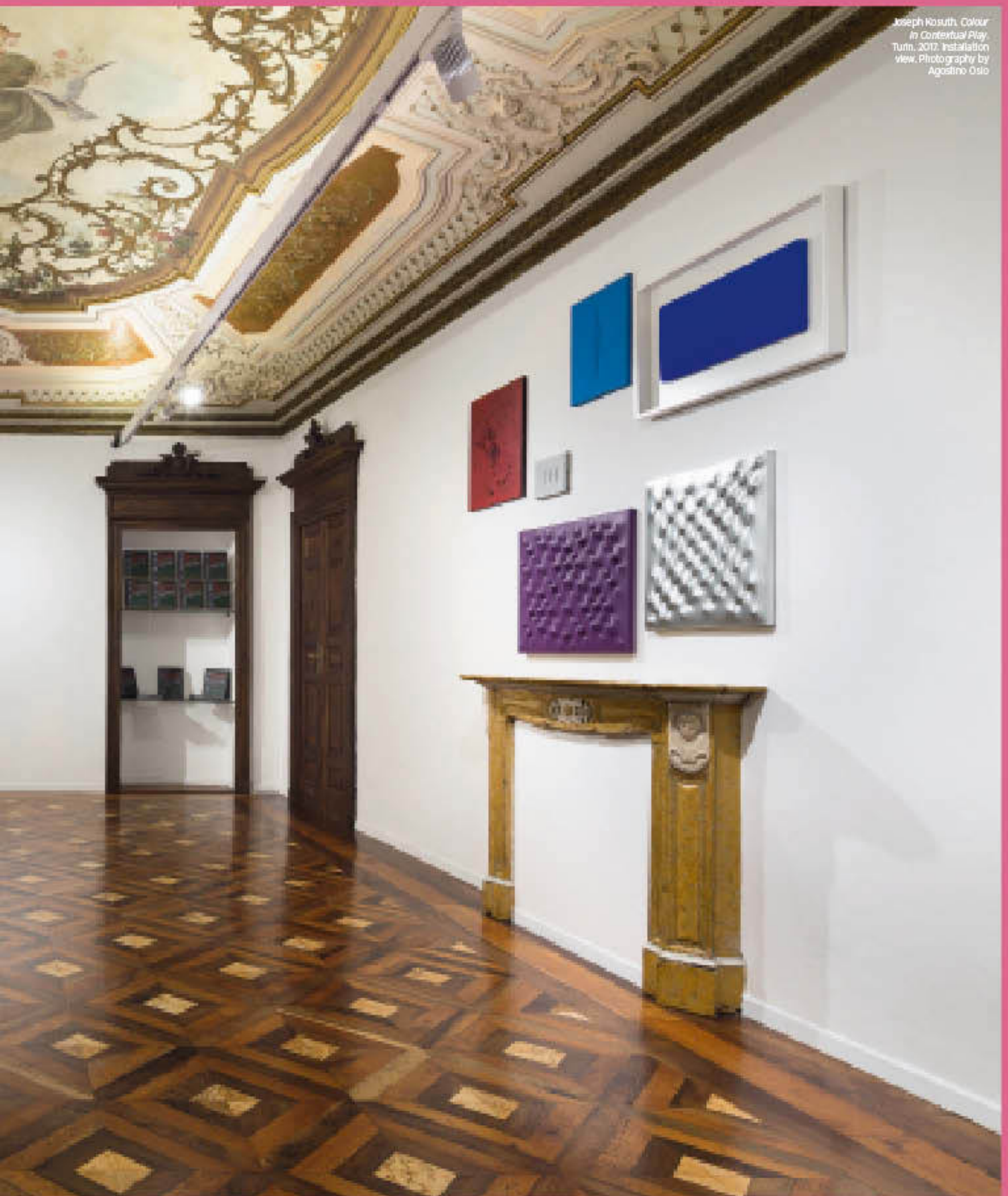




Italian CONNECTION

*With its London gallery now over three years old, and participation in major art fairs such as Art Basel, **Mazzoleni** is on a mission to emanate Italian Post-War art to the world, writes Rebecca Anne Proctor*

Joseph Kosuth, *Colour in Contextual Play*, Turn, 2017. Installation view. Photography by Agostino Oslo





In 1955, Giovanni Mazzoleni was busy at work on his family's textile business. He happened to meet the owner of a well-known fashion brand who had just returned from New York. Well aware that Giovanni's father was beginning to cultivate a passion for art, he showed him a copy of *Harper's Bazaar* where a series of works by Alberto Burri, a key figure in the Neo-Dada, Arte Povera and Postminimalism movements, were included within the context of a fashion shoot. "I was immediately mesmerised by his art, struck by his new language and the expressive energy innate in the material," writes Giovanni in the exhibition catalogue for the London gallery's show on Alberto Burri in 2015. "From this moment on, I immersed myself in Burri's work and became an avid collector."

Ever since that first encounter, Giovanni and his wife Anna Pia have been collecting art. The gallery evolved from their private collection, which brings together significant works from important international art movements including Surrealism, Futurism and Abstract Art. Italian Post-War art quickly became the focus of the collection, as well as the core of Mazzoleni's curatorial programme when their sons Davide and Luigi joined the gallery in the 1990s. "My father is a collector so he loves everything from Conceptual art and Futurism to Minimalism—everything!" says Luigi, the director of the London gallery. "Over time he moved towards a focus on the 50s and 60s in Italian art. Most of the artists my father would meet in person. He believed it was important to be open." The Turin gallery takes up three floors of the Palazzo Panizza and overlooks onto the historic Piazza Solferino, occupying part of the original 19th-century foyer of the Alfieri theatre. A mix of modern and contemporary art regularly decorates the walls of the Turin gallery, including masterpiece works by the likes of Chagall and Picasso. "I like creating aesthetic dialogues between Italian artists from different periods and movements," says Davide, director of the Turin gallery. "All artists are inspired in some way by the past and it is for this reason that we constantly seek to stage exhibitions that marry the contemporary with the



modern." The gallery recently staged *Colour in Contextual Play*, a show previously at the London outpost showcasing an installation by American conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth. The series displayed incorporated works by Kosuth, his contemporaries and predecessors. These included works by Enrico Castellani (1930–2017), Lucio Fontana (1899–1968), Yves Klein (1928–63) and Piero Manzoni (1933–63) in an investigation surrounding the idea of colour, a

concept regularly explored by Post-War artists. The exhibition, which was curated by art historian Dr Comelia Lauf, saw the gallery paint its walls in five different colours in order to respond to the definition of colour. Black Fontanas and Castellanis were surrounded by vibrant hues. "It was probably one of the best shows we have done there," says Luigi.

While Turin maintains Mazzoleni's Italian roots, it is through the gallery's London space that most of its international transactions are made. "The idea behind our London expansion was to make the brand more international," says Luigi. "Around five years ago my brother and I began participating in several art fairs and we realised that there was a big demand for Post-War Italian art." It was time to open a space in London. "If you want huge collectors then you need to go to London. Italy is where people go on vacation," he laughs.

Since its opening in October 2014, the London gallery, which occu-



Clockwise from right:
 Harper's Bazaar
 September 1965 cover,
 Mazzoleni Invites Dimore
 Gallery, London 2017;
 Agostino Bonalumi, Rosso,
 1968. Shaped canvas and
 vinyl tempera, 60x70cm.
 Courtesy of Mazzoleni;
 Piero Dorazio, Senza
 Titolo, 1971. Oil on canvas,
 41x61cm.



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pies two levels in a 418-square-metre space in the heart of Mayfair on Albemarle Street, has continually presented a programme focused on museum-calibre Post-War Italian art from the 50s to the 70s, in close collaboration with artist estates and foundations. Recent critically acclaimed exhibitions include *Piero Manzoni, Achromes: Linea Infinita*, curated by Gaspare Luigi Marcone in collaboration with the Piero Manzoni Foundation, and *Fontana/Melotti, Angelic Spaces and Infinite Geometries*, curated by Daniela Ferrari of the MART Museum Trento/Rovereto in 2016. In addition, Mazzoleni maintains its presence on a continuous roster of international art fairs—The Armory Show, Frieze Masters, TEFAF Maastricht Art Basel Hong Kong, participating in March for the fifth time, and Art Basel in Switzerland, where it participated for the first time in 2017 in the Feature section—quite a list for a

London gallery barely four years old. "It's been three and a half years and we've grown up a lot," adds Luigi. "London is a very intense city. It gives you a lot and asks you a lot in exchange."

Constantly pushing the boundaries of artistic collaboration, during the 2017 London Design Festival, Mazzoleni invited Milan-based Dimore Gallery to transform the gallery into a five-room apartment, where modern art was positioned alongside vintage and contemporary furniture. And if this isn't enough, visitors were privy to just a peek of the setting—through a small porthole. It was the first in a series of bi-annual collaborations entitled *Mazzoleni Invites*, which bring together the worlds of fashion, art and design. The reason for this, explains the

gallery's managing director Mira Dimitrova, is to bring a different audience and viewpoint to the gallery. "Our forthcoming show in London *More Than Words* weaves international artists into the Italian context, such as John Baldessari and Cy Twombly, and considers subject matter in a more thematic way rather than from a strictly Italian perspective," she says. Such crossover she feels is "necessary and relevant in today's global art market." And the gallery is working increasingly in the Far East. After several years participating in Art Basel Hong Kong and fostering exchanges there, Dimitrova feels the next step might be the Middle East. "I think that firstly the audience there is slowly opening up to the international side of things. I visited Art Dubai a few years ago and it seemed then that collectors were buying mostly Middle Eastern art but now this has evolved and we have many collectors from the Middle East interested in buying Post-War Italian art." Maybe, Dubai is next. There's no limit for Mazzoleni and its Italian connections. ■

More Than Words runs until 12 May 2018. mazzoleniart.com