

50's



During his summer vacations in Venice, he experiences significant developments:

"But the summers at the Lido held another education in seeing for me. An Austrian acquaintance of my mother's, a suitor of Aunt Bianca, who was part of the jury of the Film Festival, often visited our beach cabin; with his complicity, I spent entire afternoons in front of the screen in the Festival's grand hall, watching the competing films. And then in Venice there was Pound, whom a young friend accompanied every day on his silent walks to the Zattere, to which I soon joined. Walking alongside that great solitary and taciturn poet was also an act of devotion to his poetry, to the Cantos, which I still reread today."

Ezra Pound will often return in Adami's adult paintings and drawings with portraits dedicated to the poet and paintings inspired by the Cantos. In Venice, he meets W. H. Auden and begins painting in Felice Carena's studio, where he meets Oskar Kokoschka, who would like him to be his student in Salzburg and whose work "Promethesa Thermopylae" he sees at the 1952 Biennale.

"The encounter in Venice with O.K.'s Prometheus was, for the boy I was, the revelation of how painting could so reconnect with philosophy; analytical drawing and figuration are forms of thought, challenges to seeing, that new pedagogy for the education of our eyes."

During this formative period, he approaches the musical world with great passion, also thanks to his



mother Jolanda, an excellent pianist.

"In Venice, I also discovered Stravinsky's music, listening at the Fenice to the premiere of The Rake's Progress conducted by the composer; even then I was very interested in musical language, and for this reason, in Milan, I attended the Studio di Fonologia in Corso Sempione, founded by Maderna and Berio, with whom I would later develop a deep friendship."

In the same year, he enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera, in Milan, where he became friends with Bepi Romagnoni.

"I became a painter to redeem my father's absurd antipathy towards a poor artist who lived in the attic of our house; he called him 'dauber' without even knowing him."



Valerio & Camilla

At Brera, he followed the courses of Achille Funi, his true apprenticeship as a painter, drawing for eight hours a day on the great models of ancient and neoclassical art that he would continue to draw inspiration from.

"It was he who imposed on me the dedication to drawing, understood as a constant exercise that requires the apprenticeship of the hand and touch, of the eyes and the heart." That dedication learned from Achille Funi would accompany him throughout his life. Not a day would pass, when he did not draw or paint following his motto "Nulla dies sine linea".

His first trip to Paris dates back to 1952, on the occasion of the Salon de Mai. There he met the Creole poet Edouard Glissant, who introduced him to the painters Sebastián Matta and Wifredo Lam, marking the beginning of lifelong friendships. At that time, artistic attention was focused on the informal and Abstraction, but Adami distanced himself from this trend, not being interested in the painting of moods and the unconscious. Instead, he sought a new figurative language capable of reconstructing the space of the painting. Thus were born the works of those years, the "black backgrounds" that looked to Kokoschka but also to Matta and Bacon.

In 1955, he graduated from the Accademia di Brera and exhibited the portrait of his brother Giancarlo in Venice, with which he won the Marzotto prize. He had his first solo exhibition at the Pater Gallery in Milan. Despite completing his academic path, Adami continued to frequent the Milanese artistic



environment, which was lively in those years. The Jamaica bar in Via Brera was the main meeting point for artists passing through the Lombard capital. It was here that their lives intertwined, animating passionate discussions about art and politics. In this context, Valerio Adami and Antonio Recalcati, both young, distinguished themselves with their works characterized by neo-surrealist geometries, going against the current and embracing a return to figuration.

In 1956, he painted "L'asino di Empoli", "Bambine in seggiolino", "La giostra" and exhibited these at the San Fedele gallery in Milan. From then on, he signed his paintings with the name Adami alone. In 1958, he spent the winter in London, sharing a studio with his friend Bepi Romagnoni and sharing curiosity about that Anglo-Saxon culture that fascist rhetoric had erased. He attended Kasmin's evenings, the young art dealer who, following Mallarmé's example, opened his house once a week to new artists in the city. He met Francis Bacon and William Scott, representatives of the London avant-garde.

The following year, he presented the series of paintings "Liturgies of a Fact" at the Galleria del Naviglio in Milan. Emilio Tadini, in the introduction to the catalog, explains that Adami, in his artistic path, did not "fall" into abstract solutions but rather focused on the need to disintegrate traditional visual conventions to build a new figurative form, aiming at a concrete vitality of the image as dynamic.

It was precisely in those (still take out) Milanese years that Valerio, thanks to his brother Giancarlo, met Camilla Cantoni Mamiani della Rovere, then still a student at the Accademia di Brera, who would become his future life companion. Camilla has recounted that from the first moment she crossed the threshold of Valerio's studio, the spark struck, and it was immediately clear to her that they would spend the rest of their lives together. And so it was, until her death in 2023.

