

In canvases that are at once theatrical and humble, intimate and remote, humorous and melancholy, artist Domenico Gnoli uncovered a universe of meanings to be found in the details of everyday objects. His meditations on the material trappings of bourgeois Italian life directly challenged the politically charged discourse proffered by artists of the burgeoning Arte Povera movement by suggesting that identity is constructed primarily around consumerism and commercial choices. Supra-realistic, subtly colored, luminous and large, his paintings suggest that subjectivity can be expressed through the width of a pinstripe, or that the social values of an entire decade can be located in a lady's leather handbag. Regarded as a precocious genius pruned too soon by fate, Gnoli died in 1970 at the age of 36, a scant three months after an acclaimed solo exhibition at Sidney Janis Gallery in New York established him as a major talent. He left behind only several dozen paintings, most executed in the last five years of his life. But their enduring power derives less from their scarcity than from the unique visual grammar of an oeuvre that escapes classification.

Beginning April 26, 2012, Luxembourg & Dayan will present ***Domenico Gnoli: Paintings 1964-1969***, the first U.S. exhibition in more than four decades devoted to the artist. The exhibition brings together 18 of his late paintings, which will fill the gallery's townhouse at 64 East 77th Street. The exhibition also includes a small group of drawings from "What is a Monster?," a series in which Gnoli investigated the possibilities of a modern day bestiary. The works on view have been loaned from important private collections and museums, including the Fundación Yannick y Ben Jakober in Majorca; the Stiftung Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf; the Fondazione MAXXI and the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Rome; and the Fondazione Orsi in Milan.

***Domenico Gnoli: Paintings 1964-1969*** will remain on view at the gallery through June 30, 2012. The exhibition is accompanied by a book featuring an essay by critic and curator Francesco Bonami, and a posthumous 'interview' with Domenico Gnoli by artist Maurizio Cattelan.

***Domenico Gnoli: Paintings 1964-1969*** reveals the artist's ability to set himself adrift in an ocean of narrative while nevertheless maintaining exquisite control of the physical presence of his art. With such paintings as *Chemisette Verte* (1967), *Corner* (1968), and *Striped Trousers* (1969), Gnoli's obvious fascination with the surface of his paintings links him to a central characteristic of Italian art since the Renaissance. By mixing sand and acrylic, he achieved a striking signature texture that pushes his subjects beyond the realm of the contemporary and into an almost archaic atmosphere redolent of Mantegna and Masaccio. Gnoli observed reality not through the mechanical lens of Pop Art, but through the eyes of a skilled craftsman inspired by the Quattrocento, thereby creating such images as *White Bed* (1968) and *Poltrona* (1966), that hover above time like antique frescos of the future. Gnoli's paintings achieve their mystery and palpable tension by capturing a state of suspension between the past and the future. In each picture we see a fragment magnified in the

moment just before life's inevitable progress transforms it forever – seconds before the carefully made bed is disturbed (Green Bed, 1969) or the perfectly parted coif is mussed (Capigliatura, 1965). Alluding to the power, charm and bitter-sweetness of such timeless moments, Gnoli wrote, "I always use given and simple elements, I don't want to add or subtract anything. I haven't even ever wanted to distort: I isolate and represent. My themes are derived from current events, from familiar situations, from daily life; because I never actively intervene against the object, I can feel the magic of its presence."

### **About the Artist**

Born in 1933 in Rome to an art historian father and an artist mother, Domenico Gnoli displayed an early interest in and exceptional talent for art. He grew up between Rome and Spoleto, and at the age of 16 began studying engraving under the tutelage of painter and printmaker Carlo Alberto Petrucci. By the age of 18, Gnoli had already exhibited his work alongside such established artists as Giacomo Manzù and Giorgio Morandi. At 19, he enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, but left soon afterward to begin traveling in Europe.

In the early 1950s, Gnoli traveled first to Paris and then to London, where he enjoyed success as a theatrical set designer, particularly at the Old Vic. In the mid-1950s, he went to New York, where his work was included in exhibitions to favorable reception. He traveled frequently, worked as an illustrator (Sports Illustrated and Horizons magazines were among regular clients), and continued to exhibit in both America and Europe. In 1963, Gnoli went to Majorca and settled in Deyá, where he met and married fellow artist Yannick Vu; the two divided their time between Rome and Majorca. In 1968, Gnoli's work was included in exhibitions at the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels; the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hannover; Documenta IV in Kassel; and the Venice Biennale.

In late 1969, Gnoli opened a breakthrough solo exhibition of dramatic new paintings at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York City. The artist died in April of 1970.

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