

## Lucio Fontana

(Rosario di Santa Fe, Argentina, 1899 — Comabbio, Varese, 1968)

Fontana is one of those artists whose wealth of ideas are channeled into an all-encompassing creative impulse that art history, perhaps overly dependent on schematism, transforms into a dialectic, or even a split, between different expressions, failing to recognize them as the development of an organic path. These expressions, while diverse, nonetheless result from the powerful unified nature of a single impetus that reverberates in multiple types of forms, ranging from the artist's abstract research in the 1930s to his ceramic production, often defined as baroque or *rocaille*, to works of unusual imaginative freedom that emerge from his spatialist poetics. *Concetto Spaziale (Spatial Concept)*, 1962, is the oldest of his three works in the collection. The canvas, painted white, has numerous large holes, close together, at the center of a circular design scratched into the surface. They are the result of an act of rupturing the painting's spatiality, an activity the painter began in 1949. Fontana's perforation — a way out of a mental approach that had become too constricting for an artist who was aware of the propulsive potential that science and technology were offering him — uses the strokes of the awl to achieve the promise of space that lies hidden beyond the screen of the painting. The full complexity of Fontana's art unfolds between the nature of the word 'concept' in the title, used by the artist countless times, and the quality of the firm action of the hand, which grips and hammers the awl. "Entitling many of his works 'concepts,'" Paolo Fossati wrote in 1970, "Fontana does not privilege an intellectual or mental moment, but, on the contrary, brings our attention back, even in the title, to such an inextricable incidence between concept and operation, between thought and action, that he is able to show how no immediate intervention takes place without a concept, and that one cannot propose to oneself or to others any concept without providing it, verifying it, inventing it in a concrete intervention." This is also where the distance lies between his work and the gestural adventures of *informel* painting of the postwar period. Nor perhaps can his holes and cuts be described as gestures; they are more strictly acts, operations of a cognitive nature. And all the destructiveness they can demonstrate on the surface has little to do with the violence of unleashed gesturalism. The *Teatrini (Little Theaters)* series, to which the two other works in the collection belong, confirms this union of action and concept, returning the screen of the canvas to the value of backdrop and the artist's action to a practice of disclosure of the time and the space that spreads beyond the fictions of the pictorial stage. (EV)