

ROBERTO  
ATELIER **PIETROSANTI**

**TEXTS BY**

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**Gli  
Orl**







All forms of cultural and artistic expression – theatre, music, cinema, festivals and touring productions – are acknowledged and supported with public funding, but visual art is hardly ever included in the possible targets for state or local-government support.

Historically, artists have always depended on patronage, be it “religious”, private or that of the art market.

A patronage that charitable foundations and, in particular, banks continue to provide, playing a formidable role in maximising our nation’s talents, skills and, I would say, examples of excellence.

Roberto Pietrosanti is one of those exceptional talents and, as so often happens, his home town has been slow to take note of his artistic achievements. With the support of this book and other related initiatives focusing on his work, the Fondazione Carispaq intends to rectify an entirely unjustified “carelessness”, and in doing so is simply performing one of the key missions of bank-run charitable foundations, which is that of celebrating and supporting gifted artists whose work deserves attention.

An attention that Roberto Pietrosanti merits because of the serene audacity with which he has chosen to express himself. His work has historical roots, drawing vital lymph from the great masters of post-war abstractionism (Francesco Lo Savio, Lucio Fontana, Mark Rothko), but it has also been shaped by early collaborations with major twentieth-century artists (Bruno Ceccobelli, Fabio Mauri and Mauro Staccioli). He is currently producing work characterised by a pared-down minimalism, powerful in its impact and incisively communicative, which has won much international acclaim.

Recognition in his home region has, however, been lacking.

Redressing this lack is, for the Fondazione Carispaq, the key aim of the current initiative.

A mission that is part of the work that the Foundation performs on a daily basis, which involves offering aid and support to the many forms of cultural energy that our region produces and that all contribute to social, economic and cultural growth.

Marco Fanfani  
*President of the Fondazione Carispaq*

L’Aquila 2018

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## INTRODUCTION

Lucia Presilla

I began then to be convinc'd,  
that to succeed in any art,  
we must cultivate it all our lives.

Voltaire, *A Discourse on Tragedy*

Many of us have experienced the pleasure of watching a landscape from the window of a plane, unfurling below us in ever larger sections... trees, houses, hills. Artists of the past conveyed a similar sense of elation with bird's-eye perspectives, vistas alive with details given unity by the treatment of light and pictorial space, provoking a continual oscillation between the overview and the delight of vividly and precisely observed details. A similar approach – in other words, a desire to survey Roberto Pietrosanti's work of over thirty years with a gaze that is unified and panoramic but, simultaneously, also capable of allowing the reader to focus on individual creative moments – has inspired this present volume which is, in reality, the fruit of a long period of incubation. A long period, as we have said, because the artist's journey seems to have been shaped by and dense in episodes, characterized by repeated collaborations, the intermixing of languages, site-specific pieces and series of works in ferment, continually generating new lines of research and, with them, the need to probe, select, pare down and make distinctions. Across these pages individual nodes spread out to form maps and itineraries that can be followed diachronically, like the building blocks of an existence progressively accumulating or evolving. The resulting atlas contains myriad alternative paths: detours, switchbacks, intersections, reprisals, leaps, karstic phenomena (a term I use far from accidentally), parallels and sudden accelerations. The structure of the book therefore resembles a sequence of blocks in chronological order – each containing the critical texts written by the diverse authors who have concerned themselves with Pietrosanti's work, along with the works to which they refer, organized by type or by thematic cycles. It is a structure intended to reflect both the variety and breadth of the artist's research and his ongoing exploration of certain themes and motifs that recur throughout his work.

Gouged into a sheet of paper, a motif might resurface, sometimes many years later, like a wadi in the desert, in a new garb, a different medium, beneath another sky: the empty monochromes created at the beginning of the 1990s, with wire threads extended to outline sections of space – evidence of

**Untitled** 2002,  
cm 150x125, mixed media  
on plywood.  
Private collection.



a “passion for geometry” and of the artist’s remaining “classical in times that are not” (Fabio Mauri), as well as a natural leaning towards architecture; the *marouflages* that trap light within them, generating “ovoid forms of a mysterious (...) kind” (Ada Masoero); the “silence of white” (Vincenzo Trione), to which Pietrosanti gives voice in the form of legions of pinheads.

The artist’s works move between geometrical, spatial and textural coordinates, “matrices” formed of offset planes, spheres formed of sheet metal, walls formed of brass, its golden yellow dulling as time wears on. Like Machiavelli, he dons regal attire in order to enter the “ancient courts of ancient men”: Etruscan goldwork, Fra Angelico, Giovanni Pisano, Lorenzo Lotto, but also Fontana, Burri, Lo Savio, Morandi, Bacon, Reinhardt, and many others with whom he keeps up an uninterrupted dialogue.

He intercepts volumes and spaces, his hands sculpting the air with a marshalling energy. He reasons in terms of the inhabitability of artworks, although this in no way means that they are physically accessible, as Andrea Valcalda remarks with regard to the project entitled *Giardino italiano*, which it is impossible to “enter, or stroll through (...): it is a garden enjoyable exclusively via its guarded contemplability”. He often invents small architectural structures, given varying degrees of complexity and completion but all eliciting contrasts, sometimes strident – as in the case of the rough, corroded interior of the *Antro* [cavern] which stood in front of the Ara Pacis, at odds with the plain, elemental exterior of the structure, “carved perfectly out of a square block of stone” (Luca Ricci) –, sometimes disorientating – as in the columns, the emblem of classical antiquity, that he decontextualized and transposed into a contemporary idiom at the Barberini Vineyard for the exhibition *Post classici* and then propelled into an intense dialogue with the Sorgenia building in Milan. Incursions and digressions attract him: sorties into other disciplines such as cinema, dance, literature, poetry and music. Perhaps because every encroachment on other territories sets in train further investigations, and demands the activation of linguistic and communicative strategies in order to achieve a balance between the different arts at play on each occasion. Among his most recent gambles, a particularly daring one took him to the crest of the Tusco-Emilian Apennines, drawn there by a voice heard amid the sound of horses’ hooves and whispered poems. A fragmentary Annunciation, crisscrossed with jagged presages of turmoil incised with lasers into metal panels, “the age-old clash of Orient and Occident, of image and idea” (Camilla Balbi). Attempting to grasp the ungraspable. “And yet we must be very bold. Without audacity, without extreme audacity, there is no beauty”, as the 52-year-old Eugène Delacroix remarked in his journal. The temerity of beauty is a challenge to which Pietrosanti has risen, without fear.

Rome 2018

Untitled 1999,  
cm 45x40, pins on canvas





Untitled 2013,  
polyptych cm 170x150, acrylurethane  
paint on canvas-lined PVC panel.  
Private collection