

SE DICI CIAMPOLI

Nicola Rotiroti

How can I tell you?

by Silvia Litardi

How can I tell you? How do I explain this to my friend and poet the artist?

If you want to meet Sphinx you must first have crossed an unfathomable abyss and peregrinated without stopping. You need to discover that the horizon is not a plane, but instead it is something that gives relativity to depth and offers a better reference to test this.

To give space to this thought, we must take a step back and return to Nicola Rotiroti's personal exhibition in Rome, "Ghost Sonata- A Tribute to Paolo Aita"(2018) which transformed the gallery into a dreamlike landscapes. It burst forth and orbited. When you see the works, you instinctively did somersaults and cartwheels. And here there was something different, which pulled your gaze from the walls, the floor. from an orthogonal relationship with painting on canvas towards a visual encounter something that inevitably made your feet move. It was a piece of plastic painted and placed on the floor which looked like a puddle-frog. It was self-attracting, disturbing as a bourgeois aleph: a playful sequence of mental associations fuelling the desire to dive in, to make the colours and elements held within splash onto the walls, sucking and then whirling, energising them to conduct their framed duty.

Crossing the puddle-frog we get to today, at "Se Dici Ciampoli" the personal exhibition of Nicola Rotiroti in Pescara. It was conceived with with Cristian Ciampoli, for 16Civico. Ciampoli is 16Civico's artistic director, and is both an artist and the founder of this not-for-profit space.

A single work is displayed here, comprised of 8 rubber linoleum figures, placed inside and outside the house. Each form has two facades of grey cerulean, derived from the material being used. The linoleum, which in Rome stimulated a new perceptive pictorial dimension, in Pescara it has become the protagonist. The 8 forms came from a desire to compete with a space that is unique in that it is both the home of the artists and an arts project.

During a day that Nicola and Cristina spent together in the house preparing for the exhibition, Nicola took many portraits photographs of Ciampol. As Ciampoli moved around, documented the dialectic of his friend's body had with his home: his ways and movements.

They are accomplices in front of a shape, a crack in the wall:



<https://rotiroti.it>

Nicola Rotiroti:

Born on 24th June, 1973 in Catanzaro. He lives and works in Rome. In 2006 he founded "Studio 54" a workshop that over the course of the years has transformed in to a place of experience where artists come to research and explore. In 2014, along with other artists he opened "Spazio Y" a centre for experimental exhibitions. He has held numerous personal exhibitions and his works have been selected for the Farnesina collection. He also exhibited in the 54th Venice Biennale.



Ciampoli traces it on to paper.

Based on the photographs, Nicola enlarges the shape to a human dimension [1:1], he also translates the form from one symbolic order to another.

The subject of the series, is Cristian Ciampoli.

The flexibility of linoleum, determines the way the shapes exist in the the world, the material quality informs them: they have the ability to adapt to a wall, to behave two-dimensionally and "appear" like a framework, to be installed on supports and "appear" like a sculpture, or to be left free to surrender to gravity and fall to the ground, like



discarded clothes, stripped of their function.

Each of these possibilities is alive in the Pescara installation even the last, invisible; lying on the ground without constraints. It is the variant of that which was discarded at the time of the exhibition, but it is the stage in which the linoleum shapes lay longer before getting up. The "forms", that came out of the relationship between Cristian, Nicola and the house, are a unique work, a family of forms whose singularity is irrelevant: the work is a whole, but it is the singularity that relates to the user. The work includes the times and stages that are not part of the final form and how it appears to the world. It is the trail of events, second thoughts and compromises that remain latent, perhaps invisible, but not absent for this: " what he tells me, the aesthetic object says with its presence, within the perception."¹

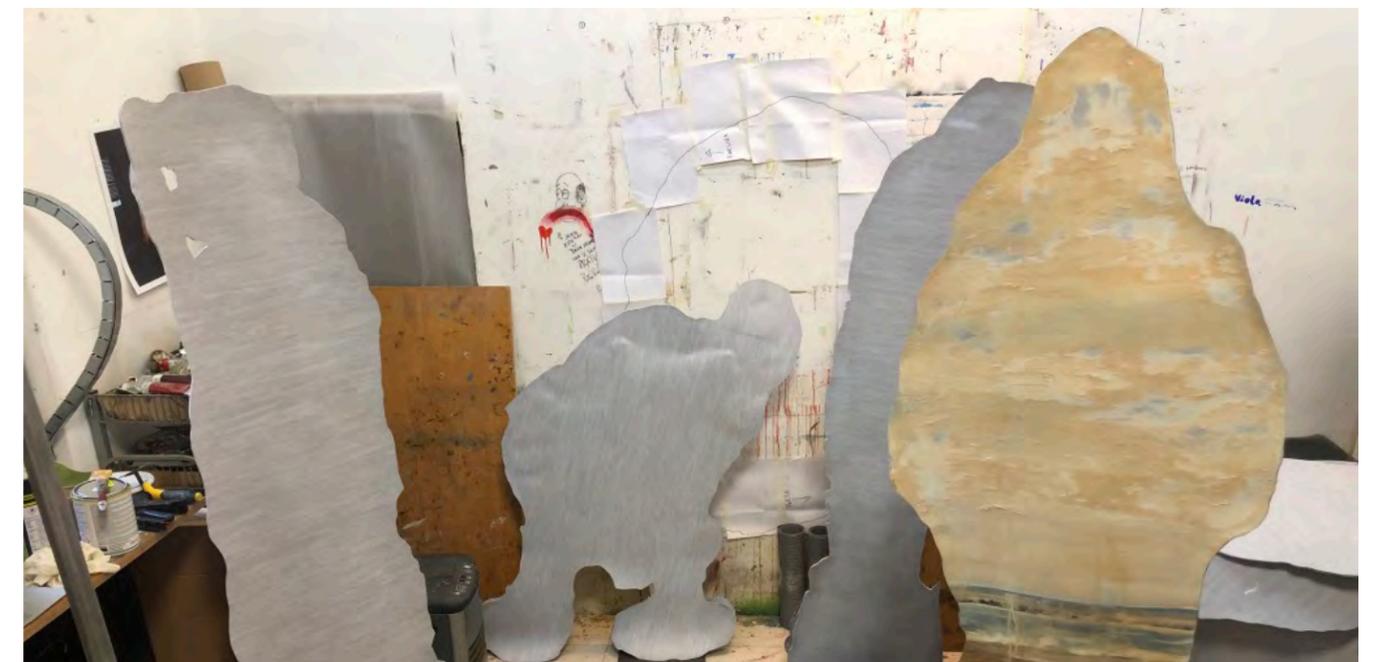
"The warm aldo evaporates from the rubbery asphalt, deforms footprints but the shadows approach."²

Something similar to asphalt condenses through linoleum. It takes shape through the artistic process, turning from a solid to a "rubbery" stage, where the Pescara house and its owner represent the event that led them to rise, germinate, accepting the invitation to "appear sculpture-like".



1 Mikel Dufrenne, *Fenomenologia dell'esperienza estetica*, Lerici, Roma, 1969, p.31

2 Nicola Rotiroi, *Giulio De Martin, 1,1, tre... stella!!!*, Edizioni Ponte Sisto, Roma, 2016, p. 5





The 8 shapes scattered throughout the rooms, are different from one another. Each one is attributable to a position taken by Ciampoli during that first day the artists spent together; one of them includes a recurring theme in Rotiroti's pictorial production: the landscape. On one of the two façades there is a view of the Pescara beach which is located close to 16Civico.

Sometime after that first meeting, Rotiroti and Ciampoli met again in Pescara to see the outcome of the months of work on the project together: the "figures", which had been created in the studio in Torpignattara's in Rome. Before the figures were taken to 16Civico and set up for the exhibition, Rotiroti and Ciampoli wandered around Pescara, creating a beautiful album of photographs with Ciampoli with figures in various places: on the beach, at the bus stop, and in some of them both Ciampoli and the shapes seem to be posing.

Leafing through the photo album of that day, a couple of shots particularly stand out:

Image 1: the "shape" painted with the landscape is placed in the same landscape, on the beach, the subject of the painting. It stands there, solitary.

Image 2: Cristian Ciampoli is in the foreground, positioned in front of the shape which is in the mid-ground and which has been painted with the landscape of the beach in the background behind it. The playful performativity in the urban and natural space opens up a meta-linguistic dimension, the presumptive-linear description of the work, done up to this point in the text disappears. A desire exists to want to assign a closed meaning to the aesthetic object, to want to trace a predetermined subject, a linear chain of motivations and ingredients that produce a result.

In the photographs we see the "form" camouflaging with the background, configuring.

And then there's the horizon.

Finally, the horizon, the real one and the painted one which coincide, at least in the space-time of the shot, and in the enjoyment of the two friends on the beach.

What is surprising is that this dividing line, which is often a protagonist in Western art, is practically absent in Rotiroti's body of work from the past decade: there is no trace of the horizon in either the "amniotic" paintings, in the series "inside" (2006-2009), or in "outside" (2009-2015). It is not even in the kaleidoscopic baroque visions "Lo Re" (2016). Nicola Rotiroti's paintings pull you under water, you are forced to hold your breath and submerge. When you raise your chin to look up towards magmatic baroque vaults that are an unbalanced delirium.

Figuration, the product of a rare executive quality, pushes you towards a sense of suspension, a necessary condition for patient contemplation. Then you can hear an echo of that dull noise which thoughts produce as they bang on your cranial wall. A magma-thought-feeling that boils up and feeds on its own bubbling, self-sufficient destruction and the continuous cycle of regeneration. Returning to the beach at Pescara, the painted "form" comes out of the water or perhaps it does not want to enter it. Regardless, it remains planted there on the shore, on the sand, observing the landscape to such an extent that it takes possession of it. A bystander and projector, like a Sphinx it brings the landscape with its horizon and then moves it in front of the viewer in the exhibition at 16 Civico.

The viewer in front of the landscape embodied in the shape could align their horizon and make it meet the other, risking them to coincide and camouflage themselves. There is a renewed invitation to push the pictorial machine and not stop on the threshold of its unique, presumed dimension. Just as with the



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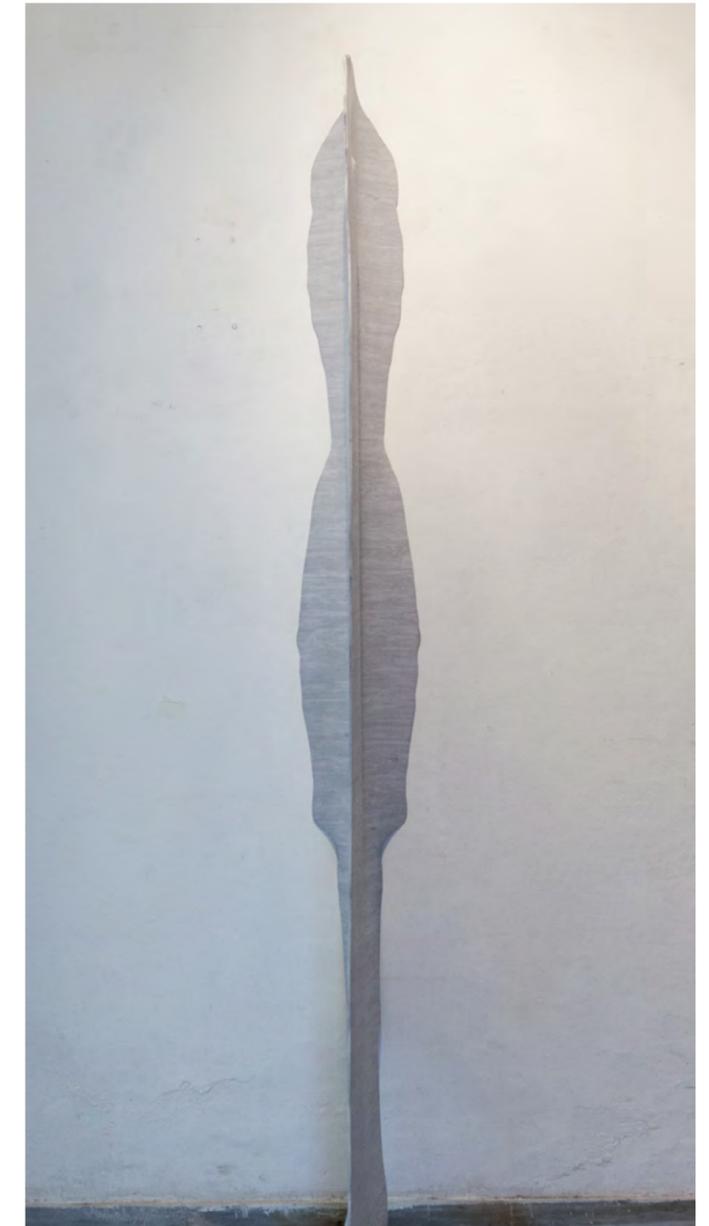
puddle-frog, in the exhibition in Rome, the artists has embarked upon a new season of research.

In his work, Rotiroti exercises a continuous oscillation between a pre-reflexive, non-differentiated unity, in which he is one with the world, totally fused with it, so as not to be able to recognise anything other than himself within in it, and its complete opposite: to know oneself as a conscious subject in the definitive loss of unity and to be able to enjoy the world as another.³

The painted "figure" is in a midground between the two existential poles, equidistant between wanting to maintain total adherence and at the same time emancipating itself from it.

In this sense, what we leaf through in this album seemed to be a game between friends, it is a critical event, a crisis as an awakening. A crisis that above all stands before its author. Like a Sphinx.

³ For a human being, becoming a subject represents an awakening, accompanied by the pain of the irretrievable loss of a state marked by non-difference, in short: by the pre-reflexive unity. The crisis frees the subject, from the awareness of the definitive loss of the previous condition at a certain cost.' Michael Jakob, Il paesaggio, il Mulino, "Bologna, 2009, p. 31



And looking at the Sphinx is an act of courage.

The subject of "Se Dici Ciampoli", then, is the crisis in the sense of awakening. How can I tell you? How do I explain this to the artist, to my friend and poet?



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