



PROF. FRANCESCA POLA was at Northwestern University for the winter and spring quarters 2016 as Fulbright Distinguished Lecturer Chair in Italian Studies. She taught two interdisciplinary courses about Italian culture in an international context, through visual arts, from World War II to the present: “Postwar Italian Culture Through Art: From World War II to the ‘miracolo economico’ and the 1960s” (in English) and “Contemporary Italian Culture Through Art: Crucial Topics of Identity from the 1970s to the Present: the Body and the City” (in Italian). With Prof. Paola Morgavi, she organized the film documentary series “Cities of Italy – Portrait Through Art and Language” at Northwestern Library, featuring Piero Manzoni, *Artista*, Emilio Isgrò, *L’ora italiana* and *Swinging Roma*. Her open lecture to the Northwestern community “Art, Photography and Media in the Italian 1960s” focused on the relationship between

visual arts: cinema, tv, printed media, advertising, branding, and consumerism. During her stay, she was able to make productive connections with faculty and students at Northwestern and beyond on topics related to her current research.

In April, Prof. Pola participated in the symposium “Performed in the Present Tense” at the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern, with her lecture “Roles, Scores, Spaces in the European Context of the 1960s and 1970s”. She was actively involved in the academic and cultural life of the area and beyond, presenting lectures and talks about Italian art and culture in various institutions: University of Chicago (“Cesare Zavattini: A Portrait Through Painting, Literature, and Cinema”), DePaul University (“Piero Manzoni’s ‘Eggs Sculpture’ and ‘Consumption of Art 1960’”), The Art Institute (“Postwar Italian Artists in Context: Alberto Burri and Carol Rama”), the Italian Cultural Institute (“Umberto Boccioni and His Legacy in Italian Postwar Art”), the Goethe Institute (“The Artist as Curator: Zero, Azimut/h, and Beyond, Collaborative Initiatives in the International ZERO Movement, 1957-67”), IES Abroad (“Art History and the Challenge of Innovation, an Italian Case Study:

the Gallerie d’Italia Multimedia Projects from 2012 to the Present”). She also participated in the public conversation “An Audio Journey to the Italy of La Dolce Vita with Studs Terkel” at the Italian Cultural Institute, with Tony Macaluso, curator of the Studs Terkel Archive, and Prof. Thomas Simpson.

Through the OLF Fulbright program, Prof. Pola has been visiting and lecturing at Florida International University in Miami and at University of Tampa. In Seattle she participated in the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Enrichment Seminar Seattle (“Where International Efforts to Combat Climate Change Converge”). She was invited to lecture at the Italian Cultural Institute in San Francisco about cultural heritage and contemporary creativity, presenting her project “Arte contemporanea a Villa Pisani”, which develops on-site commissions to contemporary international artists to carry out works conceived specifically for Villa Pisani in Bagnolo di Lonigo (Vicenza, Italy), a juvenile architectural masterpiece by Andrea Palladio.

In June, Prof. Pola returned to Italy, where she teaches at Università Cattolica (Milan and Brescia) and IES Abroad (Milan).



Prof. Pola lecturing at the Block Museum during the Symposium “Performed in the Present Tense”



May 9, 2016
Art, Photography, and Media
in the Italian 1960s

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This year the Department of French and Italian at Northwestern has had the great pleasure of hosting Fullbright scholar Francesca Pola. As an Italian-born art curator, critic, and historian, she is esteemed both in Italy and abroad for her countless works published internationally in multiple languages. Her most recent lecture focused on the inseparability of artistic and visual culture in 1960s Italy, which was truly interdisciplinary in its integration of the unique languages and codes of various mediums.

The artists of the “Piazza del Popolo” school, in particular, explored the intersection of painting, photography, and multimedia art. This approach is exemplified in the work of Mario Schifano, specifically “Futurismo Rivisitato”, in which he projected a photo of futurists in the intellectual capital of Paris onto canvas and proceeded to sketch its outline before filling in the rest with multicolored Plexiglas. The combination of photography and painting is seamlessly married to the simple material imagery and

language of ideology. Another member of this school, Franco Angeli, also tackled this multifaceted approach through his depictions of symbols of authority overlaid with a thin mesh veil. His choice to portray the papal crest and the wolf of Rome emphasizes a language of power and intimidation. Additionally, the use of the screen represents a material erasure of status which distances the spectator from the image, objectifies the subject, and in doing so, generates a new approach to interpreting these symbols of power.

Unlike the Pop Art movement that gained increasing popularity in the United States, the Avant-Garde movement in Italy looked at the history of art. In an Italy saturated with images, artists such as Tano Festa sought to remove objects from a given context and reintroduce them into new, isolated dimensions. The reproduced artificial images of recognizable historic masterpieces such as the “Birth of Venus” and “The Creation of Man” could interact with original masterpieces belonging to the same reality. This juxtaposition evokes a sense of motion both visually on a canvas and temporally as if the artwork were to be filmed through time. This concept of the image and its perception having an active role in everyday art was central to the Avant-Garde movement in Italy, and to this day remains a fixture of the intermediality of the 1960s.

Lindsey Mehl