

In a recent interview during the Italian TV show “Quelli che... il calcio”, Marina Abramović explained to the presenter Victoria Cabello that in her art “a knife is a knife, blood is blood.” Enlightened by her Method, we could say that in the art of Francesco Joao Scavarda (b. 1987, Milan) painting is painting, concrete is concrete.

Scavarda grew up between the Brazilian state of Pará, at the foot of the Amazon rainforest, and the coast of Lago Maggiore in Northern Italy. The scenarios evoked by these two places coexist in the artist’s soul without causing any conflict, but rather favoring the development of a peacefully holistic, generalistic, globalized vision. The art of Scavarda comes out of the Empire, and within the Empire it finds its own *raison d’être*. We can say so because at the end of the day there is no clash when listening to Francisco “Chico” Buarque along the Autostrada dei Laghi, or dancing to a Basic Channel production in a club in São Paulo.

On any decent long-haul flight, you can watch a Walt Disney or Matt Groening cartoon; and while in the past the appropriation of comics and other popular figurative languages by “high” art has caused a sensation, in the era of globalization the continuous migration of figures in the flow of visual production is nothing more than small talk. If we wrote that Prada’s latest menswear collection betrays a reference to the art of John Wesley (whose retrospective exhibition was held at Fondazione Prada in 2009), or shows that Mrs. Prada is familiar with the art of Alistair Frost, most of you would take these statements with a grain of salt and conclude that Aloha shirts are simply back into fashion.

Similarly, we could write that the art of Scavarda follows the tradition of Pop Art, especially in its European declination—the art of Thomas Bayle, Peter Roehr, Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, where icons serve the construction of more complex images... But such a statement should be taken with a grain of salt as well, as the artist’s concern isn’t to comment on the ordinary, the popular, the trivial, but rather to wallow in the universal visual imagery. In other words, it’s like drinking Heineken just because it’s the world’s most widely consumed beer.

In the series of gouaches on canvas we are presenting tonight, Scavarda examines the recurring figurative languages produced by the so-called “First World”. The representational technique of aerial perspective, theorized by Leonardo da Vinci but also recurring in traditional Oriental landscape painting, is the starting point of this body of work. “Adunque tu, pittore, – wrote da Vinci – quando fai le montagne, fa’ che di colle in colle sempre le bassezze sieno più chiare che le altezze, e quanto vò fare più lontana l’una dall’altra, fa’ le bassezze più chiare; e quanto più si leverà in alto, più mostrerà la verità della forma e del colore.” (Manuscript A, around 1492)

Scavarda consents to the multiplication of points of view: planes slide on each other, perspectives are distorted, the imitation of reality is pursued with the awareness that nothing is more real than the commonplace. In *Au hasard Balthazar*, Robert Bresson tells the troubled love story of Jacques and Marie from the point of view of a donkey: through Balthazar's eyes—eyes that don't know any culture—human behavior is abstracted in one-to-one dynamics regulated by the most earthly impulses. As in Bresson's film, in the art of Scavarda every personal experience is generalized and its representation inevitably entails the recourse to figurative clichés.

Facing the magma of globalized images, Scavarda avoid any highbrow interpretation, and prefers indeed to dice with them. No more dispersion. Let's make a new start. Scale, rotate, skew, distort, warp (or: *Surf it / scroll it / pose it / click it / cross it / crack it / twitch / update it.*)

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