

OKINAWA

I

The artist empties that which art has filled.

II

He seemed to have a style of his own, disaffected and, in his own way, provincial – a province, in that it had not yet managed to grow up on the basis of its most hopeful expectations and set itself apart, sweetly, in its own dislocated – and infantile – inadequacy; an enchanted, enchanting, unresolved childhood. A style based on ostensibly backward attitudes, on ways that always seemed to be rather old-fashioned, but in actual fact were truly experienced, translated into figures that always made it incredibly credible. As if that which had gone before, before “now”, that reality which, though revealed as such by certain traces it had left, could not be restored except through a series of fragments, no matter whether they were true or false, wholly or partly inventions of the imagination or reconstructions of a shared or individual memory. Only to discover in the end, beneath it all, that despite all this oscillation between invention and reality, in actual fact things were completely different. In actual fact, every time it was a matter not so much of coming up with a different reading of what had gone by, of that supposed reality, which the common language, the vulgate, history, had fixed in certain specific forms, which were of course always susceptible to modification upon every change, evolution or development of the common language, the vulgate, history, but of discovering and revealing labile evidence, a different layer of that reality, of that which had been. A layer or a state which was as if set aside, forgotten, suppressed, a layer or a state which was under the skin if not under the ground. And so this same reality, whether it be a matter of events or basic situations, or events which are apparently of entirely negligible importance or circumstances definitely of little import, appeared in other forms. Forms in which uncertainty and acuteness have the same value, in which uncertain and acuteness draw on the same source of power, dark and mysterious, under the skin, invisible and imperceptible, but whose obvious essential influence on the course of things which, in other forms, as we have already said, the common language, the vulgate, history, had, or would have, ascertained.

III

Shima always tended to identify certain signs indicating an intent to communicate, even before an expression, a communication which, precisely because of the fact that it came before the expression, was and remained unexpressed.

A few weeks ago, on his way back from a walk in town, he brought me a strange object he said he had found on the street. It was made up of a number of plastic straws, in various soft transparent hues, threaded into one another at their ends, and it terminated with an angular criss-cross of long wooden sticks which had been sharpened at one end only, and were in turn connected with the sequence of straws at each end. We asked a number of people in the town – neither of us were from there – whether it had a meaning or a purpose. No-one could tell us anything more convincing than to say that it was a meaningless composition put together at the end of a meal.

Shima appropriated it and called it Message.

Where Shimabuku intercepts signs of a peaceful universe, Michelangelo Consani tends to identify, or create, moments of tension, always an unresolved tension, as it should be, and could not be otherwise, or a state of equilibrium, unstable equilibrium – stop the world, image, figure of my irrepressible desire, stop, there is that insuperable instant that saves everything, stop, I want it, I who am dying, disappearing, losing myself, stop, just for a moment, stop (Goethe, Wilde).

Both of them come from somewhere else, but know they no longer belong there; another place other than the all-powerful centres of the world: Okinawa and Livorno.

I: I am on the twenty-second floor of the Baan Chao Phraya in Bangkok in early June, in the year of grace 2008, and the date has just changed, and as my friend Italo says, I always end up talking about Siberia.

In all humility, to the densest loves of my life, R.C. and J.R.
Pier Luigi Tazzi