

Welcome





Gibellina is...

In 1968 the earthquake of the Belice Valley destroyed Gibellina. The town was completely rebuilt a few kilometres away, giving life to the largest open air Museum in the world. Numerous artists contributed, in fact, to the reconstruction, dotting the landscape with bold sculptures and architecture

which can be admired whilst walking through the streets. The ruins from the earthquake were also transformed into a work of art by Alberto Burri who, covering them with a cement cast, made an enormous *Cretto*. In the Civic Museum of Contemporary Art, the works of the main artists

who worked in Gibellina during the reconstruction phase can be admired: Accardi, Consagra, Rotella, Guttuso, Schifano and Sanfilippo, to name but a few. During the summer period, the *Orestiadi* collection continues the avant-garde vocation of the town, with a theatre, poetry, visual arts and music review.

Stella (Star), Consagra



Casa Di Stefano



Piazza 15 Gennaio 1968





History

Gibellina is of medieval origins as indicated by the Arab name *Gebel*, mount and *Zghir* small, that is small Mount. From the feudal ownership of various noble families, it became a typical farming village on the *Busecchio* stronghold, covering five hills as attests the coat of arms of the city: a tower on five hills. The

earthquake determined a change in the history of the village: during the night between the 14th and 15th January 1968, the village was completely destroyed and around 130 people were killed. The Gibellina community decided to rebuild a new city 18 km away on a plain, a more secure territory, near the

railway and the farming land. Gibellina Nuova is a large museum en plein air with sculptures, fine architectural buildings, wished for by the mayor during the reconstruction, Ludovico Corrao, who called on Italian artists to enrich the large spaces and recreate an identity for the inhabitants.

Earthquake 1968



Ruins



Square System





Landscape

On the steep slopes of the mountain on which Gibellina Vecchia rose there is an enormous cast of cement, the *Cretto* by Alberto Burri, an extraordinary work of environmental art which, like a white shroud, covers the ruins of the city. Due to its south-east position and its vast proportions, it is

visible from afar and from the nearby towns of Salaparuta and Poggioreale: the impression it gives is amplified by the singular contrast of the dry surrounding area with parts cultivated with neat lines of vines on the hills. The new Gibellina, a sort of town-garden, seen from above is

reminiscent of a large butterfly lying along the strip of nearby motorway. From the main road which leads to Santa Ninfa, the countryside can be seen in all its splendour, offering gentle, green plains, large valleys and thriving woodlands like that of Mount Finestrelle.

Cretto, Burri



Civic Tower, Mendini



Orestiadi Foundation





Nature

The natural landscape belongs completely to the chalky nature of Mount Finestrelle; it is not an isolated high ground, but it is part of a high plain, covering quite a large area and delimited by steep slopes with small valleys at intervals which is included in the SCI site (Site of Community Interest) of the

Complesso Monti di Gibellina e S. Ninfa - Complex of Mounts Gibellina and S. Ninfa. On the chalky outcrops, strips of Mediterranean scrub survive, characterised by the flowering of the *Euforbia arborea*, thyme and wild orchids; in the valleys there is a thriving riparian vegetation, of great interest

for the high diversity of the flora. The fauna includes the hedgehog, the Sicilian shrew, the rabbit, the porcupine the weasel and the fox. The birds include the buzzard and the small kestrel, characteristic for the position *a spirito santo* - like the holy spirit - that it assumes during hunting, the nightingale and the jay.

Mount Finestrelle, chalky rocks



Mount Finestrelle, chalky rocks



Pistacia lentiscus with fruit







Religion Remembrance Bonds

Following the footsteps of ancient traditions linked to religious events, Gibellina regularly holds festivities and celebrations. Noteworthy is the *Incontro con l'angelo* - Meeting with the angel which takes place on Easter morning between the statues of the *Addolorata* - Our Lady of Sorrows and Christ Resurrected,

accompanied by the flying of doves. The devotion to *SS. Crocefisso* is shown in May with a procession and spectacular parades of horse riders, Sicilian wagons and of the *presente* a long narrow drape of silk one end of which is attached to a pole which ends in a bunch of dry ears of wheat. On the 16th of August the

patron San Rocco is celebrated with parades and folkloristic events. To honour San Giuseppe (Saint Joseph) votive altars decorated with *cucciddata*, bread doughnuts, are made at which, on the 19th of March, a lunch is offered to three children, the so-called *li virgineddi*, representing the Sacred Family.

Meeting with the Angel



SS. Crocefisso festivity



Altar of Saint Joseph





Gibellina nuova is the biggest contemporary outdoor work of art in the world, with an extraordinary collection of works by important artists such as Carla Accardi who created the panels in ceramics *Senza titolo* - untitled (1987-1988), situated under the colonnade of the town hall, Nino Mustica, creator of a *Fontana* - Fountain, or Mimmo Rotella, creator of the *Omaggio a Tommaso Campanella* - Homage to Tommaso Campanella. The *Fontana* in travertine marble is by Andrea Cascella which, like all the sculptures along the roads in Gibellina, is a reference point from which to get one's bearings in the

streets of the butterfly shaped urban layout of the town. The candid frontal sculpture *De Oedipus Rex*, *Città di Tebe*, a stage element for the performance of Oedipus the king, represented in the ruins of Gibellina, is by Pietro Consagra who, as a sculptor, also realised *Tris*, the gates of the cemetery and the Botanic Garden. For the *Orestyadi*, Arnaldo Pomodoro designed numerous scenic works of art including *l'Aratro* - the Plough, for *La tragedia di Didone* - Dido - Queen of Carthage by Christopher Marlowe, which today are part of the urban decoration. Fausto Melotti created the urban sculptures on a large

scale entitled *Contrappunto* - Counterpoint, with isolated geometric elements and *Sequenze* - Sequences, a union of continuous slabs dug in deeply on three different positions. Paolo Schiavocampo is the creator of *Una piazza per Gibellina* - A square for Gibellina, a group of sculptures formed by a number of elements destined for different functions. Turi Simeti with a slab of travertine *Impronta* - Imprint, wanted to experiment a modification of the context of the habitat provoking a pause in the space while Salvatore Messina with *Tensioni* gives it dynamicity, pushing it towards the new and renewal.



Archaeology

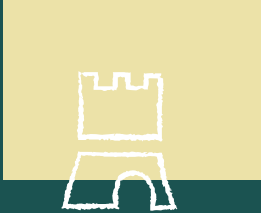
In the municipal territory of Gibellina there is the archaeological area of Mount Finestrelle, in dialect *finestreddi*, so-called for the similarity of the rocky tombs to small windows. The burial areas, about forty, from the late bronze age and the first centuries B.C. are dug into the rock and put one next

to the other in a horizontal line on more than one level: they were made up of a funerary cell of rectangular or semicircular or semi elliptic layout with an entrance hall in front. In the necropolis some clay articles have been found, including two bowls with two handles of the Villanovan type and

an amphorae, kept in the Archaeological Museum of Palermo. In addition, at the summit of the mountain, a large crater has been found with geometric decoration 40 cm high. Excavations carried out in the west of the mountain have brought to light the remains of a small prehistoric settlement.

Mount Finestrelle, rocky tombs





Monuments

The *Stella* - Star welcomes one into the city of art; a large star-shaped gateway in steel, designed by Pietro Consagra as the symbol of the town's rebirth after the earthquake. The same artist designed the *Meeting*, the first frontal building which delineates with curved and continuous levels, and the Theatre, which is being built. The fulcrum of the town is the *piazza del Municipio* with the town hall building designed by Alberto and Giuseppe Samonà and Vittorio Gregotti, which has as its focal vertical axis in the Civic Tower in cement and iron by Alessandro Mendini, which is formed by two half-cones with two

coloured wings coming out of them, brightening it. The architect Franco Purini with Laura Thermes designed the *Sistema delle piazze* - Square System where the squares connect with each other and are bordered by a long portico - wall, and for the *Casa del farmacista* - Pharmacist's house and the *Casa Pirrello* - they followed an experimental line in tackling the urban problems and architectural language and associating the rational component with classic and Sicilian tradition. Francesco Venezia with the *Palazzo Di Lorenzo* created an intriguing house-museum which, in its internal courtyard, has the façade of a building from

Gibellina Vecchia: an interplay between inside and outside, ruins and modernity. Other places of great suggestion are the two *Giardini segreti* - Secret Gardens by the same architect. The Mother church, designed by Ludovico Quaroni with Luisa Anversa which symbolises in the sphere the universe, the totality, the Divine, and in the square, human perfection; today completed, it received the quality certificate from the Regione Siciliana, the first recognition given to a contemporary work it has been declared to be of important artistic interest, in that it is unique in the Italian architectural panorama.



Museums Science Education

The Civic Museum of Contemporary Art, which is fully inserted into the history of national and international art, holds almost two thousand works by about six hundred great artists including Guttuso, Pirandello, Accardi, Sanfilippo, Rotella. Also conserved are the plans for architectural works of Gibellina Nuova and the *Cretto* by Burri. The Cycle of nature is unique; ten large canvasses by Mario Schifano, dedicated to the children of Gibellina and created on site by the artist in 1984. The *Case di Stefano* - Houses of Stefano, an ancient restored *baglio* (rural fortified structure), is today home to the prestigious Institute of

High Culture Orestiadi Foundation. It holds, in the baronial house, the *Museo delle Trame del Mediterraneo* - Museum of Mediterranean Themes which has collections of costumes, jewellery, ceramics, textiles and objects of art of populations and cultures of the Mediterranean, to show the signs and themes which the coastal populations have in common. The exhibition system is unique in the world in that it keeps together works of contemporary art, and manufactured objects of material culture. The imposing structure of the barn holds a collection of contemporary art with important works donated

by artists from all over the world who have frequented the laboratories/workshops. The foundation has the library *Empedocle* with more than 5000 volumes, also in foreign languages, and a *Centro di Documentazione Orestiadi* - Centre of Orestiadi Documentation (CDO) which collects catalogues and publications, promotes scientific and editorial activity, initiatives for the island's craftwork and professional training courses. The Ethno-anthropological Museum, in the botanic gardens, is another type of museum which reproduces domestic scenes and documents the phases of the working of wheat, milk and wine.

Palazzo Di Lorenzo





Wine and food

In the territory, there are various producers of quality wines, red such as *Nero d'Avola* and white from *Catarratto* and *Grillo* grapes, which have been credited with recognition and prizes in national and foreign events. The wines are accompanied by a good production of olives, fruit,

grapes, citrus fruit and cereal, and also cheese and ham, made using traditional methods. Real specialities are the minted artichokes and the *nfigghiulata*, a bread dough filled with cauliflower, potatoes, onions and tomato which is folded over itself and then cut and baked. For San Martino *mufulette*, soft

rolls aromatized with wild fennel are made: they are excellent eaten warm and dressed with oil. For San Giuseppe the *pignolata* are a must; small pieces of short-crust pastry fried in boiling oil and covered in honey, but at all times of year, the *cassatelle* filled with ricotta can be tried.

Nfigghiulata



Mufulette





Shows and events

The prestigious *Fondazione Orestyadi* has, since 1991, realized and produced cultural events of international importance, in the sectors of theatre, visual arts, music and poetry and it organises the *Orestyadi*, an annual prose, music and art review, which takes its name from the *Oresteia* trilogy by Eschilo, rewritten and

reinterpreted by Emilio Isgrò, with the set design by Arnaldo Pomodoro, shown in 1983 amongst the ruins of the ancient square of Gibellina. Photographic and ethno- anthropological exhibitions, conferences on the problems of the territory, cinema, music and poetry reviews, seminars, round tables and study days

are also organised. From December to April in the Auditorium of the Civic Museum the review *Gibellina d'inverno* - Gibellina in winter takes place with theatre and music productions while *Cinema sotto le stelle* - Cinema under the stars, and *Gibellina jazz*, animate the summer evenings in the open air.







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