

*Ars fluendi*, Alberto Mugnaini Pantani-Surace, Gli Ori, Prato, 2006.

One thing that can be said about the works of Lia Pantani and Giovanni Surace is that they *occur*. Nothing seems to endure in its physical state: depending on the work, everything is either gassy or evaporative, oozing or crackling. Everything is fluent. Even objects, by virtue of a kind of atmospheric empathy, melt as if in obedience to a paradoxical climate. What we know about a candelabrum is that it has wax that melts, a certain number of small flames and a barely perceptible thread of smoke. The luminous effect is often magnified by filaments of globules or tesserae of glass that acquire an additional glimmer. But what should one say if this upward motion is offset by a contrast, both elementary and symbolic, if fire is tempered by water and the rising heat is counterposed by a downward dripping? This is what happens in *Se la memoria mi dice il vero (If Memory Serves Me Right)*, where a downward movement is produced, as if in search of another route, another direction. It is as if the lamp was not a support for inserting objects, namely candles, which produce a particular effect, that of remaining alight, and fulfil the function of providing illumination, but instead an entity with a dual flow, where the effects are forgotten; this entity becomes concrete in the wake it leaves behind it, thereby actuating a two-fold consumption of the object, which is reduced to a bare skeleton, because the glass was ice and ice is the vitrification of water.

But rather than seeping away into the ground, water may be channelled in unexpected directions: the flow of water can be used to send a message, *Ti amo*, 'I love you' or to make a statement, *Un po' è vero*, 'It's partly true'. The writing is transudation, the product of a slow oozing and filtering, a soggianness that impregnates a limy support, a false wall that becomes a field where things come to the surface and a blank page for a subcutaneous form of writing: a sub-writing that does not trace but penetrates and soaks, that branches into letters and bends into meaning, slowly and physically introducing itself and trying to keep pace with its own evaporation. This is thanks to a grid of small supply tubes snaking around at the back, a water circulation system, a tangle of veins, of drip pipes, for constant watering: a writing that expands and shrinks, dribbles and dilates due to the effect of minimal tides, a liquid verb that depends on the degree and measure of the moistening, always on the brink of erasure and insignificance, either due to drying out or to flooding. The writing is a damp message, an infiltration of sense that depends upon this instability of the surrounds, of the intensity, in these rings, as the air dries it out on the surface and a slow drip of moisture within keeps it visible. There is here the celebration of a singular type of writing; it is simultaneous, not the work of the human hand, an irradiated writing that does not retain the trace of a flow, that does not stretch out parallel to the extension of time, but which is released simultaneously, like an inner stamp imprinted by breathing matter.

Sometimes it is the spectator who moves, setting in train another occurrence, an innumerable series of micro-occurrences, or rather fractures, crumbling, sound ticks underfoot: in *Non spiegatemi perché la pioggia si trasforma in grandine (Don't Explain to Me why Rain Turns into Hail)*, the communion wafers or coloured lentils that carpet the floor, shaped and manually flattened out one by one, reveal their secret in the act of being stepped upon; they free their hidden notes in the moment in which they break and emit an autumnal crackle. Circular sheets, onomatopoeia of a dry, quick chromaticity that is completed in the act of breaking – like Dante's emerald,

much more bright and radiant “in the hour in which it breaks down” – from a synaesthetic point of view, as tactile litter, sonorous friction and visual quivering.

In the work of Giovanni and Lia there is always the idea of a flow, of a change in state, of a dispersion that generates sense. Even when tackling the theme of reflection and mirroring, they produce elusive, liquid images. Through the superimposition of reflecting strips of film that swell up into irregular bubbles as if due to lacrimation inside the surface of the mirror, what disperses, is deformed and multiplies is the reflected image, which slips as if on swollen, congealed dew, breaks into fragments and slides away as if carried off by drops of mercury. In *Un oscuro complotto (An Obscure Plot)*, on the other hand, it is a sound current that is channelled and that radiates out in the afternoon somnolence of a Tuscan village through the entryphones at the doors of the houses, all open on the same music or sound, tuned to the same radio station. The village is transformed into one large soundbox, into a cloud of bricks and plaster from which sounds and voices rain down.

Precipitation, evaporation, melting, fluxes of liquid, sound and even gas: *La casa d'elio (The Helium House)* filtered another emission of sounds, the vocal ones of the spectators, through the attenuating presence of helium, which carried off the voices, lifting them towards peaks of high notes in unexpected falsettos, like sound balloons.

This fluctuating adventure releases a meteoric capacity in art. A change of state is accompanied by a jump in meaning, a break in the succession of facts that generates surprise, a domestication of becoming that translates into the serene stupor of matter broken and reconciled in the flow of language.