

## Flavio De Marco, Reflection and Contamination

On the paintings of De Marco one could write considerable simply by fixing oneself on his primary and very evident qualities. Focusing only on his operating area, which is essentially intellectual rigor, merits attention, but his works interest me, in particular, because of the aspects that may contribute to potentially linguistic effectiveness. Widening the artistic horizon is valuable not just for this artist, but for an entire area of painting that needs new stimulus since it has waited too long to expand its field of inquiry. In so doing it waived the opportunity to commit itself to possible research areas. From this observation it is best for me to begin by recapitulating briefly the history pertinent to De Marco while also clarifying the reasons for my interest in his work.

If it is true that art's first point of reference is itself and that this experience offers the artist a wide breadth of action then it is also true that the grand innovative thrusts, in the artistic world, are historically induced or nonetheless inspired by mutations that occur abroad. The detonating factors can be numerous and every single artist is capable of recognizing indications of change with a more acute sensibility to certain phenomenon than others. These cases, from the historical avant-gardes till today, are many and often very evident, from Futurism to Informalism, Pop Art to Computer Art. After 1945, parting from indications set forth by the likes of Mondrian or from the non-objective concession of painting by Malevich, a self-reflective line began to emerge that formed the way for a complete internal research, reflective precisely upon the reasons and modes of painting. Its major exponents were artists like Rothko, Newman, Reinhardt and later Stella, Ryman, etc.. Between the end of the sixties and the middle of the seventies there took place another concentration of attention on this problem with Analytical Painting, or as it has come to be called in the United States, Radical Painting. As well in Italy after the post-war generation emerged, artists up until today have adhered to a certain understanding of painting that fundamentally respects this absolute concentration upon the surface and its intrinsic values even if they have offered different personal interpretations of the problem.

In the works of the last two years, De Marco has progressively developed, effectively inserting into his canvas' prompting elements from entirely unrelated situations, which have been drawn from a mainly technological and electronic universe. The notably vast difference between the origins (of the elements chosen), although contrasting with the picture, succeed in creating instead the grounds for a profitable dialect, made up of diversity and multiplicity. The works of De Marco declare explicitly their cultural roots, from Reinhardt to early Stella up until the most recent abstract experiments. But the point of interest rests precisely in his having initiated to break (apart) the dead end completed by this line of painting if it continues to read and reread itself. I will certainly not deny the value of the reflective practice, which is like digging stubbornly into the inside of the surface, but to reach a profoundness not already achieved or exhausted, it is necessary to obtain oxygen from elsewhere; externally. The most hidden and obscurely internal spaces must be fueled and also provoked in order to show all their intensity. The energy then augments itself in combustion as more properties interact amongst themselves, and in the works of De Marco it seems to me that this occurs.

If we look at the acrylics of 1998, and also a great canvas of '97, *Retrostante* (Lying Behind) the prevalence of a mechanism that could be defined as overlapping screens is notable. Two pictorial drafts overlap without cancelling each other out and the perception of the underlying surface is consented by slight profiles or more consistent outlines that ultimately open themselves into the same colored film. In this linking between the values of surface and the concepts of space, half a century of pictorial research has been significantly synthesized. The series of works intitled *Retrostante* are particularly indicative of this aspect where problems of phenomenal perception of the pictorial draft and reductions of the sensible sphere effectively combine

themselves in favor of conceptual logic. Already in these works, in the forms of the grates and the openings that allow us to distinguish the double screen upon which De Marco acts, there appears a choice of mechanical derivation, suggested by the price tag-like cuts and by the industrially produced grill-like outlines, etc. This type of suggestion is also found in some canvas' from '98 and '99 intitled Chiuso (Closed). In one of these, the homogeneity of the black surface is interrupted by two symmetric elements that create two perceptual breakthroughs, respectively. The formal definition of these elements, notwithstanding their constitutive simplicity, owes itself to visual ambiguity. And yet again the particularity of the model inspired De Marco succeeds in creating a positive uncertainty that generates a plurality of readings. The presence of the white figures by the rounded angles, besides putting in discussion all of the surface, solicits a series of connections and contrasting projections between themselves. These range from an elaboration of a technological exhibit to the miniturized reintroduction of the the double screen pictorial mechanism utilized in this series of works.

In the course of 1999, in some of the works intitled Natura Morta (Still Life), De Marco has revealed explicitly his extra-pictorial concerns bringing to the canvas suggestive images of electronic circuits. Naturally the technical design and its complexity transferred to picture and enormously over-dimensioned transform themselves and assume meanings quite different from their original model. The sample realized on this canvas though seems to lose that component that I consider essentially to the development of the works of De Marco and is missing that enigmatic and enlivening force of contamination. Here we witness a direct transferring to a different front. The artist himself must have been aware of this danger, since in some later canvas' he tends to bring up a more dialectical plan on the confronted canvas.

Some of the most recent works that I have seen in his studio, like in the case of Spazio privato pubblico pittorico (Space private public pictoric) push themselves resolutely in the direction embarked upon by the contaminations, between the autoriflessive idea of the picture and the objectuality of the technological universe. The immediate effect upon the observer seems to be a reciprocal exchange of characteristics while the monochrome surface becomes objectualized. As well the lateral bands that send the design back to the computer tend to dissolve in the picture creating a stimulus much more complex. His initial attempt is to bring into comparison the values specific to painting with other values which belong to a particular and non-casual area of our, at this point, daily visual world. In doing so he has transformed the cannons of a radically non objective art(In reality already worn down) without yielding to the narrative and figurative history. This is achieved by means of insertments, that broaden the range of action, and act upon language without misrepresenting the original matrix.

The black screen so dear to De Marco is certainly capable of comprising and holding dialogue with the realty of an epoch that is entering into the third millenium, expanding its thought on the world, and crossing an image that comes from outside. Proceeding in this way, not only do the future possibilities change, but also the past and its various readings. As well it should not be forgotten or sidelined the very young age of this artist. I hope he continues to work in the controlled hazzard which he has tested, convinced that, like Wittgenstein wrote "One cannot look for a new system from the point of view of the past". It may be, and I hope it is so, that his interpretation of painting can bring him to conjugate the analytical knowledge of things with the profound comprehension of emotion.

Giovanni Maria Accame

