

Auto biography – the early years.

I write the year 1957 when I was born on the Italian island of Sicily, in the small village of Villaggio del Pino-le Ginestre near the port of Catania.

My mother, Jeanne d'Artali, was single and I the first and only child.

Now, our background always intrigued me and one day I was sitting in my studio and suddenly heard a story on the radio, told by someone else, about a Rotterdam based Dutch woman who had witnessed the bombardment by the Americans in 1943 to try and stop Hitler. That bombardment was later chronicled in the history books as ' the forgotten ' bombardment.



Zadkine: 'The destroyed city'

Now, that Dutch woman was also single and also had a baby and she was so traumatized, nowadays called PTSD, post traumatic stress syndrome, that they fled to England. My mother was traumatized too. What do you think after the terror of Hitler and Mussolini? She was terrified by all the news about the Berlin blockade by the USSR and concomitantly the occupations of Eastern European countries.

So she fled too, first to France and then to Belgium because from there borders were as good as nothing and there were enough smuggling and shortcuts to be able to travel back and forth. And smart as my mother was she registered me also in France and Belgium as

newborn. And shuttled back and forth, constantly looking for work. Marshall plan? Forget about it! Only the industrialists were better off.

We have finally beaten it all and worked through it together, the first 12 years my mother and then I too from my 13th until I was 17th and together with her.

And the more I look back on those years I am grateful to her that she chose to be a refugee. And now I realize more than ever that I owe everything to her and her courage.

Grazie Mama.

Gino d'Artali