

LEONOR FINI. ITALIAN FURY

As dreamed by Francesco Vezzoli

OPENING

Saturday 01.04.2022, 11 am – 7 pm

DATES

02.04 – 25.06.2022

"Italian fury, scandalous elegance, caprice and passion."

Max Ernst

Galleria Tommaso Calabro is thrilled to present *Leonor Fini. Italian Fury*, an exhibition dedicated to the Argentine-Italian artist **Leonor Fini (1907-1996)**, curated by **Francesco Vezzoli (1971)** with an exhibition design by Filippo Bisagni.

Max Ernst defined her as an "Italian fury" of "*scandalous elegance, caprice and passion.*" Leonor Fini was indeed a **femme fatale of undeniable charm and turbulent temperament**. She was a **hardly classifiable artist** because of the unicity of her vision and her independence from the main artistic trends of the twentieth century. Her infinite creativity and constant need for self-expression led her to be a painter, an illustrator, a designer, a writer and a costume designer for the entire course of the century. She began making art at the age of three, when she started drawing, and never stopped until the end of her remarkable existence. The theatricality of her person, alongside her legendary charm, led her to become one of the most popular figures in the European élite, from Milan and Paris, to Montecarlo, Rome and Corsica.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1907, Leonor Fini moved to Trieste, Italy, after her mother separated from her abusive husband. The origins of Fini's love for costume – to be considered as the possibility of assuming a multiplicity of identities – are to be found in her childhood, when her mother used to disguise her as a boy to escape from her father's attempts at kidnapping her. Fini grew up in an upper-bourgeois, cultured environment, surrounded by intellectuals and writers including Roberto Bazlen, James Joyce, Umberto Saba and Italo Svevo. Once she realized she wanted to be an artist, Fini moved to Milan, where she trained with painter Achille Funi and befriended the artists of the "Novecento Italiano" group. After moving to Paris, her adopted city, she met the Surrealists, had her first solo show at the Galerie Bonjean – at the time directed by Christian Dior – designed the famous "Shocking" perfume of Elsa Schiaparelli, and pursued her artistic research. Her painting was close to Surrealism, yet it always conveyed her personal vision, in which ambiguous creatures, sphynxes, young femme fatales, and her beloved cats challenged the conventions and traditional stereotypes associated with being a woman and a female artist, in between automatism, symbolism, and imagination.

If the rediscovery of a female artist often depends upon her relation to a male figure, this is not the case of Fini. An utterly independent woman, **Fini was the center of her own life, surrounded by a myriad of satellites gravitating around her: numerous friends and many *amis amoreuses***, as she used to call her lovers. The exhibition *Leonor Fini. Italian Fury* fosters a reading of Fini's oeuvre in the light of some of these relationships, presenting over **sixty of her works in dialogue with pieces by artists**

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who played a pivotal role in her life and career. First, her beloved **Stanislao Lepri (1905-1980)**, a Roman aristocrat and painter, whom Fini met in Monte Carlo while he was working there as Consul and whom she followed to Rome during the war. The two later moved to Paris, where they lived at the Hôtel de Marle, together with friends and lovers. During her Milanese years, Fini befriended **Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978)**. The two exhibited together in the legendary exhibition *Fantastic Art Dada Surrealism*, held at the MoMa in New York in 1936. In the same year, de Chirico wrote the introductory essay to Fini's first exhibition in the United States, organised at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York. During WWII, Fini befriended the Milanese painter **Fabrizio Clerici (1913-1993)** in Rome, where they used to spend their time with personalities such as Alberto Moravia, Elsa Morante and Anna Magnani. With the help of Clerici, Fini used to make masks and costumes for the legendary end-of-summer balls that she threw in her semi-abandoned castle in Corsica. The Surrealist artist **Dorothea Tanning (1910-2012)** was an inevitable guest, alongside her husband **Max Ernst (1891-1976)**, with whom Fini had a brief love affair after arriving in Paris in the 1930s. At the time, Ernst introduced her to the Surrealists, who gathered at the Café de la Place Blanche and to whom Fini dedicated an exhibition at the Galerie Leo Castelli in 1939.

Following the exhibition *Casa Iolas. Citofonare Vezzoli*, the gallery renews its collaboration with the contemporary artist **Francesco Vezzoli**. Vezzoli's interest in Leonor Fini dates to the earliest stages of his career, when he included Fini's *L'Amitié* in his video *An Embroidered Trilogy* from 1999. Ten years later, Fini was the protagonist of an embroidery from Vezzoli's *Greed* series: *Enjoy the New Fragrance (Leonor Fini for Greed)*, which is included in the exhibition. On this occasion, Vezzoli investigates once again Fini's persona, life and career with a series of new works. The **exhibition design**, conceived by Filippo Bisagni, draws inspiration from Stanislao Lepri's painting *La Chambre de Leonor* (1967), on view in the first room of the show. Segments of the painting, such as the tiled floor and pieces of furniture, come alive in the gallery rooms, guiding visitors into the discovery of Fini's realm.

The gallery is grateful to Richard Overstreet of The Leonor Fini Archive, Francesco Vezzoli's Studio, Galerie Minski, Rowland Weinstein and all lenders for making this project possible, and to Marazzi Group for their contribution to the realization of part of the exhibition set up.

OPENING TIMES

Tuesday – Saturday / 11 am – 7 pm

Monday / by appointment

PRESS REQUESTS

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