THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
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FOR WEDNESDAY RELEASE

MUSEUM TO SHOW MOST COMPREHENSIVE EXHIBITION OF
ITALIAN TWENTIETH-CENTURY ART

The international importance and scope of Italian 20th-century art is shown for the first time in this country in a comprehensive exhibition of approximately 250 paintings, sculptures and graphic works by 45 artists to be shown at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, from June 29 to September 11. Beginning with Italian artists of the early part of the century who created two important movements - Futurism (1909-15) and the "Metaphysical" school (1915-21) - the exhibition presents the high points in the development of modern art in Italy and concludes with the contemporary postwar resurgence of a new and creative generation. It includes the work of such internationally well-known artists as DE CHIRICO, MODIGLIANI, BOCCIONI, CARRÀ, and many new names not known here. The Museum is publishing a descriptive and well illustrated catalog of the exhibition.

Special emphasis is placed on the younger men whose works in many instances have never before been seen in this country - though their contemporaries in the film field have already won international reputations with such remarkable movies as Open City, Shoe Shine, Paisan. The painters and sculptors, too, are producing valid, original art despite the strength and renown of the older generation and despite the isolationism of the Fascist period in which they grew up. Once the works of such contemporary masters as MORANDI, MARINI and GUTTUSO are better known outside Italy they may well take their place naturally in the stream of contemporary Western art. The number, the variety of expression and the quality of the works of art in this exhibition are perhaps indicative, along with other manifestations such as films, of a new renaissance in Italy.

Assembling the show:

To assemble the exhibition the Museum last year sent two staff members to Italy for several months. James Thrall Soby, Chairman of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, and Alfred H. Barr, Jr.,

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Director of Museum Collections, were aided in their search for new talent by two large exhibitions, the Quadriennale in Rome and the Biennale in Venice, both revived for the first time since the war. From these shows they learned of a number of artists previously unknown to them, despite prior compilation of lists from art books and catalogs that had come out of postwar Italy. Private collections and galleries in the major cities were also rewarding sources, but the museums for the most part were seriously lacking in the best 20th-century Italian pictures. In the work of assembling the art and in the complicated details of arranging long-term loans, packing and shipping, Mr. Soby and Mr. Barr were enormously aided by the good offices and remarkable generosity of Romeo Toninelli, a silk designer and manufacturer of Milan, who is much interested in modern Italian art.

Many collectors in Italy proved to be people of moderate means - some of them professional men and tradesmen who had first acquired works in exchange for services or goods and then continued as enthusiastic collectors. They displayed in their choice a highly individual and personal taste, often collecting as many as 35 to 40 works by a favorite artist. The younger Italian artists charge low prices for their works - perhaps one-fifth as much as in America - and thus sell regularly a good part of what they produce and at the same time make art accessible to interested people even of modest resources.

Works were selected on the basis of their intrinsic quality and of their potential interest for the American public. Where quality would not be sacrificed, smaller works were chosen rather than larger because of the high costs of transportation; but there are nevertheless a few very large canvases in the show.

Italy's postwar art world:

The difficulties from which the artists emerged after the end of Fascism and German domination have been summarized by one of the outstanding younger artists: "We were all victims...of insecurities and anxiety, of a certain 'hermeticism' - that was the only possible way of protesting. Till 1946 I had seen nothing of modern painting - no impressionist, no Cézanne, no Picasso - nothing except in reproduction. This is true of all my generation. They sent us off to war instead... Problems resolved elsewhere remained unsolved

here, and besides one had to be prudent and not reveal oneself too much."

The effect of last year's Venice Biennale exhibition, where most of the younger Italian artists saw for the first time famous works by modern masters of other nations, cannot yet be truly gauged. Here Manet, Renoir, Cézanne, Klee, Picasso, Braque, Henry Moore and groups of French, American, Belgian and Austrian works suddenly were presented to a previously isolated art world, most of whose artists had been unable to travel abroad because of the war or, before that, the strict passport and currency regulations of the Fascist regime. Nor did the autarchic policies of Fascism encourage the importation of foreign art during all those years. Nevertheless it should be said that some Italian artists, chiefly of the older generation, were aware of advanced developments in art abroad and of their own accord repudiated these developments. Others of that generation sought refuge from Fascism's officially approved styles in work of a highly individual character. It is the young who will probably be most affected by the new influx of foreign art in Italy.

HISTORICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL NOTES

Futurism:

In the rather easy-going, retrospective, peninsular Italy of 1909, Futurism exploded with a bang. Marinetti, a wealthy poet and dramatist, proclaimed its founding with his "Manifesto of Futurism" in which he stated: "We shall sing the love of danger, energy and boldness.... A roaring motor-car, which runs like a machine gun, is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace.... We wish to glorify War.... We wish to destroy museums, the libraries...we would deliver Italy from its plague of professors, archeologists, tourist guides and antique dealers." Taking their cue from Marinetti, the five young Futurist painters signed their own proclamation in 1910: BOCCIONI, CARRÀ, RUSSOLO, BALLA and SEVERINI. Dissatisfied with portraying one "snapshot" of motion, they attempted to reveal all the rhythm and movement of a woman walking or a horse rearing. On one canvas they sought to portray something close to a movie sequence while their contemporaries were content to show only one still. They tried to express speed, dynamic energy and, in some paintings the whole complex of external sensations and internal

emotions. Their work was influenced by the French Neo-impressionists such as Seurat, and by the Paris cubists whom they tried to surpass.

The Futurists were disturbed by their conviction that "For other countries Italy seems the land of the dead," but stated that "actually Italy is coming alive, and her political rebirth is now followed by her intellectual rebirth." They proposed "to exalt every form of originality even if reckless, even if over-violent.... Painters have always shown us figures and objects arranged in front of us. We are going to put the spectator at the center of the picture.... We are fighting...against the nude in painting which has become as boring and nauseating as adultery in literature."

The famous Futurist exhibition held in Paris in 1912 traveled to major cities all over Europe. It was received with conflicting rage and enthusiasm, but always with excitement. A few critics took it seriously, others were condescending or hostile; Modigliani was outraged; Picasso, contemptuous. In the middle of the tour, the Futurists were invited to take part in the New York Armory Show of 1913, but they refused because they wanted separate galleries with a separate box office.

In 1915 the Futurists worked furiously to bring Italy into the war on the Allied side and were several times arrested and jailed - once with Mussolini - as agitators for intervention. When Italy finally entered the war Russolo and Boccioni immediately enlisted in the artillery, Marinetti was wounded and twice decorated. Boccioni was hit and invalided to a base hospital. Yet with all his enthusiastic espousal of war, it is ironical that he died from a fall from a horse while he was out riding. Severini, who took no active part in the war, made the best Futurist paintings of the war. When Marinetti emerged from the war, he allied himself with his fellow interventionist Mussolini and gathered around him a band of younger Futurists whose work however seems minor and marginal by comparison with the original group.

The Museum's exhibition is the most important showing of Futurist painting and sculpture since the early days of the movement. It is held, appropriately, on the 40th anniversary of the first Futurist Manifesto.

"Metaphysical" school:

While Futurism published a program which its artists followed, the "Metaphysical" school was much less doctrinaire; it was "more a way of seeing than a formal school." Its aim was to portray strangely philosophic and enigmatic images through the projection of commonplace and fantastic objects against unreal, dream-like settings. In 1917, CARLO CARRÀ, then 36 and a veteran of the Futurist campaign, met the 28-year-old inventor of the "Metaphysical" school, GIORGIO DE CHIRICO, while both were stationed in a military hospital at Ferrara. De Chirico, born in Greece of Italian parents, had evolved his highly personal, atmospheric style between 1911 and 1915, dreaming of the deserted piazzas of Italy while in self-enforced exile in Paris. At Ferrara, seconded by Carrà, he developed his haunting art into the "Metaphysical" school, which gained international fame through the magazine Valori Plastici. De Chirico has since renounced completely his own earlier works and modern art in general, and has just recently been invited to become one of only three foreign members of the British Royal Academy and to exhibit under its auspices. The third member of the school was GIORGIO MORANDI of Bologna who evolved his own version of "Metaphysical" painting in isolation and was more interested in formal relationships than in the philosophical and psychological values stressed by de Chirico and Carrà.

The "Metaphysical" movement was short-lived, and by late 1921 Carrà had painted his last picture in this vein, while de Chirico had long since returned to his classical heritage as an Italian, though he revived his Ferrarese iconography at intervals. But the school continued to exert an important influence on artists outside Italy. In Germany, Switzerland and France de Chirico's "Metaphysical" fantasies became a crucial factor in the evolution of the Dadaists' and the Surrealists' art.

Modigliani, Campigli:

Meanwhile, in self-imposed exile in Paris, modern Italy's best known artist (with the possible exception of de Chirico), AMEDEO MODIGLIANI had lived out his tragically short career which ended with his death from Spanish influenza in 1920. Under the influence of such Italian old masters as Botticelli, under the modern impact of

Cézanne, cubism and African sculpture, Modigliani created a notable monument to the human figure and face. His art is marked by great sensibility and elegance, his life by a desperate Bohemianism. A fine draftsman, he worked as a sculptor as well as a painter; indeed, he and Boccioni, who was also a painter, are very probably the best sculptors of the earlier 20th century in Italy.

Of Italian artists in the generation following that of Modigliani, a few preferred to escape an oppressive atmosphere by moving, like Modigliani, to Paris. MASSIMO CAMPIGLI spent many years in Paris and there developed his highly personal style based on Etruscan and Pompeian sources.

Novecento ("Twentieth century"):

In the post-World War I period of the early 1920s, art everywhere in the Western world passed into a period of reaction toward classicism and realism. By 1926 a group of painters of conservative or "reformed" tendency founded the movement known as the Novecento more or less with the official approval of the Fascist regime. Originally a small group of artists, united by a desire to return to tradition and to repudiate such advanced developments as cubism and Futurism, the Novecento finally became merely a conveniently loose phrase to describe those Italian artists who had rejected international progressive art in favor of a return to native inspiration and sources. The Novecento had many sides. It included the rather pompous neo-classicism which Mussolini liked. But it also included, at least in terms of public definition, the later work of de Chirico and Carrà. DE CHIRICO, after the collapse of the "Metaphysical" school, veered towards romantic and classic subject pictures, influenced by Böcklin, Delacroix, Courbet, Picasso and the old masters. CARRÀ painted elegiac Italian scenes, attempting to fuse Giottesque monumentality with Lombard impressionism. MORANDI, isolated in Bologna, continued to explore his major interest - the interplay of form and color. CASORATI, at Turin, achieved the careful, serene figure painting by which he is represented in the exhibition. DE PISIS, living mostly in France, adopted a rapid, impressionist style which recalls the 18th-century Venetian tradition of Guardi.

The Roman School:

In Italy itself around 1928 - the date when Campigli's mature career began - there developed in Rome the first effective resistance among younger artists to Novecento formality. This was the so-called "Roman School," whose leader was SCIPIONE (Gino Bonichi), doomed like Modigliani to early death. Scipione and his chief ally, MARIO MAFAI, were determined to paint only what they themselves felt deeply and instinctively. Scipione's art, marked by a strong sense of fantasy and considerable expressionist vigor, often dealt with favorite Roman squares, with still life and anti-classic portraiture. Mafai painted scenes of demolition in Rome or withered flowers in full sunlight without regard for the compositional rigidity insisted on by the Novecento's neo-classicists. The influence of the "Roman School" is very much alive today.

Postwar developments:

With the end of the recent war, the isolation of the Italian artists was suddenly and dramatically ended. Since 1945 the younger Italian artists have been working with great eagerness to catch up and move ahead. One group, which became known as the Fronte nuovo delle arti, issued a manifesto in 1946 to further the general reaction against the Novecento. Most current Italian painters of the Fronte believe in the art that has evolved from cubism and its later abstract ramifications and also to a lesser degree in expressionism. Their primary aim as stated in their manifesto is "to give their observations and their separate creations in the world of the imagination a basis of moral necessity and to bring them together as expressions of life." They are intent on bringing their art to grips with the humanitarian reality in which they are vitally interested. Much of their painting, as best illustrated by the wide selection of the forceful and colorful paintings of RENATO GUTTUSO and ARMANDO PIZZINATO, have a great urgency about them and are motivated by aggressive hopes.

Renato Guttuso, 37 years old, is probably the best known painter of his age in Europe. He is a leader among the young Roman artists who see a great deal of each other in cafes and restaurants and encourage one another in their art, in the face of poverty and lack of success. His fame was increased enormously by the publication in

1945 of his Gott mit uns, a book of searing anti-German drawings inspired by his valorous experience in the Resistance. Politically active, he has refused all political pressure to change his style of painting toward academic representation. Although his art is broadly abstract he retains a clear reference to contemporary actuality.

GIORGIO MORANDI is considered by many Italian critics to be the most important living Italian painter. Working quietly in Bologna, Morandi for nearly 40 of his 60 years has collected quantities of bottles of all kinds - wine bottles, perfume bottles, decanters, gasoline and oil containers. Arranging them as models he has painted elegant still lifes in a kind of quietist rejection of Fascist neo-classic pomposity. His art is narrow in iconographic range but rich in lyric sensitivity. At the Venice Biennale last summer he was well represented with the other painters who were once members of the "Metaphysical" school, and was awarded the much coveted prize for Italian painting - not so much for his "Metaphysical" works as for a lifetime of steady devotion to plastic research and for unflagging integrity and inspiration in its pursuit.

MARINO MARINI, a sculptor who lives in Milan, is widely regarded in Italy and to an increasing degree abroad, as the most powerful younger sculptor in that country. As a committee member of the Biennale Marini worked for the inclusion of progressive painting and sculpture, and many artists and critics were disappointed when the first prize for Italian sculpture went to his younger and more conservative rival, Manzù. His impressive sculptures of Horsemen, two of which are in the exhibition, were originally inspired by the sight of the peasants of Northern Italy fleeing the bombings on horses swollen by hunger. Marini is also one of the most distinguished portrait sculptors of contemporary Europe. He and his wife live in a modern apartment in Milan since, as Marini explains, he needs to feel around him the energy of modern industrial life, whereas in Rome the weight of the great artistic past is oppressive to him.

GIACOMO MANZÙ has been heard of before through American newspapers when his series of bas-reliefs representing scenes of the Calvary and the Passion were objected to by the Pope because the characters are naked. Manzù, now 41, is deeply religious and intensely serious. He was so grieved by the Pope's disapproval that

he traveled to Rome from his home in Milan to speak with the Holy Father and to explain that the bas-reliefs had in no way been created in an irreligious spirit. In one of them, done in 1942, the mocking soldier is a helmeted German infantryman at a Crucifixion - courageous motif to have used during the German occupation. In addition to bas-reliefs, Manzù is represented by small bronze figures and numerous sensitive drawings.

Information about the numerous artists included in the exhibition but, for lack of space, not mentioned here, as well as additional details about those artists described are available in the catalog of the exhibition. This book was prepared by James Thrall Soby and Alfred H. Barr, Jr., who assembled the works in Italy. It contains 144 pages; 140 reproductions, 5 in full color; full text on the developments in 20th-century Italian art; a complete check list of all works in the exhibition with a brief biography of each artist, and a comprehensive subject bibliography.

Artists whose work is exhibited:

AFRO (Basaldella)	LUCIO FONTANA	ARMANDO PIZZINATO
GIACOMO BALLA	EMILIO GRECO	OTTONE ROSAI
LUIGI BARTOLINI	VIRGILIO GUIDI	LUIGI RUSSOLO
UMBERTO BOCCIONI	RENATO GUTTUSO	GIUSEPPE SANTOMASO
POMPEO BORRA	STANISLAO LEPRI	TOTI SCIALOJA
CORRADO CAGLI	MARIO MAFAI	SCIPIONE (Gino Bonichi)
MASSIMO CAMPIGLI	GIACOMO MANZÙ	PIO SEMEGHINI
CARLO CARRÀ	MARINO MARINI	GINO SEVERINI
FELICE CASORATI	ARTURO MARTINI	MARIO SIRONI
BRUNO CASSINARI	MARCELLO MASCHERINI	ARDENGO SOFFICI
GIORGIO DE CHIRICO	AMEDEO MODIGLIANI	GIOVANNI STRADONE
FABRIZIO CLERICI	GIORGIO MORANDI	ARTURO TOSI
ANTONIO DONGHI	MARCELLO MUCCINI	RENZO VESPIGNANI
PERICLE FAZZINI	FAUSTO PIRANDELLO	ALBERTO VIANI
SALVATORE FIUME	FILIPPO DE PISIS	GIUSEPPE VIVIANI