

margherita sarfatti

Press Release

Opening at the **Museo del Novecento** in Milan and the **Mart**, Museo di arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto at the same time are two different exhibitions devoted to the figure of **Margherita Sarfatti**, the result of a **joint project by these two museums, accompanied by a single catalogue published by Electa**.

The two exhibitions in Milan and in Rovereto, independent and yet complementary, will allow visitors to analyse Sarfatti's complex personality: the Museo del Novecento will focus on **art in the 1920s in Milan**, while the Mart will offer a perspective on the role of Margherita Sarfatti as **an ambassador of Italian art in the world**.

Margherita Grassini (Venice, April 8, 1880 – Cavallasca, October 30, 1961) was born in Venice to a prominent Jewish family, but it was as Sarfatti, the name she took from her husband Cesare, whom she married in 1898, that she was affirmed as a key figure in Italy's cultural system.

An influential journalist, a curator and an intellectual, Sarfatti led the way for Italian art criticism for at least two decades, from the end of the First World War to the early 1930s. Thanks to her activity in support of a number of artists, as well as her participation in the cultural life of Milan and the rest of Italy, Sarfatti contributed, like no one else in that period of time, to tracing the artistic output of her day and age, writing some of the main chapters of the history of twentieth-century art.

An enterprising, ambitious, and remarkably erudite woman—thanks to her studies but also to the people her family frequented in Venice, as well as to those who participated in Milan's social circles, veritable workshops for ideas and inspiration—Margherita ended up holding a foremost position in the cultural politics of her day. This was also due to her close collaboration with Benito Mussolini, the founder and leader of the Fascist party .

In spite of her closeness to political and intellectual spheres around the world, Sarfatti was forced to leave Italy after the racial laws were enforced (1938). She would not return to Italy until ten years later when the cultural context had changed radically and was by then unfamiliar to her.

margherita sarfatti

Margherita Sarfatti.
Segni, colori e luci a Milano
Museo del Novecento
21 settembre 2018 –
24 febbraio 2019

The exhibition hosted by the Museo del Novecento in Milan is promoted and produced by the Comune di Milano|Cultura together with Electa, curated by **Anna Maria Montaldo and Danka Giaccon with Antonello Negri**, and installed under the direction of **Studio Mario Bellini Architects**. The project is born from the intention to describe the artistic events that, starting from the city of Milan, determined the affirmation of the "Novecento" taste that clearly impacted Italian culture in the 1920s. Within this context, through her choices, her writings, and her political activity as well, Margherita Sarfatti played a crucial role in the creation of an art movement that aspired to international fame.

Margherita Sarfatti came to Milan in 1902 and lived there until the late 1920s. In those years, the capital of Lombardy was the throbbing heart of technological, urban, and creative innovation, but also the vibrant centre of the political life of the day. The aim of this exhibition is therefore to present Margherita Sarfatti from a contemporary angle, analysing her figure and personality from all sides as the leader of the Novecento movement, her contrasts and contradictions, her intellectual depth, her cultural vision and commitment as an art critic.

The part of the exhibition that is hosted by the Museo del Novecento is immersive in nature: the visitor is invited to follow a story that traces back over Margherita Sarfatti's career, at the same time offering a fascinating portrait of the environment she lived in. **The exhibition itself unfolds along 90 works** made by the protagonists of two decades of Italian art, especially by those who were members of the Novecento movement, of which Sarfatti was the critical heart and soul. Paintings and sculptures by **40 artists, including Boccioni, Borra, Bucci, Carrà, Casorati, de Chirico, Dudreville, Funi, Malerba, Marini, Medardo Rosso, Sironi, and Wildt**, are contextualized by photographs, letters, invitations to openings and publications from that period, but also clothing, glassware, and interior decor, thus providing a broader view of what **Milan was like in the 1910s and 1920s**.

This was the beginning of a modern "art system" that witnessed the involvement of critics, art dealers, artists, and gallery owners. Contemporary art exhibitions earned the attention of a middle-class audience which formed the base of an **art market that was growing**. Critics and journalists often signed articles dedicated to Milanese galleries and wrote the introductory essays for the catalogues that accompanied the exhibitions. Margherita Sarfatti, Ugo Ojetto, Raffaele Calzini, Vincenzo Bucci, Raffaele Giolli, Enrico Somarè, were among the supporters of the new currents, holding theoretical stances, at least at the outset, that were not too distant, based on

their hope for a **return to the solidity of forms and harmonious compositions that revealed a more classical inspiration.**

Segni colori e luci. Note d'arte is the title of one Margherita Sarfatti's writings, published in 1925, which tells of her choices, particular preferences, and general ideas on the art and artists of her day. **According to Sarfatti, aesthetic quality was consolidated in a disciplined approach to art,** where the "constructive" and the "rational" prevailed over sensitivity and appearance, within a perspective of "works that [were] equally distant from passionate improvisations and from imitations of reality". Her call for "sincerity" implied the "sacrifice of the ornament," the renunciation of the easy and thus more pleasing effect", offset by "sobriety and limitation" instead. In short, Sarfatti believed in a solid and well-structured synthesis of forms.

The exhibition design is organized diachronically and also entails a comparison with the surrounding context, seeking to paint a picture of Margherita Sarfatti by means of several themes that distinguish the years she was active in the cultural sector. **Eleven sections** underscore the complexity and no doubt the impossibility of classifying the events in the life and the culture of Margherita Sarfatti: *Milan, the heart of modernity – Margherita Sarfatti in the city that is changing – Milan's cultural network: artists, critics, gallery owners – Margherita Sarfatti's artistic notes: signs, colors, and lights – The birth of the "Novecento" art movement – The "Novecento Italiano" – The "Novecento Italiano" and its organization – Trends in taste and public acquisitions: the Milanese collections – Margherita Sarfatti's relationship with power – From the editorial staff of Avanti! to exile from Italy.*

This exhibition also stems from the desire to present **the public with the City of Milan's artistic and historical heritage,** for it was precisely during this period that it **purchased some of the most important works still in its collection.** Through the choices made by the directors at the time, the unique events that characterized the city are accurately documented.

**Press Office
City of Milan
Electa
Head of communication**

margherita sarfatti

Margherita Sarfatti.

Il Novecento Italiano nel mondo

Mart, Museo di arte moderna
e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto
22 settembre 2018 –
24 febbraio 2019

Ever since it was founded, Mart di Rovereto has built its identity around the events of the twentieth century, especially focusing on the Novecento movement. Thanks to its coherent acquisitions, loans, and donations policy, the museum's collections have centered on the artistic research of the early part of the century. Of essential importance to the museum's mission as well as to the strengthening of its international standing has been the acquisition of the entire **Fondo di Margherita Sarfatti**, assembled and preserved with great care by Sarfatti herself, and later by her heirs.

The project that Mart dedicates to her today is thus the result of years of research and in-depth study, and it completes the cycle of exhibitions held over the past two years. *I pittori della luce* was followed by the major retrospective *Boccioni*, also held jointly with the Museo del Novecento, a closer look at **Mario Sironi**, the much-awaited *Realismo Magico* curated by Belli and Terraroli, and, most importantly, *Un'eterna bellezza*, held in Madrid as well.

Produced by Mart in Rovereto, *Margherita Sarfatti. Il Novecento Italiano nel mondo* is a project by **Daniela Ferrari** with the collaboration of **Ilaria Cimonetti** and the researchers from the **Archivio del '900** at Mart, which houses this precious Fondo. The exhibition illustrates *Sarfatti's ambitious plan for cultural expansion*, especially aimed at exhibitions organized in Europe and the Americas to promote Italian art.

From her early work to the founding of the Novecento Italiano, the exhibition documents the intellectual and political activity of this undisputed major figure, and the controversial historical season between the two World Wars.

Numerous loans, from major international museums and important private collections, will converse, at Mart, with documents and materials from the archives. On display are **100 masterpieces by 30 masters: Boccioni, Bucci, Carrà, Casorati, de Chirico, Dudreville, Funi, Malerba, Marussig, Morandi, Oppi, Medardo Rosso, Severini, Sironi, and Wildt.**

The exhibition is divided into **six themed sections**: *Portrait of a Lady – The Sarfatti Collections – Artists at the Mirror – The Italian Exhibitions – From “Dux” to “Acqua passata” – The Exhibitions Abroad*. In each of these sections Margherita Sarfatti's remarkable career is illustrated, from her first contacts with the vibrant Milanese art scene, to her affirmation as a writer and cultural promoter in a world that was still entirely dominated by men, and, lastly, to the role she took on concerning Fascist ideology propaganda, a political movement she embraced with belief. The author of the famous biography *Dux*, translated and published around the world, Sarfatti tied her name to that of **Mussolini**, with whom she also shared an intense sentimental relationship.

In 1922, together with Sironi, Funi, Dudreville, Bucci, Malerba, Marussig, and Oppi, Margherita Sarfatti founded the **Novecento Italiano**. This movement, which would soon include many other artists as well, expressed the poetics of what was summed up in an oxymoron that Sarfatti is famous for: "**modern yet classical**". The classical lesson of the great Mediterranean tradition was the basis for the work of these masters, who shared, Sarfatti wrote, an "aspiration towards the concrete, the simple, the definitive". The climate was that of a **return to order**, during which in all of Europe research and movements were affirmed that harked back to the formal themes and solutions of distant yet basic traditional artistic traditions. In Italy these were envisioned in *Metaphysics*, *Plastic Values (Valori Plastici)*, and the *Novecento Italiano*.

Emerging forcefully was a return to reason after the madness of the Great War, the recovery of tradition in art after the avant-garde movements of the early century, and, above all, the **affirmation of the principles of beauty and harmony** in contrast with the dissonance of Cubist, Expressionist, and Futurist art. In a modern key, the new language expressed the values of **antique and Renaissance art**, and reinterpreted the genres of painting: the portrait, landscape, still life.

In a rare and precious synthesis between evoking the classical and aspiring to modernity, the *Novecento Italiano* movement sought **perfection**, rules, harmony.

All of this emerges clearly in the Mart exhibition, described in the rooms that recount Margherita Sarfatti's **ambitious plan** to assert and promote Italian art in the world.

A sort of "**aesthetic colonialism**", writes the curator Ferrari in her catalogue essay, which is especially visible in the exhibitions organized outside of Italy between 1926 and 1932. To these is dedicated the last section of the exhibition, where visitors can view the works that travelled to France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Argentina, and Uruguay.

Around Margherita Sarfatti. The Novecento Italiano in the World

Guided tours and special events

Sundays, 3 pm

Guided tour of the exhibition

2 euros in addition to the cost of 1 museum ticket

Little Mart

Workshop for kids of all ages

5 euros

Events offering a closer look organized by the Mart Department of Education

The Avant-Garde Criticism of Margherita Sarfatti

October 3, 2018, 5 pm

An unprecedented journey through Futurism, Expressionism and the *Novecento Italiano*

Free for museum ticket holders

Margherita Sarfatti in the Archive Papers

November 14, 2018, 5 pm

A special itinerary to discover the documents on display at the exhibition

Free for museum ticket holders

The events related to the exhibition will be published in a monthly newsletter and uploaded to the online agenda at www.mart.tn.it/martnews

TECHNICAL INFORMATION MUSEO DEL NOVECENTO

Title

Margherita Sarfatti
Segni, colore e luci a Milano

9:30 am - 10:30 pm

Last ticket sold 1 hour before closing

Location

Museo del Novecento

Tickets

10 euros with no discount

8 euros with discount

Open to the public

September 21, 2018 - February 24, 2019

Information

T. +39 02 88444061

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Curated by

Anna Maria Montaldo, Danka Giacon
with the collaboration of Antonello Negri

Websites

www.mart.trento.it

electa.it

Promoted and produced by

Comune di Milano - Cultura

Museo del Novecento

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Organization, communication, and catalogue

Electa

Opening hours

Monday 2:30-7:30 pm

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday

9:30 am - 7:30 pm

Thursday and Saturday

TECHNICAL INFORMATION FOR MART

Title

Margherita Sarfatti
The Novecento Italiano in the World

Location

Mart, Rovereto

Open to the public

September 21, 2018 - February 24, 2019

Curated by

Daniela Ferrari
with the collaboration of Ilaria Cimonetti
and the Archivio del '900 at Mart

Promoted and produced by

Mart, Museo di arte moderna
e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto

In collaboration with

Comune di Milano – Cultura
Museo del Novecento
con la casa editrice Electa

Catalogue

Electa

Opening hours

Tuesday-Sunday 10 am to 6 pm
Friday 10 am to 9 pm
Closed Monday
Last ticket sold 30 minutes before closing

Tickets

11 euros with no discount
7 euros with discount
No charge for children up to the age of 14 and for
the disabled
Information

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Websites

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