

By its nature, from Mannerism on, the Still Life has been seen as the analytical representation of the inanimate world, irremediably "halted" by an innocent and automatic amputation, functional for the nutrition and sustenance of the most mutable of animate beings. In the most remarkable cases, the instant before the destruction of a banquet, the consumption of a basket of plentiful fruit, the fading of a flower arrangement, has been subjected, since the golden age of the figurative arts, to an ulterior fixation capable of immortalizing what happens without any possibility of escape, beneath our very eyes that are more voracious than our mouths.

By definition contemporary art crosses, in some of its branchings, the rebirth of the figurative. But not the tired figuration of the precise imitation of reality but a re-creation free of mannerism and translation of linguistic codes designed to make us imagine other angles along which to orient our perception. In this sense, the return to figuration does not elude — and how could it? — the conceptual and the abstract, devouring them and reprocessing them or becoming, rather, a duplicated image to send to the memory of the observer. In this ironic revisitation, the citation, in order to be perceived as the aftertaste of some delicacy must be shifted along the iconographic medium, from the surface to the depths, avoiding the suffocation of excessively accurate collations. Gennaro Castellano, having embraced this trend, offers us his *STILLEVEN* paintings, based on the reinterpretation of archaeological repertoires that function as a diaphragm between our assimilation and the "true" quotidian, easily observed in any supermarket.

In this way a transliteration of the scientific act takes place, seen as the analysis of nature in an approach aimed at the study of the system of relations among details and the whole of the figuration. We should remember that these details, as we have already seen, are not found directly in the natural universe, but have been borrowed from the artistic tradition that arose at the dawn of the modern age, a tradition that owed a debt, in its turn, to the so-called classical expressive modules. In this game of mirrors, in the particular interpretation of Castellano, the symbolic value attributed, in the past, to representations of this fact has been removed. After all, it would be unthinkable, in an age filled with genetic experimentation and biotechnologies, to attribute fantastic connotations to inert material demythicized by scientific research, connotations which our jaundiced eye would no longer perceive with that premonitory emotion of full aesthetic enjoyment. Frozen in keeping with a philological structuring, under fortifying tones, the "Still lifes" of Castellano conceal the freshness preserved from corruption by *no-frost* refrigerators, and should be consumed after the first, rapid thaw, compensating with visuals for the lack of flavor, a flavor that is fully justified as nothing more than a childhood memory.

In the crystallization of this pairing of citation and reproduction, similar to what happens in even the most harmonious of cohabitations, the strong sensations of the first impression are dissolved, the most vivid emotions of the neophyte evaporate, and pathos is replaced by a meticulous, harmonious minuet—like juxtapositioning. Although it bestows serenity on tranquil marriages, such a lack of amazement generates, in an artwork, a sort of restlessness that is not resolved in virtual restoration, on the part of the addressee, of the missing emotions. And, above all, in the case in which the meaning appears overpopulated in an orderly manner, the desire arises for an imperfection to materialize that might gainsay all these certainties, or a gap in which to develop, at ease, the personal interpretations that make an image eternally and unavoidably understood, resistant to changes in tastes and circumstances. Instead, precisely in the moment in which we approach a careful revisitation, Castellano, by shrewdly and patiently positioning details of historical, scientific and artistic relevance, castrates our fantasizing like a possessive lover, preventing us from imagining anything other than the objectively evident datum, inserted in a perfectly balanced, unavoidably stable context. An escape route from this amiable cloistered existence is not possible, even by hypothesizing an affiliation with the scientific world for these representations, and a resultant exclusion from the precisely artistic sphere. Caught in this mirror, we can only surrender to the evidence, carefully avoiding the aesthetic lucubration aimed at justifying such refined sarcasm.

With a work of radical erasure it would be healthful and wise to escape, in the end, from this sequence of words destined to flutter insanely... in the void, hunting for futile pretexts among the frames that cannot manage to contain all this sagacity.