



Group for International
Cooperation on Human
Rights Culture

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Thursday, January 24, 2008

PRESS RELEASE

**Holocaust Remembrance Day 2008: with two parallel exhibitions
Naples remembers the women of the Holocaust and the
persecution of the mentally handicapped.**

**Everyone group asks the Yad Vashem Museum to recognise
Naples as a “City of the righteous among Nations”**

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While the city tackles its serious emergencies, the Comune di Napoli – in collaboration with EveryOne Group, the Italian association that defends human rights – remembers the Holocaust and exhibits in the Sale dell’Archivio Storico (Salita Pontenuovo, 31) the works of the artists of the Watching the Sky Group (Roberto Malini, Dario Picciau, Steed Gamero, Tamara Deuel, Rebecca Covaciu, Laura Todisco). Inauguration/preview at the Archivio Storico at 12 on Friday January 25th, 2008, with the artists, the authorities and Holocaust scholars. There are two parallel exhibitions that “tell the story” of the years of the Nazi-Fascist horror through symbolic images. The first exhibition, “Psyche in Chains”, presents a series of 12 “stations” which depict the persecution of the mentally handicapped; they are digital paintings that commemorate the victims of the Germans’ ill-famed project “Aktion T4”, the oppression of Degenerate Art (Entartete Kunst) and the use of medicine as an instrument of persecution. Accompanying “Psyche in Chains”, is the photographic exhibition “Hair of Gold and Ashes” by Roberto Malini and Steed

Gamero (Watching the Sky Group): 20 portraits of women who survived the ghettos and the death camps, pictured in their home environments, and devoid of rhetoric or commemorative emphasis: from Goti Bauer to Hanneli Pick-Goslar, Ann Frank's friend; from the Jewish heroine Mirjam Waterman Pinkhof to the "Auschwitz poetess" Halina Birenbaum; from the Italian Rom woman who survived the Porrajmos (the Gypsy Holocaust) Antonia Bezzecchi to the authoress Ruth Bondy. The exhibitions are supported by the Yad Vashem Memorial Museum of Jerusalem and the Comune di Napoli. "I am proud to support this exhibition", wrote Rosa Iervolino Russo, Mayor of Naples, "because I share its aim".

Roberto Malini, Matteo Pegoraro, Dario Picciau and Laura Todisco, who carry out important campaigns for human rights in EveryOne Group explain: "Today more than ever the Memory of the Holocaust must become a priority value of our civilization. When we begin to repress or censor the freedom of art, when we start to manifest intolerance towards minorities, when we underestimate human rights, then the shadow of the most horrifying of persecutions in history looms over us once more. We are in contact with dozens of witnesses of the Holocaust, who never cease to warn us that the horror is not yet over, that its seeds of hatred and death are still putting out shoots. The two exhibitions remind us that human life is sacred, that there are no second-class ethnic groups or minorities, that art and science are at the service of human rights and must not be turned into instruments of propaganda or oppression. The meeting between Naples, EveryOne and the group of artists from Watching The Sky carries the message of the witnesses as a guide for a new humanity, against the persecution of the weaker social groups and compulsory psychiatric treatment: from the TSO (enforced treatment) to the 'Fermo 5150'. "We are proud to be protagonists of the Neapolitan exhibition," say the artists and activists who organized the event, "because Naples, with all its problems, remains the conscience of Italy. If we consider that in many European states the extermination affected 75 percent of the Jews and a high percentage of gypsies; if we think that invalids, homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, dissidents and foreigners underwent terrible persecution, we must comfort ourselves with the example given by Naples, where the Jews from the local community (more than 700 people) survived the Holocaust. Just when the Nazis were planning the deportation of the Jews from Naples, the city rose up and in the four glorious days of Naples, from September 28th to October 1st, 1943, 2000 Neapolitans liberated the city from the Nazi butchers. It was an act of heroism that must not be forgotten. Ordinary people, among them young street urchins of 12 or 13, defeated the German Death Machine, freeing Naples and preventing the deportation of the Jews towards the gas chambers of Auschwitz".

For this reason, EveryOne Group has officially asked the Yad Vashem Memorial Museum in Jerusalem to confer the honour on the city of Naples of 'Righteous Among Nations'. "Naples deserves this recognition," conclude the organizers, "and we hope the Committee of the Museum will take up our proposal".

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