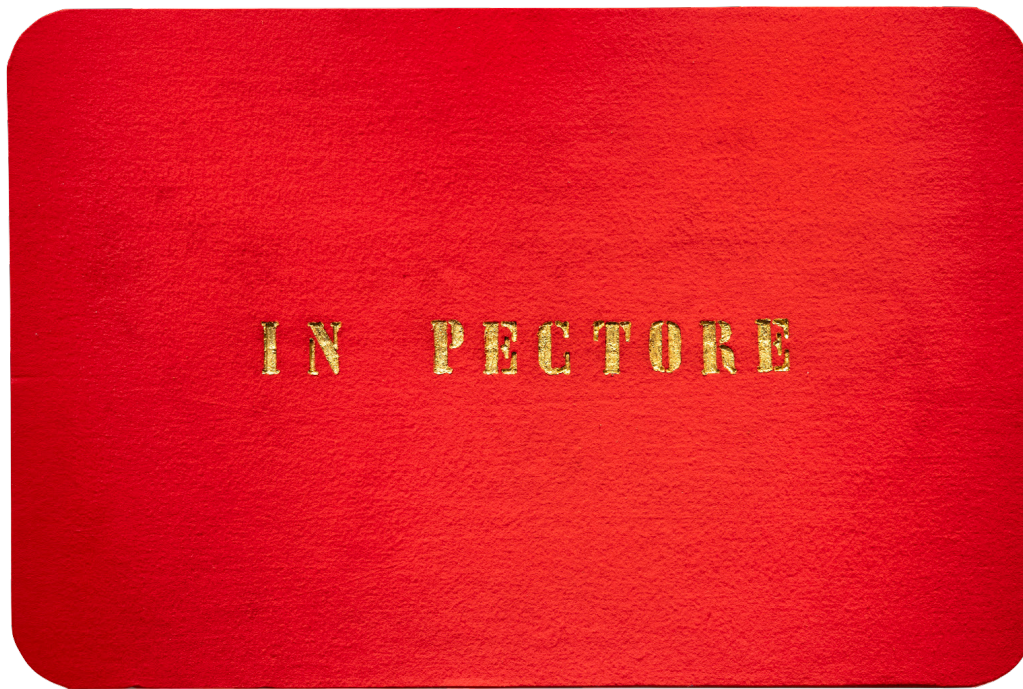




Vincenzo Agnetti, *In pectore*, 1971, engraving and plant on felt, 80 x 120 cm (31 1/2 x 47 1/4 in). Courtesy Tornabuoni Art

## VINCENZO AGNETTI PAR CŒUR

### PRESS RELEASE, January 2026

On the occasion of the centenary of Vincenzo Agnetti's birth, the exhibition *Par Cœur* (By Heart) will reveal the breadth of his practice, exploring his use of text, texture, sound and installation through which he questioned how meaning is produced and transmitted. A central figure in postwar Italian art, Agnetti was a cerebral artist, known for his rigorous investigations into language, logic, time, and memory.

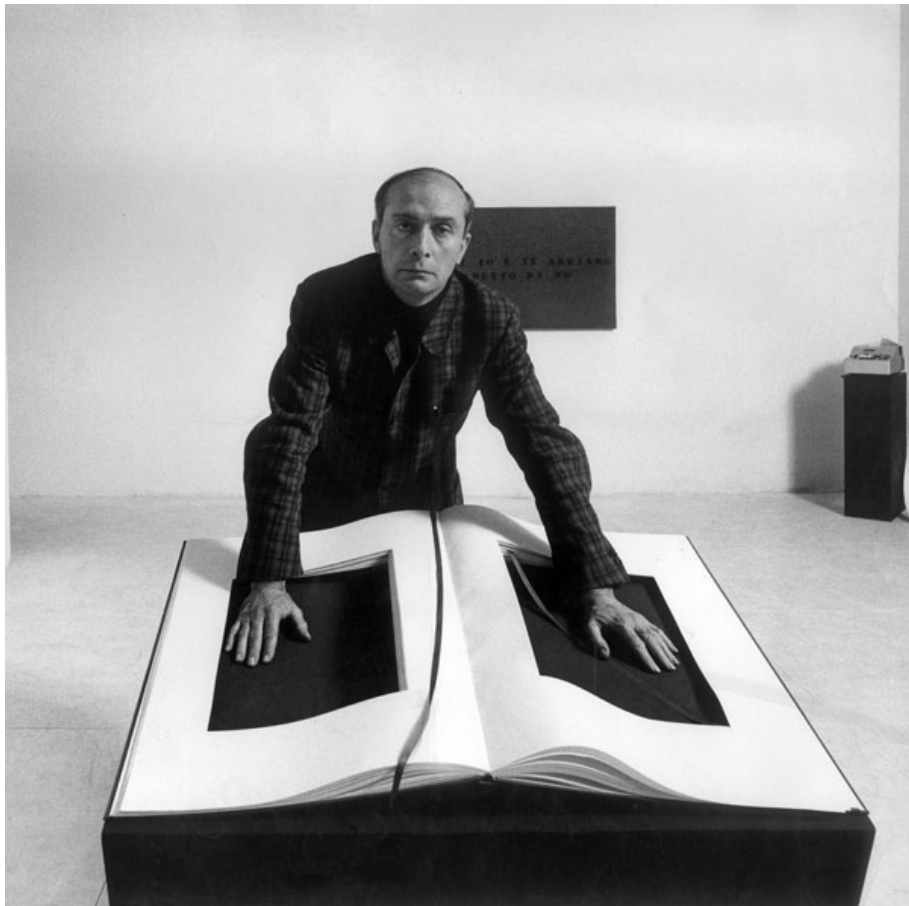
Agnetti inspects language, exploring its fragility, its limits, and its evocative power. The exhibition takes its title from the phrase "*Dimenticato a memoria*", meaning "forgotten by heart", a polysemous oxymoron that the artist explores in several series of works, both pictorial and sculptural. "Culture consists of learning to forget," Agnetti wrote of the genesis of "*Libro dimenticato a memoria*" (Book Forgotten by Heart, 1969): a larger-than-life book, entirely emptied of its contents, exhibited at Tornabuoni Art Paris. "Just like when we eat," he continued: "food, whether manipulated well or not, gives us its flavor, which we quickly forget in favor of the energy ingested."

The same paradox is displayed across a number of felt canvases, all of identical size, bearing painted inscriptions made using stencils. They form part of the *Feltri* series, the most literary and poetic typology of the artist's work, which appropriates the visual codes of the lapidarium and subverts them by placing the uppercase letters on a warm material such as felt rather than marble. Each of these works, produced from the late 1960s onwards, are considered to be either a portrait or a landscape, according to the artist. The phrases they bear often describe a character, an interaction, or the city and its buildings.

Urban spaces and dwellings are a major theme for the artist, as presented in the work *Tre villaggi differenti - Non c'è più nessuno* (Three Different Villages - There Is No One Left, 1977), also exhibited in the gallery. This polyptch, depicting phonemes traced in white on a black background, addresses the abandonment of villages and communal life in favor of anonymity and conformism of large urban centers. It is accompanied by an original audiotape, in which one can hear the artist's voice imitating the wind.

"*Dimenticato a memoria*" (Forgotten by heart) is one of the artist's most famous oxymorons. Repeated across several of his works, the oxymoron implies a questioning of language, culture, and the transmission of information.

In the gallery's basement, one of the artist's "static theater" works, *Apocalisse* (Apocalypse), awaits visitors. It will be accompanied by *Tre villaggi*, a particularly poignant visual and sound work that commemorates three vanished villages.



Vincenzo Agnetti, *Vitalità del negativo nell'arte italiana 1960/1970*, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, 1970.  
Courtesy Tornabuoni Art

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Artist, writer, poet, and thinker, Vincenzo Agnetti was born in Milan in 1926. Trained at the Accademia di Brera, he worked for a time as an actor before meeting Enrico Castellani and Piero Manzoni, in the late 1950s, the two were founders of the Azimuth gallery, with whom he formed close friendships. It was in their eponymous journal that he published his first conceptual works: "propositional writings," of which only a few traces remain today. "What I have done, thought, and listened to, I have forgotten by heart: this is the first authentic document" the artist once said.

Between 1962 and 1968, Agnetti lived in Argentina and worked in the field of electronic automation, an experience that would deeply resonate in his later works, from the *Macchina Drogata* to the *NEG. Rupture Detector*. At the same time, he filled more than two thousand pages of notes—an extraordinary reservoir of ideas and thoughts that he would call *Absence*.

Upon his return to Italy, he devoted himself entirely to his artistic practice and published for the first time, his *Tesi*. A collection of his thoughts that would form the basis for his most famous works: the *Feltri*. A succession of exhibitions and participation in international shows led Agnetti to experiment with different materials, aesthetics, and methods: from bakelite to felt, paper, canvas, photography, sculpture, performance, and video. The artist's intention was to transform his thinking into images that act as vehicles of meaning, capable of speaking directly to the viewer's mind.

In 1973, Agnetti opened a studio in New York, where he lived for part of the year. This experience explains the presence of English within his otherwise Italian corpus. He died suddenly in Milan in 1981, leaving behind an unfinished work, *Il Lucernario*, and a few luminous verses:

*At night, the moon lights  
a dark sun.  
And Aureole flies  
to illuminate the day  
Before the brief evening  
we will return to arms.  
We will be on Earth in the Sun and in the Air.  
Then with the flower player. Perhaps.  
N.Y. 6/1981*

# TornabuoniArt



## TORNABUONI ART

Tornabuoni Art was founded in 1981 on Via Tornabuoni in Florence by Roberto Casamonti, whose passion for art, inherited from his father, a collector of 20th-century Italian art, has been passed down through three generations of the family. In addition to its headquarters on Lungarno Cellini in Florence, the gallery has opened spaces in Milan (1995), Forte dei Marmi (2004), and Rome (2023), as well as international branches in Crans-Montana, Switzerland (1993), Paris (2009), and London (2015). The gallery is also present at major contemporary art fairs, including TEFAF in Maastricht and New York, Art Basel in Basel, Miami Beach, Hong Kong, and Paris, Frieze Masters in London, Arte Fiera in Bologna, and Miart in Milan.

Tornabuoni Art's collection is primarily focused on masters of the 20th-century Italian avant-garde, such as Carla Accardi, Alighiero Boetti, Alberto Burri, Giorgio de Chirico, Lucio Fontana, Claudio Parmiggiani, Arnaldo Pomodoro, and Paolo Scheggi. The gallery also presents international artists from the same period, such as Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, Jean Dubuffet, Serge Poliakoff, Wifredo Lam, Hans Hartung, Matta, Andy Warhol, and Christo.

Tornabuoni Art collaborates with numerous museums and institutions, both public and private, in Italy and internationally through loans and the organization of exhibitions. In this context, the gallery has partnered with the Giorgio Cini Foundation during three successive editions of the Venice Biennale, presenting landmark exhibitions such as *Alighiero Boetti. Minimum-Maximum* in 2017, *Burri. Pittura, un'irriducibile presenza* in 2019, and the group exhibition *On Fire* in 2022. The gallery has also worked with the Estorick Collection, which hosted major exhibitions dedicated to Paolo Scheggi in 2019 and Claudio Parmiggiani in 2025. This commitment to collaborating with major institutions found renewed expression in the exhibition *Picasso, Morandi, Parmiggiani. Still Lives*, hosted by the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, with the exceptional participation of the Musée national Picasso-Paris, as part of the 2026 Venice Biennale.

Alongside its exhibitions, Tornabuoni Art consistently produces significant publications in collaboration with renowned art historians such as Luca Massimo Barbero, Bernard Blistène, Germano Celant, Bruno Corà, Enrico Crispolti, Philippe Dagen, Cécile Debray and Margit Rowell, among others.

Drawing on over four decades of experience, Tornabuoni Art has also developed an advisory service for public and private collections worldwide.

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