

BAUHAUS, A REVOLUTION IN THE MAKING.

One hundred years ago the most important cultural revolution in the West began with the foundation of the school of Weimar, the Bauhaus.

The new aesthetic and plastic values began to spread throughout Europe and America in the applied arts, architecture, painting and sculpture. The project of substantial unification of all the arts proved successful. The purity of shapes and colours, the search for new expressive media, the abandonment of the classical world and academicism, of what is coded and established once and for all, is the hallmark of this new vision, a true revolution in aesthetics and not only. We are the heirs to this change; although a century has passed, the revolution is still taking place. New bursts of Neoclassicism are always around the corner and the counter revolutionary tendencies are not entirely appeased.

The Bauhaus lesson, although it has influenced design and contemporary architecture, has not become mainstream yet. It is still an elitist choice. Looking at the houses of the great majority of Europeans, one realises that they are still houses with a neoclassical or even baroque aspiration, where decoration is still predominant. If the public aesthetics of monuments and buildings in our cities no longer accepts models that refer to past eras, the same cannot be said of the private sphere. In the intimacy of their homes men still cultivate a propensity for traditional solutions that still turn out to be more reassuring to the human soul. But the worst of these propensities can be seen in sacred places, where the trivialisation of the sacred dimension appears more evident, giving vent to the most abject aesthetic perversions; the triumph of conformist individualism.

In our post-modern and multi-ethnic society, we can no longer think of a “coherent” style, as the Bauhaus one, but of a contamination among diverse and sometimes divergent expressive forms. The current challenge consists in accepting this situation while looking for new aesthetic values capable of unifying, or even harmonising conceptually strident aesthetics. The search for beauty remains the fundamental value, a commitment that refers to ethical meanings inherent in aesthetic values. The coexistence of different cultures will be the next frontier that will produce an unprecedented aesthetics, based on tolerance even in the art field.

Doriam Battaglia
President of SEGRETA ISOLA

BAUHAUS, ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER.

Villa Leoni is work of the architect Pietro Lingeri, creator of the project for three artists' houses in Comacina Island in the thirties. Villa Leoni seems to have been built with the main purpose of hosting artistic and cultural events.

The essential architectural lines frame one of the most evocative views of the lake. There is no glimpse, window, corner, or terrace that does not invite one to admire ecstatically the wonderful scenery that surrounds this historical masterpiece of Como Rationalism. Thanks to the warm hospitality of the two owners, architects Alessandro Galbiati and Chantal Forzatti, this year we once again have the privilege and honour to organise an art exhibition in the villa. The two are also authors of the splendid and respectful renovation, careful in every detail, of the architectural masterpiece.

While the last edition of Segreta Isola was dedicated to Como Abstractionism and Rationalism, today we celebrate the centenary of the foundation of the Bauhaus school. Bauhaus is not only an innovative school, it is also a great movement that revolutionised the very concept of art, design and architecture, creating the basis for a fusion of different visions and modes of artistic expression: from sculpture to painting, from craftsmanship to theatre, to dance and weaving.

The chance couldn't be missed to invite the artists of Segreta Isola to retrace the stages of this important cultural experiment and capture the elements that link it to contemporary art in a process of reconnection to the past, from which one emerges renewed and aware. An invitation, therefore, that sees the artist in a position of artistic confrontation, research and reinterpretation.

Capturing the topicality of Bauhaus nowadays also means regaining the utopian dimension of that very movement. It is a dimension that drives and motivates our cultural Association, always ready to take on new challenges.

Segreta Isola entrusts itself to art in all of its forms in order to enhance the artistic, cultural and landscape heritage of the historical humus in which we are immersed. A humus full of meanings and creative stimuli, that enrich the present and suggest a possible future: a harmonious balance between man and environment in the fruitful union between spirit and matter. The invitation to our audience is therefore, to let themselves get carried away by emotions in a timeless dimension. To abandon themselves to the evocativeness of colours, shapes and poetry that the exhibited works, and the Villa itself, emanate in a context of great beauty and suggestion.

Albertina Nessi
Vice President of SEGRETA ISOLA

LISTEN.

The literal translation of Bauhaus is “listen” and this has always fascinated me. For all of us Latins, born south of the Alps and with a classical heritage, the term Academy (before Brera or the Carrara in Bergamo) recalls the modern origin of the discipline of art teaching, conceived by Vignola in the XVI century in Rome. This is the famous Vitruvian Academy, where the teaching of likelihood on classical cultural models has been the embodiment of the cultural representation of every epoch, in graphic and architectural form.

The story of Bauhaus is the first great novelty. In Germany, wounded after the first World War, exactly one hundred years ago, in the newborn republic of Weimar, the school of Weimar (new cultural gem) was founded by the architect Walter Gropius. It was a novelty being founded upon the new: no longer were cultural models taken from classicism or from a more recent past, but rather the contemporary was invented through new forms of architecture and applied arts. This formed an extraordinary academy, where workshops of practical disciplines (those which in the latin academies were still defined as “minor”) were glorified on the same scale to architecture.

The new linguistic form is the true key to modernity, presented in primordial geometric shapes that become the logo and the new iconography of language (let it be clear, not primitive but primordial, because there is nothing primitive in a circle, square, triangle and their three-dimensional extensions, but the entire intellectual content of the pristine expression). These shapes are thought of in combination with the primary colours yellow, blue and red, as the essential palette of painting and arts. This is when the expressive language becomes abstract and not iconic, likelihood is superseded by mimesis, while the expression mutates into symbols and models that forerun a new linguistic alphabet. Despite having changed headquarters, directors and teachers, and after having gone through controversy and financial difficulties, we know from history that European Bauhaus was extinguished by the fury of National Socialism. It labeled the Bauhaus’ wonderful season of experimentation and research as depraved, to the point that the last of its students who attended the Berlin-based school were arrested in 1935.

To date, how much Bauhaus have we really absorbed? Are we still able to listen?

That very experience gave us design as we live it on a daily basis. It also led us back to the ability to think of colours in their endless chromatic dissociations that we experience every day. Bauhaus gave us clean, raw and essential shapes, that crowd every object or surface that we lay our eyes on.

Bauhaus is also the deeply engrained consciousness, that is always possible to express ourselves facing novelty with experimentation. Bauhaus is also the effort to search for the origin of painting. It is fundamentally the courage of facing a blank canvas using the idea of expression itself as a representative tool.

Listen, there is some Bauhaus in each of us.

We just have to remember it.

Paolo Acquilini
Director of the Como Silk Museum

CLAUDIA BEULKE

Claudia Beulke embraces the teachings of Bauhaus with a pictorial production that reveals a confident and determined mode of execution alongside with a dynamic freedom of movement that inform the shapes that she realises.

Their geometry composes itself not only ideally but also visually and symbolically on the canvasses capturing the attention of the viewer. A vision of energy typical of an artistic atelier, that switches from theoretical study to regulated practice and to colour expressionism, echoes powerfully, tracing innovative linguistic codes. Claudia relies skillfully on her technical expertise, generating a living line which loses its canonical rigidity progressively, becoming softer and more fluid in conveying the message stemming from the artist's soul. Each work is treated as a piece of fabric rich in patterns and embroideries: they are signs that first and foremost dialogue with one another, before with their surrounding environment. It is therefore fundamental to underline the importance of τέχνη (téchne), of art in terms of expertise and regulations that are applied to and carried out in an activity, whether it is exclusively intellectual or manual.

Massimiliano Porro, Art Critic

TOMMASO DOGNAZZI

Pragmatic, intimately direct and free from every decorative frill and colour effect, Tommaso Dognazzi's works encapsulate essentiality, invisible to the eye, through points and lines that encode a deeper essence. His geometric abstraction is about Sublimations, defined by an art whose cardinal points take shape in the form of ideas amidst today's chaotic universe. Guidelines that occupy the pictorial surface and become an integral part of it in a fusion of space and time. Black and white are essential cornerstones like seeds cast to blossom in eternal springs. All art is a memory of age-old things, dark things, whose fragments live on in the artist. Quoting Paul Klee, one of the most prominent Bauhaus masters, the artist strips himself as well as his canvasses in a metaphorical emancipation, to become at the same time a man and a creator of works of art. His designed mark always traces different paths to listen to, to read and to watch. Tommaso, artifex bonus, makes experience and knowledge the means to narrate and reveal the very core within which the image is preserved.

Massimiliano Porro, Art Critic

GIOVANNA LENTINI

White is a world so apart from ours, that we almost don't perceive its sound. It is the void before the origin. In this way, Wassily Kandinsky explains an essential color that encloses an entire universe. Giovanna Lentini has made of the snow-white pigment, as bright as the light of her homeland, a mark of personal recognisability. Recalling the large glass windows of the Bauhaus' architectures that neither hide nor darken but let the sun shine in every environment, the artist opens her soul to the sea and the lake that welcomed her. The elaborated fabric becomes a tool of life and action. A real factory that reflects the sincerity of the artist that never stops creating. Warp and weft describe her will to put roots in the foreground, leaving footprints in the sand that narrate the never-ending path she undertook years ago. Giovanna tells how she feels completely absorbed in that atmosphere of industriousness that is revitalised every time she gets to work with paper, threads, cotton, metal and acrylic. A multi-material consistency, the quintessence of creating from the heart.

Massimiliano Porro, Art Critic

MARZIA MAURI

The significant use of materials, which characterises the spirit of the German school, prevails and decodes itself in icons that pay homage to the field of design. After a century of history, the strong and powerful echo of Bauhaus is palpable in the works of Marzia Mauri. Her production is a reminder of it and not just a mere copy. The personal subjectivity of the artist fills the shapes that occupy in relief the surrounding space as well as the observer's gaze. The inspiration has overcome borders, walls, nationalisms and the attempt to stifle the eclectic autonomy at the base of the artistic movement, heir to the historical avant-gardes of early century. Vienna straw and wicker weaves are the threads that intertwine themselves, developing structures and contents, without hiding the nature of the object. The accent is put rather on the care of the project. The rational purity of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Marcel Breuer' chair, which are recalled by the titles of Marzia's works, highlights an intrinsic architectural character, a sign of the Gesamtkunstwerk of modern times.

Massimiliano Porro, Art Critic

ELISABETTA MENEGHELLO

Power to creativity: images marked by a stroke that transfers to the canvas an infinite continuum of revelations.

Elisabetta Meneghello studies, researches, meditates deeply, moulding the textured pigment as if it were a living substance. Her controlled and coordinated gesture becomes more and more intense. The brush and the palette draw horizontal and vertical coordinates and then open up to a vigorous determination, generated and grown from within. "If the world were clear, art would not exist" said Albert Camus. Elisabetta has interiorized this aphorism moulding shapes and colours that meet and clash in the space of the canvas: a real battlefield.

The colour black, like theatre wings, is always ready to reveal something new and surprising. It often emerges in the range of colours that compose themselves in a constant dialogue. Shades have an archaic evocative capacity. It is the role of the viewer to accept the invitation to cross the threshold of ultramundane places. Her works are a solid declaration of artistic freedom, the same that is vigorously proclaimed by the Bauhaus manifesto aimed at breaking down barriers and borders as a crystalline symbol of a new faith.

Massimiliano Porro, Art Critic

PETER SEELIG

Peter Seelig uses colours, combines them, mixes them, letting the image form itself in the mind of the one who creates or looks at it.

He puts neither constraints nor rules: abstract and figurative give voice to a need that the artist channels on the canvasses. He is aware that different hues may be means to exert a direct influence on the soul.

The theory of colour, consisting of primary and secondary pigments, conveys their union in an additive mix that reaches the human eye as a magnetic flow.

The artistic and social revolution started in Weimar, Dessau and Berlin goes beyond the limits in which time would like to compress it, claiming and thus affirming an independence that Peter pursues relentlessly.

The categories of beauty and ugliness are widely overcome, so that artist and painting merge into one another, becoming an indissoluble whole in which the support that receives the gesture is transformed into a page marked by the indelible sign of the self.

Massimiliano Porro, Art Critic