

Faces in the Face: Art in Comparison with the Shroud

By Stefano Chiappalone

In Turin, city of the Shroud, an exhibition/workshop at the Albertina Academy guides the visitor to discover the Face of Christ. The initiative, in collaboration with the Carlo Acutis Foundation, retraces art and iconography in dialogue with the Sacred Linen.

If depicting the human face is always a fascinating challenge for an artist and for those who will admire his work, it is even more so when it comes to the Man-God. *The Volti nel Volto* exhibition allows you to contemplate the Face of Christ, right in Turin, city of the Shroud, which is a singular relic of that Face. The path set up at the Albertina Academy winds through a series of precious works, normally not visible to the public, in dialogue with the Sacred Linen. Inaugurated last July 7, it is organized in collaboration with the Carlo Acutis Foundation (the entrepreneur, grandfather and namesake of the very young blessed). Dr. Adriana Acutis, vice president of the Foundation, illustrates the significance of this event and the fascinating journey that awaits the visitor.

Doctor Acutis, how was this initiative born?

The exhibition/workshop is promoted by the Albertina Academy of Fine Arts in Turin and the Carlo Acutis Foundation with the support of the Council for the enhancement of Turin's artistic and cultural heritage. Born on the occasion of the European meeting of the Taizé Community in Turin from 7 to 10 July 2022, it will remain open until 18 September.

In the city chosen as the seat, Turin, the Shroud is kept...

The children of the Taizé Community visiting Turin were offered the opportunity to contemplate the Holy Shroud. Also for this reason the theme of the Shroud is central in the exhibition/workshop organized at the Albertina Art Gallery.

Why the title *Faces in the Face*?

The artistic laboratory dimension made possible by the Academy, with the involvement, during the days of the meeting of the Taizé Community, of students of the school of painting, allows the viewer to approach the theme of the Holy Face in a lively and innovative way. In the words of the archbishop, Msgr. Roberto Repole, written on the occasion of the exhibition, "the face is much more than a part of the body: it is the epiphany of our spirit, captured in its singularity and relationality". The

exhibition/workshop creates a context that stimulates the relationality between the faces in the light of the singularity of the features of the Face of Jesus of Nazareth. In the rooms significant works are exhibited that recall the theme of the Holy Face. An immersive projection analyzes the identity traits attributed to the Face of Christ over the millennia, traits also present on the Shroud. An artistic laboratory, through the use of mirrors, connects distinct images and brings the visitor himself into the scene. Hence the title "faces in the face", where the faces of each are brought into relation with those of others and with the Holy Face.

What are the main works presented and with what criteria were they chosen?

The Albertina of Turin is one of the oldest Academies of Fine Arts in Italy and houses an important collection of ancient works of art. The installation of the exhibition/workshop, curated by Enrico Zanellati, curator of the collections of the Pinacoteca, presents Albertina's treasures that are normally kept in its vault, given their preciousness: from the sixteenth-century tables by Maarten van Heemskerck, in which influences blend Nordic and Michelangelo, to the Flemish *Salvator Mundi* attributed to the Renaissance painter Quentin Metsys.

As mentioned at the inauguration by Paola Gribaudo and Edoardo Di Mauro, President and Director of the Albertina Academy, the "Faces in the Face" project is not just an exhibition, but aims to welcome the public in the dimension of an artistic laboratory. Giuseppe Gallace, Stefano Merlo and Gabriele Domenico Casu, students of the School of Painting of professors Giuseppe Leonardi and Salvatore Giambianco, involve the public in their paintings in a surprising form, with mirroring surfaces. Giulia Piacci, a pupil of Professor Laura Valle's School of Painting, proposes a drawing that draws inspiration from one of the Gaudenzian cartoons, the flagship of the Albertina collections, and which turns into a great immersive projection. Professor Mattia Gaido.

How can visitors discover the link between the painted faces and the acheropita face?

Professor Mattia Gaido of the Academy, together with the students of his Course in Assembly Techniques, has made a video that, with artistic processing techniques, makes the identity elements of the Face of the Shroud perceptible, which are found in somatic features attributed by various artists to Jesus of Nazareth. The immersive projection traces art and iconography from the early centuries to the contemporary age. The works are selected for the high level of correspondence with each other and with the Face on the sacred linen. A particular focus is given to the original painting of Divine Mercy painted

by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski, taken from a vision of Saint Faustina, an icon of Divine Mercy celebrated on the second Sunday of Easter.

A connection between art and the acheiropoieta face is also suggested by the very choice of the works on display. Next to the Salvator Mundi attributed to Quentin Metsys, one of the most precious works made accessible to the public, you can admire a surprising cast of the Holy Face granted for the exhibition by the photographer of the Shroud Aldo Guerreschi. It is a three-dimensional reconstruction of the Face imprinted on the Shroud made in 1974 with the support of an equipment built by Paul Gastineau to measure and check the validity of French banknotes with optical techniques and used on a photograph of the Shroud Face taken by Giuseppe Enrie in 1931.

But there is also the "hand" of Blessed Carlo Acutis...

The foundation takes its name from Carlo Acutis the entrepreneur, my father, and is inspired by the Blessed Carlo Acutis, his nephew. The connection between the blessed and the exhibition is the same that binds him to the Foundation: faith embodied in the works, with particular attention to young people.

What is the message you intend to convey to the visitor?

By making perceptible somatic identity traits attributed to the historical Man Jesus of Nazareth, and present on the Shroud, the relationality is given strength which can become for the visitor a choice of surprising reality.