

• SERENA BOCCHINO • KARA MARIA • NOLA PARDI PROLL

Rhapsody

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MUSEO
ITALO AMERICANO

NEWS
LETTER

JULY • SEPTEMBER 2022



Preserving Our Italian Heritage & Culture

MUSEO ITALO AMERICANO

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Artworks on cover: **Kara Maria**, *Say Uncle*, acrylic on wood, 2004

The list on this page includes donations received from **March 1, 2022 to May 31, 2022** and are exclusive of donations made to the Capital Campaign. Our sincere apologies if any names were inadvertently omitted.

Kristen and Skip Avansino, Marsha Boyette, Joyce & Ronald Castellino, Dolci Italia Foods, Costanza Foran, Grants for the Arts, Downey Manoukian, Maria Micale & Philip Farrocco, Susan Peterson, Patrick Powell, Cindy & Daniel Rosenheim, Lisa Bagnatori & Andy Ross, Karen Seratti, Susan & Tim von Herrmann.

In Memoriam – Kristen Avansino

The Museo was devastated to learn of the passing of Kristen Avansino, who was a trustee of the E.L. Wiegand Foundation alongside her husband Raymond “Skip” Avansino in Reno, NV. The E.L. Wiegand Foundation is the largest single sponsor to the Museo’s exhibits since 1997, and one of the largest cumulative donors to the Museo since the Museo was established in 1978.

This year, the E.L. Wiegand Foundation awarded the Museo a new generous grant to underwrite the Museo’s exhibit about the San Francisco Opera and the Italian American Legacy for the 100th anniversary of the San Francisco Opera, and it made a special additional grant in honor of the Museo’s longtime Managing Director Paola Bagnatori.

In addition to the E.L. Wiegand Foundation, Avansino was a longtime trustee of the San Francisco Ballet, and a professor, lecturer and choreographer in the dance program at the University of Nevada, Reno, where she also developed the dance department’s curriculum.

Following is a quote from Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve’s statement about Avansino:

“Kristen’s life was marked by her giving spirit and big heart, as she led the E.L. Wiegand Foundation with persistent passion. She was truly instrumental in our community and was constantly giving back to make our community a better place for all.”

The Museo is proud to have been a recipient of her generosity, kindness and vision that enabled it to mount some of its most important exhibits.

The Museo sends its heartfelt condolences to her husband Skip and daughters Marisa and Calgary. The Museo also plans to work with her family to honor her life in a more public way and will share those plans when they are finalized. In the meantime, following is a list of some of the Museo’s exhibits and projects that were funded and championed by the E.L. Wiegand Foundation:

2009	<i>In Cerca di Una Nuova Vita – From Italy to California</i> (this is the exhibit that has inspired the Museo’s plans for the permanent history exhibit in its future home)
2011	<i>Michele Cascella: Timeless Painter – Un pittore senza tempo</i>
2012	<i>Italian Americans at Bat</i>
2013	<i>UNESCO Italia</i>
2015	<i>Italian American Cinema from Capra to the Coppolas</i>
2015	<i>So Be It In Peace: Beniamino Bufano</i>
2019	<i>Neorealismo – The New Image in Italy, 1932-1960</i>
2020	Reprise of: <i>In Cerca di Una Nuova Vita</i> and <i>So Be It in Peace</i>
2023	<i>San Francisco Opera and the Italian American Legacy</i>

Current Exhibition: Rhapsody

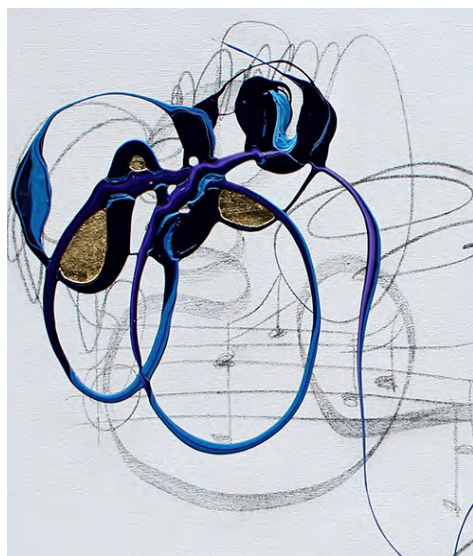
The Italian Heritage of Rhapsody's artists

The Museo is pleased to display works by remarkable Italian American artists Serena Bocchino, Kara Maria, and Nola Pardi Proll. Here are their statements regarding the influence of their Italian heritage on their art making.

SERENA BOCCHINO

I felt like I had come home when I first arrived in Rome, Italy in 1990 for my solo exhibition. The sights, sounds, and tastes of the romantic city seemed so familiar. I quickly came to realize that it was the atmosphere of the rich Italian heritage that I experienced growing up that formed this instant connection. My grandmother, Maria Confalone was from Rome. She was trained in Italy by her grandmother to be a seamstress. When Maria immigrated to New York, she continued her practice with a specialty, creating sewn lace and adornments for private clients, including embellishments for couture and elegant window dressings. My mother was a classically trained artist and maintained a home studio. An admirer of Italian renaissance paintings and sculptures, she would incorporate reproductions of them into her work. Early exposure to this work made an incredible impression on me; even at a young age, I studied the works my mother incorporated into her collages and tried recreating them.

Growing up with two generations of women artists and so much of the traditional Italian culture in the home, has richly impacted my studio practice. It has seeped into my bones and runs through my blood without anywhere to go except through my mind, heart, and hands, manifesting itself in my work.



Serena Bocchino, *Star Dance Lead* (from the TWIRL Series)- detail, Enamel paint with graphite and gold leaf on canvas



↑ **Nola Pardi Proll**, *L'aldilà (Hereafter)*, Marble & Slate, 2017

↓ **Nola Pardi Proll**, *Uccello nero (Black Bird)*, nero Belgio marble, 2007



KARA MARIA

I have been asked to consider the influence of my Italian American heritage on my artwork. My mother's grandparents immigrated to the United States from Italy (from Arzignano in the Veneto region; and from Ancona in the Marche region) in the early 20th century. I never met my great grandparents, but I did grow up with lots of interaction with my grandparents. My early ideas about what it meant to be Italian American came from them, and from my mother—and involved both large quantities of food, and attending Catholic Mass on Sundays. My grandparents both spoke Italian but did not pass the language down to their children.

I visited Italy for the first time in 1990, when I was 21 years old and traveling in Europe after participating in a study abroad program in Paris. I went to Rome to visit some of my grandfather's cousins. At the time, I was just developing an interest in visual art. The magnificent museums I visited during my time in Europe inspired me to take my first painting class upon my return to the US. Since then, I have visited Italy multiple times—often to view the Venice Biennale.

NOLA PARDI PROLL

Family history on my Mother's Orselli branch denotes several wood carvers. My great grandfather was a Master Carver. He carved the doors of the church in Vicopelago, Lucca. An Uncle, whom I met, made beautiful furniture and staircases. While sculpting in Pietrasanta I developed an interest and love of the Etruscan era. Fascinated by the photos in books and magazines, I copied several in marble. I also visited many Museums and tombs and ruins along the coast. In Florence, I purchased a tiny bronze Etruscan woman. I copied and enlarged it, in Rosa Portogallo marble. Recently had it reproduced in Bronze for this exhibition. My Grandfather was a seaman. I owe to him for my love of the sea, sails, rocks, and seashells. My wood carving started years ago. I made an African mask for a dance I was creating to AfroCuban music. Then carved several African type heads. I have always been drawn to heads, looking at a new piece of marble wondering what type of head should emerge. I am still working in marble, slower, smaller works, but I am so grateful for my Italian roots.

Museo Capital Campaign Moment: *Sunday Dinner*

The Museo was fortunate to secure the services of talented designer Jeremy Regenbogen for the overall concept and schematic design for the permanent history exhibit that will be a centerpiece of the Museo's future home at 940 Battery Street in San Francisco. In this article, we will examine *Sunday Dinner* which will be one of the most interactive and popular features of the future exhibit.

When visitors arrive on the Museo's second floor to begin their journey through the history exhibit, they will first encounter *Sunday Dinner*, a multimedia, touch-screen table with overhead projection (Regenbogen has designed and installed similar interactive table displays for his other projects, including the Presidio Visitor Center). As food is such a central part of the Italian experience, Regenbogen wanted to make that the starting point of the exhibit, and the table will consist of a series of "dinner plates" that have been pre-programmed with stories and themes that appear in other parts of the history exhibit.

With touchscreen technology, visitors will be able to "pass" plates around the table to other guests, as if they were passing around plates of food at an actual dinner table! And wouldn't you know we have an Italian American inventor to thank for making this touchscreen technology possible! For those of you who don't know, Dr. Federico Faggin invented touchscreen technology and he also designed the first commercial microprocessor. Modern computing today literally would not exist without his inventions. Dr. Faggin was featured in the Museo's past exhibit *In Cerca di Una Nuova Vita* in the section that focused on the Third Wave of Italian immigration to the U.S.

Okay, back to *Sunday Dinner*! The Museo will offer donors the opportunity to name the *Sunday Dinner* table in recognition for donations to the Museo's capital campaign as follows: up to 10 donors may add their names to sponsor the *Sunday Dinner* table with donations of \$100,000 each. This could be a wonderful way for an Italian American family or club to pool its funds to add the names of their family or club as sponsors of the *Sunday Dinner* table, and this naming would be evergreen. Gifts to the Museo's capital campaign are fully tax-deductible, and multi-year pledges that can be fulfilled by 2024 are also acceptable.

The Museo also has a staged, low-tech (really no-tech!) version of the *Sunday Dinner* table on display at 940 Battery Street, and would welcome the opportunity to give a tour to anyone interested in donating to the *Sunday Dinner* table.

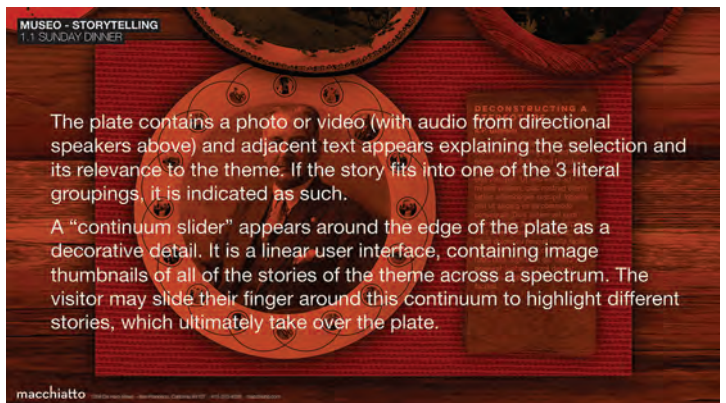
For more information, please contact **Mecca Billings**, mecca@sfmuseo.org or (415) 578-0224.

Following are more images and descriptions of the *Sunday Dinner* table:



As a visitor arrives at their "setting", they see a series of "dishes", each representing a thematic grouping of stories from our exhibit themes (dishes are replicated for easy access by all visitors). The visitor may drag a dish to their setting, which automatically populates their plate with a story from this theme.

macchiatto



The plate contains a photo or video (with audio from directional speakers above) and adjacent text appears explaining the selection and its relevance to the theme. If the story fits into one of the 3 literal groupings, it is indicated as such.

A "continuum slider" appears around the edge of the plate as a decorative detail. It is a linear user interface, containing image thumbnails of all of the stories of the theme across a spectrum. The visitor may slide their finger around this continuum to highlight different stories, which ultimately take over the plate.

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