**Mark Tobey poeticamente astratto/**

**Mark Tobey, poetically abstract**

curated by Philippe Daverio and Dominique Stella

Agnellini Arte Moderna - Brescia

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[www.agnelliniartemoderna.it](http://www.agnelliniartemoderna.it)

The success and work of the **Agnellini Arte Moderna Gallery** continues, a new and interesting enterprise recently opened in Brescia which has soon become the point of reference and trust for art lovers.

After the great success of the Jacques Villeglé's event, the interesting programme now stages another great protagonist of art history: **Mark Tobey poeticamente astratto/Mark Tobey, poetically abstract** is the title of the anthological exhibition, curated by **Philippe Daverio** and **Dominique Stella**, which presents about **ninety works from 1925 to 1974**, mostly **never seen before** and all certified by the "Tobey Archive" of Muenster (Germany).

The exhibition is made with the patronage of the Province of Brescia, Department of Cultural Heritage and Activities for the Development of Identities, Cultures and Local Languages and the Council of Brescia.

The works on display, made using different techniques, from ink to tempera, from ballpoint pen to pencil, from plaster to pastel, reflect detailed abstractions, which are the distinctive features of Tobey's work. His canvases, spaces heavy with unvarying colour and repeated lines, are at the same time simple and complex, conceptual and intuitive. The dark colours, the greys and the light touch characterize the majority of these paintings and they often remind the viewer of the natural world, especially showing nature close-up. They remind us of a network of cells, seen through a microscope, a rocky surface marked by the weather or the bark veins of a tree.

**Philippe Daverio** says in the catalogue: "Mark Tobey, the artist not fit for chaos, is the necessary personality in order to understand the other side of America, the reflective, responsible, inquiring side, and as such able to follow the strict paths of the avantgarde research, which during his life was wished for as the release of a country which still looked at foreign cultures with tactful discretion".

Crucial for his work is the moment when Tobey approached the **Bahá'í faith**, dedicating himself to a deep study of this religion which will be with him for the rest of his life: through such beliefs Tobey starts dedicating himself to the representation of the "spiritual world" in art.

At the beginning of his artistic career Tobey was a figurative artist and the most significant works from that period are 'Still life on a table', a fine still life of 1930, and the excellent portrait of Matisse, 'Portrait d'homme/Portrait of man', pastel on paper.

There is also the series of the 'Hornblower', from the early Fifties, which pictures horn players, a homage to jazz musicians, for whom the artist was very passionate.

Tobey's true work starts from the mid Fifties, expressing the typical feature which will make him become one of the most important artists of the 1900s: his paintings become completely abstract, based on small controlled gestures of the hand. In this regard the works between 1956-1958 are typical, while from 1958, during a stay in Japan, he experiments with the series of 'Sumi'. These works, made in series, are made with Japanese ink on humble paper.

**Dominique Stella** points out that: "Tobey's art exceeds the visual vocation of the work in order to reach immateriality and the void learned from the Chinese and Japanese calligraphists, who in the void see the highest degree of creative power. Space is a concept beyond sight and interests him more than the material aspect of the canvas. Beyond the tri-dimensional representation, he looks for what "he could really touch". […] The research for the fourth dimension, an immaterial energy, more suggested than tangible, comes from the desire for reaching all the senses beyond the analytical and rational vision".

On display the visitor can also admire three original hand painted windowpanes from 1970 and some undated sketches regarding ancient Greek and Roman art.

The attention to detail and the spiritual focus appear in all his works, as Tobey declares in 1962: "I must admit that faith gave me an extraordinary strength and I could use it without propaganda. It is true that today they talk about international styles, but I think that in the future it will be about universal styles... the future of the world must be the materialization of its uniqueness, which is the basic teaching of the Bahá'í faith, as I intend it, and from this uniqueness will emerge a new style of art".

A **catalogue** published by **Shin Production** accompanies the exhibition, with critical texts by Philippe Daverio and Dominique Stella.