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HIC SUNT BATOCCHIONES

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The Romans, for example, used the expression Hic sunt leones ("here are lions") to mark unexplored and therefore dangerous regions on maps.

Sure, you could do it: look for a complete meaning, or a foothold, in the drops of Coffee&Ink escaped from some restless sip, which then float like liquid islands on the wood of the table. Of course you could. You could assign shapes to the clouds parked illegally in the sky, if you have nothing better to do. Like the drunk who no longer lifts his head from the table because he has found a mission there. Like an immense starry sky of moka, laid out on the tablecloth to be contemplated. Stamped with the bottoms of coffee cups. Bubble wrap. Ready to ship. The old witch sees omens in the coffee grounds. Poor naive fool. Here there is someone who turns it into a means of expression, no bullshit. The caffeine silhouettes that Bato offers us release an exciting aroma, a spell of perpetual wakefulness that makes you addicted. Diluted, splashed, vaporous, pouring. Leftover drips. They look like dark stains on tooth enamel, swarming with linear microbes and circular lactic ferments. Someone would put a filling in. That is not quite the case here. The brush that traced them must be a sugared, havana-coloured spoon pulled out of an Indian-ink cappuccino froth. And the Colour scheme, you will say? Colour scheme my arse. It is the Concoction conquered, the substance. The realisation that ink decaffeinates. "We'll have one in a glass and one in a cup, laced with black pigment, thanks." The recipe is simple, for all the ladies at home. The alchemical painting-espresso mixture on a milk-white base behaves decoratively, like a stain on a starched collar. With its essence it creates brown oases and parallel mirrors, silky camel coats, marble veined with tow. If you look closely it is organic, sometimes breadcrumb or rusk, sometimes woodworm holes in the bottom of caramelised wood. Seen from above they are maps of great savannahs and tangled lions. Coordinates of distant expeditions on yellowed papyrus. Decorations in thick tobacco, corrupting the territory in waves and spillages. That is where they would take us, if it were up to them: to a decaffeinated shipwreck. That is what they offer us: studies of unexplored regions of wild pictorial matter, where the shadow of the gesture & the trace of the will & the reasons of taste can be shown. And the Figure, you will say? The figure, nothing: look for it elsewhere. Whales mirrored in whales, trees bent over the sand like the back of a warrior in retreat, seeds marching in good order out of vegetable navels, figures twisting into panoramas until everything becomes a landscape of pictorial intuition. What do you want with the figure? The figure has taken to the brush, along latitudes already beaten by education. Here we are talking about something else. Hic sunt batocchiones.

— Danilo Pette, HIC SUNT BATOCCHIONES, 9 December 2011