

山水

SHANSHUI

Pierpaolo Curti's Art

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Painting, especially western painting, has often shown subservience to the strong powers, contributing in part to their empowerment; think, for example, of the representations commissioned by the church during the Counter-Reformation period, or the purely ideological proselytism of painters who adhered to totalitarian regimes, or the many portraits requested by aristocratic families to give lustre to their lineage, or the exploits of Napoleon on horseback.

If we add to this the intrinsic narcissism of the painting, the vanity of the artist, who both love to be looked at, we understand that we are faced with overly conditioned and conditioning narratives that leave the viewer little room to move.

Pierpaolo Curti's research goes in the opposite direction. In his works, the active performance of the observer is strongly demanded. Curti demands an emancipated, active spectator, able to complete the work in full autonomy.

To do this, the artist constantly seeks an open symbolism, capable of unleashing multiple keys to interpretation, for a rebus that is always renewable, never resolved. The devices that Curti places, also use rhetorical elements, but well channelled, such as bridges, doors, paths, mountains, all assembled in a dry manner, without frills or easy seductive elements that could lead to useless distractions.

This highly recognisable layout, built up over a career spanning more than 30 years, is made up of calibrated colours, never showy, with a strong predominance of greys, which allow the blues and whites to stand out, to better highlight the subject, the true centre of the painting. The only constraint Curti imposes on the viewer, who always remains free to move mentally as he or she sees fit, is to accept a condition of solitude and introspection, in which the meditative and spiritual environment is immediately evident.

The artist uses emptiness as a hospitable



White Thread

White Door





White bridge 170x150 mix technique on wood, 2010



Platform 200x200 mix technique on canvas, 2015





Plauground







zone, within which everything can find a place, stimulating the viewer to new dimensional passages, where the courage of action becomes fundamental. The favourite subjects of the last decade are those of the mountains, which more easily allow the artist to achieve an enlarged metaphorical framework. Curti knows the mountains well, which he usually practices in the summer months, with long hikes at high altitudes. The impassable passages, the iron paths, the ledges exposed to vertiginous heights, ascents and descents, bivouacs and shelters that are salvific but momentary, fatigue and concentration, all necessary elements to advance. What counts is the journey and not the destination.

Another fundamental element of Pierpaolo Curti's painting is the "Here and Now". The apparently neo-metaphysical, static layout of the paintings, blocked in its meagre elements, is in truth capable of triggering immediate mental mobility, immersing the viewer in the work as the true protagonist of the painting, which is why Curti prefers large formats.

A final element, less obvious to the eye, is applied by the artist to construct the image. Very often, the constituent elements of the picture follow an imitative mnemonic process, which in its unfolding already suggests an enhancement of observation. The artist expresses this concept as follows: "When one speaks of augmented reality, one immediately thinks of the enhancement of sight or hearing, through sophisticated technological prostheses, but how to enhance the soul? Why not devote ourselves to it? Why not act on our inner software?". This call for greater awareness is translated by Curti through slow observation, capable of restoring a deeper and more participatory relationship with nature. The artist positions himself in front of a landscape or part of

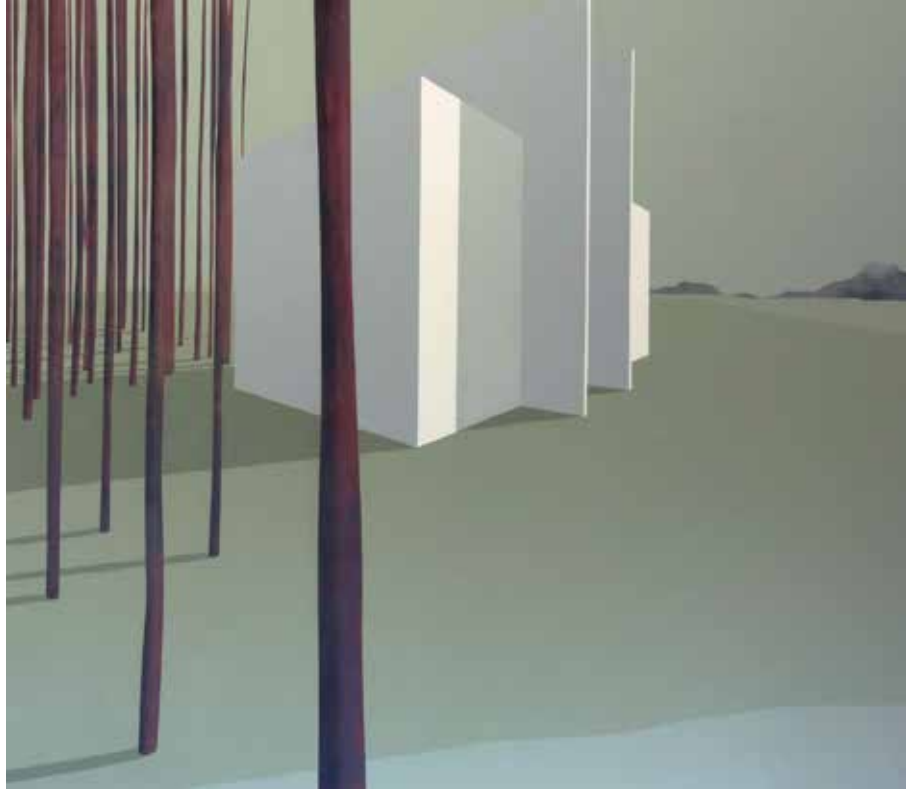
it and tries to observe all its details to saturation, without taking pictures.

Back in the working studio, a retrieval of the information stored in the memory is activated and the vision, at least of certain parts of the painting, is returned to the canvas. For the artist, this way of proceeding is educational, at least for oneself. In a society with a very fast fruition, which is too often summarised, this detailed activation of the gaze becomes a necessity and an enhancement of attention. The elements, often architectural, that complete the picture are the ones that break the bank; they are the structures that allow the visual blackout capable of suspending any easy solution.

Curti's approach to other expressive media is by continuity and never by contrast. The only difference between painting, a place of narration that uses a single image to achieve a communication, and video, or installation, is the specificity of the theme and the mode of narration. "When I cannot convey a communication with painting, I emit the signal with another expressive wave. We art-



Six supports 200x320 mix technique on canvas, 2012



White Cathedral

Altar





ists are antennae, repeaters, capable of receiving and emitting signals in a sensitive manner. We are the antibodies of society".

This statement gives us a good idea of the extent to which the use of one means of expression communicates differently from another. The most appropriate example of these differences in Curti's research can be found in the first installation that the artist created in 2001 entitled *Coltivazione*. At the turn of the mil-

lennium, between 1998 and 2000, we experienced fundamental passages, little discussed and not taken seriously by insiders, such as GMOs, the first cloning of Dolly the sheep, the discovery of the human genome and the possibility of correcting its cells, and the increasingly dense diffusion of control cameras in cities, the basis for occult observation at all levels.

Certain films such as *The Matrix*, *The Truman show*, *The Cube*, document-

ed very well these delicate transitions, which had strong repercussions on today's society. Curti's installation seemed to concentrate on all these issues. The work presented 49 cauliflowers, which, deprived of their leaves and placed in contact with the soil, appeared as an ambiguous cultivation of brains, or of an unlikely product returned from an abused land. Painting this situation would not have affected the viewer, like being able to physically enjoy it, walking through the prose of the garden with one's shoes in the wet earth. The continuity of the research with the painting is in the open symbolism of the work. In addition to the suggestions mentioned above, cultivation can also make one think of the homologation of thought, or of the social practices that would soon be imposed. The enormous shake-up at the end of the millennium, which has speeded up and changed our lives considerably, has also had major repercussions on the church, which has found itself having to respond to the obvious contradictions between Christian thought and economic empire. In this case, too, Curti did not think of a pictorial work, but of an installation that is always in progress; even today, in fact the artist still collects books with a Catholic theme, to then resin them and make them inaccessible. "I thought of a big fossil, so the death of something; but also its eternal preservation. Perhaps the death of Catholic powers, but at the same time the preservation of the power of Christ's message".



Coltivazione



Scripta



Source (x2)





Curti returned to the religious theme in 2016 with the installation *Source*.

A stoup, placed in the centre of the space, contains a black liquid from which a white thread starts its race through space, until it finds a way out and leaves the entire structure.

The artist calls it a "three-dimensional Dao", where black and white seem to overturn the reading planes of the traditional stoup and its function in churches. In this work, which Curti also painted, the distance between the painting and the installation thins out, because the work's abstraction is greater than in older installations.

If painting shows the last scene of a

story to be reconstructed, the installation takes us physically into the scene itself; the object, the space, the touch, allow the audience an interaction different from the painting where the process is purely mental.

Even more different is the approach to video art, which in its unfolding unfolds history and makes us seemingly more passive than painting or installation. This does not happen in Curti's video proposal, which also for this medium seeks a constant complicity with the observer.

The artist made four videos between





Poliedro (x/1)

2007 and 2013, all of them aimed at stimulating the viewer, and all of them with an obvious circular pattern, in which there is no beginning and no end. The only one of the four short films that does not feature a natural environment is the first one, *Poliedro*, from 2007, in which a monk sitting on a cushion in the midst of meditation is continually scrutinised and annoyed by a polyhedron, generated in post production. The continuous shots from different angles on the monk raise doubts as to which of the two presences is really polyhedral. Editing and sound favour this continuous coexistence until the fade-out.

In the other three works, the natural element is fundamental. The forest, the mountain, the path, the enchantment, the journey, are elements that are always present, all suggesting a deeper search for things, which can be fully realised if there is the will to discover.

