

Beauty is truth. So says Keats. But is it? For a large majority beauty means cosmetics and plastic surgery. Costings of creams, operations and Botox, abound. The reaction may change if misunderstandings are cleared up, and questions reformulated.

How important is Beauty for Italy? The short verbal answer is very much; in reality between little and zero. There are many reasons for this, as we learn during this wise, scathing interview with Piero Trupia, full of practical ideas - light years away from the usual refrain about art and culture as domestic capital. Asking and asking again, the disused and almost unpronounceable word *heritage* creeps into the discussion. Heritage, an asset intangible in texture and form. But not mummified. Experienced politely, it ought to be admired and studied as proof of a living culture. It is our duty to

safeguard and enhance this heritage so that it can be enjoyed without being subject to vulgar manipulation or destruction. So, no more vendors' stalls next to the railings of the Trevi Fountain or proposals for a new stone paving with fake battles of gladiators inside the Colosseum. Fake ancient Romans with thronged sandals and socks outside the Colosseum is quite enough, thank you.

Trupia asks us to think about on who we are, where we come from, and where we might go in the future. Not as a sterile and empty exercise of self-satisfaction or heroic optimism, nor to remember the good old times and the even better times ahead; but as a way to appreciate our strong points, identifying the blocked points, as well as our responsibilities, and truly comprehend the *real market value of Beauty in Italy*.

We've already made some headway with

our Made in Italy products which during this crisis continue to be exported and provide the country with a trade surplus. Whenever they can, people all over the world buy Italian food, Italian clothes, and Italian furniture. A success story without even trying. A second economic miracle. Now we must welcome all those who want to come to Italy not just because they admire it, but because they want to experience our quality of life. This interview delivers a strong, crystal-clear message, which we wholeheartedly support, as a way to escape the quicksand the country is currently mired in. All of us here at Telos send this December Beauty issue, to wish you Happy Holidays and New Year and the dawn of a radiant future.

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TRUPIA

BEAUTY IS TRUTH: IS IT?

“ *In Italian there is no word for an art specialist. Artologist? Sounds wrong, doesn't it?* ”

Telos: Italy has the largest artistic heritage in the world. If we add the landscape we can consider Italy the global home of Beauty. What does this mean for Italians in terms of awareness, responsibility and projects?

Piero Trupia: Awareness involves understanding the value of what we have, and what we have inherited. But it would appear we're not proud of what we have in Italy. Culture generates awareness, but we're deficient even in this field. Projects should focus first on conservation and then on enhancement. Our responsibility is enormous, far beyond our means: we are the trustees, custodians and *enhancers* of our treasures on behalf of humanity.

Let's take it step by step and first tackle conservation, which is inadequate. Educated people and professionals alike lack the necessary culture. Our artistic culture is average, like most of the rest of the world. Just look at how much *kitsch* there is in Italy, or how we use monuments as locations for noisy, vulgar shows.

As a country, we occupy the bottom rungs of the ladder when it comes to education, music and art. What do we teach about art? Its history; the same goes for literature and philosophy. The three graces of humanistic culture imprisoned in the extrinsic diachrony of before and after, instead of identifying the value of every event for and in itself.

Critics talk of context, cross references, and how a work relates to other works; they are aphasic about what the work means and how it conveys its message. What would happen if doctors were experts in the history of medicine rather than medicine itself? In Italian, there's no word for an art specialist. Artologist? Sounds wrong, doesn't it?

Let's talk about projects and responsibility

There are no projects. We live in a constant state of emergency, waiting for the next disaster. People are outraged; they protest, launch accusations, feel bitterly resentful and act as an audience in talk shows.

Our responsibility is enormous, and intoxicating.

First and foremost, we need to preserve our heritage, but only after having sacralised places of beauty. There are two stalls next to the railings around the Trevi Fountain and one, for now, in front of the Pantheon which Michelangelo proclaimed "of angelic and not human design." He said it: sacred.

Then there's the creative aspect: to turn Italy into a place of the soul, a place where everyone should spend at least one week of their life. As Taormina in the nineteenth century, or the Costa Azzurra before it became a place for VIPs. Anastylis would be extremely creative: picking up and recomposing the fragments of ancient monuments.

I have to say that the word *tourism* is no longer topical; it's not useful to the supply and demand of art as experience.

A Society of Dilettanti was founded in England between the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Journeys to Italy and importation of operas. Enthusiastic, cultured amateurs for whom, like all



Piero Trupia. Linguist, cognitive scientist, philosopher. Studies in mathematics, logic, epistemology, and economics. He has recently developed an interest in understanding art. He has published *Perché è bello ciò che è bello. La nuova semantica dell'arte figurativa* (2012) and is currently working on a book on narratology.

Other publications include: *L'avvicendamento nell'impresa familiare. Una sfida per la formazione* (2013), *Semantica della comunicazione* (2001), *Potere di convocazione. Manuale per una comunicazione efficace* (2003), with Mario Unnia *Parlamento che farne. Una risposta politically incorrect* (2006) and *Cento talleri di verità. Autobiografia didattica per eventi* (2011).

Formerly Professor at the Luiss Business School in Rome (Political Communication), at the University of Florence (Writing and Narrative Literature), and at the University of Lugano (Convocative Communication). Distinguished Professor at La Jolla University of California - San Diego F.C. (Organizational Management)

An engaging orator with irresistible wit; he is a well-known certified *Associazione Italiana Formatori* trainer.

He has also been a business manager.

The stray cats he loves and rescues then become the lords and ladies of his house.

He cooks for himself and his friends, also as a way to ease the challenge of his intellectual work.

Europeans of a certain class, the Grand Tour, lasting at least one month, was a formative experience and spiritual adventure.

All Italians have to be generous hosts and erudite guides in today's new world of tourism. We have to throw open the doors of our manor houses, farms, private homes, *baglios* and courtyards and share the Italian way of life. I see something positively going in this direction.

General De Gaulle would have said it's a large-scale plan. How can we achieve it? We feel lost when faced with such an enormous task.

Although mammoth, the plan is well suited to the treasures we have to make available so the whole world can enjoy them.

Three preliminary conditions.

We have to understand the economic importance of Beauty. Including the historical value of our culture and our own intelligence. In the past this is what created our rural landscape.

Beauty is heritage, not capital. We must exploit it and keep it intact.

Last of all, a bottom-up approach to create hospitality as well as a top-down approach to avoid abuse and cheap pieces of junk.

Our masterpiece, *Made in Italy*, was made thanks to a bottom-up approach which in a nutshell means we acculturated three crucial sectors: fashion, furniture and the food chain. It also involved automation, bioengineering and quality craftsmanship such as the manufacturing of lutes and other musical instruments.

This doesn't happen from one day to the next. Centuries of manual and intellectual work are behind each craftsman.

Awareness means having an in-depth knowledge of Italy, of what makes it different and not what makes it like the rest of the world. In other words, a satisfactory and appropriate knowledge of all kinds of art, its meaning and implications, the semantics of its language. And obviously its history.

Is there a universal definition of beauty or is beauty in the eye of the beholder? Accordingly, can beauty save the world?

A restaurateur of Italian origin decided to decorate his trattoria in Curitiba, Brazil with Carrara marble copies of several masterpieces of Italian sculptures from the Renaissance, as Michelangelo's *David*, and so on. Hideous.

Is Beauty in the eye of the beholder? There's a story behind this saying.

It comes from an incorrect citation from Thomas Aquinas: *Pulcra, dicuntur, quae visa placent* (beautiful things are those which please when seen). The first to cite it omitted *dicuntur* and those who cited him followed suit. But Thomas's doctrine of Beauty is very different.

Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur: integritas sive perfectio, concordantia sive consonantia, claritas (thus for beauty to exist three things are required: integrity or perfection, due proportion or harmony, luminosity).

Luminosity is not clarity. Joyce suggested "the splendour of truth".

Not the descriptive truth of science, not the argumentative truth of philosophy, but the absolute truth that, from the metaphysical hyperuranium of essences, comes down to earth and shines in common things. When, reshaped in the language of art, those common things testify to the history of mankind. Things in themselves are not beautiful; what they symbolise is. Thomas explains: *pulchra quamvis turpis* (beautiful even if ugly). The crucifix by Grünewald, work boots, the Potato eaters by Van Gogh, and deformities by Picasso.

Yes, I do think that Beauty can save the world.

Beauty is peaceful; it is not acquisitive, except for maniac cravers of possession and exhibitionists. I prefer a masterpiece to be in a museum rather than hanging on my walls at home.

In a life governed by quality and not quantity, fruition rather than appropriation, Beauty can save the world. Its truth is persuasive, not subjugating.

Exasperated battles for possession are destructive. For example, at the end of World War II the Allies destroyed the Abbey in Montecassino in their attempt to flush out the Germans. Double sacrilege.

According to the Italian Constitution, Italy repudiates war. Its task is to achieve peace through hospitality, conviviality and quality of life.