

Catalysis is a Greek word meaning dissolution or ending, and which is used in Chemistry to refer to a transformation caused by bodies which at the end of the reaction are still themselves, in other words, they remain unchanged. The word catalytic is also used to refer to household gas stoves. But Gennaro Castellano, who is a well-read painter, does not use Hellenism to deal with any of these subjects in particular, but in order to speak about processes of extenuation, body chemistry and even arouseal. In fact, he wishes to bring to mind one of Barthes' sayings used in connection with the divine Marquis, the Marquis de Sade: the art of catalysis consists of saturating the erotic body simultaneously occupying the main areas of pleasure.

The idea is that one should do these things with a certain consuming and even wearing effort of catalysts at the beginning, and then finish them with a degree of exhaustion and relaxation. Gennaro Castellano not only calls his exhibition *Arte della Katalysis*, he also calls it "*arte dello scioglimento*" an Italian word which likewise possesses a number of meanings, used, for example, to describe things such as problem solving, the evacuation of the liquid content from loose and tight bellies, the cancellation of a contract, the act of undoing complicated knots, the denouement of plays, the annulment of a marriages, and the answer to riddles. .

So then, Gennaro Castellano wishes to knit the search for pleasure at its most extreme with the acceptance of its consequences, which might be tiring or at worst terrible, but stimulating too, in short, catalysts of new quests for superlative pleasures and their effects, setting off once more on the roller coaster: enthusiastic ascents, dissoluble culminations, exhausting drops, but with an inertia that leads to new ascents, etc., etc. Bearing this in mind one will see that the paintings exhibited by Gennaro Castellano are basically about his own experiences, though occasionally they are lived only as a desire. They say that sometimes fantasies and obsessions come true, but generally they are just dreamt, written and even painted, as Gennaro Castellano has done, twice over. But something happens when fantasies are painted twice. The first time they are painted at full speed, at the moment they appear, without any pretension or refinement, with the full force of desire. The second time, however, they are reproduced and recreated, somewhat less forcefully perhaps, but with greater attention and, therefore, with more details that went unnoticed the first time round. Thus, many new and different things appear, a great disordered host of things that have to be brought together with a patience typical of analytical painters. The first intuition is followed by meditation and work, from hot to cold, from catalyst to catalysis, from problem to answer. All this occurs, is unravelled, in the painting. However, Gennaro Castellano does not refine his intuition and, consequently his drawings are not like, for example, the ones that Iohann Heinrich Fussli drew of his personal obsessions. In Fussli's perverse and refined drawings the lascivious women depicted are always the same, either Anna Landolt, a woman from Zurich who did not respond to the painters passion, or Mrs. Fussli, but in postures, stances, and wearing headresses that the art teacher at the Royal Academy of London was able to sublimate in terrible nightmares, like the one at the Goethe Museum in Frankfurt, recreated by Francis Ford Coppola recently in his film about Dracula, but which he could never have shown to his pupils, or displayed at exhibitions. "In the matter of art", states one of Fussli's aphorisms, "many beauties are born by accident, but afterwards they are painstakingly preserved". Gennaro Castellano acts according to this aphorism, but without completely eliminating the accident, to the contrary trying to preserve it as much as possible in the final result, yet accepting that his notes, those quick almost spontaneous drawings, when seen enlarged on the canvas might be interpreted as drawings that have been made with all the time in the world.

There is a paradox in those notes and drawings cooled by scale and execution, as well as by being contemplated in the neutral (but cold too) space of an exhibition room, but they still retain (or perhaps it awakens) something tepid, the uneasiness of the onlooker, for example, provoked by being in a place uninvited, a terrain that is foreign, private and always strange.

Gennaro Castellano not only exhibits these pieces he also exhibits himself. And as every exhibitionist knows, when he exhibits himself, in other words, shows himself, he is taking a risk too, though it may be of not being understood. But the risks involved in drawing out demons from inside and casting them at outsiders are worth taking. Unless he condemns himself to impotence. As Fussli said in another of his aphorisms, "a man overcome by an excessive passion, be it pain or joy hope or despair, loses all possibility of personal expression, which is absorbed by the power of the emotion acting on him".