

Frantz in six tempos

On appropriation, memory and poetics
in cutting-painting-sewing

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Tempo I

“This afternoon we’re in the studio. Looking at two paintings – two heads – of extraordinary perceptiveness, they seem to move, come towards me, never ceasing that march in my direction, coming from I know not where in the canvas which never stops emitting that penetrating face”.

Genet in Giacometti’s studio

Could they be our heads? Could they be images that come from the world of Frantz? All that and more. Everything moves. Images that march and move around me, loose in the house and in folders and folders of sketches, notes and scribbles. That is the first impression-memory I have of this artist’s work. Like Genet talking with Giacometti I am called upon to write through movement, acceleration and seduction.

I want to start this text like a meeting. An initial meeting that makes Frantz a vital mediator, an ally for the eye, an agent in the “Frantz-Pizarro” negotiation of the production of “betweens”: ways of seeing, texts, dialogues, emergences, learning, mutual commitment and deep friendship. Communication, history and aesthetic and intellectual affection-admiration were born between the “techniques-paints-concepts-painting” and the huge still unseen extent of this recent output. It was in his home that, turning through 360°, I came across his work, with the different

periods of his career and his heated, vibrant autobiographical narrative filled with arguments that did not end in the words he spoke to me, but which extended around us in colours and masses on paper and in paint.

His art and our dialogical friendship lead me to apprehend and learn Wittgenstein’s statement, to parody it and expand it: “[...] the important things in life are told with music (with sounds, images, sensations, feelings) and not through words...”

His creative process and his persistence led me on a voyage into my own creative process. The first time I wrote about Frantz’s work I spent a whole night looking for words to describe the qualities his works and processes stirred in me. My first text began with the birth of an encounter. So I am not just a reader, I am, in the more precise sense of the term, a friend – a philoi – of this painting. A friend of the images from the Frantz-universe. Friendship concerns this great proximity, the production of the last ten years which refers to the previous ten years, in which an art of such processes and works was conceived. It really is a gift to see and feel and sense that we feel while we see and thus think and exist, feeling and thinking. This is nothing less than Aristotle. And this aesthesis of existing allow us a “co-feeling”, a sharing and a joint feeling, a “com-passion” and an enchantment, allowing the subjective ties to be untangled to make the space created by painting – and by this art – into a surface of happy encounters, in which the more I step back and free myself, the more I find myself and apprehend myself in those colourful forms. Being a friend of painting is therefore to allow oneself to become lost in that existence, in constant attendance, at the same time as, while passing through, I am interrupted by it and carried away, sharing it with my own space. So I begin, by stating that these paintings are a site with which I have learned to share life.

Tempo II

These paintings, concepts, objects and books have allowed me to think about another formulation of *memory*, and about the various routes of considering the past in the present. It is a *memory* driven by a particular form of *appropriation*.

Firstly, when we come across this group of works-processes, we are faced with a *history of the sensitive in presence* – in technologies, gestures, intentions-inventions. We cannot speak about iconographic groups and content, or archetypes, figures and imagery. But we can think about how the past of a technical and gestural history stands out alongside a history of artistic intentions.

On the one hand, to perform a personification of something sensory, this group mediates with large blocks of the past, the archaic past, the historic past and the recent past, as the fruit of relationships and cross-fertilisations experienced in the artist's individual career, in deepening the challenges of apprehending-learning “what is an intention?”

On the other, a history-memory of the supports and the subjectile, the passages between the birthplaces of painting – walls, wooden surfaces, canvases of different materials, the pure masses of paint, books made from “cutting-suture”, libraries and series, running through a history of the technical support to a broader history of the media and pictorial devices. For this work invites us to think not just of the internal layers, but also of how a painting conveys something (media) in what supports it (support-subjectile). Its signs reveal the conditions of the production of the painting at different times of its history, but not as a plane of content (a semantics and an iconographic conjuncture) and instead as a relationship between technologies, meaning and signification, causing an impact on the set of other images, while seeking to reveal both the vehicle and what it conveys – a mediology of art, as Régis Debray might say.

And this is extended to his understanding of the media as a painting-device, taking painting to include the artist's studio, the artist's book and the street and the city – parts of the artist's past as sensitive to the manifestations of street art, graffiti and tagging, as much as to its mythical origins. He notes that what is communicated in painting is communicated through an ability to cause relationships that go beyond the support and beyond the channel of conveyance (media).

Tempo III

In the relationship between memory and sensory presences, the mediations result from the perspectives adopted (the Nietzschean points of view) and a “narrative of memory” (Lyotard) that is translated into a complex operation of understanding appropriation – through procedures, materials, languages and traditions.

Both artist and works translate, transcode and contextually reposition different pasts, but do not quote from them. This is not a historicist exercise of re-remembering, recollection and commemoration of the past, of art history and painting as art. It is a critical exercise of displacement through an operation of “cutting and sewing”, a collage; a montage, even. The visual artist in an expanded field begins to become part of other ways of proceeding, and performs as producer, director and editor of paintings.

The past itself is appropriated by the artist in the form of a painting event (Lyotard/Deleuze) in the way in which each operation he performs to make the work requires going to an invented source (always a new and other source) to choose the signs he will work with and with which he will carry out an intentional act of painting the painting. He makes painting happen on all sides, making us see painting in all and every surface on which it occurs. Painting is a quality, a state. It is not a work, but a state that causes a work to happen.

In these terms, I would like to consider appropriation as a practice of memory. It involves the *anamnesis of the artist*, in its pervasive, invasive, infiltrating nature within that spirit, which is also perlaborative (Freud/Fédida/Lyotard).

What do I mean by this? On the one hand the artist seeks to infiltrate the systems of thought and the processes of creation, and therefore the memories of other artists, whether as beginners or established artists. He performs a kind of *anamnesis of the visible* (Lyotard) making use sometimes of remnants, sometimes of finished things, to redevelop and comment on art and its process, in its fostering and demand for creation. He makes cuts and causes cracks in the reality set up by the other.

At the same time, he performs an anamnesis in the Freudian sense, playing with a principle of reassembly based on cuts into the pictorial narrative flow of someone else. He introduces a distanced view that allows the remains of works by other artists to be arranged and repositioned in space. He goes back to memory not as a remembrance told by the other, but in the actual source of the production of his language, in its *poietic power*. To perform this task, Frantz tears up stable cognitions and representations in front of the work of the other. He enters the core of resistance in the creative process and considers how a memory-recollection needs to be submitted to the confrontation of a material work of repetitions, returning to the past what belongs to it and perlaborating the material with the actual material of painting. Frantz therefore resembles the other's analyst, for he does not interpret someone else's work. He takes it. He actively redevelops it. He works on it. He rearranges it. And that changes the work, mixing it up its destiny in the dynamism of the artist's act. By suspending-supporting (masses of paint), by cutting (the surfaces of the work, the canvases, the picture planes) and by sewing (into book

form), the artist gives back the vibration of a poesis, in a state of resonance, to the other.

He creates a kind of pause in the game of art. He makes a semblance for the work of the other. Or rather, he encourages the realm of the positive simulacrum. Anti-Plato. It is from this simulacrum that he can proceed to transform the painting of the other and make it his own.

The artist falls into the memory of painting and thus sets himself in the place of artist as critic, a commentator who traces his investigation in the fine line of the language of painting. Painting about painting. The language gains in autonomy and accent, as if returning to the principle of Klee: *making visible*. An anamnesis of the visible. To escape from the lethargy of historicist quotations, the artist needs to confront this challenge in the memory of the materials. In the poetry of the materials. Through, in the metaphor of cutting, being able to rearrange, reassemble and gather into his writing, in his books, a history of the art of painting, all made in the dream of book-painting. In an expanded reduction to the realm of books, Frantz makes images echo and leap over words. It is from what one sees that words are born. It is from sensations that divested representations are born.

"To make visible is to attribute sensation, the sensory, to the defascinated view of the visual." (Fédida)

That is where this state of things starts to make sense. After setting up sights caused by sensory states, the artist invites us to consider a visible that no longer reaches the state of pictorial – in his masses and colours. He critiques a saturated world and a "defascination" in the visual world that fills our field of sight. He asks us to take the time to enter the substance of his painted narrative.

Tempo IV

This sensory presence sets up a private narratology. On the one hand this occurs based on a mythological principle, from the self establishment of plastic space, to the patterns of thinking and modern art, the heir to invented Renaissance space, in an extensive process of spatialising time. But on the other hand, it seeks to reconstruct time in its narrative. Not as a figure of space, but as memory of colours, gestures, lines, planes, layers and finally materials.

As history, it produces a poetic narrative, but as comment and critique, it tells a story. A story of colour, gesture, line, a story that relates to modern plastic space (in the tensions between the planes and the materials), a chemical story, of compositions of substances that make up the paint and its variants, a story of supports, of cuts in the points of vision, a story that accentuates the importance of the creative process and of the memory and time contained in the accidents of the material of creation.

The signs contained in the material accidents are one of the goals Frantz is looking for. And he folds them into an awareness of the constructive procedures of each studio or each canvas or mass of paint employed. He reverses social history into a critical and poetic history. The history of an accident that causes a tradition, of a challenge that is transformed into culture. He brings about a visibility that is renewed in front of the other's work and uses it to draw relationships and remain aware of the sign of language-fidelity to the principle of painting.

In one sense, we can agree with Fabbrini, when he indicates artists who, in exploring materials, make these into an indicial sign of images that have been archived by the historiography of art. His objects, his unrealised paintings and his book-paintings are painting-forms from the archive of the artist, of the contemporary artist. But in looking for the logic of a document in them, we only enter the muddy terrain of

accumulations and excesses and once again return to the sense of a repressed history, technology and materials in themselves, of their being positively the symptom of painting and art.

Because these symptomatic signs, as Deleuze would say, strengthen precisely the sensory elements – colourful, vibrant, intense, massive – with a power inside them from which understanding is born. They are born here in a relationship with mastery of the *metier* – of cookery, of technology, of the media, of the support.

Tempo V

In the fifth tempo we recognise Frantz as not a conceptual artist, but as someone who also makes use of part of the reflection offered by the conceptualism of contemporary art.

By examining the operations of art (in the broader concept of art: what is art? When is art? How is art? Who is an artist? What does an artist do?), his language shifts masterfully from the circuit of art to the field of the process of creation itself.

Frantz demonstrates that he knows what the art circuit does and shows this in a visual comment in his works. He takes something from the studios, their remains. And he returns them to the realm of official painting, to the exhibition space. He identifies and inverts processes of legitimisation and offers the remains a “quasi-institutional” state. Then he makes the leap into working on the works themselves by cutting and suturing them. It is a surgical operation. An operation of editing. But that neither defeats nor discourages his main concern: of touching on painting and the retinal language it is born from. That concern is not rejected. He only makes deconstructions. In the extreme. He takes the work of someone else, the space of the other,

the measurement of time of the other, his remains and, therefore, symptoms and restraints, the things that repeat, but which were rejected, that fell to the ground, that dripped, or, when dealing with someone else's work in its completed state, precisely what the other pushes away, so that he can work on it anew. Cutting and sewing again. A surgical operation. An operation of editing.

Tempo VI

In the sixth and final tempo I want to think about the relationship between Frantz's creative practice and an ethical-aesthetic. In 1984 Lyotard indicated a crisis in visual and plastic creative practices and their symptoms in the history of painting. The painting which had been at the source of everything in art history had lost that position. The post-1980 contemporary artist did not have to provide an enjoyable spectacle for the viewer. The spectacle of painting had to be abolished. The viewer had to be abolished. Enjoyment had to be abolished. Pleasure had to be abolished. That reflection affected most practices in painting from that time onwards. Frantz is an integral part of that symptom. Its origin is non-existent. Its gesture is cutting and editing. He dismantles entire completed works, forgotten or abandoned works. It doesn't matter. He also finds time to collect remains. His appropriation is of the order of transgression. Or perhaps desecration even. But it is also of the order of collection, in the act of a very selective and careful collector who finds more painting in the rubbish and by chance. There is a sensory presence. Something sensory that becomes intelligible through the challenges it brings to the artist as creator, of entering into the work and the space of the other through the gap that has been created, and once there, in that intermezzo, "carving-constructing" his own stylistic interval. Because this is not about style, but intervals of styles, something that is inter-stylistic, resulting from a friendship that he creates and which

results in his work. Frantz made me his friend and he himself is a friend of painting, of all paintings, all acts of painting, of all the places it can be found. These works that allow us to "co-feel" in a state of "com-passion" and create surfaces for encounters between things and people in the state of things are the gestures of an aficionado and commentator who, as I have said, does not quote, but hyperbolises. His painting accentuates. Frantz highlights the world as painting. Sometimes he causes certain instances from other creative processes to cry out, from accumulations, from errors, from the remains of other people's paintings. Brushstrokes, shades, colours, extensions, dimensions, planes. Pieces of works, tables, floors (grounds) – the immediate and surrounding space of producing the picture, the artist's studio, the things that frame and outline the traces and remains of the investigation and the creative process of each particular artist.

Histories of paintings and painters are told here with languages and affection, but also with the bodies (and the gestures) and the technologies (techniques, media, devices). Expansion of this framework positions Frantz in the narrative field of art. A narrative of chosen affinities, a narration in a state of affections. His paintings cause experience and reflection. They are powerful. And they are meditative. They are touched by time.

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