

Andrea Mariconti obeys the evidence and the corporeity of matter, which proposes the forms and leads the representation. The central subject of his paintings – the human body considered essentially as a stretched out ghost and an upright torso – lives off the contrast between the concreteness of ash, full of warm connotations, and the neutral and matt depth of acrylic. The key of his inspiration can be found exactly here: shapes, stylized in their essential tensions, emerge with all their dynamism from an eternal background, solemn but empty. They are still totally real stretched ropes, but simplified until they reach the abstraction of symbol. Therefore it is essentially the architectural balance of lines and weights that reveals the human nature of his faceless subjects.

This is the subtle challenge of Mariconti's paintings: showing the human and observing the total prohibition of representing the face. It is the body that reveals everything with its tension, rushes, its turning in on itself, its geometrical relation with the objects. Representing the face would be a violent act of possession committed by a humanity that instead must remain free to stretch out beyond any domain. So, if it appears, it is always veiled (or *revealed*) almost in a sacral way by the hair, the arms, the hands, by a cut in the painting or, at least, by a light tissue of rice-paper dipped in oil. In these paintings it is the uncertain steadiness of geometries and weights of the body that tells the essential vocation of man, in a way that the fleeting expression of his face, although it is true and kind, could not transmit.

Mariconti feels compelled to give a rhythm to body tensions and architectures, and uses living geometrical elements such as vegetable stripes, raw wood parts and even guideposts "baptized" into ash to achieve his aim. Ash is the true element filled with humanity and spirituality, and in its "light" everything gains its value by freeing itself from the neutral matter. But these inserted elements represent also a hole, a sign of something different laid down horizontally, "incarnated" in the painting. Sometimes this hole is also made by the cuts in the paintings, which are suitably fitted to mark a discontinuity in the representation of the subject. Here is another challenge of Mariconti: the sense of something beyond, elsewhere, which *breaks through* (but never an empty "utopia") is always given by the concreteness of the inserted elements and by the geometry of the fitted pieces. There is no surrender to the labyrinth of shapes then, but to the mystery of a "presence" (the inserted elements) and of a "wound" (the distances).

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