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The Painting, Truth of Light

The painting "From the imprint of Jesus" born of contact from the Shroud with "Imperceptible" pigments.

Veronica Piraccini

The canvas is a painting to which I gave the title "from the imprint of Jesus". It was created by contact, therefore it is the mirror image of the Shroud, with invisible pigments which I defined "Imperceptible".

A notorious example of mirroring is the painting of the Ancient Virgin Mary in Santa Francesca Romana at the Coliseum; it was made in the sixth century by contact of the painting of the Virgin Mary of Montevergine which came from Constantinople, resulting in one being specular to the other. This method is used for relics, so that the images retain the sacredness and the apotropaic power.

The Holy Shroud, being the impression of Jesus, suggested me to proceed with the same old method, tracing a transparent paper and recording by hand by contact, then turning it over and reproducing it on the canvas, previously prepared. This is how the painting "From The Imprint Of Jesus" is born in my studio in Rome, after the arrival of a 1,13 x 4,37 m life-size photographic reproduction of the Shroud on canvas.

The imperceptible pigment, with which the canvas was painted, is a special substance that I found out in the 80s thanks to the physicist Nadia, my own sister. I immediately understood its wonderful and innovative properties, its extraordinariness as a pigment for painting.

Its very peculiar property is revealing itself with any change in lighting. The paint is visible and invisible, so that from white it becomes color in its many tonalities and shades, to finally revert to invisible.

The canvas of the painting comes from Taranto, it is ancient, made of pure linen, with a herringbone weave and a "Z" twist just like the Shroud, hand-woven on a loom very similar to the one used for the sacred cloth. This is a working process in use in the ancient times, in the places where Jesus lived, passed down in other areas by families specialized in this weaving technique.

I can simply say that the Shroud, which I have been observing for many months studying scientific books and various documents, surprised me and communicated me something that is often neither highlighted nor mentioned: the Holy Shroud of Turin is impressed mostly on one side, and only few drops of blood passed through.

Why this choice of colors?

On just one side of the sacred cloth, the body of Christ left a halo, the side in contact with the body. I painted this imprint using a luminous, golden, warm, carnation color, sometimes bright gold, which is very, very shaded as the cloth transmits, indicating in this way the throb of life in the transformation of rebirth, resurrection.

Still on the same side of the Shroud, you can see the marks of the flagellation, the wounds of the martyrdom and of the falls. I painted these traces in light blue, to differentiate them and indicate the miracle of pure water, which erases the evil, and of the mysterious energy emanating from the Shroud.

On both sides of the cloth, the blood impregnated the warp till the other side. Those traces, caused by the blood spilled from the wounds provoked by the nails piercing the hands and feet, and by the crown of thorns on the head, suggested me the use of the red color of vivid embers and so I painted them.

Always, overwhelmingly, the talent, a gift received from the Lord, gave me the strength and determination to paint incessantly. My first studies were on sheets in sanguine, inspired by the great masters. I was 13 years old.

With the painting the humanity takes strength, people with their problems and their joys.

Paths, Tangles and Punctiforms appear in the paintings: it's the thought that takes shape, the Spirit who enlightens. We are among the things and nature, no longer oriented by the original and ideal projects, active with inconsistent movements in a spiritual light.

Summary of my artistic journey: in chronological order from bottom to top.

The painting gives shape to the artist's idea through the pigment and the binder. I felt the desire to extract from the Murex the purpura, a most ancient pigment, among the most powerful and stable, a symbol of immortality and incorruptibility, as it does not oxidize. I realized canvases painted with this color.

In the 80s, thanks to my sister Nadia, physicist, I came to a new substance that I called "Imperceptible". So a new way of painting was born, that appears and disappears with the black light, resulting in endless shades and nuances.

The History of Art "dates" the Shroud: from the fourth century, when Christians receive freedom of worship, in all depictions of the Savior the resemblance to the Shroud face is always marked. Over the centuries, until today, the Shroud is always the inspiring model for the representation of Christ.

Christ the Teacher, Cubiculum of Leo, Catacomb of Commodilla, Rome, 4th century

From The Imprint Of Jesus, by Veronica Piraccini, detail of the face

Always attracted by the Shroud, on Holy Thursday 2012 I managed to have in my studio the authentic life-size photo of the venerable Linen. Thus four works were born, completed in February 2013.

The first one, a pastel on transparent tracing paper that traces, with the ancient method, what is on the Shroud and reproduces it with the modern method by pastels, with the exception of the burns, doing a resumption by contact. The representation thus obtained faithfully reflects the sanctity of the relic.

The second work originates from the transposition of the pastel on tracing paper, which had been reversed and reported on an ancient hand-woven herringbone linen cloth, with a "Z" twist like the Shroud linen. I painted this work with "Imperceptible" paint, mirror-like to the original, in order to have the body of Christ as it was in reality. In the picture the white cloth placed vertically, but which goes on behind it, is already painted; and here's what happens as the light changes...

Imperceptible in natural light, the pigments appear thanks to a black light: thus suddenly the full size image of the Shroud takes form, made of gorgeous iridescent colors, which can be seen in the following images.

The painting returns clear after a succession of tonal variation of color, influenced by the environmental light and turning off the black light. At the top you can see the transparency.

The choice of colors is significant: on the pale golden hue on the body, which means "the heartbeat of life in the transformation of the resurrection", the large wounds appear in vivid "embers" red, while the scourge wounds are marked in bright blue, to indicate "the miracle of the pure water which takes away the evil and the mysterious energy that the cloth releases".

Never before life and art have been violated by the image of consumption, the disposable use of people and things. The reality itself that we created empties the contents of our actions and human values: Jesus reveals Himself to us more present than ever with the Shroud and my art, through the Holy Cloth, aims to highlight the Incarnate Word of our Lord with current and new methods.

The painting with Invisible pigments is needed today to return to see, because of their powerful reality of appearance and disappearance. They can restore wonder and our eyes, reopening,

converge to the infinity of the revelation of the Incarnate Word. We all get back to see, to believe, moving us deeply into the distracted and confused contemporaneity.

Christ is present and highlighted by the art, as it has always happened over the centuries, but now in a current and new way with the Invisible painting.

Christ reveals Himself alive and risen, unequivocally present in the love of this given, wounded and glorious body, which is always incarnated in the present of salvation: by looking at it, we all get back to reflect on our human condition, we become again present witnesses of His Word "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he dies, yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in me will never die". John 11:25-26

The third work is painted with traditional pigments in oil on contemporary herringbone linen canvas. In the studio you can see the photo of the Shroud on the wall and on the easel a detail of the painting: the frontal image, in the same direction of the Shroud.

The fourth painting is made by the same method of transport of the shapes and painted with "Imperceptible" oil painting. As you can see in the photo, it is revealed by the black light; otherwise you would see only the raw linen.

In the image we have three faces compared: the Shroud, detail of the face, and the two paintings born from the sacred cloth, detail of the face, the third of which is mirror-like.

In the image we have three faces compared: the Shroud, detail of the face, and the two paintings born from the sacred cloth, detail of the face, both in the photographic negative.

In the image we have three faces compared: the Shroud, detail of the face, and the two paintings born from the sacred cloth, detail of the face, in black and white.

I decided to use these "Imperceptible" pigments to create an analogy in a contemporary key with the Holy Shroud, which is precisely the revelation of Christ.

Art helps us to see God!