

PRESS RELEASE

ELISEO MATTIACCI

COSMOS FACTORY

with photos by Claudio Abate

Verona, Galleria dello Scudo
12 December 2010 - 30 April 2011

opening: Saturday 11 December 2010 at 7pm
opening hours: Monday – Saturday 10am - 1pm / 3.30 pm - 7.30 pm



Eliseo Mattiacci, 2010
(photo Claudio Abate)

Cosmos, planets, and magnetic fields that join together to change matter have always had a profound influence on Eliseo Mattiacci's imaginings; they were already recurrent themes in his works dating from the early 1960s, such as those seen in his actions and installations in the Tartaruga and Attico galleries in Rome or in the Alexander Iolas galleries in Paris, Milan, and New York. Central to the artist's career at an international level were his solo shows in the 1972 and 1988 Venice biennales; his shows in the Kunstforum Städtische Galerie im Lanbachhaus, Munich, in 1984; in the Capodimonte museum, Naples, in 1991; in the Mercati di Traiano, Rome, in 2001; and his project *Danza di astri e di stelle* (The Dance of Heavenly Bodies and Stars) in Reggio Emilia, 2006, where he placed imposing sculptures in the open air.

After its site-specific show here in the winter of 2002, the Galleria dello Scudo is once more paying tribute to Mattiacci by exhibiting a selection of large-scale works created between 1976 and 2010, all based on the theme of possible relationships between the earth, space, and astronomic bodies: the centre of his interest for some thirty years. *Fabbrica del cosmo* (Cosmos Factory) has been and continues to be the imaginary place where the artist, continually renewing himself, captures forms and brings them to life through a constant dialogue with the elements of the universe and the forces that govern it.

The show opens with the *Sole e luna* (Sun and Moon), diptych. He began to plan this in 1976 when his work, still strongly conceptual, often alluded to ancient cultures. At its heart is the awareness that every creative thought and process is undertaken within the coordinates of day and night: "Life itself is the manifestation of an energy of which the sun, the moon, and the whole cosmos are the active dynamics; in fact, it was to these that ancient civilizations always turned, leaving imperishable demonstrations of man's relationships with the stars". (Bruno Corà, 1991).

His polyptych *Predisposi a un capolavoro cosmico astronomico* (To get ready for a cosmic astronomical explosion), 1981-82, consisting of five large pieces on which are laid out, in apparent order, strips of torn paper on which are drawn swiftly moving planets and small satellites which shoot in impossible trajectories across blue and pink skies and whose transparency is underlined by a refined frottage technique. "Mattiacci draws a lot. He goes ahead sequentially with an indecipherable yet precise internal order. He draws so that his voracious touch can spark off an exchange - even a physical one - between the paper, graphite, and colour (I have in mind ... the early stages of *Predisposi a un capolavoro*) ... He draws what the works will or might be by suddenly extracting the sensorial impulse of materials, forms, and situations, though keeping unchanged, and finding it in the self-stabilizing speed of recording and metamorphosing, the overall and erratic value of this relationship, a relationship consisting of the moods, tastes, and blurs of a synthesis that is continually under attack. (Flaminio Gualdoni, 1985.)



Sole e luna (Sun and Moon), 1976
diptych, iron and brass, 200 x 100 cm each



Cosmogonia (Cosmogony), 1985-1986
ribbed steel, aluminium, iron and copper
height 300 cm., diameter 430 cm

During the 1980s Mattiacci once again took up his earliest themes and, now even more vigorously, launched his challenge to the laws of physics. The interest of these new works is to be found above all in the gap between the heaviness of the body and the lightness of the visual effect produced by this precarious combination. Just as in *Sfera* (Sphere), 1965, compact masses were replaced by a tangle of empty barbed wire, so in *Cosmogonia* (Cosmogony), planned in 1985, the lightness at the heart of the composition is all-important. The large spiral - drawn by an iron tube that rises up from the ground to shoot towards the infinite in the confined space of a room - outlines the orbit of the planets in their perennial movement.

At the heart of the show is *Carro solare del Montefeltro* (Montefeltro's Sun Chariot), the first work to be undertaken in the second half of the 1980s with the aim of codifying forms for establishing an ideal contact with the heavens. Rails support two large discs cut across by a beam that then curves upwards to support an alienating element, a third disc-like body with a smaller diameter, sloping transversally like a lightning rod. It points skywards as though waiting for a bolt of lightning to strike so as to use its energy, the energy that Mattiacci "feels around himself everywhere and with which, like few other sculptors of our times, he has learned to dialogue". (Fabrizio D'Amico, 2002.) If the movement is that of the first mythical chariot and of mankind's first steps, the origins of the underlying idea and iconography are to be found in Piero della Francesca's triumphal allegory in the background of his portrait of Duke Federico da Montefeltro. This large sculpture sums up the image of a secular procession and the sense of going beyond a defined space. In order to underline its strong symbolic import, Mattiacci decided to place it at the centre of one of the most prestigious rooms in the 1988 XLIII Venice Biennale, next to other similarly inspired sculptures, such as *Lente solare* (Solar Lens), 1987, and *Esplorazione magnetica* (Magnetic Exploration) from the following year.



Carro solare del Montefeltro
(Montefeltro's Sun Chariot), 1986
iron, 278 x 500 x 145 cm

The exhibition continues with works dating from the following decades. *Collisione* (Collision), 1995-96, contains particularly fascinating motifs that were to inspire such works for landscape and architectural settings as the huge suspended disc in his action/installation *Un ascolto di vuoto* (Listening to Emptiness) in the Passo del Furlo, near Pesaro, in 1992, or the enormous *Gong*, dating from 1992-1993, that attracted attention in the Mercati di Traiano, Rome, in 2001. *Scrutare il cosmo* (Scanning the Cosmos), 2004, is once again a machine for capturing far distant signals. *Tempo globale* (*Global Time*), also dating from 2004, renews the challenge against the force of gravity by changing the weight of a heavenly body, orbiting in the nights of time, into something light and airy.

Ricerca intenzionale di meteoriti (A Purposeful Exploration of Meteorites) rounds off the show. This is an installation created specifically for the exhibition. Blocks of lava of varying sizes are shown just as they are in nature, and so are not shaped by the hands of men. In a room immersed in sidereal darkness the blocks, chosen for the beauty of the reddish veining resulting from oxidation and clusters of minerals, become imaginary meteorites journeying through the void and held in metaphysical stillness.



Collisione (Collision), 1995-1996
iron and steel, diameter 135 cm



Tempo globale (*Global Time*), 2004
ribbed steel and steel shavings
height 283 cm, diameter 138 cm

The works are interspersed with photographs by Claudio Abate, one of the main protagonists of the contemporary art scene and the creator of memorable shots. These establish a series of interactions with other works by Mattiacci that he has photographed, and they produce an original short-circuit between past and present.

During the period of the exhibition we will be presenting a monograph edited by Germano Celant and published by Skira which, through its exhaustive illustrations and documentation, reconstructs the career and biography of Mattiacci.