ARTE POVERA.
A CREATIVE BREAKTHROUGH

17 May – 16 August 2018
Third floor of the Winter Palace

Press release

On 17 May 2018, the State Hermitage Museum will open the exhibition Arte Povera. A Creative Breakthrough. The first dedicated exhibition of Arte Povera to take place in Russia, it brings together more than 50 works by Italian artists of the second half of the 20th century with loans from the Museum of Modern Art of Castello di Rivoli (Rivoli Turin, Italy), the Gallery of Modern Art GAM (Turin, Italy) and various private Italian collections. The exhibition is organized by the State Hermitage and the Museum of Contemporary Art Castello di Rivoli (Rivoli Turin) with the participation of the Gallery of Modern Art GAM (Turin).

Arte Povera ("poor art") is an art movement that arose in Italy at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. A distinctive feature of the movement was the desire of the artists to move away from all-consuming technological progress and towards handicraft creativity. Rejecting industrial and high-tech materials in favor of "poor" and unaesthetic ones such as rags, newspapers and tree branches, the Arte Povera artists were determined to free art from the shackles of traditionalism. The term Arta Povera was first used in 1967 by the Italian critic and curator Germano Celant.

The exhibition will include works by leading artists of the Arte Povera movement including Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Gilberto Zorio, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Yannis Cunellis, Mario Merz, Marisa Merz, Pinot Pascali, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto and Emilio Prini. The exhibition will be held in the legendary halls of the third floor of the Winter Palace, the decor of which was conceived at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. Today it seems that these halls vaguely resemble the space of the Bernese Kunsthalle - the place from which the international recognition of Arte Povera began.

On a number of occasions in the 20th century, the art of Italy has disrupted the established artistic system with a radically new vision of the creative process. The avant-garde Futurists tried to emphasize the connection between art and technological processes, which was able to turn the usual worldview on its head in the first half of the 1910s. The industrial change of that time inspired artists to look for new principles of representation, appropriate for the growing pace of urban life. Almost at the same time, Giorgio de Chirico with his "metaphysical painting" took an antimodernist position, emphasizing the importance of craft principles as fundamental to art. The contextual premise of the post-war art of Italy - Alberto Burri, Piero Manzoni, Lucio Fontana - was reflected in the work of the artists of Arte Povera which was equally 'anti-technology'. The works of these harbingers of Arte Povera open the Hermitage exhibition.

The exhibition Arte Povera. Creative Breakthrough, is held within the framework of the "Hermitage 20/21" project, which is designed to collect, exhibit and study art of the 20th and 21st centuries. The curators of the exhibition are Dmitri Ozerkov, Head of the Modern Art Department of the State Hermitage, Anastasia Chaladze, a member of the Department of Contemporary Art of the State Hermitage, and Karolin Hristov-Bakardzhiev (Museum of Contemporary Art of Castello di Rivoli).

An illustrated brochure was prepared for the exhibition (The State Hermitage Publishing House, 2018). The exhibition is accompanied by a large educational program, including a series of lectures, gallery talks at the exhibition and a festival of installations and performances.

The exhibition is held within the framework of projects of the Hermitage-Italy Foundation, mediated by Villaggio Globale International.

The exhibition is organized with the support of Lavazza, Italy.