Poor Art | Arte Povera
Italian Influences
British Responses
Introduction

‘Impoverishing signs to reduce them to their archetypes.’ An Introduction to Arte Povera
Roberta Minnucci

La carne dei poveri
Stephen Nelson in conversation with Paul Bonaventura

Works
September 2017 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the first Arte Povera exhibition in Genoa at Galleria La Bertesca, when Germano Celant used this definition for the first time; accordingly, we felt that this was a fitting occasion to explore the influences of the movement on a generation of British artists. Since opening in 1998, the Estorick Collection has increasingly set up conversations between twentieth-century Italian art and the work of British artists, as well as international movements. In the autumn of 2005, the Collection presented an exhibition of works from the collection of Marcello Levi, entitled Portrait of a Collector: From Futurism to Arte Povera, in which a large number of works by Arte Povera artists were presented alongside pieces by a range of international figures. The exhibition was one of the first at the Estorick to showcase more contemporary Italian art, with the aim of exploring the legacy of the avant-garde and of our own permanent collection. It is interesting now to explore further the impact of this particular movement on a generation of British artists.

Arte Povera had many strands, and different elements were taken up and explored by different artists, who can perhaps be seen more as intellectuals and craftsmen, rather than painters or sculptors in the traditional sense. Art resides in an idea, and the thinking process often breaks it down into different currents – different influences. The ‘legacy’ of Arte Povera for this group of artists is therefore varied, and each artist has picked up on either the general idea or a ‘minor’ aspect of the movement that has seemed most relevant to them and their work. We did not prescribe what we were looking for: rather, the artists themselves wanted to acknowledge their connection (as loosely or as closely as they wished) with the Italian movement.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Stephen Nelson and Martin Holman for suggesting the exhibition to the Estorick Collection, as well as for curating the show; I would also like to thank Roberta Minnucci for her contribution to the project. My gratitude goes to Paul Bonaventura for his important contribution to the catalogue, and his enthusiasm for the project as a whole. I am naturally indebted to all the artists who have agreed to show in our exhibition, and to all the galleries that have facilitated the loans – in particular, Mira Dimitrova at Mazzoleni and Ursula Casamonti at Tornabuoni Art. Finally, as always, I would like to thank my colleagues Christopher Adams, Luke Alder and Claudia Zanardi alongside the many people involved in putting this show together.

Roberta Cremoncini
Director, Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art
The term Arte Povera, literally ‘poor art’, was coined by the young art critic Germano Celant on the occasion of the exhibition Arte Povera – Im Spazio at Galleria La Bertesca in Genoa in September 1967. In the catalogue essay, he presented a new kind of art concerned with ‘taking away, eliminating, downgrading things to a minimum, impoverishing signs to reduce them to their archetypes’. The adjective ‘poor’ was borrowed from the Polish director Jerzy Grotowski’s notion of ‘poor theatre’, which was conceived as an experimental laboratory where superfluous elements, such as costumes and masks, were removed in order to emphasise the actors’ performance and their interaction with the audience. Celant’s notion of poverty was also intended as a polemic against American Pop Art, which was seen as an uncritical celebration of contemporary mass-consumption society. Arte Povera’s opposition to American Pop was also a response to the latter’s dominance of the international art scene, as demonstrated by the Grand Prize for Painting being awarded to Robert Rauschenberg at the 1964 Venice Biennale.

The exhibition at Galleria La Bertesca, conventionally regarded as the first Arte Povera show, included only some of the artists who would subsequently be associated with the group. It was divided into two sections: Arte Povera, which comprised Alighiero Boetti, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali and Emilio Prini, and Im Spazio, meaning im(age) space, with works by Umberto Bignardi, Mario Ceroli, Paolo Icaro, Renato Mambor, Eliseo Mattiacci and Cesare Tacchi. All the above artists shared an interest in exploring the notion of space, adopting a new, experimental approach to sculpture.

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When in October 1968 Marcello Rumma organised the event Arte povera + azioni povere in Amalfi, the attention shifted from object to action. Whilst the artworks were shown in the medieval arsenal, the whole town became the setting for performances by artists and the street theatre troupe Lo Zoo. During three days of events, the artists revealed an increasing inclination towards ephemeral and participatory practices. Mario Merz, for instance, presented a wicker cone (Untitled, 1968 – another version, Cone, is included in the present exhibition, p. 39) containing a pot of boiling beans; the steam from which, rising from the top, transformed the sculpture in a temporary alchemical testing space. On the same occasion, English artist Richard Long – one of the international participants alongside

In November of the same year, Celant presented what is considered to be the official manifesto of this gathering of artists – entitled ‘Arte Povera: Notes for a Guerrilla War’ – in the pages of the magazine Flash Art. Here, using overtly political tones and a warlike lexicon, he introduced ‘a poor art concerned with contingency, events, ahistoricism, the present’. The political engagement, professed more by the critic than by the artists themselves, was related to the specificity of the Italian historical context. After a period of sustained economic growth, known as the ‘economic miracle’, Italy had entered a severe recession leading to the emergence of social tensions. In the autumn of 1967, universities in Northern Italy had been occupied by students whose ideological foundation was highly influenced by Marxism as well as by revolutionary events in China and South America. As the traditional structures of politics and society were being questioned, experimental practices in literature, music, cinema and art similarly sought to challenge the system of official culture through alternative forms of expression. However, Celant’s text was devoid of the authentic nature of the manifesto since it was not written by the artists but by the critic, who deliberately intended to present Arte Povera as a revolutionary force in the art world by adopting an avant-gardist approach and militant language. This detachment between the complex theoretical apparatus created by Celant and the works produced by the artists would remain a constant, contradictory element in every attempt to define Arte Povera.

In the exhibition catalogue of the 1968 exhibition at the Galleria de’ Foscherari in Bologna, Celant emphasised the identification between man and nature, visual anarchy and incoherence in an art which celebrated banal and primary elements and had regressed to a pre-iconographic stage. References to nature, however, were not significantly present in the works on display, the artists being mainly concerned with exploring the essence of sculpture through non-figurative approaches and innovative combinations of forms and materials. With this show, entitled Arte Povera, the group began to be more defined, including Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Emilio Prini and Gilberto Zorio, along with Mario Ceroli and Gianni Piacentino.

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2 Ibid.
Jon Dibbets and Ger Van Elk – performed the ‘poor action’ of shaking hands with local people while wandering around the town. After Amalfi, Celant began to cultivate the ambition of imposing the term Arte Povera on contemporary international trends, which culminated in the concurrent publication of his 1969 book Arte Povera in Italy, the UK, the US and Germany, lending the group transnational resonance. Artists such as Carl Andre, Joseph Beuys, Barry Flanagan, Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman and Richard Serra were invited to contribute to the publication with their works and statements. Meanwhile, the Italian artists were being included in seminal exhibitions abroad, such as When Attitudes Become Form (Bern-London, 1969) and Op Losse Schroeven (Amsterdam, 1969), which omitted their Arte Povera affiliation, focusing instead on broader post-minimalist practices that prioritised the artistic process over the resulting work.10

In 1970, the group achieved official recognition by being exhibited in the conventional museum setting of the Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna in Turin, in the exhibition Conceptual Art Arte Povera Land Art; hence, Celant began to consider this particular artistic adventure to have reached its end. The following year, on the occasion of the show curated by Eva Madelung in Munich, he requested to use as an exhibition title the names of the artists, rather than the term Arte Povera.11 As his demand was rejected, in the catalogue essay he declared the failure of the attempt of the contemporary arts, including Arte Povera, to destroy the myth of culture. Art had become detached from life and reality, continuing to serve contemplation and abstract knowledge.12 Following Celant’s theoretical framework, Arte Povera had thus lasted four years, from 1967 until 1971. It had comprised dozens of artists, whilst oscillating between a well-defined Italian group and a blurred international trend. Despite having proclaimed its dissolution, Celant continued to promote Arte Povera beyond Italy through a meticulous editorial and curatorial activity, culminating in Arte Povera’s grand return in 1985 with the exhibition The Knot at MoMA PS1, New York, and the publication of the first historical account of its movement, in a bilingual Italian-English text.13 Through this retrospective reading, the critic crystallised the list of the thirteen artists who would be traditionally associated with Arte Povera.14

Having presented a historical overview of Arte Povera through major exhibitions and critical texts, I would now like to consider alternative interpretations of the group, as well as the artistic context of the time. The different practices of the artists involved will be briefly examined in relation to the works displayed in the current exhibition, while some concluding remarks will expand on the current situation of Arte Povera.

Arte Povera as a term has been strongly criticised for being a product of Celant’s personal ambition.15 Undoubtedly, the critic has shaped its reception and its understanding, whilst contributing, at the same time, to its worldwide success. However, as Caroline Tisdall has underlined, ‘Arte Povera was never a movement’.16 Celant’s programmatic statements were not, in fact, necessarily reflected in the artists’ works. It was, rather, a loose association of artists who were questioning the status of the art of the time. They were influenced by a previous generation who had challenged artistic conventions with a rebellious attitude: Lucio Fontana, who had violated the pictorial surface through the piercing of the canvas, Alberto Burri, with his enquiry into materials and chemical processes, and Piero Manzoni, whose oeuvre was characterised by a provocative, conceptual approach to the body and the artwork itself.17

According to a literal translation of the term, Arte Povera is often misinterpreted as an art based on poor materials. Whilst it is undeniable that these artists made use of unconventional materials such as earth, rocks, steel and rags – and even included live animals in their installations – they also employed lavish items such as marble and gold alongside electronic technologies such as neon and video recording.18 The investigation of the dynamics of energy and processes, supported by these materials, was certainly a significant part of the group’s research, especially in the case of

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14 The official list created by Celant in Arte Povera: Storie e protagonisti / Art Povera: Histories and protagonists includes Giovanni Ancelmo, Alighiero Boetti, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Luciano Fabro, Janiss Kouvellos, Marisa Merz, Mario Merz, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Emilio Prini and Gilberto Zorio, and would remain unchanged over the following years. However, it is interesting to note that during that same year (1985) Celant included twelve artists in The Knot, excluding Emilio Prini.
15 Some of the most critical voices have been Paolo Treu, Claire Gilman, Caroline Tisdall, Dider Sassi, Bettina Ruhrberg, Marica E. Varela and Giovanni Lai.
Anselmo, Calzolari, Merz, Penone (p. 44) and Zorio (pp. 54-55). However, it was only one aspect of their practice. Boetti, for instance, was producing works more strictly linked to conceptual art whilst exploring language and signs (p. 25); Pascali was challenging the dichotomy between natural entities and artificial materials with a playful attitude, Paolini was delving into the mechanisms of vision and the nature of art history (pp. 42, 43), and Pistoletto into the active relationship between the spectator and the work in his mirror paintings (pp. 46-47). These works were also rich in references to the history of art and Italian cultural heritage, as illustrated in the appropriation of ancient architectural elements, classical sculptures and Old Master paintings. In this peculiar connection with the past, Arte Povera revealed, despite the international aspirations and the analogies with contemporary artistic trends, its distinctive Italian character. As a consequence, it can be fittingly characterised, to use Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev’s definition, as ‘a hybrid art, at once radically innovative in its stylistic variety and wholly open to past culture’. As Claire Gilman has observed, it also embodied a new subjectivity combined with artifice, narrative and theatricality. Its practices were highly varied and multidisciplinary, and their complexity has yet to be fully acknowledged.

In the formation and definition of the group, Celant’s theorisation has retained an absolute predominance. However, other critics of the time such as Carla Lonzi, Renato Barilli, Maurizio Calvesi and Achille Bonito Oliva, closely followed the developments of this artistic research, proposing alternative interpretations and acute insights. Furthermore, the emergence of these artists was favoured by a synergy between a young generation of gallery owners including Gian Enzo Sperone, Fabio Sargentini, Plinio De Martis, Marcella Rumma and the artists themselves, which led to the establishment of a network of spaces open to new experimental practices. This complex system of relationships also favoured a connection between different Italian cities, especially between Rome and Turin, where most of the artists were based.

Since its inception, the term ‘Arte Povera’, resistant to any translation, has come to define a specific experience of contemporary Italian art, and its resonance has expanded well beyond the national boundaries, thereby influencing later generations of artists on an international scale. Today, the works of this group of Italian artists are part of the collections of the world’s most important museums and provide an enduring example of experimental practices. At the same time, in Italy, Arte Povera has been gradually appropriated by the establishment and has paradoxically entered the system of official culture that it originally aimed to destroy. The apex of this process was represented by Arte Povera 2011, a series of exhibitions and events coordinated by Celant in six Italian cities on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Italian unification. In being chosen as the glorious image of Italian art, Arte Povera achieved a celebratory status and attracted national pride.

It seems more appropriate, nonetheless, to celebrate Arte Povera in 2017, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of its first exhibition. Although, as we have seen, the traditional history conveyed above is not devoid of inconsistencies, this year offers the opportunity to consider the scale of its impact and to acknowledge the importance of its legacy.

La carne dei poveri

Stephen Nelson in conversation with Paul Bonaventura

PB: Previously you told me that your artistic interest in Arte Povera was stimulated by seeing two exhibitions in London in the 1990s: Michelangelo Pistoletto: Oggetti in Meno (Minus Objects) 1965-1966, which took place at Camden Arts Centre in 1991, and Gravity and Grace: The Changing Condition of Sculpture 1965-1975, which took place at the Hayward Gallery in 1993. The latter exhibition featured examples of work by several of the best-known exponents of the movement, including Pistoletto, Giovanni Anselmo, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Maria Merz, Giulio Penone and Gilberto Zorio. What was it about the work of these Italian artists that so captured your imagination at the time?

SN: It may have been stimulated earlier. My first contact with Arte Povera actually took place at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. When I was 11 years old my father took me there to look at the paintings, but amidst all the oil paint and gold frames, I saw things sitting on the floor made out of planks, which seemed so different from the ancient, magical things on the gallery walls. And I recognised those materials—they were there at the bottom of the garden and in the garage at home. I have since found out that those pieces were included in an exhibition called New Italian Art, 1953-71.

But to get back to your question, from the moment I graduated in the mid-1980s I had been bombarded with exhibitions and images of bullish painting. Artists like Julian Schnabel and David Salle were painting and selling big. But then I saw those shows at Camden and the Hayward. The artists in those exhibitions seemed to be demanding contemplation rather than awe. To my eyes they had woven a quiet, poetic resonance into the fabric of their work.

The Gravity and Grace show pulled together lots of disparate sculptural elements from the 1960s and 1970s, Arte Povera included. It was the first time that I had seen a show curated with such thought and intelligence, with artists from different parts of the Western world. And the galleries seemed silent. At the time somebody described the exhibition as Virgilian—as though the visitor was being led through an underworld of art, with many rings and layers, populated by things made out of sacking, cloth, wire, glass, rubber, lettuce and cacti.

I had seen work by Michelangelo Pistoletto at the Forte di Belvedere in Florence, as a student, and been blown away by his bonkers take on marble figures, but the Minus Objects exhibition at Camden showed his less bombastic side, thoughtful and sensitive, and most importantly it showed an artist full of wit. Lots of art has humour, but Pistoletto’s art had wit.

The materials seemed mundane, unsensational, and the titles were matter-of-fact. In a photographic piece by Pistoletto in the Camden show Jasper Johns had lost his ears because the printing process was too small. Elsewhere a painting simply stated TI AMO. It looked like a gifted adolescent had painted it on the wall, like a proclamation of love on a motorway bridge. Minus Objects felt like a group show, not the work of an artist trying to find a style for the market place.

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Fig. 1 Oggetti in Meno (Minus Objects) 1965-1966, in Michelangelo Pistoletto’s studio, Turin, 1966.

Fig. 2 Mario Ceroli, Steps, 1965, mill-sawn timber, 248 x 353 x 163 cm; exhibited in New Italian Art, 1953-71 at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, 1971.

Fig. 3 Installation shot of Gravity and Grace: The Changing Condition of Sculpture 1965-1973.
My own work had no stylistic continuity back then—and still doesn’t—so I identified with Pistoletto. His work appealed to me as an artist who spent his mornings and evenings walking to and from a studio in an old Victorian factory, alongside a dirty, trolley-infested canal in north London; alongside and outside Margaret Thatcher’s dream.

PB: As you know, the term Arte Povera was first used in September 1967 by the Italian art critic Germano Celant to describe the work of a number of artists who engaged with humble, unconventional materials. The movement came out of a period of economic turmoil and social upheaval, locally and globally, and by embracing throwaway things like sacking, cloth and wire, Pistoletto and his peers aimed to break down the dichotomy between art and life, and challenge and disrupt the values of the commercialised art market. Twenty years down the line do you think it was the materials or the politics that appealed to your younger artistic self?

SN: I have a strong sense that the term Arte Povera suited Celant, who was an ambitious young art critic, rather than the artists it represented, but he was genuinely interested in artists and championed them vigorously.

Quite a few of the artists associated with Arte Povera rejected the term, but for me it was always about the materials rather than the politics, about a message being conveyed using the simplest possible means. By the time I was really aware of Italian politics the Brigate Rosse were a spent force, and Aldo Moro and the student upheavals in Rome and beyond meant little to the artists I knew. Our politics were the politics of punk, the miners’ strikes and anti-racism.

I have always liked Arte Povera’s anti-establishment stance and its attempts to disrupt the art market. But without sounding cynical let’s not forget that Pistoletto showed repeatedly at Galleria Sperone in Turin while Giovanni Anselmo and Gilberto Zorio were included in a group show at the Leo Castelli Warehouse in New York.

But we did make a mistake in thinking that povera simply meant poor. In Italian the word can mean many different things. We felt it gave us licence to use salvaged commonplace stuff, but the Arte Povera artists also used neon, photography and marble in their work, which are hardly ‘poor’ materials. In accepting the traditional definition we were as misguided as the Italian football fans of the time who adopted the clothing and behaviour of English football hooligans without understanding the socioeconomic reasons behind the phenomena. But the artists I identified with back then were financially poor, and the idea of prefabricated work and vitrines was a long way from our thinking.

You only have to look at the individuals associated with New British Sculpture in the 1980s—Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Alison Wilding, Bill Woodrow—and the materials and techniques they used to see the wider influence of Arte Povera and how it prompted a reaction away from cool conceptual sculpture and big bad painting.

PB: I have always thought that the term Arte Povera represented a state of mind rather than any formal, manifesto-driven commitment to using humble materials. The movement encompassed a speculative, empirical position that focused on the physical presence of the actual object and the attitude and behaviour of the individual artist. When I think of the points of contact between the work of Arte Povera artists and your work I not only think of attitude and behaviour. I also think of attributes like precariousness and fragility, memory and touch.

SN: Over the years I think the movement has come to mean different things to different people. Certainly in Italy it means something different to how people think of it in Britain.

Because the material and cultural elements are so closely intertwined, Arte Povera is revered in Italy. Like cucina povera, in which beans are considered la carne dei poveri (because of the higher cost of meat), it was born out of necessity and means more than it ever could here. In Britain Richard Hamilton drew up a list of what art should be made from. In Italy artists, critics and historians are still picking over the bones of Celant’s ‘Arte Povera: Notes for a Guerrilla War’, trying to understand its true message.

If we were to make a comparison with Catholicism, I think Arte Povera would be more St Francis than St Dominic. There’s a certain dignity to the Franciscans, with their renouncement of worldly goods and memento mori, whereas the Dominicans are thumping preachers.

Like all doctrines the real meaning of Arte Povera is still being debated, but I like your definition and I’ve tried to embody things like precariousness and fragility in my work. I place great emphasis on the physical presence of the actual object and I value the power of the visual imagination.
And then at some point I found myself thinking back to how Gravity and Grace had made such an impact on me and I wondered what it would look like to reimagine an exclusively Arte Povera version of that show with the inclusion of work by some of the British artists it might have influenced. Fifty years on from the birth of Arte Povera I wanted to see the work of some of those artists alongside my work and the work of my peers. I wanted to explore the legacy of Arte Povera in an exhibition situation.

SN: There is a lineage from Picasso’s piece of rope to Jannis Kounellis’s use of rope more than half a century later, but for me the first and perhaps most important incorporation into art of material from the real world takes place in Simone Martini’s Maestà in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, which features an actual gemstone on the Virgin’s cloak.

For the last thirty years the expression ‘Duchampian’ has been applied to everything from sharks to beds and back again, but I find this use simplistic and lazy. Arte Povera definitely breathed new life into the idea of the readymade—no Penone pun intended—but I should just like to point out that there is a difference between the assisted readymades of Arte Povera and what I am doing in my work, which moves between assisted pieces, which are constructed with readymades, and created pieces, which are wholly fabricated.

The current exhibition came about in the wake of conversations I’ve been having with artists since the mid-1980s. As you know, how artists talk and think, and who and what they see as important, is often very different to how curators, critics and historians talk, think and see. But the critical moment took place four years ago when I was involved in an exhibition about Duchamp’s legacy at the Fine Art Society in London (What Marcel Duchamp Taught Me) for which I created a piece out of found objects called The Large Wood that imagined what Duchamp’s The Large Glass and his Bicycle Wheel would have looked like had they been brought together in rural Italy. At the time I had just begun living in Basilicata, considered by some to be one of Italy’s poorest regions, but for me one of its richest.

Going around the show one evening I felt detached from most of the art works on display. Some exhibits felt dispassionate; they came across as cold, clinical. I felt that the work I had created was more to do with Arte Povera than Marcel Duchamp. I liked being in the show and it was a good idea, but I suddenly felt out of place.
When I lived in Islington in the 1990s the Estorick was my local gallery. There’s an intimacy to it, which suits the sensibility of the show. Just as importantly it provides an important contextual housing for the exhibition. The fact that it is one of the homes of twentieth-century Italian art in Britain made it appealing. Notwithstanding that the Estorick has no examples of Arte Povera in its permanent collection, Martin and I felt that there was a good fit.

PB: The number of British artists who have been directly or indirectly influenced by Arte Povera since the late 1960s is enormous. How did you, Martin and the Estorick arrive at the final selection of artists and works? Likewise how did you collectively go about choosing which Arte Povera artists and works to include?

SN: Exhibitions like ours are all about interpretation and selection. I made the choice of British artists—from those I had conversed with about the movement, exhibited alongside, or just noticed and admired over the last thirty years—and ran it past Martin to see whether he wished to amend it. In some instances we made studio visits together in order to discuss Arte Povera and its impact on a particular individual and select specific works for the show.

Needless to say the selection is highly subjective—it is based on intuition and sentiment just as much as conceptual appropriateness—but I hope it includes a representative sample from what is a very large pool of potential contributors. It was exciting for me to find out that the artists I did approach were keen to be included and underlined the rightness of my gut feelings.

We approached the Arte Povera component of the show in a slightly different way. Martin, Roberta and I drew up a list of the artists we wished to see in the show. Arte Povera is poorly represented in public collections in Britain other than Tate so we decided to contact Tate right at the outset. They agreed to lend us Mario Merz’s Cone and a beautiful mixed media drawing by Giuseppe Penone called Study for ‘Breath of Clay’. These two pieces became the nucleus of the exhibition around which we aggregated further loans from various private collectors and gallerists.

The major input here was Martin’s, as he had a clear vision of how Arte Povera related to the work of the British artists in the show. He was also instrumental in securing the participation of Richard Long whose work occupies a key position in the exhibition.

PB: To spend time with an artist in her or his studio, looking at and talking about their work, is always a privilege. The artists who constituted Arte Povera managed to convey some of that experience in their sculpture, installations, photographs, paintings and performances, and so too do the British artists who feature in this exhibition.

SN: Yes, Pistoletto’s Minus Objects were first displayed in 1966 in the artist’s home-studio in Turin. And Pascali helped choose an industrial-scale studio for a gallery that may have been the start of the whole industrial space thing.

Like many artists, Arte Povera artists used the studio as a gallery and the gallery as a studio. I sense that this was as much out of expediency as any conceptual gambit, but at the same time it made the work feel raw, vital, in transit.

I think going to a studio is a privilege. I still love getting inside the machine, but increasingly people appear less interested in visiting artists on their home turf. I don’t know the reasons for that, but I’ve always liked the Henri Matisse quote, ‘They want to enjoy the artist’s products—as one might enjoy the milk of a cow—but they can’t put up with the inconvenience, the mud and the flies.’ Maybe people are scared of the mud and the flies?

SN: The manifesto and that exhibition give us a definitive date, like the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874, which provides us with a useful tool for chronological purposes. As I am trying to suggest with this exhibition, the legacy of Arte Povera takes many forms—artistic, ideological, economic, sociological and practical—and I’m certain we’ll still be debating all those things beyond 2067.
Works
Eric Bainbridge
*The patination of...*, 2015
Plywood, table and fur fabric
H. 213 cm
Courtesy the artist and WORKPLACE, UK

Alighiero Boetti
*Untitled*, 1968
Ink on paper laid on canvas
70 x 100 cm
Private collection, Florence; courtesy Tornabuoni Art
Mario Ceroli
I, 1968
(Io)
Iron and coal
92 cm Ø
Private collection, Florence; courtesy Tornabuoni Art

Tony Cragg
Rockets, 1981
Wood
300 x 300 cm
Courtesy the artist
Ceal Floyer
Ladder, 2010
Modified aluminium ladder
279 x 37.5 x 5 cm
Courtesy the artist; 303 Gallery, New York; Lisson Gallery, London and New York; Esther Schipper, Berlin
Anya Gallaccio
*Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances*, 2001
Direct cast bronze of 9 potatoes
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London
Mona Hatoum
*Roadworks*, 1985
Documentation of performance for ‘Roadworks’, Brixton Art Gallery, London
Colour video with sound
6 min 45 s
Courtesy the artist and White Cube
Jefford Horrigan
The Shower Curtain, 2017
Painted furniture and video monitor
175 x 68 x 93 cm
Collection of the artist
Richard Long
England, 1968
Photograph and text
87 x 130 x 4 cm
Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery
Mario Merz
Cone, c. 1967
Willow,
2210 x 1295 x 1295 mm
Tate: Purchased 1983
Stephen Nelson
Timur the Lame, 2017
Bronze and bamboo
35 x 14 x 7 cm
Courtesy the artist
Giulio Paolini
Aperture 8, 1965
(Diaframma 8)
Photo emulsion on canvas, 80 x 90 cm
Private collection, London

Giulio Paolini
D867, 1967
Photo emulsion on canvas, 80 x 90 cm
Private collection, London
Giuseppe Penone
Study for ‘Breath of Clay’, 1978
Coffee, graphite and ink on paper, 760 x 568 mm
Tate: Purchased 1993
Michelangelo Pistoletto
Television, 1962-83
Silkscreen on stainless steel
100 x 120 cm
MAZZOLENI, London – Turin
Lucy Skaer
Harlequin’s Ingots, 2012
Copper
Each 5 x 5 x 34-45 cm (24 pieces)
Courtesy the artist

Gary Stevens
Containment, 2012
6 iPhones
Dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist
Jo Stockham
Cannon, 1989
Fabric, steel, dartboard frames, wood
106 x 42 x 39 cm
Courtesy the artist

Jo Stockham
Looking for a Nature She/He, 1991
Wood, felt, lace, football, dissecting awls
84 x 45 x 11 cm
Courtesy the artist
Gavin Turk
Red Senza Titolo, 2012
Oil on linen
61.5 x 61.5 x 3.3 cm
Copyright the artist. Courtesy Ben Brown Fine Arts, London

Gavin Turk
Small Gold Senza Titolo, 2012
24ct gold leaf on acrylic on linen
29.5 x 29.5 x 3.3 cm
Copyright the artist. Courtesy Ben Brown Fine Arts, London
Gilberto Zorio
Aluminium Star, 2007
Aluminium alloy and leather
74 x 70 cm
Courtesy the artist and Blain | Southern