

# CARLO ORSI

*Sculture e Dipinti antichi*

## **GALLERIA ORSI PRESENTS THE EXHIBITION "NAPOLEON & MILAN. BETWEEN REALITY AND MYTH - The image of Napoleon from Liberator to Emperor "**

**A tribute to the figure of the great French general and his links with the city of Milan  
on the occasion of the bicentenary of Napoleon's death**

**Exhibition Dates: 27/05/2021 - 25/06/2021**

### Press Release

On the occasion of the bicentenary of Napoleon's death, Galleria Carlo Orsi is proud to present the exhibition "*Napoleon and Milan. Between Reality and Myth - The image of Napoleon from Liberator to Emperor*", a collection of works that celebrate and explore the image of the French general and his links with the city of Milan.

On May 15 1796, the French army commanded by General Napoleon Bonaparte entered Milan, and despite mixed fortunes (eg. the Austrian interregnum of 1799-1800), the Corsican general proceeded to shape the destiny of the city up until 1814, the date of his abdication. Over a period of only twenty years, Napoleon influenced Milan with an intensity and fervour never seen before. He arrived as a liberator in 1796, full of the ideals of equality and fraternity espoused by the Revolution, but it was his later transformation into an Emperor which conferred new found power upon him and allowed him to reform and consolidate the legal and administrative structures and the good governance of the city, whilst at the same time disappointing many who had seen him as the promoter of the spread of Republican principles in Lombardy .

Art and the construction and dissemination of his own image were central aspects of his presence in Milan, during which the attention given to, and relationships between, painting, architecture and urban planning were a constant element.

Without any exaggeration, it can be said that Milan was the city of the Empire where Napoleon's influence was greatest, and where his memory is still vividly felt.

Napoleon had a genuine passion for art so therefore had a high regard for both the arts and artists, who played a central role in the construction of his myth. Thanks to him, the Pinacoteca di Brera became a National Museum which collected a diverse selection of outstanding works selected by a special commission and has remained closely linked to Bonaparte over the years, as can be seen from the vast rooms dedicated to him and the famous bronze statue by Canova, portraying the general as Mars the Peacemaker which greets visitors as they enter the main courtyard.

Proof of Napoleon's deeply-held passion for art is the meeting that took place the day after his entry into Milan with two of the most celebrated painters of the time, Antoine-Jean Gros and Andrea Appiani; the latter was the greatest figurative interpreter of the Napoleonic age in Italy and the official portraitist of the Emperor. And it is from this starting point of the figure of the great artist Appiani that Galleria Carlo Orsi has selected 14 works from private collections to celebrate the the bicentenary of Napoleon's death on May 5. The particularly fine portrait of Alessandro Trivulzio Minister of War (1802-1804) by Appiani, is on display

within the exhibition, the General who shown in a formal pose holding a sword, has its very “official” composition softened by the careful rendering of the facial features and pose which imbue it with humanity and character, and by the dramatic background landscape depicted by means of subtly laid on veils of colour.

Giuseppe Bossi, rival of Appiani, also features amongst the artists on display, with his portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte painted in 1805. The artist cemented his role in the creation of Napoleonic iconography by representing Bonaparte as a classical divinity dressed in purple in the famous painting now located at the Brera Academy with which he won the “*Concorso della Riconoscenza*” in 1802.

To complete the section dedicated to portraits of the “*uom fatale*” there are other important works including Giuseppe Bossi’s “Portrait of Napoleon leaning against the globe”, the wonderful Bust of Napoleon made in marble by Lorenzo Bartolini and the equestrian statuette of Napoleon Bonaparte by Giacomo Raffaelli . The exhibition continues with a section of works depicting officials and the Napoleonic court, and includes the series of miniatures by Giambattista Gigola on ivory, and depictions of the places and vistas of that time.

The exhibition closes with a testimony to the persistence of the Napoleonic myth in the decades following his death, which can be found in the work by Francesco Hayez titled “*Napoleon distributing decorations after the battle of Wagram*”. This painting was commissioned in 1831 by Count Carlo Cicogna, baron of the Kingdom of Italy and aide de camp of Viceroy Eugène de Beauharnais, who had been awarded the Legion of Honor at the age of 25 for valour shown in battle.

## **GALLERIA CARLO ORSI**

Via Bagutta, 14 - Milano

Dates: 27/05/2021 - 25/06/2021

Opening times: Mon 15-19 / Tues-Fri 10-13 15-19

Free Entry