

A TERRESTRIAL CONSTELLATION IN LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE

"Maps codify the miracle of existence."

(Nicholas Crane, *Mercator: the man who mapped the planet*)

Should we, on a planisphere, draw straight lines connecting the seven places where Diego Esposito installed his *Latitudes Longitudes*, we would soon realize that the disorderly randomness of the sites is inversely proportional to the order measured each time by the simple calculation of the coordinates. The drawn design would unite three continents, three oceans, a sea, and seven nations, and we would soon discover that these dots connected by straight lines remind us of those drawings of stellar maps and that humans have called constellations. But then, reflecting on this drawn design we might say it is the first *terrestrial constellation* to have appeared on earth.

Diego Esposito, with his cycle *Latitude Longitude* (2001-2016), still in progress, offers us an extraordinary dimension of vision based on an idea of space that represents bipolar places of reflection alongside places of energy emanations, surpassing the field of the visual.

Behaving like an explorer of the unknown of existence, the artist places at the center the vision of the center of the universe, that part of it not visible, essentially the great utopia of art and seeing. And while Leon Battista Alberti in his treatise *De Pictura* in 1436 defined painting as "window on the world", and where in the second part he wrote about *Receptio luminis*, taking into consideration colors and light and defining the spectator's optimal point of view – placing it on the line of the horizon –, Diego Esposito, who had formerly undertaken this aspect with his work *Rievocazione del mio orizzonte* in 1976, with the cycle *Latitude Longitude* opens "windows on worlds" and creates for the beholder a new Humanist model of the world.

This new model of the world challenges the history of seeing. There, the human experience of one who is looking, at the center of these works, plays the principal role, as lead actor, of sight beyond the frame of each window, as in a total openness, as in a hymn to seeing life beyond ourselves and in this way relinquishing the burial experiences of every kind of minimalism.

Besides, the stones that hold the stainless steel cavity, although extracted from quarries very near the site of the final installation, are never remodeled by the artist but merely chosen. This is where Diego Esposito set off a dialogic process between constants and variants. The stainless steel form that is to reflect the sky's mutations will represent the constant, whereas the stone, different each time, will be the variant, like the sites. But it is in the cavity's reflection that once again we enter the infinite play of variants: each one of them in the seven locations in the world will reflect different skies, different lights, different beholders, in an infinite vision of worlds, but always emphasizing this sense of the *hic et nunc* that exceeds all space and extends all time.

These reflections are and will be real and virtual at the same time. The light of the sun and the moon visible from the earth and from the sky leads us straight back to the spiritual precariousness of existence, like a model of the inner world notwithstanding the concentrated solidity of the stone. Because to the energetic concentration of the stone is always

contrasted an energetic dispersion-diffusion of the reflection. Like in an eternal pulsing of a battery, each of Diego Esposito's *Latitude Longitude*, once installed, absorbs in the opaque concentration of the stone all color, calling to mind a natural and efficient painting, whereas in the stainless steel hollow the diffusion of all light will be concentrated toward every existing light source. So it is not only the Alberti of the treatise on painting that is recalled and challenged, but also the one who codifies sculpture. In fact, in his *De Statua* the rules of *adding* and *removing* are categorical. Here with the *Latitude Longitude* what is involved is materializing the unknowable and therefore unforeseeable existent of reality. Not a thing is added and not a thing is removed. Everything is outside and inside of us. Foreseeably immobile and static and unforeseeably mobile and shifting. Exactly as happens every day for Piero Manzoni's *Socle du monde* and Walter De Maria's *Lightning Field*, two works, the former physical and mental, the latter physical and monumental, that in my opinion reorganize the conventions of space and time beyond the *window* and especially beyond the *adding* and *removing*. Diego Esposito's series *Latitude Longitude* displaces even further place meant as an authentic *locus*. Because it combines in a single and absolute process sculpture and painting, visibility and invisibility, what we are able to see from the earth and what we are not able to see from the sky. And yet Diego Esposito does not desist in front of an invisibility limiting the eye, but sets off (as he always has, anyway) the process that goes beyond the territory of artistic genres and opens up to the essential of the visible and the invisible that every human seeing represents. The term of the measurable order and the term of the unmeasurable disorder belong to the human condition of sight. There is no possible measure or calculation in the sky's mutations that even interpenetrate their reflection. To this we should add the random and aleatory condition of the positions of this series of works that compose in time a map both terrestrial and cosmic.

Diego Esposito already measured himself with this sort of venture: the journey and the vision of the inner journey as a dual experience. With works like the *Sphera graeca* in 1981 and especially *Dualitudine* in 1989, where the reflected world is that of our face contained by space that also contains the work, last with *Invisible Object Inclined towards North-West* in 1986, created between Istanbul (or maybe better said Byzantium or Constantinople) and Venice, and that best represents his journeying from East to West and vice versa, where he leaves to our vision the real possibility of a journey both mental and physical. This is why *Latitude 45° 25' 35.16 N – Longitude 12° 20' 43.32" E* acquires a special symbolic signification, like a seventh seal in an ongoing chess game with space and time.

In this journey to the center of vision the artist, presenting a horizontal landscape and a vertical landscape, combines several places, several times, and signals the points, different and similar, where concave and convex, solid and reflection, seeing and not seeing assert themselves in a time that simultaneously overlooks the *window* of our inner inside and our outer outside, where every order of the measurable bursts in countless sparks of the earth's reflection together with the sky's unfathomable. All in all, it is as if we were faced with

a hypnotic project-design that constantly leads us to think of the continuity between the inside and the outside of the *window*, that is at the same time other and the same. It is like seeing and imagining at the same time. It is like the saying “I is another” in Arthur Rimbaud’s *Letter of the Seer*. Last, it is like reading a fragment of the story *L’Aleph* by Jorge Luis Borges: “I saw the coupling of love and the modification of death; I saw the Aleph from every point and angle, and in the Aleph I saw the earth and in the earth the Aleph and in the Aleph the earth; I saw my own face and my own bowels; I saw your face; and I felt dizzy and wept, for my eyes had seen that secret and conjectured object whose name is common to all men but which no man has looked upon the unimaginable universe”. Beyond space there is time. Or perhaps they arise together, as modern cosmology claims. Do we not perhaps measure in light years the sidereal distances separating us from other systems and galaxies? But here we can no longer indicate the place. Everything too far away. And it is about this remoteness that Diego Esposito’s *Dualitudini* and *Longitudini* tell us, tell us of a remote time, a remote space where only the reflection of our face scanning this reflected sky makes us for once feel small and proud of being humans on this earth in this *inconceivable universe*. Giotto painted his frescoed skies blue and peopled them with stars, and peopled with terrestrial, human, vegetal, and animal figures worldly events, where the vastness of human emotions incited to reflect on the character of the precariousness of existing, and yet he gave bodies to the angels that always flew over the world with assured wings. Diego Esposito, with this great work *Latitude Longitude* (I repeat, still in progress, even if at its seventh station on the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, in the garden of the Fondazione Cini), cannot turn us into angels, and above all cannot subtract us from our human condition. But he leaves up to us the *induction* of looking at the below that shelters us and the above that overlooks us, between horizontality and verticality, with the invention of a new picture (without a frame) and a new sculpture (without a base), each day, each instant, each look.

Antonio d’Avossa