

Pietro Gaglianò

**PAOLO FABIANI
IS GOKU**

**Gli
òri**

CREATOR

Gli Ori, Pistoia

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TRANSLATIONS

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On the cover

Lia Acciai, student of class III A of Istituto Comprensivo Alto Casentino,
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Like Gunpowder

Pietro Gaglianò

"Art gives everything back"
Carol Rama

During a conversation about the making of some of his early works, Paolo Fabiani mentioned gunpowder. According to some hypotheses, gunpowder was invented by mistake, as a result of an error made by its creators, who were actually looking for something else. One of the devices that most strongly affected the development of human presence on the planet, to the point that some consider its spread as the very beginning of the Anthropocene not to be the result of a voluntary act, but rather an accident, due to a relapse effect, and it is certainly not a unique case in the history of great discoveries.

Fabiani tells us that some of his works (in particular the *Soffi* (breaths), where the special effect of colour arrived by chance) were conceived as follows: "like gunpowder". The reference to this story of an invention, whether or not it is true, is a metaphor that allows us to describe what happens when the artist turns his eyes from the world and focuses on his actions. The artist at work sets in motion a 'translation' process, a transformation in which the experience of what is perceivable meets inscrutable factors. These factors include sensory conditions, those of historical time and space in which the creative gesture takes place, the personal input of the artist and society at large, and, above all, that arcane function that oversees the interpretation of the universe, introducing what was not there before: the form and experience of art. Form and experience occur at the convergence of all the above-mentioned issues as an unexpected, incredible mix, which had never been seen before and was only partially desired and planned. Perhaps like gunpowder when it appeared by mistake.

So it is for Paolo, or at least this is his perception, and it is useful to maintain a similar attitude (adventurous, willing to take on the unexpected) in approaching

his history as an artist; observing it in perspective and analysing the continuities, the breaking points, and the unexpected connections that are visible only by leaving aside the taxonomic drive, this story will emerge as an island from the sea, first some hills, then others, then the valleys, showing the geological, traumatic, and sedimentary events, from which it takes its shape. Fabiani's work is presented in a similar way, with images and concepts that seem to appear simultaneously but at a great distance from each other, with crossings and returns. For this reason, it makes sense to identify some of the themes that dovetail with his biography, such as two layers with different meshes and rhythms which are finally combined in a surprising geography that is the story of an artist, is very helpful.

Paolo Fabiani's research is characterised by subjects that are arranged in a certain number of areas that are quite clearly identifiable; sometimes they have a huge impact on certain periods, sometimes they re-emerge after a while, revealing their influence on the author's work even during their latency, sometimes they recur as a juxtaposition, as a resonance included in all his works, even in those that from a formal point of view appear more distant from each other. In some cases, the themes appear to be the consequence of the artist's interest in a certain material or technique, or they are the pretext, or rather the relationship with physical and technological factors, which is completely accidental, while the idea underlying the tools of creation, to manifest in the final form, prevails. A detailed survey of this variety of themes reveals the relationship with the forms of nature, the passion for play and for objects (toys, indeed, but also packaging, crockery, household appliances, cars, and other industrial products), and there is a very strong affection for materials and their expressive potential; in the iconographic field there is the appeal of the vast tradition of the *Commedia*

dell'arte, with the masks and its blend of comic and tragic, and there is the reinterpretation of the history of Italian art, with its mix of sacred and profane figures; but there are also works that delve into architectural and relational space. All these subjects take turns and intertwine surrounded by the gaze of the artist who eventually achieves unity; Fabiani always foregrounds the human condition: it's so sensitive, neuralgic, and exciting because he deals with his own personal condition, and from this depth he speaks to all of us.

The dimension in which this interplay between the artist's work and the observer is expressed is the semantics of the body, in fact Paolo Fabiani's works are a lesson in corporeality. Not only because at the centre of all his work is his body as an artist, as a man with a suffering physique and one marked by specific pathologies, as a skilled craftsman and reckless manipulator of materials; not only because his body is there: even where a recognisable physiognomy does not prevail, it is there as the cause of an immediate and visible effect, as the origin of the form, like a fingerprint; not only because this immanence of the body in relation to the work, finally declared, is one of the most decisive claims of contemporary art, brought back to the sphere of the perceivable, to secular life, to the pleasure of the things that can be seen and heard; and not even because, at the end of the day, all this has always belonged to the solipsistic dimension of authorship, unfolding in the tension that binds each artist to their work, physically and in the mind, and which makes each work a self-portrait. The corporeality lesson experienced with Fabiani's works mostly concerns us, when we look at these works of art. The materials, the signs, the shapes, and the objects included in his works resonate in the flesh of the observer, they seem to share their substance, or at least a memory, an ancient knowledge of veins, tendons, blood, and our bones. It's something deeply concealed, narrow,



Untitled, 1998,
enamel color on slate stone, cm. 40x70
Private collection, . Photo Teresa Bellandi