

Pawel Wasowski. Temples Of This Time

The exhibition project dedicated to Pawel Wasowski (Warsaw, 1974) presents to the public a series of new works, entitled Temples, arranged in the spaces of the Gallery, specially designed by the artist between 2020 and 2021, which dialogues with previous works related to Confluence cycles. (Confluence) and Optical Vibes.

The exhibition itinerary begins with a site-specific work, offering the public for the first time the refined conceptuality of the Polish artist and architect: on one of the two walls of the access corridor to the exhibition, sketches and drawings, notes and chromatic tests are arranged, which Wasowski meticulously created for each work: a true "journey" at the foundation of his research and his creative process, from conception to design necessary to create works of rigorous perfection and seductive beauty, features that characterize its entire production up to the present series of Temples.

The works Temples of This Time thus introduce, already from the title, the last cycle of the artist's works, characterized by a square format, a refined manual creation - as in the case of his entire pictorial work - and an extraordinary capacity to vary textures and chromatic gradations, based on a modularity established a priori as a design model, with extraordinary perceptual effects arising from the meeting between forms.

Works that are Temple: as the title suggests, followed by a progressive number and an ancient name, evoking the Egyptian gods.

The temple, the square, the references to the mysterious civilization of the pharaohs are three elements that the artist places on the table of painting to visualize and interpret, with his language, the meaning of what hit the whole world today, the pandemic: an era of suffering that Wasowski himself associates with the Egyptian ones described in the Bible, the first disasters that God sent upon mankind to punish us for our wickedness and sins.

Starting from this tragic parallelism, the artist then reflected on the ancient and contemporary significance of building temples and monuments to glorify divinity: places where one tries to resume dialogue with the sacred, atone for sin, re-establish a connection with the afterlife, exploring mystery.

And the first sacred places, from the Kaaba to the Mastaba and to the Pyramids, have a square plan.

A geometric shape loaded with mystical, kabbalistic and alchemical meanings: it is enough to remember that already from the moment of choosing the construction area of a temple, the identification of a point of high tension and ideal conjunction between Earth and Heaven is fundamental. In other words, the identification of a place in a unique and extraordinary way, so as to allow the relationship between man and the divine, the contact between the transient and the transcendent, with the world Beyond.

A choice that reflects on many artistic researches, including modern and contemporary ones: from Lucio Fontana who identifies the exact point in which to pierce the canvas, thus finding and experiencing the gap to Beyond to Pawel Wasowski who finds the central point from which the composition takes place: chromatic, enigmatic and hypnotic of his patterns, in a back-and-forth between the concreteness of the project and the metaphysics of the vision.

In fact, even in the construction of a temple, the starting point of a center is fundamental, often represented by a stone that comes out of chaos and becomes its system of order.

It is the center in which the priest digs a pit and places in it not only offerings, but also a trunk-column of cubic stone: the shape of the square is rendered in all its power; the same happens in Wasowski's work: the illusion offered by the colors used skillfully allows the works to be three-dimensional: the gaze sinks into the center of the work, crosses it in its chromatic expansion, returns to its generating nucleus, in a perceptual experience that stimulates the mind to make different and changing conceptual associations, depending on our previous knowledge and imagination.

It all starts from there, from a central, small, very strong square: the beginning of creation, the sacred nave of the temple of art.

A pure and absolute form: with a dizzying leap forward, Wasowski reaches the squares of the historical and postwar avant-garde, from Malevich to Albers, from Vasarely to Alberto Biasi: the work of the Polish artist and architect is loaded with all the bold experiments of the twentieth century, and it goes through and honors the verifications and projects, utopias and visions until the meaningful updating of the so-called optical art.

It is fascinating that his research, such as the planned and kinetic ones that began in the late fifties and "exploded" in the next decade of the twentieth century, always starts from a reference to the world of nature: for example, as we have seen, the allusion to the temple takes us back to a point identified in the empty earth of a place found and chosen by man enlightened by the gods; even the patterns that Wasowski skillfully irradiates around the central point of the work are the result of an overlap of textures that the artist fills, one after the other, with color to highlight the chromatic reticle. In fact, Alberto Biasi had managed to invent the mythical protagonist of programmed art in the sixties, when in the late fifties, observing the spreading of silkworms, formed by lattice, he had thought to superimpose them to obtain vibrant works capable of capturing and deceiving, looking to enchant and make the observer think.

"After all, the world is always waiting to be rethought and redesigned from the ground up, and this is the task of artists," said another great protagonist of the great planned season, Antonio Barrese, active in the MID group.

Starting precisely from the world, from the rules that order nature and dictate its mystery, Wasowski continues to rethink everyday life; or, a pandemic that we face dramatically, becomes an incentive to unite, in a conceptual and temporal vertigo, preclassical antiquity with the kinetic

avant-garde of the twentieth century. He followed the rules of his great masters: those of Josef Albers who, at an advanced age, painted *Omaggi al quadrato* (Tributes to the Square) (1950) and who in 1963, through the pages of the essay *Interaction of color*, demonstrated how each color can be perceived in a completely different way, if associated with other colors and shapes, to provide a multiple perception of the pictorial space.

Before the Temple, Wasowski created other cycles of work that continue to generate patterns and variations around the central theme, entitled *Confluenze* (Confluences). In this case, it is a work of a rectangular shape, consisting of a composition of squares of different colors, giving the eye the illusion of dynamic and confluent movements: seem fluid, changeable as streams or rivers of rain on the windows or, moreover, it evokes microscopic investigations. It is no coincidence that this cycle of works is called *Confluenze*, as Wasowski perceives it in their most scientific sense: a measure of the number of cells in cell cultures, expressed as a percentage of the area of the culture vessel occupied by cells. For example, one hundred percent confluence means that the cells have taken up all the available space and that there is no room for further growth. In this direction, the works in this series are enriched with meaning and become much more interesting to the eye, presenting themselves as living, changing organisms, in continuous transformation and disposition due to the dynamics of these plastic units; we could pay homage to another master and "spiritual father" of Wasowski: Victor Vasarely. In 1955, the Hungarian artist, on the occasion of the exhibition "Le Mouvement" at the Denis René Gallery, published his *Yellow Manifesto*, in which all previous intuitions were reunited in a strict theory, meant to establish a new pictorial language, whose letters they were geometric elements defined by Vasarely as "Unités plastiques": colored squares of 10 centimeters on each side, inside which a smaller geometric shape of another color can be inserted, such as a circle, a rectangle or a square. A simple rule, capable of generating countless works. A rule that also comes from nature: in 1973, Vasarely described, in fact, his plastic units as "homologues of stars, atoms, cells and molecules, but also of grains of sand, pebbles, flowers and leaves": the artist's abstraction it was able to synthesize the generating and metamorphic energy of nature in a geometric form and in its infinite variations and potential dimensions. Something very similar to what Pawel Wasowski's work offers us today: a work conceived with refined mastery. From the elaboration of the project and the chromatic tests to the filling of each square with color, the artist actually intervenes manually, using only templates and patterns to obtain textures to fill and complete.

A dexterity that makes his works more vivid and vibrant and invites us, once again, to believe in the possibility of man being the measure and order of the world: but also to accept the unforeseen and the mystery. After all, they are also part of the harmony and, implicitly, of life.