

### THREE QUESTIONS FOR PAOLA RICCI

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1. Your artistic work includes both pictorial and plastic works. Is there a clear-cut difference in the meaning of what you want to express with each of these forms and, if so, what?

If there is a difference in artistic meaning, I can liken it to the differences between two words that are synonyms or homonyms.

In homonyms such as *penna=penna*, there are two different meanings: the *penna* (feather) of a bird and the *penna* (pen) for writing: or *filo=filo*, intended as the *filo* (thread) for sewing and the ‘thread’ or direction of an argument ‘the thread of words’. The latter so happens to cut through my research as the sign that unravels like a thread.

In synonyms, however, the words are likened because they have the same meaning but a different appearance, so *gomitolo* (ball of wool/thread) and *matassa* (skein) sound different and look different, but express two things that reflect each other, and for this reason converge.

But when we talk of similes, these draw near, touch one another, reflect one another, like when we try to draw a portrait of someone and we want it to be a likeness. In all the comparisons we use we make an extension of the words of the sign, we stretch them like rubber bands to be able to RECOUNT something else. In similes you recount something that goes beyond the words themselves, you create the smells, the feel, the movement of the words, and this can be seen in its evocation.

This is how I begin, in similes of signs of threads of lines of thicknesses, of strings of skeins of networks of ramifications of diversions of veining of cracks of flows of borders of outlines of margins, of edges of thicknesses, of slits of fissures of inlays of spiders webs of rays of wounds of splits of passages of writings of codes of alphabets of letters of extensions ... all infinitely small and therefore universal.

Working in three dimensions has allowed this extension to occur after years of two-dimensional work, of depositing on a plane for an observation made on orthogonal axes that however had a limit, you had to ‘imagine the depth’. The depth of our embodied condition remained separate from the artistic work, the lines cut and sheared through one another after having been produced by the physical nature of such condition.

2. Your latest works go by the name of 'Intra-vedere' (seeing-in): can you explain the reason for this name and how it is linked to the meaning of your works?

Imagining depth had become my mental pathway, which had accompanied me and marked most of my artistic and personal life. Descending into depth means touching that disturbing universe that we inevitably belong to and that sooner or later we have to encounter. Walking there, moving oneself in the 'in-itself' leads to living in a FRAGILITY that is outside one's own self. And what makes it fragile? 'It is TENSION that makes fragility, like a string: if we stretch it it can break, if left slack it can stay like that for much longer' Jean-Luc Nancy.

So the making of the work required space for action but also mental space to 'sink ones own roots in an absorbing and total existentialism'. Twisting and swaying also seem to refer to a difficult and labyrinthine human swagger, but as soon as it becomes an everyday stroll with the observer it does not present closures, but rather opens up an exit route (Letizia Ragaglia).

It is this unravelling between tensions and fragility, of twisting and swaying, and this human swaggering in spaces that open and close that we must 'intra-vedere' or 'see-inside'; we are placed in another point of view, where everything is not clearly visible through the function of the eye, but is rather 'inside, in the interior', and in separating and creating that slight pause in the word '*intravedere*' we connote 'seeing in an uncertain and confused manner', which the word has in its primary meaning, to add OTHER. Uncertainty is fragility, which is outside one's self, and it is that inevitable human swagger.

3. Your graphic works are abstract. What led you to this particular expressive form?

Art categories are useful for understanding works, but then it is important to let the artist 'speak' about how she experienced them. However, at times this is not sufficient because it is the artist speaking to others, making comparisons, that determines the evolution of how she 'narrates' her works.

Abstractionism reminds me of an explanation Italo Calvino gave in his 'Lezioni Americane', citing some lines from Cavalcante and Dante, two very important, early Italian poets, but who through modern eyes can still teach us many things:

Cavalcanti

*aria serena quand'apar l'albore*

*e bianca neve scender senza veti*

(still air when dawn breaks)

and white snow falls unchecked)

Dante in the Inferno

*come di neve in alpe senza vento*

(like snow in mountains without wind)

In Dante the line is dominated by the specification of the place 'in mountains', while Cavalcanti cancels the landscape and creates an atmosphere of suspended abstraction.

Perhaps I learnt that something like removing words from a text brings you closer to abstraction, and perhaps the same thing happens in painting.

**Paola Ricci © December 2004**