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GIANFRANCO

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AND LUIGIA

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SPAJANI

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“All things come and go.  
Maybe paintings are the only thing that can give continuous joy.  
First the pleasure of seeing them over and over, and then the certainty of having them close at hand.”  
Gianfranco Spajani

It was 1999 when Gianfranco Spajani, a collector from Bergamo who has long been close to the GAMeC, decided to allocate a substantial set of works from his collection to the Museum. This was not a snap decision: already in 1995, though asking to remain anonymous, he had donated the painting *La morte di Patroclo* ('The Death of Patroclus') by Aligi Sassu in order to contribute to the growth of a recently founded institution, but with the ambition of representing the most innovative artistic research in the city.

His collection, put together over forty years of frequenting exhibitions, museums and galleries, was of a private nature, bound up in his personal taste, his closeness to some artists and a strong curiosity and passion for the paths taken by Italian and European art over the twentieth century. The selection of thirty-two works, decided together with Vittorio Fagone (then director of the GAMeC), aimed first and foremost to provide a cross section of the artistic languages of the 'short' century, from pre-Futurist Boccioni - the work dearest to him - to the Italian masters of the early twentieth century - such as Balla, de Chirico, Morandi, Casorati, and Savinio - up to the leading exponents of European art - Kandinsky, Sutherland, Matta, Hartung, and Richter - as well as some of the artists of the 1950s and '70s.

In order to restore the private dimension of the collection, its intimate character, the close relationship between the living space and the collector's gaze, it has been decided to arrange the paintings as if they were part of a domestic picture display: inside this room, within the exhibition itinerary but at the same time isolated, reminiscent of an apartment room. The works - hanging on a single wall, one next to the other - allow for their confidential and dialogical fruition, more akin to that of the private collector than that of a museum visitor.

Gianfranco Spajani's desire, one shared by his wife Luigia, was to create an initial set of works, worthy of what he sensed would become the hub of contemporary art in his city: an open place, both physically and culturally, proactive, and worthy of such a great gift. An act of great generosity, one which speaks volumes of the high ethical stature of a true enthusiast, mindful of the common good and the future of the community.

Umberto Boccioni  
(Reggio Calabria 1882 – Verona 1916)  
*La cara Betty*, 1909  
oil on canvas, cm 70 x 53

The painter's dog Betty is a rare example of Boccioni's pictorial style shortly before he met Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and turned to Futurism. The pet looks up towards her owner, who is standing in front of her and is painting her. Her chest – like the entire surface of the painting – is awash in light, with vibrant yet unnatural splashes of colour. The forms are created through vibrant and thread-like brushstrokes. The use of bold and brilliant colours and the diffused luminosity of this work attest to the importance of Boccioni's embrace of Divisionism – shared with Balla and encouraged by his acquaintance with Previati – in his early years. Within the space of a year, he would definitively abandon this late-nineteenth-century style.



Massimo Campigli  
(Firenze 1895 – Saint-Tropez 1971)  
*Portatrici d'acqua / Water Bearers*, 1931  
oil on canvas, cm 55 x 38

The path that led Campigli to find his ideal form of expression commenced with his youthful passion for writing: in 1919 he lived in Paris as the foreign correspondent for *Il Corriere della Sera*. Initially attracted by the Cubist and Post-Cubist styles of Léger and Gris, he ultimately rediscovered the grandeur and simplicity of the ancients. Egyptian and Greek painting, and above all Etruscan art, served as the models for his distinctive female figures, archaizing and timeless forms. Stylized faces, fixed stares, gestures captured in their everyday movements and a minimal palette, with a predilection for earthy colours and a fresco-like effect, come together to suggest an archaic, innocent and primitive age, not inserted in the context of the “return to order” between the two wars, which marked a moment of withdrawal for the avant-gardes and a return to figurative art.



Filippo de Pisis  
(Ferrara 1896 – Milano 1956)  
*Natura morta con conchiglia /*  
*Still Life with Shell*, 1930  
oil on canvas, cm 60 x 72,5



Essentially self-taught, De Pisis grew up in Ferrara and dabbled in painting, prose and poetry. After moving to Rome, he decided to turn seriously to painting, a decision born out by his subsequent move to Paris, where he met “Les Italiens de Paris” (de Chirico, Campigli and Severini). The influence of the French Impressionists is evident in his extremely delicate style composed of rapid luminous brushstrokes, shaded effects and blurry outlines. His still lifes, particularly the marine ones executed starting in the 1920s, are composed of a variety of objects rendered with soft tonal shading that evokes nostalgic and dream-like moods with sophisticated allusions to water, as in this case. The areas on the canvas that were intentionally left unpainted give these works an even more rarefied mystique.

Giuseppe Migneco  
(Messina 1908 – Milano 1997)  
*Bevitore / Drinker*, 1940  
oil on canvas, cm 57,5 x 47,5



Migneco moved from Messina to Milan, an international and more culturally active city, but all of his works are imbued with traces of his childhood near the sea and in the sunny Sicilian countryside. Subjects taken from daily life and warm colours with only a few tonal variations, accompanied by a powerfully expressionistic and distorting style, reflect his bond with the Corrente Group. These artists felt no ties with either abstraction or the celebratory language of realism, and instead shared freedom of expression combined with a strong social sense. The drinker has been a popular subject for many painters, who have viewed this figure as the icon of an alienating and contradictory society that – in Migneco’s case – was also threatened by impending war.

Felice Casorati  
(Novara 1886 – Torino 1963)  
*Le uova sul libro / Eggs on a Book*, 1949  
oil on canvas, cm 50 x 40

The naturalism of Casorati's works is transfigured and mediated through his revival of the classical tradition, from Piero della Francesca to the Northern European artists of the early 20th century. His images are imbued with enormous precision in composition and perspective, pure static forms, suspension and severity – all of which harmonized by light. In addition to working as a painter, Casorati was also a leading figure on the Italian art scene (he helped select works for the Venice Biennale and the Rome Quadriennale, taught art and founded art schools). His still lifes are dominated by simple and vivid objects set in a cubic perspective space in which the relations linking plastic definition, planes, colours and tonality are studied meticulously. The egg – a simple and perfect form by definition – is a leitmotif of Casorati's works.



Giorgio de Chirico  
(Volos 1888 – Roma 1978)  
*Calco dall'antico con guanto di gomma\**  
*Old-Fashioned Cast with Rubber Glove*, 1959  
oil on canvas, cm 60 x 50

\* The artist's replica of the famous *Song of Love* (1914), now at The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The iconography of de Chirico is rooted in his childhood spent in Greece; in ancient history, mythology and painting, which he studied in Athens, Florence and Munich; and in his readings of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. He created a style he named "Metaphysical painting", meaning that it referred to a world other than the real one, a world whose absolute meaning is impossible for humans to understand. Timeless scenes marked by rarefied fixity, set in impossible perspectives, see deserted and seemingly inhospitable architectures populated by estranged



and extravagant objects, such as statues, dressmaker's mannequins and toys. The cast of the *Apollo Belvedere*, which harks back to Greek statuary, the hanging rubber glove and the ball allude to the colours of the Italian flag, a key reference in the first version of the work from 1914, painted in a climate of inflamed nationalism and interventionism on the verge of World War I.

Giorgio Morandi  
(Bologna 1890 – 1964)  
*Natura morta / Still Life*, 1959  
oil on canvas, cm 25 x 30,5



The personal maturation of Morandi, the painter of silent still lifes, reflects an interior path modelled after the most sublime pictorial tradition, from Giotto to Masaccio, Bellini and Titian, and from Corot to Seurat, Renoir and Cézanne. Although he was always up to date on current trends – for example, he was associated with Metaphysical painting – Morandi preferred the solitude of his studio in Bologna to inspire his creative work. It was here that a frugal repertory of objects – bottles, jars, jugs, oil lamps and fruit bowls – became the ubiquitous yet ever-different subject of his paintings. In this simple composition, several harshly illuminated shapes cast their shadows to create delicate and harmonious shadings of whites and greys, in a dense and suspended atmosphere that makes the objects the almost humanized actors on a perspectival stage.

Giorgio de Chirico  
(Volos 1888 – Roma 1978)  
*Vita silente / Silent Life*, 1959 ca.  
oil on canvas, cm 40 x 50



While *Old-Fashioned Cast*, a replica of the 1914 original now at MoMA in New York, fully exemplifies the strictly Metaphysical language of the period, *Silent Life* illustrates the artist's "baroque" turn of the 1940s – later followed by a return to the Metaphysical style – that was not fully understood by enthusiasts of his

works. The immobile, cerebral and alienating atmospheres that had gained the artist fame are juxtaposed with a rich still life – classical in inspiration – and a romantically interpreted landscape in the background. The bright, warm colours are enhanced by dense and luminist brushstrokes.

Alberto Savinio  
(Atene 1891 – Roma 1952)  
*Passeggiatrice in riva al mare /*  
*Woman Walking on the Beach, 1947*  
tempera on canvas, cm 30 x 20

Alberto Savinio, the pseudonym of Andrea de Chirico, was the younger brother of the painter Giorgio and, like him, was born in Greece. He initially dabbled in music, followed by literature, and it was not until 1927 that, at the age of 36, he turned to painting. His sublimely unique style shifts between Surrealism, which he first saw in Paris, and Metaphysical painting, the style pioneered by his brother, but Savinio's works also reflect his cultured upbringing. His preferred subjects were metamorphic figures – singular superimpositions of human bodies and animal heads – born from his knowledge of the naturalistic and psychological theories of the early 20th century concerning the correspondence between one's character and facial features. This delightful female body dressed in turn-of-the-century clothing but with the elegant head of an ostrich is an eloquent example. The painting was commissioned by Ubaldo Baratta, a Milanese tailor and collector, with the intent of forming a collection of small works, like this one, that could illustrate the history of costume.



Anton Zoran Mušič  
(Gorizia 1909 – Venezia 2005)  
*Cavallini che passano / Running Horses, 1949*  
oil on canvas, cm 24 x 33

Born in Austro-Hungarian Gorizia in 1909, Zoran Mušič studied at the Academy in Zagreb. The complex political events of the time led him to become Italian in 1918, but



years of cultural nomadism followed which led him to Austria, Dalmatia, and Slovenia. After a trip to Spain in 1935, in 1943 he was greatly struck by Venice, a city where he recognized the lively interweaving of East and West; the result was a fresh, joyful, cursive painting that would change in the works of the late 1940s, after his internment in Dachau as a political prisoner. The artist himself states: "It is not that out of reaction to the horrors that I rediscovered my happy childhood. Horses, Dalmatian landscapes, Dalmatian women were there even before. But afterwards I could see everything else. ... Dalmatian landscapes have returned, they have lost everything that was too much and too trivial. ... At least for my painting, I needed this great teaching." *The Passing Horses* from the Spajani Collection show this change, with a more mature and severe technique, which however does not overlook the poetry of color, remaining imbued with a perceptible restlessness and melancholy.

Enrico Baj  
(Milano 1924 – Vergiate, Varese 2003)  
*Omaggio floreale / Floral Tribute*, 1959  
oil and collage on canvas, cm 40 x 50

Baj's boundless imagination was unleashed in his artistic activity as well as his literary work and civic commitment. He was part of the post-war cultural scene, promoting the Nuclear Movement against all academic "isms" and the Mouvement International pour un Bauhaus Imaginiste. Around 1955 he turned to the collage technique, using a wide variety of materials such as medals, fabrics, braiding and decorations. In this work the ground is a still life in the tradition of the seventeenth century, but the two eccentric figures in the foreground are a collage of string, watch faces and resin eyes. The artist's irreverent and ironic interpretation is a critique of contemporary society, but at the same time, through the metaphor of the watering can bent in front of the flower, he does not forget to pay attention to human relations.



Roberto Sebastian Matta  
(Santiago del Chile 1911 – Civitavecchia 2002)  
*Composition*, 1967  
oil on canvas, cm 80 x 100

After earning his degree in architecture in Chile, the artist moved to Paris, where he worked for Le Corbusier. In 1937 Dalí introduced him to Breton, who oriented the artist towards Surrealism. His “psychological morphologies” are transcriptions – through “automatic writing” – of floating organic forms that emerge from the depth of awareness and animate the space of the painting. They are distinguished by their unique playfulness and brilliant, warm palette: colour drips to create transparent nuances and flashes of light. The artist moved to New York in 1939 and became one of the leading figures of the American avant-garde and Art Informel. In the late 1950s he returned to Europe and his compositions became more anthropomorphic, often symbolizing the dehumanization of the individual in the modern world.



Graham Sutherland  
(Londra 1903 – 1980)  
*St. Isimaels I*, 1974  
tempera and oil on paper applied to canvas, cm 60 x 81

Sutherland, who studied in London, devoted himself to etching and engraving as well as painting, in which he specialized in portraits, still lifes and, above all, landscapes inspired by the imagery of the Welsh countryside of Pembrokeshire: he went there assiduously and filled his notebooks with illustrations of this place. He did not become a fulltime painter until after World War II, when he began to develop his “metamorphoses”, a Surrealist theme influenced by the dramatic experience of the war. Turning to natural elements (roots, fallen trees, branches, flowers, rocks, insects) and, in some cases, everyday objects and human elements, the artist effected a transmutation of sorts, demolishing their original form to



reassemble them in a new way and creating anthropomorphic, animal and vegetal hybrids. His colours are bold, his tones brilliant. In *St. Islimaels*, one of these typical fantastical figures stands out against a monochromatic emeraldgreen ground. The title of the painting evokes the village of St. Ishmaels, close to the port on the Milford Haven Waterway in Pembrokeshire and characterized by enormous rock walls.

Ennio Morlotti  
(Lecco 1910 – Milano 1992)  
*Vegetazione G7 / Vegetation G7*, 1962  
oil on canvas, cm 71 x 77

Morlotti had already gone through different phases in his artistic research before 1962, the year this work was executed. Even as a child he was attracted by painting and after studying in Milan, Florence and Paris, he joined the Corrente Group, adopting an expressionistic style. He exhibited with the New Art Front and ultimately arrived at his finest production: Art Informel. The artist depicts a jungle of natural elements using broad, circular brushstrokes and brilliant colours. Dark burnished hues are blended with them to create dense and tightly woven patterns. The outcome – marked by creative spontaneity – is lush yet shadowy vegetation.



Giacomo Balla  
(Torino 1871 – Roma 1958)  
*Linee forze di paesaggio*  
(*Simultaneità di sensazioni: cielo+case+alberi+fiiori*) /  
*Lines Forces of a Landscape*  
(*Simultaneity of Sensations: sky+houses+trees+flowers*),  
1918  
oil on paper mounted on canvas, cm 42 x 54



One of the artists who signed the *Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painters* in 1910, Balla began to study the breakdown of light and movement, and around 1915 he achieved an extremely concise pictorial language. The title of this work denotes his attempt to represent the dynamism of objects, based

on the synaesthesia, the simultaneity of vision and retinal persistence underlying Futurism. They are broken down into lines of force, vanishing lines in space that are perceived simultaneously. In this composition, characterized by the rhythm and balance of warm and cold colours, circles and triangles delineate barely recognizable forms: the house on the right, the trees in the centre and sunlight.

Alberto Magnelli  
(Firenze 1888 – Meudon, Parigi 1971)  
*Fantômes côte à côte*, 1938  
oil on canvas, cm 50 x 61

Magnelli was influenced not only by the great Tuscan masters of the 14th and 15th centuries, but also by the formal solutions of Futurism and his keen sensitivity towards the era's international cultural climate – Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Matisse, Picasso, Léger, Kandinsky – which matured when he moved to Paris in 1931. The choice of an abstract language emerges as the culmination of his artistic development. Magnelli's compositions are filled with dynamic shapes composed of solids and voids, curves and broken lines, and the rhythmical balance of form and colour. In *Fantômes côte à côte*, ghostly presences resembling each other float within a double frame. The only luminous element in a predominance of shaded greens, browns and blues is the band on the left that crosses through the “phantoms” and alters them.

Mario Radice  
(Como 1898 – 1987)  
*Composizione / Composition*, 1936  
oil on canvas, cm 45 x 80

One of the leading exponents of Italian abstract art practised on an international scale, Mario Radice helped spread it throughout the country. He was always very open to engaging with the avant-garde artists of the era – Kandinsky, Le Corbusier, his townsman Manlio Rho, his friend the architect Giuseppe Terragni – and with the abstract artists who



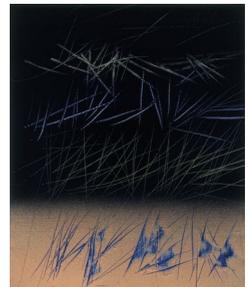
frequented the Galleria Il Milione in Milan. In the work shown here, the composition toys with round and wavy motifs that intersect with straight lines. The central geometric forms effectively create an axis of symmetry in the painting, around which the colours and figures alternate in a mirror-like fashion. The orange circle – the focal point galvanizing the observer's attention – is the centre of the composition, exalted by the relationship between complementary colours.

Hans Richter  
(Berlino 1888 – Locarno 1976)  
*Dymo – XXIV*, 1970  
oil and collage on canvas, cm 72 x 100



Open to the research of Europe's historical avant-gardes, the artist joined the Dada movement in 1917 after he moved to Zurich, exhibiting at the group's first show held at the Cabaret Voltaire. The Dadaists' spirit of rebellion and social criticism was destined to leave its mark on Richter. The result is an abstract style that seeks a dynamic, rhythmic and musical effect. The technique he used reflects Cubist origins: stripes or outlines, some of which painted but others cut and assembled, emerge from a background of neutral colours, resembling an unpainted canvas, to chase each other in space. The yellow shape on the lower left creates vital contrast.

Hans Hartung  
(Lipsia 1904 – Antibes 1989)  
*T1964-R9*, 1964  
oil on canvas, cm 73 x 60

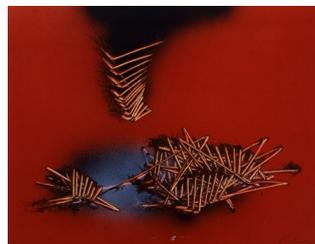


The artist, a leading exponent of Action Painting in Europe, cultivated art, music, philosophy and photography. Pursuing a personal line of research, he embraced the abstract style and conceived of painting as the spontaneous expression of emotion. The quality of his work lies in the relationship linking sign, space and colour. Against a simple

ground awash in refined faded hues, the immediacy of the artist's gesture interweaves clear and incisive signs, the instantaneous and rhythmic transcription of a mood. The surface is etched, the background colour scratched: beige and black alternate and contrast each other to give the image depth.

Emilio Scanavino  
(Genova 1922 – Milano 1986)  
*Dall'alto / From above*, 1983  
oil on canvas, cm 56 x 73

Born in Genoa in 1922 to a theosophical father and a fervent Catholic mother, Scanavino attended an artistic lyceum under the guidance of Manlio Calonghi. After having held his first solo show at the age of only twenty, he moved to Milan, where he studied architecture; a pictorial phase followed, influenced also by an influential stay in post - Cubist and figurative Paris, but in the 1950s the artist developed what would become his hallmark: the stylized knot. It is a figure that over the years takes on disturbing forms, with the influence of abstract expressionism and the signic informal embodied in a concatenation of segments and forms - in later years associated with blood red, resulting in three-dimensional figures almost with a life of their own. According to the artist, these links are central: knots that represent the relationship we weave with the world around us and that can be luminous or destructive, creative or overpowering.



Piero Dorazio  
(Roma 1927 – Perugia 2005)  
*Verso il raffreddamento / Towards Cooling*, 1960  
oil on canvas, cm 130 x 100

The artist's constant experimentation – in 1947 he joined the Forma 1 abstractionist group – inspired him to create enormous canvases in the 1960s, works with monochromatic fields in which colour is organized to form a dense and complex weave of overlaid elements, often modulated in a nearly monochromatic palette, as on this canvas. Wispy filiform brushstrokes



criss-cross to form a mesh that modulates and filters light. Colour was a fundamental element in Dorazio's research and in this work it eloquently conveys his poetics.

Wassilij Kandinskij  
(Mosca 1866 – Neuilly-sur-Seine, Parigi 1944)  
*Spitz-Rund*, 1925  
oil on cardboard applied to panel, cm 72,5 x 32

Considered the father of abstractionism, around 1910 the artist explored painting that does not imitate nature but must spring from an “inner need” – as the artist wrote in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, written between 1904 and 1909 – composed of forms and colours that convey emotions. After the structures born from innovation, starting in 1922 – and during the period in which he taught at the Bauhaus in Weimar – his forms became geometric, with separate fields of colour. *Spitz-Rund* (sharp-round) is a work from that phase. Against the monochromatic ground, geometric forms and lines are overlaid to give the painting vertical thrust. According to Kandinsky, colours had specific parallels, including musical ones. In fact, he wrote that the triangle is always yellow, sharp and unpredictable, like the sound of a trumpet, the circle – a simple, complex and mysterious figure, the symbol of the universe – corresponds to the double bass and to blue, and green to the sound of a violin.





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