

What do images want from us?

Alberto Fiz

The vertigo of images. Millions a minute which fluctuate online without any solution of continuity, like minuscule specks of matter. Overlapping, hybridized, chaotic, technologically advanced, they saturate the environment creating a sense of claustrophobia and impotency. They are out of control, destined to end up in the communicational landfill which progressively swallows them, like toxic waste.

If this is the conformism of a present omnivore, albeit not devoid of its charm, Marco Tirelli's action is liberating as it rehabilitates the iconic content and asks itself what goes beyond the vanity of the instant. It does so meticulously and through a portable cosmogony of objects which intersect and scrutinize each other without the pretense of creating an apparent order but accepting the inscrutable.

In Eduardo Secci's gallery there is an installation in progress with a series of pieces made in 2020 and in the first month of 2021, exposed on a single wall, which can be read as the conclusion of an action in three acts developed through the entire space. Tirelli explores the perceptual process creating new spaces of contemplation in an incessant dialogue between images, painting, design and photography. It is this "seeing through things" that the artist experiments since the eighties surpassing each contingency.

This *modus operandi* is, now, an identification practice compared to a course which tends to express the undefined totality of sense, withdrawing itself from the classic rite of exposition. Tirelli does not suggest prefabricated solutions, nor does he let himself be seduced by actuality, but he places the spectator in front of the complexity of the piece waiting for him to decodify it. A methodology inaugurated in 2013 with *Immaginario* the exhibition which took place at Palazzo Poli in Rome followed by, the same year, the installation at the Biennale di Venezia with over 300 pieces of art on paper accompanied by a series of sculptures. In 2017 the Musée d'art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint-Etienne exposed, on a 27 meter long wall, 387 drawings of different sizes and techniques, from charcoal to cloth, from ink to lithography.

In an increasingly anxious system, which constantly looks for the trendy and ephemeral spectacularization, Tirelli avoids muscular workouts, although he does not renounce creating paintings which are big in dimension and he prefers presenting himself undercurrent, in low definition, with his encyclopedic inventory which encapsulates any type of form, without any preclusion of subject or technique, with the understanding that germinal knowledge insinuates itself in the extraneousness of the content or in the disbelief of finding ourselves in front of sudden lexical contrasts. All of this whilst following an intimate and private diary (with subtle irony he calls it a diary of myself) in which the atelier transforms itself in an alchemic laboratory where imagined visions or visionary images, overlook the world to take on a more fleeting and transitory presence.

Tirelli, unlike Alighiero Boetti, creates a game of references without, however, delivering the regulation to the observer. He brings to the world the world, but takes away the

solution placing his pawns in an open field where each one is obliged to decipher them on the basis of their own sensibility and experience.

On the occasion of the Florentine exhibition, it seems that there is a surplus of freedom in the realm of the project where hints of landscapes, heaps of stones, enigmatic shadows, fallen trees architectural and design objects, classical and juvenile reminiscence, as well as a series of geometrical figures in reference to classical subjects of the artist, which in the eighties imposed him as the protagonist of a renewed pictorial language in the context of the *Nuova Scuola Romana* (the New Roman School), an experience which needs further inquiries.

That which appears already metabolized, returns to be acquired as primary data privileging a mechanism of re-appropriation where Tirelli re-elaborates his own actions inserting them in an expansive context. Thus, the artist does not distance himself from the past, but there is the precise will to broaden his vocabulary with more deviations and possibly complicity. As a matter of fact Tirelli's process involves the acquisition of new data which, after having been through the filter of photography, is absorbed and undergoes the ritual bath of painting, understood as a constant act of transformation: "my work has a mental dimension in place which becomes concrete through progressive operations on the layered surface", explains Tirelli based on a lenticular investigation which does not have as its objective to archive the images in the warburghian perspective, but instead aims at putting them back in circulation highlighting the aspects which were deleted or removed, as well as the interferences, the amnesias or the "fragments", as Elena Ferrante would say. A hand which can be seen in the darkness, a broken geometry which projects its own shadow on the wall or a sudden explosion, are nothing but the possible scenarios of a heterogenous dimension, devoid of an ordinary logic.

Tirelli's aim is to conquer new mental spaces. He is attempting a complex operation: recuperating the authenticity of the gaze and its increasing bewilderment. This is possible by inquiring on the hidden meaning of images which conceal what is visible in reality: "Shakespeare's metaphysical question was 'what are dreams made of?' I ask myself the same question but with images", states the artist which, through a latent narration, does not run away from the principles of representation (which is quite different from mimesis) avoiding easy shortcuts in the continuous movement between forms which, once they have been extrapolated from their context, escape from their destiny. They are fragments of a possible infinity, parts of a whole which is waiting to be deciphered from a painting style which is essential, monochromatic and totalizing. Tirelli skins the image to make it presence, subtracting it from its subordination: "the image is the manifestation, not the appearance, the exhibition, the putting to light or putting forward... a painter does not paint forms if he does not paint, above all else, a strength which takes hold of the forms and drags them in a presence", writes Jean Luce Nancy. Through this logic, the action of the artist, which does not foresee a simple visionary and introspective track shot between various elements which stem from secret crevices, follows through and commences a radical change in perception, in primis through painting. What we observe on the bi-dimensional plane, develops an autonomous mental process: "Painting goes deep", says Tirelli who, to actuate his action, seems to be placing the object of memory on a raft letting it float in the shaded

and indefinite black. The image has to be imagined outside of a linear path, ready to occupy the physical and temporal realm in a dimension which leads it to the outskirts of knowledge. Tirelli, in this way, goes beyond the tedious circumstances of the presence to bring back to the surface splinters of infinite and in several occasions in his work appear subjects which evoke tools to gaze at the sky and the stars or stills which contain who knows what magical potion.

His research, which in its conduct seems to have gestaltic origins, forces us to take a position in regards a reality which is increasingly evanescent and authoritative, where our vision risks being engulfed in the passive acceptance of stereotyped models And in answering his question, we could affirm that the material of which images are made of transcends the image itself in a constant regenerative metamorphosis. What we are observing is merely the hypothesis of the artist which becomes an accomplice to our gaze. But what do images really want from us?