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For Patrizia and Emilio

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GALLERIA ENRICO ASTUNI

66|16
Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, etcetera...

curated by Lorenzo Bruni

Sputnik Editions

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The “Dematerialised present”¹, “digital natives”², and “emergency strategies”³, are the definitions that have recently been most used to describe our present society. What is surprising is that finally there has been abandoned the use of the famous prefix post- for qualifying the panorama around us. As a result the following considerations emerge. The first is that perhaps we find ourselves outside the field of action of the Western model and the widely shared feeling of, to paraphrase Eric Hobsbawm⁴, the failure of all old and new programmes for managing or bettering the condition of humanity. The second is that reality has been accepted as the sharing of informative codes that lead to rewriting the nature of the concept of information, image, and personal and collective identity, just as there has been accepted the fact that the economy is based on the distribution of services and no longer on the production of merchandise. And

¹ Cf. Senaldi, Marco, *Media e disidentità*, Postmedia Books, Milan 2015. Bauman, Zygmunt, *Per tutti i gusti. La cultura nell'età dei consumi*, Editori Laterza, Roma-Bari 2016.

² Cf. Ferri, Mario, *Nativi digitali*, Mondadori, Milan 2011. Prensky, Marc, *La mente aumentata. Dai nativi digitali alla saggezza digitale* (2012), Erickson, Trento 2013. Gui, Marco, *A dieta di media. Comunicazione e qualità della vita*, Il Mulino, Milan 2014.

³ Cf. Ferraris, Maurizio, *Emergenza*, Einaudi, Turin 2016. La Cecla, Franco, *Mente locale. Per un'antropologia dell'abitare*, Elèuthera, Milan 2011.

⁴ Hobsbawm, Eric, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*, It. Trad. *Il secolo breve. 1914-1991* (1994), BUR, Milan

finally, the third consideration is about a change in the trend with regard to the need to reflect on collective memory – and therefore on archival tools – that society has demonstrated over the past fifteen years. In this historical moment there is being shown a lively interest in discussion about the concept of the future understood, however, outside the ideological tensions of aims/menaces which the last century was saturated in.

The exhibition *66/16* that preceded this volume has allowed me to outline from a pragmatic point of view the concepts that it dealt with. The curatorial approach, in fact, laid bare the flattery and perversions that lie behind the possibility of exploiting news from the past mixed with those of the present, without filters or conflicts, as happens with such digital platforms as Youtube and Facebook. In order to make these ways of thinking explicit, the exhibition area of the Astuni gallery in Bologna was divided into two by a wall: one part hosted a group show with works that seven artists, from various areas of the world, had made in 1966, and in the other part were works made at the time of the show, that is in 2016. The result was two autonomous exhibitions that tested the viewers' attention. In fact, this separation made possible the emergence, not only of questions about the material contingency with which the viewers approached the works, but also about how time and historical knowledge could be used to interpret and contextualise them. The

works on show, even though divided by fifty years of history, made evident the way they mirrored each other. This highlighted the clarity of the research of individual artists linked, not so much to forms, as to making them mechanisms for a debate about life and art. What must be clarified, though, is the direct dialogue with the context from which they emerged, since this is an element that is either forgotten by the collective memory or is set aside by critics⁵.

Starting from this viewpoint, it is fundamental to ask how it is possible to convey a context - whether that of 1966 or that of 2016 - linked to a certain type of work; in other words, how we can connect with the past without idealising it, and how can we address the present without apathy. This was the motive that made the show, not an end in itself, but a means for dealing with concepts from the past and the future by starting again from those very “subversive” energies frozen over the years, partly as a result of the hedonism of the 1980s. In fact, it is not by chance that what has distinguished the culture of the first fifteen years of the new millennium has been a close attention to the ideas and undertakings of the 1960s. This has been made possible by, or was a direct

⁵ An important case that has recently emerged, and one that should be kept in mind, is that the exhibition of Conceptual Art organized in America in 2009 greatly played down the link between this art and the political protests about the Vietnam war, student unrest, and all forms of political protest linked to the renewal of society.

consequence of, the contemporary spread – from online magazines to shared forums and archives – of tools for having direct access to art news in real time. This idea of immediate use has increasingly led to thinking that art history is separate from militant criticism⁶, yet the researches of the latter today seem vital for reflection as a basis for aesthetic history and tools. This is the reason for which, intentionally, the content of the book and the process of the exhibition have been related. The choice of acting within such a perspective derives from the wish to avoid such separations and to suggest future interactions between historicising, mediating, and producing culture.

The artists invited to participate in *66/16*, Marinus Boezem, Simone Forti, David Medalla, Maurizio Mochetti, Maurizio Nannucci, Malick Sidibé, and Michael Snow, are quite different from each other both for cultural traditions and for their approach to investigating and sharing the process of an art work. However, when observing the early researches undertaken halfway through the 1960s, what they had in common was the choice of using ephemeral materials and an

⁶ The history of militant criticism has yet to be written because studies linking the international influence of the researches of such figures as Lucy R. Lippard or Jean-Christophe Amman are too fragmentary. There have been more studies of the influence of the curator's role, as demonstrated by *Obrist's book*: Hans Ulrich, *A Brief History of Curating*, It. trad. *Breve storia della curatela*, Postmedia Books, Milan 2011.

experimental method. This was the only way they had available for detaching themselves from the work as a surface that was fighting against or accepting the decorative aspect that was widely collected at the time and that had spread with the various movements born from Pop Art⁷. The solution they pinpointed was to be found in the dynamics of transforming the art object into a device for a democratic dialogue in which the distance between art and life, between individuals and the community, was greatly eroded in order to create an open discussion about the role of art and its audience, something with which to change society. In order to do this, the artists at first aimed at breaking down the barriers between various languages such as music, architecture, mathematics, and philosophy. This approach was necessary in order to shift the field of influence from the space of art and from the museum/ container towards an activism that could dialogue with contemporaneity. The need to dematerialise the object was closely tied to the urgent need to be freed from the relationship with the formal referent through which reality was represented, in order to be able to concentrate on the work's *raison d'être*. In particular, these artists were specifically chosen for 66/16

⁷ The phenomenon of the global diffusion of Pop Art and of its transformation in relation to the various socio-political areas in which it developed has been widely analysed in the catalogue *The EY Exhibition. The World Goes Pop*, 12 September 2015 – 24 January 2016, Tate Modern, London.

because in the decades following the 1960s they continued constantly, and in a proactive way, to dialogue with society, aware of its constant transformation. Furthermore, an observation of individual careers might at last contribute to throwing new light on the artistic technique⁸, medium or tool that they inquired into rather than simply used. Such a change of register has made obsolete the old critical categories and has influenced new attempts to judge and classify a work of art, both from the point of view of a "generalising" interpretation and from that of insiders. This is not a question of supplying tools with which to classify the works, given that the very artists in question, just like the militant critics, have taught us that a priori systems are always inefficient⁹. It is, rather, necessary to start from specific cases in order to arrive at wider ideas. For example, the career of Marinus Boezem might give rise to wider thoughts about attraction to and, at the same time, about an emancipation from Western-style figurative painting, a tension that has always been present in the art of the past fifty years. The case of Simone Forti, instead, allows us to open up and inquire into the particular connections to

⁸ The concept of technical evolution as a way of evaluating the quality of artistic products was a great dilemma for art writing in the twentieth century. As a problem, it has been highlighted in particular by the critiques of Arthur Danto, Gillo Dorfles, Boris Groys, Harold Rosenberg, and Rosalind Krauss.

⁹ Cf. Perniola, Mario, *L'arte espansa*, Einaudi, Turin 2015.

the discovery of the body in relation to dancing, and the possibilities of enjoying shared self-awareness. With David Medalla it is interesting to observe his aim of making the role of sculpture and that of happenings coexist in order to think in a different way about representing time. Maurizio Mochetti has revealed unexpected possibilities for a dialogue between the tradition of art and new technologies. By dealing, not only with these, but also with the knowledge and widespread awareness of them, he has aimed at pinpointing the possibilities for "measuring" mental space in relation to a space that can be rationalised, and vice versa. Maurizio Nannucci's development, instead, has suggested that typographical fonts, their support, and their way of mediating, are artistic tools on the same level as others and that, for these very properties, he has used them to better fathom the change of the relationship between the private and public spheres of our mass media society. In this perspective, the work of Malick Sidibé not only refers to the evolution of cameras – his use of a portable camera allowed him to photograph with ease the night life of the capital of Mali – but also to an analysis of the theme of portraiture, and to bring together an evocation of Western progress and that of post-colonialism. Finally, Michael Snow, as a result of his very interdisciplinary approach, allows us to think of experimental cinema as part of a wider research into the narratives of a fixed/moving image that is not separated

from such other art techniques as the inquiries made by contemporary sculpture into the movement of the body. These are just some of the areas of reflection that emerge from the researches of the individual artists involved, ones that might be useful for rethinking what we consider to be the history of art and the evolution of the properties that are a part of art. The possibility of seeing all these researches together can, what is more, allow reflection about the contrast between art and time, about the concept of parallel documentation, but also and above all about the concept of the evolution of art. This is because the aim of the artists involved was, and is, not the negation of the object but its continuous testing and extension of the implications it could give rise to. Such expectations/attitudes are part of the panorama that they all had in common, even though they had different fields of interest.

*Ieri, Oggi, Domani, Eccetera...*¹⁰. The gestures and experiments of this group of artists still today seem revolutionary for the very reason that they have not been absorbed into collective knowledge and they have not become the norm.

¹⁰ *Ieri, Oggi, Domani, Eccetera...* is the work specifically created by the artist Jonathan Monk to act as a visual introduction – both through the invitation and its presence on the façade of the Enrico Astuni gallery in Bologna – and as a conceptual comment on the project to compare works of art from 1966 with others by the same artists made in 2016.

Starting from their researches, *66/16* aims at inquiring into what the future heredity of the 1960s might have been. The first question we must ask ourselves is: what are the characteristics that made the researches manifested in those years interesting? A fairly generic answer is that for the first time the idea and sharing of the message seemed more urgent than its form of representation. The work was deconstructed and dematerialised so as to camouflage itself with the mechanisms of life in order to modify them *within* it and not be separated *from* it. This aspect has been widely recognised as characterising the tensions of that period, also as a result of the researches undertaken by the new generations of artists active in the 1990s. The latter have recreated, perhaps in an unknowing way, a bridge to that period in order to establish a crossover between the arts as a means for amplifying the importance of the works in daily life. Their researches were defined, in that particular historical moment, as “post-production” attitudes¹¹, relational art¹², political art¹³, and post-media dynamics¹⁴. What united their way of working during the 1990s, and that differentiates them

¹¹ Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Postproduction. Come l'arte riprogramma il mondo* (2001), Postmedia books, Milan 2004.

¹² Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Arte relazionale* (1998), Postmedia books, Milan 2010.

¹³ Detheridge, Anna, *Scultori della speranza. L'arte nel contesto della globalizzazione*, Einaudi 2012.

¹⁴ Belpoliti, Marco, *Doppio zero. Una mappa portatile della contemporaneità*, Einaudi, Turin 2003.

from the remnants of expressionist painting, was their choice to construct *site-specific works*¹⁵. Site-specific works, their relationship to a specific container, allowed them to shift attention onto the moment of shared enjoyment. Very probably this was a reaction to globalisation and to the diffusion of the Internet which allows anyone and everyone to be in contact with each other. Along this path of highlighting direct experience there were various degrees of radicalisation that we can pinpoint in various autonomous approaches that ranged from those years to the 2000s: from Rirkrit Tirvanija to Tino Sehgal, Carsten Höller, Tris Vonna-Michell, Philippe Parreno, Hito Steyerl, Mario Airò, Matteo Rubbi, etcetera etcetera. The 1990s represented above all “a coming to grips with the century that was coming to an end”¹⁶. In this perspective, there came to the forefront new strategies and identities for such techniques as video and photography which, even though already experimented with in the 1970s, had not yet then acquired the status of a work, but only the role of recording an action. Video, instead, for the artists active from halfway through the 1990s allowed them to work on the narration/evocation of facts that were both personal and public. This

¹⁵ Negri, Antonio, Hardt Michael, *Comune. Oltre il privato e il pubblico*, Rizzoli, Milan 2010.

¹⁶ The artist, of Albanian origins, Anri Sala won the Leone d'Oro prize as the best young artist at the 2001 Venice Biennale for the video *Uomoduo*.

immediately underlined the distinction between documentaries and video clips by creating a narrative that recounted in first person the radical changes that were taking place in personal and international identities at a socio-political level. Video, in particular, has been adopted with total freedom by female artists¹⁷ and by artists who are not part of the Western economic and political model¹⁸ (East Europe and South America for example) whose use of video avoids any prejudice due to the fact that they are working with a brief tradition with respect to the millennial ones of painting and the West. Another assimilated procedure that has gained a new autonomy is the one linked to architectural language. The attitudes and methods of this discipline have become a new tool for artists who want to intervene on public spaces to make an immediate and tangible change in the urban space and in “everyday dynamics”. In the same way, photography has become a potent tool for inquiry for analyzing artistic and conceptual freedom with respect to the rules of technical reproducibility.

A momentous innovation in the history of art, related to how it is used, was the diffusion from the end of the 1990s of a non-technique; in other words, a

¹⁷ Cf. Bruni, Lorenzo, *Raccontare un luogo*, Fortino Edition, 2015

¹⁸ Cf. with regard to this, the aims stated on various occasions by the writer David Foster Wallace in *Un antidoto contro la solitudine. Interviste e conversazioni* (2012), Minimum fax, Rome 2013.

dialogue with the energies of the past: the strategy of re-enactment. The inclination to connect works from the past with ideas, film projects, music and so on, has allowed artists to begin reflecting on the creative act, on its reason for being, and its relationship with the recent history of Conceptual Art. The attention paid in recent years by young artists to a recuperation of an abstract painting linked to the use of painting in the post-war period as an aesthetic/political weapon should not be considered genuine re-enactments, even though it is fully a part of the strategy for reactivating collective memory. In the same perspective, recently many artists have begun to use words and writing in their work, utilizing them, however, not as images but as part of a wider story to be communicated. These two latter cases should be considered within a more ample need to answer the public's requirement for dealing with images/information that can activate contemplative interpretative processes that might serve as an antidote to those self-produced and distributed daily to users by their digital appliances. The re-enactment undertaken by artists has been the tip of the iceberg that, in the 1990s, allowed a rediscovery of the art from the 1960s, in particular of Conceptual Art. One artist who has been very active in this is Jonathan Monk, who was invited to the show in order to create a site-specific work for the *66/16* project. Monk gave an answer to this stimulus by questioning

himself about today's dematerialised time, and about what there was in the interval of time between 1966 and 2016; this led to the project titled *Ieri, oggi, domani, eccetera....* In this work the artist has pinpointed the cyclic nature which we have to deal with today through his thoughts about the *temporality* of the relationship between the future and the past, in line with the research he has undertaken over the past fifteen years into the heredity of the 1960s. That is, by reasoning about what a work of art is, what role an artist might have, and what might be his level of interaction between art and society.

The *66/16* book is not based on transforming the points I have just made into a dogma, but it aims at understanding - starting from this new collective awareness, in which direction a meeting with a work of art can come about - how it is possible to classify an art work among the *many* histories that have emerged and that have simultaneously cohabited since post-colonialism, and what role we should expect to have from it and from *its* history. This evaluation can only be realised by being aware, on the one hand, of the unprecedented enlargement of so-called public potential¹⁹, given that its characteristic of operating in an interactive way with information comes about by using largely limited and "singularised"

parameters²⁰; on the other hand, when dealing with the fact that the "generational passage"²¹ is not yet over, it makes the different stages of life (because of the Internet and the particular physiological longevity of those who were young in the 1960s) coexistent and "active".

The fact that the words "participation"²², "revolution from below"²³, and "dematerialisation" are commonly used, with a more or less deep awareness of a more or less strong link with art researches and with the political activism present in the 1960s, is symptomatic of what I have just said. So, this essay has taken as its starting point an inquiry into the paradoxical situation in which were to be found the artists who began to work halfway through the 1960s. In other words, if their careers began in a period of dematerialisation of the art work, since halfway through the 1990s they have found themselves in a dematerialised, digitalised context, and in a systematic globalised communications situation. Corresponding to this is the fact

²⁰ Bishop, Claire, *Participation*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 2006.

²¹ Cf. the dynamics of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

²² Cf. the exhibition *Materializing "Six Years"*. Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art, Brooklyn Museum, New York 14 September 2012 – 17 February 2013.

²³ The artists and curators active in the 1960s were in contact with each other, not because it was easy to communicate, but only because of the urgent need to dialogue between people with similar concerns.

that the public institutions and cultural and political conventions to which they reacted have not been defeated but have simply evaporated. Does this mean that the revolutionary charge failed? And that therefore there cannot exist a similar revolutionary possibility for contemporary production? It is this question that is at the heart of the great attention paid to it by artists and critics over the past twenty years, and it is to this very question that this essay is devoted.

¹⁹ Zagrebelsky, Gustavo, *Senza adulti*, Einaudi, Turin 2016.



A partial view of the show *66/16*, Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna, 2016.

The “Dematerialization of art” is a definition coined by Lucy R. Lippard¹ halfway through the 1960s in order to pinpoint a series of art undertakings that differed from the aesthetic and interpretative categories that were widespread at the time². This expression began to circulate when this art critic and researcher for MoMA used it as the title for an article written in 1968 together with John Chandler for “Art International” magazine. In this case the term was used to indicate an “ultra-conceptual” approach, one that “underlined an almost exclusively mental process making the object almost wholly obsolete”³. This phrase, in the sense Lippard intended, should be understood,

not as a refusal of materiality but, rather, as an attitude linked to the will of artists of the new generation to deal with the object not only at a physical level. This vision implies the deconstruction of the “society system” for which were produced those very objects/works that they wanted to dematerialise. From this point of view, the phrase in question had already been used on the occasion of an exhibition, *Eccentric Abstraction*, curated by Lippard in 1966 in the Fischbach Art Gallery, New York. This group show, that included Eva Hesse and Bruce Nauman among others, inquired into and presented for the first time the themes and limits of Post-minimalism or Antiform in art. However, what helped the greater diffusion of this definition was its utilisation as part of the long title of her book *Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* [...] ⁴ published in 1973 by the University of California Press, Berkeley. The

book contains an almost real-time, “annotated” x-ray of the most important shows, texts, and ideas that appeared in those years regarding those researches that used ideas as the “medium”. Lucy R. Lippard arrived at her interpretation of the facts by way of a continuous sharing of the creative processes with individual artists, and with an active participation in their debates on the New York scene. Not only with them but also with those in the rest of the world who shared the same impulses and with whom they were in contact. This was an innovative approach that strongly influenced her role and field of action as an art critic and, above all, as a curator. In fact, this latter aspect had until then been confined only to the management of the works of the museum in which she worked⁵. The book, for its approach united to her field of inquiries, did not suggest any sharp and abstract theory a priori; rather, it photographed a situation that enclosed all those impulses: from Conceptual Art to Process Art, Arte Povera, and Land Art, from “criticism of institutions” to feminist art- all those that were active

at the time and which were reacting to Minimalism and, in part, to Fluxus. Due to this, in her long essay, which is a kind of archive of ideas or a shared diary, Sol LeWitt's 1967 definition, “The idea becomes a machine that makes the art”⁶ – with which, among other things, he distinguishes his conceptual work, with a lower case “c”, from the militant dematerialisation already in evidence at the time -, can cohabit with Joseph Kosuth's 1969 statement, in his famous essay *Art After Philosophy*, that a work is such when it reflects on the status of being a work⁷. Or else such famous phrases as the one coined by Frank Stella in 1964, “What you see is what you see”, which indicated the will to distance himself from the symbolism attributed to images. In her book these have various ideal answers, among which Douglas Huebler's 1973 statement, “The world is full of more or less interesting objects. I do not wish to add any more”. In any case, these viewpoints had in common an evident challenge to the contemporary art market's diffusion of Pop Art and to the fetish for original masterpieces, viewpoints that referred to precise social and political issues that they wanted to deconstruct. This outlook was closely connected to the

¹ Lucy R. Lippard is famous for giving numbers as titles for her shows, such as the one she curated in 1969 called *557,087* and held at the World's Fair Pavilion in Seattle. The numbers corresponded to the population of Seattle at the time, and alluded to the fact that the ideal container for the artists she was presenting was not the museum, but the audience and the city. This militant curating also revolutionised the way of doing militant criticism, as is testified to by her famous book *Six Years* [...] that was to be published in 1973.

² In particular, there was strong opposition to the formalist position taken by the critic Clement Greenberg. The controversy was robust and shared by everybody, as was pointed out by Lippard herself in her 2009 essay/conference *Counting by Number* in *Tate Papers* no. 12. This position has always been summed up by reference to the work by John Latham, *Art and Culture*, 1966/69, in which a suitcase contains Greenberg's book and some glass bottles with pages chewed/dematerialised by the artist.

³ In *Art International* 1966

⁴ The exact title takes up over the whole cover of the book highlighting, even with its packaging, the subversive load of radical innovation in the context of art and newspaper criticism. *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972: a cross-reference book of information on some aesthetic boundaries: consisting of a bibliography into which are inserted a fragmentary text, art works, documents, interviews, and symposia, arranged chronologically and focussed on so-called conceptual or information or idea art with mention of such vaguely designated areas as minimal, anti-form, systems, earth, or process art, occurring now in America, Europe, England, Australia, and Asia (with occasional political overtones), edited and annotated by Lucy R. Lippard.*

⁵ Lippard was part of the new generation that would be defined with the terms of independent curator and of independent critic. In that moment other active intellectual who were reducing the distance between judgemental criticism and artistic practice were *Harald Szeemann*, *Kasper König*, *Jan Hoet*, *Germano Celant*, and *Seth Siegelaub*. They were all in contact with each other and with the artists, so anticipating the globalisation of information independently of the Internet.

⁶ So LeWitt, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, 'Artforum'. Vol.5, no. 10, Summer 1967, pp. 79-83.

⁷ In, Joseph Kosuth, *Art after Philosophy*, 1969. Reprinted from *Studio International*.

need to pinpoint new channels for the diffusion and enjoyment of the new work/idea/process. At the time, an important stimulus for the renewal of channels for the “commercialisation of ideas” was undertaken by the critic/curator⁸ Seth Siegelaub when he opened a gallery⁹ in New York in 1964 where, together with the oriental carpets that he collected and sold, he collaborated on the first show by the young Joseph Kosuth, to be followed by shows by Lawrence Weiner, Robert Barry and others. His anti-establishment approach led him to close the gallery in 1966 in order to respect the needs of his artists to face up to public and diversified situations; however, he continued to collaborate with them and pinpointed new exhibition/commercial strategies, such as the project *Xerox Book*, 1968, or the show titled *One Month. March 1-31, 1969*, 1969. In both these cases the works were contained in the catalogue, which was no longer the record of an event but was the particular space for the event itself, one that could easily be sold and owned. So the term dematerialisation – keeping in mind the examples quoted above, together with the others in Lippard’s book, such as the statements and works by Hanne Darboven, Mario

Merz, On Kawara, Bruce Nauman, Daniel Buren and others – evidently seems to correspond to the mutual needs of these artists to eliminate the distance between the public and the artist, thus bypassing the informative and bureaucratic mediation of museum institutions and the theoretical output of critics. In fact, after almost fifty years, it is obvious that the works mentioned by Lippard have in common the aim of becoming active mechanisms with which to produce an equal and direct dialogue with the public about the role of art and society. Lippard herself, in her introduction to *Six Years. The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* [...], wrote: “(...) work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or ‘dematerialized.’”¹⁰. Still today her book – republished unrevised in 2001 – is an important record of the awareness, on the part of those working in the art world, that art and society were faced by a strong impulse for change and revolution.

The best way for understanding the kind of effort made by Lippard for her *Six Years* [...] undertaking is to mention some of the works made around the heroic year

of 1968. Through them it is possible, not only to capture, but to recuperate the energies present halfway through the 1960s without falling into the trap of confining them to a priori explanatory categories. The compilation of works that follows is in part facilitated by the historic perspective in which we find ourselves and, in particular, by the fact that from 1999 until today many exhibitions have analysed these themes. *One and Three Chairs* is the work that Joseph Kosuth made in 1965 and that was used in successive decades to sum up what conceptual speculation was. In this case we are dealing with an industrial folding chair on a scale of 1:1, a photograph of the chair placed on a wall to its left, while to the right is an enlarged reproduction of the definition of a chair taken from the most widely used English dictionary of the time. With this “classifying” work, Kosuth placed on the same level various “knowledge systems”, to use Wittgenstein’s words: the visual, objectual, and linguistic ones. This allowed thoughts about the way in which humanity has always tried to rationalise reality in order to know and communicate it better. It was on this that the whole of Kosuth’s future art was to be based. The severe and rigorous aesthetics that he adopted from the start turned out to be the most efficient for shifting the attention of the observers from the image itself to the analytical rigour that he wanted to imbue it with. In that historical

moment there were many works that increased the debate about how to spark off a dialogue about the role of art and artists, and that aimed above all at “presenting” the “process” of the dialogue itself. Some, for example, chose to highlight the claim of humanity to control nature and to concretise this attitude/ paradox. This is evident in the *Air-Conditioning Show* intervention by the British Art & Language group in 1966/67¹¹ in which an air conditioner was to produce the same temperature inside the exhibition room as outside; or the 1967 work by Robert Morris *Steam Cloud*, created for the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, which produced a sculpture with the use of steam. In other cases, the work became a testimony to open participation, as happened with the first work by Mel Bochner – exhibited at the School of Visual Art, New York – dating from 1966 and titled *Working Drawings And Other Visible Things On Paper Not Necessarily Meant To Be Viewed As Art*; this consists of four file folders to be thumbed through, placed on four bases, and that contain his own drawings and thoughts and texts sent to him by artists and scientists; or, again, as happened with the action that Joseph Beuys

⁸ From this moment on, militant criticism and independent curating were to have the responsibility for pinpointing the best conditions for promoting the work/debate.

⁹ Seth Siegelaub Contemporary Art was active from autumn 1964 to April 1966.

¹⁰ “(...) work in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or ‘dematerialized.’”, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1973, republished unrevised 2001.

¹¹ *Air-Conditioning Show* started as an essay accompanied by a drawing that two artists, Terry Atkinson and Michael Baldwin, distributed in 1966 and 1967. It was put into action for the first time by Joseph Kosuth in Coventry, Great Britain, in 1967.

undertook in Vienna in 1967, titled *Eurasia*¹². The request for participation in order to discover the world, by highlighting the ambiguity of a particular case, was at the heart of the “potential instructions” of *Grapefruit* by Yoko Ono, exhibited in New York in 1964, and that consisted of a list of texts that suggested various actions ranging from surreal to meditative ones and that the public could undertake or not; or, as in the case of the film of the action *Two Correlated Rotations* by Dan Graham, 1968/69, in which two people follow the instructions to walk in opposite directions, following the same imaginary spiral, while they film with a Super 8 camera in the attempt to include the other person in their own visual field. On the other hand, it seems that a meeting with the world could only come about, in certain cases, by altering everyday life with some alienating event, as happens in the work by Vito Acconci, *Following Piece*, 1969, in which a series of photographs and typewritten material describes the time that he had taken over twenty-nine days to tail strangers through the city space; or the *Singing Sculpture* action that Gilbert and George realised in the Nigel Greenwood gallery, London, in 1970, in which the two, their faces painted gold, moved like robots while singing *Underneath the Arches*. In other cases, instead, the time for an

experience was contained in a single image/text, as in the nature walk by Hamish Fulton, his first work, *London 2nd February*, 1967; or as in the postcard with his tear-stained face sent by Bas Jan Ader to his friends, *I'm Too Sad to Tell You*, 1970. Instead, the idea of condensing a whole artistic and creative tradition into a gesture/image that could subsume it, was what led Lee Ufan in 1969, with *Relatum (formerly Phenomena and Perception A)*, to place a stone on a latex band that served to measure space; for the same reason Ion Grigorescu in 1969/1970 abandoned painting in favour of multimedia technologies to create portraits that he defined as “post-happenings”. The need to reinvent traditional techniques is at the heart of many works, among them those of Ed Ruscha who, with *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*, 1966, used a photographic technique to generate and organise a continuum of images in an accordion book to inquire into the limits and possibilities in “the age of technical reproducibility”; while the internal rules of the picture/object were investigated by Roman Opalka who began to paint his first canvas, *1965/1 - ∞* in 1965, in which he developed a numerical progression from 1 to infinity that was accompanied by self-portrait photos from before and after the event. Other works highlight the necessity to create a dialogue between art and life by adopting a “criticism of institutions”, as was the case of *MoMA*

poll, 1970, by Hans Haacke, which consisted of two transparent boxes, one marked “yes” and the other “no”, with which the public could express its own opinion about a specific question about politics; or the action by Daniel Buren in which, in 1969/1970, he illegally affixed hundreds of posters, printed with two monochrome bands, at the exit to the Paris underground. In the same period, other works investigated the capacity to stimulate the imagination with such elementary objects as, in the case of Marcel Broodthaers, the project *Department of Eagles, Financial Section*, created between 1968 and 1971 when, in order to finance a fictitious museum, he put up for auction gold ingots previously stamped with the logotype of the museum at twice the current price of gold; or when in 1966 Walter De Maria created *High Energy Bar* in which he engraved this phrase on a metal bar in order to spark off new mental connections in the observer. Furthermore, with his 1966 work *Serial Project A, B, C, D*, Sol LeWitt inquires into the modular possibilities of cubes to create a direct relationship between the container and the object contained. With *Tropicália, Penetrables PN 2 (Purity is a myth)*, 1966-1967, Hélio Oiticica explores the interactions between pure forms, nature, and the exclusion/inclusion relationship in Western society. Instead, works such as *Untitled*, 1970, by Eva Hesse, latex rubber rectangles fixed to the wall and

from which pour other elements, together with the sculptures by Franz Erhard Walter, which act as platforms for actions, as can be seen in the video *#29 from 1 demonstration*, 1967, pinpoint a wholly intimate interaction with the concept of a “public object”. While the question of what should be the role of the artist and an attempt to represent the creative act, were at the heart of the photographic work *Twins*, 1968, by Ailghiero Boetti, as also of the image *Failing to Levitate in the Studio*, 1966, by Bruce Nauman; the need to eliminate the kind of art/event in which the spectator is a passive consumer was explored by La Monte Young in his *Compositions 1960*, 1960, but also by the posters of Giuseppe Chiari bearing the phrase “art is finished let's all stop together”, 1974. The need to make contact with modernist utopias led the architect Yona Friedman in 1960 to create projects/collages of bridges as “mega-structures” over cities; in a different way, the various groups of “radical architects” that were formed in 1966 in Florence inquired into the force of media images for changing the image of the role of architecture in that period. The idea of minimal intimate gestures was dealt with, instead, by Julius Koller with such trash-sculptures as *Krajina-Mesto (Trencin)*, 1966, and also by the series of slides, *Walking Piece*, created by Yayoi Kusama in 1966, in which the artist walks around the streets of New York as though he were an alien discovering Earth, while

¹² *Eurasia* is an action that is a part of his *Siberian Symphony* and lasts about an hour and a half.

his image appears and disappears amidst the smoke and shadows of the city. These researches all came about in close union with the needs for a confrontation with, and change of, society. In fact, these artist found themselves protesting against the Vietnam war, organising student protests in America and Europe, and pinpointing free spaces within such controlling regimes as those in Eastern Europe and South America. Critics reacted with different analyses of this situation, which led Roland Barthes to suggest, in 1968, the end of authors, and Guy Debord, in a Situationist milieu, to search in a more radical way for the end of the work of art. In 1966 Allan Kaprow, one of the initiators of Happenings, wrote his *Notes on the Elimination of the Audience*¹³, in which he explained the urgent need for making audiences active participants, while Judi Chicago, in the 1970s, realised her *Dinner Parties* in which the idea of participation was raised to different levels, including the feminist thinking that was underway at the time.

The works discussed as part of this long series created around 1966, are necessary for focussing better on the choices that led to defining the *66/16* show in the Galleria Astuni and the resulting book. The show and the publication aim, in fact, at dealing with

the heredity of the 1960s, but to do this it is fundamental to be aware that that heredity is still evolving, given that the protagonists of that period are, for the most part, still in an active dialogue with the international debate about art. *66/16* is the proof of this current condition. From this point of view, the works previously mentioned are useful for framing what happened in about 1966 concerning the need to renew the role of art by means of dematerialisation. These are all “actions” that, at the time, were considered distant from each other, whether for an approach to breaking or dialoguing with society, for the wish to act on the abstract terrain of ideas, or for including the dimension of everyday time. Today, instead, we can find a common root in the desire of those artists to break the link to prejudices about art, and to act on the work of art insofar as it was a platform for the meeting of art and society. This overall vision has come about, not so much as a result of the historical distance, but by way of the many exhibitions that, at the end of the 1990s, have dealt with these subject areas and have allowed them to be observed in relation to the “present” with which they are now concerned. Especially fundamental were those shows that inquired into “conceptual practice” rather than Conceptual art, and these range from *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s-1980* at Queens Museum, New York, in 1999, to *How Latitudes*

Become Form, 2003, at the Walker Art Center. These now allow us to reflect – from the post-ideological situation in which we are now – on the theme of “reinventing difference”. This point of view must be kept in mind in order to deal with the subject of the heredity of the 1960s in our globalised situation, but above all for rethinking what we have in mind today for the history/histories of art, for the role of artists, and for the concept of the future.

¹³Kaprow, Allan, *Notes on the Elimination of the Audience*, 1966; in: Bishop, Claire, *Participation*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (Mass.) 2006, p. 102.



A partial view of the show 66/16, Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna, 2016.

The show *66/16* had a particular “workshop-like” layout that permitted it to have its own autonomous life with its theoretical backing in the present book. In fact, the choice of having two areas in which to exhibit works by the same artists, but produced in two different and specific years, immediately reveals that these are neither a thematic exhibition nor a thematic essay. Thematic shows, which developed halfway through the 1990s, have been extremely useful for creating unexpected connections and dialogues between artists from different generations and nations in a moment in which there existed only historical shows, those of young artists, or else those based on groups of works made using the same technique. In recent years, these kinds of show have lost their ability to create unexpected associations by juxtaposing formally discordant works. Perhaps because the very idea at the basis of these exhibition layouts was to make a break with an image of art history which, until then, had been analysed in an evolutionary sense and that led to displaying works independently of the others. Instead, today the possibility of creating a dialogue between the present and the past is a constant in our “expanded present”. For this reason, over the past few years thematic shows have been profoundly changing, on the lookout, as they are, for a *raison d’être* by searching for new stimuli. In fact it is not by chance that the Berlin Biennale and *Manifesta* in Zurich – to mention just two examples – both held in 2016, were curated by two artists, or that the 2015 Venice Biennale, curated by Okwui Enwezor, and the 2012 *Documenta* in Kassel, curated by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, more than to a theme referred to a need: that of thinking about the collective future.

The *66/16* project, instead, has aimed at creating a platform for discussion on which to base a dialogue between two particular years: 1966 and the year in

which the show was realised: 2016. This clarification ought to make it evident that what lies behind this project is not only a historicist aim but, rather, a reflection on history and histories, on the relevance of the past, and on the degree of awareness that our society has of the culture it is producing. What is more, this is not even a question of establishing a qualitative comparison between these two historical and artistic periods. The innovation of this approach is to be found, not by addressing the historical period of the 1960s, which has been paid great attention over the past fifteen years, as though to find refuge in it, but, rather, by aiming to take up the thread of a cultural argument interrupted by the arrival of postmodernism. Only in this way is it possible to deal once again, as is agreed by the artists active in that period, with the question of the role of art and to find the basis for reconstructing a personal/collective identity that might allow us to reflect on the concept of political culture, aesthetics, and the history of art that is not separate from the experimentations by the artists and the critical stimuli suggested by temporary shows.

From this point of view, the starting point has been to choose seven specific careers in art so as to analyse how they have, decade after decade, created a dialogue with a society that was being transformed. The next question to be pinpointed regards what links the two works chosen by the individual artists have, even though they are works separated by fifty years, and above all what differentiates them. Only by identifying these qualities is it possible to pinpoint the answers these works give to the actual time in which they were made. Consequently, the question to be faced is about artistic techniques which, over the past decades, have been analysed, deconstructed, dematerialised, deformed, and resurrected by the artists themselves. And so the only way to evaluate

these strategies is to recognise, first of all, the dialogues and connections between the different languages that have been established by the individual artists and that have led them to modify the current art techniques. At this point we can make a brief list about these particular crossovers. Marinus Boezem principally establishes a dialogue between art and the landscape; Simone Forti establishes one between art and movement in real time; David Medalla, between art and time; Maurizio Mochetti, between art and science; Maurizio Nannucci, between art and communications; Malick Sidibé, between art and portraiture; and Michael Snow, between art and the representation of movement. Of course, these are only some keys to interpretations made with hindsight, but they can be considered as being exemplary for moving in a more aware manner within the many histories that we can trace in the contemporary panorama.

Something to be kept in mind is that the gestures made by these artists in the 1960s were not aimed at creating a break with the past, but were new stimuli for a transformation of the concept of art and, as a result, of society. On the other hand, what their works from the past decade have in common is without a doubt a reflection on how to archive and transmit these gestures and potential comparisons, these different meetings and collisions between art and life. And, above all, to transmit them to whom and for what future?





The art of Marinus Boezem is essential in the conceptual context because, from the 1960s onwards, he made for the Netherlands, and for Europe in general, an active and influential contribution to the international debate by introducing aspects linked to the concept of history, landscape, and identity. His works are interventions that derive from a dialogue with the physical and mental context in which they find themselves. The common aim of his works, which make use of assemblages of ephemeral and different materials, is to encourage new thoughts about the concept of representation as well as to stimulate the public to have an active role in the face of mass media¹ products. This attitude led him to ignore “easel painting” and to use drawings like instructions for directly transforming the real environment. In 1960 he undertook his first intervention when he created on the Nieuwe Zuiderlingedijk dyke, in the south of the Netherlands, a moment for meeting a specially invited public, and made available folding chairs, tables, and good wines at a cheap price. This was an ironical comment on the openings in art galleries but, above all, it was a way for sharing a different vision of the Polder landscape that had recently undergone important physical and, as a result, visual changes. The artist considers this his first Land Art action because it presents “the landscape and the whole world as a tool for art”². However, there were already evident in it a reflection on the evolution of the concept of ready-mades, and the need to eliminate the distance between the space of art and that of current events, themes that were to become central to his work. The next stage led to him creating, for the *Show V* exhibition in Amsterdam in 1965, the work *Immaterial Sculpture*: an empty room into which hidden air-conditioners introduced various columns of hot or cold air to create an experience

¹ The book by Marshall McLuhan that indicated society’s change of direction was *The Medium is the Massage*, published in 1967.

² From an email conversation between Lorenzo Bruni and the artist 2016.

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with a strong perceptive impact, one resulting from such an ephemeral presence as that of an air-conditioner.

Despite the dematerialising aims he had undertaken and that he would never abandon, the following year he created the object *Untitled*³, 1966, that consists of an elementary metal structure that allows a wooden stretcher to be suspended in space. At this distance in time we can see in this work an important turning point in his art because it makes evident how the artist forces us to make a constant and exhausting, but necessary, examination of art’s traditional tools. In this case the element that is usually hidden from sight and that allows the canvas to become a picture and be exhibited on a wall, becomes the physical object around which the viewers can move and look through. It transforms the surface that traditionally contains an illusory pictorial and “other” space into a tool for framing the context into which it has been inserted. With the simple gesture of shifting the function of the stretcher, he has offered to the public thoughts about what are the boundaries between painting and sculpture, about the possibilities for eroding and redefining them, and about a re-evaluation of the heredity of traditional Western painting. By putting on the same level of importance the observer and the object observed, and by introducing the performative aspect that must exist between the two, he highlights the necessity of democratising their roles in the face of the new concept of art. Such an aspect anticipated all of his later work which has always been concerned with directing attention to the active relationship between the “work, surrounding, and the physical/mental viewpoint of the observer”.

In the same year, 1966, he undertook attempts to erode the boundaries between painting and

³ *Untitled*, 1966, was exhibited for the first time in the same year at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in a show titled *Signalement*. As the artist has said in an exchange of emails with the author in 2016, “This is about solidarity with objects in the world in contrast with the excessive illusions of painting. So I used the stretcher of the canvas as a window on the real world”.

sculpture by evoking the need to face the effects of the industrial revolution with his famous inflatable sculptures. The transparent or coloured plastic material that models and contains the air allowed him to develop a non-intrusive sculpture, in other words one that does not allude to the tradition of art history but, rather, to everyday objects and their use. The collage⁴ for a project for inflatable sculptures – circles of various dimensions that, placed on each other, form elastic and swinging cones – highlights how the artist considered them as a surreal landscape to be penetrated rather than contemplated. The successive passage was to lead him to obviously alter a predefined and univocal consumer object, such as an inflatable mattress that changes into something quite different after having been assembled together with another three. These works are part of the artist's long research aimed at proposing a common inquiry into what makes an everyday object a work of art, and vice versa. Already in 1965 he had made a signed object: a portrait of himself holding a ventilator, titled *Signing an Itho-fan*. This work anticipated his wish to place himself in the tradition of Duchamp in order to lead it into unknown lands. In fact, in 1968 he created the installation *Wind table*⁵ in which a tall, round table, typical of cocktail tables of the time, is covered with a long white tablecloth wafted by a household ventilator placed on the floor. In this case, Boezem provokes a totally different imagery, starting from the association of two already existing conflicting elements. The artist does not aim at the dematerialisation of art in order to remove it from channels of commercialisation, as was suggested by Guy Debord, the co-founder of Situationalism, but neither does he aim at creating an Yves Klein-style spiritual void or the metaphysical silence of Kasimir Malevich. He concentrates, rather,

⁴ The collage titled *Study for walk-through sculpture*, 1966, is reproduced on page 132 of the book: Edna Van Duyn, Fransjoef Witteveen, and Uitgeverij Thoth, *Boezem*, Thoth Publishers, the Netherlands 1999.

⁵ The work was exhibited, among other occasions, in a 1968 show in Bologna, Italy, in the La Nuova Loggia art gallery.

⁶ The three photographs taken of the *Signing the Sky* action, each measuring 122 x 250 x 2 cm., were exhibited in the same year at the *Biennale pour les Jeunes* at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, despite the early resistance of the organizers who did not consider it a work of art. It was only after the intervention of the ministry for culture that this work was accepted.

⁷ The weather drawings were produced by the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute, KNMI; they were hand-painted collotypes made each day. Slides were made from these collotypes and were then projected inside a specifically darkened room, together with loudspeakers that broadcast the radio news in which a well-known journalist read the weather forecast for that particular day. This work was acquired a few years ago by the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, which has awarded him a monographic room in which, however, the voice of the journalist has been replaced by that of the artist.

on the mechanisms of perception and interpretation that could allow showing the elements that make up the world in a different light. Inevitably, this kind of reasoning was to lead him to deal with the art/non-art relationship by concentrating on, and destroying, the artist's role which for the art system was reduced to a signature. The first of a long series of works on this subject was his intervention called *Signing the Sky*, 1969⁶, with which, through the means of an aeroplane's contrail – often used at the time for advertising such commercial products as Coca-Cola – he *signed* the sky above Amsterdam airport with his surname. This action was not planned as a performance, with a public awaiting an art event, because he wanted to bring the attention of the public and the art system to the world independently of an appointed time. Thanks to this radical and poetic approach, in that year he was invited to take part in two shows that were fundamental for the researches (including Arte Povera) underway in America and Europe at the time linked to conceptual undertakings, Land Art, and Process Art. The first show was *Op Losse Schroeven. Situaties en Cryptostructuren*, curated by Wim Beeren, held in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, which also included such artists as Walter De Maria, Mario Merz, Bruce Nauman, Robert Smithson, Gilberto Zorio and others. Marinus Boezem's intervention consisted of opening all the museum's windows, hanging outside some white sheets, and placing pillows on the windowsills, in order to highlight the project's aim of cancelling the boundaries between art and life, and also between the public and private dimensions. Furthermore, in one of the rooms inside, with the work *Weather drawings*⁷ he shifted for the first time attention to the immaterial context of the weather by presenting meteorological maps of the turbulence of

that specific day together with radio broadcasts of weather reports. The other 1966 show he took part in was *When Attitudes Become Form*, curated by Harald Szeemann⁸, installed in the Bern Kunsthalle. In later years this group show was to become legendary for the innovation of its exhibition layout that dialogued with the particular choice of the artists - Carl Andre, Joseph Beuys, Richard Long, Lawrence Weiner, David Medalla and others – which expanded in all possible ways the idea of art and the exchange of ideas with the public. On that occasion, Marinus Boezem exhibited two identical windows in front of a blind wall together with sheets and cushions. The reference was to be found in the work he had made for Amsterdam, but it was as though he were supplying “resting tools” for some future action, and also for analysing them as objects *among* other objects.

In the following decades Marinus Boezem deepened his analysis of the link between works and the public spaces in which they were exhibited, in order to concentrate, on the one hand, on an increase of the audience and, on the other, to change the self-referential art system. This led him to create, in 1971, a film in which his face vanished and reappeared behind the mist produced by his breath on the film camera, but also to begin in 1976 his work-in-progress project *Podio del mondo per l'arte* – which began with a plaque containing his ideas about the role of art – through which every year he involved artists from various parts of the world (who each made their own contributions). For the same reason, in that period he began to teach, but with an approach he was to define as “non-formal education”, and he made *Green Cathedral 1978/1987* which consisted of 174 poplars, planted in such a way as to recreate on a 1:1 scale the cathedral of Rheims in France, in a green area near to Almere

⁸ Among the many demonstrations of this show's great influence was its literal recreation in *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, curated by Germano Celant, Fondazione Prada, Ca' Corner della Regina, Venice 2013.

in the Netherlands. From the end of the 1990s the concept of monuments and of the relationship between the landscape and the concept of infinity – such as the heavenly vault in the case of the large-scale granite sculpture *Observatorium*, 1992, erected in a park in Amsterdam – were at the heart of his new works, besides his constant thoughts about his own identity as an artist and man in relation to the current situation of culture.

⁶⁶₁₈₁ p. 40 The work Marinus Boezem made in 2016 called *Della Pittura* consists of a “sculptural collage” where a standard wooden easel for painters is linked to a circle of carved wood with a white fabric held under tension. On the surface of the fabric the artist's signature is embroidered in red thread, though it is incomplete and the thread is still threaded into the needle that lies there waiting. In this case he does not aim only at associating the concept of painting with the practice of embroidery to establish a dialogue between high and popular culture, between male and female undertakings; the question he allows to emerge is: who is it who can, must or wants to complete that signature? By purposely exhibiting the gesture of a signature “in progress”, he evokes the question of a dematerialised identity in the age of social networks and IT. With this work he ideally closes the circle opened in 1966 when he suspended the stretcher in the air. If in that case he invited a greater mobility of the eye in order to free it from the preconceptions of localised culture in order to have a proactive dialogue with the world, today he seems to tell us that it is necessary to be aware, above all, from which space-time we look in order to interact with the things that seem available with a click. The same ideas are inquired into with different implications in his *Vanishing of the Artist* project, conceived to be realised on the roofs of the buildings near the

⁶⁶₁₈₁ p. 41

Enrico Astuni gallery on the occasion of the show *66/16*. There exist the photographs and videos of the trial the artist undertook in Middelburg when he visualised on the roof of his own studio his signature, enlarged to cover the whole surface, using grains of sweet corn. In this case the idea of the disappearance of the signature – thus short-circuiting the usual idea of artists, from the Renaissance until today, that they create works in order to be immortal – was set in action by the intervention of nature or, rather of the pigeons that, by eating the grains, completed the work. In fact this is only a part of the work, given that in order to see it the only means the public has is to view the images on the Internet, transmitted by a webcam placed on the roof which broadcasted the event in real time. In this way the artist contrasts the concept of ontological and historical time in order to reveal the sensation, one mixing fear and excitement, that each individual has of being able to check out all the world's events in real time but, at the same time, he insists that for this very reason it is necessary to beware of receptive apathy. The artist, in order to underline these themes and place them in a proactive dimension, also chose to exhibit a work that was not part of the chronological choice of 1966 or 2016, one titled *God bless you* (1971-2013). This work consists of a circular mirror that becomes a performative device as a result of instructions written on a brass plaque placed on the lower part of the reflecting surface. The phrase asks the subjects/artists to come near to the mirror and breathe on the surface so as to mist up the glass and be able to write with their finger *God Bless You*. When this phrase disappears and the face can be seen once more in the mirror, the same operation is suggested again. In this case the theme of beautifying portraits, something that developed throughout the twentieth century up until

recent “selfies”, is interwoven with the question of what an artist's substantial contribution might be to changing the perception of the world, and what the spectator's contribution might be to an active participation in art.



Marinus Boezem, *The Vanishing of the Artist*, 2015. Bird food (mixed seeds), variable dimensions. Courtesy the artist.



Marinus Boezem, *The Vanishing of the Artist*, 2015, film, 14h 44'13". hours. Courtesy the artist.

p. 40 | Marinus Boezem, *Della Pittura*, 2016. Wood, fabric, cotton thread, 185 x 65 x 90 cm; ø 26 (tambour for embroidery). Courtesy the artist.

p. 42 | Marinus Boezem, *God Bless You*, 1971-2013. Mirror, engraved copper, ø 60 x 2,6 cm (mirror); 18,8 x 27,8 cm (engraved copper plate). Courtesy the artist.





Simone Forti, *Red Hat (Green And Red Sunset)*, 1966. Watercolor on paper, 27,8 x 35 cm. Courtesy The Box, Los Angeles.



Simone Forti, *Red Hat On Distant Snow Mount*, 1966. Watercolor on paper, 28,4 x 38,4 cm. Courtesy The Box, Los Angeles.



Simone Forti, *Red Hat (Yellow Sunset With Green Water)*, 1966. Watercolor on paper, 37,8 x 45,4 cm. Courtesy The Box, Los Angeles.

Simone Forti, *Red Hat (Blue Car)*, 1966. Watercolor on paper, 37,8 x 45,4 cm. Courtesy The Box, Los Angeles.

Simone Forti, *Red Hat With Black Background*, 1966. Watercolour on paper, 37,8 x 45,4 cm. Courtesy The Box, Los Angeles.

Simone Forti, *Red Hat on Bicycle*, 1966. Watercolour on paper, 37,9 x 45,5 cm. Courtesy The Box, Los Angeles.

Simone Forti is one of the artists who, at the beginning of the 1960s, made one of the greatest contributions to investigating the body in movement in order to transform it into a tool for the exploration of, and interaction with, the surroundings. In this sense it would be reductive to contextualize her art only within the rules of the history of dance, choreography, sculpture, or performance. Her approach has allowed her a dialogue for the constant renewal of these disciplines, thus making them come to grips both with the active presence of the public and the concept of time as duration¹, in other words as something more than, and different from, a “memory”. In 1961 in New York she took part in a performance festival curated by the Minimalist musician La Monte Young inside Yoko Ono’s studio where she developed an action she had already experimented with in the previous year, 1961, at the Reuben Gallery, New York. The project, titled *Five Dance Constructions and Some Other Things*, is significant and radical even today, on the one hand because of the kind of dancing which hovers between improvisation² and the controlled gestures that the performers “present” rather than execute and, on the other hand, because of the interaction the moving bodies establish with the objects specifically designed by her and that are more similar to Minimalist objects than to those of scenery. Her Minimalist sculpture was to be developed in that period and for this reason; as the director and dancer Yvonne Rainer has said, Forti showed herself to have been ahead of her times³. The works in question range from the more meditative *Hangers* – in which seven performers are hung from ropes suspended from the ceiling and from which they swing slowly but repeatedly – to the “wilder” *Roller Boxes*, in which two performers in two small carts made from wooden boxes are pulled through the space by other dancers using ropes⁴. In *Platforms* two

people lie under two wooden boxes/platforms and are concerned with breathing exercises as well as, despite everything, trying to communicate with each other by whistling. *Slant Board* consists of a wooden board leaning against the wall at an angle of 45° and which is climbed by two or three interpreters who, grasping ropes, try to interact as much as they can with it. While the action *Huddle* – consisting of a group of dancers who form a tight huddle of bodies while trying to move in space, though also attempting to take their turn in trying to reach the top – with its highly participative character “suggests the way that notions of community were being rethought during the 1960s [...] Huddle was a way of encouraging reflection on what happens when a group of people come together and how they negotiate each other”⁵. The five actions, in which the artist was directly involved, took place in different moments and in different areas of the space to propose a workshop-like and “expanded time” dimension that upset and nullified both the concept of choreography and that of happenings⁶.

In *Censor*, 1961, part of *Some Other Things*, one of the interpreters rattles a box of nails in the attempt to drown out Simone Forti while she sings a song that was popular in her childhood. Her attempts to make herself heard by shouting even louder was an allusion to the rise in censorship. This is a work with many facets and that evokes the growing climate of revolt against social restrictions by the new generation of young Americans of which she was a part, but that was also a wholly private feeling given that the song was *Quel mazzolin di fiori* and was sung in Italian, as she had been taught it by her father when she was a child. Furthermore, *Censor* is a work that marked a change for the artist because it forced her later on to consider it as a work that did not depend on being performed only by her⁷. For this reason she translated

¹ Handke, Peter, *Gedicht an die Dauer* (1986), lt. trad. *Canto alla durata*, Einaudi, Turin 1995.

² Simone Forti began to dance in San Francisco in 1956 with Anna Halpri, a pioneer in dancers’ improvisation and kin-aesthetic. When she moved to New York in 1959 she studied composition at the Merce Cunningham Studio. The particular kind of approach she has to dance has been defined as *Logomotion* and comes about by obliging dance to manifest an idea. For this reason her performances were to be seen as part of the tradition of Minimalism and Conceptualism that was being delineated in that particular period. Her figure was fundamental and seminal for the Judson Dance Theater community which revolutionised dance in the 1960s and 1970s.

³ Spivey, Virginia B., *The Minimal Presence of Simone Forti*, in *Woman’s Art Journal*, vol. 30, n. 1, spring/summer, Old City Publishing, Philadelphia 2009, pp. 11-18.

⁴ *Roller Box* had already been presented in 1960 at the Reuben Gallery, New York.

⁵ Forti, Simone, in Breitwieser, Sabine, *Thinking with the Body*, Hirma, Munich 2014.

⁶ The term *happening* was coined by Allan Kaprow for describing the performative events that took place at George Segal’s farm in 1957. The reference model of this kind of action was Futurist and Dadaist events, which were then developed and further stimulated by the ideas of John Cage and the teaching at the Black Mountain College. An example of this kind of action as a continuous learning process together with life itself and the public, was the *American Moon* action that the artist Robert Whitman undertook in 1960 at the Reuben Gallery, New York, besides of course the events created by Kaprow himself.

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it into a concept/instruction that would allow it to be, not interpreted, but “intimately experienced” by others when they performed it. Until halfway through the 1960s Simone Forti concentrated on the idea of the expansion of an ongoing experience, as in the case of *Dance Constructions*. This led her to undertake “informal” collaborations, as she called them, with such choreographers as Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, and Steve Paxton or with such artists as Robert Morris, Charlemagne Palestine⁷, Peter van Riper, Robert Whitman and others.

1966 was for Simone Forti a very particular year, one characterised by deep thoughts about her role as an artist and as a woman; these were to lead her to exclusively adopt, in that period, watercolour, and with it she created a series of works on paper that can be grouped into two large series: *Red Hat* and *Two Infants*. In this case the use of watercolour allowed her to find, in the transparency of the paint and the difficulty of confining it within sharp outlines, an increased possibility for creating an intimate diary of images. In fact, for her in this case drawing was not appropriate given that for her it was always used for sketches with defined outlines with the aim of “fixing an idea” for projects in her studio or of giving instructions for gestures to be undertaken. The quality of this series of watercolours is to be looked for in a tenuous narrative that translates into traditional art codes the moment in which everything seems about to slide into an intimate or dreamlike dimension without it ever fully happening. This is what she had managed to achieve in the area of dancing and performance. 1966 was the year she married the artist Robert Whitman and in which she decided to start a family and have children. So the subject of these two macro-histories was herself – the woman with red hair who finds herself on a mountain top or

who races through nature on her bicycle – while the nuclei/cells of intense colour float on the paper – such as in the drawing *Baby on Stage* – allude to her two pregnancies, both of which ended in miscarriages. All the drawings are on sheets of paper of different sizes, underlining in this way the expressive urgency of painterly and luminous gestures aimed at recording and sublimating memories and sensations. These series of watercolours were never exhibited at the time because they had not been conceived as a specific project for a show. Only in the past decades have they been seen as part of retrospective exhibitions; in the case of *66/16*, the artist has chosen to exhibit a part on a long wooden board specifically created to evoke the intimate approach they are imbued with, and also to “activate” the viewer’s body who is thus obliged to move around that particular support in order to come into contact with the works. Due to this apparent diversity with respect to other works by the artist, these watercolours are an important part of her research into dance, sculpture, and happenings. Furthermore, on the one hand they are a testimonial to the pause in the activity of the artist due to her pregnancies, something that reminds us of the difficulties that female artists had to face in the last century in gaining autonomy and recognition in an art system that was practically completely masculine⁹ and, on the other hand, these watercolours highlight how the dematerialisation of the art object that was being debated at the time was never, at least for the artists taken into consideration in this book, a complete rejection of art history or traditional techniques, but the wish to undermine prejudices and conventions that, in that precise historical moment, the public had in its relationship with the market and art history. What is more, it is as well to underline how Simone Forti, differently from other artists, made a contribution

⁷ As a result of this, the New York MoMA, decided to acquire the performances themselves and not in the form of a photographic record. This led the artist and the museum to produce a special procedure and certificate to allow the works to be performed in the future, even after the show by the artist. This was an innovation that will serve as a model for museums for the future acquisition of the performance “object”.

⁸ The collaboration with Palestine was to develop over the next decades, leading her in 2016 to create a new action, *Illuminations*, in collaboration with the Vleeshal museum, Middelburg, the Netherlands.

⁹ Cf. De Cecco, Emanuela; Romano, Gianni, *Contemporanee. Percorsi a poetiche delle artiste dagli anni Ottanta ad oggi*. Postmedia Books, 2002. The case of the few women present and active during the 1960s still has to be rewritten and rethought in an international context.

to that debate by starting from a dematerialised dimension such as dance and that, in a particular moment in her life, re-materialised in the use of watercolours for investigating the possible interactions between personal narratives and established artistic representations.

After her divorce from Robert Whitman in 1968, Simone Forti went to Italy¹⁰ and was to stay in Rome for two years. This stay was to be important for her art because, during her frequent visits to the city zoo¹¹, she began to study the movements of caged animals and how this condition – they were put in cages to be exhibited – modified their behaviour. That was the year *Sleepwalkers* was born: a dance consisting of four actions in different parts of the gallery and taking place at different times. The first of these actions was inspired by the movement that flamingos undertake in the attempt to sleep; then there were polar bears with their rocking backwards and forwards, their movements observed like those of algae in the ocean. The actions concluded with the body held in tension and the hands and feet on the floor. In this case her method of “thinking with the body”¹² was not only aimed at staging a “concept”, as in her previous works, though neither was it aimed at creating a lithe or symbolic mimesis of nature as happens in classical ballet. What, instead, she wanted to create was an explicit reference to “caged nature” in order to reflect on social requirements in general and on distancing herself from the idea of entertainment undertaken through the means of what is different or exotic¹³. She purposely decided not to use real animals but to work on the concept of translation/interpretation by following an alternative path to that followed by many artists in the same period who used live animals in art venues, as in the case of Joseph Beuys, Valie Export, Ana Mendieta, and Richard Serra¹⁴. Furthermore, to

limit myself to Rome, in the following year Jannis Kounellis exhibited his famous twelve live horses in Fabio Sargentini’s L’Attico gallery and, in 1970, Gino de Domenicis exhibited a diorama with the twelve signs of the zodiac, including such animals as fish, a goat, rams, and a lion. However, she shared with Arte Povera the strategy that Germano Celant defined as “an experiment with contingent existence”¹⁵ in order to rethink the nature/culture tension. Arte Povera was a milieu with which she came into contact through the L’Attico gallery itself¹⁶ which she used, while in Rome, as a studio where she could try out her dance/performance pieces and where, together with the dealer Fabio Sargentini, she organized experimental festivals, inviting to take part such American artists as Trisha Brown, Philip Glass, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, La Monte Young, and many others.

In the 1970s, after her return to America, Simone Forti began a long period of questioning the “repeatability” of a performative gesture and the possibility of finding the manner and form most adapted to keeping intensity and honesty intact. She tried out different solutions ranging from a workshop strategy to the use of drawing as a plan and instructions, and to the creation of the innovative *Handbook in Motion*¹⁷, 1974, in which she summed up thoughts, instructions, and stories for allowing the performance of her actions without them being choreographed. It was in this perspective too that there she evolved her famous sculptures/holograms. This was an innovative technique that, when the spectators moved around a Plexiglas cylinder illuminated from below, allowed them to visualise a moving image inside it. One of the “light objects”, *Striding Crawling*, 1977, is in the collection of the Whitney Museum and contains an image of the artist who, standing up,

¹⁰ She organised the journey together with her parents in order to visit the places they had left as a result of the racial laws imposed by Benito Mussolini in 1938.

¹¹ For the impact that Rome, and above all the zoo, had on her research, see the essay by Bryan-Wilson, Julia, *Simone Forti Goes to the Zoo*, in *October* 152, spring 2015, pp. 26-52, an extended revision of the preceding essay, Bryan-Wilson, Julia, *Animate Matters: Simone Forti in Rome*, in Breitwieser, Sabine, *Thinking with the Body*, Hirmer, Munich 2014.

¹² In *Simone Forti in Conversation with Jennie Goldstein, critical correspondence, movement research*, Critical Correspondence, Movement Research, 2014.

¹³ This was the same approach that led her to realise, in 1968, the video for *art/tapes/22*, Florence, when she did not work in a recording studio as other artists, such as Buren and Kosuth, were doing. Her video work is the record of an unauthorised action undertaken at night in the Paris zoo, and which consisted of creating movements in a dialogue with a bear as it tried to go to sleep in its cage. Cf. Biccocchi, Maria Gloria, *Tra Firenze e Santa Teresa dentro le quinte dell’arte* (’73/’87). *Art/Tapes/22*, Edizioni del Cavallino, Venice 2003.

¹⁴ Richard Serra. *Animal habitats live and stuffed...*, Galleria La Salita, Rome 1966.

¹⁵ Germano Celant, *Arte Povera*, Praeger Publishers, New York & Washington 1969, p. 226.

¹⁶ For a detailed study of the relationship between the L’Attico gallery and Simone Forti cf. Barbero, Luca Massimo, and Pola, Francesca, *L’Attico di Fabio Sargentini 1966-1978*, Electa, Milan 2010.

¹⁷ Created during a residence at Nova Scotia College of Art and Design.

bends down to place her hands on the floor and then stands up again to transform into a perfect “virtual” loop the piece conceived in Rome about animal movements. During the 1980s she began to create her actions titled *News Animations* with which she tried to interpret newspaper reports, in particular cases from everyday life. In one action, for instance, she found herself talking about gardening, aggressive rosemary plants, and the gestures for respecting the balance of that particular ecosystem in order to spark off a discussion about American foreign policy.

Since halfway through the 1990s, with the spread of the Internet, humanity has been immersed in a particular generalised and globalised stream of consciousness. Simone Forti reacted to all this by adding the word “world”¹⁸ to the two words that were at the heart of her work in the 1960s: body and mind. As a result she began to create actions specifically designed to be used exclusively as video/narrations projected into the physical space – differently from her earlier videos which simply recorded her performances – with which to arrive at a particular interaction between movement, physical space, and the immaterial space of communicating. These ideas are tackled in such a video as *Flag in the Water*, 2015, in which she gets ready for a battle in a river with flags and newspapers, something that can be compared to an image of the labour of Sisyphus, and in which she highlights the state of mind when the identity of each individual citizen is at the mercy of dumbed-down information. Instead, the video *A Free Consultation*, 2016, began as a “live” performance for the public of 66/16 in Bologna, even though it was realised on the snowy banks of an American river, so bringing immediate attention to the idea of the “digitally mediated experience” with which we live today. In her video/action the artist listens to an army radio station

while lying on a stony beach full of shrubs. She begins to move slowly, as though experimenting with the limits of her body at eighty-one years of age, even though her gestures allude to the deconstructed dance she undertook as a young woman, in order then to simulate the movements of a soldier who moves on all fours towards the water. She hesitates or is distracted by the stones, then by a block of ice and by a shrub, as though these fragments of nature were anchoring her to the reality distorted by the drone of the radio which, in the meantime, continually searches for new stations and new information. At a certain point something seems about to happen, but the artist simply gets up and enters nature. The action, together with the broadcast, has finished.

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¹⁸From a Skype interview with Lorenzo Bruni and Simone Forti, 2016.





Censor nr. 1_29.01.16, *Quel Mazzolin Di Fiori*.



Censor nr. 2_04.02.16, *Il Boccolino*.



Censor nr. 3_11.02.16, *Bella Ciao*.



Censor nr. 4_18.02.16, *No Se Que Tengo No Se*.



Censor nr. 5_03.03, *Vecchio scarpone*.



Censor nr. 6_10.03, *Romagnamia*.



Censor nr. 7_17.03.16, *Arriverci Roma* (in Roman dialect).



Censor nr. 8_24.03.16, *La Malarazza* (in Sicilian dialect).



Censor nr. 9_31.03.16, *Lettera a una madre*.



Censor nr. 10_07.04.16, *L'uva focarina*.



Censor nr. 11_14.04.16, *A Gramadora* (in the dialect of Romagna).



Censor nr. 12_21.04.16, *Quimey Neuquen*.



Censor nr. 13_28.04.16, *L'amarezza delle mondine*.



Censor nr. 14_05.05.16, *Mamma mia dammi cento lire*.



Censor nr. 15_12.05.16, *Vecchio scarpone*.

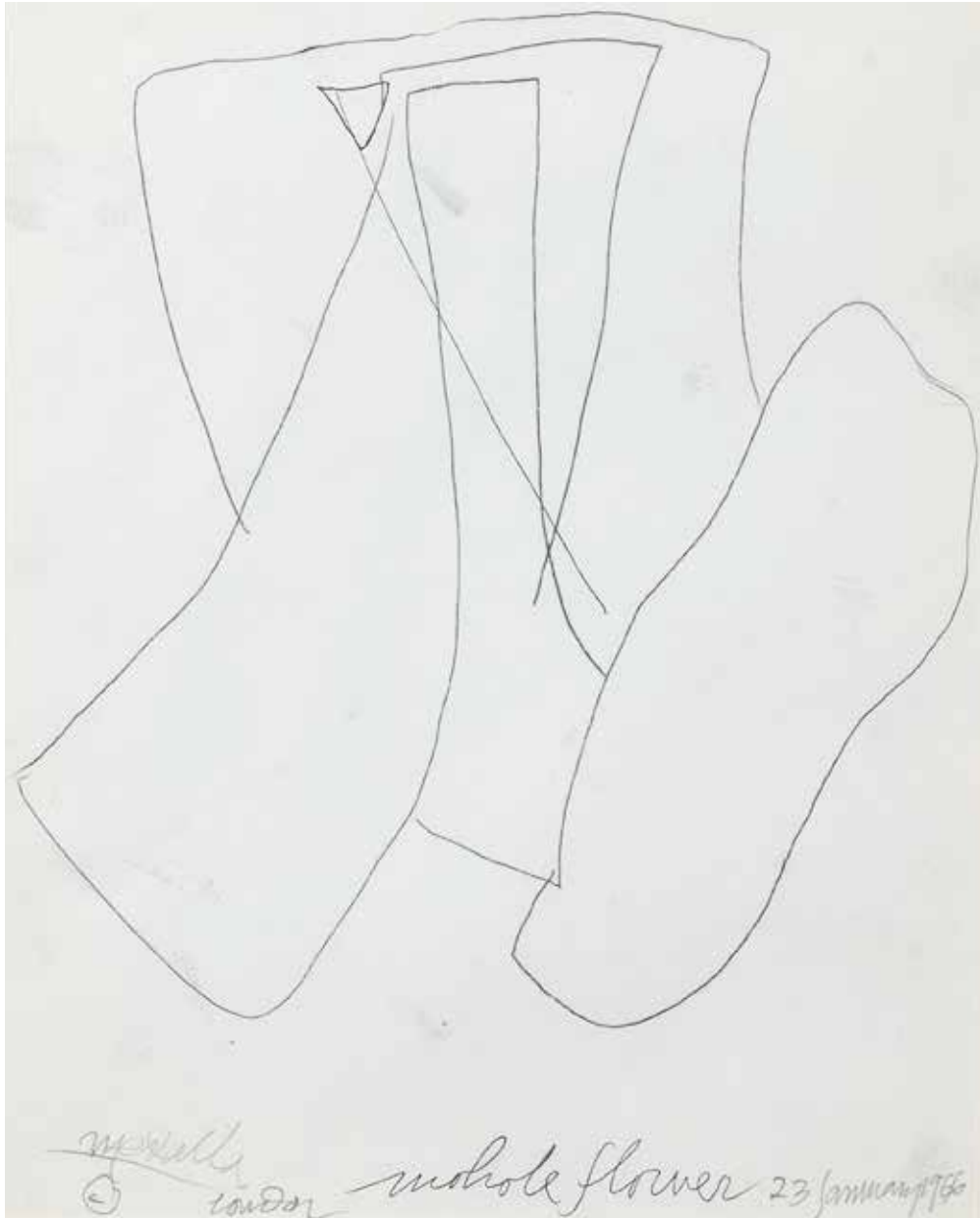


Censor nr. 17_26.05.16, *Taca e Tachin* (in the dialect of Fano).



Censor nr. 16_19.05.16, *Black Is the Colour of My True Love's Hair*.

Simone Forti, *Censor*, 1961 – 2016. Performance. Two people, metal pan, screws, audio. Courtesy The Artist; The Box, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York. Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York.



David Medalla, *Mohole Flower* (Sketch for a cosmic propulsion for a flower sculpture in the centre of the world), 1966. Graphite on paper, 29,7 x 21 cm. Courtesy Adam Nankervis.



p. 61 | David Medalla, *Cloud Canyons* (Bubble machines auto-creative sculptures), 1963-1977. Plexiglass pipe, wood, water, soap, oxygenators for aquarium, 256,5 x ø 202 cm; ø 25 (each pipe). Courtesy Adam Nankervis.



David Medalla, *Mohole Flower* (Sketch for a cosmic propulsion for a flower sculpture in the centre of the world), 1966. Graphite on paper, 29,7 x 21 cm. Courtesy Adam Nankervis.



p. 63 | David Medalla, *The Sand Machine*, n. 7, 1964/1998. Plexiglass, sand, copper, light birch, 68 x 60 x 60 cm. Courtesy Adam Nankervis.

¹ Bourriaud, Nicolas, *Arte relazionale* (1998), Postmedia books, Milan 2010.

² David Medalla arrived in Paris in 1960 where he took part in the life of the intellectuals in the city, including those who gravitated around Situationalism. He was, however, to ask the philosopher Gaston Bachelard to introduce his performance *The Brother of Isidora* which he was to undertake at the Raymond Duncan academy in Paris.

³ At the beginning of the 1960s Marcel Duchamp, the father of ready-mades, was impressed by one of the works by Medalla, so much so that as a tribute he created a work in the form of a medal which he called *Medallic*.

⁴ At the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s he was often in New York in contact with members of Fluxus

⁵ In his period in Paris at the beginning of the 1960s, David Medalla frequented Louis Aragon who, together with André Breton, had signed the Surrealist Manifesto. In this period Aragon presented one of his performances.

⁶ At the end of the 1990s, one of the first to theorize and speak about “time-specific” interventions was the artist Antoni Muntadas. The important precedents for this “time-specific” idea (related to images and not to performances) and even before site-specific activities became widespread, can be found in the essays and the installations for the shows curated by Harald Szeemann, in the works/meetings by Joseph Beuys and David Medalla, even though with different implications, and in the interventions at the beginning of the 1990s by the Cuban artist Felix Gonzales-Torres.

⁷ Medalla studied in America in the 1950s and, in 1955, held his first show of drawings and paintings in New York.

David Medalla has touched on many of the international art researches that started in the 1960s, including performances, Minimal Art, Land Art, Kinetic Art, happenings, and Participation Art. He was often ahead of the times. However, he has always shied away from these over-rigid categories which would have limited his wish to continuously overturn the relationship between form, action, and idea, an approach with which to establish a specific dialogue with the contexts in which he acted. In fact, for him the context is not so much a physical or mental space, but the moment of discovering that particular place and of sharing it with other people present. This particular approach was later to be developed by many artists active in the 1990s and, as a result, codified with the term “relational art”¹. With regard to his art research, instead, we can clearly pinpoint aspects referable to Situationist², Dadaist³, Fluxus⁴, and Surrealist⁵ undertakings. His interventions, however, are aimed, on the one hand, at highlighting the process of a work balanced between change and predetermination in the creation of “time specific”⁶ works; on the other hand, at becoming condensations of histories and narratives that can activate thoughts about the question of personal and collective cultural identity. This “experiential/performative” manner leads the conceptual approach (“the idea must become a machine for creating art”, as summed up by Sol LeWitt in his *Paragraphs on Conceptual Arts*, 1967) into unexpected territories. This is because Medalla’s own conceptual approach derived from an already dematerialised position that was concerned with studying literature. In fact, in America⁷ he is known above all as a poet. From this point of view all his performance works, painting, sculpture, lectures, his activities as an activator of participative projects and spaces, as well as his videos, are based on the

need to make concrete ideas and meetings shared in real time with others and, above all, to connect them together both with collective/personal memories and with the future.

More than a sculpture, *Bubble Machine* is an “undertaking”; in fact, from a processual point of view all its various examples are different and answer to different personal and historical “contexts”. The earliest *Bubble Machine* dates from 1963 and was shown for the first time at the Redfern Gallery⁸. It consists of a raw wooden column with a hole at the bottom from which pours a foam produced by a motor that was specially modified for the occasion. As it builds up, the foam produces masses in the air, the forms and designs of which change in relation to the climate, wind, and humidity at that particular moment. The idea of minimalist sculpture, which was being formed in that very period, was evolved by Medalla by introducing into it a “self-formation” aspect. What he is proposing with “continuous self-generation”, though, is not the idea in itself but time and the experience of it. For him, this kind of sculpture is a materialisation of the wonder of expectation, of the epiphany of the event, of placing the viewers in front of a decisive, reiterated instant in which something intimate comes about. This same principle of modifying the context in order to create an experience from nothing led him to create, again in 1963, his *Smoke Machines*.

The *Sand Machine* sculpture that he made in 1964 began, instead, from the need to make the act of drawing a perpetual rather than a personal act. The work consists of a metal base containing red sand with, at the centre, a pole that in its turn bears a square metal plate. This last rotates and drags over the sand tiny elements that become attached to it to draw lines that are then, not cancelled, but

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⁸ The Redfern Gallery shows was curated by Paul Keeler. Its title was *Structures Vivantes: Mobiles/Images*. Medalla presented a *Bubble Machine* titled *Vihara* (a community of monks), made from wood, and a smoke machine titled *Chaitya* (one of Buddha’s disciples).

continuously rewritten. The kinetic movement that in this case interested Medalla is linked to a dimension that is on the cusp of drawing and calligraphy, halfway between the memory of a gesture and its future. The elements that produce the ephemeral and permanent lines can vary from a metal comb to ceramic elements and compositions with brass cones. The single combinations, linked to the central rotating body, inevitably allude to small sculptures or talismans, while overall the object shifts towards the idea of the “Celibate Machines”. As David Medalla has said, “I gave the title *Lament* to my first sand machine because I thought of the death of metal. The other sand machines I made, for the exhibition *Force Fields* curated by Guy Brett at MACBA in Barcelona, and at the Hayward Gallery in London in 1999, were of a more festive nature and reminded of the happy times I spent on the beaches in the Philippine Islands, like the island of Cebu where my mother came from.”⁹ Medalla never misses an opportunity to remind us that his works that question themselves about modernism do not evolve from an abstract situation but from personal experiences. In this way he makes it clear and linear that for him art and life must not enter into a dialogue but must be stratified and interwoven. This is a completely alternative point of view to the optical dimension that was undertaken, by the means of a staging of abstract-geometrical forms, by the optical-kinetic group GRAV (Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel)¹⁰ active in France at the same time. For the works of that period Medalla has coined the term “bio-kinetic”¹¹, and from 1964 to 1967 he made “mud sculptures”. It was these that led his work to being associated with Land Art; they were begun in order to introduce into the area of art the gestures of nature by touching on the time/a-historical and the archaic/shamanic dimension of things¹².

⁹ *A Stitch in Time*, interview with David Medalla by Adam Nankervis, Mousse Magazine, issue 29, 2011.

¹⁰ GRAV was a French group founded by François Morellet, Julio Le Parc, Francisco Sobrino, Horacio García Rossi, Yvaral, Joël Stein, and Vera Molnár, and which, according to its 1963 manifesto, called for the public’s active participation and hoped to influence its behaviour, above all through the use of interactive visual labyrinths.

¹¹ These sculptures were almost all lost in an arson attack on his studio in south London at the end of the 1970s; for this reason they have all been reconstructed on the basis of his original designs. This episode highlights that for the artist the original work is to be found either in the planning/origin of the idea or its manifestation in that specific moment. It was this very approach that led to appreciation of him by Fluxus and the Surrealists.

¹² In order to make a deep analysis of Medalla’s shamanism and how it has been developed in his performances over the years, see the monograph written by Guy Brett, *Exploding Galaxies: The Art of David Medalla*, Kala Press, 1995.

The *Signal Gallery*¹³, founded by him together with Paul Keeler in London in 1964, and which was active until 1966, was started in order to inquire into these themes by establishing an important workshop where ideas could be exchanged; it led to exhibitions in London by such artists as Takis, Sergio de Camargo, Lygia Clark, Carlos Cruz-Diez, Jesús Rafael Soto, Hélio Oiticica, Alejandro Otero, Mira Schendel, and Li Yuan-Chia. The innovation of this gallery founded by artists was, on the one hand, to establish international links, above all with South America, and, on the other hand, to spark off an important discussion about experimental art, paying particular attention to kinetic art. Its discussion-forum aspect was fostered and diffused by the *Signal Newsbulletin* magazine, edited by Medalla himself in which, besides the documentation of art events, appeared interdisciplinary contributions about poetry, and essays that investigated, in advance of the times, the relationship between art, science, and new technologies.

1966 was a special year for Medalla who was occupied with the activities of Signal and who also took part in *Weiss auf weiss* curated by Harald Szeemann¹⁴, giving a substantial contribution to the debate that the curator wanted to start off about conceptual and process art. *Cloud Canyon* shifted the *Bubble Machine* work into a wider dimension by, above all, concretising the need to give a “light” answer to couples usually considered to be in opposition: memory and desire, ephemeral and immanent material, image and object. This he resolved by using new materials, ranging from transparent circular tubes of Plexiglas to creating a dialogue between various elements that produced foam, in order to translate the work’s sculptural nature into a landscape/event. The title, in fact, refers to the

¹³ For David Medalla in that moment, the need to establish spaces for cultural debate was fundamental. In fact, before co-founding Signal inside a large building with four floors on the corner of Wigmore Street in central London, in the early months of 1964 he began the Centre for Advanced Studies with Paul Keeler in the flat they shared in Cornwall Gardens in South Kensington; for this they involved the art critic Guy Brett and, among others, the artist Gustav Metzger. Metzger, in fact, was a fundamental figure for the debate about re-discussing the role and system of art, and this was to lead him to develop the concept of self-destructive art and art strikes. In 1966, together with John Sharkey, he set up the Destruction in Art Symposium.

¹⁴ Harald Szeemann, a curator fundamental for the diffusion of the concept of art and for shifting the debate onto an international level. The exhibition *Weiss auf weiss*, White on White, took place in 1966 in the Bern Kunsthalle.

superimposition of the memory/impressions that Medalla had had when flying over the Grand Canyon during his first journey to America, and those of the movement of the clouds over the Bay of Manila where he was born. But the experiences that led him to realise this work in a different way range from a visit to a pub in Edinburgh in 1963, to his mother baking the traditional Philippine *guinataan* sweet, and the memory of him as a child observing the bubbles of blood of a Philippine warrior killed by a Japanese soldier. The compulsion that guided him seems to have been to translate his experiences, even the negative ones, into a new "object" that could raise the observers' level of attention in order to be amazed by minimal events and so to generate other stories in turn. This idea of "cosmic propulsion" has nothing to do with any kind of naive attitude but, on the contrary, with knowing how to analyse the world at various levels in order to intervene, not in a speculative way, but in a factual way.

With this in mind, in London in 1967 he founded the Exploding Galaxy space with which he was to give rise to a significant creative force to the social and cultural revolutions of the 1960s. In 1968 he realised what he himself has defined as his most conceptual and immaterial work: *Universitaire de Failure*. The project began to be formed when he took part in a spontaneous performance at an international conference at Paris-Sorbonne University, before the famous 1968 May. It was formalised in the following months when Medalla began to receive in his London home letters – which increased once he began to answer them - sent by people who wanted to frequent his university, as well as sharing the action or field in which they were most fearful of failing. This "artistic process" came to a conclusion when the ministry of public instruction informed the artist that it was illegal

to give university courses without a licence, something that was to lead him to write to his students, "I'm sorry, but I failed". This work/action highlighted, on the one hand, the participative aspect that Medalla was looking for, from the viewpoint of generating the work and not only of continuing it, and, on the other hand, his intention, not to change society by opposing it, but to do so from the inside¹⁵; he thus made an important contribution to the "counter-culture" of the time by shifting it towards an international dimension rather than a local one.

In 1972, precisely as the result of his ability to transform social tensions and the art debate into a platform for dialogue, he was involved in two momentous group shows. One was *Documenta* in Kassel, 1972, curated by Harald Szeemann, outside of which he constructed outside a wooden platform on which he undertook various meetings while the *Bubble Machines* continued to function: foam flowed from the top of two columns of untreated wood when, suddenly, the planks opened to pour out the foam as a material/mass and not only as a drawing in the air. The other show was *A Survey of the Avant-Garde in Britain*, curated by Sissi Krauss and Rosetta Brooks, at the Gallery House in London. In both cases he presented the participative and collaborative work *A Stitch in Time* in which the textiles could be finished by the public by sewing thoughts and ideas for the whole duration of the event.

From halfway through the 1970s his drawings, paintings and, above all, his performances led to reflections about a confrontation between different cultures going beyond the nationalism of the period. And so he undertook such actions as *Down with the Slave Trade*, 1971, or *Eskimo Carver*, 1977, besides being president of Artists for Democracy, from 1974 to 1977, and director of the Fitzrovia cultural centre in London.

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¹⁵ It was this need that has induced him always to make ephemeral works, ones that he calls *Impromptus* or "instantaneous installations", at first hand in public spaces – dancing among kitsch objects in a flea market in Rotterdam, creating a show on the idea of cowboys in the Philippine community in Texas, realising works related to the architecture and monuments in Bologna – in order to raise the public's level of attention by interrupting the flow of everyday life without making a break between art and life as happened, instead, with Fluxus or Viennese Actionism which were based on art gestures' potential for creating a scandal.

What is clear in his long career in art is his action as a mediator and strategist of various cultural visions. This was already evident in his performances and pictures from the 1950s when he was still a student in the Philippines and in which were evident references to the poetry of T.S. Elliot, Rimbaud, or Dante Alighieri. However, as Medalla himself said, “The reason why it seems that my work has so many references to Western culture is because those things that I did in the West are the ones that have been documented. But I did a lot of things during my three visits to Africa. I also lived in India, Nepal, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Malaysia. In those places the work that I did was totally ephemeral except for one or two things that were photographed by chance. But they were just as valuable to me as for the people I encountered there, because they related to what I saw there”¹⁶. This procedure of dialoguing with the world is one of the reasons why he was invited by Rasheed Araeen in 1989 to participate in the exhibition *Other Story*¹⁷ at the Hayward Gallery, London.

During the 1990s his wish to concretise/celebrate “meetings” became radicalised as a reaction to the illusion created by the Internet: “To make people come into contact with everyone and everything in real time”¹⁸. On the one hand this led him to work on pictures/narratives in which he could recuperate archaic/historical symbols for new contemporary mythologies and, on the other hand, to found in 1995, together with Adam Nankervis, the *Mondrian Fan Club*, with which to undertake a proactive criticism of the art system and of the superficial commercialisation of the “dematerialising” art ideas that had started in the second half of the twentieth century. In this period his art found a new *raison d’être* with neon tubes that he used to draw people in space in his search for “knowledge”. He used different coloured fluorescent

lights, and their intermittent ignition allowed him to impress a new performative, visionary, and immaterial dimension on the scene, as is evident in his large-scale 2010 installation *Mondrian Watching two sailors dancing the Boogie Woogie on Times Square in New York City*.

In 2016 Medalla was in Bologna for the *66/16* show when he undertook many extemporaneous performances in various places in the city: the *Mondrian Fan Club* intervention in Piazza Maggiore, with Adam Nankervis, and a new version of *A Stitch in Time*. In the latter case a large, refined, neon-colour pink tulle – stretched across a road near the gallery to create an unusual meeting place – was “activated” on the opening day by the artist himself who sewed onto it a fragment of his tie and a thought. The public was transformed into both a performer and an artist in the moment it sat down to sew. The meditation which those undertaking the action were absorbed by made clear to the observers the uncertain line between individuals and the crowd. This action, besides raising necessary thoughts about the dynamics that social networks establish in the creation of a community identity, also became a gauge of the climate that permeated the whole period of the *66/16* show – the pieced was a work in progress – and created a mental, rather than physical, photograph of it.

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¹⁶ Gavin Jantjes, in a conversation with David Medalla, London 29 May 1997. In *A Fruitful Incoherence: Dialogues with Artists on Internationalism*, Institute of International Visual Arts, London 1998, pp. 94-109.

¹⁷ *Other Story*, 1989, was the first show in Britain to speak of nationalism and internationalism with respect to British imperialism in a post-colonialist manner. The exhibition took a different view to that of the show curated by Jean-Hubert Martin at the Centre Georges Pompidou and at La Villette, Paris, in the same year. Cf. Pinti, Roberto, *Nuove geografie artistiche: le mostre al tempo della globalizzazione*, Postmedia books, Milan 2012.

¹⁸ In: Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, It. Trans. *La modernità liquida*, Editori Laterza, Rome-Bari, 2016





Mondrian Fan Club, *Impromptus*, Bologna 2016. (Foto Faber).

p. 72 | David Medalla, *A Stitch In Time (green)*, 1968-2015, Mons, Belgium. Tulle, colour cotton threads, various materials, 600 x 152,5 x 15 cm (installation, variable dimensions). Courtesy Adam Nankervis. Details.

p. 73 | David Medalla, *A Stitch In Time (green)*, 1968-2015, Mons, Belgium. Tulle, colour cotton threads, various materials, 600 x 152,5 x 15 cm (installation, variable dimensions). Courtesy Adam Nankervis.

p. 75 | The Mondrian Fan Club (David Medalla e Adam Nankervis), 'The Letter "B" for Bologna, 2016 (A global graffittifest initiated NYC 1992)'. Performance realized in Bologna on the 26th January 2016. Ink-jet photography on paper, 55 x 40,5 cm. Edition of 3. Courtesy Adam Nankervis. (Foto Faber).

p. 76 | David Medalla, *M'illumino D'Immenso (Giuseppe Ungaretti)*, 2016. Watercolour on paper, 61 x 43 cm. Courtesy Adam Nankervis.

p. 77 | David Medalla, *Tongues Talk (Synchronisations)*, 2016. Watercolour on paper, 61 x 43 cm. Courtesy Adam Nankervis.







David Medalla, *A Stitch In Time (pink)*, 1968-2016, Bologna, Italia. Tulle, colour cotton threads, various materials, 298 x 910 x 170,5 cm (installation, variable dimensions). Courtesy Adam Nankervis. (Foto Raffaella Losapio and Faber).



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pp. 80-81 | Maurizio Mochetti, *Calotte*, 1966. Fiberglass, elastic, 307 x 180 x 455 (Installation, variable dimensions); 8 x ø 43,3 cm (each calotte).

Maurizio Mochetti – Art, science, and space

Maurizio Mochetti has developed his work with the use of such ephemeral, invisible, and immeasurable materials as space and time. To be more precise, his works come about in the moment when space and time interact to allow being manifested to the viewer in an “objective” way, thus making this “relationship” evident. In order to make this “relationship” the subject of his work, Mochetti concentrates on the use of minimal elements, ones far distant from the creation of expressive forms. He has adopted a scientific approach as his “medium” without, however, celebrating it in itself. These principles had already been widely developed in his first work, *Sfera trasparente con piani*, 1962, in which the sphere is not a pure object that exhibits itself but, rather, the means, the support, the field of action. In fact, there appear in it geometrical forms consisting of straight lines of light projected through it. The researches being developed at the time in Europe and America with regard to abstract/geometrical painting, Optical Art, and Kinetic Art were superseded by Mochetti; he shifted his attention onto something already existing but that was not visible as a single element. He offered no new forms to the world but visualised the dynamics that determined them.

Mochetti’s art does not consist of mysteries because it is based on the wish to share “the idea”. For this reason, his projects are not simply instructions for making a work – thus distancing himself from the techniques of architects – but ways for “grasping” that specific idea. This particular use of artistic design, one not used for creating an impression of reality or of interior states of mind, is the innovation that he introduced in 1965. And so the project is a unique work in a “potential state”¹, while his translation or transposition of reality was, instead, to be different each time. This depends, on the one hand, on the

¹ The concept of a potential state is the main material of many works realised by Mochetti over his career, and the first of them was *Razzo Potenziale*, 1969. This was a rocket installed on a ramp with its starting device. This is only how the work was positioned; in order to be completed it would have had to be activated and to be shot vertically with its consequent explosion in the air. Dating from [1969]1979 are, instead, a series of works on paper on which are outlined the starting tracks of various rockets/works.

physical space and context in which it is inserted and, on the other hand, on the degree of technological evolution of the period in which the work is made and that determines the choice of materials and methods². In fact, for Mochetti a work is “perfectible” and for this reason often has more than one date: these correspond to the date of the project and that of its making. From this point of view, we can speak of his work, not as precursors of site-specific works, but rather as being *time-specific* in the Bergsonian sense.

As the artist stated in 1965 with reference to his radical choice of using light as a material for his work, “[...] Art is a vital gesture [...] in *Raggio di sole*, Sunray, 1965, I used natural light: it is a straight line of moving photons. Rays of sunlight have always been used in a mystical way, from the Egyptians to Byzantine backgrounds and to Le Corbusier: historically, light has been considered a go-between for the human and the divine. I am interested in light in its physicality as a material. In fact, in my work light, whether natural or artificial, is directed or conveyed. This is the difference between my use of light and that of such Californian artists as Irwin, Turrel or Nordman: in Californian art light is used as an infiltration on the walls; so it is considered as being naturalistic or mystical. On the other hand, in the compositions of neon tubes by Flavin, we have the objectivised representation of a solid light. *Raggio di sole*, instead, is a straight line of photons that is visualised by being solidified in space and that also moves [...]”³. So Mochetti’s approach at the time was not exclusively minimal, conceptual or dematerialised in Lucy Lippard’s sense. Even though his work shared with them the need to reformulate the role of art and its objectives, it did not aim at dematerialising the art object but, rather, he aimed at materialising the idea.

1966, with regard to this need, was a turning

point for the artist who realised works that acted on the idea of “surveying”⁴ by adopting in an obvious way the “infinite combinable possibilities” of primary elements. *Proiezioni* is an installation with a section of a black carbon fibre cylinder suspended in an architectural container. On the walls are black-painted forms for the work’s possible continuation inside the room and that “vary” because of the inclination of the generating object/idea. The work, insofar as it is an idea that becomes a tool for measuring the physical and mental space of where it is placed, is further articulated in *Oggetto polimerico*. This consists of two spherical convex objects in a polished white plastic material on the respective bases of which is fixed one end of a piece of elastic that, attached at one point of its length to the wall, is kept under tension. The work creates infinite relationships between the three points that, in their turn, link two or three surfaces of the architectural box: the objects and the thread, in fact, can be “placed one next to the other, separately, on the floor and the wall, on the wall and the ceiling, both on the ceiling and so on”. It is a seminal work because in an overt way, and without drama it underlines, on the one hand, the new need of twentieth century man to supply himself with a new system for conceiving of space – after the systemisation of Albert Einstein’s relativity theory, two World Wars, the expansion of heavy industry, and the race to the moon – that does not only refer to the visual and optical conception linked to Renaissance perspective⁵. On the other hand, it was his first work to propose a dynamism – even if a potential one, given that only the gallery owner or museum director can decide on the position of the elements – that dislocated the “responsibility”⁶ of mounting the work in a participative manner. Mochetti, however, did not arrive at adopting the use of “instructions”⁷ as American artists of the time were

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⁴ Mochetti gave the concept of surveying his own personal, speculative solution, something that was also allowed by his use of new technological discoveries. This was an interest that – as underlined by Germano Celant in *Freccia, arciera, bersaglio in Maurizio Mochetti*, Skira editore, Turin 2003 – allowed him to differentiate himself from such other artists of the Arte Povera generation as Kounellis, Paolini, Fabro, and Boetti, and led him to make an innovative follow-up to the “spatial” researches of the historical avant-gardes.

⁵ Dating from the same year is the work *Binfinito*, which consists of a line drawn with carbon and hung in the air at eye level. The work alludes to the concept of infinity and of double infinity because the line follows two directions.

⁶ The idea that the work is the responsibility of the spectator was explored in later years in such works as *Specchio elettronico*, 1970, in which by shifting a board from its base you would also shift at the same time the twin board placed on the wall.

⁷ Cf. Lippard, Lucy, R., *Six Years [...]*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1973.

² In his early works he used projected light and, later on when it was commercially available, laser for its easier control.

³ Mochetti, Maurizio, in: *Maurizio Mochetti*, Skira editore, Turin 2003, p. 16

to do in order to free themselves completely from the problems of formalisation. Already with *Oggetto polimerico* he had arrived at an alternative solution that allowed him to pinpoint and respect the perfect “balance”, even if temporary, between creating a work and perceiving a work.

In 1968 this point of view was presented in an unequivocal manner at the La Salita gallery in Rome with his solo show *Dieci progetti* in which, besides the presentation of ten ideas/drawings, there were two “demonstrations”, among which one called *Generatrice*, which had been conceived the previous year. The work consists of a metal plank which has a pseudo-perpetual movement – as the artist always points out when speaking of his moving works – and that over time generates a virtual cone. What is created in this case is the exhibition of instants of the cone’s existence which, all together, make up its mental image. In this work the form of a minimal sculpture is made from nothing. It would, however, be inappropriate to interpret Mochetti’s work in this sense, given that we are not dealing with subtraction but with the appearance of “the event”. The artist has not created an action or an idea but, rather, a link between these two factors and the viewers, for the very reason that for him this is a tool for inquiring into space within space. This idea led him to use “sound” as a material – with *Asse oscillante*, 1968, in which the sound of a sphere inside a tube, as a result of its moment, allows a perception of the room in a different way – and as a “measurement for time” – in *Scatola del tempo*, 1969, that consists of a meter which, when the viewers touch a switch, counts and isolates twelve seconds of time. Sound and time are never represented by Mochetti but, rather, are condensed and introduced into the exhibition space in order to allow the spectators to become aware of them, both

at a physical and perceptive level, and in relation to themselves and vice versa.

In 1970 he created *Travaso di luce*: two cubes that present the same quantity of light that passes from one to the other, and that intensify not only the relationship between, but also the transformation of, time, energy, and the material, referring back to the theories of “everything” that were being worked out at the time in science, philosophy, and art. In the same year, for the Venice Biennale, he presented in his solo show his installation *Grande specchio*, which consisted of a mirror along the whole length of the wall on which a dot of light moved so slowly as to appear motionless, even while following the spectators. In this case, the trustworthiness of the spectators’ senses was disputed forcing them to question themselves more closely about what they were experiencing⁸. With the work *Baricentro*, instead, he dealt with the theme of the abstraction of concepts from a particular viewpoint; this led him to place, on the wall of the gallery in Cologne where the show was being held, a blinding luminous source that denied the possibility of contemplation, preferring instead that of cognition. In fact, that point corresponded to the barycentre of the room – pinpointed by an IBM electronic calculator – that highlighted how the artist had treated the space as a sculpture even though made from “emptiness”⁹. This way of acting has nothing to do with creating a surprise in itself but, rather, it aims at eliminating the viewers’ visual and conceptual prejudices that lead them to seeing only what they already know¹⁰.

Part of this approach of his is his strategy of investigating technological elements to create weapons for impoverishing their “destructive functions and to make them acquire a constructive one”. *Freccia*, Arrow, 1974, was placed at the

⁸ For his participation in the Venice Biennale, he also made the sound installation *Colpo di balestra*. This was the recording of the shooting of a crossbow and of it striking the wall of that specific, twenty-metre room. The sound was modified by adding extra time, thus widening the perception of the size of the space by those who were listening in the room.

⁹ The concept of exhibiting voids was widely investigated in that decade, as has also been documented in the book published for the occasion of a show curated by the artist John Armleder at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, in which were exhibited the most famous examples of “voids” of the period. Cf. Armleder, John M., Copeland, Mathieu, *Voids: A Retrospective*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, and Kunsthalle, Bern, 2009.

¹⁰ The question at the heart of all the debates about French Structuralism is always the same: do we look in order to know, or do we see only what we already know? Mochetti made works in order to find a solution to this ontological question about human knowledge.

centre of a room at eye level and, by making a 360° rotation around itself, it not only transformed itself into an indicator of directions, but into a tool that contemplated and contained all directions, so becoming an anti-arrow. *Aereo-razzo Bachen Natter* dates from 1976: a prolonged trajectory axis is visualised by laser dots in the space that contains it. 1979, instead, is the date when he made such works as *Camouflage natter-pelle* which consists of exhibiting in the room an abstract surface destined to cover planes so that they would not be detected by radar, with the aim of provoking friction in the gestalt dimension of abstract-geometric painting, something observed in the military sector and in that of recent art history. Later, in 1985, he made *F-104 Starfighter* in which a model plane is held up by the solidification of the combustion produced by a hypothetical engine which thus becomes its base. With *Pinguini* (1987), 2005, he created another type of friction that was to lead him to place model warplanes in unusual positions, vertically or on the floor, to obtain the complete opposite of their function, in other words a kind of flying machine that does not manage to fly. The multiple he created in 2016, *Untitled*, for the 66/16 show, is part of this long research. In all of these examples, Mochetti has transformed these “battle monsters” into creative objects for reflecting on the decoding of meanings.

In other works instead, he fractures the observers’ certainly with respect to what they are observing in order to make a wider analysis, not so much of the experience of reality, as of the works of art in itself. This aim is fully achieved in *Cubi*¹¹, 1970, *Oggetti che non si può vedere dietro*¹², 1971, *Processo di paragone*¹³, 1974, and *Mochetti di Mochetti*¹⁴, 1977, but also in the work in which he exhibited a real four-leaf clover on one of the walls of the Venice Biennale based on the theme of Art and Nature, 1978. And then

there is *Filo inox*, 1983, in which a laser light relates the point of a steel thread suspended in the room to its projection drawn in pencil on the wall; and *Perno della simpatia*¹⁵, 1986, or *Project to project*, 1989, where the artist’s signature inside a white, framed sheet of paper is hit by a laser that projects it on the other side of the wall, upside-down; and finally there is *Missile*¹⁶, 1993. With these radical works he places at the heart of the question his thoughts about the concept of copies, of ready-mades, of the importance of a signature, and of the idea in relation to the form, and also of the art object that negates itself to become something else. He does not, however, aim at creating an ironical dimension with respect to what can be considered a work of art or otherwise, rather he obliges the spectators – by overturning and emptying the aspect of beauty – to reflect on the essence of the creative act and of its necessary relationship with a wider project. The works I have just referred to are not the negation of art tradition and earlier culture, but simply the evidence that to deal with them implies an awareness of the scientific, philosophical, and political knowledge which society, and therefore artists, has available in that moment. This awareness has led Mochetti, over the past decades, to state with certainty that, “my art begins where Lucio Fontana stopped. He undertook a breakage by opening up a hypothesis of another conception of space. I have taken on the responsibility of measuring and verifying the space that lies beyond those cuts.”¹⁷ This is because his ideas never aim at being provocations or pure concepts, but always to be verifiable and real, and it is precisely because of this that he has always made use of scientific methods.

During the 1990s, and especially in the early 2000s, Mochetti’s obsession with how to experience, discover, and condense time/space developed across unexpected areas which led him to investigate the

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¹¹The work *Cubi*, 1970, consists of two small black cubes which maintain an electron affinity as a result of circuits hidden inside. If the distance between the two changes, then they autodestruct.

¹² *Oggetto che non si può vedere dietro*, 1971, is an object placed at the centre of the space which, however, by moving in relation to the viewers, does not allow them to see the other part of the work.

¹³ *Processo di paragone*, 1974, consists of two travertine copies of an antique sculpture, Cupid and Psyche, that are placed at a certain distance from each other. In order to verify that they are the same thing, what differentiates them, and what might be the *raison d’être* of these two presences, the viewers are obliged to move continuously between one and the other.

¹⁴ *Mochetti di Mochetti* in which the artist makes his own some drawings he found on a market stall and which were drawn by an unknown namesake in the 1930s and 1940s.

¹⁵ *Perno della simpatia*, 1986, is a pivot that exits or enters the wall in relation to the subjects standing in front of it and in relation to their height, tone of voice, etcetera. This kind of work puts to the test the spectators’ attention and shifts the question onto them and not onto the artist.

¹⁶ *Missile*, 1993, is a real missile placed at the centre of the room on its launching pad, and that moves to point at and follow the viewer who enters its field of action.

¹⁷ From an interview with Lorenzo Bruni and the artist in Rome, 2014.

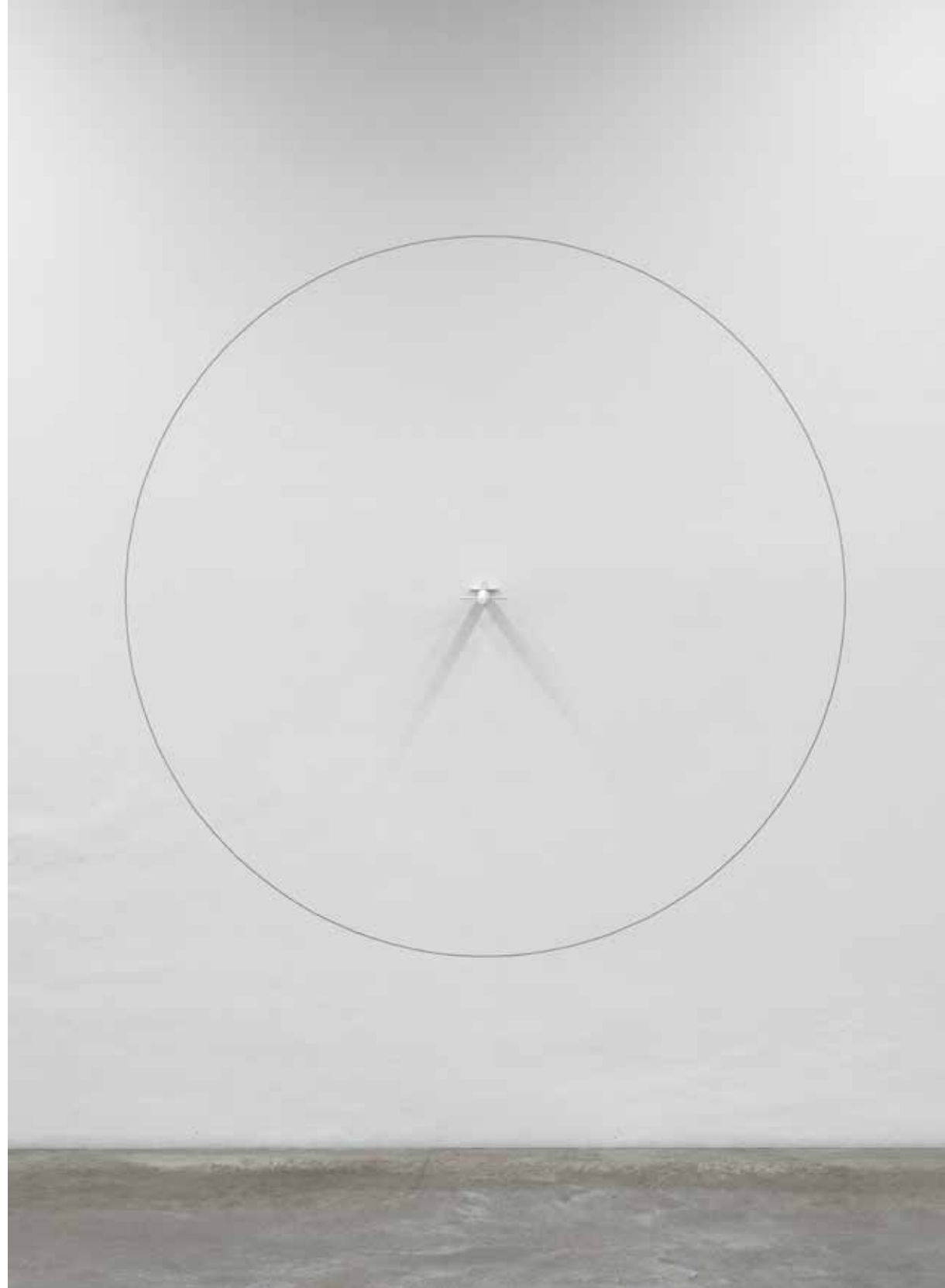
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potential of the circle/sphere and, above all, the duality of opposites. In particular, he inquired into movement/anti-movement where motion and stasis coincide with the eternal infinity of space. Indicative of this research is *Bluebird CN7* (1996), 2002, in which a scale-model of a record-winning car stays motionless with its engine running and the brake parachute open. This *Bluebird* is a representation of challenge. In this case what is important is not the speed but the record, the breaking through of limits. In recent years, at the very time when the passage from analogical to digital technology has been taking place, and having always worked on new technologies as a means and not as a celebration, Mochetti has tried to produce a new possibility for a dialogue between the subject and the principle of reality. It is precisely from this that his latest work has emerged, *Da una dimensione all'altra*, which he created specifically for *66/16*. The work consists of a model plane, painted the same white as the wall, and the final part of the tail of which is absorbed/swallowed by the wall on which it is placed. Around the plane is a graphite drawing of a circle that corresponds to the visualisation of breaking the sound barrier when the plane reaches the right speed. In this work there is an intimate reflection on the relationship between virtual and physical space, but also on what might be the future heredity of monochrome and of the researches of the "historical avant-gardes". Precisely because over his career he has found himself "bending" technology and supplying alternatives to the "media" system, he now seems to be asking us: are we sure that today we know what we mean by using an image?



pp. 91 and 93 | Maurizio Mochetti, *Da una dimensione all'altra*, 2016. Fiberglass, graphite on wall, \varnothing 209,5 cm; 7,7 x 14,3 x 19,4 cm (airplane model). Courtesy the artist.

pp. 94-95 | Maurizio Mochetti, *Senza titolo*, 2016. Carbon, elastic, varnish, and Plexiglas, 35.4 x \varnothing 8.2 cm. Multiple in 30 examples.









pp. 96-98 | Maurizio Nannucci, *Rosso Poema Idroitinerante*, 1966. Metal, plastic, water, 4 x 25 x 25 cm (box) ø 3,4 cm (spheres). Courtesy the artist.

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¹ The relationship between text and colour was pushed in new directions by his use of neon lights: "To work with light and colour on significant content has given me the possibility of penetrating the geometry of space; not only physically but also dilating and opening it up to sensorial and virtual perceptions". From an interview with Hou Hanru in *Where to start from*, edited by Pietromarchi, Bartolomeo, Mousse Edizioni 2015.

² In 1967 his work was included in the *Anthology of Concrete Poetry* by Emmett Williams, published by Something Else Press, New York.

³ His interest in experimental music was to lead him to become part of the team of the phonological music studio S2FM in Florence conservatory from 1965 to 1969.

⁴ This is the thesis made in her exploration of Conceptual Art by Lippard, Lucy, R., *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972 [...]*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1973, republished 2001.

⁵ Nannucci realised his first neon work in 1967: *Alfabetofonetico*.

Maurizio Nannucci has always been involved with the relationship between art and concepts – how they are formed and communicated – in order to create a direct dialogue with civil society and art history. The means he has adopted for this is not an abstract language, but the capacity language has to produce new functions, supports, and forms so as to install the possibility for renewing the spectator's ability to interact with the "mass media" and with the role of art. This manner of intervening, in which he combines texts and colour¹, has allowed him to pinpoint new artistic strategies and to make personal contributions, often ahead of the times, to such international debates as those about inquiries into the use of monochrome or those of tautology. This dialogic, speculative, and active approach of his began halfway through the 1960s in a general climate of breaking with traditional art expressions. The dematerialisation of the art object, the wish to escape the spaces designated for debates as well as art forms, was the explosive effect of this attitude. Nannucci was able to give an answer to these impulses and to supply unexpected aims and coordinates for the times because he already acted with a dematerialised approach, that of Concrete Poetry² and of experimental electronic music³. This gave him a proactive attitude rather than one of rupture as was the case for American Conceptual artists⁴.

From this point of view, Nannucci's turning point, even before his use of neon⁵, can be pinpointed in his choice of adopting "multiple" strategies with the realisation in 1966 of *Rosso. Poema Idroitinerante*. This serially-produced work consists of a square container of red metal filled for two thirds with water on which float ten red plastic spheres. Each of them has on its surface a black typographical letter so that all together they might form, at least potentially, the

word “red” two times. However, the visualisation of this word/image can only be activated in the mind of the viewer because the sphere floats in a random manner within the container, thus breaking the rules of Western linear writing. For Nannucci, “to produce this objectual idea” was a way of dealing, not only with monochrome in painting or the performative aspect of language, but also with science and the complexity of verifying its hypotheses. The decision to place the spheres in the water evokes a sensation of suspension and movement because the rotation of the earth and its electromagnetic flows allow them to move without any apparent external cause. This was the first of innumerable multiples⁶ and editions created by him for shows, self-produced productions, and collaborations with other artists.

The aspects present in *Rosso. Poema Idroitinerante*, and that anticipate Nannucci’s main centres of research, can be summed up in three points. The first refers to his explorations of tautological undertakings by suggesting that the relationship between mark and image can be resolved by a poetical dialogue and not only in an intensifying dimension, as was the case for many different artists of the times, for example, Joseph Kosuth in America or Joe Tilson in Britain. For Nannucci, to make the viewer’s mind summon up the word “red”, by the means of the presence of the colour red, does not mean utilising the tool of tautology⁷ but, rather, revealing its limits and potentiality through the means of the viewer’s imagination. This manner was to be developed in other works, among which the large-scale neon installation with blue letters *The missing poem is the poem*⁸, 1969, which was realised with typological fonts he designed and which he was to use in all his later works. The second point is linked to the fact that, by being completed at a cognitive level in the

mind of the viewer, the work places at its heart the interaction between these two presences. This link between the work and the viewer was an innovation with respect to such previous works as, for example, his famous *Dattilogrammi*⁹, 1964/65, in which this aspect was only latent. In that case, for example, the yellow monochrome A4 sheet of paper exhibited the word “yellow”, written with an Olivetti M40 typewriter in yellow ink, and repeated to form a square. In this way the visual rhythm and the reiteration of the sense were both present at the same time and led to a re-evaluation of the rules behind the linguistic sign. With *Rosso. Poema Idroitinerante* it is evident that the distance between the artist and the viewer was greatly reduced, not only in order to make the objects and signs existing in reality be perceived in a different manner, but also to re-imagine them. This dynamic is closely tied to the third point, in other words the artist’s decision to produce the work, not as a unique piece, but as a multiple, with the very aim of allowing an alternative diffusion to that of the “self-referential art” circuit; in this way he aimed at creating a different kind of audience. This kind of ethical/political¹⁰ attitude is the same as the one that later led him to create spaces for research in Florence in collaboration with other artists of the Funo group – from 1967 to 1970 – the Base group – from 1974 to 1984 – and the Base/progetti per l’arte group which is still active and was founded in 1998, as well as undertaking publishing projects such as the *Mela, aperiodico* magazine – from 1976 to 1981 – and the production of editions by other artists, such as those from the Zona archive group.

The idea that Nannucci experimented with in his *Rosso. Poema Idroitinerante* multiple - that of creating a dialogue between the big picture and specific cases in order to produce, not a form but, rather, a tool for performing mentally in a specific physical context

⁶ For Nannucci there is no difference of values between multiples, environmental installations, neon lights on the facades of buildings, sound installations or artists’ books. This democratisation of signs in favour of the conceptual and critical debate is Maurizio Nannucci’s great particularity.

⁷ As the artist states in “Senza avere paura di contraddire se stessi”, interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, 22 July 2008, in *Something Happened*, Gli Ori, Pistoia 2009: “In my texts with neon lights the tautological reference, when it exists, is not self-referential, but environmental and contingent...”

⁸ The neon tubes made use of the typographic font specifically designed by Nannucci and used for all his successive works. This work, like many other, resulted from his unwillingness to create tautological mechanisms but, rather, to represent and make concrete the limits, potentialities, and alternatives to this conceptual practice.

⁹ The *Dattilogrammi* works were exhibited for the first time at the Premio San Fedele prize exhibition in 1966 in a room together with Giulio Paolini and Luciano Fabro.

¹⁰ Criticism of museums was the starting point for many art researches, from Marcel Broodthaers to Daniel Buren, Gustav Metzger, and Hans Haacke. Simon Shiekh commented in *Notes on Institutional Critique*, 2006, that if the object of the diatribe is only the institution, then the greatest challenge is the institution itself and the history of art. In: <http://eicpc.net/transversal/0106/sheikh/en>.

– had its perfect development in the following year, 1967, when he adopted neon letters for the first time for his *Alfabetofonico* installation¹¹. In the same year too he created his second multiple which was a stamp that allowed its owner to print the word “red” wherever and however he wanted in order to change the aesthetic object into a unique experience, but one that was repeatable in time. It was this approach, that of making malleable the space between the role of the observer and that of the artist, that gave rise in 1968 to his art publications: *The book* – a black accordion folder into which the owner could insert objects, texts, and notes to create a portable work in progress archive – *Do it yourself/Homage to Malewitsch* – a small can containing inside coloured pigment and, outside, the instruction with which the proprietor could create by himself four geometrical monochrome wall paintings, himself becoming the artist of a tribute to and reflection about modernism – and *The medium is word* – a wooden box bearing this statement with inside a black plastic cylinder that, used as a binocular, allows you to see the word “word”. In 1969, together with the large blue neon installation *The missing poem is the poem*, he made objects that inquire into the relationship between the act of discovering, that of destroying, and that of composing. These objects are *Past, Present, Future* – three square Plexiglas surfaces with engraved on each one of the three words of the title, and the stratification order of which could be chosen by the owner from time to time -, *Universum* – a book with a double spine that did not allow its contents be read but only to be guessed -, and the poster *Letter is too big...* These three works were specifically designed to be camouflaged¹² in everyday life and to suggest new questions about it. These works, that anticipated some aspects of what in the 1990s were to be called “relational art”, have in

¹¹ His first text was *Alfabetofonico*, 1967, made from neon tubes and the artist’s calligraphy, and which visualised the sounds that would be produced by the characters of the alphabet if considered as phonemes. The text to be read was not at eye-level, as is usual with an image or a sign, but was placed at the bottom of the wall in the corner, thus transforming the sign of light into a fully-rounded presence. The dialogue with the architecture created by the letters/image forced the viewers to perceive the physical and mental space in a different way, as well as making them deal with the performative aspect that had to be undertaken by the subject in order to make the language become real.

¹² The International Situationist ideas and those of Guy Debord, as expressed in the book *The Society of Spectacle*, 1967, were widely diffused in the milieu of experimental art in the 1960s and 1970s. Among these ideas, that of reformulating authors’ rights was brought to the forefront by the systematic diffusion of photocopies. It was not by chance that Maurizio Nannucci created a non-profit space, Firenze Zona, as a tribute to Situationism after the international organisation was disbanded after the Venice conference in 1972.

common the aim of visualising the link between the impossibility of rationally explaining the world, and humanity’s eternal impulse to try to do so.

The successive works, in particular those created in 1973, such as *Volterra 73* – in which he substituted the bulbs of the street lamps with red bulbs along one road, and blue along another, in two roads that intersect in the city centre of Volterra -, *Scrivere sull’acqua* – thirty-three photographs that record various moments in which he used a finger to try to write a thought on flowing water -, and *Scrivere camminando* – in which a series of photos record the artist’s journey through the historical centre of Florence in an attempt to give the shape of the word “star” to his itinerary – were aimed at representing the mental and physical coordinates of the context which the artist/viewers found themselves interpreting and discovering as though for the first time. These interventions derived from his desire to inquire into three different aspects of the concept of the public’s and artist’s space. This idea was to be explored on other processual and perceptual levels in, for example, the multiple *Quasinfinito*, 1975, which consists of a wristwatch where the twelve letters of the title take the place of the numbers, or in the 1983 keychain which is in the form of a nameplate with “Museum of Modern Art” written on it. In a similar way, for the 1978 Venice Biennale he organised an intervention in which a biplane flew over the city trailing the statement/caption of the title to bring a different kind of attention to how things are named and imagined, and to the implications linked to the art context (the Biennale) and to that of life (the city as a tourist destination). The reasoning behind these works by Nannucci can be summed up in the plea *Let’s talk about art* which, from 1967 onwards, was to be manifested in various media; from dry point to posters, neon writings, and calendars.

The need to continue giving an answer to the cultural debate by supplying his own personal analysis and vision led him, from the 1980s onwards, to stimulate in the audience a thoughtful view of the mechanisms of mass communications. This is what is common to such works as *Lives here* – an installation with a series of images of the facades of artists' homes (collected in 1975) with which Nannucci wove together collaborations or friendships by visualising a mental geography – and *Bag Book Back* (begun in 1995) which is a series of photographs of tourists visiting various parts of the world and carrying a paper bag with "There's no reason to believe that art exists" printed on it. This strategy of insinuating a paradox between a text and an image led him, halfway through the 1990s, to collaborate with various architects for intervening with his neon statements in public areas – from *Polifonia*, 2001, a work on permanent display in the music park designed by Renzo Piano in Rome, to *Blauer Ring*, 2003, a work permanently installed in the library of the German parliament in Berlin – with the aim of reactivating public squares and places that, due to the spread of the Internet and social networks, and the loss of incisiveness in political discourse, were losing their role as meeting places. From the early 2000s Nannucci aimed at proposing alternative strategies for aggregation and at sparking off a debate about systemising the globalisation of information. And so in 2008 he prepared the artist's book *Undisclosed recipient* for Onestar Press, Paris; and, in 2009/2010 the thirty-metre-long neon installation, immersed in the Tuscan landscape for his solo show at Villa La Magia, where he exhibited his *Something Happened* statement. Besides his *Sound Anthology (The Sonic Clock)* sound installation in Piazza Maggiore, for the occasion of *Art City Bologna* in 2003 promoted by the Bologna museum of modern

art, in the same year he created an installation in the Leopolda station in Florence where the phrase written on the floor by 277 dots projected by ceiling lights was: *NOMOREEXCUSES*.

The accordion edition of *NOMOREEXCUSES* in 2016 was the result of the artist's reaction to the scenario just mentioned and of his wish to propose an interaction between a subject and object different from that that "the end user" is used to dealing with in the current digital world. This artist's book takes the form of a folded sheet like an accordion, coloured in reflecting gold, in which every page has holes that form a single letter. Only by unfolding the whole surface is it possible to read the statement "no more excuses". Reading it requires great attention and concentration because of the hypnotic/aesthetic impact conveyed by the mirroring of the pages and of the face of those reading or performing it. These visual short-circuits were ideated for producing mental short-circuits in order to make the spectators ask themselves who is involved in this statement: the context in which they find themselves, they themselves, the others in front of them, art, the economy, politics, or society? In this specific case, what is more, the references to the art history that has produced objects for ecstatic observation, from Medieval icons to the works by Lucio Fontana, are many. However, the work does not allude to these but, rather, to the increasingly urgent question of how the artist/viewer can arrive at the correct view of the "information" we have available in digital archives in order to take on and instil the responsibility for a correct transmission of "knowledge" data. With this edition of the accordion book, it is as though Nannucci had closed the circle he had opened fifty years ago with his *Rosso. Poema Idroitinerante* multiple about making language dynamic as a result of its use,

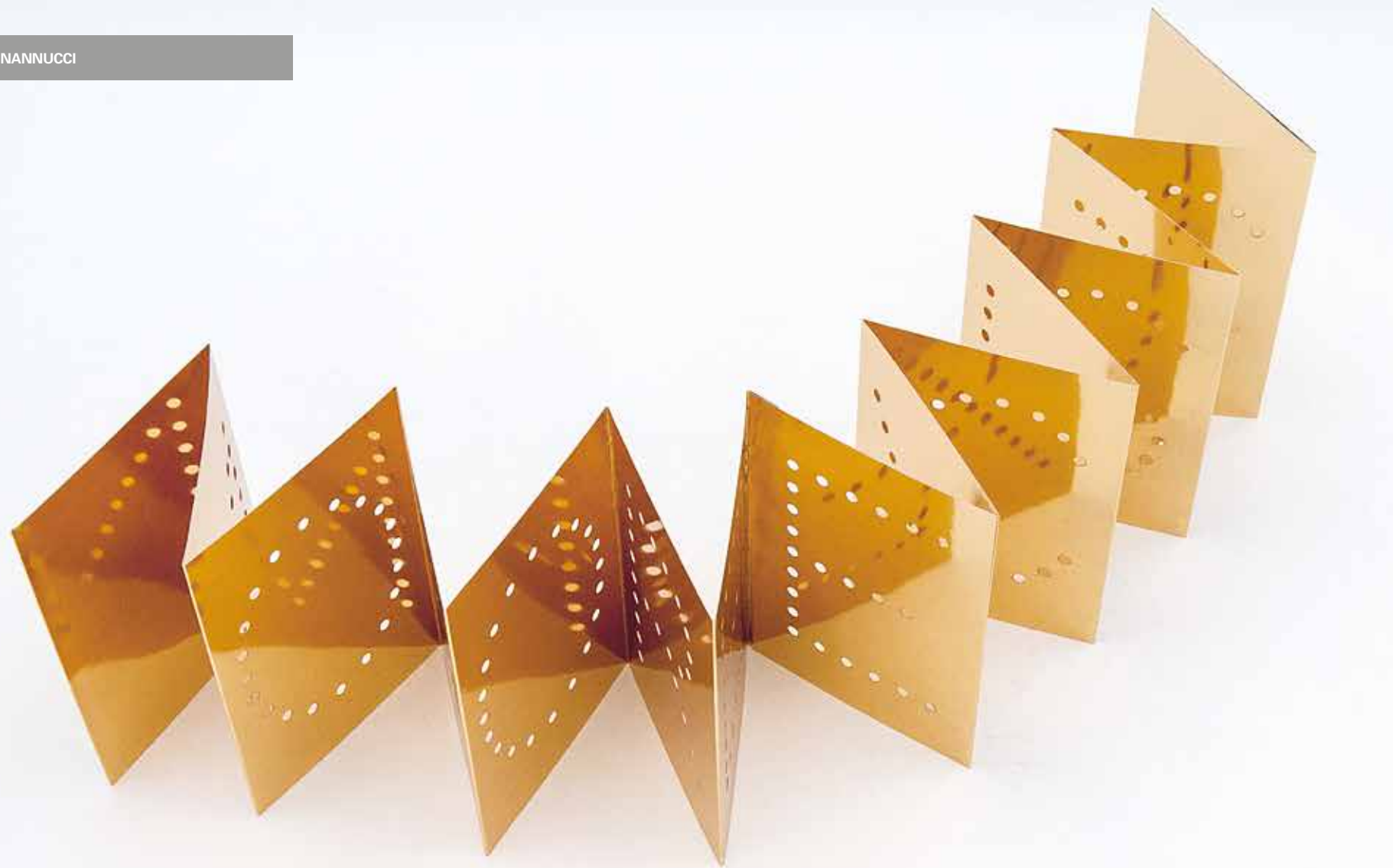
and vice versa. To represent language and to invent language is, therefore, the paradox around which he has always acted and that has led him, not to define works closed in on themselves, but to define “situations” with which to dialogue, something which has always been an integral part of his visual and semantic reformulations.

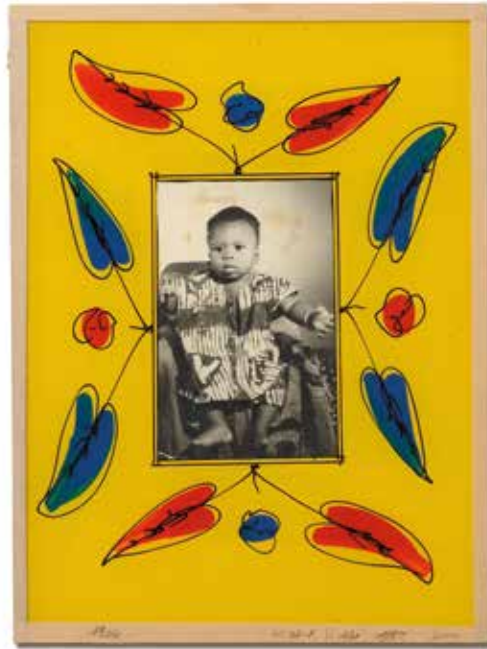


p. 107 | Maurizio Nannucci, *Same Words Different Thoughts*, 2016. Green neon, 11 x 273 x 4 cm. Courtesy l'artista.

pp. 108-109 | Maurizio Nannucci, *NOMOREEXCUSES*, 2016. Artist book, leporello. Laser engraving on gold paper, case, 157,5 x 15 cm (open) 10,5 x 15 cm (close). Edition of ninety-nine signed and numbered copies.

106 Courtesy the artist. (Photo Cesare Daglana).





Malick Sidibé, *Mariage Chambre Blanche*, 1966/2004. Vintage silver gelatin print, glass, paint, cardboard, tape, string, 12 x 8 cm; 18,4 x 12 cm (signed, titled, and dated on front of original glass frame). Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

Malick Sidibé, 'Untitled', 1966/2004. Vintage silver gelatin print, glass, paint, cardboard, tape, string, 11,4 x 7,6; 26,7 x 20,3 cm (signed, titled, and dated on front of original glass frame). Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

Malick Sidibé, *Mariage Soumaré*, 1966/2004. Vintage silver gelatin print, glass, paint, cardboard, tape, string, 8,2 x 10,5; 19,7 x 27 cm (signed, titled, and dated on front of original glass frame). Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

Malick Sidibé, *Mariage*, 1966/2004. Vintage silver gelatin print, glass, paint, cardboard, tape, string, 9 x 13,3 cm; 20,3 x 26,7 cm (signed, titled, and dated on front of original glass frame). Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

Malick Sidibé, *Untitled*, 1966/2004. Vintage silver gelatin print, glass, paint, cardboard, tape, string, 8,3 x 12,7; 13,3 x 19,1 cm (signed, titled, and dated on front of original glass frame). Courtesy Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.

Malick Sidibé was the first African artist to be awarded the Venice Biennale's Leone d'Oro prize for his career. The reasons given by the 2007 jury, which included the critic Robert Storr, were that, "No artist has been more active in increasing the importance of photography in the continent, just as no other artist has contributed more to its history, the enrichment of its archive of images, and the refinement of our knowledge of the tones and transformations that have characterised African culture from the second half of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first". On the prize giving day, still surprised by the award, he said, "I am only a small African who has narrated his country. Today there are those who call me an artist. I continue to prefer the definition of photographer". With this simple and disarming statement, Sidibé defended his role as a "sincere arbitrator" of the world's vitality. "Photography is reality, it never tells lies, and this is very important for me"¹. This attitude derived from his constant work, with just a few severe rules, on black and white photographic portraits. On the one hand he attempted to push to their limits the expressive capacities of his mechanical means in order to obtain a small but significant freedom of movement. On the other hand, he aimed at preparing to the best of his abilities his meeting with his client/subject of his portraits in order to be able to place himself on the cusp between chance and the control of his subjects' expressions, halfway between a portrait and a narrative. When he was asked what was the best quality of his work, he began to talk of his happy yet discreet character, one that always allowed him to put the people he photographed at their ease. This particularity marked him out from his early "intuitive apprenticeship" when he worked as a cashier for the Boutique Photo Service in Bamako, the owner of which was the photographer Gérard Giullat². Downplaying

¹ Public interview with Malick Sidibé on the occasion of his show at the Galeria Oliva Arauno, Madrid, 2009.

situations in order to have an empathic relationship with the specific moment always allowed him to let others lower their defences, though without leaving them at his mercy. His was always a kind of portraiture that established the basis for a radical discussion about individual identity in relation to that of society, and vice versa.

From the beginning of the 1960s, when Mali became independent and no longer called itself Sudan, he began to create "memories to be shown" for many generations of young people in Bamako, the capital, and not only there. At first he did so with images that testified to the moments of social relationships of the first generations to experience their new freedom and the new possibilities for the future. Later on, from 1970, he did so with portraits produced only in his studio, where he made available backcloths and modern objects, such as a motorbike or a radio, for the representation of an identity "in step with the times". And so his portraits became "sets" without ever becoming grotesque or fake. It was this very delicacy in knowing how to capture the "essence of the meeting" that allowed him to produce infinite images, each of which with its own intensity. Their strength lay in suggesting the history behind each person, evoking at the same time the community they belonged to, the nation, and the continent. If when speaking about his work we must use the word dematerialisation, we must do so keeping in mind that he managed to undercut the role of a judgmental or assertive photographer, even while being outside the spotlight and debates about the Western photography and art system. At the same time he dematerialised the identity of the subject portrayed by playing with the tensions between appearance and being.

Photography today – in the globalised world of 2016 consisting, not of images, but rather of digital

² In 1955, while frequenting the school of art and decoration in Bamako, he was given the task of decorating the rooms of Gérard Guillat's studio. It was then that he began his photographic apprenticeship. In 1962 he opened the Malick Studio in Bamako. In 1952, on the orders of the colonial governor, he went to the prestigious École des Artisans Soudanais, now the Institut National des Arts.

algorithms – does not exist in the moment it is shot, but when it is shared on the network³. This is neither a cause nor an effect but, instead, a symptom – together with the word “selfie” that has existed in English since 2013 – of today’s need to create an instantaneous image more for declaring one’s presence in the world than for opening a dialogue with “the other”. Malick Sidibé’s photographic prints remind us of the responsibility the eye has in producing a photographic object as a permit for the future and a witness to the past⁴. However, all the images as a series conserved in his archive also raise fundamental questions about the essence of Western models, post-colonialism, the globalisation of habits, and the concept of the exotic. In order to analyse the quality of his art, or rather to contextualise it from the right point of view, there are various aspects to be dealt with: the question of an ethnographic analysis of his photos, of being a pioneer of street photography even without having left Mali, the use of the studio as a wonderland, and his archive that becomes a tool for investigating time and not only what is visible.

The first aspect regards the need to separate Sidibé’s research from an analysis undertaken according to the theory of the “noble savage” or to that of an international professional. This double impulse is what Edward Said⁵ defined as the heredity of colonialism and its condemnation, given that it continues to create a sharp opposition between the inside and the outside. It is only this point of view that explains that for the world Malick Sidibé’s birth, in an artistic sense, happened in 1994, in other words when he began to participate in shows in Western institutions. This began in Paris and he entered the system after having been “discovered” by critics at the first edition of *Rencontres de Bamako*⁶. But for the African community and for the history of African

photography, his was a well-known figure from the 1960s. This paradox, however, does not just refer to him but to judgments about Africa in general. In fact, on the occasion of a conference⁷ in Spain, in the Galería Oliva Arauna, he pointed out, “I am pleased that people are also discovering that Mali was a civilised country in the 1960s. There are people who mischievously returned to Europe full of images a poor women and children suggesting that they represented the only situation in Africa. The fact is that Africa is very large and has many faces”. He continued, “Many people (before seeing my images) thought that we were all naked. I remember that once they came to collect me at the airport in Moscow and asked me if I were dressed”. What is important to notice in Sidibé’s style of photography and his statements is that throughout his career he was never cowed by Western culture.

The second aspect regards the photographs he took early in his career, after 1960, using portable photographic equipment in order to record the great social changes brought about by the independence of Mali. He did not capture⁸ the images of the coup d’état, or military and political actions but, rather, he “dialogued” with local youths who, for the first time, had discovered a new way of socialising: rock ‘n’ roll. A new night life was born of bars, parties, and possibilities for meeting girls, and it was there that he captured the *joie de vivre* in innumerable photos of youngsters embracing girls, dancing madly or “posing”. However, he did not follow “happy boys” for journalistic ends but in order to capture in those moments of celebration the desires of a post-colonial generation and their wish for a new future. This was partly determined by the fact that the recipients of those photos were the youngsters themselves. And so, in a photograph dating from 1963, a smiling couple

³ From a conversation with Lorenzo Bruni and the Italian artist and photographer Franco Vaccari on the occasion of his show *Col tempo* at Base/Progetti per l’arte, Florence 2014.

⁴ Cf. Krauss, Rosalind, *Le Photographique: pour une Théorie des Écarts*. It. trans. *Teoria e storia della fotografia* (1990), Bruno Mondadori, Milan 2010.

⁵ Cf. Said, Edward, *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), It. trans. *Cultura e imperialismo*. Letteratura e consenso nel progetto coloniale dell’Occidente, Gambaretti, Rome 1998.

⁶ *Rencontres de Bamako* is a biannual event financed by the ministry for exhibiting African photographers in various venues in the city and to promote their work. The first edition was in 1994 when there were also exhibited photographs by Malick Sidibé and his colleague Seydo Keita, who was about ten years older than him.

⁷ Public interview with Malick Sidibé on the occasion of his award at the 2009 edition of *Photo España*.

⁸ Although Malick Sidibé had photographed these moments, he never wanted to let them be seen as they had nothing to do with what he considered photography to be but were news reportages.

looks at the lens and, due to the framing, their Western clothes are highlighted⁹, as is also, with regard to the woman, her bare-footed relaxation. This is part of the 1963 series *Nuit de Noël* (Happy Club) (Christmas Eve, Happy Club), while in another from the series *Soirée des Ariostos*, Bamako, 1963, three fashionably-dressed young men heroically walk in the night towards the lens as though they were the protagonists of an advert, were it not for the spontaneous epiphany that dominates the scene and for its being both classical and casual at the same time. This same force is present in the photo of a group “captured” before leaving or entering the Ariostos bar, in which a girl is between two boys while a third crouches at her feet. In another image, the people change and the composition is inverted in order to show a young man, with a smiling face and a loosened tie, at the centre of three girls. This very repeated composition reminds us that his photographs are always a mixture of the subjects’ total freedom and his own control in order to permit them to express themselves better. The idea of “candid shots”, even though following hypnotic compositional rules, is reinforced and permitted by the technical expedient of the flashlight. This very source of instantaneous light – which allowed him to be the only one to make those photos in those places and at those times – gave an alienated aspect to those hit by it. He purposely set off the flashlight to disturb and lay bare a situation, highlighting the sweaty forehead of the subjects while the black of the night became an almost physical presence around them.

The great quantity/quality of the images Sidibé managed to capture and develop in those situations was made possible by two structural reasons. The first regards the technical factor, that of the type of compact and light cameras, the 35 millimetres and 6 x 6, that allowed him to work outside the studio¹⁰. With the use

of his bicycle, each night he was able to visit up to five events and places and then return to his studio to develop the negatives immediately so that his clients could come by the following day and buy them. The second regards the aesthetic aspect, that is the way he always managed to impress a specific “rhythm” to his “meeting” with the subjects, and vice versa. This was only possible due to the empathy he created with the “characters” he met and with whom entered a “dialoguing” situation. An observation of his images allows us to see, not only an evolving community, but also, and at the same time, an evolution of the photographic means and the way in which Sidibé used it. For him the idea of an instantaneous shot was always mixed with thoughts about who was looking and who was being looked at, and this was not only about that precise moment. This was the revolution in the photographers’ role that in America was taking place at the same time due to such extraordinary figures as Garry Winogrand and William Kline.

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In 1966 Sidibé was already a well-known photographer, and not only in Bamako but in all the nearby towns and the whole region. In the photos of that period he represented the various aspects of collective rituals: images of weddings, of newly born children, groups of school children, sports events, and trips to the seaside. The ones on show at 66|16 in Bologna, such as *Mariage Chambre Blanche*, refer to this specific aspect of his output. Sidibé managed to capture his subjects’ micro-expressions and to amplify them in order to evoke a particular “atmosphere” that not only reproduces what we see but the stories that we can imagine. Furthermore, what is striking about these images is their status as objects for memories. In fact, the way they are “packaged” is extraordinary in its simplicity: the print is placed between a sheet of glass and a piece of cardboard held together by

⁹ From the 1980s Sidibé had further and deeper thoughts about having used in the past traditional habits that were being recuperated by his own generation in that period.

¹⁰ As Sidibé has said, “At the time I was a young intellectual photographer with a small camera. And so I was in great demand by local youngsters. Everywhere...! Each time there was a dance, I was invited”. In: a video interview recorded by Jerome Sother in Rouen in 2008.

adhesive tape. First, though, the glass had been decorated with elements similar to those used inside cabins, something that Sidibé knew very well because they were a link to his childhood, as well as having studied and made them during his studies at art school. However, this coloured frame does not only have an aesthetic function, but also a semantic one. On the one hand it introduces the element of colour on the frame that acts as a mediator between the black and white image, the setting of the home where it would be kept, and the intense light of Africa. On the other hand, it highlights the fact that before photographic cameras, only the rich and powerful could aspire to immortality by having their face portrayed thanks to painting. Sidibé celebrated the fact that now everybody could permit themselves such a possibility, besides evoking the cultural roots of the community in which their images were produced.

The third important aspect for contextualising Sidibé's work is to observe the dynamics that he established with photography and his subjects when his work, at the beginning of the 1970s, was exclusively undertaken in his studio¹¹. The studio was known everywhere and people arrived from all parts to be photographed. This was one of the first places to install electricity, making it into a meeting place; above all it allowed the use of a system of "diffused" lighting that allowed soft shadows. The studio was full of modern objects that the sitters could use as they liked, besides a backdrop made from striped material together with others that could be used at the occasion required: white or painted with "popular" landscapes. This availability, however, should not be interpreted only as scenery, but as the putting on display of the "elements of desire". For him, to take a photo of a youngster sitting on a motorbike that did not belong to him did not mean the creation of a fake identity

¹¹ From that moment on he was no longer to take photos "in the street", outside his studio, apart from a particular occasion on 20 January 2009 when he captured images in the streets of Bamako for the celebrations for the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States. In: Serani, Laura, *Tradizione e arte del ritratto in Africa dalla Gold Coast a Bamako*, La Vie en Rose, Silvana Editoriale, 2010. Published on the occasion of her project about Malick Sidibé in the Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia.

but, above all, to make the subject's desires become overt. He managed to obtain these results through his rigorous yet informal and spontaneous composition which allowed the subject not to seem mummified¹². The knowing dialogue between "global" and "local" that Sidibé shared with his subjects was to arrive at a paradox in the photos he made in 2010 in his studio with local people dressed in the new collections by important fashion designers. The spontaneity and vitality of the ordinary and diversity – in this case diversity was the West – won him the first prize in the World Press Photo Contest in that year.

The final aspect for contextualising Sidibé's work is to be found in his archive. He always called himself a collector of things and thoughts. From all of his most recent interviews there emerged his great capacity to remember and give a voice to the stories behind all the people in his images, generation after generation. They are all to be found archived in coloured files, divided by year, on which are short but explicative notes written in pencil. The scenes follow one after another, the faces alter, the attitudes and body language change. "My photographs are a form of tourism because when I look at them it is as though I have visited the whole of Mali." If we subject his archive to this point of view, then it is transformed into a representation of time in the dialogue between the various stories. His archive allows us to touch what Malick Sidibé always tried to capture in his images: the future or, rather, his wish for a future that could accommodate all the people he portrayed. Now it is also important to remind ourselves that we are looking at those photos "from" the future. "One of my favourite photographs is of a very elegant boy dancing with the daughter of the first president of Mali. Today this woman is a Muslim and wears a veil. If she were to see this photo she would undoubtedly say: this isn't me."¹³

In 2016 Malick Sidibé was working on a project

¹² Cf. Barthes, Roland, *La chambre claire : note sur la photographie*, It. trad. *La camera chiara. Nota sulla fotografia* (1980), Rinaudi, Turin 2003.

to create a story through images, starting from the very photos in the files of his archive. The idea was to tackle a concrete journey through personal and collective memory, something quite different from surfing the Internet. Sadly Sidibé died shortly before the publication of this 66|16 book and before he could present the work he had completed this year. However, as he stated in a 2010 interview with Laura Incadorna, "I do not believe it has any sense to look too much at the past. What is important is to know where you come from, but equally important is to progress, to go forward. And this power is in the hands of the younger generation"¹⁴.

¹³ Public interview with Malick Sidibé on the occasion of his award at the 2009 edition of Photo España.

¹⁴ In: Incadorna, Laura, Una storia. Conversazione con Malick Sidibé. La Vie en Rose, Silvana Editoriale, 2010. Published on the occasion of her project about Malick Sidibé in the Collezione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia.



Malick Sidibé, *Surprise partie*, 1964-2004, gelatin silver print, 23,5 x 22,2 cm (image size), 45,7 x 44,7 x 3,8 cm (framed).
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Malick Sidibé, *Regardez Moi*, 1962/2008, gelatin silver print, 42,5 x 42,5 cm unframed, 68,3 x 67,9 x 3,8 cm framed.
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Malick Sidibé, *Dansez le Twist*, 1965/2008, silver gelatin print, 42,8 x 42,8 cm image size, 60,9 x 50,2 cm paper size, 70,2 x 70,2 x 3,8 cm framed.
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Malick Sidibé, *Le technicien de Radio Mali*, 1966-2008 gelatin silver print, 52,7 x 35,5 cm (image size), 60,6 x 50,5 cm (paper size), 72,7 x 62,5 x 4,1 cm (framed).
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Malick Sidibé, *Des Chaussures Pour Aller Danser*, 1963/2008, silver gelatin print, 36,5 x 35,2 cm image size, 58,4 x 57,5 x 3,8 cm framed.
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

Malick Sidibé, *Taximan avec Voiture*, 1970-2008, gelatin silver print 53 x 35,8 cm (image size) 77,5 x 60,6 x 3,8 cm (framed).
Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

p. 123 | Malick Sidibé, *Self-portrait*, 1956. Vintage silver gelatin print, glass, paint, cardboard, tape, and string 40 x 30,5 x 0,6 cm; 56,8 x 48 x 3,8 cm (signed and dated on original glass frame on verso).
Courtesy the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York. Collection The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

April 15, 2016

In memory of Malick Sidibé who died in Bamako on 14 April 2016

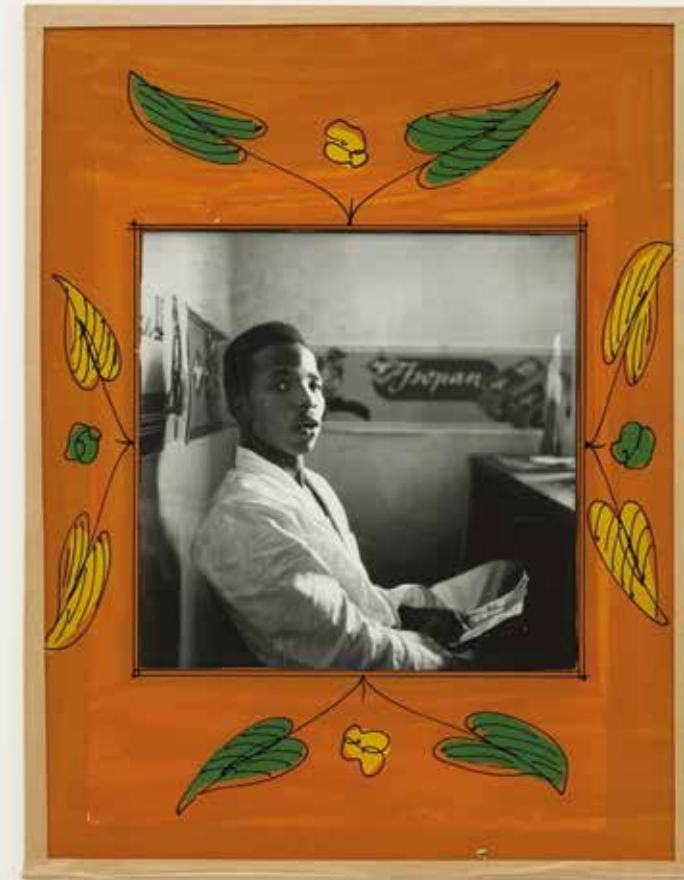
Malick's passing brings great sadness and his absence from the art world will surely be felt widely. Personally, he was a humble, kind man with a warm heart and I am honored to have worked with him.

I have many fond memories of Claude and I visiting his studio in Mali; he was very gracious and welcomed us into his practice. He introduced us to many of the sitters in Vue de dos, as well as family, friends and neighbors. It was clear he was revered and respected by all.

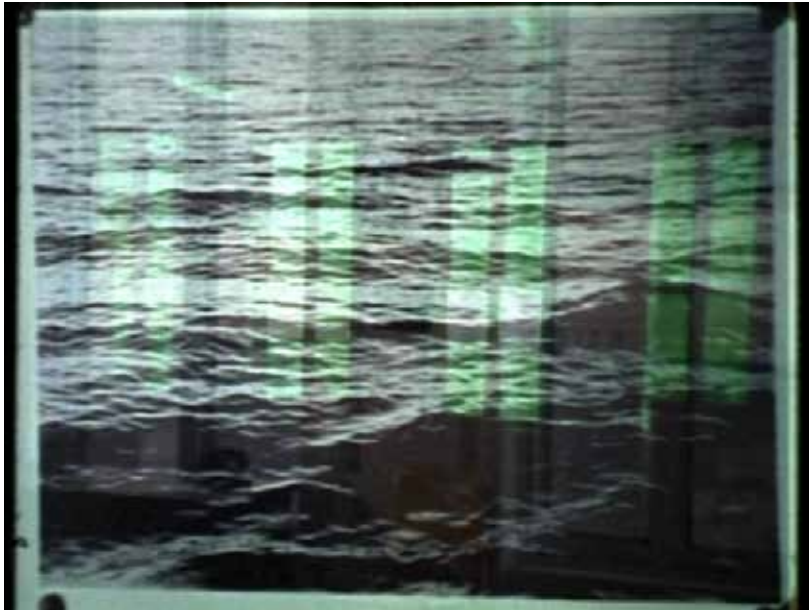
I am proud to say his creative influence continues, with contemporary artists and musicians across pop culture still drawing inspiration from his iconic photographs, decades after he began his groundbreaking career. Malick's dynamic celebration of life lives on in these joyful images.

The gallery will do our best to continue his outstanding legacy through our exhibition and ongoing advocacy of his tremendous body of work.

Jack Shainman Gallery, New York







Michael Snow is an artist fundamental for his researches into images in movement. His particularity, though, is to propose a visual and semantic context for verifying how much the presence of the spectators and of new technologies for reproduction of reality influence the enjoyment of a work of art. For this reason he has tested various media: from sound to the creation of sculptures, photographic prints on various kinds of support, performances, monochrome pictures, and his famous experimental films. In this way his works have always allowed him to measure/expand the space represented and to concretise time, both for experiencing it and for its production. For this reason Snow's development has always been marked by the interdisciplinary¹ actions between the art languages he has used to undertake radical thinking about the nature of the tools he uses, but also about the viewers' perceptive procedures. This is an aspect that was already present when, at the end of the 1950s, he tackled abstract painting, creating monochromes the painterly material of which testified to the process of its application. The stratification and immanence of this was amplified in relation to areas without colour at the edge of the canvas, where he had applied adhesive tape which he then removed. Snow arrived at these solutions for deconstructing the painting in the same period as Robert Ryman and Agnes Martin, even if for him what was more important was the relationship with time and an immediate contact with the perception of reality. For this reason he began to let images appear – syntheses of the physical world – together with their introduction into the three-dimensional world.

The sculpture *Shunt*, 1959, with geometrical forms in painted wood expanding over the wall and onto the floor, was the first experiment in which sculpture and painting interacted. The following year he realised

¹ He created his first abstract paintings after having studied at the Ontario College of Art and Design and having begun to work for an animation firm, as well as studying to be a jazz musician.

Window, which consists of a metal frame supported at its lower edge by a bottle and glass, while other elements, such as a yellow door and fragments of blue metal, are suspended between the struts to create a distant landscape. This image clearly refers to the rules of Renaissance perspective, but only in order to refute it and place at the centre of attention the surface that separates/connects illusory space and real space. It was with this in mind that, in 1961, he began his well-known series *Walking Woman* – which was to be completed in 1967 – in which a moving human figure is stylised into the silhouette of a woman. For six years he was to use this “module” as a painted surface on monochrome supports, later breaking down the form and visualising it with differently coloured patterns, successively as a “positive” detached from the picture², like a profile/sculpture from which to observe and frame the world, and finally also dealing with the idea of public sculpture for the 1967 Expo in Montreal. All these cases of creative possibilities have in common testing the viewers’ cognitive capacities and measuring their point of view with respect to the observed object, without ever submitting to Pop aspects or to the European painting tradition, even though we are dealing with works that are a part of this kind of debate.

In 1962 he moved to New York³ and his development, linked to his interest in simultaneous movement in painting and sculpture, was enriched with further stimuli. In fact, in 1964 he made his experimental film *New York Eye and Ear Control* in which the silhouette of *Walking Woman* – an outlined positive painted in black – inhabits the street scenes and shares actions with real people until – a cut-out from *Walking Woman* – it collides with and meets a real woman. What is striking about this film is not just the radical experiments with a dialogue between

realistic films and animated ones, but also the introduction of sound as a key to the development of the narrative. In this case Michael Snow, who was originally a professional jazz musician, made use of a soundtrack composed during an improvisation session expressly undertaken by the great free-jazz musician Albert Ayler, together with Don Chery and Sonny Murray. This experiment was the opposite to what the father of Pop Art, Andy Warhol, had done with his film *Empire*, a fixed and prolonged vision of a skyscraper without any sound. Snow’s way of working brought him to the attention of the New York art scene, allowing him to come into contact with such experimental film directors as Jonas Mekas⁴ (who was also director of photography for Warhol’s film) or the legendary Ken Jacobs (who was to lend Snow his film camera for his next film), and Hollis Frampton.

1966 was a decisive year for Snow. In fact he was involved with the film *Wavelength* which was considered a masterpiece from the time it was released the following year. The film lasts 45 minutes and is based on the tracking of the film camera from the gallery of a room towards the wall in front, with its two windows, until it frames a photographic image of sea waves hanging between the two windows. In the time taken to make the cinematographic eye coincide with the two-dimensional surface of the photograph, only minimal actions occurred. Two people enter with a shelf; a woman closes a window, and the room is filled with the Beatles’ song *Strawberry Fields* – recorded in those months – being played in the street, which reminds us that “nothing is real”. From this point on there begin moments in which filters of monochrome colour alter the perception of our vision of the room, reminding us that we are dealing with an abstraction, while the sound, which increasingly becomes a monotone, marks the various

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² *Venus Simultaneous* is a painted and shaped wooden panel in which some silhouettes from *Walking Women* are reproduced in various ways until one alone is suspended from the support.

³ The generation and reception of sound in the widest sense was, in those years, one of his main preoccupations and he expressed it through performances and audio pieces that can be compared, for their quality, to such contemporary experiments as those by the composer Steve Reich. In the same period, Snow opened a dialogue with artists such as Yvonne Rainer, Philip Glass, Sol LeWitt, and Richard Foreman.

⁴ Jonas Mekas was to organise, at the Anthology Film Archive, group screenings with Snow, Robert Smithson, Carl Andre and others to create a genuine artists’ association that was soon to contribute to the revolution of American Art.

⁵ In: Wees, William C., *Light Moving in Time. Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-Garde Film*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford 1992.

interferences and the restriction of the field of vision. Later a man – the director Ken Jacobs – enters, dies, and falls on the floor while the film camera, that has been following him, goes beyond the body. Then, once more, the space is invaded by a woman: she speaks on the phone and explains that a man is dead. She too disappears from the visual field as a result of its continuous restriction which, at last, coincides with the image of the waves on the wall and blurs it. As William Wees says in his book about avant-garde cinema, *Light Moving in Time*, “The richest visual experience provided by Snow’s films comes from his manipulation of the “machine-ness” of cinema. [...] In *Wavelength* the mechanical eye of the zoom lens creates a perceptual experience that cannot be duplicated by the human eye”⁵. The film *Wavelength* was greeted with great enthusiasm by the critics who saw in it another example of structuralist cinema, which had been defined by Paul Adams Sitney as a cinema for the mind rather than for the eye. In this particular case, Michael Snow undertook a dematerialization, not of the art object⁶, but of Hollywood products aimed at the general public. He subjected the film story to an intellectual analysis in order to reveal the mechanisms for seeing. He created a narrative on the cusp of meditative experience and epistemological inquiry; but above all he shifted the question from the history of fiction to the processual question of how technical tools have made possible the mediation/alteration of reality, and thus of the reproduction of time and sound, making these become the subject. In fact, as the critic Amos Vogel has written, “*Wavelength* ranks among those films which force viewers, regardless of how they react, to carefully consider the essence of the medium and, just as unavoidably, reality”⁷. While Annette Michelson pinpointed Snow’s particularity in his insistence on the

primacy of vision and the correlated emphasis on the primacy of light⁸.

In other works by Snow, this aim and the techniques that he manipulated were further developed. In 1967 he created his sculpture *Scope* which consists of a metal structure that puts its two openings into visual communication through the phenomenon of reflecting corners, despite the fact that they are at an angle of 90° with respect to the central body. In this case, the mechanism of vision is literally staged and anticipates strategies different to the corridors that Bruce Nauman was to use in the 1970s for testing the observer’s physical and psychological presence, but it also supplies minimalist structures with a new dynamic dimension, so making his sculptures tools for “performing”. With the work *Blind*, 1968, this approach was taken to another level to create an accessible architecture where four frames contain the same number of metal textures. These “sketches in the air” are placed in front of each other – progressively revealing a closer weave – than can be crossed by the public to enter into the work’s space, or else they can be observed from a distance to convey the effect of restricting the visual field that is obtained by a zoom lens, even though transposed into the language of sculpture.

Snow’s researches into integrating sculpture, music, and film are all linked to revealing the secrets behind the technical and conceptual manifestations of the image. With *Authorization*, 1969, - a mirror that becomes the subject of Polaroid photos⁹ that progressively occupy the surface in order to be re-photographed – he presents the photographic gesture but also the public’s intrusion which, while observing the finished work, sees itself reflected in it¹⁰. While with *Sink*, 1970, - a series of images of a sink dirtied with the colours from used paintbrushes and projected onto

⁸ In: Michelson, Annette, *About Snow*, October n.8, (spring 1979), pp. 111-125.

⁹ Michael Snow has already begun to use a Polaroid camera in 1962.

¹⁰ Dating from the same year, 1966, is the video <-> (*Back and Forth*). This was an exploration in the university hall in New Jersey, with a specially modified film camera, to capture almost accidentally the activities taking place inside the room, such as one student reading, two boys fighting, a caretaker cleaning up, and an inauguration including Snow and such other artists as Allan Kaprow and Max Neuhaus. Snow said at the time, “If *Wavelength* is metaphysics, and *Eye and Ear Control* is philosophy, <-> would be physics”.

⁶ This was a common practice at the time, as is mentioned in the book by Lippard, Lucy, R., *Six Years [...]*, op. cit. 1973, re-published 2001.

⁷ Ulrich, Gregor, *Geschichte des Films ab 1960*, Bd. 4, Reinbek 1983.

the wall next to the photographic print of the subject in question – alludes to the traditional tool of art, now in repose. In both cases, what is concretised by the artist is the time of reproduction and mediation, not only of reality, but of the art concept, by going beyond the simple staging of a simulacrum¹¹. This kind of inquiry into the relationship between the referent and its mediation, led him to expand the concept of cinematic representation of the landscape and the involvement of the spectators. And he did so by creating a special machine that put the film camera into perpetual and rotating motion allowing him to make the film called *La Région Centrale*, 1971. The series of images presents a continuously flowing landscape, as though the viewers were to find themselves in it without gravity. Later on he was to exhibit the machine as a moving sculpture that shot the architectural container in which it was found, together with the spectators, and that transmitted the images in real time to four monitors placed near to it. With these works, Snow laid out the situations in which the artist and the viewers found themselves on the same side to question themselves about what the role of an art work is in the age of technical reproducibility¹².

During the 1970s and the 1980s, Snow investigated in different ways the moment in which the real object was translated into an image and the effects that this led to. He undertook this inquiry with his film *Breakfast (Table Top Dolly)*, 1976, - in which the film camera nears a table and then goes further to compress everything against the wall – or with the painting *The Squerr (Ch'art)*, 1978, in which a grid of red lines is painted on the canvas with distortions as though it had been deformed because it was being looked at through a lens. This abstract/figurative approach led him to experiment with his public sculpture *Flight Stop*, 1979, - fibreglass geese hung in the central

corridor of a mall that, seen from a distance, seem to be an abstract drawing in the air -, with *Trinities, Triads, Trios (Waltz)*, 1986, - an installation in which abstract forms, video, and holograms coexist -, or the film *Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) by Wilma Schoen*¹³, 1988, to the large-scale sculpture *The Audience*, 1989, on the facade of the Toronto stadium that creates both an ironical tribute to and an anthropological criticism of the sports public.

During the 1990s the evolution of entertainment techniques and new global events led him to create, in 1990, his video *See You Later, Au Revoir* – an action lasting just a few seconds of a man leaving a room and which is slowed down to last over fifteen minutes -, in 2002 his video *The Solar Breath* – where the curtain of a window moved by the wind reveals for a moment the landscape outside. Dating from the same year are *Powers of Two* – the photograph of a nude woman on a bed who embraces a man while smiling at the viewers, printed on four large transparent panels and placed at the centre of the room hosting the work, thus including the viewers in the composition -, and the video *Corpus Callosum* in which the use of a wide range of the special effects available at the time created a tableau for transformation, a tragicomedy of cinematic variables, but also a reflection on the perception of pictorial and musical phenomena¹⁴. With these researches he proposes a concept of spectacularization that is non-rhetorical and generalised but linked to the epiphany of a minimal event that can, at the same time, be alienating.

With the 2000s Snow has concentrated on the study of what is implicated by the passage from an analogical system to a digital one and to the spread of screen touching. In 2003 this led him to make a new version of his famous 1966 film *Wavelength*, reducing it by 45 minutes to a few minutes simply

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¹³This is an extraordinary work in which the sound part consists of voices – including such exponents of the avant-garde as Nam June Paik, Joyce Wieland, Chantal Akerman, Jonas Mekas, Annette Michelson, Amy Taubin, and P. Adams Sitney – discussing various ideas: from criticism to Structuralism, cinematic illusionism, and the “New Talkies” theory. The various episodes are given a rhythm by the rolling of drums that allow the emergence of encyclopaedic satire in a persistent yet delicate way.

¹⁴Michael Snow, *The Collected Works of Michael Snow (Michael Snow Project)*, Paperback, April 29 1994.

¹¹ Cf. various authors, *Guerra virtuale e Guerra reale. Riflessioni sul conflitto del Golfo*, Mimesis, Milan 1993.

¹² Benjamin, Walter, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), It. trans. *L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica*, Einaudi, Turin 1991.

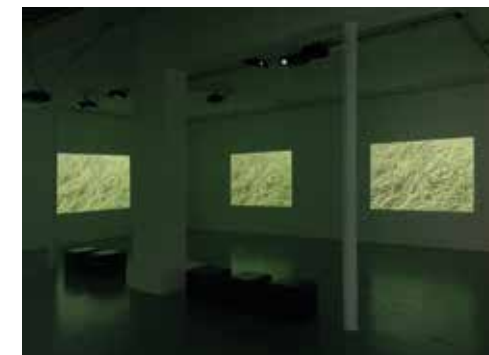
by superimposing and layering the sequences. In the *WVLNT (Wavelength For Those Who Don't Have the Time)* version everything becomes intense because the sound is invasive and the representation of the space of the room gives way to the stratification of colour filters. He made this work to show his famous film in the context of museums or art galleries, and it is this that he presented in the *66/16* show. It is as though with this version he took up once more the researches he had undertaken with monochrome paintings at the beginning of his career, but with obviously different formal and conceptual implications. The video installation *Piano Sculpture*, 2009, - different close-ups of the movement of the hands on the piano while undertaking a musical improvisation - and *The Corner of Braque and Picasso* - in which a road crossing is projected onto minimal cubes that break up the compactness of the surface - pinpoint new relationships between the abstract image and the figurative one, with the aim of creating a new dimension of duality perfectly balanced between pure and narrative images. Snow pushed this research to its extreme consequences with *In the Way*¹⁵, 2012, which was the projection of forms of primary light/colours that slightly move - modelled by the computer to simulate the reaction of the human eye to abstract paintings - seen in the Jack Shainman Gallery, New York.

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The most recent works by Snow have demonstrated his ability to use a transversal section of his media in order to inquire into the tension that the subject experiences between the "here" and "there" produced by the impact of technological change and of globalising information. The work *Video Fields*, 2016, presents a series of videos with a fixed long shot of a springtime glade - at times in flower, at others only with tall grass etc. - shaken by strong gusts of wind. The sound in the exhibition room is that of

the wind, even though it is produced artificially by a special machine. The work, on the one hand, and not without a certain dose of humour, reminds us that the act of representing is made up of a sample of reality that inevitably has a certain amount of artificiality; on the other hand, it sums up all Snow's researches into landscape, in this case concentrating on its vital but invisible element: the wind. Snow, besides having decided to present his latest work at *66/16*, suggested, in order to touch on particular themes linked to the project, showing his 2001 video *Couple*, based on an infinite loop.

¹⁵ As Snow himself says, "the work is an attempt to present only the movements of perception, not perception itself", "the way of looking at art". (Notes accompanying the solo show *In the Way*, Jack Shainman Gallery, 2012).



Michael Snow, *Video Fields*, 2016. Installation consisting of six simultaneous projections with a video monitor and loudspeaker. Installation views at Galerie Martine Aboucaya, Paris 2016. Photos Mylee Carrère. Frame from the video.

pp. 138-139 | Jonathan Monk, *IERI, OGGI, DOMANI, ECCETERA...*, 2016. Special project for the exhibition 66|16. Grey plated metacrilato, 100 x 550 x 6.5 cm (installation, variable dimensions); 40 x 22 cm (each letter). Courtesy the artist.

IERI OGGI DOMANI
ECCETERA ...

CAMERA ENRICO ASTI



Conversation² with Jonathan Monk³

I've been looking into the past for some time now - revisiting or looking into the past to see the future. For me it's always interesting to see how artists change their practice or how they don't. Every case is different – some ideas remain the same and are seen in a different form and some forms remain the same but the ideas are completely different.

I think history is there to be used. Often a lot of works from the recent past are relevant to me. Works that can be re-addressed, re-examined, in order to create something new. I might not necessary use other people's ideas, but maybe other people's visual methods and then hopefully I can twist them to become my work.

It's often clear what is going to happen but sometimes something unexpected comes out. I do not have or feel that I have a specific working method. I just mix different artists to create my own work: every time I hope to come up with a different way of making the same things.

I think it is very difficult to be original. I quite enjoy the misunderstanding of an artwork. Translation is maybe a good way looking at it.

History surrounds us all – maybe in Rome more than anywhere. But the past does tend to control what I do, either directly related to it or not...working with it or against it. I'm interested in thinking about how artists worked when I was a child or before I was born or before my parents were born etc. It clearly has no relationship to me or my own personal history but interesting nonetheless.

I'm still trying to get the name of an Italian collector's mother : she lives in Turin or the daughter lives in Turin. I send one letter every week with one name. I've been doing this for more than seven years, and the work is only complete when I guess the name correctly, so it is a work that can be virtually endless, or could possibly finish with one guess or may never be completed.

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¹ *Ieri, oggi, domani, eccetera...* is the work that Jonathan Monk made specifically for commenting on the *66/16* project. With this particular "statement" he introduced the group show through the means of a very particular invitation, besides transforming the facade of the gallery with the use of transparent gray Plexiglas letters. The *66/16* project consisted of putting, face-to-face, works dating from 1966 and 2016 created by artists of different nationalities and who, halfway through the 1960s, began to work on the dematerialisation of the work of art and who today are tackling the dematerialised reality of globalised communications. Being part of a younger generation and not having experienced that period, Monk has expressed in this way his personal view of the fifty-year distance separating the works selected, his equivalent of the different careers that have resisted, with "dialoguing coherence", the changes of society over time. At the same time he has ascertained the terms with which humanity measures and scans the cyclic nature of time in a

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historical context. He has done this by observing that this cyclic nature cannot be separated from the perception of everyday time or from personal and collective memory. This intuition has suggested both the addition of the word *eccetera...* and the particular layout of the text of the invitation card, as well as of the numbered edition that resulted from it, which do not allow following the different references to time on the same page. In fact, the words are on various faces of a large folded sheet of paper that forces the reader to discover them as individual elements, one after the other. Furthermore, in the case of the edition, the highly personal relationship that the owner will be obliged to establish is emphasised by the fact that he or she can only choose one specific "temporality" from the four to frame, exhibit, and, as a result, on which to concentrate. Which one to choose between *oggi, ieri, domani, eccetera...*? In this way the artist highlights that this is a question of a simple yet complex choice, one with particular psychological shadings. Monk, again for

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66/16, has made another ephemeral/performative work consisting of a series of visiting cards that all those involved with the show should have used as their own for the period of the show. This specific business card had the bearer's name, his or her area of art, and the date of birth. On another line, instead, is the mark of a cross with the rest of the line left white. The card exchanged with other people by the curator or the gallery owner at first caused confusion about who was who, besides revealing at once that this was not a tool for making contacts but a wider reflection about life and its length. How much longer will that artist have for making new works? And the public for looking at them? The new owner of the visiting card, once the artist has "passed on to a better life", can fill it in and complete it by transforming it into a work of art. This "intervention", one that is born and lives in an exchange between people quite independently from the physical place in which it comes about, inquires into the concept of "participative art" which developed pre-

cisely in the 1960s together with "instructions/works". However, in this case we are dealing with potential participation, given that attention has been shifted to particular temporal factors in which waiting, desire, and destiny are inexorably interwoven beneath a halo of apprehension. Furthermore, it raised some interesting questions about two particular points. The first regards the persistence in popular awareness – despite the great revolution made by the art market in the 1990s – of the idea that an artist must be dead before society can evaluate the work and so raise its market value. The second regards the concept of self-determination that is implicated by the fact that the work will become such thanks to a few people who will conserve the card and will remember to use it on the right occasion. In this way the work by Monk reveals itself to be a practical and efficient reflection on how art and life continually interact and how that relationship is inevitable.

² The replies here are part of a conversation between

The work is dispersed in Paris and people don't even know it exists. People are involved in the project but they have no idea what the project might be. I have no idea where the work is – I know it is there but it's impossible to locate.

I was recently in Los Angeles. I went there to meet a collector. The meeting was arranged the moment the collector agreed to purchase the meeting. Nothing more was said and 15 years later I met the collector on a street corner in Hollywood.

John Monk and the writer, Loranzo Bruni, in 2016. It was the artist's decision, due to the nature of the *66/16* project and out of respect for his own kind of contribution, to show only the answers without the interviewer's questions. In this way he makes immediately clear the approach he has used for tackling the reservoir of collective memory of the artistic debate over the past fifty years. His is not a detached kind of judgment made from the outside, but one that also touches on his own actions as an artist over the past twenty years. This is because the subject of his works has always been the perceptive mechanism that the public establishes – or can establish – for the enjoyment of contemporary works of art. For this reason the replies and images supplied by the artist purposely refer to an archive-in-progress. The answers recall in a particular way the most important points of his art, while the images are of some of the works he has made in the past and with which he has dealt with the themes of time, the appropriation of ideas or works of other artists from the recent past, the dialogue of art

with everyday spaces, and the comparison of abstract time with that of personal experience. These are works made for his shows at the Lisson Gallery, London, in 2006 and 2014; *BASE/progetti per l'arte*, Florence, 2007; Yvon Lambert, Paris, 2008; Gent, 2008; Klaipeda, 2013; the British Academy in Rome, 2005; and the ICA, London, 2006.

³ From the beginning of the 1990s, Jonathan Monk has made use of such diverse media as video, film, performance, ready-mades, and photography with which to reflect on the concept of art techniques, the community of reference, dialoguing, and the perception of time. Furthermore, in some cases he has re-appropriated the conceptual art processes and practices of the 1960s in order to meditate on what basis we can today consider to something to be a work of art. However, for him this approach is the means for stimulating a wider debate about the current role and identity of the subject both as an artist and a spectator in the post-ideological epoch in which we find ourselves. In fact, when he re-photographs

For this Lisson Gallery Milan exhibition, I turned my gaze to Graeco-Roman art. Inspired by the Italian setting for the show, I had my own head painstakingly sculpted and cast in Jesmonite polished to resemble marble. Five identical, fractionally larger than life-size busts have been created and each called *Senza Titolo*. With stylized hair and an imperious gaze, they resemble the idealized portrait statuary of ancient Rome. Each bust is placed on a high plinth and stares down at the spectator. The figure of the artist appears exalted but this is not a simple exercise in egoism. In order for the works to be completed, I invited different artists from the *Arte Povera* generation to break my nose. Kounellis, Calzolari, Prini and Zorio all agreed to deface a bust by giving my likeness a good whack with a specially selected hammer and knocking the nose off. Zorio even added a small glob of yellow modeling clay to the broken nose. In this moment of destruction the work comes into existence: a metamorphosis that eliminates the single figure of the artist and echoes the ambiguity of the non- title of each work. Maurizio Cattelan prepared the final sculpture - knocking off my nose and half my face in the process.

Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, as the American artist Ed Ruscha had done decades before, or when he wants to go the seven Badir A Mir lakes, in the middle of the desert to the west of Afghanistan, in order to make an 8mm film of the place where Alighiero Boetti wanted his ashes to be scattered, he is trying to take on at first hand the point of view and the relationship established by those artists with those places, together with his own personal view of experience and of artistic ideas. This is not a formalistic approach and nor is there any sense of melancholy in Monk's attitude, one with which he questions the concept of originality and that leads him to place in the foreground the "process" with respect to art language in itself. And so, when relating his autobiography of everyday to the myths of the history of contemporary art – from Duchamp to So LeWitt, Gilbert and George, Dan Graham, Boetti, and Bruce Nauman – his aim is to annul the temporal distance between those specific works from the past and to make concrete "the moment of enjoyment". With his works the past loses

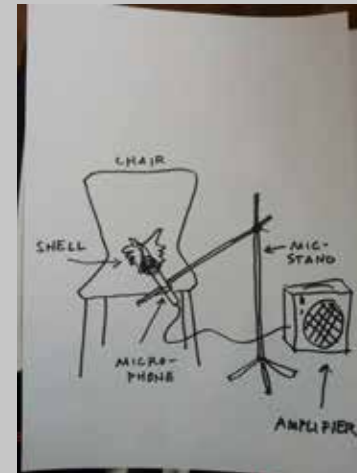
that dimension of linear consequentiality reconstructed a posteriori, in order to become present time, the time of shared experience. In some cases his works activate a new temporality, as with his famous appointments formalised with typographical writing on the wall. In these texts the artist promises or announces an appointment with the collector in the very near future, in a precise place, and at a precise time. It is not a distant future and for this reason he forces the observers to think about the desires and fears that separate them from it. The work is neither the text in itself nor only a conceptual idea, but the provision of an experience between the artist and the collector in which public and private, macro-systems and specific cases find a perfect balance, even if just for a moment... the future then advances.



Boy-Soccer-choir, HISK, Gent, 2008.



The Flated Sculpture II, Lisson Gallery, London, 2009.



Listen for Yourself, KCCC, Klaipeda, 2007/2013.



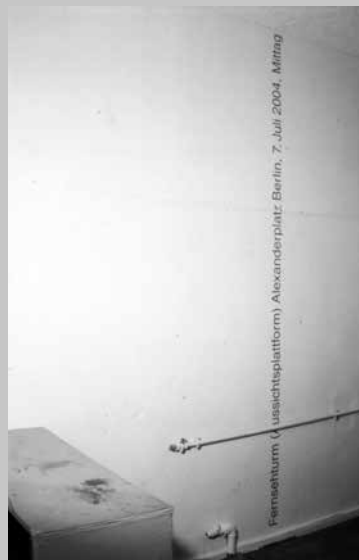
Untitled III, Lisson Gallery, Milano, 2012.



Meeting #, Mount Whitney Restaurant, 2006.



A wax work model of my foot painted to look like my mother's foot, BASE / Progetti per l'Arte, Firenze, 2007.



Meeting # 1012, 2013.



Apples and Pears and Other Fruits of the Forest, Yvon Lambert, Paris, 2008.



Do Not Pay More Than \$60,000, Lisson Gallery, London, 2009.



Incomplete Open Paperclip, installazione, Lisson Gallery, London, 2006.



Jonathan Monk, *IERI, OGGI, DOMANI, ECCETERA...*, 2016. Special project for the exhibition 66|16. Poster. Print on paper, 70 x 100 cm. Edition of forty-five signed and numbered copies, thirty of which in Arabic numerals and fifteen, reserved to the artist, in Roman numerals. Courtesy the artist.

pp. 148-149 | Jonathan Monk, *BUSINESS CARD*, 2016. Special project for the exhibition 66|16. White cardboard, 5 x 9 cm. Courtesy the artist.



Jonathan Monk
Artist

*1969 Leicester, England

†

Naming things makes them exist¹. This heroic and visionary capacity, experimented in the field from Ulysses to Wikipedia, is still one of the basic characteristics of Western culture. What happens after “the appearance of things”, however, is another question and regards the precarious balance that society wove between the name, the object, and its collective function, as well as the renewal of its *raison d’être* in time. We are dealing with the same dynamics as those on which language depends: language is not only an abstract rule handed down from the past but, rather, a tool continuously manipulated day by day². And it is precisely this awareness that seems to have stimulated over the past fifty years the artists involved in the 66|16 project. Their approach allows us to intuit that the heritage of “conceptual practice”, more than in the negation of the physicality of the art object, can be pinpointed in the widening of those of its implications aimed at stimulating an active perception of the work and of the cultural debate in which it is inserted in a dialogical manner. The decision to observe the development of these artists – from the viewpoint of the dematerialization of ideologies and of the global communications in which we are immersed today – does not only correspond to the wonder we feel in front of the

coherence of their art, something which, being based on a precise idea of art, has allowed them to try out various techniques to renew the concept of the medium decade after decade. Rather, the selection is motivated by the need to observe how they have activated a direct dialogue with a changing society, responded to this context, and modified and interpreted it.

Their particularity consists of being the catalysts of energies dialoguing between the “local” and the “global”, not only through their works, their individual gestures, but through meetings, the foundation of groups, and specific projects with which they have contributed to making self-critical the cultural panorama from within the cities in which they have worked. Precisely due to the fact that they were not impelled by an ideological aspect but, above all, by a dialogical need, this approach has not been exhausted – as happened in other cases – by the arrival of the hedonism that characterised much of the art of the 1980s and of Postmodernism. Their involvement has persisted, highlighting the different methods used over various decades for establishing an international network, with a double-fronted approach. From this point of view it becomes clear why the decision was taken to look closely at the careers of Marinus Boezem, Simone Forti, David Medalla, Maurizio Mochetti, Maurizio Nannucci, Malick Sidibé, and Michael Snow. The aim was not to add further subjects to the theme of the dematerialisation of the art object in the 1960s. The 66|16 project has nothing to do with the debate begun in

the first decade of the twenty-first century, one aimed at discovering and re-evaluating historical artists not sufficiently known at an international level, an attitude summed up at its beginning by the 2007 edition of Documenta curated by Roger M. Buerger. In that case, the aim of Buerger, as a scholar and art critic rather than a curator, was to make up for the errors perpetrated by art history, in other words not to have given enough attention to certain artists only because they came from countries not at the centre of strong economic markets or from structured museum systems as, for example, South America or East Europe.

The choice of involving these particular artists for 66|16 – who have no need of being re-evaluated because they are recognised perfectly well – started from the wish, not to rewrite history, but to underline how researches undertaken in geographical areas considered peripheral – according to the Western economic model – were perfectly a part of the international debate³. Furthermore, such researches were aimed at creating a high level of participation in the very community where they lived. In this regard, Marinus Boezem undertook his project Podio del mondo in Middelburg, in the southern Netherlands, with the involvement of other

artists and also expanded the concept of public monuments in relationship to the landscape. Simone Forti, thanks to her projects for shows on the cusp of art and dance in Rome in the 1960s, and through her workshops in America, established a new way of participative action by giving a voice to the role of female artists. Following this same path, David Medalla established exhibition spaces and magazines in London and produced at the same time “instantaneous performances” in Asia and South America for creating a direct confrontation between different cultures. The work of Maurizio Mochetti, instead, allows a particular discussion with new technologies to offer a new dialogue with reality, the public, and industry – from IBM to Philips -, one never undertaken by the Californian artists who, like him, had used light as a material for their work. At the same time Maurizio Nannucci managed to establish a close network of international connections through his many journeys and the channels opened by his work with art multiples, which were to be concentrated later on areas for art established in Florence over various years. And then there is Malick Sidibé who, without ever moving from Mali, sparked off a collective debate about identity within his community, reminding the official art system of the existence of an “enlarged” point of view. And, finally, Michael Snow creates an intense dialogue about the role of the public and raises its expectations both in the sphere of music and that of film; he starts from the internal debate about counter-culture in New

¹ In: De Saussure, Ferdinand, *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), It. Trad. *Corso di linguistica generale*, edited by De Mauro, Tullio, Rome-Bari, Laterza 2009.

² Cf. Goody, Jack, *The Logic of Writing and the Organisation of Society* (1986), It. trad. *La logica della scrittura e l’organizzazione della società*, Einaudi 1988.

³ Despite the fact that there was no Internet support at the time, there exists a wide literature about the global connections between the artists already active in the 1960s. Cf. Richard, Sophie, *Unconcealed, the International Network of Conceptual Artists 1967- 77: Dealers, Exhibitions, and Public Collections*, Ridinghouse, London 2009.

York, and official culture in Toronto, and through them he reflects on the nature of the “events” system in the widest sense. What has led these artists to enlarge their involvement in art, quite apart from the works in themselves, should not be pinpointed in their organisational abilities but, rather, in their inclination to make shareable and doable the discussion about the creative act, the concept of activism, what makes a work of art, and the will to distinguish between the action of seeing and that of taking part in reality.

The idea of structuring dialogues “about” and “in” society has something to do with their need – matured during the 1960s – to shift attention onto direct experience and, therefore, onto the “here” and “now”⁴. Their proactive approach⁵, one that all the works in the preceding chapters have in common, leads these artists to face, on the one hand, thoughts about the “abstraction of ideas” – and so about a critical analysis of the concept of culture in Western tradition – and, on the other hand, about the need to verify and test scientific, anthropological, social, and

political intuitions acquired over the past century in order to form a new “common sense”. For this reason, their work about the present time has led to the involvement of society and the intervention of individual imagination so that the works might produce successive stories and narratives. It is here in this area – between what they are, what they tend to be, and the way in which they are interpreted – that there are to be found their thoughts about the “duration of the time of experience” and the “collective future”, besides establishing an active debate with art history and culture in general.

Over the past decades, instead, they have found themselves investigating, with different technical means, the limits and identity of the surface of the “image subject”, given the heavy impact that globalised digital communications have had on daily life. In this way these artists have aimed at representing intimate gestures that directly insinuate themselves into the mechanisms with which information/images are mediated. If we look at their works from 2016 they appear, in fact, as a precise answer to what is defined as a “post-Internet” society⁶. The question that

lingers around today’s cultural debates, one which regards just how much the action of individuals can influence the transformation of reality, has been deconstructed by them through personal actions aimed at stimulating a collective dialogue that starts from concrete bases. In this way, the artists aim at closing one of the circles opened in the 1960s about the involvement of the public and the changes in society.

The answers given by these artists to this condition of the “expanded present” are exemplified by the web-cam videos by Marinus Boezem about the disappearance of the artist’s signature; by the video performance by Simone Forti where she physically fights the landscape in which she acts; by the performance *The Mondrian Fan Club* by David Medalla and Adam Nankervis and its comparisons with the Italian art of 1500; the visualisation that Maurizio Mochetti created on a wall about the shattering of sound by a model airplane; Malick Sidibé’s idea of working on a new narrative with portraits contained in his own archive; and by the installation by Michael Snow with video images of the wind confronting the artificial sound of wind transmitted through space. These works are guided by self-questioning about what relationships can be created by works, and their enjoyment in the digital and post-ideological age. This is a question that artists like them above all, ones who have had a long career that has gone hand in hand with the evolution of the media, can deal with best. This is not to say that they are more interesting than the younger

generations, only that for the first time, for a physiological fact, their answers can coexist with those of younger artists and as such must be taken into account.

The coexistence with the answers of the younger generations and those of the generation that was young in the 1960s – as has been noted in the previous chapters – is a particular case today, one that has never occurred in other situations in the past. As the historian Gustavo Zagrebelsky notes in his recent book *Senza adulti*⁷, when we think that the next generation has no possible empowerment, everything becomes an action without conflict and without dialogue. Everything seems to have no responsibility towards history. To explore and start from this awareness can be useful precisely as a platform for thinking about the concept of the future, about the concept of collective memory and history. Until now critical theories over the past fifteen years have paid attention to the collapse of historical time by considering this as a loss. This is evident, for example, in the ideas of the theoretician Hal Foster⁸. And yet on the other hand we have seen in this exit of society from history an unexpected opportunity, as the professor of aesthetics

⁴ Benjamin, Walter, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), It. trans. *L’opera d’arte nell’epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica*, Einaudi, Turin 1991.

⁵ This position is an alternative linked to a direct experience different from that pinpointed by Sol LeWitt: “When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.” In: Sol LeWitt, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, “Artforum”, Vol.5, no. 10, Summer 1967, pp. 79-83.

⁶ The term post-internet was widespread as a result of its ambivalence and receptiveness: “[...] it confirms and negates at the same time, exercising a kind of double bond with the preceding period”. Op. cit. In Heidenreich, Stefan, *Freeportism as Style and Ideology: Post-Internet and speculative Realism, Part 1*, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/freeportism-as-style-and-ideology-part-i-post-internet-and-speculative-realism/>. Latest consultation March 2016.

⁷ Gustavo Zagrebelsky, *Senza adulti*, Einaudi op. cit. 2016.

⁸ This vision of the loss of the efficiency of criticism as a result of the relationship with historical time is analysed both in *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (1996), It. trans. *L’avanguardia alla fine del Novecento*, Postmedia Books, Milan 2006, and in the recent *Bad News Days: Art, Criticism, Emergency*, Verso Books, London 2015.

and of media theory Boris Groys⁹ has explained in his books. Both these points of view derive from the idea of living in a “post medium” world, a territory that we can pinpoint at the beginning of the 1990s with “the idea that an image is more real than the real object” – insisted on by Baudrillard until the 2000s – an idea in which “a fragment of information about reality becomes reality”, something frequently repeated by Maurizio Ferraris.

Parallel to the growth of these critical opinions about the perception of reality and the evolution of the tools connected with it, there came about a new practice of art, one consisting of the use by some young artists of all available techniques in order to create site-specific works. In these cases it was not a question of experimenting with techniques, but with using them, not of breaking with the rules and the current system, as had happened in the 1960s, but of accepting the possibility of the “enlarged action” that was being advanced at the time.

In the same period, aesthetic and historical categories began to fail. However, there were already underway critical ideas about how to deal with the concept of the medium quite apart from fascination with “new tools”. The first was that proposed by the American critic Rosalind Krauss with her articles, later collected into the

book *Reinventing the Medium*¹⁰, in which she indicated that innovation in media was not to be found in “new” technology but in the capacity of the artist/viewer to find new possibilities of use and perception in the techniques they had available. For Krauss, Pollock’s approach to painting was the way he renewed a millennial medium – instead of discovering a new one – precisely by proposing a new way of using and perceiving it. This view should not be considered as a postmodernist analysis, because it derived from her study of conceptual researches in the 1960s, which demonstrated for the first time that the visual aspect is not the only dimension of a work. In fact, in this context the artists had begun to inquire into the dynamics that allow the experience of vision and to expand its implications. Another intuition was the one proposed by the Czech philosopher Vilém Flusser who, already at the end of the 1980s, spoke of a society launched towards a “post-capitalist” dimension¹¹ that would not produce objects but tools for exchange and service. As a consequence, this needed a re-evaluation of the critical and perceptive tools of the “product”, also with regard to the concept of property. In fact, while what was implied by possessing an object was clear, far less so was what was meant by possessing an idea. Flusser, in *Towards a*

Philosophy of Photography, intuited that “[...] a photo clearly demonstrates the decline of the concept of property. Power is not possessed by whoever possesses a photo but who generated the information it has”¹². Today, these intuitions of critical methodology aimed at clarifying the field of action of the object observed could shine a new light on art, on its historicising, and on what is meant today by “cultural industry”¹³. The critic Hans Ulrich Obrist in his continuous concern, though his interviews, with the experiences of the 1960s and the following decades, pinpoints the centre of the discussion in this statement: “The answer lies in participation”.

What does participation mean today though? It is from this very perspective that the careers of the artists selected for the 66|16 project were viewed. In fact, these artists have not adopted new technologies but established strategies for creating an activity of involvement and interaction between the work and the world, between form and idea, the subject and the object observed. Michael Snow, for example, undertakes a reflection on the codes of the macrostructure of film and art history in order to reason about time and the process of the work, and about its consumption. These contrasts and paradoxes were useful to them, not for establishing new techniques, but for innovative strategies

for inquiry and for defining the concept of “knowledge”. Their paths are also examples of how not to react to current facts by thinking that everything has been drained into the solitary individualism hypothesised by Marc Augé in his recent book *The War of Dreams: Studies in Ethno Fiction*¹⁴. But not even, however, to propose a search for a new reality, as hypothesised by Alain Badiou in his recent essays collected together in *In Search of the Lost Real*¹⁵.

Art, in fact, reminds us that it is misleading to think that new technologies are responsible for our incapacity to perceive the world as being in a proactive dialogue between the community, the future, and the past. When observing the approaches of the artists selected for 66|16 from the 1960s until today, it becomes evident that the problem is always to be found in society’s incapacity to think about the implications of new technologies and about the consequent reformulation of tools with respect to the context, and not vice versa. Their very approach, developed in the 1960s and that still lives in that of young artists, permits us to recuperate thoughts about the historical past, and also reclaims the idea of a collective future by postulating new practices of interaction with reality, including the reformulation of the concept of generational change and of empowerment with regard to the transmission of sources of knowledge.

⁹ This thought about a dialogue outside historical progression, in line with the configuration of the past century, led him to write *Dream Factory Communism. The Visual Culture of the Stalin Period*, Hatje Cantz Publishers, Ostfildern-Ruit 2003, and more recently *Introduction to Antiphilosophy*, Verso Books, London 2012.

¹⁰ Krauss, Rosalind, *Reinventing the Medium* (1999), It. trans. *Reinventare il medium. Cinque saggi sull’arte d’oggi*, Bruno Mondadori, Milan 2005.

¹¹ Cf. Mason, Paul, *PostCapitalism: A Guide to our Future* (2015), It. trans. *Postcapitalismo, una guida al nostro futuro*, Il Saggiatore, 2016.

¹² Cf. Flusser, Vilém, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (1984), It. trans. *Per una filosofia della fotografia*, Bruno Mondadori 2006, p. 67.

¹³ Cf. Horkheimer, Max, Adorno, Theodor W., *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), It. trans. *Dialettica dell’Illuminismo*, Einaudi, Turin 1997.

¹⁴ Cf. Augé, Marc, *The War of Dreams: Studies in Ethno Fiction* (1997), It. trans. *La Guerra dei sogni. Esercizi di etno-fiction*, Elèuthera, Milan 2011.

¹⁵ Cf. Badiou, Alain, *In Search of the Lost Real* (2015), It. trans. *Alla ricerca del reale perduto*, Mimesis, Milan 2016.

MARINUS BOEZEM

(Leerdam, Netherlands, 1934; lives and works in Middelburg) Marinus Boezem is among the first artists to have introduced in the 60's Conceptual Art in the Netherlands. In 1969 he creates one of his most famous works 'Signing The Sky', a skywriting airplane writes the word 'Boezem' with condensation trails in the cloudy sky above Amsterdam's harbour. Marinus Boezem's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions in many parts of the world. Among the future solo exhibitions are: 'Fundamenta', Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, 2016/2017. Among the most recent solo exhibitions are 'Curtain room 1965/2016', Art Basel Unlimited (2016); Borzo Gallery Amsterdam, Art Basel (2016); 'Boezem & Co - The city as stage/' 'The Stendhal syndrome - In search of an archetypal image of beauty' (with Natasja Boezem), installation Vleeshal, Middelburg (2015); 'Weather drawings', monographic gallery, collection display, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2015); 'The Absence of the Artist', Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam (2014/2015); 'Della Scultura Rustica', Upstream Gallery, Amsterdam (2012); 'A volo d'uccello', Vleeshal, Middelburg (2010); 'La Lumiere Cistercienne', Art Affairs, Amsterdam (2012). Among the most recent group exhibitions we remind '66|16', Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna (2016); 'Expeditie Land Art', Kade, Amersfoort (2015/2016); 'A Line is a line is a Line', Strombeek/ S.M.A.K, Gent (2015); 'Camera XIX', Radioartemobile (RAM), Roma (2014); 'When Attitudes Become Form', Fondazione Prada, Venezia (2013); 'Un Paisaje Holandes', La casa Encendida, Madrid (2012); 'The collection now', Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven (2013 - ongoing); 'Spirits Of Internationalism, 6 European Collections, 1956-1986', MUHKA, Antwerpen, Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven (2012). In the past, Boezem's work has been shown in influential exhibitions as 'When Attitudes Become Form', curated by Harald Szeemann, Kunsthalle, Berna (1969); 'Op Losse Schroeven', curated by Wim Beeren, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1969); 'Between man and matter', Tokyo Biennale', Tokyo (1970). For his 65° anniversary (1999), were simultaneously organized in Netherlands three exhibitions: 'Het vroege werk 1960-1975', Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, where were presented his first works; 'Mental Map', ACHK-De

Paviljoens, Almere, where were presented his works on the landscape; 'Panorama', De Vleeshal, Middelburg, where were presented his new works. Marinus Boezem work is part of important collections, among the most significant acquisitions we remind those by Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn; Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), Chicago; Kyoto Municipal Museum of Fine Arts, Kioto; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.; Royal Institute of British Architects Gallery, London; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo; S.M.A.K. Gent.

SIMONE FORTI

(Firenze, 1935; vive e lavora a Los Angeles) First performed in 1960 at Reuben Gallery in Soho (NY) and, the following year, at Yoko Ono's studio (NY), Simone Forti's 'Dance Constructions has been defined by Postmodern Dance pioneers dancers as Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton, as the work that inspired the foundation of the Judson Dance Theatre. Simone Forti's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions in many parts of the world. Among the most recent solo exhibitions we remind 'Here It Comes', Vleeshal Markt and Vleeshal Zusterstraat, Middelburg (2016); 'On An Iron Post', The Box, Los Angeles (2015); 'Simone Forti: Here It Comes. Works and Collaborations', Index, Stockholm (2015); 'lllllummmnnnatttionnnsssss!!!!', performance (with composer/artist Charlemagne Palestine), Louvre Museum, Paris (2014) and Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York (2014). Among the most recent group exhibitions we remind '66|16', Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna (2016); 'All The Instruments Agree: an exhibition or a concert', Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2015); 'Simone Forti. Thinking with the Body: A Retrospective in Motion', Museum der Moderne, Salzburg (2014); 'Nonfictions: Jeremiah Day/ Simone Forti/Fred Dewey', Santa Monica Museum of Art (SMMOA), Santa Monica (2014); '1961: The Founding of the Expanding Arts group show', Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Reina Sofia Museum), Madrid (2013). In the past, Forti's work has been shown in influential exhibitions as 'Illuminations performance' (with composer/ artist Charlemagne Palestine), Pasadena Art Museum, Pasadena (1971); 'Five Dance Constructions & Some Other Things' where, among others, Forti presented 'Censor'

performance, Yoko Ono loft, New York (1961); 'See Saw' (performed by Robert Morris e Yvonne Rainer), Reuben Gallery, New York (1960). Simone Forti received prestigious awards and recognitions for his work among which the 'Yoko Ono Lennon Courage in the Arts Award' (2011) and the 'John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship' (2005). Forti's work is held in many important collections; one of the most significant is the dance construction 'Censor', acquired by Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, NY. At the artist's specific request, a performance of 'Censor' has taken place weekly from 29.01.2016 to 26.05.2016 at the Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna, during the exhibition 66|16, curated by Lorenzo Bruni.

DAVID MEDALLA

(Manila, Philippine, 1938; lives and works in the world) David Medalla was hailed as a "genius", by French poet Louis Aragon, cofounder of surrealism with André Breton; Marcel Duchamp was inspired by Medalla's work and made for him a "medallic" object; In occasion of a David Medalla solo show at The New Museum of New York, the curator Gary Carrion-Murayari confirmed "Cloud Canyons" No. 14, 1963/2011, as an iconic sculpture in Contemporary Art. David Medalla's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions in many parts of the world. Among his most recent group exhibitions are 'Hepworth Prize for Contemporary British Sculpture', The Hepworth Wakefield, Yorkshire (2016); '66|16', Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna (2016); 'The 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (APT8)', Queensland (2015); 'Unidades y Continuidades', kurimanzutto, Mexico City (2015). Among his most recent solo exhibitions are 'The archive project', Another Vacant Space, Berlin (2016); 'David Medalla Independent Projects', Venus Over Manhattan, New York (2014); 'A Stitch in Time', Another vacant space, Berlin (2013); 'Tuloy Po Kayo, Welcome!', Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City (2012). In the past, Medalla's work has been shown in influential exhibitions as 'Weiss auf Weiss' (1966) and 'Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form' (1969), both curated by Harald Szeemann, Kunsthalle, Berna; Documenta 5, still curated by Szeemann, Kassel (1972); 'Perfotijd' curated by Wink van Kempfen, Theatre de Lantaren, Rotterdam (1984); 'Travels II' curated by

Chris Dercon, Clocktower Gallery, New York (1989); 'The Other Story' curated by Rasheed Araeen, Hayward Gallery, London (1989); 'Art Lifts Berlin' curated by Friedrich Meschede, DAAD Galerie, Berlin (1998); 'Flux attitudes', New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1992); 'L'Informe' curated by Yves-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss, Centre Pompidou, Paris (1996); 'Live/Life' curated by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Musée d'art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1996); 'A Quality of Light', Tate St.Ives, Cornovaglia; 'Out of Actions', Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (1998); 'Transforming the Crown', Haarlem Studio Museum, New York (1998); '2nd Johannesburg Biennale', Sud Africa, (1998); 'Force Fields' curated by Guy Brett, Hayward Gallery, London (2000); 'Micropolitquess' curated by Paul Ardenne, Le Magasin, Grenoble (2000); 'Live in your Head', Whitechapel Gallery, London (2000); 'Century City', Tate Modern, London (2001).

MAURIZIO MOCHETTI

(Rome, 1940; where he lives and works). In 1968 he made his debut on the Roman art scene with his first solo exhibition in Rome at the now historic Galleria "La Salita". Since the beginning his interest shifted towards "physical" light (meant as matter, and carrying no symbolic or mystical meaning), as well as planes, cars and weapons. Maurizio Mochetti's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions in many parts of the world. Among his most recent solo exhibitions are 'Maurizio Mochetti', Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo (2016); 'Maurizio Mochetti', Akira Ikeda Gallery, Berlin (2015); 'Maser e Laser', Galleria Franca Mancini, Pesaro (2015); 'Maurizio Mochetti', Giacomo Guidi Arte Contemporanea, Milan (2014); 'Maurizio Mochetti', Giacomo Guidi Arte Contemporanea, Rome (2013); 'Orizzonte degli eventi', Studio Stefania Miscetti, Rome (2012); 'Divertissement', Oredaria Arti Contemporanea, Rome (2011); 'Elica Infinita', Centro Cultural del Conde Duque, Madrid (2000). Among his most recent group exhibitions are '66|16', Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna (2016); 'Au rendez-vous des amis', Fondazione Palazzo Albizzini Collezione Burri, Città di Castello (2015); 'Light. Luce e Leggerezza', PIOMONTI Arte Contemporanea, Rome (2015); 'Maurizio Mochetti e Donato Piccolo: luce retta, calore freddo, suono visibile', Bibò's Place, Todi (2014);

'Equilibri', Erica Fiorentini Arte Contemporanea, Rome (2014); 'Anni '70. Arte a Roma', Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome (2013); 'Tridimensionale', MAXXI, Rome (2012); 'Da sopra (giù nel fossato)', Castello Svevo, Bari, (2010). Among Mochetti's influential historical exhibitions are Mostra Internazionale d'Arte – La Biennale di Venezia, Venice (1970), (1978), (1982), (1986), (1988), (1998); Paris Biennial, Paris (1970); Sidney Biennial, Sidney (1976); 'Art around '70', Museum of the Philadelphia Civil Center, Philadelphia (1973); 'Ricerca estetica dal 1960 al 1970', X Quadriennale Nazionale d'Arte, Rome (1973), Stadtische Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf (1978).

Mochetti's work is part of important collections, among the most significant acquisitions are those by Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome; Palazzo Ducale di Sassuolo, Modena; Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Rome; Parco di Villa Glori, Rome; Museo Soto, Caracas; Guggenheim NY; Collezione Panza Varese; Collezione Calabresi, Roma; Centro Georges Pompidou, Beaubourg, Parigi.

JONATHAN MONK

(Leicester, UK, 1969; he lives and works in Berlin). Over the past decade Jonathan Monk has built up a body of work with a decidedly linguistic origin, one inspired by the Conceptual Art of the 1960s and 1970s, the sense and meaning of which he "appropriates" in order to redefine them. Among his most recent solo shows, mention should be made of Eye Eye, Dvir Gallery, Tel Aviv (2015); Claymation, Museo Carlo Zauli, Faenza (2015); All the Possible Combinations of Twelve Lights Lighting (One at a Time), MACRO, Rome (2015); Anything by the Smiths, Centre d'Art Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel (2015); I 1984, Lisson Gallery, London (2014); Left Foot, Galerie Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen (2014); The Reader, Taro Nasu Contemporary Art Gallery, Tokyo (2014); All the Possible Combinations of Eight Legs Kicking (One at a Time) I, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2014). His most recent group shows include 66|16, Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna (2016); Vanità/Vanitas, Museo Ettore Fico, Turin (2015); Black Sun, Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2015); Return Journey, Mostyn Gallery, Llandudno, Wales (2014); Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum, New York (2006); and the Venice Biennale, Venice (2003, 2009).

Jonathan Monk has received many prizes and awards

for his work, including the Prix du Quartier des Bains, Geneva (2012). His works are to be found in prestigious international museums and collections, among them Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Collection Lambert, Avignon; Fondazione Morra Greco, Naples; Tate Britain, London; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

MAURIZIO NANNUCCI

(Firenze, 1939; lives and works in Florence and South Baden). In the mid '60s Nannucci began to explore the many interrelations between language, writing and images; 'Alfabetofoneticò', 1967, is his first neon writing work. Maurizio Nannucci's work has been shown in more than three hundred exhibitions in museums and galleries. Among his most recent solo exhibitions are 'Top Hundred', Museo Marino Marini, Florence (2016); 'Where to start from' Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome, (2015); 'Similarities & Differences', Hofstätter Projekte, Wien, (2014); 'No more excuses', Stazione Leopolda, Florence, (2013); 'There is another way of looking..', Musée d'Art Moderne, Saint-Etienne, (2012). Among his most recent group exhibitions are '66|16', Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna, (2016); 'Nero, The independent', Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo (MAXXI), Rome, (2015); 'Function Follows, Vision, Vision Follows Reality', Kunsthalle Wien (2015); 'Kiasma Hits / Kiasma Collections', Kiasma, Helsinki, (2014); 'Books & so', Gagosian Gallery, New York (2013). He participated several times at the Venice Biennale and Documenta in Kassel, and at the biennales of Sao Paulo, Sydney and Istanbul.

Nannucci's work is part of important collections, among which Museion, Bolzano; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; Aros Kunstmuseum, Århus; Muhka, Museum voor Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Maxxi, Rome; Galerie Nationale, Berlin; Mamco, Geneva. Nannucci has executed several public commission, among which Auditorium, Parco della Musica, Rome; Maxxi, Rome; Bibliothek des Deutschen Bundestages, Berlin.

MALICK SIDIBÉ

(Soloba, Mali, 1936 – Bamako, Mali, 2016) Malick Sidibé was the first African artist to receive the 'Golden Lion' for his

career, during the fifty-second Venice Biennale in 2007.

Malick Sidibé's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions in many parts of the world.

Among his most recent solo exhibitions are 'Malick Sidibé', Jack Shainman Gallery, New York (2016), (2014), (2011); 'Malick Sidibé', Agnès b. galerie boutique, New York (2012); 'La vie en rose', Fondazione Maramotti, Reggio Emilia (2010); 'Malick Sidibé et la photographie de mode', Frontières – 8èmes Rencontres de Bamako, Biennale africaine de photographie, Bamako, Mali (2010); 'Les nuits de Bamako', Musée Nicéphore Niepce, Chalon-sur-Saône (2009). Among his most recent group exhibitions we remind '66|16', Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna (2016); 'I am your sister', Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Brussels (2015); 'Conversations: African and African American Artworks in Dialogue', Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington D.C. (2014), 'Modernités plurielles de 1905 à 1970', Musée national d'Art moderne - Centre Pompidou, Paris (2013); 'Everything was Moving: Photography from the 60s and 70s', Barbican Art Gallery, London (2012). In the 60s and 70s Malick Sidibé work focuses mainly on local youth: the photographs are convivial and tell a great complicity between the artist and his subjects. Since the 90s his work is internationally recognized with exhibitions such as 'In/sight: African Photographers, 1940 to the present', Solomon R.Guggenheim Museum, New York (1996).

Malick Sidibé received prestigious awards and recognitions for his work: the 'Golden Lion' for his career, fifty-second Venice Biennale, Venice (2007); The 'Intifinity Award', International Center of Photography, New York (2008); the 'Hasselblad' Prize, Götaplatsen (2003). Sidibé's work is part of important collections, among the most significant acquisitions are those by Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; Getty Museum, California; Brooklyn Museum, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Pennsylvania.

MICHAEL SNOW

(Toronto, 1928; where he lives and works). Snow is one of the world's leading experimental filmmakers, having inspired the 'Structural Film movement' with his ground-breaking film Wavelength (1967). Michael Snow's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions in many parts of the world. A selection

of his most recent solo exhibitions are: 'Video Fields et En Haut', Galerie Martine Aboucaya, Paris (2016); 'Sequences', La Virreina Centre de la imatge, Barcellona (2015); 'Michael Snow: Photo-Centric', Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia (2014); 'Michael Snow: Objects of Vision', Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2012); 'Works of Michael Snow', Akbank Sanat, Istanbul (2012); 'Michael Snow', Vienna Secession, Vienna (2012); 'In the Way', àngels barcelona, Barcellona (2011); 'Solo Snow', Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts contemporains, Tourcoing (2011). Among the most recent group exhibitions are: '66|16', Galleria Enrico Astuni, Bologna (2016); 'Recently acquired projection works', MoMA, NY (2013); 'Videosphere: A New Generation', Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY (2012); '1969', MoMA PS1, NY (2009); The Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, NY (2006). Snow's work in various media is represented in private and public collections worldwide, including the National Gallery of Canada; the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Museum Ludwig, Cologne and Vienna; Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris; Tate, London; both the Musée des Beaux-Arts and Musée d'art contemporain, Montreal.

Michael Snow has executed several public commissions, the best known being Flight Stop at Eaton Centre and The Audience at Skydome (now Rogers Centre), both in Toronto. His 'The Windows Suite' was opened in September 2006 at the Pantages Hotel and Condominium complex on Victoria Street, Toronto, and his 'Les Lumieres' opened on the façade of the Cinémathèque Québécoise in Montreal in September 2013. His latest public commission, 'Lightline', on the exterior of Toronto's Trump Tower, will be launched in 2016.

Michael Snow received prestigious awards and recognitions for his work among which the 'Knokke-le-Zoute' Film Festival, First Prize for 'Wavelength', 1967; 'Guggenheim Fellowship', L.A. Film Critics Award, for 'So Is This', best Independent Experimental Film, (1972); 'Order of Canada', (1982); il 'Gershon Iskowitz Prize', Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2011); 'Chevalier de l'ordre des arts et des lettres' (2011).

