

Museo di Pietrarsa



Viaggiatori senza bagaglio



Travelers without baggage

Achille Bonito Oliva

The end of the 20th century and of the second millennium, the second half of the nineties, is dominated by the contradictory tension of a double movement: globalization and tribalization.

On one hand technological development, telecommunications, tends to unify all types of industrial and craft production, economy and culture; a powerful interdependence conditions the development of society, leading it towards standardization. A horizontal trend dominates the dynamics of production and reduces attempts to differentiate products (and therefore producers).

Globalization threatens the identity, eliminates the attempt to personalize existence. This

leads to the response, often reactionary and regressive, of tribalization, the return to nationalism, fundamentalism and the values of permanency in one place. Man responds to the macro-event of technological development with the micro-event of his own existence, linked to resistance in the fixed place of residence and the negation of the threatening micro-events of other, neighboring individuals.

This divarication is the place of the strategy of many contemporary artists, who uphold the right of their own imaginary universe, removed from the logic of the dual extremism: globalization and tribalization. They adopt the tactic of cultural nomadism in order to escape from the perverse consequence of tribal identity. At the same time they lay claim to a production of symbolic nature against the commercialization of the global economy. In this way they uphold the right of diaspora, the multicultural, transnational and multimedia crossing. They therefore escape from any logic of belonging through a basic choice that tends to negate the value of the space, habitat or relative circumscribed anthropology in favor of a value of time condensed in the form of the work.

Stoically, these artists freely choose the diaspora, the tragic historical fate suffered by many peoples in the East and the West. In this sense the work acquires a utopian value in the etymological sense of the term, the preference for a non-place, a dematerialized elsewhere that does not require permanency or definitive occupancy. Artists like these "light travelers" develop a language of release from a single formal option, the affirmation of shifting and crossing in complex works through the operative practice of the concept of decomposition.

Poetry, dance, music, photography, cinema, painting, sculpture, drawing and architecture are combined together in a production of installations that can be placed anywhere, but without the danger of total integration. The nomadism and stylistic eclecticism in form helps to uphold a progressive decomposition in terms of the spatial unity of the moment of production and the temporal unity of the moment of contemplation.

The work functions as a mixer that creates interaction between the various languages and dematerializes all traditional aesthetic categories. It acts on the audience with the alienating force of a reality in motion, with the ability to uphold its own lack of adhesion and consensus.

The character of diaspora is the natural fruit of a tradition that runs from the historical avant-gardes to the transavant-garde movement, the awareness of an autonomy of art that cannot operate on the principle of identification. Contemporary art makes use to the best effect of the surpassing of traditional barriers, to reach the rapid paths that play on the principle of contamination. This principle operates against the danger of standardization, the result of telecommunication globalization. On one hand it uses the idea of cultural crossing and interaction and on the other it upholds the wholly individual right of the artist to produce unexpected and surprising forms, the consequence of an imaginary universe free from any hierarchy.

Art functions at a further level of decomposition, in that it upholds the creative value of the individual against the quantitative value of the group. It offers itself to the contemplation of the resident audience with the traces of its own diaspora, the signs of a crossing that make it positively foreign with respect to the familiarity of the daily TV pictures that invade the domestic space of mass society. Diaspora implies complexity of multiple references, the memory of the numerous networks that underlie the cultural nomadism of the artist. The complexity of planned form against the spectacular simplification of the pictures that

bombard us from the small screen.

The ambivalence of the work constitutes these artists' sign of resistance against the reality that surrounds them, the formalization of the hostility of an art that does not wish to play the role of an information service. It wishes, rather, to interrupt the trend of a world that revolves around the myth of information.

And yet these artists do address the problem of communication, the necessary acknowledgement of the telecommunications apparatus that controls the world. For this reason they absorb within their works the spurious diversity of different languages, but mould it outside the logic of immediate consumption. To communicate necessarily implies the adoption of techniques and materials not detached from the context in which we live. It implies subjecting the regime of the diaspora to a discipline capable of developing contact with the audience. And so art, after so much diaspora, addresses the problem of a stop: to avoid the problem of an abstract globalization, the international fruition of the art system, favoring balanced communication, beyond any tribal tendency.

This tendency always implies belonging and the idea of a consumption that intercepts in some art forms the search for consensus. The balancing of form ensures that art will not become purely an object of consumption, the possibility of maintaining a character of passage that signals a journey broken only by short stops.

The art of the end of the century must necessarily repeat the value of the diaspora, the destiny of unstoppable movement, to testify to its own destructuring and contradictory structural attitude. Only in this way can these artists demonstrate the credit they give to time, freezing a better one in works that highlight a faith in history in a clear, exemplary manner.

The installation, as the prevalent form of present-day art, is born from an encounter or relation with telecommunications, beginning with the problem posed by a potentially fatal illness such as anorexia. Anorexia is a paradoxically pathological state in mass society, dominated by standardization and what I call a sort of copycat complex, to copy a model that tends increasingly to remove differences and to be dominated by a sense of disappearance, of reduction. The anorexia that tends towards death, an illness that tends to destroy the concreteness and the weight of the body, also contains an involuntary intention of aggressiveness, the body that disappears tends to lose flesh and emphasize the skeleton, the armor of the skeleton and thus, in this sense, a strong, aggressive and penetrating structure. If we apply this concept of anorexia to the field of telecommunications, we find that we can represent dematerialization, the dematerialization of the art object that thus tends to be penetrating and to enter into the domestic space, threatening and questioning the static architecture of the museum or the gallery. Telecommunication therefore develops an idea of space which is happily precarious.

What is the installation, if not a structurable and destructurable vaporized space that can be reconstructed repeatedly according to the architectural container, like in Pietrarsa, in which it is placed? Thus in this sense the idea of total art, as a multimedia and interdisciplinary precipitation, the expression of a linguistic syncretism. What is the installation, if not the capacity, the astuteness of art to cross this age of dematerialization dominated by telecommunications? And so the installation becomes what we might call the house of art. The house of art but not a habitat that has as a reference the territorial rootedness of the peasant civilization; the house as maternal bed, the definitive, indestructible, fiercely Mediterranean archetype from which we come and to which we

return, ineluctable, inescapable and, I would say, as tough as steel. The house of art is a precarious house, it is a mobile house that has more to do with another theme which is dear to me, that of the diaspora of art.

The artist is a nomad, he works through a language that is not rooted to an autarchic, geographically circumscribed tradition, but is the synthesis of a cultural memory that is stratified in a vertical sense and wide in a horizontal sense. Through language, through dematerialized, vaporized, impalpable materials, the artist thus constructs his house of art. A house that can be put up and taken down, like the tents of nomads in the desert, that protects the artist but does not armor him as in a trench nor assure him survival forever. He needs a mobile house, in which to stop and from which to set out. It is no coincidence that the image, or the gesture or the sound, when it intertwines with the installation, ensures an atmosphere that is neither diurnal nor nocturnal: the atmosphere that is a halfway between sleep and wakefulness, an ambiguous state, a state of abandonment and of lucidity, an intermediate, ambivalent, contradictory and complex state. Thus the house of art belongs more to the culture of the diaspora, of the eternal movement to which the artist abandons himself by choice, but not passively, like they who suffer the tragic destiny imposed on them by others. For this reason the term should be used in the plural, "diasporas of art", also to avoid the potential risks of using a term we should respect, in that it recalls the tragic destiny of the Jewish people, and of other peoples, who have suffered the Diaspora. That is to abandon the motherland, the place of birth, of growth, of the extension of one's own existential adventure.

The diasporas of art ensure the key character of the term and also designate the choice of the artist, the necessary and planned destiny of the artist himself. And thus Pietrarsa becomes the place of encounter not only of the artist who has designed this vaporized space, but also the space of a meeting with society, with the spectator, who enters not with a passive eye but with the peripeteia of his own body, with the motor activity of his own psycho-sensory structure. And so the house of art becomes an oasis, where the artist and the spectator together find rest, profit, welcome, even something to drink. A place where one can abandon oneself to the spectacle and to rest, rest in the sense of a stop fomented by the vaporized quality of the space.

And in this sense "Travelers without baggage" thus means being able to put up and take down the work, it means being able to deposit the project of the artist in the archive of the memory and revive it when necessary.

It is precisely here that I see a correspondence between the arts and telecommunications. It is here that I can contemplate a dignified, rather than pathetic encounter between the house of art and the penetrating force of telecommunications, which often help the domestic space of the individual, but which can also make him passive. Instead the house of art is an active space that makes the spectator a protagonist and also gives identity to the artist who has designed it. Which project am I referring to? Certainly not the project still inhabited by the rationalist pride of the artists of the twenties and thirties, a generous pride, supported by the concept of utopia, a utopia whose meaning should already have made the artists aware that it is a non-place.

And so the artists are aware that art is a non-place to proceed.

Thus they work between utopia and dystopia at this exhibition in Pietrarsa, a deposit setting out, which becomes the proof that it is still possible to practice the concept of project. It is, however, a gentle project, which cannot now convey to the outside world the

aggressive force of the artist who wishes to give a moral order to the world. It is, instead, the proof of a spirit that resists, of the constructive capacity of language to organize itself in a delicate, non-authoritarian and welcoming manner: the Neapolitan artists from the "Orologio ad acqua" group, Gabriele Castaldo, Antonio De Filippis, Carmine Rezzuti, Errico Ruotolo and Quintino Scolavino, who have opened the Museum of Pietrarsa to welcome artists working with other languages: Cesare Accetta for Photography, Gabriele Frasca for Poetry, Mario Franco for Film Direction and History, Mari-anna Troise for Dance, and Maurizio Villa for Music, or who have encountered Naples: Günther Förg, Nan Goldin, Hidetoshi Nagasawa, and Vettor Pisani, or who have flown over Naples: Luca (Luigi Castellano).

Against the indiscriminate, potentially authoritarian use of telecommunications, the artist is he who forgets by heart his own household goods in the service of the imagination and of the only adventure possible to move from the 20th century to the century that awaits us. Travelers without baggage, that is. Including the critics.

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