

Legacies and Visions from Comel to Karshan: a review

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The exhibition *Legacies and Visions from Comel to Karshan* (**fig. 1**), curated by Giulia Martina Weston,

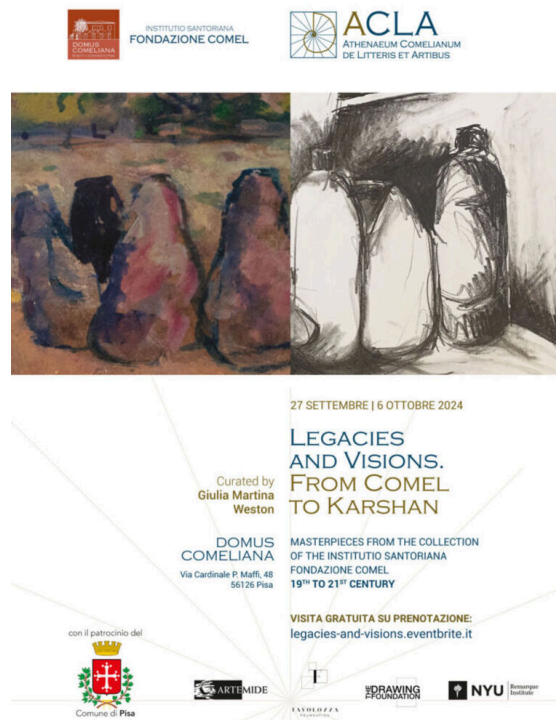


Fig. 1 - Exhibition Poster

opened on September 27th at the Domus Comeliana in Pisa (via Cardinale Pietro Maffi, 48). It closed on October 6th, 2024.

By presenting a selection of paintings, prints, and drawings from the collection of the illustrious dermatologist and professor Marcello Comel (Trieste, 1902 – Pisa, 1995), and an anthology of artworks by Linda Karshan (Minneapolis, 1947), the curator demonstrates that the taste of the former as well as the art of the latter show a heartfelt interest in the human body and its dignity. The author of this review met Linda Karshan during the inauguration of the exhibit. She lives and works in London and New York and «is renowned for her seemingly abstract prints and drawings», created under the guidance of «her inner choreography» [1](#). Her expertise in psychology, philosophy and architectural drawing is awe-inspiring.

The curator designed a site-specific exhibit that could help the visitors understand the vision of Marcello Comel. He built Domus Comeliana with the aim of facilitating the sharing of knowledge between scholars from different fields [2](#). Its recent restoration by Carlo Mariani, a virtuoso architect from Lombardy, has made that place look even more pleasant because it almost seems to capture and soften the Mediterranean light (**fig. 2**).





Fig. 2 - Interior of Domus Comeliana
(Courtesy of © Simone Andreoni)

The paintings by Gerolamo Induno, Moses Levy, Arturo Tosi, Lorenzo Delleani, Giuseppe Pallanti, Carlo Sbisà, and Arturo Nathan, as well as the drawings and the prints executed by Telemaco Signorini, Mario Sironi, Filippo De Pisis, and Renato Guttuso provide objective evidence that the goal of Marcello Comel was genuine. In this exhibit, the fourteen works executed by Linda Karshan are a further testament to noble conception of Domus Comeliana: the interaction between them and the sunlight was surprisingly intense to experience and transformed the two adjacent rooms in which they are located into spaces for meditation and even prayer. After all, the creations of the artist are inspired by Platonism and the transitional space as described by Donald Winnicott [3](#). Therefore, *Legacies and Visions* should be considered as a curatorial masterpiece.

Such a statement is not flattery. Weston even managed to devise the exhibit catalogue as an effective tool to help the visitors understand her project and the pieces of art that can be seen in the Domus Comeliana. And it is bilingual. This book was published by Artemide Edizioni, a publishing house based in Rome that has worked with prestigious institutions and internationally renowned scholars. The mastery of Artemide is displayed in the features of the catalogue: the lettering on the hardcover is blue and gold: two complementary colours. The pages have smooth surfaces that are pleasant to touch. The rendering of the photographs is accurate and precisely renders the tones of the artworks.

The first thirty-two pages of this catalogue are dedicated to the explanation of *Legacies and Visions*, its goals and methodology. They introduce the entries on the forty-two artworks being exhibited. The photographs taken by Tomaso Maria Pedrotti Dell'Acqua almost seem like a further essay: he has captured the soulful and the evocative motifs of all the paintings, drawings, photographs and prints.

The display of *The Abandoned (Compassionate Horse)* by Arturo Nathan (1928) [4](#) demonstrates the dexterity of Giulia Martina Weston as a curator and attests to the objective value of her exhibition (**fig. 3**)

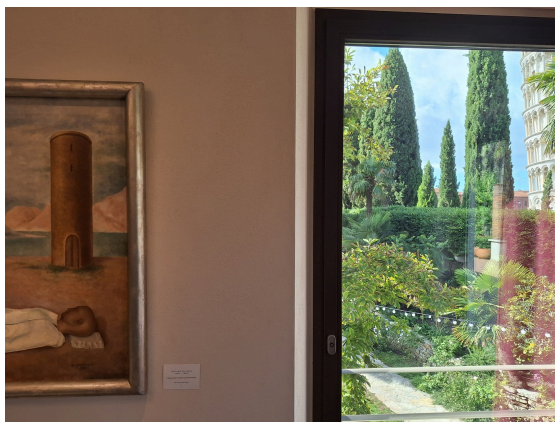


Fig. 3 - Pairing of the tower in
The Abandoned (Compassionate Horse)
by Arturo Nathan and the Torre di Pisa
(Courtesy of © Simone Andreoni)

. This sombre painting is placed next to the window of the first floor from which one has the best view of the Torre di Pisa. By pairing it with the tower in the artwork by Nathan, his role in Italian art history is now fully acknowledged beyond his fate, also emphasising the tragic composition of this painting.

Boy with a Hoop (Camillo Comel) by Jenny Wiegmann Mucchi (1895-1961) [5](#) (fig. 4)



Fig. 4 -JENNY WIEGMANN-MUCCHI
Boy with a Hoop (Camillo Comel)
 Pisa, Institutio Santoriana – Fondazione Comel
 (Courtesy of © Simone Andreoni)

illustrates the continuity between the choices of Marcello Comel as a collector and Linda Karshan's art theory. Wiegmann Mucchi, also known as Genni, was renowned for her heartfelt anti-fascism and humanism. Marcello Comel commissioned her to portray his son. In the exhibition catalogue, Linda Karshan wrote that she was moved by this artwork: she believes that the artist wanted to convey that «everything here is ordered, yet in play» [6](#). This conception is comparable to *The Orlo* (fig. 5) and



Fig. 5 - TOM FECHT, *The Orlo* (detail)
 2004-2009, photographic print on paper, 76 x 56 cm.
 Pisa, Institutio Santoriana – Fondazione Comel
 (Courtesy of © Simone Andreoni)

The Orlo Reversed, photos taken by Tom Fecht between 2004 and 2009 for the project *Karshan Time* [7](#). They depict her drawing with a torch in the empty space of a studio.

Describing the anthology of the pieces of art created by Linda Karshan is not easy: she is a cultivated person who truly loves philosophy, art theory, creating art and psychology. Her personality is impactful, and her drawing style is almost flaming. She does not create art for the sake of art, therefore her drawings by no means can be seen superficially. They demand viewers to inspect and *feel* them. Her performative drawings display both passionate execution and total control. She truly has mastered how to convey the structure of the human body with her grids, and how to geometrically compose her drawings. To such an extent that she can naturally

perform both the tasks. Moreover, her art manifests her solid knowledge of the language of art materials and their properties and can make the most out of the white background in her drawings.

Therefore, *Legacies and Visions* is an unmissable occasion for delving into the visual culture of 19th and 20th-century in Italy, rediscovering their value as well as the intrinsic power of art and its positive effects on the human mind and life.

NOTES

[1](#) KARSHAN STUDIO 2020, *Biography & CV*.

[2](#) WESTON 2024, p. 20.

[3](#) KARSHAN 2024, p. 17.

[4](#) CALABRO 2024, pp. 84-87.

[5](#) FLAMINI 2024, pp. 34-36.

[6](#) KARSHAN 2024, p. 17.

[7](#) BUSCEMI 2024, pp. 113-116.

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