

PERMANENT VOCATION

Friday, May 24 will see the opening of *Permanent Vocation*, a site-specific project conceived by Mariangela Levita for the spaces of the Voice Gallery in Marrakech.

Over the past few years, Mariangela Levita has undertaken a coherent and solitary research path within the framework of the painting medium, carefully perusing its essential elements, pushing her research to the extreme in her quest for the roots of perception. For Levita, painting is especially a self-reflexive practice, the analysis of a *code*, where the artist critically explores the relationship with tradition and at the same time refines her tools in order to redefine the present of this medium. Meta-stylistic quoting and intertextual connection are the elements which inform her theory and practice, always based on complex elaborations, intersections and layering of different languages, either drawn from the tradition of courtly art history or from the visual suggestions which belong to the *club culture*.

Permanent Vocation is an exemplary project of this fascinating *modus operandi*, consisting of a series of seemingly antithetical elements which are forced to become complementary. Optical grids inspired by signs, shapes and colors belonging to the Islamic visual tradition, are transfigured by the artist into serialized-turned-lysergic patterns to form a series of wall-papers which recall the interior of the typical Moroccan house, the riad. Against this background dwell a few works on canvas, which in turn are made with techniques and materials belonging to the local tradition, from the color powders to the canvas itself, treated following the procedures still used today by the fabric weavers in the medina to color fabric and here reproduced in a symbolic manner, limited and absolutised in the seemingly reassuring frame of the work. From a formal point of view, these pictures take on a minimal and abstract appearance, which contrasts with the aggressive virus-like spreading performance taking place on the underlying paper. Levita deliberately short-circuits the boundary which separates the representational space from the surrounding space, forcing the viewer's gaze to crash into the staging of a sensory explosion, thus amplifying the concerns of the *optical*.

In *Permanent Vocation*, Mariangela Levita creates a metatemporal trip, revisits different models and defunctionalizing them in favor of a new perception of the nature of the work, proposes an inquiry into the reality of representation and her own sensorial reality. Painting as a medium becomes a mere hypertext which suggests multiple interpretive contexts, inside of which Levite reworks consciously and recklessly the codes of language, outlining a coherent path that identifies, in my opinion, one of today's most interesting, i.e. the so-called "meta-painting" and its multiple, unavoidable hybridizations and trespassing.

Permanent Vocation in this sense appears like a survey on the structure of pictorial representation, the possibilities which this offers and the ways with which it may be presented. Levita reflects on the fate of the image in a culture increasingly characterized by its own sclerotization, releases it from belonging to one place, one time, or one specific medium, and chooses a practice which propagates into the surrounding space, the off-stage, the "out of frame", but still always *beyond* the frame.

Eugenio Viola

TOTAL IMMERSION

Conversation with Adriana Rispoli

Adriana Rispoli / In recent years, your reflection on painting, a medium to which you have always been totally dedicated, is going through a phase which I would call technological. In *Permanent Vocation*, the techniques are reversed and if the brush apparently gives way to pantone, this, with its typical flat and saturated color becomes painting by generating an illusion which is first of all conceptual and then optical, perceptual. It is so? Where does this reflection start from?

Mariangela Levita / My reflection is precisely in the relationship of these theoretically opposite elements: natural - artificial, manual or serial. My goal is to combine these aspects and merge them into a single visual perception.

AR / *Permanent Vocation* combines into an environmental, symbiotic and mimetic framework the idea of painting as a single piece with that of a multiple element, by questioning the "ancestral" value of a work's originality and ultimately stretching the boundary between painting and graphics. Please tell us about your point of view.

ML / In *Permanent Vocation* there is no separation between techniques. Painting is together with graphics and these become painting. A harmonious and fluid dialogue which is for me an essential tool for the "representation" of my visions.

AR / Yours is a metapictorial language, never realistic but not totally abstract either. The diktat of representation is successfully overcome through the perceptive hyperbole of your work through a supralinguistic research which in this case shows through with the use of art forms from the Moroccan tradition. Ancient forms bent into contemporary patterns which create a game of full and empty. What value do these aniconic signs take in your vocabulary?

ML / My alphabet is a universe of signs which draws in real time from all that is around me, and which I see and assign to my visual memory. These signs are of great value as they become evident in the act of creation, allowing me to evolve the process of study and discussion in a way I would call synaptic. There are no rules in their return: whether they are the Islamic floral decorations or the signs of the metropolis, the space of the work is a free field. It is the my emotional space.

AR / The site-specific approach is a pivotal aspect of your *modus operandi*. As in minimal art, whose language you seem drawn to, to architecture – the space in which the viewer interacts – is the starting point of your last works, as *Flag Down* or *Uno sguardo sospeso* [A Suspended Glance]. Why? What does this have to do with painting?

ML / I live a total immersion in the creation of the work, and perhaps because of this I am more and more oriented to surround myself with it to the point of involving the whole space. The space and time as well as the rhythm are fundamental in my work.

AR / Again you turned the neutral spaces of the gallery into a kaleidoscope of colors and signs, thus generating a visual and perceptual synergy between two cultures, and despite the two-dimensionality of the work, you managed to create an immersive, almost spiritual atmosphere. Do you recognize yourself in this aspect, do you think that somehow *Permanent Vocation* may have a spiritual/mystical reading, although in a broad sense?

ML / The creative act is in itself spiritual and mine is a "permanent vocation." A vocation that I keep proposing as the practice of a perceptual, emotional, infinite trip, born in one's inner self but which, using a simple, direct and often empathetic language, communicates with everyone.