

Gianni Caravaggio

The Sun filtering through the leaves¹

Although the courtyard is located in the middle of the city, at a certain time of day the trees are illuminated by beams of sunlight shining through the leaves, creating a moment of pure nature, the sign of a dimension greater than us and of which we are fleeting spectators. All of a sudden the trees in this courtyard with their various shapes, leaves and their different shades make me think that at their origin there was a matrix that destined them to take on the appearance they have now. Dazed by this thought, I feel as if I have been creating and designing this matrix, this mold, as if it were the beginning of time: at that moment I have the sensation of kneading green dough, like when you're making cookies, and in a playful way experimenting with and discovering the colors and forms of the leaves, cutting them up and pressing them into the mixture and in the end leaving the print of my hand on it; a hand which is not mine because it looks like a leaf. Nature is young. Every so often it astonishes me and the leaves seem to take on form and life from a mineral matrix, that of Verde Guatemala marble.

I go on thinking of the rays of sunlight that have enchanted my thoughts, picturing them as rays of yellow onyx. A long and rectangular block is divided into nine little sticks with which to draw the sun for every morning. I imagine being able to extend the rays of yellow onyx in various ways along a horizontal line. The gestures that compose the auroral figure are not fixed. They are free and living. This gives the impression that the figure is a fleeting one.

The ephemeral quality of the image evoked in drawing the dawn (or the sunset) constitutes, in a sense, a ritual act similar to the mu of Zen Buddhism, a circular shape symbolizing the idea of the open void that Buddhist monks paint on a sheet of paper every morning with a decided gesture. Like some acts of initiation that in their cyclicity become rites and remind us of the ground we stand on. In a manner similar to the baptistery, this work is a place for initiation.

"The sun is new every day" said Heraclitus - drawing it for each morning (and each evening) is a way of bearing witness to this marvel.

The sunlight that shines through a palm leaf is like time running through my fingers. Transformed into bronze, the fingers of that withered and dry vegetal hand are made immortal. This bronze form holds another palm leaf still in the moment of its fresh youth, but doomed to grow old and assume with time the same features as eternity—blending into it.

The image of eternity we have in our minds is that of an old man, an image whose

¹ I have discovered that in Japanese culture there is a word that is used precisely for the act of light streaming through the leaves of trees. Komorebi refers to this natural event and in doing so expresses a sense of melancholy, or that mood in which time appears to be a form of eternity.

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origin lies in the mythological figure of Cronos and which in the Christian imagination has become the image of God, or of St. Jerome with a long beard and in the pose of a thinker. Heraclitus, on the other hand, imagined time as a child playing dice.

On display in the courtyard, the light passes through the photographic body of "Melancholy—or rather transparent" just as it does between the gaps in the trees. In 1995 I had asked an old potter if I could place my then young face on his hand marked by the experience of creation. I imagined that that hand one day could be mine.

Gianni Caravaggio, March 2022

Gianni Caravaggio (1968, Rocca San Giovanni, Italy) lives and works in Milan. His most recent solo exhibitions include: *Als Natur jung war / When Nature was Young*, Kunstmuseum Reutlingen (2021); *Iniziare un Tempo*, Museo Novecento, Florence (2018); *Sostanza Incerta*, The Open Box, Milan (2017); *About Things Bigger Than Us*, Galerie De Expeditie, Amsterdam (2016); *Finalmente Solo / Enfin Seul*, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Saint-Etienne Métropole, Saint-Etienne (2014); Museum MA*GA, Gallarate, (2014); and *Scenario*, Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia (2008). His work has been exhibited in numerous group shows, among which: MASI - Museo d'Arte della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano (2018); Collezione Acacia, Museo del Novecento, Milan (2016); *Avviso di garanzia, Fuori Uso*, ex tribunale di Pescara (2016); *Il Pane e le Rose*, Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan (2015); *Ritratto dell'artista da giovane*, Castello di Rivoli, Turin (2014). Among various prizes, the artist has been awarded with the Premio Acacia, Milan (2013); the Castello di Rivoli Prize, Turin (2008) and the Special Fund Prize, MoMa PS1, New York (2002).