

Conrad Marca-Relli: The Architecture of Action
Curated by Kenneth Baker and David Anfam
10 October – 24 November 2012

Ronchini Gallery London, in collaboration with Archivio Marca-Relli, Parma, will present Conrad Marca-Relli: The Architecture of Action, the artist's first UK solo exhibition. Curated by Kenneth Baker and David Anfam, from 10 October to 24 November 2012, the retrospective will feature a selection of works spanning the pioneering American Abstract Expressionist's impressive 60 year career.

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, moving permanently to New York City in 1926, Marca-Relli (1913–2000) was a central figure of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism that emerged after the Second World War, alongside Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Philip Guston and Franz Kline. His name nearly synonymous with collage, Marca-Relli completely redefined the art form famously pioneered by Cubist masters Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Collage fascinated Marca-Relli, whose works were often monumental in scale, and combined oil paint and other media.



Conrad Marca-Relli in his studio, Sarasota, Florida, 1982,
Courtesy of the Archivio Marca-Relli, Parma

This exhibition, some 45 years after his first retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1967, brings together a selection of works spanning his expansive career, allowing the viewer to chart the evolution of this remarkable artist. Marca-Relli's works explore various media, with materials ranging from vinyl plastics and cut-out aluminium to various fabrics and patterns provided by newsprint. Over the years these works developed an abstract simplicity, evidenced by black or sombre colours and rectangular shapes isolated on neutral backgrounds. Sometimes entire series consisted only of muted earth tones, while others included splashes of colour, or explorations of various palettes.

A seminal work, *Death of Jackson Pollock* (1956), is a collage and mixed media on canvas spanning over one metre by two metres, completed soon after the death of Marca-Relli's close friend and neighbour, Jackson Pollock. Marca-Relli and his wife had grown close to Pollock after moving to Springs in the Hamptons, where Pollock tragically lost control of his car while driving drunk on the night of 11 August 1956. Shortly after he finished the epic tribute to his friend, Marca-Relli left for a stint in Europe and never again returned to live in Springs. Not wanting to take advantage of his friendship, he refused to display the piece to the public until 2000, shortly before his death. Describing the night Pollock died, Marca-Relli wrote:

"We walked a short distance and then I could see the form of a body stretched out on the side of the road. It was Jackson. He was flat on his back, his eyes open. There was no blood, no scars, in fact he looked so beautiful. I just stared. I must have stayed that way for quite a while and then I heard the officer's voice. "Do you know this man?" "Yes," I said listlessly, "yes, it's Jackson Pollock."

With work in major exhibitions at Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice (1998), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2008) and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New

York (2009); Marca-Relli's works were critical in pushing the boundaries of collage and Abstract Expressionism, and mark him as one of America's greats.

About the artist

Born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1913, Conrad Marca-Relli moved to New York at the age of 13, in 1926. One of the founders of the Artist's Club, alongside Franz Kline and John Ferren, Marca-Relli was part of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism. Focusing on art from the 1930s until his death at the age of 87, he established his own studio in Greenwich Village in 1931, and, in addition to numerous solo and group shows, Marca-Relli's works can be found in the collections of the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Museu d'Art Contemporani MACBA, Barcelona; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington DC; National Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Seattle Art Museum, Seattle; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, New York.

About Ronchini Gallery

Ronchini Gallery is a contemporary art gallery founded by Lorenzo Ronchini in 1992, in Umbria, Italy, which expanded in February 2012 with a space in Mayfair, London. Its exhibitions have explored pioneering movements within Italy; the gallery aesthetic is defined by Minimalism, Spatialism, Conceptualism and Arte Povera and it retains an unblinking future-focus on progressive movements. Ronchini Gallery evolved from 20 years of private collecting. Paterfamilias Adriano Ronchini was an early supporter of artists such as Alighiero Boetti, Daniel Buren, Joseph Kosuth, Frank Stella and Michelangelo Pistoletto and collected their work throughout the seventies. Subscribing to the highest standards of curatorship and scholarship, the gallery provides a rigorous context in which its artists can be viewed. Ronchini Gallery also maintains a successful publishing arm which produces exhibition catalogues, monographs, critical texts and artist's books.

About the Curators

Kenneth Baker has been art critic for The San Francisco Chronicle since 1985. He was the art critic for The Boston Phoenix between 1972 and 1985 and contributed to Artforum, Art in America, Arts Magazine, Connoisseur, Smithsonian, and the New York Times Book Review. He was a contributing editor of Artforum from 1985 through 1992. The author of *Minimalism: Art of Circumstance* (Abbeville Press, 1989/1997), Baker has also written for museum exhibition catalogues devoted to artists as diverse as Giorgio Morandi, David Rabinowitch, Manuel Ocampo and Edward Burtynsky. Baker has continued to publish in art periodicals internationally, including The Art Newspaper, ArtNews, Art + Auction and Parkett. In 2009 Yale University Press published Baker's latest book, *The Lightning Field*, the first study of Walter De Maria's 1977 land art masterpiece.

David Anfam is a critic and art historian, as well as Commissioning Editor in Fine Art at Phaidon Press, London. His numerous publications include Mark Rothko: The Works on Canvas - A Catalogue Raisonné (1998) and Abstract Expressionism: A World Elsewhere (2008). In 2007 he curated Bill Viola's Ocean Without a Shore for the 52nd Venice Biennale. Anfam is a member of the Advisory Board of the Clyfford Still Museum, Denver, and his awards include the Mitchell Prize for the History of Art (2000) and the Umhoeffer Prize for Achievement in Humanities (2009).

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Exhibition Facts: Conrad Marca-Relli: The Architecture of Action

Preview: 9 October 2012, 6–8pm

Exhibition Dates: 10 October – 24 November 2012

Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday 10am–6pm

Location: 22 Dering Street, London, W1S 1AN

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