

The Italian Cultural Institute
presents

Crime & Redemption



Photography Exhibit by Clara Vannucci

Curated by Veronica Santi

Opening reception: February 21, 2014 - 6-9 PM



On view through March 13, 2014
Mon - Fri, 10 am - 4 pm

“Why should I run? Where would I go? Twenty years I’ve lived in prison. Now I have something to live for. Life has meaning.” This was the unexpected and humbling response Clara Vannucci received when she asked a prison inmate of Italy’s notorious Volterra Prison and touring theatre actor why he did not try to escape when he had so many opportunities to do so.

In 1998, Armando Punzo established the Compagnia della Fortezza, a theatre troupe comprised of dangerous felons and hardcore “lifers,” at Tuscany’s Volterra Prison, which shares a reputation akin to California’s Folsom Prison and New York’s Sing Sing. In Italy they have found prison theatre to be highly therapeutic, producing positive results for rehabilitating prisoners and ultimately reintegrating them into society. Actor-inmates are taught how to read, to work collaboratively, and to be responsible for each other, as well as themselves. Traveling troupes perform to sold-out crowds in small towns throughout Italy and the inmate’s experience is very much like a real touring actor’s. During the day the men are free to roam, without supervision by guards, at night they perform, and then at the close of the performance they are escorted to the local prison for their overnight stay.

Clara Vannucci began her series seven years ago, and through her lens continues to capture the remarkable transformation these men undergo, trying on roles of alternate characters lives and in the process leaving behind the stigma and pain of their own past regressions, albeit for a brief moment on stage.

Yet, that moment proves to be profound as it provides the actor-inmates with an opportunity to reconnect with their deeper humanity and figuratively escape the physical barriers that cut them off from society. For these men, Vannucci reveals that theatre is redemption.