

GABRIELLA CAPODIFERRO

A vision of Art

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A side look

There are visual events that, at first glance, claim a lateral position compared to the traditional historical-critical method.

Nevertheless, even in their isolation, they claim close attention because, at the same time, they reveal a proud diversity that is also the affirmation of an essential truth.

The rejection of any classification naturally entails a conceptual risk because it forces the artist to start the adventure of the images all over again and these seem to use the traditional experience of form only marginally. Gabriella Capodiferro's expressive exploration can be clearly included in this difficult and rugged aspect of contemporary art.

It is a research that reflects the personality of the artist who does not shrink from using a style which is far from the traditional techniques and closer to her inner emotions and personal experiences.

However, in this way, she paints "open works" and simultaneously emotional drifts, eventually reaching a particular form of beauty that seems to be unintentional.

These are paintings that do not require any detailed explanation because "they only represent themselves". They are a sort of quiet lyric poem aimed at communicating emotions rather than narrating something.

Painting, an old matter

According to many original but basically conformist thinkers of our time, painting has a marginal position in the panorama of the expressive possibilities of contemporary art. Art is said to have overtaken its factual dimension in order to coincide only with the



Capodiferro, 2013 - *Imprevisto*



Capodiferro, 2010 - *La civita*

artist's thought, gesture and action.

It is a consideration on which critics have been insisting for over a hundred years and, to give some points of reference, it is surely difficult to paint after the legendary Malevich's Black Square (1915) and, even more radically, to make sculptures after the sensational and iconic Fountain (1917) by Marcel Duchamp.



G. Richter, 1987 - *Abstraktes Bild*

And yet, looking into the situation with uninhibited eyes, we can perceive a sort of extraordinary and somewhat inexplicable persistence of painting in the works by some of the most important protagonists of contemporary art, although with different formal variations.

I am referring to artists like Lucian Freud (1922-2011), Sigmar Polke (1941-2010) and Gerard Richter (1932), the last still active, who, through their works of art, gave voice to some of the most poetic and artistic expressions of Formalism in the last two troubled centuries.

They are three very different personalities, not only from a strictly aesthetic point of view but also considering their techniques and they have differently expressed their imaginary worlds through their own personal idea of the language of painting.

According to them, in fact, though in a different formal declination, painting has always been the only means by which the figure and the form have become the indispensable appearance of their imagination.



Sigmar Polke, 2013 - *Hollywood*

A language to believe in

I think that the work by Gabriella Capodiferro must be read within contemporary art, in which space-time coordinates celebrate a special ritual appearance that seems to have unaccountable mysterious rules. That is probably why, as Claudio Parmiggiani put it, painting is still the only language able to reveal the “mystery of things” and even to “give voice to the silence of poetry”.

Painting can evoke a particular historical idea of art which has been handed down as the only way to turn the invisible into the visible, to depict what cannot be depicted because unknown.

After all, in this way, artists have been able to portray great historical

events, both secular and religious, of which they had only had fortuitous and partial knowledge through oral tradition, often completely invented.

They have even succeeded in giving credible faces to the protagonists of those events that now permanently belong to our figurative art.

In so doing, they have revealed what was defined “the mystery of the History of Art” and they have enriched our unique artistic heritage with images and culture, forcing at least the most conscious part of the contemporary artistic research to consider that “art, even today, only originates from the History of Art”.

Nature and figure: painting

In the works of art by Gabriella Capodiferro it is evident that painting is not simply the language of representation but, in its extraordinary formal and expressive autonomy, it is also the pure representation of itself.

The artist, in fact, uses her own personal style to evoke the figure and nature as visual sources of inspiration.

At a closer look, however, there is nothing naturalistic in her landscapes, nor any sense of nostalgia in the painted figures because, in both cases, the images reveal themselves through the emotional and seductive features of the colour.

This aspect is clearly evident in some works painted in a particular period of her life (2010) certainly the best period in her stylistic experimentation, when Gabriella Capodiferro reached, to some extent inevitably, the limits of the expressiveness that can be defined historically informal.

In paintings like “Grotta delle fate”, the evocative “Montagna madre in verde e blu” and “The balanced Terra”, we can see emotional visions far from realism and naturalism.

And also, in many works of the captivating cycle dedicated to “Potnia”, the mythical patron goddess of animals, her figure is barely sketched in the painting.

It is evident that the artist shifts away from the consciousness of nature and the myth of history to achieve a new and more captivating visual and poetic expression that surprisingly acquires a new and



Capodiferro, 2010 - *Potnia n. 13*



Capodiferro, 2010 - *Potnia n. 8*

recognizable symbolic and metaphorical connotation.

It is for this reason that the paintings by Gabriella Capodiferro are regarded as a sort of event that can be defined, as already said, unintentional, because they do not declare any explicit and recognizable meaning but they only represent themselves and simply claim a surprising and indispensable formal autonomy.



Capodiferro, 1985 - *Trofeo di nuvole (part.)*

An artistic training path

The expressive adventure of Gabriella Capodiferro has revealed itself for more than forty years, since the beginning of the '70s, and of course it is extremely interesting to point out that it has not been a linear path, but rather a research marked by sudden and radical changes in her formalism.

It is a story that, as it happened in the lives of many other artists, proves her anxious search for identity, that is to say, the original and distinctive formal elements of her style; a path, in her case, already described in a valuable and detailed critical analysis by Chiara Strozzi.

The first period of her artistic production was characterised by Figurativism – like in some intense portraits painted at the end of the '70s, certainly influenced by her experience at the Academy of Fine Arts in Venice, under the guidance of her academic mentor Bruno Saetti, an artist distant from both Figurative and Abstract Art. Later, the presence of an original interplay of figuration and abstraction became evident in her works.

Paintings like “Figlia e Madre” and “Ritratto”, both painted in 1985, sensationally announced a season of real and conscious maturity because in these works it is evident that the artist did not want to limit her expressive possibilities within fixed rules but she wanted to strive for a personal and original style aimed at diverse expressive drifts taking, at the same time, numerous historical lessons into consideration.

Paintings like “Trofeo di nuvole” and “Trappola” reveal images dangerously and harmoniously poised between figuration and abstraction.



Capodiferro, 1986 - *La trappola*

The seduction of Informalism

All the active artists of the 20th century inevitably gave in to the extraordinary fascination for the Informal revolution because they considered the rejection of the refined form and, at the same time, the exaltation of the autonomous evocative value of the colour, as the most authentic and radical reaction to every academicism.

After all, the intuition of Michel Tapiè met the expressive needs of a society that, after World War Two, was thrown into a state of uncertainty and confusion, even existential.

The most significant artistic works of the '60s, in fact, were represented by the American Action Painting, whose main representative was Jackson Pollock, and the European Informal Movement expressed by such leading figures as Fautrier, Vedova and Tapiès, to name just a few of them.

Thus, it was inevitable that Gabriella Capodiferro, as a modern artist, contemporary to herself, would perceive the stimulus for Informalism that included all the abstract and gestural tendencies such as the so-called “matter painting”, abstract expressionism and “art autre”.

As it happened to many other artists, she set up a sort of “fighting for the image” which was kept poised between abstraction and figuration, in a sort of expressive indecision that was existentialist even before being formalist.

However, in such a difficult and delicate emotional condition, which also involved many risks in the field of conception and procedures, Gabriella Capodiferro achieved her most surprising and fascinating expressive results.

Her paintings appear intense and rich in emotional experiences and they show mysterious and extraordinary visual quotes and signs of a reflection totally detached from reality.

The latest reflections

Like all artists of our time Gabriella Capodiferro feels the tensions and the conflicts of the world with full awareness, thus experiencing the fragility and instability of the expressive possibilities of contemporary art.



Jean Fautrier, 1926 - *Lac Bleu I*



Antoni Tapiès - *Particolare*

But inevitably she still believes in art as a personal religion of the soul and she entrusts her own life's uncertainties to it.

It is probably because the artist is entering a period of life that a great Master has called "the big age", in which everyone comes to terms with their own history, without generous or easy concessions. It is a process which is absolutely clear and legible in her latest paintings in which it is evident that Gabriella Capodiferro has taken a more radical and possibly final position in relation to her artistic production and her expressive research.

Therefore, her interior and spiritual needs prevail in her paintings and, in particular, a new and stronger sense of light, seen as a sort of "religion of painting."

So, in the all-pervading bright yellow of "Silenzioso andare", painted in 2015, there is an abstract vision which represents a sort of spiritual poetic song. The same happens in "Onda anomala", of the same year, and, with a greater emphasis, in "Bianco ascensionale", painted in 2016, where the evocative expressive purity of the colour white, gives the painting the intensity of a real "prayer of art"



Capodiferro, 2015 - *Bianco ascensionale*

Epilogue, of course provisional

My attempt to depict the complex expressive outcomes by Gabriella Capodiferro with these short notes is definitely difficult and inadequate, since the artist herself is now able to express her strong spiritual motivation that has little to do with the description of the real processes of painting and art.

No wonder, because the signals were already clearly visible in all her previous works.

Now Gabriella Capodiferro's art seems to feed on the authentic "living breath of the soul that moves and renews everything and that affects everything in the world".

And it goes towards "boundaries that I do not know", she says, but that "I perceive projected towards the beyond".

With these words, she makes us think that, in the near future, we will still have to do with her extraordinary and poetic expressive adventure.



Capodiferro, 2016 - *Come scudo ci copre la tua benevolenza*

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