

LISSON GALLERY

NEW YORK

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Press Release

Antonio Calderara

The Double

March 1 – April 20, 2019

138 10th Avenue, New York

Opening: February 28, 6 – 8pm

Lisson Gallery is staging the first ever solo exhibition in a New York gallery of post-war Italian Modernist painter Antonio Calderara (1903 – 1978). This introductory presentation spans the painter's transition away from the official style of 1940s figuration towards his own unique mode of lyrical abstraction in the 1950s and '60s, partly influenced by the Metaphysical movement of Giorgio de Chirico and then informed by other artists based in Milan such as Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni. The show centres on Calderara's predilection for 'doubling' or mirroring forms in his work, as seen in an early self-portrait, a canvas featuring twin girls with matching ponytails or in many of his later, vertically split geometric compositions.

The motif of the double or *il doppio* can be seen in both the 1953 *Autoritratto*, featuring the artist's doppelganger and a pair of Siamese cats impossibly reflected and refracted in a studio mirror, as well as in the 1957 double portrait entitled *Noi* (meaning 'We'), featuring him and his wife, Carmela, superimposed on top of one another. While this was perhaps the last portrait Calderara made, he also stopped painting curved lines a year later, employing instead simple flat blocks, squares and lines of color. Situated neither within Constructivist nor Minimalist movements, his pared-down vocabulary and precise measurements nevertheless positioned Calderara closely with other Modernist painters of the time, including Piet Mondrian and Josef Albers, both of whom the artist admired greatly.

Among the later works produced during the 1960s and '70s, Calderara's use of a single picture plane – across which the dual forms tend to share space on either side of a central division line, either real or imagined – now become fractured and shatter into multiple panels, seen here in a 1972 diptych, *Tension Orizzontale A & B*, which is split into two mirror images. The show is deliberately not hung in chronological progression, in order to highlight the constant reference and return to the duplication and doubling of images, instead relying on pairings or juxtapositions of works. A newspaper-inspired guide to the exhibition features a new essay by the show's curator, Andreas Leventis, as well as archival reviews and photographs of Calderara at work and alongside his contemporaries.

About Antonio Calderara

Born in 1903 in Abbiategrasso, Italy, Antonio Calderara continued to work up until his death in 1978. Self-taught as a child growing up in Milan, and later mentored for a time by a young Lucio Fontana, Calderara's earliest influences were of the figuration and light effects of Piero della Francesca, Georges Seurat and the Milanese Novecento painters. After abandoning his university studies in engineering in 1925 the young man dedicated himself fully to experimenting with colour and form. Through portraiture, landscapes and still lifes, Calderara depicted the people, scenes and objects of his native Italy – all suffused by a delicate, misty light inspired by the atmospheric glow of Lake Orta in Vacciago, where the artist moved in 1934 with his wife Carmela, and where he would work for most of his life.

The legacy of this important Italian artist is preserved through the Fondazione Antonio and Carmela Calderara, the artist's former home and studio housed within a 17th-Century villa-cloister of Vacciago, North of Milan. The collection includes many of Calderara's own works, plus more than 300 artworks by dozens of international artists with whom he had relationships of friendship and esteem, all joined together by a general tendency towards abstraction. Established in 1979 by Giuseppe Alemani, the foundation organises an annual programme of exhibitions and is open to the public from May until October each year.

Calderara's work was included in the Venice Biennale in 1948 and in 1956, in Documenta 4 in 1968, and a retrospective the following year at Kunstmuseum Lucerne confirmed his status as an artist of international importance. Other solo exhibitions have been staged at a number of institutions worldwide, including the Museo d'Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (1965); Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam, Netherlands (1968); Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (1969); Kunstmuseum Düsseldorf, Germany (1973); ICA, London, UK (1974); Contemporary Art Museum of Genoa, Italy (1995); Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich, Germany (2003); and Fondazione Zappettini, Milan, Italy (2011); and MASI, Lugano, Switzerland (2016). Most recently his work has been included in the 33rd São Paulo Bienal, Brazil (2018) and was the subject of solo exhibitions at Ernst Barlach Haus, Hamburg, Germany (2018) and Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland (2017). His work is featured in numerous private collections, as well as the R&B Collection and Sammlung Hackenberg in Munich, Germany; P420 Art Gallery, Bologna, Italy and the Josef Albers Museum in Bottrop, Germany.

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