

The rediscovered image: on the one and the many (in) Maurizio Pellegrin.

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After all, it is not about photography, but about images.

After all, it is not about art, but it is about life and sometimes the impossibility of living.

Maurizio Pellegrin

The origins of the concept of harmony are Pythagorean and are rooted in a vision of the cosmos thought of as a great symphony in which all parts move according to precise laws. In fact, the multiplicity of things is the expression of a profound unity on which the harmonic becoming of reality is founded. Energy, life and movement that runs through everything, is the unity that binds the whole. The Pythagorean idea of a harmonic structure of the cosmos had an enormous influence from antiquity to the astronomical revolution of the 17th century, both in terms of the way nature was understood as a whole governed by harmonic (and therefore mathematical) laws, and in terms of the organisation of the disciplines themselves. The term *harmony* comes from the Greek verb *armozein* (to connect, to link, to agree) and the root is in the Indo-European *ar* (meaning to join, to unite, to arrange) - which is the same as *arithmòs* (number), art and arithmetic (*ars* and *arithmetica*).

As a refined and multifaceted artist, philosopher and poet, Maurizio Pellegrin *connects, arranges, numbers* the prime terms of that flow of energy in constant becoming that he considers to be the ontological foundation of reality. “The basic structure of my work,” the artist has written, “is mainly organised around the concept of the 'fragment'. The chosen fragments are composed and arranged into new hierarchical structures in order to produce new relationships, new energies, different meanings and symbols.” This first reflection, which is perhaps the principle of the artist's research, opens up space for a second observation, perchance no less important. In the history of Western thought, the function of connecting, arranging, and numbering the elements of the harmony of the cosmos is that of a *divine* demiurge, referring to the mythical-religious dimension. With these works, on the other hand, we are faced with the idea that it is the artist who has this power. Instead of a 'divine' demiurge, we find the artist who 'modifies an existing vision,' wrote Pellegrin, 'giving it a different power of relationship.

It is this 'power of a different relationship' that modifies the balances - or imbalances - of the very history of the objects or images that Pellegrin uses in his works. The artist-demiurgeon

somehow renews reality, matter, time itself, as a musician that enjoys changing the order and silences between the notes of a score on which the melody of the cosmos is recorded. Here then, the *rediscovered image* is an image that comes to new life, recomposed at a slower pace, in the silence of a theatre in which we watch the scene rearrange itself. “With the *collages*,” Pellegrin wrote, “I had rediscovered the image, or at least I was trying to rediscover an image that had perhaps been deliberately lost in response to my academic training. These small sheets contain an infinite collection of fragments that already paved the way for my future installations. A sense of intimacy appears, a recording of small tensions before a movement. The collages move slowly, flowing like curtains of a silent theatre.”

In the *collages* made at the end of the 1980s, the artist resumed the practice found in his early drawings with coloured pencils from 1978 and the early 1980s, in which he pasted cigarette papers and other small paper things. In the *photocollages* created between 2006 and 2008, Pellegrin uses a background of old photographs that support the main subject. Here, the reshaping of the harmony of the images, the 'power of different relationships' that the work realises, maintains the complex play of numerological references. Through these references, the artist almost quantifies the energy of the image, while the symbolic power of the colour makes exclusive use of black and white. Pellegrin said that it is a way to create 'a strong contrast, which helps to produce a movement despite the fixity, and testifies to an aspect of my personality'. If in the *collages* of the 1980s the movement was given by the use of colour, in the *photocollages* "the dynamic," Pellegrin underlined, "is regulated by the energy that is quantified and made visible by the numbers in the composition."

In the six paper works *Also, the Elephants travel to Venice* of 2021, created using the cyanotype technique, Pellegrin's research finally marks a turning point in the themes of travel and perception. The harmonies that the artist produces by redefining "new relationships, new energies, different meanings and symbols" can never be definitive, but are rather a slow journey that has an intimate research, also into his own existential and biographical identity, as its nucleus. From this point of view, Venice is not even real, it is a place of memory - or of forgetting - towards which one can travel, but to which one cannot, in fact, arrive. To reach it and remain there would mean interrupting that artistic and existential quest that lives and feeds on the continuous invention of new dispositions of reality. In a delicate and poetic way, the artist seems to suggest that in order to create harmony, one needs restlessness. In order to face the journey, one must renounce the destination. In order to bring the *many* to the *one* and find the *one* in the *many*, one must be 'oneself and many others'.