

FALCONE

I want to describe how the work of Caravaggio has inspired many painters during and after his life, and how I have transformed this subject in my personal work. Michelangelo Merisi called Caravaggio, is an Italian painter born in Milano in 1573. The Caravaggio's work is determined by strong chromatic contrast, dark colors and scenographic lights. He worked for the major powerful collectors and he got the most important commission from the Vatican church. After the Council of Trento (1555), the beginning of the Barocco style imposed to every artists several rules and obligations on how to show the power of the Church and emphasize religious icons with the "weapons of arts".

Caravaggio had knowledge to introduce his strong and dark theatrical style in a context where it was not possible to work on religious subjects and to represent the political power of religion in a dark way. I want to make the focus on a short period of his life: the year that he spent in Napoli. It is important to know that in this city Caravaggio destroyed the classical way to do a painting, and created a new black vision of painting. In just one year. For these reasons I have decided to analyse artists from Napoli influenced by Caravaggio and restart to paint. I found incredible the fact that a painter as Caravaggio influenced so many painters (and thousands and thousands of painters after his death) and I found more incredible the work that those painters did after Caravaggio during a century.

The "setta dei tenebrosi" was the name of the mouvement born in Napoli after Caravaggio. His style pushed over the limits the caravaggio's work and tried to paint the reality in a crude way, with strong and impressive contrasts of colors, theatrical compositions and violent subjects.

Art's critics from the 18th century, the Academy of Roma and the Venezia's painters considered Caravaggio as a poor painter not able to use his medium and they attacked the Tenebrosi because they used the "bitume de judée" as a medium. The bitume de judée is a kind of black and fat oil composed with tar. Every painter (unfortunately not contemporay painters) knew the dangerousity of this oil. Nobody should use tar because it destroys and cracks oil paintings and "eat" organics supports as canvas or wood. These two elements are for me very stranges and they make a lot of contradictions. He was mocked by critics of his time (and during the next century), he was a criminal, a murder, a troubled man who used to paint in black... and in the same time he still won the consent of the most powerfull men from the Old Italy and the Vaticano's State, he inspired directly a big city as Roma, Napoli, Palermo, Messina, Catania, and Milano. After his dead he shocked painters as Champagne, De la Tour, Velasquez, Rembrant, Rubens.

I used tar for five years to paint on canvans. Actually you can find a new industrial tar very good to fix your roof. The quality is excellent and it doesn't suffer the time. I started to use it for a serie of monumental black paintings. This project is called Ermetism and it tried to represent the psycological atmosphere of italian fascist period (fascist's Art used white marble from Carrara but italian fascist men are very dark inside). I chose tar for its brightness quality and deep tone. Even if somebody loved this project, a lot of people accused me to be a fascist. The thing changed this august when (after Roma) I went in Napoli (I followed city by city the "voyages du Caravaggio") and I saw with my own eyes the work of many Tenebrosi painters and discovered that they used tar to mix pigments with oil. After that, another strange chronological and ironic connection between oil/tar and political power gave me some troubles. Today as during Caravaggio's time, artists have to push their work to obtain consent (to show your work, to sell it and survive).

The art-market system and characters have change but the rules are still the same. When Caravaggio moved to Napoli after the crime he committed, he was the most famous painter in Roma. Even if he killed a man, every Catholic church wanted an image created by Caravaggio. In 1606 the pope sent the vatican's soldiers to arrest him but the Cardinale Don Francesco Maria Del Monte, his powerfull protector, helped him to escape in Napoli and he prepared for C. a lot of important public and private commissions.

Normally every good painter's collectors (in the past and in the contemporary age) know something about painting's process and technics. If you want to invest a lot of money in a work made with a "veritable" poison for the painting, it means that love and passion win against power and money. I love this confusion created by tar: art's critics and experts accused C. (and Delacroix, Gericault and many others...) and in the same time he sold paintings made with black tar in a context as Barocco, where after the council of Trento, artists who worked for the Catholic political power (against Martin Lutero) produced colorfull paintings, gold décoration and architects built elegants churches with white marble full of incredibles sculptures (as Bernini or Borromini). I would like to use the italian word "Peste" (plague) to describe this phenomenon. As the Black Plague (Peste Nera) tried to clean the world from men, the plague of painting try to clean the painting from inside, killing herself. With tar as poison. This "Peste" drove painting down to hell, next to holy shadows and poor colors. The darkness phenomenon is the result of an excess of rules and standards from the conception of painting. When

a political system get too much power, it has to die and usually the murder comes from inside. Painting is not conceptual art. Painting is just Painting. You can get an idea on painting, but you can not idealize the painting in conceptual terms. Originally a painter was not an artist. You can describe a painting, but the description is not the goal of the image. The image describe the goal. I have tried to generate a Black Plague inside me and work with its because I think contemporay painting has simply lost its way. If Leonardo Da Vinci said "la pittura è cosa mentale", paintings is a mental thing, many artists today wants to be called painters because they are making painting's thinking, without paint. I do not want to speak about the art system, but for me it is important to remember where we come from, to make a link with our past. A link lost through deconstruction, affirmed through many multimedia, contaminations, monstrous superstar artists and philosophers who want to become artists. To me a painter has to think about his personal origin and the primitive sense of painting. To be a painter you are not obligated to paint contemporary subjects. Art is "anachronique". A good art work should be able to speak to men in different time period. But a painter should have the knowledge of his medium, to be able to work with technicals (old) and conceptuels (new) tools at the same time. In my work, painting has to die and reborn again, the plague is a state of mind required to ressurect from a post-modern context.

For this project, the Black Plague helps me to kill bacteria and create with images an old memory-system full of characters from the contemporay power system. I have to introduce the emblematic figure of Juseppe de Ribera to explain clearly the transition. De Ribera or "lo Spagnoletto" (because he was a small spanish) arrived in Napoli in 1616 and he learned fast the Caravaggio's lesson. In a few years this painter achieved to produce many public works. He became the greatest exponent of the Napolitan school, and every aristocrat from Napoli had a Ribera's "tableaux" at home. With a personal interpretation of Caravaggio, Jusepe de Ribera became the first Tenebroso.

The first painter who saw the plague in Caravaggio's painting. He saw the disease. When I was in Napoli and I saw different Ribera's pieces, I understood quickly he was infected by the plague of painting. I wondered if it was possible to link this concept with my painting. I started my new series of paintings called LVX (light) or L'IMPOSTEVN (the imposter, the faker) looking Caravaggio from Ribera's eyes. An imposter is someone who attempts to deceive others by using an assumed name or identity or other devious disguise. I became an imposter by losing control of identity and using this device in art. I started to paint old paintings from Napolitan School using new compositions and viewpoints, giving them a new social and political context. The first subject was IL CONSENSO, LA PAURA (the consent, the fear). It is a selfportrait into the art world. This painting was followed by LA MORTE DI DIO (the death of god), a subject who represent the force of power dying. If the Power dies, every new power (or system of power) can become gods in the same time. If it happens God dies. The big Power fall down. I chose EQUITALIA as title for another work to solidify and to help the concept of God. I opposed the image of S.Mary to an economic system bad for italin population. Equitalia is an Italian public company in a form of S.p.A, between the Italian Treasury and the INPS (pensions, disability and sickness) responsible for collecting taxes in Italy. After the economic crisis thousands of Italians have committed suicide because they cannot pay taxes to Equitalia. In the painting Equitalia has the face of the Virgin Mary. Working in this way, I tried to frame into structure different codes of social identity with many others pictures. To establish my paintings I chose three composants: 1 the conceptual; 2 the visual; 3 the technical.

1. The title is the concept. It approaches in a conceptual way a popular state of mind, a current subject... it serves to connect the primitive art world with the new contemporary system.

2. The image painted is the fake, a mirror who shows the old mask of the subject explained by title. The image is usually in conflict with title to emphasize the sense. It is the weapons of seduction. The image is the main character: it remembers to everybody the primitive goal of painting

3. The technical aspect reinforces the image and support the historical quality of medium. I took oil recipes from Van Eyeck, Tiziano, Rubens, Cellino Cellini (**Xavier De Langlais, La technique de la peinture à l'huile, Flammarion, 1959**) and I composed my own procedures. I use to prepare canvas with "blanc du medeun" (fine plaster) and titanium pigments (the strongest white) mixed with rabbit glue (obtained with rabbit skin). Months ago I started to give a layer of red (**terra di siena**) as Italians painters from Venezia of 18th century.

I buy pure oil in Flanders because flamish painters discovered this practice and Flemish oil is still the best oil in the market (the shop is in Brussels but the owner is Flemish and he produce an excellent oil). Pigments come from Padova, close to Venezia. I prefer these ones because in Padova the tradition of pigments respects the "Scuola Veneziana di Pittuara". I use an industrialized kind of tar extremely sophisticated: it is not the old "**bitume de judée**" because History and Time does not forgive errors (and collectors don't love it). This tar comes from engineering and industry, not from the art world. It is tested against water, humidity and time. If it is used as a veil it doesn't crack. This component is an extra sickness added to the technical aspect as an intruder. Black Tar here assumes a symbolic role. The Peste Nera.

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