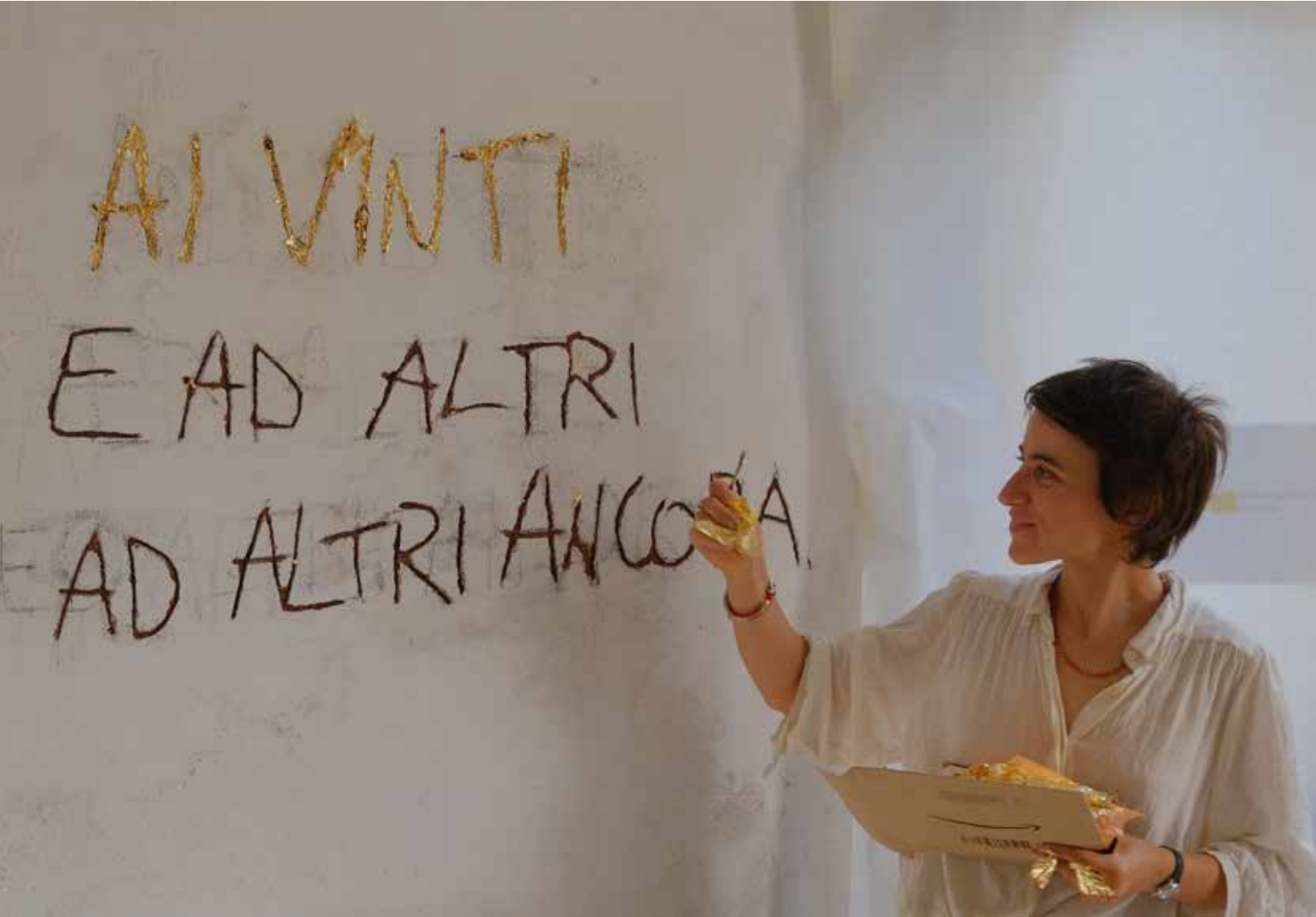




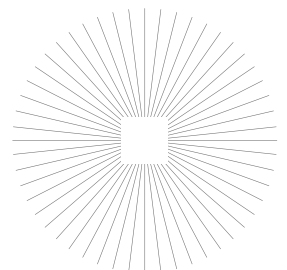
BUILDING



Sophie Ko



Sophie Ko, ph. Mario Albergati



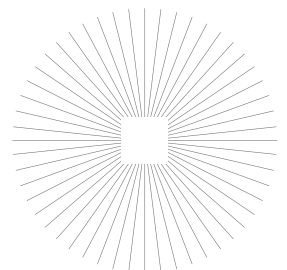
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Sophie Ko (Tbilisi, 1981) lives and works in Milan. After completing her early training at the Tbilisi Academy of Fine Arts, she moved to Italy, where she continued her studies at the Brera Academy of Fine Arts on a scholarship. Her encounter with Italian culture led the artist to gradually rethink her relationship with her own culture and with images linked to the past. The 1990s, marked in Georgia by the collapse of the Soviet Union, conflicts, and the energy crisis, constitute an important part of her formative years. Water and electricity were often lacking in Tbilisi, and in the evenings, Sophie Ko would study and draw by candlelight.

Another element linked to her upbringing in Georgia is medieval Georgian frescoes, in which the artists—often anonymous—considered themselves merely intermediaries. Ko also recalls the churches that, during the Soviet period, were not restored and on whose sacred images the names of soldiers were sometimes engraved. Her childhood gaze thus captures images marked by various layers, in which time overlaps with matter and representation. It is also through this experience that Sophie Ko recognizes, in retrospect, a connection with her roots: the relationship between her own hand—which initiates the work and then withdraws—and time, to which the task of continuing the process is entrusted.

The continuation of her training at the Brera Academy, after she moved to Italy, was fundamental to her development as an artist, and to her questioning against the traditional concept of painting. It was during these years that Sophie Ko began to explore the origins of images and their relationship to matter, gradually moving away from canvas and oil painting. Her work, however, remains deeply rooted in the practice of painting, through processes of layering, composition, and deconstruction, and through the interplay between surface, depth, and illusion.

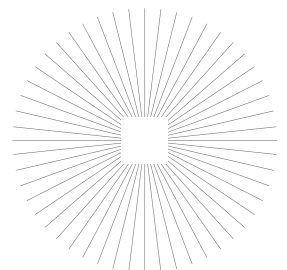
At the heart of the artist's work lies the concept of time, which is explored through its strong symbolic relationship with the materials used—primarily ashes from burned images and pure pigments—and the images created. The change and instability of materials in relation to the passage of time are therefore some of the unvaried aspects in her practice. Her early works created in Italy consist exclusively of ashes from burned images. During that period, Sophie Ko focused on black and drew inspiration, among other references, from Kazimir Malevich's Black Square and Ad Reinhardt's Black Paintings. Her education in Georgia had also helped shape this relationship with predominantly monochromatic painting: in the art history books she studied, the reproductions of the artworks were in black and white, thus painting appeared to her, at least in part, as a field traversed by an infinite range of grays. The choice of ash is also linked to the memory of her grandmother Sophieko, to whom she was very close and who, before completely losing her sight, had burned all the images depicting her. For the artist, her grandmother's act becomes a starting point for reflecting on the relationship between images, memory, and destruction.



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A significant shift took place between 2011 and 2012, when Ko began incorporating pure pigment into her works. This development happened almost by chance in her studio, where she came across a jar of ultramarine blue she had purchased years earlier but never used because she considered it too precious. The pigment introduced a material into her practice that differed from ash: while ash keeps its association with destruction and loss, pure pigment opens up a dimension more closely linked to possibility and transformation. From that moment on, ash and pigment became two fundamental and complementary elements of her practice.

The *Geografie temporali*, for example, exemplify a practice eternally suspended between the act of creation and that of destruction, in which the image undergoes a continuous process of transformation through the slow and inexorable collapse of the material of which it is composed. Conceived through a conceptual and formal negotiation between sculpture and painting, this series of works portrays "a bond made up of weight, pressure, gravity, and the destructive effect of time on images, but also of formation, depth, return, and rebirth in relation to the passage of time." In *Geografie temporali*, pigment is not confined to a surface: individual grains, subject to gravity, move and tend downward, making the process of the material's transformation an integral part of the work. As metaphors for the transience and mutability of existence, these works thus convey a slow yet persistent movement toward collapse.





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Sophie Ko (1981)

GEOGRAFIA TEMPORALE. LE NUVOLE

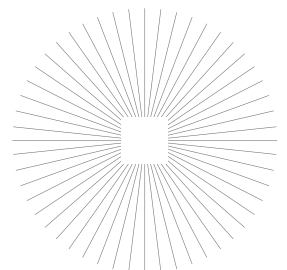
2024

pure pigment

100 x 70 cm

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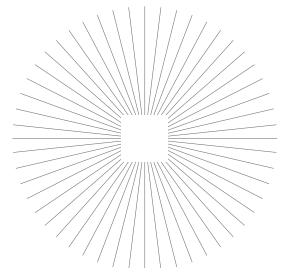
Sophie Ko (1981)

GEOGRAFIA TEMPORALE. ATTI DI RESISTENZA
2024

pure pigment
200 x 100 cm

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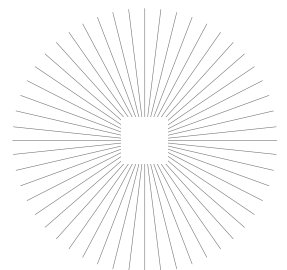
Sophie Ko (1981)

GEOGRAFIA TEMPORALE. VANITAS DEL GIORNO
2019

Pure pigment and butterfly fragments
150 x 100 cm

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Sophie Ko (1981)

NUNC STANS

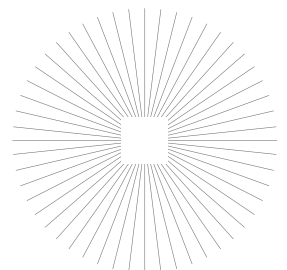
2022-2023

ashes from burned images, pigment, window

183 x 100 cm

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Sophie Ko (1981)

NUNC STANS

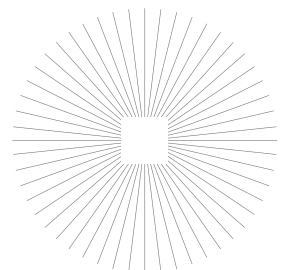
2022-2023

ashes from burned images, pigment, window

180 x 95 cm

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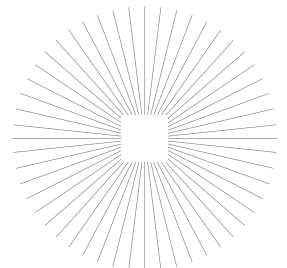
Sophie Ko (1981)

GEOGRAFIA TEMPORALE. POLVERE DI ALTRI CIELI
2024

pure pigment
31 x 21 cm

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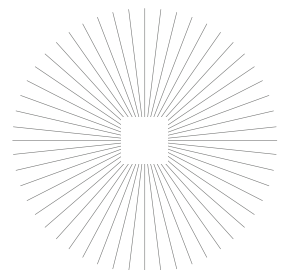
Sophie Ko (1981)

GEOGRAFIA TEMPORALE. I GERMOGLI DELLA TERRA
2025

pure pigment and butterfly fragments
70 x 40 cm

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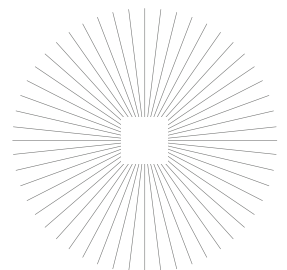
Sophie Ko (1981)

GEOGRAFIA TEMPORALE. VANITAS DELLA NOTTE
2019

pure pigment and butterfly fragments
150 x 100 cm

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