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CLARK ART INSTITUTE PRESENTS EXHIBITION OF GIORGIO GRIFFA

Giorgio Griffa: Paths in the Forest opens June 13, 2026

(Williamstown, Massachusetts)—The Clark Art Institute presents the first solo museum exhibition in the United States of artist Giorgio Griffa (born in 1936 in Turin, Italy, where he lives and works). *Giorgio Griffa: Paths in the Forest* is on view June 13 through October 12, 2026 in the galleries of the Lunder Center at Stone Hill.

“It is a great honor to present Giorgio Griffa’s first solo museum exhibition in the United States, coinciding with the energetic artist’s ninetieth birthday. The Clark provides an especially fitting setting, where Griffa’s deep historical references and engagement with the natural world resonate with both our collections and the surrounding landscape,” said Olivier Meslay, Hardymon Director of the Clark.

“Giorgio Griffa considers himself a classical painter yet his work and his thinking—especially in its ecological dimensions—is bracingly contemporary,” said exhibition curator Robert Wiesenberger, John and Barbara Vogelstein Senior Curator of Contemporary Art at the Brooklyn Museum, former curator of contemporary projects at the Clark.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

For almost sixty years, Giorgio Griffa has explored the potential of painting in a practice that is both rigorous and lyrical. Griffa paints with diluted acrylics in pastel colors on unstretched, unprimed canvases. These are tacked to the wall for display and folded for storage, a memory of which persists in their creases. Griffa values “the intelligence of materials” and views his paintings as neither representational nor abstract, but as real, material facts.

“Impersonal marks that belong to any hand, with thousands of years of memory” are Griffa’s subject; he follows and blurs the lines of drawing, counting, and writing. Griffa “interrupts” his paintings before they are finished because, “in the meantime, life has moved on,” an idea he credits to Zen Buddhism. Like the artist himself, each work remains vital: “Leaving the work incomplete means symbolically omitting that final point, which, like the period at the end of this sentence, fixes it in the past.”

To date, Griffa has made thirteen cycles, or loose and connected bodies of work, each with its own compositional idea. He calls these “different pathways through the same dark forest.” The forest, for him, is a symbol of the unknown. But it also exemplifies Griffa’s ecological ethic: his commitment to growth and change,

difference and interrelation, vitality and intelligence. There is no single path for him, nor intention to escape; the unknown is a place to dwell, in pensive darkness and exultant light.

Giorgio Griffa: Paths in the Forest is organized by the Clark Art Institute and curated by Robert Wiesenberger, John and Barbara Vogelstein Senior Curator of Contemporary Art at the Brooklyn Museum, former curator of contemporary projects at the Clark.

This exhibition is made possible by the Edward and Maureen Fennessy Bousa Fund for Contemporary Projects and Directorate-General for Contemporary Creativity of the Italian Ministry of Culture under the Italian Council program (14th edition, 2025), with the aim of promoting Italian contemporary art internationally. Additional support is provided by Margaret and Richard Kronenberg. Support for the catalogue is provided by Michael Alper and Bruce Moore.

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

Sessanta frammenti (Sixty fragments), 1980

Sessanta frammenti, which can be configured differently with each installation, extends across the walls of the entrance corridor in the exhibition. “These fragments,” Griffa explains, “are not the remains of a broken whole, they are not archaeological finds, pieces of something once united. On the contrary, they are born one by one, like our perceptions.” For the artist, fragmentation describes the state of our modern, scientific knowledge, a departure from Newton’s perfect and rational universe.



***Rosa (Rose)*, 1968**

This never-before-exhibited painting marks Griffa's defining shift beyond representation. *Rosa*, in Italian, refers to both the flower ("rose") and the color pink; from left to right, Griffa paints a bouquet of roses, a Pop-art-style rendition of them, and finally diagonal lines in black, green, and pink. Lines have occupied the artist's attention ever since.



***Narciso (Narcissus)*, 1986**

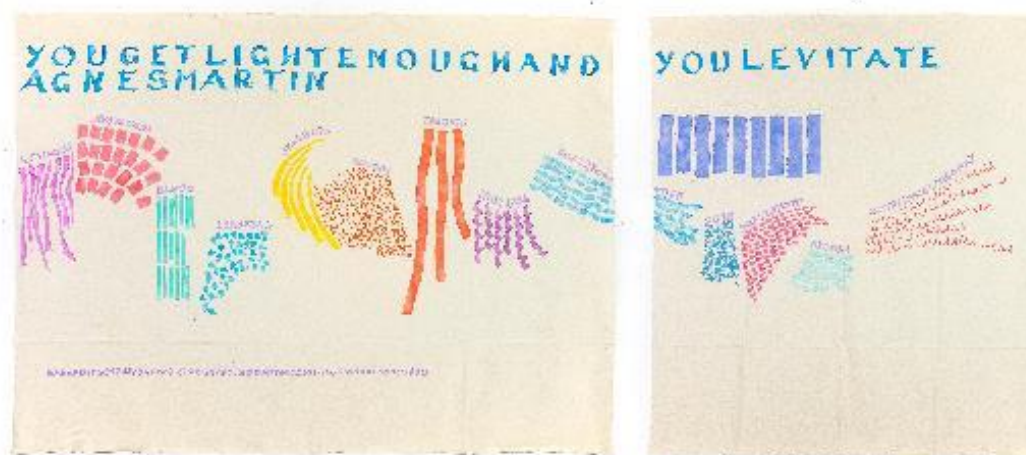
Griffa alludes to the Greek myth of Narcissus, in which a beautiful youth falls in love with his own reflection, dies of sadness, and is replaced by flower which take his name (also known as a daffodil). The story has long been considered a metaphor for artists' attempts to capture fleeting beauty in an image.

Narciso belongs to Griffa's cycle *Segno e campo* (Sign and field), in which he juxtaposes large areas of color with rhythmic marks. An admirer of Henri Matisse and Islamic art, Griffa has written: "Decoration can be structural, because it, too draws on rhythm, a means of knowledge."

Canone aureo 958 (Agnes Martin) (Golden ratio 958 [Agnes Martin]), 2016

The golden ratio, also known as the “divine proportion,” is an irrational number that begins 1.618.... For Griffa, it symbolizes the unknown, which he considers the domain of art, and became the subject of its own cycle in 2008.

The quotation here, from an essay by painter Agnes Martin titled the “Untroubled Mind,” reflects a spirituality indebted to Zen Buddhism. Lightness and luminosity, mindful presence and disciplined practice, are central to Griffa’s approach. In addition to his “anonymous marks,” since 1979 Griffa has paid homage to artists he considers formative in a cycle he calls *Alter Ego*. This work was made for the 2017 Venice Biennale, Griffa’s third time appearing in the international exhibition.



Kaddish, 2024

Phrases from Allen Ginsberg’s epic poem, dedicated to the memory of his mother and named for the Jewish mourner’s prayer, appear on twenty-two pieces of gauzy fabric (known as tarlatan). The work belongs to Griffa’s *Alter Ego* cycle as well as his *Transparenze* (Transparencies), which he debuted at the 1980 Venice Biennale. These works are layered, as Griffa notes, like parts of a symphony, and may be installed differently on every occasion.

Griffa's most recent cycle is dedicated to disorder, a phenomenon measured by scientists as entropy. Rather than a fear of chaos and the unknown, Griffa embraces change and renewal. Any disorder, he has written, "will constitute a new order, which in turn contains elements of disorder, which go on to constitute a new order—and so on and so forth without end." Even in this darkness, there is light.

Giorgio has long been a celebrated figure in Italian art. While he exhibited alongside figures in the Turin-based Arte Povera movement, and is often presented in the context of Minimalism, his approach is distinctive. Giorgio Griffa has been the subject of numerous international exhibitions, including at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the Camden Arts Centre, London, and has been featured in three editions of the Venice Biennale. His first museum presentation in the U.S. marks a major milestone for an artist long in dialogue with American art and artists.

CATALOGUE

Published by the Clark and distributed by Yale University Press, the exhibition catalogue includes four scholarly essays, an original text by the artist, and studio and installation photography highlighting the exhibition's close dialogue with the architecture and natural setting of the Lunder Center at Stone Hill. The catalogue contributors are: Joanna Fiduccia, assistant professor in the history of art at Yale University; Matilde Guidelli-Guidi, curator and department cohead at Dia Art Foundation; Kate Nesin, art historian, writer, and curator-at-large for the Art Institute of Chicago; and exhibition curator, Robert Wiesenberger.

RELATED EVENTS

All events are free. For accessibility questions, call 413 458 0524.

Opening Lecture

Saturday, June 27, 11 am

Manton Research Center auditorium

Join exhibition curator Robert Wiesenberger and exhibition catalogue contributors Joanna Fiduccia and Kate Nesin for a conversation about Griffa's vibrant and lyrical work. Fiduccia is assistant professor of art history at Yale University, whose book on artist Alberto Giacometti is forthcoming this year. Kate Nesin is a curator-at-large at the Art Institute of Chicago and the author of *Cy Twombly's Things*.

Print Room Pop-Up: Italian Abstraction Before Griffa

Friday, August 21, 11 am–1 pm

Manton Study Center for Works on Paper

Painter Giorgio Griffa grew up in Turin, Italy, at a time of great experimentation with abstraction in art. Enjoy this selection of midcentury Italian drawings that anticipate Griffa's interest in line, form, and positive and negative space, and then head up to the Lunder Center to view some more recent Italian abstraction in the special retrospective exhibition *Giorgio Griffa: Paths in the Forest*.

Giorgio Griffa: Painting and Materiality

Saturday, August 22, 2 pm

Lunder Center at Stone Hill, Hunter Studio

Giorgio Griffa is committed to the "material intelligence" of paint on canvas and the luminosity of water-based media. Join Montserrat M.M. Le Mense, senior paintings conservator at the Williamstown + Atlanta Art Conservation Center, and Robert Wiesenberger, exhibition curator, for a hands-on discussion about Griffa's materials and processes, and the chemistry of painting.

August Fridays: Giorgio Griffa
August 7, 14, 21 & 28, 1–4 pm
Lunder Center at Stone Hill

Soak up summer each Friday in August with a special activation of *Giorgio Griffa: Paths in the Forest*. Between 1–4 pm, enjoy the exhibition or take in the beauty of Stone Hill, relaxing at our Italian “café” on the Moltz Terrace offering gelato, coffee, and pastries. All ages are invited to make their mark on a collaborative chalk drawing, inspired by Italian painter Giorgio Griffa’s process of painting on unprimed canvas laid flat on the ground. At 2 pm, enjoy an all-ages tour of Griffa’s vibrant abstractions with Olivia Brandwein, manager of community and family programs.

Admission to *Giorgio Griffa: Paths in the Forest* is free between 1–4 pm. Pick up a special admission ticket at the Lunder Center admissions desk. Tour and activities are also free. Refreshments available for purchase. Held rain or shine.

Family programs are generously supported by Allen & Company.

For accessibility questions, call 413 458 0524.

IMAGES

Giorgio Griffa, installation view of *Giorgio Griffa: Paths in the Forest*, The Clark, 2026, with *Sessanta frammenti* (Sixty fragments; detail), 1980, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of Fondazione Giorgio Griffa, Turin, and Casey Kaplan, New York. Photo: Julia Featheringill

Giorgio Griffa, *Rosa* (Rose), 1968, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of Fondazione Giorgio Griffa, Turin, and Casey Kaplan, New York

Giorgio Griffa, *Canone aureo 958 (Agnes Martin)* (Golden ratio 958 [Agnes Martin]), 2016, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of Fondazione Giorgio Griffa, Turin, and Casey Kaplan, New York

Giorgio Griffa, installation view of *Giorgio Griffa: Paths in the Forest*, The Clark, 2026, with *Kaddish*, 2024, acrylic on canvas. Courtesy of Fondazione Giorgio Griffa, Turin, and Casey Kaplan, New York. Photo: Julia Featheringill

ABOUT THE CLARK

The Clark Art Institute, located in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts, is one of a small number of institutions globally that is both an art museum and a center for research, critical discussion, and higher education in the visual arts. Opened in 1955, the Clark houses exceptional European and American paintings and sculpture, extensive collections of master prints and drawings, English silver, and early photography. Acting as convener through its Research and Academic Program, the Clark gathers an international community of scholars to participate in a lively program of conferences, colloquia, and workshops on topics of vital importance to the visual arts. The Clark library, consisting of nearly 300,000 volumes, is one of the nation’s premier art history

libraries. The Clark also houses and co-sponsors the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art.

The Clark, which has a three-star rating in the Michelin Green Guide, is located at 225 South Street in Williamstown, Massachusetts. Its 140-acre campus includes miles of hiking and walking trails through woodlands and meadows, providing an exceptional experience of art in nature. Galleries are open 10 am to 5 pm Tuesday through Sunday from September through June, and daily in July and August. Admission is free to all from January through March. From April through December, admission is \$22 for adults, \$20 for seniors (65+), \$10 for young adults (18–25) and college students, and free for all visitors under 18. Admission is free year-round for Clark members. Free admission is also available through several programs, including First Sundays Free; a local library pass program; and EBT Card to Culture. For information on these programs and more, visit clarkart.edu or call 413 458 2303.

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