

Mekánema

by Silvia Criara

Histories of growing up, epic of everyday life, new initiating rites set in a natural scenery, ethereal and hushed. The works by Tamara Ferioli (born in Legnano, Italy in 1982), drawings on Japanese paper mounted on a wooden framework, small sculptures and installations, represent the existential restlessness of mankind, in search of its identity. From *boule de neige* - inner landscapes, built with old toys and *objet trouvé*, then protected under glass; to spatial works, which show armies of swings, gigantic shells and vortical spiral stairs, devices which help to free oneself from the weight of the world, in the same way as *Mekánema* - the flying machines of the philosopher Carlo Michelstaedter, from which the artist took the inspiration for the exhibited installation- works. The drawings, the main body of the work, are self-portraits that follow the protagonist as she grows up, day by day, and show her achievements and failures. The body of the artist has a central position, it records the events, the challenges of every day, and filters the sensations, sometimes free, sometimes contracted on itself. Her hair, included in the canvases and sculptures, is the *here and now* of the work, the keeper of the DNA of the artist and of the sole and unique essence of the moment when creation is done.

The works are created through a slow process generated during the action; first there is the pencil drawing on the front of the sheet, and then the application of the hair on the back of it. Only in the end the entire composition is shown, when the artist puts a coat of resin on the front of the paper, making the hidden applications visible - the DNA, first protected on the back of the composition. Her free stroke, clear and unmistakable, and the classic balance of the compositions draw the spectators to the narration, only to catch them off-guard with a sometimes bitter content. It is the immaculate white which, with a nearly-physical presence, sublimates the stories, emotions and fears roused on the scene. The stories and compositions follow the protagonist as she grows up. From the first works which revolve around her family, to the last ones here exhibited which describe her adult and independent life, and the ambivalence of the artist. First portrayed by a unique vulnerable self, now fragmented into different figures. Her mood lives also in the natural elements, trees, flowers, insects. Sometimes nature is an inimical Mother, then thorny prickly dried plants cross the canvases and block the action; sometimes is a benignant Mother and brings help to the protagonist. Human, natural and vegetable elements melt together in one spirit and rise to universal metaphors of human frailty.

FAIRY TALE AND DREAM

Armies of swings, shell-covered staircases, mysterious initiating rites. A new iconography of the self grows on the boundary between fiction and reality. Tamara Ferioli exploits the imagery, symbolism, and narrative potential of fairy tale to represent paradoxical situations, strong and condensed images which are built on contrasts. The plot follows the protagonist as she grows up, and as it challenges her, with errors and achievements, changes and passages. We follow her steps through metaphors, postures and movements. Her body pierces through the canvas, raw and naked, records the events through the senses and psyche and throws them in our face.

Tabula rasa is the ideal ending of the exhibition track. "Every woman has a skirt made of stones, and every woman collects elements which correspond to some aspects of the catharsis of each one of them" -the artist says- "I use symbols to make communication easier, they express the feelings that I have experienced. Every subject I represent carries a magic, a double and embodies a different metaphor, depending on the context, sometimes as a helper, sometimes as an antagonist". Then bees, ants, flowers, stones, trees. Just like in a fairy tale, the human, vegetable and animal realms communicate together continuously and share the same essence, Nature.

"..We are always looking for our Self, for the absolute, every spiral is an attempt..."

THE STAIRCASE AND THE SHELLS

"It leads to nowhere and you cannot run it due to its fragility". Covered with shells and painted in white, the big spiral stair of *Mekánema* erects in the room, a symbol of human insecurity. "It is covered with shells of different sizes, of young and older snails. In this way I have represented the different stages of life. Every spiral is an attempt, an endless search for the Self and the absolute. It may also recall the image of the *Oroborus*, the serpent which bites its own tail, continuously regenerating itself. It represents the cyclic nature of life, and the nonsense that we all share".

“...It imitates instability, the tension of the absolute and the intoxication of vertigo...”

THE SWING

“The use of toys, like the swings in installations, and Kinder Surprise toys in the *boule de neige* is not nostalgic. Childhood is a metabolized and interiorized phase. Today it embodies the frantic search for balance”. Fifty swings painted in white installed in the room become a wood in which to get lost. “My work is a continuous up and down. I alternate feelings of bliss to twilight states. The original title of the installation is *Poisonouse Poise (Velenosa Stabilità)*, the forbidden love for vertigo and the everlasting dissatisfaction ”.

“...It tells everything, it beats my time...”

HAIR

Little red tangles of energy deny the sight of the faces of the protagonists. “It represents chaos, that is expressed in the body. It tells everything, it beats my time. The faces are hidden because I'm not interested into showing them, sometimes I show only some parts because I want to emphasize a meaning, as a narrative event”. Not only a colour element, hair means the will to renovate herself. “I have changed the colour to make new drawings. Sometimes I need a more vivid and energizing red, sometimes I need a lighter and neutral one”.

“...Animals and natural elements are allegories of frames of mind. They embody a trouble or a pleasure...”

ANTS, BEES, GEESE and other animals

Sometimes animals are helpers, sometimes an obstacle to be overcome, sometimes they are a sign of tension, sometimes they release it. “Animals and natural elements are allegories of frames of mind. They embody a trouble or a pleasure. A stone, as well as a precipice, as scissors change identity according to the context in which they appear, which is in turn the protagonist. Sometimes in my works, things transfigure into objects or animals too. The theses I have supported and the ones I have detested live a parallel existence in the elements and life forms that remind me of them”.

"...The landscapes reflect the human body and the realm of the unconscious..."

STONES, TREES, PRECIPICES and other natural elements

"A precipice corresponds to a descent to the depths. Grass leaves and trees are the hair of the world, they are its skin. The branches are arms put around the protagonist. They change according to the stress they suffer, just like our body. I am inside that woman, as I am inside that tree, as I am inside that ant, which is a trouble that I'm experiencing in that moment, or inside that stone, that holds me on earth and won't let me rise. They are all parts of mine, imagined and magnified as in a dream".

"...White is a many-sided symbol, in symbols I look for essences..."

WHITE

From a neutral colour, it rises to a physical presence in the works of the artist. "I use essential colours, and so they are the elements that I include, the bare minimum, I am not interested into decoration. White is a many-sided symbol, in symbols I look for essences, the chance to grasp archetypes with intuition, the absence of a space-time, which indirectly admires the absolute space and time".