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IL COSTUME

UNA STORIA A PUNTA DI PENNA

Less is more. Mies van der Rohe's statement seems to fit the bill when you look at Paola de' Cavero's figures, collected in two albums and part of the substantial donation made by the artist to the Accademia Albertina in Turin.

Sometimes annotated with names and centuries, the images are anything but static. In fact, they seem to be inviting us to take part in their dialogues, which are often animated by heartfelt gestures. They roam an imaginary stage they command with ease, where no prompting is needed. Everything seems authentic.

Thus, the figures depict an unprecedented history of costume in black and white, in which the firm lines of the two-dimensional sketches and the barely outlined faces – that bear, however, a vibrant expressiveness – embellish the parade unfurling beneath the reader's gaze.

If *Arte Come Teatro* is a key synthesis of the artist's work, in this *hic et nunc* the theme begins to be declined: fashion, or rather, the history of costume, prevails and leads us by the hand into a journey from the Dark Ages to the 1960s (the prologue to a new Dark Age?).

Observing the sketches de' Cavero produced when she was as yet unaware of her future professional evolution – she was still a student at the Accademia – especially when we happen upon the Medieval armor in the opening pages of the first notebook, our minds can't help but be led back to the famous movie *Bedknobs and Broomsticks*, in which suits of armor come to life thanks to a spell and push the German invaders back into the sea.

No spell is required in Paola de' Cavero's notebooks; everything came to life when her pen first touched the paper. The puffball sleeves look like they have just been ironed, the collars freshly starched, plumes and wigs are strengthened in their volumes, and what can we say of the creases? They're all perfect, of course.

For too long has this history of costume been concealed from the eyes of the curious, of enthusiasts, of scholars and, why not, the children who yearn to endow these images with a touch of colorful freedom.

5 Continents Editions, in cooperation with the Accademia Albertina in Turin, has chosen to dedicate a book to this extremely important work.