

LAMPOON

LAMPOONMAGAZINE.COM

Magazzino Italian Art traces the contemporary Italian identity

August 26, 2023

<https://www.lamphoonmagazine.com/article/2023/08/26/robert-olnick-pavilion-magazzino-italian-art-alberto-campo-baeza/>



Collaboration across borders – Magazzino Italian Art traces the contemporary Italian identity

Magazzino Italian Art – the museum's second building, the Robert Olnick Pavilion, designed by Spanish architects Alberto Campo Baeza and Miguel Quismondo, will open to the public on September 14, 2023

The new Robert Olnick Pavilion, Magazzino Italian Art by Alberto Campo Baeza

The Robert Olnick Pavilion will be the isotropic hall designed by Alberto Campo Baeza: a cube, perforated at each corner by square-shaped windows that generate an ever-changing flow of light and shadow and, like a sundial, capture the passage of time.

Built on a 4-hectare green space surrounding the museum, the new Magazzino Italian Art pavilion will be adjacent to but independent of the main one. The minimalist architecture of the new building highlights the industrial materials used, including concrete, creating an aesthetically neutral environment that complements post-World War II and contemporary Italian art and the design objects displayed within.

On the occasion of the opening of the Robert Olnick Pavilion to the public, Magazzino Italian Art will open two exhibitions on Mario Schifano and Carlo Scarpa and a special project dedicated to Ettore Spalletti.

Ufficio stampa: Ambra Nepi Comunicazione

Magazzino Italian Art – *Mario Schifano: the rise of the '60s*

Mario Schifano: the rise of the Sixties is the title of the exhibition organized in collaboration with the Mario Schifano Archive, curated by Alberto Salvadori. This is the first institutional exhibition in the U.S. to offer a comprehensive overview of Mario Schifano's activity during the decade 1960-1970. On display are 80 works, including a nucleus of 12 never before exhibited from Maurizio Calvesi's collection.

Carlo Scarpa: capolavori senza tempo at Magazzino Italian Art

The exhibition Carlo Scarpa: Timeless Masterpieces curated by Marino Barovier presents a selection of 56 Murano glass works from the Olnick Spanu Collection. Masterpieces through which it will be possible to admire the creative path of the famous architect in the years, from 1926 to 1947, in which he collaborated with the two most important Murano furnaces of the time: the M.V.M. Cappellin & C. and Venini.

Magazzino Italian Art – *Ettore Spalletti: parole di colore*

The project Ettore Spalletti: words of color, conceived by the Ettore Spalletti and Alberto Salvadori Foundation in collaboration with architect Alberto Campo Baeza, presents five large-scale works by the artist installed within the most striking space of the new building, the isotropic room, an architecture pervaded by light, where a golden balance is created between forms, volumes and color.

«The Robert Olnick Pavilion is dedicated to my father who passed on to me the value of philanthropy as well as giving back to one's community», says Nancy Olnick. «We built the Robert Olnick Pavilion like a poem: a white cube traversed by light, says Alberto Campo Baeza. The space embraces the beauty of the artworks displayed within, and the isotropic design, pierced by an opening in each corner, will allow every detail to be grazed by magnificent natural light. Excited as with the anticipation of a new birth, it is with great anticipation and hope that we deliver this second building to the museum».

New York Drive – Cristian Chironi in 2021

The effort of Magazzino Italian art caught *Lampoon's* attention since October 12, 2021, when it featured the performance of the Sardinian artist Cristian with his series, *New York Drive*.

Dubbed 'Chameleon' for its transformative powers, the car changes colors at every stop, respecting the architectural polychrome of Swiss-French modernist architect Le Corbusier to render each leg of his tour a unique, site-specific experience.

For his performance, the artist draws on the life and work of twentieth-century Sardinian sculptor, muralist, and graphic designer, Constantino Nivola. Using their shared hometown, Orani, as a starting point, Chironi reconstructs a tale of the past into a contemporary expedition of today. «*To learn, to find, to fall in love, to look outside at a different landscape, a different situation, to question yourself and interact with your surroundings in a new way,*» expresses Chironi, is the purpose of *New York Drive*.

Cristian Chironi – the story and intergenerational links

At the root of this project lies a conversation, passing the baton from Le Corbusier and Nivola to Chironi.

Taking a few steps back to 2010, Chironi may be found talking to Daniele Nivola, nephew of Constantino Nivola, in Orani. The two families are close, and this dialogue only serves to push Chironi further in the direction of Constantino and, as a result, also Le Corbusier.

In a bid to flee fascism, Nivola and his wife emigrated to the United States in 1939. Chancing to meet Le Corbusier in New York, the two artists strike up a strong friendship and mutualistic relationship, with the modernist architect becoming Nivola's mentor. When the former gifts his mentee a project for a house, Nivola brings it back home to Sardinia and his family, hoping for the sketches to be realized in his hometown. As Daniele recounts to Chironi, these architectural plans were instead locked away in a drawer, misunderstood by a community that was used to building its own homes without an architect, without a surveyor.

A collaboration with 'Fondation Le Corbusier' in Paris – Cristian Chironi

A story which remains vivid in the mind of Chironi, he uses it as his muse, contacting the 'Fondation Le Corbusier' in Paris and asking to collaborate on a project where he may actively explore this divide between artwork and beneficiary, between client and creator, by living in the houses of Le Corbusier across the globe. These houses would become for the Italian artist «*observation points on the world, windows from which you can see what happens in Berlin, Marseille, Paris, Chandigarh, La Plata, La Chaux-de-Fonds.*» The project, *My House is a Le Corbusier*, and what it represents, then transmutes into his series *Drive* in 2018.

«*A house is a machine for living in*», writes Le Corbusier in his manifesto, *Vers Une Architecture*. Chironi adopts this famous phrase and manipulates it. With 'machine' translating to 'car' in Italian, the contemporary artist drives through Bologna, Milan, Orani, Marseille, Bolzano, La Chaux-de-Fonds, and New York, using the car as a constantly shifting perspective through which to view the world.



ETTORE SPALLETTI, PHOTOGRAPHY MATTEO PIAZZA

Drive – between Daniele Nivola and Cristian Chironi

Drive also remains closely intertwined to a separate story told during that conversation between Daniele Nivola and Chironi in 2010. This time, it is the end of the 1970s, and Daniele has received a letter from his ailing uncle in the United States requesting him to go to Dicomano in Tuscany, where he has a studio space, retrieve his belongings, and return them to Orani.

Embarking from Golfo Aranci on the long, complex journey to Dicomano, Daniele eventually reaches his destination and picks up whatever he can find, including two Steinberg posters, some papers, a few of Constantino Nivola's sculptures, and a Maria Lai carpet that refuses to be cramped into the trunk of his uncle's small car. «*What car was it?*» Chironi asks, to which Daniele replies, «*a Fiat 127*».

The absurdity of such an arduous trip completed in this old car amuses Chironi. Still, only years later, when the Nivola Museum in Orani invites him to do an exhibition, he feels it is the right moment to take the 127 and put it back on the road.

Magazzino Italian Art – Nivola: Sandscapes', it is *New York Drive*

Organized within the scope of Magazzino Italian Art's exhibition, 'Nivola: Sandscapes', it is *New York Drive* which goes a step further in its relationship with Constantino Nivola, as the beach where the modernist first began experimenting with his sand-casting technique is integrated into the voyage made by Chironi. However, as the director of

Magazzino, Vittorio Calabrese, explains, it is Chironi who deepened the museum team's knowledge about Nivola.

«I got to learn more things about Nivola through Chironi, not the other way around. He introduced us to what Orani is for him, and I experienced it with different eyes than Nivola's nostalgia for his town. With our programming, especially when we invite young artists like Chironi, we can establish a healthy relationship with the masters of Italian art. There's a level of freedom for artists like Chironi, and others who we work with, to make art that goes beyond that framework».

The immediacy of Cristian Chironi's art and the value of accessibility

«Art has always been in dialogue with nature,» asserts Chironi. Evident in the architecture of Le Corbusier, a terrace like the one above Unité d'Habitation in Marseille allows its inhabitants to have access to an open space, take a stroll, exchange a kiss or a conversation beneath the sunset. This symbiosis garners a renewed meaning in our contemporary world, according to Chironi.

«Today, especially after the pandemic, having green spaces at hand is a privilege. You pay for nature. Le Corbusier says in his book that it's included in the rent. If you have nature in your building, the rent is more expensive, the house is more expensive, and it isn't right. It should be accessible to everyone, a fragment of nature where to feel at ease, present; walks in the countryside give us this sensation».

Art has the power to fill in some of those gaps left behind by societal injustice. With his *Drive*, Chironi establishes a point of contact between the human and the natural, which was lost for many during extensive lockdown periods. Although his series was ideated and ran from before the outset of Covid-19, Chironi believes in art's powers of sensitivity. *«At times, you feel as if the work you do foresees the future; it was like this for many artists. Art probably senses what is going to happen a bit in advance, and I believe that Drive maybe anticipated this need».*

Accessibility is central to Cristian Chironi's work – Magazzino Italian Art

Access to nature, to affordable housing, to art, to conversation. A generation born in a historical context of economic precarity, where many struggle to own homes, Chironi highlights this contemporary issue through *My House is a Le Corbusier*. A project built to *«overcome these economic difficulties and take back the liberty to live in the houses of the best, or rather the houses of Le Corbusier, the best modernist architect,»* Chironi defies the system, addressing it directly: *«Through art, I go beyond the limits you impose, I surpass you. I am a key that opens the door to also welcome others inside».*

The value of inviting people inside the artwork itself continues in *Drive*, where the audience become passengers of the Fiat 127, co-pilots to Chironi. Officially invited through an open call, publicized with posters hung across town, Magazzino Italian Art ensured that the whole of the community was encouraged to participate. Rendering art accessible to all is an ideal which the museum upholds, foregrounded through a series of biennial performances which aim to bring art beyond the bounds of Magazzino's gallery walls, beginning with Michelangelo Pistoletto's *Walking Sculpture* in 2017, Marinella Senatore, and *The School of Narrative Dance* in 2019, and Chironi's *New York Drive* in 2021. Calabrese emphasizes that «*when we decided to invite Chironi, we wanted to frame his performance and his body of work within the practice of other artists who develop work concerning social issues and community. Community comes first*».

New York Drive embraces duality. It is a give and take

Chironi lends a space of communal exchange to his passengers and curious onlookers through his performance. While the artist explains that *Drive* «*always had this tone even before Covid, of staying together, being close, in tune with each other, it's obvious that after the pandemic, it acquired even more value because we were distanced for so long*».

With tickets selling out in only twenty-four hours, it is clear to Calabrese how much people yearned for human interaction. Despite Covid, he shares, «*I had no issues getting people jumping on a car with a stranger,*» many even stopped Chironi on the streets declaring, «*I want to buy your car*», or asking him, «*Oh, so you're an artist?*». For the director, «*having conversations like that is the New York that we know. The city is fully back and stronger than ever*».

Christina Strassfield, Guild Hall's Museum Director

Guild Hall's Museum Director, Christina Strassfield, was an insightful guest for *Drive's* artist, enriching Chironi's journeying through her knowledge of the area. «*She used the 127 like a travel journal, immediately recognizing the geographical importance of our crossing*». For Magazzino, mapping a specific itinerary that foregrounds this layering of geography and history was a vital aspect of the organizational process that led up to *New York Drive*.

The Springs General Store, chosen as the starting point for Chironi's performances, exemplifies this. As recounted by Calabrese, «*it was the only store there was in Springs at the time, where Jackson Pollock and everyone else was hanging out, buying groceries,*» a location which is meaningful in the way it represents that community of artists who developed abstract expressionism.

Encounters and conversations that overlooked the arts altogether allowed Chironi to have some fun with Springs residents. He stresses that *«the passengers are great co-pilots, whether they come from the curatorial world, the creative world, architecture, design, fashion, journalism, writing or are 'everyday people' like you and me»*.

Magazzino Italian Art

Meaning “warehouse” in Italian, Magazzino was co-founded by Nancy Olnick and Giorgio Spanu, who were inspired to share their lifelong love and passion for Italian art with their community. The institution as it stands today is the result of an evolving identity: beginning as a private initiative, Magazzino developed over the course of just a few years to eventually take on its current status as a public museum and foundation. The 20,000 square-foot structure, designed by Spanish architect Miguel Quismondo, opened its doors in 2017, creating a new cultural hub and community resource within the Hudson Valley. The museum is a space in which visitors can engage with, observe, and contemplate the relationship between postwar and contemporary Italian art.

Editorial Team

The writer does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article.