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**ARTS
VICTORIA**



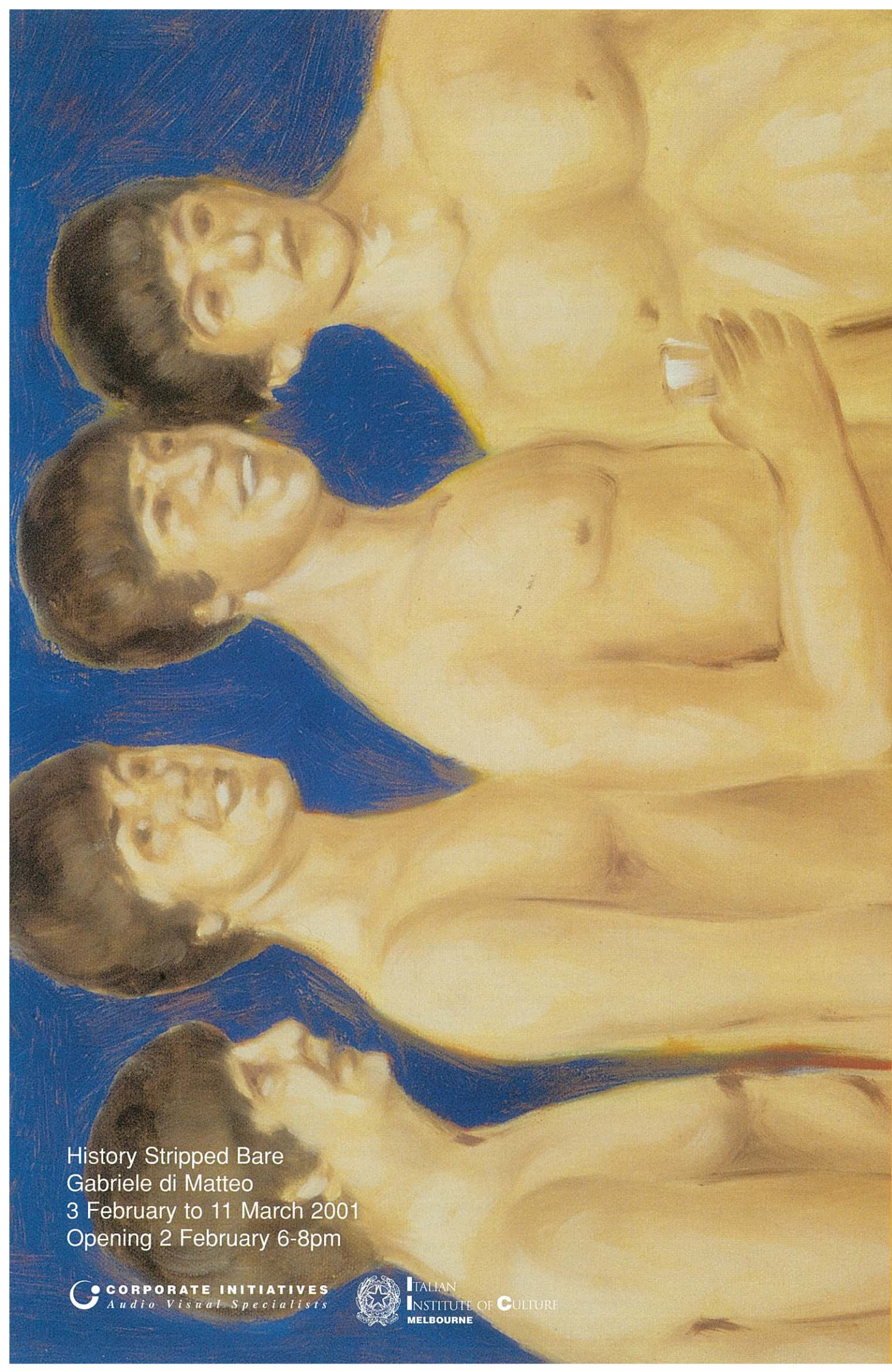
**MONASH
UNIVERSITY**

History Stripped Bare
Gabriele di Matteo
3 February to 11 March 2001
Opening 2 February 6-8pm

 **CORPORATE INITIATIVES**
Audio Visual Specialists



**ITALIAN
INSTITUTE OF CULTURE
MELBOURNE**



History Stripped Bare

Working under the assumed name of Armando Della Vittoria, Gabriele Di Matteo has contracted a celebrated Neapolitan copyist, Salvatore Russo, to reproduce illustrations from various media on the history of Western civilisation – the original work executed by some unacknowledged graphic artist or photographer – but he has added one proviso: Russo must paint all the figures without clothes.

The result is over 100 small paintings of popular scenes from the history of the world.

Besides a particular Italian emphasis it's a history we can nearly all share in the West; from Neanderthal man to Columbus' voyage of discovery to Shakespeare to the Beatles and even the Queen Mother's visit to New Zealand. We recognise this retinue of events from standard histories and popular media which are reproduced ad infinitum. And yes, all the protagonists are naked.

It's a common adage that we're all born naked, that we are all naked before God, that we are all the same underneath. That's the proposition behind the work too. Sure it's funny, ironic and clever, but its profound point regards the equality of people. Without clothes we do seem the same or similar enough that the dramatic events of history appear as so many variously crazy, ambitious, malevolent, wonderful characteristics of the species.

In this respect history has not only been stripped bare but flattened out in standardised oil on canvas panels, the momentous placed next to the marginal in a potted history of the world. But that sort of dumb history has also been imparted a singularity and craftsmanship thanks to the expert agency of the copyist Russo who honours the original with his highly respected talents for mimicry, preserving the original sketchy graphic style as well as the patina of mechanical reproduction such that it's hard to finally tell the aesthetic qualities of art from the effects of third and fourth generation reproduction.

Indeed, the determination of authorship has always been a vexed issue, more recently though, not because the copyist intends a deception (as a forger might), but because responsibility for the idea or image is dispersed across so many fronts. In the present series we could cite the first record of each event, subsequent historical accounts of that event, visual interpretations or impressions, and thereafter photographic reproductions and other facsimile versions. The image source therefore is so deeply rooted in this complex of representations that to draw it forth as the idea of some anonymous graphic artist, Russo the copyist, Della Vittoria the commissioner, or Di Matteo the overseer would be pointless.

Rather Di Matteo stands to the side as a sort of master of conflicting ceremonies, seeming to enjoy the confusion over high and low cultures,

truth and fiction, original and copy. But he also seems to prize one quality above all others in the process: a certain kind of prismatic intensity where the various aspects of an historical event appear simultaneously. From which we deduce that reproduction can take much longer than an instant and involve many more means than some single mechanical device and just as many agents. The moment of reproduction is fat, wide, long, composite, ongoing.

The video provides a charming coda to the whole process, documenting Russo naked in the studio, whistling and singing his favourite Neapolitan folk songs as he quickly translates each found image into a hand-painted oil painting. The issues of historical succession, cultural reproduction, the definition of art and the origin of ideas are inseparable it seems from the simple joy of the copyist at work. And as we watch and listen to Russo, the complex, fascinating texture of reproduction slowly emerges.

Stuart Koop

Gabriele Di Matteo

Select Solo Exhibitions

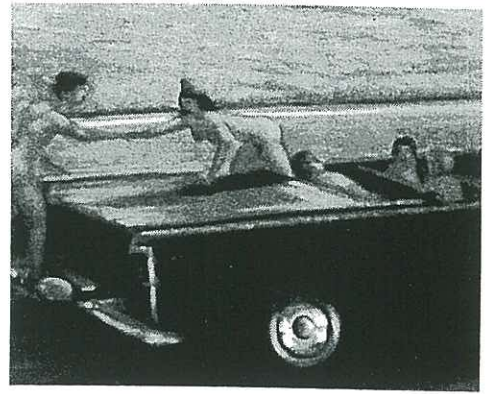
2000 Vilma Gold Gallery, London
Care/off, Milan
1999 Georges-Philippe & Nathalie Vallois Gallery, Paris (project room)
1998 Bibliotheque Municipale de Lyon, Frac Rhune Alpes, Lyon
1996 Galleria Paolo Vitolo, Armando della Vittoria, Milan
Galleria Piacentia, Piacenza

Select Group Exhibitions

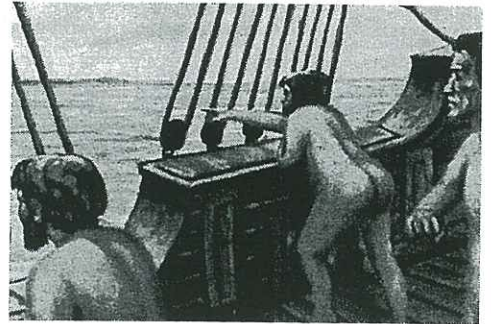
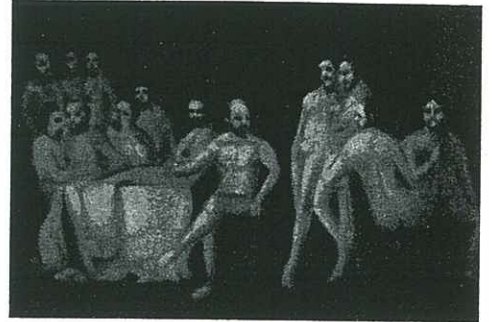
2000 Fantapp, Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa, Venice
'First Melbourne International Biennial', Melbourne
1999 Un jardin d' hiver, Bourg-en-Bresse, collection Frac en Rhune-Alpes
1998 OMI, International Artist's Residency, New York
Il Punto, Galleria Continua, Milan
Subway, Milan
due o tre cose che su di loro, P.A.C. Milano
1997 Gamblers, Mediarte Caserta
Collezione, Galleria Civica d'arte Contemporanea, Siracusa
Grado Zero, CRT, Milan
Nets, Galleria Lucio Amelio, Napoli
Il Punto, Galleria Continua, S. Gimignano
1996 Precious, M. Camh Gallery
Photoprints, Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Mutoidi, Maschio Angiono, Naples
Alfabetizzazione, CastelS. Pietro
Tradition & Innovation, Italian Art since 1945, National Museum of Contemporary Art, Seoul
1995 Museo d'Arte Italiana, Castello di Rivara
APERTO 95 out of order, Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna
Racconti Pelliziani, Volpedo
Verso una grande collezione, Flash Art Museum, Trevi
1994 Procreation, Centre d'Art contemporain FRI-ART, Fribourg
Prima Linea, Flash Art Museum, Trevi

Select Publications

Giulio Ciavoliello, 'Am I a work of art?' Care/off, 2000
Roberto Pinto, 'Stranger Knocking', Melbourne International Biennial, 1999
Jean-Yves Jouannais, 'Les ruines circulaires', The blind man, Bibliotheque Municipale de Lyon, 1998
Giorgio Verzotti, 'Gabriele Di Matteo', Flash Art #203 April/May 1997
Jen Budney, 'Five Paintings', Art and Text, May 1997
Francesco Bonami, 'Italian Art since 1945', Museum of Contemporary Art, Korea
Grazia Toderi, Flash Art International #171, 1993
Giorgio Verzotti, Gabriele Di Matteo, Art Forum # 9, 1991



Images
Over: The Fab Four, 2000
Above: Assassination of JFK, 2000
Below: Shakespeare and His Contemporaries, 2000
Discovery of America, 2000



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Australian Centre for Contemporary Art

Director: Jenepher Duncan

Curator: Stuart Koop

Gallery Co-ordinator: Vikki McInnes

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ARTS VICTORIA

