

Giorgio Griffa

(Turin, 1936)

On the basis of his work's elemental style, it can be said that "Giorgio Griffa's paintings deal with painting," indicating with a tautology the essence of an artistic investigation that has continued consistently for almost fifty years. Having grown up amid the cultural climate of Turin in the 1960s, Griffa shared with other artists a reaction to Art Informel and the need to "cool down" its temperature, shifting attention to the very elements of paintings. In his first exhibition, held at the Galleria Martano in Turin in April 1968, Griffa's work already stood out for its abstract sign, executed in monochrome or even achrome colors, when reduced to white, applied to raw canvas.

The following year, on the occasion of his solo show at the Sperone Gallery, the artist eliminated even the stretcher frame and decided to show canvases in a condition more similar to the state when he painted them. "Letting painting have its values," Griffa has said, regarding his decision to utilize as tools signs "that belong to everyone's hand," and attributing equal value to color, brush, palette knife, and canvas and its materiality. Space and time are two other fundamental components, in that every work proposes, in different ways, the idea of a suspended sequence, or rather a sequence in the process of unfolding, where every drawn sign is like a step made to measure the space according to an inner tempo, defined through its own process.

The three works *Canone aureo 820*, *Canone aureo 189*, *Canone aureo 436 (Golden Section)*, all of 2012, belong to a series Griffa created beginning in 2009, in which signs and numbers coexist on canvases traversed by solar colors, capable of transmitting the sense of an exuberant energy that is creative and vital. In Griffa's art the presence of numbers dates back to the early 1990s, when the artist used them to tangibly position each work within the proliferation of the works as a whole, and then to convey to the viewer information related to the order in which the signs are marked on the canvas. "The number is a sign, an image used at the service of something other than itself, similar to what happens in painting. But it is not painting and so I couldn't use numbers outside their function—they would have become unacceptable decorative tinsel in my work, in which decoration is to be taken for its creative rather than ornamental value. (...) Indeed I might say that this golden section or divine proportion cycle originated in the awareness that humanity has assigned to this number a profound memory of the unknown, the infinite, the unutterable, and that this number denotes such memory. The next step on from numeracy, let us say, just as painting is the next step on from the drawing of an apple" (*Giorgio Griffa. Canone aureo*, Macro, Rome, 2011). (MB)