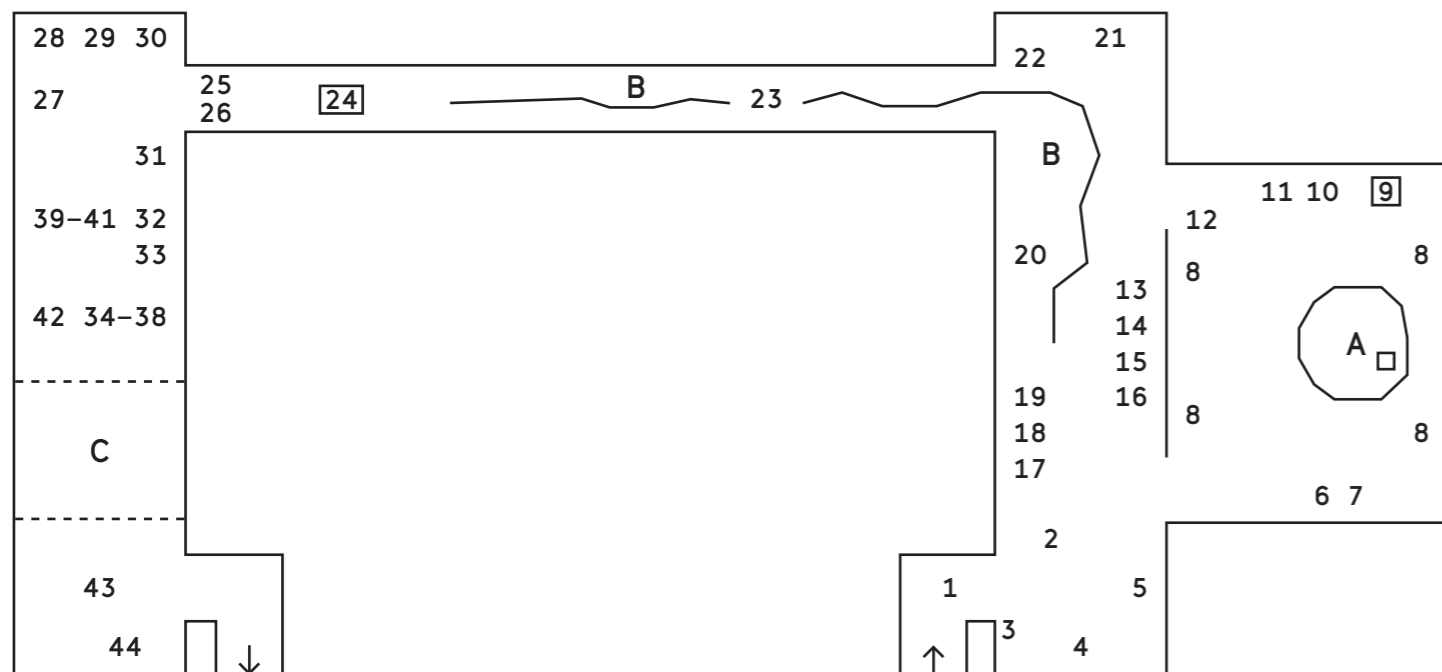


Enzo Cucchi Mezzocane

Enzo Cucchi Il libraio e l'artista



1
Untitled, 2018
Bronze and patina
Courtesy of the artist and
gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

2
Radura, 2021
Ceramic

3
Untitled, 2020
Bronze and patina

4
Untitled, 2014–2016
Pencil, charcoal and
Indian ink on paper
(5 drawings)

5
Religione, 2011
Bronze

6
Untitled, 2006
Bronze and coloured patina

7
Untitled, 2020
Bronze and patina

8
Il suicidio del pittore, 2008
Enamel on steel mesh

9
Cavallo, 2002–2003
Ceramics and iron

10
Untitled, 2023
Bronze

11
Untitled, 2023
Bronze

12
Untitled, 2017
Bronze
Courtesy of the artist and
gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

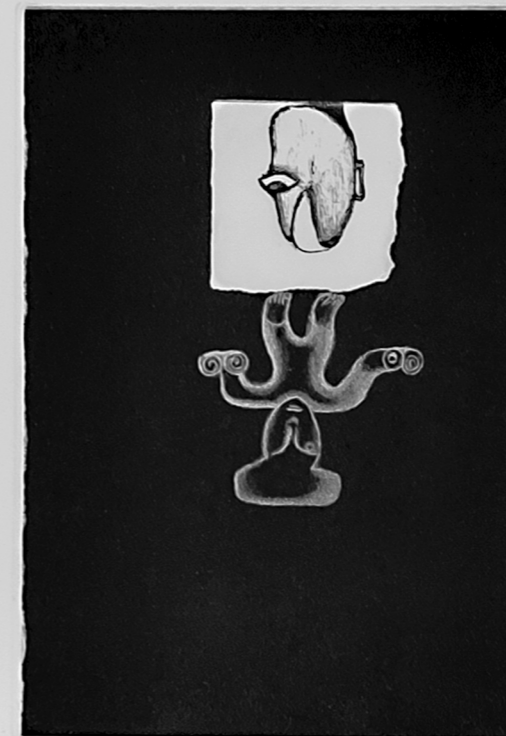
13
Untitled, 2020
Oil on wood and ceramic
Private collection, Vicenza

I. Between 12 and 14 September 2023, Enzo Cucchi travelled to Lisbon to prepare this exhibition. He came accompanied by his son Alessandro, who manages his studio in the centre of Rome and all the tasks involved in presenting his work. The main objectives of the visit were to get to know the team, make decisions about the content to be presented, and to outline initial approaches to the space of Culturgest's Gallery 1.

On the 12th, two hours after landing, Enzo entered the space and, in about twenty minutes, had laid out the exhibition concept. "Qui la rotonda con le sculture. C'è il muro che gira ed entra nel corridoio. Nella stanza sul retro c'è la cattedrale di disegni. Poi, Bruno, alcune opere sparse che punteggiano lo spazio." Enzo doesn't speak English, and I don't speak Italian, but his gestures and expressions make his enthusiasm or annoyance crystal clear. I realised that the possibilities of the gallery genuinely appealed to him and that his proposal reflected something I had felt in the solo exhibition I had visited a few months earlier at MAXXI—Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, in Rome: the distances and space between pieces are, for Enzo, just as important, if not more so, than the relationships they establish with each other. He sees the gallery

as a three-dimensional score whose architectural characteristics determine a given tone and tempo from the outset. All exhibition decisions are subordinated to this pre-existence, with the works functioning as voices that establish rhythms, harmonies or dissonances which follow one another at the pace of an imagined visitor. A lot is played out in the intervals, the silences and their articulations, which makes each of Enzo's exhibitions a polyphonic composition, an experimental and operatic "complessità" activated by our bodies as we pass through it.

II. On the afternoon of 13 September, we returned to the gallery together. I assumed that, on this second visit to the space, Enzo would want to confirm some of his initial intuitions. After wandering around the rooms holding the plan where he had sketched out the exhibition the day before, Enzo decided he would include two small sculptures flanking the beginning of the low wall, and proceeded to tell me the story behind Mezzocane [halfdog]. Between what I could understand in Italian and Alessandro's simultaneous translation, I was left with loose notions of the legend of a medieval people whose war rituals featured this terrible image



**Editions, Publications
and Artist Books**

<i>Cucchi / Thomas Lange</i> estensione della mente Accademia Simone Martini-Bugatti Editore, Ancona, 1973	<i>Cucchi. Testa è</i> Edizione Editrice Viterbo, Roma, 2010	<i>Scala Santa. Cucchi</i> Mario Diacono, Boston, 1988	<i>Enzo Cucchi "la disegna"</i> Kunststhus Zürich, Zürich, 1988	<i>Le donne sono entrate nell'arte, andiamo dall'altra parte</i> Bruno Bischofberger Foundation Volume, Roma, 2008	<i>Enzo Cucchi - Roma</i> Gallery Sperone Westwater, New York, 1990	<i>Prisca</i> Lithography Litografia Bulla, Roma, 2012	<i>Enzo Cucchi. Cosmogonia</i> Poggiati&Forconi, Firenze, 2013	<i>Trittico</i> Lithography Litografia Bulla, Roma, 1994	<i>Manuale di Architettura</i> and watercolour Edizioni Lithos, Como, 2023	<i>Enzo Cucchi. Mosaicci</i> (with Achille Bonito Oliva) Cieto Polcina Edizioni, Roma / Bernd Klüser, München / Philippe Daverio, Milano / Emilio Mazzoli, Modena, 1991	<i>Enzo Cucchi. Disegno</i> Carre d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain de Nîmes, Nîmes, 1991	<i>Idoli al lavoro</i> Artiscope, Bruxelles, 1993	<i>Denizens of the Forest</i> (with B. Antomarini) Ediciones Poligraf, Barcelona, 1992	<i>Simm' Nervusi</i> (<i>Siamo Nervosi Sempre</i>) Edizioni Galleria del Falconiere, Ancona, 1996	<i>Enzo Cucchi Ex</i> Enzo Cucchi Printed in Falconara (AN), 1974	<i>Enzo Cucchi. Libro Schiavo</i> Edizioni L'Obliquu, Brescia, 2004	<i>Enzo Cucchi 1 –</i> Colophonarte, Belluno, 2021	<i>Enzo Cucchi 1 –</i> biblioteca onirica Edizione Alessandro Berardinelli, Verona, 2013	<i>Exercises on Ezra</i> AM Book, Milano, 2021	<i>Mezzocane</i> (with Bruno Marchand and Ilias studio) Culturgest, Lisboa, 2024	Books from the collection of the artist and Alfredo Taroni, Associazione Lithos – Edizioni Lithos, Como, Italia
--	---	--	---	---	---	---	--	---	---	---	---	--	---	--	--	---	--	---	---	--	---

of a dog cut in half: an animal split so that its two impaled halves would form a portal of fear capable of intimidating the enemy. The striking power of this image, coupled with the location of those two pieces right at the start of the show, ultimately set the tone for the exhibition and gave it its title.

Although the violent nature of the Mezzocane story took me by surprise, I had already found direct references in many of the essays about Enzo to the significant role that the ancestral legends of the Morro d’Alba region—the small rural commune where he was born—play in his work. If we add to these references the more than fifty years Enzo has spent immersed in the classical culture of Rome and under the daily influence of the spectre of the Vatican, we can easily imagine that his inner world is a confluence of very different streams of images and narratives that somehow, in some way, assemble and become one.

Indeed, coming into contact with Enzo’s universe is like diving into a peculiar mythography. Like most mythographies, it operates in a time and space that, although familiar, cannot be precisely determined; some of its characters and contexts recur, hinting at the presence of narratives that transcend what the

14
Untitled, 2017–2018
Oil and collage on canvas
Courtesy of the artist and
gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

15
Untitled, 2022
Oil on canvas and ceramic

16
Untitled, 2022
Oil on canvas and ceramic

17
Untitled, 2014
Ceramic

18
Untitled, 2014
Ceramic

19
Untitled, 2014
Ceramic

20
Religione, 2011
Bronze

21
Bimbetto
Acceleratore, 2016
Oil on metal
Courtesy of the artist and
gallery ZERO, Milan

22
Buco di culo, 2017
Bronze
Courtesy of the artist and
gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

23
Il Re Magio, 2018
Bronze and glass
Courtesy of the artist
and gallery ZERO, Milan

24
Appollaiata là, 2011
Ceramic and wood

25
Untitled, 2020
Oil on wood
and ceramic

26
Untitled, 2013
Óleo sobre tela

27
Untitled, 2022
Oil and ceramic
on wood

28
Untitled, 2005
Bronze and patina

29
Untitled, 2015
Oil on canvas

images reveal; metamorphosis, magic, and supernatural relationships between humans, plants, and animals introduce us to a symbolic territory where nothing is static, and everything is relational. However, unlike most myths, I don’t think there is a universalistic impulse in Enzo’s work; I don’t think he’s particularly interested in archetypes, let alone in conventionalised morals. On the contrary, his work seems to be the unveiling of a parallel universe—a universe that Enzo found readymade and whose glimpses, like fertile hallucinations, he cannot escape. “Solo le leggende sono vere,” he once said. Perhaps this is the credo that settles the difference between using one’s imagination and being a visionary.

III. Sitting at Laurentina do Bacalhau for dinner on the 13th, I asked Enzo about Christ, fire and death; we talked about politics and censorship, nascent ideologies, and a certain fear that is settling in among us. Enzo places the last of his hopes in Portugal. He says that Europe is like a river that flows into our territory, thus the estuary of Western civilisation is our Atlantic coast. Despite his hope, Enzo is not an optimist. I reminded him of Thomas Bernhard, another unlikely optimist,

30
Untitled, 2015
Oil on canvas

31
Untitled, 2020
Oil on wood and ceramic
Private collection, Lisbon

32
Africano, 2010
Oil on canvas

33
Città volata, 2022
Oil on wood
and ceramic

34
Cavallara Santa
Oil on wood
and ceramic

35
Voglia, 2022
Oil on canvas and ceramic

36
Infanzia, 2021
Oil on wood
and ceramic
Private collection, Lisbon

37
Untitled, 2022
Oil on wood
and ceramic

38
Finisce la notte, 2020
Oil on veneered panel
and ceramic

39
Untitled, 2018
Oil on canvas and ceramic
Courtesy of the artist and
gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

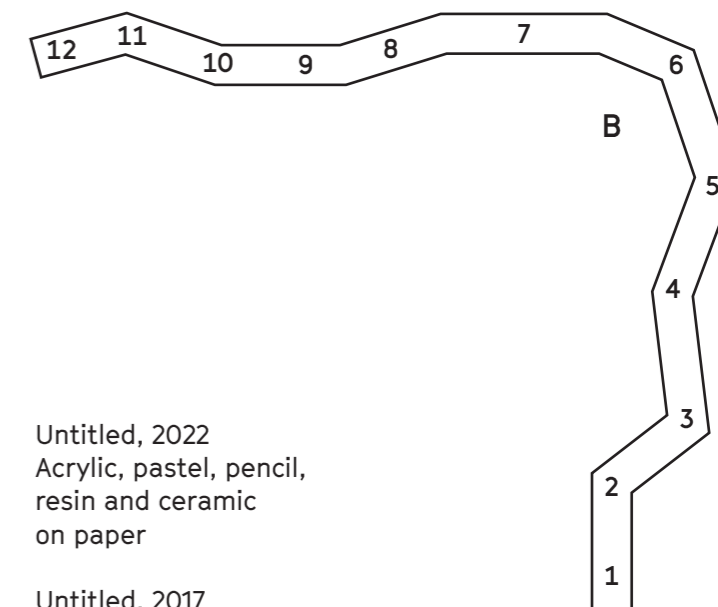
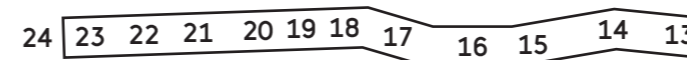
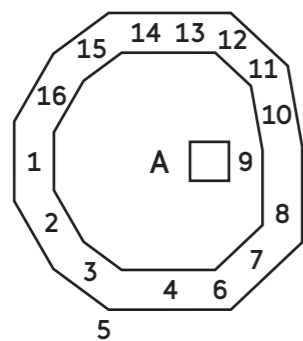
40
Sole e vento, 2022
Oil on wood
and ceramic

41
Proteina, 2020
Oil on wood
and ceramic

42
Gli Esperti, 2021
Oil, paint and
ceramic on wood
Courtesy of the artist and
gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

43
Religione, 2011
Bronze

44
Untitled, 2022
Pencil, charcoal and
tempera on paper
(62 drawings)



A
1–4
Untitled, 2006
Bronze and coloured patina

5
Untitled, 2020
Bronze and patina

6
Untitled, 2006
Bronze and coloured patina
Courtesy of the artist and gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

7–16
Untitled, 2006
Bronze and coloured patina

16
Untitled, 2006
Bronze and coloured patina
Private collection, Lisbon

B
1–5
Untitled, 2020
Cold-painted glazed ceramic
Courtesy of the artist and gallery ZERO, Milan

6
Untitled, 2002
Bronze and patina

7
Piscia Caca Muori, 2022
Bardiglio grey marble

8
Untitled, 2010
White marble

9
Untitled, 2022
Sicilian red marble

10
Untitled, 2022
White statuary marble

11
Untitled, 2022
Sicilian red marble

12
Barba d'apostolo, 2011
Ceramic and wood

13
Idolo della sera, 2020
Oil on woodboard and ceramic

14
Le Scarpe di Van Gogh, 2022
Brazilian black marble

15
Untitled, 2022
Bardiglio grey marble

16
Untitled, 2019
Oil on woodboard and wood (diptych)

17
Incantesimo, 2023
Bronze

18–20
Untitled, 2019
Oil on canvas

21
Untitled, 2019
Oil on woodboard and wood (diptych)

22
La Stimmata, 2018
Oil and veneer on woodboard
Courtesy of the artist and gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

23
Untitled, 2022
Pink marble from Naples

24
Petra, 2017–2018
Oil on canvas and ceramic
Courtesy of the artist and gallery Madragoa, Lisbon

C
Untitled, 2020
Charcoal and acrylic spray paint on paper

Untitled, 2017
Pencil and charcoal on paper

Untitled, 2017
Pencil and charcoal on paper

Untitled, 2020
Charcoal and pastel on paper

Untitled, 2020
Charcoal, pastel and tempera on paper

Untitled, 2020
Pastel, pencil, ballpoint pen and charcoal on paper

Untitled, 2022
Acrylic, pastel, pencil, resin and ceramic on paper

Untitled, 2017
Pencil and charcoal on paper

Untitled, 2022
Charcoal and ceramic on resin paper

Untitled, 2022
Charcoal, acrylic, pastel, glass and resin on paper

Untitled, 2022
Charcoal, acrylic, pastel, glass and resin on paper

Untitled, 2022
Charcoal, pastel, tempera, ceramic fragments and resin on paper

Untitled, 2022
Charcoal, pastel, tempera and glass and resin on paper

All artworks are courtesy of the artist except where indicated.

noting that he too was an unexpected sympathiser of Portugal. Not that Enzo needed a literary suggestion to talk about poets and writers—which is, I'm convinced, his favourite subject—but the mention precipitated a kaleidoscopic descent through Enzo's many references in the field of writing until it stopped on Giorgio Manganelli.

A literary critic, translator, and one of the most highly regarded authors of the Italian literary avant-garde of the 1960s, Manganelli was a tutelary figure for Enzo's generation. Perhaps not exactly due to his published work (while he was alive he only authorised the publication of one of the forty plus works he wrote), but certainly due to his critical sense and absolute intolerance towards any kind of attempt to condition him, to curtail his autonomy or his creative freedom. To illustrate the point, Enzo told a story: when Manganelli finally agreed to join the list of authors at Einaudi, the most prestigious and powerful Italian publishing house of the 1960s, Giulio Einaudi decided to throw a dinner in his honour. As all his friends knew, meals, and food in particular, were absolutely sacred to Manganelli. The dinner was attended by many of these friends, all of them great names in Italian literature at the

time, and many of whom had endeavoured to get Manganelli, who they considered to be their greatest representative, to join the ranks of the publishing house of the son of the second President of the Italian Republic. Halfway through the meal, Giulio Einaudi took a potato from Manganelli's plate. The room froze in silence. Manganelli, holding the two pieces of cutlery in his inert hands, stared at the plate without blinking for two eternal minutes. He then got up, said goodbye to everyone present, and never entered Einaudi's again.

IV. On the morning of the 14th, I accompanied Enzo and Alessandro on a tour of Chiado. Enzo wanted to visit antiquarian bookshops where he could find books that exemplified the type of publication he wanted to accompany this exhibition. After disappearing for several minutes into the hidden rooms of Sá da Costa, Enzo emerged from the labyrinth with a Portugal–Spain travel guide published by the French Guides Conty. More than four hundred pages of descriptions, maps, and all sorts of useful information for anyone venturing along the roads of Portugal and Spain at the beginning of the last century. Realising my confusion, Enzo urged Alessandro to tell me that what interested him was

the way the book fit in his hand, its shape, its weight, its appearance of a reference book that holds more secrets than we'll ever be able to find there. Deepening my concern, he added, "Bruno, devi fare un testo lungo e narrativo." In other words, he was urging me to write a piece of fiction, something that would refer to the realm of his works but that would not depend on it.

As if to avoid any misunderstandings, gesturing with the guide in his hand and holding up the queue for the checkout, Enzo asked me not to write an interpretative or academic text about his works. Instead, he was urging me to go for poetry, fables, short stories, and other formats that were the opposite of the orthodoxy of a catalogue text. "Catalogue" was, in fact, a word that immediately triggered in him a conditioned reflex of rejection and displeasure. Enzo abhors catalogues. That's also why he gave Catarina Vasconcelos and Margarida Rêgo (ilhas studio) total freedom to find the definitive body of the book they designed for this occasion, to define the thread of the reproductions, to change their appearance, and to make other, more unusual, definitely less conventional versions of them. As for me, he authorised me to write the myth of Mezzocane, the text I poured into those pages and

whose final result bears little resemblance to the story I heard in Italian from Enzo. Its inspiration, however, owes everything to him: to Enzo, to his universe, his thought, and his generosity.

P.S.: In the end, the Mezzocane sculptures were not included in this exhibition. When he saw them in the place he had intended them for, flanking the beginning of the low wall in the first room, Enzo thought they were "troppo piccoli, non possono restare lì." They can be found, disguised as editions, in the exhibition dedicated to another aspect of his work, in Gallery 3.