

Press Release

30 March 2017

Monumental Work of *Neorealismo* on Permanent Loan to the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig

The Akademie der Künste is lending Renato Guttuso's work *Occupazione delle terre incolte* (Occupation of Uncultivated Land, 1949-50) to the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig. Fifty years after it was shown at the same location as part of the last monographic Guttuso exhibition in East Germany in 1967, the monumental history painting from the Akademie der Künste's Art Collection is now returning to Leipzig where it will be on permanent display at the museum's main staircase.

Renato Guttuso (1912–1987) created this large-scale programmatic and allegorical image after the end of Second World War in reaction to social unrest on Sicily at that time. In this painterly yet vivid scene, Guttuso condenses his own experience of poor smallholders rising up against major Sicilian landowners as a procession of ordinary people setting out to take over land lying unused and uncultivated. A major influence on the inspiration for this late Cubist work came from Guttuso's encounter with Pablo Picasso and seeing the artist's anti-war painting *Guernica* from 1938. The two artists, who were both life-long communists, later became close friends. Today, Guttuso is regarded as one of the leading representatives of *neorealismo*, an Italian-style modern realism. Directly after *Occupazione delle terre incolte* was finished, it was presented publicly for the first time at the Venice Biennale in 1950.

During the "International Art Exhibition 1951", held on the occasion of the Third World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin, Guttuso's painting was shown in the East German Akademie der Künste at Robert-Koch-Platz. Subsequently, the Akademie paid a considerable sum to acquire the work for its collection. Guttuso was elected as a corresponding member of the Akademie der Künste in 1955. His painting of the poor occupying uncultivated land quickly advanced to become one of the most popular socialist images in the GDR.

With this generous permanent loan by the Akademie der Künste, the important holdings of figurative realist painting in the Leipzig collection are supplemented with a work by an influential artist from southern Europe.

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