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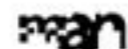
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This is a special english issue of NERO, for the first time distributed internationally. This issue has been conceived as a 'best of' the top rated stories narrated by NERO up to now.

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W W W . N E R O M A G A Z I N E . I T

IO CHE INTERVISTO JONATHAN MONK VIA E-MAIL TRA IL 6 MARZO E IL 9 APRILE 2005 *AND I WILL HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE TITLE BEFORE 80 DAYS*

from NERO n.05 may/june 2005

by Luca Lo Pinto

From: lualopinto@neromagazine.it
Subject: ready to start?
Date: 04 March 2005 17:18:57 CET
To: Jonathan Monk

Hi Jonathan,
Are you ready to start our conversation?
Let me know when I can send you the first question.

Best,
Luca

From: Jonathan Monk
Subject: Re: ready to start?
Date: 06 March 2005 21:12:28 CET
To: lualopinto@neromagazine.it

Dear Luca,
I am ready to start now!

Until then,
JM

Luca: OK. Let's start with my first question:
we all know about your great passion for conceptual art, which is also a leitmotiv of your work. I'd be interested to know how it started. Where does this great attraction come from? I mean in an emotional, not a critical way. Is it related to your studies or was it born independently from them?

Jonathan: Dear Luca,
we can add and subtract at a later date...I am just writing...not sure it makes any sense...
Until the next question,
JM

I went to art school in Glasgow (1987-91) and studied environmental art, like most of the artists you might have heard of from Glasgow. At the time my thoughts were more focused on the second generation of American conceptual artists...Richard Prince, Jeff Koons, and particularly Sherrie Levine. At that time my work didn't make direct references, but played more with a system of communication. It was very difficult for us to actually see work; most of what I saw came from the pages of art magazines and catalogues. It wasn't until much later did I realise that my work was subconsciously being influenced by the first generation of conceptual artists, who developed their strategies before I was born. It wasn't always what I studied, but who I studied with that became an influential factor... In fact, I am not sure I studied anything. I moved to LA in 1996 for a couple of years and was then given further opportunity to explore a different kind of artistic landscape. Strange, LA is not really a relaxed city, but the art I encountered was much more human.

Luca: I quite agree when you say that it's very important who you study with instead of what you study. Last week I went to a conference by Vito Acconci and I was thinking about how much better the quality of the art system could be if people like Acconci taught in the schools... not only because he is a good artist, but for his incredible way of thinking about and reflecting upon everything. Have you ever met him? It's crazy... he is 65 and listens to Tricky, new punk rock groups...it's not by chance that he's a good friend of Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore (Moore did a nice interview about "From 0 to 9" in the catalogue of Acconci's exhibition in Barcelona).
An interesting thought by Acconci was about time. He said that it's impossible for him to concentrate on one specific thing only. For this reason, even though he loves to watch movies, he doesn't go to cinemas because he can't stay for 2 hours to see the same thing. His dream is to have movies projected onto walls in the streets, so he will be able to see more films at the same time!
I'll take inspiration from Acconci for the next question... In an interview Acconci stated: "What a lot of us thought at the beginning was that we were going to completely change the art context, (that) we were going to make the art context impossible to exist. A lot of us, at that time, thought that the work we were doing – because it didn't involve something that was saleable, and since an art gallery and an art system is dependent on sales – was going to change the art system. We didn't do that, we did exactly the opposite: we made the art system more powerful than it ever was before."
How to relate to the market was one of the most discussed and problematic questions among conceptual artists in those years. Instead, you have an intense relationship with the market... In fact, you work with seven galleries. At the last Frieze Art Fair you were one of the artists who had the greatest number of works exhibited... Thirty years after conceptual art, how do you feel about this topic (of course with a different consciousness)?

Jonathan: Dear Luca,
the system will never be broken, that is the problem. Artists from the '60s may have believed they were working outside of the art world and maybe they were, but they only created a system far better and stronger than the original. They made it possible for ideas to change hands, not for large amounts of money, but that wasn't or isn't the point. There was no object, only some documentation and a signed piece of paper. The concept was conceptualised, it was possible to release a gas in the desert and offer the idea for sale. My situation is completely different and even if my work was seen at seven different stands at Frieze in London, it doesn't mean it was sold. I have always tried to play in and with the market a little and maybe it is far better to be more exclusive and/or elusive. Keep the collectors hungry and make them wait to spend their money. I made paintings of advertisements for holidays and sold them for the price of the holiday, some are still available for one hundred and fifty nine pounds. It is also possible to buy a meeting with me in the future at a street corner in Mexico City. I think it is easier to undermine the art world from within and slowly bring it to its knees. Sometimes I have to laugh at what I do, but as long as I consider it important enough to continue, I hide my smile and believe in what I do...up to a point.

I wish Mr Acconci had been my teacher!
Until then,
JM

Luca: So we could define your work as "a sort of playing around with the power structure, putting yourself in the role of the power broker" (Robert Barry)?

Jonathan: Dear Luca,
I will consider your question over the weekend. I leave for France for a couple of days.
I am making a small show in Nantes at the art school.
Will discuss my power system with my financial adviser.
Until then

Luca: OK. Bon voyage!
Take care

Jonathan: Dear Luca,
Back from my travels...but only just.
I am not sure I'm a power broker, but I do play with different structures, whether they are power structures is up for debate. The only real position of power the artist has in today's society is freedom, even if the market, the critics, curators and dealers would sometimes see it differently. Freedom is a powerful force and it is important for it to be used wisely and with understanding. To find a place to be free to think about what we are going to do. Marcuse via Barry, which I think has become easier in recent years or at least more expectable. I think if we can banish the idea of (creating) a product we have won, but what will we have? Nothing? And then we are back where we started.
P.S. I am not sure I am making any sense, but this is normal...

Luca: FREEDOM!
I think you have freedom when you have power. If your work didn't create the results it does (from an artistic and/or economic point of view), you wouldn't have the freedom that you are given when invited to think of a work or exhibition. I believe it's difficult to consider the idea of creation as not tied to the production of a product with a specific value. Paradoxically, you are freer inside the system than outside. Everything depends on how you use your freedom and your power. I'll give you an example in the artistic world: you as artist, Jan Mot as gallerist, Jens Hoffman as curator. Everyone works with intelligence and freedom (more/less) at a high level in the system. But they have a value and are free to act because they produce something for the system in which they live. They don't produce what the system wants, but something that is OK for the system. The system wants you to produce something and it's not important if it's intelligent or not if you are able to get the same results. I don't want to make a political speech, but I think it's important to reflect a lot on the field we're working in...

Luca
(I am not sure I am making any sense, but this is normal?...)

Jonathan: Dear Luca,
I agree, up to a point. I am not sure that the position I am in has made things easier for me. I hope that what I produce is not always made ready for the market, even if that is where it ends up. I am thinking more in terms of the opportunity to be able to think freely and I did that before I was stuck in an economic structure that helped me survive. I do though, except that my parents did encourage my direction, but I am pretty sure they didn't think much would come from it. My mother still asks me if I have any work. I am working class. When asked to make a work for an exhibition my first question is never...is there a production budget? Ideas are free and it is possible to make them available very cheaply. I do believe that the system I am involved in is important to the way I work and intellectually it supports what I do. I still think that the product (an actual object) is not important. Most of the work I appreciate I have never actually seen. Maybe seeing is believing, but you can't keep your eyes open all the time.
Until then,
JM

P.S. You probably see my situation differently. I never go to art fairs and I avoid politics.
More soon...good night.

Luca: I'm imagining this interview as a DJ set. We put on a track mixed with another one, remove the first and leave the second one playing. Jeff Mills, the "father" of techno music, always said that he plays a single track for just for a few seconds to take the best part and then change. So let's change track. I'd like to speak with you about music.
I know you love The Smiths...is it true? Reading your biography, I was interested in the exhibition: "My Record Collection", Glasgow, 1994. Can you tell me something about it?

Jonathan: Music...
"My Record Collection" was a very small exhibition in my bedroom. I made a small invitation card that invited people to sit on my bed and play any record from my collection they wished to hear. It was like a party, but it clashed with a larger exhibition opening, so not many people took the opportunity to listen to me through my music. I do not have a large collection of records and tend to listen to one over and over and over, until I can't hear it any more.
Stop me if you think you've heard this one before...until the record spins or the page turns.
JM

Luca: I'm curious to know more about your record collection. Do you have some records to recommend to me? Maybe it could be the soundtrack to our conversation...
I just received the invitation for Joao Onofre's exhibition in Rome.
Have you ever seen his video "Catriona Shaw sings "Baldessari sings Lewitt" re-edit, "Like a Virgin" extended version"? A passable vocalist interprets Madonna's famous song "Like a Virgin," but with altered lyrics: excerpts from Sol LeWitt's "Sentences on Conceptual Art" (1969)--which John Baldessari had already sung in 1978. I have a multiple by Baldessari on CD. Do you also have it in your collection?
I'd like an exhibition with a specific song for each work. Sometimes I go to exhibitions with an iPod to listen to music and not the people's comments. In some cases, I found a good relationship between the work I was looking at and the song I was listening to...

Jonathan: Dear Luca,
sorry for the silence. My record collection is really nothing special. The idea of my exhibition was only to show how normal I might sound. I do have some art music, Wiener, Barry, Kawara, but my children have somehow stolen the stereo. I did once re-edit "Baldessari Sings LeWitt" (with Pierre Bismuth) by adding a Lithuanian, Soviet style voiceover with the translations. You could hear John struggle in the background. I have also made some experimental jazz music. My mother cleaning my father's piano is still available on seven inch. To be honest, I listen to anything, gone are the times when I was ashamed to listen to Duran Duran... In LA I used to listen to the music (very very loudly) that was available on headphones in Tower Records on Sunset Blvd. It became a perfect soundtrack for the people entering and leaving the store.
Until the music stops,
JM

Luca: Don't worry...the silence is part of this interview. We have to think of a title for our conversation. Maybe "Io che intervisto Jonathan Monk via E-Mail tra il 6 marzo e il...2005", like an homage to Boetti ("Io che prendo il sole a Torino il 19 gennaio 1969"). Of course you'll have a good one. Your works always have great titles! Do you give importance to your titles or do you just play with them? Gonzales-Torres said that he always called his works "Untitled" to not influence the public in any way...
The ones I prefer: "...and do you think Phileas Fogg (David Niven) really went around the world in eighty days..."; "...and in Rumble Fish, does Rusty-James (Matt Dillon) really ride his brother's motorbike..."

Jonathan: We should use your title and "I will have an alternative title before 80 days"

JM

Luca: Collaborations.

You like working with other artists, not only historical ones like Barry or Weiner, but also with younger ones like David Shrigley, Pierre Bismuth, Douglas Gordon, Dave Allen, in contrast to the individualism of conceptual art... Working in collaboration with different artists seems to be a phenomenon that emerged mainly in the '90s. What is your experience?

Ha-ppy East-er

Jonathan: Collaboration halves the work, but doubles the experience. It is always interesting to develop ideas with artists who share a similar concept. I am always pleased to co-sign an artwork, this only adds to the misunderstanding of an artist's output. Confusion is something I am very happy to bring into the art world.

Another possible title > "The Moment Before You Realise You Are Not Lost".

Until then,

JM

From: lucalopinto@neromagazine.it

Subject: Re: if Pierre Bismuth won an Oscar, could Jonathan Monk become Berlin's mayor?

Date: 05 April 2005 14:36:40 CET

To: Jonathan Monk

I think confusion could be helpful to better understand the things around us. We live in a totally hybrid context where it's the relative and not the absolute that counts. If things are too clear and limited one loses one's interest in research. Referring to art and to your work in particular, an interesting thing is that there's no specific criterion with which to analyse it (as is the case with many other artists). Maybe it's easier to explain the mechanism. The very way you work is also ambivalent. If, on the one hand, every work seems meticulously thought out, on the other, it seems that the same work can take a complete different direction from where it was at the beginning, as happened in the project on Boetti: the fact that at the end the work was not realized exactly according to the original idea doesn't limit the work itself, but forms a part of it.

From: Jonathan Monk

Subject: delayed

Date: 09 April 2005 13:55:14 CET

To: lucalopinto@neromagazine.it

Maybe this is a good place to finish.

Although I would prefer the impossibility of me lifting the world cup for England to becoming Berlin's next mayor...both would and could be in Berlin.

L: "This is the end
Beautiful friend
This is the end
My only friend, the end"

Thank you very much to have taken the time for this conversation/interview. I really appreciate it.

J: Some of the crowd are on the pitch
they think it's all over
it is now

L:



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LIGHTNING BOLT

CONSCIOUSNESS AND PASSION

by Francesco de Figueredo
illustration by Nicola Pecoraro
from NERO n.02 november/december 2004

Lightning Bolt, interview...

Something that when thinking of it (and conducting it) stimulates a particular delight: because it undermines, as with all interviews, the vertical rapport inevitably established between artist and consumer / because from this fracture, sometimes something profound and unexpected emerges / because the consumer in question (me) adores Lightning Bolt / because if listening to gossip (dear old cultural hallucinations), mr. Brian Chippendale and mr. Brian Gibson prefer to avoid personal expression in the form of "they ask, I respond" / because if you've seen them live, I know you want to know more...

Brian Chippendale (drums) and Brian Gibson (bass) have been friends since high school and they share a musical universe called Lightning Bolt, an undefinable territory, difficult to sum up, a place made up of schizophrenic drives and an improbable will for relative control. In short, a passionate expression of sentiment and oppression. Perhaps noise/free-core best describes their sound, consisting of sharp riffs and wild rhythmic sections. What hits you in the stomach is the lucid desire to subjugate an aggressive and incoherent sound; that background noise that always risks overflowing; the decision to close ranks in a place of little precision. Who has seen them live is struck by that bass capable of pulling out riffs ala slayer, of that wall of excessive amplification, of that man dressed up in coloured rags who moves like a caged devil and generates striking, paradoxical, seductive rhythmic sections. Lightning Bolt began in 1995 in Providence, a prolific small town in Rhode Island, USA, with three members in the band (vocals were sung by Hisham Barocha, now the vocalist of Black Dice), a formation that they would soon abandon. The path of Chippendale and Gibson was surely marked by their belonging to the creative space Fort Thunder, a squat which acted as spokesman during the 1990s of a change in the interpretation of creative space, of the entire city, of art, and of everything that means provocation. The interview was conducted on occasion of their Italian dates at the Zufest, a travelling festival in October that presented realities of undoubted merit and of enormous technical and creative skill (Zu, Mats Gustafsson, Lightning Bolt, Black Forest Sea). Brian Chippendale, despite the famous gossip that he's unwilling to be interviewed, allowed a few questions, demonstrating lucidness, passion and consciousness.

Francesco: The "art world" and more or less institutional galleries seem to be rapidly showing interest in the performative musical approach and to noise in general. What do you think of this? Do you believe it's the right context for this type of expression?

Brian: ... I don't know... I believe that the art world you're referring to tends to eliminate the rawness of creative expression and to mix everything that it receives into a large stew. In this way it takes strength from the world outside, as with raw musical expression, which generally doesn't have that "fashion" sense that the galleries do.

You know, I believe that everyone tends to bring water to their own well. The music world has more media-related power, and the art world tries to appropriate its audience.

The overlap between artist and musician is OK, but it's up to the spectator to understand what's real and what's not. I like it when music, art and everything else blend together. I hope, however, that artists have the judgement to make something that's authentic. But I believe that the world of a certain kind of gallery poisoned itself. I'm not a fanatic of that type of conception, I think it's sterile... I believe that everyone should stay away from it.

Francesco: Would you like to talk about fort thunder and what this experience meant for you both?

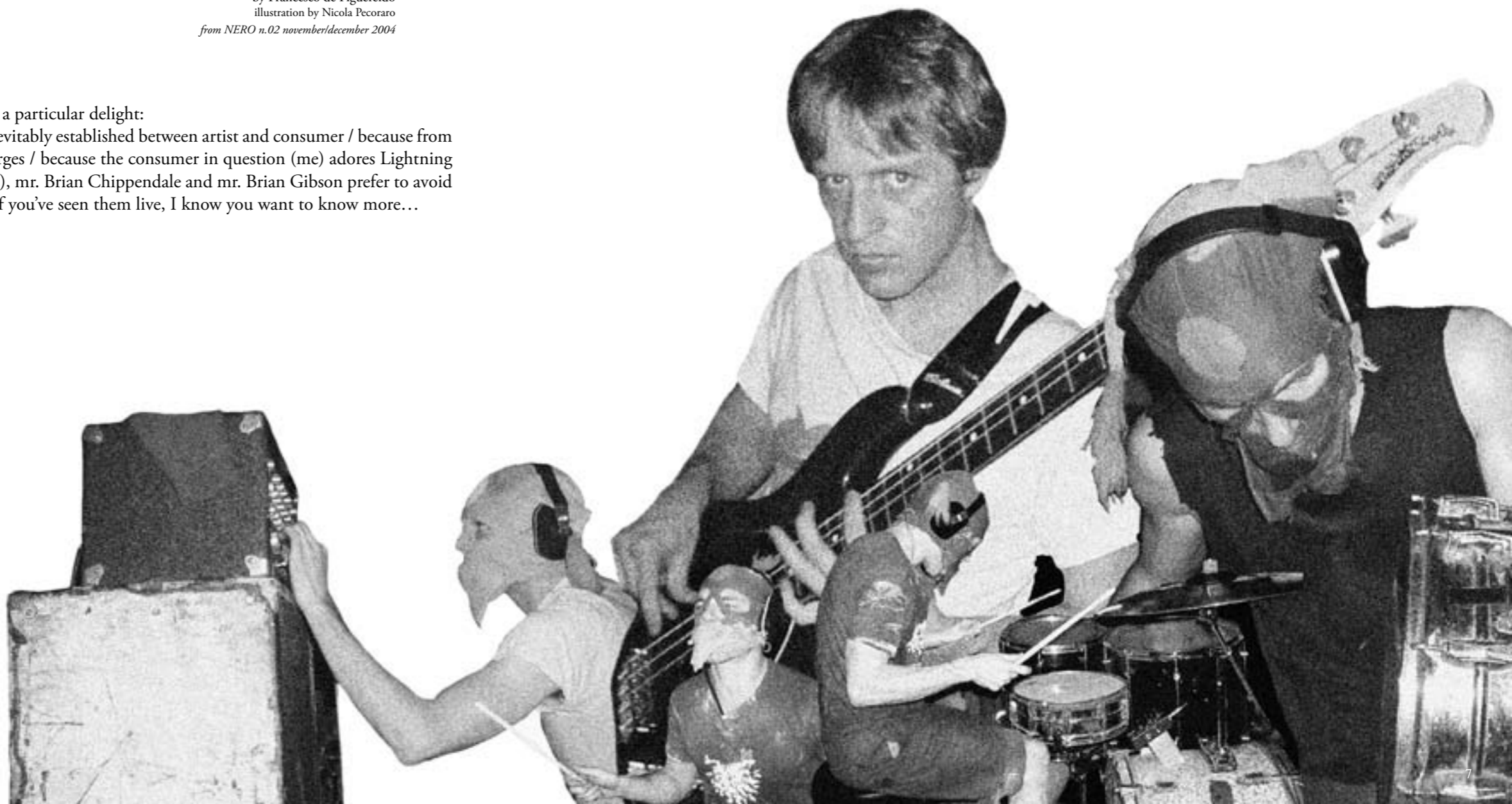
Brian: Fort Thunder was a squat where we lived for six years, then three years ago it was razed to the ground. It was a situation full of vitality, the perfect collision between art and music. The amazing thing was being constantly

surrounded by creativity, it was like living in a work of art. To live inside it constantly and not just for one or two hours a day, to always interact with new people who were living there for maybe only a few months, was meaningful and natural at the same time. Music always and everywhere, also while you were cooking or doing something else, it was something amazing. What strikes me the most is that this reality no longer exists, and I miss it terribly. On the surface, it may seem simple to recreate Fort Thunder but it's frustrating and difficult; we're trying to re-plan a similar space, but by now everything tends to define and close in on itself.

Francesco: Providence, your city of origin, proliferates groups of a certain sector. Do you think that the surrounding environment is an influence, or is there a scene that unites and allows for the continual evolution of a specific sector?

Brian: In Providence there's a large art school, which is where I studied. A lot of creative people came together there. But what particularly distinguishes my city is that it's not elegant at all. Providence is a very dirty and dilapidated city. In fact, the kids didn't seem to want to stay in Providence after having finished studying, but when we started Fort Thunder the people began to live Providence in a different way, a sort of tradition began. In a certain sense there was already a kind of rock scene, but its interaction with the art students generated something electric. It was a kind of "Fort Town", cheap, dirty, dilapidated, and a really raw independent music scene began to emerge.

The thing began to grow, people began to decide to stay there, a lot of events took off. As if a small bee began to fly and all the others simply followed it.





Francesco: What's amazing when listening to your records is your ability to control the tension and aggression, to curb the schizophrenic drives of your sound...

Brian: You're probably right, I believe that this mainly comes from the fact that we play constantly, every day. By being able to play in the place where I live, we have a chance to train and this brings us to a high level of sound control. I think that what you're talking about comes from the equation between a discrete technical ability, the continuity of playing, the desire to create a compact block of sound, and our strong personal harmony. Brian and I are integrated; the bass and drums are two instruments that tend to go together naturally. In this way a schematic table, a uniform clean sound, is formed.

Francesco: Do you think that it also comes from an elevated technical ability? What were your experiences in studying music?

Brian: For me, to play drums means to enter a state of excitement, to feel full of strength, energy. I didn't study music, I just played and played. I don't think Brian studied either, maybe a few lessons in the beginning. You know, we come from a school for visual arts, our music is more a reflection of that. We're probably also musically ignorant, unrefined.

Francesco: What necessitated the decision for just the two of you to play together?

Brian: When we began to play we had a singer, then after a year and a half we decided that the best thing was to give room only to the instruments. The more people who belong to a band, the more you have to compromise and we wanted a straight flush, without worrying about having to leave room for anyone. It's more than ten years now that things are like this, since we were in school. A lot of people would like to play with us but I can't even imagine it. We have a musical complicity that's too strong.

Francesco: Do you intervene a lot during production or do you have a lo-fi approach?

Brian: I think that one probably can't talk about a lo-fi production. In the beginning, the first recordings were made on tape with an 8-track mixer and a Walkman that we always kept in the room. Instead, over time, the sound continuously became more dense and packed, which necessitated recording with more microphones and a more complex system of production. You know, the fact is we try to reproduce the violence of our live sets and internal energy; the result, then, is that we need to record with a system that allows us to reproduce that faithfully. So we slowly moved towards a hi-fi production, though obviously not in the full meaning of the word. Let's say that it was a continual evolutionary growth that made us look more attentively at what was being produced. But we'll see how it'll be in the future, we're about to begin recording new material, something that I'd definitely like to do at home...

Francesco: Ok, thanks a lot, i'd just like to ask you one last thing: why have you often avoided interviews? Do you think words can misconstrue your expression or diminish it in some way?

Brian: It's not that we don't like being interviewed... we simply don't seek it out. We're always surrounded by people with whom we communicate; it's not a problem for us. I don't know why people say that we don't like being interviewed. This probably happens because I receive a lot of emails and, not having a computer at home, I don't always have a way to check my inbox and every time I open it I tell myself "OK...I'll do the next one". And so the gossip grows and spreads...well...anyway...always better than a voice like "Lightning Bolt always want to be interviewed"...



Ryan Johnson solo show
Sam Lewitt solo show

22 May 07 - 14 July 07

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Masquerade

“I will look away, it will now be my only negation” (Bacon)

by Francesco Ventrella
from NERO n.04 march/april 2005

To cover one's face is a reflex gesture connected to shame: the declaration of a weakness. Yukio Mishima must feel like this when, in his autobiographical novel, he describes the inexpressible adoration for a pair of trousers, abdicating his confessions to a mask. Thanks to the reticence of the storyteller, these confessions make the reader think about what is not actually written, imprinting his representations on the mask.

This reflex gesture has a long history in the visual arts, in which it is elaborated through every kind of symbolism and pataphysics. In 1896 Alfred Jarry debuted his Ubu Roi with an elephant mask over his head and a quip unequivocally addressed to the public: “Merdre!” The mask shows itself in its capacity of elaborating a breakdown through strategies of communication, and becomes the cut with the rest of the faces that are around it.

In Latin persona/ae means mask. To cover the face is like stopping one's identity, which is again questioned only in front of another. The Surrealist artist Claude Cahun (a woman in a decisively “phallogocentric” movement) masked both her art and her life. The mask as a sign of weakness can become, therefore, an aggression: to cover the face contributes to the autonomous re-choosing of one's identity, each time “positioning itself” in different cultural contexts. This, I imagine, is difficult to comprehend in a culture in which the burkha is seen only as a scandal!

The mask, then, interrupts the “cosmetic catalogue” of cultural standardisation, but it can also be a blind screen: to look away and start over. It means arbitrarily saying no, like an adolescent might, to the world to which the disguises of Peter Gabriel's Genesis and today's indie rock both belong.

On a flyer distributed before one of their concerts in 1983 in Boston, The Proletariat (they defined themselves as a non-hardcore band) printed the words of their song *Pride* and an image in which a black man held an American flag which he had used to cover his face as if it was a hood of the Ku-Klux-Klan. In this example, to cover one's face is an imposed gesture that oppresses: the mask can also choke. Like the twelve year old boy chokes in sour innocence in the novel by J. T. Leroy, the title of which is the same as the name of Leroy's mother: Sarah. Is it not perhaps J.T. Leroy himself who today chokes from a mask that he constructed around himself?

But the mask is also an instrument with which to construct a new cultural/political identity through a shift in the contested reality: the Guerrilla Girls wear gorilla masks to disassociate themselves from the roles enforced on women; the Zapatistas recognise each other by their black ski-masks. To cover one's face as a sign of refusal against enforced or negated identity. But to cover one's face doesn't mean to negate oneself before the other, on the contrary! It could push the other to up the bid, to speculate upon our identity, to recognise us: the best metaphor of a larval civil responsibility towards the weak who are incapable of publicly confessing their weaknesses and have decided to emphatically declare their difference.

One can not explain the nature of difference, but one can permit the other to understand it: it makes sense to cover one's face only in front of someone who notices the gesture and, by their presence, makes our dissent a public act.

“Let us suppose that I have wept, on account of some incident of which the other has not even become aware (to weep is part of the normal activity of the amorous body), and that, *so this cannot be seen*, I put on dark glasses to mask my swollen eyes (a fine example of denial: to darken the sight in order not to be seen). The intention of this gesture is a calculated one: I want to keep the moral advantage of stoicism; of “dignity” (I take myself from Clotilde de Vaux), and at the same time, contradictorily, I want to provoke the tender question (“But what's the matter with you?”); I want to be both pathetic and admirable, I want to be at the same time a child and an adult. Thereby I gamble, I take a risk: for it is always possible that the other will simply ask no question whatever about these unaccustomed glasses; that the other will see, in fact, no sign.” (from Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*)



Morrissey,
leader of Smiths

The collective of media-artists, Guerrilla Girls, try in every way to cheat the cards, to crack media communication through semiotic aggression: to make the tongue falter as it reads Guerrilla Girls while the eye sees a Gorilla. The Guerrilla Girls appeared on the New York art scene in the 1980s wearing gorilla masks and distributing flyers with the image of Ingres' *Odalisque*, her face hidden by a gorilla mask. The writing: “Do women have to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?” The feminist movement often used irony to show, with obvious clarity, how much white Western culture elaborated a rigid structure of social roles for the two sexes. With the same clarity the 13 Guerrilla Girls choose to wear masks and conceal their social identity, assuming invented names (borrowed from icons of female emancipation, such as Coco Chanel, Gertrude Stein, Fanny Brice...), working on the involvement of other colleagues, and making the mask a sign of dissent. The masks are downloadable in pdf from the website www.guerrillagirls.com.



*Are you looking for an answer or a scapegoat?
A reason or excuse
To deal with your shortcomings – your failures...
Your attitude is rare indeed! But hardly rare enough
Open hatred is rare indeed! Hardly rare enough
Pride
Society makes easy targets! Color, creed, sex
In white America
(The Proletariat, *Pride*, 1983. Text by Richard Brown)*



Masks as nicknames. The Animal Collective are: Avey Tare, The Deaken, The Geologist and Panda Bear. Avey Tare comes from Dave> Davey>Avey; from “to tear”, the name then became Tare, spelled differently so that people wouldn't confuse it with “tear”. Bresson was called a “geologist” by a journalist although he's a marine biologist, and he thus became The Geologist; while Deakin comes from Deacon (which is how Joshmin signed his mail at college); and finally Noah loves to draw panda bears before concerts and during rehearsals: Panda Bear.



A search on Google for “Peter Gabriel” reveals the true identity of the woman in red who wore the fox mask on the cover of *Foxtrot*, designed by Paul Whitehead in 1972!!



*Detrás de nuestra mascara negra
Detrás de nuestra voz armada
Detrás de nuestro nombre
impronunciable
Detrás de nosotros, a los que ve,
Detrás de nosotros, somos usted*

*Behind our black mask,
Behind our armed voice,
Behind our unpronounceable name,
Behind us, to those who you see
Behind us, we are you
(Text written by the Comité Indígena
Clandestino Revolucionario)*



KAMEN NO KORUHAKU

“«Filthiness» was a traditional game in our school, very common among the first and second year children, and, as happens with every type of unhealthy caprice when you adopt it as a steady pastime, it resembled more morbid affection than real fun. We played that game in the light of day, even in public. A boy – let's call him A – found himself in range while momentarily having lost his presence of mind. Wise to this, another boy – let's call him B – rushed towards him in an attempt to grab him in a given place. If the seizing was successful, B triumphantly withdrew to a certain distance to yell: «Oh, how big it is! Oh, how big A's is!»“ Anything could have been the latent stimulus for the game. It seemed that the only aim was the view of the ridiculous which covered the victim while he let his books fall to the ground, or other objects that he held in that moment, as both hands were needed to protect the part exposed to the attack.” (from Yukio Mishima, *Confessions of a Mask*)



Claude Cahun

AIR MADE VISIBLE

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN RICCARDO PREVIDI AND TOMAS SARACENO

from NERO n.03 january/february 2005

Riccardo Previdi (1974) and Tomas Saraceno (1974). Two young artists, Riccardo from Milan, Tomas from Argentina. Riccardo lives in Berlin, Tomas in Rotterdam, although he's currently in Miami. Both studied architecture. The idea of the interview came about after Tomas's 2004 exhibition at the gallery Pinksummer in Genoa (where he presented an enormous installation, a 6 meter high transparent PVC membrane in which the public could enter and remain suspended in air) and Riccardo's desire to ask Tomas a couple of questions since they both work on themes that are similar, even if not directly.

"There are risks in every research. (...) What pushes me to conduct research is: until what point does it transform? How a hexagon becomes a rectangle or a snowflake." Bruno Munari

Riccardo: I wanted to ask you a few questions after having seen your exhibition at Pinksummer in Genoa and having read the conversation (published in Arch'it) that took place between Pinksummer, Luca Cerizza and yourself. It was inevitable to think that many of the things that emerged were also very interesting to me.

ARCHITECTURE AND ART:

Riccardo: The roles that architecture and art play (or should play) in society. The relationships between these two disciplines: those that exist (and those that existed in the past), those that should exist and those that will probably never exist. The incomprehension that often occurs between architects and artists, or the incomprehension manifested by criticism.

Like me, you trained both as an architect and as an artist. Have these two paths created a conflict in you or, since they're complementary fields, did they help you to better understand how to proceed?

Tomas: A role...changeable and intermittent. Bucky (Buckminster Fuller, ndr) said: "Think global act local" ...having had the possibility to study art and architecture definitely helped me to proceed... and I would like to study a lot of other things still...

Perhaps we should use the word "discipline". If we refer to the theory of parallel universes we would realise that there is always a general context with a potential for each object, for each discipline...

One often hears architecture being talked about, by now the mass media also address the topic... also in very particular contexts: at NASA they're studying the possibility of an architecture for Space. How the problem is being tackled is really beautiful.

Architecture doesn't necessarily define people; it defines the structure and organisation. We speak about the architecture of a mission, of a system, software, or the architecture of a habitat.

So it seems to me that architecture is understood more as a kind of coherent logical system that allows for the creation of environments and for the running of secure, productive and, one hopes, enjoyable activities. Therefore, "architecture" is to organise logic.

I believe this is also valid when an architect designs a building. Actually, a building is a very complex organism. It's part of a community that, in turn, is inserted into an infrastructure of communication paths used by people. Then there's a structure that sustains it, and a structure that organises its functions, there are materials and safety requirements to respect.

I believe that architecture is a profession that involves everyone; we are all called to the cause. Therefore, the process is very important...but then I realise that this way of thinking also bores me... The truth is that sometimes it's very difficult for me to explain the things I do... I just have a lot of fun doing them and every so often it's exactly this that an architect doesn't

understand...perhaps it's more introspective work...I like it and that's that!!! I love art because...I don't know...the idea of constantly looking for an answer is what makes me keep going!!!

In art, the possibility of enlarging the process of perception activates a critical attitude that pushes you to reconsider, reinterpret and decipher your position in relation to reality and the world.

Riccardo: Which of these two disciplines (art/architecture) do you think has more instruments to modify "reality"?

And do you believe that it's important to modify reality? Is it a problem that you put upon yourself when you think of a work?

Tomas: Yes and no; sometimes to change reality, sometimes to try to interpret it, which is actually quite similar in the end...

Tomas Saraceno tomas_saraceno@yahoo.com wrote:

Hi dear Marengo, an Italian artist called Riccardo Previdi asked me if I could respond to some questions which will be published in an Italian magazine called Nero... I thought that you could have helped us to respond to this question...

The idea appeals to me... if you feel like it...write what you want...a hug

Tomas

Eduardo Marengo answers:

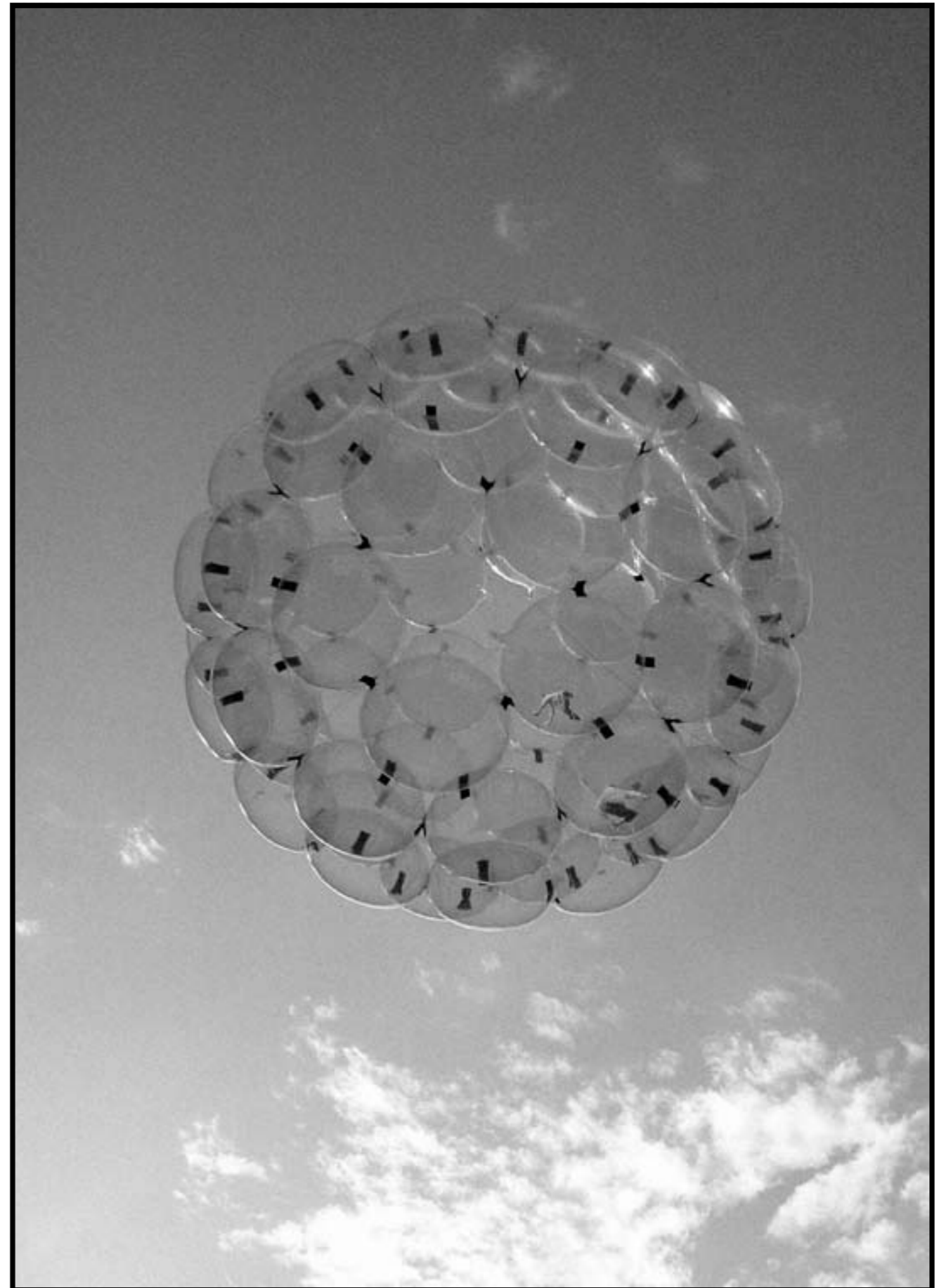
I had to hold back...it took me a while to understand your question...

I have no doubt that in art one always finds the space to express the most human aspects, like freedom, and that one can leave the materials out of consideration: with a sound or a movement of the body you can do a lot of things. While I can imagine a man without architecture, it's impossible for me to imagine a man without art. I don't know a lot about architecture but, to me, art seems to be the only path to take in order to change something else on earth, something more important. Otherwise, there remains the architecture of resignation. This is what frightens me. Today, a lot of art, like architecture, seems to devote itself to preserving reality rather than changing it. How do you say it: "to change everything in order to change nothing". I know...I'm a little pessimistic.

Eduardo Marengo

SCHOOL:

Riccardo: I'm very interested in the role of education in society. I believe that a community's state of evolution is also measured by the quality of its schools, by the resources that are provided for research. A lot of young interesting artists have graduated from the Städelschule in Frankfurt, where you also studied. Despite their very young age some of them have already taken part in important international exhibitions. Do you believe that art can be taught? What





importance have the schools where you studied had on your formation? How have they affected what you're doing now?

Tomas: OK, art or other disciplines...it would be necessary to look case by case, by every school and country...I myself was invited to conduct lessons at the university, in Argentina. I believe that one can teach an attitude towards something. For example, for me there were Thomas Bayrle and Peter Cook in Frankfurt...in Argentina Martin Olavarrieta, Pio Torrojas, Claudi Vekstein, and Ciro Najle.

To help expand your time for personal interpretation and perception...to try to help find oneself...for example, at the Städel, when no one could think of anything to say one tried to find or invite someone suitable to criticise the work of an artist.

In Argentina, a colleague, Claudio Do Campo, once told me that perhaps the best way to judge the work was to look at the time that one dedicates to it, at the passion that one invests, at the enthusiasm, as if there were no other way than to learn from oneself...and then, what comes out will be something once again tied to your conviction, to your enthusiasm... We have a lot of fun...

THE PROJECT:

Riccardo: In the golden age of Italian design, projects often had strong political connotations. What importance do you attribute to the planning phase that precedes the creation of a new work? Do you believe that working with economy of resources is a value that the artist should also keep in mind, or do you think that it's a problem that only those involved in the industry should confront?

Tomas: To generalise is impossible. You need to contextualise every question and intention for every artist...for example, if one is certain that a meteorite will strike the earth in a couple of days, I'm sure there would be no doubts about the economy of materials; of the energy and the attitude to take; of the possibility of constructing a city beyond the confines of earth...we would concentrate on something that, today, appears to be of little interest... the costs would be zero...

If we look at biology, an organism is more resistant if it's able to change in relation to its habitat or if it's able to remain immobile until times are better (a seed that still has to germinate...an animal in hibernation...). So one could say that there is equilibrium between moving and staying put...to modify the habitat...to modify oneself...or to change habitats...

So if we understand that the survival of a species or an individual depends on its capacity to adapt itself, to communicate and interact with the outside world, we would probably realise that one is more fragile when completely alien to the surroundings. You're more resistant if your capacity to create links is greater...the greater your capacity to communicate, the less likely something bad will happen.

But perhaps I'm getting too far off track...however...however, the principle of Google is exactly this...the more links a page has, the greater the possibility that it appears among the first on the list...and that it will be the most visited...and, consequently, it will also be less likely that it "dies".

UTOPIA:

Riccardo: Your way of planning seems to draw on the visionary ability of imagining new worlds, in agreement with the provocative proposals of groups of architects in the 1960s. Under the name of "Radical Architecture", architects gathered in Italy whose research moved in a field often balanced between the architectural profession and the more abstract needs of contemporary art.

Do you know the work of these architects? If you do, can you explain how they have affected what you do?

Tomas: Yes, Superstudio and Archizoom have always interested me...for a while in Frankfurt, I studied with Peter Cook, one of the founders of Archigram, and in Argentina with Gyula Kosice...Yona Friedman...Thomas Bayrle...with regards to how they've affected my work, I wouldn't know... however, they surely have...

Buckminster Fuller said, "Utopia exists until it's realised".

Wasn't it utopian a hundred years ago that people could travel in aeroplanes? Now five hundred million people fly each year. In 2010 there will be three billion...

TECHNOLOGY:

Riccardo: I would like to better understand your relationship with technology, technique and, as a direct consequence, progress.

When you speak about your work you use words like mobility, ecology, lightness. It seems to me that all the elements are there to interpret your rapport with technology (for example, the technology that allows man to fly) as, all things considered, a positive one, one of faith. And yet almost all technological innovations are developed for war purposes made available to society only later. And when these innovations become public domain, only a privileged minority can actually use them. To believe in technology as an instrument of social redemption doesn't risk being a little too naive?

Tomas: Yes, if we don't change our way of reasoning...if we don't find another system in which to see and do things...but my work tries to confront and find solutions in reality...

There is an ever-increasing awareness of the concept of the sustainability of our life on planet earth...in this sense my work tries to investigate and interpret existing reality, utilising technological innovations for new social objectives.

For example, my idea for Air Port City is to create platforms, house cells or cities that float in air, that change shape and intermingle like clouds. In relation to nation-states, this flexibility of movement finds an answer in the organisational structure of airports: the first international city. The airports are in various cities and are divided by "air side" and "land side". In "air side" you're under international laws; every action made will be judged according to international regulations. Total control under freedom. Air Port City is like an airport that flies: it can legally travel around the world, utilising airport regulations. I work on this structure to try to challenge the political, social, cultural and military confines accepted today, to try to re-establish new concepts of synergy.

I can explain to you what happens with patents and how one can also reason...the 1960s are over...I hope that something was learned there... However, it's always relevant to hold on to the concept of utopia. It's one that mutates according to each era...let's see if we succeed in giving it another character...

From personal experience, I believe there's great possibility and potential in the registration of a patent...for example, one day I telephoned a company that produces a film which I needed for a new work...after a while, the engineer with whom I was speaking to tells me that this material is used as an insulator in satellites and that the particular type which I needed can only be used for military purposes. In addition, it could be attained only with a permit (impossible to get) from the United States army... now...what could I do? I continued asking, but...this is an art project...etc...I'm making Flying Cities...nothing doing, he tells me! The film was patented with these conditions! The patent prevents the use of the material for non-military purposes...

OK, now let's look at my patent. After having registered at the Patent Office there's a period of time, about a year, in which you can sell your idea to industry, or to whoever may be interested in it. However, if after a year, the patent has still not been acquired (and I made sure that this didn't happen), one loses the right to make a profit from their invention. This means that everyone in the entire world can now use the patent, but that no one can make an economic profit.

This means that no large company will be interested in its use because the



company is unable to gain a direct earnings; but ordinary people will have the possibility to use it in a more accessible way (we hope!). On the one hand, the invention's potential is limited, but on the other, possibilities are opened to others...sustainable change does not occur if it doesn't come from the bottom up...

I'm not that ambitious...I leave the thinking to others...isn't it better? To believe that one can resolve everything...I like Rirkrit (Tiravanija, ndr) when he tries to find the space and time for things to happen...as if these things already existed and others could do them also without us...not only for technology or, one could say, for the ethics of a technology...things should not be disconnected... it's hard for me to see differently.

THE EXHIBITION:

Riccardo: At a certain point in the 1990s the conviction that the exhibition had to be consumed in an experience was widespread among artists. This happened (and still happens) using elements like light, sound, etc. I'm thinking of the fog of Olafur Eliasson or the sound installations of Carsten Nicolai, to cite only a couple of the most striking examples. To a certain degree your intervention in Pinksummer's space in Genoa could also be included in this kind of exhibition. In that same period lots of architects also made experience the cardinal point of the work. The Americans Diller and Scofidio and their Blur Building ("the cloud building" made for the last International Expo in Switzerland) come to mind. After the last Documenta, however, a new approach seems to have been declared. There are an increasing number of exhibitions in which the works, installed rather traditionally, follow one after the other and accompany the spectator in a route. What do you think? Do you also see this trend?

Tomas: Yes, to go, to come, to return, to come back to stay...I'll write something... In general, I don't think about how to show my work. I remember an exhibition in Bonn, Germany, where I showed up the evening before and still didn't know what to do. The next day I asked if they had enough money to rent a truck instead of a car...so I put the entire contents of my studio inside the truck... I arrived at the cafe of the museum...I saw the exhibition space...I went to the cafe with my Greek friend Odysseus... we ate and drank still without having decided what to show...we took the entire studio and transported it into the room...I scattered a lot of things around...sculptures, models, texts...a year and a half of work in Germany... It seemed impossible to me that the people would understand, it seemed impossible but in the end everything came together... A pause, you expose

yourself, to be able to check oneself, to expand your, or our, time (every once in a while), to share something in a continual process...it was like showing the process of something that I was trying to produce, but without being able to produce anything...

Or perhaps something...for example, for an exhibition in Berlin curated by Caroline Eggel and Christiane Rekae... But perhaps it's better if I include an excerpt from the text that accompanied my work. The work is called WMPT, World Meeting Public Telephone...

(...) In the art project WMPT, World Meeting Public Telephone, I was engaged in the possibilities and relationships of improving or opening a new means of making communication more accessible, profiting from the global connection of telephone networks (...) by creating a connection 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, between 12 public telephones around the world. Using these public telephones by simply dialling the prefix "0800", people had an opportunity to connect with the other 11 telephones in different cities. This public telephone inverts the relationship between public and private: one can receive a telephone call from a private number (a house, for example) or from one of the other 11 telephones involved. With this system, up to 5 simultaneous conversations are possible...so next time...when you find yourself walking down your street...answer the telephone!

Perhaps the connections between various exhibitions are made by themselves... perhaps one begins to perceive something only later. Sometimes I think that if the room in Pinksummer had been filled with helium and made to fly, it would have become "earth specific", as if we were connecting a more specific thought to a more general one...

Riccardo: Good, it seems to me that some things have come out of this discussion... perhaps it will take time to understand what we actually talked about. The best thing is that, instead of providing answers, in the end we did nothing other than increase the complexity of the questions...

If you feel like it, and only if it's useful to you to finish up the discussion, could you briefly talk about your rapport with Italy?

Tomas: "Still from the planet Earth, do you like it?"

Riccardo Previdi, Berlin, 23 November 2004

Tomas Saraceno, Miami, 18 December 2004

Before beginning, perhaps I should be candid and say that this article is, at least in part, contestable. But I wouldn't want it to be viewed as a kind of rejection, rather as a description. There is nothing in what follows that I haven't already swallowed or am not ready to swallow. Let's put it like this: if after having received press releases via e-mail, read exhibition and concert reviews, witnessed lucubrations from the "cultural commissioner", and listened to statements by artists and musicians who wouldn't even be allowed citizenship in Disneyland, if after all this you realised that you're fed up, what would you do? I don't know, I'm still thinking it over. In the meantime, however, I thought of spitting out a part of this prêt-à-porter conceptualism on paper. Perhaps it's the best thing to do because to try to provide linearity to dissatisfaction is a lost cause from the start. Better to spit something out and hope that it creates some unexpected links to the referred system in a chance game of upping the bid between specific idea and "empty" operation.

Let's get down to specifics then and say that what interests me is a very precise dynamic, even if not easily describable: namely, the relationship that exists between the declaration of some stereotyped ideas and the assertion of phenomena to which these ideas refer to into a wider arena. I wouldn't know how to describe this procedure because it's very subtle. But let's say that I'm referring to that phenomenon in which something created and developed in a specific social, critical and cultural context finds itself presented on a large scale (and almost always through talent-scouting conducted either by a public organisation or by a private one that is fully inserted into the dynamics of the predominant system). I'll define this phenomenon with a word that would make Nicola Zingarelli's skin crawl: institutionalisation. (Zingarelli: Italian philologist and founder of the most important Italian dictionary.)

Still more specifically, I would like to talk about that musical phenomenon that is normally defined, in its various expressions, as "contemporary ambient music", "sound art", "immersive music", and so on. That is, the entire series of experiences in which the frontal aspect of listening to music becomes secondary to the active reception of the listener who finds himself "immersed" in a sound environment. At least that's usually what one says. But let's give an example: a work that would commonly belong to this category is a sound installation or a certain type of electronic noise, while a jazz or electro/techno concert would be excluded from this kind of discourse. Usually one also says that the listener of "immersive" music experiences the sound and noise in a conscious and critical way, less passively than someone seated in an auditorium for classical music. There are a lot of other considerations – that would partly justify these assumptions – but I'm interested in tackling these ideas in their diffused "packaging".

Of course, it's obvious that the more a thing spreads, the more the ideas that it carries with it become established; but I think the reference is two-fold. Things also spread because some ideas catch on more than others, and not by pure chance. To be honest and upfront: I don't want to demonstrate that the concepts of immersion and sound ambience are nonsense. But I would like to show how they assume a closed and reassuring form, more than what's right, in concurrence with the interest expressed in the events in question by institutions and the public.

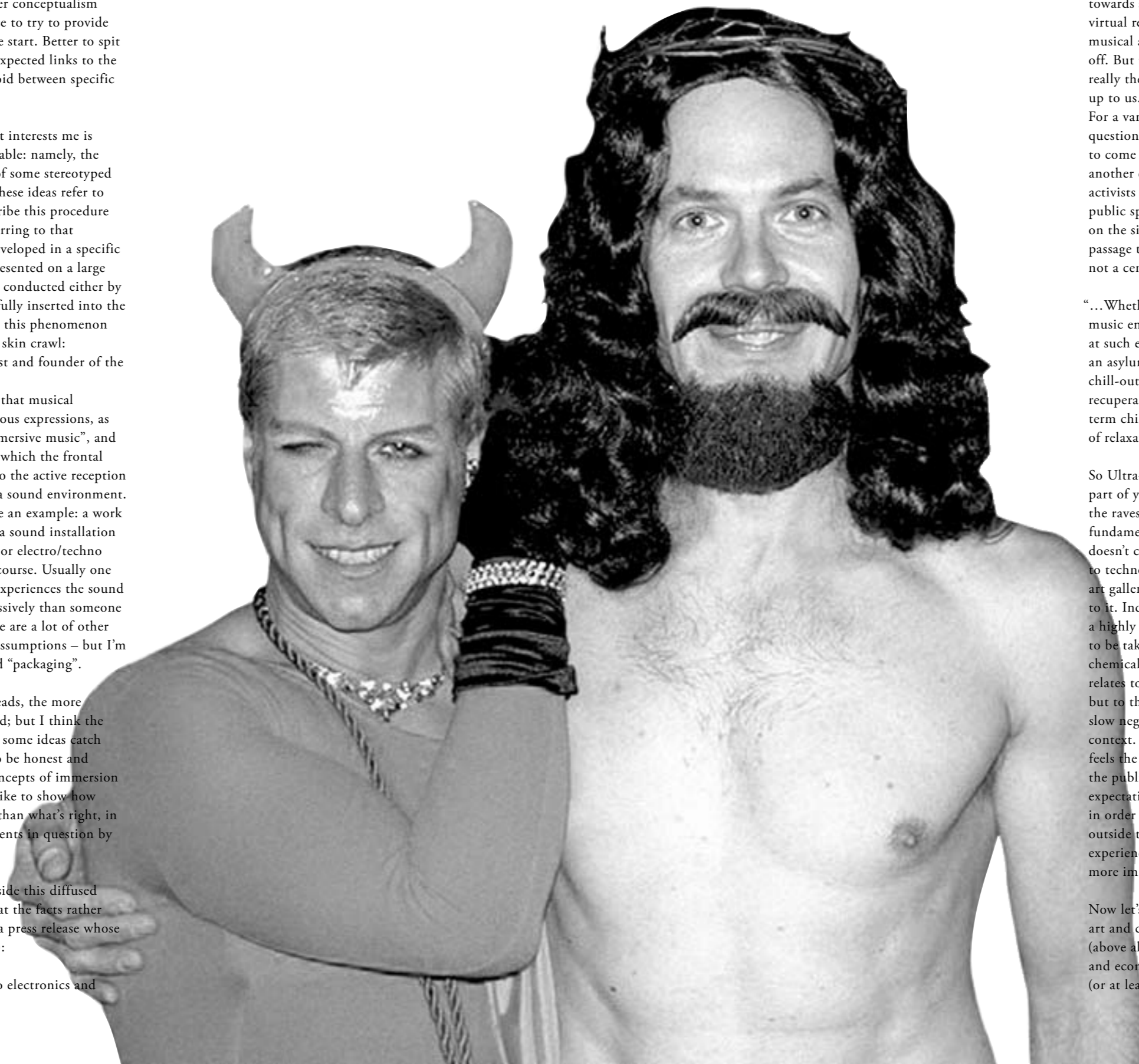
Looking closer, not everything runs smoothly inside this diffused concept. The best thing in these cases is to look at the facts rather than making assumptions. Here's an example of a press release whose source I will not cite (because it's not important):

"...The installations integrate mixed media, audio electronics and

SILENCE IS SEXY

by Valerio Mannucci

from NERO n.07 december/january 2006



video. Interactivity heightens the experience, engaging and directing participants in an activity of sensory exploration. Participants play a focal role, lending a great deal of creative input. Ultimately, outcomes are a result of the partnership between the artists and the public..."

All the elements are there: mixed media, interactivity, sensory experience, but, above all, the active participation of the spectator (here even defined as 'partnership'). Yet it's exactly for this that I sense something packaged in the idea. To hear the works talked about in these terms makes me think of a perverse form of historic regression towards an early 1900s modernism. Perhaps by dint of hearing talk of virtual reality and home theatre in television, one ends up confusing musical ambience with Dolby Surround, and this, I admit, pisses me off. But then I ask myself, in a launch of heroic honesty, if they're not really the same thing after all, at least for how they're usually served up to us.

For a variety of different reasons, several musicians have tackled the question of ambient music's origin in pop culture. First among them to come to mind are Terre Thaemlitz and Ultra-Red. So we'll go to another excerpt, taken from a text by Ultra-Red (a group of audio activists that, since the beginning of the 1990s, have performed in public spaces, written texts, and developed a very thoughtful discourse on the significance that audio culture has in our society). There's a passage that gets going a simple but significant line of reasoning. It's not a central concern, but perhaps it's enough to open a first break:

"...Whether in urban clubs or rave parties held in rural areas, ambient music entered into '90s youth music culture through chill-out spaces at such events. Characterised by a womb-like envelop of sound and an asylum from the physical rigors of dancing into the morning hour, chill-out spaces provided young urbanites a space for conversation and recuperation from a musical and chemical adrenaline rush. While the term chill-out is not universally applied to ambient music, the tropes of relaxation, contemplation and stasis remain ubiquitous."

So Ultra-Red sustain that the concept of ambient music became part of youth music culture in the 1990s through chill-out spaces at the raves and underground clubs. In my opinion, this highlights a fundamental issue: that objective immersion (physical and sensory) doesn't count in itself – what difference is there between listening to techno music in a warehouse and a sound installation inside an art gallery? – What counts is the psychological bent of who listens to it. Indeed, in a chill-out situation created to soften the exit from a highly frantic context like a rave, the stimulus is to allow yourself to be taken of, nurtured. After having abandoned oneself to techno's chemical fumes, at the moment in which one wants to get out, one relates to the music not according to the rules of melody or rhythm, but to those of a personal and psychological flux. Immersion is a slow negotiation with the listener, and therefore with the public and context. In order to be immersive artists (provided that someone feels the need to be that), the conditions need to be created so that the public decides to put itself in those conditions beyond rational expectations (that often derive from having read a press release). And in order to do this, one must amaze and surprise the public, operating outside the expectations imposed by an idea that already predicts our experience. It's for this reason that sometimes a techno party can be more immersive than a sound installation.

Now let's return to the general issue. We all know that the world of art and culture has an economy, which in the current state of things (above all in Italy) is primarily characterised by searching for funds and economic support or by sponsorship from powerful institutions (or at least connected to other rich economic/commercial realities).

Drawing a passage from a text by musician Terre Thaemlitz, here's what one says regarding the rapport between institutions and the economic necessities of artists:

"...The crossover of audio producers working in both the commercial audio marketplace and fine arts has become common place, not so much out of the "creative will" of producers (as common mythology would have it), but out of the necessity for commercial producers to find alternate income in the wake of the audio marketplace's current economic turmoil..."

So it's not reckless to think that, faced with the necessity of musicians to find alternative incomes, economic dynamics are set in motion which include the 'exploitation' of the lateral culture. However, I'd like to add and emphasise that the fault is not only of the institutions that exploit a scene, as much as the scene itself that makes itself available to be exploited. After having worked in niche contexts for years, young artists and organisers become precious goods and are recruited by more powerful institutions, becoming a reservoir for the launch of emerging phenomena on a wider scale. This transition made, the necessity of the two systems to meet halfway determines anomalous factors. A good part of the cultural communication system insists on reinforcing, also involuntarily, an idea like immersion. And therefore the little magic word begins to appear on press releases, articles, reviews of events. This is how some themes become very present, exactly because they're easy to acknowledge and conceptualise, until they stratify themselves, on the one hand creating critical confusion, and on the other helping organisers and managers of culture to better sell what they know little about.

So, the above mentioned young organisations and artists – in order to justify the request for co-productions, grants and financing by the institutions – dress their artistic proposals (often of a high standard) with concepts and presentations that have to adapt to the comprehensibility of the "high" world, with a consequent and never-well-revealed critical pomp. And there's no better way to do this than to use simplistic concepts.

All this has at least three clear and simple motives:

to justify the opening of a 'serious' institution towards young artistic practices and the 'rave' phenomena (as I sometimes happen to hear say...).

to make the object in question more comprehensible - an a-melodic installation for example - to those who are not at all trained in the field (though, despite everything, the greater part of them will define 'strange').

to create rules of communication between those who feel habitu e to these and the bordering environments. First example: "yesterday I went to see a very interesting work by CM Von Hausswolff, one of those immersive, ambient artists" – "oh yes, he's really good at making those things". Second example: "...maybe we could invite a sound artist, perhaps we can ask him to do an installation. They spoke to me about a certain Mark Bain, it seems that his work is primarily concentrated on immersion and site-specific research..." – "excellent, he could think of an installation for the basement of the museum, creating a critical journey for the spectator, blah, blah, blah..."

I don't believe anything else is needed for us to understand each other.

There is, therefore, a direct return between the establishing of certain ideas and the institutionalisation of the relative phenomena.

The strongest return is connected to the communication that one creates around, and by which, the critical schemes are prepared for the reception and the consumption of these phenomena. However, there is another decisive aspect, though it is much more hidden and difficult to highlight: besides the public, who fortunately is a lot less world-wise and with the ring in the nose than the managers of culture believe, those who begin to really believe it are the critics and, above all, young artists. It's happened several times that I've spoken with musicians my own age and felt disconcerted by the critical validation that they refer to. On the one hand, there's a conscious and sly aspect because they know they'll receive greater attention from the institutions, and on the other an unconscious and very degrading aspect in how, having found a formula that works, they attach themselves to it as if it was the only truth. Musicians who used to play electronic music at parties or in social centres begin to get big-headed and come out with improbable projects in which "...the space and listener interact, while synaesthesia de-structures the narrative...", or things like that.

Perhaps I should explain myself better because I believe all this is dangerous. Because for as many speakers that the latest installation by Carsten Nicolai has, if I passively endure the concept of immersion, I'll find myself looking at/listening to a show that's already ready to go and therefore absolutely non-immersive (no more than it is going to the cinema). I don't know if I'm making any sense. To be on the safe side, I'll quote another example from the presentation of a project that I will not cite:

"...The artist has created an immersive space, in which the spectator can move and live his own route in a personal way..."

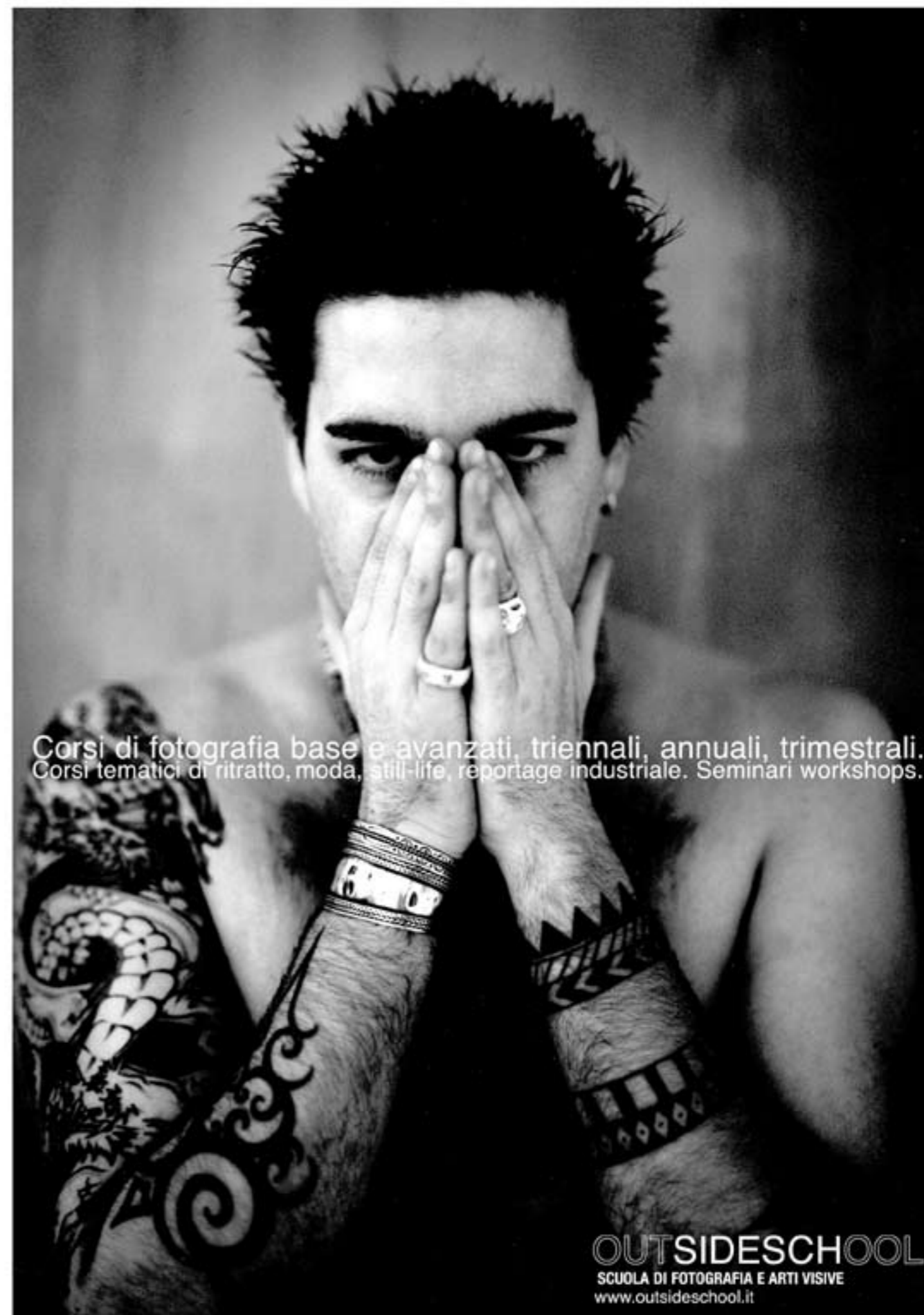
In reality, doing it like that they've already constructed the route for me. It's as if they told me "this is a film that the viewer will identify with, creating his own path made of memories and psychological reconstructions..." In the end, it's like entering the house of interactive horrors at the funfair. It's like buying yourself anti-wrinkle cream.

Only by getting away from these types of simple conceptualisations can one avoid enduring yet again a 'frontal' product disguised as something else. In another short text found online, written by Alfredo M. Ronchi (Milan Polytechnic) with regard to the study of the recreational media, he says:

"...In reality, in the rapport between player and game another fundamental aspect intervenes that is usually called immersion. Immersion represents the degree of sensory and emotional participation that ties the user to the application. It is a highly subjective factor, some people identify with adventure by simply reading the pages of a novel, others maintain an absolute detachment".

So, to finish up, it seems evident that the objective aspect is equal to zero. Therefore, any pre-constructed idea doesn't hold up. The immersion in a sound ambient is mainly subjective and psychological. Then how can an art form exist that is characterised by always arousing in the spectator the same perceptive-psychological sensation? And even if it succeeded, would it be a valid criterion of definition? Would it define something specific and unique to these arts? And would normal music remain excluded? And cinema? And literature...?

Who knows, perhaps after Immersive Art, if need be we'll also have Depressing Art and Exciting Music. All things considered then, the moment will arrive in which I'll prefer silence.



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“IN ORDER NOT TO DIE OF TELEVISION”

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAKING IT AND HOW TO WATCH IT INTERVIEW WITH SPEGNILATV

by Lorenzo Micheli Gigotti
illustration by Tommaso Garavini
from NERO n.02 november/december 2004

for Alberto Grifi

They produce audio-visuals for the streets; since 2002 they broadcast when and how they can from the rooftops of Rome, utilising the airwaves' shadow zones; they teach audio-visuals in schools; they use the web to share their material, to fine-tune and make their project even more accessible. They try to subvert the economic and political logic of making and perceiving television today. We discussed it with them to go beyond the media phenomenon, the clichés, generalisations, and superficial information.

Lorenzo: I'd begin with the name. Why did you choose “SpegnilaTV”? (a play on words meaning TurnofftheTV, ndr) ...What prompted you to occupy spaces in the airwaves to propose a self-managed and independent television?

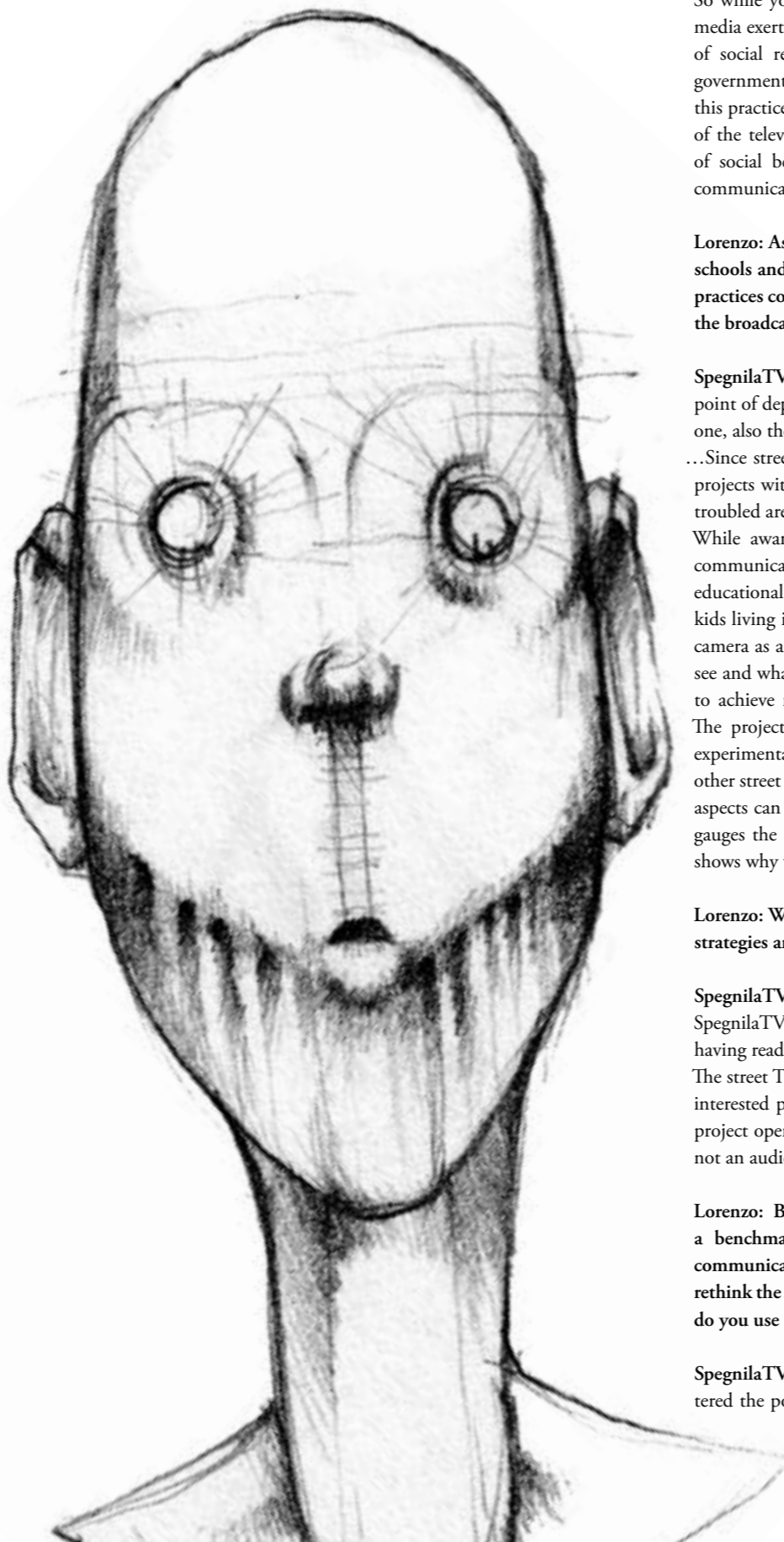
SpegnilaTV: SpegnilaTV seems a contradiction of terms and something like a television programme.

SpegnilaTV is to suggest a possibility of real freedom compared to the formal freedom of choosing between dozens of channels fixed on one message only (consume!). It's an invitation to stop thinking that the world's boundaries coincide with those of media visibility, that everything one doesn't see on TV doesn't exist – something that seems banal to remember but isn't...

It can even be to imagine the end of Television as a substitute for information and social relations. When we did the Telestreet network project in 2002, to contribute to the proliferation of autonomous initiatives on the airwaves, our motive was not – and is still not – to create our own niche in this televisual system, but to radically criticise the hierarchical model of vertical communication made by the few, bringing to many. We chose to stand on the side of the receivers rather than the professional communicators to assert in the practice that the airwaves are a resource for everyone who wants to use them in order to communicate.

Lorenzo: It's very clear that your interest is mainly directed to the “reception” of the televisual message by the viewer. What are your thoughts on the economy of time and attention?

SpegnilaTV: The first thing to do is to make evident the rules of the advertising market in front of a mass of television viewers who, while consuming entertainment, unknowingly produce economic value. The occupiers of television frequencies use the cost/contact formula to extract value from the time you spend in front of the television screen. This market is based on the conviction that by acquiring a quantity of broadcasting time in relation to the number of viewers, one acquires control over the choices made by a



community of consumers. Here one touches on the undeclared aim of the organisation of mass communications: the selling of the time and attention of television viewers to advertisers.

So while you're watching TV you're actually working, while who owns the media exerts control over the production of consumption and over the forms of social relations. This makes Television an instrument of bio-political government. For us, street TV offers a different theory and practice. And this practice begins from all those actions that contribute to the reassessment of the television medium's authority over the viewers and the modification of social behaviours with respect to making and receiving media-related communication.

Lorenzo: As I understand it, your activities focus on audio-visual literacy in schools and audio-visual educational projects in the streets. What do these practices consist of, and what does it mean to work on this front rather than the broadcasting front?

SpegnilaTV: To be able to enter the schools as a place of training is a good point of departure, but for this type of education every place can be the right one, also the street... and here I would add the street above all.

...Since street TV needs time and money in order to exist, the collaborative projects with schools or realities that work with adolescents or the mentally troubled are some of the solutions we wanted to develop.

While aware of the problems that exist in the dynamics of working in communications, these situations enabled us to try out innovations: in the educational street practice made with audio-visuals, for example. Dozens of kids living in the outskirts of Rome experiment with us, using the television camera as a pen with which one can learn to write in order to tell what you see and what you are. However, if this is the first area in which we were able to achieve results, it doesn't mean that we prioritised it over broadcasting. The project as a whole consists of diffused information, production and experimentation on language, relationships of exchange in network with other street TVs, broadcasting, and feedback with the territory. None of these aspects can be separated and, rather, must be a stimulus for the others. This gauges the complexity and time that the project needs to unfold, and also shows why we don't have to be in a hurry.

Lorenzo: What kind of response have you had from people? And what new strategies are you considering with which to engage and involve the public?

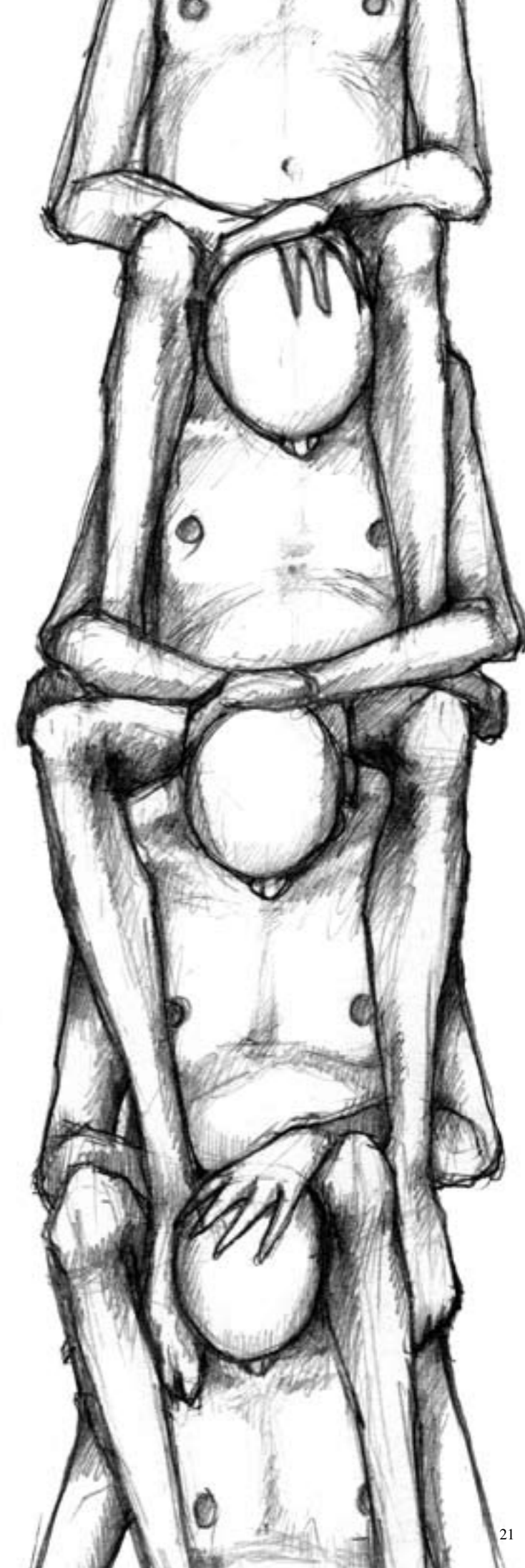
SpegnilaTV: Making street TV, in fact, means to longer be the public.

SpegnilaTV is a message that works if you think about contacting us after having read this interview.

The street TV network has reached only the minimum number of potentially interested people. It's fundamental that this project is always perceived as a project open to anyone who wants to participate. Above all else, it's this and not an audience that we need.

Lorenzo: By now, we're used to thinking of the television medium as a benchmark of one-way and monopolistic communication, the very communication that you criticise. If your intention is to de-structure and rethink the language and practices of that kind of communication, then why do you use and identify yourselves with TV?

SpegnilaTV: Because if Television has occupied social relations and sequestered the power of narrating reality, for us “to become” Television means to



take back our sociality and ability to narrate. We've been travelling around Italy and abroad for over two years now, encountering different realities, creating community ties, and co-operating with individuals and collectives that continue to spontaneously converge on the street TV network project. They get lost, find themselves, stop temporarily to take new impulses every time we meet, they share difficulties encountered, objectives reached, projects to do together. In this sense, if the communicative power of the televisual networks is in the ubiquity and ability of connection, what we're working on is television. At the same time, it's evident how much this practice can de-structure that type of one-way communication and how much it's potentially capable of transforming the television war machine into a machine that creates desire. The first transformation concerns the relationship between the TV's technical apparatus that goes back to being an instrument that radiates airwaves on which images and sounds travel, the current use of which is not the only one possible.

Lorenzo: In recent years, the street TV phenomenon has received great acknowledgement, especially from the ideological point of view. Not many, however, will have had a way of knowing about the tangible results of your projects. Your intentions still seem unexpressed. What have been the major obstacles encountered in the practice of SpegnilaTV?

SpegnilaTV: The Telestreet network project deeply struck the media-related consciousness; it even became an object of study in the universities. Some aspects of the mythology created around the "phenomenon", like the small "home made" TVs that defeat Silvio Berlusconi's monopoly, encouraged many of the people who were interested in street TV to adopt an approach that soon showed its limits, not the least of which were technical. Despite the brilliant idea of "fai la tua TV", ("make your own TV", *ndr*) it became clear that high frequency broadcasting – Vhf and Uhf – can not be improvised with an apartment building's aerial antenna without obtaining little more than symbolic results. A lot of energy in these two years of work, in collaboration with other groups in the network like InsuTV in Naples and TazTV in Milan, was focused on the technical experimentation of transmission apparatuses, the recognised weak spot in the Telestreet network project. A research geared towards the sharing of solutions to be used by the entire network to collectively reinvent a transmission technology suited to the communicative experiment. It should be said that the powerful mediatization of the "phenomenon" rewarded the statements more than the practice, sometimes to the detriment of the openness and real inclusiveness of the project.

Lorenzo: Today we witness constant media-related battles between opposing parties. The aim seems to be the hoarding of the attention and ideological consensus of the television viewer. In what way can the antagonistic media forces avoid the logic of appropriation?

SpegnilaTV: In the first phase of the Telestreet debate it was difficult to liberate oneself from the idea of television still tied to the quantitative ratings of listening, maintaining the conviction that one must take possession of the means in order to let in fairer and more democratic content.

To battle today for freedom of expression against the censorship of the regime misses the target because censorship is executed by the market and operates *a priori*. And despite this, there are still people who consider social communication an instrument of ideological propaganda.

It's a matter of getting out from this cultural subordination in order to demonstrate the possibility of another use of the television device as a laboratory of social relationships. It means bringing street to street, house to house, the conflict with this deterministic idea of the media that, in Italy, unites the government and its opposition, at the same time asserting the use of the airwaves as a common resource. A similar attitude excludes any attempt of involvement by those who inevitably move inside a quantitative vision of the audience, prevented from understanding the importance of the experiment irrespective of its impact in quantitative terms.

Lorenzo: A fundamental fact to make evident is your progressive use of the network and the success of a hybrid language between the web and television. Can the sharing and management of the videos and networking, united in broadcasting practices, represent a valid prospect for the realisation of your project? In what way?

SpegnilaTV: The idea of being able to affect mass communication by creating self-managed communication instruments was developed not two but thirty years ago, at the same time as the first worldwide circulation of the first videotapes. The originality of the street TV movement was the very hybridisation of TV, a means of vertical communication by definition, with the democratic horizontality of the network, both as a model of organisation and as a communication infrastructure. A street TV network project met New Global Vision, an instrument for the archiving and exchange of audio-visual files online. Ngv was created to collect and distribute media productions on the web. It developed a tie of interdependence with the street TVs, thus actively participating in the construction of the network and becoming an essential tool in the exchange of productions and the programming of the street TVs. Here street TV proved to be a hacking practice, as much in hijacking the use of the technological device of Television towards other communication purposes, as in the aptitude for the socialisation of knowledge and other resources. For a while now, together with Ngv, training about the instruments is organised for the sharing of audio-visual files. The aim is to add new connections to the network and to contribute to the continual growth, also in the qualitative sense, of the standard of productions on the Ngv website. By connecting to www.ngvision.org, one can watch and download street TV productions, as well as uploading one's own production to put them on the circuit.

Lorenzo: A short time ago Discovolante TV, a telestreet broadcasting station, was closed down for broadcasting without a government license. This case could represent a legal precedent for the future of street TV in Italy. What are your thoughts on the matter?

SpegnilaTV: The first proceedings against Discovolante TV, a street TV in Senigallia, are arriving in court now. The street TV was sealed by the "postal police" about a year and a half ago. In the absence of principles and in the law of those who govern television broadcasts, there are no arguments to convict us. I believe, however, that our strength remains in the meshwork, so that striking one link cannot demolish a network of autonomous initiatives that co-ordinate spontaneously. All the hypotheses of creating a single political entity of the street TV network in order to fight the controversy at the institutional level have so far failed because this would have only made us more vulnerable.

Lorenzo: Are other meetings or brainstorming on street TV scheduled for the near future?

SpegnilaTV: After the three days in Senigallia (eterea2004) last March, our last open meeting took place at the Festival Precariato Metropolitano, Incontrotempo 2.0, in Rome. TeleImmagini from Bologna, InsuTV from Naples, and Telefermento from Savona all participated in the festival and with them we organised a live production and began to work on online productions. It seems that there still no proposals for another general meeting, despite the fact that one strongly feels the need for a discussion of paths to take that would lay the groundwork for a new beginning. And if it can be considered an appointment, SpegnilaTV will be on the air again starting in December. In order to know more, and if what you've read isn't enough and you want to check personally, write us at filmrizona@libero.it (the website www.spegnilatv.it is under construction again).

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END OF THE YEAR TALE

text and illustrations by Carola Bonfli
from NERO n.02 november/december 2004

He masturbated regularly in the morning. It was the only way he knew to be able to get up. A little incentive to nice up the day.

While he touched himself he didn't think of familiar faces, or typically well-developed body parts.

In his mind a girl with an air of calm would tell him that nothing really mattered. She would also tell him that it was all a big mess and that he might as well live through it. Clearly, this was the general picture; the dynamics would change from time to time. Now he lay on the bed, looking at his stomach, his hands on it, the belly button slightly protruding; he thought of when he was little, and how he could inflate it and the swelling would make his skin pull. He liked seeing such a pronounced stomach, same as he liked staring at his own face when he was tired. His features would become accentuated, giving him a sinister look he was proud of.

He continued observing himself, now his attention turned towards his knees, which seemed swollen and stiff; he wasn't even able to fully distend them and it worried him.

He was wondering how he was able to do things only when he was afraid; if it were up to him he would do nothing from morning to evening. Or he would do only the really basic things that would give immediate results. He also wasn't very good at practical tasks. He was chronically unmindful, his carelessness towards anything that didn't directly concern him made him fuck-up continuously.

Only when he was studying, would none of this happen. He studied maths, and he was sincerely attached to such discipline. He loved planar

numbers, Renard's numbers, the cyclical ones, and so on, the theories of Cardano and Binet.

His favourite was the Euler-Lindemann theory. This treasured theory held the five fundamental units of math. Someone had told him it was similar to a work of art that had been made on a glass sheet, but he couldn't remember by whom.

When something was bothering him he would read; the muscles on his forehead would slowly relax, and sometimes he would even smile.

He was trying to prove his theory regarding the possibility of defining the technical and creative processes of artists. He would have made his calculations according to the different modes of work and the stylistic and physical features of a given artist; these modes would be then crystallized into standard math formulas.

He had never drawn, sculpted, or ever created anything remotely artistic, but he had always been an attentive observer, and he thought he'd recognized more than one similarity between the two disciplines. He was convinced that a mathematician had to be as imaginative as an artist in order to give worthy results.

The first person to make him realize this had been his father: he would say that if you had a creative perspective, then you had to live up to it. Otherwise it would be like a school play, where no one in the audience gives a shit but they all applaud.

The only artist the student knew was Gigi Ressa. Some guy who became known in 1970 due to some elaborate fetish-sculptures. They were

assemblages of discarded objects left in his brother's room by girls after one-night stands. Now that times had changed (and his brother had been married for ten years), the sculptor had started using leftovers from exhibition openings in important galleries for his pieces. His only certainty was that he would never pick up discarded cocktail umbrellas at one of his own openings.

It was Ressa that the student was supposed to meet that afternoon. Ressa had invited him to spend some time at his place; he shared it with some guy with an obscure past who called himself Christer Blomquist.

He wasn't at all tickled by the thought of spending all that time in the company of those two gentlemen. He would have to listen to their conversations about the frocked and jewelled old people and the boring youth that attended the art openings. He would fall asleep, probably with his elbow resting in a plastic dish full of unknown leftovers, bits of paper, and some Sprite.

Besides, since he had been hanging out with the sculptor's friends, the way he talked had changed. His voice had cracked slightly, and it was difficult for him to finish a sentence in a normal way, without mumbling half the words.

He lay between the sheets for a few more minutes. But he had to go to the bathroom and he was very hungry. He would only eat in bars, and he always ate the same things; except for the two times each month where he would munch on anything at hand. The rest of the time he only ate the worst kind of sandwiches.

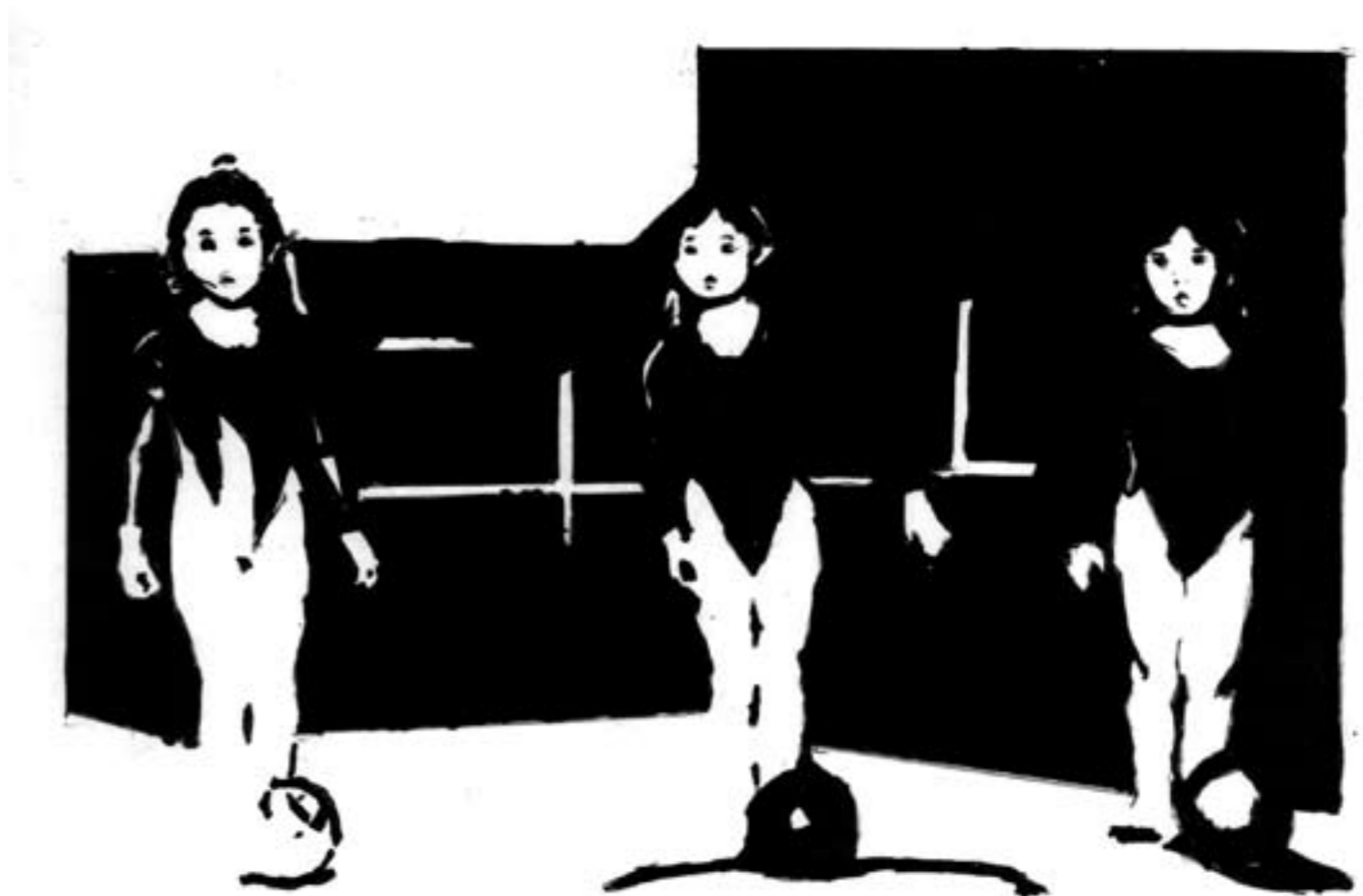
He quickly put one foot down from the bed, then the other, and then he turned his whole body around. He ate nothing, washed himself distractedly and went out of the house, only to return immediately.

He had to check the gas hob. He knew he had turned it off but he could never avoid that strange ritual. Sometimes he would find himself thinking about the aftermath of an explosion in his flat. He would imagine coming back at night and finding his neighbour wrapped in a pea-green towel with a backdrop of smoke and debris. Then he would have to live somewhere else until things were worked out.

It took him a while to reach his scooter; he had to stop to remove some slugs that had come out with the rain onto the path and that would have been at the mercy of some distracted foot.

Despite his goodwill towards the animal kingdom, a dog had pissed on his bike lock, which was now impregnated with a pungent and noxious smell that rose intermittently. The boy took a few more moments to curse.

He was already speeding down the slope when his jacket sleeves (too long and impeding him from changing gears) and a sudden curve in the road made him sway and crash. He remained crouched; his palms were peeled, almost showing his bone cartilage, and where they were intact you could see bits of gravel stuck in the skin. The sensation of loss was similar to being shouted at by someone who doesn't really care about you anymore. The last thing he remembered, before waking up in a room that smelled of feet, was the face of a man in blue overalls, who he thought was staring at him without saying a word.



Justin Bennett & Brandon LaBelle talking

10.05 — 02.06

from NERO n.12 december/january 2007

What follows is the result of an e-mail exchange between Justin Bennett and Brandon LaBelle. After we've asked them to improvise a correspondence, we asked them to edit it as they liked. The result is a conversation with no starting point and without an end, more similar to a snapshot of an encounter rather than an interview. Both the artists are working with sound, have a musical background and have decided not to stick only to the musical field, but to work in the wider range of visual arts and performance. LaBelle is American but lives in Denmark, he's an artist and a musician, but also a writer, essayist and theoretician. Bennett is English but lives in the Netherlands, is a drawer, photographer and the founder of the electroacoustic improv band Bmb.com.

The conversation took place between the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006. Consider the fact that between asking a question and receiving an answer there could have been a gap of several weeks: this should explain the apparent discrepancy between question and answer and also the bulleted way of answering.

Obviously I would like to thank them.

Valerio Mannucci



Brandon LaBelle: Museum of Instruments 2005. Installation.

Justin: Hi Brandon,

I was thinking: we were both drummers in former lives - maybe we still are? For me there is a definite link between percussion and my "sound art" a bodily approach to making sound combined with a feeling for materials and how they translate into sound - or how (as my former Buddhist percussion teacher would say) the sound of an object is just its form manifested in vibration.

Also maybe (and I'm thinking of some of your pieces) a feeling for the texture of sound as if it were a surface that you can run your hands over...

Brandon: Yes, maybe drumming has had a lasting effect. At times, I feel I'm still working in a sense through the lessons learned from drumming, as you say, with the materiality of objects and sound, and also, I think with an understanding of space. How drumming as a kind of force can transform space, and a particular social event into something quite dynamic. That bodily approach you mention maybe also creates a sensitivity to bodies in general, and the rhythms they adopt or move in and out of, according to a larger movement of environments and their features. Seems we're talking about some form of choreography...?

Justin: I was very busy setting up a show in Den Haag. And since then very busy getting over it! I showed some new things: a new piece with a 24-hour city soundscape compressed into 12 minutes, and various combinations of image and sound. One of the old pieces was a video "Resonant System" which is really a percussion piece. All the sound is made by striking a metal disc, and then resonating the sound of it in various objects, or the hands. I was worrying that it would seem completely different to the new work, but I think it seems to fit. It is nice to have something that is obviously human and musical and direct in a show where a lot of the sound could be (but isn't) electronically generated.

As to choreography, yes, I think sometimes that composing sounds for space is more like choreography than musical composition (but then I don't know much about choreography!!) especially pieces I have made which are more-or-less algorithmic, where I am creating systems which move sounds around as if the sounds themselves have "behaviours". I like listening to groups of people (and other animals!) making sounds, how rhythms emerge and disappear, or how shapes and textures grow. This happens at demonstrations or large events, marching band parades, carnival etc. I think that there's a Xenakis quote where he talks about masses of people moving and applies it to ideas about sound/composition. (I will try and dig it up!)

How is that connected/moving installation idea going that you were talking about?

Brandon: Good to hear from you Justin! And to hear the work is going well.

Yes, I can relate to this idea, of the movement of sound through a space and the question of bodies (or animals!) and their movements, occupying and defining space. You seem definitely involved in sound as it relates to given locations, or how location and sound are always part of a greater condition or reality. I wonder if the technological move toward the interactive, or more direct interactive systems, really pushes the whole notion of composition toward this level of "behaviour" as you say: composing is not so much about focusing on sound as it relates to itself, but as it begins to conduct an inter-subjective conversation with people. The "moving installation" I've been working on is just about finished - we managed to construct the interactive system with web-cams and wireless speaker systems, so people move these speaker-sculptures around the space (they kind of look like large colourful birds!) and in doing so they activate a transformation in the sound's they are carrying. I like this idea, of something very tangible or concrete that people hold in their hands, and have to care for, in a very primary way, like your "Resonant System" (and maybe back to percussion here!), and yet in doing so they are immersed in a rather immaterial or elusive structure of digital information.

I wonder what this does to listening? What kind of listening is this then?

Justin: Your installation looks nice on the photo. Is that one of the sculptures? I was wondering - with this piece, is there a concrete relationship between the placing of the sculptures and the sound - like a spatial score - or is there a more complex relation between the elements themselves?

Listening and moving the pieces, I can imagine that, yes, this becomes a bodily sort of listening. Musicians often listen with your fingers - if you have to move large things around you're going to be listening with your whole body.

I like the idea of the listeners being immersed in the "score" as well as in the sound. In strongly spatial psychoacoustic-style pieces like by Michael Brewster, Maryanne Amacher or Alvin Lucier, you get the feeling that the structure of the work exists in space and you can almost "play" the work yourself by moving around (Neuhaus



Justin Bennett: Beirut Story 2004-5. Installation and EP vinyl 10".

too - when you can hear him!) or Christina Kubisch's headphone pieces. If you add some sensing or feedback mechanism then this effect becomes magnified.

Navigational Listening anyone?

Going back to sounds having behaviours... this gets important when you stop working with sounds as events or notes, and start working with streams, textures, shapes. If you work with textures built of fragments or grains, then note-to-note control is impossible and some other kind of control is needed - could be hierarchical or it could be some kind of self-organising/behavioural model. But this is all algorithmic stuff. What is maybe a nicer idea is if the sounds can listen to each other, like creatures.

What sort of sounds are your sculptures making? Are they like birds calling to one another??

Brandon: The installation in the photo is the one with the sculptures I mentioned: each sculpture is on wheels and contains a wireless speaker; they are tracked overhead by two web-cams, so when visitors come in and move the sculptures the audio output changes. The changes occur in stages relative to their relationship to their "home" locations, which is generally one sculpture to each of the four walls - the more they move away from their home the more radical the sound is altered, moving from the pure, unprocessed recording to either a more dense version or one that is more "tonal" or modulated. So, there are loosely two axes dividing the room, along which these forms of processing happen, with a few built in random elements, to keep things interesting. I think it does work well in a sense to develop a kind of field of sensitivity, though in some ways the installation is a bit more "clunky" too than someone like Neuhaus or Lucier - which comes about through the sculptures: sounds are definitely contained within the boxes as opposed to operating strictly in the air. But your point about "navigational listening" is interesting, being immersed in the "score" along with the sounds...And this question of the differences that come about, shifting from notes to streams -

what someone else also said of my installation, from expression to emission. It seems to introduce a different notion of appreciating the work since it doesn't deliver a final crescendo but sits there in the space, as an experience... For the installation, sounds are based on the workshops with kids, building small sound devices and my recording them: shakers and rattlers, delicate textures to percussive thwacks! These become the only sound content in the work, a series of samples allocated to each of the sculptures, to give each one a kind of character or sonic feature. They do very much take on traits that make you feel they are somehow alive, and I really like that - birds calling or standing around pecking grain, or squawking around each other... This seems to also bring up the issue of "visuality" as part of sound work - is this something you work with as well? Creating sculptures, visual information... Looking at your book "Noise Map" (which is great I might add!), you are obviously moving between text and drawing to talk about sound. How does this work for you?

Justin: There was an article recently in a dutch newspaper about sound art where the writer (Sacha Bronwasser) gave the opinion that sound art worked best when there was nothing to see - and also talked about 2 pieces that I was showing in my show here in Den Haag - one where I'd combined a binaural recording (heard with headphones) with a projected photographic image. He said that "the image pushed itself into the foreground" whereas another piece which was purely sound in a space worked better. I think that it depends on the individual though - in that piece, for me, the image and the sound created a kind of tension which changed how they were both perceived, but then I am maybe less visually fixated than some people. When I make pieces with sound and image or objects the visual element is very important even though it is often secondary - it's like a frame around the work, framing the space that the sound occupies, suggesting or strengthening one particular meaning in the sound above others. That's what your "bird" sculptures seem like too - they would work very differently if they were gleaming hi-tech boxes with glowing lights on them, even if you used the same sounds.

As far as text and drawing goes - I think they are personal (drawing) and public (textual) ways of exploring what I do with sound. I draw a lot when I'm thinking and this usually is at the level of "doodling" but as a piece develops, the corresponding doodles also crystallise out - sometimes into drawings that (I think) are interesting enough to look at individually. There is obviously no single way of "drawing" sound. Some of the drawings are like scores, showing a temporal progression, but most are explorations of space in one way or another. If I have more time on my hands then the drawings often take an "autonomous" route and go off somewhere of their own without being related to a sonic project. I don't write so much for myself these days - apart from when I am integrating spoken text into a sound piece, I only tend to write when I have to explain things to others and want to get my ideas clear. Most of the time I wallow in my bath of vague-ness, sometimes a clear idea will float to the surface, or crystallise, and that's what people get to see - not me blowing bubbles or playing with my rubber duck! ;) You, on the other hand seem really to be busy with text - what is the relationship between the text and the sound-work for you?

Brandon: I definitely had that sense from your "Noise Map" book, how drawing and text are completely integrated into a larger process of thinking sound. Also, that this was very much a process, of externalizing or making apparent ideas, possible routes toward working with sound, making space, etc., which strikes me as very different than drawings by someone like Ryoji Ikeda, which seem to state a fact by diagrammatically depicting a work or installation set-up. Maybe these in the end are not really "drawings", but still, they are attempts to depict sound it seems... and no doubt reflect a certain personality. For you, I can almost imagine the drawing reflects how you might also work with sound: something spatial, processional, concrete and abstract all in one! and also tactile: a trace of the hand, the materiality of mark-making, visual exploration... For myself, I have always veered more towards "note taking": scribbling words in notebooks is a way to work out ideas, to take note of a way of thinking through problems, or dreaming around possibilities... This very much happens in for me, and probably goes back to my own literary background - reading and writing were really the first things which got me into the idea of art, or creative practice, and I started writing when I was around 13, kinds of loose poetry or prose, which has stuck with me ever since: the magic of words... Writing though, like your drawing, expands from the private notebook and toward public space in the form of publishing. And I guess in a lot of ways this functions as a means for not only expressing ideas, but working with existing ideas, histories, and cultural meanings: so, it is a kind of participation within an intellectual field, exchanging through words with other texts, works, writers, to have a conversation with culture. Of course it falls back upon my own artistic practice, influencing how an art piece may develop... At some point I did become very interested in the idea of text and sound having a relation, either in overtly text-based sound pieces (from my "Text=CD" CD) or more metaphorically (as in the "Maps of Tenderness" CD), where sound-making is equated with a form of writing... At the moment, I'm thinking more about speech and its spatiality, and how the voice is produced by space while producing space. You mention working with spoken text, I wonder if you might say more about this?

Justin: I'm just listening to Maps of Tenderness... As well as referring to writing, it seems to be sensing the irregularities surface of the earth, like a large stylus scratching, running (ploughing?) through a groove in the earth.

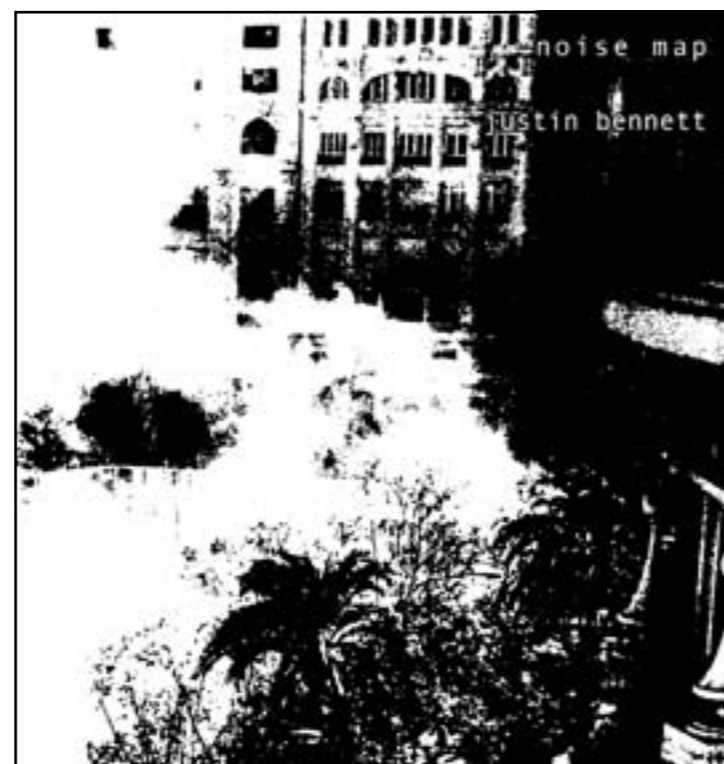
The second part of the first track reminds me of a piece I made together with Boris Gerrets, when we turned a (repetitive) text of his into sound - reading the ascii code of the text file as sound data. (although at the end your piece reveals itself to be contact microphones on some kind of machine - I think?) In turning the text into sound of course the most obvious sonic element comes from the way that the data is stored, any information appears almost as blemishes on this "surface" of sound.

I like the extreme use of stereo too - in a way you really have made a surface instead of a virtual space.

About spoken text, which I don't use so often, I tend to use it in quite a narrative way, leading the listener through a piece, or through a physical space.

Recently I made a piece with Renate Zentschnig about people living in a new town near Utrecht. <<http://www.soundscaper.com/andere/docs/LR.htm>><http://www.soundscaper.com/andere/docs/LR.htm>. She interviewed people about their experience, and especially their response to the (changing) soundscape around them. We used their voices combined with short, collaged compositions. I noticed though that some peoples voices and especially the spaces they create between the words, when thinking or hesitating, said so much, that we didn't need to use much other sound. The voices seem to sound space literally while implying space through silence and through what they say or don't say. The voice is a description of internal space anyway (Barthes!) as well as the emotional state of the speaker. But also the voice is a description of an (imagined) geography or genealogy. The boy you hear talking in the excerpt on the website was born in Holland but speaks with a strong Moroccan accent and also dreams of "returning" to Morocco when he gets married.

There has just been a big discussion about language here in Holland. The minister for immigration and integration policy said publically that she thought that people should speak Nederlands on the street (implying: not Moroccan or Turkish or Papiamentu). This sparked off a political discussion as you can imagine, but also a discussion of street slang in Holland and how kids of all backgrounds speak a mixture of dutch, english, moroccan and turkish all mixed up. And that street dutch is spoken often with a moroccan accent even though the speakers might be Russian! I read too in Orhan Pamuks "Istanbul" that a similar "linguistic cleansing" took place there, sweeping the streets clean of armenian, greek, ladino (jewish medieval spanish). There are many jokes here about English tourists getting arrested for saying out loud "which way to Dam Square?". I guess you're being careful with jokes in Denmark at the moment ;)



Justin Bennett: Noise Map 2003. Book and cd.



Caribe_2007_Linda Fregni

RAGNAR KJARTANSSON

SHIN IL KIM

LISI RASKIN

LINDA FREGNI

VERONICA SMIRNOFF

CHIARA PIRITO

Ariel Pink

by Francesco de Figueiredo
 drawings by Ariel Pink
 from NERO n.05 may/june 2005

"I am a zombie. Mummified and pruned by years of deafh-rock causing friction between my chafe and loins emitting swirling toxic gas clouds of noxiously malignant fibromialgia..."

Ariel.

Ariel Marcus Rosenberg Pink, class of 1978, native of the Los Angeles hills. A student at the California Institute of the Arts, as an artist he has already collaborated with names such as Ed Ruscha and Jim Shaw. It is through music, however, that Ariel finds a more intimate way of processing his art: since 1996 he has recorded about 500 songs, independently and using only analogue equipment. In his home this young autarchy has defined an individual and fairly atypical expressive universe.

Prosthesis.

A Yamaha 8-track cassette recorder, a guitar, some toy keyboards, and a voice, which also serves as a very credible drum kit.

The Light.

"We rocked your album on tour, we wanna release it on our own label..."

The guys from Animal Collective find one of his CD-Rs and are endeared by the crooked artwork and bizarre, nervous pop sound. They decide to release the album in its entirety, without edits or alterations, on their Paw Tracks label, which, until now, had been accessible to Animal Collective members only.

So the spotlight shines on Ariel Pink.
 And the dim indie floodlights light up...

Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti 2: *The Doldrums/Vital Pink* (Paw Tracks, 2004)
 Ariel Pink's Haunted Graffiti 8: *Worn Copy* (Paw Tracks, 2005)



Translation. Act one.

The two albums put out by Animal Collective offer little representation of Ariel's world. To understand his music, one needs to avoid the sickly sweet parable of the talented, introspective artist who's revealed to the public by some noble-spirited enthusiastic patron. Instead, you need to imagine what it would be like to casually come across one of Ariel's CD-Rs, still dirty with fingerprints and smelling like his bedroom; to create an intimate rapport with a product that exists outside of any marketing praxis (mainstream or indie, for what it's worth), and which you probably bought at one of Ariel's basement gigs.

Robert Stevie Moore, the predecessor.

The most direct predecessor is R. Stevie Moore, an ingenious American musician and advocate of the most radical DIY home recording. Since 1976 he has composed, executed, produced and printed an impressive amount of tapes, dodging the discographic market by voluntarily remaining in the shadows. Ariel's universe bears many traces of Stevie Moore's influence, from his hand-drawn cover art to the practice of one-off mongrel-pop CD-Rs, miles away from the serialization standards of the record industry.

Nothing New.

From a purely aesthetic/compositional point of view, Ariel Pink can easily be compared to a lot of pop/new wave/neo-psychedelic acts that came out during the '70s and '80s. Nothing new here: the vocal and compositional styles are brilliant but far from innovative. Comparisons can be drawn: David Bowie, The Flaming Lips, The Human League, Suicide, Phil Spector, Tiny Tim, to name a few.

Obscure Matter.

But there's something else that sets Ariel Pink apart from the rest, in his own unique, disquieting corner: the mode of production. It's goofy, primitive, infantile, crooked. Ariel seems to disregard every conventional production rule: the volume levels jump, the falsetto vocals overlap with the echoes, the strange rhythms seldom interlock with the improbable bass line. This oblique, torn pop music becomes a vehicle for an insane, antisocial, alienated urge.

Nervous, Lo-Fi Crust Pop.

I'm going to move past the trends for a moment, far away from the fake lo-fi productions designed to fit gaps in the market. Instead, I'm going to stay close to "low" punk and garage, where the real essence resides: bringing everything out, especially the rotten dark stuff.

Filtered through his cheap equipment, Ariel's pop songs turn into mutant beasts; they recreate a claustrophobic and horrific ambience. Pop music iconography becomes ill, thus generating strange paradoxes. All forms of

popular music get mangled inside the Yamaha tape recorder, usurped by the infantile and destructive production of Ariel Marcus Rosenberg Pink.

"Good Kids Make Bad Grown Ups".

Listening to the first track from *Doldrums* makes it clear how Ariel (like a lot of other creative-minded individuals) seems to have barely passed adolescence. The falsettos, lyrics, toy keyboards, naive song titles all hint at some kind of regression, at the expressive immediacy of children, their recklessness and nervous tantrums.

Raptured.

All of this enraptured me, carrying me into a dimension in which emotional responses deviate from the familiar path: leading towards the confines of the most violent and hostile music, closer than one would at first expect.

Primordial.

I can't, however, describe how difficult it was to define my closeness to Ariel's sounds. If you decide to go beyond the surface to understand a body of art, you need to create a dialogue within yourself; in order to comprehend my fascination towards this music, I had to dig quite deep.

Translation. Act two.

There was probably a false start. This must be due to the circumstances in which I first encountered these disconcerting sounds. Indeed, the Paw Tracks releases are merely artefacts, intended for diffusion purposes.

Although it has given me access to the music, this translation has deprived me of the intimate experience of the CD-R fetish, of the real context in which the music actually exists.

Irreverence.

Therefore, I can't be grateful to the Animal Collective people: I'm deprived of some key element. Yet it's the same enthusiasm I feel which encouraged Panda Bear and Co. to trespass into Ariel Pink's musical territory and give everyone (including me) the chance to listen to him.

River.

Now this would mean opening a dam of words and disquisitions on the reproducibility of art, and on how Ariel, unlike his idol Stevie Moore, might seem like a "sell-out"; and on how a colonial spirit stubbornly pervades Western culture.

Maybe another time...

But this is not the place for discussing such intellectual amenities. I'd rather celebrate this goofy and bizarre Californian kid, indulge in his mockery... focused on substance.



<http://www.angelfire.com/la3/zanna> <http://www.rsteviemore.com> <http://www.paw-tracks.com>

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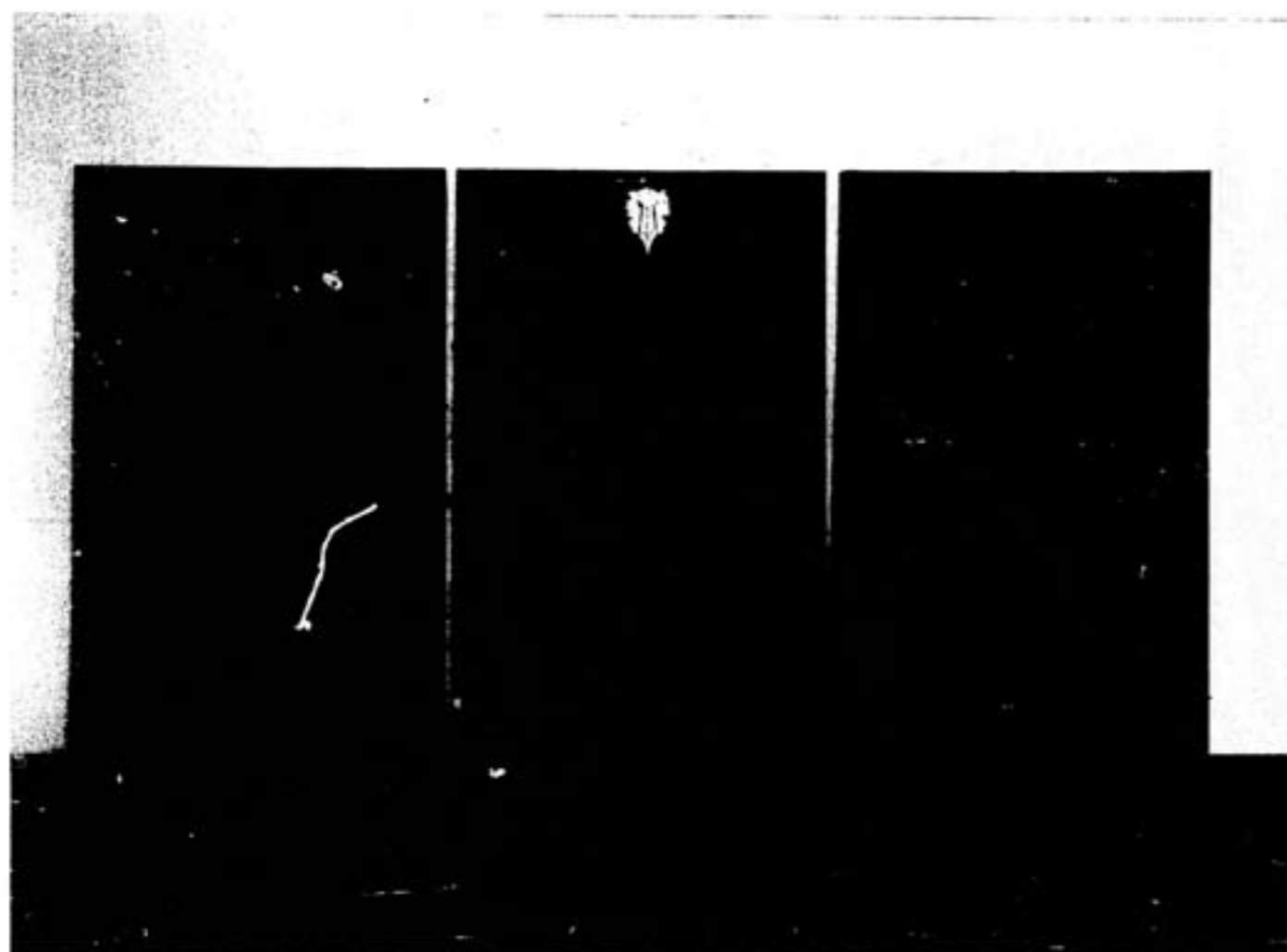
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The Crisis of Post-Spectacle "Live" Contemporary Ambient Performance (Or... Why I Can't Get Paid to DJ A-structural Audio)

by *Terre Thaemlitz*

for more info: www.neromagazine.it / www.comatonse.com

The following text is a series of extracts from the essay "The Crisis of Post Spectacle "Live" Contemporary Ambient Performance (Or Why I Can't Get Paid To Dj A-Structural Audio)" written by Terre Thamelitz in 1997 and published by us in 2006. The reason why we decided to publish it is clear: we considered it a great waste to leave unpublished an essay that dealt in such a sharp way with a world as complex as the one of contemporary music. What really struck us was his approach in dealing with issues without attempting abstractions or speculative theorizations, but simply focusing on the unsolved matters and on the obvious contradictions that were taking place. A few simple words, the kind that get straight to the point. (Produzioni Nero)

It is largely assumed among producers and listeners that the performance of Contemporary Ambient music incorporates a strategic convolution of noise with composition, presenting listeners with experiential conditions that emphasize their own performance within a sonically active social theater, rather than suppressing their performance in favor of frontal spectacle. Similarly, it is well known that production methods for Contemporary Ambient music such as non-realtime computer synthesis typically involve processes which are not immediately reconcilable with conventional listener/virtuoso performance paradigms. However, when it comes to "live" Contemporary Ambient performance, there seems to be a great deal of regressive desire among producers, organizers and audiences for conventional stage-based performance.

...
If we concede Attali's assertion that "in music, as in the rest of economy, the logic of the succession of musical codes parallels the logic of the creation of value". Then perhaps the failings and contradictions of an economy around Contemporary Ambient performance may be expressed in terms of an unconscious attempt to reconcile antithetical musical codes of repetition and representation, rather than a deliberate exploitation of their multiplicity - a multiplicity which is suggested by Ambient music's historical claim to address a restructuring and multiplication of cultural relations between production, performance and listening.

...
However, the deconstructive values I wish to infuse this multiplicious economy with are currently (perhaps hopelessly) circumvented by popular musical codes around performance as a consumer process, through which the performer is required to exist as a celebrity (including personnas of humility), and all sounds recorded and ambient are exalted only for their production of exchange value.

...
It is in this latter spectacular manner that the economic viability of DJ performance as an instrumental medium has been established, both within Underground clubs and Dominant Culture (as exemplified by the global economic success of Rap, House and Techno). And as the majority of Contemporary Ambient events are organized by club promoters who deal with DJ's on a regular basis, one would think that a stratification between DJ-ing and "live" performance of conventional theatrical instruments would no longer exist. But this is not the case, particularly within the price scales of Contemporary ambient performance. Speaking from personal experience, after hearing that my standard presentation techniques do not involve keyboards or other traditional theatrical instruments, I have had countless organizers reduce their initially proposed "live performance" fee by more than half.

...
But in the absence of any large-scale understanding of how to stage events around a concept of decentralization, most organizers and producers grappled at the most familiar performance strategy associated with free-form and a-structural music: the Neo-Bohemian Progressive Rock festival, a thoroughly mainstream marketing strategy which, by the early '90s, was already consuming the Rave community. In this manner, Contemporary Ambient producers fell prey to all of the demands of other stage and personality-based performance strategies. Decentralization was overwritten by a concept of authorship, and any remnants of desire among producers for anonymity only resulted in confusion. Disoriented producers took darkened stages, beginning and ending their sets unannounced and intermixed with opening and closing DJ's. Meanwhile, audiences now faced stage-forward, asking if the show had begun and complaining that they could not spot their favorite stars clearly on stage. By 1996, when the Orb took center stage at New York's Roseland Theater with drummers and guitarists on hand, dominant Contemporary Ambient performance was no more than a musical staging of "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte"⁷. Frustrated and confused by the lack of populist satisfaction derived from such stagings, producers, organizers and audiences declared, "Ambient is dead." Few seemed to realize that this disorientation was a byproduct of the functionality of Contemporary Ambient production. Few seemed to realize that Contemporary Ambient's inapplicability to a Prog-rock metaphor involved a disclosure of Prog-rock and all music's site specificity and non-universality; and suggested the development of new performance strategies.

Under the collapse of Prog-rock staging, a number of producers including Oval, Scanner, Dumb Type and myself increasingly turned toward production methods which attempted to address processes of deconstruction present in our own methodologies. For many of us, digital editing and computer synthesis emerged as the primary studio process capable of representing a decentralization of authorship through the sampling and resynthesis of other peoples' recordings, as well as by exploiting a high prophile technophobia present in the popular media which identified computers and the internet as threats to the loss of personal identity. In this manner, the subjectivity of the creative process, as well as the listening process, was audibly connected to a social history of inputs and cultural variables.

Despite this newfound enthusiasm among producers, on a market level the retreat from Prog-rock aesthetics was accompanied by a new emphasis on the homogenizing power of quantized rhythms, and an increasing resistance to a-structural and beatless performances. As for myself, proposals to incorporate texts with releases so as to familiarize listeners with my own rationale behind particular processes, as well as to generate discourse around materialist listening practices, were discouraged by the record company I was signed to, resulting in semiotically burdened and textless covers such as Soil. Record labels began pressuring Contemporary Ambient producers to produce Neo-urban music: "Trip-Hop," "Abstract Beats," "Drum & Bass," "Ambient Jungle" and "Acid Jazz". Both in sales and performance, this new predominance of rhythm serves to synchronize and pace a production's reception, using the restraints of simple mathematics to invoke a simplification of interpretive formulas. Only a few committed record labels which had developed steady followers continued to release a-structural Contemporary Ambient material, and they now found themselves flooded with submissions from producers rejected or abandoned by other labels.

...
One intriguing result of the contemporary ambient record industry's transition toward Neo-urban music is a renewed emphasis of the DJ as the ideal Contemporary Ambient performer. However, this return occurs in the most conventional of ways, engaging familiar images of DJ's as the celebrities we have come to know through the Rap industry and nightclub followings. There is no secondary displacement of identity as was suggested (however unintentionally) by early "chill rooms". The DJ is center stage, and fully reconcilable with dominant personality-driven performance structures. As a personality figure, the DJ's sense of individuality is used to generate authenticity, thus distracting one from questions of authorship (as opposed to encouraging a direct deconstruction of such issues). The listener's act of consumption no longer emphasizes the traditionally Modernist fetishization of a producer's creative output. Rather, it reflects a tertiary commodification of the DJ's selection and performance of other producers' outputs as the ultimate in informed commodity fetishism. In a cultural atmosphere which conflates the consumption of music with the definition of self, what process of self-identification can a consumer more closely relate to than the very act of consumption? Thus, the popular elevation of the DJ as celebrity allows consumers to not only purchase music, but to vicariously engage in the DJ's expert and near pathological process of consuming music.

...
I am forced to accept the manners in which this circumstance conditions my own reception, as well as production. My own objectives for performance are hopelessly diffused in their actualization. Every composition's abandonment of rhythm imparts an uninvented dissension from the incessant drums which accompany the march of cultural inertia; only to be resurrected through reappropriation by institutions of the Avant Garde. Each attempt for clarification on my part contributes to an air of arrogance and self-distinction which erodes my relationship to the cultural outlets I wish to nurture. I am compelled to tip a hat to the popular observation that "at least an Orb concert or Illbient event can get people together." But then again, I remind myself, so does Sunday Mass, and the act of congregation can never be distilled from the politics of social organization.

All things considered, this is why I can't get paid to DJ a-structural audio.

A Woman

by Valerio Mannucci

from NERO n.11 october/november 2006

He says that Madonna, Veronica Louise Ciccone, is not just an icon. And I agree, but when I ask him why, he replies that Madonna has also done a lot on an artistic and musical level. I'm not sure what he's getting at and I ask him to be more precise. He says there are two fundamental aspects that we should keep in mind, the first concerns music, the second, everything else. He says that the most important things when speaking about Madonna are: the men, women, MTV, sex, art, the photographs taken of her, her 1984 performance at the MTV Video Music Awards, cinema, her kiss with Britney Spears in 2003. Thanks to these things, he maintains, the life of Madonna traces the evolution of the relationship between music and television, and between live music and music videos. I'm not sure how important this kind of discourse can be so I ask for more information. He explains that first of all, there's the music, but he would prefer not to talk about this. He's silent, then takes out a sheet of paper and, reading from it, tells me that Ciccone has sold more than 280 million records. No other woman has sold as many. But to me, this doesn't seem to be the main point.

He says if musicians originally worked with two dimensions while on stage, a third dimension has been added with Madonna. Previously, a singer went on stage to do two things: to sing the song and to perform the theatrical act of singing the song. He gives the example of Jim Morrison who sang and clutched the microphone at the same time. So I ask what's the third dimension of Madonna. He replies that I have to think of television. Madonna, he adds, was the first to make music with television.

Then, all of a sudden, he changes the subject and tells me to think about her private life. He says that to understand Madonna I have to mythologize her. Then he asks me if I know everything that Madonna did before she was Madonna. I tell him that all that I know about her is connected to her activity as a soloist. He mentions a few groups that she founded: "Breakfast Club", "Modern Dance", "Emmenon", "The Millionaires", "Emmy & The Emmies". I've never heard of them.

He tells me the myth of a very poor young girl who worked at all kinds of jobs. He says that Madonna was not naïve but, on the contrary, attentive; that besides her strictly musical activity she also studied modern dance with Martha Graham and performed with various companies. He emphasises that while this aspect is important, it's only when she begins to write and produce dance pieces that the record world notices her. Then, after a brief pause, he says that MTV is involved, that the creation of musical Madonna strangely coincides with the creation of MTV.

He continues, saying that in the beginning of her career, in the early 1980s, Madonna was distributed by Warner Bros., who also controlled a large portion of MTV in that same period. And he adds that her performance at the MTV Video Music Awards in 1984 marked a fundamental phase in the history of "live" music. I ask him why and he sighs before replying.

He says that the matter of Madonna's greatness is all here. All in the relationship with television. Put like that, the matter frightens me a little.

First of all, he says, I have to keep in mind that there have been very precise eras in music: in the first phase one played the music and that was it. The concepts of playing, reproduction and recording didn't exist. Everything was tied to the fact that music could be listened to only when someone was actually playing it. He tells me to think of tribal or popular music. In the second phase a new component, recording, appeared. Music was liberated from the necessity of having to be played in order for it to be listened to. However, he emphasises, one still recorded for the pure need to document. After this phase followed a third in which recording got the upper hand. One played in the studio in order to record, and one played live to promote the cut record. He tells me that this phase is the most historically deep-rooted, the one that still continues to lay down the law today. But, he adds, now there's even a fourth phase in action in which all these aspects (playing, recording, composing, reproducing) are thought of in reverse order, from back to front, as if they were things to use for a purpose, television for example.

It all makes sense but we've returned to television without any real answers. He understands my perplexity and adds that in this fourth phase, one always sought to make music videos seem like a recorded live set and not what they really are: namely, short film clips with a soundtrack.

He looks at me expectantly, as if he anticipates a question, but I remain silent. He begins again saying that in most videos, above all in rock and pop culture, there's a continual search for devices directed towards this aim. That in every video

it's possible to trace the reference to stereotypes that certify the authenticity of a musical performance. He gives the examples of the live presence of the musicians who pretend to play an instrument in playback, of lip-synching (the lips moving in sync with the audio), of the fake public. I understand what he means, but I ask what Madonna's got to do with it.

He now responds in a lapidary way. Madonna never wanted, nor needed, to simulate her musical authenticity. If, previously, the concern of almost all musicians was to claim the authenticity of a musical performance executed for a television programme, with Madonna all this became superfluous. The significant authenticity for Madonna was not that of the stage, but of the "televsual"...

I ask him if he means to say that Madonna is only a televisual personality. He smiles at me, as if he only half agreed. He corrects me, explaining that he meant that Madonna is a lot more, but that she never tried to fake being a musician simply filmed by the television cameras. He insists on the fact that televisual pop is none other than a show of television personalities who perform two acts in addition to being personalities: the act of singing a song and the act of showing the song being sung. He continues, saying that there were even attempts by television itself to recuperate the musical authenticity, but despite everything, he says, since Madonna we travel in a triple dimension. The thing seems to make sense; I convince myself that deep down he's right. I'm silent for a while as I try to put all the pieces together. He repeats that there was a shift in musical and media-related dynamics over the years and, for various reasons, Madonna found herself at this crossroads and knew how to move better than others.

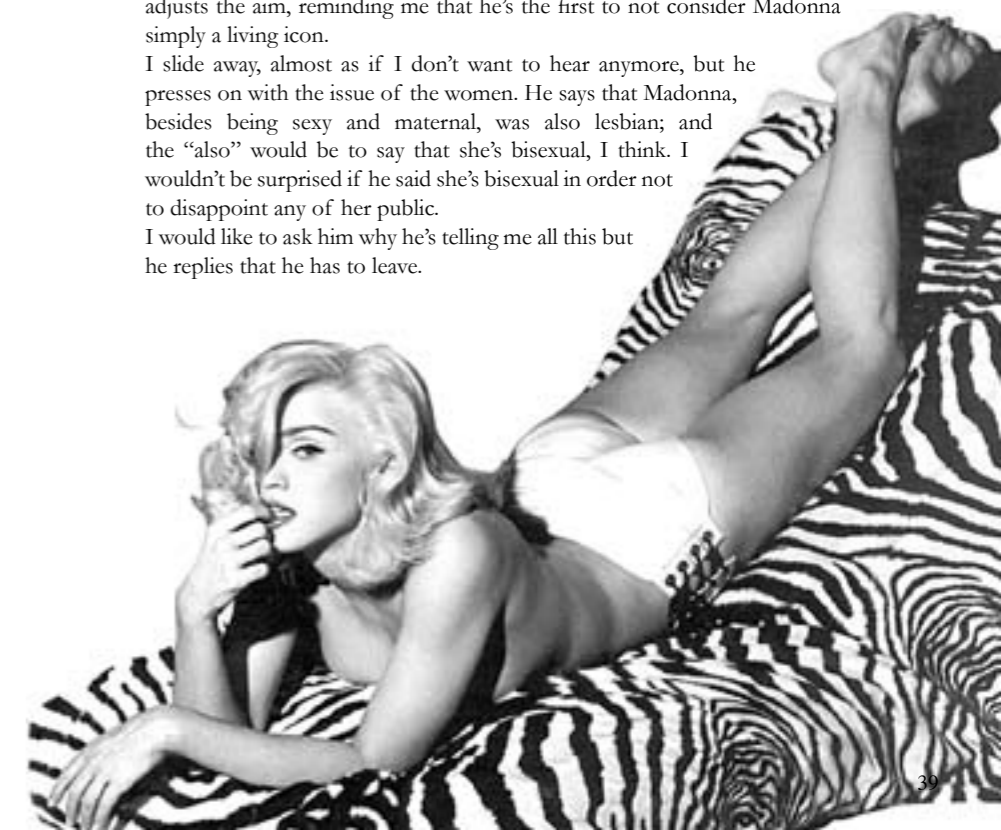
I would like to understand how she did this. He responds that the 1984 MTV Video Music Awards at Radio City Music Hall in New York was one of the first cases, certainly the most striking, of a lip-synched live performance created for a (live) television event. The first example in which the recorded song had to seem live and the live performance to be thought of as a future video. He emphasises that this was the most intelligent move made by MTV and Madonna, that it made her a craftsman. Then he asks me if I remember the video. I remember Madonna coming out of an enormous cake in a wedding dress and then improvising a striptease. He insists that this is the literal and folkloric aspect of it all. That Madonna's true greatness is her extraordinary capacity to be televisual and musical at the same time, without being as "televisual as she is musical". I find the discourse hard to follow and he clarifies the concept by explaining that the performance by Madonna became an actual video because it already was a video from the live performance and not because it was musically significant. Madonna's capacity to interpret the medium, he sustains, is equal to very few other artists worldwide.

Perhaps he doesn't feel like going on; he remains silent. He only adds that in order to succeed in this act of historic mutation, the image also played an important role.

As soon as he begins to talk about the media-related aspect, he notices that I back away a little. He tells me to relax because Madonna herself never kept it a secret. He cites the examples of the photo album "Sex" and the record "Erotica", both forms of self-exposure. He understands that I was expecting this type of discourse and adjusts the aim, reminding me that he's the first to not consider Madonna simply a living icon.

I slide away, almost as if I don't want to hear anymore, but he presses on with the issue of the women. He says that Madonna, besides being sexy and maternal, was also lesbian; and the "also" would be to say that she's bisexual, I think. I wouldn't be surprised if he said she's bisexual in order not to disappoint any of her public.

I would like to ask him why he's telling me all this but he replies that he has to leave.





Avant-garde is one thing.

Innovation is one thing.

Experimentation is one thing.

To lean a guitar in front of an insanely big amp with a volume output above and beyond human listening capabilities has got no business with any of the above three.

This is a way of making music that clearly references its predecessors: landmarks in the history of rock music, who defined its aesthetic codes. Thus it is a little strange to see a project like Sunn O))) elbowing its way to the forefront of contemporary rock music only to become its main compositional an executional vanguard. Sunn O)))’s main feature is their great simplicity: they take an intense and non-commercially exploited sound, and rewrite it with minimal variations in gigantic letters.

Stephen O’Malley and Greg Anderson’s band, however, escape their ideological premises almost immediately in order to inhabit a gray area of extreme metal that simply was waiting for occupants.

The minds behind Sunn O))) are two musicians, mostly from a doom metal background. The first member is Stephen O’Malley, whom in the past was in the US band Burning Witch, which in turn was born from the ashes of Thorr’s Hammer; both bands devoted to the sacred verb of the most malignant doom/stoner/sludge, successful disciples of the early Cathedral/Eyehategod axis and all its undertones. The second member is the founder and regent of the Southern Lord label, and leader of the band Goatsnake (with whom he enjoyed a discrete success in times of stoner rock hype); he is also O’Malley’s partner in infinite other bands.

However, Compared to all of the above projects, Sunn O))) was very different right from the start. In all probability it is the result of Anderson’s undying love for the most glorious chapter of the Earth saga: Sunn O))) penetrate deeply

into the cult Carlson’s band by pedantically repeating its Earth2 prototype and giving it a “hyper-metal” aesthetic: which is basically a casual reiteration of signs over a pre-existing format, rather than an ideological diktat.

If Anderson is the primary sound-maker, at least at first glance, it is O’Malley who immediately gives the project its unique non-musical connotations. A highly rated graphic designer (you can admire his work on his own site, www.ideologic.org), and generally refined image-maker, he is the main reason for Sunn O)))’s popularity with non-metal audiences. Either way, the bond between the two artists does not imply that Sunn O))) is an isolated unit: their practice is assisted by a high number of influences that include main protagonists of contemporary music as much as singers from obscure black metal bands; It’s a matter of credibility: anything that Sunn O))) touches, turns straight into gold.

Sunn O)))’s discographic saga begins somewhat laterally with the GrimmRobe Demos: a compilation of doom metal drones straight out of Dylan Carlson’s “junkie” phase that sounds more like a tribute-based side project than a proper album. It is with the next album, 00Void that Sunn O))) (while still spawning from the Earth-monster) present themselves with a clearer and better defined musical identity: long and incessant, at times ambient, apocalyptic drones moving at a dark, malignant speed. Here O’Malley’s cover art is crucial in defining the mood: images rendered black on dark grey and vice versa, funereal and decadent post-rock snapshots. With 00Void and the following Flight Of The Behemoth (the former released on their pal Lee Dorrian’s Rise Above label, and re-released on Southern Lord along with the latter), Sunn O)))’s music gains the support of the more open-minded black metal/doom aficionados:

music for the end of time and space, tortuous adventures at the end of the audible spectrum, and so on. The scenario in which this music emerged is also determining: while Dylan Carlson’s practice was relatively ostracized in his time, at the dawn of the 00s it was clear that slowness would be the new frontier for extreme metal. Though Anderson and O’Malley’s innovation is merely incremental: not slowness anymore, but stillness. Sunn O)))’s music starts getting mentioned among higher circles in reference to a promising future: the first half hour of the third album (2003) sees the two accompanied by Julian Cope in one of his career’s most accomplished ramblings; this and further events will bring Sunn O))) to be an ideal bridge between the Touch-school of drone avant-gardists like Oren Ambarchi (now a permanent collaborator and also in Burial Chamber - an ongoing side project with O’Malley and another Sunn O))) cohort, Attila Csihar) and any mentionable fringe of extreme metal (even hardcore detractors can’t deny the music’s accentuated negativity).

This approach is not dissimilar from John Zorn’s jazz-thrash dialogue in his Naked City/Painkiller times, although less academic and more open. It is a matter of details, or graphic appearance. It’s doubtless that the large appeal O’Malley’s graphics is largely due to Sunn O)))’s strong influence in contemporary rock.

However, the band’s glorious saga seems to be slowing down after their masterpiece White1. This album probably represents the band pushing their innovations to their limits: having reached pure drone, guests are invited to bring small (and, as in the other records, irrelevant) incremental innovations, which are destined to succumb in the band’s magma of pure electricity. From White2 to Black One, to their first collaboration with Boris, there are clear signals of scarce connectivity to a now unmanageable flux of sound; a flux

that, in the first case is subjected to an “ambient” makeover in which the sound becomes tame - an operation of bad faith in order to recruit new converts and give longevity to a fast-aging sound (which is the fate of any extremism) - and subsequently becomes convoluted - in additional bad faith - in a cloud of satanic riffs punctuated by the screams of Malefic and friends. All of this is a little irrelevant within a general discourse that could have easily embraced all of Music but is now only preaching for itself. Either way, there seems to be a change with the release of Altar, probably Sunn O)))’s most successful collaboration to this day, which involves Boris and a bunch of other guests (a resurrected Kim Thayil, for instance); and even more on its bonus disc, which features the first joint venture with the master Dylan Carlson (whom in turn reinvents the band’s malignant and lacerated approach in a western format, the results even more acid than his Hex album). This seems like the perfect balance: it would be a good starting point to rebuild a path of coherence, rather than a mass of theoretical masturbations that don’t apply too well to the project.

On the other hand, the band’s live approach remains unchanged and it’s still the definitive confirmation of the size of Sunn O)))’s project. One can see them on stage: spooky hooded figures in groups of two to five elements, playing one infinite metallic drone that lowers its tone within the hour to a pure vibration, at a volume that will squeeze your dinner out of your bowels. Most people who experience this seem to be bothered and/or upset: it is a basic and involving experience, in a way a little “cheap”, but never the less extremely “metallic” (in a “look who’s got the biggest dick” way), and excessive even to an expert ear. It’s within this love/hate that they seem to be on everyone’s mind as the “thing” that’s happening to rock music, par excellence.



DIARIES, NOTES & SKETCHES

INTERVIEW WITH PIP CHODOROV by Lorenzo Micheli Gigotti

from NERO n.12 december/january 2007

A couple of things before the 16,000 characters of this interview. Pip Chodorov was born in New York in 1965 but now lives in Paris. He has been a filmmaker and music composer since 1972. Chodorov studied Cognitive Science at the University of Rochester, New York and Film Semiotics at the University of Paris, France. He has been engaged in film distribution for several years – previously at Orion Classics, New York; UGC, Paris; and Light Cone, Paris. He is currently involved in Re:Voir Video, Paris, which he founded in 1994, and The Film Gallery, the first art gallery devoted exclusively to experimental film. He is also co-founder of L'Abominable, a cooperative do-it-yourself film lab in Paris, and moderator of the Internet-based forum on experimental film, Frameworks (mail to: listserv@listserv.aol.com, “subscribe frameworks”). The leading international artists of the European experimental film scene have grown up with and remained close to him (Metamkine and Karel Doing, above all). These artists continue the avant-garde tradition of experimental film, working with difficulty in squats and self-produced laboratories.

Lorenzo: I read your interview with Kenneth Anger published in *The Brooklyn Rail*, and I would like to repeat your first question to him: “How did you start making films?”

Pip: At the age of 4 or so I was fascinated by my dad's 16mm projector and learned how to thread it. At 6 or 7 he brought me some black leader and I made a few scratch films. This was still a fascination with the projector, seeing how the scratched lines animated themselves. At the same time I started shooting in 8mm, running around shooting single frames, or animating objects, or making Georges Méliès type tricks. I never

took it very seriously. I continued making films like that all through primary school, high school and university. When I went to Paris at the age of 23, people took my films more seriously, and so I had to make them more seriously. There are some other interesting elements. I had asthma growing up and didn't like running around outside; the camera allowed me to speed up reality and my interest in filmmaking became a way to pass time and build a community of friends.

Lorenzo: How did your meeting with Metamkine influence your work?

Pip: In 1990 I started working at Light Cone in Paris, an experimental film distribution cooperative. They took a film of mine in distribution; I became a member and started volunteering. I didn't realize how many little towns in France hosted regular film screenings. Grenoble was exceptionally active. I came to know the members of Metamkine first when they rented films, then when they performed. From them I learned that film could be developed easily at home, and that many interesting effects could be obtained using non-standard processing. With a little ingenuity one could invent all sorts of new imagery. I went down to Grenoble and learned the processes and was very inspired by the possibilities. I had felt restricted by the camera and filming the world around me, and by hand-developing and various sorts of manipulations, the film material became personal again, no matter what I filmed.

Lorenzo: What do you mean by “new imagery”?

Pip: For example, if you film through a red filter, the shadows stay black and the light parts of the image turn red. In Grenoble I wondered, how can I keep the white parts white but turn the dark parts red? By filming the negative through a green filter... simple but ingenious. I found people experimenting in all sorts of directions, doing wild things with reticulation, cross-processing, developing in coffee... I started

tie-dyeing my film, or projecting negatives and re-filming in reversal using filters, looking for moments on the edge between abstraction and figuration. The image became the result of a process, rather than a copy of what was in front of the camera. Any given image could be treated in any number of ways, opening up whole dimensions of possibilities, each with new layers of significance for the poetic filmmaker.

Lorenzo: Tom Cora of the Klangspuren Festival claims that the work of Metamkine offers us the rare experience of a live cinema projected like music, the projectionists enjoy the spontaneity of an instrumentalist. Do you think that improvisation has become customary in experimental cinema? Does it act like a music group in the presence of the public? Are you also a composer? What is the relationship between music and cinema? I'm thinking about your film *Piltzer* and the performances of Metamkine...

Pip: My initial inspiration from Metamkine was the images. The performance aspect was new to me, and I didn't know much about experimental music. For example, projecting with two projectors, a positive and a negative, and using filters, or one's hand in front of the lens to alter the density, this to me was magic. In my film *Piltzer* I was definitely working with ideas I had picked up from Metamkine in Grenoble. But those ideas come from my university studies in cognitive science, as well as ideas from structural films of the 1960s and 1970s. And of course there is a long history of color organs, synaesthesia and relating colored light to sound. I had long discussions with the members of Metamkine about improvisation, but they were more interested in the dramatic curve of their performances than in the strict relation of picture and sound. Improvisation has played a role in experimental cinema because of expanded works or performance pieces. The act of projecting in interaction with music or with other projectors is definitely linked to musical improvisation. Jonas Mekas has described his way of filming as using the camera like



a jazzman plays an instrument. The idea of improvisation goes back a long way. It is not new. But it is not necessarily in function of the audience, as it can be with music. The relation between music and cinema goes back, as I said, to Remington and color organs, and even further back to Leonardo da Vinci. My interest is more in the eyes and the ears and how the brain processes perceptual signals.

Lorenzo: Can you talk about the labs that were established in Europe at the beginning of the '90s (102, L'Abominable, MTK, Studio Een, etc.)?

Pip: In the late 1980s, Karel Doing bought some Super 8mm printing equipment in Arnhem, the Netherlands, and decided to make a trip to London, to the London Film-Makers' Co-operative where they had a printer and developer, to learn how to set up a lab. He founded Studio Een and for several years thereafter, Karel made Super 8mm prints and offered workshops. The Metamkine group attended one of these and learned how Jürgen Reble (of the group Schmelzdahin) and other filmmakers developed their own film and manipulated images. Chris Auger had already worked at a photo lab, and Metamkine had already been developing their own slides and making sandwiches of slides. They started a small lab to develop Super 8mm black and white, developing in a bucket in a dark room. By 1992 they had acquired more complex equipment, and when I visited them in 1993 they had an optical printer, a contact printer, a well-equipped darkroom and editing tables. People started coming from Paris, Geneva, Brussels, and from all over France. By 1995 they could no longer manage the lab and make their own films, so they offered to help filmmakers set up their own labs in each city. I was one of the co-founders of L'Abominable in Paris with Nicolas Rey, Anne-Marie Cornu, Yves Pelissier and a half dozen other filmmakers. At the same time, labs started elsewhere. L'Abominable is today one of the best equipped and most active. We are happy to see that this experience passed hands from London to Holland to Grenoble to Paris and back to London over the course of twenty years. With improvements along the way!

Lorenzo: What do you think determined this interest in using film during the boom of the digital revolution? Is there something that connects them?

Pip: There has always been an interest in using film. In France it goes like this: just after the First World War, the filmmaking scene was incredibly active and the avant-garde was born here. In the 1930s activity died down and in the 1940s during the Second World War, all the artists went to America where filmmaking flourished in the 1950s and 1960s, under the influence of displaced European filmmakers. Meanwhile, in France in the 1950s, only the Lettrists were inventing avant-garde work, and during the Nouvelle Vague, some militant independent features were made. Experimental filmmaking was not revived on a large scale until the late 1960s, but during

the 1970s it was huge. There were many production cooperatives and groups of filmmakers, and the number of festivals and screenings multiplied until 1976-1978, and there was an interest in starting a lab. But in those days lab equipment was state-of-the-art and very expensive. Requests for funding and political disagreements about how to receive funding divided the federation of filmmakers and cooperatives, and the 1980s was a very quiet period. The torch was kept alight mainly by Light Cone. The late 1990s picked up again, young groups started making and showing films, and by 1997 there were new production coops in Paris: L'Abominable and ETNA (Braquage). Today, new labs have sprung up all over France because the equipment is easier to find and quite cheap, but we are starting to see a new problem. Labs are closing, Kodak is discontinuing film stocks, cameras and projectors are not made anymore. The decision to work with film is now a conscious decision NOT to work with digital. But more interestingly, the film artists are taking over processes that before were industrial processes.

Lorenzo: How and when did the idea of founding Re:Voir come about?

Pip: In the early 1990s, many programmers were coming to Light Cone to screen films in view of rentals. We started asking filmmakers for videotapes, to save wear and tear on the prints. Some said no and some said yes. But one filmmaker did not understand our request, and said yes, it would be great if we could distribute the films on video. Maya Deren films had been available on video in the US since the mid-1980s. I realized this trend would soon hit France and Europe, and decided that not only would it be good business, but also important to promote the films and film art. I also felt it was important that we the filmmakers run our distribution, rather than entrepreneurs or big corporations. I did not foresee that someday, electronic distribution would threaten to overtake film projection. Anyway, that was in 1994. We released the films of Maya Deren, Hans Richter and Patrick Bokanowski. We continued releasing three titles per year, until 2000 when we released 8 titles including boxed sets with books. We became more and more ambitious. DVD became a big problem because there is too much compression for experimental films. We are trying to continue publishing without making concessions, on VHS and Blu-Ray, which are both difficult to sell at this time. We are forced to make DVDs but we are trying to release work that is the least radical visually. People are being brainwashed by big corporations about the digital revolution, about the art world, and filmmakers are even pushing me in directions I think are dangerous for the future.

Lorenzo: I understand that you opened an art gallery in Paris for experimental film. What was the impetus behind this decision? Where and how do you obtain financing for all these activities?



Jeff Perkins, “Shout (Fluxfilm #22)”, 1966. Photo © Jeff Perkins

Pip: In the beginning, one of my goals was to get Maya Deren into the Fnac, a department store in France that sells video. The reason of going to the Fnac was to bring experimental films into the mainstream market. That is one side of the spectrum. The other side is the art world. Experimental film has always been in a no-mans-land between the film industry and the art world. There is an important art fair in Paris called the FIAC (Foire Internationale d'Art Contemporain). Two years ago I was surprised to see video screens all over the FIAC but no films. Suddenly I felt the importance of the artists I was promoting and their complete absence from the art world. I started the gallery with the help of friends and colleagues with the main goal of having a booth at the art fair and showing films. At first there was no strategy of selling films in the art world. This is a big debate. Experimental filmmakers and contemporary artists using film belong to two worlds that rarely meet. We founded The Film Gallery in 2005, the first and only art gallery devoted exclusively to experimental films. We are not funded. We try and survive for now, between Re:Voir editions, the gallery and the little bookstore. We also found a niche market, providing 16mm projectors and services for museums showing films on loopers.

Lorenzo: What strategies do you adopt to sell films in the gallery?

Pip: It is hard to sell films. Few have succeeded. Collectors want to know how to live with the art they have bought. They don't want to set up a projector in the living room, they don't want to risk scratching their unique print.

Museums with film collections typically pay 3-5 times



Robert Breer, “Eyewash”



the cost of the print, a very small fraction of what they spend on paintings. The prints do not go up in value - on the contrary, they turn red over time, or are scratched if projected often. Recently, museums have started buying films from art galleries, made by contemporary artists working in film and within the art world economy. A museum may spend from under 10,000 to over 100,000 for a film. They will probably acquire a negative, one in a limited series, with the right to print a certain number of projection prints. Because striking prints is tricky business, artists may only authorize certain labs, or supervise making the prints. The museum will exhibit the film on loopers, running it continuously for several weeks or months. This requires several prints to be prepared, as well as maintaining the loop installation. It is expensive for a museum to show the work. In the gallery, I have chosen to show mostly historical experimental films from



the past century. These were never offered as a limited series when they were made, and it is artificial and impractical to offer a limited series now. So we have been trying to sell signed prints of films we think are historically or aesthetically important. We've been toying with the idea of commissioning new work from historical makers, but many film artists are reticent to limit the number of copies, for fear the work will not be seen. All these problems are indicative of the uncomfortable position of film in the art world. We are trying to pioneer an attitude within the art world to take filmmakers as seriously as artists, but we have not yet solved the problem of how to sell the work.

Lorenzo: We spoke about contemporary art and experimental cinema and I would like to ask you: don't you think that today it's quite complex to distinguish the context of contemporary art and experimental cinema?

Pip: These are two worlds that do not know how to meet. Almost none of the contemporary artists working in film and video are familiar with the history of experimental film. There are exceptions. Almost none of the great experimental filmmakers had or have a career in the art world with their films. There is no good reason why Stan Brakhage and Bill Viola, one working in film and the other in video, both top artists in their field, do not have the same authority, renown and income. One is in the art world and the other chose to or was forced to remain outside it. I find a lot of the contemporary work using film rather uninteresting compared to the work of contemporary experimental filmmakers. It is a different animal altogether. Matthew Barney seems to be working with the codes of the film industry, production and reception, that is his key. However, he is shocking people by spending so much money on such absurd imagery. But this too is a Hollywood tradition, to spend millions to create a fantasy. To me, Barney is not working with the clay of pellicula, but with the clay of Hollywood traditions, the mass media, the big budgets, the popcorn chewing audience and their expectations. Jonathan Monk makes 16mm work but it is all conceptual self-references to the art world. Whereas, as you mentioned, the experimental films refer to each other and to the history of cinema. The galleries are altogether ignorant of film techniques, history, traditions and logistics. Hollywood borrows freely from the avant-garde, the freeloaders. But the experimentation we filmmakers do does not penetrate the art world. Yet. For better or for worse.

Lorenzo: I think that experimental cinema has maintained over the years a singular connection with its history and with the history of the moving image. Perhaps we can say that it has become almost like a written and critical record of films themselves. I'm thinking about "Historire(s) du cinéma" by Godard, or your film "Number 4", which makes me think of films by Michael Snow.

Pip: Absolutely. It is a reflexive practice, always commenting on itself. Films about film. The use of found footage, for example, is a direct use of quotation from previous film imagery. Bill Morrison says: I love to shoot, but there is so much great footage out there to use and rework, a century of good images, why not work with it? In my own work, I have often felt that the filmmakers of the 1960s and 1970s were having a dialogue with each other about film techniques and meaning and that this came to an end somewhere. But these issues are still interesting and can still be

developed. I make my films with the same equipment and capabilities as were common back then, and I am inspired by ideas that they were involved with. There have been film performances (improvisation) from the early '20s (Dada), through Lettrism in the 1950s, Fluxus in the 1960s, right through to Metamkine now.

Lorenzo: In 1965 Jonas Mekas, reflecting upon Film-Makers' Cinematheque's screenings, claimed that some films (by Angus McLise, Nam June Paik, Jerry Joffen) were pushing the boundaries of cinema into a mysterious border land. There is the light, screen and, most of the time, also the moving image. But this could not describe what Griffith or Godard did. The cinematographic medium - he wrote - is exploding and is imposing itself to go on blindly in a direction that nobody knows. Forty years later, what direction do you think the cinematographic medium has taken?

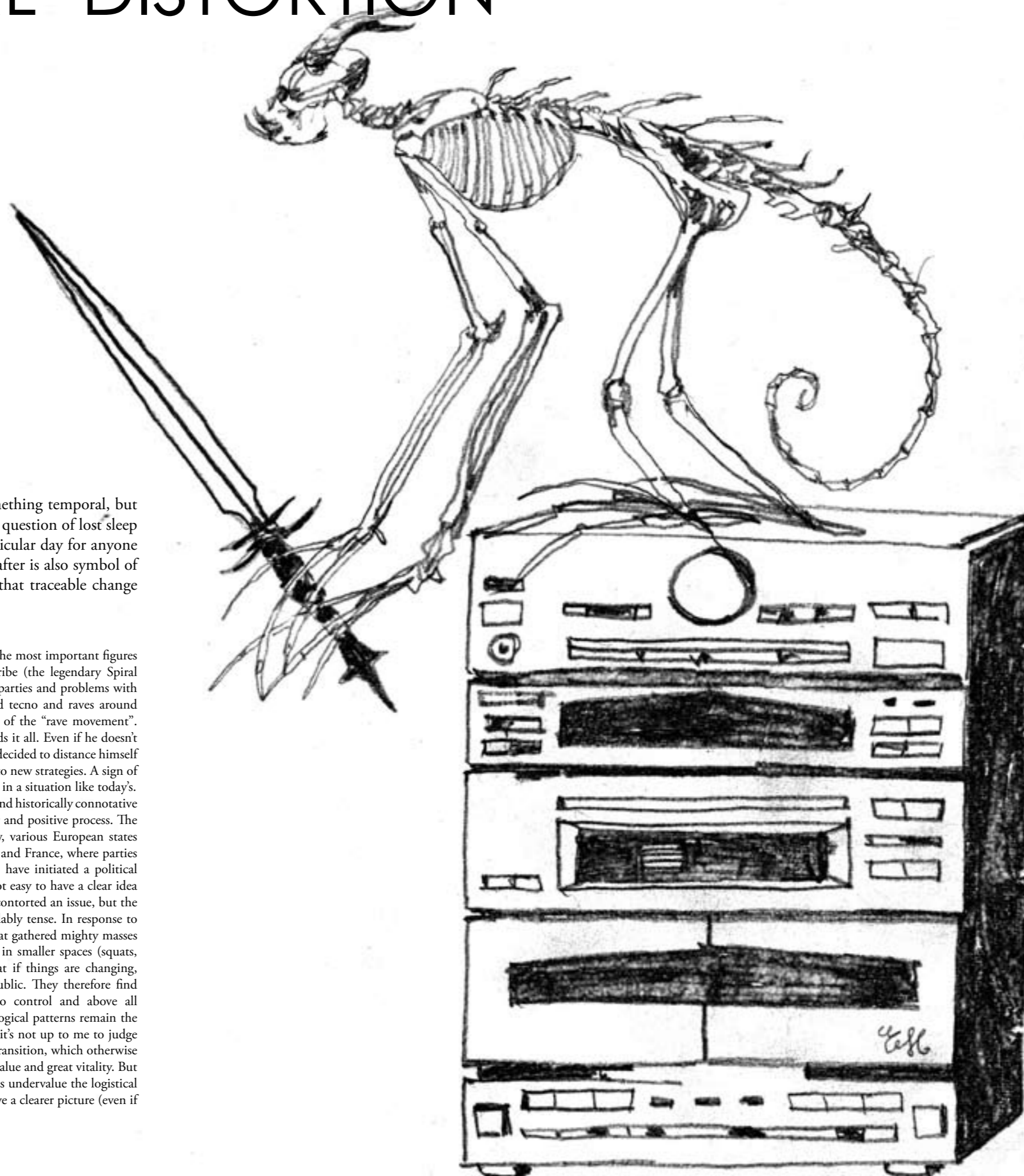
Pip: Formally, at that time we reached a period of investigation into the boundaries that went as far as it could, using the mechanics and equipment of cinema. In France, the Lettrists were to take cinema into even further boundaries: imaginary cinema, infinitesimal cinema, super-temporal or even anti-super-temporal or even anti-anti-sup films. These questioned the very act of watching a film, of making a film, of imagining a film, or of any combination of the above, as well as the negation of each, and calling into question the very act of creation itself by the viewers. After these two boundaries were pushed, the question remained of what films to make. Throughout the last 20 years, there has been a return to older techniques with newer issues at stake. Found footage films questioning gender roles or politics, diary films reworked chemically, riding the frontier between the figurative and abstract. The poetry of film has become more about personal expression and proposing new never-before-seen images. There are always inventors - Peter Tscherkassky and his 35mm scope films made with found footage and laser pens; Nicolas Rey's reticulation and, more recently, highly political essays mixing diary with Marxism and experimenting with techniques from the beginnings of cinema; Martin Arnold removing Hollywood characters from their backgrounds; Rose Lowder weaving three scenes together frame by frame in her Bolex to make a series of one-minute "Bouquets"; Frédérique Devaux's series of films about Kabylie using collages and mosaics of different forms and formats of film stock; Cécile Fontaine stripping color layers off one piece of film using scotch tape and alcohol and placing them on other strips; Ken Jacobs' 3D magic lantern shows - we are continually making new surprising images with film. But more and more there is a reason behind each film, an idea, a mixture of techniques with layers of interpretation. Through the 1990s Stan Brakhage became prolific in painting on film and each film was different and beautiful and expressed a pure idea, the windows of Chartres Cathedral, or the experience of slipping on black ice. I think each maker is expressing his or her personality through the work, and also his or her theoretical conception of the film medium. Each film is a manifesto. Each film is sweat, and heartbeats, and passion. I think we went beyond the beyond and came back home to daily reality, and now we are working very hard to make films that matter.

links:
www.re-voir.com
www.l-abominable.org
<http://metamkine.free.fr>
www.doingfilm.nl

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CRYSTAL DISTORTION

by Valerio Mannucci
illustrations by Emiliano Maggi
from NERO n.04 march/april 2005



The day after. In my opinion it's not something temporal, but rather a state of mind. And it's not even a question of lost sleep or physical malaise: the day after is a particular day for anyone who lived a great night out. But the day after is also symbol of a change that has occurred. A little like that traceable change inside the rave movement...

Brief summary:
Simon Carter (AKA Crystal Distortion) is one of the most important figures in the European underground scene. With his tribe (the legendary Spiral Tribe, a troupe of 23 people known for their free parties and problems with the law), he consolidated the foundations of hard techno and raves around Europe, thus contributing to the current concept of the "rave movement". And yet today he seems to be subtly critical towards it all. Even if he doesn't want to place blame on anyone, it appears that he's decided to distance himself from a certain type of behaviour in order to adapt to new strategies. A sign of maturity or cynicism? Difficult question, especially in a situation like today's. To briefly explain, what's happening inside the vast and historically connotative reality of the rave movement is not exactly a linear and positive process. The story is always evolving and for several years now, various European states (the first among them being the United Kingdom and France, where parties sometimes reached among the tens of thousands) have initiated a political agenda of prescriptive repression and police. It's not easy to have a clear idea about it all, nor does it interest me to examine so contorted an issue, but the situation is definitely very delicate and understandably tense. In response to such repression, instead of the large rave parties that gathered mighty masses of regulars, one has returned to parties organised in smaller spaces (squats, social centres, etc). The problem, however, is that if things are changing, not everyone seems to realise it, especially the public. They therefore find themselves in a situation of change, difficult to control and above all condemned if the methods and unconscious ideological patterns remain the same. As an external sympathiser of this ambient, it's not up to me to judge the strategies needed to get out from this historic transition, which otherwise risks making anachronistic a reality of undoubted value and great vitality. But if we add to this that even the organisers sometimes undervalue the logistical and organisational situation, perhaps we would have a clearer picture (even if inevitably personal) of the current state of things.

Rome, February 19, 2005

Here I am, a dozen hours before the party's over, hoping to find the time to chat with one of the people who contributed to the invention of the illegal parties, the tribe and sound systems. Let's say that I can't actually be described as a "fan" of his, but to find oneself seated on a couch with Simon (that is, Crystal Distortion) is a little like finding oneself facing a dark star, it's useless to deny it. A star, however, that's a lot closer than when watching it from below, from a dark, crowded, delirious dance floor. If you cross paths with him when he passes near an audio system, then you're on your own. You succeed in delaying him with difficulty. But now that he's here, lounging on the couch and devouring the seventh shitty film that the next-door neighbour of his kind host lent him, at first impact he seems almost defenceless. After having stopped the DVD, Simon finds the time and strength (but above all the desire) to exchange a couple of words with me, without too many pretensions, and with points of unexpected profoundness. Sure, he's tired, but he also comes out of a really serious live set and a busy night. Unfortunately, also from a series of rather unpleasant events mainly connected to the breaking down of the gates by some guy (as nice as he is thoughtful), intolerant of that most inconvenient (but necessary) of social compromises: the queue. Sure, it wasn't well organised, but it was still a queue...

Valerio: The illegal European underground movement has notably changed in recent years and you often also play in clubs. Is removing yourself from a context that you created a personal necessity of yours, or is it only a reaction to the impossibility of using the old methods?

Crystal: Hmm...this is a very tough question...well, perhaps for now it's better if we say that I'm mainly interested in playing...better still, let's say that I willingly play where they ask me to. In the end, it doesn't make much difference to me, if I have to be honest. I see it more as a matter of social evolution and new possibilities.

Valerio: With regards to exactly this, how do you see the relationship between the record market, in which you are beginning to be personally involved, and the culture of the movement that you yourself contributed to spreading?

Crystal: Record market and culture of reference...I wouldn't know; I have my label and I intend to move forward...the point is that one needs to go forward in some way. When you always move among the same people, who hold onto the same ideas and the same way of doing things for years, in the end you have to move on, you have to change, you have to be able to adapt. When opportunities arise that can be exploited, one at least needs to be capable of exploiting them; then, when one's on the inside, one sees how it goes...

Valerio: If I understand correctly, you think that today's situation is very different from the experiences in the early 1990s... I would like to explore this aspect: do you believe that it makes sense to speak of politics and, above all, ideology in these environments today? How do you think one can intervene today?

Crystal: Ideology? If we consider fun as an ideology, then yes. The problem is at the base and comes from the fact that today we are very 'protected' and, if on the one hand this is good, on the other it takes a lot of the fun out of daily living. And so one must move wherever one finds a bit of fun. In short, we have arrived at a point in which 'global security' is tightening a rope around us. They tell us these stories of terrorism in order to be able to protect and therefore control us, and then they go take what they need in the Middle East and spread their democracy in the world. Apart from everything else, the problem is that to live without money today, in the 21st century, is really difficult compared to only ten years ago. Today there's too much control. So also the notion of 'living without money' no longer makes sense. The people that animate the rave movement are now a stereotype, while before they weren't, perhaps because before it was something new and there was a consciousness of being at the start of something big which needed a foundation. Today the thing is already packaged and ready to go, and even if it's no longer the same, the phenomena continues to grow. The system defined a category for the people who go to raves and keep an eye on this stereotyped - and therefore more controllable - category. The thought of stealing something today is suicide. Therefore, if you want to throw a good party you have to spend money. And in order to go to a good party you have to pay. Because of this I can say that I view money only as a tool. You don't have to be afraid of it but neither see it as something good.

Returning to the matter of control, today we're so kept in check by the media, by the fact that one can't bring a penknife on board an aeroplane because it means you want to kill a pilot, that probably money is man's only chance of defence in this economic nightmare. Perhaps it will be our last defence given that all the other rights have been taken away from us. All that's left is to support yourself and plan. I now play in commercial ambits for this reason, to also show that it's really a small choice with respect to the real problem at hand. In the end, the people who go to the parties today are not so different from the others, in a certain sense. The people who animated the scene for years can't go on for the rest of their lives risking arrest every weekend by the police. More stable situations are needed to be able to go forward coherently. I strongly believe in camouflage now, I think I can do more damage hidden inside the system than living it from the outside and remaining only a target.

Valerio: Radically changing the subject, I wanted to ask you a purely musical question: it seems to me that you're moving from the classic straight sounding board towards a principally broken rhythmic structure. Do you think this is a macro-tendency?

Crystal: Perhaps we got tired or bored of listening to and playing that stuff. I still think it continues... (he says this laughing, *ndr*). I don't know if it's actually a macro-tendency, I believe that music goes forward by itself, that we don't decide where to make it go. The music writes its own story, at least as far as I'm concerned it functions like that. And, therefore, perhaps it is a macro-tendency.

Valerio: Always with respect to your music: previously you often used a lot of bits and pieces of analogue instruments, while today you only use a laptop for the live sets. Is it a matter of convenience or is there a different work on the sound?

Crystal: I use Logic to edit the stuff that I produce. This allows me a lot of flexibility, to play live very easily, pretty accurately, and above all it allows me to use a lot of loops. It is, as you were saying, mainly a matter of convenience. There's no different work on the sound, given that I seem to understand that you mean the use of very advanced software instruments. If you have enough control over what you're doing, you can do what you want with these digital means, following the same path, but with greater convenience. I like this small set a lot, it allows me to play a lot of stuff, also old tracks that would be difficult to reproduce with the old instruments, it allows me to compose music... I'll probably let the rest go screw itself, because I can travel without problems: you're not tied to anything and you can go easy. Also, the quality of the sound doesn't suffer, especially if you produce with the computer, because the sound remains inside it and the quality isn't lost.

Valerio: Outside of your circle and the things you usually do, is there something else you like?

Crystal: I played the cables in a rock band!... No, I don't know, it's difficult to say, it's difficult to give names, I'll inevitably forget someone, but let me think... Obviously everything that's valid... Sonic Youth for example, or if we're talking about really current things, Cursor Minor comes to mind. That's great music, you have to hear it, if you want I'll play it for you, do we have Internet access?...

Valerio: Apart from music, what else interests you in the various artistic fields?

Crystal: Good food definitely... But I understand you weren't referring to this, so I can tell you that in art I like the stuff made in Flash. Art... a good question would be: do you like art? (he says this with a slightly bitter smile, *ndr*).

Valerio: So I'll ask you: do you like art?

Crystal: I like fortuitous, spontaneous art. I like accidental art... apart from everything, I like to make and watch videos, I like the industrial stuff and I like things that move. If we talk about institutional art, the absolutely funniest thing in the world was when the Tate Gallery gave an award to a work called *Light Switching On and Off* (a work by Martin Creed, *ndr*). A light that switched on and off, on and off, on and off, in an empty white room... (this time I also laugh, *ndr*).

Valerio: To finish up, then I'll leave you to watch the film you were watching, what can't you stand?

Crystal: Do you know that film in which people are coming back from a rave and walk into the metro? You see the hot-dog and sausage stands, the people buying their tickets. Two or three times a week, I'm in the middle of that kind of scene, in absurd hours and not always in the best of conditions... You have to take out your metro pass, open your bag, search in your jacket pockets, look in your trousers... sometimes you even have to take off your trousers! And then you have to put everything back together again and you'd also like your brain back that, by now, is long gone...

(A special thanks to Davide Talia for his collaboration and to Strike s.p.a. for giving me the chance to interview Crystal Distortion.)



Gabriele Arruzzo
Andisheh Avini
Botto e Bruno
Monica Carocci
Martin Creed
Paola De Pietri

Alberto Peola

Arte Contemporanea

Emily Jacir
Marguerite Kahrl
Thorsten Kirchhoff
Perino & Vele
Laura Pugno
Sophy Rickett

Here lies Hard Rock



It was the Sex Pistols who said that Punk had no future. But this thing here, that you create something and then immediately declare its end, can't be done for logical reasons. To want to be a thing, and then its death, violates the so-called First Principle since one admits that being is contradictory. But being is and cannot not be. This concept was better expressed by two circles of neo-Parmenidean thinkers corresponding to the names of Exploited and Total Chaos. The first said that *punk's not dead*, the second that *punk will not die* (the consonance between the conclusions is evident). But they were right: you plainly see how Green Day, who pass for punk, are still around today. And at least it's clear that if you call any thing Punk, *some thing* of the whole can always die, but not everything – because there's always *something* left, to play, as a residual *living* thing. Which means that, by now, you consider Punk eternal and the discussion is closed. Like it or not, but that's the way it is. But if I may say so, what's really bad off is Hard Rock. You'll immediately back up this sentence that I wrote if you look around with me and try hard to add things up: Ozzy Osbourne on MTV, playing the idiot; Dee Snider who, after having bred a couple of debauched sons, dedicates body and soul to gardening; Tommy Lee with hepatitis C that, OK, is hardcore, but you're a little sorry just the same; Steven Tyler, overshadowed by the ego of his daughter, a bimbo without much sense – he's left only with soundtracks with which to occupy himself, the squalor; John Sebastian Bach, who dumped all his companions and now collaborates with... Hatebreed!

Axl Rose? Unavailable.
In fact, if you see him, tell him that they're looking for him.

And careful, it's not just about a deficit of charismatic leadership. One needs to look at what the whole contemporary Supply Side has to offer in order to understand better, departing from, e.g., The Darkness. They're really ridiculous. The Velvet Revolver, you say? Come on, let's not kid around. Of what's good there remains roughly: Motörhead (but Lemmy, unfortunately, isn't immortal), some circus freak (American) and Scandinavia. But hey, it's not as if Scandinavia can always do everything by itself.

2

There's only one way to defuse, or to remove, pessimism and irritation from the sad state of things: to try to negate the birth of Hard Rock. From the moment that, to nothing not born it's given to die, the only thing to say is that Hard Rock was a) born dead and/or b) born false. Looking closely, the idea that it was born dead works because it drives the musical critique, providing it with new elucidatory categories. To say that Hard Rock was born dead means to deliver its hermeneutic key into the hands of those who created it: Alice Cooper and Black Sabbath, they were the party of the living dead, or, well, just the dead. If it's true that they invented the genre, one presumes that they know something about it; if they know about death, so Hard Rock was born dead. But let's say it better and add something else so as not to run the risk of sententiousness as an end in itself. It immediately strikes you how, being neither subversive nor nihilistic, Hard Rock doesn't take sides with the living. Therefore, it suffocates on its own vomit and doesn't care much about getting by. But Punk, yes, it definitely does, from the moment that, from *pars destruens*, it fixes another positive that remains still, to give meaning to nihilism. In this dialectic is as much the change that Punk was, as the words with which John Lydon used to criticise Sid Vicious. Sid Vicious was still, or, rather, *already* was Hard Rock. But John Lydon no, he was Punk, he wanted to go on, to wave his arms about, to provoke and continue to do something. Sure enough, PIL was also punk. But what to say about Hard Rock as a party of the dead? That it was a party nonetheless, a celebration (therefore it's *rock*), but not in the least vitalist. On the contrary, destructive, exterminating. But not politically, since practical annihilation always presupposes a Marxist (but also "Punk", so desiring) "...day will come".

Right. These ideas, illustrated very rapidly, could have been formalised with equal rigour as much by Theodor W. Adorno as by Glenn Danzig. So let's take Danzig, when he was in the Misfits. The band was Punk but the frontman was Hard Rock; he took all the aesthetic content of the musical phenomenon and managed it with make-up, poses, with *style* in its original meaning. Danzig was the real dead man in a band of dead who played at being such. It was therefore inevitable that he would end up doing those awful albums on his own, all alone.

Danzig was Hard Rock!, not the Pope, as Celentano says.
And Celentano can piss off as well.

3

However, we established that one could also say that Hard Rock was born *false*. It all adds up from the moment in which if a thing is born false, it's false that it was born as it appears to be, and in falsity, it continues to spawn its vicissitudes. In system with death, there's not much difference then. If we say that Hard Rock was born false – and let's pay attention that this idea of falsity, necessarily loose at the edges in order to support the present explanatory needs, has other real phenomenological sides in a lot of things that are *really* Hard Rock, including e.g. the masks, costumes, legends, the stage designs of the Big Shows, and the fans above all – if we say that it was born false, then we can't but individuate its birth in the precise moment of the release of *This is Spinal Tap*, justifiably the most famous mockumentary in film history, re-released a few months ago in double DVD, with an hour and a half of fantastic extra footage.

Spinal Tap, and not Kiss, are the first roots of false Hard Rock. Of course, Kiss didn't really exist: the masks and characters (both eternal) were suspended in non-identification limbo, in such a way that if their fans had ever intended to understand them, their only possibility was to dive headfirst into their world, organised according to peculiar, artificial but fascinating rules. For this reason also, the saga of Kiss was among the most fascinating in the history of rock. Spinal Tap, on the other hand, came into the world already *beyond* Kiss: it's not a real band of eternal characters that "don't exist", but rather a fictitious band of musicians that live and die *even if not being able to exist*.

Spinal Tap's story begins in Great Britain, originating from the desire of two friends David St. Hubbins and Nigel Tufnel (the actors Michael McKean and Christopher Guest) to start a band. The first attempts have ridiculous names, The Originals, The New Originals, The Thamesmen. When the two succeed in enlisting bass player Derek Smalls (actor Harry Shearer), they decide to change the moniker to Spinal Tap. Their first full-length album, *Listen to the Flower People*, sends them into the charts and then on tour. Unfortunately, however, the drummer John Pepys dies after a bizarre gardening accident. From that moment on, the band is unable to stabilise its formation: the new drummer Stumpy Joe suffocates on someone else's vomit; his successor, Peter "James" Bond, dies by spontaneous combustion "in a great burst of green flames"; Mike Shrimpton, the third arrival, is also destined to return to his creator after an explosion on stage. On film, the succession is narrated in a dramatic and exhilarating way. Obviously, it's a ferocious satire about that other way of being (or being thought of) of Hard Rock as dead or born dead, as we were saying before, the "philosophy" of 90% of the hard rock bands established in the '70s and exploding in the '80s. The bands of skulls, drugs or Satan, depending. A "philosophy" that stung when spit with a lot of verve back in the faces of those who profess it for real. In this sense, a popular declaration by Brad Whitford in an English magazine remains on record: "The first time Steven (Tyler) saw *This is Spinal Tap*, he didn't find it at all amusing! This gages how much the film actually hit the mark. He was really pissed off! He said: hey, it's not funny!" But yes, it was funny, and it still is today. It was thought up ad hoc to make fun of rock made up of fallen, "wasted", living or already dead stars, and you can bet your life that it succeeds. Filmed skilfully, structured to perfection, it remains an absolute film, a classic that is, however, also a *true story*. Because, of course, a story can have fictitious presuppositions while still remaining history: it's enough that these suppositions produce real consequences. If the stage fiction of the mockumentary continues to be ridiculous at every umpteenth screening – stopping in time the lives of three ugly moustached mugs, three losers, who created a trend, who obliterated drummers in the most implausible ways (Joe "Mama" Besser, the fifth drummer of the band, unaccountably and very simply disappeared and is therefore presumed dead), and what's more, they also thought of the epitaphs, but in an idiotic way like "here I lie and why not?" – in reality, with the passing of historic time of *this* world, Spinal Tap's albums were listened to, but no! *consumed*, by herds of sincere spirited heavy-metal fans, until the apotheosis in 1992.

An apotheosis that was, in a certain sense, a sort of breaking down of the screen, a transition from that imaginary truth to concrete worldliness – a TV passage similar to those of the Chinaman horrors that are now fashionable. Spinal Tap reunite and organise a real concert/event (well, "real", it was a Music Awards) *outside* of *This is Spinal Tap*, which was then followed by a new album *Break Like the Wind*, which, moreover, I'm listening to right now, for the umpteenth time and with unwavering enthusiasm. Slash, Satriani and Cher all appear on some of the tracks of this album! And this was already an event, History.

4

As everyone knows, Spinal Tap disappeared again after the flash in the early '90s. It seems that the drummer who recorded *Break Like the Wind*, Ric Shrimpton, is also dead: he resold his dialysis machine to buy drugs and nobody has heard from him since. The great wave of false Hard Rock, however, never stopped. It didn't stop for the band that, from the shady entity that it became, nevertheless went on to effect incursions into reality, recording a track for an ad in 1995 and publishing an official website in 1996. And it didn't stop for all those who were inspired by Spinal Tap. We were talking earlier about The Darkness, who are ridiculous, but that doesn't take away from the fact that, without Spinal Tap, they would never have had a sound and style to spend. But if one talks about the great false school, what do you do? You don't also include the last Turbonegro in the definition? And one should continue with a roll-call that goes on for years, but here's neither the time nor place.

So to conclude, Hard Rock is either false or dead. But nobody likes death these days, because we live on Techne and publicity: for the first, death is the enemy, for the second it's *taboo*. The fear that something dies, the fear that something which likes to die dies or, better yet, is already dead (it's worth saying *old school* Hard Rock) is as insipid as it is inscribed in the spirit of our times. Therefore, the fear is more or less justifiable. However, I say: if we've already arrived at the point of having to justify ourselves, let's go that extra centimetre towards the abyss to also arrive at *consoling ourselves*. In rock, we can do this by turning the gaze once again, or holding it if it's there already, to false Hard Rock, which amuses us and makes us feel better.

This is Spinal Tap lasts eighty minutes but, in this sense, it's been going on for 21 years.



A PORTRAIT OF A TRANSCONTINENTAL CULTURAL CATALYST A DIALOGUE WITH WILLOUGHBY SHARP

by Luca Lo Pinto
from NERO n.11 october/november 2006

Willoughby Sharp defines himself as a “transcontinental cultural catalyst”. Perhaps no other term is more appropriate for someone who founded *Avalanche* (one of the most important magazines of the avant-garde), curated experimental exhibitions such as “Videoperformance” and “Pier 18”, video-interviewed artists like Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, Bruce Nauman and Dennis Oppenheim (to name only the most well-known), was a great friend and collaborator of Joseph Beuys, and participated in historic exhibitions like “Information”. At the venerable age of 70, Willoughby is a living testimony of the New York artistic avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s, and still very active today.

Luca: First of all, I'm curious to know how you came into the New York art world... Analysing all that you have done, it's impossible to separate your figure from this city...

Willoughby: I am a second generation New Yorker. I was born there in 1936. I didn't “come into” the New York art world. I was born into it. Nurtured by Abstract Expressionism, and the frequent trips I took to Europe between 1957 and 1967, I grew to become a transcontinental cultural catalyst. In March 1964, when I was a PhD candidate in Art History with Meyer Shapiro at Columbia University, I curated my first exhibition and the first exhibition of Pop Art. After having personal contact with some of the leading Abstract Expressionists, like Barney Newman whose Park Avenue studio I went to with Alfred Schmela in the early '60s, I had already gone back and forth to Europe many times. Over Christmas in 1957 and early 1958, I had my first meetings with Joseph Beuys in Dusseldorf. After I curated the first exhibition of Pop Art at Columbia University in 1964, I went to Europe again, as I had done every summer since 1957. In London I met Peter Blake, Joe Tilson and David Hockney, along with the younger generation of artists like David Medalla, Paul Keeler, Guy Brett and Gustav Metzger who formed the nucleus of the Signals group. In 1968, to celebrate the Olympic games in Mexico, I was invited to curate the exhibition, “Kineticism, Sculpture and Environmental Situations”. In this exhibition of 18 international artists from about a dozen different countries, I realized Lucio Fontana's last environmental neon sculpture.

Luca: Did you have connections with Italy?

Willoughby: I first went to Italy in 1959 with my wife Renata. Basically we did the tourist thing and unfortunately I did not meet my two favorite Italian artists: Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni, since we stayed only in Rome. In 1964, I made a pilgrimage with Günther Uecker and the photographer Lothar Volleh to visit Lucio Fontana in Milan. Besides seeing

Fontana, I also spent a lot of time with Nanda Vigo who gave me valuable information and photographic documentation on her lover, Piero Manzoni.

In the mid-sixties, when I became consumed with Kineticism, I sought out members of the two Italian kinetic groups – particularly Boreani. We corresponded, I showed some of the artists and I bought some of their works, which I still have in my collection. On August 2, 1972, I interviewed Jannis Kounellis in his studio in via di Santo Spirito in Rome. The interview was for the ‘Performance issue’ of *Avalanche*. During the *Avalanche* years I became friendly with Lucio Amelio who was an advertiser in *Avalanche*, as was Toselli and Sperone who I also met at that time.

I was Amelio's houseguest in Naples and became friendly with Mario Merz, his wife, and a number of other members of Arte Povera. It was at that time that I also met Germano Celant.

Luca: How did you meet Joseph Beuys? That meeting must have been important to you. You decided to put his face on the cover of the very first issue of *Avalanche*...

Willoughby: Joseph Beuys and I met shortly after I first went to Düsseldorf for Christmas in 1957, at the invitation of my future wife, Renata Hengeler. They were both part of a tiny art world there and saw each other frequently at museum and gallery openings, or just on the street. From 1957 until Joseph died on my 50th birthday on January 23, 1986, we came together frequently to do at least two-dozen projects like “Videoperformance”, 112 Greene Street Workshop, New York (1974), for which he did his famous “Public Dialogue at the New School, NY”. Even in the summer of 1970, when I chose the Shunk-Kender portrait of Joseph for the cover of the first issue of *Avalanche*, he seemed to me to be the most significant European artist since Marcel Duchamp.

Luca: If I'm not mistaken, you were the link between Beuys and the United States...

Willoughby: Phil Lieder, the editor of *Artforum*, commissioned me to go to Germany in the fall of 1969 to interview Beuys for *Artforum*. The interview was eight pages long in the December 1969 issue. At “Documenta 5” Beuys just occupied a room and everyone who was interested engaged him in a dialogue. Ronald Feldman, Caroline Tisdale and David Medalla were among the many people Beuys touched at that time. Then Ronald Feldman commissioned me to do a Videoview which constituted Beuys' first show in New York in 1973, but Joseph wasn't there because he was opposed to the war in Vietnam. The first time that he came to New York was at my request to participate in “Videoperformance” in 1974. Ronald Feldman paid for his trip and all his expenses.

Luca: I'm curious to know what the project “Videoperformance” consisted of. Almost no documentation exists...

Willoughby: Like so many of my independently curated exhibitions, the “Videoperformance” exhibition is not sufficiently well known, in spite of the fact that we published a 36-page tabloid catalogue about it in *Avalanche* (newspaper Volume 1). Ten artists each did a one-evening performance: Vito Acconci, Robert Bell, Joseph Beuys, Ulrike Rosenbach, Dennis Oppenheim, Keith Sonnier, Richard Serra, Chris Burden, Willoughby Sharp, and William Wegman. Jeffrey Lew, the owner of a building in the center of what was to be SoHo, located at 112 Greene Street, had an approximately 50x100 foot, very rough ground floor exhibition space where most of the cutting edge SoHo artists eventually showed their work. “Videoperformance” was the first exhibition that I curated in which I also included my own work. I did this because I had coined the word “videoperformance” and I was trying to give people an idea of the great possibilities that exist when you interface video and performance art. One art emerges. And, I must say, it sustains.



Luca: What did Chris Burden do?

Willoughby: Chris Burden did a piece called "Back to You", his first in New York, on January 16, 1974 from 9:00 to 9:20 p.m. He put his naked-torso body into a video installation consisting of a 9-inch monitor, two 18-inch monitors, a single camera and a microphone. For props, he covered a piece of plywood with a white sheet and placed it on two sawhorses that held his stretched-out body. At his right elbow was a 12-inch circular aluminium bowl with a handful of clear plastic-topped pushpins in alcohol with a hand-written sign: "Please push pins into my body". Burden was in the building's rickety freight elevator in the basement. When the piece began, the elevator



went up to the first floor where a group of over 100 people watched. Liza Bear made a request for volunteers. Larry Bell volunteered and was escorted to the elevator. As he entered it, the video camera went on. Bell stuck four pushpins into Burden's stomach and the fifth into his big toe. The audience could see this live on the monitors. Afterwards, the elevator went back to the basement. Bell stepped back into the crowd and the monitors were switched off.

Luca: How did you develop the idea of using video as a tool for interviews?

Willoughby: I am very curious. When I want to know something, I ask the people I think can best answer my questions. My central interest in life is art. I have interviewed artists practically all my life. In 1966 I produced a film for WDR German Television called "Pop Art Usa" in which I interviewed the Pop artists: Warhol, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg, and two famous art dealers, Leo Castelli and Sidney Janus. Just after Sony introduced the Porta-Pac video recording system, I bought one and I started interviewing artists I was working with

in 1970: Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, Joseph Beuys, Chris Burden, Dennis Oppenheim, and others. Tomorrow, Pamela Seymour Smith, my partner, and I are going to Videoview Dennis [Oppenheim] in his Franklin Street studio about his new land art works. I have done 6 or 7 audio interviews with Dennis and this is my third Videoview with him.

Luca: You were part of the first generation of conceptual artists. Are there any young artists you would like to collaborate with? You should consider doing a new series of Videoviews with young artists...

Willoughby: While Pamela and I were in Berlin this year, we conducted Videoviews of younger artists: Serkan Ozkaya, Eric Smith and Janos Fodor. We also conducted Videoviews in Berlin and in Italy with artists and others of my generation: David Medalla, Vincent Trasov (Mr. Peanut), Peter Fend; and, in Italy, Guido Strazza, an abstract painter who lives in Rome who will soon be 85. We also did two Videoviews with Paul Maenz (the famous German art dealer), who was responsible for bringing both the Arte Povera and Transavanguardia artists to international recognition.

Luca: With regards to your curatorial projects, I'm very interested in "Pier 18", could you tell me something about it? I find the contrast between a space like MoMA and a pier very funny...



Willoughby Sharp Videoviews Joseph Beuys

Willoughby: In December 1970, as an independent curator having no connection to MoMA, I asked Shunk-Kender, the famous photography team who took the picture of Yves Klein jumping off a roof, if they would photograph artists I intended to invite to execute works on a deserted New York pier, Pier 18. When they agreed, I eventually invited 28 artists to do work there. For example, I ran into Mel Bochner on the Lexington Avenue subway, we struck up a conversation going downtown on the express train and by the time we had reached 14th Street, I had asked him to be in the show and scribbled Shunk-Kender's phone number on a scrap of paper. I never had a programmatic list

of who I wanted in the show. It grew out of my daily life and my mood when I met artists whom I knew. After I gave the artists Shunk-Kender's phone number, I never inquired from S-K who they were working with, nor did they call me – with one or two exceptions. I went down with Liza Bear to help Richard Serra with his work, which, characteristically, took two days. Most of the pieces were done in a matter of hours. Some were done in just a few minutes. If you ask me now what I was thinking about, it was partly Carl Andre's idea of post-studio sculpture and it was another one of my attempts to subvert the museum-gallery structure. Originally, the show was curated at the invitation of Helene Weiner, (now co-director of Metro Pictures, New York) who was working at the Pomona College art gallery where I helped her create a show of Robert Cummings and William Wegman. I told her about my Pier 18 show and she said that she would like to have it at Pomona. That did not happen. Paradoxically, during the summer of 1971, Kynaston McShine, the MoMA curator who had organized the "Information" show the previous year, happened to visit Shunk-Kender's Westbeth Studio and saw some of the 620 photographs of the 28 artists that eventually participated. Without consulting me, MoMA took the photos and mounted the show in one of their earliest project series exhibition spaces. I found out about it by word of mouth, as it was being hung. The wall plaque that they had did not even credit me for having curated the Pier 18 show. I made sure they changed it so that I was credited as the curator.

Luca: Are you still in contact with some of these artists and with people from that period?

Willoughby: Very much so. Many of them live in New York and I run into them frequently out and about, almost every day – Lawrence Weiner and his wife Alice, Hans Haacke and his wife Linda, Joan Jonas, Dennis Oppenheim and Amy Plumb, Ronald and Frayda Feldman, Bill Beckley and his wife Laurie Johanning, Colette, Les Levine and his wife Catherine, and lots of others.



Luca: How did the idea of creating a magazine like *Avalanche* come about?

Willoughby: *Avalanche* was started as a publication for artists to speak about their work without the intervention of art historians, critics and curators. Like the Videoviews, *Avalanche* focused on multiple-paged sections showing the artist talking about his or her work. No other art magazine did that at the time. Liza Bear, with whom I co-founded *Avalanche* in November 1968, and I were both committed to that idea. I designed the magazine myself - under the anagram/pseudonym Boris Wall Gruphy (Willoughby Sharp). It should also be noted that *Avalanche* was a work by artists for artists. The artists drove the magazine, not the advertisers. We got the advertising pages after the rest of the magazine was finished. That's why all the ads are wrapped around the editorial sections, not interspersed through them. The reason for which I founded *Avalanche* is because I wanted the artists to talk about themselves without being manipulated by curators and gallerists.

Luca: Your total freedom of working in different roles (artist, curator, critic, gallerist, publisher) is now quite common... Perhaps with the last Berlin Biennial, curated by an artist (Maurizio Cattelan), we can say that we have arrived at an institutional affirmation. What can you say about it? Do you find many connections between the working methodologies of your generation with the present one?

Willoughby: I think about myself now as a "cultural catalyst". That includes all my activities as an artist, curator, publisher, etc. It's good that artists like Maurizio Cattelan are assuming more cultural responsibilities. Perhaps the big difference between the '60s and now is that today there is a larger audience for almost every kind of art. Now, there are so many more venues to show work that reach a



global audience. Artists are over-running the galleries, museums, art fairs, biennales, not to mention the Internet! Years ago the audience for an artist's work was mostly other artists, especially in the pre-SoHo days in New York. Often there was no serious documentation. An

event or exhibition happened and it became part of the artist's oral discourse. Today's global art world is mostly market-driven. Today the art world is blending with the fashion world, which brings in another big audience. I am not against the market. But I am against the corporatisation of contemporary art.

Luca: You were one of the first artists to use new communication technologies (fax, computers, Internet) in an artistic way and with an artistic purpose... I find it very hard to work with these kinds of mediums... Can you tell me something about your projects like "Send/Receive Satellite Network"?

Willoughby: It is extremely difficult to work with new transmission technologies. They change every day. And when one "tool" or technology changes, the relationship between all the others also changes. It's almost impossible to keep up with this kind of technological change. But I have tried. I coined the word TeleCulture in 1977 to describe the interaction of you and I (the culture) and new telecommunication technologies. I'm inspired by the pioneering work of "artists" like Hertz, Marconi and others. "Two-Way Demo", which was a collaborative project of "Send/Receive Network", consisted of two groups of artists. One group, including of Terry Fox, Alan Scarritt and others, worked at the NASA Ames facility in San Francisco. The other



group, which consisted of Keith Sonnier, Liza Bear, Duff Schweninger and myself, worked in the shadow of the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan. NASA let us use their mobile satellite up-and-down link housed in a small polished aluminium bread truck for three days. Using this technology, and a connective infrared link that Duff and I had found to deliver the signal into cable TV in the New York end, we sent live interactive satellite-delivered television between New York and San Francisco. There was a split screen on the television with an artist in San Francisco appearing on one side and an artist in New York appearing on the other. As artists, we were interested in interactivity in real time, which the new communication technology provided. The Manhattan Cable Company had

only delivered television programs – one way – to an audience. After "Two-Way Demo", Manhattan Cable learned that it could also receive live television programming. The artists' initiative resulted in the corporation learning something new about their own system.



Luca: What are you doing now? Are you working on new projects?

Willoughby: Pamela and I collaborate on almost everything now and we find ourselves very busy. Last year we started a business called sharp.smith. Sharp dot Smith. The dot indicates that it is a new media company. Aside from the Videoviews, Pamela has initiated an oral history project with me called "The Videobook: Willoughby Sharp's Oral Art History". This project will cover my activities in the art world from the late '50s until today and will be published as primary source material for cultural and art historians.

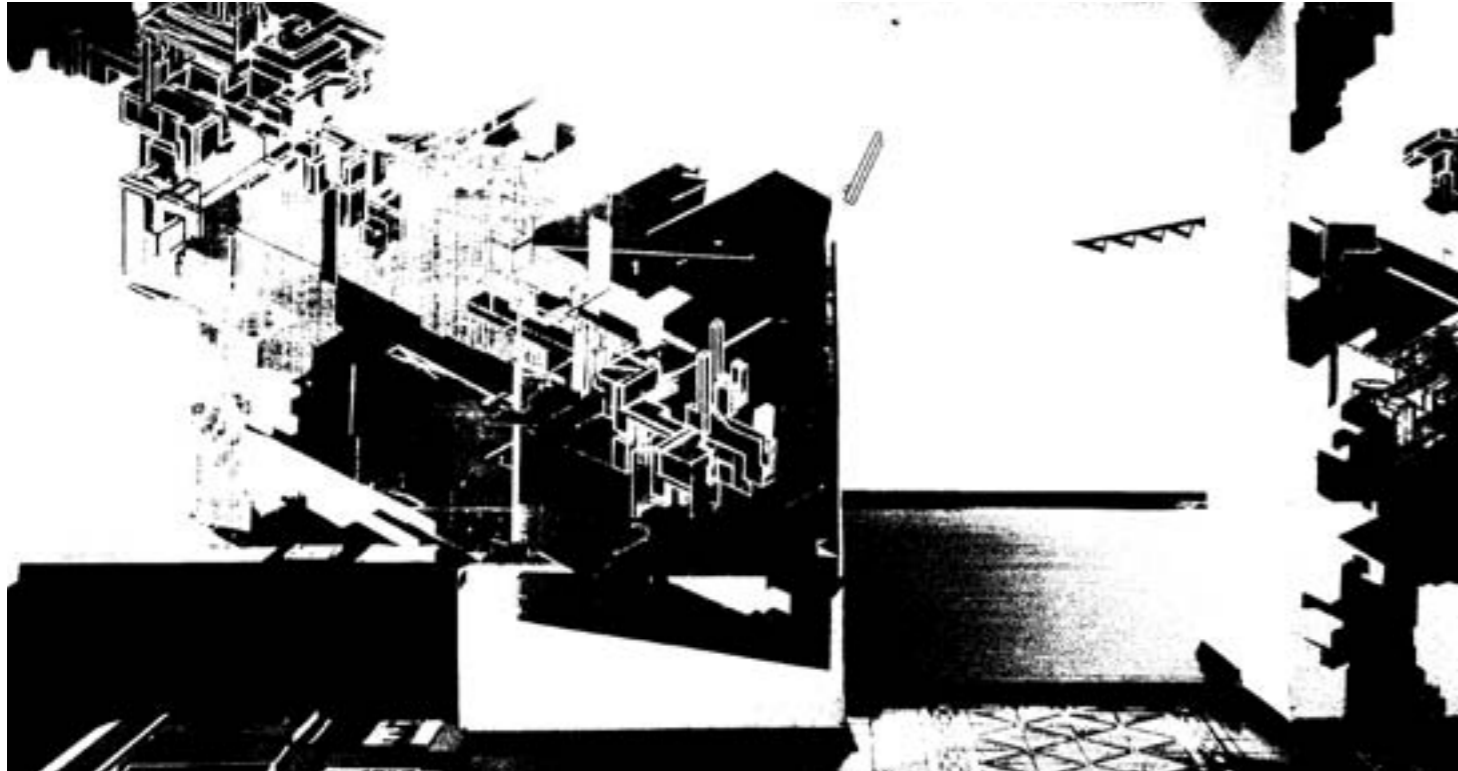
In Berlin this year I became a gallery artist. I made my first painting and object sculpture when I had a show at Galerie Kunstpunkt Berlin. Also in Berlin, Pamela and I had a joint show of my work and her photographs at Künstlerhaus Bethanien. Then we went to Italy and worked together on my show "In Luce di Lucio" dedicated to Lucio Fontana. We're currently represented in the Independents Liverpool Biennial show with a videoperformance piece called "Not Willoughby, but". We have both just received grants from ZKM in Karlsruhe for 2007 and 2008.

On December 11, I will be on a panel at MoMA discussing artist-run avant-garde magazines. We will reserve a ticket for you. One more thing, Pamela and I can be reached at sharp.smith@earthlink.net.

ŠKUC GALLERY

by Ilaria Gianni

from NERO n.05 may/june 2005



It's difficult to come across young curators at the head of successful, interesting spaces in the art world. But Alenka Gregorič, director of Škuc Gallery in Ljubljana, represents an exception.

Škuc Gallery is part of the ŠKUC Cultural Centre, one of the pillars of non-government culture, which has been active in Slovenia for over thirty years. Škuc Gallery by now boasts a tradition in the Slovenian artistic arena, developing projects of experimentation and research since 1978. Its continuous cultural activity – debates, exhibitions and conferences – has defined it as a counter-altar to the dominant exhibition policy of the well-established galleries and institutions in Slovenia, and as one of the most important alternative spaces in Eastern Europe. One of the elements that contributed to establishing its anti-academy and, so to speak, antagonistic connotation, compared to the predefined and institutional art system, was the decidedly programmatic choice of placing the direction of the Gallery into the hands of very young figures.

With a continual generational change, Škuc unceasingly questions its working methodology, while remaining faithful to the principles of a critical and laboratorial space. It thus lays the foundation for the creation of a cultural network and enables the extension of its spheres of competence and interests towards engagement with the territory and a dialogue with the international arts scene.

Ilaria: Škuc Gallery appears to be more interested in the development of a “cultural programme” rather than becoming a powerful and popular institution. Your approach to contemporary art develops the presuppositions with which to create an active dialogue with artists, demonstrating an interest in what contemporary art “could be”, as opposed to what the public thinks it “should be”. Is a concurrence, even if in dialectical terms, possible between the expectation of the consumer and the product of the artist?

Alenka: I think that art always has something to do with what it “should be” and what it “could be”. It only depends on the point of view of observation and approach. There are always ‘for’ and ‘against’ comments, and it’s important to respond to both with the same impulse. The statement “it should be like this, or like that” irritates me a lot because no one has the right to say what’s right and what’s wrong, as much in art as in life. One needs to leave creative and interpretative freedom to the people. The art is presented to the public in such a way that each individual viewer can form their opinion about what they see in the Gallery. I like to listen to the negative comments as much as the positive ones, but they have to be argued in order to stimulate, not to remain comments as ends in themselves. It’s not obligatory to have studied or to have read up on art in order to understand it. It’s really enough to read and interrogate the work that’s in front of you. To negotiate with the work and to find the right way to communicate with it.

Ilaria: Škuc’s exhibition programme is very extensive. It covers different historical periods and geographical areas: it has proposed historical retrospectives, given

space to new artistic currents, it hosts international exhibitions, it’s the seat of conferences that address current themes in contemporary art, it’s a research centre and, above all, a showcase for young artists. Can you talk to us about this last activity in particular?

Alenka: When I was appointed artistic director of Škuc Gallery, I felt encumbered by an enormous responsibility. As a young curator I was very optimistic – and still remain so – thinking that all my desires would be fulfilled. But I immediately found myself confronted with reality and had to face the fact of having become the director of a space with a long and significant history. A place that is continually questioned, subject to criticism, expectations; a place that always laid the foundations for the cultural and artistic future in Slovenia. Although a lot of “big” names in art have exhibited at Škuc in the last ten years, one of the major criticisms was the scantiness, in recent years, of presentations of young, emerging Slovenian artists. The Gallery had somewhat lost its feature of a space of research and experimentation. I wanted to create a balance between the historical legacy of the space, the requests of the public, the secret hopes of the Gallery and, finally, my personal ideas and concepts that provide for the re-introduction of working with very young Slovenian artists and designers.

Ilaria: The Gallery is not inserted in the cultural market. You don’t only have commercial aims, rather you create opportunities for artists, promoting and producing their works, providing them with stimuli and proposing dialogue. You can be considered a sort of Patron of contemporaneity. This is not a very diffused role in contemporary culture...

Alenka: I wouldn’t define us as *patrons*, but rather as *fighters*. We’re a non-government institution that fights to survive. We try to do our best, but we have a gross economic problem that makes it quite difficult to move our work forward.

Ilaria: The Škuc is very tied to the territory in which it resides. I have noticed in recent years that many Balkan artists have “surfaced”. Their work is rich in content, impregnated with lived history, with memory, and with a confrontation with the present. Can you tell us a little about the Balkan art scene?

Alenka: I would say that people are becoming increasingly less sensitive to an authentic notion of time and space. The artists that are labelled as Balkan, or from the East, tackle *reality* and quotidian situations in their work, trying to communicate a possible response. The slogan “WORK-BUY-CONSUME-DIE” is definitely absent in a large part of the works, which are critical towards that approach to art and life. In the works coming from this part of Europe, this kind of social criticism has a lot to do with the history of the region. When all’s said and done, we’re all victims of geography.

Ilaria: Can you speak about an exhibition held at Škuc in recent years?

Alenka: Rather than a particular show, I prefer to name some of the artists that have exhibited here in the last twenty years, all of whom are active at the international level: Ingold Airlines, Maja Bajević, Raimond Chaves, Attila Csörgő, Tacita Dean, Leif Elggren, Olafur Eliasson, Vadim Fishkin, Carl Michael von Hausswolff, IRWIN, Antal Lakner, Juri Leiderman, Maja Licul, M+M, Olaf Nicolai, Cesare Pietroiusti, Tadej Pogačar, Marko Peljhan, Goran Petercol, Marjetica Potrč, Nebojša Šerič-Soba, Nika Špan, Apolonija Šušteršič, The Designers Republic, Elulalia Valldosera, Sislej Xhafa, and many others.

Ilaria: Do you believe that this alternative way of producing culture works? Confronting myself with the art world, I believe that it is more important to create spaces, rather than to enter into official ones. If the objective is to develop the promotion and diffusion of culture in a serious and non-commercial way, and at the same time, to try to make it as accessible as possible, it’s very difficult to identify pre-existing spaces. Today’s society obligates the young to create alternative spaces; many don’t agree with the institutions, they don’t find a dialogue and relationship with them. Given your exemplary experience, what advice would you give to those who feel the need to work in the cultural sphere using a non-institutional modality?

Alenka: The Škuc Gallery immediately adopted a rather provocative line of conduct by nominating very young artistic directors to run the space. It’s a big risk that, however, also becomes an advantage: the young bring fresh ideas and energy; they keep the Gallery alive. The younger generations ride a subtle line between creative chaos, success and disaster. From this point of view, the space can be alternative, but it still remains a kind of institution with its own rules and identity. I don’t believe that I can give you advice; I can only say that my way of working in the field of art and in the Gallery as director, curator and organiser is to have fun and to enjoy the work. I follow my instinct and what I like, moving everything forward with the utmost seriousness and commitment, trying to bring my ideas into the Gallery’s programme, contributing to its growth in the most coherent way possible with its past.

Ilaria: Škuc Gallery also now runs a commercial activity. How are you able to coherently integrate this activity with the history, principles and the original ideas of the Gallery?

Alenka: Škuc always had a very organic structure and all its artistic directors have contributed to the space with a piece of their own personal history. This is the principle or, better still, the concept of how the space has functioned over the years. Each *individual history*, in the *collective history* of the Gallery, is an important and indispensable part of the space’s spirit and image. Expanding into the commercial field doesn’t subtract from the historical and fighting spirit of the Gallery. I prefer to think of the new activity as an added chapter. Given the social, political and economic changes in the country, it was logical to conform. The artists living in Slovenia have to pay their rent, daily living expenses and their work, and we try to create the conditions with which to make it easier for them. The Government has drastically cut funds for culture and we’re trying to create a system that meets the material needs (that unfortunately exist) of the Gallery and of the artists. Through the revenue from sales, we try to put artists in the best conditions possible for them to work, and to provide the Gallery with the means with which it can continue its activity as a cultural centre. We absolutely don’t want to become a money-producing machine, transforming artists into mere executors and works into merchandise, but unfortunately we have to face reality. In order to make our activity work and to diffuse culture in the way we want, we need resources.

Ilaria: Do you notice a particular trend in Balkan art criticism and curation?

Alenka: Yes. A rather critical position towards the West...

Ilaria: Thank you.



* The Designers Republic, Sheffield, UK



CONSUMPTION

by Giordano Simoncini
from NERO n.09 april/may 2006

There I am. Seated on the bus, fairly well packed in. Let's say it's raining outside. The day's going so-so, punctuated more by chores than pleasures. Since I don't want to know about humanity, I use the paper as a curtain between my fellow man and me. I read Zucconi from Washington: "[...] perhaps it was the vapours [...] or the multitude of shopping bags but in that moment Judith Levine felt nauseous and with the nausea, a decision potentially more catastrophic [...]: the decision to no longer buy".

JUDITH

Taking stock of the situation. Judith Levine is an American journalist that, nauseated by the umpteenth day spent spending, decided to renounce shopping for 12 months. She boycotted the cinema and restaurants, she denied herself skirts, tops and shoes, and then she wrote a book about it: Not Buying It, a year without shopping. A book that intones the paean for every Saturday boxed into the SUV, moving at a snail's pace on the bright path that heads straight for the relevant Mall. A book that proves that yes, with obstinacy, one can yank one's life away from the abyss, towards Being rather than Having.

The book, of course, is for sale. In the sense that you need to buy it, it's not distributed for free. Contradiction? Hmm. An American wrote it.

ME

Let's see how I fair: and me, what did I buy today? Nothing. Or rather: there's been no need to buy anything yet. I could have bought a bus ticket, e.g., but since I gatecrash in protest... out of the question. Oh, I wanted to get some blank DVDs before going home: I didn't pay for the films I downloaded, but then TDK demands money! I'll also pick up a couple of beers, go on... seeing as I have the films.
Seeing as I'm here.

Superfluous to inquire into the effective necessity of my consumer profile; temperate, continent... "virtuous". In spite of this, unnecessary. Yes; because a) man is made of water, he doesn't *need* to drink anything else, and b) if the motive for the films is recreational, they can be substituted with a chat with my housemates. If, instead, it's cultural... do I *need* culture or, rather, do I *want* it?

ROUSSEAU

Rousseau, who wasn't stupid, distinguished the borderline between *need* and *will* in terms of *vanity*. The no-longer-quite-primitive man discovers that it's worth his while to live in a village; this way strangers help each other out. Time passes and that man, *needing* only to eat and save energy, discovers self-love: in the common spaces among the huts, it's no longer

about the mating ritual, about distinguishing oneself by good looks, as if it was the visible side of fertility. Reproduction, nature, immediate drives have got nothing to do with it. Instead, it's about esteem and appreciation – and it's about the search for esteem and appreciation, recognised in pairs with their opposites, affront and insult, things that are *avenged*. Vanity, desire, violence, a frightening entirety that begins to be, simply, "guy stuff". Unfortunately, the indigenous *pattern* takes hold, remaining the same during centuries of, let's put it like this, "progress". Backed continuously by Techne, man learned to desire. In the tireless search for fulfilment, he invented new things, which demonstrated the new desire that justified their invention; to whoever had never foreseen that desire, it made itself desirable. When "self-production" proved to be inefficient, man bartered; when bartering became inadequate, man coined money. Money, an instrument for transactions and a "new thing" in itself, became the aim instead of the means, since it was conceived by Techne. From the desire for money, therefore, was born production, whose functionality was maintained with difficulty by the desire of the request; industrialisation, surplus and the emergence of Politics as we know it today (parties + economic policy), an ever faster race to who knows where, until arriving at *advertising*. Which was able to take away man's ownership of desire by imposing it upon him; making him the definitive slave. The same Rousseau bestowed sardonic advice on the rulers of every age: "give money and you will get chains". Owing to historical data, however, he didn't see just how unfinished the slaves were before the accession of advertising on the means of mass communication. He didn't realise how heavy the chains would become for the citizens of democracies from the "end of history", free only to carry out an atavistic craving that, perhaps, is no longer even *theirs*.

What Rousseau couldn't see then is seen now by millions of people, including Judith. I'm thinking back to her repulsion, which is often also mine: the bags, with things inside that I don't *need*, becoming entangled with those of my neighbour, inside a humid, smelly bus, which ferries individuals from the shop to the hypermarket to the shopping centre; to give them a way, to give *us* a way to "move the economy", to exercise the freedom to spend our wages from work – ever fascinating, evergreen, the combination of the headwords *work* and *freedom*. For having felt what I also feel, and by following it up with a *reaction*, Judith has my esteem. Her reaction, however, was only an action: with great practical spirit she cut up her credit cards and stopped buying. Therefore, when I have the chance to speak with her, I'll immediately ask her: "But you didn't conceive a *method*? A concept, an idea to cling to in order to escape *for another day* the yoke of the commercial forces that erode us existentially?" Because I've happened to think about it sometimes: what could radically free us from the anxiety of acquisition? What would make me recuperate the use of adverbs in place of nouns, as Fromm would say? Difficult to resist, when the cadence of arms is "today I don't buy because no". More is needed!

WHAT'S NEEDED?

E.g. *Love* is needed: falling in love transfers its desiring to the "sex appeal of the *organic*". For this only, Thank God! Better to desire Love than Gucci sunglasses. The liberating power of love appears in grand conflagration with adolescence, putting a stop to the desires of children – elected target of the advertising imposition. As long as it seems like this, good, it really helps. But then, with the passing of the years and love contingencies, we become aware of a grim detail: that for lovers, lovers are those who kiss in the park, who don't produce and don't consume, happy, absolute, senses, freedom; and for those not in love, lovers are those of gifts for invented anniversaries and of furniture to the sound of loans... *But the Last Judgement doesn't enter the houses and angels don't take appointments* (Gaber), and from a distanced position one fully sees how love has also begun to run on the tracks of the logic of acquisition, mediated by the advertising Spirit. Barthes understood this, saying it with demoralising clarity with that fateful figure of the *Fragments*, which is the "love induction". More uninspiredly, we all understand it in the presence of an acquaintance who is troubled by his being *single*, when

what he misses is not a *special person*, which can not be *one* but only *that one*, but rather the mere *having someone*. Maybe we introduce him to people, hoping to play matchmaker, and it means throwing him into the buy-sell river with a rock around his neck. Market, commerce, it's every time that people fall in love AFTER having dated for a while *more uxorio*, to the detriment of any principle of logical consequentiality. Liberation is, therefore, only a coup de foudre; *vintage* stuff, by now.

More: *Aesthetics* are needed. Until one creates art in order to live by art, we act like businesses: the acquisition of factors of production, work, surplus value, sale, income. There are those who introduce a little more conscientiousness into the process and already feel revolutionary: the people at Adbusters, e.g. Critical consumers and critics of consumption, creators of the super-famous Buy Nothing Day (sponsored, in Italy, by Terre di Mezzo). They're creative revolutionaries as long as it's not about price-marking their magazine, which is sharp, enchanting...merchandise. Of course, you pay what the magazine's worth, but it remains well entrenched in the bosom of the enemy. The point, rather, would be to aestheticize the consumerism-o-nomy, transforming it and, therefore, *cancelling it* for as long as one can. Because aesthetics, like love, is another logic. Perniola tells a story in his "Against Communication": an artist proposes 12 works for 50,000 Euro to a buyer. The buyer, a sensible businessman, refuses to buy because they're outside his range of preferences. The artist reacts by throwing 6 works into the fireplace, and the buyer, *taken-aback*, offers 25,000 Euro for the remaining 6; but the artist passes another 3 to the flame, saying that the remaining 3 are still worth 50,000 Euro. The buyer, at that point, buys. There was consumption, certainly, but outside the rules of consumption; if one is able to violate those, one alters consumption, de-systematising it and retaking it in hand. In the end, the problem is all there: to take consumption in hand, to rescue it from the mania that

dominates it with the aim of controlling it. Only through the control over consumption passes the eventuality of laying down the *theoretical foundations* for *non-consumption*, prolonged in multiple ways. There is only this: prolonged *how much?*

RESOLUTION AND FAREWELL

The story of Judith doesn't have a happy ending. After the umpteenth laddered stocking, the journalist took money and fighting virtue and threw them among the coat hangers of a boutique. It was to be expected, she was missing *theory*. However, I wasn't the least bit better in my errors committed in my burning desire for purification. In fact, would I really be capable of not buying anything for 12 months? That an American should reveal herself to be tougher than me?

The emergency exit from the "hypercube" of consumption is at the end of the corridor of an immense upheaval of Western civilisation. In the most profound sense, that upheaval is a *logical* as it is *existential*, *not at all* economical. The only value of critical, ethical, fair-trade consumption is that it takes aboard the global market's castaways into the lifeboat of enslavement. Its systemic functional character is certified by the multinationals, from Nestle that produces Partners' Blend, Virgin trains that serve Fairtrade tea, to Starbucks that sells Ethos water. The real challenge for a decent future (it's fashionable to say "sustainable") is neither to consume *better* nor to consume *differently*: it's to consume *as little as possible*. In order to make it a quotidian concern, however, handholds are needed. I've thrown out a couple, that are OK for a while, then they collapse.

At this point every contribution is very welcome.

ANDREA AQUILANTI | GEA CASOLARO | MARIANNA FERRATTO | MYRIAM LAPLANTE



FABRIZIO PASSARELLA | LUANA PERILLI | ALESSANDRO SCARABELLO | LUCA VICCARO

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Les Réflexions Dangereuses

by Luca Lo Pinto and Valerio Mannucci
from NERO n.06 september/october 2005

As often happens, the most interesting reflections develop from the words of artists. This article is a confirmation of that. The idea, in fact, came about after a discussion on musician Terre Thaemlitz's 1997 text - "The Crisis of Post-Spectacle "Live" Contemporary Ambient Performance (Or... Why I Can't Get Paid to DJ A-structural Audio)". His lucid analysis, read today, was mainly a point of flight, a stimulus that pushed us towards vaster horizons, which also include choreography and visual art.

Then things moved forward, and what had, in our eyes, developed as pure coincidences, in the end transformed into a series of elements, each different one from the next, but incredibly compatible, which travelled at equal velocity and in the same direction. For our part, we always maintained as a point of reference the multiple contradictions that are at the base of the mechanisms of production and representation of contemporary culture. And so all that we encountered, the socio-economic theories of Luc Boltanski; the doubts connected to what we usually go see; the sense of bewilderment in front of accepted critical conventions; the "politically incorrect" contradictions of Slavoj Žižek; and even some phrases by R.W. Fassbinder, were superimposed in a frenetic and confused inductive action that made us put some questions on the table; and that, maybe, were "reproduced" from time to time in the text.

What follows is the editing of an exchange of emails with three people who we considered very suitable for this kind of discussion. **Jane Dowe**, musician and journalist who has worked on various projects under different names and has collaborated with Terre Thaemlitz; **Mårten Spangberg**, choreographer, theorist on performance and essayist; **Andrea Lissoni**, critic and curator specialising in new media (and one of the founders of the well-known festival "Netmage"). Three different figures, with different backgrounds, but each ready to attentively look at what we find in front of us, if only for the sole pleasure of looking.

I saw a girl fly through the sky and I looked up her skirt, Gummo would say.

luca&valerio > Jane Dowe > Mårten Spangberg > Andrea Lissoni

luca&valerio: The idea of performance is at the centre of our reflections; how, by its very nature, it is subject to constraints. Let's depart, for example, with the concept of repetition of performances. In the contemporary art world, performance is still tied to the idea of uniqueness. It is rare that artists repeat one of their performances more than once (with the exception of Tino Sehgal, John Bock or Fabio Mauri). On the contrary, the matter is more evident in the music and theatre arenas. Actual tours exist... Apropos of this, Jacques Attali wrote, "The spectacle emerged in the eighteenth century, and, as music will show us later on, it is now perhaps an obsolete form of capitalism: the economy of representation has been replaced by that of repetition." In practice, the demand for a performance, and not its uniqueness, determines its cultural and economic value. The choreographer Xavier Le Roy prefers to speak about repetition and not reproduction when he talks about his work because something new and different is created each time, although he's the first to admit that the fundamental reason is economic... How is the economic necessity of a performance's repetition tied to the artistic necessity, or to the necessity of the work's content?

Jane: Repetition is a necessity for economic success. Even if we're only talking about a cultural economy, repetition is a formula for larger gains.

As I've done various projects under different aliases I've found that it has shortened my potential. Initially I thought that it was merely shortening my odds of fame and fortune, but even the ability to practice my art is stunted since without support only certain artistic practices are possible for me. Likewise in stage performance one must repeat oneself or the opportunity to perform again is reduced.

Mårten: The basis for any art production in the Western world is simply an economical one, and it is only when realising that it is a simple one, that it becomes inspiringly complex.

Within an economy of representation it is no longer what an artwork *is*, either as an object or what it tries to depict or represent, but what it does, what it performs, how it manages to circulate in which kinds of economies. Evidently, there is no way out of such economies, or circulations, in our society. (...) Similarly, art cannot shortcut or escape its contexts, its founding father, modern democracy and capitalist economies. This is indeed the luxurious feature of inclusive post-Fordist society, which, following in the footsteps of Foucault, however his rather interesting understanding of resistance, implies that the institution of critique is also always already incorporated. It is for this reason, therefore, that in his later period Foucault establishes concepts around governability, which, in this case, is a means of incorporating the 'situation' into a critique.

In his history of governability, Foucault endeavours to show how the modern sovereign state and the modern autonomous individual co-determine each other's emergence. (...) Hence, critique is governed by certain hierarchies; its very formulation will consolidate the governing agent, but the arts can issue contexts, or situations that are affiliated to, but not productive of, the governing agent.

On some level or another, all art is performative, and it is in the particular address to which performative that, I believe, art practices today offer potentialities, not of a critique but of what Irit Rogoff has articulated as "criticality".

Peggy Phelan was hit on the head with her own line of discourse when writing that performance cannot participate in representational economies; performance can not be recorded or documented, because what is recorded is not the performance but something else. What I write is something other than what I thought, and so on... The solution to this problem is to turn the documentation, or recording, into a kind of secondary performance, which can come out as performative writing. A good example is Tino Sehgal, whose work not 'only' shows a performance but also contaminates its contexts to the extent that the viewer starts to perform a/the context. For example, when a museum guard dances a little dance and tells the viewer that this is a work of Tino Sehgal, this act is interesting in how it renders every museum guard an art work, a performance, or, and this is perhaps the most important aspect, a visibility that cannot be ignored. So I think that repetition, as much as it is the problem for any, and especially artistic, production is also the opportunity to produce both differentia and differentiation. It's just a matter of conceptualising one's output and making sure it's specific to its own productive configuration.

Andrea: Complex question. I have the impression that the economic problem is a above all a problem for who works in the performing arts in the strict sense, particularly when his or creations are "outside of the format". This is an interesting category. Because if "outside of the format" is a standard in the artistic-visual field (regardless of reproducibility/repetition) and what carries weight to the quality of the work in itself (the economic question is, in part, out of the game, it's possible that the visual artist is able to sell docu-fragment, as Barney calls them) in the strictly



performative ambience, the problem is also the expository context. On stage? No, of course, that it's dance or representation/ mise-en-scène. And, therefore, who works producing outside of the format – because it comes to them like that, it's their research after all – has two paths before him: or it's part of the theatrical stage, in its conventions, and not only architectonic, and in that world (also economic) of belonging and subsistence (made of sbigliettamenti, takings, siae, and so on) and this is the path that many, more or less obligated, seem to chose; or they slip away and remain on the outside. Europe especially has the fortune of being able to count on independent, off-spaces, foundations, and on a quantity of museums and art centres that, partly in order to diversify the offer, partly because what's happening is interesting and costs less (see next response) which open their doors to performative projects. From which comes the very frequent confrontation between the worlds one belongs to and practices, traditionally and formally distant, like dance/theatre and visual arts. The example of Tino Sehgal is a good one, that from the experience with Le Roy, he gathered the key points of both systems, profiting from them, and, not by chance, questioned the issue of economies also from the point of view of content (see the intervention at the 2005 Venice Biennial, German Pavilion). Another point is also: and the public? How and how much does it gather? Above all, does it realise that it's part of, not only behaviourally but also existentially, of the question in play? It would be interesting if a study was developed – as it was by Maurizio Lazzarato on video – on the performative practices read in a sociological key, keeping in mind the transformation of the work and its constitution in the post-Ford era. In this sense, Carlo Antonelli takes up an interesting trajectory in the text you are familiar with in “Incursions”.

luca&valerio: Shifting points of view, we can also individuate other risks, not necessarily tied to the specific work of an artist or the content of a particular work, but which instead relate to the development of a certain type of practice. Apropos of this, Thaemlitz called attention to the danger of forcing certain types of 'new' practices into old school cultural parameters. He referred to the necessity that was created in recent years of reinserting the most superficially performative element into the electronic arts, whereas performativity, intended in the executive-virtuoso sense, didn't have a motive to be. Particularly highlighting the fact that such unconscious necessity of adapting oneself to the old canons was, in reality, dangerous for the continuation of a genre of artistic expression like that of the contemporary immersive and ambient arts.

Jane: I agree completely, although I think younger generations will eventually adopt newer models. If we look at any revolutionary movement in the arts it generally takes time for new ideas to supplant the old. In music the adoption of serial techniques never moved beyond the academic. (...). While the serialists were still pitch-centric in their strategies, they opened up new possibilities for explorations of noise, sound and process that permeates almost all music. Similarly, those ideas that we envision as being potentially new in the digital arts may only be a mere doorway for the next generation, whose ideas and practices are beyond our imagination. I'm optimistic that even if it appears that the new is being retrofitted, it is also slowly negotiating and wearing away the older structures.

Mårten: Fortunately, I believe that the arts function like any other market or site of circulation. The arts and its opportunities for production are distributed with respect to territories, so when something 'new', whatever we mean by that, occurs there are a number of structural, strategic and tactical facts, or conventions, that need to, or will be, negotiated. There is a high level of complexity to map when arguing around the necessity to 'fit' into old structures, because something indeed needs to fit into some thing, or at least be rendered recognisable in order for it to exist at all. One issue about electronic arts addresses precisely this: if electronic arts were not inscribed in established traditions, how would it be considered art? If it wasn't, it would not gain a place in a number of sites in which sound, for example, is represented. Through the inscription in certain territories, electronic arts gained a place among the already recognised, but this inscription also implies or supports a deterritorialization of the given field. A simple analogy could be to view how dance music has developed in the 20th century.

Perhaps Thaemlitz here refers to performativity, not with respect to representation or the made visible in an artistic practice, but how electronic arts could have issued different performatives, or at least associated with other territories. The tendency to move into existing territories implies to sign up for whatever ideologies such territories communicate. So when electronic arts move into established frames, what it also learns how to, and have to, perform are the performances of the territory, in relation to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and so on. When electronic arts move into sound territories, it also implicitly agrees to the heterosexual male, Christian, Caucasian, middle class performance. (...) I believe that Thaemlitz's argument is an understanding, of why should electronic arts, which as a production, undermines representational orders, sign up to known territories and hence maintain the hegemony of artistic production when electronic arts instead could have been a site where different types of individuals could be active. Relating shortly to Benjamin, what Thaemlitz acknowledges is that even if everybody can be an artist not everybody is allowed, at least not when it comes to the aura of territories and labels. (...) The necessary and excluding strategies of creating a community to create an axis of recognisable, reoccurring events around which a group of individuals can produce an identity and allegiances. Strategies that, in turn, produce notions of territory. An inside and an outside are established, or, in other words, a border, the crossing of which always implies an exchange of economy, a custom. Artistic and activating strategies constantly use, apply, deviate, undermine and activate customs of different kinds. (...) It is only when an opponent can detect the location of a different production that a negotiation can occur. This location must be invented, and invented outside of existing or current customs in order to be successful. Such inventions, however, can only emerge out of a singular situation and in its invention is also the production of a possible custom, which can be interpreted and issued by any community, as friendly and hostile, inclusive and restrictive.

(...) This means that it might not be efficiency of an action itself that is important, but the invocation, invention and establishment, or similarly destabilising, of customs, and that the already existing local and global communities need to inscribe these customs in and of themselves. It is this passing from action to custom, in whatever sense, that produces art as activating, that renders it an event. (...) The artist's position today is perhaps not to make pictures, hence any image always already functions as a contained economy, but rather to picture situations, in which groups of people or issues are engaged in singular multiplicities. That is where the artistic production deviates from both a Kantian aesthetic tradition and an instrumentalised notion of the arts, and transforms into a productive force in which the viewer/spectator is engaged in an active way as a singular within a multitude.

The artist is thus not somebody that can (successfully) inform a viewer or community, to introduce something foreign, new or unique, but the task must be rather to allow the viewer to elaborate his or her individual engagement, into an emancipated spectator. (...) So to come back to electronic arts, it is my belief that today's objectives are not to be part of certain known territories but to continuously engage in whatever multiple territories we are part of, in themselves and what they perform with regards to distribution, ownership, accountability, etc.

Andrea: It would be interesting to understand what exactly Thaemlitz means by the “immersive arts”. However, what you define a risk and that live (sic) is without a doubt a paradox (the ancient and now outdates live electronics), is probably destined, as often happens, to insert a transformation. Remaining in the field of electronic music: performativity would appear not to be able to have a sense of being, and I offer this testimony: I can't forget, during Netmage 05, in Bologna, inside a theatre that was disrupted in its form and function (the screens were suspended sideways, dividing the space in two; the sound was diffused as if in two environments side by side in a single space, the public could sit not only in the room, but also sit or lie down on the stage; the musicians 'played' at the base of the stage), Phil Niblock watched his own 'live' audio/video, with the sounding of his extraordinary films from the series “The Movement of People Working”, leaning on the stage with his arms crossed. A symbolic choice? The evening before, Staalplaat sound system was, however, decidedly in action, 'playing' with micro-radios and toy motor vehicles

modified in the live Yokomono... And to give general examples, what is the constitution of live like those of Matthew Herbert, Jamie Lidell, Leafcutter John, and many others? Or, overturning the disciplinary fields, the paradigm of reference in the Myriam Gourfink/Kaspar Toeplitz project? Executive-virtuoso performativity is a necessity of adapting oneself to the old canons? The problem that you expose is really interesting, even if you suggest leaving issues of individual works (of 'poetics', as they call them) and content out of consideration. The problem falls then on the context, on the systems of mediation, on the expository frames (and this point is excellently illustrated by Mårten Spangberg), on the system's diffusers (the theatre, museum, art centre, the festival of...). But not only. Excluding, then, the question of poetics and politics (even if it's right there that the constitution plays, but also the discriminating critic for the valuation of the surplus value of the quality of the musicians and choreographers 'live', like those you cited), the problem falls back from another angle, on the evolution of the same expressive artistic forms. And here I return to the point of the 'transformations'. Every input, intersection, performative or other behaviour, will design hypotheses of new territories. The eventual quality will be certified by the devices and/or will be inside the logic of the work, of the path of its authors. The behaviours, because human, are necessarily unpredictable and this unpredictability can generate new and other unpredictable forms, perhaps also, even casually, languages. I believe that the point is not the birth of compromises that can then reveal themselves to be dangerous for a genre or a discipline. On the contrary I think that those are terrains to cross, frequent, observe, eventually sustain, because often generative and energetic. The point will never be only the constitution of a language, but, completely in agreement with Spangberg, “...to picture situations...”. With this it's not a given that something necessarily happens in the ricombinatori processes, of appropriation, of manipulation, and of interventions of elements seemingly alien, on the contrary... but one mustn't preclude or obstruct, at most problematize. The quality or the effectiveness (a parameter that has something to do with the economy), will touch the public then, all things considered, to sanction it.

luca&valerio: Furthermore, it seems evident that in the ambit of the laptop set, while new strategies of performativity were not devised, the discriminating element that determines the difference between reproduction and performance is reduced to the concept of the presence or absence of the musician on stage. We could trace this phenomenon back, by association, to the ever-increasing demand in the art world of inviting artists to speak, to hold conferences. It almost seems as if the market pays the artist more as a “storyteller” (to cite a phrase by Cesare

Pietroiusti) than as a producer of a work in the traditional sense. What do you think are the motivations behind this?

Jane: Part of this could be that the end product is rarely understood. To most it's just sound for the sake of sound and to differentiate one laptop performer from another is daunting to many. Thus other signifiers become critical and in the end it is more of a marketing game than a battle of superior production.

Mårten: Well, the short answer is, of course, that if somebody can earn money from the artist's image, that somebody will not hesitate. The emergence of the artist as storyteller is a joint venture, and certainly not new, by many forces in the art world, and they are not likely to disappear. (...) Most examples of artists working on the circulation of the artist as a post-Fordist hero end up being rather presumptuous and, at the end of the day, consolidating precisely the positions given, and evidently so, both process and result, following Guy Debord, is inscribed in the spectacle. (...)

The organization of performance into presence and absence, which is a very strong tradition in theatre/performance and dance, is a dead end, building on philosophical traditions that issue some kind of founding agent of the subject, from Aristotle to Derrida. (...) I think we have to let go of these issues and start making contemporary performance. I mean, what's wrong? Who the hell is interested in identity politics, who the hell is interested in the body as text, as a site of violence, of sexual disposition? (...) The theatre, and its symbolic spatiality, is a *dispositif* that is completely in stalemate, and the subsidized economy and empire of managers are not likely to evaporate. And that is also valid in the visual arts, where Santiago Sierra consolidates performance as display, to which I can only respond consecutively (“Oh, this is terrible. How can an artist do such a thing?” or “This guy really revealed something important!” or finally the feel good of becoming aware of my scopilic position), whereas the work of seemingly distant artists like Felix Gonzales-Torres, Tino Sehgal and even Superflex produce situations of engagement to which the viewer can, or even must, respond (...). The Sierra kind of artist is still, and I quote Bruce Nauman, “a revealer of mystic truths”, whereas the Torres model instead provokes emancipation through and activation of the spectator. Sierra can always only be spectacular and pacifying, whereas Torres and company can activate through commonplace gestures. Against his will, Sierra thus becomes the Grand ontologist and Torres, who could be understood as engaged in something personal, becomes an artist of emancipation and engagement.

In brief, the abundance of laptops in the art world is not very curious but what's curious is how homogeneously they are utilized. It doesn't concern



me that one can reproduce sounds with a laptop rather than a guitar, but rather what can happen to sound, in its broadest sense, through portable computer technology. Recent development in sound is really thrilling but not because of how it sounds, but in relation to notions of distribution, ownership and decentralization. For me, too many people working in the realm of sound are far too interested in how it sounds, not what it does or how it functions. I also think that concepts of composition can radically change through these new technologies.

Sound is one territory, but I'm personally more interested in television. I don't mean distribution of video art on the Internet, but what new portable technologies can provoke in relation to television, especially informatics television. If regular people can produce television and distribute it on open channels or on the Internet, what implications do such activities have on the hegemonic landscape of conventional television? Art and television have a very close relationship but TV-art seems something to develop further. I would make a division between TV-art and art TV. When something looks like "art" in television its critical potentiality is cancelled and it can only end up on television because television needs it to obtain some status or other. If one instead considers TV-art, i.e. art that operates with and through television conventions, including templates, formats, narratives, performance, without the desire to display something other than television, there might be a vast territory to examine in relation to what information and communication is (...). Recently I heard that families in Sweden, especially with Arab backgrounds, film their weddings and buy time on open channels broadcasted over the public service network, where they later send more or less unedited material. This is extraordinary as it proposes something totally different than the traditions of television in the Western world.

To conclude, there are far too many laptops that are used without complexifying the use. Laptops are the tool of the next ten or 100 years, and as a norm it cannot be excluded but only complexified.

Andrea: Various. Relational, concerning the curators-artists, and as regards to the obsession of being always connected and, paradoxical formula, on the field (paradoxical because they rarely refer to and interpret the facts). Economical. It's obvious, with an 1,500 Euro all-inclusive budget, we can permit the presence, but with which one cannot (or perhaps one does not dare) invest in the production of a work. Naturally there are clear exceptions, institutions based on reflection and exchange, or 'storytelling' as a strategy if the institutions are missing or do not want it (the excellent season of "Generations of Images", in Milan, created by Roberto Pinto and fundamental enclave in the late 1990s). But, apart from the reasons of the system: more poetically (who knows?), a desire for exchange, an issue/will for confrontation of and with the public, perhaps a necessity of coming closer, an attempt at greater understanding. It's interesting, however. Beyond the standardised PowerPoint divulgations, a path of stories takes shape, an oral dimension that interrogates and reconsiders the dictatorship of the reproduced image, always and only (necessarily) from a point of view. They are narratives that expect nothing less than being manipulated, reinterpreted, and reinvented.

luca&valerio: We would also like to turn our attention for a little while to sound art. Excluding any desire for definition, but understanding it according to the commonly diffused meaning (or considering the artists, works and exhibitions that refer to this label), it's evident that in the majority of cases, an almost total absence of performativity is noticeable. Especially because, if it were present, it would be difficult to distinguish a potential 'sound art performance' from the idea of experimental and ambient music, or from the modern theories of music composition and execution (Schaffaer, Berio, and Cage are the most well-known examples). Therefore, one tends to connect the concept of "sound art" to the idea of installation, interactivity, documentation, or narration. Could sound art not configure as a specific strategy inside the cultural-economic panorama, rather than as a vast and free field of action as it is habitually understood?

Jane: I think also that just as the installation etc. trumps the performance, concept is also overshadowing composition. Even in a gallery situation it should be possible to still view sound as a time-based practice and

not merely a one-dimensional static exhibition of the medium. By this I'm referring to installations etc. that become rather dull after the initial impact.

Mårten: I think I have already answered this question above. But I can write more if you want.

Andrea: The indexing obsession, the necessity of cataloguing at all costs, reassure and nourish those who that world observes and has eventual interests in keeping in consideration as potentially activatable strategies specific to the cultural-economic panorama. But more than boundaries and definitions, perhaps it's talking about frontiers, permeable charters, and open maps. Without forgetting about identity, of course, and therefore also the history and formation of who lives and naturally conducts research in those territories. The risk of card cataloguing and creating categories is that the way of listening to difference is liquidated, preferring generality, which is more comforting but reductive. We find ourselves with a definition of a genre that becomes accepted and shared, as happened with 'video art', for example.

luca&valerio: In closing, we wanted to address the growing development of groups of artists, but also curators, critics and writers, who unite under a collective identity. If, initially, one could depict this choice as an attempt to break or criticise the predominant idea of individuality and authoritativeness in the cultural system, now it seems to have lost effectiveness, and ending up being absorbed by the very system that it intended to criticise. What are your ideas regarding this diffused need for collectivity?

Jane: I think it is merely a response to the amount of content being produced. Perhaps the only way to be recognised amongst all the individual links is to be recognised as part of a "movement," "scene," or "theme." Thus collectives are quite natural, both for instantaneous validation from other members and increased resonance due to the repetition of multiple artists speaking the same language to the outside world.

Mårten: To begin with, it is important to properly negotiate the difference between more or less conventional management models and terms such as collaboration and/or collective/collectivity. It seems to be a bad omen when simple teamwork and collaboration are intermixed and confused. (...) As far as I know, even the most demonic director or choreographer is collaborating in some way or another. A conductor in front of a symphonic orchestra is still inscribed in a collaboration, and one with very specific features. If a group or constellation wish to address collaboration as an important feature of its work or its being some kind of community, it must at least know and be able to articulate what specific features a collaboration or collective want to emphasise. If what one wants is to push the importance of working together, that the result can be different or that it deviates from models of authorship, it is my belief that one should stop talking immediately as I hardly can imagine any work situation that is not constructed around these or similar issues, understood as positive or negative. There seems to be a political paradox inscribed in any collaboration (...). Aren't politics motored by these very operations between equality and liberty, and thus become the only realm necessarily to invest in with respect to intra- and extra-structural notions of domination?

It is also interesting to note that within the arts the production of collaborations and collectives is generated with respect to processes and appearances through strong spatio-temporal coordinations, i.e. collaboration and collectivity is hardly ever addressed under any other circumstances than superficial deviations of authorship, through which the instigator, the delegating unit, receives an even stronger position (...).

Three decades later the arts have returned to process; quoting, doubling, honouring and deviating through a complete mismatching of heroes of the neo avant-garde, recycling aesthetics to make collaboration recognisable, resurrecting ideology in an easy way in order to disguise the fact that we have nothing to voice. But it seems less in a manner

of emphasising heterogeneity as a clumsy means of escaping malign capitalism ala late '90s. (...) What artistic work is not issued through one or another process? Hardcore conceptual work, yes. But that is something that we haven't seen in the performing arts since the late '60s, considering that a conceptual work, at least as inscribed in art history, is protocol based and cannot, on a display level, involve any process, or collection of experience due to the works representation. It is not enough to speak about process but it necessarily has to be conceptualised, or preferably speak its conceptualisation through its representation. Never mind any interdisciplinary attempts which often sound great on the level of application but seldom offer any further production of ideology or knowledge in its presentation. With both process and interdisciplinarity it's awkward to realise that its manifestation, as with collaboration, seems to have been formalised to include only a process just prior to a finished product, but is rarely considered to include any other frame of time or space.

What process-orientated work in the arts needs to look further into are matters of ownership.

To what extent, and in what respect, are mechanisms and processes owned by someone or some entity? An activity, whatever process is involved, will necessarily be represented by or through somebody, or some entity, and it is therefore important to address not what process is implied, but what differentiation of ownership a given process provokes, due to what market or environment. It has become common that performers are inscribed in credit lists as co-creators but it is rarely common to consider what it would imply to matters of co-ownership.

Even though I risk becoming tedious I still want to raise these questions on responsibility that necessarily occur with respect to process and production. (...) It seems that co-authorship decreases opportunities of resistance, doubt or failure due to the fact that each individual, or institution, involved runs the risk of losing face,

a feature that democracy necessarily carries with it. Its regime of cowardice is exponential to any legitimised consensus.

In fact, the process-orientated work that has flourished in the arts over the last ten years has been an important factor relating to the currently conservative climate. Is it perhaps so that an autonomous author could instead venture into a greater degree of radicality due to the fact that a collaborator is familiar with exactly what responsibility is issued? Something that must, at least for the capacity for critique, be true. The entire range of collaboration, process, co-production, co-authorship etc. is the arts own opportunistic response to a society of control.

Andrea: I don't know if one can talk of a growing development in the need for collectivity. It seems to be a diffused and shared attitude of the twentieth century. Certainly, in every collective or associative form, it happens that with the infringement of individuality, provided it's an index of value, sooner or later one has to reckon with the experience. The collaborations, openings, elective affinities (this yes, also mediated by the more or less pop music world – by featuring hip hop or R&B to the indie electronica projects), seem to be an interesting and specific trait of the most recent times. If individuality is a common good, the mark of the collective is a possible last name, a form of representation of a territory, an identity and not a brand *tout court*. They open around music labels, brands, or cinematographic production realities (the case of Anne Sanders), inter-disciplinary curatorial teams based on the exchange, interpretation and diffusion of forms and research (Xing in Italy), magazines that arrive at (re)producing consciousness (like Nero or Purple Magazine, but also The Wire, Butt and many others), practices (as it was with live media and VJ-ing before), and often they are counterfoils of coincidences, meetings, friendships, passions. Alien nations, open and provisory territories of the present (well exemplified by The Land) that chew, mix, digest and spit out the consciousnesses that design our small and large everyday.

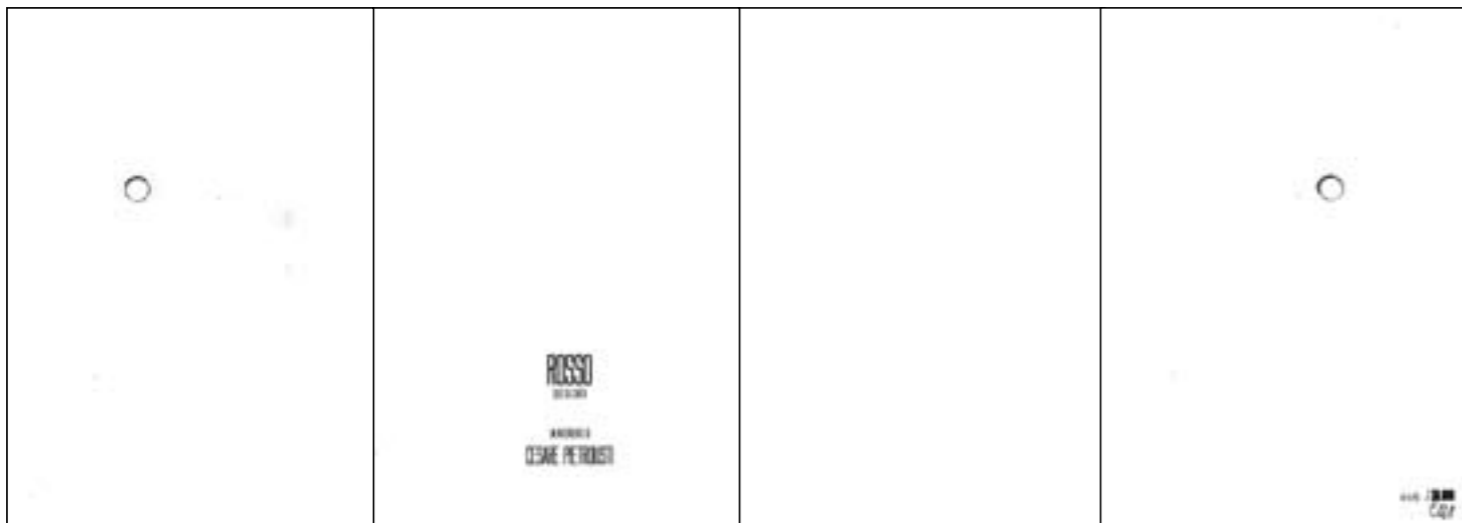


SPECIAL PROJECTS / TAPES

WHAT FOLLOWS IS THE COLLECTION OF SPECIAL PROJECTS CREATED BY ARTISTS FOR THE FOUR CENTRE PAGES OF THE MAGAZINE, FROM THE FIRST ISSUE UNTIL TODAY. VISUAL ARTISTS, MUSICIANS AND FILMMAKERS WERE INVITED TO MAKE AN AD HOC PROJECT, THOUGHT OF AS AN ACTUAL MULTIPLE THAT ENGAGES WITH THE READER IN A DIFFERENT WAY EACH TIME. SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN ORDER TO MAKE THE ARTISTS BETTER KNOWN, WE ASKED THEM TO SUGGEST A PERSONAL MUSICAL AND FILMIC TOP TEN.

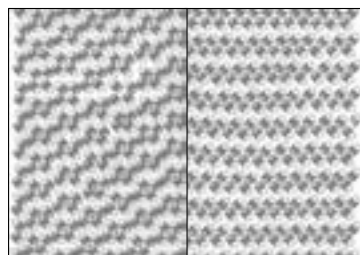
Cesare Pietroiusti

n.01



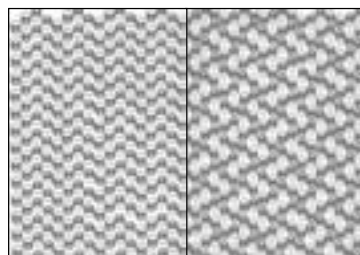
Izet Sheshivari

n.02



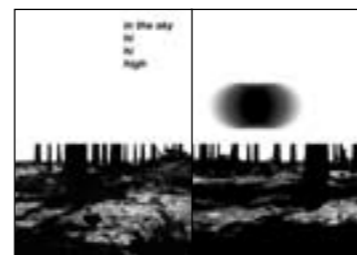
QUATRE AVENTURES DE REINETTE ET MIRABELLE, Eric Rohmer - PERCEVAL LE GALLOIS, Eric Rohmer - L'AMI DE MON AMIE, Eric Rohmer - LES NUITS DE LA PLEINE LUNE, Eric Rohmer - LA MARQUISE D'O..., Eric Rohmer - LA FEMME DE L'AVIATEUR, Eric Rohmer - PAULINE A' LA PLAGE, Eric Rohmer - LE RAYON VERT, Eric Rohmer - DO THE RIGHT THING, Spike Lee - SOLARIS, Andrej Tarkovskij

BLACK STEEL IN THE HOUR OF CHAOS, Public Enemy - MY ADIDAS, Run Dmc - STEPS AHEAD, Gang Star - SATURDAY, De La Soul - THROW YOUR SET IN THE AIR, Cypress Hill - WILD THING, Ton Loc - SUCKA NEGA, A Tribe Called Quest - CAREFUL (CLICK, CLICK), Wu Tang Clan - WHEN DOVES CRY, Prince - LOVE ON THE BEAT, Serge Gainsbourg



Robert Lippok (To Rococo Rot)

n.03



BLADE RUNNER, Ridley Scott - CRIMES AND MISDEMEANORS, Woody Allen - FANNY AND ALEXANDER, Ingmar Bergman - LE AVVENTURA DI PINOCCHIO, Gianetto Guardone - DARK STAR, John Carpenter - THE ICE STORM, Ang Lee - BLOW UP, Michelangelo Antonioni - VAMPUR-DER TRAUM DES ALAN GREY, Carl Theodor Dreyer - L'ASCENSEUR POUR L'ECHAFAUD, Louis Malle - KILL BILL VOLUME 1&2, Quentin Tarantino

ALIVE, Daft Punk - PIANO PHASE, Steve Reich - HANDS 2 TAKE, Flying Lizards - DER RAEUBER UND DER PRINZ, Deutsch Amerikanische Freundschaft - QUICK SAND, David Bowie - ROLLS AND WAVES OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, Savath + Savalas - WHAT DOES YOUR SOUL LOOK LIKE, Dj Shadow - THE GORDIAN KNOT UNTY'D, Henry Purcell - FENNESZ PLAYS, Christian Fennesz - MELODIOUS THUNK, Andrea Parker



Terre Thaemlitz

n.04



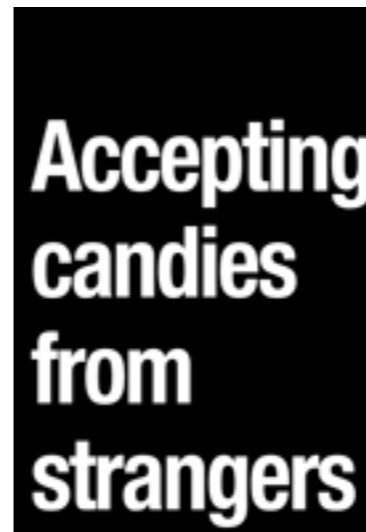
Gustav Deutch

n.05



João Onofre

n.06



AND LIFE GOES ON, Abbas Kiarostami - CLOSE UP, Abbas Kiarostami - WHERE IS THE FRIEND'S HOME, Abbas Kiarostami - THE TRAVELLER, Abbas Kiarostami - WEEK END, Jean-Luc Godard - TRISTANA, Luis Bunuel - LE CHARME DISCRETE DE LA BOURGEOISIE, Luis Bunuel - ENSAYO DU CRIMEN, Luis Bunuel - NORTH BY NORTHWEST, Alfred Hitchcock - VAMPIRE'S KISS, Robert Bierman - JOHNNY GUITAR, Nicholas Ray - MARTHA, Rainer Werner Fassbinder - L'ECLISSE, Michelangelo Antonioni - INTERVISTA, Federico Fellini - TEOREMA, Pier Paolo Pasolini - FLAMING CREATURES, Jack Smith

ALL PEOPLE IS MY FRIENDS, Dj Koze - FEVER TO TELL, Yeah Yeah Yeahs - IF THE SKY WAS PINK JAMES HOLDEN RMIX 18", Nathan Fake - AROUND THE HOUSE, Herbert - THE GREAT ROCK'N'ROLL SWINDLE, T. Raumschmiere - WE ARE MONSTER PLAYHOUSE, Isolee' - BEST OF, Maria Callas - COMBAT ROCK, Clash - BEST OF Antonio Variacoes - THE JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE, Jimi Hendrix - THE MINDS OF KURT COBAIN AND EDGAR VARESE AND MICHAEL MAYER

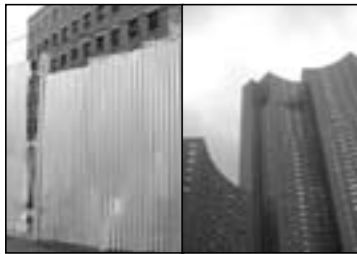
Gardar Eide Einarsson

n.07



SWORD OF DOOM, Kimachi Okamoto - SEVEN SAMURAI, Akira Kurosawa - THRONE OF BLOOD, Akira Kurosawa - BARRY LYNDON, Stanley Kubrick - SANJURO, Akira Kurosawa - CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST, Ruggero Deodato -SYMPATHY FOR THE UNDERDOG, Kinji Fukasaku - QUERELLE, Rainer Werner Fassbinder - TABOO, Vilgot Sjoman - BOILING POINT, Takeshi Kitano

VOLCANO, Satyricon - SOME GIRLS, Rolling Stones - BACK IN BLACK, Ac/Dc - ASS COBRA, Turbonegro - UNDER A FUNERAL MOON, Misfits - ME AND BOBBY MCGEE, Kris Kristofferson - ACE OF SPADES, Motorhead - DANZIG, Danzig - EMOTIONAL RESCUE, Rolling Stones



Frédéric Post

n.08

Iniziativa popolare federale LEGALIZE ART DRUG

Per permettere agli artisti e creativi svizzeri di fabbricare, avere e consumare degli stupefacenti nel quadro professionale al fine di stimolare la loro attività creativa.

Art. 1. Scopo, motivazione, obiettivi e campo di applicazione. L'obiettivo è consentire agli artisti e creativi svizzeri di fabbricare, avere e consumare degli stupefacenti nel quadro professionale al fine di stimolare la loro attività creativa.

Art. 2. Definizione di artisti e creativi svizzeri. Sono considerati artisti e creativi svizzeri coloro che sono iscritti in un registro nazionale e che svolgono attività creative in modo professionale.

Artista/Creativo	Stupefante	Quantità	Scopo
...

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Artista/Creativo	Stupefante	Quantità	Scopo
...

Ed Young

n.09

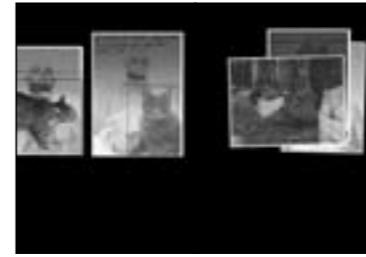


FREDDY GOT FINGERED, Tom Green - HAPPY GILMORE, Dennis Dugan - MULHOLLAND DRIVE, David Lynch - DODGEBALL, Rawson Marshall Thurber - THE TIN DRUM, Volker Schlöndorff - CHILD'S PLAY, Tom Holland - CHILD'S PLAY 2: CHUCKY'S BACK, John Lafia - CHILD'S PLAY 3: LOOK WHO'S TALKING, Don Mancini - BRIDE OF CHUCKY, Ronny Yu - SEED OF CHUCKY, Don Mancini

BEAUTIFUL, Christina Aguilera - DON'T LET ME GET ME, Pink - I'M NOT A GIRL, NOT YET A WOMAN, Britney Spears - TWISTED TRANSISTOR, Korn - HOLIDAY INN, Chingy (Ft. Snoop Dogg & Ludacris) - LACK OF COLOUR, Death Cab For Cutie - LOS ANGELES, I'M YOURS, The Decemberists - ITALIAN LEATHER SOFA, Cake - ASS LIKE THAT, Eminem - WHY DON'T YOU FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF, Morrissey

Henrik Olesen

n.10



L'ARGENT (MONEY), Robert Bresson - CASIO, SEIKO, SHERATON, TOYOTA, MARS, Sean Snyder - THE CUT-UPS William S.Burroughs/Antony Balch - PARIS IS BURNING, Jennie Livingston - LE FILS (THE SON), Jean-Pierre Dardenne And Luc Dardenne - TAXI ZUM KLO (TAXI TO TOILET), Franz Ripplloh - LOOKING FOR MUSHROOMS, Bruce Conner - I'M WITH YOU IN ROCKLAND, Karl Holmquist - SCANNERS, David Cronenberg - PORTRAIT OF JACKSON, Shirley Clarke



OASIS COLLABORATING #2, Omar-S/Shadow Ray - STUDIO 1 VARIATIONEN, Thomas Brinkmann - SESSION ELEMENTS Substance - INNOVATOR, Derrick May - ELEMENTS 1989-1990, Psyche/Bfc - REST, Isolee - SUPERLONGEVITY 2, Various - LOVELESS, My Bloody Valentine - BASIC CHANNEL CD, Various - GENTLEMEN TAKES POLAROID, Japan

Scott King

n.11



HELL DRIVERS, XXXX - DEAD MAN'S SHOES, Shane Meadows - SCUM, Alan Clarke - A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, Powell And Pressburger - SMALLTIME, Shane Meadows - REAR WINDOW, Alfred Hitchcock - STROZECK, Werner Herzog - QUADROPHENIA, Franc Roddam - CLOSELY OBSERVED TRAINS, XXXX - HEAT Michael Mann

EAT YERSELF FITTER, The Fall - FAR FAR AWAY, Slade - MOTORHEAD, Hawkwind - CHERRY RED, Groundhogs - NAVYHEAD, Earl Brutus - PERFORMANCE, Happy Mondays - DO IT, Pink Fairies - REFLECTIONS, The Supremes - AUTUMN'S CHILD, Captain Beffheart - SHADOWPLAY, Joy Division



Mario Garcia Torres

n.12



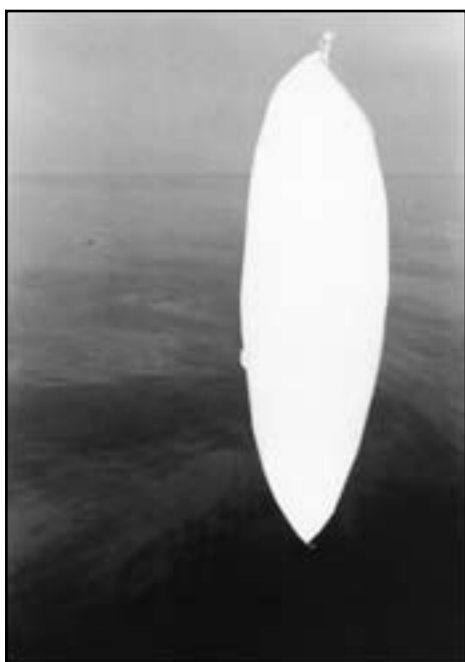
LOS ANGELES PLAYS ITSELF, Thom Andersen - Michael Asher - THE BIG LEBOWSKI, Joel Coen - TIGRERO: A FILM THAT WAS NEVER MADE, Mika Kaurismaki - 12 ANGRY MAN, Sydney Lumet - THE DISAPPEARANCE, John Menick - THE LAST LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE, Pen-Ek Ratanaruang - BATALLA EN EL CIELO, Carlos Reygadas - WHAT TIME IS IT OVER THERE, Ming-Lian Tsai - SMOKE, Wayne Wang



17 ANOS, Angeles Azules - DEBUT Y DESPEDIDA, Angeles Negros - MAREO, Babasonicos - DESDE HOY, Duelo - THE MESSAGE AND THE MONEY - Immortal Technique - JOTILLO MODERNO, Mario - JUST THE WAY YOU ARE, Maggie Gyllenhaal - I STILL REMEMBER, Micah P. Hinson And The Gospel Of Progress - I WANT TO HUNG OUT WITH ED RUSHA, David Stephenson And Richard Bell - EL MUSICO CHIFLADO, Rigo Tovar

Cerith Wyn Evans

n.13



TV Kurt Kren - WOMEN IN REVOLT,
Paul Morrissey - ANYTHING AND
EVERYTHING BY PETER GIDAL
- JOHNNY GUITAR Nicolas Ray -
RABBIT'S MOON, Kenneth Anger
- VERTICAL ROLL, Joan Jonas -
HEURLEMENT EN FAVOUR DE SADE,
Guy Debord - ANYTHING BY JULIETTE
BLIGHTMAN

DER ROSENKAVALIER, Herbert
Von Karajan - EVERYTHING BY
THROBBING GRISTLE

Piero Golia

Special Issue



DOG DAY AFTERNOON, Sidney Lumet - DEER HUNTER, Michael Cimino - APOCALYPSE NOW, Francis Ford Coppola - EVIL
DEAD, Sam Raimi - RISKY BUSINESS, Paul Brickman - NEAR DARK, Kathryn Bigelow - MEET THE FEEBLES, Peter Jackson -
CASINO, Martin Scorsese - THE ADDICTION, Abel Ferrara - HOTEL, Mike Figgis

HERB ALPERS & THE TIJUANA BRASS, Whipped Cream And Other Delights - JOHNNY CASH, Live At Folsom Prison - THE
WATTS PROPHETS, Things Gonna Get Greater - NWA, Straight Out Of Compton - ERIK B & RAKIM, Don't Sweat The Technique
- WU-TANG CLAN Enter The Wu-Tang - CYPRESS HILL, Black Sunday - MATMOS, Rat Relocation Program - QUASIMOTO The
Further Adventures Of Lord Quas - LEAFCUTTER JOHN, The Forest And The Sea



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