

Clima

Amarena

Valerio Nicolai

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Text by Matteo Mottin

These new series of works by Valerio Nicolai is dedicated to that particular moments when everything we thought we knew falters and certainties fall down, personal apocalypses perceived as absolute, moments in which our vision of the world alters and turns to red.

The title of the show, Amarena, might recall an idealized childhood, an eternal start of summer spent climbing trees to eat fruits, eternal snow cone snacks, ice cream cones bought by grandparents, but it could easily be the name of an imminent menace, a devastating climatic event, a typical storm originated off the Brazilian coasts

The red dominant of the works is the color of the stage Nicolai interposes between subjective and objective realities in contrast. The texts accompanying every work are like pulley squeaks keeping in tension this stage, facts and quotes once absorbed then forgotten by the store of life, mechanisms triggering and defusing at the same time a possible interpretation of the works.

1. Tramonto dei fornai

One of the strategies adopted by Alexander the Great against the Persian Empire was to dye the uniforms of his soldiers with large blood-red stains, obtained by applying to the fabric a mixture of clay and dried madder root. The Persian satraps, thinking of encountering little resistance in a weakened army composed mainly of wounded, were easily defeated in 334 BC by Alexander's troops in the Battle of Granico, in the northwest of present-day Turkey. The participants in the battle, the Macedonians with their Greek allies and the Persians with their Greek mercenaries, winners and losers, are all dead at the moment.

2. Toilette

Alfred Hitchcock's "Psycho" is the first film in the history of cinema that shows the act of flushing a toilet. The epochal moment occurs just before the scene in which the character of Janet Leigh takes a shower and is stabbed to death.

3. Tuffo

Ming (1499-2006) was a specimen of oceanic clam caught in 2006 along the coasts of Iceland. Her age was calculated at 507 years, making her the longest-lived animal ever discovered.

The age was initially calculated in 405 years, and for this reason she was given the name of the dynasty that reigned in China at the time of her alleged birth. A subsequent evaluation showed that the animal was actually even older, having had about 507 years when she died. A contemporary of Leonardo Da Vinci, survived the reign of Elizabeth I, Napoleon, the Industrial Revolution and two world wars, Ming died when frozen after being caught.

4. Dito

The Chinese sailor Poon Lim was the man who survived longer alone in open sea on a lifeboat, being adrift for 133 days off the Atlantic Ocean. Lim was a steward of the British ship Ben Lomond, which was sunk by a German submarine on November 23, 1942, 1200 km east of the mouth of the Amazon River. All on board perished except Lim, who after staying afloat for a couple of hours wearing only a lifejacket found a boat two and a half meters long. After about four and a half months on the high seas, survived by drinking animal blood and rainwater and eating birds and fish, including a shark that somehow he managed to capture, on 5 April 1943 he was rescued by Brazilian fishermen.

5. Il festeggiato

In "The Betrothed", Alessandro Manzoni names for 22 times the Divine Providence, the hand of God that guides and intervenes in the affairs of mortals. On the day of the Epiphany of 1873, leaving Mass, Manzoni slipped and fell, beating his head on a step of the stairs of the Church of San Fedele, Milan. He died on May 22nd of the same year.

6a. Amarena #1

How do we know that vampires don't exist? If each vampire had only one meal a day, starting with just one vampire

that turns each of his victims into another vampire, in about a month the entire world population would only be formed by vampires.

6b. Amarena #2

During the Ottoman Empire the executions were carried out by the gardeners of Topkapi Palace.

The people who were to be executed were only made aware of their fate on the very execution day via means of a sorbet, served three days after the trial. The colour of the drink would be indicative of the court's decision: if it were white, the accused was innocent and set free, if it were red, he was put to death.

They did offer to each of the condemned the chance to avoid being executed: they had to beat the palace' chief gardener in a 300 meters dash.

The last known condemned to win this race was Grand Vizier Hacı Salih Pasha in 1822. Due to the respect he gained for his impressive and unexpected victory, he was later pardoned and made Governor General in Damascus.

6c. Amarena #3

On the morning of April 26, 1982, a South Korean girl suddenly woke up her boyfriend, police officer Woo Bum-kon, swatting a fly on his cheek.

This abrupt awakening resulted in a huge fight before he left for work. When he got home, he beat his girlfriend, then went on one of the deadliest rampages in history.

Within 24 hours, he'd gone around in his police uniform, often using it to gain people's trust before killing them, murdering 56 people and seriously wounding 35 before he was cornered in a country house with hostages, where he used two hand grenades to blow himself up. The explosions also killed three of the hostages.

6d. Amarena #4

In the spring of 1873, a mysterious stranger is reported to have appeared in Alta, a small Catholic community in Utah, claiming to have the power to resurrect the dead. For a small sum he would bring back to life all 150 or so occupants of the city's cemetery, satisfying the promise upon which the Catholic religion is based. At first, the idea seemed favorable to the 3000 or so residents of this small mining town, but then the downsides were considered: widows and widowers who had remarried might have a little troubles, ownership would be insecure for those who had inherited property, and many old grudges might resurface and produce even more killings (in Alta there was almost a murder a day, and one of its saloons was called "The Bucket of Blood").

The townfolk held a big meeting and decided they'd best bribe the stranger, lest he bring back to life a wave of troubles for them. Some 25000\$ was quickly collected and given to the man, with the provision that he would not raise anybody. He took the money and, of course, was never seen again.

6e. Amarena #5

Pope Formosus, to unequivocally demonstrate the existence of an afterlife and thus strengthen the power of the Catholic religion threatened during the so-called "saeculum obscurum", decided to make a gesture as much pragmatic as revolutionary: he shot himself in the mouth.

The Roman clergy had his body laid down on a throne and watched it for weeks, waiting for a sign, in what was later called the "Synod of the Corpse" by historians, an exact representation of which was provided in 1870 by the French painter Jean-Paul Laurens. The Pope's body did not move.

The clergy deduced that the firearms represented a decadence of customs and morality, and that their use could therefore constitute sin and prevent the Pope from manifesting himself. It was decided that his successor should prove to everyone the existence of an afterlife using poison.

Pope Boniface VI, successor of Formosus, then poisoned all the Roman clergy and waited in vain for their return.

6f. Amarena #6

"Our colour concepts sometimes relate to substances (snow is white), sometimes to surfaces (this table is brown), sometimes to the illumination (in the reddish evening light), sometimes to transparent bodies. And isn't there also an application to a place in the visual field logically independent of a spatial context?"

Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Remarks on Colour"

Valerio Nicolai (b. 1988 in Gorizia, Italy) lives and works in Venice.

Recent solo exhibitions: Amarena, Clima, Milan; Heart's Rock and Potato's spirit, Las Palmas Project, Lisbon; Prospettiva di una matrioska, smART, Rome; Processo a porcospino, Clima, Milan; Trasformazione permanente di un mago in una formica, Treti Galaxie, Turin.

Recent group show: Forme uniche nella continuità dello spazio, Rizzuto Gallery, Palermo; Steklovata, Gelateria Sogni di Ghiaccio, Bologna (Double solo show); Il vello d'oro, Giorgio Galotti Gallery, Turin; The H.P. Collection, Operativa Arte, Rome; straperetana2018, Pereto; Mercato Nero, Fondazione Malutta at Monitor Gallery, Rome; VIVA ARTE VIVA, FuturDome, Milan; Trigger Party, Marselleria., Milan; Gala, Nicolai, Kvas - N+G/K, A plus A Gallery, Venice; A night out of town, Clima, Milan; Shit and Die, Palazzo Cavour, Turin; Pavillion Crepaccio at yoox.com, Venice; Lo sbocco romantico,

Furini Arte Contemporanea, Rome (Double solo show); Lords of Dirt, UGM Gallery of Maribor, SLO.