

## Giuseppe Capogrossi

(Rome 1900 — 1972)

Independent, unaffiliated with any school, and uninvolved with manifestos or proclamations, Giuseppe Capogrossi was an anomalous figure in Rome in the 1950s, to the point of being almost isolated. His work took an innovative turn when he was forty years old, following two years of experimentation, during which he focused on freeing his art from representational or metaphorical relationships. Turning decisively away from his earlier figurative and tonal work, in 1950 Capogrossi began producing paintings characterized by an innovative language of signs. Described by some writers as the tines of a fork or a comb, according to Gillo Dorfles, Capogrossi's signs are not "discursive" and do not refer to a specific content of a logical or scientific nature, but rather only signify themselves. *Superficie 141 (Surface 141)*, 1955, has a strong vertical emphasis and is traversed vertically and horizontally in its middle sections by a dense sequence of parallel lines, punctuated by red markings. This central motif claims a space that remains autonomous from the dense weave of signs, articulated in black and brown, that covers the remaining portions of the canvas. Structured with the "teeth" shapes turned alternately upward and downward, wedged against each other, and leaving empty as little space as possible, the signs seem to continue beyond the edges of the canvas, almost as if the work has an arbitrary cutoff in terms of the signs' unstoppable proliferation. Despite the aforementioned autonomy from any possible metaphorical references, it is difficult to resist the temptation to read the work as a fragment from a civilization belonging to a distant past, whose alphabet has yet to be deciphered. (MB)