

**PALAZZO DELLE PAURE**  
Lecco, Piazza XX Settembre 22

## **Franco Cardinali. Inquietudine necessaria**

*curated by Raffaella Resch*

**29 June - 1 September 2019**

opening Friday 28 June, 6pm

*press release, 26.06.2019*

The city of **Lecco** pays homage to Franco Cardinali with the anthological exhibition "Franco Cardinali. Inquietudine necessaria" (*Franco Cardinali. An Essential Anxiety*) held at Palazzo delle Paure from 29 June to 1 September 2019.

The exhibition of **around forty works** ranging from the works of the mid-1950s to the great **enigmatic canvases of recent years**, prior to the Ligurian artist's death in 1985, provides a survey of his work and follows the important posthumous exhibition held at the Brera Academy in 1989 and the recent retrospective at Palazzo dei Giureconsulti in Milan.

The exhibition route is chronological and thematic, illustrating distinct phases, decisive changes, daring insights, and a precise and clear expression of his powerful personality. As the curator Raffaella Resch affirms «His work from the period between the late 1950s and early '60s - as the oil on canvas *Saint Hilaire* of 1955 - was conditioned by the search for an original figurative style, which saw the emergence of bas-relief features from early Christian statuary, immediately abandoned in favour of a closer study of materials. His experimentation continued to hybridise the painted canvas with the three-dimensionality of sculpture, yet it irreversibly shifted the fulcrum of representation: the artwork was no longer an object created to simulate another but became instead the protagonist».

Surfaces became thick and were treated with deep lacerations or craters, as if the elements could be unleashed on the body of the painting: fire could incinerate as in *Fleur incinérée* of 1968, water could wash away as in *Linge sale pour laver en famille* from '82, and air could raise clouds of iridescent dust, as in the 1983's work *Site cosmique aux reflets d'aurore*. «Cardinali's canvases - continues Resch - delved beyond the visible dimension, inflicting deep wounds that seem to pierce the surface, akin to Fontana's cuts. The dense material Cardinali began to use at the end of the 1960s quickly evolved into sand mixed with casein and pigments, passing from an inert state to one that was made active and experimental by burning (but unlike Burri's combustions, Cardinali's were 'reproduced' in paint), dessication, and scraping and impressing the surface. The artwork was transformed into a living organism and part of the mystery of an increasingly complex cosmos».

Conversely, images became simpler, iconic, like a private symbolism translated into universal signs, such as circles, sine waves and crosses. In this respect *Fossil lunaire* from 1967, *Trames liguriennes* from 1968 and *Segnale propiziatorio* of 1977 are significant, in addition to works

inspired by the natural world, composed of environments and animals that create curious and disturbing bestiaries, like fossils imprinted on the canvas, and reveal a personal and artistic dissatisfaction that is evident from the deep hatching, from the restless landscapes and from the rippling of the surfaces. The dimensions and weight of the canvases radically increased, as if they were the new dolmens of a temple that Cardinali was dedicating to his unquiet art, which seemed to demand either a redemption or a sacrifice.

Organized by the **Municipality of Lecco - Sistema Museale Urbano Lecchese**, the **Chamber of Commerce of Como-Lecco** and the **Associazione Culturale Franco Cardinali**, the exhibition reveals the artistic view of an artist whose works belong to important public institutions and private collections in Italy, Europe and the United States.

The event has the **patronage** of the Council of Chiusi della Verna and the Aquileia UNESCO Club.

A comprehensive bilingual **catalogue**, Italian-English, published by Scalpendi Editore, completes the exhibition. It displays all the works on display as well as a rich selection of the artist's production, with a critical text by Raffaella Resch and a testimony by the artist's friend Benito Boschetto.

**Short biography. Franco Cardinali** (1926-1985) was born in Rapallo, Liguria, in 1926. He moved to Paris in 1950. In 1953, he debuted in Milan with a solo exhibition at the Galleria San Babila and two years later displayed together with the artists of the Cité Vercingetorix, with the support of Jean Cocteau, with whom he began a strong friendship, and met Jacques Prévert: both promoted him in the artistic environments of Paris and the Côte d'Azur. In the summers of 1955 and 1956, Cardinali took part in the exuberant artistic activity of Vallauris and displayed at the Charpentier Gallery in the group *École de Paris* (*School of Paris*), with works selected by Raymond Nacenta. Then he met the great Picasso.

He divided his time between Vallauris and Paris until 1968, when a deep need for solitude led him to move to Tuscany in a village in the mountains, La Rocca della Verna, where he built his house and studio and went on with his research for twelve years.

In November 1980, still torn apart by dissatisfaction, he left for the Côte d'Azur to visit his friend Jean Haechler, who then became his mentor and Maecenas. He moved to Saint Paul de Vence permanently in 1982 and in December held a solo exhibition in Nice, followed by one in Geneva in February 1983, one in Paris in March and one in Sion, Switzerland, in April. His last exhibition was in June, a solo one in Saint Paul de Vence. He committed suicide on 12 April 1985, aged only 59 years old. In 1989 the Brera Academy of Fine Arts dedicated a posthumous exhibition to him by Osvaldo Patani.

The Associazione Culturale Franco Cardinali, founded in 2018, started the creation of an archive of the artist's works, becoming a reference point for European and American public and private collections.

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### **Exhibition details**

**Title** Franco Cardinali. Inquietudine necessaria

**Curated by** Raffaella Resch

**Venue** Palazzo delle Paure, Piazza XX Settembre 22, Lecco

**Dates** 29 June - 1 September 2019

**Opening** Friday 28 June, 6pm

**Opening Hours** Tue-Fri 9.30am-7pm | Sat-Sun 10am-7pm | Monday closed

**Entrance** € 2,00

**Catalogue** Scalpendi Editore

**Info to the public** [www.museilecco.org](http://www.museilecco.org)

Tel. +39 0341 286729

[segreteria.museo@comune.lecco.it](mailto:segreteria.museo@comune.lecco.it)

[cultura.turismo@comolecco.camcom.it](mailto:cultura.turismo@comolecco.camcom.it)

### **Press office**

**IBC Irma Bianchi Communication**

Ph. +39 02 8940 4694 - mob. + 39 328 5910857 - [info@irmabianchi.it](mailto:info@irmabianchi.it)

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