

### **Vincenzo Guerrazzi : a visionary of freedom**

Many and excellent things have been written on Vincenzo Guerrazzi's painting: for example that he knows very well the perspective, that he shows the figures in their identity, role and movement, and then still again that he uses colour so as to obtain all the light possible.

Somebody also said that Guerrazzi is a naïf painter, which is very stupid insofar "naïf" is the artist who reproduces motionless terrestrial paradises and ignores with attractive tenacity good and evil, public and private, history and chronicle, anger and society, and puts himself into the center of an enchanted world in whose skies chaste doves fly, ecstatic clouds and rains of colours float on meadows, flower-beds, farms out of time, out of space, out of human pity and obsessions.

The Calabrian Guerrazzi is instead a red-hot amalgam of obsessions and angers, of grimaces and extravagant ironies. He does not insinuate, but rushes himself head long into history and chronicle, into the world of workers and into that of the upper middle-class, into the hypersocialist surrealism and the all-caricaturing realism; he judges and delivers, absolves and condemns, laughs and cries, does the bard and the buffoon, invents the tabernacle and the confessional, the throne and the altar, the popular edition and the "ex vote" of State, the funeral of mass and the round table of the Exquisites Folks. Vincenzo is eloquent, braggart, violent, rancorous, brigandeer, armed and disarmed, fierce and tender; he bites everywhere with his teeth, snaps at the calves of the History and of the Commonplace, becomes wolf and lamb, enrolls in the "ndrangheta" army useful to him to sequester and to blackmail himself, his imagination and his morality; in other words the Aspromonte has remained stuck in his gullet and in his viscera, and has made him become a "wise master" and a resourceful fellow; resourceful and wise, yes, but also solitary and unsociable: and with the workers in his blood together with the victims of the assembly line in his heart that beats in him with alternate rhythms which never adjust themselves to the equilibrium of a healthy and normal heart. I mean healthy and normal in the sense of indifference, of "my destiny", of the "couldn't-care-less" attitude and the insensibility, of impudence and of cynicism, of politeness and the official respect.

Thanks to this disorderly heart of his, the aspromontese Vincenzo rocks and smashes half the world with the impetuosity and the melancholy of the ancient Calabrian brigand that is in him. He puts the cone-hat on his head and the rude mantle on his shoulders, puts the arquebus of his moustached and bearded ancestors on his arm and places himself out of reach: but not just in the bushes, on the contrary in the beautiful squares

and streets of this Italy crossed from head to toe by lance-corporals and policemen; and as he is not able to see other else than the aforesaid lance-corporals and policemen also when do they wear morning suits and tails, thus may we give him the title of a frenetic visionary, of a wrathful prophet, finally of a hermit crying among the sands of our boundless deserts?

And ok, let's give him this title of visionary of freedom, of the justice, of the good and gifted person; this title of public accuser of our society and culture of the engineering of hearts and souls, of (false) democracy and of (false) ideals, never mind because he doesn't give a damn for titles as he doesn't want either to have or to give any. Since all he wants is to leave with his own boat, whose he is veil and rudder, hull and bow, while in another boat he puts all the others, the beautiful and the ugly, the ideologies and the counter-ideologies, even if he later notices that both his and the other boat are blown by the same wind and by one only implacable and implacated current.

They also wrote Vincenzo does not make polemic but he educates; he educates because he makes people think, reflect, meditate. I would rather say that Vincenzo diseducates, and it happens in the moment in which his absolute lack of education allows him to launch grimaces at pleasure, left and right without noticing that his indiscriminate grimacing goes against the good rules. Rather the opposite, he notices it and makes it become a subject of reflection and pain and neurosis (all the modern culture is pain and neurosis) because very few people are aware of their own contradictions as well as Vincenzo Guerrazzi is aware of his own; for example I would say that when he puts Berlinguer and Andreotti to eat the melon in the same carriage, at picture finished he looks at the painting and enjoys it, but his desperate heart asks himself: "My Heart, what the hell have you ever done"?.

I apologize to Vincenzo for all this chatterology of mine. And many other chatterologists should give him a hundred apologies for all the chatterology, or chatterese, with which they have their way repainted his pictures sinking the face and the pen in the palette of both political and unpolitical, of both accusation and denunciation, of the heretical Guerrazzi at all the levels and to all effects.

The trouble consists in the fact that, perhaps, the more and more criticism of ours, from formal as it was, has become a criticism with strict and irreparable observance of the contents with all its effects and defects, and then in front of the enormous paintings of Vincenzo, it has called to its first aid our great fathers Marx and Lenin, in fact the ecclesiastical great fathers almost intervened with mini burning-stakes and excommunications: a hubbub which seemed endless; and, in all this, what did they do with the painter Guerrazzi? What did they do with his "Olives Pickers, his "Southern Grand-mothers", his "Women on the beach", his harsh and chaste "Landscapes of the South", painted in the blinding white colour of the southern warmth?

Of Vincenzo, I especially love the fidelity to that suffering asteroid of sun and light, of spaces and volumes lit with tones and semitones of the enchanting splendour and pain

that still exists in the lands of the South. In short, I love his mediterraneity, which is not a gift Vincenzo has received as a loan from the mysterious Gods that, for good and evil, preside over those lands, but which is his primary vocation, a fantastic reinvention he owes to the strength of his interior eye.

And thence here is the birth of those of his paintings that refuse the easy casualnesses and the phrases of doubtful cultural value, that reject the ambiguous suggestions of elegy, so dear to so much of southern tradition, to stretch on chromed surface both tender and violent, both swarming and meditative, where the recreation of the landscape and of the figures is the result of the happy abandonment to a light enjoyed (and let me say suffered too) as total expansion of space.

From here, there is the absolute freedom of breath, the happy and warlike trust in the creativeness of talent, by whose strength the olives and the skies and the harbours and the women recall to mind the lesson of an old great master, who in the silence of his bravely suffered loneliness in a colourless town in the South of France, taught to others and himself that "the Louvre is a great book but the nature is better" It seems to me that it is exactly the luminous lesson of Cézanne, which Vincenzo cultivates as the most congenial one to his temperament and to the bashful sweetness of his inventive language, composed of ancient roots that so many years spent in the hell of the assembly-line have neither destroyed nor canceled.