

# BOSCO

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## THE MAN

The plain ramp, which winds beside the stairway leading to Pierre Bosco, is of naked iron ; it climbs to his landing where the half-light ceases, for it is the only level with a window. It is almost as though the artist had, long ago, determined to open this shaft of light in which the broken shadows of his books are silhouetted to-day.

– *"Ah," he says, "it is you."*

For some men whom we meet, carrying within them their secrets, their passion, and their weaknesses as well, we feel a sudden rush of warmth – we hardly know why – unless it can be ascribed to the common denominator of age, which, rendering us somewhat alike, makes us like one another. Or, perhaps it is the total absence of certitude which has qualified our existences until now ?

The first room upon entering is tranquil, and sedate. The furniture is upholstered in muted tones, and, on the wall, hang two paintings from his abstract period : chalk-white volumes superimposed upon a coloured background, like so many stones spilled upon the grass, or suspended in the sky.

We proceed, and we are in the brightly lit studio. Here is the easel, and, beside it, a kind of work-bench where, together with the paint from his tubes, anguish, hope, and certainty had been poured out.

– *"You will have a glass of champagne, won't you ?"*

He glances at me, then immediately begins getting things together. What lies ahead is a festival, a descent into our personal depths, and a rising up again, at will, like bubbles or words. And, in the paintings which surround me, horses gallop, dancers twirl, everything is movement, energy, action : everything is strength, the joy of being alive, of living.

— *"You seem to be fond of horses." I say.*

They are there, with or without riders, amid the dancers and the bicycle riders, their names floating in the wind, intoxicated with the open spaces, not as they might appear to the unintelligent eye of a camera, but as talent had formed them, and transformed them.

— *"Indeed, I am. My father used to breed them. He bought his stallions in Yugoslavia. That was when we lived in a little town in the province of Venice, not far from the sea."*

Instantly, the studio cuts loose from its moorings to carry us away to where I have never been, to a place where he had spent his entire childhood. He shivers, but continues to exert pressure on the cork of the bottle. Surely his father is among us, or he has rejoined his father ; for he begins to speak of him as one of the countless parents who refuse precarious professions to their sons.

— *"He wanted me to become an officer in the Merchant Marine."*

Was this because of their proximity to the sea ? Yet, who could blame him ? An officer wears a cap, has a noble demeanor, and a career of long duration — commerce is not likely to come to an end tomorrow — to say nothing of those precocious little wrinkles about the eyes, which so enhance male beauty.

— *"I studied in Genoa, and, later, in Rome."*

— *"What did you become ?"*

— *"A restorer of paintings. That is to say, I helped someone else restore them. His advice has been a great help to me ever since."*

So it is with our old teachers. They live on in our memories, often closer to us than our parents. If the latter gave us life, the former gave us knowledge. In that long chain of persons, the links are the result of accident, or of love.

– “Do you know,” he confides recklessly, “I prefer Delacroix’ horses to those of Leonardo da Vinci.”

He laughs, and we drink. My glance is captured by a group of dancers cavorting wildly in one of his paintings ; wheeling about unceasingly, springing into the air on a light toe, vanishing briefly in a cloud of tulle, returning centre stage to commence anew.

But how, I ask myself, can painting be both static and in such a turmoil ? There is also that hint of a polo player, for he is still but a sketch, yet movement is already present. In the effort and elegance of their mutual gesture, the man and the animal have become a single unit. What we behold is a centaur.

Then there is a small picture, which is to go to the Headquarters of the French Broadcasting System (La Maison de la Radio), and which invites us to join in a frenzied race. Here, the wheel has replaced the animal, the riders are glued to it, the spokes whirl dizzily.

I am almost astonished to see Bosco seated there, apparently so calm, in his arm chair, peacefully smoking his pipe. I am also surprised – when one is accustomed to hearing artists of the same discipline tear each other apart with relish, it is rather unexpected – to hear him speak so simply of the painters whom he loves : Bonnard, Pissaro, Soulages, Manessier, Pignon, not to mention Picasso, “who opened all the doors and closed all the windows”, and also Le Sidaner, of whom he showed me an original gouache, prepared for a book published in 1928, where it appeared as frontispiece. We speak of Bissière, who embraced abstract art rather late in life, but with absolute sincerity ; and of Tal Coat, misunderstood for so long, who exhibited paintings of the Spanish Civil War prior to “Guernica” – a fact of which an artist friend of mine had made mention that very morning – Tal Coat who will, within a few days, be honoured in the Grand Palais, with a retrospective exhibition. Tal Coat ; His stock will climb now that the trumpets of fame have accepted to arouse the public.

And once again I turn to inspect canvasses inspired by competitive sports : this is a football match, this a bicycle race, and here the speeding horses suddenly become multicolored. Immobilize the action, while retaining the movement.

And, it is always the same thing : bets are placed on the artist, he finds himself becoming an object of speculation, commerce, and exchange ; and the necrophagous repasts, so dear to professional critics in return for hard cash on the line, also await him. Perhaps that is

why, one day, some artists decide to act the clown. This can be done when one has talent. A good show is useful to success. But, what if one has talent, and one refuses to be a clown ?

– *” What matters most of all, is finding one’s self, then one must think things through thoroughly. At one time, I thought I could fulfill myself in abstract art. It did not take me very long to discover that abstractions reduced me to a single canvas, executed in different colours. What was the point ? ”*

It is evident that when one has known open country, the tousled and moving manes of horses, the tumult of rut ; the new-born colts, standing bravely upon their fragile legs...

He seems entirely absorbed in shaking the ash from the bowl of his pipe.

– *” An artistic production exists by its unity, not by its repetition. It is difficult to create. ”*

– *” I agree. ”*

And I think of Fashionable Paris, or Fashionable-Any-Where-Else, attending an exhibit on the run, only to return home, perfectly convinced that three minutes is time sufficient in which to judge ten year’s work.

– *” Time goes by, and here I am, sometimes totally inactive. That state of affairs lasts, or it does not – it all depends. ”*

He is slim, svelt, but aging. I find him to be just a trifle beyond the autumnal period, with its wrinkles and its greying hair. From his native land, he has retained his inimitable Venitian accent, his expressive gestures, and a contagious Latin warmth. I take this opportunity to invoke his youth. He smiles, and his smile is filled with phantoms, and vanished decors, very briefly alive. He did not marry until he was nearly fifty years old. Before

that, life lacked stability. Everything depended upon the whims of his friends, the capriciousness of things, circumstance. And the money pocketed for the sale of a painting would be squandered in one night.

He awoke rich, he went to bed poor. He had been under contract to Alex Maguy for three years, three years instead of the fifteen which had originally been agreed upon. Alex Maguy, who liked to declare, that if he had been a painter, he would have painted the way Bosco did. But there were drawbacks. A tale of art merchants. Alex Maguy would arrive, and insist upon filling his Cadillac with paintings. The luck of that period wore itself out... He still laughs about it.

– *“Independence,”* he says, *“you are obliged to pay for everything, but especially for independence.”*

Thus it was that he established himself in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, in this old building where we are at present, in an apartment overlooking the courtyard. He has a wife now, and children. The noise from the street does not reach him, nor that of the critics. He almost never bothers to read their articles, and but rarely accepts to be present at the openings of his exhibits. It is as though the man himself were superfluous, just a man among others, whereas it is what is hanging upon the wall that is important.

– *“I see that you not only depict movement, drive, effort, but you paint cathedrals as well.”*

– *“Yes, yes indeed.”*

He speaks, and I suddenly remember a head of Christ, glimpsed upon the wall of the Galerie La Belle Gabrielle, rue Norvins, glimpsed, then scrutinized, studied, contemplated ; an early work, rather monochrome, almost chocolate in colour, in relief against a light background. A study which may be interpreted as one likes, but, which for me, represented Bosco. It could be but he whom it symbolized, a Bosco who had left his very own head behind – not through any simple absent-mindedness, but as testimony to the tragic destiny of all of us, God and man alike, rich or poor. He speaks, and his cathedral is not a heap of stone, vaults, sculpture any longer ; it quivers as though it were alive. The unseen blood of its gargoyles, like that of its ecstatic Saints, courses through it ; and the soul which animates it, very candidly invents the eternity of which we all dream.



– *“It is strange,”* he says, *“I work with matter, and yet, for me, nothing is material. Take Cezanne, or Braque, for example. There is a whole world in a still-life.”*

Alex Maguy’s Cadillac has just crossed the studio, only to go away empty. It would appear to be nothing more than a tiny, toy car. And Bosco goes on. He sometimes spent the entire night before his easel, in a kind of delirium. The solitude of creation. If each of his paintings is, in his eyes, successful, none of them are wholly so. The paintings pile up, difficulties beset him, the children come. Three boys. And the world is cruel. The human race resembles a colony of ants where each member carries his provisions upon his back.

I think of all of those people who work for a salary, of all of those who earn a monthly income, and who can keep genuine accounts, that is to say, who enjoy short or average-dated security, and this despite the vicissitudes of economic affairs, or the imponderable factors of existence. Did the idea of compromise ever occur to him? It do not think so, since he can do nothing but paint. The King is naked.

Fortunately, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, he has friends. He is so communicative, so genuinely warm. It is not so much an abundance of words, no, he does not intoxicate you with talk; it is just his reaction to what is said to him, even succinctly. Touched but lightly, the chord of his sensitivity vibrates, and resounds, and echoes. He is a tree which breathes with every single one of its leaves, a tree which quivers at the slightest breeze. He admits to having been pessimistic, but he is pessimistic no longer. His art is both behind him, and before him. The storms of the past have permitted him to sink his roots down deeply, and no tempest has succeeded in felling him, for there he is. Though lined, his brow is full of promise. Does not the luck of certain creators reside in their holding on as long as possible?

– *“Surely you have been given some award?”*

– *“Oh, I had completely forgotten about them. I received a gold medal from the City of Visco, and the City of Paris awarded me with a silver medal.”*

Both are probably buried beneath letters, forms, and bills in some drawer; I imagine, however, that they gave rise at the time to modest celebrations, with good friends lifting their glasses in toast around the table. He says “gold”, “silver”, as one might say “paper”,

"bronze", or "diamond" when speaking of someone's wedding anniversary. Even relative recognition from contemporaries is a thing which brings pleasure. Usually they ignore you, forget about you, or simply put you off until some later date ; they are either severe in their judgements, or unduly obliging. What he would really like is that an unknown, just passing by the place where he happens to be on exhibit, stop, at length, before one of his paintings – and it must not be someone from the Social Register, on the contrary. An employee, perhaps, or someone from the world of sports, someone familiar with training, and who knows the meaning of effort. He would not have the money to meet the price asked, but he would seek to understand, sincere and accessible, the true significance of this astonishing curve, and why such song arises from these blended colours. Then, he would ask to meet the artist, loving him already because he finds himself to be a better person in the face of so much health and equilibrium, and he would simply desire to shake the artist's hand, saying : Glad to meet you, Sir.

– " You know, " continues Bosco, " *despite the trials which it imposes, the research, the successful or the unsuccessful attempts which it implies ; I firmly believe in the necessity of a return to the primitive, that we must recapture the spirit of the primitives. The art of the future will be figurative. The annihilators, with their monochrome canvasses, or with their colours spewn directly from tubes, are a thing of the past. There is no genius without patient study, not a painting worthy of the name without a tremendous amount of work. It is not the price I bring at the auction block that concerns me, or torments me, it is what I am.* "



## THE STAGES

– “*So, you were born in 1909 ?*”

– “*Yes, on the twenty-ninth of January, in Italy. In Visco, in the province of Udina.*”

This is merely a statement of fact, for it is necessary to situate him in time. But, is it entirely without importance ? The beginning of the century, or almost. Is it remote, or is it close ? It is always too far when we consider the possibilities which are offered a man in his lifetime, of all that he must leave behind, and all the things that he will be unable to discover and create. Nonetheless, it is very close.

The magic of that paint-box, which his mother gave him at the age of eight, touches him still ; the very memory of it illuminates his face. It was from that moment that the world which this box contained, a treasure locked within its depths, began to belong to him. Clumsily, gropingly he undertook the realization of his first dreams ; the gift exceeded its own proportions. Together with this sudden temptation to express himself, came the means, and for him, one more efficacious than words.

Since it is certainly not he who would boast of his origins, it is necessary to fill in the blanks, the silences. In an account published in 1963, we learn that he descends from a very famous Italian family, the Della Rovère family. But, I prefer to sit down beside this anonymous little boy who is so frankly fascinated by pencils, and saucers filled with coloured water. What did he depict at that time ? Flowers ? Birds ? His father’s horses, so difficult to render, in their pasture over there ? Or, this village, with its tiled roofs huddled close together ? What does it matter ? It is his encounter with creation, the fugitive power, the loneliness, the apprenticeship to a very special joy which is invariably mixed with suffering. Whereas, later, he will draw and paint Madonnas on the walls, according to tradition. Then, at the age of seventeen, he undertakes the restoration of paintings, of which I have already made mention ; and, there, as the young assistant to Old Masters, he will touch, with his fingers and with his heart, the secrets and the techniques of painting. An education such as this is priceless.

– “ *Then, one day you decided to go to Paris ?* ”

– “ *Yes, in 1931. I had seen, during my years of study in Genoa, and Rome, reproductions of paintings by Cezanne, Pissaro, Gauguin, Rouault. Just imagine.* ”

They are all around us now, convoked by memory ; some here, on the arm of this chair, while some manage to insert themselves, I scarcely know how, among the canvasses of Bosco. I see him hesitate, sigh, and cough – or is it Gauguin’s horse, with its very unreal coat, which snorted gently ? And, there is one of Rouault’s judges, observing us severely, a sentence upon his lips.

– “ *You understand, don’t you ?* ”

He had neither escaped, nor deserted, he had simply walked off in the direction of his elder brothers. His calling equates an irresistible appeal, like that exercised by religion, but, in the case of art, exclusive to excess, such possession is total.

– “ *I settled down in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.* ”

Not in this house in which we find ourselves at present – for he lived in several places in this city – but in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, just beside the dominion forest, and the Renaissance chateau which houses a very remarkable collection of prehistoric art. Not far, either, from Etang-la-Ville where, two years after his arrival, he was to meet his first living Master, Xavier Roussel, who helped him ; guided him – one might say decanted him – and obliged him to find his best means of original expression. An encounter of supreme importance, youth leaning upon experience. Bosco is joy, Bosco is sorrow ; he paints dozens and dozens of canvasses, destroys some of them. Sisyphus of the eternal commencements. But he will reach the summits.

– “ *Painting is, above all, an inner experience.* ” he says.

It is that, without a doubt. And, in that case, it is far removed from the din, the tiny cakes, the bow ties, the cackling of the aviaries, and from the fashionable. “*C’est le dernier cri, my dear, c’est le dernier cri !*”

"Le dernier cri", this patient progression through that which is truly human ? That anxious, anguished approach toward the reality which is to be found within the painting – and, above it ? It is like discovering the heart which throbs beneath the epiderm, and, somewhere else, the mind : and, after a most careful search, the soul. In a flash, I recall a science-fiction movie where a team of specialists, dressed in white gowns, and carrying lamps in their hands, made their way along the arteries, sounded the walls, and entered the cavernous organs of some giant, discovered on I do not know what planet. Perhaps they, too, sought, beneath appearance - existence.

– *"I met Maurice Denis, Vuillard. I worked with Marchand. And then the war came."*

He kept going, thanks to an occasional sale, and subsidies from his family. For these dark years, silence. The leaden vault lifted only once ; he exhibited at the Galerie Roussel, Boulevard Saint-Germain, in Paris. Then more silence, and the death of his father. He is back in Italy after fifteen years of absence. On the walls, here and there, remain Madonnas which have been partially effaced by time. Vestiges, memories. He returns to France, determined to remain forever. He is poor, but animated by a fierce determination to pursue his work.

– *"It was then that I got the idea of forming a group here, in Saint-Germain-en-Laye."*

Yes, unhappiness is the lot of the man alone. Friends sustain you, give you encouragement. A simple gesture is often sufficient, a glass emptied with someone else, a hand laid amicably upon the shoulder... And now we have Chastel, Gomery, Clavé, Samartino, Soubervie, Véra. It is 1950. They paint, they breathe, they live.

The following year, Bosco contributes to the First Biennale del Mare, in Genoa ; exhibits with some others at the Galerie Vivet, Rue de l'Université, in Paris ; at the Pavillon Louis XIV ; at the Musée de l'Art Moderne (the Museum of Modern Art) ; at the Third Salon de l'Art Sacré (the Third Salon of Religious Art), where he shows a descent from the Cross ; and, at the first Salon of the Ile-de-France. His contributions attract attention.

Bosco is forty years old when he presents fifty paintings, all at once, at the Galerie Herisson, directed by Madame Bagnol. They are powerful, visionary. Is Bosco a mystic ? Is not every creator, who explores the mystery of Man, a mystic ?

"Tragic expressionism" and "the magic of sorcery" are the descriptions applied to his paintings of that period. He begins to interest people ; he is known, but he is not known well. "Why, a real painter !", they exclaim. They salute the artist and then move on.

Perhaps it was then that he should have penetrated those salons where there is a great deal of talk, but where nothing is said ; proceeded from an exclamation to a guttural guffaw ; played the fool, behaved like one possessed, comported himself like an excentric ; comported himself like a buffoon. Especially inasmuch as, all around him, abstract art was creating a furor ; a simple projection of paint from a spray-gun sufficed to release gallons of ink and saliva. And how is it possible to distinguish from the facile and the genuine, the true from the false, when everything is indiscriminately applauded ? Any and everything, as though it should suffice to scream out the work "genius", to convince the world of one's talent.

Abstraction would appear to offer possibilities different from those of figurative art, it admits of other phantasms. Thus, Bosco makes a try at it, since the Faubourg-Saint-Honoré openly solicits it. Let him, who has never made a mistake, cast the first stone. The originality of his expression, his mystical temperament, the tendencies, the environment at that time, the conviction that he will be able to subjugate a system which is, more often than not, a method ; quite certainly all these things incite him to hurl himself into this adventure. I can easily imagine him as a kind of Saint Francis of Assisi, whose legend lives anew in the Fioretti and the frescoes of Giotto, and who finds himself a wanderer, solitary, spectral, far from his frugal monks and his Poor Clares, engaged in a search for nothingness.

It is obvious that Bosco might have pretended, exhibited in that renowned Galerie Forein, on the famous Faubourg Saint-Honoré, enjoyed a temporary celebrity at the expense of the deeply personal. He might have entered the dance beneath the carnival confetti, and, borrowing a peacock's feathers, pranced about in a role which was not his own, a composite role, in fact ; with an artificial voice, and concealed beneath a multitude of disguises. But he refuses to be confined, he who has the world at his fingertips ; he refuses to repeat himself. He, for whom the keys have just begun to sound the first chords upon the instrument of forms and colours. We should bow low, and honour the artist who courageously protects his true future.

– “*A stage.*” he says of that period.

A stage such as we have all known, seated with our backs to the gradient while the mirages rise in the offing.

– “*And the Galerie de l’Elysée ?*”

The Galerie de l’Elysée, that means Alex Maguy whose black and shining Cadillac crossed the room, just a little while back. Alex Maguy has excellent judgement, and the articles pour down ; the press is, as it is customary to say, unanimous. Among his connaisseurs, the maturity of Bosco leaves no room for doubt. At last !

The artist is here, there, and everywhere. Nice, where “the Smart Set of the Côte d’Azur” crowds to contemplate him ; Clermont-Ferrand ; Strasbourg ; at the Casino of the Baule ; while he remains unspoiled in the midst of all these fine people. “It is not at me that you should look, you know,” he says, “but at my paintings : that alter ego of myself in the “Silent City”, that sail boat, this couple, or this cathedral.” And, there is Bosco, standing beside the Marquis of Langle, who organized an exhibit at the Galerie Di Néo ; he shakes the hand of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Greece, and that of the Duke of Broglie. The Diplomatic Corps is well represented, and there are generals, and authors. The happy few in force. And, all through it all, Bosco remains charming, delegating to his paintings – those witnesses of the anguish of Man, and of his epoch, witnesses which are never mute – the possibility of a more vigorous expression.

– “*A half century is now upon us.*” I tell him.

– “*Very true.*”

Time elapses : sand and water. And how much do they weigh ? It is of small importance, for he acquires new roots. He marries, he travels once again. Art collectors welcome him in New York, in Geneva. A son is born to him. Stability, luminosity. His wife is young, the world is young. Life begins.

– *“ And then you met Mr. Thomas ? ”*

– *“ Yes, in 1959. It was friendship right from the start. You know how those things are.”*

– *“ Yes, I know.”*

Coincidence ? A return upon himself ? The agitation of travel, the frenzy which disperses effort, the uproar, and suddenly Mr. Thomas, who, far removed from the tawdry, the merely fashionable, offers him asylum in his gallery ; offers it to him, and without fuss.

– *“ Are you under contract ? ”*

– *“ Only morally. Between friends, that suffices amply.”*

And so it is that Bosco works on, entirely dedicated to his art, in a family atmosphere which contributes hugely to his equilibrium. He gives free reign to his inspiration, and while continuing to exploit, with even greater profundity, those themes which are dear to him – such as this head of Christ, or these new cathedrals – he undertakes those which represent energy, the suspension of movement, effort. Mr. Thomas organized an important private exhibition for him, and one which confirmed the opinion held by the serious Parisian art critics : from the *“Figaro”* to *“l’Humanité”*, and from *“Arts”* to *“Les Lettres Françaises”*. This in no way prevented Bosco from hanging his paintings at the Galerie du Carlton, in Cannes, with Yvonne Mottet ; at the Wamper Gallery, in Cologne ; some small canvasses at the Galerie du Cirque, in Paris ; other works at the II Tribbio Gallery, in Trieste ; and at the Corner Gallery, in London.

So goeth friendship, and this is the book.



## THE WORK

It is not anyone's intention, in publishing this volume, to enhance a reputation. It is a known fact that, whatever the modern methods employed, and despite recourse to the most recent scientific improvements, any reproduction is, perforce, unfaithful.

The nuances, often of major importance, are absent; the surface, and the strength are missing as well; and, evidently, the original itself. As for the reproduction in black and white, such a parody leaves us with nothing more than the idea, the general intention. But if, the man of good faith can do no more than make use of the means at his disposal, and thus provide only a very partial approximation of that which he wishes to display; he deserves some credit for declaring, publicly, his convictions.

Eugene Dabit wrote somewhere that to speak of painting signifies one's entry upon a labyrinth, from which escape can be exceedingly difficult. But, of what labyrinth can he speak, unless it be the one which, by the arcana of line and colour, leads you to the treasure which is ceaselessly revealed by the mysterious world of the mind?

A great painter is always that messenger who is to be seen standing on the threshold, demanding, yet timid, and always disconcerting. If he has recourse to tradition, is it not to make it easier to understand? And then he moves on, from yesterday to to-day, from complication to complication, toward that dangerous foot-bridge, suspended above the abyss, and which attains the shores of the future.

We have our habits, our routine judgements which a little, or a great deal of culture brings us to admit; we go along with the crowd, we are, most of us, a generation late, when it is not more than one. Or, we are snobs, and it is nothingness which attracts us, some formless magma, devoid of soul. Then, along comes Bosco, that vagabond of the imaginary, an imaginary which compels reality to tell the truth.

Just look at the emanations from the walls of his Silent Cities, behold all that he expresses by this head of Christ, or by this head – of a horse ! That which moves you proceeds more from the heart than from the intellect, but such is the way of life. Is not our world wracked with suffering of every kind ? Is not the just victimized, and the innocent animal – prize-winner or not – condemned to the slaughter house ?

I skimmed through the "Golden Ledger" where the visitors to Bosco's last exhibition at the Galerie La Belle Gabrielle, in 1971, inscribed their comments : "It is simply beautiful !" "I find it too cold.", "Que viva Bosco !" "Not pretty enough.", "Master of colour and the moment." "Beautiful !", "Oh, what harmony'", "The work of a genius.", "And you call that painting ?", "A flash of light transpierced my heart !", "I had trouble trying to disentangle your rugby melée.", "Keep it up.", "It opens upon the invisible, the fantastic.", "I felt a transformation take place within myself."

I heard these discordant voices, voices from everywhere and elsewhere, praise and incomprehension inextricably combined, which left their trace upon these pages, signs comparable to those which glimmer on the walls of his studio, near the work-bench - darkness and light.

He takes the book from me, puts it away in the bottom of a drawer in his old commode, and stands, as well might stand, despite everyone and everything, through sun and storm, one of those time-worn statues – of demon or saint – which can still be observed in the stone of cathedrals.

Bosco does not affect the pretty, no one pursues innocence less than he, although it often pierces through, here and there, as an afterthought. And there, happiness is generated at a window overlooking the street, or among those sails swollen with wind in a regatta, but it is something more than this : it is hope and promise. I can easily understand how he allowed himself to be carried away, during this whole, most recent period, by the effort expended by man in the exercise of sport, however exacting the discipline, as though this form of evasion can serve as counterpoint for the anguish which seeps through his other themes. It is a necessity that the human being be obliged to surpass himself in some way.

For him, nothing is superficial, nothing is hypocritical. I hear the wild galloping in the hippodrome, I am moist with the perspiration which runs along the backs of those players in the rugby match. It is from such things that the health, of which I have already spoken, and the equilibrium proceed.

Let us consider how this painter of movement has allied himself, in that superb painting entitled, "Bicycle Race in the Forest", with the splendour of man in the torment of mutable nature. Ahead of us lie dark greens, while above and beyond the trees, in a typical Ile-de-France sky, drift clouds which will never constitute a danger for anyone ; an art of consolation, a soothing vision, and we can remain with it as long as we like.

But there is a multicolored Harlequin moving in upon us, sometimes as a performer, as when he comes prancing upon his dancing horse, sometimes chastened and alone, with his fingers spread out like paintbrushes, the creator of a world, Boco's world, which our eye discovers, little by little, according to the subjects, the epoch, the moment. In this instance, life inebriates you, and, there, a temporary death awaits you. The gamut runs from the blind aggressivity of these fowls, embattled despite themselves, and who ruthlessly kill one another, to this Christ who has somehow become a Harlequin. And so it goes, in a continual blaze of colour, in the turmoil of a meet, or amid the frenzy of a French Can-Can, never before observed in such a manner, or upon the red wings of birds in flight.

– " *And after that ?* " I asked, my nose in a catalogue, where I read that Bosco can be seen in several museums : in Tel-Aviv ; in Caramulo, Portugal ; in the United States.

– " *After what ?* " "

– " *Tomorrow.* " I said.

– " *I plan to exhibit in Cannes, this summer.* " "

He hesitates, interrogates himself, speaks to me of Ireland where he is going to spend a week with his wife, and children, soon. Because of the light in that country, a certain quality of light, it would seem.

He is already curious, avid. What one hopes for, what one imagines perhaps, is another planet, the beauty of elsewhere, with absolute sky, and absolute sea. It is as though, suddenly, nothing else can matter, neither this dome of clouds, nor these footprints.



– *“But what about Cannes?”*

– *“Oh, yes.”*

Ireland fades out, disappears. He shudders, then rises.

– *“Do you know what really preoccupies me?”*

I translate, “obsesses me”, simply because I see him as he is now, standing in the centre of his studio, his gaze fixed upon a blank canvas which happens to be there, and his eyes already taking possession of it, filling it with colour and movement. For himself alone.

– *“No, tell me.”*

– *“The mercenaries. Those people who kill for money.”*

I say nothing. Because all of Bosco is contained in this approach toward good and evil. One day – enthralled – he is overjoyed to paint the pull of muscles, or the speed of a race at Longchamps : on another, he is seized with a cruel awareness of that which is most reprehensible in man, his love of lucre, his blind cupidity.

Mercenaries. In portraits one must go down into the very depths of people. Will there be a sky behind them ? What colour ? I do not know, but one thing of which I am certain is that it would be impossible to be so near-sighted as not to recognize, beneath the cloth, the weave, that full thickness of paint which represents the uniform – above and beyond mere appearance – the shadows of the prostrate bodies ; and none would be so deaf as not to hear the cries of their victims.

How then can we summarize Bosco ? What can I say, at the point I have reached, about him, or about ourselves ? How can he be explained ? By a reminiscence, perhaps ?

In my youth, I had a mare whom I loved. Her name was Idocrase. She was gentle and foolish, tossed her head with pleasure when I caressed her withers, and she obeyed at the slightest pressure, at the simplest sign. But, once away from the stable, the open

spaces intoxicated her, a kind of divine madness possessed her, and made her gallop until she panted for breath. She soared over hedges, ditches, covered untold distances with thundering hooves, until she was exhausted. That was the time when cavalry regiments still existed. And, what do you think happened to this creature who lived beyond the normal, without rules and discipline ? She was declared unfit for duty, but not before having been branded with a redhot iron to indicate that she might never be purchased as a saddle horse, or for the shafts, because she was dangerous, in the judgement of men. I led her to Vaugirard, where a killer, in a white coat, took her for butchering. It was then that she turned her gaze upon me.

And you ask me why I like Bosco ? It is that very same look of reproach, of regret, of love which I reencounter everywhere in his paintings. Even when he is not portraying the eye of a horse.

His production, as of to-day, includes : 1,500 paintings. People, animals and things : couples, Christs, Virgins, Harlequins, dancers, cities, streets, cathedrals, cocks, races, boats – beached or on the sea – a whole world conjured, not as one would have it to exonerate one's self, but as it is : branded with a red-hot iron, and for a long, long time.

Pierre Hulin  
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Mr. Pierre Hulin is the author of four novels :

- **Au-devant des matins**, published by Robert Laffont
- **Metro**, containing 7 illustrations, and published by Au Soleil dans la Tête
- **Rendez-vous sur la terre**, published by Gallimard
- **Les rentrées d'Octobre**, published by Galimard.