

Piero Manzoni's Lines



Piero Manzoni *Archive*

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The hidden work

Manzoni's way of working presupposes the disappearance of the artwork. It is the case of Manzoni's *Lines* ("Linee"), ink traces on paper rolls of varying length (ranging from 1,76 to 7.200 metres) realized between 1959 and 1961.

The work consists of a single line drawing on paper, rolled up and placed in a black cardboard cylinder, labelled and signed by the artist.

Manzoni reiterated several times that the work should only be sold and exhibited contained in the sealed tube. Therefore the spectator cannot see the work of art, deprived of its visibility. The Line is sealed in the container and – metaphorically – is sealed in its own closure (a closure analogue to the tautological self-sufficiency of the *Achrome*).

The existence of the Line, evoked through the label stuck on the box (guaranteeing the author, the date of execution and the exact length), can be visualised only in the mind's eye.

The disappearance of the artwork as literal object is clearly displayed in the *Line of Infinite Length* ("Linea di lunghezza infinita"): the container, a solid wooden cylinder resembling the Lines' ordinary cardboard tubes, seals and hides an ideal line existing only as a metaphysical speculation.

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*Line 15,80 m., September 1959.
Ink on paper in cardboard cylinder
(21 x 6 cm)*

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*Line 3,10m., November 1959.
Line 11,65m., December 1959.
Line of infinite length, 1960. Wood
(21.9 x 5.8 cm)*

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The Line m. 7,200 and the "Socle du Monde"

On July 4 1960, between 4 and 6,55 p.m., Piero Manzoni executed a 7,200 metres long Line at a newspaper mill in Herning (Denmark).

The *Line*, enclosed in a cylindrical lead container and interred in the Herning Kunstmuseum's gardens, should had been the first of a series of extra-long *Lines* placed in each of the principal cities of the world, in order to equal, with the sum of their length, the earth's circumference.

In addition, Manzoni proposed a white line as long as the Greenwich meridian.

The large scale of Manzoni's latest projects (as the *Placentarium*, an architectural Body of Air) is a consequence of the withdrawing of the artwork as an object that can be sold in art galleries or prized in museums.

The full achievement of this concept is the *Base of the World* ("*Socle du monde, socle magique n.3 de Piero Manzoni, 1961, Hommage à Galilèe*") constructed in 1961 at Herning.

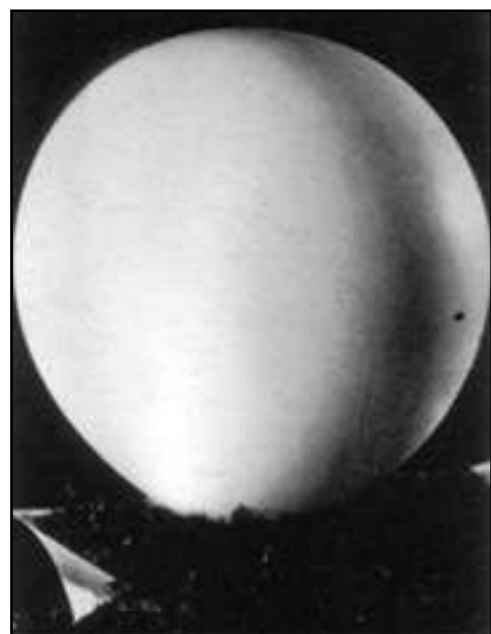
Closer to the *Magic Bases* (pedestals that transform people standing on them into works of art), the *Socle du Monde* is upside down, holding on its bearing surface the entire world. The world itself stands on the plinth and everything - animal, vegetal or mineral - is changed into a work of art.

Stefano Cappelli



*Line 7.200 m., 4 July 1960.
Ink, paper, zinc, lead
(66 x 96 cm.)*

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Project for Placentarium, 1961

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Credits

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For further information visit the website:
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Cover: Piero Manzoni, *Line 12.40m*, 1959,
Ink on paper in cardboard cylinder.

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