

EXPERTISE

for ROBERTO TONDI
on STONE PAINTING

By

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INTRODUCTION

Born in Zollino in 1964, Roberto Tondi received his professional education as a photographer in the second half of the eighties, when he attended a two-year course in Photography and Restoration, organised by the Commune of Nardò.

As a professional photographer he shoots a lot of genres, but he is most passionate about reportage photography.

A selection of his shots taken around the world, from New York to Jerusalem, while traveling for work or leisure, was featured in an exhibition called *People*, which Roberto organized in 2010. The exhibition was hosted in Lecce, at the castle Carlo V.

At that time, Roberto and his wife Luana Delos decided to acquire a space to be converted to a studio, in Lecce. While renovating, they discovered two small quarries for the extraction of Lecce stone, pietra leccese, at a depth of 10 meters. Unable to have both areas restored, they had to leave one of the *quarry rooms* in the state it was found, and the stonework was left in its natural state, untreated.

Some time later, Luana and Roberto exhibited some pictures from *People* at their new studio-gallery and, due to lack of space, the remaining part was stored in the quarry rooms. A year and half later, when they decided to replace some of the photos on display with those stored underground, an extraordinary scene met their eyes: the photographs looked like paintings. Each photograph had changed in its own unique, irreversible way, as if painted over by pietra leccese itself, by its slow and intense action. That is where the following exhibition, *Stone Painting*, held at Galleria Foresta, Lecce, in 2016, took its name.

TECHNICAL EXAMINATION

Observation and analysis of the relevant artwork pieces were carried out on the 15th, 16th, 19th and 20th February 2018, at the studio/gallery owned by Roberto Tondi and located in Lecce, at n. 42 via Orsini del Balzo.

The examination aimed at understanding whether the artworks in question were photographs and whether they had been painted over or otherwise altered by Roberto Tondi and Luana Delos.

Procedural steps are described below.

1. **First step: visual analysis. Naked-eye observation and detection of deterioration typically found in photographic materials.**
2. **Second step: identification of the kind of photographic print material employed for the photographs exhibited by Roberto Tondi in 2010 at the castle of Carlo V in Lecce, where People was held.**

The paper proved to be Kodak Professional Endura, a polycoated paper for professional use in industrial processing. This kind of support is characterised by a laminated paper sheet between two polyethylene layers, which offer better protection from external residues. Titanium oxide employed as a whitening agent catalyses redox reactions and is affected by all external environmental factors.

3. **Third step: identification of the printing technique employed by the laboratory Fotocolor Adria Digital, in San Severo.**

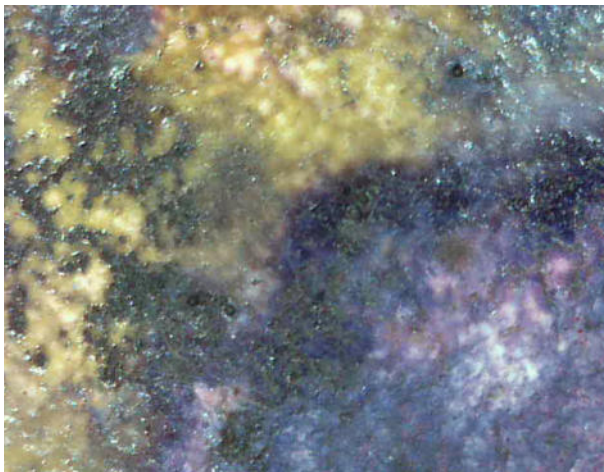
Digital c-print.

4. Fourth step: detection of the kind of damages typically found in photographic materials, on portions of the visible images, bearing in mind that «Since polyester, which is a better image stabilizer than films and emulsions previously used, was introduced in the photography industry, there have not been many specific instances of alteration of photographic prints; which does not necessarily mean that photographic materials employed for this support are not subject to alterations common to silver emulsions».

The following occurrences are detected, using camera head Nikon D700 and digital microscope DinoCapture 2.0:

a) SULFURATION.

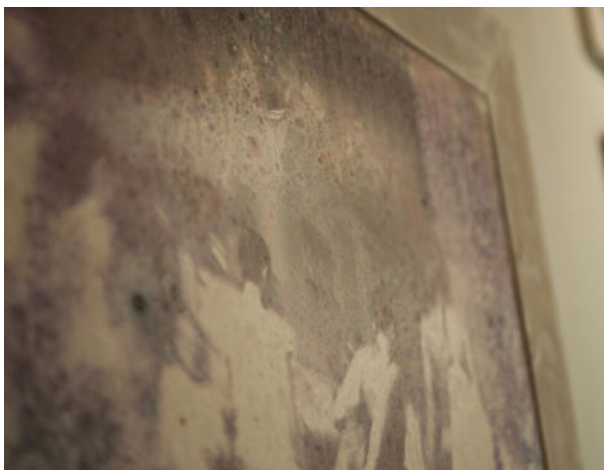
Combination of elements, producing yellowish tones.



BMP Image, Assisi

b) OXIDATION-REDUCTION.

Results in tonal variations, silver mirroring.



Nikon d700, *Forme e spazialità*

c) COLOUR SHIFT.



Nikon d700, Set

d) COLOURING.

Alteration in the light, depending on specific light and temperature conditions (magenta).



Nikon d700, Coinvolgimenti

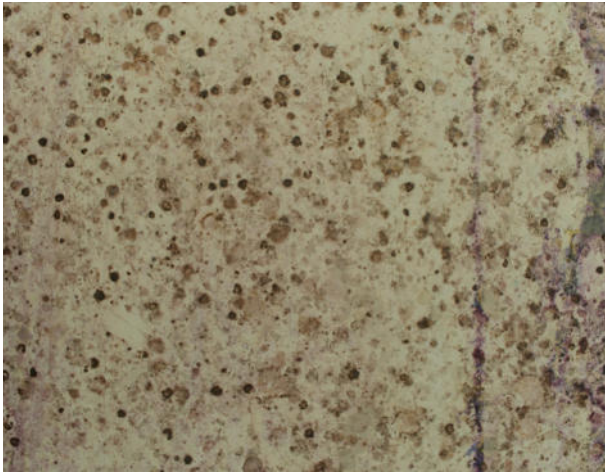
Alteration in the dark, depending on specific temperature and humidity conditions (cyan).



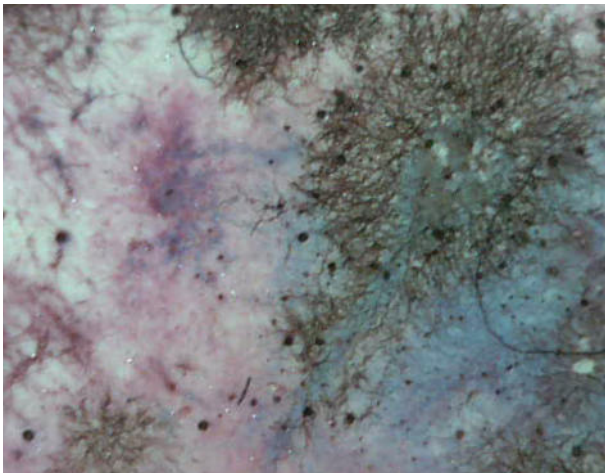
Nikon d700, Addobbi

e) MOLDS.

The growth of micro-organisms is accidental and may be localised where nutrients are especially tasty, as with adhesive agents.



Nikon d700, Coinvolgimenti

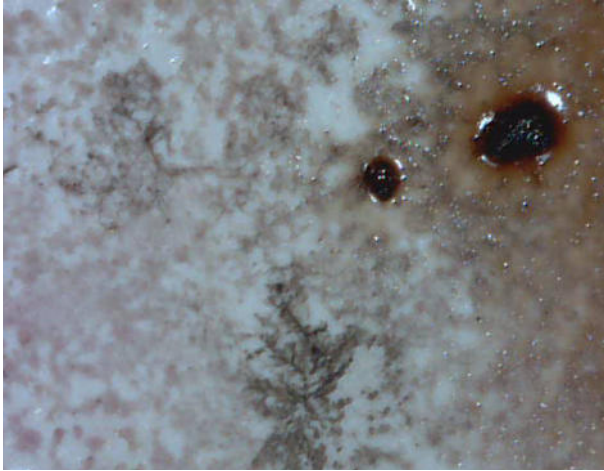


BMP Imagine, Assisi

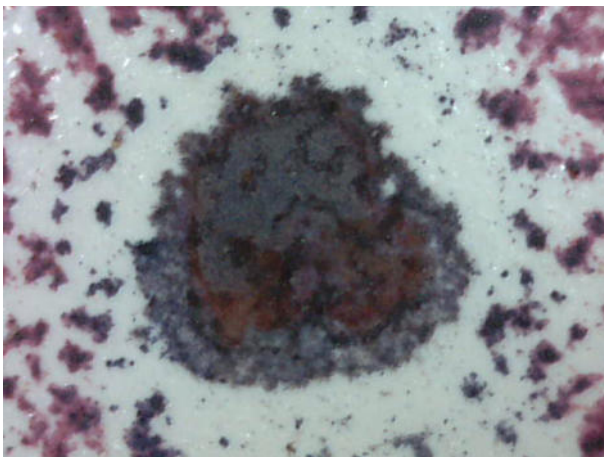
f) PHOTOCHEMICAL DECAY.

It involves hygroscopic materials and can take two forms.

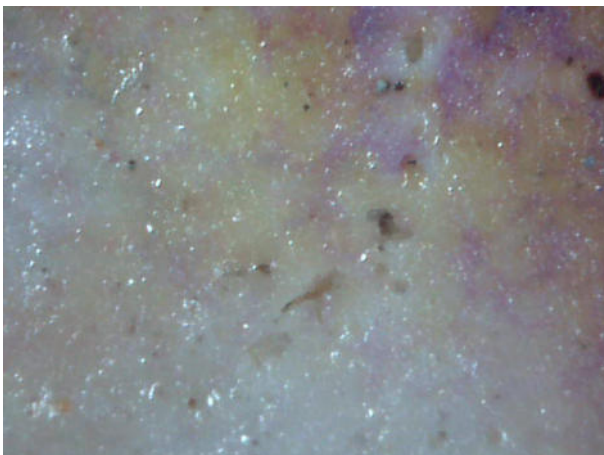
When the relative humidity exceeds 60%, biological attacks, chemical degradation and emulsion swelling may occur.



Imagine BMP, Set

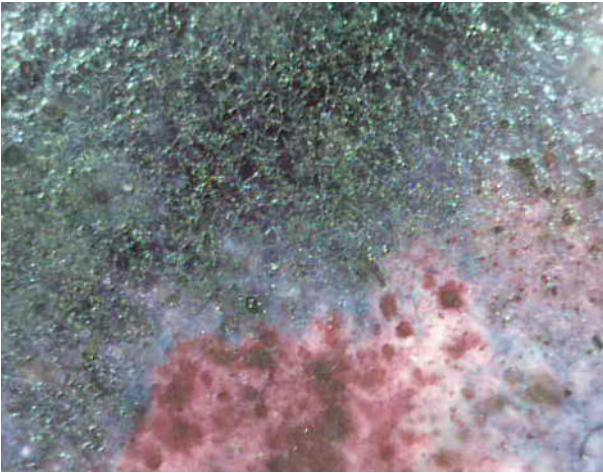


Imagine BMP, Costumi



Imagine BMP, Introspezione

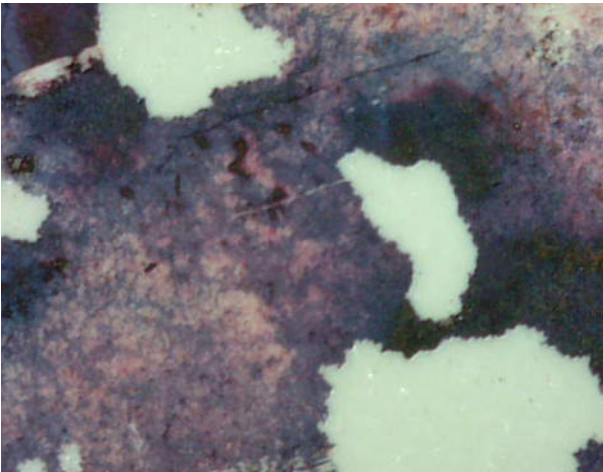
When the relative humidity is below 30%, cracks and tension are likely to occur.



BMP Imagine, Assisi

g) ABRASIONS.

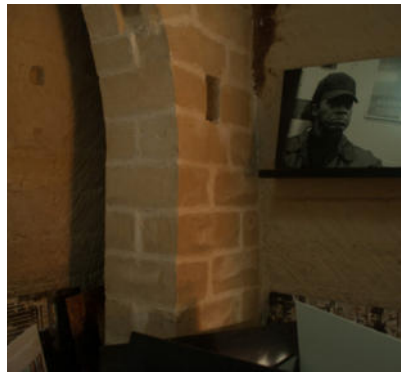
Mechanical damage and detached photographic paper.



BMP Imagine, Set

5. Finally, the area where decay and changes occurred has been examined and photographically reported.

The site has a vent and a light shaft, some areas are in a semi-dark position. Relative humidity oscillates seasonally, making possible the combination of all elements of photographic decay as reported at point 4, letters a), b), c), d), e), f).



CONCLUSIONS

In view of the above observations, it can be concluded that the artworks in question are photographs and that no man-made painting or other alterations have occurred, with the sole exception of the usage of a fixative spray, Inkjet Fix-Matte, after collecting the prints from the quarry-room.

The assumptions made by the author Roberto Tondi, viz. that, a natural process, which he named *Stone Painting*, had been at work, seem plausible. Further testing and development of this intuition will have to consider factors that may be hidden, or not always noticeable over a short period of time, or otherwise not entirely controllable.

On the other hand, it may be of great interest to create and re-create *living* artworks, starting off from ascertained elements.

It is an objective fact that the environmental characteristics of the *quarry room* triggered a process resulting in a unique and irreversible change in the photographs.

A process specific to a place surrounded by air, water vapour, nestled in limestone bedrock, where an invisible interaction between pietra leccese and the photographs has taken place.

«Uno dei primi testi di psicologia è Arie, acque e luoghi, in cui Ippocrate afferma la specificità dell'acqua di un luogo, in quanto diversa da quella di altri luoghi. Lo stesso vale anche per l'aria. Il corpo avverte questa diversità, e se non la tenessimo in conto cominceremmo a collocare lo stesso tipo di edificio in qualsiasi posto del mondo.

Nell'antica Grecia, luoghi quali crocevia, sorgenti, pozzi, boschi e simili, avevano specifiche qualità e specifiche personificazioni: dèi, demoni, ninfe, daimones, e se si era inconsapevoli di tutto questo, se si era disattenti alle figure che abitavano un incrocio o un bosco, se si era insensibili ai luoghi, si correva un grave pericolo. Si poteva esserne posseduti. [...]

Alcuni luoghi venivano evitati, mentre in altri si traeva beneficio e si otteneva guarigione. Questo accade ancora oggi.

In tutta l'Europa ci sono terme, luoghi dove si possono fare bagni curativi. Saturnia è uno di questi posti; un altro è Montecatini.

Ci sono luoghi in cui l'Acqua e l'Aria sono benefiche, ma li abbiamo alterati trasformandoli in località di villeggiatura dove sciare o prendere il sole, e dove i servizi turistici – impianti di risalita, stabilimenti balneari e tutto il resto – sono la cosa più importante, finendo così per cancellare il carattere originario del luogo.

È importante rendersi conto di cosa i luoghi “contenevano”, tenevano-dentro, da cosa fossero in-habited. Ogni luogo aveva un'intima, peculiare qualità.

Questo In, l'interiorità del luogo, è l'Anima del luogo.»

(J. HILLMAN, L'anima dei luoghi. Conversazione con Carlo Truppi, p. 90-91, Rizzoli, 2004, Milano)

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Lecce, 21 february 2018

Sign

Handwritten signature of Rosanna Lerede in black ink on a light background.

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Sign

Handwritten signature of Angela Caputo in black ink on a light background.

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