Fissare and Guardare: Italian Art in the Long 1960s (online, 18 Sep 25)

Online, Sep 18, 2025
Deadline: Apr 30, 2025

Ambra D'Antone

Call for Papers: “Fissare and Guardare: Italian Art in the Long 1960s”
Online Workshop
Curated by Dr Ambra D’Antone
Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice

Tentative date: 18 September 2025

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection will host a closed online workshop scheduled for September 2025, dedicated to exploring the multifaceted landscape of Italian art during the long 1960s, and organized by Dr. Ambra D'Antone, Curatorial Assistant. D’Antone is curating the forthcoming exhibition "Fissare and Guardare: Italian Art in the Long 1960s” (working title), which will open at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Autumn 2027. The workshop will create a platform for scholars to share original research about the artistic idioms and intellectual trends in Italy in the long 1960s, delving into themes that the exhibition will center.

The exhibition will showcase the wealth of Italian artworks in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation’s holdings that are housed at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, presenting them alongside loans from public and private collections. Fissare and Guardare will reconsider established artists and canonical artworks, as well as introduce unfamiliar figures and works, paying particular attention to the relationship between artistic creation, societal processes, and cultural memory during an extended decade of profound socio-political and economic change.

Alongside well-known artists such as Carla Accardi, Enrico Baj, Sergio Dangelo, Lucio Fontana, Bice Lazzari, Piero Manzoni, Gastone Novelli, Achille Perilli, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Tancredi, and Toti Scialoja, the presentation will also include rarely seen works by Lucio Saffaro and Adriano Spatola, as well as little-known early creations by Claudio Parmiggiani (among others). The exhibition will also showcase cultural magazines such as Appia Antica, Azimuth, Documento Sud, Ex, Il Gesto, L’Esperienza Moderna, Linea Sud, Malebolge, and Marcatré—which combined visual arts with poetry, artistic criticism, and social commentary—to draw parallels between word and image within the exhibition spaces.

By foregrounding the close collaborations between artists, poets, writers, and intellectuals during this period, the exhibition will seek to illuminate artists’ engagement with their socio-political contexts, continuities with the historical avant-garde, and new tactics when working with diverse medi-

ums—including painting, sculpture, drawing, collage, and even concrete or visual poetry—in response to the cultural needs and political ferment of their time. The exhibition builds on Gastone Novelli's declaration of the artist's labor as a dual act of fissare (fixing or staring at something) and guardare (looking):

"a painter is only an intermediary, an individual who grabs something from the most hidden truth […] and fixes its present and its future essence into an image to be looked at. Within these two acts, fissare (to fix upon) and guardare (to look at), is the relationship between who creates and who enjoys that creation, the artist and the society in which they live." (1957)

As part of the exhibition's aim to offer new perspectives on the methods Italian artists deployed during this extended decade, we hope this workshop will foster dialogue and pioneering research on these topics. We invite papers covering a wide range of subjects, including but not limited to the following areas of inquiry:

Italy in the Long 1960s

- The "long 1960s" in Italian history of art, architecture, and design.
- The active "periphery:" centers of cultural production beyond Rome, Florence, Venice, Milan.

Artistic responses to Society, Politics, and the Economy

- The spectrum of political engagement in Italian art, from large-scale paintings to ephemeral urban performances and disposable posters for demonstrations.
- Artists' responses to ecological concerns in the changing Italian landscape.
- The aesthetics, politics, and ecology of the space race and space exploration
- The role of collaborative efforts between poets, writers, and intellectuals in shaping new artistic paradigms through debates, performance, publications etc.

The Avant-Garde

- Examination of group manifestoes and artistic statements or contributions to cultural magazines such as Azimuth, Documento Sud, Il Gesto, L'Esperienza Moderna, Linea Sud, Malebolge, and Marcatré etc.
- Deepening the historical understanding of the self-reflexive relationship between so-called "neo avant-gardes" and historical avant-garde movements of the 1910s-1920s.
- The enduring power of specific figures such as Francis Picabia, Kurt Schwitters, Paul Klee etc. on Italian artists.

Art as Medium and Mediator

- The conceptual and material innovations to art making Italian artists introduced in the long 1960s.
- Explorations of "new" mediums (concrete poetry, sculpture employing innovative materials, mixed-media works, etc.) as platforms for intellectual and political expression.
- Semiotics and linguistics as part of innovative artistic vocabularies.

Re-Orientations

- The abiding inspiration provided by a fictitious “Orient” and its reimagined dimensions in the 1960s: a perceived “Eastern” aesthetics, Zen philosophy, explorations of calligraphy, references to archaeological findings, etc.
- Dialogue with the Japanese Bokujinkai group and other artistic practices beyond Europe and the United States.

Artists

Carla Accardi, Enrico Baj, Sergio Dangelo, Lucio Fontana, Ketty La Rocca, Bice Lazzari, Piero Manzoni, Gastone Novelli, Claudio Parmiggiani, Achille Perilli, Arnaldo Pomodoro, Carol Rama, Lucio Saffaro, Toti Scialoja, Adriano Spatola, Patrizia Vicinelli.

Magazines

Appia Antica, Arti Visive, Azimuth, Documento Sud, Ex, Il Gesto, L’Esperienza Moderna, Linea Sud, Malebolge, Marcatré, mETRO.

Submission Guidelines:
We welcome papers from scholars at all career stages. Please submit abstracts in English of no more than 300 words along with a 100-word biography by April 30, 2025 to adantone@guggenheim-venice.it

The workshop will take place online in September 2025 (date TBC). Please send inquiries to adantone@guggenheim-venice.it

Reference:
CFP: Fissare and Guardare: Italian Art in the Long 1960s (online, 18 Sep 25). In: ArtHist.net, Feb 24, 2025 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/44038>.