

Fiamma pilota le ombre seguono

The first painting, entitled *Fiamma pilota [Pilot Light]*, gave rise to the other two which, despite being independent works, are related to the first through variations, echoes and cross-references.

The idea behind this group of works derives from my thwarted desire to work on what is, in my opinion, the most complex and difficult pictorial subject, the Crucifixion. A closed subject, almost impermeable, its representation crystallised for centuries by masterpieces and popular painting.

My choice was not an entirely straightforward one. Indeed for a long time I sought to distance myself from this idea, trying to alter the painting as I was working on it. But it was impossible – I always returned to the point of departure, finally resigning myself to it and finishing the painting according to its nature. Only certain things are obvious to me: my painting has always constituted, indeed has been built up around, a kind of resistance of the subject, a faltering attempt to formalise figures which is manifested through a sort of linguistic construction/destruction that is as much symbolic as physical; often the erased, covered, leftover parts constitute the painting's basic structure.

A quest for meaning, a sort of interior truth, a mass of cheerfulness and sadness, joy and melancholy, drama and comedy, gentleness and brutality. It is this vitality of the image, of the painting, its internal life that interests me, that engrosses me ... my work seeks to pursue and manifest this poetic truth.

In this exhibition the Crucifixion is the matrix, the pilot light.

It might be a fundamentally natural thing for an Italian painter, but it's also an eccentric choice for a painter of my generation.

Fiamma pilota [Pilot Light]

The body of Christ is the only warm, luminous element. It is the dominant figure, an abnormal anatomy which moves in and out of the landscape. The face has its origin in the head of Christ painted by Guido Reni, while the feet come from the Crucifixion of Grünewald's Isenheim Altarpiece.

Two painters that are very far apart, almost the opposite of each other, one a master of Italian mannerism and the other prototypical of German expressionism. I think that the painting exists somewhere between these two poles.

I have borrowed from their works without any intention of direct quotation. Instead it is the great aggregative force of the subject that seems to permit these jumps, these grafts. Or, then again, perhaps it is the subject's great narrative that permits them.

Everything tumbles into this figure which, however much it is tormented, always re-emerges.

There is something infantile about the deformation of my figure's hands, feet, body, but I had no intention of being denigratory. On the contrary I tried to show tenderness, much like touching or massaging a body that has been motionless for some time.

The large, almost paw-like, hands vaguely resemble bunches of flowers, bulbs prior to flowering; they are points of energy, protective or threatening.

Beneath them are two blue figures. One is seen from behind busily engaged in some kind of digging, a humble task, while the other seeks to mock and torment; another smaller, summary figure crowned by a head has the same purpose: characters that attempt to perform actions in a state of somnambulism, empty actions, devoid of effect. On the left-hand side a motley band of musicians, made up largely of ghost-like heads, observes the scene.

The tone of the painting is not dramatic, but comes across instead as a frozen, static image, suspended in time.

I have tried to paint a picture that observes whoever looks at it, rather than being a moment of contemplation.

The genesis of the other two paintings was similar. The more I sought to distance myself from *Fiamma pilota [Pilot Light]*, the more they came under its spell, almost as if they were seeking its protection.

Le figure tornano a casa [The Figures Return Home]

This was initially supposed to be a version of the Flight into Egypt, but of the original idea only the little donkey remained.

I worked on it a lot, removing and adding figures, objects and details. In the end I deleted almost everything: a painting begun in full daylight and completed in a golden twilight.

The various incongruities and changes in style are due to the sum of the previous versions.

The landscape was simplified from one version to the next, transforming itself into an indistinct space, composed in the lower part of shadow and dim light, only a still life with fruit managing to resist this progressive desertification.

These changes in pictorial material reflect the personal experiences of these figures: people passing through, itinerant actors.

Not so far removed from the Sancho Panza and Don Quixote depicted by Honoré Daumier, they wander around seeking their place, they are like a space that empties out.

It is the unexpected gesture of the character looming out of the golden background that, like a seismic wave unleashed by *Fiamma pilota [Pilot Light]*, resolves the painting. That same gesture of the outstretched arms, measuring the limits of the space, accompanies and arrests the aimless wandering of the figures.

As if the first painting has projected onto the second its cone of shadow, its memory; *Le figure tornano a casa [The Figures Return Home]* is the dream-like, magical, nocturnal version of *Fiamma pilota [Pilot Light]*, springing as it were from a sleeping conscience. If one is the day, then the other is the night.

Testa farfalla su matrice locomotiva [Butterfly Head on Locomotive Matrix]

The title of the last painting resembles Futurist titles (such as *La strada entra nella casa - The Street Enters into the House*), with the same aim of describing a movement of interpenetration and simultaneity.

Some fundamental elements of the first two paintings find their way into the third and are repeated with variations.

The picture presents two distinct groups of figures within a landscape, to my mind a sort of whacky Annunciation.

The group on the left which observes the scene is very similar to that found in *Fiamma pilota [Pilot Light]*. Both groups occupy the same position, but this group of people have behind them a house, a picket fence, a road: a little band of witnesses/spectators that have come together seeking to be real, to be present.

The second group, on the other hand, is related to the dark and murky tones of *Le figure tornano a casa [The Figures Return Home]*.

These figures too seem in certain areas to empty out, to reduce themselves to shadow, to silhouettes, to enter into a nocturnal orbit, an ambiguous borderline between one state and another.

The centre of the painting is occupied by this group of four figures. The first three exist on different planes, and the paint that describes them varies greatly; they are connected to one another by the presence of three, different-sized drums, which rhythmically mark the space.

At the vertex of the triangle formed by the drummers, a figure – half-human, half-boiler/stove – strides forward, self-igniting matter with a tube exiting from the stomach.

Its head adorned by two ear-butterflies, encircled by a halo of yellow light resembling an aureole, the substance of the figure's painting is very twentieth century, dark, Sironi-like.

The arms open up, crumbling dissolving into the landscape, becoming the landscape; at the extremities the closed fists are yet another echo reverberating from *Fiamma pilota [Pilot Light]*.

I like to think of this group as a sort of locomotive, a machine that closes and opens at the same instant, sharing and correlating the left side – world of men-house-periphery, with the right side – indefinite-luminous-free nature – while it marches side by side with its drummers.