

Heidi Fosli. The revolution of Impressionism.

Entering the dramatic, but at the same time mysterious and subconscious realm of artist Heidi Fosli is a risk for any art lover, however a necessary one, if the truth still were that the very essence of art is to allow a deeper grasp of reality.

The depiction of the dynamics of thoughts, personal interactions and emotions and their effect on our visible reality is possible because the artist fixes upon the canvas the actual result of these very same dynamics in herself, transforming her physical, emotional and psychological experiences into tangibility and concreteness: her artwork.

This transformation takes place in Heidi Fosli's paintings as a dream in the night, when what was known yesterday is suddenly deconstructed tomorrow and a new truth, difficult to believe at first, is coming to the surface. Her automatic, spontaneously executed paintings allow this emersion, and she herself is often bewildered by the messages that are spoken to her by her most hidden self.

Mysterious faces and features, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic elements, unexpected human motions and references to art history she is unaware of appear on the canvas while the artist is looking for, experimenting or trying to understand something else. "Today my main theme is society", Heidi says. "Not inter-human relationships, but that's where I started. From day one, my inner soul and my heart decides what is going on the canvas. I never look at the outer world, only my experiences have influenced me. There is not one incident. The reference material is what then comes out on the canvas."

Heidi Fosli likes to compare this transformation to the passage from an imbalance to a balance. Her starting points are, therefore, the imbalances of our lives, of our world, seen in this way not only as personal issues, but also as global ones, to be resolved through a common shift in perspective and awareness provoked by the deepest collective subconscious symbols, which arise spontaneously in her art. The result on the canvas should be a solution, a formula on how a well-functioning society should be like.

The "imbalances" that she pinpoints in her work are those to do with injustice, of all sorts. Violations of rights and dignity, discrimination, isolation, lack of communication, inequality, especially between genders, races and religions, domination of the presumably more powerful over the weakest, selfishness and greed versus empathy and understanding, crushing of personal identities into meaningless conformation through fear, intimidation or the pressure of society instead of individual awareness and uniqueness to be shared with humanity. Appearance over essence. Recent works such as *Conformity*, *Identity*, *Independency* and *Discovery*, all dating to 2016, are emblematic of her research.

The disparity between genders is the one Heidi feels even closer to her own experience in the art world, where female artistic recognition, she discovered, was much more difficult to attain. Her impression was that male artists were naturally more confident than female artists were and could more easily uplift and think well of themselves. This extreme difference and "imbalance" between men and women, in the artist's opinion, generates from a predominantly male-powered society, in which women are still violated and deprived. In her own country, Norway, female liberation still does not exist and disparities continue in the family, in the work environment and in the differences between educational and formative backgrounds. Idealistic movements, which try to help women, are trampled on in all aspects. The illusion, however, is that male and female are equally empowered in our societies and that their relationships are ideal, but this ambiguity emerges fiercely from the artist's work, resulting in reversed and fused masculine and feminine identities where diversity has been annihilated and "loving" feelings are exposed in their untruthfulness. *Prima Ballerina* (2016), *Amor Fati* (2016), *The perfect Man or the perfect Woman?* (2015), *Comfort* (2014), *Imposed* (2014), *Empathy* (2013), *No Mercy* (2003) as well as many other paintings deal with these gender dynamics leaving the viewer to come to his own conclusions.

Ambiguity, illusion and transformation could be considered key words to understanding Heidi Fosli's *Opera Omnia*: from a staircase that could be leading us up or down (*Stairway to Heaven II*, 2012), to hypocritical layers of masks worn in the society of appearance, which can only slip away through intuitive recognition of others' and

our own real identities (*Boston Tea Party*, 2014) or to the stunning transformation of a female identity once emotionally crippled by her own pitiful, unaware narcissism into a real, dignified and therefore beautiful human being (*Avant Garde*, 2014).

Heidi Fosli discovered herself recalling many different artistic styles and techniques, sometimes aware of her references, many times intrigued to see similarities unknown to her pointed out by her art viewers. Among the earliest, clearly northern European Expressionism seems to have elements in common with some of her work. Egon Schiele, for example, with his rigid drawing, recalls *No Mercy*, 2003 while Edvard Munch shares a similar deep psychological and emotional introspection and expression, even though the differences between his painting *The Scream*, 1893 and Heidi Fosli's *Erbaut Bridge*, 2012 lie in the totally ambiguous structure of the latter work seen in the instability of the bridge, the anonymity of the human figures (which could well be simply part of the material railing), or the flatness of space and perspective, leaving an indifferent feeling to a personal drama which is pushed to the back, to a less important position, while unempathetic observers watch on: the secondary figures in *The Scream* haven't completely understood the anguish...those in *Erbaut Bridge* see everything, but simply don't feel or care.

Dali, Kandinsky and De Chirico, even though close in dreamlike themes and automatism, are far from Heidi as theirs remain codes, invented, applied, but not deriving from a real communicable experience.

Expectant Joy, 2013 is one of Heidi Fosli's works where many citations appear, from Henry Fuseli and his ghostly romantic creatures embodying light and darkness in nightmarish, almost Caravaggesque scenes to Masaccio and his early Renaissance Expressionism. French Pointillism obviously comes to mind flowing into full Impressionism, with intense coloured strokes that can only recall as many other works by Heidi Fosli, the later, more abstract works by Claude Monet.

Among the many influences, in fact, Impressionism and Expressionism are the styles to have the strongest impact on Heidi Fosli's work, fused together in a seemingly unique one. Nevertheless, if Expressionism is the language of the soul, Impressionism, by definition, is the art of illusion and unreality, or a reconstructed reality by the artist. Heidi Fosli, on the contrary, creates a "New Impressionism", where the transformative experience of art-creation allows the birth of a new reality, which has nothing to do with an impression, as it is the deepest reality, not just the artist's truth, but the truth which emerges alone. The two "warm" figures who walk out of the painting *Amore* 2015, towards the viewer, are doing so independently, unaware of the artist's desires, but escaping from everyone else towards their own.

Daniela Fraioli.



Identity/Identità, 2016.



Conformity/Conformità 2016.



Prima Ballerina, 2016.



Erbaut Bridge, 2012.



Edvard Munch, *The Scream/L'Urlo*, 1893. National Gallery, Oslo, Norway.



Expectant Joy/Gioia In Attesa, 2013.



Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare/L'Incubo*, 1781. Detroit Institute of Arts.



Masaccio, *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden/Cacciata dei Progenitori dall'Eden*. Cappella Brancacci, Firenze, 1426.



Amore, 2015.