

## Notes on the exhibition

by Lorenzo Madaro

“To structure an objective discourse about Casciaro’s art, it is necessary to separate it from the modernist controversy to which it has always been alien, "suggests Vincenzo Ciardo about the research of fellow countryman Giuseppe Casciaro (Ortelle - Lecce, 1863 – Napoli, 1941)<sup>1</sup> *Quasi un diario*<sup>2</sup>.

This reflection, linked to two noble fathers of the southern landscape painting, reveals a matter to be considered also in its topicality, after more than a century by the time Casciaro portrayed horizons and the Salento and Neapolitan views in his pastels and oils. There is, of course, a strong similarity between Casciaro’s and de Marco’s works from both a formal and theoretical point of view. It could not indeed be otherwise, too many things have happened in art and in reality to allow a possible relationship between images and thoughts a century distant. But, in addition to the biographical data, the link between the works of de Marco and those of Giuseppe Casciaro is of course the continuous analysis of the landscape, understood as a real space in which to compose visions and meaning translations, immersions and variations between an exasperation of reality and the analysis of the same.

Both - and this is another fact that unites them - are out of their time, ideally live in another place, without being influenced by certain studies of the present, which in many ways they deliberately ignore.

If in the early twentieth century Casciaro refrains from becoming involved in the revolutionary upheavals of the historical avant-gardes, in spite of living in a city - Naples – up to date with the languages that were meanwhile developing in Europe, today - and so for the last fifteen years and over - de Marco has preferred to keep a link with a genre, the landscape, meant as a representation of space, far from many common experiences, in Italy as elsewhere, among the artists of his generation. And to preserve a faithful relationship with painting and its multifaceted variations.

Thereby he has intended to start a meditation on the shape of the frame, considering it a synthesis device of images taken from reality, from advertising, from art history and the history of the same images, a process that is above all autopoietic, thus synthesizing a specific and multifaceted imaginary, tied to certain places that have also represented something for the life and upbringing of the artist.

To the use of technology, which has been utilized by many artists of his generation through video and photography, de Marco continues to prefer the painting, but at the same time reflects on the technological medium par excellence of contemporary life - the computer - through the cycle of pictorial screens started in the late nineties. The computer screen is the place of memory, both active and passive, and experience that we all activate every day, suffering and fostering its potentialities. It is therefore a real window through which to look at reality, choosing every time the images that mostly cater to our personal taste, adapting them to our predilections, configuring them according to our goals and obsessions. In the early twenty-first century this technological medium has completely

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Giuseppe Casciaro, a cura di R. Caputo, Vincent, Napoli 2007.

<sup>2</sup> V. Ciardo, *Quasi un diario*, Mele Editore, Napoli 1957.

disrupted our habits, revolutionizing the learning process and analysis of the same reality. It is not surprising, it has been the same when the television screens forcefully entered our apartments, and even then the artists - just think of Mario Schifano's TV screens conceived on emulsion canvases in the seventies - immediately understood the revolutionary significance of this invention.

*Autobiography* summarizes this and more, in the five halls of the Charles V castle. When the intrinsic structure of the show was designed with Flavio de Marco, the primary idea was to raise awareness of the fundamental experiences of his painting in his hometown. But the idea of a classic anthology appeared naturally redundant, so the artist has conceived an additional project: for each year of his production, since 1993, a work has been selected that would have to be modified and revised over a short period of his residence in Lecce. He has thus returned to his city with twenty-three works that synthesize predilections and visions, but above all the starting points of a new course. Some of them he has entirely renovated, deeply reconceiving them; to others he has made minor changes, meaningful deconstructions that contribute to new definitions. Through a post-production process he has therefore decided to get back in the game, to update his work and thus to stimulate again the very nature of his work.

The preparation in the five exhibition halls of the Charles V castle does not follow a strictly chronological journey, even though the first work on display is the Self-Portrait itself (1993-2016), which in its bitter solemnity marks the starting point of the exhibition path. The only declared human presence is this, for the rest of the work of de Marco, man is present only in traces left on a wall or in the anthropic factor related to nature. It continues with an itinerary which juxtaposes excerpts of landscape alongside screens, in a duality that juggles and modulates the halls of space, among visible and abstract construction images. To those who witness this, de Marco intends to ask what the function of painting is or what you have to look for in the landscape around us.

The "windows" of the desktops space out in different rooms, sometimes they welcome shreds of nature, landscapes interrupted by the boundaries of the cuts of the images ideally imposed by technology.

Flavio de Marco is analytical, even when he imagines landscapes that have never existed, sometimes indulges in a soft painting, almost voluptuous in its intensity. But on closer inspection there is always a control in which he mediates his vision with the analysis and interpretation.

We had previously mentioned Casciaro, but the de Marco's imagery is bulging with homages, predilections. Think of Courbet - the great storm on display - or Seurat, honored in the large triptych by A Sunday at Parco Sempione, where the reference to the paintings of David Hockney is evident.

To de Marco the horizon experience has been a constant experience, a daily one : is exactly in this constant gaze fixed on the landscape that lies the starting point of his *Autobiography*.

Moreover, if "the sun is new each day" - in the words of Heraclitus, quoted by de Marco in the opening of *Stella*<sup>3</sup> - also is the horizon, and so the one painted on his canvases changes appearance, transforms, seeks further synergies, stumbles into new geographies and real and imagined spaces.

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<sup>3</sup> F. de Marco, *Stella*, Danilo Montanari Editore, Ravenna 2013.