

## **Luca Vitone, *per l'Eternità* (2013)**

Luca Vitone's project "*per l'eternità*"\* focuses on Eternit, a theme that has been previously approached by the artist both throughout his research on landscape and memory and throughout his reflection on monochromatic painting and anti-pigment. The volatile polluting dust hovering over the urban environment are at the same time the pigment of Vitone's monochromes and their conceptual essence, a sensory version of which could define the project for Venice Biennale.

Patented by Austrian Ludwig Hatschek in 1901, Eternit is a natural material made from concrete and fibers of asbestos. It entered the market with innovative characteristics and massive democratic consequences for the construction industry.

Being highly fire-resistant, it was used for insulating wagons and ships, generously adopted for houses, industrial sheds, schools, hospitals, gyms, aqueducts, but also for very many everyday objects, even beach chairs and flower boxes. In Italy, before being dismantled and encapsulated, it has been active Eternit, the greatest asbestos plant in Europe, that in the mid-sixties employed approximately 2000 people in Casale Monferrato (Italy).

The factory was closed in 1986, thanks to a decree issued by Casale's mayor, followed by a long and painful trial against the plant managers – one among whom was considered almost a philanthropist - who held back the truth about the mortal danger of processing asbestos. Last year the trial finally has ended with a verdict "in favor" of the victims.

Eternit was named after the Latin word *aeternitas* (eternity) because of its illusory resistance to the aggression of time and weather. Apart from its monochromatic look and the danger of its fibrous powder, the material was chosen by the artist as emblem of the changeable nature of our perception of the world and the landscape.

Eternit is still widely present in Italian landscape. Prohibited in 1992, Eternit is now in every sense such an object of removal that Arpal has forbidden Luca Vitone to display, although safely, some neutralized Eternit taken from legal asbestos waste disposal sites. To the artist, the way the perception of such material has changed might suggest the transitory nature of our assimilation of world and time. During Modernism, landscape was considered a territory to conquer and future was seen as the endless progress of science and technology, but of arts too. Paradoxically, Modernism has never really taken into account the future though. In the Eighties, postmodernity let us progressively become accustomed to the state of exception: the future has become the black shadow of a threat, always larger and more frightful for the environment and consequently for human survival. The future, that in any time can be mystified and manipulated by the present, turns out to be more and more a political tool to control of the masses. During an interview, Agamben claimed that optimism and pessimism are no longer useful thinking categories and quoted a letter from Marx to Arnold Ruge: "The desperate situation of the age I live fills me up with hope".

For Vitone, landscape is the place where memory and present confront each other. Eternit represents the memory of a past time, that is much more recent than what we tend to believe, a key to access the present and perhaps a way to hypothesize the ultimate overcoming of any crisis as a tool of political control. Again according to Agamben, European people can attain the truth only by comparison with the past.

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Hence the idea of making up an invisible monochrome, able to trespass borders and perimeters, by collaborating with the master perfumer Maria Candida Gentile. Eternit has no smell, but its fibrous particles kill if inhaled: Vitone's work is meant to be breathed. Whoever enters the Italian Pavilion cannot help but breathing "per l'eternità".

On the Italian "nose" website one can read: "The perfumer's task is to capture the soul and the complexity of the world and to turn it into something volatile. Maria Candida Gentile graduated from the school of Rure, an old school in Grass (France), where she was taught to use the notes of life, as those of death, to distinguish thirty different shadings within the scent of a rose in order to be able to isolate them and to use them as they were colors. She creates her perfumes as actual commissioned portraits by using precious raw and natural materials. Her method is visualized by a circular graph that moves from getting familiar with the individual and his/her environment up to the achievement of his/her full acquaintance, that necessarily includes his and her memories.

Smell is a key to open the door of memories and a way of exploring landscape. In his work Stundàio Luca Vitone has evoked the smell of the sea, although in a much easier way than in "per l'eternità". Dealing with such an ancestral sense, far from any rational control, takes back to an archaic society, where smell played a crucial role in human survival. In more recent times, perfume was used to cover odors. Within our society, scentless and devoted to images, perfume has become the illusion of a fictional and synthetic luxury, such as economy out of State's sovereignty control. The decision of diffusing his presence through a scent is emblematic of Luca Vitone's participation to Venice Biennale.

The choice of Vitone has fallen on the rhubarb, the rhubarb is green, pungent, sour. Made together with Maria Candida Gentile, "per l'eternità" is an achromatic monofactory sculpture in three notes: Swiss rhubarb, Belgian rhubarb, rhubarb France (absolutely by chance, the leaders of Eternit came from those countries). The collaboration, based on the surveys performed in Casale Monferrato and Venice, on landscape and collective memory, is a complex project that aims to occupy Italian Pavillon space beyond any wall, ceiling and floor, beyond every possible partition, in order to retrieve the identity of the presence, that one of the artist as well as that one of the audience through the pervasiveness of the experience.

\* for all Eternity