

Press Release

AGOSTINO BONALUMI: *Il Teatro delle Forze* (A Theatre of Forces)

Curated by Marco Scotini

Mazzoleni, Torino

1 November 2023 – 3 February 2024

Private View: Wednesday 1 November 2023, 6pm – 10pm

Mazzoleni is marking the 10th anniversary of Agostino Bonalumi's death (1935–2013) with a major **retrospective** of the artist's work, ***Agostino Bonalumi: il Teatro delle Forze***. The exhibition will be inaugurated in Turin on the **1 November 2023** and will be open to the public until February 2024.

Alongside a rich selection of **large-scale plastic and or three-dimensional works**, the show will also present a **series of original documents** and sketches, thanks to the collaboration with the **Archivio Bonalumi** in Milan, the Fondazione Cini in Venice and loans from the Archivio Storico of Rome's Teatro dell'Opera and the Fondazione Egri per la Danza in Turin.

The exhibition, curated by **Marco Scotini**, will focus on one of the most remarkable phases of Bonalumi's creative activity (from the late 1960s through the 1970s), but will begin by exploring two of Bonalumi's lesser-known works which require a multidisciplinary approach to their exploration.

Agostino Bonalumi: il Teatro delle Forze focuses on the sets and costumes created for the ballet *Partita*, conceived and choreographed by Susanna Egri, with music by Goffredo Petrassi and the "choreographic" action "Rot" by Domenico Guaccerro and Amedeo Amodio, staged respectively at the Teatro Romano in Verona in 1970 and the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome in 1973.

The title of the exhibition directly references the 'theatrical machine' as an object, while also alluding to the plastic forces which each of Bonalumi's works embodies.

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Within even Bonalumi's earliest works, it is evident that there is "a force that presses from within the work, everting the surface", with each work born out of the dialogue between the internal pressures of a body and the external resistance with which the surface of the canvas opposes.

Thus, a theatre of forces is undoubtedly at work in **Bonalumi's monochromatic plastic works**, representing the many forces within theatre itself, in which there is a thing and its opposite, two entities (or two masks) in conflict. With this concept in mind, it is no wonder that the two theatrical spaces of *Partita* and *Rot* became the settings *par excellence* for Bonalumi's plastic-dynamic research. As a result of this, **these great theatrical spaces are also a platform which allows us to evaluate Bonalumi's shift from painting to this plastic environment.**

In 1967, Bonalumi's participation in the milestone exhibition *Lo spazio dell'immagine* at Foligno with the work *Blu abitabile* and his solo show at the Galleria Bonino in New York, dominated by *Ambiente bianco*, marked not only a **dimensional shift** in the artist's work, but also a paradigmatic change in the **spatiality** in which the observer is immersed.

The large fibreglass works, with their clean-cut and sharp silhouettes, were presented in the 1969 exhibition *Vorrei incontrare gli architetti* at Galleria del Naviglio. Grande Nero was also presented, in the same period, at the Museum am Ostwall in Dortmund and *Struttura modulare bianca* at the 1970 Venice Biennale. These works are all plastic experiences that came together in the scenic, spatial and dramaturgical definition of *Partita* and *Rot*, and many of which can be found reinstalled in **Agostino Bonalumi: il Teatro delle Forze**.

The exhibition thereby intends to underline the central role of the artist's involvement with the theatre. Alongside the major works in the show, sketches of scenery and costumes and original stage photos of the two performances will be exhibited.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue devoted to Bonalumi's experiences of **musical theatre**, drawing on scholars from **multiple disciplines**, from musicologists to scholars of choreography.

From 11 October to 30 November 2023, Mazzoleni's London gallery will also be hosting an exhibition devoted to Agostino Bonalumi. ***The Paradox of Proximity: Agostino Bonalumi and Lee Seung Jio*** curated by Marco Scotini, and in collaboration with the Kukje Gallery, presents an innovative comparison between the works of Bonalumi and the Korean artist Lee Seung Jio (1941-1990). *The Paradox of Proximity* embodies a significant effort to transcend the boundaries of art history beyond the Western hemisphere, exemplifying how both artists moved beyond Art Informal.

AGOSTINO BONALUMI

Born in Vimercate, Milan in 1935, Agostino Bonalumi studied technical design and mechanics and was a self-taught painter, showing his work from a young age.

In 1958, Agostino Bonalumi, Enrico Castellani and Piero Manzoni exhibited at Galleria Pater in Milan, followed by further shows in Rome and Lausanne. The following year Bonalumi and Castellani started making their first three-dimensional canvases, known as extroflexed or shaped canvases, developing the so-called "painting-object". In the 1960s, Bonalumi started developing his personal style and methodological approach with a series of works featuring "extroflexions" of the canvas, gradually refining the dialectic between volume and void, concave and convex. In 1961 at the Kasper Gallery in Lausanne, Bonalumi was one of the founding members of the Nuova Scuola Europea group and in 1965, Arturo Schwarz gave Bonalumi a solo show at his gallery in Milan, for which Gillo Dorfles wrote a catalogue essay.

In 1966, he began a long period of collaboration with the Galleria del Naviglio, Milan, which became his exclusive agent and in 1973 published, for Edizioni del Naviglio, a large monograph also edited by Gillo Dorfles. That same year, he was invited to the Venice Biennale with a group of works and, in 1970, with a solo room. He then spent a period of study and work in Mediterranean Africa and the United States, where he debuted with a solo show at the Bonino Gallery, New York. In 1967, he was invited to the São Paulo Biennale and, in 1968, to the Youth Biennale in Paris. In 1967, Bonalumi created his first environmental work, *Blu abitabile*, displayed at the show *Lo spazio dell'immagine* in Foligno. The following year, he presented another large-scale environment work, *Grande Nero*, for a solo show at the Museum am Ostwall in Dortmund. Bonalumi also worked in set design, creating the set and costumes for the ballet *Partita*, with a choreography by Susanna Egri and music by Goffredo Petrassi, performed at the Teatro Romano in Verona in 1970, and for the ballet *Rot*, staged in 1972 at the Teatro dell'Opera in Rome.

In 1979, he presented the environmental work *Dal giallo al bianco e dal bianco al giallo* in the exhibition *Pittura-Ambiente* at Palazzo Reale in Milan and in 1980 he staged a major retrospective at the Palazzo Te in Mantua, which covered his entire career. In 2001, he was awarded the Presidente della Repubblica Prize, which was celebrated with a solo show at the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca in Rome in 2002 and in 2003, the Institut Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt mounted the solo show *Agostino Bonalumi: malerei in der dritten dimension*. Bonalumi never stopped evolving his research and this drove him to complete a cycle of bronze sculptures based on designs developed in the late 1960s. During the last period of his activity, his works were exhibited on a global scale, such as Brussels, Moscow, New York and Singapore. In summer 2013, he collaborated on a major exhibition in London, the opening of which he unfortunately did not live to see. Agostino Bonalumi died in Monza 2013.

Mazzoleni represents Agostino Bonalumi's Estate.

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MAZZOLENI

Mazzoleni is a leading Post-War Italian and contemporary art gallery based in London and Turin. With over 35 years of activity, Mazzoleni focuses on a museum-calibre exhibition programme and participates in the main international art fairs, including Art Basel, Frieze, and TEFAF, as well as Artissima, Artefiera and Miart. Most recently, the gallery has expanded its reach towards new art scenes with its participation in Frieze Seoul, Art Abu Dhabi and Art Dubai. The Mazzoleni collection is exhibited in museums and institutions worldwide, such as: the Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation in New York; the Smithsonian Institution in Washington; The State Ermitage Museum in St. Petersburg; Tate and the Estorick Collection in London, as well as Museo del Novecento in Florence, the GNAM in Rome, MADRE Museum in Naples, Triennale Milano and Palazzo Reale in Milan, and the Venice Biennale. Mazzoleni represents the Estate of Agostino Bonalumi.

NOTES TO EDITORS

AGOSTINO BONALUMI: Il Teatro delle Forze

Curator: Marco Scotini | Curator Assistant: Arnold Braho

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Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Saturday: 10am – 1pm / 3.45 – 7.15.

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