

M&L FINE ART

Carla Accardi *Sicofoil*

11 February – 8 May 2020



~~MONDAY 20 APRIL 2020 at 7PM~~

Postponed June 2020 – dates to be confirmed

Carla Accardi *and her legacy*

Laura Cherubini, Flavia Frigeri, and Hans Ulrich Obrist
in conversation

ITALIAN CULTURE INSTITUTE, 39 BELGRAVE SQUARE, SW1X 8NT

reception to follow

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"I began in '65. The transition took place while working with fluorescent colour: through the use of colour, I produced light, and so I thought: 'Why not produce light with a material?' I found sicofoil, a clear and bright material. Other artists moved on to neon."

Interview by Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Carla Accardi: To Dig Deep", *Flash Art*, May 2008, pp. 96-99

LONDON -- M&L Fine Art presents a monographic exhibition showcasing Carla Accardi's seminal sicofoil works, featuring ten paintings from the 1960s and 1970s. This is the first solo presentation of the artist's work in the United Kingdom since 1961, timed to coincide with a major retrospective at Museo del Novecento, Milan (March 27 – August 30, 2020). *Carla Accardi: Sicofoil* will be the second in a series yearly series of research projects focusing on post-war Italian artists' use of radical materials, following *Aldo Mondino: Linoleum* in Spring 2019.

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Born in Trapani, Sicily, but Rome-based for most of her life, Carla Accardi (1924 – 2014) is today acknowledged among Italy's most important post-war artists. Over the course of a rigorous, poetic and conceptually informed career lasting nearly seven decades, Accardi developed a radical and sophisticated painterly syntax in which the formal and conceptual elements of style were made to embrace rather than conflict. Her paintings and extraordinary environments made using sicofoil, a flexible, translucent plastic developed during Italy's post-war industrial renaissance, were begun in 1965 and have since become the artist's most iconic works.

Following a brief period at the Accademia in Florence, where she met her future husband, painter Antonio Sanfilippo, Carla Accardi moved to Rome in 1946, immersing herself in the young and ambitious art scene of the war-scarred capital. Accardi was a Marxist, a feminist, and a cultural nomad who in the 1970s spent extended periods in Morocco, incorporating the rhythm and sensuality of northern Africa in her work.

Alert to the neo avant-garde tendencies of Art Informel, Abstract Expressionism, Arte Povera and Conceptual Art, Carla Accardi maintained a meaningful dialogue with her leading contemporaries in Italy and abroad. In the 1950s she visited Hans Hartung and Jean Fautrier in Paris, and later met Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock and Philip Guston in Rome.

Through her association with Carla Lonzi, the influential author and critic, she campaigned for the visibility of women artists. In 1976 she organized a significant exhibition on Artemisia Gentileschi in Rome, three years before Yvon Lambert's *Mot pour Mot: Artemisia* exhibition in Paris in 1979.

In 1986 she was invited by Jan Hoet to participate in the seminal exhibition *Chambres d'amis* in Gent, where she showed a large sicofoil installation across from a Dan Graham outdoor pavilion and alongside some of the most important European and American conceptual and minimalist artists.



Tenda, 1965-66. Paint on sicofoil, 215 x 220 x 140



Dimenticare mettersi in salvo, 1978.

Yet, Accardi is one of those rare practitioners who resist classification, whose work glides through movements and decades without conflict, and with an irresistible clarity and intensity of vision. As contemporary Italian artist Paola Pivi states in Laura Cherubini's contribution to the exhibition catalogue: "Carla does nothing to persuade you that her art is interesting. And her work is further enriched by this immeasurable freedom."

Enraptured by the industrial plastic sheets of sicofoil being delivered to her studio by a fashion house in the 1960s, Carla seized the opportunity to integrate this found medium in her practice, claiming: "I wanted to make transparent what was around us."¹ Forever reaching beyond the confines of the picture plane, Accardi also fashioned the painted sicofoil sheets into free-standing cylinders, cones, and extraordinary tents: metaphors for the body and symbols of the cultural nomadism at play in advanced conceptual practice.

¹ Carla Accardi quoted in "La vita non è arte. L'arte è vita," interview by Paolo Vagheggi, in Danilo Eccher, ed., *Carla Accardi*, (Milano: Mondadori Electa, 2004), 96-121.

The earliest painting on view, *Arancio-arancio*, belongs to a group of works made between 1965 and 1966, in which Accardi laid down sicofoil sheets onto a primed canvas and completed the painted image with uniform, graphic brushstrokes, made using the same shade of household varnish.

Beginning in 1967, Accardi pushed the disappearance of the conventional picture plane further, towards an expanse of pure colour and light, by fastening the sicofoil sheets directly onto the stretcher. In *Segni oro* (1967), *Due ori* (1968), and *Oro* (1972), sicofoil is at once sign and signifier, pertaining simultaneously to the plane of content and to the plane of expression.

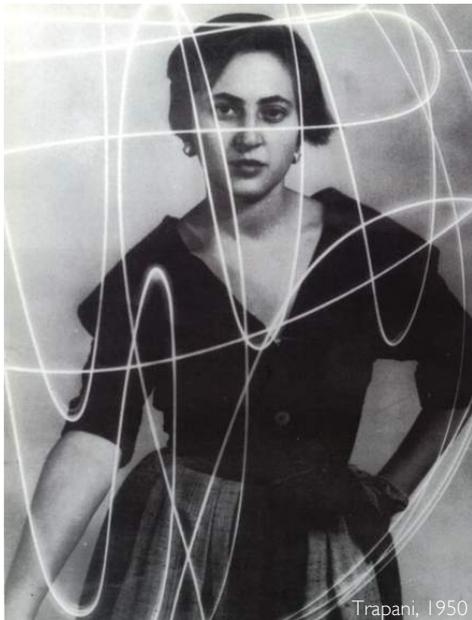


Carla Accardi, *Rotoli*, 1966-72.

In *Segni grigi* (1972), the negotiation of grey signs with the translucency of sicofoil on the pictorial surface exposes not only the artist's sophisticated investigations of colour but also an exacerbation of the ontological tension between painting's condition as visible object *and* metaphysical plane. This emerges most compellingly in Accardi's interwoven sicofoil sheets, culminating in the 1974 and 1975 transparent works on view, onto which she does not interfere pictorially at all. With the bare layering of surface, Accardi refers directly to the brightness of the wall and of the entire space, while the painting itself, at the furthest point of sublimation, disappears and is transmuted into pure light.

Until her sudden death at age eighty-nine, in 2014, Carla Accardi continued to push the boundaries of the artistic territories she inhabited. Whether reconfiguring her own works, as in the case of *Rosaverdenero*, (2008, originally made 1968), or variously alternating between opaque and translucent surfaces, in two and three-dimensions, Accardi's practice continued to shape painting "in the manner of Ariadne's thread, which is bound up with changing one's awareness of oneself."²

The exhibition "Carla Accardi: Sicofoil" is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue with newly commissioned texts by Laura Cherubini and Flavia Frigeri, and an interview with the artist by Hans Ulrich Obrist.



Trapani, 1950

In Spring 2020, Carla Accardi (1924-2014) will be the subject of a comprehensive retrospective at Museo del Novecento, Milan (27 March – 30 August).

Her work has been featured in seminal group exhibitions including The Venice Biennale (1948, 1964, 1976, 1978, 1988, 1993); "Italics: Italian Art between Tradition and Revolution 1968-2008," Palazzo Grassi, Venice, 27 September 2008 – 22 March 2009, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 18 July – 25 October 2009; "Roma 1948-1959; Arte cronaca e cultura dal Neorealismo alla Dolce Vita," curated by Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco and Claudia Terenzi, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 30 January – 27 May 2002; "The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943-1968," curated by Germano Celant, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 7 October 1994 – 29 January 1995, Kunstmuseum, Wolfsburg, 22 April – 13 August 1995; "Italian Art in the 20th Century," curated by Germano Celant and Norman Rosenthal, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 14 January – 9 April 1989; "Chambres d'amis," curated by Jan Hoet, Museum van Hedendaagse, Ghent, 21 June – 21 September 1986.

² Germano Celant, *Carla Accardi: The Life of Forms*, (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2011), 63.

One-person presentations include "Carla Accardi. Smarrire I fili della voce," curated by Laura Cherubini, Castelbasso, Torun, Budapest, Thessaloniki, and Athens, 2012 – 2014; "Carla Accardi. Segno e trasparenza," curated by Luca Massimo Barbero, Fondazione Puglisi Cosentino, Catania, 6 February – 12 June 2011; "Carla Accardi," curated by Danilo Eccher, MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Rome, Rome, 19 September 2004 – 9 January 2005; "Carla Accardi," curated by Laurence Bossé and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Musee d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, 17 January – 3 March 2002; "Carla Accardi. Triplice tenda," curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York, 20 May – 3 September 2001; "Carla Accardi," curated by Bruno Racine and Zerynthia Associazione per l'Arte Contemporanea, Accademia di Francia, Atelier del Bosco di Villa Medici, Rome, 18 December 1997 – 12 January 1998; "Carla Accardi," curated by Ida Gianelli and Giorgio Verzotti, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli, 24 June – 28 August 1994.

A catalogue raisonné by Germano Celant was published in two volumes in 1999 and 2011.

Laura Cherubini is Professor of Contemporary Art History at Accademia di Brera, Milan, since 1992. Further teaching posts include Università La Sapienza and LUISS Guido Carli, both Rome. A student of Giulio Carlo Argan and Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, she has produced extensive research on post-war and contemporary Italian art and curated a number of significant group and solo exhibitions on its protagonists both in her home country and abroad.

A personal friend of the artist, Cherubini curated the last touring exhibition of Carla Accardi's work during the artist's lifetime. "Carla Accardi. Smarrire I fili della voce," which inaugurated in 2012 at Fondazione Malvina Menegaz per le Arti e le Culture, Castelbasso, subsequently travelled to Torun, Budapest, Thessaloniki, and Athens, finally closing on 9 February 2014, two weeks before Accardi's death. Additionally, Cherubini curated "Carla Accardi. Si adagiarono sparse," Magazzino d'Arte Moderna, Rome, 28 March – 30 April 2004.

In 1990 Laura Cherubini curated the Italian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, winning the Premio Carluccio per la giovane critica. Additional curatorial projects include institutional exhibitions of Alighiero Boetti, Gino De Dominicis, Fabio Mauri, Vettor Pisani, and Gino Marotta. From 2005 to 2007 she directed the contemporary art programme of ING-Calcofrafia Nazionale, Roma. From 2011 to 2017 Cherubini was Vice President of MADRE, Naples.

In addition to her activity as critic for Flash Art, Cherubini's selected monographic texts include writings on Gino De Dominicis, Ettore Spalletti, Grazia Toderi, Massimo Bartolini, Paola Pivi, Fabio Mauri, Vettor Pisani, and Alighiero Boetti. For the publishing house Marinotti, Milan, Cherubini directed the series "Le chiavi dell'arte." Among the subjects of her numerous essays and interviews are Salvatore Scarpitta, Mimmo Rotella, Mario Ceroli, Franco Angeli, Mario Schifano, Giulio Paolini, Getulio Alviani, Giorgio Griffa, Jannis Kounellis and Cy Twombly, among others.

Flavia Frigeri is an Art Historian and Curator, currently Teaching Fellow in the History of Art department at University College London. Prior to that she served as a Curator, International Art (2014-16) and Assistant Curator (2011-14) at Tate Modern, where she worked on exhibitions, acquisitions and permanent collection displays. She co-curated (with Jessica Morgan) *The World Goes Pop* (2015). At Tate Modern she was also responsible for: *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs* (2014), *Paul Klee: Making Visible* (2013) and *Ruins in Reverse* (2013).

From 2010 to 2011 she was the recipient of the prestigious Hilla Rebay International Fellowship from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

She has published articles and catalogue essays on a range of subjects including, post-war European art with a focus on Italian art, pop art and exhibition histories. She is currently working on a book investigating Rome's post-war visual landscape and co-editing a volume of collected essays *New Histories of Art in the Global Postwar Era: Multiple Modernisms*, texts which originated in a symposium held at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Humlebæk, Copenhagen in 2017.

Between 2018 and 2019, she published two books, *Pop Art and Women Artists* as part of the Art Essentials series edited by Thames & Hudson.

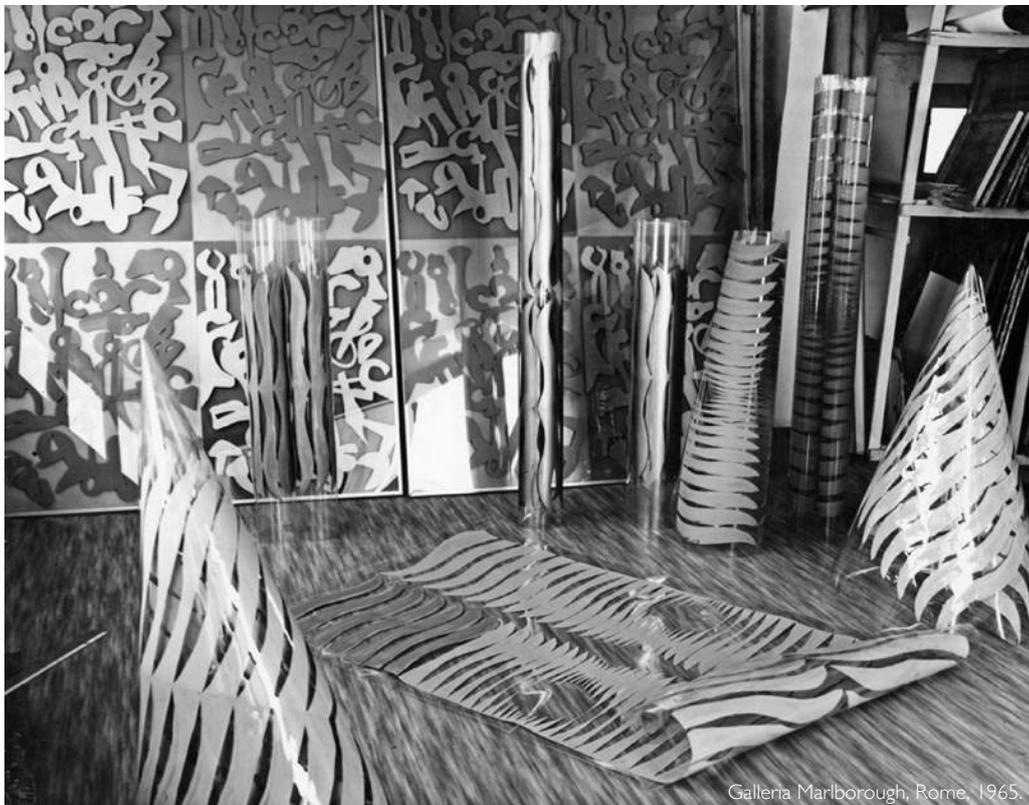
As an independent curator, her recent curatorial work includes: *Carol Rama: Eye of Eyes* (Lévy Gorvy, New York, 2019), *Boom: Art and Industry in 1960s Italy* (Tornabuoni, London, 2018) *Invisible Cities* (Waddington Custot, London, 2018) and *Evolutionary Travels* the inaugural show of Fundacion Arte in Buenos Aires in 2016. She is currently curating exhibitions for Dia Art Foundation, New York, MACBA - Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona and Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center, Moscow.

M&L Fine Art, the London outpost of Matteo Lampertico Arte Antica e Moderna, was founded in 15 Old Bond Street in 2015. The gallery specialises in Modern and Contemporary art, with a focus on distinctive and historically relevant works by Italian artists.

From its exhibition spaces in the heart of Mayfair, M&L Fine Art is an international platform for innovative perspectives on Carla Accardi, Agostino Bonalumi, Antonio Calderara, Enrico Castellani, Lucio Fontana, Leoncillo, Piero Manzoni, Giorgio Morandi, Giulio Paolini, Angelo Savelli and Salvatore Scarpitta, among others.

In the Fall of 2019, M&L Fine Art presented an exceptional single-owner collection of works by Max Ernst, with a catalogue featuring a newly commissioned text by Dr Jürgen Pech and a lecture by Professor Dawn Adès. The gallery calendar is complemented by participation in International art fairs, including TEFAF Maastricht 2020, and an educational programme of events and lectures.

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Galleria Marlborough, Rome, 1965.