

GIORNATE
AUTORI



AGALMA

a film by Doriana Monaco



Museo
archeologico
nazionale
di napoli

with



Film Commission
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Regione Campania

AGALMA

Life at the National Archeological Museum of Naples

a film by Doriana Monaco

Italy, 2020, 54' | a production by Parallelo 41 and Ladoc | with MANN - Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli | with funding and assistance from Regione Campania and Fondazione Film Commission Regione Campania | film developed in Filmap - Atelier di cinema del reale - Arci Movie | story, photography and direction Doriana Monaco with the voices of Sonia Bergamasco and Fabrizio Gifuni | produced by Antonella Di Nocera and Lorenzo Cioffi | editor Enrica Gatto | live sound recording Filippo Maria Puglia and Rosalia Cecere | sound editing and mixing Rosalia Cecere | colour correction Simona Infante | original music Adriano Tenore | executive producers Lorenzo Cioffi and Armando Andria | office at Parallelo 41 Grazia De Micco and Claudia Canfora assistant directors Marie Audiffren and Ennio Donato | assistant editor Rosa Maietta additional photography Luca Scarparo and Martin Errichiello | graphics Andrea Cioffi poster photo by Lorenzo Ceretta of the artwork Linee del tempo by Francesco Candeloro

trailer <https://vimeo.com/314516135>

SYNOPSIS

Naples. In the deceptive stillness of the great Bourbon edifice that houses the National Archaeological Museum, a frenetic buzz of activity breathes new life into statues, frescoes, mosaics and exhibits of various kinds. The film observes everyday occurrences in the museum, focusing on the daily lives of staff who tackle minutely delicate tasks that require time, care and constant attention. The works, which have lived and resounded for centuries, are monitored as though they were living bodies. All this happens while visitors arrive from all over the world, thronging the various exhibition halls under the seemingly impassive gaze of the works that are both actors and spectators in the great human endeavour. In all this, the museum emerges as a great productive entity, revealing its nature as a material and intellectual site of works.

Agalma (from the Greek for “statue” or “image”) captures the beauty of the museum, evidenced not only in its enchanting display of classical art, but also in the intimate and otherwise invisible relationships that unfold within it: the secret and continually renewed relationship between the visitors and the wonders of Greco-Roman antiquity; the impassioned breath of those who plan the everyday life of the museum.



DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Before ever crossing the threshold of the Archaeological Museum I knew the core of my research was the fragmented nature of classical works of art and, therefore, of the ancient world itself. The film came into being because I wanted to get as close as possible to that world and those works, emphasising the fact that they were mostly works that had “resurfaced”, were almost never complete and over centuries had undergone a continuous physical and interpretive metamorphosis aided by restoration actions. The starting point was thus to take these fragments of bodies of statues, ceramics, frescoes and mosaics and make them visible. Uneven surfaces, cracks, corrosion and missing pieces have become specific signs of the narrative.

I was surprised to find that the museum was anything but a “still” environment, because of the numerous ongoing changes that catapulted me into a dynamic universe. Observing the life of the museum for almost three years has given me the opportunity to explore an otherwise inaccessible world – the submerged world of the repositories comes to mind – and to film memorable moments such as the moving of the Farnese Atlas sculpture, the return of the statue of Zeus from the Getty Museum or the preparations for the Magna Grecia exhibition in rooms with floors made of Pompeii mosaics.

So one of the themes of the film is archaeology as living material. I needed an approach that could combine an archaeological and a filmic gaze, thereby leaching out the educational aspect that often informs archaeological documentaries, and rely instead on visual textures to tell the story.

Another thread of reference was a frame from the film *Journey to Italy* by Roberto Rossellini, in which the central character Katherine, played by Ingrid Bergman, finds herself in the presence of the colossal Farnese Hercules sculpture. Katherine/Bergman’s visit to the Archaeological Museum takes place, in the words of Giuliana Bruno in her *Atlas of Emotion*, “through a visceral, almost physical contact with sculptures that shake to her very soul.” I have illuminated that gaze with the symbol of the journey, that of discovery and initiation. And in some way, this is what I want the spectator to feel; I want them to relate to these objects through “a gaze that makes contact”, and to see them as close as they can be.

A further layer comes from the voiceover text that punctuates the film, based on the first-person accounts of some of the museum staff and read by Sonia Bergamasco and Fabrizio Gifuni. In the ancient world, it was customary for statues to bear inscriptions expressed in the first person, as if the work itself was saying who had made it and why. So I borrowed this language of archaeological description and reworked it for the story. Zeus tells us of a discovery, Atlas talks about a metamorphosis, Hermes about his fragmented condition, the Dancers tell us of the myth they enact, while the Tyrannicides are witnesses to the human vicissitudes that reverberate around the museum.

Agalma is the relationship between the work and those who observe it and are observed by it. The gaze of the statue becomes a site of possible interpretations, points of view and new visions that are reflected in the gaze of the visitor, then intercepted by the cine-eye, bringing to mind the performative role that Greco-Roman culture endowed on images.

The statues talk to us

Zeus Enthroned. The statue dates back to the first century BC and presents the classic iconography of the Greek god. It comes probably from the waters of the Phlegraean Gulf. One side is covered with marine encrustations, while the other side is smooth, presumably from being buried in the sand. After passing through the hands of a series of owners, it remained on display at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles from 1992 to 2017. In 2012, a fragment of marble recovered in Bacoli was analysed and was found to have originated from the edge of the armrest of Zeus' throne. The statue was restored to the National Archaeological Museum in Naples in June 2017, before going to its final home in the Castle of Baia.

Farnese Atlas. The statue in marble depicts the Titan Atlas as he strains to support the celestial sphere, illustrating the constellations, upon his shoulders. The work was discovered in the baths of Caracalla in Rome around 1546. The sculptor is unknown but we do know that is a Roman copy of the Greek original, dating from around the second century. A.D After a brief period on display in the central atrium of the museum, the statue now resides in the Meridian Hall. The film followed the delicate task of moving the work.



Hermes. The terracotta male bust is part of the new permanent exhibition dedicated to Magna Grecia. It is among the artefacts found in Canosa di Puglia and was most likely intended for a funereal context. The wings on the headdress suggest that it depicts Hermes, the messenger of the gods.

The Dancers. On 15 November 1833, a tomb was discovered in Ruvo di Puglia and was named The Dancers, after the figures depicted on its walls. Five years after the discovery, the decorated slabs were removed from the walls of the tomb and sold to the then Royal Bourbon Museum. The movement of the dancers, shown in procession with arms entwined, recalls the ritual dance of the Theseus myth. In a funereal context, this dance has the symbolic function of evoking the “transition” from life to death.



The Tyrannicides. These two marble sculptures from the Farnese collection were found in Hadrian's Villa and brought to Naples in 1790. It is one of many Roman copies, from the second century BC, of the original Greek bronze. It depicts Harmodius and Aristogeiton, who liberated Athens from tyranny and thus became symbols of Athenian democracy. This was the first time in the history of Greek art that a sculpture represented characters who actually existed.



PRODUCTION NOTES

Agalma is a documentary of observation and creation giving an inside account of one of the most important archaeological museums in the world: the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, a place perpetually torn between the enchantment of the past and the passions of the present.

It has been a long production process, begun with a development phase enabled by FilmaP laboratory - Atelier di cinema del reale and continued with study and research activities, including interviews, site visits, and relationships with people and with the spaces covered by the film. The writing process continued during filming. The people we met in the field became characters in the narrative, in alignment with the timeline and development of the story. This process allowed the minimal crew (director, assistant, and sound recordist) to establish an up-close relationship with the museum and even, arguably, to become part of it.

The outcome of this work is the Archaeological Museum of Naples as we've never seen it. *Agalma* ventures into the MANN to reveal, for the first time, its inner life as it unfolds, applying an aesthetic rigour uncommon in documentary cinema. It succeeds in rendering a unique gaze that could only emanate from curious eyes. Not by chance was *Agalma* created by a young and impassioned workgroup, led by first-time director, Benevento-born Doriana Monaco, and supported by a solid production partnership between Parallelo 41 and Ladoc, both specialising in independent *cinema du réel* content that champions young talent.



Agalma was made with funding from the Campania Region and in collaboration with the Archaeological Museum of Naples, whose director, Paolo Giulierini, immediately showed confidence in the project and supported the crew by ensuring total access to the museum. In this sense, the film closes a circle because it combines a locally grown production entity with strong international links, funding under the regional film law, the growth and promotion of local talent and the acclamation of one of the jewels of Campania's cultural offer.

Since we started shooting in early 2018, a new director was appointed to the MANN. This marked the onset of a period of renewal, not only in terms of restoration and reorganisation, but also in the development of a new management model, based on the idea that the museum, in all its forms and activities, constitutes a living entity. This has meant constant, almost daily, consideration of new perspectives for the film narrative: the fragments have become more alive than expected and have guided the imagery for the growth of the film. Proof of this is afforded by the extraordinary re-opening of the Magna Grecia section, an event that happened “before our very eyes” in July 2019, and which has been included in the filmic narrative.

Antonella Di Nocera and Lorenzo Cioffi

“I was immediately impressed by this project. The filmmakers have witnessed these extraordinary years at the MANN from the inside, with us. The work process was long and painstaking, and I could tell, absolutely unprecedented in narrative terms. That's why we decided not only to open the doors of the museum but also to support this production and to help it along its way. With *Agalma*, we're trying to tell it through young, enthusiastic eyes. With the ambition of a cultural endeavour of international scope”.

Paolo Giulierini

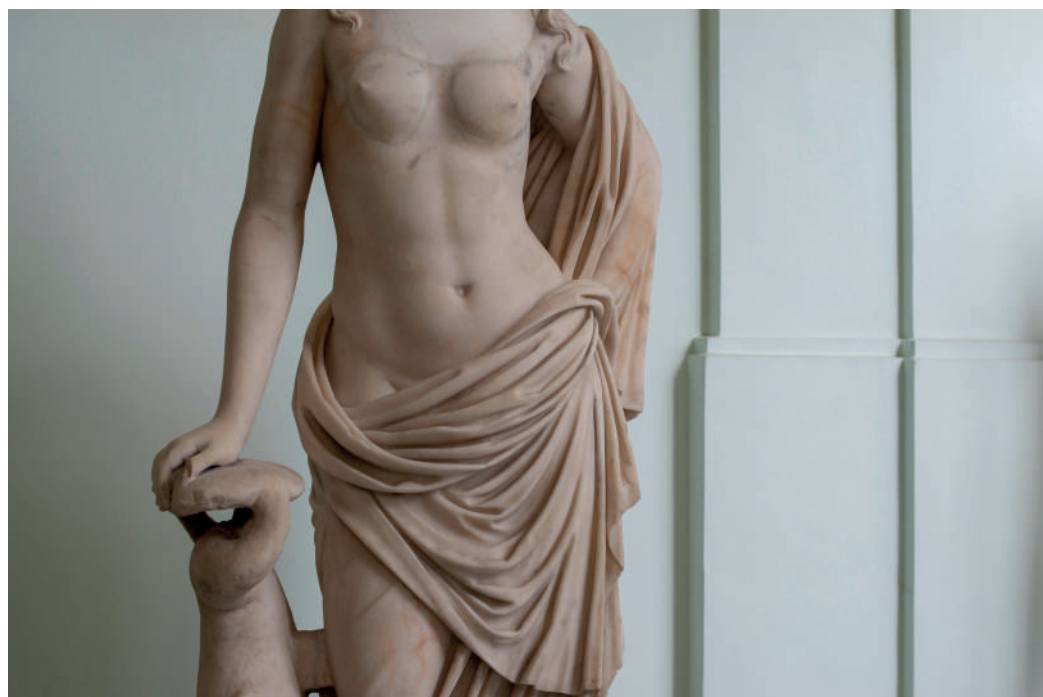


DIRECTOR



Doriana Monaco was born in Benevento in 1989. She studied Archaeology and Art History at the University of Naples Federico II. In 2014 she worked on the Edoardo De Angelis film *Perez* as assistant director. She directed her first two short films in 2015: *Anatomia di un pensiero triste* and *Laziest Girl in Town*. In 2016 she joined the FILMaP - Atelier del cinema del reale in Ponticelli, led by Leonardo Di Costanzo. During that time she made the documentary *Cronopios*, which was selected for the Corso Salani Award at the 2017 Trieste Film Festival.





THE PRODUCTIONS

Parallelo 41 was founded by Antonella Di Nocera in 2002 to promote young talents and develop independent contents in audiovisuals, towards unexplored actions along that ideal bridge of the 41st Parallel which is the same in Napoli and New York. Aesthetic principles are informed by digital technologies, minimal crews, street locations, characters and stories that originate in reality and narratives that question and recount it.

The company produced several award winning films including: *Corde* (2010) and *La seconda natura* (2012) by Marcello Sannino, *Il segreto* (2014) by cyop&kaf (Nomination Best Documentary - David di Donatello | Joris Ivens Prize and Young Jury Mention - Cinéma du Réel Paris | Best Film Pravo Ljudski, Sarajevo | Special Mention - Doc Lisboa | Special Prize of the Jury - Fronteira International Festival of Documentary, Brasil | Jury Special Mention - Torino Film Festival | Casa Rossa Award - Bellaria; *Le cose belle* (2013) by Agostino Ferrente and Giovanni Piperno (Nastri D'Argento - Special Mention Best Docufilm | Doc/it Professional Award - Best Italian Documentary | Best film - SalinaDocFest | Special Mention - XVIII MedFilm Festival | Azzeddine Meddour Award - Tetouan | Young Jury Prize - Annecy Cinéma Italien | Special Mention - Toulouse | Special Mention Italia Doc Festival and Special Mention Casa Rossa Doc - Bellaria); *Pagani* (2016) by Elisa Flaminia Inno (Filmmaker Festival | Cinéma du Réel Paris | Terre di Cinema - Tremblay en France | Lovers Film Festival - Torino | Films Femmes Mediterranee - Marsiglia | Los Angeles - Best Religious Documentary); *MalaMènti* (2017) by Francesco Di Leva (Nastri d'Argento - Best short for innovation, 2018); *Aperti al pubblico* (2017) by Silvia Bellotti (Festival dei Popoli Firenze - Audience Award | Visioni Italiane Bologna 2018 - Best Documentary | International Leipzig Festival - Honorable Mention | Jean Rouch International Film Festival 2018 - Grand Prix Nanook); *Non può essere sempre estate* (2018) by Margherita Panizon and Sabrina Iannucci (Extra Doc Festival 2018 Roma - Prize | Annecy Cinéma Italien 2018 | Shorts International Film, Trieste 2018 | Viva il Cinema!, Tours (France) 2019 | Festival du nouveau cinema italien, Tremblay-en-France, 2018); *Rosa pietra stella* (2020) by Marcello Sannino IFFR 2020.

Ladoc, founded by Lorenzo Cioffi in 2011, specialises in the production of documentaries for cinema and TV, giving precedence to creative documentaries, highlighting new points of view on themes, stories and characters of social significance and in actuality. Ladoc has carried out co-productions with Rai Cinema, Al Jazeera Documentary Channel, France Télévisions, TV2000. Its documentaries have been screened at IDFA, Locarno, Torino, Biografilm, Festival dei Popoli, Thessaloniki, Zagreb Dox, and broadcast on Rai, Sky Arte, Al Jazeera, France Télévisions, Al Arabya, RSI, Al Jazeera Balkans.

Some of Ladoc latest documentaries: *La nostra strada* by Pierfrancesco Li Donni (Biografilm Festival 2020: Best Italian film); *Corpo a corpo* by Francesco Corona (Festival

dei Popoli 2018: Audience Award); *Le circostanze – I romanzi disegnati di Vittorio Giardino* by Lorenzo Cioffi (Biografilm Festival 2018: Audience Award); *Vita di Marzouk* by Ernesto Pagano (African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival 2018); *La natura delle cose* by Laura Viezzoli (Locarno Film Festival 2016, Jihlava Documentary Film Festival 2016, Trieste Film Festival 2016); *Napolislam* by Ernesto Pagano (IDFA 2015, Biografilm Festival 2015: Biografilm Italia Award); *Rustam Casanova* by Alessandro De Toni (Biografilm, ZagrebDox).



Production Contacts

Antonella Di Nocera +393355826163

parallelo41produzioni@gmail.com

antodinocera@gmail.com

www.parallelo41produzioni.com

www.ladoc.it

Film Press Office

Simona Martino +39 3351313281

simonamartino2009@gmail.com



MANN Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

Ufficio Comunicazione - Responsabile

Antonella Carlo +39 0814422205

antonella.carlo@beniculturali.it

man-na.ufficiostampa@beniculturali.it

Digital Projects Promotion

Francesca De Lucia +39 335 6358348

delev.francesca@gmail.com