

## 5 Different Creches to Visit in NY this Christmas

M. G. (December 09, 2015)



The representation of the nativity has spread all over Italy in many ways. The stylistic shapes and the use of materials are deeply influenced by geographical place and popular traditions. This year, through January 6th, you can see different kind of creches in New York City too.

The nativity scene, in Italian called presepe, represents the scene of the birth of Jesus Christ and is one of the main traditional Christmas decorations in Italy.

The tradition of putting nativity sculptures in church dates back to the Middle Ages, even though before this period there were images and representations of the birth of Jesus. It was Saint Francis of Assisi, though, who popularized the image of the crib and thereby started the tradition of the presepe.

In almost every church and in many homes in Italy there is a presepe. It is usually prepared on December 8, the day of the feast of the Immaculate Conception and is displayed for about one



month.

We suggest 5 different creches to visit this Christmas season in NYC.

### **A creche by Maestro Artese**

From December 8th through January 6th you can see the beautiful Nativity scene from Maestro Franco Artese inspired by the landscape of Basilicata, Matera in particular. That city, known to the world for its stones, a UNESCO World Heritage site and a European Capital of Culture in 2019, provides the extraordinary backdrop of the scene of the birth of Jesus.

The backdrop is the ancient farming civilization of Basilicata, the “civilization of hands,” which revolved around fieldwork and ancient crafts. Through hard labor and frugal living, these people developed a spirit of sacrifice and a strong religious sensibility.

It is the representation of a world tied to the values of family, work and solidarity. And a conception of life open to mystery.

The Nativity is made of polystyrene covered in a resin plaster with a “tuff” effect, as well as metal, wood and terracotta. It is about 20 square meters and 3.5 meters high. The 70 or so figures, each about 27cm high, were made completely with terracotta by Maestro Vincenzo Velardita.

Their dress is inspired by local tradition and made by talented sisters Nadia and Daniela Balestrieri and Teresa Galasso. Everything was done under the supervision of Maestro Artese.

### **‘Presepio Della Solidarietà’**

In December 2001, an 18th century style, handcrafted, 120-piece, 16 feet wide, 7 feet tall and 5 feet deep gift arrived from the Naples Chamber of Commerce to the NYC Fire Department.

"We are very proud to be the custodians of this extraordinary and symbolic ‘Presepio Della Solidarietà’ which we proudly display every year for the public to enjoy," announced Gina Biancardi, the Founder and President of Casa Belvedere.

"The exhibit is particularly meaningful to Staten Islanders who tragically lost many FDNY and other civil servants on 9/11/01. I know many 9/11 victims' family members who come every year simply to pay homage to their loved ones as they get very tearful viewing the beautiful display," said Ms. Biancardi.

This handcrafted work of art was created by master artisans of the Campania Region of Italy and is consistent with techniques that date back to the seventeenth century. It is comprised of 120 handmade pieces including peasants to noblemen, the Holy Family, many animals typical of that time period, angels, a faux mountain, a stable and more. However, it is not just recreating a stable scene of Christ's Birth. It is magnificently unique in that it tells the story of the 9/11/01 tragedy in a heartfelt and meaningful way.

[The Italian Cultural Foundation at Casa Belvedere](#) [2]

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### **Presepe: Nativity of Mercy. La Scarabattola**

In Little Italy a Neapolitan Nativity scene will be on display. Called the “Nativity of Mercy” project, it was commissioned by Monsignor Donald Sakano, pastor of the Basilica of St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral on Mulberry Street, to celebrate the “Jubilee of Mercy” called for by Pope Francis and beginning on December 8th.

The figures were made by the artisans of “La Scarabattola” in Naples and are inspired by Caravaggio’s Seven Works of Mercy, the famous painting commissioned by the Pio Monte della Misericordia Foundation of Naples in 1605. The Nativity Scene will be on display at the Church of the



Most Precious Blood (entrance on Baxter Street), the National Shrine of San Gennaro, where Msgr. Sakano is also pastor.

### **Annual Christmas Tree and Neapolitan Baroque Crèche at the Metropolitan Museum of Art**

1000 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York

The Christmas Tree and Neapolitan Baroque Crèche at The Metropolitan Museum of Art is a long-established yuletide tradition in New York. The brightly lit, twenty-foot blue spruce—with a collection of eighteenth-century Neapolitan angels and cherubs among its boughs and groups of realistic crèche figures flanking the Nativity scene at its base—once again delight holiday visitors in the Museum's Medieval Sculpture Hall. Set in front of the eighteenth-century Spanish choir screen from the Cathedral of Valladolid, with recorded Christmas music in the background, the installation reflects the spirit of the holiday season. The exhibit of the crèche is made possible by gifts to The Christmas Tree Fund and the Loretta Hines Howard Fund.

### **A Dyker Heights Nativity**

Dyker Heights resident John Miniero spends weeks building and setting up a traditional nativity for Christmas each year, a 14-foot Neapolitan-style nativity scene populated with hundreds of tiny figurines. Miniero's home sports the typical Christmas lights as others resident in Dyker Heights but but he leaves those decorations to his wife.

His house has become one of the stops on the now popular Dyker Heights Christmas Lights bus tours

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