

## Everybody Knows What the Other Thinks

Eugenia Vanni's work is unusual; it is a work that focuses on knowing and on acting, on the possibility of learning not for the purpose of accumulating knowledge, but so that it can be used to do something. Vanni thinks that the artist is such when he or she knows how to place every specific skill, every aptitude for execution, at the service of an idea and of an independent creative will that is a hallmark of artistic activity. This allows artists to generate worlds around themselves, utilizing with mastery, but in less conventional ways, both abilities acquired specifically for the purpose and more traditional means. Vanni resorts to drawing (pencil on PVC, ink on canvas), painting and engraving, as well as video, photography and the installation; she creates painted landscapes and views cut out of cardboard or rubber. Recurrent in her work is a preoccupation with frames and mounts, but made out of rubber, and with sculpture, although a sculpture that takes on environmental dimensions. We find perforated screens used as natural light boxes, sheets of nylon that generate a sense of space and distance. Her engravings are not intended to reproduce identical images, but on the contrary to create ones that are always different, until the plates have worn out. They are used not to represent landscapes, but to invent new, dreamlike and suspended ones; and yet no less true, given that they have been created.

Technical incapacity and hurdles, the resistances that are encountered when an attempt is made to adapt materials to unorthodox uses, obliging the artist to experiment with new ways, do not constitute, for Vanni, anything but an addition of meaning, an opportunity to investigate further the expressive possibilities that they offer us. It is precisely the lack of familiarity with a given sphere that can compel the artist to adopt a felicitous essentiality and contribute to that distance of the gaze from which stems a renewal of the perception of the world.

Although deeply rooted in the Italian artistic tradition, her work is born out of a vigilant attention to the present and a desire for direct engagement. Thus in the exhibition Vanni includes several semi-urban landscapes of the present day. What has caught her interest is an area on the outskirts of Siena, San Miniato, with its centre, formed by the monolithic outline of a large public building, the Santa Maria alle Scotte Hospital. In her unfashionable and solitary vision, a night-time portrait of this not particularly pleasant panorama becomes a light box, but one that does not require the use of electric current, and the complex plan of the district becomes a spectral form that spreads like oil to occupy the surrounding space with its dense black. A counterpoint to these visions of a small town is provided by a vague photographic image of New York.

From the deep dark of the urban night to the liquid luminosity of the sea: from the mezzanine of the gallery, as if from the deck of a ship, the visitor faces onto a fluid, immersive, timeless panorama. The cycle of works that constitutes the hub of the exhibition consists in fact of a varied set of sculptures, drawings and engravings that have all sprung from a single nucleus of imagination: a non-scientific – indeed visionary – approach to the idea of crossing the sea has inspired Eugenia Vanni to create the very tall 'Mediterranean' stilts, the 'hydrophobic' drawings made on rubber and the figure of the 'Floating Man' who moves along the waterline equipped with a sort of primitive snorkel... an image represented in a fine, poetically diaphanous line not out of choice, but because it is drawn on a material loath to absorb graphite.

Gabi Scardi