

## Against Mediocrity

If I look at the vast quantity of highly professional images (1) covering the boundless site of Maria Morganti's archive like myriad mosaic tiles, I can't help but feel perplexed because all those coloured tiles do not represent a unique, living and vibrant surface of a real object, but seem to be an unvarying expanse in which each point of vivacity, whether extremely above or vertiginously below a statistical average, is made uniform in a dark, average, almost mediocre sludge (2). Isn't it unnerving that precisely this sludgy image should take the prime spot on the site/self-portrait whose aim is to lead us closer to Maria's work?

I would like to go against this desire for detachment from oneself, this clerical aspiration to look at one's reflection in the mirror as coldly as possible (3). We have to go against the artist's legitimate aspiration with the portrait that we, her potential audience, can make of her by freely re-reading her work from our point of view: the most emotive and childish, the most material, the most spatial or even architectural point of view possible; because her paintings are never of surfaces, but are of layers of possible volumes, sediments of adventurous and hidden stories, where much is shown but everything has been removed or flattened.

The first thing missing is the figure (4) and the stories that can be told by defined characters. With a great deal of narcissism, only the artist's hand and eye are testimony to a human presence. But maybe one day we could discover that behind all that methodical uniform layering and all those different colours lay only the tenacity of a well-hidden pieceworker who Maria phones every now and then from the bar where she is beatifically having a spritz. Even a trained monkey could do it (under the painter's capable guidance), but nothing so picaresque is ever going to amaze us. Maria does not want to amaze; she wants to convince us with her stubbornness and candour. This is the opposite of mediocrity: this is obstinacy at its height.

Yet her obstinacy makes her forget that we have a right to create a different point of view to that of the artist when viewing her works. I want to see her paintings from the side and not just frontally (5); I want to see the reflection of the light on the surfaces, I want to play with the spatial arrangement of the elements when I follow a series, I want to be free to enjoy the substance of the painting from different distances. This is why a fundamental work in order to appreciate Maria the painter is her permanent piece at the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice. Far from being intimidated by Mario Botta's far from easy and barely resolved space in the Venetian palace, Maria constructs her own painted and coloured architecture, which is so natural and classical that it seems to have already existed and fused with the rest of the palace; and by "the rest" we are talking about Carlo Scarpa (6) and Venice in general... Only by going obstinately against mediocrity can the presuppositions for such a strong human quality and sensitivity be created.

It is not easy to extract from the [www.mariamorganti.it](http://www.mariamorganti.it) archive the material that leads to such a free and intense sensitivity. The artist's restraint puts everything on the same level with a sense of modesty and impartiality. With the excuse of not wanting to hide anything from us, everything is presented under the same light and with no prominence.

I have accused Maria of self-harming behaviour and even of insensitivity towards her audience, which is submerged by thousands of words or tools and by timid little images. I suggested that she try to extrapolate from the configuration of the archive something different and radically distant, on a different level to the obsessive layout of [mariamorganti.it](http://mariamorganti.it).

She took advantage of this, enlisting me on the spot, and now I find myself viewing interminable pages and visiting ALL the meanderings of the site in search of works, images, clues and processes, in other words

anything that allows me to distil the best and the unmissable of her work despite the sludge, the temporal scansions, the repetitions, the recipes, the “Statements”, the “News” and the “Documents”. I would like to be able to have my own personal virtual collection of “Morganti”, leaving aside Maria and all the blah blah blah...

Having accompanied her back to the bar of her beloved spritz (7) and having corrupted her disloyal worker and studio caretaker, we open all the drawers and the storeroom, rummaging through all of her works, and in doing so we create our ideal list of the works we would like to enjoy. This is what I mean by my idea of the “guided tour” I am creating as an alternative to the voracious menu of [mariamorganti.it/home](http://mariamorganti.it/home) (8).

## Notes

1 Almost everything has been photographed by Francesco Allegretto, an impartial and loyal custodian of the painter’s colour, who also manages to transmit a lot of the substance of the painting. However, as is always the case, a photograph can never be a perfect witness of an artwork.

2 Quoting Maria is the dripping of the paintbrushes which are cleaned a little in order to be used again. But what other tools does she use? We could say spray, spools, spatulas, colours in leaf, in film, in laminate. At the moment she is having fun with Plasticene, powders, sponges and stones; the sign of a reawakening.

3 Fortunately, Maria is always smiling and even if she can seem repetitive and monotonous, she is never boring.

4 A few figures have appeared in early drawings of works by past masters, but they are merely ghosts of works which have been got rid of.

5 The “L'unità di misura è il colore” exhibition curated by Chiara Bertola at the Castelvecchio Museum in Verona in 2010 was exemplary. Fortunately, a painting is occasionally placed above a connecting door, which is also the case at the Fondazione Querini Stampalia in Venice. And in some cases the works can even be seen from behind, as in “History of a Painting” ed. Corraini, Mantua, 2006, an artist’s book created with Barry Schwabsky, or they deploy their stratigraphy as in the micro-photos of the “Infinite Painting”.

6 Maria is lucky enough not only to live in Venice but to actually live in a house designed by Carlo Scarpa.

7 I don’t want you to think of a Maria who prefers the bar to the studio, as that is not the case. It is her city that forces its residents to endure constant physical exercise and mental stress, mitigated traditionally by a stream of alcohol.

8 I would like to thank Maria and Roberto Boldi for their assistance on the [mariamorganti.it](http://mariamorganti.it) project.