

Sandro's words on website

October 31 1965 - October 31 2015
50 Years of Art

I was born on February 20, 1948 in Florence. Since I was a child I have had a fascination for painting and playing with clay. My elementary teacher would say: "I'm going to speak with the Headmaster! Sandro, go to the balckboard and keep everyone entertained with your drawings." So, from an early age I experienced the creative thrill of drawing on a black background with colored and white chalk, while the erasers thrown at me by my classmates flew overhead....

STUDIES

In 1965, at the age of 17, I was finally allowed to attend an art school. At the Capiello Academy I had the honor and fortune of meeting the great Gastone Canessa, headmaster of the school - a painter, a graphic designer and a ceramist.

A "dannunziano" character [Gabriele D'Annunzio, Italian writer, poet, journalist and playwright 1863-1938 considered a Renaissance man] with a goatee and mustache, ever positive, "amante" [lover] of all arts, Michelangelo in particular. He was obsessed with giving us the best possible education of art. His classroom and on site lessons were fascinating and he took us to see almost all of the museums in Florence and Rome. Professor Corrado Marsan [the most able orator I have ever met] was responsible for art history, the artist Mario Poggiali for etching and carving and we were also given instruction on the psychology of advertising. My destiny would have taken me into graphic publicity if an "explosive" episode had not changed my direction: a homemade ballistic experiment at the age of 18 amputated half of my right thumb. The fear that I would never be able to paint again convinced me to take that

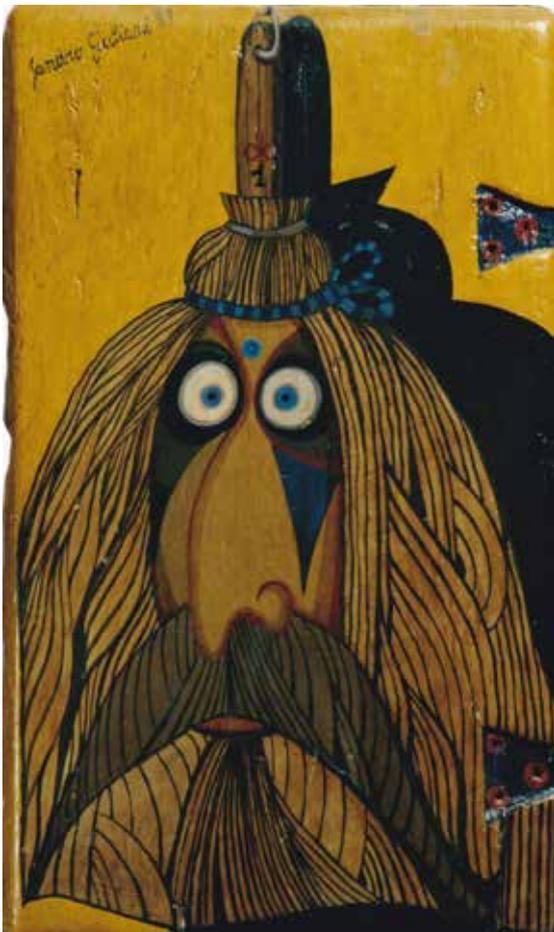
path. I worked closely with Remo Squillantini for 2 years at his studio in San Domenico of Fiesole [just outside of Florence] and it was he who taught me all there is to know about tempera....

JOURNEYS AND INFLUENCES

In 1974 I journeyed to Mexico where I was profoundly influenced by Aztec art, am still am. In 1976 I travelled to British Columbia in Canada where I discovered the Haida Indians, stupendous totem carvers of red cedar wood. From that moment the seed of sculpture was sown but many years passed before I was able to master the art. Actually another source stems from the utter amazement in seeing, as a child, the first masks and other African art that arrived in our home thanks to an uncle living in Kenya.

The first art critic to write about me was Adriana Noferi, followed by Esther Meschini Gandi, Valter Campani, Nocentini, Paolo Castellucci and Piero Santi. More than any other was the great Dino Pasquali who has followed me throughout my career and a "mare" [sea] of shows. I have exhibited, in addition to Europe, in Japan and the United States.

I have always loved art: art that is free, free of politics, free of religion and free of commercial ends. This has maintained a constant creative space within me, vibrant and inexhaustible.



A BIT OF HISTORY

1965 - Enrolled in the Leonetto Capiello Academy of Graphic Art in Florence.
First linoleum print "Indian on a horse"

1966/67 - More than 100 engravings in linoleum

1968 - Beginning of the use of oil colors, mainly with a spatula
show at GADA of Florence

1969 - Individual student of Remo Squillantini, with whom he illustrated books and learned the use of "caseina" tempera [the original kind used by Giotto]

1970 - Incisions on linoleum, oil and tempera painting, the first experiments with acrylics; works for over two years for the art merchant Carlo Cianchi of Florence

1971 - First visits to Paris and Amsterdam where he supports his travels selling his art work

1974 - Journeys to Mexico and USA with consequent sale of various work

1975/76 - travel to British Columbia, contact with the Haida tribe of native Americans and the discovery of totem carving

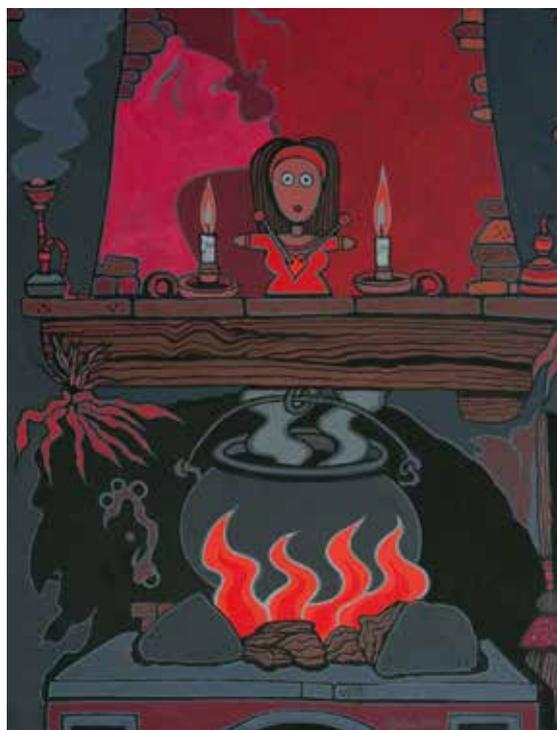
1976 - Included in the annual catalogue of the Pananti gallery, one of the most prestigious in Florence from the 1950's to the 1980's. It, together with almost all of the more than 100 galleries in Florence in the 20th century, has closed been closed for more than two decades. Interesting to note that the city of Florence has no real contemporary art museum, and only two years ago opened one dedicated to art in the 20th century, most of the work being of the first half of that century. In this internationally acclaimed heart of Italian medieval and Renaissance art, it has always been difficult for Italian contemporary artists to exhibit their work. [Could it be a similar trend to the population growth, zero since the 1980's in the country where Catholicism began?!]

1974-83 - Synthetic tempera painting, linoleum incisions, ink drawings

1975 - First prize at Toscanello d'Oro, Pontassieve, Florence

1983 - Oil spatula painting

1983 - Personal show at the Pananti Gallery



1984 - Art Sieve Expo

1985-88 - Oil brush painting

Shows and various prizes throughout Tuscany

Personal at the Teorema Gallery, Florence

Personal at the Insegna del Gallo, Galluzzo, Florence

1990 - First experiments with sculpture

Personal of ink drawings at Rignano sull'Arno

1991-94 - Sculpture of various types of wood, linoleum incisions

1995-99 - 100 color xilographic matrixes from wood

1997 - Show at the Giubbe Rosse, Florence

1998 - Show in Iugima Wagano, Japan

1999 - Show in Santa Fe, USA

Show at the Municipal Hall of Pontassieve, Florence

2000 - Return to "caseina" tempera

2001 - Base relief sculpture

2003 - Sculpture in the round

Personal at the Gruppo Donatello, Florence

Sculpture show at Civitella Val di Chiana

2004 - Spatula oil painting

Personal sculpture show at Toscanello d'Oro, Pontassieve.

Collective for Meyer Children's Hospital, Palagio di parte Guelfa, Florence

2005 - Founding of the manual typography "Le Rivolte" with a first series of linoleum prints of the "manniera nera" (black manner)

2009 - Personal at Pontassieve, Florence

2010 - Artist of the annual "Guarda Firenze"

Florence Marathon



ESTHETIC PHANTOM

Dino Pasquali at Giuliani's personal show
in Pontassieve October 2009

Because I feel the character of this show to be essentially cultural, I'll try to be up to par with the other voices [Pasquale's voice is more than authoritative, at age 89 and having been a journalist and critic of art for more than 60 years. He has known and written for Sandro since 1972.].

In a dictionary of the arts, edited in the 60's by De Agostini [n.b. top of the line in Italy], we read: "Esthetic Phantom- according to various esthetic theories, it would be the mode in which a certain emotion is formed in the mind of the artist and tends to be transmuted externally in a form inevitably his own. As a consequence, it is considered that it is in this very process, not otherwise ponderable, that the force and therefore the unique quality of the artist resides: in the knowing how to extract from a "carica emotiva" [an emotional charge] to a "carica creativa" [creative charge]. This 'charge' can extinguish itself within the individual or it can spread to others in a common sphere of interests of various types [...]" (including, unfortunately, mercantile interests. On the other hand, it is well noted that "Carmina non dant panem": Poetry does not give you bread, nor does it serve to pay the grocery bill.) "Naturally between this phantom and its concrete realization, incurs all of the labor, the challenge to the artist, the likes of which and with no small difficulty will succeed in transmuting, in full, the phantom into form. In this predicament, in which even the greatest artists are subject, resides the the reason for the continual dialect of the artist and his proverbial disconsolation." 'A mon avis' as they would say in France [in my view], the cited theory of the 'Esthetic Phantom' captures the essence of the artist.



In any event I believe, firmly, that Sandro Giuliani owes his undeniable originality to a knowing and a being able - with almost no impurities or a bare minimum - to transmute his "emotional charge" in a well working "creative charge". This has forever characterized him as being an artist who is not enamored of being in the chorus. He is one of a kind. "Poets are born, orators are formed": poetae nascuntur, oratores fiunt. Whether it was Quintiliano or not who said this (some tend to think it was Cicero), it is fact that while Giuliani was born a poet (and this is confirmed both by his being a man and a painter), I, quite differently, have never succeeded in becoming an orator. The art of orating for me has the same effect as a red flag on a bull in an arena. (Giuliani and I root for the bull not for the toreador!)

Homo faber; homo habilis; homo ludens; homo novus; homo oeconomicus; homo sapiens, eccetera. [Builder man; capable man; playful man; new man; essential man; thinking man, etcetera.

HOMO LUDENS is also the title of a famous book by Johan Huizinga, a Dutch philosopher who published this book in 1939. Among the various categories of the human being [that he examines], are the ability to think and therefore to act, and therefore to produce. Certainly it is the arts which, ab ovo [in a nutshell] and thanks to their various specificities, have nourished and have received their nourishment from play, obviously an intellectual, esthetic, poetic, creative playfulness and certainly not the recreational game of cards in a club.

In his way of conceiving painting - the visual, the art of configuration, the representation, the fabrication - Giuliani reveals himself to be a homo ludens, one capable of veiling himself with irony, a ludens which stands for, in short, a jester, a joker, one that knows how to be playful.

His is a refined and subtle irony: a patrimony of "antifrastica" culture [anti establishment that not only differs and critiques but in the face of disapproval, becomes a propellant]. This inevitably insures rejection on the part of whoever has not yet realized that the historic avantgarde arrived more than a century ago.

I wish every possible success to a "puro" [a pure being], an outsider, free of the system. Don't give up Sandro, keep going, ad onta [whatever the price] of whoever cannot understand you either for commercial reasons or for cultural misgivings.

THE JESTER - HOMO LUDENS - AND MORE

Dino Pasquali, Critic of Art

from the catalogue of the personal show of Sandro Giuliani in Pontassieve October 2009

In apparently impenetrable woods, a small opening emerges where the hermitage of Sandro Giuliani is situated. As you gradually leave urban civilization behind, you arrive at the final destination after several kilometers of a road so bumpy that there should be warning signs: “watch out for your car’s suspension”! The road winds like a serpent through a gallery of trees, the branches making it difficult to see the sky beyond. At the end of the line, you cross a little foot bridge made of timber with a bare minimum of a hand rail. Continuing along a path to the front of the house, a medieval mill, the stream we have just crossed is a tributary of the Arno river full of trout. “Fario” trout, a rare species, specifies Sandro, who has transformed a ruin of a stone structure in the typical Tuscan “contadino” [peasant] style-- and just about as “contadino” as you can get!-- into a sort of Swiss chalet, half of which is now edified with strong, heavy logs.



Situated on ground level, the studio of the artist--painter, sculptor, graphic designer--is chock full of more or less rustic old implements and instruments of every type imaginable, suggesting the likenesses of a dark but pleasant studio. It could also serve as an enigmatic atelier [attic] for some film about an alchemist or an astrologist from the 14th century... Originally built to transform grains into flour, in this house and laboratory of a “homo faber” (builder) and true artisan (inspired and guided by intellect and experience) my thoughts turned to the past.

A kind of prestigious peculiarity, the bizarre and the extravagant (in the best possible sense) were the first qualities I perceived in the grotesque work of Giuliani during our first encounter. More than simple contact, this first meeting was quite an impact, metaphorically speaking, given the difference between us of many years in age but above all, because of opposite styles of life: the more Bourgeois mine is, the more Bohemian and anarchic (if you will) that of Sandro. Not only that,

for Sandro is a practicing ecologist (almost a rarity at the time, I would be tempted to affirm).

I continue to sense a strong emotional, though also rational, sort of belonging to the style of this incredibly original painter who has a predilection for red and black (would *Le rouge e le noir* of Stendahl have anything to do with it?... Certainly not! whoever believes it to be so will have to ask him). On the other hand, one thing is certain: he is an individual decidedly outside of the mainstream chorus even though in the 50 years dedicated to his work, he has surely been requested to ‘put his head on properly’ and come to a compromise with ‘normal’ society. But which society?...perhaps the society of ‘common sense and good taste’? or what? Certainly the one that excluded painters “engages” (engaged in political and social critique--memories of Sartre and the existentialists) proclaiming acceptable art need be conformist and well framed.

So long live the free range chicken (not to mention the goose, the gander and the duck), stacks of hay, harnesses of pure bred Chianina white oxen, the romantic hovel of rural predecessors....Let us





laugh with a true 'citizen of the world', with that Giuliani 'outsider' who desires, forever yearning and so powerfully continues to play, the role of "Il Pittore" [The Painter]. As a consequence he goes through rough times, times in which he is content with a tent to ward off the cold and the water infiltration of a ruin called home. Other than a hankering for pre-Columbian civilization, he has remained faithful to his own sense of the "bef-fardo" [irreverent, teasing], the "arcano" arcane [archetypal and mysterious], and the "ludico" [jocular]. "Beffardo" I would say is what could spark an inspiration to depict a chamber pot in a

night stand with the lid up and a dropper to administer peculiar medicine...diuretic or laxative?...(may the fantasy of the viewer be spurred by that of the author!). "Arcano" I would say, given two pairs of eyes, not exactly almond shaped (are they the eyes of Sandro?) staring at you from a shady cauldron or a terracotta jar and then--all of this in a rather obscure atmosphere of what could be a witch's cellar. "Ludico", surely, a coffee grinder as a hat, a fork, a spoon, the number 5 and an upside down fairy floating on the left in the lower part of the painting.

Blazing wood that heats big pots, cauldrons actually, filled with potions (magic?)..., bearded faces with high lace collars, long noses that are almost always aquiline (hook-shaped), "bajadera" (of the Hindu goddess Kali) faces dressed up as brooms, little dolls stuck with pins by someone practicing black magic, polkadots and many other objects that bring us back to our "homo ludens". He teases and jests in a kind of autobiographical allusion.

When I first saw the 'tempera' paintings of Sandro Giuliani, he was still a graphic designer. I immediately thought of him as a 'sorcerer's apprentice'. Now he is a full fledged 'sorcerer', a truly professional painter. And that he is, and has been for years, an artist well above the norm is confirmed by his graphic as well as his sculptural work. They go beyond, are "other - autres", for they do not respect the normal horizons and expectations of a consumerist society that is more hypocritical than cultural.

So, from a darkness that evokes the deepest of nights and a brightness of flames that keeps Lucifer at bay, in a kind of perverse but fascinating spell, we leave fully convinced - though with an talisman in hand as protection, just in case - that we will not easily forget him.

Pietro Santi in the catalogue of a personal show in Florence, September 1983

Each of us who finds ourselves caught up in the routine and drudge of daily life, seeks refuge from the desperation of the sameness, of the death of imagination and of image itself, and to all that the in and out of days slowly destroys. Avoiding the pitfalls of daily life without demolishing it, a mission in vain given that it is our reality. This is the existential problem that becomes, for an operator in the world of art, the eternal dilemma. There are those who attempt to resolve the problem seeking to drown, perhaps obsessively, in daily life itself. There are those instead who create some distance through a unique and “recognizable adjectivity” [description and observation].

Sandro Giuliani has chosen a difficult path. Even if, to a superficial observer, it could appear that he chooses figures and objects through a vision disassociated from concrete reality, at a closer look we realize that his inventions, though acquiring a truth of their own and existing in an environment that is both poetic and exquisitely human, are well rooted in a reality that plagues each and every day, fixed as they are, and as they appear, within their limits and features, a lively, unique comment on everyday reality. If realists try to win over reality by imitating it (maybe even they aren't clear about their intention) exasperating each minute detail [like a photograph], Giuliani is far from this mode of expression. He seeks to understand what nests beyond appearance, knowing that there is always something beyond. So often we are oppressed on the surface of appearance without knowing how [or wanting?] to see, more precisely, “oltre” [beyond], without even suspecting the richness that lurks [like the shadows in his work] behind the conformism in which most people live. Giuliani is an Artist because he understands this and because he has found expressive means, his ways obviously, for unveiling this “oltre”.

In his figurations there is no pretense; there is no superficiality nor is there, even if at times it could seem so, a suggestion of symbolic solution. In spite of perhaps certain of his intentions, certain allusions, his strength is such that it succeeds in captivating “la pittura” [the art of painting] in its pure, absolute element, without a hint of courtesy or wanting to appeal.

If there is in him a richness of ideas and ideologies, at the moment of action he moves, of course full of those ideas, but without being overwhelmed. He allows full liberty of imagination, to creative geniality, avoiding in this manner that the painting become a mere display of those ideas, devoid of its own autonomy. It seems to me herein lies the treasure of this painting, as it always is with true artists: Klee, Ensor, Magritte or others who could have fallen into a direct depiction of their ‘dreams’, all instead unleashed a fantasy much freer than their initial geniture. Sure, Giuliani has his human “amori”, nonetheless they do not become moods; they remain, yes, to ferment - enliven the substances of his work without conditioning it. This is the importance and the teaching of this painting. Giuliani, to give an example, considers the existential rapport between good and evil and his canvases could have become a sort of exemplification of this eternal dialectic. Instead we have a solution that turns toward and portrays a fantasy with specific “oggetti” [objects], in a certain fixed way, coupled with graphic rigor and layering of shadows. Apparently permeated in symbolism, it is not. Actually it reveals a reality that exists and is unveiled thanks to his intuitive, inventive geniality and capability, from nothing else.

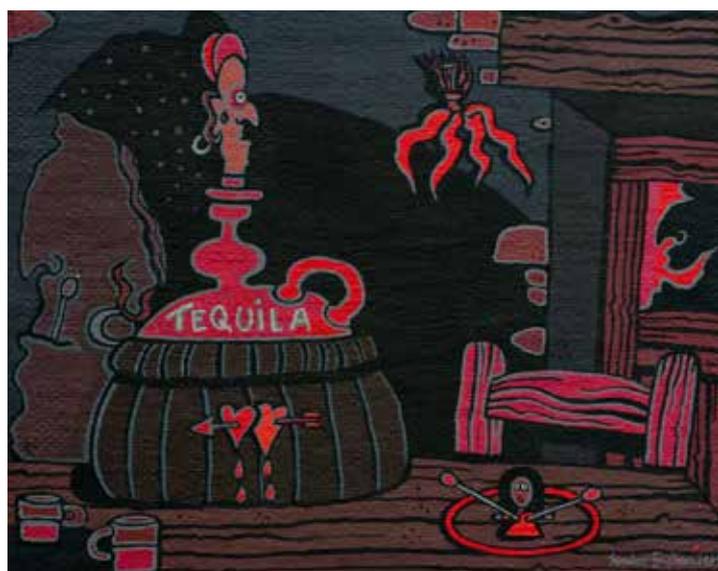
In his work, Giuliani utilizes two different means: acrylic and oil. This does not arise from any whim or desire to experiment, but from an expressive necessity. In the acrylic there is more of a recall, a fascination I would say, of the graphic, where design is predominant and color, similar in each piece, is more a complement for the graphic composition already expressed in his “segno” [mark]. In the oils the color springs off the canvas much more decisively: from an often black background, churned by spatula instead of brush almost disturbing the substances, the range goes from vivid reds to pitilessly bright whites. Together with numbers and other “oggetti” that are vivid integral components, arousing a certain something that goes “oltre” [beyond], while in perfect keeping within a harmonic pictorial conversation.

The painting of Sandro Giuliani exists, lives, in our times of contradiction and ambiguity, so full of desperate hopes, in a way that while fully aware of what goes on, he does not renounce in “dire la sua” [giving his version], and without hesitation. He taps into those archaic and arcane realms, offering an opportunity to visit those parts of our inner worlds that perhaps can make us all a little restless but surely vibrantly alive.

WRITINGS ON SANDRO GIULIANI

In a place, beautiful as it is difficult to reach, there is an old medieval water mill known by few. Enchanting, almost a fantasy, it is enclosed in a narrow valley marked by waterfalls, where a wooden bridge and path conduct you to its ancient walls.

We find ourselves suddenly in the midst of a journey, similar to the one in the film of Roberto Benigni and Massimo Troisi: “We’ve nothing left but to weep”, the difference being that we are not in Frittolo [a remote town in southern Italy] Nor are we in the 1400’s but rather in the valley of Castiglionchio just 15 km from Florence. Here a truly great artist lives with his family and has worked for more than 45 years, Sandro Giuliani also known as the artist of witches. Sandro is a man of essence who lives art with a purity of soul, and paints to tell us and himself a story. 45 years ago he left Florence the city of his birth to take refuge in the Tuscan countryside [in search of freedom to do and create as he pleased - as a teenager he had to hide his paintings under his bed - and was to become, unknowingly, one of the first city bred in 1974 to move to the countryside, thus starting a trend, Italian as well as international, that continues to this day]. Before that he explored the world for various years [throughout the Americas and Europe where among other adventures, lived under bridges in Paris and on houseboats in Amsterdam] bartering and selling his work to fund his travels. He returned to settle in the countryside and eventually bought a ruin, or rather a pile of stones, to build a house.



He returned to settle in the countryside and eventually bought a ruin, or rather a pile of stones, to build a house.

Raised under the guide of great Florentine names of art and after having graduated from a school of graphic design, he decided to abandon that world and pursue his way of being a “uomo libero” [free man]: water and oil colors, a palette, and brushes. I admit to feeling envy as he declares: “nothing else is necessary in life. This is what it takes to be a painter.” When he speaks, you are struck by the power and presence of a true artist, one who thinks first and foremost of his work: he adores it, he coddles it, he completes it and once finished, abandons it for the urgent desire to immediately create another: the thirst for and the pleasure of pure creation [...].

He describes his work as being “popolare”. For him, “popolare” signifies [of and for the “populous”, and that together with the pride of] being Tuscan, it means telling the story of the “contado” [literally the estate of a count or other nobility in the feudal system which existed in Italy until the early 1960’s], of its winemakers, of its land, of the stone houses, all of which assumed surrealistic qualities in his work. The depicted wood burning stoves and fireplaces heat and illuminate the colors on his canvases, often made of old burlap bags. His sculpture is almost exclusively created from very old wine barrel wood [oak and chestnut]. His interiors, taken ad hoc, from his own home, spin a tale of witches, pumpkins, candelabras, pins, spellbinders, magic potions, brooms and many other objects that adorn his paintings making them unique.

ALESSANDRO SARTI

Minister of Culture – Pontassieve 2009

WRITINGS ON SANDRO GIULIANI

Giuliani's ability to tap into levels of passion for all things wholesome and truly human and progressive and truthful... while standing and raging against reactionary, anti-human, destructive gestures and institutions of all kinds... is immensely inspiring!

L'abilita' di Giuliani di attingere a livelli di passione per tutto quel che riguarda il salubre e l'umano e il progressivo e il vero... mentre resiste e si infuria contro il reazionazionario, l'anti-umano, i gesti di distruzione e istituzioni di tutti tipi... e' una grande ispirazione!

CATHERINE HYLAND BRUNO

Actor and Public Speaking Consultant

At first glance, the sculpture of Sandro Giuliani might be categorized as "Tuscan Folk Art": on closer inspection his iconography is more complex. While combining the whimsical and the disturbing, Giuliani's visual choices are well informed by a thorough knowledge of art historical sources both ancient and modern.

Although he often utilizes visual gestures from ethnic art such as that of Africa, South America or Indonesia, he combines these gestures with narratives from his own cultural patrimony, not only that of Greco-Roman mythology, but also pre-Christian Tuscan traditions. Above all, in Giuliani's work I see a recognition of the original tribal function of sculpture: as a doorway and a mediator between the invisible or subconscious "unknown" and our own very visible, tactile reality.

6 March 2007

BONNIE MCCLELLAN - POET AND PAINTER

Texas, USA



WRITINGS ON SANDRO GIULIANI

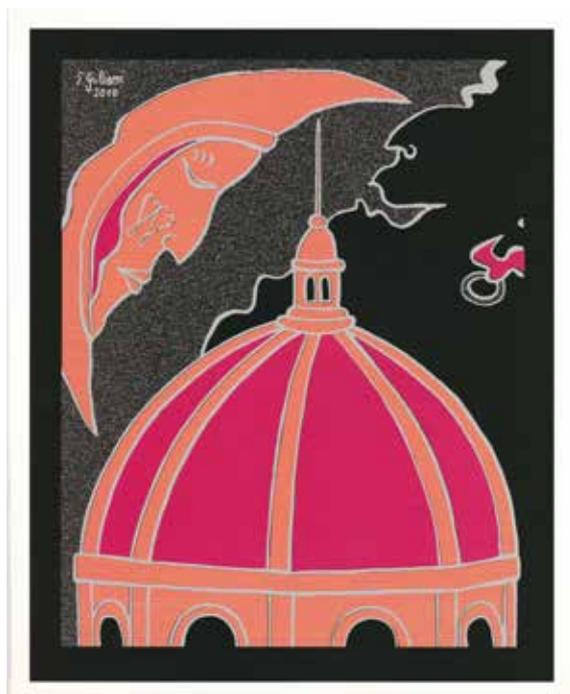
THE LEGEND

One day coming home on the train, a new student of mine asked me where I live. Upon answering, she exclaimed: "Castiglionchio! There is a famous painter who lives in that valley!" "Oh", I answered, playing along. "Yes", and do you know", she continued, "there is a legend about him". At that point I would have preferred disappearing, but had to feebly ask: "And what could that be?" "People really believe that his paintings bring good luck. In fact, my husband has one in his office, and since then, his company has gone international, and I have purchased several to give friends as wedding presents or for the arrival new babies."

Un giorno tornando verso casa in treno, una nuova studentessa mia mi ha chiesto dove vivo. Una volta risposto, ha esclamato ; "Castiglionchio? C'e' un pittore famoso in quella valle!" "Si'?" ho risposto, mantenendo il gioco. "Si' e sai," ha continuato, "c'e' una legenda su di lui?" A quel punto avrei preferito scomparire, ma ero obbligato, con un filo di voce, a chiedere: "Davvero?" "Si'! Si dice che i suoi quadri portano fortuna. Infatti, mio marito ha uno in ufficio e da allora, la sua ditta ha raggiunto fama internazionale e io ho comprato piu' d'uno come regali di nozze o come augurio per l'arrivo di figli."

MARTHA ADELE LANDISE

Sandro Giuliani's wife



GUARDA FIRENZE - LOOK AT FLORENCE

38th Edition of the Florence Marathon

May 9 2010

When Sandro was asked in the spring of 2010 to design a T shirt for the annual Florence Marathon, he did so but on the condition that the T shirts would be black. The finish line of the event was in the Piazza del Duomo [cathedral square] and on the morning of the marathon, as the runners staggered in to receive breakfast and recognition, they also received the black T shirts designed by Sandro. They happily put them on in lieu of what they had worn to run in, and the whole piazza gradually filled with the black T shirts!