

GIUSEPPE PENONE

Ebbi, Avrò, Non Ho (J'eus, J'aurai, Je n'ai), Galerie Marian Goodman, Paris

9 September – 22 October, 2016

Opening reception: Friday 9 September, 6-8pm

Fui, Sarò, Non Sono (I was, I will be, I am not), Marian Goodman Gallery, London

8 September – 22 October, 2016

Opening reception: Thursday 8 September, 6-8pm

"Tactile perception brings us closer to the present." Giuseppe Penone

Marian Goodman Gallery is delighted to announce two simultaneous exhibitions of works by Giuseppe Penone at the London and Paris galleries. These new exhibitions bring together a selection of works related to the sense of touch and which take their form from specific gestures made by the artist's hand. Laurent Busine notes: *"There is no gesture more intensely Giuseppe Penone's than the fist: that is, the quantity that a hand can grasp, or that a hand can squeeze and crush, that a hand can hold and keep, or that a hand can stroke and caress."* The works presented in both exhibitions (the titles of which refer to past, future and present) reveal that for Giuseppe Penone gestures and tactile perceptions are connected to individuality and time: *"A form without a human gesture is a collective present; with a gesture, it is an individual present."*

The Paris gallery presents a selection of works where Giuseppe Penone makes the human body's relationship to the natural world palpable with the clear and resonant print of his hand. The golden leaf of *Spoglia d'oro* (2001) is formed by the artist, leaving the imprints of his palm. In *Germinazione* (2005), a series of six hanging wall sculptures in acrylic resin, the imprints of the artist's hands are preserved in casts of tree trunks and branches. The body of work entitled *Avvolgere la terra* (To unfold the earth) (2014) presented in the ground floor gallery combines terracotta with distinct materials such as engobe of quartz color, resin, leather and aluminum. The terracotta shape originates from a simple gesture of the artist's hands: *"the action of unfolding earth with the hands, containing it"*. This gesture underlines the intimate, complex connection between humans and nature. *"It is the form impressed into the material by the fluid movement of the universe. In a simple handful of clay we have the synthesis of a universal form."*

Giuseppe Penone follows his exploration on the limits of seeing and touching with the depiction of a closed eyelid in *Terre* (2015) and *Pugno di grafite - palpebra* (2012). For the artist the closed eyelid gives *"the exact definition of the boundaries and space of thought"* and *"reflects the fact that one's body is present inside space"*. The handful of terracotta or compressed graphite represents the presence of the body.

Playing on the relation between the container and the contained, the sculptures *Il vuoto del vaso* (2005) installed in the lower gallery, brings together terracotta vases and x-ray plates. While the pots bear witness to the pressure applied on clay, the accompanying x-rays reveal the artist's hands, making visible an invisible and fleeting process. A series of black and white photographic negatives *Geometria nelle mani – 4 aprile* (2004) show Penone's hands holding small geometrical wooden shapes, repeating the gesture he made in 1979 to create the works *Cocci*. In each photograph, the empty space left between his hands and the object is illuminated, giving space for a new sculpture.

The London gallery presents works emblematic of Penone's interest in the metaphysical relationship of his body to the living ecosystem. A primary example of this, *Trattenere 6, 8, 12 anni di crescita* (*Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto*) (2004-2016) is installed in the lower gallery. In 1968, Penone attached a bronze cast of his hand to the trunk of a young tree. 6 years later, he cast this tree *in situ*, and again at years 8 and 12, recording the growing symbiosis of his hand and the tree enveloping it. *Trattenere 6, 8, 12 anni di crescita* (*Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto*) comprises these three

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casts made in the past 12 years. While the artist's grasping hand hinders the natural growth, each tree adapts to the constraints of the metallic touch, subsequently embracing and absorbing the hand. Here, both the human body and the tree are simultaneously metamorphosed to become one inseparable entity. Its sculptural identity continues to organically evolve and link its past, present and future.

Respirare l'ombra (2008), a wall installation consisting of cages of laurel leaves, will cover one of the main walls in the lower gallery and perfume the space with its scent. While tactility is central to Penone's practice, the sense of smell is employed to further transform our experience of the world around us. A forest of interweaving bronze branches supporting terracotta casts (*Terra su terra*, 2014/2015) and a group of marble and bronze tree sculptures (*Indistinti confini*, 2012) will populate both gallery floors. Like *Respirare l'ombra*, these works recreate an environment similar to the woods of Garessio, Italy, where Penone had immersed himself during his formative years. The man-made parts of the works - the cages in *Respirare l'ombra* and the marble that encases the roots of *Indistinti confini* - at first appear to interrupt the natural progression observed in forest-like environments, but eventually surrender to the organic force that searches for harmonious unity through gentle transfiguration.

In the lower gallery, Penone returns in full circle to his theme of 'touch' with *Cortecchia* (1986), a series of terracotta portraits representing his daughter Caterina. Certain areas are painted with majolica glaze to emphasize the artist's touch, which goes beyond serving as a tool but as an object itself for the sculpture. Gianfranco Maraniello states in his essay 'Giuseppe Penone: the Possibility of Sculpture', "*The hand itself is the first mould for every form with its imprint transferred to the material to be shaped, thus initiating a constitutive negative dialectic.*"

Penone's new and iconic sculptures are currently on display in the Rijksmuseum Gardens in Amsterdam (until October 2nd, 2016). The Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto (MART) has just presented a major survey exhibition. Penone's work has also been recently exhibited at Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2015); Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne (2015); Beirut Art Center (2014); Musée de Grenoble (2014); Kunstmuseum Winterthur (2013); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2013). Giuseppe Penone presented his large-scale sculptures in several prestigious gardens such as the gardens of the Château de Versailles (2013); Madison Square Park, New York (2013); Giardino di Boboli, Forte di Belvedere, Firenze (2014); La Venaria Reale, near Turin (2015).

Giuseppe Penone was born in 1947 in the small town of Garessio, in Piedmont region, Italy. He studied at the Accademia di Belle Arte in Turin where he lives and works. In 2014 Penone was awarded with the prestigious Praemium Imperiale International Arts Award for Sculpture. In 2007 he represented Italy at the 52nd Venice Biennale.

Two public events will be organised on the occasion of these exhibitions:

London: Walk through with Clare Lilley, director of programme, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, on Saturday 8 October, 4pm

Paris: Walk through with Laurent Busine, curator and former director of the Musée des Arts Contemporains de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles (Mac's), on Thursday 20 October, 11am

Press contacts:

Paris: Raphaële Coutant raphaele@mariangoodman.com or + 33 (0)1 48 04 70 52

London: Charlie Dunnery McCracken charlie@mariangoodman.com or +44 (0)2 7099 0088

Galerie Marian Goodman Paris, 79 rue du Temple, 75003 Paris

Marian Goodman Gallery London, 5-8 Lower John Street, London W1F 9DY