

THE BIRD MAN AND NEW GENERATION

Marco Agostinelli, 2017

The island of Motu Nui is the largest of the three islands located just at south of Easter Island. The other two islands are Motu Kao and Motu Iti. At Motu Nui "gray terns" nest, and directly related to them is the WORSHIP OF THE BIRD MAN, which replaced Moai ancestors worship.

Every spring each one of the tribes chose a warrior who should participate in the race / ritual, consisting of a dive from Rano Kao cliff, more than 300 meters above sea level, at the site of Orongo, and consequently had to reach the island of Motu Nui with the only help of a bundle of reeds as a float. Once on the island the warrior had to collect a tern egg and bring it back to the ground at the High Priest. Who came first unscathed, the risk of shark attacks or to have the egg broke were very strong, was appointed the BIRD MAN and worshiped as a god on Earth. In addition, his tribe was granted jurisdiction over the island for one year. The next spring, the ritual was repeated.

(According to some, the Bird Man ceremony was typical of the Polynesian cultures and was present in the island since its colonization, while others claim that it was the result of fights between some castes of warriors to secure a prominent position. But the more accredited hypothesis is that it was a "civil" and "saving" choice against the State ruling religion, which was based on an ancestor worship and on the erection of Moai, the great Easter Island statues erected to honor their own. In fact, their construction, between the time of realization and especially that of the transportation, for which a large number of tree trunks were used, meant that the trees were felled in an increasing massive way, until their total disappearance. The result was an ecological catastrophe in which, for lack of food, it started the practice of cannibalism. And here the new religion and the cult of Bird Man starts: The Bird Man and New Generation, in the desperate tentative to save the island).

But back to Easter Island: the island was one of the wonders of our planet! In the middle of the Pacific Ocean the bubbling volcanoes brought out millions of years ago a land destined to house a true test of human civilization. Many people don't know the history of Easter Island, which instead should be known; and many of those who know do not stop thinking about the importance of what happened.

People started to populate the island only around 1000 DC (therefore, quite late). The place was the best a person could wish to live in. Practically there are no seasons, it is always spring. The average temperature is 22 degrees Celsius and the thermal contrast doesn't exceed 5° in all seasons of the year. The Earthly Paradise, it was. Migrants, almost certainly of Polynesian origin, started populating the island and, of course, their quality of life was excellent. Soon, however, in the short span of a few centuries, that paradise turned into hell. People, blinded by power and greed, imposing the symbol of their prosperity, started building and raising the Moai, the big stone sculptures that still today we can see in the island, where there is no longer any trace of trees. They didn't realize that they were impoverishing their true heritage, destroying Nature and its equilibrium in favor of power and vanity.

Here, the world today, and I think particularly on Venice (another wonder of our planet), looks me like the Easter Island of the last days of the Moai, we are also impoverishing beauty and Nature... and maybe, the time would come for a New Generation and of the return of the Bird Man. In its myth there is the greatness of true democracy and civilization: think if one could stay in power only for one year and then should to be back "appropriately" to the test. Imagine now our politicians... as they are glued to their seats!

So I wanted to build The Bird Man and I deliberately made it at the Squero di San Trovaso with only 7 different woods of gondola. With those woods that have been touched by shipwrights, by the great master craftsmen in extinction, swallowed up by our consumer society hopelessly adrift. And more than three and half meters high, more than two meters wide and its long tail feathers reach six meters in length. And, in my opinion, it is so magnificent that it is really terrible! In the belly it has a silver egg, and its eyes are made in Murano glass as it is the beginning of the bust in dark gray blown glass. The Bird Man is painted with the same black paint of the gondolas and I worked everything by hand, piece by piece, centimeter by centimeter, inlaying in its entirety. Only the wings have a hint of red here and there. Blood!

With it I have created an entire population, always with the same woods. Then I painted and drew each sketch of the small sculptures, and the idea for the new generation and finally I filmed every detail, imagining the exhibition as a great show of images projected by four mega-projectors. We will experience the thrill of bird man's dive and his crossing. Then, I created a great project of mixed lights Inspired for this latter by to the scenographic design of Mariano Fortuny, which is also a reference for what is the highest craftsmanship. Unfortunately, today in danger of extinction as we all know.

And in fact it is a work that I had to do!

It is a work of denunciation and hope, together.

A desperate cry for help that, because I live here, to do it is Venice in

itself. And there are all reasons.

The Bird Man in fact brings a sentence in Latin written on its immense base: ATTENDITE ET VIDETE SI EST DOLOR SICUT DOLOR MEUS. Which means: look and see if there is a pain like mine. To cry it are all crazy daily situations, but in this specific case it is especially Venice.