

THE FEET, THE HANDS AND THE SEA

In the entire oeuvre of GF, one breathes the *poesy* of silence and the solitary nudity of the static image, eloquently paralysed in the dimension of timeless immensity, which romantic eternity establishes!

We are in the presence of a formal assumption, identifiable with *the semantics of essential surrealism*, constructed on a structural drawing of *op-graphic* disposition.

In the works reproduced here, there are vestiges of a *pop dialectic*, flagrantly associated to *Anglo-Saxon hyper-realism*, filtered by *meditation on chimerical romanticism*.

Atmospheres of a literary charm, which simulate the science fiction of *utopian anticipation and an eco-systemic inspiration*, are implicit in this.

The feet, the hands and the sea, are grasped in (almost mystical) singular acceptations (*ex-homo faber*) and reveal a profound apprehension, in which critical thought and the non-conformist spirit (of *homo-sapiens*) manifest themselves, contaminated by mythical concerns, which take root in an exacerbated magical oneirism, peculiar to the majority of his visionary proposals, and to the different themes he successively broaches: the Sea and marine landscapes (rarely invaded by a single or a few characters, if any) affirm themselves in his oeuvre as symbols of indescribable power, of *anonymous energy* - of the Occult - under the Empire of Water.

MAN, ART AND ARTEFACTS

GF is a cultivator of style, in the well-defined plane of the constructive notion of a non-idle plastic language. Compulsive producer of meticulously crafted objects of art, he is a maker of beautiful artefacts, saturated with messages of a subliminal humanism, encrypted in the intimate spatial visibility of hyper-naturalist configuration.

Man has produced successive artefacts, since the primitive discovery (or invention?) of Art - tools, jewels and weapons, first, and then clothing and locomotives - but he trades and exchanges everything, in an impenitent game of power, in competition with other bipeds, (whether they be gallinaceous birds or limited only to) his supposed fellow creatures. However, his generosity manifests itself before All he considers superior to him and - idolised, as Love is - perversely attracts his affection. Individually and pseudo-collectively, Man acts as a reigning and independent being and imagines himself the possessor of something - exclusively his - in a universe which, after all, he does not manage nor control, does not know and, perhaps, never intuitively knew with lucidity.

The admirable wisdom of Man is an abstract concept the artist eagerly desires to permanently transform into the simplicity of a singular, masculine noun, absurdly possible to inflect, in the present indicative tense as if he himself - man and author - were the Verb.

METAMORPHOSIS: MUTATIS MUTANDIS

Besides the peculiar and exciting pictorial monumentality and the enduring technical mastery, some initiatory values are clearly assumed and evident in the pictures of GF, gathered from surrealist symbolism, although he never swears unconditional or exclusive fidelity to them.

The significant aesthetic influence of *hyper-realism* - to which, formally, the exploration of his themes showed most fidelity - did not dilute but, on the contrary, sharpened and exacerbated the essential weight of the metamorphic, trans-human, and symbolist figuration of his pictorial world.

One can hardly be indifferent to the fascinating magic - virtually spectacular - of the stately vision his works project, of an enchanting microcosm, almost sacred-divine, almost inhuman, in which Man - dis-urbanised and subliminally sexual - differs, while not always being possible to tell him apart from the rest of the animals of upright bearing with which he cohabits and with which he, inflected in the feminine, mingles, in the essence of the blue planet.

...if the tree, the egg, the book, exorcise the oneiric phantasms of many oblique mutations, feminine half-nudity, erotic, transversal and orgiastic, marks the posture of the painter in the tableau of contemporary amorous disorder, producing extremes of mystical hallucination, which exhume and resuscitate princesses and queens, goddesses, fairies and sorceresses, eternal prisoners of the insurmountable charms of his corporeal and fantastical imaginary world.

NATURAL / UNNATURAL

GF conceives his pictures using automatic mechanisms of the abstract logic of the individual, randomly associated with the supposed subconscious of the mythical collective. He sublimates the more or less ephemeral a-social registers of the present. He projects them onto the factual anonymity of memories, lived in timeless spaces - vague-latent and imprecise - in the a-historic Time of a Humankind which, progressively, self-disengaged itself from the dictatorship of successive poorly invented gods and demons, granters of incredible theocratic pacts, in terrestrial control and in the spiritual domain of lunar exploration, involved in the creation of the sun and the rest of its planetary system, under the indifferent vigilance of the Star of Bethlehem... and the Milky Way!

An entire universe, indiscreetly stolen from the sac of secrets of all the bibles and mysterious legends, which suffocate with fears and surround with ghosts the souls of children.

The symbolic and allegorical themes, which GF pursues in his painting, culminate in the ambiguity of the paradoxical figurative image: the animal, in the place of man, people in the place of the creatures.

They are supported by an extremely singular projective representation of the critical understanding - marginal and dynamic - of the disturbances of contemporary humanitarianism, hovering on the verge of profound scientific abysses, indifferent to the frontiers of passional chaos and to poetic interrogations, confounded by the heterogeneity of thought and the hesitant or radical philosophic sensitivity of our days.

EMPIRE OF TIME: SPACE - MATTER

The visionary language, which Gustavo Fernandes establishes, between the enigmatic and some scales of figurative evidence, reproduces itself in multiple meanings and proposes the diversity of innumerable interrogations.

His pictorial discourse attracts us to the hyper space of a virtual world, subjugating us, or urging us to ignore everything which links us to appointment books, thrusting us towards unreal atmospheres, outside the calendar and clocks of conventional time - eventually created in the exactitude of a supposedly bio-cosmic Time - where the All and the Nothing are written in images emerging from the silence, bearers of the triumphal eloquence of a philosophy deprived of "absolute truths", which waiver any erudite explanations and do not need any practical or theoretical justification outside themselves.

... a pictorial discourse which, systematically, affirms coherence in diversity, in all of his oeuvre.

ANCESTORS & FOSSILS OF THE FUTURE

... the historical precedence, which - technically and aesthetically - upholds the current state of the oeuvre of Gustavo Fernandes, cannot be ignored. Such an omission would constitute a grave lacuna, insufficiently filled in this book by a scanty number of images selected from some of the few hundred pieces (black and white and coloured crayon drawings, watercolours, gouaches, and canvases) made between 1983 and the mid-90's, on the whole little known, but, nevertheless, particularly significant exemplars of the primordial phases to which his, already attained, maturity is affiliated, and which are traces of the origins of his pictorial vocabulary.

In the a-chronical process of his creativity, there is a dissertation, (only) apparently interrupted, which denounces the existence of a very clear evolutionary line which, besides giving credibility to his artistic trajectory, defines some of the demiurgic co-ordinates of his origin.

They are visited landscapes, with no return, intact figures suspended from nothing, having the Cyclopean vision of Time as background, remarkable (in)animate characters, which the painter surprises in fugitive *close-ups*, meddling - in secret complicity - with ghosts of a *déjà-vu Present*, or of a *(then) premonitory (now) Past*, which simultaneously has an intuition of the *Future*, between panic and the paradisiacal materialisation of the wings of slumber ... *flying through the cosmos*, hand-in-hand with the angelic immortality, of the *Androgyne*.