

Recorded online journal www.museoomero.it

Issue 29 - Year 12 - April 2025



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The shadow sees. Enzo Cucchi Multi-sensoriality and inclusiveness: new geopolitics

by Andrea Socrati

With the exhibition "L'ombra vede" (The shadow sees) by Enzo Cucchi, one of the most important and significant contemporary artists, the Omero Museum has given life to a totally accessible, original and new cultural event. The methods of valorisation, communication and relationship with the artwork, together with the design of an experiential and engaging exhibition environment constitute innovations compared to the canons of traditional museology.

Regarding the enjoyment of the artwork, first of all the artistic project intends to propose and valorise multi-sensoriality as a privileged way to rethink the encounter with the artwork. Forty sculptures by the artist from the Marche region await the public to give life to an intimate encounter, which passes through tactility and bodily feeling.

It is undeniable that our relationship with reality and consequently with art undergoes a constant impoverishment when the relationship relies almost exclusively on sight, forgetting, if not anesthetizing, the other senses. We are in the era of "Augmented Reality" where human been seems to be allowed to open new worlds which unfortunately are often ephemeral, virtual and in any case based almost exclusively on the visual channel. To truly increase the relationship with reality, a multisensory approach is necessary. Forgetting the perceptive possibilities beyond sight means giving up a large part of the information and stimuli that come from the world and the lived environment, and the case of touch, in the museum context, is striking. In museums and art exhibitions, the "ban on touching" is often and willingly applies. This essentially means excluding a priori people with visual disabilities, who make touch the main channel of knowledge of reality, denying them the right to enjoy art and beauty.

An affective aesthetic experience

In agreement with the artist, the artistic project "L'Ombra vede" focuses decisively on the sculpture; the sculptures made with different materials can be enjoyed tactilely not only by blind people but by the entire public. Here, from a need of a limited number of people with visual impairment, new possibilities emerge enriching everyone's experience. The tactile channel offers a vast range of information and sensations precluded to sight. A sculpture has a lot to tell not only through its shape but also through the used materials, through the texture of the surfaces, the geometry of the planes, the consistency, the temperature, all aspects that require a tactile and multisensory approach. An intimate and engaging dialogue with an artwork of this kind is able to amplify the affective feeling that passes largely through the tactile relationship, allowing anyone to live an intense and new aesthetic experience. Of course, touching an artwork has the same characteristics of the affective touch between people. It becomes a caress that establishes a gentle, intimate, physical relationship with the artwork. Enzo Cucchi says that to fully understand a work "you have to see it only in the dark; because things are preserved in the shadow and in the dark" and looking at the world, he adds, "you should put your head on the ground, like pumpkins, and your hands on things". Many things cannot be seen and appreciated with eyes: they remain in the shadow and in the dark. It is necessary to "get your hands on them". A particular dark environment has been set up in the exhibition spaces with the aim of allowing the public to live a unique experience. A six-meter by three-meter cave, inspired by a sculpture by the artist, hosts three artworks of three different materials, to be explored only through the hands. A sort of initiation path to awaken sleeping senses and to become aware of the potential of our body and our sensoriality. A preparatory path to a multisensory enjoyment of the sculptures of the exhibition, to fully experience the encounter with art.

Poetic imagery and manual skills: from the skull to the thimble

The valorisation of multi-sensoriality is already expressed and communicated through an original invitation to the opening day of the exhibition, which took place on December 15, 2024. The invitation presents a visual and tactile image

at the same time, with the text written in high readability and in Braille. At the ends of a cord are applied a small skull, a characteristic symbol of the artist's poetic imagery, and a thimble. The latter was wanted by Enzo Cucchi as a further reference to tactility and manual skills.

The space of the exhibition is divided into particularly scenography environments, aimed at an inclusive and engaging narration of the artist's poetics. We can define them as theatrical sets, where the main actors are the artworks waiting for the audience to bring the show to life. Involvement and active participation are the watchwords. We have already talked about the cave in the dark, called the "Cave of the Idols", which characterizes a first theatrical set together with a forest made up of life-size trees inspired by the artist's artworks. It is a reference to a primordial, genuine humanity, at the beginning of its journey, still devoid of those superstructures and masks that characterize our modern society. This theme is repeated with a second environment evoking a country farmyard and the rural life, a source of inspiration for Enzo Cucchi, also through the testimonies of his farmer father collected by Brunella Antomarini in an interesting writing entitled "Il grano" (the wheat). Giuseppe Cucchi tells about a life where the body and the senses are at the centre of the human experience, in symbiosis with the earth, animals, the rhythms of nature; a life made of hard work, rituals and collective celebrations, capable of creating solid social bonds.

Smells mark the geopolitics of the heart

Giuseppe Cucchi writes: "You could feel the smells, always, the smells of everything, of the rain and the grass and the earth and the plants and the animals. Everything had its own smell. For tihis reason, you could connect yourself to people and things, because the smell entered you. When you don't have a smell, like today, you don't connect yourself to anything and you free yourself from everyone easily because everyone smells the same way".

The presence of seats and tables in this space dedicated to the farmyard allows the public to stop, to experience the time of the exhibition in a different and productive way, increasing pleasure, interpersonal relationships and opportunities for learning and knowledge.

You can consult the artist's catalogues, read some of his poems, acquire knowledge on the theme of tactility in art and learn about further itineraries to experience within our Region to discover other artworks by the artist. This last theme is also designed for promoting knowledge of the territories, creating added value and identity, in synergy and with the involvement of other local and cultural realities: starting, for example, with the Municipality of Morro d'Alba, the artist's birthplace. To this aim, a special visual and tactile map has been created with the places in the Marche that host artworks by Cucchi. A third environment reconstructs the artist's atelier, a place where a rich and original repertoire of images takes shape. Images without an univocal interpretation but which, on the contrary, are characterised by polysemy with references to ancient symbols linking mysterious esoteric thought dwelling Jung's collective unconscious. An interpretative and reflective journey that the public must realize through the creation of their own "Cave of the Idols", in the space adjacent to the atelier, dedicated to manual skills and creativity.

The communication and narration of the exhibition is diversified and multimodal, making it inclusive and accessible to all audiences. The important collaboration with RAI Pubblica Utilità led to the creation of a totally accessible information video, with audio, subtitles and translation into Italian Sign Language. A presentation of the exhibition dedicated to people with complex communication needs was created using the strategies of Augmentative Alternative Communication thanks to the collaboration with a professional in the sector.

Finally, special educational and didactic initiatives and workshops were studied, naturally inclusive, aimed at schools, families and the adult public, aimed at experiencing moments of socialization and learning and promoting knowledge of the poetic world of this artist from the Marche Region.

Childhood, affections, countryside and then the light

by Aureliana Tesei

Enzo Cucchi's exhibition at the Omero Museum is particularly involving, more than engaging: in some strange and new ways. There are some very interesting sculptural works (strange for me), for the quality of the materials used, such as wood, marble, and iron. It is a very strong and very intimate path; sometimes individually epidermal. Touching objects and tools, exploring unknown spaces: apparently far from the artist's memory. All this can intimidate and slow down the visit. The work with the skulls is exciting; because the skull is not only the symbol bringing us back to death, but it is also something bringing good luck. There is often a double reading in some Cucchi's works and, perhaps, this is one of them. The path in the dark and entering the cave were sometimes precarious and difficult: it brought me back to my childhood when I was scared of the dark.

In the dark, we can't see; perhaps we stumble, we struggle, we imagine to be away. Therefore, entering the cave appears as a symbol, like returning to the mother's womb. Above all, discovering the works and then with great difficulty finding them again. This violent and rapid variation is the great strength of the exhibition. The docking of the boats at the port, surrounded by a lot of skulls, is very beautiful.

I realize I am writing in a somewhat clumsy and childish style: but everything is true, spontaneous and consequently childish in this adventure that goes beyond vision transporting you to rediscover the unconscious. The place where the rural space is set up, with flasks, wheelbarrows and peasant tools takes you back to the beautiful Marche countryside and makes everyone a child again.

I am not an art expert, but I am certainly an art enthusiast! I discovered an artist that previously I knew only for his fame and originality. Now from him, I have also learned feelings of serenity, affection and energy that rarely come to us in such a direct and effective way. In short, I spent a good afternoon researching culture and what art can give us.

The sun's rays go around Italy

by Marcello Smarrelli

In artistic practice, the use of light is crucial and often characterizes both the artist and the artwork. Today, this is the case in Ancona, at the Omero Museum, where the exhibition "L'ombra vede" (the shadow sees) is the inescapable confirmation involving emotionally and physically. Can light or the absence of light determine our being or not being there? In short, even the dark sees. Enzo Cucchi tells that "To fully understand a work, you must see it solely in the dark; because in the shadow and in the dark, things are preserved and for looking at the world, you should put your head on the ground like pumpkins". This explanation allows us to understand that this is not a traditional exhibition, but an intimate sensorial experience built together with the artist. From a cave to a country farmyard, the scenic path becomes strongly sensorial, until the point of perceiving the artist's creative space.

For this reason, I think it is useful to resume a nice dialogue I had with the artist on a previous occasion; I want to propose again, even if it is partially already published (Skira "I raggi del sole fanno il giro del mondo" [the sun's rays go around the world]), about the theme of the relationship of artists with light.

Here are Enzo Cucchi's answers to the specific questions:

The light is what Ortega y Gasset tells in the correspondence between Goya and Velazquez, the light is what Velazquez uses to illuminate things.

The light is something you feel but don't see. What you see is the colour that exists because it is revealed by the light.

The light is the only thing that is truly blasphemed every time we name it, but it is the only glorious blasphemy.

The light is felt and that's it. The light there is or it there isn't.

The light for Piero della Francesca? Lightis

The Caravaggio's light? Light ...is. It is the contrary of all those artists whose foggy vision is only a regurgitation of romanticism.

The light of sculpture? Light ...is. But it is not an around itself, you don't see it by turning around the object. The light is inside the sculpture and is perceived immediately at first glance.

The light in architecture? Light ... isn't. When all is perfect in architecture, you can orientate yourself. Light in architecture is a low-grade thing.

The light of architects? Light ... isn't. It is an artificial light, architects create a formal light, they are blind, they make stages and illuminate them. They make light what light isn't: a dazzle.

The light of the South? Light ... is. Full of shining sweat.

The light of beauty? Light ... is. Contemporary beauty is doped. Beauty with doping.

The light of stone? Light ... is. Stone is light and marbles have eyes because the things that can see have light inside.

The shape of the light? Light is a triangle.

The figure of the light? Light is the number three.

The artificial light? Light isn't. On a universal level, NASA scientists could talk better about it, on a local level the electrician down the street.

The light of Rome? Light ... is. The light of Rome is that of a prostitute.

Where does the light go? Light ... is. The light illuminates necessary things.

De pulchritudine. Darkness and beauty

by Aldo Grassini

A fascinating sunset, a radiant smile, the masterpiece of a great artist: does the splendor of beauty always pass through the eyes? And will the life of a blind person never be cheered by the joy of beauty?

A lot of people think with terror of a world devoid of light and devoid of the pleasure of living, a world perpetually shrouded in the heaviness of darkness. But blindness produces above all practical problems with strongly negative social implications. About the vision of the world... don't forget that for a congenitally blind person darkness does not exist he has never experienced it, just as he has never experienced light. For him, darkness is a word devoid of concrete meaning. So, let's put aside the romantic sadness of a life shrouded in darkness and ask ourselves about the problem in real terms.

First, obvious beauty does not only inhabit the realm of sight. Beautiful can be a set of sounds (music) or a set of words (poetry); beautiful is an outpouring of perfumes, a human relationship, a social situation. Sight has nothing to do with all this.

But I do not want to escape from the initial question: does the beauty of nature, of a human person, of a artwork belong only to the realm of vision?

Let us first try to clarify the borders of the feeling of beauty. Everything that produces in us a sense of well-being, a satisfying harmony of relationships between things and with things, a fruitful relationship with the object that stimulates a beneficial impulse of vitality is beautiful. Yes, beauty is a feeling, not the quality of an object, but of the emotion aroused. And this sense of intimate cohesion of the manifold can be stimulated even by contradiction and disharmony when art manages to sublimate them in the unity of a brilliant synthesis.

In all of this, the senses play an important role, but what matters is the ability to translate those sensations into engaging meanings, emotions and feelings.

An exciting sunset is beautiful to see if it realizes, through the gaze, the indescribable wonder of the fortunate relationship with nature in the "hic et nunc" instant of a happy situation. But this relationship with nature does not arise only from seeing it is much stronger and more significant if it involves us in the totality of our being. A virtual relationship is never comparable to the reality of an emotion experienced lively. Admiring that sunset while being there, on a hill in front of the sea, is not like seeing it on the TV screen or in a photograph. The difference is in what is added to the visual sensation: the warmth of the air that brushes against us, the scents carried by the wind, the chirping of birds at sunset and, perhaps, the pleasure of pleasant company. That visual image becomes much more fascinating if it is integrated into an experience that is rich because it is actual.

The senses, the mind, the heart: this is the journey of beauty.

A blind person lacks visual image and for sighted people it represents the first stage, but he can experience a relationship with nature based on the synchrony of the other senses starting that wonderful journey.

About the enjoyment of a masterpiece of art, we can indicate the same journey: the tactile or even multi-sensory approach allows us to penetrate the secret recesses of beauty just like the visual approach. Tactile sensitivity, so little known, offers a rich range of specific qualities, essential for an in-depth knowledge of things and materials, but also for the pure pleasure of touching as a first step towards a rich and refined aesthetic experience (Aldo Grassini: "Per un'estetica della tattilità. Ma esistono davvero arti visive?", Armando, 2019).

Before ending, briefly I want to think about the beauty of a person, a smile, a shape. The journey is always the same: the senses, the mind, the heart. In this case, for social reasons touch is rarely useful because our culture does not allow to touch a person unless there is a particular emotional relationship. But contrary to what you might think, we must be aware that the beauty of a person is never exclusively linked to physical forms. What we like or even fascinate us is personality. A person is beautiful for what their figure can inspire in us. A well-made face is never beautiful if it is inexpressive. A human image must communicate something, must arouse some interest and this never depends only

on physical shapes. A body is attractive for the attitude it assumes, the mouth is transfigured by a smile, the eyes enchant for the light that animates them, a face for the thought it reveals.

All this is learned with the eyes, but there are other sensations capable of revealing the characteristics of a personality. A "remade face" can deceive the eye, but it cannot hide the fading of youth at the touch of the hand. And then there is the voice. Those who see do not always notice it, but the voice is an element of physicality, like the body, which is perceived with the sense of hearing and reveals all the most subtle nuances of emotion. It is said that eyes are the mirror of the soul, but this definition can rightfully be applied to the voice as well. The senses, the mind, the heart: the journey of beauty is valid for a blind person even in reference to people. Someone may say that his judgment may not coincide with the judgment of someone who can see but I can object that in this observation there is a presumption of objectivity as an exclusive monopoly of seeing!

(article partly already published in Magazines and websites of the sector)

On the trail of the Cagli Warriors: a bridge between the past and the future through museum digitalization

by Daisy De Nardis and Federica Galazzi

In the evocative setting of the Archaeological Museum and the Via Flaminia in Cagli, an innovative digitalization project virtually brings back to the territory one of its most significant archaeological testimonies: the warriors of the Stipe of Coltona. Through advanced technologies and an inclusive approach, the museum is transformed into an immersive and multisensory space, offering visitors an engaging experience accessible to all.

In 1878, twelve bronze statuettes, depicting warrior deities, were found in Coltona, near Cagli. Since then, these precious finds have been kept in the National Archaeological Museum of the Marche, in Ancona, limiting the possibility for the territory to preserve a part of its historical heritage. The project "On the Trail of the Warriors of Cagli", developed within the "Next-Museum" European initiative, has filled this gap through interactive installations and digital replicas returning symbolically the statuettes to the local community, strengthening the bond between the civic museum and the national museum.

The initiative is part of a broader context of valorisation of the cultural heritage of the internal areas, often excluded from the major tourist circuits. Bringing back, even if only virtually, the statuettes to their territory of origin means giving back to the community part of its history and identity, allowing visitors to rediscover the link between the past and the present.

The preliminary study had the objective of recognizing the museum's own identity and finding the right way to enhance it. The heart of the initiative consists of a multidisciplinary team that has conceived a project combining archaeology, technology and multisensory narration. The exhibition has been enriched with:

- Tactile replicas of the bronze statuettes, made with 3D printing: they are
 accessible to people with visual impairments. The Omero State Tactile Museum
 actively collaborated in the design of these supports, so that the blind public
 could "read" the artworks through touch.
- An interactive table (with writings also in Braille) that allows you to explore the history of the warriors through an audiovisual narration, activated by pawns visitors can move between the stages of the route. This tool not only enriches the visit but stimulates an active and participatory experience.
- Motion graphic video story (with Italian/English subtitles), activated from the
 interactive table, designed with engaging storytelling for children and young
 people, to depict the path taken by the bronze statuettes based on their stages,
 from their discovery to their digitalization.
- A virtual tour of the archaeological finds of the area of Cagli: an invitation to discover places of historical interest not always easily accessible. Thanks to an interactive map, the visitor can immerse themselves in a journey through time and space, discovering the importance of the Via Flaminia in the past.

The adopted approach follows the principles of "Design for All", making the museum a place of inclusion and participation for a diverse audience. The concept of "accessible museum" is not limited to ensuring paths without architectural barriers but extends to the possibility of enjoying knowledge through different methods: tactile, visual, sound and interactive. One of the most innovative aspects of the project was the acknowledgment of the figure of the Digital Curator, capable of integrating digital tools in museum management, promotion and creation of new experiences of fruition. The Next-Museum project has invested in the training of this professional skill, providing advanced skills for the digitalization and valorisation of cultural heritage.

The Digital Curator acts as a mediator between scientific content, public needs and new possibilities offered by digitalization. Thanks to his vision, the museum becomes an environment in continuous evolution, capable of responding to the new challenges of cultural communication.

"On the Trail of the Cagli Warriors" is a virtuous example of how technology can be put at the service of culture without replacing it but amplifying its ability to involve the public. The initiative received the National Inclusion 3.0 Award of UNIMC (University of Macerata), an award that underlines the positive impact of the project in creating value for the territory and the community.

This model of an accessible, interactive museum, connected to the territory, represents a point of reference for other small and medium-sized museums, demonstrating how digitalization can be an effective tool to enhance cultural heritage, making it alive and accessible to all. Technology turns out to be not an aim but a mean to enrich the narrative and offer new keys to reading the past.

Finally, the project highlights the importance of collaboration between different entities to raise awareness and involve the territory: public bodies, universities, research institutes, cultural associations and specialized companies. The plurality of the involved subjects has allowed us to develop an innovative path, capable of combining scientific rigor and accessible fruition, opening the way for new perspectives for the future of local museums.

A key element for the project's success was the involvement of the interdisciplinary working group, coordinated by the Fondazione Marche Cultura (project leader). Through working groups and periodic meetings, it was possible to conduct an in-depth analysis of the territory, identifying the best strategies to redesign the museum's image. This synergy between professionals from different fields planners, organizers, communicators, archaeologists, museologists, engineers, accessibility experts, designers, digital developers and voice actors made possible to balance conservation needs and digital innovation, experimenting new ways of narration and interaction for the public.

Specifically, the project involved: Fondazione Marche Cultura, Università Politecnica delle Marche, ICOM Italia, Museo Archeologico e della Via Flaminia di Cagli, Museo Archeologico Nazionale delle Marche), Museo Tattile Statale Omero, Comune di Cagli, Comune di Fano, Confcommercio Marche Nord, UICI Pesaro, as well as professionals for motion graphics production, dubbing, 3D printing, digital museum installations and set-up. The integration of different skills has allowed to tackle the project with a broad and inclusive vision, ensuring an accurate and engaging restitution of the cultural heritage, and creating a replicable model for other museums that wish to undertake a path of digitalization and accessibility.

At Easter, like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island.

When tactility transforms itself into aesthetic perception, the World is more beautiful

By Claudia Consonni

Wandering around the supermarket shelves and the pastry shops looking for a chocolate animal to replace the Easter egg, I struggled to find an object that had both the quality and a very high percentage of good cocoa to satisfy my palate, as well as a pleasant shape. I leave aside the external appearance of the object, the graphics and the packaging to focus on the shape characteristics that I can explore with touch. Sometimes these objects, even from famous brands offering excellent cocoa, do not pass a tactile analysis test. Disproportions, approximation of details, marked relief in the conjunction of the melds and in some cases the poor resemblance to the real animal disappoint the tactile perception. The pleasantness of the experience fades. And even if for taste and smell it is satisfying, the aesthetic pleasure is missing. However, I like to think that perseverance often pays off and blind people know it. Once, I found a beautiful chocolate hen. It was a rewarding little experience that helped me celebrate my lonely Easter.

By now, a lot of people spends Easter alone, like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island or that prince on his wandering planet and catapulted into the desert by accident. Alone because we are single, widows and widowers, spinsters and bachelors, divorced, separated, halved at home and outside. We are the ones who don't like Sunday! Better Saturday and weekdays. For us, Christmas or Easter is the same. For us, staying with parents bores us; *Christmas with your family and Easter with whoever you want* doesn't matter to us. We kind, open, creative and solitary people are a floating archipelago, lazy islands, indolent fickle beings, perhaps because we are alone, separated and without an anchor, we have our rituals. Our thoughts never stop. And the ritual we lack we invent.

Mine is like this.

I bought a hen, a small, pretty hen dressed in gold. I kept it for a few days waiting for Easter, locked in the shadow of a bag. When the moment comes, I contemplate it on the table set with grace and with something extra, the rose in the single-flower vase to honour the holiday. I admire the hen in the centre of a white porcelain plate edged in blue and silver. I spin it around to observe better, as a mannequin would do in front of a wealthy customer. I imagine that, from the effort, it had become thirsty. I take it to peck the blue and silver edge; porcelain is always fresh. Then I undress the gold wrapping. And there it is: all dark, smooth, with an exotic aroma. I examine it in detail: the beautiful proportions, the grace of the thin and arched neck, the lively little tail and the barely visible wings. I admire again, while my taste buds come alive. A Shostakovich waltz come to mind and I turn in time with the music, once, twice, three times, six times in order to disorient and stun it. I take its delicate neck with two fingers and, attention! I put that little head in my mouth. Click! The guillotine comes down.

- Darling, you are delicious! -

I drink a glass of water and smile.

The ritual is done, consumed in solitude. No video or even a photo for Facebook, like on a desert island or on that other guy's little planet.

- But isn't the ritual sharing and participation? -

I seem to hear someone objecting.

The ritual is also this. When sharing and participation are true and heartfelt then they strengthen the ritual, but the ritual is the ritual: it is a deep need that marks the uniqueness of the person. The different components of the soul are involved for celebrating, and they push to invent a ritual when it can be built with a beautiful shape.

After the first bite, the tail and other parts of the hen follow. The golden dress remains, a thin, creaking sheet that bends and shapes as desired.

This is the gift that the ritual offers to those who know how to invent it, to those who, like me, seek a fragment of beauty in a moment of ordinary life.

At Easter like Robinson Crusoe on a desert island

When tactility transforms itself into an aesthetic perception, the world is more beautiful.

Credits

Aisthesis

Discovering art with all the senses

Supports and publishes studies and research on sensory perception and the accessibility of the cultural heritage.

Recorded online journal – www.museoomero.it Issue 29 – Year 12 – April 2025

Editorial and management offices:

Museo Tattile Statale Omero – Mole Vanvitelliana Banchina da Chio 28 – Ancona

website: www.museoomero.it

Publisher: Associazione Per il Museo Tattile Statale Omero ODV-ETS.



Museum Director: Aldo Grassini. **Aisthesis Editor**: Gabriella Papini.

Editorial staff: Monica Bernacchia, Andrea Sòcrati, Annalisa Trasatti,

Massimiliano Trubbiani, Alessia Varricchio.

Graphic design and layout: Massimo Gatto.

Translation: Lorenzo Bontempi.

Recording and mastering by Matteo Schiaroli.

Voice: Luca Violini.



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