

Lucio Fontana



Biography

Lucio Fontana is a European artist best known for his slashed canvases from his *Tagli* (Cut) series. Born in Argentina in 1899 to Italian immigrant parents, he spent his early life in Milan, where he attended school and later volunteered for the Italian Army during the First World War. His father Luigi was a sculptor and his mother, Lucia Bottino, was a theater actress. Fontana began his artistic career when he moved back to Argentina in 1921 and began working as a sculptor in his father's studio, which specialized in creating sculptures for graveyards.

Fontana didn't consider himself to be either a painter or a sculptor; he was much more interested in light and space and wanted to be a "spatial artist". In 1946, Fontana founded the *Accademia di Altamira*, from which emerged the "Manifesto bianco" (White manifesto, 1946). In collaboration with a group of writers and philosophers, he signed the "Primo manifesto dello spazialismo" (First manifesto of spatialism) and is considered the founder of the Spatialism art movement.

He spent the WWII years in Argentina and when he returned to Milan, he found that his entire studio had been destroyed. He saw this as a new beginning, however, and in 1949 using a canvas for the first time in his career (at 50 years old), he had his great epiphany. By puncturing the canvas and thereby destroying the 2-dimensional wall, Fontana had

created his most iconic idea: the slash. His single slash, which he called "attesa" meaning waiting or expectation, was a type of door towards infinity. During the 1950s, Fontana explored working with various techniques, such as slashing and perforating, in both painting and sculpture. The fact that he cut through the canvas, opening the canvas to a third dimension, was - and remains today - one of the most radical gestures in the canon in art history.

In the final years of his career, Fontana became increasingly nomadic in his approach to mediums, and increasingly interested in the blurring of boundaries. He explored this in the staging of his work in the many exhibitions that honored him worldwide. These concerns were prominent at the 1966 Venice Biennale, for which he designed the environment for his work, and at the 1968 Documenta, Kassel, West Germany. Fontana died in September 1969 at the age of 69.

Fontana's legacy as one of the most innovative and influential artists of the 20th Century was recently cemented by major exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, and the Hangar Pirelli Biocca in Milan.

Market

Despite working in a variety of mediums, with each bringing their own unique aspect to Fontana's oeuvre, he remains best known for his slashed monochromatic painted canvases, better known as the *Concetto spaziale* works. They are extremely sought after by collectors around the world. His most prized works are generally monochromatic red and white cut paintings. A bright yellow 1964 oval work, titled *Concetto Spaziale, La Fine di Dio*, was sold for a record \$29.2 million at Christie's in 2015. Fontana's works can be found in the permanent collections of more than 180 museums, including Tate Modern in London, the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome, the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

Since 2004, more than 200 Fontana works sold at auction have surpassed the \$1 million sale price. Between 2007 and 2021, 207 of Fontana's paintings sold for \$803.4 million. In the same period, the value of comparable artworks increased at a compound annual growth rate of 11.8% annually, according to Athena's analysis.

Career Highlights

Sole Shows at Major Institutions
Centre Pompidou, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and more.

Group Shows at Major Institutions
Museum of Modern Art, Stedelijk Museum, National Gallery of Victoria, Museo Reina Sofia, and more.

Collected by Major Institutions
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Dallas Museum of Art, Tate Modern, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and more.

Selected Works



Concetto spaziale, Attese, 1967, Collection of The Menil Collection



Concetto spaziale, Attese, 1968, Collection of The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Market Snapshot

