

ITALIAN ART OPENS NEW GALLERY HERE

Contemporary Paintings Used
by Catherine Viviano to Get
Own Quarters Started

By ALINE B. LOUCHHEIM

A new gallery made an auspicious start this week. The Catherine Viviano Gallery at 42 East Fifty-seventh Street opened with a handsome display of work by five contemporary Italians, all but one of whom was represented in the Museum of Modern Art's comprehensive Italian show last summer.

The gallery's owner, Catherine Viviano, is familiar to the art world from her many years at the Matisse Gallery. And the gallery's quarters will be familiar, too, as they were last occupied by Julien Levy. Miss Viviano has worked a transformation, however. The interior walls have been torn down in favor of a single free-standing screen, white paint has replaced the former somber tones, new lighting has been installed. The whole effect is of light and spaciousness.

Aggressive Guttuso Style

Renato Guttuso, the leading figure of the Milan group which banded together under the title of "Fronte nuovo delle arti" and dedicated their painting toward a "humanitarian realism" disciplined by abstractionist art, is represented at the best of his aggressive style. Bright, sulphurous color and bold forms insistently build into figures of the contemporary scene in which subject-matter interest remains chained to artistic expression.

Pizzinato of Venice is an artist whose handsome combinations of abstract forms seem to have a special kind of luxuriance. Colors are brilliant and forms seem to sweep through the pictures as if propelled by a burst of controlled energy. There is a vigor and a sense of well-being in these paintings which, however much derived from Picasso, have been made personal, joyous and alive.

Not quite so free from Picasso in structure is Morlotti, the one of the group who was not shown at the Modern Museum. These still-life and figure pieces, with defiant black lines, differ from Picasso primarily in their somewhat gentler vision, their more subdued tonal relations and in the impression of being an echo of something rather than an invention.

New Manner for Cagli

Cagli has had frequent one-man shows in New York, but in this exhibition he presents a new manner. His canvases are agitated with little lines and dashes, with reticulated silhouettes which look like expanded metal, with linear shapes that seem almost flattened versions of models for mathematical formulae. All these little signs exist in clear, carnival color against white and seem to sit on a single plane. These paintings have gaiety and vitality, but they seem a little trivial to this reviewer.

Afro is the most serene of the five. His abstract renderings of such themes as "Sphinx" and "Saint Martin" have a poetic quality, a rare dignity. The blue-black ink color and the pale raspberry pinks recall the mystic color passages of a Piero della Francesca fresco.

All this work relates, of course, to the School of Paris. But it has personal qualities of liveliness, vigor, joyousness and an irresistible concern for pure visual beauty.