

"Stone or paper, path or book, it is a walk that one begins, a walk to be taken."
(Angela Ibàñez)

THE POETRY OF SCULPTURE

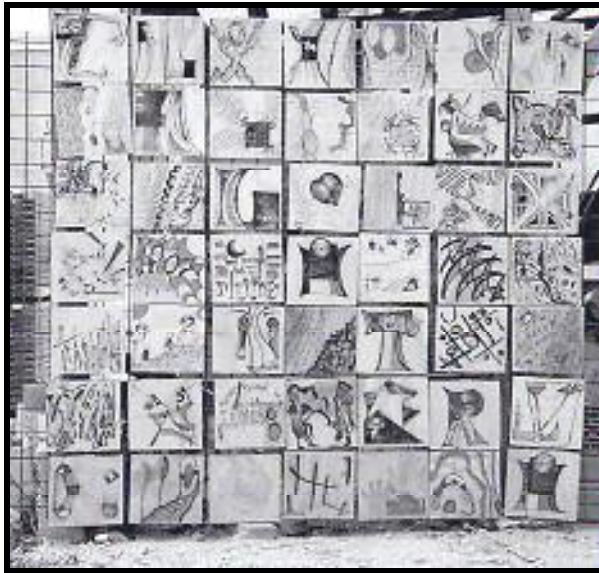
Translated from the Italian by Benjamin De Maio Montalbano

The fate/strength of all artists, both sculpture and poet, as Carlo Bo said on the subject of Victor Hugo, "is that of writing and drawing at the same time, to generate words and drawings together, in an intense and dramatic game of different signs, but at all times to render visible the face itself of poetry and sculpture."

Fascinating, difficult, ambitious, tortuous. . . these are all adjectives suited to explain the objective of the "Nicura" association, which is: to adopt the historic center and to transform it into a splendid outdoor museum. It is a living project that involves work, respect and recovery, utility and beauty, past and future. It is an operational program for putting things in a new form, by uniting content and material in a statement of solid harmony. . . but above all, it is to look beyond into the surroundings, to see the degradation, and — being tired of being broken hearted spectators — to decide to interact by invoking the strength of the material.

Therefore, in this view, it is necessary to look at the arrival of a group of sculptors, poets, and video creators — both Spanish and Italian — who worked **gratuitously**, deciding to "live" and to make our village live. The only constraint? Not to have constraints, everything counts: any form, any material, any function. It is enough that inside each project you feel a strong, creative energy. Iron, copper strips, stones, and marble — which are all folded, compressed, enhanced, beaten, and, softened — are linked together in complexes that evoke a form, an idea, or become complete abstractions.

Are they lunatics, these members of Nicura, who bet on art, and the various artists who have donated their sculptures to Calitri? I don't believe so, since art means culture, and culture is soul. It is that road over which each aspect of our society moves, it is the favored instrument in this phase of deep transformation our village is going through, hit as it is by a new wave of emigration, due to increasing unem-



Cal y otros by Àngela Ibàñez

ployment. Therefore, the sensitivity of the members of the association, the availability of the Superintendent for the BAPPSAD di Sa-Av, [Architectural Assets and for the Landscape and, for the Historic, Artistic, and Demoanthropological Heritage of Salerno-Avellino], the generosity of numerous local artisans, and the hospitality of many Calitrani have allowed the creation of collaborative effort between

Calitri and this group of artists, who develop the creativity dimension and communicate it to the outside. Accordingly, under the artistic direction of **Giuseppe Rubicco**, sculptor/coordinator of the project, of **Angela Ibàñez**, journalist/sculptress and point of reference for the Spanish section, the various sculptures started to take possession of the alleys and the square, while involving everybody. It was just like a dreamlike stage opened wide on the one hundred plus windows of this small village. There is no lack of dissenting voices, but, to use a musical metaphor, they are only noises that do not disturb the harmony and music of the project, because, as the president of the Nicura Association often asserts, "The places are encountered and tasted not only from the gastronomic point of view, but also from the human, environmental, and artistic point of view." On the basis of this, some special sculptures have been carved, sculptures that speak to the visitor, involving his soul and his rationality, like "**Invernadero**" [greenhouse] by Serafina Balach and Gerardo Garcia, which is a collection of photographs of human fetuses, treated with resin and inserted in 36 terracotta vases, alongside a blow-up of a broken watering pot; or "**Finestra sulla speranza**" [Window on Hope] by José Casamayor, made from a large stone that came directly from Spain; or the Sculpture-Painting of Angela Ibàñez, made with 49 wood/resin tiles carrying the inscription "**Cal y otros**;" [a play on words based on Calitri], or "**Il vigilante del tempo**," ["The guardian of time,"] a gigantic and unique sculpture in iron, done by Debora Quelle. The characteristic of all these works, which are so

different and yet animated by the same spirit, is the ability each visitor has to experience them, to touch them, in such a way that all become creators. They are no longer on the receiving end of this type of art, which does not violate the Calitran reality, but integrates itself with it. An example? The installation done by Giuseppe Strano, "**Passagio al futuro**" [Passage to the future] where the real object is transformed into the subject and therefore into a work of art. To use Strano's own words, "If one manages to create a vacuum around the object to make it come out of the context of the meaningful, liberating it from its burden of ideas and of conscience, then the subject can appear. . . I carve sculptures and installations that welcome into their interior whomever looks at them. Indeed, the perception of the work, and the work itself, are modified by the position of the persons inside. . . and, if you have never entered a work of art while you stood before it, you can now do so." Accordingly, the true innovation is that of putting the visitor at the center, the visitor, who comes in contact with himself and with his perceptions. This is because each sculpture is not an object to be contemplated, but a place of concrete, physical, and mental experience. Even the materials used, which differ among themselves in terms of tone and linguistic-expressive emotivity, are called to interact and alchemistically to fuse into "another" in that great mutational and marvelous alembic [still] that is Calitri.



Passage to the future by Giuseppe Spitu

It is as if they were external and internal, the known and the unknown, the above and the below, the tradition and the ex—tradition.

Another piece of this special puzzle, which was started by Nicura, is the "**Sentiero dei Poeti,**" [The Path of the Poets], poetry given by Aragonese poets, such as **Fernando Arrabal,**

Mariano Esquilor, Antonio Fernandez Molina, Angela Ibàñez, Raul Herrero, Alicia Silvestre. . . their verses are cut into stones, along a path that does not have characters that cross it, but only quiet, reflections, and intellectual exploration. The words beat out the rhythm, kindling emotions, and guiding the path, and no effort has been spared in order to move the visitors emotionally, to give them a sensation more pure than this landscape animated by the words, which revisit the places of the imagination, between lights and aromas. In the face of daily corruption, before the unstoppable devastation of things and feelings, these poems symbolize a very loud cry of life, of respect for life, of an unshakeable grasp of memory. This "Stone poem" must be understood, or read, not so much for the words that it speaks, but for those that it does not speak, which it cannot speak, and which it tries to suggest. Step by step the lightness of the engraved poems will guide the soul of the visitors to encounter beauty, to become its companion, to attempt with strength and yearning to feel it by the light of the atmosphere. It seems that the poets of Aragon are present beside their poetry, in order to meet the absolute, both in different times and ways. Without blinking an eye, without – even for an instant – the glance itself taking ones mind off the anticipated vigil, the soul submerges itself in this sculpture-poem, and



The guardian of the city by Edina Çsont

re-emerges from it, purified by this place that is not nature, but the space from which another "space" is perceived. It is a place that one could not call landscape, and yet everything has been thought and imagined about it: the brightness of the colors themselves as well as the fragrance of the elderberry and rosemary plants. The fate/strength of all artists, both sculpture and poet, as Carlo Bo said on the subject of Victor Hugo, "is that of writing and drawing at the same time, to generate words and drawings together, in an intense and dramatic game of different signs, but at all times to render visible the face itself of poetry and sculpture." This is the message that the Nicura association wants to send. And it wants to do it by attempting to insert Calitri into the tourist circuit, by showing Calitri for that which it indeed is, and by seeking an opportunity for economic and cultural transformation that involves local subjects, given that "a gente nao quer so comida, a gente quer tambem diversao e arte." [The people do not only want food, the people also want entertainment and art.]

And when in the late afternoon, in that hour that sweetly troubles and sweetly consoles, when the sun begins to red- den and the wind gets ready to blow, Calitri appears. The village is bathed in a mediumistic, clear light that floods all these works, where beauty, passion, and creativity signify the emotional temperature of the joy and passion necessary to life.

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