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TIZIANO DOSSENA

ART CRITIC, AUTHOR, AND OSDIA MEMBER ON RECENT BOOK,
"THE DANCE OF COLOR"

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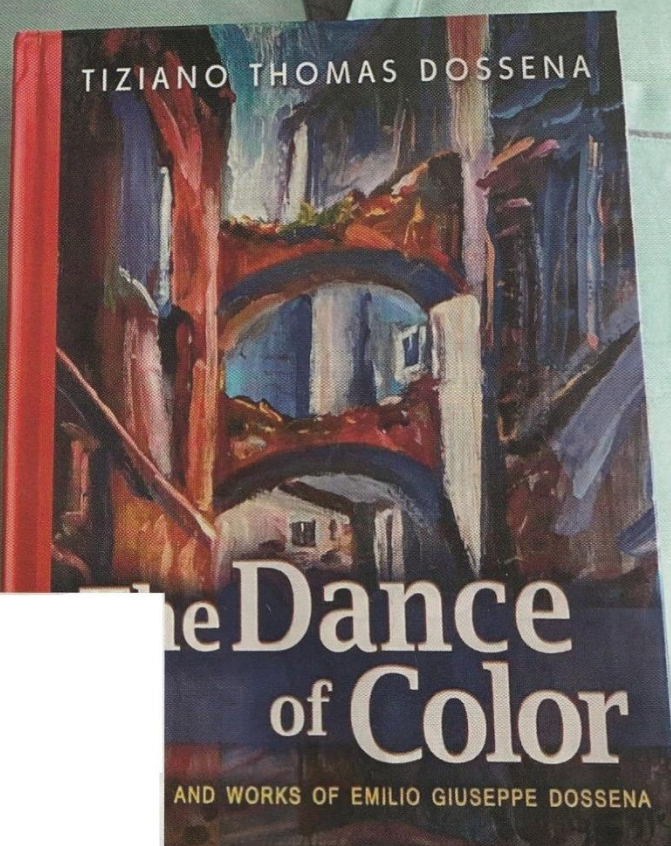
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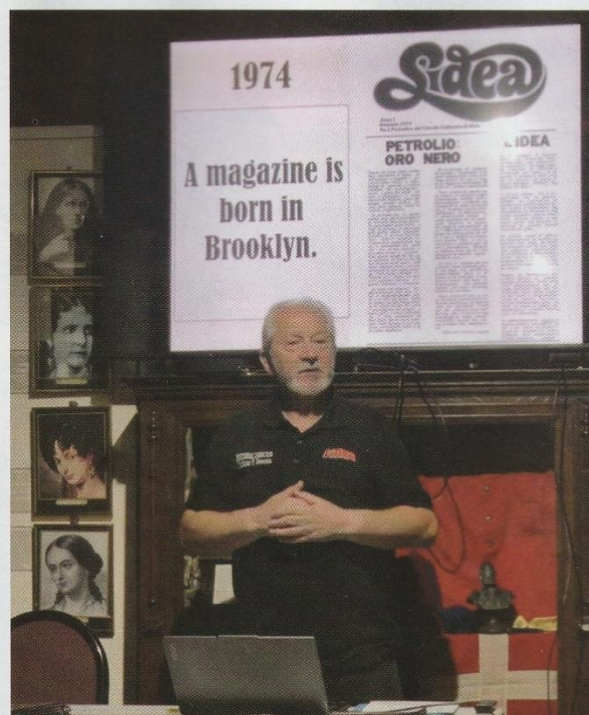
An Interview with Tiziano Thomas Dossena

BY FRANCES R. CURCIO, PH.D.

Tiziano was 16 years old when he and his parents emigrated from Milan and established residence in Brooklyn. In 1978, after completing high school and earning three college degrees, he and his parents moved back to Milan. Following the death of his father in 1987, Tiziano returned to New York, establishing residence first in The Bronx, and then in Westchester. He has devoted his professional life to making numerous contributions to support and assist Italian Americans.

As a founding member of the “Celebrated Authors of the New York State Order of the Sons and Daughters of Italy” (NYS OSDIA) committee, Tiziano is no stranger to the Italian American community, and his personal and professional contributions reach well beyond our borders. Since 2005, he has been a member of the Garibaldi Lodge #2583 in Eastchester, serving as recording secretary and trustee. A recipient of many awards over the years, Tiziano cites his proudest honor in 2019, when the NYS OSDIA Grand Lodge bestowed the Literary Award upon him. Throughout the years, he has lectured at the Garibaldi Meucci Museum where he recently had an art exhibition of his father’s work. In the following interview related to the publication of his recent book, *The Dance of Color* (Idea Press, 2023), he provides insights into his devotion to his family, art, literature, and the broader Italian American community.

Over the years, Tiziano has returned to Italy many times and he has always felt that “colpo al cuore” when visiting his native city. He describes a feeling of being at home even though many years have gone by and “his city” has changed a lot, on the surface. “After all,” he says, “there are still so many buildings, so many streets, and so many people that bring back fond memories of those early years of my life.”



Tiziano Dossena giving a presentation about L'Idée Magazine at the Garibaldi Meucci Museum in Staten Island, New York. Photo courtesy of Tiziano Dossena.

TIZIANO THOMAS DOSSENA

The Dance of Color

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF EMILIO GIUSEPPE DOSSENA

The cover image of Tiziano Dossena's book, "The Dance of Color." Photo courtesy of Tiziano Thomas Dossena.

What was your purpose for writing the book, *The Dance of Color*?

In one of my lectures, I discuss the necessity for everyone in their later years of life to retrace their roots and write a memoir, whether it be about themselves and their experiences or those of their families. It doesn't have to be published, but it is essential that we leave the history of our family behind for our successors. It is the greatest gift we can give to the younger generations.

I stood by that belief and wrote the book for my family, for the many collectors who own one or more of my father's paintings, for art historians, and for the public to discover this great artist's marvelous story.

What do you hope readers and art historians will get from reading the book?

My father, Emilio Giuseppe Dossena, was a Renaissance Man. He followed the teachings of our great artists of that period by getting involved in different aspects of the artistic world. He created stunning paintings in his sixty-year artistic career, decorated churches and castles with classical paintings and frescoes, and restored paintings of Renoir, Rembrandt, Picasso, and other Masters. He knew how to paint frescoes, but also how to remove them from crumbling walls to save them from destruction, and to restore them. The book allows the world to discover the lesser-known traits of this artist.



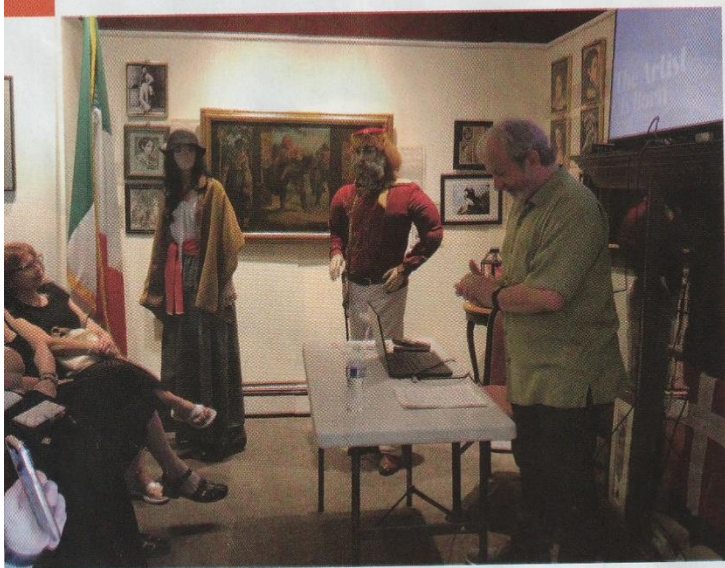
Tiziano Dossena poses with members of the Giuseppe Garibaldi Lodge #2583 in Eastchester, New York, after the 2024 Columbus Day parade. Photo courtesy of Tiziano Dossena.

You carefully set the stage for readers by organizing periods of your father's artwork into chapters with some helpful commentary. What were some of the challenges you encountered as you created the structure for the book?

As for any biography of a deceased artist, I discovered there were some years in which little documentation was left. World War II was one culprit, and the destruction of his studio in 1968 was another. I had to reconstruct some of these events by recalling my conversations with my father. From that point on, I had to research with family friends, and institutions to find the documentation verifying the facts. It was not an easy challenge.

Describe your father and his family's journey to the USA. What motivated him to return to Italy? When he returned to Italy, was he an American citizen? Did he return to the USA at some point?

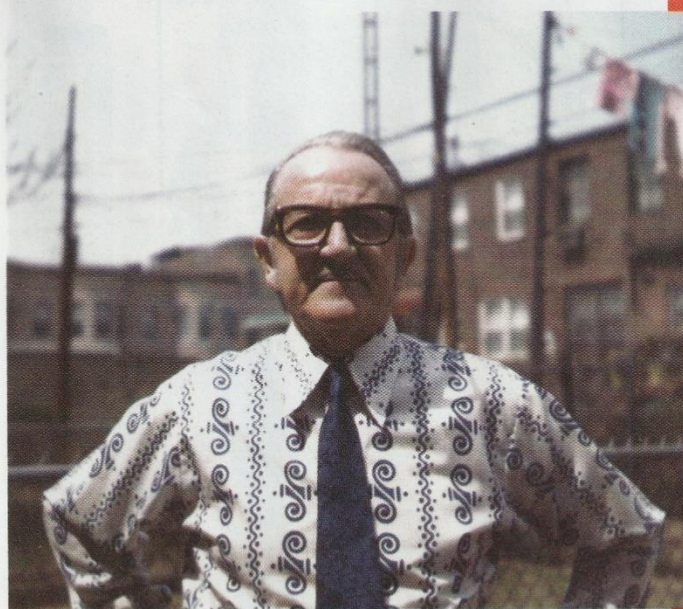
In 1968, my father lost his studio in Milan, Italy, due to an explosion in an adjacent store. Several works of restoration he had been commissioned to complete were within it. Their destruction meant a dreadful loss of income and plenty of stress. My mother contacted our friends in Brooklyn and suggested a possible relocation to my father.



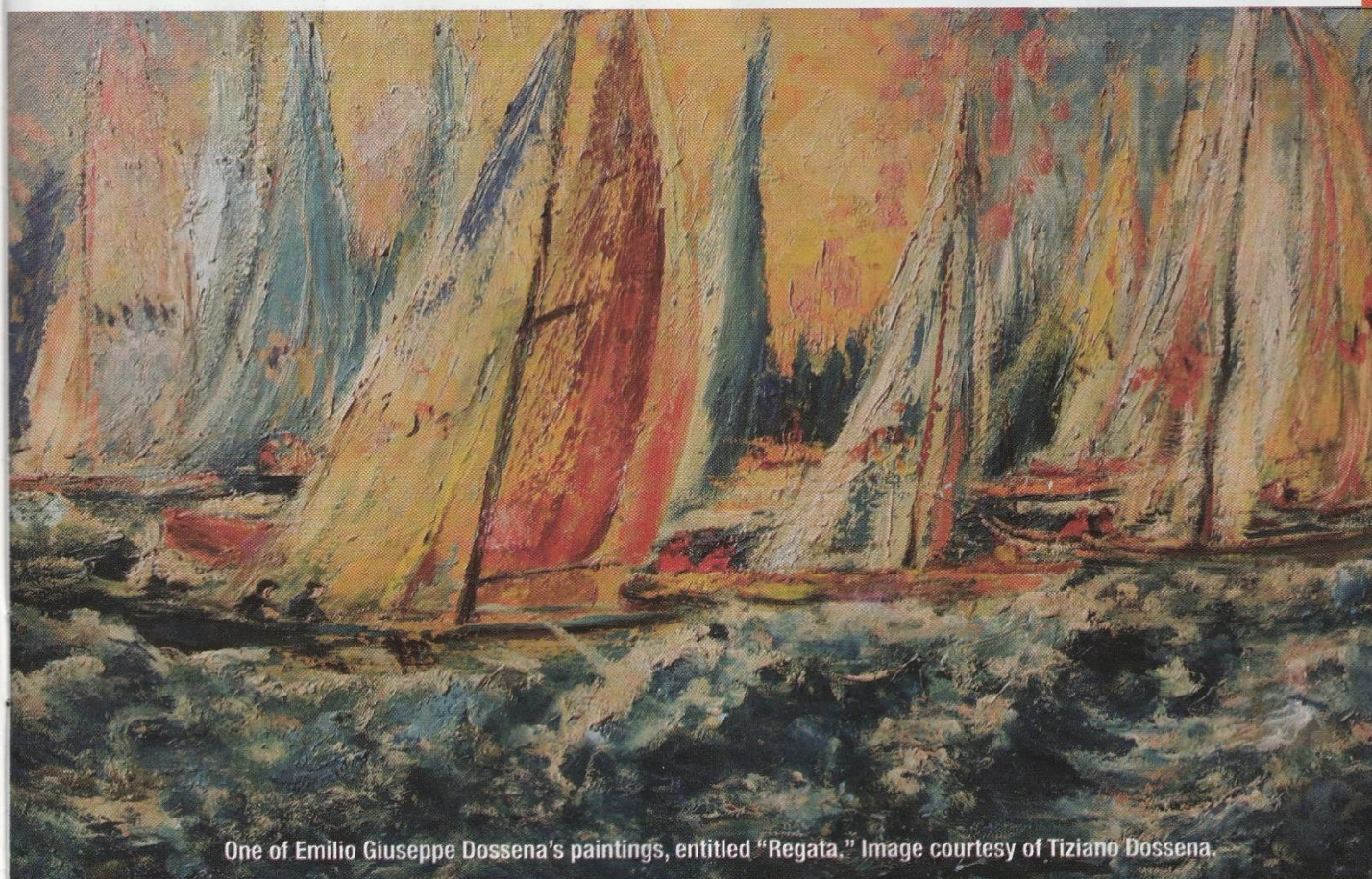
Tiziano Dossena lecturing at a Garibaldi Meucci Museum event in Staten Island, New York. Photo courtesy of Tiziano Dossena.

It was almost a desperate move to erase from his mind the catastrophe connected to the loss of the studio. The first months were a necessary evil, not only for him but also for me and my mother. On the one hand, coming from a metropolis like Milan, his problems with adaptation were mainly tied to his nostalgia for his city more than anything else. On the other hand, he felt the challenge of painting a different world, New York City; so, he painted what he saw, and soon thereafter, he created masterpieces of color and modified his style, experimenting with colors and form.

Although he was very successful in New York, loved the United States, and could have remained longer, the distance from his other children took a toll. He never became an American citizen and never returned to the USA. He spent his last few years painting the landscapes he loved in Lombardy and writing poetry. Incidentally, he was born in the small town of Cavenago d'Adda, in the province of Milan, and there is now a committee in that town that wants to place a plaque on the house where he was born and name a plaza after him. I am looking forward to that.



A photo of Tiziano Dossena's father, Emilio Giuseppe Dossena. Photo courtesy of Tiziano Dossena



One of Emilio Giuseppe Dossena's paintings, entitled "Regata." Image courtesy of Tiziano Dossena.



(From left to right) Tiziano Dossena poses with poet Robert Savino during the opening of the Emilio Giuseppe Dossena art exhibit at the Garibaldi Meucci Museum in Staten Island.

Photo courtesy of Tiziano Dossena.

Your father's seminal work goes beyond his art. Please describe his poetry. Was it all in English?

His poetry reminds us of his paintings: direct, colorful, and sensitive. He wrote about his feelings, his art, and nature. He needed to express himself in another way, beyond the paintings. His poetry production also increased in his last year, while he was ailing with leukemia and could not paint anymore. He wrote poetry in Italian, and I translated it into English. He never concerned himself with properly learning English (let's not forget he came to New York at 65) because I was always his voice in the USA, though sometimes he managed to get across in the conversations with Museums and art collectors.

It is amazing how you included your father's many awards and how he was recognized for his contributions. How did you document his many awards and include them in the book?

His gold and silver medals and trophies, unfortunately, were stolen during a break-in in his apartment right after his death. The diplomas, though, remained, so I was able to reconstruct their history. There are still quite a few

awards and information missing from the years preceding the studio's loss. I am, therefore, even now, searching for further documentation.

How long did it take you to create the book? How were you able to balance writing with your other professional and personal responsibilities?

It took me 14 years to collect and organize all the proper documentation. All the old photographs had to be restored by a professional. Facts had to be verified; people had to be contacted. It was a very challenging and time-consuming task. The love I felt for my father and his work, along with the patience of my family, allowed me to complete this enormous task. It wasn't easy. I confess there were times when I feared that I would not be able to complete the work, but I never gave up, and here we are.

How did you develop your writing style? Did any books that you have read influence your writing style?

Being bilingual, I confess that most of the time my writing acquires a style of its own that is almost a fusion of the two languages. Although I read and admire a lot of writers, I believe that Mario Soldati and Cesare Pavese influenced me the most in the development and structure of my content.

Do you have any plans to write another book?

A new book of mine in Italian, *Federico Tosti e la Montagna*, has just been published. It is a collection of all the poetry about the mountains written in Roman dialect by Federico Tosti. A biography of that poet, also in Italian, will follow. He was an outstanding poet, alpine guide, and man. Just as for the book on my father, this book will be a labor of love.

Tiziano expressed his commitment to providing necessary information to the publishing world to create permanent traces of our Italian American presence, both as cultural contributors and as authors within and beyond NYSOSDIA.



For members of OSDIA, Tiziano Thomas Dossena is offering copies of the book at a 30% discount which is \$120, plus shipping. Contact the author at editoreusa@gmail.com.

The interview was prepared by Frances R. Curcio, PhD (FRCurcio@aol.com), author of *Mio Nonno Totore and the American Dream* (Idea Press, 2024).