



**ARTE COME RIVELAZIONE. DALLA COLLEZIONE LUIGI E PEPPINO AGRATI
(ART AS A REVELATION. FROM THE LUIGI AND PEPPINO AGRATI COLLECTION)**

**Gallerie d'Italia - Piazza Scala, Intesa Sanpaolo museum complex
Milan, 6 Piazza della Scala
Open to the public: 16 May 2018 - 19 August 2018
Exhibition curated by Luca Massimo Barbero**

The story of our time, as told by the Agrati Collection

Hi-tech bolts and Andy Warhol, mechanical engineering and Lucio Fontana, business and culture, profit and art. In Veduggio con Colzano, in the industrial Brianza area where legend has it that “more businesses are born than babies”, it all started, and a brilliant Italian story began to unfold. The Luigi and Peppino Agrati brothers, the protagonists of this family journey towards capitalism that was predominant in economic development during the 20th century in Italy, were miracle makers. They did not just make an industrial miracle, taking markets by storm with the quality of their products and their company’s success, they were also a driver of employment and generator of wealth operating for over 70 years. They have applied their passion and their insight to build up, art piece by art piece, an art collection brimming with masterpieces, that is a tribute to beauty, and a celebration of the entrepreneurial vocation that fuels culture. It is a private project fostered over time with open-handedness and intellectual curiosity, initially by Peppino and then by Luigi, that is now open for everyone to see given it was donated for the public to enjoy. The collection evokes the industrialists from Brianza’s inner nature, a combination of insight and Calvinism, brilliance and experience.

“Art as a revelation – From the Luigi and Peppino Agrati collection” showcases 74 pieces selected from about 500 belonging to the Agrati brothers’ estate at the Gallerie d’Italia on Piazza della Scala, a museum complex of Intesa Sanpaolo. The exhibition,

open until 19 August 2018, is a symbolic and captivating examination of Italian, European and American 20th century art that includes works ranging from Warhol's "Triple Elvis" and Jean-Michel Basquiat's "Financial District", one of Christo's "Packages" and one of Piero Manzoni's "Achromes", to Mario Schifano's "Grande pittura". Also featuring among the works are pieces by Kounellis, Burri, Kosuth and many leading figures of the international art scene in the 20th century. This is a prestigious collection of great worth. "Its originality and its uniqueness can be seen in the fact that Peppino and later Luigi had first-hand experience of the creative process of artists, and they were contemporaries and witnesses to phenomena that they highly valued and supported," explained Luca Massimo Barbero, exhibition curator. "These works express a way of seeing the collection as a revelation and an enrichment, as an opportunity to share a possible world of images that embody modern life."

The Agrati brothers' collection took shape in the 1960s, in a world where ideas about art and artistic movements were spreading. It was the decade of high hopes, Kennedy's New Frontier and Pope John XXIII's message for peace, but also the decade of the Vietnam War and Martin Luther King's death. It was the age of social contrasts, the liberation of the people, a new culture that came to life and rose from below, and the rhythms and lyrics of rock music. A dynamic wave rolled in, that fuelled new artistic drives that broke away from the models of before. Peppino particularly came up with a personal vision for art, that was receptive to changes but free from the fashions and trends enforced by the market. He tried to establish personal and intimate relations with artists, and travelled the world to pay a visit to the most groundbreaking art galleries, taking part in the cultural exchange underway. He experienced phenomena first hand whilst they were hidden and emerged, and was a part of history before it became so. For example, Barbero said, "in November 1970, the Agratis saw Christo removing the white cloth which he had used to wrap the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II in Piazza del Duomo and the monument to Leonardo da Vinci on Piazza della Scala with their very own eyes, and Peppino commissioned the artist to create a number of work for his villa in Brianza."

In the exhibition at the Gallerie d'Italia, visitors can trace their direct involvement, dialogue and personal relations with the artists. Barbero explained that "the exhibition's primary line of exploration is Fausto Melotti, regarded the radical master of Italian art; the second is the expressive style of Alighiero Boetti; and the third is the American artist Robert Rauschenberg, who Peppino Agrati had a close friendship with and whose works were continuously collected by Peppino from the 1960s to the

1980s.” Fontana’s collection “Concetto spaziale” (“Spatial concept”), another artist linked to the Agrati brothers with his innovative enthusiasm, was almost a revelation: the 1957 work, presented at Venice’s Biennale in 1958, is immortalised by a photo taken by Ugo Mulas in 1959, that can now be seen at the Gallerie d’Italia as if it had been given a new life.

The Agrati collection is peerless when it comes to other private collections, formed by entrepreneurs, bankers, financial experts who at times were inspired by a misguided form of patronage. “In the 1980s and 1990s, other men of industry and other Italian dynasties began to collect artworks with mixed results, but the Agrati brothers stood out for their decision to be in the here and now of their time, to choose according to their personal tastes, that were rooted in their profound interests and a pursuit of an artistic identity,” said Barbero. It is probably in this philosophy that lies the reason for the collection’s originality, its experimental purpose and popularisation, and the role that art can ultimately play. Giovanni Bazoli, President Emeritus of Intesa Sanpaolo who has brought the Agrati collection together, said: “If culture and art are ingrained in the history and life of our country, to the extent that they are Italy’s most defining features, this is partly thanks to the world of business. At the very least with its most learned figures, this field has always devoted time to and poured resources into promoting values and cultural heritage.” It was in this area that the Agrati brothers “were able to balance entrepreneurial commitments with a receptiveness and passion for art, and this exhibition traces the exploratory path taken in the world of art on new and uncharted lands, a path that is also a faithful reflection of the history of our time”.

From Wednesday 16 May to Sunday 19 August at the Gallerie d’Italia – Piazza Scala, Intesa Sanpaolo’s museum complex in Milan, the exhibition *Arte come rivelazione. Dalla collezione Luigi e Peppino Agrati (Art as a revelation. From the Luigi and Peppino Agrati collection)* will be open to the public. For the first time ever, the exhibition allows the public to see a selection of works by eminent figures in Italian and international artistic experimentation from the second half of the twentieth century, that belong to one of the largest private contemporary art collections. The exhibition project was headed by **Luca Massimo Barbero**, with **Gianfranco Brunelli** as the general coordinator.

The Luigi and Peppino Agrati collection, that includes 500 works, was first set up **in the late 1970s by the two leading industrialists**, who were successors and leading figures in the learned Lombardy bourgeoisie. Following Peppino’s death, the torch

was passed to his brother Luigi who, with his wife, decided to donate the collection to Intesa Sanpaolo, a landmark contribution to the international dimension of the Bank's artistic heritage.

Giovanni Bazoli, President Emeritus of Intesa Sanpaolo, said: *“The Luigi and Peppino Agrati collection, one of the major art collections of the second half of the twentieth century in Italy, will become part of the Intesa Sanpaolo collections thanks to the extraordinary act of generosity from the Cavaliere del Lavoro (Order of Merit for Labour) Luigi Agrati. An important selection of works from this collection is to be presented to the public for the first time ever in the Gallerie d'Italia on Piazza Scala in Milan. It will be an excellent opportunity to admire and compare never-before-seen masterpieces of Italian, European and American art from the twentieth century. The exhibition also intends to commemorate and pay homage to Luigi Agrati who, along with his brother Peppino, conceived a collection that is notable on the international stage of private art collections.”*

In the exhibition, the public will be able to view a selection of 74 works from the collection, thanks to Mariuccia Agrati's assistance, the wife of *Cavaliere* Luigi Agrati. There are masterpieces from American artists including Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Robert Rauschenberg and Christo, as well as from eminent figures in Italian artistic experimentation, such as Lucio Fontana, Piero Manzoni, Mario Schifano, Alberto Burri and Fausto Melotti. The Agratis established a relationship based on dialogue and friendship with many of these artists. From Informalism to Pop Art, and from *Arte Povera* movement to Conceptual Art up to the developments in the 1980s, the collection passes through and creates links with the movements that left their mark on the course of art not only in Italy but across the world in the second half of the twentieth century.

“Arte come rivelazione (Art as a revelation) means presenting a representative selection of works from the Luigi and Peppino Agrati collection for the very first time to the public as a visual gift to the city, revealing the pair of collectors' perceptiveness and love of art. In November 1970, the Agratis saw Christo removing the white cloth which he had used to wrap the monument to Vittorio Emanuele II in Piazza del Duomo and the monument to Leonardo da Vinci on Piazza della Scala with their very own eyes, a moment known today as one of the most defining in Milan's history of contemporary art. Peppino immediately got in touch with Christo, and commissioned the artist to create a number of installations in the garden of his villa in Brianza. Peppino also was one of the patrons of *Valley Curtain*, one of the environmental installations that led to Christo being known as the pioneer of Land Art. The Agratis fervently and directly kept their finger on the pulse of the most important developments in art in their time, which is symbolically encapsulated in their personal relationship with Christo, and is also reflected in their close relationship with Fausto Melotti. This was also evident in their attentive and deep understanding of trends in conceptual art and minimalism, the latter being symbolised by Flavin's large neon

piece, which was dedicated to Peppino Agrati himself. Today the collected works express a way of seeing the collection as a revelation and an enrichment, as an opportunity to share a possible world of images that embody modern life”, said exhibition curator **Luca Massimo Barbero**.

The exhibition is the first ever opportunity there has been to reveal the collection to the public with a representative selection of Italian and American artworks. Opening with an exceptional group of sculptures by Fausto Melotti, acting as the linchpin of the exhibition, and then moving onto magna opera by Lucio Fontana, Alberto Burri, Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni, the exhibition gives a deeper insight into Italian “new figurative” painting, with works from Jannis Kounellis and Mario Schifano to name just two, and then progresses to the roots of *Arte Povera* in its infancy, represented by experimental pieces by Piero Gilardi, Luciano Fabro, Mario Merz and Giulio Paolini.

Thanks to their curiosity, a typical trait of entrepreneurs, and a rare ability to examine in great depth, Luigi and Peppino Agrati have brought together a collection that is representative of the plethora of interests in their experience of contemporary art. Their discovery of American art, examined in detail at the same time as they developed relations in the United States, led to the purchase of works by figureheads of the Pop movement, with Andy Warhol and his large *Triple Elvis* being iconic of this style, and also pieces by leading figures of minimalist and conceptual trends, including Dan Flavin and Richard Serra. Forming a diverse constellation, included in the collection alongside the Italian art are exceptional works by Robert Rauschenberg, that were widely collected from the late 1960s to the 1980s, as well as extraordinary pieces by Cy Twombly, the original mediator between American and Italian culture, and conceptual artists such as Bruce Nauman and Joseph Kosuth, whose experimental works on language are placed into a dialogue with those of Alighiero Boetti’s and Vincenzo Agnetti’s.

The exhibition develops through a non-chronological itinerary that creates areas and meeting points. Opening from the centre of the Gallerie d’Italia complex, the exhibition passes through every room, section by section, displaying works that form the tiles of an extraordinary mosaic that stands for the history of this collection, unseen by the public until today.

The exhibition catalogue is edited by Silvana Editoriale.

For press material and images, please click the following link: <https://goo.gl/Rd4yvY>

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EXHIBITION INFORMATION

Title: *Arte come rivelazione. Dalla collezione Luigi e Peppino Agrati*
(*Art as a revelation. From the Luigi and Peppino Agrati*)

Location: Gallerie d'Italia – 6 Piazza della Scala, Milan, Italy

Exhibition period: 16 May - 19 August 2018

Opening hours: Tuesday - Sunday 9:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. (last entry at 6:30 p.m.); Thursday 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 p.m. (last entry at 9:30 p.m.); closed on Monday

Ticket prices: available on www.gallerieditalia.com

Information Toll free number 800.167619; info@gallerieditalia.com

Opening Wednesday 16 May, with free entry for the public from 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. (last entry at 10:00 p.m.)

Intesa Sanpaolo makes its contribution to Italy's cultural life with the **Progetto Cultura**, a strategic collection of the Bank's cultural activities that, through the Gallerie d'Italia, Intesa Sanpaolo's museum complex, showcases a selection of over 20,000 works from the Bank's collection in its three complexes in Milan, Naples and Vicenza. The pieces range from archaeological artifacts to contemporary works, with the most notable being *The Martyrdom of St. Ursula*, Caravaggio's masterpiece, Attican and Magna Grecian ceramics, Russian icons and Italian works from the second half of the twentieth century. Alongside the permanent exhibitions, Intesa Sanpaolo's Progetto Cultura organises **temporary exhibitions** in the Gallerie d'Italia thanks to original scientific projects, and loans and exchanges with major museum institutions on the national and international scene. Since 1989 the **Restituzioni** programme has supported the restoration of artworks of national heritage that have been identified in collaboration with public conservation bodies. The **Officine delle Idee** project also aims to provide young people, graduates and post-graduates with qualified learning opportunities within the art world. Progetto Cultura is set up by the Art, Culture and Historical Heritage Head Office Department of Intesa Sanpaolo, headed by Michele Coppola.