

Aldo Grazzi *Gira e rigira*

After previous exhibitions dedicated to the artist—hosted in recent years at Marignana Arte’s main venue and at Spazio Berlendis—the project *Gira e rigira* offers a new opportunity to delve into the work of Aldo Grazzi (Pomponesco, 1954 – Perugia, 2023), an influential figure in contemporary Italian art, known for his tireless experimentation across languages and materials. The exhibition *Gira e rigira*, set up in the spaces of Marignana Project for the ninth edition of *The Venice Glass Week*, focuses on one of the artist’s most beloved materials: the glass bead, transformed in his work from mere ornament into the structural foundation of an autonomous, profound, and original aesthetic language.

Fragile, repetitive, minimal, glass beads—used for centuries in global trade and circulated widely through Atlantic colonial networks—become, in Grazzi’s hands, a material for poetic construction. These small objects have traveled across centuries and continents, serving as goods, currency, and unequal symbols of colonial power. Grazzi takes this historically charged material and subverts its function: what once served as a vehicle of economic exchange becomes, in his work, a tool for intimate and poetic reflection. Far from using them as mere exotic references, the artist recontextualizes them, transforming them into the founding elements of a practice that brings art into dialogue with anthropology and philosophical inquiry.

Grazzi’s use of glass beads originates from a pivotal experience in his life: beginning in 1987, during a series of trips to Africa, he learned traditional weaving techniques from members of the Maasai and Samburu communities. From this experience emerged a practice that intertwines aesthetics and anthropology, spirituality and manual gesture: the artist does not appropriate another’s craft in an exotic or aestheticizing way, but makes it his own in a manner that holds together gesture and thought, aesthetics and ethics, visual intuition and the construction of meaning. Through these works, Grazzi speaks to us of the journey—physical, emotional, existential—as a metaphor for being in the world: an invitation to cross borders, to recognize the other, and to inhabit change as an integral part of the search for self.

In the exhibition, the tension between order and disorder, geometry and flow, figure and abstraction becomes palpable. In the *Girevoli*, the forms seem to chase one another in an eternal return, propelled by an energy that is never purely visual, but also emotional and perceptual. In the *Arazzi*, by contrast, manual labor becomes meditation: each strand of beads is a knotted thought, a moment held in time. Grazzi constructs his works as if they were rituals—silent prayers—where the repetitiveness of the artistic gesture becomes a means of spiritual elevation and reflection on the tension between the finite and the infinite, between order and chaos, illusion and reality.

Gira e rigira thus stands as a tribute to an artist who was able to transform a humble and minute material into a universal language. The exhibition is not only a homage to Aldo Grazzi’s body of work, but also an opportunity to reflect on the evocative power of materials and the symbolic force of artistic practice. Through the modest glass bead, the artist was able to build a bridge between cultures, eras, and bodies of knowledge, turning repetition into a poetic act of reflection. His works—suspended between gesture and thought—invite us to slow down, to observe, and to value

what often escapes us in our haste. In a world dominated by acceleration and relentless productivity, by efficiency and the constant pursuit of more, Grazzi reveals the value of slowness, repetition, and disinterest—arcane tools capable of offering a more authentic and profound vision of ourselves and the world.