



MARONCELLI 12

Pietro Ghizzardi

The sea and a beautiful woman to kiss

Opening: Wednesday November 10, 2021. At 6:30 pm

On view: November 11, 2021 – January 28, 2022

After the exhibition at the American Folk Art Museum, Pietro Ghizzardi arrives in Milan with a solo show in Maroncelli 12 gallery. The exhibition “The sea and a beautiful woman to kiss”, curated by Davide Macchiarini, aims to represent the extraordinary vision of this peasant artist through a dozen pictures, mostly painted on both sides; some graphic works and a multimedia installation with the screening of the 1967 documentary “Dalla solitudine alla comunità” (director Dino Menozzi, first prize, Gold Medal at the International festival for amateur films in Belgrade, in 1970) and a fragment from “Naif del mondo: Italia” directed by Gianpaolo Tescari, 1975.

Pietro Ghizzardi was born in 1906 into a peasant family from Viadana (Mantua) of humble origins. His parents are forced to move often in search of work and little Pietro, of poor health, suffers these constant transfers with the result of a poor scholastic performance. In 1931 the family settled in Boretto (Reggio Emilia). “Pietrone” helps in the fields and since he was a teenager shows a predisposition to drawing. This practice of drawing is not well regarded by his brother Marino who more than once destroyed his works “...he did not want me to waste time painting”. Pietro is deeply saddened by this but because of his calm nature he doesn't feel facing conflict situations. These are years, until the end of the Second world war of hardships and extreme poverty. In 1951, the great flood of the Po, his brother and father's death, marked a turning point in his life as a farmer and in 1957 the author decided to devote himself completely to art and to the writing of his autobiography. A memoir in which Ghizzardi himself scrupulously notes the various transfers: “Mi richordo anchora” is published by Einaudi editore in 1976 with notes by Cesare Zavattini and was awarded the “Viareggio literary prize” as Best Debut Novel in 1977.

Ghizzardi becomes famous at the age of 60, after a life of hard work and misunderstandings, but he remains the good farmer of the Po valley, a sweet and meek man who is satisfied with a roof and a hot meal... Writing and chewing ...His biography is contained in four, five large lined notebooks, a lopsided hand writing with blatant but genuine errors in grammar and syntax. And as for the colors, he chews



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herbs and crumbles pieces of brick to put a little red and green on gray cardboard (used for packaging). For black he uses soot that condenses in wood stove pipes or coal. Few essential tones that looks like earth on which black prevails, a raw sign that forms the texture of faces and bodies. He paints mainly women faces, he portrays his uncounscious attraction to the female universe, often inspired by movie stars, accentuating necklines and bursting breasts.

Faces that are ironic, sensual, strong or worn by premature old age, furrowed by deep dark lines. The artist brings to light hidden pains and passions. He remains the obedient boy, dominated by his mother. For him the woman also means the governor and the sensual desire too often rejected. Expressionist by instinct, his painting upsets any classic concept of beauty. He expresses an emotional, uncounscious feeling that gives the work a particular vitality. He reproduces the beauty rooted in his interiority. It strikes the intense and deep eyes, always wide open that remain inside even when you stop looking at them.

Ghizzardi portrays naive landscapes, birds suspended on imaginary branches; he also paints sweet-eyed beasts (he greatly appreciates Antonio Ligabue who took an interest on him), family members and saints, characters marked by life as life has marked him. Pietrone lives far from progress in the simplicity of nature which has always satisfied him and provides him the elements for his art. But his pictorial language, apparently simple and unarmed, is actually complex and unrepeatable; it bears the mark of an interior symbology and of its own poetic reality. Marginalized by the society that is becoming industrialized, Ghizzardi finds in his art a form of redemption, his reason for existing and – he is so shy and reserved – a powerful way of communication.

He died in 1986.

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