

Antonio Pacitti: Exhibitions Commemorating Monte Cassino

'Going up the hill from our house in Cassino, I am sitting on the grass. Perhaps my mother left me while she was picking some herbs



Then I am watching a procession and being held higher than the crowd. I think it was the feast of the Assumption in which the Virgin was carried, and my older brother was one of the bearers. The column that he held was a sort of chocolate brown, and the Virgin's robe was pale.'

These are the words of the artist Antonio Pacitti describing his earliest memories of his birthplace, Cassino, a town dominated by its famous Abbey high on the mountain. But when Antonio was almost four, his father had a dispute with the local fascists and was given twenty-four hours to leave.



Antonio and his older brother fled with the parents to Glasgow, leaving two of his siblings behind in the care of an aunt. He never returned to the town of his luminous childhood memories, because it was destroyed by Allied bombing in 1944.

Now, more than four years after Antonio Pacitti's death, his art and the dramatic story of his family will feature in two Glasgow exhibitions, which will be part of a commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the battle of Monte Cassino.

Antonio Pacitti grew up to be a prolific artist who studied at the Glasgow School of Art and the Slade. His solo exhibitions included **Paintings, Drawings and Ceramics** at the Accademia Italiana, and in 1999 he received the award for Graphics and Watercolours at the Malta Biennale. One of his drawings is in the British Museum Collection. Throughout his life Antonio loved working in the medium of clay. His ceramics have been auctioned at Bonham's and Christie's, and his sculptures include a Mother and Child at the Church of St. Thomas More, Patcham, and a Woman dancing a Prayer at All Saints, West Dulwich.



Although Antonio Pacitti spent most of his early years in the cold northern light of Glasgow, there is a distinctively Italian quality about his art. It is present in his life and portrait drawings, with their fluidity of line and sensuousness of expression, in the rich colour of his painting from nature, and in the rhythms of his sculpture.

As a man, he was also very Italian in his passion for life, his exuberant improvisation on the violin and

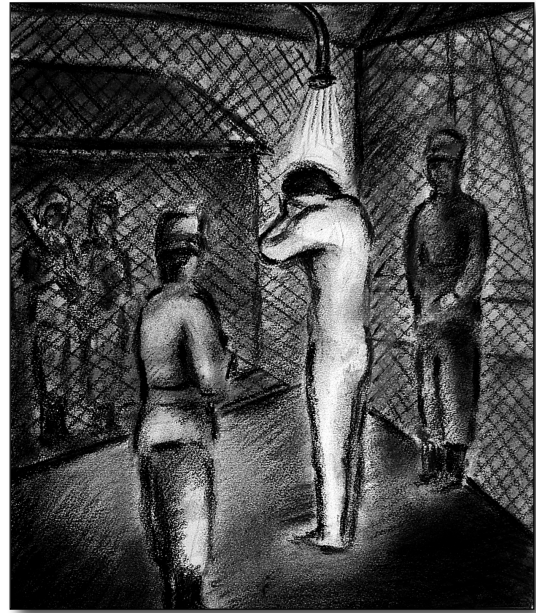
mandolin, his inspired cooking and his love of a celebratory meal with family and friends. Unsurprisingly, given his own childhood experience of flight and exile, these qualities were accompanied with a concern for social justice, which was expressed both in his teaching career and in his art.



In an Occupied Land will open at the Memorial Chapel, Glasgow University on 12 February, a date close to the anniversary of the destruction of the Abbey of Monte Cassino on 15 February 1944. The exhibition will present images of the loss, violence, displacement and imprisonment that is the experience of all occupied peoples, an experience which unites the victims of contemporary conflicts with the Jews under Roman occupation in the first century and the Italians in 1944. It will display monotypes and ceramics, works inspired by Biblical themes including a striking Resurrection oil



painting, and some drawings from the acclaimed **Guantanamo** sequence, which was praised by Harold Pinter.



Antonio Pacitti: the Story of a Scottish-Italian Family will open at the same date at Hillhead Library, within easy walking distance of the University exhibition. Using old photographs and documents such as an extract from a 1913 issue of the Falkirk Herald, the exhibition will present a dramatic story which moves between Italy and Scotland. We meet the grandfather tried for a crime



of passion in a sensational law case, the aunt who took the founder of the Forte empire to court, and the sister who sang for the Allied troops during the war. During the sequence, we watch Antonio grow from an under-nourished child clothed by his Glasgow parish to a soldier and art student.

As Antonio's wife, I know how committed he would have been to these exhibitions in his beloved Glasgow, especially as he was always deeply angered by the bombing of his birthplace. He would also have been very excited to know that I am working with the art critic Andrew Gibbon Williams and the commune to mount an exhibition in Barga, the most Scottish town in Italy.

In an Occupied Land Memorial Chapel, Glasgow University 12 Feb. – 28 March 2014

Antonio Pacitti: The Story of a Scottish-Italian Family Hillhead Library, Byres Rd. Glasgow 12 Feb – 28 March 2014

And, the global Charter for Compassionate Education (founded 2008) has a Voices Project in which Antonio's life and work features in a distinguished collection of writers and artists who have enhanced our understanding of war.

For more information about Antonio Pacitti's art, email dianepacitti@btinternet.com

Diane Pacitti

Captions

- 1) Antonio Pacitti's mother, Filomena *oil*
- 2) Antonio Pacitti in his studio
- 3) Vincenzo Pacitti, Antonio's father (left of group) in Cassino, c. 1925
- 4) Christ's body is laid in the tomb *watercolour and ink*
- 5) Guantanamo *conte*
- 6) Antonio Pacitti with his clay sculpture of Lazarus.
- 7) Antonio Pacitti's grandfather in Scotland c.1900

Opening February 2014
as part of a commemoration of the battle of Monte Cassino

Antonio Pacitti

In an occupied land
an exhibition of
paintings, drawings and ceramics
12 February - 28 March 2014
in the Memorial Chapel, Glasgow University

**The story of
a Scottish-Italian family**
a photographic exhibition
12 February - 28 March 2014
at Hillhead Library, Byres Road, Glasgow