











## Visions of the Mona Lisa . by Thais Rivitti

Like millions of tourists that visit the Louvre Museum every year, Isis Gasparini made, in 2010, her own portrait of the *Mona Lisa*. Or rather, the *Mona Lisas*. *Le Gioconde*, in Italian in the plural, is a set of three photographs taken in the most famous room of the French museum, the *Salle de la Joconde*. The theme chosen by Isis could not have been more mundane. However, her approach is set apart critically from the commonplace images of the *Mona Lisa* we find by the dozen on the internet. Her work reveals something close to the vision the *Mona Lisa* herself has of the room she inhabits in the Louvre.

Curiously, at a time when direct contact with the work is possible (despite the glass, the crowds and museum control apparatus), no one contemplates it. Except perhaps the old man in the painting by Tintoretto (*Portrait of an Old Man Holding a Handkerchief*) which appears in the background of the first photograph, and the woman in the painted portrait captured in the second photograph. A

ISIS GASPARINI

BORN IN SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL, 1989

*Le Gioconde series*, 2011

Photographs printed on adhesive vinyl, 100x150cm (each). Artist collection.

relationship seems to truly be established among the paintings that are together in that room. In the third photograph, where we can see a fragment of Veronese's *Supper at Emmaus* in the background, the painting and the museum tourists merge — there is a subtle passage between these two realities, suggesting a kind of continuity between these two worlds.

The relationship established between the paintings, always from the *Mona Lisa's* point of view, is perhaps a commentary on the spectators' presence. Attracted to their own image-making devices, these contemporary pilgrims go to the museum to see what they are already familiar with — not the *Mona Lisa*, but its image. Caught in this tautological action whose result was already predicted, they lack the openness and willingness to really see, in the sense that Didi Hurbeman understands vision: as a split, restless, agitated and open operation involving the viewer and that which is viewed. ¶



## The transparent museum . by Renato Anelli

The Museu de Arte de São Paulo (Masp) was conceived by Pietro Maria Bardi (1901-1999) and Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992) in 1947. When they arrived in Brazil from Italy, businessman Assis Chateaubriand invited them to design the new museum. Masp became an important pole of cultural modernity in a city which was at the core of the Brazilian industrialization process, but was still culturally provincial.

The acquired collection brought to Brazil artworks of great importance, from various origins and periods. The Bardis designed modern ways to display art, aiming to avoid reinforcing conservative positions through the pieces shown. Lina presented her museography and explained her strategies in the first edition of *Habitat* magazine in 1950. The intention was to offer the “viewer a pure and unguarded observation,” free of preconceptions that would highlight this or that artwork, avoiding the automatic reproduction of values that had become consolidated in Europe throughout the centuries. To achieve this, the architect positioned the paintings loose in space, with the captions at the back — a subordinate position — to allow a first judgment that was free of preconceptions.

This way of exhibiting originated in the European artistic vanguard of the 1920s. Neoplastic and suprematist artists attempted to conquer the space with works that broke the boundaries of their supports. Frederick Kiesler (in 1925) and El Lissitzky (in 1927) applied this goal to their ex-

hibitions. In his Galleria d'Arte in Rome (1930), Pietro Bardi also called attention to some paintings without frames on the walls, just like Edoardo Persico would do a short while later (in 1934) in his exhibitions and storefronts in Milan. Franco Albini, BBPR, Ignazio Gardella and Carlo Scarpa adopted similar supports in their adaptations of old historic buildings to be used as museums. Transparency in the exhibitions was restricted to the interior of these buildings, as was the case of the first Masp headquarters in the *Diários Associados* building, on Sete de Abril Street.

The limitations of that first location led to the design of the current museum at Paulista Avenue, started in 1957, but finished only in 1968. Lina took a radical approach to the transparency of the supports, building them out of glass panels and displaying them in a room whose façades were also transparent.

In the words of the architect, to make art more popular,

“I’ve attempted to strip the museum of that church atmosphere that excludes the uninitiated.”

Detached from the walls by the glass easels, the paintings “floated” in a single space that encompassed the museum and the city, creating spatial and temporal continuity between the works and the urban environment.

TOP . MASP'S PINACOTHECA. MUSEUM OF ART OF SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL, BY LINA BO BARDI. PHOTO: PAOLO GASPARINI. ATTRIBUTION: © INSTITUTO LINA BO E P.M. BARDI (ARCHIVE).