

“Trasparency”: Salvatore Emblema in New York

M. M. (December 14, 2013)



The first New York exhibition of Salvatore Emblema on view until January 11 at BOSI Contemporary (48 Orchard Street, Manhattan).

In collaboration with the archives, estate, and museum of Italian postwar artist Salvatore Emblema, BOSI Contemporary announces his first New York exhibition *Transparency*, which examines his



career through 20 works and a large-scale installation. Having spent the majority of his life in Italy, Emblema remains relatively unknown to an American audience despite two extended stays in New York City.

Brought here on a Rockefeller Grant in the mid 1950s, Emblema spent a year in the New York art scene where he befriended eminent American painter Mark Rothko. Rothko's iconic compositions and color use influenced Emblema who uniquely adopted these ideals. Growing up in Terzigno, a town on Mt. Vesuvius overlooking Pompeii, informed his basic artistic impulses. Always a purist with an interest in raw materials, Emblema concerned himself with nature, texture, shadow, and most importantly, light. His use of stretched sackcloth, or burlap, embodied all these interests and quickly became his canvas of choice. During his second New York visit in 1965, Emblema met Giulio Carlo Argan, a fellow Italian, a writer, and an observer of international art. It was Argan who attributed to the artist the term Transparency in order to describe the ability of Emblema's paintings to interact with the existing light and space. Argan's deep admiration of Emblema's work pushed his development. Emblema began physically manipulating the jute fibers in the hopes of achieving painterly transparency.

Despite working in relative isolation, Emblema's oeuvre contains undertones of minimalism, process art, and arte povera as well as earth art and abstraction. As Peter Frank, curator and critic, states "Emblema's work rarely if ever entraps itself in a certain period. It clearly comes from an era, responding as it does to the existential and perceptual questions of the 1950s and early 60s. But it was never of an era."

Salvatore Emblema (1929-2006) attended the Scuola del Corallo in Torre del Greco where he graduated in 1948. He had multiple solo exhibitions throughout Italy and internationally. Noted group shows include the 1980 and 1982 Venice Biennale; Italics, curated by Francesco Bonami, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, Italy (2009); The Language of Less curated by Michael Darling, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago, Louisiana (2011)

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