

# IL MERCANTE IN FIERA CATANZARESE

by Luca Viapiana

## THE PLAYING CARDS

1. `U PONTA (the Bridge): The Bisantis viaduct was designed by Riccardo Morandi (engineer, 1902-1989) and built between 1958 and 1962. This audacious monument to reinforced concrete remains a milestone in the history of worldwide engineering.
2. `U CAVATORA (the Cave digger): A monumental fountain designed and realised between 1951 and 1954 by the Calabrian sculptor Giuseppe Rito. This work symbolises the effort, energy and perseverance of those who face the difficulties posed by a poor land and the disasters caused by a severe nature.
3. `I COCULI (Pebbles): A popular neighbourhood where an open food market was located. According to some people the name may derive from the products that were sold there, mainly eggs and dried fruit, while according to others it may refer to its typical round cobblestone streets.
4. `I CENTU METRI (the Hundred Meters): An historical and secluded path where couples used to go inside Villa Margherita, which was inaugurated in 1881 during a visit of the Italian royal family and named after the namesake queen.
5. `A ROTATORIA (the Roundabout): The roundabout 'Benito Gualtieri' (architect, 1936-1996) is an intrepid and creative expression of road networks realised in 2005.
6. `I GIARDINI (City Gardens): A traditional meeting place for many generations of local youth.
7. `A CURVA D'O VENTU (the Wind Curve): Via Aldo Barbaro owes this nickname to the constant blowing of the wind, which is also the climatic characteristic of the city. Therefrom the famous proverb 'Trovara n' amicu è accussì raru comu `nu jornu senza ventu a Catanzaru' (to find a friend is such a rare thing as to find a day without wind in Catanzaro).
8. `U PARCU (the Park): The Mediterranean Biodiversity Park - inaugurated in 2004 - is the 'green lung' of the city and hosts numerous works of contemporary art.
9. L'ACQUA D'A PITERÀ (the Water of Piterà Fountain): On the way to the Sila mountains one encounters the fountain of Piterà district, whose particularly renowned spring waters are a classic destination for the inhabitants of Catanzaro.
10. `U PINU D'A CURVA (the Pine of the Curve): The historical pine that stood out on the 'Curva Giallorossa' (literally the 'yellow-red curve' i.e. the supporters of Catanzaro football club whose colours are yellow and red) of the 'Stadio Comunale' (Municipal stadium), which was built in 1919 and entitled to Nicola Ceravolo (1907-1988, the President of the 'U.S.

Catanzaro' [Catanzaro Sport Union] for 20 years). The pine has been a loyal companion to the 'Giallorossi' fans for decades and witnessed the sport successes of the great Catanzaro football club.

11. MASSIME': Massimo Palanca is a former glory of Catanzaro football club; he played 331 matches and scored 115 goals between mid '70s and the end of the '80s.
12. `A SCINDUTA DE' BARRACCHI (the Slope of the Shacks): It is referred to Via Mario Greco that bends in a long and steep slope that characterises the city's north district.
13. `A FUNICOLARA (the Funicular Railway): The funicular railway that currently connects the lower town with the historical town centre. The first route of this tramway line, which was originally much more articulated, was inaugurated in 1910.
14. `A HIUMAREDDA (the Little River): A river (Fiumara) that rises on Sila mounts and flows through the entire city into the Jonio sea.
15. `A MARINA (the Coastal City): Catanzaro Lido, the coastal city district. In ancient times it was called 'Villaggio Marina' (Coastal Village) and located between the streams Fiumarella and Corace.
16. SAN BITALIANU C'A MITRIA (Saint Viataliano with the Miter): Saint Vitaliano Bishop of Capua, who lived at the end of the VII century, is the Patron Saint of Catanzaro and is celebrated on 16 July.
17. `U CIACIU: Master Saverio Rotundo, versatile and brilliant sculptor that fully incarnates the romantic myth of the global artist; he is represented in one of his eccentric attire.
18. ROTELLA: Master Mimmo Rotella (1918-2006), a painter of international repute and exponent of the *Nouveau Réalisme*; he is very famous for his *décollages*.
19. JIÉ JIÉ: Bruno Rachiele (1947-2010) is a characteristic personage who was very famous in Catanzaro during the '70 and the '80. His nickname is due to the way he was used to sing and move according to the style of the pop musical movement Yèyè.
20. `A MINNUTA (the Woman with a Big Breast): The woman with a big breast.
21. `A PIGULA (the Owl): The owl that - according to a popular belief - brings bad luck to the addressees of its undesired attentions.
22. `U CULISTRU (the Braggart): A pompous and braggart person who is always willing to draw attention on themselves.
23. `A COGGHJI'OLIVI (Olives Harvesting): The typical position of the beautiful and tireless women who harvest olives.
24. `A CHJICHIA (the Protruding Jaw): A face with a protruding jaw.
25. `U `MBUNNATU (the Resentful Person): A person afflicted with a deep inner frustration that is left with a bad taste in their mouth. This is due in particular to envy, sense of helplessness or impossibility to act.
26. `A TRASTULA (the Cheat): To cheat, fraud, trick.
27. `A TRUSCIA (Misery): Misery, desperation, misfortune.

28. `U BABBU (the Clumsy one): A clumsy, shy and hesitant person that lacks of initiative. In popular jargon the expression 'babb'e grasta' (clumsy and hesitant person) is very common.
29. `U GABBU (Mocking): To mock other people's misfortune. It is customarily believed that mockers will experience the same bad luck, which they laughed about. Hence the saying 'U gabbu cogghia, a jiestima no' (bad luck hits you, blasphemy does not).
30. `U REBBEDDU (Confusion): Pandemonium, confusion, noise.
31. `I ROJINI (Ruins): Useless or unusable things lacking of any value.
32. `U STRUMBU (the Top-Toy): This traditional popular toy is a wood conic top with a metal point that is turned round by a string. The winner is the person who can either spin it for a longer time or break the competitors' top. Figuratively speaking the expression 'Va' joca alu strumbu' (literally 'go and play the top') means 'why don't you just piss off and leave me alone?'
33. `A NACA: The Good Friday procession. The dialectal term derives from the Greek 'nachè' (cradle) and refers to the stretcher on which Christ was carried after his deposition from the cross.
34. `U MORZEDDU: An extremely spicy local food made with tomato sauce and veal innards that are filled in the so-called 'pitta', a soft, thin wheel-shaped bread.
35. `A TIANA (the Pan): Literally the 'pan', which was once made of terracotta, currently also of metal, from which derives the name of the typical Easter plate made with goat, artichokes and bins.
36. `U TRITROLU (the Cucumber): The card refers to the strong local proverb 'Scivula scivula `u tritrolu, alu culu `e l'ortolanu' (literally 'slides, slides the cucumber in the ass of the greengrocer') which means that in the end something may turn badly also against the person who regularly deals with it.
37. `I VERMITURI (Slugs): The slugs (or snails) that may be picked up after rain in clayish lands around Catanzaro and generally cooked with tomato sauce and chilli pepper.
38. `U CULACCHIU (the Glass Bottom): The bottom of a glass, receptacle or other container. 'E a cu' non vida `u culacchiu, chimma ci cada `n' occhiu!' (literally 'may loss an eye the person who cannot see the bottom of the glass') is a typical toast made by taverns' regular clients who drink red wine mixed with tonic water.
39. `I GELATI (Ice creams): The term refers to the prickly pears. They were called ice creams because farmers, who came to town to sell them, used to keep them cool under the fountains' running water.
40. `A GULIA (the Desire): Desire, longing for something, whim. Some typical traditional sweets are illustrated in this card: 'tardiddi, mustazzoli, susumelle, pitta `nchiusa'.

## HOW TO PLAY

Any number of players can participate to the game 'Il Mercante in Fiera Catanzarese'. Of course, a greater number of players shall result in a more exiting game.

The game is played with two identical decks of 40 cards each; every card bears a different picture. Only the back of the two decks of cards is different in order they can be distinguished: one is yellow and the other is red. The game provides that there is an auctioneer, otherwise said 'il Mercante' (the Merchant) who can also be a player him/herself. First of all the auctioneer collects an agreed equal stake from every player; secondly he shuffles (or asks someone to shuffle) one of the two card decks (e.g. the red one); then he gives each player the same number of cards and keeps the remaining cards for the auction. Usually the auctioneer keeps 1/3 or 1/4 of the cards deck (e.g. if there are 12 players, each one is provided with 2 cards while 16 cards remain in the deck).

The remaining cards (those in the red deck according to our example) shall be auctioned (one or more cards at the same time) according to the auctioneer's decision who shall resort all their eloquence to make the auction captivating and fun in order to obtain from the purchasers as much money as possible. After all, selling is an art! According to the classic rule, the auctioneer acknowledges solemnly the highest bidder for three times before he/she sells the card to the best bidder. He/she may either state or hide the number of cards that shall be sold (in this latter case if the auctioneer is also a player he/she is not allowed to make any offer).

Once the auction is over the overall collected sum and the initial stake is divided among the cards representing the prizes; usually the first prize is the highest and the others decrease in value progressively (see below as regards the prizes).

Having regard to the number of participants, 3 to 6 playing cards shall be drawn at random from the unused deck (the yellow one in our example) and put back to front on the table. Each card is awarded a prize. To keep the players in suspense, one of the back front cards may be left without a prize therefore one player shall not win anything at the end of the game.

At this point the auctioneer uncovers one after another the yellow cards that shall match the red cards in the hands of the players i.e. every player shall hold an identical card (except for the back colour) to the one shown by the auctioneer: this cards are the losing cards that shall have to be paired and discarded. During the game the players may exchange, sell, purchase or propose a joint-ownership of cards. As long as the game goes on the value of the cards shall increase.

At the end, all the losing cards shall be discarded except for those corresponding (a part from the back colour) to the cards set back to front on the table. Such cards shall then be turned around

and the winners shall be awarded the corresponding prize. Of course, a particularly lucky player may win many prizes.

Have fun!