



PINACOTECA DI BRERA
BIBLIOTECA NAZIONALE BRAIDENSE
Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo

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PRESS RELEASE

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Milano, Pinacoteca di Brera

March 30th Grand Opening: free admission from 8.30 a.m. to 10.15 p.m.

From 27 March to 11 June 2017, the Pinacoteca di Brera will be hosting a new and highly original dialogue among masterpieces in the history of art: “*Around Lotto*” will be showcasing paintings from the museum’s own collection in dialogue with other “guest” pictures, continuing a tradition of dialogues launched by James Bradburne, the new director of the Pinacoteca di Brera and of the Biblioteca Braidense. This time the dialogue – the fourth in the series since the scheme got off the ground in early 2016 – will revolve around a single painter. The Brera’s *Portrait of Laura da Pola*, *Portrait of Febo da Brescia*, *Portrait of a Gentleman with Gloves (Liberale da Pinedel)* and *Portrait of a Man*, which constitute some of Lorenzo Lotto’s finest work and indeed some of the loftiest masterpieces of Renaissance portraiture in general, will be interacting with the same painter’s *Portrait of a Young Gentleman (Cristoforo Rovero)* from the Accademia in Venice, a “sister” institution in that it too, like Brera, was founded by Napoleon in 1807. This stimulating debate will involve a change in the layout of Room XIX (previously the home of work by the school of Leonardo, its paintings temporarily moved to the Museo Poldi Pezzoli to hang alongside kindred pictures). Room XIX will henceforth be devoted to naturalistic portraiture in Venice and its hinterland. Thus the museum’s fourth “dialogue” marks the penultimate phase in the transformation of the Pinacoteca’s public galleries surrounding the loggia on the Palazzo’s *piano nobile*, prior to the restyling of the large Napoleonic galleries in early 2018.

[FOURTH DIALOGUE]

Around **Lotto**

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In addition to the four paintings by Lorenzo Lotto, another eight paintings in the Pinacoteca’s collection are to be rehung as part of this new “kaleidoscope of portraits”. In the words of Maria Cristina Passoni, who has curated the exhibi-

tion in conjunction with Francesco Frangi, these portraits “are as revealing as a private diary, fuelling our interest in discovering the identity and the history of these sitters who offer themselves so candidly to our gaze” (the full text of the curators’ essays can be downloaded in the press area of the Pinacoteca’s website after accreditation via the presskit - <http://pinacotecabrera.org/area-stampa/>).

The portraits in Room XIX will include G. B. Moroni’s *Portrait of Antono Navagero*, Sofonisba Anguissola’s *Self-portrait*, Titian’s *Portrait of Count Antonio di Porcia e Brugnara* and Tintoretto’s *Portrait of a Young Man*. Once the exhibition is over and Lotto’s portrait has returned to Venice, its place will be taken by the aforementioned Titian and the Tintoretto portraits.

As with the previous dialogues, on this occasion too the visiting public will be able to get the most out of the “conversation” thanks to new panels with explanatory texts, more comprehensive captions, new lighting and a completely new colour scheme on the walls, its warm grey tone enhancing the qualities of the paintings on display. And once again, the public will also be asked to voice its opinion of the new layout.

On 30 March, the day of the exhibition’s inauguration, the museum will be open free of charge from 8.30 to 22.15 (no admission after 21.40)

“Over and above its traditional role as guardian of the world’s heritage, and its duty to make that heritage accessible to a broad range of different audiences, the museum has to recognise and embrace its role as the foundation stone of our identity as citizens of the world and to continue to be both a crucial weapon in the struggle to create a better world and a bulwark against the forces of intolerance, fear and xenophobia,” said Director James Bradburne. His vision turns once again to the path paved by Franco Russoli (director of the Pinacoteca di Brera from 1957 to 1977) who, realising the importance of the museum’s role in forging our identity as citizens also in times of unease and of social turbulence, wrote as long ago as in 1971: “For my part I believe that the battle needs to be fought in another way, by providing concrete proof of the possibilities and the potential of the museum as an active weapon of culture.”

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The Sense of the Portrait: from Lotto to the Selfie

Brera’s new dialogue “around” Lotto prompts us today to reflect on a highly topical issue, the portrait, the self-portrait, or the way we look at others and the way we look at ourselves. Portraits depict people, of course, but what do they really show? Portraits are neither just depictions of the way people look nor mere courtly flattery. A portrait can depict the sitter’s political power, confirm and consolidate their public image, communicate their importance or even portray their deepest private feelings. Literary historian Stephen Greenblatt points to the Renaissance as the moment in which both written and painted portraits began to lose their sym-

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bolic function and to hint at the sitter's individual psychological identity, at the sitter's "self". The most important artists to have pioneered this change include Giorgione, Bellini and Titian but also Lorenzo Lotto, one of the painters who began to use portraits as a way of cautiously alluding to his sitter's inner self. His portrait of *Andrea Odoni* (1527) was later to influence Giovan Battista Moroni's portrait of *Alessandro Vittorio* (1552) and the portrait of *Jacopo Strada* (1568) painted by his better-known and almost contemporary fellow artist, Titian. Today we tend to say that the modern portrait depicts the artist more than it does the sitter. Discussing his portrait painted by Oskar Kokoschka, the Viennese artist Karl Kraus wrote in his satirical review *Die Fackel* (The Torch). "*Kokoschka has painted my portrait. People who know me may not recognise me, but people who don't know me most certainly will*". And then there is another development which has taken place over the last hundred years. Photography began to place portraiture within everyone's reach at the turn of the 19th century, but at the turn of the 20th century smartphones made even self-portraits commonplace, spawning the neologism "selfie." This has also changed our sense of the discovery of self and of the world, and turned tourism from a voyage of discovery to learn about other cultures into an orgy of self-representation. A debate on this theme is inevitable in an era in which we can use Instagram, Facebook and the social networks to create new identities through portraiture, self-portraiture and selfies that are increasingly distant from our authentic selves. At the end of the day, we are in danger of drowning like Narcissus in a well (or possibly a cloud) of images of ourselves taken against the backdrop of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, Botticelli's *Venus* or Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus*.

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