ARTNEWS

Magazzino, a New Home for Postwar Italian Art in Upstate New York, Announces Inaugural Show

BY Maximilíano Durón POSTED 02/27/17

Exterior of Magazzino, Cold Spring, New York. ©2016 MARCO ANELLI

Magazzino, a new home for Italian postwar and contemporary art in the Hudson Valley just north of New York City, will open to the public on June 28, with an exhibition dedicated to the influence and legacy of Margherita Stein, a late Italian dealer associated with artists active in Arte Povera circles and beyond.

Formally designated Magazzino for Italian Art (or "Warehouse for Italian Art"), the enterprise will feature a two-building, 18,000-square-foot campus on the former site of a dairy operation and later a computer factory. Located in the town of Cold Spring, about an hour north of the city along the Hudson River, Magazzino will be free to the public and open by appointment, timed to the Metro-North train schedule into the Cold Spring station.

The institution is the brainchild of Nancy Olnick and Giorgio Spanu, a couple who have collected postwar and contemporary Italian art for the past 30 years. The focus of the collection is to survey artists in depth, with examples of artworks spanning from the 1960s through the '80s and into the present.

Giorgio Spanu and Nancy Olnick. ©2016 MARCO ANELLI

The opening exhibition will look specifically at Italian artists who were associated with Stein and her influential Milan-based gallery, Christian Stein, with about 70 artworks spanning four decades of production. Among the artists included are Pier Paolo Calzolari, Luciano Fabro, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Giulio Paolini, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto, and the late Jannis Kounellis.

While work from the Arte Povera movement makes up a large part of the collection and what will be on display, Magazzino's director Vittorio Calabrese said, "I really want to make it clear: we're not opening the museum of Arte Povera. It's not a museum, first of all, and it's not just Arte Povera. That's how we look at this."

Stein, who took her husband's name for her gallery, first opened a space in her apartment in 1966 in Turin, then Italy's economic capital. "She was a newcomer and a woman, so she decided to use her husband's first and last name to be a gallerist," Calabrese said. "She took his name, maybe because she was not going to be considered credible as a women dealer." Decades later, in the '90s, she opened a space in New York with Barbara Gladstone called SteinGladstone.

Archival photograph of Margherita Stein (Christian Stein) surrounded by works by Jannis Kounellis, Luciano Fabro, and Michelangelo Pistoletto. MARIO SAROTTO

The director recounted a story of Alighiero Boetti's debut exhibition at Christian Stein, after which Stein bought the entire show. "She had a hard time selling the work to anyone who didn't fully understand what the work was about," Calabrese said.

In a way, Magazzino founders Olnick and Spanu are similar to Stein in their commitment to forging very personal "one-to-one relationships" with artists and their estates, Calabrese said. Before the two met, Olnick, a New Yorker, collected mainly postwar American and Pop art, while Spanu, an Italian who lived in Paris before moving to New York, collected European modern art, especially works by Picasso, Matisse, and Jean Dubuffet. After their marriage, they built up an extensive collection of Murano glass, which has been exhibited internationally.

Through their travels to Italy while building their collection, Olnick and Spanu gradually found an interest in postwar Italian art and became friends with many of the artists (or their estates) traditionally associated with Arte Povera as well as artists from later generations.

Giulio Paolini, *Amore e Psiche*, 1981.
AGOSTINO OSIO/©GIULIO PAOLINI/COURTESY MAGAZZINO ITALIAN ART, NEW YORK

The director of Magazzino stressed the operation will not be a private museum or a foundation. "We are opening a warehouse. We're not a foundation. Our mission is to share the collection of Nancy Olnick and Giorgio Spanu, to create an organization that will host the works," Calabrese told *ARTnews*.

In addition to exhibition space, which will change slowly—every few years or so, except for a rotating project room—Magazzino's main focus will be to provide opportunities for research into postwar Italian art. On Magazzino's campus will be a 5,000-volume library of magazines and exhibition catalogues focused on postwar and contemporary art, with plans to put the library catalog online and translate major essays into English. There are also plans to have additional programming including film screenings, events looking at Italian food and culture, and perhaps performances.

With a recent increase in interest in postwar Italian art, in the form of museum exhibitions, gallery shows, and market activity, Calabrese sees Magazzino's imminent opening as important—and none too soon. "What we want to do now is to catch-up," he said, "and try to tell the story of what was happening in Italy in the late '60s."