

New York. NICE Festival 2009... After the Funds-Cut

Marina Melchionda (December 01, 2009)



What are the consequences of the cut of public funds on the national Cinema industry in Italy? We asked Mrs. Viviana del Bianco, the organizer of the NICE (New Italian Cinema Events) Festival, during the press conference inaugurating its 2009 edition. Find in the article information about the movies running this year. Among them, Viola di Mare by Donatella Maiorca was presented at the Italian



Cultural Institute of NY on November 10th, 2009

All those who are passionate about Italian movies living in New York most probably have followed in the last 20 years one of the biggest events that celebrate our National cinema, the [NICE \(National Italian Cinema Events\)](#) [2]. This year they were expecting it, anxious to see what the directors would propose them this year.

Indeed, many of them barely knew about the calendar of the movies in schedule, or about the

beginning of the festival itself. Why doesn't the whole city talk about it as it used to do before? Why didn't they advertise it in any manner, or let it be a "niche event"? These were some of the questions that we were asking ourselves and sought answers to.

When we got to the [Italian Cultural Institute](#) [3] on November 10th to attend the press conference organized for this year's edition of "NICE" we meant to ask the director of the Festival, Mrs. Viviana del Bianco, the real reason why a veil of silence fell on the event this year. Her words were very clear: the government's cuts to the funding destined for the cinema sector has deeply affected the industry, and is challenging the quality and image of Italian movie production both domestically and internationally.

As we understood right away, the organization of this year's edition of NICE is mostly entirely due to the collaboration of Mrs. Del Bianco with the Italian Cultural Institute, and more specifically, with the event's former director, Renato Miracco, who will host three screenings of the movies selected in the month of December.

We had a chance to talk to Mrs. Del Bianco and discuss with her this year's edition of the Festival, and the silence surrounding it.

The Italian Government has recently heavily cut the public budget destined for the cinema industry. What will be the main consequences of this initiative?

We can't preview this from happening, but those of us who work in the field had a meeting with the Minister of Cultural Affairs to ask him what to expect in the future. He didn't give as a straight answer, but made us understand that there will be more cuts next year.

Could financing provided by the private sector could diminish the effects of this cuts?

In Italy private financing destined for the cinema sector represent a very small percentage of the overall figure. We are still essentially connected to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, thus we still rely on public support. This says a lot...

The Government, however, provides you with other types of assistance. Take the Italian Cultural Institute's case, it is hosting the press conference and the screenings of the movies in December...

First of all, we must remember that the Italian Cultural Institute had its own share of cuts. Even if it has been supporting us in the last two years, it does not have the right means to promote the NICE as it should. Their budget, of course, must be spent for the many events they host and promote throughout the year, and can't be focused only on our festival.

Has the festival changed in any sense this year?

Well, I adopted a new strategy. I am presenting a "new cinema", movies produced and directed by young people, who are at the beginning of their career and need to be promoted. We need to focus the few means we have on new proposals, new generations of filmmakers, actor and director.

As Mrs. Del Bianco told us, the movies selected this year are: **Pa-ra-da** by Marco Pontecorvo; **Lezione 21** by Alessandro Baricco; **EX** by Fausto Brizzi; **La Siciliana Ribelle** by Marco Amenta; **Diverso Da Chi?** by Umberto Cartene; **La Casa Sulle Nuvole** by Claudio Giovannesi and **Viola di Mare** by Donatella Maiorca.



Another important novelty of this year's edition is the collaboration with the [IFC Center](#) [4] that, as Mrs. Del Bianco told us, "being a public theatre, is more attracting for young people." The aim from this year on, as she further explained to us, is to introduce American youth to the new Italian Cinema. On November 12th, the IFC hosted the American preview of the movie *Viola di Mare*, before the NICE moved to the West Coast for a festival in Seattle (Nov 17-21) and almost simultaneously in San Francisco (Nov 15-22), organized with the support of [FICE](#) [5] (Federazione Italiana del Cinema d'Essai) and the [Seattle International Film Festival](#) [6].

During the press conference, attended by a wide audience of International and Italian journalists, we also had the opportunity to meet and interview the director of the movie *Viola di Mare*, Donatella Maiorca, who presented her movie together with protagonist actress Valeria Solarino and one of the producers Giovanna Emidi (Italian Dreams Factory).

The film, we would say, is part of a contemporary current of "cinema di denuncia" (denouncing cinema), which stands against the falsification of the truth and the denial of liberty at every possible level. "The reason why we choose this film", Mrs. Del Bianco told us, "is because one of our most important aims as NICE is to offer a new image of Italy, far from stereotypes and traditional beliefs. The picture, set in Sicily, gives a different image of the territories that are no longer portrayed as a 'land of Mafia'.

Donatella Maiorca's second film has already had a strong impact on Italian audiences. Based on the book "Minchia di re" by Giacomo Pilati, it recounts the intense and unconventional love story between two young women in the mid-19th-century Sicily. "I also must say that we kind of wanted to rehabilitate the image of Sicily to the International audience. We filmed landscapes, weather phenomena, and corners of wild nature that foreigners usually don't see when they come to Sicily. We abandoned every possible stereotype in favor of a genuine image of the region, the side that people never see or don't want to. It's the first time that a movie of this kind, different for theme and environment, was shoot in these territories."

Aside from *Viola di Mare*, the Italian Cultural Institute is promoting another three of the movies selected for this year's edition of the NICE: *Pa-ra-da* by Marco Pontecorvo (Dec. 1, 6:00-8:00 pm); *Diverso da Chi?* by Umberto Carteni (Dec. 8, 6:00-8:00 pm); and *La siciliana ribelle* by Marco Amenta (Dec. 15, 6:00-8:00 pm)

More info about NICE on http://www.nicefestival.org/ing/nice20092010/niceindex_ny_sf.htm [7]

[7]

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