

SALVATORE  
SCARPITTA  
1956-1964

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LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN

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# SALVATORE SCARPITTA: ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC

## DAVIDE COLOMBO

On the topic of Salvatore Scarpitta's 1956 exhibition at the Galleria del Naviglio in Milan, the artist's friend and fellow abstractionist Giulio Turcato wrote these indicative and perhaps conclusive words:

*I am grateful to speak about the painter Salvatore Scarpitta. His pictorial adventure is not among the most common. The son of an Italian sculptor who emigrated to America and later returned to Italy in 1936, he has preserved his sense of love and passion for his father's country, and at the same time this has made him feel his birthplace even more intensely.<sup>1</sup>*

Any attempt to divide Scarpitta's spirit into its constituent Italian or American parts is destined to run aground, since they are both equally convincing facets of his artistic identity. Nevertheless, the fact of being in one place or another exerts its own influence: each place has its particular historical, social, cultural and visual characteristics. This influence is perceived not only in Scarpitta's artistic output, but also in its critical reception.

Understandably, nearly all the literature dedicated to Scarpitta until 1958–59 was produced in Italy, due to the limited diffusion of his work abroad—excluding the interlude of 1953, when he spent a year in the United States, and the reportages of the American art critic Milton Gendel while correspondent for *Art News* in Rome.<sup>2</sup> It was only after Scarpitta's definitive return to New York in 1959 that his international resonance grew in conjunction with his increasing success. During the 1950s, for instance, institutional exhibitions with an international scope pigeonholed Scarpitta as being among the foreigners residing in Italy.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in Rome he was considered a member of the large American community, since he was a pensioner of the American Academy.<sup>4</sup> But in general, in the eyes of his artist friends, Scarpitta was perfectly integrated into the Italian, and more specifically

Roman, artistic scene of the period. Indeed, he even appeared in survey exhibitions dedicated to Italian art,<sup>5</sup> and was included among the abstract painters cited in Italian artist Piero Dorazio's essay "Recent Italian Painting and its Environment," printed in the influential book *The World of Abstract Art* published by Wittenborn in 1957.<sup>6</sup> Also significant was a letter from Dorazio to dealer Leo Castelli dated April 14, 1957, in which he recalled one of their previous visits to Galleria La Tartaruga and described its refurbished spaces and new direction: "Now [Galleria La Tartaruga] has been superbly renovated, and it has taken on a group of Roman painters: Afro, Scarpitta, Turcato, Corpora, Perilli, Scialoja, Brunori and myself."<sup>7</sup>

For a better understanding of Scarpitta's position in the art world, it is useful to look beyond the binary dynamic of Italy-United States or Rome-New York. For example, in *Aujourd'hui*. *Art et Architecture*—a French magazine (1955–67) founded by André Bloc and among the most important and informed publications concerning abstract art during the 1950s—Scarpitta's name only appears in a list of exhibitions on the occasion of his one-man show at Milan's Galleria del Naviglio in 1956<sup>8</sup> and within a series of in-depth articles on Italian postwar art between 1958 and 1959,<sup>9</sup> edited by Charles Delloye.<sup>10</sup> The magazine never discussed Scarpitta's work either before or afterwards—even when, as of 1962, it featured a regular column by Colette Roberts titled "Lettre de New York," in which the shows at Leo Castelli Gallery in New York were often reviewed. The magazine's scarce interest in American art during the 1950s was probably a contributing factor to this lack of coverage, and was attributable to rivalries between Paris and New York.<sup>11</sup> It was therefore significant that Scarpitta was perceived and presented as an Italian artist—or at least an Italo-American in Rome.<sup>12</sup>

Scarpitta's works of 1957–58 were, more specifically, often framed within the long wake of artistic



Fig. 1: Scarpitta's written statement and painting (1956–57) (top right) in "Materiali d'oggi per pittori e scultori d'oggi," *Arti Visive*, II, no. 8, 1958

research conducted by Alberto Burri.<sup>13</sup> Again in *Aujourd'hui*, the poet and critic Emilio Villa wrote:

*In Italy, personalities of a doubtlessly higher quality gravitated around him [Burri], and under the influence of his energy, certain Italo-American artists found reasons to work, including Meo Salvatore, Donati, Marca-Relli and, for me the most recent, Salvatore Scarpitta, who is the most genuine fruit of this great tree due to his vehemence and the vigor of his conceptions, and he is perhaps one of the greatest painters whom one can encounter today in this scene.<sup>14</sup>*

Between 1957 and 1959, as evidenced in Villa's statement, Scarpitta's artistic production was recognized as among the most advanced and significant, and was sustained by leading Italian activist art magazines. In the December 1957 issue of *L'Esperienza Moderna*, Cesare Vivaldi associated him with other artists of the "Rome School" and their "new representation of the real," which went beyond traditional logic "to obtain a faithful and profound image of life."<sup>15</sup> Earlier that year, Vivaldi had presented Scarpitta's one-man exhibition at Galleria La Tartaruga, where he showed, among

other works, *La siccità (Via)* (1957); the critic asserted how the artist had overcome a long incubation period thanks to his painstaking work on materials and color, his great energy achieving newfound balance.<sup>16</sup> In September of the following year, one of Scarpitta's *extramurals* of 1958 was published in a round up of works printed in *Il Gesto*, a magazine of the Nuclear Art Movement compiled by Enrico Baj, Sergio Dangelo and Piero Manzoni.<sup>17</sup> Another two of his works—an oil painting of 1957 and a doughy, clumpy color-based piece, probably of 1956–57—also appeared in 1958 in *Arti Visive* (fig. 1). In particular, the second work accompanied a statement by Scarpitta within the magazine's feature on the use of Vinavil and other non-traditional materials in painting and sculpture, reporting on Burri, Ettore Colla, Nuvolo, Mimmo Rotella, Edgardo Mangucci and Achille Perilli. Such materials responded to a technical necessity related and essential to the new poetic and formal criteria that these artists were innovating.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, Vinavil was fundamental for Burri's opaque paste—an opacity that Villa considered as one of the greatest qualities of the Umbrian artist's work.<sup>19</sup> But it was just as important for Scarpitta, who stated:

I use Vinavil to prepare the canvases, mixed with 10% glycerine to make it more elastic. In fact, I would like Vinavil to have a greater elasticity and a greater capacity to penetrate the weave of the canvas. I would also like to find a colored Vinavil, but oil-based.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, in a review of Scarpitta's 1957 exhibition at Galleria La Tartaruga, Lorenza Trucchi highlighted the "opaque paste" and "sober tones" as elements underlying the refinement of a painting style that remained within its own material and conceptual boundaries.<sup>21</sup>

Material and color were thus at the core of Scarpitta's considerations. As with other artists—if we think of their common desire for a colored Vinavil—Scarpitta explored a concept of material and color identity that steered him towards the new phase of wrapped or bandaged canvases exhibited at La Tartaruga in April 1958. This identity stemmed from a separation of the problem of hue from the problem of material.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, by dividing the two, Scarpitta was able to transform the material—i.e. the "twisted, stretched, slashed, ripped and taut canvas"<sup>23</sup>—into a "pure plastic medium," which was subjected to a slow and laborious manual process. Vivaldi outlined this development in the monograph dedicated to Scarpitta at La Tartaruga, accompanied by large-format reproductions of eight *extramurals*, including *Moby Dick* (*Extramural-Composition n. 3*) (1958), *Untitled* (1958) (plate 3) and *Matrimonio segreto* (*Extramural n. 6*) (plate 4). In his *extramurals*, Scarpitta emphasized the crude and raw canvas of bandages, which were stretched and interwoven on the frame in order to create structured and dynamic three-dimensional compositions. As a result, rather than being laid on top, the color was ingrained not only in the material—in accordance with Burri's lesson—but also in its spatial transformation. In his bulging canvases—redolent of Burri's *Gobbi*, or "hunchbacks"—Scarpitta passes from works such as *Sul limite e oltre* (*Composizione*) (1956) (plate 1), in which color variants ambiguously highlight or constrict the mobility of the canvas like a second skin, to the monochrome pieces of 1958, such as *Dimensione* (plate 5), where a topographical tension dominates the artwork. Moving from the almost iconoclastic act of tearing the canvas to a more constructive and designed approach, Scarpitta operated on the double levels of linguistic reductionism and the monochromatic concretization of his previously two-dimensional mark-making in earlier oil paintings. He thus brought out the vital

and rhythmic potential inherent in the tension of the bandages—a personal reinterpretation of the Futurist idea of universal dynamism.<sup>24</sup>

On this point, Scarpitta wrote the following words to Plinio De Martiis, the founder of Galleria La Tartaruga, in July 1959 from New York:

*The painting is simpler, or rather there is greater parsimony in the number of pulls. I would like to do a painting with one or two pulls at the most, dear Plinio, so as to give ever greater play to the color surface and thereby return to the question of color and tension in the canvas. For the moment free of strong color, I work in the black and white of the canvas with corrosives.*<sup>25</sup>

That Scarpitta's works opened up new horizons is confirmed by the failure of certain critics to grasp his reasoning, even if they had supported the most up-to-date abstract "pictorial" languages until that time. Yet, despite regarding Scarpitta as an original artist, even Trucchi criticised what he saw as a decline into facile material-based experiences displayed in the works Scarpitta presented at La Tartaruga in April 1958.<sup>26</sup>

In view of Scarpitta's solo show at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, which was to open on January 27, 1959, the second half of 1958 was a period of intense activity for the artist, as De Martiis recalls:

*After seeing bullfights for the first time, I realised that Scarpitta resembles a bull before the picador and the banderillas. He stays in his studio working and bellowing precisely like a bull. It is full of white bandages and his things seem better to me.*<sup>27</sup>

The Castelli exhibition—which was attended by Scarpitta himself, eager to return to New York—presented a number of *extramurals* that had already been exhibited at La Tartaruga, such as *Moby Dick* (1958), *Flying Dutchman n. 2* (1958) and *Composizione Extramural n. 5* (1958), as well as new works including *Matrimonio segreto* (*Extramural n. 6*) (1958) (fig. 2). The reaction and feedback were positive: the exhibition was met with considerable success and sparked debates and reflections among artists and critics, and also resulted in a number of sales (albeit fewer than anticipated).<sup>28</sup> Castelli himself encouraged Scarpitta's inclination towards the use of bandages in his works, emphasizing this technical innovation as well as the need for large dimensions.<sup>29</sup> This kind of format was not unusual for Scarpitta. Indeed, he had already experimented



Fig. 2: Exhibition view, Salvatore Scarpitta: *Extramurals*, Leo Castelli Gallery, New York, January 27 – February 14, 1959

with larger compositions in the mid-1950s, and further explored this direction between 1957 and 1958, especially with his first bulging canvases and early *extramurals*. Such large-scale formats were in fact ingrained in a more typically American way of conceiving art—distinguishing him, with few exceptions such as Burri, from his Italian peers. Moreover, the technical aspect was also highlighted by Dore Ashton in "Art: New Techniques," a January 1959 review published in *The New York Times* in which she took a critical approach that—in line with Italian literature of the period—reflected on Burri's legacy and the theme of collage. She wrote that, "Scarpitta's contribution is an extension of the canvas collage—used by Burri and Marca-Relli—into another dimension."<sup>30</sup> Through his complex craft of bulging, cutting and interweaving the canvas, Scarpitta had invented a "technique." And it was not just about the visual effects identified by Ashton, but also the production of balanced and perfectly conceived compositions that were also sculptural; to paraphrase Ashton, bas-relief, after all, is sculpture too.<sup>31</sup> A review printed in *Art News* a month later, in February 1959, also spoke in similar terms. The article underlined aspects

of his technique and process, the visual effects that recalled a lesson in anatomy, his derivation from and great evolution compared to Burri (even concluding that Scarpitta had little in common with him beyond his use of fabric), and the choice of increasingly simple, almost sculptural constructions. Furthermore, the review also mentioned the use of an "all-over" color—specific of the Abstract Expressionist approach—in several more recent works.<sup>32</sup> The *Art News* review of Scarpitta's second exhibition at Castelli's gallery in 1960 once again echoed this assessment, highlighting aspects of the artist's process and materials.<sup>33</sup>

In early April 1959, Scarpitta traveled to Italy aboard the "Cristoforo Colombo" ocean liner; it was to be a brief return, since on May 31, 1959 he informed De Martiis that he intended to leave once again for the United States.<sup>34</sup> This "escape," as the artist confessed, was driven by a pressing need to return to New York: "There I will be able to continue my work, which for me wants of many new things, without delay I'd say, even physically and mentally. I do not know how long I will stay there."<sup>35</sup> The East Coast metropolis had penetrated Scarpitta's restless personality, allowing him to focus on his potentialities.<sup>36</sup> In those years, New



Fig. 3: Emilio Villa, "Dada coriphée à New York," *Appia Antica*, no. 2, January 1960

York enchanted countless Italians who stayed there: artists, critics, collectors and men of letters have all left numerous accounts of their deep-rooted impressions, such as the one sent to De Martiis from Giorgio Franchetti, who was in New York searching for contacts and openings for artists of Galleria La Tartaruga: "New York is a city that can only be described by inventing new words. In a certain sense it is like a force of nature, an apparently immobile volcano, in continual eruption, an immense glacier, with intense and united life swarming in its crevices. It is a boil on the skin of the earth, full of all the active and passive germs that fight to the death in a battle for the creation of man."<sup>37</sup>

New York thus became essential for the work of Scarpitta, who wrote, for example:

*I am in a state of anguish for having made things that challenge the human intellect. The escape from Rome was necessary and I am neither regretful nor proud of it. For me this journey was like a finally unavoidable appointment.*<sup>38</sup>

In the following months and years, Scarpitta nevertheless continued to assert his desire to maintain relations with La Tartaruga, considered De Martiis his gallerist, and regarded Castelli's work as being useful for everyone, both in the United States and

in Italy. However, the Italian interlude had ended and Scarpitta returned to being not only an American artist, but an artist of the Leo Castelli Gallery—the gallery of Neo-Dada, Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns.

Between October and November 1959, after inclusion in the inaugural group exhibition of the new season at Leo Castelli Gallery, Scarpitta exhibited *Helikon* (1959) (plate 8) in the exhibition *Work in Three Dimensions*—alongside works by artists such as John Chamberlain, Johns, Yves Klein, Marisol, Louise Nevelson, George Earl Ortman and Rauschenberg. The exhibition was reviewed by Villa in *Appia Antica* with the title "Dada coriphée à New York" (fig. 3).<sup>39</sup> As well as appreciating the "tormented" outcomes of this new artistic direction, and despite difficulties in entirely following it, Villa also sanctioned the reception of a new Scarpitta in Italy.

Scarpitta was well aware that something had changed in his practice, as well as within the American artistic scene as a whole, and that there was something new in this direction that perfectly coincided with his nature and passions. However, there were also harsher aspects to this trajectory, like "hydrochloric acid" or "a noise of exhaust pipes in a garage in Indianapolis."<sup>40</sup> But they had, of course, their own *raison d'être*:

*The last show at Leo's titled Three Dimensions is very interesting. [...] It seems a bit like a museum of criminal history, fires, burglary items, child-abduction prams, evacuation slides, etc. It gives rise to controversy. I reasoned with my friends Guston and Kline that they are irritated. But they calmed down with self-importance; protectionism, in the sense that, at bottom, it is better not to talk about it since they have every interest to dodge the issue. They sense a certain 'hydrochloric acid' in there. However, they have their own chronicle and they rightly feel in the saddle. But will the horse bolt?*<sup>41</sup>

Art was transforming once again, and Scarpitta was conscious of being part of this change; he also knew, as hinted at in this statement, that each artist fights to keep his own position in the history of art, and its market.

A new interpretation of Scarpitta's artistic research would soon become even clearer with the evolution of his work from the *X frames* onwards. Indeed, a well-known article published in *Metro* in November 1961—a magazine edited by Bruno Alfieri from 1960 to 1972 and very receptive to American developments, thanks to a special relationship with Castelli—emphasized Scarpitta's

transition towards the idea of spatial and symbolic "modules."<sup>42</sup> The *X frames*—shown at Dwan Gallery in Los Angeles in the summer of 1961—were composed of X-shaped "modules" that could be taken apart, juxtaposed, overlaid, and reassembled into different and interchangeable sequences.

Concurrent with the *X frames*, Scarpitta started producing a series of works in which he incorporated car fragments, often salvaged from race-track accidents: seatbelts, racing harness buckles, parachute clasps, racing car tubes, exhaust pipes. These compositions are deeply considered structures, in which the objects are associated with painting elements. This is evident in works such as *Tishamingo (for Franz Kline)* (1964) (plate 19), or *Sundial for Racing* (1962), *Over the Fence* (1962), *The Rail on the Pole* (1963) and *Wallendas* (1963), which were shown in his one-man exhibition at Castelli Gallery in 1963. On the occasion of this show—the last before the new turning point and transition towards the "Sal Race Cars" of 1964—the American critical literature increasingly tended to focus on the "American" aspect of Scarpitta's research: it was noted that his work had, since his move to New York, acquired a more brutal and grandiose finish. Indeed, *Art News* highlighted the strength and impact of his new works, which seemed to incorporate hard references to war, speed and naivety.<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, there were also recollections of Scarpitta's long stay in Rome, evidenced in the simultaneous emergence of a critical language that, in stressing Scarpitta's creative procedures and their effects, returned to the idea of wounds, sutures and pain reminiscent of Burri.<sup>44</sup>

Thus Scarpitta had by 1963 achieved a profoundly autonomous and original artistic language. If this visual vocabulary was increasingly harsh, it was also deeply emotional, as Clotilde Scarpitta—his former wife—highlighted with these incisive and heartfelt words during that summer:

*Salvatore is really the only artist that manages to stay on course: we don't know where he is going, but he goes, and there is no question that his works are even stronger and clearer. Sometimes there is too much bitterness; perhaps a bit of optimism he always had in the past is missing, but the paintings give off strong emotions—not in a romantic sense, but rather they don't leave you indifferent.*

*His love for cars and his fear are incorporated in increasingly chaotic tangles; each painting is like a twisting 'Millemgia race' and the emotion is so strong that looking at them alone leaves you feeling as though you had partaken in the race.*<sup>45</sup>

1. *Salvatore Scarpitta* (Galleria del Naviglio, Milan, February 18–27 February 1956), exh. cat., (Milan, 1956); text by G. Turcato: "Mi è cosa grata parlare del pittore Salvatore Scarpitta. La sua vicenda pittorica non è tra le più comuni. Figlio di uno scultore italiano emigrato in America e ritornato poi in Italia nel 1936, ha conservato il senso d'amore e di passione per il paese del suo genitore, e per questo nello stesso tempo gli ha fatto sentire più intensamente il suo paese di nascita."
2. See M. Gendel, "Art news from Rome," *Art News*, 57, no. 5, September 1958, pp. 50–51, 61 (p. 61): "Scarpitta's approach is the opposite; the canvas is attacked broadly and muscularly; in fact it bulges forward from behind or is pulled taut into bundles and knotted, while the color is dashed on in generous masses."
3. XXVI Venice Biennale, 1952 (room XXXII b); XXVIII Venice Biennale, 1956 (room "Foreigners in Italy"); *Mostra di pittori italo-americani*, Galleria Schettini, Milan, September 20 – October 4, 1957; XXXIX Venice Biennale, 1958 (exh. *Stranieri in Italia at Galleria Bevilacqua La Masa*).
4. See "Americani di Roma," *L'illustrazione Italiana*, February 2, 1957, pp. 54–59, 94–96 (p. 59).
5. V Quadriennale, GNAM, Rome, March 31 – May 1948; *I Mostra degli artisti di Roma e Provincia*, Galleria d'Arte del Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, May 6–31, 1955; *Sette pittori romani*, Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, from March 20, 1956; *Nove pittori romani*, Galleria L'Ariete, Milan, from June 19, 1957; *Giovani artisti italiani*, Palazzo della Permanente, Milan, April 20 – May 16, 1958; *Giovane pittura di Roma*, Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, from February 10, 1959.
6. P. Dorazio, "Recent Italian Painting and Its Environment," in *The American Abstract Artists* (ed.), *The World of Abstract Art*, (New York: Wittenborn Inc., 1957) pp. 43–52 (p. 52).
7. Letter from P. Dorazio to L. Castelli, Milan, April 17, 1957, Leo Castelli Gallery Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.: "Ora [la galleria La Tartaruga] è stata rimessa a nuovo molto bene ha preso un gruppo di pittori romani e cioè: Afro, Scarpitta, Turcato, Corpora, Perilli, Scialoja, Brunori e me."
8. "Les expositions à Paris et dans le monde," *Aujourd'hui. Art et Architecture*, I, no. 6, January 1956.
9. E. Crispolti, "La quatrième génération," p. 10–13 (p. 13); "Peintre italiens d'aujourd'hui," pp. 16–29 (p. 20), *Aujourd'hui. Art et Architecture*, IV, no. 20, December 1958; C. Vivaldi, "La nouvelle avant-garde italienne," pp. 8–15 (pp. 14–15); E. Villa, "La peintre italienne dans les dix dernières années," pp. 16–25 (pp. 17, 21), *Aujourd'hui. Art et Architecture*, IV, no. 21, March–April 1959.
10. See letter from C. Delloye to P. De Martiis, undated [early 1959], Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina.
11. The only exceptions were analyses of American painting and sculpture in the July and September issues of 1958: "Unité et divergences de la peinture américaine,"

*Aujourd'hui. Art et Architecture*, III, no. 18, July 1958, pp. 12–27; I. Sandler, "La sculpture américaine," *Aujourd'hui. Art et Architecture*, IV, no. 19, September 1959, pp. 4–9.

12. On the other hand, links between *Aujourd'hui* and Rome's art scene dated back to the late 1940s, thanks to contributions by certain abstract artists, notably including Dorazio, to the magazine *Art d'Aujourd'hui* (1949–54), which was also edited by Bloc. These associations were reinforced throughout the decade as a result of relations with the magazine *Arti Visive* (1952–58), the official organ of the Fondazione Origine.
13. E. Crispolti, "La quatrième génération," cit.
14. E. Villa, "La peintre italienne dans les dix dernières années," cit., p. 21: "en Italie, autour de lui [Burri] gravitèrent des personnalités d'une qualité sans doute supérieure et sous l'influence de son énergie trouvèrent des raisons de travailler quelques peintres italo-américains tels que Meo Salvatore, Donati, Marca-Relli, et, parmi les plus récents, Salvatore Scarpitta qui est, lui, le fruit authentique de ce grand arbre de par sa véhémence et la vigueur de ses conceptions et, peut-être, l'un des plus grands peintres que l'on puisse rencontrer aujourd'hui dans ce milieu."
15. C. Vivaldi, "Nuova figurazione nella giovane arte italiana," *L'Esperienza moderna*, no. 3–4, December 1957, pp. 20–24 (p. 24).
16. *Scarpitta*, (Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, from May 27, 1957), exh. cat., (Rome, 1957); text by C. Vivaldi. See also F. D'Amico, "Il lungo laboratorio della pittura di Salvatore Scarpitta," in *Salvatore Scarpitta*, curated by G. Celant, D. Eccher (GAM, Turin, October 20, 2012 – February 3, 2013), exh. cat., (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2012), pp. 11–17.
17. "Scarpitta 1958," *Il gesto*, no. 3, September 1958.
18. "Materiali d'oggi per pittori e scultori d'oggi," *Arti Visive*, II, no. 8, 1958.
19. E. Villa, "Burri [Nostra dimessa cosmogonia]," *Arti Visive*, I, no. 4–5, May 1953.
20. S. Scarpitta, statement, in "Materiali d'oggi per pittori e scultori d'oggi," cit.: "Uso il vinavil per la preparazione delle tele, mescolato con glicerina al 10%, perché lo rende più elastico. Infatti vorrei che il vinavil avesse una maggiore elasticità e fosse capace di penetrare maggiormente nella tramatura della tela. Inoltre vorrei che si trovasse un vinavil-colore ma ad olio."
21. L. Trucchi, "Mostre romane. Caracciolo, Fabbriziani, Secchi, Scarpitta, Accattino, Fusi, Levi," *La Fiera Letteraria*, XII, no. 23, June 9, 1957, p. 7.
22. See the text by Scarpitta ["Confession"], in *Scarpitta*, (Galleria La Tartaruga, Rome, from April 26, 1958), exh. cat., (Rome, 1958).
23. C. Vivaldi, "Salvatore Scarpitta," in *Scarpitta. Quaderni di Arte Attuale*, (Rome: De Luca Editore, 1958).
24. See M.G. Messina, *Il collage nel secondo dopoguerra. Materie*; M.G. Messina, "Il collage negli anni cinquanta. Una storia americana (o quasi)," in *Collage/Collages dal Cubismo al New Dada*, curated by M.M. Lamberti, M.G. Messina (GAM, Turin, October 9, 2007 – January 6, 2008),

- exh. cat., (Milan: Electa, 2007) pp. 202–206 (p. 204); pp. 300–320 (p. 315).
25. Letter from S. Scarpitta to P. De Martiis, July 27, 1959, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina: "Il quadro è più semplice ossia il numero dei tiraggi è maggior parsimonia. Vorrei fare un quadro con un o due tiraggi al massimo, caro Plinio, così da offrire sempre maggiore gioco alla superficie colore e così rientrare alla base del discorso colore e tensione di tela. Per il momento libero di gran colore lavoro nel bianco e nel nero della tela con corrosivi."
  26. L. Trucchi, "Mostre romane," *La Fiera Letteraria*, XIII, no. 19, May 11, 1958, p. 8.
  27. Letter from P. De Martiis to L. Castelli, September 18, 1958, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina: "Dopo aver visto per la prima volta le corride ho capito che Scarpitta somiglia a un toro prima della picada e delle banderillas. Sta nel suo studio a lavorare muggendo appunto come un toro. È pieno di bende bianche e le sue cose mi sembrano migliori."
  28. See letters from S. Scarpitta to P. De Martiis, February 9, 1959; March 6, 1959; April 1, 1959; letters from L. Castelli to P. De Martiis, February 3, 1959; February 12, 1959, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina.
  29. See the letter from L. Castelli to P. De Martiis, August 14, 1958, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina.
  30. D. Ashton, "Art: New Technique. Inkless Intaglios and Canvas Collages on View in Two Gallery Shows," *The New York Times*, January 27, 1959, p. 30.
  31. The newness of Scarpitta's work was highlighted also by B. Schiff, "In the Art Gallery," *New York Post*, February 15, 1959, p. 12.
  32. See J. S., "Salvatore Scarpitta," *Art News*, 57, no. 10, February 1959, p. 15.
  33. See V. R., "Scarpitta," *Art News*, 59, no. 3, May 1960, p. 16.
  34. See also letters from S. Scarpitta to L. Castelli, April 27, 1959 and May 22, 1959, Leo Castelli Gallery Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.
  35. Letter from S. Scarpitta to P. De Martiis, May 31, 1959, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina: "Li potrò continuare il mio lavoro che di molte nuove cose bisogna per me, improrogabile direi, addirittura fisicamente e psichicamente. Non so quanto tempo ci starò."
  36. See the letter from P. Dorazio to L. Castelli, Rome, April 26, 1959, Leo Castelli Gallery Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
  37. Letter from G. Franchetti to P. De Martiis, January 23, 1958, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina: "New York è una città per descrivere la quale bisogna inventare i termini. In un certo modo è come una forza della natura, un vulcano apparentemente immobile, in continua eruzione, un ghiacciaio immenso, nelle cui crepe formicola una vita intensa e unita. È un foruncolo nell'epidermide della terra, pieno di tutti i germi attivi e

- passivi che combattono a morte la battaglia per la creazione dell'uomo."
38. Letter from S. Scarpitta to P. De Martiis, July 4, 1959, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina: "Sono in uno stato di angoscia per aver fatto cose che sono una sfida all'intelletto umano. La fuga da Roma era necessaria e non me ne rammarico né me ne vanto. Per me questo viaggio era come un appuntamento finalmente inevitabile."
  39. E. Villa, "Dada coriphée à New York," *Appia [Appia Antica]*, no. 2, January 1960.
  40. Speaking about his own solo show at the Leo Castelli Gallery, April 19–May 7, 1960 in letter from S. Scarpitta to P. De Martiis, May 19, 1960, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina. See also V.R., "Scarpitta," *Art News*, 59, no. 5, May 1960, p. 16.
  41. Letter from S. Scarpitta to P. De Martiis, October 24, 1959, Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina: "L'ultima mostra da Leo 'Tre dimensioni' è assai interessante. [...] Sembra un po' un museo di storia criminale, incendi, oggetti da scasso, carrozzelle da rapimenti di bambini, il salto del telone ecc. Suscita controversie. Ho argomentato con l'amico Guston e Kline che sono irritati. Ma si sono calmati con sussiego; protezionismo, nel senso che, in fondo, è meglio non parlarne dato che loro hanno tutto l'interesse a schivare. Intuiscono un certo "acido muriatico" lì dentro. Però, loro hanno la loro cronistoria e si sentono giustamente in sella. Ma il cavallo fuggirà?"
  42. "Optical Symbols On The Increase: Scarpitta," *Metro*, no. 3, November 1961, pp. 88–89.
  43. E.C. M., "Salvatore Scarpitta," *Art News*, 62, no. 5, September 1963, p. 14.
  44. This interpretation of Burri's work was well-known in the United States at this point thanks to the 1955 monograph by James Johnson Sweeney: J.J. Sweeney, *Burri*, (Rome: L'Obelisco, 1955).
  45. Letter from C. Scarpitta to P. De Martiis, undated [Summer 1963], Galleria La Tartaruga Papers, Archivio di Stato, Latina: "Salvatore è veramente l'unico artista che riesce ancora a tenere la sua rotta: non si sa verso dove vada ma va, e non c'è dubbio che i suoi lavori siano sempre più forti e chiari. Qualche volta c'è un po' troppo amarezza nel suo lavoro, manca forse un po' di ottimismo che aveva sempre ma sono quadri che sprigionano una tale forza di emozioni e non in senso romantico che non lasciano nessuno indifferente. Il suo amore per le macchine e la sua paura anche sono incastrati in grovigli sempre più caotici, ogni quadro è una specie di Millemgia vorticoso e l'emozione è così forte che il solo guardarli ti lascia come se tu avessi corso."
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Project Coordinators  
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