

There is a harsh and delicate beauty in Sergio Tisselli's comics. In his most recent stories, he worked with constant introspection in order to catch a particular state of mind in characters: the thoughtful strictness of reflection, the aggressive cruelty of purposes, the resentment of envy, the authoritative power of command.

These are stories of events which really took place far back in the past. Then, drawn up again through imagination, they were given back to narrative reading fluency by pictures. Images often reveal through a cinematic technique, according to an invention starting from the general and gradually coming to the detail.

This was the extraordinary narrative creation that Manzoni put into effect at the beginning of "Promessi Sposi" with a clearness ahead of his times. Here, he starts detecting a wide area, then reduces gradually the frame until focusing on Don Abbondio walking on a path and even to the detail of his breviary. Thus, in most of Tisselli's pictures, a story full of events often dries up in a lonely figure. Then it gradually focuses on the face, on a small part of it and finally on mouth or eyes. These are physiognomical elements with a great expressiveness which directly convey an instant tension, the moment of an idea, the speed of a thought, an emotion, an excited troubling. Everything plenty corresponds to Tullio Pericoli's definition of this topic in the volume "I Ritratti" (Adephi 2000), where he introduces the series of Tisselli's drawings referred to famous people faces: "the portrait, been painted or drawn, is a story and tells what we everyday are drawing on our face.

Following this philosophy, in her well-known work on comics Clara Ghelli catches from Tisselli some hints relating to face and expression. And she works them out again, interpreting them within an aesthetic theory that translates into painting with a rigorous rational building of shapes and a precise chromatic system, expressly solving in a choice of particular colours. Cold colours most of the times, in a variety of blues and dull sky blues, with a more recent attempt of employing hot colours as well, orange ochre or brown, faded by the most delicate intervention of raw colours. In the peculiarity of this volumetric abstractionism, faces fragments emerge. Sometimes they are broken and further isolated in some elements like eyes or mouth.

Sometimes they are framed within a geometric abstraction of perfectly outlined shapes, an allusive evocation of a distant Cubism, but more stylised and replaced into a more logically formal domain. They are almost logical constructions of a thought that through abstract symbologies conveys a message of precise and obtained tension towards spatial order and the logic of syntactic, developing as a speech with its particular grammar and no bewilderment or mistakes. Hence, without formal unbalances, without volumetric dissonances, without harshness, neither chromatic nor constituent. In this way, faces, looks and expressions soaking in this space agitation emerge in their chill, at times merciless lucidity. Sometimes they are even inanimate, as in a painting where the outline is like a mask covering the non-existence of life.

A life becoming mechanical spring, spiral wrapping up emptiness, technology with a human surface but a cold inertness inside. Thus, a significant without true meaning. These Ghelli's works are therefore "reconstruction portraits" as Plinio il Vecchio defined them in his "Natural History" referring to imagined or invented faces, or reconstructed on the exclusive basis of stories and events. And where sometimes in Ghelli's painting there would emerge quoting from a certain Picasso during his 1916-17, having never been more inclined to abstractionism than here. In a mixture of stylized geometric shapes where expressive fragments stand out inspired by Tisselli's drawing but revived in the cold and almost hyper realistic mathematicity other representation.

This formal abstractionism also conjures up a certain Manganelli during the Thirties and then Fifties and Sixties, with some curious appearances of Futuristic eccentricity not extending to this movement restless agitation but rather to the most ludic elaboration of Depero, yet without his dazzling chromatic brightness.

Clara Ghelli's mat and voluntarily dull colours are moreover reflecting the cold disillusionment faces seem to express, in their freezing motionlessness or even in dismembered breaking. It is a sort of "everyday tragicalness," where everybody compares and collides, soaked into the deep

detachment of a reality organised through the cold logic of a geometric silence. Furthermore, as Tullio Pericoli writes in another one of his works (“L’Anima e il Volto, “ Bompiani, 2006) “face is the synthetic autobiography with which we introduce ourselves in every occasion, being aware that we are exposing to an inquiry through it.”

Clara Ghelli penetrated this investigation and — choosing moreover some images from clear artistically well-grounded comics — proposed them as examples of an existential reality. She compared them to her spectator, nearly as if being into a mirror where one’s double is reflected, that unappreciated and unknown side which expresses itself or hides behind a face. An apparently real figuration or a metaphor of a deeper, just perceived or even unknown existence.

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