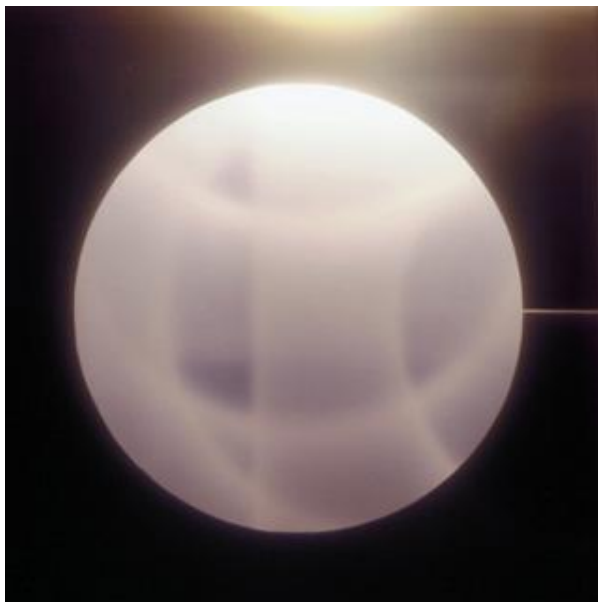
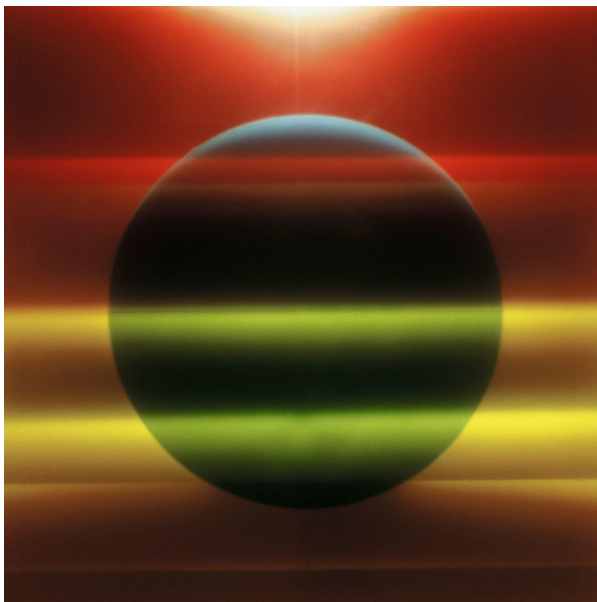


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Marinella Pirelli: Meteore

Richard Saltoun Gallery Rome
4 May – 10 June 2023



"Painting amused me, but it did not satisfy me [...]. Rather than crystallising an image or a gesture or a thought in a moment, even if happy and positive, I was interested in giving a sense of the making of an image, a gesture, a thought..." - Marinella Pirelli

Richard Saltoun Gallery presents *Meteore*, our first solo exhibition with pioneering Italian artist and filmmaker Marinella Pirelli (Verona, 1925–2009). The show focuses on one of Pirelli's most significant works, *Meteore*; a series of dynamic experimental sculptures where the movement of light generates a becoming of shapes and colours. Created around 1970, these works express the synthesis between Pirelli's pictorial research, her avant-garde cinematography and the singular research on light and movement carried out by the artist throughout her life. *Meteore* is the first solo show dedicated to Pirelli's work after the exhibition at the Museo del Novecento in Milan (2019). Moreover, *Meteore* have been exhibited in several major exhibitions including 'Ombra e Luce' at Villa Panza di Biumo (Varese) in 2003, later taken to the MAM (Museum of Modern Art) in São Paulo Brazil in September 2003.

Although still largely unknown to the general public, Pirelli is considered one of the most significant figures in Italian art of the second half of the 20th century, with a prolific career spanning over fifty years alongside artists such as Carla Accardi, Jannis Kounellis, Luciano Fabro and Bruno Munari, and critics such as Achille Bonito Oliva and Carla Lonzi.

Pirelli began her activity on the Italian art scene after World War II. After moving to Rome in the 1950s, she found employment at the Filmeco film company, where she acquired the masterful

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technique in animation that she would treasure in her work in experimental cinema. Her 16mm feminist films of the 1960s combine colours and abstract forms, critically reflecting on the politics of the gaze, the dominant cinematic conventions of the time, and her personal experience as an artist and woman. Pirelli was particularly fascinated by the representation and reflections of light on film, the subject of her later research.

Meteore (1969-71) are a series of electromechanical works, organisms that create an iridescent choreography of shapes and colours, eluding easy artistic categorisation. These large aluminium frame-containers appear as otherworldly bodies within which a light source radiates through semi-transparent and coloured panels. The mysterious, iridescent core comes to life thanks to the simplest of technologies: a motorised bulb that shines a grazing light through the different methacrylate layers arranged in sequence. The *Meteors* continue Pirelli's attempt to capture the essence of light as a representation of an 'origin', declining this interest in the study of the relationship between nature and cosmology. As we read in her notes from the mid-1960s: "Remember that it is light that is the most powerful and most mobile message in the universe".

After the unexpected death of her husband Giovanni Pirelli in 1973, Pirelli retired from the art world, resulting in the marginalisation of her extensive work by the art establishment until recent years. The exhibition at the Richard Saltoun Gallery celebrates Pirelli's fundamental contribution to the Italian avant-garde and its pioneering experiments in the fields of light, space and movement.

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Images: Marinella Pirelli,
Meteora 6 e Meteora 4, 1970 ©
Archive of Marinella Pirelli
Courtesy Richard Saltoun
Gallery, London and Rome

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Opening hours:
Mon – Fri: 10:30–19:00
Saturdays: 11:00–19:00
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Notes to editors:

A crucial figure in Italian post-war art, **Marinella PIRELLI (Verona 1925 - Varese 2009)** left behind a unique body of work, including painting, drawing, moving image, light environments and experimental cinema. With a career spanning more than fifty years, Pirelli's artistic efforts and unquestionable talent are still surprisingly under-recognised. Her approach—both incredibly personal, and avant-garde—has meant that Pirelli has avoided many definable schools and currents, although remaining in contact with the best of contemporary creativity of her time. Marinella was at this time particularly close to the artists Carla Accardi, Jannis Kounellis, Luciano Fabro, Bruno Munari and the important feminist theorist, Carla Lonzi. She was one of the few Italian woman artists working in experimental film and her works traverse numerous thematics connected to the body, the gaze and the relationship with the cinema apparatus/projection event.

Marinella Pirelli passed away at the age of 84 years in 2009. In the final years of her life, Pirelli had retrospectives at the Chiostro di Voltorre, Varese (1999), at Villa Panza, Varese and at the Museo de Arte Moderna, São Paulo (2003), at La Permanente, Milan (2005). Spanning more than fifty years, Pirelli's artistic efforts are still surprisingly under recognised though her recent retrospective at Museo del Novecento in Milan (2019) has brought her back under the

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spotlight. She was awarded numerous prizes, including the FEDIC - Italian Cineclub Federation Award (1964); and the 57th Michetti Award - Italian Lab (2006).