

Veronamerica. Connecting Women Artists

F. B. (October 23, 2007)



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Warning: Veronamerica celebrates its tenth anniversary this October at the Italian Cultural Institute and includes strong impact exhibits, high-voltage charisma and moving audio-visual concepts. To get the spirit of this exciting event, you'll be torn between the love for different cultures and the need to breathe their innovative air because what makes it hard is that it's not a simple exchange program from across the Atlantic - it's something more.

First off, Veronamerica II is a nonprofit group of American and Italian women artists from the Hudson Valley and the Veneto and Lombardia regions, respectively. Its purpose is to share (and show) art

and personal histories, with workshops that took place in November 1997, throughout the historic center of Verona (Italy).

The presentation of Veronamerica on October 16, 2007 saw Italian artists Sara Poli, Gabriella Goffi and Tiziana Arcio share their particular visions of life, under the coordination of Jane Toby. Sara Poli, director and visual artist, worked on many theatrical events, collaborating with some of the most important figures of the Italian scene. During the conference, Ms. Poli said, "I'm here for the presentation of my docu-reality, called Sguardi, Glances, based on the project La vita è un sogno, Life is a dream. It's about a group of prisoners and their dreams. It was hard to do the interviews because we've been surveyed by several guards all the time. But I think it will touch your heart strings."

Ms. Poli's work was one of the presentation's nicest surprises, even if part of the American audience found it sad and disturbing. "I'm confused by it," said a woman, "the work feels a bit forced to me. I didn't understand what Ms. Poli's work means. What sort of art is that?" The presentation also included Gabriella Goffi, a sculptor born in Gavardo, Brescia, where she still works. "I'm a teacher," she told us, "and I'm specialized in non-verbal communication. Since the 1980s, I have focused my attention on the expressive power of material cloth, wood, metal which I assemble in panels or into a sculpture. These objects are completely transformed by myself and made into something artistic". Gabriella also finds time to teach her methodology at the Psychodrama and Art school, giving seminars for adults and teens and offers formative courses to teachers. "Who said artists cannot change the world?," she asked.

The last of the three Italian artists, Tiziana Arici, works in advertising, publishes books and cooperates with national magazines. "My imagination and creativity became professional in the 80s, through my photography. I love to fix hands of people in my pictures and I'm conducting a personal study on old bodies. My mom, as you can see in the photograph 'Cause I feel nostalgic for you' was my first test and my favorite one, of course."

About 35 artists are participating in Project Veronamerica. The artists include 15 Hudson Valley artists, five 1997 Veronamerica artists from different parts of the States and Europe, 15 artists from Italy. "Down a quiet Veronese street, the so-called Circolo della Rosa, a women's cultural arts center makes its place," explained Ms. Toby. "Here, Italian women created a meeting place but it looks more like a home, where they promoted women's activities in the arts. The Circolo was the focus of the Decumano Secondo, a show devoted to women's thoughts and art, and it's still held in many spaces throughout Verona's historic center. Do you know, Verona is known as Little Rome?! In November 1997, 12 American women artists packed their art on their backs and journeyed to Verona, where they participated with 20 European artists in an intercultural art exhibit: Veronamerica. American artists were invited in 1997 to share their points of view, philosophies, stories". So, the journey from the States to Italy, to quote the catalog La Bella Tavola, became a journey to connect a variety of countries and cultures. An exchange against the stereotypes: big emotions, but also big rewards for the women artists.

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