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## Woman as Fancy Slit?

**The Daily Pic: In 1961, Lucio Fontana portrayed his female dealer as a cut – hold the "n".**

by [Blake Gopnik \(contributors/blake-gopnik.html\)](http://contributors/blake-gopnik.html) | September 26, 2013 5:24 PM EDT



(Photo by Tom Powel Imaging, Courtesy Dominique Levy, New York)

This is “Spatial Concept: Portrait of Iris Clert”, painted by Lucio Fontana in 1961 and now on loan from a private collection to the exhibition called “[Audible Presence \(http://www.dominique-levy.com/exhibitions/audible-presence-lucio-fontana-yves-klein-cy-twombly\)](http://www.dominique-levy.com/exhibitions/audible-presence-lucio-fontana-yves-klein-cy-twombly)”, which inaugurates the new Dominique Levy gallery uptown in New York. The piece has been billed as Fontana’s tribute to his famous dealer, but – how to put this delicately – there’s something a bit ... *special* ... about portraying a woman as a bejewelled slit. It also gives a new twist to how we read the “abstract” knife-slits in Fontana’s other “Spatial Concepts”.

I think Fontana’s work runs the same danger as the work of many other official geniuses (especially in Europe, and especially when it has a posh market): The work gets deprived of its faults, and thus of its energy. Fontana, as Levy’s show proves, could veer from brilliant composition to tacky decoration, and sometimes into bad taste. Good for him. (Photo by Tom Powel Imaging, Courtesy Dominique Levy, New York.)

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