

Gianni Testa has a wide and varied career but his figure as a painter appears clear and highly personal today, expressing a coherence and a continuity of thought that make him a sensitive and passionate witness of our age.

Apparently, however, the themes, the subjects, the figurative nucleus formulated by the Maestro would seem remote from the events and cultural and spiritual needs of the era in which we find ourselves living. Testa is rather a lover of the Divine Comedy, involved with the great poetry of a glorious past who draws his images from the sphere of Myth (as in his favorite almost dreamlike visions of horses) from the observation of natural things and the memory of ancient painting and it is not out of place to highlight these aspects to approach the art of such a complex painter with awareness. Testa, as a matter of fact, got trained, after an initial interest in architecture, as a restorer under the guidance of great experts, among whom we must mention above all Paola Della Pergola, one of the most noble and beloved representatives of a historical artistic culture, which today it is not recognized as it deserves. Testa was introduced to the study of heritage conservation of our glorious past in the best of ways, that is from those who, like Paola Della Pergola practiced in the 50s of the last century, a trade, that of the conservative and the historian based on the most authentic and generous passion for art and the values it contains. Those men and women born in the early twentieth century truly believed in it and pushed the younger generations in that direction. Testa set off with equal dedication and enthusiasm, the same that are still with him today in his full maturity. He learned well the ancient painting techniques and for many years he was only a restorer. But then those knowledge poured into his creative activity, which, however, has never been marked by the imitation of the ancient but by the respect and here lies the fundamental point of the essence of his art and of his relationship with contemporaneity.

Testa actually educated on the ancient and on an almost sacral cult of art, based all his work on the fundamental teaching that can be received from the artistic knowledge of our country's past, and this teaching lies precisely in the fact that the artist that more and better than anybody else lives his time, is often the one who hardly ever talks about it directly but draws from his time the authentic food of his fervor, of his desire to accomplish something addressing it to meet the needs that the artist feels is flourishing around him and that the majority of his contemporaries perceives not very clearly, without being able to identify its profound meaning. That's the artist's job, who considers his activity as that of a flame that warms souls, brightens minds, and through himself arouses curiosity, dismay, admiration.

And Gianni Testa's art is indeed a sort of metaphorical flame that invades the space of painting and forges all things in a synthetic and unitary way giving everything that represents the same breath and the same energy.

Dante, at this point, is effectively a contemporary of ours, because the Maestro relives the fatal moments of the Comedy in a perspective of passionate and poignant love towards the pictorial material that forms itself while maintaining a sort of freedom and internal tension so the images take shape in the magma of the swirl of colors that remain deposited on the canvas as if they were forming at that moment. This is an ancient procedure. Already Tiziano Vecellio in his last works, did something similar: it started from the chromatic mass that spread on the canvas in an informal way, then he drew the figures circumscribing that seemingly chaotic mass and discovering its intrinsic vocation to represent. He did, as a painter, that which Michelangelo Buonarroti did as a sculptor: he took the shape out of a shapeless



Rather, it comes to mind the lightning of *The Tempest* by Giorgione, but here, in Testa, there is no sky nor earth, there is only abstract space which takes the form of our own perception.

A moment of great maturity of the artist and a set of really beautiful works.

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