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## Elements: Opening of the exhibition of Axel Becker on Thursday, April 18

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The exhibition of German artist Axel Becker, entitled "Elements", will be open on Thursday, April 18 at noon in Sala Novelli of the former Benedictine monastery. „The exhibition is focused on pure monochromes: the Cartesian 'clear and pronounced' blocks-basic elements of a broad artistic discourse. The artist is in love with evocation and synthesis: *necessaria tantum*, i.e. nothing more than necessary in his works. In fact, Axel directs his minimalist observation to a series of strict monochromes that are “absolute” in themselves, then assembled together or on which metals are melting.

These metallic incrustations reflect the light and these flashes unite the uniform base of the canvas with Nature without a recognizable shape. With references to the abstractions of Mondrian, Malevič and Klein, to Minimalism, but also to lyrical and symbolic evocation,

Becker's monochromes refer to an aesthetic and artistic context, as well as to a philosophical and metaphysical one. In dynamic contrast with the rational "norm" of the rigorous monochrome and "geometric" canvas, abstract Expressionism makes its appearance on it: informal dripping and gestural fusions of shiny metals. The essence of these fundamental elements (water, air, fire, earth) and 'alchemy' is the flame that does not destroy, but melts, unifies, creates, vivifies: water, rain, drops, waterfalls as 'frozen' in their natural and dynamic flow, magma consolidated by 'eruptions' that solidify on the surface inner emotions and thoughts on the greatness of Nature; melting of metals that reminds of planets trapped in craters, changing the liquid state into solid, conveying the emergence into the motionless dimension of eternal. Thus, that single apparently uniform color is enlivened in myriad of vital impulses that lead to a peaceful reflection, veiled by a suffused lyricism in a close empathy between the author-chemist (Becker) and the observer-spectator who gets involved in the work. Therefore, there are two possible groups of works of our artist. The first is given by works each consisting of a series of monochromatic juxtaposed canvases, as if to form a puzzle or, even better, mega-pieces of an abstract and geometric mosaic in the manner of Mondrian's painting. The second one consists of canvases with superimposed liquefactions: falling drops of a virtual rain with the appearance of "alive" and volatile mercury, puddles recalling realistic splashes of water, petrified waterfalls, glaciers and torrents in flood. Everything is always a play of water and metals, their heating and their fusion and evaporation and again their cooling and their condensation and solidification: *solve et coagula* was pursued by alchemists in order to evolve and regenerate. Applying the Kantian concept of the aesthetics of the sublime expressed in his Critique of Judgment, we can confirm that at Becker there is no a dynamical sublime, a harbinger of amazement and dismay as a result of the awareness of our limits and our powerlessness, but a mathematical sublime, where a calm reflection on our dignity elevates us above the immensity and immeasurable grandeur of Nature itself. His works are paradigmatic examples of *contaminatio* or *coincidentia oppositorum* present in Becker's works, i.e., the dialectical and non-conflictual relationship between *ratio* and *pathos insensatus*, between instinct and reason, between mind and heart, between geometric and informal gestural and lyrical rationality. Finally, the series dedicated to money is like a quiet reflection on the relativity of the value of money itself: copper and brass coins embedded in lead dripping, always on monochrome backgrounds of canvases, are blocked, made prisoners as if in the depth of abyss after the sinking of the ship that carried them; their tinkling no longer resounds, money does not 'flow' anymore, it has become useless, it has no value, it has lost its falsely 'divine' and omnipotent purpose. *Elements*: elements of a whole, that is, components of a mosaic, fundamental parts constituting a whole through their aggregation, but also chemical elements of the Periodic Table, gaseous, liquid and solid. With this term, therefore, we can understand both the different monochrome and serial 'mosaic elements' or 'pieces' that constitute various possible aggregations, as in a mechanistic DNA chain of life, and the various metallic 'elements' that impress vibrating 'soul' in a cold and inert matter, where the 'experimenter' Axel plays the role of a modern alchemist in search of 'his' philosopher's stone. The artist's task - it seems that Becker alludes to it - is to overcome the seemingly irreconcilable dualism between vivid spirit (the darting and informal metals) and amorphous matter (the abstractly geometric monochromes). In this way, the unity between false opposites heals "the corruption" of a "logic" matter itself, providing that irrational *quid* and *absurdum* that tones it up. As in the great transcendental allegory of the sacred and royal citadel of Monreale and its mosaics, precisely the Light is the thread that unravels the skein: the light reflected by those metallic drippings that constitute 'informal' or 'differently' formal 'presences', personalize and vivify, almost spiritualizing that matter governed by pure reason and by the eternal and unchangeable geometric, mathematical and physical laws, the laws of evolution and survival of Nature in the Universe." (Giampaolo Trotta)

With the support of the municipality of Monreale, the exhibition curated by Giampaolo Trotta will be open to the public, free admission, from Monday to Friday from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm until May 2, 2019.

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