

Naples. Danger for Via San Gregorio Armeno

N. L. (October 14, 2011)



Naples' street of the Nativity scene makers is threatened by a perilous building. Residents and store owners alike declare war to the mayor's office if precautions are not taken immediately. The closing down of the street will have serious effects on the city's economy as every single day about 2000 tourists visit the shops and purchase a small piece of art for their home.

There is a a street in Naples, a street where it is Christmas all year long. It is the street of the Nativity scene makers. Here you can admire numerous shops with creative nativity figurines in all variations. "Besides the Jesus- and Madonna figurines you will also find detailed copies of all household objects, gastronomic delights, exotic animals, and sometimes even caricatured politicians. Moreover you can get thousand of accessories and building material for your presepe (nativity scene in Italian), like cork to create the mountains, ready-to-place houses, wells, waterfalls powered by



electric engine, small lakes with water, trees, grasslands, bridges, towers. And all (or nearly all) handmade!" the portal portanapoli.com [2] explains.

But right now the so called street of Nativity scenes, Via San Gregorio Armeno, is at risk of closing down. A building is indeed in danger of collapsing and all store owners are planning to close down if no immediate action is taken. That means the big international Christmas fair that takes place every November 1st, and that attracts tourists from all over the world, will not happen this year.

The only way to make it happen is to do something. A part of Via San Gregorio Armeno, the area closest to the building, has already shut down and the decision is approved by all, despite the inconveniences caused to people living in the area, tourists and store owners alike. "In this area, every year, something new happens," Antonio Esposito, president of the San Gregorio Armeno Association said, "That building was bombed during World War II, it was flooded several times and was raided for all different reasons, but nobody ever cared. Only once, many many years ago, a small repair was done, but nothing else after that. Yesterday we spoke to a representative of the mayor's office who is taking care of this case. We informed him that security precautions should be taken within a week before the street reopens. If not, it is war, everything will shut down, stores and stalls alike."

"This is a real damage to our economy," Gennaro, whose store is just a few steps away from the dangerous area, continues, "Every single day we get about 2000 tourists, it is crazy that this is happening, that they have to witness something like this." Indeed groups of foreigners arriving to the famous area are taken aback by the barricades, some even take pictures see this as something that can happen "only in Italy."

There is who, like Carmela, a 90 year old resident, is worried about their health. "I am old," she says "And if I feel sick and I need help how can the ambulance reach me?" She is reassured by the people of the neighborhood. They all know her and they all care, so they will come to the rescue if necessary. Still there is one more problem in Via San Gregorio Armeno. "How do we prepare for the fair?" Genny Di Virgilio and his father Rosario say, "How can we even get through? That building has been in danger for decades now. What are they waiting for? For someone to die?"

Marco Ferrigno, another store owner, talks of "forced isolation." "I feel like they closed us inside a cage. They are destroying what we have been doing for a lifetime. It takes us a year to prepare for the fair. There must be a synergy among us, while, once again, we have to worry about some sort of emergency. San Gregorio is one of Naples' main attractions but there is zero consideration for us. We are tired of emergencies, of worrying for our lives and our businesses. We want attention but not for this type of stuff. We want it for our craft, that is unique and appreciated all over the world."

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[2] <http://www.portanapoli.com/>