

## ***INTERVIEW Roger Balboni***

**Roger Balboni** - *In the continuous process of creation of your works of art, what are your references, if any, amongst historical and contemporary influences, aesthetic trends and technological breakthroughs?*

**Antonella Bussanich** - My life experience, like that of all artists, is made of encounters, discoveries, revelations. As to historical influences, I come from Florence, so the Italian Renaissance undoubtedly played a role. I was particularly interested in the Renaissance spirit's transdisciplinarity and cross-fertilization from which there eventually emerged a global vision of the world and of the human being.

In terms of artistic influence, the choice is difficult: there are many people, places, works and experiences that come to my mind. Caravaggio, of course: some years ago I was lucky enough to visit an exhibition displaying almost all his paintings. I'm responsive to his interest in people's ordinary lives and their humanity. Then Frida Kahlo: I was not familiar with her work when I discovered her paintings in Mexico. I was impressed by her choices: Frida remained faithful to popular art and its forms of expression, but was capable of using an intimate, passionate and universal language in an extraordinarily powerful way. Other artists inspired me to explore the depths of the human being's flesh and mind: Francis Bacon, who sees, and make us see, through and beyond the human being. And Duchamp, because he got to the essentials, to the origin of artistic creation. He had the great merit of getting rid of the imperatives of aesthetics and craftsmanship through his research, and in particular his ready-mades. And then, of course, many contemporary artists, like Marina Abramovic, Bill Viola, Bruce Nauman... But also writers like Bruce Chatwin, Henry-David Thoreau, Kenneth White... And places... The island of Gravinis, a masterpiece of megalithic art in Brittany, and the island of Gorée off Dakar, a port of call for slave ships, the island of Lussino (Losinj), in today's Croatia, from where my father and his family were expelled at the end of world war II.

Sometimes I think that I wouldn't be an artist if photography and video didn't exist! I am not particularly attracted to matter, nor to the creation of shapes, objects - I am much more interested in the vision, in the perception of what it is. Obviously, photography and video are the perfect means to capture what is already there. I seize moments, actions, gestures, and then try to enhance their intensity, uniqueness, and metaphoric nature.

**R.B.** - *In the subjects you choose and in the titles of your works, there is an initial intention, and then there are elements that emerge from your exploratory approach to and insight into the Other and his/her flowing. You have given preference to portraits, landscapes and, as it were, "still lives". Where do the journeys of initiation that start from these two poles lead us?*

**A.B.** - I am deeply interested in the gaze, in the eyes. They are our most powerful emitter, and are located between the brain and the heart. The gaze is the link with the others. Looking into each other's eyes is an important action. A newborn stares at people because he's completely open to the other. Lovers look into each other's eyes because they trust each other. Offering one's own gaze somehow means accepting to be naked. The classical self-portraits is made in front of a mirror: by looking at his reflection, the painter essentially looks into himself - a major introspective action.

My landscapes are elementary, minimalist, on the verge of abstraction, sometimes inconsistent. There is the sky, water, the land, an urban landscape. I am interested in life as a continuous and eternally changing flow.

In general, this is about the link, the connection that humans establish with themselves, their peers and what surrounds them - the ability that human beings have to explore themselves and beyond appearances. Introspection, projection: these two subjects of reflection have been inspiring my work since the beginning - they join and mutually enrich themselves.

**R.B.** - *Being an artist today: what does this mean for you in terms of recognition and acceptance - by the public, institutions and the market?*

**A.B.** - To be recognized and accepted as an artist - well, of course, I need it, but it's not a matter of numbers or renown. I do believe that art will always remain a gift, a message, a secret to be passed from one person to another. When I display my work, I get the most satisfaction from knowing that there is somebody in my public, and not necessarily a specialist, who receives my signal and makes it his own. As to the market and institutions, I have no specific approach: I have worked in institutional settings, I've met collectors, I've participated in the creation of music or contemporary dance, and what actually matters is the quality of the encounter, of interpersonal relationships. In this respect, I have a regret, which is undoubtedly shared by others: very often the art world and the market are too closely intertwined, and this can be detrimental to the artist's work or, even worse, turns the artist into a creator of luxury items. I also have a wish, that the artist's position in society were different, that artists were invited to participate in and contribute to social and political life more often. This is a very sensitive, but also exciting time, in which our society has to reinvent itself, and I think that it would be intelligent and necessary to invite artists to participate in this reflection.