

I was born in 1940. I was three years old when my family were evacuated to the outskirts of Ancona due to the bombings. I was there when the front-line was crossed, when the Germans came and then when the Anglo-Americans arrived. My parents had dug a small trench to hide in on the banks of a stream, I could still see then, I was four years and two months old! It was the July of 1944. I saw the Germans and the Anglo-Americans from the trench who were firing from left to right, long light trails which then exploded. I lost my sight when some war debris exploded: we used to collect bomb fuses to make into lighters. These moments marked my life and act as a reminder of history. I always say that wars, the worst thing ever invented by the human mind, end but the children must live in the shadow of them. I was six, I couldn't start school and I pleaded with my parents because I wanted to go. It was my burden. At twenty, I was driven by a deep passion, curiosity and interest in other cultures and relationships with people from other countries. At the age of 16 I became an Esperantist and had contact with many friends from around the world. A school of respect, understanding, tolerance towards different civilizations and interested in everything that is different, it is motivated to protect the rights of the weakest and this has been the basis of my political passion. In my own way, I have been in politics since I was a child, 1948 was a particularly tense and intense moment for Italy, at the time, my friends and I pretended to hold elections: I had prepared a polling station, made the boards and I made them all vote. I had two uncles involved in the Communist Party who took me to all the Feste de l'Unità¹ as a child. They always made me greet the speaker at the time and, from the age of six to twelve, I was to recite poems in Ancona dialect. I have nothing against the English language, but I do not agree that there has to be a monopoly of one country's language on another. This ultimately leads to uniformity and inevitably implies recognition, on a psychological level, of the people that use that language; it is no coincidence that in the history of humankind the language of trade has always been the language of the most powerful. Nowadays, this behaviour dominates; it is a sort of cultural colonisation. Nowadays, in Italy and in the rest of the world, the United States is the model: how we sing, how we eat, how we dress, it is all from there and I do not like that. I believe that every population has its own dignity. Culture cannot be measured on a quantitative dimension, by the amount of people. Every population has its own values so I think it's something important for those who really want to see the world in all its complexity. Some see diversity as a threat, I consider it to be an asset. On the other hand I am a disabled person, many consider me to be a misfit, I have to protect my identity, not by thinking that I am a misfit but by trying to solve my problems in a way that is technically different to others. We are all equal and we are all different. Language indicates the cultural identity of a person, always bringing with it a civilization, so it is important to know languages in order to know about the different civilisations within them. Whether you are in Europe, speak English or you are out of the game, I see this dangerous thing in the future. In 1959 I enrolled at university, there was a law that prevented the blind from teaching subjects that lead to written papers, my passion at the time was Greek and Latin, so I took philosophy. The law then changed, but by then I had become fond of it, especially the aesthetics connected to the pleasure of literature, art and music.

Now I have another passion: the Museo Omero that at a certain age allowed me to enter into the world of art, for many years I had considered this world to be out of my reach because others had made me think so.

The museum was born out of rage because my wife and I, who is also blind, are passionate travellers and when we travel, we see things by touching them. Unfortunately, when you go to a museum this is an absolute taboo. We went on a trip to Germany and had heard of the great Pergamom Museum, but we could not touch anything. Upon

¹ Annual local celebrations, at the time organised nationwide by the Communist Party.

returning, Daniela said to me: "Couldn't you just put reproductions of all the great masterpieces somewhere so that even the blind would have a chance to know them?" I said, "Why not?" It was 1985 and no tactile Museums existed anywhere in the world

Sculptures are not just visual art, they can also be identified by touch, and this grants very different and additional emotions. By touching artwork there is a revival of all of your senses, this has been confirmed by the children who come to us and are happy because they have five senses and they use all five of them. The tactile relationship with things is deeper, more intimate. We love with the eyes and hands. All the things we love we need to feel.

Life is a continuous expansion; the moment it starts shrinking, it is no longer life. Now I am of an age where the only limit I feel I have is that I cannot plan very far ahead, I am 74 years old. I hope for a long life but it is not guaranteed, nowadays I have a smaller amount of time in front of me, this is the limit that I feel, I do not have a broad future but it doesn't stop me from doing things. If there is something that I do that lasts longer than me, there will be someone else to take it forward. The Museo Omero is our son.

I am a Christian, fundamentally I believe that within in the Gospel there is the salt of life, love is the force that moves the world. Where there is love there is also good. Love means being at one with another, being yourself and at the same time establishing a reality together with another, and with others. This is the case when regarding cultures; they should meet each other and grow from one another. There shouldn't be a culture that destroys another, the same applies to people. This is utopia, without utopia mankind would still be living in caves!

We are in an age where there are major problems, but think about Western Europe: it is experiencing the longest period of peace in its history, doesn't that count for anything? For me it is a great thing and it is very important. Let's be more positive. When major disasters occur I see great solidarity being triggered. I put it down to communication, television only informs us about negative things as that's what makes the news, but there are other things than just violence. In reality, most people, albeit with mediocrity and defects, are not bad. I am a disabled person; I have lived my life as a disabled person. I need help with so many things and I have to say that I have a positive relationship with society and with other human beings. As the President of the Italian Esperanto Federation, I instituted the award for the 'Voices of World Peace'. The aim is to reward a work of art to those who have shown positive examples of spreading the culture of peace, who are normally overlooked. The public must make it clear that there are not just rapists, gangsters and robbers out there. There are also people who leave everything and go to Brazil or Africa to devote their care to the people who need it. They never make the front page, often because these acts are treated as daily life and everyday life does not make the news. This brings us back to the worship of the sensational and exceptional which pollutes the vision of reality and the world. I remember when I was young I was extraordinarily impressed by Albert Schweitzer, one of the most important organists in the world. A man who had art and success before him but in the early fifties he dropped everything and went to Equatorial Africa to aid the sick. He was also a doctor: at the age of 30 he began to study medicine and graduated at the age of 37.

Today, several things make me ashamed. For example, a certain type of culture that is promoting and glorifying the exaggerated need for money and success, it is above all one of the elements that pollutes social and political life. Money does not make you a bad person nor does success or self-image, they are values, but when they become absolute

values we see a deterioration of ethics and humanity. The contamination of politics is a result, I am deeply committed of the values of democracy, but now I am convinced that it is a good idea to rethink certain aspects of democracy. If it is those who own a television that win the elections, it is not true democracy.

I have had two political experiences: the first was in 1979 with the independent Left party, an informal group of people who belonged to different cultural spheres (Catholics, secularists, Marxists) who found themselves on a common project; it was a very nice experience because it was independent, resulting from the direct participation of the people involved. It did not last long though, I do not know if I was wrong in doing so but once I saw that this thing was exhausted, I gave up. In 1993 I returned to the City Council with the PDS (Democratic Party of the Left) to experience how it could be done within a stronger political body, but it was a more difficult experience, having to fight with my own party colleagues weighed heavily on me. The problem was perhaps not having fully dedicated myself to politics. I have always considered politics as an additional option.

In 1968 I had been teaching for two years, I was a very young teacher caught between a rock and a hard place, I was young like the others who were protesting but at the same time I was on the other side of the fence. It was fascinating: I became the spokesperson for the students to the world of teachers and at the same time I had to relay the institution's reasonings to the young people, who did not want to hear it at that point in time. I had to create some kind of balance. Compared to current movements, (think of the Arab world, Greece, Ukraine) which are very different to one another, the feeling of 1968 had a much stronger ideological and theoretical approach (without a negative connotation). It was a movement that spanned the world and wanted to change the basis of some common ideals, while the revolts today are oriented against a specific reality. 1968 wanted to change the world; it had a passion closely resembling Palingenesis.

I have a less positive judgment of 1977 – a rejection of consumerism that was of a completely different calibre, when they started breaking shop windows.