

Marcello Avenali

Italian stained glass window designer
(1912-1981),

He was born in Rome on November 16th. 1912 by Luigi and Elena Terziani. His grandfather Domenico was a well-known Roman builder established in Rome with the construction of Palazzo Brancaccio and the headquarters of the Bank of Italy. At the age of thirteen, in 1925, he was enrolled with a special leave at the high school and at the end of the four-year period he was admitted to the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1939 he enrolled at the Experimental Cinematographic Center.

The news that at that time he worked with M. Cito Filomarino for the stage set-ups of the Opera of Rome, does not find a secure answer in any of Filomarino's sketches stored in the archive of the theater.

In 1939 Gallenga's gallery was held in Rome, his first exhibition, in which he showed himself sensitive-the artistic experiences of the "Roman school", especially those expressed by C. Cagli, R. Guttuso and F. Pirandello. In 1941 he was appointed assistant at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome, thus beginning a long and intense teaching career.

After the liberation of Rome, in 1944, he participated in the first Italian art exhibition, organized in the Rome gallery by the Roman Committee of the Youth Federation of the Party of Action; the following year he was among the artists present at the first exhibition of the Free Association of the Arts, held in the S. Marco Gallery of the capital, whose intent was, in the words of the poster, "a frank and cordial collaboration in view of an end ... keep alive in art the spirit of revolution that originated and developed in France from 1830 onwards and which allowed artists (to those who had the qualitative possibilities) to completely renew themselves".

In 1948 he exhibited at the Galleria Margherita di Roma a series of wooden and cloth puppets (all lost) inspired by the characters of the fairy tales, using the collaboration of his sister Anna and Cito Filomarino, who must wear some doll clothes. While on the one hand the processing of new materials was for Avenali a test bench for successive and bold experiments, on the other he felt "relocated to painting" by receiving new impulses "to take up brushes and colors left over for too long".

His language was initially oscillating among the expressive possibilities of postcubic figurativity and those of a more decisive abstraction: an example is the 1951 Meditation picture and Walker. But already the 1957 blue nude works and Still Life of 1958 show shattered objects, and more incisive make the suggestion and I remember the art of Braque, an artist he loved and knew deeply.

Among the numerous artistic commitments of. In this period, we remember the participation in the VI Quadriennale d'arte di Roma of 1952.

In 1958 he painted, on commission of the International Institute of Liturgical Art, the altarpiece for the church of St. John Bosco in Rome, in which Cubist tendencies are strengthened alongside influences of futuristic ascendancy. On this same search line in 1959 the series of churches and cathedrals depicting churches and cathedrals began to be drawn from the main Roman monuments (they are mostly preserved in private collections: see M. A., 1983).

In 1960 he made some glass panels, painted on the back, for Michelangelo's Hotel in Rome, and the following year the architect Lucio Passarelli entrusted him with the decoration of some of the walls of the new Roman office of Banco di Sardegna, made with wooden slats covered with copper embossed.

In 1961, he traveled to Washington and São Paulo, Brazil, in the first town to perform mosaic works in the chapel of apostolic legation and in the second to create some mosaics and a series of stained glass windows for the cathedral. Of 1962 are the mosaics of the headquarters of the Automobile Club of Rome.

In the same year he was entrusted with the execution of the stained glass window of the Sole highway church in Florence, made by architect G. Michelucci.

Avenali designed a large metal structure with planing planes in which to insert "Dallas" glass blocks, a thicker and more durable glass type. To perform the work, the painter moved to Florence several months and made use of the collaboration of the Quintin glassware for coloring and working glass.

According to the architect Michelucci, in the great bright mosaic depicting s. John the Baptist, Avenali was able to indicate "a new possibility of inserting into the architecture of a type of glazing that does not block the illuminating openings ... The thickness of the multi-layered glass can always offer the possibility of greater participation than architecture, becoming construction and non-buffering".

In his interview in 1961, Avenali had noticed that in the process of glass, an "absolute color search" could be achieved. The pictorial problems are bound by the obligatory engagement of the lead that makes the façade elastic and indestructible. This lead is the nerve, the blood of the glass and as it can not be done technically, it can not be neglected in the composition of the color, because this line is black ...: the color requirement of the glass is so violent, so explosive its color that it is useless to look for the depth of different plans, the perspective is almost useless".

The quest for expressive color abilities also had new impulses from the realization of tapestries (executed with long frames by specialized firms, and by sewing the pieces of cloth between them), works in which the fabric appeared at the same time as an abstract form and as tangible and thick matter.

Some tapestries were exhibited along with those of Cagli, Guttuso, Mirko, Muzzi and Spazzapan in the Italian Archeological Exhibition organized in Athens in 1964 and replicated the following year in Paris.

In 1967 the Avenali made some abstract iron structures that were exhibited at the Il Carpine gallery; the following year, in the same premises, abstract objects were made of pieces of glass embedded in iron structures.

Always continuing to work in the field of architecture, in 1969 he made a composition in steel and glass "Dallas" for the Hall of the IMI Council of Rome; in the same year he performed a work made of brass corner elements and black resin which, to a greater extent, had to decorate a New York building designed by M. Breuer (the structure, which remained in the design state, was purchased by the Hotel nations of Rome).

In 1969, in the Roman Gallery Studio Erre first exhibited collages, works made from different materials (cloth, paper, metal), sometimes accompanied by the use of colors and paints, often sewn together from metal stitches.

"Painter-artisan", defined it as Maurizio Fagiolo (1980), insisting on the predilection of the. for the processing of different materials and for the expression of a true and skillful manual capacity: Avenali "he is not afraid of materials and techniques, even the least pictorial. Yet you will always feel like a painter because in those materials he is especially interested in the coloristic impression".

In 1972 he became a member of the National Academy of St. Luke and became a member of the Superior Council for Antiquities and Fine Arts. He was also invited to the XI Quadriennale of Art of Rome where he exhibited five collages of cloth made between 1971 and 1972. In 1974 he was entrusted with the creation of a metal structure for the façade of the Roman headquarters of the Banca Popolare di Milano designed by architect Luigi Moretti. In 1978 he was appointed director of

the Academy of Fine Arts in Rome; In 1979 the publishing house Gli Amici editori published the collection of Verlaine poems titled Femmes illustrated by its three etchings.

In 1980 he designed and executed his last public work, a steel structure devoted to the memory of Aldo Moro and the massacre of via Fani, located in Brindisi.

Avenali died in Rome on Nov. 11. 1981.

Despite the constant changes to his artistic research line, Avenali never abandoned painting on a stand, which allowed him to constantly improve his knowledge of surfaces and space and to find the "psychological security and the right proportions" of the great murals Verdet, 1972, p. 21). Even in painting he tried to open new fields to his own research, beginning to adopt acrylic colors and spray paintings in 1970 even on tripod work.

Underlying these ongoing experiments was the awareness of the role of the modern artist who must be able to seize and transform the artistic world into the stresses of the modern world.

In 1983 a retrospective exhibition was organized by the Rome Prize Body; the following year, always in Rome, was published the volume A poet artist with poems by M. Luisa Spaziani illustrated by twenty-four designs and gouaches of the Avengers.

His works are in the National Gallery of Modern Art in Rome and in the collection of contemporary art of the Pontifical Museums and Galleries, as well as in many private collections.

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