

The PARODY of Today's World - Duccio Trombadori

We are pleased to accompany the insightful eye of 'Steve' Stefano Mezzaroma. Through his art he manipulates with ease and loose irony the stereotypes of our more than tested consumer civilization. Gifted with spontaneous expressiveness Steve inspirationally combines advertising messaging, topical information and latest fashion to make his art both a statement and a commentary on today. His art becomes cinema, photography and television all in one contemporary imagery. Avant-garde experimentalism distanced culture and society. New technologies today bridges the gap with the intelligence of digital programs and the fusion of different languages that often fail to communicate the true meaning.

By flexing and inter-mingling of these different mediums, the direct life experience is filtered by Steve through allusions that immerse in the collage of snapshots, special effects and *photoshop* that enhance fiction and expand both imagination and understanding, making it collide with reality. From the forest of symbols of commercial civilization, Steve 'smile' humourously combines a number of poignant metaphors to help the observer understand the serious issue of what is required to 'save the world'. The result is a kaleidoscope of witty appearances that replaces the fairy tale with the coldness of *pop* insignnia. Art becomes an expression of realism and practicality and invites everyone to join in a journey through the idols of our time.

It is a reality experience of Alice's looking glass that uncovers and deciphers: the covers of *fashion* magazines, advertising signs, *flashes* of events, crimes news and sports, movie *trailers*, video scripts, wars, traces of life, sex, love and death in both the virtual and real versions.

This iconography memorized by Steve refers to the most recent film heritage: the show begins with Steven Spielberg, with the image that associates the caducity of the *Microsoft* brand in the shadow profile of Tyrannosaurus recovered from *Jurassic Park*. It is not coincidence that these are followed by the silhouette of the villain Darth Vader, dark lord of the universe of '*Star Wars*' silouetted with his sword on a fluorescent background. Michael Douglas and Charlie Sheen enter the fray, framed by the overlaid silhouette of Wall Street bull: to remind us that 'money never sleeps and often charges on relentlessly at the expense of a dense network of blood-stained hands causing the background of posters faces to smile apathetically. Then 'enter' the flowing *silhouette* of Mary Poppins with her umbrella hovering over the semicircle of Italian Parliament (white, red and green) to seal the emblematic and alluding refrain '*just a spoonful of sugar...*'.

Invention and creativity are not reduced to inlaid figures extracted from the screen and *computer*: So as to avoid visual sterility, Steve manipulates the images on the silkscreen canvas, by painting 'interventions' with gold spray, cutting and pasting of the written word and geometric shapes that intersect with inter-communicating lines. By playing with the idols and icons of our time, he fondles them and somehow uncovers and then exorcises

their power and influence:- Bin Laden ends up with a dummy in his mouth to advertise diapers, or tetragonal figures of Chinese communism as Mao Tse-dun is absorbed by the approval sign of Google Viewdata. While Albert Einstein, the sacred monster of science and emblem of antomasia 'homo sapiens', laughs and sticks out his long yellow tongue thereby advertising in the form of the Chiquita banana gourmand monkey; Then by duplicated by a photograph, Mike Tyson, king of physical force applied to *boxing*, actually has no other rival than the menacing image of himself, .

By this unconventional witnessing of the strange metamorphoses of the modern age, Steve takes the observer through the weave of symptomatic anagrams that play images against words. The figure of Queen Elizabeth II (who gave titles to the *Beatles* - only to be rejected by John Lennon) appears with a Freddy Mercury style moustache and with the fateful chorus of *God Save the Queen*, that highlights the ambiguity between two. Halfway between anecdote and moralizing irony, parody and celebration, Steve's journey continues through the mountain of products consumed by a civilization of images: rituals and myths, the sacred and the profane, science and magic, all held in the melting pot of a culture capable of assimilating and culpable in making every value relative.

The stark comparison between real and virtual world ruled by advertising, Steve reveals the essential features of what our culture has become: by playing with ambiguity between text, image and caricature that involves the myths of certain *sex symbols* (Angelina Jolie) or if the mega-apparatuses of furnishing *prêt à porter* (Ikea and Hermes). So, the remake of the verso of collective infatuations is proposed again even when the author makes a psycho-autobiographical control of his emotional world. The humorous and sincere description of *My World* results from this - a sort of imaginary imaging trip around his room, where the terrestrial globe is constellated simultaneously by dreams, desires, things seen and hoped.

The attempt at parody is expressed in the 'diary in public'. Here the agile modern film hero figure of *Lupin* arises, and combines with images taken from comics, art, history and news: rather like the hands of Adam and the Lord on the *Day of Creation* drawn by Michelangelo; Raphael's cherubs doubled by two winged figures obtained from the *Simpson cartoon* and as the striking background of a night-time New York, associated with the famous image of workers who built the glories of the Thirties, suspended in equilibrium from a skyscraper in construction. Such 'self portrait' could not close without illuminating with a frank morality the *football* champion Francesco Totti, idol of sports crowds in the Rome of our years and an example realized by an exuberant youth, . Meticulous and capable observers can combine all types of visual stimuli through Steve's imaginative eye that writes information for an unlimited and always enjoyed investigation simultaneously in thousands of facets of our '*Global Village*'. The conclusion from this abstract view of the pandemonium of an era is '*signifying nothing*' - to quote the words that Shakespeare put in the mouth of Macbeth. The end of morality is suggested with a smile on the lips to define the intelligent easiness of Steve's critical spirit, which creatively makes precise the persuasive and poetic focus of a style and a 'way of seeing'.