Excerpt from Giuseppe Raimondi, *Alberto Sughi, The Everyday in the City*
De Luca» Editore, Rome, 1965, pp.13-14

When, in ’62, Sughi undertakes the series of his Portraits, whose subjects stand together, forced to live alongside one another inside the painter’s studio, alone, without looking each other in the face, like the clients and patients in the waiting room of a clinic, one might say that Sughi’s aim is the observation and the study, from a plastic point of view, of the different cases and destinies of these models of his.
These people no longer act, no longer share a common part in a scene, in a picture populated by figures. They live, separated from the world, with the weight of their own mood, of their own “illness”, which they might even ignore, were it not for the fact that, from time to time, they see it reflected, through the features of their faces, inside an imaginary and somewhat haunting mirror that follows them everywhere.
The painter, no differently from the psychologist, has set aside a chair, an armchair, in which to receive them and attend to them. And they sink into it, unaware of the diagnosis and the treatment awaiting them.
The dark confusion of their souls must gradually flow not only into the exposed parts, which are their faces, their hands, arranged as if to speak without restraint, but also into the little clothing they still retain: the shirt with its folds, with its restless creases, like the skin of an animal whose fur has been stroked the wrong way.
As for the legs, the support of their bodies, they are nothing more than rags, or dry branches of a tree trunk waiting to be pruned.
What stories these faces tell, now deprived of every social defence, of every convention. A petrified, or fossilised anxiety. The doubt, or uncertainty, of someone who no longer wishes to make choices, to face problems. No problems, other than those of brushing one’s teeth, shaving one’s beard, or tying one’s tie, as the last sign of one’s personality.
The suspicion towards life, which must be started anew every morning. The daze, the foolish astonishment at every aspect of things.
They passively accept livid areas on their foreheads and cheeks, and these remain there like scars, like the mark of a lash, increasing the dramatic and the unknown in their presence among us.
Signs, scars, flashes of shadows that continue everywhere, across torsos and arms, with the capricious ferocity of a doodle, of a black smudge, black as the ink of cuttlefish.
And so they remain, in their solitary posture, like people, like personifications of character types. Characters of the human soul: it sounds like the heading, the signboard of a “gallery” from the time of Voltaire or La Tour, when the tools of psychological analysis and moral engraving were sufficient to engage in a controversy of social significance.
But these “characters” of Sughi belong to another time. Our own: when corrosive moralism must be accompanied by an understanding that goes beyond the human soul, as it develops within a closed society.
The task now is to go and seek out the wild beasts lurking in the depths of the social jungle.
Some of these portraits bear the title: “Man Laughing”. And their laughter, the grimace of laughter, causes more sadness than those faces that remain silent, walled up in their solitude.
Others depict “someone” performing an action: an arm stretched along the back of the armchair, the crossing of the arms of someone undressing. Or the figure who, seated on the bed, turns his back and takes off his shirt, turning his eyes towards us.
His flesh, red like a lobster, like a crustacean, perhaps laughs too. Certainly, it provokes us, in a flash of painful and atrocious gaiety.

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