

150 Years of Italian Genius. Interview with the Curator of the Exposition

I.A. (December 28, 2011)



“SCIENCE IS CREATED TOGETHER” – states Chimera Poppi, the curator and organizer of the “150 years of Italian Genius: Innovations Changing the World,” an exhibit dedicated to science and inventions hosted by the Italian Cultural Institute of New York.

Ms. Poppi, the curator and organizer of the “150 years of Italian Genius: Innovations Changing the World” at the Italian Cultural Institute of New York gave us a brief introduction to the exhibit:

“The exhibition is divided into five categories: Experiencing the New, Travelling for Knowledge, Crossing the Frontiers, Efficiency at Work, and To Cure is to Live. The one that is most abstract is Crossing the Frontiers, where we have placed the physicists, mathematicians, the ones that in a different or abstract way tried to surpass the limits of the unknown.”

She further explained the introductions to each of the sections of the works on display:

“Every category, or cluster has a testimonial, often of a well-known person, at times a Nobelist, who is accompanied by people that may be less known, that often do not have anything to do directly with one another but we decided to put them together in a particular cluster under the idea that science is created together.”



Each category hosts its share of objects (often of every day use) arranged in a thematic environment. In the case of the first cluster, the items are displayed on the backdrop of the Laboratory of Giulio Natta. Ms. Poppi named a few inventors in this category:

“In the category Experiencing the New we have for example the inventor of Moplen, a resistant type of plastic, Giulio Natta. This type of plastic was widely used to make kitchen equipment among other everyday life objects. Antonio Meucci is in the same group with the invention of the telephone. On display you will also find a light bulb of Alessandro Cruto, who has invented a brighter light bulb than that of Edison and yet was not known for this invention, due to the fact that he lived in a small town and produced only for the local community, yet his invention is later purchased and mass produced by Phillips.

In the same category we have placed the invention of Giovanni Battista Pirelli who invented not only pneumatic tires but the rubber was used to cover electric wires and therefore aided in the telephone invention of Meucci, because such rubber coated wiring was necessary to allow the passage of communication cables underwater.

In this area one can also find the typewriters and calculators of Camillo Olivetti, which were not invented by him as such but were brought to Italy and their design was innovated. One of the less known facts is that an Italian invented the MP3 player, something that has brought music to each and everyone. We also pay a tribute to our sponsors in a particular way, in this case by integrating Enel, which is more or less the history Italian of energy. It is important that the sponsors are actually a part of the exhibition and not just a name under it.”

Other sectors are also thematically exhibited, therefore the travel section whose testimonial is done by none other than Corradino D’Ascanio, the inventor of the Vespa Piaggio is rightfully set against a background of 1950’s Italian landscape. Furthermore, in each of the exhibition rooms there are screens, connected to I-pads, which allow the visitors to search through films and other interesting materials. Ms Poppi points out one of the films in the sector dedicated to Efficiency at Work:

“This cluster houses the machines and inventions that have facilitated the way we work, and improved productivity in general. Here you will find exponents such as microprocessors, another invention of an Italian, Federico Faggin. In this room one can watch a short film that shows how the work in the factory of FIAT has changed from the 1930’s to the present with the invention of machines and robots.”

There are numerous stops on this scientific journey through the world of invention and innovation. From the discovery of Serotonin by Vittorio Ersamer to Piergiorgio Perotto’s first personal computer, this exhibit will pleasantly surprise all with its wonderfully perceptive presentation of the contribution of the complex and the simple wonders created by some of the greatest Italian minds.

On view until January 27th, 2012 at the IIC (686 Park Ave).

More info: [IIC Website](#) [2]

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