

## “*Arte essenziale*”

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In a time when many continue to lament what they see as the inexorable decline of theory's role in criticism, “*Arte essenziale*” (Essential Art), curated by philosopher Federico Ferrari, does its part to placate concerns with an exploration of the ties that link artistic practice and philosophical speculation. The show focuses on the *Wesen*, or essence, of a work of art—a notion that has always been inextricably linked with a search for the new. “For any truly radical gesture that might affirm itself today, the question of essence comes to expression through a clear confrontation with tradition while fully aware of the impossibility of in any way turning back,” Ferrari states.

Beginning with this premise, the exhibition investigates the genesis of a creative act, for instance in Gianni Caravaggio's sculptures, whose polished, clean surfaces, made of precious materials, seem shaped by a demiurgic act, and evoke internal landscapes and unexpected connections. Elsewhere, Jason Dodge creates tactile assemblages of found objects, while Ian Kiaer investigates relationships between work, architecture, and landscape. Alice Cattaneo reduces forms to a pure geometric abstraction that seems to redesign the space and render the void an integral part of the work. A geometricizing approach also characterizes the practice of Thea Djordjadze, whose materials evoke the domestic and traditional. Meanwhile, Karla Black takes a holistic sculptural stance as she reuses unusual materials: plaster, sugar, and cosmetics with scents that add a multisensory dimension to the work. A Minimalist approach frames Helen Mirra's aniconic canvases, which seem to assume the characteristics of a passage from a story, or perhaps a past experience. Francesco Gennari, finally, investigates the relationship between man and nature by reworking organic and inorganic materials into complex ecosystems. While these artists can hardly be reduced to any one unifying tendency, their different approaches and aesthetic strategies all in a sense dissect reality, offering radical reflections on the notion of the absolute.

*Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.*