

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**The Museum of Modern Art****THE SUBTLE COMPLEXITIES OF GEORGIO MORANDI'S ETCHINGS ON VIEW**

Giorgio Morandi Etchings
March 16-August 22, 2000
Second Floor

Giorgio Morandi was a solitary figure who, despite early flirtations with Cubism, Futurism, and metaphysical art, refused to align himself with any of the vanguard movements of his time and remained rigorously faithful to his own personal vision. *Giorgio Morandi Etchings*, which includes a selection of sixteen etchings from the period 1912 to 1945, concisely demonstrates Morandi's sustained and inspired involvement with the etching technique, the subject of still life, and the development of a subdued and architectonic formal style. This exhibition, on view as part of *Making Choices*, the second cycle of MoMA2000 that focuses on the period 1920 through 1960, is organized by Starr Figura, Assistant Curator, Department of Prints and Illustrated Books.

In his quiet, modestly scaled works, Morandi (Italian, 1890-1964) consciously chose to limit his subject matter to still life and, less frequently, landscape. Using and reusing the same empty bottles, tins, and boxes from the artisan shops near his home in Bologna, he sought new formal and emotive effects through variations in their placement and lighting. Morandi's prints rely on the nuanced tonalities that he was able to produce with etching, a technique whose intimacy and craftsmanship particularly suited him. He used the etching needle to create a fine network of black and white lines that can either bring each object into dramatic relief or suggest an ambiguous flatness.

In *Large Still Life with Coffeepot* (1933), individual objects are ultimately less important than the architectural structure of the composition and the formal relationships between the objects. This emphasis on compositional form over naturalistic object becomes even more pronounced in *Still Life*, also from 1933. The tighter view crops the edges of the objects, and the sense of distance and perspective that helps to locate the objects spatially in the other work is lost. At times it is hard to distinguish solid from void; the objects are less identifiable as tins or boxes than as flat geometric shapes floating on the surface of the picture plane.

While the viewer may be tempted to find metaphors in Morandi's lifeless tins, jars, and bottles, the artist maintained that the true subject of his works was the recording of his perceptions of form, color, light, and space. But there is an undeniable sense of emotional restraint in all Morandi's work, for his subtle tones and shadows create an atmosphere of pregnant, almost eerie, stillness. Through the repeated and exacting analysis of the most ordinary of objects, Morandi translated his visual sensations into sensitive and extraordinary works of art.

SPONSORSHIP

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