

SERGIO BOLDRIN – Venice, a Place of the Soul

Colours incisively applied as dynamic segments turn the profiles of Venetian architectures into monumental façades. The spasmodic rhythm of the brush strokes shakes the giddy heights of the buildings with their dark windows, tracing the shaky profile of walls testifying to a remote and glorious past. Spare surfaces waver against the sky. Beyond them is a glimpse of the void, giving a disquieting feel. A jester acts as a silent onlooker in this unusual urban context – a great mocking mask with a grotesque expression that follows Venice as it inexorably dissolves. This shift of colours is an immediately perceivable feature of Sergio Boldrin's painting. The viewer will be stunned and captivated by the artist's very personal take on the city, his city. There is no rhetoric here, no aesthetic complacency – only the genuineness of an enchanted place that is losing its historical reference points over time. Within this process of decline, Boldrin's art may be seen to express a sincere awareness, in the form of a mood, a poetic engagement which serves to interpret local malaise.

The marked gestural component of Boldrin's art and its expressive figuration also evoke images of the past. This is the case, for instance, with his revisiting of Canaletto's *Campiello dei Tajapiera* in his painting with the big jester showing himself behind the scene defined by the great vedutista; it is also the case with his homage to Modigliani at San Sebastiano, where the quayside extends like a spacious arena before the monumental presence of a green buffoon who plastically mirrors the elegant nudes by the Livorno-born artist.

What instead exclusively belongs to Sergio Boldrin's style is the intensity of its contents, which expand through his airy atmospheres of Fauve-Expressionist inspiration. The artist is on an ongoing quest for those traces that have changed the very life of the city in its development and decline.

If we turn to Boldrin's curious spatial distortions, if we manage to emotionally grasp the resigned gaze of his buffoon, we shall immediately be captivated by the artist's narrative.

Urban architectures blend with one another and boldly intertwine on the surface of the paintings, creating vast monumental settings. It becomes difficult to detect any eastern styles or influences here, as all we can make out are mysterious, dream-like buildings which show an upside-down perspective in their interiors. It as if we were gazing at a vast papier mâché theatre resting on the fragile soil of the lagoon, gradually transcending it as it moves upwards. Like trees, the old palaces turn to the sky, stretching their roots for one last time towards the unstable surface they originated from.

Boldrin's painting, therefore, expresses a reality which emerges through observation, blending reason and feelings. His is a sophisticated research, which often crosses the threshold of dreams (or possibly nightmares), yet without ever losing touch with genuine reality. People who know and love Venice today see it as a melancholy city that has been stripped of its inhabitants, a city caught between its apparent existence and the soul which has made it so magnificent over time. Ruin, decay and the indifference of the majority speak of a lifeless city for Boldrin. Regrettably, Venice is losing not just its beauty, but also its identity. The jester's knowing gaze and his grotesque and melancholy mask conceal the conscious feelings of a Venetian. Painting manifestly becomes an intimate pursuit, a form of expressionism that is not merely formal, but which has been fully assimilated and redeveloped according to parameters based on complete emotional engagement – even of a visceral kind in certain paintings. The lines and visual impact of the subjects reveal a marked primitivism almost reminiscent of sculptures in the smoothness of the artist's fields of colour – as best illustrated by his *melancholy* white buffoon, with its stern and highly contemporary style.

The artist launches a sensory enquiry into the milieu of Venice by expressing visual

impressions or extemporaneous images: in his pictorial rendering, he symbolically translates the reflections of known data by following the protean development of his subjects, the endless change of a decadent reflection on the lagoon. Refined and harmonious decorations give way to dense brush strokes; earth colours covered in blues simulate an architecture mottled by time; the shadows of an interior are depicted with dreamy melancholy. Boldrin thus attains his lyrical expression by structuring his images into various levels, using a different colour to define each phase. His images expand or grow denser from one level to the next. They mirror the reflections of an atmospheric crystal. They show the fleeting and precarious beauty of things. Possibly this is why the artist's brush strokes stand out like lacerations, congealing the veins of old marble as if they were deep wounds. For Sergio Boldrin, each mark or colour influences his will to get to know the present dimension of an object, as if to seize control of its inner development. Painting here reveals the genuine identity of existence. Through a rhythm punctuated by gestural touches, the artist searches for that suspended moment which emerges as the genuine soul of the city. Meanwhile, the jester looks on, enabling the viewer to enter into direct communication with the artist and his reality: the arcane presence of the tragic mask envelops us in boundless pathos.

June 2012

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