

LUCIO FONTANA

08.09 – 19.11.2022

Galería Helga de Alvear presents a selection of ceramic sculptures, several *Concetti Spaziali*, and important works on paper; the *Ambienti Spaziali* by Lucio Fontana (1899-1968) produced between 1938 and 1960. The Argentinean-Italian artist devoted his life to sculpture and the search for a new dimension in art.

Lucio Fontana was born in Rosario, Province of Santa Fe, Argentina, in 1899. His parents were Italian immigrants. He spent his first years in Milan where he enrolled at an engineering school. When he returned to Argentina in 1922, he worked at his father's studio; a sculptor who specialized in funerary monuments. In the late 1920's he returned to Italy in order to study sculpture under Adolfo Wildt. After graduating he began to engage in a break with formal academic language. Fontana felt that the terminologies of art constrained him since he considered himself a "spatial artist".

In 1939 he returned to Argentina and founded the Altamira School of Art where the *Manifesto Bianco* (*White Manifesto*) (1946) was later conceived. The *Manifesto* advocated the synthesis of the arts and the abolition of conventional materials, propagating the dimensions of time and movement in space instead.

Upon his return to Milan in 1947, Fontana founded the *Movimiento Spaziale*. He created the first works following his new concept of space as defined in the *Manifesto Bianco* treatise. From that moment onward, the artist referred to his works as *Concetto Spaziale*.

At the ceramic studio in Albisola he worked on natural and amorphous forms and piles in which the spatial potential of the artistic medium became the focal point of the artist's studies. Fontana defended himself against those who criticized the artisanal character of his ceramics: "*Io sono uno scultore e non un ceramista*". [*I am a sculptor and not a potter*"]

The appropriation of space through expressive and dynamic gestures is manifested in the movement of works such as the Crucifixions and Crucifixes where he worked the clay using a language of spatial expansion in a baroque and sensual style. The pace of creation in relation to a fresh appearance was highly valued by Fontana. He always preferred to work with mud or clay over marble since the former adapt to the gestures of the hand, to the "spatial sensations" that are perceivable to the touch.

In 1949 his research led him to produce his first perforated fabrics, which consider the experiences of war and post-war. "*When I work on one of my perforated paintings my intention is to create a new dimension of art, to enter into a relationship with the cosmos that extends into infinity, beyond the limited surface of the painting*".

The works in this exhibition prove Fontana's virtuosity; they were a pleasurable activity for a set of hands subject to the more ascetic disciplines of his *Buchi* and *Tagli*.

Although his work cannot be identified by one single artistic gesture, Lucio Fontana's oeuvre was so varied in terms of motifs and formal means that it is difficult to classify it as the work of the same artist. Both his creations and *Manifesto Bianco* are eclectic and demonstrate his taste for influences claiming contradictory and occasionally antagonistic ideals.