

Essay by Cristiana Perrella

For his second solo exhibition at Riccardo Crespi, the artist of Korean origin Shin il Kim presents Into, an evolution of the project Active Anesthesia shown at his first exhibition in Milan two years ago.

Starting out from a reflection on the state of passivity, of numbness of the senses, that in many ways characterizes our daily life and in particular our relationship with the media, the artist seeks to reawaken an active condition, to stimulate us to look at the world in a more conscious and participatory way. Thus he brings about a drastic slowing down of the visual process by means of a series of “complications” that render the images he produces or decides to use almost invisible: drawings made by pressing a point onto a blank sheet and that can only be seen when illuminated with grazing light, mirrored surfaces that create superimpositions and reflections, oversized blow-ups that atomize the texture of the images, video sequences reduced to the level of the pixel, of the single unit of light. Filters, obstacles, stumbling blocks that are placed between the immediate impression on the retina and the moment of comprehension, offering a visual experience that is at once complex and rarefied, requiring us to sharpen our attention.

This is the case with Duration To Intuition, an installation in which advertising videos taken from American TV – the epitome of the manipulative image, relying wholly on an uncritical and passive reception – are projected onto a mirror and reflected, reduced to a mere vibration of light and colour, onto an openwork structure formed of an accumulation of words particularly pertinent to Shin il Kim’s current research: words like duration, persistency, insight, activeness, reflection and practical spirituality. The luminous impulses of the video images, further deconstructed by their passage through the filter of the sculpture, take on an abstract and evocative character that is conducive to meditation, letting thought run free, just as happens at night when we see the glow of a television through an open window. Nam June Paik’s utopia of an interactive and playful relationship between TV and viewer rather than the kind of one-way aggression that currently exists seems to find a new variation in this work, which tips a wink at design and at the same time has an aura of spirituality. A balance that the artist himself links with Buddhist discipline, where the spirit is manifested through matter and matter comes to life through the spirit.

And it is through matter that the invisible becomes visible, as in the drawings on transparent polycarbonate, barely perceptible thanks to the play of light and shade, that are at the root of the animation Dual Beats, an attempt to visualize and harmonize the concept of real time and inner time. In this work – and in others in the exhibition like the large drawing The Ritual, the image of the brain indicates a state of potentiality of the mind, in which it is possible to bring about the shift from a passive condition to an active search for meaning and transcendence. A quest that, combining spiritual power and rationality, animates every aspect of Shin il Kim’s practice.

Cristiana Perrella