

AGAINST PUBLIC DEATH
Text by *Achille Bonito Oliva*

Through video-tapes, video-games, video-clips, virtual reality and a fast and thrilling synthesis of languages, technology is an involuntary primary school for chronic pre-literates. The so genuine and educated art public becomes instantaneous, indirect, temporary and undetermined. Speediness turns into a contemplation time and meeting places become more and more hidden into everybody's tiny leisure space. We take part to a *steaming death of the art public* turned by many media offers into a target and vector.

For instance internet surfing has been developing an *art anorexia*, a loss of tangible consistence of the art work that seems to deny any sense of nostalgia for the institutional space of the museum that nowadays has been given a new dimension and meaning by Telematics. Technique in its irradiant capillary extension capacity that also involves the domestic environments, has staged a domestic telematic dinner that spoil spectators and turn them into a full terminal of a daily iper-information system of iper-creative production of images. The developing technology as a synthetic drug, has created hybrids able to absorb the most provocative experimentations of avant-garde, now skimmed from any utopia and knowledge virtuality.

Historical avant-garde of the beginning of the century has been through provocation, scandals and jokes a steady attemptation to the contemplative attitude which bends the art work to a conditioning and legitimate thing. Art turns into a subversive system, torture splinters of a growing public out of which art can't survive. Spectator negation process works just as "de-negation", confirmation of a binding and bond group subject, "to be slapped" as poor and anyway to be intercepted and hooked by mass media, fights, ready-made and Kitsch: Marinetti, Duchamp, Breton, Dali.

After the second world war everything changed, the mass public welcome the new avant-garde, New York City takes the place of Paris. Art experiments new techniques and materials through the ready-made tradition and the assumption of the everyday object, allowing a wider range of public to recognize in the art work familiar elements of everyday's life.

Consequently artists from the 50s and 60s learn the concepts of improvisation, rituality and surprise: Kaprow, Cage, Ono, Oldenburg, Klein, Manzoni, Nitsch, Beuys, Vostell, Ben, Chiari, Gilbert & George, Acconci. "Fluxus", "Aktionism", "Happening", "Performance" and "Body Art" involve directly the spectator: a synchronization between production and art consume.

So the art public is asked to stop to play the role of deathly long distance *voyeur* and to turn from a weak *amateur* into a protagonist of the event itself. So creativity becomes ideal and exalting subject till to explode (definitely not rhetorically speaking) into the students' movements of the '68 and '77.

This same public gained an *iperidentity*, a mirror for the deepest cultural longings of a drastic decade: a strong desire to *participate*.

So the public is clearly seen as a mass composed by a mere addition numbers that constantly grow in a self proliferation that amplify the acknowledgement of the art work, the firm social artist's status and the simple spectator's one - seen as a glances collector and as old and modern art purchaser (nowadays identified in both single and corporative patron of the arts).

After Medici's family that in the Renaissance allowed the birth of the Art Public by giving the concession to the citizens of Florence to visit their art collection in Palazzo Vecchio, it will be the

catholic church of the XVII century with its baroque parties to intercept first the mass public (roman and foreign) that will crowd later in the XIX century the *Salon* events in big cities such as Paris.

An interesting exception will be Gustave Courbet especially excluded because of two of his works: on one hand "The origin of the world" is a case of *hidden art*, whose subject has been especially committed and the committing: a first-rate pubis commissioned by a Turkish diplomatic. A painting made for a "selected men" public, a *coup de théâtre* of a sudden opened curtain ready to show "the world origin". On the other hand the painting "Atelier" is the case where a crowded conversation among artists is painted, a coincidence between artists and art public. Clear sign of a new special language that now seems to need an informed public. On the contrary the museum becomes the border place for *the concept of generic beauty*, a sealed sequence of hung "masterpieces", an armoured place enjoyed by an intense contemplative public that show its approval through the wall hanging tradition.

This is the reason why the museum is still the place where the crowd remains still. Gioconda or Guernica, Art always grabs attention, silence and admiration. The public, simply identified as a general crowd, is cooled by the institution itself, the museum, a wonder store of history guaranteed by the permanent collection and that in order to have a contact with the present time, gives more and more importance to any single Event able to document any research of its contemporaneity.

If nowadays Art's duty and especially contemporary one is supposed to massage the atrophied muscle of the collective contemplation and to develop in the public a new way of acknowledgment, then this is the case where the art public death might be avoided and might be created an interactivity between the artist's work and its user.

On the artist's way, he will have many mates such as gallerists and collectors that through the artist's lesson take inspiration and cultivate their mind.

Peppe Morra is for example one of these, in his intellectual adventure he become emancipated from his first state of basic pr and passive art viewer to a self consciousness gained thanks to the specificity of Hermann Nitsch's art works poetry. Here is the consequent birth of this new structure realized by a private project that wants to show to everybody the strength of the contemporary art in order to give power to the anthropological senses of the social structure.

The peculiar structure given to the Museo Archivio Laboratorio Hermann Nitsch doesn't want to turn the public into a simple voyeur, an admired performances viewer. On the contrary it inquires and develops other processes of acknowledgment through the projection of different departments that should give to the museum a interdisciplinary and multi-media identity.

So the public is safe from the traditional and ecstatic taste of the museum, the viewer is offered new methods to be active part of contemporary art world through an interactive experience able to add value to everybody's attitudes thanks to the different linguistic levels of the artwork itself.

Nitsch's artwork becomes the new scale to document the historically innovative importance of the famous Austrian artist and at the same time to underline the Wagnerian inspiration in his work.

Thanks to its departments the museum gains a pedagogical function definitely not scholastic and moreover it underlines the need of new structures able to create different social taste, complex and rich that boards the line of different research fields not only strictly related to Art.

Quite interesting is the location of this private structure with public function in the contest of the city of Napoli that can find in the concept of art an irradiant and prolific field for new social and cultural energies. After all, Fondazione Morra has always been against the idea of a pure entertaining art, so a well-defined tactic and strategy has been planned for this new project. Nitsch's and other artists' events and exhibition terms are part of this tactic while a wider project will invest in the social structure and in the district where the museum is based.

After all the Museo Archivio Laboratorio lives a sort of double dream, a short circuit between Illuminism and Romanticism in order to conceive a new knowledge and conscience of the world and to build a new anthropology through many sensorial levels.