

## Giorgio Morandi *Masterpieces from the Magnani-Rocca Foundation*

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537 West 20th Street, New York



Giorgio Morandi, *Natura morta (Still Life)*, 1942. © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome. Collection of Fondazione Magnani-Rocca, Mamiano di Traversetolo (Parma), Italy. Courtesy David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to present *Giorgio Morandi: Masterpieces from the Magnani-Rocca Foundation*. Curated by art historian and Morandi scholar Dr. Alice Ensabella and organized in collaboration with the Magnani-Rocca Foundation, the exhibition features an extensive selection of works from across the revered artist's six-decade long career, all on loan from the Foundation, located in Mamiano di Traversetolo (Parma), Italy. This exhibition is one of the largest in New York to focus on Morandi's work since *Giorgio Morandi: 1890–1964*, the artist's 2008 retrospective at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. It follows and builds on celebrated institutional presentations of the Foundation's collection of works by Morandi at the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, London, in 2023 and at Musée de Grenoble in 2021.

This singular group of works by Morandi (1890–1964) is one of the largest and most important collections of paintings and works on paper by the Italian master. It was assembled in close collaboration with Morandi over more than twenty years by the entrepreneur, musicologist, art historian, and collector Luigi Magnani (1906–1984), who, after meeting Morandi for the first time in fall of 1940, became one of the notoriously reclusive artist's closest friends. As Ensabella notes, "The friendship [Magnani] built with Morandi was unique. The group of 50 works by the artist in his collection illustrates the profound esteem in which Magnani held Morandi's art and soul. This group of works tells the story of a collection, but also of a long-lasting friendship. The well-known discretion of Morandi, and the exclusive character of his circle, confirm the exceptional nature of this relationship.... Magnani aimed for perfection in creating his collection. The nucleus of works he acquired by Morandi ... also had to constitute a perfect whole, and it does in fact represent a cross-section of the artist's output, covering every subject, technique and period."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Alice Ensabella, "Giorgio Morandi & Luigi Magnani: The History of a Collection and a Friendship," in *Giorgio Morandi: Masterpieces from the Magnani-Rocca Foundation* exh. cat. (London: Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 2023), p. 27.

Magnani frequently bought directly from Morandi—one of very few collectors to do so—and the artist helped ensure that the selections were exemplary yet representative of his notable bodies of work. Morandi also gifted several works to Magnani, and he frequently visited his friend and patron and advised on the placement of his works in the villa in Mamiano. In addition to significant landscapes, and still lifes of flowers as well as those with Morandi's signature bottles, vases, and other vessels, Magnani collected individual works by the artist that exist largely outside those established groupings. These include *Autoritratto (Self-Portrait)* (1925), one of a small number of self-portraits Morandi created during his lifetime. *Natura morta metafisica (Metaphysical Still Life)* (1918) is a rare and especially refined work from Morandi's brief period as part of the school of metaphysical painting. Unprecedented in Morandi's oeuvre is *Natura Morta (Strumenti musicali) (Still Life [Musical Instruments])* (1941) possibly the only commissioned work that Morandi ever agreed to make. Magnani had proposed the commission for this work a few weeks after the two first met, unaware that Morandi did not work in this way, but the older painter must have recognized something in the younger collector that compelled him to accept the offer regardless. As Magnani writes in *Il mio Morandi* (1982), his memoir-like account of his friendship with the artist, "I left happy, but unaware of the great and generous gesture [Morandi] was making by agreeing to paint his first (and last) picture 'on commission.'"<sup>2</sup>

As both a survey of Morandi's vast and unrivaled oeuvre, and as a testament to one of his most important friendships, *Giorgio Morandi: Masterpieces from the Magnani-Rocca Foundation* offers New York audiences a truly unique understanding of one of the twentieth century's most important and influential artists.

The Magnani-Rocca Foundation, one of Italy's foremost artistic institutions, was founded in 1977 following the wishes of Luigi Magnani (1906–1984) to honor his father, Giuseppe, and mother, Donna Eugenia Rocca. Its mission is to support and advance cultural activities, focusing particularly on art, music, and literature. Magnani entrusted the Foundation with the Villa dei Capolavori in Mamiano di Traversetolo, near Parma, which opened as a museum in 1990 to house his remarkable art collection. This collection includes masterpieces by Monet, Renoir, Cézanne, Goya, Titian, Dürer, de Chirico, Rubens, Van Dyck, Filippo Lippi, Carpaccio, Burri, Tiepolo, Canova, and the most significant ensemble of works by Giorgio Morandi.

Nestled in the picturesque Parma countryside, the villa preserves an enchanting and timeless allure with its neoclassical and Empire-style furnishings. It is surrounded by an expansive Romantic Park featuring exotic plants, monumental trees, and magnificent white peacocks. The Foundation aims to make culture and art accessible as essential tools for the development and enrichment of civil society.

Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964) is best known for his paintings, drawings, and etchings depicting still life arrangements of quotidian objects. Although Morandi spent nearly his entire life in his hometown of Bologna and rarely traveled outside of Italy, his work was exhibited internationally and was widely admired by the avant-garde as well as traditional schools both during and after his lifetime.

Morandi was born in Bologna, Italy, where he lived until his death in 1964. From 1907 to 13, he was enrolled at the Bologna Accademia di Belle Arti, where he later served as the professor of engraving and etching from 1930 to 1956.

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<sup>2</sup> Luigi Magnani, *Il mio Morandi* (Monza: Johan and Levi Editore, 2020), p. 24.

His work has been the subject of major retrospectives and traveling solo exhibitions at institutions including Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, The Hague (traveled to New Burlington Galleries, London, 1954); Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (1964); Royal Academy of the Arts, London (traveled to Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, and Rotonda della Besana, Milan, 1970); Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (traveled to Kharkiv Art Museum, Ukraine, 1973); San Francisco Museum of Art (traveled to Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and Des Moines Art Center, Iowa, 1981); Museum of Modern Art, Kamakura, Japan (traveled to Fukuyama Museum of Art, Japan, and National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, 1989); Galleria dello Scudo, Verona (1997–1998; traveled to Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice); Musée Maillol, Paris (traveled to Museu de Arte de São Paulo, Brazil, 1997); Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (traveled to Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Spain, 1999); Tate Modern, London (traveled to Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 2001–2002); The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (traveled to Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Italy, 2008); Museo d'Arte Città di Lugano, Switzerland (2012); Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (2013); and Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow (2017). *A Backward Glance: Giorgio Morandi and the Old Masters*, a major exhibition examining the formation of Morandi's practice, was presented in 2019 at the Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain. Most recently, in 2023–2024, the Palazzo Reale Milano hosted the major retrospective *Morandi 1890–1964*.

Morandi has been included in important international group exhibitions, such as the Quadriennale di Roma; the Bienal de São Paulo, where he was awarded first prize for etching in 1953 and first prize for painting in 1957; Documenta; and the Venice Biennale, where he received the City of Venice prize in 1948. In the United States, he participated multiple times in the Carnegie International, Pittsburgh.

In 1993, the Museo Morandi was established in Bologna, Italy, and is currently located in the Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna.

The artist's works can be found in public and private collections including the Art Institute of Chicago; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Museo del Novecento, Milan; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Tate, United Kingdom.

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