

Karen Wilberding Diefenbach

The Pecore-Recent Sculpture

November 1 - December 14, 2012

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 1, 6-8 pm

Italian Cultural Institute of San Francisco

814 Montgomery Street (415) 788-7142 Gallery Hours: M-F 11-5 and by appt.



The Italian Cultural Institute of San Francisco presents San Francisco artist Karen Wilberding Diefenbach's recent bronze sculptures from Italy, *The Pecore*, at its Gallery at 814 Montgomery Street, San Francisco CA, November 1-December 14, 2012.

Opening reception for the artist
Thursday, November 1,
6-8 pm



Information and Photos:
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The exhibition will feature life-size and miniature bronze sculptures of the **Pecore Massese** sheep, an endangered old-world species which has captivated the artist for many years, as well as paintings and works on paper created at the artist's studio near Lucca, Italy.

Diefenbach, who received her MFA at the San Francisco Art Institute, has divided her time for the past 10 years between San Francisco and the village of Camaiore, Italy, which dates to Roman times. (Her house and studio are 15 minutes from the Lucca city walls.) Shortly after arriving, she discovered the local

Title: Pausa 2, 11 x 7 x 4", Bronze, 2012

breed, an ancient species documented to 1400 AD and memorialized in Niccolò Machiavelli's The Life of Castruccio Castracani of Lucca.

The animals, their shepherd, and the harsh beauty of their home in the Tuscan hills serve Diefenbach as both muse and metaphor. With long necks, spindly legs, anvil-shaped heads and black mantles, the Massese are at once vulnerable and enduring, sentinels of an ancient time grazing in the present-day. This duality is of past in present pervades Italy, in contrast to America, says Diefenbach, and has fundamentally changed her "notion of time."



Amabile 1, 31 x 46 x 19" bronze, ed. 1/3 unique patina, 2011.

"The Italian Cultural Institute is proud to host an exhibit which reflects on Italy's heritage and traditions from the perspective of a contemporary American artist," says incoming Institute Director Paolo Barlera. "Karen genuinely feels at home in both cultures and her work speaks to universal issues and the difficult struggle to honor age, tradition and ritual amidst modernity."

Seen on a Tuscan or San Francisco Bay Area hillside, Diefenbach's life-size works appear disarmingly realistic; in a gallery setting, the artist's craft and imagination and the spirit animating each figure become clear.

San Francisco art historian Paul Karlstrom has described Diefenbach's sculptures as "mournful, enigmatic...bearers of meaning" and sees her forms as "a container for ideas."

"The Pecore are really a blank canvas suitable for what I want to say. They provide me with a metaphor for ritual and survival in harsh surroundings, in their dignity, their fragility, the acceptance of their simple rituals, and the cycles of the years," says Diefenbach.



Allegro, 32 x 47 x 19", bronze with unique patina, 2012.

Today Diefenbach's survivors from another time are at risk of extinction. The Italian government has just launched an effort to save the Massese, whose numbers have fallen below sustainable levels for the first time ever. "If this exhibit can in any way ignite interest in saving these survivors from another age, I hope it will," says the artist.

About the Artist:

A MFA Graduate of the San Francisco Art Institute, Karen Wilberding Diefenbach studied drawing with Manuel Neri and counts him as a lasting influence.

In 2013, a flock of Diefenbach's Pecore will be displayed in the Piazza Grande of Arezzo, Italy, by invitation of the Mayor. The artist's 2010 solo exhibition at the ARIA Gallery in Florence, Italy, featured catalogue essays by historian Paul Karlstrom,

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former director of the Archives of American Art, and Gail Gregg, artist, writer and frequent contributor to Artnews. The show was featured in Vogue Italia and in The Huffington Post. Diefenbach last showed in San Francisco and Healdsburg in 2002 and 2007, respectively, with Jernigan Wicker Fine Arts. She has had solo exhibitions at the Bobbie Greenfield Gallery, Los Angeles, Toots and Magoo, Chapel Hill, NC; and has participated in group exhibitions in numerous international art fairs and galleries.



Pecore near the Artist's home in Lucca, Italy, 2012.

Working Method:

From her studio in an old hayloft on her farm near Lucca, Italy, Diefenbach first made small sculptures in clay. She then perfected her technique in wax, scraping and modeling the surfaces prior to casting the sculptures in bronze. Over time, Diefenbach developed life-size forms as well, working in small editions of 1-4. Each work has a unique patina, created while the bronze is still hot at the foundry. The artist casts and adds the patinas in collaboration with an artisan at Artworks Foundry in Berkeley, CA.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=PM3ydVuYkag

About the Italian Cultural Institute of San Francisco
http://www.iicsanfrancisco.esteri.it/IIC_Sanfrancisco

Artist Website
<http://www.karenwilberdingdiefenbach.com>

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