

## **Pietro Ruffo. *I sei traditori della libertà***

The exhibition, entitled *I sei traditori della libertà*, is the final step of Pietro Ruffo's recent research on the Russian philosopher Isaiah Berlin, who's considered one of the most important liberal speculator of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Ruffo analyses the two concepts of negative and positive freedom, elaborated by Berlin in the text *Two concepts of liberty*. The text was published in 1958 as an essay on the first lecture in the moment in which Berlin was called to be a professor of Political Theory at Oxford University. In this text, Berlin defines the concept of "negative" freedom as the absence of limitations or interferences towards everything someone can do. More "negative freedom" means lower restrictions in the list of the possible actions of a human being. Following his theories, Berlin associates "positive" freedom to the idea of self-control or to the ability of self-determination, to be the leader of your own future.

The gallery of the six 18<sup>th</sup> century philosopher's portraits is joined to the portrait of the Russian philosopher, draw on the map of Russia, covered with a sprawl of dragonflies. For Pietro Ruffo, the typical random-movement of dragonflies and their short life are the expression of the concept of "negative freedom", or of absolute liberty.

The portrait of Isaiah Berlin reflects a particular historical moment, referring to the first years of 21<sup>st</sup> century when the Soviet giant starts to flake and a group of American economists and politics, influenced by Berlin's theory, landed to Russia to explore the possibility of exporting the model of negative freedom, failed attempt for many reasons. The dragonfly that invades the Russian map expresses the attempt of exporting that model of absolute freedom, but also the evidence of its failure.

Following the steps of Berlin's theory, Pietro Ruffo has faced the philosophic references constituting the assumptions of the Russian philosopher, until the famous cycle of conferences *Freedom and its Betrayal*, broadcasted on BBC in 1952, in which are traced portraits of the six "enemies of liberty" and, at the same time, the best introduction to the philosophical thought of Berlin. In each portrait of the six "bad professors" – all belonging to the French Revolution period – Berlin identifies an irreducible authoritative or illiberal nucleus that darks the theoretical effort and the individual intuition. These conferences aren't transcribed by Berlin directly, but a few years later the publishing of *Freedom and its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty* came out, curated by Henry Hardy. Philosophers' portraits by Pietro Ruffo represent: Helvétius, Rousseau, Fichte, Hegel, Saint-Simon e De Maistre. All covered with hundreds of dragonflies. The portrait of Jean Jacques Rousseau is joined by a unique recorded speech of the radio conference of 1952.

Next to the six pencil-drawings, six video portraits of contemporary philosophers (prof. Giacomo Marramao, prof. Sebastiano Maffettone, prof. Giovanni Aldobrandini, prof. Eugenio Lecaldano, prof. Ian Carter, prof. Marco Santambrogio) interviewed by Pietro Ruffo expose hypothesis and reflections on the concept of liberty, in its social sense. In fact, no matter Berlin thought that the two concepts of freedom (negative and positive liberty) were proper and valid human ideals, history teaches that they are particularly subjected to political abuses. The interviews are an historical continuous to the theory of Isaiah Berlin, in order to find new possible interpretative perspectives.

L.B.

**The interviews are realized in collaboration with Benedetta Nervi.**