

THE LUCID DREAMS OF GRETA SCHÖDL
di Giorgio RUGGERI

“I write my dreams: a subtle weft underlies them”.

Covered with India ink the scratching nib runs rapidly over the paper, without repentances. The die seems cast, but instead the artist has only a natural bent for story telling.

Dreams are like painting in as far as they rise from the common matrix of the unconscious. The poetics of Greta Schödl lies here: she makes use of her instinctive and sensitive feeling for graphics to penetrate the inmost essence of things and in so doing makes the invisible visible, since there is no correlation between apparent reality and what is beneath. Her style is a kind of writing. It doesn't seem to come from a given theme; rather, it seems to arrive at it, discovering gradually while following the course of a sign, bare and essential. Any attempt to make a clear distinction between the abstract and the figurative aspects of her painting is useless since they both are part of her personal poetic world.

One can mention the names of Schiele, Klee, Klimt, Wols, Dubuffet, Chagall, Mirò, Kokoschka, Rothko, Tàpies, Hundertwasser; and if you like Licini, Liechtenstein, Fontana and even Steinberg. Greta will be the first to point out that the works of these important artists have long been a subject of her thoughts.

But she possesses a component which perhaps other don't have: candour, a kind of innocence unchanged since childhood which allows her unusual combinations. To draw “pupazzetti”, for instance, recalling the walls of Ankara which she had once found herself touching and feeling, carried away by a longing for the Eastern World which she, as a viennese, was discovering in herself for the first time.

So her drawing, bare and essential, sustained by an extraordinary lyric finesse and charged with presages, unfolds skillfully on the paper. Beneath that sign, as with an iceberg, a long unconfessed story, is concealed an anxious search for identity – with failures, defeats and reflections – which only a fierce faith can redeem.

Greta Schödl's background is one of relentless research, passing through a continual series of experiences: painting on material, weaving carpets, firing enamels, casting silver, composing mosaics, making affrescos, printing etchings, hammering golden icons. So she has fed not only on dreams.

She has always looked for herself in things. Just as Goethe felt nature raging in himself, so Greta feels deeply moved by everything she touches – stones, shells, nails, materials, trees, earth – discovering in the meanwhile, that ancient towns hide the strongest kind of painting. Bologna, she tells us, is wonderful from this point of view. Fighting continuously against the environment and society, she has been able, after years of effort, to achieve her equilibrium. Her tactile sensitivity, which induced her to delicately touch velvets, clays or the trees along the banks of the Danube, has gradually changed, freeing itself, going toward an abstraction resolved on an artistic and intellectual level. In her drawing, barely accentuated with color, she has responded with the height of her own feelings. I don't know how she seems to tell us but, I know where I am going. Today I feel more confident. I am grateful to Schiele for the emotion I got from the desperate melancholy of his thread-like forms; to Chagall for his explosion of fantasy; to Wols for his sort of “nesting” which helped me to explore the origins of mysterious uterine regressions; to Rothko for the opposite reasons: he disclosed space to me; to Hundertwasser for that bit of oriental charm which fascinates all Austrians, and to everyone else who has given me a hand.

A long voyage awaits her in good company.

GIORGIO RUGGERI, 1974