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FACES AND COLORS TO HOLD BACK LIFE

Painting is the traveling companion of the restless seekers of truth. A sign that invites us to take a "provocation". In the literal sense this term is intended as *pro-vocare*, that is, to call out, to ask something to manifest itself. Anastasia Kurakina's painting tends to this: to give color to a moment, to a sudden one to be grasped even in the infinite topology of unequal searches and never-ending stories. Aim to hold back wrinkles and smiles between the rainbows that cut the days. Narration of roots and beauty, listening to sunrises and sunsets. Because in the end one travels within oneself. And memories are a woman of port who leaves us with a game of flesh and bitterness. Or I am a stone fireplace that knows how to tell us about the time we have lost by always chasing dreams. Anastasia carries in her veins the icons of her father Sergey, who together with the Cassio Studio in Rome has recently created the main mosaics in the Orthodox churches of San Remo, Bari, Rome and Barcelona. The patience in reassembling pieces of wood and color, her painting is also an island in the memory of the wind. Word-sign that knows how to make itself *logos* when it typesets paths but at times it becomes *fabula*, and plays with the days. It invites us to always look for a meaning beyond the fragment. Reference to a deeper thought that can grasp the secret of those faces that populate his canvases full of experience. Giordano Bruno was right to argue that the philosopher and the painter work on the shadows and build their processes starting from the shadows. Therefore painters are philosophers and vice versa. But *the threshold of the shadow*, that human and all too human land between everything and nothingness is also matter to tell a life, it is necessary to go beyond every possible barrier, every last coast explored. Painting and word together, because they speak of *movement*, of collective, of airy

perspectives. History that builds us, which goes beyond the courtyard and the particular, and draws unified maps without setting boundaries to the challenges that await us. What remains of a battle for freedom can perhaps be witnessed by a line of a poem we love, a face that is imprinted in the veins of what we believe, a portrait painted by an artist who manages to stop and capture a stretch of time, a face, a joy or a tear. Henry Michaux wrote: "Three, or at most four colors have been, for centuries, enough for men to make something important, unique, which otherwise would have been ignored". In Anastasia Kurakina's portraits the characters often inhabit a purple background, soft as a space that tells stories must be. Other times they have orange and the confident stroke of the brush plays with the light, placing a face and eyes in the center. They are always eyes of expectation or disenchantment. They dance on lost or restless spaces. They scratch truths or have lost them at the crossroads of choices. And the palette returns to tell the green-eyed woman who reads cards or the gypsy, stages an actor or a child who comes to life. They subvert our boundaries and especially invite the two blue men, with the bottle on the side and yellow eyes, to confrontation. But the canvases also speak of women who have long red hair, and intertwine sensuality and poison. In the background there is also an old peasant woman who sits on the straw looking for grain with the little light that steals from the night. In a time of poverty of ideas, we need a new artistic story that talks about young people like Anastasia willing to go through a whole path of solitary research without any guarantee of landing. With the only certainty that there is no going back. New aesthetic of existence not to say goodbye to the truth. To paint the days with sacrifice and hope, as this artist does, is to have in the chest not



Ill. 1. Boy with a blue hair. Paper, watercolor

the nail of despair but the fire of hope. Tending towards a truth is also his path, to 'a' possible truth. And then the most beautiful adventure: watching over the meaning of things, rediscovering *the pathos of thought*, running the challenge of freedom and infinite research. The artists are a sign of an impatience and knowledge that is typical of those who live in borders and know they have to move their tents, "along the passage we did not take, towards the door we never opened" (Eliot). None of us will know what lives in the heart of this young artist when she is in her room of creation, when she goes with her heart to her Russia, when she struggles every day to give flesh to the dreams she cherishes in her chest. This story of truth belongs only to her research. But it lets itself be read in color. In his characters there is the icon of what remains, of the man who struggles and who does not stop at the first recipe tavern but asks for real answers to real questions. It is as if a word or a why always came out of her portraits. Never consolation, always research. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry with his disarming simplicity taught us: "If you want to build a ship, you don't first have to tire yourself calling people to collect wood and prepare tools; don't distribute tasks, don't organize work. But first it awakens in men the nostalgia of the distant and boundless sea. As soon

as this thirst has awakened in them, they will immediately get to work to build the ship". This is also the task of artists. It is the space where the beauty of the encounter must be possible, to change things. The path is long, even for Anastasia, but as Beckett said, *one must continue*. Because Ulysses with the Lotophages, and even from Circe, did not forget the day of the return. And even near Calypso he never stopped looking over the rocks and the shore at the sea, letting tears of profound humanity flow through his chest. When painting speaks to stories, it is *korismòs* (difference) that cannot be resolved in a roll of the dice. Rather, it is the cipher of the elusive self-giving of life, an incurable event that brings with it infernal risks and must remain profoundly human. Going to the *ingens sylva* means listening to its cry, making a journey in search of what Maria Zambrano called 'a living philosophy', willing to look at man in his entirety and with any wind, ready to celebrate the clear as what is silent, the exiled side of history. We fell in love with history because history is without banality. Passionate thinking. But a form of knowledge that takes into account the light as well as the shadow of things also means asking the question of the roots and the effort that living entails. Recovering the bowels of feeling is the acceptance of coming from a shadowy background and in this



Ill. 2. Venere. Paper, watercolor

same path there is already the redemption from disembodied impositions, from prefabricated truths. Rather, it is necessary to go where, for a few moments only, a dawn of human and all human hope shines. We all carry the Jacob's ladder painted by William Blake in our hearts. It is always shrouded in a whirlwind of wind, but that wind calls to climb its steps, to climb its expectations to discover its secrets. Because making the sun rise between the fragments is an ancient duty of the artist. Even the colors of Anastasia Kurakina will continue to stay on the trace of the circle that has a point in the center. At the school of *marbyll* stone, the one that does not fear fire. Her palette will seek its own number, its own nature. From the writings of Nolan to the sweetness of the Magdalene, from the strength of acacia to

the works that bring to life the alchemical secret of colors, the painter will call us to an instance on the open sea. To a matter in motion, infinite *kinesis* that runs after each other in the game of chromophanes and resonances. Her portraits travel between silences and words, with his hands open to the future and to the wind that carries the voices. They are *topoi* of identity and memory. But also laboratories of humanity, where history asks us to go beyond what has already been given in order to find meaning in the paths of difference. A "sea always restarted", to quote Paul Valéry, which however does not forget what is most intimate. The possibility of experiencing thoughts is in this artist connected to the idea of one's own, of that *oikos* which is also a bridge launched on decadence. I don't know how much

will remain of an image fixed on color, but it will speak to us and this is important. It is part of our truth. Something we cannot transfer to others, ours like death. Here, yes, Immanuel Kant returns: *Wenn die wirkungen da sind*, entities, things, must be saved. Because sometimes a stroke of color or a pencil scratch animates dreams more than words can. Or maybe this is an illusion too. True alchemy is to pick up the brushes again in front of a blank canvas, to keep thinking. On an unfinished wall. Anastasia Kur-

akina will continue to search for an art secret within her destiny. For her as for all of us there is still a journey. And then another. Even knowing that everything perishes, we build our homes in granite. Even those of one night. Maybe we have lost our bets. We are consoled by the verse of an old sage such as the painter and poet Giuseppe Antonello Leone: "We will see you in the square this winter, when the last canvas will be in your wind".