

My Four Roots

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Rossella's gaze, although strongly connected to the sensible experience, can be defined as transcendental, aimed at understanding the reality that lies beyond the visible. From her first photo features made in distant and evocative places, such as "Japan", "Women of Burma" or "Fragments of Identity", up to her most recent abstract production, her work has never had just a documentary purpose. The desire to pursue an artistic career was rather animated by the urgency to grasp the essence of the subject, whatever it was, eliminating any unnecessary superfluity and focusing attention on the revealing particular. The photographic lens, in this sense, does not exclusively record concrete data, but it becomes an expressive instrument that is capable of analysing the multiple layers composing all natural phenomena. The weave of the emotional fabric, connoting every experience, emerges from such a revelation, as well as the traces of a latent but resonant spirituality, which is distinctly perceptible in the folds of each shot. In this regard, if one wonders about the specificity of photography, about the peculiar characteristic that makes it a fully legitimated means of artistic expression, it would be necessary to take into consideration the incomparable property of the photographic medium to investigate the intimate nature of things. The lens, a mechanical instrument that has infallible precision, inevitably captures a fleeting moment, which flows before the eye of the photographer, who remains hidden – even if peremptorily present – behind the camera. And it is precisely in this sudden act of eternalizing a reality that has already disappeared, already irreversibly changed in the flow of life, that photography is not only limited to reproduction: it rather offers the opportunity to investigate phenomena analytically and to reformulate them, to reassemble them in a reality even more real than reality itself. In this sense, the exhibition "My Four Roots" is a real programmatic manifesto. The artist aims to return to the essential, on the one hand expressing a human, visceral and individual need to get back in touch with her own origins, recognized in the four natural elements; on the other, she talks in universal terms, with the aim of identifying the very roots of reality.

This double research, conducted both on an existential and theoretical level, translates into an increasingly abstract and intangible artistic language, as if to emphasize that the true essence of things cannot be circumscribed in a closed and definitive form, nor can it be touched. Through this operation, she delineates places that only apparently resemble natural landscapes, but resonate with inner vibrations. Dematerialized, with no anthropic elements, they acquire the symbolic value of inner places, of metaphysical spaces.

It is no coincidence that the chosen technique to perform a similar analysis is

photography, a form of art constituted by an incorporeal but omnipresent material. The “light traces” by Rossella are therefore the perfect correspondence between signifier and meaning, in which an impalpable entity with an undeniable spiritual meaning gives shape to everything.

In this regard it is interesting to note how in her photographs every detail is emphasized, accentuated, almost in an exasperation of reality, which results into a totalizing abstraction, that invests every small particle, every single atom, of what is represented. The camera is an ally in the accurate identification of the structure of physical bodies and, in this precise context, it is possible to consider again the aesthetic category of “beauty”, using the words of the famous photographer Edward Weston: “The physical quality of things can be rendered with utmost exactness: stone is hard, bark is rough, flesh is alive, or they can be made harder, rougher or more alive if desired. In a word, let us have photographic of beauty”.

The path taken by the artist unfolds over an extended period of time: each step is a hard conquest of her own awareness, up to the revelation of the quintessence that permeates all the four elements of Nature.

Her research starts from the series called “Cruel Colors” (2015), which represents the element of Fire through shots taken in Dancalia, a region in Ethiopia that is also the largest depression on Earth and the hottest area in the world. No place could be more appropriate to physically represent the most carnal, the most dangerous, the most primordial of the four “roots”. The photographs that capture the volcanic eruption are characterized by a clear chromatic dualism, which noticeably accentuates reds and yellows, through their isolation on the background of an absolute black. The jets of incandescent lava stand out on a dark velvet canvas, they seem to be arabesques of colour, outlined by a wise fortuity, almost like a drip painting. In such a terse composition, a magma of pulsating energy boils, communicating with the spectator without any symbolic mediation. A different discourse has to be made for the other photographs of the same cycle, in which the rocky conformations, with acid colours in evident simultaneous contrast, draw a new morphology, not similar to any pre-existing geographical description. Reality is multifaceted and changes right under the attentive eye of the photographer, who is able to reshape it with her own works, even if only temporarily.

The fickle passion of fire dissolves in the modulated shots of the “Linear Alchemies” collection (2016), dedicated to Water. Water builds parallel realities, gives body to immaterial reverberations, redoubles the visible world. Compositions acquire order, linearity, they are based on horizontal lines and on a few, essential, diagonals. Surfaces

are structured into chromatic bands, in order to narrate the poetry of the reflections, the reciprocal contamination of colours that merge and mirror each other, the harmonious alchemies that regulate Nature.

The photographs of the series “Breath of Heaven” (2017), taken on the mountains of the Chinese Zhangye Danxia Park, bring the concept of abstraction to a further level. Earth, seen from space, a privileged point of view, is blue, a variegated and changeable blue. Precisely blue, in its most ethereal and iridescent shades, is the predominant colour in the shots dedicated to the element Earth. Rossella’s extraordinary intuition lies in integrating the overall vision of the globe and its minute, lenticular, capillary observation.

Some magnified details of mountains are painted blue, as if the infinitely small and the infinitely big coincided, as if they were watched simultaneously from close up and from afar. Not only. Blue, in Tibetan philosophy as well as in Western mysticism, is the materialization of spirituality, of the divine, of harmony, of stillness. Composition, angular and geometrically solid, loses all identifiable connotations, appears to be founded exclusively on pure forms. In this progressive purification, the mountain range becomes a rarefied and sublime place, an emanation of the soul.

Earth becomes Heaven, it rises, and Heaven becomes incarnate, breathes. This last flash of inspiration must have crossed the mind of the artist when she created the last series of this artistic path, “The Roots of the Air” (2018). How can Air, an invisible, immaterial element, difficult to perceive, have roots? Being it uncontainable, incorporeal and changeable, Air possesses the essence of Becoming. Briefly, the artist makes a definitive transition from the polyhedric nature of phenomena to the immutability of being; she translates the primordial chaos, that is at the origin of Everything, into a few synthetic forms. To transpose such an achievement into formal terms, the chromatic range is cleverly reduced to a few shades of white, grey, beige and significant black outlines, evoking the complementarity of substance and void. It is the highest degree of expression of a photography based on “removing”, in which progressive depuration leads to catharsis. The artist refuses the rhetorical representation of the sky and instead chooses the most arduous and complex way, materializing ether and making it dialogue with its terrestrial counterpart. The cycle dedicated to Air brings to mind the shots of the British photographer Michael Kenna, whose profound and masterly technical skill originates images in black and white, minimal, imperturbable, silent, pervaded with immensity. Rossella, capturing the sense of history that nature transmits, immortalises serene and poetic places which, suspended in an undetermined and mysterious time, with no connection to the present, appear inexorably as eternal and boundless spaces.

The path traced by Rossella leads us to reflect on the very nature of the photographic act, to conclude that this gesture is nothing but a conscious reorganization of the natural chaos. As already theorized by another important photographer, Ansel Adams, the eye that captures the image manages to extrapolate the shape from the surrounding material confusion.

The need for a more and more radical dematerialization has also been expressed in an innovative form of art, extraordinarily experimental: the hologram. Explored by the artist since 2012, the hologram is based on the paradox of creating three-dimensional but incorporeal, virtual, poetic images. By giving voice to the intangible emotions of her soul, Rossella puts technology at the service of her own feelings, in order to find the most appropriate and coherent means for a specific expressive necessity. Colours, fluid and malleable masses, are articulated in her own consciousness and slowly merge, in an indissoluble way, with memories and sensations, both physical and emotional. Her desire is to give shape to whirling, confused emotions, deposited during important, even painful, experiences. Disorienting states of mind gradually become definite, clearer and clearer, they are investigated by an eye that – like the photographic lens – is able to decode reality, to plumb its symbols and produce renewed images. Pain lightens itself, dematerializes, produces beauty.

The last admirable result of this research on impalpable and multiform images, is the hologram entitled “Auric Egg”. A perfect form without end and without beginning, the casket of life and sacred symbol that alludes to the Resurrection, the egg was chosen by the artist to synthetically represent the complex totality of the four elements. This single entity, perfectly complete in itself, contains direct references to all the “roots” already mentioned above. The shell of the egg recalls the rough and fragile surface of the Earth. The membrane, breathable by its own nature, represents Air. The albumen, liquid and corpuscular, materializes Water. The yolk, a yellow beating heart, echoes Fire. The adjective “auric” is characterized by a precious meaning of perfection, as if to underline the completeness of a microcosm in which all the elements are complementary and each one feeds on the vital essence of the other. From the fire emerges a salamander that, although touched by the flames, remains uninjured: the legendary resistance of this indestructible animal thus becomes a metaphor for the inexhaustible capacity of adaptation of the human being who, tempered by multiple tests, is able to constantly remodel his own *modus vivendi*. The salamander remains balanced on a spinning top in perpetual rotation, which evokes – without interruption – the transition from childhood to adulthood. The object, strongly linked to the dimension of playing games, explains the need to grow, to recognize oneself in an autonomous and individual entity, overcoming the mother-child duality, without giving up the more instinctual, more creative impulses. The continuous motion alludes to a process without interruption, extended at all stages of life; the direct dialogue with the salamander, in this sense, is fundamental to underline how human beings must

continually regenerate themselves throughout their evolution. To make the communication of such an interior development even more effective, the hologram turns into a spiral: a geometric form in perpetual rise, it expresses the infinite and the cyclicity, it represents the inner axis of each person who learns to rotate around themselves. In his swirling dynamism it can even remember a DNA molecule, the richest archive of every individual story. Finally, the hologram ends with a poetic image of the sky and the sea, fused together on the horizon. Two halves divided and at the same time united in a subtle shade, different and essential, like Yin and Yang, that dominate the indispensable contradictions that inhabit the spirit of each of us. The fragile but sublime balance that permeates all of Rossella's artistic research is thus expressed in this perfect ambivalence of infernal impulses and paradisiacal aspirations, which allows her to narrate – through works of ethereal but carnal beauty – a human story, unfolded among the many facets of Being.