

## Together from afar.

As Freud pointed out, we have really only ever been in one *place*: our mother's womb. Everything else is the result of a separation, a strict *aporia*, what remains from cutting the umbilical cord. We embark on all kinds of journeys throughout our life, on many occasions swept along by the impulse of tourism, to see what we already knew there was to see. We look through our mobile phone, we take a *selfie*, unable to actually experience anything. On occasions we feel the need to return to places we have never been, and we even try to reconstruct a lost object, in an anticipation of the melancholy we will inevitably suffer when those that really matter to us are absent. Man is a stranger to himself, as was established in the riddle of the Sphinx, but worst of all is the fact that man's essential condition is terrible, disturbing; or, in other words, tremendous and formidable. The artistic experience arises, to a certain extent, like in the account told by Pliny of the drawing the young woman makes of her lover's shadow on the wall, in an unequivocal exercise of sadness in the certainty that the unique being must depart. I like to think of the history of art as fragments of a lovers' dialogue in which we find ourselves caught between *atopy* (the non-place that keeps us on tenterhooks waiting, literally, for correspondence) and enthusiasm (which disrupts everything and introduces a dimension of sublime feelings, a pleasure that does not exclude pain), paying homage to that ancient deity of poverty and need, an example of astuteness but also of a path towards the shining plain of truth.

The paintings of Carmen Jabaloyes can be seen as a story of friendship -another form of creating an affective bond beyond what is given to us by Nature-, driven mainly by a search for light. Carmen Jabaloyes writes about her trips to cities such as Venice, Washington, Boston (and, more recently, to cities in Germany) and her desire to find warm luminosity, perhaps from a nostalgic habit that comes with the lingering memory of the Mediterranean. In the hope of finding a welcoming warmth, she planned a trip to Cuba with her friend Anja, which she was unable to carry through. Her friend took hundreds of photographs in Havana, mixing with the Cubans on four passionate journeys; enjoying their empathetic way of life, settling with landscapes and people, taking snapshots of song, laughter, chattering, of magical lights of a city where urban ruin and political anomaly have also imposed their law. From afar, away from the light of the Caribbean, Carmen was inundated by these photographs and decided to paint *her own particular feeling of what is Cuban*. She says, most precisely, that she has turned what Anja gave her into "paintings".

"I have appropriated landscapes, paths, lights and above all people", says Carmen Jabaloyes. She turns the photographs into a *pictorial clarification*. She makes the snapshots of Havana, which were taken by Anja, burst with colour – typical of the late romantic era- so that the chromatic carnation stands out over the defined outline of the drawing. It is this artist's intention to give free rein to a feeling that emerges as *enthusiasm and deliberation*, in a lucid expression of the task of art: not to imitate what is in the world but *to produce what is visible*. There is a vibrant colour in her work, a musicality of what is figurative, a pleasure that makes the painting *diaphanous*. In dark times we need a glimmer of hope or, reminiscent of Stendhal, we hope to recover the idea that art is "a promise of happiness". The aesthetic utopia (again that place which, strictly speaking, is nowhere exactly) of Carmen Jabaloyes gives us (as her friend Anja did with her photographs) a visuality that goes beyond nihilism, longing for things (not only in Cuba but also in our part of the world which is, truly, terrorized) to get better. Sometimes the world can be understood better by listening to or dancing a bolero, although for art lovers we can also recall the rhinoceros that was drawn by

Durero. It was an extraordinary animal that he had never actually set eyes upon, but which we were left as an *aesthetic gift*, urging us to enjoy the unprecedented, everything that invites us to creatively overcome the distance.