

Renato Guttuso: Painter of Modern Life

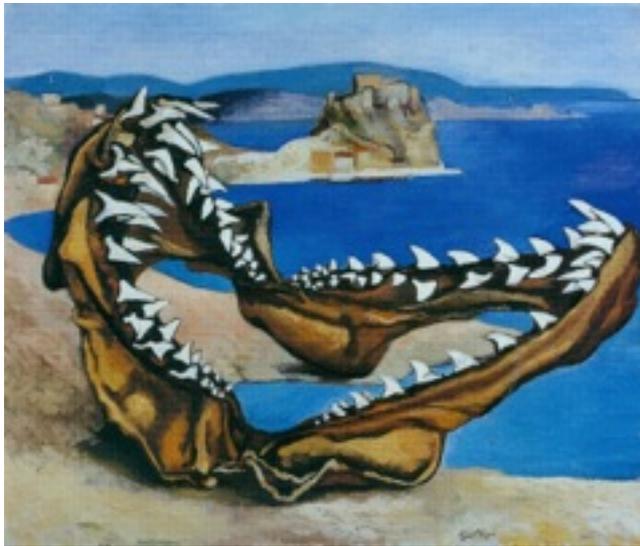
Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, London

14 January - 4 April 2015

Press view: Tuesday 13 January, 17.00-18.00

Private view: Tuesday 13 January, 18.00-20.30

www.estorickcollection.com



Shark's Jawbones in a Landscape, 1974, Courtesy Galleria d'Arte Maggiore, Bologna

The first major exhibition in the UK for almost 20 years to focus on the career of **Renato Guttuso** (1911-1987), opens at the Estorick Collection in London this January. Guttuso is one of post-war Italy's most widely respected painters whose powerful brand of expressionist realism vividly conveyed the *angst* of a generation. Wanting reflect and engage with the urgency of contemporary life and rebelling against the art advocated by Fascism's cultural establishment, Guttuso played a key role in forging a style that would go on to dominate Italian art throughout the immediate post-war years. Resolutely 'popular', his imagery continued to chronicle Italy's frequently turbulent political life and the changing face of its society for over 40 years. **Renato Guttuso: Painter of Modern Life** runs from 14 January until 4 April 2015.

Born in Sicily, Guttuso was encouraged to paint from an early age. During the early 1930s he encountered the expressionism of artists from the Scuola Romana and began to employ a more vibrant palette and freer painterly technique. After settling in Rome in 1937 he became associated with the Corrente group who resisted the idea of an art created in accordance with a binding 'ism'.

In 1940, Guttuso joined the Communist Party - despite the fact that he continued to participate in state-sponsored exhibitions, where he won prizes for his political allegories. Guttuso's *Still Life with Lamp* gives an idea of his approach; the image appears to be a conventional still life, yet it may in fact be a veiled comment on the brutality and persecution suffered by the regime's political opponents, or the chaos of war.

In the immediate post-war years, the spirit of cooperation and reconciliation that had characterised the Resistance, in which Guttuso had fought, was reflected in a new artistic association established in 1947 called the Fronte Nuovo delle Arti, which he later broke away from. True to his conviction that art should be 'useful', Guttuso continued to apply his robust, accessible style to socio-political themes over the course of his career (*Portrait of a Woman in Profile, Death of a Hero, Heroine*). He remained faithful to the Communist Party throughout his life, twice being elected Senator of the Republic. A work dating from these years (*Neighbourhood Rally*) captures the ferment of this tumultuous period.

Alongside politically-charged imagery, Guttuso continued to create works celebrating the people and the landscape of southern Italy, employing a palette described by the art historian Maurizio Calvesi as having been drawn directly from the intense colours of his native Sicily: '*like the fire of Etna, like the turquoise of the Tyrrhenian Sea, like the green of the lizards and the twisted vegetation [and] like the yellow of the oranges and the sulphur*'.

Organised in collaboration with Galleria d'Arte Maggiore, Bologna.

About the Estorick Collection

The Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art is internationally renowned for its core of Futurist works. It comprises some 120 paintings, drawings, watercolours, prints and sculptures by many of the most prominent Italian artists of the Modernist era. There are six galleries, two of which are used for temporary exhibitions. Since opening in 1998, the Estorick has established a reputation and gained critical acclaim as a key venue for bringing Italian art to the British public.

Listings information

Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, 39a Canonbury Square, London N1 2AN
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Renato Guttuso: Painter of Modern Life

Exhibition open: 14 January - 4 April 2015

Opening Hours:

Wednesdays - Saturdays 11.00-18.00, Sundays 12.00-17.00, closed Mondays & Tuesdays
Admission: £5, Concs £3.50. Includes entry to exhibition and permanent collection.
Transport: Victoria Line, Overground and First Capital Connect to Highbury & Islington.

For further press information, please contact Alison Wright PR

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