CARLO ZINELLI A TWENTIETH CENTURY ARTIST  
(Verona, San Giovanni Lupatoto 1916 – Verona (Chievo) 1974)

Carlo Zinelli is a distinguished twentieth century artist who is still too little known. Heir to the century’s unrest, he experimented in his art various iconographic themes, many of which (archetypal symbolism, seriality and verb-visual aspects) were present in the works of other contemporary and later artists.

Recurrent in his paintings are mysterious figures, stereotypes, images reiterated four times or in multiples of four, autobiographic narratives as well as a studied use of colour, a refined graphic sensibility, a decorative use of the letters of the alphabet, the abstract use of writing, balanced compositional structures and an architectural expression of space.

Zinelli turned to expressing himself in painting late in life (during the last years of the 1950s), executing his entire production within the confines of a psychiatric hospital.

Such a condition of marginality opened the way to his place in Jean Dubuffet’s collection of *Art Brut*: this legitimised and established his work’s artistic value, at the cost of greater recognition.

Since then, Carlo Zinelli’s production has been promoted as that of a *brut* artist, largely in the context of group shows, alongside other *outsider* artists, that are not always of comparable quality.

He has only appeared sporadically in group-shows of modern and contemporary art alongside famous twentieth century Italian artists: he is yet to be fully discovered.

An increasing body of critics and art historians now agree that he should be extrapolated from the ambit of *Art Brut*, that has become too tight a label to do his work justice: they have thereby increasingly raised the problems involved in art classification.

It should be recalled here, that, apart from the exhibition held at Verona (Castevecchio) in 1992, which was accompanied by the first and only monograph on the artist, in Italy he has not since been the subject of any significant event.

Carlo Zinelli has been excluded from the national scene since this time. He lacks a great monographic exhibition and a truly exhaustive critical catalogue capable of reigniting debate on this extraordinary artist. These are two events that are greatly attended internationally.

The *Fondazione per l’Arte* plans to promote an important monographic exhibition in Rome that will document the artistic experience of this great protagonist of twentieth century art through his works and through the production of a substantial volume containing contributions of a critical and historical nature and from the contemporary art world.