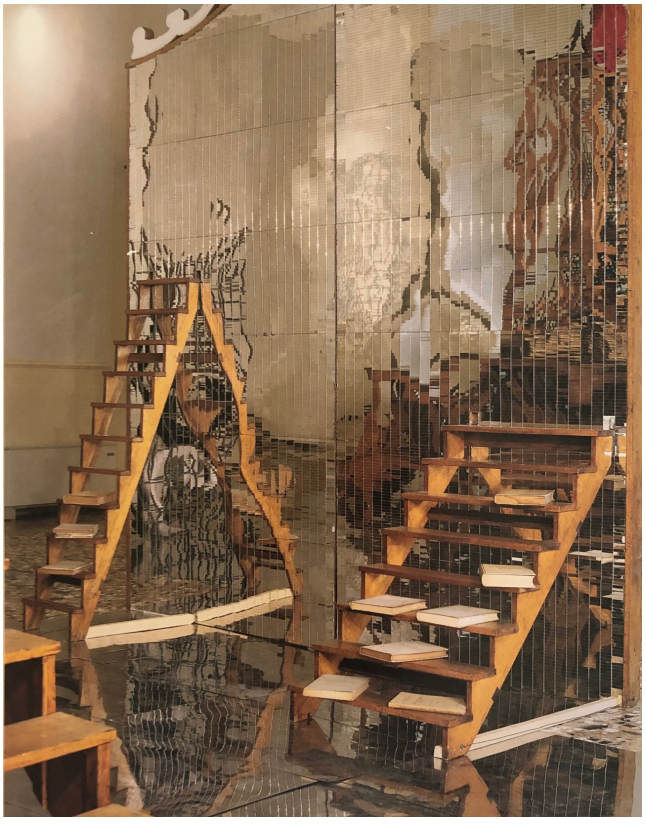


Fig. 25.7
Alik Cavaliere, *I Processi: dalle storie inglesi di William Shakespeare* [Processes: from William Shakespeares's English Stories], 1972.
Detail

Fig. 26
Alik Cavaliere, *Un'avventura della natura. Le quattro stagioni* [An Adventure of Nature. The Four Seasons], 1970.
Bronze, 220 x 240 x 60 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

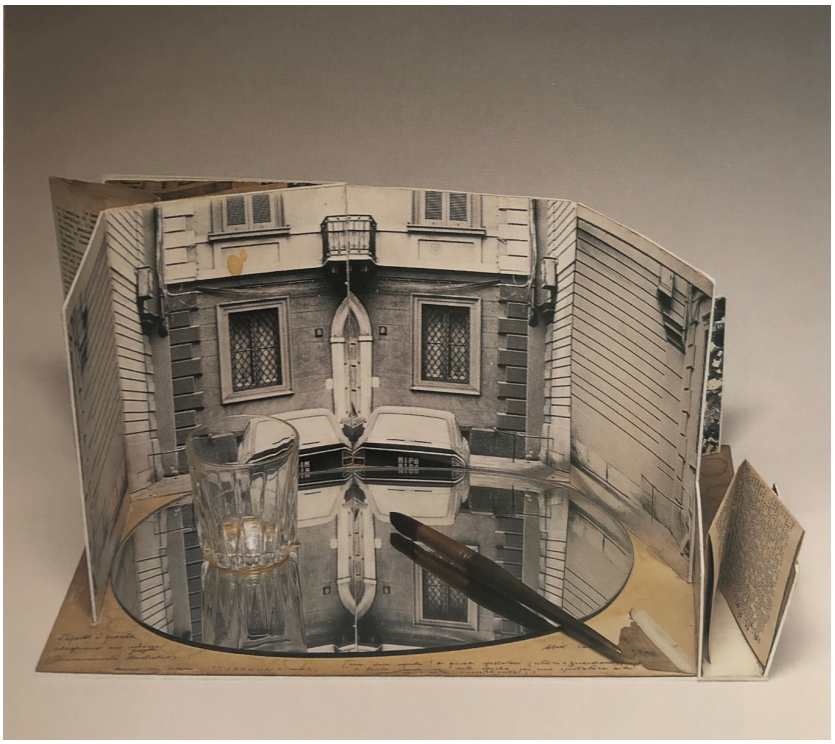


Fig. 27
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings I*, 1972.
Paper, mirror, glass, cardboard, 24 x 35 x 50 cm.
Unknown location

Fig. 28
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings II*, 1973.
Audio recordings, image projections, plasterboards, 1250 x 900 cm.
Destroyed work

Fig. 28.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings II*, 1973.
Detail

Fig. 28.2
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings II*, 1973.
Detail

Fig. 28.3
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings II*, 1973.
Detail

Fig. 28.4
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings II*, 1973.
Detail

Fig. 29
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings III,* 1976.
Furniture, actors, tableware, unknown dimensions.
Destroyed work

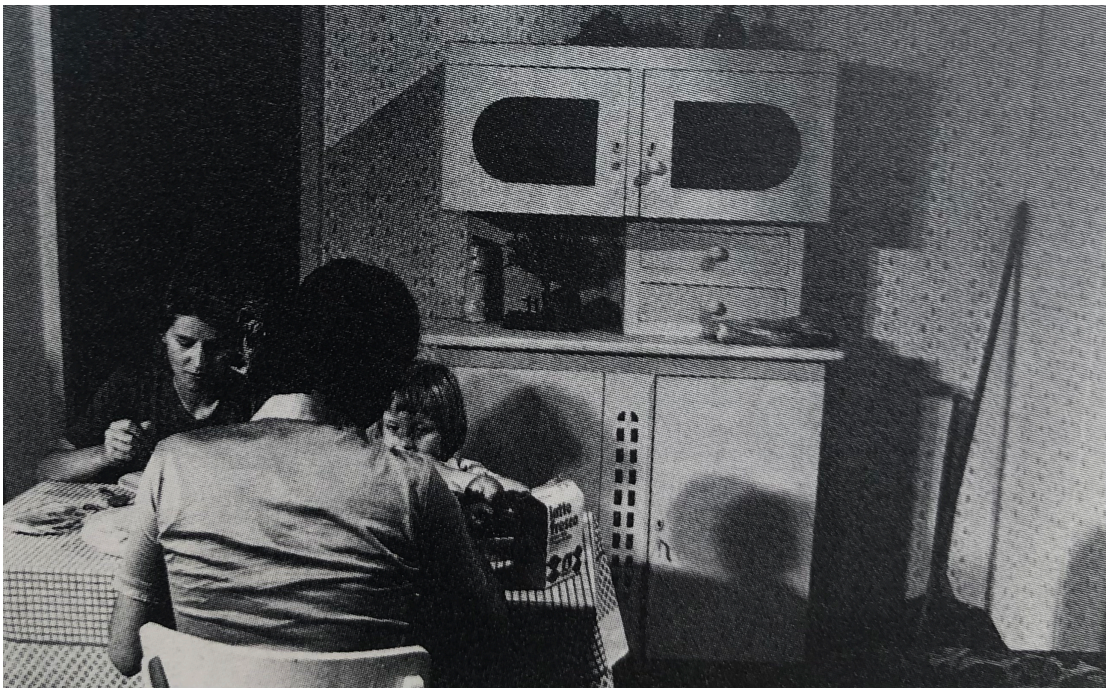


Fig. 29.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings III,* 1976.
Detail

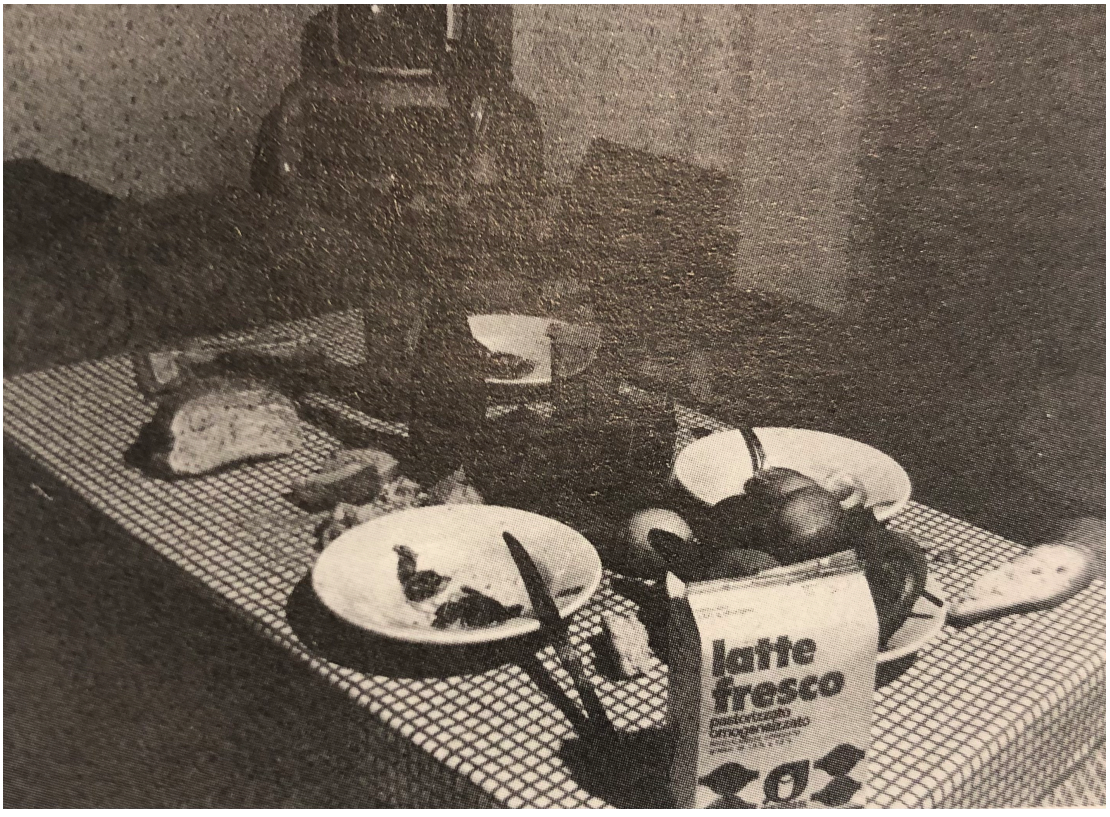


Fig. 29.2
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings III,* 1976.
Detail

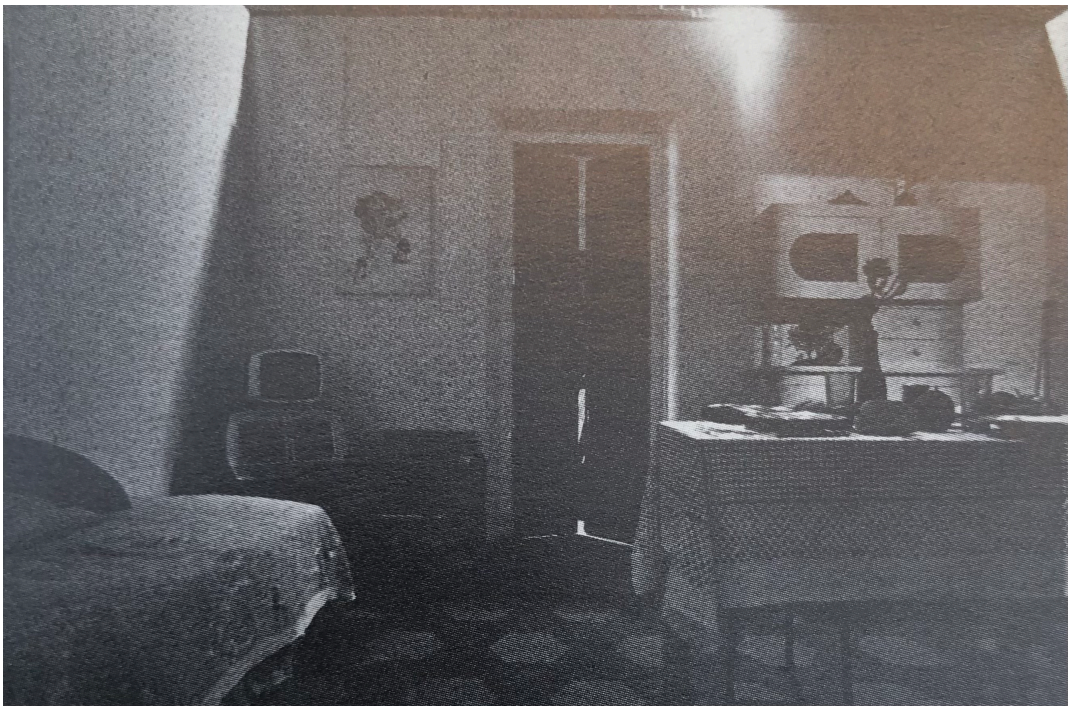


Fig. 29.3
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings III,* 1976.
Detail

Fig. 30
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings IV, Boulevard Saint Michel 35, Bruxelles*, 1976-1977.
Paper, wood, leather, brass, 30 x 40 x 10 cm
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

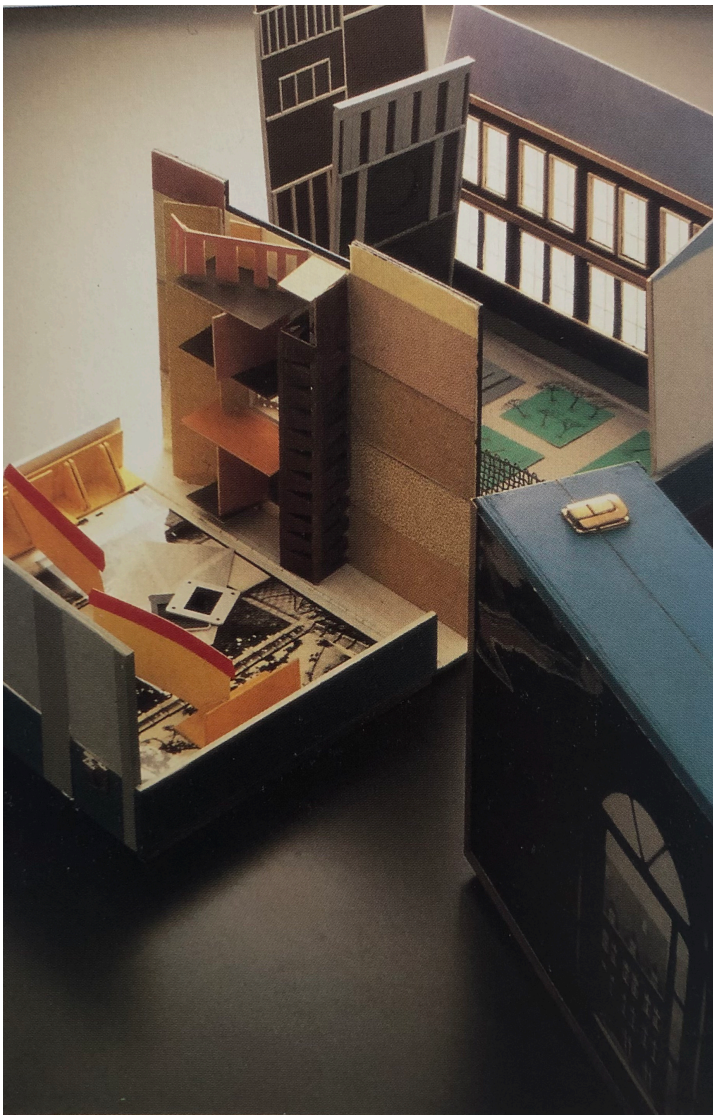


Fig. 30.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings IV, Boulevard Saint Michel 35, Bruxelles*, 1976-1977.
Detail

Fig. 31
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings V*, 1976.
Actors, plasterboards, furniture, 1250 x 900 cm.
Middelheim Museum, Antwerp

Fig. 31.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings V*, 1976.
Detail

Fig. 32
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings VI*, 1975-1976.
Cardboard, 50 x 70 cm (closed: 35 x 50 cm).
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 33.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings VII*, 1982-1984.
Detail

Fig. 33.2
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings VII*, 1982-1984.
Detail

Fig. 33.3
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings VII*, 1982-1984.
Detail

Fig. 33.4
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings VII*, 1982-1984.
Detail

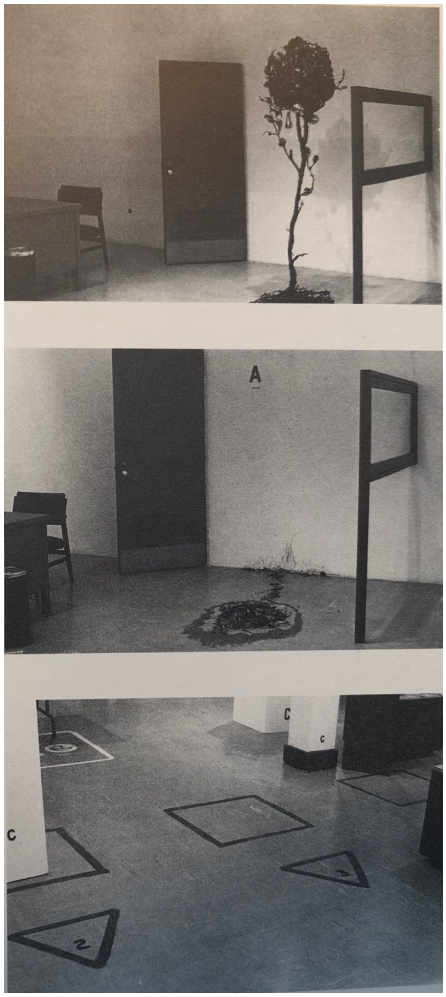


Fig. 33.5
Alik Cavaliere, *Surroundings VII*, 1982-1984.
Detail

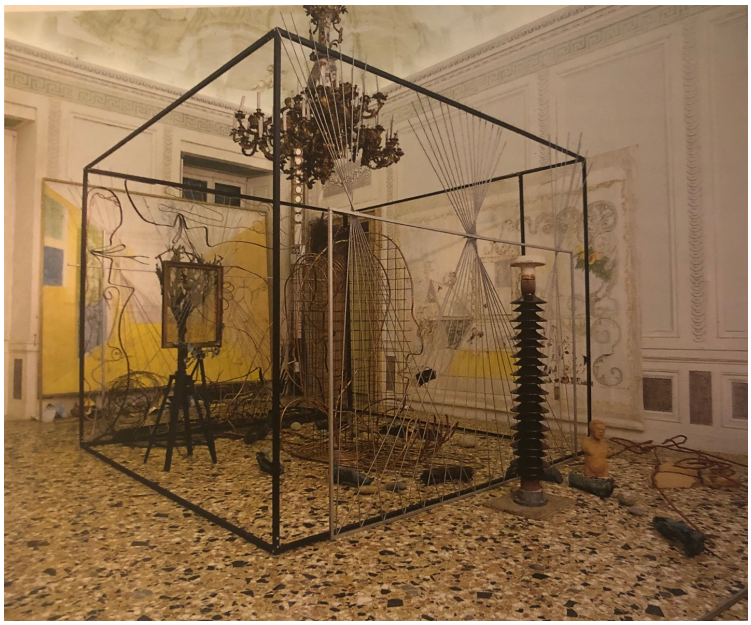


Fig. 34
Alik Cavaliere, *Pigmalione* [Pygmalion], 1986-1987.
Copper, iron, bronze, brass, aluminium, porcelain, terracotta, mirror, stone, glass, satin, wood, 376 x 376 x 1000 cm.
Cavaliere's storage Romagnano Sesia, Italy

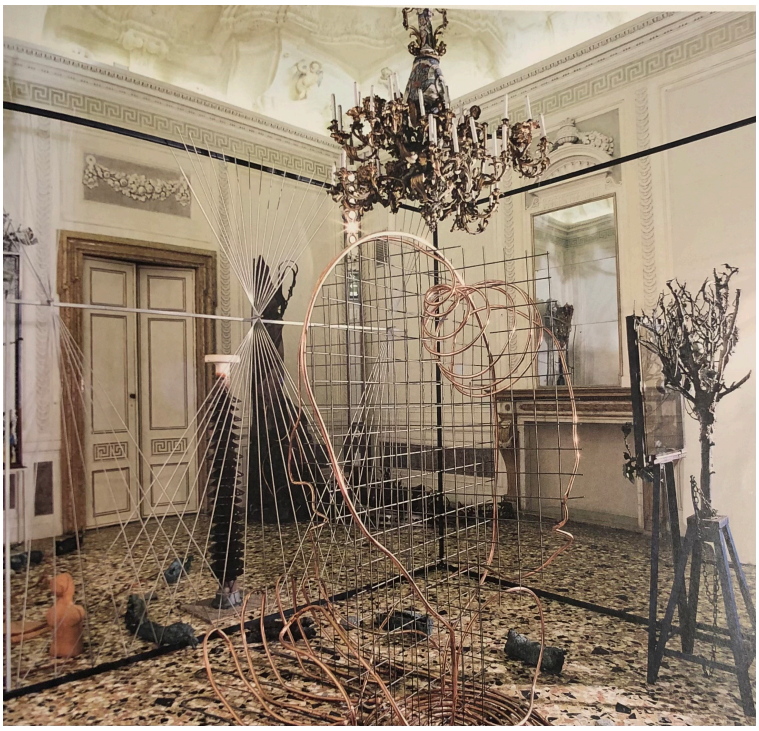


Fig. 34.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Pigmalione* [Pygmalion], 1986-1987.
Detail

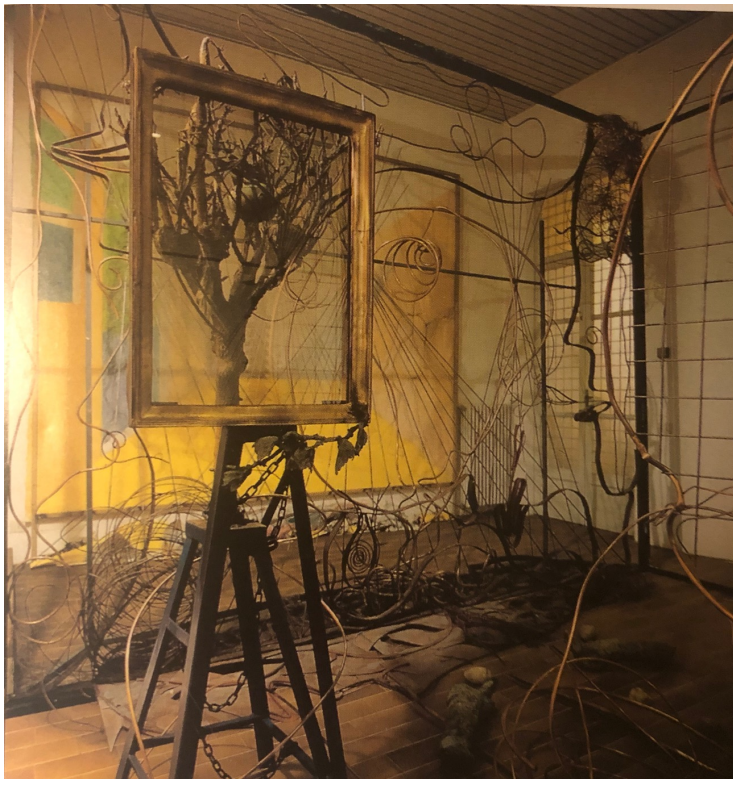


Fig. 34.3
Alik Cavaliere, *Pigmalione* [Pygmalion], 1986-1987.
Detail

Fig. 34.4
Alik Cavaliere, *Pigmalione* [Pygmalion], 1986-1987.
Detail

Fig. 34.5
Alik Cavaliere, *Pigmalione* [Pygmalion], 1986-1987.
Detail

Fig. 35
Alik Cavaliere, *Le riflessioni di Narciso*
[Narcissus' reflexions] 1989.
Mirror polished stainless steel, porcelain, terracotta, bronze, glass, brass, copper, aluminium, 185 x 175 x 175 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 35.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Le riflessioni di Narciso*
[Narcissus's Reflections], 1989.
Detail

Fig. 36
Alik Cavaliere, *I Giardini nel labirinto della memoria* [Gardens in the Labyrinth of Memory], 1990-1998.
Ceramic, stone, wood, bronze, crystal, glass, fabric, mirror polished stainless steel, copper, brass, acrylics, 300 x 500 x 700 cm.
The Adriana and Fania Cavaliere Collection, Milan

Fig. 37.1
Alik Cavaliere, *Opere sull'Orlando Furioso* [Works on the Orlando Furioso], 1994-1996.
Mixed technique, wood panels, acrylics, brass, copper, 280 x 700 x 100 cm.
Private collection, Rome.
Detail

Fig. 37.2
Alik Cavaliere, *Opere sull'Orlando Furioso* [Works on the Orlando Furioso], 1994-1996.
Copper, brass, unknown dimensions.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan.
Detail

Fig. 38
Marini Marini, Cavaliere [Horseman], 1936.
Gypsum, metal, wood, 22 x 20 x 8.5 cm
Museo Marino Marini, Florence

Fig. 39
Marini Marini, Angelo della città [Angel of the City], 1949.
Bronze, 175 x 176 x 106 cm.
Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice

Fig. 40
Alik Cavaliere, *Rose?* [Roses?], 1965.
Bronze, steel, h. 250 cm.
Private collection, Berlin

Fig. 41
Alik Cavaliere, *La rosa le rose* [The Rose, the Roses], 1965.
Bronze, 78 x 54 x 39 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

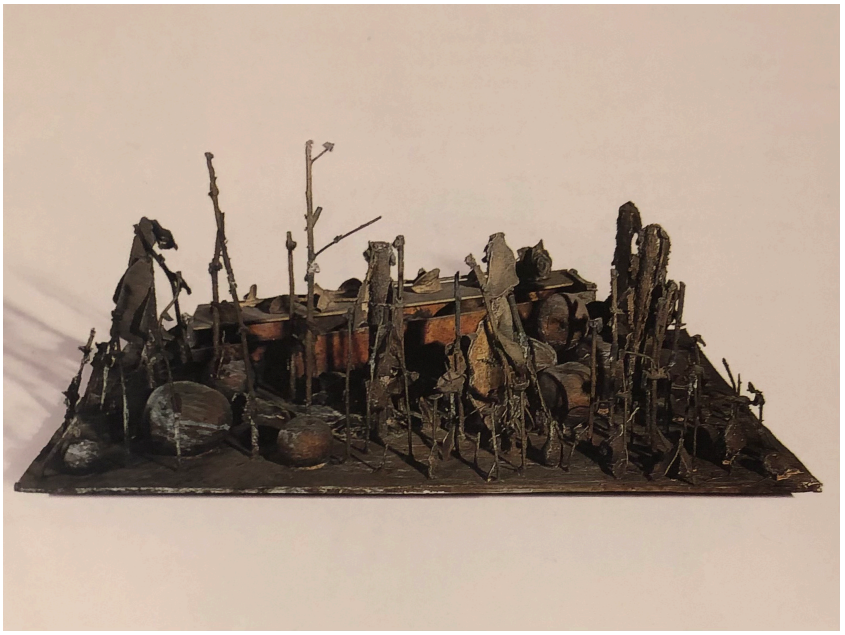


Fig. 42
Alik Cavaliere, *Natura con scatola e rosa* [Nature with a Box and a Rose] 1964.
Bronze, 38 x 66 x 90,5 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 43
Alik Cavaliere, *Il fiore* [The Flower], 1964.
Silver, glass, h. 75 cm.
Private collection, Rome

Fig. 44
Jasper Johns*, Light Bulb I,* cast 1960.
Painted 1962, painted bronze, 10.8 x 15.2 x 10.2 cm.
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Fig. 45
Jasper Johns, *Flashlight III*, 1958.
Plaster, glass, 13.3 x 21 x 9.5 cm.
Collection of the artist

Fig. 47
Tony Smith, *Die*, 1962.
Steel, 183.8 × 183.8 × 183.8 cm.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Fig. 48
Alik Cavaliere, *Partenza per la città* [Leaving the City], 1961.
Cement, wood, 50 x 125 x 80 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

Fig. 49
Alik Cavaliere, *Gustavo B. nei meandri dell'arte*
[Gustavo B. in the Meandrs of Art] 1962.
Bronze, 27 x 38 x 18 cm.
Unknown location

Fig. 50
Alik Cavaliere, *Gustavo B. e la natura* [Gustavo B. and the Nature],1962.
Bronze, 16 x 55 x 44 cm.
Unknown location

Fig. 51
Alik Cavaliere, *Gustavo B. e i suoi fratelli* [Gustavo B. and His Sibillings], 1962.
Bronze, 13 x 75 x 67 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

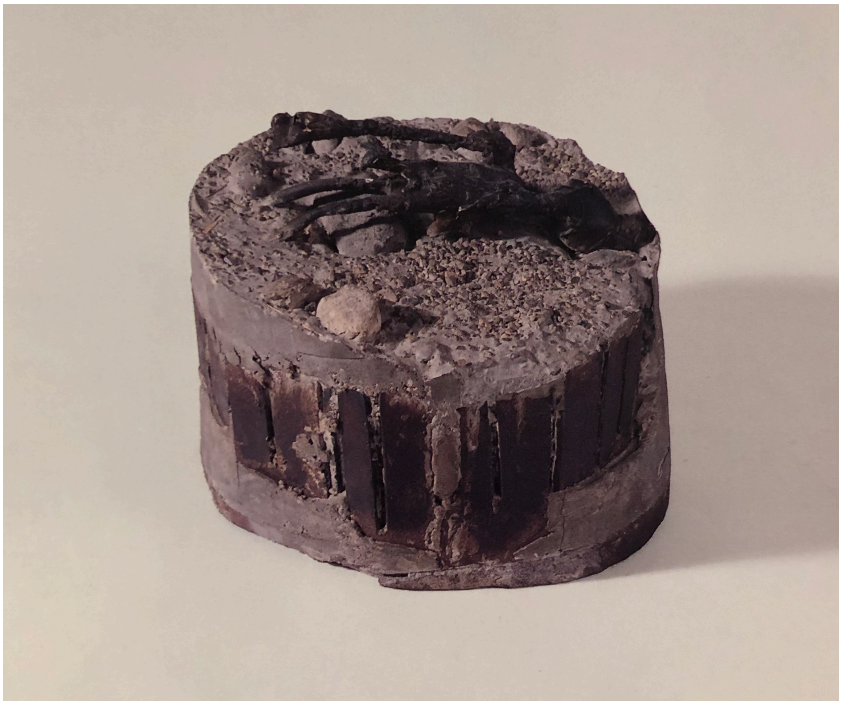


Fig. 52
Alik Cavaliere, *La morte eventuale di Gustavo B.* [The Eventual Death of Gustavo B.], 1962.
Bronze, iron, cement, 31 x 22 x 22 cm.
Unknown location

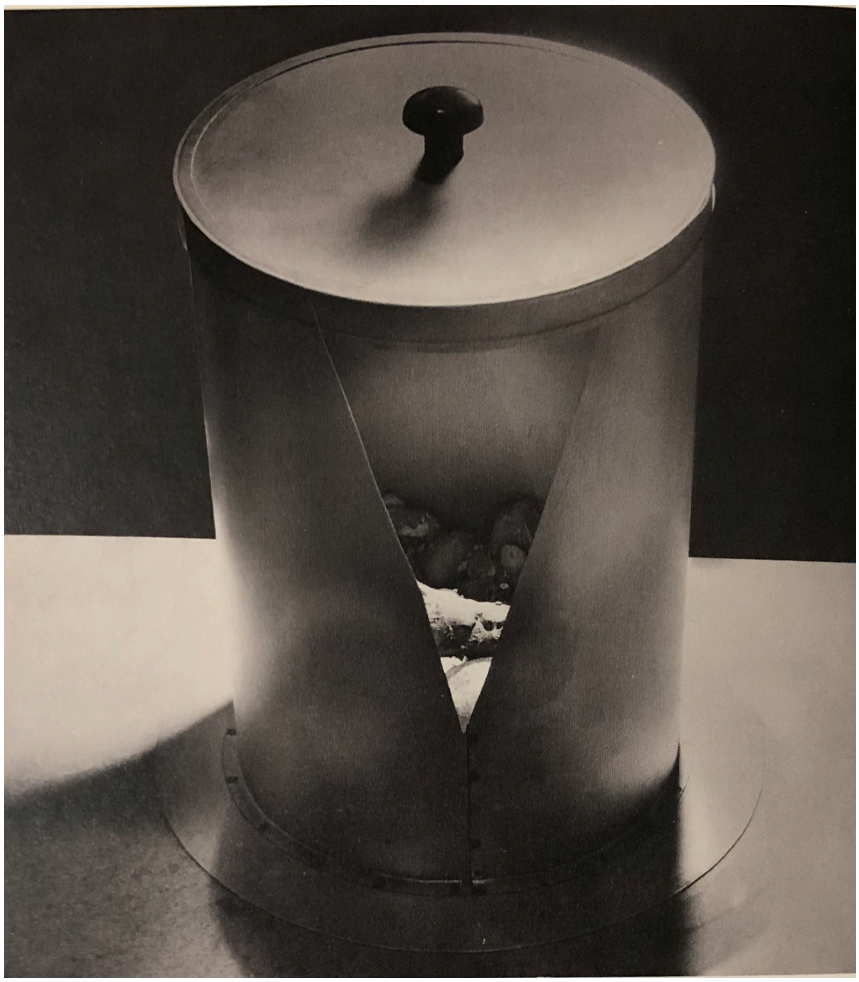


Fig. 53
Alik Cavaliere, *L'eventuale sonno eterno di Gustavo B.*[The Eventual Eternal Sleep of Gustavo B.], 1962.
Bronze, stone, cement, 40 x 40 x 40 cm.
Unknown location

Fig. 54
Alik Cavaliere, *Post Mortem,* 1963.
Bronze, iron, 70 x 100 x 70 cm.
Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

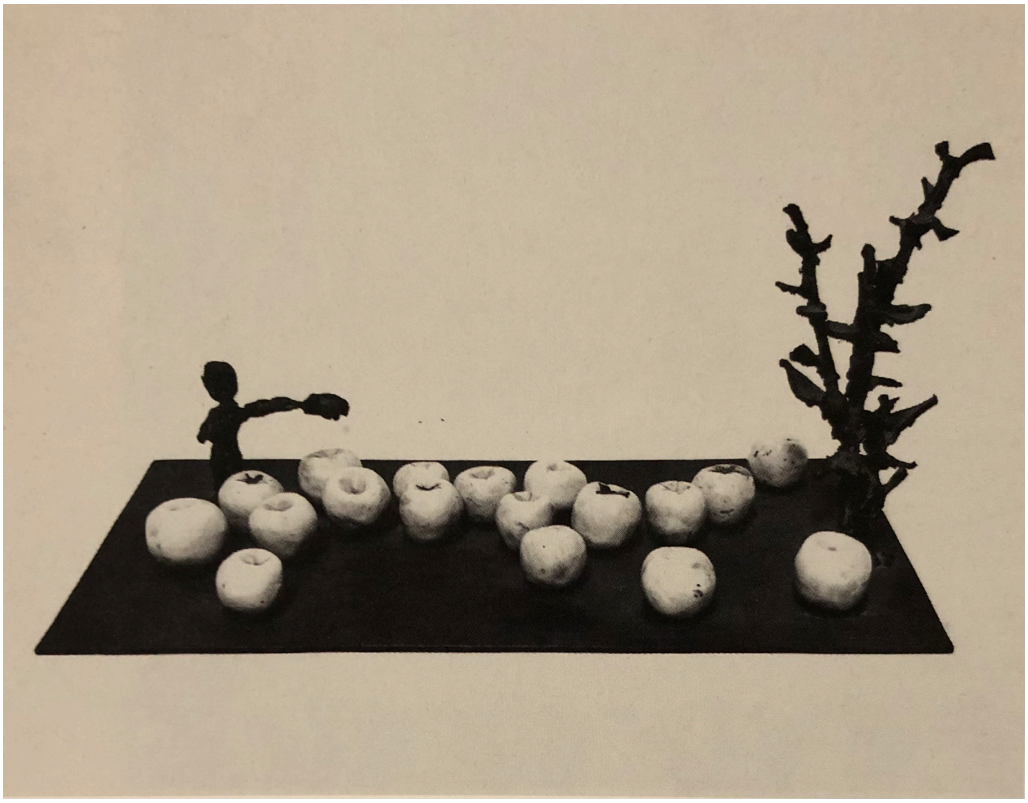


Fig. 55
Alik Cavaliere - *Gustavo B. e le mele* [Gustavo B. and the Apples], 1963.
Bronze, porcelain, 21 x 22 x 38 cm.
Private Location, Como

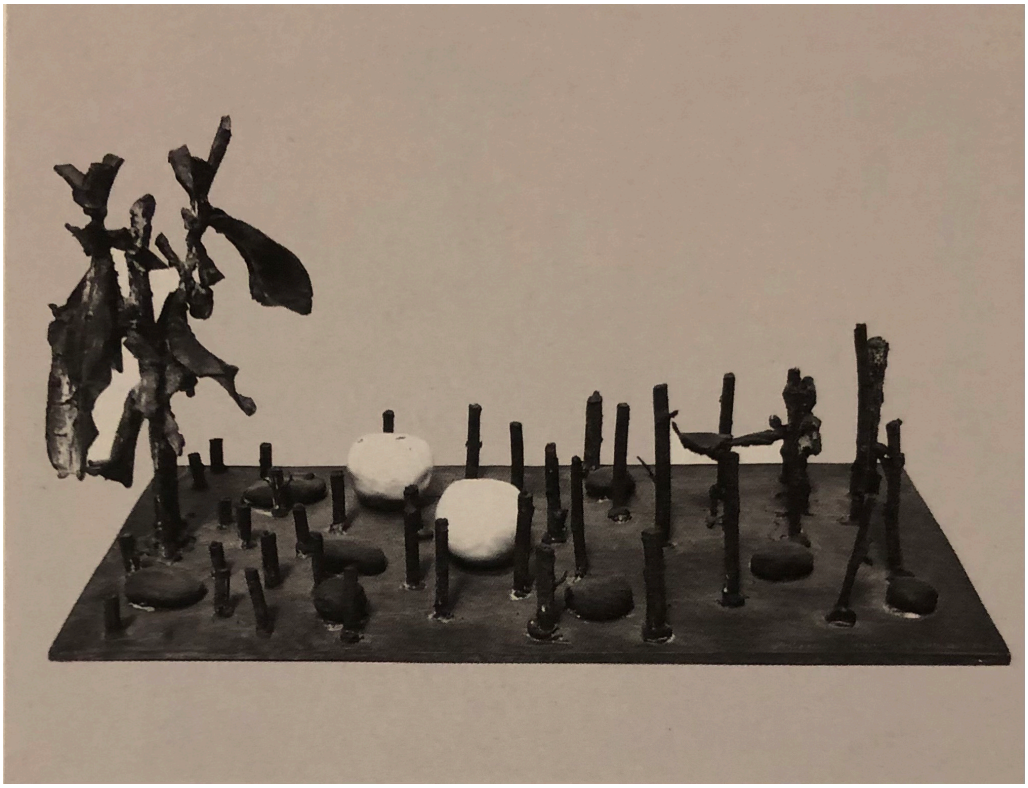


Fig. 56
Alik Cavaliere, *Gustavo B. e la natura* [Gustavo B. and Nature], 1963.
Bronze, porcelain, 21 x 22 x 38 cm. Archivio Cavaliere, Milan

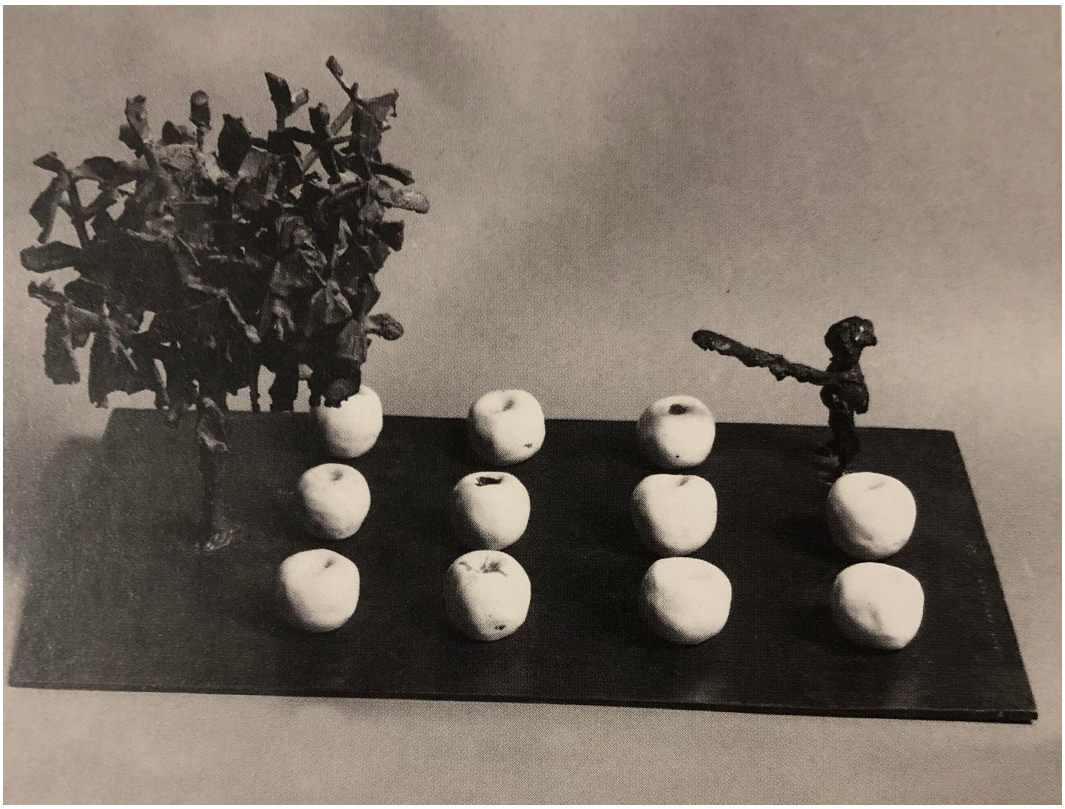


Fig. 57
Alik Cavaliere - *Gustavo B. tra natura vera e falsa* [Gustavo B. between True and False Nature], 1963.
Bronze, porcelain, 30 x 44 x 18 cm.
Unknown location

Fig. 58
Alik Cavaliere - *Omaggio a Magritte. Ritratto di una mela ranetta* [Homage to Magritte. Portrait of a Pippin Apple], 1963.
Bronze, silver, 7.5 x 50 x 50 cm.
Private collection, Paris

Fig. 59
Jannis Kounellis, *Untitled*, 1967.
Steel, stoneware, parrot, 14.5 x 100.5 x 33 cm.
ProLitteris, Zurich

Fig. 60
Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Venere degli stracci* [Venus of the Rags], 1967.
Ccement, fabric, 130 × 40 × 45 cm.
The Giuliana and Tommaso Setari collection, Milan

Fig. 61
Giulio Paolini, *Elegia* [Elegy], 1970.
Chalk, mirror polished stainless steel, 15 x 15 x 11 cm (base 100 x 100 x 50 cm).
Fondazione Giulio and Anna Paolini, Turin

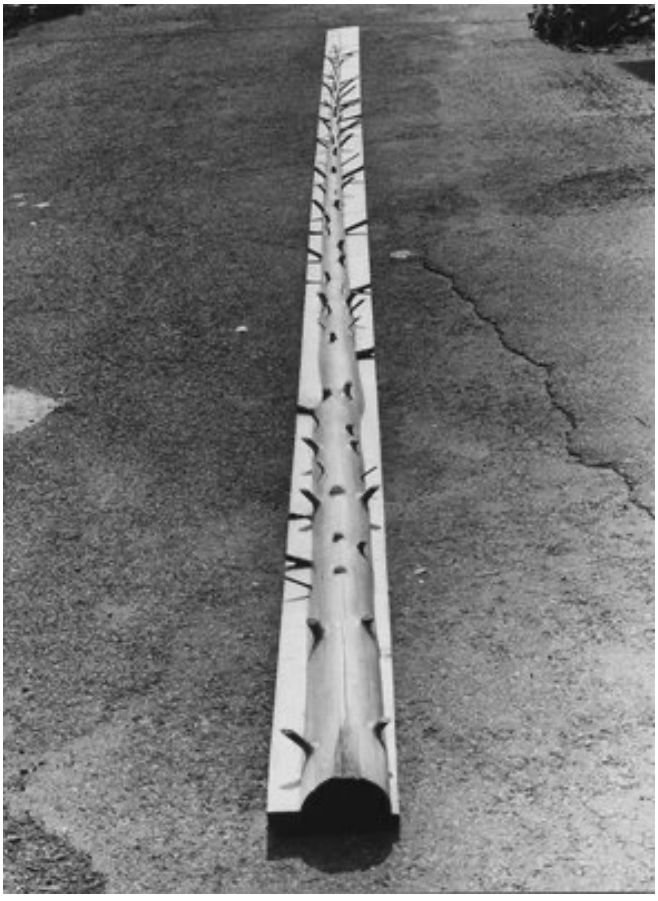


Fig. 62
Guiseppe Penone, *Albero di 8 metri* [8-Meter Tree], 1969.
Larch wood, 792.8 × 20 × 10 cm.
The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo

Fig. 63
Giovanni Anselmo, *Direzione* [Direction], 1966-1967.
Granite, compass, glass, 16 x 220 x 101 cm.
MADRE – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Naples

Fig. 64
Luciano Fabro, *L'Italia* [Italy], 1968.
Bronze, 70 x 335 x 10 cm.
Galleria Palatina – Palazzo Pitti, Florence

Fig. 65
Marcel Duchamp, *Bicycle Wheel,* 1913.
Metal, wood, 129.5 x 63.5 x 41.9 cm.
Lost original. Picture of the third version from 1951.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

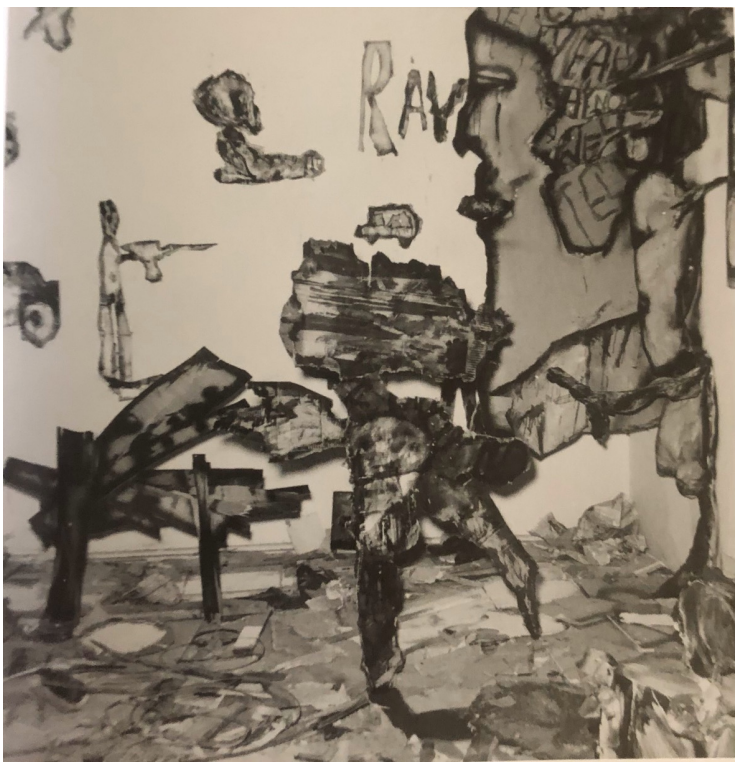


Fig. 66
Claes Oldenburg*, The Street,* 1960.
Cardboard, variable dimensions.
Installation at the Judson Gallery,
New York, 1960

Fig. 67
Louise Bourgeois, *Cell (Spider)*, 1997.
Steel, tapestry, wood, glass, fabric, rubber, silver, gold, bone
440 cm × 670 cm × 520 cm.
The Easton Foundation, New York

Fig. 68
Louise Bourgeois, *Cell (Choisy II)*, 1995.
Pink marble, steel, mirrors, 216.5 x 194.3 x 198.8 cm.
The Easton Foundation, New York

Fig. 69
Louise Bourgeois, *Cell (Eyes and Mirrors),* 1993.
Steel, limestone and glass, 2362 × 2108 × 2184 mm (unconfirmed).
Tate, London

Fig. 70
Robert Morris, *Untitled*, 1965-1971.
Mirror glass, wood, 914 × 914 × 914 mm (each cube. Overall, display dimensions are variable).
Tate, London

Fig. 71
Michelangelo Pistoletto*, I visitatori* [Visitors], 1978.
Oil-painted flimsy paper, mirror polished stainless steel, two panels, 220 x 120 cm each.
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome

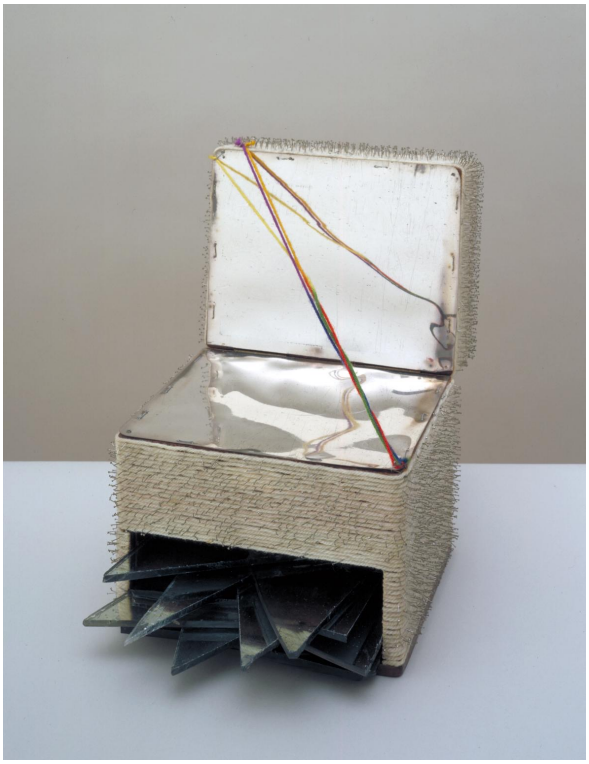


Fig.72
Lucas Samaras, Box, 1963.
mahogany box, wool, steel pins, glass and acetate film, 350 × 255 × 380 mm.
Tate, London

Fig. 73
Lucas Samaras, Box #124, 1988.
Wood box with rhinestones, dyed yarn, painted wire, painted wood, glass jars, acrylic, fibers, corroded metal, fabric, paperweight, pencils, colour photographs, brass necklace, level, marbles, beads, a tarantula, 20.3 × 33 × 24.1 cm – closed. 40 × 58.4 × 45.7 cm– open (variable).
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Fig. 74
Lucas Samaras, *Box #131,* 1989.
Wood box, painted wire, glass, acrylic, pencils, photographs, stones, fabric, a moth, a cicada, a tipulidae, 31.8 x 61 x 61.6 cm.

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