

Archaeology–Patisserie

Renato Leotta

The landscape as the unfolding of time upon surfaces, including my own.

The outer layers contain an inner part. Fragrant surfaces—wax or marzipan—or soft ones, like raw clay, theatre of sweet images that belong to time: a barely sketched car, the cast of a beach shaped by the tide, as the side of a female body. Slow and inexorably welcoming landscape; one rooted in the time of the Mediterranean.

Some mirrored shelves from an old patisserie, recently closed in the centre of Turin, act as capriccio ruins or a portal. A small slab of marble, painted with cyanotype—with the light of the sun— contains a sketched map of the sky, arrangement of the stars at a specific, potentially meaningful, moment. It suggests where we are—or where we've come from. On the ground, a loaf of bread—or perhaps a stone—glazed.

Mediterranean sentimental assortment

Marco Nicodemo

The surface as an archaeological excavation site, awaiting for something to surface, a figure a perceptible image materializing. Less to instruct us on its nature, to inform itself, rather, on what it endures over time. To capture the instant between its flagrant apparition and its obsolescence, to provide a support for its sweetness, its fragrance.

The fascination for these amalgams, mixtures preceding images, demands the infantile gesture, "that does not speak", of a craftsman capable of reclaiming, provoking, dissolving or annihilating this landscape of transparencies exhumed and drawn from the opacity of their material evidence. The infantile gesture that seeks to touch things with drawing, through drawing un-margin them from their contour – periechon: that which includes without including –, to separate them from their name.

It is necessary, therefore, before modeling these materials, to know how to induce in them a spontaneous alteration until one can mold with and through them the volume and the surface of their absence, deferred.

Leotta's work is fragile, as it involves traversing a threshold, passing through it, separating raw matter from the incandescence of its form, Leotta surveils them both until he brings them to embrace the emergence, the transit of an image onto the wax slab.

Here, the mooring to the temporal dimension of a surface, upon which a figure comes to reside, to dwell, to linger, and finally, perhaps, to fixate – thus the Apollo of Piombino, with its presumed ambiguities of cast or copy, resurfaces again, not to add a second or third time to its first apparition, but to bring the first time to the nth degree (archeo-logos).

The crude matter can, therefore, also feign a figure, curious, indeed, that this term is linked to the Neolithic invention of pottery, to the Proto-Indo-European root *deigh-, which in pre-Neolithic times meant "to manipulate with the hands, to knead," probably referring to food preparation (hence the English dough, the German Teig, etc.). In the Latin area, however, this root was used exclusively for the working of clay destined for pottery (figere "to form, to shape, to mold, to imagine," fictilis "made of clay, terracotta," figulus "potter," figmen "figure," figmentum "worked clay, statue; fiction, lie," fictor "molder, artisan," fictus "reproduced; imagined; feigned," fictio "simulation," effigies "portrait, image, copy, model, representation"; and the Greek thixis, "the act of touching").

Leotta can, therefore, modulate the imprint of his fingers on the wax, mold, knead a toy, a marzipan machine: a plastic tangibility of the sweetness of a memory, whose scent is coaxed and seized by a surface, captured within a contour.

In this assortment nothing is diminished by the symbolic; on the contrary, everything is "a sign, insignificant", yet offered, like a plaything, an almond paste sweet, or an ex-voto, a pawn left upon a shelf, on a threshold. A magma of timeless figures of matter and, at the same time, a clot of figures exiled from something they try to transgress—perhaps a mental landscape of obsessive naivety, mediterranean sentimental constellation, with the omnipotent sovereignty of a children's game of make-believe, where one doesn't own what is proposed, and gives only in the avidity of the claim, and the only existing time is the absence of time.

BIO / CV

Renato Leotta born in 1982, in Turin, currently lives and works between Acireale and Turin. Renato Leotta's work stems from a reflection on the landscape, understood as the unfolding of time upon surfaces. Temporality is the subject of the work, and it takes shape through an observation of the elements that govern it: the sky, for example, and its relationship with things—the sea, plants, the wind, but also the body and memory. His works are acts of observation, and the subject of his practice is traced back to the Mediterranean—a context understood as an entity that situates the artist's research within a critique or resistance to the rhythms of speed and image production.

Leotta's solo exhibitions include: Concertino, Castello di Rivoli, Italy (2023) and Ondina with the Turin philharmonic orchestra at Conservatorio Verdi, Turin (2023); Sensibilità, Le Quai, Monaco, France (2023); MACTE, Termoli, Italy (2022); Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin (2020); Galleria Fonti, Naples (2019 & 2015); Magazzino Italian Art, NY (2019); Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen (2018); Madragoa, Lisbon (2017 & 2016), among others. Group exhibitions include: Museum de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves, Portugal (2025); Bourse de Commerce - Pinault Collection, Paris (2024); Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, Italy (2024); 17th Istanbul Biennial (2022), Bulgari Prize, MAXXI, Roma (2021); Fundación Santander, Madrid (2019); Gropius Bau, Berlin (2019); Palazzo Fortuny, Venezia (2018); MASP, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2018); Manifesta 12, Palermo (2018); Madre, Naples (2017) Le Galerie Centre d'Art Contemporain, Noisy-le Sec, France (2016); BOZAR, Bruxelles (2015), among others. Leotta is a co-founder of CRIPTA747, Turiner Khunstverein, Turin and Istituto Sicilia.