AFTER THE CATASTROPHE

The word catastrophe, a rhetorical term designating the final resolution of a poem or a tragedy, is underscored, in the early 21st century, by the state of exception, that is, by the phobic experience produced by the viral dimensions of terrorism. Perhaps where some saw the materialisation of the terribly sublime*the attack on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001*we can only encounter a pornographic pulsion. We can hardly free ourselves from shock and stupidity, and even worse, we know we are en route to things even worse. Aristotle warned us that accidents reveal substance, whereas Rene Thom, in Stabilité structurelle et morphogènese, declared that it is tempting to consider the history of nations as a series of catastrophes. We might well, by combining both suggestions, postulate that our situation is ciphered*post*historically in the photograph of the executive covered in dust and soot, sitting with his laptop in the midst of the rubble of the Twin Towers. But the skulls of Marco Veronese, literally inscribed in the world, also make us aware that there is no reason whatsoever to give ourselves over to the same old story of the happy world. We indulge in convulsive zapping and find all kinds of insanity; the serious ravages of the epidemic of nonsense: Things are so bad that laughter has to be canned. One gets the impression that everything is mutilated and that even humour has become stupid, ridiculous even. The gaze of the catatonic spectator does not come to rest on his surroundings, preferring to indulge in media-related catastrophe instead of seeking refuge in the home, which, as we know, is a place where everything can turn sour. We are afraid to turn our heads because, maybe, like the Benjaminian Angelus, we would only see heaps of ruins. Alex Angy, at least, is capable of converting plastic leftovers into sympathetic and disquieting knots, folds and flexures that free us from the literalisation of horror.

It is curious to see Marco Veronese's and Alex Angy's works in exhibitory dialogue because, from the outset, their poetry seems to have no relationship in common. Yet both artists, beyond the symbolic, have a concern for colour and the seductive dimensions of art. We feel attracted by something that rapidly acquires an ambiguous dimension. Because neither of the two aims to delight in the decorative, but rather, with significant doses of irony, allegorise our age and manifest critical positions. Regis Debray sustained that there are no images, either from the dawn of time or from the guts of the artist, that are anything other than an SOS. It is important for us realise that images do not purport to bewitch the world out of pure pleasure, but rather free it from its shackles, because where we see caprice and gratuitous phantoms, there undoubtedly is and was anguish and supplication. This cry for help was explicitly launched by Veronese in his hypertechnological images, like deposits of dialogue in the history of art. Although Angy's creations seem to highlight a certain ludic sensation, they also have quite a lot to do with the sedimentation of the "contaminating", or with the absurdity of a world that is incapable of doing anything else but feel idiotised by seeing how reality is nothing but a show.

In our *good or bad*times of banality, art is a kind of unidentified object. Unconsciously we retreat to the bunker or the crypt in which we can find a more or less acceptable allegory or materialisation of freedom, an indecision or, to be even more *psycho*physical, an intolerable kind of claustrophobia. Virilio states that in the age of globalisation, everything is a choice between two things, which are also two terms: foreclosure *Verwefung: rejection, negation*or the locked-in syndrome *exclusion*. Some creators like Marco Veronese and Alex Angy are capable of balancing themselves on the dangerous knife's edge that separates and brings together the marvellous and the banal. It is precisely there and not in vacuous transcendentalism where the unique should arise.

Luca Beatrice has pointed out that the works of Angy emerge as a kind of pathway through the asphalt jungle and his "plastic invasion" is a kind of manifestation of the absurdity of the contemporary. His works are like "synthetic viscera", recyclings of artificial materials which he converts into kneadings or almost "star-like" shapes Marco Veronese appropriates for himself some magnificent portraits by Bronzino, Leonardo or Raphael, which he places in contact with a world of butterflies and also the crude presence of a skull. The "Rinascimento" or the contamination to which he refers is therefore an intense kind of friction from the aura of artworks imbued with aristocratic subjectivity and from a metamorphosed world that has a specially strong but ephemeral dimension of existence. Both artists, despite the fact that they stand up to the imaginary catastrophe of the present, do not drift off into melancholy, but are rather quite capable of generating pieces that reformulate, in a most heterodox manner, a sentiment of beauty.

It is not that these works are sublimating, by any means; on the contrary, they possess a peculiarly uncomfortable undercurrent, a tendency towards contemporary labour disputes, but without falling into the pure literalism of strap codes or asignificant abstraction. Poesía della materia, the title of the exhibition that brings these two together, lucidly reconverts interpretation towards the pre-iconological terrain. Even so, once more, allow me to repeat that the material of art is not plastic, steel, oil or the generically photographable. If we can still talk about materiality, it is because there is one irreducible cliché: obsession. Veronese and Angy want us to gaze in upon a world of obsessions that arise from

culturally and technologically contaminated landscape. Whereas one proposes postmodern vanities, the other *dis*organises that which symbolises connection – cables that wind up pointing towards disorientation. Poetry, therefore, that starts off with the catastrophe that has already taken place. Contemplating these chromatically seductive works, we can understand how it is that Baudelaire's "In Praise of Makeup" in his Painter of Modern Life is still alive and well. Our destiny is towards anti-nature; we inhabit a completely artificial world and in such an age that obliges us to experience so many nightmares, perhaps art still has the mission of reminding us that it indeed is, "such stuff as dreams are made on".