

Harmony and dissemination Regarding the painting by Pino Pinelli

Claudio Cerritelli (2012)

Translated by Howard Rodger MacLean

Museo Archeologico, Chiesa di Santa Caterina, Lipari

1. The fundamental aspect of Pino Pinelli's art is bound to the investigation regarding the re-definition of painting which kept his research centred upon a gradual process of the alteration of pictorial canons from the opening years of the 1970s until the definitive superseding of the painting which took place in 1976.

By analysing the image in its primary elements - colour, field, line and light - Pinelli conceived painting as luminous emanation which dilates space, producing continuous expansive tensions of the geometrical form.

The physical nature of colour was exalted with the maximum firmness, the internal vibrations controlled in their every movement and the changeableness of light allowed the surfacing of invisible atoms of matter, chromatic impulses beyond the perimeters.

Painting offered itself as colour concentrated in itself, a field of pure sensitivity, prelude to the new way of thinking painting that Pinelli conceived as being mental and sensorial identity of pure form.

This preliminary orientation allowed the artist to deviate from the conventional modalities of painting without abandoning the relationship with it: in fact, it was by 'coming out' of the canvas that the artist invented a new spatial procedure that was capable of vitalising all of his successive work.

Colour became an 'objectualised' sign. The technical aspect was based on the use of acrylic on flannel, the surface unity took on the possibility of a plural existence and the identity of the painting was configured in relation to the surrounding space. The modulation of the chromatic bodies took place between reduction and expansion, the conceptual value of the image

did not compromise the level of the chromatic physicalness and the monochrome surface became an unlimited sensorial field.

One of the most radical images at the heart of Pinelli's art is made up of angular segments which suggest the cut perimeter of an empty rectangle, incorporating the surface of the wall as part of the work. The fixity of the painting is consequently ruptured, determining the passing from the inside to the outside as if the space were dominated by the alternation of concentration and extension, ambivalent mechanisms that evoke the dialectic between open and closed, between full and empty.

In various ways the spatial process developed the idea of dissemination from which Pinelli drew the dominant idea for all of his interventions, as is true here with the works chosen for this exhibition: the search for equilibriums by way of manifold rhythms of tensions of the image referred to the chromatic duality of blue and red. The painting unity is undertaken in the harmonic arrangement of the multiplicity of elements following an elementary construction line where the tactile dimension of the forms is partnered to the physicalness of the wall. In reflecting upon the specific aspects of his thought and his carrying out of painting, it is not fortuitous that Pinelli unites the experience of seeing to those of feeling and touching, pursuing a synaesthetic dimension which amplifies the colour towards total perceptive tension, beyond the limit of the means that constitute the work.

The maximum sensorial intensity of each surface is achieved by way of repeated stratifications of pulverised pigments, the depth of the monochrome permits illuminating the space with radical vibrations and each fragment is a point of tension which is 'articulated' in relation to the others. In this way every installation plays on the overall field of vision and the uniqueness of the spatial fragmentations, on the ambivalent co-presence of eyes which oscillate inside and outside the architectural references that contain the suspended 'breathing' of the painting.

2. Pinelli's 'adventure' is inseparable from the places in which he plans his interventions, it is each time adapted to the demand to carefully gauge the rhythmical equilibriums in vibration, involving the spectator as an active part of the work's meaning. The perceptive experience is an exchange of sensitivity between the artist and the reader, solicited to assimilate the total

dimension of space, the ideal point of meeting between the formal identity of the work and the emotional freedom of looking, of glimpsing, of disclosing the structural meanings. The pictorial signs radiate on the wall with different modalities, the variations increased over the decades diversifying the spatial warps and wefts, the plastic forms, the rhythmic trajectories, the chromatic relationships and their possibilities of varying with different aggregations on the wall.

Pinelli is aware that the expansion of painting within environmental space is a question that was exhaustively faced by the historical avant-gardes. He therefore acknowledges his cultural debts which range from the constructivist roots up to the spatialist and minimalist research works and the environmental experiences that are the bases of the plastic-pictorial installations of the 1970s onwards.

The awareness of these references - from Malevich to Fontana, Manzoni, Castellani, Reinhardt and Klein - is the necessary premise in order to imagine different hypotheses that accompany the relationship between painting and the environment/ambience, the anxious state of thought in the search for a constant redefinition of space. After having taken part in the cultural 'movement' of the so-called Pittura-Pittura (or Pittura Analitica or Nuova Pittura which included Zappettini, Cacciola, Morales, Griffa, Olivieri and Verna), Pinelli confronted analogous experiences of European painting (ranging from Charlton to Geiger, Dolla, Viallat, Gaul and Rajlich) to later measure himself with a spatial conception of colour tied to the dissemination of fragments.

With the critical support of Filiberto Menna (1977) his work was compared to other Italian painters (Cotani, Gastini, Ortelli and Pozzi), some French artists (Dezeuze and Joubert) and a number of Americans (including Shields and Umlauf), all of whom having in common the use of "disseminated units in space, dislocated in different and distant points, at times constituted by elements that are not homogeneous, neither in their form nor their size".

By using the strategy of dissemination the artists keep open the system of painting as the search for relations with external reality. In this sense Pinelli was among the most convinced advocates of the need to establish a relationship of simultaneous correspondence between the work and its place.

From this choice he began a process of construction in which the individual forms were harmonised by way of reciprocal magnetisms, flexible measurements, calculated distances, spatial progressions and wall strategies in order to continuously regenerate the space of the imaginary, without ever considering it restricted to a sole solution.

3. As is true in some works of this exhibition, Pinelli followed the curvature of the space, the impetus to take himself beyond the circumscribed measure of the forms, to sound the chromatic energies that are diffused in the depths of the surrounding emptiness. In every installation one is made aware of increasingly more different shiftings, of centripetal compositions, ascensional rhythms, of articulations of radiating signs and of dislocated nuclei at times near the floor and at other times near the ceiling. There are numerous composition modes which distinguish the painting in the event of its being revealed in the environment: angular elements at a regular distance, curved trajectories with transversal rhythms, crossed and convergent forms, the superimposition of bichromatic triangles, radiant and dynamic signs, and combinations having divergent corners and edges.

The titles of the works are serial codes in their own right, lacking any trace of recognition: as if by way of an abstract/aniconic conception, they indicate symbols of chromatic connotation although the real individuation lies in the concrete spatiality in which they have been placed and in which they have been made real. The expansiveness of the vision has spurred Pinelli on to multiply the elements with the creation of enveloping spatial rhythms, articulations of considerable impact suited to the energetic vitality which the arrangement of the fragments determines.

In his experimentation of the spatial aggregations the artist balances the profound courses of reason and the emotional level of perception, the analytical and the intuitive dimensions, conceptual thought and the need to render large spaces physical, creating a multiplicity of resonances in a sole image. His way of feeling space often appears as a diffused polychrome, an orchestration of penetrating rhythms, the propagation of colours and sounds, and as forms acute and launched in every direction.

The spectacular dimension stimulates intense perceptive dynamisms tied to the interpenetration of the forms, to the changeable vibrating of the

colours and to polychromatic accentuation as the internal dialectic between different colours. The especial predisposition for the red and blue - the persistent dialectical relation that has accompanied the various periods of his research - in this exhibition enjoys a moment of maximum plastic evidence.

In taking on the bichromatic idea the artist has invented new paths for the eye to follow, new spatial trajectories that are accompanied by a treatment of the matter that is capable of instilling slight pulsations into the body of the colour, effusions of light which move the surface with mellow and sinuous forms.

In his search for different plastic effects there is nothing that can make one think of sculpture, if not the artist's interest for modelling the thicknesses aimed at fathoming the form, at cutting into the surface without ever neglecting the matteric qualities of scales, furrows, embossings, deformities, chippings and the fluidity of the profiles also worked on the edges. These characteristics are strengthened when the artist comes to terms with two or three larger elements that are made to touch each other. In these cases the surface is not only modelled with indentations and projections but also - and literally - "plowed" inside, similar to a ground with irregular configurations that go deeply into it in such a way as to show the generative vitality of the form.

Many spatial alphabets were developed throughout the 1990s. Some research works also more fully investigated the sense of "folded" painting, with new implications for shadow and light: the edges are raised to the point of creating an 'embankment' between the body of the work and the wall, an icon no longer shattered, a solid image with only one central fracture that sinks into itself.

Accentuating the energy condensed in the form is the fact that also a brief monochromatic measure supports the perceptive weight of an entire wall: this challenge has been seen in various exhibitions as the minimal choice with respect to the complex logic that instead 'stages' symphonies of multiple elements which intersect and dilate.

4. In wanting to describe the works of this research phase one can rightly be surprised by the inventions with which Pinelli solicits the plastic forms in

the environmental continuum that is every time different. Twenty elliptic red forms are disseminated in the sheen of the unstable space. Six large red bands on three reading levels frame the view in the symmetrical measure of the horizon. Forty-eight elements arranged on four ascending lines diffuse the energy of the red in the mirage of a divine proportion.

These are works imagined beyond the boundaries of the possible, rhythms of thought projected toward limitless distances, concrete abstractions at the maximum of their possibility to run the musical scales of colour, timbre painting rich in internal variations, without half tones and charged with absolute light.

Parallel to the irregular extensions of the fragments, Pinelli brings a sense of more linear composing back into play (rectangles, framings and geometrical combinations), a rigorous proceeding by way of metric elements that are developed by means of luminous agreements and intermittent vibrations.

The elementary foundations of the colour are the persistent instruments of this journey towards the imaginative beauty of pure forms. The dynamic configuration gives identity to the always open sense of the image which embraces everything and which disseminates everything, synthesis of energies by way of which painting wishes to be looked at in its complexity. Unity of multiplicity, or as Giovanni Maria Accame indicated, "unity becomes plurality". In fact, in the definition of "painting" one finds all of the plastic-chromatic operations, formal mutations and optical shiftings which characterise the style that Pinelli has matured with originality in the art panorama during the last forty years.

Plastic painting, wall painting, tactile painting and total painting: these are the definitions preferred by the artist in so far as the spectator has to be involved by the simultaneous 'assembly' of the chromatic fragments, bits and pieces that reveal senses hidden between consciousness and unconsciousness, between the proportions established by the planning weave and the surfacing of more profound sensations.

The horizontal or vertical movements are proportionate to the measure of the individual fragments in such a way as to also determine the spaces between one element and the other, the objectuality of the forms, the sensation that the discontinuous whole seems to raise itself in the act of observing the work.

In order to dilate the dimension even further, in some cases Pinelli paints the surface of the wall with the same colour as the fragments. For example, in a completely yellow environment the numerous fragments disseminated on the walls 'dialogue' with small cross-shaped icons in the negative, contracted signs with respect to the airy exultation of the large installations.

The sense of the infinite is joined to the corpuscular movement of the light which floods the environment with changeable aggregations, dissimilar harmonies, sonorous colours and expressive forms "given that with my third eye I would like to arrive at the atomic substance of the form as the element of force and constitution of a different nature of painting", in Pinelli's own words.

When the monochromatic choice favours white the luminous expansion is reinforced by the natural colour of the wall in such a way that the white of the fragments seems to rise out directly from the wall. The only interference is due to the shadows that form around the edges of the scales and chips but also in correspondence to the grooves and channels of the surface, in the perceptive differences in levels which heighten the velvet-like sensation of the matter, not to mention the corrugated beauty of the irregular forms. In the different formal typologies - the cross, arrow, the herring-bone) one feels the desire to communicate the morphologies of plastic language as an autonomous alphabet of composition based upon the matteric quotient of every element.

5. From comparisons with the different "environments" created after 2000, there emerges a control of the internal and external surface coefficients which are subdivided dependent upon the perceptive field, the life of pictorial language always pregnant with new ideas and consequent hypotheses for putting these into practice.

In Pittura BL/G or Pittura BL of 2004 Pinelli carries out a deep 'cut' of one side of the two elements with the sensation that a strip of the chromatic body is raised due to an invisible motion, by the unpredictable gust of air. Obviously, we are faced by one of the possible results of a process that comes from the forms of the 1980s when the artist detached the painting from the surface in order to make it breathe in space with frayed and car-

nal forms, chromatic trepidations projected with lightness beyond themselves.

This freedom of action allows making calculated moves on the 'chessboard' of sensitivity, once again carrying out the ambivalent latitudes of non-Euclidian geometry - Pittura R of 2007 - by way of minimum shiftings which invite the observer to carefully consider the tactile revealing of the forms.

The wall compositions entitled Pittura R and Pittura BL of 2008 are made up of structures comprising twelve and eighteen elements which act at different heights, placed close together on the basis of intervals studied to support the emotional event of the forms, their usual 'floating' in the suspension of the wall.

There is no minimalism of a conceptual kind. It is not a question of aseptic and unmodifiable structuralism but of an intuitive spatial scheme in which the fragments act according to magnetisms established by the eye of painting.

With regards to the "blue": the space dilates, going beyond the edges of the virtual perimeter of the composition in an almost symmetrical way, to a greater degree than appears in the "red" installation, unbalanced towards the left in order to incorporate the emptiness. On the other hand, in the works which we could define as "self-concluded diagonal theorems" the line of conjunction of two triangular elements lets us glimpse an irregular opening, the disclosure of the matteric qualities of painting, a further expressive modality for verifying new chromoplastic equilibriums.

All of the interpretations on the part of critics - ranging from Cortenova to Bonomi, Meneguzzo, Mango, Corà, Barbero, Tedeschi and Pola, besides the already cited Menna and Accame - have in Pinelli's painting acknowledged indispensable values of conceptual tensions centred upon the dynamic vitalism of the colour.

The different means of reading disclose the persistent oscillation from the planning act of the wall writing to the restless vibrating of the colour in the open field of action. Infinite declinations are adopted in order to make the profound physicalness of the epidermis felt: "skin with dilated pores", as defined by Ingrid Mossinger.

The phenomenology of the solutions indicates a state of permanent transition of the fragments' rhythm, verifiable in the constant dislocation of the images from one point to the other of overall vision.

Modelling the body of the colour and modelling its structures in the environment/ambience are the polarities within which the constructive language of emotion is developed, at one and the same time rigorous and sensual, limpid in its formal project and dense in the stratified accumulations. The logic of the installations always foresees that the spectator goes beyond the initial phase of the first look and becomes aware of the matter with which the artist comes to terms: from the conceptual project to the 'handicraft' phase, from the archetypes of pure manual dexterity to the perceptive processes of the plastic-object.

After all, Pinelli's painting is not only a 'journeying' of spatial ideas but has an impetus that above all measures itself with the passion of doing, the eternal pleasure that personally leads him to follow and control all of the work phases. Intellectual artificer of his own universe in its becoming, the artist has arrived at such an interior possession of his alchemies as to transmit a sense of harmonic mystery to the forms that come out from his hands, even before they are placed, arranged and then contemplated on the wall. Once again, as always, the game is played between minimum signs and great constellations, opposed polarities within which the flow of research finds different points of arrival and courses to follow, affirmations of space and upheavals, solidity and fragmentations.

6. This communicative complexity excludes whatever more or less codified mannerism, staging a constant possibility of relation between works that are distanced due to time in so far as every research period is always connected to the spatial matrix of harmony and dissemination which form the generative foundation of the painting's thought.

Pinelli is so aware of this that the idea of showing works of the past for present-day exhibitions continually offers a new experiential charge, both increasing and intensifying the identity of the work by way of a sum of verifications of its always intact imaginative potential.

This aspect must not be neglected because it means keeping the field open to new spatial implications which transform the intonation of the forms, designating new perceptive senses with the same visual grammar. The spatial interpretation of this exhibition in Lipari is in response to the artist's declared wish to install exhibitions "only after physically and psy-

chologically appropriating the space available to him". On this specific occasion one feels the desire to harmonise the works and the environment in order to make the forms literally sing out in the architectural rhythm while bearing some dominant factors in mind: the measurements of the walls, the light sources and the relationship with the magnetic tension between the diverse plastic morphologies. The works are set in the symbolic theatricalness of the passageway which from the central nave branches off to the lateral transepts, in the harmonic equilibrium between corporeal emotion of the colour and the perfect correspondence of the composition nuclei. The red and the blue, the colours elected to be the protagonists of this installation, are two dominant chromatic elements that have always been part of Pinelli's research, luminous polarities that accompany the imaginative pulsations which are the persistent reason of his language. The thought of these two colours ideally corresponds to the luminous energy of the place, the dialogue between the incandescent red of the volcanic lava and the deep blue of the sea, visionary go-betweens which the artist feels as the sensorial field in the infinite vastness of the surrounding landscape.

Nothing naturalistic but profound coherence in wanting to incarnate a symmetrical course which produces new relations between different compositions. In fact, Pinelli's environment is never static but joins up broken geometries and bichromatic radiations by way of pauses and distances between the red and blue.

In order to render the perfectly measurable spatiality of this passageway magical, the artist develops the frontal tension of three installations placed in the central nave, completely dedicated to the adventures of red.

On the two-fold front of the lateral transepts we find six works created between 1999 and 2003 which alternate three chromatic combinations in the form of total red, blue-red and total blue, construction modalities that face each other with measured equilibriums between fulls and empties, between geometrical memory and velvety matter, and between the fingertip-moulded colour and the surrounding diffused light.

At the beginning of the 'passageway', therefore, one is aware of the transversal surge of two large spatial rhythmicity which dilate on the parallel walls that measure almost nine metres: on the one hand there is Pittura R with twenty-four elements while on the other, in response, there is Pittura R

also made up of twenty-four elements (of 1999), scales/flakes frayed in their contours or closed by regular edges. The work installed at the centre of the apse - Pittura R - is the only one we see during the two phases of this passageway, the point of convergence of all the works, the connecting line made up of six elements in harmony with the other focal points of the space. Thinking painting means dynamising the space in which the chromatic syntax is articulated, given that Pinelli's is one of the most original expressions of art of the last forty years. A difficult position to define if not by way of his particular "differing" from the conventional ways of painted painting.

An aniconic and concrete vision, a painting of thought that each time generates itself, drawing from the energies of an unlimited plastic-chromatic conception. A painting that looks for the hidden sense of seeing, the "conscious womb of one's own ignoring". Infinite corporeity of the ideas that are born from colour and which on the path of painting extend and add to the sense of one's own creative destiny.