

Great indeed

By dedicating a retrospective of his work to BABB, I was able to bring to light many of his hitherto unexhibited and unpublished works. In order to do this, I contacted many people in the city who had bought the artist's oil paintings, and subsequently photographed them in person. I would like to express my gratitude to the owners of the works, as they really supported me and put up with me in the execution of the photo shoot.

I entrusted the complete editing of the publication to the expert Michele Quirici, who interviewed many people who had known Giorgio Dal Canto, leafed through any documents that might reveal significant aspects about the artist, reconstructed his life and thinking, and highlighted every noteworthy detail, including the reviews of critics. Thus, this retrospective is a comprehensive document of the artistic life of Giorgio Dal Canto, aka BABB.

I have always wondered which characteristics can define an 'Artist' in the broadest sense of the word, and have given myself a few answers: the first is undoubtedly that of the recognisability of the works produced, or at least those characteristic details in the works that immediately make one think, 'this work is by...'. Indeed, the inner strength of the artist emerges, and is clearly represented through his own lens in the whole, and in the details of all his works. The second is undoubtedly the identification of epochs, periods in the artist's life that have influenced the substance and form of all his work and that can be grouped into sets containing the same *leitmotif*, which, over time, has changed and taken on different characteristics. The third peculiarity of the artist is his behaviour towards himself and others. An artist has a rather 'difficult' and cryptic character, which is why, not without difficulty; I had Babb explain to me what it had not been possible to clearly understand in many allegories in his paintings. The hidden meanings of his thought emerged, which I fixed in the many captions that accompany this and other publications that I have sponsored. The cat expresses the balance that Power imposes in the play of the parts. Backlit from the door of the laboratory, Power projects a concrete, visible figure onto the floor. This is a very strong concept of the artist in the reversal of the figures, who sees power as an immaterial entity, represented by the non-tangible shadow against the light, which projects definite, real and tangible physical entities (the people who use power).

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Ombra (Shadow), 2007
oil on canvas 35x50 cm

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Therefore, Giorgio Dal Canto was an Artist with a capital 'A', a complex mind who wrestled with his 'I', almost like a mix of modern Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Bruegel. With an anarchic spirit, he painted onto canvas the indignation, shared by many, towards the powerful who oppress the weak, who, unfortunately, have no escape and succumb miserably.

From all the reviews, especially those by critics Dino Carlesi and Ilario Luperini, but also by all the others who have spoken about him, this strength of the artist emerges, seen clearly in the faces of the characters that animate the scenes, without any hope of revenge.

I would like to point out a few aspects that have characterised Dal Canto's career, starting with a milestone entitled 'You will hear about me' by the painter himself in 1963. Here the artist did not sign this 'cubist' work because, according to him, he had not yet found the main road, but had guessed that he would have a future ahead of him. I gathered his testimony of this in one of the many meetings we had from 1994 onwards. I was struck by the first painting that Dal Canto produced for me on the subject of my story, which portrays me playing the guitar, acting as a photographer, riding up to the computer (which cuts people's heads off) and crossing the Pontedera Bridge on a bicycle, with various transparent balloons. It is precisely in this last representation of me in the painting, with the striped T-shirt, that the artist's inventiveness stands out: the balloons signify for the artist 'my ideas', which later led me to achieve good results in the field of information technology in the 1980s.

I decided to help this extraordinary character who did not like impositions and advice. Giorgio Dal Canto has his own ideas, his own convictions, and nothing could change them. He hated gallery owners who wanted to influence him in the drafting of his works. He did not like publicity, he was grumpy and harsh with those he disliked. He even declined the invitation to physically participate in the exhibition at the 54th Venice Biennale in 2011, dismissing us all with a 'you go there!', referring to myself, the director Alberto Bertolini and the visual poet Stefano Stacchini. We did, however, go and set up exhibits numbers 101 and 102 in the Arsenale Nuovissimo in Venice, see p. 693 of the Biennale catalogue *'L'Arte non è cosa nostra'* edited by Vittorio Sgarbi.

He was a very special character who made his debut with his first painting exhibitions in the 1970s and was particularly well received by the critic Dino Carlesi, who mentioned verbatim in the catalogue of 1977: 'the quality of this painting is already capable of arousing curiosity and interest'.

Bugie (Lies), 2007 oil on canvas 50×60 cm

Power is multifaceted and manifests itself in various forms. Here it takes on a red color (perhaps shame) instead of the black usually used by the artist, and has a double face, one of which is that of Pinocchio with the elongated nose. Here the theme is precisely the lie, often used by power, which grows in the tree of lies and used by the gnomes who come out of the pockets of power. Power is found in the labyrinth from which there is no exit and the gnomes hold in their hands the letters that make up the word "LIES".

This was followed by several local exhibitions of paintings that depicted Pontedera characters such as the driver, the ploughman, the tinker, the Pontedera market, card players, the ice-cream vendor, the football salesman, the petrol attendant, etc. with the utmost irony and primitive desecration. This was already clear in the title of the 1990 exhibition *Controfiaba*, until a real turning point was reached. From the early 1990s onwards, Dal Canto evolved his communication with a Morenian flavour and transformed the 'photos' of the local reality, seen through his own eyes, into real messages, implemented by various new characters and elements who became actors and witnesses of the terrible general situation of mankind and the country of Italy.

It is from here that Dal Canto begins, with Magritian overtones, his most important work of 'poetic attack on Power', indignantly denouncing human weaknesses through fantastic allegories of paradoxical situations, citing monuments, false myths, village fairs, the apartment block, and the chess game of life, the media, culture, beach holidays, etc. Everything

is exposed in a satirical and desecrating manner to accentuate all the paradoxical situations of each representation. The underlying motif is always Power dominating ordinary people, who suffer and resign themselves.

His poetic maturity was concentrated, starting from 2007 through enthusiastic transpositions of abstract figures, such as the Shadow of adow of Power, which projects a concrete and vis-





ible figure representing the human being who physically wields Power. It was a succession of 'poetic' attacks on Power in all the works that followed.

In 2008, still on the subject of contesting Power, a new element appeared. It was the puppet Pinocchio. Dal Canto used him as the protagonist and witness in all his critiques of what was happening in cities, to monuments, to Power itself (which had a long nose), in technology, etc., up until the work 'Chaos', which is depicted with a Pinocchio as a scarecrow, surrounded by buildings, cars, churches, all in incorrect positions. The 'ACARI', (mites) which Giorgio Dal Canto visualised in our weaknesses, the worst part of the human individual, were depicted as small worms with large, asymmetrical eyes, coming out of holes and approaching man to deviate his nature for the worse. The ACARI would become dangerous when they convinced Power, establishing a kind of cooperation with it. This would inevitably lead in 2010 to the CHAOS OF THE ACARIANS No. 2 and No. 3, where everything was upset in a maelstrom, the ACARI took over humanity and Pinocchio was pushed aside.

From then on, Pinocchio would no longer be a protagonist, but only appeared as an 'observer'. Finally, Pinocchio ended his support for the artist in 2012, when the showing of *Potere Anonimo* came to an end: the mask of the puppet in the painting 'Epilogue' was placed on the *Dump of Falsehoods* with the following auto-graph dedication by Giorgio Dal Canto: 'Ciao Pinocchio, thank you for helping me in my little tale... I know, I have adapted to fit in, but then again, I am also an error of nature'.

This epilogue concludes the most representative of the artist's works from 2007 to 2012.

This publication contains all the works produced by Giorgio Dal Canto from 2013 to 2016, the year of his passing. It should be noted that, probably due to health problems, no significant works were produced in 2015 and early 2016, almost as if the artist's poetic vein had had a pause. He left us some unfinished works, one of which I would like to mention at the end of this retrospective, the 'Hot Air Balloon'.

With the direction of Alberto Bartalini and the graphics of visual poet Stefano Stacchini, all illustrations for the 2018 publication of Andrea Bocelli's poems *Andrea Bocelli. Piccoli Versi Disegnati* where space is given to the imagination and the surreal combination of elaborate details of the paintings that Giorgio Dal Canto left us.

Giuseppe Diomelli

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Partita a scacchi

(Chess Game), 1994
oil on canvas 120x80 cm

The game of life has begun. Everyone has taken their role and it is immediately noticeable that the Queens count more than the King because they are taller and the Queen in the background has the chair of power higher than the King.

In the battle there are those who fight in the center and those who escape by hiding behind the tower.

There are those who perish and those who, taking advantage of their role, commit an unfair act by touching the bottom of the Queen who is facing away; however, everything does not go very well because the bishop has not considered the unexpected event that the dog is peeing on his leg.

The scene takes place with a backdrop of the Tuscan countryside

Piazza dei Cavalieri, 1989

oil on canvas 80x60 cm
(Rodolfo Giuntini)

