



THE SIGNS OF THE SACRED – THE IMPRINTS OF THE REAL

Twentieth-century Graphic Arts

in the Contemporary Art Collection of the Vatican Museums

curated by Francesca Boschetti

Press Conference

Tuesday 10 December 2019 - 11.30 a.m.

Braccio di Carlo Magno – Vatican City (St. Peter's Square)

Open to the Public 11 December 2019 - 29 February 2020

Admission free

THE SIGNS OF THE SACRED – THE IMPRINTS OF THE REAL. Twentieth-century Graphic Arts in the Contemporary Art Collection of the Vatican Museums is the title of the exhibition that inaugurates to the Press on Tuesday 10th December 2019, at 11.30 a.m. in the monumental spaces of Bernini's Braccio di Carlo Magno. The exhibition, **curated by Francesca Boschetti**, specialist about the graphic art in the Contemporary Art Collection of the Vatican Museums, presents for the first time an extraordinary selection of about 150 graphic works, mostly unpublished, selected from about four thousand works that make up the entire collection of prints, drawings and photographs of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the Vatican collections. An exhibition that invites the public to **amazement** and to **discover** an "**hidden treasure**" whose life, stored in folders and protected from light, is normally far from the eye of the public.

Preserved in special conditions of light, humidity and temperature, the artworks on paper occupy a very limited space in the Vatican Museums, where only a few units are visible in rotation. For this reason, the exhibition – with the coordination of **Micol Forti**, Head of the Contemporary Art Collection of the Vatican Museums – is a special occasion to see up close masterpieces by **Edvard Munch, Paul Klee, Otto Dix, Max Ernst, Oskar Kokoschka, Umberto Boccioni, Giorgio Morandi, Felice Casorati, Piero Dorazio, Marc Chagall, Joan Miró, Henri Matisse**. Graphic arts, usually considered a field for specialists and experts, is indeed a privileged "observatory" to get to know the artists and appreciate their most innovative and experimental aspects.

Precisely because of the heterogeneity and richness of the artworks that compose it, the exhibition was conceived as a **circular narration** that begins with **the Creation of the World** and

ends with **the creation of the artwork**. These artworks are sometimes accompanied by paintings and sculptures by the same artists or other authors, who have iconographic or chronological connections with the prints. A closeness that aims to underline the osmosis between graphic art and expressive languages considered "major".

The exhibition itinerary, underlined by the set-up of the architect **Roberto Pulitani**, is divided into **four sections**: *The Sentiments of the Sacred and the Human*, *The Imprints of the Real*, *Origin of an Idea* and *Sign and Colour*.

THE SENTIMENTS OF THE SACRED AND THE HUMAN includes subjects inspired in large part by the Holy Scriptures taken from the Old and New Testaments, highlighting the wide range of human feelings contained in religious iconographies. The Genesis, the life of Christ from the Motherhood of the Virgin to the Deposition in the Tomb, the Apocalypse, take form in the graphics of the Catalans **Joan Miró** and **Joan Josep Tharrats**, in the powerful woodcuts by the expressionists **Max Pechstein**, **Karl Schmidt-Rottluff** and in the refined prints by **Felice Casorati**, **Sigfrido Bartolini**, **Rufino Tamayo**, up to the stereoscopic Crucifixion by **Salvador Dalí**: two lithographs designed to be viewed with a special viewer that makes the image three-dimensional. The section focuses on the **universality** and **actuality** that some themes bring with them. **Georges Rouault**, **Marc Chagall**, **Marino Marini**, **Renato Guttuso**, **Guido Strazza** in the years of the two world wars, use sacred iconographies to give voice and face to the injustices and sufferings of war. *The Martyrdom* by Lorenzo Viani tells the laic drama of the deaths in the sea through a sequence of images that recall the martyrdom of Christ and at the same time evoke the shipwrecks that happen at any time and in any place.

The section **THE IMPRINTS OF THE REAL** opens a glimmer on the wonder that activates in the careful and sensitive observation of the concrete details of everyday life, whether it be a still life, a tree, a city view. **Emil Nolde**, **Ernst Ludwig Kirchner**, **Giorgio Morandi**, **Luigi Bartolini**, **Carlo Mattioli**, **Duilio Cambellotti**, **Anselmo Bucci** are some of the artists in this section.

The third thematic line **ORIGIN OF AN IDEA** gives an insight into the delicate and precious moment, that of the creative process, when the idea of the artist begins to take shape and the creation of a work begins. Papers, plaster and bronze sketches tell the evolution and the stages of the creative path of artists such as **Mario Sironi** and **Umberto Boccioni**, **Giacomo Manzù**, **Pericle Fazzini** and **Cecco Bonanotte** and **Santiago Calatrava**.

Finally, the **SIGN AND COLOUR** section brings together mainly abstract works that show a range of possible solutions conceived from the dialogue between these two founding elements of the pictorial and graphic language. Among the interpreters of a personal re-elaboration of the vision of the world are **Georges Braque**, **Hans Hartung**, **Lucio Fontana**, **Fausto Melotti**, **Venturino Venturi**, **Kazimierz Głaz**.

“An artistic expression of this genre cannot miss in the Papal collections – declare the Director of the Vatican Museums, Barbara Jatta – because it is actually made up of these ‘Signs of the Sacred’ generated by the spiritual sensibility of so many artists during the 20th century. Graphic arts is an intimate art, less scenographic and disruptive with respect to painting and sculpture but it reaches more directly to the heart and soul of the person”.

Founded in 1973, in parallel with the creation of the section dedicated to the twentieth century art desired and inaugurated by Pope Paul VI, **the twentieth-century graphic art collection** is a **young** and **anomalous** collection. In fact, it is not the result of the will of a collector, who chooses and collects the individual sheets with an overall idea to be constituted and enriched progressively, but rather a natural and spontaneous consequence of Pope Montini's "call" to the world of art to reconnect the historical link between the Church and contemporary culture. The rich nucleus of papers is in the beginning the result of the response of artists, heirs and patrons, who personally gave the Pontiff prints and drawings, then merged into the Vatican collections. From the death of Paul VI onwards the increase of the collection follows different criteria and the acquisitions are aimed at filling gaps in the existing historical nuclei, while maintaining a continuity with the original idea of giving witness to contemporary spirituality.

The exhibition is accompanied by the catalogue published by **Edizioni Musei Vaticani**, with texts by Francesca Boschetti, Micol Forti, Barbara Jatta, Giorgio Marini, Giuseppe Trassari Filippetto.

Admission and opening times

Every day from 10.00 to 18.00

Wednesday from 13.30 to 18.00 p.m.

Closed on Sundays and holidays

Admission free

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Info

www.museivaticani.va