

Venice, Isola di San Giorgio Maggiore  
13 September – 24 November 2019

***Emilio Isgrò***

*For the fall, Fondazione Giorgio Cini presents an extensive new retrospective on a great Italian artist. The exhibition has been organized with Archivio Emilio Isgrò and brings together works from the 1960s to the present, in a setting that will transform the display spaces in an unprecedented way.*

For its fall programming, Fondazione Giorgio Cini presents a new major retrospective: ***Emilio Isgrò***, from 13 September to 24 November 2019. The exhibition **curated by Germano Celant** in collaboration with the artist and **Archivio Emilio Isgrò** offers an overview of the artist's **creative and aesthetic trajectory from the 1960s to the present**. The extensive approach ranges from the first erasures of books, in 1964, to the visual poems on emulsified canvas and the *Storie rosse*, the monumental and complex erased texts in the historic volumes of *L'Enciclopedia Treccani*, 1970, all the way to the ethnic pages of the *Codici ottomani*, 2010.

In an unexpected and spectacular exhibit design, the experimental and linguistic voyage of Isgrò will be inserted in an **enveloping architectural setting**. The rooms of the Ala Napoleonica of the Foundation, enhanced by crosswise and diagonal partitions used to break up and modify the space as if they were lines on a page, will function as the **paper surfaces conveying an enormous new erasure operation**, conducted once again on literary material, enabling the viewers to enter a huge book that has been visually modified by the artist.



The choice of the text that will run across the surfaces of the display enclosure has gone to the novel *Moby Dick* by **Herman Melville**, implying a fantastic journey in the belly of a whale, the journey of erasure of words and writings that has made Isgrò famous: “*The theme I approach for this exhibition at Fondazione Cini in Venice, the city where the first erasures took place in 1964, cannot help but be that of language. For this reason, it seemed necessary to link back to the biblical tradition filtered by Moby Dick, the marvelous novel by Melville - Emilio Isgrò explains. - The erased work by Melville will thus contain all the others, and those who enter the exhibition will be accompanied into the belly of the whale, the belly of the media language that covers its real and despairing silence with noise.*”

The exhibition relies on the presence of **works from important public and private, national and international collections**, including *Il Cristo cancellatore*, 1968, an installation composed of 38 erased volumes, from Centre Pompidou in Paris; *Carta geografica*, 1970, from the Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto; *Storico*, the book erased in 1972, from the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome; the monumental erased map *Weltanschauung*, 2007, with a length of 9 meters, from Centro d'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato; four precious works from the collection of Gallerie d'Italia; *Poesia Volkswagen*, 1964, from the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione of Parma; the “red story” *La corsa di Alma*, 1969, from the Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori di Livorno; and the *Corpus Iustinianum*, six erased volumes, dated 2018.

The retrospective is accompanied by a book published by **Treccani** that includes the erased pages from *Moby Dick*, a conversation between the artist and the curator, and a thorough illustrated time line offering in-depth documentation of the personal and professional career of Isgrò.



Exhibition produced with the contribution of Intesa Sanpaolo – Department of Art, Culture and Heritage, in the context of Progetto Cultura

### **Emilio Isgrò**

A painter and poet – but also a novelist, playwright and director – Emilio Isgrò (Barcellona di Sicilia, 1937) is one of the most highly acclaimed figures of Italian art on an international level. Isgrò has created one of the most revolutionary and original bodies of work in the context of the so-called second avant-gardes of the 1960s, leading to various appearances at the Venice Biennale (1972, 1978, 1986, 1993) and the first prize of the São Paulo Biennial (1977), as well as participation in other important events at MoMA New York in 1992, and at Fondazione Peggy Guggenheim in Venice in 1994, and retrospectives at Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci in Prato in 2008, at Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna in Rome in 2013, and Palazzo Reale in Milan in 2016. In 1998 he made a *Seme d'arancia* for his native city. In 2011, for Bocconi University in Milan, he created the work *Cancellazione del debito pubblico* and for Expo Milano 2015 he created a marble sculpture with a height of seven meters, *Il Seme dell'Altissimo*.

As the pioneer of “erasure” of texts, a procedure applied to encyclopedias, manuscripts, books, maps and films, Isgrò has made this practice the fulcrum of all his research. In 2017 he exhibited in London and Paris and that same year three of his most important works (including the famous installation *Il Cristo cancellatore* from 1969) became part of the permanent collection of Centre Pompidou in Paris. The year came to a close with *Fondamenta per un'arte civile* at the Milan Triennale, an entire day devoted to the artist, including the presentation of his latest book, *Autocurriculum*, published by Sellerio; the opening of the exhibition *I multipli secondo Isgrò*, organized by Gruppo Treccani; and the ceremony for the permanent placement of *Il Seme dell'Altissimo* in the space in front of the Triennale.

In 2018 Isgrò presented the work *Monumento all'Inferno*, made



specifically for the IULM University in Milan. In April he showed work in Belgium at the MDZ Art Gallery, in a double solo show together with Christo. In the summer, *Lettere* was an exhibition-dialogue between the artist and Osvaldo Licini at Centro Studi Casa Museo Osvaldo Licini at Monte Vidon Corrado.

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