

GABRIELLA BENEDINI. ATHANOR

Gallerie d'Italia – Milan, Museum of Intesa Sanpaolo

From 15 September to 6 November 2022

Exhibition curated by Paolo Bolpagni

IMAGES AT THE LINK:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/235s4xe3azvtyfcs8l2zl/h?dl=0&rlkey=5ajrajec560ng61i5zahrva4x>

Milan, August 2022 – The ‘**Gabriella Benedini. Athanor**’ exhibition, curated by Paolo Bolpagni, will be open to the public **from 15 September to 6 November 2022** at the **Gallerie d'Italia in Milan**, Intesa Sanpaolo’s museum. The exhibition, staged in the Sala delle Colonne, aims to mark the further development of the personal artistic research of Gabriella Benedini, who was born in 1932 and became a leading light in the cultural life of Milan from the beginning of the nineteen sixties.

Cremona-born Gabriella Benedini’s art is studded with memories and evocations; the subjects of travel (physical and spiritual), the interrogation of the stars, the transmutation of matter and the elements, the thirst for knowledge are central in Gabriella Benedini’s works. This is also shown by the title chosen for the exhibition, that esoteric word ‘athanor’, which recalls the world of alchemy and features in a tale by Jorge Luis Borges, *The Rose of Paracelsus*, the main character of which is the inscrutable figure of the sixteenth-century German doctor-scientist.

The central feature of the exhibitions is, without doubt, the *Biblioteca*, a compact, hermetic body in Payne’s grey colour, displayed in its enigmatic and brooding presence. Neatly positioned on the shelves are more than three hundred and sixty “books” (actually indecipherable containers), all the same on the outside. Not any ordinary containers, obviously, but special, of the same size: two lids that, when opened, reveal unimaginable, surprising worlds but that remain hidden to the observer. Only one, wide open, is placed on a lectern.

Among the 24 composite works in the exhibition are the by now famous *Arpe (Harps)* by Gabriella Benedini (including three of the Intesa Sanpaolo collection), sculptures made of multiple materials that, as Gillo Dorfles

wrote in 1992, “fill the environment in which they are placed with their ‘spatial sonority’”, inspiring the feeling of “notes - arcane, imperceptible, elusive to human ears”.

Along with these, there are two-dimensional works, large projecting panels marked respectively with shades of blue and grey, which recall the constellations and another motif dear to the artist, that of music.

The exhibition site in Milan, together with those in Turin, Naples and Vicenza, is part of Intesa Sanpaolo's Gallerie d'Italia museum project.

Biographical note

Gabriella Benedini (Cremona, 1932) graduated from the Parma Institute of Art and attended the Brera Academy. At the end of the nineteen fifties, she was living in Paris, staging exhibitions and taking part in collectives. On her return to Italy, she held her first solo exhibition in Milan in 1962 at Bergamini, where she exhibited until 1980; thereafter, key galleries were Spaziotemporaneo, Studio Cavenaghi and Arte 92. She travelled a great deal. Focusing on the use of materials, she made two films in 1973-1975, *Doprenoi* and *Diutop*, and, going beyond the constraints of two-dimensionality, the sculptor gradually developed her art.

Among the numerous public exhibitions, mention must be made of those at Ferrara, Palazzo dei Diamanti (1972), Como, Pinacoteca (1993), Aosta, Torre del Lebbroso (1994), Spoleto, Palazzo Racani Arroni (1997), Siena, Palazzo Patrizi (1999), Sarzana, Fortezza Firmafede (2004), Reggio Emilia, Palazzo Magnani (2006), Cremona, Museo Ala Ponzzone (2007), Milan, Spazio Oberdan (2012), Milan, Diocesan (2014), Cremona, Museo del Violino (2016), Milan, Galleria San Fedele (2019).

She featured prominently at the San Paolo Biennale in Brazil (1982) and the Venice Biennale (1986 and 2009).

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