

SERGIO BOLDRIN or THE SOUL IN A MASK

Entering the world of SERGIO BOLDRIN is like embarking on a journey into the subconscious, an adventure whose visible traces you recognise even though you haven't the slightest idea where the road will lead. We believe that the real imaginative strength of this Venetian painter lies in the fact that he has focused all his creative energy upon the task of showing what each one of us holds within our own invisible "double".

He paints MASKS that have nothing to do with the ludic representation to which tradition has accustomed us. His works are a revelation, like the other side of the moon, the more tragic, grotesque and desperate side, ambiguous in its solitude, the projection of all our feelings, our fears and our pains. He presents those emotions that we are unable to express through modesty or bashfulness, all the waste-matter that accumulates within us as we struggle to adapt ourselves to a society that can be distant or even ferocious towards those who do not have the strength to resist, and which thus impacts on the daily life of the spiritually defenceless.

This is why his icons may appear "ugly", even grotesque; the Artist clearly wishes to emphasise an interior specular condition, expressed with a pictorial idiom that leaves nothing to the imagination since every subject is described with the penetrative power of psychological introspection. Boldrin adopts an expressionist style that allows him to represent his characters without any academic aestheticism, achieving a physiognomic accuracy that acts as the point of contact between the human being and his oneiric projection in a tragic/ludic key.

This also helps to explain our doubts with regard to these paintings, since we are unable to distinguish the dream from reality, frightened by the notion that we might be faced with a vision that imitates our own selves, one that reveals our own defects; the risk is that we might discover that the masks are us and not just portraits of melancholy characters who belong to a performance projected in the time/space of our memory. And it is only by agreeing to do it that we can take into consideration the fact that BOLDRIN is satirising our society, poetically denouncing the existential anxiety, the disquiet and apprehension that afflict us daily, forcing our subconscious to take refuge in the form of a "mask" offered to us by the Author (see *LA MASCHERA È SERVITA ⇒ HERE IS YOUR DISGUISE ⇒*). At that moment, we enter into osmosis with the Artist, becoming subjects of his psychic research, at the risk of being vivisected and exposing our innermost, uncontrollable EGO; we assume the burden of the fiction (the great WHITE MASK hanging around the neck of the JESTER), and are thus projected into that oneiric world where everything is simulation, or a bitter occult reality, that we have no wish to discover.

However, as we know BOLDRIN well, his intelligence as a man and artist, his great sensitivity of spirit, his love for his city, we cannot expel a nagging doubt: could he have been playing with us, offering this playful representation of a world that has disappeared (18th-century Venice, tired and decadent, with its vices and (few) virtues, described so well by the great GOLDONI and GOZZI), or using the fascination of the "ugly" as a ruse to reach the "beautiful" that may well be concealed inside each one of us?

This would explain the joyful irony of his self-portraits, arrayed in rich vestments which enfold him in Venetian visions, or those paintings of his wife's face hidden beneath a white mask, and mantled with a blue cloud, or those portraits of his two daughters, seen with the loving eye of a father, able to interpret their character and moods.

Why else would he, in his latest works, place his masked jesters in a typically Venetian setting, which enfolds them like an embrace, almost as if, by leaving them afloat in the void of an existential limbo, he had deprived them of their natural cultural roots, thus minimising their importance as representatives of a society carefully located in time and space – a society that can still be set up as an example for what it has bequeathed (both for good and for bad) to all those who intend to relish to the full all the happy moments of life, but also to face all its asperities with the necessary sense of humour?

In the end, however one may choose to read his works, there is no denying the pleasure that BOLDRIN's art offers those who study his paintings, the chromatic ensemble, with its sudden mysterious light that cuts across the scene, illuminating the characters from aslant, or sending its full glare on them, like actors moving centre-stage, against a backdrop of lopsided houses, mnemonic projections filled with a yearning nostalgia for a world and a city that no longer belong to them. It is as if, having himself become a mere Mask and a stock character in the work, he were striving to bid a symbolic farewell to a world that has so essentially changed that it no longer responds to his expectations as a man, as an artist and as a Venetian.

And if, by some whim of fate or just for a single moment, all his psychic research were to prove vain, we would still be left with that marvellous pictorial achievement, with which he expresses his thought on the profundity of our existence, with their mysterious alternating backgrounds, their mixture of warm earth-tones and vivid yellows bathed in that magically impalpable light, the enchanted greens alongside the vibrant whites and reds that delineate the characters; all of this would be sufficient reward for our spirit since the art already contains within itself the ability to make us understand the world around us.

But what we want to emphasise with full conviction is that fortunately SERGIO BOLDRIN is able to paint and also to read our innermost selves, penetrating beyond those outward guises that robe us temporarily, and eternally fixing for our descendants what will remain of our PERSONALITY.

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