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Clouds and myths: the art of Lino Mannocci

Two exhibitions this spring present both the printmaking and the curatorship of this remarkable contemporary artist

Clouds and Myths: Monotypes by Lino Mannocci

9 February – 9 May 2010

The haunting prints of contemporary artist Lino Mannocci are showcased in an exhibition opening this February at The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Clouds and Myths: Monotypes by Lino Mannocci brings together over thirty recent works exploring the world of myth and its resonance. Mannocci's imagery and subjects are rich in association and metaphor, with their allusions to artistic and literary sources as diverse as Greek mythology, the work of Ovid, the Old and New Testaments and poetry across the ages. With their often enigmatic titles – many of which, at first glance, do not appear to directly relate to the image they are assigned to – these prints resist exact definition, yet resound with meaning.

Lino Mannocci (b. 1945) came to London from his native Tuscany in 1968, studying at Camberwell School of Art and at the Slade. Since 1976 he has divided his time living and working in London and Italy, and has exhibited regularly in both locations for the past thirty four years. The theme of the Annunciation – the revelation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary that she would conceive a child who was the son of God – is one of the artist's most recurring preoccupations, who devoted an entire exhibition to the theme in 1992. This subject is a crucial element within *Clouds and Myths*, with a sequence of six dedicated prints presenting an unseen, frequently unsettling perspective on this perennial theme.

Throughout the unique images on display in *Clouds and Myths*, isolated figures are set within a poetic landscape in which clouds or the sea loom large. Their identities, like their outlines, are often blurred or broken, and many are taken from a variety of external visual sources, from paintings and prints to sculptures, newspapers and – in one case – a nineteenth-century erotic postcard. One group of prints employs figures from the Fitzwilliam Museum's paintings by Domenico Veneziano (1400-1461) – an artist whose work is frequently a source of inspiration for Mannocci. Most of these figures bring hints of the narratives from which they have been lifted, evoking classical mythology, or the Bible, but Mannocci ultimately leaves visitors to draw their own conclusions about their place in his work.

Clouds and Myths also emphasises Mannocci's mastery of the monotype medium – in which a print is created by painting with ink directly onto the printing plate – as well as his experimental techniques within this process. Mannocci creates coagulated textures



Lino Mannocci
May it be to me as you have said



Lino Mannocci
Concedimi verginità perpetua



Lino Mannocci
Then Susanna shrieked



Lino Mannocci
And the nursing of the sky

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by running a crumpled tissue through the printing press, and disperses ink with turpentine to produce 'blobs' of light. Cut-outs and stencils are often used to create his mysterious figures, silhouetted in black or white. In certain prints, Mannocci introduces elements of collage, using paper or tissue that sometimes has already been printed with an image. In one print, the figure of the Virgin Mary is fashioned from gold-flecked pink tissue, evoking gilt religious paintings and notions of a 'celestial shower'.

Mannocci prefers not to divulge the sources of his titles, to avoid attaching to the work cultural 'baggage' and unwanted associations that a famous author's name might bring. On his use of these sources, the artist likes to quote one of his favourite writers: "It might well be said of me that here I have merely made up a bunch of other men's flowers, and provided nothing of my own but string to bind them". He is, he says, "most satisfied" to act as the 'string' in this situation.

"Lino Mannocci's art is suggestive rather than definitive," said Craig Hartley, Senior Assistant Keeper of Prints at The Fitzwilliam Museum. "Every move he makes opens up possibilities rather than narrowing our understanding to a focal point. His clouds are intended to enrich – formally, spiritually, atmospherically – rather than obscure the subject."

Dr Timothy Potts, Director of The Fitzwilliam Museum, said: "It is a particular pleasure that Lino Mannocci agreed to put aside the most beautiful and intriguing of these recent prints so that they could be exhibited for the first time at the Fitzwilliam, especially as he used the Fitzwilliam's paintings as a springboard for his imagination. The sequence of monotypes of the Annunciation redeploing figures from the Fitzwilliam's predella panels by Domenico Veneziano are among the most remarkable in the exhibition."

The Angel and the Virgin: A Brief History of the Annunciation

9 February – 9 May 2010

To complement *Clouds and Myths*, the Museum will also be displaying *The Angel and the Virgin: A Brief History of the Annunciation* (9 February – 9 May 2010). This smaller concurrent exhibition is curated by Lino Mannocci, who is also a writer and print historian.

For this display, Mannocci has selected works from the Museum's own collection exploring the theme of the Annunciation. A theme that is particularly important to Mannocci's own work, the Annunciation is here portrayed in a series of old master prints from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, including Albrecht Dürer's *The Annunciation* (c.1510)



Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528)
The Annunciation, c.1510

Also on display is a select group of manuscripts, enamels and ceramics further developing this theme. At the centre of the display is Veneziano's panel painting *The Annunciation* (c.1442-1448), a great source of inspiration for Mannocci's prints on display in *Clouds and Myths*.

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The Angel and the Virgin: A Brief History of the Annunciation

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Notes for Editors

The Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses the University of Cambridge's art collection and is a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints.

The Fitzwilliam's treasures range from Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to the arts of the 21st century and include masterpieces by Titian, Canaletto, Stubbs, Constable, Monet, Renoir and Picasso, one of the world's foremost Rembrandt print collections, Handel music manuscripts and the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one of the most significant collections of Korean ceramics outside South-East Asia, medieval illuminated manuscripts and outstanding collections of pottery, porcelain and medieval coins.

The Fitzwilliam Museum welcomes over 300,000 visitors a year, offers a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions and events, and has an award-winning Education Service. The Museum is open Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 – 17.00, Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00. Free admission.
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