

Press release

Pistoia – Dialogues on Man
Eighth edition: 26-27-28 May 2017

Following a successful event last year, involving the participation of more than 20,000 visitors, 2017 marks the eighth edition of ***Pistoia – Dialogues on Man***, the festival of contemporary anthropology promoted by the **Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Pistoia e Pescia** and the **Municipality of Pistoia**, designed and directed by **Giulia Cogoli** (www.dialoghisulluomo.it).

“Culture makes us human. Movements, diversity and exchanges”: this is the topic for 2017, chosen to mark the Tuscan city’s role as Italian Capital of Culture this year. The Festival will celebrate this special year with 25 international encounters for an audience of all generations eager to discover new tools to understand the world today.

Interpreting “culture” as a plural concept is not only the main theoretical acquisition of cultural anthropology, but also one of the great cognitive revolutions of the 20th century. In fact, the acceptance of an anthropological notion of culture has paved the way for the deconstruction of the notion of “race”, enabling us to consider the whole of humanity from a single perspective.

Over the last eight years, *Dialogues on Man* has offered a new way of performing cultural analyses, both for the anthropological approach (it was a forerunner in adopting this technique), and for the production of cultural content. Indeed, thanks to its continued commitment, the festival has offered audiences more than 200 cultural events with 215 speakers, four major photography exhibitions, a collection of books published by UTET and a huge archive of audio and video recordings on the Festival’s website. This is in addition to an anthropological project for schools, involving approximately 15,000 students to date.

The new feature this year is the creation of the ***Dialogues on Man International Award***, given to a personality in the world of culture whose thinking and opus testifies to the centrality of dialogue in the development of human relations. The winner of this first edition is the Israeli author **David Grossman**. On Saturday 27 May, in piazza del Duomo, Grossman will talk about his literary works and his tireless commitment to sustain dialogue and search for a peaceful solution to the Middle East question, in a discussion with the writer **Paolo Di Paolo**. “There is a strong impulse for destruction. A temptation to intensify conflict, but I know that only dialogue can change people”, says Grossman. “And books are dialogue, the power of dialogue”.

The Encounters

Friday 26 May

The Festival opens with the inaugural lecture “The skies of Europe. Culture, creativity and equality” by **Salvatore Settis**. The intentional destruction of works of art, the neglect of monuments and landscapes, declining historic cities and the spread of urban ghettos are all different yet converging signs of not only an economic and political crisis, but a cultural one too. The creative use of critical thought is the only thing that can help us understand the processes in motion in the world today, argues **Settis**, also outlining this theory in the book “The skies of Europe”, to be published by UTET at the end of May, as part of the *Dialogues on Man* collection.

CERN physicist, **Guido Tonelli**, one of the protagonists in the discovery of the Higgs boson, will be discussing the importance of culture and scientific research and the new challenges in science, starting

from the study of our origins. Journeying back in time towards the “non-place” where everything began is useful for seeking to understand the strange uniqueness that produced the marvels around us, to gather clues as to its end.

Writer **Claudio Magris** starts from his personal experience as a pupil of the poet Biagio Marin and then as a teacher, to look at the special relationship between teacher and pupil. He will look at examples from literature to explore the relationship that has enabled the transfer of knowledge since time immemorial and mutual acknowledgement between teacher and pupil.

Saturday 27 May

We have all been intermingling at the dinner table for several millennia at least. Proof of this is found in the history of Mediterranean cultures and crops, nurtured by continual exchanges. The culinary arts are the result of people migrating, intermingling and borrowing from each other, according to anthropologists **Elisabetta Moro** and **Marino Niola**. In this context, the Mediterranean diet represents a recipe for living and eating together that above all involves ethical and social values, and as such, is a dress rehearsal for tomorrow's humanity.

The writer **Edoardo Albinati**, who has been teaching prisoners in Rebibbia jail for more than 20 years, brings first-hand proof that culture can play a role in situations of social deprivation, creating a different kind of awareness and an openness to new opportunities. This is the significance of holding classes in emergency conditions, which actually represent the current state of the entire Italian school system.

What is the point of culture today? Philosopher **Michela Marzano** gives her answer: culture is the only antidote left when our critical thinking weakens and we conform to prevailing ideologies. Critical thinking also requires the courage to think autonomously, without giving in to the global processes “producing culture” in exactly the same way commodities are produced.

Our current digital era appears to be replacing photography with more superficial and less essential images. **Gianni Berengo Gardin**, a master of Italian photography, reflects on what being a photographer means today in a discussion with the publisher and curator **Roberto Koch**. He reveals that now, more than ever before, there is a need for a slow, profound timeframe totally unlike the tumultuous, self-referencing timescale that leads people to take tons of pictures, fill social media with selfies, and look at and instantly forget thousands of images.

According to French historian **Serge Gruzinski**, it is history, not culture that makes us human. But which history? Global history, the history of migrants and migrations across continents, the history of miscegenation and the contamination of ideas, objects, technologies and religions. A history capable of establishing a critical dialogue between the past and the present.

“Nature or nurture? Deciphering gender and identity” is the subject of the encounter with psychiatrist and psychoanalyst **Vittorio Lingiardi**. Is sexual orientation the result of education and social interactions? Does it spring from unusual fundamental relationships? Is it the result of a traumatic experience? Or is it *purely* a matter of genes and hormones? Lingiardi thinks these questions are wrong because they are founded on preconceptions that make us forget life is made up of shaded nuances.

The human tendency towards fanaticism provokes the contraction of knowledge into a single creed and turns the facts of history into ideological absolutes, driven by a longing to cleanse history of its multifaceted, ambiguous and hybrid nature. The truth is that the West no longer appears to have a past, according to **Silvia Ronchey**. But, as George Orwell wrote, who controls the past, controls the present.

Culture has proven to be an extraordinary instrument of evolution in human history. But what are its limits? To what extent can human beings transform biology and, more generally, the environment they live in? Anthropologist **Adriano Favole** recalls we were warned about the risks of *hubris*, the “arrogance” of technique as far back as the myth of Prometheus. The question is still highly topical today, for example in relation the laws regulating life of our planet to the point of altering its climate, or the development of genetic technologies.

Anthropologist **Marco Aime** and geneticist **Guido Barbujani** discuss human evolutionary processes. The long journey of human beings, their constant migrations, their encounters and exchanges have

resulted in such a genetic and cultural mix that there is no such thing as pure races or cultures, contrary to what constructed identities seeking out and evoking the myth of purity would have us believe.

Sunday 28 May

“Culture and school: synonyms or antonyms?” is the title of the encounter with writer **Paola Mastrocola**. She analyses the words used to describe the “new” school system - educational processes, plans for digital schools, certification of skills, school-work alternation – and asks if they have anything to do with the classic notion of “culture”? What do we want to save or throw away, and in the name of what kind of modernity?

French anthropologist **Jean-Loup Amselle** explores the idea that “museums” are offering a new form of cultural narration, starting with the Louvre Abu Dhabi, opening very shortly. It is the 21st century’s first universal museum in the Arab world, conceived as an artistic product based on the Western model, which must interact with the cultures exhibited. This innovative relationship between a “container” and its “content” belonging to two different cultures presents a new problem of the modern age.

Culture is entertainment, it educates us, enhances our nobility of spirit and contributes to our social development. But it is also a business. Leading historian in cultural processes, **Donald Sassoon**, guides the audience through the very rapid changes in cultural consumption over the past two centuries when knowledge became a mass market product.

Prominent cultural anthropologist, **Amalia Signorelli**, will examine the concept of “popular” culture in its more contemporary expressions such as TV culture, mass culture, culture originating from virtual worlds and the culture of social media networks. The aim is to understand the meaning of popular culture today, and the role it plays in our society.

The ethno-anthropologist **Stefano Allovio** looks back at our evolutionary history, highlighting how culture has intervened to shape humanity. As Pico della Mirandola pointed out in the 15th century, human beings can be extraordinarily clever in moulding and sculpting themselves.

John Eskenazi, one of the most highly regarded scholars of South Asian religious art, compares the figures of Buddha and Alexander the Great. This fortuitous interconnection would give rise to a very successful graft of civilisations, religions, culture, art and trade. An extraordinary mixture of ideas and styles, told through the images of Gandhara art, stemming from Hellenic-Roman art, absorbing Middle Eastern and central Asian influences, ending up by defining the image of the Buddha in the style of a Roman emperor.

Dialogues on Man, which opened with a discussion on the centrality of a “plural” cultural memory, concludes with a look to the future ahead. **Marco Paolini** holds a special conference-lesson on the increasingly dominant role technology will play in the years to come. “I am not an internet expert and I don’t use social media. I know nothing about quantum mechanics, neuroscience or physics, nothing about robotics or artificial intelligence”, says the actor. “But all this affects and interests me. I know my life is changing thanks to or because of the technologies resulting from these innovations and which I, like my fellow human beings, also use”.

The shows

The Festival’s eighth edition will be celebrated with an extraordinary performance of **Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony**, on Friday 26 May at teatro Manzoni (9:00 pm). The message of joy and universal brotherhood in the “Choral” Symphony, adopted in 1972 as the European Union’s anthem, is played by **The Leonore Orchestra** conducted by maestro **Daniele Giorgi**. The Orchestra is a jewel in the crown of Pistoia’s cultural scene, established in 2014 and bringing together musicians from prestigious chamber music environments and international orchestras.

Thirty years after the death of Primo Levi, actor **Toni Servillo** pays tribute to one of the greatest writers in 20th century literature on Saturday 27 May at teatro Manzoni (9:30 pm), with readings from *The*

Periodic Table and *If This is a Man*. As also portrayed in *The Canto of Ulysses* – these texts remind us of the crucial role and meaning culture had in one man's life.

At the end of each day, there will be a film screening at teatro Bolognini. This mini-showcase is for works by François Truffaut with a connection to the theme of this year's festival. Three anthropologists explain and introduce three famous films: on Friday ***The Wild Child*** (at 10:30 pm, with Adriano Favole); on Saturday ***Fahrenheit 451*** (at 10:30 pm, with Stefano Allovio); and on Sunday ***The Last Metro*** (at 8:00 pm, with Marco Aime).

The exhibition

Dialogues on Man is hosting a photography exhibition again this year, curated by Giulia Cogoli. "***In festa: celebrating Italian folklore festivals***" has been created especially for the festival by the master of contemporary photography, **Gianni Berengo Gardin**. Sixty of his black and white photographs taken between 1957 and 2009, illustrate Italian society, its rites and transformations, folklore festivals, ancient customs and traditions from all Italy's different regions.

From 26 May to 2 July in the Sale Affrescate, Pistoia Palazzo Comunale, free admission (catalogue by Contrasto).

The volunteers

As every year, pupils from secondary schools in Pistoia and the surrounding province and university students will be making a crucial contribution to the running of the festival, which has seen their passion and involvement grow year on year. They are joined by young volunteers from the Cagliari festival *Leggendo metropolitano* and from the Livorno festival *Il senso del ridicolo*, thanks to the **Gulliver** cultural exchange initiative.

Moreover, the festival will host the winner of the **2017 *Dialogues on Man* research grant**, awarded to the best essay written on the theme of this edition of the event. The winning contribution will be released as part of the *Dialogues on Man* collection published by UTET.

Tickets on sale from April 28 (€ 3.00 - € 7.00) at La Torre, via Tomba di Catilina, 5/7, Pistoia, or via the website www.dialoghisulluomo.it.

Information, programme and tickets: www.dialoghisulluomo.it

Press pack and photos (credits are compulsory): <http://bit.ly/2ovprwZ>

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