

Gina Lollobrigida

Talented, Tenacious and Tough

By Joyce Brooks

Born in Subiaco, Gina Lollobrigida was one of four sisters. Growing up during WW II was not easy. There were no toys, no money and often times no food. Little Gina however, remained content with her imagination and her gift of drawing. Her first artwork was published in the Mickey Mouse Magazine at the tender age of 8. Life for the Lollobrigida family was far from easy, Gina's home and her father's furniture factory were destroyed by Allied bombs, forcing the family to relocate. They decided to move to Rome. Always interested in the arts Gina studied as a soprano and attended art school where she won a scholarship and developed her talent for sculpture. Gina could not have been happier, but as sometimes happens in life, destiny had other plans for Gina which took her far away from her passion and thrust her in a completely different direction.



Gina Lollobrigida

Gina was discovered in front of Rome's Academy of Fine Arts. Reluctant to be in movies she accepted a part as an extra (for half a dollar a day) in the film Black Eagle because she needed the money for singing lessons. When Mario de Costa offered her a leading role in the film Clowns, she declined. Mr. Costa persisted and so Gina asked for the outrageous sum of 1 million lire expecting him to turn her down. Much to Gina's dismay Mr. Costa accepted her proposal and gave her the amount she requested. It was the talented artist De Sica who encouraged Gina to remain in film. He recognized her talent and the potential she had to be truly great in the world of acting. Through his guidance, she came to realize that it was actually a blessing spending so many years in the cinema. Gina came to understand that not only does her true love of sculpture require money, it also requires maturity. "I am glad that I did it later - now is the time for me. I have always put my soul into what I have done. When I sculpt it is not enough attaining the perfection of forms - I try to give movement, tension to the figure, strength, grace and color. The result mirrors fully my character. I knew what war was, even though I was very young and my recollections are still vivid in my memory. My art must reflect feelings, not only be lifeless forms without emotions. Many of the characters which I sculpt are women of great valor and strength such as The Queen of Sheba and Esmerelda, portraits of myself like in a magic mirror. Having played these parts in the movies I got to know these extraordinary women to a great extent. I was able to feel their joys and pain, their strength and weaknesses. When I sculpt, I incorporate all of these feelings into my work which gives them life. If art doesn't communicate with feelings, for me it is not art."

The world recognizes her as the symbol of feminine beauty. She remains to this day one of the great cinematic stars of the 20th century. Some of her films include Notre Dame de Paris, Bread, Love and Dreams, Never So Few, Solomon and Sheba, Hotel Paradiso, Women of Straw and Buonasera, Mrs. Campbell. The list goes on and on. Gina has worked with the most renowned directors such as Rene Clair, Jean Delannoy, L. Comencini, Luigi Zampa, Vittorio de Sica, Carol Reed, Christian - Jaque and John Huston. Her fellow actors have included Frank Sinatra, David Niven, Sir Alec Guinness, Rock Hudson, Humphrey Bogart, Sean Connery, Anthony Quinn, Marcello Mastroianni, and many other prestigious actors. Gina is fluent in Italian, French and English which made her the first actress to win International acclaim both here and abroad.

Gina dedicated the next 12 years of her life to photography and published 5 books (on photography). The first "Italia Mia" won the Nadar prize for best International book of the year in 1973. In 1992 Gina was awarded the Legion of Honor from French President Francois Mitterand and in 2003 she was made Commandeur de L'Ordre et Lettres. Gina is the first woman ambassador of the Food and Agriculture Organization which is an agency of the UN dealing with world hunger. She is Cavaliere de la Repubblica and was an honored member of the Florence Academy of Fine Arts. Gina was the third woman to receive this honor after the famed astronomer Margarita Hack and The Noble Laureate Rita Levy Mantalcini. Gina's sculpture consistently reflects her love of children, her love of life and her appreciation of beauty. Gina believes that "art is civilization because it is culture, but culture only if its language is universal."

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Gina at the Musée de la Monnaie in Paris with her grandson Dimitri next to the sculpture "Lina Cavalleri", another portrait of Gina in the film "Beautiful but dangerous". Bronze with 24 carat gold finishing 57x33x98 (h) cm.



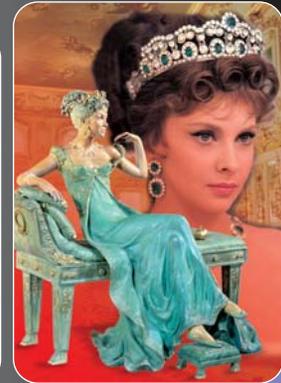
Gina at work will clay on "First emotions" 1994.



Gina working on patination of Esmerelda, bronze, 16-1/2 feet high, 2001



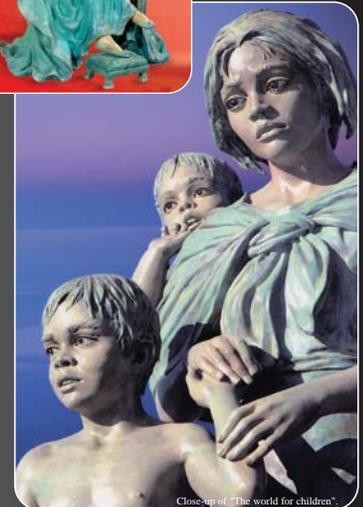
Gina works at the wax head of Esmerelda.



"Paolina Borghese" the famous sister of Napoleon Bonaparte that Gina portrayed in the film "Imperial Venus". Bronze with 24 carat gold finishing 76x52x73 (h) cm.



Gina checking her clay work on "Intimity". Bronze 171x98x103 (h) cm.



Closeup of "The world for children".

Today Gina's world is sculpture. "There is no script to follow, no director to listen to, no public to captivate or please. It is a three dimensional creation where my fantasy is free to fly. However, I am again alone, inexperienced, in a world surrounded not only by jealousy but by false friends, vultures that are trying to live on my skin. No, it is not a drama in a film: it is my life and I will continue to struggle like the first years in cinema, but I am strong and I won't give up. In the end, my popularity has become a handicap: One success is forgivable, but two, three, No! e troppo, it's too much. But if I stop, I would become like a leaf on the water - I would sink. Instead, I will continue to express myself because imagination is the beginning of creation, and dreaming, my life becomes joy. While enthusiasm lasts so will youth.

Brava Gina for continuing to inspire the world through your acts of human kindness and your glorious works of art.

We look forward to seeing you in the US Gina with your exhibition of sculptures. We wish that you will have the same success as you had in the Pushkin Museum in Moscow and the Musee de la Monnaie in Paris. BT

For more information on Gina please log onto www.lollobrigida.com