

An "Affair" to be Remembered

Maria Rita Latta (August 06, 2008)



Silvio Berlusconi and women are constantly under the microscope. This time, though, it is not a woman in person, even if rumors keep spreading as usual...

This time, the controversy involves Berlusconi, Italian Prime Minister and media tycoon and the woman depicted in Giambattista Tiepolo's painting "Truth Revealed by Time". According to Mr. Berlusconi's wishes, a copy of this painting was placed as the backdrop of his media briefing room in Palazzo Chigi after he took office for the third time. Most likely, this painting was chosen because of



its title since the Prime Minister wants to show the Italian public that time will tell if he has been unjustly persecuted by the judges who are trying to incriminate time.

Apparently, the woman's naked, firm, and well-rounded breasts, fully exposed in the original painting, have been covered by a white veil and are, therefore, no longer visible. The same thing was done to her navel. The Italian press is accusing Mr. Berlusconi of Victorian prudery; however, knowing his egocentric character, perhaps he thought that the attention of journalists and viewers would focus on the woman's breast rather than on what he was saying in his speech. The media compared this censorship to the Vatican's censorship of Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescoes in the sixteenth century when the Congregation of the Council of Trent felt that some of the figures depicted in the Last Judgment were "obscene". The task of painting a covering, called "braghe" (pants), over the questionable exposed parts in the Last Judgment was given to Daniele da Volterra, who received the nickname of "braghettone".

Silvio Berlusconi's staff at Palazzo Chigi said that the exposed breasts could "offend the sensibilities of some people." Paolo Bonaiuti, Mr. Berlusconi's spokesman, added that some of the female staff at Palazzo Chigi had asked for the "retouching".

Vittorio Sgarbi, art critic and former deputy Minister of Culture, said that the decision to cover the woman's breasts and navel was "madness, absolute madness" and added, "You cannot touch up a Tiepolo! What are they going to do with all the statues of naked women scattered in museums across Italy with busts that would make Pamela Anderson jealous? I hope that whoever came up with this absurd, mad, pathetic, comic, and futile idea did so without the knowledge of the Prime Minister."

Giancarlo Galan, governor of the Veneto region, which includes Venice, home of Giambattista Tiepolo, also criticized the censorship of the painting. Although he belongs to the same political party as Mr. Berlusconi, he did not hesitate to say that "It is not good to offend Tiepolo. Whoever came up with this grotesque and absurd gesture should be punished as they have offended a particular artist. The Prime Minister's office has managed to offend one of the great artists of freedom."

It can't help but be noticed that Silvio Berlusconi's staff (if it is true that they ignored what was happening to the painting", which was so ready to hide what could "offend the sensibilities of some people", seems to be oblivious to what is being shown every day on television sets belonging to the Prime Minister and the state television sets controlled by his government. It is a never-ending parade of reality television shows like Big Brother and others that show young girls who dream of becoming a celebrity at all costs; all of whom don't really care about what they are wearing, which includes mini skirts and bras that leave little to the imagination; not to mention the vulgarity of most of these shows, which lack good taste and etiquette.

Is it so difficult for Silvio Berlusconi's staff to take care of its viewers by promoting high-quality shows and censoring vulgarity? Should Tiepolo be censored while such television shows are considered "artistic" and, therefore, worthy of an audience?

One thing is clear: if his staff wished to do the Prime Minister a favor by not letting Italians associate a woman's breasts to his image, all of these rumors have created the opposite effect!



Links

[1] <http://ftp.iitaly.org/files/berlusconi21218082531.jpg>