

Daniel Maillet. Life equator, the time of painting.

In this first beginning period of XXI century, when we are unarmed witnesses of a mankind afflicted with the consumerism cancer, where too many artists die before being born as they are more ephemeral than their own creations, while others –surely talented- waste their research to give in to the market whims, we sometimes can still find some “great minds”, some voices which come out of the vulgar chorus of banalities.

Daniel Maillet is one of these “great minds”: an educated artist, making his work a thought and technique synthesis.

His design is surely the starting point, the sole origin, the meagre and bare structure on which the sensible world is modelled. A refined technique in which the ancient masters lessons meet the great contemporaries’, the fatherly expressionism and the personal talent. A design which comes from the truth, but analytic at the same time, a design in which objects are caught in space and isolated on paper, they are bereaved of their habitat and integrated in a kind of cosmic empty space.

I think that it’s absolutely important to notice how formal Maillet sign is, how weighed up each line is, how inclined to a total perfection each proportion is. Maillet is subtle and accurate, he gets near to perfection but yet he is far away from the easy victimization of art for art, looking for a communication through the universal language of the figure.

I left for a while the beautiful Switzerland near the sites of the Lombardy and Veneto culture. I ended up in the sad tropics, following Claude Lèvi-Strauss”. Daniel Maillet makes me sharing the setting from where his last works are originated in a such concise and analytical way at the same time. I think that’s a mind more than a body exile, where his tireless research gets new horizons. He moves like a modern Gauguin to the southern world absorbing the colours, the lights, the atmospheres, the topics.

His palette expands, taking over the sea, the earth, the sky and the nature colours. His line enlarges, it’s of matter, bold brushworks become the figure basic elements, but it isn’t cram full : the line remains minimal and refined. It isn’t an extreme changing but an *Aufhebung*: an overcoming which keeps the previous lessons enriching them with meaning and inspiration. Tropics clad old stylistic methods.

A whole length portraits gallery, testifying to the ethnical mixture which, far from being a simple fascination of exoticism, become extraordinary life proofs. Paraphrasing the famous Berenson judgement about the Lorenzo Lotto portraits, also these pictures by Maillet , and I quote by heart, “are looking for the favour of a look”.

Very high real portraits which are not satisfied with the shape and colour pleasure but which become the synthesis instrument of the mixture of the artist and subject feelings. A “melancholia equatorial”- as he himself defines it- a mixture of passion and sadness.

Next to the portraits of old or young native women suspended in space, with his attention mostly focused on the figure, we find large paintings where the landscape itself becomes an integral part of this intimate tale. A tale which expresses itself through photography too, through the stolen shots taken along the streets.

The journey to Brazil is not only bringing to the painting time rediscovery, but it’s also an occasion to work with terracotta. The visual experience turns into three-dimensionality, painting and design become, in a certain sense, tangible. The angular lines are in contrast with the shapes calm rhythms, two crouched children become one more chapter of that emotions book Maillet is giving us. The analogy with design and painting, which remain basic in the whole work of this artist, isn’t casual at all. Maillet himself states in fact, in one of his writings: “ In 1994, when I first went to Brazil, I have been to Bahia. I met there a ceramist and she insisted I had to make clay models; I really was a painter and I was feeling sculpture far away from my work I finally gave way to her persistent requests, I tried with a portrait and started to model a face; I was surprised to see the model shapes come naturally. At first I couldn’t understand how could I be able to, without any experience. I realized much later that it was my trained eye copying, it was directing my hand, and it really was easier than drawing on a sheet, as I hadn’t the problem to turn the third dimension into a bi-dimension”.

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