

A plastic painting

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In 1975 Pinelli broke the unitary nature of his monochrome canvases and split up the painting into more than one element. The space was contracted in the individual painted surfaces although it extended itself in their repetition. The canvas repeated itself in order to escape the painting, its concept. A desire without return which in the structure of fragments found its own originality: the extraordinary possibility of painting to affirm itself not only as surface but as body.

In being concentrated in a series of elements this painting met with the wall understood as being theoretically infinite space, as neither was the passage carried out by the work finite. Sign of transit, a form that becomes energy, the work always reaffirms its origin: that of being indissolubly an idea and an emotion.

Fragmentation and repetition of the fragment become force factors in the occupation of space. A perceptive and perceptively magnetic continuity is established which accompanies the eye in its measured, transferred movement from one form to the successive one. This property, together with the elementariness of the forms and the chromatic severity, are totalled and integrated with intentions that are the opposite to American Minimalism. In fact, Pinelli remains firmly tied to an idea of painting and to its phenomenology. Decidedly innovatory, this idea does not renounce involvement in the emotional sphere of colour and space - culturally closer, this is true, to the experience of Fontana.

In the 1970s Pinelli's rereading of what Fontana was still able to suggest was certainly a solitary one, following the generation that from the

end of the 1950s until the opening years of the 1960s led to new and original solutions of Fontana's lesson. And I am obviously referring to Castellani, Manzoni, Bonalumi, Dadamaino, Colombo and few others.

The poor art by Fontana and Burri had assimilated all of the immense field of external exploration, centrifugal with respect to those concepts of space and matter. Pinelli, on the other hand, adopted a centripetal course, burying deep inside that 'other' which breaks the unsurmountable unity of the surface. Whereas Fontana conceived pure spatiality which he penetrated as an indeterminate and indeterminable place, Pinelli made it a new experience which developed the consequences of a no longer unitary surface.

In a group of important works entitled "Concetto spaziale / I quanta" (1959-1960), Fontana intuited the possibilities of fragmentation which he carried out by grouping small and differently shaped canvases. With a different approach Pinelli once again took up this interrupted process: differing from Fontana, his fragmentation was not an explosion which gave rise to a group of unique pieces but was instead an ordered repetition of a sign-fragment. In these works by Pinelli there was no experimental vehemence and impetuosity but a reflective determination.

In Pinelli's first works of 1975 the painting contracted 'objectually' and withdrew chromatically. It became an 'objectualised' sign with the intention of wanting to attain its own silence, not in order to stay mute but in order to find a different way of making itself heard. That this nevertheless remained painting was from that point on laconically and insistently affirmed by the title. This aspect of entitling, as is true for much of contemporary art of a conceptual stamp, took on a particular importance the more this work over the years moved away from the connotations with which we are used to qualifying an artifact as painting. The affirmation of the title each time imposes reading what we see in the sense of a continuous and searched for transgression of a concept of painting tied to the unity and the two-dimensionality of the surface. At the same time it opens the possibility of an outside which is

passed through, however, with the awareness that the way with which it is realised means that it is always the outside of painting, the profound and unlimited extension which surrounds it and that belongs to it.

To break the tie that unites painting itself with the individual painting, its unicity, is to free painting from the confines that codify it and which physically and conceptually close it. It means subtracting, freeing painting from the possibility of making it stay silent, bringing it into the continuity of space. There is not in fact negation but a breakage and a shifting: the unit/unity becomes plurality.

The three rectangular elements painted dark grey that date to the very first works of 1975 affirm this concept by initiating from repetition. The space of the canvas is contracted as surface and expands in the re-proposal. What prevails in this phase is the idea of a modularity of the painting, in many respects close to some works by Robert Ryman. However, already evident in the reduction of the surface was the 'objectual' conception which here bore both on the individual elements and on these same elements taken as a whole. In fact, the repetition accentuates the 'objectuality', eliminating the possible equivocation of making a canvas more precious by reducing its size. The observation I have made in connection to Minimal Art and its important iterative component is pertinent here, to be related in a close re-equilibratory measure with formal simplification.

To these reductive and iterative aspects Pinelli added the differentiation given by painting with which he distanced himself from minimalist silence, introducing the 'whispering' of a manual approach and a stimulation he has never abandoned. This pictorial presence is not a contradiction but the mark of a different experience. In these works the intention is to affirm how it is painting that modifies the characteristic of its appearing and that, in consequence, diversity does not mean its disappearance but the freedom of being different.

In 1980 Pinelli created a group of works from among his most origi-

nal and most important. Ideated as structures of self-identification and literally made concrete in structures of minimal and constructive painting, these works were based on concrete relations: internal, between their individual parts; and external, with the environment, the wall as physical place of the possible. A possible that the artist wanted to be verifiable, tangible, where every conceptual reflection corresponded to an effective sign. Concentrated in a series of elements, painting now seemed to feel the entire gravity of the breakage with the surface, the detachment from the unit/unity of the painting. A choice which made the language define itself in order not to be dispersed, although to open itself to an outside that no longer had boundaries and experienced no pause. From the separation with the surface one had the meeting with the space of the wall and the works carried out in 1980 effected the most radical overturning/upsetting with respect to the idea that bound painting to the two-dimensionality of the canvas.

In an exhibition held in Paris at the Galerie Chantal Crousel a series of works was almost entirely composed of six or seven elements and which in its 'objectual' consistency made painting an articulated sign structure. The organisation on the wall always presented clear-cut and concatenated rhythms. The repetition was actively constructive and perceptively stood out with all of the tension of a thought that had been rendered *phenomenal in the moment in which it reached its centre*.

Characterised by elementary forms although rich in a merely hinted at potential complexity, their derivation is more mathematical than geometrical (something which Mondrian had laid claim to in his compositions). The structural relationships and developments are in fact the result of a fundamentally speculative accretion which then finds a phenomenal compromise in its concrete becoming. There is no intention of measuring the physical space, however. The work arranges itself in the space and establishes relationships although without proposing or imposing any kind of order.

The pure thought is constructed and becomes perceptively present,

it enters the defined reality of a place which it makes the participant of its phenomenology but not of the ideational principle. The origin is elsewhere. Rather, it is precisely in an elsewhere which in nothing draws upon the relationship with things - if not that unique and extremely particular thing which is painting. The interior nature of painting, the inextricable union of thoughts and sensations, is here made possible in the happening of the form. Because we are talking about forms, and about forms in which painting is condensed and accumulated to the point of transmitting that energy which is not only due to the relief structure but also to the depositing of the colour, its amassing and its taking place on a surface that has a plastic body. The sensorial stimulation is no longer simply visual but also explicitly tactile. And not only resulting from the three-dimensionality of the structures but due to the laying of the colour on the un-prepared canvas which in being deposited with the various passings of the airbrush does not hide but reveals the weft and irregularities of the surface.

For Pinelli passing from the 1970s - from the experience of reflective and analytical painting - to the 1980s-1990s meant shifting his work from a formal definition that was very closely tied to concepts to that of the impulse of an interiority which drove, surfaced and infringed the surface and which determined the form. The fragment structure therefore took on the appearance of an ample dissemination of 'scales'. The material used increased its consistency and became self-supporting whereas the colour deposited and bound itself to the surface in such a way as to constitute a sole body.

Without there being formal affinities, here one had the confirmation of the ideal continuation from Fontana although the concept left its propositional nature and became practice with the effective dissemination of painting in physical space. Differing from the spatial environments by Fontana, here Pinelli also wanted to conserve painting outside of its traditional context, in this way broadening and extending its conception. The problem was not one of superseding painting, of placing it 'over there', but of modifying its boundaries, its limits, and consequently its statute and recognisability.

In the most recent years of his production the plastic course of the disseminations has been flanked by another series of works in which impetus and mobility are substituted by the stability of a strong equilibrium. Here Pinelli inversely runs the same path. The dynamics of this crossing are transformed into a frontal fascination. The space is no longer thought of in the sense of its extension but of its concentration.

The immobility which appears in some works seems to propose itself as a necessary parallel time that accompanies dynamic time. Moreover, the calm is only effectively such regarding the vast fragmentations which are inevitably tied to an idea of movement although not at all lacking in emotive tension. In fact, it is precisely in these works that with greater intensity we feel one of the factors that distinguish them: their concrete physicalness.

The elements are no longer a light cloud of fragments set on the wall but are a firm presence, chromatically magnetic and plastically disquieting. The accentuated 'matteric' nature of the fragment/scale, its continuous relating to space and, together with this, the chromatic intensity, the values of the surface and the persistence of a title that for twenty years has been termed "Pittura" [Painting], all once again take us to the concept of painting and to its extension. Regarding this point, it is the case to make a distinction between the attitude and approach of Pinelli who dilates and disseminates the idea of painting beyond its statutory boundaries and limits (although always referring to that idea) and who instead works on a terrain of the contamination of languages without feeling bound to any one of them.

Effectively speaking, Pinelli's plastic painting is a singular case while also being exemplary in the artistic vicissitudes of these last twenty years. Its particularity, what makes it so recognisable, embodies a complex of themes that have formed part of contemporary art from the avant-gardes up until today.

The fragmented form of these works, whether that of greater dissem-

ination or else where concentration and frontality prevail, is a cognitive structure which holds its own happening in suspension. Determined by an idea and not by a technical need, the fragments/scales possess the movement that only thought is able to give. It is movement without time, without speed and without a goal. It is pure motion without destiny - if not from that derived from the singular unity of its two-fold origin, plastic and pictorial.

Some recent works affirm this characteristic to an even greater degree by dilating the original fragment/scale into a large self-supporting form which is usually presented doubled and slightly inclined. With their surface increased in this way the elements do not disperse but augment the energy that distinguishes their presence. In these cases it is certainly no longer connected to the dynamism of the moment: the energy of these works is furnished by the chromatic concentration, by the intensity of the colours which are in the main expressed by a plastically worked surface and yet again, consequently, the chromatic sensation is added to the tactile one. The colour is not painting of surface but the condensation of matter. Absorption and regeneration of pigment that settles, becomes impasto and an integral part of the plastic form.

The linguistic value of this achievement is important given that during these last decades of research extending beyond painting and sculpture there have been few artists who have looked for a possible 'above and beyond' the linguistic redefinition, instruments and criteria of classification. The extension attained by these works results from the estrangement that language has had to reach in order to be modified. Detaching painting from the surface, breaking its unity, raising it, giving back substance to it and moving it in space. Coming out of itself in order to recognise and acknowledge itself. Forgetting the painting in order to find painting once again.