

The Korea Herald

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Ancient art form rediscovered

The Italian Cultural Institute is presenting a master of the ancient, rich and engaging art of engraving.

Francesca Poto's "In Canto" exhibition offers an art form that is very rare due to the complexity and time needed to make just one piece.

"In Europe there are probably about 20 people doing this," said the director of the institute, Lucio Izzo. "One piece can cost the artist three months of work compared to a modern artist who can produce 10 paintings during that timeframe."

In her collection of engravings, Poto devotes herself mostly to the evolution and history of the mermaid.

She explained that in ancient times the mermaid had wings, but with the spread of Christianity, the siren was removed from the skies to live a life under the sea.

"They were the messengers of knowledge and spread it all over the world," she said. "The fact that they were confined to the sea diminished the spread of knowledge."

In folkloric theology, once the mermaids, or sirens, got their wings they were then elevated to angelic status.


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To show the story of the mermaid, Poto uses different techniques almost lost to modern artists.

"She still uses the old tools that are very hard to find," said Izzo.

Her works are presented on stone, wood, copper, steal and plexiglass; "It's like the evolution of human kind's use of canvases," said Izzo.

Running until July 21 at Gallery Pici in Cheongdam-dong, her 26 works will then move to MoA Gallery in Heyri Art Valley, Paju on July 25.

The exhibition also presents another purpose; diplomatically it offers the possibility for Korean artists to learn about a form that is almost extinct.

"We are thinking of developing with local universities some kind of cooperation which would include teaching this form," said Izzo. "We can further our knowledge and cooperation between artists to rediscover this technique."

By Yoav Cerralbo

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