

## Between Images and Words

In the years spanning from the discovery of the "fantasia di sparizione" (disappearance fantasy) to the writing of *Death Instinct and Knowledge*, and through the circulation of the manuscript and its subsequent first publication, many of the words that would gain new meaning through Massimo Fagioli's theoretical work were circulating within artistic circles. These terms were often linked to the sensitive intuitions that artists have long possessed, coupled with others that moved dangerously to block and impede research on the human mind—a mind endowed with imagination that distinguishes us from animals.

To write this piece, I sought out the first edition of *Death Instinct and Knowledge*, published in January 1972. I found it in the library and handled it with care, observing it with curiosity and emotion. It represents the initial work of a young and courageous Massimo Fagioli, who, on the first page of the preface, wrote: «Presenting a book to colleagues and an ever-growing audience of psychoanalysis enthusiasts undoubtedly requires courage» and simultaneously announced the discovery of the «fantasia di sparizione.»

In parallel with reading the first edition, I also compared it with the second edition, and the latest versions published by Nuove Edizioni Romane in 2007 and L'Asino d'Oro in 2010. Significant modifications were made in the 1976 edition, with further, more limited changes in 1980, and finally, a terminological update occurred when the book was published by L'Asino d'Oro in 2010 (D. Armando p.50 *Il sogno della Farfalla* n2/2024). Initially vague, two lines of inquiry have gradually taken a more defined shape over time. Captivated by the allure of the surgical precision with which our Author approached and narrated his exploration, I attempted to immerse myself in the historical context of his discovery and writing.

Accompanied by a curiosity for those years dense with crises and intuitions, I explored the interplay of words and images, aiming not to define but to view a complex and multifaceted history from multiple angles. The years I revisit were fertile but also desperate, marked by visual artists struggling between those who resisted and wished to continue creating art through traditional means—painting or sculpting—and the rise of conceptual art. These were years of hope, seeking a new social dimension, yet overshadowed by the stifling presence of prevailing existentialism.

I will provide an evocative rather than exhaustive overview, as the events and works before and after 1964 that I will consider are connected by a research thread featuring certain key terms: indifference and lack of affectivity (*indifferenza e anaffettività*), as well as related concepts such as boredom, inertia, and emptiness (*noia, inerzia e vuoto*). As the construction progresses, terms like vitality, image, and creativity will inevitably emerge (*vitalità, immagine e creatività*). I will not adhere strictly to chronological order, as the unfolding of hypotheses and connections followed the stimuli that appeared during readings, thoughts, and the many things heard in meetings, debates, and directly from our Author's voice.

Some passages may seem bold, daring, or overly literal, but in attempting to construct a research hypothesis, I hope this contribution serves as an invitation to revisit a history and delve into themes that, in my view, are crucial for understanding and reflecting on the complex contemporary reality we are experiencing. Starting from Venice—a city emblematic of the dominant cultural framework and a voice for artists, writers, directors, and intellectuals—I will trace the research on the human mind and creative process that Massimo Fagioli's publication of *Instinct of Death* has profoundly shifted. The contribution I offer for the conference is a small excerpt from an unpublished essay of mine.