

"Ritratto di giovane uomo" (Portrait of a young man) seeks a link between an Ecce Homo representation attributed to the Spanish painter José de Ribera and the depressions, wounds and minerals which interrupt the continuity of a smooth sheet of onyx.

The naturalistic drawing is not forced, rather adopted as a guiding principle for the replica of an ancient image through various attempts. These end only once precise calls emerge from the abstraction of stone and a realistic model – in this case the nose, cheeks and left breast of the figure.

The model isn't passively embraced: the attributes of the original image (crown of thorns, wounds and cane) which would allow us to identify with certainty the iconography of the character have long gone.

Light on symbols and heavy on materials, the figure which gazes at us appears to be that of a man – the eponymous young man of the painting's title, redolent of the generic titles given to ancient portraits depicting unknown sitters.

In "Lucrezia romana" (Roman Lucretia), the stone on which the woman's profile has been depicted is not merely a surface, but the result of a patient splicing of geodes extracted from blocks of onyx. These are set as inlays in strategic points of the image, simulating seemingly corrosive tears, which slip from the eyes towards the sternum, growing larger into a big groove which recalls the mortal wound inflicted by a dagger.

The model for the painting is a celebrated work by Parmigianino, chiselled with care, almost as if it were an engraved cameo which, in this version, celebrates the mineral vocation of the Mannerist painting through the raw material on which the image is modelled. It encapsulates crevices which shine with crystals, such as the one in the ear, echoing the painted pearls which enrich the sophisticated hairstyle.

"Musa mancina" is an oil painting on onyx which, like "Lucrezia romana", takes inspiration from an ideal portrait of the Roman noblewoman by Michele di Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio. Each bright timbre of paint present in the Mannerist model has been depleted, stifled by heavy and repeated black ivory glazes which have progressively blinded the painting. Once blackened, the painting has been sanded delicately, reviving the material highlights and transforming it into something which – at first glance – appears as a 16th century painting heightened with white lead. Lying in opposition to the imperceptible white reliefs is the cavity of the eye, which, like a small geode, falls into the depths and crosses the solid support of the mineral.

"La negazione di Marte" (The negations of Mars) is an oil and sulfur on copper work which depicts a bunch of dried buttercups. They have been consolidated with ABS, a substance which has transformed the plants' fibres into something similar to crystal – the same material of the vase which holds the flowers.

Once the pigment with which the petals were moulded (oil mixed with tempera) had dried, the painting was placed horizontally, and the surface of each flower chipped away with a scalpel, crushing the colour into particles which then fell onto the painting haphazardly, generating small constellations close to each flower.