

FOREWORD

*“Today, I am defined as a researcher of femininity;
in short, through my art I try to highlight
what is evident for most of the persons, making it unique.”*

Vesna Pavan

Thus introduces herself Vesna Pavan, a painter and an art designer of international fame. She has been able to interpret the feminine soul of the present society, suggesting extraordinary pictures of feminine universe, placing emphasis on the sensuality and elegance, revealing, at the same time, its unconfessed weaknesses and hidden fragilities. Vesna Pavan is an enigmatic interpreter of a *chick* femininity which lives on in the context of colourless every day life, sometimes frivolous sometimes attractive and in which rule a slight sense of solitude together with the high interest for culture. On the present-day horizon, her artistic research opens the road to the ideal of a strong and self-confident woman, sensual and uninhibited, promoting a new way of “being woman” in this jungle of life: it is a new idealised feminine form which puts up around itself the invisible and defensive paling fence under false pretences of emancipation and

of an inviting body. Such a shield shows itself necessary in this far too much binding real world; it should be noted, in this regard, the eloquent virile absence in the art of Vesna Pavan.

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INTRODUCTION

Prominent at national level as a sensible researcher of femininity and delicate interpreter of the aesthetic sense of the Twenty first century, Vesna Pavan proposes a new model of femininity, reactive to the traditional schemes and to the present-day tasks of the gentle sex.

Vesna Pavan has been a sudden earthquake which shook artistic research and pictorial activity of the Lombard region during the last decade of creative turmoil, spreading its perfumes of progress and diffusing rebellious notes over the entire national territory.

The last three years registered, on the artistic stage of Milan and in the whole northern area, a frequent presence of the Vesna Pavan's art at the most important cultural events which aimed to increase the value of the role and the ancestral virtues of the today's woman. This model of femininity conceals decaying beauty, highlighting the strength of woman's physique and her intellectual and relational gifts.

The communication qualities of this brilliant artist outline a highly charismatic personality, able to leave an indelible mark on the contemporary art without leaving the room for any reversibility of her concepts.

Having examined the *leitmotiv* of the Pavan's pictorial production, analysing the iconographic sphere, there emerges a particular figure born in the Pavan's imagination: Legghy. In it, the playful author's vitality interfaces the sensual beauty of feminine figures, showing the most infantile and spontaneous side of the artist, who explains: "Each my study is always accompanied by my personal experience. Before, during and after my exploits, I painted. My art is the fruit of my experience, therefore, I am my art and my art represents me."

CHAPTER I

THE LIFE OF VESNA PAVAN

1.1. Biographic notes

A painter and an art designer of Friulian origins, Vesna Pavan became Milanese by adoption: in fact, although she was born in Spilimbergo, a province of Pordenone, today she lives and works in Milan, a city where her artistic ferment grows exorbitantly and strenuously.

Spilimbergo is the city of Mosaic par excellence, where Pavan had started her artistic studies, initiating a period of intense experimentation of the techniques and materials, rediscovering different procedures of the artistic execution.

She is a young woman who has never spared herself, in fact, she put herself constantly to the test in life and at work, showing a great confidence in herself and her potentialities.

Strongly convinced of the possibility of the reincarnation and almost forgetful of it, since the beginning she had the impulse of 'living several lives in one' because 'all the lives that she desires can be lived in this one'.

Vesna Pavan has always had a great influence on the life of the persons she met, starting with her family, thanks to her charisma and her spiritual force which had also a positive effect on the artistic front.

Her strong personality made her protagonist of life with the attitude far away from passivity and indolence, in fact she was a model, a poet, an actress, a photographer's assistant, a co-founder of a glamour magazine and a Breathwork Counselling therapist. The artistic activity of Vesna Pavan often shows unexpected coincidences with her personal life experience: it is enough to think about the role of the animator who, in parallel, realises scene designs and body studies and the movement present in her art. In the same way, the job as a model lines up with her pictorial pathway along which she develops new themes concerning the feminine body and the evolution of the chromatic use of acrylic. Moreover, acting permitted her to study in detail the mime of the body and of the expression, in addition to the analysis of interior movement aimed to create various figures. In perfect harmony with her

poetical inspiration, the works of Vesna Pavan tells us about an unusual introspection and a revision of her past experiences, as opposed to her environment. On the other side, her approach to photography blends perfectly with the luminist aims of her works.

In summary, we can assert that in the Vesna Pavan's works, behind the frivolous and sensual appearances of her feminine icons, are hidden unexpected existential yearnings, where painting becomes a healing instrument meant to be the only way to ease the load of life.

1.2. Professional formation

The complex formation of Vesna Pavan can be summarised as following. She attended the School of Mosaic Art in Spilimbergo and after the artistic studies at The Accademy of Art and Mosaic, she made further studies in gestalt area with the special attention on the interior work. In fact, at the age of eighteen, Vesna Pavan started her most personal path in discovering the human being.

So she grew up through the artistic, psychological and pedagogical studies, together with the alternative medicine including the psychosomatics, rebirthing and chromotherapy . She is also interested in philosophy, medicine, herbalism and biogenetics.

For several years she was the assistant of Emanuel Van Holsten, a photographer, therefore she developed the love towards photography and extended her knowledge of it. All these interests, over the years, helped her to see, find out, and understand various aspects of the human being and the profound sense of the feminine expressiveness.

Afterwards she specialized in relationship problems.

As it was said earlier, each Pavan's artistic study goes with her personal experience. Before, during and after her experiences she painted. Her art is the immediate fruit of her

experiences, as she says: 'I am my art and my art represents me'.

1.3. Exhibitions and events

Vesna Pavan's artistic debut goes back to 1992, followed by numerous international participations. Later on she received a special merit for her cycle of works "Fusion" at the Alba Gallery in Ferrara.

Afterwards, the Friulian art designer exhibited at Spazio Unicità in Monza with the personal show [Monza, April 5th – 25th 2008], where she presented forty new works.

Although she often took part in various exhibitions, Vesna Pavan has, nonetheless, intensified her presence on the Italian artistic scene in the last three years, that is from 2008 until these days, taking an active part in prestigious artistic exhibitions and obtaining acclaims of general public and critics.

Thanks to the directness of her artistic language, Vesna Pavan's works have reached large public, and in particular, raising a great interest, an elitist circle of art lovers, collectors and experts, appearing not only on the pages of glamorous magazines, but also in the circles of the high aristocracy and those of the international business.

Remarkable artistic gifts of Vesna Pavan emerged with emphasis, in fact, already three years ago at The Centre of Modern Art in Pisa where some of her works were presented in a preview at the exhibition "Feminine Eros: A Contemporary Artistic Universe" [Pisa, March

8th – 19th 2008] sponsored by the Department of Culture of the City Council of Pisa. Vesna Pavan continues her artistic tour in the Ligurian main city, showing two of her paintings from the “Fusion” cycle at the prestigious Palazzo Spinola of San Luca, at the exhibition entitled “Profound marks and chromatic nuances of a man” [Genoa, April 19th – 30th 2008]. The lively figures of her paintings allow us to see a dual feminine aspect which shows the new icons of the contemporary beauty.

“The body and the beauty of the senses” [Torino, April 2008] inaugurates new considerations of a woman image, inside which the sign produces nice effects when intersecting the design in her dynamic figures. After Genoa it is the turn of the capital city where the suggestive frame of The Amphitheatre of Culture, better known as the Central Ristothetre [Rome, May 17th – June 4th 2008], makes unforgettable background for about fifty works of Vesna Pavan. Some of them, of big dimensions, sample the whole exhibition of the young artist, organized by Carlo Franza, who “explore at large the feminine universe through a luxurious stroke, able to condense and narrate the body of the pin up girls. This exhibition, entitled “Mawkishness of the dream” is a novelty, says Franza, because the names of significant relevance in the contemporary art has been diffused here in Rome, pointing out and highlighting the most intriguing

developments in making art in the third Millennium”.

In the meantime, the splendid Venetian lagoon welcomes the emancipated pin ups of the art designer Vesna Pavan in an international exhibition, “The tradition bridge between China and Italy” [Venice, May 24th – June 4th 2008]. It was sponsored by the Culture Office of People’s Republic of China Embassy and took place at the Calcagno Art Studio. On that occasion Vesna Pavan exposes a series of works from the cycle “Orient” together with the well-known Chinese painter Qin Bailan, an institutional symbol of China. While the corvine pictorial sign languishes the sophisticated movements of Qin Bailan’s girls, that of Vesna Pavan is quick and volitive in sketching the fascinating western women with a narrowed chromatic range which touches red, black and white colours. The exhibition has contributed to encourage artistic and cultural exchange among western and eastern countries, stressing in particular the visual communication between Italy and China, two cultural worlds close to each other today more than ever. A fervent intellectual climate, created by recent approach of the two geographically distant artistic expressions, but joined by iconographic tissue, highlights the research of the representation of the feminine figures, extremely refined and of delicate appearance. They are traditional pictures of the universe

“woman”, the icons of supreme beauty, carriers of the high values and great virtues. Opening an intellectual passage to the European area, the Asiatic art, full of evidences indicating the survival of customs and traditions of Chinese people, receives the contemporary projections of feminine universe which begins with every day life and reaches the human genesis.

In the splendid Serbelloni Palace in Milan, actual seat of Circolo della Stampa, Vesna Pavan was awarded for her professionalism in the art field, winning in the section “Design” at Premio delle Arti Premio della Cultura XX edition [Milano, September – October 2008].

This interpretative path continues with “The dream of the line”, a personal exhibition of Vesna Pavan held at Bel Art Gallery [Milan, July 10th – September 15th 2008], which shows no intention of portraying her women figures, thus non identifiable but idealised. The figures of Vesna Pavan have no faces because they actually allude to the essence of femininity. They elaborate a most personal concept of being a woman, based on elegance and attractiveness, supported by strong sensuality. Several works from “The dream of the line” are on the permanent show at Bel Art Gallery.

At the same time Friulian author exhibits at Sottovento of Porto Cervo.

The Vesna Pavan’art has also arrived in Sicily at the Tèa Art Gallery with an exhibition entitled “Confidences in red and black”

[Taormina, 17th – 27th September 2008]. It was an exposition project of contemporary art, dedicated to the visual representations in red and black, where colours reveals interesting cultural symbology. The works showed at Tèa Art Gallery are still on permanent show at the Taormina Gallery.

The Art Light of Vesna Pavan surprises the public of Torino at Galerie d’Art Unique with the exposition project “Glass, lights, mirrors and refractivity of the colour” [Torino, October 2008].

Particularly relevant is Vesna Pavan’s participation at IV International Biennial of Art in Ferrara, with her new “Visions of the East and of the West” at the Ex Borsa Palace, currently Space Art & Culture [Ferrara, October – November 2008].

At the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, Vesna Pavan exhibited at The Stragapede and Perini Gallery in Milan, while in the spring, it is the turn of Ferrara at Estense Castle for the exhibition “Body Sign Surface” [Ferrara, May 2009] and afterwards at the Uva Gallery.

Later on, she was called for the Artist of the year award at Art Expò in Cesenatico [Cesenatico, June – August 2009]. Soon afterwards she took part in the artistic project “Feminine horizons” presented at first at The Borgo Gallery in Milan [Milan, June 2009], then in Naples at San Severino al Pendino [Naples, July 2009], and again in Milan for

“Naked Transparencies” [Milan, July – August 2009].

With the exhibitions in Prague at Chodovská Gallery tvrz [Prague, August 2009] and in Cannes at Le Patio Mandelieu La Napoule [Cannes, October 2009] starts a new season abroad, without however, losing sight of Italy. She comes back to exhibit at the Marzocco Gallery in Florence [Florence, October 2009], at the Alba Gallery in Forlì [Forlì, November 2009], at the Chie Art Gallery in Milan [Milan, November 2009], as well as at Grand Hotel in Portovenere [Portovenere, December 2009]. The year 2010 starts favourably for Vesna Pavan who exhibits at the “Venice Art Fair” [Forlì, March 2010] and continues with monumental personal exhibition at the Borghese Palace, a Renaissance former residence of the family Aldobrandini [Florence, April – September 2010].

1.4. Awards and academic assignments

Premio delle Arti / Premio della Cultura XX° edizione, Design a Milano.

Premio Internazionale di Design e Premio della Critica, Gall. Eustachi.

Premio al Merito Gall. Alba di Ferrara.

1° Premio ModernArt 2008, per la Grafica.

1° Premio di Pittura, per meriti speciali, con iscrizione sul Libro D’Oro, Acc. S. Sara.

1° Premio Alessandriarte, per le arti figurative.

1° Premio Città di Alessandria, per il contributo dato all’arte ed alla cultura.

1° Premio della Critica, Acc. S.Sara sez. Arti Figurative.

1° Premio assoluto “ Trionfo di Venere 2009”
Riceve la Nomina Ufficiale di Maestra D’Arte H.C. dal consiglio direttivo dell’Istituto Artistico e Culturale S. Sara.

Titolo Accademico d'onore al merito, sezione design e pittura 2008

Vincitrice del premio internazionale Michelangelo Buonarroti 2008

Vincitrice del premio Human Rights 2008

Diploma al merito, galleria Alba, Ferrara 2009

Premio Oscar per la grafica d’Autore 2009 (Arte italiana nel mondo-Accademia Santa Sara)

Onorificenza Accademica di Dama al Merito di Parco Reale (linea di San Teodoro)

1° Premio San Giuseppe, pittura scultura grafica 2009

Trofeo artista dell'anno 2009

Premio delle Arti / Premio della Cultura XXI edizione, Premio dell' Internazionalità, Milano

Premio Piter Paul Rubens 2009 con l'opera Green (ciclo: Fusion)

Premio Artiste de Montmartre 2009 (ciclo: Fusion)

Premio S. Maria Novella, omaggio a Firenze 2009

Premio I Maestri dell' Arte Contemporanea 2009

Diploma di merito, galleria Alba, Ferrara 2010

Onorificenza accademica S.Sara 2010 (Cav.Dott. Flavio De Gregorio)

Medaglia al Merito Città del Vaticano per meriti artistici e culturali nel mondo, Aprile 2010 (Archivio Biografico Internazionale dell' Arte Italiana- Dott. De Gregorio)

Oscar per le Arti Figurative - premio della Critica, Acc. S.Sara, Febbraio 2010

Premio Mercurio d' Oro conferito dall' Accademia D'arti e lettere S.Sara, Giugno 2010

Candidata al Conferimento della Laurea H.C.dal consiglio direttivo dell' Istituto Artistico e Culturale S. Sara, Dicembre 2010 (Rosa di 15 candidati)

CHAPTER II

ICONOGRAPHY

2.1. Pictorial cycles: Fusion, Orient and Signs Feel

Extraordinary fusions with Far East mark the creative research of Vesna Pavan, with exuberant contemporary touch. Design, fashion, make-up and technology combine in the Vesna Pavan's fotopictorial style: it is "Fusion", an artistic stream of the post-modern pattern, inspired with the innovations in technique and execution.

Vesna Pavan produced **Fusion**, after eighteen years of studies and painting, mixing the arts of technology and painting, the latter being considered a means of the interpretation of reality involving modern materials. Fusion represents, in fact, the process of fusion of the arts that mostly represents Pavan's personality, nourished by the need of accentuating beauty and unique physical features of the human being.

In this series of work, exhibited for the first time at Le Trottoir in Milan in the summer of 2007, the portrayed figures show a strong vitality and an original temper which is stressed

by an agitated, vibrant and versatile gesticulation. There is an explosion of colours on the paintings which reaches the *pathos* at once, where the complementary colours floats autonomously on the painted surface and the graphic harmony suggests a heterogeneous flow of emotions and typically feminine state of mind.

If the "Orient" exalts an eastern woman, "Signs feel" and "Fusion" valorises western feminine ideals although in different ways: the former stresses the sobriety of being a woman, while "Fusion" gives tribute to the rebellious and, in a way, revolutionary character of the feminine *imago*.

The "Orient" cycle is dedicated to the solemn elegance which distinguishes the eastern cultures, as well as the extraordinary qualities of their gentle sex. With the particular emphasis appear the diffidence of the Japanese woman, her measured presence and the simple sincerity in showing herself. The study of "Orient" concentrates itself on the expressivity of faces, indulging exceedingly in its representation, sometimes repeated obsessively on the painting

almost as if to seal the preciousness of these exceptional icons from across the ocean.

On the other hand, "Signs Feel" elaborates a new style in white and black and represents the European alter ego of "Orient", where the official features of the modern woman are created. She is a magnificent actress of every day scene, greedy for social acclaim, thirsty for attentions, a woman who can not and would not pass unobserved, so egocentric and maliciously refined to catch the eye of the leading contemporary art admirers.

2.2. Subjects and motives of the Art Design of Vesna Pavan

Almost all of the Vesna Pavan's subjects concerns the feminine universe, with a marginal, if not entirely absent, hint of virile existence. For these motives the author's themes deal exclusively with the feminine world, exploring all the human areas and relative fields of action.

If, on one hand, the artist openly reveals womanly virtues stressing the interaction spheres, on the other, she is the informer of woman's vices, her limits and fragilities which she dissimulates with praiseworthy ability.

Eccentric and uninhibited, young and impertinent, provocative and voluptuous, the feminine figures explored by Vesna Pavan appear incredibly modern, bearers of a fundamentally epicurean vitality.

Their distinct and firm features, quick and volitional marks, perturbing appearances and trendy looks, portray a new model of today's beauty, indissolubly based on the appearance and on the alteration of natural images, in a delicate dialogue between *veritas* and *artificium*. After the idealization of the feminine image, Vesna Pavan proposes an ideal of perturbing beauty prolonging to infinity the interpretation of the naked. This beauty alludes at the erotic spheres as well as at exhibitionist

attitudes which has marked our century. This is why among the themes dealt with, we find the cult of image, fashion, make up, hair style, in one word, the appearance, the projection that the others have of our selves. The singular sequence of heavily made up faces and half naked bodies is audaciously transfigured through a daring stylization in a bold summary of the gesture. We are in front of the synthesis of the signs which combines the experimental western linearism not only with Art Dèco, but with the Japanese symbology and with the traditional simplifications, typical of Japanese prints.

2.3. The pin-up girls and the feminine role

Among the achievements of Vesna Pavan, it must be recognized her ability to narrate, under the new light, the feminine emancipation and the role of the woman in the 21st century, reserving a particular attention to the fashion and the image. The protagonists of her works are, in fact, sexy and refined women who discover self confidence and are marked by a strong charisma: it is the example of contemporary beauty that prevails also in the visual arts. Vesna Pavan narrates its glories, virtues and gives value to those little flaws which every woman hide with self-assurance.

Considerable influences in the artistic exploration of Vesna Pavan, can be seen through the acquisition of the pictorial motives of the United States twentieth century art, starting with Pop Art.

Andy Warhol is a perfect example of this Pavan's expressive orientation which, at first sight, reflects a typically American form of art. The Warholian suggestions can be seen not only in the use of the strong and vivid colours but also in the experimental manipulation of the *imago*. Like the artist from Pittsburgh, Pavan's art activates a non dissimulated provocation, connected with the contemporary society compulsion to consume. They are feminine

essences of hedonistic looks, associated with the femme fatale stereotype. Icons of contemporary beauty, these fascinating creatures, fruits of artistic imagery of Vesna Pavan, celebrates with spicy tones and ironic touch the triumph of the feminine individualism.

The pneumatic women of the art designer are, nonetheless, deprived of the sight - the introspection of the human being on the world – and are able to preserve their interior world, although they are conscious of their role and identity. The fascination springs out from the interior richness and the woman who is in harmony with herself does not hide and is not ashamed of her looks nor her femininity, but stresses it serenely and unconditionally. Vesna Pavan's works focalize a delicate existential picture, which investigate in deep the identity crisis of the modern woman, who faces continuous pressures of present day demanding society and which she directs towards a significant aesthetic responsibility.

Women without their own face nor features, are standardised imagines belonging to the current beauty principles, who in the present social context have to maintain it: it is not a case that the corvine sign, fluent and decisive, stresses the features of figures and the sensuality of gesture. Apparently solid feminine figures wears the clothes of the social emancipation,

evoking a sober and in the same time seditious eroticism.

The represented bodies achieve an unsuspected lightness, created by the sharpness of the signs and careful study of the movement. The pin-up girls of Vesna Pavan, full of life, obtained by paint that goes out of the picture frame, pose maliciously exhibiting the attractive bodies, an irreverent wrappings of their souls.

2.4. Legghy

Legghy appears for the first time in the year 2010, immediately becomes a protagonist of the works belonging to the “Fusion” cycle. Starting from that moment Leggy gives emotionality the author’s airy icons, proud bearers of pathos and anxieties, unique women who spontaneously reveal their own dignity and sincerity without ever taking themselves too seriously.

Legghy the Toy, found in the world of Cartoons and modelled on Emoticons, is nothing but an icon, a new *Iconic sign*, useful to the world of *advertising* and to the speculative portrait of Pavan’s experiences, expressed in a comic manner through the irony. With a process of the ennoblement of the insect that becomes a protagonist of the contemporary art, the author opposes a direct semiotics to a non verbal language which concentrates only on the visual aspect. It is the artistic evolution of the keyboard Emoticons, to which are attributed modern usage and meaning. It is a more complete communication of feminine identity, through the liveliness of gesture and the impertinent look of Legghy, who with his typical facial expressions completes his secret mission: the transmission of the direct emotion. The non verbal communication opens to the philosophy of the gesture and results in a surprising facial mime, an indicator of “interior movement”. Legghy is its synthesis.

In that sense “Legghy” becomes the ideal place of the Pavan’s psychic transfer, where the interior and subjective experience finds the alter ego and its own iconic expression through the graphic element. Starting with the decomposition of the picture, in big and pleasant Leggy’s eyes develops an emotional amplification still more stressed by the synthesis of the drawing. The representation of the eyes has always had a crucial role in the artistic communication since the age of the Babylonians and the Egyptians, with a symbolical connotation in various periods of history and cultures, because the eye is the mirror of the soul. In fact, it is in the broadness of the eyes that numerous expressions and states of mind follow one another, from joy to ecstasy, from anger to surprise. It embraces a great emotional range which sometimes includes a touch of lunacy and exhilaration, sometimes the impatience of jealousy and love, sometimes the fear and the complicity, a medley of spontaneous and human sensations.

Vesna Pavan painted ten pictures and each of them “talks” about an emotion. Legghy in love induces to dream and hope in an eternal and romantic love, shows us the weak sides of the human being, reveals us without shame the greatness of the emotion in a crescendo without limits. Through the metaphor of hearts impressed in the eyes, Pavan simplifies the artistic message making it comprehensible and

accessible to everyone. In the same way, also Legghy, a happy figure, is able to instil a pleasant vision of the world, as the anticipation of positivity and good wishes for realisation of one's dreams: it is the enthusiasm for the life which gives the strength and the energy, necessary to go on along the intricate human paths.

The auto-ironic side of Vesna Pavan emerges in the figure of drunken Legghy with big eyes represented by concentric circles which show a momentary "disruption" of the reality, in the same way, Legghy who winks the eye and Legghy as a bandit show a most mischievous aspects, sometimes necessary not to take the life too much seriously.

The strategic movement of the eyebrows and of the mouth becomes the essential part of the Vesna Pavan's dictionary, where the language combines with the communication spontaneity and the emotional simplicity.

This is why the man-like appearances of this comic personality make a cosmic unit, the pure emotion which frees itself without hesitation. But Legghy is not only that. Legghy is a witty and pure little girl who is not afraid of showing her emotions; she is the childish and ironic side of Vesna Pavan and the projection of herself and her unhappy childhood, a playful spirit that shows up. Because Legghy brings within herself the message that there are lot of emotional conditions that must not be accepted

all in the same way, but interpreted differently. Legghy tries to prove that it is possible, in the same moment, to cry because of happiness and rejoice crying. Legghy teaches us that behind an emotion there could be a different and unexpected emotion or quite its exact opposite. Almost a modern tao, Legghy can be understood as the symbol of the spiritual harmony among the opposing parts and this phenomenon makes his looks significant.

Legghy recalls to the spectator the childish side which in Vesna Pavan becomes an ontological reality as the poetry was for Giovanni Pascoli (San Mauro di Romagna , 1855 – Bologna, 1912) who towards the end of the nineteenth century said: " for the poet's nature, his sentiment and his vision are infinitely more worthy than the manner of transmitting them to the others".

Looking back , Legghy reminds us a Platonic myth: "There is inside us a little boy who has not only thrills [...] but tears and rejoicing". So, it is a voice hidden deep down in every human being, which confront itself with the surrounding universe thanks to the imagination and sensibility. Legghy, therefore, achieves the true knowledge of the others because he is not guided by *ratio*: he leaves himself to be guided by intuition and the "feeling" rather than the reason and adopts the right value of the spirit to improve the quality of life, opening the door to

the most intimate of relations: that with our selves. That is the reason we love him.

The comic side of the figure enlightens the initial phases of the art designer's life, not always full of light and comfort. Legghy is the biographic abyss of Vesna Pavan, it is the *ephebos*, the unaccomplished man of funny appearance who has the sensibility of a woman. Legghy claims protection, raises in us an unconditioned sense of protection and deep affection.

It is easy to fall in love with this funny little figure who appears provocative, amiable, charismatic, unstable and daring; it is not possible to be indifferent to his will to live, his fighting spirit, the courage and the communication bravery.

Legghy is a communicative point which emerges from a playful surface on which he settles with obstinacy.

The strong personality, hidden behind this vivacious protagonist, is, as a matter of fact, particularly sensible and receptive, in spite of his manifested strong obstinacy and resistance. It transmits in every day life its intimate universe, full of fantasy and good qualities. Although sometimes it flinches, from the

symbolic point of view, Legghy is a positive and optimistic message : nothing really surprises him in the vision of life, not even serious and unexpected obstacles, being determined to face the situations and overcome them. Moreover, in the irony he finds the stimulus and proof of his courage, although conscious of being dependent directly on emotions.

Legghy is a figure of fiction who recalls in a certain way the world of Japanese Toys and of Manga, represented only essentially, which by synthesis reaches its communicative maximum. With Legghy, the expression in three colours is born: red, white and black of Vesna Pavan, "a red dot", according to the artist, a communicative point which represents the mirror of meticulous studies of the human face expressions, oriented to a non verbal communication which determines social relations.

CHAPTER THREE

PAVANIAN CHROMATIC WORLD

3.1. A new theory of colour

Vesna Pavan can be considered an eclectic and complete artist from all points of view, since she asserts her attention to the Life Style contemporary tendencies, without excluding, however, the influence of historic and artistic tradition. These influences, seem to converge on a crucial point of the present day transformation underlying, however, the concept of the art evolution across the ages. The goals achieved by the author, show an inexorable course of the pictorial experimentation, which continues its evolution through a process of the artistic maturation rooted in the execution of the creative expression, as the starting point for the future branching of the complex artistic language.

The profound artistic research of Vesna Pavan, can be seen in the author's attentive look on Europe, rich of the twentieth-century values, up to the eastern graphic works typical of Japan, so elegant in the sign interpretation and on the American Pop inflections. All these influences

build up a new, a most personal *theory of colour*.

Pavianian chromatism is founded on the predominant use of complementary colours and on the concept of the tonal contrast. Since the old ages, the colours have had a fundamental function in the art and the every day life. Being often the bearers of the important messages, also in the works of art the colour has the essential role, taking part in the completion of the visual and gesture communication and making easier to the observer the reading of *imago*. It is for these reasons that in all historical periods and particularly after the success of the impressionism, the colour becomes the indisputable protagonist in the comprehension of the artistic research. Decisive turn, in this sense, was given by the "Theory of simultaneous contrasts" introduced by Michel Eugène Chevreul (Angers, August 31st 1786 – Paris, April, 9h 1889), a famous chemist of the nineteenth century who carried out various studies of colours in the chemical area and their usage in art and science. The artistic culture still owes a lot to the French scholar,

who asserted the inexistence of the pure colour, because each colour is influenced by the neighbouring one. He distinguished two chromatic typologies: the primary colours (red, yellow and blue) and the secondary colours (violet, green and orange).

The colours used by Vesna Pavan appear saturated and are never softened. In the “Fusion” cycle, there is the optical effect of the simultaneous contrast, of which Chevreul was the first theorist, and the contrasting colours standing near one another become more intense, resulting pure. Thus, the eye registers the virginity of colours, the nobleness of movement and the ancestral sensuality of Pavan’s figures.

In the Vesna Pavan’s art the use of colours has even the therapeutic function, as the antidote for the evils of the human existence, an anti-depressing form of art which gives us a great energy charge.

3.2. White, black and red: an anthology of chromatic values

The refined theatre of lines proposed by Vesna Pavan shows, proudly and without hesitation, the sublime union of fashion, eros and design through a chromatic comparison based on the synergy of contrasts. Such tonal relations, deliberately simplified, concern the contrast between white and black and between red and snow-white background.

The femininity, the queen of the ancestral virtues, is explored with the interpretative anxiety, perpetuated in the every day solipsism and honoured by formidable chromatic contrasts. Red, black and white, in Pavan’s works have the expressive monopoly in the research of the feminine universe, magnificently suspended in the Levantine inspiration. In fact, the pictorial cycles using the three colours are “Orient” and “Signs Feel”.

The white is frequently present, a result of the additive synthesis, which stands in the Vesna Pavan’s painting as the neutral element, fluctuating in the absence of colours. The background is white, the narration *d’ensemble* is white, the same as the Pavanian personalities’ soul, candid and light.

In the traditional symbology of colours, white, which contains all the colours of the electromagnetic spectre, was always associated

with light, purity, innocence, birth and precision. The early Christian art painted the saint's clothes in white, while in Japan the white colour is the symbol of mourning. In this case, Vesna Pavan shows her separation from the iconic models in order to renew completely the meaning of the colours. And so, the white colour, in the presence of the contrasting colour, becomes essential partner in order to intensify the artistic message, facilitating the reading of the painting by the observer and introducing him to the ecstatic feminine figures of the artist.

One more time Vesna Pavan does not adapt herself to the collective attributions rooted in the past but gives new chromatic meanings to both colours: white and black. In the Pavan's art, black represents a gestural sign, in other words the effective action of her sensual feminine personalities, a tone that gives to their features a western elegance. Their dynamism is in the line, which is used in the gestural and expressive function, and not descriptive. Even the famous painters of the past used this method to transmit a particular state of mind or an atmosphere. The first among all was Paul Gauguin (Paris, June 7th – Hiva Oa, May 8th 1903). In contrast to white, the black colour can be identified as the visual impression gathered in the moment when some visible light reaches the eye and the pigments which absorb the light, instead of reflecting it, produce black. In

the western cultures, the black colour has generally negative connotations, sometimes associated with mourning, fear and superstition. This is in complete contrast to the elegance of the black colour typical of the contemporary tendencies. However, in various countries the black colour is the bearer of good messages; for example, Masai tribes in Kenya or Tanzania consider them as the symbols of life and prosperity. In the ancient history of China, the black colour, the symbol of the water has neither positive nor negative meaning.

Among various interpretations, it has to be mentioned that the black colour can stand for the unknown, an ambiguity, a mystery and, in general, all that that is not possible to know. Black is the negation of the colour, a final limit behind which it is impossible to go. If the white colour is a prelude and the genesis, the black colour is the conclusion, the ending; in this sense, white and black are two extremes which represent a dichotomy in the art of Vesna Pavan. In psychological terms the Pavanian black colour expresses not only the elegance and the movement, but also the introspection and the apology of the birth and it strongly influences other neighbouring colours to whom it gives an incredible energy. Behind the corvine lines, it can be noted a fundamental rebellion to the destiny, which, in the artistic research, brings to the irrationality in order to come out of the ordinary imagine.

Various artistic movements removed black and white from the palettes, but in their favour talked Vincent Van Gogh (Zundert, March 30th 1853 – Auvers-sur-Oise, July 29th 1890): “Black and white have their meaning, their motivation” adding that “the most logical thing is to consider them as neutrals: the white colour as the most luminous union of red, blue and bright yellow and the black colour as the most luminous combination of deep red, blue and yellow”.

The corvine sign describes the voluptuous movements of the pin-up girls of Vesna Pavan; it becomes quick and strong-willed in sketching attractive western women with a narrow chromatic range which includes red, black and white.

Particularly exhaustive is the theory of the parallelism between the colour and the sound which was elaborated by Kandinsky (Moscow, December 4th 1866 - Neuilly-sur-Seine, December 13th 1944): it is based on the belief that the colours are marked by their own “chromatic sonority” and by “resonance” which is, in its turn, correlated with the distance from a colour e.g., the red colour is equally distant from the both “non colours”: black and white.

The word red stems from the Latin word “rubens” to be intended at least as a physiological condition which creates energy. In the experimental researches of Vesna Pavan the red colour denotes the vital force, a

pertinence to the mother Earth, the erotic tension and the desire expressed in all its forms. The presence of red on the paintings is limited to the representation of the sanguine lips which is by now the artist’s signature.

Shades of red show the charisma of the personality, the latent femininity, the temperament. The red colour, one of the primary colours identified by Chevreul, is the traditional symbol of blood, passion, aggression, conquer and competition.

The author’s graphic style regains all the nineteenth century comics tradition: particularly typical deep red and seductive lips and capricious anatomies of the vamp. Something in the Pavanian atmosphere evokes a few paintings of Roy Lichtenstein.

The woman created by Vesna Pavan appears as a brand new reworking of a modern Marylin, rebellious more than ever. That vermilion lipstick profiles against the two-dimensional background with such an expressive determination to leave an indelible mark in the history of the contemporary Art Lighting Design.

3.3. Symbols and functions of the chromatic range

In her chromatic experimentation, Vesna Pavan attempts to avoid, where possible, the dominance of the reflected light which is usually generated by mixing and by overlapping of colours. In this way she gives to her paintings a great visual intensity sealed with the communicative force of contrasts.

The colours are never diluted in order to create light and shade, a fact completely absent in her works, instead she prefers matching of complementary colours in order to stress the sensation of brilliance. It is just this negation of the light and shade that breaks with the academic tradition and elevates Vesna Pavan to the peaks of avant-garde.

The colour, spread on the moving yet precise background of the paintings, preserves and strengthens the legendary power of suggestion that has been assigned to it since the period of Symbolism.

Since the ancient times, the human being has represented successfully the unconscious aspects of his perception of himself through a symbolic dimension. The symbol, in fact, is nearly the most complete expression of a thought or of an experience, which says a lot more than the words could ever communicate. So, in addition to its physical properties, the

colour in Pavan's works is primarily a mirror of interior life out of which come up unexpected emotional meanings.

3.4. Stylistic analysis

The chromatic symbolism of Vesna Pavan represents not only a supreme catharsis, but above all, it is a subtle linguistic interlude of the pictorial study in exam. This interlude unites the two stylistic elements of fundamental importance for the Vesna Pavan's art: it is exactly the intellectual emphasis on colour that connects the necessity of movement on one hand and the more graphic aspects on the other. The excited dynamism, highly present in the "Fusion" cycle assists the Pavan's feminine ideal, which is based on the figure's vitality, on its inexhaustible interior energy and on the identity of a so passionate and vibrant personality so as to create a new stylistic approach. This approach is characterised by significant movement variations.

The gestures flashes on the Pavan's paintings in a form of sinuous movements, chromatic vibrations and linear elasticity, which in their sobriety of composition go up to the ancestral phonemes.

The elasticity of the sign tempers this pictorial vivacity and energy insinuating a touch of eroticism, a sensual voice that supports the whole artistic production of the author. It is a low tone voice which reveals the proper aesthetic inclination.

The style of Vesna Pavan appears refined in the elaboration of her research of the feminine

virtutem expressed in an extraordinary synthesis.

CHAPTER IV

CRITICISM

4.1. The style and the originality of Vesna Pavan

It has been said a lot about the directions of the contemporary artistic art, but it is a singularity that makes difference between one artist and another.

The originality of the art of Vesna Pavan stands in the internationality of her research and in the extraordinary elegance of the synthesis. In times so full of frills and sumptuousness this ability of synthesis is extremely efficient in the artistic message which points to the clear, sober and immediate communication. Today the expressive limits of many a young artist is actually the lack of consistency. In the case of Vesna Pavan however, it must be discussed the synthesis of signs, colours and icons. In the synthesis of these, there is the entire artistic universe of the author from Spilimbergo who suggests an essential design, played by a refined line theatre. She suggests also a synthesis of the chromatic range used, reduced to a minimal terms with the revival of complementary colours and massive use of

white and black, together or in contrast. Within poetic of *brevitas* there is also the iconographic body, entirely concentrated on the feminine image. Vesna Pavan, a new star of the made in Italy design, suggests a new, all feminine setting with her sexy and mysterious creations in a style that praises the line and valorises the movement. It is actually an inspired dynamism of signs which, under the curtain of life, bursts out with its solemn erotic song, followed by a lovely background of gestures and a whirl of biting profiles.

The fashionable atmosphere that Vesna Pavan gives to her works becomes the basis of her artistic studies which follow an experimental path, announcing a postmodernist triumph.

Vesna Pavan also dealt with interior design and trend accessories, thus creating carpets, china, Art Light style dresses and even a unique hand decorated Porsche car model.

Everything is the gestural exuberance in the creative production of the author, where she creates a glamorous atmosphere made by the virile absence and by the splendour of “pink” in

a process of the feminine valorisation, which certainly leaves no space for indifference.

4.2. Modernity of Vesna Pavan's art

The shaking effect which produced her eccentric works is collegated with the contemporary aspects of the Art Design of Vesna Pavan. The modernity of this elegant production stands in fertile heterogeneous soil of peculiarities: from the expressions of signs, through the stylistic and formal ambivalences of The East and the West, to the transmission of the feminine emancipation and the woman's role in the society of the twenty-first century, showing an accurate attention for tendency and image. Not only the contents have characteristics of modernity; also the sign, free and dynamic, shows on one hand a detachment from the structure and perspective rigidity typical of the figurative tradition, and on the other the triumph of the synthesis, displaying a non indifferent artistic elaboration. The graphic style of Vesna Pavan filters that universe of signs and symbols, with which the history of Italian art nourished itself for long centuries. In the field of stylization of Vesna Pavan there is neither the space for details nor for exasperated descriptive pictures of the figurative tradition. Her language is based efficiently on the illustrative synthesis, recalling certain Japanese simplifications which appealed a lot to the western culture.

The modernity of Vesna Pavan is confirmed, however, by her usage of machines and new painting materials and various techniques.

4.3. Opinions of the critics

A few critics have been interested in the work of Vesna Pavan.

Here are some points of view:

THE PIN UP GIRLS OF VESNA PAVAN

It is irresistible, this generational contamination of Vesna Pavan who does not fear fantasy, a real concept, abstractions and the adventures of the curious eye.

Plotin says: "The eye would never see the sun if it were not already similar to the sun, neither would a soul see the beauty if not already beautiful" .

So the discreet exhibition of the body, between visual editing e hidden malice, brings our young artist to explore one part of that old pop territory, geographic and that of sentiments, where everything is ulcerated with colours, with Pin Ups decorated with the tiny lumps of lipstick and thin carnal cuts, gentle skin, soft sinuousness, explosive shapes.

A sort of biography of the feminine of our times, of inebriations, of games of hand, therefore each model is the eternal moment, a toponymy of sexuality and of sensuality, where everything is regained in an intimate charm.

Her work derives from the Pop art, with the freezing of the picture, stylized, synthetic and essential, which is wrapped primarily around the feminine bodies and faces, figures of the

star system or Pin Up, sexy, provocative and smiling girls.

Sex-symbol champions, of long legs, flourishing breasts, upturned little nose, voluptuous and attractive. "Private" stars of classic star system, whose style is linked with post-modern aspects or better with the Upskirt style, reborn recently in the underground culture and resumed even by the Mainstream.

The Warholian lesson and not only, I like to cite also Norman Rockwell and Patrick Nagel, lives in the characteristic traits of faces, underlined by timbre and intense colours, pink skin, the red of the lips, the make-up of the eyes, the hair and the hats. The bodies, frankly, because of the special effects and the non naturalistic use of colour, appears artificial, false, far from the being real, also thanks to the backgrounds which float on the stereotype expressiveness.

Women and models, enlarged and brought to the front line, regain the communicative immediacy of the strip.

(Carlo Franza)

THE DREAM OF THE LINE

The woman that the artist from Friuli paints is not a woman.

Not exactly, at least. It is an idea of feminine gender. Used to the glaring folklore of the catwalk and advertising curves, those without ever too much skin on, the eye follows the works of Vesna Pavan (Spilimbergo, Pordenone, 1976; lives in Milan) always watchful, never satisfied, always searching. The retina of the spectator insinuates itself between the brush strokes and regal flesh of the collage with the speed of a hand that touches a cloth and strokes quickly the fleshy ribs of the dark velvet.

Brushed fabric at first sight and yet extremely inconsistent and fleeting in a direct contact with the skin. Through this short synaesthesia, it is explained, with clear simplicity, the play of transparencies and of delicate visual dazzling which these silhouette in pose, hanged on the walls of the gallery, offer; spreading, though a little, their rigid candour over the large and regular dimension of the spaces around. The exhibited works, about twenty or so in all, hang on the walls, like the posters of past times, provoking a mottled wave of white and black, halfway between a painting and a collage, between anonymity and dissolution, between evanescence and femininity.

As if the hand that paints them decides to step back exactly at the point which determines the

formative style, dividing the paintings from an extreme figuration. These hollow shadows, prominent and protruding, seem to be drawn on fingertips, on the surface of milk. Red mouths, faces without expression (although imaginable as perfect), thick hair, long-limbed and firm legs (like only the mental perfection of a woman would conceive and imagine them) transform themselves in a snow-white mixture of a faint flavour of the style retro.

The tenuousness of these paintings remains therefore an ideal cover which separates them from the only concept of breadth which is absent in the series of works exhibited. As a face-powder that shades burned outlines, in fact, the Pavan's imagination is a device, between wake and dream, which draws away and distracts the onlooker from the inevitable reality of the femininity: the tone of the skin. The same skin which senses in order to become flesh. If, therefore, the only flaw of this series of paintings, never painted and never merely concepts on the paper, is and remain the extreme composure of subjects, far too much languid and obliging with respect to the summer heat, the works, in their intriguing complicity reserve the space for imagination that is not to underestimate.

(Ginevra Bria)

A silent interior message wraps the intimist expression of her palette, full of vibrant effects which come out and give life to numerous interior sensations. The compositional synthesis is supposedly described with a mastery of its technique: a delicate tone composition which gives to the works that personal pathos which envelops a thousand fantastic emotions.

(Francesco Chetta)

4.4. Vesna Pavan: The future of the art

With Vesna Pavan, new frontiers of the Italian Art Design have been opened. It is not by accident, that in her artistic works there are seeds of the new way of painting which looks at the immediacy, makes easier substantially the artistic communication and simplifies the process of the comprehension of the more and more complex languages of the contemporary art.

The painting of Vesna Pavan constitutes the future of the art because it promotes the return of the simpler expressive forms and diffuses the necessity of the return to the simplicity of the

artistic language. It encourages the straightforwardness of expressivity related to the visual arts and proposes the lineamentum as the vehicle of a fresh dialogue and new relations between itself and the outside world, between the interiority and appearances in a refined bipolar code.

The corvine undercoats on canvas confer to her production a touch of avant-garde which determines a new expressive orientation on the European artistic scene. It is a revolutionary way to conceive the art, not easily comprehensible by the large public, which puts the artist Vesna Pavan out of the usual cliché.

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