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ART AND SICILIAN WINE AT VILLA NECCHI IN MILAN

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Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Caravaggio and Rubens chose to include wine in some of their most important works of art. Today, a few very talented illustrators thrill wine lovers with sophisticated wine labels. One of the most famous is Stefano Vitale, an Italian artist who illustrates the magnificent labels of Donnafugata, a world-renowned Sicilian winery. The exhibition *Chasing Donnafugata (Inseguendo Donnafugata)* explores the history and the wine labels of Donnafugata. The celebration of art and Sicilian Wine at Villa Necchi in Milan is one of this summer's cultural highlights in the city of fashion and design.



Villa Necchi Campiglio is surrounded by a large garden with a swimming pool and a tennis court. The Necchi Campiglio family (Angelo Necchi, his wife Gigina Necchi Campiglio and his sister Nedda Necchi) belonged to the Lombard industrial bourgeoisie and led a prosperous life.



Their home is the result of a harmonious melange of architecture and decorative arts. Built between 1932 and 1935 by Milanese architect Piero Portaluppi, and subsequently renovated by fellow architect Tommaso Buzzi, the house marked the entry of Rationalism into modern architecture.



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In the last two decades, Stefano Vitale has created the illustrations for 20 labels of Donnafugata wines, one for oil and others dedicated to the Donnafugata Music & Wine project and CDs. As a young student, he moved to Los Angeles and graduated in economics and social studies. But art was his passion. Therefore, he enrolled at the Art College of Design in Pasadena and travelled extensively throughout Mexico and Central America. Those trips and the local folk art strongly influenced his work. “I have always trusted folk art more than the official art,” says Vitale. “Folk art is sincere, like the art of a child.”



When Stefano Vitale moved to New York, his career as an illustrator took off. He worked in publishing and advertising. 15 years later, he returned to Italy and settled in Venice. He fished floating pieces of wood in the lagoon and gave them new life, using them as boards on which to paint.



In 1994, Vitale encountered Gabriella Anca Rallo, who together with her husband Giacomo had founded the Donnafugata winery in Sicily in 1983. That was the beginning of a professional collaboration and a deep friendship (see below).



“Gabriella was a guest of one of my neighbours,” recalls Vitale. “She entered my studio, saw my illustrations and asked me if I would create a label for her.”



“She asked me to carry the colours of Sicily in the communication of the wine; strong, bright colours. Making them was easy. The colours of Sicily are my colours.”



(Above) The latest work created by Stefano Vitale for Donnafugata represents the *Giardino Pantesco* (Pantelleria Garden) donated to FAI, symbol of the collaboration between the Sicilian winery and the Foundation, that has led to the exhibition *Chasing Donnafugata*.



Don't miss the exhibition *Chasing Donnafugata: Illustrations by Stefano Vitale, wine and Sicily* at Villa Necchi Campiglio in Milan (16 May to 22 July 2018).



I visited the exhibition and was overwhelmed, not only by the Villa Necchi but also by the fascinating history of the Rallo family and Donnafugata.



Villa Necchi Campiglio is located in the centre of Milan near the metro stations Montenapoleone and Palestro. Address: Via Mozart 14. Admission: 12 euros.



The exhibition is included in the guided tour of the Villa. Opening hours: from Wednesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.



(Above) Gabriella Anca Rallo, Stefano Vitale, José Rallo and Antonio Rallo at the inauguration of the Donnafugata exhibition.



(Above) Italian ballet dancer and actress Carla Fracci (right) attended the Donnafugata inauguration. José Rallo's daughter, a ballet lover, had the honour to guide her through the exhibition.



If you travel to Sicily, don't miss the opportunity to [visit the cellars](#) of Donnafugata. About 10'000 visitors a year are welcomed at the Marsala cellar and on the island of Pantelleria.



You can also order Donnafugata wines in many restaurants and wine shops worldwide (click on our [store locator link](#)).

Visit the official website of [Donnafugata](#), [Stefano Vitale](#) and [Villa Necchi](#)

VIDEO: THE RALLO FAMILY PRESENTS THE CHASING DONNAFUGATA EXHIBITION

VIDEO: THE DONNAFUGATA EXHIBITION AT VILLA NECCHI

VIDEO: MEET THE RALLO FAMILY IN SICILY