

Italian Newyorkers @ Casa Italiana

Luca Delbello (September 20, 2011)



Maurizio Molinari, La Stampa's New York correspondent, presents his latest book "Gli Italiani di New York"

ITALIAN VERSION [2]

"Italians are unique geniuses who, together, form a politically disorderly population... So surprising a group to create problems when trying to make an overall assessment". To paraphrase the late Alberto Lattuada seems like a good idea to help understand what's behind the latest book by [Maurizio Molinari](#) [3].

In his "Gli Italiani di New York" (The Italians of New York), the journalist runs through a number of important Italian names of New York, from the Dean of the [John D. Calandra Institute](#) [4] Anthony J. Tamburri to LoCicero, a Korean War veteran of the Air Force, from Nicola Gallotti, general manager of the Geneva Watch Group to Sirio Maccioni, owner of luxury restaurant [Le Cirque](#) [5].



And last Wednesday, in the auditorium of NYU's [Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò](#) [6] many of them were present at the book presentation. Some were visibly proud to have been chosen.

On stage, together with Molinari, were six of the protagonists of his work, Matilda Cuomo, Italo "Al" Barozzi, Federico Mennella, Antonio Monda, Gaetano Pesce and Cesare Casella.

Director Stefano Albertini, as usual, welcomed the first guest, Massimo Gaggi, New York correspondent for [Il Corriere della Sera](#) [7], who moderated this evening tinged with green-white-and-red.

The journalist briefly introduced the book to the public before giving the stage to Matilda Cuomo, a leading figure of the Italian-American community of New York, president of Mentoring USA, wife of the former Governor of New York, and mother of the present one.

The ex-First Lady spoke passionately about her Italian-American family, beginning with the many sacrifices her Italian parents had to make when encountering the first difficulties of a less welcoming America. She also spoke about her husband's political passion, her son's commitment, and her first person work towards the more needy citizens through Mentoring USA.

Gaetano Pesce is undoubtedly a very famous artist, an architect who "emigrated" to America 35 years ago. The public was able to enjoy his ability as a great narrator, as well, when he talked about the creativity of the Italian people. Among the anecdotes, Pesce gave a few details about his fantastic project for the Messina bridge, "we mustn't imitate the Americans and build a second Golden Gate", joking about the custom of being competitive about who builds the "longest" bridge.

His idea refers to an inhabited bridge in the shape of an "S", as in the word Sicily, held up by pillars that could become homes and hotels, each one built after a typicality of each Italian region.

There was also room for religion during this all-Italian event. New York priest Italo "Al" Barozzi explained how frequently Italians hurt their own image by creating and consolidating the same stereotypes all the time. He was joined in this by chef Cesare Casella of the Salumeria Rosi, speaker for the culinary excellence of Italy who complained about a gradual decrease in the numbers of Italian restaurants that use actual Italian ingredients, while we witness an increase of French or American restaurants who can boast the best Italian products.

Frequent guest at Casa Italiana is professor Antonio Monda, who teaches cinema at NYU. He went slightly against the current when explaining, with a bit of sadness, the slow death of Italian cinema, at least the one produced back home. He bitterly explained the slow decline of the industry, speaking about the gradual emigration of good Italian directors to the United States and in the rest of the world. Paolo Sorrentino over all.

Finance is also present in Molinari's book, and was represented on stage by Federico Mennella, managing director of Lincoln International, who spoke about how, during the last twenty years, a gradual abandoning of the American scene took place among the great names of Italian business, such as [Olivetti](#) [8], [BNL](#) [9] and many others. He confessed to be greatly saddened by the situation among the younger generations, today, since most Italian talents are hired by foreign companies.

The final words were spoken by the author who thanked all his "protagonists" and concluded the evening stating that, after having collected all these successful Italian experiences in New York, he reached the conclusion that the true Italian characteristic is "always doing your best".

With a tinge of unhappiness, answering a question, he said that the book was received coldly in Italy. Molinari thinks that the wound caused by Italians succeeding abroad is deeper than what appears because of the absence of a deep reflection. "If you love your country and your people, you must push towards a reflection about it", he concluded.

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