

23 June 1764 vedovamazzei Pantani-Surace, Gli Ori, Prato, 2006.

23 June, 1764, the bishop of Pienza, Francesco Piccolomini, is arrested and sent into exile.

A bit earlier.

Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, born on 17 July, 1738 in the smelliest place in France, the Cimetière des Innocents in Paris, rejected by his mother from birth, rejected by wet nurses because he has no odor, rejected by religious institutions, manages to survive, in spite of everything and everyone, and in spite of his ugly and disagreeable appearance. All of this notwithstanding, the protagonist manages to endure every adversity and, growing up, gradually discovers that he possesses an inestimable gift: an extremely refined olfactory sense, a prodigious capacity to perceive, distinguish and catalog ODORS .

The sense of smell is the most ancient of the useful senses; it classifies, categorizes, makes you lose your head, distributes odors, puts them into your brain and from then on they create tumult: odors cannot be seen, they are smelled, they are brush-strokes for the nose.

Odor has its own present, the time of the duration of a sniff, a woman passing, a man's wrist, a man's neck, the armpits of people from the South of France, the smell of victory, something burning, pleasant odors, strong odors and so forth.

Odor is the second, or rather the younger brother of the atmosphere of planet earth; it insinuates itself like a ghost, enters everywhere, and in everything that moves creates a boundary violable by the nose.

In animated cartoons it is presented like the fingers of the aurora from the Aeneid.

Or like the right hand of David Bowie in an old video clip, moving undulating from left to right at nose level.

An old De Sica film would be fine, too - a nice black and white, perhaps set in Naples, or Rome, around the central stations, the tenements, if you will, you can see that in the lower right part of the screen there are piles of trash - well, in this case the odor is hidden in the absence of color, the black/white of the film manages to disintegrate the nose, the image, even the one in the most vigorous motion is homogenized with other elements, the B/W tone is everywhere, a sort of a democracy of CINEMA.

Odor needs color to imagine itself, and to allow us to take advantage of it.

They are obviously allusions to the possible manifestations of odor, so much one could write but what madness to deal with it. It never ends.

The biggest trouble came when two MADMEN got it into their heads to do something.

The size of the trouble is equal to the conviction and patience and time and how many got involved in that lovely story.

Someone is already lauding the word alchemy or thereabouts, hmmm, I have my doubts.

The deed: Pantani-Surace, who are friends of mine, decided to make something, a work, of art. Italians are gossips. Did Prezzolini say that? I don't remember, but it was one of the greats of that generation there. We're paying the consequences of those lovely intuitions. Anyway let's get back to us, to them, the two Artists. THE ODOR OF THE PAST. We know, we imagine that natural odors are almost always the same. It's hard to digest, but we suppose that's the way it is. On the whole it might be that way. What we leave behind us after we've eaten is with adequate nuances quite similar from one man to the next. The fermentation of foods in our bodies produces sonorous affirmation of disgust.

But this is not the two artists' field.

Not disgust, but preparation with the simple purpose of doing odor archeology?

The smell of African pine was the same 2000 years ago. We request that philosophers stay away from this text.

2001.

In the refectory of the Calci Monastery in Pisa, the aforementioned, with the aid of timed devices, sprayed into the air the odors of food from a dinner on 23 June, 1764.

Do you know why they did it? I don't. But I imagine, and for some strange reason I have to say, quarreling in art is difficult, damn it, it's like going back in time and deciding to kick the ass of a few brutes from the past. But seriously though. For me, it's still an unknown. In the end, art is nothing other than strategically and rigorously imposing your own taste on others.

Earning enough and wussing around left and right.

Earning a dinner, perhaps, from 1764, with our noses wide open, why not?

I didn't smell the dinner, but I saw its birth, a hubbub of time, a hubbub of enthusiasm, it was like finding the perfume of God before the one who made it. Giovanni Surace is from Calabria, he has a fantastic mom, he speaks the language of Vibo; Lia Pantani is Tuscan from Florence, nearby actually, her grandfather taught her to make a liver paté that has no equal, for the love of Giovanni she went to Calabria and learned Vibonese. That way Giovanni's mom is happier.

The fact that one is Calabrese and the other Tuscan is something to study; the Calabrese is a bit diffident, the Tuscan open, with the right amount of pride, but they tricked me, I love cooking and its odors. Maybe I didn't go on purpose.

But they made a fresco, pulverized colors becoming essence, a perfect fresco or painting for the nose alone.

But how do you paint a nice hunk of warm bread? Or chocolate? Or mushrooms? Or a roast? Blessed Carthusian Monks.

Don't forget that they made us dance the tango without allowing us to listen to music, don't forget that they made the chandeliers cry, don't forget the mildewed damp walls, directing the humidity to create words, phrases. Don't forget that the magical sensation of odor in a beautiful monastery, odor of a clamorous ghost dinner, the taste of which was imposed by them and by the past, without allowing us to lick our lips and make silly comments about taste. Odor is relative in us, and to avoid silly comments, the two artists imposed a universal certainty.

"Olfactory pleasures not being more absolute than other sorts of pleasures, one would do well to rise above conventional judgments about odors.

It is a petty criterion, that which defines as 'perverted' the seeker of wisdom who, having cleaned his toes with his fingers, sniffs his hand with secret joy."

John Barth, *Floating Opera* (italian edition: *L'opera galleggiante*, p. 263)

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