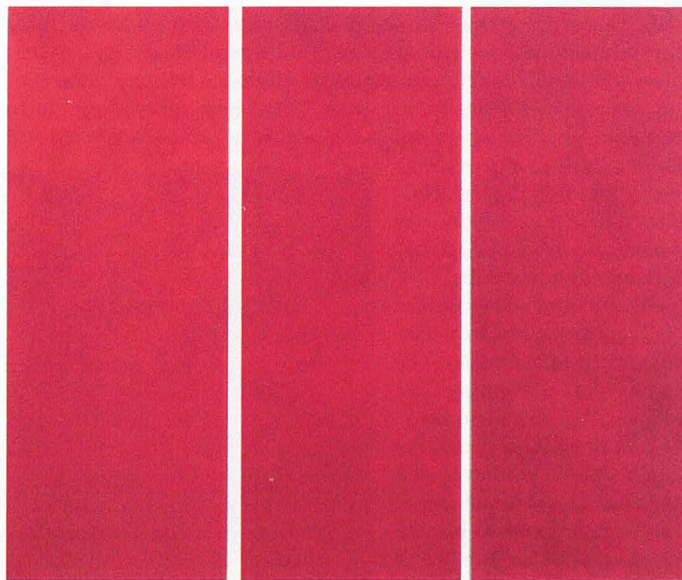


MILAN

Pino Pinelli

DEP ART GALLERY

The show, "*Monocromo (1973–1976): Il colore come destino e come profezia*" (Monochrome [1973–1976]: Color as Destiny and as Prophecy) presented a rare occasion to revisit the early work of the Italian artist Pino Pinelli, who in the early 1970s played a leading role in developing a new, distinctive way of interpreting monochromy, one of the emblematic manifestations of twentieth-century painting. From the beginning, Pinelli's intention was to avoid any symbolic or expressive reference and instead to redefine painting in terms of concreteness and physicality, by treating color itself as a material with the potential to expand beyond the two-dimensional realm. This exhibition retraced a crucial three-year period that led the artist, in 1976, to develop the form of expression for which he is now best known: the "dissemination" of chromatic shapes arranged on the wall in dynamic sequences.



Pino Pinelli, *Pittura R* (Painting R), 1974, triptych, acrylic on canvas, each part 90½ × 35¾".

The monochromes in this show, whether in primary or secondary colors or gray, while characterized by extreme reductiveness, affirmed the eminently sensorial and dynamic nature of Pinelli's work. The spaces defined by these paintings are neither regular nor uniform, but rather pulsate with intermittent internal variations. Works such as *Pittura B* (Painting B), 1973, or *Pittura G* (Painting G), 1974, often reconfigure geometric coordinates that remain latent, alluded to rather than explicit, in the way a field of color expands and lightly touches the edges of a white or lighter surface. For Pinelli, the surface of the canvas is never a pictorial background or a symbolic extension, but a topological and active field: a space that cannot be measured or traced in a mathematical, compositional, or structural sense, but is definable solely by the continuous distortion of the presences that inhabit it, by their internal vitality. The artist presents a physiological vision of painting in which nothing is absolute, and the image comes to life before our eyes, in real time.

What might be called a vitalistic sensitization of space is a foundational quality of Pinelli's practice. In these early pieces, the surface is typically activated in a flood of tensions and pulsations. While the roots of Pinelli's concision might be traced back to various artistic investigations of the 1960s—the search for fundamentals, the analytic

consideration of the shaped canvas—his work stands out for the originality with which he pursued these ideas. In his monochromes, color itself becomes a concrete body in organic flux, in a continual, perceptible, and sensory relaunching toward the viewer. His painting is characterized by anomaly and intermittence, generated by slow and stratified gestures, in unceasing internal variation.

During the most radical period of Conceptualism, Pinelli affirmed the primacy of painting as a definitive rejection of any allusive, compositional, or tautological spatiality. The central role of perception in his oeuvre should not be understood as confined to a visual or psychological level, but rather should be seen as part and parcel of an indivisible sensory and psychic totality that is at the origins of our emotional as well as our rational response to images and what they suggest. In these monochromes, vision is translated into a tactile dialogue, a physical conversation between the work and those who observe it—who often feel a near-irresistible impulse to touch it. This was clear, for example, in the large red triptych *Pittura R* (Painting R), 1974, which was exhibited at the 1986 Venice Biennale, and in the gray works of 1975, each titled *Pittura grigia* (Gray Painting), which were painted in acrylic applied directly to unprimed flannel. The artist chose this material precisely for its tactility, presaging a new way of working with paint that would become characteristic of his art.

—Francesca Pola

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

