

GUGGENHEIM

NEWS RELEASE

Guggenheim Presents Major Alberto Burri Retrospective

First Comprehensive Exhibition in the United States Devoted to the Italian Artist in Nearly 40 Years

Exhibition: *Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting*
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Full rotunda
Dates: October 9, 2015–January 6, 2016
Media Preview: Thursday, October 8, 10 am–1 pm

(NEW YORK, NY – June 10, 2015) — From October 9, 2015, to January 6, 2016, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum will present a major retrospective—the first in the United States in nearly forty years and the most comprehensive in this country—devoted to the work of Italian artist Alberto Burri (1915–1995). Exploring the beauty and complexity of Burri’s process-based works, the exhibition positions the artist as a central protagonist of post–World War II art and revises traditional narratives of the cultural exchanges between the United States and Europe in the 1950s and ’60s. Burri broke with the gestural, painted surfaces of both American Abstract Expressionism and European Art Informel by manipulating unorthodox pigments and humble, prefabricated materials. A key figure in the transition from collage to assemblage, Burri rarely used paint or brush in conventional ways, and instead worked his surfaces with stitching and combustion, among other signal processes. With his torn and mended burlap sacks, “hunchback” canvases, and melted industrial plastics, the artist often made allusions to skin and wounds, but in a purely abstract idiom. The tactile quality of his work anticipated Post-Minimalist and feminist art of the 1960s, while his red, black, and white “material monochromes” defied notions of purity and reductive form associated with American formalist modernism. Bringing together more than one hundred works, including many that have never before been seen outside of Italy, the exhibition demonstrates how Burri blurred the line between painting and sculptural relief and created a new kind of picture-object that directly influenced Neo-Dada, Process art, and Arte Povera.

Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting is organized by Emily Braun, Guest Curator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Distinguished Professor, Hunter College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York; and Curator, Leonard A. Lauder Cubist Collection, with Megan Fontanella,

Associate Curator, Collections and Provenance, and Ylinka Barotto, Curatorial Assistant, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. An accompanying study was led by Carol Stringari, Deputy Director and Chief Conservator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

The Guggenheim Museum acknowledges the collaboration of the Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello, Italy.

“This comprehensive exhibition of the work of Alberto Burri affirms his position as a leading pioneer of postwar European art and one of the most groundbreaking artists of his time,” stated Richard Armstrong, Director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Foundation. “Through the scholarship of our curatorial team led by Emily Braun, the Guggenheim is bringing to light new aspects of Burri’s experimental and innovative practice. We welcome the opportunity to reacquaint twenty-first-century museumgoers with Burri’s legacy and to reexamine his impact both on his contemporaries and on a new generation of artists.”

Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting is made possible by Lavazza.

Support is also provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

The Leadership Committee for the exhibition, chaired by Pilar Crespi Robert and Stephen Robert, Trustee, is gratefully acknowledged for its generosity, with special thanks to Leonard and Judy Lauder and Maurice Kanbar as well as to Luxembourg & Dayan, Richard Roth Foundation, Alice and Thomas Tisch, Isabella Del Frate Rayburn, Larry Gagosian, Sigifredo di Canossa, Dominique Lévy, Daniela Memmo d’Amelio, Mitchell-Innes & Nash, Pellegrini Legacy Trust, ROBILANT+VOENA, Alberto and Stefania Sabbadini, Sperone Westwater, Samir Traboulsi, Alberto and Gioietta Vitale, Baroness Mariuccia Zerilli-Marimo, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Additional funding is generously provided by Allegrini Winery, Mapei Group, E. L. Wiegand Foundation, Mondriaan Fund, the Italian Cultural Institute of New York, La FondazioneNY, and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Francesca Lavazza said: “Alberto Burri’s birth date of 1915 represents a major moment in Italian history, marking the nation’s entrance into World War I but also the establishment of Lavazza’s longstanding headquarters in Turin. This year Lavazza is proud to celebrate its own 120th birthday with support for this sweeping exhibition of one of the pioneers of modernism, and by joining the Guggenheim in showing Burri and his enduring influence upon the art world on both sides of the Atlantic.”

Burri is best known for his series of *Sacchi* (sacks) made of stitched and patched remnants of torn burlap bags, in some cases combined with fragments of discarded clothing. Far less familiar to American audiences are the artist’s other series, which this exhibition represents in depth: *Catrami* (tars), *Muffe* (molds), *Gobbi* (hunchbacks, or canvases with protrusions), *Bianchi* (white monochromes), *Legni* (wood combustions), *Ferri* (irons, or protruding wall reliefs made from prefabricated cold-rolled steel), *Combustioni plastiche* (plastic combustions, or melted plastic sheeting), *Cretti* (induced craquelure, or cracking), and *Cellotex* works (flayed and peeled fiberboard). The exhibition unfolds on the ramps of

the Guggenheim both chronologically and organized by series, following the artist's movement from one set of materials, processes, and colors to the next. Throughout his career, Burri also engaged with the history of painting, reflecting his deep familiarity with the Renaissance art of his native Umbria. The exhibition likewise reveals the dialogue with American Minimalism that informed his later *Cretti* and *Cellotex* works. In addition, the installation includes an immersive new film commissioned by the Guggenheim Museum. Dutch filmmaker Petra Noordkamp documents Burri's singular Land art memorial, the enormous *Grande cretto* (*Large Cretto*, 1985–89; with its last section completed posthumously in 2014) in Gibellina, Sicily, a town devastated by a 1968 earthquake. An enormous shroud of white cement covers the ruins, and fissures function as pathways that wind through an area of roughly 20 acres. The film captures *Grande cretto* as an experiential work of art filled with a sense of place and history.

Born in Città di Castello, Italy, in 1915, Burri trained to be a doctor and served as a medic in the Italian army in North Africa during World War II. Following his unit's capture in Tunisia in 1943, he was interned at a prisoner-of-war camp in Hereford, Texas, where he began painting. After his return to Italy in 1946, Burri devoted himself to art—a decision prompted by his firsthand experiences of war, deprivation, and Italy's calamitous defeat. His first solo show, at Rome's Galleria La Margherita in 1947, featured landscapes and still lifes. After a trip to Paris in 1948–49, he began to experiment with tarry substances, ground pumice stone, industrial enamel paints, and metal armatures, and he formed accretions and gashes that destroy the integrity of the picture plane. He then traumatized the very structure of painting by puncturing, exposing, and reconstituting the support. Instead of using the traditional cohesive piece of stretched canvas, Burri assembled his works from piecemeal rags, broken wood veneer, welded steel sheets, or layers of melted plastic—stitching, riveting, soldering, stapling, gluing, and burning his materials along the way. His work demolished and reconfigured the Western pictorial tradition, while transforming the scale and affective power of modernist collage.

Though considered an Italian artist, Burri married an American dancer-choreographer, Minsa Craig, and, beginning in 1963, resided annually in Los Angeles during the winter months. In 1978 the artist established the Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri in Città di Castello. The Fondazione today operates two museums in his hometown that present artwork he personally installed: the Palazzo Albizzini and the Ex Seccatoi del Tabacco. Exceptionally, the Fondazione is lending two pictures pulled directly from its permanent collection exhibition: *Grande bianco* (*Large White*, 1952) and *Grande bianco* (*Large White*, 1956). The former is one of three large textile collages that Robert Rauschenberg saw—among other works—in Burri's Rome studio in early 1953. Those three grand pictures will be reunited in the New York presentation.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Guggenheim Museum led an in-depth conservation study of the artworks assembled for the retrospective as well as numerous other works from the various series. The study, which involved the efforts of a multidisciplinary team of curators, conservation scientists, and painting, paper, objects, and textile conservators, analyzed the wide variety of original and complex materials and working methods used by Burri in pioneering ways.

Following the presentation in New York, *Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting* will travel to Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf, from March 5 to July 3, 2016.

Exhibition History

Burri launched his career in Rome but exhibited his work regularly in the United States, beginning in the early 1950s at the Allan Frumkin Gallery, Chicago, and the Stable Gallery and the Martha Jackson Gallery, both in New York. In 1953 Guggenheim Museum director and curator James Johnson Sweeney included Burri in the landmark exhibition *Younger European Painters: A Selection*, and he wrote the first monograph on the artist (1955). Burri's awards include a third prize at the Pittsburgh International, Carnegie Museum of Art (1959); Premio dell'Ariete in Milan (1959); UNESCO Prize at the São Paulo Biennial (1959); Critics' Prize at the Venice Biennale (1960); Premio Marzotto (1965); and Grand Prize at the São Paulo Biennial (1965). Burri's earliest U.S. retrospectives were organized by the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (1957), and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1963). Other major exhibitions include retrospectives at the Musée national d'art moderne, Paris (1972), and the University of California's Frederick S. Wight Gallery, Los Angeles (1977); the latter traveled to the Marion Koogler McNay Art Institute, San Antonio, Texas, and the Guggenheim Museum (1978). In 1994 his work was included in *The Italian Metamorphosis, 1943–1968*, also at the Guggenheim.

Education and Public Programs

A range of public programs—including exhibition tours, Italian neorealist films, and related family workshops—is offered in conjunction with *Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting*. Highlights are listed below, with full information and tickets available at guggenheim.org/calendar.

Dramatic Reading and Panel

Theater of War

Tuesday and Wednesday, October 27 and 28, 6:30 pm

Taking into account Alberto Burri's experience as a prisoner of war, the Guggenheim hosts *Outside the Wire* as they present an iteration of their innovative public health project, *Theater of War*. Esteemed actors Zach Grenier, Amy Ryan, and John Turturro perform dramatic readings of selections from Sophocles's *Philoctetes* and *Algerian Diary* by Vittorio Sereni, a major Italian poet who was also a prisoner of war during World War II. The readings will be followed by a panel discussion and town hall-style forum addressing the various and lasting impacts of war on the human psyche. Cast subject to change. Free with RSVP.

Performance

November Steps

Thursday, November 12, 8 pm

Tom Gold Dance reimagines *November Steps*, a 1973 ballet choreographed by Alberto Burri's wife, Minsa Craig, to Tōru Takemitsu's 1967 composition of the same name, which included set design and costumes by Burri himself. In this rendition, dancers from the New York City Ballet perform on the Rotunda Floor as a projection of one of Burri's *Cretti* works gradually comes into formation on the stage beneath them. \$40, \$30 members, \$20 students.

Film-Related Panel

Le Conversazioni

Tuesday, December 15, 6:30 pm

Moderated by Antonio Monda, this program features a conversation with acclaimed cinema personalities, including Don DeLillo, about how Italian neorealist films have influenced their lives and work. \$20, \$15 members, \$10 students.

Film

Aesthetics of Poverty: Italian Neorealist Film

Alberto Burri's work, in its straightforward presentation of materials from life, shares with Italian neorealist film an "aesthetic of poverty" that points to material deprivation in postwar Italy. Four important films from this rich cinematic period are screened on select Fridays. Free with admission.

Friday, November 20, 1 pm

Paisà (Paisan), 1946, dir. Roberto Rossellini, 120 min.

Friday, December 4, 1 pm

La terra trema (The Earth Trembles), 1948, dir. Luchino Visconti, 160 min.

Friday, December 11, 1 pm

Il cielo e rosso (The Sky Is Red), 1950, dir. Claudio Gora, 99 min.

Friday, December 18, 1 pm

Il deserto rosso (Red Desert), 1964, dir. Michelangelo Antonioni, 117 min.

Tours

Conservator's Eye

Friday, October 30, 12 pm

Carol Stringari, Deputy Director and Chief Conservator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Curator's Eye

Friday, December 11, 12 pm

Exhibition curator Emily Braun

Tour interpreted in ASL

Exhibition Catalogue

Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting is accompanied by a 280-page, richly illustrated scholarly exhibition catalogue that includes a five-chapter essay by Emily Braun; a text by Megan Fontanella on Burri's early exhibitions and collectors in the United States; and essays on each of Burri's series, authored by Braun and Carol Stringari, which analyze his methods and materials in depth. The publication is the first major English monograph on Burri, contains a wealth of new research and interpretation, and will be the standard reference on the artist for years to come. The catalogue will be available for purchase at \$65 as a hardcover edition at guggenheim.org/store.

About Lavazza

Lavazza prides itself as Italy's leading coffee brand and manufacturer. The company, founded in 1895, has been led by the Lavazza family for over a century of business and currently operates in more than

ninety countries. Lavazza has recently made a second home in the United States as it expands its presence across the globe. With a long history of support for the arts, including Renaissance art, photography, design, and music, Lavazza joined the Guggenheim's efforts to promote greater understanding of Italian Futurism through the major exhibition presented in New York in 2014. Lavazza is proud this year to celebrate its own 120th birthday with support for this sweeping retrospective of one of the pioneers of modernism. Through its sponsorship of the exhibition *Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting*, Lavazza supports an art movement vital to its home country of Italy while also reaching an international audience.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The Guggenheim network that began in the 1970s when the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, was joined by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, has since expanded to include the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (opened 1997), and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi (currently in development). The Guggenheim Foundation continues to forge international collaborations that celebrate contemporary art, architecture, and design within and beyond the walls of the museum, including the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative and The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Chinese Art Initiative. More information about the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation can be found at guggenheim.org.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission: Adults \$25, students/seniors (65+) \$18, members and children under 12 free. The Guggenheim's free app, available with admission or by download to personal devices, offers an enhanced visitor experience. The app features content on special exhibitions as well as access to more than 1,500 works in the Guggenheim's permanent collection and information about the museum's landmark building in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Verbal Description guides for select exhibitions are also included for visitors who are blind or have low vision. The Guggenheim app is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Museum Hours: Sun–Wed, 10 am–5:45 pm; Fri, 10 am–5:45 pm; Sat, 10 am–7:45 pm; closed Thurs. On Saturdays, beginning at 5:45 pm, the museum hosts Pay What You Wish. For general information, call 212 423 3500 or visit the museum online at: guggenheim.org

guggenheim.org/burri
guggenheim.org/social
#Burri

For publicity images, visit guggenheim.org/pressimages
User ID: photoservice
Password: presspass

September 25, 2015 (Updated from June 10)

#1394

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sarah Eaton, Director, Media and Public Relations

Lauren Van Natten, Associate Director, Media and Public Relations

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

212 423 3840

pressoffice@guggenheim.org

PRESS IMAGES

Alberto Burri: The Trauma of Painting

October 9, 2015–January 6, 2016

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Online Photo Service for Press Images

Images for current exhibitions may be downloaded free of charge through our website

- Visit guggenheim.org/pressimages
- Enter the following username and password:
 - Username: photoservice
 - Password: presspass
- Select the desired exhibition

All images cleared for press are available in either jpeg or tiff format.

All images are accompanied by full caption and copyright information.

The publication of images is permitted only for press purposes and with the corresponding credit lines.

Images may not be cropped, detailed, overprinted, or altered.

E-mail pressoffice@guggenheim.org with any questions.



Alberto Burri
Grande bianco (Large White), 1952
Oil, tempera, fabric, burlap, thread, and Vinavil on canvas, 151.2 x 251.5 cm
Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello, Italy
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome



Alberto Burri
Lo strappo (The Rip), 1952
Oil, fabric, thread, pumice, and Vinavil, 87 x 58 cm
Collezione Beatrice Monti della Corte
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome
Photo: © Christie's Image Ltd



Alberto Burri
Rosso gobbo (Red Hunchback), 1953
Acrylic, fabric, and resin on canvas; metal rod on verso, 56.5 x 85 cm
Private collection, Rome
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome



Alberto Burri
Sacco e oro (Sack and Gold), 1953
Burlap, thread, acrylic, gold leaf, and PVA on black fabric, 102.9 x 89.4 cm
Private collection, courtesy Galleria dello Scudo, Verona
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini, Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome



Alberto Burri
Nero bianco e sacco (Black White and Sack), ca. 1954
Oil, fabric, burlap, pumice, and PVA on canvas, 125 x 107 cm
Courtesy Galleria Tega, Milan
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome
Photo: Paolo Vandasch and Romina Bettega



Alberto Burri
Legno e bianco I (Wood and White I), 1956
Wood veneer, combustion, acrylic, and Vanivil on canvas, 87.7 x 159 cm
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York 57.1463
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome



Alberto Burri
Combustione legno (Wood Combustion), 1957
Wood veneer, paper, combustion, acrylic, and Vinavil on canvas,
149.5 x 99 cm
Private collection, courtesy Galleria dello Scudo, Verona
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome



Alberto Burri
Grande ferro M 4 (Large Iron M 4), 1959
Welded iron sheet metal and tacks on wood framework, 199.8 x 189.9 cm
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York 60.1572
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome
Photo: Kristopher McKay © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York



Alberto Burri
Sacco e rosso (Sack and Red), ca. 1959
Burlap, thread, acrylic, and PVA on black fabric, 150 x 130 cm
Private collection, London
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome
Photo: Lucy Dawkins, London



Alberto Burri
Ferro SP (Iron SP), 1961
Welded iron sheet metal, oil, and tacks on wood framework, 130 x 200 cm
Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Rome
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome
Photo: Antonio Idini, Soprintendenza alla Galleria nazionale d'arte moderna e contemporanea, Rome, courtesy Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e del Turismo



Alberto Burri
Rosso plastica (Red Plastic), 1961
Plastic (PVC), acrylic, and combustion on plastic (PE) and black fabric,
142 x 153 cm
Modern Art Foundation
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome
Photo: Massimo Napoli, Rome, courtesy Modern Art Foundation



Alberto Burri
Grande bianco plastica (Large White Plastic), 1964
Plastic (PVC) and combustion on aluminum framework, 191.8 x 292.1 cm
Glenstone
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome
Photo: Tim Nighswander/IMAGING4ART, courtesy Glenstone



Alberto Burri
Grande nero cretto (Large Black Cretto), 1977
Acrylic and PVA on Celotex, 149.5 x 249.5 cm
Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne/Centre de
création industrielle, Gift of the artist, 1978
© Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello/2015
Artist Rights Society (ARS), New York/SIAE, Rome
Photo: © CNAC/MNAM/Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, New
York



Installation view: *Inaugural Selection*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
New York, October 21, 1959–June 19, 1960
Third from left: Alberto Burri's *Legno e bianco I (Wood and White 1, 1956)*
Photo: © Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York



Alberto Burri in his studio in Case Nove di Morra, Città di Castello, Italy,
1982
Photo: Aurelio Amendola © Aurelio Amendola, Pistoia, Italy