

Barga's Graphic Artist, Nazareno Giusti

Nazareno Giusti, born in Barga in 1989, graduate of Lucca's Istituto Artistico A. Passaglia, left behind a wealth of art, writings, and illustrations that his family has now decided to share, five years after his premature death. Many of his works will soon be on display at the Fondazione Ricci ETS in Barga and at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni of the Fondazione Banca del Monte di Lucca – some published in the past, others seen publicly for the first time, with illustrations and accompanying descriptive panels. These two exhibitions open a fascinating window onto aspects of Italian history.

At the Fondazione Ricci the presentation is articulated into nine sections, each dedicated to historical figures illustrated and written about by Giusti:

Matilde de Canossa, the Countess of the Middle Ages who dedicated herself to serving the Pope, is famous in the Val di Serchio for building churches and other works such as Ponte della Maddelena (Ponte del Diavolo). Giusti illustrated her story in graphic novel form in 2015, and this makes up the first part of the exhibition.

Ferdinand Cheval, a French mail carrier who lived from 1836 to 1924, fulfilled a lifelong desire by building his Palazzo dei Sogni in Hauterives, in the Drome region. The castle became known throughout the country, and Monsieur Cheval opened it up to public viewing.

Poet Giovanni Pascoli. As part of the *Tra le Righe Festival* (2012) at Palazzo Pancari in Barga, Giusti exhibited a series of watercolors dedicated to Pascoli, his public life, political commitments, love for the rural lifestyle, friendships, and connection to the Val di Serchio, where he came to live in 1895. In 2016 and 2017, for the magazine *L'Avvenire*, Giusti wrote about Pascoli's connections with the Scolopi and with Gabriele D'Annunzio.

Giacomo Puccini. In 2008, when Giusti was only 19, he brought together the disparate worlds of opera and comics, creating an illustrated booklet entitled *Giacomo Puccini, Scrutinando l'eternità*, which is of great relevance even today.

Painter and sculptor **Ligabue** was the subject of Giusti's 165 page graphic novel published by Hazard in 2014. Full-page illustrations show the artist Ligabue during his tormented life as an artist.



Cartoonist, novelist, and journalist **Giovanni Guareschi**, best known for his stories about Don Camillo (later made into popular films), was imprisoned during World War II at the Czestokowa camp in Poland. Giusti dedicated a two-volume illustrated publication to the diverse facets of Guareschi's life.

Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco, Italian activists and anarchists, were sent to the electric chair in 1927 in the USA after being accused of murdering an accountant and a shoe factory guard. Protests by intellectuals and by the Italian government were in vain. Giusti's treatment of them is an attempt to shine light onto their martyrdom and the injustice of the death penalty.

Guido Rossa was a Communist worker assassinated in January 1979 by the Red Brigade after having denounced one of their members. In 2010 Giusti wrote the graphic novel *Guida Rossa, un operaio contra le BR*.

Finally, Giusti's watercolors, made between 2013 and 2014, show **the faces of the Shoah**: righteous individuals such as Oskar Schindler and Giorgio Perlasco (Italy's Schindler), as well as Giovanni Palatucci, a police officer from Fiume who died in Dachau prison after years of trying to help the Jews while working within the system. Giusti's graphic novel *L'ultimo questore* (for which he was awarded the *Paladino delle Memorie* in 2015) was an attempt to negate the rumors discrediting Palatucci. Other faces from this tragic period drawn and painted by Giusti include Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, Art Spiegelmann, Edith Stein, Roman Polanski, and more, many never exhibited before.

Concurrently, at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Lucca (entrance in Via del Molinetto), is the collateral exhibition entitled **Il Sogno del Cinema Italiano**. In 2014 Giusti, with artists Keane and Pepper Pepper, participated in a show at the Blackbird Gallery in Chicago. His illustrations now on display in Lucca were freely inspired by Italian cinema: Fellini's *Il Casanova*, Bertolucci's *Novecento*, *Christ stopped at Eboli*, *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*,

This is a rare opportunity to see the prolific body of works by this young artist, who examined and illustrated the tragedies of recent and more remote history from a fresh perspective. Admission is free of charge.



Nazareno Giusti
Il Poeta dei Colori e delle Parole
11 May to 16 June 2024
Fondazione Ricci, Via Roma, Barga
www.fondazionericci.info
Hours: Tuesday 10am to 1pm,
Saturday/Sunday 11am to 1pm, 5pm to 7pm.

Il Sogno del Cinema Italiano
Palazzo delle Esposizioni, via del Molinetto, Lucca
12 May to 16 June 2024
Fondazione Banca del Monte di Lucca
www.fondazionebmlucca.it
Hours: Tuesday to Sunday 3pm to 7pm

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