

Pablo Candiloro | A PROMISE OF IMMORTALITY

Cycles and Counter-Cycles

by Massimo Mattioli

"Men at first feel without perceiving, then they perceive with a troubled and agitated spirit, finally they reflect with a clear mind". In 1725 Gian Battista Vico formulated, in the fifth book of the *Scienza Nuova* (The New Science), the Thesis of the "Cycles and Counter-cycles of History". This theory is radically opposed to the linear conception of time, supported for example by Saint Augustine, and already called into question by Machiavelli. Vico proposes a cyclic conception of history's development, as well as of man's faculties; according to which historical epochs that are dominated by sentiment, by instinct, are followed by others marked by fantasy, by poetry, to then be overtaken by stages guided by the faculty of reflection. The ages of gods, heroes and men.

Which then reappear according to the same pattern, in different historical forms. Temperaments that could also be applied to the history of art. To dwell on times closer to us, Futurism, moved by pure instincts, was succeeded by Surrealism and Dada, movements open to the fantastic and dreamlike, and then regaining rationality with the Return to Order. Facts that, when differently modulated, can also apply to the Informal - Pop art - Minimalism sequence.

Taking such a historicist approach helps us grasp the complexity of Pablo Candiloro's work. His beginnings saw him grappling with a narrative form of painting, a personal one though with classical references, which viewed him as the leading actor of the scene. The following series, starting from "Tomorrow at the Sea", brought about a decisive turn in a lyrical direction, with a confrontation with the absolute that touches spiritual chords. With his most recent works, in the series "Dehydration" and "Infinite Palette", the artist overcomes lucidity and awareness of the context, juxtaposing his work with a constantly changing socio-cultural conglomerate.

There are always actions and reactions, choices and consequences in the Argentinean artist's work. His paintings an intrinsic completeness, which he seeks with an awareness built on great examples, from Piero della Francesca to Giorgio Morandi. But attempting to focus on a single work by Pablo risks leading us astray. His work should in fact be observed in its entirety, where there is always a before and an after. Where actions and reactions follow each other cyclically, following precisely "cycles and counter-cycles". The recurring concept he has preferred when talking about his work is that of "circularity".

Although Candiloro's expressive strength relies almost exclusively on painting, his work might actually be viewed as a great performance. A complex process of mental elaboration that stitches together all the passages, reshaping the contingent into one

single conceptual work. The streams of thought that are translated into the paintings come to dominate the works themselves.

And rather than abandoning the instrument of painting and seeking other more fitting ones, they are sublimated into a new, higher level, where painting becomes even more fundamental. Where, having recognized that it proved inadequate to its expressive needs, finds an increasingly greater strength.

Men at first feel without perceiving

Pablo Candiloro's art is firstly guided by instinct. He feels the need to entrust to his disturbances, his anguish, his complex relationship with the world to painting. His Argentina is a land beset by crises, first political and democratic, then economic. And for him, the canvas, becomes a territory of awareness, self-analysis, and venting. He felt the need to make a tabula rasa of the past, and his quest for order and spirituality led him to the work of Piero della Francesca. An elective affinity, which eventually led him to move to Italy, to Sansepolcro, the land of Piero. His example granted him the first spatial awareness, and a tonal palette that banished the dark, grim colors of his very first attempts into the attic, and then became more Morandi-like.

Almost as a reaction to this problematic background, his first series of paintings, between 2012 and 2017, are dominated by irony. "Room Service", with a series of self-portraits featuring Candiloro in everyday situations: the cut is classic, with the head and shoulders portrayed against a neutral background and objects. Almost like still images of a long performance. A first formal synthesis arrives with "Stop Searching for Me Marcelo": the objects disappear, the self-portraits see the artist variously posed on an armchair that unequivocally recalls Alessandro Mendini's "Proust". Homages emerge, the cultural evocations that nourish much of Pablo's work. The colors become bright, sometimes shrill.

Then they perceive with a troubled and agitated spirit

But his arrival in Italy marked a key phase in the development of Pablo Candiloro's personality, and of his future work. He found himself without identification documents, living illegally in a country that is not yet "his" country. Officially "he doesn't exist". He lives this condition - here is the troubled spirit - like that of a ghost, he developed a surreal sense of impermanence.

Obviously, this relativism could not help but spill over into his work. Painting remained his chosen medium, he felt that he must entrust his anxieties, his frustrations, but also his openings, his aspirations to it. Yet he was all too aware of its limits, and continually questioned it. *"All contemporary artists are bipolar, because they have to cope with extremes, and they have to constantly go in and out of extreme situations"*

he says. Armed with this mental frame of mind he dedicated himself to the new season of his art, with the series "Tomorrow by the Sea". And the completion of every mental process took place with a new break, a new negation. This revolution, compared to his previous works, became radical: the figure even disappears, and only the "background" remains. These are the first paintings in which the self-portrait does not dominate: metaphorically Candiloro even "kills" himself, in order to only leave space for painting.

The artist's path remains a personal one, an almost intimate matter, free from any comparison with what is happening in contemporary art. A fierce struggle with a soul torn asunder by the desire to grasp, to interpret ecumenical issues, to remain attached to a society in chameleon-like, frenetic evolution, but also to "read" it with eternal principles. His painting failed to do this: and so he changed it. He aimed his eye at the absolute, gazing at the mystery of the infinite given by the line of the horizon in front of a sea. If his travelling companion had so far been Piero della Francesca, he was now joined by Mark Rothko. The playfulness cyclically returns as does the irony: Pablo is dead, then "reborn" as Mark, and with his instruments portrays a vast array of seascapes. The Dead Sea, Patagonia, Los Angeles, Shanghai, Palermo, Livorno. To every location, he associates a palette of colors that evoke it. With the seas, he gazes at boundaries, and the boundaries are endless, they can be continually flowed across. This is why the Mari (Seas) series does not destroy itself, but reaches another dimension. Once again a rupture, which now however does not lead to a different resetting, but rather a sublimation. The gaze passes from terrestrial infinity to absolute infinity: and the latest works in this series point to the cosmos. Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, the Sun. Now through the eyes of Piero Manzoni, a "gentle rebel"...

Finally, they reflect with a clear mind

A legend has it that Michelangelo, contemplating the Moses in San Pietro in Vincoli after the last finishing touches, amazed himself by the realism of those forms, cried out, furious: "Why don't you speak? ". And hurled his hammer at the sculpture. A recurring syndrome, from van Gogh to Bacon: the artist who identifies with his expressive medium. And when he becomes aware that it cannot create life, that it cannot become truth, he comes to hate it. To destroy it. A cathartic moment that moves the most recent work of Pablo Candiloro. The tabula rasa as the start of a palingenesis.

"Painting must move towards its own funeral," he opines with conquered lucidity, with a "clear mind." "That's where its strength lies. Painting today knows that it cannot have the power of image that other languages have, especially technological ones. And in the moment in which it acknowledges this defeat, it gains in power, in its narrative capacity. It can tell us about loss, and defeat, like no other language".

And the artist-shaman celebrates this funeral rite with the solemn instrument of fire.

"I imagined a new Pompeii, where the volcano, however, kills all the artists". He reproduced on canvas the self-portraits of many great painters, but then burnt his painting with a heat gun, creating a multitude of "mummies": Goya, Velazquez, Cezanne, Duchamp, de Chirico, Magritte, Rivera. It was thus that the "Dehydration" series came into being, made up of many paintings, or a one-of-a-kind artistic Walhalla. The new dimension of his art is underpinned by the shattering of matter. He himself as a painter is dead, now - with a mechanism that recalls the automatism of the Surrealists - he creates by overseeing the action of fire. Heat sublimates matter, overrides will.

"Having arrived at the absolute, you either kill yourself, or go back to looking at reality. As Malevic does". And in his last works, Pablo begins anew: again cycles and counter-cycles. Back to the classic themes of painting, flowers, landscape, architecture, human figure. Autobiographical evocations emerge, the Argentine flag, Maradona's house. But in the new, higher level of awareness, the artist leaves room for the creative dignity of matter, and the fire that will sublimate it. The tones are lowered, which become almost livid. A pictorial process that finds its fulcrum in the palette. The "Infinite Palette", as the title of the series. As is the case with kintsugi in which the Japanese master potters found perfection in recovering broken objects, Candiloro now seeks it out, by reusing the colours left on the palette from the previous painting. The landscape is born from the same paint used for the flowers. The nobility of refusal. And the circularity leads to superpainting...

Immortaly

Pablo Candiloro has drawn his tormented artistic path as a very personal storytelling. A bumpy trajectory, always marked by his vicissitudes, his experiences, his emotions, his reflections on reality. Painting is one of the certainties that accompany him: following the syncopated rhythm of his existence. He continually enters and exits it: he denies it and then immediately redeems it, he "kills" it but only to elevate it. Now in a reassuring Morandi like fashion, now as disorienting as a cerebral shock. Up until to his last works, which refuse any critical organization, any objective approach. He no longer feels the need to have a scaffolding, a conceptual framework: the artist has disappeared, he has delegated everything to the intrinsic quality of the work. The key? As often happens, it lies in the title. "A Promise of Immortality," copyright Stanley Kubrik. The ghost artist signs a promise of painting, immortal medium...