

## **THE OWNER AS WITNESS**

### **(WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SAY TO THE PERSON ABOUT TO BECOME THE HOLDER OF ONE OF MY WORKS)\***

#### **WORDS YES, WORDS NO**

These are the words that belong to me: vulnerability, precariousness, transience, delicate balance, instability, sensitivity, fragility, emotiveness, impermanence, openness, non-finite, and on a human scale.

And these are the words that do not: centrality, strength, greatness, imposition, definite, finite, immobility, certainty, closing, end, and absolute.

#### **MY WORK = PUTTING COLOUR ON CANVAS**

What is it that I do? Is it a physical act? A poetic act? A paradox?

My work has nothing to do with colour as visual perception, but as physical substance. I don't paint a static image; I produce living material. For me, painting is something physiological. It is closer to a vital function, like breathing, eating or excreting.

The mass that is produced during existence is created and accumulated in front of me and outside of me. What I do is create the conditions in which things happen and this is out of my control. Possessing does not mean having total dominion, it means letting something develop per se, for what it is. I don't work thinking about what it will be, I act on a living thing in front of me. The work is in the present, not the future. The work is not a central, frontal object, but is the trace of a journey. It is as though I am the spectator of an event happening in front of my eyes and whoever becomes the holder of one of my works is like a new witness to this transformation. The meaning is not the actual "thing", but the vital process that has led to this thing. It is necessary to maintain the possibility of proceeding, of ensuring that things happen, of living. The new witness is taking away a piece of material, the fragment of a vaster and more complex organism.

#### **I GO AGAINST TECHNIQUE**

Technique is the human capacity to have constructed rules capable of manipulating the material to the point of dominating it.

Oil painting technique states that when painting with oil, in order to superimpose layers of colour you need to make sure that each subsequent layer is more flexible than the one immediately preceding it. The principle is "fat on thin", or "flexible on less flexible". When you paint using subsequent layers, you need to increase the percentage of the medium used. You thus have to proceed consistently and in a progressive order.

In my work, it is not technique that makes me go on. I find myself at the mercy of the material. It is as though I have exasperated the painting technique and taken it to extreme consequences, to the point of excess, going against its laws. What makes the work progress and change is not control but a feeling, a procedure, a blundering progress that slowly leads me to make choices and gradually transform the work.

When I began to perceive painting as a form of "sedimentation", the palette was reduced to a minimum. The place where colour is formed was reduced to one: the bowl. I never use a pure colour but always start with what I find in the bowl. I find what is left over from the day before, after I have painted on a canvas. Every day I add a new colour, slowly transforming it over time. The material in the bowl is transformed, consumed and does not accumulate. It is always renewed. The bowl is never empty, but remains alive and wet. It is like keeping a plant alive. The colour created is then spread onto the canvas and gradually accumulates there. There is only one bowl, but there are lots of canvasses.

“Good methods” dictate that I should treat every colour with a different principle. Each colour has its specific characteristic: it dries in a certain way, is oily in a certain way, it covers in a certain way, and so on.

But how can I decide which layer of colour has to come before and which after? On which canvas should I work first and which after? In my case, everything is put on the same level and everything concurs together to create a single material. The order in which I spread one colour over another is determined by my daily rhythm, and by what happens in the bowl and on the canvasses I am working on.

“Good methods” say that I cannot layer so much. I should abandon one canvas a lot sooner and continue working on another, but the number of layers is defined by the materiality, the consistency, the sense of completeness I feel when looking at this material that has been created in front of me.

I am not an artisan. There is no logic connected to my technique, but to the natural course of things determined by the flow of existence.

### THE SKIN OF THE PAINTING

The painting is a living organism. The painting is like a membrane or a skin. It is thin, thin and composed of lots of very fine and fragile threads. It can dry, excoriate, become scaly, display swellings and bubbles that can burst and detach. Like skin, it is destined to age. We cannot know how quickly, how much and when it will age. Things have their natural development. Like our human condition, it is at the mercy of factors beyond our control. It is subject to the climate, to air, to movement, to external conditions. It can become something else. It can change. We can decide to try to keep it young for as long as possible, we can nourish it, we can give it facelifts and restorations, but time passes over it nevertheless.

I like to think of this time that passes as a continuous creation of the work, or rather a natural continuation of the material's change. The work that signifies material left as a trace of experience or existence is destined to decompose and transform.

The work finds its natural habitat in the studio. This is where it grows and develops, always alive. When it leaves, it is as though it crystallises, but never dies. It is a question of keeping it alive with intentions. It passes from me to someone else, like throwing a ball to someone.

### WHAT IT SEEMS IS WHAT IT IS

It is not possible to plan a shape. Things take the shape they need to take; they become what they want to become. Sometimes they assume an image that does not necessarily correspond to their essence. The image that represents them does not always coincide with what is behind them.

In my case the work has taken on a fairly ambiguous shape. It is a contradiction in terms. It is thus difficult to understand its intrinsic nature if I don't talk about it, if I don't complete it with my words. From the outside, it talks of monochrome, cleanliness, precision, completeness, but I know that what I feel is polychrome, dirtiness, indefiniteness, and transition. Who knows, maybe I will reach a point when the two things will coincide. I realise that it is misleading, but nothing can be forced. All I can do is follow and get behind the natural flow of things without forcing them. The event happens; it is not provoked. The idea of time passing cannot be simulated or represented, we can only be in it and go along with it.

Maria Morganti  
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\* This text, which accompanies each work, is attached to the Certificate of Authenticity.