

MILANO
GALLERIA 10 A.M. ART
FROM 20 FEBRUARY TO 28 MARCH 2025
“STRUCTURE, MATTER AND COLOUR.
FRANCO GIULI WITH PIERO DORAZIO 1969-1975”
Curated by Paolo Bolpagni

From 20 February to 28 March 2025 the Galleria 10 A.M. ART is organizing, in collaboration with Lorenzelli Arte, a retrospective dedicated to Franco Giuli (1934–2018), curated by Paolo Bolpagni, at no. 5 Corso San Gottardo in Milan. The exhibition is an opportunity to rediscover this artist from the Marche, one of the leading exponents of non-figurative, Neo-Constructivist and optical-dynamic research in Italy, whose varied yet consistent production is of exceptional quality and significance. We have chosen to focus on a specific phase of his art, from the end of the 1960s to the mid-1970s, juxtaposing Giuli's works with two oils on canvas by Piero Dorazio, with whom he enjoyed a profound friendship and mutual respect, and shared certain affinities. As the curator writes in his introductory text:

An untiring and coherent researcher of the image, Franco Giuli is one of those artists who risks being undervalued, due to a certain reticence, an aversion to any form of sensationalism, and a quiet, serious approach to his work, to which he always brought rigour and inventiveness, combining esprit de géométrie with esprit de finesse, to say it with Blaise Pascal. His focus was always on the essential elements of the pictorial lexicon: formal structures, material and colour, which have provided the title of this retrospective dedicated to him just over six years after his passing.

The list of scholars and critics who have concerned themselves with Giuli's production is impressive. They include: Giulio Carlo Argan, Giuseppe Marchiori, Luciano Caramel, Enrico Crispolti, Rossana Bossaglia, Umbro Apollonio, Giorgio Di Genova, Lara-Vinca Masini, Filiberto Menna, Giovanni Maria Accame, Giorgio Cortenova, Franco Solmi, Cesare Vivaldi, Nello Ponente, Italo Tomassoni, Carlo Melloni, Armando Ginesi and, among the living, Luigi Lambertini, Bruno Corà, Giancarlo Politi and Lorenzo Canova – and these are only some! It could never be said, in fact, that Giuli was neglected by critics, who have always considered him a worthy exponent of Italian geometric abstraction from the 1960s on. Clearly rooted in Constructivism and the Bauhaus (and especially the Kandinsky of Point and Line to Plane) his art followed in the international wake of New Tendencies, but without adhering to any of the movements, groups and associations so fashionable at the time (the Gruppo N in Padua, Gruppo T in Milan and Gruppo 63 in Rome, in Italy; the Zero Group in Germany; Equipo 57 in Spain; GRAV in France; Nul in the Netherlands...). Giuli preferred to distance himself from the “militant” attitudes of that period, implicitly laying claim to a freedom of action and research that literally set him apart in his investigation of the mechanisms of perception and the ways of defining geometric figures on the support to create three-dimensional effects, movement and optical illusion. In 1977 Argan placed him among the leading practitioners of “an orderly and methodical analysis of the pictorial surface”, of the “relationship between solid forms and their shadows”, and the “modalities and limits of design in painting”.

Over the decades Giuli experimented with different techniques and materials, from cardboard to wood, from burlap to collage, achieving effects that sometimes projected the work towards the viewer, by means of raised or undulating areas, dovetailing, protruding elements and relief. In the exhibition at 10 A.M. ART, however, we have chosen to concentrate on a specific period in his career, between the years 1969 and 1975, occasionally moving slightly out of this time frame. It was a phase in which Giuli painted in acrylic on canvas, creating works in saturated, brilliant colours and mainly a square format (which more than any other averts visual aggregations and even unconscious figurative or representational references), which possessed a transcendental virtuosity and at times were reminiscent of the concern with the machine aesthetic of the second Futurism, in the manner of Ivo Pannaggi. Moreover, art historian Laura Turco Liveri aptly reminds us in a text published in the catalogue of the artist's major retrospective at the Mole Vanvitelliana in Ancona in 2000, that the area around Fabriano, where Giuli was born, was agricultural and that as a “youth who grew up with tractors and threshing machines”, he must have observed their functional

systems and been fascinated by them. This would have determined in him a specific imagery, which it is only fair to take into account, but without over-emphasizing the importance of such a background.

In fact, in the 1960s the painter reflected on the concept of "structure", on the constitutive elements of formal creation and on their unlimited generativity, by constantly seeking to develop the possible combinations of the visual components and the ways of constructing the work. At the time, Giuli was very close to Piero Dorazio, who in 1992, on the occasion of a show devoted to his friend at the Galleria Zammarchi in Milan, dedicated an enlightening text to him. His essay highlighted the "consistency" of his production in the sphere of non-objective art, and the constancy, immune to the temptation of kowtowing to the whims of taste, of his linguistic research characterized by a geometric lexicon founded on the parameters of modernism. It was a means of exploring the "probabilities of identifying spaces and plastic rhythms through elements that were simple yet had a powerful chromatic impact", to quote Dorazio.

Coming from an artist who experimented so tirelessly with overlaps, the "weaving" of colours, and artful and refined layouts of signs and light, this was not only a testimony of esteem, but also revealed an expressive and methodological affinity. This leads us to consider the many interrelationships of a period of Italian painting which, aside from labels – that are somewhat emasculating – still merits careful analysis without preconceptions or classifications.

Biographical note:

Franco Giuli was born in Cerreto d'Esi (Ancona) in 1934 and died at Fabriano in 2018.

After exploring Informel at the end of the 1950s he directed his interest to new forms of expression, passing from an emphasis on the machine and the dynamics of space to perspectival surfaces in relation to factors of light, space, colour and form.

In 1967 he exhibited his works, with an introduction by Giancarlo Politi, at the Galleria Fanesi in Ancona; in 1968 he had another solo show at the Galleria Scipione in Macerata, this time with an introductory text by Italo Tomassoni. He met Rafael Alberti and Giulio Carlo Argan who found his work to be serious, committed and a revisitation of Constructivism, and would write about him in his introduction to the monograph published by Nuova Foglio Editrice in 1977.

Cesare Vivaldi presented the artist at Studio d'arte moderna SM13 in Rome in 1970; Filiberto Menna, in 1974; Lara-Vinca Masini, at the Galleria Flori in Florence in 1971; Luigi Lambertini, at the Galleria Ferrari in Verona in 1972, and Giuseppe Marchiori at La Chiocciola in Padua that same year.

Giuli then became a part of the art scene in Milan and Rome. During this period an interest was shown in his work by, among others, Giovanni Maria Accame, Umbro Apollonio, Giorgio Di Genova, Armando Ginesi, Luigi Paolo Finizio, Luciano Caramel, Rossana Bossaglia, Nello Ponente and Mauro Reggiani who asked him to participate in the 36th Venice Biennale in 1972. He also met Max Bill, Francesco Vincitorio, Claudia Terenzi, Luciano Marziano, Carlo Melloni, Leo Strozzi, Luigi Veronesi, and Piero Dorazio with whom he enjoyed a long friendship, sealed by the latter's respect for Giuli's research in the field of "New-Constructivism".

In 1977 he had a show, introduced by Italo Tomassoni, at the Galleria Fumagalli in Bergamo. In 1978 Enrico Crispolti presented him at the Galleria La Polena in Genoa. In 1979 he had an exhibition at the Galleria Il Cortile in Bologna, curated by Bruno D'Amore and introduced by Franco Solmi. In 1982, the Salvi Prize and University of Urbino gave him an anthological exhibition, curated by Elverio Maurizi. That same year the Macerata City Council organized an exhibition of his work, curated by Luigi Lambertini, in the former church of San Paolo. In 1983 he had a solo show, curated by Giorgio Cortenova, at Palazzo dei Diamanti, Ferrara.

Subsequently Giuli opted for "poor" materials, like cardboard and various woods, always pursuing a consistent path of research. In the works he created, cardboard was used as the surface of the piece, while the wood, utilized as strips or broader lengths, created layouts that defined the structure of the piece. He used cardboard of varying thicknesses and colour (grey, white and Murillo black from Cartiere Miliani in Fabriano).

Giuli then moved on to burlap canvas, with a precise, regular weave, focusing on the colours that he painted on it. In the diptychs, the structures of the two adjacent spaces were often overturned, with the colour in the first being applied compactly in the angled structures, and in the second exploding vividly. At this stage, Giuli's art possessed chromatic qualities resembling those of landscape: the structures had vibrant colours and their own light, and were mirrored in a dimension congenial to them.

In 1987, he was given the exhibition 'La sfida della ragione. Opere 1980/1987', curated by Giovanni Maria Accame, organized by the Civitanova Marche City Council and inaugurated by Giulio Carlo Argan.

In 1990, he was given a solo exhibition, with an introduction by Luciano Caramel, at the Galleria Vismara in Milan. In 1991, the text for his one-man show at the Galleria Eralov in Rome was written by Rossana Bossaglia. That same year the Rimini City Council devoted a large one-man exhibition to him in the church of Santa Maria ad Nives.

During this period Giuli reintroduced colour in large works, in which the structures were developed logically and the forms were deliberately ambiguous. His research continued with the creation of a shaped division in the works, whose elements were dovetailed or disengaged, which were positioned differently on the walls. In

1998 Carlo Belloli wrote the text for the catalogue of the anthological exhibition 'Franco Giuli: componibili a incastro' organized by the Cesena City Council in the Ex-Pescheria space.

In 2000 the major anthological show, curated by Giorgio Di Genova, was staged at the Mole Vanvitelliana in Ancona.

In 2005 Giuli, presented by Giovanni Maria Accame, had parallel shows at the Galleria Arte Struktura and Galleria Vismara, both in Milan, and that same year, an exhibition at the Galleria Giulia, with an introduction by Enrico Crispolti, in Rome.

In 2007, Lorenzo Canova curated the exhibition 'Le geometrie poetiche di Franco Giuli' at the Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Palazzo Collicola in Spoleto. The same year, Giuli took part in his second Venice Biennale.

After creating large works exploring the dynamics of space, he produced three-dimensional structures in wood, which, as Armando Ginesi observes, "resemble lively, rapid, darting, elegant tongues of fire".

During his last years he produced artworks on packing cardboard, in which the acrylic is enhanced by incisions scratched into the support. However, the relationship between space and form, the dynamic morphologies and the colours remained basically the same.

Mention should also be made of important venues and exhibitions in Italy and abroad where his works were displayed: Palais de l'Europe, Menton; Permanente, Milan; Kunsthalle, Darmstadt; Museum of Art Collections, Bucharest; Malopolska Institute of Culture, Krakow; Domotecnica, Cologne; MACLA – Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Latinoamericano, La Plata, Argentina; 'New Trends in European Painting', Düsseldorf; 'Linea della ricerca artistica in Italia dal 1960 al 1980', Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome; 'Secessioni astratte in Italia dal dopoguerra al 1990', Palazzo Forti, Verona; 'Art 90 for Europe', London, and '50 años después', Centro de Exposiciones y Congresos, Zaragoza.

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In collaboration with Lorenzelli Arte, Milan

Milan, galleria 10 A.M. ART (Corso San Gottardo, 5)

20 February - 28 March 2025

Opening day: Thursday 20 February 2025 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

Information:

tel. +39 02.92889164; info@10amart.it; www.10amart.it