

## *About the Yellow Colour and about Light*

Giampaolo Trotta, Florenz

„Light is something that cannot be reproduced,  
but it has to be represented by means of something else  
which is colour.“

Paul Cézanne, 1839-1906

“The more you meditate about light,  
the more you will be surprised about the fact  
that you feel something inside yourself  
which opens in the same way like a flower  
bud which is unfolding.“

Osho Rahneesh, 1931-1990

The artist Luzena created a new and exciting series of works which she dedicated to the yellow light.

It is generally well-known that light is not only a natural element in a complex representation in the field of painting but also one of its fundamental elements.

Caravaggio managed to ‘tear’ the figures out of the darkness. Together with its other ‘face’, the one of the coloured shadows, Impressionism made light the peculiar element. Nowadays light is becoming the most important element by gradually undermining the very concept of the artistic activity until being its undisputed protagonist.

The stroboscopic photographs taken by the Albanian Gjon Mili (1904-1984) are very well-known. Since 1939, he had been a photojournalist of the magazine “Life“. During this period of time, he was experimenting with the possibility of capturing the immateriality of movement and light and locking it in a still image.

Recently, in 2003, the Dane Ólafur Elíasson, “The Ambassador of the Sun“, made the sunlight the absolute protagonist of his art installation *The Weather Project* in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Gallery of Modern Art in London: a huge sun made of artificial light (created by using monochromatic lamps and visually enlarging the gigantic hall of the former Bankside Power Station by covering the ceiling with a huge mirror) as well as a subtle fog (made of sugar mixed with water) were permeating the large hall in London and thus created the visitors’ complete immersion into the yellow and orange light room.

Light plays an ‘exterior’, but a fundamental role in architecture or sculpture by wrapping and shaping or designing them. But in the art of painting, light is an ‘inner‘ element for the work of art. As I have already said, this is true for the light itself and its inseparable opposite, the shadow. In Luzena’s art, however, light itself - and this is not the light shining on landscapes, objects or figures on the canvas - is getting the subject of the painting: what is immaterial has thus become art.

Yellow symbolizes light and creativity, energy and joy, but also the desire to act and to change thoughts into ‘matter’.

In Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Farbenlehre (Theory of Colour)* he wrote in 1810 he said that “yellow is the colour which is closest to light“ and that yellow is the first colour which is transmitted from light itself. For him, blue and yellow are the two primary colours from whose interaction and varied intensity, you can obtain all the other colours. For Goethe, yellow was the principle of light and as such, he called it the positive pole whereas blue was the principle of darkness and therefore the negative pole.

The golden yellow colour, the symbol of the sunlight, has always been a metaphor for what is divine (please, think of the Byzantine and Arabic-Norman mosaics or the plates with the golden background dating from the 13th and 14th centuries), a metaphor for what is absolutely transcendental, the abstract concept itself of God. And the red and orange colours of fire, their vital radiation creating light and warmth exactly represent the

germ of expanding life and of indulging love which already occurred at the time of Pythagoras and later of Christendom.

In Luzena's art, yellow is a radiating and abstractly expressionistic, lyrical and gestural symbol showing her openness to life and to the light of spring which continues renewing life itself in an eternal process of development.

The yellow and orange colour which is sometimes tinged with red is the expansion of the regenerating warmth of spring into the outside, but also of the inner warmth that has mankind open themselves to the light of love.

Luzena captures the sun rays and reduces them to the absolute tonality of the yellow colour which is sometimes tinged with red and orange. On each 'paper' of this series, Luzena spreads her delicate chalks and pastel shades which are highly pigmented and resistant to the effect of light so that they will not fade. On the surface, the chalks and pastel shades are expanding like a flowing cascade or a stream of light. In this way, impressions come into being as well as associations reminding the viewer of dynamic and wavelike ectoplasms looking neo-futuristic and which are dancing and emerging by means of delicate transitions between warm shades of colour.

The artist does not plan anything in advance, everything is in a spontaneous flow and, on the surface of the paper, there is a reminiscence of the creative subconscious as it occurs in all her works. And Luzena herself remembers, „Inside myself there is a presentiment without any form and idea. Then in the course of the creative process, this takes shape in my paintings, and then I let myself be carried away by the joy of experimentation.“

In this series created by Luzena, you can find Goethe's theory of colour, just like in William Turner's (1775-1851) „Light and Colour“. (*Light and Colour – Goethe's Theory*). *The Morning after the Deluge. Moses writing the Book of Genesis* that was painted in 1843 represents a completely undefined subject the shapes of which are dematerialized. The only thing that remains is the effect of the colour which has become light. The substance of the painting is a kind of magma which is being actuated by a centrifugal force sometimes allowing uncertain and undefined forms to come into being. Just like Turner, Luzena is looking for the most sublime effects of light by using the yellow and orange paint.

Luzena's attraction to light and colour allows / colour itself to take the place of form.

In the midst of the yellow paint, there are abstract red and orange figures looking like flames, golden suns and stars, swirls, bright areas and golden clouds as well as red poppies in undefined fields of wheat.

And it is exactly the Spanish title of this last painting (*Amapola*) which poetically refers to the well-known Spanish song of the 1920s composed by José María Lacalle García: "Amapola, lindísima Amapola /será siempre mi alma, tuya sola. / Yo te quiero, amada niña mía, / igual que ama la flor la luz del día"<sup>1</sup>

The playwright Giovanni Battista Niccolini (1782-1861) once said that "light is the word of nature"<sup>2</sup>. And it is by means of the golden yellow colour that Luzena expresses all her longing for Light. „That I lived my whole life full of my most sublime desire / for inextinguishable light and love“ (Pasquale Trotta, 1915-1997)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> „My pretty little poppy, my soul will only be yours for ever. / I long for you, my beloved little girl, just like the flower loves the light of the day.“ - (Translator's note: This is the direct translation of the Spanish lyrics. The English lyrics of *Amapola* written by Jimmy Dorsey are as follows:

„Amapola, my pretty little poppy,

You're like that lovely flower so sweet and heavenly.

Since I found you, my heart is wrapped around you

And loving you, it seems to beat a rhapsody.

Amapola, the pretty little poppy,

Must copy it's endearing charms from you,

Amapola, Amapola.

How I long to hear you say, 'I love you'."

<sup>2</sup> Atto Vannucci, *Ricordi della vita e delle opera di G. B. Niccolini*, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1866

<sup>3</sup> Pasquale Trotta, *Sogno lontano*, Arezzo, C&M Arte, 2008.

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Diese Übersetzung eines Textes von Prof. Giampaolo Trotta vom Italienischen ins Englische ist vollständig und sachlich und sprachlich richtig.

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