

Donà dalle Rose on Palazzo Donà and Venice

Posted on May 22, 2026 by Angelica Peruzzi

CANNES, France — Contessa Chiara Modica Donà dalle Rose is president of the Fondazione Donà dalle Rose, based at Palazzo Donà dalle Rose, the only great Venetian house where descendants of the original family are still in residence after more than 400 years. She is also a jurist, arts patron, and lecturer at La Sapienza in Rome, and the author of the 1 euro houses scheme, a legal model for repopulating Italy's historic centres that has since been copied around the world. Italy Now spoke to her at the World Woman Foundation during the Cannes Film Festival on May 12.

Q. Four hundred years, one family, one palace. What is the secret?

"The magic word is work, never stop working. The Republic of Venice was a society founded on hard work and free trade. Italy did not yet exist, and the Adriatic Gulf was called the Gulf of Venice and reached all the way to Cyprus. My husband, my children and I preserve the past by living in the present like our ancestors, unstintingly".

Q. The palazzo has been described as a living cultural hub during the Biennale, would you agree?

"I consider myself a soldier of history, an ant, who in 2005 founded a neo-Renaissance movement where history and the present are intertwined and experienced, not merely studied. Inspiration comes from the Fondaco Veneziano, the gathering place for all the foreigners who came to Venice, a crossroads of cultures, as Venice and Sicily have always been. For over 25 years I have curated national and collateral pavilions at the Biennale."

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/dona-dalle-rose-on-palazzo-dona-venice-and-education/



The Donà dalle Roses with visiting dignatories (*Credits: Donà dalle Rose archive*)

Q. You created the Biennale of Spiritual Art, can you tell us about this?

“In 2016 I founded BIAS in Palermo. I regenerated 24 venues across the city with contemporary works, selected by Italian and international university professors. The competition opened the doors and prepared the venues for Manifesta 2018 two years later. The artists are divided by spirituality into Abrahamic, Buddhist, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Shamanic, Philosophical, Scientific, Digital and Sports Pavilions. BIAS has travelled to Sardinia, Tuscany, Piedmont, Egypt, Dakar, and this November to Equatorial Guinea.”

Q. You blocked 1,000 photovoltaic and wind projects in Sicily, an incredible feat?

“Between 2009 and 2019 I worked pro bono for the city of Salemi and the whole province of Trapani, besieged by requests for photovoltaic plants and gigantic wind farms. I blocked more than 1,000 projects that would have destroyed the countryside, all the way to Marsala. Then I blocked the absurd construction permit for an offshore park off Gela, stretching as far as Falconara Castle. The project would have destroyed the coast, the seabed, tourism, the fishing market and underwater archaeology. My right-hand man was the late paleontologist Sebastiano Tusa.”

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Q. Education is your focus this Biennale season.

“The future of our civilisation is education. During the seven months of the Biennale, the foundation runs study and teacher training events. I have created a Music Master Class for under-18s with young musicians. The project is called Melodia Mediterranea. Only music can break down the walls set by man.”

Q. What is the future of Italy as you see it?

“Training and educating people towards true integration. In welcoming migratory flows, we must be capable of educating. Our model is attractive, but we must preserve it without denying the paradigms that made our Republic great. BIAS and the Venice Biennale are platforms where we understand that cultural boundaries should not exist, only bridges.”

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