

PRESS RELEASE

LISA PONTI
DISEGNI DI COMPAGNIA

From June 22nd to July 24th, 2023

Lisa, Aldo e Saul

This exhibition by Galleria Annamaria Consadori is in ideal continuity with the one organised in 2021 Saul Steinberg: Milanese homage. In fact, the corpus of drawings, or rather: of drawn letters by Lisa Ponti (1922- 2019) presented here is that of her correspondence with Aldo Buzzi (1910-2009). A probably unique sending of images that was completed or at least ended in 2009 (a letter entitled Diario, without drawings, bears the dates 21, 22, and 23 March 2009; the postmark on a surviving envelope is dated 8 August of the same year), the last year of Aldo's life, who passed away on 9 October 2009.

Almost all the drawings bear folded marks precisely because they were sent in an envelope to her friend Aldo: this element testifies to the vitality of a medium, the drawing, which for Lisa not only has an autonomous expressive value but also conveys and synthesises images and thoughts that are strongly autobiographical and linked - like her father's famous drawn letters - to her relationship with the addressee and the need to communicate an emotional state. Sono un disegno di compagnia: posso entrare? (I am a company drawing: may I come in?) Lisa writes in the drawing that gives this exhibition's title.

At the same time, each of the drawings takes on, detached from the contingency that generated it, an autonomous and, in some ways, universal artistic value. A universe of lightning intuition expressed on tiptoe, as always happens in Lisa's writings (recently reissued in anthological form, together with a selection of her drawings, in the volume Lisa Ponti. Io sono un disegno, published by Humboldt Books in 2023, following an exhibition at the Macro in Rome in 2022 and one at the Triennale di Milano in 2023).

After all, already in Scheiwiller's small volume Miracoli di San Bernardino da Siena, published in 1944 and recently unearthed, Lisa's prose borders on poetry, but is very precise in outlining what would be too complex, or take too much time and space, to address in more conventionally disciplinary terms. So her drawings for Aldo, so the drawings of Saul Steinberg (1914-1999).

But why Saul? And above all, why this late correspondence? Lisa and Aldo had certainly known each other since the war years (the years to which the bronze portrait of Lisa created by Carmelo Cappello and exhibited in the exhibition dates back), but

it was immediately afterwards that they actively collaborated on the editorial staff of “Domus”. Aldo published a few short articles in the magazine between March and September 1944 (some of which are republished in the beautiful anthology Aldo Buzzi. Tutte le opere, edited by Gabriele Gimmelli for La nave di Teseo in 2020). In October 1946, the piece L’architetto Steinberg appeared in the pages of “Domus”, introducing the Italian public to the new activity of the formidable Romanian draftsman and artist, later naturalised American) who had been Aldo’s fellow student at the Facoltà di Architettura of the Politecnico di Milano between 1933 and 1940 and who would remain closed to him for the rest of his life. Lisa also published an article on Saul in “Domus”, which came out in May 1950.

Probably the rapprochement between Aldo and Lisa testifies to a willingness, without nostalgia, to share a past and an accomplice and deflected gaze (for both Lisa and Aldo), transversal to the media limelight. Saul is at the centre of many of these - and other - drawings by Lisa. Ricevuti regali bellissimi da Aldo + Saul! Dobbiamo rincontrarci (Received beautiful gifts from Aldo + Saul! We must meet again), Lisa writes; and again: Un saluto da Saul (A greeting from Saul), then drawing a Pinocchio with a long nose revealing that Lisa is the writer. Evoked and quoted, Saul probably becomes the trait d’union that brings the three protagonists back together at the end of their lives (Saul dies in 1999, Aldo in 2009 and Lisa in 2019), in what, as Lisa says in one of the drawings in the exhibition: Gio Ponti non diceva “vecchiaia”. Diceva “grande età” (Gio Ponti did not say “old age”. He used to say “great age”).

Roberto Dulio