

In her abstract-biblical-narrative essay, here published (p. 51), Daniela Papadia writes, contemplating, in front of her cycle of paintings *Inside Me*, dedicated to the theme of pregnancy: “The arrow... will open a wound. The desire has been transformed into a wound and the Eros that animated it will reclaim its victories and cure the fallen.”

This *Inside Me* cycle contains forty-five paintings of a pregnant woman, a rarity in the history of painting, related to the motive of the arrow. It is erotic, fragmented and harmonious, dramatic in its color expression, which is connected to the reflections of fire and water.

The sensual bodies, one in each painting, are like a screen on which tens of figures are projected, and they are simultaneously transparent, as showing a tattoo under their skin. It is interesting the painterly fact, that within the accumulation of details and crowded little figures—the intimate silence of the central figure is radiated all along the *Inside Me* cycle, so connected to the visual culture of the Italian Baroque, consciously or not. And so it is the case related to Daniela’s central series of paintings where dancing women are floating in blue light over an astonished crowd, watching these ballet angels in the height of space.

These suspended feminine figures, in their anti-gravitational movements, in a declaration of liberation—lead us to associations with the high achievements of the architectural painting of the Baroque, where angels and figures inhabit the illusionist deep illuminated skies. We find it in the impressive frescos by Pietro da Cortona in the Roman Palazzo Barberini, and in *Trionfo di Bacco e Arianna* at Palazzo Farnese, just to mention two Roman examples, or the Orazio Gentileschi Caravaggesque painting at the Pinacoteca di Brera, where the gesture of the angel seemed to be taken from a *Sospesi* [Suspended] canvas by Daniela Papadia.

We relate here to the visual components and not to the basic concepts,

which are so much different, as different are these worlds, socially, politically and culturally.

Daniela is an idealistic artist, whose art is based on clear thematic messages: Feminism, or the women’s existential situation; Multiculturalism in a changing society; the crowd and its everyday rituals.

These themes are frequently overlapping and they touch reflections about nomadism in our time, characterized by displacement and nomadism, where people and their culture move from south to north, from east to west. Paintings crowded with veiled Islamic women and others with hundreds of prayers in a mosque in a perfect geometric order are paralleled with an image of a corporation office, where an infinite number of clerks, mainly women, are installed, in a geometric order, in front of their computers, in a socio-economical and technological environment.

Those are the expressions of daily life rituals, and we remember the large scale digitalized photographic work by Andreas Gursky, where rows of women in front of their computers spread out up to the horizon. A working-place as a daily life ritual, shown at the MoMA of New York, shifted the appreciation toward digital photography, and broke the economical value limits of contemporary photography.

We put together the works by Daniela Papadia with the Baroque of the 17th century, with the photography by Gursky, the relatively young German artist, and with the works by Leon Golub, the American pioneer of realistic

political art of the end of the fifties, who dedicated his life and art to the protest against tyranny, oppression, and racism.

The paintings by Daniela, included in her series Profughi d'identità [Refugees of identity], like the image of young black prisoners with closed eyes, held by an oppressing regime, radiate this atmosphere of solidarity and protest, known in the paintings by Leon Golub.

The fact that we relate Daniela Papadia's work both to such contemporary artists, and to the joyous grandeur of the Baroque, may prove the integration of polarities in her art, which is in itself a "photo based painting": the metamorphosis of photography into painting. It answers the consideration of the philosopher Jean Baudrillard, in his essay For illusion isn't the opposite of reality: "The photographic image, by its technical essence, came from somewhere beyond, or before, aesthetics, and by that token constitutes a substantial revolution in our mode of representation. The irruption of photography throws art itself into question in its aesthetic monopoly of the image. Now, today, things have turned around: it is art which is swallowing up photography, and not the other way around."²

The departure step for these painting-in-process, the photo-based paintings by Daniela, is the digital elaboration of the chosen photographic image. Here starts the creative adventure, satisfied or tortured, from the computer's screen to the canvas, from the printed support to the completed painting.

And each painting bears a social, political and spiritual saying: "Beauty holds protest, disagreement evaporates into mystery, displacement breaths enigmatic rituals, antigravitational power declares feminist liberation, pregnancy radiates joy and suffering."

The photography, chosen as a support and as a concept, seemed to represent a segment of reality, of "truth." But the photographic image is not a reality, for not being in scale, and mainly for being isolated from the real situations and environment within which the photo, as a segment of reality was taken by the objective.

It becomes an object, a document of partial reality. So, this objectdocument is a report about the choice of the photographer and his point of view. A not-in-scale photographic object is a document of its own isolation. But within the alchemy of the process that transforms photography into painting, through digital superimposed collage-like methods, their definition and its philosophy are melted.

Now, when it becomes a support for painting and as catalyst to the execution of the handmade painting, its silence, defined by Baudrillard as "its most precious quality," has to be filled rather than watched at.

All the technical details and terms, which accompanied the art of painting throughout its history, from the color theories to chiaroscuro, to perspective etc., all exist in the menu of Photoshop ... But these are means for the struggle to transmit a message, and in a digitalized photo-based painting they are the wings of the high-tech alchemist.

In her strive to touch spiritual and poetic sources of remote and archaic cultures for a conceptual enforcement of her images and their message, Daniela Papadia searches into philological biblical terms, mainly related to

feminine myths. They accompany her cycle Inside Me, mentioned above, in a

rare and courageous painterly approach. The archaic melody of words like Bassar, Isha, Bat Kallah are melted into the forms. They are presented like a bridge over the infinite distances of deserts and times.

Memories, as remote history, exist now. Everything is contemporary.

The presence of the arrow in the Inside Me paintings, its relation to Eros and blood, is definitely connected to saint Teresa in her ecstasy, in the Bernini art installation at Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome.

“Do not ignore the echo, because of echoes you live,” wrote Edmond Jabès.³

And the Inside Me figures are listening to echoes arriving from far away, maybe from the cries of Hagar in the archaic desert, and we listen to them through the sensible colored brush strokes and refined vision by Daniela Papadia.