

New York. The Art of the Neapolitan Crèche. Nativity in the World

(December 16, 2010)



At the Italian Cultural Institute the show "Nativity in the World/ from Naples to New York", the exhibit of Neapolitan crèches brought by Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe. "This art is life, Naples is a vital city, a cultural capital of the world throughout the centuries" - said Consul general Francescò Maria Talò at the opening

It began with a curious and surprised procession in front of the presepi. It ended with pizza and mozzarella, offered by the New York Neapolitan pizzeria [Kestè](#) [2]. Among those present, a special guest sang "O Sole Mio", the sound reverberating through the halls of the [Italian Cultural Institute](#) [3] on Park Avenue.

The public participated in this unique event, the opening of the exhibition on the Neapolitan presepe, entitled Nativity in the World, wanted by the Cardinal of Naples Crescenzo Sepe as a prologue to his episcopal New York visit in January.



Among the guests at the opening the Consul General of Italy, Francesco Maria Talò, the curator of the show, Dottoressa Filomena Maria Sardella, from [Direzione dei Beni culturali della Regione Campania](#). [4] Professor Anthony Tamburri, Dean of the [John D. Calandra Italian American Institute](#) [5] of CUNY, and the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, Archbishop Francis Assisi Chullikatt.

A message from Cardinal Sepe opened the event, in which he saluted the American public and announced the details of his visit. Consul Francesco Maria Talò introduced the event by saying, “In New York there are presepi everywhere”, as they are a symbol of a Neapolitan culture with deep roots in the American territory. These traditions came from the immigrants and were inserted in a local context. “This art is life – continued the Consul – Naples is a vital city, a cultural capital of the world throughout the centuries. This isn't just Christmas tree season”.

The vice-director of the Institute, Simonetta Magnani focused on the importance, especially in a festive period – to exhibit such a lively aspect of Italian culture. Filomena Sardella had the mission of explaining the intents and the details of the exhibition, as a way to stimulate inter-cultural dialogue and spread the artistic culture of Naples, a long journey through time from the origins of the presepe in the 11th century, to its noble evolution under King Charles Bourbon, to the popular version after the French revolution. It is an art that reflects the high and the low, nobility and popular culture, a “hobby for people in high places” as Goethe described it, but also a way to introduce everyday characters alongside the Holy Family.

Lastly, Prof. Anthony Tamburri underlined the importance of the round table with Cardinal Sepe, academics, experts and the vice-minister of Foreign Affairs Vincenzo Scotti, about the problems of human migrations that will take place in January.

Among the audience were two of the artisans of the works on view: Luciano Testa and Gino Baia of [AIAP](#) [6], the Italian Association Friends of Presepe, shy but intent on making their works a success. Afterwards, several visitors hung around and had the opportunity to learn more about the details of these works of art.

The thirty-eight works on view on the two floors of the Institute were well received by the public. Francesco Manes – whose tapestry is on view in the entrance of the Institute – and Giuseppe Reale, director of the [Museo ARCI](#) [7] curated the exhibit.

The centerpiece of the exhibit, for its historic and artistic value, was an object from the Reggia of Caserta, a cart pulled by a donkey. The exhibit will stay open until January 18, the day of Cardinal Sepe's visit that launches his pastoral visit to New York.

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