

ARTFORUM

Mimmo Rotella

PALAZZO REALE

Piazza del Duomo, 12

June 13–August 31

Mimmo Rotella described his *décollages* as a “protest against a society that has lost the desire for change.” By tearing down advertising posters and peeling away some of their surface in his studio, he wanted to release the materials’ latent “moods,” believing this would give a “patina of hope” to an otherwise bleak world.

The exhibition at the Palazzo Reale presents Rotella’s *décollages* alongside his *retro d’affiches*, “poster backs.” This is the name that Pierre Restany gave to Rotella’s found and reworked compositions that include the caked glue and ripped paper from multiple posters, whose reversed images and texts are sometimes visible. To give a sense of Rotella’s contexts, the show also includes works by his contemporaries (Alberto Burri, Enrico Castellani, Jean Dubuffet, Lucio Fontana) and predecessors (Hannah Höch, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Kurt Schwitters) as well as documents related to Rotella’s sound poetry, which he called “epistaltic.” The exhibition proceeds backwards, from Rotella’s meter-wide *décollages* shown in the 1964 Venice Biennale to the first, more modest *décollages*, made in Rome between 1953 and ’55 after his return from a Fulbright in Kansas City, where he was still exhibiting works in his early, abstract style.

Abstraction runs parallel to epistaltic poetry, Rotella writes in a manuscript displayed in the exhibition. But the torn poster must have been more than parallel, because it became his signature material. This exhibition gives a sense of *décollage*’s possibilities, but also of its limitations. The hopeful patina of materiality is hard to separate from the *dolce-vita* sheen of the posters’ original images, from the pop-culture gratification that can still be felt in front of their dynamic typefaces and their elegantly tattered Marilyn Monroes and Sophia Lorens.



Mimmo Rotella, *A Love in Casablanca*, (detail) 2003, serigraph with collage, 28 x 38".

— *Patrick Greaney*