

Some have the gift while others do not. Mariconti has the gift and that too in a precise way: it is the element most conspicuous in him. It is no coincidence, in fact, that much has been written about him in little time (he made his debut four years ago at Spazio San Fedele as a twenty-five-year-old): things subtle and learned. And as these have already been said, we will not repeat them in this venue. It would therefore be more useful to say other things; and let the eyes - and only the eyes - do the talking rather than knowledge or critical jargon. What do eyes say? They say, even to those who walk by inattentive among the stands of a plethoric exhibition, that behind a painting that draws you out from a state of distraction to one of attention, that compels you to stop, there is a painter. And in this specific case a full painter, a painter who is curious and much attracted by that mystery that is a constituent part of the sensitive world: a painter who reads, travels and feels. Who thinks, as others have copiously written.

What made me at first become attentive and stop in surprise before an Andrea Mariconti was the painter's perception of landscape: all that which of a landscape is said or not said in order to grasp its sense: the spatial and imaginative depth and - yes, let us say it without qualms - the magic spell. Which in nature, if you look for it (and all you need are eyes), you will always find. Seen against the light, a cliff cut off from the sea is a primary emotion. And even more so is a wood as it opens before you the spaces between the bodies and the shadows of the trees - a wood into which you slowly enter, enthralled, not knowing where its secret will lead you. And if in the wood there is a home - any home whatsoever - it gains, even if represented in a straightforward way, an aura like a person would, and would appear laden with something unfathomable.

This and much more Mariconti makes evident with a naturalness and soberness of means. For him colour is a waste, rather, a hindrance, because it distracts. Grey is sufficient for him. A grey that is not a colour but a material (mostly ash and sometime cement) that structures or, rather, shapes the painting and gives body with the variations of its thickness. White and ash, flashes of active light on the inertness of matter, will take you anywhere; and the landscape, thus translated in an elementary alternative, becomes readable as if it were a written piece. Among the works shown at the exhibition, a good number is inspired by Ireland, which the author has an affinity with in terms of nature and humanity and of literary and poetic spirit. Ireland is an island that is magical: a land of fairies, leprechauns and other fantastical creatures, a land imbued with legends and tales. And in Mariconti landscapes - especially the Irish ones - are also *tales* or the beginning of tales that you then develop in your head. This depends not little by the fact that he does not paint these landscapes *sur le motif* but on recollection, and with the ash of memory: two factors that converge to create a similar effect of *suspension*. For as memory makes the contours of reality more fluid, thus ash - to quote the artist - is something "with which one must strike a compromise with...": a material that unlike oils and acrylics you can't "make do exactly what you had in mind..."; something that conserves a vital margin of unpredictability.

Landscape does not mean that Mariconti isn't interested in other things. He is indeed! Even for man, who, considered as being too invasive, as someone who breaks the spell, is always left out. His interest for man is of a different nature. Here the tale somehow evaporates, subjugated by a commitment rigorous in formal and existential terms. It is as if, returning from a anti-stress walk in the woods, the artist found himself face to face in his studio with another human being (and that too a naked human being) or looked at himself, naked as well, in the mirror. Here the question would be: "Who is this fellow? ...who are we?"; and the portal for the answer would be compassion. Mariconti quests for it with lucidity: it is the gift of his that does not fade.

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