



MILAN
GALLERIA 10 A.M. ART
FROM 10 JUNE TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2021
“UNFOLDING OF HISTORY.
AGOSTINO BONALUMI, SANDRO DE ALEXANDRIS”
curated by Marco Meneguzzo

From 10 June to 30 September the Galleria 10 A.M. ART in Milan is organising the show *Unfolding of history. Agostino Bonalumi, Sandro De Alexandris*. In the show an important selection of works from the 1960s and 1970s will open a new dialogue between the researches of the two artists.

This is what the curator, Marco Meneguzzo, has written:

The habit of looking at a certain kind of reading of history – all histories – is usually generated by a very convincing interpretation of what has happened, and also of the inevitable generalisations that the distance in time from the events produces in those very interpretations. The history of art, which is made of individuals as well as of languages, is not immune from these generalisations and habits: the cataloguing by movements and by successive phases really is convenient (from the viewpoint of scholastic or frivolous divulgation) and allows the placing of each work of an artist in the place that news and the universally known attribute to them, and thus to define them once and for all, in such a way as to make clear what we are speaking about and anyway the territory in which we move.

Luckily, history is a dynamic affair that, even without resorting to impossible revisionism, in the urgency of defining certain important moments of its course – important for us, not for history in itself which is indifferent –, together with generalisations, searches the opposite pole in order to refine its own view, to make it more acute until it finds the various underground rivers of its own course which, on the one hand, shift from the principle current and, on the other, perhaps finds in another direction part of that current that was held to run calmly to the mouth. Let's take, for example, the great period of the Italian neo-avant-garde in about 1960, which saw in Agostino Bonalumi and Enrico Castellani (though rather less in Piero Manzoni) the major interpreters of the new condition of “surfaces”, after the absolute gesture of cutting by Lucio Fontana. They were the ones who searched – allegorically and physically – to “sew up the tear” and to reconstruct on new and wider bases the relationship between with an essential element – the surface – of art. Together with them, there were just a few others – Paolo Scheggi, Dadamaino, Turi Simeoni – and then nothing: all those who came after were considered epigones because they were formally too similar to them, so much so as almost to be plagiarists. But if these are to be liquidated as copyists, the question that a historian must ask him or herself, and just as complex, is: is it possible that such an important category as “the surface” was dealt with in those years by those few (obviously I am speaking of Italy, not of the world where, however, something similar happened, though not with our stubborn blindness), and then put to one side as though everything had been resolved and, above all, confined to that experience?

And so the image of the underground river can render the sensation that it has not been explored enough, and that a part of the waters of that mainstream has been diverted to other more hidden and underground streams, then to emerge as something new, in places and at times apparently distant from the initial experience.

The art of Sandro De Alexandris, in comparison to that of Agostino Bonalumi, sculpturally answers this possibility, of how two artists, rarely compared or even simply brought together, can reveal linguistic

relationships not too distant from each other. In the twists or folds of history, that is, there can be hidden something not yet seen, not revealed, and that historically opens new perspectives of interpretation of experiences commonly considered independent. And it is from a “fold” that the inquiry begins, that turn of the direction of the surface that characterises the first works by De Alexandris (from 1964) and that then was to be transformed into something else. That fold was a real fold, a geometrically-determined corrugation of the surface, a physical modification of a conceptual field, traditionally tied to representation, which is the canvas. When the canvas – or the paper, which was to become the preferred material of De Alexandris – is folded it is no longer a simple support but becomes a main element of the work, which is determined by that fold. Bonalumi and his generation (which are not all that distant given that Bonalumi was born in 1935 and De Alexandris in 1939) had declared factually that the surface “was” the work, to the point of accepting the definition that Gillo Dorfles gave to these experiences as “painting-objects”, and theirs was the merit of a kind of neo-avant-garde heroism in their acceptance of Fontana’s revolution and their carrying on with it “by other means”, to quote von Clausewitz; but in doing so they opened up a vast and unknown territory the exploration of which promised great developments... instead, art history as we know it has practically declared the end of that period together with its first discoverers. Perhaps it has been unable to see that that research had a different development (again!). As happens when you throw a pebble into a pond, the perturbation of the original calm of the water – a metaphor to indicate the disruptive action of Fontana, without whom probably that pond would have remained motionless – generates a wave near to the impact – Bonalumi and Castellani –, and then return to the initial entropy through increasingly less relevant waves. But that pond, anyway, is no longer the same. And then even in the metaphor there exists a kind of formal resemblance, if you consider how many surfaces of Bonalumi have been pinpointed, arriving almost to the point of high-reliefs and, like these reliefs, in De Alexandris they are increasingly minimum and minimal, so much so as not to be recognised as the result of that primary action by Fontana. He, rather, is spoken of as “analytical”, and this is quite right, but isn’t this the result of that intuition that so sharply and precisely accented what might be the surface and, the opposite, what painting might be? And so a critical derivation of so-called analytical painting of the everted surfaces of Fontana’s cohorts could be flanked to the traditional vision of a derivation of that trend from geometric and radical abstraction. A vision that is not strange; it is one in which there are no imitators but analysts.

“UNFOLDING OF HISTORY. AGOSTINO BONALUMI, SANDRO DE ALEXANDRIS”

**Milan, Galleria 10 A.M. ART (Corso San Gottardo, 5)
10 June - 30 September 2021**

Opening: Thursday 10 June 2021 at 5 p.m.

**Opening hours: from Tuesday to Friday, from 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., and from 2.30 p.m. to 6 p.m.
On other days by appointment only**

Free entry

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