

GUGGENHEIM BILBAO

Press release



Opening on February 9

Giovanni Anselmo **Beyond the Horizon**

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Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon

- Dates: February 9 to May 19, 2024
 - Curated by Gloria Moure
 - Exhibition organized by the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao
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- Space, time, orientation, magnetic fields, and the planet's gravitational forces are the recurring themes that define Giovanni Anselmo's artistic vocabulary.
 - This exhibition, which the artist was deeply involved in until just a few days before his death last December, aims to faithfully convey the depth of his vitality, the grandeur of his legacy, and the significance of his contribution.
 - Even though he shared certain artistic concerns and reflections of his time, being a referent of Arte Povera, which emerged in Italy in the late 1960s, Giovanni Anselmo avoided labeling by forging a corpus beyond styles and trends over the course of several decades.
 - In 1965, Anselmo experienced the dissolution of his "own shadow in the infinite" at the peak of the volcano Stromboli, when he became aware that he was part of a universe under constant transformation. This led him to present reality through materials and actions that occur due to interaction with the public or the forces around them.
 - Anselmo summons invisible, universal energies to create artworks that build a bridge between the visible and the invisible, everyday reality and the forces driving the world.

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is opening *Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon*, a comprehensive analysis of the artistic practice of Giovanni Anselmo (b. 1934, Borgofranco d'Ivrea; d. 2023, Turin) envisioned as a path or a journey that connects the most emblematic works in Anselmo's career with other site-specific pieces and reveals the powerful relationship between Anselmo's oeuvre and the architectural space in which they are exhibited.

This selection of more than 40 works (drawings, sculptures, photographs, projections, and site-specific pieces) surveys the creative approach of an artist who actively and perceptively presented the surrounding energies and the incommensurable nature of the forces and dynamics governing the universe. *Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon* offers the opportunity to learn about the broad range of mediums and materials used by the Italian artist, as well as the recurring themes that defined his artistic vocabulary, such as space, time, orientation, magnetic fields, and the planet's gravitational forces.

Giovanni Anselmo was deeply involved in the conception of this exhibition until just a few days before his death last December. This is why now more than ever, the goal of *Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon* is to faithfully convey the depth of his vitality, the grandeur of his legacy, and the significance of his contribution. By age and conviction, Giovanni Anselmo belonged to the generation of the 1960s, when artistic circles were experiencing an atmosphere of change that anticipated the advent of a new humanism fostered by the exhaustion of the deterministic paradigm that had dominated Western culture for more than

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a century. Thus, a number of artistic approaches emerged throughout that decade which questioned the rationalist idea of progress in order to revamp existing creative approaches and seek new forms of expression. Concepts like instability, randomness, indeterminacy, interdependence, and complexity came to the fore and shook the very foundations of all artistic disciplines. Likewise, for this generation of creators, art became a powerful tool targeted at appreciating, measuring, and understanding the landscape, as well as actually shaping it. This meant that contemplation had to be replaced by experience, that artworks could not be considered independent of their environment, and that interaction among things was more important than their individual substance. Anselmo's creative approach congealed on these aesthetic foundations.

Giovanni Anselmo began his artistic career with the practices of drawing and oil painting. However, he decided to abandon both mediums in 1965 after experiencing the dissolution of his "own shadow in the infinite" at the peak of the volcano Stromboli, as he documented in a famous photograph that can be seen at the start of the exhibition. At that moment, the artist became aware of being an integral part of an immense universe under constant transformation, and after that he turned away from the idea of representation and advocated presenting reality through materials and actions. The starting point of the show is the first sculptural inquiries that Anselmo made after that revelatory experience. These sculptures exposed the original foundation of his purpose: to challenge the notion of fixed structures. One example is *Untitled* (1966), a thin iron bar that remains standing yet reveals its instability with the tiniest vibration. Thus, the artist managed to prevent his works from crystallizing into a single image or static object and instead turned them into spaces of encounter open to continuous interaction with the observers or the forces around them. Anselmo thus managed to present reality by revealing energy through its own action.

These early works made him a key reference of the Arte Povera group when it first emerged in Italy in the late 1960s. In reality, Giovanni Anselmo had barely started his own artistic career, which would go on to avoid labeling. Indeed, even though his works reflect certain concerns and artistic reflections of his day, Anselmo forged his own artistic corpus beyond styles and trends over the course of several decades.

After the mid-1960s, his works were based on reflections on the order of things and the cyclical course of natural phenomena in immediate relation with the real world. The artist crafted his works to simply and poetically address fundamental physical conditions and relationships, like the equivalence between mass and energy or the precariousness of balance, using real objects and existing materials that revealed a great deal of ambivalence: there is a physical part and there is an invisible part that acts, that is manifested through action. Thus, Anselmo summoned and harnessed invisible universal energies like gravity to come up with pieces that build a bridge between our understanding of an infinite cosmos and our daily individual experience of the here and now. *Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon* reveals an artist whose creations are situated at a fascinating boundary between the visible and the invisible, between everyday reality and the forces driving the world.

This exhibition offers visitors the possibility of familiarizing themselves with the recurrent categories and motifs shaping Giovanni Anselmo's artistic corpus, like energy, space, time, orientation, magnetic fields, and the planet's gravitational forces. A good example of this is *Untitled (Structure that Eats)* [*Senza titolo (Struttura che mangia)*, 1968]: one of the granite blocks falls due to the decomposition of the lettuce, capturing one of the ways natural energy transforms, in addition to revealing the force of gravity and alluding to the passage of time. Anselmo also uses another kind of time, one that stretches over millennia

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and is revealed by movement and material transformation, that is, by nature's "desire." Thus, *Three Hundred Million Years* (*Trecento milioni di anni*, 1969), made of anthracite, is comprised of a piece of metal and a lamp whose heat strives to go back in time to help the petrified fragment come alive again the way it was 300 million years ago.

Some works included in the exhibition are related to orientation, like *Direction* (*Direzione*, 1967–68), whose compass, inserted in a block of granite cut in the shape of a triangle, points northward. This block of granite, one of the oldest and most durable materials, is alive with latent energy and invisible forces. The sculpture is not limited to the physical space it occupies; instead, the compass transports us to the magnetic fields and poles shown by its magnetic needle. Other works deal with the force of gravity, like *Untitled* (1984–91), in which two stone blocks are suspended in balance over canvas with steel cables.

The exhibition also presents an artist who poeticizes with language, which played a fundamental role in his work after the 1970s in projections of words like "detail," "everything," "visible," or "infinite" on different surfaces, including walls, the gallery floor, the ceiling, corners, pipes, a baseboard, or even the visitors themselves. These light rays only become meaningful when they encounter a material body, showing that the world is made of details, or that something may apparently be invisible even though it exists.

The richness and complexity of his approach was enhanced in creations like *Entering the Work* (*Entrare nell'opera*, 1971) and *Panorama with a Hand Pointing to It* (*Il panorama con mano che lo indica*, 1984). The former reveals his desire to truly be inside the work of art and experience it as a specific place more than an alien object, while the latter appeals to us directly by suggesting we become aware of our form of perception.

Finally worth noting in this exhibition is the work *While Towards the Ultramarine the Color Lifts the Stone* (*Mentre verso oltremar il colore solleva la pietra*, 1995–2024), designed specifically for the gallery space that houses it and crafted with local limestone from a quarry in the Lastur region.

CATALOGUE

The exhibition is accompanied by a monograph including reproductions of the works in the exhibition along with images of other pieces by the artist, offering an exhilarating survey of the Italian creator's career. In addition to the essays by exhibition curator Gloria Moure and Gabriele Guercio, the volume also contains provocative texts written by Anselmo about his own works, a selection of in-depth interviews that shed light on the intention of his work, a critical biography by Marta Blàvia, and a selected bibliography.

DIDAKTIKA

As part of the Didaktika project, sponsored by the EDP Foundation, the Museum designs online content, special activities, and onsite educational spaces that complement the exhibitions and provide tools and resources to facilitate the appreciation of the works exhibited.

For the Didaktika educational space devoted to *Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon*, located in the hallway on the second floor, a selection of objects will help visitors tangibly grasp some of Anselmo's artistic concerns around invisible processes and energies like gravity, magnetism, and orientation. Several audiovisuals with interviews of the artist round out the experience.

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The space also includes a reading area where visitors can peruse the exhibition catalogue.

Activities

Opening Talk (February 7)

Gloria Moure, art historian, critic, and curator of the exhibition *Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon*, will offer a talk as an homage to artist Giovanni Anselmo.

Shared Reflections*

These tours provide different vantage points on the contents of the new exhibition alongside Museum professionals associated with the show:

- Curatorial Vision (February 21): Marta Blàvia, Museum Curator.
- Key Concepts (March 6): Luz Maguregui Urquiza, Education Coordinator.

*Sponsored by Fundación Vizcaína Aguirre

Creative Session (March 14)

Introductory workshop on jewelry design with natural textures and materials with an emphasis on organic shapes, led by Maitena Ganboa, specializing in jewelry and ceramics.

Visit with... (March 15)

An opportunity to discover the exhibition from a different perspective, this time accompanied by renowned athlete Alex Txikon. His special connection with nature resulting from his being an elite climber churns up energies worth discussing during this visit.

Performance (April 13)

Joan Catalá will perform his mythical piece *Pelat*, connecting with the forces generated in the Museum Atrium, and the body, gravity, tension, and balance as fundamental elements. With the participation of the public visiting the exhibition on Giovanni Anselmo, many of whose works are fueled by the physicality of the spectators' own bodies as the recipients and generators of energies.

Cover image

Direction (Direzione), 1967–68

Detail | Stone and magnetic needle

16 × 220 × 101 cm.

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle,

Purchase, 1983.

Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM – CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image Centre Pompidou

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Complete information on the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is available at www.guggenheim-bilbao.eus (Press Room).

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Images for the use of the Press
Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon
Guggenheim Bilbao Museoa

Online press image service

In the press section of the Museum's website (prensa.guggenheim-bilbao.eus), registered users can download high-resolution images and videos of both the exhibitions and the building. If you have not yet opened an account, you can register and download the required material.

If you are already a user, introduce your username and password and access the image downloading facility directly.

- The images provided must be used only for editorial publicity related to the exhibition *Giovanni Anselmo. Beyond the Horizon*, open to the public from February 9 to May 19, 2024.
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For further information, the Press Department of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao can be contacted by phone (+34 944 359 008) or email (media@guggenheim-bilbao.eus).

Giovanni Anselmo

Untitled, 1967

Black Formica, water, and wood

160 x 60 x 60 cm

The Rachofsky Collection, Dallas

© Giovanni Anselmo

Photo; Kevin Todora



Giovanni Anselmo

Direction (Direzione), 1967–68

Stone and magnetic needle

16 x 220 x 101 cm

Centre Pompidou, Paris.

Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle. Purchase, 1983

© Giovanni Anselmo

Photo: © Centre Pompidou, MNAM – CCI, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / image

Centre Pompidou



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Giovanni Anselmo

Direction (Direzione), 1967–68

Fabric, glass and metal

24,3 x 420 x 335 cm

Tate, London. Purchased with funds provided by an anonymous donor 2009

© Giovanni Anselmo

Photo: © Tate Images



Giovanni Anselmo

Untitled [(The Wet Cotton Is Thrown onto the Glass and It Stays there)]

[Senza titolo (Il cotone bagnato viene buttato sul vetro e ci resta)], 1968

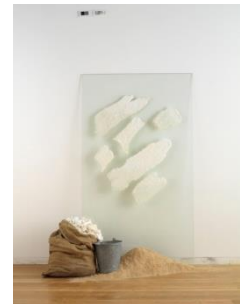
Glass, cotton, sack, zinc bucket, water, and sawdust

210 x 210 x 50 cm

The Sonnabend Homem Collection. On loan to Fundação de Serralves – Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto

© Giovanni Anselmo

Photo: © Filipe Braga



Giovanni Anselmo

Torsion (Torsione), 1968

Iron and fabric

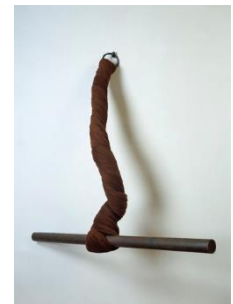
160 x 160 cm

GAM – Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Fondazione Guido et Ettore De Fornaris, Turin

© Giovanni Anselmo

Courtesy: Fondazione Torino Musei, 2008

Photo: © Studio Fotografico Gonella



Giovanni Anselmo

Untitled, 1968

Stones and cable

2 elements, 21,5 x 63 x 41,5 cm aprox.

Private collection / Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz

© Giovanni Anselmo

Photo: © Stefan Altenburger



Giovanni Anselmo

Untitled (Structure that Eats) [Senza titolo (Scoltura che mangia)], 1968

Granite, copper, and lettuce

62 x 25 x 25 cm

Citadellarte - Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella

© Giovanni Anselmo



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Giovanni Anselmo

Untitled (Structure that Drinks) [*Senza titolo (Struttura che beve)*], 1968

Stainless Steel, water, and cotton

54 x 30 x 30 cm

Collection of Carine Szwajcer, Anvers

© Giovanni Anselmo

Foto: © Paolo Mussat Sartor



Giovanni Anselmo

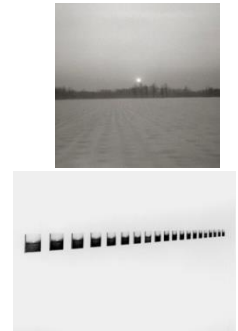
Interference in Universal Gravitation (Interferenza nella gravitazione universale), 1969–2016

Print on emulsioned canvas

20 elements, 30 x 30 cm each

Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli-Torino, on loan from
Fondazione per l'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea CRT

© Giovanni Anselmo



Giovanni Anselmo

Right side (Lato destro), 1970

C-print

33,5 x 26,5 cm

Private collection, Turin

© Giovanni Anselmo

Foto: © Paolo Mussat Sartor



Giovanni Anselmo

Infinito, 1970

Photografia

70 x 50 cm

Collection of the artist, Turin

© Giovanni Anselmo

Foto: © Paolo Mussat Sartor



Giovanni Anselmo

Entering the work (Entrare ne'll opera), 1971

Photographic print on canvas

267 x 391 cm

Mart, Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto.

Private collection

© Giovanni Anselmo

Photo: Mart – Archivio fotografico e Mediateca



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Giovanni Anselmo

Detail (Particolare), 1972–74

Projector

Dimensiones variable

Collection of the artist, Turin

© Giovanni Anselmo

Foto: © Paolo Mussat Sartor



Giovanni Anselmo

Panorama with a Hand Pointing to It (Il panorama con mano che lo indica),

1982–84

Graphite on cloth paper and stone

Dimensiones variables

Colección CGAC, Santiago de Compostela

© Giovanni Anselmo

Photo: © Manu Suárez



Giovanni Anselmo

Untitled (Toward the Ultramarine) [Senza titolo (Verso oltremare)], 1982–89

Stones, canvases and mural painting

330 x 170 x 525 cm

Patrimonio Artístico Fundación “la Caixa”

© Giovanni Anselmo



Giovanni Anselmo

Toward the Ultramarine (Verso oltremare), 1984

Stone, steel wire, slipknot, and ultramarine

300 x 140 x 3 cm

Collection of the artist, Turin

© Giovanni Anselmo

Foto: © Paolo Mussat Sartor

