

Fabrizio Prevedello - Arte Fiera 2016, Bologna

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Fabrizio Prevedello is a sculptor in the wide sense that the term assumes today. Unlike many of his colleagues, however, he keeps a tight bond with what it meant to be a sculptor up until a few decades ago, and the works presented here provide a fine example. The first piece that strikes the eye upon entering the display area is a tall sculpture fashioned primarily of marble and concrete. Several blocks of different geometric shape resting on a wide base fitted one atop another create what appears to be some strange obelisk, a geometrical abstraction of a highly elongated mountain that resembles in certain ways the shapes of the utopian projects of the very first Modernist architects recently re-presented also by the likes of Herzog & de Meuron. The aspect of architectural maquette is, however, contradicted by the presence of metal loops through which guy wires might be slung for handling and transport.

The mountain element is not important only for the sculpture's shape, but also for its evocation of spiritual significance, which in my opinion is often present in Prevedello's work, albeit not prominently. Stopping by his new studio a few weeks ago, I was reminded of how Sottsass traced his love for a concept of "heaviness" back to his having been born in the mountains and moulded there for life. In these years of praise for lightness it was a nice surprise to read about the entirely mountain dweller's need to make things heavy and stable with ample, massive bases anchored to the ground with no risk of tipping over. Perhaps all this has something to do with the idea of balance, with the anchoring of one thing to something else that eliminates every risk of falling, just because it's so easy to fall in the mountains. All this becomes *forma mentis*; there's nothing like fear for creating *forma mentis*, and so every time Fabrizio produces a work, it's always well balanced, or else the requisite hooks and clips, some solid welding point that immediately becomes also a point of mental energy and psychological friction are provided.

But another, functional *forma mentis*, even if in contrast with the first, comes to Prevedello from the particularity of the mountains in which he's been living these recent years, mountains that are different from all the others we might imagine. Fabrizio has been living for many years now in the Apuan Alps, and they've become a fundamental part of his work, an inspiration, the one true subject of his various pieces, the stage for some of his performance art that take subsequent form in sculptures and videos, and they also serve as the catchment area for most of the materials he uses. Roving the Apuan peaks and foothills you can't help but notice all the rock material of various type piled here and there. Everywhere you go you encounter heaviness, weight that cannot even be quantified by the neophyte, but everywhere this massiveness is offset by the habits developed to counter it. Nothing is ever allowed to lie on the ground because nobody will ever be able to pick it up again. Everything's got to be kept ready to take flight, raise its head. We've always got to be able to move everything, and quickly as well. We've always got to be able to slide "hands" beneath the block in order to lift it up, or else use expedients like the wooden beams that raise also this sculpture up off the ground and help protect people's hands. That's another type of fear that often sneaks into Fabrizio's work, one that can be discerned also in the other works on display, if but to lesser degree.

These similarities with Sottsass and a full field of suggestions and passions typical of groups like the Memphis group also appear in the preference for an intentionally shrill, cacophonous, and showy combination of materials and forms that seem to be forcibly, artificially lumped together. Entirely absent from Prevedello's work is the Memphis designers' passion for color, which he shuns in favor of the chromatic and textural juxtapositions offered nearly exclusively by his materials. But the root, a zeal for everything that represents a return to Man's primordial dimension, is the same. Primordial, intended as the recovery of archetypal and ancient forms, myths, and methods, as the sharing of primal and primary ways of creating art that may be found in certain types of folk or naïf art and structures built by people without any type of professional skill or cultural awareness of art. Even when observing this sculpture from close-

up, we see that each face of the polyhedron is composed of either a particular type of marble or rough concrete. Fossils, the metal loops mentioned earlier, the wood supporting beams, the chalk line drawn on the floor that delineates an elongated space, it's as if every component element had been scavenged from a pile of debris or a marble mill scrap yard and used as is, allowing even the polyhedron's shape to be dictated by pure chance, the recovery of one marble slab over another.

His trail takes us on a return to the roots and materiality of things, the origins of sculpting and Man's earliest ways of domesticating the space around him, giving it conceptual sense and making it less aggressive. This return to a simple and realistic basis for being humans and artists arises in a period in which many of our generation's artists have felt the need to wipe out the background noise and return to a more serious commitment to form, material, and artistic practice. It is also an implied criticism of the many provocative and excessively conceptual forms of much of today's art he shares with other the artists, critics, photographers and intellectuals who by working together and with him over the years have developed many projects independently or in museum and institutional contexts under the Laboratorio name.

Diligence as a position assumed by the artist, the desire to fill with dialogue and collective effort the "desert" left by institutions that should instead work as an aggregator, and an approach to working that attempts to start very nearly from scratch reflect in Prevedello a type of work that appears to have emerged from a post-apocalyptic or post-atomic dimension similar in certain ways to that of films like *Mad Max* or other disaster movies in which humanity is forced to begin reconstructing a new form of civilization from the rubble. The context in which these works move might be a meta-historical time in which archaic and primeval elements mingle with modern or futuristic details and aspects.

Many contemporary artists can be linked to this short-circuiting of the modern age, such as Oscar Tuazon, for example, whose works have been greeted with success in recent years and who has done much in the way of rehabilitating eccentric figures of the past whose work anticipated certain needs, like Scott Burton. By no mere coincidence, both artists moved freely between sculpture and practical objects of daily use just as Prevedello does. One such example is the sculpture/table that Fabrizio made for the occasion as an integral part of the show that both art dealer and guests have no qualms about using. In this the day-after mental dimension, it is inevitable that a vaguely military nuance emerges from certain details of his work, from the materials, which must be resistant, inexpensive, easy to procure and use, and from the need to fulfill certain human needs, such as those served by tables, benches, platforms, a pavilion to sleep under, or a roof, or a bridge that affords passage over a stream or the use of a lake.

Unlike these constants that may also be found in many parts of the world however, in Prevedello's case one cannot help but think of poetics similar to those of the great Italian sculptors of past decades, foremost of whom I mean Giuseppe Uncini with his sensitivity for materials and how often these elements were created to be hung from a wall, in this way establishing the two-dimensional relationship with space typical of painting or a crushed, flattened sculpture transformed into a slender slab. This is perhaps required by practical reasons: floors cannot support the weights that walls can, but it then becomes poetic tension and opens another possibility of form to be explored, such as in the works hung from walls in this show. A metal grate supports what might be a wobbly, beat-up catalogue of marble pieces. The same wall holds blocks of color on which a small wooden formwork had been positioned into which liquid concrete was injected, some of which also happened to drip onto the wall. After the concrete hardened, the wooden formwork was eliminated, in this way leaving a sculpture provided with four protuberances that support four small marble fragments.

As in nearly all Fabrizio's work, harder elements of greater resistance destined to last in time are continuously juxtaposed with transient, fragile elements, which in certain cases must be re-created every time the work is installed or replaced in the future, and this can be seen in this piece as well. This also occurs in the other two wall-mounted works composed of metal geometrical structures that stand out against a special type of light blue/gray paper usually used for advertising signs and are flanked by neon tube lights and living plants in glass jars. The vegetable kingdom is represented in the room's final sculpture: a bundle of bamboo poles to which a neon tube is attached descends down the wall before nearly reaching the floor

without touching it. The upper part is clasped and held together by a metal ring by which it is also hooked to the wall, while in the lower part the bundle of poles is kept open and split by a metal structure that also supports a slab of marble.

The show comes to an end in the corridor leading to a second room in which on a wall papered with gray cardboard three sculptures are hung that consist of a marble base, a central part with various elongated parallelepipeds in glazed ceramic rise to serve as three precarious support feet, and an upper lump of plaster soaked in spent engine oil that is dark in color for this reason. It was a pleasure to talk about these three sculptures with Fabrizio and listen to his explanation of what had brought him to this point, reasons I have decided to refrain from disclosing. The way he kept on seeing flowers in what I began to see as torches was also illuminating.