

**“ROMA 1950 - 1965”**

**AN EXHIBITION CURATED BY GERMANO CELANT**

**PRESENTED BY FONDAZIONE PRADA**

**23 MARCH – 27 MAY 2018**

**PRADA RONG ZHAI, SHANGHAI**

“Roma 1950-1965,” conceived and curated by Germano Celant and presented by Fondazione Prada, will open to the public from 23 March to 27 May 2018 within the spaces of Prada Rong Zhai in Shanghai. The exhibition explores the exciting cultural climate and lively art scene that developed in Rome during the period following the World War II, bringing together over 30 paintings and sculptures by artists including Carla Accardi, Afro Basaldella, Mirko Basaldella, Alberto Burri, Giuseppe Capogrossi, Ettore Colla, Pietro Consagra, Piero Dorazio, Nino Franchina, Gastone Novelli, Antonio Sanfilippo, Toti Scialoja and Giulio Turcato.

Within a historical context characterized by the Italian economic boom and an increasing industrialization, the intellectual and artistic debate focused on notions of linguistic renewal and political commitment. In Italy, from the mid-1940s, innovation was embodied from a literary and cinematographic perspective through the neorealist movement, represented by film directors such as Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini and Vittorio De Sica, while writers and intellectuals like Elio Vittorini and Cesare Pavese created an extraordinary period of experimentalism and international openness. In the art scene, people witnessed the spread of ferocious debates and polemics, as well as the proliferation of opposing groups and theoretical positions. Rome was one of the most vital epicenters of this clash of ideas which translated into a rethinking of ideological realism, promoted by artistic figures like Renato Guttuso and Giacomo Manzù, as well as into an attempt to reconcile collective life with individual experience, abstraction with political militancy, art with science.

In November 1950 Mario Ballocco published the article “Gruppo Origine” in *AZ* magazine, promoting and defining the program of a group he had formed in Milan with Burri, Giuseppe Capogrossi and Ettore Colla. The artists of the group “express the need for a rigorous, coherent and energetic vision” that is powerfully anti-decorative and is translated through renunciation of an overtly three-dimensional form; through the reduction of color to its “simplest, but peremptory and incisive expressive function”; through the evocation of “graphic nuclei, linearisms and pure and elemental images.” Burri’s presence within the group proved fundamental in affirming a poetics that gave up idealism in favor of the human and material. Since 1948 onward he began to experiment with the expressive potential of abrasions, rips, holes, patches, molds, scars and corrosions, applying various different techniques on his canvases and working with natural or artificial elements. Ettore Colla, on the other hand, relied on industrial waste materials to create his sculptures. Created with found objects, Colla’s assemblages have a dramatic dimension: the artist ripped things from

their destiny as merchandise destined for the waste heap and deterioration, reconsidering them as “acts of human intelligence.” Through two-dimensional painting, Giuseppe Capogrossi experimented with a non-figurative investigation of the gesture and sign that connected him with contemporary international research.

The next generation was that of the Forma group, which, although founded in 1947, was made up of younger artists like Carla Accardi, Ugo Attardi, Pietro Consagra, Piero Dorazio, Giovanni Guerrini, Achille Perilli, Antonio Sanfilippo and Giulio Turcato. They signed a manifesto published in the first issue of the magazine *Forma 1*, the name by which the group was identified. Their artistic vision was focused more on painting, displaying less interest in raw and primary materials, and recovering elements from the Futurism of Giacomo Balla and Umberto Boccioni, as well as from the Constructivism of Kazimir Malevič and Vladimir Tatlin. Their formalism was vital and open, nevertheless paid close attention to social and political instances, driven by a revolutionary and avant-garde approach. What counted was the sign that stemmed from an uncontrolled gesture, and the ability not so much to represent reality as to create a new reality through the use of primary colors and new forms.

Accardi, Sanfilippo and Turcato, in particular, invented cosmic or biological dimensions made up of stars and atoms floating freely on the surface of the canvas. The approach adopted by Dorazio, Consagra and Perilli was more systematic: in their works they create narrations in which the energetic charge of color and material become central.

Forma, Origine, the Gruppo degli Otto and the Fronte Nuovo delle Arti, to quote only a few, were primarily Roman groups and movements from which essential figures for the development of Italian art in the following decades emerged. During that period, painting and sculpture tended toward the formless and the gestural. The influence of Action Painting and the abstract Expressionism of Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky, Willem de Kooning and Franz Kline would become clear in painters like Afro Basaldella and Gastone Novelli, who presented a linguistic experimentation based on the sign.

During the fifteen-year-period taken into account by the exhibition, Rome was quickly redeveloping from the rubble of war and was rediscovered as a place of beauty and misery, perdition and religiousness, sensuality and splendor, depicted in all its contradictions in Federico Fellini's film *La Dolce Vita* (1960). The city attracted not only important writers and intellectuals of the period like Alberto Moravia, Italo Calvino, Ennio Flaiano, and Pier Paolo Pasolini, but also a new group of actors, celebrities and Italian and international filmmakers who populated Cinecittà, the “Hollywood on the Tiber,” as the Americans defined it. For a number of years, these protagonists moved many cinematographic mega-productions to Rome, helping increase the Italian capital's legendary status in the collective imagination. “Roma 1950–1965” also investigates this cultural aspect through an important collection of documents from those years, including historical photographs and original publications; and evokes the social and intellectual context within which the exhibited artists compared and confronted with one another in a constant, productive dialogue.

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