

Venus of third millennium

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Is there a language for describing the present? Is there a form, a way which an age (however circumscribed the definition of this word is these days) instantly recognises as its own? Possibly yes, beyond the banality of the news. It is this language, current without being everyday which LUCA MR has been using naturally for some time.

It seems easy, but it isn't. Time, on the whole is complex, crossed by frequencies and tensions which vary greatly, hesitating to acknowledge one another; a swift, ephemeral, tormented time in which even the remotest idea of style has become a kind of mirage, a presumption, an incongruity, an impossibility. LUCA MR is, last but not least a painter - not just as a matter of fact – at least that part of his comprehensive and dilated creativity that, above all, we are interested in documenting in this testimonial and in this publication.

Art is (and it is not necessary to be reminded of this) perhaps the visual art which is the greatest implicit compromise and the most tightly bound to tradition. This compromise is however, without any doubt also a strength, a useful or even indispensable resource to enable contrast with the diversity which the world constantly proffers without becoming a “product”; that is, without surcoming to all logical but instead maintaining a providential distance and power of observation and comprehension. However, before going any further in the critic of the works of LUCA MR, I have to point out that his work isn't limited to painting but consists of a complete life's work (outside of which, that painting acquires a different meaning), completely open to the creative experience. Musician, actor, story teller also in a certain sense of aphorisms or fragments of poetry or impromptu reflections; the artist moves continuously from one medium to another, building on them simultaneously and becoming passionate about the confrontation and the exchange of glances, different cultures and different ways of thinking.

Everything done very seriously because we are taking about a serious person and not an improvising amateur who is only able to experience curiosity as an “easy” superficial game (as superficial, actually, as the pretext of manipulating instruments about which you know little). No, here we are dealing with a profoundly creative being and a hunger to live his time in all its facets and expressions without confining himself to falsely specialised dimensions which seem ever more limiting and incoherent with things as they are.

So we find ourselves right at the heart of the image culture, that is the world in which we live: bombarded by vast amounts of information every minute, our brains struggle to concentrate on a little of this and is constantly on the look out for entertainment (the public is a distracted observer said Benjamin: now things are worse). Messages, therefore, have to be (and in the main are) fast, efficient and pertinent. LUCA MR, observes, reacts to and relates all this. The world is changing quickly: there is already a special language, ignored by dictionaries (but not for long) conceived for the new epistles text messages more pertinent 4 one thought than :-) change; photos (and even photos as art, why not?) are taken with mobile phones, music these days is made more using a mixer than a piano, we appreciate the latest campaign by La Chapelle more than the nudes of Weselman, an epigram by Saffo becomes a rap, so it is high time to think of an aesthetic revisited and changed which can at least try and understand and adapt itself to all this. There is actually a very urgent and undeniable need to reconsider the basis of the notion of art that we have inherited and to discuss again our frequent and deep prejudices against high and low culture, against beauty, against ephemeral values and those which are enduring. Even the boundary between true and false, between representation and reality is becoming more ambiguous and debatable.

In this explosive situation the critical elements, as far as LUCA MR is concerned, remain – above all – the idea of beauty, sensuality, language and aesthetic experience. Let's begin at the end: it is said that the dimensions of LUCA MR expressiveness are global, hi tech where necessary but, in his case, never making it a central factor. A artist needs to bring to life, to be, to live moment for moment everything that he does; music, actions, recitals or naturally painting. Painting, in his hands is something absolutely natural, congenital, immediate; he has the ability to capture and has the irretrievability, as Borges writes, of the colours of the sky. In the sense that every canvass captures a unique and irrepeatable moment but is done with simplicity and without editing a natural process. The white canvass must, quickly capture a vision, the intuition of a moment and for LUCA MR, can never be corrected. To go back is impossible: the balance of a composition, irrespective of the format, is a matter of a fraction of a second, of a few, irrepeatable lines. Without claiming to do more than seizing an intuition, a suggestion of the way a certain day is, however, in this way the artist assures his canvasses the subtle melancholy implicit in every suspended moment, taken away from the flow of the present towards the past (days go by..., said Laurie Anderson in a piece famously dedicated to Fassbinder) though lost none the less, consigned to a representation. And this way of understanding the image is intimately in accordance with the most recurring image – now almost fixed – in the works of LUCA MR, it is in agreement with

effervescent air of the androgynous figures who are always on the point of dissolving into the transparent background. Reticence and exhibitionism: the hand captures in the image vibrations and doubts, it records the hesitations and the imperfections of living in this restless present and transmits them to the figure appearing, taking shape, with its pose taken apart and studied, with its eroticism – artificial and on show. The artist, without a doubt, always creates these images even when taking as a model a simple photograph, magazine or similar material. There is in his work a special delicacy, which doesn't however excluded acute analysis. The creator participates in the seductive game of his personalities, fighting on equal terms, he is the first to let himself be tempted by their insinuations and, maybe, to get tangled up in the net which his own imagination has created. This is no arrogance, if anything there is a shyness cover up by a false self assurance, as adolescents do. LUCA MR story has the air of format conceived as a sub species of painting.

An autobiography? It isn't known and it isn't even important. What is certain, however is that the story is about an entire generation. Not by chance are these characters no-one and at the same time everyone: they have no faces, or more accurately they have no eyes because their faces are almost always interrupted (unfinished or better, cut short) at the level of the nose. A body without eyes can't see (and this is exactly the intention of the artist, who achieves the opposite effect of that Giulio Paolini in *Portrait of a Youth looking at Lorenzo Lotto*) but is there to be seen. LUCA MR doesn't hesitate, the position of his pleasing creatures is that of objects, in fact as soon as you look a bit more deeply, that characteristic of a sexual object, given their explicit attitude, inviting, winking, seductive. However, even here it is a brush with an illusion: look but don't touch, as happens with professional dancers at a disco. Even when they appear in pairs, caressing each other, these creatures don't seem to be able/want to go beyond some apathetic and narcissistic preliminaries. Other times "he" isn't there and the girl turns directly to the observer. LUCA MR sometimes writes his very rhetorical question on the canvass "What do you want from me?" "What can I do for you?" She is a girl produced by a totally fashionable and trendy imagination, as - on the other hand - her companion (when he exists) is very thin and provocative, with smooth hair showing in the background an empty body, missing. The artist insists on depriving them of depth, drawing only the outlines, the profile, a simple sign in space. It hasn't always been like that: years ago LUCA MR was a more traditional artist, at least as far as composition goes. A beautiful bunch of gilded grapes, painted a while ago, shows a complete use of colour and space, quite different from more recent works. Nature full bodied and in colour, expands on the surface with a type of joyous exuberance intensified by the original choice of technique – that of the use of

glass enamels instead of oil paints. Bit by bit LUCA MR themes have been reduced, progressively subtracting elements

The progressively emptier space has no determining factors, it is a simple space, fine and transparent as silk. Favourite tonality: maybe ivory but also black, browns, pink, pale yellow, anything that creates contrast. None the less we are dealing with emptiness, distinct, indeterminate and attractive; emptiness in which, undoubtedly, there is nothing more to eat (the grapes on the other hand were metaphorically very “edible”) but just something to look at, maybe to smell: a flower for example, a fragile element, delicate and perishable no less than the figures LUCA MR has entrusted to his enamelled stage. The feelings are light, transparent: is it an offer, that flower (but certainly a good deal more anaemic than the full bodied bunch of marguerites and narcisi which Picasso, in a famous image, had passing from hand to hand), is it a metaphor for the transience of the most beautiful things?

Bring me a flower....., says one of the most soffused early poems by Bertold Brecht, but from the shrub which grows far from your home.

Amongst all the painters of whom it is possible to think, at this point one comes into my mind who, mutatis mutandis, embodied with genius and personal risk this feeling of loss and the irrecoverability of beauty, like that of the present moment: Filippo de Pisis. The elegance of some of his still lifes, the sense of impalpable nostalgia of his details left in space by a few brush strokes is, in a way, mysteriously evoked by the refined and sensitive hesitations of LUCA MR.

Except that, coherently, the tactile sensuality, very typical of painters who are sons of marquis, has completely disappeared and can no longer have a place in contemporary culture so focused on voyeurism as our own is. From flowers we return now to the young, expressionless protagonists whom the artist has chosen as exclusive inhabitants of his compositions, they too are outlined not in oils but with a trace of nail varnish, a shiny, vain, impermeable substance perfectly in tune with the circumstances. Fashion therefore, fashion and moderately transgressive pleasure: young, ever younger are the subjects

LUCA MR has no doubts as to their superficiality, not in the sense of content but of substance: there is nothing behind them and yet something about the work, maybe uncertainty, the slightly ostentatious sophistication of attitude gives us a feeling of torment, of an internal knot, a complexity behind their invisible faces (which obviously has nothing to do with the “tragic” and high flown classicism of Mitorai...). Because of this, in the deliberate choice of superficiality or if you prefer of silence, LUCA MR isn’t superficial and interprets contemporary unease in very delicate and sensitive terms.

Letting oneself be seduced by his enamelled and empty presence, the artist describes (as has already been said), just an age, a moment, a day maybe but recognisable by a large proportion of a generation; which at times offers itself but as the result of insecurity; or protects itself but is posing, or because it identifies with someone else’s truth. LUCA MR speaks to us of all this, participating and with a complicity made evident; but the removal of the gaze and hence the individualising factor; in this way everyone is and everyone can enter into the context of the frame participating in the immaterial, seductive exchange, everyone because there are no names and even if there were they wouldn’t be used: an act of discretion and respect or delicacy that the artist who gives and undoubtedly contributes to making the whole a little less perturbing (if you don’t know who you like the most) and more pertinent. In other words, we want to see but pretend not to be seen; we become passionate about reality shows but we invoke privacy laws.... Obviously art always involves a voyeuristic act. But the Venus of the third millennium is more than likely to be a hermaphrodite, to be able to accommodate all desires and has an introflexed gaze, turned inwards, so as not to look at you and not to ever see you... LUCA MR is painting it.

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