



Monochromatic Light: American and European Artists from the Panza Collection, Palazzo Ducale di Sassuolo (2001-ongoing)

ANNE APPLEBY in the Camera di Fetonte
by Dr. Giuseppe Panza

Surprise, emotion, and a subtle sense of panic invade the visitor who enters the *Camera di Fetonte*, introduced by the simple captions that Anne Appleby has attached to her ten works. They are, in fact, nothing more than such indications as *For West wall, #1 (left)*, etc. that, however, are effective in leading the visitor to the site of the Este frames. The artist has preferred not to use words to create a title that might prejudice the works themselves.

These spaces contain, as though in a clasp, pictures in which nothing happens. Any occurrence consists, if anything, in a palette ranging from blue-black to white, the aggressive presence of which admits no comparison. These blues suggest a concatenation, even though without any

clues as to its meaning, as a result of the surprising variation of tonal gradations, dosed, or so it would seem, by an internal mechanism of the material that flaunts them within the limits imposed by the geometry of the frames.

The palette is to be seen, congealed, in the painting placed at the head of the trio *For North Wall, #2*, the surface of which shows its character in the strangest of blacks. This black is not all that deep, since it is unable to block the presence of a dark blue. It is not certain if we should impute its darkness to the antagonistic function that the blue ought to have in comparison to its formidable rival, or else to black and blue being the constituents of an impasto with which the artist shows us she has invented a colour the impure nature of which is highlighted by the modest form of the setting, and by its strange chromatic intensity, even in the absence of light.

The surface of a large rectangle, *For South wall*, opposes the most immaculate of whites to this colour. Pure white might well cause the surprised visitor to think, with this first impression in mind, of earlier reactions to the purity of snow. It is this purity that makes the white a corporeal substance formed by the absence of colour while never becoming light. This panel does not contain color and yet it is not empty: not even the presence of traces of yellow eliminates our doubt that there might yet be some ray of light. But the range of blues, like a wave that nears the shore, seems to lose its intensity as it nears this painting, one that might well engulf it, having slowly diluted and dissolved its variations of colour for its own pleasure.

This range of blues is not to be found in the sea. Not even the sky is alluded to in these paintings in the *Camera di Fetonte*, since the colours, like the blues, are not linked to things: colours precede them and are invented and named for the first time by man. Over these pictures, so individual in their distinctive colouring, Anne Appleby, with her commanding technique, has laid a dull blow; this impalpable yet tenacious layer, like an immobilizing membrane, is the spell that the artist has cast so that the material and its softened colours might become painting.