

GENESIS

The idea of dedicating an art gallery to Angelo Brando, the most illustrious son of the town of Maratea, took form after the 1985 anthology exhibition of his works. Held at Villa Tarantini, the exhibition commemorated the thirtieth anniversary of the artist’s death and was conceived by the Maratea Cultural Centre, now dedicated to one of its most active founders, José Mario Cernicchiaro.

The idea made progress with the purchase in 1987 of Palazzo De Lieto, near the painter’s birthplace, on the initiative of Francesco Sisinni, the then Director General of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage.

The palazzo was assigned to the Regional Authority for Environmental and Architectural Heritage of Basilicata, which began a long series of restoration works to give the ancient “xenodochium” a museum structure. The gallery eventually opened in 1998 with the temporary exhibition held on the first floor Maratea: from land to sea curated by archaeologist Paola Bottini, which included ancient anchors and amphorae used for transporting oil and wine by sea.

Following the June 2002 exhibition *19th and Early 20th Century Painters of Basilicata* curated by Director of the Regional Authority for Historical and Artistic Heritage of Basilicata, Salvatore Abita, and fitted out by the newly formed Provincial Art Gallery of Potenza, the project for the “Angelo Brando Art Gallery” once again took centre stage in ministerial plans and in the public debate on the issue of “what to do” with Palazzo De Lieto.

A decisive part in the creation of the Art Gallery was played by Angelina Mastroluca, wife of the artist’s grandson and his only remaining heir. Her willingness to sell a total of 34 paintings covering a period of thirty-seven years from 1909 to 1946 was fundamental, as was the availability of another four paintings, two plaster sculptures, several loose pages from a drawing notebook and a few family heirlooms, all loaned by the J. M. Cernicchiaro Maratea Cultural Centre, ASP Potenza and Tina Polisciano.

A further important stage on this long administrative journey was

the touring exhibition *Angelo Brando. Selected works. Proposals for a museum*, curated by Michele Saponaro, with a critical essay by Isabella Valente, which opened in Matera in 2007 during the 9th Week of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism, with subsequent dates in Potenza and Maratea.

Now that the Art Gallery is open, we have to acknowledge that we have not as yet accomplished everything.

There are plans to fit out the ground floor to create a “multifunctional space” for temporary exhibitions, concerts, conferences, film showings, theatre and dance. Without activities like these, any museum, large or small, is doomed to a limited future. Interest in the permanent collections needs to be renewed every year through robust cultural initiatives. These are “concrete actions” that turn a place where art is merely stored into an open inclusive place. Such activities make it a “home of culture for all” that can attract and stimulate interest, particularly among young people, and be a reference for many cultural associations, not only in Maratea, but throughout the Lagonegro area.

Work also needs to be done to restore a fifth room on the first floor that is currently not in use. The plan is to create a small section with works of Basilicata artists from the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of these – Marinelli, Tedesco, Di Chirico, Petrone, Claps, Colasuonno, Giocoli, to name just a few – shared the same training path as Brando. A permanent exhibition of their works in the art gallery would not only facilitate comparison with Brando’s paintings, but would also keep interest alive in the study and research of this region’s distinctive artistic identity in painting.

For this we know we can count on the contribution of the Municipality and the Regional Authority for Archaeology, Fine Art and the Landscape of Basilicata, the two principal institutions with a say in the future of Palazzo De Lieto.

The fact that this project has come to fruition in the year of Matera–Basilicata 2019 European Capital of Culture is a good sign for all involved.

BIOGRAPHY

Angelo Brando is born in Maratea on 10 January 1878 to Giuseppe and Vincenza Zaccaro, the last of eight children. In 1895, he enters the Royal Institute of Fine Arts in Naples. Right from his very first year of study, he receives several awards, as demonstrated by the medals on display.

His training is influenced by the Neapolitan school of Morelli, Cammarano, Volpe and Tedesco and ends on 19 July 1904.

He first comes onto the national stage in 1908 at the 2nd Quadriennale of Turin. In 1909, he takes part in the National Exhibition in Rimini and at the 1st Youth Art Exhibition in Naples. The event is an important one for the city. Defined as the “Secession of the twenty-three”, of which Brando is a member, it signals the end of the old official system of exhibitions featuring works that respond to the needs of amateurs and collectors, and an opening up to anti-academia and to the European artistic movements of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism and Symbolism.

In 1909, he paints *Portrait of wife*, the Neapolitan Eugenia Tauro, whom the artist marries in the same year. The couple’s daughter, Cordelia, is born in 1910.

In 1917, he begins his long teaching appointment at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Naples. In 1919, he is charged by Vincenzo Volpe with the reorganisation of the Regional Gallery of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Naples. Thanks to Brando’s commitment in the academic world, in 1934, the National Ministry of Education promotes him to Officer of the Order of the Crown of Italy.

Brando’s theme is the painting of reality. He favours domestic scenes in which his subjects, often his own family members, are captured in the intimacy of the home. The female figure is always central to the artist’s imagination.

His prolific artistic production continues throughout the Fascist period, with contributions in exhibitions held by the Fascist Syndicates, at which he presents works related to the Italian portrait tradition (*Cordelia in evening dress*) but also a series of landscapes. Brando proposes the same themes at national level, as in the 2nd National Exhibition of the Fascist

Syndicate in 1937 and the first edition of the Premio Cremona in 1939, where he presents the painting *Listening to the radio*.

At the second edition of the Premio Cremona in 1940, Brando presents the large polyptych consisting of five panels with a country theme (*Malaria, Reclamation, The offering, Planting season and The harvest*). In this exhibition, we find *Country scene*, with a note added by Brando himself at the bottom of the canvas: “studies for the wheat painting”. The two female figures relate specifically to the central episode of the large composition.

He also takes part in exhibitions outside of Naples, in Basilicata and Calabria. In 1942, he moves to Airola (Benevento), where he produces works such as the large canvas *Village Market* (part of the *19th and early 20th century painters of Basilicata* exhibition held in 2002, and currently at the Provincial Art Gallery in Potenza) in which the influence of realism re-emerges. He also produces works of sacred art, such as the *Pietà* for the church of the Addolorata in Maratea (a sketch of this large painting done for the private chapel – which Brando frescoed for his brother Antonio, the Priest – has been found in the house where he was born near Palazzo De Lieto).

The works exhibited here include two religious canvases. One, *Nativity*, painted in 1938, contains brush strokes reminiscent of late 19th-century Neapolitan painting. The second, *The first comers at the Cave in Bethlehem*, named by the artist himself, is related to the first and features two shepherds.

Angelo Brando plays an active, even public, role in the conservation and cataloguing of cultural assets. He holds several important positions, under ministerial appointment, including, Conservator of the Regional Gallery of Fine Arts of Naples, of which, as already mentioned, he oversees the reorganisation.

In addition to his strong ties to his family and his land of origin, he also cultivates bonds of great friendship with members of the intellectual world of the time, including Salvatore Di Giacomo and Libero Bovio. He continues to work tirelessly in his latter years, albeit away from official events.

He dies on 21 February 1955.

COLOURS OF BRANDO

There have already been cases, in the history of music, of composers dedicating pieces to works of art. For example, Mussorgsky wrote *Pictures at an exhibition* in 1874 after visiting the exhibition commemorating his friend Viktor Hartmann, who had died the previous year.

In 1926, Ottorino Respighi wrote *Vetrata di chiesa* (“Church Windows”) a symphonic composition in four movements inspired by images depicted in stained glass panes.

Numerous such examples can be found throughout the history of music.

I myself wrote *Seirenes* for the exhibition of works by the late Claudio Bonichi, *La donna pesce* (“The fish woman”), held in Maratea a few years ago. In the oratorio entitled *Nigra sum sed Formosa*, recently published for the reopening of Matera Cathedral, I included a number of compositions inspired by painters like Antonello da Messina and Fra Angelico and the sculptor Altobello Persio of Montescaglioso.

The question I am often asked is “how can paintings and sculpture be translated into music?” People take for granted that it can be done when adding music to poetry, but find it much harder to imagine the process of translating pictures.

My answer to this question is: they can't. Music cannot translate images, just as it cannot translate poetry or sculptural elements. All art forms have their own specific characteristics that are born of the materials used in them. There is, however, a profound affinity shared by the various forms of art such as painting, music, poetry, sculpture, cinema and dance. That is why there can be contamination across different genres.

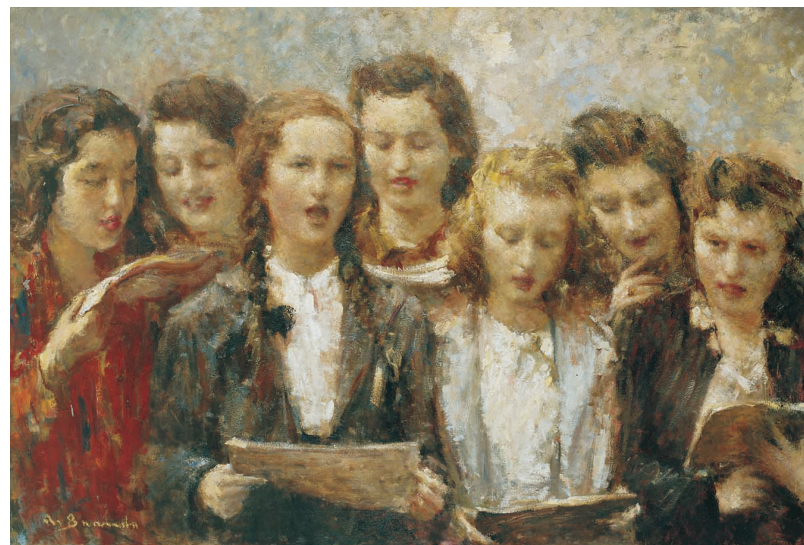
Debussy loved placing the titles of his compositions at the bottom of his scores, as a way to represent that the pieces did not accurately express what is in the title. The title was meant as a mere suggestion, an invitation to use one's imagination and allow oneself to be inspired by the music.

Music never translates into reality; it transforms it and infuses it with lightness. Similarly, the static materiality of a canvas or a sculpture becomes an ethereal vibration that triggers emotions.

From the moment Michele Saponaro invited me to score the music accompanying visitors to the art gallery, I was struck by the quality of the colour in Angelo Brando's paintings.

I chose the title *Colori di Brando* (“Colours of Brando”) to pay tribute to the quality of his pictorial work and I have dedicated the score to my friend and commissioner of the work who, in the meantime has become the director of the Angelo Brando Gallery.

D. D'A.



Choir of young girls
1938
oil on canvas cm 72x102,5
signed lower left: A. Brando



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 Palazzo De Lieto - Pinacoteca Angelo Brando

PINACOTECA Angelo Brando

