

THE DRAWING ROOM 66H Newtown Lane East Hampton NY 11937 T 631 324.5016

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 2015

COSTANTINO NIVOLA [1911-1988]

Early Concretes



M.01, 1969, concrete, paint, 19 x 9 1/2 x 3 3/4 in



M33, c. 1950's, concrete, 16 5/8 x 14 1/4 x 19 5/8 in

The Drawing Room is pleased to present **COSTANTINO NIVOLA [1911-1988] Early Concretes**, on view September 12th to October 26th.

Costantino Nivola: Early Concretes presents rare sculptures and wall reliefs that highlight the distinctive vision of the Sardinian-born mason turned artist who settled in East Hampton in 1948 along with other émigré artists who shared his passion for expressive materials for a new age. Nivola's innovations in sand-casting and carved concrete would help to humanize urban public sculpture and to extend the vocabulary of international style architecture in post-war America. Made between 1950 and 1982, the sculptures on view include 11 faceted abstract figures and two unique bas-reliefs, which offer a close look at the singular pictorial compositions he created as maquettes for monumental murals.

The central work in the show is a maquette (measuring 15 x 43 x 1 inches) related to the large mural commissioned by the Barnes Jewish Hospital, in St. Louis in 1963 and still on view there. The relief offers a dramatic example of Nivola's expansive Arcadian panoramas of abstracted figures, children, birds and trees in an idyllic universe of sweeping modern forms. Nivola's many commissions for murals and public sculpture often began with fully finished reliefs such as those on view.

(over)

The immediacy of his gestural sculpting in plaster or wet concrete maquettes captured the compositional inspiration and its elastic potential to scale up and enliven modernist architecture by Eero Saarinen and Marcel Breuer, among others.

Since his 1953 commission from the Olivetti Corporation to create a 75-foot wall relief for its Fifth Avenue Manhattan showroom, Nivola was celebrated for the graphic vigor, the muscularity and lyrical compositions of his wall murals. The long modular Olivetti relief, which was created in sand troughs on his lawn in Springs, was met with such enthusiasm it conferred him an international reputation and led to many corporate and civic commissions.

Carving blocks of wet concrete with shims of wood, Nivola again put a universal material to groundbreaking use in freestanding three-dimensional figurative sculptures. Often he added powdered pigment to the mix and on occasion, colored sand and pebbles. *M.02* dated 1965, is the most abstract and colorful sculpture in the show; a cross between fish forms and layered geometric shapes, its powdered red and orange-pigmented design on the raw concrete form instills an archaic modernity. In the two attenuated female sculptures dated 1969 and 1982, Nivola's graceful reduction of the figure into elemental abstract forms recalls ancient idols. Like Corbusier, Matisse and Picasso, Nivola explored abstraction, always using the figure as armature.

Several of the sculptures on view from the 1960s present the figure as architecture of cubistic volumes and were made at the same time Nivola collaborated with Eero Saarinen on the Morse and Stiles Colleges at Yale University. A courtyard commission of wall reliefs and sculptures behind the Yale Art Gallery, the project led to many public art commissions in Manhattan and sites throughout the U.S. and Italy. Indeed, Nivola's innovations in casting modular forms and carving cement would be key to the development of public art in urban spaces.

After studying art in Milan, Costantino Nivola came to the U.S. in 1939, embarking on an artistic legacy that embraced a diverse range of mediums including bronze, travertine, terra-cotta, wood and concrete in scales ranging from the diminutive to the monumental. Resourceful, prolific and tireless in his intellectual and artistic exploration of 2 and 3-dimensional art forms, Nivola's experimental process in concrete defined an original aesthetic contribution to mid-century art and architecture.

Costantino Nivola's work is represented in noted international public collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Parrish Art Museum. The Nivola Museum, founded in 1995 in his hometown of Orani, Sardinia, houses the most comprehensive collection of his oeuvre.

www.drawingroom-gallery.com

Gallery hours: Monday, Friday and Saturday 10-5; Sunday 11-5

For further information and reproduction quality images, please contact Janet Goleas at 631.324.5016