

Featured Artist

Antonio Berni



Antonio Berni, *Demonstration (Manifestación)*, 1934, Latin American Art Museum of Buenos Aires (MALBA).

Antonio Berni, Argentine artist known for his socially committed art. Berni had his first exhibition when still a teenager and received a scholarship to study painting in Europe in 1925. After visiting Madrid, he settled in Paris, where he studied with the painters André Lhote and Othon Friesz. He received a second scholarship in 1927 that enabled him to meet the Surrealists. While in France he explored Surrealism, revolutionary politics, and the psychoanalytical writings of Sigmund Freud.

Berni returned to Argentina in 1930. In 1933 he established a leftist group called *Nuevo Realismo* ("New Realism") and began to prefer Social Realism. That same year he collaborated on a mural with visiting Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros. Unlike the muralists of Mexico, however, Berni had little opportunity to paint murals, so instead he used enormous mural-sized canvases. An example of this is *Public Demonstration* (1934), which captures the desperation of Argentina's working classes. The anguished faces of men, women, and a child crowd the image; one protester holds a sign that reads "pan y trabajo" ("bread and work")

Berni continued to produce work in this realist style until the late 1950s, when he began a series of collages that he centered on the daily life of a fictional boy from the slums of Buenos Aires whom he named Juanito Laguna. In the early 1960s the fictional prostitute and seamstress Ramona Montiel became the subject of a second series of works. In 1979, he was appointed member of the *Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes*. Berni passed away in Buenos Aires on October 13th, 1981.