

**ALBERTO CASTELLI**

**"reverse portrait"**

**15.06.2021 - 11.09.2021**

The entire work of Alberto Castelli can be seen as a daily application and discipline of memory, a recherche achieved by the means of painting. A sort of familiar and individual mandate that is fulfilled within the studio, through a practice of "religiosity" and contemplation. The atelier projects a dimension of abundance and temporal suspension and pushes the artist to daily face the voids as the traces of an investigation, that are paradoxically carried out in the double role of investigator/investigated. The layering of traits in painting is an analogue of memory when it is in motion, searching for a specific object. In the common language it is "collecting your thoughts". Rearranging ideas. Recovering the roots of the forgotten. Meditating through the sign to go beyond the removed. Being present. Being ready. This is how the thoughts of the studio "congeal" into paintings. Selected, captured or simply happened upon.

Even in the solitude of his studio, Alberto Castelli approaches painting as a fragment of dramaturgy, a ghost of a collective work caught in a moment of narration. His fascination with photography is actually a fascination with the photogram, the frame, the film, the audiovisual fragment. Imagining cinema as a coordinated coexistence of human beings, as the highest art of workers, and likewise seeking in painting the coordination of signs that is mediated by the individual. The relationship between what one is while painting and what becomes animated (or unanimated) within.

A directorial fantasy that opposes the self-referentiality of the painter who, as in all forms of targeted unsociability seems to suddenly want to explode into its exact opposite. The world.

It is difficult to explain or share with others "the long preparation that leads to a perfect brushstroke for the economy of a work", because the merely technical question is instead the result of a whole series of "revelations". So it is no longer technique.

One wonders whether the moment of pictorial happiness is a divinity that manifests itself or a secret that is never fully represented.

It is just like the mysteries that are caught in the restlessness of fixity, like frozen myths. Alberto Castelli's images are objets trouvés, random frames that collected from himself, from other people, from magazines, from cell phones. Photography does not interest him as such. The atlas is a mere accumulation. The transition from photography to painting lies in the sensuality of the support and a little in that of the subject. As in an elective relationship with all the fetishes of photographic pictorialism, the component of the surpassed is dissolved in the sign, in the detail, in the cut.

It is possible to dialogue with past centuries, like Balthus, but no one can escape contemporaneity.

So the clothes tell the story of a period, or rather, more than the clothes, it is the physicality that leaves a generational mark. Like Galliano but without any "documentary" intent.

The backgrounds, the places that have not been extrapolated from the reality of the city, live far away, in a cold, intangible way. As if they came from the demon of some cinematographer, of some strange western, where nothing happens. Grant Wood's American Gothic, on the cover of Spoon River Anthology, comes to mind, but without a frontal perspective. Turning sideways as a negation of portraiture. Posing that is a removal from the pose.

The subjects, belonging to a rebellious but unaware genius, follow their anti-system parables alone and the author defines them as "apathetic". Reducing "the other" to a conventional object becomes necessary, therefore, to deactivate any pathos, because the world outside should neither attract nor hurt.

Step back.

Alberto Castelli grows up in the 1970s and Turin may not seem completely welcoming and safe.

In the transition from the '70s to the '80s, Alberto Castelli's family, which is surrounded by an environment that does not reconcile the aftermath of prosperity with a growing perceived social discord (which results in terrorism and fear), finds a way to escape in the love of art. Frequenting the great international museums is a vacation from the urban news.

Art is the familiar place.

Castelli's father is a painter and antiquarian and seems to educate his son in a kind of museum homage. "Me too" is young Alberto's summary in front of Théodore Géricault's The Raft of the Medusa. But he seems to be implying "me too, like dad". And the story becomes a model, reconciling itself with that of everyone. Somehow, the characters in AC's paintings seem to try to fix, seem to want to freeze a perennial and impossible childhood.

The tree crowns of rebellion become placid trees on which to meditate. The tree crown leads to the countryside.

Urban subjects are deprived of the ideology of belonging to the city.

The subjects are sucked in. Where do they go?

Where does the work of Alberto Castelli go?

Alberto Castelli (1970)  
ives and works in Turin.

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