

CASEY KAPLAN

525 WEST 21ST STREET

NEW YORK NY 10011

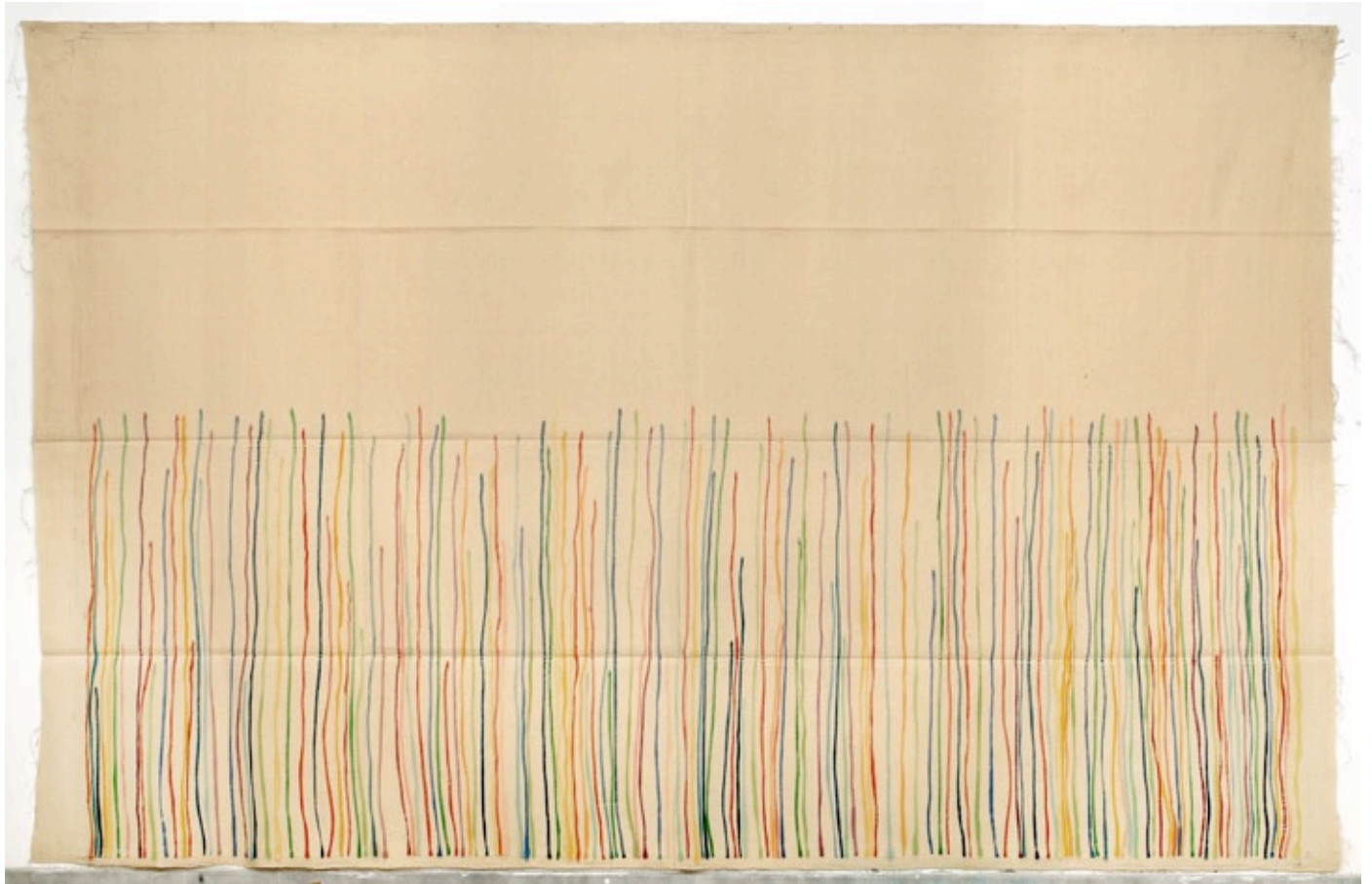
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FAX +1 212 645 7835

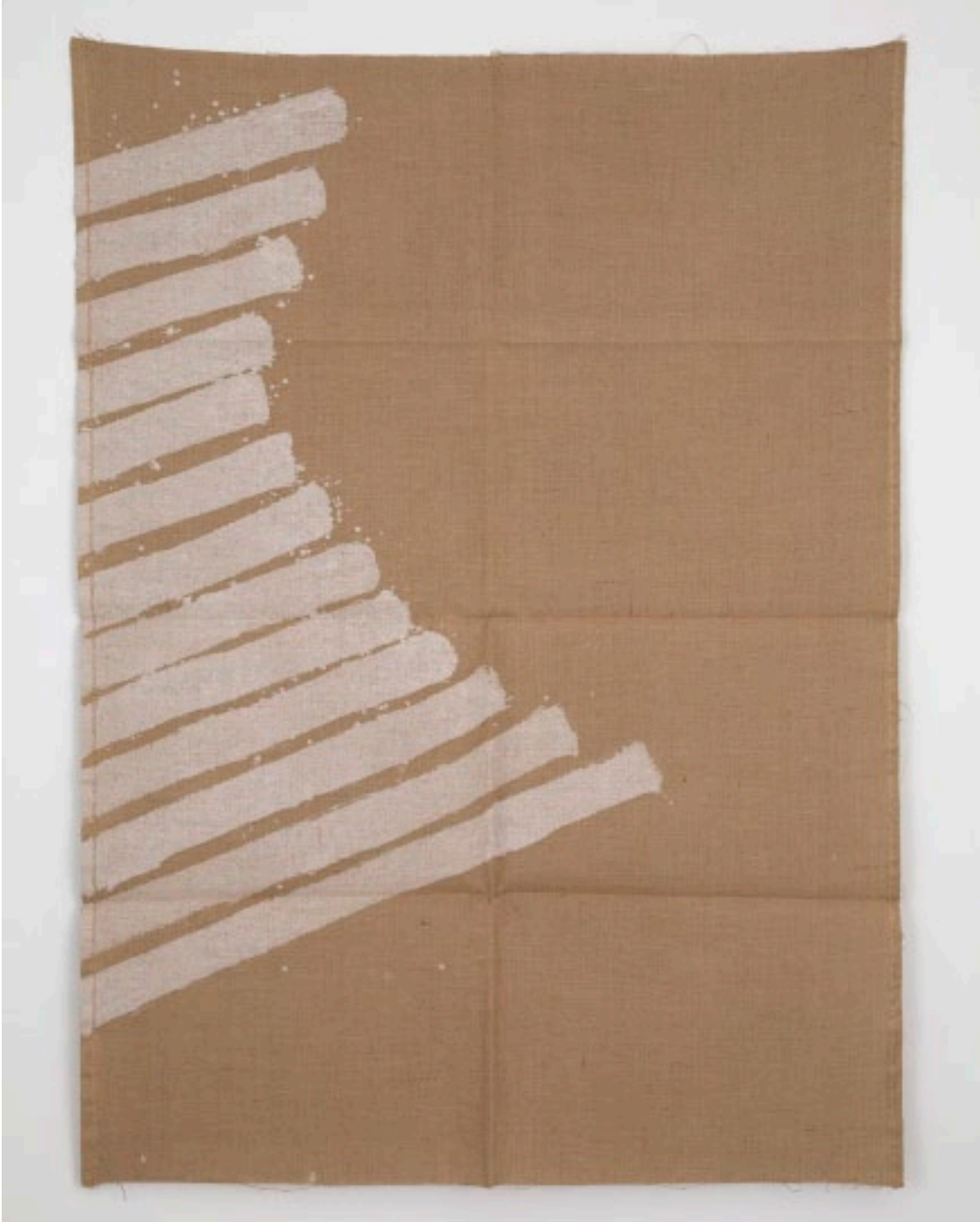
WWW.CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

INFO@CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

GIORGIO GRIFFA
SELECTED WORKS



Giorgio Griffa
Poliocromo Verticale, 1968
Oil on canvas
94.5 x 141.2" / 240 x 360cm



Giorgio Griffa
Quasi dipinto, 1968
Acrylic on canvas
79 x 58" / 200.7 x 147.3cm
GG1968-001

Exhibition History:

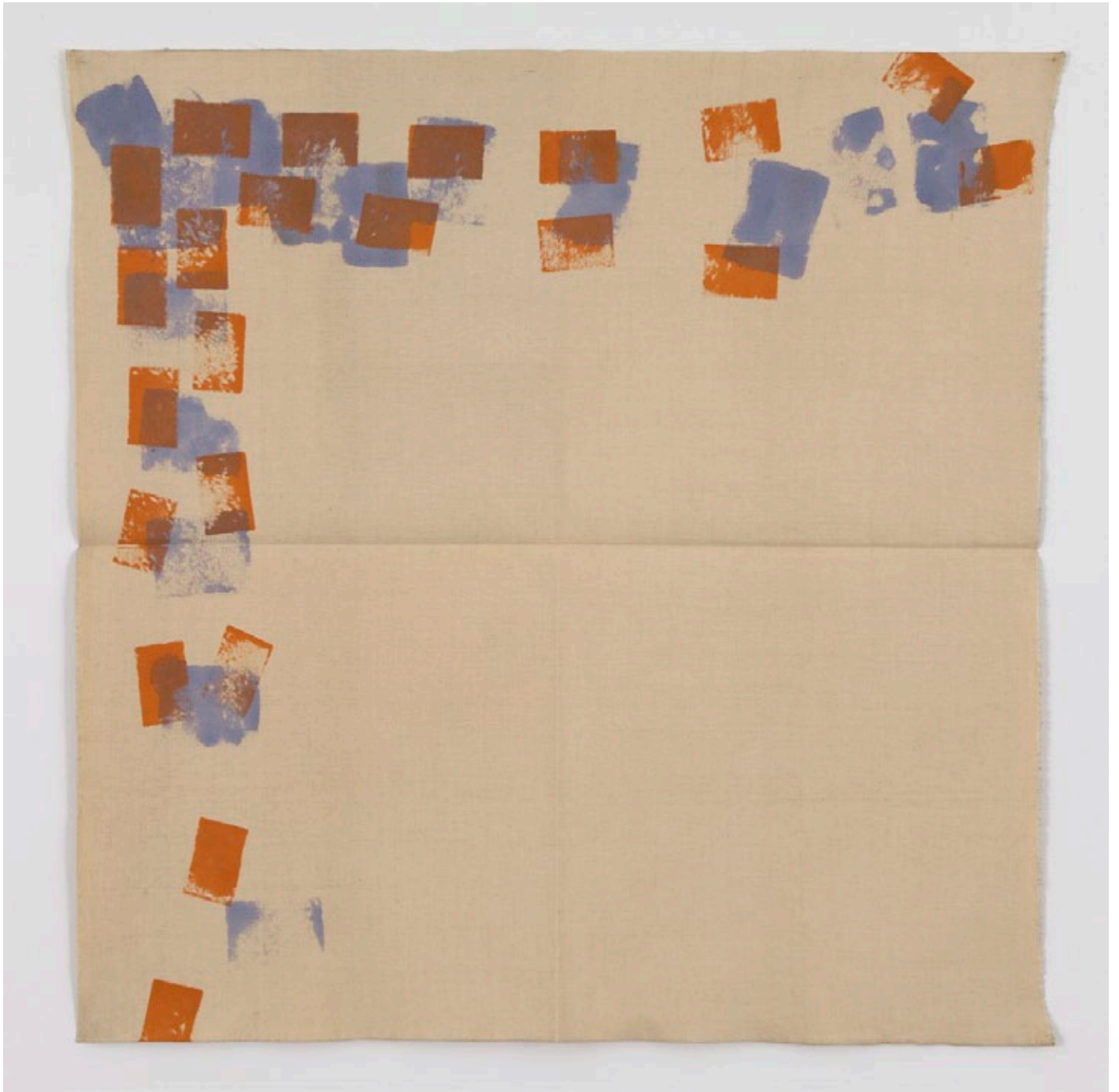
Fragments 1968 - 2012, Casey Kaplan, New York, 2012 - 2013

TIME & PLACE, Torino-Milano, 1958 - 1968, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden, 2008

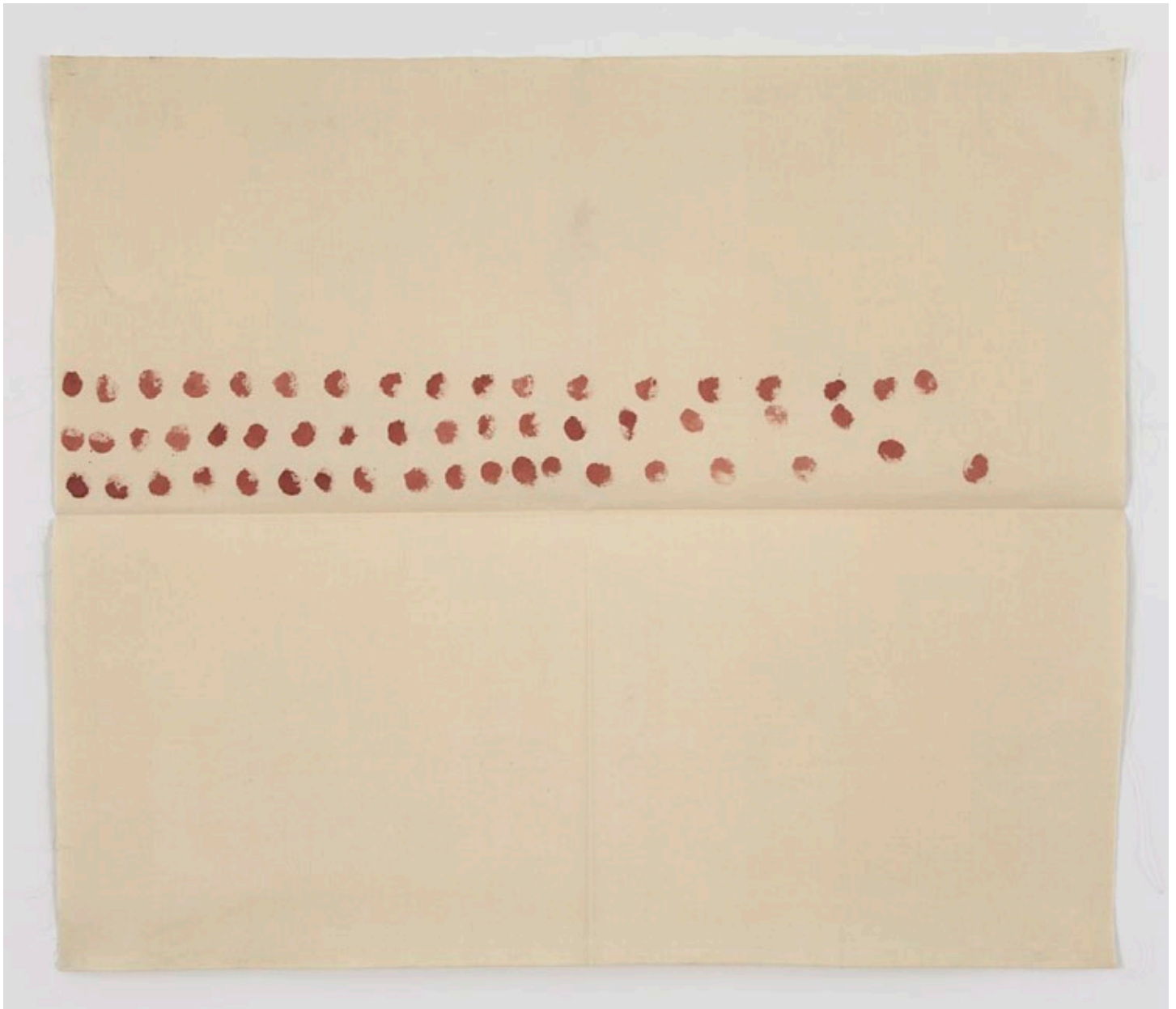
Hot spots, Rio de Janeiro/Milano-Torino/Los Angeles 1956 to 1969, Kunsthaus Zurich, Switzerland, 2009



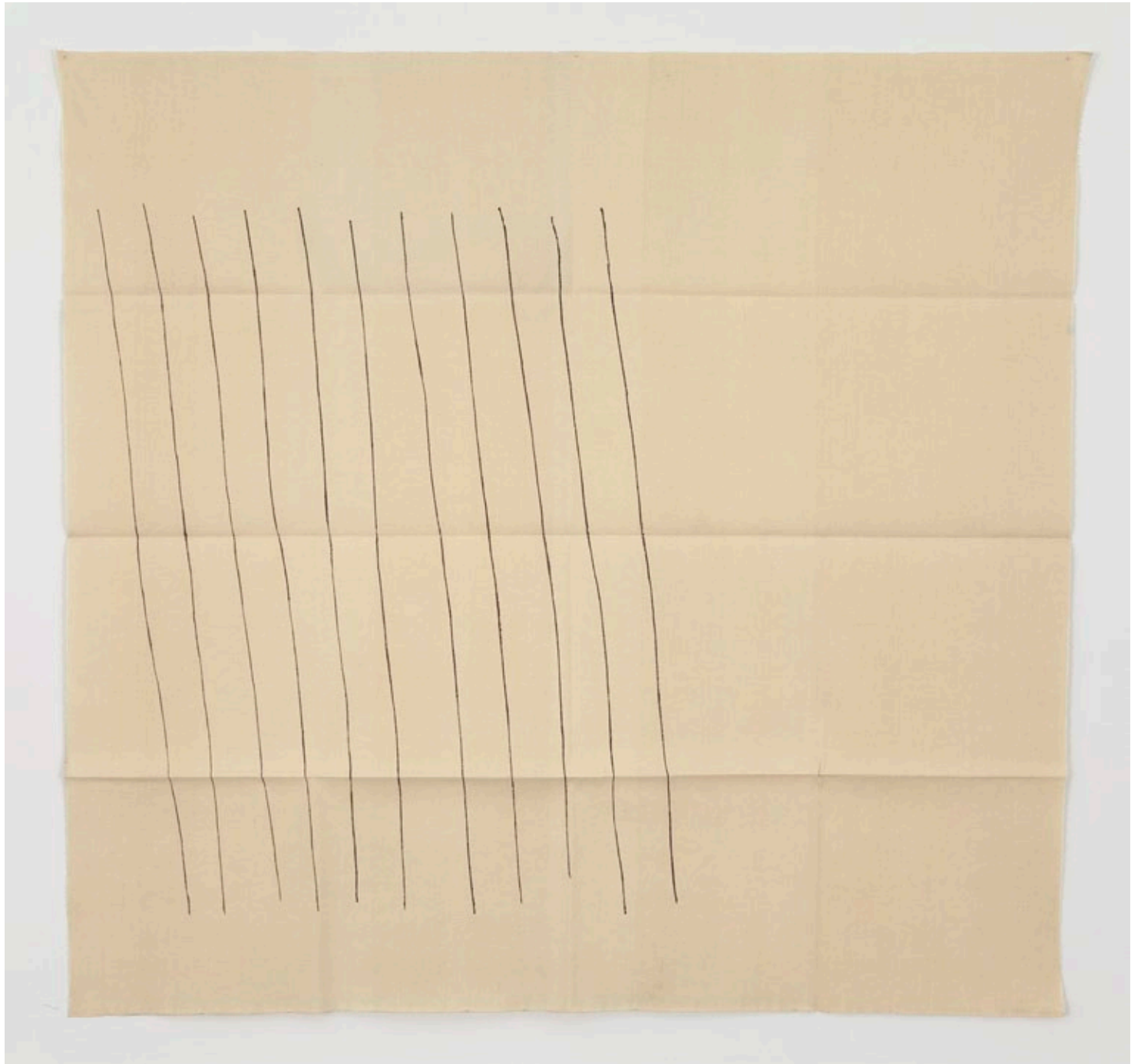
Giorgio Griffa
Macchie, 1969
Acrylic and pastel on canvas
68.9 x 66.9" / 175 x 170cm
GG1969-005



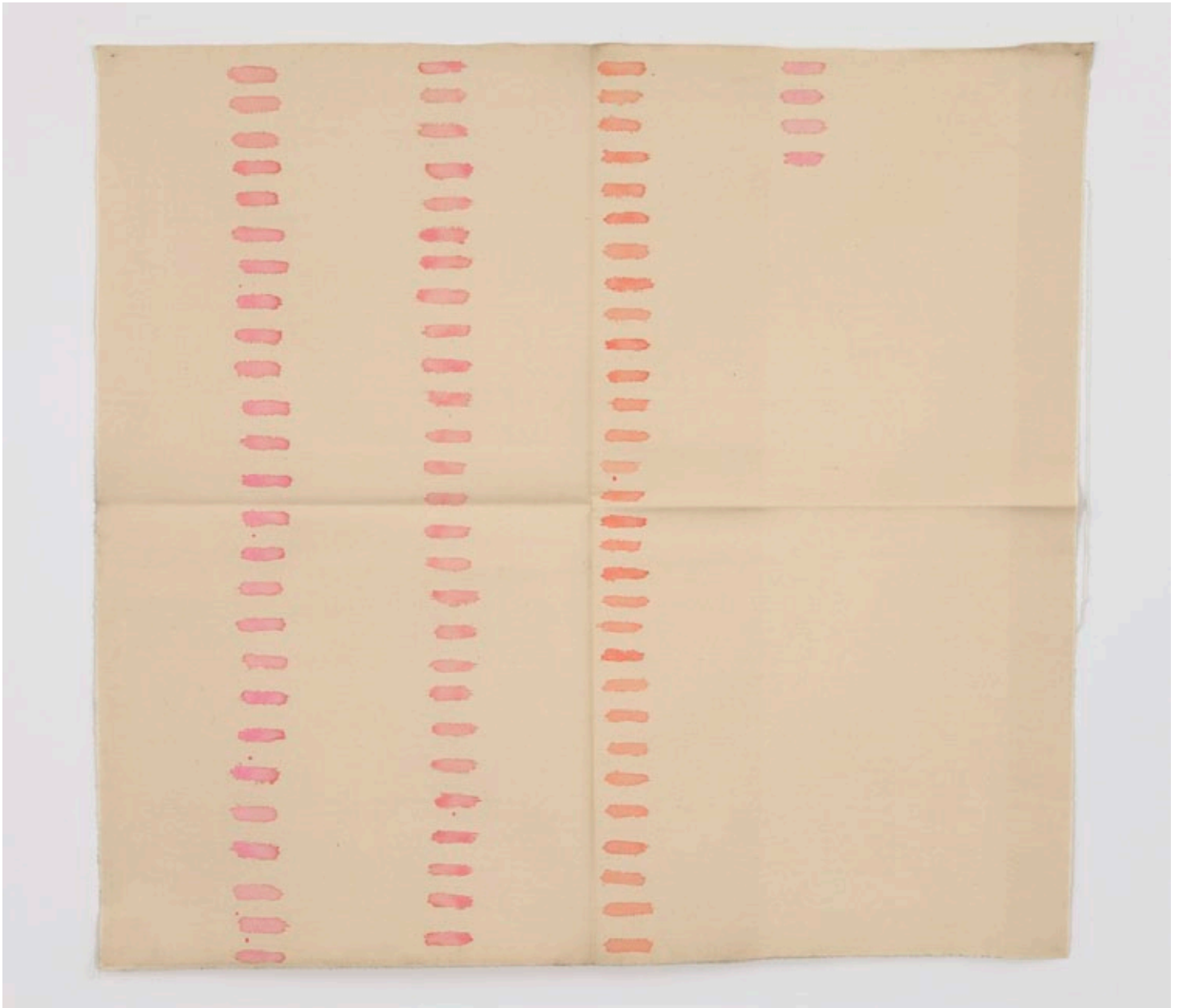
Giorgio Griffa
Spugne, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
57 x 57" / 145 x 145cm
GG1969-004



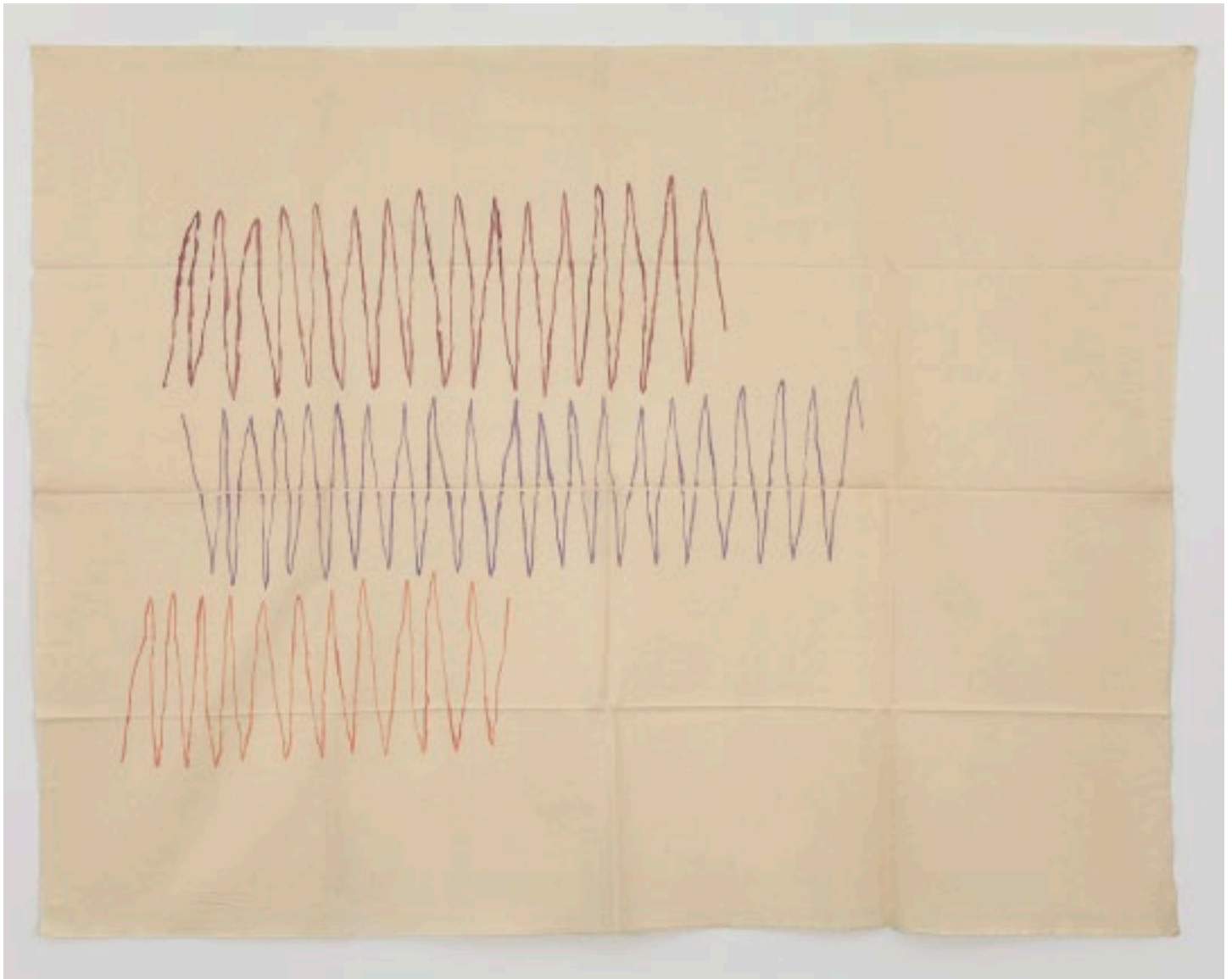
Giorgio Griffa
Impronte, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
47.2 x 55.9" / 120 x 142cm
GG1969-003



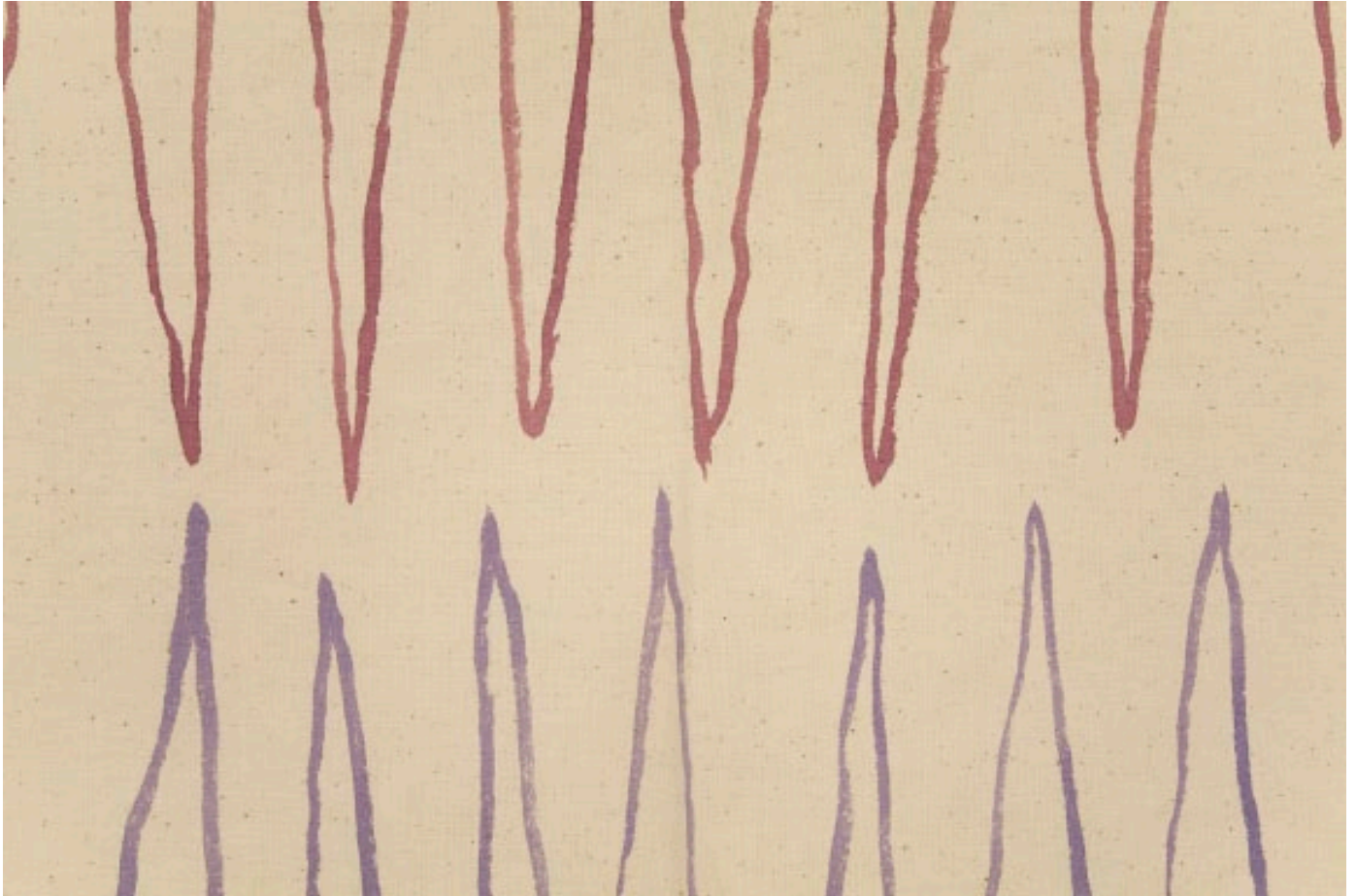
Giorgio Griffa
Obliquo, 1970
Acrylic on canvas
70.9 x 74.8" / 180 x 190cm
GG1970-005



Giorgio Griffa
Non Finito, 1970
Acrylic on canvas
47.2 x 51.2" / 120 x 130cm
GG1970-003



Giorgio Griffa
Linea spezzata, 1970
Acrylic on canvas
68.9 x 90.6" / 175 x 230cm
GG1970-004



Giorgio Griffa
Linea spezzata, 1970
Acrylic on canvas
68.9 x 90.6" / 175 x 230cm
GG1970-004



Exhibition view, Giorgio Griffa, *Fragments 1968-2012*. Casey Kaplan, New York.



Exhibition view, Giorgio Griffa, *Fragments 1968-2012*. Casey Kaplan, New York.



Exhibition view, Giorgio Griffa, *Fragments 1968-2012*. Casey Kaplan, New York.



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GIORGIO GRIFFA
FRAGMENTS 1968 - 2012

EXHIBITION DATES: JANUARY 10 – MARCH 2, 2013
OPENING: THURSDAY, JANUARY, 6-8PM

"I don't portray anything, I paint." Giorgio Griffa, 1973

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce FRAGMENTS 1968 – 2012, an exhibition of new and historical paintings by Giorgio Griffa (b. 1936, Torino, Italy). Spanning four decades of Griffa's career, this is the first solo exhibition of the artist's work in New York since 1970, as well as his first in the United States since 1973.

The exhibition presents a selection from over forty years of Griffa's paintings on un-stretched canvas and linen. Throughout the past four decades, Griffa has undertaken a practice that he describes as "constant and never finished", adhering to "the memory of material", and to the belief that the gesture of painting is an infinite one. Within the finite frame of his canvas, each artwork becomes a site of collaboration between painting and the painter as the hand works to reveal a constellation of signs and symbols. This relationship is further mediated by the materiality of the works: the absorption of the acrylic into the fabric from each stroke dictates the brush's next move. The completion of a canvas functions as a suspension of this relationship. After the acrylic has dried, each painting is carefully and neatly folded into uniform sections and filed as a register of their collective life as a whole.

The artworks from the late 1960s and 1970s display the use of an "anonymous" sign, the simple and repetitive movement of the artist's paintbrush to create uniform task-like marks that serve to record the process of painting. These early, minimal compositions began with ordered horizontal and vertical lines that eventually gave way to the use of sponges and fingerprints. While this period displays a shift from the anonymous to the personal, it is united through the consistency of deliberate end points or breaks in pattern and reveals the construction of the paintings as an action interrupted.

Griffa's paintings actively resist perspective and narrative, instead favoring a cyclical connection to the memory of painting as an action. Time is present through aesthetic shifts in the work that are most notable by decade. These mark making variations reveal an awareness of the artist's surroundings and provide evidence of the time within which he was working. For example, in the 1980s Griffa's practice evolved to include expressive forms and brighter tones, coexisting with discordant arrangements of unfinished planes of color. He began to utilize a more concrete set of references in the "Alter-Ego" series (1978 – 2008), in which Griffa aspired to come to terms with aspects of painting's memory within the works of other artists, such as: Henri Matisse, Mario Merz, Yves Klein, Tintoretto, Joseph Beuys as well as imagery of the Romanesque and International Gothic periods.

This shift, from ordered marks towards a broad range of gestures, eventually led to the inclusion of numerical systems into his artworks in the 1990s. Still characterizing his paintings today, the "Canone Aureo" series displays Griffa's interest in mathematical and scientific structures that underlie our natural world. These infinite sequences, such as the Fibonacci series and the Golden Ratio, act as a parallel to Griffa's practice, and additionally function as punctuations in the work's vocabulary. They also determine and organize the signs within a work. Despite these varied trajectories, it is the act of painting that always remains at the forefront. Griffa said in a recent interview with Luca Massimo Barbero: "If these works have the power to speak and to listen, I'll let them do it themselves."

Giorgio Griffa joined the gallery's program in 2011. Solo presentations of his work include MACRO, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rome (2011), Neuer Kunstverein, Aschaffenburg (2005), Städtische Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf (1978) and Sonnabend Gallery, New York (1970), among others. His work was presented in the 38th and 40th Venice Biennale in 1978 and 1980, as well as in group exhibitions at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Museum Abteiberg, Kunstverein Münster, Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Kunstverein Hannover, Städtische Museum, Monchengladbach, Kunstverein Frankfurt and Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

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ARTFORUM



Giorgio Griffa, Macchie (Stains), 1969, acrylic and pastel on canvas.

consists of a tumbling constellation of acrylic daubs overlaid with scribbled pastel, was executed from top left to right.

The writerly disposition of this work dovetails seamlessly with a compulsion to foreground materiality and process, which is characteristic of the deconstructive era from which it initially issued. Indeed, the formal similarities it shares with the Supports/Surfaces movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s in France are striking, but it seems blessedly unencumbered by the unwieldy Marxism that beleaguered and ultimately rent apart its French counterpart. Here a kind of pure painting thrives intact, evincing a discreet but tenacious fidelity to its most basic components: paint, canvas, and the human hand.

Giorgio Griffa
CASEY KAPLAN
525 West 21st Street
January 10–March 2

“Fragments 1968–2012” traverses the past four decades of the Turin-based Italian artist Giorgio Griffa’s winsomely delicate production as a painter. And while changes in terms of content can be described throughout the fifteen paintings on view, fundamental constants remain. To wit: a commitment to mark making on unprimed and unstretched canvases, whose sheetlike folds are as much a part of their composition as the texture of their weave are a part of their fabric. Deploying a bright and airy Matissean palette, Griffa’s marks, which vary from vertical and horizontal stripes to zigzags to numbers, are manually applied in a systematic mode from left to right, and there is often a signature caesura in the middle of the canvas, as if the artist were stopping a thought midsentence: Even *Macchie (Stains)*, 1969, a personal favorite, which

-Chris Sharp

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FAX +1 212 645 7835
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“Smith, Roberta, Review: Giorgio Griffa, February 7, 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/08/arts>”

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

Giorgio Griffa: ‘Fragments, 1968-2012’

By ROBERTA SMITH

Published: February 7, 2013



Jean Vong, Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan
Giorgio Griffa’s “Festone.”

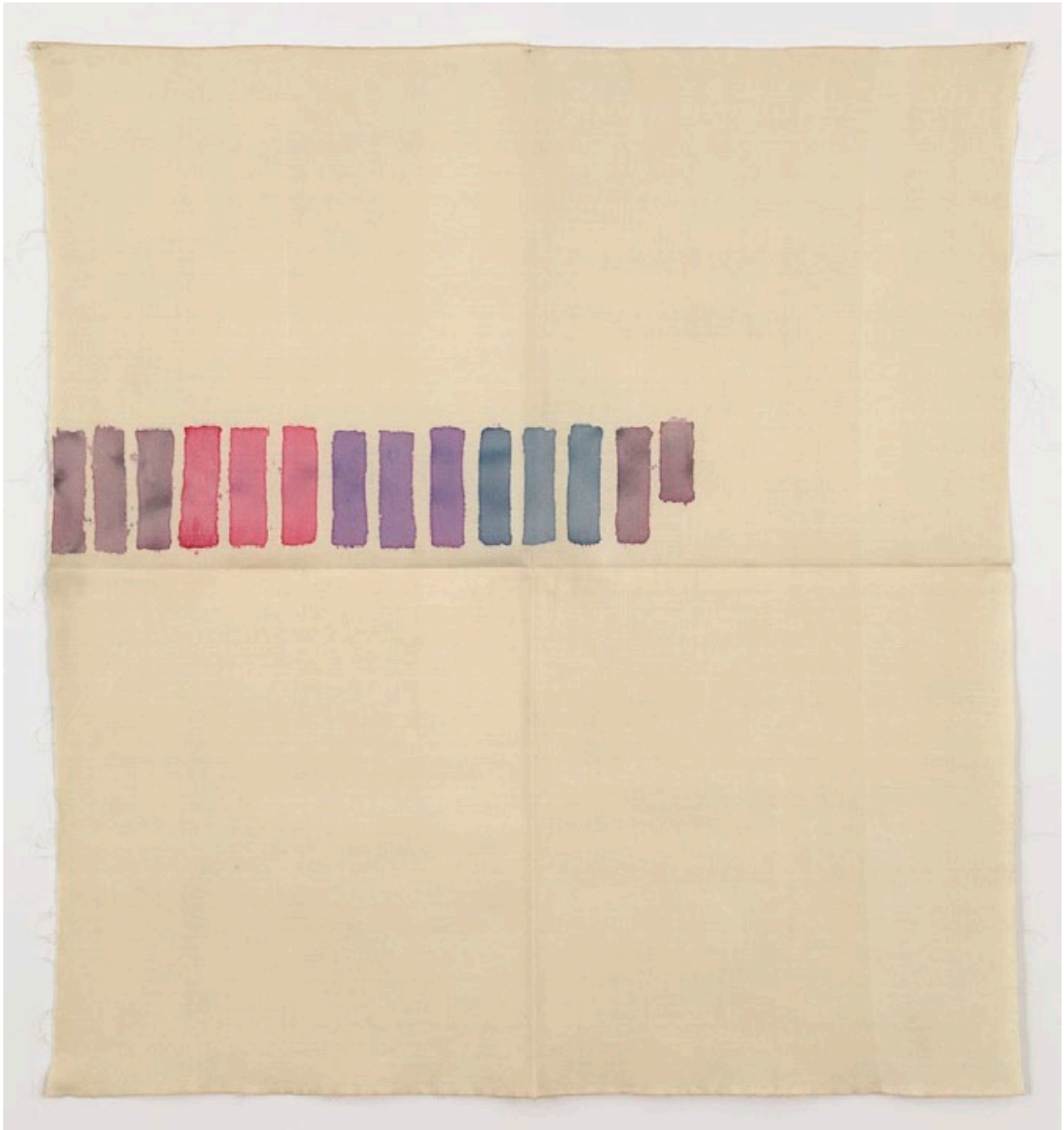
525 West 21st Street, Chelsea

The floods of Hurricane Sandy interrupted an exhibition at Casey Kaplan’s gallery that was close to his heart: the Italian painter Giorgio Griffa’s first New York gallery show since his debut in 1970. Like most of Chelsea, it’s now up and running. It could hardly be timelier in bringing to light the work of an artist who reduces painting to its basics.

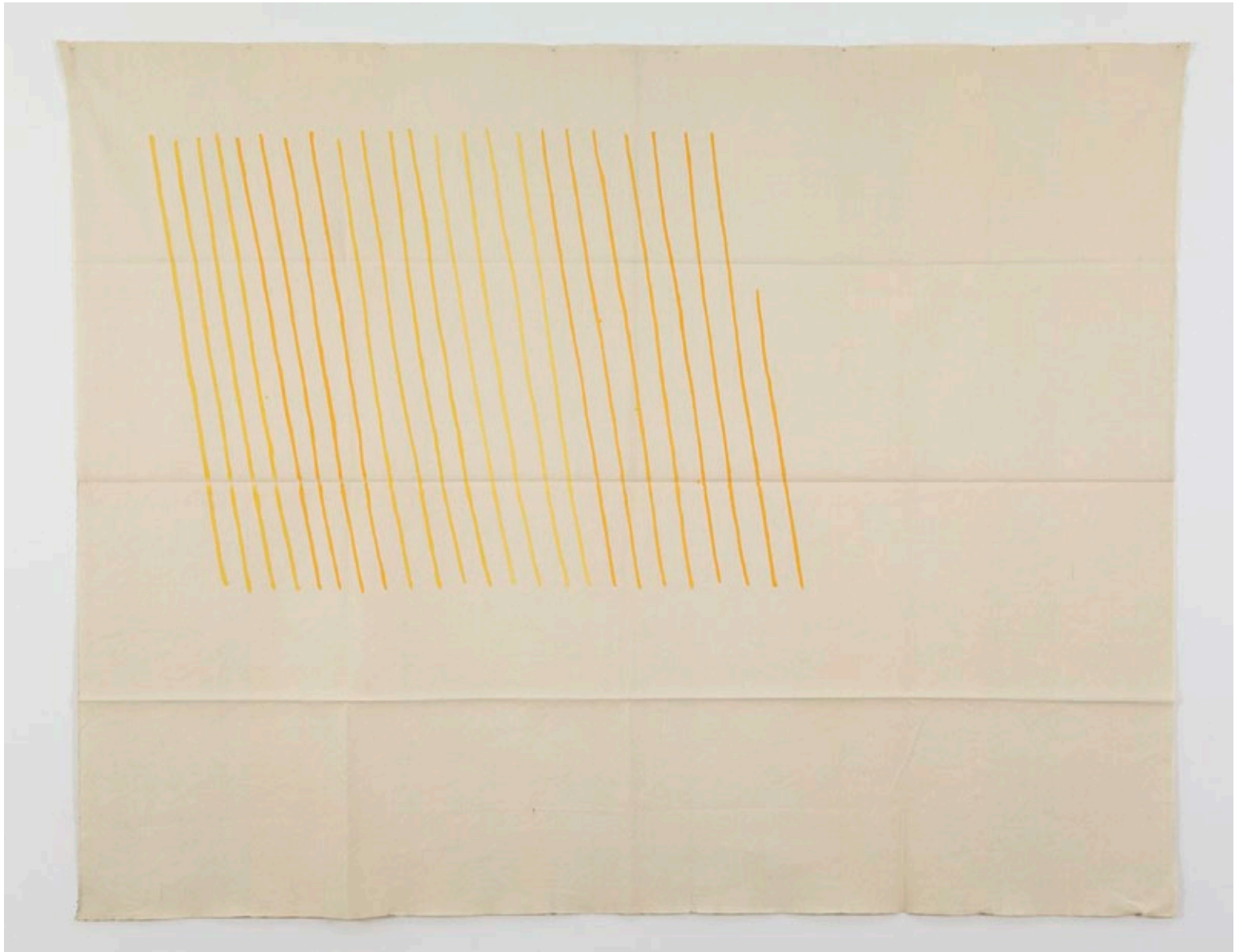
Like many younger artists, Mr. Griffa seems to test how little it takes for something to qualify as a painting. For decades he has used raw unstretched canvas of different textures and tones in a way that emphasizes portability. The paintings are simply folded up when not on view, which invariably makes the grid of fold lines part of the motif. To these surfaces he applies unruled lines and strokes that sometimes accumulate into shapes but often simply repeat for a while and then stop — as if in midsentence.

The short fat strokes of “Segni orizzontali” (1975) march edge to edge across the top of the canvas in pinks and blues, for only four rows, halting halfway through the fifth row. Other paintings consist of thin wobbly lines of color also drawn edge to edge, like an Agnes Martin version of one of Kenneth Noland’s stripe paintings. There are funny details: Of the three zigzag lines in the 1970 “Linea spezzata,” the middle one seems to carefully jump the fold, belying the work’s apparent nonchalance. In the 1969 “Macchie,” a swarm of pink dots scribbled with black pastel have left ghosts on the lower, bare portion of the canvas because of folding.

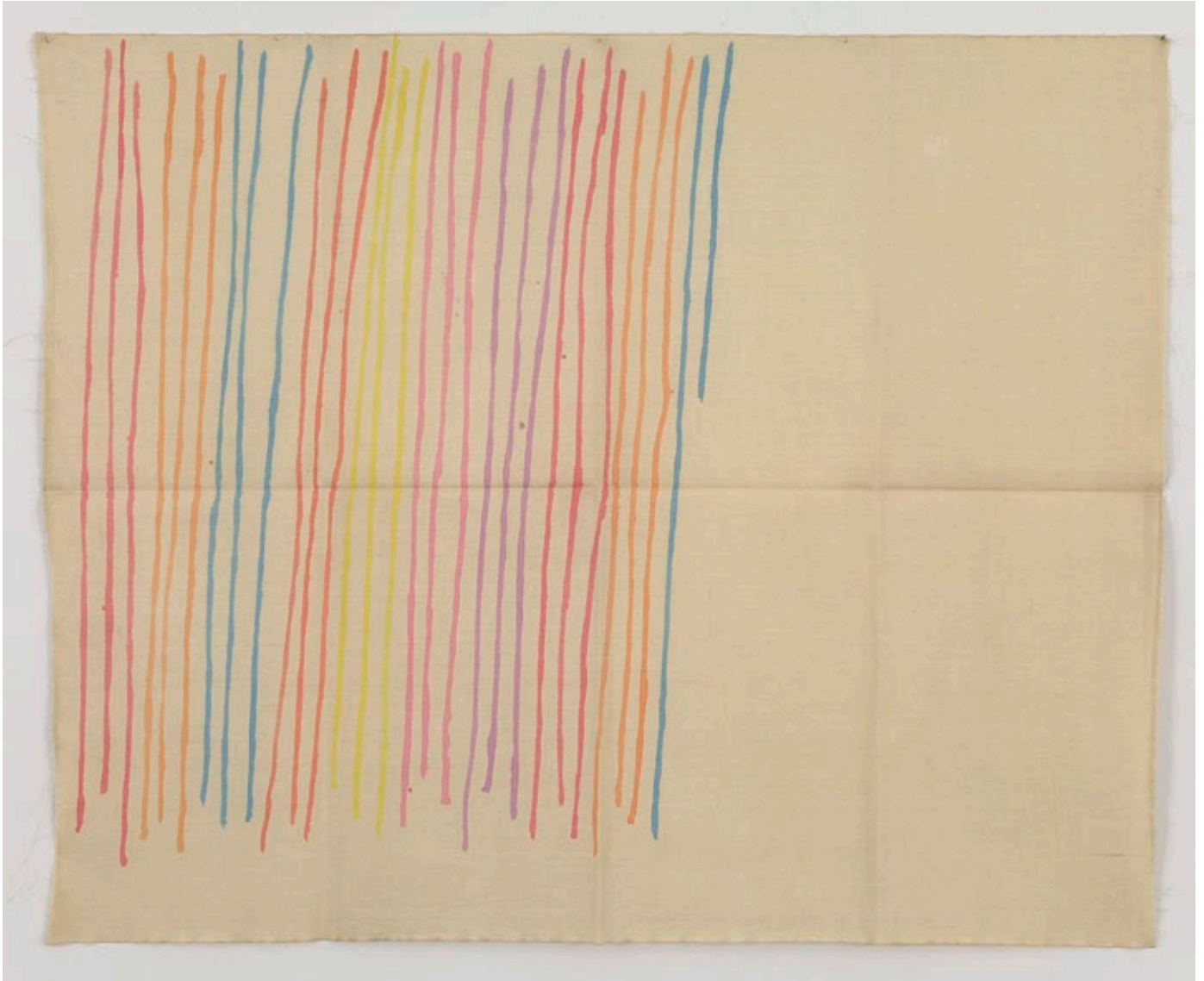
Mr. Griffa’s early efforts especially take advantage of the eye’s reflexive tendency to read marks on flat surfaces as pictorial but repay the effort with a natural touch, a playfulness that has its own kind poetry and a determination that beauty and deconstruction are not strange bedfellows. His art deserves a place in the global history of abstraction.



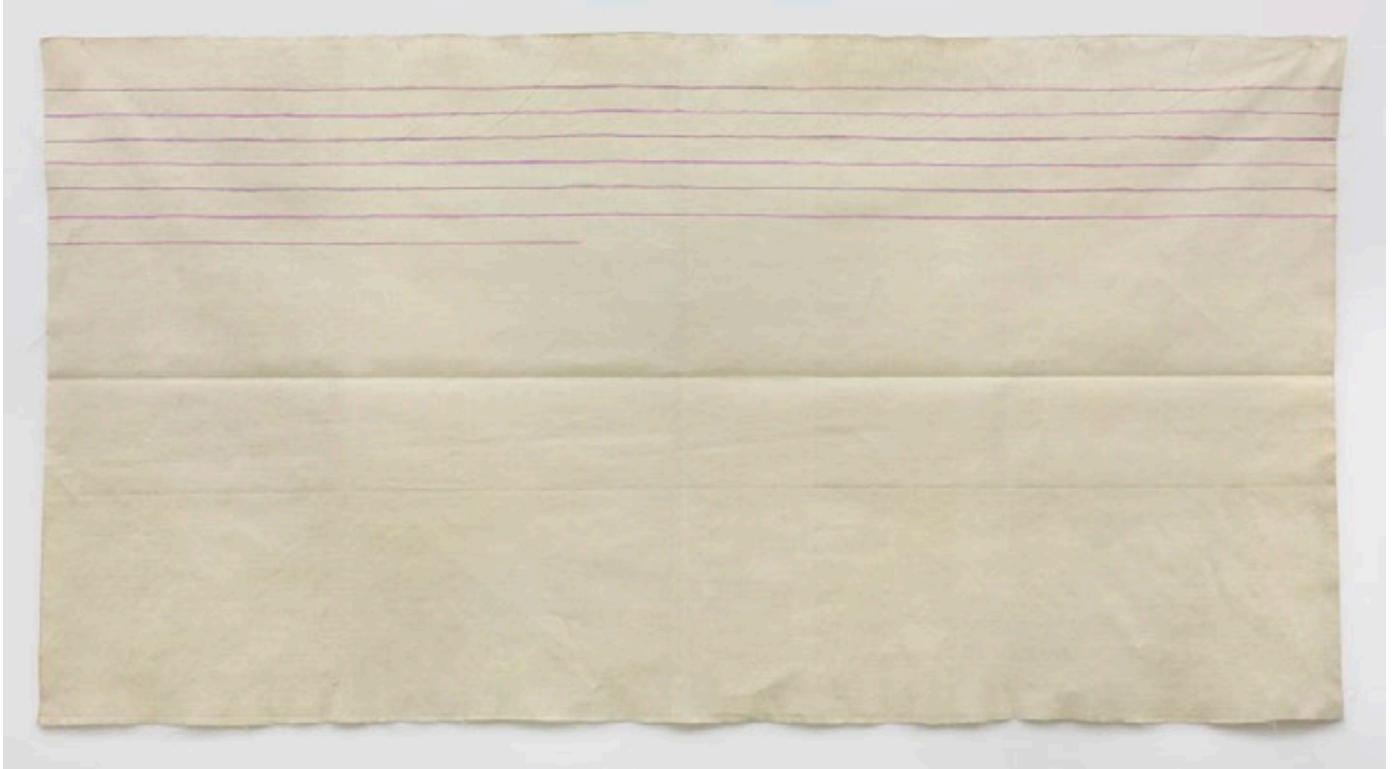
Giorgio Griffa
Pennello Piatto, 1971
Acrylic on canvas
59 x 53.1" / 150 x 135cm
GG1971-002



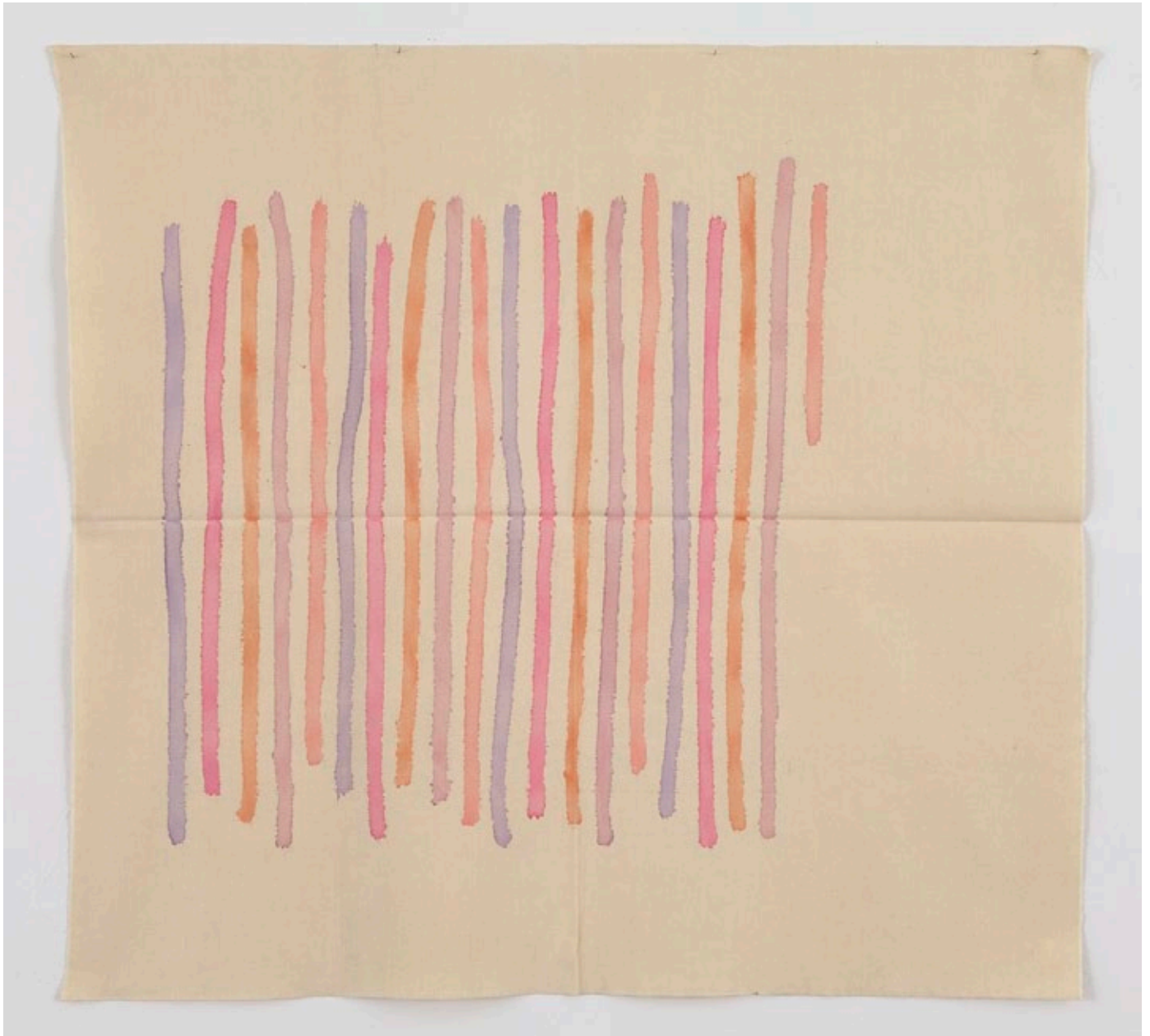
Giorgio Griffa
Obliquo giallo, 1971
Acrylic on canvas
69.7 x 89" / 177 x 226cm
GG1971-004



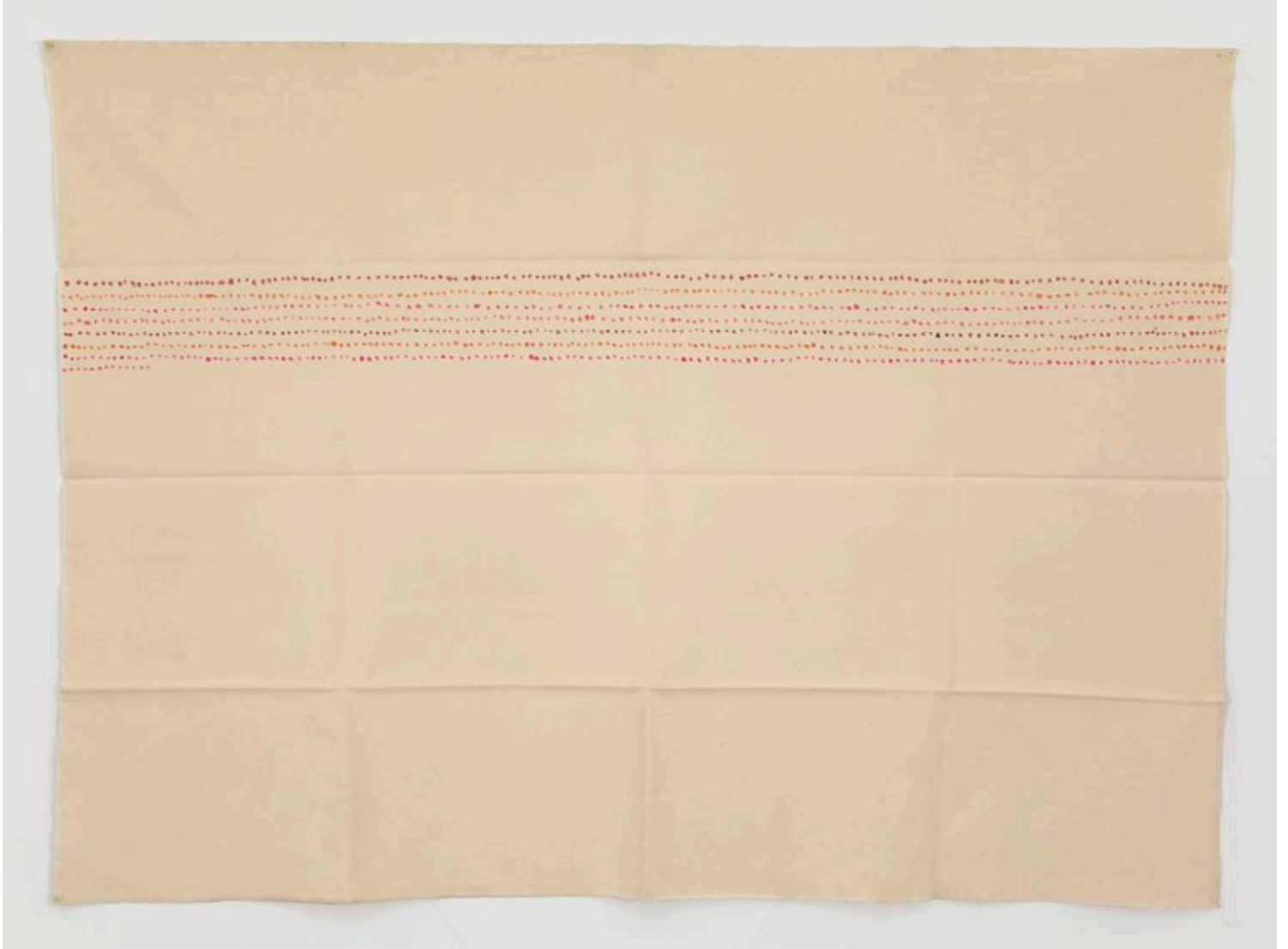
Giorgio Griffa
Linee Verticali, 1972
Acrylic on canvas
58.7 x 71.7" / 149 x 182cm
GG1972-001



Giorgio Griffa
Linee orizzontali, 1973
Acrylic on canvas
35 x 66.9" / 89 x 170cm
GG1973-001



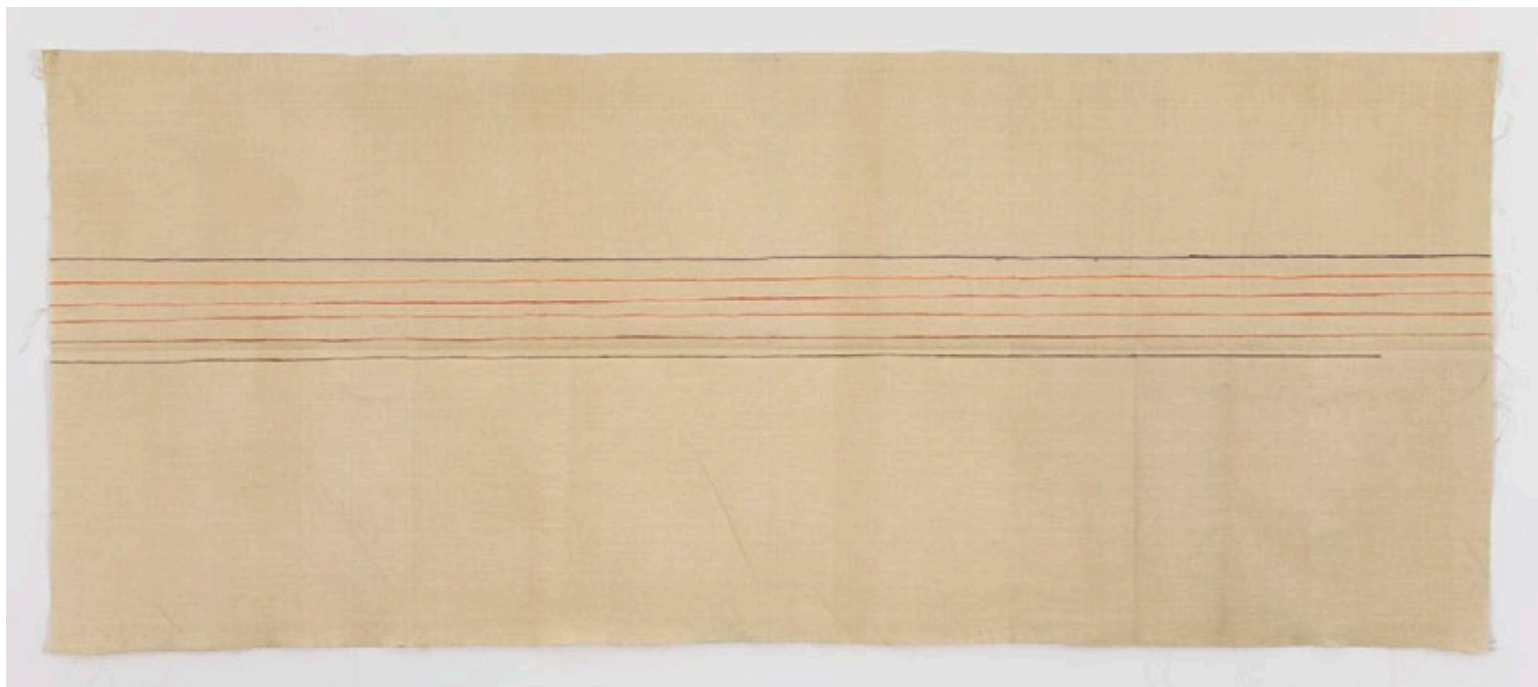
Giorgio Griffa
Policromo Verticale, 1973
Acrylic on canvas
47.2 x 49.6" / 120 x 126cm
GG1973-003



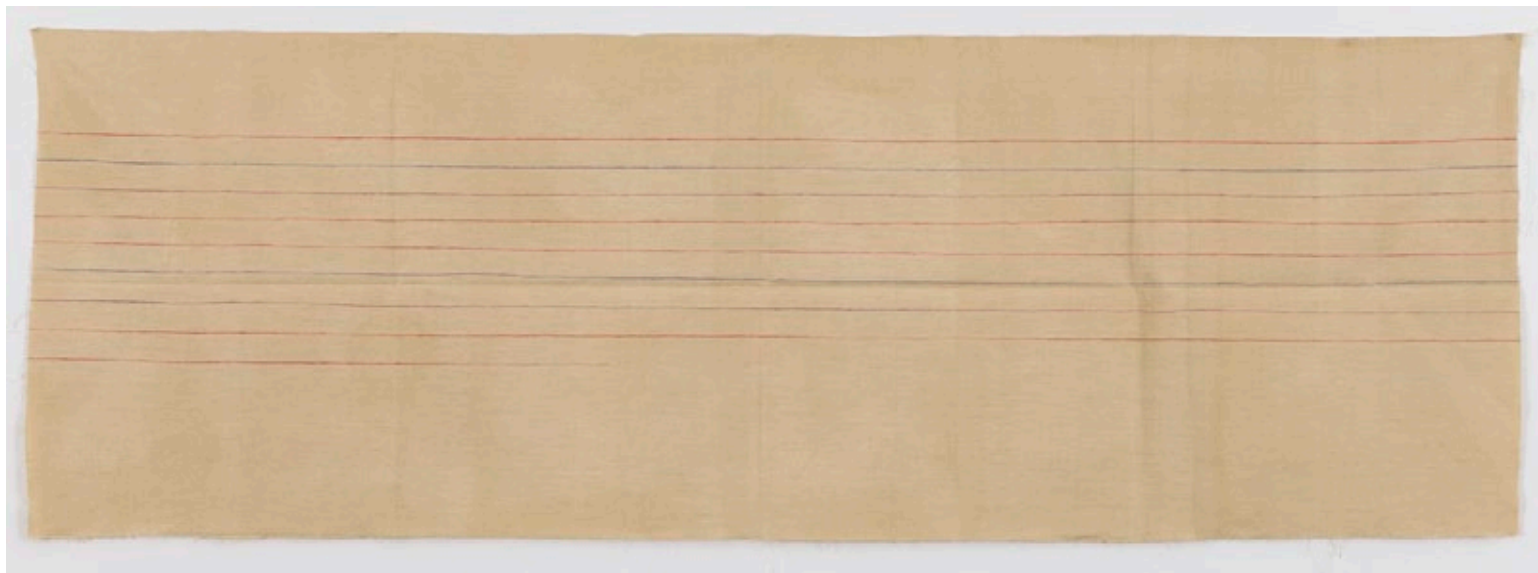
Giorgio Griffa
Puntini, 1973
Acrylic on canvas
55.1 x 74.8" / 140 x 190cm
GG1973-002



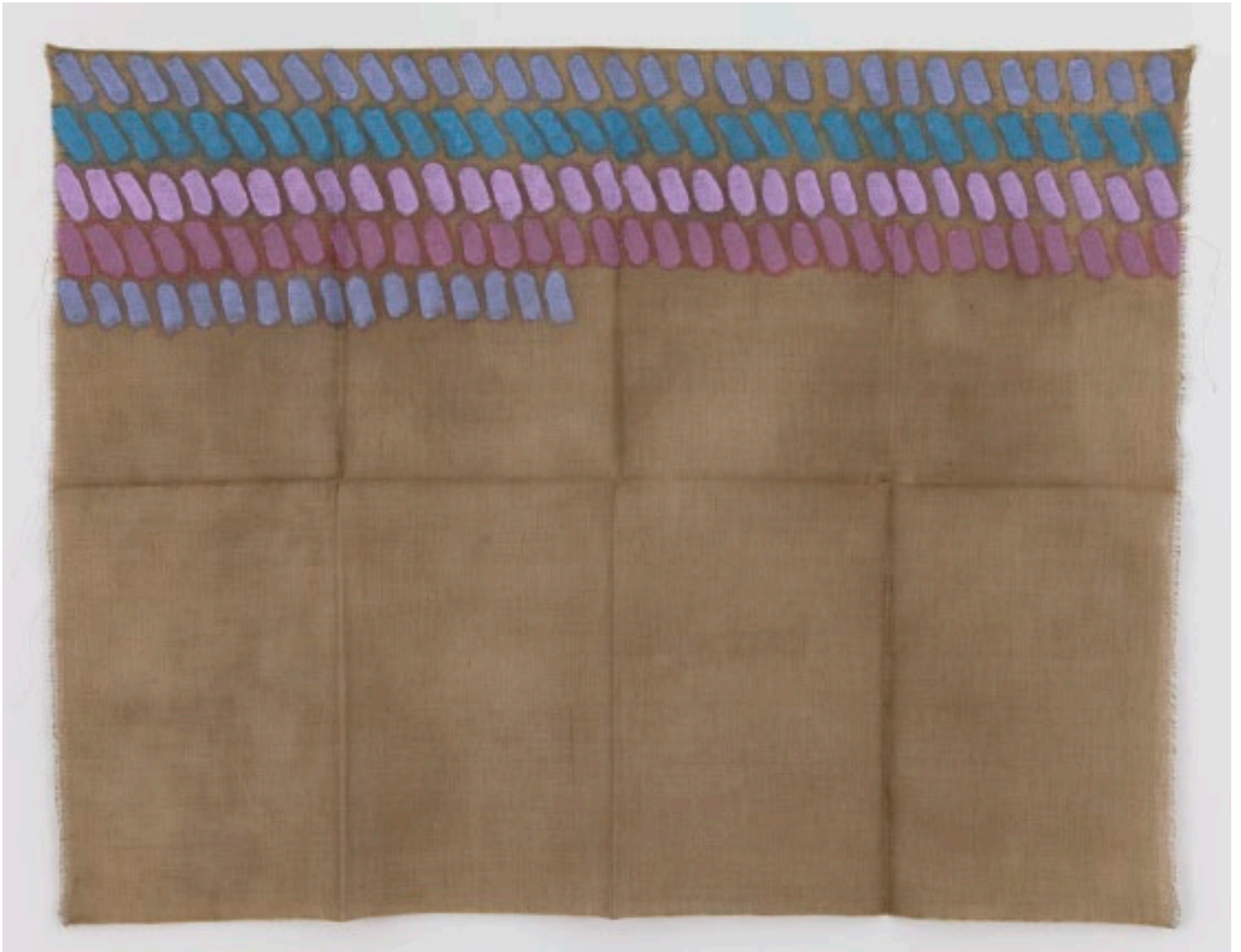
Giorgio Griffa
Linee orizzontali, 1973
Acrylic on canvas
59 x 171.3" / 150 x 435cm
GG1973-004



Giorgio Griffa
Linee orizzontali, 1974
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 112.6" / 117 x 286cm
GG1974-002

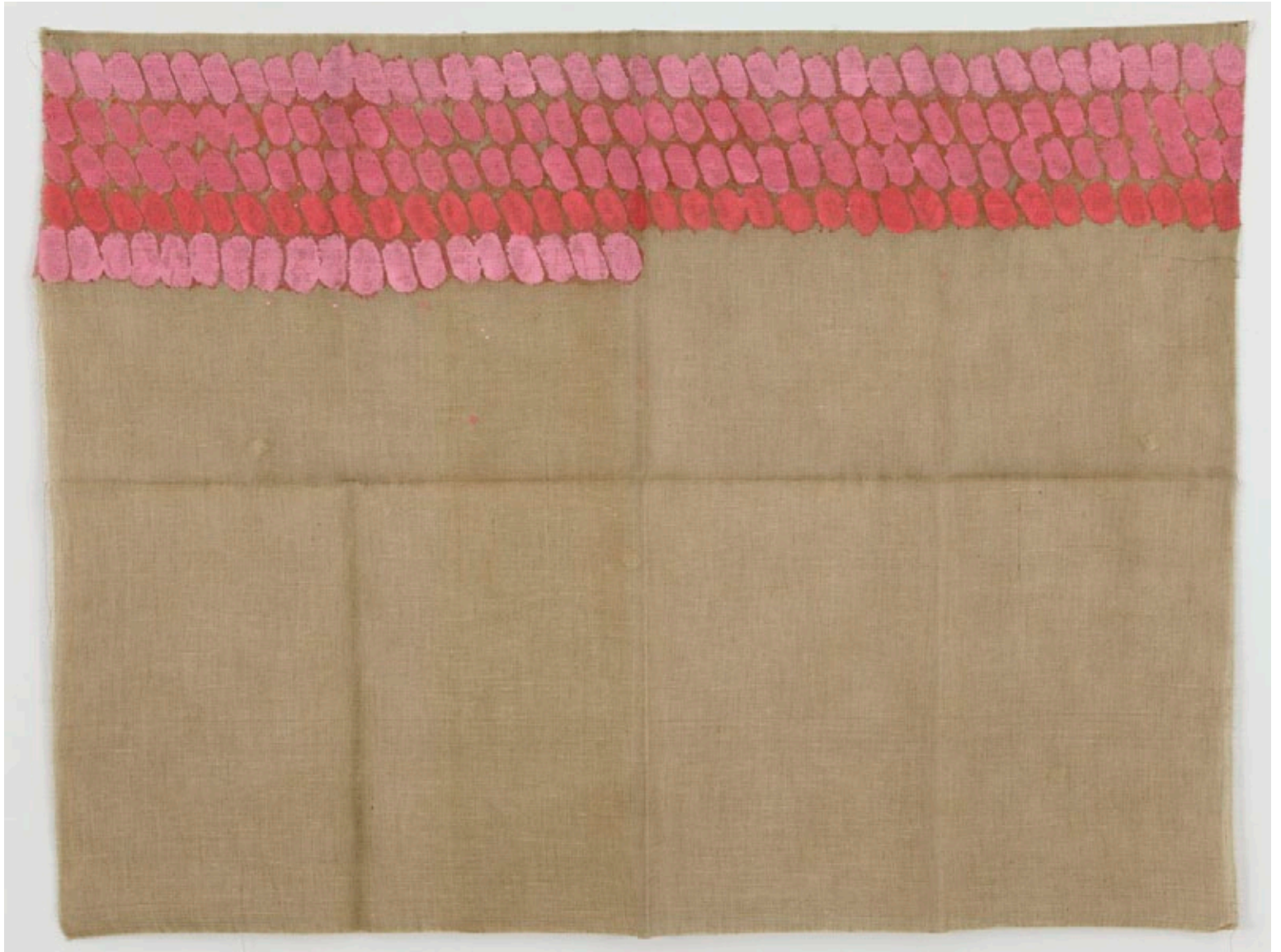


Giorgio Griffa
Linee orizzontali, 1974
Acrylic on canvas
49.2 x 143.7" / 125 x 365cm
GG1974-003

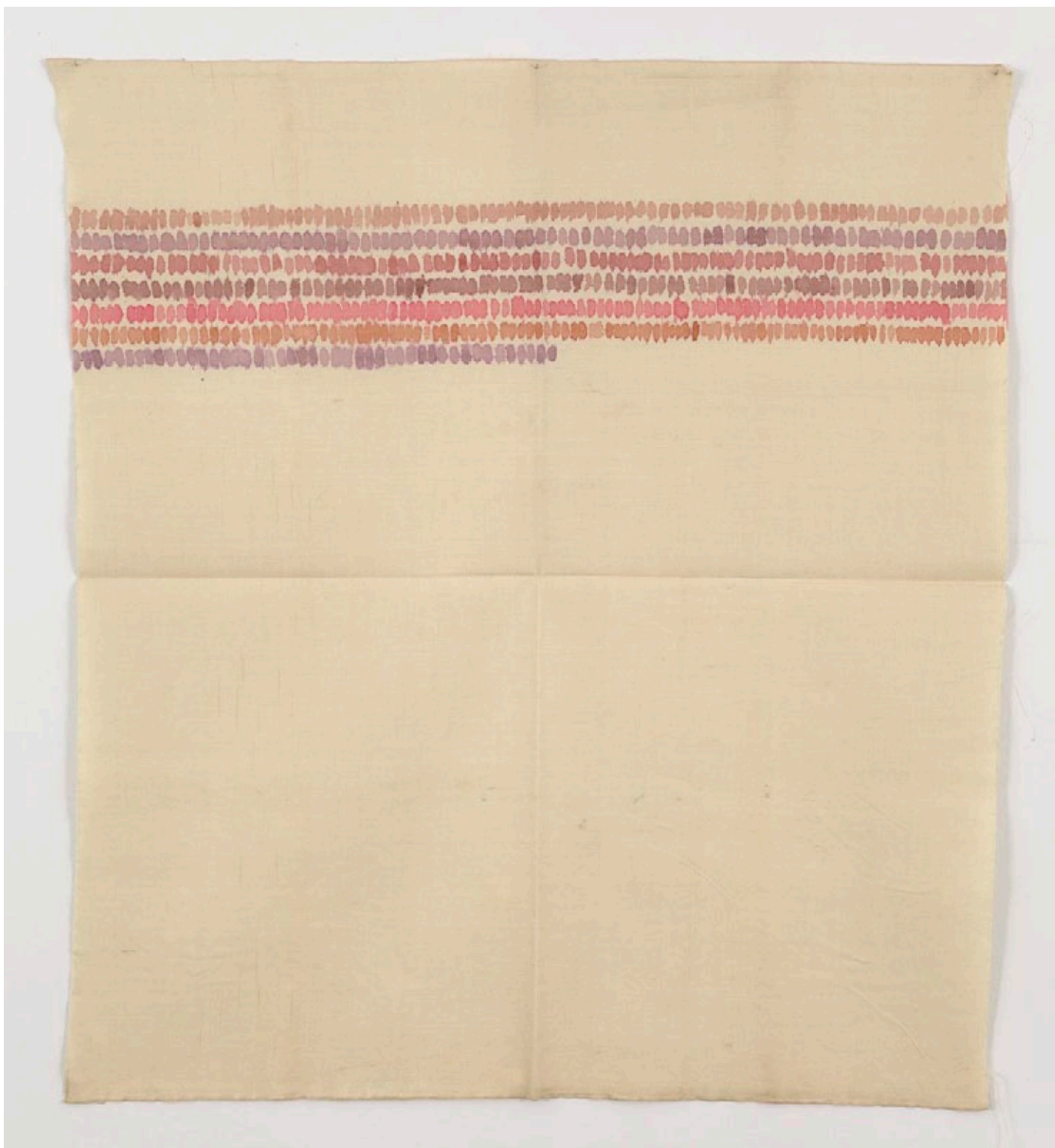


Giorgio Griffa
Segni orizzontali, 1975
Acrylic on canvas
57.5 x 74" / 146 x 188cm
GG1975-006

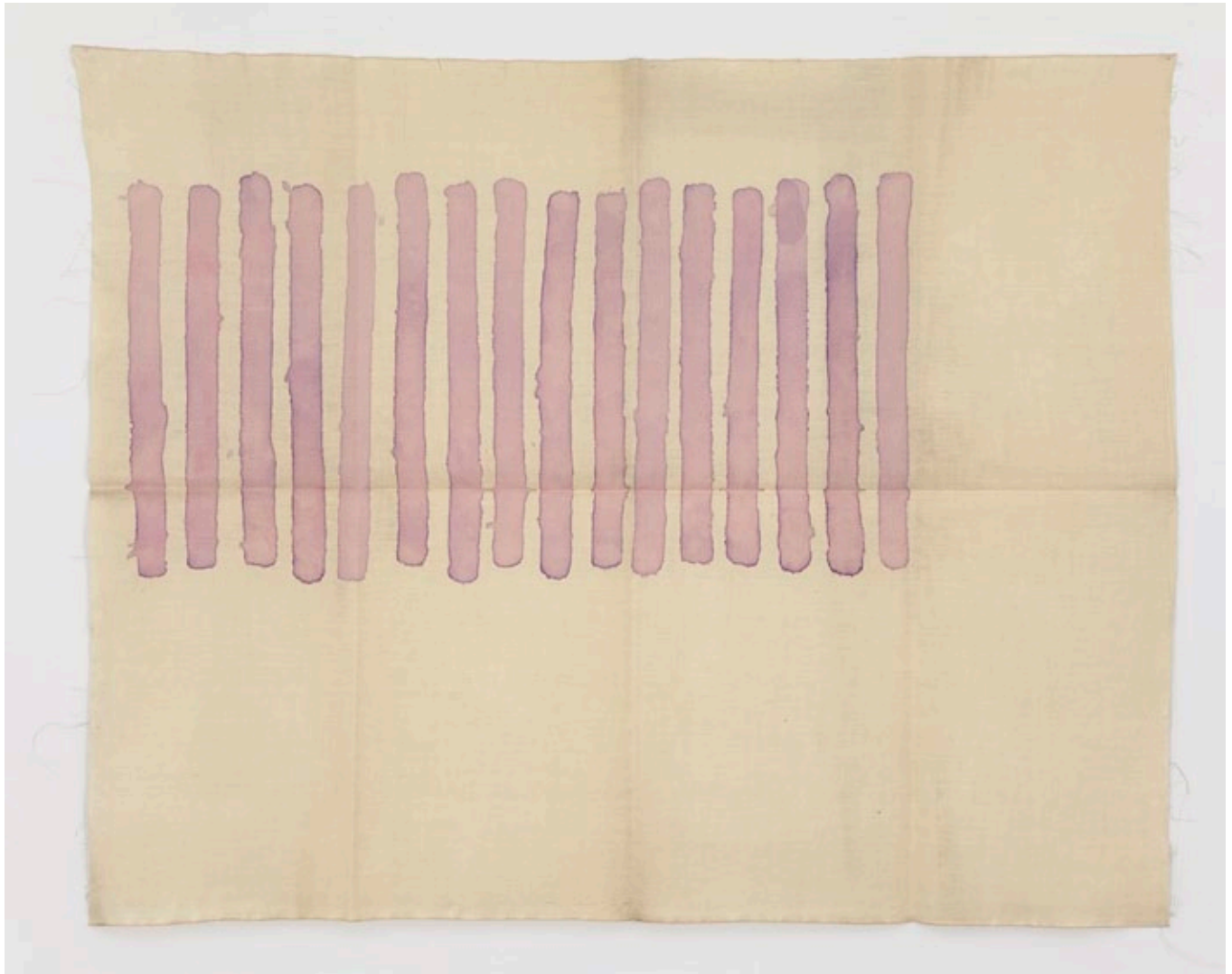
Exhibition History:
Italian Painting, Castello di Rivoli, Rivoli, Italy, 1997



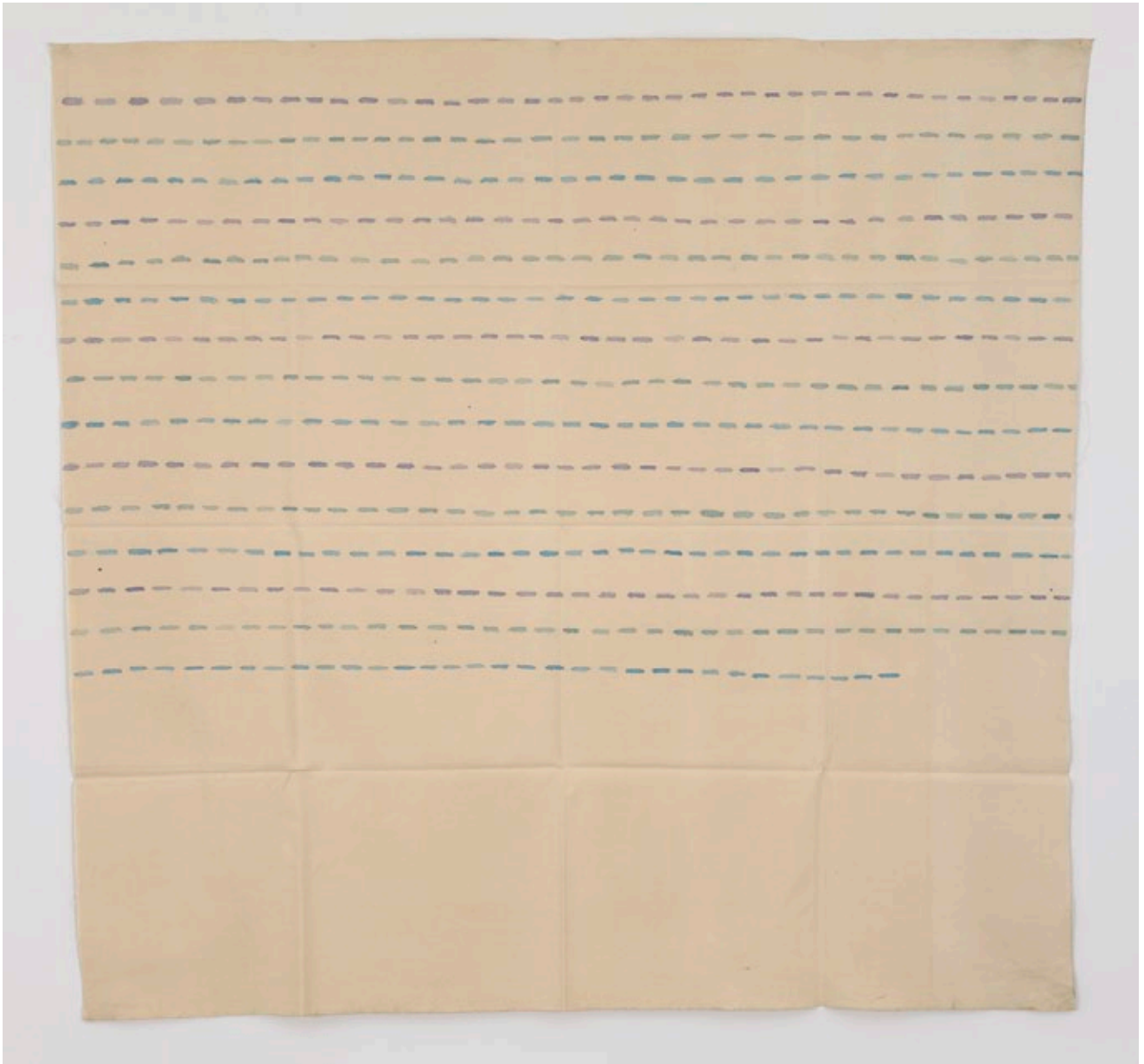
Giorgio Griffa
Orizzontale, 1975
Acrylic on canvas
58.3 x 76.8" / 148 x 195cm
GG1975-003



Giorgio Griffa
Orizzontale, 1975
Acrylic on canvas
58.7 x 60" / 149 x 132cm
GG1975-004



Giorgio Griffa
Verticale monocromo, 1975
Acrylic on canvas
59 x 72.8" / 150 x 185cm
GG1975-007



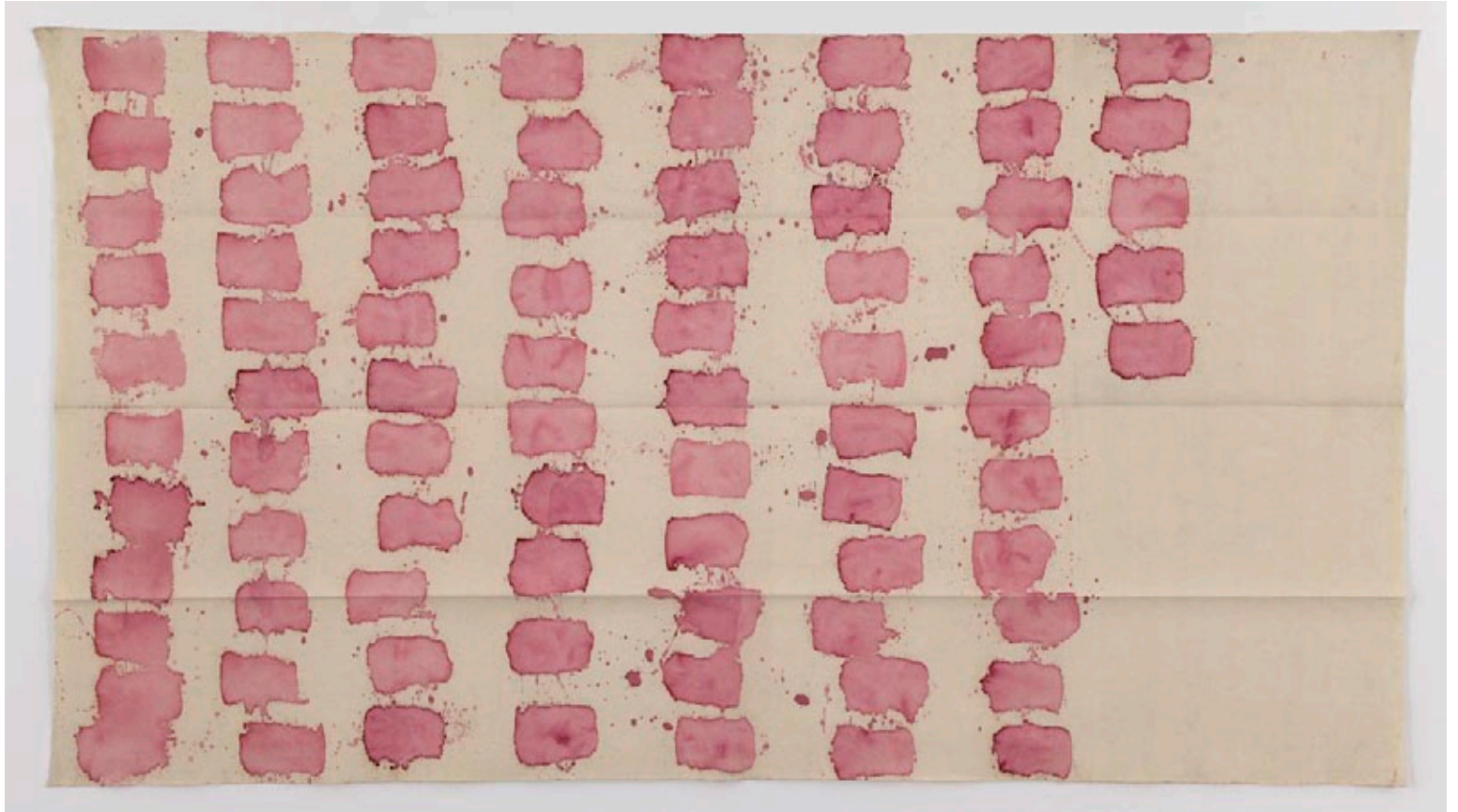
Giorgio Griffa
Tratteggio, 1976
Acrylic on canvas
86.6 x 90.6" / 220 x 230cm
GG1976-001



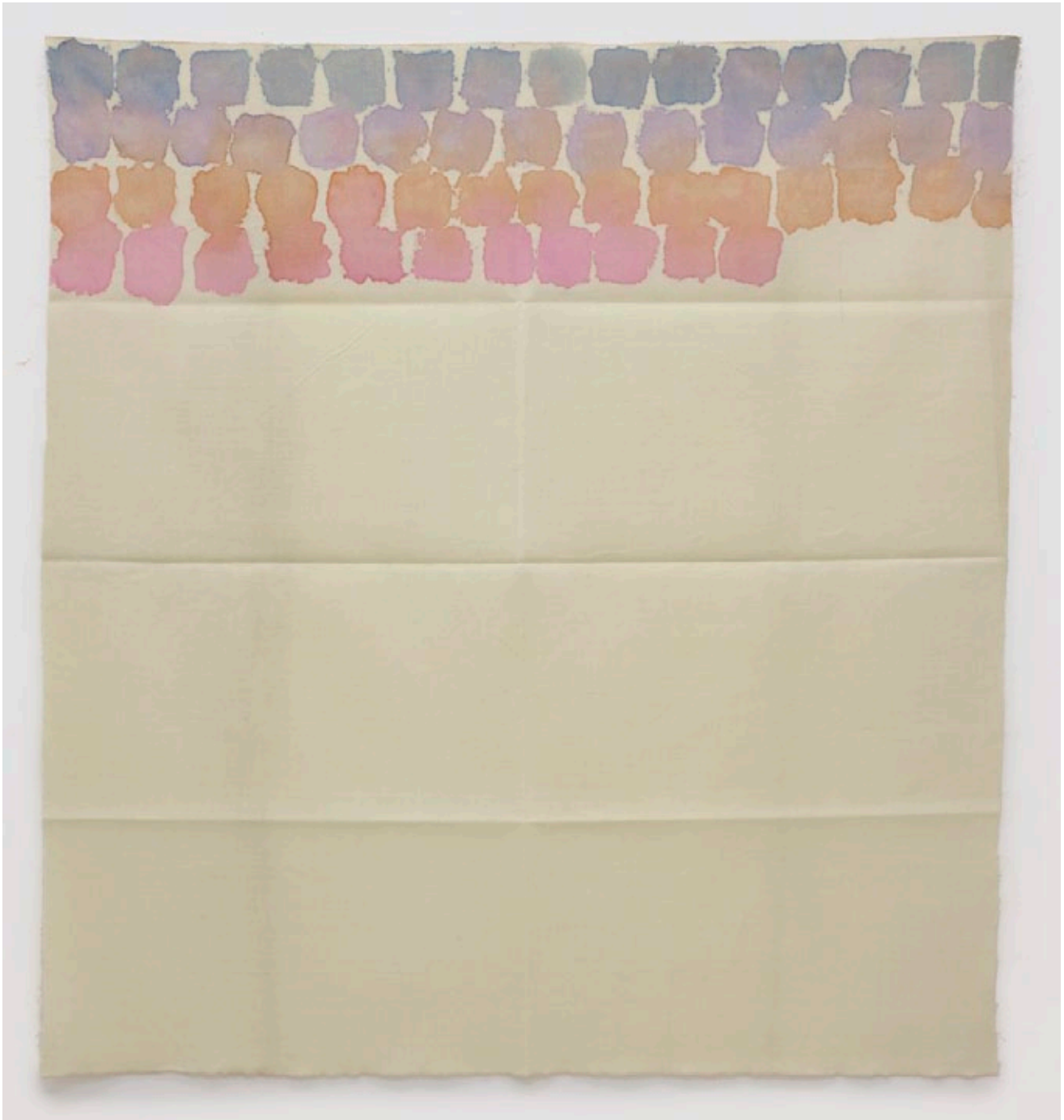
Giorgio Griffa
Sei Strisce Orizzontali, 1974
Acrylic on canvas
58.3 x 74.8" / 148 x 190cm
GG1974-001



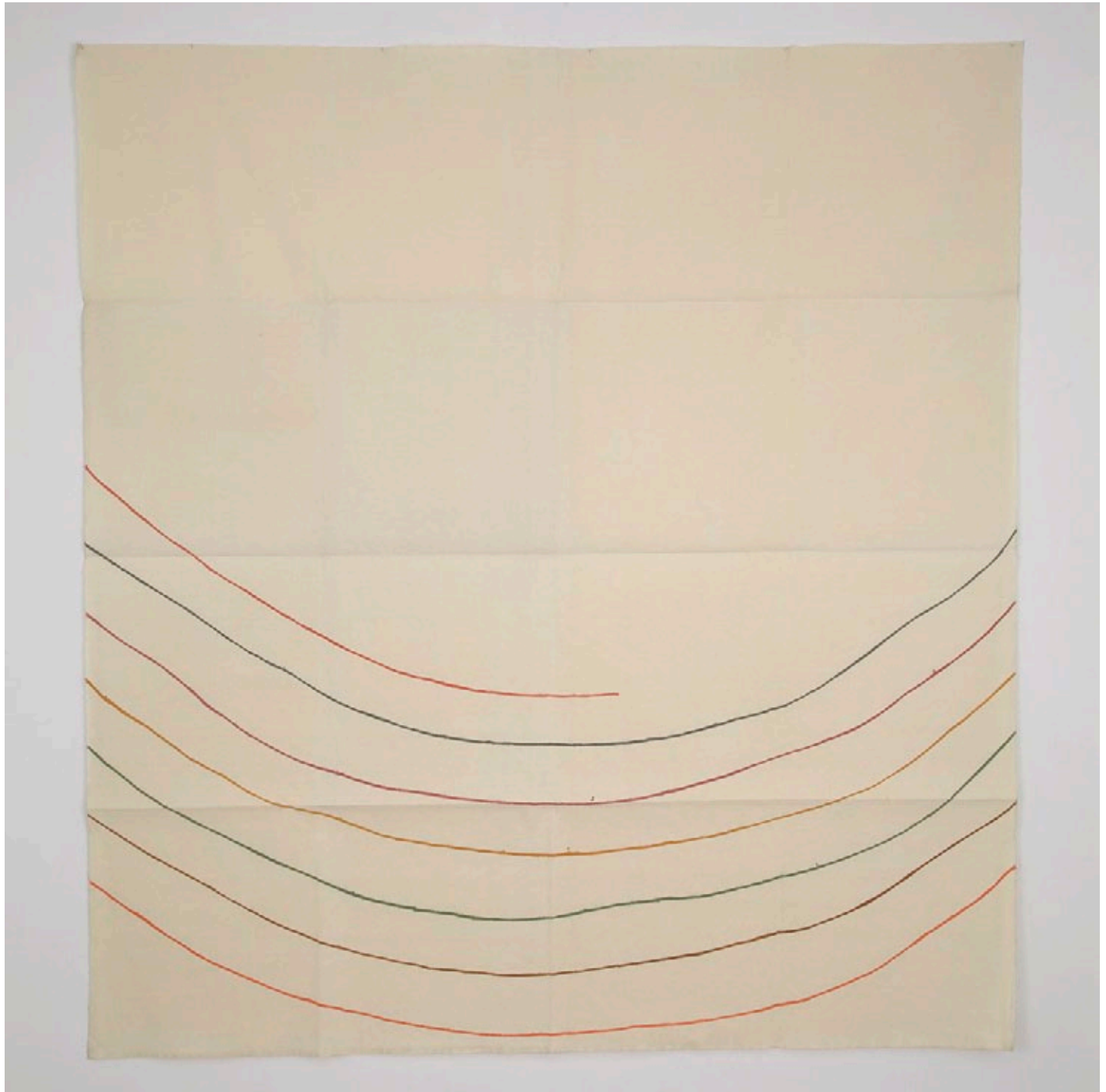
Giorgio Griffa
Policromo, 1976
Acrylic on canvas
57.9 x 53.9" / 147x 137 cm
GG1976-004



Giorgio Griffa
Spugna, 1977
Acrylic on canvas
70.9 x 126" / 180 x 320cm
GG1977-002



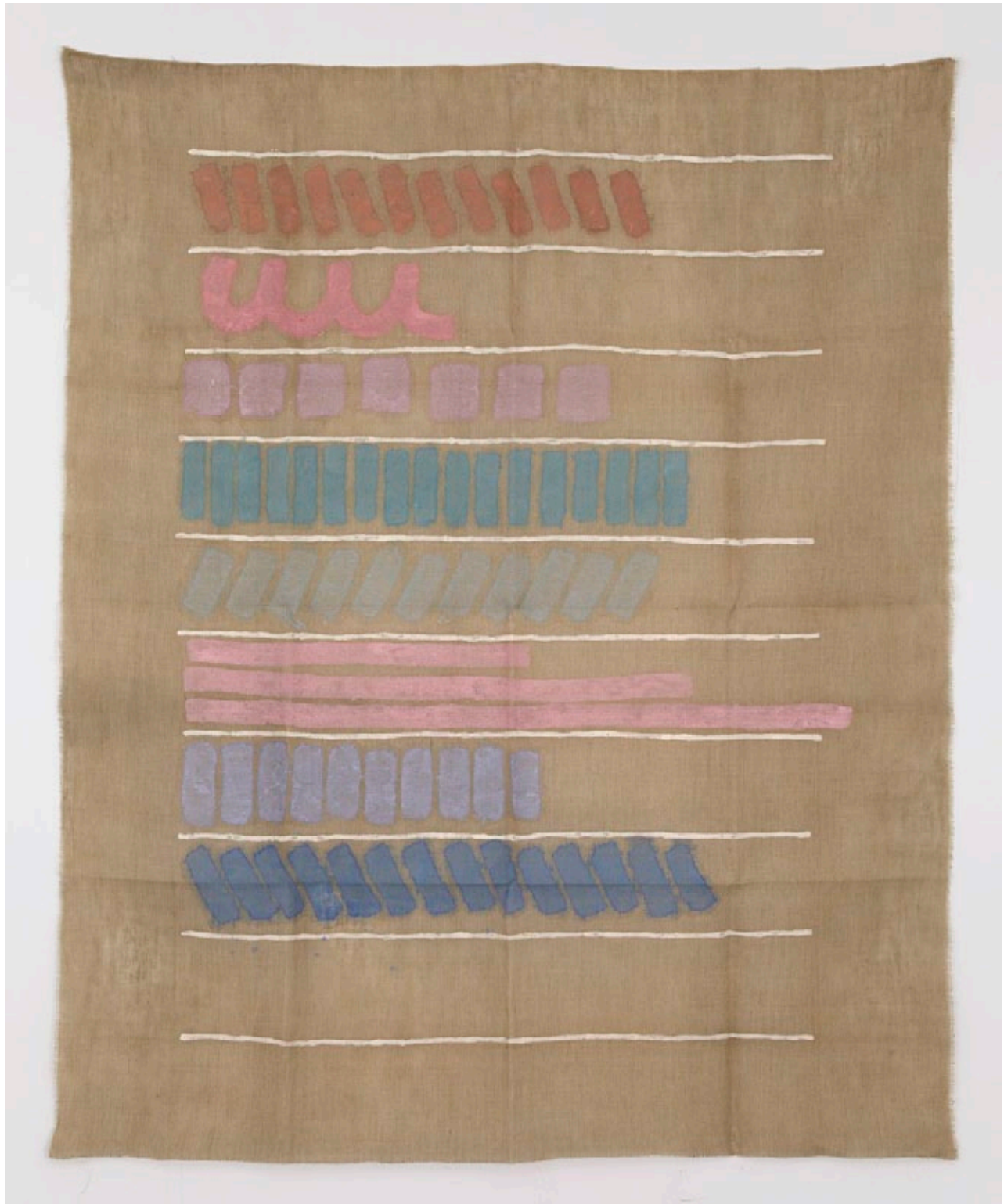
Giorgio Griffa
Spugna, 1978
Acrylic on canvas
58.3 x 54.3" / 148 x 138cm
GG1978-001



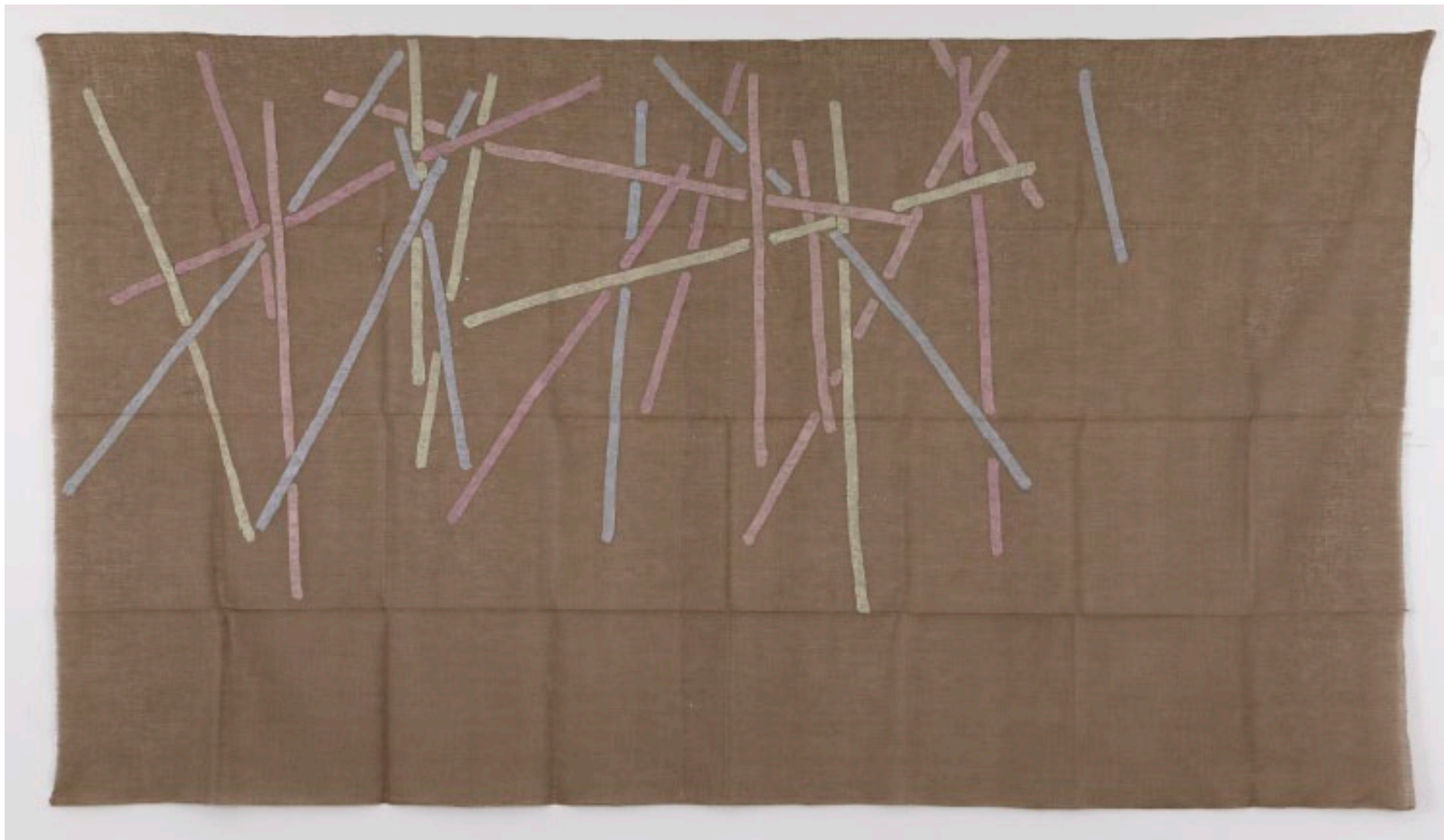
Giorgio Griffa
Dalla terra al cielo, 1979
Acrylic on canvas
93.5 x 88" / 237.5 x 223.5cm
GG1979-002



Giorgio Griffa
Policromo, 1980
Acrylic on canvas
59 x 57.1" / 150 x 145cm
GG1980-001

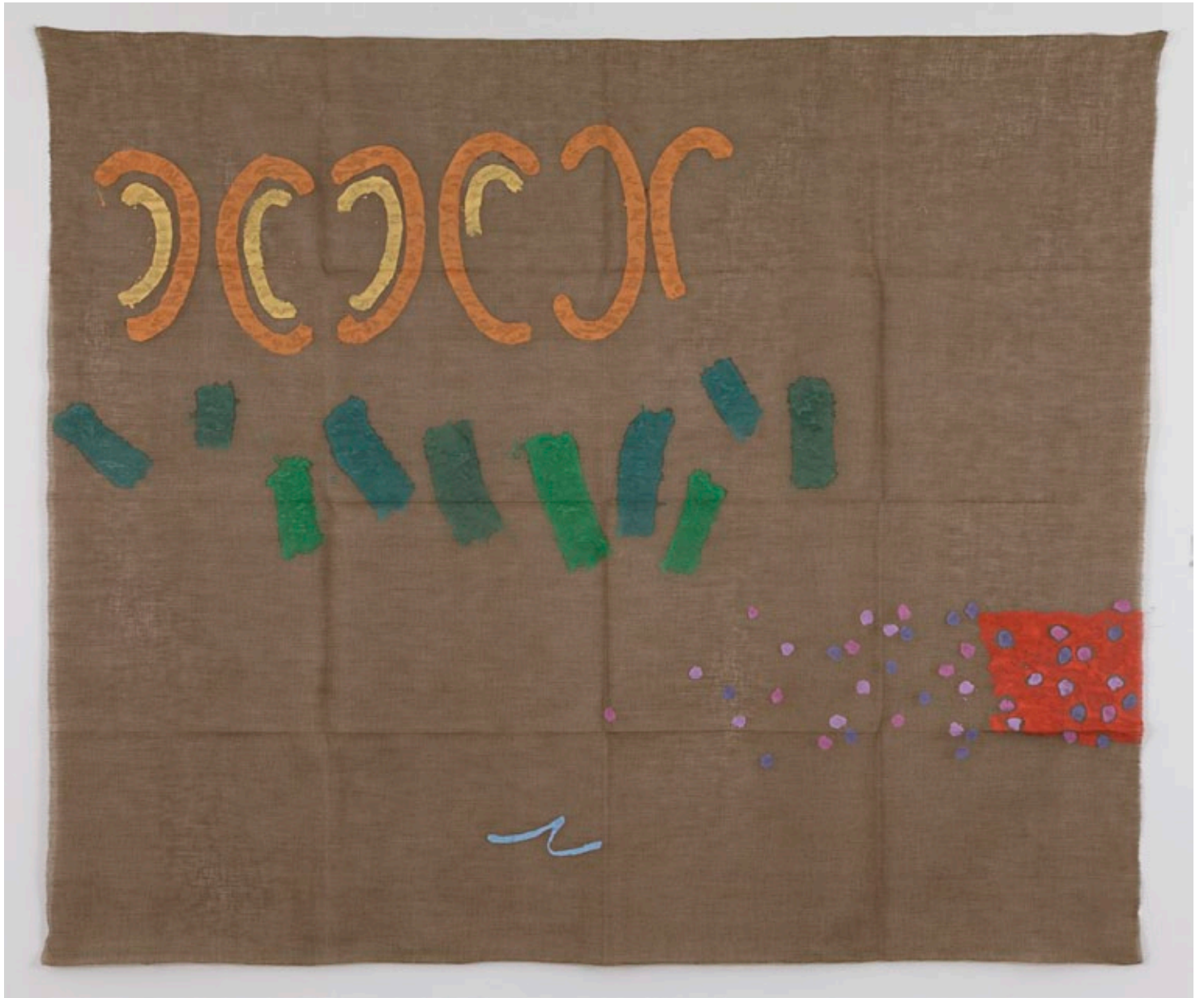


Giorgio Griffa
Bianco alterno, 1980
Acrylic on canvas
94.5 x 78.7" / 240 x 200 cm
GG1980-002



Giorgio Griffa
PAOLO E PIERO, 1982
Acrylic on canvas
118.1 x 212.6" / 300 x 540cm
GG1982-001

Exhibition History:
Alter Ego, Castiglia, Piazza Castello, Saluzzo (Cuneo), Italy, 2011
Le soglie della pittura, Italia-Francia, Rocca Paolina, Perugia, Italy, 1999



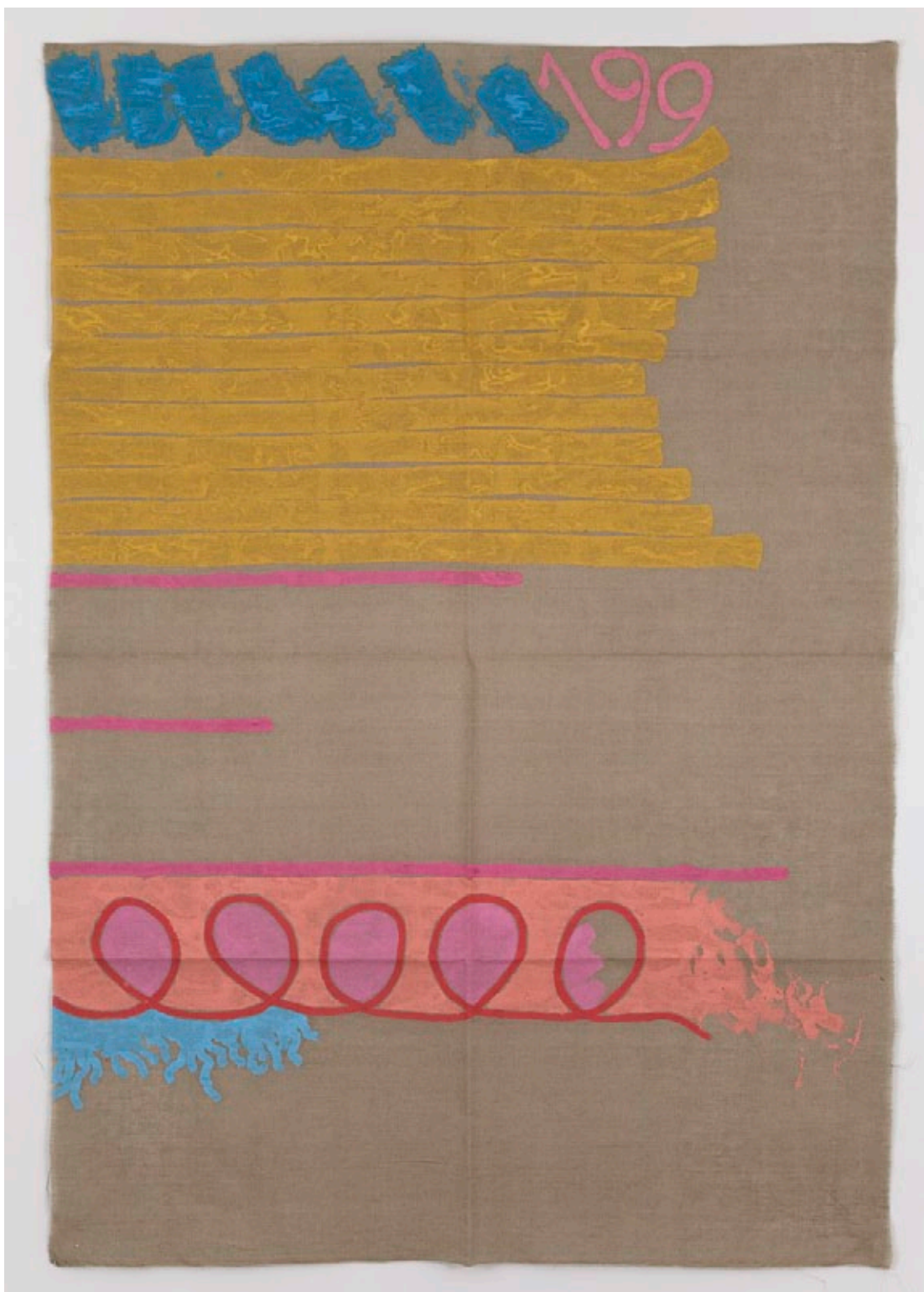
Giorgio Griffa
MATISSERIA N.1, 1982
Acrylic on canvas
118.1 x 137.8" / 300 x 350cm
GG1982-002



Giorgio Griffa
Festone, 1984
Acrylic on canvas
58.3 x 55.9" / 148 x 142cm
GG1984-002



Giorgio Griffa
Viola sotto, 1989
Acrylic on canvas
70.9 x 94.5" / 180 x 240cm
GG1989-001



Giorgio Griffa
Tre linee con arabesco n.199, 1991
Acrylic on canvas
118.1 x 78.7" / 300 x 200cm
GG1991-001

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NEW YORK NY 10011

TEL +1 212 645 7335

FAX +1 212 645 7835

WWW.CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

INFO@CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

GIORGIO GRIFFA

60 SCHIZZI DA
OPERE 1968/2000
E UN TESTO

60 SKETCHES FROM
WORKS 1968/2000
AND A TEXT



FRANCO MASOERO

DISEMBARKING IN GILANIA

(From the Giancarlo Salzano Gallery catalogue, Turin 1998)

*"I would like something that didn't need
expression and form"*
(Flaubert)

The archaeologist Riane Eisler gave the name Gilania to a Neolithic society that occupied a wide area of the eastern and southern parts of central Europe. It was based on an agricultural economy, accorded equal status to men and women, and did not know the use of weapons. For about a thousand years, between 4000 and 3000 BC, this society was enslaved by the herding and hunting peoples of the northern steppes, who controlled the horses and arms, bringing with them a model of domination that is still prevalent today.

The word Gilania is a blend of the Greek words gyne (woman) and ane, (man). Carbon dating, which makes it possible to establish when objects were made, has begun to enable us to build up a picture of the Gilanians. Theirs seems to have been a developed society,

no longer matriarchal but not yet patriarchal, and organized in a non-hierarchical system. A society whose structure calls into question many aspects of our past. I am not interested in examining the scientific basis for this exciting discovery (or invention, if such it is). Rather, disembarking in Gilania has helped me to make some unexpected connections. It has given me a glimpse of a general pattern which extends over the various human disciplines. I see in the twentieth century various phenomena which, within the model of domination, breaks the tools that are used to dominate the world.

Space and time, ruler and clock, were the keystones of scientific observation. They were stable, fixed elements on the basis of which the knowledge and domination of the physical world was organized. With Einstein that hierarchy collapses; space and time become relative elements: they stand in a relationship to one another, and are themselves a relationship. Later, with Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle, science absorbs the unknown into its processes: the unknown becomes part of the scientist's activity. Observation influences the observed phenomenon to such an extent that it makes one aspect of it uncertain. The observer's ability to consider himself as being outside the process now collapses; and this used to be a distinctive feature of

domination.

When I work on a canvas and my hand follows what is happening and I am both tool and craftsman at the same time, I am not able to specify any particular style of mine which superimposes my recollection on the memory of the colour that flows and of the signs that pursue one another. Nor am I able to evaluate any impact on the spectator.

Of the three characters - the author, the work, and the spectator - my concentration is entirely focused, as far as I am aware of it, on the event that lies in the middle. There is nothing new in this; I think it is a constant feature of creation, the relationship to colour, to marble, to stone, to the memories of the materials. It takes on different aspects in different epochs and in different artists.

But the relationship between the work and the spectator is a fact that there is no getting away from.

At a certain point in history we constructed the perspective view, which, through the optical box, fixed an objective view of the world, external to the spectator. It was a clear process of dominating vision.

With sublime results.

A system in which on the one hand we looked from outside, as if through an open window, and we read the story from outside; while on the other hand the inner involvement, the emotion of letting oneself be absorbed, crossing the threshold, entering the work, was hidden, entrusted to the wisdom of the materials and the spaces. Then the perspective view was no longer enough; the categories of thought that had supported it began to crumble, and the window started to change into a mirror and later simply into an opening.

For example, remember when landscape painting started to traverse perspective with the excrescences of nature, and waters and boats metaphorically invited the spectator to embark on the picture, or when Cézanne broke the volumes and opened space, and others painted the frame, invading the diaphragm of separation, or when Monet's water lilies doubly checkmated the system of domination because matter becomes superior to the hand and because his eye, which is going blind, produces an increasing quantity of light instead of reducing it, as would be logical according to the laws of domination.

If we accept this path, where the difference between figurative and non-figurative becomes unimportant, we may note that the invitation to the spectator to enter the work, to walk through it, is generally accompanied by the disappearance of the story; it is no longer a banquet of the gods or just any old story meant to be read from the outside: the figures, or the signs (which is

almost the same thing), are there, in a state of suspense, waiting for the spectator to sit down to table. The perspective work made you look at it from outside. These do not.

I think that the scientist of our time is aware that his action interferes with the phenomenon that is under observation: that he knows he is not investigating that fragment of the world because of the way it is, but because of the way it reacts to provocation. And from it he elicits fragments of knowledge of becoming. So it is not only the craftsman who interferes with the phenomenon; it is the spectator too. We must not forget this aspect. Nor must we forget another aspect, which will prove useful.

Up to a certain limit the phenomenon is dominated; it can be looked at from the outside and reproduced by the will of man, who may turn on the gas or build the atomic bomb. But when the non-linear phenomenon is multiplied and shrunk to the point where other causal though present, were insignificant, then it escapes from domination and continues to develop according to the concurrent causes as if it were itself a thinking subject.

We may therefore say that beyond that limit the system of domination is put into checkmate.

The phenomenon tends to elude control. And instead of there being a decrease in knowledge as would seem logical, we witness an accelerated increase, so that a few decades have carried science light years ahead. In quantum physics a phenomenon exists in various simultaneous, different, contradictory aspects, and another tricky question arises. The aspect that we investigate with the cognitive procedures is only one of several possible aspects; the phenomenon cannot be dominated except at a very rough level. In the arts after the middle years of the twentieth century I see a rapid extension of procedures in which the craftsman gives up dominating the whole process from raw material to finished work, and exercises a limited dominion or rather puts himself in a different relationship to his materials. Instead of dominating the process from the outside, he enhances participation from the inside; he lets matter talk instead of making it the tool of an external narrative. And so I can tell you of Pollock's hand, which does nothing but arrange the dripping of colour on the canvas.

Of Morris Louis's hand, which just steers the flow of the colour across the canvas.

It is clear that the procedures take place under the artist's control - that goes without saying but in a sense the hand has put itself at the service of colour, overturning the system of domination. Dorazio uses a brush but his procedure is not dissimilar: the artist's intention

seems to me palpably subordinated to the vibrations of light and emotion which the colour creates by flowing and interweaving; it is the hand that has become an extension of the brush.

In Ryman painting ends and is sublimated in the mere ancient gesture of putting brush to canvas; the artist withdraws his personal memory before the millennial memory of the act of painting. With Burri the attention shifts to the materials: both in his *combustioni* and in his *cretti* the hand only performs the initial gestures. The process develops of its own accord within the materials that burn or dry out.

With Anselmo the oldest material on which man has exercised the lofty qualities of dominion, namely stone, is manipulated rather than shaped, and displays its memories by virtue of simple significant actions. It is still the hand of man that extracts the memories of the materials, but the procedure is reversed; it does not require a form to be moulded, and if there is form, it comes by other ways.

Richard Long, too, uses these same stones, but breaks them and organizes them. All he does is arrange them in large circles of barbaric weight, which hold us suspended between millennial ancestral memories, the power of great sculpture, and the precise sense of radical change.

The same change becomes in Gastini physically embodied in the canvas, which is both support and protagonist, tool and agent at the same time, as are the colour, the iron, the signs and the space in a reciprocal dynamic, and here the weight is sublimated into an exchange with the air.

Where it used to be presumed that there was a single direction from artist to work and from work to spectator - a sense, of course, enriched by the internal valencies of the work - I find a movement that goes in both directions. The artist, by moderating the relationship of domination over the materials, shows a readiness to receive from them and not just to give; and he places in his relationship with the spectator the determinate elements of an indeterminate story, the boundaries for a transition in which the spectator, in observing reality, can modify it by his observation.

In a discussion of my paintings of the 1980s, Paolo Fossati wrote of a narration and fabulation that disembarked on Cythera. It seems to me that Gilania provides a more precise motivation for what I have been saying for almost thirty years about my condition as a tool rather than a craftsman, an indeterminate narrative that lies within the signs.

I would say that the detachment from Perspective and Form is obvious and not worth dwelling on. Rather, I would like to stress the strong sense of continuity that is concealed beneath the harshly discontinuous appearance. When we consider the works of the past we are aware how each of them is inseparably linked to its own time - by whose ideas it is nourished - but we also feel the strong and irrepressible sense of presence in our own time. In the physical impact of a sonata by Bach, a sonnet by Petrarch, or a painting by Raphael, this feeling of a presence which transcends the centuries, and which persists in different ways according to the way in which we ourselves change, constitutes an experience just as general as the experience of changes over time, and far more moving. Therefore the work belongs to the present both of its own age and of later ages.

And at the same time historically it always belongs to the past. I say always because as soon as it is completed it becomes past, just as this sentence I am writing becomes past when I add the final stop that ends it.

It is a duality that I see as a precise sense of continuity between the various epochs and civilizations and between the discontinuities of history. It enables one to see the work as subject rather than object, as an active entity which, in its relations with people - which vary for different individuals and epochs and civilizations - escapes from its own objectivity.

This aspect of continuity comes, in a sense, to participate in the action; it belongs to the relationships that manufacture the work and not simply to the qualities of the finished work. The space of the action extends to aspects that were not necessary in a relationship of dominion over matter.

The chemical reactions that often conclude the works of Zorio continue to be produced in the finished work, and in this way attribute an organic character to that sense of a present that persists in time.

My works are never finished; the signs stop before that can happen, as if they were trying to elude that moment of conclusion when the present ceases to be the present.

These are different ways in which the ambiguous relationship between past and present become part of the constitutive process of the work.

And here the spectator comes back into play. This area of work, which is far wider than the episodes that I have mentioned, comprises paintings which, though strongly characterized, leave the relationship with the spectator indeterminate, displaying rather the modes of their own creation.

They leave the spectator a space for active intervention, for comparing his own memories and those of the work, for emotion and alienation. This seems to enhance that aspect of the work as a subject which is capable of forming a relationship with other subjects, and which is quantally superimposed on its simultaneous existence as an object.

Under the domination of perspective the spectator found himself dispossessed of his own body; he had a soul, an intelligence, a heart, and the body was the container.

With the transition to materials, their memory and their physical impact, we find that we have a body that expands; the orient is no longer so very far away.

The artist is aware, even if he doesn't know it, of that immense chain of causality which in the physical world carries phenomena out of control. So he restricts himself to fixing the body of that painting or that sculpture, the constituent links, the corporeal sense of the work; and he lets the work tell its own story, lets it give and receive in the indeterminable relationship with the spectator, which cannot be dominated except within very rough limits.

I am sure that among the many who have read the Divine Comedy over the centuries - really read it and not just studied it at school- no two people have read it in exactly the same way. This is the body of the work. Which has always existed. This body becomes the sole actor, in the two-way relationship with the body of the artist, who does not merely sow but leaves to the work what the work itself in turn suggests in the process of its creation, and in the two-way relationship of giving and receiving with the countless bodies of its spectators. The other aspects - ritual, magic, religious, narrative, celebrative, etc. have become indeterminate. A striking analogy with scientific thought.

Giorgio Griffa

Postscript

It is not a realism that subtracts from reality in order to make it representable. It is a realism which participates in reality, which introduces itself into reality's procedures and so constitutes it in another form.

I look at Cindy Sherman and Vanessa Beecroft, but I also think of Giotto's coretti in the Scrovegni Chapel. The fake peopleless architecture that is introduced into the fresco changes its form.

I read the fresco in its phenomenal aspect; first and foremost it is reality: all the rest it carries inside itself.

That is how I understand painting.

Giorgio Griffa, 7 may 2000

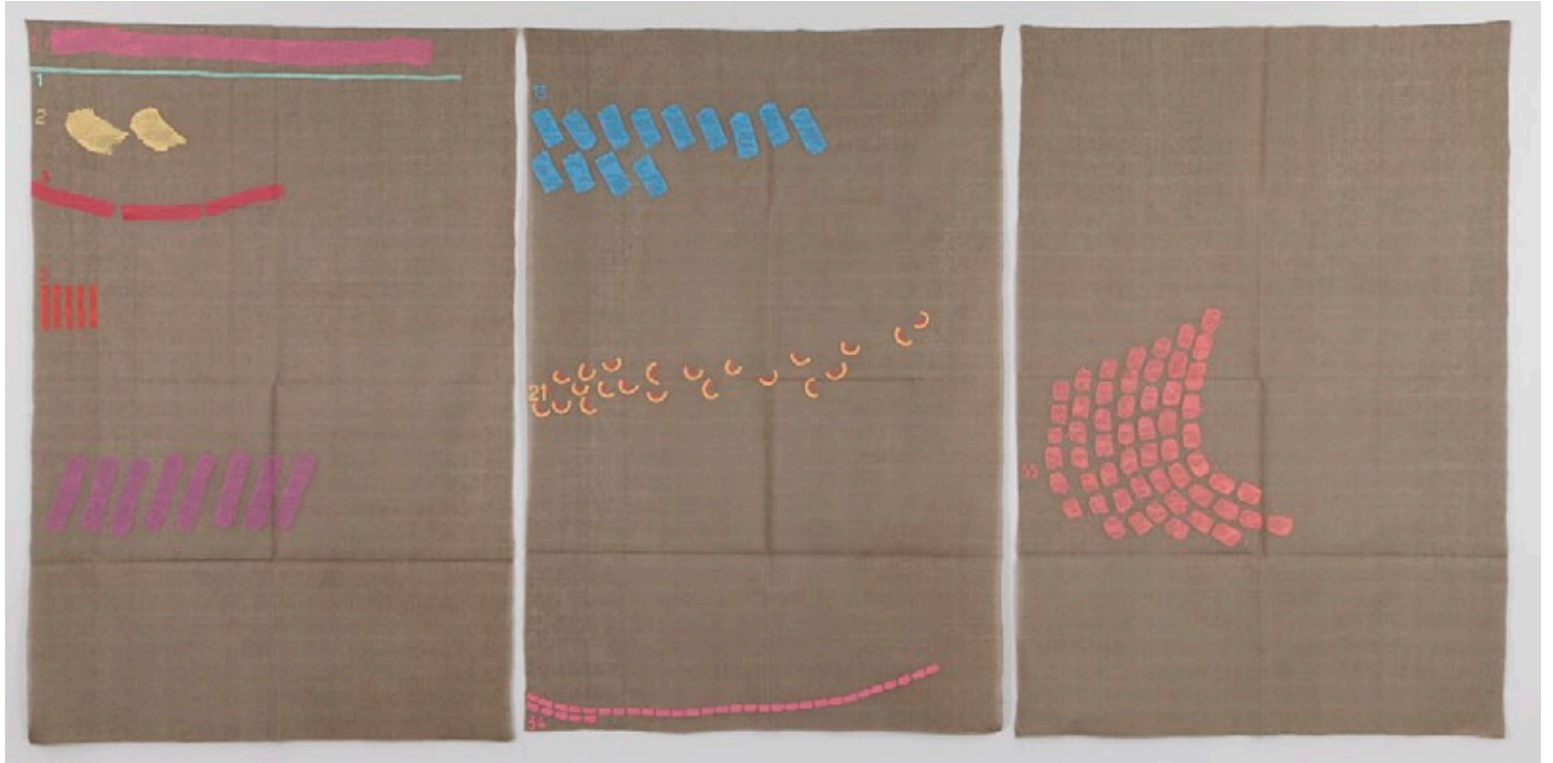


Giorgio Griffa
DDB (DA DANIEL BUREN), 1997
Acrylic on canvas
46.5 x 43.3" / 118 x 110cm
Installed Dimensions: 46.5 x 180.7" / 118 x 459cm
GG1997-001

Exhibition History:
Alter Ego, Castiglia, Piazza Castello, Saluzzo (Cuneo), Italy, 2011



Giorgio Griffa
Polittico con tredici colori, 1998
Acrylic on canvas
6 canvases: 70.9 x 20.5" / 180 x 52cm each
GG1998-005



Giorgio Griffa
FIBONACCI, 2006
Acrylic on canvas
118.1 x 78.7" / 300 x 200cm each
GG2006-001



Giorgio Griffa
(IN)VISIBLE, 2007
Acrylic on canvas
20.5 x 45.7" / 52 x 116cm
GG2007-001



Giorgio Griffa
QUASI UNA SPIRALE, 2008
Acrylic on canvas
34.6 x 29.1" / 88 x 74cm each
Installed Dimensions: 71.7 x 60.7" / 182 x 154cm
GG2008-005

Exhibition History:
Alter Ego, Castiglia, Piazza Castello, Saluzzo (Cuneo), Italy, 2011

Painting too is Knowledge

Luca Massimo Barbero and Giorgio Griffa

LMB: I'd like to start this conversation of our by talking about your early days: about the artistic and cultural environment in which your first forms of expression took shape, drawing on the affinities or diversities of what was around you, and about how this emerged in your first exhibitions.

GG: My roots are in a traditional form of painting, in which the figures gradually became superfluous until I really had no option but to abandon them. This was in the cultural climate of Turin in the 1960s, with Ginsberg reciting his poetry in the basement of the Pezzana bookshop, his voice like organ music, the new theatre and new American cinema at the Unione Culturale, new jazz in the cellars of Via Botero, the Unione Musicale with its contemporary music, Antonioni and Fellini, Beckett and Ionesco, the Galleria di Tazzoli and then Pistoia. .. My long friendship with Aldo Mondino ever since the 1950s and later, towards the mid-60s, with Boetti and those who were to become the exponents of Arte Povera. In a world like that I found I had to deal with Informal Art and the climate was decisive for my early development. In the informal I saw painting at the service of scorching emotions and passions. That temperature needed to be brought down. By abandoning representation, I was able to shift my attention to the prime elements of painting, overturning the dominant position of the painter over paintings, and thus placing myself at its service-at the service of the intelligence of painting. In this I felt, and I still feel, close to those artists of Arte Povera, like Anselmo, Penone, and Zorio, who put their hands to the service of the intelligence of matter. A process that comes from Pollock's dripping, and from even before that.

LMB: In this context. I'd like you to describe how your approach to painting changed and became the radical analysis that is still so characteristic of your work today, and how you made your first steps towards this.

GG: When I put on my first exhibition in 1968, I'd already established some of the aspects that are still present today. One is the choice of signs that tend to be adopted by everyone and that come from a decision I'd consider more as one of ethics than of aesthetics, along the lines of a verse by Allen Ginsberg: "Every man is an angel": The other aspect is the constant non-finished, when painting is never taken right to the depths of the canvas. Initially it was a reflection on Yves Klein's monochromes, and the need to stop just a moment before completion, because in the meantime life has moved on-as Zen teaches us. Then other aspects became clear: avoiding the final point of closure that suddenly puts the work into the past. leaving a trace of time by suspending the sequence of signs that has been created, one sign after another, in both space and time ...

LMB: Your work speaks to the younger generations with the most stunning freshness and effectiveness, without losing anything of the clarity of your original choices. If you had to choose three fundamental shifts in this consistent evolution from your origins to today's paintings-moments of crisis or turning points, of reflection and choices-which would you choose?

GG: I'd say the first transition was my abandonment of representation, though I didn't make a choice between representation and abstraction and indeed I believed, and still believe, that the whole controversy caused immense harm to Italian painting.

The consequence of this abandonment was the choice of a painting that represented nothing other than itself. This was nothing particularly new, since a self-referential attitude can be found in all areas of knowledge, and painting too is knowledge.

In 1973 this approach acquired radical overtones with the decision to create only horizontal lines, and it stayed this way for about a couple of years. Probably because this increased my feeling for the centuries-old memory of painting which is encapsulated in

every sign, in the second half of the 1970s I felt the need to move in the opposite direction, organising sequences of different signs on the canvas. It's a cycle of mutual influences or connections, of which the Dionysus shown at the Biennale in 1980 was a part, with transparent canvases in which different signs all interacted with each other.

Numbers came in the early 1990s. Here too, the choice was not aesthetic. It was a matter of fixing each individual within the collective that was the Tre linee con arabesco (Three Lines With Arabesque) cycle. So number 1 was the first, number 2 was the second, and so on.

A few years later, in another cycle, the numbers gave the viewer information about the order in which the signs had been placed on the canvas, somehow emphasising the aspect of moving forward together in the space of the canvas and in the time of the action. Meanwhile, from 1979 the immense internal memory of painting had led me to come to terms with some particular memories-first just occasionally, with years passing between one work and the next, until I realised that these works too formed a cycle. I called it Alter Ego. Here there are references to Matisse, Yves Klein, Klee, Tintoretto, Beuys, Paolo Uccello, Dora-zio, Brice Marden, Merz, Anselmo, the Romanesque, the International Gothic, the Laocoon, and others. Lastly, there are these works on the Golden Canon.

LMB: In this sort of "evolutionary avant-garde" of yours, a fundamental role has been played by the relationship-which is not illustrative but structural-between poetry and painting. Also in these works for MACRO, we can talk of 'metre', 'verses', and 'stanzas' which form part of the genesis of your work. What are your sources in poetry and painting, and who are the masters of writing and painting who have had the greatest influence on your work, looking at it both today and retrospectively, as well as in terms of its future potential?

GG: Let me give the first names that come to mind. Allen Ginsberg, as I've already said. Ezra Pound's The Cantos. Calvino's Lezioni americane. Matisse, as I've said. And of course, there's Mozart's music, with its inner happiness, which is so different from our personal feelings.

LMB: The room you've created for MACRO has a twofold form of vitality, as a complete, self-contained environment and as a set of works that is in itself

clearly recognisable.

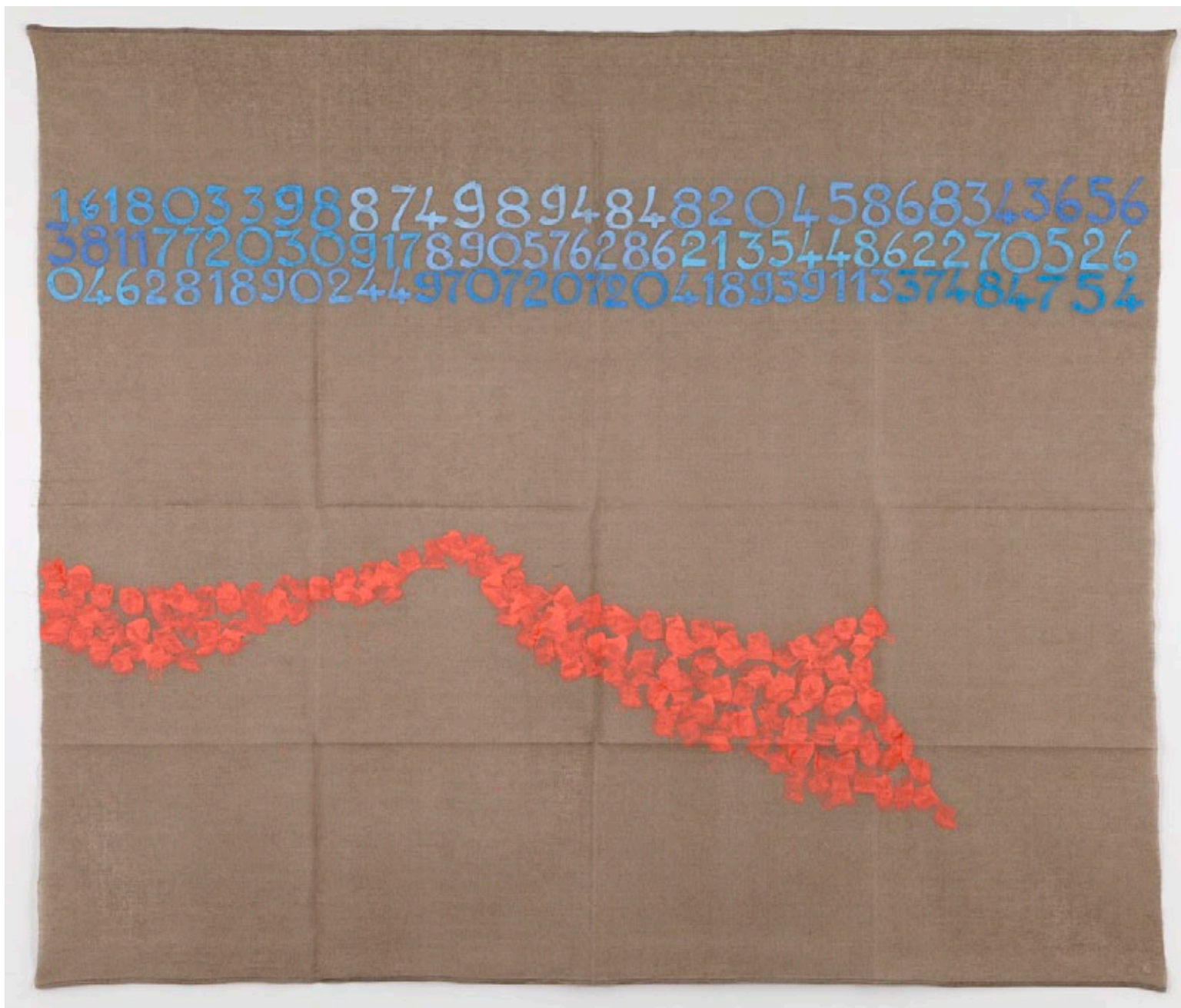
I'd like you to describe the distinctive features of each of these works, but also how they relate to the others, explaining how they came about for this particular place.

GG: These works come from an inextricable combination of hand, mind, heart, eyes, canvas, colour, and brush, which means that I can't describe them and analyse exactly how they came about.

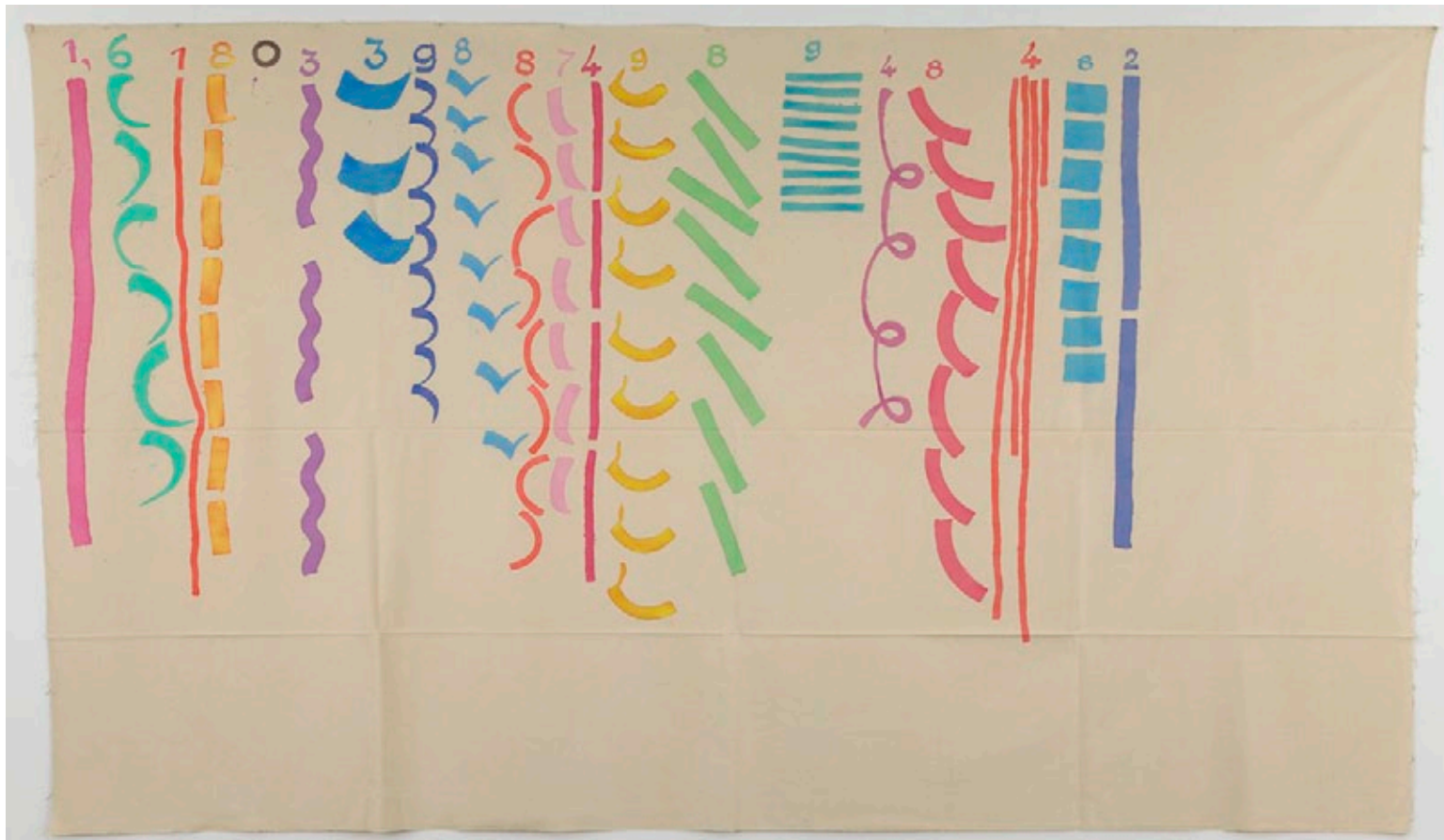
I can only say that, considering the space available for them, the first decision concerned the number and size of the works to put on show. This was followed by the choice of fabrics-two works on patina canvas, one on bandera canvas, one on light cotton-and then I made one on oblique strips, on another I wrote large numbers, while on the other two I used the numbers of the Golden Canon to establish the number of signs each time.

Apart from that, I wouldn't know.

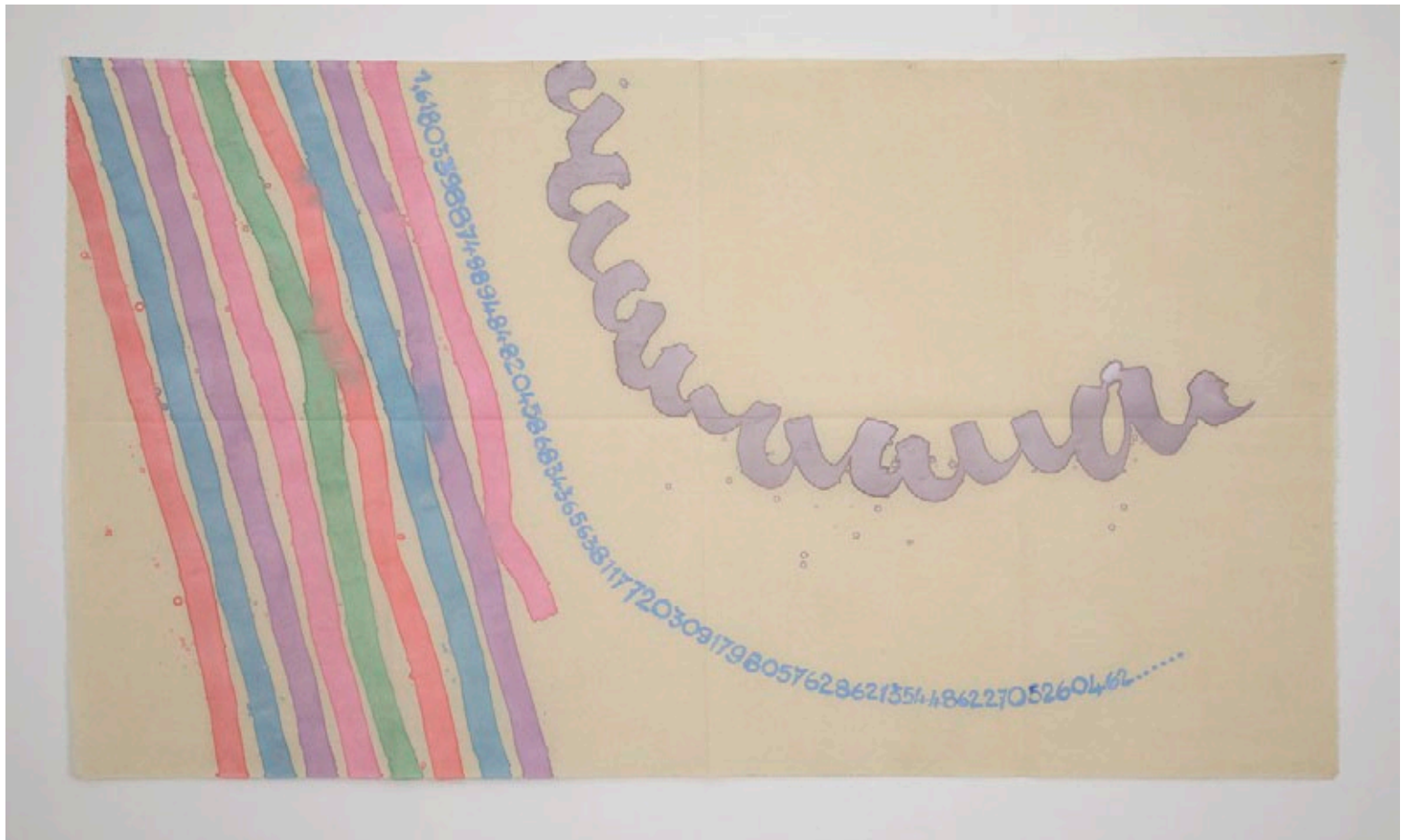
If these works have the power to speak and to listen, I'll let them do it themselves.



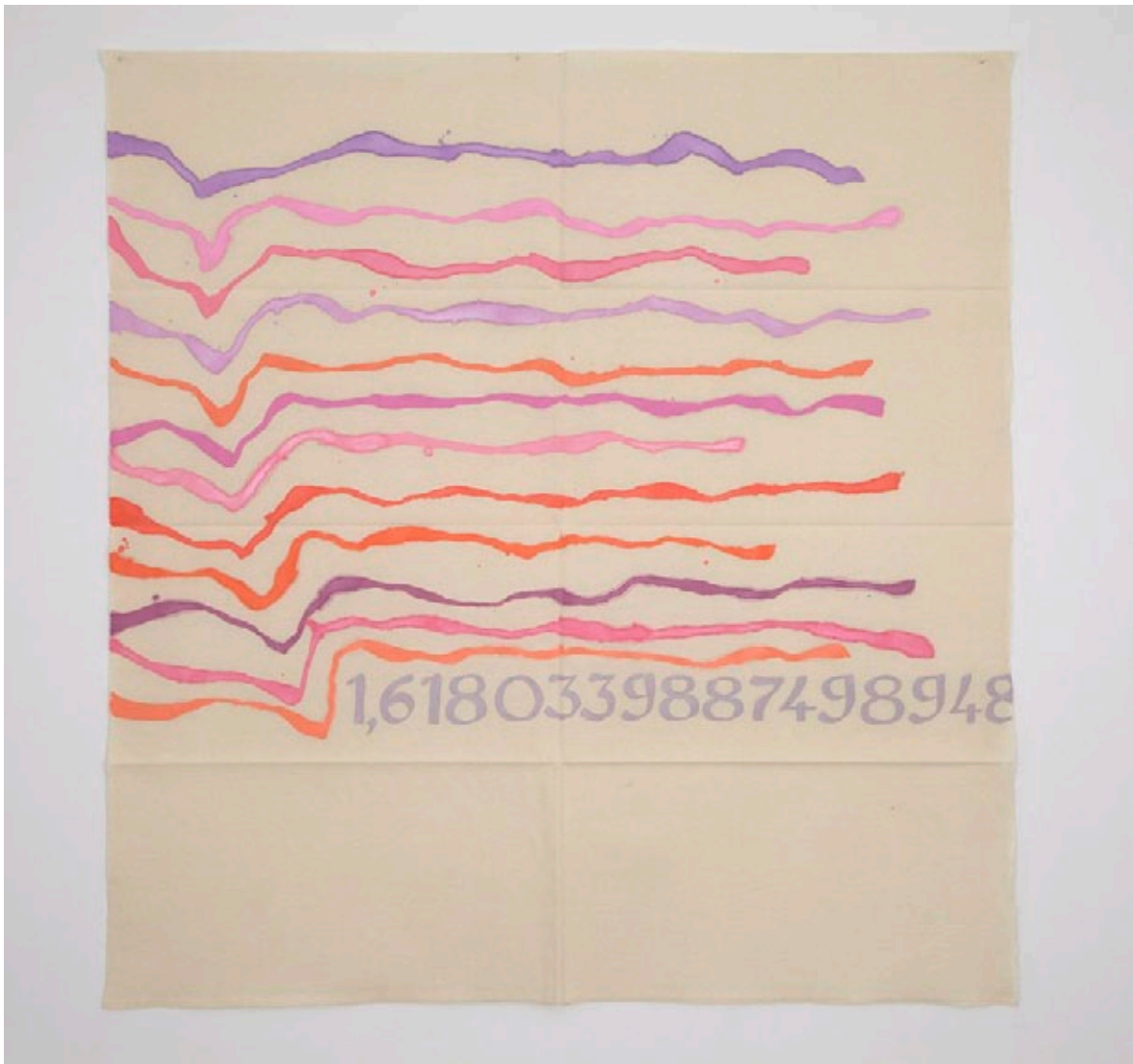
Giorgio Griffa
SEZIONE AUREA - GROSSI NUMERI - FINALE 754, 2010
Acrylic on canvas
118.1 x 139.8" / 300 x 355cm
GG2010-007



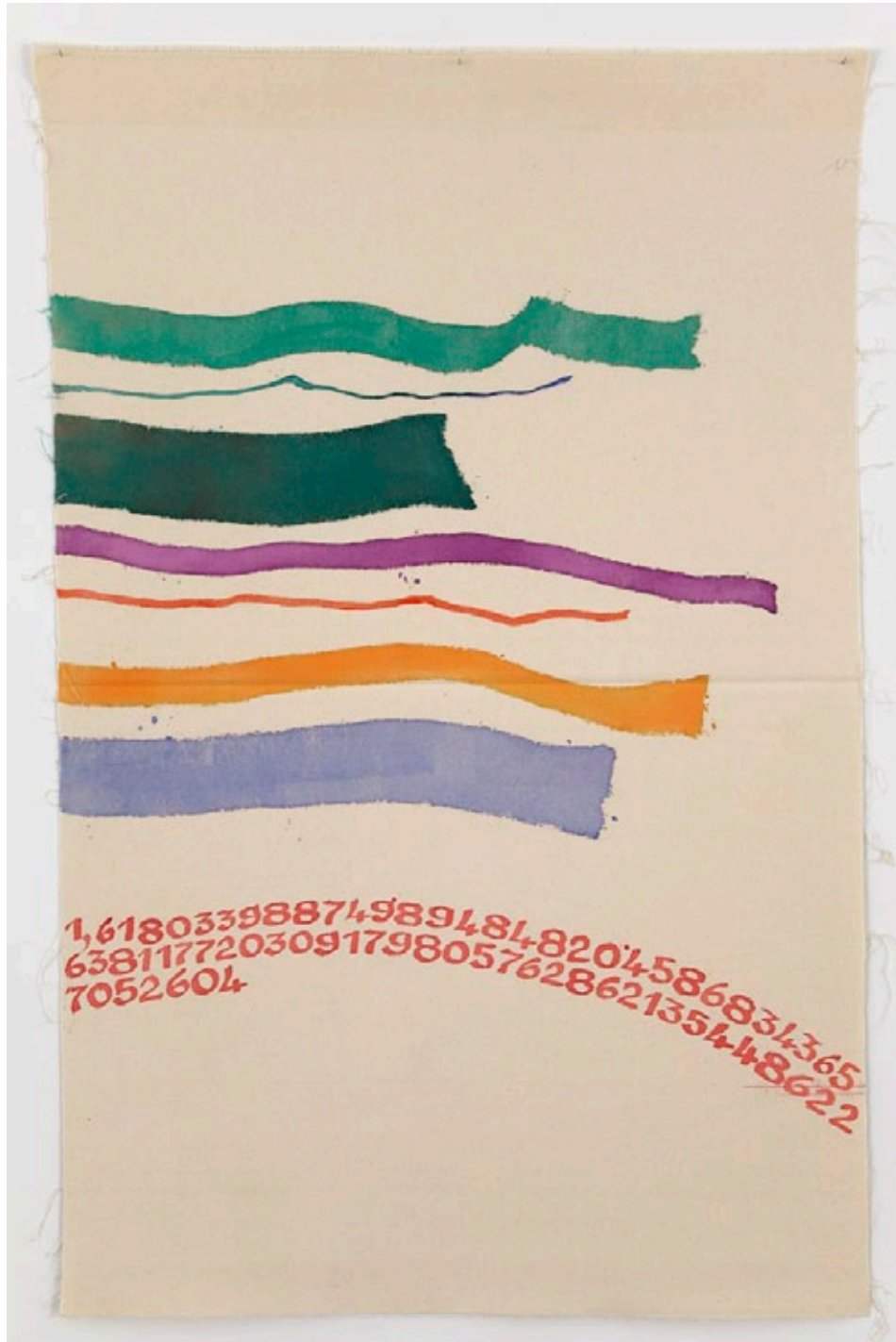
Giorgio Griffa
SEZIONE AUREA - SEGNI VERTICALI - FINALE 482, 2010
Acrylic on canvas
110.2 x 196.9" / 280 x 500cm
GG2010-006



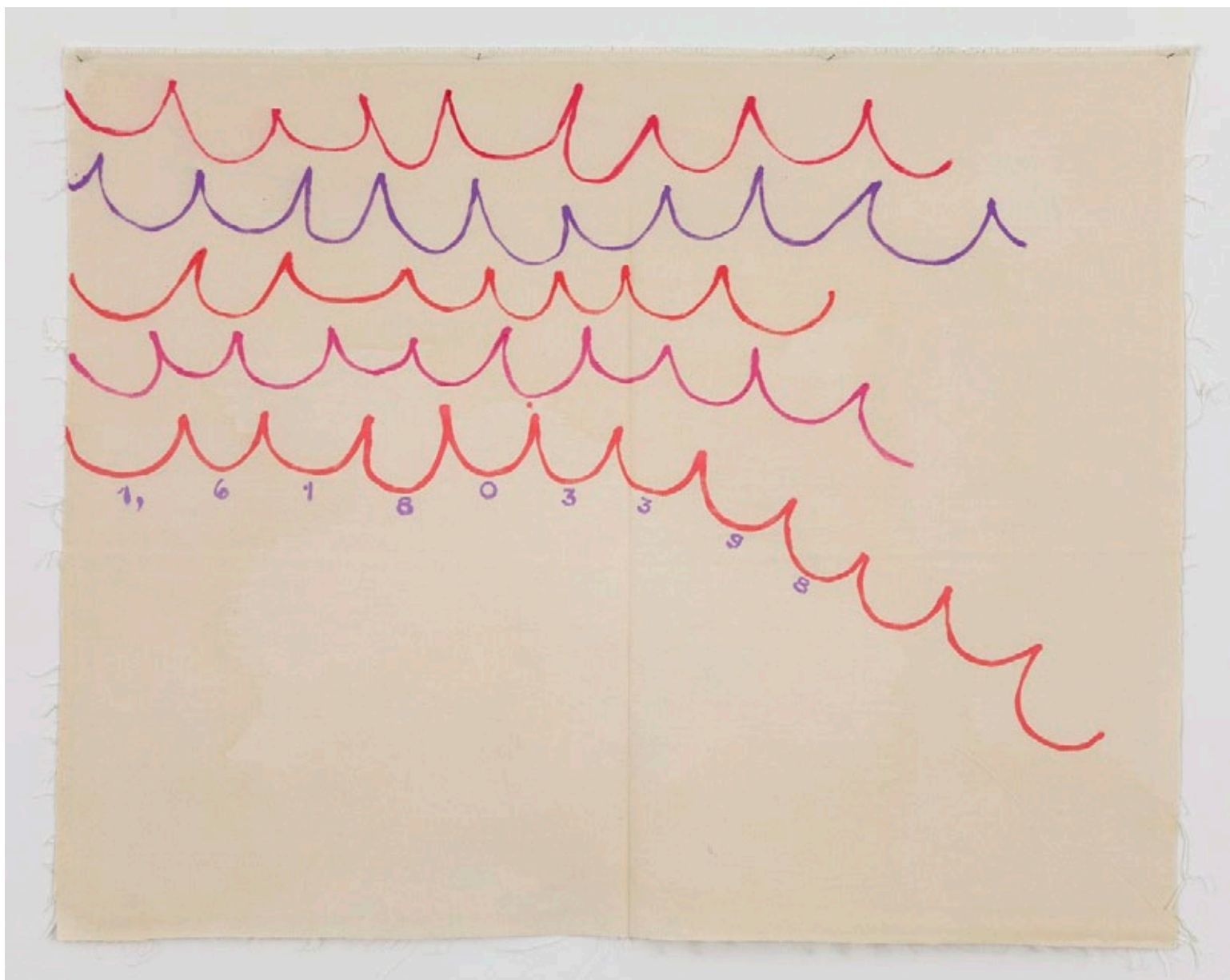
Giorgio Griffa
CANONE AUREO (finale 462), 2009
Acrylic on canvas
48.5 x 85" / 123.2 x 215.9cm
GG2009-007



Giorgio Griffa
CANONE AUREO (finale 948), 2011
Acrylic on canvas
61.5 x 59" / 156.2 x 149.9cm
GG2011-021



Giorgio Griffa
CANONE AUREO (finale 604), 2011
Acrylic on canvas
57 x 36.6" / 145 x 93cm
GG2011-016



Giorgio Griffa
CANONE AUREO 398, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
38.2 x 48.8" / 97 x 124cm
GG2012-009



Giorgio Griffa
CANONE AUREO 189, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
63 x 39.4" / 160 x 100cm
GG2012-018
Collection of the Castello di Rivoli, Turin



Giorgio Griffa
CANONE AUREO 820, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
63 x 39.4" / 160 x 100cm
GG2012-021
Collection of the Castello di Rivoli, Turin



Giorgio Griffa
CANONE AUREO 874, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
63 x 39.4" / 160 x 100cm
GG2012-014



Giorgio Griffa
CANONE AUREO 443, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
63 x 39.4" / 160 x 100cm
GG2012-019

CASEY KAPLAN

525 WEST 21ST STREET
NEW YORK NY 10011
TEL +1 212 645 7335
FAX +1 212 645 7835
WWW.CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM
INFO@CASEYKAPLANGALLERY.COM

Press Release
Berlin, November 2012

**GIORGIO GRIFFA
GOLDEN RATIO**

Opening on Sunday 25th November 2012 at 11 am
25.11.2012 through 24.2.2013



Giorgio Griffa, who was born in Turin in 1936, first made his name internationally in the 1960s as part of the Arte Povera movement. In 1970 he exhibited at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York and Paris. In 1969 and 1973 he took part in the avant-garde shows "Prospect" in Dusseldorf, where he also had a solo exhibition in the Kunsthalle. In 1978 and 1980 Griffa was represented at the Venice Biennale. His work is currently on show at the Casey Kaplan Gallery in New York "Fragments 1968-2012", 25.10.12 to 10.1.13).

Giorgio Griffa's work is marked by an asceticism and modesty, which nonetheless radiates with a playful Mediterranean lightness. In terms of the "art of the simple" Giorgio Griffa works on raw, unframed canvas. These are nailed to the wall and painted with luminous colours. Griffa makes relatively free but sparing use of colour in the form of painted lines, dots or numbers. The work may be read as fragments, dealing with time and space dots or numbers. The work may be read as fragments, dealing with time and space.

Giorgio Griffa has called his exhibition in the Mies van der Rohe House "Golden Ratio". The golden section, also called the divine ratio, is currently an important topic in architecture. All the work in the exhibition deals with the golden section in the form of the irrational number 1,618033988749894848204586 8343656381177203091798057628623154486227 05260462818..... For Giorgio Griffa it is a way of approaching the infinite through the modest presence of a simple number.

Dr. Wita Noack (Mies van der Rohe Haus)



Exhibition view, Giorgio Griffa, Golden Ratio, Mies van der Rohe Haus, Berlin. 2012



Exhibition view, Giorgio Griffa, Golden Ratio, Mies van der Rohe Haus, Berlin. 2012



Exhibition view, Giorgio Griffa, Golden Ratio, Mies van der Rohe Haus, Berlin. 2012

GIORGIO GRIFFA
FRAGMENTS 1968 – 2012

To be men not destroyers.
(Ezra Pound, closing verse of *The Cantos*)

Richard P. Feynman, physicist:

"... a photon is absorbed by an electron, the electron continues on a bit, and a new photon comes out. This process is called the scattering of light. When we make the diagrams and calculations for scattering, we must include some peculiar possibilities. For example, the electron could emit a photon before absorbing one. Even more strange is the possibility that the electron emits a photon, then travels backwards in time to absorb a photon, and then proceeds forwards in time again." (from *QED: The Strange Theory of Light and Matter*)

Until just yesterday, matter was matter and light was light; time was inevitably past, present, or future.

Einstein already turned our yardsticks for measuring the world, time and space, into events. At least we could count on the tangibility of matter and the evanescence of light. Today we learn instead that a particle of light, a photon, can enter an electron—one of the particles that make up matter, along with protons and neutrons—that in turn emits another photon. One might say that when a particle of light encounters a particle of matter, they copulate. The boundary between light and matter is broken, light becomes matter and matter in turn becomes light.

Arnold Gehlen, philosopher:

"... there is a resonance within us, and without concepts and without words, we grasp something of our own essence. What is interesting about this hypothesis is the notion of a basic self-understanding that starts from the outside, and hence a new possible understanding of symbol and metaphor." (paraphrased by Maria Teresa Panseca in *Antropologia Filosofica*)

Today, as in the past, we can still consider ourselves capable of grasping things without concepts and without words; following Orpheus into an unknown that never becomes known. This, among other things, is one of the realms of art.

Roberto Calasso, author:

"The essence, *rasa*, of the *Satapatha Brahmana*, an unmistakable essence, not classifiable as that of a metaphysical nor a liturgical treatise, lies first and foremost in the uninterrupted sensation of focusing thought on the action in the very moment that it is performed, never letting go of it or forgetting it, as if the spark of thought can flash to life only in the moment when an individual being moves its body in accordance with a meaningful design. It would be hard to find other cases in which physical life and mental life have co-existed in such intimacy, refusing to be separated even for an instant. (from *L'ardore*)

Rather than there being any conflict or hierarchy between the two, physical and mental life embrace each other. Like light and matter. The mind leads the brush and in turn, the brush leads the mind.

Giuseppe Ungaretti, poet:

MORNING

Immensity illumines me.

(postcard from Santa Maria la Longa, January 26, 1917)

The morning is not only that particular morning when the poet put this image on paper, but also all the innumerable mornings of humanity down through the millennia.

The morning that saw the dawn of the Copernican world was a stormy one indeed, which is understandable given that man found himself ousted from his palace at the center of the universe and packed off to humble lodgings on the outskirts of the solar system. Giordano Bruno's death at the stake and Galileo's trial bear witness to that drama.

And yet Bernini greets it with happiness and a sense of wry humor. Immensity illumines him.

That happiness lies in the discovery of motion. The straight line becomes curved, the golden rectangle turns into an oval, space opens up, solids empty out, sculpted garments weave a perpetual movement with the wind, and pursued by Apollo, Daphne turns back into a tree.

The wry humor laughs at hierarchies. The lion on the Fountain of the Four Rivers in Piazza Navona laps the water like a puppy, having laid aside its regal role, and the figure above it raises one hand to shield himself from the falling sky. In Saint Peter's the columns twist up through the air, and the square before it, which at the time was the center of the human world, is conceived with two centers.

The brush scoops up the paint and lays it on the canvas. The canvas absorbs it. The paint dries and while drying it changes and takes on its own configuration. The intelligence of matter is what sustains the operation; my hand is at its service.

And the event continues.

Innumerable photons penetrate those electrons and come out bearing color, image, memory, knowledge, emotion and seduction (this is not a scientific explanation, just an impression).

It is another morning in the endless representation of the world, where knowledge and seduction are stored.

Where do knowledge and seduction lie? In the neurons of our brain? In the photons that emerge from the painted canvas? Do the photons awaken them or carry them along?

In painting, as in music and poetry, there is an indescribable, unbounded native joy that intersects with our individual stories. Perhaps we know how it manifests itself, once it manifests itself. But we do not know where it lies, where it hides.

Thought, our principle reality, is still without an effigy.

A mere stroke of the brush.

Turin, March 28, 2012
Giorgio Griffa