Magazzino Italian Art: the home of contemporary Italian art in the United States

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The journey of discovering Italy in the United States has taken us and will continue to take us just about everywhere, but it is clear that the American state where there are the most people, institutions and events representing our country is New York. But New York is not just Manhattan, nor is it just the five boroughs that take the name New York City.

Today we move an hour's drive north of Manhattan, where an extraordinary institution that tells and shows Postwar Italian art has sprung up. It is called Magazzino Italian Art and is directed by a talented young Italian, Vittorio Calabrese, who started out from Irpinia (in the Campania region) and now is the Director of one of the most important centers representing Italian art in the United States. We welcome him, grateful to be able to tell our readers through him about this magnificent institution.

Dr. Calabrese, please tell us how you have become Director of Magazzino Italian Art Foundation

I had the chance to meet Magazzino's Co-founders, Nancy Olnick and Giorgio Spanu through Italian artist Francesco Arena on occasion of the unveiling of his site-specific sculpture, which was part of the Olnick Spanu Art Program in Garrison in 2014. I have always been an admirer of their efforts in promoting Italian Art in the US and at that point I knew very little of their plans to open a warehouse to host their Arte Povera Collection in Cold Spring, NY.

Given my previous professional experience in the art world, my holding degrees in both Management of cultural institutions and in Art History, as well as my first-hand knowledge of Italian language and its culture, I was equipped to interpret the project they had in mind. Beginning with its initial conception in 2015, I have been working closely with them on building the foundation of what is now Magazzino Italian Art.

Since the building's inauguration and the museum's launch in 2017, I have been in the position of Director, developing our programming, coordinating our exhibitions, and leading a team of almost 20 talented individuals. With the imminent opening of our new Robert Olnick Pavilion in June, 2023, the scope and reach of our activity will continue to grow and expand and I am excited to face these next challenges ahead in my role as director.

I see on your website that "Magazzino Italian Art is a museum and research center dedicated to advancing scholarship and public appreciation of postwar and contemporary Italian art in the United States". How and when did the founders come up with this wonderful idea?

Nancy and Giorgio are long-time advocates and collectors of Postwar Italian art and design. They opened this space in 2017 designed by Spanish architect, Miguel Quismondo, converting the former factory building into a museum. The goal was to be able to share with the community the incredible works of their collection and to introduce Italian Postwar and Contemporary Art to a wider audience

in the US. Education has always been a key element of the project and the opening of the Research Center has been fundamental in fostering research and academic literature on Italian Art.

Getting to Cold Spring from Manhattan takes an hour's drive. Choosing a location that far was a bold move…

Nancy and Giorgio have been residents of Garrison NY, 5 min away from Magazzino, for over 30 years. The reason behind their choice to found Magazzino in Cold Spring was for them a way to give back to such a welcoming community. While at a bit of a distance from the city, the museum makes up part of a burgeoning and vibrant art scene and neighbors institutions such as Boscobel, Dia Beacon, Manitoga, the Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Art Omi and Storm King. Our grounds are somewhat of an oasis from the city and the flowering landscape with small pasture, acting as home to our herd of Sardinian donkeys, gives Magazzino a spacious and natural backdrop for a unique and personal visitor experience.

What are the exhibitions organized in the past that you think it is important to remember for our readers?

Our current exhibition *Gilardi: Tappeto-Natura* and last year's *Nivola: Sandscapes*, were both important efforts towards our commitment to creating a platform for under-researched artists that have been often overlooked by mainstream Art History. Both shows include examples of each artists' original techniques, being "sandcasting," in the case of Nivola, and intaglio upon color-saturated polyurethane, in the case of Gilardi and his "Tappeti-Natura," still on view through January 9th 2023 at Magazzino.

And what exhibitions are scheduled between now and the end of 2023?

This fall, we plan to open an exhibition in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute in New York and Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò at New York University, featuring works by Italian contemporary artist, Margherita Raso. This will be Raso's first solo show in the US and it will include three different bodies of work featuring fabrics and ceramics in response to the architecture, history and locality of the space at the Cultural Institute; as well as a free standing aluminum cast sculpture.

Magazzino Italian Art also organizes events…

Yes, we have a variety of events each year that range from film series to lecture series to concerts and book presentations. Our next event will be a Study Day that will investigate the work of Piero Gilardi, the artist featured in our current show: *Gilardi: Tappeto-Natura* thanks to the research of 4 international scholars. Our movie nights, concerts, and performances run all year round.

Please tell me about the Magazzino Italian Art Research Center

Our Research Center is located within our museum building and includes over 5,000 publications with 330 being rare books. 1000 of the publications focus on Arte Povera specifically. The Research Center is available to scholars seeking information and home to our annual Scholar-in-Residence program, a yearly scholarship dedicated to a recent PHD Graduate on Italian Art.

Surely some of our readers will be interested in donating to support your wonderful institution. How can they do so?

There are a variety of ways to support Magazzino and to join our growing community. We invite readers to donate on our website. Your generosity will fund Magazzino's exhibitions, research, publishing of catalogues and monographs, acquisitions to our Research Center, and public programs.

We also encourage you to sign up for our newsletter to stay up to date on upcoming events.

Your support allows us to fulfill our mission and our role as a community hub for Italian Art in the Hudson Valley.

How would you describe the relationship between Italy and the United States as seen through the filter of art? Is there anything that can be done to improve this relationship in this respect.

I will first say that the love that Americans have for Italy is extraordinary and is unequaled! As an Italian immigrant that moved here 12 years ago, I had always held much curiosity and admiration for Italian art and culture. Unfortunately some of the references people have are outdated, especially in the arts, and there are not enough institutions approaching Postwar and Contemporary Italian art even in a city like New York. Magazzino opens a unique window upon contemporary Italy through programs aimed to amplify marginalized voices within Italian culture that might allow the audience to reconsider their automatic conceptions and assumptions around Italy and Italian art. We explore this

rich and dynamic ecosystem through films, lectures, exhibitions, and concerts in person and digitally, such as with *Pensiero plurale* curated by Ilaria Conti.

We also foster programs and research focused on exploring the interconnection between Italy and the US that will highlight the constant cultural dialogue between the two nations over the years.