

HEROES

Paolo Chiasera's art deals mainly with Heroes

For Freud "A hero is someone who has had the courage to rebel against his father and has in the end victoriously overcome him"¹, while for Jung "it represents the unconscious Self of man" and "expresses ideas, shapes and the forces that have a hold on the soul and they shape it"². Chiasera's heroes are the ones of our time whose main task is not, as in the fairy tales, to leave the village, fight and annihilate the dragon, the evil force that is threatening to oppress his community, according to Vladimir Propp³. Their main objective is to erect their own monument.

It was so for the negative heroes of the *Young Dictators' Village, 2004* - Benito Mussolini, Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Francisco Franco, Mao Zedong, Idi Amin Dada, Pol Pot, Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Husein. Freud wrote in his writing about the hero: "We know that in the mass of mankind there is a powerful need for authority who can be admired, before whom one bows and perhaps even be ill treated [. . .] It is a longing for the father felt by everyone from his childhood onwards, of the same father that the hero in the legend claims to have defeated. [. . .] The resolute spirit, willpower and the impetus of the action belong to the father figure, but more so do autonomy and independence of the great man, his divine indifference that can become a total disregard for any care. One has to admire him, the faith in him is accepted, but one cannot help fearing him . We should have been led literally by his word: who else but the father could have been the 'great man' of our childhood"⁴.

It was so for Pier Paolo Pasolini in the video *The Following Days, 2005*, as in the preceding one, filmed near Bologna in the countryside of Molinella, with explosions, devastation and fire as if to damage a landscape, an Italian landscape, having felt and rendered the irretrievable loss of something that belongs to the substance of the soul more than just bearing witness to a particular event.

Or finally those of *The Trilogy, 2006*, Vincent (Van Gogh), Pieter (Bruegel) and Cornelius (Escher), with video, sculptures, drawings and photographs, heroes and not just heralds of change, but bearers of knowledge and a culture that heroically puts themselves and their meaning into question.

Not to mention those that have been the subjects of his more recent works, the hero of the word Celine, the hero of the moving picture Andrej Tarkovskij, the hero of musical performance Mstislav Rostropovic.

Chiasera does not so much highlight the results of the actions of his heroes who should be concerned with the redemption and salvation of their race or family, as much as the erection - *pun intended* - of their own monument, recognising, if not quite revealing, the virtuous or vicious meeting between hero and monument. If the hero succumbs during his action, which happens quite often, sometimes without having completed it, other times having only partially completed it, the monument is the sign of that action. It is its reminder and warning: reminder of something that is missing regardless of the action having been completed or not, and warning as witness of the moral and ideal substance that that action has shaped. Substance which is often connected aspects that are impertinent and disrespectful, as Freud refers to the above; of aspects that are sometimes outrageous vis à vis norms and acquired standards. Therefore the ease, or the obsession and together the foreshadowing of death, of one's own end, are the price that our hero is consciously willing to pay to complete his mission that he first of all has chosen. In the end, heroism consists of the full consciousness of risk.

The hero is therefore the protagonist in Chiasera's stories which are more annotated than told with his videos,

¹Trans. Sigmund Freud, *Der Mann Moses und die monotheistische Religion: Drei Abhandlungen*, 1934-1938.

² Trans. Carl Gustav Jung, *Symbole der Wandlung: Analyse des Vorspiels zu einer Schizophrenie*, 1912-1952.

³ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folk Tale*, 1928.

⁴ S.Freud, *ibidem*.

drawings, photographs and sculptures. For the *Tupac Project 2004-2007*, the work at the Herford *MARTa* consists of one sculpture. IN ESSA The artist achieves an extraordinary the synthesis of the monument without any digression of a dramatic or narrative nature: the hero Tupac is identified in his monument in the both in the classical sense, a three dimensional figure on a pedestal and in the metaphysical sense (à la De Chirico). It rises on the "Piazza d'Italia", solitary, in the twilight, projecting its shadow on the desert of the turn of the INIZIO millennium European city. At the same time it stands out, a minuscule David against the Goliath of the Architecture that seems to twist itself in its presence while it actually pre dated it in all those same apocalyptic forms and will probably outlive it as a ruin of itself. Tupac was killed in Las Vegas, the city that is taken as a symbol and symptom of the end of modernity and the beginning of a new phase that implies not only the end of a certain type of architecture (Modern Architecture) but also of a certain type of civilisation and even *culture* by Robert Venturi⁵.

It is not by chance that the monument to Tupac is located outside of the building of a museum designed by Frank Gehry in the centre of a united Germany. For Venturi in architecture that analyses the signs are more important than the space: the parable starts with the two dimensional representation of three dimensional space as a workspace thanks to Giotto and then as Brunelleschi's invention of perspective not just as a model of representation but also as a model of culture then set in the Cartesian model to be continued finally into modernism of Albert Loos and *ante litteram* minimalism of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and then he finishes with the Venturi's quip "*Less is Bore*".

Therefore also *MARTa* Hertford, designed by Gehry is Disneyland. But the monument that the Italian artist Chiasera has placed is not dedicated to Mickey Mouse, and does not come into the category of cynical and satisfying Plastik à la Jeff Koons nor in that of the arrogant and despondent figurations of Mario Cattelan, but to a representative of the spectacular Afro-American sub culture, one of the most acrid and acid of the planet and one of its greatest heroes of rap, Tupac Shakhur, aka 2Pac, Pac, Makaveli, hit by 5 of the 12 bullets shot against his car September 7th, 1996 as he left the MGM Grand where he had attended a title fight where Mike Tyson, another great Afro-American icon had just won the title of World Heavyweight Champion after beating the title holder Bruce Seldon in the first round. Tupac died in the Nevada University Hospital from the effect of the bullet wounds after six days of agony: he had just celebrated his 25th birthday a few months earlier. Leasne Parish Crooks was born in the Bronx from a Black Panther member, Afeni Shakur, who had just been released from jail. At the age of six he was given the name of Tupac Amaru, which was the name of the last Inca emperor decapitated in Qusqu by the Spanish conquistadores in September 1572 and subsequently that of a mixed race descendant who led a revolt against the Spanish domination in Peru and who had been subject to the same destiny as his forefather in the same place and by the same means. Lastly, in more recent times, the name was used, in a slightly altered form, by a Marxist armed group called the Tupamaros who practised a devastating urban guerrilla warfare in Uruguay between 1963 and 1984, year in which they were disbanded. After a very poor childhood, aged 17 Tupak Shakhur moved to California where in the space of little more than four years he emerges in the world of rap. His texts deal with life in black ghettos, with the effect of white racism, but also with the violence that is practised or suffered. In 1991, with his first appearance making a record with a title *This is an EP* by Digital Underground with whom he had been working for some time, he started a very successful career that let him to sell over 75 million records in the following years. With fame and success lawsuits, legal battles with the authorities and physical battles with the police and confrontations - often violent - with his colleagues, sentences and prison followed. In the end, after a first attempt on his life - that he survived in spite of the numerous wounds - the final killing in Las Vegas. It was never ascertained who were the executors or those who had commissioned the crime. Most suspected ware his ex-friend and rival Notorious BIG, Aka Biggie, and Orlando "BabyLane" Anderson from the *Crips* gang as potential executors as they were Biggie's bodyguards and they were killed a few months later. It was also said that this was an elaborate hoax and that Tupac would have re-appeared later, but this has not happened, neither in 2003, nor any time since then. No Mickey Mouse!

⁵Robert Venturi, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 1972.

The first work I saw of Paolo Chiasera, and loved was a video transmitted on a small monitor that was

presenting a loop of a film of the view from the window of an aeroplane on which heavy rain was falling diagonally thus rendering indiscernible the external landscape. I was told that it depicted the montage of two films taken from inside a plane one during take off and the other during landing. It was in the *Magazzini del Sale* in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena for an exhibition in which one of the artists invited was the Albanian Armando Lulaj, who had opened his space to works of other artists who had not been invited.

Pier Luigi Tazzi
Marseille July 2007.