



Lucio Fontana (1899 – 1968)

Concetto Spaziale

1962

Oil on canvas

39 3/8 by 31 1/2 inches (100 x 80 cm)

Signed “L Fontana” lower right, and on verso

- Provenance: Private collection (Acquired directly from artist, 1963)
Private collection
Christie's London, Post-War and Contemporary Art Morning
Session, February 7, 2008, lot 120
Tournabuoni Art, London
Private collection
Private collection
- Exhibition: New York, Marianne Boesky Gallery, *Lucio Fontana / Paintings
1956 - 1968*, March 9 - May 15, 2010
- Paris, Musée D'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, *Lucio Fontana,
Retrospective*, April 25 – August 24, 2014, pp. 189, 220, illustrated
- Literature: Crispolti, Enrico, *Lucio Fontana Catalogue raisonné des peintures,
sculptures et environnements spatiaux*, Brussels, 1974, vol. II, pp.
118-119, no. 62, illustrated.
- Crispolti, Enrico, *Fontana Catalogo generale, Volume Primo*,
Electa, 1986, p. 401, no. 62 O 52, illustrated.
- Crispolti, Enrico, *Lucio Fontana Catalogo ragionato di sculture,
dipinti, ambientazioni*, Milan, 2006, vol. II, p. 585, no. 62,
illustrated.

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided above, confirmation of these facts may not always be possible due to the unavailability of primary sources. Please be advised that the work of art described above is subject to changes in availability and price without prior notice.

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With a single deep fissure gouged into its pink, oil paint-encrusted surface, Lucio Fontana's *Concetto Spaziale*, 1962, is from the artist's celebrated body of *Olii* (oil) paintings. These works represent the ultimate efflorescence of his *Spazialismo* movement, launched in 1947 with *the Primo manifesto dello spazialismo* (*First manifesto of spatialism*.) The title *Concetto Spaziale*, derived from *Spazialismo*, was employed by Fontana for the bulk of his output from 1950 onward. In the *Olii* works, Fontana abandoned the opacity and uniformity of water-based paint in favor of the flexibility and brilliance of oil paint. The *Olii* came to dominate Fontana's practice in the early 1960s and remained central to his work until his death in 1968.

Characterized by a monochrome canvas with one or more holes roughly torn into the center of the work, the brightly colored *Olii*s were counterparts to Fontana's Minimalist *Tagli* paintings. While the hallmark of the *Tagli* (Cuts) were crisp, almost surgical slashes into the surface of the canvas, the *Olii* expressed a more primal sense of raw immediacy. Indeed, rendered in thick, sculptural lavishes of oil paint, the *buco* or 'hole' in the present work seems to erupt from the surface. The antithesis of the cool and seductive *Tagli*, the wound-like hole in *Concetto Spaziale* dominates the composition. Fontana further incised markings into the pictorial surface: they circle and spiral around the gaping hole, imbuing the work with a sense of percolating, pent-up energy.

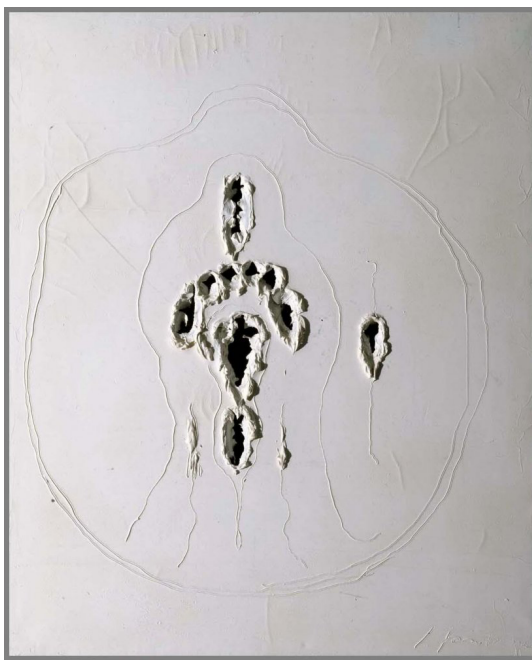
While the paint was still wet, Fontana would employ a sharp tool to gouge the surface, then claw at the canvas with his fingers, adding texture and weight, with a thick impasto of oil paint encrusting the ragged edges surrounding the violently punctured hole. Describing his transition between the *Olii* and the *Tagli*, Fontana explained: "The cuts that I have made so far represent

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above all a philosophical space. But that which I am seeking, now, is no longer philosophical space but rather physical space... It is a human dimension that can generate physiological pain, a terror in the mind, and I, in my most recent canvases, am trying to give form to this sensation.” (Lucio Fontana cited in Grazia Livi, ‘Incontro con Lucio Fontana’, *Vanita*, No. 13, Autumn 1962, p. 55).

The conceptual essence of *Concetto Spaziale* and the series from which it derives is the creation of the central perforation, which disrupts the traditional flat plane of the medium. This innovation opened the canvas, infusing it with the space endlessly expanding behind, around, and through it. The dawn of the Space Age, marked by Yuri Gagarin’s flight in 1961, introduced an entirely new cultural dimension. For Fontana, the astronaut’s launch into the infinity of the cosmos is echoed in the void created by his perforations. These punctures ruptured the canvas as well as the traditional boundary between painting and sculpture, bringing a new dimension to art of the 20th century and the cosmic age.

Similar works to *Concetto Spaziale* can be found in museum collections around the world, including *Concetto Spaziale*, 1968, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, and *Concetto Spaziale*, 1960-62, The Menil Collection, Houston.



Lucio Fontana, *Concetto Spaziale*, 1968, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid



Lucio Fontana, *Concetto Spaziale*, 1960-62, The Menil Collection, Houston