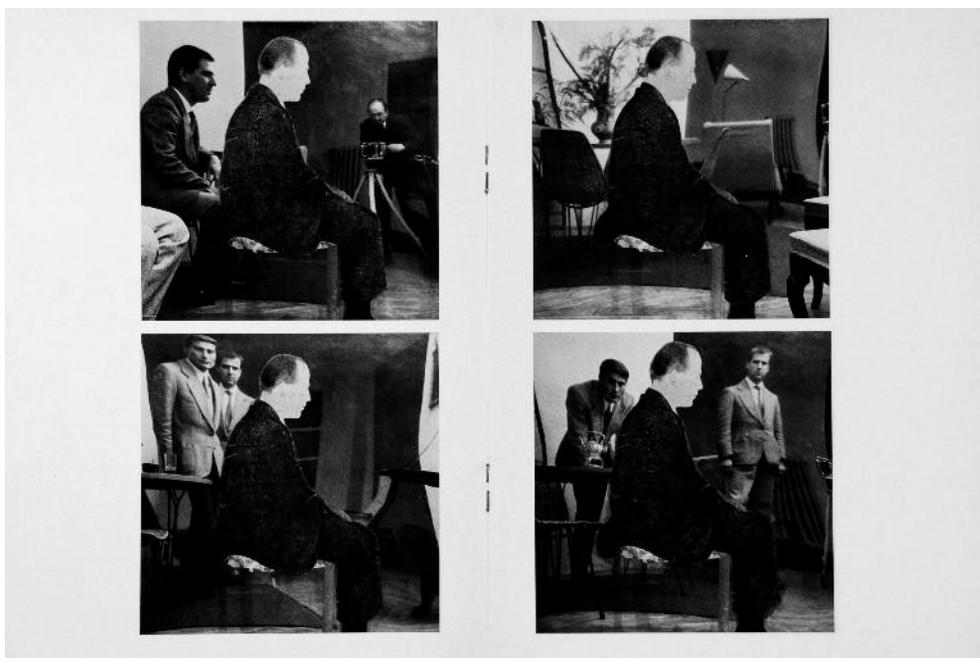


Michelangelo Pistoletto.
Seated Man, 1962. As reproduced
in the catalogue *Michelangelo
Pistoletto: Opere recenti* (Galleria
Galatea, 1963). Photo: Paolo
Bressano. Courtesy Cittadellarte-
Pistoletto Foundation, Biella, Italy.



Flashbacks and Eclipses in Italian Art in the 1960s

ROMY GOLAN

In 1962 Michelangelo Pistoletto, a young Turinese artist later identified with *arte povera*, began cutting life-size silhouettes of friends and mundane objects out of thin, translucent paper and placing these on the reflective surface of highly polished stainless steel. The “mirror paintings” (*quadri specchianti*) confounded pictorial and viewing space and made the act of looking an active phenomenological experience. The format also allowed for near-endless variation of effect with the simplest of means (Pistoletto often used the same photographs in different groupings).¹ Although the figures Pistoletto adhered to these surfaces evolved from drawn to photographic and from quasi-monochromatic to color, the basic concept remained remarkably constant throughout the series. The same can be said of the criticism that the mirror paintings have generated, which has focused on their “presentness” as viewers encounter them when walking into a room. The reviews written by Tommaso Trini, a critic who has repeatedly addressed the ideas underlying Pistoletto’s work, exemplify that approach. The following statement made in the mid-1960s is characteristic:

His paintings reproduce exactly the portion of space, of objects, of movement in front of which they are placed. That is all that we can see around us without him, and yet with an added presence: our own. We had almost forgotten it, this presence which needs to be accounted for. . . . What is one to do? Hide behind the silhouettes?²

Three years later, Trini pressed this point again: “Ultimately there is no subject-matter since the latter cannot be any different from the reality that is being reflected.”³ Umberto Eco makes the same argument in a 1985 essay in which he argues that, because the mirror is stubbornly about presence whereas the sign is predicated, conversely, on absence, on substitution, mirrors could *not* convey, by definition, any signs:

The mirror does not “translate.” It registers what comes into contact with it as is. The reflected image is present, it is in the presence of a referent that cannot be absent. It never takes us to remote meanings. The relation between object and image is the relation between two presences without any mediation. The image is causally produced by the object and cannot come into being in its absence.⁴

How are we to interpret these reflections, however, when they are fixed by the camera? In these photographs the ambient figures and objects that happen upon the mirror’s field become impossibly entangled with the figures and objects cut out and previously affixed by Pistoletto onto his metal surfaces. In the photographs of these mirror paintings we see the story of Italy, a country that, during the two decades following the fascist *ventennio* (the regime’s twenty years in power), chose to take the measure of the world “obliquely.” The photographs reveal how Pistoletto can be understood as an artist transiting out of the political *engagement* of the immediate postwar decade to the psychological disaffection of the economic miracle. They also reveal how the mirrors might have been conceived by Pistoletto as a canny device permitting an entry into dialogue, even if from a distance, with a charismatic transatlantic interlocutor: American pop. Photographs of these hybrid works further reveal, by capturing the domestic trappings of the mirror paintings’ surroundings, the degree of complicity between Italian art of the 1960s and the design of environments. The latter, for better or worse, was what the nation would come to be known for.

Only two critics writing on Pistoletto have addressed the questions raised by these photographs. The fact that both are Americans and neither was writing for an Italian journal might say something about the degrees of separation required to perceive the strategies at work in Pistoletto’s deceptively simple mirror conceit. Reviewing Pistoletto’s 1964 show at Ileana Sonnabend’s gallery in Paris for the *International Herald Tribune*, the poet John Ashbery wrote,

Simpleminded as it sounds, Pistoletto’s art is fascinating and even haunting. The mirror surfaces automatically pick up the rest of the room, including you who suddenly find yourself, like it or not, the subject of a Pop picture. Not the main subject either, somewhere in the background—the foreground being taken up by your anonymous two-dimensional companions.⁵

Returning to the mirrors two years later on the occasion of Pistoletto: A Reflected World, an exhibition held at the Walker Art Gallery in Minneapolis, Ashbery

notes the disparity between his experience of the photographs and his physical encounter with the mirror paintings:

The figures and the décor that are the symptoms of today's strange and new disease of alienation are the raw material, and perhaps the end product, of Pistoletto's art. . . . The décor is that of a gallery, or your own home if you own a Pistoletto, or whatever surroundings the mirror surface happens to reflect. Chances are there will be white walls, modern furniture (Knoll, if the picture is a gallery) and potted plants. Probably the ubiquitous philodendron.⁶

Annette Michelson also immediately caught on to the game, writing about the 1964 Sonnabend Paris show for *Art International*:

Pistoletto makes traps and teasers. . . . Supposing one wishes to choose a photograph for illustration, the hide and seek with the self is arrested, deprived of the opening into infinity, and is impoverished in a mere image. Neither object nor image, really, Pistoletto's are Occasions for Reflection.⁷

Reading for the Plot

No sooner were the mirror paintings photographed than they began to suggest narrative plots.⁸ The double-page spread inside the brochure produced for the first exhibition of these works, in Turin's Galleria Galatea in 1963, features four shots of the mirror painting *Seated Man* (1962). Apparently taken only minutes apart, the photos show what was reflected in the mirror at each moment and thus create, in combination with the cutout figure of the seated man wearing a dark suit, different tableaux. Two of the men are younger (Pistoletto and fellow artist Aldo Mondino), while the other two are older (Paolo Bressano and Renato Rinaldi; photographers, they were the authors of most of the photographic cutouts used by Pistoletto for his 1960s mirror paintings; they also photographed the shots of the finished mirror paintings), and all of them are wearing grey suits. Rinaldi is represented by a cutout silhouette sitting on a wooden stool, while Bressano is shown in the room as he is photographing the mirror painting. The comic parlor game captured by the photographs seems disconnected from Luigi Carluccio's ponderous statement on the mirrors themselves. Carluccio, the in-house gallery curator, muses about solitude, human fragility, and the existential void.⁹

While the point of reference suggested by the first photograph of the mirror paintings is a photographer's studio, the point of reference of the photographs reproduced in the brochures for Pistoletto's second and third exhibitions the

following year (at Sonnabend Gallery in Paris and at Gian Enzo Sperone's gallery in Turin) is cinema. The Sonnabend brochure features three sequential shots of the mirror painting *Two People*, showing Pistoletto standing next to Marzia Callieri, his wife at the time. The brochure produced for the exhibition at Sperone's gallery a few months later features, on one page, a photograph of the mirror painting *Self-Portrait* (1964), showing Pistoletto in white jeans kneeling next to one of Marcel Breuer's tubular-steel-and-black-leather "Wassily" armchairs in the streamlined gallery space and on the other page features a photograph of *Marzia with Child*, showing an image of Pistoletto's wife and baby daughter, radically truncated by the edge of the mirror, with another chair by Breuer in the background. Because he was working in a nonfilmic medium, Pistoletto was able to stage what the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze identifies in Italian cinema of the 1960s, in particular the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, as the crisis of the "movement-image" and its shift to the "time-image," signaled by the introduction of what Deleuze called the "opsign." In this new category of sign the image breaks with the sensory-motor schema of film to become first and foremost an optical sign, a "cinema of vision," as Antonioni called it.¹⁰ As Pistoletto told Germano Celant in 1988, "In the Mirror Paintings we have the ephemerality of the moment, which is, however, detained in the duration of time. The figure that I fix endures in the present; in this case it is the ephemeral that makes the static, the past, endure."¹¹

The visual parallels between Pistoletto's mirror paintings and Antonioni's films abound: the way the main characters/actors are silhouetted as if pinned to the wall; the noncommunication between couples; the figures' tendency to turn away from us so we constantly see them either in *profil perdu* or from behind; their withdrawn body language: slouched shoulders and passive, pensive demeanor; the disconnected space and the way some of the figures appear to be walking not just out of the frame but as if passing into the void. We may read these exits as a removal from the scenes of dreariness of neorealism into a world where they would find themselves transfixed, almost inadvertently, by the phantasmagoria of Europe's economic miracle.¹² Thus, by the time Trini wrote his second piece about Pistoletto in 1966, the parallel with *cinema d'autore* had been made more than once. Trini writes,



Right: Michelangelo Pistoletto. *Marzia and Child*, 1964. As reproduced in *Michelangelo Pistoletto: A Reflected Word* (Walker Art Center Gallery, 1966).

Opposite: Michelangelo Pistoletto. *Seated Woman from Behind*, 1963. As reproduced in Alberto Boatto, *Pistoletto dentro/fuori lo specchio* (Fantini, 1970). Photo: Paolo Bressano. Courtesy Cittadellarte-Pistoletto Foundation, Biella, Italy.

These images have reminded some of the cinema of Fellini, Antonioni, Resnais, and the phenomenology of the *école du regard*. Of course there is a kind of iconography of contemporary life, one can find it anywhere, it is enough to look at oneself in the mirror. And this is what happened with Pistoletto's work. But in fact it is cinematic technique that is implicit in his work. Pistoletto likes going to the movies: "the story interests me, of course, but what really fascinates me is the mechanism of the images."¹³

Yet while Trini, adhering to a fundamental tenet of modernist art criticism, made sure to dissociate Pistoletto from the possibility of a cinematic narrative, Ashbery, the poet, went the opposite way. The title of his 1966 *Artnews* piece, "Talking of Michelangelo," positions Pistoletto and Antonioni (who share the same first name) as mirror images of one another but is itself taken from a line in T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": "In the room the women come and go, talking of Michelangelo." This sentence takes us back to Ashbery's first piece on Pistoletto, in the *Herald Tribune* two years earlier, in which he refers to *Le amiche*, a relatively early and little-known film shot by Antonioni in 1955. Based on Cesare Pavese's short novel *Tra donne sole* (*Among Women Only*, 1949), this film follows the itinerary of four women from different walks of life, all of whom aspire to a higher position by partaking in the life of Turin's bourgeoisie.¹⁴

These figures have a peculiarly oppressive quality. Well dressed in a white-collarish way, they remind you of the languid countesses and business executives in Antonioni's movies (Pistoletto is from Turin, where *Le amiche* was filmed). They either turn away from you gazing listlessly into the mirrored depth of the picture, or slump in modern chairs, fixing an unexpectedly pale and unsettling gaze on the viewer.¹⁵

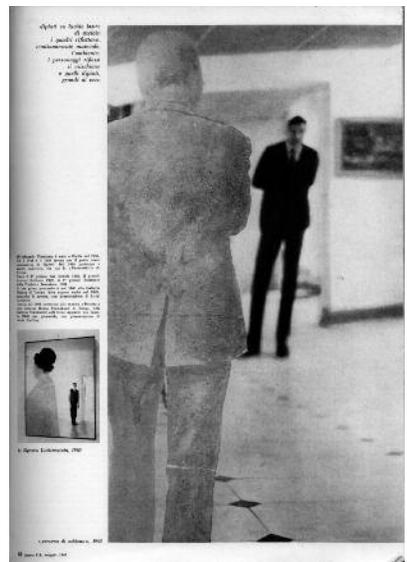


The first extensive essay about Pistoletto in *Domus*—and the first to reach a wide Italian readership—was written by the designer Ettore Sottsass Jr., who, although he never cites Antonioni by name, uses the movie *Le amiche* as his constant underlying reference.¹⁶ Titled "Pop e non pop: A proposito di Michelangelo Pistoletto," the essay is illustrated by photographs of the mirror paintings mostly culled from the Sonnabend catalogue in a sequential

format that emphasizes their cinematic quality. The essay begins with *Woman in Green with Two Figures* (1962), featuring Marzia Callieri, Pistoletto, and a third figure, the Turinese poet Piera Opezzo, standing in Sonnabend's gallery (recognizable by the floor tiles) and looking at an *informale* painting (the Italian equivalent of abstract expressionism). The shot was probably taken just prior to Pistoletto's show.¹⁷ The next photo shows a cutout of *Person Seen from the Back* (1963) facing an unidentified man in the same gallery, while the subsequent sequence of four photos moves the viewer back in time to Pistoletto's studio/apartment in Turin, beginning with *Bottle on the Ground* (1963); then *Two People* (1964)—Pistoletto and Callieri again—placed in the background of *Bottle*, creating a double reflection between two mirror paintings; followed by two more views of *Two People*. These scenes of couples and threesomes looking at artworks, the figures seen from the back, appear almost to be lifted from two sequences in *Le amiche*, in which figures are always seen either in three-quarter view or from the back. In the first sequence, Lorenzo, a failed painter played by Gabriele Ferzetti, stands next to Nene, his companion, a ceramicist played by the slim, cropped-haired Valentina Cortese, who looks very much like Pistoletto's wife. The couple stares at a portrait of Rosanna, a suicidal girl in love with Lorenzo. A few scenes later, Lorenzo and Nene's gallerist take a call from a New York dealer asking him to send her—not his!—works to the United States. The preference, in spite of the possible feminist touch it might have had in the film, must have left a pang because of the way it reflected the postwar infatuation of American collectors and museum curators for the talent of the Italian artist-as-ceramicist rather than painter. The fact that this subplot having to do with art was added by Antonioni to the narrative he took from Pavese's novel is intriguing, because it may be interpreted as self-commentary on his own position as a filmmaker midway between the predominantly artisanal world of neorealism and his signature vision of the industrial anomie of the breathless economic boom.¹⁸

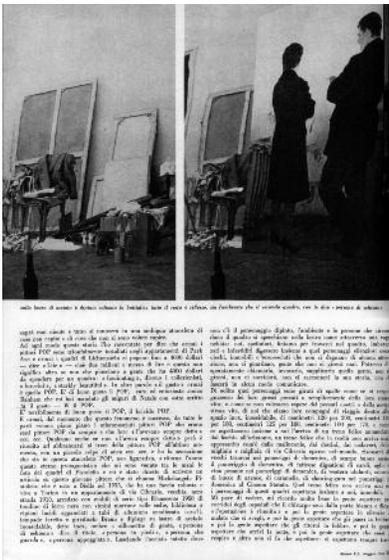
After a short digression on how American pop art lost its initial shock value after being domesticated by New York's high-society ladies—the collectors who display these works as trophies on the walls of their Park Avenue apartments—Sottsass abruptly changes tack. The essay's title, "Pop e non Pop," was intended to stem the flood of articles written by Italian critics (including Sottsass but excepting Trini) who had embarked the previous year on a trip to New York to report on the pop art phenomenon.¹⁹ Sottsass decided to concentrate instead on what was hap-

Magazine spread showing, from left to right, Michelangelo Pistoletto, *Women in Green with Two Figures* (1962); *Person Seen from the Back* (1963); *Bottle on the Ground* (1963); *Bottle on the Ground* with *Two People* (1964) in background; and two views of *Two People*. From Ettore Sottsass Jr., "Pop e non pop: a proposito di Michelangelo Pistoletto," *Domus* 414 (May 1964).



pening in Italy, particularly on what he terms “the atmosphere of Turin and the boredom of its days.” He extemporizes on Turin as a one-factory town huddled at the foot of the Alps, a city that has remained provincial, on the periphery, cut off from the hub of nearby Milan, which, like Rome and Naples, was regarded as a European cultural and economic crossroads.²⁰ The text is worth quoting at some length not only because of Sottsass’s unusual gift as a prose stylist but because it brings to the fore the poignant question of anachronism in the pages of *Domus*, a magazine otherwise devoted to its readers’ unquenchable desire to keep up with the very latest trends in design:

I happened to receive some photographs of the mirror paintings and I was asked to write about this young man born in Biella in 1933, who has a tough face and lives in Turin in an apartment on the via Cibrario, an old and dark street of 1910, furnished with mass produced furniture like that one might buy at *La Rinascente* department store, wrought iron and wicker chairs, bookshelves with shiny anodized surfaces hung with stainless steel metal, spotlights and Braun record-players, everything reflected into the mirrors as if enveloped by fog. These characters . . . it is as if they were waiting along with us for a happy train that in truth will never come, waiting for something, burdened by the melancholy fates, the corpses, the thousands and thousands of Via Cibrario that exist around the world, resonant of old tramways of those Sunday afternoons, heavy digestions of garlic and wine, howling Westerns, the smell of orange peels and chewing-gum at the Cinema Statuto. This youngster named Michelangelo Pistoletto, one cannot say that he is a Pop painter as someone has said, and if someone hasn’t said it, better be clear that this guy has nothing to do with Pop because in Turin, as probably in all of Italy, the premises for Pop painting do not exist, there is only this oppressive and invincible weight, no American Coke, no Vermouth Perlino, no vamps, not much use of deodorant, people still sleep in their pajamas, people still cook pasta, squeeze the tomatoes, people still do all those things. At the Bar Torino on Piazza San Carlo you sit on little baroque chairs to eat lots of gelato but not much “ice-cream.” Thus I would say that this boy from Turin is a true poet, even if perhaps less incisive and caustic than the boys from New York, the Lichtensteins, the Rosenquists, the



Luca Sottsass in Biella, fabbrica di tessitura, via Cibrario, con il figlio e un amico di famiglia.



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Luca Sottsass, figlio di Giuseppe Sottsass, l'architetto e il pittore che inventò il design italiano. Luca Sottsass è nato a Biella nel 1933. Ha studiato all'Accademia di Brera a Milano e alla Scuola di Architettura di Torino. Ha lavorato con i fratelli Sottsass e con altri architetti e designer italiani e stranieri. Ha fondato il gruppo di ricerca "Gruppo di ricerca" con Franco Albini, Giancarlo Piretti e altri. Ha progettato e realizzato molti edifici e interni, tra cui il Palazzo della Regione di Torino e il Palazzo della Regione di Biella. Ha anche progettato e realizzato molti oggetti di design, tra cui sedie, tavoli, lampade e mobili. Ha scritto molti libri e articoli su architettura e design.

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Rauschenbergs, the Oldenburgs, and the Chamberlains, in recounting to us the conditions of our own drama, our own story.²¹

What could have triggered such a long-winded account? Perhaps it is the fact that Sottsass wrote his piece after having been handed, as he remarks, a group of photographs—a few more than those reproduced in his article and in the Sonnabend catalogue—rather than after seeing Pistoletto's actual mirror paintings in person. Roland Barthes and others have meditated upon the mnemonic powers of the photograph.²² And for the reader, the temporal gap between then and now, that grey area between the “Pop” and “non Pop” of Sottsass's title, was widened by seeing the black-and-white photographs of the mirror paintings—*Domus*'s customary format for the illustration of all the articles in the magazine dedicated to “high” art—sandwiched between large glossy color photographs and ads that brimmed with plastic furniture ensembles and *elettrodomestici* (the new buzzword for domestic appliances). Most striking—a break from the writings found in *Domus* and pointing, again, to the plotted quality of Pistoletto's mirror paintings—is the strongly novelistic quality of Sottsass's response to the melancholy grisaille of the grainy photographs. Sottsass's writing is here strikingly reminiscent of that of Italo Calvino, then one of Italy's foremost young writers, and brings to mind Calvino's *La nuvola di smog*, a 1958 work in which the author, writing in a style midway between the realism of Pavese and the witty absurdism of Franz Kafka, follows the tracks of a nameless protagonist who has come to work for a scientific journal called *La purificazione (dell'aria dal fumo, dalle esaltazioni chimiche e dai prodotti di combustione)* in a city—Turin—perennially enveloped in fog, its façades black, its windows opaque, the silhouettes of its denizens turned into mere ideograms with nearly effaced faces—a place where every object appears perennially coated by a film of dust, leaving open the question of whether all this grey is the result of depressive loneliness, inclement weather, or chemical pollution.²³

While Sottsass delves insistently into the 1950s, Ashbery begins his second review of Pistoletto (that of 1966) with a detailed description of the first scene of *L'eclisse*, the third work in Antonioni's trilogy of 1961–1962 and a film with a markedly “sixties” flavor:

In the opening scene of Antonioni's *The Eclipse* we see Monica Vitti, alienated as usual cowering on a sofa in a pleasant livable apartment that apparently belongs to someone of intelligence and means—probably an architect. But somehow the soothing décor has turned on Miss Vitti and driven her up the wall—that at least is the impression we get during the long wordless

Michelangelo Antonioni,
dir. *L'eclisse*, 1962.
Frame enlargement.

scene in which she circulates in her prison, fingering pieces of modern sculptures and striped slipcovers. It seems that the more we attempt to cushion ourselves from the realities of alienated life with a buffer state of objects, art and the people and attitudes that go with them . . . the more we expose ourselves to these dangers.²⁴

The early photographs of the mirror paintings present a narrative of objects: mostly chairs but also lamps, first in the photographic reflections and then in the actual cutouts, as in *Lightbulb* and *Spotlight* (both 1964) in which the light fixtures are the only items affixed to the surface of the painted mirror. Meanwhile, *L'eclisse* shows, in scene after scene, an entire catalogue of lamps—from nineteenth-century pastiches to the widely acclaimed midcentury modern lighting fixtures produced during the years of the postwar economic miracle. These were designed by Giò Ponti, the Castiglioni brothers, Marco Zanuso, Vittorio Vigano, Joe Colombo, and others for such firms as Arredoluce, O-Luce, Fontana Arte, Floss, Stilnovo, and Artemide. The fixation on lamps in Italy was such that it led the designer and theorist Andrea Branzi to infer that the numinous glow emanating from them, and the absorption they elicited in the figures perambulating around them, could be read as an unwitting philosophical meditation—in the midst of the frenzy produced by the economic boom—on the mysterious, dark side of technology.²⁵

The first photograph in Sottsass's 1964 article in *Domus*, where Pistoletto's three cutout figures are looking at an *informale* painting, signals another shift from *Le amiche* to *L'eclisse*. At the end of the latter's opening scene, Vitti and her boyfriend, Riccardo, are shown standing, looking bored and alienated, in front of a large gestural painting.²⁶ Sottsass's article appeared in *Domus* immediately after several pages presenting a series of cameo portraits of new dealers in contemporary art, photographs that blend almost seamlessly with the Antonioni film stills and the photos of the mirror paintings: in a candid shot of Beatrice Monti, director of the Galleria dell'Arte in Milan, hobnobbing with Robert Rauschenberg at Castelli's gallery in New York, Monti looks like Vitti in one of her brunette incarnations; another shot shows Monti in a typical Vitti pose, her arms lifted, hands behind her



head, conversing with Sam Francis in the garden of his house in Santa Barbara.²⁷

A more unexpected theme in both Ashbery's and Sottsass's articles on Pistoletto is that of suicide. In a bizarre non sequitur, Ashbery's paragraph about *L'eclisse* segues into the following observation:

Scandinavia, where questions of interior decoration, architecture, city planning and public welfare in general are taken more seriously than in most countries, has a famous suicide rate, and its principal artistic contributions are the tormented works of Ibsen, Strindberg, Munch, Bergman and Dreyer. The figures and the décor that are the symptoms of today's strange new disease of alienation are the raw material, and perhaps the end product of Pistoletto's art.²⁸

This detour to the north in fact takes us back to Turin, because *Le amiche* revolves, as does Pavese's novel, around Rosanna's unsuccessful suicide attempt early in the movie. This attempt occurs in an anonymous Turin hotel room.²⁹ In her second, successful attempt, she jumps off a bridge. Suicide is also a subtext of Sottsass's second essay on Pistoletto. The essay was published as a leaflet in February 1965 to accompany the installation of four of the largest mirror paintings on display behind the huge glass windows of Sala Espressioni, a showroom owned by Ideal Standard, a producer of bathroom appliances, on one of Milan's elegant streets. The installation was designed by Ponti, who later described the space, which designers and artists such as Bruno Munari, Enrico Castellani, and Achille Castiglioni and Piergiacomo Castiglioni had used for their own installations, as "A store, not of objects, but of ideas."³⁰ Sottsass decided to approach the seamless lineup of figures in the four versions of *People on a Balcony* (all dated 1964), photographed by Ugo Mulas, as if they were a large narrative fresco, a format that had become taboo after fascism's embrace of mural painting. In a veritable tour de force, Sottsass telescopes in a breathless flashback the two decades that had elapsed since the fall of the fascist regime:



The story began with Trini Castelli, the guy on the right with the beard and the black shiny raincoat like the one worn by cod fishermen on the North Sea, leaning on the railing. . . . He came over to me and so now there are two characters; and the third one enters the story almost at once because Trini Castelli showed me the photos of the Pistoletto mirrors and told me the story of Pistoletto, a friend of his who was showing his stainless steel plates at the Sonnabend Gallery in Paris and who was, in any case, as you can see in the photo, a guy who looks at the world in his own way; he too is leaning on that railing looking down into a pit, at what, no one really knows. A snake pit? A marble quarry? A soccer game? An anatomy lesson? The funeral of Marilyn Monroe? Our own funeral? The entry of the troops? The retreat of the troops? A gored bullfighter? The consecration of bishops? I showed the photos to *Domus* and *Domus* published them. Thus Ponti saw them who then told Pistoletto to do a show for the store window of via Hoepli and so Pistoletto came to me to ask if I would write him what we now call a “presentation.” The circle of characters seems to be closed. But meanwhile other people had entered the story, others who were looking down the pit, also Sperone, the one from the gallery in Turin who shows Pop painters, in a way of speaking, a skimpy young man who never seems to find the solution and is always a bit feverish and lives with his ailing mother in the small town of Carmagnola at the outskirts of Turin and whose part in this story is that of the merchant, a rare kind of merchant who doesn’t sell to make money but because he feels he belongs to this story whose characters are leaning on the railing and looking down into the pit. And then there are the girls. I don’t know who they are, these lovely young girls, with their little sweaters and overcoats, with ribbons in their hair, leaning against the railing. Are they maybe the little girls from via Cibrario where Pistoletto lives, or the ones from Carmagnola who walk up and down Main Street on Sunday morning; and here the story becomes a little bit more mysterious. Who are they? How come they too are involved in this story of people looking down the pit? I would have preferred if the girls weren’t there. . . . But Pistoletto is right. There have to be girls looking down the pit, girls in their Sunday best, their knee-highs and lovely shoes from the manufacturers of Varese, girls who wait. And there also needs to be that guy who turned to look me in the face, like the one who on the morning he was supposed to be shot, who when they made him sit on a chair facing the wall turned around, just before they shot him, to see where death was coming from. Inside and out, on either side of the mirror, there is nothing but a long

Michelangelo Pistoletto in
Sala Espressioni, Milan, 1965.
Courtesy Cittadellarte-Pistoletto
Foundation, Biella, Italy.

wait for how the spectacle will end, the suspense that stretches all the way to the end, the only reality that keeps us going. He has understood all this, Pistoletto, damn it; so that one never knows whether he is standing on this side or that side of his stainless steel filters, or on both sides.³¹

A series of resonant images and themes, some of them disturbing, are evoked in intermittent flashes in Sottsass's text: the allusion to troops, referring to the invasions by the Germans and then the Allies; the fall of the fascist regime, with its murky tales of collaboration and resistance—a cryptic reference perhaps to the end of Roberto Rossellini's movie *Rome, Open City* (1945) when the priest, a member of the underground resistance during the last days of the Nazi's control of Rome, is executed by the fascists while seated on a chair facing the camera; the bull fight—a likely reference to the extraordinary impact Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* had on Italian artists as an antifascist statement when it toured Europe in 1953; and the “hopeful” girls and boys, displaced by Italy's imperfect and incomplete modernization, which forced millions of uprooted provincials to toil in the cities.

Sottsass's text is reminiscent of the end of *L'eclisse* where, in one of the most chilling sequences of postwar Italian cinema, Antonioni recapitulates, as in that instant of “total recall” experienced in the seconds before dying when one's entire life passes in front of one eyes, the entire film in a series of completely still and silent shots, each reminiscent of a particular episode in Italian art. He shows us a trash barrel in a fenced-in pit, suggesting the aesthetic of new dada, and perhaps unknowingly foreshadowing Pistoletto's corrugated cardboard *Well* (one of his mid-1960s *Minus Objects [Ogetti in meno]*); streets in Benito Mussolini's E.U.R. and the survival of its ghostly monumental cityscape south of Rome alongside its postfascist architectural aftermath; a building covered with scaffolding, suggesting a well-known work by Giacomo Balla just before he became a futurist; a man on a horse-pulled cart and a nanny pushing a baby carriage, subjects painted by the Macchiaoli, a group of Italian artists in the mid- to late nineteenth century; crosswalks (geometric abstraction); and, the final shot, a street lamp, a substitute for both atomic glare and solar eclipse and reminiscent of *Guernica's* glaring light bulb, symbolizing the first experiment in full saturation bombing.

In the first scene of *L'eclisse* the camera dwells for a few seconds on a pile of magazines and newspapers on the desk in Riccardo's living room, inviting viewers to glance furtively at the media much as viewers might furtively glance at a reflection in a Pistoletto mirror painting. We see the Communist *La rinascita* in the middle of the pile and, on the top, an issue of its monthly supplement, *Il contem-*

poraneo. The latter features on its cover a reproduction of the painting *Execution in the Countryside*, Renato Guttuso's 1943 homage to Federico García Lorca, the Spanish antifascist poet killed in 1936 at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, very likely by Nationalist militia siding with General Francisco Franco. The first issue of *Il contemporaneo*, in 1954, was devoted to the shift from the political commitment of neorealism to the indifference personified in *L'eclisse* by Riccardo. The last sentence in Sottsass's text echoes the phrases used by the philosopher Norberto Bobbio to describe the subject position of Italian intellectuals vis-à-vis politics in 1954, the year Italy entered the period of its economic miracle: "above the fray, neither here nor there, both here and there, aiming at synthesis."³² Here was a bourgeois intellectual who, like the men in suits in the mirror paintings and like Pistoletto and Antonioni themselves, subscribed to the Left while embracing the comforts of the new object-world.

Looking at Pop Askance

A remarkable number of the photographs of Pistoletto's mirror paintings published in 1960s art magazines cast his lonely cut-out figures (which sometimes feature the artist himself) as thoughtfully yet passively examining iconic works by their transatlantic and European pop counterparts. The story begins somewhat jokingly with *La signora Lichtenstein* (1964), a small mirror painting of Roy Lichtenstein's mother in the form of a portrait bust, wearing a close-fitting hat and looking incongruously like Britain's Queen Mother while being ogled, in a photograph in Sottsass's "Pop e non Pop" article, by a young man.³³

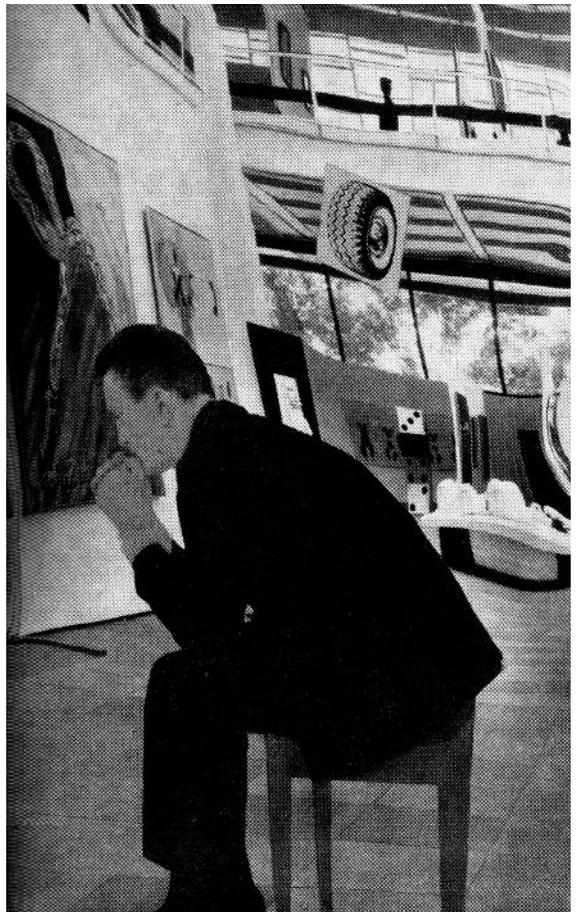
Just a few months later American pop art took the Venice Biennale, and Europe, by storm. The controversial award of the coveted Grand Prize in Painting to Rauschenberg—signaling the obsolescence of any such prize for a work in the medium of painting—elicited international coverage that ranged from fascination to outrage. As Alberto Boatto understood in his review of the 1964 Biennale, "That this is a good Biennale is evident from the light it throws on a situation that goes beyond artistic matters."³⁴ He also understood that pop had created a no-win situation for Italian artists. The curators of the Italian section at the Biennale, among them Maurizio Calvesi, had placed their bets on their own contingent of pop artists—Tano Festa, Franco Angeli, Mario Schifano, Titina Maselli, Concetto Pozzati, Antonio Recalcati, and Giosetta Fioroni. But while Calvesi had been happy to place Angeli, Lucio Del Pezzo, and Festa within what he called "the neo-metaphysical pole" of pop and thus link them to the strategies of appropriation used by Giorgio de Chirico, Boatto saw citationality as a dead end for his conationals. Facsimiles

of Old Master paintings, which read as camp when they were embedded in a Rauschenberg combine or silkscreen, were fated to fall flat in an Italian pop piece. As Boatto notes,

It is notable that instead of directly absorbing objects and images, artists (with the exception of Rotella and Del Pezzo in their most recent works) are still transcribing, and by traditional pictorial means. Even when the object or image is directly absorbed this is done cynically, in the degraded form of a citation of a more or less famous source. Examples of this are the metaphysical bric-a-brac of Del Pezzo or the Michelangelesque Adam by Festa both of which prove, unwittingly, how difficult the art of citation really is. It would seem that everyone is burdened by a culture whose symbols and obligations hinder any strong grasp of or straightforward relation to the world. In the case of older artists this culture reveals itself to be nothing but an outmoded world, a suffocation long since institutionalized.³⁵

By all accounts, the intense political infighting among nations produced by the system of awarding prizes at the Biennale reached a climax that year. When the dust settled, Leo Castelli and his ex-wife, Ileana Sonnabend, the American doyenne of pop in Paris, divided among them the spoils of Europe. The most spirited photoreportage of the events on that opening week was by Ugo Mulas for *Domus*. This coverage more closely resembled a film by Fellini than one by Antonioni: full-page portraits of Rauschenberg and Lucio Fontana on facing pages, each shown sitting like kings in matching Venetian gilded chairs; on another page, the inverted juxtaposition of two photographs of a—genuine? contrived?—celebratory toast (*brindisi*) between Rauschenberg and Andrea Cascella, the latter being the much less well-known Italian artist who received the sculpture prize. These did little to dispel the sinking feeling that, after the feasting and diplomatic pageantry of the Biennale, the Europeans were left somewhat bereft.³⁶

The most widely reproduced photograph of the 1964 Biennale, also by Mulas for *Domus*, shows by Rauschenberg being carefully loaded on a motorboat so they can be whisked away from the U.S.



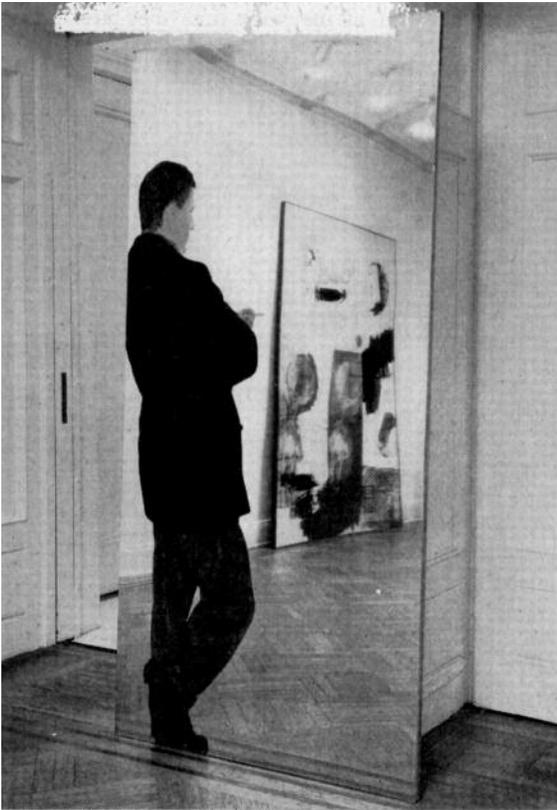
Right: Michelangelo Pistoletto. *Seated Man*, 1963. As reproduced in Pierre Restany, "Estate 1964: La 'nuova' figurazione è Pop," *Domus* 420 (November 1964).

Opposite: Michelangelo Pistoletto. *Person Leaning*, 1964. As reproduced in John Ashbery, "Talking of Michelangelo," *Artnews* 65, no. 4 (Summer 1966).

consulate to the grounds of the Giardini to allow the artist to legally win the coveted prize.³⁷ Whereas the boat provided a logistical solution for the Americans, such images were, from an Italian standpoint, part of Italy's problem. This view of the Grand Canal perpetuated the perception of Italy, decades after the futurists' vituperations against foreigners' morbid love for Venice, as the perennial land of touristic kitsch, visual clichés, and *passatismo* (past-ism).³⁸ Pistoletto had no works in the 1964 Biennale, and the two mirror paintings he created based on pop works he saw there—one featuring a cutout of Oldenburg's *Stove*; the other featuring a cutout of a crushed-metal sculpture by John Chamberlain—can be read as his way of absenting himself from the commotion and stating, "I saw and did not partake; these are souvenir pictures."

"Paintings that one doesn't see at first, this is how Pistoletto captures us, he operates by transparency": these were Trini's words when he first encountered the mirror paintings.³⁹ This gift of invisibility allowed the mirror paintings to be slipped among other artists' works, where they functioned almost as if a photo-camera, producing—once photographed—a whole set of exhibitional scenarios that disclosed the ambivalence and misgivings felt by a European artist often labeled or mislabeled as "pop." Nomadic, his figures appeared among—or, rather, superimposed on—a number of more-or-less famous pop icons of both sides of the Atlantic during and after the 1964 Biennale. In the November 1964 issue of *Domus*, Pierre Restany's review of the myriad pop art shows that had taken place that summer and fall ended with a photograph of *Seated Man* (1963) pondering in front of *Re-think/Re-entry*, a 1962 painting by British pop artist Derek Boshier that was positioned not far from an ominously suspended *Tire* (1962) by Lichtenstein in the exhibition Pop etc etc etc, curated by Werner Hofmann at the Museum of the 20th Century in Vienna. The giddy atmosphere of the exhibition is conveyed by the

slight deformation of the space reflected on the mirror painting's undulating surface of stainless steel.⁴⁰ Continuing this theme, *Man with Yellow Pants*, featuring a cutout of Gian Enzo Sperone, appeared that summer staring at what looks like a painting by Francis Bacon, one of Pistoletto's most important formative influences, in the exhibition *The Object Transformed*, curated by Arthur Drexler at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. *Woman Sitting in Three-*



Quarter View, which could be seen lounging in Sonnabend's gallery at the time of Pistoletto's 1964 show, could thus be included, as an interloper, in *Mythologies Quotidiennes*, curated by Gérard Gassiot-Talabot—Restany's nemesis—at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris that same year. That exhibition, which was planned as a counteroffensive to Europe's colonization by the Americans, launched a militantly anticonsumerist and anti-imperialist homespun movement called "narrative figuration." The gift of invisibility of the mirror paintings might also explain, in retrospect, why Pistoletto was the first European artist of his generation to be given a solo exhibition in the United States, at the Walker Art Gallery, in 1966 (this was his first museum show). The editors of *Artnews* chose to illustrate Ashbery's review of the Minneapolis show with a photo of *Man with Cigarette*, featuring a cutout of Pistoletto's own silhouette standing in Castelli's gallery in New York casting a sidelong glance at a painted silk-screen by Rauschenberg.

Most revealing, and functioning almost as an allegory of Italy's embrace of and resistance to American pop, is the itinerary taken by *Alpino*, one of Pistoletto's first mirror paintings. The work exists in two slightly different versions, one dated 1962, the other 1964. Both versions show a young man in uniform, a member of Italy's battalion of mountain soldiers, seen from behind as he huddles close to his girlfriend. The story begins with an attempt on the part of the art historian and critic Maurizio Calvesi to bring a New York gallery show, Sidney Janis's 4 Environments by 4 New Realists, into the Italian fold. In the spring of 1964 Calvesi inserted a mention of Pistoletto alongside mentions of actual show participants Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, and George Segal.⁴¹ A year later, as if to fulfill Calvesi's wish, Sperone included Pistoletto as the sole Italian artist in his 1965 exhibition *Pop*, the first gallery show to bring the entire American pop contingent—Dine, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, and Tom Wesselman—to Italy.⁴² Installation shots show Pistoletto's *Alpino* hanging on a wall alongside Rosenquist's *Trophy of an Old Soldier* (1962); a vitrine with plaster food sculptures by Oldenburg, including a small homage to Italy titled *Vitello tonnato*; and a silk-screened *Car Crash* painting by Warhol. However, *Alpino*, which hung across from Lichtenstein's comic-book war diptych *Whaam!* (1963), does not appear among the Pistoletto works listed in the exhibition's leaflet. That this particular mirror painting should have been chosen, perhaps at the last minute, is probably not due to happenstance. The two works appear superimposed in many of the photographs of Lichtenstein's panels, the onomatopoeia reversed by the effect of the mirror.⁴³ By means of reflection, these photographs thus provide another telescoping of the history of the twentieth century's many wars.

Right: Michelangelo Pistoletto. *Alpino*, 1962. As reproduced in Maurizio Calvesi, *Le due avanguardie* (Laterza, 1966). Photo: Paolo Bressano.

Opposite: Michelangelo Pistoletto. *Alpino*, 1962. As reproduced in Alberto Boatto, *Pistoletto dentro/fuori lo specchio* (Fantini, 1970). Photo: Paolo Bressano. Courtesy Cittadellarte-Pistoletto Foundation, Biella, Italy.



The original mission of the Alpini, Italy's elite mountain soldiers, was to protect Italy's northern border with France and Austria. Pistoletto's soldier is wearing a uniform that suggests either of the two world wars. The reference, at least for an Italian viewer, may have been to the futurist artists. Galvanized by *irredentismo*, the *revanchiste* hope of regaining the northeastern portion of the Italian peninsula from Austria during World War I, many futurists enlisted in the army as volunteers in the Lombard Battalion of Volunteer Cyclists and had gone to Peschiera, on the shores of Lake Garda to receive training as Alpini. Boccioni, Antonio Sant'Elia, Mario Sironi, and Federico Tommaso Marinetti—the first two of whom would die in the war—had themselves been photographed valiantly uniformed in their Alpine surroundings.⁴⁴ *Alpino* subsequently appeared in the form of two contiguous photos in one of the illustrations in *Le due avanguardie*, the anthology of Calvesi's 1960s writings, published in 1966.⁴⁵ The first shot shows *Whaam!* reflected in the mirror portion of the painting; the second shot is from another room and eliminates *Whaam!*, leaving the soldier and his girlfriend alone in front of a blank wall and a door left ajar—as if Calvesi were wishing away American pop, the Cold War, and the concomitant culture wars. Boatto, whose views on the geopolitics of pop, judging from his reaction to the 1964 Venice Biennale, differed considerably from Calvesi's, opted for a different tactic in his choice of photographic illustrations for his book *Pistoletto dentro/fuori lo specchio* in 1969. As a topical late-1960s antiwar (anti-Vietnam) gesture, Boatto reproduced a shot of *Alpino* at Sperone's in which the charged field between the young man in uniform and *Whaam!* is traversed twice—once in front of the work and once in reflection, thus illustrating the book's title—by the figure of Pistoletto walking by, hands in his pockets, laughing at something outside the camera's image frame.⁴⁶



Eclipse of the Object

The thirteenth Milan Triennale, nicknamed “La triennale Pop,” was reviewed back to back with the Venice Biennale in *Domus* in the summer of 1964.⁴⁷ This was the first Triennale since the 1930s to be organized around a theme, and its chosen topic was “free time.” As Umberto Eco, its co-organizer with architect Vittorio Gregotti, stated in an interview, this was the only Triennale to deliver a

message rather than merely decorate a setting for the display of objects. The thirteenth Triennale was also the first where painters, sculptors, designers, and filmmakers were asked to address a topical issue.⁴⁸ In an all-out attempt to locate design within an increasingly saturated media culture, Gregotti and Eco foregrounded the total environment over the display of singular commodities, forcing visitors through spaces that alternated between a barrage of visual and auditory sensations (most of them culled from cinema and television) and empty spaces. The conventional design object was thus eclipsed by a disembodied image-world. Bruno Zevi, Italy's most vocal architectural historian during those years, described the Triennale for the weekly *L'Espresso*:

The ideological void is matched by a senseless architectonic program. One wastes 250 to 300 million lira by giving a group of artists (all of them, it goes without saying, "politically engaged") the chance to vent their repressed desire for escapism. Every three years, the Milanese architects find themselves in front of the same quandary: how to mask the historicist palazzo by Giovanni Muzio? Every three years a new device: laminated sheets or banners to hide the arcades and the columns. . . . The images, brilliant, sophisticated and abstruse, communicate the void, and the state of being they impart the viewer is that of torpor. If nausea is the outcome of leisure, then the performance was a success.⁴⁹

Most daunting—and reproduced in a full-page color photograph in *Domus* a few pages away from Mulas's upbeat photographs of the events taking place in Venice—was a color photograph of the monumental *scalone*. Since 1933 it had welcomed the visitors into the Palazzo dell'Arte to see the national displays of product design at the Triennale. The photo features a diminutive silhouette of a woman descending the staircase in a space suffused by a sulfuric light. With this photo we are again projected into the realm of an Antonioni film, specifically that of *Red Desert* (1964), his first in color and the one released closest to the date of the Triennale. In the film the camera follows the agoraphobic and neurotic Monica Vitti as she wanders alone or with her young son in the toxic industrial landscape of the Pò Delta near Ravenna. The ominously protruding cubes, or "conduits," that surround her, which reviewers also described as "containers," appear in one of the last, Dantesque scenes in the film, when Vitti drifts among the huge corroded metal hulls of colossal container ships.⁵⁰ The malaise exuding from the Triennale signaled the end of Italy's boom, as strikes against low wages and growing unemployment began to besiege the factories, beginning with that of Fiat in Turin.

Main staircase of the Milan
Triennale, 1964. As reproduced
in *Domus* 418 (September 1964).

By that time, however, Pistoletto had moved on to something else. The early photographs of the mirror paintings capture the private space of his “studio/abitazione” on Via Cibrario. In early 1966, in a reversed strategy, Pistoletto exhibited his new work, the *Minus Objects* (*Oggetti in meno*) in a new studio where he had moved to live among his works so that the space tripled as home, studio, and gallery. Ambiguous objects, midway between sculpture and mock furniture, these works will not decide whether they belong to the simulacra of pop or to minimalism’s “specific objects” or to the artisanal or to the manufactured. Like the mirror paintings, the *Minus Objects* were structured by a strategy of subtraction that for Pistoletto had turned in 1966 into something closer to a refusal: refusal to be branded as a “maker of mirrors” by producing a series of works that defied a signature style; refusal to move to New York at Leo Castelli’s bequest after he was offered the chance to join Castelli’s stable of artists; and a refusal, in the year his Turin dealer Sperone opened a gallery in nearby Milan, to give in to the latter city’s near obsession with industrial design.

Pistoletto’s *Minus Objects* have often been described as a prelude to the emergence of *arte povera*, whose spokesman, Celant, would famously claim in 1967, in the new Milanese magazine *Flash Art*, that the movement’s “poverty” of materials represented a guerrilla strike against the world of conspicuous consumption.⁵¹ And yet Pistoletto was responding to a fluid situation symptomatic of postwar Italian art, a situation in which Sperone, one of *arte povera*’s earliest and most important gallerists, dedicated no less than three shows, from 1965 to 1967, to Sottsass’s furniture and ceramic designs; a situation in which the new Milanese Galleria Toselli opened with a show of Ponti’s furniture immediately followed by one on *arte povera*.⁵²

Trini chose exactly this moment to join Sottsass and Restany as the third art critic on the masthead of *Domus*. Asked some years later what working for a publication like *Domus* was like, the critic answered,



The city stood for the opposite of what we thought art ought to be. It was dominated by *design*. The consumerist production of housewares that have always been at the core of the Milanese aesthetic sensibility. For us, art in Milan had sold its soul to *upholstery*. No one cared about art . . . even though none of the designers' lights would ever reach the spiritual intensity of a single neon by Flavin.⁵³

But Trini would not find escape from those light fixtures to be so easy. His first piece for *Domus*, a review of a series of Pistoletto shows in the spring of 1967 in Milan, Genoa, New York, and Brussels, is illustrated by nothing less than a photograph in which Pistoletto appears at the Galleria Notizie in Milan, standing next to a couple of gallery visitors and a man with a tripod, all reflected in his 1964 work *Spotlight*. This work isolates a profile image of a stylish wall-mounted lamp, and its enigmatic space is traversed, twice, by Ciaccia Trini (Tommaso Trini's wife) looking like a Monica Vitti look-alike.⁵⁴



Notes

This article is based on my essay “Eclissi: Arte italiana degli anni sessanta,” in *Il confine evanescente: Arte italiana 1960–2000*, ed. Gabriele Guercio and Anna Mattiolo (Milan: Electa, 2010), 75–104.

1. For a detailed analysis of Pistoletto’s techniques in the making of these works, see Suzanne Penn, “‘The Complicity of the Materials’ in Pistoletto’s Paintings and Mirror Paintings,” in *Michelangelo Pistoletto: From One to Many, 1956–1974*, ed. Carlos Basualdo (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art; and Rome: MAXXI, Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI secolo, 2011).

2. Tommaso Trini, untitled text for Sonnabend Gallery, Paris, 1964. This phenomenological approach has remained dominant through the recent excellent essay by Claire Gilman, “Pistoletto’s Staged Subjects,” *October* 124 (Spring 2008): 53–74.

3. Tommaso Trini, *Pistoletto*, exh. foldout (Milan: Galleria del Naviglio, 1967).

4. Umberto Eco, “Sugli specchi,” in *Sugli specchi e altri saggi: Il segno, la rappresentazione, l’illusione, e l’immagine* (Milan: Bompiani, 1985), 15–16, 24–25.

5. John Ashbery, “Michelangelo Pistoletto” (1964), in *John Ashbery, Reported Sightings: Art Chronicles, 1957–1987* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989), 158–159.

6. John Ashbery, “Talking of Michelangelo,” *Artnews* 65, no. 4 (Summer 1966): 42, 64.

7. Annette Michelson, “Paris Letter,” *Art International* 8, no. 3 (April 1964): 70.

8. My reference here is to Peter Brooks’s *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), a book that calls for a rejection of the dominant trends of formalism and structuralism in literary theory in favor of a return to readings driven by the pleasures of the plot, which had been demeaned as characteristic of popular, mass-consumption literature as opposed to high art.

9. See *Michelangelo Pistoletto: Opere recenti*, exh. cat. (Turin: Galleria Galatea, 1963). The show included twenty works, sixteen of them *quadri specchianti*.

10. See Gilles Deleuze, *L’image-temps* (Paris: Edition de Minuit, 1985).

11. Germano Celant, ed., *Pistoletto: Division and Multiplication of the Mirror*, exh. cat. (New York: P.S.1, 1988), 32. To complicate matters further, film theorist Christian Metz makes an important analogy between the mirror and film in *The Imaginary Signifier: Cinema and Psychoanalysis* (London: Macmillan: 1982), 45–46: “More than the other arts, or in a more unique way, the cinema involves us in the imaginary: it drums up all perception but to switch it immediately over its own absence, which is nonetheless the only signifier present. The film is like a mirror. But it differs from the primordial mirror in one essential point: although, as in the latter, everything may come to be projected, there is one thing and one thing only that is never reflected in it: the spectator’s own body. In a certain emplacement, the mirror suddenly becomes clear glass. . . . In the cinema the object remains: fiction or no, there is always something on the screen. But the reflection of one’s own body has disappeared. . . . Thus what *makes possible* the spectator’s absence from the screen—or rather the intelligible unfolding of the film despite that absence—is the fact that the spectator has already known the experience of the mirror (of the true mirror), and is thus able to reconstitute a world of objects without having first to recognize himself within it.”

12. See Seymour Chatman, *Antonioni or, The Surface of the World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles:

Opposite: Michelangelo Pistoletto. *Spotlight*, 1966. As reproduced in Tommaso Trini, “No Man’s Mirror,” *Domus* 449 (April 1967). Photo: Manfredi Bellati.

California University Press, 1985); and Carlo Di Carlo, ed., *Michelangelo Antonioni* (Rome: Bianco e nero, 1964).

13. Tommaso Trini, untitled review (1966), in *Michelangelo Pistoletto* (Genoa: Galleria La Bertesca, 1966), 48.

14. Cesare Pavese, “*Tra donne sole*”; *In appendice la sceneggiatura del film “Le amiche” di Michelangelo Antonioni* (Turin: Einaudi, 1998). For an English translation of the novel, see Cesare Pavese, *Among Women Only*, trans. D.D. Pagie (London: Peter Owen, 1997).

15. Ashbery, “Michelangelo Pistoletto,” 158–159.

16. Ettore Sottsass Jr., “Pop e non pop: A proposito di Michelangelo Pistoletto,” *Domus* 414 (May 1964): 32–35.

17. I thank Marco Farano, the archivist of Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella, for his answers to my many queries.

18. See, for instance, the predominance of modern ceramics, *maiolica*, and ironwork in an exhibition such as *Italy at Work: The Renaissance in Design Today*, which in 1950 traveled to eleven American venues, including the Art Institute of Chicago and the Brooklyn Museum.

19. See especially the article by Pierre Restany, the principal art critic for *Domus*, titled “Le raz de marée réaliste aux USA,” *Domus* 399 (February 1963): 33–36, which posits that pop—in contrast to American neo-dada, which he had attempted to put on the same par as the French nouveaux réalistes—derived from a uniquely American sensibility. See also, Ettore Sottsass Jr., “Dada, New Dada, New Realists,” *Domus* 399 (February 1963): 27–32, which favors neo-dada over what the author argues is the academicism of American pop painting, a charge often made by European critics. On *Domus* and its art critics, from Restany to Trini, see my “Restany tout azimuth,” in *The Florence Gould Lectures at New York University*, vol. 6, 2002–2004 (New York: New York University Center for French Civilization and Culture, 2004), 80–93; and “Point de chute: Restany à *Domus*,” in *Le demi-siècle de Pierre Restany/The Half Century of Pierre Restany* (Paris: INHA, Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art, 2009), 403–414.

20. This is to some degree the same postwar city described by another of its famous natives, the philosopher Norberto Bobbio, in *Trent’anni di storia della cultura a Torino (1920–1950)*, when he comments “la vecchia Torino era morta e non era nata una nuova” (the old Turin was dead and the new one not yet born). See Alberto Papuzzi, “Lo scrutatore nella nuvola d’ira (Torino 1950–70),” in *Un’avventura internazionale: Torino e le arti 1950–1970*, exh. cat. (Milan: Charta, 1993), 35. See also, Mirella Bandini, “Torino 1960–1973: Interviste—Note di lavoro-Dichiarazioni,” *NAC* 3 (March 1973): 2–28, esp. 3–4. One of the few scholars to have paid attention to Sottsass’s essay is Robert Lumley in “Between Pop Art and Arte Povera: American Influences in the Visual Arts in Italy in the 1960s,” in *Across the Atlantic: Cultural Exchange between Europe and the United States* (London: Peter Lang, 2000), 173–186.

21. Sottsass, “Pop e non pop,” 34–35. Antonioni often reminisced on his own provincial youth in Ferrara.

22. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (New York: Noonday Press, 1981).

23. For two letters from Calvino to Antonioni about *Le amiche* at the time the film was released, see “*Tra donne sole*.”

24. Ashbery, "Talking of Michelangelo," 41. In an interview from 1979, Antonioni states, "I have always given a lot of importance to objects. Within a frame, the object can be as important as the characters. What is important is to influence the viewer to become as aware of the object as they are of the character." "The History of Cinema Is Made on Film" (1979), in *Michelangelo Antonioni: Architettura della visione*, ed. Michele Mancini and Giuseppe Perella, 2 vols. (Rome: Coneditor Consorzio Coop., 1986), 213. See also, Guido Crainz, *Storia del miracolo italiano: Culture, identità, e trasformazioni fra anni cinquanta e sessanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 1996).

25. See Andrea Branzi, "Le luci che cambiano," in F. Ferrari and N. Ferrari, *Luce: Lampade 1968–73: Il nuovo design italiano* (Turin: Allemandi, 2002), quoted in Alberto Bassi, *Italian Lighting Design 1945–2004* (Milan: Electa, 2004), 129. See also Andrea Branzi, introduction to *Il design italiano negli anni '50* (Milan: Centrokappa, 1985).

26. This shot is immediately followed by another of Riccardo standing alone, after Vitti has left, in front of an even larger *informale* canvas. In another parallel with Pistoletto, a startling shot a few minutes earlier in the film shows Riccardo sitting motionless, as if nailed to his armchair. On Antonioni's interest in contemporary art, or what he calls "nonpainting" (he cites Alberto Burri, Pietro Consagra, Emilio Vedova, and Lucio Fontana), see his interview "La malattia dei sentimenti" (1961), in *Michelangelo Antonioni*, ed. Mancini and Perella. The article was originally published in *Bianco e nero* 22, no. 2–3 (February–March 1961).

27. None of the dealers are Parisian, or even French, thus leaving out Sonnabend. Meanwhile, Monti explains how Americans are so much more open and less chauvinistic than the French; how her models are Betty Parsons, Leo Castelli, Martha Jackson, and Sidney Janis, all New York dealers; and how she loves traveling all over the United States to see her artists. See Editoriale, "I mercanti d'arte: Beatrice Monti per la galleria dell'Ariete, Milano; Peppino Palazzoli per la galleria Blu, Milano," *Domus* 398 (January 1963): 29–34.

28. Ashbery, "Talking of Michelangelo," 64.

29. This was the kind of hotel room where Pavese would take his own life a year after his novel was published.

30. Gio Ponti, "Espressioni," *Domus* 415 (June 1964): 16–19. See also "Espressioni," *Domus* 423 (February 1965): 45–48. The latter reproduces two of Pistoletto's mirrors in a large, grainy, black-and-white double-page spread. Finally, see "I corpi plastici," *Domus* 431 (October 1965): 50–51.

31. Ettore Sottsass Jr., "'Espressione' di Michelangelo Pistoletto," unpub. ms. for Sala Espressioni, Milan (February–March 1965), in *Domus* archives, Milan. To my knowledge, the manuscript version of the text has never been republished. I thank Giulia Guzzini, the archivist of the *Domus* archives, for her help in locating the manuscript. Clino Trini Castelli, a young designer and Sottsass's collaborator, is Tommaso Trini's younger brother. The two other men pictured in *People on a Balcony*, are Rinaldi and Bressano. The line-up of figures along a balustrade is a visual trope used by Antonioni. See, for example, the beach scene in *Le amiche* and scenes set in the Rome stock exchange in *L'eclisse*.

32. Norberto Bobbio, "Intellettuai e vita politica in Italia," *Nuovi argomenti* 7 (1954). Branzi, *Il design italiano negli anni '50*, 18, cites Bobbio's statement but quotes from *Politica e cultura* (Turin: n.pub., 1955), ch. 8.

33. The way the cutout, based on a photo taken by Sottsass to illustrate his review of a show at the

Sidney Janis Gallery in New York for *Domus* the year before, appeared for a second time in *Domus* in a review of Pistoletto's Sonnabend show is one of the many amusing traffickings of these photographs. See Sottsass, "Dada, New Dada, New Realists."

34. Alberto Boatto, "XXXII Biennale di Venezia: La polemica, la realtà dei consumi, il dialogo Europa-America," *Letteratura* 69–71 (May–October 1964): 151–158. Boatto waited until 1965 to make his own trip to New York. See Alberto Boatto, "Manhattan Dada e Pop," *Marcatrè* 11–13 (1965): 293–305.

35. Boatto, "XXXII Biennale di Venezia," 157. That Rome, not Milan, earned the title of "capital" of Italian pop art is telling. What Boatto might have had in mind were paintings by Tano Festa such as *Obelisco* (1963) or *Dalla odalisque di Ingres* (1964) or *Dalla creazione dell'uomo* (1964), with its reference to the scene of genesis in Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling. See D. Micacchi, "Una neo-metafisica degli oggetti della città," *L'unità* (Rome), 1 April 1965; *Il pop art e l'Italia*, exh. cat. (Milan: Mazotta, 1983); and Achille Bonito Oliva, *Tano Festa* (Milan: Electa, 1988).

36. Pierre Restany, "La XXXII Biennale di Venezia, Biennale dell'irregolarità," *Domus* 417 (August 1964): 27–42.

37. For a detailed recounting of the facts by Calvin Tomkins, who reported on the Biennale for the *International Herald Tribune*, see Calvin Tomkins, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Artworld of Our Time* (New York: Doubleday 1980), 10.

38. A few years earlier, Reyner Banham, a champion of pop art and a keen observer of Italy after the war (he was also Sottsass's friend and supported the latter in his Pistoletto review for saying "M il Gusto, W il Pop"), had penned "Ungrab That Gondola." The title is from a London musical inspired by another photograph that, like Mulas's, had become famous overnight: that of a British actress who, in a publicity stunt, had thrown herself into the Grand Canal at the 1956 Venice Film Festival. Banham's article points, in the most amusing if unforgiving fashion, via the gondola, to the dwindling influence of Italy on "that dreadful day when an old Astragal had treated an exhibition of Italian industrial design with what sounded like tolerant amusement, instead of the loutish self-abasement required by protocol . . . and when a copy of *Domus* could last forever, instead of getting shredded [by use] in a fortnight." Reyner Banham, "Ungrab That Gondola" (1957), in *A Critic Writes: Selected Essays by Reyner Banham*, ed. Mary Banham et al. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 24–25. The article originally appeared in *The Architect's Journal* 126 (15 August 1957): 233–235.

39. Trini's remark first appeared in a 1964 Sonnabend Gallery catalogue.

40. Pierre Restany, "Estate 1964: La 'nuova' figurazione è Pop," *Domus* 420 (Novembre 1964): 38–39. The catalogue also lists *Due uomini in camicia*, one of Pistoletto's earliest mirror paintings of 1962, featuring the double silhouette of Rinaldi. Pistoletto, perhaps because the works belonged to the Sonnabend Gallery in Paris, was included in the French contingent. Also exhibited was the ubiquitous *Whaam!*, also owned by Sonnabend. *Tire*, which was shown at the first Lichtenstein exhibition in Italy, curated by Sperone for Turin's Galleria il Punto, is listed as belonging to a Turinese collector. A variant of this show titled Pop art, nouveau réalisme etc. went to the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. The triumph of pop art at the Biennale also led to a flurry of debates and polls in Italian art magazines; notably, "Cos'è la pop art?: Inchiesta," *Arte Oggi* 21 (September 1964); and "Opinioni sulla Pop Art," *Rivista Italsider* 3–4 (1964).

41. Maurizio Calvesi, "Dine, Oldenburg, Rosenquist, e Segal alla Sidney Janis di New York," *Collage* 2, no. 8 (March 1964). The article was later reprinted as "Dine, Rosenquist, Segal, Pistoletto e Oldenburg," in *Le due avanguardie: Dal futurismo alla pop art* (Bari: Laterza, 1981), 365–367. Calvesi's first, long article on the pop phenomenon is "Ricognizione e reportage," *Collage* 1, no. 7 (December 1963); it, too, was reprinted in *Le due avanguardie*, 280–294.

42. "Pistoletto was key to my initial choices, because through his eyes I intuited what was happening in America and I did not waste time with local problems." "Intervista con Gian Enzo Sperone," in *Torino: Un'avventura internazionale*, 169.

43. Other works appear to have been added at the last minute, explaining the unbound postcard format of the exhibition's brochure.

44. After *Blam*, *Brattata*, and *Takka Takka* of 1962, *Whaam!* was the fourth of Lichtenstein's paintings to make reference to the futurists' use of onomatopoeia in their wartime poems.

45. Calvesi, *Le due avanguardie*, figs. 39–40.

46. Alberto Boatto, *Pistoletto dentro/fuori lo specchio* (Rome: Fantini, 1970). This was the first book-length publication on the mirror paintings. The "swiftly" passing figure is also oddly reminiscent of one of Marcel Duchamp's last paintings, *The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes* (1912).

47. Editorial, "Prime immagini della XIII Triennale," *Domus* 417 (August 1964): 1–11.

48. "La Triennale di Milano, Intervista con Umberto Eco," *Marcatrè* 8–10 (July–September 1964): 134. The interview with Eco is followed by Vittorio Gregotti, "Sull'allestimento della XIII Triennale," *Marcatrè* 8–10 (July–September 1964): 135–136. This was the year of Eco's first notorious plunge into the semiotics of mass culture. See Umberto Eco, *Apocalittici e integrati: Comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa* (Milan: Bompiani, 1964).

49. Bruno Zevi, "Processo alla XIII Triennale: Il carnevale triste degli architetti," *L'Espresso*, 16 August 1964.

50. The eight containers, all of them almost entirely mirrored, were assigned to the following artists: Roberto Crippa, Fabio Mauri, Fontana, Enrico Baj, and Del Pezzo. The visitors were then lured into Gregotti's dizzying octagonal *Caleidoscopio*.

51. Germano Celant, "Arte Povera: Appunti per una guerriglia," *Flash Art* 5 (November–December 1967): 3.

52. For an account of these shows, see Maria Cristina Mundici, "Torino 1963–1968," in Anna Minola et al., *Gian Enzo Sperone: Torino, Roma, New York: 35 anni di mostre tra Europa e America*, 2 vols. (Turin: Hopeful Monster, 2000), 17–32. One of the rare scholars to broach the question of design is Paolo Thea in *Verso l'arte povera* (Milan: Electa, 1989). Thea writes, "Sottsass' contribution takes on a particular relevance, albeit now eclipsed by Arte Povera circles. The phase during which he exhibited in Sperone's space coincides with his remarks on the home, daily objects, and intercontinental travel" (38). See also my review of *Il Modo Italiano: Italian Design and Avant-Garde in the 20th Century* at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, in *Artforum* 45, no. 2 (October 2006): 258.

53. Tommaso Trini, interview by Marco di Capua, in *Roma anni '60: Al di là della pittura*, exh. cat. (Rome: Carte Segrete, 1991), 378.

54. Tommaso Trini, "No Man's Mirror," *Domus* 449 (April 1967): 45–48. I thank Marco Farano for identifying the gallery and the woman reflected.

Erratum

Sarah E. James, "A Socialist Realist Sander? Comparative Portraiture as a Marxist Model in the German Democratic Republic," *Grey Room* 47 (Spring 2012): 38–59.

The August Sander portrait *Communist Leader* (1929) depicts Paul Frölich, and not Paul Fröhlich, as was mistakenly written on page 48 of the article. Frölich was a prominent leftist in the 1920s who helped found the Communist Party of Germany and later the Socialist Workers Party, and was also a biographer of Rosa Luxemburg. His influential writings and prominent political life mean that he would have had considerable ongoing significance to a postwar East German audience. Fröhlich, who is not pictured, was another prominent leftist of the prewar period who had by the 1950s and 1960s become a member of the politburo and central commission of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), as originally stated in the essay. It is possible Sander's GDR audience of the 1970s might also have conflated the two.

—Sarah E. James