

LUXEMBOURG & DAYAN

The New York Times

Domenico Gnoli

Through July 14. Luxembourg & Dayan, 64 East 77th Street, Manhattan;
212-452-4646, luxembourgdayan.com.



Domenico Gnoli's "Capigliatura Maschile" (1966), acrylic and sand on canvas, in the show "Detail of a Detail" at Luxembourg & Dayan.

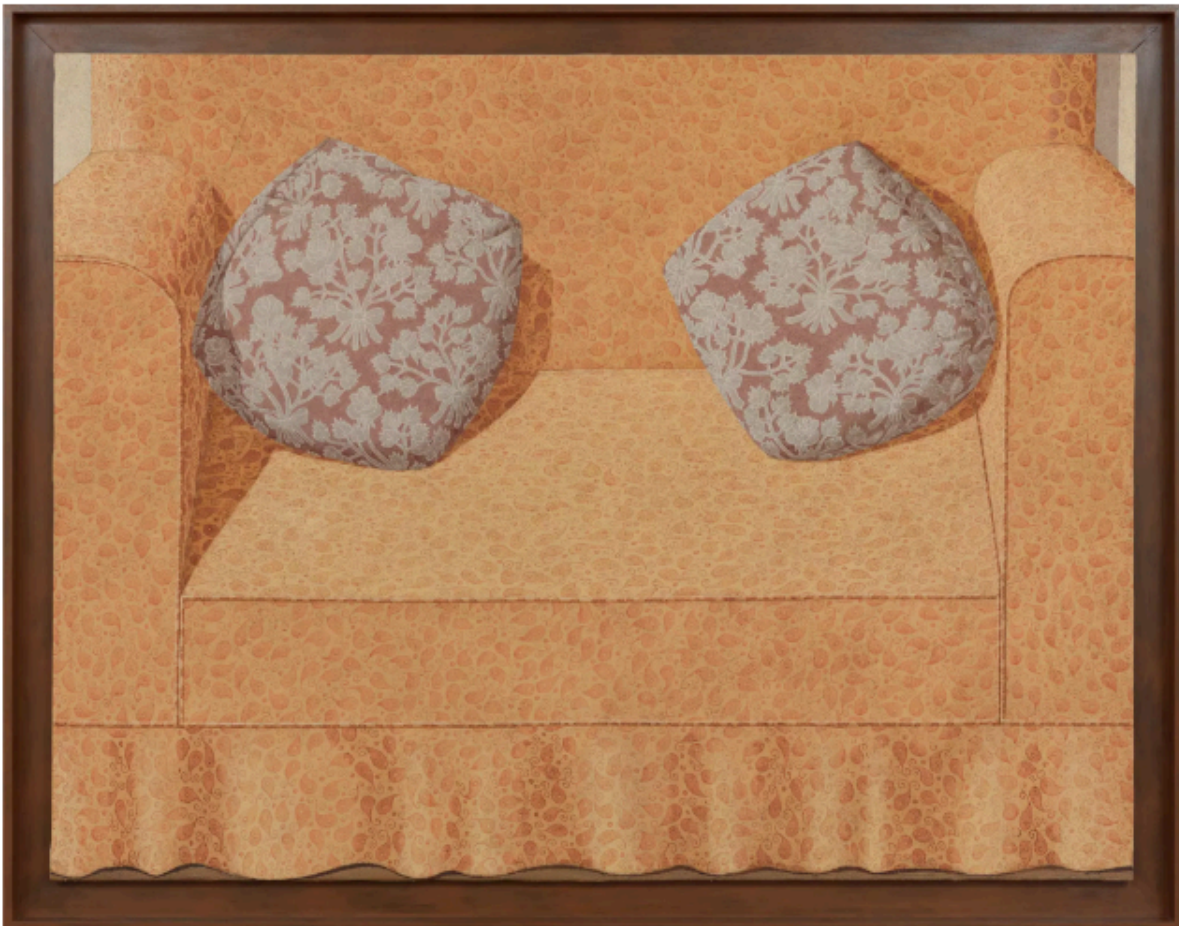
Domenico Gnoli, 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome; Luxembourg & Dayan, New York

Giorgione, Raphael, Caravaggio, Watteau, Géricault, Seurat, Schiele, Boccioni:
All of them changed the course of European painting, and all of them died
before they were 40. There are entire histories of art that never happened

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because of war and illness. Another name deserves a place on that list of trailblazers who were gone too soon: Domenico Gnoli, whose unsettling paintings of isolated bodies, clothing and furniture shook up the art world of 1960s Italy, but who was brought down by cancer in 1970, at the age of 36.

Gnoli painted overlooked details of bourgeois Italian life — a chair, a shoe, a forehead with slicked and parted hair — at bizarre scales, some on canvases more than six feet wide. The close-ups can be comically dull, as in that of a love seat fitted with a ghastly slipcover of Creamsicle orange, seen from a high angle, and with its back cushion cropped at the top. Or they can be fetishistic: Witness the sickly-shiny gloss of a woman's leather heels, or the evocative dimple of a man's necktie, blown up to five feet square.



Gnoli's "Sofa," also in acrylic and sand, from 1968.

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Though these paintings are precise, they are not photorealistic. The silk of the necktie, for instance, looks like ridges of Plasticine, while the skin and hair of Gnoli's models recall the waxy figuration of Carlo Carrà, Giorgio di Chirico and other Italian predecessors. Gnoli mixed sand into the acrylic paint, which gives them an archaeological undertone. And if his close-ups have a parallel in contemporary American Pop Art, or in the French painting of Narrative Figuration, there is no apparent social engagement here, unless you count the alienated downward gaze and the extreme cropping of the images, which turns the amulets of the borghesi into things ornery, oppressive and comic.



Gnoli's "Sous la Chaussure" (1967), acrylic and sand on canvas.

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None of the paintings in this exhibition, titled “Detail of a Detail,” have been seen in New York since 1969. Especially here, where the unassuming sculpture of Arte Povera dominates our view of Italian art of the 1960s, this second show of Gnoli’s at Luxembourg & Dayan offers a gift of painting whose everyday details take on the weight of metaphysics. JASON FARAGO