

I FOUND PAINTING SO I COULD HANG MY IDEAS ON A NAIL. At some point you have to stop going around holding your hat in your hand

A neat mess dominates the room. It is cheerful space, taken up by two closed suitcases piled up in a corner, different sized packed paintings stocked on a shelf, a few chairs and a table. A laptop is turned on and sitting on the table, and some books are piled up on a chair. I can read the titles on their spine: two are by Adachiara Zevi, one is about Italian art in the second half of the twentieth century, one is on American art, then there is Kerouac's *On the road: the original scroll*, in its recently released, un-expunged version, a couple of books on Leonardo, a few Mafalda comic books, the comic strip Vittoria Chierici loves best. Artist Vittoria Chierici has been living and working between Milan, Bologna and New York for about twenty years. While I look at the pictures hanging on the walls, she talks to me about her latest project, pointing to the images scrolling down her computer. It is an all consuming job because she has to keep within a color scale going from the yellow array to the blues. The collector who commissioned the painting is in fact afflicted with a pathology that prevents him from seeing reds, she says "I have to use the array of colder yellows, otherwise he perceives the color as browns, blues and blacks". Her words bring back to my mind an episode concerning Vittoria Chierici as a student, related to me by one of her friends. For the *Theory of Forms* examination she had spent a lot of time working on a paper on colors. When she got to the point of binding it she realized that the photocopier had made black and white copies. She didn't lose heart. She thought about it, looked among her books and picked out Wittgenstein's *Remarks on colors*, leafed through it carefully, and having found the sentence she wanted to quote, wrote it as an epigraph on the first page of the paper, "You can't learn anything on the concept of color by looking."

Vittoria M Chierici was one of the founders of *Slam* (a journal of contemporary art that is not published regularly) and *Infarto* (the first and perhaps the only European satirical magazine of contemporary art, two issues have been published so far). She is also the author of a book, *Aftermath*, in which she expresses her considerations on "the collapse of certainties in contemporary art". Smart, witty, restless she has always claimed that painting is the thing "she knows how to do best", and then adds, "Actually, it is more or less the only thing I know how to do". The sentence used as the title for this interview is a quote by George Braque.

VITTORIA M. CHIERICI I came back from New York just a few weeks ago. I'll spend summer in Italy and then go back to the States. I have a job to finish. If I think of these last two years in which my time was divided equally between Italy and the United States, I can say that my attitude has changed. Like many of my generation, I went to New York with the more than justified idea that it was a mythical place. At the end of the seventies, we were still immersed in the great season of American art- from abstract expressionism to minimalism. Today I have a lot more respect for Italian art and European art in general. When I am in New York, now I am conscious that my cultural background is different but rich of experience nevertheless. I go there without any inferiority complex and with renewed energy, just like the aftermath of the war was over. This does not mean that I don't still have a lot of admiration for the enthusiasm that Americans, especially New Yorkers, feel for art.

New York is part of my personal history, my training ground as a young painter, just like Milan. I studied there as a young woman and it is there that I set up my most recent solo shows. Those exhibitions were important for me, because they forced me to come to terms with strong competition among artists. New York is still the showcase for international art. Among contemporary American art forms, over these last few years video art is the art form that has made the biggest impression on me.

PAUL DE LEONARDIS. Which artists are you referring to?

VITTORIA M CHIERICI The most famous ones are Tony Ousler, Bill Viola and Gary Hill. I would also add Matthew Barney, on the border between video-art and cinema. But my favorite is Gary Hill for his sharp, incisive visual impact and his ability to communicate a state of presence and unreality at the same time, without making too much of it, using film as a time of immediate, exciting impact. That's also the aspect I liked about old American painting- its radical language.

PDL And what do you think about painting?

I find it excessively narrative, perhaps symptomatic of the current state of art, it is irreverent and amusing, sometimes even too cultured, but not exciting enough. And consider that for me painting could still have Renaissance connotations, I consider it a form of thought: a philosophy to which Americans have contributed with big movements starting from the second half of the last century. Now times have really changed. We must acknowledge that.

PDL- Is that true for all art forms?

VMC- I think so. You have to keep in mind that in New York you see art from all the countries of the world. Globalization has brought new things, or rather is mixing things up in such a way that the best American art of the second half of the 20th century is already history.

I notice this in contemporary dance and music as well. I have been lucky to meet some interesting practitioners of these two disciplines who are well known among young people. It is as though "modern" is their most ancient tradition. They have the schools, the universities and it's from that education that they start. With a lot determination, we have to recognize that.

PDL- What impact did these latest experiences have on your work?

VMC- To give you an example, I became friends with Liz Gerring, a young choreographer who studied at Julliard, and attending her rehearsals over a year and a half I started to work on the concept of movement. It is not the first time that I do that, even my series on the battle of Anghiari contains figures that are dynamic, in motion, but it's a dynamism in the kinetic sense of the word, taken from Leonardo's drawings. Now on the dance series I am currently working on in New York, the perception of movement is given not by the position of the bodies, but by my painting that goes around the bodies and moves space. In short, I too am dancing! And it is the first time that in my work I use painting as color.

PDL - But isn't painting color?

In my own work I have used mainly monochromatic colors. Often black and white, and yellow too. I have used painting as an expressive sign and not to give shape to something.

Caption

Vittoria Chierici, *Mandy K.*, 30 X 40 Inches, acrylics, oil on canvass, 2007. Property of the artist.

In the case of dance I have “deboned” some snap shots of Liz’ rehearsals and I used their outline. I did that in order not to give the body an excessive connotation and yet have a trace that, in its movement, moves the space around it. This way it is the empty space around the dancer that is colored and becomes an architectural space, but only thanks to color.

PDL- One of the pieces from this series is part of the show organized in Ascona in homage to Louise Bourgeois.

VMC- I started that picture only as a photograph. In December of 2006 I was invited by Martin Kuntz, at the time director of the Ascona Museum, to participate in a collective show with artist from different nations paying homage to Louise Bourgeois on her 95th birthday. It was the first time I exhibited a photo.

PDL- Was it a “deboned” photograph?

VMC- No it was a “real” photograph, in a standard format. My work always starts off from an image I create on a computer. The image in the Ascona show is one of the many shots I took while photographing the rehearsals for Liz Gerring show titled *When you lose something you can’t replace*, a dance performance held at Saint Mark Theater in New York last December. Liz’ idea was to bring a little silence on the stage, while many of her colleagues are strong on the “spectacular” aspects of performance, which make a lot of “noise”. I liked the performance right away, the movement is very fluid yet associated to the “gravity” of the bodies. She has joined these two elements, showing how the weight of the body moves the air and moves it because it goes through it. It is a simple idea, seemingly outside the issues that are big in dance, but it is not a simplistic idea. At any rate, it stimulated me to think of a very liquid and fragile relationship between the movement of dance and the act of painting.

PDL- Was it during your first long stay in the US in the 1980s that you decided to become an artist?

VMC- Going to America was kind of a fluke, it was my graduation gift from my parents after earning my degree at the Dams, the art and performance department of the university of Bologna. I was not planning on staying there for a long time. I went to California where I lived for about nine months in Oakland as a guest of some family friends. There I met some people my age who were attending UC Berkeley and I continued studying art history at that university. Altogether I studied art history for nine years. That’s my training background.

PDL- What classes were you taking?

VMC- I remember a class taught by Peter Seltz on abstract expressionism. He is one the top experts in that field. But I was also taking some science classes. At the time there were more scientists in Berkeley than art historians and artists. And in addition, I was living at the house of an geo-thermal expert, a friend of scientist Emilio Segré, who had “discovered” as he ironically used to say, “hot water”, i.e. geo thermal wells. His name was Giancarlo Facca. A great character.

PDL- And then from Berkeley you ended up in New York.

VMC- Yes, I enrolled in a Ph.D. program at Columbia University. The Art department was famous for Meyer Schapiro, a noted specialist in Medieval, Modern and Contemporary art history and theory who was no longer teaching when I got there. At the time I was most interested in modern American art, i.e. the period that goes from end of Nineteenth Century realism to Pollock and Warhol.

PDL -Who were your professors?

VMC- I studied with Jerry Silk, an art historian and critic who specialized in XX century American art. But Donald Kuspit too was important in my training. He was one of my teachers at the School of Visual Arts where I enrolled, having left the Ph.D program at Columbia because painting had been my dream since I was a child. Kuspit taught aesthetics and was also a poet. In those years he made us study Plotinus. Among other things he directed *Art Critics*, a small format journal that was very authoritative even if lacking from a graphic point of view.

PDL- What made you decide to become an artist?

VMC- "Artist" is not the right word, even people working in a circus are called artists. I prefer to define myself a painter, even if my idea of painting is very theoretical and not very formal compared to the traditional concept of it. For me painting is a way of being, not a means. Even as a child I knew that I expressed myself best with images and color. I loved art as a game and even more considered it a friend. And perhaps, after politics, art was my terrain of rebellion in my family. I come from a bourgeois family, of highly educated professionals who in the 60s were inflexible as far as their child-raising principles. I half attended the Classical Lyceum halfheartedly, but I now recognize that those studies were very helpful. In fall 1973 I moved from Milan, where I had attended the Berchet classical lyceum to Bologna, my native city, to study at the DAMS (the first experimental Department of Art, Music and Performing Arts). It was a new department, that had just opened and there I experienced the most intense years of my life. There I made formative and long lasting friendships, I met my "tribe", i.e., Dina Bara, Dario Trento, Bruno Predetti, Emi Ligabue, Ivo Bonaccorsi, Roberto "Freak" Antoni. Aside from Dina who is a journalist, everybody else is active in the art world. So by the time I enrolled at the School of Visual Arts in New York I was already 24 years old.

PDL- If I am not mistaken it is essentially a professional school...

VMC- Yes. In the beginning I studied photography with an assistant of Irving Penn. Then cinema – film and video-but then ended up in a painting class.

PDL- What made you go that route?

VMC- First off because of my generation. We are talking about thirty years ago, I was very attracted by what were then considered the new media. Today using a video-camera seems natural, but at that time it truly was a novelty. I always liked to start off from an image, not from a figurative model or an abstract form. This is the reason why I started with photography, super 8 and a video class. I attended a performance course with an extraordinary artist, Simone Forti. We are talking about the 80s.

PDL- Then you ended up in David Salle's class...

VMC- I took David Salle's class when he was young and wasn't so famous yet. But I also worked in Will Insley's class, an artist between conceptual art and minimalism, and Frank Roth's class who was an abstractist. These three artists were very different from each other. Salle came from conceptual art, had been a student of John Baldessari and at that time was still doing photography and some drawings.

PDL- How important was your meeting with David Salle for your artistic choices?

VMC- It was pretty important. But in the meantime I had also met some people in New York, people I am still very good friends with, who were already working hard in the art field. For example, Renata Petroni, a graduate of SVA, curator of "The Kitchen" who later became an important dance theater producer. And

Manuela Filiaci , an artist from Vicenza who has been living in New York for many years and participated in many important movements, like that of the East Village. As mentioned by critic Adachiara Zevi who wrote an excellent book on American art and a very important one on Italian art from the second half of the 20th century, among other things Manuela organized the exhibit venue Parallel Window, on Fifteenth St. When I met her at the beginning of the 80s, I understood the difficulties but also the challenge and richness implied in being an Italian artist in America. Manuela was able to bring these two cultural realities together in her work.

PDL- But it was David Salle who gave you the decisive push.

VMC- He told me, "Go to work right away, don't linger here to study". By that time I was actually already 24 and the classroom was filled 18 and 19 year olds.

PDL- Maybe he said that because he thought your work was mature enough.

VMC -He had the intuition that I had a sufficient cultural base to proceed on my own. There are artists who mature while working on the field, with experience. That's how I did it. Later on I wrote him a letter from Italy thanking him for having "given me permission" to be an artist. I have been told that he read my letter to the students in his class. I am still proud of that.

PDL- Which artists' work did you watch most closely during those years?

VMC- I remember being very excited in seeing Julian Schnabel, Francesco Clemente and Sandra Chia da Castelli's early exhibitions. And David Salle at Annina Nosci's gallery as well. It was a photographic exhibit. The most interesting thing is that Salle asked us students to read a book for his class.

PDL- What books did you read?

VMC- Novels. My favorite author those years was Peter Handke. He wanted us to develop a narrative dimension in our work. We would take to the class the visual ideas that were born from reading. I would read to capture images not forms.

PDL-What's the difference?

VMC- The form can be abstract or figurative but it's always interpretative, it comes from a model. Instead when you are engaging in visual discourse- which I don't call figurative- your point of departure are images and objects that have already been interpreted, that have a nature of their own. For me they are more complete compared to the ready-made or the found object. Photographic, cinematic or simply graphic images get to the point of no longer answering to the original matrix. In short, you use them, you don't interpret them.

PDL- What would you say characterized New York in the 80s?

VMC- Freedom of expression at various levels, but everything was already moving on the international scene and it was getting strongly commercial. There was a “badly packaged” art (as “bad painting”), more symptomatic than aesthetic. And there was more energy, even in dramatic situations, if you think of the East Village saga or the tragedy of Aids.

PDL- Who were the painters that influenced you? How much do you owe to American art and to Italian art?

VMC- I like both painters and non painters, I am not Manichean in my approach. In America I studied action painting a lot and was influenced by Pollock. I would never paint paintings similar to his because I am not interested in him from a formal point of view. I am not an artist who loves forms, but rather the concept they imply. The Pollock I like is the one before “dripping”. The influence of Europe and the Surrealist is obvious, but he makes everything bigger –there is that oversizing of paintings that is so specific and important for American art. Starting from the painters of the Sublime, the late 19th century landscape painters, large dimensions is typical of American artists. Dimensions are very important. In European art of the second half of the 20th century, oversized gesture is Masson’s apotheosis, the high point of the Cobra group. Enlarging is important because it changes everything: first off you read its impact as spectacle, then you think.

PDL- What influence did Warhol have on your formation?

VMC- Enough, but for other reasons. Warhol is the most classical among 20th century artists. He is the most “Renaissance-like” in character. It’s an idea that at first may seem paradoxical, but he is truly classical when it comes to forms and their harmony. The first thing I found interesting in Warhol is the way he deals with the concept of icon, which in his case is more abstract than figurative. He turns an image of his times into an icon, but he does it differently than other pop artists. He uses fragments of social and urban life, presented in a detached and non-judgmental way, without surrendering to autobiography.

PDL - Mao, Jacqueline, the Brillo boxes, Marilyn, the electric chair...

VMC -They are icons of his times. Political, cultural, commercial icons. The other thing of Warhol that interested me was his technique. The concept of seriality that I had in my work some years ago comes from him, not from minimalists like Donald Judd. Like a work of mine, *Coca Cola Classic*, on which I spent many years. I reproduced a 1962 painting by Warhol, *Coca Cola Bottles*, on a series of same sized canvasses with the same background. Then, when I started elaborating my ideas with computer graphics I understood that the concept of seriality had lost meaning—you can modify a file endlessly and print always in a different way without having to go to the matrix (original). In my opinion, digital culture is a new one and has been applied to photography for a while now (the beautiful photography of the German school, for example). It is less applicable to painting which, in spite of its hint of traditionalist modernity (“the new at any cost!”), has always been considered an “ancient” medium. Instead I think that painting today can become the freest form of expression.

PDL -How has the atmosphere in America changed after September 11?

VMC- September 11 is by now considered a watershed date for American history and the history of the world... Since then American society has become more fragile. And it is precisely this fragility that can give rise to a need to step back and reflect on its own history and origins. It seems like a contradictory idea when compared to globalization. Actually, though, this local conscience is complementary to the global dimension.

PDL -Thinking about Italians, which artists influenced you the most?

VMC- When I returned to Italy in 1983 I saw some exhibits by artist that I was not well acquainted with. I remember De Pisis' show in Venice, at Palazzo Grassi. I was really struck by De Pisis' work in the 40's. A De Pisis that wasn't just virtuous but also ironic and bitter, and paradoxical at the same time. Then, always at Palazzo Grassi, there was the Futurism exhibition. And there I saw all the 20th century Italian painters that I had studied in high school, without paying much attention because I was more interested in the Americans and in the avant-guard movements like dada, suprematism, constructivism and surrealism. On that occasion I saw paintings by Balla and Boccioni together.

PDL -And what effect did it have on you?

VMC- I understood that the course of modern Italian art has always been very complex and difficult to classify. In the Futurist years Balla seemed more abstract than Boccioni (with the exclusion of his paintings titled "*Stati d'animo*" ...). On the other hand I consider Boccioni a great modern theoretician. Italian art wavers between formalism and theory, perhaps for this reason it was difficult for it to find open doors abroad. In these last years many things have changed in New York. When I was studying there, for example, you couldn't see much 20th century Italian art in museums and galleries in New York. But today they are paying more attention to us and treating us with and respect. That is because in these past 20 years, through the efforts of Italians from the new generations – artists, writers, designers and art critics/museum curators, Americans have been exposed to a broader and more autonomous vision of Italian culture.

PDL- In the past few years you have been defined as "Schifanian" because of a certain gestural expressiveness in your paintings..

VMC- I like the ability and speed in Schifano's gestural expression. He was one of the few high level gestural painters in Italy. I got more out of him than from American gestural painters, who are always a bit gloomy and tormented. Schifano gestural expressivity is full of adrenalin and expresses energy.

PDL- Today you are living and working between Milan and Bologna. What kind of ties do you have to these two cities?

VMC- I lived in Milan for a long time, I went to college and had my first exhibits in Bologna. In New York I met Francesca Alinovi just by chance, in the subway. Francesca taught at the DAMS in Bologna, organized exhibits and was a contemporary art critic. I was in the subway speaking to a friend in Italian when Francesca approached us and invited us to the "Nuovi Nuovi" exhibition at the Holly Salomon gallery. He was showing the works of a group of young Italian artists mentored by Renato Barilli. That's how I met her and we stayed in touch until her tragic murder in 1983. Francesca was a very smart, educated woman who had an artist intuition. In 1982 she organized an exhibit in Bologna, at the Neon gallery presenting a group of young artists called the "Enfatisti". My paintings were shown in that first exhibition. That was a period of incredible artistic vitality. Movements and groups were blooming constantly but they were short lived. It was a very good exhibition, we had a lot of fun. I met many artists and I am still friends with some of them like Emi Ligabue, Ivo Bonaccorsi...

PDL -What about Milan?

VMC- In this case too, a chance encounter with Corrado Levi, a charismatic figure in the art world was decisive for me. He played an important role in Italian art from the 60's on and then in the 80s, especially in Milan. He was an unique intellectual figure who was an artist, architect and writer. Throughout the 80s, he

organized exhibitions in his atelier in Corso San Gottardo in Milan that became points of reference for many of us who were young artists at the time. The first one, in 1984 entitled "Dall'olio all'aeroplanino" (From oil to paper planes) was a refreshing exhibition devoid of the suffocating directive of the various art "isms" (transavanguardia, conceptual art, poor art, neo-expressionism). A total freedom of movement reigned in that exhibition. The other important exhibition organized by Corrado Levi was "New Polverone" in 1980, shown in the Renaissance chapel of Sant Eufrosino in Volpaia, a village in the Chianti region.

We worked as a group and those were years of an unforgettable apprenticeship, also because of the discussions and fights we had. Then came the big "New York, New York" exhibition of painters from the East Village. And finally "Il Cangiante" show at Pac.

PDL - That's an exhibition that you consider especially important. Why?

VMC- Because in some ways it marks the end of a period and it's Corrado Levi's most important work. Corrado is an artist, a patron of the arts, a very sensitive architect, a teacher for many students, a traveling companion for artists of different generations, a theorist of contemporary art. At the "Il Cangiante" exhibit there were artists of all kinds- classical, contemporary, naïf, all on the same plane and acting as though they were participating in single work of art. It resulted in something eclectic from a formal point of view but unique as a manifestation of a way of thinking. It was an exhibition/work of art and vice versa at the same time.

Corrado's Levi distinguishing feature is that he always had intuitions outside of the mental boxes in his work as architect, artist and critic. There were three faces to this complex figure that only a country like Italy could have.

PDL - And what changed after the "Il Cangiante" exhibit?

VMC- Of the group that formed around Corrado Levi I was the only painter. Stefano Arienti, Amedeo Martegani, Mario Dellavedova, Marco Mazzucconi were doing neo-conceptual work. At a certain point I was contacted by a small group of Tuscan artists who were doing interesting work. Two of them are painters Massimo Barzagli and Paolo Fabiani, the latter both a painter and a sculptor. Critic Alberto Mugnaini was also part of that group. Thanks to Fabio Sargentini, the gallerist that was a point of reference for the group "Maledetti toscani", two exhibitions were organized at the Umbertine Fortress. Corrado Levi participated in the organizing effort and selected artists from northern Italy, this time mostly from Turin. I was the only one from Milan. Included in the collective show were Sergio Cascavilla, Bruno Zanichelli (who unfortunately died very young), Enrico de Paris and Pier Luigi Pusole. For me it was a stimulating meeting with them because the Tuscans faced different issues from us "northern artists". Their work had great strength.

It was always through Corrado Levi that, after my second prolonged stay in the States, I met some very special people. I am referring to the protagonists, both male and female, of the cultural exchanges that take place in Milan at the Libreria delle Donne (The Women's Bookstore) and the Circolo della Rosa. I am thinking of Luisa Muraro, Lia Cigarini, Stefania Giannotti, Silvio and Renata Sarfatti, Marisa Caramella...

PDL- How long did you stay in the States the second time?

VMC- From 1993 to 1995, two years. I had decided to change my work. My other great passion is the cinema, but I thought about it too late. With a executive producer degree in my hand that I had earned at New York University, a super 8 and video class I had taken at the School of Visual arts, I decided to complete my training by enrolling at the New York Academy, a film school that had just been opened by Jerry Sherlock, a Los Angeles producer. He was a very adventurous type with whom I have stayed friends through the years. His goal was to set up a hands-on camera school that would teach how to use the camera. I had enough of a background to attend an essentially technical school. Once I finished, I didn't really ever make films but I used what I had learned for a new series of works.

PDL- Are you referring to *Battaglie* (Battles)?

VMC- Yes. I started to think about the series on war after seeing on TV, like everyone, the live images of the first Gulf War. It was something completely new for me and for all those of my generation, both because Italy participated directly in that war and because the live broadcasts brought to our homes the images of the bombing of Baghdad and other strategic objectives such as cities, bridges, harbors, refineries. At the beginning my idea was to represent war through emblematic figures, and my technical film studies helped me with composition. They also helped me create the boundaries of a visual field where to compose the scenes. I must preface that the only time when I express myself directly is when I paint, because my pictures are all designed on computer. The design technique – where I am in control of everything, from choosing to elaborating the image and the size of the work – I have learned from architects. Later on there is an “industrial” part, i.e., transferring the computer produced image to canvass or another support. It's only in the strokes of paint that my subjectivity is called to the fore, as I move from photography to the vitality of painting.

PDL- Le's get back to the *Battaglie*.

VMC- My first paintings were flat and abstract, they were based on strokes. With my experience in film school I reintroduced figures and positioned them on a field (the canvass), adding depth and perspective. In order to do that, I took as a point of reference the moment in which you reach the stage of editing film. To those people who are say that I am merely doing collage I reply that “No, it isn't a collage, it's like editing film. It's a dynamic concept that allows you to get an idea of representation, it is not merely assembling materials and figures. You position figures and objects which, according to the roles they play, can be in the foreground, in a middle field or in the background.

I started painting green battles because I wanted to imitate the color of nighttime bombings filmed with infrared rays, like I had seen on television. I don't know if I succeeded in doing that because that green is such a cold color that it is very difficult to reproduce it with paints. I took the figures of soldiers from images of armies of different centuries. English, Roman, colonial, Greek, American Native American, German, Russian soldiers. The reason for this is simple: giving a temporal and historical connotation to warring armies didn't matter as far as what I wanted to say. On one hand it was the consciousness of an historical state, i.e., that war was breaking through in the daily life of us Europeans. At the same time, I was interested in visualizing the moment when the breaking of an army occurs, when the war is already lost.

PDL- And how did you get from these paintings to the *Battaglia di Anghiari*?

VMC-Working at the Battaglia di Anghiari, Leonardo's lost masterpiece, was an old project that I was able to get back to and confront only after the work on *Battaglie* and after attending film school.

PDL- Perhaps it would be useful to describe Leonardo's painting...

VMC- It was a mural painting that was commissioned in 1503 by the *Gonfaloniere della Giustizia* Pier Soderini for the Hall of the 500 in Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. Leonardo was to complete it around 1506. It was supposed to depict the battle between the Florentines and the Milanese armies that took place on June 26 (?), 1460 in the plains between Anghiari and Borgo San Sepolcro. Leonardo was not able to make the deadline for his commission contract. And after various vicissitudes, probably due to an unsuccessful experiment with dry paint on the wall Leonardo left the painting unfinished. I studied the whole history of the battle and found its historical location, I did an inspection of the grounds and wrote a kind of script assigning roles to the main characters, which were nothing else but the "figures" in the surviving Leonardo's drawings- men and animals in combat situations. I didn't invent anything, I just retraced a course that followed a story told by few historians who wrote about it.

I did the early work just like a cinematographic reconstruction, all in black and white. The City of Anghiari had great foresight in commissioning me to do it. There is no historical truth to my reconstruction, it's all hypothetical, because until the real painting by Leonardo is found, it's not possible to set the goal of truthfulness.

The battle of Anghiari fascinated me and at the same time contributed to isolate me, draw me away from the art of the 90s- from the post human, from photography, autobiographism, etc. But it was worth it, even more so because today the battle of Anghiari could become a topical issue, actually a turning point discovery, thanks to the searches for Leonardo's painting that are starting up again at Palazzo Vecchio. The search was undertaken by Editech, Maurizio Seracini's company and by a pool of historians and art restoration experts. It is quite a challenge on the technological side as well, because it could open doors for its application on archeological sites.

During the time I was working at the *Battaglia di Anghiari* I also taught at the Department of Design of the Politecnico of Milan, where I found a great meeting of the minds with Beppe Finessi, a very sharp scholar.

PDL- How do you assess the pictorial aspects of your Anghiari series?

VMC- Many people have asked me that question. A young American critic wrote on *Flash Art* that the pictorial aspect in my work is an "embellishment". That could be true, but it is with the gestural dynamism of painting that have brought the images to life. Otherwise I should have stopped at the basic visual structure, at the staging of it. To make an analogy: it would have been a movie without actors.

Caption

Vittoria Chierici, *Anghiari blue*, small colored, 50 cm by 94 cm; digital aerograph, oil and acrylics on canvass,

2003

