

A mute poetry

Antonello Tolve

"He who has an eye, finds what he's looking for even with his eyes closed."

Italo Calvino

Covered by a visual grammar packed with signs and objects, of suffering and things, the visual parable fielded by Pierpaolo Lista (Salerno, 1977) presents a matter that comes to terms with the ordinary, to build a prose made of small details, of precious hints and accents. Full of humor and attention to the minimum and mio-kinetic materials of the art, edgy and seemingly hostile, his works – all realized on a support of visarm or crystal glass- are designed to bring in a muffled space, stuffed with dense and creamy colors, full of emblems that avoid the noise of the world and build silent and obsessive scenarios, which are apparently sticked down on one go with rapid and steep brushstrokes, safe, light and dazzling graphs. His painting is, in fact, as *"a background of noise softer than silence, a slight wind that passes in the thick of a forest, or a murmur of water that gushes and loses itself in a meadow"* (Calvino).

After a first *transmateric* season, in which the artist investigated and chose a material, the visarm glass - elected today, together with the crystal glass, as the sole support of his painting (a painting whose process reverses the operating dictation of painting to privilege the back of the vitreous slab) – and, after an ingenious photographic journey that managed to bring the pictorial sign to a review and a stripping of its own flesh (Dorfles) generating a truly remarkable lyricism and a subtle and effective aesthetic irony, Lista has shifted his reflection on the concepts of loss and appropriation to give rise to a circuit in which the viewer accesses the object represented in the work, but remains paradoxically excluded from it.

The path faced by Lista tends to show, in fact, a world where the living and the object belong to each other by means of original affective rituals. Where the ordinary is always exceptional to give (and maybe give back) sense to things or *to adhere to the very nature of things*.

Aseptic, skinny, inhabited by a few topics of daily use that float in an environment which is *beyond time and history*, his works return to the intimate of the painting as act and gesture of painting. But they also highlight a relationship with the viewer. A viewer who stumbles in the work by bringing in the concept of time as *real duration* (Achille Bonito Oliva) or, to put it like Filiberto Menna says, as *real life*, in the artistic matter.

From drawing to painting, from photography to set design, the galaxy of objects proposed by Lista appropriates itself of the ordinary object to lighten it and enter it into a poetic scene that comes to terms with the time of life to build uncontaminated worlds and light and transparent spaces. For him, *the whole reality is the world*. And the world, in all its various forms, is the space in which to move to act and produce *images of things*, to build bright environments, to process *states of things* that "are independent on one another" (Wittgenstein), to present the situation chosen "in the logic state" of art, to construct images that are a model - one of the many models - of reality. Of a reality to which Pierpaolo Lista relates himself gently to avoid confrontations or unnecessary shocks, to divert the course on things and environments which are outside of time. Up to propose a side street that controls reality through shifts, abstractions, sweet and pungent signs purifying the real of (and from) the real with the purpose of showing a galaxy which wants to revise - to rethink - the world. To mark it and draw it through a rhythm that decapitates the noises of the world, to gradually propose soothing breaks or intervals, pleasant sensory interruptions misleading the usual drives of reason, to immerse the viewer in a *Bildhafte Denken*, tied to the imagination, to a dear imagining that makes the real the primary cause of creation.

Soft and stinging, his images are shown, therefore, as escape routes from reality – *Via di fuga* is, among other things, the title of one of his exhibition in 2012 - to build small secret theaters, pleasant and passionate heterotopias. *Counter-spaces* that the artist molds to create plastic and creamy images, virtuous and lyric scenarios. Whose model, characterized by the search for the minimum material, designs and projects pseudo-

environments, places which were nonexistent before appearing in photography and non-existent even after being photographed. They are, then, simulations of the real, imaginative formulas, micro-scenes that the artist creates with scraps of paper, iron thread, string, scraps of cloth, plaster, and acrylic paints. They are micro-spaces illuminated by light strokes (which are hot or cold, depending on the circumstances and choices), which call for a questioning on the real space through hints and allusions. But also to discover a new authenticity, a new originality, a new value - or a new strength - to recognize to the image.

Riabilitazione (2011), *Monologo* (2011), *Grembo* (2011), *Assente* (2011), *Titolo in bianco* (2011). And then *Manovra* (2012), *Prova d'autore* (2012), *Materia d'un sogno* (2012). Or, again, *Fuori pista* (2012), a little bicycle made of iron thread mired in a sandy path. They are some jobs, some traces of a program, a trip aimed at bringing order to the perceptive chaos of reality that does not allow the concentration on a single object. Traces of an aesthetic plan aimed at creating, finally, a different relationship between what is real and what is not real, to go beyond reality and conceive precious happy atolls, far from the Malestrom and the ambiguities of the art and of daily life.

Unknown destination – the title of the triptych that serves as viaticum for the journey to his new exhibition – *Lascia passare* (a jeep with a red cross), *Qualcosa da leggere* (some books with a black background) *Estinzione*, *Ogni cosa a suo posto* and the footprints in *Salto nel vuoto* (a jump that is an indelible trace of painting) are the works that draw this new path which indicates a movement, a journey, a journey without destination. A journey ("journeys are a chance", Antonio Tabucchi has apostrophised in *Altri frammenti* of his *Donna di Porto Pim*) which turns its gaze beyond the painting and invites the viewer to a questioning, once again, on the very reasons of painting, of the manual act, of an atmosphere in which the painting is pronounced as a *mute poetry* (Leonardo), as a leap of contemplation, as a search for thoughts to think and to translate into emotionally effective images as a heroic protest against the irreversibility of time.

Antonello Tolve / The lightness of things. The narrative suspension and silence. The memory and the *slow incubation* of remembrance. I would move from these figures, from these plots that are, I think, the bright spots of your work.

Pierpaolo Lista / My effort is to find ways to represent *things* in an essential way, and not in a noisy one, trying to lighten them by their excesses. The images are exemplified to highlight a more intimate, sometimes evocative, personal aspect. Not all the objects that I use for my works belong to my daily life, however, I try to seize them to reformulate them through my vision.

AT / In your stylistic path, the ancient language of painting has been passed to revision by a stylistic trick that not only abandons the canvas in favor of glass plates made of visarm glass, but also reverses and inverts the act of painting. Would you care to tell us about your personal and unique process?

PpL / After many experiments with different materials, I've started to use the glass plate as a support for painting. The simple brush could no longer be the only tool to trace the sign that has become an engraving on the layer of color. It was a real liberation to me the fact that I could finally do without the traditional tools. Of course, I've flipped the plate after having covered and *closed* with color the engraved mark. At this point the surface of the glass has become one with my work and lost the function of support.

AT / What reflection prompted you to dig into the fabric of the painting *tout court* (and its long history) to arrive at these *reflective surfaces*?

PpL / Glass presents many features, mainly that of reflecting all that there is in front of the slab. What interests me most is the result of smoothness and additional tidiness of the image. The intent is to cancel all forms of materiality of the object.

AT / In your works the human figure is always absent, deliberately denied to the composition. This operation of subtraction indicates, it seems to me, a subterranean desire to open the work to the viewer. To offer to

those who look from the outside, an input in the work and a direct relationship with the depicted (and transfigured, according to minimum aesthetic maneuvers) object.

PpL / Indeed, the use of a sanded and somehow mirroring support, as I said, has the little aim to capture the viewer. Watching it is like entering the work and be seduced by what objects or things evoke in the imagination of each of us.

AT / What kind of relationship do you establish with the objects that you take into consideration and decide to bring in your works?

PpL / I have the same relationship that a craftsman has with his objects, objects that I mend and then place in a solid dimension. With some objects, I've certainly established a personal, direct link of belonging. But this is not the reason that takes me to use them in my works, but their symbolic value, back to something more meaningful to me, a bit as with what happens with the verbal language.

AT / Each of your work has an indicative title which makes the composition witty and seems to strike up a game – which is sometimes paradoxical, other times witty - between the referent and the sign, between words and things.

PpL / Yes, it's true. I like to formulate titles that play with the image, but I find it especially important to establish this relationship between the object and the title that becomes the link, in this case, with the viewer.

AT / Between the end of 2007 and the early 2008, you also got to photography, not only to experience the language of photography, but also to achieve a minimum reality in which everyday objects are reconstructed to achieve a different life.

PpL / Photography has always fascinated me, and for some time I have made a personal, traditional use of it. In the summer of 2007, it has become a part of my job when I started taking shots in my studio where I've built a fictitious reality with poor materials such as paper, string and light. My primary need was to build images that were different from the real ones. That's because, perhaps, my eye was tired of the stress that came from advertising photography, internet, cinema, television. I was interested, in short, in a vision that was not the reproduction of something that is already there.

AT / To accomplish your photographs, you create small secret theaters, spectacular structures through which engaging in a series of questions on the objects that populate everyday life. How is a photo shoot created?

PpL / Probably from a need to reconstruct situations that interest me in a sort of private laboratory. For me, one shot is the result of a staging of objects that I put together in a context and thus take on another body, another light.

AT / How important is lighting within these scenarios?

PpL / Light has a fundamental role. I use different light sources of various kinds to make a shot, as a kind of color palette for photography. The time of one shot allows me to manually intervene with the lights to create signs, shadows and to dose colors.

AT / I would close with the drawing. With the *minimum material*. An excerpt which you don't love so much to talk about - perhaps because it's intimate in your story - but that I think it is really indicative in your works.

PpL / I often draw a little everywhere. It gives me a way to take notes. Sometimes a drawing can replace a written thought. In my work I use the drawing almost always as an outline for a painting or a photograph.

September 10th, 2013