

Paolo Icaro
Remembrance yes, monument no

Abstract

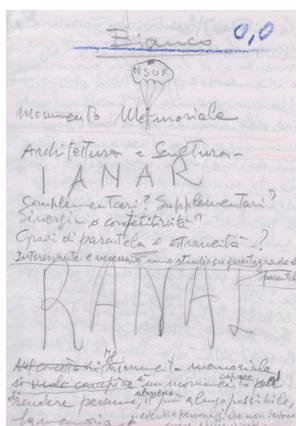
What follows below is a document sent by master sculptor Paolo Icaro in April 2024 to the editor of this edition, accompanied by the following words: «Dear Gentucca, I am attaching the notes I made to outline an idea of the landscape as a place in which to examine the concept of an “MM”, or memorial monument».

It has been decided to publish the notes in the original version, showing the transcription of the text at the beginning.

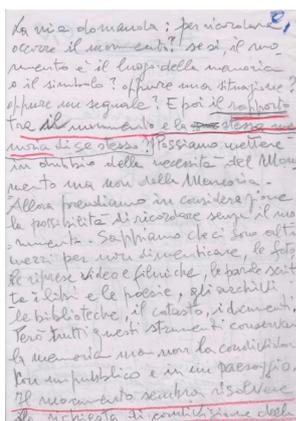
Keywords

The place — The invisible

[sheet 0,0]



[sheet 0,1]



White

Memorial Monument

Architecture and Sculpture

Complementary? Supplementary?

Synergy or competitiveness?

Degrees of kinship or unfamiliarity?

A study into this degree of kinship is interesting and necessary

A memorial monument is a monument that keeps the memory of events and people who should not be forgotten alive, at least for as long as possible.

My question is: do we need a monument to remember? And if we do, is the monument the place of the memory or the symbol of it? or a situation? or a sign? And what exactly is the relationship between the monument and the actual memory itself? We can certainly question the need for the monument, but not the need for remembrance.

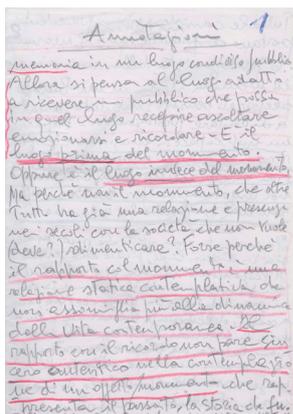
So, let us consider the idea of remembering without the monument.

There are other ways of not forgetting something, such as photographs, video clips or films, the written word, books and poems, archives, libraries, registries and documents.

However, while these all preserve the memory, they do not share it with a wider public or within a landscape.

A monument would seem to be the answer to the desire to share the memory in a communal and public place.

[sheet 1]

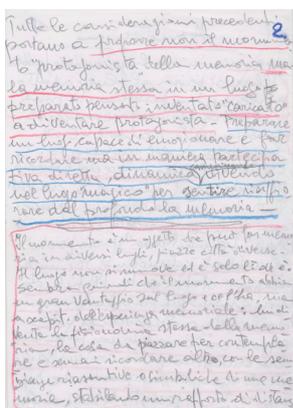


Notes

So, what is needed is a place where people can come to see, listen, become emotional and remember. The place comes before the monument. Or it is actually the place rather than the monument. But why not the monument, as something that already has a relationship and a presence over the centuries, in a society that does not (or should not?) forget?

Perhaps it is because the relationship with the monument is a static and contemplative one that no longer resembles the dynamics of contemporary life. The relationship with the memory seems neither sincere nor authentic when it simply comes down to contemplating an object or monument that represents the past, times gone by. The monument is presenting itself, rather than the memory it is supposed to represent. It betrays that memory.

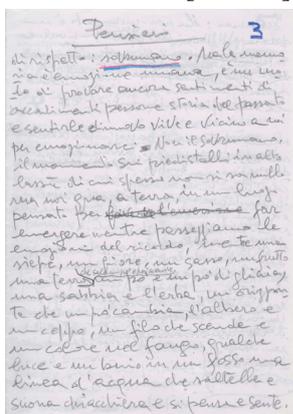
[sheet 2]



All the above considerations lead to the concept of the monument no longer taking “centre-stage”, but rather the memory itself, in a place that has been prepared, conceived, invented and “charged” with taking centre-stage. The idea is to prepare a place that strikes an emotional chord and allows people not just to remember, but to participate in a direct and dynamic manner, walking through and experiencing something in a “magical” place which allows that memory to resurface from the depths of their consciousness.

A monument is an object that allows remembrance in different places, squares and cities. The place does not move, it remains there, precisely where it is. A monument would therefore appear to have a major advantage over a place, and it does in a certain sense, but to the detriment of the actual experience of remembrance: it becomes the “face” of the memory, the object placed there to contemplate and maybe to remember something that has the summary or symbolic appearance of a memory, but establishes a relationship of distance and respect: almost godlike.

[sheet 3]

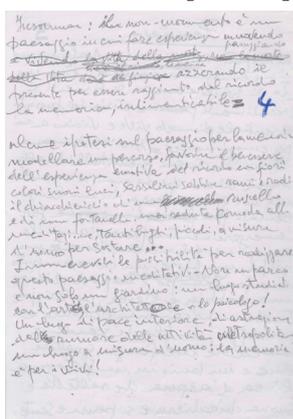


Thoughts

But memory is a human emotion, it is a way of still having feelings about events, people and the past that brings them alive and closer to us, moving us.

It is not something godlike, the monument on a pedestal looking down on us from above, about which we often know nothing. It is here among us, on the ground, in a place designed to bring out the emotions of the memory as we walk by. It is a bush, a flower, a rock, a piece of fruit or a piece of ground, something that rises and then falls, a patch of gravel, sand or grass, a horizon that changes a little, a tree and a stump, a thread that descends and a colour in the mud, a little bit of light and a little bit of dark in a hole, a waterfall that cascades with a sound like music, chatters to us and makes us think and feel.

[sheet 4]



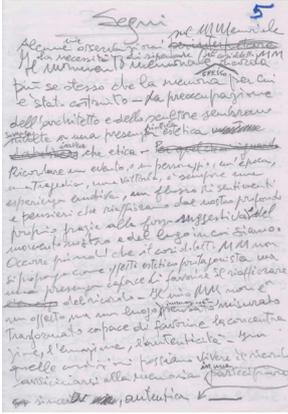
In short: a “non-monument” is a landscape in which we experience something by moving and walking, leaving the present to be reached by a recollection, a memory, the unforgettable.

Several ideas on the memorial landscape: modelling a path, promoting the sense of well-being of an emotional experience and the memory itself, with flowers, colours, lights, pebbles, sand, branches and roots.

The chatter of a stream or a fountain, a comfortable seat for meditation, so many small places, on a human scale, to pause and reflect ...

There are numerous possibilities for creating this contemplative landscape. Not a park and not just a garden, but a place designed with the artist and the

[sheet 5]



architect and the psychologist!

A place of inner peace, an abstraction from the noise of city life, a people-friendly place: memories are for the living!

Signs

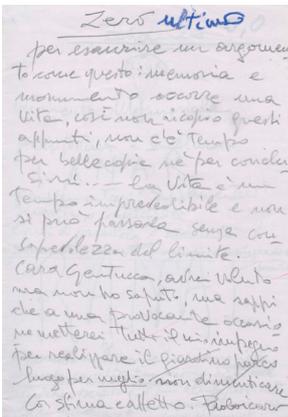
Several of my observations on the Memorial.

There is a need to rethink the concept of a memorial monument.

A memorial monument is often more a memory of itself, rather than of the memory for which it has been built. The main concern of the architect and the sculptor would often seem to be focused on aesthetics rather than ethics.

Remembering an event, a person, an era, a tragedy or a victory is always an emotional experience, a rush of feelings and thoughts that reappear in the depths of our consciousness, thanks to the power of suggestion, the moment and the place in which we find ourselves. The so-called MM itself should therefore not be the visual focus, but a presence that allows that memory to return.

[last sheet]



My MM is not an object, but an imagined place, designed, measured, transformed, capable of provoking concentration, emotion and authenticity. In those conditions, the memory comes closer to us and we can experience it with a sense of sincere and authentic participation.

Zero

Covering a topic such as memories and monuments exhaustively would take a lifetime, so I am not copying these notes, there is no time for neat copies or conclusions ... life can be unpredictably short and you cannot spend it without being aware of that limit.

Dear Gentucca, I wanted to but I didn't know how, but please understand that, if the enticing occasion were to arise, I would do my utmost to develop the best place for never forgetting.

Yours with appreciation and affection.

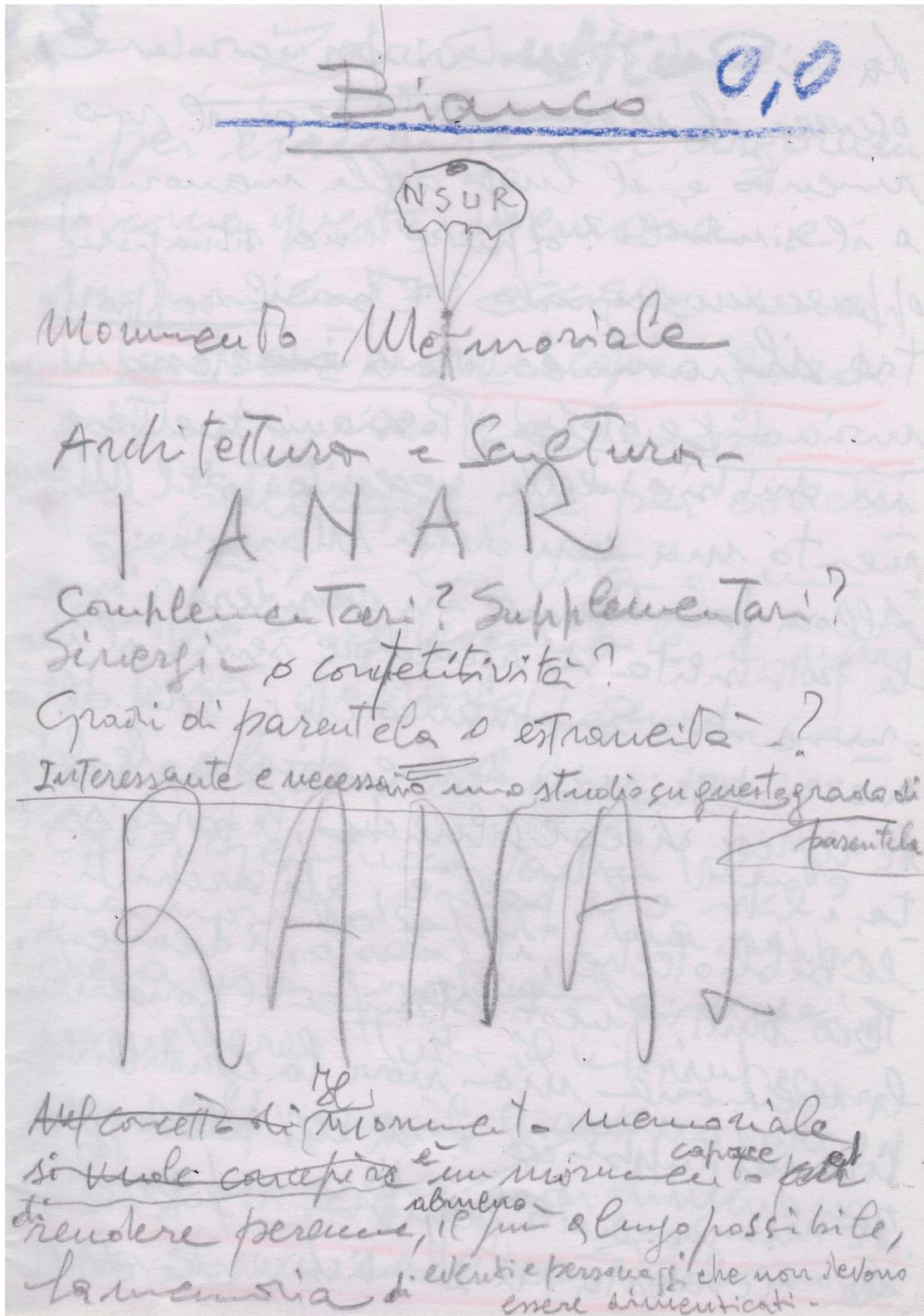


Fig. 1
Paolo Icaro, sheet 0.0.
12th April 2024.

La mia domanda: per ricordare, occorre il monumento? se sì, il monumento è il luogo-della memoria o il simbolo? oppure una situazione? oppure un segnale? E poi il rapporto tra il monumento e la stessa memoria di se stesso? Possiamo mettere in dubbio della necessità del Monumento ma non della Memoria. Allora prendiamo in considerazione la possibilità di ricordare senza il monumento. Sappiamo che ci sono altri mezzi per non dimenticare, le foto, le riprese video e filmiche, le parole scritte i libri e le poesie, gli archivi, le biblioteche, il catasto, i documenti. Però tutti questi strumenti conservano la memoria ma non la condizionano con un pubblico e in un paesaggio. Il monumento sembra risolvere la richiesta di condizionare della

Fig. 2
 Paolo Icaro, sheet 0.1.
 12th April 2024.

Annotezioni 1

memoria in un luogo pubblico
 Allora si pensa al luogo adatto
 a ricevere un pubblico che possa
 in quel luogo recepire ascoltare
 emozionarsi e ricordare - E' il
luogo prima del monumento.
 Oppure e' il luogo invece del monumento,
 ma perche' non il monumento, che oltre
 tutto ha gia' una relazione e presenza
 nei secoli con la societa' che non vuole
 (deve?) dimenticare? Forse perche'
il rapporto col monumento e' una
relazione statica contemplativa che
non assomiglia piu' alla dinamica
della vita contemporanea. Il
rapporto con il ricordo non pare sin-
ceramente autentico nella contemplan-
za di un oggetto monumento che rap-
-presenta il passato, la storia che fu.
 = Il memoriale presenta + stesso che la memoria perche' e' stato concepito. Tradisce

Fig. 3
 Paolo Icaro, sheet 1.
 12th April 2024.

Tutte le considerazioni precedenti portano a preparare non il monumento ²
 to "protagonista della memoria ma
la memoria stessa in un luogo
preparato pensato inventato "caricato"
a diventare protagonista - Preparare
un luogo capace di emozionare e far
ricordare ma in maniera partecipa
tiva diretta, dinamica ^{comunicando} coinvolto
nel luogo "magico" per sentire riaffiorare
dal profondo la memoria -

Il monumento è un oggetto che può far memo-
 ria in diversi luoghi, piazze città diverse.
 Il luogo non si muove ed è solo lì che è.
 Sembra quindi che il monumento abbia
 un gran vantaggio sul luogo e ce l'ha, ma
 a scapito dell'esperienza memoriale: lui di-
 vende le funzioni stesse della memo-
 ria, le cose da piazzare per contempla-
 re e mai ricordare altro, con le sem-
 branze riassuntive o simboliche di una me-
 moria, stabilendo un rapporto di distanz

Fig. 4
 Paolo Icaro, sheet 2.
 12th April 2024.

Pensieri 3

di rispetto: sobrumano. Male memo-
ria è emozione umana, è un mo-
do di provare ancora sentimenti di
occurrenti persone storia del passato
e sentirle dinanzi vive e vicini a noi
per emozionarci. Non il sobrumano,
il momento sui piedistalli in alto
lasciati di cui spesso non si sa nulla
ma noi qua, a terra, in un luogo
pensato per ~~far~~ ~~emergere~~ far
emergere mentre posseggiamo le
emozioni del ricordo, mentre una
siepe, un fiore, un sasso, un frutto
una terra ^{che sale un po' e poi scende,} un po' e un po' di gloria,
una sabbia e l'erba, un signor-
te che un po' cambia, l'albero e
un ceppo, un filo che scende e
un colore nel fango, qualche
luce e un buio in un fosso ma
linea d'acqua che saltella e
suona diacchiara e si pensa e sente.

Fig. 5
Paolo Icaro, sheet 3.
12th April 2024.

Il monumento: il non-momento è un
 paesaggio in cui fare esperienza ^{passaggiando} ~~vivendo~~ la vita della morte, ~~non la morte~~
~~della vita~~ ~~che è il ricordo, la memoria~~ ~~che è di finire~~ azzerrando il
 presente per essere raggiunto dal ricordo
 la memoria, indimenticabile = 4

alcune ipotesi sul paesaggio per la memoria:
 modellare un percorso, favorire il benessere
 dell'esperienza emotiva del ricordo con fiori
 colori suoni luci, sassolini sabbie rami e radici
 il chiacchiericcio di una ~~fontana~~ ~~scurella~~ scurella
 e di una fontana, una sedute comode, alti
 muretto, tre, tanti luoghi, piccoli, a misura
 d'uomo per sostare...
 Innumerevoli le possibilità per realizzare
 questo paesaggio meditato. Non un parco
 e non solo un giardino: un luogo studiati,
 con l'arte e l'architettura e lo psicologo!
 Un luogo di pace interiore, di astensione
 del rumore delle attività metropolitane,
 un luogo a misura d'uomo: la memoria
 è per i vivi!

Fig. 6
 Paolo Icaro, sheet 4.
 12th April 2024.

5

Segni

Alcune ^{mie} osservazioni ~~per interpretare~~
 la necessità di ripensare ^{il cosiddetto MM}
 il Monumento ~~memoriale~~ ^{ricorda}
 più se stesso che la memoria per cui
 è stato costruito - la preoccupazione
 dell'architetto e dello scultore sembrano
^{sovente} ridotte a una presenza ^{piuttosto} estetica ~~mentre~~
~~debetto~~ ^{invece} che etica - ~~Per quel che riguarda~~
 Ricordare un evento, o un personaggio, un'epoca,
 una tragedia, una vittoria, è sempre una
 esperienza ambiva, un flusso di sentimenti
 e pensieri che riaffiorano dal nostro profondo
 proprio grazie alla forza suggestiva del
 momento nostro e del luogo in cui siamo.
 Occorre quindi che il cosiddetto MM non
 si proponga come oggetto estetico protagonista ma
 una presenza capace di favorire il riaffiorare
~~del ricordo~~ del ricordo - Il mio MM non è
 un oggetto, ma un luogo ^{immaginato} ~~pensato~~ misurato
 Trasformato capace di favorire la concentrazione,
 l'emozione, l'autenticità - In
 quelle condizioni possiamo vivere il ricordo
 avvicinarci alla memoria ^{in una} partecipazione
 sincera ~~alla~~, autentica ←

Fig. 6
 Paolo Icaro, sheet 5.
 12th April 2024.

Zero ultimo

per esaurire un argomen-
to come questo: memoria e
monumento occorre una
vita, così non ricopio questi
appunti, non c'è tempo
per belle copie né per conclu-
sioni... — la vita è un
tempo imprevedibile e non
si può passare senza con-
scienza del limite.

Cara Gentucca, avrei voluto
ma non ho saputo, ma sappi
che a una provocante occasio-
ne metterei tutto il mio impegno
per realizzare il ~~piacere~~ ~~piacere~~
luogo per meglio non dimenticare.
Con stima e affetto. Paolo Icaro

Fig. 7
Paolo Icaro, sheet 4.
12th April 2024.

Notes on the “memorial monument”

If it is a memory (of events, people, important historical facts, human endeavour) that we want to preserve, confirm and consolidate, in order not to forget, then I will dwell first on that memory and then ask myself which ways are the best for preserving it and, possibly, celebrating it. Memories are present in our everyday life, in both a voluntary and involuntary way. I want to focus on voluntary memory, leaving involuntary memory to experts in the human psyche. We use our voluntary memory constantly, in order to be able to function with sufficient awareness, deciding the logical sequence of our actions. When we forget why we have opened the fridge, we make a concerted effort to remember which item we intended to take from it, we try to remember, just as you do when you encounter someone who says they know you and you try to recall, not always successfully, what their name is and even where you met them, in order to return the greeting. We need to make an effort to remember. But we also need to make an effort not to forget. In our everyday actions, this often simply means not forgetting to buy something or an appointment or a payment, whereas, in the continuity of distant or even remote and historical events, the effort not to forget is totally different and much more complex. This effort combines the culture we possess, in terms of knowledge of facts, circumstances and social, political and economic conditions, together with the environment and education, individual concepts and preconceptions, of each person who does not want to forget and, on the contrary, feels the need to remember. We could refer to this feeling as a historical conscience, and therefore an awareness that is both individual and collective and that needs a *collective, strong and penetrating public testimony in bringing it from the past into the present* in order for it not to be forgotten: it is like pulling a bucket full to the brim with the history and stories of humanity from a well that is tens or hundreds or even thousands of years in depth. This could be the foundation for a memorial concept.

Above all, I imagine a possible project for a memorial place as outdoors, a narrow emotional path for one person, who walks in a *spiral towards the centre, yin and yang*, helping them to concentrate on themselves and allowing the memory to become an emotion. There are a multitude of solutions to design and delimit the spiral, depending on the soil, the areas, the surrounding environment, all in relation to the nature of the memory and with everything allowing an emotional resurfacing of the reason for which we are walking, alone, on the spiral path.

Another path, a design once again dictated by the various circumstances already listed in part, could be a *horizontal hourglass*: a convergence, as scene from above, towards a “critical” point, where the emotion of the memory enters into the true nature of the Ego. The path then opens slowly and brings us back to the present, as we emerge from the deep well of the past.

I have to specify here that, for me, a path is, for the time being, simply a line but, in the actual natural landscape, it becomes a material physical dimension, with measurements and proportions, and even the memory itself of the hypothetical path makes a difference. In passing from the initial idea to the actual construction, it is obviously necessary to consider all the elements involved, sometimes as obstacles and sometimes as beneficial

suggestions. The final design considers all the elements and is always subject to variants, with the original, interior spiritual structure always acting as a guide.

Last but not least, a place where the right conditions exist for the concentration that assists remembrance, whether it is a page of history or a prestigious person, could be considered not as a monument, but as a memorial place, in which to walk, to stop and to reflect, meeting ourselves in the silence and thanking the memory for the emotions it affords us in thinking about the past.

Paolo Icaro

Post-scriptum:

Reading back over what I wrote (with a slight sense of embarrassment), I felt that my proposal for a memorial place needed to be coloured with joy: a moment of existential enrichment, retracing a memory is vital nourishment, an ecological delight.

Exaggerating to make the concept clearer; I imagine a playground for the soul, populated not with symbols but with incentives, etc., not a visit to a cemetery!!!!!!!

Paolo Icaro (Turin, 1936). He studied music and enrolled in the Faculty of Language and Literature at Turin University in 1955. In 1958, he abandoned his studies and began sculpting in the studio of Umberto Mastroianni. In 1960, he moved to Rome, where he held his first solo exhibition at the Galleria Schneider in 1962. In 1966, he moved to New York, where he lived until 1968. In 1967, he held a solo exhibition at the Galleria La Tartaruga in Rome and was invited by Germano Celant to participate in the exhibition "Arte Povera Im-Spazio" at the Galleria La Bertesca in Genoa, the city where he went to live on his return to Italy. In 1968, he held a solo exhibition at the Galleria La Bertesca, called "Faredisfarerifarevedere", a title that reflects his approach to his art. Between 1968 and 1969, he participated in the main exhibitions of the international avant-garde art scene, performing works at the Teatro delle Mostre, Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome (1968) and in "Arte povera più azioni povere", Amalfi (1968); he was also invited to "Op Losse Schroeven. Situaties en cryptostructuren" at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1969), and "When Attitudes Become Form", curated by Harald Szeemann at the Kunsthalle in Bern (1969). In 1971, he returned to the United States, in Connecticut, where he lived for the next ten years, before returning to Italy for good at the start of the Eighties. He held numerous solo exhibitions at major galleries in Europe and the USA in the Seventies and Eighties, including: Verna, Zurich; Françoise Lambert, Milan; Marilena Bonomo, Bari; Massimo Minini, Brescia; Paul Maenz, Cologne; Hal Bromm, New York; Jack Tilton, New York. His most recent solo and group exhibitions include: "Appunti di Viaggio 1967-2014", Peep-Hole, Milan (2014); "Teoria ingenua degli insieme", Galleria P420, Bologna (2016); "Respiro, all'interno dell'esterno dell'interno", Fondazione Volume!, Rome (2017); "Le Pietre del Cielo: Paolo Icaro and Luigi Ghirri", Fondazione Querini Stampalia di Venezia (2017); "Un prato in quattro tempi", Università Statale di Milano (2018); "Alla ricerca dell'equilibrio perduto", Galleria Massimo Minini, Brescia (2018); "Paolo Icaro: Cantiere", Galleria P420, Bologna (2019); "Antologia", GAM Torino (2019); "Polarità", Pinacoteca di Volterra (2021); "Dribbling", Galleria Lia Rumma, Naples (2021); "Arte povera and beyond", Le Bal e Le Jeu de Paume, Parigi (2022); "Anacronismo", Chiesa dei SS Pietro e Paolo, Spoleto (2023); "Rifrazioni", Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome (2024); "Overall", Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan (2024); "Meteorite, gemello", Dalle sculture nelle città all'arte delle comunità, Pesaro 2024 Capitale italiana della cultura, Pesaro (2024).