

YANA

Cini Alliata di Montereale



Together with her twin sister Ylda, Yana was the youngest daughter of Count Vittorio Cini (one of the greatest Italian entrepreneurs of the early twentieth century, as well as a patron, collector and promotor of diverse initiatives in the areas of economics, culture and the arts) and Lyda Borelli (the great theatre actress and star of the early Italian silent screen). Vittorio and Lyda had married in 1918 and their firstborn, Giorgio, was born in Rome on 26 November 1918. Vittorio had moved the family to Venice, the centre of the "Gruppo Veneziano" entrepreneurial projects in which he and Giuseppe Volpi were collaborators, and it was in the Venetian house of Campo San Vio on the Grand Canal, which previously belonged to the Loredan family and the prince of Borbone, that Mynna (1920) and finally Ylda and Yana were born (8 January 1924).

Their baptism was held on 6 July 1924 at Monselice. The little town in the Euganean Hills was, so to speak, the Giraldi family's "fief". Vittorio had inherited the Castello, Rocca, Villa Duodo and trachite (a valuable Vulcanic rock) quarries from his grandmother. The quarries were part of the family fortune and their rocks were used in the paving of the Venetian *calles* and *campos*. Thus the Cini girls spent their childhood and youth between Venice, Monselice and the villa overlooking Montericco.



Yana, Ylda, Giorgio and Mynna Cini

As was the custom in well-to-do families of the time, the girls' schooling up through highschool occurred at home with the aid of tutors and private instructors. Each school year culminated in an exam held by the public school, which the girls passed with flying colours. They were especially well-educated in foreign languages, and were always instructed by native speakers. Yana was fluent in both spoken and written French and English (she attained a diploma from Oxford University), and her knowledge of German and Spanish was advanced.

While still a child, Yana was stricken with poliomyelitis, which profoundly damaged her right leg; it was only thanks to lengthy physiotherapy and numerous operations that she was able to re-obtain almost total functionality in the limb which nevertheless remained slightly shorter. These periods of suffering and forced immobility were an opportunity for reading, cultural growth as well as the development of an acute sensitivity to suffering. Taking on (always very discreetly) the financial as well as more existential problems of those less fortunate than her was a life-long characteristic in which she resembled her father.

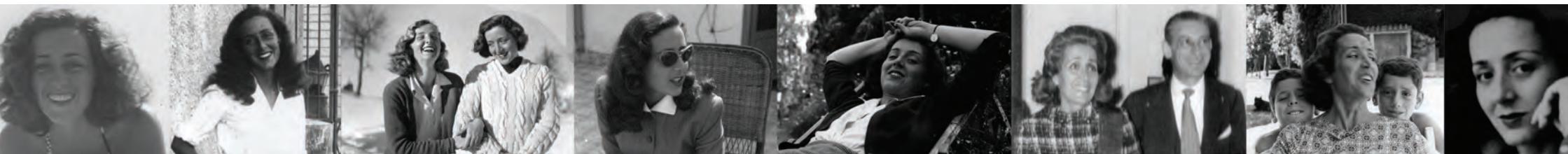
The memory of her charitable works for the elderly and the poor (to the point of performing injections herself, as she was also trained as a nurse) is still very much alive, in Venice, in the neighborhood of Dorsoduro where Palazzo Cini is situated.

Her interests spanned all areas including Italian and foreign literature (read, when possible, in the original language), Western and Eastern philosophy, social studies, religion, art, archeology, architecture and design.

This voracious interest for all things cultural is testified by the proliferation of books and journals in both the houses in Rome and in Venice.

The Vittorio Cini's art critic friend Bernard Berenson, visited Palazzo Cini's mezzanine in the early 1950s, he was impressed by Yana's library of books filled with minute annotations and stimulating comments.

During those same early years, Yana developed a deep friendship with the great painter Emilio Vedova and his wife Annabianca, who inducted her into the "mysteries" of modern art, a passion which she long cultivated.



On 31 August 1949, at the age of 30, Yana's brother Giorgio died in a plane crash near Cannes. On 20 April 1951 her father founded the Foundation that bears his name, restoring the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice.

Yana married Prince Fabrizio Alliata di Montereale on 16 February 1953 in Venice and moved to Rome, where their five children (Giovanni, Vittorio, Domizia, Giorgio and Paolo) were born. But she always remained attached to her native city, returning several times a year to her father's house and keeping up with the Cini Foundation's events and undertakings. She was very athletic and enjoyed skiing, swimming and deep-sea diving. She was also interested in photography (the photograph she took of the Sicilian tuna fishing ship, subsequently published in *National Geographic*, was a source of great pride), theatre and classical music, and assiduously attended concerts and plays with her children. Yana loved traveling, and, pursuing her passion for archaeology, history and foreign cultures, visited numerous countries in the Middle and Far East as well as South America, bringing back photographic and filmed reportages.



Yana with the sculptor Francesco Messina in 1951

She developed a love for beautiful things and a predilection for collecting early on, which manifested themselves both in the care of her paternal inheritance and in the collection of fossils, antique bronzes and furniture.

She nurtured relationships with great figures of contemporary culture, some of which she had met in Venice while still living in her father's house. These included writers (Montale, Pomilio and Pasinetti), journalists (Longo, Della Giovanna, Meccoli), artists (Messina, Cecchi, Vedova, Lucarda), scholars (Siciliano, Mathieu, Branca, Cornelutti, Cozzi), intellectual politicians (Spadolini, Fanfani, Visentini) art historians (Berenson, Zeri, Valcanover) and many others such as Wally Toscanini and Elsa Respighi.

In 1961 Yana founded the "Nido Verde" in Rome, in memory of her mother Lyda Cini, for the care and re-education of poliomyelic children. The centre was inaugurated on 11 July 1961 and continued operating for over a decade, guaranteeing rehabilitation, day-care and schooling for the young victims of this epidemic (the centre hosted over 120 children a day). It was the first successful day hospital in Italy. It was through this initiative that she met and became friends with Albert Sabin, the man who discovered the oral vaccine against poliomyelitis (and intentionally neglected to patent it, so as to facilitate its divulgation among the poor), thanks to whom the disease has been eradicated. It was upon his suggestion that in 1969 Yana and Fabrizio promoted the formation of the AIL (Italian Association against Lukemia), which still operates in the field of research and assistance against tumours of the blood. The association has over eighty branches around Italy. In 1971 Yana was operated for a thymoma – a benign tumor in the mediastinum – but the consequences of the operation and of the following cobalt radiotherapy, especially the inability to breathe, afflicted her up until her death.

Having obtained the consent of the other family members, and with her father's wishes in mind, Yana decided to donate a considerable portion of her inheritance to the Foundation, including the family home in the two *piani nobili* of the

Palazzo at San Vio, as well as the collections of Tuscan paintings and objets d'art "so they might be permanently on display and to make them accessible to the general public" while maintaining the atmosphere of her father's home. Following, even here, in her father's footsteps, and as always in the habit of secretly doing good, Yana expressed her wish to make this anonymous bequest to Bruno Visentini, at the time president of the Foundation.

The opening of the Gallery of Palazzo Cini took place on 21 September 1984 by Federico Zeri, who curated and mounted the exhibition.

Yana died in Rome on 5 April 1989. She is buried in the family vault at Certosa di Ferrara next to her father, mother, brother Giorgio and from October 2017 her husband Fabrizio.

"She was a beautiful and reserved woman, with a temperament that was simultaneously strong and sweet. She was an excellent wife and mother, and immensely respectful of her children's ideas" (Sandro Meccoli, Il Gazzettino, 8 April 1989).



Yana and Vittorio Cini