

The Manetti Shrem: Modern Patrons of the Arts in California

Mauro Aprile Zanett Zanetti (April 18, 2018)



A life dedicated to Art. Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem, an exceptional philanthropic couple that has created a Museum of Contemporary Art conceived as a Renaissance “bottega dell’arte” at UC Davis.

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“Caravaggio! If I should think of a painter’s style from the past to compare [Maria Manetti’s](#) [2]creative strength to, I would have no doubt: she is a [Caravaggio](#) [3] with all her power of realism, challenge and beauty. In the same way, if I should make a comparison from the history of art with **Jan Shrem**, **Giorgio Morandi’s** sophistication and silent mystery would certainly come to mind.”



To further describe the Manetti Shrem couple, outstanding philanthropists from San Francisco, on the evening of the “Legacy Dinner” — the benefactors’ event at which these patrons of the arts raised almost one million dollars in a single evening in Fall 2016 all to support the new **Jan Shrem & Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art at UC Davis [4]** — whom should I rely on better among the elected guests than the great painter, Wayne Thiebaud?

The 97-year old “Maestro”, who is famous for painting common mass-culture objects with extremely rich and bright pigments and thus often associated with **Pop Art** along with **Lichtenstein** and **Warhol**, is closely connected to UC Davis as other distinguished artists now exhibited, such as **Robert Arneson, Roy De Forest, Manuel Neri, William T. Wiley** and **Roland Peterson**, who both also attended the opening evening.

[Thiebaud’s \[5\]testimony](#) is unique and unprecedented. Thiebaud, one of the greatest living artists and internationally-renowned, portrays the Manetti Shrem by referring to the style of two indisputable giants of Italian art of the past, like **Caravaggio** and **Morandi**: two extremely iconic artists, so far apart (in time and style) yet so close, at least, regarding the “minor pictorial genre” in which they have both excelled as few others, that is, **still life**.

Last January again, on the occasion of the opening of a once in a life exhibition such as **Wayne Thiebaud: 1958-1968**, mounted at **Manetti Shrem Museum of Art**, and on show from **Jan 16 through May 13**, professor Thiebaud declared with special gratitude and admiration that: “Manetti Shrem are the people that we need desperately to make things happen... and accomplish them. I kind of feel guilty toward the people who worked hard to bring this exhibition together. I am so pleased to be featured in that way. And I got to see pictures I haven’t seen in 60 years. I think I will go back and work that way again... and start it all again. But thanks to both of them, that made this amazing thing possible. So, I thank them with great love and affection.”

Adventurers and dreamers, pioneers and visionaries, armed with resiliency and determination, **Maria and Jan** gave life to their dreams right in the **San Francisco Bay Area**, and are now allowing the best talents, from all over the world, to also make their own dreams come true at UC Davis. In fact, the new **Museum of Contemporary Art** has not only exhibition spaces, but also areas devoted to creating and making works of art, the reason why Maria Manetti Shrem named it “a ‘bottega dell’arte’ carrying on the best Renaissance tradition of Firenze.”

Genesis of the Museum Project and Spirit of its Mission

In 2011 the couple—pursuing on a dream their friend and fellow **philanthropist Margrit Mondavi [6]**(deceased in summer 2016) entrusted them with—invested the first \$10 million dollars towards its realization, which cost over \$30M, and took on the very ambitious project of creating a museum of contemporary art at UC Davis, on a plot of land that had remained vacant for years, right next to the **Robert & Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts**.

“No one better than Maria and Jan”—as tireless socialite **Denis Hale [7]**, grande dame of San Francisco, and former wife of the film director **Vincente Minnelli**, says— “could complete such a magnificent and beautiful work.”

Since November 2016 the **Manetti Shrem Museum of Art** has become a concrete reality, encouraging new generations of experimenters to come to UC Davis, as well as an audience of contemporary art lovers, and family and kids, having already counted the record number of more than 80,000 visitors in the first year.

In order to make such a work of art itself come to light, the refined passion of an art collector like Jan Shrem and a “force of nature” like Maria Manetti Shrem—according to the common definition given by their friends and closest acquaintances—were needed.

The Consul General of Italy, [\[8\]Lorenzo Ortona \[8\]](#), acknowledges her qualities as an “excellent ambassador of the Italian culture”, while his wife, **Sheila Pierce Ortona**, underlines her “extraordinary combination of American entrepreneurial spirit and Italian charm.”



“It couldn’t be more appropriate with the timing that this Fall 2018 Maria Manetti Shrem will be officially honored with the recognition of the title of “Grande Ufficiale dell’Ordine della Stella d’Italia” (Grand Officer of the Order of the Star of Italy), approved by Italy’s President, Sergio Mattarella, after the proposal formulated by **Italy’s Ambassador in Washington DC, [Armando Varricchio](#) [9]** with **Consul General in San Francisco, Lorenzo Ortona.**”

Keith Geeslin, director of the San Francisco Opera, and his wife **Priscilla Geeslin**—both collectors of the specific genre of contemporary art of the Manetti Shrem Museum—especially praise “the synergistic passion between two different points of view” of the couple of generous benefactors, whose souls “are respectively reflected in the Italian Opera and in Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde.” One of the world’s largest collectors of vintage classic cars, and closest friend of the couple, **Peter Mullin**, playfully completes the picture of dialectic analogies between Maria and Jan, comparing her to a “**wonderful Delahaye, Type 165 of 1939**, of which there are now only two examples in the world”, and him to an “**essential Grand Prix Bugatti of 1931.**”

There is no need to add further images of praises; after all, there must be a reason why during the opening evening, **Maria Manetti Shrem** even gained a congratulatory video-message from an absolutely special friend of hers, **the heir to the British throne, Charles, Prince of Wales**—who was honored on April 3rd 2017 with Mrs. Manetti Shrem standing on his right, with the “**Renaissance Man of the Year**” award from the **[Foundation Palazzo Strozzi USA](#) [10]**, during a ceremony in which **[Andrea Bocelli](#) [11]** sang for British and Italian nobles and aristocrats. Besides, Maria Manetti Shrem succeeded in summoning other wealthy philanthropists and friends flown in from every corner of the United States and from all over the world to make donations in support of the new museum at UC Davis and was also able to involve high caliber sponsors such as the **[Gagosian Gallery](#) [12]** (**Courtney Raterman** business development manager at Gagosian Gallery in Los Angeles, was in the room), **Sotheby’s and Bulgari.**

A real unprecedented success, recently acknowledged by the **Council for Advancement and Support of Education**—an international association for marketing, development, and alumni relations professionals that serves more than 3.400 colleges, universities and independent schools in more than 70 countries—which conferred the “**Gold Award**” of special events to the Manetti Shrem’s “Legacy Dinner.” The opening event held at UC Davis is now the gold standard for special events across university campuses.

The museum, open to all without an admission fee, is a temple of contemporary art, and is home to approximately 5.000 works of art created by UC’s legendary artists-teachers and artists-students. “That extraordinary production of experimental art, which took place right here at UC Davis—as Provost and **Executive Vice-Chancellor Ralph J. Hexter** underlined—is finally cherished thanks to this unique jewel that the Maria and Jan have given us.”

Maria Manetti Shrem comments: “At UC Davis we are continuing a tradition started 60 years ago, which gave life to some incredible artists. And we want to recreate it again.”

She is echoed by her husband, Jan Shrem, who explains: “Our philosophy of giving back has very simple foundations. We believe that education and the arts should be accessible to everyone, and that any curious-open-mind needs to be nourished and supported”.

Words from exceptionally successful immigrants, those spoken by the two philanthropists, which may seem slightly discordant in the US today, still offer hope for the educational public system. “I think the museum will help to elevate the students’ souls”—Mrs. Manetti Shrem continues. “It will be a very important asset for the rest of their lives, and thus help to some extent to make their dreams come true. Jan and I remember well—Maria keeps pointing out—what it means to start from scratch in a new world, where education was our salvation and art our greatest joy.”

According to Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem’s belief, in fact, there are “three great moments in life: the first is the basic one for education and learning; the second is the one for the very hard work and tireless execution; the third one, which we are experiencing now, is the time for giving back what we have been able to earn in a lifetime of sacrifices.”



It's not a case that Jan and Maria have recently done also a major philanthropic investment in **Cardiology Fellowships at California Pacific Medical Center**, which treats more cardiology patients than any other hospital in San Francisco. The perfect place for Maria and Jan to show their love for their city. Their visionary partnership will significantly expand a highly regarded program that provides young cardiologists with elite training.

The Architecture and Direction of the Museum

“With its beautiful perforated white grand canopy, through which sunlight filters down constantly modulating a dynamic flow of light and shadows, the museum, which rises in this enchanting corner of the country landscape of Davis”—as **Richard Walker**, a very proud UC Davis alumnus, and co-founder of the [Napa Valley Festival del Sole](#) [13], precisely describes—“fits with perfect harmony into this area, where science and art have always walked hand in hand, embodying this brilliant and transformative moment of **UC Davis**.”

Actually, it is an extraordinary work of art itself, designed by the young Dutch architect, **Florian Idenburg** (co-founder with **Jing Liu of the SO** - IL architectural design firm; and a Japanese architecture enthusiast and associate professor of practice at Harvard) in collaboration with **Karl A. Backus** (the American architectural firm very well-known for its signature style of **Apple flagship stores, Pixar Animation Studios, UC Santa Cruz Digital Arts Research Center and UC Santa Barbara**). Idenburg describes his architectural work as a synthesis between “Japanese lightness in homage to **Jan Shrem’s** culture” and “**the magnificence and grandeur pursued by Maria Manetti**.”

The **founding director** of the Manetti Shrem Museum is the talented **Rachel Teagle**, at her third new museum launch, with a Ph.D. in History of Contemporary Arts at Stanford, and a variegated museum experience under her belt: from the Bay Area to San Diego with the **Anderson Collection** and the **SFMOMA, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the New Children’s Museum** in San Diego. Teagle declares: “the unique value proposition of this museum is precisely the couple Maria and Jan themselves, who made it possible by collaborating for years with an enormous amount of people, and especially by providing us with their extraordinary community. They are an unstoppable force, bringing together some very refined and creative ideas with a pragmatic ability of execution.”

For this new challenge Rachel Teagle raises the bar, stating: “**Art Wide Open**: we want to show a broad range of art, from art that inspires great beauty, to art that engages with the critical issues of our time.” UC Davis, with its renewed faculty of art, the diversity of its collections and its anticipated exhibitions, will solidify the reputation of the university in the art world thanks to the very original Manetti Shrem Museum of Art.

The Parallel Lives of Two Archetypal Immigrants to the US

Maria Manetti, of Florentine descent— “the quintessence of Italian-ness”, as American philanthropist and “twin sister” **Merle Mullin** defines her—has been the main drive behind **Gucci’s** internationalization in North-American department stores such as: **Magnin, Saks Fifth Ave, Bloomingdale, Macy’s, Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus**.

Maria Manetti: 1960s in Tuscany

In Firenze during 1960s, a very young Maria Manetti and her first husband, a Puglia-born and American naturalized citizen, [Edward De George](#) [14]strategically established a company in the fashion industry, working 18 hours a day towards becoming the one-and-only platform to internationalize Italian fashion. They basically brought on the so-called “Made in Italy” fashion legacy, originally conceived by Tuscan **Giovan Battista Giorgini**, who had been exporting handicrafts to the US since 1920s and had officially given birth to the Italian fashion system, producing the first selection of Italian fashion maisons in a unique profile, organized in his own residence, **Villa Torrigiani on February 12th 1951**, and one year later having expanded it in the “**Sala Bianca**” at **Palazzo Pitti**.

To the very young Maria, Mr. De George (25 years older than her) was a sort of “cultural mentor,



especially regarding the opera and classical music. “I owe him the discovery and knowledge of the widest classical repertoire, of the **Maggio Fiorentino** festival and of the great opera singers like **Renata Tebaldi**. To me Edward De George was a sort of father-figure I traveled with, especially to the US. We used to arrive in NYC and thence through all the States, traveling like ‘gypsies’, to visit our clients.”

In less than a decade, Manetti and De George literally become the leading company in exporting Made in Italy fashion creations, till **Stephen Farrow**, a young family friend and architecture student at Berkeley, comes into the picture.

A sort of Greek god, an “Adonis in jeans”, who will disrupt their lives like a “theorem”—**Leoncavallo** re-writing **I Pagliacci**, or **Shakespeare** having **Othello** resonate in **Verdi’s** opera, would not be enough. Maria Manetti’s life-story is so volcanic that its intricately woven plots could undoubtedly provide a universal love-drama for a new Hollywood production, combining: pain and joy; everything and nothing; loss and gain; exemplary challenges and milestones; the “**Italian Boot**” and the “**American dream**.” Each moment surfing the waves of a life always animated by a compelling competitive romanticism, infecting every person and thing barely touched, which makes **Maria Manetti** a true women’s lighthouse: able to inspire and motivate both present and future generations; blending beauty and determination, elegance and love, humility and courage, perseverance and generosity. Because as Maria’s mantra goes: “hard work, integrity and passion make the difference.”

The 1970s: the passage from Tuscany to the San Francisco Bay Area

Between 1971 and 1973, Maria’s life moves from the stability of the paradisiac landscape of **Montefili** in the Chianti hills, where she carries on a leisured aristocratic-like life, to the mobility of a migratory leap toward the Pacific Coast, in the San Francisco Bay Area hills: where she used to “cook for a commune in Berkeley—as Maria tells, highlighting the centrality of juxtapositions in her life—elaborate Italian meals on make-shift dual burner on a shelf in the bathroom, draining the spaghetti in the toilet, and washing the dishes in the bathtub.” It basically meant to start life from scratch again, only motivated by the “sacred fire” of love to “dare further in the pursuit of happiness.”

Fundamentally, Maria’s life is an existential and professional parable that, even compared to the emblematic story of **Steve Jobs**, dismissed by his own company, and starting over, would prove to be minor and pale, especially considering that Maria’s choices are those of a woman, with all that it entails on the eve of the 1970s, adding some explosive ingredients such as: the divorce from a Jehovah’s Witness in the Catholic Italy of the time; an emigration process with no money, mixed with sudden transatlantic crossings and coast-to-coast marathons to realize a quite impossible plot among **NYC, Santo Domingo, Nevada and California**; up to the final reunion with the embrace of a new marriage in the arms of her beloved **Stephen Farrow**.

“**Incipit Vita Nova**”, to quote one of Maria’s fellow Gemini, the distinguished “toscanaccio” and “poet of love”, **Dante Alighieri**: The Beginning of a New Life!

Maria starts working at Gucci’s, in the Magnin family’s San Francisco department store—another sign of her destiny being connected to the birth of the so-called “Made in Italy” fashion system, given that the buyers of this family had been invited to the first memorable fashion show organized by Giorgini in Firenze in the post-war period. Maria quickly climbs up the Gucci department career ladder, breaking through every glass ceiling, aiming at the top, until the late 1970s when she proposes an ambitious five-year plan to **Mr. Aldo Gucci**, which would exclusively make Gucci’s brand definitively take off in the United States of America.

The 1980s in California and the early 1990s: the acme of success and the end of another parable

Manetti Farrow Inc. is established, and by the end of the 1980s it is the number one fashion platform to win in the US market, scaling up globally. Even **Cartier, Ferragamo and Fendi** stand in line for Manetti-Farrow’s services. In the meantime, 1990 marks the beginning of a deep recession,



which drastically cuts through the fashion industry. But Maria had once again a gut feeling, having sold her fashion company six months earlier. In 1992 the painful process of divorcing Farrow also comes to an end, and she now needs to quickly learn how to manage her assets, and how to find a reason to be born again.

“The years between 1989 and 1996 were the worst of all my life, since I had lost the greatest love of my life.” Yet those are also the years in which she discovers “detachment” from everything in life, embracing **Buddhism** and starting meditation practice with mountain retreats. So, she starts her new activity as a philanthropist and patron of the arts: “I told myself that **Michelangelo, Leonardo** and **Raphael** were contemporaries of their own time, so in 2000 I joined the **SFMOMA** and I started to travel with them, something which began to open my eyes.” She also joins the **FAI** (Italian National Trust), to: “promote a tangible culture of respect for Italy’s natural heritage, art, history and traditions.”—According to the FAI statement— “And to protect a legacy that forms a fundamental part of the roots and identity of the Italian people to encourage the preservation of the environment and art in Italy.” This way Maria is able to also involve other wealthy friends of hers, “Italophiles”, passionate at classical music, fine arts, and above all in love with “Il Bel Paese.”

Her mentor for contemporary art is one of the world’s greatest video-art collectors, **Pamela Kramlich**, who loves Maria’s simply “exceptional and contagious enthusiasm. When she really gets interested in something, she delves into the subject intelligently and deeply, making things happen.” On the 7th floor of the newly renovated **San Francisco MoMA** you can have a taste of this new bond and really unique passion for contemporary art by the two couples of close friends such as the **Manetti Shrem** and **Pamela and Dick Kramlich**.

Jan Shrem: his life

When there is love, stellar alignments can reverberate on the human dust walking on Earth, making it shining even when the sky seems darker.

“Jan imposes himself with his silence.” The sublime **Sophia Loren** described **Jan Shrem** as Rubens working on a portrait. Her magical words about Jan are echoed by **Eitan Wertheimer**’s description: “Jan is for me like a quiet volcano: when wisdom comes, it comes in a big way”—which puts us in mind of the great eighteenth-century art historian Johann Winckelmann.

From his childhood in South America and the Middle East to his Maturity in the United States of America

Jan Shrem, for his part, could actually be defined as a man from another planet, due to a life as a traveler, a polyglot and a citizen of the world since his childhood. In fact, he was born in Columbia to Jewish parents from Beirut. Age 2, he returned to the Middle East with his mother, living in Israel, and then traveled back again at 9 to Columbia, which he leaves at age 16 for the United States of America, where he completed his higher education in New York and later in Los Angeles. Then he embarked on a brilliant career as a door-to-door encyclopedia salesman all over the US, including Hawaii. He sets up an international publishing company, making his fortune in the Far East whilst pursuing love: his Japanese girlfriend he had met at **UCLA**.

Ex Oriente Amor: Love and Japan in the 1950s and 1960s

In Japan, Jan is the right man at the right time. In fact, he ends up distributing technical reference books translated into English throughout the Land of the Rising Sun, as the country’s second language had been referred to German from the 1800s through the post World War II period. Japan is also the place where he refines his passion for architecture and comes into contact with **Zen Buddhism**, as he starts to attend a temple on the hills of **Kyoto**. In 1968, when he sells his Japanese company to return to Europe, he had “a very profitable organization with 50 sales offices and 2000 employees spread all over Japan.”

Europe: the 1970s

Not yet forty years old, Jan returns to Europe, dividing his time between Paris and Lugano, where he



marries **Mitsuko**, the first person who had been working in his Tokyo art gallery since the 1960s. “A Japanese woman had taken me to Japan (the one I fell in love with at UCLA, whose parents never allowed me to marry) and another one took me out: Mitsuko”—as Mr. Shrem likes to remember with one of his “life-juxtapositions.” He starts to collect art while studying wine-making at **Bordeaux University**. He spends a couple of years in Milan, where he tries to do business with **Fabbri Editori** publishing house. From his post in Italy, he was able to visit his relatives in Israel more often. Thanks to his frequent visits to the **Rive Gauche galleries** in Paris in the early 1970s he becomes friend of the Chilean artist Roberto Matta. He also meets other artists such as Francis Bacon, whose work he immediately appreciates for its “uncanny style through which art must shock, otherwise being useless.” Jan Shrem is not unlike the nineteenth-century art historian **Konrad Fiedler**, breathing art as a direct experience, becoming a close friend to artists, frequenting their atelier, deepening his understanding of art and its underlying creative processes; that is to say neither theories, nor criticism but rather poesis: namely how an artist can create a work of art able to resist time. Hence, he thoroughly understands what was better written by **Paul Klee**—the artist, par excellence, according to Fiedler—freeing art from the definition given by Plato as a mere act of imitation, that is: “Art does not reproduce the visible, it makes it visible.”

California, Napa Valley: the 1980s

Later on, Jan moves to California, specifically to Calistoga in Napa Valley, where he establishes the **Clos Pegase Winery** in 1986. Together with his friend Robert Mondavi’s winery, his estate (Clos in French) represents one of the main pillars contributing to establishing the international winemaking brand that Napa Valley took on from the late 1970s onwards thanks to the visionary winemaker, **André Tchelistcheff**.

“Clos Pegase”, as Mr. Shrem explains, is the first winery in Napa Valley to have been created following an architectural competition sponsored by **SFMoMA**. Because of Jan’s primordial love for architecture: “It was a contemporary **Palladian structure** by **Michael Graves**—as Mr. Shrem remembers—and it was much more than just a simple winery.” The property featured an underground music theater and became an exhibition space for one-of-a-kind and unique international private collection, consisting of over a thousand pieces, listing paintings and sculptures by: **Francis Bacon, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Jean Dubuffet, Lucio Fontana, Henry Moore, Anthony Caro, Robert Morris, William Tucker, Tony Cragg, Sandro Chia and Mimmo Paladino**, among others.

Philanthropy: The Love-Spark between Maria Manetti and Jan Shrem

When in 2010 SFMoMA asked Maria Manetti to organize a lunch to gather philanthropists and patrons in view of the expansion of the new museum, among the few invited on a most exclusive guest list to her enchanting summer residence, **Villa Mille Rose**, in **Oakville**, Napa Valley, was the owner of the refined winery, **Clos Pegase**.

Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti were not complete strangers to each other; they had already met a long time before during another charity event for the **Napa Valley Festival del Sole**. But now Mr. Shrem—a widower following a 50-year marriage to his beloved wife, Mitsuko—finding again his smile, observed Maria in a special way: as if struck by some magic dart from the quiver of a cruel and unpredictable Cupid.

“That night Jan was the last of my 24 guests to leave my home”, Maria remembers. “Ten days later we were face to face for a ‘friendly dinner’, he had insisted I accepted during a thank-you call the following day.” In fact, this gentleman had begun an ancient courtship, which was to lead to their union in marriage in **San Francisco City Hall** on Valentine’s Day in 2012. This recounts the birth of an exceptional couple of thoroughbred philanthropists and incomparable patrons of the arts, such as the Manetti Shrem.

Margrit Mondavi defined the marriage between her two dear friends this way: “A completely natural combination between Maria and Jan, due to a shared interest in art, Jan’s amazing art lectures, his art collection, his appreciation for art and beauty.”



In 2013 Jan sold **Clos Pegase** in order to better continue his support for the arts and music, new talents and their ideas, always along with Maria, as a song dedicated to them goes:

“Two hearts blown by the wind / Swirling around that finally found each other.”

“The Certainty of Unhappiness for the Uncertainty of Happiness”—The Universal Reasons of An Immigrant.

It is at least twenty years since Italian media began discussing the “brain drain.” I am sure that there will always be someone ready to show that the term has been coined even earlier, or that it is something good or bad, and exponentially worsening, but that is not the question. The point is that we must realize that, now more than ever, the tendency of people with an advanced education (whether bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree)—in other words, those with both excellent intellectual and technical skills, and above all those who are able to dream—to leave the country has become a veritable and undeniable “exodus of talents.” And on the contrary, what was Renaissance in Italy but a never-stopping selection of talents from all over the world?

These people, who are not emigrating from so-called “developing countries”, are labeled “expats”, which is a euphemistic word en vogue today to avoid naming them mere “immigrants.” Yes, “Il Bel Paese”—being a natural docking port, due to its geographical features in the bureaucratic heart of a cold and rigid Europe—is casting away the best of its youth as quickly as the waves of the Mediterranean waves beat on its shores, while trying to assimilate African and Middle Eastern refugees and immigrants driven from their own countries by war. We are talking about what the Romans called Mare Nostrum, “our sea”, a sea of cultural diversity, which is still searching for its identity: is it a sacred basin of peace, as desired by the legendary mayor of Firenze, the Pozzallese, **Giorgio La Pira**? Or is it rather an infernal mess of blood, where we witness the shameful spectacle of a modern democracy on a daily basis, incapable of dealing with fluxes of fear and of human desire?

Over the last 25 years, on the subject of Italians migrating abroad, I have been listening to poets, entrepreneurs, adventurers, politicians, artists, economists and various theorists—everyone with a very personal, and more or less reasonable explanation—but no one has ever expressed better than Maria Manetti Shrem, why an Italian, leaving his or her own country (probably much more difficult than for anyone else, due to Italy’s exceptional biodiversity and beauty), makes such a determined choice, as she did when she left the Chianti hills for Berkeley’s ones:

“I preferred the uncertainty of happiness to the certainty of unhappiness. The ritual of the Italian Sunday with all the family gathering at the table in exchange for the waves of destiny: feeling alive and free to dare.”

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Links

- [1] <http://108.61.128.93/files/manettishremtaglionastrojpg>
- [2] <https://manettishremmuseum.ucdavis.edu/about/founding-donors.html>
- [3] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caravaggio>
- [4] <https://www.ucdavis.edu>
- [5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayne_Thiebaud
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