

**Carlo Nangeroni
at Esso**

This survey chronicled the development of Milan-based Carlo Nangeroni's work from the 1940s to the present, beginning with his Italian metaphysical painting, showing his gestural abstraction of the '50s and emphasizing his highly rational painted grids of disks dating from 1974 to now.

Among the earliest paintings included here, the 30-by-25-inch oil-on-canvas *Encounter* (1947) depicts a couple embracing against a building protected from the incursion of beach and sea by an impossibly narrow brick wall. *White Composition* (1954), a monochromatic acrylic on canvas mounted on board, suggests a conversation of angled recumbent figures, while an untitled oil and plaster on board from the same year is distinguished by a mottled surface and its Picasso-like, curvaceous figures. The artist evidences a growing interest in architectural structure in *The Blue Hills* (1957), a semi-abstract still life with a bowl of fruit and vases of flowers before windows that give onto the view suggested by the title.

In a series of paintings of the early '60s, Nangeroni works with short bands or strokes of intense color and simulated light. In the acrylic *Group of Lights* (1961), the bands are vertical and are set within centered concentric rings of white and yellow that resemble the faceted automobile headlights of the era. This work is at once orderly and vibrant. Soon, Nangeroni turned his attention to ranking concentric circles and disks.

In 1974, his palette became reductive: the disks are laid out in rows like so many identical checkers on a board. The near-musical *Scansion—Times and Light* (1974) locates gradated gray disks in vertical rows figured with gray-on-gray stripes and a half-dozen dark but transparent blocks. The overall patterning and tempo suggest potential extension of the field. The related *Encounter* (1989) gives the impression of a curtain or veil and muted colors activated by diagonal stripes.

The more recent the painting, the more active the artist's scheme. The brightly hued disks of a 12-by-16-inch untitled work of 2003 are joined hemispheres of opposed colors that cluster around two intersecting white bands. A somewhat similar but larger untitled acrylic of 2004 seems a culmination of this exuberant exercise, with an array of colorful hemispheres ordered on pale horizontal bars that seem to float. Several 2005 examples on narrow supports are engaging and confident, suggesting that the artist has caught up with himself and found freedom in the inherent discipline of his many years of practice. While Nangeroni exhibits frequently in Europe, this survey was his first exhibition in New York—where he was born in 1922—since a solo show at Meltzer Gallery in 1961.

—Edward Leffingwell

Carlo Nangeroni: Untitled, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 12 by 16 inches; at Esso.

