

Mario Ridolfi's *Love Knot*

Massimo Mariani

My memories of Mario Ridolfi are infinite in number, all of them as clear, even in the smallest details, as those we preserve of our loved ones, of our teachers.

I can see him drawing *Casa Lina* and the *Love knot* in front of me; I always sat at the first table directly facing his desk. He drew with a fine-pointed Pelikan fountain pen on '*carta burro*,' a translucent tracing paper of minimal thickness used for architectural drawings, that allows you to superimpose successive ideas and correct them.

In his brown leather bag, Ridolfi kept his small bottle of black ink and a roll of this paper. I never saw him throw away any of the sheets of paper he had drawn on, not even the ones he rejected immediately because he was not satisfied with the solution.

And I was there, in front of him, learning to draw perspective views and observing him.

I went searching for Casa Lina in Marmore. I knew it very well, because I had seen it designed step by step. I found it, and it was perfectly identical to the one drawn.

The summer of 1984 was ending.

I needed to ask him for some important advice regarding my professional future. I needed my Maestro. I hadn't seen him for about twenty years.

I walked up to his door and looked in, calling out to him, hoping not to disturb. It was early in the afternoon.

He answered me, turning his attention away from a switched-on television that he was watching from a minimum distance, something I immediately found unnatural.

He politely invited me to come in and sit down and asked me who I was. Together we recalled our common past (his past... mine was irrelevant: I was only a former student of his course).

This article was written upon invitation to comment on the image of Mario Ridolfi, not submitted to anonymous review, published under editorial director's responsibility.

On the white formica-topped table, to the left of the television, was a 'blueprinted' drawing of the plan of a building that, it seemed to me, already existed: in fact, it was a survey restitution, which he later told me was part of the ongoing project for the renovation of Ancona's City Hall.

The personal matters that had prompted me to go looking for him were completely forgotten when he confided to me, in despair, that he could no longer see.

He had completely recovered from the painful after-effects of the 'blow' to his hip, as he called the car accident in which he had been injured. The compensation, he told me, had enabled him to build Casa Lina. He was eighty years old, in good health, but blind.

I remember every word of our confidential dialogue filled with his suffering, but nothing could have led me to imagine his future, which was to end only two months later.

I must confess that what I remember most from those moments is that drawing, lying on the table, waiting to be taken up again and continued.

To the *Love knot*, a few thoughts from an episteme that accompanies me.

In this, the ideal beauty of form and feeling is revealed: sensitive vision becomes intellectual, philosophical and religious vision.

In Ridolfi's creation, the intimate qualities of the thought that formed it take on an important role and are perceived by the observer with his mind's eye.

Its beauty is 'true,' it is 'beauty itself,' it is in the domain of the intelligible not obscured by the 'imperfection of matter'; it is in the idea identified in an order of aesthetics, in

the ontological universality that characterizes it. Its function is one that allows us to descend from the particular to the universal, to elevate ourselves from the imperfect to its essences of truth, it is 'abstraction as an epistemological mechanism that generates a creative power deflected from the real towards the universal.'

The *Love knot* was born from Mario Ridolfi's desire to give identity to a design that diversifies creative thought by drawing on his experiences and ascending towards aesthetic essence and feeling.

There is a distance between the observer and the 'knot,' the same distance that contains 'respect' and 'sacralization'; it joins beauty and the ethical dimension equally between the idea of 'beautiful' and 'good,' in symmetry, in consonance.

The 'knot' is an expression of Ridolfi's spirit, in which he has transferred his identifying presence, that does not imitate reality and that identifies the 'Kosmos' as ancient meaning, the same that gives us spatiality and temporality.

His creation moves us; its meaning sparks a unique feeling.

This work has a value, in the sense that it is the bearer of a value, that of the 'beauty' that Ridolfi has conferred upon it; a supreme value, such as the 'good' and the 'true' that become a metaphor for the 'goodness of the soul' and a symbol of the spiritual quest in feeling.

Ridolfi expresses himself between craftsmanship and philosophy, between the manual and the intellectual. And the beauty of his idea is alien to rational determinisms typical of the restitution of reality; it is an idea of inspirational free expression.

Credits

The *Love Knot* by Mario Ridolfi is taken from: Ridolfi, M. (1997). *Mario Ridolfi. Manuale delle tecniche tradizionali del costruire. Il ciclo delle Marmore, a cura di F. Cellini, C. D'Amato*. Milano: Electa.

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