

PRESS RELEASE

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Burri, Fontana, Manzoni

This exhibition brings together the works of three Italian Post-War artists: Alberto Burri (1915-1995), Lucio Fontana (1899-1968) and Piero Manzoni (1933-1963). These three artists alongside Francesco Lo Savio (1935-1963) and Pino Pascali (1935-1968) changed the course of Italian contemporary art with influence well beyond their national borders.

Burri re-conceptualisation of art led to the invention of a new form of monochrome; the artist reduced to the minimum its own colour- the choice of painting as *"tutto-sacco"* (all-sack), *"tutto-legno"* (all-wood), *"tutto-ferro"* (all-iron), *"tutto plastica"* (all-plastic). These colours which seem to be added, indeed are removed. The black is the burn, the white is the total absence of colour, the red is the flame. To burn is the most evident way to reduce. In this sense, Burri is the inventor of the painting by *"reduction"*. The reduction is always a reduction as a rigorous science. His colours are born objectively; it is in fact a necessity congenital to the material used, and this choice is carried out endlessly.

At the same period as Burri, Fontana no longer used the canvas as a mean of support but rather as *"total representation"*; a space to be accepted as it is, to go beyond, to pierce, to cut. Those two artists worked toward the same aims of reinventing the concept of art. In their approach to revalorisation of primitive materials and nature, they however look at different aspects. As for instance, Fontana looks towards the sky (the space of the *"spazialismo"*), and Burri towards the earth (the seething matter).

'From the outset, I never called the work I was doing in 1946 painting, I called it "spatial concept". This is because for me painting is a matter of ideas. The canvas served and still serves for the documentation of an idea. The things I am doing at the moment are just variations on my two fundamental ideas: the hole and the cut. At a time where people were talking about "planes" – the surface plane, the depth plane etc –making a hole was a radical gesture which broke the space of the canvas as if to say: after this we are free to do what we like. The surface cannot be confined within the edges of the canvas, it extends into the surrounding space. In this way, in these ways, - "well, I don't know, because I could not survive until the year two thousand; the important thing is that we have born witness to these demands."

Manzoni's work moved towards a temporal dimension capable of enhancing the idea of the open work and to demonstrate the spiritual necessity of art. Burri's sutured and Fontana's punctured and incised canvases must have fascinated him, though their influence was probably more general than specific.

With the “*Achromes*” (colourless), “*linee*” (lines), conceptual event, Manzoni affirmed the individuality of thought – the idea of the artist as capable of activating the fundamental elements of art, always projected towards a spatiotemporal totality. He renounced any glamorous or provocative gesture, and in this way achieved an extreme radicality. Manzoni writes: “*The image has no value for remembrance, explanation or expression –the question is rather to be found- nor does it need to be explained as an allegory of a physical process: it has value only because it is –to be*”. In 1961, Manzoni started a new series of Achromes in which wrapping paper are shaped into parcels sealed with red sealing wax and bear the name ‘Piero Manzoni’. These reflect the idea of a ‘waste product’, joining the irony of his *Merda d’artista*. Manzoni is one of the first artists to celebrate the unity of art and life. “*Being is all that’s count*”.

Alberto Burri

Combustione plastica, 1958

burnt plastic, acrylic and cloth on canvas
120 x 150cm
signed *Burri 58* on reverse, left

Legno nero rosso, 1960

wood, acrylic on canvas
83 x 133cm
signed *Burri 60* on reverse, left

Lucio Fontana

Concetto spaziale, Attese, 1964

signed, titled and inscribed 1 + 1 - ZZUZ3 / oggi ò / parlato/ con /Nanda on reverse
waterpaint on canvas
73 x 92cm

Piero Manzoni

Achrome, 1961-62

newspaper, wax, sealing rope and lead on canvas
35 x 35cm