

BREADTH AND VASTNESS OF PURE VISION

26.03.2024

GALLERIA CONTINUA / BEIJING is pleased to present, eight years after his first exhibition in its spaces, a solo show by Italian artist Serse, titled "Breadth and Vastness of Pure vision". For over thirty years, Serse has renounced colour, consistently pursuing research based on the patient and original practice of graphite drawing on paper. Through the dense and black materiality of graphite, distributed on paper with extreme care, lights and shadows create a meticulous texture that imitates the silver bromide of photography in its early days.

The artist states: "I try to reinvent drawing", insisting on the technical aspect of his 'obsessive' work; when we look at his drawings, we perceive the patience, precision, concentration of his work, the sense of isolation in his studio in Trieste, and the extensive outlining, shading, filling, erasing involved in each drawing.

"A constant search for different perspectives" is achieved through focusing on the gray gradients between black and white, capturing the dichotomy between absolute darkness and a diamond-like sparkle of light. Absence of colour or rather non-colour is an experiment in illumination, the 'vertigo' of every emotion between the beginning and the end of everything.

Serse's landscapes are "landscapes of the soul". Serse says: "I am attracted by the sublimity of nature, by the immeasurability that distinguishes it and that passes through us, leaving indelible signs of its greatness in us. The landscapes I draw do not refer

to anything external, but to that internal immensity so dear to romantic poetics". Serse's works are all devoid of the presence of man, the measure of all things in the Western artistic and philosophical tradition. The visitor is thus confronted with his "immeasurable" landscapes and in doing so is invited to adopt a new perspective. What Lorand Hegyi defines as "radical self-referentiality"¹ or compact, concrete, incontrovertible and inexorable objectivity combined with the lack of a temporal dimension, is what distinguishes the representation of a total and definitive absence of any reference to something other than the surface of the drawing itself: for Serse, "the gigantic is something that does not belong to the open eye, but to the closed eye. It is not a question of enlarging the image, of progressing in size to make the imperceptible more visible but rather of giving a symbolic meaning to the cyclopean, a meaning that we can recognise in the traces of that interior immensity that belongs above all to the soul". The landscapes do not refer to anything external but to an internal immensity.

Serse was inspired by the painter Wang Wei (701-761), an author of essays on landscape painting and theorist of the pictorial and spiritual value of the void; Serse finds value in his use of white spaces.

Serse explains: "my aesthetic experience is similar to the thought of the great Chinese literate painters. No distance or fractures

1. Lorand Hegyi, "Enigma e rivelazione. Il disegno di Serse", p. 18-21, in Serse. *Geometriche dissolvenze*, Trieste, 2010, exhibition catalogue, Trieste, Ex Pescheria, 2010.

must be created between the artist's spirit and the observed landscape. I am aware that only by immersing myself within the landscape can I reach the condition in which the landscape itself reveals the most authentic forms of its nature to me. Here a work of art and nature are in unison, that is, they are a single unitary entity."

The exhibition presents a great variety of works dedicated to the theme of landscape, a theme dear to Serse. In the exceptional works that present sea surfaces, as written by Riccardo Caldura², Serse manages to "bring to the limit of the still describable and recognisable what by its nature changes incessantly". The exhibition showcases works begun in the late 1990s and early 2000s, such as *Toccare l'onda*, *Scogliera a nord*, *Grande onda* and works resulting from more recent research, such as the spectacular large formats of *Riflessi di Mare*, *Vortici*, up to to the very small formats of *Cartoline di Mare*, which contain a sublime vastness. The *Canneti a Changsha*, part of the successful *Canneti* series, are the result of shots taken during a trip the artist took to Changsha in 2017. Also of great intensity are the Tuscan landscapes *Terre senesi*, and the works *Con gli occhi al cielo*, which show a monumental quality. Finally, a special connection with Chinese visual culture can be recognized in the beautiful work *Camminare tra le nubi*.

As observed by Jérôme Sans, in each of Serse's drawings "time seems suspended, from the extreme precision of the line to the distinctly figurative and silent nature of the subject"³. This suspension, this silence, allows the visitor to relive states of mind no less fluid and difficult to describe than the surprising drawings he is observing.

About the artist:

Serse was born in San Polo di Piave in 1952, and lives and works in Trieste. Having dismissed colour, he consistently researches graphite drawing. From Serse's graphite sparks one of the most intense reinterpretations of the landscape-theme in contemporary art: seas, aquatic surfaces, plants reflections on the water, cloudy skies, high mountains, snowy forests and natural spaces lacking human figures and transformed by light and shadow. For Serse, as a medium, graphite "allows both making the tautological gesture of drawing, and realizing a work that does not lie about its nature of pure drawing".

2. Riccardo Caldura, press release of the exhibition *Cartoline di mare*, curated by Riccardo Caldura, ASP-ITIS, Trieste, 2020.

3. Jérôme Sans, "La trasparenza del diamante. Jérôme Sans intervista Serse", p. 12-17, in Serse. *Geometriche dissolvenze*, Trieste, 2010, exhibition catalogue, Trieste, Ex Pescheria, 2010.

A selection of his most recent solo shows includes: "Bianchi e Neri" (Palazzo Ducale, Colorno, 2023); "Ondes Tracées" (Galleria Continua, Paris, 2022); "Qui tutto è aperto. Fogli d'Acqua" (St Regis, Galleria Continua, Rome, 2020); "Water Veils" (Modern Studio, Shanghai); "Serse" (Tan Guobin Museum, Changsha, 2017); "Aquí todo está abierto. Nada es cercano, nada es lejano" (Museo Nacional De Bellas Artes, Havana, 2017); "Paysage Analogue dessins 1994-2014", Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Saint Étienne, 2014); "Serse - Koh-i-noor" (Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rimini, 2012); "Geometriche dissolvenze" (Ex Pescheria, Trieste, 2010).

About the gallery:

Founded in 1990 in San Gimignano, Italy, GALLERIA CONTINUA has expanded its locations to Beijing, Les Moulins, Havana, São Paulo, Rome, Paris, and Dubai. Remaining faithful to the spirit of perpetual evolution, and committed to engaging the widest possible audiences in contemporary art, GALLERIA CONTINUA has built a strong identity through its bonds and experiences, thriving away from the conventional urban centres, in completely unexpected yet timeless locations.

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Opens from Tuesday to Sunday
11.00 am - 6.00 pm.

For further information on the exhibition and photographic material:

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