

Sofia Macchi: a contemporary art lover

Per voce creativa

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Sofia Macchi, a woman from the art market

Per voce creativa is a series of interviews with women in the contemporary Italian art scene. Giovanna Lacedra meets Sofia Macchi, (Karlstad, Sweden1968).

For the first time in this column generally reserved to artists, I have the honour of hosting a gallery owner, or rather, a woman from the art market: Sofia Macchi, owner of Punto sull'Arte Art Gallery in Varese, who will tell us how her passion-profession was born and what it means today to manage and grow a contemporary art gallery in Italy.

Sofia, who has always been an art lover, immersed in this experience in 2011. She founded a gallery destined for success, strongly based on figuration and dedicated to the promotion of Italian artists, young or established, but always looking outside the borders, and thus including, among the gallery artists, also names of international renown. Punto sull'Arte Art Gallery has been growing, from an exhibition to another. Relations with Italian and foreign art collectors increase and strengthen. From one year to another the participation in national and international art fairs increases and the name of the gallery has become more and more well-known, so much that the gallery has enlarged its first headquarter – today it is on two floors with a large permanent selection of artists, as well as a well-organized schedule for exhibitions – and it has just opened a second headquarter in the historic center of the city.

Sofia is truly one of the most refined, elegant and bright gallery owners I have ever met. She is extremely welcoming when entering her gallery, but also extraordinarily accurate in taking care of every detail so that everything is at its best, from the set-up to the presentation. She is at the same time a visionary and a pragmatic woman. She dreams big but doesn't have her mind in the clouds. She stays grounded and acts, with determination and remarkable organizational skills, always having clear ideas and moving with great determination.

Sofia is a gallery owner who takes care of her artists, working with fervor and great professionalism. She was born in Sweden, but today she lives and works in Varese, and this is her creative voice for you.

Who is Sofia Macchi?

First of all, I'm a mother and a wife. I was born and raised in Sweden even though I've lived half of my life in Italy. Then I'm a contemporary art lover. I had the opportunity to follow this passion and to start, more than ten years ago, an activity that allows me to devote my time to this beautiful form of communication and creativity.

When you were a teenager, how did you imagine yourself as an adult?

As a girl I traveled a lot in different countries of the world. I've always wanted to see different places but without a specific idea of what I wanted to do.

How did you approach art?

I grew up surrounded by art thanks to the time I spent with my cousin and uncle who was a Swedish painter. I still remember the smell of colors in his studio and the time I spent watching him while painting. In my travels and in my spare time I have always visited museums, exhibitions, fairs... I have tried to follow my passion every time I could.

How did the project to have an art gallery come about?

In the beginning, it was supposed to be an activity more limited to the promotion of some artist friends. Gradually, however, when I start to get into the heart of this world, to expand knowledge, to come into contact with both national and international artists and galleries and to develop new relationships with customers and collectors, my original passion grew and I realized the importance of "having a project". When I opened the gallery 10 years ago I would have never expected that one day I would have been here where I am today: with two art galleries and, above all, with a strong network of artists, collectors and art galleries with which I collaborate.

Sofia, how do you choose an artist?

I am a very organized person and I have always believed in the importance of following a method. We have a structured research process that involves periodic discussions with my curator, with some galleries with which I collaborate and with my collaborators. A debate that is also enriched by a lot of research on the web, on specialized websites and social networks, as well as obviously my visits to many art galleries abroad and specialized art fairs. We then proceed with a selection and real planning. Of course, more "random" situations also happen, but they are certainly less frequent. In any case, what we seek in our artists is the quality from a technical point of view, the emotion and the message they convey. Finally, it's very important for me the personality of the artist and being able to feel in full harmony.

Who is the first artist you chose for Punto sull'Arte?

For the first exhibition held in my gallery, I chose three artists: Jernej Forbici, one of my first love at first sight, Johannes Nielsen, a Swedish sculptor who arrived in Varese thanks to the collaboration with a Gallery based in Stockholm, and Arcangelo Ciauro, an artist from Varese that I had followed and known for several years.

Can you tell us more about the first exhibition you made in your gallery?

The three artists mentioned above were the protagonists of the exhibition entitled *NaturAzioni*, the first in a long series of "trio solo show". This specific format distinguished us in the first two years. The exhibitions that took place in the gallery thus saw the participation of three artists, one international, one national and one local, always including a sculptor. A format that was appreciated by our audience because it allowed discovering not Italian artists close to our territory but also to meet and discover those from other countries. We also immediately approached our audience to sculpture, which today represents a very important part of our activity.

How does the concept of an exhibition originate?

As I mentioned before, we are very organized and we want to have the right time to make our exhibitions and to allow the artists to develop their project in the time they need. We have a schedule already set for the upcoming 18 months, with an exhibition every 6 weeks. At this moment as the art fair sector is stopped due to the health emergency situation, we have decided to increase the frequency of exhibitions and our digital activity in order to be able to stay in touch with our international collectors and with the galleries with which we collaborate. Now at the gallery, we present both solo exhibitions and double or trio solo shows. For 8 years now, during summer we have a recurring appointment which is a group exhibition with a selection of our artists together with other national and international renowned artists that are asked to make paintings in small sizes, 15x15 cm and 20x20 cm. It is an appointment that attracts great interest among our customers and there is always a lot of expectation.

Bernini or Canova?

Canova, although it is very difficult to choose between such two important sculptors.

The color of amazement?

Orange.

What does it mean to "believe" in an artist?

It means seeing its uniqueness and potential and, consequently, dedicating time and energy to plan and manage a precise promotion path.

The most annoying sentence you've ever heard from a visitor to your gallery?

I'm not used to remember the things that bother me as I don't think they're important. Art is beautiful because it has to create debate.

An unforgettable compliment that was given to you by a visitor to your gallery?

'When you enter this gallery it's like getting into another dimension and you don't want to go out anymore'.

Red or blue?

Red. It's the color that charges me and that's what we have chosen as the gallery logo. Blue is my favorite in clothing, in all its nuances.

A characteristic of an artist that immediately conquers you.

The impact, the amazement, the humility

A characteristic of an artist that you absolutely don't like.

Arrogance and lack of transparency.

Can you tell us about the most unforgettable exhibition you have held at Punto sull'Arte?

For me, all the exhibitions are unforgettable and unique.

That time an artist really moved you to tears.

To tears?... I'm still waiting!

If you were to choose a city in southern Italy where to open a new Punto sull'Arte Art Gallery, which one would it be and why?

Places like the Amalfi coast, or cities of art in Sicily like Syracuse. Both for their history and their charm and for the chance to meet and talk to visitors and tourists that always populate them.

The color of enthusiasm?

Yellow.

A painting that represents your personality.

I see myself in Marc Chagall's painting *The Promenade*. I am an optimistic and romantic dreamer and, for this reason, I often need a rational person who, with a firm hand, takes me back to the ground, as my husband does.

A sculpture that talks about your weaknesses.

The Thinker by Rodin.

A museum in which you would be gladly locked for one night.

The Hermitage and, possibly, not just for one night.

Sandro Botticelli or Piero Della Francesca?

Piero Della Francesca. His geometric precision and his absolute symmetries perfectly match with me.

The color of determination?

Red.

In which other country or city would you open a gallery?

Definitely in the United States.

If you could take a step back in time, which artist's studio would you like to visit?

Michelangelo's one, for watching him while making *La Pietà*.

An historic place – cathedral, castle, building, monument – where you would like to make an institutional exhibition with the artists of your gallery?

There are many of them, Italy is full of wonderful places!

A museum artwork you would dream to have in your private collection?

Elasticità by Umberto Boccioni.

The artists of Punto sull'Arte Art Gallery have a common denominator: they work on figuration. How did this choice come about?

Since the beginning we decided to represent figurative artists, focusing on quality, technical skills, sensitivity and innovation. Figurative art is the one that continues to excite me the most.

Your gallery is made of women: gallery owner, gallery assistant, graphic designer, press office, curator... all women. Does this happen by chance or is it a choice?

This is a choice.

What does it mean to have an art gallery in Italy today?

Courage, determination and true passion. Ours is a niche sector and there are really a lot of things that could be improved to support and improve it. Angame (the National Association for Modern and Contemporary Art Galleries), of which we have been a part since 2012, is doing a great job in this regard.

How is your relationship with your collectors?

We have different "types" of collectors. There are those who come often to the gallery and with whom, over the years, we have established beautiful relationships also in our personal life. There are collectors that we meet only at the art fairs and with whom it is always a pleasure to talk and to present the new artworks exhibited in our booth. And, finally, there are foreign collectors who buy exclusively online and with whom we do not physically interface and we keep in touch only by email, phone or video call. In any case, we believe that at the base of the Gallerist-Collector relationship there must be trust, transparency, exchange of ideas and listening.

Give us the identikit of the ideal art collector.

Of course, Punto sull'Arte collector.

Now instead make us the identikit of a collector you would avoid.

There are no collectors to avoid, they just need to be understood.

Joys and sorrows of being a gallery owner.

The greatest joy is to be able to work every day surrounded by wonderful artworks. Sorrows arise when you realize that you have not invested at the right time or from the lack of expectations given by interpersonal relationships.

The world of contemporary art in three adjectives.

Vast, exciting, complex.

The contemporary art market in three adjectives.

Stimulating, Competitive, Ambiguous.

Three characteristics that an artist should have to achieve success.

Talent, uniqueness, conviction.

Three characteristics that may represent a limit for him/her.

Arrogance, urge to become "famous", presumption.

Beauty, according to Sofia Macchi.

I am lucky enough to live in a country and in a city that I love. Beauty in my opinion is waking up every morning appreciating what surrounds us and always smiling.

Work in progress and projects for the future.

We have just opened a second gallery in the historic center of Varese and we have a busy calendar of exhibitions scheduled for 2021. At the same time, we are further intensifying our digital activity and collaborating with several galleries abroad. We are looking forward to coming back soon to the Art Fairs both as exhibitors and as visitors.

Your motto in a quote you really like.

A Swedish proverb that says "*Bättre ett ärligt nej än ett falskt ja* Better an honest no, than a false yes." Respect and honesty are really important to me.

Thank you so much, Sofia!

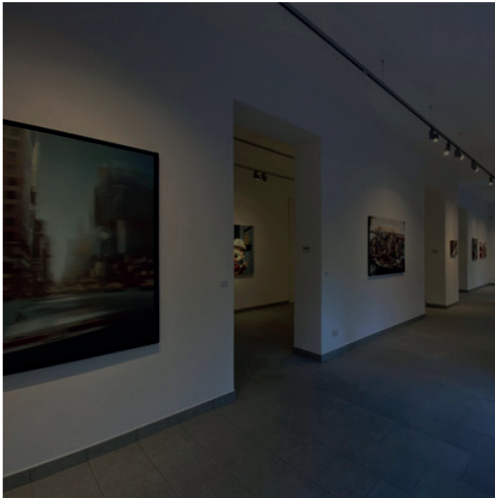
Thanks to you for your beautiful questions.



Giovanna Lacedra

Born in 1977 in Venosa (Potenza, Italy). In 2000 she earned a BA degree in Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence. In 2004 she got the teaching certification at the University of Pisa. Then she moved to Milan, where for many years she lives and works as visual artist, performer and author. She also teaches Drawing and Art History in a public scientific high school. She currently lives and works in Ravenna.

[Author profile](#)



1. Punto sull'Arte, American Illusions, 2021

2. Vernissage Lollipop, 2019

3. Punto sull'Arte, American Illusions, 2021

4. Sofia Macchi with Michele De Lucchi

5. Punto sull'Arte, American Illusions, 2021

6. Vernissage Lollipop, 2019