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Time and space are the realms in which life unfolds—at once possibility and constraint.

We have always sought—or imagined—a way to escape being confined to this allotted space, to this limited time. And yet, paradoxically, we also long for a cage in which to shelter ourselves from the world's pain, a refuge from the risk of vanishing entirely.

These enclosures, these boundaries, often take a square shape. The square seems simpler, more efficient; it offers reassurance. Perhaps that is why works of art have so often adopted this form, fencing off and defining a space within which to express the condition of those—like us—already enslaved by time, who seek through this space to turn limitation into advantage.

This is exactly what Sergio Mario Illuminato enacts in *VULNERARE*: within the conquered space of the work, he performs an alchemical transformation using the material world—stones, colors, plants, objects, and above all, fire. Through the *Opus Rubedo*, the "Work of the Red," he reaches for the ideal goal of alchemy, the ultimate aspiration of those who sought to overcome the limits of life: eternity, immortality. A suspension of time, which myth connects to sleeping—and especially dreaming—on the tombs of ancestors, a liminal state believed to allow communication with the dead.

This is even more resonant during the summer solstice, when the sun casts no shadow. Since time is revealed and measured by shadows, their absence signals a temporal stasis, a dissolution of distance between who was present in the past and who is present now.

This same logic underlies the fascination ruins exert upon us. Many of Sergio Mario Illuminato's works are contemporary ruins—present-day relics deliberately sought. They allow us to touch, to come into contact with something that witnessed a time far removed from ours, and yet still exists alongside us.

It is the presence of the past touching the presence of the present, erasing the temporal barrier between the two and giving concrete form to one of the most primal human desires.

And once more, writing appears—this time hidden in old, abandoned case files, now obsolete records of long-past trials and verdicts. But these aren't just pages; they are lives. Lives of men imprisoned for years, sometimes forever, confined in an immobile frame of stone built around their bodies and their souls.

We see *Divieto di Fissione* ("Fission Prohibited"), a fractured, wounded device by Sergio Mario Illuminato—a ruin, and in that ruin, a testimony to uncertainty, to the astonishing, inescapable imperfection of life. Yet soon after, we are shown a human figure drawing, with their limbs, the outline of a livable space—an attempt to make sense of a place devoid of meaning. Perhaps this is what we all do, moving within our invisible prisons, reaching for something that might make us feel truly alive.

In another piece, *Collisione*, we see a terrain cut through with fissures—an image of scars, but also of fertility, of life potentially ready to be born. Like furrows in a field.

Then come thousands of pages—each one a person. Pages as ruins, as remnants that testify to the absence of those who lived imprisoned in the present of a past time.

More inscriptions appear—names scratched on walls. Names are people. And names appear again and again in Sergio Mario Illuminato's work.

One piece consists of plaster and color spread across a cage that is at once a barrier and a support. And again, we see burned paper—transformed by fire, destroyed and reborn like a Phoenix,

attempting resurrection from its own ashes. As if, to truly live, one must first destroy apparent reality with fire. As if one must necessarily pass through that red, that alchemical heat, toward ultimate transformation—toward Truth.

And again, a square: *The Four Seasons of the Present*. This time the square multiplies into four distinct fields. It becomes a window—because a square can be both a boundary and an opening. And a cross. In front of (or within) that cross, bodies dance, opening their arms to become crosses themselves. Bodies leap—seeking space, seeking a possible life, together.

There are two of them. They support each other, embrace, look at each other, love. And in their togetherness, pain melts and falls away. A dance as potential escape—a shared salvation, transcending the limits of isolation and selfishness, toward a union of love that can save us, that must save us.

They dance in front of a square, in a closed room, trying to give shape and meaning to time and space.

And perhaps that dancing couple—that “One plus One”—might give birth to something new, something never seen before. A “Three” that didn’t exist, but that we deeply need in our journey as prisoners. A “Three” that can only be born through the shared search, not in solitude.

Creating this “Three” might finally allow us to break free from the cage of time and space. A “Three” that is our living, speaking, singing, dancing, playing—together. Our running, loving, smiling, gazing, embracing—even when burdened by a cross. And this is our possible salvation.

A salvation that is truly such because it doesn’t evade time and space, but interprets them, uses them. And this is precisely what happens in Sergio Mario Illuminato’s work.

The final image of the film is a square courtyard—a frame—of a prison. Space and limit for those who, in the present of a distant past, inhabited it during the single hour they were allowed to attempt to give their lives once more the space of the sky. That infinite space above—that sky—is the only, but essential, difference between a courtyard and a room. A sky capable of making us feel (or believe—and does it really matter?) that there might be more space, more time, that not everything is doomed to vanish.

A sky before our eyes, to be carried into our hearts. To be kept for when life feels like a prison with no escape, a time that has run out.

And it is under this sky, reclaimed for our gaze, that our vulnerability, our wounds, become a testimony of possible life—just as the words on the wall at the film’s end declare:

“Vulnerable, therefore alive. Art is loving reality.”

Perhaps, truly, loving reality is an art. And perhaps Art is the only way—the only chance we have—to truly look reality in the eye. And to look at ourselves.