

NEWS FOR NOW...NEWS TO USE...NEWS FOR NOW...NEWS TO USE...NEWS
ITALIANS SHOCKED BY GLIMPSE OF SAN FRANCISCO AND ITS MAYOR

MASSA, ITALY—Like dangling petticoat lace, San Francisco's dark side is showing at the old Palazzo Ducale here, sticking out in the lauded retrospective of paintings and drawings by knighted Italian artist Marco Sassone. While the exhibit includes six sensuous blue and gold drenched scenes of San Francisco, the cover of its glossy catalogue is a chilling portrait of a blue-eyed vagrant Sassone met when he took to the city's streets during the boom years of the 1990s to explore and expose the downside of his adopted home. Hanging among his color flooded visions of Venice and Amalfi and the view from Broderick Street down over the Palace of Fine Arts to the bay are more of his haunting portraits of San Francisco's homeless.

Italians are shocked by Sassone's San Francisco revelations since homelessness has only been a wartime phenomenon for them. "The dark side of America," one Italian newspaper headline screamed.

"I hope I don't end up like that!" Massa Mayor Roberto Pucci exclaimed, seeing probably the most exotic objets d'art of the 83 on display: Sassone's two satirical charcoals of Mayor Willie Brown as a flying pig. *Metamorphosis* and *When Pigs Fly* are both also reproduced in the show's glossy catalogue even though the latter was originally part of a letter to the editor of the *San Francisco Chronicle* Sassone wrote to challenge Brown's absolute failure to keep any campaign promise concerning the city's underclass while blaming them for the abrupt downturn in its fortune.

Mingled with his luscious landscapes, Sassone's grim portraits and charcoal drawings are a reminder that in his native country disasters like the great mid-1960's flood of Florence, whose aftermath is depicted in an oil from 1968, result from Nature whereas the destruction blighting the equally beautiful San Francisco comes from the willful sins of humanity. "You can do better," he is telling his adopted home, "and be beautiful in every way."

Sassone's retrospective closes in Massa April 28. A show of his work opens in Milan on May 4 and another in Venice on May 8. Some of the work was shown here with acclaim last December at Pasquale Iannetti Galleries on Sutter. Sassone has a studio in Pacific Heights and is part owner of Pazzia, the popular Tuscan café and pizzeria on Third Street. ##

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