

## THE DOCTOR

Giorgio Forni was born in Valeggio Lomellina on October 29, 1947, after attending the Liceo Classico in Vigevano, he enrolled in the Faculty of Medicine in Pavia.

Having graduated in 1972, Giorgio obtained a specialization in Occupational Medicine at the University of Pavia, then he completed his training with a second specialization in Florence, under the guidance of Prof. Antonini, Professor of geriatrics at the University of Florence, brilliant innovator of the overall approach to the aging of the person. To the genius of his intuitions Antonini, so Giorgio told, added the originality of the method (music, art, in short beauty were used as a therapy); Antonini's substance and method in the care of the person and its health had a striking impact on the students and in particular on Giorgio, who was strongly tempted to follow the path proposed by Antonini to pursue an academic career under his guidance. He eventually did not, but the intellectual bond between Antonini and Giorgio remained strong and secure until the end. Even though in the 80s Giorgio terminated his brilliant career as a doctor to become a "cultural operator", for his whole life he remained a doctor in the special way that Antonini had transmitted him.

## THE CITIZEN

Descendant of one of the most important, rich and powerful agrarian families of Lomellina of the XX century, which had played a pivotal role in the economic, political and cultural history of the province of Pavia as well as at the national level in the fascist period, Giorgio Forni joined Lotta Continua, moving away from it only when the Movement showed a tendency towards violent forms of protest.

His convinced participation in the Movement did not happen so much by taking an active part in the events, as by making contacts with the world of culture and art, taking advantage of his and his family's historical relations with the artists of the XX century and getting close to further artists, such as Vedova, Pomodoro, Bai, as well as enlightened politicians and men of culture, who showed sensitivity, interest and participation in that movement, which was literally overwhelming the Italian social and economic order in '68, involving students and, to a stretch, a sector of the world of work. With the battle name of "Pasticca", Giorgio contributed to the construction and dissemination of the newspaper of the Movement, also guaranteeing its distribution, ensuring the connection between Rome and Milan with its rickety Fiat. The acquisition of works of art, generously donated by the artists thanks to his intercession, was a source of funding for the Movement.

The passion for politics intended as a service and his "social ethic" were the *primum movens* of most of Giorgio's choices, as he was led to write and organize opportunities for civil and cultural growth by a sort of duty of sharing art and beauty with the community. The short experience as Councillor for Culture of the Municipality of Vigevano in 2011, as well as taking active part to the rescuing following the flood of Florence and, as a young doctor, planning the transfer of a group of Lombard health care workers to Irpina to provide assistance to the population during the earthquake, not to mention, most recently, fighting for the reception of migrant children, against all discrimination and inequality, all must all be counted on Giorgio the "citoyen".

The passion for art and beauty, which amounts to Giorgio's signature style, was matched with the need to give body and concreteness to the ideal thrusts, keeping rigorously careful not to waste and not allow the destruction of material resources and evidence of human creativity in every sector.

### **EDUCATION AND PROFILE**

His grandfather, Virgilio Forni, played a fundamental role in the education of Giorgio Forni. The figure of his grandfather is essential to understand the personality of Giorgio: grandfather Virgilio was in turn a complex and eclectic personality. First of all, in his own words, a farmer (much more, in fact, in terms of personal power, reputation, authority and training) deeply attached to the land, but at the same time chemistry graduate, one of the few at the time, a champion of rowing at the Universiade of Paris in 1903, a refined breeder of pointer dogs, a cosmopolitan, a passionate hunter, an elegant host, a man of relationships, but also an art scholar but also curious and art scholar (he attended Brera academy to learn the techniques of oil painting, on paper and on canvas, becoming himself an original and interesting painter). Friend of many of the most important artists of the twentieth century.

It was grandfather Virgilio who introduced his grandson to different worlds, conveying to him curiosity and passion for art and knowledge, along with respect for the land and the work of the earth, the rejection of the waste of material and intellectual resources, the constant tension towards not trivial objectives, vision and at the same time the self-confidence of being and becoming what he wanted. Like his grandfather, Giorgio combined an eclectic personality with a healthy realism; he had an innate detachment from banality, aware, beyond the simplicity of his manners, of where he belonged culturally, socially and economically. Virgilio Forni "scientist" and "artist" has certainly contributed to equip his grandson with the ability to grasp the connection between art and science, art and health/well-being of the person, not as a result of an unlikely "wholeness", but as a result of a confrontation based on mutual suggestions and on a common cognitive tension, played on the thread of criticality. Giorgio Forni treasured it and the "imaginary logic" became his compass for striking the balance between concreteness and his, at time visionary, vision.

Giorgio combined an eclectic mind and a strong vision with a healthy realism. The strong bond with his land and his family tradition pushed him to undertaking the adventure of the purchase/recovery of the Castle of Sartirana Lomellina, making it the goal with which he would measure his curiosity for all aspects of art, knowledge and the expression of beauty. The same curiosity that then led him to travel everywhere, anywhere interweaving relationships with the exponents of different cultures, in search of his personal social aesthetics in the name of creativity. The term is abused, but in Giorgio's case it reflects the subtle balance between constraints and freedom of those who, like him, sought to establish a special link between art and human health and, more broadly, between art and science in the sign of beauty, as he mentioned in a recent interview. He introjected the intuition that the method of the scientist, as well as that of the artist, is "a manoeuvre of the mind", which proceeds from disorder to order, with the creation of forms of works of art on the one hand and scientific theories on the other. A link between science and beauty and human health.

In this perspective, being a doctor, and a doctor deliberately dedicated to the most fragile, matches with being a great collector, in his very original way, which involved sharing the experience of beauty with the community and being constantly engaged in a form of social planning. Curiosity and civil passion led him to become an ambassador of the beauty of Italian culture in the world, by organizing an incredible series of exhibitions and events abroad, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the network of Italian Institutes of Culture, as well as contributing with a significant number of works to the formation of the Farnesina Foundation, this, as well, as a result of a sort of socio-cultural responsibility.

### **THE CASTLE OF SARTIRANA**

Since 1993, Castello Visconteo in Sartirana has hosted the Fondazione Sartirana Arte and its collections and the Centro Studi della Lomellina, both non-profit organizations. The manor has a square plan delimited by four angular towers, of which that in shape of a cylinder having been reinforced by Rodolfo Fioravanti in 1464/1465. The building dates back to the last quarter of the 14th century. It was built by order of Gian Galeazzo Visconti and became the seat of the Secretary of State of Charles V, Cardinal Mercurino Arborio Gattinara with the end of the Milanese duchy (Battle of Pavia 1525). The Arborio Gattinara inhabited the Castle until 1934, when it passed by succession to Amedeo Duke of Aosta. The Castle was donated at the beginning of the 70s to the sculptor Fausto Melotti, of which Giorgio Forni was an admirer and collector, as well as his doctor. Giorgio's connection with Fausto Melotti was critical to acquiring the manor. The establishment of a cooperative of young and less young people, united by personal friendship and the ambitious dream of the recovery of the Castle, at that time in a state of total neglect, made the reopening of the Castle for public use with a first exhibition of fashion and design possible in a short time, thanks to the all members of the cooperative, Pietro Forni, Paolo Forni, Roberto Fasanetto, Liliana Furlani, Ida Bianchessi, Giorgio Orlando, Elena Bedon, Pier Barisio, Angelo Ceretti, Roberto Tedesco, Maria Rosa Cattaneo, Pilu' Virginia Gagliardi, Gaetano Franza, Rocco Franza, who made a personal investment in terms of financial resources, ideas, as well as direct manual work. After that followed several series of exhibitions of antiques of enormous success for over 20 years and thematic exhibitions dedicated to contemporary art, design, glass artist and textile art, under the name of *Tra trama e ordito*, the "ancestor" of the Sartirana Textile Show, now hosted in Turin. The most diverse activities taking place at the Castle until the death of Giorgio Forni have deeply changed the status of the village of Sartirana, bringing it back to life.

### **THE SARTIRANA ARTE FOUNDATION**

The Sartirana Arte Foundation, hosted at the Castle of Sartirana, is the instrument conceived and established by Giorgio for the achievement of the objectives of his visionary logic. Giorgio dedicated himself to the Fondazione until his death, on 11.12.2019. The Foundation was founded on the initiative of Giorgio, with the participation of local authorities, with a triple objective.

The first objective of the Foundation was and is "to preserve evidence" of that extraordinary development, which, in the second half of the twentieth century brought a revolutionary change to decorative arts, that same change which had already been appreciated since the Renaissance and which had made the "Bel Paese" famous in the world. The Sartirana Arte Foundation aims at documenting the fusion between the historic craftsmanship of Italian laboratories and the creative imagination of many representatives of the new Italian design, for reference of future generations.

In recent decades, the Foundation has selected and collected examples of the most innovative and interesting objects made in the last fifty years in the fields of silverware, glassware, furniture design and its accessories, of fashion and its accessories and body ornaments, designed by great Italian artists. For their originality, these collections represent the talent and creativity of contemporary Italians almost as well as the painting and sculpture of our Renaissance and the Castle of Sartirana, Visconti Sforza fortress of the fourteenth century that houses them, represents their "chest".

As a second objective, the Foundation has the task of continuing and developing the fruitful relationship between craftsmen and artists, through a process of catalysing reciprocal exchanges, organizing meetings and commissioning new projects to famous sculptors, painters and architects. The collections exhibited at the Castle of Sartirana highlight the red thread that binds the expert hands of the artisans to the creative masters, thus eliminating the division of work that, for centuries, has separated the world of craftsmanship from that of art.

The third aim of the Foundation has been and is to promote the promotion of these works of exceptional quality through two lines of action. The first line of action aimed at breaking the barrier of silence that surrounds these innovative experiments and seeking new forms of contact and communication with the public, through the organization of exhibitions in the most prestigious art galleries and museums. The second, in the absence of appropriate training centres, consisted in the activation of contacts between the artisanal realities of our country with other similar European and international experiences.

In the past years the collections of the Sartirana Foundation have travelled in many countries. Each of them represents a sort of a "museum in a suitcase", having been hosted by the Italian Embassies and the Italian Institutes of Culture in the five continents, proud of testifying that the Italian contribution to the world artistic heritage is not limited to the great artists of the past, but it vests a significant and distinctive role at the present time as well. The travelling collections are meant to convey the message that sophistication and beauty are crucial elements of the quality of life - which is very Italian – and as such could and indeed should be within everyone's reach.

LORIANA