

ARTFORUM

Luciano Fabro: PALAZZO FABRONI

By Francesca Pasini (March 1995)

The Fabro retrospective at the Pistoia museum had the freshness and immediacy of a diary. Personal biography is always connected to his works, as the catalogue (designed by the artist himself) makes clear. Thus his story, his participation in *arte povera*, his progress as an individual through other shows, other writings, other perceptions, emerges through the sculptures, a critical text, and a photograph. Luciano Fabro's visual "diary" develops by continually weaving together past and present, biography and history. The viewer is faced, not with a chronological sequence, but with sort of circular path where the works set up a dialogue with each other over a distance of time and visions.

The central hall of the museum contained a two-by-two-meter cube lined with mirrors on the inside and outside entitled *Cubo di specchi* (Cube of mirrors, 1969–75). It reflects what is happening around it, but upon entering it, the reflected image is infinitely multiplied. It allows viewers to metaphorically perceive the innumerable sides of the self. Looking down from the galleries facing onto this room were the various colored-marble sculptures of the series "*Nudi che scendono le scale*" (Nudes descending the staircase, 1987). The artist's computer pieces (1988–94) hung from the walls and ceiling; these are metal-sectioned sculptures that form various geometric figures, their design changing according to where they are placed, just as the almost infinite variation of information our computers contain is based on a basic binary language.

Another room contained *Io (L'Uovo)* (I [The Egg], 1978), a gigantic bronze egg with a black patina, of the same dimensions as Fabro's body were it to assume a fetal position. One end is open, and the interior cavity is clad with gold leaf from which Fabro's handprints emerge, as if still embracing his first envelope of life. Even when in another room, the viewer immediately sensed a connection to the most recent sculpture: *Sisifo* (Sisyphus, 1994), another self-portrait. If in *Io* one senses the exertion of birth, here one could imagine the effort of growth. An extremely beautiful onyx cylinder, the color of amber, had been rolled on the floor, which was partially covered in flour. The rolling action left on the cylinder surface a vivid and impalpable impression of the artist's presence. Of course, Sisyphus was condemned to roll a huge rock uphill only to have it roll back down so that he would have to begin the futile exercise all over again. But Fabro's roller is terrestrial, suggesting that life requires this continual pushing forward that perhaps has no end in sight. Here, at least, it guides us through an encounter with some twenty other works that, at this particular moment, Fabro chose from his diary to relate his life as a man and as an artist.