BELINDA GRANATA

Ombra Tremula

7 December 2011

I am writing to you from the bowels of the earth, the “region of the mothers” perhaps, where I have descended to keep safe certain immaterial values, not convertible, of course, which belong to the domain of the human spirit. In this still-green depth, the land of origins perhaps, I will try to recover the primitive secret of our meaning in the cosmos. Osvaldo Licini, [from a letter of February 1941]

Bato’s is an abstract vocabulary equally attentive to geometry, modulated with a chromatic intensity that breaks the regular texture of the composition. His paintings are made of pictorially sensitive surfaces, with tonal depths that avoid flat, compact fields of colour. Thus his creatures are born: unsettling, ironic, fascinating and sensual, freed from any attempt to enclose them in a “modelling” and projected towards absolute formal purity. His creations possess an enchanting grace in which painting becomes a measured play of shadows, releasing an original poetic vein that can be felt in the fragile, light structures made of colours at once soft and strong laid down in zones, of fluid forms charged with a sense of dynamism. In depicting bodies Bato reduces anatomical details and almost entirely cancels the features of the context, yet the light volumetric structure of his figures vividly dominates the space. The artist thus dissolves the human figure and its identity, reducing bodies to barely sketched lines, erasing their details and bringing out his search for harmony and balance of volumes and lines. Essential, clear structures prevail, straight or curved, undulating surfaces that reflect or imprison light in their various supple movements: these are open structures, smooth and luminous like plaster bas-reliefs, where the play of light and shadow is the only compositional aim. The absence of dense brushstrokes and the choice of a fluid material – coffee and Indian ink – give the work a life of its own, an autonomous becoming, through a pictorial structure that is freely modulated in space in intervals that create an effect at times harmonious and at times disharmonious. These pauses are essential in these paintings; they can be caught between the thin lines and the full masses of colour, and they make the surfaces vibrant, light, made of fantasy and ironic poetry. A lightness at once provocative and gentle takes hold of the imperceptible marks on the canvas, which retain an almost suffering intensity that recalls the immaterial sounds of a symphony. The artist strips the forms of any illustrative or demonstrative superficiality; rather, they tend to voice his wish to teach the world to breathe lightly; with grace and discretion they come out of the canvas like the lines of a poem; they are marks dictated by the heart, forms that become feeling.

— Belinda Granata, Ombra Tremula, 7 December 2011