

FELICE CARENA

Gallerie d'Italia – Milan, Intesa Sanpaolo Museum

17 May to 29 September 2024

Exhibition curated by Luca Massimo Barbero, Virginia Baradel, Luigi Cavallo and Elena Pontiggia

IMAGES AND MATERIALS AT THE FOLLOWING LINK: [FELICE CARENA](#)

Milan, 16 May 2024 - **From 17 May to 29 September 2024**, Intesa Sanpaolo will be hosting the **Felice Carena** exhibition, dedicated to one of the most important yet least known artists of the historic 20th century, at the Gallerie d'Italia museum in Milan. The exhibition is curated by **Luca Massimo Barbero, Virginia Baradel, Luigi Cavallo** and **Elena Pontiggia**.

Marking the 145th anniversary of his birth, the exhibition aims to reconstruct the artistic career of the great painter who, born in Turin but Florentine and Venetian by adoption, was regarded as one of the foremost European masters of 20th century up until the 1940s, noted for his prolific output inspired by his pictorial, luminist and poetic research. **Over one hundred works** will be on display, including some of the artist's masterpieces, now conserved in public and private collections in the cities where the painter lived and worked (Turin, Rome, Florence and finally Venice), as well as a number of important and eye-catching works that have never been seen before.

The exhibition illustrates Carena's career and achievements throughout the first half of the 20th century, his continuous experimentation, ranging from symbolism to expressionism, always seeking to create a dialogue with the classical and Renaissance tradition.

As a young man, he was interested not only in Nordic luminism but also in the pre-Raphaelites and symbolism. On display will be his highly sculptural works of the 1910s, his much more abstract and volumetric compositions from the 1920s - such as *The Apostles* and *The Pergola* - through to the 1933 work *Summer (The Hammock)*, regarded as one of his greatest masterpieces, and his religious paintings of the Italian post-war period.

Giovanni Bazoli, Chairman Emeritus of Intesa Sanpaolo, comments: “*The anthological exhibition on Felice Carena that opens today in the spaces of the Intesa Sanpaolo museum in Piazza Scala restores one of the most important painters of 20th century Italy to the limelight. The exhibition retraces the various stages of his aesthetic, existential and spiritual journey, celebrating the life and works of the great Torinese artist with the aim of sealing his rightful place in the history books. Following the retrospective on Giambattista Moroni, Gallerie d'Italia continues its original*

programme of exhibitions which invite the public to rediscover the most important figures and periods of Italian and European art.”

Felice Carena continued to maintain his unique sense of individuality compared to other Italian artists of the time. This can be seen in his great “late” masterpieces, dramatic and splendid in equal measure, and his high-impact religious works, like the Deposition of 1939, from the Vatican Museums, which shaped the path of modern Christian art.

In the post-war period he chose to isolate himself in the city of Venice where he formed a deep and intimate relationship with some of his patrons such as Gilberto Errera and Vittorio Cini. After leaving the Florence Academy of Fine Arts in 1945, Carena focused on still lifes and religious themes, as can be seen in the important series of drawings from the Giorgio Cini Foundation, and the extraordinary and dramatic Adam and Eve in earthy, expressionist tones, both of which are exhibited at the Intesa Sanpaolo Gallerie d'Italia in Milan specially for this occasion.

The artist made his name as a very young man, enjoying lots of success and positive reviews and taking part in major Italian art exhibitions and many Venice Biennale shows. The exhibition at the Gallerie d'Italia in Milan follows on from the last comprehensive anthology dedicated to the artist in Venice in 2010.

Through six sections, each dedicated to a specific period of the artist's life - Between Turin and Rome; The Roman Period; Between Rome and Florence; Theatre; Portraits and Still Life; Religious Paintings and Drawings - the exhibition highlights the common denominator of all Carena's works: the spasmodic search for light within objects. A light that does not caress bodies but emanates from within them, becoming “form” itself.

This exhibition is part of Intesa Sanpaolo's special project to rediscover significant artists that deserve wider appreciation in the panorama of Italian art history.

The exhibition catalogue is produced by **Edizioni Gallerie d'Italia | Skira** with texts by the curators and an analytical biography by Lorella Giudici.

The exhibition site in Milan, together with those in Turin, Naples and Vicenza, forms part of Intesa Sanpaolo's Gallerie d'Italia museum project, led by Michele Coppola, Executive Director of Art, Culture & Heritage.

FELICE CARENA. BIOGRAPHY

Felice Carena (Turin, 1879 - Venice, 1966) trained at the Albertina Academy of Turin as a pupil of Giacomo Grosso. Initially interested in secession and symbolist works, after travelling to Paris during his years at the Academy he became fascinated by the works of Courbet. After winning the Pensionato Artistico Nazionale prize in 1906 with the painting *La Rivolta*, he moved to Rome and in 1910 was given his own room at the Amatori e Cultori exhibition. In 1912 he exhibited at the Venice Biennale, while in 1913 he was part of the organizing committee of the 1st Roman Secession and was attracted by the paintings of Cézanne and Matisse. Meanwhile, his creative and expressive qualities were widely appreciated by critics.

After fighting in the First World War, where he was appointed as an artillery officer, he moved to Anticoli Corrado, a fervid artistic environment that would influence his thematic and formal choices. Between 1922 and 1924 he held an art school together with sculptor Attilio Selva at the Orti Sallustiani. Its classes were attended by Emanuele Cavalli, Giuseppe Capogrossi and Fausto Pirandello, among others.

In 1924 he was appointed to teach at the Florence Academy of Fine Arts. Carena never deviated from his solid figurative approach, evolved from symbolist models and his esteem for Cézanne and Gauguin. As such, he never sought to reverse his stylistic development, continuing on his path by adding weight and a wealth of classical references to his compositions which would gradually also display an expressionist component with a strong spiritual and religious dimension.

From 1924 to 1944 Carena remained in Florence as chairman of the Academy, a period of great international prestige for the institution. After the War, the changing political and social scene took him to Venice where, in the intimate confines of his studio and in his revisitation of the great 16th-17th century classical models, he fulfilled his ambition of bringing out the light in matter. Felice Carena died in Venice in 1966.

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Intesa Sanpaolo

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