

# Renzo Ferrari



Renzo Ferrari at the opening of the exhibition «Visions nomads» in Neuchâtel, 22 November 2014. Photo: Stefano Iori

## When did you first approach art, how did your artistic journey begin?

During adolescence, I was often to be found at my maternal grandparents who lived near Lugano. It was here I met the travelling painter Ugo Moglia who had a special fondness for these locations and added the distinctive feature to his day landscapes with the unmistakable and paradoxical presence of the moon. Thus was born my interest in the world of art, which matured over time into the decision (a decision not shared by my parents to tell the truth) to go to art school in Brera Milan. This new urban setting had a significant impact on my rural past, stimulating a huge interest in museums, libraries, art galleries and collections, of which there was an abundance in the capital city of Lombardy. After graduating from the academy, with a thesis on Ensor's graphic works, I had my major debut as a painter with an exhibition at the Galleria delle Ore (1962) which was well received by the critics and the public alike. Circumstances favoured, from that point, the choice of Milan as a place of work and exhibitions.

## What are the inherent difficulties in being an artist?

Today typically a young recently educated artist, focuses on his work, but above all on his career in terms «everything now» with the goal of becoming trendy immediately and fast tracking into the art system. «But competition in the art market is fierce (not unlike among Formula One drivers), the select few <champions> are those with

solid galleries behind them... all the others get burned and become large marginalized numbers.» I cite this extreme example because I think the choice of art as a profession requires time for development that excludes the fret of fashion and carries the risk of severe disappointments in terms of immediate success. It's worth remembering the words of Degas «il faut décourager les artistes» which are not so anachronistic when you consider the current artistic overpopulation. There should be a «birth control on artists» and a less «democratic» evaluation in the allocation of grants and art competitions complicit in a fashionable «Duchampism» unlikely to identify rare non-conformist proposals. As far as I'm concerned the difficulties with this art system, inspire me to, ironically, take the part of «the contrarian» and work without inhibitions.

## What has enriched your creativity over the years?

It can perhaps be summarized as: the creative engine, the motives which have been and still are, a strong curiosity towards the world, life, history and time, present in harmony with «ancestral» resonances. Painting is a vehicle that has transported me, sometimes dangerously, along a fairly extensive path (traced by the chronological layout of the exhibition «Renzo Ferrari Visions Nomades») and which I imagine will continue to intrigue me to experiment and continue to ask questions of myself. Over time, places, people, events, my philosophy of life have changed, but the main goal is, and remains, to remit, communicate through the work (where possible) a jolt of energy, unsettling not comforting, symptomatic of our condition. The current state of affairs of the world and even of fashionable contemporary art continually pushes me to make and pass on indispensable comparisons between our history and our art heritage. Without memories the man, the artist, is lost and unable to express himself artistically in any form.

## What are your plans for the future, where will they lead you?

There are many projects in hand of a practical nature geared at how best to organize and to whom to allocate materials: works and various documents that I still have. First priority would be to carry out a detailed inventory. There are various hypotheses regarding the destination. As part of the series Arte Moderna edited by SKIRA, two monographs were recently published: Pittura 1990–2010

and Opere Grafiche 1958–2013 and the catalogue «Visioni Nomadi» (retrospective 1958–2013) exhibited in the museums of Neuchâtel and Lugano. The documentation of unpublished works will continue in the future. There will be a monograph on my drawings 1956–2015 and, hopefully, a catalogue analyzing my entire works (since 1955). In the immediate future I am working on a solo entitled «World» that, again, I will propose in 2015.

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**Renzo Ferrari**

**Visions nomades**

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### **What does this exhibition mean to you?**

First I would say that the creation of the project «Visions nomades» (Retrospective 1958–2013) and its completion have given me a great deal of satisfaction and acknowledgment on the part of the two curators Antonia Nessi and Cristina Sonderegger, under the guidance of Marco Francioli, director of the Museo della Svizzera Italiana. The current exhibition in Neuchâtel, curated by architect Mario Botta, is having great success. The exhibition gave me the opportunity to positively retrace the chronological history and has motivated me in more recent works towards a new work in progress.

### **From Ticino to Milan and back: how would you describe this existential-artistic experience?**

The choice of Milan for my education as well as where I work and exhibit (and to a broader sense all of Italy) has generated, and still generates, objections among my fans that perhaps the better choice (given the character of my painting) would have been Northern Europe: the German part of Switzerland and Germany itself. I can agree that maybe I should have exhibited in a larger geographical area but, as I said earlier, art as a profession has never been easy. I saw that the exhibition in Neuchâtel gave rise to a real interest, where thanks to the courage of curator Antonia Nessi, I exhibited as an unknown. I personally think that it's never too late and that in the future I may, after my return to Cadro, exhibit my works more widely. Milan gave me so much and I couldn't imagine a creative balance without considering the welcome my work was given in this Italian city.