



Echoes of Sculpture

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During the 50s, in the former communist countries, a complex mechanism was created and introduced at social, economic and cultural level for propaganda purposes, one that would eventually produce a high amount of «official art» - standardized and gravitating around a central character: the proletarian worker. His figure was often used and abused, even if it did not serve him at all. Labour, therefore, was supposed to be the subject of that art. However, the cultural behavior of obeying this symbol was completely abandoned after the Romanian Revolution of 1989, when we suddenly had to accept and face the reality and consequences of an unwanted heritage: the socialist realist sculpture. 30 years later, one could honestly wonder: where is the hero of yesteryear, where is the worker today?

Trying to put myself in the artist's shoes of the communist regime, I decided to create some replicas in the same style and formal language, focusing on the symbol of the proletarian worker, with the main difference that I made the sculptures from white cotton paper, an extremely perishable material. The paper's materiality, its texture, its relationship to light, make the statues appear like ephemeral citations of some historical characters, like ghosts from the past. Each of these "Ghosts" have a "camera obscura" (pinhole camera) equipped with photosensitive paper inserted inside their heads at eye level, for the purpose of photographing everything they see. Thus, the statue is not merely an object: it becomes an eye witness, a fragile receiver of the context and its essential changes over time.

In front of one of these eye witnesses, while I was working in the studio, I made some test photos with the pinhole camera. After one hour of exposure the camera captured the surrounding environment with all the objects in the room, all inert, well defined, while the human figure - the worker - was invisible, due to the movement. Even if you may observe some nearly imperceptible traces of the worker's presence, the final image is empty, devoid of heroes.

Similar to what Diego Velazquez did in "Las Meninas", or Giulio Paolini in "Young Man Looking at Lorenzo Lotto", by switching the roles between the subject and the object, or between the artist and the viewer, I would try to reverse the roles between the viewer and the artwork. Now it is the artwork that looks at us and captures history.

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