

MILANO
GALLERIA 10 A.M. ART
FROM 30 NOVEMBER 2023 TO 23 FEBRUARY 2024
“10x10 BALLOCCO / GRIGNANI / VERONESI.
TEN YEARS OF 10 A.M. ART GALLERY”
Curated by Paolo Bolpagni

From 30 November 2023 to 23 February 2024, 10 A.M. ART gallery in Milan, at its headquarters in Corso San Gottardo 5, will be hosting the exhibition *10x10 Ballocco / Grignani / Veronesi. Ten years of 10 A.M. ART gallery.*

So writes curator Paolo Bolpagni:

In January 2024, 10 A.M. ART will celebrate its first ten years of activity. On this occasion, besides developing a new logo that will henceforth accompany the gallery's image, graphically condensing the idea of consistency of research, immediacy and formal simplification, the gallery has conceived an exhibition comparing three historicized artists of the same generation, who all gravitated towards Milan and were experimenters, forerunners in their respective fields and advocates of a link between painting and design: Mario Ballocco (1913-2008), Franco Grignani (1908-1999) and Luigi Veronesi (1908-1998). Furthermore, these are figures on whom the work of historical-critical promotion and enhancement carried out by the 10 A.M. ART gallery focused early on, defining its line, which is clearly recognizable today.

Exponents of aniconism, but each in an innovative way, Ballocco, Grignani and Veronesi approached this language at different times. We need to consider that abstractionism, in Italy, while knowing the early experiments of Romolo Romani, Giacomo Balla and Alberto Magnelli, manifested itself rather late compared to other European countries: over the 1920s only a few Futurists (such as Prampolini and Fillia) had attempted – in parallel, anyway, to less radical solutions – the path of non-figuration. In the following decade, however, two major groups of elaboration of a fully abstract-concrete pictorial idiom, aligned with coeval foreign (especially French) experiences, gathered in Lombardy: one in Milan around the Galleria Il Milione, managed by brothers Peppino, Livio and Gino Ghiringhelli; the other developed in nearby Como (hometown of Antonio Sant'Elia) thanks to the works of artists such as Manlio Rho, Mario Radice, Aldo Galli and Carla Badioli (as well as with the significant indirect contribution of architects such as Giuseppe Terragni, Cesare Cattaneo and Alberto Sartoris).

Among the three, however, only Veronesi was in contact, though “marginally”, so to speak, with the Milione group; Ballocco, a pupil of Aldo Carpi, stood still on different, figurative positions, while Grignani came to a personal abstractionism of constructivist flavor in an experimental way, almost by himself.

In the post-war period, their respective paths would come closer together: on the one hand, the “original” aniconism as developed since 1948 – on his return from Argentina – by Ballocco and Veronesi's approach to M.A.C. and then to a vaguely informalist sensitivity; on the other hand, as early as 1949, Grignani's investigations around tissural aspects of sub-perception, distortion and induction. He and Ballocco, in this, in the 1950s were to be the two major Italian (and not only) precursors of the kinetic and optical researches that would later explode, almost like a trend, with the birth of various groups and collectives that would adhere to the “New Tendency”.

Veronesi, for his part, would return to the clarity of his own geometric compositions, but without attempting to investigate the perceptual phenomena that his two colleagues analyzed instead. What unites the three of them – beyond any fascination exerted on them by the “esthétique du nombre” and by the possibility of basing certain formal balances on specific proportions – is the love for number and for structural rationality, arising from a deep awareness of the chaos and mystery of the “apparent” phenomenal world; this as opposed to another reality – the abstract one, that is, art – which the mind is able to invent, build and suggest according to infinite harmonies, and in which, indeed, it is possible to find a universal order, the same one that the Greeks had identified in the golden section, and the masters of the Tuscan fifteenth-century in the “divine proportion”.

The idea of a painting based on numerical expression, whose modern father was Seurat, and which, in the twentieth-century, was embodied mainly by certain versions of abstractionism, in Ballocco, Grignani and

Veronesi is therefore presented as an “antidote”, a certainty to be opposed to the unknowability of reality. Thus, if the unstable and “kinetic” harmony of their works, on the one hand, is a reflection of a Cartesian trust in scientific reasoning, on the other hand it conveys an image of life as an enigma: if I may be allowed the metaphor, it is as if in the artworks of these three artists, the forms – just like us human beings – live in space without knowing where they come from and which direction they are going.

A further connecting factor between Ballocco, Grignani and Veronesi is, as already mentioned, their being painters, designers and graphic designers at the same time, without hierarchical distinctions between the different branches of activity. Their desire to leave no room for subjective expressiveness, spontaneity and arbitrary intuition brings them together: each artwork is an object, often provided with analytical faculties, built on the basis of specific rules, of a pre-established system, pondered and measured with scientific exactness and consequentality; and it means nothing but itself. The most important element is that it sticks to the identified rule, in accordance with an original application of the Keplerian motto «ubi materia ibi geometria» alluding to the intimate, mysterious structure that innervates nature and the cosmos.

Mario Ballocco (Milan, 1913-2008) was a crucial figure in twentieth-century Italian art and culture. He was an original experimenter, a man of countless interests and a forerunner in many fields: an abstract painter of great consistency, he made a fundamental contribution to the spread of design and to research into color and visual perception. The instances of aesthetics and science, of communication and teaching, of theory and technique converged in him in the most extraordinary way.

After studying with Aldo Carpi at the Accademia di Brera and being at the helm of the magazine «*Mondo d'oggi*», in 1947 he was in Argentina, where he came into contact with Lucio Fontana. In 1950, he founded in Milan the Gruppo Origine (also joined by Alberto Burri, Giuseppe Capogrossi and Ettore Colla), launched and directed the magazines «*AZ*» (from 1949 to 1952), «*Apri l'occhio!*» (from 1952 to 1960) and «*Colore. Estetica e Logica*» (from 1957 to 1964).

In Milan, he curated design and industrial aesthetics exhibitions and one on the history of photography (respectively in 1952 and 1953, at the Fiera). In 1958 came the “1^a mostra del colore”, which was held at the Museo Nazionale della Scienza e della Tecnologia “Leonardo da Vinci”.

Ballocco was also the inventor of “chromatology”, an interdisciplinary method for solving “visual problems of collective interest”: from the color of ambulances to that of exercise books for elementary school students. His goal was to defeat the monotony “which makes us come into the world with white, live with gray and die with black”. In the early 1970s he introduced chromatology as a subject of study at the Accademia di Brera, and later he also held courses at the Carrara in Bergamo and at the Politecnico in Milan.

He twice exhibited at the Venice Biennale with solo-tributes (in 1970 and 1986), and his works are held in many important collections and museums throughout Europe, South America and Israel. The Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris recently acquired one of his paintings, with the permanent display in the room dedicated to Italian abstractionism on the occasion of the rearrangement of the modern collections.

(p. b.)

Franco Grignani (Pieve Porto Morone, Pavia, 1908 - Milan, 1999) from his early youth took part in the Second Futurism events, with an intense exhibition activity.

After leaving the Math Department, in 1929 he went to Turin to enroll in Architecture and, at the end of his studies, moved to Milan, engaging in the design of exhibition areas as well as in graphic design. With regard to artistic research, by 1935 he abandoned any figurative reference to devote himself to all experiments that the use of camera allowed him: this led him to approach the abstractionist and constructivist avant-gardes.

Called to arms at the outbreak of World War II, he was assigned to teach an airborne sighting course. This experience made him interested in the analysis of optical perception.

Once the war was over, Grignani resumed his work in graphic design, however, devoting more and more of his attention and time to art. His painting was, from there on, a constant experimentation, ranging from spurious mathematics to optical techniques, but without being detached from a constructive freedom open to new insights.

The encounter with gallery owner Bruno Lorenzelli would give Grignani the opportunity to show the outcome of his much research and start a long-term exhibition collaboration.

In 1975 the City of Milan dedicated a retrospective show of his work at the Rotonda della Besana.

In 1980 he began teaching at NABA – Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan, which would name one of its departments in his memory.

(p. b.)

Luigi Veronesi (Milan, 1908-1998) enrolled at the technical institute, attended a course for textile designers and studied painting under Carmelo Violante. At a very young age, he approached the artists who gravitated around Galleria Il Milione, where, at just 17, he first exhibited works influenced by Sironi and Modigliani. As he drew closer to abstract art, he joined the “Abstraction-Création” group in 1934. Crucial to this period were his encounters with Josef Albers, László Moholy-Nagy, Max Bill and Jean Tschichold, which enabled him to

absorb the teachings of the Bauhaus and get to know the work of Malevič, El Lissitsky and Rodčenko. Meanwhile, he worked with «*Campo Grafico*» magazine. He would also collaborate with «*Casabella*» and «*Ferrania*» and, in the postwar period, with «*AZ*». He made many experimental achievements in the 1930s and 1940s, during which he developed a personal geometric-constructivist abstractionism, while remaining open to different spheres of expression: painting, photography, engraving, cinema and set design.

He was also interested in music: in 1936 he produced the famous *14 variations of a pictorial theme*, with collage and Indian ink on paper, now part of the MART collection in Rovereto; they would be reproduced in a volume three years later, along with the *14 variations of a musical theme*, which Riccardo Malipiero Jr. composed in 1938, inspired by Veronesi's work. In 1939 this cycle of works was later exhibited in his solo show held at Galerie l'Équipe in Paris.

In 1947 he joined *La Bussola* photographic group, signing its programmatic manifesto, while in 1948 he joined the M.A.C. (Movimento Arte Concreta). In the 1950s and 1960s, Veronesi received his first major recognitions (prizes, participation in the Venice Biennale and the Bienal de São Paulo of Brazil, solo exhibitions in Italy and abroad) and went through a period of restless openness to certain aspects of Informal Art, later overcome during his return to a clear lyrical-constructivist geometricism. Furthermore, he began teaching at the Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera (where he "inherited" the chromatology course introduced by Mario Ballocco), and then at NABA – Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan.

In the 1980s and 1990s, his renewed interest in photography and cinema was combined with works related to the field of applied art, with frescoes, projects for public spaces and outdoor graphic interventions.

(p. b.)

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**Milan, galleria 10 A.M. ART (Corso San Gottardo, 5)
30 November 2023 – 23 February 2024**

Opening day: Thursday 30 November 2023 at 5 p.m.

**Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.
All other days, by appointment only**

Free entry

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