

CORRADO CAGLI: FROM ROME TO NEW YORK

23rd February–28th April 2018

Private View: 22nd February 2018, 6–8pm

Brun Fine Art is very proud to present the first UK solo show of the pioneering Italian artist Corrado Cagli (Ancona 1910 – Roma 1976), also known as Maestro Cagli. The first-ever selling exhibition, titled *Corrado Cagli: From Rome to New York*, will be organised in collaboration with the Archivio Corrado Cagli (Rome) and will run from 23rd February, significantly the artist's day of birth, to 28th April 2018. Curated by Alberto Mazzacchera, the show will feature over forty works by Maestro Cagli on view for the first time in the UK. Presented across the two floors of the Old Bond Street gallery, two main strands of the artist's career will be referenced: the Roman School of Painting (1930s), and the abstract period (1940s-1950s). *Corrado Cagli: From Rome to New York* will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with introductory essays by curator Alberto Mazzacchera.

Throughout his life, Cagli worked with a number of different mediums, such as ceramics, sculptures, paintings, theatre set design and costumes, wall painting, and tapestry. Considering this vast artistic production, the curator selected a first group of paintings belonging to the so-called 'Roman School,' which Cagli co-founded with Italian artists Giuseppe Capogrossi and Emanuele Cavalli in the 1930s. As leader of the Roman School, Cagli first introduced fundamental artistic concepts, such as *primordialismo*, and in the years between the two World Wars he became one of the most influential Italian artists of the time due to his evocative style and figurative pictures.

Cagli's artistic career was then deeply influenced by the enforcement of the Italian Racial Laws promulgated by the Fascist government. As an artist of Jewish heritage, Cagli was forced to flee Italy in 1938 and seek refuge in New York, where he remained until 1947. The reaction against the Fascist-imposed cultural tradition was already visible in the paintings *Views of Rome*, which were partly censored at the 1937 Universal Exhibition in Paris. In the 1940s, after becoming a U.S. citizen, Cagli enlisted in the Army with the heartfelt intention of defending freedom, a value so vital in his pictorial production as well as his life. During his service, Cagli fought in Normandy, Belgium, the Ardennes, and Dachau (Germany), where the artist was inspired to produce emotionally-charged drawings of the prisoners being freed from the tortures of the infamous concentration camp. After the exile and the following return to Italy, Cagli presented his work, deeply influenced by his experience in New York, in an exhibition held in Bologna in 1948. Here, the artist gave full expression to the more abstract and informal nature of his pictorial style – an evolution already foreshadowed by some works painted before the exile. Art historian and critic Enrico Crispolti noted that Cagli's informal experience heralded "consequences not only in Rome, but also for the development of spatial and nuclear *gestualismo* in Milan." Cagli's post-war artistic production will constitute the second core group of works presented in this exhibition, where paintings are visibly less figurative to give way to abstraction, and colours are charged with moving intensity.

In the second half of the 20th century, Cagli became the master of a number of younger artists, and was able to quickly established his reputation both nationally and internationally. In addition to exhibiting in New York (1947, 1948, 1949, 1954, 1960, 1971, 2015), the artist's work was also shown in Rome (1932, 1935, 1948, 1954, 1972, 1986, 2001, 2005, 2011), Paris (1937, 1939, 1951, 1964, 1997, 2015), Florence (1938, 2002), San Francisco (1941, 1942, 1946), Los Angeles (1941), Washington (1943), Chicago (1950), São Paulo (1951), Hamburg (1951), Phoenix (1963), and Turin (2017), amongst others. Today, works by Maestro Cagli are part of international private collections as well as public museums, including the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, the Vatican Museums, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje, the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, the Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade in São Paulo, the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, the LACMA, the Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, the Jewish Museum and the MoMA in New York.

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