

ANGELUS MILITANS

by Carlotta Testori

*Mortals call him fluttering love [Eros],
but the immortals call him winged one,
because the growing of wings is a necessity to him.*

Plato, *Phaedrus*

Carlotta Testori is pleased to announce the opening of Carlotta Testori Studio located in the sixteenth century Palazzo Brivio, at Via Olmetto 17, Milan. The Studio is to be a place for artistic projects, observations, exchanges and hosting art in its myriad forms.

It is with this spirit that the Studio proudly presents its first project: the *Angelus Militans* trilogy. Each of the three phases, or chapter, *Nunc Instantis*, *Nunc Fluens*, *Nunc Aeternus*, interprets the appearance of the *Angelus Militans* through a different artistic medium.

The *Angelus Militans*, with its reference to the title of Paul Klee's drawing, is an angel without either a specific time or place; it is an angel with childish features because, like a child it knows how to view the world and discover its hidden secrets; and, like a child it is about to develop into something else. With his incessant motion he embodies the constant tension of his other self. The Militant Angel becomes a symbol and archetype of paradox, of the coexistence and battle of opposites, of mediumism, of being a bridge between two dimensions - between God and Man, Light and Darkness, omnipotence and impotence, being and not being (yet). He is an Angel who appears to communicate the invisible. He is a Militant Angel, like Cupid, looking for his bow and a target to inflict a deep and lasting wound.

The Angel is the symbol of love that the gods granted to mortal souls. He is a Platonic metaphor of the human soul which, only by loving can spread its wings and fly up to the habitation of the gods. Plato, in fact, tells us that "The wing is the corporeal element which is most akin to the divine [...] The divine is beauty, wisdom, goodness, and the like; and by these the wing of the soul is nourished, and grows apace; but when fed upon evil and foulness and the opposite of good, wastes and falls away"¹. And if this angel is *daemon* for Plato, something midway between divine and mortal, his power is that of "interpreting between gods and men, conveying and taking across to the gods the prayers and sacrifices of men, and to men the commands and replies of the gods"², Rilke reveals the *terrifying* aspect: his beauty disarms us and leaves us defenceless.. And, now we see the Angel with all his power, Eros who, with his sweet cruelty and his arrow, can deliver a single blow in an instant and leave his mark forever.

The trilogy program consists of the three *Nunc* of *Angelus Militans* to be presented at three different times.

The first part of the trilogy, *Nunc Instantis*, is the exhibition by Julia Krahn that will open on 22 February. *Nunc Instantis* is the instant that the angel appears to us and himself, when he finds himself in the dimension of appearance.

¹ Plato, *Phaedrus* 246

² Plato, *Symposium*, 202 e.

The second part concerns *Nunc Fluens*, that is when this Angel/Eros begins to move, when Eros shoots his arrow. The arrow strikes ...it is a flow: dance and music. The second part of the trilogy is a dance performance that will be held in the courtyard of the palazzo in the spring.

And finally, *Nunc Aeternus*: Eros has struck and his arrows leave lasting wounds. The instant that leads us back to literature, to the word like an echo that will resound forever, becomes just as eternal. At the end of June, for *Nunc Aeternus*, the great actor, Sandro Lombardi will present a reading on the theme of love from his book *Le mani sull'amore*³.

It is in the trilogy that these different *Nunc* of the *Angelus Militans* will reveal themselves as beyond time itself, as moments that coincide with eternity. A point of no return.

***Nunc Instantis* | Julia Krahn**

The first part, *Nunc Instantis*, is the exhibition by German photographer Julia Krahn. Her subject is her own body in pictures taken using a cable release; these are apparitions, visions, instants that capture the moment – the experience – while it is occurring on film. There is both composition and freedom in her pictures: composition as the desire for an experience and freedom as the spontaneity of living it. Her gaze seeks, calls and questions with the lightness of an angel and the restlessness of Cupid. The artist shows us the experience in the exact moment it occurs, we see the angel when he appears to the world and to himself with all the surprise of the moment.

Julia Krahn's angels are beings in motion, they are disturbed and sometimes frightened, they are bearers or perhaps seekers of a message. These angels look at us, call to us and then withdraw, hiding under their wings as if they want to hold onto the message.

The apparition coincides with the icon of the angel, *Nunc Instantis* as the instant of the angel's apparition, as poiesis, unveiling the truth. The artist's action, showing the cable release that allows her to shoot from a distance, emphasizes the revelation of the truth, in the case of the angel it is the message that the apparition brings. The photograph here is a symbol of the fleetingness of the moment and therefore of the angel suspended in his being-instant. The creative process is revealed highlighted through a dual reference between the *Nunc Instantis* of the angel's appearance and the *Nunc Instantis* of the photographic shot. The angel and the photographer find themselves sharing part of their destiny, and in Julia Krahn's work they "meet" for a brief moment during the experience, as a moment of the action within the action. According to Giorgio Agamben, we can say that having reached the end of its esthetical itinerary, art removes the difference between what to convey and the act of conveying and returns to drawing closer to the mythical-traditional system, in which the two terms were identical⁴.

So, at this point we must reflect on the concept of the apparition, how it can be seized and materialized through art in which the material does nothing more than confirm its metaphysical nature. Again, according to Agamben, rather than releasing the subject from its authenticity, the fact that it is technically reproducible pushes it to the extreme: it is the moment in which, through the multiplication of the original, authenticity becomes the symbol of the elusive⁵.

³ (Feltrinelli Editore, Milan, 2009)

⁴ Giorgio Agamben *L'uomo senza contenuto*, Quodlibet, 1994, p. 171 [Eng. Trans. *The Man Without Content*].

⁵ Ibid., p.159.