

"Il Paesaggio Descritto". 44 Reasons to Visit Italy

Marina Melchionda (June 08, 2010)



On June 4 the Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò hosted the inauguration of the exhibit "Il Paesaggio Descritto. UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Italy", a collection of 44 shots of 44 different Italian UNESCO Heritage Sites by photographer Luca Capuano. Whether you are an American fond for Italy, an Italian who is lonesome for his country of origins, a photography buff or even a historian, we assure you that you'll find a reason to fall in love with it!

If you think it is impossible to bring together the best that Italy can offer you in terms of landscapes and historic and cultural sites, you are definitely wrong.

On June 4 [Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò](#) [2] inaugurated the exhibit "Il Paesaggio Descritto - UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Italy", a collection of 44 shots of 44 different Italian UNESCO Heritage Sites



by photographer Luca Capuano.

As many of you know, Italy is the country that hosts the largest number of UNESCO sites, might they be historical centers, natural parks, sea or mountain panoramas, monuments, or architectural landscapes. Luca Capuano traveled throughout the entire country, from the Dolomites in the North to the Aeolian Islands in Sicily, to portray all of them through the lens of his reflex camera.

The original exhibit, first inaugurated in Villa d'Este in Tivoli (near Rome) on March 2010, featured over 530 pictures, a huge collection from which the photographer and the curator of the exhibit, Tommaso Gavioli, selected numerous samples to bring to New York for the exhibition at the Casa.

The display, that will be on view through July 16, is the result of a collaboration between the Casa, the [Ministry of Cultural Heritage](#) [3] and the [Associazione Città e Siti Italiani UNESCO](#) [4]: "Casa Italiana found out about this exhibit on the website of the Italian national newspaper [La Repubblica](#) [5] and immediately contacted us showing a deep interest in hosting it in its headquarters. Thanks to the collaboration between Elsa de Giovanni, who became the on-site coordinator of this NY edition, and Mr. Gavioli, we are here after only two months from the first inauguration in Tivoli", said Arianna Zanelli, Secretary General of the Associazione Città e Siti Italiani UNESCO.

Such an initiative also has a symbolic meaning for her: "We must remember that New York itself hosts two UNESCO heritage sites, the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, places that are traditionally part of the "Italian version" of the American dream and that have shaped in many ways the history of both these countries. This time we Italians are not coming as immigrants, but as ambassadors of our national beauties that somehow represent 'the Italian dream' of many Americans".

From the Royal Palace with its gardens in Caserta to the "Sacri Monti" (Holy Mountains) in Lombardy and Piedmont; from the Etruscan Necropolises of Cerveteri and Tarquinia to the "trulli" in Alberobello, Apulia; from the Cilento Coast and Vallo di Diano National Park with the Archeological sites of Paestum and Velia, and the Certosa di Padula to the Archaeological Areas of Pompei, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata, the exhibit takes the visitor on a virtual journey through the country. Its touristic value was further underlined by the presence of Riccardo Strano, the Director of the [Italian Government Tourism Board in North America](#) [6], on the day of the inauguration: the vivid colors of the pictures, the extraordinary combination of such different landscapes, left all of those attending enthusiastic about a possible visit to Italy in the near future.

"The exhibit was first conceived for two different reasons: first, we wanted to produce an accurate documentation of the state of preservation of these UNESCO sites in Italy; second, we wanted to offer the public a comprehensive overview of this extraordinary country, that we have the duty to take care of and hand over to future generations", stated Mrs. Zanelli when we asked about the origins of the initiative. "Since the experiment to display a smaller version of the exhibit is proving to be very successful, we are encouraged to take it on both a national and an international tour, in cities and territories where there aren't such large spaces as Villa d'Este in Tivoli".

For Luca Capuano, selecting just 44 images out of the original 530 was a very delicate task that inevitably changed or shaped the meaning of the exhibit.

He was introduced to Mrs. Zanelli and the UNESCO scientific committee in Italy by his friend Mr. Gavioli and, although he is mainly a photographer of architecture, he was immediately appreciated for some works he had already done in the Province of Ferrara, where the Association's headquarters are located.

We met him a few days before the inauguration and asked him about his commitment with UNESCO. He told us about the fascinating way he carried out his appointment...

Why do you think the Associazione Città e Siti Italiani UNESCO selected you among all the photographers they were supposedly examining?

They already knew me, my style and the works I had done before in the province of Ferrara.

They gave me great freedom in the way I could carry out this job, the "cut" and the "point of view" from which I could take my pictures. This is not only an exhibit about the 44 UNESCO sites in Italy,



but it is also about the way I look at them, and the language I use to introduce them to the public. This is why the exhibit is called "Il paesaggio descritto" (The landscape described): it is more a subjective than an objective representation.

What is the point of view that you talk about? What kind of photographer are you?

My life is divided into two parts. My work as a professional photographer in the field of architecture for trade magazines and studios requires me to use a language that is both professional and commercial. My artistic projects, of which in most cases I am the first creator, allow me greater freedom of expression. Sometimes, as in this exhibit's case, these two aspects of my work cross: on one side these pictures document the reality as it is, on the other they are the fruit of a thoughtful consideration of what a "UNESCO heritage site" should represent. My conclusion is that the object of this preservation should be the identity of these places, that is the fruit of what they were when they were first created and of what they have become now, thus between past and present. In order to portray this "identity" in my pictures I chose to remove all of the external contemporary elements that could distract the attention of the viewers, from the advertisement posters to the people walking by and the traffic. So there I was with very few spots that I could work with: using this lecture key made my work much harder, but it was the only way I thought I could carry it on properly

How long did it take you to take all those pictures?

It took me almost five months traveling up and down Italy by camper. I left from Florence in July and took my last shots in December. After two months of editing, we were ready for the inauguration in Tivoli for which we chose 10 to 20 images for each UNESCO site.

How did you manage to come down to one picture per site for the NY exhibit?

It was hard to choose which one to pick. I had to find another lecture key and I asked for the collaboration of the curator Mr. Tommaso Gavioli. We finally ended up giving more emphasis to my perspective than to the informative aspect of the project. So it is more a Luca Capuano than a UNESCO exhibit.

How does it feel to have your works presented to an American audience?

I think that we found in the Casa Italiana a great place for the exhibit: it has a consistent American audience that is very attentive to the Italian contemporary reality but, being committed to the spreading of the Italian culture, it is also deeply connected to the Italian community in New York. Its audience is extremely various and could thus be fascinated by it for cultural, historical or tourist reasons. The exhibit itself is accessible to an extremely large public that, according to their personal and cultural background, can respond to it in a different way.

Beauty is a universal concept, that can be interpreted in as many different ways as the people who observe it. I am curious to see how the New York public will respond to the beauty I have tried to introduce to them through my exhibit.

We invite all of you readers who happen to be in New York to visit the Casa Italiana this first half of summer. Whether you are an American fond for Italy, an Italian lonesome for his country of origins, a passionate about photography or even a historian, we ensure you that you'll find a reason to fall in love with Luca Capuano's work

Il Paesaggio Descritto

UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Italy

June 4 - July 16
(Monday - Friday, 10 am - 5 pm)
[Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò at NYU](#) [2]
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