

## FROM THE SHADES TO THE SHADOWS

(Omar Galliani and Lorenzo Puglisi)

As attested by the argument **ut pictura poesis** painting as a medium of representation has always been possessed of poetic ‘shades’, and any number of elusive pictorial ghosts.<sup>1</sup> These spectres are analogous to the archaic mytho-poetic shades (called “ombra”), those lost and wandering souls or spirits known to us from literature like Homer’s *Odyssey*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and the ‘Purgatorio’ of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*.<sup>2</sup> As operative symbolic (connotative) and indexical (denotative) entities, these shadows embody and disembody as they point towards the material/immaterial paradox attached to the actual substance (material/subject) of a painting. For what is painting if it is not a set of material-based practices used to manifest speculative immaterial visions that always remain somehow in advance of the intentions of their maker. Painting therefore, as with poetry, remains ineluctably in a puzzling state of aporia, and is necessarily bounded by opaque conditions of unresolved becoming. There is similarly a spectral myth that those who have no soul are unable to cast a shadow, for they exist in the world of the undying and lack even the entelechy of becoming.<sup>3</sup> The relevance of such obtuse if general spiritual observations take on a particular meaning in the context of the recent and current site-related two installation(s) of paintings by the Italian artists Omar Galliani and Lorenzo Puglisi. The exhibition project called *Omar Galliani – Lorenzo Puglisi: Caravaggio La verità nel buio*—literally expressed as truth in the dark—deals specifically with the spectral and apparitional aspects of painting and shadows. The Baroque proto-realist painter Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1592-1610), and the later titled Caravagesques, who stylistically followed him, were called tenebrists or ‘shadowists’ (“tenebrosi”), and Caravaggio is considered the first great master of painted shadows in the modern age.<sup>4</sup> However, initially most art historical research on the this master concerned emergent lighting cast on the material forms within the shadowed Caravaggio’s paintings, more recently the focus had been on the mystery of

the darkness itself.<sup>5</sup> And it is ‘shades’ or shadows, through presence and absence that the installations of paintings in Palermo and Naples are intended to address.

An argumentative dichotomy as to the role or status of shadow and light has existed from the beginning of Western ideas on painting and creative representation.<sup>6</sup> Plato in his famous “Cave’ narrative spoke of false illusions through reflection in order to establish the substantive reality and solar focus on the history of light, shadows that are the consequence of cast light.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Pliny’s *Natural History* (xxxv, 15) quoted ancient sources and stated that representation began when man first traced the outline of his shadow, thereby beginning an alternative history of sorts based on the inspiration seen as shadows and darkness.<sup>8</sup> Since light and darkness constitute the diurnal-nocturnal round of our daily existence, it leaves open for the painter many pictorial questions of their relationship and mutuality in figurative painting as to where the dominant creative emphases should be placed—that is visible light or opaque darkness through the means of painting *chiaroscuro*? The evaluation or question is, perhaps, both metaphorical and metaphysical, phenomenological and spiritual, immanent and transcendent either as expressive presence and/or illusive absence. The painter Caravaggio is championed as the first great artist of *chiaroscuro* realism expressed within painting using primarily religious subject matter, his paintings are axiomatic of these questions of light and darkness. Yet in the fragmented post-analogue photograph (photography was once called “shadowgraphy”), post-celluloid and contemporary digital world of the artists Omar Galliani and Lorenzo Puglisi, they have sought to develop a new and meaningful relationship with “shades’ and shadows in the paintings and drawings exhibited in Palermo and Naples.<sup>9</sup> Both cities have an intimate historical relationship with Caravaggio. In Palermo the installation in the *Capella dell’Incoronazione* is in near proximity to the *Oratorio di San Lorenzo* that once housed the original and famous high altarpiece *Natività con i santi Lorenzo e Francesco d’Assisi* (Nativity

with Saints Lawrence and Francis of Assisi, 1609), The painting was sadly stolen in 1969, and the Oratorio has today only a substituted copy of the famed masterpiece.<sup>10</sup> In Naples the paintings and related drawings (new works currently being executed) of Galliani and Puglisi are to be installed at the Pio Monte della Misericordia, where Caravaggio's *Sette Opere della Misericordia* (Seven Works of Mercy, 1606-7), an extraordinary theatrical masterpiece of integrated religious drama is located above the high altar.<sup>11</sup> This large painting was executed while in exile from Rome (from 1606), on his first visit to Naples, prior to the periods in Malta, Sicily, the second Naples period, and subsequent death on route back to Rome in 1610.<sup>12</sup> In Caravaggio light and darkness play a dramatic and pictorially expressive role in our understanding of his paintings. Hence much has been written on the use of shadow and darkness in paintings by this Lombardy-born artist, as to whether he used a early primitive form of *camera obscura* to create his realistic direct image to canvas approach without the use of study drawings, and similarly there have been considerable extended debates over the use of exterior-sourced and directed light effects within his paintings.<sup>13</sup> Yet it remains open as to whether the artist privileged the status of light a priori over his use of shadow and darkness. Omar Galliani and Lorenzo Puglisi do not attempt to explicitly advance either argument under the juxtaposed tutelage of the late sixteenth early seventeenth master. Rather the two artists undertake in different ways to test the manipulative parameters of light and darkness, darkness and light, through facture and expression drawing upon their own personal experiences in the process. The two artists use of "shades" or shadows ergo serve as investigative counterpoint to the complex and allusive contents of Caravaggio's unique and period innovative realist art.

If Puglisi's paintings in the installed exhibitions are about the ghosts ("shades") of painting with immediate pictorial and iconographic relations to Caravaggio, those of Galliani are far more associative as shadows with layered allusions rather than explicitly connected

referents.<sup>14</sup> Another aspect and distinction is that Galliani works in the medium of graphite through pencil drawing, and in his large works primarily with poplar panel (“retable”) supports, since he rarely paints on canvas. In terms of the artist’s technique the emergent shadows are created through a delicate surface gradation as graphite marks that appear almost photographic at times. Yet when seen close up his images are clearly anything but photographic, except, perhaps, for the imbued sense of their shared *sfumare* (“smokiness”) within which the allusive optical and misty shadows sensitively emerge.<sup>15</sup> This use of a chiaroscuro characteristic has an obvious shared affinity with Caravaggio and the Baroque Caravagesque seventeenth century masters who used it actively as a compositional device and artistic strategy. Yet in distinction and in terms of his chosen iconography Galliani pursues an allusive form of connotative parallelism, that is to say his historical references or cultural sources are never made literal as such, but loosely associative (equivocal at times) but nonetheless paradoxically evocative and intuitively relatable. And since to connote is to infer, suggest, or imply, there is a sense of affective association that directs the imagination beyond the mere formal realisation of what is depicted. In the artist’s pencil on wood drawings what is visualised is always intentionally made in the first instance pictorially familiar. That which is pictorially present (the denoted signified) is openly expressed in terms of a signifier that is either symbolic or indexical; that is to say a recognisable object or source that is emblematic or deictic. If we consider the exhibited triptych work *Breve storia del tempo* (A Brief History of Time, 1999), the contents are not unfamiliar, but only made so by a chosen poetical alliance through juxtaposition.<sup>16</sup> In the central panel the skull with its obvious Baroque ‘vanitas’ associations challenges the spectator since it is depicted from an unusual viewpoint. The lower jaw having been abandoned we see the upper jaw and skull for below revealing the opening of the *foramen magnum* as the entry point of the spinal column. Therefore it has the effect of observational and anatomical precision over what might otherwise be considered a conventional form

of symbolic allusion.<sup>17</sup> A fact made evident also by the descriptive way that the external occipital crest, and the inferior nuchal line, that runs onto the parietal plate at the back of the skull are detailed and modulated in light, and are visually reminiscent as if we might be looking at some form of lunar surface. The poetics of immanent presence linked to cosmological inferences are a frequent expressive aspect found in Galliani's large panel drawings. The modelling of shadow and light is also partly determined by the hidden ground of the mediating support, and this makes the subject matter appear immanent in that light emerges readily from within and through the accreted marks of applied graphite. This stands in contradistinction to a Caravaggio old master painting where the light is cast theatrically and directly onto the different narrative aspects of the scene that is depicted. Though historically speaking this was usually due or determined in part by the site-specific nature of Church commissioned altarpieces in throughout the seventeenth century. Hence Galliani's use of visual or optical immanence, literally inherent and pervading, is achieved by the subtle power of the drawing technique as distinct from the generally layered applications common to most forms of painting practice. Linking the left and right panels of the tri-partite ensemble (triptych) is more problematic, since the artist has argued that these are chosen through random juxtapositions of original photocopied materials from anatomical and/or botanical manuals. Yet the viewer might be tempted to connect the magazine illustrated orchideae of the right panel to the "vanitas" skull through an affiliating *memento mori*, since historically flowers are commonly associated with transient life and human mortality. However, line drawings of flowers with incorporated skulls are often depicted in close juxtaposition and/or visually superimposed in many different ways within the body of drawing works that constitute the artist Galliani's practice.<sup>18</sup> Further when the delicately drawn orchid, derived from a book/magazine illustration, is cast against the diffuse drawing of the left panel of the triptych, with its subtle photographically refined woman of beauty in a seeming state of archaic embrasure, we might similarly choose to

make reference to the artist's frequent suggestion that the female principle be linked to a floral association.<sup>19</sup> This evidence for this is verified by its actual date of execution that places the work between his *Mantra* (text and image) series of works, 1997/8, and Galliani's extended enquiry into "Princess Lyu-Ji" questioning of East-West female consciousness and poetic thought following on from his trips to China after the year 2000.<sup>20</sup> The link is no doubt significant since in 2003, the work entitled *Breve storia del tempo*, was awarded first prize at the 1<sup>st</sup> Beijing Biennial. The second work exhibited by Galliani in the Palermo installation (Naples has new works) is a recent drawing *Agnus Dei* (2016), and is a return to a subject matter first seen in a charcoal drawing on untreated canvas work realised by the artist in 1990. In this instance the occasional use of a flat colour is often that which the artist called his female red (in earlier works occasionally gold was used by the artist in a manner not dissimilar to that of the American artist James Lee Byars), and this reminds the viewer that Galliani does not see himself in such simple terms as purely figurative artist, since his ideas first began in the late reaches of conceptual art at the end of the 1970s. Yet the line drawings realised on the red bands above and below the centred *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), make fairly obvious Eucharistic and sacrificial references to the Crown of Thorns and the Sacred Heart.<sup>21</sup> While at the same time it is noticeable that the lower drawing is an anatomically accurate human heart, rather than the pierced or thorn-encased flaming depiction usual to it as a conventional Catholic religious symbol. The Lamb of God as depicted has an illustrative almost child-like quality with its eyes closed in sleep within a fantastical cosmic constellation or landscape. The term 'landscape' often used by Galliani when referring to a drawing, stands in for a range of pictorial scopic imaginings, such as skylines, lunar landscapes, and cosmic 'inscape' drawings. In incorporating the idea of the appended '-scape' it becomes by definition a necessary allusion to a combining form. And like *Breve storia del tempo* the image is materially luminous if somewhat smaller in scale and less sombre in tone. The installed drawings nonetheless reveal the sheer magnitude of

energy utilised by the artist to realise his images on such a scale. Yet in this context an immediate relation to Caravaggio and premise ‘truth of the dark’ the drawings are largely of only generic association. Hence Galliani’s use of the poetic shadowlands of light and dark, is secured by a graphite surface-based medium that is mastered through his extended accumulative applications born his detailed drawing process. And it is an approach that relates as much to an intimate knowledge of the workings of light and dark in photography as it does to original seventeenth century chiaroscuro sources. Galliani drawings are filtered and connotative, based on a rich poetic and pictorial vocabulary that selects and interplays with displaced source materials expressing an immanent presence.<sup>22</sup>

In my decision to consider Puglisi and Galliani separately, it has been done to avoid the fraught dangers of binary comparison common to two-person exhibition installations such as these. Equally the premise of the exhibition project is the related engagement with the famed tenebrist Lombard master rather than each other. The surface and facture sensitive paintings of Lorenzo Puglisi are more spectral in nature and carefully paired down to aesthetically selected residual details that reference chosen old master sources. While Galliani in his luminous pencil drawings might well be considered a voluptuary, an artist expressive of modulated light and shadows, conversely the black paintings of Puglisi cultivate issues of an obliterative masking and the haunting powers that we associate with secreted darkness.<sup>23</sup> At the same time Puglisi’s paintings are about the actual processes of that erasure and reduction through masking, whilst leaving in place oblique residual traces as to specific historically famous master artists such as Goya and Caravaggio among others. In the current exhibition the artist’s paintings refer to Caravaggio’s aforementioned and now lost *Natività con i santi Lorenzo e Francesco d'Assisi* and to *San Matteo e l'Angelo* (Saint Matthew and the Angel, 1602), a main altarpiece and part of the three painting(s) Contarini Chapel cycle commissioned for the Church of the French community San Luigi dei

Francesi, in Rome.<sup>24</sup> The artist Puglisi freely acknowledges the influence of tenebrism, “I was very touched by the matter of darkness in seventeenth century painting”, and it became a vital influence on his own painting development.<sup>25</sup> By working through achromy (black and white) the artist makes direct reference to the apparitional conditions of painting and to the existential void. The void as a generic cosmos in this respect shares something with Galliani’s drawings. But in distinction, Puglisi has a completely different sense of materiality, presupposed in part by the use of paint, yet more significantly in terms of application and material erasure. Galliani’s drawing process is accumulative and inductive, whereas Puglisi contests facture application using variable methods of surface mergers through textured elision. Yet since the void scientifically speaking is an atmospheric emptiness and without matter as such, there is a self-reflexive awareness of the paradoxical use of material facture in the Puglisi paintings. It is this creative tension between the void as a neutered nothingness and a site of imagined presence that indicates the fundamental aesthetic position adopted by the artist. From within the matt blackness apparitional (“shades”) or spectral aspects emerge like punctuating presences, part objects/part images are therein incised and/or elided from within a monochrome nothingness. It is this metaphysical or spiritual propensity towards darkness that connects Puglisi works to Caravaggio, less in the use of an inserted narrative, but rather from an imagined viewing potential of the sublime unknown.<sup>26</sup> With the advent of nineteenth and extended twentieth century sublime aesthetics, the qualities of pictorial indeterminacy took on a powerful material character for themselves, realized as the gestural mark or trace, aesthetics of over painting and erasure, and through increasingly diverse materially expressive uses of material facture.<sup>27</sup> In considering Puglisi’s *San Matteo e l’Angelo* you confront the indeterminacy head on, and the viewer would have to know the original Caravaggio composition very well in order to recognize it. The artist has excised and expressed the head, hand, and raised left foot of Matthew, though the stool on which the lower limb

rests like all other parts is not present. St Matthew who is presumed in the Baroque original to be writing his gospel, and the inspiring angel (the work is sometimes entitled the “The Inspiration of Saints Matthew”) is reduced to a mere gestural trace and fragment of its original swirling robe. The head of Saint Matthew is almost “vanitas” in skull-like character, and the facture of the white on black marks (“traces”) blur upon and bleed into one another. It therefore presents itself to the viewer as an allusive ghost, a fragmented presence within the matt and obliterative void of painted darkness. Not only do we find there is an intentionally removed sense of narrative, but also the sublimation of conventional identifiable composition-pictorial processes commonly used for visual storytelling. In this respect the Puglisi painting is reduced to an expressive indexical event (the painting points to itself as a painting) and the viewer is cast towards an act of memory and the re-imagining of the Caravaggio. The viewers are thereby made consciously aware that recollection through memories (whether involuntary or otherwise), are in fact the occasioned spectres of life, the transient “shades” that we carry around with us in the everyday. In the Puglisi painting that refers directly to the *Natività con i santi Lorenzo e Francesco d'Assisi* (Nativity with Saints Lawrence and Francis of Assisi), the work is similarly revealing of component traces and fragmented presences. We see the heavenward pointing and much reduced hand of the angel, and the thin outline trace of a curved part of its wing, the angel’s head, and small traces of the Virgin, and the Christ Child on the ground. While the chosen depicted elements reinforce the verticality (even exaggerate it) of the original old master painting, the viewer is still hard pressed to access any sense of immediate recognition. The residual aspects or motif traces, smudged blurs of allusion, reduce the Puglisi paintings into what we might imagine are mere signifiers of process and optical passage, which is to say they are generally without any sensual or affective intention. This makes the two Emilian artists’ approaches very different, both might indirectly refer to an aesthetic of the sublime aspects of the unknown, the Galliani drawings are visually and

cognitively sensual and worldly. The paintings of Puglisi are conceptually distanced, and the power of the paintings resides in their status of imagined memorial remnant. A remnant being a residual part or quantity that is left after the greater part has been used, effaced, removed, or destroyed. This artist uses the erased state of reality (Caravaggio is often thought of by some as the first realist painter) as a point of departure rather than outcome. The minimal means, black and white matt paint (occasionally there is a punctum splash of red), the brush and the spatula, and the generic conventional canvas support are means to invert the beginning and end of the task of painting. At the end we find the beginning where first exists the unidentifiable subject contents of a painting, and this is also the reason why so many of Puglisi paintings have focused on the skeletal conditions of portraiture through the use of a consistent motif repetition. Self-evidently the tradition of portraiture is by its very nature about that which is visually identifiable, namely the sitter, whereas this artist's facture portrait(s) contents are of reduced smudged and blurred ovoid heads and hands that are anything but recognisable. An example of a portrait is included in the exhibition installation(s) and alludes historically, perhaps, to Baroque period studio practice of the master painting head and hands.<sup>28</sup> Except in important commissions it was often the only part of a portrait that was executed by the studio master, with the remaining draperies and backgrounds executed by any number of workshop-atelier assistants.<sup>29</sup> This was a largely born of the wide seventeenth century expansion of patronage, and while Caravaggio rarely painted traditional portraits as such, it can be argued that the real life personae seen in his religious, mythological, and genre paintings are all unique portraits of sorts bringing a revolutionary realism to his art. Again to juxtapose Caravaggio and Puglisi's interaction with the psyche of portraiture is to address the immediate ghosts or "shades" that all portraiture (paintings and photographs) must eventually become. The creation of a portrait is an act of memorialisation, a fixing of time and moment that becomes an apparition in retrospect.

Omar Galliani and Lorenzo Puglisi are artists of affinity and disparity, which is to say the shared affinity is that of pictorial tenebrism through chiaroscuro, the play of light and darkness, that determines their relationship in this shared exhibition participation *Caravaggio, La verità nel buio*, the truth in the dark. This said the disparities reveal approaches that are very different. In the case of Galliani his art derives from his intimate knowledge of photography and pencil line drawing that he translates and turns into large complex works on poplar panels, or, alternatively, as intimate drawings on paper. His visual language is the linear mark, repetitive and layered hatching, a accumulative surface build up of graphite materials and the subtle connotative parallelism between the applicative means and the poetic juxtapositions of his chosen subject matter. Conversely, the reduced paintings of Puglisi confront the remnants and residual traces and remembrances of what I have called the “shades’ of painting, the ghosts or the possibilities that painting presents today. He touches on the endless endlessness of painting, a medium of expression that has been consistently consigned to the graveyard over the last fifty years. His paintings are reduced to the bare bones of painting, or, expressed better still, as the painting of the bare bones themselves. In meeting Puglisi’s “shades” we touch upon all that has gone before as if by eternal repetition, for painting ends in its beginning, and mysteriously it seems that its beginnings are its final ends.

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#### **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> The term *ut pictura poesis* comes from Horace *Ars Poetica* (c. 20 BCE), line 361, "as is painting so is poetry" repeated in various forms by later writers such as by Plutarch (c. 46-120 AD) in his *De gloria Atheniensium* (3: 346), citing its origin to Simonides of Ceos (c. 566-468 BCE) as *poema pictura loquens, pictura poema silens* "painting is silent poetry, poetry is eloquent painting." There are varied translations, and for its exegesis as

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regards painting Wright Lee Rensselaer, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The humanistic theory of painting*, New York, Norton, 1967 (available in recent Italian translation) In the literature of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries painting and poetry were conjugally bound together particularly in Italian humanism.

<sup>2</sup> Alighieri Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, 'Shades and Shadows: Terrace 7: The Penance of the Lustful', *Purgatorio* 25 (85-108). In the language of Dante the term "ombra" is used to refer both the shadow that is cast by the body, and also the soul (the life and afterlife when bound together) that become as 'shades' or 'shadows'. For a pictorial-textural synthesis see, *Sandro Botticelli: The Drawings of the Divine Comedy*, London, Royal Academy of Arts Publications, 2000, pp. 190-193, Sculpture examples include Rodin's 'Les Trois Ombres' surmounting the Gates of Hell (1880-1917), in Antoinette Le Normand-Romain, *Rodin: The Gates of Hell*, Musée Rodin, Paris, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> It is common to Scandinavian and Central European folklore and more recently within the fashion for vampire literature that those who do not cast a shadow remain in a state of undying, and cast no shadows, Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial and Death: Folklore and Reality*. New York, Yale University Press, 1988

<sup>4</sup> "What begins in the work of Caravaggio is, quite simply, modern painting" translated by current author from André Berne-Joffroy, *Le dossier Caravage: Psychologie des attributions et psychologie de l'art (Idées et recherches)*, Paris, Flammarion, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> See the exhibition entitled *Bodies and Shows: Caravaggio and his Legacy*, Los Angeles County Museum, Resnick Pavilion (November 11, 2012-February 10, 2013), the book accompanying the exhibition is called *Caravaggio and his Legacy*, Los Angeles, 2012

<sup>6</sup> Victor I. Stoichita, *A Short History of the Shadow*, London, Reaktion Books, 1997. The publication is an overview of the role played by shadows in Western art and cultural history since the time of Plato.

<sup>7</sup> Hans Belting, "Plato's Shadow Images in Video Light," *Mischa Kuball/Platon's Mirror*, ZKM Karlsruhe, and Buchhandlung Walther Koenig, Cologne, 2012, pp. 21-24 For Plato's "The Cave" *ibid* pp. 15-18

<sup>8</sup> Horst Bredekamp, "The Play of Light and Shadow" *ibid.*, pp 259-274 See also 'Shadow Theater' and 'Shadows as the Bringers of Light' (Magic Lantern), while several essays deal with Leibnitz and the seventeenth centuries fascinations with perspective, various rays, shadows and light.

<sup>9</sup> The term "shadowgraphy" was first coined by Fox-Talbot one of the founding figures of photography, and as *ombromanie* refers to the nineteenth century use of hand shadows as "cinema in silhouette".

<sup>10</sup> It was executed for the rectangular late sixteenth century Oratory of Saint Lawrence, the painting was stolen (17-18<sup>th</sup> October 1969), and has never been recovered. The historical oratory was at the time of the seventeenth century commission administered by the Company of Saint Francis (Compagnia di San Francesco), while the stucco interior by Giacomo Serpotta (1656-1732) replacing the existing series of paintings on the life of Saint Francis was added later in 1699. See Giovanni Mendola, *Il Caravaggio di Palermo e l'Oratorio di San Lorenzo*, Palermo, Edizioni d'arte Kalós, 2012. The period Caravaggio spent in Palermo is discussed in Helen Langdon, 'Sicily', *Caravaggio A Life*, London and New York, 1998, pp. 364-380

<sup>11</sup> The building of Pio Monte della Misericordia, was commissioned by a small charitable brotherhood as an institution for incurables at the behest of seven young secular noblemen in Naples, and consecrated in 1606. It was extended and altered in its configuration by the architect Francesco Antonio Picchiatti (1619-1694), to understand its function, see Christopher Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1969 pp. 258-260. Helen Langdon, *ibid* 'Naples', pp. 319-39

<sup>12</sup> Originally seven different canvases were envisioned for the space, but Caravaggio combined all 'seven acts of mercy' within one unified canvas, see John Spike and Michèle Kahn Spike: *Caravaggio with Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings*, New York, Abbeville Press 2001. The accompanying CD-ROM gives details of the work. It has been updated more recently by Rosella Voudret (with CD Rom), Milan, Silvana, 2010

<sup>13</sup> It is suggested Giambattista della Porta (c.1535-1615) and his invention of a *camera obscura* (c. 1580s) was known to Caravaggio, since Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte, was patron to the artist and the scientist, see M. Marini, *Caravaggio e Guercino. Artisti per il cardinal del Monte*, Pontedera, Bandecchi & Vivaldi, 2010

<sup>14</sup> See Mark Gisbourne, "Ghosts in the Void", *Lorenzo Puglisi Paintings*, Sobering Galerie, Paris, 2016. np

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<sup>15</sup> The artist has a longstanding relationship and creative affinity with both photography and film, and these associations stand as influences and sources particularly as they relate to light and shadows, see Gregorio Mazzonis 'Work In Black', *Omar Galliani L'Opera al Nero*, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderne e Contemporanea, Turin (6 March – 18 May), Milano, Mazotta, 2013, pp.45-49

<sup>16</sup> The title of this work from 1999, is taken no doubt from Stephen Hawking's world famous book on cosmology, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*, London, Bantam, 1988. Yet artist Galliani has always been interested in the spiritual dynamics of cosmology and the "cosmic landscape" as he sometimes refers to it. This was a subject of particular piquancy at the time of the millennium in 2000.

<sup>17</sup> As distinct from Leonardo's anatomical drawings, the earliest published anatomical source illustrations were those of the sixteenth century anatomist Andrea Vesalius (Andreas van Wesel, Brussels, 1514-1564), who studied in the universities of Leuven, Paris, Pavia and Padua, and whose *De humani corporis fabrica* (On the Fabric of the Human Body), and *De humani corporis fabrica librorum epitome* appeared c. 1543.

<sup>18</sup> Marzia Faietti, *Omar Galliani Notturmo*, Gabinetto e Stampe degli Uffizi, Firenze (2 February-2 March), Milan, Electra, 2008. The juxtaposition of the skull and botanical line drawings were the dominant contents of this exhibition and publication

<sup>19</sup> To a literary consciousness such as that of Omar Galliani, the orchid has perhaps a complex neo-Proustian set of inferences, the flower plays a seductive symbolic female role in 'Swan in Love' (In Search of Lost Time, Vol 1). The writer Proust was fascinated with orchids, especially their pollination syndromes, understood through Darwin's 1882 work as translated by the French botanist Amédée Coutance.

<sup>20</sup> The large three panel (joined) master work (300 x 600cm) *La Principessa Lyu-ji nel suo quindicesimo anno di età* (Princess Lyu-Ji in her fifteenth year, 2008), includes a cosmic floral expression of roses in the right panel, *op cit.*, *Omar Galliani L'Opera al Nero*, pp. 136-137

<sup>21</sup> The most famous "Agnus Dei" panel is the central image of the famed Ghent Altarpiece (1432) by the Van Eyck brothers (Hubert and Jan), where the blood of the lamb spills from the breast of the sheep into the chalice on the high altar. The Sacred Lamb panel, like the Caravaggio altarpiece in Palermo, was stolen in 1934, and has never been recovered but replaced with a copy. It has been the subject of endless occult speculation, see Karl Hammer, *Secret of the sacred panel*, London, Stacey International, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> *Omar Galliani, Dans mon tiroir à dessins/From my drawings' draw/Dal cassetto dei miei disegni*, Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Etienne Métropole (15 May-22 August) Silvana, Milan, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Gisbourne, "Ghosts in the Void: The Paintings of Lorenzo Puglisi", *Lorenzo Puglisi Paintings*, Sobering Galerie, Paris, 2016, np.

<sup>24</sup> The painting references the chapel ensemble commissioned by the family members of the French Cardinal Matteo Contarelli (Matthieu Cointerei, d. 1585), and devoted to his name saint, in the Church of Saint Louis of the French, in Rome. The other paintings subjects are *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, and *The Martyrdom of Saint Matthew* (1599-1600). The painting referenced by Puglisi is the second and final version by Caravaggio. The first radical version of the painting was rejected on the grounds that it lacked an appropriate sense of decorum, and a second version was installed as the altarpiece. The first version of *Saint Matthew and the Angel* was destroyed in Berlin during the Second World War. See Jacob Hess, Jacob, "The Chronology of the Contarelli Chapel", *The Burlington Magazine* **93** (579), 1951 (pp.186–201).

<sup>25</sup> From an interview with the current author and quoted in, "Ghosts in the Void..." *op cit.*, np

<sup>26</sup> Simon Morley (ed.), *The Sublime (Documents of Contemporary Art)*, Whitechapel Gallery, MIT Press, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Yve-Alain Bois, and Rosalind E. Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*, New York, Zone Books, 1997

<sup>28</sup> The practice was common in seventeenth century ateliers and workshops for the master to paint only head and hands if it was a general commission, and famous international artists like Sir Peter Paul Rubens would have any number of assistants to execute draperies, material settings, and landscape backgrounds, etc., see Svetlana Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1995.

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<sup>29</sup> For a brief history of draperies in seventeenth century art, see Gen Doy, “The Fold Baroque and Postmodern Draperies,” *Classicism and Barbarism in Visual Culture*, London, I. B. Tauris, 2002, pp. 139-175