

Cinema Italian Style: A Talk with Director Laura Bispuri and Actress Alba Rohrwacher

Emily Hayes (April 27, 2018)



On Tuesday, April 23, the Embassy of Italy hosted an all-women conversation on Italian contemporary cinema with Italian Director Laura Bispuri and Italian actress Alba Rohrwacher, moderated by the President of the Italian Film Journalists Association, Laura Delli Colli. Bispuri and Rohrwacher arrived in the nation's capital straight from the Tribeca Film Festival to present "Figlia Mia" (Daughter of Mine) at Filmfest DC.

Italian films have always captivated American audiences. With 42 Academy Award wins and 14 Best Foreign Language Film victories, Italy has won the most Academy Awards out of all the non-English speaking countries. This is [Bispuri's](#) [2] first time in Washington, D.C., but she expressed the strong "calore" or warmth she feels when visiting America. This is due in part to the praise of her beautiful, first feature film [Sworn Virgin](#) [3], which in its development phase was selected by the Cannes Film Festival's "[Atelier de la Cinéfondation](#) [4]."



[Rohrwacher](#) [5] discussed another strong tie between American and Italian films born out of the [#MeToo movement](#) [6]. This global revolution gave a voice to women who experienced sexual harassment and inequity in the film industry, and has since grown to include women in all industries. Rohrwacher is one of the 13 founding members of Dissenso Comune, the logo for which she designed. Like #MeToo, Dissenso Comune has allowed women in the Italian film industry to “uniamo la nostra voce,” to unite their voice, and add it to the global chorus.

Dissenso Comune is not only raising awareness of harassment and abuse women experience, but it also aims to publish and present concrete examples. The group is for “tutte le donne,” lawyers, journalists, and all women who want to add their voice, not just women in the film industry. Dissenso Comune presented a paper to the President of the Italian Republic, asking for equal pay, to establish an ethics code, and among other things, education in primary school on gender parity and equality.

The movement also resonates with Bispuri, whose Sardinia-set film [Figlia Mia](#) [7] “is an exploration of motherhood that gains authenticity and emotion from a superb cast,” according to Variety magazine. Her female characters are “caged in by body, country, culture, and situation,” and must go on a journey “until they free themselves.”

Archaic, traditional landscapes and cultures serve as the backdrop, and according to Bispuri, are a “major ingredient,” to her exploration of contemporary issues that “really have always been there.” In Sworn Virgin, the transgender protagonist is set within and yet questions the ancient Albanian mountains and traditions. Figlia Mia “comes down to the same question.” It is the story of a young girl in Sardinia who comes to understand she has two mothers, one biological and one adopted mother. The ancient issue is who the child truly belongs to.

As a mother and a daughter, Bispuri told the story looking at both sides. For Rohrwacher, the role was a challenge executed beautifully. She felt her character in Sworn Virgin was a “journey to the moon,” as she had to transform into a man. However, there was a sensitivity in the character she could connect with. Figlia Mia was a challenge only in a different direction, as she had to become louder, more aggressive, and “really free herself.” In both films, Rohrwacher was tasked with displaying “traits that are hard to get right if you don’t experience them in real life.”

[Delli Colli](#) [8] noted comparisons between Anna Magnani’s portrayal of Italian mothers and Rohrwacher’s role in Figlia Mia. Although the mothers as characters are not similar, there is a certain “emotional investment and passion common to Italian mothers” that both Magnani and Rohrwacher bring forward in their roles.

At the end of the event, Rohrwacher was awarded an Italian Cultural Icon award for her work with Dissenso Comune.

Figlia Mia will screen on Tuesday, April 24 and Thursday, April 26 at the AMC Mazza Gallerie in Washington, D.C.

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[2] <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3053575/>

[3] <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3646344/>

[4] <http://www.cinefondation.com/en/menu/4>

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alba_Rohrwacher

[6] <https://metoomvmt.org/>

[7] <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt7765120/>

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