

The enigma of earth

It is not matter that breeds mind, but it is mind that breeds matter.

Giordano Bruno

It is not easy to take possession of organic matter and of its eternal enigma. Andrea Mariconti is able to do it to perfection, maybe because the passion for organic has always lain inside him up to create a visceral relationship. The impact of the matter is the main character of his pictures, as if the painting itself were made of materials that live before the artistic creation, and whose natural origin, made of a blend that is almost alchemy, represents their most interesting feature.

So we have ash (konis), a living organism, pure and free from bacteria, that is memory and heritage of the tree which was previously. Then there are burnt fuel oil, that is injurious, useless, fluid and impalpable and clay, the stiff sticky earth to be baked (keramos), linked to man and so to creation. These materials are strongly connected to land and its manipulated memories. Emptied of an abstract and symbolical content, they remind us the peopled earth, the so-called *Ecumene*, a word that takes its origin from the greek half passive participle *οικουμένη* and that has two different meanings: a geographical one, that is to say a description of the world as we know it, and a philosophical-religious one.

But the ecumenism of Andrea Mariconti is meant to be more universal and shaman, than orthodox and it includes, in its meaning, all dry lands populated by people and, at the same time, both the global community who live in and the different characteristics that affect its individuals. An idea of habitat that implies a sharing way of living, based upon the destruction of the frontiers and the collective care about the planet.

In his works wanderers with old-fashioned hats take turns with faces absorbed in secret thoughts, with scenes of difficult ordinary life, with exotic figures casually found during his trips in foreign countries. Three-dimensional characters, often seized in a statuesque attitude, who are never the true protagonists of the scene, with whom the artist keeps a direct relation through the photo of a moment which indelibly fixes them on paper.

Andrea Mariconti decides to follow the crossroads of the man and of the landscape -often metaphysical and ancestral- among composed faces, fields painted with land, that remind Burri's *Cretto* or Kiefer's stratifications, whales that look like living landscapes, difficult to take in at a glance, and lonely Irish cliffs (moher). The subjects he chooses always remain separate, without communication, between the ambivalence of the denial of the oblivion (the anamnesis of the title) and the analytical process of the painting. The representation is sullied by white marks made of linseed oil. They look like geometrical cuts, folds, real splits that break the linearity of the view, kinetic lines that give the effect of space to image, putting the object in the background. A perfect geometry based on mathematical connections that, however, never excludes the pure act of painting.

After all Andrea Mariconti returns to the origin of painting, to the ancient model of beauty, that reminds us the glazing of the 17th century, even if black is just soot and titanium white is the only oil-colour used. In this way the image disappears behind a rent and, almost by magic, changes in something else.

Francesca Baboni