

Giovanni Anselmo

(Borgofranco d'Ivrea, Turin, 1934)

Although his early artistic investigations emerged within the pictorial discipline, Anselmo immediately sought to reject a nostalgic approach to creating a painting, which he saw as a space apart, separate from the artist's sensibility. As Jean-Christophe Amman relates, Anselmo said: "It is true that the painting has its fascination, but it excludes you, you remain alone with your emotions." There is a well-known story of how the artist, walking one day at dawn at the summit of Stromboli, had a clear perception of the infinite realm of which, from that point on, all his works would become components. Unlike what occurs outside the closed imaginative plane of the canvas, the fulcra of energy created through his installations include everything within themselves: artist, viewer, cosmic geometries. No element remains isolated in the solitude of its finite reality. Everything is reorganized in relation to the positioning of the work's elements, and the work responds to the trajectories and lines of energetic tension of earth and sky.

Anselmo arranges and positions large stones of granite and other building stones, and orients them along the axes of geographical coordinates. Sometimes a compass pointing to the north is set into the stones and, as if in response to the force of the magnetic field, the stone itself is oriented according to the line that passes through the needle. At other times, Anselmo fastens a large mass to the white wall of the exhibition space, as high up as possible, so that the higher the stone is positioned, the lighter it becomes. If it were possible to place it even higher – the artist says – in the space between earth and sky, it would become so light that it would no longer be imprisoned by the force of gravity, and we would be able to see it hovering beyond the influence of our planet.

In *Untitled* (1967) in the CRT Collection, a sheet of Plexiglas is held in tension by an iron rod and, due to the curvature created, the sheet can remain vertically on edge. Here the disembodied nature of the transparent material signals the action of a force in space; on the small scale of a unit of energy; it repeats the spatial curvature of the cosmos, and through the rod and the work's verticality, ideally indicates the line of the earth, the line of the glance and the terrestrial axis. *Neon nel cemento* (1967–70), another work in the collection, is an image of luminous energy imprisoned in solid matter: a living energy destined to run out like a cosmic hourglass.

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One winter afternoon in 1969, in a stretch of Turinese countryside, Anselmo walks westwards towards the sun at the moment of sunset and takes a photograph every twenty steps: he thus creates *Interferenza nella gravitazione universale*. By proceeding in the opposite direction compared to the rotation of the Earth, he attempts to follow the sun, lengthen the day and gain an infinitesimal portion of extra daylight. The twenty images that make up the sequence are apparently identical, the sky and the earth divided by a continuous strip

of trees, but between the first and the last shot, we may notice the sun setting, little by little growing closer to the line of the horizon. Anselmo developed the original negatives for the first time in 1971 only to reprint them in various formats on paper or canvas over the years to come. The version of the work that forms part of the collection was produced on the occasion of his solo show at Castello di Rivoli in 2016. Designed to adapt to the vast architectural proportions of the 'Manica Lunga', the photographic display took account not only of the orientation of the wing of the museum along the east-west axis, and thus of the position of the sun, but also left ample spaces between one photograph and the next, thus inviting visitors to ideally walk the same twenty steps that Anselmo took while producing the work.

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