

Italy

In Perspective



By Sherri Roberts Lopez



Few of those who visit Italy leave unchanged. Beauty is showcased there in some of the most breathtaking and influential art of Western civilization. And more simply, it is reflected in the way food, friendships and life are savored on a daily basis.

For plastic surgeon Dr. German Newall, a family vacation to the European country provided an unforgettable learning experience from a culture that embraces the simple joys and appreciation for beauty that he has come to cherish most in his own life and career.

“There is so much to be learned from Italy,” said Dr. Newall. The art, culinary focus, wine, and friendships—these are

all tied up in the daily lives of the people, and they appreciate them to the max. I was very impressed with how they get together every day for a three-hour lunch from 1 to 4 p.m.! Our culture is more achievement-oriented, whereas, over there, good times and relaxation come before work and stressful daily lives.”

Staying in an 18th century Tuscan villa that overlooked orchards, a vineyard, and the olive trees that are synonymous with the region, Newall and his family—along with his sister, her family, and close friends from the surgeon’s native Peru, together explored the region’s rich medieval history, visiting Siena, Pisa, Lucca, and Florence, the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance.

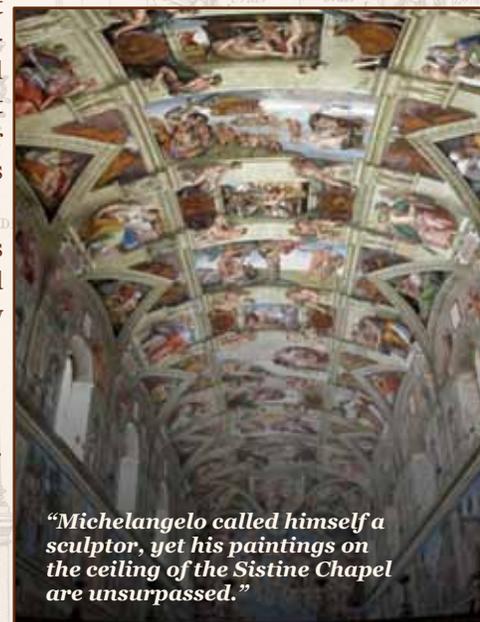
“It’s not hard to believe that so many artists were inspired by the beautiful views of the landscape. It was an inspiration to see such a

wealth of magnificent art throughout the medieval and Renaissance cities of Italy,” said Dr. Newall. “Florence offers the pinnacle of Renaissance art history. Every corner of the city reflects art at its highest level, and that in itself is inspiring because, as plastic surgeons, we strive for perfection and beauty, and certainly Florence was at that level during the Renaissance.”

Beginning in 14th century Italy and spreading throughout Europe, the Renaissance movement inspired a rebirth in art, literature, and science that was influenced by the ancient classical approach to art, architecture, literature, and learning. Holding to the ideal that people should strive to embrace all areas of knowledge and that they are limitless in their capacity to learn and apply this knowledge, the movement inspired intellectually curious titans who often excelled not only in their fields, but often also in a variety of other disciplines within the arts and sciences.

Their masterpieces fill Italy’s museums, churches, and piazzas, where you can view the sculptures, paintings, and architectural designs of Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Botticelli, and Brunelleschi.

“The brilliance of Da Vinci was unsurpassed,” noted Dr. Newall. “He was a sculptor, painter, engineer, scientist, inventor, and



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Dr. Germán Newall

“One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote ourselves to eating.”

Luciano Pavarotti

anatomist among many other things. Similarly, Michelangelo called himself a sculptor, yet his paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel are unsurpassed.”

Standing imposingly in the Galleria dell’Accademia, Michelangelo’s colossal 17-foot statue of the biblical hero and ancient Hebrew king, David, which the sculptor fashioned from a marble block when he was in his 20’s, stood out as one of the most impressive works of art to the surgeon.

Exhibiting an expression of defiance and holding in his left hand the slingshot that he used to kill the giant Philistine warrior Goliath, the stately figure reflects the realism many Renaissance artists sought to portray through their studies of anatomy, proportion, perspective, shadows, and light.

“The David is mind-boggling, from the presence of

the figure itself to the intricate details and contours of the anatomy,” said Dr. Newall. “Michelangelo conveyed the character of whatever he studied and created. The David stands larger than life both physically and in character as the person who defeated Goliath. Michelangelo captured that strength.”

The Newall’s trip to Italy provided the opportunity to experience yet another widely-admired aspect of the Italian culture that could be considered an art form in itself: its delectable cuisine and the central focus that the mealtime ritual plays in everyday life. The

group sampled dishes containing fresh and regionally-found ingredients such as funghi porcini and white truffles—a rare wild mushroom that is harvested with the help of female pigs, who possess the valuable innate ability to sniff out the costly delicacy, along with the unfortunate tendency to devour them upon discovery.



“Wine and olive oil are components of almost every meal,” said Dr. Newall.

“There was a simplicity to the great variety of dishes, and yet they were so tasteful.



“The Mediterranean diet is probably one of the best in the world, yet you never see obese people there,” he noted. “They eat the right foods in the proper amounts. They never overindulge, yet they enjoy it.”

It’s a way of life that the surgeon has found applies as much to enjoying the good things in life as it does to his own profession, in which achieving the right balance is the difference between creating natural-looking beauty versus artificial-looking excess.

“A good plastic surgeon strives to create a more beautiful look on any given person while guarding against producing the changes that appear overdone and excessive,” commented Dr. Newall. “True beauty is doing what that person feels needs to change to enhance their attractiveness in a way that reflects who they really are, as opposed to completely changing what they have.”

Sometimes the things you’ve known all along are illuminated and reflected back to you in unexpected ways. Italy is like that. It has a way of reminding you that the greatest joys are often the simplest, found in enjoying the beauty around you and the people who matter most.

“Life goes so fast that any given time I have with my family and friends, I cherish” said Dr. Newall. “As you grow older, you start to realize the mortality of human beings and appreciate the little things with the people you love, like sitting together at the dining room table and laughing together. Things that we took for granted in the past become more meaningful.”

