

Assia Busiri Vici

[Aleksandra Olsoufieff]

(1906-1989)

Countess Alexandra Olsoufieff was born on 15 May 1906. She is the daughter of Count Vassili Olsoufieff and Countess Olga Schouwalow. She married Andre Busiri Vici d'Arcevia on 19 April 1928 at Rome, Italy

Consort of Andrea Busiri Vici and the associate of the architectural firm of Michele and Clemente Busiri Vici, her brothers-in-law. She arrived in Florence in 1919, fleeing from the Revolution, together with her family, which was one of the most famous aristocratic Russian families.

Her education did not have a distinctly academic character, but she combined different experiences. She studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Florence at Gaetano Spinelli and Felice Carena classes; then she took lessons from the sculptor of Czech origin, Hélèn Zelezny-Scholz, an important protagonist of Art Deco, and also often frequented 'the lectures of the sculptor Marino Marini'.

In the same period, she met two artists, the Michahelles brothers –Thayaht (Ernesto Michahelles) and RAM (Ruggero Alfredo Michahelles), who soon became her relatives.

Andrea was attracted 'by the beauty and nobility' of the young Russian countess, and they were soon married by 1928, a few months after Andrea obtained his degree in Rome at the Faculty of Architecture. Aleksandra was immediately involved in the activity of her brothers-in-law and her husband, using her high skills as a miniaturist, watercolorist and sculptor for the execution of architectural drawings where she added trees and people, as well as works of interior decoration, 'no project by the Busiri Vici studio was presented to the client without the final touch up of Assia'.

Aleksandra took part in several works by studio Busiri Vici, even in two important commitments for the fascist regime. The artist created the stained-glass of the Luce Documentary Film Institute in Rome, built, winning the competition in 1937, and in 1939, she participated in the preparation of the Italian pavilion at the New York Universal Fair. According to the artist's testimonies, the pavilion was 'a resounding success'.



The crafts section was set up by Donna Alexandra Busiri Vici Olsoufieff. The artist also designed the stained-glass windows Italy at work, in the characteristic style of Italian monumental art of the 1930s. The work had an explicit ideological task, due to its destination, but also had to be elegant and with a taste of metaphysical art; it was placed above the portal of the main exit of the vestibule of the pavilion, which led to the gardens.

After the Second World War, Aleksandra and Andrea separated. Aleksandra did not stop working with the studio but devoted herself mainly to portraits, now present in several private collections, especially Roman ones. Such examples of a Russian collaboration with a Roman architecture studio are rare, especially due to the artist's social and familial status.

Sources:

Vyazemtseva, Anna; "Foreign Women in Italian Architecture and Art during the Fascism"; *Women's Creativity since the Modern Movement (1918-2018)*; ISBN 978-961-05-0106-0; 2018; Pg. 1044

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