

Stealthily, the infinite

Maria Perosino

These must be the bones of a fallen angel, these must be the bones of a fallen angel: thus the slaves of Alabaman respond, in fear and wonder, upon the discovery of the gigantic skeleton of a whale, emerging -who knows how- from the era in which water had swallowed up the continents. The story does not say whether it was a white whale; all we can do is wonder about the dread and surprise that coursed through those tired bodies. And so be surprised by the powerful imagery of their song.

The history of our "contemporaneity" could even be described like this: the oft-stigmatized voicelessness of social living is echoed by the stubborn neurosis of art, by the bold and heroic courage of artists who call themselves *magicians* of earth and sky. Or, more simply, by sickness and healing.

Even before calling themselves artworks, sculpture or photographs, Daniela De Lorenzo's works are apparitions, with all everything that goes with being of pedigree. They are angels, or at least presences, that inhabit a space which is both physical and interior, and in so doing feed on it, design it, outline its uncontestable borders. Using the terms of an art critic of our time, we could say that these works mold, rather than represent, a space, which is at once visual, sonorous and emotional. Thus they produce dialogue, they subdue the inertia of the gaze, of our gaze.

This is also why we might call them performative, that is, intended to design time as well as space. It is no safe bet: burdensome to act on, burdensome to subscribe to, it brings up questions we thought had been stored away. Questions such as: who am I, where do I come from, where am I going? What is the meaning of what I do and what I say in relation with the sound of those harmonic spheres that the exhibition's title evokes? In short, we may not have wanted it, but the fact is we find ourselves *vis a vis* with the infinite.

De Lorenzo gets to this point almost stealthily. Like any artist, what she narrates for us is in the first place the history of the artist's trade. She concentrates on the specifics of the chosen medium each time in an absolute manner, to the point that if we wanted to attempt a description, we would have to resort to neologisms or inelegant terms like *sculptural* or *photographic*, keeping in mind the inadequacy of the corresponding adjectives (imagining a Twentieth-century history yet to be written, how else could we describe Ripellino's book *Il trucco e l'anima* but as an essay on *theatricality*? And Brancusi – what else could he have been talking about, with his works, if not such a thing as *sculpturality*?).

De Lorenzo's are figures in which the imprint of other figures is deposited, from Van Eyck's drapes to Robert Morris' soft labyrinths.

Angels, as we have said, but twentieth-century angels who, as is known, pass through history with their heads facing backwards. Or rather, more specifically, downwards. This is also the reason why her works ask us to be inhabited, passed through, absorbed. Just as they act on and absorb the self which molded them, in a continuous jumbling together of indemnifications. Who, one critic wondered, is being swallowed in Chardin's painting *The Card Player*? The figure depicted, the artist who painted it, or us, viewers captured by a scene which both calls us in and excludes us?

De Lorenzo responds to this by turning our gaze aside. Calling us back, that is, to the epiphanic, and thus ethical, qualities of the real, or of that part of the real that she has chosen to depict. And it does not take long to realize that the choice, indisputable and mysterious as it may appear, has nothing random about it.

(Translation Theresa Davis)