

## Reviews

Francesco Manganaro,  
Alessio Altadonna, Adriana Arena

**Mario Manganaro**  
**“...un disegnatore generoso”**

EDAS Editori, Messina 2018  
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The book here exposed is the exhibition catalogue of *MM I RICORDANDO una mostra di disegni di Mario Manganaro*, but it is also much more, collecting, next to drawings, texts written by friends, family, students and colleagues of Mario Manganaro to ensure memories, shared practice, thoughts addressed to him.

Edited by Francesco Manganaro, Alessio Altadonna and Adriana Arena, the book, entitled *Mario Manganaro “...un disegnatore generoso”*, published by EDAS, collects ninety-five *Drawings by M.M. on the left pages* and sixty-one *Drawings by M.M. exhibited* (drawings are cataloged by title, year, place, size, technique, support), side by side to fifty-five textual contributions signed by the same numbers of authors.

These short texts appear as a collection of letters written to a friend and to themselves, reconstructing episodes of life lived together and shared memories. “Even fragments of correspondence by e-mail, some publishing, testify, to have received in support of their studies, at that intersection, even at a distance that he did not miss” [Marchese 2018]. The texts seem to repeat the drawings in words: meticulous report of events, descriptions in which we recognize the places of meetings, the talks, the quiet warnings of the professor; the academic and scientific authoritativeness, the delight of being together silently. Each part is useful to complete the other one. As well as the presence of his wife, sons

and nephews, at the exhibition opening, is useful to complete his absence.

Prepared on a design by Claudio Marchese, in collaboration with Michela De Domenico, the exhibition is divided into five thematic ‘rooms’: *Visions of the Strait, Architecture, Nature, City and Landscape, Art*.

High white partitions, orthogonal to each other and rotated diagonally to the room, border the ‘rooms’ that hosting drawings according to particular themes; the open corners of the partitions allow the adjacent ‘room’ to be seen, anticipating, in oblique views, different visions and panoramas. Each session is introduced by a vertical banner in which in addition to a sketch there are an autograph text and the title session. The drawings are arranged on metallic canvases in rows misaligned at the height of the visitor’s visual horizon. Twenty drawings for each theme, framed in ash frames and detached from a passpartout that enhances the uniqueness and at the same time makes the focus on the single scene drawn.

The sketches are detailed part of the world seen by the professor. Each sign shows a real detail of architectures, landscapes, faces, transcribed in the redrawing world. The real world he has traveled and seen, the world of which “takes possession of something, though impalpable, of the place” [p. 15].

Places of which he leaves traces in drawings that are repeated sometimes for many years, at distance of signs,



each of them shows the modification of the time passed "in the hope that the drawing could stand as an incomplete but structured witness on the territory surveyed or to be surveyed" [p. 161]. Two trestles host the perspective *Palace of Culture of Messina Competition*, made in 1975, and *I Ponti in Tasca*, a haulietic bridge made on 2007, which Mario Manganaro so commented in a text: "At the waiting dimension the input to narrate part of what the place represents for a Strait of Messina observer prevailed. A large liquid square, constantly crossed far and wide from big and small boats, full of people and things, [...] which in the face each other 'ab antiquo' created an imaginary mirror, in which the one reflects in the other its indefinite and mysterious part". [Manganaro 2008]. *Hortus Linearum*, is a drawings composition from 2003, standing alone in a dedicated space and a projector sends in loop photos, drawings, interviews, videos.

It has begin to "realize that vision of the world" [Cacciari 2007, p. 11] for sequential signs that only in a general exposition – when all the drawings will be shown – can be captured in a single vision. It is the world vision of an observer, left to the students, to the scholars now able to reconstruct the geographical units of those fragments of "recognizable places" mentioned by Laura Carlevaris in her presentation.

Mario Manganaro is not the Fra Mauro of Cowan who draws the world told by the merchants coming to Venice, it is rather the Marco Polo of Calvino, the traveler who knows the lands of the Empire better than Kublai Khan. His drawings are not opposed to reality, they transcribe it, transfer it to the notebook, allowing essence and consistency, degradation or integrity of the portrayed object; the form of the pla-

ce is not expressed, but it is the sign that becomes a story, *logos*, and even conversation. Those conversations apparently difficult *per verba*, become eloquent in the narrative trace of the sign, in a too loud solitude, often disturbed by curious colleagues who, not satisfied by the signs, tried to steal the words. The event *MM I RICORDANDO una mostra di disegni di Mario Manganaro* is the last of a series of meetings held in memory of the professor from Messina. The first meeting was held on May 7th, 2017. During this event "Mario's family, friends and collaborators remember him on the first anniversary of his death [...]. The intent of the group was not to forget my father's studies and his work and to define ways to show them to the scientific community", so wrote Francesco Manganaro on the scientific journal *Galileo* [Manganaro 2018, p. 31]. The aim is to make available to the scientific community and to the others, researchs and the work of professor Manganaro, who left an archive of more than 3.000 china, pencil and color drawings, made on valuable papers or on simple sheets, cataloged by "description, year, place, grammage, support and tools" [Manganaro 2018, p. 31].

Francesco Manganaro is the creator ad editor of the <[www.mariomanganaro.it](http://www.mariomanganaro.it)> website where we can read 'In memory of Mario Manganaro'; it is a storage under construction, presenting on the menu two main items: the first is 'Incontri' ('Meetings'), in which are inserted the events that have already been held and those to be held; the second is 'Ricordando' ('Remembering'), an exhaustive documents, images, videos and drawings repertoire.

From 5th to 8th May 2018 at the Palazzo della Cultura PalaAntonello of Messina hold the first exhibition of Mario Manganaro's drawings. "The exhibition,

although defined, appears to the visitor; ...under construction: more than anything else, it can be completed! Of course, an anthology would need a museum entirely dedicated to him, such was the great attention that Mario Manganaro reserved for everything that came before his eyes and aroused interest in study and research, as well as affection" [Marchese 2018].

The exhibition opening includes some spechs introduced by Adriana Arena and Francesco Manganaro. The speakers are the President of Unione Italiana per il Disegno (UID), Vito Cardone, Laura Carlevaris (Sapienza University of Rome), Antonio Conte (University of Basilicata) and Sereno Innocenti (University of Brescia).

Cardone, speaking of his "things out of place", highlights the exceptional qualities of teacher and researcher of Mario Manganaro, "not to confine his

## M. M. | RICORDANDO

una mostra di disegni di Mario Manganaro

Messina, Palazzo della Cultura | 5, 6, 7, 8 maggio 2018



Inaugurazione | sabato 5 maggio, ore 16.00

Intervengono: Vito Cardone - Laura Carlevaris - Antonio Conte - Sereno Innocenti



Coordinamento: Francesco Manganaro - Alessio Altadonna - Adriana Arena

Mostra a cura di: Michela De Domenico - Claudio Marchese

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figure only in the role of draftsman”, he remembers “far from the academic power” but keeping strongly his role as teacher and Engineering Department director. He mentions the “educational value” that is on the exhibition catalogue *Introduction*: “now I draw together with my students the city and its suburbs. [...] To consider himself as one of the students is important to understand their problems and to make sure that the experiments always concern something that unites us and does not take us away” [pp. 15-17]. Drawing together –highlights the president– “is a method of learning by osmosis among students. It break down the crystal barriers. Together with the teacher there is a mutual learning, without detachment”. Cardone concludes urging them to think about the possible production of a critical anthology of thematic writings, “those for example, which show clear educational and operational indications”. Laura Carlevaris recalls the “silent presence of the professor” as a strong figure whose role was always that of “connecting and placing each one of us

in his place”. In the same way in which in his drawings we recognize urban details or landscapes that come out of minute signs that are shattered and are composed by reconnecting the whole in a single unitarity. Carlevaris recalls in metaphor the drawings of *Felicittà* by Richard Scarry or those of Iacovitti, in which each character, placed in the graphic context and busy in his things has a role of close relationship with others and whose balance depends on the position he occupies in the context where it is located. “There is a sense of belonging to the place of every single element that participates in the construction of the whole within a graphic equilibrium”.

“As well as –continues the professor– his drawings of the Strait of Messina, in which the water join the two banks with the boats that travel in a transversal direction, Mario Manganaro, has helped to place each of us, teachers of architectural drawing, in the place that suits him, in order to paint a unitary context”.

Antonio Conte says about his participation in the construction, starting from

2006, of a “collective place of work and research” to which “drawing and representation of the world” were the main focuses. Conte compares the work of Mario Manganaro to the *Soun of human voice* with which Paul Valéry notes the Cartesian variations in the pressing repetition of the action. “The representation of things that he observed during a life is like the representation of the frenetic pulsation of our daily things that interlace and crystallize in that infinite place made up from the weaving of his signs enclosed in the small spaces of his notebooks. He searches through the signs the things that comprised of the world trying to crystallize the sense of a knowledge through a silent reasoning”. Finally, Sereno Innocenzi ‘builds’ a “drawing that begins and a drawing that ends”. Starting from the rectangles that define a tatami, through rotations, overturns and prolonged lines, he composes places, architectures and details in a historical narration of which the projected light of a lamp becomes the connecting element.

Paola Raffa

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