

Nicola Verlato. Myth generation



by the editorial staff

Visiting an exhibition by Nicola Verlato (Verona, 1965) is always a regenerating experience, and the anthology exhibition that has just opened in Imola – a selection of works created from 2002 to the present, preceded by a small, evocative *overture* with some of the artist's youthful drawings – is no exception.

Verlato is a painter – as well as a sculptor, modeler, renderer – who knows his craft and is proud to practice it, with one foot in the past and the other in the future. He favors the large formats of the Renaissance tradition and uses a figurative language, that includes the skillful and guileless use of the rhetorical figures of classical culture. This is what artists of all ages have always done, in both sacred and secular spheres.

Verlato's great altarpieces are full of pathos, they flaunt virtuosity and excess, they do not shy away from the sacred terror of appearing *kitsch*, populist, reactionary, etc. These are all definitions that never have their real justification in the work as it is presented to the eye of the beholder. Rather, they arise from the blackmailing and fideistic approach that a certain idea of "contemporary" – based on the *a priori* rejection of everything that does not conform to a deconstructed, fragmentary, nihilistic worldview – would like to inculcate in the public.

Standing in front of Verlato's works, we realize that the object hanging on the wall, commonly called a "painting," is actually a "machine" (as it would have been called in the past). That is, a device in which *trompe-l'oeil*,

scenic fiction, and architectural decoration enthrall the viewer by leading him or her through a narrative labyrinth. Certainly, the rituals and myths that in the past allowed such imposing images to become one with the architecture of places of worship, mausoleums, and memorials may seem outdated today. But the Imola exhibition is here to remind us that myth and ritual continue to reappear on our horizon in the most unexpected forms.

In this sense, *Myth generation* is an excellent title, because it leaves open two interpretive paths, both equally useful for understanding Verlato's work. That is, there is a generation of myths to be understood in an anagraphic sense (it could be that of Pier Paolo Pasolini or James Dean, to mention two archetypes of Verlato's mythography, or rather another one yet to come); but there is also a generation of myths to be understood as a vital process through which myths continually generate and regenerate themselves, mixing blood and poetry.

The exhibition *Myth generation*, curated by Diego Galizzi, is on view at the Museo di San Domenico in Imola from October 26, 2024 to January 19, 2025. The catalogue, with texts by Diego Galizzi and Andrea Bruciati and an interview with Nicola Verlato, is published by Imola Musei.

Homepage: Nicola Verlato, Hooligans (detail), 2002, oil on canvas, cm. 150 x 150, Museo Go!-Ronco Arte, Gussago.

Bottom: Nicola Verlato, Hostia, 2022, oil on canvas, cm. 300 x 175, The Bank Ets-Istituto per gli Studi sulla Pittura Contemporanea, Bassano del Grappa.

