He lives and works in Lisbon, Portugal.

Born in Bologna in 1943, Calzolari spent his childhood and adolescence in Venice, whose Byzantine artistic heritage and unique light left a deep trace on the sensitivity of the future artist. In 1965, he returned to Bologna and opened a studio in Palazzo Bentivoglio, where he produced his first paintings and hosted exhibitions by other artists. He presented the first 8mm and super8 films by Ari Marcopoulos, Andy Warhol, Jonas Mekas and Mario Schifano and met people such as Allen Ginsberg, Julian Beck, Luigi Ontani, Raymond Hains and Chet Baker. In 1966-1967 he created the first of his performance works (Il filtro e benvenuto all'angelo), which saw the audience participate directly in the work and which Calzolari himself defined as an "activation of space", according to a work technique typical of his later production, titled the "atti di passion" (acts of passion).

Between 1967, the year he moved to Urbino, and 1972 Calzolari traveled between Paris, New York and Berlin and developed his artistic project, establishing the parameters of his plastic vocabulary. During this period Calzolari was incorporated into the Arte Povera movement and his work "La casa ideale" (1968), which found completion in a group of works, is considered to be one of the essential enunciations of the Arte Povera movement. In those years he produced a broad series of works with icy structures and neon, such as "Oroscopo come progetto della mia vita" (1968) and the series "Gesti"(1968-1969) in which the formation of frost on the forms, marked by the time passing, is an indication of the alchemical transformation process of matter. In this way, the objects and materials that the artist had been using since 1967 (fire, ice, lead, tin, salt, moss, tobacco) were given a second life alongside luminous elements, echoes of the brilliance of Venetian marble.

From 1972 onwards, the artist focused on the study of painting in a deeply unconventional way.

Choosing new "supports", such as flannel or sheets of cardboard glued to the canvas, the artist juxtaposes pictorial signs with real objects, such as small paper boats or toy trains moving along endlessly repeated paths. Calzolari's painting often remains linked to the physical involvement of people: in Berlin, for example, he produced a series of performance-works (collected in the book entitled "Day After Day, a Family Life") such as "Usura amore e misericordia" (1972-1974) in which the artist, subverting all formalism, transposes the rituality of everyday life onto the field of aesthetic experience and into a horizontal relationship with the world and history. His career, despite its obvious affinity with the contemporary production of Arte Povera artists (in particular Mario Merz and Jannis Kounellis), Conceptual Art and American Post Minimalism, is characterized by several peculiar elements: the desire to saturate the senses, the attempt to reveal the data of abstract thought and the essence of things, the particular attention paid to the fragility of objects and materials.

From 1973 he travelled between Bologna, Paris and Milan, where he settled for eight years, continuing his parallel research into painting, sculpture and performance. Finally, he moved to Turin and created installations composed of large-format paintings and performances at the Tucci Russo gallery.

Around 1982 he left Turin for Vienna, where he returned to concentrate mainly on painting, and in 1984 he decided, due to the quality of light, to return to Montefeltro, where he still lives and works today. During his stay in Urbino, Calzolari was invited to take part in numerous residencies abroad, particularly in France (La Ferme du Buisson, Domaine de Kerguéhennec, Atelier Calder, Le Fresnoy), during which he worked in the context of dance, becoming interested in the study of the relationship between space, body and time, and thus giving new development to his performance work.

Calzolari's aesthetic dimension - which takes shape through paintings, sculptures, texts, sound recordings, videos, performances, the involvement of people and animals, architecture and light, and a profound diversification of materials - is difficult to circumscribe or recompose in a project that is still ongoing: "No formal consideration," writes Catherine David, "can account for an experience whose dimension is restored in all its states".