

Antonio Saliola

They wrote about him

...Antonio Saliola is one of those men who took the vows of painting, and his great paintings are the representation and the meticulous tale of his own interior life, not seen through pain or anguish of living, but through pleasure: a way to interpret painting in the way of 19th century's painters who considered the portrait of leaves, walls, and things as an intimate tale of their own lives, the exact projection of a memory and a their own profession...

Giorgio Soavi, 1985

Antonio Saliola enters in his garden in 1982, often in the afternoon, when the light is softer, more intimate, and warmer, when the time is more propitious for mysteries. He meets there, everywhere, traces, ruins, shadows, walkways, happenings, little miracles; he sees there faraway apparitions; he finds there forgotten things, benches waiting for someone to sit, toys without children
...But who can paint gardens nowadays? Which artist could be so mad, so careless of the anachronism, so far away from trade, profanity, and tragedies of the present, to be able to do it?
Saliola paints gardens.

Roberto Tassi, 1990

Everyone can dream and see themselves in Saliola's paintings...they remind you of a world real or imaginary devoid of embarrassment and bashfulness.
Flashes of truth and drawing of Arcadian childhoods relive in these canvas dazzling with colours and atmospheres captured by the unconscious, possibly never lived, but always evoked few minutes before sleep turns into oblivion, forgetfulness.

Lucia Fornari Schianchi, 1997

The soul's place enclosed in our memories surrounded by our childhood days when we thought to be immortal, never really parts us. For a long time I've been asking myself "will nowadays childhood be able to comfort and fill with creativity tomorrow's artists and everyday people?"

Tonino Guerra, 1997

In one of the many backyards of our childhood, and surely you painted it, in the twilight of the evening there is still a child.

On his own, stubbornly, he keeps playing that game started with others.

He doesn't stop. Everyone else has already left but he keeps playing alone, challenging the great darkness of the night getting closer and closer.

Maybe Pascoli, maybe Dylan Thomas are playing as well.

But moreover, as far as I know, there's Antonio Saliola playing in Via del Garofalo number 6.

Pupi Avati, 1997

...So we realise that Saliola is, essentially, a happy man. Is not always that easy to convince the common person that art's qualities deriving from happiness are valuable. Every actor playing the role of Hamlet can count on a token of esteem for his job even if he's not good enough in controlling his dramatic impetus, while the Cary Grants of this world, for as much as brilliant they are in seducing audiences and conquer hearts using their irresistible charm, they're criticised even when they're source of pleasure...

It shouldn't be necessary to insist on how happiness is an affirmation just as serious as unhappiness, but much nicer to handle. Above all when it's not reflected in a passive way, but artistically recreated, as in the specific case of Saliola's art. In spite of his simplicity, Saliola is a fully aware and capable artist. His visions are firmly build on the basis of a perfect technique.

John Russel Taylor, 1998

Saliola builds day after day, following the laws of nature and the variations of time, the natural models of his painting; with patience, dreams, certainty of vision and limitless persistence he gives birth from earth, water, and air to a painting that's bright, fragrant, iridescent, and vaguely magic; he modifies the space, creating possibilities for reflections; he studies colours juxtaposition; he predicts and harmonises

their variations according to the changes of the seasons and the changes of the souls; he models firstly their natural form, than their artistic one consequently; he imagines his creations earlier in their physical world, then in the poetic universe; he gets this way closer, for as much as a human can, to the demiurgic capacities of modifying nature and art; and mix them up so much and make them grow so jointed, as if they were the same idea, concept, and vision. So in the mind, passion, and brushstroke of Saliola, who thinks, chooses the seeds, falls in love with a flower crown, admires, and paints, the close conjunction of nature with painting is fulfilled.

Gian Maria Erbesato, 2002

...So, who has got enough knowledge of tales talking about parallel worlds, can see that Saliola answers to the same *topoi*; that the painting comes from the idea of create an alternate reality. What about the actual garden then? De Pr cy's empathetic garden that creates an effect on the soul? Well, the garden is the alternate world, a place of discretion and hiding, the subject that opens, to the soul, an escape, an exit, a door to walk through the known edges of a countryside that becomes the real discovery of the actual world. Many are the names of this “middle land”: from the analogue country to the one the painter himself chooses, the “Quasi” world. In it the essential is fleeting, the modesty is regality. We can reread those Ren  Daumal's passionate pages about the research of the “mount analogue”:
“I won't talk about the mountain but through the mountain. Using this mountain as a language, I'll talk about another mountain that's the route that connects the earth to the sky, and I'll talk about it not to resign myself but to push me further.”

Luca Cesari, 2015

...In the timeless time of Saliola, with a late nineteenth century taste, the world of traditional fairy tales cohabits with a *nabis* influence of upper middle class interiors where the library play the protagonist part, filled with the great quantity of imaginary worlds that every book encloses, and domestic gardens that whisper the most hidden secrets of nature, if only we'd have the childish ear to hear them, introducing us ideally to “Quasi Orto” that Saliola built in the isolation of Petrella Guidi, real open artwork that eliminates every contrast between man and earth, the created and the future creation.

A proposition, if I may, to develop his *imagerie* even more.

Borges said to think the paradise as a library: the word paradise comes from *par deisos* (garden), alluding to the marvels of the biblical Eden, associated to a Christian ideology, especially Marian, of the *hortus conclusus*, the beautifully looked after garden hidden from tan indiscrete eye.

The library, the garden, the hortus conclusus united in a whole, could create a new picture, able to express even more than what these symbolisms alone would do, as if Eden weren't the maximum we could imagine, but would leave room for improvement, the "super-paradise". Who would be able to do so if not Antonio Saliola?

Vittorio Sgarbi, 2015

Can you paint a dream? Can you paint the nature? Maybe the two things are not that incompatible and they can combine: I'm talking about the nature dreamt in painting. But what type of painting would it be and which meaning would the nature portrayed in that way, between reality and invention, have? Perhaps it's a flight on the edge of the representations of the mind and of the heart: an apparition that needs our whispers, a dreamt vision.

...This applies to Antonio Saliola's work that extends, in the distance of an enchanted glance, allegories and natural dreams through an illustrious and at the same time gullible, since we can perceive Flemish landscapes and naïve delights, tradition. We can also catch a glimpse of how primitive tastes mix perfectly with Fauvist candour and far away wealthy loftiness, wealthier even as more inspired is by the daily life, the ordinary, something that looks like a garden, a backyard, a "Quasi Orto" as a representation of the whole nature, as a hiding place for the redemption of the ephemeral: flowers, leaves, branches, trees. Cryptic contaminations of the minor world and superior one follow new mythologies surrounded by a halo of oneiric Post Impressionism. In the solar or nocturnal wonder of the unusual, as in Saliola's paintings, we seize a pacifying not unsettling sensitivity.

...The corporeality of the nature in Saliola's work is filled with an imaginative and oneiric soul that intimately characterises it. In the mind of the painter, perhaps the last painter of gardens, we find the consciousness that he managed to combine in a single vision the dignity of natural beauties and the grace of dream.

Raffaele Milani, 2018