Franco Grignani: Art as Design 1950-1990
5 July – 10 September 2017
Press view: 5-6pm, Tuesday 4 July 2017
www.estorickcollection.com @Estorick

Best known for his swirling ‘Woolmark’ logo, Franco Grignani (1908-1999) was an influential artist and graphic designer whose dazzling works anticipated Op Art. This exhibition features around 130 paintings and works on paper, including his graphic design projects, on loan from private collections and the Manuela Grignani Sirtoli Archive. It runs at the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art from 5 July until 10 September 2017. A further exhibition of Grignani paintings will run at M&L Fine Art in London during June and July.

Like many experimental Italian painters, Grignani was briefly affiliated with the Futurist movement. He exhibited as part of the group from the mid-1920s, and in 1933 participated in the huge Great National Futurist Exhibition in Rome; however, most of his works from this period are now lost. After 1935 his work turned toward geometric abstraction, abandoning any lingering figurative elements.
Grignani studied both mathematics and architecture between the late 1920s and the early 1930s, before opening a studio in Milan that specialized in exhibition design and graphics. Over the years he produced advertising campaigns for a variety of high-profile companies, including Pirelli and Alfieri & Lacroix, and designed covers for a number of science fiction novels published by Penguin Books in the late 1960s. Alongside such commercial work he continued to create paintings which revealed a growing fascination with optical effects. His ideas were initially not understood by the artistic establishment, and he worked largely in isolation. His exploration of perceptual processes, largely inspired by Gestalt Psychology, was undertaken through both painting and photography. The works he made were characterized by their use of blurred forms, and warped and dynamic ‘virtual’ shapes that seem to emerge out of, and recede back into, the surfaces of his compositions.

Grignani’s most famous work was created in 1964, when the International Wool Secretariat (IWS) chose one of his studies as the winner of an international competition for a new logo. As a member of the jury, Grignani was unable to submit a design of his own, but had been so disappointed at the standard of the Italian entries that he submitted one under the pseudonym ‘Francesco Saroglia’. Acknowledged as one of the most recognizable, elegant and effective trademarks of all time, the design is based on a skein of wool, but its sinuous, twisted form – resembling a Möbius strip – also reflects Grignani’s interest in mathematics.

Notes to Editors

Franco Grignani at M&L Fine Art, London

A further exhibition of Grignani paintings will run at M&L Fine Art, 15 Old Bond Street, W1S 4AX from 1 June -28 July. The exhibition features around 20 paintings from the 1950s through to the 1970s. More details at www.mlfineart.com. Press information about M&L Fine Art from anya.harrison@kallaway.com

About the Estorick Collection

The Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art is internationally renowned for its core of Futurist works. It comprises some 120 paintings, drawings, watercolours, prints and sculptures by many of the most prominent Italian artists of the Modernist era. There are six galleries, two of which are used for temporary exhibitions. Since opening in 1998, the Estorick has established a reputation and gained critical acclaim as a key venue for bringing Italian art to the British public.

Estorick Listings information

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square, London N1 2AN
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www.estorickcollection.com Twitter: @Estorick

Opening Hours
Wednesdays-Saturdays 11.00-18.00, Sundays 12.00-17.00
Closed Mondays & Tuesdays
Admission: £6.50, Concs £4.50. Includes entry to exhibition and permanent collection.
Transport: Victoria Line, Overground and Great Northern to Highbury & Islington

Image caption: Grandangolare, 1965

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