

Culture mixture

The Albertina Academy of Fine Arts, comprising the school of fine arts and a picture gallery, was established in Turin in 1778. The museum collections are an integral part of the academic institution, as they were created as a "teaching aid" for the training of students.

The *Culture Mixture* project, which aimed at acknowledging and enhancing the growing presence of the Academy's foreign students, was meant from the start to reflect this institutional framework.

Objectives

- To promote intercultural dialogue through contemporary artistic expression;
- To give voice and visibility to the work of the Academy's foreign students.

Process

The project started with the selection of three young foreign artists specialising in different art techniques reflecting the Albertina Academy's training courses: Baci Dogan (Turkey, painting), Emanuel Rata (Romania, sculpture) and Moisi Guga (Albania, graphics). The selection was carried out through interviews open to all foreign students, in which candidates were required to submit a proposal for a final artwork and ideas on how to involve and cooperate with students from the "Passoni" Art Institute, a local vocational school specialising in art, design and fashion subjects.

The three artists ran a 15-hour workshop (five afternoons) in the Academy spaces. The workshop, which was addressed to the Arts Institute's youngest students, was introduced by a conference held by Lea Mattarella, art critic and teacher at the Academy of Contemporary History of Art, on the immigration issues dealt with by the established Albanian artist Adrian Paci. The purpose of this conference was to provide young artists and students with insights and suggestions for their creative work.

The cooperative activities carried out in the workshop's framework under the guidance of teachers and of the project team, led to the production of a range of materials on the theme of immigration. These included three artworks created by the Albertina Academy's young students, which, through different techniques (graphics, painting, performance art, sculpture), reflected and reinterpreted the dialogue they had held with project participants during the workshop. The rich, diverse sensibility emerging from these works confirmed the universal nature of artistic languages.

"Poetic Shadows", a great canvas by Baci Dogan whose shaded background represents the mixture of cultures, points to 'a hope without uncertainty, a chance for reconciliation,' in the words of art critic Lea Mattarella.

In his graphic work, Moisi Guga quoted verses by Albanian poet Naim Frashri, 'work night and day to see some light,' a sentence employed by the Communist regime and here reinterpreted from a perspective of hope.

In his performance sculpture entitled "I love my life," Emanuel Rata addressed the question arising from the acknowledgement of migrants' plight through the contrast between a spotless sofa and the boxes used by homeless people.

The project ended with the temporary exhibition *Culture Mixture*, open to the public from 12 to 19 of May 2009, in which video artists Roberto Bella and Carlo Riccobono also took part with two installations: one devoted to the experience of the Academy's three student artists, the other as an introduction to the exhibition, with the metaphor of a wall made of string to be destroyed in order to see beyond.

The artworks of the three students are now an integral part of the Albertina Academy's collections, as an evidence of the integration process of new citizens.

Outcomes

Culture Mixture was beneficial for participants in terms of:

- Personal growth (the result of a humane, collaborative experience);
- Knowledge of different cultural realities;
- Development of organisational skills;
- Visibility of the Academy's foreign students' work.

The project also enriched the contemporary collections of the Albertina Picture Gallery through the acquisition of the young artists' work.

Institution

Albertina Academy of Fine Arts
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Target groups

Young foreign artists attending the Albertina Academy and students of the "Passoni" Art Institute