

Bosco Sodi's chromatic incandescence

of Ludovico Pratesi

"I consider painting to be a form of research, a journey. I don't like to get to a place brush-in-hand. It's a complicated journey: this kind of approach puts you in the condition of finding the pigments, the sawdust, to decide the density of the color mixtures."¹ With these words, the Mexican artist Bosco Sodi, born in Mexico City in 1970, defines the founding elements of his artistic practice: first of all, he pays close attention to the place where the work is produced, from which derives the more strictly material dimension of his art, in a perfect balance between the composition of the different materials and the choice of the chromatic pigments. The artist examines every element with extreme care in order to realize his pieces, each of which may have been realized in a different part of the world, from Mexico City to Berlin. Although the formula, defined and put into practice by Bosco Sodi after years of experience, is structured in its essential components, the result is never what had been foreseen, as the element of chance plays a key role and makes each of his works truly unique. "In some way, it's a sort of action painting. Something very physical," says the artist.²

The physicality is the most immediate essence of Bosco Sodi's art, which in this exhibit is showcased in its pictorial dimension. A painting that is transformed into organic matter, brightened and livened by a strong chromatic component: maybe the most obvious natural comparison is that of magma from a volcano, as Agustín Arteaga wrote, who proposed a parallel with the bright works by the Californian artist James Turrell, for their capacity to evoke "a feeling of discovery and of exploration from a different dimension."³ The opening of the works towards a spiritual dimension, which goes entirely beyond the material power, is evidence of another annotation by Arteaga, connected to "the artist's ability to establish a relationship on different levels with the viewer."⁴ Thus, the work is defined as a concentrated burst of energy, which, due to its explicit material nature suggests a sort of metaphorical threshold towards an underground and emotional component of the art, beyond matter. A memento painting, which, in its metamorphosis, yearns for a transcendent dimension.

The mental processing of the works by Bosco Sodi is more complex than what may appear at a first glance. Just like a Renaissance alchemist or a Mayan priest, he carefully studies every step of the transformation of matter to concentrate the energy of the different elements used and cause a sort of epiphany of the artwork that usually lasts a few hours. If Lilly Wei underlined the influence that the Catalan artist Antoni Tàpies⁵ had on Sodi, it is possible to also imagine a sort of elective affinity with Alberto Burri, and in particular with the realization of the *Cretti* that the Umbrian artist began to produce in 1973 using a glue and vinavil paste, and shortly

¹ R. Peterson, *Interview with Bosco Sodi*, in AA.VV. *Bosco Sodi*, a cura di J.Krieger, Braus, Berlin 2015, pg. 8

² Idem

³ A. Arteaga, *That which can be seen*, in AA.VV. *Bosco Sodi*, pg. 52

⁴ Idem

⁵ L. Wei, *Bosco Sodi: the material sublime*, in AA.VV. *Bosco Sodi*, pg. 170

after added kaolin. Just like dried up puddles, mindful of a classicism in disrepair, the *Cretti* are celebrations of bloodless and exhausted shapes, which may have been ideally inspired by the famous poem *Meriggiare* by Eugenio Montale, written in 1916. According to Maurizio Calvesi “the cracks of the *Cretti*, realized through a controlled drying process, do not hold the roughness of a wound, but rather the richness of a design tiered in layers and printed in the light poured out by the white kaolin, or withheld in the tangle of black.”⁶ As opposed to the *Cretti* by Burri, Sodi's bubbling surfaces look like portions of incandescent lava, a sensual and font material, vitality of conflicting energy fields: not *Ossi di Seppia* by Montale but *Sotto il Vulcano* by Malcolm Lowry.

“I want to show people a sort of chaos, a kind of uniqueness, an energy made of colors. It's a controlled chaos: controlled because I am the one that decides the size of the works, a good part of the structure and the balance of the painting.”⁷ Facing a painting by Bosco Sodi, one must let go and be captivated by the suggestive nature of the colors, delve into a magmatic and stratified surface, which can recall a rock formation, a meadow of lichens, a cellular structure or even a Mandelbrot fractal. This exhibit may represent the first step of a journey in the painting by Sodi, a path on the search for his primeval essence, which every work holds in a sort of “chromatic incandescence” that is impossible to ignore.

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⁶ M. Calvesi, *Alberto Burri e i mutamenti dell'arte*, in catalogo mostra *Burri gli artisti e la materia 1945-2004*, a cura di M. Calvesi e I. Tomassoni, Silvana Editoriale, 2005, pg. 29

⁷ R. Peterson, *Interview with Bosco Sodi*, idem, pg. 11