

Joie de vivre

(painting is a refined art) Antonia Di Giulio

In his informative introduction to the Italian edition of the book "Dangerous Liaisons" by Pierre Choderlos De Laclois, Alberto Beretta Anguissola, making ample use of adjectives the personalities of the two main characters in the book which is set among the rarefied "Boudoirs" and perfumed alcoves of pre-revolutionary France it is a century characterised by elections, where the perverse Eighteenth century, amid "volants and martingale" illustrates the essence of the illuministic spirit.

Courage, infallible analytical acuteness, determination without uncertainty, elegance in the execution, joy in facing and overcoming apparently insurmountable obstacles, the supreme ability to dissimulate and act out sentimental and passionate roles with extreme coolness", this is how the academic defines the personalities of Valmont and Merteuil, characters in which "everything that is human has been calcified".

The marchioness of Merteuil, a true "femme fatale", ante litteram, from our point of view as uninvolved twentieth century readers, personifies the perfect image of the illuminated woman.

Cultured, rational, expert at intrigues, a competent conversationalist, an extraordinary socialite, in her first letter to Valmont she asks the viscount to be her accomplice in pulling off a "naughty trick"-from which the whole plot unravels.

In this very same carefree and libertine atmosphere does Antonia Di Giulio's research take place-an artist who has chosen a language which is close to the "secolo dei lumi" for her recent work.

As well as her natural attraction for a rich and refined epoch where excess and exuberance were triumphant, Antonia Di Giulio has added the photographic image of the "lady", a portrait by Mario Schifano in black and white, where the artist's pose is provocative and light-hearted-this image is enhanced by the eighteenth century dress that gives a theatrical touch when she appears in front of the spectator.

Like a character from a novel, or a photograph retrieved from the bottom of an old drawer, the "lady" becomes part of the work of art the moment she emerges from memory's labyrinth, offering to be not merely a simple icon but a "real presence", the indecipherable fragment of a "modus vivendi", suspended between the past and present.

The thick, wild hair, the daring cleavage, the voluptuous and sarcastic pose, the thousands of pleats that belong to the past. In a kind of joyful transfiguration, the image of the lady becomes an internal part of Antonia Di Giulio's artistic journey, like the beginning of catharsis.

A journey of rarefaction which leads to a style of painting made up of light chromatic marks, delicate nuances which compose precious, luminous marquetry. An itinerary of sublimation therefore leads this extreme character to the embrace of the painted canvas where the infinite

depth of dead chromatic gave gives life to an immaterial web, "leeing" and "fuggitive" like the depth of Tiepolo's skies, the imperceptible blue undercurrents of Monet' s ponds, the pale light of certain ancient marbles which shine when illuminated by a timid sun-ray in the dark of Roman Baroque churches, or the moonlight reflections in a Venetian nocturnal by Canaletto.

The linking thread which crosses this suspended universe where there is an air of Dorian Gray and des Esseintes, is the passage from the lady's social world to the essential world of painting, via a conceptual itinerary of elevating the sounds of the world up towards the dematerialisation of pictorial signs so, the trip of lace that apperared in the artist's early works, behind the little, wooden boxes in 1978, which later became the impalpable stories on the canvasses inhabited by a translucent style of paint, now starts to look a dress from the past, impregnated with a "Joie de vivre".

It is artist's work, multiform like a brilliant conversation among madame Du Deffand's illuministic circle, which has its origins and then develops into a linguistic game up of going back and forth between photography and painting, image and colour, presence and absence, the aim being to transform a work of art into a refined instrument so as interpret relity in ways which are always different.

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