



Fellini's Images, Finally Released

Andrea Di Camillo (July 29, 2008)



A new exhibit in Ardo in northern Italy shows Federico Fellini's bizarre sketches that have never been seen by the public

Who would've known the late world-renowned Italian director Federico Fellini was actually a journalist and caricaturist before delving into his passion for cinema?

Perhaps it shouldn't surprise us. After all, the great Fellini was predominantly well-known for his mastery of images in his films—just the visual images alone comprise most of the magical experience offered by a Fellini film. Fellini believed in the importance of the visual to such a degree that his actors were never handed complete scripts, indicating that he was much less reliant on other cinematic elements such as dialogue, plot structure, and narrative.

Fellini's fascination with visual aesthetics began early for him. As a young man he worked as a caricaturist in his Funny Face Shop in Rome and relied upon what he saw in the prominent features of people's faces to create an exaggerated and successful portrait. In addition to working at the Funny Face Shop, he sold witty cartoons and comic strips to various newspapers, such as the satirical *Il 420* that was based in Florence. Fellini brought this highly imaginative spirit with his sketching to his eventually highly decorated cinematic career as a director. His knack for drawing and imagination is coveted by most filmmakers, who have to force themselves to sketch out their visions on paper to aid in the production of the film, but for Fellini, doodling was a delightful pastime and came naturally to him, and he used to always start his films in this manner.



One of Federico Fellini's sketches

Screenwriter Liliana Betti, one of Fellini's closest friends, his personal assistant, and assistant director for two decades for some of his renowned films in his masterpieces such as *Giulietta degli spiriti* (*Juliet of the Spirits*) was lucky enough to have been so close to Fellini that she received some of his personal sketches. Her brother, Giuseppe Betti, has recently loaned her private collection of over one hundred of Fellini's rarely seen original black and white and color sketches to a museum exhibit in Ardo called "Fellini e la sua musa: Disegni inediti della collezione Liliana Betti" ("Fellini's Muse: Unpublished Sketches from the collection of Liliana Betti") that will be shown from July 13 until October 19 in the Palazzo Bargnani Dandolo, but will be moved to Milan in the Filodrammatici Theatre shortly after. Fellini entitled these images as "Fantasy Between One Take and Another" and "Masks of the Grotesque." As indicated by the titles, most of these drawings are dream-like,



fantastical, and surreal visions that shed light into Fellini's subconscious and imagination, which his films are most noted for. His sketches also include portraits of Betti herself, a few realistic drawings, and erotic ones of men with gigantic and out-of-proportion genitalia, where he exhibits his tastes for graphic and grotesque humor.

Liliana Betti with Federico Fellini

Not only does this exhibit showcase Fellini's intimate self and personal life concerning his dear friendship with Liliana Betti, but it also explores the cinematic phases concerning the production of films that Fellini underwent, as one of the world's most important film directors. As Giuseppe Betti notes, the exhibit he brought forth is innovative in two ways: it is meant "to remember an extraordinary woman [Liliana Betti] and promote artistic impulses, while providing an important cultural understanding in Italian cities and even worldwide."

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