

Venice, Island of San Giorgio Maggiore  
13 September – 24 November 2019

## *Emilio Isgrò* curated by Germano Celant

*The Fondazione Giorgio Cini is staging a rich retrospective show devoted to the great Italian artist. Organised in collaboration with the Emilio Isgrò Archive, the exhibition features works from the 1960s to the present day in a new setting/installation, conceived by Germano Celant, who has adopted an innovative approach to Isgrò's art.*

The Fondazione Giorgio Cini exhibition season continues with a major new retrospective show in autumn: *Emilio Isgrò* (13 September to 24 November 2019).

**Curated by Germano Celant**, in collaboration with the artist and the Emilio Isgrò Archive, the exhibition is a broad survey reconstructing **Isgrò's creative and aesthetic development, spanning from the 1960s to the present day**. The rich selection of works begins with the first erasures of books (1964) and continues with poems on emulsified canvases and the *Storie rosse* (Red Stories) to arrive at the imposing, complex series of texts erased in the historic volumes of the *Enciclopedia Treccani* (1970) and in the more recent ethnic volumes of the *Codici ottomani* (Ottoman Codices, 2010).

Isgrò's experimental and linguistic journey is installed in a new, spectacular way in an **all-encompassing architectural setting**. The rooms in the Napoleonic Wing of the Fondazione Cini has additional transversal and diagonal partitions to break up and modify the space, almost as if they were lines on a sheet of paper. They in fact serve as **paper supports for the results of a new enormous operation of erasure**, conducted once again on literary material. For the visitor, it is like entering a large book, visually modified by the artist.

The chosen text that flows on the partitions of the exhibition setting is **Herman Melville's novel Moby Dick**, as if to imply a fantastic journey into the belly of a whale. Here the journey consists of the erased words and writings that have made Isgrò famous: “*The theme I addressed for this exhibition at the Fondazione Cini in Venice, the city where I made the first erasures in 1964, inevitably focuses on language. That's why I thought I had to resort to the biblical tradition as*



*interpreted in Moby Dick, Melville's wonderful novel.” - explains Emilio Isgrò – “Melville's erased work contains all the others and visitors to the exhibition will enter the belly of the whale, that is the belly of media language that smothers with noise its real, desperate silence.”*

The exhibition features many **works from major Italian and international public and private collections**, including *Il Cristo cancellatore* (Christ the Eraser, 1968), an installation made up of 38 erased volumes, from the Centre Pompidou, Paris; *Carta geografica* (Map, 1970) from the Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto; an historic, erased book (1972) from the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome; the monumental nine-metre-long erased *Weltanschauung* (2007) from the Centro d'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato; four works from the Collezione Gallerie d'Italia; *Poesia Volkswagen* (Poetry Volkswagen, 1964) from the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, Parma; a "Red Story", *La corsa di Alma* (Alma's Run, 1969) from the Museo Civico Giovanni Fattori, Livorno; and the *Corpus Iustinianum*, erased in six volumes (2018).

The companion book to the exhibition, published by Treccani, includes erased pages from *Moby Dick*, a conversation between the artist and the curator and an extensive illustrated chronology exploring and documenting Isgrò's personal and professional journey.

The exhibition is being staged with the support of Intesa Sanpaolo – Direzione Arte, Cultura e Beni Storici nell'Ambito di Progetto Cultura.

### Emilio Isgrò

A painter and poet, but also novelist, playwright and stage director, Emilio Isgrò (Barcellona, Sicily, 1937) is a leading, internationally renowned Italian artist. He created some of the most revolutionary original works in the so-called second avant-garde of the 1960s, bringing him several invitations to show at the Venice Biennale (1972, 1978, 1986 and 1993), first prize at the São Paulo Biennial (1977), and major exhibitions at the MoMA, New York (1992) and the Peggy Guggenheim Foundation, Venice (1994). He has also been given retrospectives at the Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi Pecci, Prato (2008), the Galleria Nazionale di Arte Moderna, Rome (2013) and the Palazzo Reale, Milan (2016). In 1998, he created a monumental *Seme d'arancia* (Orange Seed) for his hometown. In 2011, he made *Cancellazione del debito pubblico* (Public Debt Cancellation) for the Luigi Bocconi University, Milan, and a seven-metre-high marble sculpture, *Il Seme dell'Altissimo* (The Seed of the Most High, 2015), for the Milan Expo. The inventor of "erasures" of texts, applied to encyclopaedias, manuscripts, books, maps and even movies, he made this practice the basis of all his experimentation. In 2017, in London and Paris, he showed three of his most important works, including the famous installation *Il Cristo cancellatore* (Christ the Eraser, 1969), now in the Centre George Pompidou permanent collection, Paris. In 2017, he was celebrated with an event, *Fondamenta per un'arte civile* (Foundation for a Civil Art), at the Milan Triennial: an entire day dedicated to him with the



presentation of his latest book, *Autocurriculum*, published by Sellerio; the opening of the exhibition *I multipli secondo Isgrò* (Multiples According to Isgrò), promoted by the Gruppo Treccani; and the ceremony for the permanent installation of *Il Seme dell'Altissimo* in an area in front of the Triennial. In 2018, Isgrò unveiled *Monumento al Inferno* (Monument to Hell), made specifically for the IULM University, Milan. In April, he shared a double solo show with Christo at the MDZ Art Gallery, Knokke, Belgium. In summer 2018, *Lettere* (Letters), an exhibition conceived as a dialogue with the work of Osvaldo Licini, was held at the Centro Studi Casa Museo Osvaldo Licini, Monte Vidon Corrado (Fermo).

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