

WORLD FILM LOCATIONS FLORENCE

Edited by Alberto Zambenedetti



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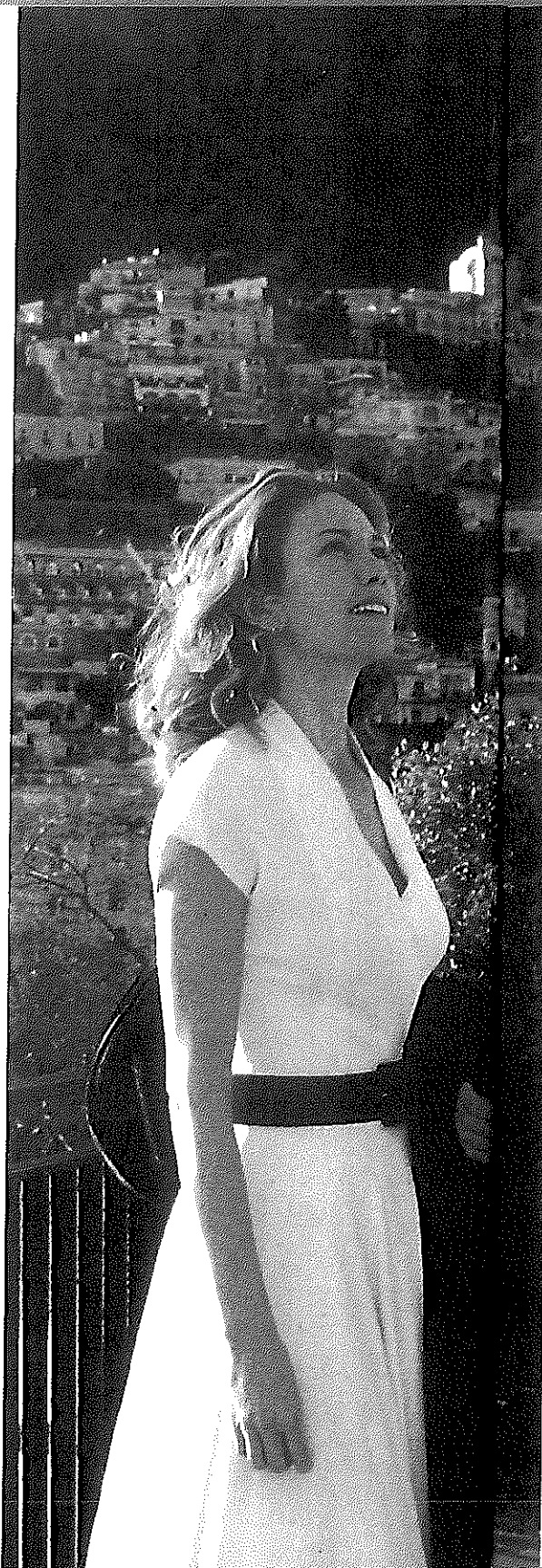
LOCATION PHOTOGRAPHY
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PUBLISHED BY
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company in England
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Intellect Books Ltd, The Mill,
Parnall Road, Fishponds, Bristol,
BS16 3JG, UK.



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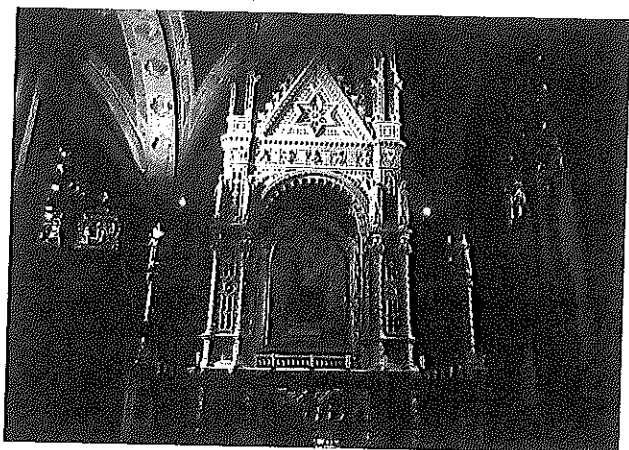
Maps/Scenes

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World Film Locati

OBSESSION (1976)

Orsanmichele Church, San Gimignano (NB: Bernardo Daddi's "Madonna and Child")



BRIAN DE PALMA is often dismissed as a vulgar Hitchcock poser. Appropriately, then, *Obsession* deals with the implications of remoulding a vanished icon, an operation inherently dependent on an act of imposturous posing. Sixteen years after the death of his wife Elizabeth (Geneviève Bujold), New Orleans businessman Michael Courtland (Cliff Robertson) travels to Florence. Here, he meets art restorer Sandra Portinari (surnamed after Dante's Beatrice and also played by Bujold), who uncannily resembles his deceased wife. A plot punctuated by Michael's attempt to 'remake' Elizabeth ensues. In a meaningful scene, Michael approaches Sandra while she works at the restoration of Bernardo Daddi's "Madonna and Child". The painting is in the Church of San Miniato al Monte, but De Palma situates the encounter inside the Church of Orsanmichele, thus effectively conjuring up a double of Daddi's piece, whose blatant status as fallacious copy here mirrors Sandra's own deceiving act. Adding to the 'doubling' motif is the (fictional) reference in the scene to damage in the painting that has revealed an earlier draft underneath, which makes it difficult to label one layer more 'original' than the other, along with the (actual) fact that Daddi's *Madonna and Child* was conceived to replace another image of the Virgin that had previously adorned the church. Daddi completed the piece in a cleverly revivalist style as an act of homage and to keep the potency of the original alive through its substitute. De Palma appears to state this much about his relationship to Hitchcock.

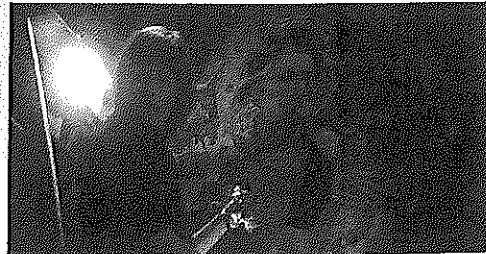
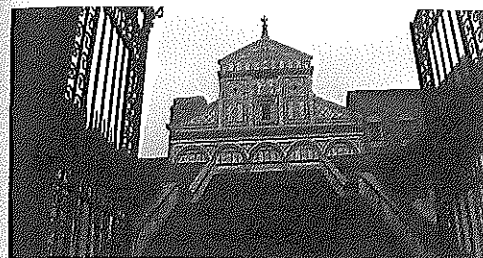
❖ **Stefano Ciammaroni**

Photo © Elizabeth Williams

Directed by Brian De Palma

Scene description: Sandra works at the restoration

Timecode for scene: 0:35:08 - 0:39:28



Images © 1976 Harry N. Blum, Robert M. Brenson, George Lillo

THE STENDHAL SYNDROME/ LA SINDROME DI STENDHAL (1996)

LOCATION

Caravaggio's Head of Medusa, Sala del Caravaggio, Uffizi Gallery

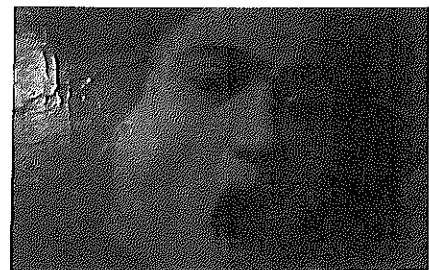


MICHELANGELO MERISI DA CARAVAGGIO and Dario Argento are evidently passionate about beheadings. Caravaggio's "Judith Beheading Holofernes" (1599), "Salome Receives the Head of St John the Baptist" (1607) and "The Beheading of St John the Baptist" (1608) all feature images of decapitation, as do Argento's *Four Flies on Grey Velvet/4 mosche di velluto grigio* (1972), *Deep Red/Profondo rosso* (1975), *Inferno* (1980) and *Phenomena* (1985), to only name a few. In *The Stendhal Syndrome*, Asia Argento plays Anna Manni, a detective in pursuit of a serial killer. The opening scene has Anna wander erratically around the tourist-choked rooms of Florence's Uffizi Gallery, a pretext for Argento's typically roving camera to duly take in many of the museum's most iconic treasures. It is however Caravaggio's *Head of Medusa* that the camera obliges the spectator to gaze at most forcefully, through a prolonged zoom shot that gets us close enough to register the horror in the eyes of Medusa, its head severed but still conscious. In this piece, which was commissioned to Caravaggio as a gift for the Grand Duke of Tuscany, the artist appears to catch Medusa at the very moment of self-recognition, as if the shield of Perseus had worked as a mirror, causing Medusa to fall prey to its own horrific and petrifying image. Argento's fans will be quick to note that mirrors, and with them the horror of self-recognition – of exhuming from the distant past the original sins and traumas responsible for triggering unspeakable violence – are the signature obsession of the Italian horror maestro.

• Stefano Ciammuri

Photo © ArtArchive – DeA Picture Library

Directed by Dario Argento
Scene description: While Anna wanders,
Argento's camera pauses on Caravaggio's
Timecode for scene: 0:03:05 – 0:06:40



Images © 1996 Dario Argento, Giuseppe Colombo (a Mei)

THE BEST OF YOUTH/LA MEGLIO GIOVENTÙ (2003)

LOCATION

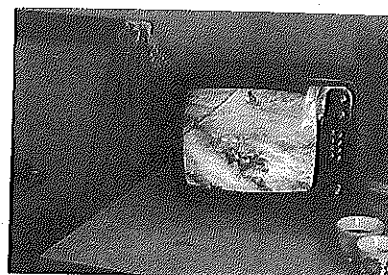
Piazzale degli Uffizi



ON 4 NOVEMBER 1966 (the 48th anniversary of Italy's victory in World War I), Florence's Arno river flooded the city, leaving dozens dead and causing irreparable damage to artworks in the Uffizi Gallery and to thousands of ancient books and manuscripts stored in the archives of the National Library. The loss was mitigated by the intervention of the (best of) Italian youth, who converged on Florence en masse to help dig precious artefacts out of the mud. In Marco Tullio Giordana's family epic, spanning the years from the early 1960s to 2003, these 'angels of mud', as they were called, are paid tribute to in a meaningful segment. Several social types who would be at each other's throats come the 1970s are seen working together for the sake of a shared national patrimony: the army recruit and future angry cop, the progressive but moderate university student, the future star economist, and the soon to become leftist terrorist. Released on the wake of a troubling resurgence of political terrorism in Italy, the film carries a conciliatory and unifying message, most evidently in this image of Italians coming together at a time of crisis. It is a reference to the purported inclusiveness and heterogeneity of the anti-Fascist Resistance of 1943-45, the 'good fight' whose violence the streets of Florence had seen a great deal of and whose insurrectionist ethos would later be revived, though now in the name of national disunity, by the political ideology of the Italian terrorist left. ➤ **Stefano Ciammaroni**

Photo © Alberto Zambenedetti

Directed by Marco Tullio Giordana
Scene description: Marco and Matteo
'angels of mud' after the flood of 4 Nov
Timecode for scene: 1:16:06 - 1:19:56



Images © 2003 Tonino Nieddu and Fabrizio Zappi for F

SOMETHING IN THE AIR/APRÈS MAI (2012)

LOCATION

Piazza dei Peruzzi



SOMETHING WAS DEFINITELY in the air for those who came of age in the aftermath of the tumultuous events of May 1968 thinking that the revolution was at reach, through weapons as varied as the pistol, the painter's brush and the film-maker's camera. In 1971 Paris, Gilles (Clément Métayer) is a high school student committed to a career in abstract painting and left-wing insurrectionism. After his anti-establishment exploits draw police attention, Gilles is forced to seek refuge abroad. Appropriately, he lands in arty Florence, where his frequentations of the local radical collectives take him to an open-air screening of a French documentary on the Laotian Communists fighting the American military alongside North Vietnam. A typical, obligatory debate ensues on the need for a cinematic syntax 'at the service of the internationalist revolution' and the struggle 'to defy the imperialist forces'. With a touch of irony too delicious to dismiss as incidental, Assayas has this gathering of revolutionaries take place in and 'occupy' Piazza de Peruzzi, which in late medieval times had been the courtyard around which stood the residence of the Peruzzi family. Bankers, international traders and war profiteers, the Peruzzi helped King Edward III of England finance his imperialist endeavours in France and Scotland in exchange for economic favours. By the mid-fourteenth century, however, the cost of what would become known as the 'Hundred Years' War' proved unsustainable for the Peruzzi, whose bankruptcy is believed to have had a significant impact on the economic depression of the late Middle Ages. ♦♦ **Stefano Ciammaroni**

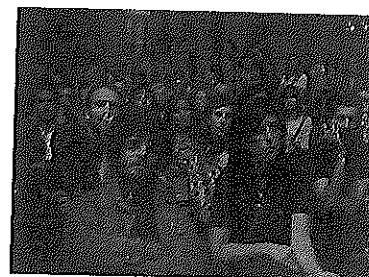
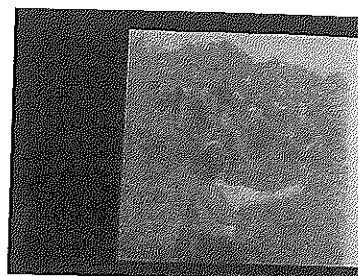
Photo © Elizabeth Williams

Directed by Olivier Assayas

Scene description: Gilles attends a

on the role of the Laotian Commun

Timecode for scene: 0:43:49 - 0:47:



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