

# ANTONIO CALDERARA

MAAB Gallery  
Milano | Padova



The show presents a series of works on canvas and paper by this artist – born in Abbiategrasso, Lombardy, in 1903 – which allow an overview of his art from the first figurative works (*Il campo*, 1928) to the geometrical-abstract results of his output from the end of the 1950s to 1978 (*Progressioni parallele in viola*, 1960) the year of his death in Vacciago, the town that is today the venue of the Antonio and Carmela Calderara Foundation's museum and archive.

An artist it is almost impossible to pigeonhole, Calderara was above all a reference point to himself, to his constant and passionate research, to his love of art and of the artists with a particular expressive tension, as is highlighted by the catalogue essay by Gianluca Ranzi. These qualities were always evident and today allow us to make an exemplary analysis of the expressive purism of the works from the 1930s and 1940s - close to the feeling of the Novecento movement of Ubaldo Oppi, Donghi, and Arturo Martini, but also to the purist rigour of Felice Casorati (*Mamma e sorella*, 1939, oil on canvas) - up to the dematerialisation of form in favour of a light/colour harmony in the works of the final period.

His initial realism in the 1930s showed, on the one hand, a vague affinity with Massimo Bontempelli's Magical Realism but, on the other, paid more attention to the mathematical-formal aspects of the harmony of the composition, something that reveals his close observation of the works of Piero della Francesca and Georges Seurat (*Pittura n. 40*, 1954). He then came to know the work of Josef Albers, Almir Mavignier, and Max Bill, a road that was to lead him, already at the end of the 1950s (*Il lago e l'isola*, 1958), to abandon figuration and to follow another direction that reduced composition and exalted the relationship between

colour and light (*Senza titolo*, 1959-60), in many ways an anticipation of the trends in analytical painting in Italy and France in the 1970s or of Post-Painterly Abstraction in the United States. So we can understand that, just as happens in scientific research where, when entering the world of the infinitely small, there is a vague sense of elusiveness, in the expressive range of Antonio Calderara too, from the premises to the final results, we see him present limpidly a well-organised historical background and a rigorous scientism which, however, leads to a poetic lightness and a degree of lyrical emotion that are unique of their kind. His was a way of proceeding from complexity to simplicity while maintaining a coherent and personal method towards an absolute purity of relationships, the exclusion of any kind of ornamentation, and the discovery of a truth that is revealed thanks to the magic of the varied rhythm between light and colour.

## ANTONIO CALDERARA

### BIOGRAPHY

Antonio Calderara (Abbiategrosso 1903 - Vaccinago 1978), was a singular and elusive figure on the Italian art scene. He began his career as a self-taught artist in the 1920s. In 1923 he held his first solo show and, in the following year, abandoned his engineering studies at the Milan polytechnic in order to devote himself exclusively to painting.

Characterised by a sculptural simplification and by a clear light in which we can feel the echoes of Piero della Francesca and Georges Seurat, by the early 1940s the colour in the painting of Calderara had become even more refined in its tones and to create polished and uniform surfaces where the colour decants into light. Once the war had finished, he moved to Milan where he had already passed some time as a young man. Here his art opened to new experiences and new stimuli.

In the second half of the 1950s Calderara's attention was increasingly focussed on light, a light that invades and destroys everything in order to be the only protagonist in a painting that by now was at the very limits of figuration.

What marked a change in his painting was his turn, in 1959, to abstraction. An abstraction that it is difficult to parallel in other Italian artists for its radicalism, one that was perfectly in syntony with contemporary European experiences that tended towards a zero degree of painting. In his case, however, geometry never had the rigidity of Concrete Art but was dominated by delicate and subtle luminous vibrations obtained through superimposed veils of colour. In the paintings of the 1960s and 1970s, almost always on a small scale, there took shape a light-colour that revealed his aim of "painting nothing, the void, that is everything, silence, light, order, harmony. The infinite".



Antonio Calderara

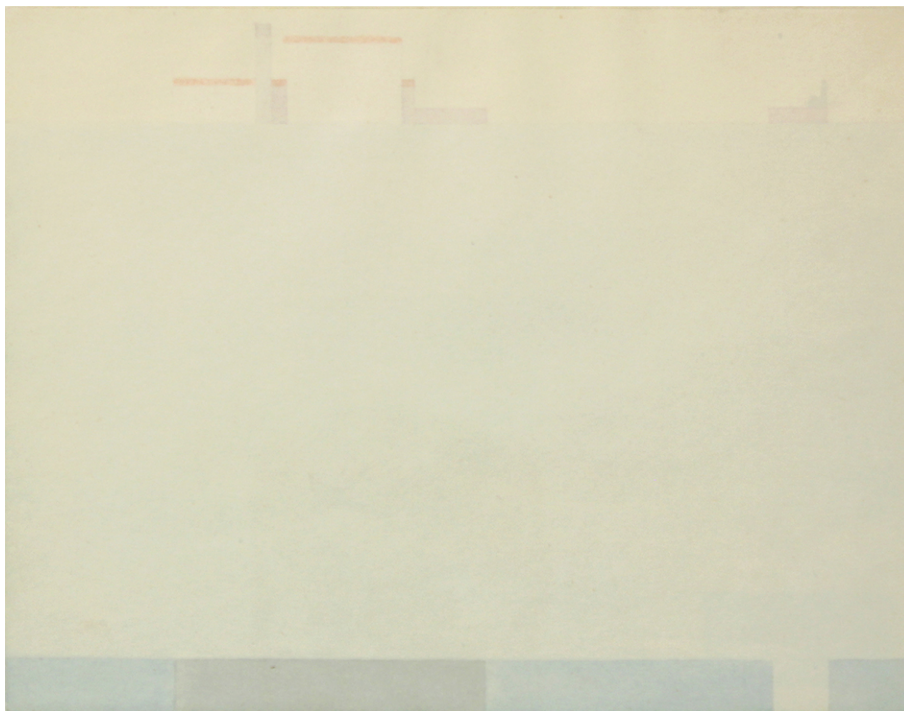
*Senza titolo*

1939

olio su tavola | oil on board

30 x 25 cm | 11,9 x 9,8 in

Photo @ Bruno Bani



Antonio Calderara

*Senza titolo (Lago d'Orta)*

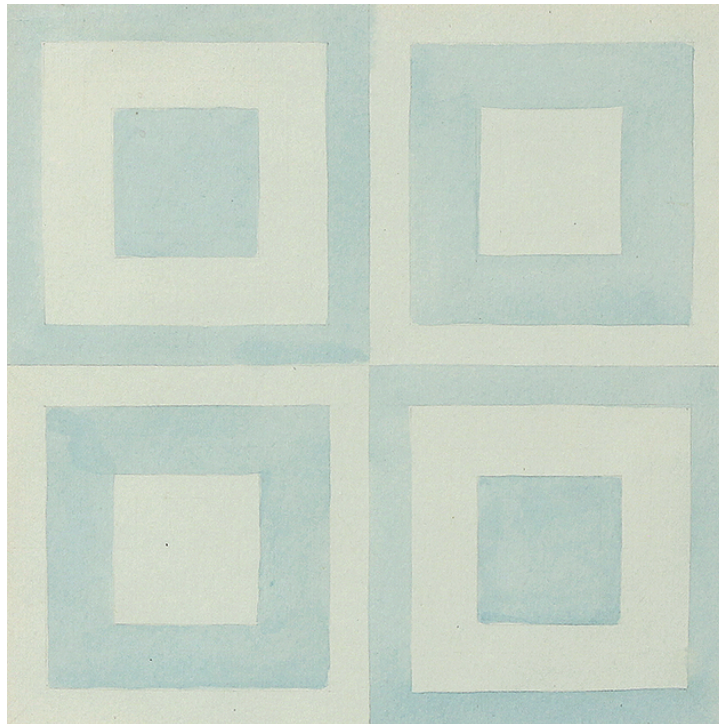
1959

acquerello su carta | watercolor on paper

17,3 x 22,3 cm | 6,8 x 8,8 in

Photo @ Bruno Bani





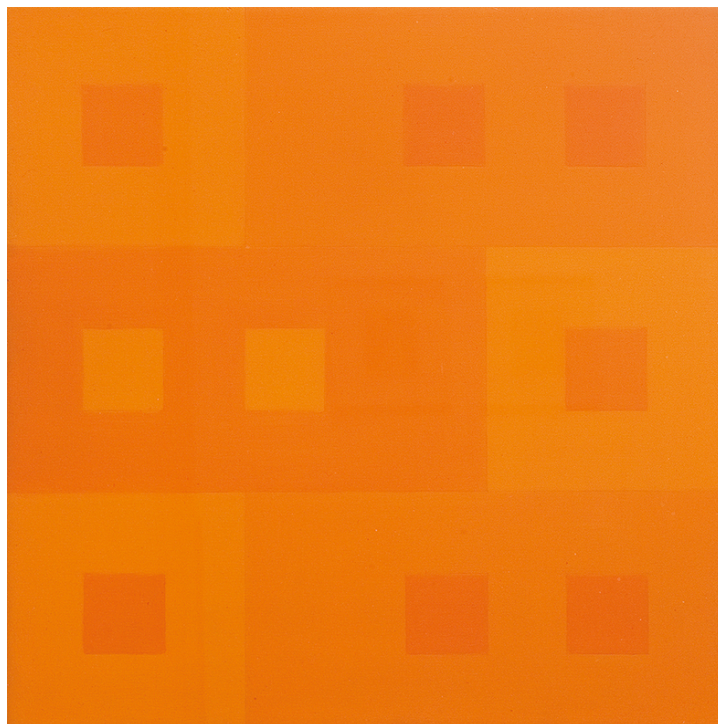
Antonio Calderara

*Senza titolo*

1963

acquerello su carta | watercolor on paper

18 x 18 cm | 7,1 x 7,1 in



Antonio Calderara

*2 quadrati*

1968

olio su tavola | oil on canvas

27 x 27 cm | 10,6 x 10,6 in

Photo @ Bruno Bani



Antonio Calderara

Senza titolo

1977

olio su tavola | oil on board

cm 27 x 27 cm | 10,6 x 10,6 in

Photo @ Bruno Bani