

A POINTED STRAIGHT LINE DISINTEGRATES THE PAINTING. IT IS A HEADLONG RUSH FORWARD

Francesca Pini

There are distant gestures (over the centuries of art) that resemble one another from a distance because of their dose similarity. The gesture of sowing seeds, captured by Millet in a famous 1850 painting and by Van Gogh in 1880, suddenly burst into another painting and historical context when Pino Pinelli created his expressive formula of 'dissemination' in his paintings during the 1970s. He casts elements of pure colour up into the air, which end up being attracted to the white wall and become a new alphabet on an immaculate page. The character depicted by Millet draws a circle with his arm using a natural gesture (the circle of life), whereas the man painted by Van Gogh (with the typical slipping technique used for his brushstrokes of colour) seems to be distributing Lines. The countryside stands in the background of these two artworks. In Pinelli's works, the countryside is present by absence; but it is obvious that the artist (who lived in Catania until the age of 23) is the son of Sicily, of an Italian south that was profoundly bound to agriculture and farming during the Fifties. Now this dimension of Land (today experienced as a predictable return as opposed to excessive mass technology) in Pinelli's works is pure abstraction, maintaining all the charm of fields rolling in golden wheat – condensing it all into a primary colour.

The use he makes of yellow seems to descend directly from Van Gogh's palette. The artist has often affirmed that great lessons of the past (those of Piero della Francesca, for instance) have moulded his artistic practice.

Pinelli is the most important representative of the Pittura Analitica movement. An adjective that contains within a dose of Cartesian rigour, but we must not allow this retro-thought to mislead us.

Pinelli fills this analytical quality of his painting with the purity of pigments, actually contradicting every possible form of coolness. The surfaces of his works are wrinkled, furrowed (as if they were ploughed clods of land), folding, mountainous, with traces of volcanic activity (Mount Etna with its lava flows) contained within the boundaries he has set for himself. But how did Pinelli begin to establish his object painting, divided into monochrome shapes? During the 1900s, artists sensed the limits of a painting (understood as a set of canvas and frame), surfaces began to shift, hosting reliefs (hence Jean Arp), assuming volumes and flexing beyond (Castellani, Bonalumi),

1950s/1960s even for young Pinelli who was a teacher there at the time), giving a glimpse at a "beyond" that was unimaginable until then. A sense of revolution blew onto the painting's rectangle and Pinelli proceeded by steps, testing the direction to be taken, initially flowing out of the painting and ultimately shattering it with wrath (in 1976). In psychoanalytical terms, these shattering gestures can be connected to precise experiences. And beyond this explosion, painting then loses its centre (essential in figurative painting) – the work is observed and experienced from different directions. Therefore during that period the umbilical cord between modern and contemporary art is torn further (asking to be at least seen, if not understood). Carrà, Campigli, De Chirico, Marino Marini remain a figurative riverbed that continues to be appreciated both in Italy and abroad, but art of the future travelled on a straight line that became more and more pointed, a headlong rush that still retains its fiery trajectory intact. Pinelli began his career as a painter, with the classical means intrinsic to the trade. He did not choose sculpture (abandoning the application of colour perhaps seemed too traumatic in his view) but sought his own synthesis between antithetical impulses, reaching the plastic concretions he gets by working with construction material. His works have undoubted tactile qualities; but before the hand has a chance to brush against them, it's the eye itself that perceives their consistency and caresses them while imagining the sensuality of the velvet-like surface. In this way our state of being corporeal is welded to that of his plastic forms.

On the premises of the MAMM in Moscow (this is the artist's debut in Russia), Pinelli displays some cornerstones of his research stretching out over five decades, with a preponderance of red elements that perhaps recall history that has marked the years in a certain Italy, in a certain Europe, in a world that had to come face-to-face with the Cold War. With those who were "pro" and those who were "con". Using a semiotic language made up of scales, atoms and acute angles, the artist travels beyond geometry and enters inside a territory of freedom that coincides with space; yet this freedom is not without reins, he has found an internal measure to these object artworks so that the ovals, the atoms, the crossings, the scales are never numerically more than necessary as they self-adjust themselves according to an unsaid law.

In particular, the success obtained by Pinelli today is the result of having thought and having acted, assiduously, always in one direction, without failure or concessions. A sort of coherence that has accompanied and accompanies the brightest figures in the history of Italian late-1900s, one that is beloved and esteemed at an international level with Burri, Fontana, Castellani, Bonalumi, Scheggi, Alviani and of which even Pinelli is a vital part.