

AN UNEXPECTED COLLECTION. A journey through contemporary painting and sculpture

Gallerie d'Italia, Milan - Intesa Sanpaolo Museum

26 May - 22 October 2023

A new temporary display of the collection curated by Luca Massimo Barbero

PRESS IMAGES

Milan, March 2023 - Gallerie d'Italia, Intesa Sanpaolo's museum in Milan, is pleased to present *Una collezione inattesa. Viaggio nel contemporaneo tra pittura e scultura [AN UNEXPECTED COLLECTION. A journey through contemporary painting and sculpture]*, curated by Luca Massimo Barbero, Associate Curator of the Bank's Collections of Modern and Contemporary Art. Running from **26 May to 22 October 2023**, the exhibition will present a selection of works from the Intesa Sanpaolo collection in dialogue with works that form part of the permanent exhibition, "Cantiere del '900".

Gathering over **70 works** - all of which all form part of Intesa Sanpaolo's most recent acquisitions and have never before been exhibited at Gallerie d'Italia in Milan - the exhibition unfolds as a journey through modern and contemporary Italian and international art. Specifically, it aims to stimulate reflections upon the different research of several of the most prominent artists of the twentieth century, while offering new insights into post World War II painterly and sculptural practices. A further, fundamental contribution to the exhibition comes from the works selected from the Luigi and Peppino Agrati Collection, which now forms part of the Intesa Sanpaolo collection.

In the monumental hall at the entrance to the museum, visitors will encounter the large white marble work *Femme Paysage* (1966) by **Jean Hans Arp**, representing an

extensive collection of sculptures from the Henraux Collection, which now forms part of the collection Intesa Sanpaolo. Functioning as a sort of focal point, works by Jean Arp open the way to those by **Bruno De Toffoli**, an author and among the signatories of *Manifestos of Spatialism*, a movement closely linked to Lucio Fontana's practice and research. This exhibition offers an unprecedented opportunity to see nine sculptures by this artist, whose works have never been exhibited before in such a close comparison with other Masters of the time.

Following a chronological order, the exhibition starts with a focus on the 20th-century Masters of sculpture: those whose work had a major impact on the production of Italian plastic arts in the following decades. In the first rooms, visitors will encounter works by three great artists of the 20th century: *La Pisana* by **Arturo Martini**, *Pomona* by **Marino Marini** and *Grande Cardinale Seduto* by **Giacomo Manzù**. Rarely presented together, these works are exhibited here to represent the roots of Italian contemporary sculpture.

Particularly important for the curatorial research sustaining the exhibition, the gallery dedicated to **Fausto Melotti** hosts the display of an important corpus of sculptures by Melotti, who was also a protagonist of ceramics. Specifically, this special room presents 19 representative works that have never been shown publicly before, among which are Melotti's ceramic vases, including four important *Korai*. The exhibition also includes the work in copper, *Coppia*, previously exhibited in the permanent collection exhibition at the Gallerie d'Italia in Milan, as well as another, less known work, also in copper wire, belonging to the Luigi and Peppino Agrati Collection.

Thanks to the coming together of several collections, the exhibition also presents iconic works by **Lucio Fontana**, unfolding as an homage to the Italian artistic movement known as **Spatialism**. An internationally recognised artist whose research had an enormous impact on 20th-century artistic practices, Fontana is represented here with some of his most iconic works, such as *Concetto spaziale. Attese* (1965). In order to ensure consistency with the modern and contemporary

Italian tradition of sculpture in ceramics, the exhibition also includes some hand-painted clay plates by Fontana called *Antica Savona*, as well as the important nucleus of the three *Nature* in bronze and terracotta.

Another gallery space is dedicated to dematerialisation and **monochrome in the early 1960's international contemporary art**, the centrepiece of which is **Sol LeWitt's** *Complex Form*, a sculpture that has only recently entered the Intesa Sanpaolo Collections. This gallery also presents a harmonious dialogue between **Robert Ryman**, a Master of American minimalism, and several Masters of Italian contemporary art practice and research, such as **Piero Manzoni**, **Alberto Burri**, **Toti Scialoja** and **Enrico Castellani**. The exhibition also includes the monumental work *Superficie bianca 35* (1966) by Castellani.

Two further spaces focus on **abstraction** in artistic practices of the late 1950s. Emblematic of this research are artists such as **Carla Accardi** - here present with the work *Senza Titolo* - **Giulio Turcato** and **Antonio Sanfilippo**, whose work *Superficie 45/C/63* is also in the exhibition. An important painting by **Corrado Cagli**, *Il flauto di canna* (The Reed Flute) represents the continuity of this great painter's experimentation in the 1960s and opens the way to the discovery of sculptures by **Pietro Consagra**, including *Bifrontale malachite*. Dedicated to the research on stones and marbles conducted by the artist in the 1970s and 1980s, these works exemplify that idea of 'frontal sculpture', of which Consagra is both theoretician and sculptor.

On their way to the 'Cantiere del '900' exhibition, visitors embark on an artistic journey. Starting in rooms dedicated to classical abstraction, they then enter galleries focusing on the increasingly minimal and procedural painting of the post-World War II period. This includes artist such as **Bice Lazzari**, here with her work *Misura 9*, **Mario Nigro** and his pictorial abstract art so profoundly inspired by the American analytical and conceptual paintings of his times, as well as **Roman Opalka**, whose practice implies a day-to-day procedure of numerical drafting that

eventually also comprise large and very rare canvases, on the threshold of monochrome, that also form part of the exhibition.

Some of the studies in the other galleries hint at Sol LeWitt's poetic and performing methods. Specifically, the important 1969 sculpture *Three Cubes (Straight)* by the American conceptual artist that has recently become part of the Intesa Sanpaolo Collections, creates two paths for visitors: one leading to the exhibition "Cantiere del 900". However, as the point of arrival of the exhibition itinerary, this work by Sol LeWitt, and the perspective comprised of cubic profiles that it opens, make the way to the display of another masterpiece, also recent acquisition by the bank, *Abstraktes Bild* (1984) by **Gerhard Richter**.

In fact, "**Una collezione inattesa**" is not just the exhibition of the bank's collection; rather, it offers a rare opportunity for an in-depth examination and appreciation of the numerous themes, artists and movements present in the Intesa Sanpaolo Collections.

Along with Gallerie d'Italia in Naples, Turin and Vicenza, Gallerie d'Italia in Milan is part of Intesa Sanpaolo's museum project, led by **Michele Coppola**, Executive Director of Art, Culture and Historical Heritage.

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Opening hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday: from 9.30 to 19.30; Thursday: from 9.30 to 22.30. Closed on Mondays. Last entrance: one hour before the closing time.

Tickets: full 10€, reduced 8€, free entry for Gallerie d'Italia members, students, people under 18s; free entry for all on the first Sunday of the month; special reduced 5€ ticket for people under 26s and Intesa Sanpaolo Group customers.

Information and bookings: www.gallerieditalia.com - milano@gallerieditalia.com - Free toll number 800.167619

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created its own network of museums, the Gallerie d'Italia, to present the bank's artistic heritage and to offer a venue for prestigious cultural projects.

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