

## *Philippe Pastor. Strategies of Impulse*

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In the era of mass media – cinema, television, Internet – that diffuses transitory forms of communication in an often dumbed-down and opportunist manner, we are seeing interesting artistic experiments with an emotional or even existential identification resurface. When technological media translate into a feeling of remoteness and separation, some artistic practices react by seeking physical immersion, a connection with the latent forces and vital energies of the Earth, the instinctual urge of anthropological primitiveness.

Between monumental paintings and wooden sculpture, Philippe Pastor's experiment develops into a myriad of underground perspectives that transcend the ephemeral aspects of today's fad-driven society. It opens up a reflection on the issues of community and the environment, without neglecting either the endogenous relationship with Nature or the symbolic interpretation of things. The large panels that Pastor is making for the Monaco Pavilion recreate some kind of scene from the cosmic drama, entitled "The Sky is Watching the Earth". Similar to satellite images of Earth, these scenes, arranged as if in three acts, turn our eyes to a type of chaos, both human and natural, divided into several thematic frames: Nature, the North Pole, and Pollution. The panels refer respectively to the "North Pole", the "Cyclones" and "Disfigured Nature".

In these works, the artist's creative process is not in search of a unique space of knowledge. On the contrary, he perceives an unknown space that incorporates lots of natural pigments from Morocco (ochre, brown, blue and green), which blend with natural elements (branches, dry leaves, sand, etc.), handled and modelled using fire and various liquids (mainly water), as well as compressed air.

With the oxyhydrogen flame, water and "soils", Pastor invents an amorphous representation of the world, rich in evocations of the unexpected forces through which we pass. At the core of the representation are his emotional responses to climatic changes, death, fears and ecological disasters. He channels this anxiety in the pictorial flows conveyed in his works. Philippe Pastor's contribution consists of a core of three large works created with wooden panels, positioned as if they are the wings of a theatre of the World, with materials so natural they can be left in the open air and will resist bad weather.

The panels of the Biennale seem to reveal three almost cruel and animal visions. A changing, uncertain surface dominates these panels, upon which the material's evolution depends on the lamented concerns and desires. Watching the Earth from the sky leads us to reconsider reality from above, based on the adoption of "strategies of impulse", that know how to rise from the soul and the spirit, penetrating to the heart of the muddy surfaces, the rumbling pigment and the metal mesh that symbolically controls and supports everything.

Art is necessarily an experiment in ebullition, an unknown route towards which the instinctual loads of a new understanding about places of matter and nature flow.

Fully imbued with forces that develop and become urgent, Pastor's works reveal to us a world that is animated with changing environments, where gestures and actions depend on the emotions and desires extracted from all types of religious or moral systems. A world peopled with ancestral presences, with masses of a strong material thickness, which have been rigorously handled and onto which pieces of wood, burnt surfaces and fabrics engraved with anthropomorphic signs have been overlaid. These are the amorphous icons that almost crack and swell because of their dynamic tendency to isolate or seek themselves, spread upon a beautiful setting of large chromatic areas, which vary from browns to blues and other colours. They live in

an ever increasing state of aggregation, among the elements of an earthly conscience (muddy areas, natural fragments and materials). They are subjected to chromatic energy flows, as if they are becoming metaphors for a passage followed by a life and death instinct.

All the works allow a state of transitory existence to be perceived, a vision of immeasurable weight: in other words, the ideological reference. At the very most, the only quantifiable entity is the physical substance of the pictorial gesture.

Pastor salvages the value of culture as nature, as a source that generates its own existential trace. A culture distinguished by a relationship of closeness, almost of promiscuity with the forces of the cosmos.

The relationship between Man and his Earth has always had a psychic and living character. He who experiences and examines a given territory necessarily depends on it. In this dependence, an aspect concerning the sense of transformation and the passing of time must always be distinguished.

The pigment that, spread out and stretched, rumbles and floods the surface, is destined to strengthen and revitalise the law, which implies that man no longer has his own life and that he is led to merge into the endogenous and terrestrial movements of his own Earth.

The «The Sky is Watching the Earth» series tends to present itself to the spectator as a scenario affected by upheavals and changes, currents and turbulence to which human concerns are added. Pastor's impulse impels him to transmit the secret echo of his Earth, by transposing it onto the canvas without any theoretical speculation, no preordained schema, abstract and minimal.

A movement of expansion, charging towards the emulsion and burst of colour, towards an alchemy of mixtures, invades these works. It is about a movement resulting from exchanges with the zones of existence that, from time to time, open onto the mundaneness of everyday life, there where reality suddenly slows down, before losing itself, to discover the vibrant and powerful surface of the anthropological context.

Thus, the whole series arises from an exploration of the imaginary space discerned in the bowels of Nature and history.

The images of Pastor's fluctuating universe, the apparitions of that which is no more and that which is not yet also include metal sheets he has recovered from places devastated by attacks and accidents, by the dramatic events that shatter communities. In the composition of the paintings, among the pictorial elements and the debris of objects, it is not only the tension that leads us towards the primitive: it is also a collapse into the magnitude of biological evolution and phenomenological reality.

All interventions seem to secretly recall the «natural state», in other words, the state of man, as described by Rousseau, before society was organised. A vast repertoire of latent spirits seems to be evoked, according to an interpenetration of white, greenish, bluish or blurred cloudiness.

Passing through the fire paintings of Burri and Yves Klein and the sedimentation of Tápies and Kiefer, Pastor's unusual alchemy produces a different "pictorial experience", providing a new source and new points of approach. One of these is the group of totem-trees, "The Burned Trees". These ancient trees of the Garde-Freinet forest (Massif des Maures), which were burnt in a fire caused by arson, mark a new course: a course that, this time, is appeasing and turned towards the sky. This group of tall black trees is recreated with chromatic additions, coloured elements made using forms of debris from places struck by criminal disasters. These applications of colour – from yellow to green and red – may be compared to steps that perhaps seek to help us transcend the sociological rhetoric of the global era.

Through the motif of the revitalised tree, comparable to the debris of an attack, Pastor opens up an exchange between the reversible energy of terrestrial gods and the energy borrowed again from the ancient fetish. Thus, the tree ends up stimulating a bid for redemption thanks to the vitality of its own upward structure. In addition, the layout of the group underscores the ritual and original aspects of the tree installation, bringing a new expressive source to a distant knowledge.

Therefore, Pastor's iconography escapes from the prison of a realist narrative and takes refuge in a representation suspended between being and not being, continually fed by the amorphous expressivity of the material. In addition, the pigments spread and their thicknesses reflect the violence of atmospheric convulsions

pushed to their limit by climatic changes. The artistic language combines here with the terrestrial element, linked to pathos, a vehicle of passion and metamorphosis. In fact, the passionate investiture of this artistic interpretation of the world affirms the fundamental character of the deep psychic spirit. One discovers that the immovable reference points - the ethical, cultural and perceptive systems - are only very minimal sensitive areas that submit to a whole theatre of magical voices whose start and conclusion cannot be seen.

Now a circuit of underground secretions, Pastor starts to play with the cosmic mystery, tremors and fears. Sometimes, he creates black or red contrasts to further enrich his topography of the world, to allow old-fashioned movement in the scheme of the Earth's maternal belly. It is around this enigmatic progression that the framework of a dialogue with the turbulences of life and the questions one asks oneself about the elements of the Jungian "collective unconscious" turn, not consigned to the individual sphere. Like Jung, Pastor finds, in the collective subconscious, a being that consists of archetypal images, presenting itself in the form of primitive icons. The revelatory nature of these primitive signs follows their need to become visible forces.

To the mechanical and illusory passing of time, given by the expedients of media laboratories, the pictorial introduction of this Monegasque artist adds the participation of an overworld, of a sensation of a different "terrestrial metabolism". He detaches his gaze from the diurnal God of global truth to turn towards the dream-like and unpredictable God of the planet Earth.

Pastor models spiritual fetishes, before physical and factual fetishes. He therefore phenomenologically proposes a relationship with the Other. And, to a certain degree, the Other takes on the appearance of a demoniacal and pagan energy that invents a mythical and poetic sense of belonging to the heritage of the primitive and original.

There is no idolatry of what is intelligible at the level of what is seen or lived. The amorphous image is the form given to the "first" manifestations: in a certain sense, to the "mythical" manifestations, because they intend to establish themselves at the very source of human evolution. From this perspective, Pastor's art still manages to preserve the impulsive flow that incorporates "the knowledge and power men have acquired in order to master the forms of nature and to extract therefrom the resources that allow him to satisfy his needs" (Freud).

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