



*Art  
Inclusion*

**Renato Guttuso**



## Renato Guttuso (1911-1987)

Renato Guttuso was an Italian painter born the early twentieth century in Bagheria. Son of a surveyor and amateur watercolorist, since childhood he showed his talent in painting.

Just thirteen years old he began to produce and sign his paintings, thanks to his father's hobby and the attendance of the painter Domenico Quattrociochi's workshop and of the painter Emilio Murdolo; furthermore he began to attend the artistic circles of Palermo. His art was linked to expressionism and characterized by a strong social commitment, which also led him to go into politics as a senator of the Italian Communist Party.

The young Guttuso lived the Sicilian crisis of the postwar period and the complete decay of the nobility of the eighteenth-century villas, all this moved the painter deeply, as he was already scarred by the poverty of his family. He completed his high school and university studies in Palermo. His education was based on the style of European painters, in particular Courbet, Van Gogh and Picasso; this took him to Milan and to travel all around Europe.

In his style are more and more present Sicilian symbols, such as the lemon groves, the Saracen olive tree, the Palinuro: this led him to participate in 1931 in a group exhibition of six Sicilian painters. Back in Palermo, he formed the "Group of Four" along with the painter Lia Pasqua-lino Noto, and sculptors Giovanni Barbera and Nino Franchina. He became part of the artistic movement called "Corrente", which was opposed to the official academic standards, giving much importance to the color with the addition of free figures in space; with a strong anti-fascist opposition. In his stay in Milan he reached the idea of "social art", with an increasingly evident political and moral commitment. Later he moved to Rome, getting in touch with the Roman artistic circle.

The artist will never stop to work even in wartime, alternating still life paintings, to glimpses of the Palermo landscape, to the representations of Nazi repressions. In the '40s he married his faithful companion Mimise, who he painted in 1947. Between the '40s and the '50s he devoted himself in his paintings to the representation of his childhood, of his land, of Sicilian peasants who had the first place in his heart, as he considered himself one of them. In the '60s, the female figure became a dominant element in his painting, in fact he portrayed Marta Marzotto in a series of paintings, who was his muse and his model. He also created a series of 37 drawings, called "Cartoline", where the artist represents the memories, feelings, emotions, fantasies and moods towards Marta Marzotto. In the '70s he devoted an entire cycle to his autobiography in painting, paintings of exceptional value for the knowledge of the man-artist Guttuso. In 1974 he painted the famous painting "La Vucciria". Guttuso sadly died in 1987 in loneliness.

Two funerals were celebrated: one secular and one religious. He had no biological children, but had a foster son, Fabio Carapezza Guttuso, who was the only one who took care of his father in the last years of his life.





**Vucciria, Renato Guttuso, 1974, oil on canvas, 300×300 cm**

## Vucciria

Vucciria is the most famous painting by Renato. It was realized in 1974 when the painter was 63 years old. The painting is an oil on canvas and measures 3m x 3m. It is currently exposed in Palermo at Palazzo Steri. The artwork represents a daily life scene, located at Vucciria market, one of the most important markets in Palermo. The word Vucciria stems from the French word “boucherie” (butcher’s shop ) and it is still used nowadays with the meaning of confusion in order to represent that mixture of voices, people and objects that is typical in the Sicilian markets. It is a painting with a traumatic impact. The artist defines the painting as a large still life that has a passage in the middle where people flows and meets. The artwork is characterized by the gritty realism of the cut in half meat and fishes; the attention of the observer is caught by the chaos of goods and people that is moving around in a crowded space but rhythmically chanted by fish, shellfish, fruit and vegetables boxes. The author emphasizes any good thanks to the well balanced use of colors (for example: the red color of the swordfish and the bright red of meat). Guttuso aims to the dynamism, paying attention to the composition of the painting, so the mess is only ostensible. The composition is almost asymmetrical but there are some alignments that provide balance and harmony: for example one of the lamps is aligned with the bowl of mozzarella in the middle. Actually, the painting reflects the reality of the market in Palermo. Guttuso was used to say: “Even if I paint an apple, there is the Sicily in it”.

### **The Art of Inclusion learners’ own impressions on the painting:**

*Benedetto: “I like this painting; I used to go shopping there with my mother and there was a bar that has been used to sell staff for 50 cents, I remember it since when I was a child. In the painting it seems that there are a pig and a rabbit hanging.”*

*Alberto: “I like the whole painting but most of all the people.”*

*Vincenzo: “It reminds me my childhood because in the past we were used to go shopping at Vucciria. But nowadays it is not anymore like this, it’s smaller they sell other goods.”*

*Davide: “It inspires folklore, multiculturalism and wellness.”*

*Simona: “It makes me feel happiness and confusion at one time.”*

*Giulia: “The painting represents a scene of my everyday life, when I go to the greengrocer with a lot of people in queue.”*

*Martina: “It seems almost to hear the sellers’ shouts, the smell of fish and the people pushing to move on.”*

*Antonio: “Hunger, confusion, harmony of the colours and gastronomy.”*

*Serena: “I like the dried fruit, the onions and the colors!”*

*Davide R: “Folk culture.”*

*Mary: “Tradition of Palermo with some interesting images of people and gastronomy.”*

*Gabriele: “It makes me think of all the markets and I see the people walking and selling.”*

*Flaviana: “Beautiful, it conveys life.”*

*Veronica: “Holy Mary! It reminds me that beautiful mess of the times when I went there as a child.”*

*Maria Giulia: “vivacity and joyful confusion.”*





**Crucifixion, Guttuso, 1941, oil on canvas, 200×200 cm**

## **Crucifixion by Renato Guttuso**

This Guttuso's painting is one of the most important because it made him known to the public and the critics.

The painting was displayed in 1942 and it gave to the painter the nickname of "Pictor Diabolicus" because of the presence of naked Magdalene.

The painting is inspired to the scene of Golgota but using a new space scheme where the three crosses are one behind the other rather than in a diagonal. This effect creates a sense of alienation in the observer.

The Christ's face is hidden by one of the two thieves' Cross and we can just imagine his grimace of pain.

The painting is expressively charged because of strong shades and bright and pastel colors that were used by Guttuso.

Guttuso's brushstroke is decisive and the figures are angular.

The figures' nakedness in the painting did not want to stir up scandal among the audience; it was a decision of the author in order to place the scene in the space-time context of a bombed city during the war.

The artist continuously refers to the Gospels so that the name of the painting is "Crucifixion". It is no coincidence but it was chosen by the author to highlight that Jesus death is the drama of the entire mankind. Painting the Gospel episode of Jesus who is dying on the Cross for our sins, Guttuso highlights the universality of human pain.

In the painting a soldier is holding a rod with a sponge soaked in vinegar on the top in one hand and some stones in the other; the taut strings that bind one of the thieves seem to be almost frayed, painful and sharp.

This painting shows to the audience that we are living in a time of massacres, decapitations and suffering.

In the painting the houses in the background are squared in the Cubist style. Because their lines are essential, they could be the houses of those times as well as our everyday houses. The landscape represents in general Guttuso's homeland: Sicily. About that the bridge in the background is telltale: it is an Arabic-Norman humpback bridge.

### **The Art of Inclusion learners' own impressions on the painting:**

Antonio: "The painting gives rise to emotions of displeasure and sadness."

Davide: "Personally this image do not satisfy me because it is caotic."

Serena: "The painting is very beautiful."

Vincenzo: "To me the painting elicits dismay and indignation!"

Mary: "The image of the painting is a bit confused but also vibrant and very colourful."



**ASSOCIAZIONE UNIAMOCI ONLUS**  
Sede Operativa sita in via E. Giafar n°36  
90124 Palermo  
Tel./Fax 0919765893  
[www.uniamocionlus.org](http://www.uniamocionlus.org)  
[info@uniamocionlus.org](mailto:info@uniamocionlus.org)

