

Still Life as a Lifestyle

I have never given minor importance to inanimate objects. I have never considered them less useful or, as often happens, mere background details. On the contrary, I believe that "details" actually dominate the scene and define the aesthetic codes which create opportunities for people to unite and cooperate. This is a personal point of view but also fruit of an indomitable unconscious instinct which in some ways links my ideas to the imaginary of Allison Katz, where I find traces of these convictions.

With its attention to detail, its approach to decoration and use of symbols, this textile product has an affinity with English industry, that of the XVIII century pioneers who contributed to leaving a mark on the history of applied arts. It is owing to this selfsame sensitivity, the same touch, that a flower seen in Kew Gardens and described in a novel by Virginia Woolf has ended up then by being woven into jacquard fabric by Morris, or painted on Wedgwood porcelain or machine embroidered in Italy onto a knit garment created by Katz (a Canadian living in London.) Back and forth in time the flower shrinks and blooms with each new task of identification.

It was Allison herself who provided me with a fragment of this atmosphere the last time we met in a cafe in the centre of Milan. She casually mentioned a trip taken to East Sussex to visit Charleston House. A dwelling set deep in the countryside in which an early twentieth century intellectual élite – known as the Bloomsbury Group – used to meet and socialize, far from puritan principles. The atmosphere of Charleston house influenced the lives and everyday existence of those people who, when they were there, left their role as individuals behind them to connect synergically with the context. The furnishings and objects had now become almost indistinguishable and the fertile wilderness of the bucolic landscape surrounding the house seemed to penetrate deep down into the sofa upholstery fabrics in some way.

Neither in that place nor in her story were the details left to chance: no further confirmation was necessary to verify whether she or I believed that the plot of a story could be intertwined with the weave of a fabric.