

LARVAE

the form's appearance

The mask is a simulacrum, yet it gives rise to a phenomenon—one that takes shape within relationship.

A revealing phenomenon, which might be called an apparition.

In my exploration of the mask—and through the mask—I constantly find myself returning to the same question:

What is it that I perceive when a mask, a character, a gesture, or any expressive form appears before me?

I wonder whether, in that moment of encounter, there is—

or is not— that ineffable presence, that absolute, which art by its very nature seeks to evoke.

It is this same question that moves within me whenever I am engaged in creation.

I long for, and search for, something that continually escapes me—

something I can sometimes grasp by the hair if I move with deep honesty, both with the material and with myself.

If I transform compulsion into practice,

if I keep the temple of my research clean.

Like fireflies,

they appear only when the air is pure enough—

and then we see them,

we say, marveling:

“There are fireflies this year!”

As if for the first time.

As if they might never return.

But that doesn’t matter.

What matters is:

they are here, now.

And I have done everything I could to be able to see them again.

This has been true, at least, for the last twenty-five years.

I often find myself suspended in that mysterious space between being and not being.

And I cannot deny that when an apparition occurs, it shakes me—

with a healthy, vital tremor.

That delicate threshold—between presence and absence—

stirs the same thrill as a child’s game,

as when we suddenly reveal our face and cry out,

“Peekaboo!”

It is the spark of emergence—

the moment where nothing becomes everything,

only to dissolve once more into nothing.

A necessary dialogue:
upon which the vastness of being and the fragility of existence are both founded.

These reflections open the door to mystery—
a path of inquiry that constantly draws me toward the void.
And yet, to approach it, I must grapple with fullness—
I interrogate matter, form, and presence.
I turn to what *is*
in order to glimpse what *is not*.

Larvae are creatures that dwell in this passage—
between being and not-being.
They live in an embryonic state,
innocent, at the beginning of everything.

The masks that allow us to populate a world inhabited by Larvae
are simple, elemental, primordial forms.
They define only what is strictly necessary—
so that the vastness of potential may arise.
They are born of the most basic encounters—
between volume, plane, line, color, and texture.

The closer a larva's form remains to its first glimmer of appearance,
the more fully it reveals the immensity of what *could be*.
These primary masks carry within them
both the guiding shape of what may come
and an infinite range of possibilities.

In the search for these elemental forms,
I try to move with sensitivity, curiosity, and knowledge—
always balancing the fear of doing too much
against the fear of doing too little.
I navigate between the risks of determinism
and those of surrendering to pure chance—
to the chaotic unreadability of overlapping manifestations.

Among the questions that guide me constantly, especially in the search for larval forms, are:
What happens if I define too much?
And what if I get lost in the annihilating vortex of the undefined?

I stay on guard,
wary of relying too heavily on geometry—
which may offer comforting formality,
and is often mistaken for purity, simplicity, or convenient symbolism.
Still, I do not discard its teachings—
geometry may hold valuable traces.

I try not to obsess over defining a face, a character, a recognizable form—
at least, not too quickly,
and not by letting that need dictate the work.

I ask myself again and again:
What happens when we focus only on shaping an idea?
And what when we rely entirely on randomness?

The questions multiply,
and they sit beside me,
gazing with me at these forms,
these creatures of a primitive, dramatically elemental world—
resonating with the boundless imagination of children,
with the disarming presence of the pure,
with the silence of plants,
with the nonjudgment of animals.

Why do we tend to think that all that is naïve is also charming?
Do all states of innocence inspire sympathy?
Why do we assume that primary, primordial forms—those just barely emerged—are without
drama?

When the purity of someone's physical presence is so complete
that it seems to erase all drama—
as in a newborn,
a saint,
or an actor in the state of the neutral mask—
does our search for drama shift elsewhere?
Perhaps toward a universal presence—
toward the existential dynamics that bind us all?
Or perhaps the drama migrates from the physical to the metaphysical.

So many are the questions.
Many remain unanswered,
continuing to point the way forward.
Others transform—
opening new realms to explore.
Still others dissolve,
leaving behind the one space that gives meaning to all this seeking:
the poetic space.

Matteo Destro – September 2021