

# They Came To Milan For Cagli

## Vast Retrospective Of Modern Eclectic

By Jeanne Moll

*Special to the Herald Tribune*

MILAN, Dec. 27.—A planeload of friends and collectors, among them John Huston, flew up from Rome. Other collectors came on from London. Soccer players from the Turin team and the mayor of Asti arrived. Poet Giuseppe Ungaretti cut short a lecture to get there on time. Official, intellectual, artistic Milan turned out in full force. They came for Corrado Cagli.

By invitation of the city of Milan, the artist has assembled a vast retrospective of his work from 1931 until the present. It coincides with his preparation of sets and costumes for "The Mines of Sulphur" at La Scala. More than 230 works, including paintings, drawings, tapestries and sculpture, are on display on 900 square yards of the Civic Pavilion of Contemporary Art in Via Palestro. The show will run until Jan. 8.

As one critic pointed out, facts and figures usually are more pertinent to bookkeeping than to art. But in this case, they are the simplest means to convey the scope of the show. Those familiar with the scope of Cagli's activity, however, will instantly realize that various aspects still had to be sacrificed.

### Eclectic Maverick

Cagli is not an easy man to encompass even in 900 square yards. He is a maverick and an eclectic.

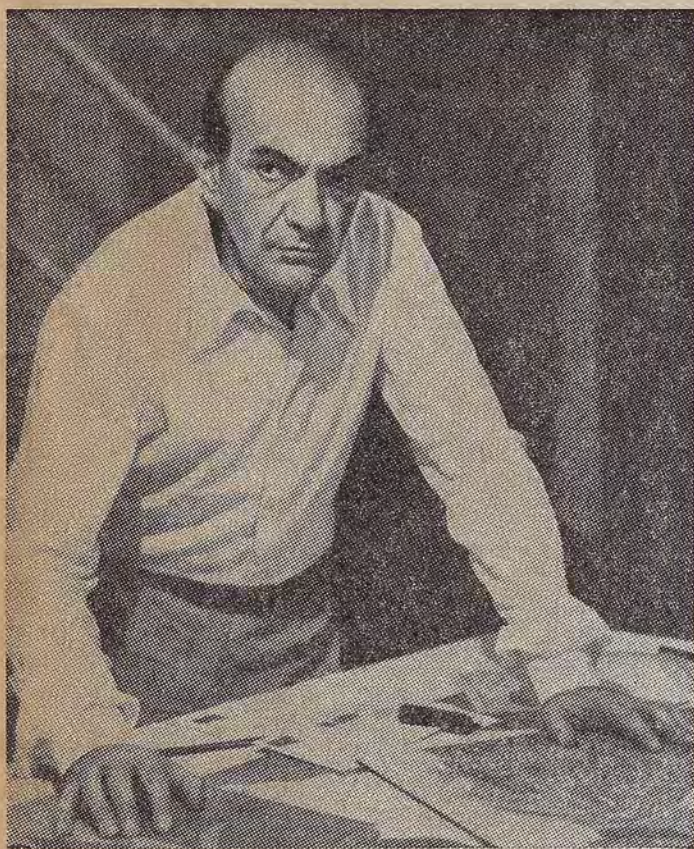
"If a Botticelli allegory is useful, use it," he says. "What critic forbids it? Painters have always taken what they needed, and the more past you have, the more future. That's the difference between modern and modernist."

Prior to the show, many of the paintings were lined around the walls of his Rome studio ready for crating and shipping. Abstract, figurative, Klee here, Renaissance there, applied mathematics, shades of Jung, classicism . . . Orpheus, symbols, signs, farmers, tarot cards, African totems, cabalistic lore, creased paper, Sicilian wagon colors, American soldiers, Buchenwald and a carousel of techniques, tricks of the trade, refinements and discoveries.

Furthermore, a quick look at the dates confirms the suspicion of a constant debate with reigning trends. Cagli seems always to have adopted a style of painting before or after everyone else—far too ornery or bored to ride with the herd.

"I'm beyond it, but what is a young painter to do now that a new law is laid down every year on what is right and wrong, in or out?" he says. "I'm against this Calvinistic approach—this Christian preoccupation with good and evil. The risk, the control, are all that matter in a painting."

"My work is in continuous movement like that of any analytical painter," Cagli says. "I don't know what I'm doing next year or next painting. The procedure is from analysis to synthesis. For example, Cézanne worked by juxtaposition of one tone to another until they took form. I may start with a line. I play around with it, put one line next to another. The theme emerges later."



Multi-faceted artist Corrado Cagli.