

MASSIMODECARLO

ENRICO CASTELLANI

SUPERFICI/SURFACES/雕面

Massimo De Carlo gallery is pleased to present *Superfici/Surfaces/雕面*, the first solo show by the renowned Italian painter Enrico Castellani (1930) in China.

The exhibition will be composed by a range of fundamental works spanning from the early seventies to the first decade of 2000, retracing the career of this Italian master who was associated with the Zero movement and the magazine *Azimuth*, created with fellow artist and friend Piero Manzoni. Enrico Castellani was a key figure of the flourishing European avant-garde scene of the 1950's and 1960's tackling minimalism, spatiality and revolutionizing the notion of canvas.

The show focuses on the seminal body of work *Superfici* (Surfaces): shaped relief canvases that Castellani started working on as early as 1959 and is still producing. These canvases signify and mark a historical moment when there was an essential quest for the dimensional and a land marking shift in the use of the canvas: it was no longer confined to being a background tool in aide of the abstract gesture but an active, physical and expanding surface that demands to exist.

Each painting in the exhibition invites the viewer to reflect on one of the key topics of Castellani's practice: the relationship between space and time. Repetition is addressed through the shape of the works and the different colours that the artist chooses in order to highlight his rigorous approach to the gestural.

Grey, black, white and purple monochrome surfaces evoke the industrial Milanese sky, the city where his works were made, and emphasize the importance of light in defining the new dimensionality of the canvas. As put by Enrico Castellani himself in an interview to the magazine *Azimuth* in 1960: "Through the monochrome surfaces of these work I try to capture the concreteness of infinity."

This exhibition offers an insightful survey into the historical importance of the work of Enrico Castellani and his severe approach to the translation in to art of the investigation of space, intertwining depth, width and luminosity oscillating though rigidity and gentleness.

THE WORKS:

The white shaped relief canvas is one of the earliest in the exhibition, dating back to 1972. *Superficie Bianca* is a tangible example of Castellani's four decade long rigorous research around the colour white. Castellani obtains the modulated rhythm of the white surface of the painting through the vaulting from behind and piercing through from the front with a sequence of nails that create a carefully paced grid pattern. Light becomes here a tool to the understanding of the dimensional: "My surfaces," Castellani has said, "...tend to modulate themselves and accept the third dimension that makes them perceptible".

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The *Superficie Viola* (1981) is one of Castellani's more rare shaped relief canvases because of the artist's choice of using purple paint to create the monochrome slate. There are only a few bright purple canvases, a colour that Castellani started experimenting with in 1964, and that evokes the melancholic sharpness of the Milanese industrial sky, where the artist was living while he made the work. Light and darkness alternate each other and meet the empty space devoid of nails, the dramatic nostalgia of the shades of purple emphasizing the emotional element in Castellani's seemingly austere research.

The *Superficie Grigia*, dating back to 1989 and the *Superficie Grigia* (1991) shaped relief canvas are both part of Castellani's investigation of the relationship between shape, light and colours. In both works the undulated landscape, created by the nails underneath the canvas, is heaved and almost musical: the particular sinuous shape of the curves in contrast with the sombre choice of dark grey as a colour. Castellani's explorations of grey are marked by the intensity of the grid, which heightens the dramatic effect of the construction of the work itself. The earlier work *The Superficie Grigia* (1989) differs from *the Superficie Grigia* (1991) as it is hanged as an angle, almost evoking the 1950's-60's *The Angolare* (the angular): a reflection and statement on how a painting can occupy a three-dimensional space.

Superficie Nera (2001) exemplifies Enrico Castellani's constant research around lightness and darkness. In this work the thick black coat of paint becomes spatially perceptible and dimensional through a series of intensified grids, piercings and heights: one angular series of heights that cuts the canvas into three separate atmospheres and two pierced sections. *Superficie Nera* (2001) composes and at the same time challenges the idea of spatiality on canvas, playing with multiple layers of dimensionality and sculptural rigour, oscillating between brightness and darkness.

Superficie Argento (2008) is one of Enrico Castellani's most recent works, though he has investigated the translucent power of silver paint throughout his practice. Bringing together architecture, painting and sculpture this shaped relief canvas illustrates perfectly the artist's continuous quest for outer dimensionality. The shimmering metallic pallet and the rare silver shades confer to the work the likes of an almost lunar landscape, where the light enhances the contrast between emptiness and whole.

ENRICO CASTELLANI

Enrico Castellani was born in 1930 in Castelmassa, Italy. Enrico Castellani has had solo exhibitions at prestigious institutions around the world such as the the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Musée national d'art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; and Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich. He has represented Italy at the Venice Biennale in 1964, 1966, 1984,

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and 2010 (with solo exhibitions in 1966 and 1984 and as part of group exhibitions in 1964 and 2010).

Hard Facts:

Massimo De Carlo, Hong Kong
3d Floor Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong
From November 18th, 2016 until January 7th, 2017
Open Tuesday to Saturday, 10:30am – 7.00pm
Opening: Friday 18th of November 2016

For further information and materials:

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