

PRESS RELEASE

MORE THAN WORDS...

Curated by Daniela Ferrari

23 February – 18 May 2018

Vincenzo Agnetti | John Baldessari | Mel Bochner | Alighiero Boetti | Dadamaino | Tracey Emin | Lucio Fontana | Emilio Isgrò | Joseph Kosuth | Jannis Kounellis | Piero Manzoni | Rebecca Moccia | Gastone Novelli | David Reimondo | Mimmo Rotella | Salvo | Mario Schifano | Cy Twombly

Mazzoleni is pleased to announce **MORE THAN WORDS...** - a group exhibition which opened to the public on 23 February will now be extended until the **18 May 2018**. Curated by Daniela Ferrari, art historian and curator, the exhibition explores the use of text and the written word in the practice of major Post-War Italian artists including, Vincenzo Agnetti (1926-1981), Alighiero Boetti (1940-1994), Dadamaino (1930-2004), Lucio Fontana (1899-1968), Emilio Isgrò (b. 1937), Piero Manzoni (1933-1963), Gastone Novelli (1925-1968), Mimmo Rotella (1918-2006), Salvo (1947-2015) and Mario Schifano (1934-1998), alongside key international artists including Cy Twombly (1928-2011), Joseph Kosuth (b. 1945), Jannis Kounellis (1936-2017), Mel Bochner (b.1940), John Baldessari (b.1931) and Tracey Emin (b.1963). Focusing on creative output from 1958 onwards, the show features over 30 works in various media including painting, photography, collage and neon.

The word represents an essential expressive vehicle: words or letters are an integral part of the apparatus of contemporary art, although the practice has its origins in antiquity and took on particular importance in the historic twentieth century avant-garde movements. Within the broad and complex system of verbal-visual research, which comprises more circumscribed areas of investigation such as concrete poetry, visual poetry and narrative art, the experience that has expanded its horizons furthest has without doubt been that of Conceptual Art. The artists included in the exhibition are brought together by certain key concerns – **concept – light – dictionary – pop – time – philosophy – chirography** – which allow us to identify affinities, following the *fil rouge* that unites them. Drawing on life and the kaleidoscope of verbal, literary, philosophical and poetic communication, each artist has succeeded in conferring upon the word a power that goes beyond mere meaning: **more than words!**

"I believe that the foundation of my practice is the creation of meaning", says **Kosuth**. It is the very value of the **concept**, of the meaning expressed in the work that this exhibition intends to highlight: the word as question and statement, as revealed by the verification of thought. Kosuth's neon work *#1149. (On Color/Multi #9)*, 1991, is included to exemplify his critical position in the canon of conceptual art. **Bochner**, a similarly key figure working since the 1960s, has devoted himself to investigating various expressive forms, including text phrases in diverse languages or vernaculars, amplifying thereby the confines of language to include expressions that have entered the spoken language, and which belong to the so-called sphere of the meaningless. His work 'The Joys of Yiddish', a screenprint on felt from 2014, demonstrates this enduring practice.

The series of "arazzi" or embroidered grids of coloured letters conveying puzzles of short phrases, inverted sayings or wordplays, conceived by **Boetti** in the 1970s (exemplified here by a work from 1989), were realised by artisans in Afghanistan and Pakistan, often over many months. The **time** of making and reading also regulate the asemantic writings of **Dadamaino**: her *Alfabeti della mente* transformed into *I fatti della vita* exhibited at the 39th Venice Biennale. She is represented by a triptych from the *Alfabeti* cycle, whereby she invented her own personal and distinct alphabet between 1976-1979; on show will be Letters 4, 7 and 10, from 1979. **Manzoni** had also focused part of his research on the sequence of the letters of the **alphabet**. The "alphabet of prime images" to which he aspired finds a possible conjugation in the work *Alfabeto*, exhibited, composed of the letters ABCD in three columns painted with ink and kaolin on canvas, while the painting-writing experience of **Novelli**, is related to the Informal trend developed both in Europe and America, taking up the legacy of Surrealist "automatic writing", that is also represented in the exhibition by **Twombly**.

Words come into play that have been chosen for their conceptual value or **philosophical** weight (**Agnetti**), for the meaningfulness or the irony of the message transmitted (**Salvo**), for the expressiveness of the content communicated or for its absence (**Isgrò**): words deleted that through this negation of appearances become all the more powerful. The world of the **Pop** image is in turn represented in the exhibition by **Schifano** and **Rotella**, both aware of the power of advertising, of logos, of lettering, of poster messages of contemporary culture that are combined with cult images from the history of art.

Two younger artists **David Reimondo** (b.1973) and **Rebecca Moccia** (b.1992), catapult the word into the most contemporary artistic cycle, pulling together the threads of historical research through to the present day. The exhibition, though by no means exhaustive, thus presents a rich and broad survey of the strategies employed by artists in utilising text and the written word in modern and contemporary art practice since the 1960s.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay by Daniela Ferrari.

About DANIELA FERRARI

Daniela Ferrari (b. 1973, Trento) is a curator and art historian who is currently curator and conservator at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art of Trento and Rovereto (MART). She was educated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Brera where she studied painting and the University of Milan where she studied literature. She was awarded a Masters in cultural institution management in Trento. Selected exhibitions at MART include 'Visual Poetry: The Donation of Mirella Bentivoglio'(2011), 'Claudio Olivieri: The Unveiled Colour' (2013) and 'Beyond the Canvas Border: Fontana Burri Manzoni Dadamaino Bonalumi Scheggi' (2015). Ferrari's writing has appeared in numerous catalogues and publications, including *The word in art. 20th-century avant-garde research. From Futurism to the present day seen through Mart's collections* (2007); *Window to the World. From Dürer to Mondrian and beyond* (2012); *Mario Radice: Architecture, colour, number* (2014); *Felice Casorati: Collections and exhibitions in Europe and the Americas* (2014), *Divisionism to Futurism: Italian Art Towards Modernity* (2016), *An Eternal Beauty. The Classical Canon in Early 20th Century Italian Art* (2017). In 2012 she published *ANS Archive of New Writing of Paolo Della Grazia: History of a collection* and the general catalogue for the VAF - Stiftung collection. Ferrari was the curator of the critically acclaimed exhibition "*Fontana / Melotti: Angelic Spaces and Infinite Geometries*" staged in 2016 at Mazzoleni, London.

About MAZZOLENI

Mazzoleni was founded in Turin in 1986 and opened a Mayfair-based London gallery in October 2014. Over the past three decades Mazzoleni has organised solo and group exhibitions of more than 150 prominent Italian and international artists from across the 20th century. Recent critically acclaimed exhibitions have included the major solo Alberto Burri exhibition in 2015, 'Piero Manzoni. Achromes: Linea Infinita', curated by Gaspare Luigi Marcone in collaboration with the Piero Manzoni Foundation, 'Fontana/Melotti. Angelic Spaces and Infinite Geometries', 'Colour in Contextual Play, an installation by Joseph Kosuth', 'UnComfort Zone' with Dimore Gallery, and 'Light in motion: Balla Dorazio Zappettini'. All exhibitions are accompanied by fully illustrated monographs, often featuring newly commissioned research contributing to current critical and art historical discourse. Mazzoleni is present at international art fairs, across London, Basel, Hong Kong, New York and Miami.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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Gallery Hours: Mon – Fri 10am – 6pm, Sat 11am – 5pm

Admission: Free

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