

Gastone Novelli

(Vienna, 1925 – Milan 1968)

Painted in 1957, '58 and '59, the three works by Gastone Novelli acquired by the CRT Foundation respond to needs not very unlike those that would animate the period of *Art Informel* and Abstract Expressionism, where artists seem to embark on a search for painting's ground zero. But in Novelli's work this search, which others carry out within the closed perimeters of form or in the gestural expression of silent, pre-linguistic feeling, becomes a path toward the sign-related and mythic genesis of thought, action, and painting itself.

The work of other artists and the theories of critics from other countries had led to a formulization of poetics that spoke of flatness, of two-dimensionality, necessary for any painting that wanted to be authentic. In Novelli's work, however, this impulse leads to the creation of pictorial surfaces that are as stratified as ancient palimpsests, where every different material film, every sheet of collage, and the very surface of the raw canvas paradoxically become coexisting levels of that ground zero, and where it is not absence or essentiality that is manifested, but rather origins, as infinite as the time from which reality arises. In the work of other Italian painters during this same period, that sense of time emerges in the body of the work, to bear witness to the process contained within it and to the duration and rhythms of the creative action. In Novelli's work, however, it takes the form of a mental dimension, a time without history, where the ancient and the recent mix on a horizontal plane that has no depth and that knows no successions or cause and effect sequences, but extends indefinitely like an empyrean of letters, signs, and symbols, all paratactic appearances, like the phrases of an oracle.

For Novelli neither history nor biography exist. Everything is explained solely in terms of coexistence, in the epiphany and evidence of the now. A passage he wrote in 1958 might serve as a haughty countermelody to the following brief note: "Gastone Novelli was born studied exhibited his paintings, transports the gesture into meaning etc... All this is detestable, boring and excessive. [...] Perhaps the truest thing is that one contributes to the world only with one's own presence and that this act of painting, like all others more-over, is justified in the very moment when it is accomplished." (EV)