

Emerging signs

Having written about Andrea Benetti's works for other expositions – I have had occasion to point out how his subjects relate to archaic artistic forms – connected to a pictorial-expressive modality that takes us back to the contexts of primitive or pre-modern artists where the world of realism and phenomena, rich in iconic and descriptive details disappears, and leaves way to simplified iconic symbolism. Often in his paintings we find ambiguous figures that bring to mind forms of objects and utensils that are caught between an archaic past that implodes almost all the way back to the origin of man and a hyper-technological future where things and people are transfigured in symbolic—almost heraldic—elements, and as such they dance together in constantly changing compositional rhythms. Each figure presents its own *outline* – that clear element that is so common for wallpainters and street artists. We can put this into a clear analogy with the 18th century practices of the *cloisonné*, so dear to the Symbolists. Benetti's intention is to give form to an idea, to a non-natural image that is still de-codifiable according to principles and habits that have entered into our capacity to interpret the current repertoire of the visible, made of icons, symbols and synthetic images that with a few strokes say so much. And in this he is perfectly aligned with signage, advertising, media communications and especially with digital, or computer language. He uses a decisive outline and flat chromatic development, in the place of blending and illusory three-dimensional effect from realistic painting techniques. In this way Benetti not only creates a new sense of space but he also defines the stereometric aspect of the icons and makes them “pop” from the background.

In the series of works that make up the *VR60768 - Anthropomorphic figure show*, Benetti's path backtracks through art history and cultural anthropology in an even more regressive tack – citing the very first forms of cave painting recorded in Italy and using a chromatic palette that is reduced to the very essential: like those two prehistoric stones found in the Fumane caves. In these new paintings, Benetti no longer fills the anthropomorphic icons and symbols with color – but he leaves them fleshless, like simple signs that are more or less evident or transparent against a pictorial background that is agitated, grumpy, ready to coagulate into unusual material-chromatic mixtures that use original elements that come from stratifications where the two stones were found in the Fumane caves: soil, okra, coal, but also sediments left over from washing away the layers above the artifacts. Re-reading and re-interpreting the archaic passage, that of the origin of pictorial expression of our far-away ancestors, is fascinating, but no less full of disturbing stylistic elements that point out the distance in time between those original stones and Benetti's works: on the canvas, the whites and blues that alternate with the earthy colors that remind us of stone. They seem to simulate explosions of sky and atmosphere that are backgrounds to the pictorial space – where simple signs emerge in all their expressive strength as neo-archaic symbols.

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