

ARCADIA

Arcadia, the ancient Greek region in the heart of the Peloponnese, registers in the collective imagination as a timeless place, the byword for an idyllic world where nature and pastoral landscapes reign and chaos is banished.

Vittorio Lavazzo draws on the ancient and mythological iconography associated with this paradise, adapting it to contemporary times. The utopian and romantic image of Arcadia does not represent an escape route from reality for Lavazzo, but rather a symbolic element, an invisible guide, an ideal place which can be made visible through art.

The artist's works focus on mythological figures who follow an allegorical path, an inner journey that leads from loss to rebirth. Apollo and Daphne open the quest and are portrayed at the climax of their tale, when the nymph turns into a laurel tree, leaving her forlorn would-be lover clutching at a twig.

The loss, however, is not intended as an ending but rather as the start of a spiritual journey that will usher in vital change, as implied by the circles on which the figures are set: unstable elements that make the search for balance and movement inevitable, like wheels circling into the future.

The symbolic journey laid out by Lavazzo ends with a rebirth, represented by allegorical figures such as Venus rising from the waters and who, having explored the abyss, can finally bare herself to the light of the sun.

Lavazzo experiments with different techniques in his sculptures, combining the use of paper mache with other materials that echo the imagery of the Classical world. Apollo and Daphne are treated with oxides to give the sculptures an ancient look, similar to that of the recently unearthed San Casciano bronzes, worn by time and atmospheric agents.

Mars and Athena, on the other hand, are made with a mix of paper and terracotta powder, a technique that brings to mind the surface appearance of ancient Greek vases.

The paintings and drawings, in keeping with the journey conceived by the artist, are populated by figures that emerge from the ideal world of Arcadia, such as nymphs, fauns and pagan divinities. Experimentation is again a key feature with Lavazzo applying materials such as coffee and copper oxide to the surface of the canvas or paper, with the aim of giving the images an aura of antiquity.

Arcadia is a pilgrimage through an inner world, a silent, theatrical representation full of codes for us to decipher through our gaze and intuition.

Anna Gasperini