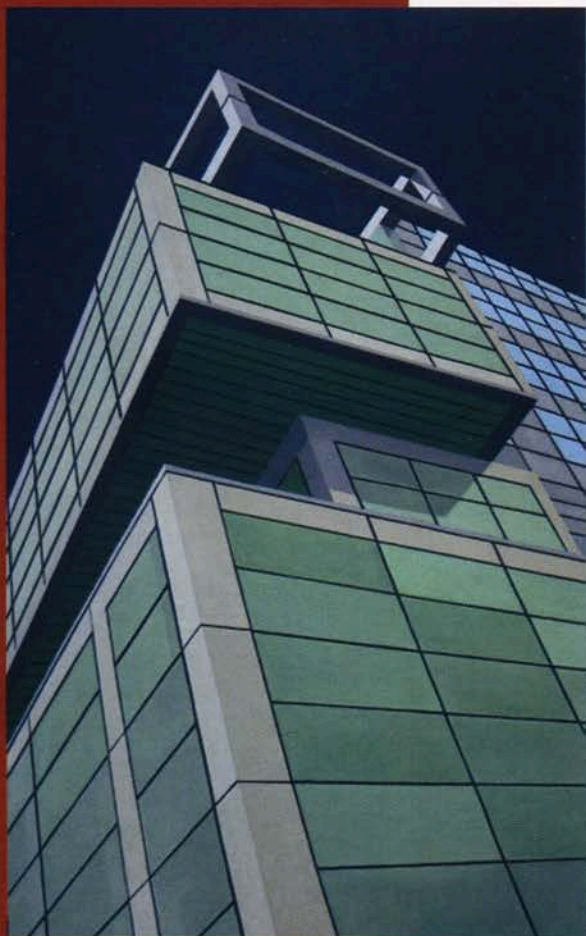


Marco Petrus'

«PICTORIAL ARCHITECTURE»

AN EXHIBIT IN TRIESTE SHOWCASES THE LATEST WORKS BY AN ABSOLUTE STAR OF THE CONTEMPORARY ART SCENE

by A. D. V.



He began in the 1980s depicting a desolate and nocturnal Milan, a little like Mario Sironi, and a little like Giorgio De Chirico. He continued, with his ever more stylized paintings, to immortalize a series of cities in Europe and across the world -from London to New York, from Moscow to Shanghai. Now Trieste becomes his muse at an important exhibition at the Ex Pescheria, running from October 25 to November 29. His name is Marcus Petrus. He was born in Rimini in 1960. He's got Russian roots and a painter as a father. Petrus' urban architectures -his deconstructed and simplified buildings that take pictorial form- have always had a very personal and clear tone. This is even truer today than in his earlier years. We met him on the eve of the exhibition in his studio, located in Milan's Isola area. Petrus is the quintessential artist -a man of few words enveloped in his own world that's in perennial movement; a fluid, moving gaze; his hands incessantly adjusting the small models of works that will soon be showcased. Sitting up against the wall, his new works are ready to be shipped to Trieste. Words that best describe them: incisive, refined, severe, delicate, essential, full of pathos and poetics.

Why did you choose Trieste for your new exhibit?

At times, projects are born casually. In this case, I had been going quite a bit to visit a friend from Trieste, who lives in Lubiana. One day, as I was passing through, I stopped in Trieste, and I began wandering the streets and «taking notes» with my camera. This was four years ago. Right from the start, I knew there was something about the city's architecture that intrigued me. In fact, I quickly found a building that really struck me. It was the Mercato Coperto (in English, the «Covered Market»), which I painted and exhibited in another show of mine in Como in 2007. It was from that moment that I decided to dedicate an entire series of works to Trieste. I started telling people about it, just to see if there was any interest... At the beginning, I was a bit scared because it was a city that I really didn't know well; but instead this helped to stimulate me, in addition to Trieste's unique geographical location and the particular historical moment and context.

What's your work method?

We have to take a few steps back in time to when I used to wander around Milan and take long walks studying itineraries and architecture, observing and taking photographs. Initially, I studied buildings that were immersed in a spe-

Above, «Ljubjana,» (2008), oil on canvas, 160 x 100
On the right page, «Praha 3,» (2009), oil on canvas, 180 x 140

cific urban context. After that, I used this same work method even when traveling. It took me more and more behind the lens of a camera in search of something that inspired me. For the type of painting I do, I need a certain kind of architecture. What attracts me the most is monumental architecture that has strong features and notable volumetric relationships.

Your critics and those that review your work, define you as a painter-architect, and even an architect-painter.

One of the definitions I like most was offered by Elena Pontiggia: painter-builder.

Observing your artworks it's clear that you work to make sure that your pictorial lines are not too rigorous or straight, and that a few artistic «imperfections» are allowed, and even welcomed.

I'm not an architect and it's precisely for this reason that I don't want to give the impression of a drawing that's too technical. Let's say that I draw free hand, or almost free hand.

What are the passages you take from the initial photo to the finalized work of art?

First I choose the photos, and at this moment, after many years, I'm rather well trained because often the photo already has a very precise tone. After this, I project the image in large format so I can have a kind of skeleton to work from. And then I start painting. I'm very careful about not making it too detailed, because details are not my expertise. The final phase is color, which takes up a lot of my time. I can't say how much time it takes because I often paint several works contemporarily.

Your first individual exhibition was in 1991. In a few years you'll be celebrating 20...

In fact, it doesn't seem real to me that 20 years have passed. Let's say that in order to stay the course, what's needed is a good dose of persistence, but also lots of luck. The most important things are the people you meet and the situations in which you find yourself. I had the possibility of meet-

ing people that I got along perfectly with; people I was able to start working with.

In the beginning, you became famous thanks to a series of works dedicated to urban architecture in Milan.

I started when I was 25 years old. I used to wander around Milan in search of ideas; then I would return to the same places and have a second look, take photographs and look for additional inspiration. My first works, which were from that period, are much more nocturnal because back then I was much more «nocturnal» myself.



How does Milan look to you at the moment: a city in ferment, full of cranes and construction in view of Expo 2015?

It reminds me of Shanghai a couple of years ago.

You started as an etcher and art printer. Do you still have a press?

Of course, even if it's been six years since I have engraved something. It's funny, in these last few days I've been thinking about using the press again... It's only that etching is very hard work and it takes time, it's not like you wake up in the morning and say, «Now I'm going to make an aquaforte». But I keep the press close by because you never know ...

You were born in Rimini but you have

Russian origins, and your ancestry influences your work.

My father's ancestors left from Tolmezzo, in the immigrant flux of the mid-1800s. They were headed for Siberia, in search of the marble caves where they could work. In fact, my relatives on my father's side were all born in Kiev. Then, in 1938, they returned to Italy and moved to Udine. My mother from Rimini met my father when he was studying in Venice at the Accademia.

Did always know that you were going to paint for the rest of your life?

No, I never would've guessed it, really. I was enrolled at the faculty of Architecture, and in the meantime, I had done thousands of jobs: photographer, graphic artist, apprentice in an art printer's shop... Then, when I attended the first year of architecture, my father died. I had to do all I could to make ends meet, and following my father's example, who was a painter, I thought about opening up my own art printing studio. In reality, the studio never took off, but it did create a very special environment: my artist friends would often pass by, painters would come to engrave and print, a nice ambient was born... I not only worked there, but I would also do whatever job came around. It took me some years to move from engraving and really start focusing on painting, but look at me now...

MARCO PETRUS, TRIESTE IN THE CENTRE EXHIBITION
Centre of Modern and Contemporary Art

Salone degli Incanti, Ex Pescheria
Riva Nazario Sauro 1, Trieste

From October 25 to November 29, 2009

From Monday to Friday, 10 am to 7 pm

Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am to 8 pm

Free entrance

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