



Tribute to Afro at the Jean-Francois Cazeau Gallery

PARIS

Apr. 29 - The Jean-Francois Cazeau Gallery of Paris will host, until July 31, an exhibition dedicated to one of the most important Italian artists of the 20th century, Afro Basaldella, known as Afro. The exhibition includes about 40 works on paper and on canvas executed between 1947 and 1975, reflecting the essential stages in the artist's career. It reveals the "glorification of light and joyful life" characteristic of his work, according to the definition given by James J. Sweeney, former director of the New York Guggenheim Museum during the '50s, who was a strong supporter of the artist.

THE INFLUENCE OF CUBISM

Born in 1912 in Udine, brother famous sculptors Mirko and Dino, in 1937 Afro goes to Paris and discovers cubism. Under the influence of Picasso and Braque, he slowly evolves towards abstract art. He moved to Rome in 1938 and in 1947 joined the New Front of the Arts. The turning point for his career occurs when he participates in 1949 XX Century Italian Art exhibition at the MoMA in New York; in 1950, he travels to the United States for the first time, where he is strongly marked by the discovery of Arshile Gorky and Action Painting by Franz Kline, Cy Twombly and Willem de Kooning. He thus substitutes meditation on Cubism and De Chirico's metaphysical art, with a more diluted interpretation of space, which is nothing more than "the thickness of memory." The rigorous geometry and contours marked with calligraphic lines give way to larger and more colored backgrounds. Stripped of a recognizable form, the image gradually dematerialized: the colors become more intense and the chaos generated by the lively brushstrokes and lines creates a new emotional space. In 1952, Afro adheres to the Group of Eight along with Birolli, Corpora, Moreni, Morlotti, Santomaso, Turcato and Vedova. In 1955, he participates in the exhibition The New Decade, organized by the MoMA in New York and, in 1956, he is conferred the award for best Italian painter at the Venice Biennale. In 1958, he was invited to participate, along with Pablo Picasso, Hans Arp, Alexander Calder and Joan Miro, at the mural decoration of UNESCO in Paris. He later performs the masterpiece "The Garden of Hope", a huge canvas in which the shapes and colors extend over a wide horizontal line. In 1969, the Kunsthalle Darmstadt dedicated a major retrospective exhibition of more than two hundred works; and in 1973 he moved to Zurich, where he died three years later.

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