

## Poor Art | Arte Povera

### Italian Influences, British Responses

20 September – 17 December 2017  
Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art, London

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Press View: 5-6pm, Tuesday 19 September 2017

'Arte Povera' is internationally recognised as the most famous and influential development in Italian art of the late twentieth century. It was introduced as a loose term in 1967 to describe the practices of a number of Italian artists. This exhibition highlights the impact of Arte Povera on the work of some of the British artists for whom it has been a source of inspiration. It shows work by the movement's key artists, including Alighiero Boetti, Mario Merz, Giuseppe Penone and Giulio Paolini alongside that of British artists such as Tony Cragg, Ceal Floyer, Mona Hatoum, Gavin Turk and Richard Long. **Poor Art | Arte Povera** runs at the Estorick Collection from 20 September until 17 December 2017.

Arte Povera emerged in the years following the rapid economic and technological growth that transformed Italian post-war society, when the economy began to slow and social tensions grew. Distinguished by a radically free attitude to materials and form, Arte Povera involved its audiences in the active perception of the physical and social world through individual experience. Over the decades, contemporary art in Britain has absorbed approaches derived from this way of working, from the 'New Sculpture' of the early 1980s and the installations of the nineties, through to the present day. Arte Povera embraced diverse cultural and philosophical connotations, although the artists grouped under its name are now mostly associated with using plain, everyday objects and organic substances collected from the home, workshop, street and landscape, sometimes placed in dynamic contrast with man-made industrial materials.

The show's opening in September 2017 marks the 50th anniversary of an exhibition that has become a landmark of the post-war avant-garde: *Arte Povera-Im Spazio*. Held at the Galleria La Bertesca in Genoa, it introduced the concept of an *arte povera* – literally 'poor art' – that the show's curator, Italian critic Germano Celant, had identified in the working practices and shared concerns of a number of young Italian artists.

The Italian artists in the exhibition include: Alighiero Boetti, Mario Merz, Giuseppe Penone, Giulio Paolini, Michelangelo Pistoletto and Gilberto Zorio. The British artists are: Eric Bainbridge, Tony Cragg, Ceal Floyer, Anya Gallaccio, Mona Hatoum, Jefford Horrigan, Stephen Nelson, Lucy Skaer, Gary Stevens, Jo Stockham and Gavin

Turk, plus the pivotal figure of Richard Long, who participated in the first international Arte Povera event in Amalfi in 1968.

The exhibition has been devised and selected by artist Stephen Nelson and writer Martin Holman, and organised by the Estorick Collection of Modern Italian Art. Stephen Nelson has commented:

*'This year is the 50th anniversary of Arte Povera's original exhibition and it's a moment to acknowledge its importance. This exhibition presents artists I have admired and encountered over 25 years, and who I believe embody the spirit of the arte povera movement.'*

## **Notes to Editors**

### **About Arte Povera**

Arte Povera is the term applied by the critic and curator Germano Celant to a generation of remarkable individual artists working mostly in Turin, Milan and Rome. It embodied a spirit of ongoing, open-ended research and emerged as the economic growth that transformed Italian post-war society faltered. Although its tenets are hard to define, Arte Povera reflected on this social change and the tensions that followed in its wake. At the same time, many of the artists encouraged a reconnection with naturalness, among other factors, by focusing on techniques which followed the elemental qualities of materials, nature and the senses.

While the choice of 'poor art' as a title in 1967 embraces several artistic and philosophical connotations related to pared down gestures and primary experience rather than to cost or value, the artists grouped under its name are now most often associated with using ephemeral materials, everyday objects and elements that convey the energy intrinsic to all things. In fact, their choice of materials, like their intentions, has always been more varied but, generally, their work sought to close the gap between the traditionally separate spheres of art and life. One consequence was the involvement of several of the artists in performance, live events or experimental forms of exhibition. Another was the emphasis on real experience and a renewed interest in the personal and subjective. By breaking through conventional limitations of space and time, they favoured the potent empirical forces of nature over art's historical concern with representation and accomplished form.

### **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  
T: +44 (0)20 7704 9522

[www.estorickcollection.com](http://www.estorickcollection.com) Twitter: @Estorick

**Opening Hours**

Wednesdays – Saturdays 11.00-18.00, Sundays 12.00-17.00

Closed Mondays & Tuesdays

Admission: £6.50, Concs £4.50. Includes entry to exhibition and permanent collection.

Transport: Victoria Line, Overground and Great Northern to Highbury & Islington.

**For further press information, please contact Alison Wright**

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