

INTERVIEW TO MICHELE “RAVE” GRASSANI / THYSANURA

Artist, poet and musician, **Michele Rave Grassani**, known in the post-industrial scene with the **Thysanura** monicker but also for his Art influenced by Conceptual Art, considered one of the leading artists in his field in New York, speaks about himself to **FLUX** in an interesting interview that tries to draw a bridge between his Art, his music and his poetry.

- 1) Hi Michele! You're an artist and a musician, plus, lately, you've written a new book of poems. Does a connection between Thysanura's music and your artworks exist?

A premise. I was born as a visual artist. Like all children, I started to love to draw very soon, the difference is that it was my dream job, along with that of film director. I enrolled at my first Art course, at the Civic school of Art **ARVIMA** in Pavia, my hometown, in 1984, and I had my first group exhibition in the summer of 1985. Unfortunately, the school, due to a problem with emergency exits, if I'm not wrong, closed its door to preteen, and I had to continue learning new techniques as self-taught up to my 14th, when I enrolled at the Art Institute Michelangelo, where, honestly, I practically learned nothing about painting. There was a good course of still life drawing, and that's all. I had a real teacher only in **Franco Duranti**, when I discovered that the school still existed and I enrolled again at the ARVIMA in 2011; today I'm not more one of the students but one of the Members of it. After Franco, I found my way in New York, where in 2014 I was accepted at the Intensive Studio Program of the prestigious National Academy School & Museum, one of the most old Art school of the USA; here, I'm really bringing my skills to a next level.

As a movie buff, I've practically grown up in front of a TV. I see the music as a soundtrack of life, a means to underline sensations, feelings, and "visions". When I was a child, my passion was for the electro pop and New Wave, as kid I moved to the Metal side, and, after that, to the Rap, that, at 13 years, I tried to embrace as my style, with embarrassing results, I remember. I was also a Techno Hardcore DJ, that was and is my favorite party music. In this story, I never stop to do experiments with sound. My first experimental work was a tape where I recorded, in the early morning, something like one hour of bird singing outside my window, adding over a guitar, sometimes clean, sometimes jarring, looped, all improvised, played at random, without chords, that not even knew them at the time. Then, I've read somewhere about **Throbbing Gristle** and **PTV**, and I discovered that there was a real school of the genre. During one of the record fairs, Vinilmania, that I attended since 1989, I met and I became friend with **Stefano Musso** aka **Alio Die**. From then on, I entered in what is the world of Ambient, Power Electronics, Avant-Garde etc.

Because of an anxiety disorder and panic, which fortunately I've beaten, I've got a hole in my production, both visual and musical, but as soon as I started again to pick up the two, I have merged themselves spontaneously, the music as a soundtrack of my paintings, my paintings and videos as a visual transposition of my music. So, the short answer to the question is: "Yes, apart rare exceptions, everything is connected".

- 2) How much do you think that Italian Postwar Conceptual Art has influenced your work? Which inheritances do you think that are essential in order to develop Contemporary Art?

If for Italian Conceptual Art you mean **Gruppo Zero, Burri**, etc. I discovered one of them during 2014 Christmas thanks to the **Guggenheim** retrospective and the second one this Christmas thanks to his solo retrospective. This makes you understand how history of Art in Italian schools, at least those where I've studied, is taught very awfully, on the one side. On the other side that's, counterposed, my ignorance, that is also desired; one anecdote: this year I've started to make several series of works, of which one quite conceptual, based in Hardboiled literature, when Mr. Pellegrin, head of NA, told me that one of my works remembered Burri's work in some things, this last one wasn't known by me, and casually afterwards the exhibition was held. It had been a pleasure, the fact that I didn't know him, as this would and want to say that that work was born in me, completely, without any external influence, without the will to "copy" something made by others. Therefore, part of my ignorance in not knowing artists is for me a way to feel free to create without having to be embarrassed if something looks similar to something, that's casual. Then, talking about Italian Art, I find Burri interesting and so Gruppo Zero, but, to say it clearly, I never had an attraction towards Italian Art, generally speaking.

3) Do you consider the use of painting an obsolete way of making Art?

I mainly create paintings, then I would say No. At home I hang up a painting, a photo, I put a sculpture into a glass showcase or a pedestal. Art should be enjoyable by all, if I created only installations this would be enjoyed by few.

4) Why an Italian artist today chooses to go to New York? Do you feel stimulated and encouraged by the City in the making of your art?

Firstly, I don't consider myself an Italian artist. If you find Italy in my artworks, you're led to think it because you know that I was born in it. To be honest, I don't consider myself Italian, excluding the fact that I was born there; I don't understand and I never understood the Country and its people. I chose, long time ago, to move to the US, and I saved and searched the right way to go there. I discovered the NA, one of the most prestigious old American schools, in 2013, I contacted them and I sent my portfolio. I was accepted for the Intensive program and I won, for two years, the scholarship. I was a bit reluctant, I must admit it, not for what concerns my professionalism in the artistic field, but because I still had anxiety/panic disorders. The City saved me, I'm not without them at 100%, but I had them only one/two times in this last year. NY it didn't eat me alive, has embraced me and cleansed from my uncertainties. NY in itself is Art, its people, its roads, its constant changes, and the persons, from the youngest to the most aged, appreciate Arts for what they are, not for a mainly profitable reason, or because you have to appreciate Art for its history. They appreciate it because it gives emotions, shakes life, makes you dream, speaks you; that's common to several American cities, even in those which are smaller. In Italy is different, I don't want to talk you about this.

5) Would you advise a peer to make your same itinerary (musical and artistic)?

I can give advice to someone only if he has already begun his way, that's according to my experiences, but not if he is starting from scratch. Everyone has their own reasons, choices, they

have to firstly ponder of what is better for themselves. My advice can be, and probably you heard that several times, but it is a good one; rationally follow your dreams, look at your merits and cultivate them, grow up and believe in yourself, no matter if you're a kid, a teen, or adult, stand and fight for your Dreams!

- 6) Do you want to talk us about your last poems book, **Perish, She said**? I find that it's strongly influenced by certain early-twentieth avant-garde. Do you agree with this?

My favourite poetess is **Emily Dickinson**. I really appreciate, also, **Charlotte Perkins Gilman** and **William Faulkner**, I think that this answers your question. I wrote my first poem when I was 7 years old, for a child that, obviously, she sent me to fuck off, this is only to say that I don't remember from when I started to be influenced by other poets. Excluding those studied during the compulsory education years, I never considered italian poets, I never been interested in them. Despise me for that, but I can't do anything about it. "Perish, She said" is partially self-biographic, partially fictional, always starts from the concept of Noir / Mystery / Hardboiled, it takes in consideration the Fire as, the Love, the devouring Passion, and makes it a Woman, that is tough, diffident, with a complex and dominant nature. Both, her and the book have several facets, several possible readings, that you can like it or not. The choice to use archaic terms starts from the will to impress a touch of Romanticism, in a literary meaning, to the Contemporary.

- 7) Thysanura is a rather atypical and interesting project in the noise / experimental italian scene, and recently i've appreciated a lot your collaboration on the new Otur Boyd's album. What do you want to express with your music?

Also here, as in the visual Art, it depends a lot from the initial concept. With Thysanura, i've worked a lot with psychology, with social relations/diseases, with the faith, and with the sexuality in the last two albums. Every work expresses something different, but everything is connected, I record following the instinct and the feeling of the moment, many time in one take, improvising. I like to leave the freedom to have a personal point of view on that, although it could be fully detached from what I tried to express, isn't wrong, it's yours, your being and, for that reason, correct.

Song titles are only starting points, the journey is in freedom, you will follow the concept, but you will free to choose the crossroads.

- 8) I've read that an exhibition is going to be held in Pavia. Do you want to talk us better about it?

They're going to be two solo exhibitions in February. One is **Angolazioni** held at the **Bliss Cafè**, and is the second appointment with a sort of retrospective. Are presented new and old works, not necessarily related between each other. The exhibition is held into Bars and Clubs, not in galleries, and, therefore, they are appropriate for eclecticism, you can simply visit it and leave, or choose a painting that you like, drink a coffee or a drink and sit admiring it smoothly.

The other solo exhibition will be held at **Gallery Arte 17**, that is also the gallery that represent me in Pavia, and will be a homage to **Twin Peaks** entitled **One chants between two worlds**, are works made in 2014, between the abstract and the minimal figurative. Casually, while I was painting this series, Lynch announced that a third season was in the making.

- 9) Noise music in Italy: which common thread, musical and not, links Thysanura's music with that of other projects such as Otur Boyd and **SC9**, to name a few? Is it just a musical linkage or there's something deeper? Does a scene that actively relates with the music made outside of Italy exist? If so, what are its trademarks, and do you feel to belong to it?

I've worked several times with Otur Boyd, but I only know SC9 by name. If the scene actively relates with itself, I can only tell it seeing on FB the various comments sent between each other, and the several events that are being posted. Surely social networks helped in this connection, something that in the past was more difficult to obtain. I know, and I am linked to few, we haven't searched each other, it just happened.

All I know in terms of relations in the scene is this. I am quite a misanthrope, therefore is rare that I look for a relationship in the field, neither in NY nor in Italy, what I can tell you, is that here, the scene is very active, there are several gigs and performances, also linked to Art, and it moves in the underground but also outside. In Italy no, everything is much more forced, many groups stay enclosed in some guidelines/cages, some others have more freedom, but these last ones are few. Of course I hope that the scene will become ever "mainstream", it would lose its initial logic, but it would be nice, that even in Italy, the walls that relegate it as an "only for few" fall down, because it is not. It's made by people who have a great sensibility, let's think about the always cited **Corbelli (Atrax Morgue)** in order to understand what I'm talking about, and outside of music, his personal story. He shows the world as it is, raw, without gimmicks.

- 10) What are you planning to do with Thysanura? Do we'll have the chance to listen to something new shortly? And as far as Michele Grassani as an Artist is concerned, where are you heading to?

As far as Thysanura, since 2015, I'm working in tracks inspired by NYC, looking at its Noir face. Even if I don't know if I will release them under Thysanura or **MRG** alias, my artistic nickname. This work is connected to where I'm moving into the visual Art at now, as already said. Surely I won't leave Thysanura in the oblivion, I've recently released **Lust on the thin black line** that follows **Hardcore**, and probably I'll stay in this direction. Everyone in the Power Electronics / Noise scene confronted themselves with the sex topic, at least in their early years, but I didn't. It was spontaneous, the last year, maybe because I'm single since 2008 eheh, however, sooner or later I had to confront myself with this topic.

As a visual artist, I'm focusing on four series: **Hardboiled**, as I've said, that is purely conceptual and it is made of installations, one **Noir** that is an abstract representational that recalls the world of the Detective's comics, another serie that merges these two things, a real minimal figurative, and the last one, also in the same minimal stile, that recalls the typically British's **Mystery**.

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