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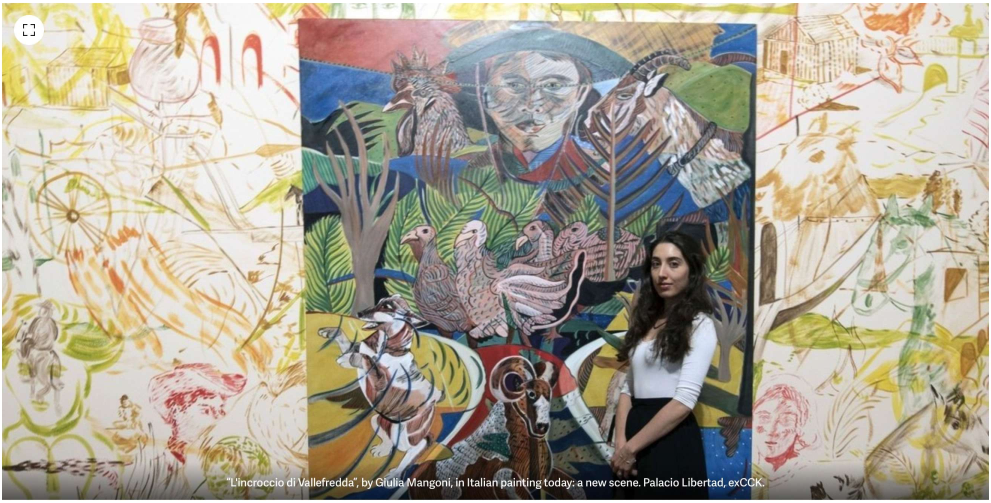
Giulia Mangoni, the Italian artist who brought the spaghetti western into dialogue with the Argentine gaucho

- His work is at the center of the exhibition "Italian Painting Today: A New Scene" mounted at the Palacio Libertad (formerly CCK).
- Curated by Damiano Gullì, the exhibition brought the richness and complexity of the new Italian painting scene to Buenos Aires through the works of 27 artists representing the main trends of the time.



"L'incroccio di Vallefredda", by Giulia Mangoni, in Italian painting today: a new scene. Palacio Libertad, exCCK.

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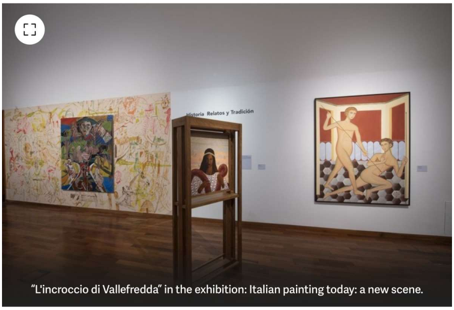
Giulia Mangoni's work is the one that steals the show " *Italian Painting Today": a new scene* mounted at the Palacio Libertad (formerly the CCK). It sits in the middle of the main gallery and is presented as a work within another. Or as a work surrounded by another with which it converses;

and they blend together.

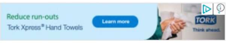
The exhibition was conceived by the Milan Triennale (Triennale Milano) and the Italian Cultural Institute of Buenos Aires, and promoted by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Italian Embassy in Buenos Aires. Curated by **Damiano Gullì** , the exhibition brought the richness and complexity of the new Italian painting scene to Buenos Aires through the works of 27 artists representing the main trends of the time.

Giulia Mangoni 's work "L'incroccio di Vallefredda" presents a back-and-forth, a meeting between Italy and Argentina. It's a painting made in her Italian studio, mounted on a wall in the former CCK gallery. The artist worked for two days, creating a background that accompanies and contrasts the meanings and characters depicted. It features images and protagonists: **the gaucho, the Argentine countryside, the horses** blending with the Italian prairies where Italian spaghetti westerns were filmed. The canvas captures the cowboy's dream, nature, and the strong Italian presence in Argentina.



"L'incroccio di Vallefredda" in the exhibition: Italian painting today: a new scene.

Mangoni was present at the opening and told us about the work process involved in creating this composition: "The work, an oil painting on canvas, was created in Italy for an exhibition that was part of a project I was doing that reflected the idea of constructing a territory, because I've been interested in this theme for years. I returned to live on



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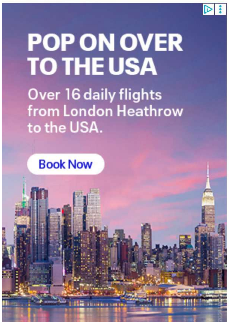
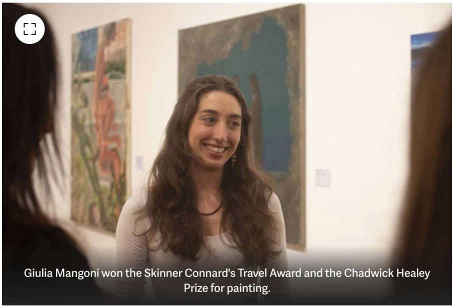
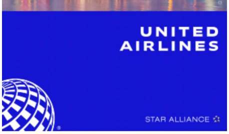


Isola dell'Iri in the province of **Frosinone** , where I was born. I'm very interested in narratives outside of the urban, exploring the rural, and seeing a bit of Italian magical realism. I'm half Italian and half Brazilian, so I always have a bit of both worlds. When I returned to my hometown, I started creating works that explored the cultural identity of that territory and the construction of identity."


Giulia Mangoni won the Skinner Connard's Travel Award and the Chadwick Healey Prize for painting.

–What did you find in common between the Italian and Argentine territories to create this work?

–In this case, it has to do with the spaghetti western and the idea of the cowboy. There's an area that was widely used in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s to film those movies. There are many landscapes that look like **Nevada, Mexico, or South America** , yes, but they're Rocca Secca, Campo di Appennino, very close to Rome. And I was fascinated because this was linked to the territorial tradition of bandits, who were authentic 19th-century cowboys. I'm fascinated when there are layers of history that touch in time. So I imagined a young protagonist who finds himself at a decisive moment in his life, at a crossroads, like the one in **Vallefredda** . The work speaks of this plurality of open paths, but it's not obvious which path he should take, and each animal represents a hero, a path, a way, in this landscape.



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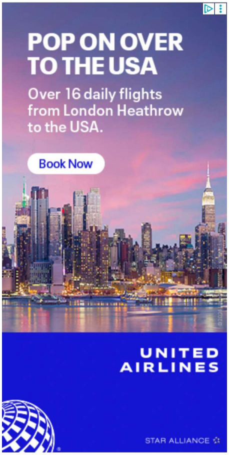

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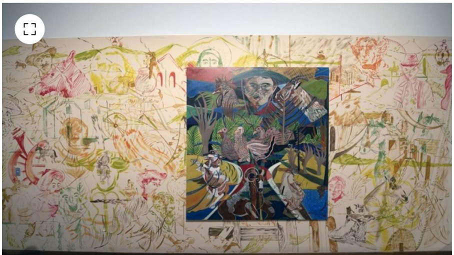

“L'incroccio di Vallefredda”, by Giulia Mangoni, in Italian painting today: a new scene. Palacio Libertad, exCCK.

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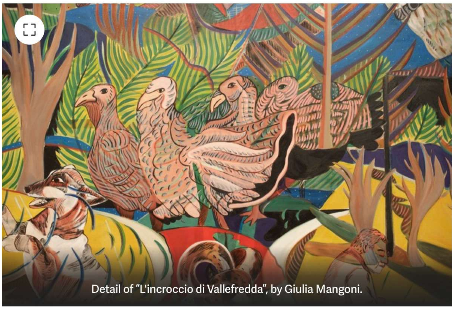
–What is the protagonist portrayed in your work like?

–He's in a moment of equilibrium. He's a character who also speaks of the territory as one in equilibrium; he's halfway there, he hasn't quite understood what he wants to be. He's not very industrial, rural, or touristy, and he hasn't figured out which direction he'll go culturally. Then, in my interpretation, he dreams in this context of going beyond his own territory, perhaps to Abruzzo, to be a kind of cowboy, to live a romantic life, to find the solution in the imaginary of the Western, and that's why I enjoyed thinking about the imaginary of the Spaghetti Western adapted to this place.

–What was the invitation to come and bring a work of this nature to Buenos Aires?



Detail of “L'incroccio di Vallefredda”, by Giulia Mangoni.

–When Damiano Gullì asked me to bring a work here, I said, "Let's bring him, because he's a character who dreams of traveling. Let's make him travel here and in South America," because Westerns often portrayed a false South America. In my interpretation, there's an additional layer: in the mural painting, I work on his dream of Buenos Aires, so he imagines the life of a cowboy, of an Argentine gaucho, watching Argentine Westerns, all the films that take place in the Pampas. In any case, those Westerns are a portrait

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seen from the outside, from the cinema, seen with American influence. It's not a real portrait, but a construction upon a construction, upon an imagination, upon a dream.

–What is that dream like?

Giulia Mangoni with the curator Damiano Gullì.

–It speaks to this desire to find one's own path, and to dream of different paths. And that's what I did in this mural, which took me two days. It's an unplanned composition, so I prepared by drawing a lot about films and cinematic things that spoke to Argentine territory. I created an archive of drawings that I then compiled here because I don't know Argentina very well either, so it's also my way of saying, "Hello, I'm Giulia."

–And how did you build that image of Argentina?

–It's only the first layer of a deeper understanding. I see an entire Argentine dream, the paths, the journey, the immigration, the memory, the nostalgia, the imagination, the idealization of the other country: that's always there. There are all these stories of immigration, conquest, violence, and the movement of rootedness and uprooting. That's more or less the idea. Yes, it's also a current situation, not just a historical one. Then there's also the idea of the young person who has lost their way, which now, in our pluralistic world, is wonderful because there are always many open paths, globalization, travel, the internet, but it's also true that there's a lot of confusion and that this moment of assessing the path isn't obvious.

–How do you see your work placed within this exhibition?

–It's a celebration of a narrative. In my opinion, many of these paintings in this room have this quality of celebrating narrative, its stratifications. There's a path, and whoever sees it has to work a little, take the steps, look, walk. Then I like the work to appear and be erased: after the exhibition, it's destroyed.

–What conceptual elements came together in this work?

–It's an invitation. I like the painting to say "Come here and see." The work comes from my pictorial roots, from the artists I saw growing up in Brazil in the 1980s, the expansive Brazilian painting, which also included the anthropophagous movement now at Malba, the "Abaporu" by Tarsila do Amaral. It's my "Mona Lisa." I went to greet her because it's philosophy, an imaginary, a culture that feeds on other cultures to survive. I think if you really study painting, painting contains everything: literature, philosophy, theater, mathematics, because to do something like that you need proportion. Yes. It becomes a lens through which to see the world. That's my idea. I'm more of this school than the one that uses painting to apply a philosophy. I think painting is philosophy and helps you see the world. But this isn't for everyone; only I see it that way.

Italian Painting Today. A New Scene. At the Palazzo Libertà (formerly the CCK). 2025. Giulia Mangoni and Damiano Gulli

–Does nature come in and out of your life?

–It's very important because you have a kind of worldview, a complete and comprehensive vision. It's a way of positioning life, relationships. My painting changes my life. Often when I work with animals, even those I raise at home, like with Rupert, the rooster, I see that nature isn't a cold application; it's my life.

Until September 21, 2025, from 2:00 PM - 8:00 PM, in Rooms 705 and 706 of the Palacio Libertad.

Bio

Giulia Mangoni was born in 1991 in Isola del Liri, FR, grew up between Italy and Brazil and has now returned to live and work in her hometown. Mangoni holds a Foundation Degree in Art and Design from Falmouth University of the Arts (2011), a BA in Painting (Hons) from City & Guilds School of Art, London (2014) – where she also won the Skinner Connard's Travel Award and the Chadwick Healey Prize for Painting – and an MFA from SVA Art Practice, New York City (2019).

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