LOVE AS A GLASS OF WATER
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60TH VENICE BIENNALE
FOREIGNERS EVERYWHERE

In her project for the Albanian Pavilion the painter Iva Lulashi (Tirana, 1988) evokes the «glass of water theory». This theory, dating back to the Russian pre-revolutionary period and linked to the feminist thinker Alexandra Kollontai (1872 - 1952), is based on the idea of a sexual revolution in which impulses are perceived as a simple necessity to be satisfied with the same carefreeness with which you drink a glass of water; it had a great influence on the artistic circles of those years but was immediately opposed by the revolutionary political apparatus.

Water is the basic condition of life, just like love, and both life and love move in a continuous state of fragility. Love, sex and desire can give meaning or ruin our lives, and are the only great reality that is eternally revolutionary, telluric by its constitution, on which power, be it political, economic or ideological, is unable to firmly impose its own control. Their strength is suprapolitical and existential, similar to that of water, elusive, sometimes peaceful, but capable of breaking down any obstacle. Lulashi's work revolves around these universal subjects capable of transcending differences and overcoming borders, not just geographical ones. The images of her paintings are generally taken from film and video stills which act as detonators of the painting; they are populated mainly by female bodies and suggest situations potentially linked to the erotic act - almost as if they were «immediately before» or «immediately after» - without explicitly showing it and thus provoking a state of tension and ambiguity.

The ability to find and recreate images is one of Lulashi's strengths. Her style mixes the Albanian pictorial tradition (made up of important figures now recognized internationally) with the Italian and Venetian path. At first sight the paintings emerge for their "photographic" attitude, while at a more careful look they appear strongly pictorial, made of a livid liquidity, of synthetic brushstrokes and devoid of any affectation, which leave many parts of the painting deliberately unresolved and almost abstract. They are a song to female desire, with everything it still carries with it in terms of fear, hope, desire for freedom, dark sides, vitality. Themes inseparable from a past that has not yet passed, full of truly global problems and political issues, which we have to deal with every day and every night.
The artist embodies the theme of the Biennale. Born in Albania, she soon moved to Italy with her family and currently lives in Milan. She trained as a painter in Venice, the city of water and glass (many would also say of love...), attending the local Academy of Fine Arts, which over the last years has become a meeting place for young people from all over the world and one of the most interesting laboratories of new painting in Italy.

Text by Antonio Grulli