

tornabuoniArt

LONDON



Valerio Adami, *Completo*, 1970
Courtesy Tornabuoni Art

PRESS RELEASE

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ITALIAN POP

**VALERIO ADAMI / FRANCO ANGELI / MARIO CEROLI / TANO FESTA /
GIOSETTA FIORONI / MIMMO ROTELLA / MARIO SCHIFANO / CESARE TACCHI**

22 APRIL – 18 JUNE 2016

21 APRIL (10:00 – 11:30 am) Breakfast and conference on Italian Pop Art
(6:00 – 8:00 pm) Private View

For the second group show in its Mayfair gallery, Tornabuoni Art London leaves the abstraction of Lucio Fontana and Arnaldo Pomodoro to focus on the socially engaged and figurative movement of Italian Pop Art. “We wanted to provide a counterpoint to Italian post-war abstraction and the Milanese avant-garde that we typically show at Tornabuoni Art,” says gallery director Ursula Casamonti, “and present a different side to the Italian 1960s, one driven by Rome and by the people’s relationship to Italian culture and the ‘Dolce Vita’.”

The transition from abstraction to figurative Pop aesthetics becomes evident with the work of Mimmo Rotella (1918 - 2006), whose *décollage* practice consisted in tearing and superposing posters, and then peeling parts of each layer in order to obtain unique works of art. At first completely abstract, Rotella later became interested in using the vernacular of popular films and advertising, exploiting the imagery of their posters; making him one of precursors of Pop Art in Italy.

The Italian Pop Art movement only became formalised in the early sixties, in Rome, with the founding of the *Scuola di Piazza del Popolo*, by Mario Schifano (1934 – 1998), Gioetta Fioroni (b. 1932), Tano Festa (1938 – 1988) and Franco Angeli (1935 -1988). These artists were concerned with the same notions of mass culture and mechanical reproduction as their American counterparts, but through the spectrum of Italian culture. The *Scuola di Piazza del Popolo's* foremost exponent, Mario Schifano, outlined the characteristics of Italian Pop Art throughout his career. Painting Esso and Coca-Cola logos, but also using imagery from nature and cultural icons, his work engaged with the Italian-specific dialogue between high and popular culture. Schifano revisited the Italian history of art from Da Vinci to the Futurists via Constructivism, using art historical symbols such as the tree of life to study the effect of repetition and reproduction.

Specifically embedded in the people's consciousness and in the Italian collective memory are indeed the staples of the world's high culture such as Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, Michelangelo's *David*, or Botticelli's *Primavera*. With the growth of tourism, these icons were used to advertise the Italian way of life, and mass reproduced to commercial ends. Tano Festa and Cesare Tacchi (1940 – 2014) – a later addition to the *Scuola di Piazza del Popolo* – re-interpret Michelangelo's *David* and Botticelli's *Primavera* respectively, reclaiming these symbols of high-culture for the people by re-working them into a Pop aesthetic, while at the same time denouncing their use as icons of consumerism.

This concern with the mechanised techniques of reproduction resulted in a fertile dialogue with the representatives of Arte Povera. Mario Ceroli (b.1938), for instance, while commonly associated with the Arte Povera movement through his use of humble materials, oscillated between the two movements. On show at the gallery, *Serata di Gala* (1981) – or 'gala evening' – is an example of how Ceroli humorously integrates the silhouettes of the *Riace Bronzes* into the Italian lifestyle.

In parallel to this, the 1960s were a time of economic renewal and growth in Italy. Convertibles and sunglasses were the order of the day and cinema contributed to propagate the image of the Italian Dolce Vita. Between Fellini's romances and Sergio Leone's Spaghetti Westerns, the film industry blossomed and its icons were attracting viewers from all over the world. Italian Pop artists such as Gioetta Fioroni and Valerio Adami (b. 1935) sought to denounce through the apparently joyful colours of their works, the underside of the Italian way of life and the hypocrisy in the myth of the Dolce Vita.

Finally, self-reflexively tackling the problem of America's global influence, Franco Angeli unites both aspects of Italian Pop Art through the symbol of the *Lupa Capitolina* (the wolf feeding Romulus and Remus), as a reference to the founding myth of that obliterated the violence of historical reality. Affixed to symbols of American power, like in *Souvenir* (1972-74) on show at the gallery, the *Lupa* constitutes in Angeli's work a denunciation of the USA as an economic and military empire in the 1970s.

By regrouping works by these figures of Italian Pop Art, Tornabuoni Art, builds on the *The World Goes Pop* show at the Tate Modern which closed in January 2016 to explore the reaction of Italian artists to their own popular culture: a unique conjecture where high and low culture met within the rapidly commercialising world of the 1960s – 1980s.

NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT TORNABUONI ART

Tornabuoni Art London was launched in October 2015 by Ursula Casamonti after having worked alongside her father and brother for over 20 years managing Tornabuoni Arte. The gallery was founded in Florence in 1981 on via de' Tornabuoni which gave it its name, and has since opened new exhibition spaces in Crans Montana (1993), Milan (1995), Forte dei Marmi (2004) and Paris (2009).

Specialising in Post-War Italian art, exhibiting artists such as Fontana, Burri, Scheggi, Castellani, Bonalumi, Boetti and Dadamaino, the gallery also has a permanent collection of significant works by major Italian artists of the Novecento, such as de Chirico, Morandi, Balla or Severini, as well as International 20th century Avant-garde masters, such as Picasso, Mirò, Kandinsky, Hartung, Poliakoff, Dubuffet, Lam, Matta, Christo, Wesselmann, Warhol and Basquiat.

The gallery is also since many years present in all major international art fairs – Frieze Masters, Fiac, Art Basel, TEFAF – bringing its exhibition programme based on Italian Post-War art, while also promoting a few emerging Italian artists.

The annual exhibition programme revolves around ambitious solo exhibitions of post-war Italian masters, themed group exhibitions as well as one exhibition dedicated to emerging Italian artists. Following the success of the inaugural exhibition dedicated to a retrospective of the work of Lucio Fontana, Tornabuoni Art presented group show *The Die Is Cast*, about Italian abstraction, and dedicated its second solo exhibition to great Italian sculptor Arnaldo Pomodoro.

The gallery also works closely with museums and institutions for expertise and guidance and with its experience and thorough knowledge of the work of the artists it represents, it has established itself as an advisor for both private and public collections.

For more information on the gallery's history and other activities, please visit www.tornabuoniart.com

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