

[Faded, illegible handwritten text in Italian, likely a letter or manuscript fragment.]

ALESSANDRO ALGARDI

The mind reads what the eye can't see

Alessandro Algardi

Ubeir Peeters

- Rossana Pittelli
Curator
- Clorinda Conti
Design
- Aurelio Barbareschi
Photographer
- Arti Grafiche Baratelli
Printer

I am grateful to:



Carlo Presenti
Director



Jeremy O'Sullivan
Cultural Diplomacy Officer



Daniele Pescali
General Manager
www.imago-artgallery.com

The first solo art exhibition by Alessandro Algardi, a significant artist of today's contemporary scene, is a great opportunity for the Italian Cultural Institute to collaborate again with the European Commission.

Our aim has always been to spread awareness of contemporary Italian art abroad, so I am proud to introduce the works of Alessandro Algardi to the art connoisseurs in London.

His works from the 1970s onwards aim at a new dimension of writing and with their movement they create evanescent shapes. With this illegible handwriting, he keeps digging into that "neutral zone", between the conscious and unconscious. Algardi's handwriting maintains a link with the alphabet, grammar, syntax, with every element that qualifies as writing, well beyond just the layout and linearity on the canvas page.

Finally, his graphics lacking the "normal" code of communication make a subjective thought experience, which is extremely complex, stratified and cannot be expressed but only with the most up-to date and refined painting instruments.

I believe that this exhibition will enhance even further the long-standing connection between the Italian Cultural Institute and the European Commission, in a process of mutual enrichment and research of new forms of artistic expression.

Carlo Presenti
Director
Italian Cultural Institute

I am delighted that the Italian Cultural Institute is once again working with the European Commission to promote a great European artist: Alessandro Algardi.

The cooperation of the Italian Cultural Institute with the European Commission is the proof that we do believe in a new dimension of our role, namely, that of exploring and bringing to the fore that which unites us, with the same enthusiasm with which we promote our own particular cultural identity.

Beyond the sometimes confining boundaries of our respective countries, the people and cultures of the European Union have provided throughout history a means of communication and of shared experience.

Though formed by different cultural traditions, through their works, visual artists speak a language understood by all. The mystery of Alessandro Algardi's works is this apparently incomprehensible graphic writing, which becomes a language accessible to everybody.

There are several ways to convey the idea of beauty: Algardi achieves it by writing and painting at the same time.

The title suggests the way to read Algardi's works: "What the eye can't see, is read by the mind."

While the writing encourages the development of ideas or new concepts, the painting enhances the pathos of feelings.

The ingenious feature of his art can be identified in the mixture of painting and writing.

All the writings are original texts by the author.

The use of the colors black or white has got the same value from an aesthetic point of view, but aims to make the works of the artist even more refined and stylish.

Rossana Pittelli
Curator

Algardi's illegible manuscript
Ubeir Peeters

The art work of Alessandro Algardi is alive. It is easy to write about, as in his calligraphic works on canvas the elegance of his unreadable words is dominated by the hidden expression of his ideas. In his petrified writing you can find the echo and sediment coming from centuries of written cultures.

About letters

The wide variety of single characters or letters join together to make up words which carry the meaning of ideas. Whereas, feelings and sentiments are easier to convey through a representation of plants, animals, humans, landscapes or objects. To the world of ideas, the letter is a building block for the concrete expression of ideas through words: no other medium is equal. Can you imagine a philosophy that could have survived without script? Inside our mind, deep inside, each word is related to a particular item, a given concept, a fragment of memory, but nowhere this appears more clearly than in a written text, where ideas are chopped and reassembled in a string of words. Writing is an incarnation or rather, the mirror of ideas. Algardi's cursives indeed have the liquid flowing quality of ideas. However, the writing itself is made illegible. By superimposing text over text Algardi conveys a problem regarding the eventual meanings. Thus his writing covers and hides any possible significance within the signs themselves, inducing a tension that remains permanent once and for all. His unreadable calligraphy generates a craving to understand the indecipherable text and claims our attention again for a fascinating and mysterious experience. The secrecy of these paintings is that magically they awaken fresh ideas in our mind. Indeed, anyone of us can bring his own ideal world over and over again into Algardi's works. Anyone looking at them is caught by their immaterial reality. The mystery of this apparently incomprehensible graphic writing is that it becomes a universal language accessible to all.

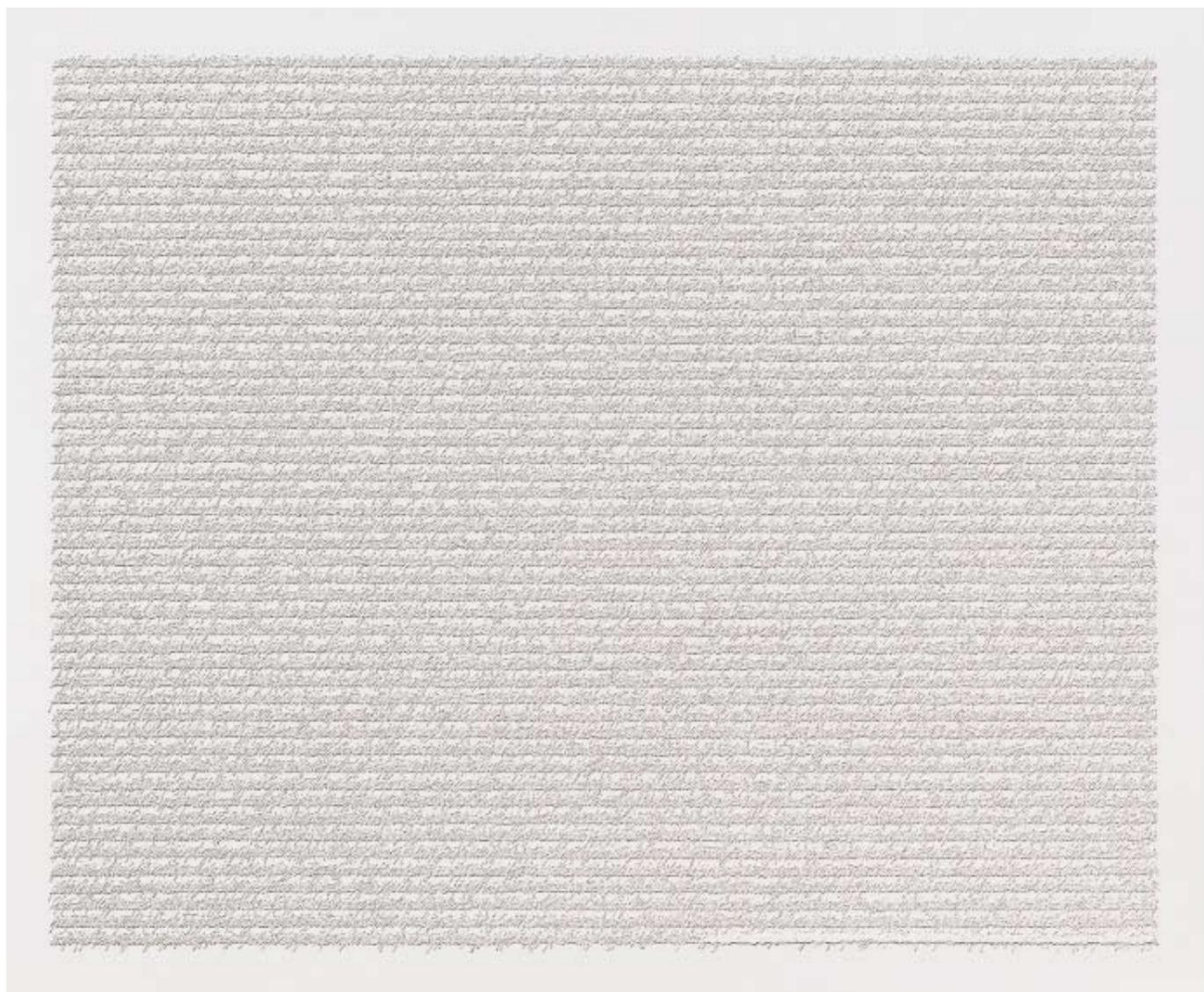
In a normal readable text each letter has to be linked up in a correct sequence to generate the logical entity of a word, making sense in the language of that text. This process is very close to a similar process used in mathematical thinking where symbols make up the links within mathematics, algebra and geometry.

One could say that letters yield digital information while words are analogical. Both types of information are connected in our brain into what we call "language". Language organizes our concepts freezing them into words and joining them into a sentence expressing an idea.

Typically, writing originated with pictograms, but these required huge numbers of intricate patterns and great skill was needed to write a meaningful text. Many pictographic scripts from all over the world have remained closed up forever because their analogical drawings have provided no easy clue to a digital analysis. The Japanese soon perfected the Chinese pictographic system and introduced shorthand signs for serial sounds like Ba, Be, Bi, Bo, Bu etc. This was an extraordinary improvement. Clearly the alphabet was the next and major turning point in perpetuating and preserving knowledge throughout the centuries, both in a historical and geographical sense. These remarks are useful to show how in Algardi's script the difference between letter and image relives by means of his skilful twisting of digital letters into analogical signs. Ideas, proper to each observer's mind, surge inside his head. Algardi unconsciously externalises such mental mechanism in his unreadable script, while other artists, using a normal legible writing, play with words to convey a message that can be read on the face of their works.

Algardi's graphic writings, with their particular layout, appear to penetrate again and again the deepness of the words' meaning, with an approach much more subtle and profound than the naïve maxims of those graphic painters who write very simple texts anybody can read at first sight. Unfortunately, even so, they do not mean much and are only a teaser, a pun or a joke evaporating as fast as aether.

Algardi's writing on canvas suggests the elegance and self-consciousness of the clever Hercule Poirot, in a perfect "hunter's" suit, tailored to his personal anatomy in a snow-white spotless fabric. When Malgritte writes "ceci n'est pas une pipe", it is a statement by a man under a bowler hat. Its deepest significance comes from the clash of his bourgeois brain with the tornado of the post war Dadaism, characterized by surrealist experiments of poets and pictorial artists. If we read Ben's posted notes, we see the homework



The great poem - 2009 cm 147x182 Oil, acrylic on canvas

of a fourth grader disclosing his wit by getting no further than a small talk, drinking a Coca Cola, at a round terrace table standing on one cast iron column with three feet. The titles by Arakawa along the streamers of a flag, or Jim Dine's explicit titles on his assemblages painted with real tools, are nothing more than whimsical footnotes, provocative expressions about raw objects. They are direct statements. When Oldenburg adds scribbled suggestions to his iconic technical drawings, you can see the same ironical background coming from his life-size drawing of a vacuum cleaner. When Panamarenko fills the space around his naïve flying projects with scientific formulas, he is cheating the public with non-sense formulas, giving a futile impression of Da Vinci's great inventiveness.

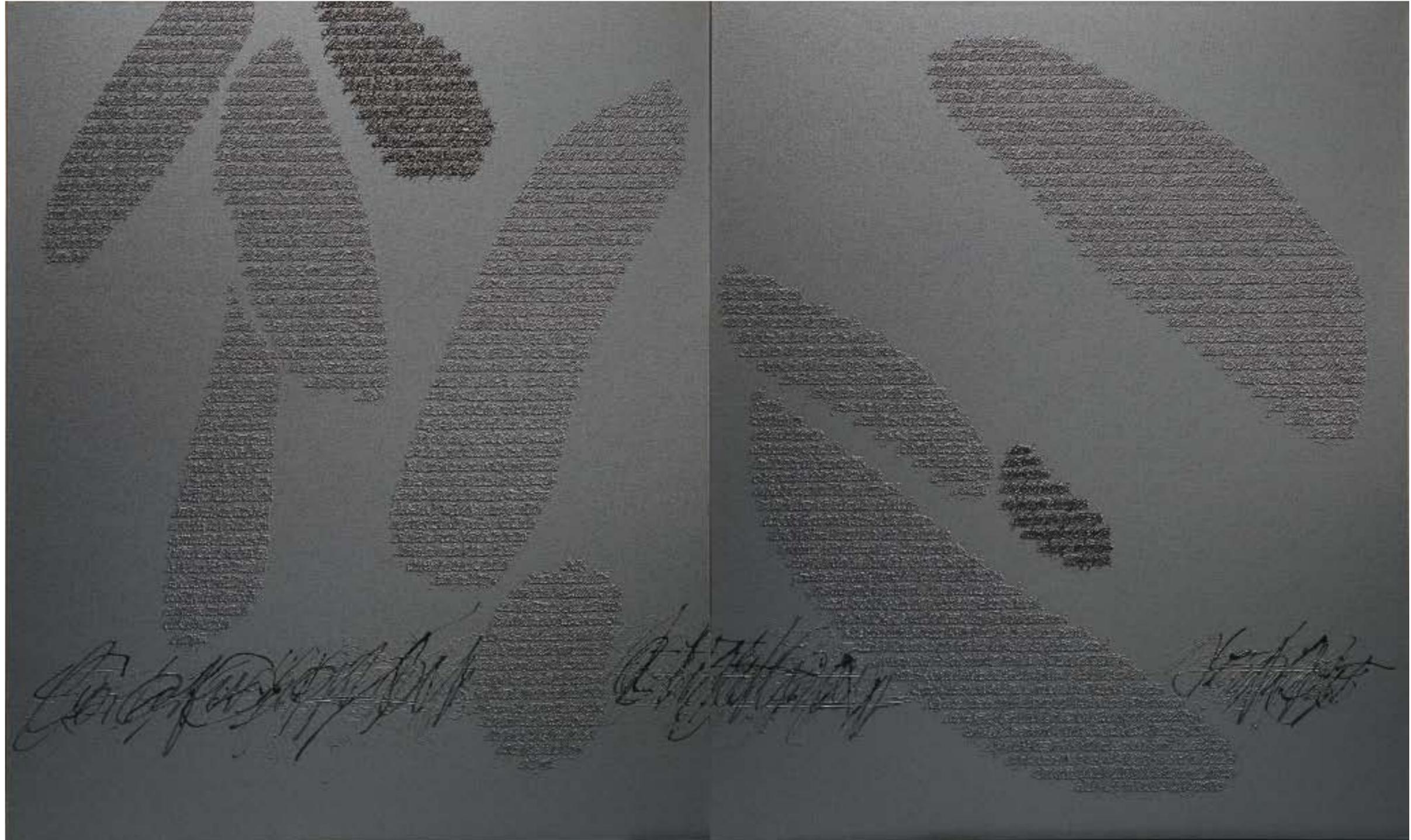
There is an uncomfortable margin between all those users of words and maxims and the canny elegance of Algardi – homonym and descendent of the sculptor of Baroque glory – as all of his fellow artists use their words as souvenirs of their mind. On the contrary, he writes about the inner problems that keep each of us secretly busy each moment of our working hours and even in our dreams. To our amazement, these unreadable texts generate the stimulating experience of their hidden meaning. They stimulate an image of everlasting beauty, mystery and truth which we observe with our inward eye. The language of these works of art conveys an universal message open to everybody. All can read Algardi's texts with their own idiom and meaning whilst staring at his subtly crafted things of beauty.

A shower of Pentecostal waves, that can arouse in each onlooker his own personal world of ideas.

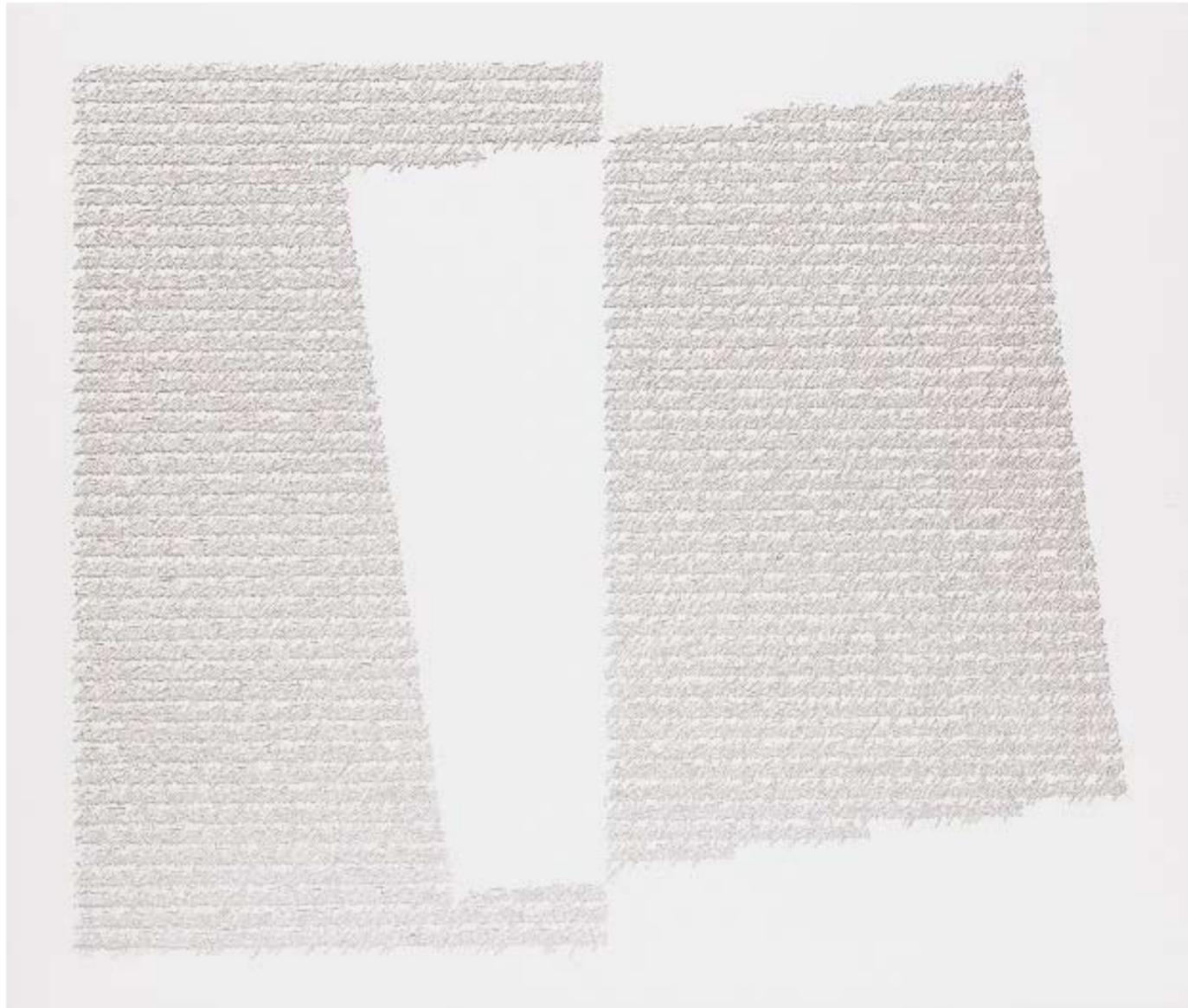
About characters and digits

There exists a big difference between characters and figures, especially when we take into account their face to face value. A character is a closed sign, with its meaning limited within a specific language. A figure or digit, on the contrary, remains entirely mobile and can express any kind of quantity in any language. The figure is the same drinking glass that could contain either water, wine or milk.

In a word letters are assembled like a flower. In a given language words can have a more aggressive, sweet,



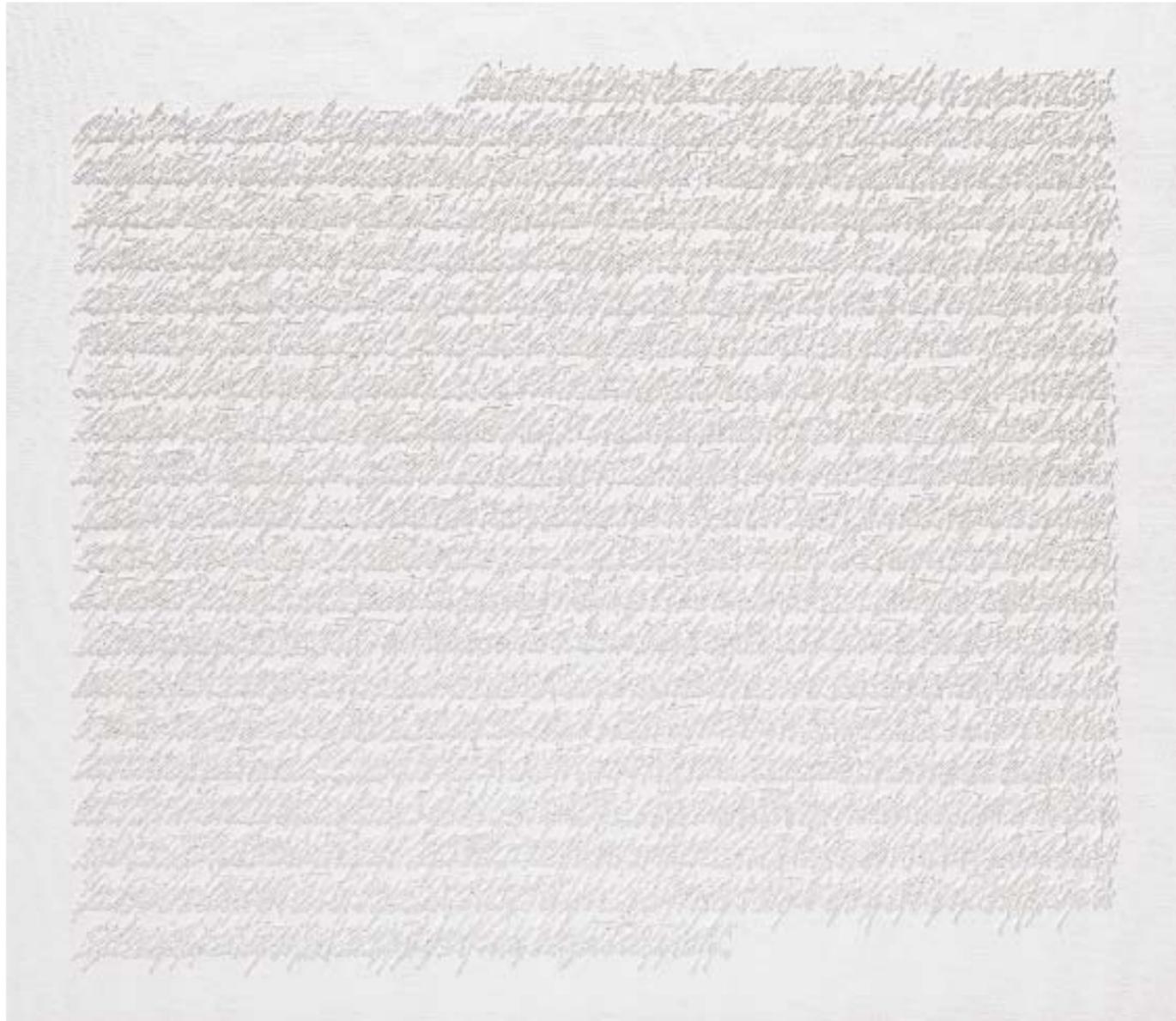
Between signs and writing - 2008 cm 120x200 Diptych, oil, acrylic on canvas



Rectro verso - 1998 cm 100x120 Oil, acrylic on canvas



Denied poem - 2007 cm 80x80 Oil, acrylic on canvas



Portrait of Rossana - 2009 cm 50x60 Oil, acrylic on canvas

manly or womanly face which does not necessarily correspond to their intellectual meaning. Words we link in our brain in a phrase like a garland, a kind of landscape where each word represents a bush, a meadow, a brook, an enclosure or a road. By a succession of sentences, writers can give a clear impression of their thought, but to the reader it could be incorrect or even generate a wrong meaning. With Algardi there is still more. He writes several texts on top of one another so as to make sure we cannot read them. What we call his script or writing has an endless series of interpretative possibilities. This is an unknown and fresh approach. Through this voluntary destruction of a written text's primary aim – namely to inform – Algardi leaves the onlooker helpless. However, you and I now have a chance to imagine the mystery that is occurring in the minds of other people as they construct their own stories. Algardi writes for each observer the story the reader wishes to see. This is a fascinating and original situation.

The painting, which at first apparently seems to have an abstract surface, requires a bit of mental effort by the onlooker. The aesthetical allure of this new writing is something like that of the soft skin of an imagery beauty, which we can touch. It conveys an internal potential so strong that it hits our brains like lightning, if we are able to feel such a reaction and accept it. "Plus est en vous" is suggested by Algardi's works. Many people remain without ideas or dumb as they look at art.

They are unable to grasp its meaning. In fact they probably rarely use their brains. Lack of intelligence, anaemic willpower, a low level of hormones, fatigue through overwork, little personal experience, slow integration with other people's opinion: these are some possible causes for the fog that hangs over their heads making them unable to enjoy the golden stripes that the autumn sunlight creates over the rusty leaves on the forest floor, among the silvery trunks of the beeches. Only small bushes grow in their heads, which means there are no shady, nor sombre patches in their souls, nor is there sun in which to warm themselves in their hearts.

The meaning of Algardi's calligraphy

One cannot approach an Algardi's painting without feeling respect for a work that contains the hidden impact of his mind's spiritual landscape.

After an analysis of the unreadable yet aesthetically beautiful handwriting of our painter, we are still puzzled. Each writing expresses an idea which lives inside our brains. We write readable words because we think our idea is clear and worthy of being read. Here lays the deepest significance of Algardi, whose unreadable script remains fascinating even when over the years we keep gazing at it. His art is dedicated to the secret garden of our hidden thoughts.

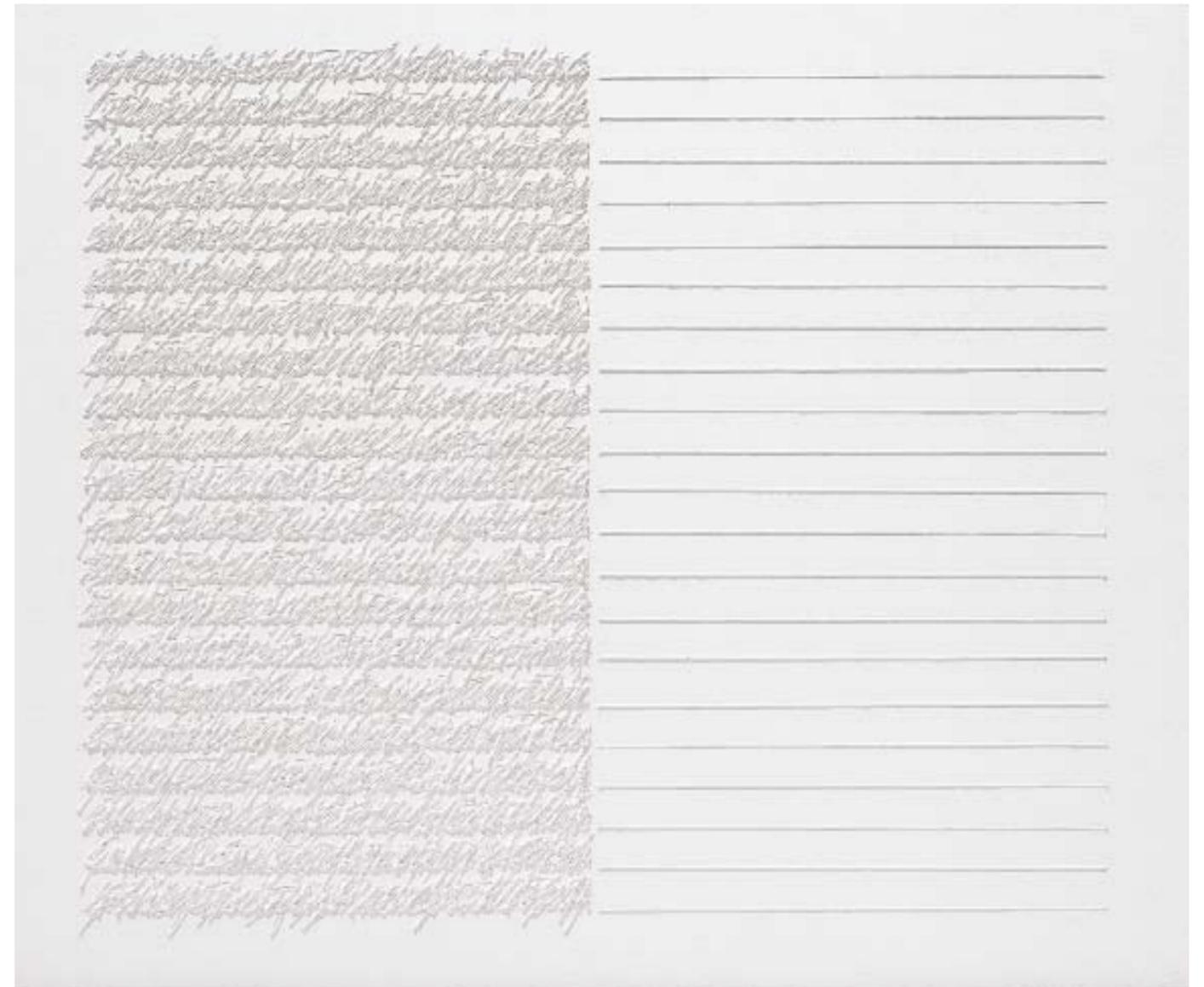
One who pretends such works to be dull or to lack meaning and significance is himself "jejune", which means "hungry, empty and meagre". Personally, I prefer to interpret his writings like a fast that makes me hungry, like the surface of a desert with its profound enriching solitude. We need this solitude to discover our own resources.

At this point it could be useful to make a comparison and I would propose to look at a beautiful white canvas, its surface slashed by Fontana. The analogy between Algardi and Fontana is very interesting. When Fontana slashes the canvas, the incisive brutality of the slits reveals a wound in his sensitivity. This wound seems to be less evident in Algardi's approach, yet he also creates eruptive canvases where the scratches across the surface are the signature of his furious energy. The immobility of his frozen pages is then replaced by the rage of a tormented gesture.

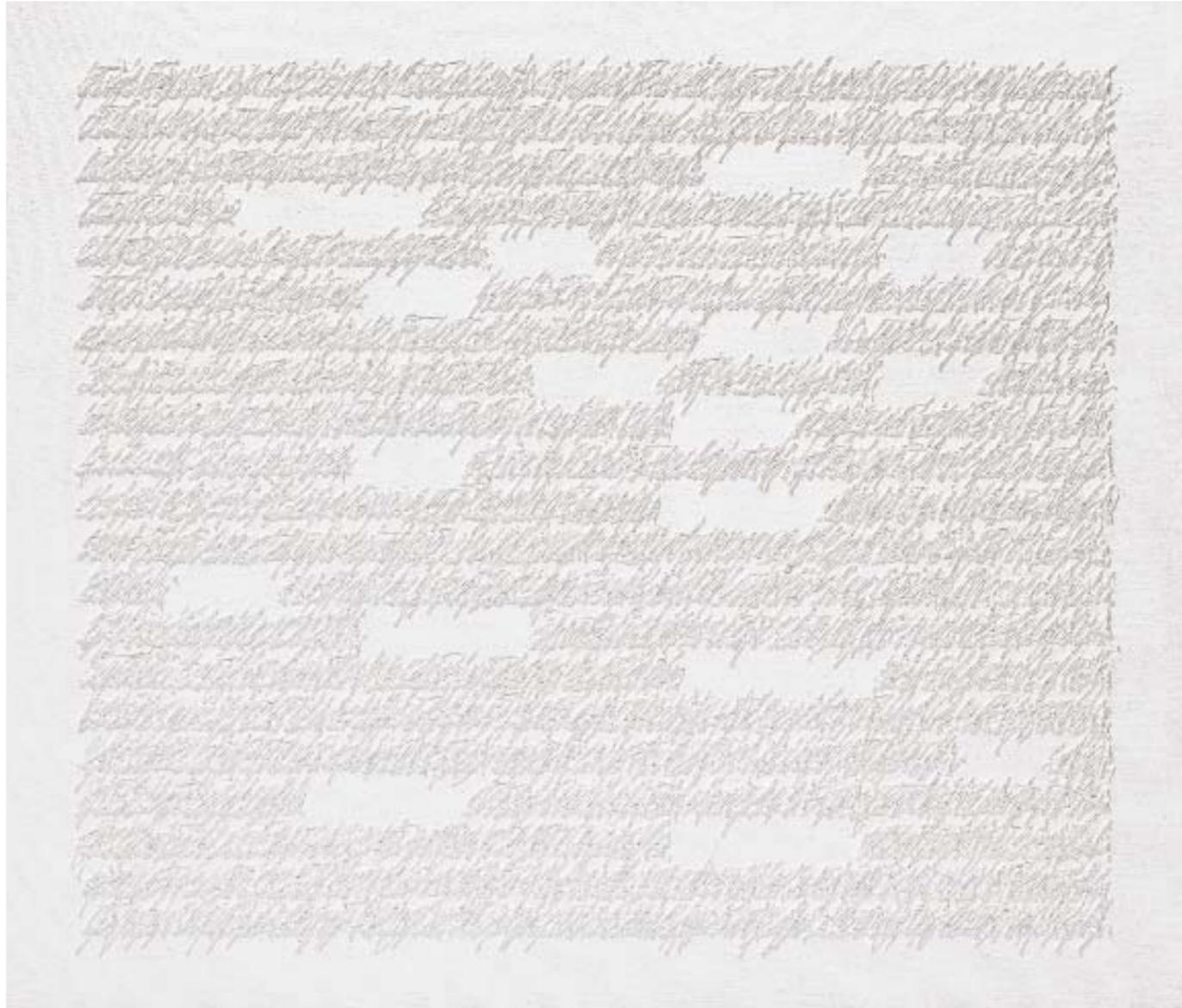
Conclusions

A canvas by Algardi writes about writing through its congealed snowfield of ideas. His works of art never could have been conceived before the day he decided to make an allegory of the digital information which is the hallmark of our computer age.

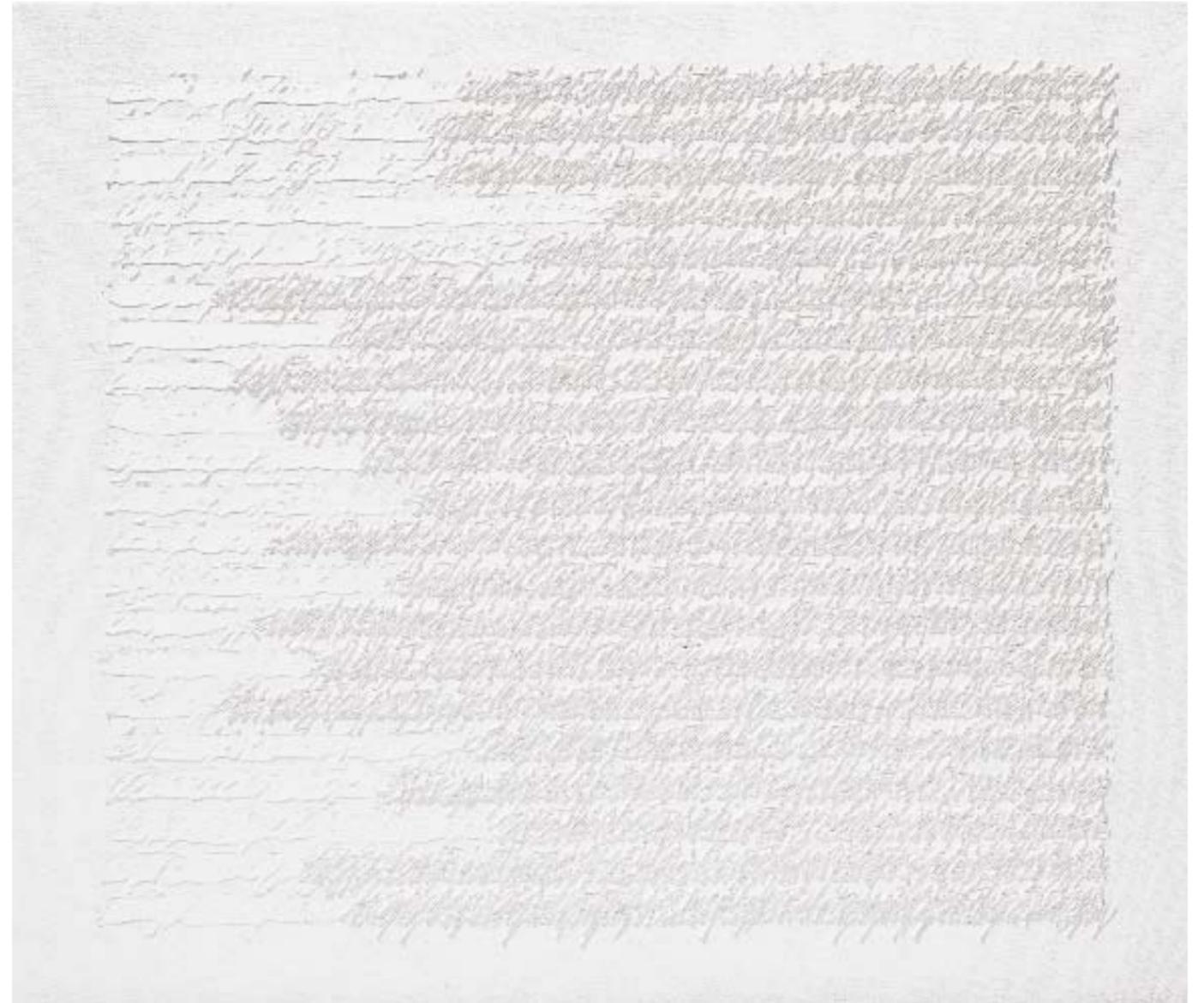
To write about Algardi was not a difficult task because the spirit of beauty, that holds all of us in its grip, lies on the surface of his canvases, written in a language each connoisseur can read in his own personal meaning. As I finish my words, it is important that we should again remember he never discloses the meaning of his phrasing. Thus the mystery is here to stay. Will his paintings not be beautiful and give us joy forever?



Silent pages - 2009 cm 50x60 Oil, acrylic on canvas



Mendelssohn's travel notes - 2009 cm 50x60 Oil, acrylic on canvas



Eastern tale - 2009 cm 50x60 Oil, acrylic on canvas

Solo exhibition

- 1967 *I* **Milano**, Galleria Agrifoglio
- 1970 *I* **Milano**, Galleria San Fedele
- 1972 *I* **Bari**, Galleria Fante di Fiori
- 1973 *I* **Brescia**, Galleria San Benedetto
- 1974 *I* **Roma**, Galleria Sirio
- 1975 *I* **Milano**, Galleria Nino Soldano
I **Bergamo**, Galleria 72
- 1978 *I* **Milano**, Galleria Santandrea
- 1980 *NL* **Amsterdam**, Da Costa Gallery
- 1981 *U.S.A.* **New York**, O.K. Harris Gallery
- 1982 *I* **Milano**, Galleria Ockham
- 1983 *U.S.A.* **New York**, O.K. Harris Gallery
- 1984 *I* **Milano**, Galleria Mercato del Sale
- 1991 *I* **Milano**, Galleria Anny Di Gennaro
I **Milano**, Centro Culturale d'Arte Bellora
- 1992 *B* **Knokke**, Vera Van Lear Gallery
- 1994 *I* **Varallo Sesia**, Palazzo d'Adda
- 1996 *B* **Bruxelles**, Art Kiosk Gallery
I **Milano**, Galleria Artestudio
- 1999 *B* **Bruxelles**, Art Kiosk Gallery
- 2000 *I* **Milano**, Galleria Artestudio
- 2001 *B* **Bruxelles**, Art Kiosk Gallery
- 2004 *F* **Marseille**, Galerie du Tableau
- 2006 *I* **Faenza**, G.A.M.
Galleria Arte Moderna Contemporanea
- 2006 *MC* **Monaco**, Maretti Arte Monaco
I **Venezia**, CIAC
Centro Internazionale Arte Cultura
- 2008 *I* **Milano**, Galleria Glauco Cavaciuti
- 2009 *UK* **London**, 12 Star Gallery

Group exhibitions

- 1966 **Como**, Pittori d'oggi in Lombardia
- 1967 **Suzzara**, Premio Suzzara
Novate Milanese, Il bianco e il nero
Milano, 25ª Biennale di Milano
- 1968 **Novi di Modena**,
Premio Novi di Modena
Sassoferrato, Premio Piccola Europa
Suzzara, Premio Suzzara
Santa Sofia, Premio Copparo
Grottamare, Premio Grottamare
- 1969 **Nova Milanese**, Premio Bice Bugatti
Sassoferrato, Premio Piccola Europa
San Geminiano,
Premio Raffaele De Grada
- 1970 **Sesto San Giovanni**, Premio Piazzetta
- 1971 **Muggia**,
Rassegna Internazionale d'Arte
Santa Sofia, Premio Campigna
Palazzolo sull'Oglio,
Premio Nazionale di Pittura
Torino, 100 Pittori
- 1972 **Milano**, Artisti Contemporanei
Galleria d'Arsena
Sesto San Giovanni, Premio Piazzetta
Bari, Grafica Contemporanea
Galleria Centro 6
Lesà, Omaggio a Salvator Dalì
Molfetta, Artisti in convergenza
Milano, Premio Sassetti
- 1973 **Milano**, Immagine cercata
Galleria Agrifoglio
- 1973 **Vasto**, I Giovanissimi
Novi di Modena,
Premio Novi di Modena
Santhià, Premio Santhià

- 1974 **Mentone**, Biennale Internazionale
Palais d'Europe
Santa Sofia, Premio Campigna
Santa Maria Capua Vetere,
Arte e Impegno
Cremona, Arte e Impegno Civile
Santhià, Premio Santhià
Suzzara, Arte e Lavoro
Torino, Grafica Multipla
Varese, Oh che bellezza e che allegria
Terni, Premio Mazza Curati
- 1975 **Santhià**, Premio Santhià
Roma, Decima Quadriennale
Foggia, Premio Primavera
Napoli, Collettiva Galleria la Parete
Milano, Foto Midia Rotonda della Besana
Bergamo, Immagini e Concetti
Milano,
Collettiva Galleria Studio Nino Soldano
- 1976 **Milano**, "Le tendenze dell'Arte dal
Neoclassicismo alle Neo Avanguardie"
Torino, "Avanguardia, Avanguardia"
Assessorato Cultura Torino
- 1977 **Milano**, 6 Artisti d'avanguardia alla
Galleria Pilota
- 1979 **Milano**,
La scrittura negata, lo zero semantico
Galleria Mercato del Sale
- 1980 **Milano**, Scrittura attiva:
gli Artisti al lavoro
Sesto San Giovanni,
Processi Artistici di Scrittura
Milano, Galleria Mercato del Sale:
Progettazione poetica
Parigi, 2ª Biennale di Parigi
Sezione libri edizioni Da Costa

Group exhibitions

- 1980 **Amsterdam**,
Galleria Da Costa: Beeld Boeken
Milano, Galleria Ockham:
Algarði, Comini, Beuys, Darboven,
Kosut
- 1982 **Hasselt**, Provinciaal Begjonhf Museum
Milano, Galleria Mercato del Sale:
Nel linguaggio della scrittura
Suzzara, Galleria d'Arte
Contemporanea scrittura attiva
Seoul,
"International Drawing Exhibition"
Seoul - International Fine Art Center
New York, "Less in More"
Pratt Manhattan Cester Gallery
Madrid, "Libri e Parole"
Biblioteca Nazionale Madrid
- 1983 **New York**,
"You Can't Tell a Book by its Cover"
Thorpe Intermedia Gallery
- 1984 **New York**, "Book"
Markel Kathryn Gallery
Venezia, Algarði e Comini in campo
San Lorenzo "Atlantide"
Ciò che l'occhio non vede viene letto
dalla mente
Cleveland, "Book of Art"
Museum of Art
Portland Oregon, "Arts & Crafts"
- 1985 **Lissone**, "Parole & Immagini"
Galleria Radice
- 1986 **Chicago**, "The Book Made Art"
The University of Chicago Library
- 1991 **Gallarate**, "Parole Immagini"
Premio Gallarate

- 1992 **New York**, "The Artists and the Book
in the Twentieth Century Italy"
Museum of Modern Art
Como, "Parole dello Sport"
Assessorato dello Sport
Milano, "Pittura - Scrittura"
Galleria Artestudio
Roeselare - Rumbeke,
Ottobre il Mese Italiano di "t Casteelken"
A. Algarði - M. Arlati - E. Forese
- 1995 **Milano**, "Undici opere di grande formato"
Galleria Artestudio
Milano, "Collettiva fine stagione"
Galleria Artestudio
- 1996 **Milano**,
"Algarði - Pope - Savelli - Zappettini"
Galleria Artestudio
- 2000 **Leuven**, "Epifanie"
Museum S.M.A.K., Gent
- 2002 **Kassel**, "Nicht mehr fur Ohren ..."
Bruderkirche
- 2006 **Mantova**, Palazzo Te
"Arte è pensiero"
- 2007 **Garbagnate Milanese**, Corte Valenti
"Oltre le parole"
- 2008 **Milano**, Galleria Vinciana
"Il prima e il dopo della scrittura"
- 2009 **London**,
Imago Art Gallery
"1906-2008 One century of italian art"

Exhibition in museum,
public and private
institutions

- 1982 *B* **Hasselt**,
Provinciaal Museum
"A choice within a choice"
- 1984 U.S.A. **Cleveland**,
Museum of Art "Book of Art"
- 1986 U.S.A. **Chicago**,
The University of Chicago Library
"The Book made Art"
- 1992 U.S.A. **New York**, M.O.M.A.
"The Artists and the book in the
twentieth century Italy"
- 2000 *B* **Leuven**, "Epifanie"
Museum S.M.A.K., Gent
- 2006 *I* **Faenza**, G.A.M.
Galleria d'Arte Moderna
e Contemporanea
- I* **Venezia**, CIAC
Centro Internazionale Arte Cultura

Works of Art
in museum, public and
private institutions

- NL **Amsterdam**,
Peter Stuyvesant Fondation
- U.S.A. **Savannah, GA**
Savannah College of Art & Design
Istitutional Advancment
- U.S.A. **Dubugue, IO**
Dubugue Museum of Art
- U.S.A. **Danville, KY**
Norton Center
Center College
- U.S.A. **Miami Beach, FL**
"Visual & Concrete Poetry"
Ruth e Marvin Sackner

- 2007 *I* **Rovereto**, MART
"La parola nell'arte"
Ricerche d'avanguardia nel '900.
Dal futurismo ad oggi attraverso
le collezioni del MART
- I* **Milano**,
Palazzo Reale - Sala delle Cariatidi
"Le religioni: strumento di pace?"

- B* **Gent**
Crypte van de Sint Baafs
Kathedraal te Gent

Bibliography

- 1975 **Enrico Crispolti**
Testo critico Studio Nino Soldano
Milano
- 1976 **Anty Pansera**
Le tendenze dell'Arte dal
Neoclassicismo alle Neo Avanguardie
- 1977 **Vincenzo Accame**
Il segno poetico
Edizione Munt Press
- 1978 **M.N. Varga**
La scrittura di Algardi
Gala Internazionale
Janus
Catalogo Bolaffi - Segnalati
- 1979 **Flavio Caroli**
Presentazione libro amanuense
"Il segno come scrittura,
la scrittura come pittura"
- 1980 **Carlo Finotti**
Alessandro Algardi, Roberto Comini
"La scrittura negata"
Ugo Carrega
"Scrittura attiva"
Edizione Zanichelli - Bologna
- 1981 **Vincenzo Accame**
"Il segno poetico"
Edizione Zarathustra Arte Incontro
Roberto Comini
Testo critico O.K. Harris Gallery
New York
- 1983 **Flaminio Gualdoni**
Testo critico O.K. Harris Gallery
New York
Vincenzo Accame
testo critico
- 1984 **Roberto Comini**
testo critico
- 1989 Archivio "**Della Grazia** di Nuova
Scrittura" - Milano
- 1992 **Ubeir Peeters**
Testo critico
Vera Van Lear Gallery
- 1994 **Flaminio Gualdoni**
Testo critico - Palazzo d'Adda
Varallo Sesia
Enrico Crispolti
La Pittura in Italia
Il Novecento/3 - Le ultime ricerche
- 1996 **Ubeir Peeters**
Roberto Comini
Vincenzo Accame
Testi critici
Art Kiosk Gallery - Bruxelles
Artestudio - Milano
- 2000 **Giulio Giorello**
Giorgio Fonio
Michelangelo Coviello
Testi critici - Artestudio Milano
Cristina Castelli Fusconi
"Dal segno alla scrittura"
Genesis della comunicazione scritta
nel bambino
- 2003 **Jacqueline Ceresoli**
"Sensualissimo colore" - Rivista Stile
- 2005 **Jacqueline Ceresoli**
"Liriche in libertà" - Rivista Stile
Elisabetta Longari
"Convegno sulla scrittura"
Bari
- 2006 **Ubeir Peeters**
"I manoscritti illeggibili di A. Algardi"
G.A.M.
Elisabetta Longari
"Presentazione CIAC Venezia"

