

ETTORE SPALLETTI

Opening Thursday 5th November, 2026, 6:00 – 9:00 pm
Galleria Lia Rumma, Via Stilicone 19, Milan

Lia Rumma Gallery is pleased to present, at its Milan venue, a solo exhibition dedicated to one of the leading figures of contemporary Italian art: Ettore Spalletti.

Belonging to no particular movement, Spalletti consistently rejected any form of categorisation. In his work, the dialogue between classical and contemporary art unfolds through a practice in which painting and sculpture merge in the pursuit of an essential dimension and a new conception of spatiality, in constant dialogue with the art of the past, from Beato Angelico to Piero della Francesca and Raffaello, through to Morandi. It is in colour, which runs throughout the history of art, that Spalletti's language identifies the source from which forms emerge. Geometries and archetypal forms, imbued with colour, lead painting to become sculpture, while sculpture takes on a painterly quality. *"I think of myself as a painter, a painter who has also painted in the round."* His colours are not colours "of the surface", but "atmospheric" ones, endowed with a profound emotional quality. They suggest a passage; they welcome those who observe them, reflecting light back into the space they occupy. Paintings with inclined frames or bevelled edges are arranged throughout the space, becoming protagonists of a collective work; the forms shed the rigidity of the geometry from which they originated, filling instead with a material that, like mist, breaks apart into a fine dust. These are "pictorial bodies" that continually draw the viewer's gaze, arousing a powerful tactile desire: they welcome us, yet do not wish to be touched. Curated by the Ettore Spalletti Foundation, the exhibition brings into dialogue works from different periods that meet, without hierarchy, within an "atemporal" dimension; they do not simply occupy a place, but reveal it. To enter Spalletti's world is to enter into colour, a colour that does not describe but rather "happens". It gathers in the mixture developed by the artist, settles on the surface like pigment, and spreads through the air, becoming a "volume of colour". A place where colour seems not so much to be seen as to be traversed.

"Things always come about like this; you don't even know how: during a walk or while I'm sitting in the dark. Then, suddenly, a desire arises. My work is always built around a desire. Then comes colour, which in my painting is the will."

Witnesses to an epiphany, the works in the ground-floor gallery form a unified whole, resonating with the space and the viewer. *Stanza bianca, verticale*, 1995, moves away from the wall, creating an impression of levitation, of a place without gravity, as does *Cuscino, bianco del gesso*, 1988. In *Il colore e l'oro, bianco*, 2016, gold leaf expands the pictorial space beyond the frame, adding light to light. At the centre of the room, *Contatto*, an ephemeral work from 1976, suddenly manifests itself as a breath of white pigment, an exhalation that, settling onto the floor, frees itself from the geometry of the crystal that contains it.

On the first floor, a suspended horizon, the indeterminate hour of twilight: *Davanzale, oro*, 2000, counterbalances the large window framing the city; *Sapone, oro*, 1998, a small sculpture that fits in the palm of one's hand, punctuates the wall; while *Leggio*, 1990, a blue slide for the gaze, carries echoes of Antonello da Messina's *Saint Jerome in His Study*.



On the second floor, *Quartetto indivisibile*, 1992, unfolds through an alternation of “figures of colour” that define one another in a moment of perceptual symphony, a dance. Surfaces that seem to breathe, a “skin” that conveys an atmospheric impression. It is accompanied by *Rosa e Grigio tenue, argento. Napoli*, 2011, in which the frame, unfolding outwards, opens onto its surroundings. Windows onto other places, images of colour barely condensed. *Scatole di colore*, 1991, are positioned beneath the shower of light from the large skylight; in the alabaster, colour becomes a line of shadow.

“Looking at this crystalline geometry, I feel that at any moment it might break apart and become water again. When I come into the studio, I am still amazed to find these forms. Sometimes I think they might dissolve during the night.”

Ettore Spalletti (1940–2019) was born in Cappelle sul Tavo (Pescara), where he spent his entire life. Major exhibitions dedicated to Spalletti have been held around the world. In 2014, a major retrospective was presented simultaneously at three Italian museums: GAM, Galleria Civica d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin; MAXXI – Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, Rome; and MADRE, Museo d’Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples. A single large exhibition unfolding from north to south; Italy conceived as a museum and three cities as its rooms.

Other important institutional solo exhibitions include: yu-un, Tokyo (2024); Magazzino Italian Art, Cold Spring, New York (2023); Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome (2021); Nouveau Musée National de Monaco, Principality of Monaco (2019); Palazzo Cini, Venice (2015); GNAM – Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, Rome (2010); Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Kleve (2009); Villa Medici, Académie de France, Rome (2006); Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2005); Castello di Rivoli – Museo d’Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli, Turin (2004); Fundación la Caixa, Madrid (2000); Museo di Capodimonte, Naples (1999); Musée d’Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg (1998); MUHKA – Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp (1995); Guggenheim Museum, New York (1993); Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (1991); De Appel, Amsterdam (1989); Kunstverein, Munich (1989); Portikus, Frankfurt (1989); Halles d’Art Contemporain, Rennes (1988); Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent (1983); and Museum Folkwang, Essen (1982). Spalletti was invited to participate in documenta in Kassel on several occasions (1982, 1992) and in the Venice Biennale (1982, 1993, 1995, 1997). His permanent installations include Salle des départs (1996) for Hôpital Raymond-Poincaré in Garches, near Paris; Collezione, paesaggio, Obayashi Corporation, Tokyo (1998); Necessità del movimento e della contemplazione, Yokohama Island Tower, Yokohama (2003); Fontana, Palace of Justice, Pescara (2004); and the Cappella (2016), created together with architect Patrizia Leonelli Spalletti for Villa Serena Nursing Home in Città Sant’Angelo, Pescara.

The Ettore Spalletti Foundation was established in 2022 by Patrizia Leonelli Spalletti. Its aim is to safeguard and preserve Ettore Spalletti’s artistic production. Based in the artist’s studio in Italy, the Foundation promotes initiatives intended to disseminate and foster knowledge of his work.