

BUILDING

Milan, November 23rd, 2021

press release

The Shape of Gold

curated by Melania Rossi

From January 2021, 12 artists in 12 months

BUILDINGBOX

via Monte di Pietà 23, 20121 Milan

On view 24/7

12

November 30th, 2021 – December 31st, 2021

Jean Bedez

Sans titre [Untitled], I, II, III, 2021

plaster, gold

7 x 23 x 13 cm each

Atlas portant le monde [Atlas carrying the world], 2021

natural pigments and charcoal drawing on paper

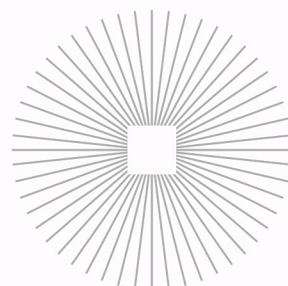
133 x 98 cm

Hercule tuant Cacus avec une massue [Hercules killing Cacus with a club], 2021

graphite drawing on paper

108 x 83,5 cm

BUILDINGBOX presents, from **November 30th, 2021 to December 31st, 2021**, a selection of works by **Jean Bedez** (Colmar, 1976), the last artist of *The Shape of Gold*, the annual exhibition project curated by Melania Rossi, which investigates the use of gold in contemporary artistic research through the works of **twelve artists** invited to compete with the chosen theme. The



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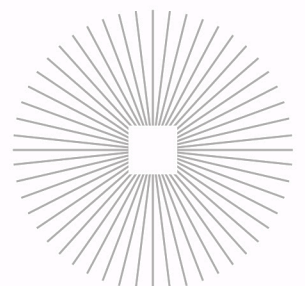
installations are visible **24 hours a day, 7 days a week** from the window in via Monte di Pietà 23 in Milan. On display are three sculptures made especially for the show and two large drawings, one entirely in graphite, one with natural pigments.

Jean Bedez takes inspiration from the ancient world, mythology and classical Greek sculpture, taken as metaphors for creating works that reflect on the contemporary period, tackling ancient sculpture and drawing techniques. This work picks up the theme of the exhibition by evoking the myth of the Golden Age, a utopian dream that dates back to the dawn of mankind.

The Greek poet Hesiod (VIII-VII century BCE) was the first to write of the “golden race of man”, which lived in perfect harmony, with no troubles or suffering, receiving nature’s fruits spontaneously and in abundance. After Prometheus stole fire, and the gods took vengeance by creating Pandora, the first woman, humanity’s lineage began its progressive decline, with the bellicose silver race, the violent bronze age, the age of heroes, most of whom died in wars, and finally the iron race, the worst of all. This myth has inspired many literary and artistic creations: from Plato to Nietzsche, Michelangelo and Cranach, up to Gauguin, who physically went looking for the lost paradise in Tahiti, the idea has been taken up by philosophers, writers and artists as an allegory of the decadence of the present time compared to the past, as well as the constant search for an idyll of peace and prosperity that cyclically returns in every age.

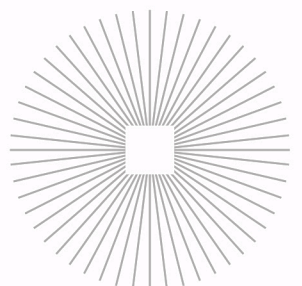
In the works on display, Jean Bedez reworks images from classical statuary, which are in turn inspired by the myths of the labors of Hercules and Atlas, metaphors of the human condition in its involution from the golden era to the iron race. These mighty, incomplete figures possess the distinctive verticality of the Western representational tradition, which sees humanity striving towards the eternal afterlife and the exploration of the mysteries of the universe, but engaged in actions that inexorably bring it back down to earth, to the struggles of our mortal existence. The artist suggests an idea of non-linear time, in which past, present and future combine, representing eternal battles between giants in landscapes and atmospheres that evoke the origin (or end?) of the world. The graphite drawing technique, skillfully used by Bedez on large format pieces, makes for an aesthetic harmony in works whose objective, recognizable beauty transmits a complex conceptual framework.

Gold is used as a physical element in the series of three small plaster sculptures representing a bull missing various parts of its body. The gilding highlights the dramatic nature of the amputations, but at the same time adds something precious to the absences, the gaps left by



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what has been lost over time. The bull was a sacred animal in many civilizations, from the Stone Age to the ancient Egyptians and Christian iconology, but it is also an important mythical figure present across all eras. Jean Bedez artistically evokes its mythological significance, from its combat on equal terms with the hero to its domestication in the ages following the Golden Age, when it was enslaved for hard labor in the fields, becoming an emblem of the relations of domination that characterize our contemporary society.



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For **2021 season BUILDINGBOX** is presenting *The Shape of Gold*, an exhibition consisting of twelve monthly appointments curated by Melania Rossi. The show sets out to offer a broad overview of the use of gold in contemporary art, with twelve installations that reference the “king of metal” using different media and techniques. Called “the flesh of the Gods” by the ancient Egyptians, and symbolizing discord in Greek mythology, in the Christian world gold became both an emblem of divine manifestation and an incarnation of earthly vanity and human vices. One thing is clear: through the centuries, this natural element has maintained its lofty expressive value in both religious and secular settings. In visual art, gold has gathered a host of metaphors that go from the divine to the diabolic, from spiritual to material, from perfection to corruption. Its symbolic power even extends to allusions, to absence, the denial of space/time and gravity.

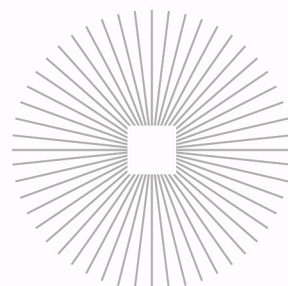
In the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance painters used gold to represent what went beyond the tangible sphere, transcending humankind. The mystic aura created by ancient techniques such as the gold background, golden luster and gilding still represent the essential starting point for artists wishing to use this element in their works.

What kind of appeal does gold have in the modern world? How is it used in contemporary art?

All golden and gleaming, the works and site-specific installations by the artists selected by Melania Rossi (in real or fake gold, or bronze, brass, plastic, ceramics, glass and paper) inevitably evoke the historical artistic tradition, while bearing the traces of each artist's personal poetics.

Indeed each artist offers a unique perspective on this noble metal, exploring its beguiling alchemy or opting for an irreverent approach. Some, viewing gold as a color, have studied its pictorial properties; others, considering it a plastic material, have investigated its sculptural potential; others have set out to subvert the mythological, philosophical and literal meanings of gold over the ages.

The Shape of Gold is therefore an exhibition of exceptions: here, all that glitters is indeed gold. The exhibition will feature one installation per month for twelve months, viewable **24/7** in the **BUILDINGBOX** window. An ongoing exploration of different, outstanding interpretations of *aurum*, that noble, rare, eternal metal, incorruptible in its purest form.

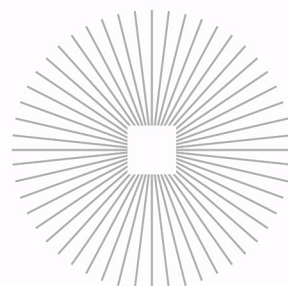


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Biographical notes

Jean Bedez (Colmar, 1976), lives and works in Paris and Marseille, France. After studying at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Art in Nancy, Jean Bedez was admitted to the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he graduated in 2001. Trained in parallel in drawing and sculpture, he continued at the studio of Chen Zhen, of which Jean Bedez will become assistant. The themes dealt with in Jean Bedez's work are linked to the history of the representation of political and religious powers. His drawings and sculptures express the artist's commitment to deconstruct and reveal the codes and conventions underlying the construction of images and to propose representations of the contemporary world that assume the function of modern allegories. It is through a series of sculptures inspired by the dominant cultures of play, entertainment and power, highlighting the role of the citizen, that Jean Bedez explores the relationships of domination of our societies. In parallel, echoing these sculptural works, the artist produces a series of drawings through which he further develops these themes. In creating works that are an expression of his time, Jean Bedez also confronts himself with the most ancient techniques and knowledge of the art of drawing. Starting in 2011, the artist worked for three years on the *Quatre Cavaliers de l'Apocalypse de Saint-Jean* series, retranslating the representation of the wounds described in the Bible, in which natural landscapes and ruined architecture merge. The series was presented for the first time at the Suzanne Tarasiève gallery on the occasion of the monographic exhibition *L'Art du Combat*, the title of which refers to the book by the Soviet master David Bronstein, *L'Art du Combat aux Échecs*.

Jean Bedez was trained in the art of chess from an early age; the strategic and combinatorial dimension of this game has a decisive and lasting influence on his artistic poetics, constituting a constant reference. The artist deepens his exploration of the theme of combat through various series of works, which have the figure of the bull as their thematic fulcrum. These recent works evoke the stars and the first cartographic representations of the sky, which interpenetrate with the most recent aerospace technological advances.



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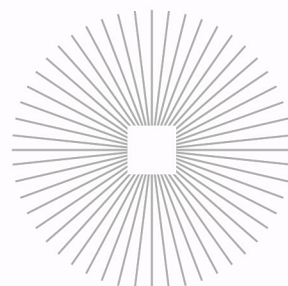
Jean Bedez

Sans titre [Untitled], I, II, III, 2021

plaster, gold

7 x 23 x 13 cm

Ph. Ludovic Jecker



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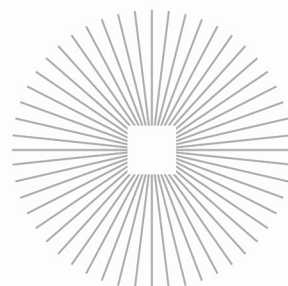
Jean Bedez

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Ph. Rebecca Fanuele



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BUILDINGBOX is the new exhibition project inaugurated in September 2018, located inside one of the windows of BUILDING that overlook via Monte di Pietà, **visible 24 hours**, night and day, without having to enter the building, although it is actually part of it. Through its location it reflects the aim for which it has been created: to build an independent space characterized by a project which will be separated from the exhibitions program that BUILDING will host during the year. **BUILDINGBOX** is based on a temporal extension: it will host a series of works, linked to each other from a common thread developed in time, rather than in space. **BUILDINGBOX** is a physical space, not a simple showcase, it is delimited by white walls and glass, an unreleased exhibition solution that represents an interruption of the ordinary concept of exhibiting, in which content and container are closely connected, giving life to a constant dialogue between form and content. A relationship that also occurs between the inside and the outside, since this is a place visible **24/7**. This showcase will host different artists and designers, cycles of exhibitions and temporary projects, offering a curatorial analysis on multiple artistic themes.

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via Monte di Pietà 23, Milan
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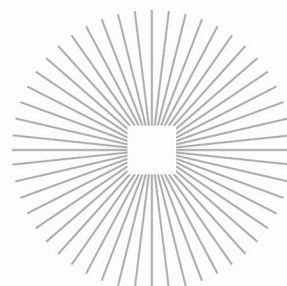
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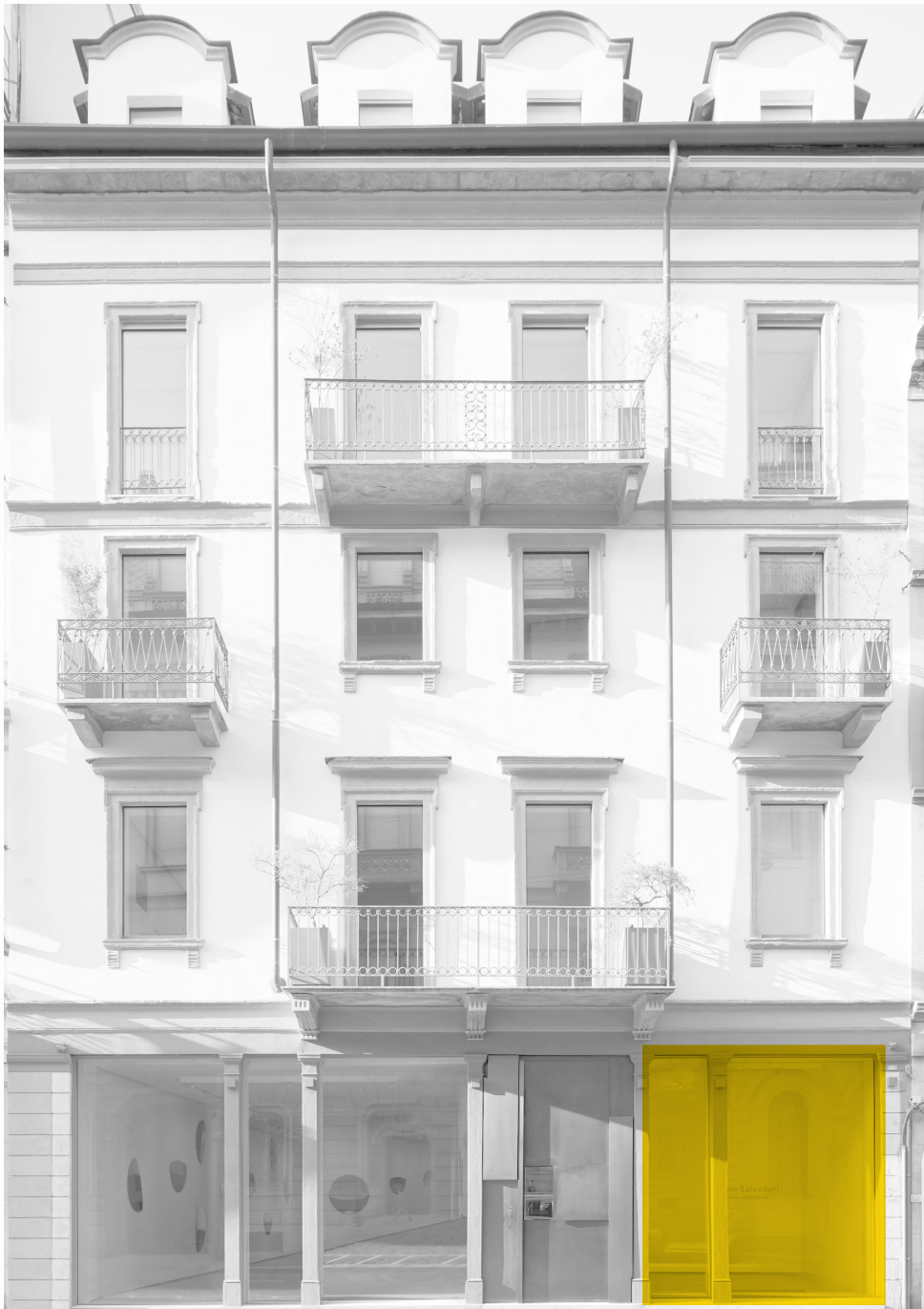
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