**Masterpieces by Raphael, Mantegna, Bellini**

**return to screens in all their splendour**

**BEHIND A PORTRAIT**

**The Italian Treasures**

**From Accademia Carrara**

**A film by Davide Ferrario**

*The film tells the story of the museum that is the symbol of Italian art collection: its works of art, its treasures and its reopening after restoration*

**With special guests**

**Giovanni Romano, Desmond Morris and Giovanni Lindo Ferretti**

The Accademia Carrara in Bergamo is one of many Italian treasures to finally re-emerge after remaining closed to the public for a long period of time.

Its collection consists of over 600 paintings, including those by **Raphael, Mantegna, Bellini, Botticelli**, but also works by great artists **from the Renaissance to the late Nineteenth Century**. After being closed for renovation in 2008, the Accademia reopened only a few months ago to a record number of visitors. It was during the last year of work that director **Davide Ferrario**, born in Casalmaggiore, Cremona but raised in Bergamo, decided to start shooting a film that is a cinematic journey about the re-opening of the gallery, but also **a personal reflection through images about how and why we look at them**.

***Behind a Portrait – The Italian Treasures from Accademia Carrarra*** distributed by Nexo Digital, shows experts at work on the reopening of the museum and we listen to their knowledgeable opinions on new systems adopted to manage the art collections, and we become immersed in the touching testimony of the ex-keeper of the Accademia Carrara who has accumulated over 40 years experience building his own personal relationship with each hall in the museum. As director **Davide Ferrario** explains *“For me making films has always been about searching. I never start by proving a thesis. Here we had a location, we had art masterpieces and all the physical set-up as well. So I decided to pursue these three paths, try and shoot as much footage of them as I could and then see how to tie the whole lot together when I got to the cutting room. But I didn’t just follow what was happening: I also staged quite a number of scenes. I think talking about paintings doesn’t mean just filming them and then getting an art scholar to talk about them, explaining their importance and the story behind them. That’s not what the life of a work of art is all about.”.*

So, ***Behind a Portrait – The Italian Treasures from Accademia Carrarra*** shows scenes from the reopening of the gallery (with large crowds of local people from Bergamo eager to get “their” museum back after being closed for a long time), there are activities organized by the art school adjoining the gallery attended by hundreds of young students, musical performances in the halls by pop-rock groups, and videos projected onto the front façade of the building: all signs of **a museum steeped in modernity** and all of this made into an original, absorbing film transferred to the big screen. Ample space is given to the visually powerful sequence featuring **Giovanni Lindo Ferretti**, ex singer-songwriter with the bands CCCP and CSI, accompanied live by Gianni Maroccolo and Paolo Simonazzi, where he reads a text by Vasilij Grossman, asking himself what lies behind the Madonna’s face. By following the theme of the portrait in particular, of which the Accademia Carrara has an amazing collection, the film will also try to explain why we have been looking at painted images for centuries. Guiding us on this investigation are art historian **Giovanni Romano** and famous British anthropologist **Desmond Morris**, author of many books, including *The Artistic Ape.*

In the film **Giovanni Romano** talks about how “*Organizing a complex museum like the Accademia Carrara involves a lot of often contradictory thought. The person or persons responsible must know how to choose and justify their choices. One method of choice could quite simply be the visiting experience – why not show how portraits change over the centuries? The ones in the Accademia Carrara are by extraordinary artists of Italian portraiture, not just from Bergamo, that oddly enough are all to be found in Bergamo.*”, while **Desmond Morris** states: “*Art makes life special, that’s the whole point of it. When we create works of arts we engage in the primitive effort of making life special. We can’t do without beauty, even if it’s just the colour of our car. Art is a necessity, it’s not just for fun. It’s something we need to have in our lives in one form or another.”*

***Behind a Portrait – The Italian Treasures from Accademia Carrarra*** is a Rossofuoco production in association with Innowatio and in collaboration with Lab80 Film. Distribution is by Nexo Digital.

**DAVIDE FERRARIO**

Davide Ferrario was born in Casalmaggiore (Cremona) in 1956. He has a degree in American Literature from the University of Milan and lives in Turin. He began working in cinema during the 70s as a writer and film critic, as well as starting up a small company to which we owe the Italian distribution of films by Fassbinder, Wenders, and Wajda. He later worked as the Italian agent for several independent American directors such as John Sayles and Jim Jarmusch. He made his debut as a director in 1989 with *La fine della notte,* voted “Best Independent Film” of the season. He then directed both fiction films and documentaries, which earned him a glowing reputation in Italy and were presented at numerous International festivals, such as Berlin, Sundance, Venice, Toronto and Locarno. His films include: *Tutti giù per terra, Figli di Annibale, Guardami* and several with Marco Paolini. His last film was *La luna su Torino* (2014). Ferrario occupies a unique place in Italian cinema. He is rigorously independent, and not only is he a director, but at the same time he also runs his own profitable production company, called Rossofuoco. *Dopo mezzanotte*, made on a very low budget, achieved great success in Italy and was sold all over the world, as was the documentary *La strada di Levi*. He is also the author of several books: *Dissolvenza al nero* which has been translated into many languages and adapted to film by Oliver Parker. In September 2010 *Sangue mio* was published by Feltrinelli. He is a columnist for the Corriere della Sera and has also published a book on photography following an exhibition of his work entitled *Foto da galera* (2005).

**ACCADEMIA CARRARA, BERGAMO**

From its inception at the end of the 18th Century, the Accademia Carrara has always been a museum and a place to study art, thanks to the art collection, exhibited by its founder Giacomo Carrara, and the School of Painting. The amazing, enduring continuity of Giacomo Carrara’s cultural project is due to a number of reasons, namely that it conveys a strong message to people, which great collectors responded to and which consequently led to them donating their collections to the museum in Bergamo, an affirmation of the modern concept of sharing. High-profile collectors and experts – such as Guglielmo Lochis and Giovanni Morelli in the 19th Century and Federico Zeri in the 20th Century – developed the original Accademia Carrara and turned it into one of the finest in Europe, celebrating and symbolizing Italian private art collection. Italian Renaissance painting is the pulse of the Accademia Carrara and contains absolute masterpieces of art history, from Pisanello to Mantegna, Foppa to Bellini, Raphael to Botticelli. The collections in the museum also demonstrate another of the city’s cultural values, seen in the careers of artists born in Bergamo or working in and around the city. The art of Lorenzo Lotto, an interesting 16th Century Venetian, can be admired in a magnificent series of paintings that trace the wonderful route of the churches of Bergamo. In portraiture Giovan Battista Moroni and Fra’ Galgario single out a sensitive style of realism, that is full of the humanity so typical of Lombard painting; still life is represented by Evaristo Baschenis, the fine inventor of the special genre depicting musical instruments.