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Luciano Fabro, probably the last of the Renaissance poets

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The images of his works have been reproduced in countless brochures, catalogues and books, together with his explanatory comments placed within the context of ancient and contemporary art. Though in recent years the number of publications has kept growing, most of them cannot be found or are out of print. The same applies to Fabro's art since the tangible realizations of his intellectual efforts can rarely, if at all, be seen in an Italian museum and even the preparation of this one man's show now being set up at the Castello di Rivoli - though we have been aware of this need and working on this project for over five years - has met with alternate fortunes. This is a destiny that Fabro shares with many fellow artists, some of whom have undoubtedly created - over the last three decades - a new intellectual climate and a new *image* of their country and their time, as has been widely recognized and talked about for years in the artistic world in the West.

In this country Fabro's latest works are displayed in private galleries, at regular intervals, but in actual fact behind closed doors and for the benefit of few people; in most cases they are shown elsewhere first, beyond the Alps and overseas, in the New World. For the recipient, as mentioned before, such works survive in the form of *images* reproduced in brochures, catalogues and books, in the form, that is, in which the objects seen, the objects on display were interpreted by photographers of different backgrounds: we might very well then speak of *illusions* (simulacra) - to introduce a concept formulated by Pierre Klossowski which seems very appropriate in these circumstances. It is with these illusions that the viewer - the recipient - will have to concern himself with, and in doing so will realize how difficult it is to approach the artist's creations through the filter of photographs which appear hazy in some spots and where the image is subtly altered by the type of printing paper and ink selected - as is the case, for instance, in this catalogue. But though his works are still so distant and scattered throughout the world, it is worth our while to keep looking for them, if only to gain a better understanding of what the title to this study is about; Luciano Fabro, in fact, is a great connoisseur of objects, of materials such as marble, for example, and silk and different metals (e.g., brass and copper), but he is also well versed in theories and treatises, which he quotes and deals with as if they were made of the same stuff as the materials we have just listed; theories and treatises which he needs for his discourse and uses freely and with keen discernment.

This experience and direct involvement with materials seems to me to be of decisive importance if we are to understand the complex works of Luciano Fabro. Most of his contemporaries seem inspired by an aesthetics involving a break with the past and, in line with 20th century avant-garde traditions, they always start afresh, from scratch. Fabro, on the other hand, continues to work in the furrow ploughed by Italian art since the Renaissance and he does so in the tradition of a craftsman working with modern means.

We think it is a lucky circumstance that this ample presentation of Luciano Fabro's works - and ideas - is being staged at the Castello di Rivoli: in a baroque setting and so close to the mountains. This extant fragment of Juvorra's imposing project brings to mind the continuity of history, in contrast to haphazard decor» of the interior, which, under a closer and more attentive scrutiny, appears as frivolous and as irreverent (if you allow me to use these two attributes) as some of the works that are currently being displayed.

In 1980, visitors to the Venice Biennale would immediately come across a closed room with bars to prevent people from entering and letters and numbers painted light blue to tell the curious that Fabro could be contacted at such and such an address and phone number at his house, or at his studio in Milan. One question would come to mind: was this man who had turned down an official invitation one of the last freebooters of contemporary art? For the traveller, however, these was yet another alternative of the greatest practical interest: to go to Milan and see the artist's works on show in the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, a proposal which he agreed to on his way back from Venice to Switzerland. This was the first important encounter with Fabro's works, an overall view embracing their development over two decades' time, from the early Sixties to the present. The works on display, with their contours dissolving into a fragmentary script, stood out clearly in the brilliant summer light and fully revealed their daring beauty mated to easiness of execution. They spelled out the boundaries of the so-called *corpo d'intelligenza* and in no way suggested the personal experiences the traveller would make in later years with this highly vulnerable construction, so difficult to treat and so very unpractical.

Yet this is precisely the aspect of his works which is most frequently denied - we might speak, as the artist himself does, of a process of destruction of the object, of deviations and anomalies as might be encountered in nature. Such anomalies reminded me of the ideas on organic construction advocated by German architects Häring, Taut and Scharoun, whose views, in the late Twenties, were notoriously opposed to those held by Le Corbusier and his Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). To put it in Scharoun's word: «*Thus, the modern also appeals to tradition, moves yet again towards the living organism... A spiritual landscape can be characterized in turn by its static or its dynamic qualities. This multiplicity promotes development. Multiplicity alone - and nothing else - can build up the forces and foster their growth through polarity*».