

FRANCESCO VILICICH
THE WELL



FOREWORD

DR. STEFANO CARBONI, DIRECTOR, ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA



When I wrote a short introduction to Francesco Villicich's new body of work just about a year ago, I emphasized the concept that he is not your average artist, based mostly on his uncompromising attitude, passion, commitment and underlying literary and musical romanticism.

I am happy to say – after viewing his new series of paintings centred around the concept of wells (or perhaps eddying black holes, or perhaps vaginal abysses?) oozing in a miasmic, primordial atmosphere – that still nothing is ordinary in Francesco's practice and that, more than ever, the viewer is asked to be actively and vertiginously drawn into the picture in order to tune into it.

The importance of physicality and gesture seems to be the highlight of this year's body of work. Reminiscent of Lucio Fontana's Spatialism (artist whose Italian background Francesco and I share) and his active intervention on the canvas with deep cuts, Francesco's "wells" provide an equivalent painted window into an unknown, womb-like world beyond. I was also thrilled to gain a better understanding of the physical process through which Francesco has created texture and layers on his canvases: the re-birth of pigments after their temporary permanence in the limbo of a "sacred" urn, as well as the new life given to the cotton threads of his over-used rags.

Although I have not witnessed the birth of any of these new paintings, I can easily picture Francesco in front of a canvas already pulsating with a coat of vibrant colour, onto which he explodes the condensed life of former paintings represented by the pigments in the urn. It is a miniature-size big bang that impresses life and provides the nucleus through which the painting will inevitably expand and take shape. I am positive that, as small a big bang as it might be, it resonates very loudly in his ears every time he does it.

COVER

Well 26 – Sally

2013

oil, thread and recuperated pigment on linen

198 x 198 cm

LINTON & KAY GALLERIES
PERTH CITY

present

THE WELL

an exhibition of works by
FRANCESCO VILLICICH

25 JULY – 8 AUGUST 2013

“MY INDIVIDUATION PROCESS HAS LED ME TO
THE VISUALISATION OF THE UNCONSCIOUS AS A WATER WELL,
WHERE PRIMORDIAL IMAGES AND SYMBOLS EMERGE FROM
AND DROWN IN OUR DEEPEST EMOTIONS.”

FRANCESCO VILLICICH

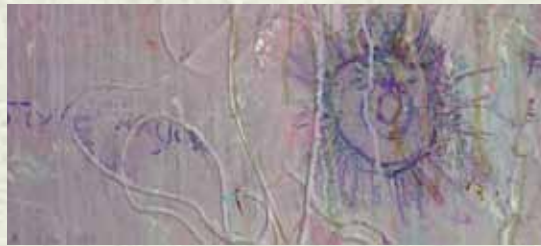
ART AND THE UNCONSCIOUS – SYMBOLY AND ETERNAL LANGUAGE

BY ALESSANDRA D'ARBE, CURATOR, 2013

Through the metaphorical vision of a well, the artist offers a visual language with which to contemplate the boundless powers of the human psyche and art's capability to unearth dormant passions which are innate and eternal. The concept of a collective place within us, which conceals the accumulation of innermost thoughts, memories and emotions, is expressed through the individuation of archetypes. In Villicich's vision, symbolic circular forms reside in an intimate antenatal liquid substance, proposing the idea of a secret-sacred compartment which springs from the depths of our unconscious mind.

Some of Villicich's expressionistic images can appear to be very personal representations of water lilies, however one perceives that there is more at play which goes beyond a purely aesthetic experience. Concentric circular forms are found in the symbology of many ancient cultures and recall a number of natural elements, which can range from a simple ripple effect in water to our complex solar system. They evoke the sensation of constant motion throughout the image, like a living entity in evolution.

In the latest paintings of this series circular shapes begin to take secondary focus to an increasingly large and interestingly ambiguous archetype, which could recall a flower, a flame or a dissected stone fruit. It evokes a duality of emotions which is beautifully portrayed in Rainer Maria Rilke's poetic words "...one moment your life is a stone in you, and the next, a star." Its epicentre's resemblance to the female anatomy recalls the act of creation, which unearths in the human psyche the mysteries of our primordial beginnings. At the same time the artist begins to insert threads which seem to autonomously branch out across the picture plane like delicate filaments eventually mapping out the seismic energy of a collective spiritual journey.



A particularly significant matter employed in these works, which is the perfect painterly incarnation of the residues from a ritual experience, is leftover pigments. The last particles of paint left on the brush, which do not quite make it onto the canvas, are carefully cleaned off and stored in an urn, then utilised in charging the next work with an initial coat as if to bless the new creation. Villicich's indiscriminating love for objects and materials, therefore, plays an important part in the realisation of his surfaces with the incorporation of his treasured recuperated pigments, which are very much like the ashes of oil paint resurrected and ennobled by their destined symbolic significance in these works of art. In *Well 26 – Sally* the use of these pigments increases, creating thick encrusted clumps which convey the concept of the sediments of lives lived, both real and imagined. The threads, which have also been meticulously saved from piles of old torn rags, embed a special significance in the artist's message. It is a reminder of how every gesture and treatment towards the most seemingly insignificant matter can psychically charge the meaning behind the creation of an art work.

Through the intuitive impulse of gestural destruction and reconstruction of the image, the artist's vision serves to unleash an array of emotions which range from tragedy to ecstasy. In an age where multi-media and technology seem to hold prominence, Villicich's art not only continues to express concepts through the lyrical medium of painting, but also, shamelessly, focuses on temperament rather than irony, cynicism or rational thought.



Well 2 – Assassin's Creed 3

2013

oil on linen

198 x 152 cm



Well 15 – Stefanescu

2013

oil on linen

167 x 213 cm



Well 1

2013

oil and thread on linen

152 x 198 cm



Well 4

2013

oil on linen

102 x 152 cm



Well 24

2013

oil on linen

120 x 180 cm



1925
K. S. MURPHY
POLY





Well 13 – Slug

2013

oil on linen

152 x 112 cm



Well 14

2013

oil on linen

152 x 122 cm



Well 19

2013

oil and thread on linen

122 x 152 cm



Well 29

2012

ink on paper

55 x 75 cm



Well 31

2012

oil and mixed media on paper

75 x 55 cm

THE WELL – LIST OF WORKS

Well 1, 2013
oil and thread on linen, 152 x 198 cm

Well 2 - Assassin's Creed 3, 2013
oil on linen, 198 x 152 cm

Well 3, 2012
oil on linen, 152 x 198 cm

Well 4, 2013
oil on linen, 102 x 152 cm

Well 5, 2013
oil on linen, 102 x 152 cm

Well 6, 2012
oil on linen, 92 x 122 cm

Well 7 - Ziggy, 2013
oil on linen, 102 x 92 cm

Well 8, 2012
oil on linen, 122 x 92 cm

Well 9, 2013
oil on linen, 92 x 122 cm

Well 10, 2013
oil on linen, 92 x 122 cm

Well 11 - Fifth Season, 2013
oil on linen, 200 x 300 cm

Well 12, 2013
oil on linen, 167 x 213 cm

Well 13 - Slug, 2013
oil on linen, 152 x 112 cm

Well 14, 2013
oil on linen, 152 x 122 cm

Well 15 - Stefanescu, 2013
oil on linen, 167 x 213 cm

Well 16 - Grasshopper, 2013
oil on linen, 152 x 122 cm

Well 17, 2012
oil on linen, 92 x 203 cm

Well 18, 2012
oil on linen, 112 x 84 cm

Well 19, 2013
oil and thread on linen, 122 x 152 cm

Well 20, 2013
oil on linen, 122 x 92 cm

Well 21, 2013
oil on linen, 92 x 122 cm

Well 22 - Frog, 2012
oil on linen, 92 x 137 cm

Well 23 - Brimo, 2013
oil, canvas, thread and recuperated pigment on linen, 122 x 152 cm

Well 24, 2013
oil on linen, 120 x 180 cm

Well 25- Igor, 2012
oil on linen, 84 x 102 cm

Well 26- Sally, 2013
oil, thread and recuperated pigment on linen, 198 x 198 cm

Well 27, 2013 ,
oil on paper, 55x 75 cm

Well 28, 2012
oil on paper, 55 x 75cm

Well 29, 2012
ink on paper, 55 x 75 cm

Well 30, 2012,
oil on paper, 75 x 55 cm

Well 31, 2012
oil and mixed media on paper, 75 x 55 cm

Well 32, 2012,
oil on paper, 55 x 75 cm

Well 33, 2012
oil on paper, 55 x 75 cm

Well 34- Cullen, 2012
oil on paper, 55 x 75 cm

Well 35, 2012
oil on paper, 55 x 75 cm

All measurements height x width

BIOGRAPHY – FRANCESCO VILLICICH



The artist pictured in his studio, in front of *Well 23 – Brimo*, 2013

Artistic inclinations emerged in Villicich from a young age. Born in Parma, Italy, in 1965, Villicich studied music, dance and visual arts, receiving professional training in classical ballet from the age of twelve under the direction of the great dancers Liliana Cosi and Marinel Stefanescu as well as completing a diploma as 'Maestro d'Arte' in Fine Arts at the Istituto d'Arte 'Gaetano Chierici' in Reggio Emilia.

After finishing his education, Villicich embarked on a career in ballet becoming a principal dancer and, from the age of thirty, an international freelance guest principal artist, performing in many places around the world including England, Germany, Portugal, France, Spain, Japan and Italy. Despite this intense lifestyle, Villicich always found time to express himself through the visual arts. In 1997, at the height of his dance career, Villicich was invited to exhibit his paintings in his first solo exhibition in Windsor, England. Following this, he held various solo and group exhibitions in Italy, gaining recognition from both public and critics.

In 2003, Villicich decided to leave his dance career and the ballet world to dedicate his artistry entirely to painting. He, therefore, made the choice to isolate himself in a chalet in the mountains of northern Italy to begin an intense period of research to find his personal 'poetics' and connection with nature. Following this period of two years, Villicich then moved to Perth in 2006 with his fiancée who joined the West Australian Ballet as a dancer. Villicich held his inaugural exhibition in Australia in 2008, at the Moores Building in Fremantle entitled *Paesaggi*, which was opened by the Minister for Culture and the Arts, The Hon. Sheila McHale, who also wrote the foreword for the forty page catalogue published in conjunction with this exhibition. Villicich then went on to hold several solo and group exhibitions in Perth and interstate.

Both Villicich's art and career have been featured in various important newspapers and magazines including *The Times* (London), *Corriere della Sera* (Milan) as well as *The West Australian* and the *Sunday Times* in Perth. His paintings are part of collections around the world including Italy, France, England, Germany, Canada, United States, South Africa, China, Japan and Australia.

Villicich is represented by Linton and Kay Galleries in his city of residence, Perth.



CENTRE PAGES

Well 11 – Fifth Season

2013

oil on linen

200 x 300 cm

Dancers Jayne Smeulders and David Mack performing in Smeulders' choreography *Fifth Season*, inspired by Villicich's concept and painting of the same title. The ballet premiered in the West Australian Ballet season *Genesis*, in April 2013. (Photograph: Sergey Pevnev)

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Other Authors/Contributors: Carboni, Stefano. Linton & Kay Galleries .

Contacts:

LINTON & KAY GALLERIES
PERTH CITY

The Old Perth Technical School, Level 1 / 137 St. Georges Terrace,
Perth, Western Australia, (08) 6465 4314
perth@lintonandkay.com.au, www.lintonandkay.com.au

Francesco Villicich: www.francesco-villicich.com

