

Exhibition: **Christian Stein's Collection.
A History of Italian Art**

IVAM Institut Valencia d'Art Modern
7th October 2010- 23rd January 2011

Museo Cantonale d'Arte. Lugano
12th March – 15th May 2011

Curators: Jean Louis Maubant & Francisco Jarauta;

Co-produced by: Museo Cantonale d'Arte. Lugano

This exhibition, organised by the IVAM and the Museo Cantonale d'Arte in Lugano, presents for the first time in Spain a selection of over one hundred masterpieces of postwar Italian art from one of the most important and internationally prestigious art collection of gallery-owner Margherita Stein. In the best tradition of gallery-owners cum collectors, Stein chose the works that she felt passionate about rather than those that would further the art trade. This was a passion that she dedicated her whole life to and which earned her the staunch friendship of the artists whom she dealt with for more than forty years. The exhibition, thanks to the extraordinary collection of works that comprise it, documents crucial moments in the development of contemporary art with a view to reflecting the complexity of the historical-artistic moment and the constant evolution of the language of its protagonists.

The catalogue published for the exhibition contains texts by Consuelo Císcar; Marco Franciulli, Jean Louis Maubant; Francisco Jarauta; Bruno Corà, Giulio Paolini, and an interview by Catherine Francblin, and is illustrated with reproductions of the works displayed.

This exhibition reveals the existence of the most solid emblematic side of European art, showing great curiosity in examining and exploiting the possible continuations of the historic avant-gardes. But also a European art steeped in

doubt at the rise to power of American art and another way of experiencing culture. The itinerary of the exhibition allows us to view different art styles in the work of, Alighiero Boetti, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Giulio Paolini, Domenico Bianchi, Bruce Nauman, Michelangelo Pistoletto and Fausto Melotti, among others, and scrutinises the experimentation carried out by these artists in their search for innovative forms and methods in their production process.

The work of Manzoni, Fontana and Castellani is amply represented in the exhibition, as are artists not so well known to the Spanish public, such as Uncini, Lo Savio or Colla. One of the most original artists in the Italian art scene is also present: Fausto Melotti, Manzoni's unclassifiable friend. The ceramic pieces (Manzoni, Melotti) from the Albisola workshops, the monochromes and the sculptures that are a "manifesto" of conscious radicalness (Lo Savio, Fontana, Manzoni) tell the tale of northern Italy in the fifties and sixties, always full of classical and contemporary history, closely related to literary circles and reminiscent of constructivism.

The Galleria Stein opened in Turin in 1966. It soon became a daily meeting place for artists and Ms Stein, where important debates about art and culture were held. Some of the first artists who showed their work in the gallery were Calzolari, Boetti and Paolini along with Manzoni and Fontana. All or nearly all the artists that created the *Arte Povera* movement exhibited there. The gallery was an apartment at the same time; works were exhibited in the hall, the drawing room, the billiard room and site-specific pieces were made for certain places like the bathroom, the kitchen or the corridors.

Margherita Stein also worked with German and American artists. But her relationship with Mario and Marisa Merz, Luciano Fabro or Pistoletto, among other artists who frequented her gallery and whom she admired, led her to make the decision of collecting their works. In this way, she conserved all the work of Boetti, who held his first solo exhibition in the gallery in 1967. Later, Giuseppe Penone, Gilberto Zorio, Giovanni Anselmo, Gino de Dominicis and Claudio Parmiggiani showed their works regularly in the gallery. Remo Salvadori and Domenico Bianchi, among others, represent the generation that followed, in the eighties.

With this unique collection, the IVAM offers the opportunity to reflect about the art system and about a way to collect art for over fifty years in a European country, at a time when the commitment of artists was as great as that of collectors; when intellectual and spiritual complicity helped artistic production to prosper. And when the emotional content of a work of art could turn a gallery-owner into a collector, determined to conserve the testimonial function of art for future generations.

This exhibition serves to pay tribute to the curator, Jean Louis Maubant, recently deceased.