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Neapolitan arches covered with veils: Marieta Chirulescu's solo exhibition

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Marieta Chirulescu, *Cytwombly Cyfonti*, 2016. Exhibition view at Galleria Fonti, Naples. C.sy Galleria Fonti, Napoli

Below the painting, there is something else. What can one paint centuries after the masterpieces of the art of painting? In the 21st century, it is a complicated discourse on which many contemporary artists, who have returned to painting, one of the seven arts, seek to reflect. The works of Marieta Chirulescu reveal a heterogeneous and multilayered pictorial reality. In the era of the reproducibility (also) of painting, the artist combines digital and analog techniques, merging the different times to which these techniques belong. In doing so, she gives substance to her painting, seeking its uniqueness.

“An intermediate space separates painting from print reproduction,” explains Marieta Chirulescu, the Romanian artist from Sibiu who lives and works in Berlin and was born in 1974. Her third solo exhibition at Galleria Fonti (via Chiaia, 229, until December 2, opening hours: Tuesday to Friday from 1 pm to 7 pm; Saturday from 10 am to 2 pm) is titled “They said so,” which also seems a way to go back to what has already been done in the past, over the centuries: information about the works is layered, circulates, and changes, the works remain what they embody, but in the end, they are open to different interpretations by different people who look at them, whether they are professionals or not.

The artist adds that she has created a parallel between her way of making art and the way the American writer Gertrud Stein made poetry. The author of the famous essay on Picasso and especially the poem “Sacred Emily,” where the aphorism “a rose is a rose is a rose” is contained, worked on words by creating shifts in meaning and context, thus witnessing their mutations.

Chirulescu intends to do the same with painting, and for this reason, her approach is by layering. In addition to using monochrome canvases with diaphanous colors, she overlays - instead of the glazes used by ancient masters - papers, collages, fabrics, prints, and other materials. Regarding collage, for this occasion, she uses it in a more tactile sense, not only scanning the fabric but applying it to the canvases. In addition to techniques, there are the forms that the Romanian artist has worked on.

A recurring motif in many of the paintings shown at Fonti is a reference to the arches found in the gallery’s white cube, in an ancient building on Via Chiaia. Those forms have crystallized, creating a correspondence between the architectures and the paintings exhibited, but the light that the artist experienced in Italy in 2015, when she won a significant German award for a residency at Villa Massimo in Rome, also played its part.

The arch element is found in many works, as well as the light reflecting on the canvas, opening up to its internal space, revealing the other possibility, the sense of almost infinite depth, opened by subtle, diaphanous colors that are like light, transparent curtains from which sometimes details of figuration also emerge: the hint of a body, balusters or lattice, the citation of a landscape on which a red sun seems to set over the sea, or real overlapping objects, such as those that would seem like seeds.

It is the same artist, after all, who has established that a shift in meaning, context, can change the status of the representation to which she has resorted.