

DIEGO ESPOSITO'S TRANSPARENT MAP FOR A NEW TERRESTRIAL ORIENTATION

Latitude Longitude is at once a stunning dismissal of the categories of time and space as modernism conceived them and an absolute confirmation of the irreversible change in our human course after the spatial ventures that overturned our fate and the terms of all our knowledge.

Anyone who thoroughly reexamined the history of the past fifty or so years through Franco Farinelli's minute analysis of the fact that all of our conceptions – historical, psychological, economic, political, philosophic, literary as well as artistic – stem from what was originally the form of Western knowledge – that is, geography –, realizes that we must go back to 1969 to date the beginning of globalization, when in the night of 20-21 July Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the Moon. Only this awareness can enable us to fully acknowledge the revolution that concerns us far and near, even the way we interpret what happened in art.

Artists – Diego Esposito was one of them – immediately pointed it out with their actions, but without a sure guide and a different approach for interpreting these events and their consequences we cannot fully grasp their scope.

The notion of boundary, as a measure between two points, that for centuries had allowed to symbolically reduce the globe to its flat cartographic image, became entirely irrelevant precisely when, at the time of the Moon landing in 1969, two computers began their dialogue, creating the first segment of the Web, as Franco Farinelli explains.¹ From then on we could no longer hypothesize a rigid, immobilized subject like the one Brunelleschi placed under the Portico of the Innocenti in Florence, to impose his laws – laws that endured however, long after we relinquished the rules of perspective, in our visual prejudices – on a universe in perpetual motion. Instead, for the first time, the subject was at last apprehended in its mobility and elusiveness, reflecting the mystery of its very life.

Diego Esposito is this moving subject, having crossed many boundaries, stirred by a passion for knowledge like that of the first explorers and geographers who, indeed, knew how to tell the stories of the world, drawing extraordinary geometries arisen from their meetings with real human beings. In this momentous 1969 Diego Esposito had already spent a year in the United States, staying on until 1972, and had begun to experience the disparity between European culture idealistic and theoretic – and the American one, that draws its own principles from doing.

His first canvases, without frames, formed of various fragments where color merges with the support, are the result of his encounter with those cultures that living on the American soil from the beginning always questioned America from within, on the boundaries of its own identity. It happened to Pollock with the Redskins, it had to happen to Diego Esposito during his stay in America: crossing the border with Mexico he came upon the Mayas and the Aztecs. They inspired him to confront space no longer as an ideal perimeter, as concept or theorem, but as a place in which you encounter the tangible, uniting with it, overcoming the quandary of form and color, reality and representation. It was in fact the same attitude that led Barnett Newman in his quest for “the living rectangle”, in open contrast with Mondrian's, caught between insuperable fetters.

Bruce Chatwin wrote: “Man's real home is not a house, but the Road, and life itself is a journey to be walked on foot”, and journeying is Diego Esposito's passion: from the beginning he considered direct experience as the only one worth considering, either as a source of personal knowledge, or of culture, peoples and landscapes, for him the object of boundless observation, the opportunity to confront and verify. But in this perpetual motion, in abolishing frontiers and outside authorities you need a compass, the authority of a center within yourself that has nothing more to do with the Ego's volitional urges, but instead does have to do with regaining the anima, animal and archetypal part within oneself.

According to James Hillman, for Plotinus rectilinear motion belongs to bodies, whereas the motion of the anima is circular. The anima strives to ever move toward itself... in a motion of consciousness, reflection and life, that returns upon itself, never exits from itself, nor does it pass into something else because it must embrace all within itself.²

On the subject Diego Esposito comments significantly on two large works in paper that for a time, between 1974 and 1975, were hung in his studio across from each other, until they were published by the German review “Magazin Kunst” in 1975. “One work was 3,88 x 3,61 meters. A big, entirely white sheet. A large geographic map without certain references” featured only two cuts, one horizontal, the other diagonal; the second one was nine white sheets that assembled formed a surface that was “slightly wavy, like a sail”. “More than anything else it was a quest for a territory, not as a physical fact but a fact of the anima, the spirit, feeling”.³

So the quest for a “place” has been with him since those remote 1970s when he was already at a turning point, where with other companions he strived toward the origin that the Greek philosophers called *epistrophé*: upheaval, torsion, unexpected curve, whose task is to convert accidental events into a sense of meaning.⁴ The idea of place is very different from that of space. The notion of space is like a universal equal-area projection where each part equals the other, whereas a place is irreducible to any other place. It is like a landscape of the soul, a *habitat* of the mind, that can be seized in a glance but identifies our innermost reality, forcing it to recognize itself and represent itself outside of us.

Latitude Longitude is not just the crossing point between two terrestrial coordinates, indispensable for someone who wants to identify his own position on a map, but is the point whence in 2001 Diego Esposito began to materialize his long spiritual journey, with the decisive features of a wisdom attained, gradually fortified along the way.

Latitude Longitude is his *opus*, philosopher's stone par excellence, erected by achieving a ‘transparency’ won with the effort of his own research motion, grinding reflections, along the paths of the world, peoples and cultures, just as the ancient geographers did. A tribute to the earth and to stone with which man built his own civilization, to this earth that we seek to traverse but by which in turn we are crossed, nurtured and travelled, but without ever forgetting the cosmos that must become once again our only true great model, because even if God does not exist it represents his spirit in our life. Just try to imagine the design ideally traced in the air by the points Diego Esposito chose to place his stones. There,

through the inset stainless steel convex eye, the passage of the sky is turned upside down, with its shifting that contrasts with the huge firmness of these *sui generis* “milestones” that actually do not measure lengths, but densities of energies that create bridges between peoples and cultures. If we sought to draw the mental lines connecting these intersections through the earth, in each hemisphere, we would probably trace asymmetrical and oblique planes very similar to those of the philosopher’s stone echoed by Dürer: never has its like been found in reality, but it conceals infinite lines within the facets of its own organism that maintain it perpetually in balance. These hubs of energy placed on the surface of the earth like a navigator’s ports of call that a play of reflections promptly sends back into the universe, Diego Esposito calls them “an earthly family that will constantly be in communication with the heavenly vault as a sign of ‘cosmic brotherhood’”, leading us back to eternal and fundamental facts: humans, knowledge, their role on earth in harmony with a dialogue with the cosmos.

Charles Sanders Peirce, an American epistemologist and one of the fathers of pragmatism and modern semiotics, placing ethics inside logic, like a place connected with esthetics and morality, does not separate the study of inference and reasoning from the world, holding that every logical process is already a script of the world, a cosmology, that supposes, invokes and gives meaning to the world, “even the simplest graph, sign, trace, contains within itself a philosophy of the universe”: to make it clear, there is no trace that does not immediately create coordinates, a map, an orientation that fail to contain a design of the world, a possible order in the world and of the world.⁵

These truths, as elementary as they are eternal, that Diego Esposito continues to sow and position with scrupulous ritual, seem to want to question us – now more than ever – about what the fate of art can be, should it not once again point to a spiritual course, that has certainly always been its role linking earth and heaven, free of those profane bonds that turned it into a slave of the dominant economy and systems; but also about what can be man’s fate if he does not knowingly reconvert the technologies available to him for a return to these everlasting archetypes that live in him and on earth.

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NOTES

1. F. Farinelli, *Geografia. Un'introduzione ai modelli del mondo*, Einaudi, Turin, 2003.
2. J. Hillman, *The Force of Character*, Random House, New York, 1994.
3. Diego Esposito. *Passaggi*, exhibition cat., ed. by B. Corà, Palazzo Fabroni, Pistoia, 5 April - 21 June 1998, Skira, Milan, 1998, p. 154.
4. J. Hillman, *op. cit.*, p. 189.
5. C. Sini, “*Il foglio-mondo*”. *Immagini della filosofia*. Transcription of lesson no. 6.