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One of the artists who definitely contributed to Galleria Fumagalli's history was **Giuseppe Uncini**, to whom numerous exhibition projects and books were dedicated, including the Catalogue Raisonné edited by Bruno Corà, and published by Silvana Editoriale (2008).

The texts of the Catalogue, together with archival material, constitute this focus that traces the various phases of the Italian master's research.

GIUSEPPE UNCINI



Giuseppe Uncini, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 2007. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

Giuseppe Uncini was born in Fabriano in 1929 and died in Trevi in 2008.

In 1953 he moved to Rome where he encountered Edgardo Mangucci, Alberto Burri, Afro, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Ettore Colla, Emilio Villa. His first series of works dates back to 1956 when he created the **Terre**, followed by the **Cementarmati** (1957-61), a series of sculptures that revealed the supporting structure and the constructive and architectural principles in the foreground. In these years Giuseppe Uncini took part in various exhibitions of the group "Giovane scuola romana", together with Tano Festa, Franco Angeli, Mario Schifano and Francesco Lo Savio. In 1962, together with Gastone Biggi, Nicola Carrino, Nato Frascà, Achille Pace and Pasquale Santoro, he founded Gruppo 1 to foster the social role of art: they contrasted the Informal with the idea of art linked to perception, suggesting the fundamental function of the artist in society. The research continued in the first half of the 1960s with the **Ferrocementi**, followed by the **Strutturespazio**, presented at the 33rd Venice Biennale in 1966. In the 1970s the series of **Mattoni** showed the massive architectural presence of bricks (mattoni) dialoguing with their own shadow as an actual volume. The reflection on the shadow and on the possibility of making it plastically perceptible continued in the subsequent cycles of the **Ombre**, **Dimore** and **Muri d'ombra**. Between the 90s and the early 2000s, Uncini's attention was polarised by the desire to turn the empty space between forms into sculpture, as demonstrated by the **Spazi di ferro**, followed by the **Spazicemento**. In the 2000s, Uncini's sculptures took on large dimensions and architectural vocations in the **Architetture**, continued until the last years of life, when he began the **Artifici**. Besides being sculptor, he also worked as a **goldsmith**: in 2002 he presented at Galleria Fumagalli a series of jewels in gold, silver and brilliants, made with the ancient

technique of lost wax casting.

The last monumental work created is *Epistylum* (2007-2009), a sculpture made of reinforced concrete and six-meter-high, conceived for the outdoor exhibition space of the museum Mart in Rovereto.

Throughout his long career, Giuseppe Uncini was invited to exhibit his works in countless solo and group exhibitions in national and international institutions. Mentioning only a few would be meaningless, therefore we invite you to visit the website of the Archivio Uncini. However, it is worth mentioning that he was present in important international exhibitions such as the Rome Quadrennial (1999, 1992, 1973, 1965, 1955), the Venice Biennale (1995, 1984, 1978, 1976, 1966), and the Tokyo Biennale (1963).



Exhibition view: *Giuseppe Uncini*, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 2007. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

TERRE

Remarkable precedent of the iconic *Cementarmati* series – pivotal works in the development of Uncini's art – are the *Terre* (1956-1957).

On these canvases or papers, the artist set tuff, sand, concrete, coal and coloured pigments that offer spatial qualities: the artist declared himself a painter, yet the materials used created layers, transparencies, creations of backgrounds, and depths.

The backgrounds look like a plaster with well-ground texture and repeatedly smoothed and incised, which recall urban spaces, a residual result of overlapping and scratched volumes that reveal underlying colours.

Imbued with the Italian Informal Art, the *Terre* are landscapes of earth, light and colour.



Giuseppe Uncini, *Terre*, 1956, earth on cellotex, 51,5x38 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

«I painted, painted everything, with anything, on anything. My materials were the most diverse... cardboard, plywood, even better Masonite, Cellotex etc. (luckily, canvasses and paints were a luxury I could not afford), and for colours I used all sorts of earths, tuff, marble and coal dust, ashes, sawdust, lime, concrete, in brief anything that I happened to find, as long as it was cheap, practical and not complicated.» G.U.



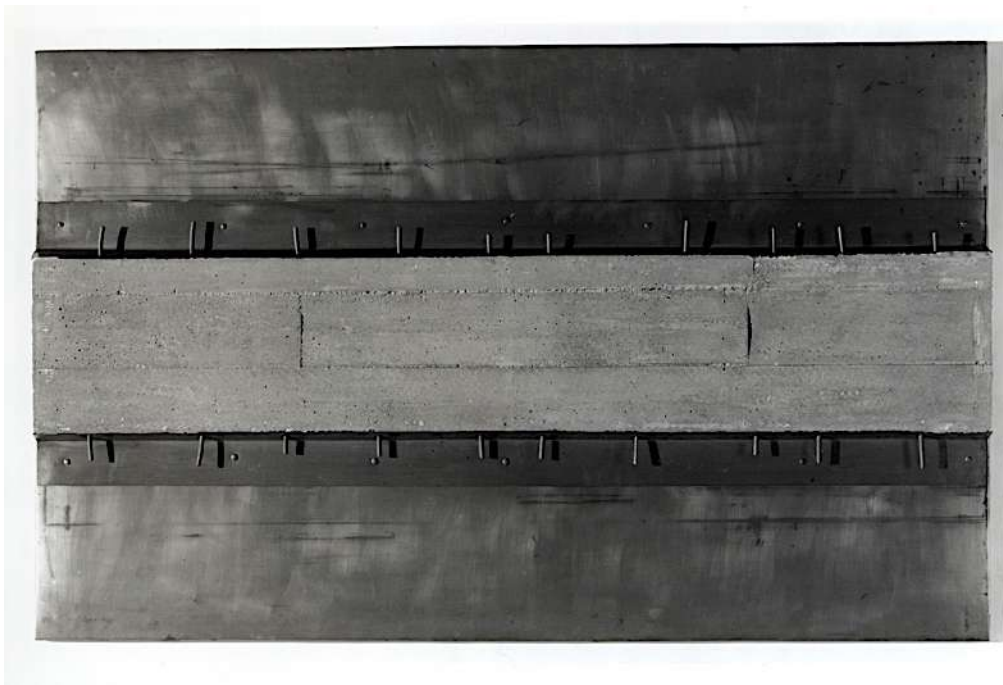
Exhibition view: *Giuseppe Uncini*, Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, 2009.
Photo courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

CEMENTARMATI

The experience of the *Terre* led Uncini to avoid traditional pictorial production and prefer two elements with a strong spatial and constructive value: concrete and iron.

The implementation of these new materials represented a very important step which allowed him to overcome all the ties with the past experience and the Informal, but above all laying the foundations for what we now consider an effective and extraordinary turn in favour of a new path. A turning point, irreversibly made to reach the land of objectivity.

The *Cementarmati* (1957-1961) is a revealing manifesto of the passage from the pictorial tradition to the entity of object, to the creation of an unrepresentative, but self-eloquent and self-supporting artefact. Uncini wanted to reveal the constitutive elements of his new language (concrete and iron), without hiding anything, without infusing the artist's thought into the work, but maintaining a certain detachment, a key passage that will become a constant in the following production.



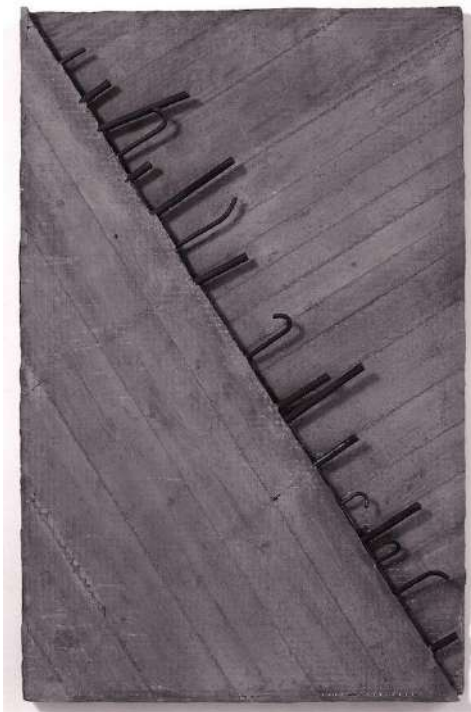
Giuseppe Uncini, *Cementarmato lamiera*, 1959, concrete, plate, iron, 121x196. Private collection

The painter gave way to the builder: the work reveals its self-supporting structure and the squared surface is literally constructed just like any portion of a concrete building, with the same rules and the same self-supporting values.

Giuseppe Uncini is attracted by this mixture of water, sand and cement in which to insert an armour made of wire mesh and round steel bars. These works allow us to glimpse the supporting structure of their making, in contrast with the compact and rough surfaces of the concrete that often show the formwork grain.

The extraordinary number of variations in the elaboration of the *Cementarmati* highlight Uncini's extremely far-reaching sensitivity towards construction experiments and surfaces marked by a high degree of aesthetic quality.

«Those who make art should deeply reflect on the materials they use, in order to express an actual meaning.» G.U.



Giuseppe Uncini, *Cementarmato*, 1961, concrete and iron, 139x89 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

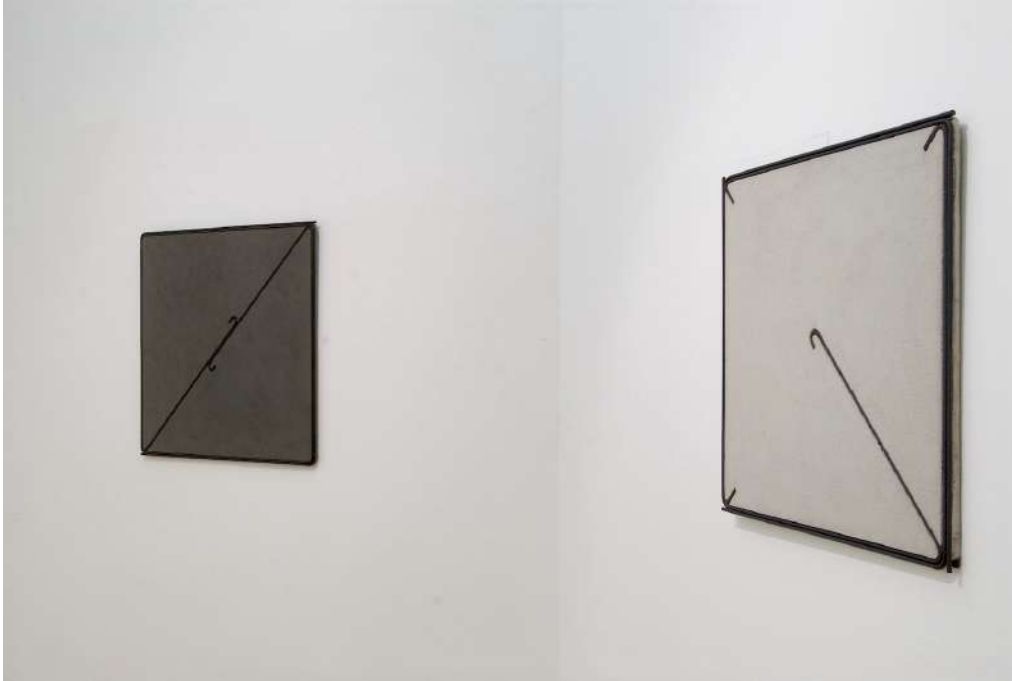
FERROCEMENTI

In 1960 Giuseppe Uncini began creating some *Cementarmati* (for instance *Traliccio*, 1960-1961) which, instead of being designed for wall hanging, were conceived to stand vertically on the floor, without any constraints. The first of such works consisted of two reinforced concrete vertical parallelepipeds kept together, though not touching one another, by means of pieces of iron reinforcement rods, fixed at open right angles. They should be looked at as plastic organisms in which emptiness and void, concrete and iron, front and back, all converge in a single monochromatic identity.

These works are an anticipation of morphologies which were fully developed in the *Ferrocementi*, closely related to the artist's adhesion to Gruppo 1, together with Gastone Biggi, Nicola Carrino, Nato Frascà e Achille Pace in 1963 (active until 1967). Among the main common points there was the refusal towards the

Informal and the commitment to a research aimed at the assessment of space, by overturning the status of work of art from being within space to being itself space.

By using the iron rod, the *Ferrocementi* (1963 to 1966) highlight the importance of the line and the geometric construction. The concrete – sometimes grey, sometimes white – lost all its roughness and the surface is perfectly smooth and framed by the metal rod: something very close to Minimalism.

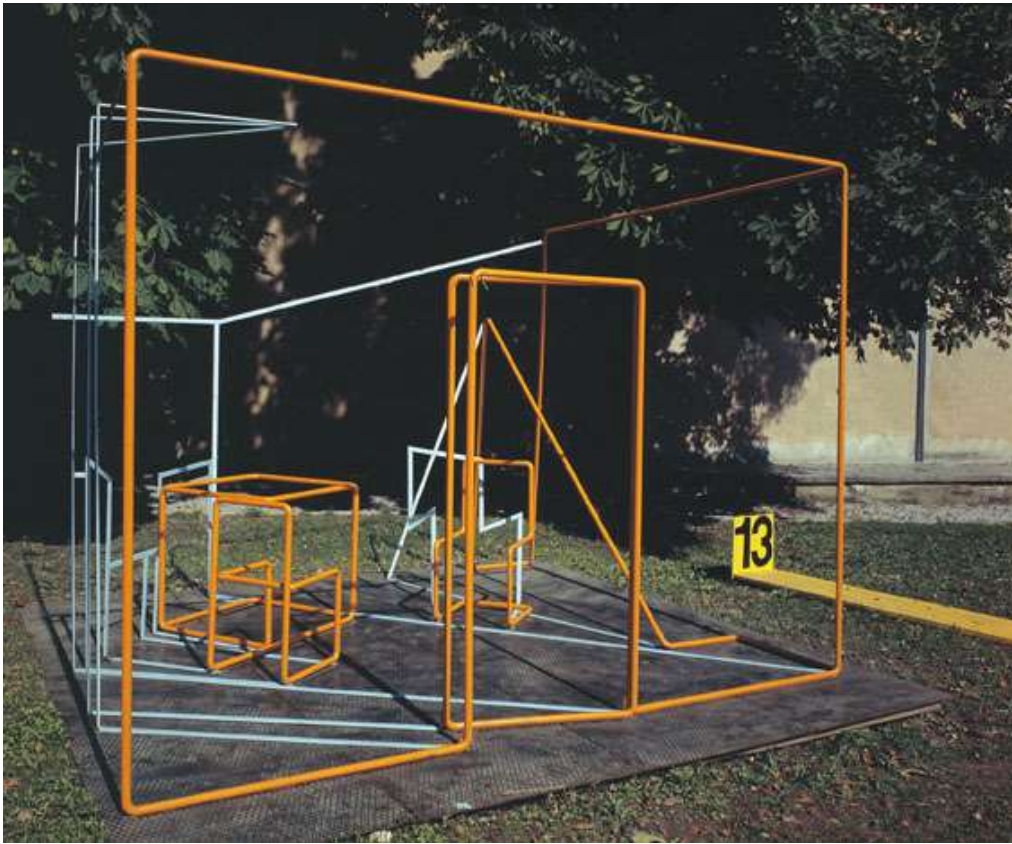


Exhibition view: *Giuseppe Uncini*, Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, 2009.
Photo courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

STRUTTURE SPAZIO

In the *Ferrocementi*, the aesthetic value of iron reinforcement rods increased more and more, until it assumed a complete plastic-spatial value in the *Strutture spazio* (1966). The void took on a plastic presence thanks to the metal profiles, which in turn became light-sign. These were the most conceptually advanced experience of Uncini, who soon, however, returned to investigate the constructive and aesthetic properties of concrete.

In 1967, Uncini created the first *Strutture spazio-Ambiente* in which spaces, tables and chairs, in full scale, well suggested the eloquent potential for intervention in space to be actualised through the use of flat iron or with circular section.



Giuseppe Uncini, *Ambiente con tavolo e sedie*, 1967, iron, 250x600x400 cm. Collection of the artist - GNAM, Rome

MATTONI

In his constructive investigation, Giuseppe Uncini also encountered another constitutive element of architecture: the brick (*mattone*). The artist considered its value as a modular unit to build actual walls, devoid of any functionality, but capable of evoking building experiences of the Italian tradition.

By using brick, Giuseppe Uncini considered the spatial potential of these parallelepipeds and, above all, the entity of shadow projected on the wall. So followed a progressive research on the physical presence of the shadow, and therefore on its definition in sculpture.

In this way the artist pursued a study, once again totally innovative, which had the aim of materialising and integrating perceptually and objectively their own immateriality: the shadow.



Giuseppe Uncini, *Cloaca massima*, 1970, brick, concrete and wood, 350x350x110 cm. Museo Civico G. Fattori, Livorno



Giuseppe Uncini, *Parete concava*, 1971, brick, concrete, 180x120x18 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

OMBRE

The series of the *Strutture spazio* and, definitely, of the *Mattoni* led Uncini to a long meditation on shadow that spanned the entire decade 1967-1977, marked by works characterised either by metal profiles or consisting of concrete solids, such as *Finestra con ombra* (1968), *Porta con ombra* (1968), and *Sedia con ombra* (1967), metaphysical and conceptual synthesis of an extensive research on objects and on their intangible projections.

To imagine the shadowy projection of volumes meant to give shape to a reality not-physically perceived, despite always present: light. Through the formative act, the shadow became alive and a whole entity with the body that generated it.





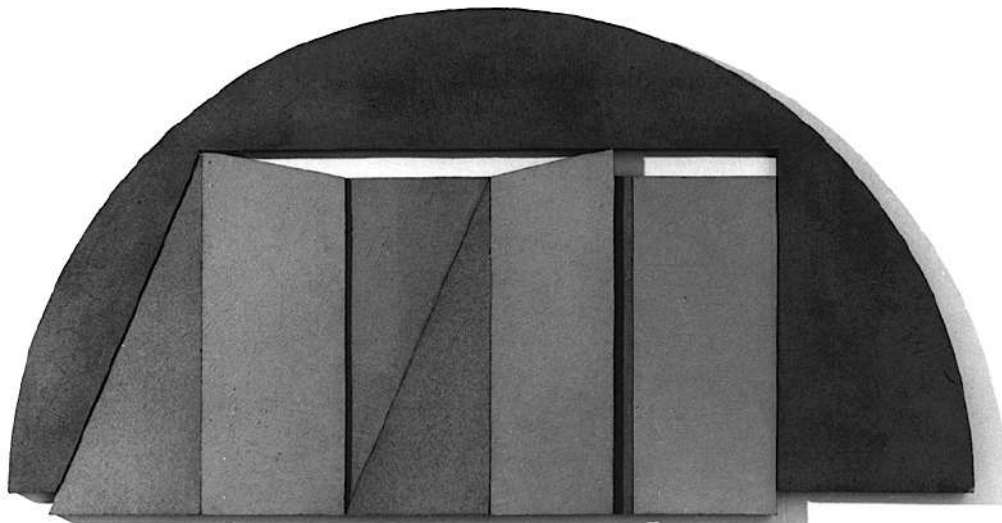
Exhibition views: *Giuseppe Uncini. The Conquest of Shadow*, Fondazione Marconi, Milano, 2019.

DIMORE AND MURI D'OMBRA

In 1979 Uncini started an original cycle of works called *Dimore*, a further investigation into shadow and echo of a certain Italian architecture: they presented arches, insuperable thresholds, simply drawn perspective vanishing points; bare disposition of volumes or openings onto empty spaces that were only theoretically habitable.

The whole collection of the *Dimore* highlights Uncini's inexhaustible practice with the essential elements of plane geometry, from orthogonal straight lines, to diagonal lines, curves, and polygons, all made of the usual matter (concrete) and monochrome coloration with very slight variations.

«These works of mine are container-sculptures, accessible sculptures which one can open and pass through, with, at times, movable elements that add to their aesthetical-formal value also a specific function. In order to understand or better accept a sculpture, I opened it, I investigated and enhanced the void inside it, by dwelling on it with special attention so that it did not appear as a simple cavity, but so that it would rise to an "aesthetical fact", like the external part that forms and contains it. Therefore, the inside of a sculpture is consequential to its outside and vice versa.» G.U.



Giuseppe Uncini, *Dimore*, 1983, wood and concrete, 52,5x100 cm. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

SPAZI DI FERRO

Iron, a fundamental element in the *Cementarmati* as well as in the *Ferrocementi* and in the *Strutture spazio*, was also used in the following sculptures: the *Spazi di ferro*.

The iron reinforcement rod, which encloses and supports the concrete, takes on a new value. Mostly self-supporting and designed for wall hanging, these works are characterised by a dense three-dimensional metal mesh that combines with concrete slabs to form geometric shapes, again in the context of the empty-full relationship between iron and concrete. The geometric shapes challenge the perspective with their intense irregularity, but at the same time express an authentic and sophisticated balance.



Exhibition view: Giuseppe Uncini. *Il cemento disegnato*, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 2010.
Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

SPAZICEMENTO AND MURI DI CEMENTO

From the plastic construction of the shadows to the materialisation of void between volumes in space, Uncini affirmed the existence of an indissoluble continuity between matter, light, and energy which, radiated in the space, reaches such a physicality that it is not only perceived, but is real.

In the early 90s Uncini began the cycle of the *Spazicemento* where the concrete became a monochrome page marked by the grain of the formwork used for the castings. The work became mainly two-dimensional and took on irregular geometric shapes, angles, curves, rectangles, squares, trapezoids... in which the ever-present iron rod enclosed and completed the shape. Here, however, more than in any other series, the artist chose to give extreme freedom to forms: the rod not only completed the design, but set the form free, going beyond it in size and spatiality.

In the *Muri di cemento*, which chronologically followed the *Spazicemento*, we observe the same formal freedom and experimentation but simplified and shrunk into more regular portions, and iron rods that tend to gain greater strength and expressiveness. Rods no longer delimit the shape but overlap it, sometimes taking non-linear, broken, knotted or hook shapes.

In 1996 the colour appeared in some of the *Spazicemento*: blue, yellow and red, small or large backgrounds accompanied the grey of the concrete and iron. These works seem to be the most pervaded by uneasiness and show a feeling of unrestrainable freedom.



Exhibition view: *Giuseppe Uncini, Works 1958-1996*, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 1997.
Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

ARCHITETTURA

From the early 2000s, after continuing to investigate the concrete surface even in the *Muri di cemento*, he began to create large sculptures characterised by a system articulated around pillars, architraves and iron bars to form actual architectures. Showing a trilithic morphology, despite being made of concrete, the *Architettura* can be acknowledged as the foreseeable landing of Giuseppe Uncini's sculpture onto the architectural scale.

The artist did not go as far as to constructing real buildings, but outlined large-scale volumes and forms kept together by solid staples made of iron rods, which nonetheless, although recalling architecture, do not presume their habitability.



Exhibition view: *Giuseppe Uncini*, Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo, 2007. Courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

ARTIFICI

In the last years, Giuseppe Uncini's ultimate production is a "return to origins".

The last series of works, the *Artifici*, presented earth next to reinforced concrete, the element that initiated the artist's research, as if he wanted to close the cycle of his plastic investigation with a reference to his beginnings.



Giuseppe Uncini, *Artifici*, 2008, earth, concrete and wood. Photo courtesy Galleria Fumagalli

To learn more about the artist's work, browse [Galleria Fumagalli's website](#) and the [Archivio Uncini's website](#).

Text drawn from the essay *Giuseppe Uncini: The Golden Rules of a Career* by Bruno Corà included in the Catalogue Raisonné, edited by the Archivio Uncini and Annamaria Maggi, published by Silvana Editoriale in 2008.

Galleria Fumagalli edited 6 other monographic publications: *Giuseppe Uncini. Gli Spazicamento*, with a text by Giovanni Maria Accame (Edizioni Stefano Fumagalli, Bergamo 1995); *Giuseppe Uncini*, curated by Giovanni Maria Accame (De Agostini, Novara 1996); *Giuseppe Uncini. L'immaginarìa misura*, with texts by Bruno Corà, Chiara d'Afflitto, Annamaria Maggi, Marco Meneguzzo, Manfred Fath (Gli Ori, Pistoia 2000); *Giuseppe Uncini. Raum aus fläche und struktur*, with texts by Manfred Fath, Marco Meneguzzo, Volker W. Feierabend (Edizioni Galleria

Fumagalli, Bergamo 2001); *Giuseppe Uncini. A cera persa*, with a text by Ada Masoero (Edizioni Galleria Fumagalli, Bergamo 2002); *Giuseppe Uncini. Il cemento disegnato*, with texts by Giacinto di Pietrantonio and Franco Fanelli (Silvana Editoriale, Cinisello Balsamo 2010).

