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This archaism of water, of liquid chemicals, connects photography to the past, to time [...] the echo of water in photography evokes its prehistory.

Jeff Wall, *Photography and Liquid Intelligence*, 1989

Not only is the photographic image an analogy, rather than a representation or an index, but analogy is also the fluid in which it develops.

Kaja Silverman, *The Miracle of Analogy*, 2015

Une magnificence se déploiera, quelconque, analogue à l'Ombre de jadis.

Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*, 1897

In his 1989 essay *Photography and Liquid Intelligence*, Canadian photographer Jeff Wall reflected on the imminent development of digital technologies, which, in a short time, would alter “the historical consciousness of the medium.”

According to Wall, this alteration is due to what we might define as a paradigm shift in photography: the “liquid intelligence” of its origins—embodied by the essential use of water and emulsions in the analog process—suddenly becomes “dry” through electronics. This paradigm shift is both historical and ontological because, in the transition from analog to digital—and therefore from emulsion to sensor, from photosensitive material to pixel, from drop to glitch—photography has transformed its original vocation.

As American art historian Kaja Silverman argues in *The Miracle of Analogy*, the photographic image is born as “an analogy rather than a representation or a reference.” In other words, the photographic image does not exist to represent or designate any referent: we do not “take” it, “make” it, or “capture” it; rather, it emerges from the world and reveals something about it.

It is “an image that arrives from the future and lands in the present.” If, in the shift to digital, this primacy of analogy is lost, it is because “analogy is also the fluid in which [the image] develops”: it is through that fluid that the light captured by the shutter transfers onto matter and takes on a discernible form, allowing the world to emerge and re-introduce itself.

Roberto Alfano is a painter. Like every painter, his work consists of manipulating fluids and fixing them onto a surface in order to bring forth something of the world and to the world.

Although the result stems from two different mediums and processes, the process of painting shares with that of photography the principle of analogy: both a photograph and a painting are analogical insofar as they resemble the world from which they originate, while at the same time allowing that same fragment of the world to be transcended, revealing, in analogous forms, its infinite meanings and connections.

But what happens when, with an alchemist’s intuition, the painter decides to abandon his usual fluids and manipulate those of photography? What happens when it is not pigments but light—or “matter of light,” as Roberto Alfano prefers to call it—that becomes the painter’s ally in escorting an image from the future to bring it into the present?

The works that make up A MATTER OF LIGHT are the result of this liquid alliance between painting and photography, through which the latter returns to what Wall calls “the archaism of water, of liquid chemical agents,” which “connects photography to its past, to time.” Perfected over the past three years, the technique developed by Alfano allows him to get, on photographic support, a pure liquid movement nourished by light, simultaneously and fully both pictorial and photographic.

Whether black and white or in color, large or small in format, the images that emerge from these studies belong to a world that is both created and captured. As in “traditional” photography, they preserve the luminous memory of the time and place where Roberto Alfano acted upon the photosensitive paper, with the difference that this memory has been redirected by the artist toward forms and motifs characteristic of his imagination and style: from atomized bodies to survivors of an after-party, from snarling dogs to crying children, from windows to gates, from meteors to galaxies.

To Alfano-the-painter and Alfano-the-photographer, one should also add Alfano-the-poet: among his compositions is one titled *Gola*, whose opening verse reads, "I float like a galaxy in the gel of the universe." It is curious how, when exposed to any of the photographs in *A MATTER OF LIGHT*, we all experience this same sensation of floating in a cosmic gel. This is because, alongside luminous memory, another memory is at play: liquid memory, present in the drips, splashes, and stains of gelatinous emulsion, each of which bears a trace within these works.

Because it establishes a largely unexplored connection between liquid memory and luminous memory, between the photographic something and the pictorial something, the play of analogy here becomes even more radical and mysterious.

It reveals the interconnection that exists not so much between light and the space it makes visible but between light and the artist's imagination-his inner space.

One analogous to the other, both alike-using Stéphane Mallarmé's words-"to the Shadow of a time," to that prehistoric phase of photography evoked-Wall might say-by the echo of water, the light and space emanating from these works invite us to explore the cosmic gel and float among its galaxies.

Roberto Alfano, Lodi, 1981.

His interest for art began in the first half of the nineties, when he was first captivated by the graffiti writing scene.

In time this interest would develop into an obsessive passion for drawing and painting.

His primary sources of inspiration are tied to contemporary underground culture, to Art-Brut and to post-impressionist and expressionist painting.

Beside his productions and exhibitions, the artist has specialized in leading experiential-artistic laboratories addressing groups of people with disabilities or living social and psycho-physical distress.

Lately Roberto Alfano's research is focused on underlining the value of the creative process in the artistic practice as being a symbol of freedom of expression.

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