

## NAPOLI LIBERTY. “N’ARIA ‘E PRIMMAVERA”

Naples, Gallerie d’Italia – Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano

25 September 2020 - 24 January 2021

Exhibition curated by Luisa Martorelli and Fernando Mazzocca

- **An exhibition with over seventy works** testifying to the **extraordinary originality of Liberty style in Naples** in a myriad of forms - paintings, sculptures, exquisite gold jewellery and creations with precious stones, as well as graphic design and advertising posters.
- **Naples equals Paris, Berlin and London as a capital of modernity**, and it stood out for its embrace of the new style - Liberty, or Floral - in creations rooted in the major arts and applied arts, enjoying huge success in Italian and international exhibitions.
- The displayed **works fit perfectly against the backdrop of the Palace’s Great Hall with its spectacular interiors**, among the most original and magnificent examples of Liberty style in Naples.
- There is a **fascinating glimpse of Felice Casorati’s brief stay in Naples**, an artist involved in the early secessionist avant-garde movement, supporting the initiatives of young art students.

*Naples, 23 September 2020* - From **25 September 2020 to 24 January 2021**, the **Gallerie d’Italia – Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano** (the Intesa Sanpaolo museum complex in Naples) will stage the exhibition *Napoli Liberty. “N’aria ‘e primmavera”*, curated by **Luisa Martorelli** and **Fernando Mazzocca**, and set up by Lucia Anna Iovieno.

With more than **seventy works** - including paintings, sculptures, jewellery and various other items - the exhibition highlights the popularity of the modernist style and **original nature of art in Naples between 1889 and 1915**.

Different forms of expression, some unusual, others extraordinary, of a nature defined by architect and art critic Alfredo Melani as: “a new art, new style, modern style, Liberty style, Floral style, in so many ways this aesthetic movement is defined!”, a real breath of fresh air, truly “n’ aria ‘e primmavera”, spring is in the air, as it goes in the popular poem *Marzo* (1898) by Salvatore Di Giacomo.

Giovanni Bazoli, President Emeritus of Intesa Sanpaolo, said: “*Our exhibition celebrates the extraordinary elegance of Liberty style in Naples, reminding us of the unique quality of our national heritage, an invaluable resource of our country. There can be no reconstruction, no moral, social or economic upswing, without the beauty that only art and culture can bring. This initiative confirms the*

*strong link between the Bank and Naples: a link that was reinforced by the Gallerie d'Italia over the last thirteen years by contributing to the city's cultural activities.*

### **The exhibition**

The exhibition opens with a room dedicated to paintings inspired by **Felice Casorati's** stay in Naples which lead on to further rooms housing works by protagonists of the *Secessione dei 23* (Secession of the 23), a movement launched in 1909 by **Edgardo Curcio, Francesco Galante, Edoardo Pansini, Raffaele Uccella and Eugenio Viti**, along with sculptors **Costantino Barbella, Filippo Cifariello and Saverio Gatto**.

A large area is dedicated to **applied arts** which, during the Liberty period, integrated with major arts for a modern production slant in the new consumer era. The work *La fontana degli Aironi* (1887) will be on display, an exemplary creation by **Filippo Palizzi**, a forerunner in this artistic field who set the foundation for future generations to stage a definite relaunch in the crafted artworks sector.

In the **Museo Scuola Officina** (now Museo Artistico Industriale), at the beginning of the twentieth century, the maestros and pupils of the **Officina della Ceramica e Stipetteria workshops** busied themselves preparing items in keeping with crafted goods on display at the Universal Exhibitions and, in accordance with modern Liberty rules, adorned them with floral decoration and the "whiplash" lines that marked the new style.

Also, at the **Scuola d'arte di Sorrento**, the production of inlaid furniture was updated in a modern and original manner. The exhibition includes two works by **Almerico Gargiulo**, a maestro in marquetry who produced inlaid works with curved lines, in the style of Carlo Bugatti.

High quality items in **gold and precious stone** (coral, mother of pearl, and tortoise-shell) will also be on display, a genre in which Naples led Europe.

Visitors can admire jewellery by **Emanuele Centonze, Gaetano Jacoangeli, Vincenzo Miranda** and **Manifattura Ascione**, famous all over Europe for tiaras, brooches, and hair clasps in countless versions. The **School of coral carving of Torre del Greco** will also figure in the exhibition, noted for its refined, eclectic and modern creations with precious stones applied to practical items in great demand such as buttons, jewellery boxes and *pettenesse*.

This section houses the painting *Seduzioni* (1906), by **Vincenzo Migliaro**, the **exhibition poster image**, which features the store window of Jacoangeli jewellers where a female figure can be glimpsed, filled with intense emotion as she gazes on the object of her desire.

The exhibition ends with a section dedicated to **advertising images and posters**, a field in which Naples is one of the major players in Italy. Advertising billboard art became an easy tool for diffusion of ideas and propaganda selected by businesses emerging in those years such as, for example, the Grandi Magazzini Mele located in Palazzo della Borghesia, the Chiosco Miccio and Cirio factories.

Works by nationally and internationally renowned artists will be on show, including **Leonetto Cappiello, Marcello Dudovich, Vincenzo Migliaro, Pietro Scoppetta** and many more: advertising posters, the front pages of "Il Mattino" newspaper of Naples, cover pages created by Arti Grafiche Ricordi and *Editore Bideri*, famous printers of music periodicals dedicated to "Piedigrotta", a traditional event of Neapolitan music.

## The context

At the end of the nineteenth century, Europe was enjoying the season of Art Nouveau, and the process of growth launched by Italian and international exhibitions (along with the establishment of an entrepreneurial middle class) was radically transforming Italian cities.

The innovative new “Liberty” style, as it was known in Italy, infected Naples, a city undergoing reconstruction while attempting to move forward and leave behind the years of cholera epidemic. Special laws that financed urban expansion, the economic revival, and industrialisation redeemed the city’s image: it was the Belle Époque and a bloom of projects that made Naples a modern and cosmopolitan city from the end of the Great War.

To cite some examples: Posillipo, villa Pappone (1912) which most closely subscribed to the new style; in Chiaia, via del Parco Margherita is the floral road par excellence; in Vomero the villas Marotta (1912), Loreley (1912), De Cristoforo (1914) and Russo Ermolli building (1918), all deserve a mention. There were plenty of fashion shops but also pharmacies, bakers, and patisseries, spread out almost everywhere.

In 1898, Palazzo Zevallos Stigliano became home to Banca Commerciale Italiana and sponsored the electrification of the city. The restoration project in the 1820s, by Luigi Platania, transformed the courtyard into an up-to-date room covered by polychrome windows and Liberty-style decoration and galleries.

Naples underwent a modernisation process that promoted renewed dialogue between intellectuals, journalists, writers and politicians. The institution of “conference” was a novelty for the new middle class, busy disseminating the values of culture, science, and art in private clubs, theatres, cafés, libraries and publishing houses.

In the world of journalism, the names Edoardo Scarfoglio and Matilde Serao appeared in the editorial team of “Il Mattino”, which Carducci defined as the “best-written newspaper in Italy”; it was in these years that Benedetto Croce and Salvatore Di Giacomo launched “Napoli Nobilissima” (1892), a journal based on a forerunner that reflected on protecting monuments, with a philological precision for history and geographical topography.

Between the end of the eighteen-eighties and the early twentieth century, leisure and social life were lived out between the Galleria Umberto I and the Circolo Artistico, which some years after its founding (1888) would settle a few steps away from Caffè Gambrinus to provide a stage for countless poets, artists and musicians of the city.

Naples, like Paris, became a night hotspot complete with its *cafés-chantants*: many “sciantose” would appear at Salone Margherita - from Armand’ Ary (‘A frangesa) to the beautiful Lina Cavalieri; from Maria Campi, who invented ‘la mossa’ to cabaret singer Elvira Donnarumma. Neapolitan music became a worldwide phenomenon (*Funiculì Funiculà* was recorded in New York in 1899), the first permanent cinema in Italy was opened (“Sala Recanati”) and by 1906 the city already had 27 movie theatres. Like its music, cinema was a very important aspect of Neapolitan creative output. Film producers Roberto Troncone and Gustavo Lombardo put the first stars of silent films Francesca Bertini (*Assunta Spina*) and Leda Gys up on the big screen.

The exhibition catalogue, by Edizioni Gallerie d’Italia | Skira, includes essays by the curators and an article by Renato de Fusco, renowned author of the book *Il Floreale a Napoli*, published in 1956.



For press materials and images, click on the link: <https://bit.ly/2PAFgay>

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**KEY INFORMATION:**

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**Admission**

Combined ticket for exhibition and permanent collections: Full-price €5 | Reduced €3

Free admission for pass holders, schools, under 18s, and customers of the Intesa Sanpaolo Group

**Opening hours**

From Tuesday to Friday, 10.00 am to 7.00 pm (last admission at 6.30 pm).

Saturdays and Sundays, 10.00 am to 8.00 pm (last admission at 7.30pm). Closed on Mondays

**Contacts**

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