

HECTOR DIAZ

Stefano Puleo

The visual poet of Sicily by **Javier Arizabalo**

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By **Javier Arizabalo**
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Stefano Puleo, born in Sicily in 1950, was shaped by classical tradition and the beauty of his land, which invites viewers to immerse themselves in a world of optimism and vitality, offering a respite from the monotony of daily life.

From an initial period of more expressionistic and monochromatic work, he transitioned in the mid-1980s to a mythographic re-foundation with youthful and beautiful figures, also diversifying his chromatic range. In 2010, he joined the "Movimento degli Arcani," led by art critic Polo Levi, a promoter of modern and contemporary art. It was through this group that Stefano's art expanded into exhibitions across Italy, Europe, and the United States.

The first analysis we can make of his work is that of its structure. Figures are defined by strong lines, and space is created by the accumulation of different perspectives, sometimes with slight support from straight vertical or horizontal lines. The lack of vanishing points and atmosphere makes this formal organization, along with the intensely vivid and saturated color, give us the sensation that the painting is rushing towards the observer.

His use of color is related to Fauvism, exciting the observer with the use of strong contrasts of complementary colors—reds and oranges against greens and violets—but with a warm dominance that brings tranquility and joy. He employs the Italian knowledge of using earth pigments, such as those extracted from Mount Etna itself.

The second aspect worth mentioning is the use of archetypes in timeless scenes of characters who could be part of a film, while in other works, he brings us closer to the warmth of tranquil Mediterranean villages, their bar and terrace, their church, pine forests, orchards, and the maritime horizon.

Puleo explores several themes that reflect his concerns: cultural identity in the relationship between humans and their environment, that of the Mediterranean landscape of Sicily; historical memory, through references to archaeological ruins, traditional architecture, and everyday objects; the sea as a border and connection, a barrier simultaneously a path of communication between cultures, reflecting the island's position as a crossroads of civilizations; and finally, the transformation of mundane elements such such as tables, vases, fruits, and boats into symbols loaded with cultural and historical meaning, relating him to Italian metaphysical painting.

Puleo does not copy reality but transforms it into an idyllic and dreamlike universe where people live, love, dance, play music, and interact, and landscapes seem to have a life of their own due to their organicity. He is not, therefore, an analyst, a cataloger, or an illustrator, but a seeker of essences, who seeks to extract all the mystery and spirituality from things and people.

His work reflects international influences, expressionism, abstract art, which prioritizes color and expressiveness, post-impressionist painting of Van Gogh, Cézanne, from the late 19th century, until reaching the avant-garde of the 20th century, with Modigliani, balancing global influences with local particularities, creating a dialogue between tradition and modernity.



A particular day, 2022, Oil on Linen, 145 x 165 cm, “Women” Series © Stefano Puleo

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Cover:
Stefano Puleo © Stefano Puleo

Back Cover:
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