

WoMA

WEB OF MODERN ART



Colors of our unconscious – Vis à Vis Federico Infante

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At [Punto Sull'Arte](#), in Varese.

Saturday 12th of March Punto Sull'Arte gallery in Varese inaugurated the first solo show “We can see the wind” by Federico Infante in Europe. The Chile-born and New York-based artist has finally landed in Italy after several exhibitions in his two countries of origin and adoption, and us of WoMA had the great pleasure to meet him at the opening, whereby he shared with us his sources of inspirations as well as the message that his paintings, somewhere in-between the surreal and dream-like, intend to communicate.

The works by Infante deserve a different special kind of attention as they invite the viewer for self-introspection, on the pursuit of one's inner self that the superficiality and frenzy of our lives have often

led us to forget. As the opening is about to start, Infante is walking with us through the gallery space, silently and with the same intimacy that his works require, recounting about himself and his life.



We can see the wind, installation view at Punto Sull'Arte

WoMA: Federico, we know that the technique you make use of is very particular. It seems that you always begin from the background with colors and tones over tones, like a sort of tempera overlapping. Thereby, you proceed with the elimination of the same colors, which seem to have been grated off the canvas, and only subsequently you decide what subject to portray. Where does this necessity to start from the background to then move onto the subject arise? Why these different steps?

F. I.: It's not really separate, it's not a systematic process that has chronological steps, but it's rather very organic because it tries to express the elements of the unconscious mind. So in that part of the process I try to do it, but I know it's very difficult, I actually think it's quite impossible to do it in a pure way, but that's really about exercising and you have to go and try. So I try to do it taking into consideration everything that happened to me that day or everything that comes through my mind, all the emotions that I'm feeling, and although I may not understand the logic behind them, they don't necessarily need to have a logic to be understood. In fact this irrational power is expressed through the abstraction of the paintings, via the colours and scratches. When I was younger I used to do that just because of the situation I was going through in my life, the process was very painful at that time but now, it has mutated into a process I can enjoy a bit more. Still, there are times in which the pictorial elements are sad and painful, but I've come to the acceptance of the fact that you are not in control of everything you have, and thus this has become what I want to communicate through the abstraction of my paintings.





We can see the wind, installation view at Punto Sull'Arte

WoMA: Still regarding your artistic practice, which is the moment you understand that the act of colors removal is enough? Why taking off something you have previously added?

F. I.: It's a very smart observation. I think that it stems from who I am, it's the need to fix what I did, the need to try something new and also to make some mistakes. If you don't do it, you will never be able to know if you made a mistake or not. So, what I don't like about most figurative realistic painters is their absolute belief in certainty, they believe that brushstrokes will go right over the white canvas, perfectly, with the subsequent strokes becoming part of it. I believe instead that the process of painting represents the expression of who I am as an artist and as a person, so I'll go ahead with mistakes, and to those mistakes I will find remedy, scratching it off. So yes, painting is a language for me.

WoMA: What the viewer may notice from your paintings is the natural transport of the subject into a surreal and dream-like world, linked to our deepest unconsciousness which perhaps, we really struggle to reach because of our ever more chaotic lives, forgetting to look within us. Does this key of reading and interpretation, implied by your works, necessarily convey in us a sense of melancholy or rather the fear to look within us? What do you want to represent?

F. I.: Yes, that's a very interesting point actually. What happens when viewers see the figures is that they try to identify themselves with it, because the first thing that comes to their mind is to read and understand the painting. Through the figures you enter into the work, the atmosphere of which is made up of energetic elements that I believe must be put there. So when they see sadness, melancholy or whatever they see, it's a response to it, and to the energy conveyed by the canvas.

WoMA: What are your hopes and expectations about your works? What do you share with your subjects?

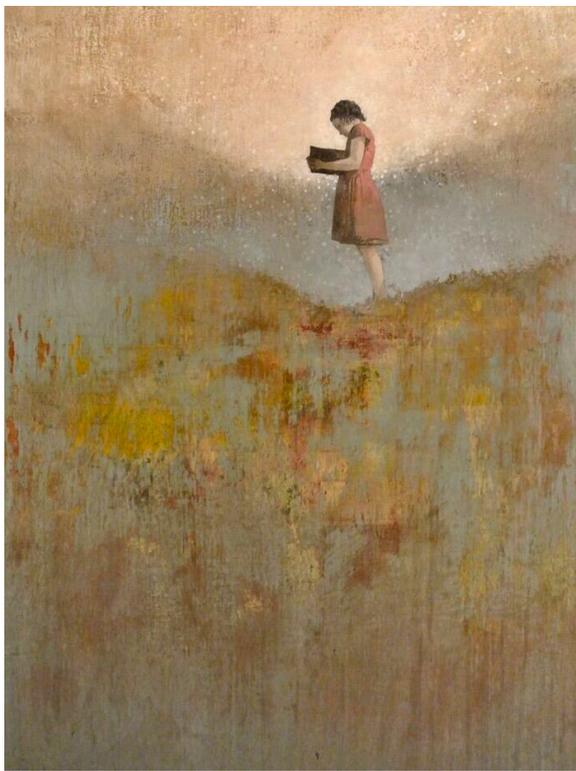
F. I.: What happens in the abstract part of the painting is totally outside of my control, in the sense that I cannot expect to say "Oh I want you to feel in that way" because it depends on the viewers and

their intimate relationship with their inner worlds. What I hope is that through my works, people can start looking into themselves and find out who they really are or who they are going to be. I hope they can finally manage to “See the wind” as the exhibition’s title suggests: to see the unperceivable, to meet the invisible, to deal with their inner feelings. I actually don’t understand yet why the main subjects of my paintings continue to be women but I guess they’re part of the process. When I will be more conscious about it I will answer to this, but right now I can say that I am just trying to avoid self-portraits as well as portraying young men or else people would immediately assume it’s me, even if of course each painting is a little part of me. Each image I paint, whether male or female, is intended to evoke a great energy. I know that in each of them, a little piece of Federico Infante is there too, but I am also sure that the paintings will exist by themselves without me, without my existence, and when I will stop being here, they will become pieces of my soul that enclose a universal message.



Magnolia I, 2015





Glow, 2013

WoMA: The chromatic choice is also peculiar, you tend to use very faint colors for the backgrounds, such as yellowish grey tints that recall the subconscious and the indefinite. Nevertheless, do you think your subjects predominate over your paintings or does their relevance actually derive from the background? Can the color be sufficiently evocative to completely substitute the subject?

F. I.: Yes, it could be enough, actually the colour is already enough. Only with the use of colours the painting is fully expressed in something. The difference is that it's not fulfilling who I am as a person if I only leave the colours. Because in that case, I would show only a part of me, whereas I feel the need to search for a logic. For instance, one morning I may have been awakened by a dream in a certain way. With the images you have the possibility to express a feeling or an emotion, but your mind wants to understand where that feeling comes from. It's like having a conversation with someone and then reacting in a way that leads you to ask yourself "Why am I reacting in this way?" So you then realize that your unconsciousness puts a figurative element into your mind and creates a dialogue between two parts of us, and this may happen everyday or throughout our entire life. I also need to include a reference for the viewer and the image incorporates that logical and rational part of myself because my ultimate aim is to express who I am as a person, and by doing that I carry out what's supposed to be the artist's mission, that is to become the mirrors of our contemporary society and time. So for now I cannot simply leave the colours, maybe one day I will, when I will have found the essence of logic and finally say it's enough.

WoMA: In the video you talked about honesty, a very important value for you and for your artistic production. In a way, it can be consider as the keyword in order to understand the thought behind your pieces.

F. I.: The whole process wouldn't have a meaning if I weren't honest with myself. My works would lose authenticity and they would even become a fake element, in the sense that anyone could repeat this process. But this wouldn't happen if I'm able to do art with true honesty because other people would come out with a totally different image. So this is THE exercise, and the accomplishment of such honesty may take one's whole life. It's all a matter of being part of a process where you are asked to learn about accepting who you are. If I weren't able to accept the person I am, I wouldn't be doing this, I would be doing something else and if I were doing something else, I wouldn't be happy as I am.

Giorgia Papaleo

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