

FROM PAINTING TO PAINTING THE ART OF CITATION

Curated by Daniela Ferrari

Mart, Rovereto, 13 June - 01 November 2026



The exhibition explores how artists have used citation as an ongoing dialogue between past and present, revisiting, reinterpreting, and transforming themes, images, and ideas across eras. Bringing together both modern masters and contemporary artists, it weaves a network of references and comparisons that runs through art history, revealing connections, influences, and new perspectives.

The Mart Museum in Rovereto features 150 works by various artists, including: Mirella Bentivoglio, Mariella Bettineschi, Felice Casorati, Salvador Dalí, Giorgio de Chirico, Filippo de Pisis, Andrea Facco, Flavio Favelli, Giosetta Fioroni, Omar Galliani, Renato Guttuso, Roy Lichtenstein, Piero Manzoni, Giorgio Morandi, Vik Muniz, Luigi Ontani, Giulio Paolini, David Reimondo, Mimmo Rotella, Salvo, Mario Schifano, Francesco Vezzoli, Andy Warhol, Ai Weiwei.

From Painting to Painting The art of citation delves into the intricate and fascinating web of references, citations, and reinterpretations that run through the history of modern and contemporary art. It ventures into the conceptual heart of the artwork as a mental space, where **the viewer's gaze becomes the true catalyst of meaning.**

With this cultural project, Mart invites its audience to reflect on the mechanisms of perception and visual familiarity, drawing visitors into a play of mirrors that demands attention, engagement, and complicity—a search for connections and associations, some clear and explicit, others subtle and whispered.

The exhibition unfolds in **eight sections**, starting off minimal and conceptual before becoming more colourful, vivid, and pop-inspired: *Vis à Vis*, *The Copy*, *Paintings within Paintings*, *Marks*, *D'après*, *The Morandi Case*, *Covers* (the largest section, bridging into the contemporary), and *Anida Dollars*. Featuring **150 works** by nearly **80 artists**, the exhibition is structured around the idea that art history can be read as a captivating and continuous sequence of *covers*: Forms and themes from the past travel through time, constantly being reimagined.

From the close dialogue between early twentieth-century masters and the ancients—seen in **Giorgio de Chirico's** copy after Raphael or **Virgilio Guidi's** copy after Correggio—to the device of the “painting within the painting,” the exhibition reveals how the artist's studio has always been a place for reflection and paying tribute to great models. Painters such as **Felice Casorati**, **Filippo de Pisis**, and **Renato Guttuso** include explicit references to masterpieces of the past or to their own works, transforming the painted surface into a **complex layering of visual memories.**

With the advent of photography and later pop culture, the concept of technical reproducibility, as analysed by Walter Benjamin, is amplified, undermining the traditional idea of the artwork's uniqueness. The exhibition highlights this crucial shift through the works of contemporary artists such as **Giulio Paolini**, **Luigi Ontani**, and **Francesco**

Vezzoli, whose research is based on appropriation and the ironic play of identification with the masters of the past.

The exhibition finally moves into the present, exploring the languages of mass media. Here, timeless images such as the Mona Lisa or iconic Venuses give way to or blend with cinematic myths, or are swept up in the forces of mass consumption and production, tracing a path from **Andy Warhol's** pop revolution to **Piero Manzoni's** conceptual provocations.

Amidst digital reinterpretations, visual puns, and reflections on the commodification of beauty, the exhibition encourages visitors not only to question what they see, but also how they see, and, above all, to consider the very power of looking.

Artists on display;

Stefano Arienti, Giacomo Balla, Paolo Baratella, Mary Ellen Bartley, Mirella Bentivoglio, Carlo Benvenuto, Gianni Bertini, Bertozzi & Casoni, Mariella Bettineschi, Mike Bidlo, Umberto Boccioni, Niccolò Boldrini, Giulio Bonasone, Pompeo Borra, Corrado Cagli, Chiara Calore, Massimo Campigli, Agostino Carracci, Felice Casorati, Mario Ceroli, Vittoria Chierici, Luca Coser, Salvador Dalí, Giorgio de Chirico, Filippo de Pisis, Bruno Di Bello, Andrea Facco, Flavio Favelli, Tano Festa, Giosetta Fioroni, Andrea Francolino, Achille Funi, Omar Galliani, Giorgio Ghisi, Virgilio Guidi, Renato Guttuso, Alain Jacquet, Jiří Kolář, Ketty La Rocca, Maria Lai, Roy Lichtenstein, Mario Mafai, Piero Manzoni, Lucia Marcucci, Arnold Mario Dall'O, Gino Marotta, Nino Migliori, Rolando Mignani, Aldo Mondino, Giorgio Morandi, Vik Muniz, Ugo Nespolo, Anna Oberto, Luigi Ontani, Luciano Ori, Giulio Paolini, Claudio Parmiggiani, Carlo Pasini, Luca Maria Patella, Lamberto Pignotti, Fausto Pirandello, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Décio Pignatari, Piero Pizzi Cannella, Concetto Pozzati, Marcantonio Raimondi, David Reimondo, Mimmo Rotella, Salvo, Sarenco, Mario Schifano, Gregorio Sciltian, Gino Severini, Emilio Tadini, Armando Testa, Francesco Vezzoli, Andy Warhol, Ai Weiwei.



The Exhibition Path in the Wall Texts

In art, a “citation” involves reimagining motifs, themes, and elements from earlier works—a resonance that is rarely literal, yet always unmistakable. In fact, much of art history unfolds as a continuous narrative of citations—evolving from ancient imagery through a dynamic interplay of references and lively dialogues.

This exhibition shines a light on this phenomenon through eight thematic sections, each delving into a distinct form of homage or variation: from copying—both as a tribute to the Old Masters and as a fundamental artistic exercise beyond apprenticeship—to explicit citations of the “painting within a painting,” as well as *d’après* and reinterpretations.

Works by over seventy artists—from the Mart Collections and notable public and private holdings—create a multifaceted landscape of reflections, echoes, and deformations. This setting awakens our visual memory, inviting us to recognise echoes of the past—not only in the works of early twentieth-century artists who revered the Masters (Giorgio de Chirico, Achille Funi, Felice Casorati), but also among trailblazers of the later 20th century (Mario Schifano, Giulio Paolini, Andy Warhol) and within contemporary art (Francesco Vezzoli, Vik Muniz, Ai Weiwei).

VIS À VIS

“[...] the art of the past has not yet passed, and never will. The dilemma, or the enigma, lies in where and how the thread connecting one work to another might be found [...]”.

With these words, Giulio Paolini articulates his relationship with the art of the past — a constant thread in his practice since the 1960s. From plaster casts of Roman statues to photographic reproductions of Renaissance paintings, his works are built on quotations and fragments that form an inventory of figures he calls himself a “prisoner” of.

It is precisely this conceptual dialogue with the art of the past that opens the exhibition. The visitor is greeted by a play of gazes – a face-to-face encounter between two apparently identical works. *Giovane che guarda* Lorenzo Lotto (Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto, 1967) is a black-and-white photograph of *Ritratto di giovane uomo* (Portrait of a Young Man), a painting by Lorenzo Lotto from the early 16th century. Paolini sought to set in dialogue the time and space once occupied by the painter with the time and space that belongs to us as we look at its reproduction today.

Controfigura (critica del punto di vista) (Stand-in. A Critique of the Point of View), on the other hand, is a photomontage in which Paolini has replaced the young man’s eyes with his own, pushing further the play of roles and the exchange of gazes that draws in all of us: the author of the Renaissance work, the subject he portrayed, and the author of this conceptual from 1981. This substitution — which we might also call identification — transforms the original figure into a “controfigura”, a stand-in or double.

THE COPY

For centuries, artistic training was grounded in the practice of copying, following the classical concept of *mimesis*: the imitation of what one sees. In academic training, copying was a way of learning from the great Masters — absorbing their techniques and style. Over the course of the nineteenth century, with the rise of anti-academic movements — and even more so with the avant-gardes of the early twentieth century — this practice was challenged and ultimately abandoned. But in the aftermath of the First World War, with the so-called “return to order”, many artists turned once again to the art of the past. Among them was Giorgio de Chirico, who in a 1922 letter to André Breton wrote: “[...] a problem has been tormenting me for about three years: the problem of craft, which is why I have taken to copying in museums.” Between the late 1910s and early 1920s, the artist made copies of ancient works, including Raphael’s *La Muta* (The Mute Woman). At other times, the artist reworked old paintings in a more personal style — as in *Fanciulla addormentata* (Young Girl Sleeping, 1947) drawn from a work by Antoine Watteau.



The theme of copying naturally connects to reproductive printmaking—a technique that, from the 15th century onward, played a crucial role in spreading art. Later, photographic reproductions took its place, such as in the series *I maestri del colore*, published from 1963 to 1967 in 278 instalments. In *I Maestri Serie Oro* (The Masters - Gold Series, 2022) Flavio Favelli applied Ferrero Rocher chocolate wrappers onto the covers of the issues. These golden patches conceal the figures' faces, but instead of erasing them, they seem to shelter and enrich the images beneath.

PICTURES WITHIN PICTURES

Giorgio de Chirico's Metaphysical paintings frequently contain a representation of another work of art. The device recalls the tradition of the picture-within-a-picture, through which painters demonstrated their skill by reproducing the main scene in precise miniature.

At the centre of *Interno metafisico* (1926), for instance, one can make out one of his celebrated *Piazze d'Italia* — a series in which the artist sometimes includes a reproduction of the Sleeping Ariadne, an ancient statue held in the Vatican Museums.

Il dorso del cielo by Piero Pizzi Cannella (1979) is an explicit homage to the father of Metaphysical painting. On the left side of the canvas, the same building painted by de Chirico in *Roman Villa* (1922) reappears, albeit from a different perspective. This alone would qualify as a picture-within-a-picture, but Pizzi Cannella goes further, adding a painting held up by a blindfolded figure that mirrors the landscape of the main scene. The picture-within-a-picture appears frequently in the work of Filippo de Pisis too: amid the studied disorder of his still lifes, reproductions of works by El Greco and Francisco Goya quietly make their presence felt. This section of the exhibition challenges us to identify the masterworks hidden within paintings by Gregorio Sciltian (a Leonardo drawing held in the Uffizi's Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe), Mario Mafai (Vermeer's *Allegory of Painting*), and Renato Guttuso (Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*).

MARKS AND HUES

Artists' signatures have played a fundamental role in defining the identity, history, and value of works of art. Over the centuries, the way artists have signed their work has evolved in step with cultural, economic and social change.

The artistic and conceptual experiments of the twentieth century sometimes made the artist's signature the primary subject of the work itself. The installation *Brand Names* is a case in point: Andrea Facco has faithfully reproduced the signatures of dozens of artists taken from the paintings that shaped his formation — from Manet to Picasso, Seurat to Mondrian, Morbelli to de Chirico. Twenty-seven paintings evoked by a section of wall, outlined in pencil to mark the space of an absence. Of those works, only the portion dedicated to the signature remains—a detail that, in the original pieces, certifies both authenticity and the completion of the artwork. Here, however, the signature is forged, inviting us to reflect on the very notion of the artist's identity and to imagine these phantoms from the art of the past.

David Reimondo's installation, by contrast, takes visual language as its starting point to explore the realm of sound. The artist has selected dozens of art books, subjecting each image to careful visual scrutiny. Using a grid to divide the work into squares, he identifies up to four colours within each section. Reimondo's *Cromofonetica* is a personal colour theory that assigns a syllable to each hue. In this way, the combination of colours produces new phonemes — a “chromatic description” of the work.

D'APRÈS

In works of art, quotation finds its fullest expression in tributes, reworkings and interpretations — all of which can be gathered under the French term *d'après*. While a





copy aims to reproduce its model as faithfully as possible, a work “after” another can draw freely on it in an entirely different style.

In the first half of the twentieth century, many artists entered into rich dialogue with the masters of the past, and their sources of inspiration are often easy to identify. The *Portrait of Marta Pallini* (1940) by Achille Funi, calls to mind Raphael’s *Woman with a Veil*, and Renaissance art is a touchstone for much of the portraiture produced by artists of the Novecento Italiano movement, of which Funi was a part.

Piero della Francesca is a key reference point for both Felice Casorati and Massimo Campigli. Both look to his sense of measure and balance in their quest to simplify forms based on geometric solids. A principle already articulated by Paul Cézanne in his still lifes and an unavoidable reference for Casorati’s *Le uova sul cassettone* (Eggs on the Dresser, 1920).

This section also includes several explicit tributes to twentieth-century artists. Campigli, for example, reworks Seurat’s most celebrated canvas in 1954 — *Una domenica alla Grande Jatte* (A Sunday on La Grande Jatte) — simplifying its composition and setting his own stylised pictorial language in dialogue with that of the Neo-Impressionist master.

THE MORANDI CASE

The tributes paid by twentieth-century artists to Giorgio Morandi are so numerous that they deserve closer examination. The rigorous, solitary practice of the Bolognese artist has captivated more than one generation of painters, sculptors, and photographers. Their works are brought into dialogue with the Master’s paintings: a self-portrait and three still lifes, Morandi’s preferred subject. The *Self-Portrait* (1924) is itself a tribute, as it closely mirrors the composition of a self-portrait by Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot from 1825, held in the Louvre.

The studio on Via Fondazza in Bologna, now part of the Casa Museo Morandi, is a place where time seems to have stood still — a world of motionless things made eternal by the artist’s work: cups and bottles rendered opaque by a coat of pale paint, vases holding small bunches of dried or fabric flowers, left to gather dust. Humble objects that were never to be polished — so they would not reflect the light, but absorb it.

The vials lined up by Claudio Parmiggiani in *Untitled* (2019) could be the ghosts of those very objects. The artist, who met Morandi during his formative years, began in 1970 to explore the themes of absence and memory through his *Delocazioni* — works in which the negative traces of objects are imprinted using smoke and dust.

The books and objects held in the Casa Museo are at the heart of Mary Ellen Bartley’s project *Morandi’s Books*, in which the American artist composed and photographed a series of precise, meditative arrangements that echo Morandi’s sensitivity to light, colour, and geometry.

COVERS

In popular music, a “cover” is a reinterpretation of an existing song by another artist — one that retains the original melody and lyrics while stamping them with their own style. This section borrows the term to describe works in which artists revisit iconic works of the past through a new lens. They may be reproduced in full with variations, or a single detail may serve as the point of departure.

Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa* — arguably the most recognised work of art in the world — is understandably the subject of many covers, such as Ai Weiwei’s, assembled from Lego bricks and “smeared with cream” in reference to the 2022 act of vandalism, when an activist hurled a cake at the protective glass of the painting.

Tano Festa reinterprets Michelangelo through a Pop Art lens in a series of 1960s works, in which the Aurora from the Medici Tombs is reduced to a graphic silhouette, its three-dimensionality entirely flattened. Luigi Ontani uses photography to reinterpret famous paintings. In *Déjeuner sur L’ArT* (1969) he mimics the pose of the nude woman in

Manet's painting while holding a reproduction of that very canvas. His works are frequently built on wordplay and puns, as when he assumes the persona of *LeonArdo* or *RaffaEllo*. Before him, Salvo had already stepped into Raphael's shoes — *Self-Portrait (as Raphael)*, 1970 — in a photograph that Francesco Vezzoli would pay homage to many years later.

“To cover” also means to overlay, consequently, the work that best fits this description is by Stefano Arienti, who has covered a reproduction of Claude Monet's *Water Lilies* with coloured modelling clay, thereby translating every brushstroke of the Impressionist artist into three-dimensional form.

AVIDA DOLLARS

In 1934, Salvador Dalí brought his Surrealist works to New York, where they met with enormous commercial success. His pursuit of wealth drew sharp criticism from the Surrealist movement — so much so that André Breton coined the anagram of his name: Avida Dollars (“hungry for dollars”).

Taking its title from this phrase, the final section of the exhibition explores how — particularly from Pop Art onward — the impulse to quote and replicate shifted beyond the art of the past. New myths took their place: cinema, mass media such as print and television, and commercial products.

American Pop Art embraced the icons of consumer society in a less critical manner than the irreverent approach of European artists. Warhol built his practice around the serial reproduction of everyday objects, most famously with *Brillo Soap Pads Box* (1964) — a silkscreen work that, at first glance, is indistinguishable from the cardboard box used to store Brillo soap pads. For all their mimetic effect, Warhol's *Brillo Box* are wooden crates that contain nothing, and this invites us to consider the gap between a real object and its representation. Together with the iconic Marilyn — a 1967 silkscreen based on a publicity still from the film *Niagara* starring Marilyn Monroe — these works by Warhol have inspired covers including *Granbucato* (2008) by Arnold Mario Dall'O, the *Coca Cola Classic* (1989) by Vittoria Chierici, and Marilyn works by Ugo Nespolo (2025) and Carlo Pasini (2010).



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Opening hours

Tue, Wed, Thu, Sun: 10.00-18.00
Fri, Sat 10:00 am -7:30 pm
Closed on Mondays

Admission fees

Tickets are valid for two months and provide entry to the Mart in Rovereto, the Depero Futurist Art House, and the Trento Civic Gallery
General admission 15 Euro
Reduced ticket: 10 Euro
Free entry Members, visitors under 15, and people with disabilities.

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