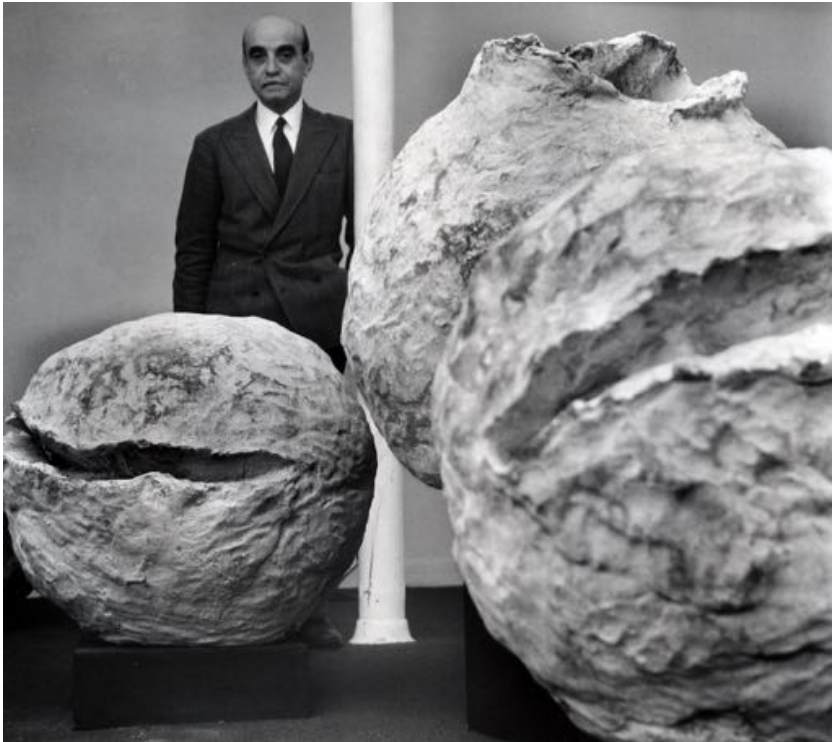


Press Release

Lucio Fontana. Sculpture

3 November 2022 – 4 February 2023
Hauser & Wirth New York, 69th Street



New York...Beginning 3 November, Hauser & Wirth will present the second in a trilogy of exhibitions dedicated to the late Argentine-Italian artist Lucio Fontana, considered among the 20th century's most inventive artists. Curated by Luca Massimo Barbero, in collaboration with the Fondazione Lucio Fontana, and focused on Fontana's prolific breakthroughs and experiments in the medium of sculpture, this exhibition will fill the gallery's uptown location at 32 East 69th Street, the very same address where, in 1961, Fontana's first solo show in the US was presented at the galleries of the legendary art dealers Martha Jackson and David Anderson. 'Lucio Fontana. Sculpture' will feature 79 works on loan from important institutions and museums, the Fondazione Lucio Fontana and both private and public collections and will shine a light on a critical dimension of the artist's revolutionary practice that is rarely explored in depth outside of Europe.

While perhaps best known in the United States for his 'Tagli' (Slashes)—the slashed canvases that summarized and reinterpreted decades of research surrounding space and the conceptual value of gesture—sculpture was integral to Fontana's artistic project and pivotal to its evolution. Having experimented with the medium from the beginning to the very end of his career, Fontana used sculpture as an opportunity to test, and put into practice, the exchange between form, color, matter and space, through a dialectical relationship between abstract and figurative, spatial and baroque.

HAUSER & WIRTH

When writing about the wide array of artistic mediums Fontana mastered during his lifetime, esteemed art historian Enrico Crispolti posed the question, 'And what if he had only been a sculptor?' This exhibition at Hauser & Wirth teases that question by bringing together an array of three-dimensional works in terracotta, concrete, clay, plaster, metal, glass and wood made over the course of five decades, from the 1920s until the artist's death in 1968. Here, they are placed in dialogue with paintings and drawings that act as a counterpoint to the gesturalism and methodology of the sculpture.

In an homage to Fontana's debut 1961 exhibitions in the United States, 'Lucio Fontana. Sculpture' opens with a dazzling painting that was first presented in those exhibitions: 'Concetto spaziale, La luna a Venezia' (Spatial Concept, The Moon in Venice) (1961). This canvas, which defies categorization, will be juxtaposed with a rare nucleus of drawings reflecting the artist's impressions of his initial visit to New York City, where he was guided by famed architect and Fontana collector, Philip Johnson.



The exhibition continues with the rarely seen sculpture, 'Nudo' (Nude) (1926), and an exploration of pivotal works from the 1930s, including 'Tavoletta graffita' (Incised Panel) (1931), 'Figura alla finestra' (Figure at the Window) (1931), 'Scultura astratta' (Abstract Sculpture) (1934), 'Conchiglie e Farfalle' (Shells and Butterflies) (1935-36) and 'Cavalli marini' (Seahorses) (1936). Made during a period of intense research, these pivotal works embody a particular syncretism between the abstract and the figurative and demonstrate how Fontana's work began to express pure innovation and how, unfolding within the larger context of European sculpture-making, his radical output from this period was at once rooted in historical avant-garde art movements, while also reinterpreting those movements' meaning.

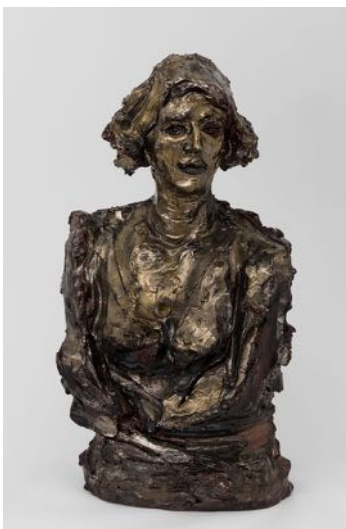
These sculptures were a prelude to Fontana's experiments during the late 1940s, which, in their association with the birth of spatialism, were marked by both abstract and figurative explorations and were critical to developing the artist's distinctive new style. In this regard, the 'Scultura spaziale' (Spatial Sculpture) (1947), a circle of matter imbued with a primordial force, is placed in dialogue with figurative works such as the monumental 'Figura femminile con fiori' (Female Figure with Flowers) (1948).

HAUSER & WIRTH

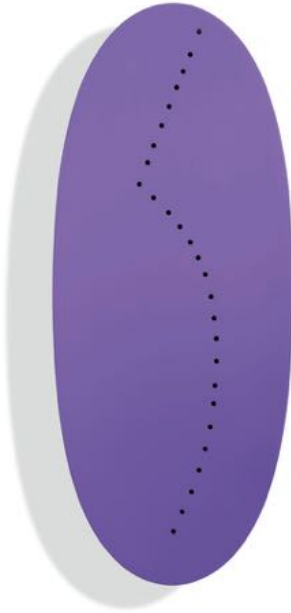
The second floor of the exhibition illustrates the tension generated between Fontana's various Spatial Concepts (a title that Fontana started to adopt in 1946 for all of his spatialist works) and his figurative sculptures, made through his unique treatment of matter and color. Visitors will experience a visual journey through Fontana's extraordinary lifelong creativity, from 'Concetto spaziale' (Spatial Concept) (1949)—the rare and first linen papers punctured with 'holes'—to the multiform terracotta sculptures of the 1950s and 1960s and such 'baroque' works as the spirited 'Battaglie' (Battles) or the astonishing 'Arlecchino' (Harlequin) (1948 – 49).



The final floor of the exhibition is dedicated to the evolution of Fontana's sculptural experimentation during the late 1950s and 1960s. A grouping of 'Concetto spaziale, Natura' (Spatial Concept, Nature) works—sculptures lacerated by 'paths' that are highly representative of the artist's investigations during this period—illustrate an existential declaration of the artist's spatial philosophy. The exhibition closes with the equally productive, albeit lesser-known period of the last years of the artist's life, a moment where the boundaries between painting and sculpture were all but obliterated. The 'Ellissi' (Ellipses) (1967) and sculptures in metal described by critics as 'space capsules,' were mechanically executed and demonstrate the final phase of Fontana's aesthetic inquiries, in which the conceptual dimension became more prominent.



HAUSER & WIRTH



'Lucio Fontana. Sculpture' will be accompanied by a new, fully illustrated catalogue from Hauser & Wirth Publishers, laid out by the designer Leonardo Sonnoli and edited by leading Fontana scholar and scientific advisor to the Fondazione Lucio Fontana, Luca Massimo Barbero. The book, realized in collaboration with the Fondazione, will be the first comprehensive monograph in English dedicated to Fontana's sculptural works and includes a foreword by Paolo Laurini and essays by art historians Cristina Beltrami and Maria Villa, as well as an essay by the curator.

This project is part of the Fondazione Lucio Fontana's effort to study and introduce new audiences to Fontana's sculptural output, which will culminate with the release in November 2022 of the catalogue raisonné of ceramic sculptures (Skira) curated by Luca Massimo Barbero in collaboration with the Fondazione.

This exhibition follows Hauser & Wirth Los Angeles' 2020 exhibition, 'Lucio Fontana. Walking the Space: Spatial Environments, 1948 – 1968,' the first comprehensive presentation in the US of the late Italian master's groundbreaking 'Ambienti spaziali' (Spatial Environments). The third installment of the Fontana trilogy, a major anthological exhibition, will take place at Hauser & Wirth's Hong Kong gallery.

For additional information, please contact:

Andrea Schwan, Andrea Schwan Inc., info@andreaschwan.com, +1 917 371 5023

Daniel Rechtschaffen, Hauser & Wirth, danielrechtschaffen@hauserwirth.com, +1 415 608 2148

Christine McMonagle, Hauser & Wirth, christinemcmonagle@hauserwirth.com, +1 347 320 8596

Caption and courtesy information:

Lucio Fontana exhibition Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, 1961 November 10
© J. Paul Getty Trust. Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2014.R.20)
Photo: Shunk-Kender
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022

Lucio Fontana
Concetto spaziale, La luna a Venezia
[Spatial Concept, The Moon in Venice]
1961
Acrylic, glass, and holes on canvas
150 x 150 cm / 59 x 59 in
Archivio Patrimonio Artistico Intesa Sanpaolo
Photo: Studio Vandasch, Milano
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022

Opening of the exhibition 'Lucio Fontana: Ten Paintings of Venice', Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, November–December 1961
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022

Lucio Fontana
Tavoletta graffita
[Incised Panel]
1931
Painted and incised plaster
23 x 29 cm / 9 x 11 3/8 in
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022
Photo: Daniele De Lonti

Lucio Fontana
Sculptura astratta
[Abstract Sculpture]
1934
Wrought-iron wire and clay
33 x 19 cm / 13 x 7 1/2 in
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022
Photo: Daniele De Lonti

Lucio Fontana
Ritratto di Teresita
[Portrait of Teresita]
1949
Glazed and lustered terracotta and topaz
70 x 45 x 31 cm / 27 1/2 x 17 3/4 x 12 1/4 in
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022
Photo: Daniele De Lonti

Lucio Fontana
Battaglia
[Battle]
1947-1948
Glazed terracotta
12 x 30 x 18 cm / 4 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 7 1/8 in
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022

Lucio Fontana
Concetto spaziale, Ellisse
[Spatial Concept, Ellipse]
1967
Lacquered wood and holes
173 x 72 cm / 68 1/8 x 28 3/8 in
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022

Lucio Fontana
Concetto spaziale
[Spatial Concept]
1968
Lacquered copper and cut
20 x 56 x 6 cm / 7 7/8 x 22 x 2 3/8 in
© Fondazione Lucio Fontana by SIAE 2022
Photo: Riccardo Gasperoni



Explore our history >