

the doors of a lacquered wooden cabinet and used them only sparingly to mix colors on. Small compositions resulted: The paint developed a fantastic luminosity on the glossy surface, enhanced here and there by a rhinestone. These works, all 2019, were titled after artists Krystufek likes: *Lassnig, Robert Longo, Pettibon, Rothko, Tuymans*. Her connection to these artists is evident; everyone will be able to think of others who could be added to the wide-ranging list.

—Brigitte Huck

Translated from German by Gerrit Jackson.

MILAN AND VENICE

Roman Opalka

BUILDING/FONDAZIONE QUERINI STAMPALIA

Like its now-closed opening chapter in Milan, the Venice installment of this extensive exhibition—which remains on view through November 24—features a selection from Roman Opalka's famous series "OPALKA 1965/1–∞," 1965–2011, along with earlier works that have rarely or never been seen in Italy. The show hinges on the decisive date of 1965, when, making a commitment that he would stick with until his death in 2011, the artist decided to devote himself to canvases bearing consecutive sequences of diminutive white painted numbers, from one to (theoretically) infinity, which he presented alongside photographic self-portraits made on the completion of each painting.

Starting in 1972, each time he began a new painting, Opalka added 1 percent more white paint into the gray background onto which he painted his numbers; from 2008 to his death, his paintings were white on white. Every canvas in the series bears the title *Détail* (along with the span of numbers it depicts). Each thus necessarily becomes a fragment, a moment in a long, uninterrupted meditation on painting and a testament to Opalka's own subjective existence, transcending immediately into an almost mystical tension with the concept of time as an absolute. The title of the exhibitions, curated by Chiara Bertola, is "*Dire il tempo*" (Telling Time), and that telling signifies, precisely, wanting to bring the absolute into the phenomenal *hic et nunc*.

Before this illuminating attempt at total fusion between artistic creation and existence, Opalka had been observing the most radical European developments in the visual arts, those tending toward the

degree zero of expressivity, important echoes of which were also felt in Poland, where the French-born artist attended art school. His works from this period, surprising in both their delicacy and audacity, include the "Fonemats" series, 1964, abstractions in black ink on paper, and *Alphabet grec* (Greek Alphabet), 1965, which shows affinities with Piero Manzoni's search for the absolute. There was also, in Milan, a 1963 piece titled *Chronome*: a canvas saturated with microscopic dots of white paint, a clear harbinger of his magnum opus.

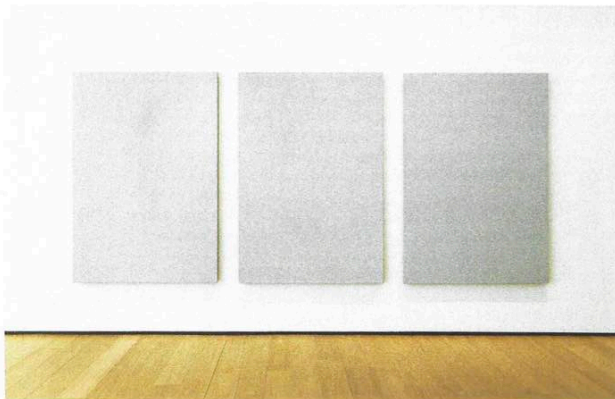
In this context, "OPALKA 1965/1–∞" came alive as a work that was forever in progress. Seeing several *Détail* paintings next to one another in Milan allowed one to perceive the minimal tonal difference from canvas to canvas, as well as how, over and over again, the white of a sequence of numbers slips into gray as the brush takes up paint from the background. From a distance, the canvases thus ended up pulsating with ever-recurring small, evanescent white dots. In Venice, by contrast, the series is represented only by the very first and the very last paintings in the set. They are installed one opposite another, the former resolutely in white on black and the latter with the white barely discernible and the numeration almost disappearing.

In both venues of the exhibition, the photographic self-portraits, always the same shot against the same neutral ground, were or are exhibited separately from the paintings. These images point to what distinguishes Opalka most from other artists likewise engaged in a strategy of subsuming existential time into a body of work. Dadamaino with her scriptural signs, Hanne Darboven with numerical permutations, and On Kawara with his Date Paintings, all assume a detached stance that neutralizes the feeling of advancing time and is valid as an apotropaic ceremony, an exorcism of death. Opalka, by contrast, looked death in the face by pitilessly exhibiting, day by day, his own aging face. Every photograph evokes its own overriding, and, in the completion of the series, the definitive encounter with death. The paintings mechanically register a numerical evolution, but the artist's face as he gets bags under his eyes and wrinkles attests to an unrepeatable singularity. Out of this dichotomy, Opalka created a corpus of works that is among the most dramatic and passionate of his era.

—Giorgio Verzotti

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

View of "Roman Opalka," 2019. From left: *Détail* 1896176–1916613; *Détail* 1916614–1940089; *Détail* 1940090–1965011, all works undated.



BRESCIA, ITALY

Haris Epaminonda

GALLERIA MASSIMO MININI

In the last room of Haris Epaminonda's exhibition "VOL. XXVI," which opened this past April, a few weeks before the artist won a Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale, viewers found themselves facing the enigma of *Untitled #15 t/g* (all works 2019). A small vase and a slender metal structure were set atop a rectangular swath of gilded paper. A single palm leaf fluttered down from one of the metal bars. A few feet away, a white stucco panel leaned against the wall. Jutting from behind it was a snippet of an illustration from an old atlas, showing a young woman twirling on a swing on a red-figure Attic vase, dating from 450 to 400 BCE.

In its entirety, the original tableau shows a satyr on the verge of pushing the girl. Why the artist would include only this small, furtive excerpt is one of the myriad unanswered questions that Epaminonda's work poses. Perhaps the image highlights the symbolic significance the swing had in antiquity, when it was associated with Dionysian rituals, with death and life. For the image not to yield a straightforward reading was, however, in keeping with the sense of oscillation imparted by other aspects of the show, from the quiver of the palm leaf to the