

TOMMASO CALABRO

COPLEY

Opening

Wednesday, 10 April 2024, 12 am – 8 pm

11 April – 22 June 2024

Casa Grondona

Corso Italia 47, Milan

"My life is a quest for the ridiculous image."

William N. Copley

On Wednesday, 10 April 2024 Tommaso Calabro inaugurates *Copley*, an exhibition celebrating the American artist **William N. Copley (1919-1996)**, known for being an important link between European Surrealism and American Pop art.

A self-thought artist, writer, gallerist, patron, publisher and collector, connected through friendship with Marcel Duchamp, Copley lived in Paris, New York, Connecticut and Florida. Following the experience of the Copley Galleries in Los Angeles in 1948 – where Copley presents, for the first time on the West Coast, works by surrealists such as René Magritte, Yves Tanguy, Roberto Matta, Joseph Cornell, Man Ray and Max Ernst, many of which would find their way into his private collection – Copley decides to devote himself entirely to painting.

Signing his work with the pseudonym "CPLY," starting from the late 1940s, the artist creates naïve portraits and surrealist-inspired subjects. In Paris, where he lives between 1951 and 1962, he becomes an integral part of the Impasse Ronsin in Montparnasse, where he meets and works alongside Yves Klein, Niki de Saint Phalle, Jean Tinguely, and Constantin Brancusi, developing his distinctive figurative style characterized by **curvilinear figures** (often rendered without faces), **bold contour lines**, **luminous colors**, **a flattened pictorial space** and **comic-inspired motifs**.

The exhibition *Copley* at Tommaso Calabro features a selection of about **twenty paintings and drawings created between the 1950s and the 1970s**. It includes works that Copley executed after his return to New York in 1963 – such as a piece from the *X-Rated* series (1972-1975), featuring figurative distortions of portraits of erotic subjects taken from pornographic magazines bought on 42nd Street – and paintings from the *Nouns* series presented by **Alexander Iolas**, Copley's main gallerist and supporter, between 1970 and 1972: images of everyday objects, enlarged and placed in abstract spaces.

With the addition of **catalogs and archival monographs**, the exhibition explores Copley's satirical and playful imagery, where love, death, politics, sex, parody and nationalism are embodied by Copley's distinct vocabulary of recurring motifs, which he described as a "private mythology" of personal images and characters, including men in suits and bowler hats, nude and semi-nude women,

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prostitutes, cars, embracing lovers and everyday objects extracted from their context.

Copley at Tommaso Calabro is the **most significant exhibition in Italy** since the major retrospective dedicated to the artist in Milan in 2016 by the Fondazione Prada, curated by Germano Celant in collaboration with the Menil Foundation of Houston. **Copley** brings the attention back to an artist who challenged the artistic conventions of his time and anticipated the developments of contemporary art, from the Pop Art of the 1960s to the return to figuration of the 1980s.

Copley's work can be found in important public collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Tate, London; Ludwig Museum, Cologne; and many more. Major exhibitions of Copley's work have been held at the: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1966); Kunsthalle Bern, Bern (1980–81); Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hannover (1995); Ulmer Museum, Ulm (1997); Frieder Burda Museum, Baden-Baden (2012); The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas (2016); Fondazione Prada, Milan (2016); ICA Miami, Miami (2018–19); Philara Collection, Düsseldorf (2023–24).

OPENING TIMES

Tuesday – Saturday / 11 am – 7 pm

Monday / by appointment

PRESS ENQUIRIES

Elena Caslini | elena@tommasocalabro.com | +39 02 49696387

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