**Visca – the ‘threads’ of the work**

“Art is freedom or it is nothing”, Sandro Visca said a few years ago summarizing, in a few peremptory words, one of his central ideas on art. Today, with a backward glance over his work, it emerges that the concept of freedom has been his compass for all his artistic activity. Visca has proudly distanced himself from fashions and schools that guaranteed legitimacy, and deliberately opted out of the system and the market, placing himself in voluntary isolation so as to focus entirely on his own language, thus responding fully to his true nature and enduring goals.

From this standpoint, with his disenchanted eye, Visca has explored the world and is indeed still observing it, in a demystified vision devoid of idealizations, while capturing a fragmented reality which has abandoned the human dimension. What is left for the artist, if not the daily freedom to choose to return to the human dimension? What’s needed is an incessant creative movement that connects life to art, where the mind guides the hand and plans out the weaving of visions.

*Poetics of the fragment*

The splitting of the wholeness of the world into a myriad of fragments is an aspect of Visca's conceptual elaboration belonging to the most recent years of his production; it reveals a profound knowledge of the disintegration of the values ​​of humanity and the rupture of the social fabric. Thick cracks run through reality as he sees it, causing fractures, some due to natural causes, others due to rampant globalization, in a system of unparalleled acceleration. In Visca’s eyes, existences and objects, having lost their identity as a whole, are in constant flux, either due to time that erodes, or the increasingly widespread presence, to quote Giorgio Agamben, of "a man without substance”.

There is a clear critique of contemporary nihilism, conveyed through the language Visca uses, and the reconsideration of the role of art today, in an attempted reconstitution of a work that survives these disruptive forces. The foray into nothingness that Visca performs around himself is influenced by a fruitful imagination and artistic planning in which both the constant recovery of fragments and the search for a stable unity of what is lost emerge. But the coveted wholeness of reality, of what can become whole again, is not the final destination for the artist, even when attempting to crystallize and stratify various levels of existence and particles of a life that is no longer. It is rather the restructuring of a precarious partiality that has the fragment at its core, the iconic power of his works. The fragment is a part of fresco painting that has survived the collapse of a wall, it is the portion of a torn canvas, a precious find and a sign of memory, it is a theatre frozen at the moment of collapse in a set of vague illusions, dreams and dissonances, resolved in ironic expressions of play and bitter awareness.

In the celebration of the fragment, almost always placed at the centre of the composition, as evidence of its discovery, the residual nature of reality acquires an almost solemn form in Visca's work, also including elements of trash and a deliberate evocation of the "ugly". The conceptual dissonance that underlies his work never manifests itself in language and he treats both the representation of an excrement, or the word that names it, in the same way as a classical theatre immobilized as it collapses.

Every aspect of reality and accompanying reminiscences of culture and figural images have an equivalent weight, and if reality, considered in a broad sense, can never be entirely reconstructed after the fracture, the artist, as a new creator, brings together all the aspects of the surrounding world, even the most critical ones, on equal terms, treating each element as fundamental and indispensable to the layout of the work.

Having therefore ascertained that Visca's job is to reconstruct, the action is a result of a destruction not accomplished by the artist himself, but recognized by him and at the same time denounced. The two poles of equal strength, the pars destruens and the pars construens, interact, the former in a veiled way as analytical evidence and a starting point, while the latter manifests itself in the space of the composition. Visca finds what is fragmented, and presents it in the work, informing the viewer of an implicit "fracture" and in some cases making it visible as the real subject.

Exhibiting what remains is a sort of tacit redemption against time and human behaviour as well as a return to memory and the persistence of memory. On the other hand, an art of ruin, art depicting decay and destruction is a recurring feature of the work of many artists of the late twentieth century and beyond. Without going into names and individual languages, generally the "ugly" is part of the contents expressed through a language that is also performative and causes a traumatic reaction through which the viewer is invited to reflect and partake of the perception that the artist in question has of his times. This is not part of Visca's poetics, as there is no trauma in his works, rather an alienating effect provoking questions, but with the equilibrium that derives from formal knowledge. The challenge he sets himself, with the materials that will become his work and which at the same time are the hallmarks of his expression, lies in the pursuit of harmony. Ethical implications form the foundations of the aesthetic transformation, in an interdependent combination that places reality and art in conversation, rooting Visca's work in the present day, as the bearer of an original vision of the world.

*The textures of language*

The visual solicitations that Visca proposes, the paradoxes, the barely perceived indignation, the provocative ironies, the desecrations and the utopias come to life through the textures of his language, fabric textures that weave the story, together with elements of an industrial poly-materialism. Fabrics from distant memory, refined and poor fabrics, sumptuous and eye-catching, soft and raw, brocades and satin, of different thicknesses, cotton, linen and carded wool are the components of Visca's paintings, for which the stretched "fabric" also functions as a support. They provide extra-aesthetic values ​​as a founding part of the work, a heritage of shared individual and collective memories, together with exquisitely aesthetic values ​​for the intrinsic pictorial nature of the fabrics, the resonance that the colors emanate, with the tactile sensations evoked by multiple warps and wefts, in which the work can be seen and "touched" simultaneously.

The wefts of thread on the fabrics draw and superimpose shapes, fringes and tangles, creating architectural rhythms and planes, refined textures in which the needle has replaced the pencil or the brush.

The slow action of sewing, a characterizing part of the construens, unites the fabrics in a dynamic set of shapes evoking ancient artifacts; meticulous attention is paid to detail and to the thread, the drawing tool. The time of conception differs from the realization; this ritual work has long processing times, with few changes in the development of the work compared to the initial project. The hand on the fabric becomes that of a creator of visions, actualizing what the mind has conceived and chosen in the Visca’s vast archive of fabrics and objects. The fabric is a non-amorphous material, already in itself characterized by the quality and consistency of the fabrics, by the hues, the decorations and the different way they behave in the light. In over sixty years of activity, Visca has got to know all the secrets of natural and industrial yarns so that he can already see the particular effects he wishes to create with his materials at the moment of the conception of the work.

Emerging from the stories are anthropological values and reminiscent evocations suggested by the variety of materials used by Visca, always evoking a strong pictorial presence. The space of the picture is the place assigned to the fulfillment of multiple narratives, starting with the one featured in the composition, and subsequently recalling those suggested by the creation of the artefacts.

Sewing, this magical design of stitches on the canvas created by Visca, highlights connections, determines breaks and resonates with domestic stories, religious and institutional customs. The work and its final image conjure up more lives than the thread has sewn, where a fragment of fabric acquires other dimensions.

*The works*

It is in the poetics of the fragment that Visca's work expresses its energy and vitality, as if the painting were constantly regenerating itself and following its own path, independently of the harshness of the ideas, filling the dissonances found in reality through language. The various textile components within the work are numbered or have letters, or both, and are referred to a submerged heritage of archaeological traces, mostly resulting from various thought processes. The inventory initials affixed to the front of some of the works created in this period are the title of the paintings and sculptures themselves, assuming the function of an ontological entity achieved through the linguistic and numerical signs. There are striking analogies in Visca's work with the executive methods used in the creation of traditional handicrafts, not determined by geographical places, but belonging to a common heritage of actions. When there are no acronyms to complete the work, the titling is entrusted to keywords that can be traced back to the semantic field of the fragment and to the preciousness of the artifact found, such as the word "fragile". This word is placed on the front of the painting or sculpture, as in Fragile 4 of 2020; in some cases, the terms recall actions, or there are letters crossing each other whose meaning is encrypted. It is evident that in the artist's painting, text and fabric exist in osmosis, in an incomparable compositional finesse, two writings united by the same Latin term *texere*, in which the thread of speech is closely conjoined to the thread of the fabric. The use of the word responds to a constant of the artist's language present in works created in previous times, which primarily responds to denotative functions, such as for example the inscription *Ex voto*, which gives the title to a 1970 painting assembled with various materials on packing boards, or the enigmatic letters in *Internal Landscape* of 2004. Both works are exhibited in the anthological exhibition dedicated to Visca and held in 2008 at the "Vittoria Colonna" Museum in Pescara. Visca uses various different signs, drawn from different codes, assimilated into an original compositional grammar, which also includes his own signature made with the same materials as the work and perfectly camouflaged.

In the "fragments", the iconography of the various subjects responds to well-known figures, albeit relived in new forms, in which the loss of any reference to reality is intense and where the disintegrating sign becomes increasingly estranged, losing any element of recognizability. There is a calibrated and intentional abstractive impetus in the essential figurativeness typical of Visca's work, conducted on recurring icons and symbols throughout his corpus of works, such as for example the asparagus, which is striking for the infinite range of possibilities and, sometimes, its complete extraneousness to the context.

Even the steles, or the sculptural showcases in iron and multi-material elements, containers of a world in disintegration, are flashy and indecipherable thanks to the objects within, the gaudy plumage, the things built or found. The work *Segnali* from 2018 is emblematic. Here the title refers to a map of contents, to a signage of thoughts and images that indicate a path that goes without interruptions of meaning from painting to sculpture, where we can see great versatility and an extensive, significant reference.

*Fracturae* of 2018-22, a work that goes beyond the usual formats due to its unusual dimensions, declares the fracture of a collapsing world. It is created exclusively with acrylic tempera on canvas and in three staggered parts. In the absolute void of the black background, we can observe a tormented horizon of asparagus at the base, which becomes entropic chaos and is a source of tension in the balance of the work. This work, planned down to the smallest detail, expresses an irrefutable truth, namely that Visca's "painting" always has a common denominator of aesthetic strength, of visual impact that amazes the onlooker even before he has investigated or tried to understand it. The concept of fracture is evident in the collapse of the architectural structure, of the theatrical wings and in the disintegration of the wooden boards, a material evoked to such an extent as to seem real. The artist often plays on the planes of reality and unreality, on what may seem tangible and which is not, in a benevolent deception towards the observer. In Fracturae of 2020, however, the break concerns fabrics of various warps and colours laid out on the canvas, in different thicknesses and shapes.

The asparagus, a recurring symbol from 1974 to the present day - a component of changing realities - is a portion of an articulated mannequin in *Theatrical mechanisms* of 2020, a painting characterized by vibrant obliquities, dynamisms accentuated on a single level and as a whole, here too in the void of the black background.

The evocation of the scenic box is an almost privileged subject of Visca's pictorial elaboration of this period and allows him to explore unprecedented compositional possibilities, drawing from his extensive and differentiated iconic heritage recognizable figural subjects and others as yet unknown.

In Theatre Z6 of 2020, the spatial textures and the alchemy of fragments of white-on-white yarns, sometimes similar to arabesques, mingling with gold, define cosmic surfaces of absolute lyricism, based on analogous and essential signifying aspects.

Together with the compositional richness of some of the works, we can detect a character already identified in Visca’s expressive grammar, of progressive rarefaction of his habitual icons, in the stringent selection of the "scenic" subjects, leaving space in the work for empty areas which accentuate the spatial dialogue between presence and absence, reality and utopia.

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