

**The Bloomberg Commission: Giuseppe Penone**  
5 September 2012 – September 2013, Gallery 2

Over the past 45 years, Italian artist Giuseppe Penone has examined our relationship to nature. For the latest Bloomberg Commission, the Whitechapel Gallery unveils a twelve metre bronze cast of a tree, with a radiant gold-leaf interior, which will spread across the columned gallery.

The tree is carefully balanced on its branches and divided into sections to allow visitors to move between the separate elements. The work contrasts with the urban environment surrounding the Gallery, highlighting hidden nature within the city. It also references the Whitechapel Gallery's Arts and Crafts architecture which features the Tree of Life motif on its façade. The installation is accompanied by a year-long programme of talks and events exploring the rich relationship between nature and the city.

Giuseppe Penone (b.1947) became the youngest artist to be admitted to the legendary Arte Povera group, an Italian movement coined by curator Germano Celant in 1967. Inspired by the radical politics of the late 1960s, these artists challenged the conventions of sculpture, often using everyday materials.

This new site-specific work for The Bloomberg Commission, *Spazio di Luce (Space of Light)* (2012), is made using the ancient technique of Lost Wax casting and the interior and exterior of the tree are deliberately reversed. Reflecting Penone's interest in how we relate to the natural world by touch, the bronze exterior registers thousands of finger prints left by the foundry workers who covered the original tree in wax as part of the casting process. The inside of the sculpture is layered in gold leaf, creating a glowing contrast to the dark patina which assimilates the appearance of tree bark. A second sculpture *Essere Fiume (Being River)* (1998) will also be included in the gallery, consisting of an original stone shaped by the flow of a river in Tuscany and a sculpture of the stone, hand carved by Penone to mimic the original.

Giuseppe Penone carries out 'actions' within the landscape, which can lead to sculptural work, photographs or drawings. For one of his earliest works *Alpi Marittime – Continuerà a crescere tranne che in quel punto (Maritime Alps – It will continue to grow except at this point)* (1968), he created a steel cast of a hand gripping the tender stem of a sapling so that the sculpture slowly became absorbed as the tree grew. Using traditional techniques such as casting or carving, and often working with bronze and other natural materials, he explores human interaction with the environment and the way we perceive our surroundings. He uses the tree as a model for his sculpture and a symbol of human life. In 1969, Penone made *Gli anni dell' albero più uno (The years of the tree plus one)*, placing a layer of wax on to the surface of a cut tree adding the equivalent width of one year's growth.

Material from Penone's archive will be included in a series of displays on show in an adjacent space. The material gathered will include writings, sketches and photographs focusing on his career-long interaction with trees.

The Bloomberg Commission invites an international artist to create an annual site-specific artwork inspired by the rich history of the former library. Previous commissions were created by artists Goshka Macuga (2009), Claire Barclay (2010) and Josiah McElheny (2011). Bloomberg's support reflects its commitment to innovation, and its ongoing efforts to expand access to art, science and the humanities.

**Press Release**

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## Notes for Editors

- Giuseppe Penone (b.1947 in Garessio, Italy) studied a diploma in sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts, Turin, before returning to the Garessio woods in Northern Italy to develop his practice. He teaches at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris and continues to live and work in Turin. Penone's work is held in major collections internationally, including Tate, London and the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Recent exhibitions include Centre Pompidou (2004), Paris, Venice Biennale (2007), Toyota Municipal Museum of Art, Toyota, Japan (2008), Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2009) and MACs, Grand-Hornu, Belgium (2011). In 2010 Penone's work *Idee di Pietra (Ideas of Stone)* (2003) inaugurated Documenta 13 which is currently on display in Kassel. He was the recipient of the Schock Prize for the Visual Arts—reconciling nature and civilization—in 2001 from the Kungl Vetenskapsakademien, at The Royal Swedish Academy of Science, Stockholm. He has recently been selected to exhibit new work at the Château de Versailles in spring 2013.
- *The Bloomberg Commission: Giuseppe Penone* is curated by Achim Borchardt-Hume, Chief Curator, Whitechapel Gallery with Poppy Bowers, Assistant Curator, Whitechapel Gallery.
- The Commission will be accompanied by a fully illustrated publication which will include an interview between Giuseppe Penone and Achim Borchardt-Hume, an essay by Douglas Fogle and illustrations of key works across 45 years.
- Supported by Bloomberg.
- Bloomberg, the global business and financial information and news leader, gives influential decision makers a critical edge by connecting them to a dynamic network of information, people and ideas. The company's strength—delivering data, news and analytics through innovative technology, quickly and accurately—is at the core of the Bloomberg Professional service, which provides real time financial information to more than 300,000 subscribers globally. Through the philanthropy programme, Bloomberg help charities and non-profit organisations around the world with education and literacy programmes, health and medical research, social work, arts and culture, public parks and the environment. [www.bloomberg.com](http://www.bloomberg.com)
- Additional support provided by the Wingate Scholarships.

## Visitor Information

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm, Thursdays, 11am – 9pm.

Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX.

Nearest London Underground Station: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR. Admission free,

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## Press Information

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