

The obsession

We are on this thin edge where what is tender and impalpable, dignity and "feminine" meet the day-to-day life and all its abominations.

By Andrea Volterra

An idée fixe, a pressing must. Long-lasting. Steady.

Obsession. Something that gives birth to a devouring fire that devours but that over all nourishes. A property that may come from the birth, an essential artist's distinctiveness, i.e. the ground reason of her Art, the real momentum, the real origin. A research that has a destination: knowing that obsession, staying inside it. Living in it as it were a second skin, or the real skin. The only skin.

All this turns into a feverish state, yet mild. Because it creates.

Looking at the works produced along the Time I can see the gentle monster leading the artists lives:

Randomly glancing at the story I perceive the obsession in the reduction to points of the reality, that the Frenchman Seurat does in the last part of the nineteenth century, or in Picasso's need of having each viewpoint simultaneously on the two dimensions of a canvas. Or the sharp and burning light in Caravaggio's paintings, that plunges us into the sacred feeling in the day-to-day life too. Michelangelo's superhuman bodies and his "unfinished" that nevertheless is ended. I can remember Warhol's Campbell canisters of soup and his obsession for the consumerism, central nervous system in his research. Frida's illness, turned into a painting so agonizing and yet so sweetly innermost.

Hartung's painted strokes and Fontana's cuts: different drives, different obsessions; in the case of the artist of German origin the stroke produces an essential, agonizing, thoughtful world, memoirs of a war. In the cuts lanced by the Spatialism promoter it's tried to go beyond the limits of the physical canvas, to go beyond the space, the true dimension, passing by a canvas.

It could go on up to infinity or just about, from the obsession for the empty absence and the resultant metaphysics of De Chirico up to the obsession for speed and motors of the futurists.

Obsessions sometimes created circles, other times created tendencies or yet raised questions about the whole art language, as in the case of Duchamp that didn't tolerate the German art intent only on pleasing the eyes but that always tried to understand what the art was; thinking even the art could be interpreted and revealed using instruments never considered by anyone before. Enlightening is the example of the urinal.

Thinking the obsession is something that takes up absolutely, than doesn't leave at rest and it's true that it can upset the reason's balance; but who can tell that in the world of the art this is a damage? It could be really shallow and irritating speaking about simple madness and not about method. In the artistic context research is caused by the obsession for something, for a sign, for the



opera n.323 - olio su tela cm40x50 - 2015

research of that particular sign of that particular point, or for a shape, for the study of a shape; or for the details of this or of the other World. The obsession for a material, for example Burri's obsession for the plastic in a period of his life; or the obsession for the sheets of metal of Serra, or for the recycling material in the junk Art, by Schwitters and his Merzbau till Rauschenberg.

Viola's obsession expresses itself by different means and shapes. It must be considered that about an artistic research the real consistency doesn't mean using always and only the same ways, the same technique and the same tools; but means realizing the real quiddity that drives the artist. This ab immemorabili, but, particularly since about a century,

the artists have always grown more omnivorous as for the ways and tools by which narrating themselves.

This happens when this obsession scans all the world and catches that insight that burns and runs it outwards. That quid that quietens and in the same time pushes it for the growth.

Expressing over her own view. This is the definition that definitely pertains to Viola. A video with a child: "the little white Bride" ("la piccola Sposa bianca"), painted canvases, an empty chair, some stones lived and survived, a marbled stele, the white, the red and the "nero di marte", a chessboard, a labyrinth.

The woman that is not on a defence position but that in her nakedness manifests her courage. Some women's accessories, a shoe, stockings, and the black pearls legacy of the time and that sometimes start as a necklace and later turn themselves into infinity.

Different means, different channels but same origin.

I think that what drives the artist Viola, i.e. her obsession, is the study of the bound and the limit between the vulnerable and the invulnerable, or between the intangible and the bodily.

As in work n. 323: when the woman at the centre, may be the author, seems to go out from the painting for blocking the other two female presences, as pathologically keeping for herself that part of the world, her world.

The pathway towards the limit caused by the fears when it's defied a



"Ad ogni passo un Minotauro" - opera n.330 - labirinto in pietre - 7,90x6.90 - 2015

labyrinth, the everyday one or the symbolic one made by stones driven in the real ground.

A labyrinth is a work valuable for every day and every night, that tells all the days and all the nights, every moment in which we fight as in one of Viola 's last works named "At every step a Minotaur ("Ad ogni passo un Minotauro"), labyrinth made by stones in the year 2015.

After all, if life is fight the foe is not out of ourselves. Moments that reproduce themselves, in which the fear, the Minotaur, turns real and wants to devour you. Well, this trip, or better, this exploration of the limit made by Viola, clearly expresses the thin line almost imaginary between going farther, term dear to the artist, and stopping there where one stays, that is not giving up but worse, letting dominate oneself without even trying to combat.

Viola has always gone farther; this is her necessity, her obsession, what pushes her ahead. This path in continuously testing her own courage and gathering the strengths to overshoot the fear, accepting it but without being subjected to it; exactly this is the conditioned reflex of all her work.



The back of woman is frailty, elegant frailty, but a great noble dignity. Frailty in showing the undressed back, dignity in showing the undressed back.

Exactly as for the labyrinth: the courage of facing a path full of Minotaurs, the fear of meeting them. The

courage of showing a naked back, the fear of showing it because exhibited, not guarded, naked.

Giacometti's figures are the remainders of a reality that devoured them and remain only relics, a pretence, an idea of human being. Viola's women are fleshy and seem stretching outwards; they don't wear away in the reality, if ever they counter it. Exactly reality, another cornerstone, another vertebra that constructs the obsession that in the case in point we could tell "Farther": some oneiric visions in which Viola contextualizes her women can lead into error.

She lives in a fairy-tale. **Nothing is wronger than this claim.**

This artist lives the reality to the full, but who tells that the reality is only the tangible one? The day by day one? Putting feet on the ground ... Why? Otherwise what is on risk? Viola puts her feet on the ground, but Viola's ground is all: the reality and the intense oneiric activity of the artist.

Reality is always the same, when one dreams too.

The dream is an other vertebra of this obsession. Going Farther means passing the bounds of the definitions too: the reality is all what shapes us, both when our eyes are closed, and when they are open.

When one dreams one is real.



Viola paints a woman upon a marble stone, memorandum of a big monument: "Accomplice of the material - Monument to the scar of the white - Work n. 327"

White and purity. Elegant feebleness, piece of a life that there is no longer. The imprint of the woman tenderly painted on the

stone at first gives me peace, but it seems an offer too, the last meal for restless souls. From the figure stems the black pearl necklace, moments of life and sometimes of agony; the pearls cross on the marble plane and produce the symbol of the infinite; after the pearls go along the edge of the work and in the back of the stone turn into lead ... bullets; an impending end.

A violent end.

What aforesaid is here strengthened: it's indeed subtle what Viola suggests, because she moves us on a fringe and from here we can see: the gentleness of the woman's marble skin and the lead bullets ready to transfix her.

Here we are now in Viola's obsession.

That edge, that fringe, always at the mercy of a sum of femininity, frailty and abyss, facing reality, fears. But this is not a message.

This is a path.

The artist leads us over the thin edge, inside her obsession.

Obviously we cannot follow her, but we know that her path is true, genuine, deep.

Which is then the essence? It may be this:

attention for no putting a wrong foot but stopping a moment before, and only after this moment doing another pace on. If I realize my vulnerability I'll realize I'm a human being full of dignity and then I'll be not crushed, because this is my obsession, my path.

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