

Saul Steinberg **Milanese tribute**

works by:

Saul Steinberg

Tullio Pericoli

Andrea Ventura

Paolo Ventura

From 1933 to 1941 Saul Steinberg lived in the Città degli Studi, a neighbourhood of Milano close to the Politecnico, where in 1940 he graduated in Architecture. By then, Italy's racial laws had put an end to thoughts of a career in architecture as well as to his more brilliant career as a cartoonist for Italian humor newspapers. More than two-hundred of his drawings were published in «Bertoldo» and «Il Settebello». They reveal remarkable subtlety and expressiveness, which the American public would begin to enjoy in 1940. Perhaps few artists testify, as Steinberg did, to the standing of drawing: although separate from other visual arts, drawing entertains a respected dialogue with them, in no way secondary or subsidiary.

Traces of Steinberg's Milanese training run through his production, at times clearly resurfacing in the tangible memories of the city, its streets and buildings. This is how and why we got the idea for this small exhibition, while the Triennale di Milano is dedicating a major exhibition to his work. A Milanese tribute to Steinberg as a corollary to an extraordinary corpus of his 1949-1981 drawings (including the slice of mortadella for his friend Aldo Buzzi). Three other artists who have a strong link with the city of Milano – where they came from or which they left – complement Steinberg. They are three authors who have long regarded him as an ideal master and were inspired by him in different ways.

Tullio Pericoli portrayed him in a series of drawings which seem to take their cue from Steinberg's expressive style right from the first 1992 one, to then almost immediately move on to his self determined style we all know (the last drawing is from 2021). An exhibition of Pericoli's work is being held at the Palazzo Reale in Milano at the same time. Andrea Ventura has painted a series of interiors (oil on paper), of Steinberg's places in Milano in the 1930s: from the staircase of his via della Sila house to the Bar del Grillo. In 2014, Paolo Ventura tackled the well-known photo-portrait taken by Evelyn Hofer in 1978, where Steinberg poses with a life-size silhouette of himself as a child.

Steinberg's had a complex relationship with his past and with Milano. «Your letter makes me go all soft and nostalgic» – Steinberg wrote to Buzzi on November 23, 1945 from New York – «and the old things as usual look very beautiful. But I've been fooled too many times by these things and I know now that the reality is the one I find myself in and can also imagine the sadness of Milan»

Roberto Dulio