

RÄ DI MARTINO

THE CITIES OF BOLO

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Galleria Valentina Bonomo, Rome

"Art is to ensure that everything is fake but looks real" G.L. Bernini

The most real part is showing the pretence, highlighting the elements that serve to build a simulated reality. In cinema and photography, light and the way it is used are crucial – illuminating space and faces, making sure that all the plasticity of bodies can be translated in its full intensity. The use of bright yellow light was a central element of the Baroque. Gian Lorenzo Bernini looked for ways to illuminate some of his marble compositions with hidden natural light sources. His highly elastic forms were almost bathed in a golden light. The light served to further polish where his work tools failed. Light and movement were seventeenth-century devices for showing art as narrative and the Baroque would have loved cinema had it existed a couple of centuries earlier. To remain with the best-known examples, Caravaggio also anticipated cinema through a conscious use of light that does not illuminate but narrates. Light accentuates the movements of the figures in the total darkness of the surrounding space. Caravaggio paints the cinema hall directly onto the canvas.

Here too is a clear demonstration of artifice, where black only accentuates and dramatizes the light. The installation of the new works by RÄ di Martino uses elements of technical scenography to illuminate a scene. The three screens that greet visitors at the entrance to the room are both a scenic device and an artistic structure. The display of common elements in the fabrication of image fakery and their activation within another type of device shows clearly how di Martino's research centres on simulation as a way of showing reality. It is a contradiction that reveals the technical fascination of fakery. Artifice is created through real elements that, even if hidden, form the proof that the artifice is made.

The film industry produces an archaeology of the image. The theme presented repeatedly in di Martino's works echoes the fragility of the image in relation to time and the transient state that affects the existential experience of cinema. In the installation the artist only leaves the backdrop, the wings of the image, the light illuminates the objects on the floor and the visitors to the exhibition. Although the scene is edited, no film runs, no camera captures the image. We are met simply with a constellation of cannonballs transformed into planet-cities that synchronously create a symphony of intertwined eclipses. Like the shadows, the sound interweaves an imaginary space, a cosmos filled with a metaphysical atmosphere in which an echo of their potential trajectories can be heard.

On the one hand, a fictitious light that aims to reconstruct a more real reality, on the other hand, lights that reconstruct an imaginary cosmos. Image and space are set off against each other in a radiant reconstruction. We are dependent on light both in the definition of the image and in the search for parallel worlds. Lights can reflect and highlight a moment of reality, while conversely, they shape a cosmos of illuminated objects.

The cannonball was one of the first objects to be projected into space, and, albeit across a modest distance, it was the starting point for a history of projecting something into the air. In a few decades, the balls became ogive, then became rockets and rose higher and higher until they pierced the last layer of the atmosphere and floated into space. But projection is of course also the projection of image and light. Cinema arrived relatively late, but the first things to be projected with gunpowder were fireworks. Again, the idea of projection serves to construct a mechanism of fictitious reconstruction of reality through projection.

As in her *Allunati* moonscape series, the exhibition shows us how Bernini's words can also be applied to imagining the boundless grandeur of reality. Thanks to art we can create a more infinite projection of reality by identifying with it through pretence.

Lorenzo Benedetti