

ONIRONAUTI.

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All that is conscious is subject to a process of erosion,
whereas what is unconscious is relatively immutable.
(Sigmund Freud)

The greatest gift is the gift of the invisible. To dissolve
means to give to the world what belongs to it.
(Alejandro Jodorowsky)

Painting cannot be called other than a system of signs in continuous evolution, a living language, organic, organized into imaginative forms that need to be arranged and organized into new and eloquent ways each time. The problem of the painter, the artist in general, is to find new solutions to solve the ancient riddle of representation. It is not therefore a simple matter. The relationship between painting and reality is a central knot, but the very concept of reality today takes on uncertain undefined contours, extending beyond the boundaries of what exists concretely and effectively on a physical plane. The object of contemporary art seems to be the "res cogitans" itself, the thought in its extensive capacity, not limited to waking rational consciousness. In the wake of the mutation of the object, reproduction (camouflage), intended as the optical adhesion of the intaglio of reality, has become a dead letter. Painting is given the task of representing the ineffable and the unspeakable, to replace the linguistic dialogic codes of speech. What cannot be described, if not through visions and dream imagery is, in fact, the virtual space of action. A space which necessarily welcomes figures that as evanescent and "ectoplasmic" as they are, form episodic sequences and narrative clots. In other words, hints of narrative. At the origin of Casadei's art is undoubtedly the founding gesture of Surrealism, which included in the representation the elusive dimension of the dream and of the vision: the chthonic and subterranean scope of the subconscious magma. Like Breton's followers, Casadei parts the spectrum of representation, rips the Maya's veil of the phenomenal world and introduces the distorted element of metamorphosis. The exercise is apparently similar to that of the *exquisite corpses*, but the break with the figure and therefore with the narrative structure is more profound and indelible. In fact, here it is not about juxtaposing recognizable entities, according to a process of transformation of Ovid's forms, but rather to rethink these forms and their relationship with reality.

By observing Casadei's paintings, one feels the interest for the germ-time images, the curiosity towards the potential condition of the figures which is not yet established. It is in this unformed limbo which the structure still vague and indistinct, floating and fluid, struggles to become image. It is in this limbo that the artist performs his own wandering. Casadei goes beyond the operational Surrealist domain, but does not as yet invade the chaotic abyss of the Informal. Instead, he reaches into a "liminal" zone, which receives influences from both directions, in a sort of intricate and fertile osmosis of moods. In his hands, the painting appears to be a sensitive elastic language, capable of expanding the figure making it vibrate at a higher frequency, deforming and breaking it up to the point of cancelling it. It is not an outcome that can be explained in stylistic or formal terms only, but rather the result of a specific cognitive process, that contemplates the possibility of observing the outside (and internal) world in ways that basically differ from those to

which we are accustomed.

Casadei mentions *The Dance of Reality*, the biographical novel by Alejandro Jodorowsky, as the main source of inspiration of his new works. Some works, such as *Tocopilla*, hometown of the Chilean writer, director and playwright, make a direct reference. Still, the thought goes above all to the work by Carlos Castaneda and, in particular, his distinction between "first attention" and "second attention". "The whole organization of Don Juan's teachings was based on the idea that man has two kinds of awareness," writes Castaneda in *The Fire from the Depths*. "He called them the right side and the left side and as a consequence he differentiated his teaching into lessons for the right side and those for the left side. He described the first as the normal state for all of us, or state of awareness necessary in everyday life. He said that the second was for everything that was not normal, the mysterious side of man, and the state of awareness necessary to play the role of shaman or seer". The "first attention" is, therefore, the size of normal perception, where every sense is a rational interpretation. It depends on habit and education. The "second attention", however, breaks the mold of ordinary perception and allows the "warrior" to get into unimaginable worlds, where things take on another aspect. A typical example of this perception is the way in which, in the "second attention," Castaneda describes human beings as entities of light, similar to large eggs, or balls of light formed by bundles of fibers in motion. In short, something like the form shown in the painting entitled *An Egg (Un uovo)* which oozes into the landscape. Perhaps, unwittingly but corresponding precisely to the description of the American writer. In any case, without venturing too much into Castaneda's controversial thought, it seems clear that also Jacopo Casadei intentionally tries to develop a new form of perception and therefore of the representation of reality. The artist's pictorial universe is, in fact, animated by shadows and ghosts, ethereal substances, which have the power to transmute objects into living, vibrant entities, as in the case of *Live Mustaches, Julius' Whiskers, In the Hope She Returns, They Become a Dragon. (Mustacchi vivi, I baffi di Giulio, nella speranza che lei ritorni, diventano un drago)*.

Casadei transforms the phenomenal world through a magical vision, which reveals the extraordinary side of life. To do so, he had to discipline his attention and his imagination into grasping the facts and circumstances which go unnoticed by the waking consciousness and the limited vision of the iris. His vision seems to become more acute under conditions of dim light, in milky albino vapors, in feeble almanac Vespers and especially in the darkness of night, full of surprising and hallucinatory visions. Nightmares, delusions, illusions and mirages follow each other onto the canvases of the artist like products of a fevered imagination, a recalcitrant and unruly fantasy.

The same, after all, which accompanies the visions of the dreamer. It is no coincidence that the artist defines himself as a lucid dream, a pilgrim of the dream, and the subconscious mind of a wanderer whose task it is to translate into painting the bizarre and whimsical inflorescences of the deep. Epiphanies that arise from the shapeless mass of the landscape to take on miraculously, the likeness of the figure. In his subjects, in fact, the setting and the subject blend seamlessly, creating profiles not easy to decipher, as in the paintings of *The Atmosphere Becomes Thick and Empties the Body of the Monkey Mother, The Father*

in the Woods Mistakes the Trunks are His Children and Cries for their Faces and finally, *The Landscape in a Smile*, (*L'atmosfera diventa densa e svuota il corpo della scimmia madre, Il padre nel bosco confonde tronchi per figli e ne piange i volti e, infine, Landscape in a smile*), where the figures are nothing more than landscape protuberances, bumps and swellings of an incongruent area.

This substantial elusiveness of shapes and figures, this escape from mimetic evidence, which is the stylistic mark of much contemporary painting, for Casadei becomes an opportunity to extend the boundaries of his own epistemological inquiry. It is a way to affirm the idea that, through art reality can and should be the result of an original experience.