

CULTURE
TAKEAWAY



Professor Marina Wallace



University of the Arts London Professorial Platform 2013

CULTURE TAKEAWAY



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FOREWORD

By Martin Kemp

Marina Wallace is a true child of Rome. History – Classical Antiquity, the Church, the great parade of artists and the erratic political fortune of the late-unified nation – is built into the very fabric of the city, physically and emotionally. Marina absorbed, with her mother's milk as it were, that particularly Italian characteristic that ranks sensory quality as the most valuable ingredient for a fulfilled life.

Educated in a Swiss school in the Holy City, Marina is also a committed internationalist, with an enviable gift for foreign languages. She was trained in Rome as a classicist and as a painter, under the kind of apprenticeship that no longer occurs in Britain, before moving to study at the Byam Shaw School of Art and Goldsmiths College in London. Her post-graduate research at the Royal College of Art characteristically took up a cross-cultural subject, looking at how, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Serene Republic of Venice related visually to its maritime rival, Ottoman Turkey. In between degrees she worked for Italian television in London, reporting on arts and culture in the UK (and notably also on the Heysel Stadium football disaster in 1985), acquiring communicative skills that later stood her in good stead in varied fields.



Her own artwork is about identity and memory through time and space (looking at photographs but using pigments as a tool), and focuses on light and shade – chiaroscuro in the Italian sense, in contrast to the grey nuances of Britain. Her subjects are often drawn enigmatically from the defining shadows in family ‘snapshots’. Her paintings on gesso-prepared panels explore the traditional and demanding Renaissance medium of tempera.

These factors, her dialogue with the ever-present past of memory, her international curiosity, her intuitive sympathy of exotic cultures, her feel for materials, her unshakeable commitment to the quality of sensory experience, and her deep engagement with the complex processes of conception and execution in works of art have all infused her subsequent career. She was never one of those art historians parachuted from dry academia into reluctant art schools, when it was decreed in the 60s and 70s that those cradles of orchestrated anarchy should become ‘respectable’ academic units. Rather, she was able to relate to staff and students in a deeply sympathetic manner, devising courses that focused on an analytical engagement with the arts of the past and of today together with a creative role in the nurturing of artistic talent.

I first met Marina at a conference of the Association of Art Historians in Birmingham. There she enrolled me as a contributor for her book on contemporary artist, John Hilliard, published in 1995, for which she had obtained a major Arts Council photography publishing grant. Shortly afterwards I asked her to work with me on the exhibition *Spectacular Bodies* for the Hayward Gallery. In 2000 we embarked on the *Universal Leonardo* project that lasted seven years. As soon as I began to devise enterprises in partnership with Marina, it was apparent that

she already possessed all the attributes to achieve something notable in the public domain.

The prime vehicle that has served to bring her potential into rounded realisation is the devising, researching and curating of exhibitions. A major and original feature of her activity as a curator has been her facilitating the intimate involvement of practising artists with historical material across wide chronological ranges. ‘Modern’ (and contemporary) works are not simply borrowed and ‘dropped in’; Marina is committed to encouraging the participation of artists who, under her careful monitoring, are drawn into the conspiracy of the show in a process of mutual enrichment. Not least, artists know that Marina is on their side. Moreover, her sense of visual quality in all aspects of design and ambience, both in art and in life, have made her a natural partner with architect-designers, most notably Paul Williams of Stanton Williams, who was responsible for the really big shows, *Spectacular Bodies*, *Seduced* and the *Leonardo da Vinci* exhibition. Designers of catalogues and websites have unfailingly recognised in Marina a fellow spirit and, through their liaison with her, have reacted with work of exceptional quality.

The international team she assembled at Central Saint Martins, under the aegis of the research and exhibition-making unit, Artakt (of which I was co-founder under its initial name Wallace Kemp Artakt) developed talent and loyalty in equal measure, more like an extended family than a cold hierarchy. Marina and her colleagues have brought a very distinctive flavour into the world of such endeavours at the University of the Arts, London and elsewhere, maintaining the conviction that ‘art, science and culture individually and, above all, collectively, can and

should be communicated as creatively and accurately as possible.’ Marina possesses a notable ability to work across disciplines, to think laterally and to integrate varied fields into her curatorial projects. An integral component in her projects, is the association of art and science. Just as she drew artists into her creative partnerships, so she has collaborated with scientists connecting with their special kinds of creativity. Bodies and minds have been at the centre of these shared ventures, extending into senses other than the visual, most notably music and dance (one of Marina’s personal passions). The scientists with whom she has embarked on a series of remarkable projects have also recognised her as ‘one of them’, not in terms of technical knowledge but by her fostering of aspirations to extend their reach into wider fields of thinking and communication. She has transgressed the boundaries of conventional disciplines across a wide range of artforms and sciences with unfailing verve and creativity. The whole of her pioneering enterprise has been at the forefront of what is now a major trend in art-science collaborations. Marina is set to continue inventive and imaginative collaborations in the hybrid world of art&science at the highest level. Her latest, *Lens on Life*, is a robust venture involving twelve top scientific institutions and a European Consortium Project, *MitoSys*, with Vienna’s Institute of Molecular Pathology as her closest partner. For her current art&science endeavour Marina has brought together lead scientists, superb artists, a star choreographer and an excellent documentary filmmaker.

It would be remiss in any appreciation of Marina not to mention her family that provides a powerful foundation and the basis of great personal integrity: her revered father, Franco, who encouraged his beloved daughter to move to England when she was twenty (and passed away

three days after she had established herself in London); her mother, Jolanda (recently deceased in Rome), who was someone for whom the word indomitable might have been invented. Her former husband Paul, a doctor and an important Professor of Public Health, provided a high exemplar for career standards, together with powerful family and public commitment. Their children, Marcel and Juliette, are remarkable young people.

Marina herself is, as they say, a one-off, whom it is a privilege to know.



CULTURE TAKEAWAY



THE BACKGROUND



This book is mainly based on the research I carried out for Volume X of *La Cultura Italiana* published by UTET in 2010. The volume is in Italian and I thought it would be good to translate some of it so that I could share with my colleagues and students in England the work I did for it whilst at CSM, where what I normally do is in English, albeit in the context of a very international environment.

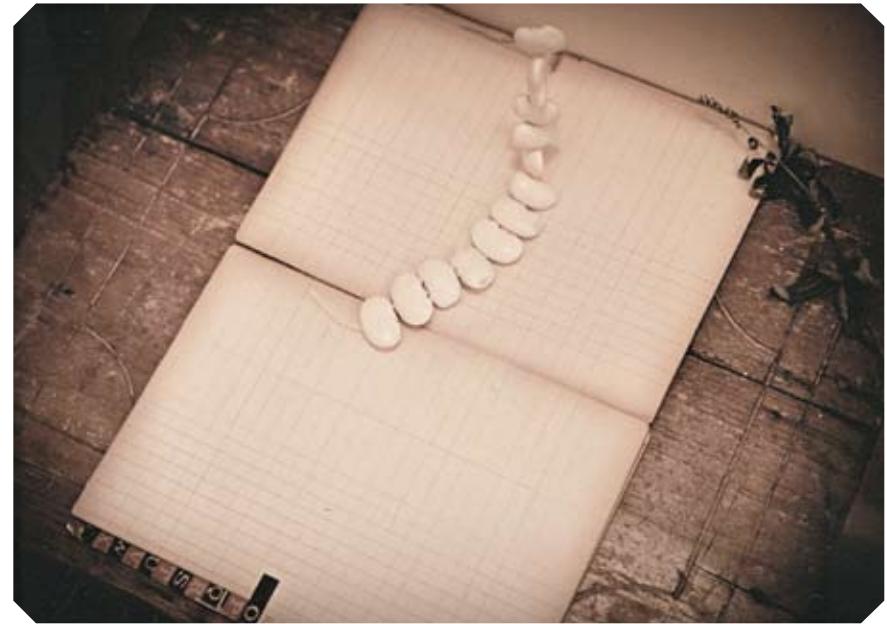
I was fortunate to be one of the main editors and authors of *La Cultura Italiana*, a publication intended to cover all aspects of Italian cultural life – chosen, I was told – on the strength of a sound lateral approach. It will give a sense of the breadth and scope of the enterprise to say that the volumes range from paleo-anthropology, archaeology, genetics and demography – Volume I – to medicine, economics, science, law, cinema, theatre down to art, *Volume X – L'Arte e il Visuale (Art and the Visual)*.

The idea of defining the complex make-up of Italian Culture as a whole came from population geneticist, Luca Cavalli Sforza, who lived and worked in the USA, based at Stanford University, until his retirement. The Geneticist and the Humanist in Cavalli Sforza combine to focus on what he wrote about elsewhere, the Evolution of Culture¹. A series of fortuitous circumstances (the exhibition, *Spectacular Bodies*, at the Hayward Gallery in 2000–2001; my appearance in October

1. Cavalli Sforza, Luca, *L'Evoluzione della Cultura*, Codice Edizioni, 2004

2000 on the live Radio 4 programme, *Start the Week*, presented at the time by Jeremy Paxman; the Mendel exhibition in Brno, *The Genius of Genetics*, 2003) led me to meet Cavalli Sforza and then Vittorio Bo, of *Codice – Idee per la Cultura*, a Turin based arts organization and publishing house. Through Vittorio I was introduced to UTET – founded in 1790 – publishers of academic texts, encyclopaedias, and multi media material, and to its resourceful staff.

When asked to join a working group gathered to create a structure for a series of volumes to be called *La Cultura Italiana* I was in the throes of curating *Seduced – Art and Sex from Antiquity to Now* for the Barbican (2007). In spite of being very busy at the time, the UTET enterprise seemed far too intriguing to be ignored. Thanks to a determined editorial assistant, and the efficient help of the UTET staff,² I was able to participate in what became a tough brain-storming series of sessions aimed at identifying what on earth makes up a visual culture and distinguishes it from other cultures.



2. Marisa Rinaldi and Gabriella Vinciguerra stand out for their valid help

IDENTITY



Questions of identity crept in as I was laboriously attempting to make out what subjects would comprise the whole endeavour and draw up a table of contents to submit to the commissioning editors. This took the shape of a very rough brain map, drawn on several pieces of paper joined up with adhesive tape and laid out on the floor of my living room. National identity, but also my own identity came into question.

I first came to London in 1976, moved here permanently in 1979, married Paul, an English doctor of German Jewish origins and started studying art at the University of London, Goldsmiths College, after a Foundation year at Byam Shaw School of Art in Notting Hill Gate. As a young foreigner I struggled to comprehend the local culture and felt that there were huge differences between the English landscape, family structure and food and my own background. Reflections on cultural differences dominated the first years of my life in London. Art College, work, friends and the newly acquired family all conspired to make me reflect on who I was in such a different environment. The ‘look’ of English things was so radically different. Travel between the two countries was not as easy as it is now – flights were expensive, I had less money to spend on going back ‘home’... until ‘home’ changed its meaning. ‘Home’ became both here and there, and the visual stimuli were recorded in new ways.

I am now ‘home’ when I am in London, and ‘home’ when I am in Rome: the internal register of this double identity is a complex business, tricky to unravel and hard to explain. I found working on the UTET volume almost thirty years after first landing in England a significant experience. Not only was I given the chance to examine the visual culture of my country of origin – I was also given a free hand at representing it within a new structure, free to partially re-interpret the prevailing academic tradition proper of the history of Italian Art that I had been taught in Italy.

This was a notable personal *and* professional challenge that I embarked on with a great sense of anticipation. The association with the Royal College of Art for my post-graduate studies, my work in an Art College, Central Saint Martins – teaching and mixing with students and colleagues from various creative disciplines – and sustained curatorial practice, increased my freedom to relate to art production and art history in less conventional ways. I felt that I could bring to this new challenge, so different from the customary exhibition-making, a breath of fresh air drawn straight from curatorial experience, and from the lateral-thinking mode that is encouraged and nurtured in creative practice in art colleges.



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GENIUS & GENES



The intention of the volume was to offer a coherent ensemble of essays on aspects that best characterize Italian visual culture and distinguish it from the cultures of other countries. All essays were commissioned imagining a specific onlooker, someone who would approach Italian culture from the outside (Cavalli Sforza himself had conceived the whole *oeuvre* with his American compatriots in mind as potential readers).

One of the assumptions was that the relationship each citizen has with his/her own country and culture is mediated by personal experiences matured during a lifetime. It is a delicate task to identify what motivates the consciousness of ‘insiders’ of a culture whilst, at the same time, stimulating the interest of outsiders. The unique angle given by geneticist Cavalli Sforza opened up a view of the panorama of Italian art through a new lens: that of the comparison between the transmission of genetic material and cultural factors. Genes transmit vertically, from mother to child. Language is also transmitted vertically (‘mother-tongue’). Culture can transmit vertically, but also diagonally and horizontally.

To be able to observe the prodigious artistic production of one’s own country from the point of view of another culture and another genetic material offered new cues. Curiosity, prodded by geographical and physical distance, helps to identify in a schematic way those characteristics

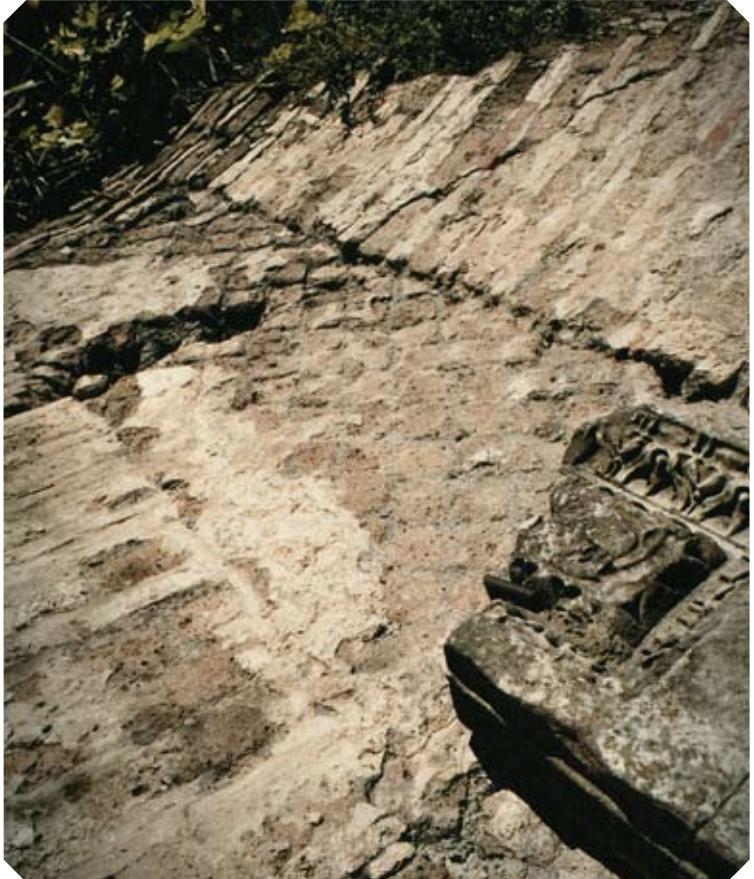
that define a country's visual culture in a decisively distinctive way. The decision of what to include or exclude from the Volume matured across an extended period of time. It took nearly two years to come up with a definitive index, and two more to commission the authors, to write and edit their texts. Academic, artistic and scientific ingredients were blended in the right quantities.

It was tempting but would have been repetitive to start by drawing up a list of all Italian artworks, of artists and notable places. There is already a very rich literature on all this. Rather it felt important to centre the dialogue on those aspects that emerged as original and uniquely Italian. But which were those? How does one define a culture?

Art and its visual culture have been the major factors that characterised Italy at all times. It is through its Art in particular, more than anything else, that Italy established its identity internationally and has become a constant magnet for visitors. The 'tourist business' has been founded on four pillars: the grandeur of ancient Rome, evocative in its massive ruins and its progressive excavation; the presence of St Peter and his papal successors; the canonical nature of Renaissance art (and to a lesser extent Baroque art); and the later cult of Summer vacations in a land of sun and of food-as-art. No other country has provided quite such a draw. But which were the added factors that supported and nourished its artistic identity? Which the fundamental elements that render Italian Art and its visual expressions famous, accessible, exportable, and a source of admiration for other cultures and other countries?

In Volume X, Italian Art is seen in relation to its prodigious production, its compulsive collecting and exorbitant commissioning, its varied reception and its controversial conservation rather than as a series of sporadic glorious achievements. However other aspects such as popular religion, the contribution of artists from Northern Europe, the input of foreign visitors and authors of guidebooks, as well as undeniable influences from the Orient, and other 'minor' factors that contributed to the particular *shape* and *flavour* of Italian Art in less discernable ways are also taken into account. The various and varied populations that inhabited the peninsula throughout the centuries left a mark with their genetic and cultural singularities. The Italian *genius* must be seen in the context of the Italian *genes*.

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THE CULTURE of the VISUAL (& of the IMAGE) IN ITALY

First things first: in Italy the culture of the *visual* and of the *image* comes first. In a way the *cult* of images (*il culto dell'immagine*) is inextricably linked with everything else, ensuring that aesthetic nuances are an intrinsic part of everyday life. Italy displays a powerful visual identity through its art, and images in daily life are not exempt from a strong sense of visual reverence and reference. To illustrate the persistence of certain visual codes from the Renaissance to now, I enjoyed drawing a parallel between a contemporary propaganda image, and a 15th century painting.

During a holiday in Italy I spent time in Ischia – a favourite destination for foreign visitors, many of whom – like the English composer Sir William Walton and his Argentine wife, Susanna – chose to reside there permanently. The affability of the people, the beauty of the landscape, archaeological remains, and works of art of the past, are things that attracts those who land in Italy. Everyday-life, however, is something else, as Susanna Walton discovered when struggling with the construction of her house and gardens, *La Mortella*. Daily life reveals itself with intransigent rough edges that contrast with the polished surfaces of the magnificence of art and the sun that shines on it. Inevitably, strong traditions can be perceived in various ways, essentially either as stale or invigorating, depending on one's point of view. Digging deep into the everyday, signs of the past reliably emerge from the complex visual fabric of the country.

It was in Ischia that I saw an image that sparked further thoughts along these lines. The owner of the *Hotel Terme Colella*, in Ischia, *Gaetano Colella*, runs a Spa dedicated to the health of his island's inhabitants. He is clearly a benefactor of humanity and, as such, he stood for the political elections of the Province of Naples in Summer 2009. His electoral campaign included publicising his own image on a poster prominently displayed in the streets of *Ischia*, conspicuously just opposite the entrance of his Spa. The poster exhorted the citizens of *Ischia* and *Procida* to rise again: *Rialzati Ischia! Rialzati Procida!* The effigy of *Colella* on the poster is associated with the Olympus of Italian politics. The direct visual link is with the pre-eminent representative of Italian politics at the time, the then Prime Minister, *Silvio Berlusconi*. *Colella* and *Berlusconi* appear to smile side by side, silhouetted against a vivid blue sky, embroidered with the contours of a world-map. However, this can only be a fictitious coupling because, if we submit the image to careful scrutiny it seems obvious, from signs that are not immediately evident, that the proximity between the two politicians is the result of a masterly photomontage. The two characters are side by side at the same level, but their outfits reveal an incoherence that unearths the fiction. *Berlusconi* wears a formal jacket and tie; *Colella*, on the other hand, is dressed casually, his shirt is open around the neck and he wears no tie. If the pose had been real, both would have worn similar attire. The photomontage involuntarily brings us back to a strategy common to devotional images of the Italian Renaissance. In the 15th Century painters were commissioned by local patrons to help perpetrate their image by placing it pictorially next to that of Saints and *Madonnas*.





Continuing with Neapolitan references let's take, as an example, the case of the *Carafa* Chapel in the Roman church of *Santa Maria sopra Minerva* entrusted to *Filippino Lippi* by the Neapolitan Cardinal, *Oliviero Carafa*, in 1418.

Carafa, who had led the Pope's army against the Turks in 1472, was planning to candidate himself for the papacy and for this purpose acquired a chapel in the Roman church, paid *Filippino* a fee for decorating it, and offered 'indulgences' to the faithful to encourage them to go and worship in the chapel. The sumptuous image represents at its centre the kneeling figure of *Oliviero Carafa* being introduced by St Thomas Aquinas to the Madonna. An angel witnesses the encounter. In Colella's poster *Berlusconi*'s guardian angel is missing, but the population of *Ischia* and *Procida* are exhorted to rise again, implying a prostration and an imminent salvation in the highest. It would be unlikely, for better or for worst, to find such a poster in England, Germany or France nowadays. It seems to me that it is representative of Italian culture, combining past and present codes in a single visual act.

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FIVE THEMES



To return to *La Cultura Italiana, Volume X* and the idea that the Italian visual presence has been the most notable factor in the Nation's existence and persistence, followed by the reverence for genius and power, and a creative lack of respect for rules and regulations, a strong sense of family, and a *penchant* for lavish private and public performance, I started by seeking how best to address such concepts. I began by referring to contemporary notions of *culture* according to recent anthropological studies. These have re-thought 'culture' quite radically, with the aim of narrowing down its concept so that it may include less and reveal more. But predictably modern anthropologists have not agreed on the best way to do this. Implicit in current views of culture is that it does not have a true, sacred or eternal meaning 'but that, like other symbols, it means whatever we use it to mean'.¹

Eventually five main themes were identified and agreed upon for Volume X as the most significant in the representation and definition of the development of Italian Visual Culture across the centuries. In a way they formed a circular route, each standing on its own right, and yet all fundamentally related to each other, offering a holistic view.

Number One: *Antiquity*

Number one, the most ubiquitous, *Antiquity*: the great spectre of Ancient Rome is a constant in Italian history and it is an integral part

1. Roger M. Keesing, *Theories of Culture, Annual Review of Anthropology*, Volume 3, (1974), pp. 73–97

of its ‘fame.’ The concept of antiquity (*antichità*) filtered through to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and imposed its ‘cultural logo’ right up to the XX century. Inspiration and derivation from the antique are omnipresent in Italian visual history in equal measures: throughout the centuries ancient archaeological sites were looted on a regular basis, and fragments of ruins, busts and sculptures passed on from hand to hand, and were used to decorate the homes of Cardinals and Princes, often ending up on the black market in the possession of notorious *tombaroli* (tomb raiders). A style linked to the ‘antiquarian culture’ established itself so potently that it emerged even in the 1960s *Arte Povera* (Paolini; Kounellis, etc.) and continues to inspire Italian contemporary artists such as Vanessa Beecroft and her statuesque performances reminiscent of Canova’s *Paolina Borghese*. References to the antique remain in fact a way to move in a sphere that is shared and recognisable.

Number Two: the *Church*

Number two, the most powerful, the *Church*: the majority of the art of the past that is admired in Italy started as devotional, commissioned by the Catholic Church, and located in its chapels, on its altars, in its monasteries. The coexistence of classical references and religious imperatives often produced artworks that are uniquely Italian. Take one of the main tourist attractions in the Holy City, *Piazza Navona*. The square was designed and built on the ruins of an ancient stadium constructed under the rule of the Emperor Domitian; in the fifteenth century the arena (*campo di Agone*) became a *piazza*, and in 1644 Pope Innocent X (from the Pamphili family) enlarged the family palace on the *Piazza* and commissioned Gianlorenzo Bernini to design the fountain in the centre of the square. A 1st century Roman obelisk

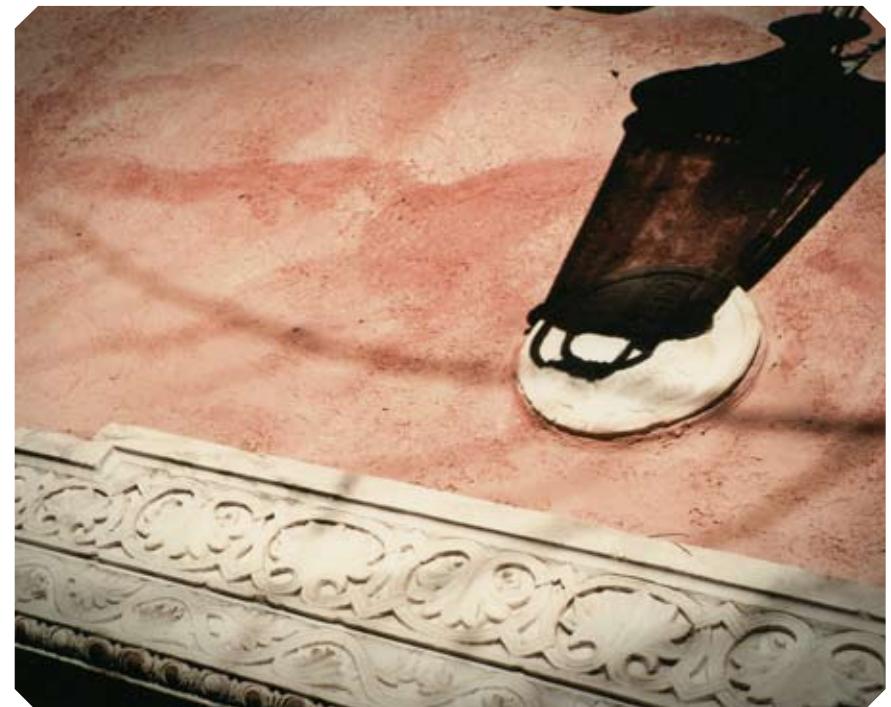


modelled on an Egyptian original was placed on top, surrounded by marble carved to resemble natural rocks. The sculpted ensemble faces the Church of *Sant'Agnese*, designed by *Francesco Borromini* – a Baroque eccentricity. Even the unorthodox Caravaggio painted on commission by a Cardinal, *Francesco Maria Del Monte*. The cult of saints and reliquaries and individual devotional urges, all permeated Italian visual culture in the most persistent way. Precious reliquaries were made to contain valuable remains. The culture of the ex-voto migrated from ancient Rome through the Middle Ages to the Renaissance and the Baroque, remaining a strong feature also in modern times. Ex-voto artefacts are still produced and offered in churches, particularly in Southern Italy. Religion still draws crowds of pilgrims and tourists to Rome.

Number Three: *Public and Private*

Number three is the most intimate and the most spectacular: *Public and Private*. Italian visual culture assigns a fundamental role to appearances, *l'apparenza*, and the cult of the personal image. The imperative to make a good impression (*far bella figura*) is pervasive. The border between public and private performance is blurred. Significant portions of lives are lived outdoors under public scrutiny. The Italian piazza archetypically provides a multi-functional space that serves as a site of local identity and pride, as a ground for military and civic parades, an outdoor debating chamber, a fashion cat walk, an arena in which to consume food and drink, as sports stadium, as market place, as theatre for specially-staged civic events and miscellaneous encounters.

The scenographic setting for such acts of civic life in the centre of the city characteristically involves a major church façade, the cathedral, the palace that houses the city government and various private buildings



of substance. Sculptures placed in open air spaces mark the triumph of the *tutto tondo*.

The ‘private’, in its grander manifestations, does not occupy an essentially different world. The names of those who dominated the look of the towns are often the same as those who lead private taste. This is the result of the lack of centralised ruling in Italy and the persistent control of local civic government by leading families.

A city palazzo was a major statement, displaying rhetorical confidence. The interior *cortile* was both an enclosed, privileged space and a semi-public arena. Sculpture, either freestanding or in relief, and painted murals, spoke of the patron’s status.

Paintings, commissioned to major painters, were part of the furnishings, frequently in the literal sense. The objects comprising what we would now call ‘design’ or ‘applied art’ played a primary role in the prestige, life and narrative rituals of the household. The spirit of collecting, commissioning artists and sharing private pleasures that derived from such activities helped to maintain ‘appearances’ in Italy and guarantee *bella figura*. In many ways this trend continues.

Number Four: Art and Artists

Italy effectively invented the notions of ‘Art’ and the ‘Artist’ in their modern senses. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were mainly responsible for this, through writing on art. The rise of the social status of artists had its roots in classical antiquity, recorded by Pliny, who exercised a huge influence on Renaissance thinking. But the modern phenomenon, culminating in the earliest academies of art,

went far beyond. The rise of what we might call ‘super-artists’ – those who transcended the constraints of their profession and became famous individuals – is first apparent with Giotto, whose reputation became such that whenever an Italian writer (from Dante onwards) cited the example of a great painter, Giotto’s name was automatically evoked (it was true also when I went to school in Rome). This implied the idea of ‘progress’ in the visual arts, a central theme in Renaissance writing. Star artists were seen as possessing an innate talent (*ingegno*) as they managed to accumulate a substantial amount of property and were enlisted amongst the most prominent citizens of their days.

With the generation of early fifteenth-century artists (Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Donatello and Masaccio) both individual and collective status began to rise. The praise of *alto ingegno* became a notable humanist *genre*. Artists exploited their importance whenever they could, and flexed their intellectual and social muscles with varied effects on their patrons. The supreme representative of this phenomenon was Leonardo da Vinci. His fame operated on posterity no less than on his reputation in his own day. It is a measure of his success that no artist is etched more clearly across the story of art than him. He accomplished the world’s most famous painting, (the *Mona Lisa*), the best-known drawing (the *Vitruvian Man*), and what bids fair to be the second most famous painting (the *Last Supper*).

Artists’ lives were recorded, and the extraordinary compilation of the *Vite*, by Giorgio Vasari and his collaborators, culminating in the biography of the ‘divine’ Michelangelo, is a summation of the trends that emerged in the 15th century. The lives of artists, their personalities and productions are blended to paint compelling verbal portraits.



The image of the creative (generally male) individual that emerges from the *Vite* is very much one we recognise today. By 1750 the chief ingredients for a ‘great artist’ included attracting significant patronage and income, access to high society, an international reputation, prominence in professional bodies such as the local academy, and overt powers of invention and originality. Being talented, grand, and a bit difficult was all part of the *image*. All in all, the conceptual and social notions of art and artists that prevail today can be seen to be originating from Italy, progressively from the 1300s to the 1800s. France created the modern notion of art criticism, but its foundations were firmly Italian.

Number Five: from Outside

My post-graduate thesis was based on the influence of the Orient on Venice in the 15th and 16th centuries. The research allowed me to look at Italian art in a new way, through the impact that other visual cultures had on it and concentrating on its mercantile relationship with other countries. Venice, of course, occupies a special place in cultural exchange, across land and sea. The great ‘warehouses’ of the Turks and Germans on the Grand Canal near the Rialto spoke of the European and Mediterranean dimension of the trading and the culture of Venice. The Germans employed Giorgione and Titian to decorate the outside of their Fondaco. The Venetians employed Oriental craftsmen to work on decorative motives in the city. Peaceful exchanges and relations with the Turks and North African countries were frequent in spite of existing competition for maritime dominance. The impact of Ottoman and Mameluk styles and products in Venice were profound, and Venetian architecture, ceramics and metalwork were all deeply influenced, whilst the Bellini brothers and Carpaccio exploited a ‘Turkish look’

in their paintings. In 1479 Gentile Bellini was exported as a kind of cultural ambassador to Constantinople, where he painted portraits of Sultan Mehmet II. Other cities and regions in Italy were strongly influenced by cultural exchanges, the result of occupations, commercial and military dealings. The complex visual richness of such cultural integrations is sometimes apparent (as in Sicily and the Neapolitan region). At times it is difficult to extricate with clarity such fundamental complexity of the visual fabric. Visitors to Italy have been exposed to such visual intricacies since the 1600s when it became a must to visit Italy, and Rome in particular, as a fulfillment of a proper education.

After 1600, an Italian visit features in the *curriculum vitae* of many leading artists from the North. Rubens and Van Dyck are conspicuous examples of major masters who took their Italian lessons back to other European countries. For visiting French artists, Raphael and the Carracci served as specially revered exemplars. Poussin took up residence in Rome and embodied what was to become the academic style of history painting. The centrality of Rome in the education of a young artist who aspired to greatness was enshrined by Louis XIV in 1666 by his establishment of the *Académie de France* in Rome and the *Prix de Rome*, awarded in an annual competition administered by the French Academy. There are currently at least 31 foreign cultural centres in Rome sponsored by national governments, comprising a cultural array of nationalities unrivalled by any other world-city. From the later part of the 17th century visitors call upon Italy on cultural missions as part of their general education as accomplished people.

Guidebooks are a genre in themselves. Brought into printed life in the late 1500s out of the *genre* of itineraries for pilgrims, they introduced

a novel way of visiting a city, ‘with the guide in hand’ (*con la guida in mano*), describing works of art and marking the beginning of an era of an ‘art public’. By contrast, in E. M. Forster’s *Room with a View*, ‘visiting Santa Croce without a Baedeker’ is seen as an achievement, a distinguishing feature of a daring woman as a tourist in 19th century Florence.

The valuable experience of visiting Italy for its art and for its life has been codified in different ways, ultimately in the attempt to protect and conserve its many works of art. With more than 3,400 museums, circa 2,100 parks and archaeological areas and 43 UNESCO sites, Italy possesses the biggest cultural heritage in the world. In spite of this absolute primacy the USA, with half its cultural sites, has a commercial return that is 16 times higher than the Italian one. The return of the cultural asset of England and France is 6 to 7 times more than the Italian. Given the enormity and the range of the Italian cultural heritage it is clear that there is a huge potential to develop it and value it. This process is in continuous development, not least as regards to the definition of value, coupled with the definition of culture. *Conservare con cura. Vale un Patrimonio Culturale (Conserve with Care. It is worth a Cultural Heritage)* – printed on a concert ticket of the *Auditorium della Musica* in Rome – seems to me a concise and succinct way to outline the question and the related problems. We must know how to conserve with care what we value. Our cultural heritage is a made up of a complex number of things, all interrelated and interdependent. After all there is some truth in what Miss Lavish says to Lucy in E. M. Forster’s *Room with a View*: “One doesn’t come to Italy for niceness, one comes for life.”

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TAKE AWAY THANK-YOUS



In the end my thanks go to the authors of Volume X, expert interpreters of Italian visual culture, and the hardworking and ingenious producers of *La Cultura Italiana*, UTET.

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I dedicate to my children, Juliette (on this occasion also acting as my editor) and Marcel (always lending a vigil eye), the greatest inspiration in my life, and to the memory of my father – who sent me away to England – and of my mother, who brought me back to Italy – the beauty of Italian Art and Culture.

Di Madre in Figli remains a potent concept in my mind.

And, finally, I too can say – paraphrasing Miss Lavish in E. M. Forster: “*One doesn’t come to England for niceness, one comes for life.*”

Marina (Scarselli Tundo) Wallace

23 May 2013



Marina Wallace, Professor of Curation and Director of Artakt, Central Saint Martins College of Arts & Design, University of the Arts, London, was born in Rome, Italy and has lived in London since 1979. She has a background in classics, fine art, art history and journalism. She curated a number of groundbreaking exhibitions including *Seduced - Art and Sex from Antiquity to Now* (2007–8) and *Spectacular Bodies – The Art and Science of the Human Body from Leonardo to Now* (2000–1).

She is the author of a number of publications, amongst them are *John Hilliard, 1969–1996* (Verlag Das Wunderhorn, 1999); *Spectacular Bodies – The Art and Science of the Human Body from Leonardo to Now* (Yale University Press, 2000); *Head On – Art with the Brain in Mind* (2003); *Mendel, the Genius of Genetics* (2003); *Seduced, Art and Sex from Antiquity to Now* (2007); *Acts of Seeing*, Zidane Press, 2009; *La Cultura Italiana, Volume X* (UTET, 2010), *The Lives of Paintings Seven Masterpieces by Leonardo da Vinci* (2011).



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and international level in major museums and art galleries, alignment with top-level artists, scientists, academics and cultural institutions.

In 2003 Artakt became part of Research and Innovation at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts, London. Previously known as Wallace Kemp Artakt Ltd, the consultancy was established in 2001 by Martin Kemp and Marina Wallace in the wake of their highly successful exhibition Spectacular Bodies at the Hayward Gallery, London.

Artakt also offers Ph.D supervision in the fields of art and science, and curatorial practice and theory. We are especially interested in interdisciplinary research that reflects upon visual culture (historical and contemporary) and innovative curatorial ideas. www.artakt.co.uk

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