

SOLIDlandscapes.04

Domenico Quaranta

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The other day I was in a wood, and all of a sudden a woodpecker came next to me.(Mauro Ceolin)

The birth of the landscape as genre, at the end of the XVI century, is marked by its progressive liberation from a "narrative". It can be a religious narrative, like in the *Santa Maria Egiziaca* by Tintoretto; an allegorical-symbolical one, like in Giorgione's *Tempest*; or an historical, mythological or adventurous one, like in Rubens' huntings. Slowly, landscape gets rid of its role as a background or scenographic wing, and becomes the main character of the work. Nevertheless, landscape has difficulty in freeing itself of the myth. Think about Lorrain or Poussin, the two great landscape painters of the XVII century: the characters may become smaller and smaller, or even fade away, but they keep on going around like ghosts, and you can find their signs at the opening of a cave, along the banks of a river, among the ruins of an ancient temple. This happens because the landscape, at least up until Romanticism, still worked as the background of those myths, the sweet Italian landscape that hides a tale in every nook and cranny.

The views seen in the *SOLIDlandscapes* series by Mauro Ceolin come from a narrative too and are taken from a myth: a myth made by motor racing and bloody

battles, soccer teams and the constitution of new social entities; a myth in which there are no spectators, just heroes, because the XXI century mythology is interactive by nature. Like the XVII century landscape painters, Ceolin is very diligent in keeping clues that could bring us back to the Story hidden from us, nevertheless the Story doesn't stop from peeping out of that colour puzzle, typical of his unique style: the Red Square from Gotham Project Racing is still the architecture seen from the corner of your eye in the frenzy of a race, and the urban scenario of GTA, even though all is calm now, continues to evoke the scenes of the ordinary madness that it witnessed.

The mention of the classical tradition, while discussing Ceolin's polygonal landscapes, shouldn't seem self-serving. The artist himself appears to allow this reference, paying his tribute to Canaletto in one of his recent works. Canaletto, the landscape painter who worked with the optical camera as Ceolin works with the electronic pencil. Canaletto, the first ever to portray, in his paintings, not the Venice he could see, but a "mediated" reality, filtered by another medium. Like Ceolin, who doesn't translate the values of depth into pictorial values, but the polygonal structure of the videogame landscape into the vectorial language of Flash. Look at the sketches drawn by Canaletto with the optical camera that are then used as starting point for his paintings, then look at Ceolin's vectorial drawings: the similarities in the processes and results are impressive.

In a way, the mention of a tradition is necessary for an artist who, even when making videogames, software or sculptures on palms, insists that he is a painter by definition, and who behaves as a painter. Listening to Ceolin when he talks about his work is always a surprise: and even if you think that artists' words don't deserve to be heard, Ceolin's speeches require a certain attention. If nothing else, they are extraordinarily self-defeating, at least for a "fashionable" characterization of his work. He turns up his nose when you call him a "net artist", or when you try to interpret his work in a socio-political way; he says naively that he prefers a trip to the mountains than the joys of technology, and to feel more at ease, attending a Fair, among the "moderns" than one the "contemporaries". An attitude opposite to that of a

pose, that proves how serious and premeditated his choice of field, of a technique and of aesthetics is. A choice that hasn't stemmed from a generic techno-enchantment, from the will to do something new, to conform to a fashion: but from the simple remark that if this is the reality we live in, then we must paint this reality; if these are the languages we use, and with which we make ourselves understood best, then we must use these languages.

SOLIDlandscapes is a series of images that pays honour to the landscape of the new contemporary mythology. As we said, it is an interactive mythology, in which the "reader" doesn't follow Ulysses' adventures, but he wears his clothes and he lives his adventures. It's a myth essentially made of images, and that leaves no space for the imagination: you don't need to think about Calypso's island, you just have to look around you. You're there. Even the point of view is defined. Nevertheless, Ceolin doesn't work as a reporter, just photographing the background of his adventures. He stops these landscapes, extracting their essential elements, and most of all purifying them from all the components of action. And he gives them back to our fantasy, free, at the end, to appreciate their features, and to set new stories in them. Showing how much reality can be a videogame: that sets his stories, often war stories and violent ones, on the backdrop of a wonderful world, in the way we set our own stories on New York's skyline, on the Afghani mountains, on the Iraqi desert, on Sicilian beaches. A world in which, if we pay attention, we may even be approached by a woodpecker.