

**ABSTRACT – THE PERFORMING PRESENCE OF PORTRAITS**

**Keynote speaker - Professor Emeritus Martin Kemp, University of Oxford – *Being looked at: in the presence of Lisa Gherardini***

We start with my experience of seeing the *Mona Lisa* out of its (her?) frame, considering the material and visual properties of the picture. This is followed by the evidence about the sitter and the reasons why Leonardo should have portrayed the wife of a Florentine silk merchant when he had more "important" things to do.

How is it that the likeness of a bourgeois woman has come to embody such an uncanny sense of presence for generations of viewers, even ones who never visit the Louvre? Why does she look at us, and why does she smile, when eye contact was indecorous for women? How did she come to embody so much of Leonardo's philosophy, in such a way that the picture can barely be considered a "portrait" in Renaissance terms?

What are the factors that endow her with such a compelling presence outside the context of the commissioning and making of the picture?

**Director of FotoGrafia International Festival of Photography and photographer Marco Delogu – *The portrait as self-portrait***

I have always embarked on projects focused on groups of people who have experiences or idioms in common, and in doing so I have always drawn inspiration from my own life. The idea of photographing the cardinals for example began with my uncle who was a bishop, the Roman busts from my obsession with imagining them come to life in various parts of the city. My interest in the farmers of the Pontine marshes came from stories told by my grandfather – who himself had farmed in Sardinia – and also because my father, a medic, had studied malaria. The composers of contemporary classical music fascinated me because they have a unique language in common that is incomprehensible to most people – a friend of mine spent a long time trying to explain it to me. The jockeys – I have been immersed for a long time in the world of horses and horse racing; a family passion, that is also traceable to my Sardinian origins, but above all because of the aesthetic and cerebral pleasure I derive from talking about horses, watching them and spending a lot of time in their company.

Imprisonment has been a familiar element for my generation with the extreme expressions of the political struggles of the 70s; twenty years on I found some of my old schoolmates still in prison, while others return at night but are free to work outside during the day.

All the photos were taken in different sections of the Rebibbia jail in Rome, between Autumn 1997 and Spring 2003. However Rebibbia in these photos is not easily identifiable, it is simply a detention centre, one of a community of fifty thousand in Italy and millions throughout the world whose inhabitants live within a web of imposed and self-imposed rules and regulations, that are indecipherable to those who do not know this experience. Beyond the rules are men and women just trying to survive.

I was interested in the relation between people and their environment. Over time I have come to focus on either the people or their environment. Concutelli had burned his beard during an accident with a gas burner and had shaved it for the first time in years. Notorious and anonymous figures alike posed patiently for me. A Sardinian friend helped me but did not want to be photographed. The women were much warmer and more colourful. The transsexuals kept asking to be photographed a second time.

**Reader Peter Stewart, Courtauld Institute – *The performing presence of Roman portraits***

The notion of images working as social agents or being treated as if in some sense alive is very relevant to the art of the Roman empire. It is most obvious in the reception of religious images, which stood in for the gods and provided visible and tangible objects for devotion. But Roman portrait images served some analogous functions and were treated in similar ways. Most notably, the conventionalised images of the emperor served as his proxies, distributing his charismatic presence through the provinces of the empire.

Examining examples between the late Roman Republic and earliest Byzantine icons, this paper touches on the forms of presence implied by the two kinds of images, and the devotional responses that they elicited. However, my intention here is also to go beyond the superficial similarity of cult images and portraits, and explore the *limits* of 'presence' in Roman portraiture.

It is, in fact, harder to demonstrate the performing presence of portraits than that of explicitly religious images, and the Romans seem to have drawn subtle conceptual distinctions between the two. Ultimately the particular constraints on the animacy of portraits depend on their varied social contexts and how they were framed by the social exchanges in which they were embedded.

**Senior Lecturer Caroline Vout, University of Cambridge – ‘*Still lives*’: *portraiture and biography***

What kind of life does a portrait give? This paper addresses this question in two key ways by focusing first on Roman imperial portraiture and replica series, and secondly on ancient Roman funerary portraiture. It sidesteps the vexing question of 'mimesis' or faithfulness to focus instead on interrogating the fictions which portraits weave; the ways in which portraits are not 'stills', but tell life-stories; on how what is not 'said' is often more important than what is. All art encodes absence but some genres of art do this more insistently than others, with funerary art a case in point. In shifting the focus from likeness to life (and death), this paper re-examines such central concerns of the discipline as context, cataloguing, and how to do history with images.