

Basilica di Santa Maria delle Grazie
Sacrestia del Bramante
via Caradosso 1, Milan

Ulisse Sartini. La virtù della bellezza
Omaggio a Leonardo

curated by Giovanni Gazzaneo

16 December 2018 - 13 January 2019

opening Saturday 15 December 5.30pm
Sala San Domenico, entrance from via G. A. Sassi 3

press release, 10.12.18

Ulisse Sartini celebrates Leonardo da Vinci with more than 30 paintings and sketches in the occasion of the 500 years from his death. The **unreleased artworks** will be presented at the exhibition "Ulisse Sartini. La virtù della bellezza. Omaggio a Leonardo" at the Sacristy of Bramante in Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan. The exhibition has been curated by Giovanni Gazzaneo and will take place from December 16th 2018 to January 13th 2019.

The exhibition presents a cycle of paintings created in 2018 and inspired by the masterpieces of Leonardo as *Monna Lisa*, *La Madonna dei fusi*, *l'Annunciata*, *La Belle Ferronière*. The curator of the exhibition **Giovanni Gazzaneo** says: «The artworks are not copies from the originals, but they're portraits of the true and sacred works that find a source of creativity in every detail of the paintings, starting from the atmospheres, the lights, the hand gestures and the draperies».

The event will take place not so far away from the *Cenacolo* and keeps the creative relationship between the masterpieces of Leonardo and the ones of Ulisse Sartini alive. This union had already started with the exhibition of the artwork of Ulisse Sartini dedicated to the Eucharistic Mystery that is now located in The main Cathedral of Piacenza. This painting is inspired by the *Ultima Cena* of Leonardo.

The masterpieces of Leonardo are rare gems. In the variety of his works and in 50 years of artworks' production, only 20 artworks have reached us. «Some paintings remembered from the sources have been lost (the altarpiece of the San Bernardo Chapel in Palazzo Vecchio, the *Medusa* from the Medici's collection), some others remained not finished (the *Adorazione dei Magi* in the Uffizi, the *San Girolamo* of the Vatican art gallery), others again got ruined during the realization because of technical problems of execution (the wall painting *Battaglia di Anghiari*). The painting itself wasn't for Leonardo only an end, but more a means. It was an instrument of knowledge, of scientific research, of avant-garde professional experimentation. It was an eminently intellectual activity, aimed at understanding, through the imitation and the interpretation of the nature, the great machine of the world» says **Antonio Paolucci**.

Thanks to his painting, Leonardo gave us the some artworks that are masterpieces in the world history as the face of the *Gioconda* and the drama of the *Ultima Cena*.

Ulisse Sartini pays tribute to Leonardo, he's not afraid of the comparison with the great beauty generated by Da Vinci, because in his whole life he had to **compare himself with the masterpieces of the ancients** and so he had the opportunity to give us **iconographic codes and languages for our days**. «I think that my modernity – says Ulisse Sartini – consists of having dared to come back to the Renaissance and to the Venetian art, to those masters who I have always felt close to me, as Moroni, Tiziano, Tintoretto. Paying the tribute to Leonardo falls into what is my creative horizon». That is the heart of thought of the artist and of his being as a painter: *respicio praeterita, aspicio presentia, prospicio futura*, «I observe the past, I watch the present, I make out the future». In the quote of Adamus Scotus - in the strong indiscible link of the passage of time (the substance of the human's life) - the awareness of the impossibility of an art without history, the absurdity of a creation that, to be considered, had to close with all what it was before. In this way *Monna Lisa* reborns in the face of a little girl, the study of a fetus in *Embriocosmo*, the *Musico* in the self-portrait of the artist. In his portraits Sartini continues to express the soul of whom he portrays.

In the introduction of the catalogue **Antonio Paolucci** writes: «Using the traditional materials, ad Ulisse Sartini does, unfolding a prodigious memory and “an amazing technical ability” (Sgarbi) is possible. Others have done that at the end of cultural paths and using others expressive ways. I think about Piero Guccione or Bill Viola. It's possible to take from the ancient language and to rework it, to transform it, making it comprehensible and effective to the women and men of our days. Provided not to fall into the citationism that is always sterile and unpleasant [...]. We should know how to use the figurative tradition with the naturalness with which we use literary language, a communication tool that had been built by Dante and by Petrarch, by Bembo and by Manzoni and yet there it is used to express ideas and values, feelings and passions of our time. In this way moves Ulisse Sartini. The artist goes into the great figurative tradition (in Caravaggio, in Annibale Carracci), he disarticulates and analyses it, he seems to be in competition with it (his extraordinary technical talent allows him) and then offers it to us, in a reinvented, transfigured way, characterized by his specific expressive genius».

Accompanying the exhibition there is an important **volume** published by Edizioni Crocevia, curated by Giovanni Gazzaneo, with the images of the works, details and preparatory drawings of the exhibition, with the reproductions of the works of Leonardo to which they pay homage. The volume is also enriched by the critical texts by Antonio Paolucci, Stefano Zuffi and the curator.

Biographical notes. Ulisse Sartini was born in Ziano Piacentino (Piacenza) in 1943. He's a known painter and a portraitist, he moved very young to Milan where he studied under the guidance of the painter Luigi Comolli, student of Segantini. But his real masters are the painters of the Renaissance, from who he learned the iconography and the technique. His most significant works are: the official portraits of the Popes Giovanni Paolo II, Benedetto XVI and Francesco; the portraits of Maria Callas, located in the Museum of the Scala Theatre in Milan, in the Auditorium Megaron in Athens and in the Theatre La Fenice in Venice. Famous are also the portraits of the English Prime Minister John Major, of Pier Paolo Pasolini, of Luciana Savignano, of Luciano Pavarotti at the Royal Opera House in London, of Audrey Hepburn for the new Unicef office in Rome and of Giovanni Verga for the Immaginario Verghiano Museum of Vizzini. He is the second Italian painter, after Pietro Annigoni, to be present at the National Portrait Gallery of London with the portrait of Joan Sutherland.

His works are located in important museums, churches and private collections in Italy and abroad. Authoritative scholars and art critics were interested in Sartini's work, such as Raffaele De Grada, Mario De Micheli, Floriano De Santi, Alberico Sala, Roberto Sanesi and Vittorio Sgarbi. He lives and works in Milan.

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Exhibition details

Title Ulisse Sartini. La virtù della bellezza. Omaggio a Leonardo

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Venue Basilica di Santa Maria delle Grazie, Sacrestia del Bramante, via Caradosso 1 - Milan

Dates 16 December 2018 - 13 January 2019

Opening Saturday 15 December, 5.30pm

Basilica di Santa Maria delle Grazie, Sala San Domenico, entrance from via G.A. Sassi 3

Opening Hours Monday-Sunday, 10am-12pm / 3pm-7pm. Closed 25 December and 1 January

Entrance free

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