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Enrico DAVID
Cielo di giugno

February 9 – March 20, 2021
Tuesday – Saturday; 11–19 (by appointment)

Gió Marconi is pleased to announce *Cielo di giugno*, Enrico David's first solo show at the gallery.

The work in the exhibition manifests a distinctive pull towards both lightness and a craving for the horizon, in part following the and reacting to David's Venice experience: original material such as notes, drafts and drawings that are typically at the core of all of his work were conceived during the conceptual stages of the Italian Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennial. *Cielo di giugno* marks a threshold in David's practice, in that it is his first exhibition composed exclusively of graphic works, of "beginnings" and "clues" which in different circumstances would have migrated to other media and modes of expression. The sequence of works, oscillating between proximity and distance, sinking and gliding, underlines David's position as a painter and finds its pretext in an exteriority made of air and atmosphere, dust motes and light, waning wind and twilight, the sun, the moon and endless vistas. The act of observing is equal to sitting on a clod of earth - or on an unlikely bench, waiting for irreducible remains. Here the horizon is the utopia that Edoardo Galeano describes as a kind of tension: drawing us closer but inevitably shifting further away, its only purpose being to allow us to move forward.

The exhibition comprises three groups of paintings. On the shorter walls of the space two works are being displayed which function as an imaginary parenthesis, facing each other and enclosing their content. *Il fraterno silenzio del fango* (2020) and *Zattera viva* (2020) are two large canvases which, like an architecture, form a supporting structure for the other works and represent the trellis onto which all the rest is fixed, entangled: kites, hovering in a light that no longer conveys matter, and with their eternal melancholic dream they yield to their fall. Or *rafts*, whose color blends and dissolves, and whose customary harmony – both reflective and meditative - holds earth and sky together, the material and the incorporeal, on the verge of dissolving. In contrast, the small canvases are virtually studies, compositions which, like riddles, explore the possibility of painting, or how to paint in the least pictorially possible way.

Bassa marea al molo, Fossa madre, Cielo trema o niente, Punti di fiamma, Salvezza trovata in cielo, together with the exhibition's title piece *Cielo di giugno* (all works 2020) reveal the unfolding of the images at a faster pace, with the excited gesture of something happening or about to happen: instants that spin around before falling back on themselves, sowing signs of sentiment. The work evokes a sculptural feel that refers to natural elements such as grass, bamboo canes, mud, materials frequently found in Enrico David's work.

The gallery walls are painted in the same natural tone as the canvases in order to enhance the materiality – or its absence – of the pictorial surface.

Cielo di giugno, Acrab's sky, the "lady of the blue". Beyond the past spring never lived, beyond the encounter of human transience and nature's unperturbed cycle, beyond this endless winter, summer fades away and what remains is an unsettling tenderness.

An essay by Rita Selvaggio accompanies the exhibition.

Enrico David (b. 1966, Ancona, Italy). He currently lives and works in London.

Recent exhibitions include: *Gradations of Slow Release*, MCA, Chicago, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, USA (2019); 58th Venice Biennale, Italian Pavilion curated by Milovan Farronato, Venice, Italy (2019); *Fault Work*, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah, UAE (2016); *Autoparent*, Lismore Castle Arts, Lismore, Ireland (2016); The Hepworth Wakefield, West Yorkshire, UK (2015); Maramotti Collection, Reggio Emilia, Italy (2015); UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, USA (2013); 55th Venice Biennale curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Venice, Italy (2013); *Head Gas*, New Museum, New York, USA (2011); *Repertorio Ornamentale*, Bevilacqua La Masa Foundation, Venice, Italy (2011); *How Do You Love Dzzzzt by Mammy?*, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel, Switzerland (2009); *Bulbous Marauder*, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, USA (2008); *Ultra Paste*, ICA, London, UK (2007) and 50th Venice Biennale curated by Francesco Bonami, Venice, Italy (2003).

Enrico David
Cielo di giugno

June sky, early summer sky. After the wait for light and its dazzle, the hemispherical vault recalls the season of a long-awaited inner time where thinking corresponds to taking tender *care* and desiring to contemplating what is not there, but that reveals itself in the form of a possibility. The gaze is turned on the enigma of our own, inner sky, on the movement of its constellations, on that language of feeling and suffering to which Leopardi referred or to the alphabet of stars of which Mallarmé spoke. A form of care, this, that consists above all in an unbounded opening up to whatever happens, when the gaze in a toing and froing of perceptions goes beyond to gain access to the experience of being possible, open in its turn to every possibility. That of *June sky*, a sky flocked with clouds swollen with nothing, is in fact precisely the time when the gaze lights on a visible that is in a perennial state of metamorphosis, a sky in which disobedient and snow-white forms appear, as light as kites and yet able to appease hunger and slake thirst, or signs that like needles sew the image onto the canvas, ripping the fabric of the discourse. Like a reckless tearing away, almost an abuse. 'A giving the measure of how much material can be left untouched,' as the artist himself puts it, or even, more simply, the need to keep faith with thirst without confusing it with the evaporation of water. Enrico David peoples his space with faces, cyphers of iteration and reflection. His faces all have a question mark in their eyes or eyes from which rain pearls; faces whose common fragility stretches out in comet tails as in a caress that comes from who knows where. Sometimes the face can accommodate an apparition, as in *Da già non più ad ancora qui, ancora qui* (*From already no more to still here, still here*, 2020), while in others, like *Da già non più ad ancora qui, già non più* (*From already no more to still here, already no more*, 2020), a composition with a length of bamboo cane, a profile and a potato, finds the infinite in the smallest things. Obeying the great laws of the corporeal materiality of breathing, their light dissolves the space of living we call reality. Once more on this occasion, the artist brings a history tattooed in the body and in the gaze back to life and, before this grows pale, hangs out in the sunshine of the day what knocks on the eyelids in the dark of the night, with a way of acting that is in tune with actions, recognizing their intentions.

The exhibition *Cielo di giugno* (*June sky*), revealing a very personal inclination to lightness, combined with a great yearning for horizon, stems in part from the experience of Venice, in the sense that the original materials, notes, drafts and drawings that normally generate David's work were conceived and jotted down during the period he was working on his contributions to the Italian Pavilion at the 58th Biennale. It should be stressed that this show marks a new stage in Enrico David's artistic practice. It is the first time in fact that one of his solo exhibitions consists exclusively of graphic works, of 'initiations' and 'indications' that in other circumstances are usually couched in different media and languages. Their sequence, wavering between proximity and distance, underlines Enrico David's position as a painter and has as its pretext an outward appearance made up of air and atmosphere, notes of dust and light, of falling wind and first darkness. The sun and the moon and the wide field are moreover concentrations of verticality that are contrasted with vast expanses. In this logic, the acts of sinking and overflying are part of the same movement and, dispelling any protective certainty, deliver us up to an unlimited uncertainty. Observing then becomes something equivalent to sitting on a clod of earth or an impossible bench to await an irreducible remain. When waiting risks being seduced by utopia, then the line of the horizon, as Eduardo Galeano put it, becomes more of a tension. We want to approach it but it always moves farther away, and in practice that is its only purpose, simply to allow us to go on moving forward.

The exhibition conceived for this occasion is made up essentially of three groups of paintings: paintings that speak of air, of open air, pictures of air and pictures of light that solidify an early summer breeze or blue scales of sea. The shorter walls of the space constitute a sort of parenthesis and, one facing the other, enclose its contents. *Il fraterno silenzio del fango* (*The fraternal silence of mud*, 2020) and *Zattera viva* (*Living raft*, 2020) are two canvases of large size that, like in a work of architecture, constitute the supporting structure for the other works and represent the lattices in which the rest gets stuck. A sign, just an indication, the branch of a tree or a blade of grass like the slender thread of a textile, or rather many blades of grass that are interwoven on the surface of the canvas, asserting the right to silence and to slowness, to the feeling of the subsurface and hesitation. And again, kites as happy as a smile that, like steps leading down and not up, get caught in the air. We snuggle in the theatre of inner life as if in the recesses of a shell that hides just as many masks as it does truths. With a light that no longer transmits material and with the eternal dream of melancholy, these figures of shadow give themselves up to caducity, to *rafts* that offer refuge from the theft of bodies and whose colour, before melting away, fuses with and dissolves into the customary reflective and meditative tone. Like floating anchors they hold together earth and sky, gestures and shivers, what is material with what has no substance and risks being lost.

Listen to Pound, the poet of Imagism :

What thou lovest well remains,

the rest is dross

What thou lov'st well shall not be reft from thee

What thou lov'st well is thy true heritage

(The Pisan Cantos – Canto LXXXI)

Moments of consciousness give time to breathe, prolonging the exhalation as much as possible and then slowly learning to let go. In fact every breath simply teaches us to let go. Breathing in takes, but breathing out leaves. It goes out into the world and teaches us to let go in the conviction that conditions are not going to persist. When everything has already happened, it is necessary to bring into the image what is left, the reflection, the trace, as for the feeling of the dream that remains after the dream has faded, leaving a diffuse fragrance, as for the wraiths of the dream itself, sometimes without outlines and without words, as for the snow that is unsealed in the sun, or again, as for the palm leaves on which the Cumaean Sibyl wrote her prophecies in hexameters, leaves that were immediately scattered by the whirling of the wind.

Under a sky of lifeless stars, amongst maternal and lost lands, Enrico David's recent works focus precisely on this irreducible 'rest', on the reflections of a truth that has always evaded comprehension, on what it is right to keep and what to dissipate instead. On that *Economy of the Unlost*, a theme dear to Anne Carson who, in the book of the same name, speaks of humanity's place in the world of poetry and the place of poetry in the human world, laying claim, in a precious and measured language, to the centrality of intimacy as opposed to the sincerity of complementary stages. It is that 'economy of language' that in its turn connects visible and invisible, presences and absences, in space and in time. After all the nature of memory is precisely this, a limited movement of thought against an infinite background – the 'paradigm of what the poet does in confrontation with void. He thinks it and he thanks it' – from the mystery of memory to the mystery of the silence, not to say anything. Or to say everything. The portraits in *Untitled (Tasha)*, *Untitled (Bonnie)* and *Untitled (Santi)* are the faces of the other, the faces of those who reside with us, those YOUS that essentially are the ghosts of the ME. They are mostly studies, insubstantial images of a temporary jargon, visual compositions that explore the possibilities of painting as if it were a sort of acrostic, or rather, of how to paint in the least pictorial way possible. The idea of the face is 'the form the other takes in our presence' as Lévinas put it. Indeed, perhaps we could speak of the experience of the face as experience of the other that, alone in its solitude, draws in this case on the empathic system and stirs it up to the point of compassion, making it sufficient unto itself. 'It is as if the intimate scale of these portraits were suggesting the opportunity for a relationship with the immensity and the emptiness of what is outside, with the passion of the outside,' says the artist. And he adds '*Untitled (after Boccioni)*, perhaps a response to the modern idol of Boccioni? Or perhaps the attempt to make a point about the electricity unleashed outside and inside the subject.'

Bassa marea al molo (Low tide on the quay), Fossa madre (Mother grave), Cielo trema o niente (Sky trembles or nothing), or Puntini di fiamma (Dots of flame), Salvezza trovata in cielo (Salvation found in heaven), all from 2020, like Cielo di giugno (June sky) that gives the exhibition its title, are canvases in which the image occurs more rapidly, with the animated gesture of something that is happening or about to happen, moments that go round and round only to fall back on themselves, sowing signs of feeling. They are sculptural traces that make reference to natural elements like grass, bamboo canes or mud, materials that are used frequently in Enrico David's practice. The walls of the space are painted the same natural colour as canvas and the images come to life in the whiteness that separates one thought from another. A way of artificially seeking the materiality or the lack of materiality of the surface that holds the paintings, a double knot to bind us to our own time and to the time that is not there, to what happens and what is unlikely.

June sky, sky of Acrab, the 'lady of blue', beyond the last spring ever lived, beyond the clash between the caducity of the human and the imperturbable cyclicity of nature, beyond this long winter, even the most intense light can fade away and vanish. The summer does not outlive the summer and what remains is a strange and discomfoting tenderness.

Listen to Pound again:

If the hoar frost grip thy tent

Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent

(The Pisan Cantos – Canto LXXXIV).

Rita Selvaggio

February 2021

Translation by Christopher Huw Evans