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Press Release

ANTIQUÉ TOYS, THE (HIDDEN) ART OF THE MUSEUM OF LUNI, MODERN ANTIQUES AND DESIGN.

FROM 2 MARCH, THE MERCANTEINFIERA YOU WEREN'T EXPECTING

Ilaria Dazzi “In Italy, some artworks are kept in museum storage rooms. For ten days, Fiere di Parma will be returning the (hidden) archaeology of Liguria’s Luni museum to the public at large”

(Parma, 11 December) - Dolls, toy soldiers and toy trains. A toy is never just a toy. It is a living item which takes us all back to a magical place. A toy is a story, a chapter of our time. It’s there to remind us to remember how we were, and perhaps even “what” we have become.

Mercanteinfiera will be opening on 2 March with the fringe event “Let’s play: how we used to play. Toys and games from the private collection of Gianni Marangoni” plunging us into a world of both individual and collective memories. The top-flight international fair will once again be bringing the premises of Fiere di Parma to life until 10 March.

The stories told in the second fringe event scheduled to take place, “Stories of the town of Luna” are, on the other hand, all from Liguria. Fragments of daily life in the shadow of Rome.

Organised in conjunction with the Ligurian museum, the exhibition sees a journey into the ancient town of Luna (now Luni) established in 177 B.C. as a Roman military outpost by consul Marco Emilio Lepido (one of the triumvirs to whom the Via Emilia highway is owed).

Unseen drawings of the site from 1800 onwards, made by Carlo Promis in 1857, will set the stage at Fiere di Parma for archaeological materials, bronzes and tiles dating back to Augustan times such as the head of Mars. All are important works, yet to date they have remained off-limits to the public at large because they are kept in the store rooms of the Luni Museum.

“In Italy, some works of art are kept in museum store rooms,” says Ilaria Dazzi, Brand Manager at Mercanteinfiera “For this edition, we decided not to go for a fringe exhibition for the big names that are an instant attraction. Instead we have decided to give greater visibility to an archaeological legacy which has remained unknown because it is kept in museum store rooms.”

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Mostra internazionale di modernariato, antichità e collezionismo

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Yet the phenomenon of “hidden” art is not solely the preserve of Italy.

Research conducted in 2016 by American magazine Quartz into the artistic assets stored in twenty museums (including the NY MoMa and the St Petersburg Hermitage) and over two thousand works by thirteen famous artists (such as Cézanne, Monet and Shiele) revealed that, on average, major museums only exhibit around 5% of their collections.

“As a trade fair,” Dazzi continues, “we decided to raise the profile of hidden art.” It is a courageous operation, and one which reflects its commitment to help put the outstandingly diverse cultural riches that make Italy unique of its kind back in the public eye. More than a promotional initiative, it involves raising awareness of what we are once again.”

Yet antiques, modern antiques, design and vintage collectibles remain the undisputed hallmarks of Mercantinfiera: ranging from rare eighteenth-century furnishings dating from Napoleonic times, to unique Sumerian statues dating back to the fourth millennium B.C., such as the large-eyed idol from the temple of Tell-Brak; from English seventeenth-century coin collection cabinets to Tuscan sideboards with Breccia Stazzema marble (a marble quarry from the times of the Medici family, destined solely for the nobility). Not to mention the paintings, from the Flemish artists to Guareschi, the master of flowers, to De Nittis, Bocchi or Boldini. Five centuries of history, concluding with design’s most iconic objects: Gio Ponti, Joe Colombo and Franco Albini, to name but a few.

Mercantinfiera's weapons of seduction feature no shortage of vintage fashion. “Marlenes”, the Jimmy Choo feather shoes made famous by Carrie Bradshaw in Sex and the City, are not a rarity. Other finds include colliers by Larry Vrba, the renowned designer behind the Victoria’s Secret fashion shows, Morris Moskowiz’s famous mini-bags, not to mention the colourful evening gowns designed by Versace, LV, Hermès and Chanel. There will also be a large section dedicated to timepieces such as Rolex, Audemars Piguet, Vacheron Constantin, Patek Philippe and Hublot.

The magnetic appeal of the event’s 1,000 exhibitors reaches everyone, from enthusiasts to the curious, young and old alike. To date, each edition attracts over 50 thousand visitors, 5,000 buyers and architects from all over the world who come to Mercantinfiera to find inspiration for a new language in furnishing.

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