Sociology and Contemporary Art

On the occasion of this third issue of our magazine, the cover story is focused on Alberto Di Fabio’s solo show at Luca Tommasi Gallery in Milan. With his artistic practice Alberto Di Fabio has educated us to the “occult” simply understood as something that is there but that we do not see for various reasons. His works strike us immediately for the beauty, the shape, the colors. And for this reason they are often seen as an expression of a research based primarily on form. However the artistic research of Di Fabio more than a problem of form aims a content problem. Therefore, any reflection on the work of Di Fabio cannot ignore the systemic analysis of the various parts involved. I hope my article can help to introduce readers to different level of analysis in experiencing Alberto Di Fabio’s artworks because they are really great artworks.
ENERGY IN MOTION
anthroposophically Alberto Di Fabio
Alberto Di Fabio, Aura e Fosfenismo, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 150x230 cm. Courtesy Luca Tommasi Arte Contemporanea
Over the years Alberto Di Fabio get us used to pay attention to the different levels of perception enlarging what is small and invisible but that for this reason is not less important in our existence. Indeed quite the opposite. A "game" of perspective reversal that becomes the basis of a spiritual and moral growth. Yet the practice of Di Fabio is not only this.
We are living in a period in which the religious, cultural, economic, geographical, physical, political differences get us used to consider ourselves as "individuals" i.e. subjects with a specificity irreducible to that of other people so it becomes increasingly important, also in order to save our species understood as consisting of "social animals", to find the points we have in common with others as parts of a common universality. Contrary to a scientific and materialistic vision methodically based on the concepts of space and time (a prevailing view since Descartes, "guilty" of having separate res extensa and res cogitans), in almost all religions the body is considered only the matter that covers the true essence of a being that through religious practices must free from the constant attention given to the materiality reaching rather high degree of spirituality and freedom. According to the Western tradition, with which we are more familiar and in which we move easily, the man is body, soul and spirit. According to other Western visions as the Steiner anthroposophy the spiritual world is intellectually understandable and accessible by an inner growth. For Chinese medicine a living entity is energy; the body is energy as well as the thoughts, the emotions, the spirit; the only difference is the degree of density. Over the years Alberto Di Fabio get us used to pay attention to the different levels of perception enlarging what is small and invisible but that for
this reason is not less important in our existence. Indeed quite the opposite. A “game” of perspective reversal that becomes the basis of a spiritual and moral growth. Yet the practice of Di Fabio is not only this. Already in the Renaissance within some alchemical-Christian circles it had regained strength an esoteric view of human being conceived as a microcosm in which the macrocosm reflects itself, a set of parts that form an organic and systemic whole. Those were the years of the Neo-Platonism of Ficino that had an important success and appeal in the Renaissance courts. Homo copula mundi. Man as the only being provided with an intellect that allows him to fall to the animal world, to rise to the divine world through love and beauty or keep to a balanced equidistance from both. Remember the Vitruvian Man? Leonardo’s famous drawing inscribing a human figure in a circle and a square represented the symbolic

“Someday perhaps the inner light will shine forth
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
symbolic connection between the human and the divine. In any case it is an analysis that while representing that particular historical period is distant from commonly held vision and in this sense an expression of something that is hidden. With his artistic practice Alberto Di Fabio has educated us to the "occult" simply understood as something that is there but that we do not see for various reasons. His works strike us immediately for the beauty, the shape, the colors. And for this reason they are often seen as an expression of a research based primarily on form. Kandinsky had already expressed a very close connection between art and spiritual dimension. "Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the harmonies, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul." (Kandinsky, The Spiritual in art, 1911) Therefore it is clear that the artistic research of

"Someday perhaps the inner light will shine forth from us and then we’ll need no other light”
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Elective Affinities, 1809
research of Di Fabio more than a problem of form aims a content problem. Therefore, any reflection on the work of Di Fabio cannot ignore the systemic analysis of the various parts involved.

In the new group of artworks on display at Luca Tommasi Arte Contemporanea in Milan, Alberto Di Fabio further elaborates this theme by giving new impetus and energy to his artistic research. “Corpo di luce” (Body of Light), “corpo denso” (dense body), “corpo astrale” (astral body), “corpo aurico” (auric body), “energia fosfenica” (phosphenic energy), “veicoli di coscienza” (vehicles of consciousness), “individuo magnetico” (magnetic individual) ... are some of the names of the works and introduce us in a world of beauty, energy, spirituality. We human beings are more complex than we appear. Not only matter. We are not only physical. We are also energy and spirituality. We are energy in motion. Maybe
contrary to what we are accustomed to think, is every being a being of energy that guides, directs and controls an external physical body? Are we light bodies consisting of several layers that permeate and revolve around the physical body? It would seem that these layers vibrate at different levels of frequency and intensity and radiate up to a certain distance from the physical body depending on the style of life, the physical, emotional, mental state as records of our present and past life, of our thoughts, fears, joys, feelings, emotions, desires. Each light body would reflect the distinctive note of every person that is the specific part of the universal energy field we call individuality and that is interconnected and part of the only universal life.

Proceeding in this analysis the physical or dense body is only one of the seven energy components of the light body (physical body, etheric or vital body, emotional body, mental body, astral body, etheric body matrix, celestial body, causal body) and it is in this way because generated in the physical world in which we live, that is composed of substances present in this world. If we were born and raised on another planet we would have been composed in another way, with the substances present in that environment. This means that the physical body should not monopolize our attention as it is only the physical form that we perceive through our five senses. It is like an iceberg: the part you see on the surface is just a small part of what is hidden below the water surface. In this sense, invisible to normal perception is the aura or halo that surround all living beings as a kind of cocoon capable of reflecting the soul of the individual and to survive the decay of their biological life. We can find something about this in Vedas descriptions of Aryan peoples who invaded India in the twentieth century A.C. or in Egyptian hieroglyphics. But also some paintings of the Christian era did not resist its charm. For example Titian and Raphael often inserted a luminous halo around sacred characters. Have you ever observed a light source for a few seconds? Is it happened to you see luminous balls? According to Phosphenism these are called phosphenes, they have a duration of three minutes and represent a kind of portal; that is the light energy can become mental energy: it calls concentration, memory, creativity, it reduces stress and anxiety. In other words they lead us to be a magnetic individual that is an individual who controls emotions without getting carried away by them. So the beauty of Alberto Di Fabio’s artworks is a tool to create a mental energy. According to Rudolf Steiner we have mentioned several times “to contemplate artworks works on the ethereal body. In front of an artwork man feels something higher and nobler than what comes from the sensitive environment and this feeling transforms his vital body.” Art is therefore a bridge between materiality and spirituality that gives life to higher forms of knowledge with the aim of achieving higher levels of consciousness through concentration, meditation and contemplation. With reference to this I wish to remember Vladimir S. Solov’ev who considered the beauty of art a “light materialized” or “matter enlightened”. In this sense the artistic practice of Alberto Di Fabio opens up to new considerations and awareness, be they inner or outer, philosophical or religious, social or ontological. An analysis that starting from shapes and colors stimulates the mind and spirit, feeds growth and development, subverts the hierarchy between matter and spirit. In a materialistic world as the contemporary one the subversion of values of Di Fabio becomes intimate, whispered never displayed. The matter no longer causes the spirit but becomes the means, the bridge by which we reach the spirit. Schumann said “send light into the darkness of men's hearts. This is the artist’s duty.”

**ALBERTO DI FABIO**

(Avezzano, 1966) lives and works in Rome and New York. After studying at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Rome, he underwent further training by attending Cy Twombly’s and Alighiero Boetti’s ateliers. In USA he is represented by Gagosian galleries. He has taken part in many prestigious group shows and has held solo shows in important institutions. To mention just a few: 2012 Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna, Rome; 2013 Estorick Collection, London; 2014 CERN, Geneva; 2015 MART Rovereto; 2015 MACRO, Rome.