

Press Release

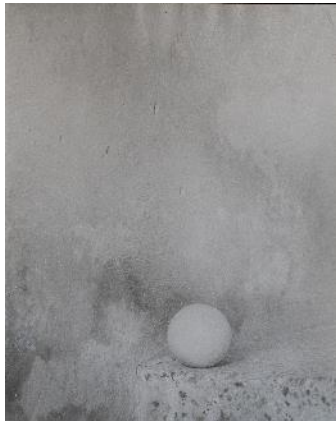
Formless Form The non-objective phase of Italian Photography 1935-1958

Curated by Antonella Russo

Wunderkammer Galleria Civica d'arte Moderna e Contemporanea -GAM, Torino

June 25 - November 8, 2020

Opening date: June 23 ,2020



The Galleria civica d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Turin, opens **Formless Form** in its Wunderkammer Gallery, an exhibition devoted to the inception of Italian non-objective and *Informel* photography from 1935-1958. It comprises a selection of about **47 vintage and little-known original prints by 7 outstanding Italian photographers** belonging to major Italian photo archives and prestigious international art collections, as well as a **choice of rare photography books**.

Formless Form offers one of the first in-depth investigations on the formation of the experimental photography phase in Italian photography from the mid 1930s to the mid Fifties of the Twentieth century curated by Antonella Russo, historian and theoretician of photography.

The exhibition can be defined as a “voyage at the end of form” of Italian post-war photography, starting from the photographic luminism of **Giuseppe Cavalli** (1904-1961), experimentation of **Luigi Veronesi** (1908-1998), to the non-objective optic graphism by **Franco Grignani** (1908-1999), chromatic cosmography by **Pasquale De Antonis** (1908-2001), turning on the pioneering materic photography by **Piergiorgio Branzi** (1928) . It also focuses on the “decompositions” of **Paolo Monti** (1908-1982) and the formless works of **Nino Migliori** (1926), who has been recognized as the first and foremost founder of empathic *Informel* photography in Italian photography.

The exhibition displays works by **Giuseppe Cavalli** and shows his “high - key tone” pictures such as **Little Ball** (1949) and **Little wall** (1950) which captures purely tonal relations that aimed at seizing the “palpitating rhythm” of objects. Painter, graphic designer, scenographer, and photographer **Luigi Veronesi** devoted much of his lengthy career to photographic experimentation, producing images based on a juxtaposition of positive and negative, tonal inversions, superimpositions, and solarised images. Among those **The Stars from my Window** (1940), a picture of a moonless sky crossed by star trails. the dynamism of curved lines is expertly rendered with alternating white, black, and grey marks, lending movement to the image.

Franco Grignani, painter and self-taught photographer and graphic designer, put photography at the service of graphics and experimented with multiple exposures and negative superimpositions. By the end of the Forties he refined his exploration, multiplying his visual experiments. What emerged were his self- described “perceptive dissonances”, “visual vibrations”, “formal rotations”, and “visual tensions”.

The exhibition also includes little-known works from the **Montmartre** series (1954) by the great Italian humanist photographer **Piergiorgio Branzi**, urban views of the Parisian borough expose the material wounds of the recent war, as well as **Mykonos** (1957) which describes the matter and structures of the landscape.

One of the major protagonists of Italian photography, **Paolo Monti** devoted a large part of his career to his “abstract” photography which, as the exhibition curator writes in the exhibition catalogue, “is an investigation that reaches into the core of world matter, the roots of the production of primordial forms, the source of its magma”.

While Monti’s Art *Informel* was, at least until the 1950s, still tied to the photographic images, some of his contemporaries had already started to move away from it.

Pasquale De Antonis conceived his own particular photographic practice by using by multiple light sources filtered by a paper screen pierced in multiple points, moving it slightly so that the light would break up into a thousand biomorphic spheres. Later he perfected these initial experiments, creating new images directly on reversible colour paper, recording the thousands of shapeless forms assumed by drops of oily liquids, and dense inks poured onto a sheet of backlit glass.

Nino Migliori had begun photographing in a tiny darkroom set up in a corner of his kitchen, utilising the developer and fixer on scraps of paper, because whole sheets were much too valuable. The paper would be covered with developer and then exposed to artificial light, sunlight or a flame.

Migliori called these pictures ***Oxidations***. His other experiments included the ***Pyrograms***, records of small burns made in the film with a heated pin or by exposing it to a naked flame; and the ***Hydrograms*** - traces of water or foamy liquids applied onto the enlarger plate, forming an image which appears like a living organism, a constellation of cells suspended in amniotic fluid.

Formless Form is accompanied by a **bilingual catalogue** in Italian and English edited by Antonella Russo and published by **Silvana editoriale** which comprises 60 plates. Besides all exhibited photographs, it includes a preface by Riccardo Passoni, an essay by Antonella Russo an annotated chronology of the main exhibition publications and photographic events from the mid Thirties to the end of the Fifties, as well as biographical notes on the photographers displayed in the exhibition.