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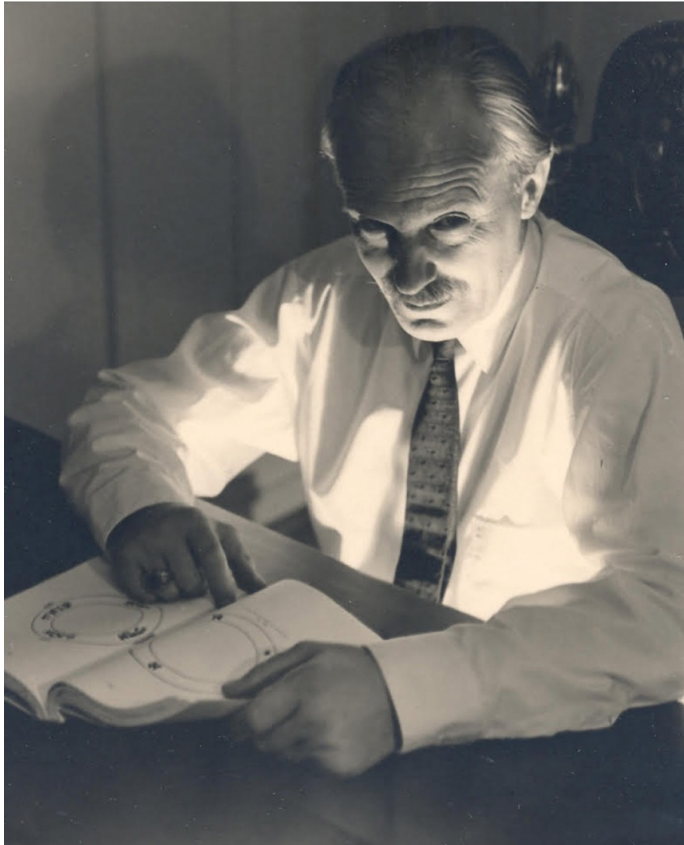
THE INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE FOR FREEMASONS

Freemasonry in Queensland

The Masonic Memorial Centre, Brisbane

Lewis & Masonic

Ivan Mosca – Esoteric Artist, Freemason and Martinist



Sergio Prezioso

Top: **Ivan Mosca.**
Images courtesy GOI

The Artist

Giovanni 'Ivan' Mosca (Parma, 14 January 1915 – Rome, 25 November 2005), was an influential painter and notable exponent of the Italian esoteric scene. Born in Parma, he studied art in Milan and relocated to Rome in 1936. In 1943 he briefly moved to France and then returned to Italy after the end of the war.

Mosca is best known for his evocative landscapes and fascination in his work with the morphology of insects. He began his artistic career in the 1930s, and in the 1940s he exhibited at the renowned Galleria Sant'Agostino and Galleria del Secolo, with paintings that already reflected his particular interest in the evocative potential of a metaphorical and otherworldly language

mirroring his esoteric inclination. After his return from France, Mosca focused on peculiar artistic choices, distancing himself from the artistic current of the time but experiencing considerable success, as evidenced by numerous personal exhibitions and collective projects carried out in Italy and abroad. Ivan Mosca is an anomalous presence in the artistic scene of his time; the particularity of his subjects and the ability to reconcile mimesis and symbology allowed him to create narratives that seemed to be generated in a state of dreamlike and visionary suspension. From the 1950s onwards, he was involved in the creation of large solo and group exhibitions all over the world, cultivating a special relationship with Spain, where Mosca's works were exhibited alongside those of some of the greatest Italian modern artists, such as Giorgio De Chirico, Carlo Carrà, and Renato Birolli. Today his works appear in collections and Museums of Modern Art in Rome, Milan, Venice, Turin, Paris, London, Zurich, Madrid, New York, Buenos Aires.

The Freemason

Initiated in the Grand Orient of Italy on 23 May 1947, Mosca soon devoted himself to the study of Masonic symbolism and, after having founded in 1969 the Lodge Har Tzion Montesion No. 705 in Rome, a lodge born with the aim of studying the esoteric tradition of Freemasonry with a significant orientation towards the Qabalah, he began a long series of seminars around Italy during a period of more than twenty-five years. In these Mosca, who regarded the Craft as 'one of the very few Initiatic Pathways of the Western world', discussed the esoteric and Initiatic issues of Italian Freemasonry, recently flourishing after the Fascist era.

A passionate bibliophile and eclectic artist, what distinguished him beyond his singular artistic path was the use of a fantastic expressionist entomological language manifested through his seminars where he transmitted the results of his personal research and speculations. Ivan Mosca's esoteric knowledge did not come from studying alone, but also from his acquaintances with the most famous esotericists of the 20th century. The seminars were a great success and Ivan

decided to write his ideas into the now famous *Quaderni di Simbologia Muratoria* [Notebooks of Masonic Symbolology]. These notebooks, edited by the Grand Orient of Italy between 1977 and 1981, are still used today in various lodges as a tool for study and research reporting Ivan's explanations of Masonic symbols, tools and rituals. They are unique books. They summarize practices and ritual procedures of Freemasonry and are essential reading for those brethren who, as Ivan said, 'are only members of Freemasonry, but not yet Masons, for lack of esoteric preparation and initiatic education.'

In the Grand Orient of Italy, Ivan Mosca was first Deputy Grand Master (1978-1982) and then Honorary Grand Master. As a 33° 'ad vitam' member of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Italy, he was *Grande Esperto Teglatores*, Grand Director of Ceremonies, Grand Archivist & Grand Historian, and the Regional Inspector for Lazio for many years.

The Martinist

Ivan Mosca was also very active in Martinism and in the esoteric currents linked to the figure of Martinès de Pasqually¹. A C.B.C.S. with the esoteric name of 'Eques Peregrinus a Stella Matutina' in the Rectified Scottish Rite², and using the mystical name of 'Hermete' he became Sovereign Grand Commander of the *Ordre Martiniste des Elus Cohen* (an order derived from that of Martinès de Pasqually), which at that time was the inner circle of the *L'Ordre Martiniste de Paris* lead by Philippe Encausse in France. He received the appointment on 14 August 1967 of Sovereign Grand Commander from the French esoterist Robert Ambelain (known as 'Aurifer', who revived the Order of Martinès in 1943). One of Hermete's first acts was to disjoin the Order from *L'Ordre Martiniste* in which it had arisen and had found the logical reason for its existence. To underline this event and to recreate the Masonic spirit in which the original Order of Martinès was born, he changed the name in *Ordre des Chevaliers Maçons Elus Cohen de l'Univers* [Order of Night Masons, Elect Priests of the Universe]. Hermete, however, must have had some doubts about the legitimacy of the Order he inherited that had been revived by Ambelain following its disbanding 150 years earlier because, after extensive consultations with his Officers and after only one year, he made the Order dormant on 14 August 1968 for an 'undetermined time'. He disbanded the Sovereign Tribunal and the Grand Secretariat, and removed all Officers



Ivan Mosca and Robert Ambelain.

appointed by his predecessor and himself. However, he appointed a study committee to research all the incongruences he found, foretelling a future World Convention for the 'revival' of the Order. Thus, after a 24-year revival, the 'Elus Cohen' fell back into silence, study and meditation.

After almost thirty years, on 23 September 1995, Hermete officially revived the Order. Two months later, on November 23, he convened by decree, for the following year, the World Convention expected since 1968.

Remembrance

Eventually passing to the Grand Lodge above on 25 November 2005, Ivan Mosca has been a leading figure within Italian Freemasonry. He had an impressive culture and his interests were widely diversified, making him a personality of international importance. As a renowned painter and a full expert of esoteric disciplines, he has been a leading figure in the history of the 20th century esotericism. He left a profound trace that is still felt today. Ivan is remembered with affection by all the brethren of whom for years he was a beacon, a point of reference for all those interested in the fascinating path of mystical research.

For those wishing to deepen their acquaintance with the history of this illustrious Brother, I strongly recommend the recent book by Stefano Bisi, Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy, entitled *Ivan Mosca. The Man, the Artist, the Initiate*, published by Mimesis in 2015.

Endnotes

1. Martinès de Pasqually (1727 - 1774) was a French Freemason and a scholar of theoretical and practical theurgy, involved in different systems of 'high degrees' in the 18th century. He was in possession of a Masonic patent inherited from his father, who traditionally was said to have received it from the putative Grand Master of the Stuart lodge, namely Prince Charles Edward Stuart. In 1767 he created the *Ordre des Chevaliers Maçons Elus Cohen de l'Univers* and among his main students of those years there are to be found Jean-Baptiste Willermoz and Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, whose writings, together with the work of Martinez himself, inspired the birth of the so-called Martinism, in its various expressions.

2. The Rectified Scottish Rite, also known as C.B.C.S. (*Chevaliers Bienfaisant de la Cité Sainte*) or K.B.H.C. (Knights Beneficent of the Holy City) in England, is a Masonic Rite impregnated with Christian esotericism and marked by the profound spirituality that has distinguished its founder J.B. Willermoz, disciple of Martinès de Pasqually.