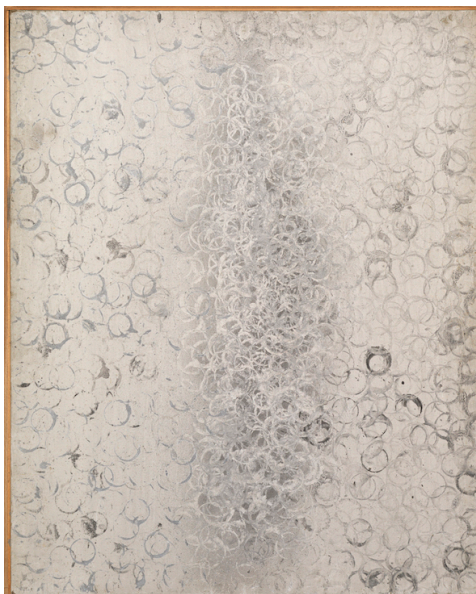


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LONDON



AGOSTINO BONALUMI
1935 VIMERCATE – 2013 MILAN

UNTITLED

1960

Oil and mixed media on canvas
100 x 80 cm

Signed and dated 60 on the reverse.

This work is registered in the Archivio Bonalumi, Milano, under number 60-010.

Provenance:

Given by Bonalumi to the British artist Michael Michaeledes
Michael Michaeledes collection until 2015

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Agostino Bonalumi is a self-taught painter who turned to art after giving up his studies in technical and mechanic design. Early in his career as an artist he met Pierro Manzoni and Enrico Castellani. Sharing the same vision for the future of art this would be the beginning of experimenting with the idea of the artwork as an object rather than a place of representation. They had their first group exhibition in Rome, Lausanne and Milan in 1958.

Bonalumi, Manzoni and Castellani were inspired by art critic and philosopher Gillo Dorfles 1966 essay *pittura – oggetto* "painting as object" who founded the definition "objectual painting", which for Bonalumi was the perfect description of his work. This aspect of painting as object is what Bonalumi's work connects with Lucio Fontana. In the late 50's he began frequenting Fontana's studio, which would have a big influence on his work. With the cutting of the canvas Fontana expressed the idea that everything in art has been done, there is nothing more to do. In the repetitively cutting of the canvas he was neglecting the canvas as a place of representation and in doing so made the canvas the artwork.

Bonalumi started elaborating on this theme investigating issues of space, representation and the canvas and to produce his first 'estroflessioni'. Made from structures and frames placed at the back of canvases these artworks would stretch and deform. Bonalumi was concerned with form and how it appears to us and with what quality it acts upon our senses. For him every material has its possibilities of representation and development. The chosen material is very important and doing research is to him essential in the creation of an artwork. Even though Bonalumi's main concern was with space, form and structures he considered himself a painter creating what he called an archetype of a new painting through his use of colour as a non emotive, non evocative element.

The present painting can be placed in Bonalumi's 'Impronte' series. The Italian word 'impronte' can be translated as footprints or imprints. He began this serie around 1958/59 with footprints on paper and cardboard. In our painting from 1960 we see the imprints left behind by a circular object in different shades of grey all over a grey painted canvas. The imprints are layered to such an extent that they give the canvas an almost structured look. The Improntes can be seen as the prelude to his estroflessioni.

Bonalumi quickly gained recognition and became a leading figure of the Italian avant-garde in the post war period. He participated several times in the Venice Biennale, first in 1966, then in 1970 with a room to himself, and again in 1986. In 1980 the Palazzo Te in Mantova mounted the first major retrospective of his work. His concern with space and representation would lead him into creating large-scale installation like Ambiente Bianco, Spazio Trattenuto e Spazio Invaso in 2002 for the Guggenheim in Venice. In 2003-04 a solo exhibition of the artist's work was held at the Institut of Mathildenhoë, Darmstadt Germany. Bonalumi continued to work developing his art up to the last years of his life with solo shows around the world. In 2013 he collaborated on the realisation of a major exhibition in London, which he unfortunately did not live to see.



Fig. 1 Agostino Bonalumi and Michael Michaeledes in London in the Seventies, Archivio Bonalumi, Milano.