

José Molina at Fondazione Mudima “Cosas Humanas”, a mesmeric world

Following his personal show in 2006, *Predadores*, José Molina returns to *Fondazione Mudima* with a broader project, an overview of the polyhedral and visionary universe of this Madrilenian artist, who was born in 1965 and has resided in Italy for years. José Molina's world is inhabited by characters at times ironic, at times monstrous: they seem to have emerged from the canvases of some surrealist painter, or escaped from some books by naturalist explorers, where the magic of the fantastic worlds leaves (legitimate) room for doubts as to whether they are real only in the mind of those who have drawn them... as Vittorio Sgarbi wrote about the “outstanding graphic undertaking” of this Madrilenian on occasion of Molina's show at Milan's Museum of Natural History a few years back.

“...The documentary and imaginary value of Molina's work brings him close to Borges, the writer who invented unreal, yet absolutely credible, texts, places and historical situations, with an estrangement preventing us from distinguishing what is real from what is unreal, exalting, with unsurpassed naturalness, the verisimilar. Molina's anthropology could be the handbook that integrates Borges' atlas of imaginary places that today, following the explorer Guadalupi, Alberto Manguel has redefined as renewed itineraries. Along this path, meandering through exotic (and inexistent) places, it could be possible to come across Molinas' mysterious beings, coming from unexplored areas ...”.

The visionary phantasy, and the hands, of this incredible artist generate universes that José Molina needs to bring to light in many ways: drawings, paintings, sketches and splendid colourful graphics, in which what is particularly striking is not the love for aesthetics and hyperrealism for their own sake, but a mannerism triggered by his passion for experimenting all the possible means and tools he can avail himself of to express himself: pencil, china and needle, bic pen and coloured pencil, oil on board, graphite, crayon. He is constantly looking for a limit that his phantasy keeps pushing further away, at the boundaries of those worlds that only explorers, visionaries and madmen can live and see without moving or travelling with the body, but merely by watching with the eyes of imagination and with their heart, in search for those inner worlds that are inside of us

and that few have the fortune (or curse?) to perceive. José Molina crosses the threshold of those parallel worlds – perhaps a mirror of our previous lives – in search of an ever distant horizon ...a pretext to roam in search of the dreams, ghosts and memories of worlds where the only rules and limits are those of the phantasy and of the courage to look at them.

Molina's technical and introspective skills are extraordinary; he engrosses you and sucks you into his surreal, visionary and not always reassuring worlds. The spectator is lured like in Maurits Cornelis Escher's drawings, he falls into them. But while the landscapes are reassuring, the faces could belong to a sort of new handbook by Cesare Lombroso, in which the character analysis, and not only, is turned into a surreal image. An anthropological theory in which the physiognomy infers the psychological and moral features that are then translated into physical aspects, into facial features and expressions, like in Hieronymus Bosch's figurations. In this artistic framework, where technical and creative skills appear more and more blurred, not only does Molina wade through worlds evoking the exotic – captured like in the diaries of an ancient explorer – he also reveals a deep knowledge of the archaic anthropological figurations that he translates into paintings, drawings and sketches with incessant experimentation and with a mastery that, I dare say, is outstanding regardless of the technique or tools being used.

So Man Ray: "I paint what cannot be photographed. I photograph what I don't want to paint. I paint the invisible. I photograph the visible." José Molina's representations are so vivid that they appear to us as the photographs of that invisible realm that his inner eye can see.