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## The artists of a street called Margutta

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### An exhibition of 16 artists presented by the Italian Cultural Institute

highlights the work of artists who all used to gather on the Via Margutta, a street lying between the noisy and prestigious Via del Babuino and the colossal Trinita dei Monti in the eternal city of Rome.

In this long, gray and narrow street that traces its origins back to the middle of the 16th century, artists used to mingle with writers, poets, philosophers and politicians to discuss the hot issues of the day -- a time marked by their efforts to cope with post-war society, the confusion and the bitter acceptance of loss after the Liberation, but also hope and plans for the future. As the most dramatic time of their lives, everybody had stories to tell of jails, cellars or exile.

Eva Fischer, the owner of the art works displayed, loves to reminisce about the time right after World War II. Many of the artists in the exhibition had reacted against fascism and the regime, and could hardly believe they were free. How odd, writes Eva Fischer, the war was still close but it looked so far away on those nights which we, still wearing worn-out or even mended clothes, relished while watching from the Villa Borghese as the dawn broke over the problems of this world.

We talked about everything, says Eva Fischer, the only surviving artist of that time. This was a time of plans, discoveries, ambitions, goals and achievements for everybody, she said, adding that they lived especially by night. "We kept on walking, in groups of five or ten, in the warm Roman night which appeared lazy but unique on account of its colors and its generosity."

Fischer played a role in the art movement in Italy after World War II with aesthetics and techniques that included social commitment. Born in Yugoslavia, she lived in Italy from 1941 and became part of the group of artists on the Via Margutta -- artists struggling to keep their inspiration aflame in the midst of a dark dictatorship.

She had experienced the horrors of the holocaust and could never forget how her father, a rabbi, and 32 other family members were killed. Locking it all into the dark labyrinths of her memories, she kept it hidden for many years. "I had hoped that painting would serve as a catharsis, but I cannot forget these horrors and I can't forgive."

At last, in 1989 Eva decided to display her paintings. "The people had to know. I saw things that nobody had yet described."

But her works don't speak of those dark experiences only.

During the early 1950s Eva met Picasso in Luchino Visconti's home, and he encouraged her to continue with her landscape work and to also include architecture from southern Italy.

Soon after this period, Eva transferred her work to Madrid where she also took an active part in the debates in Juana Mordo's atelier on the fight against Franco's fascism.

In the 1960s, Fischer exhibited her work at Lefevre's Gallery in London, then in Israel and the United States.

This exhibition involving 15 artists contains just some of the works of people with whom Eva socialized in the Via Margutta. These are works that she owns

and has given in loan to the Italian Institute. All of the artists have played their part in history.

Alberto Burri (1915-1995), for example, was a proponent of Art Informel, experimenting with various unorthodox materials, while Giuseppe Carpogrossi (1900-1972) was one of the founders of what is called the Scuola Romana.

Other artists include Carlo Levi (1902-1975), an Italian writer, noted anti-Fascist leader and a painter of international acclaim, and Giorgio de Chirico (1888-1978), a leading figure in the international scene and predator of surrealism, and Luigi Bartolini (1892-1963), who is considered to be one of the most important exponents of etching in Italy.

There is also Cagli Corrado (1910-1976), whose continuous explorations have led him to eclecticism, Umberto Mastroianni (1910-1998), who abandoned futurism for avant-garde, Fausto Pirandello (1899-1975), who changed from realism to neo-cubism after 1945, Gino Severini (1883-1966), whose explorations with various trends have contributed to each of modes he was involved in, ranging from futurism to cubism and from abstract to dadaism, and Lorenzo Vespagnani (1924-2001), whose realism changed to almost hallucinatory inclinations.

The exhibition also showcases the work of Arnaldo Ciarrocchi (1916), Antonio Corpora (1909), Renato Guttuso (1912-1987) and Franco Gentilini (1909-1981), and M. Maccari.

"I do not often go back to the Via Margutta, writes Eva. So many friends have become shades in its sky!" The exhibition, however, gives new life to that period on the Via Margutta.

*A Street called Margutta, an exhibition of drawings, etchings and lithographs, April 22 until May 22, 2004, Italian Institute of Culture, Jl. HOS Cokroaminoto 117, Menteng, Central Jakarta, Tel. 3927531*