

SPECIAL FEATURE:

## Towards reconstructing the Shroud Body - a History

By the Editor

Although little known outside Italy, the great pioneer of work on reconstructing the Shroud pose was undoubtedly Professor Lorenzo Ferri of Rome, who died in 1975. For information about him I am greatly indebted to materials and photographs kindly supplied by his son, Professor Leonardo Ferri. The commune of Cave, near Rome also sent a copy of Professor Leonardo Ferri's book *Volto Senza Tempo* ('Face out of Time'), on his father's work .

Born in 1902 in the small Italian town of Mercato Saraceno, between Florence and Rimini, early on Lorenzo Ferri exhibited a talent for sculpture and drawing, which duly became fostered under the direction of sculptor Giuseppe Fallani, an ex-physician. Subsequently he worked in the Studio of Sacred Arts in Rome. When he was in his late 20s Ferri first formulated the idea of trying to reproduce the Shroud negative image in three-dimensional form. By 1933, shortly after release of the Enrie photographs, he had created his first terracotta bust of the man of the Shroud, followed by several further versions. In 1951 he made his first reconstruction of the entire body, producing this to quarter scale. In 1967 he produced a most superb three dimensional version of the Shroud head, undoubtedly his finest. He followed this a year later with the first ever life-size sculptural reconstruction of the man of the Shroud, one that attracted considerable attention at the time, marked up as it was with all the wounds. By way of demonstrating the accuracy of this, he deployed the life-size mock-up of the Shroud which he used constantly to check his work.

In 1973 Professor Ferri unveiled his second great life-size reconstruction, one more tortured than the first, and sculpturally somewhat evocative of the style of Michelangelo in his later years. Both his 1967 and '73 versions are notable for a marked raising of the left shoulder, also for an equally marked being of the knees, rather than the legs lying flat, as in the STURP reconstructions. Another element, clearly visible in the side-view of the 1967 reconstruction, and again differing from the STURP equivalents, is that the head is raised several inches above the horizontal plane.

It would be a quarter century before other sculptors would take up the challenge, two having surfaced in the last two years. The first of these was the life-size bronze version produced by Professor Luigi Mattei, featured in Newsletter 49. This is currently on display in Bologna, as part of the celebrations of Bologna 2000 - European City of Culture.

The second, similarly life-size, is the work of Spanish sculptors Carmelo González Ramos and Carmen Otero Rodríguez, both of Madrid. Ramos and Rodríguez produced this in polychrome, complete with the bloodstains in life-like colour, and last year it was accorded a solemn blessing in the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption at Vilar de Domingo García, a small town in the Cuenca province of Spain some seventy miles east of Madrid. Photographs of the statue laid out before the church altar during this event were published in the June 1999 issue of the Spanish Shroud group Centro Español de Sindonología's journal *Linteum*, and Mark Guscini has kindly supplied others showing the statue itself in clearer detail. Again the knees are bent, and the head particularly markedly raised.

In all the above instances the professional artists worked with the aid of life models, doing so in order to ensure optimum anatomical accuracy. So when Los Angeles liturgical artist Isabel Piczek, who similarly hires models to pose for the figures in her vast works in mural and stained glass, became actively interested in the Shroud during the early 1990s, it was natural that she should use her models likewise, though in her case simply from the point of view of establishing the image's faithfulness to anatomy, rather than for the immediate production of a three dimensional sculpture.

And working completely independently of the others, Piczek's findings have corroborated and complemented theirs to a remarkable degree, particularly in the case of Ferri and the two Madrid sculptors. Like these, Piczek found the man of the Shroud's head and upper back to have been markedly raised from the horizontal, as if the body lay stiff in rigor mortis, and the head had been laid on some kind of head-rest. Since no model could possibly sustain this pose without support, she arranged for the building of a special platform to hold the model's body in the required position, and made several drawings from a variety of models laid on this platform side by side with a life-size copy of the Shroud negative.

Prompted by my height closely approximating that of the man of the Shroud, around 5 ft 11 inches, last year, during a visit by my wife Judith and I to Isabel Piczek's studio, I too went through this same process of assuming the Shroud pose, an experience which served immensely to add to my conviction of, and confidence in, the Shroud's genuineness. Once I had settled on the special platform Isabel, as she had with all her professional models, gave detail by detail instructions from the 15 ft ladder which she insists provides the only scientific vantage point by which a living body can be checked against a life-size photo of the Shroud laid alongside. To conform to the posture required, my legs had indeed to be surprisingly bent, this representing the strong foreshortening to the legs that Isabel insists is present in the Shroud image. Between heels and buttocks there was absolutely no contact with the horizontal. Equally notably my elbows had to be raised several inches above ground level, and initially needed supports to keep them in this position. My left shoulder had to be awkwardly raised to conform to the dislocation that medical specialists, in full accord with Isabel, see on the image. My arms felt stiff and forced just as if they had been brought together from another position, arguably outstretched on the cross.

A fuller account is given in the forthcoming book written in partnership with Barrie Schwartz. But from this first-hand experience, even though at the time I had no awareness of Laidler's arguments, (see p.22) I can unhesitatingly refute these, being based as they were on a mere computer-generated figure, rather than any real live (or

dead) human body. Inspired by his computer figure and by a misquotation of Isabel Piczek by Picknett and Prince in their book *The Turin Shroud, In Whose Image?* Laidler claims the Shroud man's head to be 'impossibly incorrect... sunken into the upper chest in an astonishing and quite alarming manner'. Well, Judith took several photographs of me in the position that Isabel determined as exact to the Shroud, a detail of one sideways-on being reproduced here. This surely demonstrates that it is Laidler, not the man of the Shroud, who is 'impossibly incorrect'.

Isabel Piczek's research into the Shroud pose is far from complete, and she has recently written to say that she is currently furthering this with a view to creating her own life-size three-dimensional sculpture of the Shroud body. In particular she wants to show that some of the most ostensibly scientific reconstructions of the Shroud body, as done by Dr. John Jackson and others of the STURP team, have in fact been the most misguided. As she points out, the VP8 Image Analyzer, while it has certainly revealed and confirmed the Shroud image to have three-dimensional characteristics, has captured only the body's topmost and bottom-most surfaces. But in her view only the artistic eye, from its long experience of working with life models, can properly 'see' and ultimately recapture the rest. No-one would therefore claim that there are not uncertainties and disagreements over the exact posture of the Shroud body, some of which are yet to be fully resolved. But Laidler's claims can be discarded out of hand.



*Professor Ferri's 1968 reconstruction of the Shroud body*