

Michelangelo Pistoletto

Hard Poetics

1985

Art of squalor, parasitic art, art of mortification. Surface of desolation, obtuse surface. A repulsive art that represents nothing.

Repressed art, like the countries where there is no art. Art that removes, art that crushes, livid art, squalid art, a squalor that is only in art. Squalor of things without art, art that removes, art that makes the eye and the mind hard.

An immobile, viscous, worn out art.

Grayish, blackish that tends towards yellowish.

Mass of triturated ideas, of pulverized objects, of meanings that are smashed, rotten, softened, and compressed.

Fragments of instruments and concepts; stellar dust, cosmic foam, meteorite lava, sidereal ice.

Fountains of jets of grayishness.

Idiotic thicknesses of a crushed and dribbled art, as arduous as childbirth.

Weightless art without instruments. But filthy like the swarming of a disgusting humanity.

A grave and cowardly art that achieves the maximum distance and maximum slowness without being grazed by infinity or immobility.

The motion is slow like the catastrophic motion of the universe.

The slowness of vast distances replaces the swiftness of approaching movement, the violence of transformation, the speed of change in the approached distances.

It is the perception of contemporaneity beyond time/space.

Heterocontemporaneity

endocontemporaneity

incorporeacontemporaneity.

Figures bathed by the black light of billions of shadow years, leaden in a planet too vividly colored by too rich and too creative a nature. Mother of squandering. Too much dazzling light, too much illusion.

Art of squalor, theater of squalor and consuming obstinate heroism.

Dry slap on hardness, sticky powder, exhausted color.

Vile mass tinted with vile colors, noble mass tinted with vile color.

Gray curtain, shabby drapes.

Literal vision of the sentimental, literal like the mortified will, like degraded dignity, like offended truth; with no redemption other than squalor.

Art of squalor as the only commitment, as the only possibility, as the only strength, as the only activity.
Prison as the the only place of freedom and only the vague, bright slowness of distance. It is the consistency
of a forced volume. It is the velocity of the canvas that we find when moving away from the mirror.

We have joined the velocity of the canvas, that is, its slowness.

The slowness of vast distances in the soaked color of squalor, which is not sham but thickness.

Subterranean energy of dense skies in the depth of the sea, without interruption.

Flat to the eyes, dark, reddish, far from everything and everyone; alone. A terrible detachment, a definitive
otherness, a cold softness.

A wrong angularity, an insipid form, and silence.

Veined silence, gliding silence, and tepid torpor.

Foam and canvas soaked in stucco.

Black sculpture of figures dipped in tars of squalor, with lava outlines.

Art without decorum, art without deceit, numb impact of a vaguely silly volume.

The accounts do not balance, the square that does not square, the cube that does not cube, uneven
parallelepiped.

Too large a hand, too abstract a shoulder.

From the limbo of a well as deep as the void comes the squalor that molds the figures that gaze into the well.

The luminous fountain of a bad painter, the minus objects of a delusive art, the infinite dust of the brilliant
squalor on the mica square.

The rejection by a cubic meter. And the giants in stages under the dome of each temple, twisted figures
turning on themselves.

Copulating males.

I took the second distant voyage in a time where sculpture is recomposed. Venus interrupted.

The third voyage goes further.

The first voyage was close, very close to the mirror. It was the rapid change, the mutation of styles at the
speed of perception. Now, the person painted on surfaces also, people also turn to the mirror with small, very
small changes. The difference between the paintings is that of a gesture. Little movement, it is the slowness
of painting of which these figures are made. Like the sequence of the farmer burning memory.

From the window of a racing train, we see the hedge passing at a dizzying speed, the houses further on are
the minus objects, a swift verification.

Then the slower hills in the distance and far away the motionless mountains.

We express ourselves at those distances and at those speeds. From the speed of nearby objects to the
slowness of distant squalor.

The great catastrophes are tiny faded dots on canvas, tiny accidents. The vanished presences have remained
there before our eyes, transported to the slow rhythm of the centuries. And we see ourselves in the mirror of
time, which is the self-portrait of stars.

The languor of a universal hunger, the effort that seeks its sleep, everywhere. The absurd idea of a nonexistant ruin, when there is nothing but ruin, the complex and refined ruin that produces blood in the veins. That transforms rocks into stones, the sky into sunset, and words into squalor.

(first published on the catalogue of the exhibition “ Michelangelo Pistoletto. Quarta Generazione”, Galleria Giorgio Persano, Torino, 1985)