

Once upon a time there was a balloon in the shape of a man. Or a man who flew like a balloon. Anyway, it flew. Instead of bones, or a stomach, or a liver, its insides were made of thoughts. Subtle bursts of energy ran between one thought and another, binding them together, and then so many emotions, so many feelings, so many countless images, but I mean so many and so intense, so packed inside the walls of his body that, instead of staying on the ground, the man flew. Some people didn't even notice, but this man didn't walk; he flew. The problem was that he liked to paint... How do you paint when you are flying, he wondered.

One day he had an idea. He closed himself up in a room all made of paper so that, even though he could fly off, he was forced to paint the walls and couldn't fly too far. He picked up a brush and gave it a try... The first stroke came out very pale and airy, transparent like the paths of his flights. It wasn't easy to come down to earth each time to change to a different colour, so he soon decided to paint everything with the nuances of a single shade. He played and played; he rocked gently in the air and bounced softly off the walls of the room, leaving his mark each time.

At times he found himself thinking that it was inconvenient to be fluttering about all the time... At the supermarket, in the street, sometimes he wondered why his feet were not firmly on the ground like everyone else's. But now that he was painting he realized how lucky he was. To be able to rise and to fall, to be cradled by a breeze, letting the paper lovingly conserve the evidence of each impact. His painting came out as light as his body, but intense and pulsing with energy like his thoughts, while the room still held within the gust of his flight as if the air were infused with his soft passage forever. He painted nothing but men in flight, as if he had never seen anything else, and felt no need to portray a landscape, a background, a context... Flight itself was enough. They flew as he did, and he didn't feel alone anymore in the room, suspended in mid-air, because everyone around was flying with him.

When the day came to shed light on his paintings, it revealed the shimmer of subtle strands of energy that had passed from his hands into the paint, so that it really seemed that the bodies throbbed with a powerful, mysterious force, like a magnetic field from far away.

Painting became his favourite game: he didn't need to go out in the street anymore in a world that wasn't his. All he needed was to take a brush in hand to feel in his soul his true calling.

And that's why he never stopped painting again.

Paola for Elvio