

## Benetti's Neo Cave Painting

In this article, I'll address Benetti's invention of and specific style of *Neo Cave Art*; a pictorial concept that gave way to a manifesto that he presented at the Venice Biennale in 2009.

At first reading of the manifesto we see that Benetti has constructed a totally new formula, even though it is evident that his work is a mutation of the marvelous cave paintings of thirty to forty thousand years ago. He doesn't replicate nor even revisit that primitive artwork and his approach could easily extend beyond the painting medium.

He amplifies artwork that was produced in distant epochs and from there he goes on to produce a new genre that is one of the most interesting in the art world of recent times.

In 1879 de Santualo and his daughter stated that the Altamira Cave in Spain concealed paintings left there by prehistoric men; historians who specialized in prehistory broke out into boisterous laughter and were still laughing twenty years later.. Then Abbots Breuil and Cartailhac went to the site and the laughter was suddenly replaced by awe: the paintings were authentic, definitely painted by Paleolithic men. As far as esthetics go, they were no less beautiful than a great deal of modern painting. Awe is not a comely scientific attitude and scientists hold it in some contempt.

Painter Andrea Benetti does have that sensitivity, intuition and moments of genius; and he grasped the significance and the remarkable force of humans who many tens of thousands of years ago expressed their highest aspirations in images. He imagined it, then rationalized it and finally transferred these sensations into his own original painting style with pigments derived from unconventional materials in a prehistoric way – without copying it.. He brought a one-of-a-kind exhibit into the Castellana caves, showed his paintings there and projected a copy of his buffalo onto the rocky wall, but it wasn't the bison of Altamira nor Lescaux. With an intuition that was more erudite than dramatic, he integrated the music of a famous contemporary composer, Frank Nemola, into the show. By doing so, he reminded us that scientists have pointed out that perhaps the concentration of cave painting occurs in the areas of the cave where the acoustics are the best.

So Benetti "lost" something of the primitive and "gained" something from his brothers lost in the abysses of time.; he has refused the theme of the ugly, animalesque primitive man dancing in the depths of the cave in front of images of buffalo in the hopes preparing his victory over they prey of his imminent hunt.

Perhaps it is through the artist, and not the anthropologist, that we will learn of the ancient holy men who descended into the bowels of the earth in order to use their marvelous artistic technique to paint the symbols of their spirituality, their concern for eternity.

I said above that Benetti didn't copy the prehistoric buffalos or cave-wall symbols; his is a new idea, making the point that even though we are the children of a troubled century, we can start anew positively. All this without forgetting that art is such when it takes into consideration its own tradition. Michelangelo and Raffaello look to ancient works hoping to access good taste at the source. Raffaello sent his pupils to Greece so they could sketch the objects from the ancient world for him. In these objects he saw nature's beauty; in remoter ancient times Proclus taught us in his comment of Timaeus that ideal beauty is made up of figures constructed wholly of our intellect.

Personally, I believe that paintings should be observed with the hope of discovering something held secret: more a secret of existence than a secret of art. So I say again that Andrea Benetti has not copied nor even reinterpreted anything. I have no hesitation in suggesting that perhaps Benetti's operation is akin to that of Jung; the great psychoanalyst did not invent the term archetype, but he transformed it from Neo-Platonist philosophy and applied it to psychology. I believe Benetti proceeded in a similar fashion for his own artistic endeavor.

The symbols in the paintings have no relationship with life and personal experience.

Certainly cancelled memories are stored away there, as well as forgotten experiences or historical shadows. I think Benetti may have re-elaborated upon a collective subconsciousness which might explain the analogies which are almost certainly part of our common basis with far away cultures. In other words, we can perceive an archetypical experience of primordial imagery that stimulates in us the possibility of coming in contact with the essence of human experience.

Andrea Benetti's work has a brilliant sense of plasticity, but he doesn't want to express his abstract symbolism in contemporary abstract forms. And again, I would describe the implied metaphysics that he expresses as something like a complex thought that is concerned with eternity. It is precisely in this mindset that Benetti will soon "fresco" the artificial walls of the tunnels that men have constructed as an entrance to the natural caves. That is why these paintings, become "Neo-Cave" paintings, possess a timelessness that will persist unchanged in future centuries.

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