

## Toti Scialoja

(Rome, 1914 –1998)

The three paintings by Toti Scialoja were acquired for the CRT Collection in order to fill a gap in the GAM holdings and are significant for reasons that go beyond their high quality. Scialoja was more than a painter, at a time when theoretical and critical ideas went hand in hand with artistic creation, to a greater degree than was ever possible before or after. “There seems to me to be no doubt that Toti Scialoja belongs to a rare species of *peintres philosophes*,” Giuliano Briganti wrote in 1979, “a very ancient and noble species, not always easy to approach, one of arduous and conflicted itineraries, armed with considerable erudition and profound discipline.” His works emerge from a deep understanding of earlier art and from an ability, which did not cease to amaze the New York art world, to thoroughly grasp the reasons behind the painting of the Abstract Expressionists.

Scialoja, in addition to having written art criticism, collections of poetry, and theoretical writings on poetry and theater, left us his *Giornale di Pittura*, where he recorded his meditations between 1954 and 1964, his most fertile and mature period, during which he was an active presence in New York.

*Irregolare (Irregular)*, 1957, belongs to a series of paintings that, according to the artist, he began that year while staying on the island of Procida, and where he first used a “molding” technique. During this period he became dissatisfied with making paintings with the canvas nailed to the floor, a technique clearly reminiscent of Pollock; almost by chance, or in a dream, as he wrote, a sheet of newspaper covered with paint ended up on the canvas: “it was the solution that apparently abolished any ‘choice’ on my part and entrusted my intervention on the surface solely to an ‘act of fate.’” The other two canvases, *Ripetizione ex ira (Former Rage Repetition)* and *Estate seconda (Summer Two)*, both 1959, reveal a language and technique that have already changed, where there is a return to a more precise composition in order to give the work a rhythm capable of relating at a glance the development and duration of the pictorial action: “Time summarized in repeated ‘impressions’ represented for me a ‘solidification’ of Abstract Expressionism,” he wrote, again in his *Giornale*. “Expressionism was brought back to its basic rationale: time was marked on the surface, as the primary reason for that activity.” (EV)