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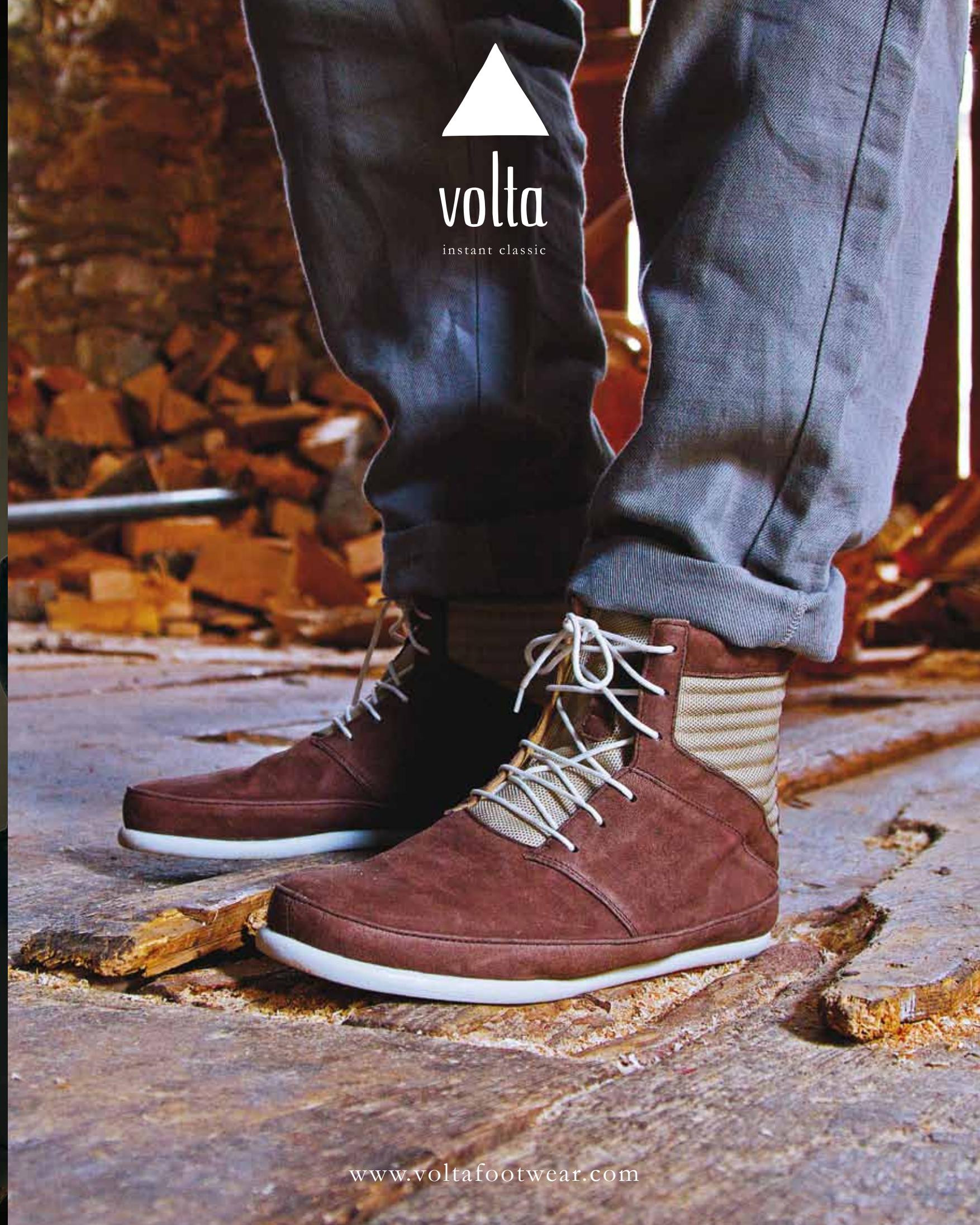


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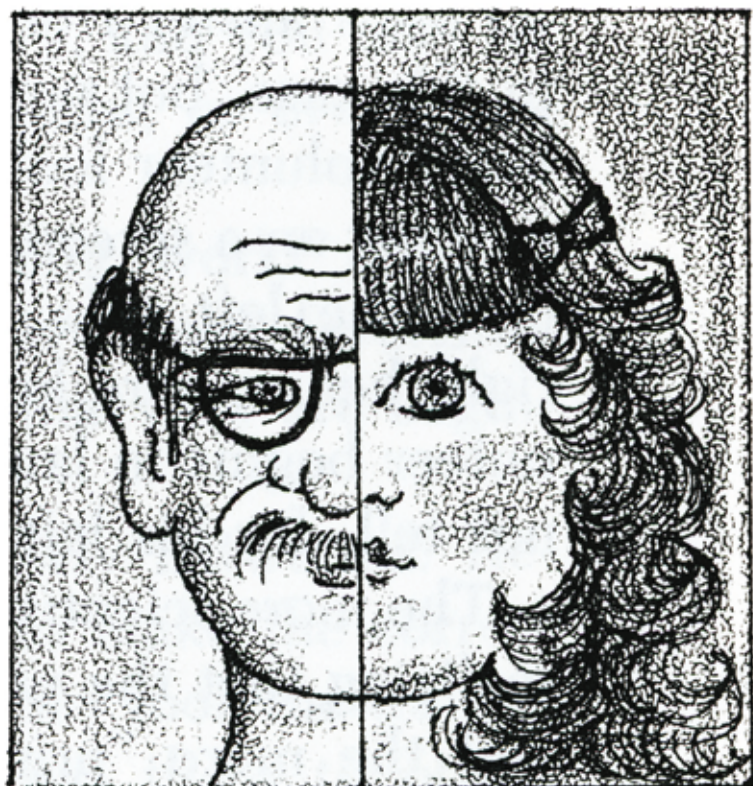
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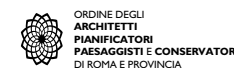
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LIVE FOREVER

I'VE BEEN IN HERE FOR SO LONG THAT IT'S HARD TO TELL, WITHOUT STOPPING TO THINK SOME TIME ABOUT THE MATTER, HOW LONG THAT I'VE ACTUALLY BEEN HERE FOR. THE PROSPECT OF LIFE OUTSIDE SEEMS MORE IMPROBABLE EACH DAY I SPEND IN HERE. BUT AS LONG AS I KEEP MOVING TO THE MUSIC EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY BECAUSE WHEN I'M OUT THERE ON THE DANCE FLOOR THE QUESTIONS DISSOLVE BEFORE THEY CAN FORM IN MY MIND. I'M AS HAPPY AS ONE OF OUR APE ANCESTORS WITHOUT THE NEED TO THINK ABOUT SUCH TROUBLESOME, HUMAN, QUERIES AS WHY AM I HERE? HOW DID I GET HERE? WHERE AM I GOING? FOR I KNOW JUST AS LONG AS I KEEP DANCING I KNOW NEITHER THE QUESTION NOR THE ANSWER.

words by matthias connor
image by michele manfellotto

Every four hours we enter one of the chill out lounges. It is in here, whilst adopting the pose of someone chilling out – there are bean bags, lava lamps and canapés of snacks - that I find myself reflecting, as I am doing now, on how I came to be here. It has been over twenty years since I took the flyer advertising this place. It was one of scores of flyers advertising other clubs and parties that were pushed into my hands as I left the club each week as I staggered blinking, after eight hours in darkness, into the sunshine.

I was nineteen and I didn't want the good times to end but I had already begun to suspect that they would. After three years of going out every weekend to dance all night I could already feel autumn around the corner when the leaves begin to brown and crackle under foot, just before winter comes and they turn to mud. I knew the clubs weren't as good they had been when I first began going and I feared that one day they'd be even worse. If and when summer returned I feared that it could never be as glorious a one as those that had already been.

My life from Monday to Friday, coming down from the high of the weekend, served to remind me of this and I cursed the look on my elder brother's face when he told me it was time to get up for work. But, I would begin, I had only just gone to bed. Just when I couldn't take any more at work it would be Thursday which meant tomorrow would be Friday and as long as I gritted my teeth and refrained from insulting one of my superiors who I had begun to look down upon as my inferiors, I would be on the dance floor that night. Lost in dry ice, my way illuminated by the blinding light of the strobes, I felt so intensely about so little I could have been a comet light years away from earth. Sometimes the night would carry on into the next day but eventually it would come to a close and often it was night again when I realized that it had.

You would think one would tire of the music being played in here but whilst the melody I dance to remains exactly the same it manages to sound as if it's changing which lends the experience of being in here a sense that things are moving forward even though the next record sounds exactly like the last one. Since everybody in here recognizes the next record as their own personally tailored beat this generates a feeling of excitement that manages to entrance me in the same way that it has since the very first night I came here.

The gathering drum rolls come one after another and threaten to spiral out of control. It reaches a point when it no longer seems possible to keep up with their accelerating tempos, which conspire to make a vast wall of noise that threatens to engulf the dance floor. I see panic in the other dancers' eyes, fearful that they won't be able to keep up with the colliding rhythms yet unable to stop. Suddenly my mind goes blank and I think my knees will give way. I fear that the wall of noise will crush me but then at the very last moment, a gap, just big enough for me to pass through, opens up and lets me through and I realize that I'm going to be okay. Fireworks, like those that can be seen on television during the Fourth of July celebrations, explode inside my mind. Whilst I am not afraid I'm conscious about not stepping this way or that way for fear of treading on my neighbors' toes. Gradually the fireworks begin to fade and I feel myself floating into the night. A sense of calm falls over the dance floor and I fall back into the groove of the familiar tempo of the last song I remember hearing before entering here. I open my eyes to see that whilst those around me are visibly shaken by the experience of what I can only describe here as dying and entering what must be Heaven before returning to life in the space of a few seconds, they are as relieved as I am that the music has begun again and we hug each other in jubilation. Many of us holler: "This is bloody amazing!" But whilst there has never been a time when the chorus and then the verse didn't return everybody has an expression of relief

that suggests that for a split second they feared, as I did, that it wouldn't. That this time we were goners for sure. And it's this sense of relief that puts a spring in my step when under normal circumstances I'd probably sit down.

In the chill out lounge we make the small talk associated with people who have been dancing all night. A lone pianist tinkers in the background. He is playing a spared down interpretation of Nina Simone's version of Leonard Cohen's 'Suzanne'. Compared with what it's like on the dance floor, by its very nature the chill out lounge is a more downbeat environment. Communication is little more than verbally nodding at each other as we sip our energy drinks. Some of us are smoking from packets of cigarettes that never empty, others are telling each other what a good time they've been having. But the conversation is limited and frankly, I've come to realize that, in here, we could be saying anything. We talk out of habit; it's a way of exercising our mouths without resorting to complete babble. A few people are telling each other that they LOVE them but, unlike the reality of the outside world, everybody (black, white, gay, straight) LOVES everybody in here. Many conversations assume variations of "Are you alright mate?" and likewise the responses, however different in appearance, always indicate: "affirmative: I am all right and having a very good time." This is because there is never a moment in here when we aren't having what we associate with a good time because this is, as the huge neon sign on the wall reminds us, the best and biggest nightclub in the entire universe. So really, to ask each other these questions is pointless but we continue to do so anyway because it feels good to say I am having a good time, yes I am, I am. But then I wonder what am doing in this place? I meant to go home years ago I am still here dancing. I've been up so long it looks like dawn. The longer I remain here the more I fear what will await me outside if I was to leave and this, I know, is what keeps me here whenever I think about leaving. If only someone was to leave with me. To face what we've been missing all these years. On my own the real world seems unimaginable. But every time I try to express the sentiment to somebody, that maybe it would be a good time to leave now, to see the world, give living a go, the words come out all wrong and I say instead: "it's great in here isn't it?"

If I were to leave tomorrow I would find myself 39 years old. I imagine trying to adjust to the outside would be similar to how it is for people released from prison sentences. After a lifetime in here, what kind of existence would await me? I have no training or experience in even the most simple of rudimentary adult matters; I can't wire a plug and that's not to mention I don't know if plugs are even still being used. For all I know, world war 3, 4 and 5 have been and gone and the world that I remember when I entered here has been extinguished. I'm not saying that it's too late to give living a go and there are plenty of people in here who have been in here longer than me. Some would live amongst the elderly, on a state pension, for a while but many of them of them would self-combust in a cloud of smoke the very moment they set foot outside, leaving only a mound of ash in their wake. Besides what little news that filters through here over the years from our newer dancers is that life on Earth has been getting steadily worse and worse which reinforces the belief that to leave would be suicidal and why would anybody contemplate suicide when they're having such a good time? Far better would be to keep dancing. Who but an imbecile would deny us this logic?

Every six months the huge metal doors, so tall that you can't see the tops of them, slide open to allow new members to enter. We are warned beforehand because the sunshine can be overwhelming after living in darkness for so long. I cover my face with my hands and when the doors have closed again I remove them. For a while the fashions grew stranger with each passing year but recently I have noticed that those entering aren't dressed dissimilar to how I am now - which is exactly as I was dressed when I arrived. Whilst our numbers swell from



new members entering there is never a notable effect on the population here. The club simply expands to accommodate the new members. What this means is that whilst the dance floor is always bustling with the exact amount of energy it takes to make it buzzing no one will ever bump into you. Whether you're Walking the Egyptian, doing the jerk, the tango, the strut, the rude boy skank, the drunken goose step so beloved of jaded English rock singers, the lone Morrissey flail, the waltz, the Conga, the Temptations shuffle, the Jerk, the Humpty dance, vogueing or, as I am now, dancing to House music, which involves a sort of vigorous jacking from backwards to forwards motion, there is always space to do your thing without inconveniencing others. Until I came here I never realized just how many infinite variations there are within these remarked styles of dancing. Within the head banging alone I have, over the years, counted thousands of subtly different variations of form depending on the participant's age and what style of heavy metal or rock they are listening too. There are the guys who form a circle on their knees, those who prefer to play air guitar whilst standing up and that one style that was popular in the mid-seventies, that involves its participants to stand with their legs a few feet apart with their hands on their hips whilst moving their upper body and in turn their mane from side to side in time. Contrast the dancers at Wigan Casino in the seventies to those at the Twisted Wheel in the sixties to the 100 Club in the early nineties to the mods who considered the way they appeared standing more important to the way they danced or the style of jacking popular in Stoke On Trent, where I am from, to the way they jacked in Blackburn to the way they move in Chicago.

Maybe if I had been in the real world I would be married with children by now. Families are inconceivable in a place like this. It's impossible to know how my life would have turned out if I hadn't cut it so short by the car in which I was traveling home from the club careening off the road into a tree. We forfeited the right to middle age, death, careers, niggling health worries just by coming here. Even the cigarettes we smoke are cancer free ones. Children are a small price to pay to live forever. After all isn't that why people on Earth have children anyway?

Because they don't live forever? Well, in here we do. Even if we were miraculously granted the right to have children, what would they do in here? Hang around the chill out room? A nightclub isn't a place for children to live. In twenty more years, unless someone on Earth has found a cure for aging, I will be ravaged by advanced aging and then death as soon as I step foot outside. If I were to stand a chance of living for a short span of time, I have to leave as soon as possible. I had little to encourage my enthusiasm for life before I entered here and the odds would be that I would have even less to be enthusiastic about now. Once outside you are forbidden to contact anybody you knew before. There is a certain status quo to be upheld on Earth you must understand. Those in here are presumed dead and on Earth this has been accepted as the truth. It's unfeasible, if not cruel to haunt our old friends and families if we return. Thus if I am to return I must make my way with no more than the clothes (Gio Gio long sleeved tee-shirt, floppy fisherman's hat, Joe Bloggs jeans, Kickers) which I was wearing when I arrived here. Once I believed I knew everything but now faced with the possible outcome of what would become of me if I were to leave proves how little I really know.

But as long as I still have the chance to live I can't help but entertain this fantasy of what my life outside of here might be like? I know it is madness and I am afraid that I am being infected by this idea of living in the real world. I only have my memories before I entered here to compare in here with and the longer I'm here the more distant these memories become. One day, when it will be too late to leave, I fear that I won't even have my memories to reassure me whenever I wonder what I am doing here.

People have left but I never am able to ask them: was it worth it? As the sign reminds those in

here there is no readmission if you step foot outside. You will be gone. Kapoot. No more. WAP. A Northern Soul dancer claps his hands together. I watch one pale rake glide across the dance floor like a rabbit with myxomatosis, dragging one foot behind the other. Every time it is announced that the doors are about to open my heart begins to beat with excitement. I ask myself is this it? But then as the sunlight from outside pours through the open doors (and) I cover my eyes for fear that it will blind me. Each time the shock of the sunlight is worse than the last time the doors opened. How long would it take for my eyes to adjust to the light of the outside world if I were to leave? I fear that if I left now that I might not be able to ever adjust to real life and, after twenty years in here, I would be bound for an institution where I would spend my remaining days. I still remember that those places are full of people who claim they have seen the light. Well, I would tell the doctor, I have seen the light, I have danced with the angels in Heaven to the sound of Joe Smooth's "Promised Land," but then I got bored and wanted to come home again. The medical profession, I'm sure, would view me with a curious disbelief; someone who would sacrifice eternal life for a few moments of reality. My doubts begin to echo like a stone falling down a well, the sound ricocheting off the sides getting more distant as it plummets, yet before I hear the splash of it breaking the surface of the water I realize that I am dancing again.

What if the questioning doesn't stop when I no longer have any choice? This recurring nightmare of the future, that if I don't act of my own accord soon, that soon it will be too late to leave, I can't bring myself to comprehend whilst I am having a good time. I have decided though that this it, next time, I am going to leave.

The doors are sliding open again to allow the new members admittance. As always a few hapless dancers lurch towards the light before covering their eyes and struggling to their knees in defeat. I am one of them but this time I keep walking past those on their knees, my hands covering my face, into the white light of the day. After five minutes I slowly remove them to survey this new world I am in. I am standing in what looks like a giant car park. There is a light drizzle. I hear what sounds like a motorway roaring overhead. In the distance I can make out the unmistakable arches of a Macdonald's restaurant where there was just an Esso garage before. Maybe, I ask myself, I am in America? I glance at my reflection in the window of a parked car. After twenty years inside a nightclub I look older than my thirty-nine years.

The end

Matthias Connor is an English writer also known as "Wolf Boy." Through his Poppy Books imprint, Matt tells stories of life's long negotiation through the eyes of the put-upon, the lonely, the cynical and the drifting, while finding his own way to a voice that can see the important details in the world, find reasons to live, and determine right from wrong.

LIVE FOREVER

È da così tanto che sono qui dentro che è difficile, non essendomi mai fermato un minuto a riflettere sulla questione, stabilire quanto tempo sia trascorso. Ogni giorno che passa, la prospettiva di una vita all'esterno mi sembra sempre più improbabile. Ma finché posso seguire la musica andrà tutto bene, perché quando sono in pista le domande si dissolvono prima ancora di riuscire a formarsi nella mia mente. Sono felice come uno dei nostri antenati-scimmie, senza il bisogno di pormi quei fastidiosi naturali quesiti tipo come perché sono qui? Come ci sono finito? Dove sto andando? Finché continuo a ballare, non conosco né la domanda, né la risposta.

Ogni quattro ore entriamo in una delle sale chill-out. Ed è qui che, mentre mi comporto come uno che fa chill-out – ci sono puff, lava-lamps e canapé –, mi ritrovo a riflettere, proprio come sto facendo ora, su come sia finito qui. Sono passati più di vent’anni da quando ho preso per la prima volta il flyer che pubblicizzava questo posto. Era una delle tante pubblicità di club o feste che mi mettevano in mano ogni settimana all’uscita del club, quando, dopo otto ore nel buio, caracollavo strizzando gli occhi verso l’alba.

Avevo diciannove anni e non volevo veder finire i bei tempi, ma già sospettavo che prima o poi sarebbe successo. Dopo essere uscito tutti i week end per tre anni di seguito, a ballare per tutta la notte, sentivo già l’autunno dietro l’angolo, con le foglie che diventano marroni e scricchiolano sotto i piedi, prima che l’inverno arrivi e le trasformi in fango. Mi rendevo conto che i club già non erano più come quando avevo cominciato a frequentarli, e avevo paura che un giorno sarebbero stati ancora peggio. Avevo paura che l’estate, se e quando fosse tornata, non sarebbe più potuta essere gloriosa come un tempo.

La mia vita, dal lunedì al venerdì, venendo dallo sballo del weekend, serviva a ricordarmi di questo, e maledivo ogni volta lo sguardo di mio fratello quando mi diceva che era il momento di alzarsi per andare a lavoro. Ma come, attaccavo io, ero appena andato a letto. Proprio quando non ne potevo più del lavoro, era ormai giovedì, che significava che domani era venerdì, e se stringevo i denti, evitando di insultare uno dei miei superiori che avevo cominciato a considerare come inferiori, quella sera sarei stato di nuovo in pista. Perso nel ghiaccio secco, la mia via illuminata dalle strobo accecanti, tenevo così tanto ad una cosa così piccola che sarei potuto essere una cometa ad anni luce di distanza dalla terra. A volte la notte arrivava

fino al giorno successivo, ma alla fine si concludeva, e spesso, quando mi rendevo conto che ormai era successo, era già di nuovo notte.

Voi penserete che in teoria ci si dovrebbe stancare della musica che passa qui dentro, ma anche se la melodia sulla quale ballo non sembra cambiare, riesce lo stesso a suonare come se fosse in continuo cambiamento, dando la sensazione che le cose si stiano muovendo, anche se il disco che segue suona esattamente allo stesso modo. Ognuno qui dentro riconosce ogni disco, come se il beat fosse fatto apposta per lui, e questo genera un sentimento di euforia che si fa strada dentro di me, come è successo la prima volta che sono entrato qui.

Le rullate salgono, una dopo l’altra, e minacciano di andare fuori controllo. Fino al punto in cui non sembra più possibile stare dietro a quei tempi accelerati che, creando un muro di rumore massiccio, rischiano di ingolfare la pista da ballo. Vedo il panico negli occhi degli altri che ballano con me, spaventati di non essere in grado di seguire quei ritmi collidenti, ma allo stesso tempo incapaci di fermarsi. All’improvviso la mia mente si svuota, penso che le mie ginocchia stiano per cedere. Ho paura che quel muro di suono mi schiacci, ma poi, proprio all’ultimo momento, uno spiraglio grande abbastanza per passarci dentro si apre e mi lascia proseguire, e capisco che tutto andrà bene. Nella mia mente esplodono fuochi d’artificio, come quelli che si possono vedere in televisione durante le celebrazioni del 4 luglio. Anche se non sono spaventato, sto ben attento a dove metto i piedi, per paura di calpestare quelli dei miei vicini. I fuochi d’artificio cominciano gradualmente a sfumare, e mi sento fluttuare nella notte. Un senso di calma cala sulla pista da ballo e io mi lascio cadere sul groove familiare dell’ultima traccia che ricordo di aver ascoltato prima di entrare qui. Apro gli occhi e mi rendo conto che, anche se tutti intorno a me sono visibilmente scossi dall’esperienza – descrivibile solo come morire ed entrare in quello che deve essere il Paradiso, per poi rientrare in pochi secondi nella vita normale – sono sollevati quanto me dal fatto che la musica è ripartita, e ci abbracciamo gli uni con gli altri in segno di festa. Molti di noi gridano: “È pazzesco!” E anche se non c’è stato mai un momento in cui strofa e ritornello non siano tornati, hanno tutti un’espressione di sollievo, ad indicare che anche solo per una frazione di secondo hanno avuto paura, come me, che ciò non sarebbe successo. Che saremmo stati spacciati. Ed è questo senso di sollievo che mi mette le molle ai piedi, mentre in altre circostanze mi sarei probabilmente seduto e basta.

Nella lounge-room le persone che hanno balla-

to tutta la notte chiacchierano tra di loro. Un pianista solitario strimpella in sottofondo. Sta suonando una versione semplificata dell’interpretazione di Nina Simone di “Suzanne” di Leonard Cohen. A confronto di ciò che accade sul dancefloor, la chill-out room, nella sua natura più profonda, è un ambiente dai ritmi lenti. La comunicazione consiste più o meno nell’annuire mentre sorseggiamo i nostri energy drink. Alcuni di noi fumano pacchetti di sigarette che non si svuotano mai, altri parlano dei bei momenti passati. Ma la conversazione è limitata e, francamente, sono arrivato alla conclusione che qui dentro potremmo dirci qualsiasi cosa. Parliamo per abitudine; è un modo per esercitare la bocca senza ricorrere ad un completo farfugliare. Qualcuno dice ad un altro che lo AMA, ma, a differenza della realtà del mondo esterno, ognuno (nero, bianco, gay, etero) AMA qualcuno qui dentro. Molte conversazioni sono semplici variazioni di “Va tutto bene amico?” e le risposte, sebbene apparentemente diverse, sono sempre: “affermativo: sto bene e mi diverto molto.” Questo perché non c’è mai un momento qui dentro che non sia associabile al piacere, perché questo posto è, come ci ricordano le grandi insegne al neon al muro, il locale migliore e più grande dell’intero universo. Quindi davvero, farci l’un l’altro queste domande è privo di senso, ma continuiamo lo stesso a farcele, perché è bello dire che si sta bene, sì, sto bene, sì.

Ma quando poi mi chiedo che ci faccio in questo posto? Dovrei essere già tornato a casa qualche anno fa e invece sto ancora ballando. Sono stato a mille così a lungo che mi sembra di stare a zero. Più rimango qui, più ho paura di quello che mi aspetta là fuori se dovessi andar via da questo posto; e questo, lo so, è ciò che mi trattiene ogni volta che penso di andarmene. Se solo qualcuno venisse via con me. Per affrontare insieme quello che ci siamo persi negli ultimi anni. Da solo, il mondo reale mi sembra inimmaginabile. Ma ogni volta che esprimo questo sentimento a qualcuno, cioè che magari è il momento giusto per andare via, per vedere il mondo, per dare una svolta alla propria vita, mi escono solo parole sbagliate e dico invece: “è grandioso essere qui, non credi?”

Se dovessi andarmene domani, mi ritroverei ad avere trentanove anni. Immagino che mettersi in sintonia con l’esterno sia un po’ come per chi esce di galera. Dopo una vita passata qui, che tipo di esistenza mi può aspettare? Non ho alcuna esperienza, non sono allenato neanche alla più semplice e rudimentale delle cose da adulti; non so collegare una presa elettrica, per non dire che non so neanche se le prese siano ancora in uso. A quanto ne so, la terza, la quarta e la quinta guerra mondiale sono già belle che finite e il mondo che ricordo prima di essere

entrato qui dentro si è estinto. Non sto dicendo che è troppo tardi per dare una svolta alla mia vita, ci sono persone che sono qui da più tempo di me. Alcuni si ritroverebbero vecchi, con una pensione statale, ma molti di loro, nel momento stesso in cui metteressero piede all’esterno, finirebbero per autocombustirsi in una nuvola di fumo, lasciando solo un cumulo di cenere come scia. Oltre alle poche notizie che sono filtrate all’interno nel corso degli anni, grazie ai nuovi arrivati, si sa che la vita sulla Terra sta andando costantemente di male in peggio, il che rinforza l’idea che lasciare questo posto sia un suicidio, e perché uno dovrebbe contemplare il suicidio quando sta così bene? Sarebbe molto meglio continuare a ballare. Chi, se non un imbecille, vorrebbe negare questa logica?

Ogni sei mesi le grandi porte di metallo, così alte che non riesci a vedere dove finiscono, si aprono per permettere ai membri di entrare. Ci avvertono in anticipo, perché la luce del sole può essere accecante dopo aver vissuto nel buio così a lungo. Mi copro il viso con le mani, e quando le porte si chiudono nuovamente, le tolgo. Per un certo periodo, ogni anno che passava, le mode sembravano diventare sempre più strane, ma recentemente ho notato che i nuovi che entrano non sono vestiti in modo troppo diverso da come lo sono io – ovvero esattamente come ero vestito quando sono arrivato. Se il numero delle persone aumenta, a causa dei nuovi arrivi, questo non genera mai un effetto rilevante sulla popolazione del luogo. Il club semplicemente si espande per accogliere i nuovi membri. Significa che, anche se il dancefloor è pieno, con l’esatta quantità necessaria di energia che serve a tenerlo vivo, nessuno ti verrà addosso. Che tu stia facendo il Walking the Egyptian, il jerk, il tango, lo strut, lo skank dei rude boys, il passo dell’oca ubriaca così amata dagli annoiati cantanti rock inglesi, il dimenarsi solitario alla Morrissey, il walzer, la conga, il passo strascicato dei Temptations, l’Humpty dance, il vogueing o, come sto facendo adesso io, ballando la musica house, ossia una specie di vigoroso muoversi avanti e indietro, c’è sempre spazio per fare quello che devi fare, senza creare problemi agli altri. Prima di venire qui non avevo mai capito quante infinite variazioni ci fossero all’interno di questi stili di ballo appena citati. Solo all’interno dell’headbanging ho contato negli anni migliaia di impercettibili differenti variazioni di forma, che dipendevano dall’età degli interessati e dallo stile di heavy metal o di rock che ascoltavano. Ci sono tipi che fanno un cerchio sulle ginocchia, quelli che preferiscono stare in piedi a fare l’air-guitar, o quello stile popolare a metà degli anni settanta in cui i partecipanti stanno in piedi con le loro gambe a distanza di un metro l’una dall’altra, le mani sulle anche, e muovono la parte alta del corpo sbattendo le loro chiome da una parte all’altra, a tempo. Contrapponete i ballerini del Wigan Casino degli anni settanta con quelli del Twisted Wheel degli anni sessanta, con il 100 Club dei primi novanta, con i mods che consideravano il loro modo di apparire più importante del loro modo di ballare, o lo stile del jacking, popolare a Stoke On Trent, da dove vengo, con il modo in cui

lo ballano a Blackburn o con il modo in cui si muovono a Chicago.

Magari, se fossi nel mondo reale, sarei sposato con figli. Le famiglie sono una cosa inconcepibile in un posto come questo. È impossibile ipotizzare quanto la mia vita sarebbe cambiata se non l’avessi troncata così, con la macchina nella quale stavo viaggiando verso casa, venendo dal club, sbandando e finendo contro un albero. Abbiamo rinunciato al diritto alla mezza età, alla morte, alle carriere, alle assillanti preoccupazioni sulla salute, semplicemente venendo qui. Anche le sigarette che fumiamo sono quelle che non causano il cancro. I figli sono un piccolo prezzo da pagare per poter stare qui. Dopo tutto, non è per lo stesso motivo che sulla Terra le persone fanno i figli? Forse perché non vivono per sempre? Bene, qui noi possiamo. E anche se fossimo miracolosamente dotati del diritto di avere bambini, cosa potrebbero poi fare qui dentro? Si vedrebbero nella chill-out room? Un club notturno non è un posto dove far vivere i bambini. Tra altri venti anni, a meno che qualcuno sulla Terra non abbia scoperto una cura contro l’invecchiamento, appena metterò piede all’esterno sarei devastato dall’età, e poi dalla morte. Per avere la possibilità di vivere almeno un breve arco di vita, dovrei uscire adesso. C’erano già così poche cose di cui ero entusiasta prima di entrare qui dentro, e la cosa strana è che adesso ce ne sarebbero ancora meno. Una volta che sei fuori ti è proibito avere contatti con le persone che conoscevi. Sulla Terra c’è uno status quo che va protetto, dovete capire. Chi è qui dentro è considerato morto, e sulla Terra la cosa è data per vera. Sarebbe impraticabile, se non crudele, tornare a perseguitare i vecchi amici e le famiglie che ti credono morto. Così, tornando, dovrei fare il viaggio con solo i miei vestiti addosso (t-shirt a maniche lunge Gio Gio, cappello floscio da pescatore, jeans Joe Bloggs, Kickers), gli stessi che avevo addosso quando sono arrivato. Un tempo credevo di sapere tutto, ma adesso, di fronte alla possibilità di quello che mi aspetta, mi rendo conto di quanto so poco.

Ma finché ho la possibilità di vivere non posso fare a meno di accarezzare questa fantasia, di come potrebbe essere la mia vita lì fuori. Lo so che è una pazzia, e ho paura che questa idea di vivere nel mondo reale mi abbia ormai infettato. Ho solo i miei ricordi, che risalgono a prima che entrassi, da mettere a confronto con quello che vivo qui, e più resto qui più mi sento distante da quei ricordi. Un giorno, quando sarà troppo tardi per andarmene, ho paura che non avrò neanche i più i miei ricordi ad aiutarmi a ricordare che ci faccio qui.

Alcuni se ne sono andati, ma non ho avuto modo di chiedergli: ne è valsa la pena? D’altra parte l’insegna ricorda che non c’è riammissione per chi lascia questo posto. Sei andato. Kapoor. Basta. WAP. Un ballerino Northern Soul batte le mani. Guardo un pallido edonista mentre scivola sulla pista da ballo, come un coniglio affetto da mixomatosi, trascinando un piede dietro l’altro. Ogni volta che annunciano l’apertura delle porte il mio cuore comincia a

battere d’eccitazione. Mi chiedo, è la volta giusta? Ma poi non appena la luce del sole si riversa in sala (e) mi copro gli occhi per paura che mi accechi. Lo shock dovuto alla luce è ogni volta peggiore. Se me ne andassi, quanto tempo occorrerebbe ai miei occhi per abituarsi alla luce del mondo esterno? Ho paura che potrei non esser più in grado di adattarmi alla vita reale e, dopo venti anni qui dentro, mi metterebbero in un istituto nel quale spenderei i miei ultimi giorni. Ricordo ancora che quei posti sono pieni di persone che pretendono di dire di aver visto la luce. Bene, direi al dottore, io ho visto la luce, io ho ballato con gli angeli nel Paradiso al suono di Promised Land di Joe Smooth, ma poi mi sono annoiato e sono voluto tornare indietro. Il medico, sono sicuro, mi vedrebbe con curioso scetticismo; come qualcuno che ha sacrificato la vita eterna per un po’ di realtà. I miei dubbi cominciano a fare eco come una pietra che cade da una rupe, il suono dei rimbalzi si fa più distante mentre precipita, e prima di sentire lo splash della pietra che rompe la superficie dell’acqua mi accorgo di stare di nuovo ballando.

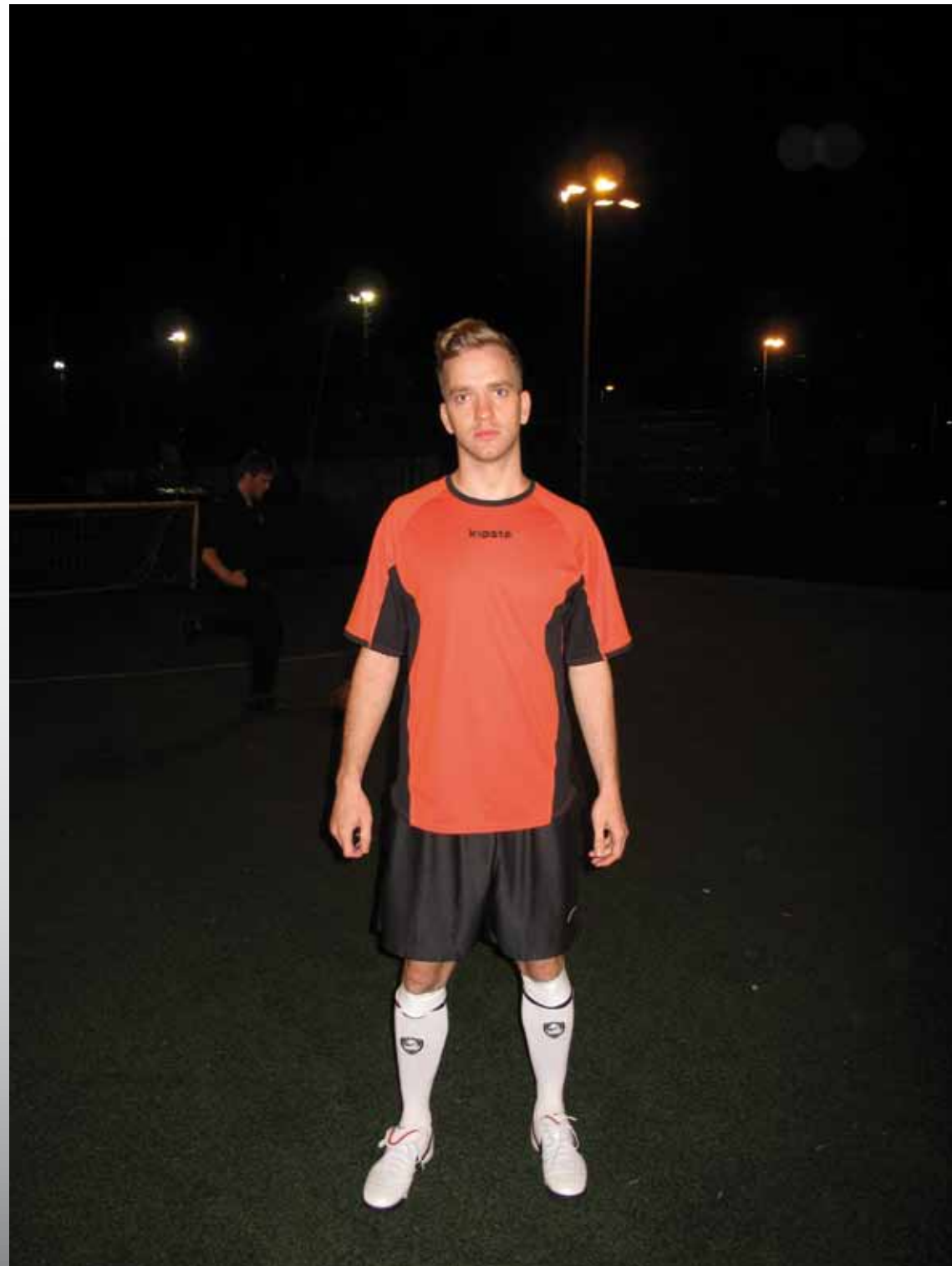
Quando non avrò più alcuna scelta, cosa succederà se le mie domande non dovessero aver fine? Quest’incubo ricorrente del futuro, che se non mi muovo presto, presto sarà troppo tardi, non riesco a concepirlo quando sto bene. Ho deciso quindi che sarà questa, la prossima volta, che me ne andrò.

Le porte si aprono ancora per permettere l’accesso ai nuovi membri. Come sempre, qualche sfortunato ballerino vacilla nella luce prima di coprirsi gli occhi e lottare contro le proprie ginocchia che cedono. Sono uno di loro, ma questa volta, con le mani sul viso, vado avanti e passo oltre a quelli in ginocchio, nella luce bianca del giorno. Dopo cinque minuti le tolgo, lentamente, per scrutare questo mondo nuovo in cui mi trovo. Sono in piedi, in quello che sembra un enorme parcheggio per auto. C’è una pioggia leggera. Mi sembra di sentire il rumore di una strada sopraelevata. Riconosco ad una certa distanza gli inconfondibili archi di McDonald’s, con una stazione Esso poco prima. Forse, mi chiedo, sono in America? Nel finestrino di una macchina parcheggiata do un’occhiata al mio riflesso. Dopo vent’anni passati in discoteca dimostro più dei miei trentanove anni.

Fine

Matthias Connor è uno scrittore inglese conosciuto anche come “Wolf Boy”. Con la sua collana autoprodotta Poppy Books, Matt racconta storie di lunghe negoziazioni con la vita, attraverso gli occhi dello sfruttato, del solitario, del cinico e del disperso, nel tentativo di trovare una sua voce, capace di svelare i dettagli importanti del mondo, trovare ragioni per vivere e distinguere il giusto dallo sbagliato.

HISTORY PASSES THROUGH ME



words by eddie peake

...I was saying that Palermo felt sordid. Celia and I saw a dead body as soon as we arrived there, and that really set a macabre tone that was consistent for the entirety of our stay, which seemed to consist of one weird event after another. But I have to say I loved Palermo - I really did - though it definitely felt threatening in a way that Rome never, or very rarely has done to me. Having said that, there was one occasion recently when Celia and I saw a man pull out a knife and slash another man just outside the McDonald's by Termini Station. It must have been an unsettled beef between the two men, but to me and everyone else standing by it just looked like a guy pulling a knife out, randomly slashing another man in a crowded street during the middle of the day, and then running away.

Celia and I talk about the characteristics of Rome a lot, both of us being foreigners and all. There are many things that I find immeasurably frustrating about Rome, and I encounter at least one of them per day, but for me it is greater than the sum of its parts, because I love being here. Celia says she thinks that in Italy there are the rules, and then there's what you do, and those things are quite separate. I would tend to agree with that, and I would say it contrasts greatly with London, where the rules and what you do are more closely aligned.

For the first year that I was in Rome it was quite difficult to immerse myself properly because I was living in a community of English people. But the last year has been completely different. I have moved apartment seven times, and each one has been in a different area, so I have gotten to see a lot of the city in a relatively quotidian capacity. I play football several times a week with a hotchpotch of Italians and foreigners from all over, mostly at the pitches by Ponte Marconi. I also played regularly in London, and I would say that there is basically one difference: the men I play with in Rome bring hairdryers with them to use in the changing-rooms after the game. I've never seen a man in England do that. In fact, in England, where people are a lot less comfort-

able with their bodies and nudity, it's not that common to take group showers after playing football. I love the post-sport-group-shower culture in Rome.

I see the sexually explicit material in my work as quite matter-of-fact and beautiful. None of the imagery is *that* explicit really. There are no penetration shots for example. It's mainly just photos of me in my bedroom or studio, sometimes with an erection, which I take with a timer, or get my girlfriend to take. They, the photos, are a kind of ongoing soft-porn diary. Odd, I suppose, given that I'm not especially into porn. I might have been a lot more into porn had my mother and sisters not made such a big effort to prevent my twin brother and I from becoming porno-enthusiasts when we were children. Maybe that was a bit weird, but mainly it just provides me with some funny memories, such as being in places like Forbidden Planet (the comics shop), and trying to act like I didn't know the woman shouting her head off at all the staff, causing a massive scene because she spotted some pornographic imagery in a shop that minors visit. Actually, saying all that, it seems fairly obvious to me now that the reason there is a sexually explicit component in my work is precisely because of memories like that, and attitudes towards sex and pornography that I was surrounded by as a child.

Memories are important to me, but they do not necessarily feature explicitly in my work. I tend to think that art that is explicitly based on memories is a bit naff, even though I can think of lots of examples to the contrary. Anyway, what I'm interested in is the point at which a personal history collides with a canonized, or more broadly recognizable history. I think that's why work by other artists, and imagery from the media in general, has often featured in my art. So memories are always there in almost everything I do, just not necessarily as a diagrammatic description.

I recently did a drawing that says "The artist lives in a haze of confu-

sion and doubt." It's a cliché, but one that this artist, at least, believes in. I live in a haze of confusion and doubt, and have conviction for that state as a position and valuable starting point for making work. I want to be active in my bewilderment!! There is something very graphic and perfect seeming about a lot of my work, I mean in terms of the surfaces and the imagery. Sometimes that makes them seem rigid and calculated, and definitely not confused or doubtful. I don't want to polarize those two positions though. I am calculated about my work, and yet I see the aesthetic of perfection as psychotic and violent. But I do sometimes have an urge to interrupt my particular painterly language with a very different, or even opposing, language. I think that urge is mitigated to a large extent by the fact that I make work in lots of ways and lots of media.

I am specifically interested in the space between verbal language and non-verbal language (and by extension the space between any two types of language) and the discrepancy that occurs when one is translated into the other, for example when trying to convey an emotion with words, say. I find that space, which for the most part feels to me like an immense, unbridgeable gulf, extremely confusing! I feel that sense of confusion most poignantly when I am asked to talk about my work. Whenever that situation arises, all I really want to do is make little squeals and grunts, and roll around on the floor, and hope that that will suffice... but of course it won't. So language, I would say, is my primary concern with all my work, and is most explicitly addressed in my paintings. But that concern has generated itself out of necessity really. Otherwise I'd have all these disparate elements and no way of talking about them or making sense of them in my head...

Eddie Peake (1981) is an English artist who has spent the last two years in Rome. He works with words and images, within a sort of aesthetic classicism that's half-way between conceptual and pop formalism. His works are often linked by an attempt to superimpose, saturate and juxtapose diverse languages.

HISTORY PASSES THROUGH ME

...S tavo appunto dicendo che Palermo sembra sordida. Celia ed io, appena arrivati, abbiamo visto un cadavere, e questo ha caricato il nostro intero soggiorno di un'atmosfera macabra, anche per via di tutta una serie di eventi piuttosto bizzarri. Devo ammettere però che amo Palermo – veramente – anche se nell'aria vige un sentimento di minaccia che a Roma ho raramente sentito. Dico questo, ma di recente a me e a Celia ci è capitato di vedere un uomo con un coltello in mano, che sfregiava un'altra persona, proprio fuori dal McDonald's della Stazione Termini, a Roma. Doveva trattarsi di una lite irrisolta tra i due, ma a me e al resto delle persone che hanno assistito alla scena ci è sembrato di vedere semplicemente un ragazzo che, estraendo il coltello, colpisce per caso un passante, in una strada trafficata in pieno giorno, per poi scappare via.

Celia ed io parliamo molto delle particolarità di Roma, con tutto che siamo entrambi stranieri. Ci sono molte cose di Roma che trovo incredibilmente frustranti, e ne faccio esperienza almeno una volta al giorno, ma Roma è più forte della somma di tutte queste cose, perché io amo stare qui. Celia dice che in Italia esistono le regole e poi esiste quello che fai tu, e le due cose sono abbastanza separate. Tenderei ad essere d'accordo con lei, e a dire anche che questo contrasta fortemente con la situazione di Londra, dove tra le regole e ciò che fai c'è decisamente meno distanza.

Il primo anno che ho passato a Roma non è stato per niente facile integrarmi nel modo giusto, visto che vivevo all'interno di una comunità di Inglesi. Ma quest'ultimo anno è stato tutto diverso. Ho cambiato casa sette volte, ogni volta in una zona diversa, così ho avuto modo di vedere e vivere nella quotidianità molte parti della città. Gioco a pallone diverse volte a settimana, insieme ad un gruppo misto di italiani e stranieri, soprattutto sui campi di Ponte Marconi. Gioco regolarmente anche a Londra, e vorrei dire che esiste una differenza fondamentale: quelli con cui gioco a Roma portano con sé l'asciugacapelli, per usarlo negli spogliatoi dopo la partita. Non ho mai visto nessuno in Inghilterra fare una cosa del genere. Infatti, in Inghilterra, dove le persone sono molto meno a loro agio con i loro corpi e la loro nudità, non è così comune fare la doccia insieme dopo aver giocato. Adoro la cultura romana della doccia di gruppo dopo la partita.

All'interno del mio lavoro, considero il materiale sessualmente esplicito più che altro come un dato di fatto e come una cosa bella. In realtà nessuna delle immagini è così esplicita. Ad

esempio, non ci sono penetrazioni. Sono soprattutto foto di me stesso fatte con l'autoscatto, o scattate dalla mia ragazza, a letto o a studio, qualche volta con un'erezione. Sono una specie di diario soft-porno in progress. Strano, dato che non sono particolarmente fanatico del porno. Sarei potuto esserlo molto di più, se mia madre e le mie sorelle maggiori non avessero fatto un tale sforzo per evitare che io e mio fratello gemello diventassimo fanatici del porno. Forse era un po' strano, ma mi ha anche lasciato dei ricordi molto divertenti, come quando frequentavo negozi come Forbidden Planet (il negozio di fumetti) e facevo finta di non conoscere la signora che urlava a tutto lo staff, facendo una scenata, per il fatto che fossero presenti delle immagini porno in un negozio frequentato da minori. In realtà, dicendo questo, risulta abbastanza ovvio che il motivo per il quale c'è una componente sessualmente esplicita nel mio lavoro, è proprio per via di ricordi come questo, e per gli atteggiamenti nei confronti del sesso e dalla pornografia che mi circondavano da bambino.

I ricordi per me sono importanti, ma non hanno necessariamente una rappresentazione esplicita nel mio lavoro. Tendo a considerare l'arte basata sui ricordi in modo esplicito un po' sfigata, anche se sono sicuro che potrei trovare numerosi esempi che dimostrano il contrario. Comunque, quello che mi interessa è il punto in cui la storia personale si scontra con la storia canonizzata, o riconoscibile in maniera più ampia. Credo che sia questo il motivo per cui il lavoro di altri artisti, e le immagini dei media in generale, sono spesso presenti nei miei lavori. I ricordi, quindi, sono presenti in quasi tutto ciò che faccio, ma non necessariamente come descrizione diagrammatica.

Recentemente ho realizzato un disegno che dice "L'artista vive in una nuvola di confusione e di dubbio". Si tratta di un cliché, ma è l'unico cliché in cui questo artista crede. Vivo in una nuvola di confusione e di dubbio, e sono convinto che quello stato sia un prezioso punto di partenza per lavorare. Voglio essere attivo nella mia confusione!! Esiste qualcosa di molto grafico e apparentemente perfetto in gran parte del mio lavoro, in termini figurativi e di superficie. A volte questo li fa sembrare rigidi e calcolati, sicuramente non confusi né pieni di dubbi. Tuttavia non voglio focalizzare su queste due posizioni. Sono molto accurato nel mio lavoro, e tuttavia considero l'estetica della perfezione come psicotica e violenta. Ma qualche volta ho l'impulso di interrompere il mio linguaggio pittorico meticoloso con uno molto diverso, o perfino opposto. Credo che questo impulso sia notevolmente attenuato dal fatto che lavoro in molti modi e attraverso differenti media.

M'interessa espressamente lo spazio che esiste tra il linguaggio verbale e quello non verbale (e in senso lato tra tutte le tipologie di linguaggio) e la discrepanza che si verifica quando uno è tradotto nell'altro, per esempio quando si prova a tradurre un'emozione in parole. Trovo questo spazio, che in generale mi appare immenso, estremamente confuso! E questo senso di confusione è particolarmente intenso quando qualcuno mi chiede di parlare del mio lavoro. Ogni volta che succede, vorrei fare strillette e grugniti, e rotolarmi sul pavimento sperando che ciò sia sufficiente... ma ovviamente non lo è. Quindi il linguaggio, oserei dire, è la preoccupazione principale di tutto il mio lavoro, ed è particolarmente esplicito nei miei quadri. Ma in realtà questa preoccupazione è nata da una necessità. Altrimenti avrei tutti questi elementi disparati e nessun modo per parlarne o per dargli senso nella mia mente.

R Y G N T S T YOUR S E L F

a project by Ilaria Gianni and Ryan Gander

Everything started when Ryan Gander sent a Timeline to Ilaria Gianni, beginning in 800 BC and ending in 7006 AD, documenting over 500 of his works made during a ten-year period – works associated to events that occurred in history and to future ones that could possibly take place. Test yourself is a quiz on our historical knowledge that leads us into Ryan Gander's practice through a selection of works drawn from the Timeline. Through the artist's own words, the game reveals episodes, memories and back-stories, disclosing the conceptual processes and ideas behind his oeuvre. The project, specifically designed by Åbåke, who conceived the recent publication *Ryan Gander: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. 1* [JRP|Ringier, 2010], does not present any images. The participation of the reader is a fundamental element.

Team Name: _____

Round: _____

Eddie Peake (1981) è un artista inglese che ha passato gli ultimi due anni a Roma. Lavora con le parole e le immagini, in una sorta di classicismo estetico che è a metà strada tra il formalismo concettuale e quello pop. I suoi lavori sono spesso legati al tentativo di sovrapporre, sovraccaricare e contrapporre i linguaggi.

Q – Which particular element is mentioned in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* (77 AD)?

- a. Unicorns on Mount Olympus.
- b. Cannabis used as a painkiller.
- c. Glass mirrors backed with gold leaf.
- d. Tiger's eyes in Mediterranean caves.

Work – A Future Loam Opium, 1008

A black and white photograph of the artist, showing how his invented word, 'Mitom', is a physical palindrome.

Episode – The word 'Mitom' was a bit of a useless failure. The objective was to introduce the word into the world as if it had always existed. I tried to do this by sending it to editors, journalists, writers, musicians etc with the idea that they could use it in texts, plays, articles, stories and songs. It didn't occur to me that when the word is typed out in any word processing software an aggressively jagged red line appears beneath it acknowledging that it is not in the user dictionary and, in fact, doesn't exist. My belief was that editors would let it go. Too ashamed that there was a word in the English language that one of their staff was using but which they didn't know, it rarely got past proofreaders and fact checkers, meaning the thousands of examples of it existing throughout literature in fact became a handful. *Think About Gender*.

A – Glass mirrors backed with gold leaf are mentioned in *Naturalis Historia* by the Roman author Pliny the Elder.

Q – Where and when was tobacco first discovered and tasted by Europeans?

- a. In 1492 on the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas, during Columbus's expedition to the Indies.
- b. Between 1255 and 1262 during Niccolò and Maffeo Polo's first travels through Asia.
- c. In 1488 while Bartholomew Diaz was sailing around the southernmost tip of Africa.
- d. In 1246 in Mongolia by John of Pian de Carpine, the first European to enter the court of the Great Khan.

Work – Having done more work than most can men – (Alchemy Box n III), 2009

An alchemy box, appropriating the vessel of a locked Siglo cigno number one handcrafted from Maracani Ebony, is exhibited on the floor with its back to a wall. The contents of the box relate to the theme of 'work ethic and class conflict'. The box is displayed alongside a rub down transfer wall text listing its contents.

Episode – The key to this humidor is on a shelf in my studio, cast into a piece of concrete. Unlike the other alchemy boxes it is therefore impossible to open. I'm always disappointed when people ask me if the contents are really inside them. No one believes I've put my credit cards and lottery tickets in them. As if I would lie, as if I would compromise the conceptual rigour and integrity of the work...

A – 1492 – Two of Columbus's crewmen, Rodrigo de Arnez and Luis de Torres, are said to have encountered tobacco for the first time on the island of San Salvador in the Bahamas. Whilst observing daily life, the natives presented them with dry leaves that were described as "sprinkling a peculiar fragrance".

Q – Was Absinthe introduced as...

- a. An extreme party drink at the Court of Louis XVI in 1776.
- b. An all-purpose patent remedy created by Dr. Pierre Ordinaire in Switzerland in 1702.
- c. A spiritual drink only available during the Bacchanalia in 200 BC.
- d. A plant fertilizer in the XVI century.

Work – Come up on different streets, they both were streets of shame, or Absinthe bears my thoughts. I think we should be moving on. 2009

A large figure of a young female ballerina resembling Degas' dancer stands atop an ultramarine blue cube to pose through the window of the front of the gallery space. Her hands are at the sides of her face, directing her gaze and shading her view from the reflections or shadows. Her abandoned plinth stands in the corner of the gallery.

Episode – Rather embarrassingly quite a few titles in this series of works are appropriated from lyrics from songs by Dire Straits. I once played the song *Romeo and Juliet* at Wimbledon School of Art while teaching there. To illustrate this point, when the track had finished, the voice of a first year fine art student from out of the darkness, way at the back of the auditorium, spoke. 'Not cool!'

A – 1702 – Absinthe is introduced as an all-purpose patent remedy created by Dr. Pierre Ordinaire, a French doctor living in Couvet, (CH).

Q – The raised-dot writing system corresponds to...

- a. Military codes invented during WWI that allow the sharing of top-secret information on the battlefield, without speaking.
- b. Egyptian hieroglyphs dating from around 1800 to 1900 BC.
- c. The system used by prisoners of the Roman Empire to count the passing days.
- d. The method widely used by blind people to read and write, invented in 1824.

Work – Like being balanced on the handlebars of a blind man's bike. 1008

A number of coloured balls in differing sizes are exhibited on the floor of the gallery representing a translation of the Google logo in Braille. On entering the gallery space the spectator can find a fixed position from which all the balls appear to be the same size, giving the work a corrected perspective at one particular location.

Episode – The title originated from something the artist Bedwyn Williams said to me during dinner at his mansion in North Wales. I wrote it down and used it. Some people call that stealing. He used the phrase to explain an untrusting and untruthful relationship between an artist and a gallery. I have an image of an artist sitting on a blind galleant's handlebars in my mind, that I have not been able to rid myself of since.

A – 1824 – Louis Braille finishes inventing his raised-dot writing system at the age of 15.

Q – Which institution in London was known as "University of the Ghetto"?

- a. Whitechapel Library in the late 1800s.
- b. Goldsmiths's College, University of London in the 1980s.
- c. Hornsey College of Art in the mid 1800s.
- d. The Hunterian Museum – The Royal College of Surgeons of England in the late 1700s.

Work – Is this guilt in you too – (Cinema Veritas), 1008

A series of institutional corridors lead the spectator to a cavernous deserted space behind the projection screen of a constructed cinema. A soundtrack of what appears to be a film is audible in the distance and although the back of the projection is visible, the image is out of focus and indistinguishable. Upon closer inspection, the viewer is able to peer into the vast empty auditorium via a scratched away clear section. From this location the soundtrack to the film is clearly audible, but the projection becomes invisible. The spectator is placed in the position of a blind person, which is the predicament of the lead character in the film *Twenty-four seconds elapsed* between the first and the last shot, 2006, which is being screened in the cinema.

Episode – During the first incarnation of this work at Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, I was homeless and lived in the back room of the museum for a month. Sadly it was during heavy rain in the area. There is nothing more terrifying than being locked inside a heavily alarmed empty dark museum all night whilst others run across the roof carrying petrol bombs. Since that experience I am skeptical of no fixed abode artists who float from residency to residency. Get an apartment.

A – 1892 – Whitechapel Library, London (UK) was founded by the Liberal MP J. Passmore Edwards, and quickly garnered a reputation as "the university of the ghetto".

Q – Who opened what was to become a fashion empire on the ground floor of the apartment of a famous horse breeder?

- a. Giorgio Armani in 1967.
- b. Antonio Marras in 1985.
- c. Coco Chanel in 1909.
- d. Christian Dior in 1920.

Work – Investigation + R – What you don't know will never hurt you. 1008

Two framed and mounted antique prints. The first, a golden Chaud advert, with a mount that frames the print in five windows, covers a large majority of the text and reveals only the tips of the characters of the text. The second, a German print, by Eberme Leopold Trovdiot depicts the Zodiaca Line, an astronomical phenomenon that was once considered a false dawn.

Episode – I have no idea what this work is about. If so idea feels right I make it and call it an investigation and worry about what it means later. The pitfall of being a widely non signature conceptual artist is that you have no style, you don't know what you are, the only thing holding it all together is meaning, and if there's no meaning, people don't trust you, so in order to practice, I conduct investigations. It's like I throw it all in the air and see how it lands. Get out of here.

A – 1909 – Gabrielle Chanel opened a shop on the ground floor of Étienne Balsan's apartment in Paris – the beginnings of what would later become one of the greatest fashion empires in the world.

Q – Who created the 'Avery Coonley Playhouse: Triptych Window'?

- a. Frank Lloyd Wright in 1912.
- b. Antoni Plàcid Guillem Gaudí y Cornet in 1888.
- c. Jeff Koons in 1993.
- d. Marc Chagall in 1962.

Work – Remnants of Theo and Pier's ball from 1924, through the Avery Coonley playhouse window, during a struggle brought on by an argument over the dynamic aspect of the diagonal line, into the white room. 2009

The installation consists of broken stained glass and sections from a lead window across the gallery floor as if someone had fallen through a window at some speed. The amount and colour of the glass is taken from a reproduction of the centre panel of Frank Lloyd Wright's 1912 'Avery Coonley Playhouse: Triptych Window', whilst the title refers to a disagreement between Piet Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg in 1924, that led to a split. In the same year, over the relevance of the diagonal line in the construction of their compositions.

Episode – blots, Mondrian and Van Doesburg arguing about diagonal lines. It's not like one of them slept with the other's wife... I love those feuds in art history. Mural named Calder because Calder was making Mural's toys bigger and selling them to museums. These stories are how legacy comes into being.

A – 1912 – Avery Coonley Playhouse: Triptych Window, Bensenville, Illinois (US) is created by Frank Lloyd Wright.

Q – The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse is...

- a. The riddle Gollum asks Bilbo Baggins in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*.
- b. A Ghost Story from Scotland's Clyde Valley.
- c. The first and original electro-mechanical rotor machine used for the encryption and decryption of secret messages.
- d. A work by Man Ray referring to Comte de Lautréamont's famous phrase 'Beautiful as the chance meeting, on a dissecting table, of a sewing machine and an umbrella'.

Work – The Halls of Ducasse, needs (long), needs something I remembered about half way between Istanbul and KFC. 2006

Five framed black line drawings made by the artist attempt to represent a blank as thrown over an object – an exercise he would perform as a child, a practice method that he recollected when seeing a drawing of smoke by the artist George Henry Longley.

Episode – Longley is George Henry Longley, a really good artist and friend. We did a show together at Kaufman Gallery in Zurich years ago. The work has this title because a work George made (a drawing of smoke) reminded me of drawings I used to make as a teenager, where I would throw my duvet in a pile on my bed and try to draw it. Thinking back they were quite advanced, but I don't have any of them anymore, only these five remain. I've tried to recreate them but they never look as good as I remember them.

A – 1920 – Man Ray, executor *The Halls* on *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse*.

Q – Who designed the Bauhaus chess set?

- a. Helene Börner in 1919.
- b. Oskar Schlemmer in 1940.
- c. Josef Hartwig in 1924.
- d. Josef Albers in 1933.

Work – *Bauhaus Revisited*, 2003
A Bauhaus chess set, designed by Josef Hartwig in 1924, is reproduced in blacklisted Zebra wood (Microberlinia Brazzavillensis). It comes from the African rainforest.

Episode – A government collection (of an unnamed country) wanted to purchase this work, but they weren't allowed to acquire any politically incorrect works. The work was made out of blacklisted Zebra wood from the African rainforest. That was the point of the work. The collection asked if it was possible to have it remade in Pine. Failing to realise that the meaning was inherent in the politically incorrect material, I often wonder how a Pine version would have looked – like it was from IKEA perhaps.

A – 1924 – The Bauhaus chess set was designed by Josef Hartwig in Dessau (DE).

Q – What is Alan Smithee?

- a. The first American Nouvelle Cuisine Chef.
- b. A famous English football player from the 1960s.
- c. The pseudonym used by film directors who wish to disown a project.
- d. A brand of Australian cookies.

Work – *She walked ahead, leading him through a blizzard of characters*, 2008
A two thousand word text written by an anonymous ghostwriter is pasted directly onto the gallery wall, which is immediately afterwards re-plastered. The wall is left the colour of the plaster. The text written by the ghostwriter brings to life the fictional character Alan Smithee, a pseudonym used since 1968 by cinema directors who want to disassociate themselves from a film for which they no longer want credit. The printed text was originally commissioned by the artist Mario Garcia Torres, to be used in the performance *I am not a flopper or...* (2007), but ultimately unsettled, unpublished and unwanted. The exclusive legal rights to this text belong to the artist.

Episode – Mario Garcia Torres and I are the best of friends, and because of that a lot of people think that the public disputes inherent in the construction of this artwork was created for the purpose of making interesting art. Sometimes we muse on this idea, and when we are out together, at openings in Paris or London for example, we frequently discuss whether it would be an apt moment to have a public display of physical violence to enhance the myth. My father has always said, never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

A – 1968 – The pseudonym Alan Smithee is first used by an anonymous film director.

Born in 1976, Ryan Gander lives and works in London. His photographs, films, installations, performances, sculptures, and inventions draw on multiple layers of facts and fiction. Censorship, precedence, mimetics, appropriation, participation are only some of the issues tackled by Ryan Gander's work. He has exhibited widely in museums and galleries throughout the world.

TEST YOURSELF

Tutto è iniziato quando Ryan Gander ha spedito ad Ilaria Gianni una Timeline che, partendo dall'800 a.C. e finendo nel 7006 d.C., documenta più di cinquecento dei suoi lavori nell'arco di un periodo di dieci anni – lavori associati ad eventi accaduti nel corso della storia e ad altri che potranno forse accadere. *Test yourself* è un quiz di storia generica che ci guida all'interno della pratica di Ryan Gander, con una selezione di lavori presi dalla Timeline. Attraverso le parole dell'artista, il gioco riporta episodi, ricordi e storie del passato, svelando i processi concettuali e le idee che fanno da sfondo alla sua opera. Il progetto, la cui grafica è stata disegnata appositamente da Åbåke, studio grafico che ha concepito anche la recente pubblicazione *Ryan Gander: Catalogue Raisonné Vol. 1* (JRP|Ringier, 2010), non presenta alcuna immagine. La partecipazione del lettore è un elemento fondamentale.

D – Quale particolare elemento è menzionato nella *Naturalis Historia* di Plinio Il Vecchio?

- a. Gli unicorni sul monte Olimpo.
- b. La Cannabis usata come antidolorifico.
- c. Gli specchi in vetro con retro in foglia d'oro.
- d. Gli occhi di tigre nelle caverne del mediterraneo.

Opera – *A Future Lorem Ipsum*, 2006
Una fotografia in bianco e nero dell'artista che mostra come la parola di sua invenzione, 'Mitim', sia un palindromo fisico.

Episodio – La parola Mitim è un po' un fallimento. L'obiettivo era di introdurre la parola nel mondo come se fosse sempre esistita. Per questo motivo ho provato a mandarla ad editori, giornalisti, scrittori, musicisti, etc. con l'idea che avrebbero potuto usarla nei loro testi, rappresentazioni, articoli, storie e canzoni. Non mi ero reso conto che, quando la parola viene digitata in un qualsiasi programma di scrittura, un'aggressiva e frastagliata linea rossa appare sotto di essa, avvertendo che non fa parte del dizionario, e infatti non esiste. Ero convinto che gli editori l'avrebbero lasciata passare, pur di non ammettere che uno dei loro collaboratori stava usando una parola di cui non conoscevano il significato. Raramente però ha passato il vaglio dei proofreaders e del riscontro fattuale, facendo sì che le migliaia d'esempi che dovevano esserci in letteratura di fatto siano diventati una manciata. *Pensaci prima Gander*.

R – 0077 – Gli specchi di vetro con retro in foglia d'oro sono menzionati nella *Naturalis Historia* dell'autore romano Plinio Il Vecchio.

D – Dove e quando è stato scoperto per la prima volta il tabacco dagli Europei?

- a. Nel 1492 nell'isola di San Salvador nelle Bahamas, durante le spedizioni di Colombo verso le Indie.
- b. Tra il 1255 e il 1262 durante il primo viaggio in Asia di Niccolò e Maffeo Polo.
- c. Nel 1488 mentre Bartolomeo Diaz navigava intor-

no alle estreme coste sud dell'Africa.
d. Nel 1246 in Mongolia, ad opera di Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, il primo europeo ad entrare alla corte del Grande Kahn.

Opera – *Having done more work than most ten men – (Alchemy Box # 11)*, 2009
Una scatola alchemica – creata appropriandosi di una scatola umidificante per sigari fatta a mano in ebano macassar – è esibita chiusa sul pavimento, con il retro appoggiato al muro. Il contenuto della scatola è legato al tema 'etica del lavoro e conflitto di classe'. La scatola è esibita con una scritta in vinile adesivo a muro che ne enuncia il contenuto.

Episodio – La chiave per aprire questa scatola umidificante è su una mensola nel mio studio, incastonata in un cubo di cemento. Diversamente dalle altre scatole alchemiche è quindi impossibile aprirla. Mi scoraggio sempre quando le persone mi chiedono se i contenuti sono realmente lì dentro. Nessuno crede che ci abbia messo le mie carte di credito e i biglietti della lotteria. Come se potessi mentire su una cosa del genere e compromettere il rigore e l'integrità concettuale del lavoro...

R – 1492 – Rodrigo de Jerez e Luis de Torres, appartenenti alla compagnia di Colombo, si dice si siano imbattuti per la prima volta nel tabacco sull'isola di San Salvador alle Bahamas. Mentre osservavano la vita quotidiana, i nativi gli si presentarono con delle foglie secche che furono descritte come "emananti una fragranza peculiare".

D – L'assenzio fu introdotto come...

- a. Un drink estremo per le feste alla corte di Luigi XVI nel 1776.
- b. Un rimedio universale creato in Svizzera nel 1702 dal Dr. Pierre Ordinaire.
- c. Un drink spirituale disponibile solo durante i Baccanali del 200 a.C.
- d. Una pianta fertilizzante del XVI secolo.

Opera – *Come up on different streets, they both were streets of shame, or Absinth blurs my thoughts, I think we should be moving on*, 2009
Una piccola figura di bronzo di una giovane ballerina, che richiama la danzatrice di Degas, posta su un cubo di color blu oltremarino guarda attraverso la finestra frontale dello spazio della galleria. Le sue mani sono ai lati del viso e direzionano il suo sguardo coprendolo da riflessi ed ombre. Il suo piedistallo abbandonato è in piedi nell'angolo della galleria.

Episodio – Non senza imbarazzo, alcuni titoli di questa serie di lavori sono appropriazioni di testi delle canzoni dei Dire Straits. Una volta, durante una lezione alla Wimbledon School of Art, ho mandato il pezzo *Romeo and Juliet*. Per illustrare questo punto, quando la traccia è finita, una voce proveniente dal fondo dell'aula buia, appartenente ad uno studente del primo anno, disse: "Non ci siamo".
R – 1702 – L'assenzio venne introdotto come rimedio universale dal Dr. Pierre Ordinaire, un dottore francese residente a Couvet (Svizzera).

D – Il sistema di scrittura a punti in rilievo, inventato nel 1824, corrisponde a...

- a. Codici militari che consentono la condivisione di informazioni top-secret nei campi di battaglia, inventati durante la Prima Guerra Mondiale.
- b. Geroglifici egiziani scoperti dagli archeologi alla fine del 1700.
- c. Il sistema usato dai prigionieri dell'Impero Romano per calcolare il succedersi dei giorni.
- d. Il metodo, inventato da Luise Braille nel 1824, ampiamente usato dalle persone cieche per leggere e scrivere.

Opera – *Like being balanced on the handlebars of a blind man's bike*, 2008

Una serie di palle colorate di grandezze diverse, esposte sul pavimento della galleria, raffigurano il logo di Google tradotto in Braille. Entrando nello spazio espositivo lo spettatore può individuare una posizione precisa da cui tutte le palle sembrano essere della stessa grandezza, dando così al lavoro un'unica prospettiva per la corretta visione.

Episodio – Il titolo nasce da ciò che l'artista Bedwyr Williams mi disse durante una cena nella sua villa nel nord del Galles. Me lo sono appuntato e l'ho usato. Alcune persone definiscono questo come "rubare". Lui ha usato quella frase per spiegare un rapporto poco sincero e infruttuoso tra un artista e un gallerista. Ho quest'immagine che non riesco a cancellarmi dalla mente di un artista seduto sul manubrio della bici di un gallerista cieco.

R – 1824 – Louis Braille finisce di inventare il suo sistema di scrittura a rilievo all'età di 15 anni.

D – Quale istituzione londinese è conosciuta come "University of the Ghetto"?

- a. La Whitechapel Library alla fine del 1800.
- b. Il Goldsmiths College, University of London, negli anni '80.
- c. L'Hornsey College of Art a metà del 1800.
- d. L'Hunterian Museum – The Royal College of Surgeons of England alla fine del 1700.

Opera – *Is this guilt in you too – (Cinema Verso)*, 2006

Una serie di corridoi come quelli presenti nelle scuole conducono lo spettatore in un spazio vuoto e cavernoso posto dietro lo schermo di proiezione di un cinema. La colonna sonora di quello che sembra essere un film è udibile a distanza e anche se il retro della proiezione è visibile, l'immagine è fuori fuoco e poco chiara. Ad una visione più attenta, lo spettatore è in grado di scrutare il grande auditorium vuoto attraverso una sezione che è stata rimossa. Da questa posizione la colonna sonora del film è ben udibile, ma la proiezione diventa invisibile. Lo spettatore si trova nella condizione di un persona non vedente, ovvero quella del personaggio principale nel film *Twenty-four seconds elapsed between the first and the last shot* (2006), proiettato nel cinema.

Episodio – Durante la prima presentazione di questo lavoro a Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers

ero senza casa ed ho vissuto nel retro del museo per un mese. Sfortunatamente in quel periodo ci sono stati frequenti e forti scontri in quella zona. Non c'è niente di peggio che essere bloccati tutta la notte dentro un museo deserto, buio e pieno d'allarmi, mentre i rivoltosi corrono sul tetto con le molotov in mano. Da quest'esperienza è nato il mio scetticismo rispetto agli artisti senza fissa dimora che passano da una residenza all'altra. Trovatevi un appartamento.

R – 1892 – La Whitechapel Library, Londra (UK) è stata fondata dal deputato liberale J. Passmore Edwards ed ha rapidamente conseguito la reputazione di “the university of the ghetto”.

D – Chi ha aperto, al pianterreno dell'appartamento di un famoso allevatore di cavalli, quello che sarà poi un impero nel mondo della moda?

- a. Giorgio Armani nel 1967
- b. Antonio Marras nel 1985
- c. Coco Chanel nel 1909
- d. Christian Dior nel 1920

Opera – *Investigation # 98 – What you don't know will never hurt you*, 2008

Due stampe incorniciate e montate su supporto rigido. La prima, una pubblicità dorata di Chanel, con una montatura che incornicia la stampa in cinque finestre, copre gran parte del testo e ne svela solo delle parti. La seconda, una stampa tedesca di Etienne Leopold Trolvet, raffigura la luce zodiacale, un fenomeno astronomico un tempo considerato una “finta alba”.

Episodio – Non ho idea di cosa tratti realmente questo lavoro. Se un'idea sembra funzionare, la faccio e la chiamo investigazione, e mi preoccupo solo a posteriori di capire cosa possa significare. L'insidia di essere un'artista concettuale “senza firma” è che non hai uno stile, non sai cosa sei, la sola cosa che tiene insieme il tutto è il significato, e se non c'è significato, le persone non si fidano di te, perciò, per poter praticare, faccio delle investigazioni. È come lanciare tutto in aria e vedere come atterra. Clausola di rescissione.

R – 1909 – Gabrielle Chanel apre un negozio al pianterreno dell'appartamento di Etienne Balsan a Parigi – è l'inizio di quello che diverrà poi uno dei più grandi imperi nel mondo della moda internazionale.

D – Chi ha disegnato l'*Avery Coonley Playhouse: Triptych Window*?

- a. Frank Lloyd Wright nel 1912.
- b. Antoni Plàcid Guillem Gaudí i Cornet nel 1888.
- c. Jeff Koons nel 1993.
- d. Marc Chagall nel 1962.

Opera – *Remnants of Theo and Piet's fall from 1924, through the Avery Coonley playhouse window, during a struggle brought on by an argument over the dynamic aspect of the diagonal line, into this white room*, 2009

L'installazione consiste in una vetrata colorata infranta e in alcuni pezzi della finestra principale posti sul pavimento della galleria, come se

qualcuno fosse caduto dalla finestra ad una certa velocità. La quantità e i colori del vetro sono ripresi da una riproduzione del pannello centrale dall'*Avery Coonley Playhouse: Triptych Window* del 1912, mentre il titolo si riferisce al disaccordo tra Piet Mondrian e Theo van Doesburg risalente al 1924 che portò ad una divergenza, nello stesso anno, sull'idea della rilevanza della linea diagonale nella costruzione delle loro composizioni.

Episodio – Idiotti, Mondrian e Van Doesburg che discutono sulle linee diagonali, non è proprio come se uno avesse dormito con la moglie dell'altro... Amo queste faide nella storia dell'arte. Munari odiava Calder perché Calder faceva i giocattoli di Munari più grandi e li vendeva ai musei. Queste storie dimostrano come si generano le eredità.

R – 1912 – L'*Avery Coonley Playhouse: Triptych Window* a Riverside, Illinois (US) è stata disegnata da Frank Lloyd Wright.

D – L'enigma di Isidore Ducasse è...

- a. L'indovinello che Gollum fa a Bilbo Baggins in *Lo Hobbit* di J. R. R. Tolkien.
- b. Una storia di fantasmi della Clyde Valley in Scozia.
- c. La prima e originale macchina elettromeccanica di calcolo vettoriale usata per criptare e decrittare messaggi segreti.
- d. Un lavoro di Man Ray che si riferisce alla famosa frase del Conte di Lautréamont “Meraviglioso come l'incontro casuale, su un tavolo anatomico, di una macchina da cucire ed un ombrello”.

Opera – *The riddle of Ducasse, meets Longly, meets something I remembered about half way between Iceland and KFC*, 2006

Cinque disegni in bianco e nero incorniciati tentano di rappresentare una coperta lanciata su un oggetto – un esercizio che l'artista faceva da bambino, un metodo pratico che si era ricordato vedendo un disegno dell'artista George Henry Longley che raffigurava una nuvola di fumo.

Episodio – Longly è George Henry Longly, un artista molto bravo e un amico. Anni fa abbiamo fatto una mostra insieme alla Kaufmann Gallery di Zurigo. Il lavoro s'intitolava così perché un lavoro di George (un disegno raffigurante fumo) mi ricordava i disegni che facevo quando ero adolescente, quando tuttavia il mio piumino sul letto e provavo a disegnarlo. Ripensandoci ora, quei disegni erano abbastanza avanti, ma non ne possiedo più nessuno, mi sono rimasti solo questi cinque. Ho provato a rifarli, ma non sono così belli come me li ricordavo.

- R – 1920 – Man Ray realizza “The Riddle” or “The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse”
- D – Chi ha disegnato la scacchiera Bauhaus?
- a. Helene Börner nel 1919
- b. Oskar Schlemmer nel 1940
- c. Josef Hartwig nel 1924
- d. Josef Albers nel 1933

Opera – *Bauhaus Revisited*, 2003
Una scacchiera Bauhaus, disegnata da Josef Hartwig nel 1924, è riprodotta in Microberlinia Brazzavillensis, che è un legno sulla lista nera; proviene da una foresta pluviale africana.

Episodio – La collezione di un governo (di un paese di cui non farò il nome) voleva comprare questo lavoro, ma non gli era permesso acquistare un lavoro politicamente scorretto. L'opera è stata realizzata con un legno di cui è proibito l'utilizzo, proveniente da una foresta pluviale africana. Questo era il punto del lavoro. La collezione chiese se era possibile rifarlo in pino, non capendo che il significato stava proprio nei materiali politicamente scorretti. Ho pensato spesso a come potrebbe essere la versione in pino – come se fosse la versione Ikea.

R – 1924 – La scacchiera Bauhaus è stata disegnata da Josef Hartwig a Dessau, (DE)

D – Chi è Alan Smithee?

- a. Il primo chef di nouvelle cuisine americano.
- b. Un famoso calciatore inglese degli anni '60.
- c. Lo pseudonimo usato dai registi che volevano ripudiare un progetto.
- d. Una marca di biscotti australiani.

Opera – *She walked ahead, leading him through a blizzard of characters*, 2008

Un testo di duemila parole scritte da un anonimo ghostwriter è incollato sul muro di una galleria, che subito dopo è stato reintonacato. Il muro è stato lasciato del colore dello stucco. Il testo scritto dal ghostwriter, riporta in vita il personaggio fittizio Alan Smithee, un pseudonimo usato fin dal 1968 dai registi per prendere le distanze dai film ai quali non volevano essere associati. Il testo era stato originariamente commissionato dall'artista Mario Garcia Torres per essere usato nella performance *I am not a flopper or...* (2007), ma di fatto irrisolto, non pubblicato e non voluto. I diritti esclusivi di questo testo appartengono all'artista.

Episodio – Mario Garcia Torres ed io siamo carissimi amici e per questo motivo molte persone pensano che la disputa pubblica sulla realizzazione di questo lavoro sia stata creata al fine di rendere interessante il lavoro. Qualche volta meditiamo su questa idea e quando per esempio ci troviamo insieme a delle inaugurazioni a Parigi o Londra, discutiamo se sia o meno il momento giusto per uno scontro fisico in pubblico, così da rinsaldare un po' il mito. Mio padre mi ha sempre detto, non lasciare mai che la verità diventi una buona storia.

R – 1968 – Lo pseudonimo Alan Smithee è stato per la prima volta usato da un regista anonimo.

Nato nel 1976, Ryan Gander vive e lavora a Londra. Le sue fotografie, film, installazioni, performance, sculture e invenzioni si sviluppano su diversi livelli di realtà e finzione. Censura, precedenza, mimesi, metodologie associative, autorialità, proprietà, appropriazione, partecipazione sono solo alcuni dei temi affrontati dal lavoro di Ryan Gander. Ha esposto in musei e gallerie in tutto il mondo.



In order to reach immortality
I am trying obstinately not to be an artist
but simply a telephone number
+39 011 543597

WHAT WOULD

ALL PRESS RELEASES ARE A MIXTURE OF WRITING, CRITICISM AND MARKETING. AND ALL OF THEM, THIS INCLUDED, NEED AN EXTERNAL POINT OF REFERENCE TO EXIST. THAT'S WHY FRANCESCO STOCCHI, IN ADDITION TO WRITING THE TEXT, WILL CURATE AN ONLINE SHOW RELATED TO THIS PRESS RELEASE (AT WWW.NEROMAGAZINE.IT/WWPD.HTML). THE SHOW WILL BE PRESENTED ON THE 15TH OF NOVEMBER 2010 AND, AS USUAL, THE OPENING WILL BE AT 7 P.M.

The positivism formulated in the name of scientific rigor restricts the horizon to that which is demonstrable, that which can be verified through experiment; it renders the world opaque. It contains mathematics; but Logos, on which this mathematics and its applicability are predicated, no longer appears. So our world of images no longer overcomes appearance, and the flow of images that surrounds us signifies, at the same time, the end of the image: other than that which can be photographed, there is no longer anything to see. At this point, however, what becomes impossible is not only the art of icons, or sacred art, which is founded on a gaze that expands itself in depth; art itself, which had tried in impressionism and in expressionism the extreme limits of sensible vision, remains, literally, without an object.

Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduzione allo spirito della liturgia*, p. 127.

In past centuries the Church controlled society, at least within the confines of Western culture, determining tastes and desires and establishing moral limits. This power exercised itself principally through the control of images. Throughout this period, the Church was the sole producer of images, through which it spread both artistic sense and indoctrination. Far removed from conservative drives but in relation to tradition, it was thanks to the Church that many geniuses were able to express themselves, breathing life into the new and creating revolutionary styles that represented the advent of the first avant-gardes and forged the history of art as we have come to know it. Whoever had control over images held the power, but with the emergence of photography this control was gradually decentralized, passing into the hands of the mass media. The Church thus saw its power over image creation decrease to the point where the production of liturgical art came to border with the realm of mere craft: as David Hockney emphasizes in an intervention that is both provocative and acute, the decline of the Church went hand in hand with the mass production of cameras.

If we rest for a moment on the quality-quantity relation and on the choice of settings, churches (whether they be Romantic, Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque) represent extraordinary examples of artistic curating. It is only rarely that we have a chance to see so many works of art linked to a specific theme, regularly exhibited in the space for which they were created and produced centuries apart; inside a chapel, time is flattened in favor of an idyllic harmony between the works that transcends the centuries from which they originate, establishing as many relations between them as there are points of view – the ultimate aspiration for whoever realizes exhibitions. In this sense, the Pope, and the Church on his behalf, have acted as the supreme curators, supporting artists, creating spaces to host their works, and endorsing revolutionary styles that went on to become the avant-gardes. Pope Benedict XVI makes no secret of the creative crisis in which the Church has found itself for well over a century, and in 2001, in his *Introduzione allo spirito della liturgia*, he confronts the problem of the over-production of images in contemporary society. With the emptying of the value of the image, which is caused by its very proliferation, liturgical art as we know it loses value, thus opening itself to abstract art: *mimesis* is abandoned in favor of a more intimate relationship with the representation of the spiritual. Only recent are the invitations extended to artists and organizers of contemporary art shows in the Vatican (Matisse and then Kounellis, to mention two examples).

What would the Pope do? therefore aims to investigate, starting from the thoughts expressed by Pope Benedict XVI, the question of how the Church, the largest institution of artistic production in history, might develop its choices with regard to the avant-gardes of the twentieth century, moving from creator to receptor of the *imago*.

Francesco Stocchi (1975) is a critic and curator based between Vienna and Rome. In addition to curating shows for public and private institutions, he is a contributing writer for Artforum, Domus and other publications. This year he founded the magazine Agma, of which he is also the editor.

THE POPE DO?

TUTTI I COMUNICATI STAMPA SONO UN MISTO DI SCRITTURA, CRITICA E MARKETING. E TUTTI, COMPRESO QUESTO, HANNO BISOGNO DI UN REFERENTE ESTERNO PER ESISTERE. PER QUESTO MOTIVO FRANCESCO STOCCHI, OLTRE AD AVER PREPARATO IL TESTO, CURERÀ UNA MOSTRA ONLINE LEGATA A QUESTO COMUNICATO STAMPA (SU WWW.NEROMAGAZINE.IT/WWPD.HTML). LA MOSTRA VERRÀ PRESENTATA IL 15 NOVEMBRE 2010 E, COME AL SOLITO, L'INAUGURAZIONE SARÀ ALLE 19.

“Il positivism formulato in nome della serietà scientifica, restringe l'orizzonte a ciò che è dimostrabile, a ciò che può essere verificato nell'esperimento; esso rende il mondo opaco. Contiene anche la matematica, ma il Logos, che è il presupposto di questa matematica e della sua applicabilità, non vi compare più. Allora il nostro mondo delle immagini non supera più l'apparenza sensibile e lo scorrere delle immagini che ci circondano significa, allo stesso tempo, anche la fine dell'immagine: oltre ciò che può essere fotografato non c'è più nulla da vedere. A questo punto, però, non è solamente impossibile l'arte delle icone, l'arte sacra, che su fonda su uno sguardo che si apre in profondità; l'arte stessa, che in un primo momento aveva sperimentato nell'impressionismo e nell'espressionismo le possibilità estreme della visione sensibile, resta priva di un oggetto in senso, letterale.”

Joseph Ratzinger *Introduzione allo spirito della liturgia*, p.127

Nei secoli la Chiesa ha controllato la società, almeno nei confini della cultura Occidentale, determinandone gusti, desideri e stabilendone i confini morali. Tale potere si è esercitato innanzitutto attraverso il controllo delle immagini. A quei tempi la Chiesa era l'unica a produrre immagini, attraverso le quali veicolava senso estetico e indottrinamento. Lontana da pulsioni conservatrici ma legata alla tradizione, è grazie alla Chiesa che molti geni hanno potuto esprimersi dando ripetutamente respiro al nuovo e vita a stili rivoluzionari che hanno rappresentato le prime avanguardie e forgiato la storia dell'Arte così come la intendiamo. Chi aveva quindi il controllo delle immagini aveva il potere, ma con la nascita della fotografia, tale controllo si è gradualmente decentralizzato passando in mano ai mass media. La Chiesa vede diminuire il proprio potere immaginifico fino a confinare la produzione d'arte liturgica al basso artigianato: come sottolinea in un provocatorio quanto acuto intervento David Hockney, il declino della Chiesa va di pari passo con la produzione di massa di macchine fotografiche.

Se ci soffermiamo sul rapporto qualità-copiosità e sulla scelta degli allestimenti, le chiese (che siano esse Romaniche, Medievali, Rinascimentali, Barocche) rappresentano degli straordinari esempi di curatela artistica. Raramente si ha occasione di vedere insieme tante opere d'arte legate ad un medesimo tema, di norma esposte nel luogo per il quale sono state ideate e realizzate a secoli di distanza; all'interno di una cappella il tempo si appiattisce in favore di un idillio armonico tra le opere che trascende i secoli, instaurando tra di esse tante relazioni quanti sono i punti di vista, aspirazione ultima per chi realizza mostre. In questi termini il Papa, e la Chiesa per lui, hanno agito da supremi curatori sostenendo artisti, creando luoghi per ospitare le loro opere e avallando stili rivoluzionari, divenuti poi avanguardie.

Papa Benedetto XVI non fa mistero della crisi creatrice nella quale si trova la Chiesa da ben più di un secolo e nel 2001, nell'*Introduzione allo spirito della liturgia*, affronta il problema della sovrapproduzione dell'immagine nella società contemporanea. Con il valore dell'immagine che si svuota a causa della sua stessa proliferazione, l'arte liturgica così come la conosciamo perde valore, aprendo in questo senso all'Arte Astratta: si abbandona la *mimesis* in favore di un rapporto più intimista con la rappresentazione dello spirituale. Recenti sono gli inviti ad artisti e le organizzazioni di mostre del contemporaneo in Vaticano (Matisse, poi Kounellis, per citarne due).

What would the pope do? intende quindi interrogarsi, a partire del pensiero espresso da Papa Benedetto XVI, su come la Chiesa, la più grande istituzione di produzione artistica della storia, opererebbe le sue scelte in merito alle avanguardie del XX secolo, passando da creatrice a recettrice dell'*imago*.

Francesco Stocchi (1975) è un critico e curatore italiano che vive e lavora tra Vienna e Roma. Oltre ad aver curato mostre per istituzioni pubbliche e private, collabora con Artforum, Domus e altre pubblicazioni. Quest'anno ha fondato la rivista Agma, di cui è anche editor.

(SHE)

JIMMY DE SANA (NEW YORK, 1949-1990) IS AN AMERICAN ARTIST WHO PASSED AWAY IN 1990, AT THE AGE OF ONLY FORTY-ONE. HE WAS A KEY FIGURE ON THE NEW YORK ART SCENE OF THE 70S AND 80S. THE SUBJECT OF HIS PHOTOS IS THE HUMAN BODY, BUT ITS PRESENCE IS EXPRESSED THROUGH SHAPES AND COLORS SO UNUSUAL THAT THE BODY ITSELF BECOMES AN ALMOST SYMBOLIC ELEMENT. **MICHELE MANFELLOTTI** FOUND HIMSELF WRITING A PIECE ON THE SUBJECT, HAVING NO PREVIOUS INFORMATION ABOUT THE PHOTOS, NOT KNOWING WHO'D TAKEN THEM, DRAWING INSPIRATION SIMPLY FROM WHAT HE SAW.



"She had my full attention right away, like a character of the utmost importance.

She wasn't anyone to me.

She was just supposed to do our makeup, but as soon as she walked in I said to myself, There she is.

She registered my presence and smiled.

An automatic smile: but it seemed full of innuendos and it floored me.

The set was an apartment, glossy and empty: it was freezing and she was wearing a tank top and no bra.

We were posing nude.

No faces, so no makeup: she didn't have much to do.

I studied her as she worked on the others: smiles and winks for everyone, but no intimacy.

Women who work with models, my boyfriend's fixation.

He always asked me what they thought about us, their fellow creatures who make money just by being hot.

My turn came and her voice made me jump in my seat: she knew my name without my telling her and that intimidated me more than being nude.

For the first time in my life I asked myself, What does she think of me?

She inspected my back for an infinite amount of time and her slowness was flattering.

When she finished, she circled around me and stopped for a moment, in a way that I thought seemed calculated.

That is, on purpose to let me see down her neckline.

And, yes, I saw her tits.

Then she wanted to check my face.

There was no need to, but I let her do it.

We were really close and I took advantage to look at her properly: big eyes on a long face: the ears and nose, the shape of the mouth, the size of the head: and it occurred to me that she had the features of a man, a thought that gave me this awful sense of nostalgia.

Afterwards, a huge mess happened in front of the subway station: this guy got all cut up trying to steal my bike. The bike resisted, but he was covered in blood.

A passer-by stopped. He didn't understand, he wanted to help the guy and he shouted at me after I ran off.

This city doesn't look anything like a body with tentacles.

I heard a statistic on TV: on weekends there's twentyfive percent fewer people on the streets than on other days. How can you calculate the probability of meeting the same person twice if you don't know the population of your city?

But her, I ran into again.

That same night, no less: at a party, in a white dress that she wore without lingerie, like a nightgown.

The image of the nightgown made me think of the stainless soporific marriage that, deep down, I feel awaits me.

She was dancing with a black girl wearing the exact same dress as hers: the black girl was also a model, she hated me because I fucked her ex, a retard with a gigantic dick.

Two women on the beach, two women in a dressing room, two women sleeping together: what difference does it make?

She was dancing with her black friend in her white dress with her male features.

Now and again she looked at me, as though I'd ended up in her field of vision by mistake.

My boyfriend was drunk and wanted me to leave with him at all costs.

At home he passed out and I stayed over. All you can see from his apartment are offices, it's not an interesting view at night.

When I went to sleep I had a nightmare.

I was there with him fully dressed and snoring, and she was at the foot of the bed.

She moved noiselessly, she laughed and in the dark her mouth was clearly visible.

She was a vampire.

Holy shit.

I woke up screaming, GO AWAY!

My boyfriend worked for a big cell phone company.

One time he gave me a really cool one, but I broke it. I had a kind of hysterical fit and threw it at the wall: it shattered into a thousand pieces. I felt so guilty I couldn't get rid of it. I looked at the cobwebbed crack on the screen and kept telling myself I was a human piece of shit.

For days everything in my life was impaired by a diffuse sense of imperfection.

Then I got over it and bought another phone. Same brand, but the dumbest

model there is: it doesn't take photos, it doesn't do videos, it doesn't do shit. It has games though.

My favorite is this one where you're a falling ball: you have to bounce on these surfaces that rise up from below, being careful not to fall into the void or onto these pikes that pierce you.

When you save a number, the phone lets you add a figure to the name.

A bear. A cat. A heart. A sun, a car, a flower.

There's a kind of star of David, and a ladies' hat that looks like a flying saucer.

There's faces: in particular, the face of a man with a beard and a woman with a headband, who look exactly like my parents.

In the end, a year is more than enough.

So bye bye, America: the model thing is over.

But I took the phone.

I had to empty out all the contacts, it took forever.

And I had to break up with my boyfriend.

I deleted his numbers together with the rest, with unforgivable coldness, and packed my bags.

The phone is filling up with names from my new life and names fished out from the past.

It's weird, I get the feeling here that nothing ever happens: but it's not bad, I'm pretty comfortable in it.

A few days ago I found that number by accident.

I guess I forgot to delete it.

The crazy thing is that I don't remember ever talking to her on the phone.

God knows how I got it, that number.

She had the butterfly figure.

I kept the butterfly for special people. Specifically, for special females.

But when I saw it again, next to her name, the butterfly made me think of my classmates' maxi pads at school.

She still makes me nervous.

The idea of her is obscene somehow, like the feeling I get looking at certain insects with stingers.

I got my number to appear as anonymous and I called.

I let it ring for a long time, but, nothing, she didn't answer.

In the end I deleted the number and then all the others, all the numbers with butterflies.



Jimmy De Sana, *Plastic Wrap*, 1980



(SHE)

Jimmy De Sana (New York, 1949-1990) è un artista americano scomparso nel 1990 a soli quarantuno anni. È stato una figura chiave nella scena artistica newyorchese anni '70 e '80. Nelle sue foto il soggetto è il corpo umano, ma la sua presenza si esprime attraverso forme e colori così particolari che lo rendono un elemento quasi simbolico. Michele Manfellotto si è ritrovato a scrivere un testo al riguardo, senza alcuna informazione sulle foto, senza sapere chi le avesse scattate, prendendo ispirazione semplicemente da ciò che vedeva.

Lei ha avuto da subito tutta la mia attenzione, come un personaggio della massima importanza.

Non era nessuno per me.

Doveva solo truccarci, ma appena è entrata io mi sono detta, Eccola.

Lei ha registrato la mia presenza e ha sorriso.

Un sorriso automatico: ma mi è sembrato carico di sottintesi e mi ha spiazzato.

Il set era un appartamento tirato a lucido e vuoto: si gelava e lei in canottiera, senza reggiseno.

Noi posavamo nude.

Niente facce, perciò niente trucco: lei non aveva granché da fare.

La studiavo mentre era all'opera con le altre: a ognuna sorrisi e ammiccamenti, ma senza confidenza.

Le donne che lavorano con le modelle, il chiodo fisso del mio ragazzo.

Mi chiedeva sempre cosa pensavano di noi, le loro simili a cui basta essere fische per guadagnare i soldi.

È venuto il mio turno e la voce di lei mi ha fatto fare un salto sulla sedia: sapeva il mio nome senza che glielo avessi detto e questo mi ha messo soggezione più del fatto di essere nuda.

Per la prima volta in vita mia mi sono chiesta, Cosa pensa di me?

Lei ha esaminato la mia schiena per un tempo infinito e la sua lentezza era una lusinga.

Quando ha finito, girandomi intorno si è fermata un momento, in un modo che mi è parso calcolato.

Cioè fatto apposta per lasciarmi vedere dentro la scollatura.

Infatti le ho visto le tette.

Poi ha voluto controllare la faccia.

Non ce n'era bisogno, ma ho lasciato fare.

Eravamo vicinissime e io ho approfittato per guardarla bene: occhi grandi su una faccia lunga: le orecchie e il naso, la forma della bocca, la grandezza della testa: e ho pensato che aveva lineamenti da uomo, un'idea che mi ha fatto venire un sentimento tremendo di nostalgia.

Dopo, davanti alla stazione della metropolitana, è successo un macello: uno si è tagliato tutto mentre cercava di incularmi la bici.

La bici ha resistito, ma lui era pieno di sangue.

Si è fermato un passante. Non aveva capito, voleva soccorrerlo e mi ha urlato dietro quando sono scappata.

Questa città non assomiglia per niente a un corpo con i tentacoli.

Alla TV ho sentito una statistica: nei fine settimana la gente in strada è il venticinque per cento in meno degli altri giorni.

Come fai a calcolare le probabilità che hai di incontrare due volte la stessa persona se non sai quanti sono gli abitanti della tua città?

Invece lei l'ho incontrata di nuovo.

Quella sera stessa, per di più: a una festa, con un vestito bianco che portava senza la biancheria, come una camicia da notte.

L'immagine della camicia da notte mi ha fatto pensare al matrimonio soporifero inossidabile al quale sotto sotto mi sento destinata.

Lei ballava con una nera con un vestito identico al suo: è una modella anche lei, mi odiava perché mi sono scopata il suo ex, un idiota con un pisello gigante.

Due donne in spiaggia, due donne in uno spogliatoio, due donne che vanno

a letto insieme: che differenza fa?

Lei ballava con la sua amica nera con il suo vestito bianco con i suoi lineamenti da maschio.

Di tanto in tanto guardava me, ma come se fossi capitata per sbaglio nel suo campo visivo.

Il mio ragazzo era ubriaco e ha voluto a tutti i costi che venissi via con lui.

A casa è crollato di schianto e io sono rimasta lì. Dal suo appartamento si vedono solo uffici, di notte non è una vista interessante.

Quando sono andata a dormire ho avuto un incubo.

Ero lì con lui che russava tutto vestito e ai piedi del letto c'era lei.

Si muoveva senza fare rumore, rideva e nel buio si vedeva benissimo la bocca.

Era un vampiro.

Che ansia.

Mi sono svegliata che gridavo, VATTENE VIA!

Il mio ragazzo lavorava per una marca grossa di telefoni.

Una volta me ne ha regalato uno molto fico, ma l'ho rotto. Ho avuto una specie di crisi isterica e l'ho tirato contro il muro: è andato in mille pezzi.

Mi sentivo talmente in colpa che non riuscivo a buttarlo. Guardavo la crepa a ragnatela sullo schermo e mi ripeteva che ero una merda umana.

Per giorni ogni cosa nella mia vita è stata come guastata da un senso diffuso di imperfezione.

Poi l'ho superata e ho comprato un altro telefono. Stessa marca, ma il modello più stronzo che esiste: non fa le foto, non fa i video, non fa un cazzo.

Ha i giochi, comunque.

Il mio preferito è uno in cui sei una palla che cade: devi rimbalzare su questi piani che salgono dal basso, facendo attenzione a non cadere nel vuoto o su certi punzoni che se no ti bucano.

Quando salvi un numero, su quel telefono puoi associare una figurina al nome.

L'orso. Il gatto. Il cuore. Il sole, la macchina, il fiore.

C'è una specie di stella di David, e un cappello da signora che sembra un disco volante.

Ci sono delle facce: in particolare la faccia di un omino con la barba e quella di una donna con il cerchietto, che sono identiche ai miei genitori.

In fondo, un anno intero basta e avanza.

Allora ciao, America: finisce la cosa della modella.

Il telefono però me lo sono portato.

Ho dovuto svuotarlo di tutti i contatti, ci ho messo un secolo.

E ho dovuto lasciare il mio ragazzo.

Ho cancellato il suo numero insieme agli altri con freddezza imperdonabile e ho fatto i bagagli.

Il telefono si sta riempiendo dei nomi della mia vita nuova e di nomi ripescati nel passato.

È strano, qui ho l'impressione che non succeda mai niente: ma non è male, ci sto piuttosto comoda.

Qualche giorno fa ho ritrovato per caso quel numero.

Si vede che avevo dimenticato di cancellarlo.

La cosa pazzesca è che non ricordo di averle mai parlato al telefono.

Dio sa come l'ho avuto, quel numero.

Lei aveva la figurina della farfalla.

La farfalla me la tenevo per le persone speciali.

Precisamente per le femmine speciali.

Però quando l'ho vista di nuovo, accanto al suo nome, la farfalla mi ha fatto pensare agli assorbenti delle mie compagne di scuola.

Lei riesce ancora a innervosirmi.

L'idea di lei è in qualche modo oscena, come la sensazione che mi danno certi insetti con il pungiglione.

Ho fatto in modo che il mio numero apparisse anonimo e ho chiamato.

Ho lasciato squillare a lungo ma niente, lei non ha risposto.

Alla fine ho cancellato il numero e poi tutti gli altri, tutti i numeri con la farfalla."

Kiki Smith Color Still

Curated by Cai Guo-Qiang

24 settembre 2010

24 gennaio 2011

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FLASH! THE EYE OF A BADASS

IN MEMORY OF JIM "FLASH" MITEFF, 1933-1999

words by cary loren



Part One: The Road to Publication

The secret of getting things done is to act. – Dante Alighieri

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate.

All hope abandon, ye who enter in. Inferno, Canto III, line 9

When a spray of bullets blew through the front windows of Jim and Helen's modest home in Dearborn Heights, they lodged into the walls just several feet away from their two children playing in a back room. Helen gave Jim an ultimatum: "Either you leave the Outlaws, or I'm leaving with the kids." It was the end of the 1960s. Jim "Flash" Miteff had spent the past six years documenting and riding as a member with the notorious Detroit chapter of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club.

It was a tough decision, but Jim decided to keep his family together and sever formal ties with the club. The Outlaws had become a surrogate "outsider family" for Jim; a brotherhood of badass bikers, linked by their loyalty to each other, their deep commitment to the club and their subversive hard-hitting lifestyle.

The next day Jim went to the clubhouse and gave up his colors; the three-rocker MC vest with "Outlaws" at the top, the skull logo with bones replaced by pistons in the center and "Detroit" writ in old English style across the bottom. Tommy Tucker, president of the Detroit chapter, requested Jim turn in all his photographs and negatives to the Outlaws since they identified members, (some wanted by the police), and many photos showed colors and private details about the club they'd prefer to keep secret.

Flash agreed but wanted to sell the Outlaws the entire collection to recoup his cost in film, paper and chemicals. It was a difficult negotiation, and finally Flash promised the Outlaws he would never publish the work as long as he lived, a promise he kept, and the negatives remained buried in his room for over 40 years until his death in 1999.

On his deathbed, Jim willed his photographic collection to his daughter Beverly. The photos were the artifacts she valued most from her father's life and spoke of his happiest and freest moments. She fondly recalled helping her Dad out in the darkroom and meeting his colorful biker friends, now reproduced in the black and white photos.

"Ever since I was a small girl I dreamed of these photographs becoming a book and also sharing them with the public," Beverly said.

It took many years for her to gather the courage to put together a book; that dream was realized in 2008 when Beverly self-published *Portraits of American Bikers: Life in the 60s* and in 2010, *Portraits of American Bikers: Inside Looking Out*. Both titles were

an immediate cult-hit within the confines of biker culture and are slowly being recognized as a vital part of photographic history.

The journey first began while Beverly was selling some hand-printed darkroom photographs she processed with her brother and began selling on eBay. The distinct Outlaw biker colors were spotted by Jingles 1%er, an Outlaw member who specialized in copyright infringement issues. His first reaction was shock.

"Where in the hell did you get those photographs?" Jingles asked.

"My father took those."

"Well that's our history in those photos!"

"...but that's my history too," she replied.

Jingles never knew Flash, but he was of the same generation and immediately recognized the importance and integrity of the images. Flash's work showed the Outlaws in a way that was neither overly sensational nor glossed over. They were just plain, honest and truthful, electric with life and humor.

Jingles 1%er was enthusiastic about the project. He was able to open doors to the Outlaws' attorneys and soon a meeting with Beverly and an Outlaw panel was set up to view the photographs for publication. Opinions were given and respected, very few images were held back, and the process quickly fell into place.

Living Outlaw MC members and estates were contacted and not one person objected. The books would show the Outlaw bikers' fondest days and youthful pursuits; something to celebrate and pass along to the younger generation, who only heard crazy stories from the old days – the glory days of the Outlaws.

The public identity of biker culture has been fed primarily through mass media: journalism and Hollywood films depicting dangerous acts, perversity and the taboo. Here in stark black and white are hundreds of images that tell a different story, taken from the golden age of the Motorcycle Club.

The story of these images coming into public view is one of a daughter's love and determination to bring attention and light to her father's artistry and unusual lifestyle. Beverly, who was practically raised on a motorcycle (riding before she walked), sought the identity of everyone living or dead in each photo and was granted access to the closed world of the Outlaws, who sanctioned the work and correctly saw it without prejudice, as a true record of their time and history. The Outlaws are family to Beverly and she has taken on the task of representing that history, warts and all.

previous page: Jim Miteff, *Kaiser's Wedding Detroit* (detail)



Jim Miteff, *Portrait of Zipoo at a Michigan State Park*

Part Two: The Education of an Outlaw

*Libertà va cercando, ch'è sì cara,
come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.*

*He's looking for freedom, which is so precious, as he
who dies for it knows.*
- *Divina Commedia, Purgatorio, I, 71-72*

Jim Miteff was born April 27, 1933, in Toledo, Ohio. He was the first born of three children to parents who immigrated to the USA from Bulgaria in the 1920s. The family soon moved to Lincoln Park, Michigan, a working class neighborhood of Southwest Detroit where almost the entire city was employed by the auto industry. Only Bulgarian was spoken in the home and Jim learned English when attending grade school. As a youth, Jim collected comic books

and loved the animated cartoons of Walt Disney. He marveled at inventions and by age 18 he was riding motorcycles.

In 1955, Jim's best friend Richard died in an auto accident. Richard's girlfriend Helen drew closer to Jim and they married. They had four children together: Jim, Beverly, Susan and Helen.

In the late 1950s Jim opened West Side Cycle, a Detroit motorcycle repair, customizing and accessories shop. Located on Vernor Highway near Livernois, it soon became a hangout for bikers across the city. By the early 60s Jim had become a member of the Outlaws MC, nicknamed "Flash" because of his interest in photography and the bright magnesium flash bulbs ignited by the camera trigger.

Jim had a natural gift for humorous pranks. Beverly recalled a fishing trip her Dad went on and his promise to bring her back the biggest fish he could find. When he returned he said, "go take a look in the backyard pool..." When she looked in the small child-sized pool there were hundreds of small minnows swimming in the water. "Well since I couldn't find a big one, I brought you lots of small ones!"

Many of Flash's photos would be centered on small pranks and goofy set-ups. He loved to direct and incite his biker subjects, provoking situations that would lead to an interesting photograph: bikers kissing each other in front of policemen, bikers in Vampire teeth, caveman outfits, balancing beer bottles, peeing, exposing themselves or mooning the camera; the deliberately sensational use of Nazi paraphernalia - helmets, swastikas and flags set against the playful disregard of men goofing around together. Nothing was too outrageous or off-center for Flash's eye.

The Outlaws trace their history back to Chicago in the mid-1930s. After World War II they expanded rapidly, as did many clubs throughout the United States. The 1953 outlaw biker movie, *The Wild One* starring Marlon Brando, was based on the 1947 Hollister, California motorcycle riot and influenced the design for the Outlaws' skull and piston backpatch. "God Forgives Outlaws Don't" ("G.F.O.D.") became the club's motto in 1969.

The term 1%er refers to an alleged comment by the American Motorcycle Association (A.M.A.) that 99% of bikers were law abiding and that 1% were bad apples.

Flash was a biker's biker – a true 1%er. He was slightly older than many of the Outlaw members and knew more about motorcycles than most. Flash had an uncanny control of almost any situation. He centered himself and photographed in a simple unpretentious style, gaining the respect of all. It seems as if his fellow bikers wanted to please him and sought his attention, out of deep respect and trust.

Part 3: Flash as Photographer, or the Speed Graphic Time Machine

Ché perder tempo a chi più sa più spiace.

The more you are learned, the more you dislike losing your time. – Divina Commedia, Purgatorio, III, 78

Flash's images are unique in the history of photography. They represent a subculture previously unrepresented, shown only through the stereotyped sensationalism of comic books and mass media. The photographs provide an unblinking view through the window of local Detroit and Midwest biker culture.

The images are both participatory as "life-in-action" and as a subject of observation at the same time. His work has the same unshakable and gripping authenticity as that of Diane Arbus, his natural contempo-

rary, but without her dour tone and sad demeanor. There is wildness in abundance: rough-housing, drinking, laughter, madness, some darkness but mostly joy.

The images show the same sincerity, devotion and access to subculture as a Larry Clark or a Nan Goldin, but Jim "Flash" Miteff is working a decade or two earlier and is the far better technician, as skilled with the large format camera as Weegee or a street-wise Atget. His negatives are richly balanced and clean 4x5" shots. Miteff's up-in-your-face stark style is like many of the older masters', an instantly recognizable style totally his own.

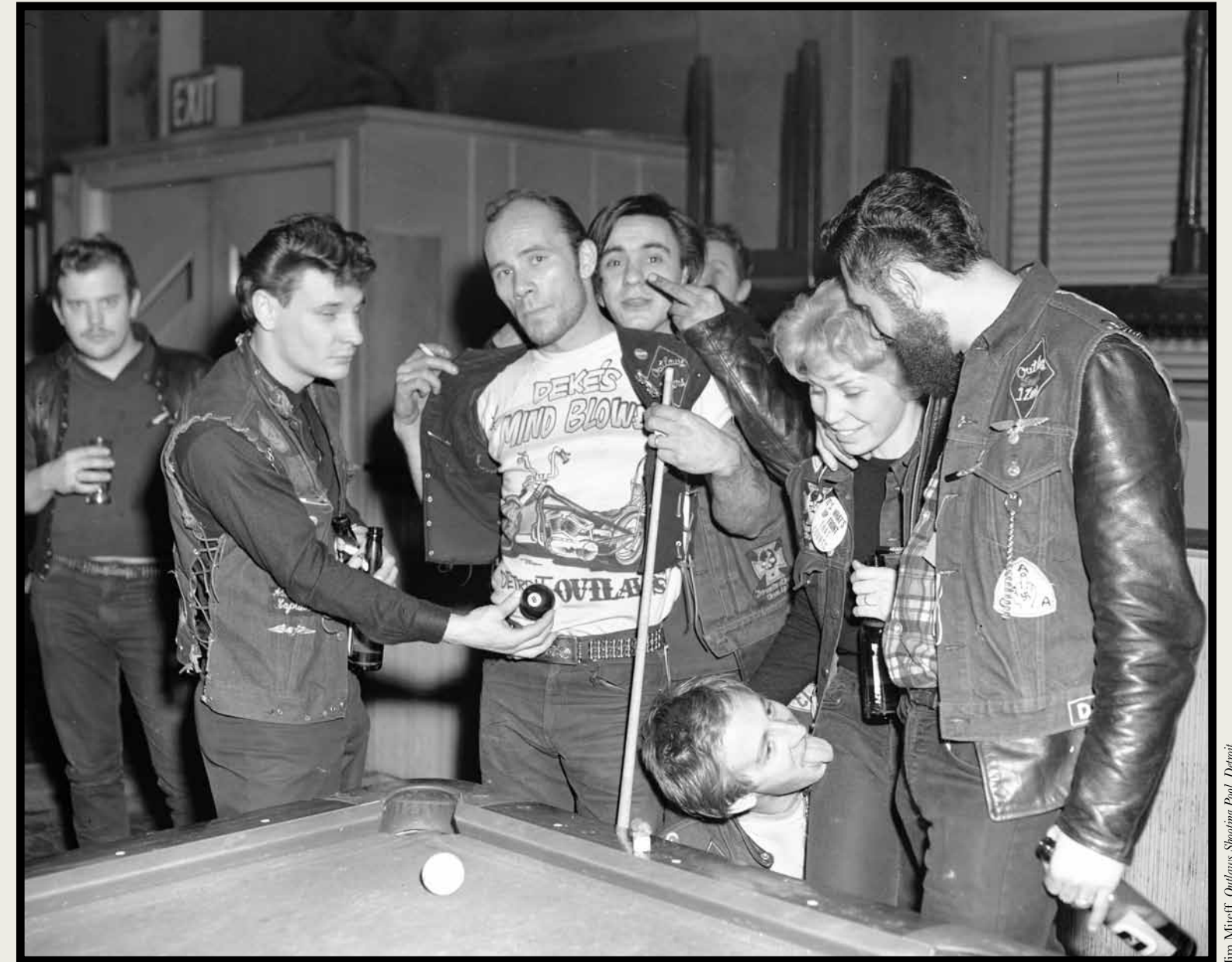
As far as prints go however, there are problems. Jim did not look at other photographers' work and was an outsider to the "fine art" world. He printed quickly, unconcerned with tonalities or dodging. Using 8x10" paper, he always cropped closely trying to pull the action into the frame. He edited his work as if it were for a magazine or newspaper and rarely gave photos away. The few prints he did make were for himself, a chronicle of his days as an Outlaw.

A comparison to *The Bikeriders*, a 1968 series of biker photos by Danny Lyon is unavoidable, and here the differences are most apparent. In photography circles, *The Bikeriders* has become a legendary debut photo book, still considered the most controversial and brutal book of its kind, sealing Lyon's reputation as the first to document the Outlaw bikers. Lyon, who was born in 1942, was a baby-boomer and of a younger generation than the Depression-era born Miteff. Lyon used the faster, more portable 35mm camera, the most popular camera of the 1960s.

When held beside Flash's work, Lyon (who rode with the Chicago chapter of the Outlaws for two years) reads foreign, self-conscious and somewhat distant, a stranger entering a world he is trying to frame and explain. Lyon had a journalistic mind and was embedded in the Outlaws, self-aware of his position and slightly frightened of it. Lyon viewed his life within the Outlaws as an undercover anti-Life-magazine assignment. Looking at his work today it seems far less cutting-edge than it did in 1967.

Flash seems totally at ease inside this world, like an elder statesman, a politician or poet taking the viewer by the hand on an underworld journey. Flash is self-assured, knowing exactly where and when to shoot. He controls the shots in a way most photographers only dream about. His eye is always in command, merging with the streets and the people he is photographing, and his photographs are all edge, sharp as razors. There is no doubt that if Flash had published his work anytime in the 60s, he would be considered a giant in photographic history. Such are the vagaries of time and fashion.

Some of the differences between these photographers can be explained through the tools that each used. Lyon took photos on the fly, quickly capturing



Jim Miteff, Outlaws Shooting Pool, Detroit

time and images like a bandit, hit or miss, speed-shooting from the hip in a style dependent on the Robert Frank snapshot aesthetic.

Flash was slow-moving, careful, plodding and organic. With a passion similar to the classicist Atget, famous for lugging an outsized 19th century view camera through the streets of Paris, Flash shows us the world of bikers in a way that is both generous and truthful. Flash is one of the true rarities of the 1960s, a self-taught artist outside the circle of those following the lead of Robert Frank. If Flash did have an influence it was probably the lurid black and white sex and journalism men's magazines of the 1950s, a place where a photographer like Weegee could always find work.

Flash made the Graflex Speed Graphic press camera his weapon of choice. The Speed Graphic is a large

format, heavy and imposing camera, the one used by news hounds in cartoons and in old B-film noirs. Made obsolete by faster, more nimble 35mm SLRs, it's an odd choice of camera for a shooter in the 60s, but Miteff was no ordinary photographer and his large camera demanded respect and parted the waters for him.

It produced a big 4x5" high quality negative that allowed for a wide degree of exposure and development that resulted in great prints suitable for magazine or newspaper publishing. There is a time-machine quality to a Flash photograph. The 60s seem slightly older, tinted by the thirties to fifties and more intense because of the detail he reveals through this slower, antique camera.

The camera made Flash stand out in a crowd, it screamed "photographer" and he knew it - people reacted to him in a way that was both posed and

natural. Speed and fast shooting was not Flash's game. He recognized the wild zeitgeist of the 60s MC world and saw it as classical theater: here was drama unfolding in front of his eyes, and he wanted to preserve it in the most rigorous and beautiful way possible, and so the older more stable Speed Graphic became a trusted companion.

Flash's photographs were carefully planned out compositions, almost reminiscent of stage plays or movie sets, blended with the humorous and absurd chance happenings of real life. The photos have retained an eclectic vitality beyond sheer nostalgia, where immortality is revealed in the everyday activities happening inside club houses, bars, the streets and woods; pool players, smoking, drinking, driving, picnics and weddings; and at the center stands the motorcycle, a shining symbol of freedom and the road.

The images were created with care and reverence and their power and resonance seem transcendent, undisturbed by time. These images speak to our humanity, zest for life and deepest fears. They are photos steeped in the 1960s, a very specific time and reality, yet they are also connected to the rich heritage of the MC stretching back to the 1930s. The Outlaw MC worldview is one few citizens will ever experience, yet here it is in an open book, a history exposed without limits and unsifted through the tentacles of the mass-media.

Part 4: Life After the Outlaws

Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda.

A great flame follows a little spark. – Divina Commedia, Paradiso Canto I, line 34

When Jim left the Outlaws MC, he continued his love affair with motorcycles and photography. He was hardworking, always busy, with endless energy, often thinking up new ideas and inventions, and he was involved on many levels with different businesses and sidelines. He built a machine shop in Detroit where many of his designs for sissy bars, emblems and chrome goodies could be produced and sold to biker shops around the world.

Jim also started a printing company, and in the late 60s he began another business designing and silk-screening a wild line of t-shirts with his friend "Mr. Ed." These were all black tees with humorous crackpot sayings on the front, like "Blow Me!" or "Let's Roll One!" with hippie heads pictured, or "Harley Repair Kit" with a hand grenade in the center. Jim made a series of photographs of friends modeling his t-shirts that is also an amazing and hilarious record of the day.

Over the years Jim accumulated over one hundred motorcycles, a collection that made him wealthy. Along the way he filled up warehouses across Detroit with vintage bikes. The money never changed

Jim. He enjoyed simple things and remained close to his parents until they passed away. His children and grandchildren were a great comfort. He continued to live in his modest home and workshop garage until his death on December 1st, 1999.

The first book Beverly published, *Portraits of American Bikers: Life in the 1960s* was a small edition of 3000 copies and is nearly sold out. The new book, *Portraits of American Bikers: Inside Looking Out*, has another 150 classic images with no repeats and a section photographed by Beverly that updates some of the bikers forty years later. A third book of more biker photographs is being planned and there are about one thousand unprinted 35mm negatives and reels of movie film still waiting to be proofed and catalogued. Beverly has taken on these projects to keep her father's vision alive. It's a legacy that seems to grow deeper in mystery and beauty over time.

Coming across Flash photos for the first time can be a mind-bending moment. Like hieroglyphs, the images convey a time and code of life nearing extinction. In an age lacking identity, discipline and authenticity, the works of Flash reveal a time that is often too real, too wild and too close for comfort, a time when skill and good times were celebrated loudly and shared.

We can also see the future fashion and pomp of punk rock in the faces of Flash's biker portraits. That once rare novelty of tribalism, with its piercings, tattoos, leather and road hogs, has now become another absorbed culture, a vanished world made mainstream. Here are the exposed roots of an extreme age, the savage outer rings of life where the biker's journey was also woven into a love of country, a view of this land as the primitive wide-open wilderness it once was.

Flash's photographs highlight a different side of the 1960s: a socially reviled universe that existed parallel to hippie culture, absorbing some of it, yet far removed from the age we call idyllic and charmed. There was a brief period when both worlds collided – before Altamont, Manson and the bloody violence that helped destroy the 60s.

Flash has left a visual archive that celebrates the rejects of society, the outsider-as-individual and the brotherhood law of the road. In photographs of beauty, humor and stylistic depth, Jim "Flash" Miteff has contained an unforgettable moment of time preserved, a moment of truth understood.

An Interview with Beverly V. Roberts, daughter of Jim "Flash" Miteff

Cary: Can you describe how you approached the Outlaws about the book project and what hurdles you needed to overcome to realize it?

Beverly: I had been away from the club for over forty years. I had gone out into the world and focused on



my career and my life as an adult. It was not until my father passed away and I could gain control over his photo collection that I even thought about what I would do with them. I had always dreamed that one day they would be published and shared but the odds of that ever actually happening were slim and I knew that. This is why I call it a "dream" rather than a goal. My dad had been gone for seven years and I started to really think about the photo collection being published. I had no idea who to contact from the Outlaws MC or how. For that matter, I had no idea that anyone else in the world would even share my vision for these photos.

I decided to test the market and posted a few hand-processed prints that my brother and I developed to see what people would think of them – if they would sell. Well, they did get a lot of attention on eBay from bidders and the Outlaws MC. The club watches for

copycat merchandise using their trademark/logo being sold by others on a regular basis. It was "Jingles" in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who was in charge of that. He contacted me by phone. The club had no idea the photo collection existed. I told Jingles who I was and where I got the photos. This is a historical treasure for the club and for me.

The club offered to buy the collection from me. It was never about money for me. It was about preserving a piece of American history and my way of paying a tribute to people who meant a lot to me. People I shared my childhood with. Of course I would share that with the Outlaws today, we share the same roots. I was delighted to finally be in touch with my Dad's club again. The process was fast but sometimes a bit difficult. This is an all-male club. We did not know each other. Getting them to allow the world to peek and poke around in their very private

world was a big deal. I am forever grateful that they took that leap of faith and agreed to work with me on these projects. It is preserving Outlaw history and making some new Outlaw history at the same time.

Cary: Can you talk about his relationship with the Outlaws? Was there tension when he left?

Beverly: I think it was a hard decision for my father to retire from the club and I think the club was sorry to see him leave, but I know the club eventually understood. My father continued to have several individual relationships with members of the Outlaws. He also continued to keep his word about the photo collection being kept private. Only a small handful of people even knew the photos existed. Nobody in the club knew what happened to the collection. After forty plus years, nobody even remembered them.

Cary: Did you or your father have any favorite photos?

Beverly: My dad liked taking the “silly” pictures the best. I like the one with the guy standing in the trashcan with the lid on his head. My father always tried his best to get anyone he took a picture of to do something “goofy” or “silly” for the camera. The Outlaws of those days appeared to be more than happy to do it. Many of the photos in the Outlaw collection are funny. The younger members of the Outlaws today like to look at the books and laugh at the styles and mannerisms of that time. Even those of us who were there and remember it very well have to admit that things have changed a lot, we laugh at a lot of the photos too.

Cary: Could you comment or describe what life was like being raised by Outlaw MC parents? Was there any friction about this lifestyle within your family?

Beverly: In those days it was hard to be in a family and live that lifestyle. Many from that original Detroit chapter of the club retired from it as they started families. My father became very successful in his motorcycle related business ventures and had very little time for much else. He retired from the club by the end of the 1960s as well. He had a deep feeling of love and respect for the club always and he expected me to honor their wishes regarding sharing his photos of the club members with the public. And I do.

The 1960s biker movies are accurate in the way they show the “attitude” of American citizens towards bikers back then. It was tough. My sister, Susan, and I both dealt with a very hostile social environment being the children of a biker who rode with a 1%er motorcycle club. Our parents were rebel, hell-raising bikers; both wore the official Outlaw MC patch called “Charlie” on their backs. In those days women were allowed to wear the patch just like the men. Never have women been allowed to become members and

today women no longer wear the famous skull and crossed pistons emblem on their vests. Only a few women rode their own motorcycles in the 1960s. Today it’s very common to see women riding. A lot has changed.

My parents were the black sheep of their families. Sadly, so were my sister and I. It’s no surprise that my sister and I would sense this. Susan and I were never very close to our aunts and uncles. We would usually see them at holidays. Some of the guys in the club were around a lot. They became our “uncles.” I have a lot of great memories of the guys from those old days. I don’t have a single bad memory of any of them. I learned from the Outlaws not to judge people based on what you see on the surface. That turned out to be a very good lesson indeed.

I think it’s hard to be your own person. Peer pressure at any age can be a powerful thing. My dad was his own person. He loved his parents and his own family but he lived his life his way. He never told other people how they should live and he wasn’t going to be told by anyone how to live his. He liked his freedom and was willing to pay the price for it. His “in your face” honesty used to shock people. I appreciated the honesty and admired that in my father.

Cary: Do you think these photographs dispel or reinforce myths about biker culture?

Beverly: Both. Without *any* doubt.

Cary: What do you think your father’s reaction would be toward the publication of his work today?

Beverly: He would be very, very proud. Most proud of the way the club has supported my efforts. I think my dad does see what’s going on with the books. I can feel it.

Cary Loren (1955) is one of the founding members (with Mike Kelley, Jim Shaw and Niagara) of the renowned Detroit based band Destroy All Monsters. He is still living in Detroit, where he is the proprietor of Book Beat, a nationally recognized independent bookstore specializing in art related subjects. He continues to create music, photography, and independent films.

Cary Loren for Nero Magazine, 2010
quotations by Dante Alighieri
all photos (c) Flash Collection 2010, Beverly V. Roberts

FLASH! THE EYE OF A BADASS

Parte 1: La strada verso la pubblicazione

The secret of getting things done is to act. –Dante Alighieri

Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch’entrate.

Inferno, Canto III, riga 9

La raffica di proiettili che attraversò le finestre della modesta casa di Jim ed Helen a Dearborn Heights si andò a conficcare nel muro, a pochi passi dalla stanza in cui giocavano i loro due figli. Helen diede un ultimatum a Jim: “O lasci gli Outlaws, o me ne vado con i bambini.” Era la fine degli anni sessanta. Jim “Flash” Miteff aveva passato gli ultimi sei anni a documentare e a girare in moto come membro della famosa sezione di Detroit dell’Outlaws Motorcycle Club.

Fu una decisione difficile, ma Jim scelse di stare con la sua famiglia e troncò i legami formali con il club. Gli Outlaws erano diventati per Jim una “famiglia esterna” sostitutiva; una confraternita di motociclisti tosti, legati tra loro dalla lealtà gli uni per gli altri, per il loro profondo attaccamento al club e per il loro stile di vita sovversivo e privo di compromessi.

Il giorno seguente Jim andò alla clubhouse e lasciò i suoi colori, il suo gilet a tre “rocker” (le tre toppe stampate sulla schiena, ndr) con scritto “Outlaws” in alto, il logo con lo scheletro e i pistoni al posto delle ossa al centro e la parola “Detroit” scritta in old-english sulla parte bassa. Tommy Trucker, presidente della sezione di Detroit, chiese a Jim di riconsegnare all’Outlaws tutte le foto e i negativi, dal momento che, attraverso di esse, era possibile identificare i membri (alcuni dei quali erano ricercati dalla polizia), e che in gran parte delle foto apparivano i loro “colori” e altri dettagli privati del club che volevano mantenere segreti.

Jim acconsentì in linea teorica, e provò a vendere agli Outlaws l’intera collezione, sperando così di recuperare i costi di pellicola, carta da stampa e prodotti chimici per lo sviluppo. Il prezzo era basso, ma il club non negoziò. Ci si trovò ad un punto morto. Promise quindi agli Outlaws che finché fosse vissuto, non avrebbe pubblicato le foto; una promessa che ha mantenuto, i negativi sono rimasti sepolti nella sua stanza per oltre quarant’anni, fino alla sua morte nel 1999.

Sul letto di morte, Jim affidò l’intera collezione di foto alla sua figlia femmina maggiore, Beverly. Quelle foto erano gli oggetti a cui lei teneva di più rispetto alla vita del padre, le parlavano di momenti felici e spensierati, giorni che ricordava con affetto, quando da bambina di otto anni aiutava il padre in camera oscura e lo accompagnava agli incontri con i suoi coloratissimi amici motociclisti, ora ritratti in questi scatti in bianco e nero.

“È da quando sono bambina che sogno di far diventare queste foto un libro e di condividerle con il pubblico,” ha detto Beverly.

Ci vollero molti anni prima che trovasse il coraggio di metterle insieme in un libro; quel sogno si è realizzato nel 2008, quando Beverly ha pubblicato in proprio *Portraits of American Bikers: Life in the Sixties* e nel 2010 *Portraits of American Bikers: Inside Looking Out*. Entrambi i titoli sono stati un immediato cult nella cultura biker e stanno lentamente venendo riconosciuti come parte vitale nella storia della fotografia.

L’avventura è iniziata quando Beverly, con l’aiuto del fratello, ha cominciato a vendere su ebay le prime fotografie stampate a mano. Gli inconfondibili colori dell’Outlaws furono riconosciuti da Jingles 1%er, un membro Outlaw specializzato in questioni di copyright. La sua prima reazione fu di shock.

“Dove diavolo hai preso queste foto?” chiese Jingles.

“Le ha scattate mio padre.”

“Beh, c’è la nostra storia in quelle foto!”

“...ma è anche la mia storia,” rispose lei.

Jingles non aveva mai conosciuto Flash, ma appartenevano alla stessa generazione e riconobbe subito l’importanza e l’integrità di quelle immagini. Il lavoro di Flash mostrava gli Outlaws in modo non sensazionalista, né patinato. Erano semplicemente oneste e veritiere, piene di vita e d’umorismo.

Jingles 1%er fu entusiasta del progetto. Fu in grado di aprirle le porte dell’Outlaws, organizzò un incontro tra Beverly e un loro comitato per vedere insieme le foto da pubblicare. Le opinioni furono espresse e rispettate, pochissime immagini furono ritirate e l’intero procedimento fu veloce.

Furono contattati gli eredi e i membri

dell’Outlaws ancora in vita, non ci fu nessuna obiezione. I libri avrebbero mostrato i giorni più cari e le attività giovanili dei motociclisti dell’Outlaws; qualcosa da celebrare e passare alle giovani generazioni, che avevano sentito solo incredibili storie sui vecchi tempi – i tempi gloriosi dell’Outlaws.

La fama pubblica della biker-culture è stata alimentata principalmente dai mass-media; il giornalismo e i film di Hollywood ne hanno dipinto gli atti pericolosi, la perversione e il taboo. Qui, in bianco e nero, ci sono centinaia d’immagini che raccontano una storia differente, che viene direttamente dall’età d’oro del Motorcycle Club.

La storia di queste immagini venute alla luce è quella dell’amore di una figlia e della sua determinazione a portare all’attenzione e alla luce il singolare ed artistico stile di vita del padre. Beverly, che è cresciuta praticamente su una motocicletta, (in sella prima di imparare a camminare) ha rintracciato chiunque fosse presente nelle foto, vivo o morto, e gli è stato concesso di accedere al chiuso mondo dell’Outlaws, il quale ha dato l’ok al lavoro, giudicandolo giustamente senza pregiudizi, come una registrazione veritiera dei loro tempi e della loro storia. L’Outlaws è una famiglia per Beverly, e lei si è data il compito di rappresentare quella storia, nel bene e nel male.

Parte 2: L’educazione di un Outlaw

Libertà va cercando, ch’è sì cara, come sa chi per lei vita rifiuta.

Divina Commedia, Purgatorio, I, 71–72

Jim Miteff nacque il 27 Aprile del 1933 a Toledo, Ohio. Era il primogenito di tre figli nati da genitori immigrati dalla Bulgaria negli Stati Uniti durante gli anni venti. La famiglia si spostò presto a Lincoln Park, Michigan, una zona popolare nella parte sudovest di Detroit, dove quasi tutti erano impiegati nell’industria delle automobili. A casa si parlava solo in bulgaro e Jim imparò l’inglese alle elementari. Da giovane Jim collezionava fumetti e amava i cartoni animati di Walt Disney. Si meravigliava delle invenzioni e all’età di diciott’anni guidava già una moto.

Nel 1955 Richard, il miglior amico di Jim, morì in un incidente d’auto. Helen, la ragazza di Richard, si avvicinò molto a Jim, e si sposarono. Insieme hanno avuto quattro figli; Jim, Beverly, Susan ed Helen.

Alla fine degli anni cinquanta Jim aprì ‘West Side Cycle’ a Detroit, uno shop in cui si vendevano accessori per moto e si facevano riparazioni e customizzazioni. Situato su Vernor Highway, vicino Livernois, divenne ben presto un punto d’incontro per i motociclisti della città. Durante i primi anni sessanta Jim diventa membro dell’Outlaws MC e viene soprannominato “Flash”, per il suo interesse nei confronti della fotografia e dei bulbi luminosi dei flash al magnesio azionati dai trigger della macchina fotografica.

Jim aveva un dono naturale per gli scherzi. Beverly ricorda una volta in cui il padre partì per un viaggio di pesca, promettendogli di portare a casa il più grande pesce che avesse potuto trovare. Una volta tornato disse “vai a dare un’occhiata alla piscina sul retro...” Quando fu di fronte alla piccola vasca per bambini, Beverly vide centinaia di pesciolini che nuotavano nell’acqua. “Beh, non ne ho trovato uno grande, così te ne ho portati tanti piccoli!”

Molte delle foto di Flash girano intorno a piccoli scherzi e a buffe messe in scena. Amava dirigere ed incitare i suoi soggetti, provocando situazioni che avrebbero reso la fotografia interessante; bikers che si baciano tra loro davanti alla polizia, bikers con i denti da vampiro, vestiti da uomo delle caverne, che agitano bottiglie, che pisciano, che si mostrano o tirano giù i pantaloni di fronte all’obiettivo. L’uso sensazionalista dei paraphernalia nazisti: caschi, svastiche e bandiere sono posti in contrasto al giocoso disinteresse degli uomini che scherzano tra loro. Niente era troppo oltraggioso, o troppo strano, per l’occhio di Flash.

La storia dell’Outlaws torna indietro ai primi anni trenta, a Chicago. Si espansero rapidamente dopo la seconda guerra mondiale, così come tanti altri club negli Stati Uniti. *The Wild One*, il film del 1953 sui motociclisti fuorilegge, con Marlon Brando come protagonista, era basato sulla rivolta dei motociclisti del 1947 ad Hollister, California, ed influenzò il design del simbolo dell’Outlaws, con scheletro e pistoni. “God Forgives Outlaw’s Don’t” (“G.F.O.D.”) (trad. “Dio perdona, l’Outlaws no”) divenne il motto del club nel 1969. Il termine 1%er fa riferimento al presunto comunicato dell’American Motorcycle Association (A.M.A.) nel quale era stato dichiarato che il 99% dei motociclisti era obbediente alla legge e che solo l’1% era composto di mele marce.

Flash è stato un biker fatto per i biker – un vero 1%er. Era leggermente più vecchio della maggior parte degli altri membri dell’Outlaws e di moto ne sapeva più di loro. Flash aveva un in-spiegabile controllo su quasi tutte le situazioni. Rimaneva saldo e fotografava con uno stile semplice e non pretenzioso, guadagnandosi il rispetto di tutti. Sembra come se i suoi compagni motociclisti volessero accontentarlo e cercavano la sua attenzione, per rispetto e fiducia profondi.

Parte 3: Flash come fotografo, o la Speed Graphic Time Machine

Ché perder tempo a chi più sa più spiace.

Divina Commedia, Purgatorio, III, 78

Le immagini di Flash sono uniche nella storia della fotografia. Rappresentano una sottocultura mai mostrata prima, emersa solo attraverso il sensazionalismo stereotipato dei fumetti e dei mass media. Queste fotografie offrono la possibilità di guardare attraverso una finestra la cultura dei motociclisti di Detroit e del Midwest.

Le immagini sono partecipative, sia come esempi di ‘vita in movimento’ che come oggetto d’osservazione. Il suo lavoro ha la stessa inattaccabile e avvincente autenticità di Diane Arbus, sua contemporanea, ma senza quel tono cupo e di quell’atteggiamento triste. D’intensità ce n’è da vendere: alloggi spartani, bevute, risate, pazzia, un po’ di cupezza, ma soprattutto gioia.

Le immagini mostrano la stessa sincerità, devozione e avvicinamento alla sottocultura, di Larry Clark o Nan Goldin, con la differenza che Jim “Flash” Miteff inizia a lavorare con un decennio o due di anticipo, ed è tecnicamente di gran lunga migliore di loro; ha un controllo sulla macchina fotografia di grande formato paragonabile a quello di Weegee, ed è un esperto di strada come Atget. I suoi negativi sono scatti in formato 4x5” perfettamente bilanciati e precisi. Lo stile assolutamente sfacciato di Miteff è simile a quello di molti vecchi maestri; uno stile immediatamente riconoscibile come suo.

Dal punto di vista della stampa tuttavia ci sono dei problemi. Jim non guardava al lavoro di altri fotografi, era un “outsider” rispetto al mondo delle “belle arti”. Stampava velocemente, disinteressandosi alle tonalità o ai ritocchi. Usando la carta 8x10”, era costretto sempre a tagliare le foto, cercando di portare l’azione nella cornice. Editava i suoi lavori come se fossero per riviste o quotidiani, e raramente faceva girare le foto. Le poche stampe che realizzò erano per

se stesso, una cronaca dei suoi giorni come Outlaw.

Un confronto con *The Bikeriders*, una serie di foto di motociclisti del 1968 di Danny Lyon, è inevitabile, e le differenze in questo caso sono ben visibili. Nell’ambiente della fotografia, *The Bikeriders* è diventato un libro di foto d’esordio leggendario, ancora considerato il più controverso e brutale di questo genere, sancendo Lyon come il primo ad aver documentato il mondo dei motociclisti Outlaws. Lyon, nato nel 1942, era un baby-boomer, di una generazione più giovane rispetto a Miteff, nato nell’era della depressione. Lyon usava la più veloce e maneggevole 35mm, la famosa macchina fotografica degli anni ‘60.

Posizionato accanto al lavoro di Flash, Lyon (che fece parte della sezione dell’Outlaws di Chicago per due anni) sembra estraneo, consapevole e in un certo modo distante; è uno straniero che entra in quel mondo per ritrarlo e raccontarlo. Lyon ha una mentalità da giornalista, quando fu arruolato nell’Outlaws era consapevole della sua posizione e ne era leggermente spaventato. Lyon vedeva la sua vita nell’Outlaws come un lavoro sotto copertura, per una rivista in stile anti-Life. Guardando al suo lavoro oggi, sembra assai meno innovativo di quanto apparisse nel 1967.

Flash appare completamente a suo agio all’interno di questo mondo, come un vecchio uomo di stato, un politico o un poeta più anziano che prende lo spettatore per mano in un viaggio nell’oltretomba. Flash è sicuro di sé, sa esattamente dove e quando scattare. Controlla gli scatti come gran parte dei fotografi potrebbe solo sognarsi di fare. Il suo occhio è sempre al comando, diventa tutt’uno con le strade e le persone che ritrae e le sue fotografie sono tutte affilate, taglienti come rasoi. Non c’è dubbio che se Flash avesse pubblicato il suo lavoro in un momento qualsiasi nel corso degli anni ‘60, sarebbe stato considerato un gigante nella storia della fotografia. Questi sono i capricci del tempo e della moda.

Alcune delle differenze tra questi fotografi possono essere spiegate in base agli strumenti utilizzati. Lyon scattava le foto in volo, catturando velocemente il tempo e le immagini come un bandito, colpisci o manca, uno stile di fotografia veloce in uno stile legato all’estetica dell’istantanea di Robert Frank.

Flash si muoveva lentamente, era intento, meticoloso e organico. Con una passione simile al classicista Atget, famoso per trascinare una gigantesca

macchina fotografica da veduta del XIX per le strade di Parigi, Flash ci mostra il mondo dei bikers in modo generoso e veritiero. Flash è una delle vere rarità degli anni ‘60, un artista autodidatta, fuori dal circolo di quelli che seguivano l’esempio di Robert Frank.Se Flash è stato influenzato da qualcosa, lo è stato probabilmente da quelle riviste maschili di sesso e giornalismo degli anni ‘50 in bianco e nero, dove un fotografo come Weegee poteva sempre trovare lavoro.

Flash fece della macchina Graflex Speed Graphic la sua arma preferita. La Speed Graphic è una “grande formato”, una macchina pesante e imponente, quella utilizzata dai reporter nei cartoni animati e nei vecchi noir di serie B. E’ una strana scelta per un fotografo d’assalto degli anni ‘60, era obsoleta rispetto alla più veloce e agile SLRs 35mm, ma Miteff non era un fotografo ordinario e la sua grande macchina fotografica imponeva rispetto e gli apriva le porte. Produceva negativi di 4x5” di ottima qualità, che permettevano un alto livello di esposizione e sviluppo, per delle grandi stampe adatte a formati di riviste o quotidiani. Nelle fotografie di Flash c’è qualcosa che ha a che fare con l’idea di macchina del tempo. Gli anni ‘60 sembrano leggermente più vecchi, hanno qualcosa del periodo che passa tra gli anni ‘30 e i ‘50, sono più intensi per via dei dettagli che questa macchina fotografica lenta ed antica riesce a rilevare.

La macchina ergeva Flash nella folla, gridavano “fotografo”, e lui ne era consapevole – le persone reagivano allo stesso tempo in modo naturale ed in posa. Scattare foto in fretta e furia non faceva al caso di Flash. Riconosceva lo zeitgeist selvaggio del mondo degli MC anni ‘60, e lo vedeva come teatro classico; c’era un dramma che si svelava di fronte ai suoi occhi ed egli intendeva preservarlo nel modo più rigoroso e bello possibile; per questo la vecchia e stabile Speed Graphic divenne sua compagna fedele.

Nel corso degli anni Jim accumulò più di un centinaio di moto, una collezione che lo rese benestante. Riempi magazzini di moto vintage per tutta Detroit. I soldi non cambiarono Jim. Apprezzava le cose semplici, e rimase vicino ai suoi genitori fino alla fine. Suo figlio e suo nipote erano un grande conforto. Continuò a vivere nella sua modesta casa e nel suo garage laboratorio fino alla sua morte, avvenuta il 1 Dicembre 1999.

Il primo libro che Beverly ha pubblicato, *Portraits of American Bikers; Life in the 1960s* fu una piccola edizione di 3.000 copie ed è praticamente esaurita. Il nuovo libro: *Portraits of American Bikers: Inside Looking Out*, ha altre 150 immagini classiche, senza ripetizioni, e una sezione con le foto di Beverly che raffigurano, quarant’anni dopo, alcuni di quei motociclisti. Un terzo libro, con ulteriori foto di motociclisti, è in programma, e restano ancora circa 1.000 negativi in 35mm

bate dal tempo, trascendenti. Queste immagini parlano alla nostra umanità, del gusto per la vita e delle paure più profonde. Sono foto che s’immergono negli anni ‘60, in un periodo e in una realtà molto specifica e, ancora, sono legate alla ricca eredità dell’MC che risale agli anni ‘30. La visione del mondo dell’Outlaws MC è una cosa di cui pochi potranno fare esperienza, e tuttavia qui è un libro aperto, una storia esposta senza limitazioni e ancora non passata al setaccio dai tentacoli dei mass media.

Part 4: La vita dopo l’Outlaws

Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda. Divina Commedia, Paradiso Canto I, riga 34

Quando lasciò l’Outlaws MC Jim continuò la sua storia d’amore verso i motociclisti e la fotografia. Era un gran lavoratore, sempre impegnato, con un’energia infinita, spesso alla ricerca di nuove idee ed invenzioni, agiva su più livelli, con lavori diversi e complementari. Aprì un negozio di macchinari a Detroit in cui gran parte dei suoi disegni per le *sissy bar*, gli stemmi e le componenti cromate potevano essere prodotti e venduti ai negozi per motociclisti in giro per il mondo.

Jim avviò anche una stamperia e nei tardi anni ‘60 iniziò a disegnare e stampare in serigrafia una pazzesca linea di magliette, con il suo amico “Mr. Ed”. Erano magliette nere con scritte ironiche tipo “Blow Me” o “Let’s Roll One!” e la testa di un hippie, o “Harley Repair Kit” con una granata. Jim realizzò una serie di foto con amici che indossavano le sue magliette, un ulteriore incredibile e divertente documento.

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mai stampati e alcune bobine di un film ancora da visionare e catalogare. Beverly ha preso in mano questi progetti per tenere viva la visione di suo padre. E’ un’eredità che sembra crescere sempre più nel mistero e nella bellezza fuori tempo.

Incrociare per la prima volta le foto di Flash può essere un’esperienza sconvolgente. Come i geroglifici, le immagini trasmettono un tempo e un codice di vita praticamente in estinzione. Oggi, in un’epoca che ha perso identità, disciplina e autenticità, i lavori di Flash rivelano un periodo ancora troppo vero, troppo selvaggio e troppo vicino, un periodo in cui la bravura e i bei momenti erano condivisi e celebrati a gran voce.

Nei volti dei motociclisti ritratti da Flash possiamo vedere anche la moda e il successo futuri del punk rock. Quella novità di tribalismo che allora era così rara; i piercings, i tatuaggi, la pelle, i road-hogs sono stati assorbiti oggi da una cultura altra, quel mondo scomparso è stato reso mainstream. Qui vediamo esposte le radici di un’epoca estrema, i confini più selvaggi della vita, in cui il viaggio di un motociclista era anche intriso d’amore per la patria; qui c’è una visione di questa terra come la sterminata landa selvaggia di un tempo.

Le fotografie di Flash evidenziano un lato diverso degli anni ‘60; un universo ingiuriato dalla società, che ha avuto luogo in parallelo a quello della cultura hippie, assorbendone alcuni aspetti, ma allo stesso tempo lontano da quella che definiamo un’epoca idilliaca e incantata. C’è stato un breve periodo dove i due mondi si sono scontrati; prima di Altamont, Manson e la violenza sanguinaria che contribuì a distruggere gli anni ‘60.

Flash ha lasciato un archivio visivo che celebra i reietti della società, l’outsider come individuo e la legge della fratellanza di strada. Attraverso fotografie piene di bellezza, ironia e spessore stilistico, Jim “Flash” Miteff ha raccolto un momento indimenticabile, un momento di verità svelata.

Un’intervista a Beverly V. Roberts, figlia di Jim “Flash” Miteff

Cary: Mi puoi descrivere come ti sei avvicinata all’Outlaws per il progetto del libro e quali ostacoli hai dovuto superare per realizzarlo?

Beverly: Sono stata lontano dal club per oltre 40 anni. Sono stata fuori, nel mondo, e mi sono concentrata sulla mia carriera e la mia vita da adulta. E’ stato solo nel momento in cui, morto mio padre, sono venuta in possesso

della sua collezione di foto che ho cominciato a chiedermi cosa avrei voluto farci. Avevo sempre sognato che un giorno fossero pubblicate e condivise, ma le probabilità che ciò potesse accadere erano limitate e lo sapevo. Questo è il motivo per cui lo definisco un “sogno”, più che un obbiettivo. Erano sette anni che mio padre era scomparso quando ho cominciato a pensare veramente all’idea di pubblicare che la collezione. Rispetto all’Outlaws, non avevo idea di chi e come contattare. Per la stessa ragione non avevo neanche idea che qualcun altro, oltre me, potesse condividere i miei intenti al riguardo di queste foto.

Ho deciso di testare il mercato e ho mandato alcune stampe fatte a mano, sviluppate da me e mio fratello, per vedere che ne pensavano le persone e se le compravano. Beh, hanno suscitato molta attenzione su eBay dal pubblico e dall’Outlaws MC stesso. Il club controlla il materiale contraffatto che usa i loro simboli e viene venduto di continuo da terzi. Era “Jingles” da Milwaukee, WI, il responsabile di tenere sotto controllo questo aspetto. Mi ha contattato al telefono. Il club non era conoscenza dell’esistenza della collezione di foto. Ho detto a Jingles chi ero e dove avevo preso quelle foto. Si tratta di un tesoro con un valore storico per il club e per me.

Il club si è offerto di comprarmi la collezione. Ma per me non è mai stata una questione di soldi. Si tratta di preservare un pezzo di storia americana, e di un mio personale modo di rendere tributo a delle persone che hanno significato molto per me. Persone con cui ho passato la mia infanzia. Ovviamente ho voglia di dividerlo con l’Outlaws, condividiamo gli stessi percorsi. Ero così felice di essere finalmente tornata in contatto con il club di mio padre. Gli ostacoli e l’intero iter sono stati veloci, ma qualche volta è stato un po’ difficile. È un club solo maschile. Non ci conoscevamo. E’ stato un grosso sforzo riuscire a convincerli a permettere al mondo di sbirciare e di impiccarsi del loro mondo privato. Gli sarò sempre grata del fatto che hanno deciso di fidarsi e che hanno accettato di lavorare con me su questi progetti. Si tratta di preservare la storia dell’Outlaws e allo stesso tempo di crearne una nuova.

Cary: Puoi parlarci del rapporto di tuo padre con gli Outlaws? C’è stata tensione quando se n’È andato?

Beverly: Credo sia stata una decisione difficile per mio padre ritirarsi dal circolo, e penso che il club fosse dispiaciuto nel vederlo andar via, ma so che il club alla fine ha capito. Mio padre ha continuato ad avere di-

versi rapporti individuali con alcuni membri dell’Outlaws. Ha continuato a mantenere la sua parola sul tenere privata la collezione. Solo un esiguo numero di persone erano a conoscenza dell’esistenza delle foto. Nessuno nel circolo sapeva cosa era successo alla collezione. Dopo oltre 30 anni, nessuno se ne ricordava più.

Cary: Tu o tuo padre avevate delle foto preferite?

Beverly: Mio padre amava considerare migliori le foto più ridicole. A me piace quella del ragazzo dentro il bidone dell’immondizia con il coperchio in testa. Mio padre ha sempre provato a fare del suo meglio per convincere chi fotografava a fare qualcosa di “stupido” e “ridicolo” per la macchina fotografica. Gli Outlaws di quei tempi sembravano essere molto disposti a fare queste cose. Molte delle foto nella collezione Outlaw sono divertenti. Oggi, ai membri più giovani dell’Outlaws piace vedere i libri e ridere degli stili e delle pose dell’epoca. Anche quelli di noi che erano lì e hanno un ricordo chiaro delle cose, devono ammettere che le cose sono molto cambiate, ridiamo anche noi su un sacco di foto.

Cary: Puoi raccontarmi o descrivermi com’è stato crescere con un padre appartenente all’Outlaws MC? C’è mai stato qualche attrito in famiglia per via di questo stile di vita?

Beverly: A quell’epoca era difficile avere una famiglia e fare quel tipo di vita. Molti membri dell’originale sezione del club di Detroit si sono ritirati non appena hanno messo su famiglia. Mio padre ebbe molto successo nelle sue attività commerciali legate alle moto e aveva pochissimo tempo da dedicare al resto. Si è ritirato anche lui dal club alla fine degli ‘60. Ha avuto sempre un profondo senso d’amore e rispetto verso il club e si aspettava che un giorno avrei reso onore ai loro desideri di condividere le foto con il pubblico. E infatti lo sto facendo.

I film sui bikers degli anni ‘60 mostrano in modo accurato quale era l’“attitudine” dei cittadini americani di quei tempi nei confronti dei motociclisti. Era dura. Mia sorella Susan ed io avevamo entrambe a che fare con un ambiente sociale molto ostile, essendo figlie di un biker che apparteneva ad un club di motociclisti “one percenter”. I nostri genitori erano dei motociclisti ribelli e indiatolati; entrambi indossavano lo stemma ufficiale dell’Outlaws MC, chiamato “Charlie”, sulle spalle. A quei tempi le donne potevano indossare la toppa come gli uomini. Nessuna donna è mai potuta essere membro del club e oggi,

sui loro gilet, non indossano neanche più il famoso simbolo col teschio e i pistoni incrociati. Solo poche donne guidavano le moto negli anni ‘60. Oggi è molto più comune vedere donne in sella. Tante cose sono cambiate.

I miei genitori erano le pecore nere delle loro rispettive famiglie. Sfortunatamente lo eravamo anche io e mia sorella. Non sorprende che io e mia sorella ce ne rendessimo conto. Io e Susan non siamo state mai troppo unite ai nostri zii e zie. Li vedevamo durante le feste. Alcuni ragazzi del club erano sempre intorno a noi. Loro sono diventati i nostri “zii”. Ho tantissimi bei ricordi di quei ragazzi. Non c’è un brutto ricordo legato a nessuno di loro. Dall’Outlaws ho imparato a non giudicare le persone da ciò che si vede in superficie. E questa si è dimostrata essere davvero un’ottima lezione.

Credo sia difficile essere se stessi. La competizione, a qualsiasi età, può essere una cosa molto tosta. Mio padre era se stesso. Amava i suoi genitori e la sua famiglia, ma ha vissuto la sua vita a modo proprio. Non ha mai detto ad altre persone come vivere, e non gli è mai stato detto come lui stesso avrebbe dovuto farlo. Amava la sua libertà ed era pronto a pagare per questo. La sua onestà sfacciata scioccava spesso le persone. Ho sempre apprezzato e ammirato la sincerità in mio padre.

Cary: Credi che queste foto abbiano indebolito o rinforzato la mitologia che si è creata intorno alla biker-culture?

Beverly: Entrambe le cose. Senza dubbio alcuno.

Cary: Quale pensi sarebbe stata oggi la reazione di tuo padre alla pubblicazione del suo lavoro?

Beverly: Sarebbe stato molto, molto orgoglioso. Ancora più di quanto lo è stato il club nel sostenere i miei sforzi. Penso che mio padre sia in grado di vedere quello che sta succedendo con i libri. Lo sento.

Cary Loren (1955) è uno dei membri fondatori (con Mike Kelley, Jim Shaw e Niagara) della famosa band di Detroit “Destroy All Monsters”. Vive e lavora ancora a Detroit, dove gestisce Book Beat, un bookstore indipendente specializzato in pubblicazioni legate alle arti visive riconosciuto a livello nazionale. Continua a creare musica, fotografia e film indipendenti.

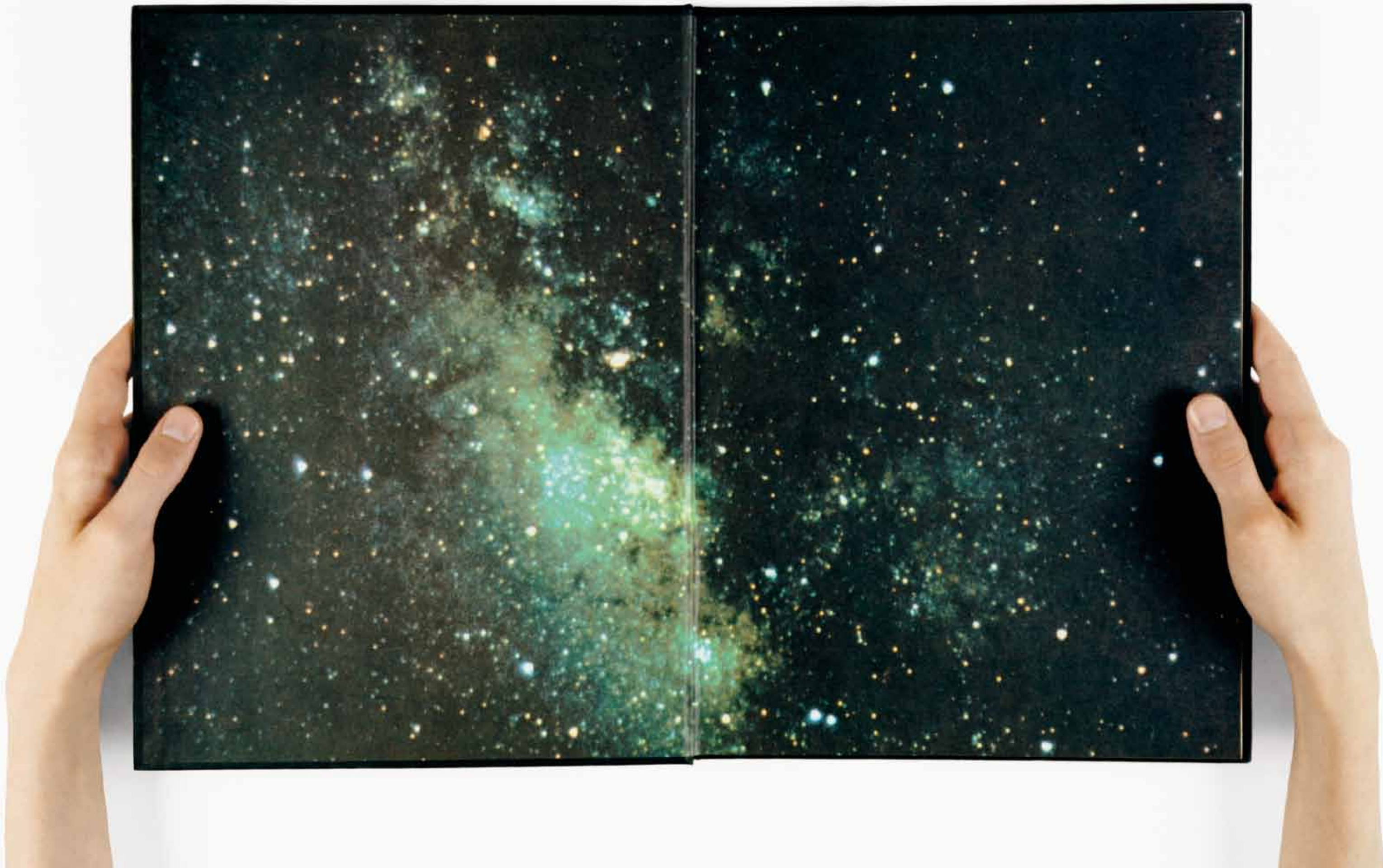
Cary Loren per Nero Magazine, 2010 citazioni da Dante Alighieri

tutte le foto (c) Flash Collection 2010, Beverly V. Roberts









THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF WAITING ROOMS

EVERY ONE OF US HAS, AT LEAST ONCE IN HIS OR HER LIFE, BEEN MARKED BY THE EXPERIENCE OF A WAITING ROOM. AMONGST ALL THE SO-CALLED NON-PLACES, WAITING ROOMS ARE THE MOST PROFOUND, THOSE WHICH MOST AUTHENTICALLY GUARD THE MYSTERIES OF EXISTENCE. THE MOST INTENSE & SILENT ARTISTS HAVE UNDERSTOOD THIS BETTER THAN ANYONE. ALL THE WORK OF FRANZ KAFKA IS ABOUT THE COGNITION OF WAITING; INDEED, ONE MIGHT SAY THAT HIS ENTIRE OPUS IS A SINGLE, DISTURBING, WAITING ROOM.

words & images by francesco pecoraro

De Chirico's Italian piazzas are suspended in the expectancy of an inexplicable event. Hopper seems to paint the fixity of the wait between one moment and the next. Etcetera.

The construction of a time machine, and on which principles of physics it should be based, is often theorized: entire scientific and philosophical treatises devoted to a problem that already finds a solution in waiting rooms – which are, precisely, time machines. They serve to conduct us from the instant t^0 (the moment we enter them) to the instant t^n (the moment we exit them to access another, more specific, locale). If, for example, I arrive at my dentist's waiting room at 17.38, it will transport me to 18.02, that is, to the moment when I'll get up and exit there in order to enter the studio. The transportation seems to occur in "real time," but in reality it actually doesn't, insofar as the waiting room functions as a temporal accelerator or decelerator, no less than as the only institutional space of true meditation that the West concedes itself. As soon as we step into it we precipitate into an anomalous spatiotemporal dimension that places us in a suspended and hypnotic psychic state, while everything that we expected to find there is duly present: according to an almost immutable phenomenology, the waiting room is an eternally conventional place, a container capable of revealing entire cultures. In this sense, it also functions as a time capsule, conserving intact the state of the world as it was at the

moment of the room's foundation as a space of waiting.

But there is also another given that we can define as constant: you, and all the others who find themselves there in that moment, would like to *be somewhere else*, because waiting, *this* kind of waiting, as necessary as it may be, is always forced & always unpleasant. It is impossible to really appreciate a waiting room, since it is by definition a place of unease, of more or less anxious passage from an *ante* state to a *post* state. It is not the waiting itself that is disagreeable – many, for example, enjoy being in airports, in the ecstatic suspension that precedes the boarding and the take-off – but merely the type of waiting produced in certain categories of places.

To limit myself to the waiting rooms of professional studios (leaving aside hospitals, clinics, ambulatories, public offices, stations, ports and airports, all those places worthy of separate consideration), I would say that there are two types of waiting rooms: the *sacred* and the *profane*.

Sacred are the medical waiting rooms, in other words the high-emotion ones, where we feel anxiety, hope, or even suffering that attends alleviation, like a pulsing molar: here we reflect on the life/death duality, on our own and others' corporal destiny, on the frailty of human things, etcetera.

Profane are all the others, such as that of the notary, the accountant, or the lawyer, linked to earthly ques-

tions of interest, legal tangles, transactions and sales: spaces capable of generating boredom, predominantly, or at the most anxiety about goods or money.

A separate category is constituted by the waiting rooms of that most malignant of professional categories: the waiting rooms of psychiatrists. These would deserve to be discussed apart, perhaps because they are the only ones that show a certain attention and care in the choice and the homeliness of their furnishings. Nonetheless, it is here that the highest level of embarrassment and jealousy between the gatherers is generated: "This is *my* analyst, not *yours*, shit-face. He must be a class-A psychotic, look, his hands are shaking." In waiting rooms, we find, in the first instance: silence, tension, boredom. Nobody talks except on a cell-phone, under their breath. Someone coughs, someone else reads an insipid and sullied magazine, only the sound of pages turning breaks the enforced silence. Back when it was permitted everyone smoked like a chimney. There's never a shortage of glass tables, ceiling lamps with low-voltage light-bulbs, armchairs and sofas unflinchingly upholstered in fake leather that sticks to your forearms in the summer, or to women's legs, so that, as they get up, you hear the *scritch* of the loosening, and as they walk through the door you observe the red mark on the back of the thigh... You see awful paintings on the walls and you think that the owner of the studio really couldn't care less, or he would have hung them in the living room of his own home: they're *always* bad and in some cases they're actually terrible. Perhaps they belong to those lots of pariah-objects bequeathed in excess of the wedding list and punished with segregation to the waiting room.

The *mobilia* of lawyers and accountants demands its own discourse: waiting rooms habitually furnished as libraries, with shelves and consoles realized in *Cena delle beffe* style, a sort of neo-Renaissance look in dark wood, the legs sculpted like lion paws, or even griffon paws, other armchairs in the same style, with backs in leather or velvet nailed to the wooden frame, it too dark and pawed. They're objects that come from distant chronological deposits, datable roughly to the 30s and 40s of the twentieth century and denoting long & opulent dynasties of professionals, generations of people who know how the world turns and aren't afraid of it, who play daily tennis at the country club only to sound off obscenities in the changing room, or who go there at night to play poker. And then the reproductions on the walls. At one time, we observed the absolute prevalence of Mirò. Alright. But what about the frequency of Matisse? Of Van Gogh? Of Chagall? Of the Impressionists?

In Rome we often find reproductions of Piranesi or Vasi, plants and city views, usually in small dimensions. Never original prints, however: always reproductions and always of poor quality, under the aegis of a middlebrow modernism, moderate and bourgeois. Modern art yes, but not too modern, with a marked preference for the entertaining variety, precisely like the Matisse/Mirò/Chagall triad, followed by the artists cited above, and then perhaps Bonnard, Derain, Picasso, but these are rare. Particular attention is afforded to the ringostars of impressionism, perhaps because they're simpler and more affable, and so we find reproduced a number of Pissaros & Sisleys.

We could form an impression of the professional we're visiting from the waiting room itself, if these weren't all so similar: desolate, selfish, miserly, sad, the bare minimum of furnishings acquired at the least possible cost, together with the refuse from the practitioners' own homes. Nonetheless, they do tell us something: they speak to us of the eternal professional bourgeoisie that constitutes the backbone, the frame of power in every city; they tell us about the collectors of (preferably undeclared) fees who will leave the world exactly as they found it, certain that their progeny will do the same. Some of them, inevitably, excel at their jobs, but you realize that even the good ones put only a minimum amount of money and attention into their work environment – because then, once you've entered the real studio, dominated by framed degrees and diplomas, you have the feeling of passing from one type of desolation to another that is, at times, worse.

At night, I suffer from recurring nightmares, one of which I call the Nightmare of Waiting.

Picture a world constituted entirely of waiting rooms, a planet that is itself a single nervous-careless-resigned waiting room with Vasi prints, an almost uninterrupted sequence of places where you wait, till eternity, to be received by someone, in the hope of obtaining a response, in expectancy of the successful completion of a transaction, of a step up on the social ladder. Spaces where you wait to hear the Verdict of a Judge or the Diagnosis of a Luminary, to pick up an x-ray view of the inside of your body, or to be received by the Public Official who can, but only under certain conditions (which you ignore), move a certain matter forward...

A planet where *everything* happens behind the doors and the walls of the waiting room: you're there, waiting, infinitely suspended in space-time, silent, immersed in your own issues, when you hear the muffled cry of pain, the weeping, of someone who went in before you.



THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF WAITING ROOMS

Ciascuno di noi, almeno una volta nella vita, è rimasto segnato da una sala d'attesa. Tra tutti i cosiddetti non-luoghi le sale d'attesa sono i più profondi, quelli che più autenticamente custodiscono il mistero dell'esistenza. Gli artisti più intensi & silenziosi l'hanno capito meglio di altri. Tutto il lavoro di Franz Kafka è sulla cognizione di attesa, anzi si può dire che l'intera sua opera sia un'unica, inquietante, sala d'attesa. Le Piazze d'Italia di De Chirico sono sospese nell'attesa di un evento inspiegabile. Hopper sembra dipingere la fissità dell'attesa tra un istante e quello successivo. Eccetera. Si teorizza spesso su com'è fatta una macchina del tempo, su quali principi fisici dovrebbe basarsi, interi trattati scientifici e filosofici per un problema che ha già la sua soluzione nelle sale d'attesa, che sono, appunto, macchine del tempo: servono a condurci dall'istante ti con zero (il momento in cui vi entriamo) all'istante ti con enne (il momento in cui ne usciamo per accedere ad altro più specifico locale). Se accedo alla sala d'attesa, metti del mio dentista, alle 17,38, questa mi trasporterà sino alle 18,02, cioè fino all'attimo in cui mi alzerò e uscirò di lì per entrare nello studio.

Il trasferimento avviene in «tempo reale», anche se di fatto non è così, perché la sala d'attesa funge da acceleratore o da rallentatore temporale, nonché da unico luogo istituzionale di vera meditazione che ci concede l'Occidente. Non appena vi mettiamo piede precipitiamo in un'anomala dimensione spazio-temporale che ci introduce a uno stato psichico sospensivo, ipnotico e tutto quello che ci aspettiamo di trovarvi puntualmente c'è: secondo una fenomenologia quasi immutabile, la sala d'attesa è un luogo eternamente convenzionale, un astuccio capace di rivelarci intere culture. In questo senso funziona anche da capsula temporale, conservando intatto lo stato del mondo così com'era all'atto della sua istituzione come spazio d'attesa.

Ma c'è un altro dato che possiamo dire costante: tu, e tutti quelli che in quel momento sono lì, vorreste *essere altrove*, perché l'attesa, *questo* tipo di attesa, per quanto possa essere necessaria, è sempre forzata & sempre spiacevole. Per questo motivo non è possibile apprezzare davvero una sala d'aspetto, perché è per definizione un luogo di disagio, di passaggio, più o meno ansioso, da uno stato *ante* a uno stato *post*. Non è l'attesa in sé ad essere disagiata – molti per esempio si trovano bene in aeroporto, nella sospensione estatica che precede l'accesso all'aereo e poi il decollo – lo è solo il tipo di attesa che si produce in alcune categorie di luoghi.

Volendo limitarmi alle sale d'aspetto da studio professionale (quindi tralasciando ospedali, cliniche, ambulatori, uffici pubblici, stazioni, porti e aeroporti, tutti luoghi degni di trattazioni specifiche), direi che esistono due tipi di sale

d'attesa: quelle *sacre* e quelle *profane*.

Sacre sono le sale d'attesa mediche, cioè quelle ad alto contenuto d'emozione, dove proviamo ansia, speranza, o addirittura sofferenza che attende di essere alleviata, come un molare che pulsa: qui riflettiamo sul dualismo vita/morte, sul nostro e sull'altrui destino corporale, sulla caducità delle cose umane, eccetera.

Profane sono tutte le altre, come quelle del notaio, del commercialista, dell'avvocato, legate a terragne questioni di interesse, a garbugli legali, transazioni et compra-vendite: spazi capaci di generare soprattutto noia o al massimo ansia per roba e soldi.

Una categoria a sé è costituita dalle sale d'attesa della più maligna delle categorie professionali, quella degli psichiatri. Andrebbero trattate anch'esse a parte, forse perché sono le sole a mostrare una certa attenzione e cura nella scelta e nell'accoglienza degli arredi. Ma, nonostante ciò, è lì che si genera il massimo imbarazzo e gelosia tra i convenuti: «Questo è il mio analista, non il tuo, faccia di merda. Dev'essere uno psicotico all'ultimo stadio, guarda, gli tremano le mani».

Nelle sale d'attesa troviamo innanzi tutto silenzio, tensione, noia. Nessuno parla se non al cellulare, sottovoce. Qualcuno tossicchia, qualcun'altro legge una rivista insulsa e bisunta, solo il rumore delle pagine voltate rompe la quiete forzata. Quando era permesso si fumava a tutto spiano. Non mancano mai i tavolini di vetro, le plafoniere con lampade a basso consumo, poltrone e divani rigorosamente in finta pelle, dove d'estate ti si appiccicano gli avambracci, alle donne le gambe, così che, quando si alzano, senti lo scretch dello scollamento e mentre imboccano la porta osservi il segno rosso sul retro coscia...

Alle pareti vedi quadri tremendi e pensi che al titolare dello studio non gliene poteva fregare di meno, se no li avrebbe appesi nel salotto di casa sua: fanno *sempre* schifo e in alcuni non rari casi sono addirittura orribili. Forse appartengono a quei lotti di oggetti-paria un tempo regalati fuori-lista di nozze e puniti con la segregazione in sala d'attesa.

Un discorso richiede la mobilia degli avvocati e dei notai, sale d'attesa di solito atteggiata a biblioteche, con librerie a vetrina realizzate in stile *Cena delle beffe*, una specie di neo-rinascimento in legno scuro, i piedi dei mobili intagliati a zampa di leone o anche di grifone, alte poltroncine nello stesso stile, con seduta imbottita rivestita di pelle o velluto e inchiodata con borchie al telaio in legno, anch'esso scuro e zamputo. Sono oggetti che vengono da lontane sacche crono-culturali, collocabili attorno agli anni Trenta o Quaranta del Novecento e denotano lunghe & opulente dinastie di professionisti, generazioni di gente che sa come va il mondo e non ne ha paura, che tutti i giorni gioca a tennis al circolo per poi motteggiare oscenità negli spogliatoi, oppure che ci va la sera per giocare a poker.

E poi le riproduzioni alle pareti. Si diceva una volta dell'assoluta prevalenza di quelle di Mirò. Va bene. Ma che dire della frequenza di quelle di Matisse? Di Van Gogh? Di Chagall? Degli impressionisti? A Roma vi troviamo spesso riproduzioni di Piranesi o Vasi, piante e vedute della città, di solito di piccolo formato. Mai le stampe originali però, sempre riproduzioni e sempre di cattiva qualità, all'insegna di un modernismo midcult, moderato e borghese. Arte moderna sì, ma non troppo, con preferenza di quella di intrattenimento, come appunto la triade Matisse/Mirò/Chagall, seguita dagli artisti citati, più metti Bonnard, Derain, Picasso, ma questi più rari. Particolare attenzione viene prestata ai ringostarr dell'impressionismo, forse perché più semplici e alla mano, così troviamo riprodotti molti Pissarro & Sisley.

Nella sala d'attesa potremmo farci qualche idea sul professionista da cui stiamo andando, se non fossero tutte così simili tra loro: desolanti, egoiste, sparagnine, tristi, il minimo indispensabile di arredo col minimo indispensabile di costo, più gli scarti evidenti di casa loro. E però qualcosa ce la dicono lo stesso: ci parlano dell'eterna borghesia professionale che costituisce il nerbo, il telaio del potere di ogni città, ci dicono di incameratori di parcelle (meglio se in nero) che alla fine lasceranno il mondo esattamente come l'anno trovato, certi che la loro progenie farà lo stesso. Inevitabilmente qualcuno di loro è bravo, ma ti accorgi che anche quelli bravi mettono solo una quantità minima di soldi e attenzione nel proprio ambiente di lavoro, perché poi, una volta entrato nello studio vero e proprio, ove campeggiano incorniciate lauree e specializzazioni hai la sensazione di passare da un tipo di desolazione a un altro, talvolta persino peggiore.

La notte soffro di incubi ricorrenti, uno di questi lo chiamo l'Incubo dell'Attesa.

Si immagini un pianeta interamente costituito di sale d'attesa, un pianeta che sia esso stesso un'unica nervosa-sciatta-rassegnata sala d'attesa con stampine del Vasi, una sequenza pressoché in-interrotta di luoghi dove attendere all'infinito di essere ricevuti da qualcuno, nella speranza di avere una risposta, nell'aspettativa che vada a buon fine una transazione, un salto di grado nella scala sociale. Spazi dove si siede in attesa del Verdetto di un Giudice, della Diagnosi di un Luminare, o di ritirare la visione interna del tuo corpo ai raggi x, o di essere ricevuti dal Funzionario che può, ma solo a certe condizioni (che tu ignori), mandare avanti una certa faccenda...

Un pianeta dove *tutto* accade dietro le porte a vetri e le pareti che delimitano le sale d'attesa: tu sei lì che aspetti infinitamente sospeso nello spazio-tempo, silenzioso, immerso nei casi tuoi, quando ti arriva attutito l'urlo di dolore, il pianto, di qualcuno che è entrato prima di te.

GINO

WHEN I WAS ASKED TO WRITE A TEXT ABOUT A HISTORICAL ITALIAN ARTIST, I KNEW MY CHOICE COULD BE NONE OTHER THAN GINO DE DOMINICIS. AN ARTIST WHO HAS BECOME A SORT OF OBSESSION FOR ME OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, WHO HAS PUSHED ME TO LEAF THROUGH THIRTY YEARS' WORTH OF ART MAGAZINE ARCHIVES, WHO HAS BROUGHT ME TO SEEK OUT PEOPLE WHO KNEW HIM OR HAD MET HIM, TO LISTEN TO INFINITE ANECDOTES AND STORIES, THE VERACITY OF WHICH HAS CEASED TO BE AN IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR ME. I TRIED GETTING TO THE BOTTOM OF HIS INTELLECTUAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL PREMISES, ATTEMPTING TO IDENTIFY THE CULTURAL SOURCES FROM WHICH SUCH A UNIQUE AND FASCINATING POETIC COULD STEM.

words by giulio frigo

Like a character from a Bolaño novel, I became a detective on the heels of an elusive auteur of whom very few traces were left. Gradually, I came to know about other works and anecdotes that only deepened my fascination. I bore his fascinating aura like an adolescent might adore and endure a hero, uncritically and compulsively. I couldn't believe that such a splendid and romantic person was circulating the streets of Rome in a period contemporary to mine.

The first time I heard of Gino De Dominicis was during a visit to a permanent collection in Rivoli. The pole balancing on a rock became, for me, both a revelation and the birth of an intellectual passion. I perfectly remember the disorientation I felt as soon as I entered the Accademia, where within a very

short span of time I discovered how many things, of which I had not been aware, had happened in the last fifty years. It was difficult to overcome the initial feeling of resistance, a resistance determined by my previous education. I didn't have the vaguest idea what art was, what linked a Renaissance painting to a minimalist sculpture, to a fluxus happening or to the things I saw in galleries. I was fascinated by these works, but I didn't understand them. I didn't know how to approach them or interpret them, and so I would stand there, waiting for some kind of emotional resonance that never seemed to come. I was stubborn and hardheaded, like a person who complains about the meaninglessness of a literary work in English simply because they don't speak the language. The pole balancing on a rock changed my

mind about contemporary art, and convinced me to learn its impossible “language.” It was a piece that spoke clearly to me, that I could easily define as beautiful without feeling embarrassed. It communicated a seductive sense of temporal suspension and stillness. Clear and mysterious at the same time, it drew a deep line of continuity between the artistic expressions of all epochs. Without straining, I could imagine it in an Egyptian temple or in a cathedral. I didn’t have to be aware of one or another theoretical presupposition for this piece to “work,” for it to resound in my sensibilities.

The discovery of the *Letter on Immortality* became the definitive confirmation that Gino De Dominicis is a singular artist, unique in his kind. This letter stands as something of a conceptual backdrop for his entire production. The form and content are philosophical, suffused with a tongue-in-cheek attitude; the desire that underlies it is lucidly insane, but secretly shareable. It reads like the manifesto of a visionary who develops his arguments on universal themes with rigorous and crystal-clear logic. The tone is blunt and provocative, such as when, with malicious curiosity, he asks “What’s death got to do with it?” The simplicity and bluntness with which this question is put forth seems to me to be a constant in the work of Gino De Dominicis. His work is directed at life. Unlike the art of many of his contemporaries, it doesn’t provide reflections on language; it is functional, instead, to deep psychological needs. The works of De Dominicis can be seen as true tests of, and solutions to, a single problem: that of human finitude and its relation to eternity. The perfectly balancing poles, the mirrors that reflect everything but ourselves, the mirrored clock with missing hands, and many other works besides, make us intuit the presence of a notion of alterity: a sensation of still time or even of a lack thereof, like a magic trick that leaves us momentarily stupefied. Steadfast within his solitary poetic, Gino De Dominicis appears immune to the artistic panorama of his time. Responding, during the 1996 Biennale, to a journalist who asked about the possibilities of his freeing himself from American influences [*influenza*], De Dominicis said “I’ve never had the flu [*influenza*]. To prevent catching the American flu, I suggest covering up with a knowledge of the Origin: the how, the where, the when and the why of the birth of the first civilization on planet earth.” Coherent and undisturbed, his poetic continues to articulate itself around the very premises which he himself posed. It’s an immovable poetic. This lack of temporal collocation is, in my opinion, the distinctive feature of Gino De Dominicis’ art. Singularity is the vehicle by which we accede to such distant and rarified frequencies of sensibility. Collectively, society makes progress and moves together with its beliefs and conventions, but it is individually that everybody traverses existence for the first time. In order to express his unique position, Rainer Maria Rilke, in a letter to a young poet, advises: “Try, as though you were the first man on earth, to say what you see and to live and love and lose.”

This is precisely what De Dominicis seems to do when he discovers and admits that according to him “things don’t really exist.” Or when he asks, in surprise and disbelief, “what’s death got to do with it?” - having contested the notion that age comes with time and queried why it is that he should not be considered more ancient than an Ancient Egyptian artist. It is precisely what he does when, in the face of every modern materialism and disenchantment, he reinstates a sense of mystery at the center of discourse. His works consistently evoke a feeling of occultness and appear to spring from a sensitivity ever conscious of and perplexed by the very experience of being. In this sense of mystery, in this use of philosophy as a muse and this nostalgia for a supposed golden age, in many formal solutions and in a certain disdain for the contemporary, there persists one of the most authentic moments of Italian sensibility: the metaphysics of Giorgio De Chirico.

I believe it was the very steadfastness of his poetic that so profoundly attracted me. The clarity of his writings presuppose an unambiguous choosing of sides, a general and organic vision of art, to which his works rigorously and coherently testify. De Dominicis has on numerous occasions declared a radical vision of art that takes into consideration only the so-called principal art forms, such as “drawing, painting, sculpture: materials, immobile and mute, are ontologically the opposite of the other artistic languages.” He objects to the fact that “western culture today identifies primarily with immaterial, moving languages, and forgets the principal art forms, which are material, immobile, mute and born from the desire to contrast precariousness, corruptibility and death.” Indeed, the “masterpiece of art” corresponds to the “immortality of the body.” This is a radical position. Effectively, there is no doubt that art has always been the greatest and most obstinate form of resistance against the corruptions of time and oblivion. Pyramids, obelisks and cathedrals present themselves as immobile emanations from past times, like meteors springing from a temporal otherness. It is widely acknowledged that in past times a precise ontology of the materials themselves testified to this recognition. There is little doubt about that. Yet all of this can’t but make me raise a few questions. How could we possibly be under the illusion that art is eternal? In the past, people contemplated a mere few millenniums. Today, we know that the universe has existed for billions of years, and that the earth appeared only towards the end of this interminable process. What will become of the pyramids in another couple of millenniums? In this sense, I perceive De Dominicis’ arguments as vane and stubborn, tantamount to fighting windmills. Lucio Fontana’s overcoming of the artwork’s materiality in the *Gesto* is much more convincing and realistic. Even the distinction between the arts of time and those of space, likewise plucked from history, seems to me arbitrary and limiting. The truth is that even a painted image fades and changes, thus continuing to suffer the processes of corruption. Air oxidizes pig-

mentation, and matter and light envelop everything in a kind of abrasive sheath that entraps sculpture, architecture and painting alike. A continuous molecular pother. So how, then, could we possibly fall under the illusion that matter is immortal? The answer, for me, is that to do so is not very different from the way De Dominicis’ art works.

De Dominicis probably considered the principal arts as the most formidable deceptions of which people are capable: the illusion of immobility. Here we’re confronted with tricks and illusions, such as the balancing of the golden pole, or the stillness of the ball in the moment preceding a bounce. De Dominicis himself considered the artist as an illusionist who could, by way of his own tricks, surprise even himself. This notion culminates in the mirror that reflects everything but people, an artifice that calls to mind certain machinations of 19th century illusionism. Upon closer examination, a painting, a sculpture, a drawing do not appear immobile; nor are they exempt from the stronghold of gravity, as De Dominicis would have us believe. But they do grant us that very illusion, allowing us to intuit the eternal. Yet when I hear talk of withering photographic prints, or technical supports that go out of production in less than a decade, forcing the disciples of an artist to make executive decisions that affect his work, or animals in formaldehyde decomposing prematurely, or performances being forgotten mainly because they were never documented, the problematic put forth by De Dominicis’ work doesn’t appear so crazy. And I truly understand the reasons for his move to painting over the last few decades. I believe that Gino De Dominicis immediately and presciently touched upon a thematic that we are only now beginning to fully comprehend. With *Seven Easy Steps*, Marina Abramović raised the question and resolved the problem of performances in time. De Dominicis discreetly and silently slipped over to the more solid ground of painting.

In any case, if it is true, as James Lee Byars said, that “thought is performance,” then the thought of De Dominicis must be one of the most sensational performances in recent years. Gino De Dominicis is the artist of minorities and countercurrents *par excellence*. A paradox in the flesh. *Para doxa*: against the common opinion. Is there a current stronger than the opinion of the majority in contemporary society? He imagined the history of art turned on its head; in fact, considering his wristwatch, he probably didn’t even believe in the existence of time. He maintained that the world of art didn’t exist, he negated the second principle of thermodynamics, wished everyone the immortality of the body, threw rocks into the water in expectancy of an exception to the laws of physics, and made attempts at directing human evolution towards the ability of flight. But we can credit him with having successfully given closure to at least a couple of these paradoxes and titanic attempts, at least while he was still alive: invisibility in the media, and the preservation of a work’s aura in the age of overpublication. And here we must again mention his capacity to shroud himself and his

oeuvre in mystery - in a time such as ours, no less. Walter Benjamin’s prophetic theory on how the means of technical reproduction determine the outcome of the aura of a work of art has been widely noted. The infinite reproducibility of a piece leads to the disappearance of the original as well as of the *hic et nunc* in which it was realized. It weakens the aesthetic capital of the piece and in doing so extinguishes its aura of mystery. It would appear that this is an inevitable destiny for every work of art, a true paradigm shift. But not for Gino De Dominicis, who opposed the whole process systematically, masterfully managing the accessibility of his art. I consider myself lucky for having come to know of his work some six years ago, when the effects of this management were even more evident. The rare pieces that I have “met” in these years still maintain, at least to my fascinated gaze, an almost sacred aura, perfectly intact. His works always appeared to me as dark objects, mysterious shrines, endowed with a light and pleasantly alien aftertaste. This is an aspect of De Dominicis’ work that I consider pivotal, almost palpable, as though it were a piece in itself. Now that he is no longer among us and his oeuvre has become more accessible, I don’t know what will become of this aspect of his work. Much of it will probably live on as a kind of legend, fed by anecdotes that will further nurture the mythology surrounding this mysterious dweller. One thing is certain however: posterity will continue to expose itself in front of his work for a long time yet.

Giulio Frigo (1984) is a young Italian artist based in Milan. His work, which spans various media, is often concerned with the very meaning and experience of art and of being an artist.

GINO

Quando mi è stato chiesto di scrivere un testo riguardo un artista storico italiano la mia scelta non poteva che cadere su Gino De Dominicis. Un artista che negli ultimi anni è diventato per me una specie d'ossessione, che mi ha spinto a spulciare archivi delle riviste d'arte degli ultimi 30 anni, che mi ha portato a conoscere persone che lo avevano incontrato o conosciuto, ad ascoltare infiniti aneddoti e storie di cui per me non ha più nemmeno importanza capirne la veridicità. Ho cercato di risalire alle sue premesse intellettuali e filosofiche, di intuire le fonti culturali da cui proveniva una poetica tanto singolare e affascinante. Come in un romanzo di Bolagno, mi ero trasformato in una specie di detective alla ricerca di un autore sfuggente di cui esistono pochissime tracce. Gradualmente venivo a conoscenza di nuove opere e aneddoti che non facevano altro che amplificare questa fascinazione. Ho subito il richiamo della sua aura come un'adolescente nei confronti di quella del proprio idolo, in maniera acritica e compulsiva. Non potevo credere che una figura così dandy e romantica se ne andasse in giro per Roma in un periodo a me contemporaneo.

La prima volta che ho sentito parlare di Gino De Dominicis è stato a Rivoli, visitando la collezione permanente. L'asta in equilibrio sulla pietra fu per me una rivelazione e l'inizio di una passione intellettuale. Ricordo perfettamente il disorientamento che provai quando, non appena entrato in Accademia, nel giro di pochissimo tempo scoprii quante cose, di cui non sospettavo l'esistenza, erano successe nell'arte degli ultimi cinquant'anni. Fu difficile superare l'iniziale resistenza dovuta alla mia formazione. Non avevo la più pallida idea di che cosa fosse l'arte, di cosa accomunasse un dipinto rinascimentale e una scultura minimalista a un happening Fluxus, oppure a ciò che vedevo nelle gallerie. Ne ero affascinato ma non capivo. Non sapevo come approcciarle, come leggerle, e rimanevo in attesa di una qualunque risonanza emotiva che non sentivo arrivare. Ero ostinato e testardo come una persona che si lamenta dell'insignificanza di un'opera letteraria scritta in inglese, per il semplice fatto che non conosce la lingua. L'asta in equilibrio sulla roccia mi convinse a cambiare idea sull'arte contemporanea e a imparare quella "lingua" il prima possibile. Era un'opera che mi parlava chiaramente, che potevo tranquillamente definire bella senza provare imbarazzo. Comunicava un seducente senso di sospensione temporale e d'immobilità. Chiarissima e misteriosa nello stesso tempo, tracciava una profonda linea di continuità con espressioni artistiche di ogni epoca. Senza particolari forzature, me la immaginavo in un tempio egizio oppure in una cattedrale. Non avevo bisogno di conoscere chissà quali presupposti teorici perché l'opera "funzionasse", risuonando nella mia sensibilità.

La scoperta della *Lettera sull'immortalità* fu la conferma definitiva che Gino De Dominicis era stato un artista singolarissimo, unico nel suo genere. Questa lettera è un po' lo sfondo concettuale di tutta la sua produzione. La forma e il contenuto sono filosofici,

attraversati da un'irresistibile vena ironica. Il desiderio che la sottintende è lucidamente folle, ma segretamente condivisibile. Suona come il manifesto di un visionario che sviluppa le sue argomentazioni su tematiche universali, in una logica rigorosa e cristallina. Il tono è schietto e provocatorio come quando si domanda con maliziosa curiosità "che cosa c'entra la morte?". Sono proprio la stessa semplicità e schiettezza con cui si pone questo interrogativo, che io riscontro come un elemento costante nell'opera di Gino De Dominicis. La sua opera è diretta alla vita. Non riflette sul linguaggio come molta arte del suo tempo. E' funzionale rispetto ad esigenze psicologiche profonde. Le opere di De Dominicis possono essere lette come vere e proprie verifiche e soluzioni di uno stesso problema. Quello della finitudine umana e della sua relazione con l'eternità. Le sue aste in equilibrio perfetto, gli specchi che riflettono tutto se non la nostra presenza, l'orologio specchiante privo di lancette e molte altre sue opere, ci fanno intuire sensibilmente la presenza di un senso d'alterità, che di per sé è irrepresentabile e indicibile. La sensazione del tempo fermo o della sua inesistenza, come in un trucco di prestigio che per un attimo ci meraviglia. Saldo all'interno della sua solitaria poetica, Gino De Dominicis sembra non subire l'influenza del panorama artistico a lui contemporaneo. Ad un giornalista che, in occasione della Biennale del 1995, lo interrogava circa la possibilità di liberarsi dalle influenze americane risponde: "Io non ho mai preso l'influenza. Per proteggersi dall'influenza americana e dalle correnti artistiche, consiglio di coprirsi bene con la conoscenza dell'Origine. Del come, del dove, e del quando e del perché sia nata improvvisamente la prima civiltà sul pianeta terra." Coerente ed indisturbata, la sua poetica continua ad articolarsi rispetto a quelle premesse che lui stesso ha posto. E' una poetica immobile. L'inattualità è a mio parere la cifra distintiva dell'arte di Gino De Dominicis. La singolarità del veicolo per accedere a frequenze della sensibilità così distanti e rarefatte. Collettivamente, infatti, la civiltà progredisce, si sposta insieme alle proprie credenze e convenzioni, ma individualmente ognuno attraversa l'esistenza per la prima volta. Al fine di esprimere il proprio singolare sentire, Rainer Maria Rilke, ne *Le lettere ad un giovane poeta*, consiglia: "Tentate come un primo uomo al mondo di dire quello che vedete e vivete e amate e perdetevi." È ciò che sembra fare De Dominicis quando assume la consapevolezza che secondo lui "le cose non esistono veramente", quando si domanda sorpreso e incredulo "che cosa c'entra la morte?", quando dopo aver constatato che con il tempo si invecchia, si domanda per quale ragione non dovrebbe considerarsi più antico di un artista egiziano. Quando, a dispetto d'ogni materialismo e disincanto moderni, riporta il senso del mistero al centro. Un senso d'enigmaticità è sempre evocato dalle sue opere, che sembrano provenire da una sensibilità sempre consapevole e stupita dall'esperienza stessa di esistere.

Nel senso del mistero, nella filosofia intesa come musa, nella temporalità sospesa, nella nostalgia per una presunta età dell'oro, in molte soluzioni formali e in una certa 'sprezzatura' nei confronti dell'epoca a lui contemporanea, sembra persistere intatto uno

dei momenti più autentici della sensibilità italiana: la Metafisica di Giorgio De Chirico.

Penso che sia stata proprio la saldezza inamovibile della sua poetica ad attrarmi così profondamente. La chiarezza dei suoi scritti presuppone una presa di posizione netta, una visione dell'arte generale e organica, di cui le sue opere sono la testimonianza rigorosa e coerente. De Dominicis ha più volte dichiarato una sua radicale visione dell'arte, che comprende soltanto le cosiddette arti maggiori: "...il disegno, la pittura, la scultura: materiali, immobili e muti, sono ontologicamente l'opposto di tutti gli altri linguaggi artistici." Lamentava il fatto che "la cultura Occidentale oggi s'identifica principalmente con linguaggi immateriali e in movimento, e dimentica le arti maggiori, materiali, immobili, mute e nate dal desiderio di contrastare la precarietà, la corruzione e la morte. Il 'capolavoro dell'arte' corrisponde infatti alla 'immortalità del corpo'."

E' una presa di posizione forte. Effettivamente non c'è dubbio che l'arte sia sempre stata la più grande e ostinata forma di resistenza alla corruzione del tempo e dell'oblio. Piramidi, obelischi e cattedrali appaiono effettivamente come emanazioni immobili del tempo passato, come fossero meteoriti provenienti da un altrove temporale. Ed è risaputo che questa consapevolezza del passato è testimoniata da una precisa ontologia dei materiali impiegati. Su questo non ci sono dubbi. Però tutto ciò non può che far nascere delle domande: Come è possibile illudersi davvero dell'eternità dell'arte? In passato l'uomo contemplava poche migliaia di anni. Oggi sappiamo che l'universo esiste da milioni, e che l'uomo appare nella terra solo verso la fine di questo lunghissimo processo. Che cosa ne rimarrà delle piramidi tra qualche millennio? In questo senso l'argomentazione di Gino De Dominicis mi sembra vana e ostinata come chi lotta contro i mulini a vento. E' molto più convincente e realistico il superamento materiale dell'opera nel *gesto* suggerita da Lucio Fontana. Anche la distinzione tra arti del tempo e dello spazio, anch'essa presa dal passato, sembra riduttiva e arbitraria. In realtà anche un'immagine dipinta sbiadisce e muta continuando a subire un processo di corruzione. L'aria ossida i pigmenti e la materia, la luce avvolge tutto in una specie di membrana abrasiva in cui ogni scultura, architettura e pittura sono immerse. Un brulichio molecolare continuo. Allora come potersi illudere di una tale idea di immortalità della materia? Io mi sono dato una risposta pensando che non è molto dissimile da come funzionano molte delle sue opere.

Gino De Dominicis probabilmente considerava le arti maggiori come il più formidabile prestigio di cui l'uomo è capace: l'illusione dell'immobilità. Si tratta di una sorta di trucco di prestigio, come quell'equilibrio in cui si trova l'asta dorata, o l'immobilità della palla nel momento prima del rimbalzo. D'altra parte De Dominicis stesso considerava l'artista come un prestigiatore, che con i propri trucchi deve essere capace di sorprendere se stesso. Questo aspetto, secondo me, raggiunge il suo apice nello specchio che riflette tutto tranne gli esseri umani, che fa venire alla mente certi macchinari dell'illusionismo ottocentesco.

Se ci si pensa, un dipinto, una scultura, un disegno non sono immobili, e neppure esenti dall'azione

della forza di gravità, come sosteneva De Dominicis. Però c'illudono di questo, dandoci quell'impressione, e rendono possibile l'intuizione dell'eterno.

Ma quando sento parlare di tirature fotografiche che deperiscono oppure di supporti tecnologici fuori produzione nel giro di un decennio, costringendo i posteri di un artista a prendere decisioni sulle sue opere, d'animali in formaldeide che decompongono precocemente o di performance di cui ci si sta quasi dimenticando perché non documentate, la problematica posta dall'opera di De Dominicis non mi appare più così folle. E colgo più profondamente il senso del suo passaggio alla pittura negli ultimi decenni di vita. Penso che Gino De Dominicis abbia toccato immediatamente, molto in anticipo sugli altri, una problematica di cui solo ora ci si sta rendendo pienamente conto. Marina Abramović con *Seven Easy Pieces* si interroga e propone una sua soluzione al problema della performance nel tempo. De Dominicis, discretamente e in silenzio, è semplicemente passato al terreno più solido della pittura.

Comunque stiano le cose, se davvero come diceva James Lee Byars "thought is performance" quella di De Dominicis è stata una delle performance più sensazionali degli ultimi anni. Gino De Dominicis è artista minoritario e controcorrente per eccellenza. Un paradosso in carne e ossa. Para doxa, contro l'opinione. E quale corrente più forte dell'opinione della maggioranza nella società contemporanea?

Concepiva la storia dell'arte in maniera ribaltata, anzi probabilmente non credeva nemmeno nell'esistenza del tempo, visto il suo orologio da polso. Sosteneva l'inesistenza del mondo dell'arte, la fondazione sumera di Roma, negava il secondo principio della termodinamica, augurava a tutti l'immortalità del corpo, lanciava sassi nell'acqua cercando l'eccezione nelle leggi della fisica e tentava di orientare l'evoluzione umana verso il volo.

Ma ci sono almeno un paio di questi paradossi e di questi titanici tentativi di cui bisogna dargli atto, per essere riuscito a portarli a compimento con successo, perlomeno in vita. L'invisibilità mediatica e la preservazione dell'aura dell'opera nell'epoca dei mass media. E qui si torna a parlare della sua capacità di ammantare se stesso e le proprie opere di mistero, in un'epoca come la nostra. È nota la profetica tesi di Walter Benjamin secondo la quale i mezzi di riproduzione tecnica determinano la fine dell'aura dell'opera d'arte. La riproduzione infinita dell'opera sancisce la scomparsa dell'originale e dell'hic et nunc in cui veniva esperita. Indebolisce il capitale estetico di un'opera ed esaurisce in questo modo la sua aura di mistero. Sembra un destino inevitabile per qualunque opera, un vero e proprio cambio di paradigma. Non per De Dominicis, che si oppone a tutto ciò sistematicamente, gestendo in maniera magistrale la visibilità della propria arte.

Mi ritengo fortunato di essere venuto a conoscenza della sua opera circa sei anni fa, quando ancora gli effetti di questa gestione erano più che evidenti. Le rare opere che in questi anni ho "incontrato" conservano intatta, almeno al mio sguardo affascinato, un'aura quasi sacrale. Le sue opere mi apparivano sempre come oggetti scuri, teche misteriose, con un leggero retrogusto piacevolmente alieno. Questo è un aspetto dell'opera di De Dominicis che considero centrale, quasi palpabile, come un lavoro in se stesso. Ora che non è più in vita e la sua opera è più facilmente visibile, non so cosa ne sarà di questo aspetto. Probabilmente tutto ciò sopravvivrà sottoforma di leggenda, nutrita di aneddoti che andranno ad aumentare la mitologia di questo misterioso abitante del tempo. Molto a lungo però, questo è certo, la posterità continuerà ad esporsi alla sua opera.

Giulio Frigo (1984) è un giovane artista italiano di base a Milano. Il suo lavoro, che adotta media diversi, si interroga spesso sul significato e sull'esperienza stessa dell'arte e dell'essere artista.

HEAVEN IS KNOWING WHO YOU ARE
Live voices and street finds
collected by Michele Manfellotto

**SEE
YOU AT**

*"The dream lasts thirty seconds?
Every three seconds I go in and out: I mean, I'm partially
conscious, I interact with the dream.
If I want to, I leave the dream, I wake up completely.
I've been dreaming like that for years.
This is the dream. Straight from my unconscious.
I'm in a forest-like place.
There's people, like, the People.
Kind of like Lost.
The People: in the sense that there's a relation between
them, probably a common goal."*

MYRTLE, 1974
This is how I met him, at a party.
A half-way thing, half seductive and half not, with no
recognizable form.
Everybody drunk, chit-chat, and then another party, with
the same friends: we spent the whole time talking there
as well.
Then he walked me to my car and we said goodbye.
Three seconds later he came back: Can you give me
your number?
We were meant to meet up, and to meet up, but it never
happened.
I didn't have any great expectations, but I was disap-
pointed.
Nothing awful, like Oh my God, I'm gonna kill myself.
You ask for my number.
You say, Let's go out.
I imagine we're gonna go out.
A woman is a woman.
Instead, to sum it up, he screwed me over.

MAUDE, 1976
He stayed in his room a lot.
I got that: getting used to this city takes an insane
amount of effort.
He wanted to learn the language, he'd signed up for a
course.
They gave him tapes to listen to at home. It was a mem-
orization method, you were meant to listen to the same
sentences a thousand times.
I don't know if it worked.
That also took him an insane amount of effort, he
couldn't remember anything.
We talked once.
I was dating this guy who modeled and he came out
with this whole thing about how all women like men
with muscles.
I've had like a thousand boyfriends who weren't cute.
I told him, Listen, it doesn't make any difference.
A really buff guy, for instance, might not feel good to
hug. He won't have a belly, which is something I really
like.
It's the personality that counts.
But he was really insistent, and categorical, like he want-
ed to convince me by force: I was attracted by muscles,
like everybody else.
I got really irritated.
I said, Don't ever tell me what I think. Ever.

*"I find myself together with these people, under a tree:
really tall, with lots of branches, so you can climb it.
One guy comes up to me and says, Someone has to go
up.
I say, I'll go.
What can I say? If no one else wants to go, I'll do it.
Since I can't reach the first branch, this guy gets down,
makes a step with his hands, and I go up: I was sup-
posed to get to the end of this branch.
Was I meant to get something?
Was I meant to go there just because they asked me to?
I don't know.
The point is, I get to the top, but I can't reach the
branch.
I mean, I physically can't reach it.
So nothing.
I go back down."*

MAUDE
The model and I broke up over the phone. When he got
back we met up, we talked and it was even worse. He
threw a whole bunch of shit at me.
My friend calls: Has he been there?
Yeah.
Is he gone?
Yeah.
Ok, I'm coming.
And she comes over half an hour later with a bottle of
wine and a bottle of Bailey's.
I threw myself into this insane job.
Inhuman rhythms, zero emotion and room only for ac-
tions like eating drinking sleeping.
It confirmed the value of everything, and let's make it
work and revenge and a million things.
Otherwise I'd have buried myself alive.
He called me up in that period, You wanna meet up
sometime?
I said, I'm crazy busy, I don't have time to breathe, I'll
call you as soon as I can, soon I hope.
Then I didn't call him again.
I forgot to call: it was a muffled period and I didn't pay
much attention to anyone.

MYRTLE
He was cool.
Maybe a bit depressing: or, melancholy.
Interesting, at any rate, as a man: as a boy, rather.
One night I go to an Indian restaurant with a couple of
girlfriends. Work, life, lots of soul-thrilling gossip.
At a certain point one of them points and says, Isn't that
him?
It did look like him.
But it was from the back, you couldn't see jack.
He got up and I saw him.
My friend says, God that girl he's with is ugly.
She wasn't ugly at all. In fact, she was cute and young.
My friend says, She's a minger, she's gross.
In the meantime, I realize she's really young and really
badly dressed.
She was wearing this sort of senseless miniskirt with
colored flowers, or butterflies.
I thought, Whatever, if it suits him.

I go to pee.
I come back and I run into him.
Stiff and red-faced: he was always a little stiff, and when he saw me he went red.
Then this girl comes up: I see her properly, she's much younger than him and me.
Nice to meet you, we shake hands.
Are they dating?
Ok, it's not a hundred percent.
But it's probable.
In the end, something wrong is always ready and waiting, no?

*"I look below, there's people looking at me.
I say, No, I can't make it, I have to come down.
And they say, Ok, come down.
I go down and the rest of it is this feeling like, Yeah: I did it but I didn't finish. I mean, I know I'll have to go back, and so I'm left with this lump of dread in my throat."*

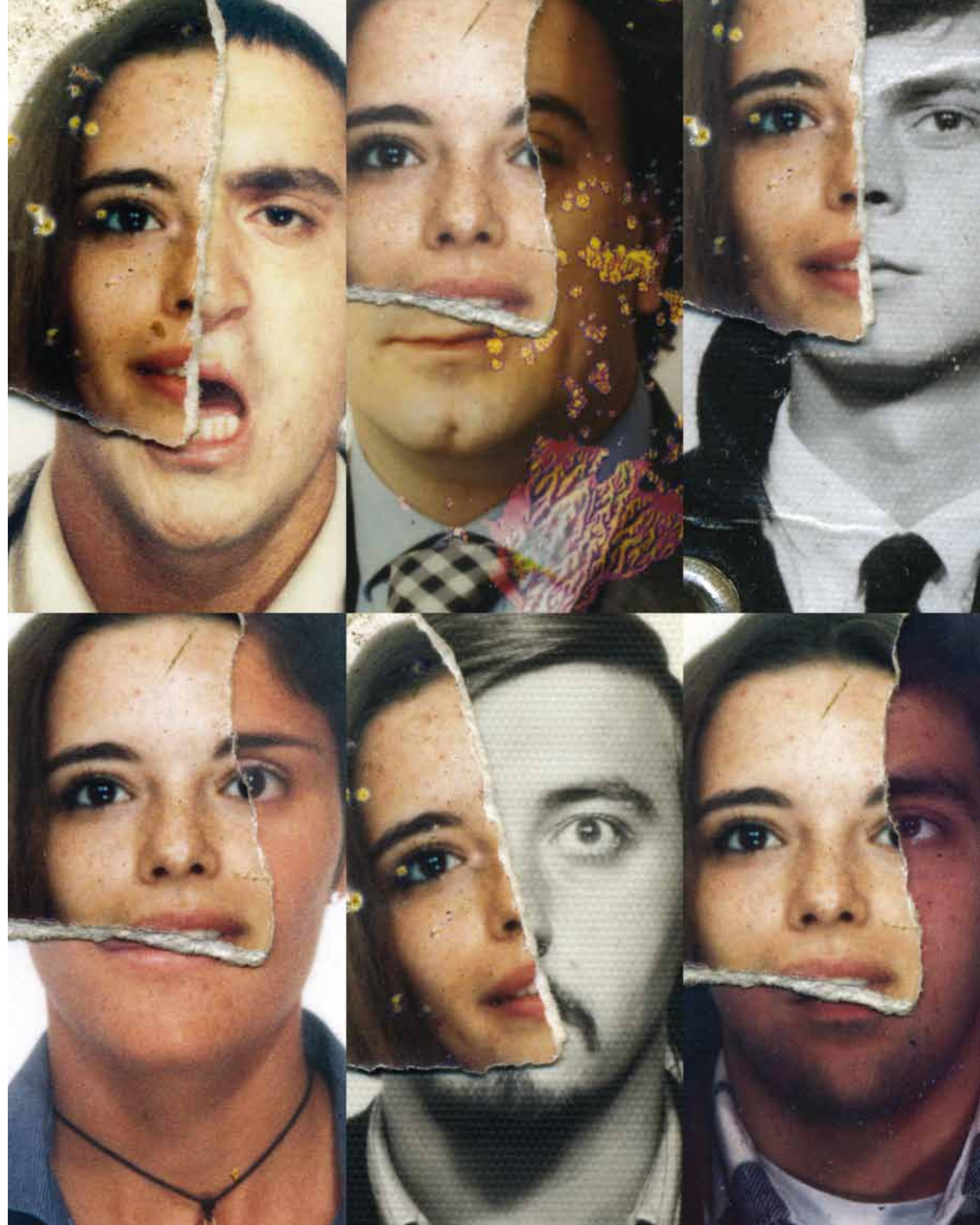
MAUDE
I saw this horrible documentary about people who throw themselves off the Golden Gate.
The average is three a month: that is, one person every two weeks, if not one every week.
They interviewed the one guy that survived.
They got him back on his feet, but he really fucked himself up.
It's not just currents down there, there's also whirlpools.
He got sucked into a whirlpool and he was about to sink.
There was one of those flat fish, I don't know what they're called, they're big.
This flat fish basically brought him back up to the surface.
It was biblical.
In the interview he said, When I jumped off the bridge I thought: what the fuck have I done.
Instinct.
I thought of the other night, at home. I live on the sixth floor now, when you look down you feel dizzy.
In the documentary they'd show the future suicide, they'd interview the family, and then he'd jump off the bridge.
It was all like that, one after the other.

After the first one, you accept it, you know they're all going to jump.
One guy was there the whole time, from the beginning to the very last scene.
All the others threw themselves off instantly.
You don't want to stand there thinking about it, I guess.
But what does he do: he stands on the parapet and turns his back to the water, so he can't see.
He's a sort of metal type, with long black hair, black sunglasses, black beard.
He stands like that, facing the bridge, and he throws himself backwards.
He does this angel flight, with all his hair.
He falls into the water. The documentary ends there.

MYRTLE
After dinner, I dump my friends and go home.
It was the Sunday they killed that soccer fan on the highway.
The TV was on in the restaurant and I saw the fights.
Even here, outside the stadium.
What's more, it was raining: a spectral desert outside.
I live in an old neighborhood that's full of North Africans now. Crowded and a little dilapidated, when it's sunny it looks like Cairo.
But at night.
If it rains it turns into a desolate inhospitable place, the tram tracks like a ghost train, bikes rare and fast, and people like shadows.
Then it feels like being in Amsterdam inside your worst nightmare.
On TV I saw the dead guy's MySpace photos.
They kept on showing one in particular: him making this gesture with two fingers, like a rapper.
Everyone does it.
A friend of mine said it actually means "East Coast" but for me it's all pretty abstract.
I thought about this one woman who used to hang out at the bar I went to after work, before I moved.
Forty-ish but stale, Mad Madam Mim blonde.
I imagined her drinking at the bar the next day, saying how that soccer fan was just a little fascist.

Shame, about that guy. Of course he couldn't say, Sorry, but I realized I didn't like you.
I was annoyed.
Annoyance begets annoyance: that's why I was thinking about the woman at the bar.
There was this motorcycle coming from the top of the street. Really tiny, it looked like a cartoon.
It was making a crazy amount of noise.
I stopped to look: the noise made my head ache.
On the curve, the guy lost control.
He shot out straight onto his back, at supersonic speed.
The motor bounced two or three times and got stuck. It was turning on itself, like a spinning top.
The guy was cool: he waited immobile for it to lose speed.
If you bend you can get all rolled up and break your bones.
As soon as it stopped, he shot up and ran away as quick as he could.
Maybe the tram was coming.
He got to the sidewalk and it was only then that he turned round to look.
The motor still rocking and me petrified, more shocked than him.
There wasn't a soul around.
The guy saw me and made a face like, Crazy, huh?

*"I can't pretend this thing doesn't exist.
I have to get there, sooner or later.
The first time I didn't make it: I climbed down knowing I'd have to go back up.
It could be social stability, which means money.
Or the exact opposite.
That is, realizing what's inside: and that it's not money and all that stuff.
One or the other: I have to choose which.
But it's the exact same thing, whether I give up or not.
If I give up on making money, I won't give a shit about work, I won't give a shit about anything and I'll just do my own thing.
But I still have to get up there to do my own thing, right?
I remember all the dreams I've had, and I understand them all."*



SEE YOU AT

“I *l sogno dura trenta secondi? Ogni tre secondi su trenta io entro e esco: cioè sono in parte cosciente, interagisco con il sogno.*

Se voglio esco dal sogno, mi sveglio completamente.

Da anni sogno solo così.

Il sogno è questo. Direttamente dal mio inconscio.

Sono in un posto tipo bosco.

C'è gente, tipo popolo.

Un po' come LOST.

Tipo popolo: nel senso che queste persone hanno una relazione tra loro, probabilmente uno scopo comune.”

MYRTLE, 1974

L'avevo conosciuto così, a una festa.

Una mezza cosa tra il mezzo seduttivo e il mezzo no, senza alcuna forma definita.

Tutti ubriachi, chiacchiere e poi un'altra festa, sempre con gli stessi amici: abbiamo parlato tutto il tempo anche lì.

Poi lui mi ha accompagnato alla macchina e ci siamo salutati.

Dopo tre secondi è tornato indietro: Mi dai il tuo numero?

Ci dovevamo beccare, ci dovevamo beccare, ma non ci siamo mai beccati.

Non avevo grandi aspettative, ma ci sono rimasta male.

Niente di grave tipo, Oddio mi suicido.

Mi chiedi il numero.

Mi dici, Usciamo.

Io penso che usciremo.

Una femmina è una femmina.

Invece, in sintesi, lui non mi ha inculato.

MAUDE, 1976

Stava un sacco di tempo in camera sua.

Lo capivo: ambientarsi in questa città è una fatica pazzesca.

Voleva imparare la lingua, si era iscritto a un corso.

Gli davano delle cassette da sentire a casa. Era un metodo mnemonico, bisognava ripetere le stesse frasi mille volte.

Non so se funzionasse.

Per lui anche quella era una fatica pazzesca, non riusciva a ricordarsi niente.

Una volta abbiamo parlato.

Io stavo con questo che faceva il modello e lui ha detto tutta una cosa sul fatto che alle donne piacciono gli uomini muscolosi.

Ho avuto mille ragazzi che non erano belli.

Gli ho detto, Guarda che non conta un cazzo.

Uno muscoloso, per dire, può non essere piacevole da abbracciare. Non ha la pancia, che è una parte che mi piace.

Conta la personalità.

Ma lui mi parlava in modo insistente e categorico, come per inculcarmi il suo pensiero con la forza: anche io ero attratta dai muscoli, come

tutte.

Ero molto irritata.

Gli ho detto, Non mi dire mai cosa penso io. Mai.

“Mi ritrovo con questa gente sotto a un albero: altissimo, pieno di rami, i quali permettono di arrampicarsi.

Arriva uno e mi fa, Qualcuno deve salire.

Dico, Vado io.

Che ti devo dire? Se non vuole andarci nessuno, ci vado io.

Siccome non arrivo all'altezza del primo ramo, questo tipo mi si mette sotto, mi fa scaletta e io salgo: dovevo arrivare alla fine di questo ramo.

Dovevo prendere qualcosa?

Dovevo arrivare laggiù solo perché me lo avevano chiesto?

Non lo so.

Fatto sta che arrivo su, in cima, ma non riesco a raggiungere questo ramo.

Cioè non ci arrivo proprio fisicamente.

E allora niente.

Riscendo giù.”

MAUDE

Il modello e io ci siamo lasciati al telefono. Quando è tornato ci siamo visti, abbiamo parlato ed è stato ancora peggio. Mi aveva detto un sacco di cazzate.

Mi chiama la mia amica: Has he been there?

Yeah.

Is he gone?

Yeah.

Ok, I'm coming.

E si presenta mezz'ora dopo con una boccia di vino e una di Bailey's.

Mi sono buttata in questo lavoro allucinante.

Ritmi disumani, emozioni azzerate e spazio solo per azioni tipo mangiare bere dormire.

Era la conferma del valore di tutto e let's make it work e rivalsa e miliardi di cose.

Se no mi sarei sotterrata.

Lui mi ha chiamato in quei giorni, Ti va se ogni tanto ci vediamo?

E io, Sto nel delirio, neanche respiro, appena posso ti chiamo, spero presto.

Poi non l'ho più chiamato.

Mi scordavo di chiamare: era un periodo ovattato e non prestavo granché attenzione a nessuno.

MYRTLE

Era fico.

Forse un po' deprimente: malinconico, anzi.

Comunque interessante, come maschio: anzi, come ragazzo.

Una sera vado con due amiche al ristorante indiano. Il lavoro, la vita, molto gossip con inferno-ramento di animi.

A un certo punto una delle due indica e fa, Ma non è lui?

In effetti sembrava lui.

Ma era di spalle, non si vedeva una mazza.

Si è alzato in piedi e l'ho visto.

La mia amica fa, Dio quanto è brutta la tipa con cui sta.

Non era brutta per niente. Anzi, era carina e molto giovane.

La mia amica, Ma è un cesso, una cozza.

Intanto io realizzo che questa è piccola e vestita in un modo terribile.

Aveva una specie di insensata gonna corta con dei fiori colorati, o delle farfalle.

Mi sono detta, OK: contento lui.

Vado a pisciare.

Torno e me lo ritrovo davanti.

Paonazzo rigido: è sempre un po' rigido, in più quando mi ha vista è arrossito.

Arriva questa ragazza: la vedo bene, è molto più giovane di me e di lui.

Piacere, ci stringiamo la mano.

Staranno insieme?

Certo, non è ovvio obbligatorio.

Però era probabile.

In fondo c'è sempre pronto qualcosa di sbagliato, no?”

“Guardo di sotto, c'è la gente che mi guarda.

Dico proprio, No, non ho le forze, devo scendere.

E loro, OK scendi.

Io scendo e resto con una sensazione come a dire, Sì: l'ho fatto ma non l'ho completato.

Cioè so che ci dovrò tornare e quindi mi resta questo magone.”

MAUDE

Ho visto un documentario, tremendo, su quelli che si buttano dal Golden Gate.

La media è di tre al mese: cioè si butta uno ogni due settimane, se non uno a settimana.

Intervistavano uno che è l'unico sopravvissuto.

L'hanno rimesso in piedi, ma si è sfondato.

Non ci sono solo le correnti, là sotto. Ci sono i gorghi.

Lui ha beccato il gorgo e stava andando giù.

C'era uno di questi pesci piatti, non so come si chiamano, grossi.

Questo pesce piatto l'ha praticamente riportato a galla.

Una cosa biblica.

Nell'intervista diceva, Quando ho mollato il ponte pensavo: ma che cazzo ho fatto.

L'istinto.

Mi è venuto in mente l'altra sera, a casa. Ora abito al sesto piano, quando ti affacci ti senti male.

Nel documentario facevano vedere il suicida, intervistavano la famiglia, poi lui saltava dal ponte.

Tutti così, uno dopo l'altro.

Dopo il primo sei rassegnato, sai che si buttano tutti.

Uno c'era per tutto il tempo, dall'inizio alla scena finale.

Gli altri si buttavano tutti di corsa.

Perché non vuoi starci a pensare, immagino.

Invece lui che fa: sale in piedi sul parapetto e si mette di spalle, per non vedere.

È un mezzo metallaro, con i capelli lunghi neri,

occhiali neri, barba nera.

Si mette così, di spalle e si butta all'indietro.

Fa questo volo d'angelo, con tutti i capelli.

Cade nell'acqua. Il documentario finisce così.

MYRTLE

Dopo cena, mollo le amiche e vado a casa.

Era la domenica che hanno ammazzato quel tifoso sull'autostrada.

Al ristorante c'era la TV accesa e avevo visto gli scontri.

Anche qui, fuori dallo stadio.

In più pioveva: per cui fuori deserto spettrale.

Io abito in una zona vecchia che ora è piena di nordafricani. Affollata e un po' cadente, se c'è il sole sembra di stare al Cairo.

Di notte, invece.

Se piove diventa un luogo inospitale e desolato, con le rotaie del tram tipo treno fantasma, le bici rarissime veloci e la gente come ombra.

Allora sembra di stare a Amsterdam nel tuo incubo peggiore.

Alla TV avevo visto le foto sul myspace del tifoso morto.

Ne facevano vedere di continuo una: lui che fa questo gesto con due dita, tipo rapper.

Lo fanno tutti.

Un amico mi ha detto che in realtà vuol dire

“East Coast” ma per me è tuttora piuttosto astratto.

Ho pensato a una che frequentava il bar dove andavo dopo il lavoro, quando ancora non mi ero trasferita.

Sulla quarantina ma marcia, Maga Magò bionda.

Me la immaginavo il giorno dopo al bar a bere, a dire che quel tifoso era solo un fascistello.

Peccato, per quel tipo. Certo non poteva dirmi, Scusa ma ho capito che non mi piaci.

Ero infastidita.

Fastidio chiama fastidio: per questo pensavo alla donna del bar.

In fondo alla strada arrivava questa moto. Piccola piccola, sembrava un cartone.

Faceva un rumore pazzesco.

Mi sono fermata a guardare: il rumore mi faceva venire il mal di testa.

Sulla curva, il tipo ha perso il controllo.

È schizzato dritto per dritto sulla schiena, a velocità supersonica.

La moto ha rimbalzato due o tre volte e si è inchiodata. Girava su se stessa, tipo trottole.

Il tipo è stato fico: ha aspettato immobile di perdere velocità.

Se ti raggomitolì rotoli e ti rompi le ossa.

Appena si è fermato è schizzato in piedi, è corso via più veloce che poteva.

Magari passava il tram.

Ha raggiunto il marciapiede e solo a quel punto si è girato a vedere.

La moto ancora dondolava e io impalata, sotto choc peggio di lui.

Non c'era un'anima.

Il tipo mi ha vista e ha fatto una faccia come a dire, Paura eh?

“Questa cosa non posso fare finta che non esista.

Devo arrivare laggiù, prima o poi. La prima volta non ce l'ho fatta: sono sceso sapendo che sarei dovuto risalire.

Può essere la stabilità sociale, il che vuol dire soldi.

O l'esatto opposto.

Cioè realizzare ciò che è interiore: e che non è il denaro e non è questa roba.

Una delle due: io devo scegliere quale.

Ma è la stessa identica cosa, se mollo o se non mollo.

Se mollo di fare i soldi, non mi inculo il lavoro, non mi inculo più niente e faccio i cazzi miei.

Però per fare i cazzi miei sempre lì su devo arrivare, no?

I sogni che ho fatto me li ricordo tutti e li ho capiti tutti.”



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words & images by carola bonfili

As I listen to a song coming from the other room, against my will, I think it's called Mandy or Mindy, it's sort of whistled and the singer complains a lot, then it seems to pick up in a burst of vitality to conclude with some guitars that would be good if they weren't bad, as I was saying, I'm trying to formulate a thought that's got something to do with lucidity. Now there's another song starting, I think the singers are black and probably beautiful, they're complaining too and they say "baby" a lot, I can't really understand the lyrics but I think they're saying "now – my eyes – they're waiting for you but wait – you – I need your love – but also your cell phone –" and then I don't understand. I got an email, e-flux, I don't read them anymore, even though when I signed up for the mailing list it seemed like a great way to stay informed, there, it's back to the point I was trying to explain about lucidity. I read a theory of quantum physics somewhere that said more or less that time doesn't exist. Now I don't want to go into the reliability not so much of the source as of my memory, which gets a kick out of confusing me once in while (maybe the theory said that time is green, but then one always remembers what one remembers), but as far as I recall, time, according to this theory, is just the moment we're living. It should be philosophy that talks about something so un-scientific, but I'm sure that in that moment I was reading a physicist and not a philosopher (the preceding post was about telepathy, which is the subject I was actually

looking for, summer is long sometimes). In fact, if time is just something that exists so that everyone can get to the station at the same time as the train, why is the concept so important to physics? Now, to avoid looking like a complete idiot (but maybe I'm just making things worse), when I read that sentence I thought it was an absolute truth, which there'll be a logical explanation for in two thousand years. Or maybe never, since we don't have enough dimensions to get there, I mean, it's not our fault. Hence, to go back to the point, lucidity. In every moment of my life I feel like the thing that I'm doing makes complete sense, and that the thing I did three hours earlier is the opposite. It's not easy to explain this thing about the moment, but I'll try, at any rate I don't think I stand a chance of seeming credible anymore, but if nothing else you can use what you're reading to think of something that has nothing to do with it. So, I was trying to explain how the mind only considers "the now", the exact moment we're living, which is also the consequence of everything we've lived, but then it seems that lots of things are always there but only occur to us when we least expect it (like when you see a ham and mozzarella pizza and you remember that you're actually hungry). So, in the exact moment that I formulate the thought it seems to me that I'm completely lucid, at the cost of negating the thought from a minute earlier. (I don't want to turn to goldfish but something makes me think there's a subtle link.) Good, at this point the only thing I can think

about is that I'm hungry, and who knows if it's out of need or because of the thought from before, but sometimes it so happens that you're hungry just because you're hungry. (The song was called "Mandy," I recommend searching youtube for "Family Guy – Barry Manilow")

I just reread the article in question, I thought it would be fair to reprint an extract so that everyone can make up their own minds about it:

"(...) Inspired by the discoveries of physics and by the ancient teachings, Schrödinger arrived at the conviction that the mind could not be separated from the world and put into a box, i.e. the brain. (...) One of the great and eternal dilemmas regarding the nature of the mind is this: why, if there are so many conscious egos, is there only one world perceived by everyone? Why not a different world for every person? (...) Schrödinger gives the following answer: "There is evidently a sole alternative, which is the unification of the minds and of consciousness. Their multiplicity is only apparent: in actuality, there is only one mind." (...) Schrödinger maintains that there are valid reasons to also believe that this One Mind is immortal. That conclusion is based principally on new conceptions of the nature of time. In modern physics, an external time – a completely objective time in the broadest sense – does not exist. Absolutely nothing shows us that time

is the entity conceived in Newton's vision, and not a single experiment has ever demonstrated that time passes. (...) Quite simply, there is no external, objective world where an external, objective time could exist. In this way, not only are mind and world fundamentally unified in modern physics, but also mind and time. Now, if mind and time are interdependent, the following difficult question arises: how is it conceivable for time to destroy the mind? Schrödinger replies that it cannot: "I have come to define [the mind] indestructible, insofar as it possesses its own peculiar temporal dimension: the mind, that is, is always now. No before or after effectively exists for the mind. There is only a now that comprises memories and expectations. We can, I believe, assert that in its present state the theory of physics seems to support the notion of the indestructibility of the mind by time. The fact remains that time no longer appears to us as a gigantic [force], dominating the world, or as an originary entity, but rather as something derived from phenomena themselves. It is a construction of our thought. That such an entity might at any point bring an end to my thought, as some people retain, is beyond my comprehension. Even the ancient myth has Chronos devour his two sons, not his father."

(excerpt from an article by Stefano Calamita, published online at www.performancetradin.com and titled *Dimostrazione del Teorema di Bell*)

works that could be mine & works that I would like to be mine

a project by R  di Martino

"I have been taking note through time of other artists' works that bear a striking resemblance to ideas I have had and sometimes written in my notebook, but have never done. I catalogued these as: 'works that could be mine'. More recently, looking at this list I drew a line and wrote a second list called 'works that I would like to be mine'. I update these lists regularly and read with increasing curiosity the gap between the two; between what you can imagine yourself to be and how you would like to be, the image of yourself and the desire for something 'other' at play. I also started to consider what other artists' lists would be; if done in complete sincerity it's an interesting set of lines and arrows between works seen through the eyes of one artist and how they view themselves. But it also inevitably plays with the idea of originality."

Lists by MARIO GARCIA TORRES, Mexico City, 26 - 09 - 2010

works that could be mine:

Eduardo Costa
A Piece That Is Essentially The Same As A Piece Made By Any Of The First Conceptual Artist Dated Two Years Earlier Than The Original And Signed By Somebody Else, 1970

Barbara Visser
Mystic Truth (Calling Bruce), 2007

Ryan Gander
A Phantom of Appropriation, 2006

works that I would like to be mine:

Barry Le Va
Velocity Piece #1, 1969

Pierre Huyghe
Timekeeper, 1999

Charles Ray
Rotating Circle, 1998

Christopher D'Arcangelo
Withdrawal Piece, 1974

Robert Barry
The Space Between, 1969
0-9 Magazine. Ed. Vito Acconci and Rosemary Meyer

Michael Asher
No Title
Vision Magazine No. 1, 1975. Ed. Tom Morioni

The Atlas Group
I Only Wish That I Could Weep, 1996-2003

Chris Marker
Sans Soleil, 1982

Whatever Bruce Nauman comes up with through 2011

Hans Peter Feldmann
Pictures of car radios taken while good music was playing, 2004

Richard Tuttle
3rd Rope Piece, 1974

Steven Parrino
Crowbar, 1987

Franz Erhard Walther
Plinth, Four Areas, 1969

TELEPATHIC HOLIDAYS

Mentre ascolto, contro la mia volont , una canzone che proviene dall'altra stanza, credo si chiami Mandy o Mindy,   un po' fischiettata e il cantante si lamenta parecchio, poi sembra riprendersi in uno slancio di vitalit  per concludere con delle chitarre che sarebbero belle se non fossero brutte, dicevo appunto, sto cercando di formulare un pensiero che abbia a che fare con la lucidit . Ora sta iniziando un'altra canzone, credo le cantanti siano di colore e sicuramente bellissime, anche loro si lamentano un po' e ripetono spesso "baby", non riesco a capire il testo, ma secondo me dicono "ora - i miei occhi - ti aspettano ma no aspetta - tu - ho bisogno del tuo amore - ma anche il tuo cellulare - " e poi non capisco. Mi   arrivata una mail, *e-flux*, non le leggo pi , anche se quando mi sono iscritta alla mailing list mi sembrava un ottimo modo per essere sempre aggiornata, ecco, e torna il punto che cercavo di spiegare prima riguardo alla lucidit .

Leggevo da qualche parte una teoria della fisica quantistica che diceva, pi  o meno, che il tempo non esiste. Ora, non vorrei approfondire riguardo all'affidabilit  non tanto della fonte, quanto della mia memoria che ogni tanto si diverte a confondermi (magari la teoria diceva che il tempo   verde, ma poi uno si ricorda sempre quello che si ricorda), ma da quello che mi ricordo, secondo questa teoria, il tempo   solo l'attimo che stiamo vivendo. Dovrebbe essere la filosofia a parlare di una cosa cos  poco scientifica, ma sono sicura che in quel momento non stavo leggendo un filosofo, bens  un fisico (il post precedente parlava di telepatia, l'argomento che stavo in realt  cercando, l'estate a volte   lunga). Infatti, se il tempo   solo qualcosa che serve per far arrivare tutti alla stazione nello stesso momento del treno, perch  in fisica   un concetto cos  importante? Ora, per non sembrare completamente idiota (ma forse sto solo peggiorando le cose) quando ho letto quella frase ho pensato che fosse una verit  assoluta, di cui tra duemila anni ci sar  una spiegazione logica. O forse mai, perch  non abbiamo abbastanza dimensioni per poterlo fare, insomma non   colpa nostra. Quindi, e ritorno al punto, la lucidit . In ogni istante della mia vita mi sembra che la cosa che sto facendo sia assolutamente sensata, e che quella che ho fatto tre ore prima sia l'opposto. Non   semplice spiegare questa cosa dell'attimo, ma ci prover , tanto ormai non credo di avere nessuna chance per sembrare credibile, al limite utilizza questo che stai leggendo per farti venire in mente qualcos'altro che non c'entra niente. Dunque, cercavo di spiegare come la mente considera solamente "l'adesso", l'attimo esatto che stiamo vivendo, che poi   anche la conseguenza di tutto quello che abbiamo vissuto, ma poi tante cose sembra che siano sempre l  ma ci vengono in mente nei momenti che meno ti aspetti (tipo quando vedi una pizzetta prosciutto e mozzarella e ti ricordi che in fondo hai fame). Ecco, dunque nel momento esatto che formulo il pensiero mi sembra di essere assolutamente lucida, rinnegando anche quello di un minuto prima. (Non vorrei tirare in

ballo i pesci rossi ma qualcosa mi fa pensare che ci sia un sottile nesso). Bene, a questo punto l'unica cosa a cui riesco a pensare   che ho fame, e poi chiss  se   per l'insoddisfazione o per il pensiero di prima, ma a volte succede anche che hai fame semplicemente perch  hai fame.

(la canzone si chiamava "Mandy", consiglio di cercare su Youtube "Family Guy - Barry Manilow")

Ho appena riletto l'articolo in questione, ho pensato che fosse giusto riportarne un estratto cos  ognuno pu  farsi la propria idea:

Ispirato dalle scoperte della fisica e dagli antichi insegnamenti, Schr dinger giunse alla convinzione che la mente non poteva essere separata dal mondo e messa in una scatola, il cervello. (...) Uno dei grandi ed eterni dilemmi sulla natura della mente   questo: perch , se ci sono tanti ego coscienti, c'  soltanto un mondo percepito da tutti quanti? Perch  non un mondo diverso per ciascuna persona? (...) Schr dinger d  questa risposta: "C'  evidentemente una sola alternativa, vale a dire l'unificazione delle menti o della coscienza. La loro molteplicit    solo apparente: in realt  esiste una sola mente". (...) Schr dinger sostiene che esistono validi motivi per credere anche che questa Mente Una sia immortale. Questa conclusione si basa principalmente su nuove concezioni della natura del tempo. Nella moderna scienza fisica, un tempo esterno, un tempo completamente obiettivo in senso lato, non esiste. Assolutamente nulla ci dimostra che il tempo sia l'entit  rappresentata nella visione di Newton, e non un solo esperimento ha mai dimostrato che il tempo scorra. (...) Semplicemente non esiste un mondo esterno, oggettivo, dove potrebbe esistere un tempo esterno, oggettivo. Cos , nella fisica moderna non solo mente e mondo vengono sostanzialmente unificati ma anche mente e tempo. Ora, se mente e tempo sono interdipendenti, sorge questo difficile quesito: com'  concepibile che il tempo possa distruggere la mente? Schr dinger risponde che non pu  distruggerla: "Io arrivo a definirla [la mente] indistruttibile, poich  possiede una sua peculiare dimensione temporale: la mente, cio ,   sempre adesso. Per la mente non esiste realmente un prima e un dopo. C'  solo un adesso che comprende ricordi e aspettative. Noi possiamo, almeno cos  credo, affermare che allo stadio attuale la teoria fisica sembra nettamente suffragare l'indistruttibilit  della mente da parte del tempo. Resta il fatto che il tempo non ci appare pi  come una [forza] gigantesca, dominante il mondo, n  come un'entit  primaria, ma come qualcosa di derivato dai fenomeni stessi.   una costruzione del nostro pensiero. Che una simile entit  possa un giorno o l'altro mettere fine al mio pensiero, come alcuni ritengono, va oltre la mia comprensione. Perfino l'antico mito fa divorare a Crono soltanto i suoi due figli, non suo padre".

(estratto da un articolo di Stefano Calamita pubblicato in rete su www.performancetrading.it con il titolo *Dimostrazione del Teorema di Bell*)

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OF ART

PRESENTS

**WHAT EVER HAPPENED
TO ITALIAN ARCHITECTURE?
A SYMPOSIUM CO-ORGANIZED
BY DEPART FOUNDATION AND
ISTITUTO SVIZZERO DI ROMA,
CURATED BY RETO GEISER
OCTOBER 15-16, 2010**

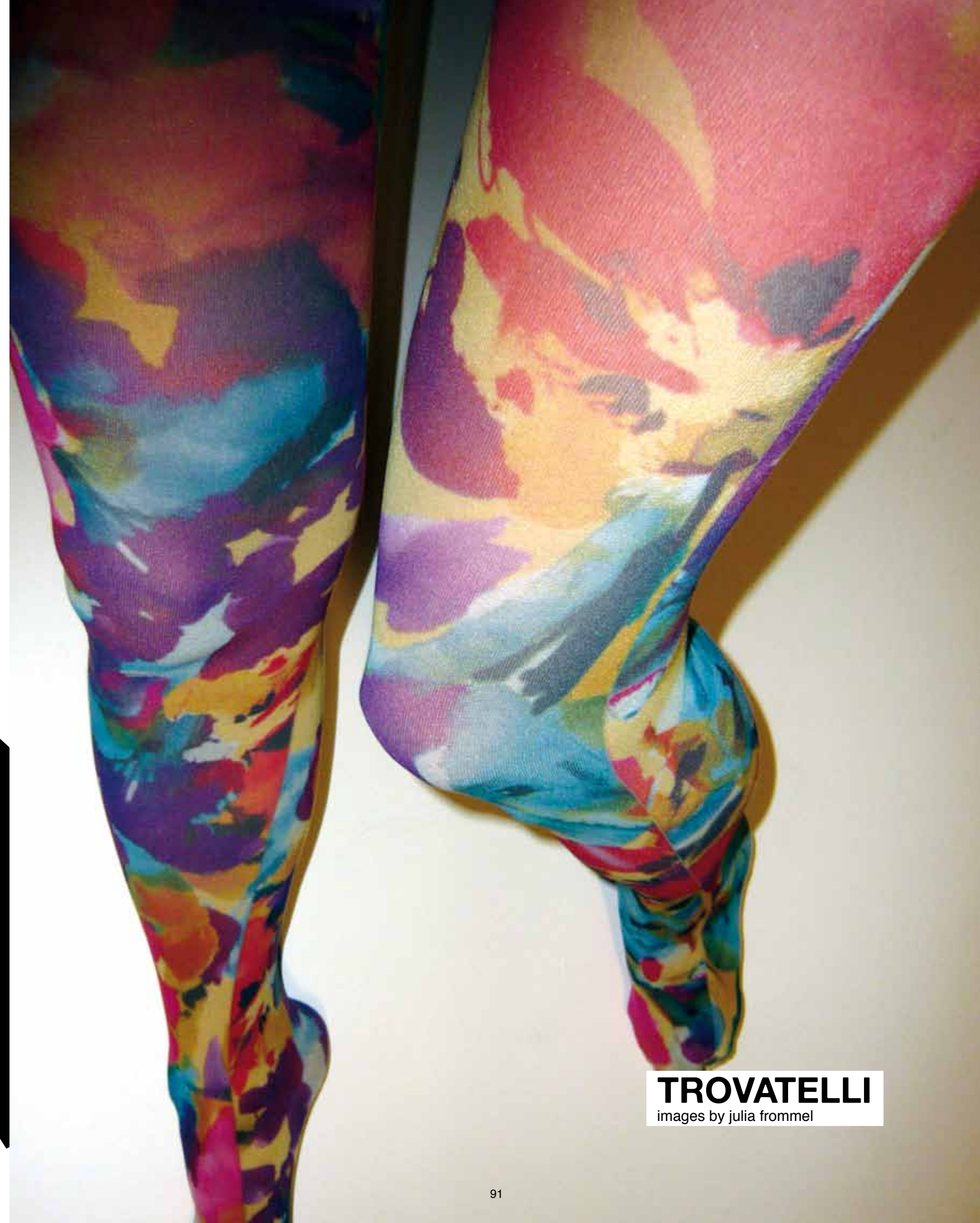
**KIKI SMITH : COLOR STILL
ASSOCIAZIONE ARTE CONTINUA
IN COLLABORATION WITH
COMUNE DI VAL D'ELSA AND
DEPART FOUNDATION
CURATED BY CAO GUO-QIANG
SEPTEMBER 24, 2010
UMOCA MUSEUM,
COLLE DI VAL D'ELSA (SI)**

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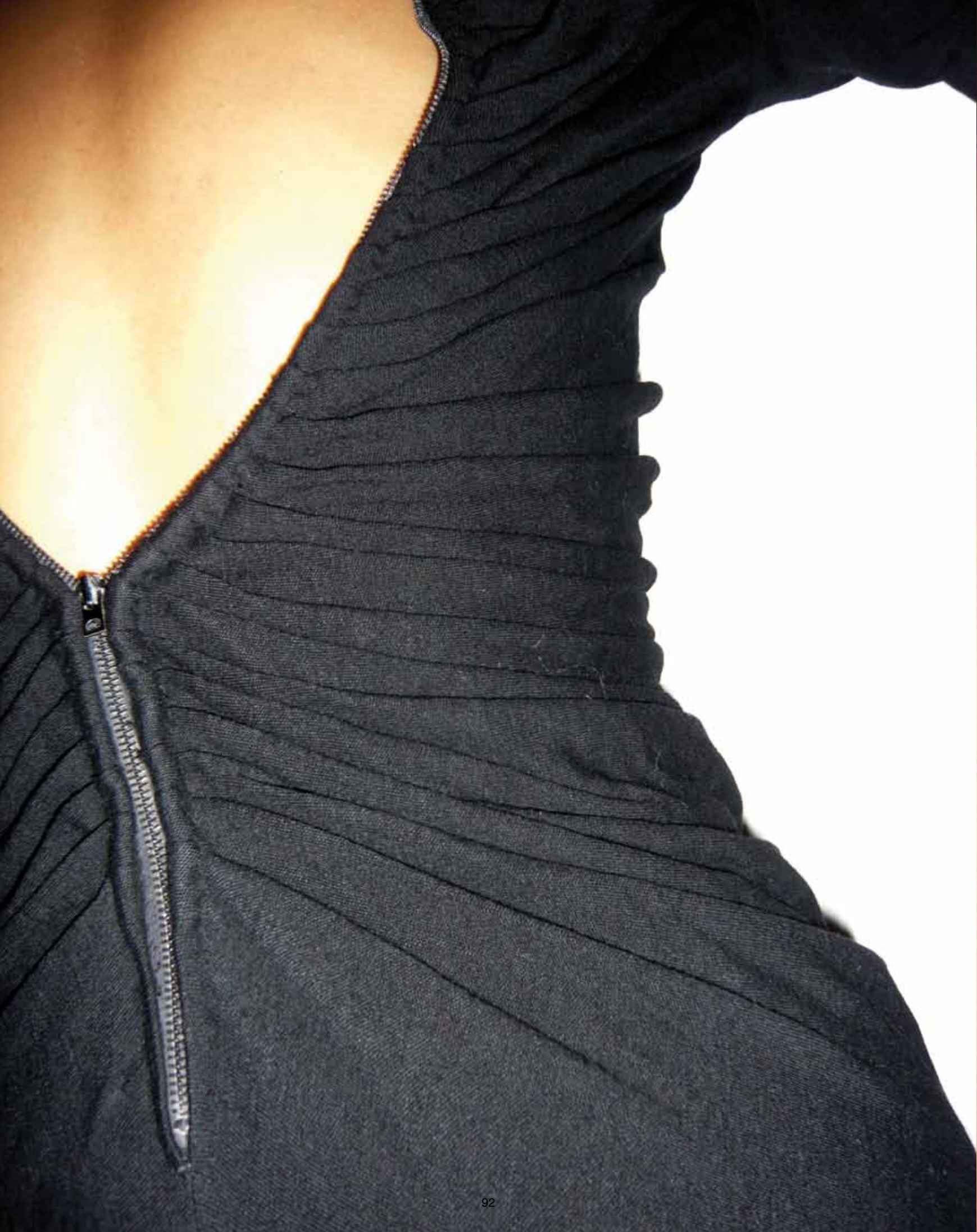


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images by julia frommel





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TRADITION

words by michael rosenfeld

I recently read an amazing article in The New York Times that brought tears to my eyes. It posed the following question to Italians: tradition or growth? The focus of the story was on Italy's textile industry, but the main point, which encompasses the entire economy, was how the country's unions, guilds, and archaic laws have completely stagnated growth and innovation. Italy is run by a small elite class only interested in protecting its own interests and backed by a massive elderly population, terrified of change and longing for the glory days when people with different color skin and customs only came to visit, not stay.

Let's take a moment to explore a few examples of how tradition in its many forms is interpreted and applied in Italy in today's terms.

The most nefarious tradition would be the time-honored "scam." It appears to be a badge of honor or a rite of passage here, akin to obtaining a luxury item, like a Rolex, that shows everybody that you have "arrived." Not honoring work contracts, secret cell phones for secret lovers, nepotism, mail and packages never being delivered, and rampant overcharging for products and services, are just a few examples that quickly come to mind.

The work experience here is an utter and complete mystery to me. Most people are honest and hard-working (if they can find jobs at all that don't involve telemarketing) and just want to earn enough to modestly support their family and possibly move out of their parents' house before the age of forty. But nepotism, age discrimination and the contract system inevitably fuck everything up. My personal experiences with the job market have been surreal at best. I can't even begin to tell you how many chef positions I have been offered for six euros an hour. That's right: I said chef, not dishwasher. It also strikes me as strange that not one person has ever asked to see my CV on a job interview. You would think that they would be interested in seeing my past experience and/or what I could possibly contribute to enhance or expand their business. But no, my 25 years of experience don't really matter

because change or improvement is not the goal. My skills and work ethic would be looked down upon by the other workers; improvement would require team effort and dedication to achieve a common goal — and god forbid, nobody wants that. What the fuck?! I'd rather stay home. And why is it that it always takes three months or a lawyer's involvement to get paid for anything?

The shambled contract system is structured to only hire people for three months at a time or practically forever, with heavy penalties levied on the employer for firing someone. Workers with short contracts feel no reason whatsoever to take a vested interest in the business, and those with long contracts work only the bare minimum because they know that getting rid of them is difficult. This cockamamie system was a "gift to the people" from past governments, a kind of bribe to get votes and stay in power. In America (which has its own but different set of work-related problems), people are hired by merit or experience and, in turn, advance or are fired based on their performance. Waiters, for example, are paid a small, token salary, making the bulk of their earnings come from tips. This encourages fast, efficient, and friendly service, which benefits everyone involved: customer, waiter, and owner.

Food tradition, the beating heart of Italy, is quickly deteriorating as well. I shop almost every day at the Mercato Trionfale (the best market in Rome) and, at 41-years old, am usually the youngest shopper there. You can always spot me as I stick out like a sore thumb in a sea of noble and weathered old women with swollen ankles pulling their shopping carts around. These women are the vanishing food-knowledge repositories of the country, as the masses turn more and more to supermarkets and less and less to fresh markets and *alimentari* for their daily food needs. All high-school students should be required to shop and cook with one of these old women for a week in order to absorb some of their rich food experience and keep the old and true recipes alive. I'm sorry, but if you can't make a good basic *sugo* from scratch, you shouldn't be able to graduate high school. I'm certainly not opposed to supermar-

kets, and understand that most families just don't have the time to go from butcher to *alimentari* to bakery, but what I can't grasp is the shitty selection and dubious products that line supermarket shelves. Mozzarella that turns blue. Olive oil with added food coloring. Falsely labeled wines. "Fresh" breads that taste like cardboard. Anemic fruits and vegetables. Go buy a few *etti* of prosciutto di Parma from your local supermarket and compare it with the real stuff from Franchi on Cola di Rienzo, and you'll begin to understand the scope of the problem.

But the absolute, hands-down, by far worst contributors to the decay of the Italian cultural food tradition are the restaurants. It's not that they're all bad; it's just that the vast majority are not very good. It's food without emotion or honest intent. But without condoning this behavior, I do have some insight into how Italy has arrived at this low point in its food history. In Rome, at least, it's impossible to find an available commercial space to open a restaurant. There are a fixed number of licenses assigned to each zone, and these have been gone for generations (unless you want to open up a place near Fiumicino). This creates a supply-and-demand situation that turns a small amount of licenses into a commodity. The average license costs more than an average Roman apartment, and so, by the time you buy the license, rent the overpriced space, pay the *notaio* and the lawyers, and finally open the doors, you're in the hole for between 500,000 to a million euros. So now you've just spent your life's savings and panic sets in as you start to realize that it's going to take fifteen years, if you're lucky, to make it back (if ever). Three things start swirling inside your mind: 1) buying the cheapest ingredients, 2) hiring the fewest number of staff for the least amount of money, and 3) lobbying to make sure that the license system never opens up so that, in the future, you might be able to sell yours for a profit instead of seeing it become completely worthless. Restaurant owners have become license speculators instead of people who have a passion that they want to share with the public. The saddest thing of all is that their fellow countrymen, either by lack of choice or lack of knowledge of anything better, patronize these restaurants instead of setting fire to them!

Another problem is that the irrational fear of foreigners and their traditions, coupled with the blind assumption that anything made in Italy is of superior quality, has collectively stunted any inkling of motivation, modernization, or personal curiosity. I find it surprising that the current right-leaning government wouldn't embrace the basic principles of the free market. Instead they allow laws to be passed that restrict "foreign" eateries in some town centers, and although this affects only a very few extreme areas, it taps into and feeds the undercurrent of confusion of a country at a pivotal crossroads in its history, as well as its fear of either becoming more a part of the spirit of the European Community or foundering into a third-world country.

In any case, the polenta, pasta, rice, tomatoes and potatoes that Italy claims as its own are, in fact, relatively recent additions to their diet, annexed from other places. And not surprisingly, each region's use and preparation of these borrowed and native ingredients, although basically very similar, is considered to be of a superior quality to that of its neighbors'.

And this is the true root of the problem that holds this magnificent and beautiful country back: the cultural civil war raging over invisible lines on the map. These divisions must be put to rest once and for all.

Throughout Italy's long and important history, her fortunes and great cultural contributions have always risen in times of need to overcome an obstacle or to achieve a common goal, whether for the sake of conquest, art, religion, philosophy, science, or food. Likewise, Italy has fallen in times of fear, greed, excess, and complacency. Unfortunately, she (and humanity in general) has been heading down the latter road for the better part of the last thirty years. But how did Italy slide so far away from her golden period of the late sixties, when its fashion and design were the envy of the world and Rai TV was both brilliant and progressive?

The ironic twist to all of this is that the pride and (dare I say) stubbornness of its people to change are the very things that have kept Italy's cultural history intact over the centuries. It is one of the very few western countries not to have been overrun by strip malls, and it has generally protected its own industries and crafts from the influence of global conglomerates and interests. Be that as it may, markets that are truly open to all, free of favoritism to a few, greatly increase creativity, quality and economic growth by allowing a product to rise or fall based on people's license to choose from a wide assortment of options instead of having to settle on something from a few, small, restricted ones. More options equals more competition, employment, and ultimately more tax revenue for the state.

One could argue endlessly about the good and bad and right and wrong of this country. But one thing is for certain. The different regions, different classes, and different colors must unite to find a way to incorporate this "cultural protectionism" into a new long-term common goal so that Italy and her people can grow and prosper once again.

Viva la revolución! (just kidding... maybe)

TRADITION

Ho di recente letto uno splendido articolo sul New York Times che mi ha portato alle lacrime, poneva agli Italiani la domanda: “tradizione o crescita?”. L’argomento si concentrava sull’industria tessile italiana, ma il principale punto, che riguarda l’economia intera, era il modo in cui sindacati, corporazioni e leggi arcaiche, fanno ristagnare crescita ed innovazione, le cui sorti sono controllate da una piccola elite intenta esclusivamente a fare i propri interessi, avallata tacitamente da un’immensa popolazione d’anziati, terrorizzata dal cambiamento e nostalgica dei giorni di gloria, in cui etnie di differenti costumi e colore di pelle venivano solo a visitare senza rimanere.

Prendiamoci un momento per considerare un paio di esempi di come la tradizione, nelle sue multiple forme, viene interpretata ed applicata nell’Italia odierna.

La più nefasta di queste “tradizioni” è la perenne sola. Sembra sia una medaglia d’onore o un rito d’iniziazione, eguaglia l’ottenere uno status, come avere un Rolex che mostra a tutti che sei arrivato. Non onorare contratti di lavoro, cellulari diversi per amanti diversi, nepotismo, posta e pacchi non recapitati, nonché il surplus che viene caricato sul prezzo di prodotti e servizi, sono tra i primi esempi che vengono a mente.

L’esperienza lavorativa qui in Italia é per me un puro mistero; la maggioranza delle persone sono oneste e lavorano duro, se sono in grado di trovare lavori che non abbiano a che fare con il telemarketing, cercano solo di guadagnare abbastanza per mantenere le proprie famiglie e possibilmente andar via di casa prima di aver compiuto quarant’anni; ma il nepotismo, la discriminazione basata sull’età ed il sistema contrattuale inevitabilmente mandano tutto a puttane.

La mia personale esperienza nel mercato del lavoro è stata a dir poco surreale. Non posso neanche cercare di raccontarvi quante posizioni come chef mi sono state offerte per sei euro all’ora. Esatto, ho detto chef, non lavapiatti. Ho trovato sorprendente il fatto che neanche una persona, durante i colloqui di lavoro, abbia letto il mio Curriculum Vitae; si presume che, per valorizzare o espandere il proprio business, potrebbe essere interessante conoscere quali

siano le mie esperienze passate e/o quale potrebbe essere il mio contributo, ma no, i miei 25 anni di esperienza non hanno alcun valore, perché il miglioramento o il cambiamento non sono lo scopo finale.

La mia etica lavorativa e la mia padronanza del mestiere sono disprezzati dagli altri lavoratori: migliorare richiederebbe un lavoro di gruppo ed impegno per ottenere un fine comune e Dio ce ne scampi, nessuno vuole questo. Che cazzo, preferisco starmene a casa!

E per quale motivo ci vogliono tre mesi, o un avvocato, per qualsiasi pagamento?

Lo stato caotico del sistema contrattuale è strutturato in modo che o assumi una persona per tre mesi alla volta o la assumi praticamente fissa, con penali applicate in modo pesante, al datore di lavoro, in caso di licenziamento. Gli impiegati a contratto breve non hanno alcuna ragione di prendere a cuore il proprio lavoro, e chi ha contratti a lunga scadenza lavora il minimo indispensabile perché sa che essere licenziato è difficile. Questo folle sistema è stato un “regalo al popolo” di governi precedenti per assicurarsi voti e restare al potere. In America (che ha i suoi problemi rispetto al mondo del lavoro) le assunzioni avvengono a seconda del merito e dell’esperienza del soggetto, ed è in base alla qualità della prestazione che si determina la carriera o l’eventuale licenziamento.

I camerieri, ad esempio, sono pagati un gettone minimo, e fanno la maggior parte del salario con le mance. Questo incoraggia un servizio veloce, efficiente ed amichevole, di cui beneficia no tutti: cliente, cameriere, datore di lavoro.

La tradizione gastronomica, ovvero il cuore vivo dell’Italia, è in deterioramento. Io faccio la spesa al mercato trionfale (il miglior mercato di Roma) quasi giornalmente, e a 41 anni d’età sono di solito il più giovane tra i clienti. Mi si nota subito, sono visibile quanto un pesce fuor d’acqua, in una folla di nobili ed attempate vecchie signore con le caviglie gonfie che trascinano i carrelli della spesa.

Queste donne, che mantengono intatta la cultura culinaria del paese, sono in estinzione, mentre le masse fanno sempre più uso dei supermarket per la spesa quotidiana e sempre meno dei mercati freschi e degli alimentari. Ad ogni studente di liceo farebbe bene passare

una settimana ad aiutare una di queste donne anziane, aiutandole a fare la spesa e cucinare, per far sì che assorbano e tengano vive queste ricche conoscenze culinarie. Mi spiace, ma se non si è in grado di fare un buon sugo da zero, non si dovrebbe passare la maturità.

Certamente non mi oppongo all’uso dei supermercati, e capisco che la maggior parte delle famiglie non ha il tempo di andare dal macellaio, all’alimentari, al fornaio, ma quello che non comprendo è quanto misera sia la selezione e quanti i prodotti “dubbi” esposti negli scaffali.

Mozzarella che diventa blu, olio di oliva con colorante, vini con etichette false, pane “fresco” che sa di cartone, frutta e verdura anemica. Compra un paio d’etti di prosciutto di Parma al supermercato e fai il confronto con quello vero che trovi da Franchi a Via Cola Di Rienzo, così potrai capire l’entità del problema.

Ma soprattutto, il più grande contribuente al decadimento della tradizione culturale culinaria italiana sono i ristoranti. Non sono tutti cattivi, ma la grande maggioranza non è molto buona. E’ cibo preparato senza emozioni e senza onestà. Senza giustificare questo comportamento, credo di comprendere la dinamica che ha portato l’Italia, o sicuramente almeno Roma, ad un punto così basso nella storia della sua cucina. A Roma è impossibile trovare uno spazio commerciale per aprire un ristorante. C’è un numero fisso di licenze assegnate per ogni zona, le quali sono in pratica prese da generazioni (a meno che tu non sia intenzionato ad aprire un locale nei pressi di Fiumicino). Questo crea una situazione di richiesta che fa delle poche licenze disponibili un bene economico. Una licenza normale costa a Roma più di un appartamento, quindi dopo aver comprato la licenza, affittato uno spazio costosissimo, pagato il notaio e gli avvocati, ti ritrovi ad aprire le porte che sei già in debito per una cifra che si aggira tra i 500.000 ed un milione di euro.

A questo punto realizzi di aver appena investito tutti i risparmi della tua intera vita e ti assale il panico al pensiero che ti ci vorranno almeno quindici anni, se sei fortunato, per recuperarli (se mai). Tre sono le cose che cominciano a girarti per la testa: 1) comprare gli ingredienti meno costosi, 2) assumere meno personale possibile a costo basso e 3) entrare in un’ottica di lobby, per assicurarti che il sistema delle licenze non si apra mai, così che in futuro potrai

vendere la tua, nella speranza che non perda di valore. I ristoratori sono diventati speculatori delle proprie licenze, invece che persone con una passione per il cibo da condividere con il pubblico.

Un altro problema è la paura irrazionale degli stranieri e delle loro tradizioni, unita alla cieca assunzione che tutto quello che è Made in Italy sia di qualità superiore. Tutto questo ha portato al ristagno collettivo di motivazione, modernizzazione, o curiosità personale. Trovo sorprendente che l’attuale governo tendente alla destra non accolga i principi elementari del mercato libero. Ma che al contrario lascia passare leggi che limitano l’apertura di ristoranti etnici nel centro di alcune cittadine. Al di là del fatto che questo fenomeno affligge solo alcune aree estreme, si ricollega ed alimenta la corrente di paura e confusione in un paese al crocevia fondamentale della propria storia, tra il divenire pienamente parte dello spirito della Comunità Europea o il naufragare e trasformarsi in un paese del terzo mondo.

In ogni caso, la polenta, la pasta, il riso, i pomodori e le patate che l’Italia rivendica orgogliosamente come propri, sono in realtà acquisizioni relativamente recenti da altre parti del mondo. E senza sorpresa, ciascuna regione ritiene di saper trattare questi ingredienti di gran lunga meglio della regione accanto, nonostante non vi siano sostanziali differenze.

È questa la radice del problema che tiene fermo questo magnifico e splendido paese: la guerra civile e culturale che si scatena su linee invisibili tracciate su una mappa. Queste divisioni vanno messe da parte una volta per tutte.

Nella lunga ed importante storia dell’Italia, i suoi beni ed i suoi grandi contributi culturali hanno sempre fatto luce nei momenti di bisogno, per sorpassare un ostacolo o raggiungere un fine comune, che sia stato allo scopo di conquistare o in nome dell’arte, della religione, della filosofia, della scienza o del cibo.

Tuttavia l’Italia è caduta in momenti di paura, sete di potere, eccesso, compiacimento, e sfortunatamente durante gli ultimi trent’anni è stato questo il trend della nazione (e non solo il suo). Ma come ha fatto l’Italia ad allontanarsi così tanto dal periodo d’oro dei tardi anni sessanta, quando il design e la moda erano l’invidia del mondo intero e la RAI era progressista

e brillante?

L’ironia in tutto questo è che la fierezza e, mi permetto di dire, la cocciutaggine di questo popolo rispetto al cambiamento sono la cosa che ha tenuto intatta la sua storia culturale nei secoli. E’ uno dei pochi paesi occidentali a non essere stato sopraffatto dai centri commerciali e ad aver in generale protetto la propria industria e i propri prodotti dagli interessi e dall’influenza del mercato globale. Ad ogni modo, i mercati realmente aperti a tutti, senza favoritismi, alzano il tasso di creatività, qualità e crescita economica, permettendo il successo o il crollo di un prodotto in base alla richiesta del pubblico, in grado di scegliere tra una grande varietà di opzioni anziché accontentarsi tra la scelta ristretta di un paio. Più scelta implica più competizione, più reclutamento di forze lavoro ed in conclusione più profitto in tasse per lo Stato.

Si potrebbe discutere senza fine sui beni ed i mali ed il giusto e l’erroneo di questo paese, ma una cosa è certa, le differenti regioni, le differenti classi, i differenti colori devono unirsi e trovare il modo di incorporare questo “protezionismo culturale” in un obiettivo nuovo, a lungo termine, che permetta all’Italia ed al suo popolo di crescere e prosperare di nuovo.

Viva la revolucion! (sto solo scherzando... forse)

COMPOSITES

ARTISTS' INTERVENTIONS IN PRINT (CHAPTER TWO)

curated by luca lo pinto and valerio mannucci

Composites is a show on paper which documents a series of artists' interventions in newspapers, magazines and periodicals. The show is articulated in various episodes, here realized on paper, because that is the context in which the works were conceived.

The history of artists' interventions in magazines and newspapers is vast and historically articulated. Within it cohabitate examples with very different features and assumptions: some artists have preferred to realize "camouflaged" interventions (Dan Graham in *The New York Review of Sex & Politics*, Stephen Kaltenbach and Joseph Kosuth in *Artforum*, Dieter Roth in *Anzeiger Stadt Luzern und Umgebung*); others have produced true stand-alone works (Gilbert&George in *The Sunday Times Magazine*); still others have focused on the medium itself (Michael Asher in *Vision n.1*, Robert Barry in 0 to 9); finally, some have utilized the pages as pure "exhibition spaces" (Piotr Uklanski's *GingerAss* in *Artforum*). That is why the methodology of the works' re-proposal in this show on paper has been defined case by case: for several works we used scanned reproductions of the original pages; for those which cannot be technically reproduced, we adopted methods of re-enactment.

Conscious of the fact that proposing these artworks outside their original context seriously alters (and sometimes completely eliminates) the meaning of the interventions themselves, with this show we simply wanted to present to the public a series of emblematic cases, with no pretension to catalogue this enormous and fragmented corpus.

(Thanks to Stefano Gardini, Max Renkel, Christoph Schifferli for materials made available and for their valuable suggestions.)

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Composites è una mostra su carta che documenta una serie d'interventi d'artista su giornali, riviste e periodici. La mostra è articolata in più puntate ed è pensata su carta, perché è lì che questi lavori sono stati concepiti.

La storia degli interventi d'artista all'interno di riviste e quotidiani è vasta e storicamente articolata. Al suo interno convivono esempi molto diversi per caratteristiche e presupposti: alcuni artisti hanno preferito realizzare interventi 'mimetizzati' (Dan Graham su *The New York Review of Sex & Politics*, Stephen Kaltenbach e Joseph Kosuth su *Artforum*, Dieter Roth su *Anzeiger Stadt Luzern und Umgebung*); altri hanno creato dei veri e propri lavori a sé stanti (Gilbert&George su *The Sunday Times Magazine*); altri ancora hanno lavorato concentrandosi sul medium stesso (Michael Asher su *Vision n.1*, Robert Barry in 0 to 9); ci sono alcuni infine che hanno utilizzato le pagine come puri 'spazi espositivi' (Piotr Uklanski con *GingerAss* su *Artforum*). Per questo motivo, in questa mostra su carta, la metodologia di ri-proposizione dei lavori si è definita in base ai singoli casi: per alcuni lavori ci si è serviti della riproduzione in scansione delle pagine originali, per altri – che non possono essere riprodotti tecnicamente – si sono adottate forme di re-enactment.

Consapevoli che proporre questi lavori al di fuori del loro contesto originale modifichi in maniera importante (e talvolta annulli completamente) il senso stesso di questi interventi, con questa rassegna si è voluto semplicemente proporre al pubblico una serie di casi emblematici, senza alcuna pretesa di catalogare questo enorme e frammentato corpus.

(Si ringraziano Stefano Gardini, Max Renkel, Christoph Schifferli per il materiale messo a disposizione e per i loro preziosi consigli.)

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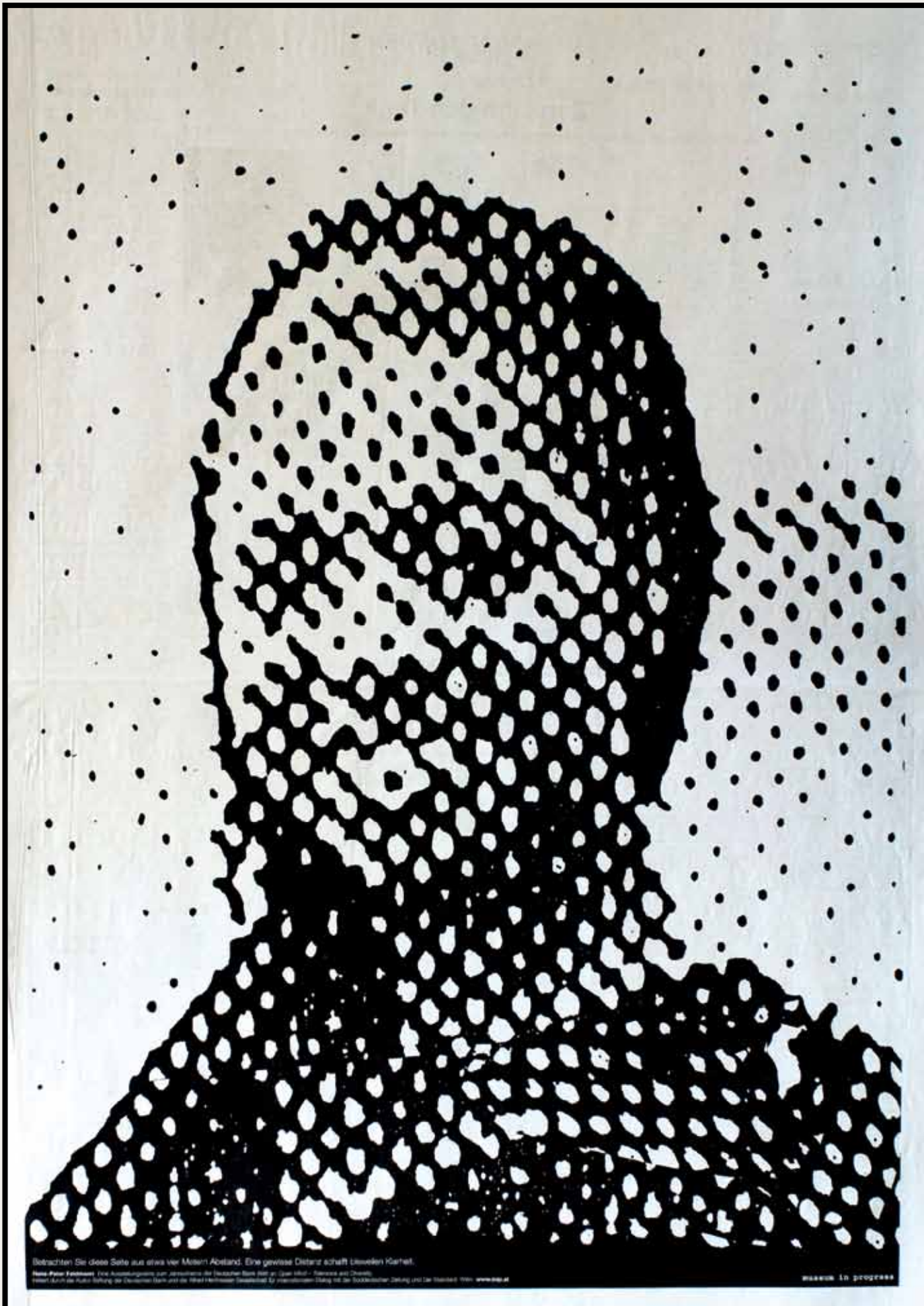
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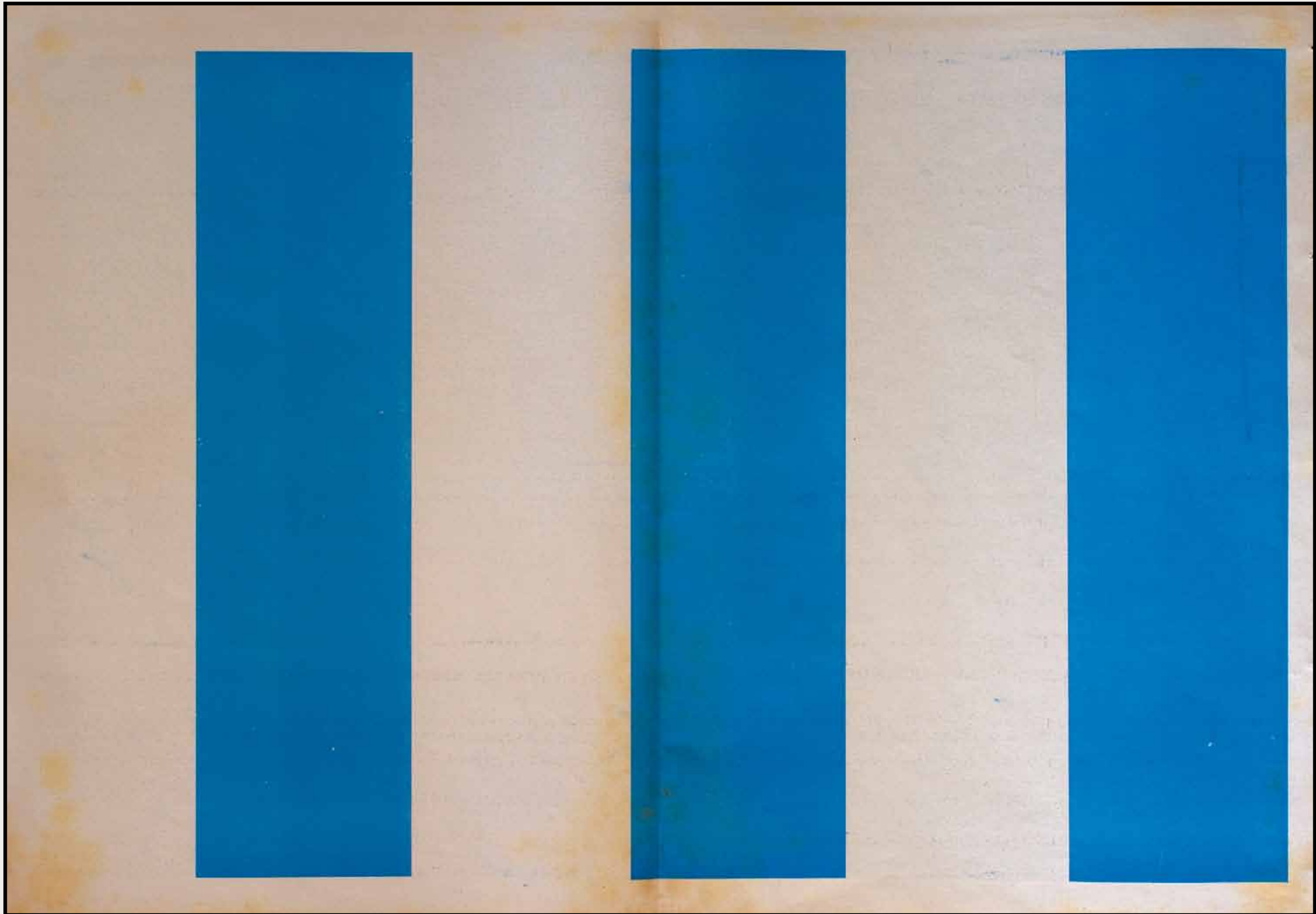
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Wahr oder falsch? Ein Fotoroman von Helmut Newton



Ich heie Jack, ich bin reich...

...und reise um die Welt auf der Suche nach Abenteuer. Als ich einmal in Wien war, besuchte ich die Wohnung von Professor Freud. Dort begegnete ich Gloria, einer Touristin. Gemeinsam verließen wir das Haus und gingen in einen Park spazieren. Am selben...

Abend lud ich sie in die Oper ein. Den folgenden Tag tief sie mich in ihr Hotel. Sie trug einen schwarzen Anzug, und bei einer Tasse Kaffee erzhlte sie mir, dass sie die Gefahr liebe. Sie schlpfte aus der Jacke, zog einen Revolver aus ihrer Handtasche und...

...steckte sich den Lauf in den Mund. Dann entschuldigte sie sich und verschwand in ihrem Schlafzimmer. Fast nackt kam sie zurck, immer noch spielte sie mit ihrem Revolver. Spter am Abend nahm sie mich mit in ein Palais am Ring, wo uns zwei Herren in die...

...privaten Gesnker des Grafen von S. fhrten. Die ganze Nacht ber sah ich zu, wie Gloria russisches Roulette spielte.

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Wahr oder falsch? Ein Fotoroman von Helmut Newton



Im Sommer 1988...

... war ich mit dem Zug nach Hnselberg gerhrt, um meinen Agenten Davide Manfredi und einen Klienten zu treffen, der ein sehr interessantes Angebot hatte, eine Frau zu fotografieren, nchst an einem Ort, der fr Fotografieren verboten ist, und die Abgabe bis zum 24...

Stunden an seiner Adresse in Paris zu schcken. Nach dem Treffen nahm ich mit Davide im „Eisernen Kreuz“ einen Drink, um den Auftrag und mein Honorar zu besprechen. Ich wollte nach Mnchen, um dort einen Flug nach Prag zu nehmen, wie ich im Hotel...

...Europa schauen wrde. Mir wurde gesagt, dass ich um sieben Uhr an diesem Abend in der Hotelbar eine Frau treffen wrde. Mein Klient hatte von ihr als der „Prinzessin der Nacht“ gesprochen. Als ich in die Bar trat, entdeckte ich sie sofort und setzte mich zu...

... ihr an den Tisch. Ich bestellte zwei Kaffees, denen wie verlangt mit Cognac veredelt. Sie schob mir ein Stck Papier in die Hand und sagte: „Geben Sie zu dieser Adresse, eine Frau wird Sie an der Tr empfangen. Sie werden sie an ihren hndigen Zpfen erkennen..."

... um wird Sie zu Madonnenklle Yvonne fhren, aber seien Sie vorsichtig, verbergen Sie Ihre Kamera, und knnen Sie sich vor dem Hund!" (Fortsetzung folgt)

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PIOTR UKLAŃSKI
Untitled (GingerAss), 2002



TOTALLY MY ASS

Alison M. Gingeras

PIOTR UKLAŃSKI took a photograph of my ass. My naked buttocks are shown in full frame—a stretch mark here, a freckle there; my curves are far from heroin chic. The rest of my body is almost entirely cropped out, save a bit of upper thigh. From the arch of my upper back, it is obvious that I am slightly bending over, flashing my ass to the camera as if begging for a good smack, or perhaps longing for something else. It is certainly an inappropriate pose for a museum curator to assume in front of an artist.

Just another white girl's ass? Purchasing three pages in *Artforum* in order to publish this image along with a text that bluntly acknowledges my professional identity makes it impossible to write it off as such. With its various flaws, it neither offers the airbrushed perfection of a *Playboy* spread, nor the tasteful standards of an academic nude. This image courts the immediacy and accessibility of porn. Deliberately frontal and flat, the hackneyed subject of a girl's ass is designed to arouse the viewer by convincing him or her that this ass is real, credible, and obtainable while corresponding to a particular sexual fantasy.

Ukłański likes porn. It offers a clear-cut formula for how to create visual titillation using banal subjects and clichéd techniques. His ongoing preoccupation with sunsets, flowers, full moonlit skies, city lights, and shimmering water goes beyond their photographic depictions in his signature series *The Joy of Photography* (1996 to present).

Other works such as his torn paper collages, paintings made of pencil shavings, as well as sculptural installations (e.g. water spilled on the gallery floor *Untitled (Wet Floor)*, 2000), all reference the same prosaic themes while utilizing extremely simplified techniques or formal devices. The shared affinity in this eclectic body of work lies in a crass, if not arrogant ambition: an earnest attempt to capture "beauty."

Untitled (GingerAss) pushes this calculated crassness to another level. It is not an art project inserted in the magazine on the invitation of *Artforum*. A museum or gallery did not purchase this space. This is an advertisement paid for by the artist. Money buys visibility. Visibility caters to ego. Publication of this picture displaces it from a wall to a double page spread (closer to porn). This text ensures that my identity as the sitter is exposed. Without leaving it to gossip, it divulges a charged liaison—potentially beneficial for the artist, problematic for the curator.

Making it public in *Artforum* confronts the projection of taboos, concepts of professional climbing, vanity, and artistic/personal conviction that are part of the relationship implied by the image. This crass gesture offers the image the possibility of retaining its autonomy. This is totally my ass—striving to be beautiful.

Alison M. Gingeras is a curator at the Centre Pompidou, Paris.
Piotr Ukłański is an artist.

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LESSONS

This is a new section of the magazine devoted to a different topic each time. In this issue, we have concerned ourselves with the idea of the “lesson,” or the transfer of knowledge from one person to another. One might object that any article, essay or discourse presupposes a transfer of notions and therefore of “knowledge,” yet what becomes thoroughly explicit in the concept of lesson is the very fact that whoever talks has something to teach someone else, who listens in order to learn. This position, so clear and explicit, puts the actor in a peculiar position which renders the discussion under way both less ambiguous and less “open.” It is perhaps for this reason that lessons continue to maintain that aura of theoretical classicism, logical rigor and expositive clarity that is increasingly rare in the production of contemporary criticism.

From the sea of lessons, lectures and conferences that have been produced, we have chosen a handful of emblematic - and

for the most part little-known - examples of teaching techniques and approaches. What follows is in no way intended to stand as an overview, but simply as an arbitrary and limited selection of particular cases.

The material published consists at times of entire lessons - authorized and released as such - and at other times of simple extracts of lessons found online, or free transcriptions of notes. In any case, as many credits as possible have been cited. Wherever it has been impossible to trace the source, the credits have been evidenced as well as they could be individuated. What follows, moreover, should be considered as a simple collection - in cut-up format - that documents, to our thinking, a variety of approaches towards the material in question: in short, the idea of the “lesson” in the contemporary era.

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SOME PARAGRAPHS ON EDUCATION BY MÅRTEN SPÅNGBERG

To initiate the concept of Lessons we are presenting here a text by the Belgian choreographer and performance theorist Mårten Spångberg. The piece is divided into seven paragraphs on education. It is quite obvious that the concept of education and the idea of lessons are closely bound, but what is significant here is precisely the fact that he is “educating on education” and so, in a way, the subject of the “lesson” is to some extent the idea of lesson itself.

Some Paragraphs on Education

International Festival

I. From utopia there and then, to efficiency here and now.

It isn't such a big deal to dream up an education that would fulfill all and every desire from everybody engaged, but as we know utopia is there and then. What is difficult is to articulate opportunities that can be realized and function effectively here and now. It is essential that discussions on education don't end in openness, visions and anything goes, but continue through ideological and ethical elaborations based on the means and structures available. To produce discourse describing ideals is done over lunch, but to live the dream is an effort that takes both stubbornness and generosity. Hope isn't such a great learning experience, but to practice on the spot is always an opening towards knowledge production. So far utopia hasn't changed the world, but a politics of engagement can definitely offer us opportunities to rehearse the world differently.

II. From education in performance, to performing education.

A frame is always stronger than its content. It is indifferent to what extent the content is radical, as it always will be inscribed in the ideological territory proposed by the frame. As long as education is directional – an education in... - it will always propose knowledge as static, general, consensual and commodity, and can therefore only facilitate information. Shifting the perspective relatively education towards its specific performatives can alter the fundamental conditions of framing, and allow for concepts of knowledge that is processual, singular, dissensual and political.

Directional education defining a territory must inevitably reproduce consolidated knowledge, licensed as proprietary, whereas a performed, or performing education in and of itself, on an ontological level, is deterritorializing reproductive economies and modalities of distribution. It therefore unavoidably destabilizes conventional models of authorship, and performs an open protocol allowing for collaborative modes of production with references to open source.

Directional education essentially homogenizes its territory in order to maintain validity in a given context, as well as its legacy due a particular technology, technique, style or strong author. A performing education's production on the contrary is heterogeneous as it favors means in front of ends, process in front of result. It is legitimized by its own continuous contextualization, its engagement in performance as a plurality of strategies formed by its specific modalities of activation. Performing education is not based of what performance, with its different expressions, can be, but on specific potentialities' becoming performance, or in other words, not formed on conventions of presence, embodiment or e.g. narrative structures but on formations of immateriality.

III. From individual program, to programmed individuation.

The decline of the classical art academy, with its elaboration of technical ability within a Fordist economical system, in favor of what is widely known as individual program, implied to prepare the student to participate in an art market based on a relocation of aura from the artwork towards the artist's identity and individual performance. The “freedom” of choice estimated by individual programs in effect cancelled out the opportunity for the student's emancipation supporting specific processes of production of identity inscribed in neo-liberal regimes. This process implicitly nourished a romantic image of the artist's identity, however not in respect of an outside of conventional capitalist production but rather as specific niches assimilated in late capitalism, i.e. the romantic artist as sales argument or gimmick.

The individual program with its inevitable lack of categories of assessment, in other words, is rather to be understood as identitarian program, its main function being to teach the students how to be an artist, and if not to be an artist

to be recognized as one.

Programmed individuation should not be mistaken for a recapitulation of the classical art academy, but as an alteration of methodology towards education in modes of production, including multidirectional discourse intensive learning experiences through which the student can engage in individuating processes independent of specific territories of identity production. Such learning experiences propose an oscillation between the conjunctive (“and”) and the disjunctive (“or”), forcing the subject to return to the experience and retroactively interpret it. It is in this particular dynamic that the subject can find herself both in the image and out of the frame. This activates an indefinite series of constellations or states of experience that are recognized and are consummated after the fact by the subject of the experience. This oscillation generates the possibility of the production of event, not in the sense of causality, but through the performance of knowledge as foreign. Such processes of knowledge production, simultaneously conjunctive and disjunctive, can avoid reinforcing particular processes of identity formation in favor of a becoming, or a programmed individuation.

IV. From student, to participant.

The system of individual program reinforces conventional literacies and homogenizes production through its lack of criteria of assessment. The student’s success or brilliance can not be credited hence that would render the educational unit redundant, but it is instead his/her ability to perform successfully within a known context that is valued.

The individual program’s fundamental base in conventional hierarchical institutions implies that however individual the student will always remain a student. Together these two conditions give preference to an active student, i.e. active in respect of recognizable and interpretable, and student as a subordinate individual in need of guidance.

The active student performs action. Actions are repeatable and propose particular protocols for production and evaluation that are innately rational and linear, which indicate that the student is consuming education within a pacifying regime. The active student is regurgitating information.

Activation on the contrary presents no form, ideological or ideational, remaining vague as to the source, nature, and location of the experience, carrying a minimum of content.

This proposes a learning experience distinctly offering only an activation contour: a variation in intensity of feeling over time, without addressing subjects’ cognition, but rather bodies’ irritability (positive or negative). Activation contours are perceptual cues activating direct bodily responsiveness rather than reproducing a form or transmit definite content. Activation contours initiate bodies/individuals to inevitably express their attunement to affective modulations in their own unique ways.

Activation is signals without signification. If a signal triggers activation follows, prolonging the situation along a line of flight. The experience is a dynamic ingathering of activation assuring the continuity of its serial unfolding, moving the reality of the situation.

The diversity of the resulting activations offers each engaged individual to position him- or herself subjectively in relation to others, proposing a moment of reflection after the experience, a retrospective review consolidating activation into set of actions.

The participant of activation is productive of his/her own competences and desires in relationship to sets of situations engaging in actualization processes. Activation sets in motion indiscernible fields of knowledge through which the subject engages in a process of becoming, i.e. production of knowledge.

This approach requires an ethical shift from difference and multiplicity to particularity and multitude. It involves a reformulation of participation in order to avoid difficulties of sustainability implied by the inherent temporality of the multitude. The objective initially is to invent and introduce decision-making protocols consistent in both procedural and operational modalities of production, rather than to dissolve hierarchies and functional institutional frames.

Each participant, independent of his/her position and context, should therefore be inscribed in the same system of negotiation. Inequality will not be absent but will distinctly be given temporary man-

ifestations according to the intensity of engagement communicated by the participant, and the will for discovering and combining new relations. There should be no hierarchy of capacity, independently of whether it is of discursive, performative or bodily character. Equality implies process, and emancipation is becoming conscious of this equality of nature. Equality is not given, nor is it claimed; it is practiced, it is performed.

V. From control, to discipline.

Self-precarious, alternative and local educational models once radical and convictional have today been entirely assimilated into governing neo-liberal moods of production. The precarious individual is today a creative asset that offer additional license to a society of control, i.e. hyper dynamic, short-term, opaque, global and operating through difference of degree.

The once necessary departure away from disciplinary, i.e. static, long-term, transparent, local and enabling emancipation, operating through difference in kind, pedagogical models towards models of control, coincided with the individualization of technique and dissolved notions of material in e.g. visual art (a shift of attention from what was depicted or represented, to how, and its performance).

This shift is symptomatic to post-Fordist economies and imperative for the development of artistic practices, but must today be scrutinized in order to offer educations in the arts that 1. avoid further corporatisation of educational units 2. avoid equalization of students due a totalitarianism of openness 3. stimulate emancipation through avoiding the illusion of “here we are all equal” and 4. that engage in consecutive, common, local assessment models.

The voice acquired by self-precarious movements especially during the 60s, has to the same extent been integrated by global market economies, performing a catchy edge of neo liberalism. Regimes of control produce momentum precisely through incorporation, illusions of emancipation, the pretence of lateralization and offer its citizens/students, at best, the opportunity of a murmur, but never the agonistic intensity of a voice.

This murmur is the inarticulate sound of com-

plaint, consolidating the police, whereas a voice performs the promise of a politics. Its expression is further dependency towards an allowing authority, reproducing ad infinitum neurotic offspring. Control is a univocal machine without any prospect for lines of flight, but is productive of an endless stream of differences given sanction through tolerance.

This machine, which is able to measure a time of presence, a time of social engagement by the subject, but are unable to measure the subject’s contribution, and offers no opportunities to function transversally, must be substituted with a series of constructed devices producing machinic empowerment. While subjection concern social selves or global persons, machinic empowerment consists of mobilizing and modulating pre-individual, pre-cognitive and pre-verbal components of subjectivity, causing affects, perceptions and sensations unassigned to a subject. Machinic empowerment, contrary to the molar economy of the machine of control, connects infra-personal and infra-social elements thanks to a molecular economy of desire, difficult to maintain within stratified social relationships. Yet the machinic does not consist of smooth absences, but must be constructed as a multitude of particulars, incompatible and superimposed, therefore disciplinary and functioning transversally, linking material and semiotic elements, from non-discursive, un-namable, un-repetable sets of entry-points, in order to construct political, economic and aesthetic devices where existential transformation can be tested. This implies a politics of experimentation, inscribed in a disciplinary regime of particulars critical precisely because it produces the outside as an inside, because of its insistence on the separation between power and knowledge, simultaneously a place of alienation and of a new happiness.

VI. From representing, to practicing practice

Any educational endeavor with ambitions superseding strict formation, i.e. technical training assessable through consecutive protocols, necessarily engage in preparing the student for activities in a general practice; a life as e.g. choreographer.

The preparation inevitably takes on a theatrical characteristic as it represents practice, and the assignment, or contract, proposed to the student

function on the basis of as if, i.e. it is pretended. The design and motif of the representation must inevitably be idealized, as its capital precisely is the maintenance of desirable, mystical, heroic, successful positions, which simultaneously acts as the attractor to the education. This idealization concurrently depends on a separation from other modes of circulation on a territory in order not to perform a threat, i.e. an education must be detached from common economies. Every attempt to prepare the student for a life in practice through representations of as if will consequently have the opposite effect: the student will feel deceived and misled.

A proposal for an education with ambitions to contribute to the renewal and expansion of a general practice therefore involve to combine, as singular

1. sets of knowledge experiences that are disconnected from practical applications and instead are concerned with methodological, epistemological, onto-ethological questions, i.e. the pedagogy of the concept, which subtracts apprenticeship, or learning, from the representational logic of instruction, making it into a matter of sub-representational contemplation or rather contraction of singularities, into the ability to extract material schematisms, or spatio-temporal dynamism, out of student's or participant's encounters with the outside of thought.

2. sets of actual apprenticeships, subtracted from learning, attached to in situ situations of practicing practice in which the student become a participant of activation, inscribed in multitudes of (incompatible) knowledge production.

This implies that the individuation of a practice is an involuntary adventure, the movement of knowledge production that links a sensibility, a memory and then a thought, with all the cruelties and violence necessary. Practicing practice as a result avoid the empirical actuality of a solution endeavouring to link the subjectivity of the apprentice or participant to singular points of the objective in order to form a problematic field.

The facilitation of information coupled with the counter productive modus of representing practices (as if), can accordingly be passed to the praxis of a territory and, so to say, what the doing does.

VII. From stable structures to dynamic resources

Repetition in language consolidates states of affairs. For how many years do we need to repeat catchphrases on negative trends in subsidies, and we-have-a-very-tight-budget-litanies before the contraction of energy is bursting its barriers? Next year will not be better. We know that but economies within the cultural sector are still not changing significantly. We also know that to continue will bring nothing else than misery, self-pity, bitterness and forced illusions of radicalism.

The imperative is not to do something better or differently. The cultural sector will only survive if the circumstances and conditions for cultural activity and engagement change fundamentally and distribution of power is decompartmentalised. Time for change has arrived, to simply revolutionize ways of doing business in order to gain leverage knowing that independence is just not part of the deal.

Networks, institutions and most conventional corporate economies, after an initial expansive phase, unavoidable experience a shift of impetus from dynamic resources towards static structures, i.e. from innovation and creative expansion to maintenance of hard structures, growing administrative and managerial requirements, minimal risk-assessment and wide-spectrum target orientation.

This shift is preferential in relationship to recognition, sustainability and accountability to the same extent as it impairs processes of heterogenization, down-up or lateral protocols of decision making and proliferation outside a named and given territory, i.e. this shift homogenizes protocols distribution, accountability and authorization.

Modern education has been dependant on location, distinct modes of gathering and consequently on structures connected to static costs. In an educational environment fundamentally supported by digital networks these categories have taken on new meaning and often lost its relevance for the students' active participation. A significant part of the students learning experience is today taking place over the internet, which has rendered yet other structures abundant. Analyzes accordingly involves identifying forces that strive for the maintenance, or even proliferation of static structures.

Certain types of education depend on particular spatial conditions but these can be facilitated in different ways than through centralized institutions, e.g. using outsourcing, temporary short-term contracts or investment and proliferation of structures used by for instance active creative communities. Systematic and consistent implementation of education economies into existing structures and generative smaller and more informal institutions could circumvent the conventional institutions' reduced mobility, restricted and linear modes of change?

Study the total cost of a student including staff, structures etc. and consider how the same economy could be used to enhance and offer further momentum to already active participants in the field. This can take place without institutionalizing the economy through assigning the students, i.e. participants, to, from a collection of subscribing institutions, companies, choreographers and other suitable capacities of knowledge production (qualified by students and other active agents in the educational frameworks), choose how to allocate and activate economies, in response to facilities and conditions proposed by hosting capacities.

Economies with such characteristics risk becoming strongly market orientated but can through proper regulations function as a self-regulatory system where participants evaluate each other diagonally and through shared interests, especially in an organization were the position of the student is abandoned in favour of participation.

Structures cannot be escaped but will always succeed action. Structures emerge from preverbal, affectual states and are coming into representation. Action is the repetition of activation, yet it is only possible to articulate the meaning of a situation in relation to an action undertaken to transform it. To propose a different territory of education implies new modes of subjectification, which is both political and existential. A model for education that shifts perspectives from defensive tendencies of structural allocation to benevolent heterogeneous allocation in dynamic resources is one that emphasizes opportunities for new modes of subjectification for all participants as well as for educators and new institutionalities.

From "For them" to "For us"

The direction of production is always complex, as well as estimations of political or social relevance and potentiality. If the state governs and guarantees education its direction is redundant and criticality must be sought for differently. Education is productive as governmentality, which implies that assessment on the basis of efficiency will offer insufficient complexity, but must be the result of algorithms recursive to user value and transformative capacities.

Considering the allocation of economy, creative investment, deviation from personal/artistic practice and further the extended duration of educational operations in comparison to e.g. conventional production it is important determine trajectories of use.

Conventionally education is understood to support and serve the students, whose responsibility it is to maintain and expand a tradition, legacy, technique etc. But what are the arguments for a community of active participants, such as interpreters and authors, to compromise their activities "for them...", particularly when education to such an extent is instrumental and dependant on subsidy structures which inevitably cultivate weak and defensive strategies.

Educational frames whose departure point is "For us...", e.g. in accordance with what has been proposed above, offer a proposition that can involve and empower a multitude of practicing users associated with a minimum of appropriated funds for administration.

It is our responsibility, and opportunity, to take on such an adventure, which indeed is self-jeopardizing and a departure from consensual and universal notions of education and its relationship to individuality and protocols for knowledge production, education thus being closer to engineering than consolidation. An engineering of abstraction defined as equipment, both tools and lure, linking material and semiotic elements, from non-discursive, un-namable, un-repeatable sets of entry-points, in order to construct political, economic and aesthetic devices where existential transformation can be tested. Each individual case of engineering proposes a tangible threshold, or force to think and create through, a "bad will" as opposed to good will which however joy-

ful and affirmative will allow for consensual production.

An education “For us...” initial ambition is to honour what forces us to escape good will, consensual thought, and insist on bad will, which fundamental concern is to examine the reliability of claim, in favour of an open speculative operability that empower us to venture all the way along the question that gave power to oblige us to think: how to produce incoherence where coherence rules.

***EXCERPT
FROM
MAX
NEUHAUS'
SOUND
WORKS***

Max Neuhaus' lecture is taken from a text published in the first volume of the monograph *Sound Works*. Max Neuhaus is renowned as one of the first artists to have extended sound, as an autonomous medium, into the domain of contemporary art. After a brief speech, the text proceeds in standard Q&A format, facilitating our access to a deeper understanding of his ideas and work.

In 1973, the year I discovered the space in Times Square, I also passed through Paris and came across what was for me an amazing space - a tunnel 600 feet long with three moving sidewalks in it. Its ceiling is arched, an unbroken curve which stretches the whole length of that tunnel. It is an unusual space in the way it looks and feels.

I found the space exciting, although many Parisians detest it. It took me a while to figure out why. I believe it was deliberately designed without visual references to make it look shorter than it is - one long space with no way to establish its scale. Its architect may have thought that, by making it look shorter, people wouldn't mind it so much. In fact, he accomplished the opposite: by making it look shorter than it is, people keep expecting it to end before it does - in effect making it seem endless.

Over the last ten years I have endeavored to do work there, initiating meetings with the people who control that space and talking to them about the concepts of the work. Just this last week I've succeeded in negotiating the first phase of the work.

It will take a year to build and will be permanent. One of the most interesting things about the space for me is that it is a passageway with moving sidewalks running in both directions; 2,000 people, sometimes 3,000 people, pass through it in an hour. It is a space where people are in motion, people's ears are in motion, very much different from Times Square where people can stop, stand, look - here everyone's moving. There is a whole new set of things for me to work with once I know that someone's ears are in motion.

It is also, surprisingly, a very quiet space; few people talk in it. What happens, due to the custom of standing on the right on moving side-

walks, is that people who are together have to line up one behind another, making conversations difficult to the point where most people stop talking.

The Paris Metro has a tradition of street musicians which play throughout its very resonant tunnels. The two ends of this tunnel are favorite places for musicians to set up for several hours and work. The work will act as a transition between two possible sound spaces, as a passage between these two locations.

The process of making a work for me is a gradual one - going into the space, looking at it and learning about it, figuring out its mechanics and its acoustics, and then going in with a system which generates sound and beginning to outline, to illuminate, so to speak, the space with sound. It is very much different from working as a visual artist where you go to a site, look at what is there, photograph it, make drawings about it. One can't see acoustically what happens in the space until you illuminate it, so to speak, by putting sounds in it.

I know that there must be things which I have not been able to make clear. It is hard to know what point of departure to take with any given audience. So I would like to ask you now for any questions about any of the things I talked about, so that we might have a discussion.

Q. Are you concerned with the effect that your sounds have on people? Are you trying to surprise people?

A. I am not trying to create a surprise. I am concerned with affecting them. The works are not conceptual; they are experiential. I deal directly with how people perceive a space through sound. My focus is not on making sound works which are exhibited to people's ears, but on affecting the way they perceive a space by adjusting or shifting its sound.

Most of us think that what we think about a place is determined by what we see in it. And I think it is for most of us, consciously. But unconsciously there is a perception of a space which deals with how it sounds, what sounds are there, and how sound acts in it and on our sense of sound. We are such a visually oriented society now that we take this perception of space through our ears for granted, it's automatic; but a blind per-

son can 'see' the shape of a room just by walking into it.

Q. Is your style of work identifiable?

A. It is different for each work. We are used to artists having styles; we are used to being able to say that a mature artist is identifiable by what his work looks or sounds like. In my case, because each work grows from the place where I make it, there is no style in that sense.

My idea about making works in public places is about making them accessible to people but not imposing them on people, making them findable for people. The works are usually very subtle, although if we put the sound of the work in Times Square in this room it would be very, very loud, but in its context of the street sounds of Times Square it can be walked through and not noticed.

The threshold of these pieces is a crucial factor. I try to find a point, a common point, where the works are at the threshold of being there and not there, allowing people to find them, not making them so obvious that they are forced to find them.

Q. In the Villa Celle work, does it alter the sounds that are presently there?

A. It alters the perception of them but not the sounds themselves. One of my starting premises with each work is the aural nature of the place - the sounds which are already there. In a wooded area, the most consistent sounds are insect sounds, locusts, crickets. They change with time of day and season.

My idea wasn't to make the same sound or to communicate with them, but to make a sound which related to those sounds so that it fit within that context. Not making sound which was a separate thing in that environment, but making a sound so integrated that it shifted and pulled people into hearing the existing sounds in a different way.

Q. When you started, what got you in this direction?

A. I began as a musician. I was a performer of percussion works, works for a solo performer. I did concerts with many large arrays of percussion instruments, a different array for each work. I was working in an area which dealt with sound

timbre rather than rhythm and melody. And I began exploring electronics as a way of expanding the timbres I had to work with. It was a natural evolution.

Q. Are there any recordings of your sound works?

A. That is a question that I am surprised didn't come up sooner - I am standing here talking about something which is sound. In fact I don't record the sound installations, and there is a very good reason. They are about creating places. The sound is only a catalyst for a particular place; it is not the work. If one takes the place away, one only has the catalyst left. We think of all sound art as being capturable with the tape recorder. Some of it is, but mine isn't.

Q. Do you always use normal speakers?

A. Rarely. The speaker in the work at the Museum of Modern Art was a very large subsonic horn. Part of the process of making a work is deciding on how I will apply sound to the space. Often I have to invent something.

Q. Could you tell us what you meant when you said there are more things for you to work with when you know people's ears are in motion?

A. Well, my thinking about that piece is still in a sketch phase, thinking about what kinds of things could happen in it with people moving. One example: it takes some time for sound to move; it takes about half a second for sound at one end of this tunnel to reach the other end. If I put sound sources that had different sounds at either end of this tunnel, as a listener started at one end, he would hear the closest sound source first and the far source half a second later. When he reached the middle of the tunnel he would hear them both simultaneously; they would become vertical. As he passed the middle he would begin to hear the inverse. That is something I could begin to build a work with. Another area that I could explore in depth is to move sounds through the space - sounds which move at the same speed, which move a little faster, which move a little slower, which move in an opposite direction.

It is very much like any other artist working with any other medium. One tries things. In my case because the works are large and involve

public spaces, that trying process takes a long time and involves planning. It is trying to set up the same situation that a painter sets up in his studio of doing something, seeing how it looks, adjusting it gradually, focusing more and more until you realize the work is done.

Q. Isn't there a strong reaction against sound itself?

A. Yes. The Environmental Protection Agency in New York has an area called the Department of Air Resources. They are so inefficient in cleaning up the breathable part of the air, that they have to do something else to show people they are busy, so they run around and tell people that it is bad to hear. The concept of noise pollution, which has been foisted on us by those agencies, is oversimplified and is robbing us of a very rich, sensual resource in our environment, i. e. hearing. This concept has convinced us that every sound we hear deafens us; that's the implication. In fact, most of our sound environment doesn't damage our ears at all, even when it is very loud.

I feel a duty to try and counter that propaganda. In 1974 I wrote an editorial in the New York Times condemning the New York City Department of Air Resources. We have been at odds ever since.

Q. Have you ever gone and stationed yourself around your works to check people's reactions?

A. I thought about that when I did Times Square, and it seemed to me that it was voyeuristic. Maybe that is too strong a word to use.

Yes, I could go and observe people. But I know what the work is, I know what it can do, otherwise I wouldn't be a very good artist. The direct knowledge I have about people's reaction to it, I like to keep as an accident. People finding it for themselves and knowing about it for a number of years and then finally running into someone who knows it is a work of mine, and they write me a letter or a postcard.

Recently I was up there because someone was making a TV documentary on my work and filming. And an amazing thing happened. As they were shooting the square for background, a woman walked up and started talking about this sound which she had found and how wonderful it was and asked them to listen to it, instead of just pointing their camera around the square. She went on for about fifteen minutes.

Q. What about interactive sound installations?

A. Yes, I know what you mean. I have never done that. I have thought about it quite a bit. I think things of that kind are public instruments rather than artworks. Usually what happens is that the person with the strongest ego makes the most noise. But culture bureaucrats love the idea; it fits in with their idea that art should be fun.

The ideas that I am involved with are contrary to that - giving each person the possibility to make a work for himself, but for himself only. For instance, by making a work that has a topography, one can move through that topography at one's own pace, stop where one wants to. One has the freedom to form an experience of the work for oneself but not impose it on anyone else.

Q. Where does the money come from?

A. It depends on the situation. In the case of the Metro project, a third of it will come from the Metro Authority itself with a third from the Ministry of Culture and a third from private sources. In the case of a museum, it comes from the museum and the patrons that they can find.

Q. In the case of the Paris Metro project, do you go to the state and say, I saw this place and I want to do this?

A. Essentially yes. But it is a dilemma; here I am walking in and saying, I am an artist, I want you to commission me to do a work. It sounds strange within the context of the way our society realizes works of artists. The artist is supposed to sit in his studio by the telephone waiting for it to ring.

That system, in fact, doesn't always work very well. Usually by the time the telephone rings, someone is calling you about a work which you did fifteen or twenty years ago for a place which is not the same place where you did the other work.

I find the most honest thing to do is to find sites and propose works. By not raising the money myself but going and presenting an idea and asking the place to raise the money, I put the decision in their hands. It is creating a situation which wouldn't happen by itself. No one ever would have commissioned me to do a work in a hole in the ground in Times Square. I had to have the idea. I had to annoy the Transit Authority to the point where they realized that the only way to get rid of me was to let me make this strange thing in the middle of Times Square.

The fact that I work with sound makes the situation more complex. Our sense of the monetary value of art sits firmly on the material instincts of size and weight. The most material thing in my work is air; it's invisible and weighs practically nothing. This in itself presents some problems in convincing people that there are costs involved in making a sound work - manpower, electronic systems but, most of all in my case, time.

Q. What kind of music do you listen to?

A. I don't have a stereo; I don't have a record player. I sometimes listen to popular music on the radio as a way of keeping current with the sound vocabulary that the rest of the world is speaking, but that is just a way of keeping my ear open.

Q. Have you ever worked with water sounds?

A. Yes. There was period from '71 until about '75, when I did many works in water. In one sense they were sound installations; but because they are in water, such a different medium than air, I think of them as another area. They were done in swimming pools. The sounds were made by using water running through small whistles which made pitches in the water. I set up systems of hoses and plugged it into the water system. People heard the work, which was only underwater, by going in the water. The easiest way to listen was to float on your back with your ears under and your nose and mouth out. It was my approach to dealing with people who thought they didn't like culture. They sounded like so much fun; few people suspected what I had in store for them.

Many of these works indeed started out as pool parties with people making a lot of noise and jumping in the pool. The noise didn't matter; the sounds in the air could never penetrate the water. As soon as you put your ears in the water, it was another world. The sounds were quite beautiful - rich continuous sonorous structures, gradually shifting in three dimensions. The water was at body temperature. One by one people would disappear from the party until fairly soon everybody was on their backs in the water literally swimming in it.

I did seventeen of those works. In fact, one here in Florida, in Tampa, at the university. I think the largest pool I ever did was there.

So, yes, at one point I was extremely interested

in underwater acoustics. I call it my water period.

Q. In your selection process, what part is experimental and what part is mathematical?

A. None is mathematical. I use computers; but instead of using a computer to simulate a situation, I use it to create it and to give myself the maximum number of possibilities to try within a space. If I use the idea I described about motion in the Metro tunnel as a point of departure, I will build a computer program that will let me try many of those kinds of things to see how they sound.

It is different with each piece. I go through a development of technique at the same time as I am learning about the site; for each work I build an electronic system. In the case of the Metro project, because it is a very big project, it will probably be rather elaborate.

I will start working with two engineers who build software which allows me to start from several points of departure and to explore areas within them by ear. They work with me during this phase, adjusting the software tools to new directions which I find while I'm working.

At the end of the exploratory phase, when I have defined the general area that I want to work in, they start developing software which allows me to do the composition process.

One of the main problems for me, because I make pieces in space that have topographies, that sound different in different places, is how can I set up a situation where I can control a complex set of sound sources from anywhere within the topography without running back and forth to a computer console, listening somewhere else, going to the computer console and typing something in, going back to the place where I want to hear it. Fine discrimination with sounds demands that you're able to change and compare differences quickly.

Several years ago I developed a system which was a portable terminal, made out of a small TV set which was battery-operated, with a light pen, which allowed me to walk anywhere within a space and control all the actions of the computer which was controlling a set of synthesizers. With a light pen I could draw any parameter that I wanted, any parameter of the synthesizers to execute.

I work as much as I can with my hand and my ears, setting up a situation where I can control sounds with my hand and listen to the results. It

is hand, ear, brain, hand - a circle.

While building a work I am constantly switching between being an engineer to solve practical problems and an artist to solve aesthetic ones. The only way to make aesthetic judgments with sound is by ear. You cannot engineer a work of art; its parameters cannot be found by measuring.

Q. What actually would the synthesizers be doing?

A. Generating sounds. I am now in the process of designing the synthesis module that I will use for Paris. It will be digital, partly so that I can duplicate an image in each source to create the illusion of movement.

When I start a work, I start a process of research in technique. I am looking for the best means available at this time for this particular piece. If I had done this work ten years ago I would have a wholly different set of things to choose from. I don't think it changes the essence of the work; it just changes the means I have to realize it. It is like picking a set of paints.

Q. Are any of the pieces self-supporting in terms of their power sources?

A. No, Times Square is connected to the street lighting system, so when that goes, yes, it goes. There is no other way for me practically to power that piece. It only draws as much as a 50 watt light bulb, so it is not a matter of cost. I have made proposal for a Time Piece for Munich, though, which would be solar powered.

Q. Does that make a difference?

A. Well, it just makes it independent of the power company. It makes it more of a permanent entity.

I mean it when I say that these sound works can be permanent. Last week I met the maintenance person of the Metro. He maintains all the Metro stations south of the Seine. We were talking in broken English and my broken French, and after about five minutes he was trying to explain what he felt his function was in this project. Usually the maintenance man is one of the most difficult persons in a project because he thinks of the building or the space as his property in some way, and the artist is doing something which he

doesn't quite understand to this 'possession' of his.

But this man was entirely different. After about five minutes he stopped and said, my job is to make sure this piece lasts a hundred years. And I said, great.

Q. What interests you in the issue of permanence?

A. If the sound in a work of mine is no longer there, the work ceases to exist. Nothing remains; one can't even be reminded of it with a photograph or recording. The experience that happens when sound engages mind in a work of mine can never occur again.

Q. We are talking about the equipment and not the sound?

A. No, the sound - the sound work.

Q. The sound is obvious.

A. You were really asking about an aesthetic issue about permanence.

Q. Not as an aesthetic issue so much as a conceptual issue.

A. It is no different than the destruction of any other work of art. Just because it is made of sound and we have this leftover idea that sound is temporary, doesn't change that.

Q. But is it permanent, like stone, I mean is it that kind of thing?

A. Times Square has existed for seven years without anything except dusting it occasionally. We have the means today to make a sound which lasts for ever; even if the equipment that generates it disintegrates, sound can be described so precisely now that it can always be rebuilt from its description.

But we have inherited some assumptions about sound which are no longer true. One is that sound is temporary. This is because in the past sound has always been associated with an event - thunder, a voice speaking. When the event is over, so is the sound.

My work turns that idea around. The sound is not a result of an event; the sound I make results in, manifests a place.

Q. Well, the stone, it has always been there, and you come upon it and obviously it has a different meaning for people now than it did then, but it is a permanent thing.

A. In my case an intangible work can be more permanent than the stone.

Q. I don't know if you are aware of it but you have an entire class of the University of Miami here tonight, because we are very interested in keeping up with and learning all we can about what is going on in the contemporary field of music. You have given a very interesting talk, and you showed us some interesting slides. I am very pleased to hear about all the things you do and all the work. And I would like very much to know what kind of music you make.

A. I have never written a piece for conventional instruments.

Q. I realize that. But we would like to know something of what the music is like. You have told us what you wanted to do. You have told us how you want it to affect us. But we don't know anything about what it sounds like.

A. Indeed. In my case it is not possible to play examples, to go to a piano and render something which sounds like it. It is not possible to move it from the place. All I can do is tell you where the places that they exist are and hope that when you go there you will go through them. And by talking about the work perhaps stimulate you to find them.

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EXCERPT FROM ALAIN BADIOU'S FIFTEEN THESES ON CONTEMPORARY ART

The importance of this lecture by the philosopher Alain Badiou, held in 2003 at The Drawing Center in New York and published in the spring issue of Lacanian Ink in 2004, consists in its effort to enumerate a list of proposals that focus on what contemporary art needs to be concerned with in the very act of producing itself. Apart from the actual contents of the inquiry, what is crucial is the format itself, which tries to schematize a sort of theoretical vademecum. To better elucidate the functioning of this lecture, we've included here the list of the fifteen theses – as reported by the listeners after the lecture – and quoted a selection of excerpts from the lecture/article that only partially illustrate some of the theses formulated by Badiou. The material here presented is nevertheless useful in clarifying the way in which Badiou attempts to define this revealing list.

1. Art is not the sublime descent of the infinite into the finite abjection of the body and sexuality. It is the production of an infinite subjective series through the finite means of a material subtraction.

2. Art cannot merely be the expression of a particularity (be it ethnic or personal). Art is the impersonal production of a truth that is addressed to everyone.

3. Art is the process of a truth, and this truth is always the truth of the sensible or sensual, the sensible as sensible. This means: the transformation of the sensible into a happening of the Idea.

4. There is necessarily a plurality of arts, and however we may imagine the ways in which the arts might intersect there is no imaginable way of totalizing this plurality.

5. Every art develops from an impure form, and the progressive purification of this impurity shapes the history both of a particular artistic truth and of its exhaustion.

6. The subject of an artistic truth is the set of the works which compose it.

7. This composition is an infinite configuration, which, in our own contemporary artistic context, is a generic totality.

8. The real of art is ideal impurity conceived through the immanent process of its purification.

In other words, the raw material of art is determined by the contingent inception of a form. Art is the secondary formalization of the advent of a hitherto formless form.

9. The only maxim of contemporary art is not to be imperial. This also means: it does not have to be democratic, if democracy implies conformity with the imperial idea of political liberty.

10. Non-imperial art is necessarily abstract art, in this sense: it abstracts itself from all particularity, and formalizes this gesture of abstraction.

11. The abstraction of non-imperial art is not concerned with any particular public or audience. Non-imperial art is related to a kind of aristocratic-proletarian ethic: Alone, it does what it says, without distinguishing between kinds of people.

12. Non-imperial art must be as rigorous as a mathematical demonstration, as surprising as an ambush in the night, and as elevated as a star.

13. Today art can only be made from the starting point of that which, as far as Empire is concerned, doesn't exist. Through its abstraction, art renders this inexistence visible. This is what governs the formal principle of every art: the effort to render visible to everyone that which for Empire (and so by extension for everyone, though from a different point of view), doesn't exist.

14. Since it is sure of its ability to control the entire domain of the visible and the audible via the laws governing commercial circulation and democratic communication, Empire no longer censors anything. All art, and all thought, is ruined when we accept this permission to consume, to communicate and to enjoy. We should become the pitiless censors of ourselves.

15. It is better to do nothing than to contribute to the invention of formal ways of rendering visible that which Empire already recognizes as existent.

“(…) I think the great question about contemporary art is how not to be Romantic. It's the great question and a very difficult one. More precisely, the question is how not to be a formalist-Romantic. Something like a mixture between Romanticism and formalism. On one side is the absolute desire

for new forms, always new forms, something like an infinite desire. Modernity is the infinite desire of new forms. But, on the other side, is obsession with the body, with finitude, sex, cruelty, death. The contradiction of the tension between the obsession of new forms and the obsession of finitude, body, cruelty, suffering and death is something like a synthesis between formalism and Romanticism and it is the dominant current in contemporary art. All the 15 theses have as a sort of goal, the question how not to be formalist-Romantic. That is, in my opinion, the question of contemporary art.

(...)

[The first thesis] is an intimation of how not to be a Romantic. It consists of the production of a new infinite content, of a new light. I think it's the very aim of art; producing a new light about the world by means of precise and finite summarization. So, you have to change the contradiction. The contradiction today is between the infinity of the desire for new forms and the finitude of the body, of the sexuality, and so on. And new art needs to change the terms of this contradiction and put on the side of infinity new content, new light, a new vision of the world, and on the side of finitude, the precision of means and of summarization. So, the first thesis is something like the reversal of the contradiction. Subtraction: the word subtraction has two meanings. First, not to be obsessed with formal novelty. I think it's a great question today because the desire for novelty is the desire of new forms, an infinite desire for new form. The obsession of new forms, the artistic obsession with novelty, of critique, of representation and so on, is really not a critical position about capitalism because capitalism itself is the obsession of novelty and the perpetual renovation of forms. You have a computer, but the following year it's not the true computer, you need a new one. You have a car, but the coming year it's an old car, something like an old thing and so on. So, it's a necessity for us to see that the complete obsession with new forms is not really a critical position about the world as it is. It's a possibility that the real desire, which is subversive desire, is the desire of eternity. The desire for something which is a stability, something which is art, something which is closed in-itself. I don't think it's quite like that, but it's a possibility because the perpetual modification of forms is not really a critical position, so the desire of new forms is certainly something important in art, but the desire for the stabil-

ity of forms is also something important. And, I think we have to examine the question today.

(...)

Second thesis: Art cannot merely be the expression of a particularity (be it ethnic or personal). Art is the impersonal production of a truth that is addressed to everyone. The great question here is a question of universality: is there, or is there not, a universality of artistic creation? Because the great question today is the question of globalization, the question of the unity of the world. Globalization proposes to us an abstract universality. A universality of money, the universality of communication and the universality of power. That is the universalism today. And so, against the abstract universality of money and of power, what is the question of art, what is the function of artistic creation? Is the function of artistic creation to oppose, to abstract from universality only a singularity of particularities, something like being against the abstraction of money and of power, or as a community against globalization and so on? Or, is the function of art to propose another kind of universality? That's a big question.

(...)

My position is that artistic creation today should suggest a new universality, not to express only the self or the community, but that it's a necessity for the artistic creation to propose to us, to humanity in general, a new sort of universality, and my name for that is truth. Truth is only the philosophical name for a new universality against the forced universality of globalization, the forced universality of money and power, and in that sort of proposition, the question of art is a very important question because art is always a proposition about a new universality, and art is a signification of the second thesis.

Third thesis. It's only a definition of the universality of art. What is an artistic truth? Artistic truth is different from scientific truth, from political truth, from other sorts of truths. The definition is that artistic truth is always a truth about the sensible, an outline of the sensual. It's not a static sensible expression. An artistic truth is not a copy of the sensible world nor a static sensible expression. My definition is that an artistic truth is a happening of l'Idée in the sensible itself. And, the new

universality of art is the creation of a new form of happening of the Idea in the sensible as such. It's very important to understand that an artistic truth is a proposition about the sensible in the world. It's a proposition about a new definition of what is our sensible relation to the world, which is a possibility of universality against the abstraction of money and power. So, if art seems very important today, it is because globalization imposes to us the creation of a new kind of universality, which is always a new sensibility and a new sensible relation to the world. And because the oppression today is the oppression of abstract universality, we have to think of art along the direction of the new sensible relation to the world. And so, today, artistic creation is a part of human emancipation, it's not an ornament, a decoration and so on. No, the question of art is a central question, and it's central because we have to create a new sensible relation to the world. In fact, without art, without artistic creation, the triumph of the forced universality of money and power is a real possibility. So the question of art today is a question of political emancipation, there is something political in art itself. There is not only a question of art's political orientation, like it was the case yesterday, today it is a question in itself. Because art is a real possibility to create something new against the abstract universality that is globalization. Fourth thesis. This thesis is against the dream of totalization. Some artists today are thinking that there is a possibility to fuse all the artistic forms, it's the dream of a complete multimedia. But it's not a new idea. As you probably know, it was the idea of Richard Wagner, the total art, with pictures, music, poetry and so on. So the first multimedia artist was Richard Wagner. And, I think multimedia is a false idea because it's the power of absolute integration and it's something like the projection in art of the dream of globalization. It's a question of the unity of art like the unity of the world but it's an abstraction too. So, we need to create new art, certainly new forms, but not with the dream of a totalization of all the forms of sensibility. It's a great question to have a relation to multimedia and to new forms of images, of art, which is not the paradigm of totalization. So we have to be free about that sort of dream. A few words about theses five and eight. The question here is what exactly is the creation of new forms. It's very important because of what I previously said about the infinite desire for new forms being a problem in contemporary art. We have to be precise about the question of new forms in them-

selves. What is the creation of new forms? I hint that, in fact, there is never exactly pure creation of new forms. I think it's a dream, like totalization, pure creation of absolute new forms. In fact, there is always something like a passage of something which is not exactly a form to something that is a form, and I argue that we have something like impurity of forms, or impure forms, and purification. So, in art there is not exactly pure creation of forms, God created the world, if you want, but there is something like progressive purification, and complexification of forms in sequence. Two examples if you wish. When Malevich paints the famous white on white, the white square on white square. Is that the creation of something? In one sense yes, but in fact, it's the complete purification of the problem of the relation between shape and color. In fact, the problem of the relation between shape and color is an old one with a long story and in Malevich's white square on white square, we have an ultimate purification of the story of the problem and also it's a creation, but it's also the end, because after white square on white square there is, in one sense, nothing, we cannot continue.

(...)

We come now to theses six and seven. The question here is what exactly is the subjective existence of art? What is the subject in art, the subject in the subjective sense? It's a great discussion, a very old one. What is the subject in art? What is the agent of art? The subject in art is not the artist. It's an old thesis too, but an important one. So, if you think that the real subject in artist creation is the artist, you are positing the artistic creation as the expression of somebody. If the artist is the subject, art is the expression of that subject, thereby art is something like a personal expression. In fact, it is necessary for contemporary art to argue the case that art is a personal expression, because you have no possibility to create a new form of universality and you oppose to the abstract form of universality only the expression of the self or the expression of communities. So, you understand the link between the different problems. It's imperative for us to say that the subject in artistic creation is not the artist as such. "Artist" is a necessity for art, but not a subjective necessity. So, the conclusion is quite simple. The subjective existence of art are the works of art, and nothing else. The artist is not the subjective agent of art. The artist is the sacri-

ficial part of art. It's also, finally, what disappears in art. And the ethic of art is to accept the disappearance. Sometimes the artist is someone who wants to appear, but it's not a good thing for art.

(...)

About these ten and eleven, I think we can demonstrate that imperial art is the name for what is visible today. Imperial art is exactly Romantic-formalism. That is a historical thesis, or a political thesis if you want. The mixture of Romanticism and formalism is exactly the imperial art. Not only today, but, for example, during the Roman Empire too. There is something common between the situation today and the situation at the end of the Roman Empire. It's a good comparison, you see, and more precisely between the United States and the Roman Empire. There is really something very interesting with that sort of comparison, and in fact the question is also a question of artistic creation, because by the end of the Roman Empire we have exactly two dispositions in artistic creation. On one side, something really Romantic, expressive, violent, and on the other, something extremely formalist, politically straight. Why? When we deal with the situation of something like an empire, something like having the formal unity of the world, if you want, it's not only the United States, it's finally the big markets, when we have something like a potential unity of the world, we have in artistic creation something like formalism and Romanticism, a mixture of the two. Why? Because when we have an empire, we have two principles. First, all is possible because we have a big potency, a unity of the world. So we may say, all is possible. We may create new forms, we may speak of everything, there is not really laws about what is possible, what is not possible, so everything is possible. Yet, we also have another maxim, everything is impossible, because there is nothing else to have, the empire is the only possible existence, the only political possibility. So, you can say that everything is possible and you can say that everything is impossible, and when the two are said you have an artistic creation, formalism, that is to say all is possible, new forms are always possible, and Romanticism and nihilism because all is impossible, and finally, we have the mixture of the two, and contemporary art is saying that all is possible and that all is impossible. The impossibility of possibility and the possibility of impossibility. That is the real content of contemporary art. To escape that

sort of situation is to state that something is possible, not all is possible, not all is impossible, but something else is possible. There is a possibility of something else. So, we have to create a new possibility. But to create a new possibility is not the same thing as to realize a new possibility. It's a very fundamental distinction, to realize a possibility is to think that the possibility is here and I need to conceive the possibility.

(...)

About thesis twelve. It's a poetic thesis. The three determinations of artistic creation, to compare artistic creation with a demonstration, with an ambush in the night and with a star. You can understand the three determinations. Why a demonstration? Because finally the question of artistic creation is also the question of something odd, something possessing a sort of eternity, something which is not in pure communication, pure circulation, something which is not in the constant modification of forms. Something which resists and resistance is a question of art also today. Something which resists is something endowed with some stability, solid. Something which is a logical equation, which has a logical coherence, consistence, is the first determination. The second determination is something surprising, something which is right away the creation of a new possibility, but a new possibility is always surprising. We cannot have a new possibility without some sort of surprise. A new possibility is something that we cannot calculate. It's something like a rupture, a new beginning, which is always something surprising. Thus, the second determination. And it's marvelous, like something in the night, the night of our knowledge. A new possibility is something absolutely new for our knowledge, so it's the night of our knowledge. Something like a new light. Elevated as a star because a new possibility is something like a new star. Something like a new planet, a new world, because it is a new possibility. Something like a new sensible relation to the world. But the great problem lies elsewhere. The formal problem for contemporary art is not the determination, one by one. The problem is how to relate the three. To be the star, the ambush, and the demonstration. Something like that.

(...)

The last thesis. I think the great question is the

correlation between art and humanity. More precisely the correlation between artistic creation and liberty. Is artistic creation something independent in the democratic sense of freedom? I think if you consider Lombardi for a second time, we may consider the issue of creating a new possibility as not exactly a question of freedom, in the common sense, because there is an imperial definition of freedom today, which is the common democratic definition. Is artistic creation something like that sort of freedom? I think not. I think the real determination of artistic creation is not the common sense of freedom, the imperial sense of freedom. It's a creation of a new form of liberty, a new form of freedom. And we may see here that sort of thing because the connection between the logical framework, the surprise of new knowledge, and the beauty of the star is a definition of freedom which is much more complex than the democratic determination of freedom. I think of artistic creation as the creation of a new kind of liberty which is beyond the democratic definition of liberty. And we may speak of something like an artistic definition of liberty which is intellectual and material, something like Communism within a logical framework, because there is no liberty without logical framework, something like a new beginning, a new possibility, rupture, and finally something like a new world, a new light, a new galaxy. This is the artistic definition of liberty and the issue today consists not in an art discussion between liberty and dictatorship, between liberty and oppression, but in my opinion, between two definitions of liberty itself. The artistic question of the body in some art forms, like cinema or dance, is precisely the question of the body within the body and not the body without body. It is an idealistic conception of the body without the body or the body as something else, crucial in the story of Christianity and in Paul. For example in the Greek classical painting the body is always something else than the body, and if you consider something like the body in Tintoretto, for example, the body is something like movement which is body like something else than the body. But in fact today the body has a body, the body in the body is the body as such. And the body as such is something very hard, because the body has no representation which is really a representation as a star, something like that. In that sort of painting (Lombardi), we have names, and no bodies. It is a substitution of names to bodies. We have no picture of Bin Laden, but the name

of Bin Laden. We have no picture of Bush, but the name of Bush. Father and sons.

(Text excerpted from an article published online at www.lacan.com/frameXXIII7, an edited version of the original lecture, which appeared in *Lacanian Ink* 23, Spring 2004 – likewise online at www.lacan.com)

WORDS ADAPTED FROM A LECTURE ON DESIGN BY WILLEM SANDBERG

Here below are a few words adapted from a lecture delivered by the graphic designer Willem Sandberg (1897-1984), as published online in Art Directors Club. Whilst the words used by Sandberg seem to be taken from daily life, their value as testimony of a unique conceptual approach to graphics is invaluable. In addition, the use of self-standing sentences, written as they were spoken, without punctuation, is perfectly in accordance with the subject matter of the lecture itself.

Design

i am invited to write a statement
about my work, my life, my ideas
my philosophy, my hopes or my dreams
and i guess
you will get a little bit of everything
a graphic designer
is somebody who brings order
into graphic communications
if possible he makes them attractive
in order that the public takes notice
a graphic designer
tries to condense communication
to make it more effective
but there are many kinds of designers
industrial designers
who try to make tools more effective
or in the widest sense
social designers
who try to redesign
human relations
like marx and engels did
or to design a people
like ben gurion
or to redesign a part of society
for example the artist community
or the relationship
between art and the public
as i tried myself
let me explain how i came to these ideas
between the age of twenty and thirty
i was interested in too many things
first i wanted to become a painter
and after leaving the army
at the end of world war i
i went to the state academy in amsterdam
but after six months i left
it was not my cup of tea
and went to italy and france
to study on my own

till at the age of 25
i saw the work of mondrian
that was what i would have liked to do
but it was already done
during youth
i suffered from bad health
and after some ineffective surgery
i lost my confidence in doctors
at 22 i became a vegetarian
and decided to become my own doctor
i started to fast
first ten days, then twenty days
and was healed
i continued experimenting on myself
and returning to holland
i began lecturing in "healing by nature"
i was rather successful
only being always surrounded
by sick people got on my nerves

so i left for vienna
in order to study psychology
with alfred adler
one of freud's outstanding pupils
there i met dr otto neurath
head of the society museum
who had developed
a new method of statistic pictographs
now i could combine
my interest in society and in design

at the age of thirty
i returned to amsterdam
and soon received many commissions
to design statistic pictographs
for exhibitions, schools etc.
gradually i also received commissions
mostly from governmental institutions
to design calendars,
programs for theaters and concerts
and became a graphic designer
my only preparation for this job
was six weeks of typesetting
at a printer's

during these years
i organized and designed
several exhibitions
that attracted public attention
when i was forty
the director of the municipal museums
invited me to become his assistant

i hesitated
because i never imagined to become
a civil servant
but after a few days i accepted
i entered the museumworld
on january first 1938

i started by organizing
a show of abstract art
the first general exhibition of this trend in europe
(alfred barr had done so before in MOMA)
i immediately visited hans arp, max bill,
otto freundlich, gabo, kandinsky
mondrian and many others
for most of them
this was the first occasion
to see their work in a museum
and all eagerly collaborated
brancusi brought his sculptures himself
in the mean time
i had the exhibition rooms redecorated

the 40 year old brick building
made a gloomy impression
the central part was inside also
covered with bricks of several colors
very depressing
so i wanted to whitewash
the whole entrance, the staircase
and the main hall upstairs
my director agreed
but was afraid to bear the responsibility
so i suggested that he should take
a week of absence and when he returned
he hardly recognized his museum
the mayor of amsterdam
was very angry with me
but the start was made
and gradually the whole interior
was redesigned

during the summer of 1938
in the middle of the civil war
the spanish bishops published a letter
about how the republican government
was mishandling the treasures
of the prado museum in madrid
the republican government
invited me to report on the matter
during the fall i visited spain and could study
how well the government had cared
for the precious paintings

by bringing them to caves on the costa brava

returning home
just after “the days of munich”
where the western powers
had abandoned chechoslovakia to hitler
i heard how nervous the dutch had been
about how to handle their art treasures
in case of war
the first to ring me was
the mayor of amsterdam
who asked me to report
on how to deal with this question
overnight i had become an expert
on hiding art
together with the town engineer
we designed a heavy concrete cave
with air conditioning under the dunes
as we had no rocks in the neighborhood

WAR

when the germans overran holland
on may 10th 1940
the treasures of the stedelijk-
and of the rijksmuseum were safe
over 200 van gogh’s,
rembrandt’s nightwatch, the jewish bride etc.
were protected by 1.50 m of concrete
and 10 meters of sand

RESISTANCE

during the second half of 1940
everybody received new identity cards
the jews got a big “J” on their cards
shortly afterwards the jewish artists
were excluded from governmental commissions
this started with the sculptors
out of solidarity all the other sculptors
refused such commissions
in order to help them subsist
a fund was created
afterwards the germans organized
a ‘kulturkammer’
and every artist who wanted to function
had to become a member—most artists refused
so we created new funds
for painters, actors, authors, architects,
musicians etc. gradually this work
grew into the center
of the artists resistance movement

in the meantime the germans started

to deport jews to germany and poland
and wanted to create a ghetto in amsterdam
to collect the jews
this ghetto should be surrounded
by a high fence of barbed wire
but the town workers who had to build
the fence struck
in february 1941 this strike
became a general strike in amsterdam
and environment
thirty workers were shot
but the germans failed to build the ghetto
notwithstanding this success
we had the feeling that we should do more
so we decided to fake identity cards
without the “J” and with the new names
for jews and other people who were in danger

our group of designers
did an excellent job and we found a printer
the artists resistance movement
distributed many thousands of these cards
and the germans were unable to discern
between the faked and the genuine cards
they only could find out
at the registration office of the town
and therefore we decided to blow up
the office

the building was well guarded
day and night by 2 policemen and 4 guards
after a long discussion
we agreed to kill nobody
on the evening of march 27th
six of us dressed in police uniform
a painter as the captain
and a sculptor as a lieutenant
marched towards the office
and took over the building
the six occupants were ordered “hands up”
got a sleeping injection and were
carried into the garden
the whole building was blown up
and a strong fire destroyed the contents
this was the first open attack
on the german occupation
next day many people in amsterdam
put flowers in their windows
the germans were furious and offered 10.000
guilders for a successful tip
about the perpetrators
this worked and on april 1st

they caught most of the people involved
twelve of them were shot on july 1st
among them were three of my best friends
i myself escaped because i was in the dunes
inspecting the hidden art treasures
my wife could warn me by phone
and i went into hiding for 2 years
under another name

DESIGNING SOCIETY

we were not only trying to thwart german measures
but also planning to create a better society
for the future
there were many groups of people
who wanted to reshape public institutions
after the war—
there were two groups which elaborated
a new organization for the artists
near the end of the occupation
these two groups came together
i was myself a member of both groups
and a kind of liaison officer between the two
we decided to create a professional society
for each kind of artists
societies for actors, for authors, for composers
for executing musicians, for painters, sculptors
etc. and to bring all these societies together
in one federation
in order to strengthen the position of the artist
towards the general public
and specially towards the government
we suggested an arts council of which two thirds
of the members were proposed by the federation
the federation was constituted
right after the war
and the arts council was nominated
by the minister of culture according our wishes
in 1948: the minister was obliged
to ask the council for advice
in every serious question regarding the arts
and also about his budget
i was chairman of the national arts council
from 1948-60

HIDING

during the two years i was hiding
i first lived in a small town
near the german border
and for the last 9 months
in a village between the two branches of the rhine
during the first year i remained in constant contact

with the new leader of the artist resistance movement
and the printer of our identity cards
both were shot on june 10 1944
they had become great friends
during the last months of the war
i became assistant food commissar of the region
this job with (faked) SS papers gave me the possibility
to move freely around the country on my bicycle

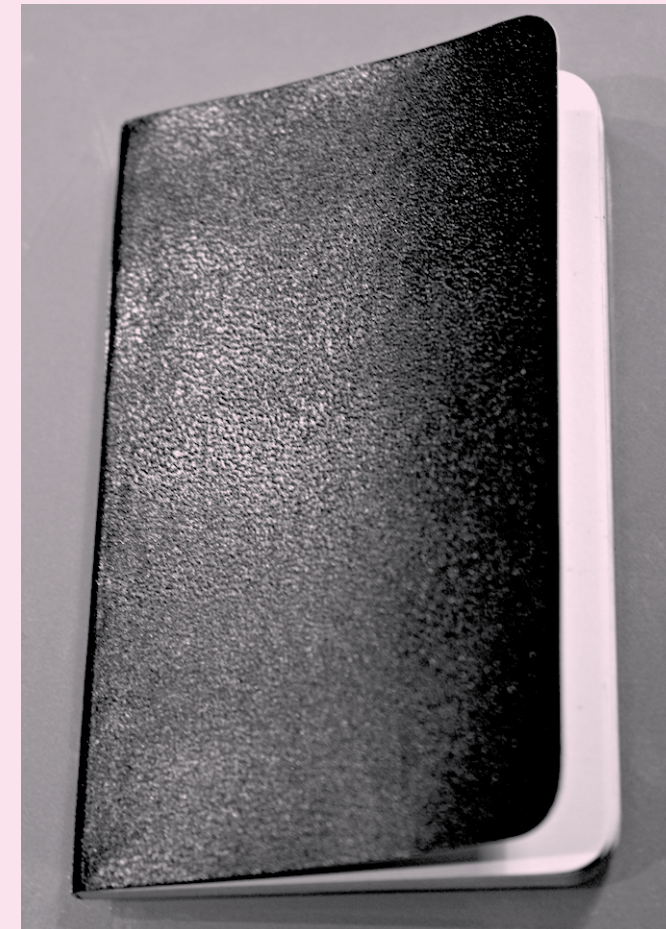
i must confess that starting a completely new life
with a new name at the age of 45
is not given to many people
for me although i was in danger for life every moment
this was quite a treat
most of the things i could do after the war
were encouraged by the experiences
during these years

IACOPO SERI UNA LEZIONE

(The text above is an adaptation of a lecture delivered in Jerusalem by Willem Sandberg and published online in Art Directors Club – www.adcglobal.org)

Iacopo Seri, who conceived and wrote this particular lesson, presenting it in collaboration with the artist Cesare Pietroiusti, describes its structure as follows:

“On December 11th, 2008, “Rhizome,” the introductory chapter to Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaux*, was discussed and analyzed in the context of a university seminar. The only variation with respect to standard academic practice was that, during this lesson, all the participants – including roughly twenty students; the professor, Cesare Pietroiusti; and the assistant, Filipa Ramos – had to drink a bottle and a half of wine each. A sip for every new concept introduced throughout the discussion. This was a work on the mechanisms of attention, on the precarious and unpredictable relationship between distraction, parallel thoughts and “versions” of reality; a rigorous experimental verification of the concept of “drunkenness as the triumphant irruption of the plant in ourselves.” I decided not to document the performance in, so to speak, an official manner. This lack of documentation, together with the fact that all the participants were drunk, means that the concepts that were expressed and the events that occurred during the lesson remain largely mysterious – even to the participants themselves – and that, over time, legends have formed surrounding these concepts and events, of which everyone continues to recount his or her own personal version, thus gradually enriching the narration. The one potentially trustworthy and feasibly veracious (but who knows, really?) account of what actually happened was produced by the one abstinent student admitted into the lesson: Yang Jianwen. I provided her with a notebook, asking that she take down the minutes of the lesson in her mother tongue: Chinese.”



4:45 开始
我担任记录员的任务
任务
Jacobo
每人喝葡萄酒
大家互相敬酒
Salute!
mauro 提议敬东西
提示喝酒
老师讲解课题

问题 (Rizoma)
喝酒一次
usb: 敬酒一次
Marta 敬酒一次
Soo: 敬酒三次
读《Rizoma》
4次后于她讨论
6次 Jacobo 发言
9次后 Phillipa 发言
5:10 讲拖淋哥

11次后 讨论中
也吃也讲也喝
12次 MARCO 扱小盒
Nico 用嘴已
没接住 可惜
坑头没有开位。
Michele: 发言
15次后 还在讨论
5:15分 catalina
来 (迟到)
Benedetta 活跃。

5:20. nico 脸红	5:20分: MARCO 拍照
Jacobo 脸红	在桌上. 红色
23次 老师讲课	29次 - 31次
Francesca 讲话	5:27: 介绍人. 帮了.
讲话	(mostra all: 27分)
26. Benedetta 讲	Marco 吃东西
话: "听我的"	给 Nico. 没接住
喝的有点多了	喝酒 31次
5:25分. 27次	michele 和女朋友
老师脸红了点	玩游戏

老师讲课	5 Jacobo 拍照
Francesca	脸红了. 大家说话
吃饼干	37次. here tutti
Daria 笑. 引大家笑	Francesca. 帮了
脸红了. 出门了	脸
大家都安静	38次.
老师讲课	5:36分: 老师说了句
5:31分 Francesca 笑说	"oh. dio")
Fabrizio 喝酒	39-40次
	37分: Francesca
	喝完一杯

Nico 念诗	51次 扔纸团
Chiara 和吕明辰 回来	Jacopo 从外地回来 Luca 讲话
17:40. Francesca 和 Fabrizio 拍照. 菜对号	Francesca 讲话多 2次
17:40 44次	53次. Jacopo per favore bere
17:45分: 喝多了 Bene... 和讲话了	老师喝得擦鼻子 17:56分: 看资料. 讨论

大家表情欢快 激烈: Francesca	Francesca 激烈 割气话
Michele Benetta nico 高座 55次	18:10分. Luca 给老师 倒酒. (老师-游 酒喝完)
6:05. 烟圈出 抽烟 57次 喝茶杯	59次. 老师喝茶
marco 扔纸团多次	marco 屋内打伞 60次 喝茶杯

<p>演讲时很紧张</p> <p>讲话激烈</p> <p>Fillipa 讲</p> <p>关于材料</p> <p>6:40 下课</p> <p>6:50 激烈讨论</p> <p>18:20: 陆续有人离开</p> <p>饭了. 坐不住了</p>	<p>Jacopo 拍桌子</p> <p>念复印件</p> <p>有醉感.</p> <p>提及大前用手势</p> <p>说话. 都很开心.</p> <p>的样子.</p> <p>18:30分. Luca 讲演</p> <p>激烈</p>
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<p>高举杯子. 祝酒</p> <p>Viva.</p> <p>Luca 念材料</p> <p>老师讲得. 很多人</p> <p>上台摸纸片.</p> <p>场面活跃</p> <p>老师走位不稳</p>	<p>Luca 乱讲话</p> <p>大家哈哈笑</p> <p>6:40分:</p> <p>醉感感觉很好</p> <p>大家开心. 高兴.</p> <p>老师跪地上看书</p> <p>Luca 的画</p> <p>6:50分 Salute. Cin Cin</p> <p>拍桌子. 老师卡壳</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

咖啡。	咖啡。响
Volutta'	哗然。
Li Bido	Casa c'entra
自由响。	Con noi
不序。	读译友。欢呼
6.5台。老酒	Francisco (刘国)
Benettieta	读译友。欢呼
	收音。老师高器
	在作也冰

新酒。读不	大着感谢
7.5台。接善法	Jacobo
Fra 拍拿子 大响	收拾残局。
Bene 再拍	相拥告别!
Luca 拍手	7:10 — 20分
大着读:	
deterritoriali	
-zzazione	

TEN LESSONS BY MILAN KNIZÁK

Here again another list. The speaker is the Czech artist Milan Knizak, who formulated a sort of compendium of ten lessons on various topics, all of them regarding the relationship between life, politics and the meaning of being an artist. The tone here is a balanced mix of manifesto and self-help manual.

Aktual Univerzity: Ten Lessons (1967-1968)

LESSON ONE: ON CONFLICT

Conflict is the most direct method of communication but (alas) sometimes (especially now when technology is so prevalent) it is impossible to solve big problems through conflicts and other ways are looked for.

But there are territories where it is possible and necessary to use conflict to clarify something which is impossible to clarify any other way. Often we must kick to be heard. Often we must caress to get a kick.

Conflict has wonderful and dangerous property: we must be on one side or the other. We must believe in something.

It is impossible to be just warm. Hot or cold.

Therefore I love conflicts.

Therefore I'm afraid of conflicts.

Conflicts begin solutions.

LESSON TWO: ON BEING DIFFERENT

While the means of external communication are rapidly getting better and better, inner communication (an ability to live together, to exist in a collective community, the capacity for interpersonal communication) remains on the same level as it always has, and sometimes it may even seem to be degenerating; it is only very seldom that we feel it to be improving. Perhaps this is because such a highly developed system of external communication, which means that we can gain information about everything going on around us without the slightest effort (merely by displaying a minimum activity), enables us to be invisible witnesses to the lives of those around us. This system, that by its very perfection demands no effort from us, tranquilizes us so completely that it never even occurs to us to be more active than we have to.

And so, pacified by the flood of information about ourselves and those close to us, we live a solitary and selfish life in the midst of the crowd. We live locked into our private needs whose exterior we rearrange and decorate so that it will blend in with the accepted conventions of society, but

the core, the essence, remains unaffected. And this results in very superficial and illusory interpersonal relationships.

The shells of our needs are painted with a single colour. And woe to anyone who dares to choose another! Those of a different colour are immediately condemned.

LESSON THREE: ON DREAMS

Dreams, which accompany us from childhood, have a substantial influence on the course of our efforts and sometimes (in some individuals) they govern our lives entirely. They are beautiful and dangerous. Not the dreams themselves, but the difference between them and reality. The abyss that continually widens in proportion to how we mature. It is perhaps impossible (and mad) to surrender to them entirely, and so there is nothing else but to do everything we can to eliminate that widening gap.

(The ideal solution would be not to allow it to develop in the first place, but this is impossible in the modern world. Some conflict will always appear. And one is not always able to judge its importance and find an appropriate solution. And so the moment one becomes aware of those terrifying gaps, one can only begin slowly working to close them).

We must separate out the flood of problems that surround us a few of the most important and make them the centre of our efforts. In such a way that, in them, our imaginings unite with reality. But it is also a question whether we are capable of setting up that scale of importance. For in some circumstances, apparently trivial problems may become quite basic. Their importance is totally dependent on the time and the place in which they occur. Therefore it is impossible to resolve a given situation in isolation, on some abstract, elevated level, but only and always inseparably from the circumstances and the time in which the problem arises. Sometimes, it becomes our bound duty to solve even the most subtle problems.

EVEN THE SMALLEST PROBLEMS

LESSON FOUR: ON REVOLUTIONS

Revolutions have proven incapable of totally changing the world. They are always merely a shifting of power. And often (almost always, in fact) the means of power remain unchanged; at the very most they are painted a different colour. But revolution is a beautiful thing. It gives hope to thousands. Therefore all those who long for

something new and different understand it. But equally enthusiastic are those who are merely discontent with their present power status and want revolution simply because it will help them gain positions that will be exactly like the ones responsible for their present subjugation. And therefore every revolution always suppresses genuinely revolutionary elements.

All societies so far have had and still have one common characteristic - ANTIHUMANITY. Societies create enormous social institutions for the protection of man and at the same time, from the very beginning, they destroy him by absolutely annulling the basic requirements of his humanity - respect for him as an individual with a unique nature and unique opinions. Society always respects only those individuals and opinions that suit the monetary notions of the ruling minority. It is, after all, nonsense to talk about majority rule. A majority can never, in present state systems and given the present condition of human mentality, govern properly. It is always only a selected portion of the victorious majority that rules and those remaining are immediately demoted to the same level as the losing minority. That separated ruling minority apparently represents the opinions of the majority but in fact those opinions originate above (in the circle of the ruling minority) and are passed down by "agitation" and then, naturally, presented as the true opinions of the majority. That is, majority rule is naked mystification.

It is unfortunate and sad that there is so little difference between the capitalist and the socialist states. The socialist petty bourgeoisie is in no way different from the capitalist (except perhaps a bit poorer). This is possibly because the socialist revolutions that resulted in the transformation of half the world are incapable of transforming people's mentality. They only fill the stomachs of the hungry. And sometimes they make even the satisfied hungry. And today these fattened (formerly hungry and revolutionary) people gently, very gently, slip into the position of those they overthrew; the revolutionary mood soon disappears and fighting spirit and high aims turn into bourgeois affluence and comfort.

It is necessary to abandon so that one might find. You can't have your cake and eat it too. You will end up hopelessly in the gray mire of the middle. One must abandon totally so that what comes can also be total.

LESSON FIVE: ON LOVE

Love comes to us through a great variety of

media. It functions as another dimension of faith. Its only disadvantage is that we dream of it before we really experience it. And so there is always a little piece of it that remains unfulfilled. The reality that comes never attains the sparkle and splendor of the dream. True, it is more total, more total because it exists, because it is an earthly presence, but precisely this asset is also its handicap. And therefore love is possible only in a state of perfect symbiosis with dreams. Love has this advantage over other human states and activities: its intensity does not depend on fulfillment. Love can exist in itself. Independent of our efforts and our behavior. Love can be fulfilling even when it is disappointed.

Where love is capable of dialogue (or polylogue), however, a new space is formed in which all of reality takes on a new dimension that is incomprehensible to anyone not involved. And from the elements determined by this new dimension, the world is constructed anew.

LESSON SIX: BUILD YOURSELF WINGS

Fly straight ahead. Walk a straight line. Visit. Leave a special sign on the door. Make a gift of words. Mark your path with books. With clothes. With food. Join two distant places. Two rocks. Two people. Bridge a river. Build a city of sand. Raise up a mound.

LESSON SEVEN: ON BELIEF

More important than an object of belief is believe itself. To believe in the power of caressing, in peace-conferences in Geneva, in Buddha or in medicine herbs it doesn't matter. The properties of the God in which we believe do not matter: what matters is the quality of the actions we perform in that belief.

LESSON EIGHT: ABOUT PLAY

Moving your hand over the surface of a table, catching flies in the air, making faces in a mirror, keeping time with your foot, etc. etc. etc. - all these are really little games that we amuse ourselves with without being aware that they are games.

Is a game merely something that does not end in the attainment of some concrete gain?

If we consider everything as a game, as play, if we ignore the usefulness (and sometimes even the difficulty, the strain) of what we happen to

be doing, then we may make even something as boring as shopping seem just as amusing as watching cats stretching themselves.

An eight-hour work-day can be broken up into a series of more or less amusing and interesting games and discoveries.

Breaking up commonplace, deadening regularity. Divide time into unexpectedly irregular stretches that are surprising if only because they are no longer or shorter than the ones before. And in this chaos, the chance appearance of regularity has a sensational effect.

One is most influenced by those things that are neither every-day not too exceptional. Exceptional things are immediately considered rarities. And every-day things are lost in the flow of the commonplace. And so things that are only a LITTLE BIT DIFFERENT, that are impossible to include in recognized categories, possess the greatest ability to influence and effect.

Sometimes it is enough for a thing to have an entirely different affect merely by virtue of how we name it.

If we give it the name of a known category, then it is only a matter of convention for us to recognize whether it corresponds to our notions about the possibilities (or representatives) of that category or not. It usually ends with our widening the boundaries of that category.

If we do not give it a name, if it acts merely in itself and through its unclassifiability, then it evokes in us many different associations that lead in all directions, because we are obstinately seeking a place for it in our notion of the world. And precisely this seeking is the most important of all, for through it we discover.

It enables us to see intimately familiar things and phenomena less intimately. It reveals other dimensions. It reveals things that are quite new. Caress a table. Break a chair. Fetch a cup from the cupboard. Look through a microscope. Write one word on the typewriter. Make a slice of toast. Pick an apple. Phone a friend. Take a drink of water. And look for a long time through an open window into the night.

LESSON NINE:

Are you tired? Work!

Are you sleepy? Wake!

Are you hungry? Don't eat!

Do you want to talk? Keep silent!

Are you afraid of death? Commit suicide!

LESSON TEN: ON ART

Art is a perennial outsider. It can never quite be fitted into life. In spite of all the reforms and the efforts of this century to make it fit into life, it still stands out. In art there is no visible, rational evolution, at least not from the viewpoint of the temporal and spatial criteria known to us. There is a visible difference only in the choice of media and in temporal and spatial colouring. This is perhaps because the area of man's existence into which art penetrates and from which it derives is for the time being (judged by the criteria of our level of awareness and the temporal sector we are capable of comprehending) a kind of unchanging quality that does not undergo development. At least not development as we understand it. It is more probably a matter of changes within the circle. Shifts of meaning. An unknown mathematical order that grows inside itself.

For the development of art is directly proportional to the development of the human senses. And in that brief space of human history that we know and understand, the senses have undergone no dramatic changes.

For these reasons it is impossible to speculate about the development of art as such, but only about the development of human existence with all the aspects which it embraces and of which art is creative part.

In art as such, it is no longer possible to discover anything. Everything has already been discovered because everything is permitted. And so a gradual fulfilling of the original social function of art is coming about. But on a different qualitative level. Art, understood as a collection of specialized professions, is ceasing to function.

Art, as a visible, tangible, reality perceivable by the senses is ceasing to exist.

The culmination of art is in its extinction. Art as a specific, separated area is ceasing to exist. There remains only one area, the area of human existence. (Later, perhaps, just existence).

Art is becoming one of the indispensable factors influencing the organization of everyday life. It is present everywhere and nowhere. It is becoming a fluid. It stands outside all professions. It cannot be isolated, it cannot be worshipped, it cannot be converted into money. None of this is possible. It is irreversibly in the solution of burgeoning human existence.

(The above text is an excerpt from *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art: A Sourcebook of Artists' Writings*, University of California Press, 1996)

THE END



*Francesco Cuomo
Artist
Siena, Italy**

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