

PAMELA DIAMANTE. Welcome Apocalypse

“It’s the terror of knowing what this world is about”
(F. Mercury / D. Bowie)

The work of art is the synthesis of intensities, passions and its creator’s life. Accordingly, talking about art means putting up a discourse, which turns into a place of resonances where both the artist’s affections and the subjects of his/her work are brought together. The work of art reflects a state of the soul, the materialization of a vision of reality that awakens not-yet-expressed feelings. They can be found inside a lost time and contribute to constructing an image of eternity. The work of art is the perfect harmony of itself and the most intimate essence of its author. Gilles Deleuze¹ wrote: “It is only in art that the sign becomes immaterial at the same time that its meaning becomes spiritual”. The artist’s personal background, which is full of experiences and unique meanings, lightens or intensifies the greatness of his/her creative work. In art, life and creation are two realities inextricably united by a strength that sometimes exceeds them: that is where the artwork takes on a life of its own. Talking about Pamela Diamante’s art means facing fascinating and considerable oppositions, a bizarre blend of energy and fragility, exalted enthusiasm, pain and suffering.

Pamela Diamante does not regard art as a “naturalistic” act. Even if she starts from the real events, when she takes them to her dimension she grants them their own autonomy. Therefore, she does not present “real” not-transformed objects; in fact, she re-creates such objects in a new reality belonging to the surface area of the artwork by converting them into shapes and plastic conceptions. By means of a visual and often hermetic language –which is not easy to approach, although very aestheticizing– she alters the natural elements for expressive purposes. Her style is tied to the simplification of shapes, to scientific experimentation and to a technological processing that is gradually combining with some principles dear to the 20th century Neo-Avant-Garde, such as three-dimensional space, time and movement. In her works, shapes and contents seem to be a technical recourse associated with a schematic and rational style, which apparently results from both a minimal-conceptual art and the next-generation new media. Diamante makes use of such influences to evoke the essence of our contemporary world. Through this synthesis, the artist succeeds in creating a relational and expressive art that enhances her whole creative process. Diamante’s art goes beyond the boundaries of the work of art and establishes an interior, intensive and solitary dialogue with nature. She goes back to the world’s classical elements, namely air, water and earth –but also wood, glass, marble– in a sort of self-denying chemistry. She makes use, however, of suburban and, in some cases, technological materials that are not part of an industrial production. Her choice is to stimulate the expressive development of nature by identifying herself with the energy contained therein: it is not –or not only– the one visible and familiar to the millennial common human experience, but rather the one which is still secret, or merely undisclosed, or latent and still unknown to collective consciousness.

In her work, images and volumes seem to be part of a meticulous writing. She is interested in detecting the essence of the phenomenon, in what lays behind the semblance of an object. Starting from such assumption, Diamante gives a load of mystery, magic and silence to the elements she conceives and, by this means, she expresses the sacredness of the represented

¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* (translated by Richard Howard), London and New York, Continuum, 2008, p. 85.

image. She evokes the essence of the objects through her gesture, a sort of possibility to intercept phenomenologically material data and to include nature in the artistic experience. Thanks to a process of purification, Diamante is able to create transfigured images that express the poetic dimension of reality and to go beyond the dramatic nature typical of her research. In her personal and strict conception of constructivist nature, each element fulfils an almost geometric function; therefore, her way of understanding the Neo-Avant-Garde – that is to say, combined with popular elements– can be also perceived in the simplification of the form and the deconstruction of the elements. In her art, accordingly, a sort of neoprimitivism –whose meaning is found in the “dead-alive” metaphor– appears: they are the survivals, ghosts and semi-buried structures of a murdered world that no longer exists. Diamante’s style focuses on a symbolic metalanguage, which combines abstract elements and distances itself from the narration and description by veering towards a more universal meaning. The desire to gain access to the universal responds to different needs in contemporary culture. On the one hand, many people regard the universal as a synonym for international; from this perspective, a clear rejection of nationalism leads to an identification with the contemporary world and to an imitation of foreign models. On the other hand, the universal has been a great paradox: it is a term that acquires its meaning after contact with the particular and the concrete, but at the same time it facilitates dialogue between different cultures. That is precisely what becomes crucial in Diamante’s artistic discourse. Her interest focuses on going through the internal features of her background, on expressing the national character, on establishing a synthesis of the different cultures that she came in close contact with or investigated by her (from the Cuban one to the Iranian one, for example). In her art, Diamante declares the need to feedback and humanize her own culture through its universalization. The universal is an opening to knowledge, a form of research and a meeting with influences of spirits rather than countries. What is truly universal is the original and the original is what each of us carries with us, namely the creative ability to express ourselves and the sensitive ability to receive. Diamante’s originality is found in the artistic values that allow her to express feelings and different forms of being, namely the hallmarks of her culture. In most of Diamante’s artworks, the human race is placed in a context of melancholy and solitude. Most of the time, man is alone and isolated from society in a quiet space. All these elements enhance the myth of the overturned Eden, a mythical space affected by the contemporary world. Such paradox leads us to believe that the man represented by her is an archaic soul and that his tragic relationship with contemporary world forces him to constantly reiterate his primitivism. Diamante’s reflection comes from a broad view of the world, history and future. She is aware that the universal shall open the doors to new possibilities of life and to new technical-artistic concepts, even at the expense of the technical support of the artwork. In fact, she breaks through it by creating a breach –like a bullet hole– that apparently wants to drag us into an *other* dimension. Diamante regards it as important to be current, to take part in the transformations of the contemporary world. Her work reflects her concern to express time and movement as current elements and not as Aristotelian arguments. Being current means being completely free to make any political or social compromise; moreover, it implies a compromise with ourselves. Current art and culture are universal and timeless expressions not affected by trends, art movements or movements of thought. Being current also means refusing nationalistic borders and the idea of being the counterpart of nationalistic culture. It is –to some extent– a way to be different. Diamante’s art is shaped by such attitude: a concise and austere expression characterizes her works, in which she combines the universal with the expressiveness of materials, she highlights her distance from narrative art and she takes possession of another gaze. Movement and time appear as signs of actuality and modernity in her works; they allow her to express the dynamism, the transformations and even the destruction of modern life. Baudelaire defined modernity as: “the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the

half of art whose other half is eternal and immutable”². Diamante approaches this conception by revealing and telling the truths of the present time. Through her art, she proposes a scientific, rigorous and methodical knowledge, where nationalism is part of a subjective and existential expression. Diamante shows the racial and cultural heterogeneity of mankind while at the same time acknowledging cultural pluralism. In this regard, she refuses imposed ideas, styles or schools. The cultural issue relating to the obsessive imitation of foreign models –which triggered an inferiority complex in many Italian artists– apparently does not affect our artist.

Historicism and existentialism has undermined the concept of eternal truth which philosophy has always aspired to; there are not eternal truths in an absolute sense, but only absolute truths in a circumstantial sense. Such philosophical currents mainly want to approach the concrete side of human existence, leaving aside abstractions such as consciousness in general terms. Going back to the individual –our most characteristic and unique feature– does not mean falling into narcissism or into a closed nationalism; on the contrary, it means contributing to the human experience. Only in that way is a philosophical anthropology possible. Starting from the union between the two mentioned disciplines and from the idea that a uniformed system of laws does not exist in the universe, Diamante develops a sort of ontological pluralism. Philosophical anthropology aspires to understand man in its entirety. The artist uses the universal as a synonym for humanism. She wants to reach the original meaning of artistic creation and to redeem the essence of man, of mankind; by way of this notion, she also opposes everything that could call into question human freedom. However, the universal cannot be reached through a path of mere abstraction. The artists who tried to reach it had started from its concrete connotation, its special features. Diamante is interested in a nationalism that does not hide human reality; in this connection, the work of art is nothing but the expression of the concrete, of the determinant of man. The main thing is that we become aware of our human condition and of the fact that we are human beings within a community. Diamante does not regard universality as a form of selfishness incapable of understanding the others, precisely because every single individual has something to give to the world’s experience. Furthermore, the artist develops a philosophy that denies the reality of universals, or simply of general concepts. The originality and the sense of authenticity lay at the base of the development of her personal philosophy, which regards that the universal is not found in abstract forms only, but also in the concrete, the specific, the personal or the material form of a marble block. Through her art, Diamante explains how the universal is marked by humanist connotations and how universal development involves neither the loss of our own cultural identity nor the imitation of foreign or international features; on the contrary, it combines both cultural features belonging to its own traditions and to different cultural traditions. In her artworks, Diamante traces a *continuum* ranging from her urgencies to the artistic research. It is a vital interchange where both elements pursue the same aim, that is to say self-knowledge and the union with the cosmos as an individual. The connection deriving from the artistic practice blends the visible, the existing world and what transcends it.

In the artworks chosen for the exhibition *Welcome Apocalypse*, Diamante’s spirit is taken over by her existentialist attention. The emphasis on the ambiguity and the duality in representing indetermined spaces and situations difficult to define or understand gives rise to gestures and impulses, which are used by Diamante to express her creative anxiety. She starts to reflect on the loneliness of the human being and on his destructive relationship with the world he lives in. Since the universal is not governed by uniformed laws, it should transcend the authoritarian/totalitarian concepts and the monopolizing attitudes. Diamante believes that the universal cannot be found in the imitation of foreign models, but rather in the search for self-identity. A retrieval of humanism

2 Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays* (translated by Jonathan Mayne), London, Phaidon, p. 12.

able to show the relationship between man and his environment is at the heart of her compositions. Man is captured both in the concrete and the particular. Diamante is more interested in the symbolic meanings of plastic elements than in a completely abstract art, which, in her view, would imply a total dehumanization. The artist's creations are the pretext to reflect our image in a mirror: by cynically representing a sampling of man-made and/or environmental disasters, Diamante turns her art into the "magical other side" of our reality. Man is converted into something disturbing: he is the one responsible for all the evil in the world, a world where he kills himself and his own existence. Such cruel and violent communication is inspired by both past and current violence; in fact, art reveals itself when it echoes the barbarity and anxiety of a gloomy unsatisfied truth. Diamante's apocalypse finds its fullest expression in this scenario, where the artist retraces and organizes the multifaceted string of her art, its unresolved –or, rather, understood as unresolved– tangle, its forceful tones, its sharp gaps and its grievances. It is not, therefore, a juxtaposition of random images, of any inner ghost, but rather an attempt to put order into the evasive coarse material through an extraordinarily rigorous mental operation, an analytical clarity that wants to see the darkest sides of man which make life unlivable by condemning it to helplessness. The artist's need to exceed the limit in order to understand and start thinking stems from this burning and suffered helplessness. In Diamante's art, the rejection of simplicity lies behind her efforts to cauterize wounds, to turn disharmonies into possible new harmonies. Contrary to what most people might think, her art develops its personal –and even suffocating– beauty. It wisely and effectively combines the tough messages with the necessary elegance of an aestheticizing artistic decoration, which is seen as both the value of language and the panacea for the soul. No feeling; no passion; no heart; no senses: Diamante's apocalyptic code is based on the radical abstinence from any sensual and emotional desire traditionally evoked by the presence of matter.

Even if Diamante is worried that she cannot express faithfully the scientific side of reality, she goes beyond such concern; in fact, she proves she is an artist with the sufficient capacity to express her independence and personality in front of the world. Her identity –far from any logical or established assumption– is difficult to achieve. In order to give substance to a work of art, a separation is needed; not only does the artist spot a simile or create a replica, she also goes so far as to invert it. The desire to invert the world –from a catastrophe to its reconstruction– expresses her need to make art. I might be reproached for giving a psychological character to this composition, but that is only half true. The work of art is not a closed universe that feeds off of itself. An anecdotal biography does not explain Diamante's whole process of creating art; however, it is the basis of its making and, at the same time, it reveals the premise of its conception. Art becomes the double of Diamante's life, the concrete side of her interiority and a spiritual state. She does not develop a real plastic problem through her creations, which –even better– give rise to a language able to communicate the strength and depth of the way she perceives everything around her. By taking us into its dimension –a world where we must penetrate to find out its true value– Diamante's art turns into a transmitter of signs that need to be deciphered and interpreted. Pamela Diamante is capable of transfiguring the real by starting a creative *loop*, in which –also thanks to her sharp irony– the "great work of living" appears to be the impetuous courage to keep on living.