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Giorgio Griffa: *The 1970s*
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Opening Reception: Thursday, January 7, 6 – 8 PM

We used to have two worlds: a living world with men, animals, plants, and a world without life, minerals and objects. And the universe was way up there. Now everything is alive, the whole universe is life, it's just the when and the how that changes, everywhere particles work non-stop, eagerly, inside us and in the rocks, the wind, the full and empty spaces, ubiquitous ever.

-Giorgio Griffa
Turin, December 7, 2015

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce Giorgio Griffa: *The 1970s*, the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Through an ever-evolving trajectory established within the past 40 years, Griffa (b. 1936, Turin) has adroitly revealed the elemental principles constituting painting as medium. Stemming from the artist's circumnavigation of margins that dither between calculation and intuition, a distinguishable visual language emerges in uncovering the intrinsic materiality of painting. Griffa's discourse, which has become increasingly dynamic in more recent years through color variation and the illustration of characters, symbols, and numbers representative of the Golden Ratio, (also the focus of a solo exhibition to be on view this February at Fondation Vincent van Gogh Arles, curated by Bice Curiger), originated from a simple mark; the unadorned line that reaches horizontally from left to right. The collection of works presented in this exhibition hail from that beginning: a period from 1970-79 in which logic was first established and the formation of a line initiated a decades-long career. Driven by notions of time, rhythm, and memory, Griffa reflects on the faculty of an anonymous, restrained gesture and its capacity to be both distinctive and integral.

Griffa's exhibition at the gallery in 2012, titled *Fragments 1968 – 2012*, was his first in the US since 1973 and marked his reintroduction to the New York art scene in over 30 years. In 2015, the artist has become the subject of an acclaimed traveling retrospective presented by institutions Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Fondazione Giuliani, Rome and Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Porto. In conveying the works' progression within each survey, from the precision of early paintings that follow the artist's unyielding rationale to the release of the brushstroke and evolution of signage, an inability to categorize the work within any single art movement persists. Bordering art historical thresholds, from Arte Povera (a concurrent movement in Griffa's native Turin and home to the artist still today) to Minimalism, whilst engaging with diverse influences and histories, Griffa defies any subjective categorization. As evidenced by this circumvention of an unequivocal classification, be it figuration or abstraction, narrative is similarly resisted.

In Griffa's observations, metaphorical and symbolic imagery exist as an overlay functioning on top of the canvas, superimposed rather than prevailing as integral to the material itself. In 1968, as a means to escape these limitations, Griffa relinquished the stretcher by laying the raw canvas on the floor so as to effectively absorb the applied color while yielding direct contact between body and surface. Seeking harmony between action and result, the artist synchronized his engagement in a rhythmic, repetitive pattern, ingraining movement into the work as the relationship between artist and instrument stemmed into a symbiotic interconnection, manifesting somewhere between the predetermined and the unconscious. Calling upon "the intelligence of the painting"¹ through the generic simplicity of a single brushstroke, the original gesture that generated the artist's legacy, a series of horizontal lines of varying widths and color linger on; though terminate at fluctuating lengths in an effort to consider authorship within the construct of an active cessation. Initiating a process governed by reductive inclinations and a sophisticated ease, Griffa coexists with his paintings in reflection of origin and anonymity while simultaneously signaling the passing of time through a restrained interruption in a series of linear strokes.

¹ Barbero, Luca Massimo, and Giorgio Griffa. "Painting Too Is Knowledge, a Conversation with Luca Massimo Barbero and Giorgio Griffa." *Giorgio Griffa, Canone Aureo = Golden Ratio*, MACRO. 14-17. Print.

Initially chosen instinctively, for the preliminary tone in each painting is selected at random, color is engaged to administer the following selection and so on. In effect, color assumes the role of the connector between gesture and outcome, creating a necessary formal logic that stabilizes the work in history. The resolution to eliminate connotative subject matter or content parallels the way in which color is employed, for as tones and hues seep into the canvas they become a blend of ingredients and in effect, the matter that forms imagery. Griffa bestows his work with “a capacity not inherent in it by nature, but made natural to it through man’s efforts,”² allowing his own hand to continue on an equal plane with the authentic matter constituting each painting, through both physical and intellectual means.

As movement halts, after the paint dries and the immediacy created by the body is removed, the artist gently folds the fabric in equal parts. We are left with an archive, or record of the act of painting. In unfolding the canvas and pinning the painting to the wall, distinct lines remain, reminding us of time passed as the memory of painting becomes memorialized. In providing the viewer with the freedom of independent consideration through a limited degree of intervention and openness in composition, Griffa offers a universal language in his commemoration and celebration of painting.

Giorgio Griffa lives and works in Turin, Italy. The artist is currently the subject of a traveling retrospective touring institutions including Centre d’Art Contemporain Genève, curated by Andrea Bellini, Genève, Switzerland (May 2015); Bergen Kunsthall, curated by Andrea Bellini and Martin Clark, Bergen, Norway (August 2015); and is due to travel to Fondazione Giuliani, curated by Andrea Bellini, Rome, Italy (February 2016); followed by Serralves Foundation, Porto, Portugal (May 2016). A monograph titled GIORGIO GRIFFA: *WORKS 1965 – 2015* was published by Mousse Publishing on occasion of the cycle of exhibitions dedicated to the artist’s work. Griffa’s work has been exhibited internationally, with solo exhibitions at venues such as Mies van der Rohe Haus, Berlin (2013) and MACRO, Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Rome (2011). In 2015, the artist participated in exhibitions at Fondazione Carriero, Milan, Italy; Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Perugia, Italy; and a group show curated by Ugo Rondinone at Secession, Vienna, Austria (2015). Griffa’s work is housed in the permanent collections of Tate Modern, London, UK; Galleria d’Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy; Castello di Rivoli, Rivoli, Turin; GAM, Galleria di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin, Italy; and Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, Texas. The artist is slated to present a solo exhibition at Fondation Vincent van Gogh, Arles, France in February of 2016.

² *Cani sciolti antichisti*. Turin: Martano and Samanedizioni, 1980, p. 46-48