

IL TIRRENO

The Expressionism of Sassone, Kokoschka and Loffredo

Ilaria Bonuccelli (English translation by Anne Milano Appel)

Pietrasanta. In the beginning there was Oskar Kokoschka. Die Brücke, “the Bridge,” the revolutionary movement (in painting), the birth of Expressionism: “the degenerate art” disagreeable to the Nazi regime which in 1937 confiscated the unforgiving works of the Austrian artist; Kokoschka was naturalized in London to escape the steel grip of the dictatorship. Then came Silvio Loffredo, a Florentine, a notable student of the Austrian master in Salzburg in 1953 and 1954. And finally Marco Sassone, a Tuscan from America, a painter who plunges his brushstrokes into the open wounds of social issues. The oozing blood and despair found along the streets, perhaps in San Francisco, among 6,000 homeless people. Those with a name. Or those without a name. With a muddled past, living out the present on the sidewalks. Kokoschka, Loffredo and Marco Sassone will meet in the following weeks. In Pietrasanta, in the Putti and Capitolo galleries of the Cloister of Saint Augustine. They will exchange — artistically speaking — impressions and expressions in the exhibition “Il Maestro e L’Allievo” (Master and Pupil) that will open tomorrow at 5 pm, and that will remain on display through March 23 (hours: 3:30-7:00 pm; closed Mondays). A month of pure expressionism, bringing together the dramatic show formerly exhibited, in 2001, at the Italo-American Museum at Fort Mason, San Francisco. And not by chance: San Francisco is the city where Sassone lives and works. Only recently has he returned to his Tuscan roots (he was born in Campi Bisenzio and in the Fifties, studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Florence, with Silvio Loffredo), buying a house in the hills of Massa. Where just last year — at the Ducal Palace — a one-man show was devoted to his work. Originating, like the majority of his works, in the productive heart of California. It is in San Francisco, in fact, that Sassone created the entire series of paintings focusing on the homeless. A harsh world, with no room for metaphors, that Sassone encountered, or rather, collided with, for the first time in 1989. The day of the San Francisco earthquake, when rushing out of his house-studio, he ran into “Willie,” with his wagon load of rubbish and keepsakes. Crammed into a supermarket shopping cart. “I had my paintbrushes in my hand — Sassone Says — when I met Willie. I followed him, I asked him if I could paint his picture. I saw him, for the first time, near the Embarcadero in San Francisco, near the old railroad tracks. When I went back up to the studio, I painted only those tracks. Which led me, later, straight to the homeless.” With whom Sassone, in the early Nineties, lived in close contact, each and every day. The only way, perhaps, to read them. To translate them. And to come up against the “Uomo Dagli Occhi Blue” (Man with Blue Eyes). A man without a name and without memory. With only one certainty, as he sat on the edge of a fountain: that the revolution would soon be over.

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