

## *The Unconscious in itself and Analytical Painting*

by *Alfredo Anania*

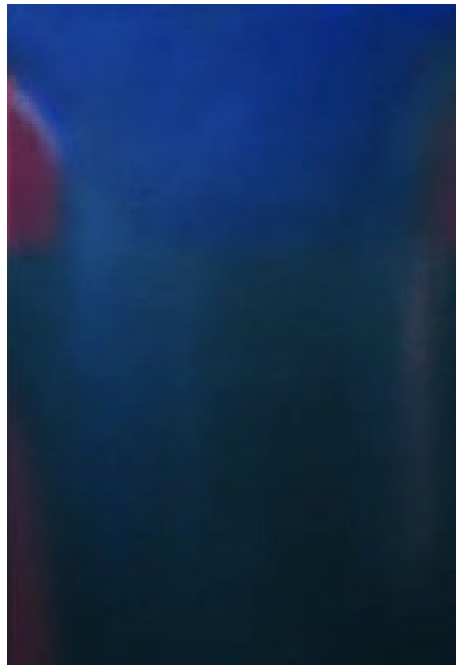
*Analytical Painting* is not a psychological terminology but a pictorial movement that arose in 1968 in Italy, but more or less in that period in different parts of the world and which in Italy found notable exponents such as *Claudio Olivieri* and *Claudio Verna*.

I would like to underline the importance of the historical period in which “analytical painting” arises which is characterized by a break in all fields - intellectual, artistic, literary and so on - with the way of conceiving being in the world and living the humanity, proposing itself in a way that is in many ways peacefully rebellious compared to previous eras and therefore, in short, enhancing the dream of a “better world”.

In the field of visual arts, *Analytical Painting* emerges as a tool for reflection by the artist on his own creation which appears devoid of relevance to material reality, to symbolic meaning or to referentiality, although hidden, from the author's personal novel: the work dresses of apparent indefiniteness. “Painting Painting” has also been called, but I would prefer to call it “Painting in Itself”!

The material and technique used to create the work are important, as is the result of the light-colour combination. It would seem that the work has a function (this is partly the case for all artistic works) that is above all narcissistic and, therefore, as if the creator did not have a thought for the observer! Considering it is possible that the *Other* is not consciously present in a human being, we must admit that we certainly do not self-generate, that we are born to the *Other*, that our essence has in any case been the *generative Other*!

The speaker, the excellent art critic *Gianna Panicola*, in the poster of our Webinar of April 18th, *Analytical Painting* has chosen to include the work “Permanenza in blue” (1972, oil on canvas) with the subtitle “*Claudio Olivieri and the color of the indefinite*”.



But already the “permanence” of the color, in this case the blue, represents an existential affirmation and an emotional-affective continuity that cannot fail to correspond to a legitimate *process of individuation*.

*Gianna Panicola* was enlightening when she quoted *Claudio Cerritelli* in his book “Analytical Thresholds. Writings on Italian painting of the Seventies” underlines how for *Claudio Olivieri* the undefined is a silent territory devoid of references and that in his works it makes sense to talk only about color as a means of expressing one's emotions and not about colours. Of blue,

of red, of... **the color of the indefinite**. We read in the exhibition catalog “Claudio Olivieri. Visible Infinity”, curated by the *Claudio Olivieri Archive* and hosted in the rooms of *Palazzo Ducale in Mantua*: “the works of Claudio Olivieri stage a sort of space-time suspension that opens up to the exploration of the unknown and in which silence meditative is never empty, but an astonished atmosphere that invites you to be seized and in which traces, holds, presences/absences, interstices and possibilities resonate”.

Certainly *Analytical Painting* is a disruptive painting; in the volume “Olivieri in parallel with Verna” (Silvana Editoriale Spa, Milan, 2013) in the preface *Pietro Giorgio Salvo*, at the time President of the *Ente Mostra di Pittura di Marsala*, writes that with “analytical painting” “forms are reduced to a minimum, sometimes in simple lines... an unspectacular painting, not easy and immediate to understand for the visitor... In Olivieri, color and light are two founding moments, from the dark midnight blue, black or brown, to the bright red, yellow or indigo, up to blue, white or light blue; fundamentally monochromatic canvases are illuminated thanks to the play of light with thin veils and light shades; images, features and features of figures seem to stand out on the canvas and then merge into the enveloping colour. In his works there is a continuous reference from the visible to the invisible, a desire to cross the canvas to understand what is hidden behind, and a reference from the invisible to the visible, from the afterlife to the here and now. Suspended spaces of light, metaphysical universes, pure and composite intellectual research. The color on the canvas seems to sing and enchant the visitor who allows himself to be enveloped and fascinated by the artist's world”.

If we put ourselves in the shoes of the observer, the minimum common denominator in *analytical painting* is the disappearance, in the paintings, of forms and figures and, therefore, disappearance of any reference to the reality of the external world or even to that which refers to it. At symbolic level, the same can be said of the apparent disappearance of the author's inner world! Let's keep in mind that even the famous stains of the *Rorschach Test*, despite being meaningless, have shapes that allow those taking the exam to provide personal interpretations! Something that doesn't allow you "analytical painting”.



But what meaning do the creations of *Analytical Painting* have? Meanwhile, it is certain that these are authors who are very capable of using brushes and endowed with the gift of creativity in a fascinating form, enveloping probably due to the fact that they induce the imagination in us: imagining what the work could mean, imagining the state of mind that it led the painter to complete that work, because he have used that color in one moment and another color in another creative moment; everything leads us to enter the author's interior universe! This applies to all artists of course. But what I want to underline is that that strong emotion that the works of art that enrich museums all over the world give us, think of *Botticelli's Venus* for example, is not aroused in us by "analytical painting": we are enveloped by it but don't too enveloped!

Searching for the profound why, bringing what is unconscious to consciousness is part of my job. Since its inception, psychoanalysis has invaded all cultural and artistic fields worldwide! But we must ask ourselves whether “analytical painting” is not a more or less conscious research that the artist does on his own unconscious, on his feelings of the moment, on his pathos that he "transfuses" onto the canvas that must give him an answer on himself, on that part of himself that is invisible to him. All this leads us to consider whether "analytical painting" has finally discovered and highlighted that a part of the human being is invisible and, therefore, can hardly be made visible to oneself or even to others, but that this invisibility has a strength, a content, a meaning and whether in the moment of creative impetus it produces a particularly lively red or an almost imperceptible white and all the forms of transition between these two pictorial extremes does and all that not tell us what derives from the unconscious and leads to but this tells us that the author is dealing with his unconscious which, although unknown and mysterious at the same time, has such an overpowering force that leads him to make a representation of it: an *unconscious in itself* which cannot be if not formless. The very beauty of pictorial creation is defined if not by the encounter between color and light.

The viewer cannot help but wonder the reason for that work and what meaning it has for the artist. It seems obvious that every expression of “analytical painting” prompts a reflection on the possible intersection between the personal novel of the artist, the personal novel of the observer and the novel of the historical era in which they are experiencing.

*Diego Mormorio*, during our webinar, rightly underlines that works such as *Botticelli's Venus* have a reassuring effect because they belong to us, also as founding myths of our cultural heritage, while the works of “analytical painting” have the fascination of the unknown, of the disquieting abyss!

I agree, but I have the feeling that the emotional impact of the observer is sometimes connected to the opening towards the abyss of the pre-archetypal internal world, where the terrifying interior, the mystery of life and death, the immensity (in our eyes) of monstrous and mysterious creation, that invisible world that breaks into us with the nightmare, the prehistory that our unconscious contains as the “Vertical Sea” admirably described by *Giorgio Saviane* in his novel of this title; contrariwise other times the emotional impact of the spectator pertains to the “Great Beauty” of the *Universe* to which we belong, to the joy and happiness we experience, to the dearest memories of our live and so on. The strongest feeling is that we will never know and, therefore, we remain visually attached to the canvas in a kaleidoscopic game of imagination, which, in my opinion, is the ultimate aim of *Analytical Painting*.



Claudio Verna, *Pittura* (1973, Olio su Tela)

Alfredo Anania, 29.04.2024