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FOR AND ABOUT ITALIAN AMERICANS

primo

THE LADY CORNARO

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ITALIANS OF THE

Beginning April 2, the Gallery of International Naive Art, GINA, located in the heart of Manhattan's Upper West Side, at 454 Columbus Avenue, (www.ginagallerynyc.com) will feature the works of Italians in an exhibition titled "The Four Seasons: The Naives of Italy." PRIMO spoke with gallery director Ann Priftis about Italians of the Naive art genre.

The two paintings here are by Cesare Marchesini (left) and Cesare Novi (right). Please tell us about these two Italian artists.

Marchesini was born 1939 and raised in Monza, Italy. He lived for awhile in Venice and today resides in Tuscany. He began painting in his 20s and has continued living solely from the profits of his artwork for the last 50 years. He has had solo exhibits throughout Italy as well as in Switzerland and group exhibitions in Spain and Israel. Cesare Novi was born 1938 and raised in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy. He moved to Florence in 1965 where he practiced law. He retired in the 1990s and began painting first as a hobby, then, upon receiving rave reactions from friends and the art world, began painting as his main vocation...immediately becoming extremely popular. He's had group exhibits throughout Italy as well as in Spain, Switzerland and Israel.

How many Italian artists are featured in your exhibition?

Seven artists: Giovanni Gailli, Cesare Marchesini, Cesare Novi, Luciano Prandini, Alessandra Puppo, Guido Vedovoto, Francesco Maiolo.



NAIVE ART GENRE

How do Italian Naive artists compare with others in the world as to influence, style and quality?

Just like in all countries, the Naives of Italy are influenced by their landscapes and every day activities. GINA shows only the best of the Naive world from all 23 countries it represents. Italy is no exception. The paintings are of extremely high quality and are often mistaken for "un-naive" artworks. They paint with a variety of mediums on several surfaces including canvas and board. The fact that all these artists are making a good living off artwork they are currently creating is a very clear indication of its popularity. There is a museum of Naive art in Suzzara, Italy and there is talk of creating a new Naive art museum in Castelvetro.

What do you say to Italians who revere the great masters of detail Raphael and Botticelli, for instance, that Naive art is worthy of their consideration?

The Naive genre has gained popularity and interest and the respect of the fine art world. Henri Rousseau, Grandma Moses and Botero are but a few of the more recognizable Naive names. The genre has heartwarming characteristics that make it immediately accessible to the viewer. Complexity is no more worthy of consideration than simplicity when it comes to art. The easy-to-understand scene and the idealized view of the world which characterize Naive artworks are to be considered attributes rather than detriments. It is refreshing that the paintings can be understood and appreciated instantly and viscerally without much explanation or art education. The results speak for themselves.