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ART AND MIGRATION CONVERGE AT IMAF IN MILAN AND NEW YORK

By Christopher Livesay

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(ANSA) - Rome, June 26 - It can be hard to make friends when you're a stranger. But as the International Migration Art Festival (IMAF) shows, culture is often the best way to bridge the gap and get to know someone new. That's the idea behind the festival, which this year has the theme 'Art Your Food', asking artists to select food-themed works. After its growing success in Italy, the non-profit has taken the event abroad to New York City with a stop this month at New York University's Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimo'. The categories are film, literature, music and the visual arts. IMAF was launched by EatArt, the parent organization with a focus on international cuisine, run by Rossella Canevari, Elena Maria Manzini and Rene' Manenti. 'Migration is a worldwide phenomenon,' they said. 'Virtually all nations are involved as receiving, sending or transit countries'. In film, pieces included Anna Kauber's 'Ciclone Basmatti' (Basmatti Cyclone) about Bengali chef Gautam Talukdar cooking an Indian dinner in the countryside outside Parma. In literature, Andrea Cuminatto's short story 'Speranza Italiana' (Italian Hope) tells the first-person story of a Vietnamese refugee who, in the late 1970s, is pushed by food shortages to flee to Italy. In music, singer-songwriter Giorgio's song China Town is an ironic look at getting to know Chinese people. And in visual art, Francesca Bochicchio's photographic collage 'IMPERAT' depicts a giant pizza filling up the interior of the Colosseum as a hand reaches in with chopsticks. The finalists and winners over the years have been awarded with opportunities to show their work in important venues and meet influential people in the art and culture world. Given that accessing the media is available online, the event has become a sort of

marketplace for artists, experts, aficionados and the public to mingle and exchange views on art and immigration, organizers say. 'The festival aims to highlight the rich and positive complexity of (immigration) through the eyes and sensibilities of artists,' IMAF says. 'At the same time, artists will have an opportunity to show their talent to a large audience and hopefully influence, in a favorable way, the frequently bleak perception of 'strangers'. If these food-themed pieces worked up an appetite, festival attendants were also invited to head over to EATaly, Manhattan's Italian-cuisine superstore, to taste food at 'Sport Your Food'. In honor of the 2012 Olympics in London, couples composed of top chefs and visual artists teamed up to create food and art inspired by Olympic events. Duos included Chef Massimo Bottura and New York photographer and sculptor Gregg LeFevre who interpreted the javelin throw; chef Cristina Bowerman and artist Fulvio Di Piazza who depicted the discus event; and Lorenzo Cogo and Silvio Giordano who interpreted the hurdles.

