

Art as paradigm

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I have long reflected on how to start this short text, which will try to illustrate the reasons and, at least in part, the meaning of the images and objects you are going to see.

The trauma produced by Covid-19 and the consequent confinement we experienced is still working inside of us, tireless in its ability to merge with the existential molecules of our inner and outer daily life, beyond any fluctuating data regarding the expansion and contraction of the infection. The trauma has drawn a separation between who we used to be and who we are, but perhaps even more with respect to who we will be. Hence, as concerns the beginning of this text, the invitation that I address as much to you as to me is to not pretend anything has happened, to not try to neutralize the trauma by relegating it to the past, because it is not, and it has never been its place, since unconscious processes are in themselves timeless, as Freud already claimed in 1920 (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*), an assertion never really denied even by his prosecutors and antagonists. The trauma we have experienced thus continues to accompany us in the present, finding new reasons for its current configuration, a continuum expanding amid past and future.

Paradigma is first and foremost this: an exhibition on the present moment in which we are but above all on what endures from the past and on what is already in the future.

Conceived, designed and initiated at the end of 2019, *Paradigma* has been inexorably absorbed by the events, acquiring a sense of affinity that is as immediate as it is unpredictable.

The idea of a model for what to imagine in the reconstruction, immediately related by more than a few to the post-war period, created a fulminating short circuit between the portraits of the 75 members of the Constituent Commission and the need to find a salvific reminiscence to overcome what was happening to us. Their portraits, occupying the entire surface of all the walls, become our audience, whose gaze is obstructed by white bands that, if on the one hand represent a sense of discomfort towards our present, on the other attenuate the character of each character, creating a community aimed at achieving a common goal. We look at them as they cannot see us, inviting us to pay attention to the lecture Piero Calamandrei, a member of the Commission, gave to the students of the Cattolica University in Milan on January 26th, 1955. A speech that is still very relevant today and that in its very first lines expresses a decisive concept for our present: "In our Constitution there is an article that is the most demanding, demanding for us who are declining, but especially for you, young people who have the future ahead. It states: «It is the Republic responsibility to remove all the economic and social obstacles which, by limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, prevent the full development of the human being and the effective participation of all workers to the political, economic and social organization of the country»."

What else should we expect? What else should we demand? Now that the contagion has shown us that what we considered "normal" largely relied on inequalities that are no longer acceptable, nor sustainable for the life and development of our community. If you think about it, having voted just two days ago on altering the Constitution, we can instantly identify that audience and that discourse to us, to this moment.

A present addressed by this same audience painted in a harsh black and white, suffering from the fatigue of everyday life and facing the floor, on which lies the installation titled *Piazza*, a constellation of motorcycle helmets, symbols of self-defense in demonstrations that are transformed into flower boxes in which vegetables grow, just like hope; on the other the video *Certosa 2020*, which shows how the political action of the community in the Villa Certosa district in Rome, near Torpignattara, takes care of people's needs, making up for the lack of institutions. How margins represent today the expression of a real political centrality, becoming the actual divide between now and before, but even more with what we imagine will be the after.

"Art that is political", the art created by Sandro Mele, is not a simple testimony, or representation but a constituent element of reality as it unfolds in a present that is nowadays an active and practicable deposit of the past and the future. "Art that is political" does not change things, but demonstrates how much and how it is necessary to change them, becoming itself a model, a paradigm, of the necessary change.