



«STORIA IN RETE»

Catalogue of Documentaries

2008 - 2009

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1) **The Deaths of Mozart** (2005)

A recent hypothesis tends to exclude the great musician's death simply through illness. It's thought he may have died prematurely due to the violent blows he suffered as a betrayed husband. The Court of Vienna and his wife Costanza may have tried to cover this up yet even the day after Mozart's death a series of inconsistencies led to suspicions and doubts.

Duration: approximately 30'

2) **Balvano 1944: the silence surrounding a massacre** (2005)

In March 1944, during the Anglo-American occupation of Italy, one of the biggest train accidents of all time took place. Even today very little is known about it. An extremely overcrowded train had to stop because of excess weight in an uphill tunnel in the mountains of Irpinia. Over 600 people suffocated to death and immediately afterwards the work of covering up the accident began...

Duration: approx. 24'

3) **The King's Diaries** (2006)

The complicated and unresolved series of events which accompanied the writing and subsequent disappearance of Vittorio Emanuele III of Savoy's memoirs immediately after the sovereign's death in 1947. Why has his son, Umberto II, gone to such pains to conceal this, his father's auto defence ?

Duration: approx. 35'

4) **The Secret Risorgimento** (2006)

Spies, intrigues, plotting, diplomatic secrecy and corruption serve as a backdrop to the Italian Risorgimento. We revisit this national epic event through three key moments and as many decisive characters (alongside men like Costantino Nigra and Admiral Persano): the Countess of Castiglione, the woman who thanks to her graces brought Napoleon III over to the side of Italy; General Govone who created the military espionage on the eve of the Second War of Independence; Giuseppe La Farina, the man who Cavour trusted, in vain, with taking away the Garibaldi's leadership of the Thousand men...

Duration: approx. 37'

5) **The Secrets of Jules Verne (2005)**

A great enigma of literature and science called Jules Verne! How is it possible that a nineteenth century man could imagine and know so many things which came true decades, if not a century after his death? Could it possibly be that, beyond his boundless imagination, the author of “Around the World in 80 Days” and “Voyage to the Centre of the Earth” had some way of seeing further than other people? And could this special gift have something to do with the secret sect that Verne was apparently a member of? Why was it when he tried to cut off from the sect that he was the victim of a mysterious attempt on his life which almost brought him to death’s door?

Duration: approx. 26'

6) **Girolamo Segato, the man who turned bodies to stone (2005)**

In Tuscany in the first half of the 19th century a strange character, Girolamo Segato, was at large. Having wandered through many countries including Egypt he started experimenting a way of preserving human bodies. It was not just a simple embalming technique but a real “petrification” which fixed the colouring, materials, dimensions and features of the corpse for ever. He was on the point of perfection just before his own death but Segato refused to reveal the secrets of his discoveries. These secrets remain today as modern science has been as yet unable to decipher his methods.

Duration: approx. 25'

7) **Rewriting Mussolini’s Death (2006)**

Rewriting Mussolini’s death: the most recent forensic medicine and digital technology lead to very different conclusions with respect to the official version of the circumstances of Mussolini’s death. Today, thanks to a wealth of innovative analysis on the photos and films shot in April 1945 in Piazzale Loreto and at the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Milan, we can conclude that the dictator was killed then dressed once again, according to formality and probably at a different moment from Claretta Petacci. What was the reason behind this staging?

Duration: approx. 56'

8) **The Ghosts of Parma (2005)**

Is there a place in Italy where ghost stories are more prevalent than others? The answer could be yes. In the region around Parma there's an extraordinary and unique tradition concerning tales about ghosts in the many beautiful castles scattered around the countryside. This tradition doesn't even spare the Grand Duchess Maria Luigia (Napoleon's second wife) and her lover Neipperg, united in life and maybe also in death... Then there's the undeniable fact that often these "legends" are accompanied by inexplicable phenomena (strange noises, unexplained appearances, premonitions) without mentioning some surprising photographs...

Duration: approx. 25'

9) **Ludwig II, an eternal enigma (2006)**

Even today he's still the best loved Bavarian king despite the fact his reign conjures up more about his doubts and contradictions than his self confidence and political achievements. Ludwig II of Wittelsbach is remembered for his –presumed– madness, his –authentic– uncontrolled spending, necessary to construct the castles that still attract millions of tourists and for his mysterious death that took place on the banks of Lake Starnberg on the evening of June 13th 1886 just two days after his deposition. Ludwig's death was immediately archived as suicide which could have been connected to the fact that the person who loved him most had planned unsuccessfully to run away with him. That person was no other than his cousin Elisabeth, better known as Sissy Empress of Austria. At the hour of his death she was in her castle on the other side of the lake...

Duration: approx. 38'

10) **The Queen is Nude (2007)**

In 1862 papal Rome was reeling from the shock of an unprecedented scandal: the Queen of Naples, Maria Sofia Wittelsbach, (Sissy's younger sister), newly left by the Piedmonts following the assault on Gaeta and finding refuge in Rome with her husband, was apparently photographed nude. These photographs were put in circulation, so it seems, by liberal, pro-Piedmont agents. All this is true apart from one detail: the photograph of the "Queen in the nude" was in fact a photo-montage, maybe the very first in the history of photography. The pontifical police got to the bottom of the plot thanks to the cooperation of an uninhibited "penitent" Costanza Vaccari Diotallevi, who with her "revelations" accepted to serve the internal battle within the

pontifical government between the head of the police, De Merode and the Cardinal Secretary of State, Antonelli. In the meanwhile Queen Maria Sofia was undisturbed by this gossip and had fled far away from her husband to Bavaria to give birth to her baby by a pontifical official.

Duration: approx. 38'

11) **Mysterious Dante** (2007)

He's one of the most famous Italians of all time and his Divine Comedy certainly one of the most quoted pieces of literature ever. And yet it seems that many surprises are hiding between the rhyming tercets: for example the poet's frequentation of sects and groups of various kinds such as "The Faithful of Love". In this way not only do we discover traces that link Dante to the Knights Templar but also how the structure of the Divine Comedy recalls a certain Arabic work which Dante probably knew of in an indirect way.

Duration: approx. 36'

12) **Young, pretty and merciless: The Female Brigands** (2007)

Women toting guns : they were to be the foremothers of the female terrorists in 1970's Italy. With pretty names like Michelina, Filomena, Maria, Marianna... they were known as the "Female Brigands". They were young, pitiless and held vague political convictions. After 1860, in a newly united Italy, they chose to don a rifle and join up with the bands of brigands with whom they fought to gain control of the region of the ex-Kingdom of the Two Sicily's from the Italian army. Their stories, which almost always ended dramatically, can now be recounted thanks to the reconstruction of the events of the lives of the most famous of the female brigands: Marianna Oliviero, Filomena Pennacchio, Michelina De Cesare, Maria Capitano.

Duration: approx. 52'

13) **Desperately Seeking Giulia - Stories and Mysteries of Giulia Farnese** (2007)

Giulia Farnese (1474-1524) was one of the most beautiful – and at times one of the most powerful- women of her times. Entering into the graces of Pope Borgia she helped the ascension of her older brother Alessandro (who was to become Paolo III) within the bosom of the Church. Giulia became the Pope's mistress and his sister Lucrezia Borgia's friend, all the while getting involved in many picturesque adventures – including one where she was kidnapped at the opera by the French who intended blackmailing the pope – which continued even after the Pontificate's demise (she had "left" him in the year 1500). Always between lovers and intrigues she continued to carry her

“weight” in Rome even during successive pontificates. But yet she didn’t live to see her brother on the papal throne because she died ten years before Paolo III’s election, after he had governed over the stronghold of Carbognano for many years. Many questions remain about her life (why her will and testament wasn’t carried out, where she was buried...). One of the most interesting is the one concerning her portrait: many are thought to be of her but nobody seems completely certain. Today experts and researchers are still torturing themselves over whether the forms of a certain statue in Saint Peters might be hers. Or in a fresco that was once in the Vatican. Or maybe in a painting by Raphael. Also in a church shrine near her castle in Vasanello. Or even in a mosaic inside an ancient Roman church...

Duration: 54’

14) Mussolini’s Diaries (2007)

From time to time the burning subject of Mussolini’s diaries, which disappeared in the those turbulent months from spring to summer 1945, flares up once more. From the 1950s onwards a real legend has formed around the dictator’s agendas fuelled by secret negotiations, real and presumed fakes, ex-Italian partisans, English businessmen, Swiss banks and notaries and even Japanese diplomats. And yet one thing is certain : those papers really existed. But if many questions remain concerning their contents the same can’t be said of the chase to find the dictator’s private papers. Wheeler dealers, the secret services, historians and editors have been searching consistently since April 1945.

Duration: approx. 34’

15) Murder at Court- in the house of de’Medici (2007)

A team of experts has been able to prove that the Grand Duke of Tuscany Francesco I and his second wife Bianca Cappello (who was a source of heated gossip) were both poisoned, probably the work of the brother and successor of Francesco, Ferdinando de’Medici. The investigation, using evidence from 16th century sources, archaeological and paleo pathology, has been able to demonstrate that the two could really have been poisoned as has always been suspected. To carry out this exhaustive inquiry we’ve visited the places where the murder was carried out (between Florence, the Villa di Poggio at Caiano and a little church just outside Florence where the proof of the poisoning can be found).

Duration: approx. 40’

16) **A Spy named Claretta (2008)**

Claretta Petacci has gone down in history as the woman who faced death in order to stay close to the man she loved, Benito Mussolini. A character with a certain dignity then in an obscure and dramatic period in the history of Italy. But even Claretta's reputation was impaired during these dark times. Her actions, which were considered full of ambiguities, didn't escape the attention of the security services of the Republic of Salò or even Mussolini himself who, in October 1944, ordered that Claretta's home on the Garda Lake should be searched for her private letters and documents. It emerged from these papers that Claretta had been passing on information to the Germans. But in a period where double crossing was a frequent occurrence it was thought that as her brother Marcello had had some strange dealings Claretta may also have gathered information from English and American agents. At least this is what Mussolini's wife, Donna Rachele, claimed. She confronted Petacci in a dramatic face to face a few months before the fall of the Social Republic of Italy. But nothing could stop Claretta from playing the part of an "informing pawn"- whether she was aware of it or not- at Mussolini's side until the dramatic end when they were both shot in Giulino di Mezzegra.

Duration: approx. 52'

17) **Sissy – the Real Story (2008)**

The nickname which made the tortured empress of Austria and Hungary so famous was coined as the result of a spelling blunder : an intricate signature where an "L" was mistaken for an "S". Therefore "Lisi" – Elizabeth's family nickname – became Sisy and later Sissy. This is one of the many details that have been omitted from the myth created by the cinema: the story we tell is of an insecure, fragile and betrayed woman, obsessed by the beauty of her hair, her weight, her personal hygiene. She was always travelling, followed by misfortune and bereavements until the death of her only male child, Rudolf, who died at Mayerling. And even her own death seemed to hide a tragic coincidence: indeed the young Italian anarchist who killed her had actually meant to hit another target that day...

Duration: approx. 50'

18) **The Real Story of Paolo and Francesca (2008)**

1289: Conflicts and political alliances between the Lords of Ravenna and Rimini are behind one of the most tragic love stories ever recounted, immortalized in Dante's poetry and many other works of art. Paolo Malatesta

and Francesca da Polenta really existed, were indeed lovers (she was Paolo's brother Gianciotto's- known as Crippled John's- wife) and, being caught red handed inside the Castle of Gradara were murdered by Francesca's betrayed husband. But neither of them was innocent nor young considering the standards of the time: she was 29 and had been married for 14 years and he was 43 with a wife and children. Notwithstanding the brutality of the murder, the political balance of that era had to guarantee the alliance between the house of Ravenna and Rimini therefore the event was conveniently swept under the carpet. And so, a short time after the incident, the two families celebrated another arranged wedding with financial interests at its heart...

Duration: approx 40'

19) **Who Killed the Pope's Son? (2007)**

During the Renaissance the Papal court was shocked by a series of three similar dramatic events which happened in the space of fifty years. The Pontiff's favourite son was assassinated throwing his father into despair. A thread of blood was therefore to link these three Pontiffs each one very different from the others: in 1497 it was Alessandro VI, Pope Borgia, who mourned the sudden death of his first son Juan (the older brother of Cesare and Lucrezia); in 1537 it was Alessandro de'Medici, the illegitimate son of Clemente VII, who fell victim to his cousin Lorenzino; and finally in 1547 Paolo III Farnese (the Pope who opened the council of Trent) saw his first son Pier Luigi assassinated.

Duration: approx. 54'

20) **The Prince of San Severo (2008)**

18th century Naples: at the height of the Enlightenment the city was one of the finest cultural capitols in Europe. One figure shines out in this context: Prince Raimondo di Sangro (1710-1771). He was a highly educated man, passionate about art and science. He seemed indeed to incarnate all the ideals of the Enlightened intellectual. However there seemed to be a darker side to the prince. He was known to practise a series of strange activities inside his palace laboratory in Piazza San Domenico. Popular opinion believed he experimented in all kinds of witchcraft and alchemy. But in fact the prince realized some mechanical and war inventions which hugely impressed his contemporaries. He was also an expert in anatomy and also participated in secret sects. The work for which he is most famous, the "San Severo Chapel", contains some statues of exquisite beauty. Their execution was much talked about at the time (especially the "Veiled Christ"). But it's the series of allegories inside the chapel which fed the fame of the enigma of San Severo: is it really a collection of references to Masonic, alchemy and knights of the Templar knowledge? And could our mysterious nobleman, as some have suggested, really have been one of Cagliostro's masters?

Duration: approx. 55'

21) The Secret of Federico II of Montefeltro (2008)

Apart from being one of the major political and political figures of mid 15th century Italy Federico was also a great patron of the arts. One of his most important commissions was Piero della Francesca's "Flagellation" which has been the source of debate for decades. Experts have been arguing about what exactly the artist wanted to represent: the assassination of Federico's brother, Oddantonio, or else the attempt to organize a crusade to save Constantinople.

Duration: approx. 52'

22) A Roman road: the Via Flaminia (2008)

What was the Via Flaminia like in Augustus' time? This most important of Roman roads is at the centre of a detailed 3D reconstruction carried out by the Laboratory for Applied Technology of Artistic Heritage of the National Research Council (CNR) in Rome. The remains of Livia's - Augustus' wife - villa (which came to light in the 19th century) are at the heart of this reconstruction. There's an ancient legend associated with her villa : it's told that a white hen with an olive branch fell into Livia's lap in this very abode. The CNR's researchers studied this story in great depth as well as the structures of two other monuments: The Ponte Milvio bridge and Constantine's Arch which were transformed into the village of "Malborghetto" during the Middle Ages. Situated a few kilometres apart these two places are however connected by an historic event of the greatest importance: Constantine's victory over Maxentius in 312 AD, the Battle of Saxa Rubra or Ponte Milvio which opened the doors to Christianity within the Roman Empire.

In preparation: ready december 2008

23) The Great Cardinal: Alessandro Farnese (2008)

Representing the Renaissance cardinal par excellence Alessandro Farnese, Paul the Third's nephew, was to dominate political, religious and cultural life over several decades in 16th century Rome. More than once on the point of becoming Pope, the Great Cardinal, as he was known, left many traces behind him: numerous documents and letters, the Church of Gesù – where his tomb is- and the restructuring of the splendid Palazzo Farnese di Caprarola. Then there was the affair of his secret child, Clelia, at the centre of a singular dispute with another highly powerful Cardinal of the time: Fernando de' Medici. Evidence for this dispute was provided by some licentious and allusive paintings commissioned by De' Medici portraying Clelia nude and in ambiguous poses...

In preparation: ready december 2008

24) **Sabbioneta, the ideal city** (2008)

In the second half of the 16th century Vespasiano Gonzaga realized his dream: an ideal city. Sabbioneta (Mantova) is a hymn to harmony and architectonic perfection, built however by a violent (he was a soldier by profession in service for Spain) and vindictive man (his first wife was poisoned and one son killed in a moment of rage). Even so, this brutal temperament did not stop Gonzaga being a lover of the arts. Although he was pursued by debt and misadventures Vespasiano clung to his dream and when he finally carried it out so successfully he considered Sabbioneta his one and only first born child. This is History which is a perfect cross-section of the Renaissance with its artistic splendours, dreams of perfection alongside murder and violence.

In preparation: ready december 2009

25) **The “Spring Mystery”** (2009)

Simonetta Cattaneo is a name which doesn't sound familiar but just look at Botticelli's “Spring” or “The Birth of Venus” for a moment and you'll realize who we're talking about! This young lady from Genoa was the talk of Florence around 1475. Both muse and model for many artists Simonetta – who had married a Vespucci – was the mistress of Giuliano de'Medici, Lorenzo the Magnificent's younger brother. However in Botticelli's masterpieces there is more than meets the eye. But these secrets are so well hidden that over the centuries many different interpretations have developed. What emerges is what it was like to paint during the Renaissance, an age in which art called not only upon culture but also the news and politics of the day.

In preparation: ready february 2009

26) **The drama at Mayerling and Rudolf of Hapsburg** (2008)

Who was Rudolf of Hapsburg exactly? The heir to the throne of Austria and Hungary, the son of Franz Josef and Sissy, died at the age of thirty alongside his young mistress in shady circumstances in his hunting lodge at Mayerling on the 30th of January 1889. The official version – despite contemporaries' doubts - was that of suicide and yet, especially in recent years, historical research has revealed new elements that suggest the possibility of a double homicide. This homicide was an epilogue to a complex, international plot organized between Paris and Vienna in order to place Rudolf on the throne as quickly as possible to put an end to his father's pro-German policies. However this project hadn't taken two things into account: first Rudolf's psychological fragility and then the extreme efficiency of Bismarck and William the Second's German secret services...

In preparation: ready december 2008

27) The Renaissance Courtesans (2009)

The equivalent of today's luxury "escort girls" lived between Rome, Florence and Venice. They had their own districts, their homes, their vices, their hobbies, their five star clientele but also their own churches. Divided into "ladies of the street" and "high class ladies" the courtesans –who often paid their taxes- were kept under control by the authorities. For example in Florence and Venice a list was drawn up of these professional women. They were tolerated but even more often visited upon! These courtesans not only left behind them a memory of dissolution and social climbing but also stamped their names on the streets (vicolo dell'Onestà – Honesty Close- in Florence, the Ponte delle Tette – The Bridge of Breasts- in Venice) and on the history of literature and on famous paintings. The memories of some of them have come down to us thanks to their cultural and artistic merits, be they direct or indirect: Veronica Franco in Venice the "Redhead" or the "Curly headed girl" in Florence (loved by Machiavelli) or the "Divine Empress" in Rome.

In preparation: ready april 2009

28) An independent woman: Giulia Gonzaga's adventurous life (2009)

Giulia Gonzaga (1513-1566) was a land owner (Fondi, far from her native Gazuolo, beside Mantova), smacking of heresy, independent to the point of being a feminist (married one of the Colonna family at 16 years old and was widowed when only 18) friend of both men of letters and warriors. She was beautiful, without a husband and the object of an attempted kidnapping by the famous Ottoman pirate Red Beard. She got away by the skin of her teeth. She similarly narrowly escaped from the investigations of the Inquisition who suspected her of being sympathetic to the Lutheran cause which was being diffused in those years. In both towns of Fondi and Itri we can still see the castles where she reigned and loved Cardinal Ippolito De'Medici, nephew of Clement VII, who was poisoned in Itri but maybe not before conceiving a child with the lovely Giulia. She spent the last years of her life in a convent but not before having looked after the education of one of the most splendid princes of the Renaissance: her nephew Vespasiano Gonzaga. Giulia Gonzaga was included in the «Biographical Dictionary of the Italians» for the important historical and cultural role she played.

In preparation: ready march 2009

29) An enigma named Celestine V (2009)

Celestine V was the only Pope who left his appointment before his death (and for this reason Dante placed him in Hell in the Divine Comedy). During the

four months of his pontificate he never once went to Rome. He'd been elected during one of the longest conclaves in history despite the fact that he wasn't a cardinal: Pietro Angeleri was a hermit monk noted for his saintliness who in that summer of 1294 was already 79 years old.. He was nominated clearly because there was an impasse between the other cardinals. But his behaviour and his first decisions (for example to be crowned in a ceremony in Aquila, where Dante Alighieri was also present) risked breaking many of the practises inside the church. His resignation in December 1294 was "helped along" by his successor, Cardinal Castani who, as soon as he was elected Pope Boniface VIII, had his predecessor thrown into prison where he died a few months later. He was surely murdered as results of recent analysis of his remains have shown. After this analysis it has recently been shown that Pietro's remains had been the object of a strange and unexplained theft.

In preparation: ready march 2009

30) Whoever murdered Pico della Mirandola? (2009)

A squad of Italian researchers (historians, biologists, anthropologists, the RIS of Parma) have started investigating into the deaths of Pico della Mirandola and his friend Angelo Poliziano (both dead within a few weeks of each other in the autumn of 1494). Today we know that the friends, both leading figures in Lorenzo the Second Magnificent's court, were poisoned. But who did it and why? More than five centuries later suspicion falls on Lorenzo the Second Magnificent's son, Piero, who had been Poliziano's pupil. In Florence where the Medici family were losing their power to the advantage of the Savonarola Lorenzo's two friends ended up being dragged into intrigues and being put under suspicion (like another great cultural figure of the period Marsilio Ficino) during the momentary twilight of the Medici dynasty when the latter started to treat the former as enemies to be eliminated...

In preparation: ready april 2009

31) Giovanni dalle Bande Nere / John of the Black Band (2009)

After a violent and turbulent childhood followed by countless battles and victories in November 1526 at only 28 years old Giovanni dalle Bande Nere or John of the Black Band, one of the most important mercenaries of the era, died near Mantua from wounds from a fire arm.. A member of the cadet branch of the Medici, it was his own son Cosimo 1 who inaugurated a long series of grand dukes who were to lead Tuscany for two centuries. The blow hit Giovanni (who in reality was called Ludovico but it pleased his mother Caterina Sforza to call him after her deceased husband) on the thigh but curiously enough the doctor who treated him decided to amputate only his foot. This choice wouldn't have made any sense unless he wanted to speed up the mercenary leader's death...

In preparation: ready may 2009

32) Galileo Galilei (2009)

In preparation: ready summer 2009

33) Giordano Bruno (2009)

In preparation: ready summer 2009