



Dario Ballantini was born in 1964 in Leghorn, (Tuscany). His first contacts with the painting and theater world already occurred within his home walls, thanks to his father, who was a Neo Realism painter, his uncle, a Post Macchiaioli painter, his grandfather, actor in amateur dramatic companies, and another uncle, a tenor manqué.

Dario has deeply been impressed by Gutzon and Picasso masterpieces reproductions he had seen in his father's books.

He was fond of comics (Jacovitti and Marvel authors), seeking to make some of his own.

During his teen years, Dario discovered the songs of Luigi Tenco, who became the protagonist of several portraits of the former. Since that moment, Dario's enthusiasm for Italian singer-songwriters, such as Guccini and Dalla, tremendously rose, so that Ballantini portrayed them more than once.

After having attended a cross-hatching course, held by Professor Giulio Guiggi (1912-1994), Dario entered the High School for Science and Maths in Leghorn, joining artistic courses and being pupil of Giancarlo Cocchia (1924-1987).

There, Ballantini got his degree, in 1984.

In the meanwhile, his love for the stage and his passion for Totò, Petrolini and Alighiero Noschese's characters prospered. Dario had seen their live shows in Pisa.

At the age of 16 he visited a outstanding exhibition of Amedeo Modigliani at the Modern Art Museum in Paris. The master's work partially influenced Dario's education. During that same period, Dario's favorite training subject was Totò's face: being so irregular, it reminded cubist decompositions as well as portraits and caricatures of high school professors and schoolmates he used to make and to fill agendas.

After a broadcasting experience in a local radio station (Radio Flash) and after having being the National Cabaret Festival winners, Ballantini and his schoolfriend, Stefano Ceselli, made their debut in cabaret in 1983, surprisingly starting out with their "Le Cornacchie" duet in Corrado Manti's TV show "Ciao Gente" on Canale 5 Channel.

The show used to propose young talents and Dario used to mimic Enzo Bearzot and Falcao, among others.

In the meanwhile, Ballantini had been acting in theater, interpreting four Leghornese usherettes in a dialectal acting company that used to stage Beppe Orlandi's dramas.

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Following several appearances in the "Pronto Raffaella?" show on Rai 2

channel and in some "Incrocia la fortuna" episodes on Antenna 3 channel, the comic duet broke up.

The two eighteen-year-old guys were missing a guide and Stefano decided to give up.

After the high school degree, Dario met the painter Maurilio Colombini and the art dealer Cesare Rotini (1945-2008), starting to display his own works of art in the Leghornese area. At that time his favorite subjects were Pierpaolo Pasolini's neorealist portraits and then some other expressionist works, both collective and personal.

Giovanni Merlo, the promoter of some poetry awards, bought many of his small dimension paintings. Thus, Ballantini fitted in in a marked contrast with the Post Macchiaioli painting that used to be very trendy in that period among the many Leghornese painters.

While his cabaret shows were improving, having since that moment a strong transformistic-traditional method, Dario performed in several town festivals, feasts, shows, nightclubs, being a good seller of himself.

Anyway, painting has always been an open road and his participation in the "Rotonda Expo" collectives gave him the possibility to meet the then President of the Senate Giovanni Spadolini (1925-1994), a passionate historian to whom Ballandini gave one of his work of art for the private collection the former.

In 1989 Dario attended a commercial art course held by Professor Leonardo Baglioni and in the same year his painting have been displayed in Florence, at the "Teorema" art gallery. Nevertheless, his artistic language had never been really appreciated and this failure determined a moment o crisis and break.

In that period, Dario committed with his cabaret training, touring around all Italy and arriving in Milan, at the "Derbino" cabaret. He had been selected among several Tuscan talents for the Pippo Baudo's "Gran Premio" TV show, but decided not to take part and present himself to the selections of the "Star 90" talent show on Rete 4 Channel, program with Antonio Ricci in the jury panel. In that occasion, Dario won the competition lead by Alessandro Cecchi Paone and since that moment he made some appearances in the Fininvest networks shows, such as "Oggi sposi", "Radio Carolina", "Cara tv" and "Giù la maschera".

In 1993 he got married with Cristina Cennini and they had two children, Ilaria and Nedo.

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In his preparatory studies of special effects (even those experimental) and his theatrical sceneries, Dario used to carry his unexpressed pictorial authenticity. Just to name a couple of examples, the “Petrolini Petrolini” pièce, in which he has been both author and actor, and Vittorio Sgarbi’s “Asti Teatro” show, where he obtained the plaudits of the then alive futurist painter Osvaldo Peruzzi (1907-2004).

Ballantini also acted a small part in film “Zitti e Mosca” shot by the movie maker Alessandro Benvenuti: in that situation, a quick-change Dario made Ray

Charles and Lucio Dalla’s imitations; as a consequence of Emanuele Milano’s recommendation to Antonio and Pupi Avati, the two enabled Dario to take part in some episodes of the Telemontecarlo Tv program “T’amo TV” anchored by Fabio Fazio, in which Ballantini interpreted Dario Fo and Enzo Jannacci.

In 1993 he took part in a “Domenica In” episode on Rai 1 channel, after having been selected by Ugo Gregoretti that introduced Ballantini during a discussion with Antonio Rezza.

In 1994 Dario signed a new contract with Antonio Ricci through David Lubrano, one of the author Ballantini still works with. This experience let him arrive to "Striscia la Notizia", starting with Dario Fo imitation, then with Paola Borboni, Ignazio la Russa' and Vittorio Cecchi Gori's.

With his short film 'La Chiave per il mare' (written together with Francesco Torri), Ballantini participated in the "Bellaria film festival" and obtained a minor role in a Silvano Agosti's movie, "L'Uomo proiettile", presented at the Venice Film Festival.

While he was still performing in cabaret theaters, Dario also arrived to the Milanese TV program "Zelig" with his "Zapping mutazioni telegenetiche" performance, written together with Lubrano.

After few years, in 1998, he came out with the fashion stylist Valentino's imitation: it was a groundbreaking initiative, presented also in "on the road" programs with the troupe of the moviemaker Luca Silvestri. It was the beginning of a new approach for "Striscia", made of makeup (by Beppe Trioli), mimic and dressing up that let the character to interact with other people (actually everyone he ran into) as if he was the real one.

For Dario, that was the first great TV triumph, came after a 16-year ranking.

In Ricci’s TV show Ballantini became an icon, also after Gianni Morandi, Margherita Hack, Vasco Rossi and Gino Paoli imitations.

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However, his passion for figurative arts had never gone: Ballantini completed several portraits of entertainment personalities, such as Erminio Macario, Bice Valori and Fred Buscaglione for the “Acquaviva nei Fumetti” festival, while he also started touring around Italy with his new manager Massimo Licinio (who had been introduced to Dario by Ezio Graggio), showing off in the latest transformation performance, focused on Valentino, Morandi and Vasco. The show got a huge success everywhere it had been performed.

In 2001, being a correspondent of the satirical “Striscia” newscast, Dario met Achille Bonito Oliva in San Benedetto del Tronto (Marches). With Achille, Dario used to talk about painting, also showing him his old paintings pictures; Dario got a lot of benefit from that meeting.

Ballantini definitely moved to Milan and broke up with Cristina. In that same period he met the journalist Stefano Lorenzetto, rediscovering his almost abandoned painting activity. Lorenzetto proposed him to show his works at the historic “Ghelfi” art gallery in Verona. That was the turning point: Massimo Licinio, by then friend and advisor of Ballantini, big fan of his painting as well,

encouraged Dario to undertake the pictorial carrier path: indeed, the latter took part in the setting of a painting exhibition; the exposition catalog had been assigned to Giancarlo Vigorelli (1903-2005), mutual friend of both Ballantini and Marta Marzotto. Vigorelli described Dario as an unexpected but amazing Cubo-Expressionist painter the Italian panorama could not imagine.

The exhibition got an outstanding success, being a real “renaissance” of Ballantini as a painter.

At the same time, Dario interpreted cameo roles in numerous movies, such as Paolo Virzi’s “Baci e abbracci”, Leonardo Pieraccioni’s “Il Pesce innamorato”, Ezio Greggio and Mel Brooks’s “Svitati”, Pupi Avati’s “Festival” and Antonello Fassari’s “Il Segreto del giaguaro”. On the other hand, he was the protagonist of Carlo Pulerà’s short film “La grande borsa blu”: the movie had great success at the first edition of the “Sacher Festival” led by Nanni Moretti.

In 2002, Dario met Pietro Cascella (1921-2008) in his atelier in Fivizzano (Tuscany); Pietro encouraged Ballantini, showing great appreciation for the latter’s works of art.

The relation with Bonito Oliva strengthened even more and Dario was stimulated and advised for a more careful and brave choice of works to be displayed.

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At the same time, his TV achievements have not been stopped and after having participated to the Lorella Cuccarini's show "La note vola" in a duet with Gianni Fantoni, Dario proposed his new imitations once again to "Striscia"; he specialized in makeup thanks to the collaboration of the makeup artist Mariangela Palatini and got amazing results with the Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, Tony Renis, Antonio Fazio, Franco Marini, King Vittorio Emanuele, Valentino Rossi and many others impersonations; in some of these performances he partnered with Alvaro Vitali.

Time was ripe for setting an exhibition in Milan, in collaboration with the Artesanterasmo art gallery.

The art dealer Sorrentino proposed Professor Luciano Caprile a visit in Dario's atelier in Milan. Since that meeting a strong cultural harmony on artistic works of art developed and Caprile decided to look after of the critic text drafting with great pleasure.

The Milan exhibition got a great success, even amplified by mass media's echo.

Many other expositions followed, in Padua, Genoa, Como, Fano,...and some appearances in collectives, among which in the European Parliament in Bruxelles with the Labronico Group and an homage to Amedeo Modigliani in the artist's birthplace held by the Guastalla art gallery in Leghorn.

In 2005 Dario had his third child, Deleo, with his partner Eleonora Giaiotti. The two broke up the following year.

During the "Telegatti 2005" prize award one of his painting was reproduced on

porcelain: the theme had been made expressly for the magazine "TV Sorrisi e Canzoni" and R101 radio station and was given to all Telegatti winners as a gift.

That same year Ballantini took part in the radio program "La Carica di 101" (on air every morning on R101), performing the grandmother character. The partnership lasted 2 years.

In May 2005 the critic Fabio Marcelli, curator of the Gentile da Fabriano exhibition, decided to take care of the setting of an exposition in the same town. The exhibition was visited by the critic Enrico Crispolti and Ivano Fossati; the latter also came to the idea to dress up his concert stage for the "L'Arcangelo" tour with Ballantini's oeuvres.

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It was the beginning of a friendship and a cultural harmony also with Ugo Nespolo, who had been introduced to Dario by Antonio Ricci. Nespolo was enthusiast of Dario's works of art, stating the painter represented post modernity personified.

In 2006, in remembrance of the singer-songwriter Ivani Graziani, Ballantini recorded the personalized label "Un Fiore per Ivan", produced by Marcello Zaccagnini on the occasion of the event "Pigro" in Teramo.

In September that year, together with Bonito Oliva, Dario shot a satirical reportage on the "Da Dada Dada e Dadaismi del contemporaneo" exhibition.

Later on, he was awarded the A.B.O silver prize for painting.

In October the national newspaper "Il Corriere della Sera" asked Ballantini to present (in the form of an interview) the grand exhibition "Turned e gli Impressionisti" at the Santa Giulia Museum in Brescia.

In 2006, during the reading of an Olivier Py's book, interpreted by Leo Gullotta, in the context of the review of new French dramaturgies, some images of Dario's oeuvres were projected at the Piccolo Eliseo Theater in Rome.

Fabio Marcelli edited the publication of the book "In arte Dario Ballantini" (Silvana Publishing group), a monograph of Dario's career that retraced his works of arts from 1980 to 2007, together with critical texts of Ivano Fossati, Antonio Ricci, Enrico Crispolti, Luciano Caprile and Luciano Lepri.

Ballantini interpreted a permanent role in the fiction "Carabinieri 7" on Canale 5 Channel, directed by Raffaele Mertes and an central one in the movie "Il Soffio dell'anima" by Victor Rambaldi; in the same year, Dario exhibited at the Palazzo Coveri art gallery in Florence and at Castel dell'Ovo in Naples; after having been in Bologna, his touring exposition arrived also in Paris, in 2009 at the "Galerie de l'Europe" art gallery.

In summer Alessandro Parella held an exposition at Saint Rhémy Castle (Val d'Aosta), followed by another one, named "Labirinti Esistenziali, in September that year at the previous Anglican Church in Alassio, ran by the critic Nicola Davie Argerame

In autumn, the President of the Triennale art gallery, Davide Rampello, proposed Dario an exhibition at the Triennale in Bovisa, retracing his 25-year career, made of both artistic activities at last merged.

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The setting of the 2009 exposition “Identità Artefatte” was held by Massimo Licinio, with the precious contribution of Antonio Ricci’s 15-year video materials and the participation of many esteemed colleagues of Ballantini, among which Lucio Dalla, Enrico Ruggeri, Remo Gironi, Enrico Mentana, Antonio Ricci and Mario Lavezzi, together with new critical texts of Luciano Caprile and Nicola Davide Angerame.

In the same period, Ballantini’s new paintings were displayed at the San Carlo art gallery (property of Giancarlo De Magistris) in Milan.

From November 26th 2009 to January 7th 2010 his paintings were shown at the Galleria 18 in Bologna.

In 2010 Ballantini has already been chosen for the movie “La Prima cosa bella”, by Paolo Virzi, and also as anchorman of the radio program “Ottovolante”, on Radio Due station.

He also exhibited his works at the collective exposition “Italians do it better”, held in Bale (Switzerland), and at the Albanese Arte gallery in Matera, at the Palafiori in Sanremo and the Cloister in Suvereto.

During the 2010 Salone Internazionale del Mobile (International Furniture Fair in Milan) Ballantini’s paintings furnished the Anni Luce exhibition area and at the same time his unpublished work, called “Cilindro”, was at the Resin Solution Atelier of the Triennale art gallery. In the same period Ballantini took part in one of the most important contemporary art exhibition, the “Cow Parade”, painting one of the sixty author cows that have furnished the most beautiful squares in Rome.

On the occasion of the Vogue Fashion’s Night the San Carlo art gallery in Milan set an exposition of some of his works.

Dario was present also at the Art Basel Miami (November 30th-December 7th 2010), and at the Sangallo Tolentino art gallery from September 2010 to January 2011.

In 2011 the Telaccia art gallery in Turin has set an exposition of some of his works and in April Dario has been at the International Furniture Fair in Milan at the “Francesco Molon” and “Illulian” stands, at the “Fuori Salone 150Y Italian Beauty” and at “Noa”; on May exposed in a collective exposition in Acquire Gallery of London.

Dario was present at the 54th Biennale di Venezia in the project “Tibet Hall” and in June in a collective exposition in Brehova Gallery of Prague.

Dario has been one of the protagonist of Giovanni Veronesi’s film, “Manuale d’Amore 3”.

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In July Ballantini was present in the Sixtieth Labronico Group' Exhibition at Athena Gallery of Livorno and in the same month at "Arteforte" an important Art Fair in Forte dei Marmi (Tuscany) with La Telaccia Gallery of Turin.

In October 2011 he exhibited at Fortezza Medicea Girifalco in Cortona (Tuscany).

Dario exposed for Euart Tour 2011 – Usa (Tallahassee, Miami, Dallas, Chicago) which started in October 2011. In Italy he is present in 54' Biennale di Venezia "Italian Hall" Milan (October 2011), Turin (December 2011) and in the same period in "Tibet Hall" for Ruggero Maggi's project. In 2011 he realized the logo of his radio program "Ottovolante" on Radio 2.

Dario is present at 54' Biennale of Venice – Padiglione Italia curated by Vittorio Sgarbi in October in Milan, in December in Turin and at the same time for Padiglione Tibet curated by Ruggero Maggi.

On 31st January to 5th February 2012 there will be his first solo exhibition in London at Fiumano Art Gallery.

In March 2012 Dario Ballantini is present at the London' LA DOLCE VITA FAIR. In May 2012 he had a solo exhibition at the Mazzoleni Art Gallery in Bergamo, and in September of the same year he exhibited his art works in Bologna Fair for Conca' space.

– 2013 presso l'Accademia di Belle Arti di Verona dove ha avuto luogo la sua Lectio Magistralis titolata "*L'artista a tutto tondo: l'arte apre ad infinite strade*". Nel mese di aprile sono state inaugurate le mostre a Torino al Museo MIIT, a Palermo al Palazzo Sant'Elia, a Lucca Palazzo Fondazione Banca del Monte di Lucca e Castiglioncello (LI) alla Galleria In Villa. Attualmente le opere sono esposte a London City all'ArtMoorHouse

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