

FELICE NITTOLO – *RITORNO* / **RETURN** – curated by Paolo Sacchini and Generoso Picone

A large-scale project, with the artistic career of Felice Nittolo as the central theme, will get underway from San Felice di Capriglia (Avellino) on 15 May and will run until February 2017. It is the first retrospective of his over forty years of work, esteemed in various places and cities in the world.

The project RETURN is under the patronage of the Campania region, the municipality and province of Avellino and is led by the municipality of Capriglia Irpina. San Felice di Capriglia is Felice Nittolo's birthplace and he wanted this important project, with him as the protagonist, to start from this little village.

He has also wanted to involve the small elementary school of his village where, together with the students, he will realize a work that will remain patrimony of the V didactic circle of Avellino. The aim is to create a relationship between art and territorial identity in order to give voice to the memory of a place.

Another important reason for the project is the dedication of the event to his parents, this year marking the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of his father.

The official opening of the event will take place at 12 o'clock on 15 May at the cultural centre of San Felice, in the presence of the mayor of Capriglia *Nunziante Picariello*, the director of the V didactic circle *Angela Tucci* and the historian *Roberto Barbato*. On show some photographs of the place as the artist lived it in his youth and several mosaics to let us appreciate this art that Felice has known how to utilize as a protagonist of contemporary visual art.

For many years a *Ravennate*, "for love of mosaic", today he is recognized as one of the main protagonists in the international world of contemporary mosaic art. Since his first significant beginnings in the early 1970s, he has known how to present himself to critics and historians, bending the traditional technique of mosaic to expressive ends, taking it well beyond its limits and opening his vision towards highly original and innovative technical solutions and expressive points of view. His first solo show was in 1970 at the *Circolo della Stampa* [Press Circle] of Avellino, curated by the historian *Goffredo Raimo* (1937-1995).

Nittolo is an artist that uses mosaic predominantly as a means of expression, integrating his work with various techniques such as painting, sculpture, installation, glass art, ceramics, design, photography and scenic design. All this will be seen in the project RETURN, which will unfold in various locations and on different dates. The complete programme is published separately and foresees seven appointments from May 2016 to February 2017.

Felice Nittolo was born in Capriglia Irpina on 15 May 1950. After his first training in ceramics at the Istituto Statale d'Arte in Avellino and in painting at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Naples, he moved to Ravenna «for the love of mosaic» and in this Romagna city learned the secrets of the art of mosaic from the most important interpreters of this art form on the Ravenna art scene of the 1900s. Already in these early years he began to reflect on the possibility of opening mosaic to heterodox contaminations.

In 1984 on the occasion of the II International Congress of AIMC (International Association of Contemporary Mosaicists) hosted by the Università Cattolica of Louvain-la-Neuve, he came to international attention with his manifesto "L'Aritmismo". In this manifesto he became the promoter of a decisive renovation of mosaic as traditionally understood, suggesting to mosaicists not only a fully "authorial" stance – instead of simply "translator", as mosaic work was considered for the most part at that time. He also proposed innovative experimentation, which in the next few years led him to examine all the material and ideative possibilities of the art of the "tessera".

Starting in 1989 the rising international appreciation of his work has allowed him to exhibit regularly in

Italy and abroad at highly prestigious locations.

In 1992 he presented the manifesto of the New Tradition at the III International Congress of AIMC (hosted by the Academy of Fine Arts of Saint Petersburg) and was present at Genoa in the exhibit commemorating the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America. In 1996 he staged the show *Always Mosaic* at the "Casa Italia" in Atlanta on the occasion of the XXVI Olympics. In 1997 in Ravenna and Udine he realised and exhibited mosaic works involving the field of design, while he was also engaged in scenic design (collaborating with Vinicio Capossela among others); he also prepared the exhibit *Byzantium Faventia Venetiae* (at the Urban Glass Contemporary School of Design in New York), *Avellana* (in the church of the Carmine in Avellino) and *Murarie* (in the Gallery of Modern Art, the Republic of San Marino).

He continued to investigate in-depth the potentiality of interaction of mosaic with various media (site-specific installation and performance in particular). In 2000 he realised the installation *Abellinum* in the catacombs of the early Christian church in Prata di Principato Ultra (Avellino), exhibited in England (Exeter, Chichester, Sheffield) and in the United States (New York, Chicago, Seattle and at the Faculty Gallery of the University of California, San Diego). In 2001 he again paid homage to his homeland with the exhibit "Centoportemorte" [one-hundred dead doors], set up in the Church of the Carmine in Avellino, dedicated to the tragedy of the earthquake in Irpinia. In the following years – while continuing to show in various places in Italy – he had important solo shows abroad, among which *The Sound of Silence* at the Art Museums of Kawagoe and Saitama in Japan (2003) and the show "Incantamenti" at the Gallery of the International Museum of Tuzla, in Bosnia Erzegovina (2004).

In the following years he further experimented with the possibilities of glass and ceramics and also realised several video performances. Along with his creative activity, he carried out the rediscovery of the work of the main protagonists of the Ravenna school of mosaics of the twentieth century, organizing and curating a long series of retrospective monographic exhibitions at his NiArt Gallery over the years. This gallery soon became a reference point for mosaic enthusiasts worldwide, and for exhibits of living artists, often talented young mosaicists. Nittolo has continued to show regularly in Italy, especially in his "adopted land" Ravenna and in Avellino, as well as in France, Japan, the United States, Germany, Austria and Scotland.

In 2007, on occasion of the launch of the new Fiat 500, he realised the work *Ravenna 2007* for the Turin auto company: a "500" completely covered with mosaic tessere, which was exhibited in various places in Japan. The following year – during which several of his works were acquired by the Art Museum of Ravenna – he set up the suggestive installation "Water and Mosaic" in the crypt of the ancient Basilica of San Francesco in Ravenna. In 2013 he exhibited on the "Isola di Garda" as part of "Meccaniche della Meraviglia", and in 2014, as part of the prestigious "Rencontres Internationales de Mosaiques" in Chartres, he was invited to show his "Porziuncola" in the "Chapelle de Saint-Eman"; later this installation was also shown in Ravenna.

For many years he taught the art of mosaic at the Istituto d'Arte, which later became the art school Liceo Artistico "Nervi-Severini" of Ravenna. He has also taught at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Ravenna and at the Pilchuck School in Seattle (USA). He lives and works in Ravenna.

EXHIBITION PROGRAMME:

San Felice di Capriglia, cultural centre, Piazza San Felice – 15 - 19 May 2016, photographs, mosaics, video. Inauguration Sunday 15 May at 12 o'clock.

Picarelli, historic church of San Giuseppe, Piazza SS. Salvatore – 6 August - 30 October 2016, mosaics and works on paper. Inauguration Saturday 10 August at 10 a.m.

Avellino, Church of Santa Rita, Via San Francesco Saverio – 7 August 2016 – 28 February 2017, *Porziuncola*, installation. Inauguration Sunday 7 August 11.30 a.m.

Capriglia Irpina, Palazzo Comunale – 13 August – 30 October 2016, mosaics, photographs, paintings. Inauguration Saturday 13 August 10 a.m.

Avellino, Museo Civico di Villa Amendola, Via Due Principati, – 1 October 2016 – 28 February 2017, mosaics, graphics, glassworks. Inauguration Saturday 1 October 11.30 a.m.

Avellino, Foyer Teatro Carlo Gesualdo, Piazza Castello – 1 – 27 October 2016, photographs, art in scene, rural culture, old city. Inauguration Saturday 1 October 5.30 p.m.

Avellino, Ex-prison Borbonico, Via De Marsico from Via Mancini, – 28 October 2016 – 28 February 2017, mosaics, paintings, video. Inauguration Friday 28 October 5 p.m.