

In Italy, Frescobaldi's 700-year history of art patronage gets a modern twist

Museums throughout Italy recently celebrated the annual *Giornata del Contemporaneo* (Day of Contemporary Art). And while people might not immediately equate Italy with modern or contemporary art, there's always been a push for what's new and modern. Think on the Italian futurists, or the more recent *arte povera* movement. Even Christie's and Sotheby's dedicate entire annual sales each year to Italian modern and contemporary art.

Marchesi de'Frescobaldi, Tuscany's most prestigious wine producer, owned and run by the Frescobaldi family for the past 700 years, wants to support Italian contemporary art. So, they've partnered with the Association of Italian Museums of Contemporary Art (AMACI) to launch a new international art prize and initiative called *Artisti per Frescobaldi* (Artists for Frescobaldi). The goal: promote both contemporary art, and more specifically Italian contemporary art, throughout the world.

Tiziana Frescobaldi, the company's artistic director conceived *Artisti Per Frescobaldi* as a way to both support contemporary Italian established and emerging artists and contemporary art museums and to continue her family's long-standing tradition of art and wine. That tradition dates back to the Italian Renaissance when the Frescobaldi's supported artists such as Filippo Brunelleschi and Donatello, who we may now deem as old masters, but were considered the "cutting-edge" artists of their time.

Frescobaldi explained that, "In order to bring our ancient tradition of patronage into the present, we selected a few young contemporary artists who we believe are especially interesting talents. We believe that the themes and languages of contemporary art open up new perspectives, creating dialogue with the world stage. For an international winery this is an important aspect."

Frescobaldi worked with curator Ludovico Pratesi to develop the competition. They put together a jury of leading museum professionals that included Franziska Nori, director for the Contemporary Culture Strozzi (Palazzo Strozzi Foundation, Florence), Marina Pugliese, director of Milan's Museo del Novocento and Angela Tecce, director of Castel Sant'Elmo in Naples. The trio worked under the direction of honorary jury president Antonio Paolucci, director of the Vatican Museums.

Frescobaldi and Pratesi selected Italy as the country for the first edition of *Artisti per Frescobaldi*, though a different country will be announced each year. Three artists will be selected each year as finalists commissioned for a project and work toward the annual prize, a grant of \$21,000. Frescobaldi maintains, however, that, ““an Italian artist will always be among the finalists, no matter the chosen country.””

The jury chose three Italian artists who were brought to Frescobaldi's CastelGiocando estate in the autumn of 2012. Though, they own and operate nine distinct estates throughout Italy, they plan to focus the contest on one per year. CastelGiocando is where they make their renowned Brunello di Montalcino wine.

The three selected artists included Elisa Singhicelli, Rä di Martino and Giovanni Ozzola. They were all given the same commission parameters in working toward the grand prize: create a single work using new media formats, including digital photography, video and multimedia installations that would visually represent the relationship between the company.

Sighicelli, a mid-career artist represented by the Gagosian Gallery, created the work that subsequently won the grand prize. She cleverly went inside a large wine fermentation barrel and shot a photograph of the view upwards to create *Untitled*, 2012. The object's lines and colors have been created through use over time, resulting in an abstract composition comprised of a shape unrecognizable without prior knowledge, and lacking spatial reference points.

Da Martino turned the beautiful Castelgiocondo landscape, which she described as, “almost too picture postcard perfect,” into a place of intrigue with the inclusion in her photo of unidentified flying objects hovering in the Tuscan sky. The work alludes to *Madonna with Child and Saint John*, a painting by an unknown artist found at Palazzo Vecchio in Florence and also often jokingly referred to as Madonna of the Flying Saucer

In his work, Ozzola superimposes the map of the night sky above Castelgiocando with a map showing how the estate's borders have changed over time. In doing so, he uncovered the unreal dimension of a territory that has been mapped, but not compromised and created an image very much about place, detached from the reality of daily events.

In January of this year, the three artists' works were shown at an exhibition at Fondazione Stelline in Milian, where Singhicelli was also awarded a grant of \$21,000. The same night Frescobaldi made a gift to the AMACI to promote the growth and sustenance of contemporary art museums in Italy. The initiative didn't end there, though. Each work served as inspiration for a limited edition magnum bottles of Frescobaldi's 2008 Brunello di Montalcino that were presented in March at Vinitaly in Verona, Italy, the world's largest and most prestigious Italian wine tradeshow.

The Frescobaldi family views their artistic patronage as yielding immeasurable positive returns. By supporting artists, they open a well of creativity from which to draw inspiration and interpretations related to the sense of place that defines the beauty and craft of Italian winemaking, an entirely territorial endeavor. Pratesi said, “The soul of the place must be discovered in the same way as the soul of a person.”

For more information, please visit: http://www.artistiperfrescobaldi.it/Artisti-per-Frescobaldi/artisti_frescobaldi/ENG/

Jenifer's Notes (For me, not included in pitch letter)

- Artists visited the estate in autumn, 2012 to garner inspiration for their submissions
- Exhibit at Fondazione Stelline in Milan was held January 22nd to February 3, 2013
- At a gala on January 29th, the winner was announced and given a \$21,000 grant given by Frescobaldi
- A check was also given to AMACI, the association of contemporary art museums in Italy
- AMACI unites 27 of the most important museums of contemporary art
- Also contributed to BASE in Florence, an artist collective
- Commissioned, 'Art in a time of crisis: the importance of investing in a sector crucial to the country's rebirth'
- Elisa Sighicelli, *Senza Titolo (Una Botte di Ferro)/ Untitled (an iron barrel)*, 2012, 102 x 102 x 4 cm, framed photograph
- Rä di Martino, *Landscape with flying objects* (Castelgiocondo), 2012, 80x144 cm Archival pigment print on cotton paper
- One of the paintings that inspired di Martino is in Florence in Palazzo Vecchio: *Madonna with Child and Saint John*, aka *Madonna of the Flying Saucer*
- Giovanni Ozzola, *Historia, al-khimiyah , En to Pan, 1100-2012*, 2012, 125x161 cm
- Photos are available of artists/works at Stelline Foundation exhibit
- Tiziana Frescobaldi and Ludovico Pratesi are also art critics/culture writers
- Three magnums of CastelGiocondo Brunello di Montalcino 2008 were presented at Vinitaly in March
- Limited edition with labels – 500 of each
- Starting price 200 euro/ \$270 USD
- Marchesi de' Frescobaldi was founded in the 14th century as wine supplier to royal courts of Europe
- Comprised of nine distinct estates totaling approximately 1,100 hectares, Marchesi de' Frescobaldi produces wines utilizing only the grapes grown in its own vineyards
- Continually upgrades and modernizes its grape growing and winemaking operations, maintaining a relentless focus on producing unique wines that express the individuality of each unique *terroir* from which they are produced
- Marchesi de' Frescobaldi wines are represented in the U.S. by Folio Fine Wine Partners, owned by Michael Mondavi family