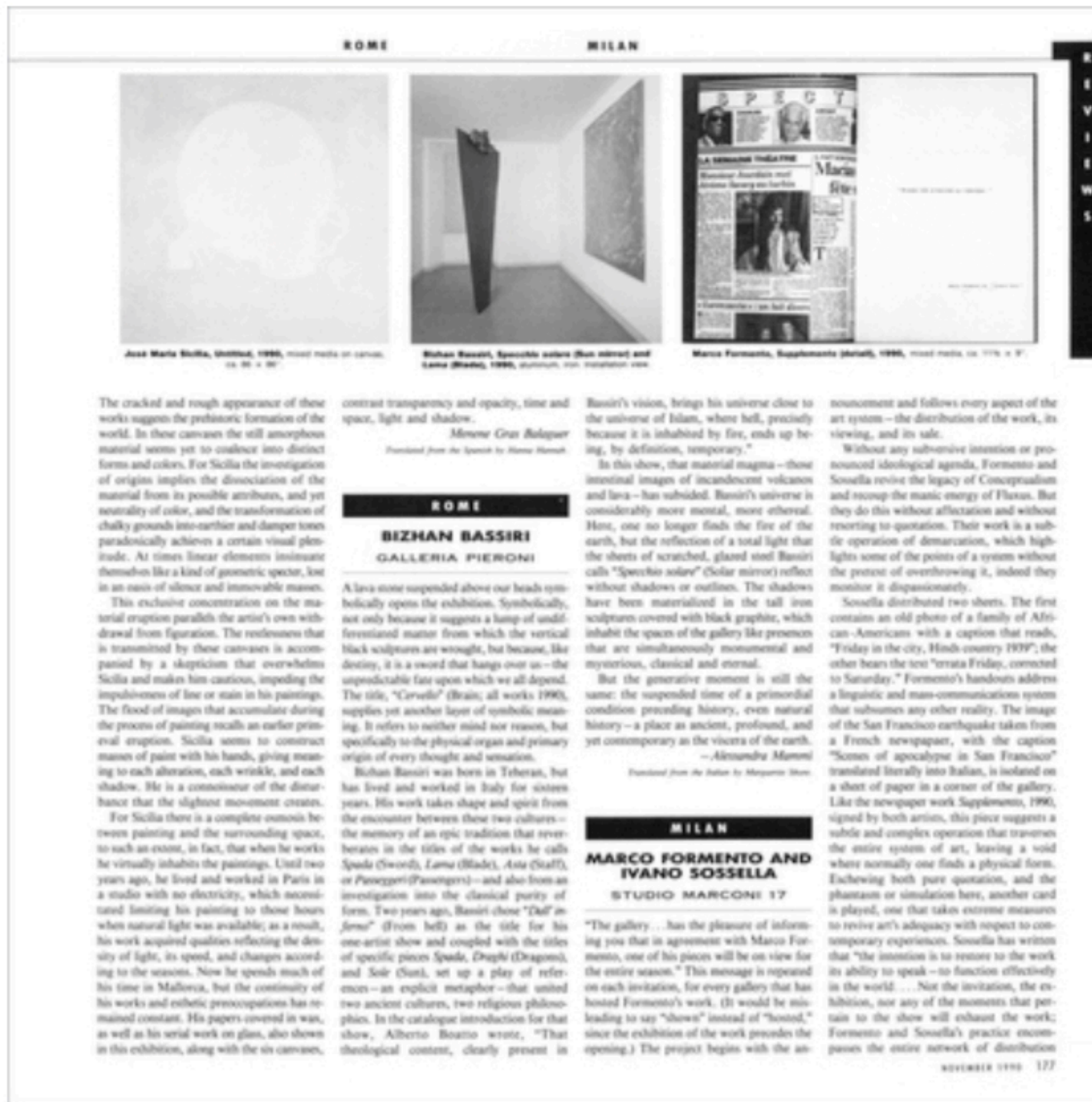


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Bizhan Bassiri

GALLERIA PIERONI

A lava stone suspended above our heads symbolically opens the exhibition. Symbolically, not only because it suggests a lump of undifferentiated matter from which the vertical black sculptures are wrought, but because, like destiny, it is a sword that hangs over us—the unpredictable fate upon which we all depend. The title, “*Cervello*” (Brain; all works 1990), supplies yet another layer of symbolic meaning. It refers to neither mind nor reason, but specifically to the physical organ and primary origin of every thought and sensation.

Bizhan Bassiri was born in Teheran, but has lived and worked in Italy for sixteen years. His work takes shape and spirit from the encounter between these two cultures—the memory of an epic tradition that reverberates in the titles of the works he calls *Spada* (Sword), *Lama* (Blade), *Asta* (Staff), or *Passeggeri* (Passengers)—and also from an investigation into the classical purity of form. Two years ago, Bassiri chose “*Dall’ inferno*” (From hell) as the title for his one-artist show and coupled with the titles of specific pieces *Spada*, *Draghi* (Dragons), and *Sole* (Sun), set up a play of references—an explicit metaphor—that united two ancient cultures, two religious philosophies. In the catalogue introduction for that show, Alberto Boatto wrote, “That theological content, clearly present in Bassiri’s vision, brings his universe close to the universe of Islam, where hell, precisely because it is inhabited by fire, ends up being, by definition, temporary.”

In this show, that material magma—those intestinal images of incandescent volcanos and lava—has subsided. Bassiri’s universe is considerably more mental, more ethereal. Here, one no longer finds the fire of the earth, but the reflection of a total light that the sheets of scratched, glazed steel Bassiri calls “*Specchio solare*” (Solar mirror) reflect without shadows or outlines. The shadows have been materialized in the tall iron sculptures covered with black graphite, which inhabit the spaces of the gallery like presences that are simultaneously monumental and mysterious, classical and eternal.

But the generative moment is still the same: the suspended time of a primordial condition preceding history, even natural history—a place as ancient, profound, and yet contemporary as the viscera of the earth.

—Alessandra Mammi

Translated from the Italian by Marguerite Shore.