

VALERIO CARRUBBA.  
A NON-INTERVIEW BY MAURIZIO CATTELAN

SCRATCH OFF THE QUESTIONS AND DISCOVER THE ANSWERS.

DEAR VALERIO, YOU'RE A PERSON OF CLEAR  
IDEAS BUT WITH A PRETTY OBVIOUS OBSESSION...  
WOULD YOU TELL US ABOUT IT?

AN OBSESSION THAT HAS NEVER LEFT YOU,  
WE MIGHT SAY.





CAN YOU EXPLAIN A BIT BETTER HOW THIS  
OBSESSION MANIFESTS ITSELF IN YOUR WORK?



WHAT DO YOU MEAN, PAINTING IT TWICE?

TELL US A BIT ABOUT THESE WORKS AND THEIR  
MEANING.





SO WHAT CAN A VIEWER FEEL OR FIND LOOKING  
AT YOUR WORKS?

WHY IS THE DENIAL OF FORM SO IMPORTANT FOR  
YOU? WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY IT?



NOW A MORE "TECHNICAL" QUESTION: WHY DO  
YOU PAINT ON METAL "BOXES"?









IN YOUR PAINTINGS YOU NEVER SEE THE SKIN, OR THE FACE. YOU SHOW WHAT'S UNDERNEATH, OR YOU COVER IT IN HAIR AND CLOTHES. OF COURSE THIS CREATES A PARTICULAR TENSION, SINCE WE ALL WANT TO SEE EYES AND FACIAL FEATURES... WHY DO YOU DO THIS?

IN YOUR PAINTINGS THE INCONGRUITY BETWEEN THE ELEMENTS CREATES A VERY STRONG TENSION, WHICH APPEARS ALMOST THEATRICAL OR BAROQUE... DO YOU AGREE?

In order of appearance:

Now I Won (after Giovanni Ricci Novara), 2013. Oil on stainless steel, 60 x 45,2 cm

Olson is in oslo, 2012. Oil on stainless steel, 60 x 44 cm

Ian is not on sinaj, 2012. Oil on stainless steel, 60 x 44 cm

Mr Alarm, 2012. Oil on stainless steel, 53 x 44 cm

Naomi I moan, 2014. Oil on stainless steel, 60 x 45,2 cm

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SCRATCH OFF THE QUESTIONS AND DISCOVER THE ANSWERS.

YES, YOU'RE RIGHT, MY OBSESSION IS THAT OF IMPLEMENTING A CREATIVE AND PRODUCTIVE PROCESS THAT CANCELS, EXCEEDS AND DISPUTES THE SIGNIFYING VALUE OF FORM AND IMAGE, IN A SUBSTANTIAL AESTHETIC INDIFFERENCE, OF WHICH MY PAINTINGS ARE THE RESULT.

YES INDEED, THIS RAGE IS STILL THE CORE OF MY ART, AND I REMAIN UNMOVABLE WITH REGARD TO THIS SAME OLD OBSESSION.





I WOULD START WITH SOMETHING SARTRE SAID: "THE IMAGE SHOULD NEVER ENCLOSE A NULLIFYING NOTION WITHIN ITS OWN STRUCTURE. IT APPEARS AS IMAGE BY PLACING AS ITS GOAL AN EXISTING-OR NO LONGER EXISTING-ELSEWHERE."

WITH THIS IN MIND I HAVE DEVELOPED VARIOUS PROCESSES THAT ALLOW ME TO PRODUCE PAINTINGS THAT CONTRADICT THEIR OWN *TRUTH* AND NO LONGER RAISE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR FINAL APPEARANCE. ONE OF THESE PROCESSES, THE MOST RECENT, IS THAT OF PAINTING THE SAME PICTURE TWICE.

IN THE SENSE THAT AFTER PAINTING AN IMAGE, I REPAINT IT AS FAITHFULLY AS POSSIBLE IN A SECOND PICTURE THAT COVERS AND REPRODUCES THE ONE BENEATH. THIS REPETITION IS PERFORMED IN THE MOST MECHANICAL MANNER POSSIBLE, WITH A SLOW CARE THAT TRANSFORMS PAINTING INTO AN ANALYTICAL EXERCISE.



THE DOUBLING CANCELS THE *SIGNIFYING* NATURE OF THE *GESTURE* (OF THE HAND OR BRUSH...); IT'S AN EXPERIENCE OF BODY-DOUBLE, THE "PRACTICAL" TOOL FOR THIS SORT OF PLAYBACK. THE ACTION THAT I AM UNDERTAKING IN THE SAME INSTANT DISPROVES ITS OWN *ARGUMENT*. THIS IS NOT THE CLASSICAL RHETORIC ABOUT THE DOUBLE, ABOUT "ORIGINAL" AND "COPY," BUT THE LOSS OF THE IMAGE ITSELF.

IN A WAY, IT IS AS IF IT WERE A PROCESS THAT INSTEAD OF ARRIVING AT A FINAL RESULT TENDS TOWARDS THE ANNULMENT OF THE IMAGE ITSELF, AN ATTEMPT AT FORM THROUGH FORM, A DENIAL OF THE DEPICTION WITHIN THE DEPICTION.





I ALWAYS FOUND THE FORMAL INTERPRETATION OF A WORK RATHER ODD—THE SPECULATION ABOUT STYLES AND TECHNIQUES, PALETTES AND MATERIALS—AS ALSO THE MODERNIST APPROACH OF “WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU GET,” THE PURE AND TERRIBLE SURFACE, HOWEVER APPEALING IT MIGHT BE. I HAVE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN AND WANTED A PICTURE THAT WAS SOMETHING ELSE AND THIS OTHERNESS COULD THUS NOT BE IN THE FORM. I LOOKED FOR A WAY TO GIVE THE PAINTING A NEW DEPTH, A HORIZON, EVEN A SPIRITUAL CONTENT, THAT WAS NOT IMMEDIATELY ALL THERE, ON THE SKIN OF THE PAINTING, WHILE MAYBE, INSTEAD, ALL THE VIEWER WANTED MIGHT BE TO HAVE A NICE PAINTING TO LOOK AT.

DISMAY, I THINK, BUT ALSO A DIRECT DIALOGUE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND THE VOID HE IS *LIVING*. THUS IT IS THAT THE IMAGE ITSELF LOSES IMPORTANCE. THE MOST HIGHLY SOUGHT-AFTER PAINTINGS BECOME THE SAME AS THE COARSEST, FOLLOWING A LOGIC THAT NO LONGER BELONGS TO ANY CATEGORY OF CRITICISM. IT IS NO LONGER A CONCRETE PROBLEM OF FORM, BUT OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TWO *REALITIES*. AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, WE ARE REALLY OUTSIDE THE FIELD OF ART, OR AS I LIKE TO SAY TO MYSELF: “ELSEWHERE.”



THE CHOICE OF STEEL AS A SUPPORT IS DICTATED BY THE CONTRAST IT GENERATES IN ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PAINTED IMAGE. SINCE THE LATTER IS “ECCENTRIC” AND VISUALLY EXUBERANT, MANNERIST AND VERGING ON THE MELODRAMATIC, IT WAS NECESSARY TO FIND A FORM OF CONTRAST. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FRONT OF THE WORK, PAINTED AND FULL OF DETAILS, AND THE EDGES OF THE SAME, DEEP AND PERFECTLY VISIBLE, WITH THEIR RAW BRILLIANCE AS INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS, HELPS IN BOTH CASES TO CREATE A GENERAL PSYCHIC MOOD THAT IS VERY ALIENATING, INDEFINABLE, DEFINITELY MELODRAMATIC.






THE POINT IS ALWAYS THE SAME: A WORK THAT IS A HARBINGER OF ITS OWN DEMISE, WHICH RESOLUTELY WEARS AWAY FROM WITHIN AND UNDERMINES ITS OWN CREDIBILITY. THE CHOICE OF ANATOMICAL SUBJECTS OR HAIRSTYLES IS JUST A MATTER OF PRECISION WITH REGARD TO THE GENERAL SENSE OF MY OPERATION.



HE'S AN ARTIST FOR WHOM I HAVE GREAT ESTEEM, BUT HE HAS NOT BEEN FUNDAMENTAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY PERSONAL WAY OF MAKING ART... LET'S SAY THAT I LOOKED A LOT AT HIS WORK IN THE PAST, HIS TECHNIQUE, HIS DEVELOPMENT OF HYPERREALISM, WHICH IS NOT HYPERREALISM IN THE SENSE OF MIMESIS. I CAN ONLY BE IN DEBT TO GNOLI FOR THE FORMAL SOLUTIONS, BUT THE THEORETICAL AND PROCEDURAL APPROACH IS COMPLETELY DIFFERENT, DESPITE THE EVIDENT SIMILARITIES.





THE PAINTED IMAGE IS A METAPHORICAL REFERENCE TO THE EXECUTIVE PROCEDURE IN MAKING THE WORK, AND MORE GENERALLY IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE WORK ITSELF. THE ESSENTIALLY THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL NATURE OF THE LATTER IS SUGGESTED BY THE *AUTOPTICAL* APPROACH ("SEE WITH ONE'S OWN EYES"), BY THE FIGURATIVE RESORTING TO IMPOSSIBLE AND LANGUID LIVING CORPSES, AND THUS BY THE ANATOMICAL FIGURES WHICH WITH GREAT PATHOS SURRENDER THEMSELVES TO THE SCALPEL OF THE SURGEON/ARTIST AND TO THE VIEWER'S GAZE; BUT REPAINTING IS ALSO A MATTER OF HIDING, AND THIS IS THE WHY OF THE BIRTH OF THE FACES THAT ECLIPSE THEMSELVES THROUGH AN UNCONTROLLABLE PROLIFERATION OF SIGNS/HAIR.

FULLY, THE IMAGE ITSELF IS AN ARTIFICIAL CREATION, THE RESULT OF LONG PREPARATORY WORK IN PHOTOSHOP. I PROCESS THE PICTURE AS A SORT OF STAGE PLAY, LIKE A DRAMA, IN WHICH EACH ELEMENT MUST CONTRIBUTE TO THE CREATION OF THE DRAMATIC TENSION. I TRY TO LOAD OR EMPTY IT OF ELEMENTS, I ANALYSE THE DETAILS THOROUGHLY AND WITH EACH PASSING DAY I ADD STRATA OF INPUT. I INSIST SO MUCH ON IT THAT IN A SHORT TIME I CONSUME IT VISUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY. ONCE THE WORK IS CONCLUDED, IF EFFECTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL, IT WILL HAVE A STRONG "PSYCHOLOGICAL INTENSITY," EXACTLY BECAUSE IT WILL BE THE RESULT OF THIS CONSUMPTION.

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