

Art shows' titles are sometimes a pretext, a cue, a thematic suggestion. Here the thing is different: Nina Carini chose to call her exhibition on the lower floor of Palazzo Nicolaci in Noto, Divine Astrazioni (Divine Abstractions), an actual conceptual tribute and not only to Alighiero Boetti, who gave this name to some of his works.

In this respect I think it is interesting to make a kind of philological digression on the subject, the adjective "divine" is a reference to what belongs to another dimension, as opposed to the human one, with a link to the concept of sacred, sacer. This term corresponds to the ancient greek [1] ἱερός *hieros*, belonging to a religious lexicon that qualifies reality and natural spaces. And To Hieron designates the sacred fence, the sanctuary. In the exhibited works, the huge net, *Analfabeta*, specifically designed, and the drawings *Senza parole* [2] (Without words), the artist creates, delimits space in order to respect it and, at the same time, to break its boundary.

The net, 2 metres wide and 4.48 metres long, was woven by Nina, who then painted the meshes with kaolin to make it chalky and highly tactile. The big structure contains fabric tiles with words that, when read in the right order, form sentences which refer to a dream that the artist had. A sort of nightmare in which she is on a ledge and then she is falling, because the person in front of her keeps eating and doesn't help her. "Why you let me fall?", just as if the net was a soft ladder, dangling in space. Suspension is a central theme of her research. This is a metawork. The artist often needed a ladder to work on the big net, suspended in the air of her studio.

Placing the letters in the texture of the net is not a simple operation: the material from which it is made is hard and the needle often bends during the insertion. It is the strain of physical work, testified by the bending needle which is preserved.

The work is accompanied by a soundtrack; it is the artist's voice, which reads aloud the sentences written on the fabric, and which is reproduced by a phonograph [3]. The intention is that of showing the difficulties of who is beginning to speak. The instrument choice is obviously not casual. It is the complication of the word, of expression, literacy, comprehension, of people-to-people dialogue, underlined by the title. It is the virtual impossibility of communication and the constant attempt to do it. It is the everyday complexity of existence.

The ladder is also a grid, and here Carini refers to some writings by the american art historian Rosalind Krauss. The grid is impervious to language, it doesn't have hierarchical positions, it lacks a centre and somehow manages to create an atmosphere of silence, which is the same felt by who looks at *Analfabeta*, even in the presence of writing. We are not in front of a cage, but rather to a geometry which helps us to find the way, to give us a starting point, to start from the beginning, and

which has the potential for strengthening out of proportion. According to the American scholar, there are two ways in which the grid works to declare the modernity of modern art: the first is spatial, the second is temporal. Carini is particularly interested in the first one.

The spectator must see the front and the back of the work, which reveals its difficulty. Also in the drawings the back is very interesting; it becomes a proof of the operation in the making. It is a work on full and empty, on presence and absence alternating in a sort of music composition, but also of crosswords, they are mental circuits.

I also like to read an alternation of darkness and light, of opposite components, as if in Eastern philosophy, a culture that has been interesting Carini for many years.

In the drawings, 11x15cm and 18x23cm, the black thread, of different textures, creates forms, lines, which is however wrong to call embroidery. They are composed of a single thread which turns into the page, as it can be seen from its back. They are like a diary, and behind some single sheets there are pencil notes. But the thread works as a sort of writing itself.

When the needle pierces the paper it is rebellious, not serviceable like fabric, and each time this creates tension. None of the drawing starts from a project, each time it is a personal journey which has an unpredictable beginning and end.

The manual practice is important, and so is the struggle of the involvement in the work, the tension which, to bring up Carlo Emilio Gadda, has however nothing to do with womanly practices. That of Nina Carini is a sort of ritual, obsessively repeating in the action, not in its outcome.

Certainly, as we have already said and repeated, the tribute is to Boetti, but if we want to dig deeper into Carini's work we can find a connection to the research of Louise Bourgeois.

She is, and has been, a teacher to Carini, a point of reference also from a social and poetic point of view.

Her work leaves many open questions, which rarely find an answer, (but it doesn't matter). The ladder with soft rungs is an evident metaphor of this, it is an existential ladder which sometimes can make us fall, back to square one, but which forces us to an effort of understanding and participation towards what we have been offered the chance to live day by day.

Sacred fences

Note on the recent works of Nina Carini, exhibited in Noto

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¹ And here we are in the middle of Magna Graecia.

² The series consists of 99 drawings, here there are 89.

³ It is one of the first instruments thought to record and reproduce sound, designed by Thomas Edison.