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Carona

Carona is first mentioned in 926 as Calauna. The hamlet of Ciona was first mentioned in 1213. During the Middle Ages the village of Carona and the hamlet of Ciona formed a *Kastlanei* of the Bishop of Como. During the Middle Ages, the Church of Santa Maria was built in the hamlet of Torello. After 1349, the church was supported by a community of Augustinians Canons from the nearby monastery (built in 1217 by Guglielmo Della Torre). For the village's loyalty to the Visconti and Guelph families, it received its own coat of arms. According to Swiss Confederation law, it enjoyed a special status (*terra separata*) which included exemption from certain laws and taxes. The old, medieval statutes were renewed in 1470. The Carona romanesque village church of San Giorgio was first mentioned in 1425. Two years later it was raised to become a parish church. The church of S. Marta was built in the 14th century, and was formerly known as the Church of SS Pietro e Paolo. The Baroque pilgrimage church of Madonna d'Ongero was built in 1624, to the west of the village in the forest. The church of S. Maria delle

Grazie was built in Ciona. The last two churches as well as the homes of the village from the 17th and 18th Centuries represent the growing wealth of the village, through emigration of artists from Carona.



The village remained an agricultural and grazing village until the beginning of the 19th century, when Lugano developed into a tourist destination. In 1943, the S. Grato hill was cleared and farming began on the hill. However, the buildings were later converted into a vacation complex. After centuries of decline, the population doubled in the 1970s and 80s, as new homes were built outside the historic core village. In 2000 21% of the population spoke German. There is a major swimming pool and sports center, that serve the surrounding communities, it also holds top art events. You can read about Carona Immagina in this issue.

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Carona Immagina is a top art event in the tiny Swiss village of Carona.

Carona, a small village nestled high above the city, behind Monte San Salvatore is easily accessed from downtown Lugano by way of one of the yellow La Posta buses. Winding up narrow switchbacks, the 30-minute trip offers stunning views of Lugano, "San Sal," and the lake.

Getting off the bus, one notices how quiet it is. Gone are the cars and city noise; instead one can hear birds singing and children playing. At the golden hour, the peaceful, cinematically lit mountain village is a jaw-dropping reminder just how idyllic Switzerland can be, without even trying. Around the main square, Piazza Montaa, Carona's architecture is an interesting mix of colourful Italianate villas and traditional Ticinese mountain houses, made from local stone and wood. An interesting feature is the external staircases and wooden walkways that connect many of the houses, making the village look like some sort of massive fantasy tree-house.

Carona, like many Swiss villages, is not as populous as it once was. But the remaining residents obviously care deeply about their commune, as evidenced by the Immagina photo walk.

Filippo de Fernex, is co-founder and curator of the show and also happens to be Carona's Vice-Mayor. He is passionate about Carona and photography. 2019 marked the second edition of the photo walk. It featured three photographers: Frank Horvat, Georg Gerster, and local Riccardo Comi. All the works were displayed outdoors, printed on large format metal boards which were mounted to the walls of the houses. A map provided the three routes visitors could take through the village to see each artist's work.

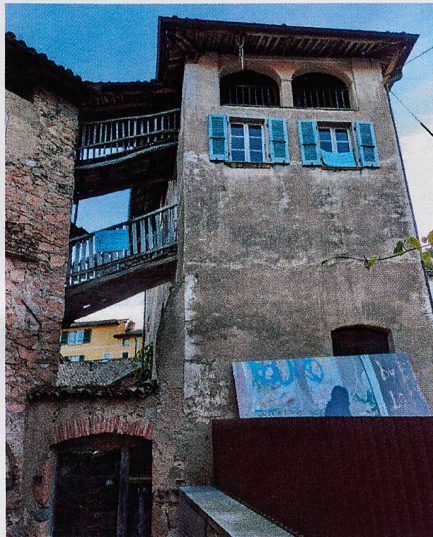
Samuel Muller reflects on his day there: The Carona Immagina photo walk was one of those times when everything just serendipitously comes together and creates an experience that is truly special.

The weather was perfect, the village was

idyllic, the company was invigorating, the artists world-class, and the photographs both beautiful to look at and thought provoking. Thinking back on a year filled with art and culture events, Carona Immagina was without a doubt the highlight, showcasing a spectrum of modern and contemporary photographic talent and curated by passionate, knowledgeable people in a unique setting.

Carona is also a brilliant example of just how good a local art exhibit can be, even in a small, relatively remote community with only regional sponsors.

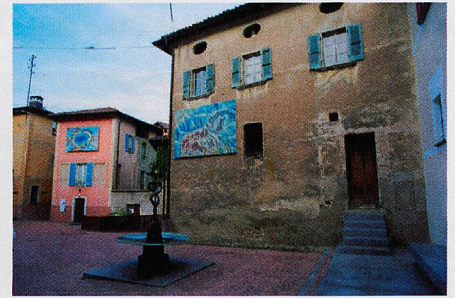
Guiding us along each artist's route, Filippo described some of the difficulties of designing and curating an outdoor photo exhibition for three different artists.



Frank Horvat, for example, required a special printing process for his work that only one shop in the world could produce. In another case, some locals did not want the photographs to be mounted on their houses, creating routing problems.

And then, of course, there was the difficulty of curating the exhibit, choosing which photos to hang where. In a museum, with controlled lighting and layout, this is already a thoughtful process. But imagine doing this outside, in narrow streets, on walls of stone or painted plaster surrounded by doors, windows, and plants of different shapes and colors.

To their credit, Filippo and his team did a masterful job. For example, Swiss photographer Georg Gerster's colorful, geometric aerial landscapes were arranged according to the accent colors of their mounting spaces. A yellow field was hung next to a yellow door, and so on, creating a harmonious experience for the walker.



It felt like each photograph and its village backdrop had been made for one another. Filippo described each artist, including the story, techniques, and motivations. Georg Gerster had recently passed away, but his daughter was staying in Carona during the exhibit and joined us at the end of the tour.

Riccardo Comi was a young, rising star from Lugano whose bold, graphical smartphone street photography contrasted sharply with Gerster's delicately detailed aerial landscapes and with Frank Horvat's works.

With a career spanning nearly 70 years, Horvat had touched pretty much every famous 20th century European photographer and his work showed the marked evolution of style, technique, and technology.

As we walked, locals came out to wish us good evening, look at the photographs that were hanging on their houses, and chat with Filippo. His passion for photography, it turned out, was a lifelong pursuit, and something he had dabbled in professionally, despite an advanced degree in physics and an international career in business.

Now retired, he devotes his time to working for Carona, representing the town and developing their artistic programs, including a beautiful small museum in the main piazza. The photo walk came about as a way to combine his passion for photography in its various forms with his promotion of Carona as an artistic attraction.

newlyswissed.com/photos and article by Samuel Muller

