

Roma/New York, 1953–1964

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537 West 20th Street, New York



Piero Dorazio, *Totale: giallo*, 1963. © 2023 Piero Dorazio, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Roma/New York, 1953–1964*, an exhibition exploring the significant intellectual and artistic cross-pollination between artists in the centers of Italian and American art in the 1950s and 1960s, on view at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location, and curated by gallery partner David Leiber.

In the early 1950s, against the backdrop of New York's emergence as an international art capital and Italy's postwar economic boom and cultural revival after fascism, Informale and abstract painters working and exhibiting in Rome, such as Afro Basaldella, Alberto Burri, Giuseppe Capogrossi, and Piero Dorazio, began to be regularly featured in solo exhibitions in New York galleries—like Eleanor Ward's Stable Gallery, and Catherine Viviano's and Leo Castelli's eponymous spaces.

At the same time, several New York-based artists, such as Cy Twombly and Robert Rauschenberg, traveled to Italy, and their work was influenced by their experiences there. Many of these artists, including Philip Guston, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Rauschenberg, Salvatore Scarpitta, and Twombly, exhibited at notable venues in Rome, most especially Irene Brin's and Gaspero del Corso's Galleria dell'Obelisco and Plinio De Martiis's Galleria La Tartaruga. Throughout this period, group exhibitions in each city presented both communities of artists alongside one another, putting their work in direct dialogue. Fruitful relationships emerged from this transatlantic exchange, as in the case of Twombly returning to Italy in 1957 at the suggestion of artist Toti Scialoja and de Kooning working from Afro's studio in Rome in 1959.

The first part of the exhibition will explore these interwoven threads of gesturalism, Informale, and material-based art that defined the 1950s and early 1960s in the New York and Italian art worlds, bringing together key works that exemplify the visual, material, and conceptual links these artists developed and shared with one another. From there, it proceeds to address the emergence in Italy of a distinct aesthetic informed by new realism—as well as Italian neorealist and more experimental avant-garde cinema—in the early 1960s in the work of Franco Angeli, Tano Festa, Giosetta Fioroni, Jannis Kounellis, Mimmo Rotella, and Mario Schifano, who incorporated the language of American consumerist iconography and urban signs into their compositions in reaction to both Informale painting and American pop. Among the works that will be on view are several important paintings by Schifano—one of the artists included in Sidney Janis’s landmark 1962 exhibition *The New Realists*—which feature his signature incorporation of text and visual fragments from logos and advertisements. 1964, the year Rauschenberg won the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale, stands as a transition point for this exhibition as the years that followed would see a shift away from Rome as the center of the Italian avant-garde, with Milan and, increasingly, Turin serving as the centers of artistic activity for both established and younger generations of artists.

Roma/New York, 1953–1964 will focus in particular on the Italian artists, several of whom—including Carla Accardi and Gastone Novelli—are recognized and acclaimed in Italy, but remain less well-known in the United States. Though largely unheralded today, Luigi Boille, who will also be featured in this exhibition, appeared in notable exhibitions during this time at the Rome-New York Art Foundation, Rome, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

The presentation will include notable groups of paintings by Afro, Angeli, Burri, Dorazio, Festa, Novelli, Rotella, and Schifano, with some works coming directly from the respective artist’s estate or foundation. These paintings will appear alongside representative works—several lent by prominent institutions and foundations in the United States—by the American and New York-based artists to highlight the formal and conceptual overlaps that existed between both schools. Among the Americans, Conrad Marca-Relli, and his intricate collage-based painterly practice, are a central focus of this show. Born to Italian immigrant parents, Marca-Relli served as a key ambassador between both communities, introducing various Rome and New York-based dealers and artists to one another and helping establish many of the relationships that would persist throughout this period.

This exhibition also commemorates the passing of curator, writer, and scholar Germano Celant (1940–2020), who organized *Roma-New York: 1948–1964*, a 1993 exhibition at the Murray and Isabella Rayburn Foundation, New York, that serves as the inspiration for this show. In 2019, the catalogue for that exhibition—originally published in 1993 to accompany the show—was expanded and reprinted into a two-volume history documenting this period and the relationships between many of these artists. This exhibition also follows the final exhibition that Celant conceived and curated, *New York: 1962–1964*, at the Jewish Museum, New York.

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