

Globespotters



Travel News, From Those in the Know

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A Minimalist Christens a New Space

By [Claudia Barbieri](#)



Courtesy of Tornabuoni Art "Spatial Concept," 1957, by Lucio Fontana.

PARIS | [Lucio Fontana](#) was so handy with a knife he could probably have made a living as an old-school hit man. Instead he became an artist, and a pivotal one at that. Through what he called his "conceito spaziale," or spatial concept, he exerted a huge influence on 20th-century modernist art.

A retrospective of his work — much of it intentionally cut, pockmarked by cigarette burns, torn by bullet holes or rat bites — is the inaugural show at Tornabuoni Art, a new gallery in Paris.

The gallery (16 Avenue Matignon, 33-1-53-53-51-51; www.tornabuoniart.fr; Metro: Franklin Roosevelt) opened in September in an elegant town house around the corner from the Élysée Palace.

The show, which runs through Nov. 30, draws on a specific history between artist and gallery: The Tornabuoni family, leading collectors of 20th-century art, discovered Mr. Fontana and nurtured him throughout his career. The Paris gallery, their first outside Italy, is showing more than 60 museum-quality works from their own collection. Covering the artist's development from the early 1950s to his death in 1968, the exhibit seeks to prove why Mr.

Fontana matters by illustrating his progression from baroque origins toward his increasingly pure and minimalistic monotonal, slashed canvases.

After starting out as a sculptor in the 1920s and '30s, Mr. Fontana became increasingly preoccupied with the dynamics of the relationship between light and space. In 1947, he published his “White Manifesto,” the founding doctrine of what became known as the [spatial movement](#), dedicated to the concept of art as immaterial. In his “concetto spaziale” he was one of the first artists to propose an understanding of art as gesture or performance.

From 1950 onward he constantly experimented in his paintings, treating the canvas not as a surface but simply as a plane in three-dimensional space, to be built on or cut through. In a series of works that he titled “holes,” “stones,” “inks,” and the like, he developed a richness of expression — a variety clearly in evidence at the exhibit.