

Painting is a mute poem and poetry is a blind painting, and both proceed by imitating nature as far as their powers make it possible...

Leonardo da Vinci

Muta poesia continues the artistic research begun by **Alessio Deli** with his cycle *Incipit Memoria* in 2019: the poetics of reutilisation no longer concerns castoff and abandoned materials, but rather past traditions.

Looking back to the Horatian simile *Ut pictura poesis* (literally meaning “as is painting, so is poetry”) that Horace introduced in his *Ars Poetica* to compare the art of painting with that of poetry, and continuing through to Leonardo da Vinci’s treatise on painting in which this analogy is affirmed, *Muta poesia* underscores the link between art and poetry and their ability to generate images in the minds of the observer and tell a story.

A distant world emerges in the present, classicism finds a new dimension and new forms while remaining on the path traced by the principles of harmony and proportion, typical of Greco-Roman and Renaissance art in which the stylistic roots of Deli are embedded.

Dialogues between the present and the past spring to life. Something new is born from something old. Echoes of classical sculpture and Renaissance prototypes inhabit the works of Deli: the canvases of Botticelli, and the busts of Verrocchio, Jacopo della Quercia and Francesco Laurana are recognisable but do not become sterile citations. The art of the past is studied and revisited by the artist who, in a game of simultaneity, generates new tales of that silent poetry inherent in human nature, now living in a diaphanous, fragmented world that has lost the way of history, perhaps its identity, certainly its origins.

The beauty of harmonious proportions is recovered. A sense of grace and stillness pervades the sculptures of Deli and places them at odds with the contemporary world, with its conflicts and contradictions. It is an invitation to meditate on present times in relation to history and therefore memory. It is also an invitation to look at Nature and hence includes ancient symbols of life and renewal, which are integrated with their human counterpart, silently declaiming a sense of rebirth or good omen, as in the case of *Venus After Botticelli*, born during the lockdown.

The artist rediscovers and updates that sense of proportion and balance which was the guide and artistic ideal of the Masters of the past. The harking back to tradition is extended to include the practical, strictly technical aspects of making art, underlining the fundamental role of the artist's manual skills and the importance of drawing in the preparation and study of a work. Deli returns to bronze as his material, as well as the Della Robbia process for the polychrome glazing of his terracottas.

The past that Deli returns to allows a certain idea of cultural identity to continue living its previous life and, at the same time, to become something other than what it was before: an ancient presence that persists over time but at the same time is corroded by time.

Rust, which is used by Deli as an artistic medium in his photographs, allow us to glimpse passages from the past which survive to ferry ancient mute poems into more recent times.

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