



The director Massimo Angelucci Cominazzini, his wife Nunzia Ercolino and centre Contessa Carla Compagnoli Floriani in Floriana

pietro paolo floriani: a documentary

In 1632 **Pietro Paolo Floriani** was invited to Malta to discuss the possibility of strengthening the land front of Valletta by increasing its depth towards Marsa. After all those years a documentary has now been made of this distinguished military engineer

Photos: Ben Borg Cardona

The Istituto Italiano di Cultura under the directorship of Dott.essa Anna Maria di Marco recently organized an evening at the Istituto during which a documentary about the military engineer so closely associated with Floriana, Pietro Paolo Floriani, was presented for the first time. Contessa Carla Compagnoli Floriani and other personalities came especially to Malta for this occasion.

It must be first of all pointed out that fact and fiction were mingled in the documentary. However, this approach worked well. Above all the documentary was visually beautiful.

In his remarks following the film the director focused on the fact that cinema transforms reality and injects it with its own transformative interpretation of what really happened. The film therefore is not a documentary in the strictest sense of the word, since it deliberately does not strive to reproduce a completely faithful account of Floriani, but rather it colours it with its own inventive interpolations.

Let us start with the piece of fiction on which the documentary revolved.

In November 2005 the Famiglia Floriani received a packet of letters from the Pio Istituto Misericordioso di S. Chiara. The covering letter said that seeing that the Convent was about to be closed, those managing it had decided to return the correspondence to its rightful owners. These letters were written in the middle of 1600, between Pietro Paolo Floriani and his daughter Camilla who had joined the convent at a very young age. They were of an intimate nature and put in the Archivio

Compagnoni Floriani which still exists in the family home.

The documentary starts with a young girl (played by Valentina Compagnoli Floriani, Carla's daughter) reading the letters. Through them her father wanted to make himself and his illustrious family known to his daughter Camilla.

From the letters one can catch the historical nuances of the period and what finally led Pietro Paolo Floriani to become an authoritative military engineer well-known and respected by the influential people of his time.

Weaving letters, interviews and documents, fact and fiction, one remains with an outline, a chronology of the life of Pietro Paolo Floriani, a chronology which touches on salient points until now undiscovered.

As we have seen, the letters, in fact did not exist: they are a point of departure, a device which the cinema uses so that everything becomes more understandable in the telling of a story.

Historical fact is mixed with human impressions and represented by the creativity of the cinema, with a very quick glance at the original letters addressed to Camilla, who really existed and really became a nun when very young.

This documentary was made, among other places, in Macerata, seat of the Floriani family where they live to this day. Apart from Macerata, several other Italian cities as well as Malta were visited and used to make the documentary. Some 60 collaborators took more than a year to gather information, testimonials and so on.






Top: Assessore Provincia Macerata Donato Caporalini, Assessore Istruzione Macerata Federica Carosi, Contessa Carla Compagnoli Floriani and Professor Denis De Lucca **Above:** Mirella Mariani, Dott.essa Anna Maria Di Marco, Massimo Angelucci Cominazzini and his wife Nunzia Ercolino

The production was not without its hitches. The director, Massimo Angelucci Cominazzini had an accident so that filming stopped for some six months but with goodwill, hard work and teamwork the production came to a successful end. Even Malta was not kind to them. When they were here last year to film for some four days it did not stop raining.

To quote Sig. Cominazzini: "From the first moment, working in a period in which personalities who made history, culture and Italian Modernity, men like Galileo, Bernini, Caravaggio, Borromini, moved me profoundly.

"The first shots among which those taken at the Archivio Floriani, were very demanding as I was trying to understand who the cartographers of the maps which were in front of me were. After the Archives, my emotions took over in the various places visited, in the museums, churches and libraries where every painting, chapel or book sent me directly or indirectly back to the personality or period in question."

In the beautiful programme printed for this occasion, the list of credits is very long. However, when it comes to local personalities the Professor of Architecture at the University of Malta, Professor Denis de Lucca deserves a special mention. The director used Professor De Lucca's narrating

voice as the strategic device that gave a cohesive structure to the various segments of the film. 

(The above text is loosely based on the programme produced for the launching of the documentary and translated by Marie Benoît)



Contessa Carla Compagnoli Floriani in Floriana