

**NOT MADE  
NOT CHOSEN  
NOT PRESENTED**

**BY EMILIO PRINI**

6 October – 6 November 2020

With Studio for Propositional Cinema and Christopher Williams

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**BY STUDIO FOR PROPOSITIONAL CINEMA**

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With Gaylen Gerber, Nicolás Guagnini, Irena Haiduk, Emilio Prini, Puppies Puppies (Jade Kuriki Olivo), Julia Scher, Cally Spooner, Josef Strau, Studio for Propositional Cinema, Franz West, Christopher Williams

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LONDON – ML Fine Art and Rizziero di Sabatino present a two-part exposition on Emilio Prini (1943 – 2016), Italian artist from Stresa associated with Arte Povera.

Staged by Studio for Propositional Cinema, an artist entity inaugurated in Düsseldorf in 2013, the project takes the form of two distinct yet interlocking exhibitions featuring twenty works by Prini in dialogue with ten contemporary artists. Its aim is to represent Emilio Prini's distinctive creative attitude, while simultaneously presenting his enduring relevance for subsequent generations of artists.

The project addresses important aspects which recur – some directly, others obliquely – in Emilio Prini's practice throughout his career, especially from 1967 onwards. Its title is a citation of Prini's 1975 exhibition at Galleria Franco Toselli, Milan, *Mostro – Una Esposizione di oggetti non fatti non scelti non presentati da Emilio Prini*, which consisted of a vitrine of objects to which the artist claimed total extraneity. In response to Germano Celant's appeal for a guerrilla art that resisted dialogue with social and cultural systems, Prini created work centred upon experiential immediacy rather than narrative legibility.

*NOT MADE NOT CHOSEN NOT PRESENTED* is organised in the spirit of *Fermi in dogana*, Emilio Prini's only institutional exhibition during his lifetime, and the closest to a retrospective, held in Strasbourg in 1995. Clearly referencing the setting, a former custom house dating to the fourteenth century, the title's translation – "held at customs" – also alludes to a state of transience, to signal the formal and symbolic impermanence of Prini's objects. Resisting the historicist drive of most museum surveys, *Fermi in dogana* featured recreations of historic works and revisitations of pieces previously exhibited and lost or destroyed.

To preserve the elastic character of Prini's presentational strategies, the present exhibition is framed by two structurally adaptable artistic devices: movable walls by American artist Christopher Williams (b. 1956) and a text work by Studio for Propositional Cinema. Conceived to facilitate the contamination of Prini's work by that of the invited artists, they introduce two driving features of Prini's research: the ontological precariousness of material form and the resulting urgency of reconstruction.

Beginning Friday November 6, many, but not all works by Emilio Prini will be gradually replaced with photographs by Christopher Williams and more works by seven additional artists: Gaylen Gerber, Irena Haiduk, Puppies Puppies (Jade Kuriki Olivo), Julia Scher, Cally Spooner, Josef Strau, and Franz West. Once complete, the second exhibition will remain on view until 4 December 2020.

### **NOT MADE NOT CHOSEN NOT PRESENTED BY EMILIO PRINI**

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Through sculpture, photography and performance, Prini's research documents the fracture of experience and existence in the documentation of reality, in the form of its certification, or as the physical manifestation of tautological propositions.

In the years between 1967 and 1971, Prini took part in two exhibitions at Galleria La Bertesca in Genova, in addition to *Il Teatro delle Mostre*, Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, and *Arte Povera - Azioni Povere*, Amalfi. Abroad, he participated in *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, Kunsthalle Bern, *Information*, MoMA New York, *VII Biennale de Paris*, and *Arte Povera. 13 Italianische Kunstler*, Kunstverein Munich. Beginning with a photograph made in 1967, the year of Prini's debut at the first exhibition of *Arte Povera* organized by Germano Celant at La Bertesca in Genova, and ending with a 2013 poster, the present exhibition features works that revisit key moments in the artist's oeuvre.

In *Magnete/Serie fotografica/gruppo 2000 fogli relativo al Settembre 1968 (22/75.000) In Cabiria*, Prini reproduced the image of an Exakta camera, implying its use while simultaneously foreshadowing its eventual and inevitable demise over time. According to the artist's calculations, it would take ten years and twenty thousand shots for the camera to fully exhaust its functionality. In this work, Prini established a temporal dimension punctuated by the standard unit of the shutter release, and, exposing the instrument's inert state, revealed its potentiality. A similar operation activates the untitled photographic work from 1967 depicting a video screen. Once again, the apparatus is shown in a state of inactivity: disconnected from any documentary function, it merely exhibits its suitability for a hypothetical recording of real time.





Galleria de' Foscherari, 1968

In other works from the 1960s and '70s, such as *Punto - Ipotesi sullo spazio totale (prototipo)* or *Confermo partecipazione esposizione*, Prini transfers the work's form onto the linguistic plane entirely. Presented as the referent to an event, or the descriptor of a physical dimension, the text produced a virtual mapping of space. In the offset print *Punto - Ipotesi sullo spazio totale (prototipo)*, Prini refers to an environmental work made in 1967 and presented at the Galleria de' Foscherari in 1968. Using a series of small black roundels, three centimetres high, painted black and arranged on the floor of the exhibition room, the artist established a physical support structure which, referring to an intangible volume – the empty space of the environment itself – could only exist in a hypothetical state. Similarly, in *Confermo*

*partecipazione esposizione*, Prini demonstrated his commitment to removing himself from the exhibition space without surrendering the declaration of the existence of the work.

Presence and absence coexist most powerfully whenever Prini puts his own body at the centre of the work. In the series of *Fermacarte*, for example, the artist used blocks of lead as stand-ins for his body weight, placing them on an enlarged photograph of himself in motion and re-photographing the ensemble. In the 1978 poster for an exhibition at Galleria Pio Monti, Rome, Prini photographed himself in profile, holding a thin baton which, in a line with the artist's left eye, formed a stylised approximation of Prini's field of vision. Further exploring the tension between passiveness and potentiality, it is as if Prini here were identifying himself with the documentary instruments addressed in some earlier works. In fact, by drawing the viewer's attention to his own sight, directed towards a horizon outside the confines of the work, Prini seemed to want to emphasise the artist's role as 'seer' in the absolute sense.

In the 1971 newspaper clipping *Monaco*, four people stand around a table laden with technological machinery: two are conversing, one lights a cigarette, another is already smoking. Despite the recording instruments at the centre of the image, what mattered most to Prini was the star that seemed to magically appear on the lit cigarette on the right-hand side of the photograph. In conversation with Germano Celant, the artist confessed his enthusiasm for this unpredictable appearance, which feeds without conflict into Prini's research, guided by the unexpected discovery of visual spaces and their incidental phenomena. Prini's investigation of normative formulations, the limits of reproduction and the unpredictable behaviour of machine technology continued in a series of over three hundred works on paper created with an Olivetti 22 typewriter between 1968 and 1974. In these sheets, numerous themes are worked out by attempting to exhaust all of the typewriter's functions, over a sequence of pages, so that the series at times resembles a flipbook. Art historian and curator Cornelia Lauf has written of this body of work:



Monaco, 1971

“Vying neck to neck with the Fibonacci research of Mario Merz, the ability to make a bicycle seat into a bull, or ceramic urinal into a sculpture, Mr. Prini has gone one up, and in his utter anonymity, taken on the formulas underlying life itself.”

Celant described Prini's practice as “A movement which is alive in time, but in exile from the artifact.” This becomes increasingly evident in the works made from the 1980s onwards, mainly on paper, onto which Prini intervenes lightly in pen or pencil, moving as far away as possible away from the production of new objects. It is equally discernible in the reproduction of works idealised, but subsequently lost, or never executed, according to the wishes of the artist. This is the case of the series *Fogli da un taccuino di legno*, begun in 1968 and completed in 1995. Destabilising hierarchies of scale, the artist intervenes on the rough wood with enamel, pencil or gesso, creating rhomboids that simultaneously refer to a form of automatic drawing, and, in the words of Prini himself, the V-neck of a man's sweater. Later, he increasingly appropriated images, posters, or comic books, as in the 2013 revision of the poster for an important 1995 solo presentation in Strasbourg. Finally, Prini also explored the intangible dimension of sound, culminating in a series of works made in the new millennium for Radio Arte Mobile in Rome.

The two interlocking exhibitions aim to recover the radical, innovative and enduring strength of Prini's poetics. Alienated from the dynamics of the contemporary art economy by its reluctance to offer either 'things' or 'events,' it presents itself instead as a live and urgent paradigm of the aesthetic resistance at the root of every expression of the twentieth century avant-garde.

## **NOT MADE NOT CHOSEN NOT PRESENTED BY STUDIO FOR PROPOSITIONAL CINEMA**

Many of the artists chosen by Studio for Propositional Cinema are familiar with Prini's research, and this has informed their own practice. Josef Strau (b. 1957), for example, in 1993 restaged the photograph used by Prini in the 1971 work *Monaco*, and Christopher Williams has referenced Prini's practice in his series of *Exakta* images, as well as in graphic works including the *Model* sign on display. In other artists' work, synergies are implicit but no less relevant. Franz West (1947 - 2012), who met Prini in the early 1990s in Rome later made a small sculpture simply titled *Emilio Prini*.

The visibility of work and the conditions of its existence within the scenography of the exhibition, a key preoccupation in Arte Povera and Conceptualism, and later Institutional Critique, is palpable in the work of all of artists presented. In some, a further tension exists between the dematerialization of the work and its status as physical support, leading to instances where the physical occupation of volume is disguised through the mimicry of functional surfaces. This is present in Gaylen Gerber's (1955 -) *Support* works, where the concept of the monochrome functions in collaborative relation to existing artworks and objects, both negating the reviving them and their authorship. Christopher Williams's mobile walls, which use sculptural language to operate a particularly photographic reproductive gesture, express similar concerns.



Christopher Williams,  
Fig. 5: Setting the aperture, 2012

Cally Spooner, *Early Research: Method #7*, 2016



Puppies Puppies (Jade Kuriki Olivo) (b. 1989) work examines the logical extreme of an object's use value with an urgent political dimension; its production involves the de-commissioning of an active firearm. Cally Spooner's (b. 1983) *Early Research: Method* presents a stack of performance scripts held down with paperweights made by casting the artist's ear. Julia Scher (b. 1954), whose works dealing with surveillance has often operated on the margins of the exhibition context, taking over the surveillance and communication systems of the host

institution, utilizes signage to quietly situate the exhibition with *The Ecology of Visibility*.

Studio for Propositional Cinema's lexical structure *NOT MADE NOT CHOSEN NOT PRESENTED*, commissioned for this exhibition, is part of their ongoing project *Focal Vocabulary Index*. Under the conditions of sale, individual words enter into a co-licensing agreement for which the purchaser becomes a licensee with specific rights to subsequent use of their words within future textual works by the artist. The sale includes both the contract and the offset printing plate used to print it. In this particular work, the redundant space made by the repetition of the word NOT is used to print a new text about the work of Prini, which will also double as the exhibition's publication.

The critique of language and its means of distribution, its subtle ambiguities and fraudulent neutrality was an innovative strategy pioneered by Emilio Prini and many of his contemporaries. Artistic manifestos, a prerogative of the modern avant-gardes, were critiqued and their pretensions challenged. Josef Strau's (b. 1957) text "The Non-Productive Attitude" not only subverts the genre of the manifesto but also aligns itself closely to Prini's position towards artmaking, with Strau writing that "the non-productive attitude should be seen as a refusal of production values, but not as a refusal of expression as such." Irena Haiduk's (b. 1982) *Decapitation Index*, begun in 2011, confounds the objectivity of news reporting, the factuality of art history and the spectacle of tabloid magazines. Emilio Prini, known for his elusiveness, becomes a real-life criminal in Haiduk's narrative, in which the names of actual Serbian gang members from tabloid news are replaced with those of the artists exhibited in Harald Szeemann's 1969 *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*.

## **EMILIO PRINI**

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Emilio Prini was born in Brisino di Stresa, in 1943 and lived in Rome for most of his life. He died in 2016.

In the Fall of 2019, the Fondazione Merz in Torino, owing to the strong bond between Prini and Marisa and Mario Merz, held the first institutional solo presentation of the artist's work since 1995. Prini's work was also featured in the seminal retrospective of Arte Povera organized across museums in Italy by Germano Celant in 2011. In 2010, the Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein exhibited its holdings of work by Prini as part of the exhibition *Arte Povera: Che Fare?* In 2001, *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera, 1962-1972* held at Tate, London, later travelled to Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Washington, United States, featured work by Prini. In 1997, curator Catherine David invited Emilio Prini to her *documenta X*, thus including him in her theoretical confrontation of the art world's imminent globalization.

In a 2012 interview, Italian dealer Franco Toselli, at whose gallery Prini had shown in 1975 the extraordinary *Mostro - Una esposizione di oggetti non fatti non scelti non presentati da Emilio Prini*, stated: "I have no news for you about Emilio, but Emilio is a precious resource, always on the run. In fact, Emilio is part of an 'event' in Italian art that includes only a few other figures such as Marisa and Mario Merz, and in a more theatrical way also in Gino De Dominicis. You can't 'describe' them. They are like the history of poetry."

## **STUDIO FOR PROPOSITIONAL CINEMA**

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Studio for Propositional Cinema, in addition to an active artistic and publishing practice, have consistently engaged with a collaborative and curatorial practice, which they have referred to as "a hypothetical stage upon which various statements and characters can be introduced, enacted, and played out". This has included large-scale exhibitions and projects at institutions such as mumok, Vienna (2015), Kunstverein Düsseldorf (2016), Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover (2017), and Kunsthaus Bregenz (2016, in collaboration with Gaylen Gerber). Additionally, they operated an eponymous project space in Düsseldorf from 2014–2017, which presented solo exhibitions by artists such as Anna-Sophie Berger, Keren Cytter, Feminist Land Art Retreat, Aaron Flint Jamison, John Miller, and Jeff Wall. Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, Germany will present a large-scale exhibition of their work in 2022.

## **ML FINE ART**

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ML Fine Art was founded by Matteo Lampertico in Milan in 2007. The gallery's second location opened in 15 Old Bond Street, London, in 2015. Specialized in modern and contemporary art, ML Fine Art's exhibition programme focuses on post-war Italian artists and their dialogue with the international twentieth century avantgarde.

In its first five years of activity, ML Fine Art has been a platform for innovative perspectives on Carla Accardi, Agostino Bonalumi, Antonio Calderara, Enrico Castellani, Lucio Fontana, Leoncillo Leonardi, Piero Manzoni, Giorgio Morandi, Giulio Paolini, Angelo Savelli and Salvatore Scarpitta, among others.

In the Spring of 2020, ML Fine Art presented *Carla Accardi: Sicofoil*, the first solo exhibition of Accardi's work in the UK since 1961. The gallery calendar is complemented by participation in international art fairs including TEFAF Maastricht, and an educational programme of events and lectures.

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