



MILAN

Stefano Arienti

STUDIO GUENZANI

At Studio Guenzani's two venues, Stefano Arienti reaffirmed his particular line of creative investigation, involving the impulse to catalogue things, to transform them by taking parts of them away, and to seek out the essence of everyday objects. Two works were based on the flags of the European Union and the United Nations—but with the original lightness of the banners' cloth transformed into stone. In *Bandiera* (Flag), 2006, the stars are drilled into a slab of yellow Atlantean marble, while in *Nazioni unite* (United Nations), 2006, the globe and the olive wreath are sculpted in slate. This art of removing weight and depth from the material was visible earlier in his *Cartoline* (Postcards), 1990, where Italian landscapes were carved into polystyrene. Now, however, Arienti has momentarily put aside the *arte povera* spirit that marked his beginnings to tackle a classical material, which he, best known for his work on paper, manages to make “flutter,” posing a challenge to the material's weight.

For the installation *21 tappeti tinti in rosso o nero* (21 Carpets Dyed Red or Black), 2006, the floor was completely covered by



Stefano Arienti,
Bandiera (Flag),
2006, drilled yellow
Atlantean marble,
59 1/2 x 74 3/4 x 3/4”.

twenty-one wool carpets of different provenances and sizes, re-dyed red or black. The original patterns, veiled by the color and transformed into shadowy reflections—more vivid on the red, darker on the black—in turn become part of a larger geometry created by the overlapping of the “carpet objects” that have been simplified into monochrome rectangles. On the walls, *Tappeto A* (Carpet A) and *Tappeto B* (Carpet B), both 1999, seemed to be an attempt to help viewers detach their glance from the actual object, to instead take in its reflection. These pieces are drawings on tracing paper, depicting traditional motifs such as birds and stylized foliage, typical of the most common Oriental carpets.

Like the carpets, books (seen earlier in *Copertine italiane* [Italian Covers], 1997) and posters also reappear in Arienti's current work. This show included a table with numerous books of all sorts, which the artist had either cut or perforated. He has executed clean cuts on art books, such as one on van Gogh (the subject of an earlier work) or classics of Italian literature, for instance a leather-bound volume of poems by Giacomo Leopardi. The artist's interest seems to fluctuate between the symbolic value of the author (the contemporary novelist Aldo Buzzi, a modern master like Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa) or subject (the history of Byzantium, Snakes) and the iconic value of the cover image—an image Arienti transforms into a silhouette, the outlines of which seem embroidered onto the heavy paper of the book cover, and which then pierce through to the lighter paper of the inside pages. Finally, there were four posters, three of them taken from Andrea Mantegna's frescoes for the Camera degli Sposi in the Castle of San Giorgio in Mantua, along with one of a painting by Victor Dumont that inspired the wallpaper decoration of the Galerie Louis XIV in Paris. Here the images had been transformed into representations that are “cut” and “resewn” with a zipper, achieving a mobile state of equilibrium between iconoclasm and iconophilia.

—Paola Noé

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.