

Liquid metal... like water

Refined ensembles of metallic materials and changing colors, layer after layer. Simon Raab chose to rely on water. «Parleau», from the French «par l'eau»

LUCCA - It was not easy to summarize in a title his extremely original works, refined ensembles of metallic materials and iridescent colors, layer after layer. But in the end, Simon Raab chose to rely on water. «Parleau», from the French «par l'eau», i.e., «through water » is the name given to the exhibition that opened to the public yesterday (until October 2nd, free entrance) in the deconsecrated church of San Matteo in Lucca.

Light that is reflected, metaphorically crossing liquid material, is at the center of the work of this artist who lives in the USA but is of French birth. He was born in Toulouse in 1952. Raab's originality lies in having created in the course of the years a work in which the frontiers between painting and sculpture, between the abstract and the figurative are mixed. With the poetic play on words «parleau», Raab describes what the visitor notices at first sight: an ensemble of reflections and vibrations of color in continuous motion.

Works that seem about to produce sounds, to speak. The same sensation that flowing water produces. In reality, the work of the artist is much more complex; it is almost an alchemic process where calculation is camouflaged behind improvisation. In a word, nothing is casual. And so the large, smooth aluminum or stainless steel sheets turn into a large platform on which to work. In his hands, the metal bends, is deformed, pressed, hammered, until it becomes a polychromatic bas-relief faceted with curves and dents: a surface that reminds us of the moving ripples of water. On this surface, the artist overlaps polychromatic and transparent paints that prevent the colors from mixing or becoming opaque. The final effect is iridescent, just like the flowing of water.

Loredana Ficicchia