ABSTRACT

An introduction to this thesis should, in the first place, justify its title: *The Invisuality of Painting: History of an Obsession (from Caravaggio to Bruce Nauman)*. The purpose is a definition of painting that permits or reveals (extending) a common denominator to the videosphere (but likewise to sculpture and to cinema). This common denominator defines or redefines the nature, or the *trace* and the *existence*, of the subjects considered (video and painting, firstly, followed by successive relevant expansions – which can take us from cinema to music and theatre): that *trace* is in the concept of INVISUALITY, something that does not belong either to the order of the visible or to that of the invisible. Put another way, the *cosa mentale* by which painting is historically defined cannot be visible, as it also cannot be invisible.

Put in these terms, INVISUAL is the partner of TRUTH, being TRUTH that which emanates from painting. TRUTH shall be considered as defined by Plato, and especially as later defined by Alain Badiou. The philosophy of Badiou is the point of departure from which art will be considered, so as to overstep contingencies such as value judgements and the pulverization of interpretations. Thus, the first part of this thesis shall deal with the concept of TRUTH; the second, INVISUALITY; the third, the surpassing of interpretation as a consequence of the TRUTH and INVISUALITY of painting. It is stated in this last section (with analysis of artists like Caravaggio, Velázquez, Rembrandt, Vito Acconci and Bruce Nauman) that a pictorial work of art is INTERPRETABLE when its reading/reception is not confused with its interpretation (what is dealt with here is the crucial dissociation of interpretation and INTERPRETABILITY: that is INTERPRETABLE which has not closed itself off in an interpretation or permitted the inception of such a process).

From a profound analysis of the philosophical work of Alain Badiou emerged the concept of TRUTH as the central location of art in this statement: *art is a*
procedure of TRUTH; doubly so: because it permanently produces TRUTHS, and then because in its moments of rupture emerge its clarifying peaks (let’s call them self-definition of art), also considered to be TRUTHS.

For instance Caravaggio, Rembrandt and Velázquez are the paragon of baroque TRUTH, Vito Acconci and Bruce Nauman created the videosphere. The baroque implies the existence of a light in painting that is above all an arbitrary formal self-emanation (a pictorial statement) – which allows for its hypothetical relation with self-reflexivity of form in Greenberg, for example. Now, if form is a self-emanation, it diverges from observable reality. Hence the perusal of ample bibliography on the suspiciousness of the ocular paradigm as centre of knowledge: a study of the antiocularcentric discourse from Saint Augustin to Guy Debord.

With this definition of the nature of painting, the possibility shall subsequently be considered of enlarging it, and its conclusions, to a generic nature of the arts, a development that the central concepts proposed – TRUTH, INVISUALITY, INTERPRETABILITY – require and seem to permit. A necessary disciplinary transversality (or even indifference) is, furthermore, intrinsic to this conceptual concatenation. There will be a reflection on the nature of painting and art (and literature and music shall sporadically, or whenever necessary, be summoned), inevitably grounded in theory and critique, in aesthetics and philosophy.

Art and philosophy shall be connected. Which can be deduced from the nature of art as here proposed, and from the way it is proposed, right from the moment in which it is considered that the determinant of art is the concept of TRUTH. Art manifests and proceeds according to the nature of TRUTH – it is, as said, a procedure of TRUTH. That is why this thesis demands a subject that reflects on the partnership or compossibilization between TRUTHS and their procedures. This compossibilization is simultaneously analysed in its particular territories (art, science or politics) and retroactively contributes to the redefinition of TRUTH.

This is the determinant of art, but the way in which art asserts in itself the relevance of TRUTH reverberates in the very definition of TRUTH, in a circularity possessed of multiple meanings: TRUTH → art; art → TRUTH; TRUTH → indiscernibility; indiscernibility → INVISUALITY; INVISUALITY → INTERPRETABILITY (impossibility of interpretation).
The connection between art and TRUTH is decisive in the sense that the presentation and the openness of a concept should generate others: TRUTH manifests in art, and art, as procedure of TRUTH, clarifies it remarkably. TRUTH is an unfounded choice, supported primarily by a void empty of motivations, interests or justifications (excluded, therefore, from verifiable experience). Its determinants arise from a corner of the self that is unsupported and founded on pure intuition, “strong”, where deduction and induction have no place.

KEY CONCEPTS