AMEDEO PORRO
Arte Moderna e Contemporanea Gallery
Milan, Italy

Carriera "barocca" di Fontana
"Baroque" career of Fontana

18 November 2004 - 21 January 2005

A new overview of the artistic development of Lucio Fontana from the '30s to the beginning of the '60s introduces the exhibition dedicated to him by Amedeo Porro Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Milan. The show entitled "Carriera 'barocca' di Fontana/'Baroque' career of Fontana" holds 7 sculptures, 9 works on canvas and a series of 7 designs on wood. This is the same title of the **book by Enrico Crispolti** that collects Fontana's writings and the long correspondence between the artist and Crispoldi, published by Skira/Amedeo Porro Arte Moderna e Contemporanea for the exhibition. So the title of the book is "Carriera 'barocca' di Fontana. Taccuino critico 1959-2004 e Carteggio 1958-1967/'Baroque' career of Fontana. Critical notebooks 1959-2004 and Epistolar exchange 1958-1967" whose publication (together with the exhibition) establishes a unique and extraordinary event about Fontana, a very particular contribution (in works and writings) to a further knowledge of one of the major artists of the 20th Century.

The exhibition, which holds some never seen before works created between 1931 and 1962, starts with a splendid plaster sculpture "Campione olimpionico (Atleta in attesa)/Olympic champion (Waiting athlete)" of 1931-1932, where the first attempts at expressivity of the matter and the role of colour can be read, to the "Concetto spaziale/Spacial Concept" of 1959, one of his first experimental cuts on canvas-baked paper.

The "Campione olimpionico/Olympic champion", plaster work completely made in light blue, is among the most meaningful sculptures by Fontana during the figurative period in the '30s, so that the artist chose it among the many works created in that period to represent himself at the "Seconda Quadriennale d'Arte Nazionale" at Palazzo delle Esposizioni of Roma in 1935.

Another important sculpture is "Mujer con mascara/Lady with mask" created in 1940 at Buenos Aires which portrays an extraordinary figure of a full-size plaster woman entirely painted in gold who covers her face with a black mask.

Fontana never forsakes ceramics and once back in Italy from Argentina in Spring '47 he starts again to use this material: on display one can admire two evocative polychrome ceramics created in those years - "Testa di medusa/Head of Medusa" and "Deposizione/Deposition" - which highlight the vitality and great capability of shaping matter, learned between Sèvres and Albisola in the light of the new experiences in the aftermath of the war.

Some of his works on show are part of a prestigious private collection and are presented for the first time to an audience. Once again together as they were conceived by Fontana two baroque paintings of '56 can be admired, "Concetto Spaziale. L'Inferno/Spatial concept.

Hell" and "Concetto Spaziale. Il Paradiso/Spatial concept. Paradise". And from '56 another important baroque "Concetto spaziale/Spatial concept".

The '50s are for Fontana an intense period of continuous creative transformation, as pointed out by Enrico Crispolti: "between '54 and '55 it almost seems that the onset of an image intervenes to put in order and give concreteness to the turmoil of matter, exactly like in the fixation of a sort of baroque form…". There are also on display some carved tiles of solid wood, pierced with lead, which Fontana made in 1958 for the project of the wall decoration for the hall of Palazzo dell'Eni in San Donato Milanese. They are rough outlines to be converted into large sizes representing Fontana's two different solutions for this project, which was never achieved.

Instead of the traditional catalogue, transforming completely its role as comment and inventory of what is on display, a large volume completes the exhibition, an exceptional contribution to the knowledge of Fontana's work and the character, by Crispolti "Carriera 'barocca' di Fontana. Taccuino critico 1959-2004 e Carteggio 1958-1967/'Baroque' career of Fontana. Critical notebooks 1959-2004 and Epistolar exchange 1958-1967", published by Skira/Amedeo Porro Arte Moderna e Contemporanea and curated by Paolo Campiglio, who reprints rare and scattered critical texts from 1959 to 2004 and a meaningful epistolar exchange between the artist and the then young critic from 1958 and 1967, with many never seen before papers. What comes out of it is a sort of "messainscena/staging" where the main character is Fontana, both in the innovations that his last research promoted (from the end of the '50s to the most part of the '60s), beyond the Informal art; and in the gradual acquisition of the awareness of the historical importance of his work, between the late '20s and the early '50s, from the beginning to the Informal art. A "messainscena/ staging" where the supporting role is played by Crispolti, whose personality of art critic and historian grows also due to the close relationship with the extraordinary artist, of whom he immediately recognized the creative genius. They met at the end of 1957, when he was 24 years old and Fontana in his full maturity, 58 years old, a master of the European avantgarde not yet properly acknowledged by the critics in Italy. Campiglio has the role of the "voice over" who comments from now and then to highlight the turning points of the action.

The exhibition will continue to London, England from 31 January to 24 March at Ben Brown Fine Arts, 21 Cork Street, London W1S3LZ.

Press office: Irma Bianchi Comunicazione