

SKIES ARE BLUE

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Alberto Di Fabio has always led his audience along a reverse voyage from the visible to the invisible, accompanying them into a kaleidoscopic vision that forces the viewer to abandon macroscopic perspectives and immerse himself in microscopic observation of the world in order to verify formal correspondences, geometric equilibriums and chromatic harmonies between individual natural elements, pointing out how a group of molecules and their organization into sophisticated structures (for example DNA) leads to a qualitative leap, generating that which we commonly refer to as “life.”

This kind of process shares an enchanting correspondence with art, understood as the outcome of creation. The verb “create” contains the Indo-European root *kere*, also present in the Latin form of the verb “to grow” (*crescere*), and in the name of the Roman goddess Ceres, an immortal being who embodies the principle of growth. Like nature, art is that which is derived from a group of factors and mechanisms, and is in turn capable of producing those of its own.

It is a group of abstract units brought together into a single ordered structure.

The strong abstract current that runs through Di Fabio’s artistic production is a way of drawing the viewer in to experience space and the world.

Human beings instinctively attempt to structure their habitat, to find order in the heart of chaos. Architecture was born as a concretization of awareness of the world, and the mental landscape is a reification of these concepts: if Roman buildings were based on geometrically proportional systems; during the Renaissance (with the birth of perspective, modular regularity and its repetition) mankind still sought to identify a relationship between the parts, creating a new mental landscape. In ancient people’s floor tiles, and those of Rome’s Cosmati family in particular, the designs created by placing different kinds of marble mosaics and strips alongside one another to form white and multicolored ribbons and various different motifs - within which serpentine circles and porphyry stone became knotted together, were used to mark particular liturgical locations, and acted as a two-dimensional map of a three-dimensional space - determining the direction of movement within ecclesiastic environments, indicating the path one must follow.

Speaking of floor tile designs, Leon Battista Alberti defined them as structures designed to occupy the space with “musical and geometric”¹ lines, drawn from biology and geometry the precepts for creating architecture, and adopting the Pythagorean definition, according to which “it is absolutely certain that nature never disagrees with itself,”² as an absolute rule.

¹ Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, (1450), book IX, chapter V, translation into Italian by Giovanni Orlandi, note by Paolo Portoghesi, ed. Il Polifilo, Milan 1966. The *De re aedificatoria* is a treatise on architecture in ten volumes that was commissioned from Alberti by Leonello d'Este. Originally written in Latin, the text was based on the ten-volume set *De architectura* by Vitruvius.

² Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, book IX, chapter V, op. cit.

The idea of harmony, proportion and **euphoria (eufonia non euforia)** return full bore in Di Fabio's artwork, along with a nod to music in the title the artist has chosen for the exhibition, which is not a chance reference.

Sound, which incarnates all these factors in an intrinsic manner, is something viscerally bound to nature and man, to science and those disciplines dedicated to reordering the states of entropy that alter inner and interior balance in living creatures (just consider the role music and dance play when associated with medicinal herbs in ancient healing rites, or in hypnosis, or more recently with music therapy).

Over the Rainbow, referring to the famous song by Harold Arlen and sung by Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939), as well as by many other singers and musicians (including Ella Fitzgerald, Keith Jarrett, Jimi Hendrix and Rico Rodriguez, the Ramones, Deep Purple, Ray Charles and others), intends to suggest the idea of possible ulterior path, one that is parallel, beyond what we can see, transcendent and partially familiar and, precisely for this reason, intriguing. It is an invitation to look beyond contingent reality through imagery that turns abstract, returning man to his supernatural dimension.

It is precisely along the lines of, and through the search for, symphonic harmony and a universal coherence to regulate the world's chaos and enables it to be transformed into a cosmos that Alberto Di Fabio's artistic inquiry develops, driving intellectual analysis into unusual territory that is most of explored from entomological, medical and scientific points of view.

If in his earlier works Di Fabio's interest was concentrated on the study of ecosystems, astral forms, genetics and cerebral synapses, his most recent work digs into the relationships that bind together art and the cosmos in the most total manner, opening up to scientific theories like relativity and quantum mechanics.

In dealing with luminous effects, for example, Di Fabio takes into consideration the surprising duality in the way light behaves, taking advantage of the vibrant potential of color in order to create games with interference and diffraction, utilizing the natural vitality of light itself, as well as the particles it is made of – the “quantums,” or photons, that are the stuff of the other components of material as well, like protons, neutrons and electrons.

The combination of points of pure color, for additive synthesis, allows Di Fabio to achieve increased brilliance and luminosity, at times giving the impression that the painting's surface has been lit up from behind.

In several artworks in particular, this luminous effect reminds the viewer of the oleographic vortex of Gothic windows found in Northern European cathedrals where light filters in from the outside, creating unreal and rarified chromatic effects. In the artist's most recent series of artworks, however, light seems to come from lateral sources, turning into concrete geometric sections that cross the painting transversally, leading our gaze in the precise and opposite directions, as well as helping give the artworks a hypnotic, disorienting power, and creating visual vertigo upon impact.

Bringing reality back onto the plane of pure harmony, and the reproduction of the real onto that of poetical synthesis, Alberto Di Fabio's artwork develops and evolves while constantly maintaining itself on a connected ridge, leading several of the main

historical/artistic experiences of the 1900s and their relative stylistic inflections to dialogue: from geometric abstraction to kinetic art, from the dynamism of the futurist investigation conducted through American Action Painting all the way to Arte Povera (Poor Art), from which Di Fabio infers interest for the energetic and vital dimension of the materials, and recognition of the need to recover the primary values of existence. Nature, in its most global meaning, and mankind, in the most markedly physical and neurological meaning, are the undisputed protagonists of Alberto Di Fabio's artistic inquiry. Ultimately it is life, in all its shapes and forms and from the point of view of its intelligible principles, that constitutes the object of the artist's studies, as well as the generative drive behind his iconographic repertory.

Like a surgeon of art, Di Fabio vivisects the plot of existence in order to bring them to light, into view, opening up the structural complex, at once non-linear and eurhythmic, that subtend and determine a leaf's shape as much as its color; mental activity and the secretion/traces of neurons (in a word: thought).

The artist's interest in ecology is global, therefore more congruous than ever with respect to the original meaning of the word. Born of *oikos* (home) and *logos* (study), the word "ecology" mainly delineates investigations relative to the biosphere, but in its broadest and most philosophical dimension, *oikos* means "body," understood as the home for man's vital and intellectual activities³.

The sense of physical belonging, together with the intuition of a spiritual and psychic correspondence, are stimulated within the viewer as he or she follows the painting landscape laid out by Alberto Di Fabio. Considering it an anthropical dimension, this collection of signs that point back to the comparison between culture and nature, Di Fabio surpasses old notions of landscape as aesthetic representations of the world, supplying an epistemological and conceptual revision through its scientific relocation much more profoundly close to mankind, understood as the most total meaning as "being," made of form and material, the substantial union of body and mind.

Taken as a whole this new body of work – characterized by new chromatic experimentation, including the use of fluorescent pigments and a juxtaposition of shiny tones and dark shades – suggests a totalitarian vision of landscape, a sort of observatory that provides a view of the world as a whole: on one hand material and visible (Himalayan landscapes, cosmic geographies), on the other psychological and interior (traces of thought, score sheets for psychic rhythms), leading the viewer's gaze further, deeper towards the ultra-terrain and as-yet-unexplored regions (luminous interplanetary paths, an enigmatic and celestial predominance of graphic elements).

In Alberto Di Fabio's work the encounter between nature and culture develops a seductive labyrinth of comparisons and interaction, highlighting the relationship between mental and physical energies.

³ "Cleaning the house" is, for example, the definition artist Marina Abramović (CON ACCENTO E SENZA "H" FINALE) has given to physical and mental training aimed at cleaning own's own (?) "dwelling," through activities designed to stimulate reflection the mental and physical conditions of being an artist, preparing the body for the act of performing and for the relationship with the audience.

Natural elements and events, stimulated through artistic action, are regenerated and mistaken one for the other, coming to life once again as a shared, and shareable, artistic act.

*But two things cannot be rightly put together without a third;
there must be some bond of union between them. And the
fairest bond is that which makes the most complete fusion of
itself and the things which it combines; and proportion is best
adapted to effect such a union. For whenever in any three
numbers, whether cube or square, there is a mean, which is to
the last term what the first term is to it; and again, when the
mean is to the first term as the last term is to the mean—then
the mean becoming first and last, and the first and last both
becoming means, they will all of them of necessity come to be
the same, and having become the same with one another will
be all one.*

(Plato, *Timaeus*)⁴

⁴ Translation by B. Jowett, Project Gutenberg, www.gutenberg.org, 2008.