



"The afternoon was intimate, infinite. The road descended and forked among the now confused meadows. A high-pitched, almost syllabic music approached and receded in the shifting of the wind, dimmed by leaves and distance."¹

A garden is a landscape shaped by the aesthetic gaze. It is the route designed for the autumnal walk and the place to encounter nature customised to our tastes. Natural elements coexist in it: the light, the rocks, the plants, the singing of the birds in the trees and the wind. Built elements also feature there: the path, the pond, and the flowerbed that tries, in vain, to contain and mark out the boundaries of the space. In a similar way, Fabio Viscogliosi arranges these two types of elements – the built and the natural – on the canvas, in his new paintings. By doing so, he becomes a kind of landscape gardener, an architect, who masters the equilibrium of the shapes, a walker capable of getting lost in the depths of the two dimensions of his paintings. The characters that appear in them await, in a contemplative stance. The wall of "Studio afternoon", for example, features three paintings and a window through which plants appear, as if the landscape were there undercover, like a secret that bursts into the room... perhaps a call that the artist himself heard.

The Garden, a simple and powerful word to my ears. It imposed itself on me during this long spring as I was working on the 20 paintings that line up on the walls of the L21 gallery. The titles emerge in the same impetus as the forms, according to a playful intuition, early in the morning, while the hand moves ahead of consciousness. Perhaps I had in mind The Garden of Forking Paths, this short story by Borges, whose title is one of the finest in all of literature, or a distant song from the Kinks. Or was it the urge to escape into nature? I do not know anymore.

In some form, a garden is domesticated nature and a landscape designed to our tastes. It offers a non-functional window of time and space, which facilitates aesthetic contemplation. As a location, a garden is full of artistic and literary echoes; it also has deep symbolic roots that sink into the land. It therefore comes as no surprise that it is one of the major themes in western painting. However, gardens are not just places of collective memory, they are also strictly personal. In the words of Fabio Viscogliosi,

Our memory is also a garden, a labyrinth whose familiar and intriguing, mysterious and exhilarating paths we traverse. As a teenager, I liked to escape into my grandparents' garden, in the dampness of the Lazio in Italy. At nap time, while everyone stood quietly in the shade, I wandered between the tomato plants and the sun-streaked bamboo forest. Anything could happen.

In fact, anything can happen in the artist's paintings too, enclosed in the garden – this symbolic space, which is at once internal and external. From contemplating a geometrical night to walking around the almost metaphysical sculptures of "Tree sculpture" or "Aquarium", as if one could go around their negative space and look at them from behind. The space in the painting invites one to imagine the void, which opens up the necessary distance for that aesthetic contemplation that makes it possible to talk about landscape rather than tree, mountain, cloud and sun. In short, what can be found in Fabio Viscogliosi's new paintings is a visual poetry of space.

I often have the impression that a painting is born in reaction to the previous one. Each is the product of a double movement, dazzling and patient, in balance. Each is punctuated by the hours of its own appearance. Each is a play area circumscribed by the black line of its frame. And yet, all of them fit into a space that extends far beyond themselves. I like it to be that way.

A two voices text between Fabio Viscogliosi and Esmeralda Gómez Galera
Lyon / Palma 2020.

Translation by Carla Davidson

Fabio Viscogliosi, born in Oullins (France) in 1965, lives and works between Lyon (France) and Geneva (Switzerland).

His artistic practice is focused on painting and drawing and inspired by different influences like comics, literature, burlesque cinema or graphic design. His artworks are usually untitled or named after songs and quotes from his favorite books and movies. Actually, the sentence by Robert Bresson «Not to use two violins when one is enough» is also a good statement to describe his work as an artist.

He has shown his work in places such as the Museum of Contemporary Art (Lyon), Museum of Decorative Arts (Paris), Galerie du Jour – Agnès B. (Paris), and at the Intermediatheque in Tokyo. He has also participated in ARCO Madrid (2018, 2019 and 2020) with L21 Gallery. His last solo show at L21 Gallery was "Home recordings" (2019).

He has also published several novels in France –Apologie du Slow (Stock, 2014) or Mont-Blanc (Stock, 2011) which has been translated into Italian and Japanese. He received the Prince Pierre de Monaco award for his book Je suis pour tout ce qui aide à traverser la nuit (Stock, 2010). In 2015, he wrote a fiction about a picture by Fischli & Weiss (Les Hors-la-loi, Confluences/FRAC Aquitaine). He also made comic books (Da Capo, L'association, 2010) and art zines, like the current Belvédères series in duet with Luca Retraite.

As a musician, he has recorded Spazio (2002), and Fenomeno (2007), and has collaborated with artists like Amedeo Pace (Blonde Redhead) or Vanessa Paradis. His last record, Peplum, came out in 2019.