



MAGAZZINO

Vedovamazzei

Early Works. From Giotto to Hirst

Exhibition dossier

Early Works. From Giotto to Hirst

10 December, 2021 – 31 January, 2022

Magazzino is happy to present the sixth solo show by Vedovamazzei at the gallery space, titled *Early Works. Da Giotto a Hirst*.

As it often happens with Vedovamazzei, artistic duo born in 1991 and composed by Simeone Crispino and Stella Scala, all the visual stimuli triggered by wonderment and surprise represent one of the main aspects upon which their works are based.

For this exhibition, Vedovamazzei presents a series of works started in 1992 and still in progress, related to iconic works from great artists of the past and of the present which have been reinterpreted by children from 5 to 12 years old. Infantile drawings always have a similar style, for children do not learn from techniques, they rather follow precise phases.

Throughout the exhibition there are works by Giotto, Uccello, Raffaello, Bernini, Rembrandt, Ernst, Warhol, Hammons, Koons and Hirst, in which it is brought back their genius and style, in a phase which is not yet mature. Stella and Simeone thus assign children the task to represent the style of these artists and the very iconicity of the works that made them famous, to subsequently reformulate them on great scale in the artworks present in the show.

The exhibition is accompanied by a critical contribution by Giacinto di Pietrantonio.

Vedovamazzei is a duo founded in 1991 by Stella Scala (1964) and Simeone Crispino (1962). Their work is based on the use of different media like video, installation, sculpture, photography, as well as more traditional mediums like painting, watercolour and drawing. The urge in Vedovamazzei's work is the necessity to look beyond appearances, observing the iconographical origin of objects and their symbolical value; the often implied absurdity of their works invites a reflection over arts and its formal and intellectual principles.

Vedovamazzei
E.A.R.L.Y. W.O.R.K.S.

To Be or not to Be  is not only the iconic Shakespearian ~~monolog~~ monologue, but also a new and important ~~occasion~~ occasion to appreciate the latest production by Vedovamazzei, artistic duo composed by Stella Scala e Simeone Crispino. The works have never been displayed (and yet not all of them are here displayed), and they belong to a series started in 1992 with Botticelli and Paolini, which today is still in ~~progres~~ progress.

The Art of drawing and the Art of painting, initial ~~techniques~~ techniques of  humanity's ~~espressive~~ expressive history, are here put to test not only as primordial ~~techniques~~ techniques, but in the broader practice of how "to be".

To stay within traditions, for Vedovamazzei means to ~~try~~ succeed in  surprising us once again with works/questions evolving around art and on the latter's relationship with ourselves.

Their creative work situates the idea of sharing at the centre of their poetics, (this is already visible in their will to work in a twosome), and such idea in this exhibition is even extended to other subjects with an ~~attitude~~ attitude like a  yo-yo.

The Yo-Yo is a game that can ~~metaforically~~ metaphorically represent these new works, for it employs the kinetic energy of a cord that wraps and unwraps around two disks. The ~~later~~ latter represent Stella and Simeone, while the cord embodies a third person, a child  whose age varies from 6 to 10 years.

~~Wedovamazzei~~, that from now on I will call with the W, on account that, being they a twosome, I like to point out to this couple suggestion as being present already in the name (and that in this very occasion becomes rather a triad).

~~Wedovamazzei~~ in this case, propose a series of paintings that are born from children's reinterpretation of iconic works including ones by ~~Gioto~~, Giotto, Uccello, ~~Raffaello~~, Raffaello, ~~Benigni~~, Bernini, Rembrandt, ~~Ernesto~~, Ernst, ~~Varrot~~, Warhol, Hammons, Koons, ~~Hirsto~~, Hirst and also one of themselves.

Each one is unique, meaning that each artist has their own signature, style  and individuality,

that ~~Wedovamazzei~~ bring back ~~trough~~ through infantile marks.

The memory of the memory is what is being activated by this particular attitude, for the  memory is what allows us to be connected to history and in this very specific case to the history of art, and to be part of tradition providing a ~~koinè~~ koinè. 

Koinè as a ~~synthesis~~ synthesis that ~~Wedovamazzei~~ realize through borrowing marks from children's creativity. ~~Certainly~~ Certainly they are not the first ones to employ infantile creativity. For example, the North-European artistic movement CO.BR.A, already in the 40's was looking for originality in drawings

made by  children, yet it was not originality in terms of a sign freed from culture and from the sedimentation of history. On the contrary, ~~Wedovamazzei~~ try to search for originality in the confrontation and in the re-reading of works possibly made by artists when they were children, that is to say their *Early Works*.

~~Wedovamazzei~~ thus claim that the "early" artwork ends up to be the matching point between the start and the end, indicating the end not as a finishing point, rather a scope, a vision  that is born from the ambivalence that these works represent: a perfect synthesis between originalities.



Giacinto Di Pietrantonio

Early Works

Modernity discovered children two and a half centuries ago. In *Émile*, Rousseau was the first to oppose the common belief of his day, that the child was an imperfect adult, with a conception of childhood as an original state of nature, a full expression of authenticity as yet uncorrupted by civilisation. Hence, for the philosopher, the focus of any upbringing was not education, writing or mathematics, but the child's own curiosity, imagination and play. Let the child "know nothing because you told him so, but because he understands it for himself; let him not learn science but invent it." Later, sketching out the traits of the modern artist, Baudelaire would speak of genius – for the Romantics, the artist's most essential feature – as "childhood recaptured at will". In the mature artist, this is further enhanced by an "analytical spirit" through which the artist may impose order on sensations. Childhood was perceived as a dimension irreducible to the social grid, where the power of imagination ferments; the artist was perceived as a mediator and guardian of this same imagination.

In modernity, a basal dispute broke out between spontaneity and rigour, innocence and stratagem: can art be taught, or is all learning deceptive (perhaps even useless) in the absence of the innate, mysterious quality that is genius? For the Vedovamazzei duo, this question is essential. As ever filtered through their hallmark acute, caustic and paradoxical spirit, they have made this question a recurring theme of their work. In 1992, for a series with the ironic title, *Early Works*, Stella Scala and Simeone Crispino asked a group of children to copy famous artworks by renowned artists from the history of art (Botticelli, Bernini, Raphael, Rembrandt), great avant-garde artists (Ernst), and well-known contemporary authors (Hammons, Hirst, Paolini, Warhol). Each drawing's title is a biographical detail with the presumed age of the famous artist, corresponding to the age of the child who physically made it.

Behind such apparent simplicity, this initial version of *Early Works* conceals a highly sophisticated device. As we may expect, in their own expressive and rudimentary way the children translated the original image, retaining minimal traits from the original that enable it to be recognized. From this point onwards, for the beholder the process becomes wholly mental. Given that Vedovamazzei retro-project their mature style onto the authors' fictitious childhood, we witness an ironic short-circuit between what we expect from a childish drawing and what we actually see, between what art history tells us about the famous artist, his youthful phase, his apprenticeship, in short about the conquest of his original style, and the evidence – obviously false but somehow made credible by the very drawing we see before our eyes – of the surprisingly non-evolutive nature of that style. Now, childhood no longer appears to be a place of innocence but rather an anticipation, however crude and imperfect, of what will be, of something ineluctable.

What is, in other words, presented to us is evidence of automatism rather than an anticipation of a future vocation. Especially when it comes to stereotypes: Giotto's "O" is a typically mocking commentary on the reduction of art to formula, to sensational mythology. From an early age, Hammons and Hirst appear

trapped in their respective fetish-works – the reinterpreted American flag, those colourful dots. Absurd as it may seem, Vedovamazzei do not escape this rule: one of the drawings reproduces one of their best-known works, *Go Wherever You Want, Bring Me Whatever You Wish* (2000), a truck whose trailer is filled with water on which an incongruous little boat floats.

The final stage for this series was to enlarge the original drawings onto outsized canvases, in an oblique homage to art history and a sneer at the pompierism of contemporary painting, its gigantism, ambition, and mercantile success. This scale shift reinforces the whole operation's ironic ambivalence, making it clearer how *Early Works* plays with audience expectations simultaneously from within the institution of art – i.e., art considered as a discourse, a practice, a system of power – and outside it, in the ideally distant territory of childhood, which on closer inspection nonetheless reveals itself to be no longer conceivable in terms of innocence and nature. "It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child," runs a famous saying attributed to Picasso. Vedovamazzei's artist-children tell another story: at age eight, they were already condemned to becoming themselves.

Stefano Chiodi

Early Works (Scipione Borghese by Bernini at 7 year old)

2021

Bronze

47 x 35 x 11 cm

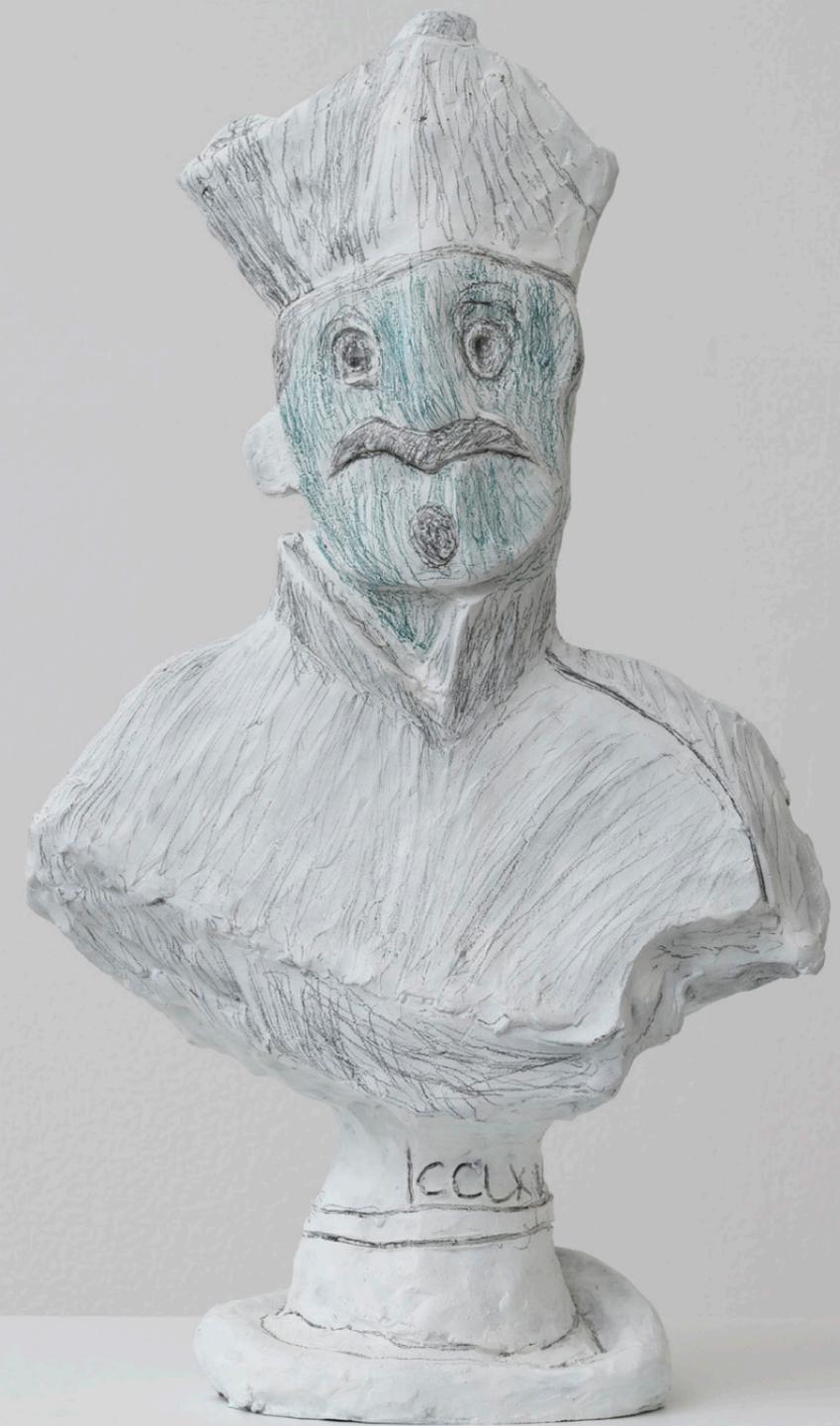


Early Works (Scipione Borghese by Bernini at 9 year old)

2021

Bronze

50 x 32 x 17 cm





Installation view



Early Works (Andy Warhol at 5 year old, Marilyn Monroe found dead)

2021

Stick oil pastels, acrylic on canvas
280 x 335 cm



Installation view

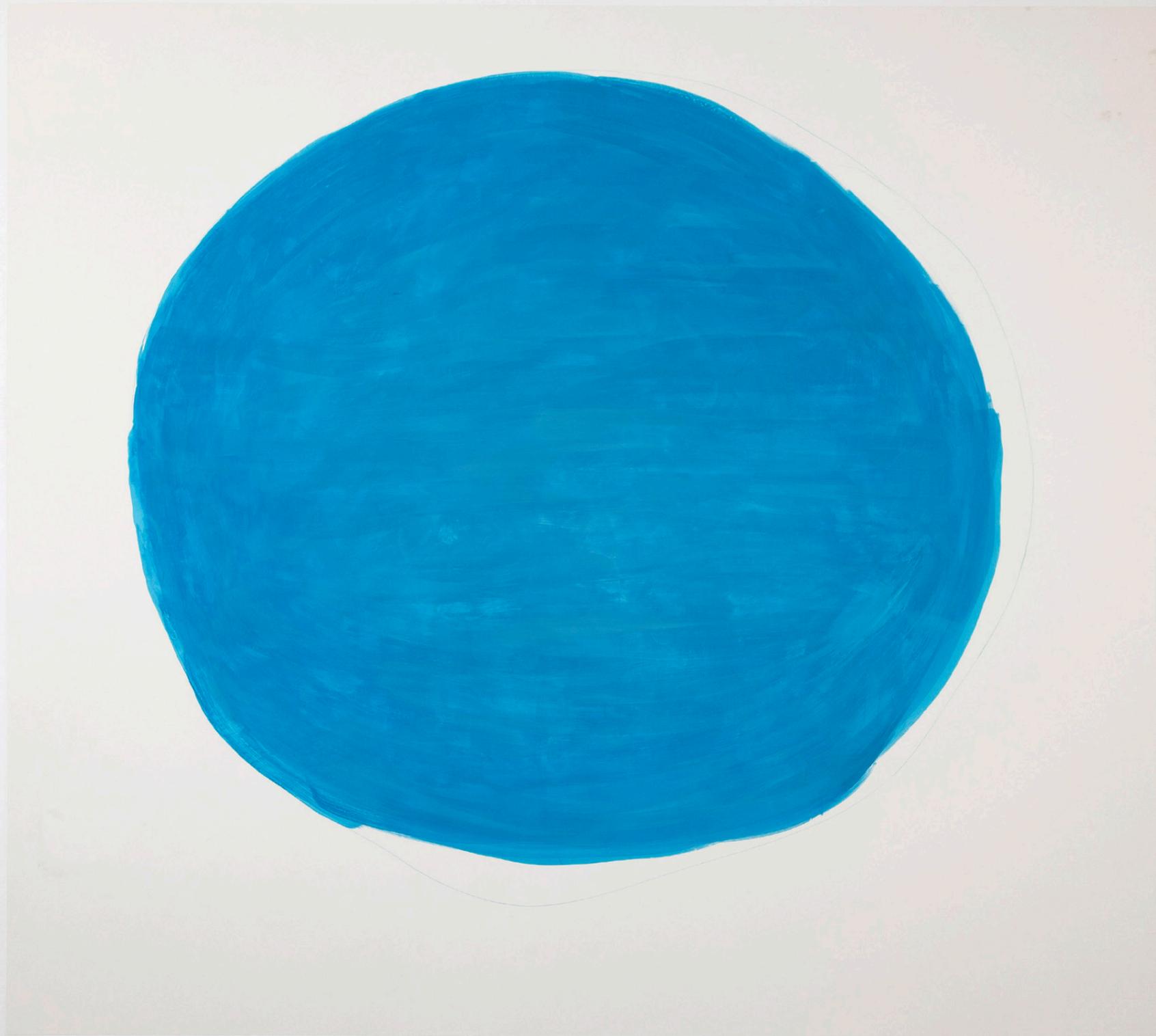
Early Works (vedovamazzei at 5 years old)

1992 - 2021

Stick oil pastels, acrylic on canvas

150 x 100 cm





Early Works (Giotto at 9 years old)

1992 - 2021

Affresco on the wall
Variable



Early Works (David Hammons at 5 years old)

2021

Stick oil pastels on canvas
190 x 237 cm

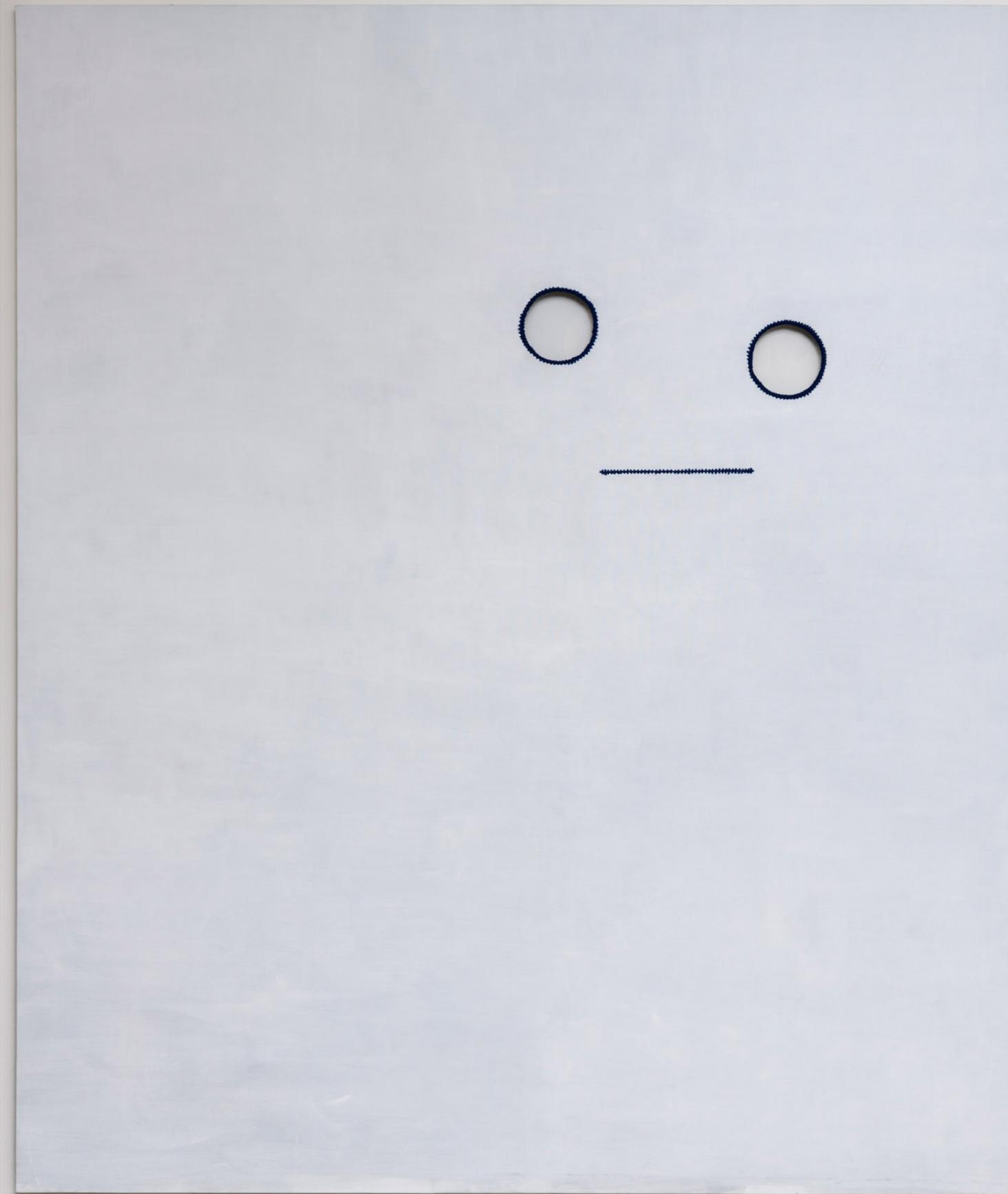
MAGAZZINO

Early Works (Max Ernst at 9 years old. Royal Baby Portrait Every day I contemplate the idea of becoming a serial killer -1)

2020

Acrylic and embroidery on canvas

215 x 180 cm



Early Works (Damien Hirst at 7 years old)

1992 - 2021

Stick oil pastels on board

108 x 98 cm





Installation view

Early Works (Rembrandt at 10 years old)

1992 - 2021

Stick oil pastels, acrylic on canvas

290 x 335 cm





Early Works (Rembrandt at 10 years old)

1992 - 2021

Stick oil pastels, acrylic on canvas
290 x 335 cm



Early Works (Raphael at 7 years old)

2021

Stick oil pastels on canvas
290 x 335 cm



Installation view

Early Works (Giulio Paolini at 12 years old)

1992

Pencil on cardboard

104 x 72 cm



Early Works (Botticelli at 6 years old)

1992

Colored pencil on cardboard

104 x 72 cm

