

Like a Wave

Simon Gaon in action

a cura di Annarita Rossi e Marcello Chinca Hosch

New York Street Painter welcomed by the Andrea Tardini Gallery for his first solo show in Venice

The gallery located on the Giudecca island concludes its 2016 exhibition season, a year that marks the five-hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Venice Ghetto, with a personal show dedicated to the American artist of Jewish origin Simon Gaon

The **Andrea Tardini Gallery** is pleased to present from 11 November 2016 to 8 January 2017 (opening: Thursday 10 November, 6 pm) the American painter **Simon Gaon's first exhibition in Venice**. Born in **Manhattan in 1943** to a Jewish Uzbek family, Gaon is considered to be the last of the **Expressionists**, the **successor of** artists such as **Chaim Soutine** and **Marc Chagall** as well as an **irresistible narrator of life in New York**, the city in which he founded the **Street Painter** movement and which has recently paid tribute to him by including his works in the **collection of the New York Historical Society Museum**.

With this show, Simon Gaon finally returns to Venice, where he lived in the Seventies, and he does so coming *back to action*, painting live, as he did then, the city's streets and the shores of its canals; this time, his favored point of view will be from the banks of the Canale della Giudecca, in the spaces of the workshop **Fucina Andrea Tardini**, which **will be transformed for 14 days into his personal atelier**.

What Simon brings with him from New York, and above all the island of Manhattan, is its vivid daily life, seen from the streets. Immersed in the crowd at **Times Square**, Gaon accentuates his love for humanity, expressed by the multitude, the deep energy communicated to him by chaos and the dense interweaving of lives and stories. Unremitting and energetic, Simon paints in between the smog and the vibrating lights, from the shores of the canals and the bridges: the evocative perspectives, the faces of passersby, the portraits and Carnival expressions are all set

afame by his highly tactile art. Every figure is unique, wrought out of corpulently blended pigments, brought to the canvas with brushes, knives and fingers, using unhesitant, instinctive gestures.

Precisely his love for the street and his devotion to live painting led to the birth of the **Street painter** movement in 1977, with a group of eight artists (Tad Day, Ronald De Nota, Jessie Benton-Evans, Simon Gaon, Don Gray, Myron R. Heise, Kenneth McIndoe, and Philip L. Sherrod) who gave themselves to paintin "on the road", hunting for subjects among the streets of New York.

Many comparisons can be drawn between Venice, the city that saw **the first Ghetto** in history, whose five-hundredth anniversary is being celebrated this year, and the metropolis that is now home to the world's **largest Jewish community** outside of Israel; one a port to the Mediterranean and the other a gateway to the Atlantic, both important financial centers, and both acting as a crossroads for exchanges of merchandise, people and culture.

Simon's personal story, like that of many New Yorkers, is a story of migrations and voyages. Born in Manhattan to a Jewish family originally from Uzbekistan, as of 1962 he travelled across Europe thanks to a scholarship, first visiting **Haarlem** in Holland, then **Hamburg, Amsterdam, Paris** e and lastly his beloved **Venice**, where he lived for a year along with his first maestro and mentor Arthur Bressler (1927–1975). His style of painting, already highly sculptural and tactile, thus began to draw on the **Fauves, German Expressionism, Chaïm Soutine** and **Marc Chagall**, as seen in his intense portraits of rabbis and Lubavitchers. He has engaged in a dense correspondence with the elderly **Oskar Kokoschka**, admires **Vincent Van Gogh** and looks towards **William Turner**, as a grand master of the past, to whom he pays tribute in various works.

«It's difficult to describe, - Simon Gaon tells us - how for these artists anxiety is "like an invisible color". In Soutine, there is no gravity: everything and everyone is about to fall into the void. He speaks of the moment. In that suspended instant, as though there was no tomorrow, I believe that Soutine, like Kafka, foresaw the drama of the Holocaust, in a mystic sense. In Vincent Van Gogh's paintings, - the artist continues - with their whirlwinds of color, I see the agitation around his self-portrayed figure, his emotional disturbance, his restlessness, his anxiety in the use of color. This is the feeling I share».

With this exhibition **painting once again becomes**, therefore, **the unrivaled protagonist of the gallery** on the Giudecca, which thus proceeds in its rediscovery and reevaluation of this artistic language; the leitmotif is once again **water**, an element inflected according to each of its manifold aspects and meanings. After the winter's inauguration, with the fresh streams of Albania by Orion Shima, and the summer season, marked by the deep blues of Christelle Labourgade, this new autumn exhibition is **a homage to this painter's artistic career, over fifty years long** and played out like a series of *waves* between metropolitan America and the streets of Paris, Amsterdam and Hamburg. But it is also a homecoming, reaching the shores and canals of his beloved Venice, traveled through and painted as though dancing.

Information

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