

Che ve ne sembra dell' America ?

Gregg inarrestabile

Architetto con la passione della pittura e distacco buddhista

Gregg Unstoppable

An architect with a passion for painting and Buddhist detachment

Jon Gregg studied architecture with Louis Kahn, the architect who everyone now knows; but, who while he was living scarcely succeeded in being entrusted with the projects that he deserved. It's like the old adage that is infinitely repeated: the admired artist left outside, while all know him.

On one side, Gregg understands the game of ambitions in the architectural profession, and on the other, he deflects this with a loose interested search, and you discover that he's passionate about is painting. Also in this field (painting) there is a lot of distortion and the race to gain fame and fast consumption, but in painting it's more possible to survive in an alternative dimension than in architecture. The painter, as Morandi and Braque demonstrated, and as many contemporaries demonstrate (in Italy, Bruno Pinto and Livio Marzot are two names that come to mind), can work, without too much sacrifice, in a space independent of external destructive forces.

Jon Gregg has succeeded in constructing just that space, a very special mental and physical place, in order to detach himself from the circus, and also to live beautifully. His paintings are regularly exhibited every two years in one of the more prestigious cooperative galleries of New York, the 55 Mercer Gallery. This frees one from the pressures of the market of fashion, because the many collectors who attend the openings feel privileged to view and to acquire works that don't enter in the bazaar hustle and bustle of Chelsea.

Then Gregg, like many painters feeling the desire to feel less isolated, created an artistic community. With his wife Louise, he acquired an old mill, in a small village in Vermont. He restored it, and now 30 other buildings as well, renovating them, as an expert architect. For 23 years, they have been building the Vermont Studio Center, now the largest and most inter- national Artists and Writers Residency Program in the U.S. an oasis for artists and writers of all ages and levels of emergence from Asia, Europe, Africa, Latin America and all of the American states. These artists spend 1, 2, or 3 months in a community quite inspired, yet tranquil; and receive a studio, housing, and meals in the communal dining room that are prepared by a chef who somehow manages to cook such refined meals for 75 people, three times a day, 7 days a week. Every week prominent visitors arrive, from whom the residents can receive individual studio visits, critiques, and writing conferences.

I immensely like Jon Gregg's paintings. From them is born a sense of absolute concentration, always on the edge of collapse. They consist of layers and layers of oil paint, in which the viewer can trace the weaving paths of contemplation and tension. The theme of this artist is simply to paint, and the paintings come as offerings to painting, and come from images that taken from wherever.

Recently he's been going to Venice to sketch, taking details from Tintoretto and others. The sketches are then brought back on canvas in the studio and transform from the eye to the hand of the painter. This is an art that does not demonstrate, but when looked at is revealed unstoppable. The bodies of the original persons become modern bodies, coil to you in their essence, eternal and mortal.

Gregg served an apprenticeship for many years with the famous Tibetan meditation master, Chogyam Trungpa, and he's able now to unite the Buddhist idea of non-attachment with the existential anguish of our contemporary drift. As Gregg converses with other artists in his community, in his paintings he converses with the past of a civilization foreign to him, distant enough from it to be able to see it as if from behind the screen of time, but also in a way that inspires passion. After all the trouble of big paintings of empty attitudes and the sensibility that contaminates our galleries, I receive from the anger and delicacy of these paintings a strong desire to continue.

Translation by Jon Sessions
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