

DIEGO ESPOSITO THE SPIRITUAL PURITY OF PLACE

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The word *topos* has always differentiated and confirmed the value of Diego Esposito's work. He himself has indicated his close connection to the places where he's traveled both mentally and physically. Nonetheless, his intention is not the recollecting eye of the traveler who attempts to represent form or convey space as a point in a geographical region. His ongoing effort has been to achieve a synthesis of the spatial surroundings with the substantive structure of the historical context of a specific land. However, in its depiction, space appears as an independent quality. It is fused in the work as a poetic essence, taking the form of a sensation, color and shape informed by the mentality of its esthetics; it bears the particular weight of the space within the perpetual course of its historical legacy.

In Esposito's work, space is dominant, and its function dual: the context suggested to the viewer by the work itself, as well as the form of the space imposed by the installation of the work when exhibited. These general characteristics, which I feel are necessary to introduce Esposito's work, were disclosed yet again by the Italian artist in his recent show at Bisker Studio in Amsterdam.

The substantive form in Esposito's art is a departure from traditional painting not only in style but also in the limitations of subject matter by the fact that it seeks the place, and not the indication of the landscape, as its primary definition. Of course, this motility is not indicated by the dynamic displacement of volumes in their contextual movement (they're fixed at the instant they shift) but rather by the static dynamism of their orbit. And by the word orbit I mean not simply their mobile state, but also the imprint of their historical course in an ideal symbolic form, unique to the artist – the full impact on his awareness during his involvement in this internal journey. The final result is a depiction of the internal aspect of place – one very often not even present in the space. I mean that this aspect is not directly registered on the eye: it's a mere dot of a city or a colored area on the map, a movement on the surface of the sea, a reminder of a page in history, a condensing of the entire space into a characteristic feature of a broader region, even when this is a point lost in the eternal turmoil of historical events. The work automatically takes on a singular attribute, an acquired magnetism, a compass guiding the mind's eye to move inside memory or knowledge. Graffiti-like, it marks the blank consciousness as it activates its dynamic movement according to the fixed position of place within the movement of history, which layers the place with life experiences and the pollution of nature's elements.

As to the memorial role of the landscape pieces, I'd characterize Esposito's creations as votive steles dedicated to the individual "event." The work does not constitute a representation but a memorial record of its extent and corporeality. As in the votive steles of Simonides or other

epigrammatists, not only do they memorialize the valor that came to pass on a particular site, but knowingly record the participants' virtues implicit in the general historical context. Similarly, in Esposito's work, the landscape is restricted to two or three salient points, especially those that touch us spiritually and foster the workings of emotion (and hence memory), which then turn the mind's eye toward the primal, subconscious, and thus more intense stimuli, generated not by the viewing but by the internal experience of the space.

In this emotional state stimulated by the philosophical acme of landscape, place and form, the mind reverts to the simple representational notations capturing the landscape's inner aura as a stimulus to elevate the artist's emotion and record the nature of the geographical area within the broader cultural *topos*. Of course, this doesn't mean a depiction of the landscape's fundamental form, but rather its relation to the basic emotions, primal feelings and notions arising from one's encounter with a place.

What's more, Esposito boldly declares himself a preSocratic. Indeed, if one carefully examines the artist's 'tendency to condense, one sees that his concern lies primarily with discovering the landscape's basic component. Just as pre-Socratic philosophers sought the origin of the world in primal matter, so Esposito attempts to elevate to a higher plane the basic element of the space, to denote with it the underlying cause and experience of life in the way the philosopher maintains that the primal element is the cause and matrix of the cosmos. Thus form becomes more refined, more formalistically denuded. Color becomes a synthesis or bond of pure colors intent on achieving a representative (not clean in the coarseness of unadulterated pure color but more dematerialized) sublime in tonality and reflection.

For Esposito, the signifier of "topos", is the issue, rather than the description of its significance. His concern is its disclosure through a new semantic order and conceptualizing structure, and not the repetition of its impact and repetition of its common impression, in the sense of a central, one-sided language.

The signifier in Esposito's work consists of, demands, and is founded on an inner, not inward, gaze; it declares the experience by returning to the place of internal experience to signify. He doesn't turn inward in the same spirit in order to preserve a deep emotion. He does not summon the familiar to further expand and develop the work. Instead, he searches the visual vocabulary for new meanings, drawn in turn from the identification with the deeper, harmonious chord of experience as the lived and conscious space of the landscape elements and the surrounding atmosphere. Subsequent to an oneiric process, the space is empowered both through the artist's own intentions and the viewer's need for a specific oneiric process in order to connect the spatial elements one sees before one.

This process embodies nearly all the elements of such an enterprise. The compression of the morphological elements, geographical coordinates and cultural charges of a place into the requisite shapes and colors and their ongoing metonymy in its primitive/symbolic stages, constitute the fundamental character of Esposito's work. He constructs his canvas by constantly returning to the semantically symbolic characters of a mythology, a philosophy. The groundwork for the normal temporal sequence is abolished by the fixed, equal morphological and actual elements and the continuous line of formal historical traditions (in the sense of myth and the landscape we conceive and regard). The work both impacts on our experiences and on our intellectual comprehension.

GREEKNESS IN ESPOSITO'S WORK

Esposito's work appears to have matured in the Greek spirit. From his first steps in the field of visual art, he has walked, literally and figuratively, in a Greek environment, inspired by the Aegean light and parched rock, rebaptized in the Greek historical current. From Delphi to Ephesus in Asia Minor, Esposito has discovered that ophthalmic element which suites his own artistic idiosyncrasy: the integral pre-Socratic philosophical proposal for the reduction of the cosmos to the coupling and union of primal elements. In essence, everything is analyzed within these primal elements. They become thoughts and existential schemas of a life-affirming nature, a sublime life-spirit of pure being: his discourse is, "it's as it seems (to me)."

The watery clarity of his color corresponds to the delicacy of the Greek landscape. It is not the solid color of Western landscapes: hard, strong, or dull and hazy, depending on conditions. In Esposito, color is always the primary ingredient of the work's philosophical content. It reflects the profound issue, the invisible side of the visible. It is the thought, the keen perception in the work, that breaks through the phenomena to become sound, color, refined basic form.

It is this corporeality that Greek thought requires to expand and extend the connection between the inside (thought) and the outside (the visible). and can be conceived only through a synopsis relationship between the individual and reductive (here, the landscape) and the integrity of the human spirit, the basin of civilization, the historical journey through space. All this leads to the reincorporation into the work of the body's journeys, not in the convincing and imitative repetition of atoms of time and space containing the energy of the viewing and the field of vision.

Esposito conceives the being in the unity, completeness, and stability of the object. He emphasizes the absolute transparency of the internal world whose fundamental attributes flow from the infinity sustaining it. It is more an ontology of the one being emerging from the perpetual growth of the passive (landscape) and the active (human spirit) that determines their balance differently from conventional representation.

In Esposito, the ideal and the historical move in concert since the idea is supported by the derived actions and develops within the specific time-space horizon. He expresses the subjective spirit of the conception of the invisible/ineffable which is mindful of the layers of history.

It's not odd that Esposito's work is structured as a metalanguage poetry in a literally and figuratively "constructionist" sense. Here, space functions semantically, i.e, with exceptional semantic typology that enlightens the meaning of the work in a parasymphetic manner in relation to established expression. His synthesis of space and art work transports us directly to the region opening up through the work itself - its essence. It returns us to that fundamental realm of art work, to the serenity of the self, as Heidegger would say, which reveals the truth of the space and attempts to reveal through the work's *matter* and *type* the hidden essence of the unknown yet existent archetypal beings in the environment. Time, on the other hand, is secured by the environment itself by assuring the cryptic, sacred nature of these forms. This hierofant/artisan relationship, which according to Heidegger "enlightens that which forms the basis of its habitat," comprises the sum of the points the ancients called *physis*, which in order to emerge and reveal itself needs a renewed appraising vocabulary and distinctive representational material via a process from within. And Esposito, too, perceives nature as such.

One only has to regard works such as *Arco*, or *Giardino*, and even more the monumental *Pozzo*, *Suono*, *Scherma*, to realize the precision with which Esposito endeavors to mold the truth. He seeks the origin of the art work through a historical cycle, without losing the fundamental character of the "thing" as something other than a consumable, useful product.

Again, color for Esposito comprises the central point of convergence in the work, the crucial point that reveals its nature combined with its material substance and the shape of its construction. The particular color and material structure of each composition form an amalgam of meanings and images manifesting its uniqueness while conveying the integrity of its substance. In Esposito's work, images, experiences and colors travel in concert and flow together to display that the "sovereign" lies in the form, or rather in the poetic nature of form as presence, as the image of its "physical" nature. Moreover, the minimalistic traits in his oeuvre demonstrate Esposito's theorem that esthetic pleasure is acquired through the relationship of the elements of the work in space, as man is connected emotionally to place and its spirituality. What links the works together is Esposito's quest, one that seeks response. Through the schema of position-reaction, he tries to articulate the special language of material and shape through the unique essence of place.

(Translation: Andrea Gilbert)