

Antonio Pauciulo



From the multisensory performances of the Gruposangiorgio in Rome to the experimental galleries of Berlin, Antonio Pauciolo's existential paintings evolved out of Europe's underground art scene, following a very personal path on a journey that often took place "outside the outsiders."

Antonio was born in a coastal town on the Gulf of Naples in southern Italy and began painting oil landscapes at a very young age. He later studied psychology and philosophy at the University La Sapienza and painting at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Rome.

His studies led him to discover Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein whose ideas continue to influence the artist today. "Especially his focus on the relationship between language and life," Antonio said. "Logical mathematics and the structure of languages fascinated me, as they communicated to me a kind of strange poetry."

Another key influence in Antonio's artistic career took place in 2003 during a visit to Paris for the retrospective of Russian-born French painter Nicolas de Stael. "The powerful reality of his paintings touched me so deeply, I couldn't continue my work like before," Antonio said. "He embedded something human into the 'flesh' of his painting. I experienced living creatures made of paint."

"The actual flesh of humans and the medium of oil paint are very similar," Antonio explained, "to the point that sometimes I'm surprised that the 'flesh' of the oil paint is cold to the touch."

Antonio Pauciulo's own paintings focus on his research of the various human narratives that shape our understanding of reality. His approach to painting is to expose what he calls "the artificiality of Western humans" while adding within "the flesh of the oil paint" a tangible dimension which he considers deeply human.

"In the West the contemporary disruption of the tangible world is the result of long-term efforts to get rid of the flesh because of the perishability of the body and fear of death," the artist said. "The very purpose is to transform humans into something enduring: a pure intangible idea. From Plato until today, this process of artificialization has developed steadily to the point that now we are almost left with only images of the world and ourselves. Furthermore, I call my painting 'artificial' for pointing out the real matter: the conventional language of painting, which in my opinion is the real messenger of narratives and not the iconography."

For Antonio, painting is a very physical yet conceptual act. "The painting process begins with little control over the outcome as the artist practices a "body-to-body kinaesthetic relationship" with the painting in the beginning. Only later does he detach himself and start using his eye to "provoke events" in the painting. "When I perceive that something alive is there, I nurture this newly-arrived presence," Antonio said. Thus, the artist exercises two types of control: one "bodily and unconscious," another "visual and conscious." Antonio's process of contact-detachment between "body/painting" and eventually "eye/painting" is complex and takes place following a non-linear timing.

“The visual dimension is subsequent and concerns mostly decisions and choices, rather than creation of events, the artist said. “Furthermore, the creation of the painting’s image does not require any mediation of extrinsic tools such as a camera or computer.”

“Painting allows unexpected images to emerge which constitutes a tangible reality in themselves, like a tree,” he continued. “For me, it is these ontological images-presences that are the significant statement and not the mental concepts, which have an ancillary role.”

Antonio maintains a one-to-one relationship with each painting. A series, therefore, is not purposely conceived, but is rather a consequence, the outcome of “a wide exploration through a certain human field.”

It is that one-to-one experience Antonio envisions bringing to the viewing public.

“I want to provoke an encounter between one person and one painting,” the artist said. “I imagine small cabins hosting one painting inside, with space for only one person to view it at a time. I believe in the political function of this method: the personal is the political. It is through the enhancement of the individual existential knowledge that transformations are possible. To the masses one speaks through propaganda and manipulation. To individuals one speaks through an authentic personal message. This is the path that interests me.”

He has found, however, that the experience of exhibiting at certain art fairs, for example, can be limiting due to their purely commercial stance, although he did enjoy seeing “the authentic curiosity of some visitors” during Supermarket, the international artist-run art fair in Stockholm that showcases artists’ initiatives from around the world.

Antonio finds the public reacts to his work in a variety of ways, ranging from enthusiasm to detachment. “I believe that painting, and a visual experience in general, are not universal but strongly conditioned by a specific cultural knowledge,” he said. “If the visual input doesn’t match the recipient’s knowledge, it will communicate to very few people.”

“Especially today, in times of virtual communication, noise often prevails.”

Antonio Pauciulo currently lives in Leipzig, Germany. He has several projects that he anticipates will bring him to the United States and the Middle East.

Article by Serena Kovalosky for ACS Magazine based on my interview.

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ANTONIO PAUCIULO

Nell'estate del 1975 ho dipinto en plein air una serie di paesaggi intitolati 'giardino'. Questa esperienza preziosa è la radice della mia pittura recente (a partire dal 2014) e soprattutto della serie di autoritratti 'array' in cui le immagini emergono da un processo pittorico basato sull'esperienza istantanea e il risultato è del tutto inaspettato: solo dopo che l'immagine si è formata comincio a guardare, riconoscere, accettare o rifiutare.

In the summer of 1975 I painted en plein air a series of landscapes titled 'giardino'. This pristine experience is the root of my recent painting (starting from 2014) and especially of the series of self-portraits 'array' in which the images emerge from a painting process based on instant experience and the result is totally unexpected: only after the image is formed I begin to look, to recognize, accept or reject.

