

I'm at Mario Schifano's studio, listening to his projects and anyone's words and scenes from a host of televisions.

"Mario, listen, there's a friend of mine who's got a theatre couture with beautiful costumes; imagine an eighteenth century dress, very loose skirts, laces, ships on my head or gardens, how splendid, can you fancy about me walking like this?"

"Why don't you go and take one? Come on, let's take some pictures."

July 1991. "Come on, switch on those lights! No! Move that....wring the laces, let out the dress, what are you doin'!....." I've told you to move that further!"; he yells at his assistant and then, as a loud river, he starts taking snapshots, one after the other.

We've finished taking pictures, it's July and it's hot with all those lights.

But I don't feel like putting off my dress, it would be like putting off my own skin.

So dressed up I wander about the studio.

You know, Marcello has developed the pictures" and, as giving me a nice surprise... "Come on, open them!"

Excited and happy, knowing I would appreciate that surprise...: "Look, you like yourself, don't you!?"

"Mario, they're beautiful!"

"Well, now we must take the biggest ones. Yes, big pictures, in order to combine them to the paintings....or big paintings that we can match to the little pictures."

In the meantime a friend of him calls, for work reasons.

"Yes, I want to organize an art-show with Antonia, find out a place, ok!?"

"Let's show off our big pictures, your paintings and my works."

Summer 1997, at his studio, in Rome: "Ok, come to Sabaudia, let's go on taking pictures at the sea. Then we'll work on them in Rome and we'll take some more ones."

In Rome: "Now put off your eighteenth century dress.... you've come out from that age, now put on other ones."

"I'll put on the black velvet one, we'll take pictures with that and the "painting". Here it is, the little "painting" you're keeping in your hands, will it either become a big work then or a little one?".....

Just these words, so spontaneously and deeply expressed, tell us what we'll find in this art-show. Actually it's not a real art-exhibition in its strict sense, but a dream or rather what remains of it, after being broken not by a sudden awakening, but, as we know, by the untimely, unforeseen Mario Schifano's death.

Dreams are projects, more or less clear in mind, they can be shaded and foolishly ambitious, but also limpid as the brightest summer day. And all the projects – like the present one, undertaken by Antonia Di Giulio with Mario Schifano's generous and friendly complicity, inspired by his turbulent and exuberant creativity – are always dreams, in the end, made of the same stuff, fragments of reality, expectations, desires, needs, spurs and reasoning.

Also made of tries and attempts....the dream, as the initial draft of a project, is like a sort of "phase zero" of an existential representation where everything goes in and out with

incredible speed, without privileging either the chance or the accident. Simply dealing with both.

The result of this dream, shared by two minds, showing Sabaudia as a fragment of reality, can be found at the show, as a dedication or, even better, as a tribute to a friend, so far by now and yet so close. As for every friendship, two identities merge together, yet keeping their own integrity.

Mario Schifano and Antonia Di Giulio: we can see their works and, above all, as in a dream, all those many different odd fragments which help us to understand the importance of the play in progress and what it would have become, if realized. But also the outline of pictures, fragmentary snapshots, cards "moulded" by Schifano, has the value, as the most important aspect of the show, to emphasize some worthy peculiarities of the dream, its "times", its "temperatures", its course, influenced by the mood and by the circumstances of that moment.

It reflects the vitality of a dialogue and of common purposes, expressed through a recollection, in the same way, apparently by chance, in the places and in the setting - Mario Schifano's studio - where this dream has originated, first by chance, afterwards assuming a clearer shape but not a concrete structure yet, as every dream.

Antonia Di Giulio belongs to the generation of artists that gathering among themselves, sometimes in voluntary isolation, during the last ten years at least have reconstructed the meaning of painting and revealed the sense of it, consisting in a strong instinct, a total control and a "natural" process of realization.

Her will to paint and her need to work with this mean of expression are the base of our artist's effort, while her stubborn commitment and the coherence of her choice give sense to her own existence.

Antonia Di Giulio's art of painting, along its more than decennial evolution, is now revealing then concealing, both in its external aspects and in its inner meaning, now taking abstract figures as patterns, then using symbols. Her painting swings between peremptoriness and subtlety, working with a spontaneous and, at the same time, methodical attitude.

If we observe all her works and then concentrate only on some of them, little by little, we'll discover their real "meaning" and pictorial "taste", the multi-stratification, the paint-brush trace under a strict geometrical scheme, the manifold shades under the apparent monochromatism, in a word, her control of the means of expression adopted and her ability to guide the observer's eye using a language devoid of ambiguity.

Authoress of many cycles, Di Giulio is the painter of a unique work, open and continuously in progress.

In all the opposite aspects above mentioned, in the hesitations and the swinging between opposites we perceive her art strength and the ideas it implies rather than an insecure attitude.

This strength has its source in the artist's consciousness about her own nature and character, and in her reactions to the outside world. It's a strength that springs from the awareness of her own fears that, in the end, she faces and controls.....a strength that arises from the clearness of her purposes and from her own conscience, even if disenchanted, on the possibility to live in harmony with the outside world.

The strength of her painting consists, as well, in what it suggests and even in what remains untold. Therefore urgent messages and important contents can be expressed now loudly then in a whisper, or even refraining from any assertion.

The content of Antonia Di Giulio's art is mainly based, even though not so obviously, on her own "innermost landscape" that becomes the key to understand the deepest meanings of her art of painting which is, above all, hermetic: the belief in the possibility to share the riches offered by our common environment, to gain a vision of our world and widen it, at the same time and symbolically, in a new dimension.

That's why her paintings become a reflection of unavoidable hesitations, of the above mentioned opposite aspects, and the choice each time made between them.

Her art, according to its nature, is open and powerful, nourished by the artist's immediate and resolute reaction to the spurs and impulses rising from the outside world and from art in itself.

The set of paintings presented in this occasion, intriguing for their fickle and unusual perspective, so devoid of a clear structure and cost, are the result (as in her previous cycles) of her attempt and struggle against a theme - not in its traditional meaning – that we can consider as deeply rooted in our time. The matters implied are not presented in formal shape, or according to aesthetic purposes.

None of these questions troubles the artist: Antonia Di Giulio fights (if I'm allowed to use this word) against her own awareness and her own conscious reaction to her occasional object, against the answer to the relation between "representation" and "concealment" and, finally, against the senses arising from that "consciousness", along its process of definition.

Mario de Candia

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