



# A Legacy of Making

21 Contemporary Italian American Artists



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Curated by  
Joanne Mattera and Joseph Sciorra

Catalog for an exhibition at the  
John D. Calandra Italian American Institute

September 27, 2023 — January 12, 2024



## THE ARTISTS

B. Amore

John Avelluto

Nancy Azara

Angelica Bergamini

Gianluca Bianchino

Jennifer Cecere

Chris Costan

Elisa D'Arrigo

Claudia DeMonte

Diana González Gandolfi

D. Dominick Lombardi

Joanne Mattera

Timothy McDowell

Patricia Miranda

John Monti

Carolanna Parlato

Anna Patalano

Karen Schifano

Mary Schiliro

Denise Sfraga

Lisa Zukowski



## **A Legacy of Making:**

### **21 Contemporary Italian American Artists**

The work of the twenty-one artists featured in this exhibit offers a richness of form, medium, subject matter, color, and style that is a delight and a revelation to behold. Connections to a discernable Italian art tradition—or for that matter to Italian American aesthetic practices more specifically—vary across the exhibition, ranging from the explicit to the suggestive to the nonexistent. A dynamic tension operates in which a usable past is employed to create not only art of the moment but a reimagined and reconfigured ethnic sensibility. Ultimately such creative diversity is predicated on a heterogeneity of experiences, sensibilities, and understandings that serve as inspiration for transformative acts of beauty.

While the work is installed with a visual rhythm and flow, the selected pieces align with one of three categories:

#### **Mapping Routes**

Several pieces reference immigration histories and vernacular expressions.

**B. Amore's** assemblage of photographs and objects highlights the life of her maternal grandmother, Concettina De Iorio. The transatlantic journey is rendered poetically in monotype prints by **Angelica Bergamini**, who was born into a family of Tuscan shipmasters, and in maps by **Diana González Gandolfi** (great-granddaughter of a Garibaldi compatriot), who traces her journey from Argentina to the United States. **Lisa Zukowski's** small, wrapped packets recall the string-tied bundles carried by those who traveled in steerage. Vernacular religious belief is expressed in **Claudia DeMonte's** elegant *Corno*, embellished with amulets for safe passage, while **John Avelluto's** *Due Facc'* elevates popular hand gestures to an art form. **John Monti** taps the glorious excesses of Neapolitan baroque for his wall sculptures.

## **A Legacy of Making**

Italian artisan and craft traditions, from needlework to carving, have had a notable impact on US culture and have influenced several of these artists.

**D. Dominick Lombardi** creates quirky sculptures that incorporate woodworking techniques he learned from his father and grandfather. **Nancy Azara** took up the mallet and chisel to sculpt on a grand scale. **Elisa D'Arrigo** works across mediums and techniques, stitching rough-hewn hangings and building eccentric forms in clay. **Jennifer Cecere** and **Patricia Miranda** work with lace, Cecere constructing doily-like fabrics in outsize dimensions, and Miranda taking conventional handmade lace, dyeing it red, and fashioning pieces she calls shrouds. **Chris Costan** creates playful collisions of color and texture with fabric scraps. Inspired by the needlework her aunts taught her, **Joanne Mattera** paints with a textile sensibility, often evincing a surface suggestive of silk.

## **No Accent on the Italian**

Most of the artists in this third category do not reference Italian culture per se, although it has undeniably informed them personally. **Denise Sfraga** paints otherworldly plant forms rooted in botany. **Carolanna Parlato** and **Anna Patalano** work gesturally, Parlato with broad areas of color that layer and drip, Patalano with vigorous brush strokes in a mashup of texture and hue. Using flat color, **Karen Schifano** references empty spaces where things can emerge. **Mary Schiliro** hews to a rigorous poetry of form, while **Gianluca Bianchino** constructs sculptures with a mechanical bent. An exception here is **Timothy McDowell**, who, inspired by long stretches in Northern Italy, takes inspiration from Renaissance painting as well as from contemporary concerns.

—Joanne Mattera and Joseph Sciorra, curators



Patricia Miranda, detail of *Lamentation for a Reasoned History*, 2022,  
vintage lace hand dyed with cochineal insect dye,  
ex-votos in plaster and paper clay, thread



Angelica Bergamini, *Fra Mare e Cielo (Between Sea and Sky)*, 2020, mixed media, monotype, collage on paper, 11 x 11 inches framed



Diana González Gandolfi, *Bearing Witness:  
1983 Buenos Aires (Navigated Territories Series)*, 2016,  
encaustic collagraph with watercolor, color pencil,  
and collage on panel, 19.5 x 16.75 inches framed

photo: Greg Leshé



B. Amore, *Following the Thread IV: Concettina De Iorio*, 1999,  
copper, wood, photo, fabric, thread, 24 x 48 x 3 inches

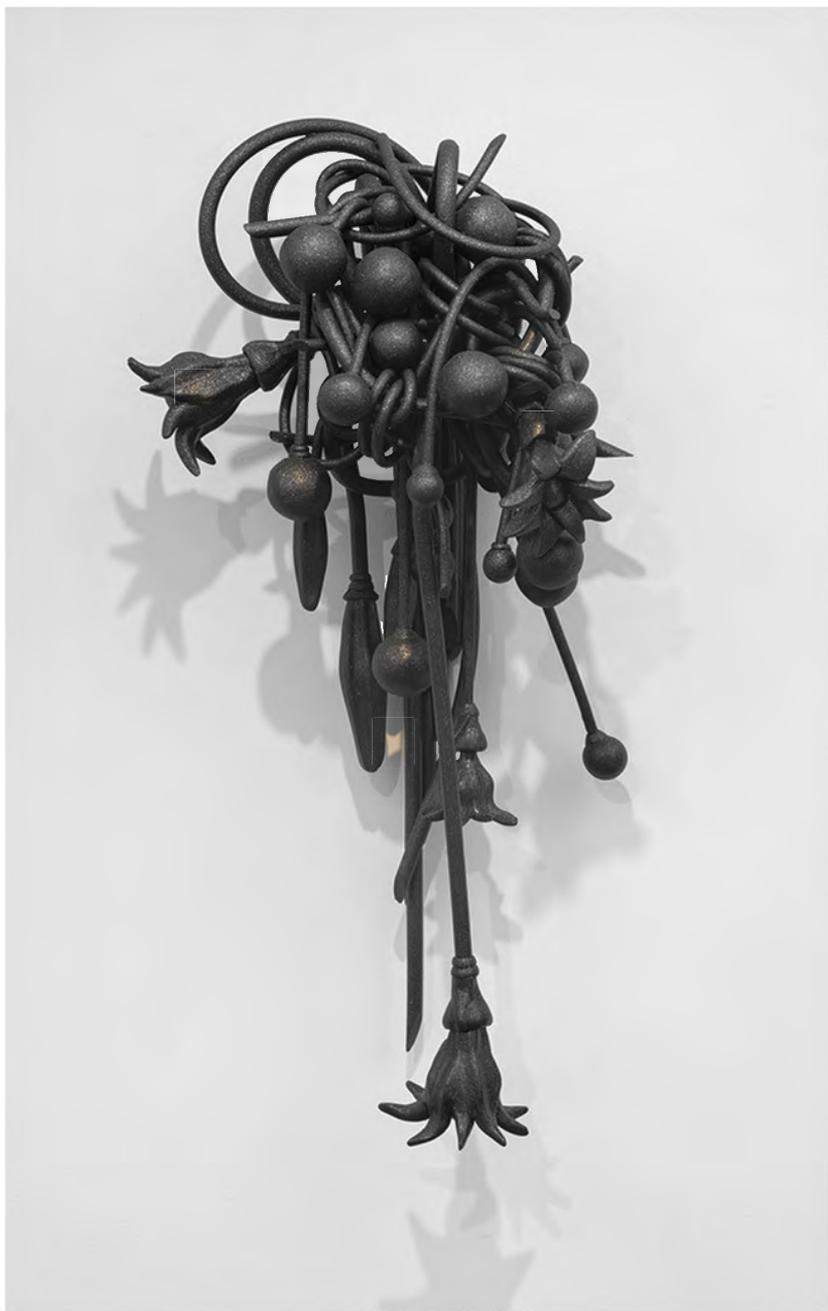


Claudia DeMonte, *Il Corno*, 2013,  
pewter and gold leaf on wood, 14 x 3 x 3 inches



John Avelluto, *Due Facc'*, 2020,  
acrylic on panel, 25.5 x 21 inches

collection of Eugene Strupinsky



John Monti, *Black Frost*, 2021,  
urethane resin, pigments, glitter, 40 x 19 x 14 inches



Nancy Azara, *Tree Altar*, 1994,  
carved and painted wood with gold leaf, 60.5 x 36 x 12 inches

photo: Christopher Burke



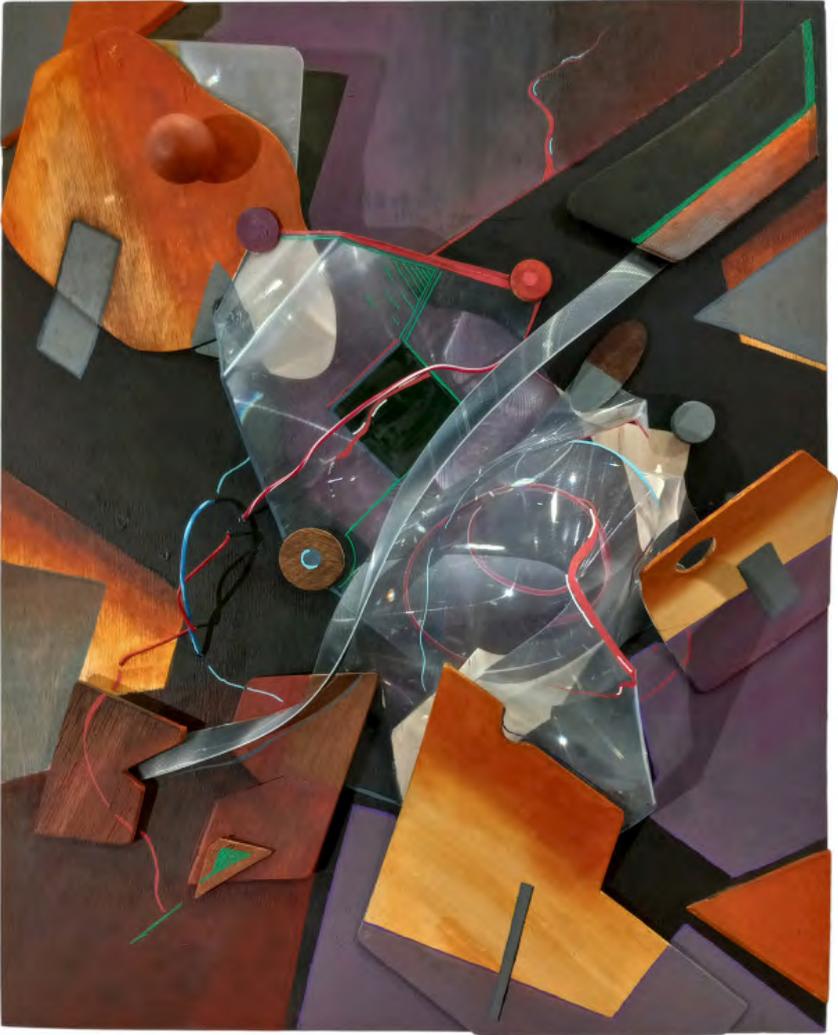
Joanne Mattera, *Silk Road 338*, 2016,  
encaustic on panel, 12 x 12 inches



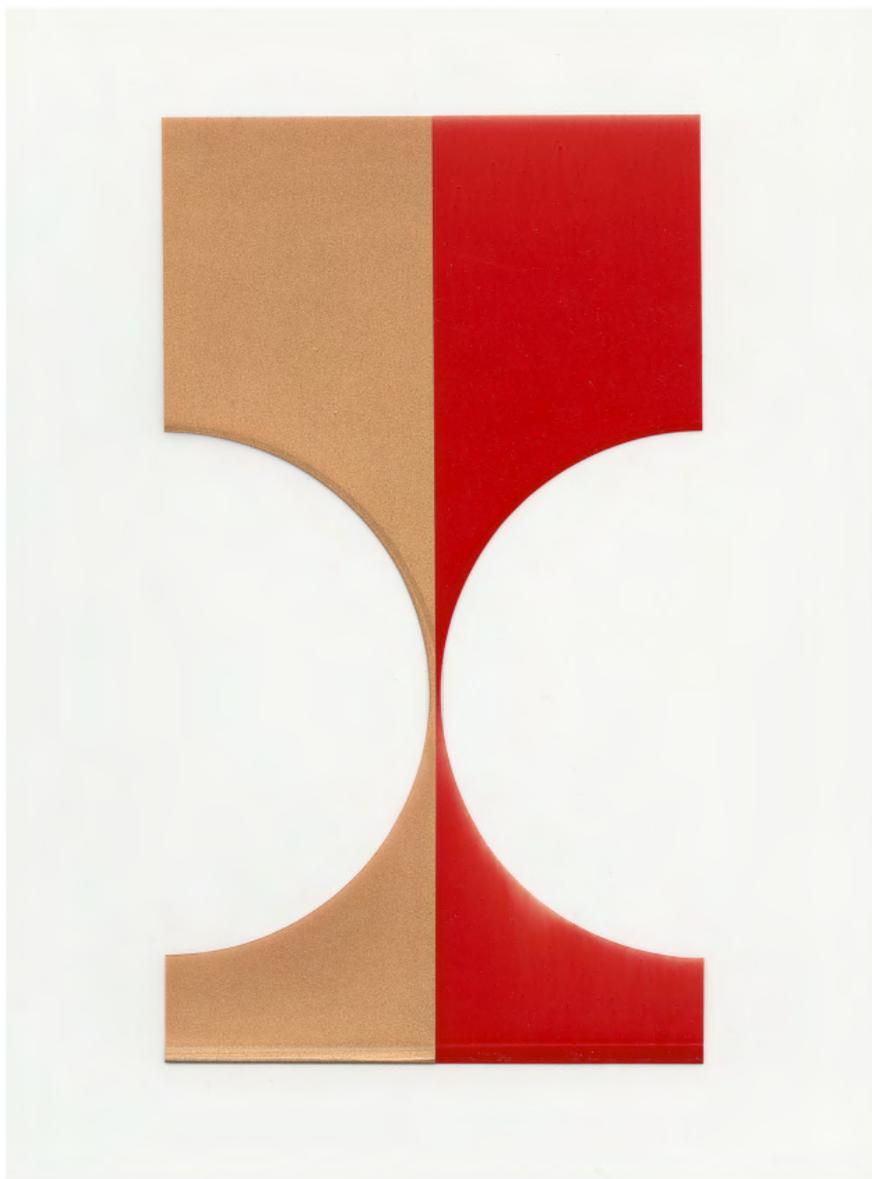
Chris Costan, *I Believe 4*, 2023,  
textile pieces and mixed media on paper, 11 x 13 inches



Elisa D'Arrigo, *Double Dyad*, 2010,  
hand-built and glazed ceramic, 8.5 x 12 x 7 inches



Gianluca Bianchino, *Bubbleverse—Outward Orange*, 2022,  
mixed media, 16 x 20 x 5 inches



Mary Schiliro, *Dip Drip Snip 5*, 2020,  
acrylic on Mylar, 15 x 11 inches



Karen Schifano, *Something's Brewing*, 2022,  
flashe on canvas, 28 x 36 inches



Carolanna Parlato, *Swipe Up*, 2022,  
acrylic on canvas, 42 x 36 inches

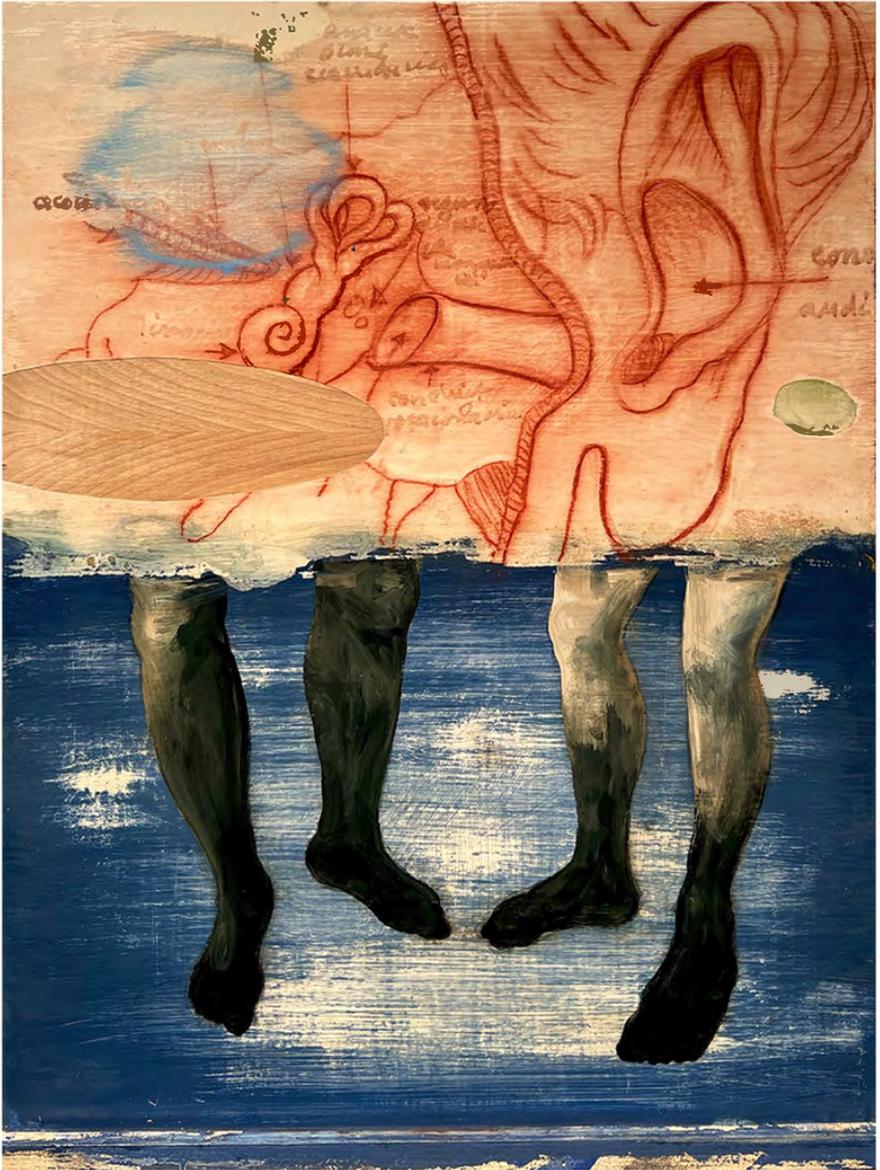
photo: Adam Reich



Denise Sfraga, *Fetish augusta 6*, 2021,  
colored pencil on paper mounted on panel, 12 x 9 inches



D. Dominick Lombardi, *CCWS 28*, 2018,  
sand, wood, papier-mâché, gesso, plexiglass, piano keys, chair leg,  
acrylic medium, acrylic paint, objects, 21.5 x 20 x 14 inches



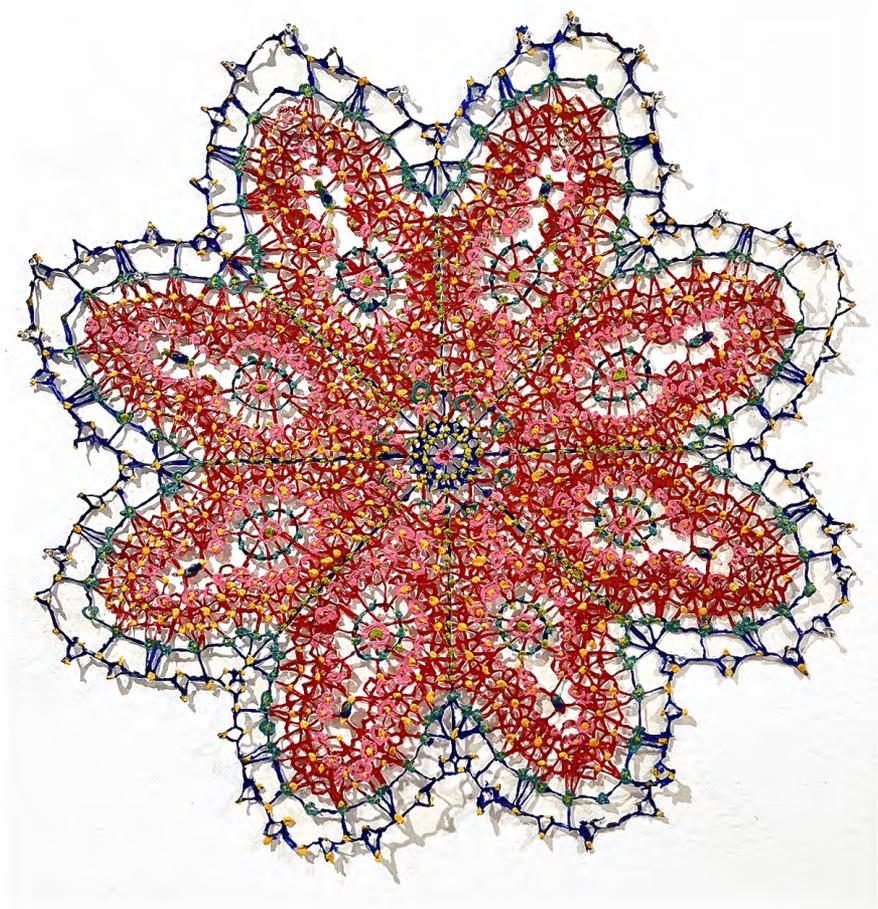
Timothy McDowell, *Siren's Call*, 2023,  
oil on panel, 24 x 18.5 inches



Anna Patalano, *Clashing Cs*, 2022,  
oil on linen, 30 x 30 inches



Lisa Zukowski, *No. 12 (Bundle Series)*, 2015,  
mixed media (burlap, textile, encaustic monotype on cloth,  
old clothes, embroidery, string), 4.5 x 6 x 2 inches



Jennifer Cecere, *Red Star*, 2011,  
acrylic on ripstop nylon, 36 inches diameter







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