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CANGIANTE

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It. *Cangiante*; Fr. *Changeant*; Germ. *Changierend*; Span. *Cambiante*. Colour category applied to the technical-pictorial dimension since the fourteenth century for golden backgrounds, but also in the following ages (Giotto, Michelangelo...). It involves the use of light as an element for the construction of perspective, through allusions to forms of stratified spatiality, for the definition of volumes by means of different stages of colour reflections. Concept expressed later on by the Baroque, which determines the interruption of the linear history of art, within the context of contemporary art, *cangiante* may be referred to as a veritable aesthetic category: firstly, as an element of colour revitalisation which considers the observer's point of view as an intrinsic part of the work and secondly, as a process for the acquisition of expressive autonomy through the appropriation of the "works" of others in order to identify one's own. In this sense, *cangiante* also embraces methodological considerations, with reference to the creative process as well as the vast array of forms of art appreciation.

THE CONTEMPORARY DEBATE

In the framework of contemporary aesthetics, *cangiante* has aroused a debate involving above all artists committed to researching the expressive potential of pictorial matter. Therefore, this category is definable first and foremost in an essentially technical dimension, as well as in a secondary, procedural one. The technical dimension of *cangiante* embraces two specific aspects: the method in which colour is applied, based on the different directions of brush strokes, and the addition of sparkling and shiny elements to pigment mixtures (specks of gold, gunpowder, copper sulphates, glitter...). In contrast, the procedural dimension of *cangiante* is strictly theoretical in nature, culminating in a veritable construction method for the artist's creative process, based on the appropriation of elements that are "external" (in time and space) to its production. These alternating and sometimes contrasting elements succeed nonetheless in recounting the artist's style through a sort of continuity-changeability which manifests itself in the

fluctuating phenomenon describable as a form of cangiante. In this sense, cangiante presents itself and is perceived through a movement which seeks out balance, is open to change, perceives the fleeting nature of things, capable of alternating all these elements by which seeks out balance, is open to change, perceives the fleeting nature of things, and is simultaneously capable of capturing all these elements, so to speak, as if they were suspended in a solution.

ART AND AESTHETICS

Approaches to the topic in terms of artistic production and pictorial technique focus above all on monochrome painting, from abstract expressionism right through to the latest minimalist research pursued by artists from the 1980s to date. This enables us to hone in on certain fundamental development guidelines, by observing the works of some of the most authoritative exponents of avant-garde and post-avant-garde art.

Barnett Newman, the father of American abstract expressionism, theorises aniconic painting, linked to its interpretation over time, both in terms of execution and appreciation. In this sense, the "Newman instant" (Lyotard 1988) refers to the fluctuating (cangiante) and fleeting dimension of a work which despite being perceived through its intellectual content, transforms painting into "mental plasma" (Newman 1990), in virtue of the temporal and progressive dimension of perception, resulting in its transient and ambiguous interpretation.

Donald Judd, one of the most representative artists of American minimalism in the 1950s, studied sculptures alongside sculptural, polished and reflecting objects and theorised the possibility of transcending forms of domestication of the gaze, in favour of visual perception's fluctuating (cangiante) attitudes. In his works, ambiguity may appear unresolvable and indecision fundamental. While Roland Barthes talks about "the death of the author" (Barthes 1968), Robert Morris redefines the relationship between object and subject in the following way: "One is more aware than before that he himself is establishing relationships as he apprehends the object from various positions and under varying conditions of light and spatial contexts" (M.E. Gardiner & J.J. Haladyn 2017: 70).

Works by the American artist David Simpson can be perceived as a further specification of cangiante, tied in with American expressionism and the color-field trends of the 1950s and 1960s (Greenberg 1986-1993). In terms of pictorial technique, it is defined by the addition of interferential pigments to the pictorial composition, such as titanium dioxide, which transform surfaces into bright shards in the thralls of perpetual colour transformation, according to the angle of viewing and light.

In contrast, in the tradition of conceptual movement, Josef Kosuth, who is considered as its founder, identifies veritable "exercises of iridescence (cangianza)" which through the exhibition of creative processes, culminate in the presentation of the concept (Kosuth 1991). These exercises consist of the artist's appropriation of external and decontextualised objects, works and situations, as he described in 1970 in a famous manifesto presented in Turin: "Shift voluntarily from one aspect of the situation. Remain

mindful of various aspects simultaneously. Understand the essential of a complete fact in its parts and deliberately isolate them [...] Think or act symbolically”.

Artists belonging to the most recent generation, engaged in a dialogue with previous traditions, are particularly worthy of mention in virtue of their original specification of *cangiante*, specifically as regards the possibility of using colour and the addition of new materials to pigments.

The Italian artist Sonia Costantini achieves iridescent (*cangiante*) effects by means of a special approach to the material aspect of painting, with an almost “alchemic” approach which emphasises the spatial dimension of colour by means of its stratified application, conferring depth upon her works. The American Ruth Ann Fredenthal represents a minimalist specification of iridescence (*cangiante*) whereby the appreciation of works is based on perceptive experiences, quasi “optical-texts”, in which painting is brought to life by colours applied onto interconnected microtonal planes which exalt its three-dimensional potential. Lastly, works by the young British artist Roger Hiorns express his relationship with iridescence (*cangiante*) by means of copper sulphate which is used as a material of experimentation for the achievement of shimmering effects. This technique enables the creation of objects, which during a production process determined by chance, present themselves to the gaze in all their changeability through the refraction of external elements on their surface, self-generated by their immersion in copper sulphate.

With reference to the methodological dimension of *cangiante* in the age of so-called “liquid modernity” (Bauman 2000), the most contemporary artistic research includes works by the Polish artist Goska Macuga, who embraces the roles of author, curator and collector. This results in a fluctuating (*cangiante*) relationship, grounded in the transverse selection of artistic and aesthetic experiences that are different in time and space, within a project which exhibits unity through changeability. This same perspective, which refers to the method of *cangiante*, is adopted in the project developed in 1986 at the PAC, Milan, curated by Corrado Levi (Levi 1986): “*Il Cangiante*, is of particular significance: the fluid mutation of sensibility, intellectual sharpness, mental energy, irony, the dissolution of artistic ideology combined with rigour and utmost seriousness in play [...]. The fact that you go from one colour to another, without any gradualness, suddenly, so that you are either in one position or another, is a particularly important theoretical fact because it removes the passage, it removes succession, it removes gradualness, it removes the hierarchy of time, it removes shades”.

OTHER DISCIPLINES

The theme of *cangiante* is also present in other disciplinary fields, such as architecture and science, with particular reference to optical theories. The French philosopher and urban planner Paul Virilio theorises the phenomenon of change in architecture by linking it to the theme of “morphological breaking” and the way in which mankind experiences space in the age of post-modern technology. In this way, space manifests itself in its ever-changing and fluctuating reflection, alluding to an almost non-physical architecture, made of lights and shadows (Virilio 1984). With reference to the scientific sphere, *cangiante*

can be interpreted in light of the "parallax" phenomenon, which describes the apparent shift of an object caused by the observer's movement. This scientific phenomenon is particularly used in astronomy, although it has also been applied in more recent research into visual perception. This has resulted in profound philosophical reflections, with parallax vision having repercussions when re-reading the past through a lens of "fluctuating (cangiante) ambiguity" which connotes the present.

With reference to the research of Landart artists, cangiante is also a phenomenon which has been used and often deliberately "exploited" in virtue of its relationship with light, atmosphere and natural elements. In the recent "The Floating Piers" by the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude for example, the choice of fabric used to cover 100,000 square metres of the walkway connecting Sulzano to Monte Isola, in the Brescia province, focuses on the sheer shimmering (cangiante) potential of yellow, the artists' colour of choice for reproducing the colour variations of the sun's rays. In Fashion, cangiante translates into a specific fabric quality: iridescence, with particular reference to silk (shot silk), the result of a highly refined process involving the spinning of yarn in different directions. It is also noteworthy that the luminous physicality of iridescent fabric is often used for ceremonial outfits, ecclesiastical and religious robes.

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