

LÉVY GORVY

LÉVY GORVY CELEBRATES MODERN ITALIAN ART WITH
THE FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION OF VINCENZO AGNETTI
IN NEW YORK IN OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS

Vincenzo Agnetti: Territories
After the Future: The Postwar Italian Avant-Garde

July 6 – August 11, 2017
Opening Reception: July 6, 6 – 8 p.m.

Update: On view through August 11

909 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10021

New York, NY— Vincenzo Agnetti was an innovative participant in the Italian avant-garde from the 1950s through the '70s, and a prominent member of the artist-run gallery and journal *Azimut(h)* along with Enrico Castellani and Piero Manzoni. Agnetti's work traverses a wide formal range with an analytic rigor matched only by his poetic vision. In examining the depth and progression of the artist's output, *Vincenzo Agnetti: Territories*,

opening July 6th at Lévy Gorvy New York, begins to map the development of his artistic and philosophical consciousness. The first solo exhibition of Agnetti in New York in over twenty-five years, *Territories*, which was presented in London earlier this spring, celebrates Lévy Gorvy's new collaboration with the Archivio Vincenzo Agnetti Milan. The exhibition will be on view through August 11th.

In parallel with *Territories*, the gallery also presents *After the Future: The Postwar Italian Avant-Garde*, a selection of works that demonstrates the ways in which the Milan-Turin axis served as an epicenter for the gestation and proliferation of ideas in the sphere of emergent international artistic movements. Offering a context for—and in dialogue with—the Agnetti works on view, *After the Future* includes



Vincenzo Agnetti, *Paesaggio*, 1971, engraved and painted felt, 31 1/2 x 47 1/4 inches (80 x 120 cm). Courtesy Lévy Gorvy. Photo: Stephen White.

works by Alighiero Boetti, Alberto Burri, Enrico Castellani, Jannis Kounellis, Piero Manzoni, Giulio Paolini, Giuseppe Penone, Carol Rama, and Gilberto Zorio.

“From Enrico Castellani, who we have represented for many years, to Carol Rama, who recently joined the gallery, we have a longstanding connection with Italian artists,” said Dominique Lévy, cofounder of Lévy Gorvy. “The opening of *Vincenzo Agnetti: Territories* and *After the Future: The Postwar Italian Avant-Garde* in New York represents an incredible opportunity to explore vital participants in the rapid development of modern art in Italy after the Second World War.”

Vincenzo Agnetti: Territories

A student of poetry and art from a young age, the details of Vincenzo Agnetti’s early life remain opaque. In the artist’s words, “What I did, thought, and heard, I’ve now forgotten by heart.” This deliberate occlusion of biographical information is characteristic of Agnetti’s use of language: shifting away from the personal toward a more remote philosophical terrain, Agnetti cultivated a mythic voice.

Curated by gallery director Begum Yasar, *Territories* focuses on two bodies of work from the artist’s diverse oeuvre—*Axiomi* (Axioms) and *Feltri* (Felts)—and explores the ways in which Agnetti approached language as both content and material, depicting linguistic propositions and abstractions with a signature esoteric streak. Seen as a whole, the artist’s work sheds light on possibilities for art’s engagement with philosophy and knowledge production: rather than illustrating theories, Agnetti sought to fully integrate idea and form.

The poetic dimensions of Agnetti’s linguistic explorations are perhaps most evident in his *Axioms* (1968–1974). The works’ white text on black grounds is evocative of the blackboard, but the slick finish of their smooth surfaces and engraved words lends a permanent and fixed quality. Through this linguistic and formal play, Agnetti produces a slippage between proposition and truth, calling into question the way meaning is produced and comprehended.

The *Feltri* also draw on familiar cultural forms, albeit more art historical than pedagogical. Many of these works are titled *Paesaggio* (landscape) and *Ritratto* (portrait) but, like the *Axioms*, their main visual content is textual. The portraits and landscapes are aesthetically severe, with stenciled letters burned or painted on a humble felt surface. The *Feltri* landscapes put forth more spare and open-ended provocations, as in *Paesaggio*, a 1971 dusky chartreuse felt with a circular chip

missing from a top corner, its surface stenciled with the word "TERRITORY." Theoretical and geopolitical conceptions of space constitute another significant concern for Agnetti, as this work boldly indicates.

After the Future: The Postwar Italian Avant-Garde

Immediately after the Second World War, Italy underwent a series of rapid changes, seeing its transformation from a rural nation into a major industrial power. Spectacular economic growth was coupled with a major cultural shift as new products flooded the market and mass media gained popularity. This dramatic period was also the stage for some of the most revolutionary political movements of our time, in which Italian thinkers, artists, and laborers alike grappled with questions of how to live and work in an era of increased state power and consumerism.

The duality of material and concept, as well the complex implications for economic and abstract value formed a broadly shared theme among many postwar Italian artists—not as opposed dimensions, but rather as interwoven aspects of an artistic practice. *After the Future* is dedicated to contemporaneous Italian artists who forged bold and singular paths during this time of cultural upheaval, negotiating the intersections of Conceptualism, Minimalism, and post-Minimalism in the 1960s and onward. After the war, after artistic Futurism and political fascism, after the waxing and waning of revolution—after the future—Italian artists continued to explore what it might mean to make art in a newly globalized, interconnected world.

Exhibition catalogue

Territories was on view at Lévy Gorvy's London gallery from March 31 to May 13, and the transnational exhibition is accompanied by a comprehensive monograph edited by Begum Yasar. This publication includes full-color illustrations of Agnetti's works featured in the exhibition, an unprecedented selection representing the broad range of materials and styles that comprise his oeuvre. The catalogue also features writings by the artist; a personal reflection by the artist's daughter, Germana Agnetti; essays by Ara H. Merjian, Karen Pinkus, and Bruno Corà; and a chronology. The book details three bodies of work by the artist: his famous *Macchina drogata* (Drugged Machine) and its products, which Pinkus explores in depth in her catalogue essay; the Axioms; and the *Feltri*. Merjian's text represents an analysis of Agnetti's use of language and his relationship to the neo-avant-garde. The catalogue also includes the artist's manifesto *Macchina drogata*,

in a new translation by Pinkus. With a wealth of archival images and full-color plates, this publication constitutes an important step in scholarship on this groundbreaking artist and his oeuvre.

About Lévy Gorvy

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Formed by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains a gallery in Mayfair, London, inaugurated an expanded New York space located at 909 Madison Avenue in January 2017, and is committed to developing its program in Asia. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates it represents and pursues a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. Lévy Gorvy also produces ongoing art historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications.

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