

madre



12.02-18.05.2026

Uri Aran
Untitled (I love you)

curated by Eva Fabbris

Uri Aran Untitled (I love you) is the first Italian museum exhibition by American artist Uri Aran (Jerusalem, 1977) and brings together around 170 works. The exhibition features new works, created specifically for the occasion, alongside others produced throughout his career, since his debut in the mid-2000s.

The path of the exhibition, curated by Eva Fabbris, Director of museo Madre, offers a sequence of experiences and free associations that generate echoes, shifts in meaning, and references sparked between the various works.

Uri Aran gathers together elements that already exist in his works: found objects, everyday gestures, words worn out by overuse. He reorganizes them according to a logic he defines as ‘bureaucratic formalism.’ Measuring, moving, classifying: seemingly neutral gestures that reveal how every system of control carries with it a hidden emotional dimension.

Images of animals recur throughout the exhibition: stickers, videos, small passport photos. Ordering them taxonomically is a seemingly harmless action, yet one that actually creates hierarchies, transforming life into controllable categories. *Is a cat good or bad? What about a whale?*

Many works also feature bread, cookies, and billiard balls: everyday objects that Aran arranges, accumulates, or transforms. They are not symbols to be interpreted but material presences that trigger memories and nostalgia, often bound up with childhood.

For Aran, childhood is never naïve but represents a time when emotions are experienced with extreme seriousness, and every gesture can take on enormous weight.

In Aran’s works, language is not a transparent tool but a field of negotiation in which multiple meanings coexist without ever being resolved. Even humor—seriously done yet never explicit—is a part of this field: it brings things closer without explaining them, creating familiarity without cutting down distance.

Proposals for your visit

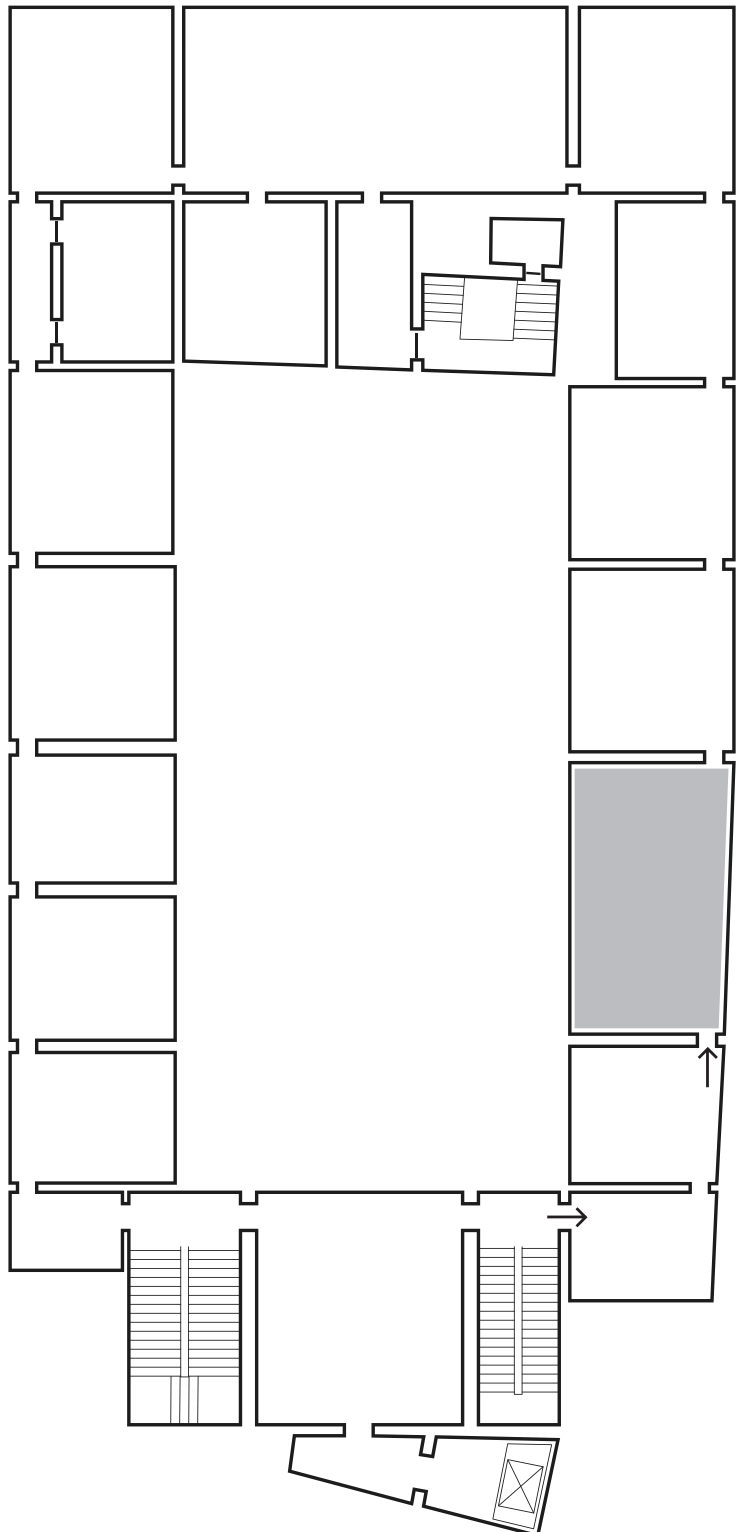
- 1 *Uri Aran Untitled (I love you)* is not a historical exhibition, but rather the perspective of an artist interpreting our present.
- 2 Asking questions while visiting a contemporary art exhibition is natural and stimulating: good works provide questions, not answers.
- 3 Music is constantly present in the exhibition, like a perfume that envelops you. Letting yourself be carried away by the emotions it stirs up might be just the right way to approach your visit.

Method

- 1 Despite spanning over twenty years of work, the exhibition is not organized chronologically. It is conceived as a single work in its own right: a spatial and emotional whole in which the artist's entire production embraces a new order, laid out in relation to the museum architecture.
- 2 In this document, we present a number of works that summarize the most important and recurring themes in Uri Aran's research.

1

Third floor





Uri Aran
***Manual*, 2025**

oil, graphite, oil pastel, conté, color pencil,
charcoal and mixed media on paper

On loan from the Collection Joy L. Wang and
Family (New York)

Uri Aran
***The Bride*, 2025**

oil, oil pastel, graphite, charcoal, and mixed media
on Somerset Paper

Courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London

Uri Aran
***Portrait*, 2025**

oil, oil pastel, graphite, charcoal, and mixed media
on Somerset Paper

Private collection, Malta

Uri Aran
***Rose*, 2024**

graphite, oil pastel, conté, color pencil, charcoal
and mixed media on paper

Courtesy the artist and Matthew Brown

1

The works *Manual* (2025), *The Bride* (2025), *Portrait* (2025), and *Rose* (2024) are created using a process that may be described as mixed media on paper. The artist paints and draws using a range of tools and materials, adopting a spontaneous and playful approach. A serious game that is repeated subject after subject, composing vibrant images in which everyone can recognize something. Underneath the painted compositions in each work are small passport photographs. The quintessential medium of institutionalized recognition, in Aran's works, passport photos appear without any indication of the nationality or biography of those who appear in them, suggesting a distancing from the mechanism of identity assignment, also in relation to the artist's own experience of migration. Despite not knowing who these people are, we cannot help but wonder: *how are they related to the artist? Are they members of his family?*

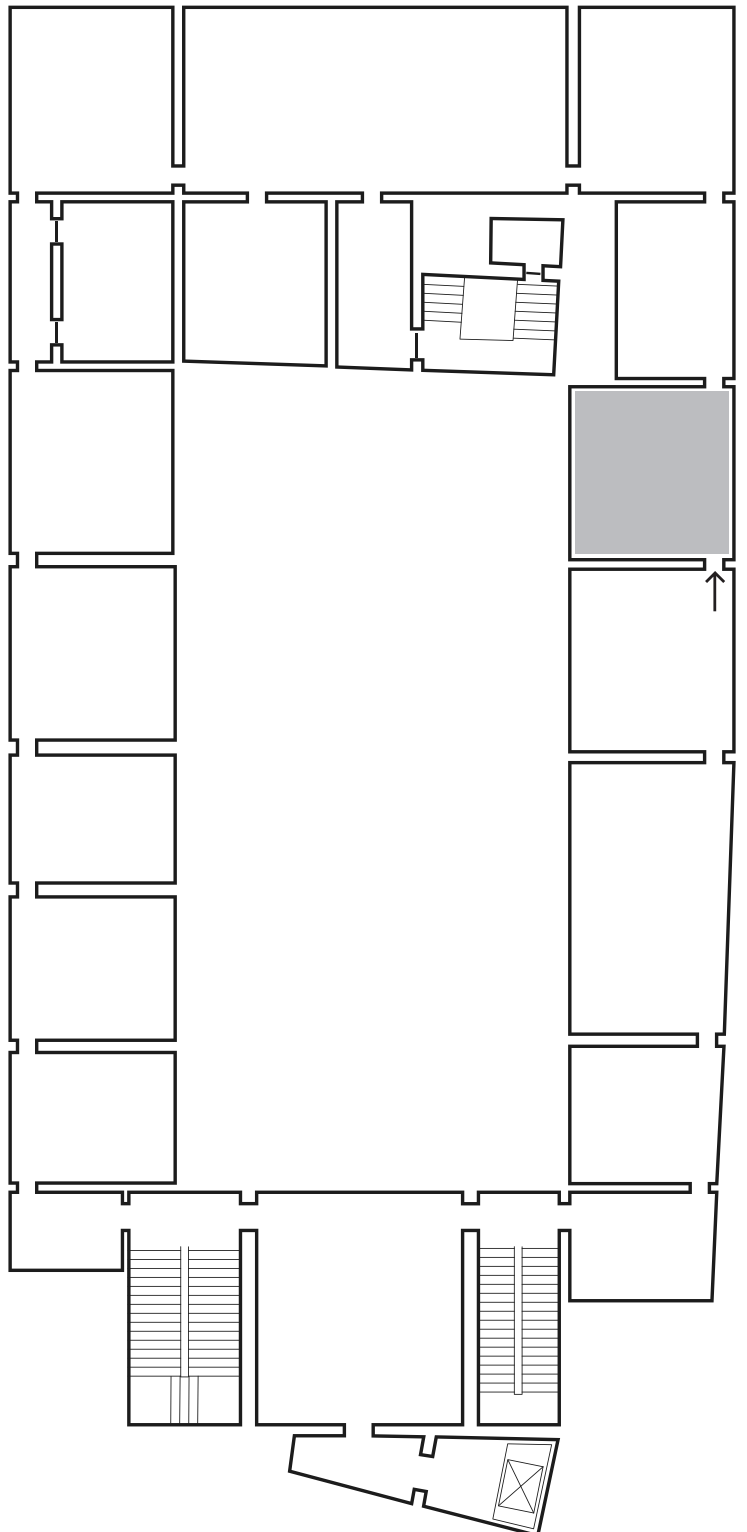
According to Aran, the work is completed by this very question, one destined to remain unanswered, revealing the shared need to orient ourselves by reading connections and links, in a dimension that is as much social as it is existential.

What do you see when you look at the face of a stranger?

Can an image tell you who you really are?

2

Third floor





Uri Aran
***Untitled (Bread Library)*, 2025**

wood and bread

Courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London

2

On the wooden shelves, there is an alphabet made entirely of bread. *Untitled (Bread Library)* (2025) is an environmental installation that envelops us, opening up various possibilities of language: an archive that catalogues while giving off a specific aroma. Just as bread is our ABC, so the alphabet is the basis of our language.

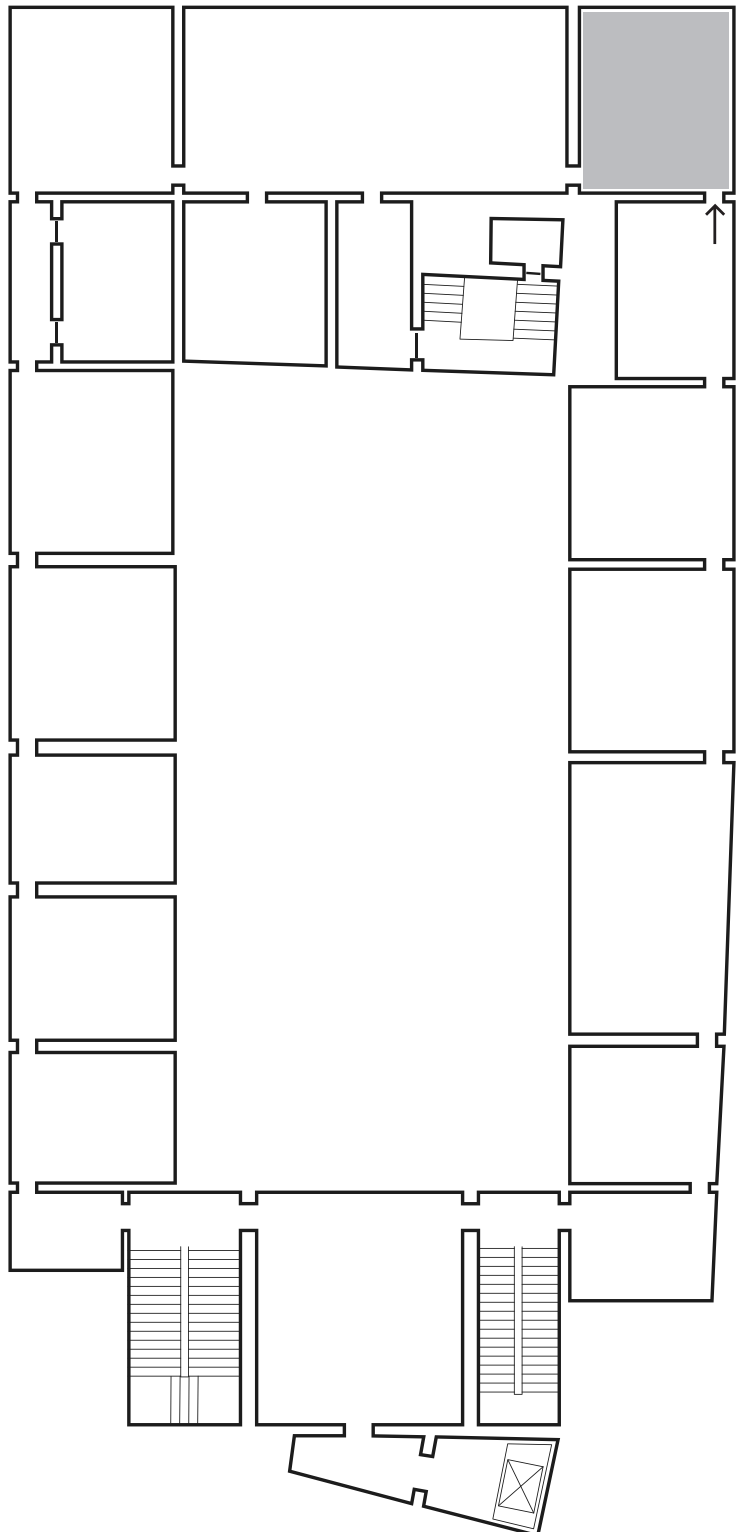
Uri Aran treats words, letters, and their supports as materials that change meaning on the basis of how we use them. The functional capacity of language is put to the test, just as it is in poetry.

How does the meaning of words change when you perceive them with your senses and not just with your mind?

How do materials transform words into experience?

3

Third floor





Uri Aran
***Skyline (Two or Three Elephants)*, 2024**

wood stain, oil, acrylic, oil pastel, graphite and wax pencil on canvas

Courtesy the artist and Matthew Brown

3

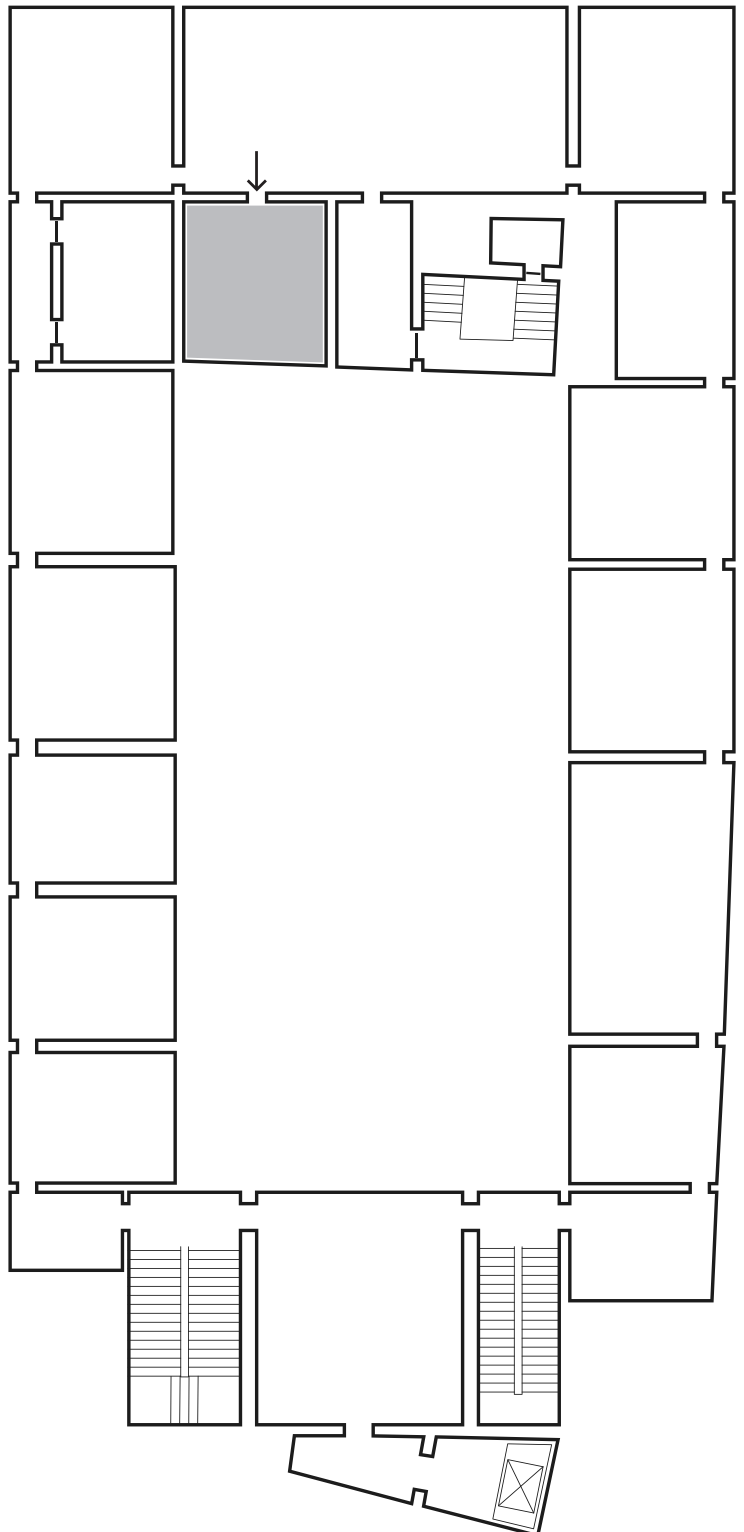
In this work, Uri Aran combines painting and drawing in a free, layered composition. Silhouettes reminiscent of animals, figures, and fragments of landscape emerge and dissolve amid fields of color and splashes of paint. The arched lines in the background suggest a horizon or an urban skyline, creating a dialogue between nature and the city. The title invites us to look for ‘two or three elephants,’ yet the shapes remain ambiguous.

The layering creates a visual field in which each shape can emerge or dissolve depending on where we look. Just like when we gaze at clouds or stains as children, searching for recognizable figures, so in this painting the gaze continually negotiates what it sees. We may pick out an animal or a figure, but that does not mean we have truly understood them. The image changes depending on where the gaze rests and remains open, like something that cannot be captured once and for all.

How many shapes can you see before the image changes?

4

Third floor





Uri Aran
***Untitled*, 2006**

single channel video, 3' 24"

Courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London

4

In the video, the artist embraces his dog while tears stream down his face. A gesture that does not clarify a specific emotion, but rather reveals how difficult it is to express what we feel.

The only possible channel of communication between us and animals is nonverbal language. In Aran's works, our relationship with animals becomes a territory for understanding human bonds: they do not speak, yet they help us to express ourselves and feel understood.

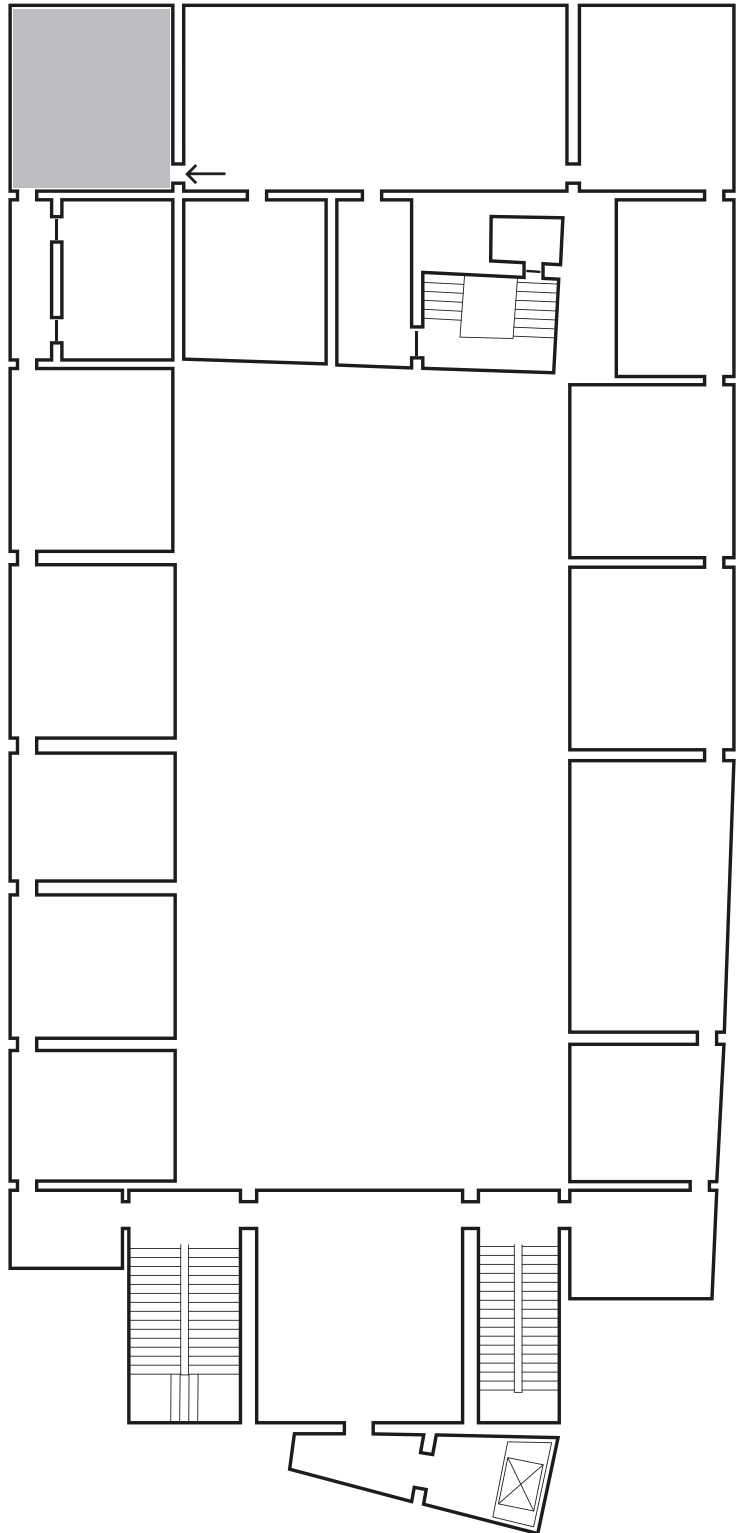
Emotions are never represented directly in Aran's works: they emerge indirectly from situations, gestures, and materials that trigger memories, sensations, and smells, ones that are often vague and hard to pin down precisely. Emotions do not explain the works or make them easier to understand. They keep them open, where what is perceived remains incomplete, provisional, and deeply human.

What kind of relationship is created when words are not shared?

Can you stay within a feeling without immediately transforming it into meaning?

5

Third floor





Uri Aran
Untitled (Bus), 2008

mixed media

Courtesy Filiep and Mimi Libeert Collection, Belgium

5

On a table with a dirty, yellowed surface, as if stained by time and coffee, billiard balls are scattered about. Each one is labeled with the word ‘bus.’ On the same surface, there are also false eyelashes, seemingly unrelated elements to be found in the same space. Like when we try to give directions to someone by placing random objects on the table—a cup becomes a crossroads, a lighter a landmark—the objects are transformed into tools for orientation, giving shape to something much larger.

The table is the place where we learn to be composed, to bring order and to respond to a task, but it is also a space in which to take refuge.

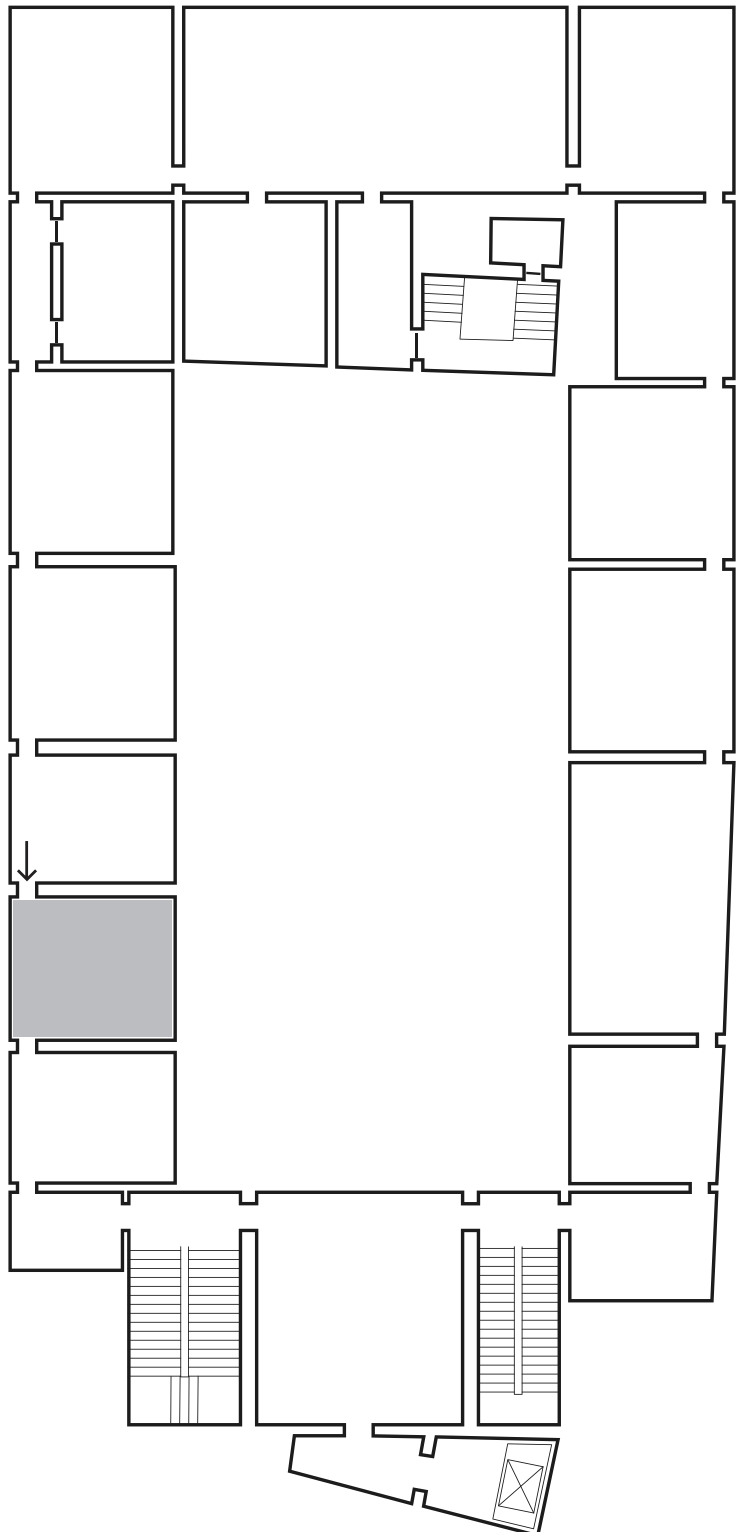
What’s more, the table is a meeting point between time and form: a surface on which things are placed, moved, and accumulated. For Aran, the studio—a place of thought and art production—works in much the same way: it is a place where seemingly mundane materials are reorganized to construct meanings, to find order in everyday life. This space thus becomes a potted model of how society works, where the bureaucratic, office, and domestic dimensions all overlap.

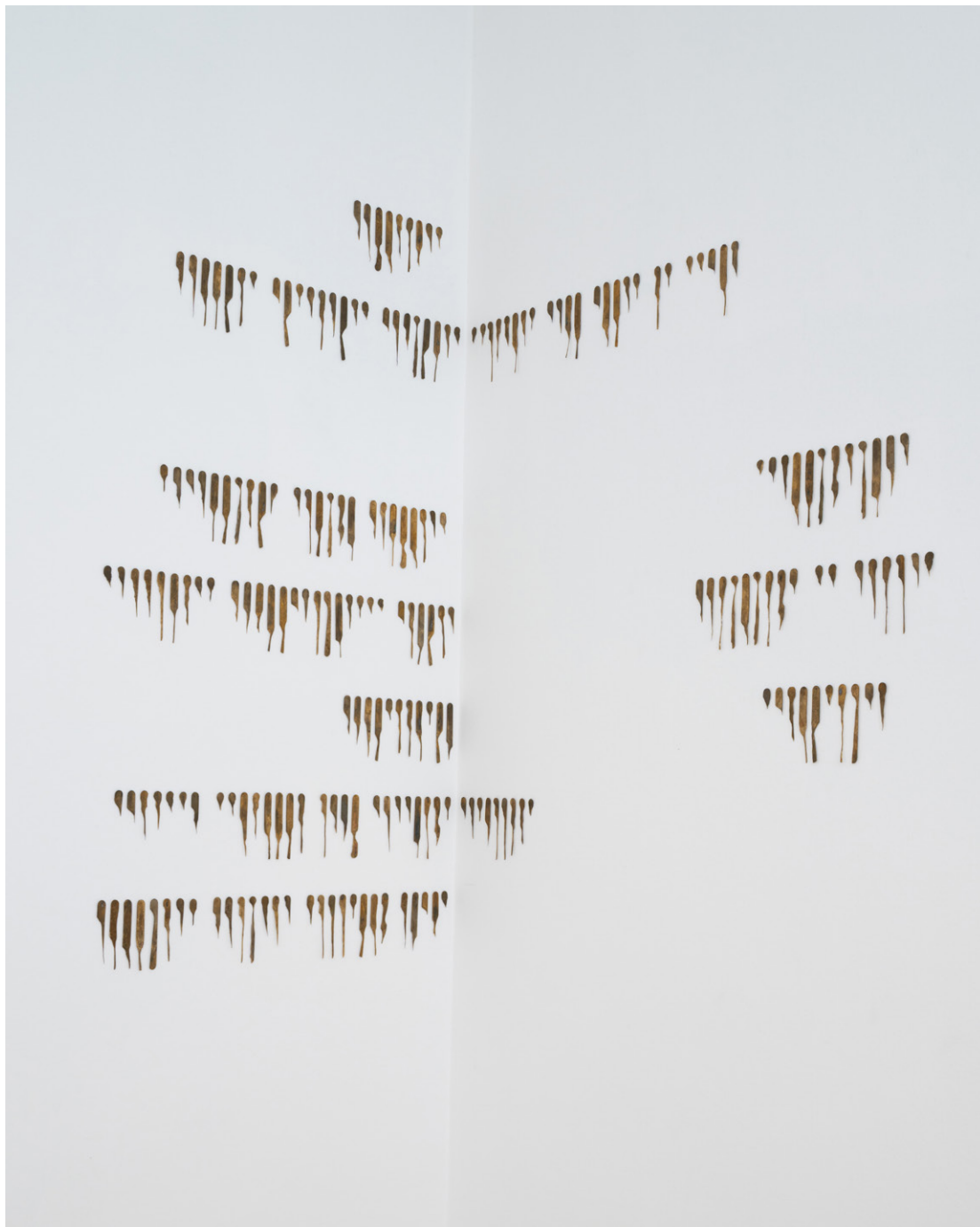
What holds such different objects together?

Is a work of art a finished object? Can it change over time?

6

Third floor





Uri Aran
***Untitled (Bronze)*, 2026**

bronze, patina and mixed media

Courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London

6

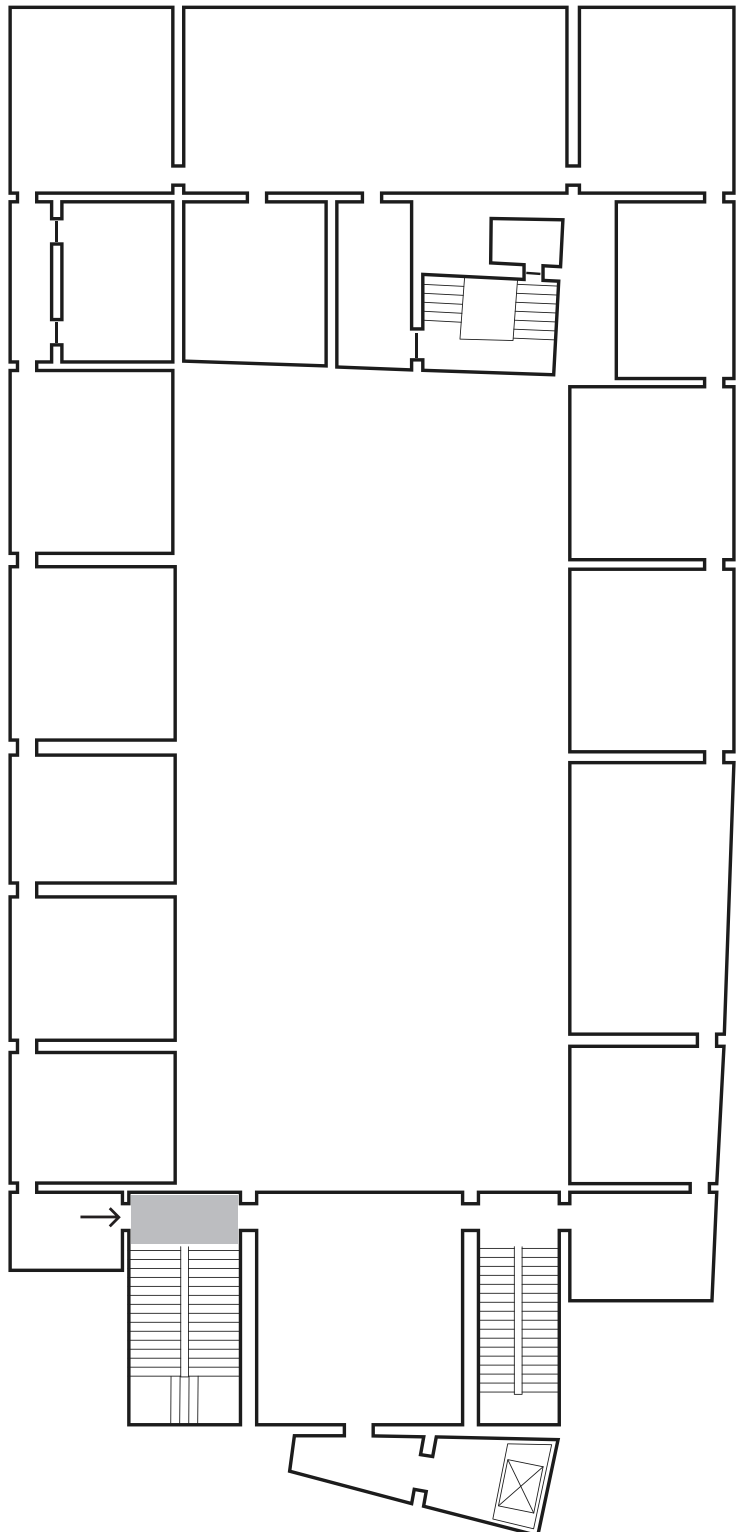
The work expands into the space, occupying the walls of the room. A series of bronze tongue depressors are arranged to form an illegible yet strangely familiar alphabet. The language that emerges appears recognizable in form yet inaccessible in meaning.

Writing promises clarity, but often generates confusion. It does not contain what we expect from it. Naming something does not necessarily mean knowing it. Recognizing a language before understanding it can be misleading, causing us to project false expectations.

**Have you ever recognized something before understanding it?
When?**

7

Third floor



7

In the video *My Friend*, which brings the exhibition to a close as you walk anti-clockwise, the artist films Harry, a friend who appears in many of his works, as he repeats a series of phrases. A deep relationship between the two is perceptible, but the distance imposed by the camera keeps this intimacy at arm's length, visible yet not entirely accessible.

In Aran's videos, there is no performance in the theatrical sense. Rather, there is something fragile, imperfect, hesitant. The artist is interested in gestures that are not yet fully defined, that lie between the sincere and the constructed. The people he involves receive incomplete instructions, whispered rules, then long silences.

Aran directs but at the same time withdraws, not seeking total control. He prefers to observe what emerges when instructions are not enough, when the actor has to find a way to continue on their own. He allows hesitations, mistakes, and moments of uncertainty to occur. What interests him is the seriousness with which the actor sustains the gesture over time and, at the same time, the fragility this reveals. For Aran, acting doesn't hide fiction: it exposes it. It shows the effort of those who try to give shape to something that isn't yet entirely clear, even to themselves.

When someone repeats a gesture, are you watching a rehearsal or a real moment?

Does the wait engage you or make you uncomfortable?

How much room is left for the unexpected?

Uri Aran
My Friend, 2020

single channel video with sound, 8' 47''

Courtesy the artist and Sadie Coles HQ, London

Biography

Uri Aran (Jerusalem, 1977) lives and works in New York. After studying at Cooper Union in NY, he earned an MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University in 2007. In 2013, he took part in the 55th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Massimiliano Gioni, and held a solo exhibition, *Here, Here and Here*, at the Kunsthalle Zürich, curated by Beatrix Ruf. In 2014, he participated in the Whitney Biennial, curated by Stuart Comer, Anthony Elms, and Michelle Grabner, and in the Liverpool Biennial, curated by Anthony Huberman and Mai Abu ElDahab. In the same year, he presented *Puddles*, his first solo exhibition in Italy, at Peep-Hole in Milan, curated by Vincenzo De Bellis and Bruna Roccasalva.

His work was subsequently presented in major international exhibition contexts, including the Kölnischer Kunstverein with the exhibition *Mice* (2016); the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis with *Platforms: Commissions and Collection* (2019); and The Douglas Hyde Gallery with the exhibition *Take This Dog For Example* (2023). Uri Aran is a professor on the Fine Arts (MFA) program at the School of Visual Arts in New York, and a visiting critic at Columbia University.

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Digital guide

Digital guide texts
Marta Ferrara

Exhibition texts
Eva Fabbris, Alberta Romano

Editing
Libera Durante

Graphics and Web
Walter Santomauro

Translations
Bennett Bazalgette

Exhibition Coordination
Laura Mariano with Silvia Salvati

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