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By Diego Papetti

COLTORTI

# PERFECTION IS NEXT DOOR WITH MARTA RAVASI

What happens when painting becomes an operation of subtraction? What is going to be left on canvas?

We had a chat with Milan based artist Marta Ravasi, who has let us step in her studio.

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## **What do you do when you're not painting?**

When I'm not painting I seek out and pursue clues that can inform my research. I look around, I read. There are stimuli that can come from things apparently far from art : outside the studio I find information that while not having strictly anything to do with painting, it inspires it. I also deepen the work of artists I still don't know about and I keep myself updated on the art world in general. In addition, when I'm not painting, I find satisfaction in manual activities that don't contemplate my creativity, nor leave any room for contingencies or pauses, but still imply following different steps that bring to a result. It's once that I reach that result that I feel that everything is perfect. Activities such as knitting or baking. Anyways, every period has its own craze.

**Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said that perfection is not achieved when there is nothing left to add, but when there is nothing left to take away. What would you say to him if he could hear you? How important is the activity of synthesis in what you do?**

I've been wanting to gather some thoughts on the theme of synthesis for a long time, so thanks for asking. Concluding a painting for me is finding a final and clean version after having arranged the same situation many times. "Clean" in sense that it starts from a gesture that is increasingly refined and degreased; a color reaches its definitive degree, the thickness of a surface acquires a certain firmness. It is an operation that always proceeds by subtraction, like a clean-up.

Considering my paintings, I notice that each one finds its synthetic form through different levels of description, but the synthesis is being able to look at the totality of the work while seeing every specific aspect of it at the same time, and this can happen in different ways. In the case of a painting I am not speaking only of the composition and of how the various elements are distributed through the space, but of how from the set of all the specific facts that contribute to reach the total balance - like the look of the paint, its direction, texture, color, ratio of the elements in relation to the surface of the canvas - a totality is achieved. A similar situation occurs within each new exhibition. During the installation phase there is a very accurate work of positioning all the paintings, and every time it amazes me how I end up using them all and never leaving any of them out. I feel like removing a unit would imply having one in excess. The result is almost always very dry but never empty. Each work contains a specific dynamic that does not repeat itself in neighboring ones.



**Paintings, not works. Painter, not artist. When they ask you who you are, you answer "I paint", and you refer to painting as a practice to be approached without asking for anything in return. Is there still room for romanticism in contemporary art?**

Yes, these are the terms I prefer to use. I can say that I consider art and my practice as something disengaged from a production dynamic, as I want to keep making everything happen in a very consequential way, truly moved by an internal, intellectual need. I don't know if my approach leaves room for romanticism, but I believe in maintaining an authentic impulse. The other needs and strategies outside the creative process are not to be ignored, but to be considered as ways that allow you to turn this activity into a profession. I'm learning to control more what happens next, but the production and the original act are not imbued with these dynamics and predictions.

**Do you listen to music while you paint? Who's on your playlist?**

My painting sessions often start by browsing online: I open YouTube and choose a video that's already on my home. Usually I opt for live performances rather than official clips, but it all depends on the moment and obsession I'm living. For instance, lately, I've been very into Italian videos from the the 80's and 90's. In the past months I repeatedly watched Alice singing Summer on a Solitary Beach by Battiato at the '95 Saint Vincent Summer Gala. In general I like how a person with his presence, voice and movements can be become so hypnotic. There is no special effect, it is just she who sings, dances and also interprets through clothing. From there I let YouTube proceed with the selection for me. While I paint I often change abruptly and switch from Italian music to classical music especially with solo piano, to then switch again to trap music. When I feel that the moment is decisive I prefer silence. I realize it because tension gets higher... it's a silence even inside me, I don't have room for any thoughts and yet I feel fulfilled. It is a rare moment that precedes an automatism.

**Joanna Piotrowska with Prada, Sterling Ruby with Raf Simons, Vanessa Beecroft with YSL and Moncler, Tom Sachs with Nike. What relationship do you have with fashion? If you had the opportunity to collaborate with a designer, who would it be?**

I would love to be able to collaborate with a designer and have the opportunity to bring my painting on another dimension, translating it in a certain sense into another type of language. I often find myself imagining how it could be, perhaps through the use of light and smooth fabrics. Arranging my subjects in new patterns, combining, cutting and juxtaposing. I am curious about the idea of working in relation to the body, understanding how the material can organize itself around it. This would imply working with a set of volumes which is drastically different from the type of space that I am used to deal with, and probably for this reason I would start from defining the fabrics, just out of familiarity with the subject. I don't know who it could be, but I am certainly very attracted and curious about this possibility. In general I have a good relationship with fashion; I choose a sober style which sometimes I like "corrupting" with stronger and more recognizable pieces.







