

VIVONO: Arts and feelings HIV-AIDS in Italy, 1982-1996

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'VIVONO. Art and Feelings, HIV-AIDS in Italy. 1982-1996' is the first museum exhibition to reconstruct the forgotten history of Italian artists affected by the HIV-AIDS crisis. In the rooms you are about to enter, artworks, poems, and videos come together with archival materials and personal memories to trace a path through the years between 1982 and 1996. These dates carry a symbolic weight: 1982 marks the first recorded cases of AIDS in Italy, while 1996 is the year when, at the XI International AIDS Conference in Vancouver, HAART therapies were introduced, capable of suppressing the viral load.

The exhibition is the result of group work. The research, the texts, and the selection of artworks and documents took shape through long discussions, meetings, and exchanges that involved a wide community. What you see here is a first attempt to rebuild a memory that has too often been forgotten—or erased—but that has survived thanks to the care of activists, friends, and families who never stopped remembering. It is also an act rooted in the present: its perspective on those years is specific, never exhaustive, and acknowledges silences, absences, and mistakes.

Yet it responds to today's urgencies. The exhibition asks us to reflect on what remains of those struggles and artistic visions: the right to healthcare, to privacy, to sexuality; the dignity of the person in illness and suffering; the right to make one's own choices. In a word: freedom.

Some questions guided the making of this exhibition: How do we live love and joy when everything around us feels dark? What becomes of anger and hope when all seems lost? How do we breathe, and act together, to build a future in a time of shared threat and fragility? What alliances are born to smile together? Which words and images do we choose to speak of our losses and our victories?

How do we look each other in the eye?

The exhibition proposes to read the years of the HIV-AIDS crisis in Italy as a generative moment—a time when unexpected alliances emerged, when love became a space of political action, translated into care, support, and affection. VIVONO is a collective story, told as much as possible in a shared voice. It is a portrait of a living generation, where words, images and voices weave together with sex, imagination, and mourning, and where utopias still belong to us, still beat, still live.