



UPDATE

Italic Institute of America
“Italian Pride on a Classical Foundation”

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www.italic.org



What Now?

by John Mancini, Executive Director



In the long sad saga of *La Casa Italiana* at Columbia University—that 30,000 s.f. palazzo donated by Italian Americans in 1927 who are now denied access—we have reached another insulting wall of silence. This time, it’s Italian Ambassador Varricchio.

In February, our Italic Institute managed to collect written endorsements from all the major organizational leaders for the nomination of Dr. Dona De Sanctis to the Board of the Italian Academy, which operates in *La Casa*. Six of those fourteen Board members are appointed by the Italian government, Columbia appoints the others.

But why has Ambassador Varricchio (right) not replied to Dona’s nomination in six weeks? The endorsements come from the community’s major organizations, activists, and legislative leaders. Should only the Italic Institute be offended by this silence?



Here are the Ambassador’s ironic words from 2016: “[To the Italian American community] *I would like to convey a message of trust, of closeness... Don’t hesitate to contact us, to tell us what we could be doing better. ...we need your help.*” - Armando Varricchio [6/29/16 in a NYC interview]

Clearly, the Italians have been cowed by Columbia, based on a published report in the *Columbia Spectator*, to keep their hands off the Academy and to place only university-friendly appointees on the Board (see the next section). Of the six Italian Board members, one being the Ambassador himself, half are ethnic Jews. The Academy showcases Holocaust studies, Palestinian issues, and a new orientation toward Indigenous peoples.

The Italic Institute is *res non grata* (an unwelcome entity) at Columbia since our 2012 lawsuit to restore *La Casa*’s Italian American connection – Columbia employees, including the Italian Dept, are forbidden to talk to us.

The Intimidator

The man who rules the Italian Academy with an iron fist is Prof. David Freedberg (below). A native of South Africa, he arrived at Columbia University in 1986 to teach Dutch art and landed the directorship of the Italian Academy at *La Casa Italiana* when the Italian government purchased the building in 1991. He speaks Italian fluently and houses his new organization for indigenous cultures at *La Casa*.

He has no patience for outside interference and stared down the Italians during the Berlusconi administration. Here were his words then:

“I received a complaint that the fellowships, which we assigned, had not been in line with the Italian government’s policy, and I have sternly rejected this...I am looking forward to times in which the board members will be more supportive.”



Good Press

Institute opinions have been published in various press outlets. Rosario Iaconis continues to reap success with pro-Italian letters in *The Financial Times* (international) and the *Bergen (NJ) Record*. Bill Dal Cerro scored a hit with a full page story in a *Chicago Tribune* publication in Park Ridge, IL, protesting the anniversary showing of *Godfather II* at a local movie house. Anyone can find this film on TV, weekly. The glorification of “Mafia” movies approaches religious proportions. (Long Island’s *Newsday* just did a 6-page cover story on a mob murderer who reached 102 years of age. I smell a screenplay!)

John Mancini’s protest letter to Notre Dame University over its decision to blank off Christopher Columbus murals was published with photo in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, thanks to our local reps Dominic DiFrisco and Lou Rago.

We Need Support!

Should we all roll over and accept our fate? Italian American organizations are focused on galas and charitable giving while our core heritage is being eviscerated.

*****Give to the Italic Institute...The Alternative!*****