

The Year of Italian Culture in the U.S.: An Appraisal in New York

Natalia Quintavalle * (December 14, 2013)



It has been a yearlong campaign to promote our country and involve Americans, strengthening old bonds and forging new ones. But now, nearing yearend, we should not forget that every year is the year of Italian culture! So, stay tuned for more!



2013 has been a memorable year for Italians in New York and the United States. 2013: The Year of Italian Culture in the United States – a program created by the Foreign Ministry with the support of Italian President Giorgio Napolitano – began its yearlong campaign to promote our country and involve Americans, strengthening old bonds and forging new ones.

Every facet that makes up our culture and identity, traditions both past and present, were championed, promoted and put on display, from architecture to art, design, enogastronomy, fashion, film, literature, music, science and theater.

Our campaign began in New York last November with an exhibit at the Morgan Library of Rosso Fiorentino's painting Holy Family with the Young Saint John the Baptist and continued with a flurry of interrelated events covering every sector of our country's bottomless font of culture. Like the enduring grace of ancient sculpture embodied by "The Boxer," the extraordinary bronze masterpiece discovered in Rome at the end of the nineteenth century and put on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art for several weeks over the summer, thanks to Eni. The magazine you have in your hands recently compared it to the beauty of dancer Roberto Bolle, who, with the support of Acqua di Parma, gave the city of New York the moving performance "Roberto Bolle and Friends."

Here is just a smattering of the amazing cultural events sponsored by the campaign, spanning classical art (the exhibition of Raphael's early painting "Saint Catherine of Alexandria" at the Italian Cultural Institute, Hartford's exhibition of eight masterpieces by Caravaggio and the Piero della Francesca exhibit at the Frick Collection); modern art ("Morandi and Casorati," a selection of works from the De Fornaris Foundation's important modern and contemporary art collection on display at the Cultural Institute); film (screenings of the contemporary classic "Open Roads" at Lincoln Center and "Homage to Pasolini" at MoMa, in commemoration of the ninetieth birthday of the poet, novelist, painter and director) and music (on October 10th Giuseppe Verdi's bicentennial was celebrated in high style in New York with a performance of "Cameristi della Scala" at Carnegie Hall, Francesca Parvizyar's "Waiting for Verdi" at NYU's Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò, as well as numerous events sponsored by Italian American societies in Staten Island and Queens).

Jazz, one of the bedrocks of contemporary American culture, also played a pivotal role thanks to Umbria Jazz. The most prominent Italian musicians – Bollani, Rava

and Fresu – delighted audiences at the Birdland Jazz Club with "Top Italian Jazz." And an exhibit honoring Maestro Luciano Pavarotti, sponsored by San Pellegrino in collaboration with the Pavarotti Foundation, traced the personal life and legendary career of Pavarotti with photos, videos and personal belongings of the singer.

In December, there will be exhibits and simposia dedicated to Italian language and literature, including the 500th anniversary celebration of Niccolò Machiavelli's literary masterpiece, The Prince, to be held at Columbia University and the Institute for Italian Culture. I want to thank Ferrero USA for their precious support in organizing these conferences on Machiavelli at Columbia University. Their support has also made possible several other initiatives, including the Metropolitan Museum's exhibition of Diego Velazquez's "Portrait of Francesco I d'Este," a masterpiece from Modena's Galleria Estense; a conference focusing on Italian Cinema at Yale University; a series of Italian and American cooperative workshops on nanotechnology research at Columbia University, and "In scena," a show dedicated to Italian theater.

I could go on, listing all the events made possible thanks to the generous support of "corporate ambassadors" Eni and Intesa San Paolo during the whole year, but I trust that i-Italy's readers not only are aware of these past events but will continue to follow our operation over what's left of the year and in the years to come. As someone said before me, every year is the year of Italian culture! Stay tuned!

* Natalia Quintavalle is Consul General of Italy in New York. The first woman to be appointed to such a post, she took her seat at the Park Avenue Consulate in September 2011.



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