

YEARBOOK 2019/2020

Arts Museology and Curatorship



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LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

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Yearbook is the first collection of AMaC's student projects developed during the first two years of the course. AMaC is a Master's degree in Arts, Museology and Curatorship with a clear mission: to educate and train professionals with creative and research skills essential to developing successful arts and cultural heritage strategies. This broad and demanding field requires an engagement with the current debate on common goods, the identity of communities, access to heritage art, and the impact of the arts on society.

AMaC's *Yearbook* collects only part of the many projects and assignments the students were involved in. For the first year Course, there are assignments for the following classes: Displaying Photography in Art and in Cultural and Creative Industries, The System of Contemporary Art, Exhibition, New Media and Performance Art. For the Second year which has more of hand-on approach the volume collects projects from the following courses: Collections, musées et publics, Mêditation culturelle dans le musées, Museology in the Contemporary Age, Museum Practice in Europe, De l'archive à l'expositions: méthodes, pratiques et narration, Boîte â miracles, Curating the Contemporary. The classes of Early Modern Art, Medieval Art, Modern and Contemporary Art, Survey in History of Architecture, Visual Studies, Arts Law in the Digital Era, Curatorial Practices, Espaces d'expositions: visions culturelles et processus créatifs, Functions and Meanings of Early Modern Art, Conservation of Cultural Heritage: Theories and Practices, Valorisation de l'art médiéval et de la première Renaissance, were equally relevant despite not appearing in the *Yearbook*. In this case, professors adopted a more dialogic teaching methodology, which allowed criticism and direct feedback from the students. We need to acknowledge the relevance of these classes as students were nurtured by what they learned, and such thing is graspable in the references they make.

This multidisciplinary and multimethodological approach is pivotal for AMaC. It invites its students to explore the arts and their stories concerning the ongoing transformations of museums, exhibitions, and the role of curators from an international and intercultural perspective. The visual arts, architecture, urban forms, and cultural organizations are analyzed in relation to contemporary social, political, legislative, technological and environmental transformations. Together with many curators, artists and museum professionals who were involved in lectures and project developments, all AMaC professors have contributed, directly or indirectly, to this publishing project.

We are grateful to the director of the Arts Department, Giacomo Manzoli and to the director of the Visual Arts second-cycle degree program Chiara Tartarini, to collegArti's coordinator Sandra Costa, and Annalisa Carpi's supervision. Special thanks go to the AMaC students.
The Covid-19 pandemic was a tremendous challenge for the students enrolled in 2019 and 2020. Therefore each exhibition project, assignment or review provided an opportunity to further question what the world of art and culture will look like or will need after a hopefully ending of the sanitary emergency. A deep acknowledgment of their

responsibility in building tomorrow's future is the thread in all students' texts and projects. The *Yearbook* itself was primarily promoted by AMaC students, who want to leave a trace of this demanding, troubled, enriching time of our life. Will things still look like this in ten years? We still have no answer; however, students have experienced a 'fast-forward' condition. Looking into the future was not a mere exercise but an existential condition.
We are looking forward to seeing you there.

Anna Rosellini and Clarissa Ricci

COURSE TITLE:

DISPLAYING PHOTOGRAPHY IN ART AND IN CREATIVE & CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

HELD BY:

Federica Muzzarelli

COURSE TIMETABLE:
I year, II semester.

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Between February and April 2020, during the course named *Displaying Photography in Art and in Creative & Cultural Industries*, AMAC's students developed a pathway dedicated to the identity of displaying photography in artistic and cultural exhibitions.

The goal was to experiment a methodology, both historical-theoretical and practical, thanks to which they had to improve their skills by discussing their ideas and curatorial choices with the professor and the class. To do this, we followed different steps.

First, we discussed some famous photographic case stories which took place in international exhibition venues, such as the CNP (Paris), the 291 and the MoMA (New York). This step was useful to stimulate the students to think about the special philosophy of photography when displayed in a public space.

Then, we analysed a particular topic in the history of photography: the automatic photographic portrait, through science, visual art and fashion communication, as displayed in the exhibitions from 19th to 20th century. After this, the class were divided into little groups of maximum three-four members and each group started to define the content of a project. The assignment was to plan the catalogue of a virtual exhibition enhancing the topic of automatic photographic portrait and exploiting the potentiality of displaying photography in visual art, up to its uses in fashion.

Students planned their virtual exhibition and the final catalogue using the ground floor of the cloister of S. Cristina (Department of Arts, University of Bologna) as the precise venue and taking its real map as a guideline. They were invited to consider the whole space, and not only the walls, that is the ceiling, the floor, the columns and the architectural elements as possible surfaces for the exhibition. Moreover, they were stimulated to develop an interdisciplinary approach, involving other languages and technologies as well as photography.

In the catalogue plan, students had to include a critical essay of 3000 words (with explanations about their tasks and quotations from the history and theory of photography), a description of the virtual exhibition display (linking to the cloister of S. Cristina), a selection of pictures visualising the exhibition and then all the typical apparatus of an exhibition catalogue: index, colophon, bibliography, captions.

As for the material and graphic characteristics of the catalogue (dimensions, layout, visual planning...), they could freely decide. Students knew that their project would be evaluated considering the originality of the concept, clarity and precision in writing, good selection of pictures, ability in displaying the concept within a defined space and awareness in using all the traditional apparatus of a catalogue.

Finally, due to the pandemic, students also prepared a presentation of their projects via PPT, sharing the slides all together on a web platform. In the following pages, a recognition of their projects could be appreciated. In order to visualise their projects, they included: a curatorial abstract with five key words, an abstract of the exhibition design, a critical essay, the bibliography, a visual representation with the choice of a picture and the checklist of artworks and artists.

The contents of the students' projects relate to these topics: a reading of human physical characteristics in the context of a society through the mechanism linking photography, fashion and

surveillance; a sort of investigation about the mysterious identity of Martin Margiela and its connection with fashion, photography and art; a discussion about identity and appearance, and especially about the icon's hyper-identity; a reflection on the historical evolution of the portrait genre and the questioning of the female gaze; a perspective on the mechanism of voyeurism and observation mania in the contemporary era, by cataloguing systems such as ID portrait and CCTV; the role and personality of a chief fashion photographer such as Richard Avedon and his interest in the automatic portrait in fashion; a focus on Man Ray's photographic portraiture (in fashion and art) and its connections with other photographers' poetics and fashion brand campaigns.

BEYOND CELEBRITIES

Richard Avedon and the Automatic Portrait on Fashion

AUTHORS:

Erika Dal Bon, Emma Puliti, Elena Righini

FIRST SECTION:
Timeless beauty. The cult of stars.

SECOND SECTION:
Cover girls. The cult of fashion.

THIRD SECTION:
Behind the camera.

CURATORIAL ABSTRACT + 5 KEY WORDS

The automatic portrait as a photographic genre finds its origin in the scientific field and its artistic possibilities were explored only later. In fashion photography, this technique was used as a way to enhance the aesthetic side of a commercial picture. Beyond Celebrities investigates how this portraiture technique in fashion shapes the myth of celebrities, while investigating the sitter's intimate identity.

This emerges from the 35 shots by the acclaimed fashion photographer Richard Avedon presented in the exhibition, which were accurately selected to show the photographer's ability to accentuate the stars' auras, using photography as a tool for expressing their inner human nature.

Richard Avedon's approach investigates identity through the lens of his camera. He is considered, in fact, one of the 20th century's most radical photographers who explored the *genre* of photographic portraiture. Starting from heterogeneous materials - black and white photographs, magazine covers, video clips - the exhibition gives space to powerful forms of expression in Richard Avedon's portraits of celebrities.

The exhibition's concept is the exploration of the potentiality of the automatic portrait of going beyond the cover-girls' cult. The photographs, focusing on the facial expressivity of the portrayed subjects, created a collection of star representations, questioning the nature of their public persona, mixing it with their behind-the-scenes life.

Avedon's success in the creation of iconic portrayals in popular culture and fashion history is widely recognized, but his role as a cataloguer of indivduality is still unexplored. *Beyond Celebrities* aspires to highlight how the automatic portrait allows Avedon to reveal the double nature of stars' personalities: public and private.

5 key words: Richard Avedon, fashion, identity, Covergirls, Celebrities.

ABSTRACT EXHIBITION DESIGN + 5 KEY WORDS

The exhibition is planned to be held in the Santa Cristina Complex, the seat of the University of Bologna's Visual Arts department. Since this site used to be a monastery, it presents both internal and exterior spaces.

The curators have selected the whole complex as the place of the exhibition, deciding to use both the cloister and the rooms on the ground floor. The ticket office is going to be right near the entrance, replacing the university reception. After the entrance, visitors will enter the squared cloister. For the introductory part, curators have decided to use only the covered part of it, which is a colonnade running around the central courtyard.

They have chosen not to display artworks in this open, uncontrolled environment, but to create a visual introduction without original pieces. The path will in fact be enriched by photo-curtains with some of the most famous automatic portraits by Richard Avedon. Walking in the portico to reach the exhibition's entrance, the visitors will see different photo enlargements occupying the space. The photos have a vertical cut in the middle, so that people can walk through them, literally penetrating their identity, and maybe have fun taking photos in the path. The beginning

of the inside exhibition will be placed in the opposite corner of the cloister:

> visitors can choose if they want to go left or right through the curtains. Of course, they can also choose to stay longer in the introductory part or enter the central area of the cloister to admire the whole architectural complex.

The first room is dedicated to Avedon's introductory biography, aimed at providing some background to correctly understand the exhibition.

The display of all sections consists of white panels, respecting the historical environment. The panels are not too close to the walls, being flying panels, and leave space both above and below, always considering the poignancy of the site. In all the sections, the panels are placed differently, to create flying rooms inside of real rooms, so that the visitor is surrounded by Avedon's works when entering them. The first section is placed in the conference room, the biggest of the complex, and it is dedicated to Avedon's automatic portraits. In the second section, containing Avedon's fashion covers, the curators have planned to exhibit them not only in vertical panels, but also in horizontal display cases, to exhibit opened magazines as well. The third section doesn't involve Avedon's photos, since it is dedicated to the screening of the 1973 documentary about the photo shooting for the commercial campaign of the Japanese label Jun Ropè. This not-so-big room will be divided into two by a black curtain, providing an introductory corridor which will facilitate the visitors' access and exit into and from the screening's darkroom.

This area can only host a limited number of people and the access needs to be regulated. The corridor also permits the displaying of materials connected with the movie:

> photos from the shooting and one example of the Rolleiflex, the twin-lens reflex roll-film camera used by Avedon in the video.

The last room of the exhibition is both a bookshop and a space for the final interactive activity. Here, one photo booth will be available. Visitors will be able to take photos of themselves to be published on the Instagram account of the exhibition and projected on the wall of the corridor right at the exit of the room. People can thus participate in the display through the exploration of their own identity. The remaining room is dedicated to conferences, lectures and other activities linked to the exhibition.

5 key words: flying panels, interaction, identity, Avedon, photography.

INTRODUCTION: THE AUTOMATIC PORTRAIT

The visitor entering the exhibition or reading this catalogue has probably already heard of Richard Avedon, one of the most famous and fascinating photographers of the last century. But they are probably not familiar with the concept of *Automatic Portrait*. Since this exhibition is about Avedon's use of this particular *genre* of photography in the field of fashion, it is important to briefly introduce it. Before the invention of the photographic medium, the portrait had already obtained the status of the classical genre of representation thanks to a long history of art production (Belting 2014). In fact, the portrait is a useful means which allows the photographer to obtain a realistic image of someone.

Usually, the artist represented only the face or the upper part of the body and the main aim of the portrait was not only to capture the physical appearance of the subject portrayed, but also to reveal their personality and their psychological traits. When first invented, photography was not considered a form of art and was rather to be associated with the sciences. At the time, scientists and scholars turned to photographs first and foremost for their ability to *mirror reality* (Muzzarelli 2016) in an objective and neutral way.[1] It was at that moment that a new form of portrait was born:

> the *automatic portrait*. The word *automatic* refers to two different photographic elements: the medium (the camera) and the way the subject is portrayed. The camera is a mechanical device able to capture images from reality and reproduce them in the form of photographs: a mechanical record of the surrounding world with no filter, interpretations or artistic intention. However, nowadays this conception of photography has been disputed.[2]

However, at the end of the XIX century, the automatic portrait seemed to be the most effective way to document a subject's features, for example in the asylum field, as in the work of Cesare Lombroso,[3] or in police records. The automatic portrait was used to capture the criminal's face, in association with the bertillonage, a system of identification invented by the Frenchman Alphonse Bertillon.

Thanks to the automatic portrait, the police had a new system of record-keeping composed by a front and a three-quarter profile picture (the two main characteristics of the automatic portrait), with a "description of any particular identifying marks and details of the anthropometric measurements of various body parts" (Muzzarelli 2016, 11). Photography seemed to be the right means to obtain any sort of physical representation in a short time. At that time, photographers employed it:

> *using the same methods of Bertillon and Ellero: the subjects were placed in front of neutral backgrounds, in the most impassive and austere manner possible, and photographed from the front or in profile according to the most classic of police identification methods* (*Muzzarelli 2016, 11*).

Meanwhile, photography started to gain more importance and respect in the artistic field.[4] A new type of photography was created in relation to this recognition form:

> *la carte-de-visite*,[5] invented by André-Adolphe Eugène Disderi. Disderi's main idea was to give his clients a means thanks to which they could have an official and serious portrait of themselves.

However, after some time, he discovered that people liked to improvise in front of the camera: they became actors, someone else. In relation to this artistic infiltration into the portrait production, we can refer to the work of Richard Avedon and our exhibition itself. The project of the exhibition started from the study of the automatic portrait, but it was mainly inspired by the works of one of its best exponents:

> Richard Avedon. His shoots, even if most of them were fashion shoots, are never only representations of a subject: they embody the search for a character.

1 For this reason, the first examples of photographic portraits are related to the desire of scholars to document, study, and classify human identity. In the second half of the 19th century, we see an increase in the use of photography in the field of psychiatry, criminology and anthropology. It was used to portray asylum patients, criminals and human beings in order to analyze and identify their facial features in relation to their psyche.

2 "Every time we look at a photograph, we are aware, however slightly, of the photographer selecting that sight from an infinity of other possible sights. (...) the photographer's way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject." (Berger 1972, 10).

3 The Italian doctor created one of the most fascinating visual records of human identities, aimed at finding a connection between criminal anthropology and physiognomy. Physiognomy is an ancient discipline that wished to understand the psyche and tendencies of someone just by their facial features. This discipline was used, as we said, in the criminal and psychiatric field in

We chose to focus on the photographs which show this particular way of portraying people:

> the automatic portrait. Studying the personality of the photographer and his approach towards the subject, we selected thirty-five fashion portraits in which the main characteristics of the automatic portrait emerged: focus on the visage, positioned in profile or three quarters, on a neutral background (Garner 2010).

We would like to explore how these portraits could be seen as a form of psychical investigation on the secret, private lives of these celebrities, but also as a way of documenting their existence, in an attempt to transform them into the icons of our era: through the automatic portrait, Avedon was able to not only encapsulate pieces of reality, making them indelible memories, but to portray real characters. The exhibition focuses on Richard Avedon's use of the automatic portrait. In his wide production of photos in this frame, Avedon ranged between portraits of celebrities, friends or relatives, and fashion photographs. These two types of shooting are tied together by the key theme of his work: identity (Capote 1959).

Thanks to his ability to bring out the personality of his subject, he could, on the one hand, extrapolate the true person often hidden behind the mask of the celebrity and, on the other hand, find the celebrity living inside the models, who could aspire to become famous top models thanks to his work. *Beyond Celebrities* shows both these traits:

> beginning with the attention he dedicated to the portraits of stars, leading up to fashion magazine covers which made amateur models famous.

On one side, it is interesting to notice how fashion brands looked for the support of stars and pop icons to obtain visibility and a good advertising campaign; on the other side, unknown models appeared in important magazines, and in the case of the ones photographed by Avedon, they became famous. This link between the cult of stars and the cult of fashion was at the core of the exhibition, leading the visitor to wonder about their relation:

> when does a star bring prestige to a fashion magazine, and when does a fashion magazine build the fame of a model?

FIRST SECTION: TIMELESS BEAUTY. THE CULT OF STARS

The technique of the photographic automatic portrait was used by Richard Avedon in the fashion portraits of models of his time, shoots which were featured in important fashion advertisements and magazine covers.

The photographic medium has helped the creation of images common in popular culture. These captions started to circulate and appear not only in the cultural production but also on billboards, magazine pages and mind blowing tv advertisements, and eventually became iconic (Martineau 2018). To enhance the commercial good's appeal, the fashion ads started to combine the product with the appearance of a public persona (Muzzarelli 2013). Richard Avedon started his career working as a fashion photographer for big brands of the 60s' rising fashion industry such as Dior, Versace, Armani (Aletti and Squiers 2010).

His snapshots, in which he captured, through the lens of his Rollinflex, models that were destined to become superstars, were

order to prevent any form of violence and attack (Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d.).

4 Photographs were present at *The Great Exhibition* in London in 1851.

5 This was patented on the 22nd of November 1854 by André-Adolphe Eugène Disderi, who invented a new photographic device capable of creating small sized pictures: "a small portrait of approximately 5.7 x 9 cm obtained with a device using four lenses capable of taking four to eight small images that were then printed on the same sheet." (Newhall 1964, 89)

published on the pages of trendy magazines. Richard Avedon's style is unmistakable. For his modelling photos, he has resorted to the technique of the automatic portrait applied in advertising images. His renderings are characterized by the main features of the photos IDs (Muzzarelli 2003):

> the blank backdrop; the sitter-face blow-up; the black-and-white light contrast; the front/profile frame. These pictures underlined the importance of the appearance of the sitter and enhanced the image's popularity.[6]

Richard Avedon initiated, in the glamour world, personalities like Twiggy, Dovima or Kate Moss, and their appearance began to spread in the visual culture as the symbol of the new modern woman:

> the photographer's posers are transformed into mass icons using photography as a springboard (Garner 2010). The post-war age, thanks to the rising of capitalistic culture, helped with the popularization of these images, which now satisfied the consumerist and frenetic need of the new society to consume images too.

Because they were replicated various times and because of their boldness, these new beauty myths established themselves as symbols that people recognized. Through the medium of photography, starting from the *carte de visite* (Muzzarelli 2016), the depiction of normal people was the main focus. A fascinating precedent to the creation and propagation of the stardom effect through the use of photography can be found in the awareness of the French writer Charles Baudelaire who used Nadar's shots to create his own public total-black dandy character (Muzzarelli 2014, 119-122).

Avedon's snaps operated in a similar way, but through a completely different photographic technique. His way of capturing fashion shoots was revolutionary:

> in the past, fashion photographers used to depict the sitters in static, emotionless poses (Werner 2018, 8), while Richard Avedon let the models act freely in his studio.[7]

Showing the personal status of a model, an actress, a public character, he changed completely the way in which these famous people were perceived. A perfect example of these dimensions could be the remarkable shooting session with the most iconic actress of that time and a major popular icon:

> Marylin Monroe (The Richard Avedon Foundation, n.d.). In May 1957, Marylin went to his studio and started the shooting by dancing and performing with energy but then, hours later, she felt tired and withdrew back into a corner to get some rest (Moma Official Website, n.d.).

It was this melancholic moment that the lens of the camera of Richard Avedon caught, showing a different, more self-reflective dimension of the explosive actress. To show the intimacy of a public persona allowed the audience to penetrate their personal moments too:

> the privacy of the star was completely violated (Douglas and McDonnell 2019, 74-77).

Richard Avedon's best-known fashion portraits of famous actresses - Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, Liz Taylor, just to mention some of them - could be compared to the photographic depiction of the leader of the pop art movement: Andy Warhol. Repetition, seriality, celebrities were the key words of his aesthetic:

> he was obsessed with recording reality through his Polaroid

6 "The white background isolates the subject from itself and allows to study his face's geography," Richard Avedon stated, talking about his celebrities' portraits and the effect of the neutral environment on the model's physical features (*Aspasia*, 2013).

7 A new dimension of modelling started to emerge, which did not involve the use of mannequins to show the clothes and the brand's creation, but beautiful and charming women, who would become famous together with the brand. (Armitage 2020, 99).

> camera, but also with capturing through his lens the pop idols of consumeristic culture.

Avedon also created an array of photos recording celebrities who, thanks to his clicks, were fixed in eternity. This way of recording facial traits has been a peculiar trait of photography since its invention, serving as a tool for physiognomic science to study a large number of faces in an objective way.

The unique style of Richard Avedon's fashion portraits, the focus on facial aspects, the press coverage of these images are all features that created the cult of celebrities from the 1960s onwards.

SECOND SECTION: COVER GIRLS. THE CULT OF FASHION

From early on, Richard Avedon established an artistic relationship with fashion magazines, for which he worked as a photographer, and became one of the pioneers of a new way of making revue cover pictures.

In 1944, at the age of 22, he kicked off his brilliant career joining *Harper's Bazaar* in the years in which it was directed by Carmel Snow (Squiers 2010,156). The editor-in-chief had the merit of transforming the sheets of the magazine using photos instead of artistic illustrations (Best 2017, 136).

The same process was destined to affect the other mainstream fashion magazine, *Vogue*, which he collaborated with as an acclaimed American photographer since 1962. For that headline, Edna Woolman Chase was responsible for the complete change of the journal's style.[8] These two giants of fashion publishing seemed to follow the same path:

> it was clear that resorting to the strategy of employing photos to promote big fashion brands meant to enhance the seductive power of advertising.

The covers of these two known magazines, over a long period of time, were enriched by Richard Avedon's most remarkable shots. The typical format of the magazine cover, with its rectangular frame, was perfect for inserting precious blow-up portraits of models. The automatic portrait technique was well-suited for the sleeves of these mostly female revues. The lens was pointed on the female sitter's face, showing her facial traits in the typical way in which the automatic portrait was intended:

> profile or frontal.

However, there was something new in Avedon's style, considering that he used colored photos instead of his common black/white ones, which were more elegant but failed in capturing the readers' attention (Peric 2011, 91). The appearance of beautiful cover girls was a pretext to promote the big brands of the fashion industry:

> the subject was wearing fashionable griffes or was dressed by important stylists. In this way, what caught the eye was not the sitter, but the dresses: the cover girl was just a simple woman and the purchaser could see herself in the image of the model wearing the must-haves advertised.[9]

From the '60s until the '80s the shoots appearing on magazine covers were mostly portraits showing self-conscious ladies staring at the camera (Farrauto 2015). The look of the girl was underlined:

> what fashion magazines were reaching for were self-conscious ladies. The foreground image with the model's face

8 Under her direction, a photograph appeared for the first time on Vogue's magazine cover: the one shot by Edward Jean Steichen which portrayed a girl wearing a swimsuit while throwing a big red ball (1932).

9 "A fashion photograph is not just a photograph of a dress; it's a photograph of a woman", stated Alexander Liberman, Vogue's editorial director in 1962, expressing

how ladies wanted to mirror themselves in glamour shoots and identified themselves with the cover girl. (Angeletti and Alberto 2008, 56).

that filled all the first page, was used to highlight the new modern woman.

THIRD SECTION: BEHIND THE CAMERA

Three videos taken from the 1973 commercial campaign of the Japanese label Jun Ropè[10] are a good example of how Richard Avedon used to work during his photo shootings. These works are 60second videos, each dedicated to the photoshoot of a single model: Angelica Huston, Lauren Hutton and Jean Shrimpton (Avedon, 1973). Watching these documentation sources, the visitor has the possibility to really enter into Avedon's set:

> the videos reveal either how Richard Avedon worked on the models' poses or, instead, how he interacted with his models. In fact, he was able to establish a relationship not only with the image of the subjects, but also with their psychological features: thanks to his empathy and his desire to penetrate their identity, he succeeded in shooting real characters, inclusive of all their personal features, both physical and psychological.

To complete the feeling of participating in Avedon's shooting, it is necessary to focus on the devices he used. His original cameras are displayed in relation to the images of the photographer shoot with them, so as to preserve the connection between the object and the documentation of its employment:

> in this way, visitors could enjoy a complete immersion in what happened in Avedon's studio, being overcome by cameras' flashes that are enlightening the dark space of the projection.

In the 1972 Venice Biennale, a revolutionary work by Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale numero 4* was displayed (Migliore 2011, 146-157):

> in the installation, the visitors were invited to participate actively in the exhibition, leaving a photo of themselves as a trace of their passage.

To keep the established immersive relationship between the exhibition and the viewer, created thanks to the video installation of Jun Ropè's documents, the curators were directly inspired by Vaccari:

> they asked visitors to take a photo of themselves and share it in the exhibition space.

Interpreting Vaccari's installation through a contemporary device, the curators proposed an app, that every visitor could quickly install on their phone, through which they could take a selfie in the frame of the cover of an important fashion magazine with which Avedon collaborated during his career.[11] The app automatically projected their photos on the wall of the corridor, which lead to the exit in a sort of *quadreria* display.

> The photos, with the visitors' permission, were then uploaded on the Instagram profile of the exhibition:
>
> in this way, they became an active part of the exhibition itself (Bourriaud 1998).

With the *quadreria* display, the curators underlined the importance of the presence,[12] the fact that visitors were actually visiting the exhibition, and that it existed thanks to each of them; another reference to Vaccari's project.

> This element of sharing one's identity publicly is the principle of all social networks:

10 From Ad Break archive, www.nowness.com. Nowness is a digital video channel launched in 2010 by Jefferson Hack and created by LVMH Moet Hennessy Louis Vuitton.

11 Just to mention a few: Vogue, Harper's Bazaar and Life (Oloizia, 2014).

12 In Vaccari's installation there was this suggestion: "Lascia sulle pareti una traccia fotografica del

> the concept is reinforced by posting the photos on Instagram. Social media is, in fact, the newest way of making fashion advertisements and fashion photos: when an influencer posts a selfie, or another type of content, he/she is showing and advertising a product, often to an unaware viewer.

Nowadays, the readers of a fashion magazine are no longer passive readers:

> after consuming the product (the image), they may generate a product by themselves (Ruggero 2015), in the form of amateur photos –which are becoming more and more professional – that show the result of recent shopping activity.

What Richard Avedon contributed to creating for his models and subjects, namely a real cult around their personalities and around fashion brands, has become more accessible using social networks. In the same way in which an ordinary person could become an influencer sharing popular content and photos, the visitors can also create a personal cult through the exhibition's app.

tuo passaggio".
This phrase invited visitors to take a photo of themselves in the photobooth and to put the result on the white wall, in order to leave proof of their presence at the exhibition.
(Rugnone 2017).

BIOGRAPHY / AVEDON

Richard Avedon (1923–2004) was an American photographer with Russian origins, working in New York between the '50s and the '90s.

His work focuses on portraits and on fashion photography and it was documented in a great number of exhibitions. His passion for photography began when he was twelve years old and continued during his studies at DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx. When he was nineteen, he abandoned photography studies to join the armed forces:

> he was Photographer's Mate Second Class in the U.S. Merchant Marine, in 1942, during World War II. Here, he started to take photos of his roommates and began to discover his interest in portraits (Capote, 1959).

After the war, during his studies at the New School for Social Research, he was noticed by Alexey Brodovitch, professor at the school and art director of the magazine "Harper's Bazaar".

Thanks to his collaboration, he began working as a professional photographer: at the age of twenty-two, Avedon was already working as a freelance photographer. In 1944, he started working for "Harper's Bazaar". Instead of using a studio, he photographed models in uncommon locations: on the streets, in nightclubs, at the circus, on the beach. This type of research was revolutionary for the period:

> he detached himself from classic photography to discover the world of the movement, of freedom of the body motion, coherent with the new strong women conditions of the period (Capote 1959, 156-187).

In a career that stretched over sixty full years, he worked for *Life, Vogue, The New Yorker*, The Rolling Stone, Calvin Klein, and Gianni Versace. In all these magazines, he contributed to building the identity of brands, proposing different points of view:

> always a classical rigor, together with the subjectivity of the models' bodies and positions.

But his portraits built his fame (Avedon and Rosenberg, 1976):

> Avedon was fascinated by the extraordinary capacity of

photography of suggesting the personality and evoking the life of his subjects, focusing on the force of individuality. He had complete confidence in all the features of his tool, even in its limit: the two-dimensional nature of the medium.[13]

Avedon's genial instinct discovered new feminine icons of the seventies and the eighties,[14] and was the reason behind the success of important brands.[15] He had also pursued personal projects,[16] as the 1963 reportage about people holding the newspaper with the news about the Kennedy death.[17] After publishing his first book of photographs in 1959, *Observations* (Avedon 1959), containing an essay by Truman Capote,[18] he continued to publish his works throughout his life.[19]

After suffering a cerebral hemorrhage while on assignment for The New Yorker, Richard Avedon died in San Antonio, Texas on October 1, 2004.[20] In 2004, The New Yorker wrote that "he suffered, just a little, from the knowledge that the vigor of his presence might eclipse the rigor of his work" (Gopnik, 2004). His energy always won over his negative view of life. Avedon's portraits show us "how we prepare a face to face the world, and how the world shows itself in our faces" (Gopnik, 2004):

in his work, he was able to represent an *Era,* the portrait of an epoch, avoiding its annulation in the past.

13 In 1980, he said: "My photographs don't go below the surface. I have great faith in surfaces. A good one is full of clues" (Scala, 2012). He used these "clues" to let the soul shine through the photographic pellicle, both for ordinary people and public figures. His portraits offer to the viewer the possibility of thinking, of analyzing the personality immortalized. He is captured by real gazes and movements.

14 They became famous characters of the fashion world history: Veruschka, Twiggy, Lauren Hutton.

15 Just to name some of his most famous American advertising campaigns: Calvin Klein, Revlon, Versace.

16 "Incandescent in his presence, he was surprisingly domestic in his enthusiasms; he believed in family as passionately as he believed in art, and could leave an hour-long conversation about Goya's horrors to talk with the same avidity about how to light a room or roast a leg of lamb." (Gopnik, 2004).

17 Other personal projects were his extended portraiture of the American Civil Rights movement, the one regarding the Vietnam war, a cycle of photographs of his father, the one on the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the prestigious editions of the Pirelli calendar in 1995 and 1997.

18 "Sometimes I think all my pictures are just pictures of me," he told one day to the writer, reflecting about the selection of photos for the book. Only the people who knew him well could realize the intense personality of his work, even when it was considered simply fashion. "That's all. That's it. The visual symbols of what I want to tell are in these faces. At least I hope so". At the age of thirty-six, he had already pointed out the aim of his work: representing real people. In fact, the selection of this first collection of works is arbitrary: the connective theme is the choice of personalities.

19 Including *Nothing Personal* in 1964 (Atheneum Publishers, New York), with an essay by James Baldwin; *Portraits 1947–1977* (Noonday Press, 1976), with an essay by Harold Rosenberg; *An Autobiography* (Random House Inc, 1993); *Evidence 1944–1994* (Random House, 1994), with essays by Jane Livingston and Adam Gopnik, and *The Sixties* (Random House Inc, 1999), with interviews by Doon Arbus.

20 He established *The Richard Avedon Foundation* during his lifetime.



Fig. 1 ***View of the exhibition's entrance in Santa Cristina courtyard***, rendering, 2020.

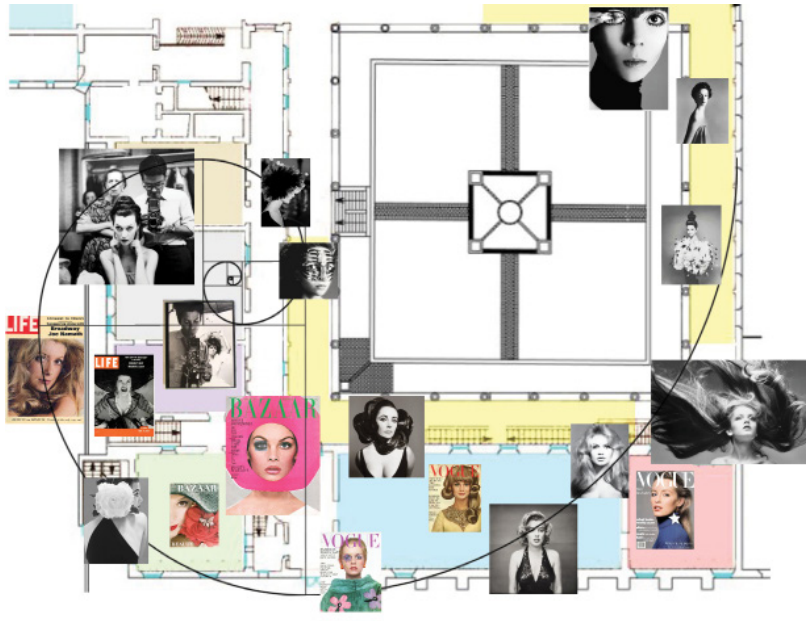


Fig. 2 ***The exhibition's path***, Collage, 2020.

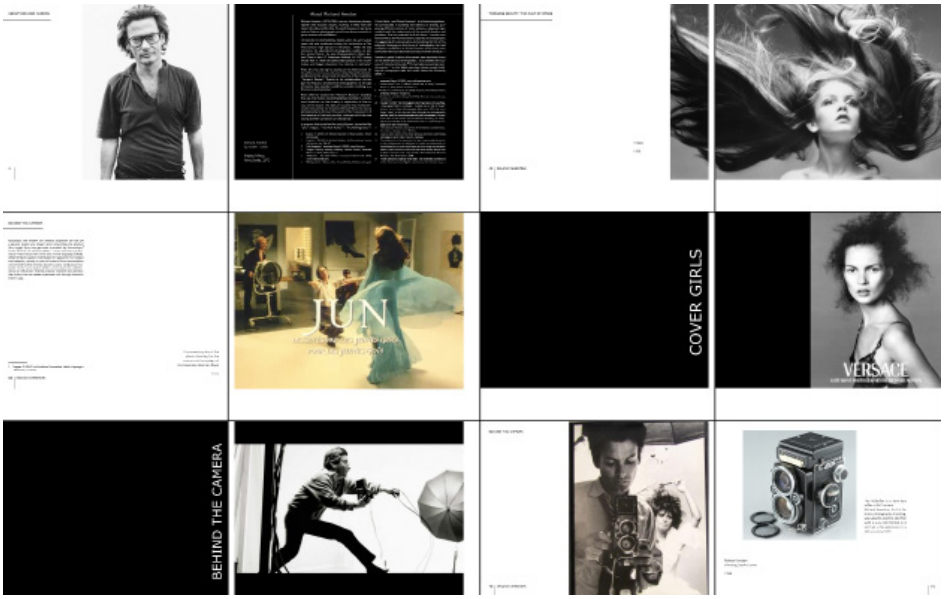


Fig. 3 ***The catalogue, Collage***, 2020.



Fig. 4 ***Atlas***, Collage, 2020.

Beyond Celebrities.

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IDENTITY - SURVEILLANCE

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FIRST SECTION:
ID Portraits.

SECOND SECTION:
The display: the Actualization of Automatic Devices.

33

CURATORIAL ABSTRACT + 5 KEY WORDS

In today's world, we see and are seen at the same time. This constant dichotomy has transformed our society, making it more and more accustomed to the depersonalization and spectacularization of the subject that appears on the screen. This situation has been evident for some decades and the world of art and the fashion industry have addressed these issues, approaching them from different points of view.

In particular, it seemed interesting to compare Thomas Ruff's pessimistic thought, in opposition to the escapist possibility proposed by the world of fashion. On one hand, we have the criticism of the massification of the image and the detachment from the real perception of what it shows while, on the other, an ideal to pursue, proposed to the consumer.

The two main topics analyzed in the exhibition are the *ID portrait* and *CCTV*. These are two systems of cataloging, which characterize the perception of the world where we live, because their sole purpose is to provide social surveillance. By reconstructing, through a historical excursus, the process of invention and consolidation of these systems, the exhibition aims to reflect on the automatic portrait, showing how automatism, as a control and surveillance system, is today a disturbing and captivating presence at the same time. Thanks to the exhibition's set up, the ultimate goal is to make the viewer empathize with the perspective of the voyeurism of the all-seeing perspective, making them aware of the observation mania that pervades us.
Keywords: id portrait, cctv, thomas ruff, surveillance, exhibition.

ABSTRACT EXHIBITION DESIGN + 5 KEY WORDS

The exhibition intends to rebuild a security environment inside the cloister of Santa Cristina. The goal behind the set-up is to guide the viewer through the theoretical contents displayed, just as in an educational path, so that he/she will develop his/her own critical understanding of the evolution of the automatic portrait and how this is used within our social system.

The exhibition begins with an introductory part located inside the corridor in the west wing, on the ground floor of the Santa Cristina complex. This first area will provide the viewer with historical elements about the topics of the exhibition:

> bertillonage, autograph, car photography, Thomas Ruff and CCTV. Exiting the corridor, the visitor will then find the exhibition in the cloister.

We intended for the first impact to be strong and immediate, in fact the open environment of the cloister will be completely subverted. In the first section dedicated to ID portraits, Ruff's works will be hung on the perimeter wall, following the display employed by the artist, consisting of large-format images with a simple frame. Nine fashion photo blow-ups placed in front of Ruff's photos, and hung in the space between the columns on a semi-opaque PVC support - referencing Steichen's display for *The Family of Man* - to almost completely obstruct the view of the courtyard.

The use of the same format for fashion photographs and for Ruff's works allows the public to understand the recurrence of the

iconographic schemes used in editorial photos. The use of opaque PVC has the aim of limiting the spectator's vision, as well as of giving an impression of surveillance, closure, and alienation. These feelings are all symptoms of the automation of modern society and are all present in Ruff's portraits. In the second section, dedicated to CCTV, the setting does not change except for the media used:

> Ruff's photos are now displayed in contraposition with fashion photos and videos of advertising campaigns, which show the acquisition of CCTV aesthetics in the fashion field.

At the end of the section, the spectator can finally have a complete view of the cloister, with a 7 meters high totem entirely composed of cameras and screens at the center of the space. The spectator will come face-to-face with the true protagonist of the exhibition:

> the machine capable of recording indiscriminately and autonomously, with a clear reference to the Panopticon and the idea of control associated with the use of machines.

Just as Ruff has shown and criticised the functioning of visual communication, the exhibition wants to give the viewer an all-seeing perspective of the surrounding space. The spectator approaching the maxi screens will then realise that they have been filmed all along the exhibition path.

The video, projected with a certain delay, will allow the visitor to observe themself while moving in the cloister; the violation of the 'apparent' privacy and the final revelation of the exhibition layout, aims to spark a reflection on the power that the automatic eye of the machine has on us and on our perception of society.

Keywords: cctv, thomas ruff, surveillance, exhibition, recording, steichen.

ID PORTRAITS

Photography immediately became the symbol of its era, the nineteenth century, and of the new positivist society. It was the perfect tool for creating true-to-life, mechanical and automatic images, very useful for studying, documenting and comparing the whole world.

The first documented use of the automatic portrait can be found in the '*schedatura scientifica manicomiale, criminale e antropologica-etnografica'* [1] (Muzzarelli 2014, 166). As it always happened in the early years of photography, its first use was scientific, rather than artistic. This new means proved to be very useful inside the Parisian hospital Salpetrière, where the French neurologist Charcot repeatedly photographed his patients to monitor their psychiatric progress and to document his research to the scientific community.

Furthermore, photography also became crucial in police investigations and in the compilation of the nosological record of patients or criminals. '*si predilige uno sguardo frontale e asettico, uno sfondo neutro, un'impassibilità da cui non possano trapelare sentimenti e distrazioni. Si deve comunicare con un linguaggio di grado zero che tratta di scienza e non di arte*' (Muzzarelli 2014, 167). This first experience of control, inaugurated with the invention of the photographic medium, took the name of *bertillonage*[2] (Muzzarelli 2014, 167), named after its inventor Alphonse Bertillon, who invented what today we would call an 'identikit', in 1882.

Through the same language used by the nosological record, it notices a sign indicating a front and a profile photograph, with

1 Trad: 'mental, criminal and anthropological-ethnographic scientific cataloging'.

2 Trad: 'a frontal and aseptic look is preferred, a neutral background, an impassiveness from

which feelings and distractions cannot leak. You have to communicate with a zero-grade language that deals with science and not art'.

an indication of the distinguishing features and anthropometric measurements. This practice was facilitated by the invention of Salvatore Ottolenghi, who created a device capable of synchronizing two cameras placed 90° apart, so as to have two photos at the same time (Muzzarelli 2014, 168).Photography soon became a way to capture the world objectively, not only in the scientific field, but also in common settings. In 1889, Carquerot and Guillaumot patented the *car photographie* (Muzzarelli 2014, 55), which is a totally automatic machine that was able to photograph and print small-format photos. The invention of the *car photographie* marks two important steps in the history of photography, both present in the exhibition:

> the first is the invention of what will later become the photo booth and, therefore, the production of ID photography, which owes considerably to the scientific setting given by Bertillon; the second step is given by the idea conceived by Enjabert of *autography* (Muzzarelli 2014, 55), based on the idea that it was possible to create a mechanism capable of producing a photographic image by itself, without the need of an operator's intervention.

The real influence that recording could exert on society was not immediately perceived; especially artists were fascinated by the potential of the new medium. This fascination prevented people from reflecting on how much this new instrument had become in such a short time a means not only for cataloging the world, but also for surveillance.

In the second half of the twentieth century, people became more aware of it when, following the Cold War, they realized what the side effects of surveillance tools were and the impact they had in daily life.

The traces that were produced became evidence that could have been used to the detriment of the subject. Ruff believed that artists were able to create interesting reflections internal or external to the art system. Thomas Ruff, born in 1958 the 10th of February, in Zell am Harmersback, is a German photographer and one of the leading exponents of the Düsseldorf School. His poetics was influenced by Sandler, as well as by the Becher's. This is why in Ruff's works we can find a taste for the objective impassiveness of the photographic instrument, used as a means to catalog the world, so as to be able to create an archive in which the subject is the man of the 20th century and his depersonalization (Marra 2012).

The individuals captured in Ruff's photos are not presented as types, but as subjects without introspection and social identity; their purpose is to entice the viewer to read today's society critically. In an artistic system mostly based on advertisements and spectacles, Ruff invites the viewer through the *Portraits series*, which he started working on in the 80s, to reflect on the consumerist perspective of image production.

The first series consists of small (24 cm x 18 cm) half-length, frontal portraits of people similar in ethnicity, age and social status. Ruff's portraits were inspired by ID pictures, like passport photos. By choosing this format, he wanted to criticize the massification of the image through the use of the same canons employed by advertising and human filing.

The large format, the photo retouches and the dermatological realism of his subjects are all elements that are used in order to reveal the repetition typical of advertisements. The personality of Ruff's subjects is shown precisely as it was captured by the camera. In this way, the artist

offers us objectified images without narration. In other words, Ruff wants to make the viewer aware of how the advertising world is only a glossy world that always proposes the same format:

> a neutral background and a frontal foreground on the subject. However, unlike Ruff's sequential works, fashion images always appear new to the consumer.

This paradox is possible because the objective of the fashion system is exactly that of being able to sell an image, which eventually becomes the symbol of a dream, in which the consumer wants to be the protagonist.

Therefore, the use of the minimalistic format of the ID portrait proves to be efficient in communicating little but essential information to the viewer. In such a manner, adopting the nineteenth-century canons, Ruff manages to show to people the power of the medium and to trigger a reflection on it. After the series of portraits that began in 1980, Ruff continued to investigate the relationship between man and automatic reproduction machines. With *Andere Portrait*s, Ruff wanted to emphasise how much the individual feels unable to recognise him or herself as a subject and not as an object observed by society (Castello di Rivoli, 2009).

Inspired by the previously mentioned bertillonage, this series of images consists of portraits made using a specific identikit technique employed by the German police; however, the faces of the subjects have turned into hybrid forms with blurred lines because of the overlap of multiple images depicting the same subject. The individual portraits are transformed and manipulated creating something different, new, partly recalling the cloning and cataloging of the human being which had already been analysed in the first series of *Portraits* (Castello di Rivoli, 2009).

These dystopian identikits aim at revealing the schizoid and divided nature of the individual, between his or her own identity and the interpretation that society gives of it. The importance and power of the social gaze on the citizen is a very crucial issue in today's world.

Each type of video surveillance is linked to observation; this idea of control and of an all-seeing perspective is traditionally associated with the figure of God. The iconographic representation of the eye that sees everything, oppressive and imperishable, led men to become paranoid about omniscience (Levin, et al 2002). The *Panopticon* represents a rather peculiar experience of visualising and putting into practice the idea of the all-seeing perspective. Invented by the Bentham's at the end of the eighteenth century, this project consisted in the construction of a circular penitentiary which allowed the guards to keep all the prisoners inside under control simultaneously, through a surveillance tower placed in the center and through the elimination of blind spots. It is considered to be the ancestor of modern video surveillance systems.

Today, through the evolution of technological means, the all-seeing obsession has expanded on a global scale and we can indeed speak of planetary voyeurism (Levin, et al 2002). Thomas Ruff, in 1992, offered a reflection on the spectacularization of the war through the large photographs in his *Nacht* series. The 40 images that the collection consists of depict night landscapes of deserted towns through the serial treatment and the large format already present in his previous works. Ruff's innovation lies in the use of an unusual technique used by the military for night vision:

> the so-called light amplifier. The low infrared lighting device

> allows the human eye to select the object in the most intense darkness, amplifying the few available light sources that make visible what normally would not be (Levin, et al 2002).

Ruff's intent is to recall a specific military moment related to a certain historical event:

> the Gulf War (1990-1991), which was one of the first conflicts whose images were broadcast live on all media.

This experience cut distances and allowed the global community to witness an event that is taking place in the present, but that is far at the same time. Ruff proposes this situation of television voyeurism by separating technology from its context, that is, that of the war. The photos were taken using light intensifiers supplied to the military starlight system, with a 35 mm camera mounted on a Zeiss fixture to increase the light intensity.

The greenish light, the subjects, the common landscapes resemble military objectives, in contrast with the ordinariness of the places depicted (Castello di Rivoli 2009).

There is no explicit narrative intent or any introspection here, either. These nocturnal visions have the aim of looking like spectacularized images that allow distant realities, such as the Gulf War, to enter everyone's homes, satisfying the eternal and inherent human desire for omniscience.

The low resolution, the fixed target, the track of time and the exact place, are all stylistic features that can be found in CCTV.

However, as it always happens, the world of fashion is proposed as an alternative reality to the real one. If man, in everyday life, is passive, frightened and defenceless in front of the eye of the machines and surveillance systems, the Calvin Klein, MiuMiu and Balenciaga models subvert the rules, by imposing and claiming their power above the target.

It is not the first example of this kind of performative attitude being staged in front of the 'cold' machine. From Magritte to Duchamp, up to the contemporary video art experiences, the limits of the automatic machine have led to different subversive experiments, in which the subject tries, in different ways, to regain possession of his or her status as an active individual. Automatic recording thus began to be used in fashion, as it became a means to catalog and disseminate new trends.

THE DISPLAY: THE ACTUALIZATION OF AUTOMATIC DEVICES

The exhibition intends to rebuild a security environment inside the cloister of Santa Cristina. The goal behind the set-up is to guide and accompany the viewer within the different sections of the exhibition. Through the theoretical contents displayed, just as in an educational path, the viewer will be able to develop his or her own critical understanding of the evolution of the automatic portrait and its use within our social system. For this reason, the exhibition begins with an introductory part located inside the corridor in the west wing, on the ground floor of the Santa Cristina complex.

This first section will be the chance for the viewer to learn notions and the historical background regarding the topics of the exhibition: bertillonage, autographs, car photography, Thomas Ruff and CCTV. Subsequently, exiting the corridor through the door on the right, the visitor will find the exhibition. We intended for the first impact to be strong and immediate, in fact the open environment of the cloister will be completely subverted. In the first section, dedicated to ID portraits, Ruff's

works will be hung on the perimeter wall, following the exhibition method that the artist has often used, consisting of large-format images with a simple frame. Nine fashion photo blow-ups will be placed in front of Ruff's photos and hung in the space between the columns on a semi-opaque PVC support - in reference to Steichen's display for *The Family of Man* - to almost completely obstruct the view of the courtyard.

The same format was chosen for the fashion photographs and for Ruff's works, because of the desire to create a space that can allow the public to understand by themselves the recurrence of the iconographic schemes used in editorial photos. In addition, the use of opaque PVC and the desire to limit the spectator's vision has the aim of creating an environment that can give the idea of surveillance, of closure, almost of alienation. These themes are all present in Ruff'sportraits and symptoms of the automation of modern society. Therefore, since the cloister of Santa Cristina is a large and airy space, we chose opacity, the use of large formats and many images to reach this purpose. Moving on to the second section, the one dedicated to CCTV, the setting does not change except for the media used:

> Ruff's photos hanging on the wall are now in contrast with fashion photos and videos. The spaces between the columns are therefore covered with fashion photos and maxi screens constantly showing advertising campaigns. These videos will focus, in particular, on the acquisition of CCTV aesthetics in the fashion field.

At the end of the second section, the spectator finds themselves in the south of the cloister and he or she can finally have a complete view of the whole cloister:

> the set-up aims to astonish the visitor with a 7 meters high totem entirely made of cameras and screens. The spectator comes face-to-face with the true protagonist of the exhibition: the machine, capable of recording in an indiscriminate and autonomous way. With this installation, the exhibition intends to display its own spectacularization.

Just as Ruff has shown and criticised the functioning of visual communication, the exhibition's aim is to give the viewer an all-seeing perspective of the surrounding space. The use of the totem is obviously a reference to the Panopticon and the idea of control associated with the use of the machine, creating a feeling of violation and fear. The spectator approaching the maxi screens will be able to realise that he or she has been filmed without his or her knowledge during the whole exhibition.

In fact, the cameras placed at the corners of the cloister will film the entire path, which will be projected with a delay of 20 minutes on the screens of the totem. In this way, the spectator will be able to observe him or herself while moving inside the cloister; the violation of the 'apparent' privacy and the final revelation of the structure of the exhibition constitute the end of the exhibition. This new level of awareness allows the visitors to reflect, one last time, on the potential of the machine and the power that its automatic eye has on us and on our perception of society.



Fig. 1 ***Atlas***, Collage, 2020.



Fig. 2 ***Collage***, Collage, 2020.



Fig. 3 ***Collage***, Collage, 2020.



Fig. 4 ***Collage***, Collage, 2020.

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SEEK OR HIDE?

Art and Body Politics in the Age of Mass Surveillance

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FIRST SECTION:
Physiognomic analysis from its beginningsto our days.

SECOND SECTION:
From standardized beauty to self-consciousness in fashion.

THIRD SECTION:
The contemporary use of physiognomic analysis: Facial recognition.

FOURTH SECTION:
The act of hiding one's face.

CURATORIAL ABSTRACT + 5 KEY WORDS

The curatorial work around this exhibition proposes a reading of human physical characteristics in the context of a society. From pseudo-science to fashion standards, the habit of categorising features has ruled our contemporary perception of common attributes or the identification of singular personalities. Nowadays, this tendency is extended to a process of facial recognition used by power entities to monitor the citizens. Paradoxically, some fashion creations help people to disappear.

The theoretical discourse dissects the mechanism linking photography, fashion and surveillance.
Keywords: beauty standards, facial recognition, fashion, physiognomy, hiding.

ABSTRACT EXPOSITION DESIGN + 5 KEY WORDS

Entering the complex of Santa Cristina the visitor finds him - or herself in a long corridor on one side defined by a white curtain. The curtain serves the purpose of transforming the space and guiding the visitors, while also being a reference to fashion runways or the studio atmosphere.

The lengthy space with the voluminous curtain might evoke the feeling of walking along a runway. Arriving around the end of this space, some flashes go off, assaulting the visitor, just as would happen at a fashion show, creating the feeling of being exposed. When entering the main space, the voyeuristic action of moving the curtain aside leads the visitor into a first small, intimate vestibule. On the way out, leaving the space of the exhibition, the visitor finds him - or herself again exposed to the flashes, although this time, after seeing the exhibition, the flash gains a new meaning: it refers to the exposedness to surveillance systems.

We decided to cover all the walls with mirrors in the exhibition space and place five additional panel walls around the space, reminiscent of the mirror labyrinths in funfairs. However, we chose mirrors because of the way they connect the subjects of beauty/fashion to the concept of surveillance.

Seeing ourselves in the mirror allows us to reflect on the subjects of beauty, searching for beauty in our face, comparing it to beauty standards or even falling into narcissism. On the other hand, it also creates a sense of being watched that is also supported by the organization of the structure. Thanks to the position of the mirrors, the visitors can see and observe other people's reflection, without them noticing that they are being observed. The upper edge of the outside walls bends towards the center of the space, giving the impression that the visitors are looking at a prison's courtyard walls and that they are being watched in a way that they cannot control, while they are outside, in an environment that usually would give them a sense of freedom. This juxtaposition between the feeling of freedom that comes from being outside and the sensation of being watched makes one uncomfortable.

The organization of the walls has been planned from the central point of view of the courtyard, according to perspective theories, creating the non-possibility of seeing 2 limit walls at the same time from any point within the space. This is the result of a geometric study

of the mirroring effect. The artworks are placed inside the mirror, under a non-reflective surface, creating a smooth aesthetic in the exhibition.

The artworks have been sorted in 3 groups according to their subject. There is a distinction between the three theoretical units in the space. However, the units are not strictly divided, allowing the visitors to find their own path and their own connections between the works.

The first space the visitor steps into is separated from the rest of the exhibition space. It serves as a first impression, an introduction to the subject. We chose to cover the walls with two photographs by the fashion photographer Steven Klein, that refer to both fashion and facial recognition/hiding, constituting a great introduction to both topics of the exhibition.

The first theoretical section of the exhibition is the one about fashion and objectification. In this part, we wished to connect some polaroid's of models to fashion photographs and some other works related to beauty or fashion. Admiring these works, the visitor also is confronted with works belonging to the theoretical section of facial recognition, which offers them the possibility of reflection on the connection between the two fields. Between some works, thanks to their placement, some connections shape that might inspire some thoughts additional to the main concept (eg. work 8. Rigged and work 11. Spurious Memories both consider the "feelings" of virtual systems and algorithms, together opening up questions about the human characteristics of computers).

The theoretic unit of facial recognition connects the unit of beauty to the unit of disguise, creating a dialogue between the subjects. The unit of disguise is at the end of the theoretical path of the exhibition, offering potential ways of protection against surveillance to the visitor.

A screen showing diverse examples of disguise is placed next to the exit door, almost like a last piece of advice given to the visitors before they step back into the outside world. It gains even more importance once the visitor crosses the door and finds themselves/him or herself exposed to the flashes once again.

Keywords: mirrors, labyrinth, surveillance, fashion, hiding.

PHYSIOGNOMIC ANALYSIS FROM ITS BEGINNINGS TO OUR DAYS

Since the beginnings of civilization people have had a tendency to connect one's physical appearance to his or her personality.

There are many manifestations of this belief in our history, and Charles Le Brun's drawings are probably one of the most well-known examples from the 17th century, depicting human portraits with exaggerated animalistic features, connecting the animal's behavioral characteristics to the portrayed person's personality. Since the invention of photography, the pseudo-science of physiognomy became increasingly popular, given that the device facilitated the capture and analysis of faces.

There are several examples of the collection of photographs for the purpose of physiognomic analysis from the second half of the 19th century. From police departments to psychiatric hospitals and anthropological research groups, diverse fields of research applied methods of analysis of facial features, to define different characteristics of the individuals, like predisposition to criminality, the presence of different kinds of mental illness or other factors originated from ethnic identity.

Not only that, these studies objectified the subjects of the

numerous portrait photographs by judging them upon one single shot, but often they ended up with highly deterministic results due to the simplification of their questionable methods. Although through the 20th century we still find examples of the institutionalized judgement of individuals upon physical characteristics, this trend seemed to subside by the second half of the century. There is one field in which, until recent years, the judgement and classification upon physical characteristics prevails as a commonly accepted practice.

While it has always been a practice of society through different eras or locations to shape opinions and ideals of beauty, at the end of the 20th century, and at the very beginning of the 2000's the fashion industry developed a strong criterion and a somewhat objectifying selection procedure that put the models into a similar situation as the processes of physiognomic examination, judging the body and facial features.

The ideals of this era shifted towards a lifeless, otherworldly figure with a material peculiarity, rather than visual. Following multiple attempts to fulfill the criticisms aiming at modifying these processes, the 2010's brought the first considerable change in the fashion industry in terms of transparency of the processes and the promotion of diversity.

Interestingly enough, in the same decade that brought more self-consciousness in these regards in the fashion industry, and thereby underlined its objectifying tendencies, a very different field, gained great importance:

> the research of artificial intelligence. This area of study, through the development of facial recognition rooted in physiognomic analysis, revealed the new potentials of this type of technology, and raised crucial questions about its use.

FROM STANDARDIZED BEAUTY TO SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS IN FASHION

The fashion industry's process of arriving at self-consciousness, or in certain cases even self-criticism can be tracked in our visual culture.

Let's just take the example of the common practice of taking polaroid pictures of the models during castings to facilitate the choosing procedure. In these cases, the model upon arrival stands in front of a blank wall, sometimes with some signs on it indicating their height, and gets captured in an almost automatic, fast shot, most of the time without showing any emotions, as a dehumanized process of taking ID pictures inside a photo booths or a bureaucratic office. These photographs are labeled by the surname of the model and some other information, they are collected and take part in a selection procedure along with other model portraits.

This process makes the casting visually similar to how some 19th century researchers of physiognomy faced a series of portraits, detaching themselves from the human nature of the photographed individuals, observing them almost like an object. However, in this case, the study aims to find a series of models, whose facial features match the campaign in question. Some of Vanessa Beecroft's polaroids resonate in an intriguing way with this kind of casting photographs. The same medium immediately creates the connection between these images along with the fact that many of Beefcroft's polaroids show a portrait of a model, who usually gets captured before or after participating in one of the artist's performances.

Even without knowing in what kind of aesthetic Beecroft uses models in her shows, these portraits are very powerful at proving how the model gets deprived of her individuality and reaches a different state of existence, the one of a beautiful object, that can be used or modified according to the needs of the person directing them. The paint on the models' skin makes this effect really clear, while referring to different idols, almost making it sculpture-like:

> the pure, golden, untouchable beauty, the white skinned blond beauty etc.

This one simple act of painting the skin takes away the model's individuality, and provides her with a collective stereotypical identity.

These polaroids are usually secondary products in Beecroft's performances. In her works, the artist usually uses several models, to arrange her mainly static performances, exposing the identically styled models to the public's gaze. A great number of her works recalls the atmosphere of fashion shows through the mass of schematized figures, fully or partially dressed in identical or matching sets. Even in cases in which the work is not explicitly referring to fashion, she uses the models in a really similar, objectified way, presenting them as the unit of a mass, in order to convey her aesthetic and message. To react to this kind of perfectioned but schematized aesthetic the artist Kate Cooper often borrows some publicly available female avatars from the web, to place them in a different environment than the one originally intended for them, raising several questions about what perfection means in the virtual world, and how struggle related to it can be imagined. The importance of facial features and the perfectionism related to them is also the central issue in Evija Lavina's work, titled *Human Warriors*. In her work, women pose with different tools, which can be purchased from commercial circulation, with the intention of changing some of their facial features.

To make the smile more symmetric, wrinkles go away, the nose becomes slimmer, the eyes more open etc. The representation of the measurements and the attempt to change these features perfectly shows how important these issues are on an individual level.

From this point of view the fashion brand, Balenciaga's 2020 Spring Paris runway show, might be considered exceptionally interesting, since the designer Demna Gvasalia asked makeup artist Inge Grognard to transform the faces of the models. While the prosthetically enlarged cheekbones and mouths matched the inflated and oversized pieces of the season's collection, they could also be interpreted as an ironical and self-critical take on the exaggeration of the beauty and fashion industry.

As per the self-consciousness of the industry, some of Juergen Teller's photographs show some level of awareness of how similar the models' exposedness might be to the one of the dehumanized documentation of identity, even the identity of criminals. Some of his shots from the 1999 Fall campaign of Helmut Lang show really simple, emotionless portraits of the models with captions like:

"Tom New York, N.Y. A 99/00", "Angela New York, N.Y. A 99/00".

We might ask ourselves:

> am I seeing Tom from New York in this portrait, or is it the name of the product the model is wearing? And if that is the case, why is the name of the product more important to share than the one of the subject? Is it the ID picture of the person or

of the object? Does this kind of picture, one among millions, make one an object in the eye of bureaucracy?

These are just some of the questions we could ask ourselves regarding the nature of ID style images, while we might also interpret these photos as a reference to the practice of casting polaroids as in another work from Teller, showing models in a mugshot-like setting, holding an information plate.

To understand how this reference can be connected to fashion, we must look at some casting polaroids as an example:

some shots from a casting for New York Fashion Week in 2012. The photographs show the models standing against a black wall, with a series of scale lines on the side, indicating the height of the model, recalling the atmosphere of mugshots used for criminal documentation, for which a similar method is employed to indicate the height of the criminals.

Even if Teller does not have the intention of showing a resemblance between the two, it is possible to observe a kind of uncomfortable exposedness in this kind of dehumanized documentation, as well – in fact, the sunglasses are used as a form of disobedience.

THE CONTEMPORARY USE OF PHYSIOGNOMIC ANALYSIS: FACIAL RECOGNITION

The topic of ID photographs leads us to a more developed contemporary way of identification: facial recognition. Using the sizes and distances of facial elements just as some speculations of the 19th century, facial recognition was developed initially to identify people in specific spaces where CCTV cameras with a facial recognition software are installed, and in certain cases, to monitor their behavior.

Although the general delay in efficient regulations regarding this fast-improving technology raises some problematic questions, one of the most threatening issues has to do with the fact that it is used in a not purely objective way, solely aiming at personal identification.

Some uses of this technology highly resemble the methods and areas of the 19th century researchers of physiognomy. There are examples of softwares claiming to be able to tell apart heterosexual and homosexual individuals, or to recognise people who might have a tendency for criminal activities (even without a pre-existing criminal record), merely based upon their facial features. These softwares could represent the renaissance of a physiognomic determinism, that, if institutionalized in any way, could be used on masses of people without any consent from their side.

Many artists addressed the issue regarding the objectifying approach and other issues related to Machine Vision. The issue of how we perceive the image of us that the computers and, consequently, corporations have, is ironically addressed by Jillian Mayer, who set up billboards showing her work in different locations in the US. She sarcastically raised the possibility of identifying on a personal level with the grouping processes of machine vision. She played with the idea of humans defining their own personality and identity according to the self-analysis of their facial features. A similar issue, regarding how this kind of approach would limit our personal freedom, is addressed by Zach Blas' work, *Face Cages*.

He built iron cages, covering the faces with a grid similar to the one of facial recognition softwares, referring to the controlling power of such practices, and stands as the dramatization of their

structural violence, described by feminist communications scholar Shoshana Amielle Magnet as "a cage of information". Many of Heather Dewey-Hagborg's works address questions related to biometric data (like DNA, facial recognition etc.), exploring the methods of getting closer to the understanding of how facial recognition works.

In her work *How do you see me?* she used adversarial algorithms, intended to deceive recognition softwares, and bases her work on the artificial evolution of the processes. The result produced over hundreds of generations is a series of black and white images, unrecognizable to the human eye, that were recognized either as a human face, or the artist's face upon some featural resemblance. The works show how distant the automatically generated machine vision is from the process of human vision, and points out the problems that may come from giving too much power to these machines in the judgement of human faces.

One of her other works, *Spurious Memories*, explores the possibility of what would happen if, instead of pointing out the differences in the vision of machines, we imagined them with human-like qualities, like the ability of dreaming. What would a facial recognition system's dream look like? Like a series of mixed, blurry images of faces? The work focuses on the instinctive human habit of humanizing objects, even machines, in order to understand them better, especially when these tools are capable of judging us. To humans, it is impossible to imagine that machines can form judgements, completely without subjectivity.

A certain type of subjectivity, although different the one we might expect, can be observed in some processes of facial recognition systems, as shown by the exhibition *Training Humans*, organized by Prada Foundation, which was based on the project of Kate Crawford and Trevor Paglen. The researcher and the artist collected several examples of studies related to facial recognition, and databases of portraits. Through the detection of gender, race, emotions, and features, they showed a series of fields of research, as well as a software that guesses the profession of the person examined, mainly based on the similarities between other faces included in the software's training data. This is the topic that is being examined by the London-based artist collective Broomberg & Chanarin's work, *Spirit is a Bone*. The artists use a Russian facial recognition software that creates a "mask", a virtual image of the individuals' faces using 4 cameras placed in different points, without the person knowing.

The artists use this system to create the portraits of several Russians with different professions, one from each field. Their method is similar to that of two 20th century German artists, August Sander and Helmar Lerski, who both photographed their country's communities sorting them by profession or place occupied in society, but in two completely different ways. Sander often presented his subjects in a heroic way, in the middle of the composition, looking into the camera, often together with the object referring to their occupation. Lerski, on the other hand, showed the subjects in close-up portraits, alone, while lights on their faces were the only accompanying elements. These different approaches to represent society are revisited in Broomberg & Chanarin's work:

> the outsider, mechanical gaze, raising the question of how much we can let Artificial Intelligence systems classify people putting them into categories, and construct their own image of society.

The method of machine learning, a basic dynamism of every surveillance system, is one of the tools that the French photographer Julien Prévieux uses in his works *Les inconnus connus inconnus*. The machine learning mechanism compares generated images with some pre-recorded images.

Prévieux chose to use images of well-known, anonymous people like spies, revolutionaries, forgers of masked musicians, and ran them through the system. The collection of encrypted images created pays homage to the political figure of the "anonymous".

Just like Prévieux's work, the artist Leonardo Selvaggio's work also plays with anonymity, by offering a 3D and a 2D copy of his face for open use, a fake identity pointing to the artist's person to anyone in need.

THE ACT OF HIDING ONE'S FACE

The idea of hiding from the always-watching eyes of a surveillance system is a recurring subject in contemporary artists' works, from which one of the most well-known is Hito Steyerl's video work *How Not to be Seen. A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File*. Steyerl's sarcastic propositions for possibilities of disappearing point out the sometimes impossible action of becoming invisible for computer vision, but it didn't discourage the numerous artists, activists and designers, who try to propose more practical ways of hiding. It appears that, in recent years, following the development and wider use of surveillance technologies, the possibility of becoming unrecognizable to the CCTV cameras became a shared issue for many people of different fields of interest.

Adam Harvey is one of the best known artists, the subject of disguise who sacrificed years of his practice to develop alternatives for hiding, using all the tools of fashion. Through the use of makeup, additional hair or applied small facial objects to jackets/hijabs hiding the person from the camera, he explored diverse ways to make the person unrecognizable to surveillance systems. All these methods seemingly only served a fashion related function. We can think of many examples, from artists and designers to accessories made to hide the person wearing them, from reflecting glasses, infrared sunglasses, different jewelry compositions, types of makeup that confuse AI systems, masks, special projectors that distort the face, as well as certain hairstyles, hoodies with patterns that make the wearer unidentifiable as a person.

All these tools, like patterns, colors, special surfaces etc., are normally used in fashion, these tools remain only seemingly related to aesthetic appearance while their main purpose is to fulfill adversarial functions, the jewelry collection called Another Skin by Akiko Shinzato, who addresses the issue of dissatisfaction and of the common desire to change one's facial features, while also reflecting on the masking of identity.

Another example is Balenciaga's 2020 spring campaign, a great example which can help us to understand how highlighting certain facial features has great importance in both the expression of the beauty industry and in the process of hiding one's identity.

Even the phenomenon of hiding beauty becomes relevant in this discussion, just as Adam Harvey is using the hijab to hide from surveillance, an object that's one intended use the hiding of beauty, and the protection from the gaze of its wearer. Just as Guido Palau's hairstyles show in Fabien Baron's photographs (pic) the tendency to hide beauty is not only

a relevant issue in certain religious environments. It seems that fashion, while it can help us express our personality, might also end up hiding it.

After discussing all these different ways to hide identity, it is only natural to ask ourselves the following question:

> why do we want to hide our face and our beauty? Is beauty a fundamental part of someone's identity, is it what defines us? Or is it the position of certain features of our face that tells people who we are? Why do we find it important to change or hide these features? Are we scared of being reduced to a mere dehumanized ID photograph?

Some of these questions were already posed by Franco Vaccari's photo booth exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 1972.

Although AI technologies will not develop until decades from now, the simple, often machine-made ID portraits have already been a big part of bureaucratic control over society. Vaccari, placing the machine in an empty room and inviting people to leave a trace, inspired many visitors to take a photo of themselves, and to place it on the walls.

Among the many images, some portraits seemed to differ from the stereotypical ID photos. Many of the visitors altered the simple shot with grimaces, disguises etc., fighting the cold objective vision normally associated with the automatic machine.

This seems to be a human behavior that comes from our preference for this type of images, instead of simplified,forced identifications of us; the first one based only on our face, while the latter is created by a machine. In our age, being judged by machines day-by-day, it seems we are left with only a few options, to feel that we are in control of our image.

Nevertheless, we can choose to accept the type of identification and the portrait that machines offer us. We can try to alternate it, hoping to reach a more satisfactory result, or we can choose to hide, refusing to be judged by our face.



Fig. 1 ***Collage***, Collage, 2020.



Fig. 2 ***Collage***, Collage, 2020.

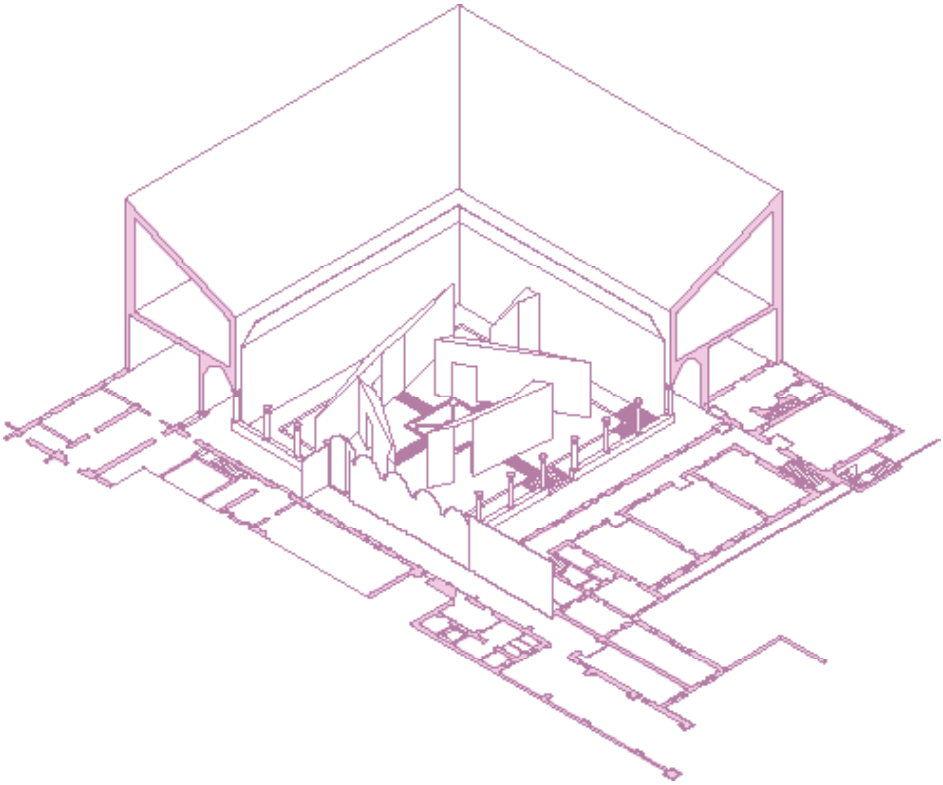


Fig. 3 ***Section***, Collage, 2020.

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UNTITLED

Who is Martin Margiela?

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ROOM 1:
INCOGNITO.

ROOM 2:
ICON/ONOCLASTIC.

ROOM 3:
THE ARTIST IS ABSENT.

ROOM 4:
TABI.

FIRST SECTION:
Who is Martin Margiela?

55

ABSTRACT CURATORIALE + 5 KEY WORDS

Who is Martin Margiela? Ground-breaking fashion designer born in Belgium, Martin Margiela founded the Parisian brand Maison Martin Margiela, which he was the designer of until 2009, when, suddenly, he stepped back, claiming he had nothing more to say and design.

A true creative genius, for more than twenty years he dictated fashion trends, challenging conventions and presuppositions, without the actual intention of making a tabula rasa of the fashion industry, but rather to playfully explore its boundaries. His style is so conceptual that, somehow, we enter the domain of art rather than fashion. Martin Margiela purposefully made it difficult for others to define him, and the mysterious aura that surrounds him is one of the reasons why he's so interesting even today.

The idea of identity, however, has always been central to him in many ways. The exhibition *Untitled* is nonetheless focused on one particular aspect:

> how the brand, in the years under Margiela's guidance, eployed the format of the automatic portrait to investigate the boundaries and balances between self-identification and brand identity.

What the exhibition sets out to underline is how a whole photographic tradition, deeply rooted in the very first experiments on the device itself, can be summoned up again in fashion, a field very far from those of its original use (medicine, psychiatry, criminology, and anthropology) and in a historical context completely changed, questioned, manipulated, or rather, to use the most suitable term when it comes to Martin Margiela, 'deconstructed' to achieve newer aims.

Keywords: Martin Margiela, identity, fashion, photography, art.

ABSTRACT EXPOSITION DESIGN + 5 KEY WORDS

Developing amongst four different rooms and a courtyard devoted to documentaries and movie screenings, the exhibition design aims at highlighting the interconnection between Maison Martin Margiela's iconic brand identity and the history of automatic portraiture.

Different shades of white create the colour palette of the exhibition, as a reference to the first ateliers opened by Martin Margiela in Paris, where white was an expression of unity, purity and honesty.

ROOM 1: INCOGNITO

This first room sets out to discern the particular relationship Martin Margiela and his Maison have with the representation of identity. By disguising the models' faces and even his own, Margiela concentrates the attention on his creations and doesn't let the brand be dominated by recognizable faces. The most used iconographies related to fashion brands, in fact, have to deal with face and thus identity, whether it is the 'face' of the brand (model/muse) or the 'head' of the brand (the designer). Margiela refuses all of that and puts forth a strict Incognito strategy that

will eventually result in the creation of some of the brand's most iconic products: the Incognito sunglasses and the masks.

ROOM 2: ICON/ONOCLASTIC

The second room shows how, by refusing the concept of self-identity, Maison Martin Margiela has managed to develop a strong, unique, and collective brand identity, where the clothes are at the centre, making the brand instantly recognizable. When Maison Margiela was founded, extreme narcissism dominated the fashion landscape, with designers attaining superstar status, whereas Margiela always avoided the limelight, so as to allow his fashion to speak for itself. Furthermore, he always refused to give interviews. All interviews are answered in the name of the Maison and formulated in the first-person plural. The strategy that made the brand iconic is a strong brand identity and Maison approach.

Grouped here are some of his most iconic creations, collections, and fashion shows, testifying to the ability his garments have of speaking on behalf of the brand. They do not need extraordinary fashion shows or high-budget editorials and campaigns. Most of the time, they do not even need models. The aim is to minimize the spectacle of fashion while creating some of the most unforgettable pieces, such as the Tailor's dummy Jacket.

ROOM 3: THE ARTIST IS ABSENT

Starting from the ideas shown in the previous Icon/oclastic room, this room is dedicated to the screening of Alison Chernik's documentary on Martin Margiela, *The Artist is Absent* (2015), a short film, that, much in line with the brand philosophy, talks about Martin Margiela, without Martin Margiela himself.

ROOM 4: TABI

The last room is entirely dedicated to the true icons of the brand: Tabi boots. Tracing back their origins to 15th-century Japan, Tabi had never entered before the world of Western fashion, let alone haute couture.

Present since the beginnings of the brand in 1988, they are here interpreted as a metaphor for Martin Margiela himself, as, through the recognizable shape of his Tabi, Margiela left a permanent mark on the world of fashion, which still celebrates him today. Keywords: Martin Margiela, white, the artist is absent, exhibition design, display.

WHO IS MARTIN MARGIELA?

That is a very good question. It is actually the question that lies at the very base of our whole exhibition, *Untitled*. We could just start by saying that he's a fashion designer, born in Belgium, who studied fashion in Antwerp, a fundamental centre of fashion production in the 1980s. In 1988, he then moved to Paris, where he started his own fashion house, Maison Martin

Margiela, which he was the designer of until 2009, when suddenly he stepped back, claiming that he had nothing more to say and to design (Simons 2015). When it comes to this ground-breaking designer, however, just stating the facts is definitely not enough.

He was a creative genius who, for over twenty years, dictated fashion trends, challenging conventions and presumptions, not really intending to make a tabula rasa of the fashion industry, but rather of playfully testing its borders (Debo 2008, 3).

Maison Martin Margiela's whole oeuvre challenges conventional perceptions of authenticity, the body, fashion's illusions that it can create a standardized 'body' fitted for the mass production of clothes, the opposition between 'high' and 'low' fashion, and the role of the designer (Debo 2008, 3). His style is so conceptual that, somehow, we enter the domain of art, rather than fashion (Vinken 2008, 112).

Martin Margiela voluntarily made it hard for everyone to define him, and the mysterious aura that surrounds him is exactly why he's still so interesting today. The idea of identity, however, has always been central to him in many ways. When designing *Untitled*, we decided to concentrate on one particular aspect:

> the way the brand, in the years in which Margiela was the designer, employed the format of the automatic portrait to investigate the boundaries and the balances between self-identity and brand identity.

What our exhibition will underline is exactly how a whole photographic tradition, deeply rooted in the very first experiments on the device itself, can be summoned up again in fashion, a field very far from those of its original use (medicine, psychiatry, criminology, and anthropology) and in a historical context completely changed, called into question, manipulated, or rather, to use the most suitable term when it comes to Martin Margiela, "deconstructed" to achieve newer aims.

In order to make Margiela's revolution in the format of the automatic portrait clearer, we believe it is fundamental to take a step back and briefly trace the evolution of the technique. The usage of photography for the depiction of identity is almost as old as the device itself, and, given its widespread use today, especially on social media and in the general media scape, one may perhaps claim that it is precisely its most lasting role (Lee 2020). Human beings have rendered images of themselves in different forms since the beginning of our species, the first artefacts in the form of proto-portraits dating back to the Neolithic. The desire to capture the human essence in something that will outlast the physical body is universal, and it answers different specific needs:

> personal, historical, and political especially. It is a desire that could be defined as narcissistic, which, as Freud put it, '[...] is the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation,' in the sense that it unites the individualistic necessity of the memory of the self with the idea of surviving death (Freud 2014).

For centuries, those who could afford to have images made of themselves were almost invariably of the upper-middle and ruling classes, who had the income and leisure to sit for the portrait painter or sculptor. On the contrary, with the invention of photography in the first half of the 19th century, the power of such imagery, of a personal and public cry

of individuality and self-worth, came within the reach of ordinary people, too. Here, we could refer to Michel Foucault, who in *The Order of Things* stated that an image depicts not just what could be seen within it but the very means of ordering and representing a society (Foucault 1970).

Photography, in fact, almost immediately found fertile grounds among commoners, who thought of it as a means of self-representation in a historical moment in which portraits and self-portraits seemed to match contemporary political and social developments that gave voice to individuals, like the fight for the universal right to vote or, in England and France, the revolution for self-governance amidst traditions of monarchy (Lee 2020). The invention of photography was first introduced in 1839 in a scientific environment, and immediately celebrated for its capacity to mirror reality and to be an index of the surrounding world.

Since its original and natural close association to the uses of science, photography was immediately exploited for its recognized ability to mirror reality, documenting human identity, studying ethnic diversity, identifying and classifying psychiatric disorders, eventually facilitating coercion, and the prevention of danger and civil insecurity.

To do so, photographic portraits have been used since the second half of the 19th century for psychiatric, criminology and anthropology applications (Muzzarelli 2016, 2). The type of photography employed to these ends was the most mechanical and neutral one, with the aim of ensuring the objectivity necessary to depict the salient physiognomic features of the subject. The type of photography used is mimetic with the camera; it is a grade zero, without authoriality, since it doesn't show the perspective of the photographer. This interest in the depiction of identity through the analysis of human features is a legacy of the ancient science of physiognomics, already known by Aristoteles, a discipline that found in photography a fundamental tool and that disappeared in the 19th century, only to re-emerge in the forms of anthropology, criminology, and psychiatry (Lavater 1775-1778; Cairoli 1995; Giuffredi 2001).

The mania for classification through the use of automatic portraits was a consequence of a particular philosophical climate known as Positivism, which is characterised by an exaltation of science and techniques. Medicine and psychiatry were the first disciplines to take on automatic photography for their needs, and to this end, the research of Guillaume Duchenne de Boulogne, Jean-Martin Charcot, and Augusto Tamburini could be mentioned. Similarly, anthropological studies infused with a positivist climate triggered the need to catalogue for investigative and forensic purposes, and the use of the automatic portrait entered the realm of criminology. Very interesting in this sense is, for example, the archive created by Cesare Lombroso, the work of Alphonse Bertillon, inventor of the *bertillonage*, that will influence diverse fields, especially art and fashion, and the research of Salvatore Ottolenghi.

Finally, worthy of mention is the anthropological studies in the climate of Colonialism, which had an interest in studying, cataloguing, and examining human features with the aim of tracing lines of differences (and separation) between the races of the world (Muzzarelli 2016, 2-5). In conclusion, in the 19th century, the automatic portrait was seen as automatic and mechanical, suitable more for scientific purposes than art. In the new century, instead, the automatic portrait enters first the realm of art and then that of fashion, which is the field that concerns

the exhibition the most. The turning point was in the early 20th century when Dadaism and Surrealism created the premises for a total revaluation of the concept of art, its meaning, its language, and its products.

The artworld finally recognises the possibilities of automatic and mechanical photography, of an "automatic imaginary," that can open up to other realms, such as fashion (Marra 2003, XI). Photography's one-century-old fight to achieve the same pictorial effects as a painting and to be recognised as art becomes useless. It's instead particularly interesting to see how photography, in its "coldest" (to quote Marshall McLuhan), most mechanical and impersonal evolution, affected fields that are based on the personal expression of the self, such as fashion and art.

Fashion and photography are two fields that work almost in osmosis, influencing and transforming each other's language.

When taking a fashion photograph, one can rely on photographic imagery, staging stories, and situations that immediately recall the conceptual background of the history of photography (Muzzarelli 2009, 3-4). Advertising and fashion are great examples of the photomatic's incorporation in the collective imagery. Fashion advertisement studies the automatic portrait, its language and its communicative models and appropriates them. Of course, the technique has changed over the century and the digital picture differs greatly from the authentic automatic image.

It is rather a visual reference to that photographic tradition; nonetheless, it retains some of its original meanings and aims, firstly that of the depiction of identity. Many fashion photographers and campaigns are worthy of mention:

> Oliviero Toscani and his work for Benetton, starting with the advertising campaign titled *Faces* (1997), or Juergen Teller's work for Helmut Lang in 1999, which owes much to the visual heritage of the *bertillonage*.

There are many other examples, but it is safe to say most of them at this date (the 1990s) seem to respect the original aim of the technique, which was to investigate the identity of the subject. (Muzzarelli 2003, 133-137). But since for every good thesis, there is also an equally valid antithesis, we feel the need to mention Maison Martin Margiela in this discourse. The real question is:

> how can we interpret identity when it comes to a designer who has never shown his face in public?

According to Helmut Newton, every photographer is a voyeur, whether he admits it or not (Squiers 1993, 14). If we believe in this concept, we could also say that every photograph visualizes a voyeuristic desire.

Psychoanalysis frequently associates voyeurism with erotic and sexual desire, but it is better to say that the true voyeur is someone who finds satisfaction in the appropriation of visual information that belongs to the lives of others (Muzzarelli 2009, 53). The photograph thus becomes a Freudian fetish. As Francesca Alinovi pointed out, photography can be a perverse medium. What was first conceived as a mere index of the world, could always become an escape from reality, both for the photographer, who could interpret the mechanical device as a prosthesis of his own body and, through it, possess the subjects of the photographs (Lewis Carroll being the most eloquent 19th-century example) and for the portrayed, who, by putting his body in front of the lenses, could act as a performer and impersonator of different characters (suffice to quote the

Countess of Castiglione or all the commoners who playfully performed in front of the camera in Disderi's studio).

With mass media, the private dimension has been absorbed by the public sphere, which bursts uninvited into the intimacy of one's person, and photography perfectly visualizes this process, as Roland Barthes noticed. "[...] the age of Photography corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public, or rather into the creation of a new social value, which is the publicity of the private"(Barthes 1981, 98).

By denying his face, instead, Martin Margiela is refusing the public role of the fashion designer as an icon, a celebrity and a star, a tendency that we are very much accustomed to today, but that already emerged in the 1980s. When Maison Margiela started, in 1988, extreme narcissism dominated the fashion landscape, with designers attaining superstar status. In contrast, Margiela always tried to escape the spotlight in order to let his fashion clothes speak for themselves.

All interviews are answered in the name of the Maison and formulated in the first-person plural, as in the famous "We Margiela", subject also of a documentary (Meijer 2018). No photographs of the designer ever circulated as an effort to stay back from stardom (Debo 2008, 5).

In the fashion industry of those years, models were becoming icons themselves, too. The term "top model" appeared for the first time in the fashion landscape, especially with Naomi Campbell, Linda Evangelista, Cindy Crawford, and Claudia Schiffer (Muzzarelli 2009, 88).

Their "icon" status was created and nurtured by the fashion photographers. Their identities were so sharp and clear that they were often used as "faces" of a brand in order to create a definite, evident, and immediately recognizable brand identity, just by linking the muse to the designer.

In the fashion houses, "[...] the models have become the absolute stars of fashion, and their recognisability is bankable because they are 'omnipresent' faces of publicity"; they also "[...] offer a point of narcissistic identification while being the driving force of sales." (Vinken 2008, 112). Margiela, instead, refuses to book famous models (with the almost unique exception of Kate Moss in 1993), preferring friends of the staff of the Maison. Normal people, with normal bodies, just like any other customer who might buy the clothes he designed. The most used iconographies related to fashion brands have to deal with face and thus identity, whether it is the 'face' of the brand (the model or the muse) or the 'head' of the brand (the designer), (Debo 2008, 8).

Margiela, on the other hand, creates disfiguring and reconfiguring processes that have visual consequences on the presentation of the label as well as on the faces and names that, somehow, "incarnate" it (Vinken 2008, 111). What could be defined as an "Incognito strategy" is then followed through in the presentation of the collection as well, both on the runway and in lookbooks. On the runway, the faces of the models are generally hidden by making them wear masks or veils, or else by obscuring their faces with dark and heavy make-up or hair extensions.

In lookbooks and advertising campaigns, instead, a black band is usually drawn across the eyes of the models, which has then been the ultimate inspiration for the creation of the famous Incognito sunglasses (Line 8, 2008), (Debo 2008, 8).

Of course, the black strip placed over the eyes of the models, of those who are photographed, immediately refers to the safeguarding

of the anonymity of the suspect or convicted criminal who should not be made recognizable for fear of popular outrage. The use of the automatic portrait to create these lookbook pictures, then, immediately recalls its original use in criminology, both visually and conceptually. Just as criminals should remain incognito for as long as they are infamous, so too should the models. The anonymity and "in-famy" that Maison Martin Margiela forces on its models could be almost read as being on the thin threshold between discretion and violence, but, eventually, it is imposed with the aim of running counter the iconicity of models as idols of the modern age (Vinken 2008, 112). At the same time, another clear reference to the *bertillonage* and to the visuality of criminality through the automatic portrait is created in the backstage of Menswear fashion shows, where male models line up in front of the camera, looking straight at the lens and holding a placard with name and height, looking just like a 19th-century criminal.

"In-famous in the strict sense of the world is also Martin Margiela's choice for remaining nameless and anonymous as a fashion designer [...] and his refusal of endowing his collections with bombastic names. Instead, he identifies them by merely giving them a number." (Vinken 2008, 113) At the same time, Martin Margiela avoids relying on big names for his fashion campaigns. In the same way in which he denies his own identity and that of the models, he tries to hide the identity of the photographers, too. Margiela's fashion campaigns and editorials are mostly still-life photographs, in which the clothes are the real protagonists.

He opts for photographs that appear mechanical, automatic, impersonal, and cold (using a term coined by Marshall McLuhan) in order to make the viewer concentrate on the clothes, on the object, rather than on the beautiful picture, in a way that recalls the photographs of Karl Blossfeldt. A viewer (who, as we should never forget, is always a potential customer), when looking at the picture, should wonder who made that marvellous piece of clothing, rather than who took that beautiful photo.

Margiela often resorts to the format of the automatic portrait in order to hint to a whole early tradition of photography in which the perspective of the photographer was completely hidden behind the device and at the centre of the photograph there was a still subject, who, through a cruel process of reification, was eventually treated as an object, as a thing to study and analyse. In the same way, Margiela puts his creations, his "objects", with no distinction of who's wearing them, whether by true, breathing models, or by hangers or even by chairs, in front of the cold lenses of a camera and lets the clothes be the striking and recognizable identity in the picture. Even in the fashion shows, where models seem a necessity, Margiela manages to replace the girls with objects:

> with mannequins with the typical black band drawn across the eyes or wearing masks (Winter 1994/1995 and Winter 1998/1999), with hangers carried on stage by the staff of the Maison (Summer 1998) or even by automatic portraits printed on a placard, carried by the staff (Summer 1999).

That the body of the model isn't relevant at all is also testified by the photographs of the Summer Collection of 1998, made with automatic portraits of the clothes on hangers, held by the staff of the Maison (whose hands are recognizable because they are wearing the famous *blouse blanches*) in front of the models, without them actually trying on the collection.

Yet, that fashion's what must represent the brand is best visualized in the

photograph of AW 2000/2001, in which we see a dress on a hanger in front of a neutral background and a lot of microphones held towards it, as if it was actually speaking on behalf of the Maison. This concept is so deeply rooted in the philosophy of the brand that, even today, in 2020, where Martin Margiela is not the designer of the fashion house anymore (that position was given in 2014 to John Galliano), the brand identifies itself as an "iconoclastic brand" (maisonmargiela 2020). No label, no logo, no muses.

Margiela uses a series of strategies with the aim of disappearing as much as possible from his own creations (another interesting example being the blank white label). What Margiela enacts is a deconstruction process of self-identity (his own, the identities of his collaborators and workers, and even the identity of his models) in favour of a strong, unique, and collective brand identity.

Yet, his work is not a total negation of identity; rather, it is a negation that eventually leads to the affirmation of a stronger brand identity. The Tabi boots, the Incognito sunglasses, the Tailor's Dummy Jackets, and the *blouse blanche* are worn by every single worker of the Maison, with no distinction or hierarchy. These are Margiela's true icons: the clothes and the Maison itself. These are the subjects worthy of being captured by a camera, published, and diffused. These are Martin Margiela's signature, and, we dare to say, his true and authentic identity.



Fig. 1 *Atlas*, Collage, 2020.

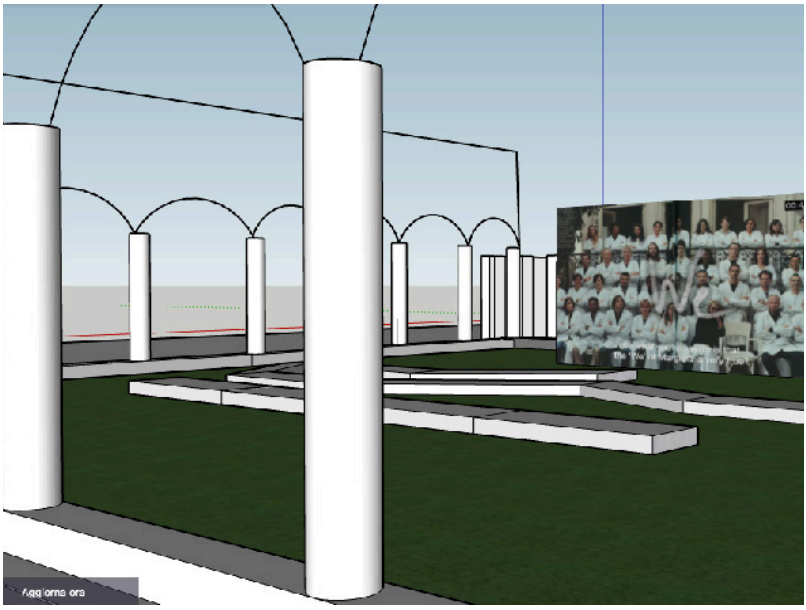


Fig. 2 ***Courtyard***, view of the exhibition ***Untitled***, 2020.

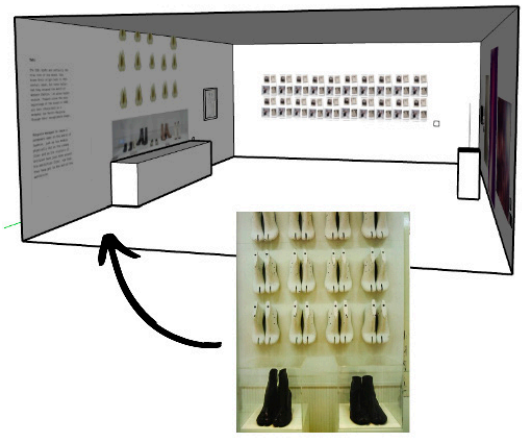


Fig. 3 ***Tabi Room***, view of the exhibition ***Untitled***, 2020.



Fig. 4 ***Tabi Room***, view of the exhibition ***Untitled***, 2020.



Fig. 5 ***The Artist is Absent Room***, view of the exhibition ***Untitled***, 2020, screening Alisno Chermick, ***The Artist is Absent*** (2015).



Fig. 6 ***Untitled***, Exhibition Catalogue, 2020.

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***The Photo Booth and the photographic automatism*. 2016. Milan: Pearson.**

ONE, NO ONE AND ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND

AUTHORS:

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FIRST SECTION:
Cecil Beaton:
the iconic photographer.

SECOND SECTION:
Annie Leibovitz: the lens
behind the magazine covers.

THIRD SECTION:
Bill Cunningham: the elusive
street photographer.

FOURTH SECTION:
The Shared Photography.

CURATORIAL ABSTRACT + 5 KEY WORDS

With the Covid-19 pandemic, people, including the students behind this exhibition, soon had to give up physical interaction and turn to any technological screen at their disposal for communicating. If we as a group didn't care about our appearance during our meetings thanks to the confidence we learned to gain from one another, the image of ourselves, when imprinted on an analog or digital device, reveals part of our identity.

At the same time, photography is a vehicle for identity, which is about someone's inner and hidden side; it is a constructed representation that is addressed to and judged by an external audience. The clash between identity and appearance, being a photograph embedded with traces of a possibly manipulated identity, finds a fertile battleground in the fashion field, in which photography reveals its twofold tendencies:

a certification of authenticity and a means for artificial self-construction.

Specifically, the field of fashion is patterned by the 'icon' dynamic. If on the one hand, the icon can be perceived as a sort of hyper-identity, emblematic of a certain characteristic, the icon-appointed person can feel the burden of an inescapable status.

However, by delving into the world of fashion, it is possible to realize how the actors enlivening this world are not as fixed as we might tend to think, as the relations between the photographed subject and the active photographer within an ever-changing context go through transitions. It is enough to think about the technological development the photographic device has been experiencing since its birth.

This exhibition, alongside a chronological development, inquires into three major cores:

the photographic device, the notion of icon, and the setting of the photoshoots, and leads us to wonder about some issues: Is the power of the icon capable of forging a model's fame at the hands of a famous photographer, or is it the shooting of a renowned subject that opens up a glorious path for a photographic career? How does the myth of the idol affect the photographic portrait in relation to the author, inasmuch as with the subject, as well as considering the fruition by part of the public?

Key words: identity, representation, icon, technology, fashion.

ABSTRACT EXPOSITION DESIGN + 5 KEY WORDS

Our curatorial choice for the arrangement of the exhibition, held in the convent house of Santa Cristina, is to use mainly the cloister.

Dividing the space into four squares is an explicit reference to the shape of the photobooth, which constantly inspired many artists, like the project Franco Vaccari presented for the Venice Biennale in 1972 .

Each of them hosts one artist, starting from the first room with the photographer Cecil Beaton, then shifting to Annie Leibovitz, and finally arriving in the third room with Bill Cunningham. The fourth and last room is occupied by a section dedicated to the practice of the 'selfie'.

In order to guide the viewer through the space, we have decided to dye the walls four different colors, each of them nuanced and soothing to the eyes. In the corner of the colonnade, before entering the room, there is a panel introducing the theme and the photographer.

Next to the panel, there is a glass case that showcases a specific photographic device for each photographer. Even if they have used many types of cameras throughout their careers, only the ones that have become iconic for them are on exhibit. Moreover, displaying each photographic machine next to the correspondent panel gives a picture of the technological development over time. First, we start with a Kodak 3A folding camera for Beaton, moving to one of the favorite cameras of Annie Leibovitz – the Nikon F – and then to the Pen-D Olympus, perfect for Bill Cunningham's street photography. Finally, we finish with the Iphone4, presented in 2010, the first one with a frontal camera.

As soon as the visitor enters each space, a portrait of the iconic photographer stares at him from above, hanging from the corner of the room. This placement is a reference to the artistic attitude of the Russian artist Malevich, as expressed in his display of the iconic Black Square:

> the painting looks at the visitor like a Russian icon, a supernatural spiritual entity which is there to comfort earthly suffering.

Then, the rooms are roofed with a glass ceiling that recalls the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. Being the Great Exhibition a historical event that contributed to the development of human craft and expertise, the rooms were decided to be closed with a glass ceiling, in reminiscence of the original Crystal Palace. Considering that natural light is not always ideal for photography display, lead movable spotlights will be used as well.

The display of the picture is inspired by the pivotal exhibition *Family of Man*, curated by Steichen at MoMa in 1955. Accordingly, the material is displayed through light and modulable supporting structures hanging from metallic beams. In order to engage the viewer more, the pictures and magazine covers exhibited are all enlarged reproductions of the originals. This choice is a reference to Delpire's curatorial practices at the CNP in the '80s. The exhibition then concludes in the internal hallway leading to the exit. Guided towards the end of it, visitors entering the last space face a photobooth, where they are invited to take a selfie.

The same photo is then transmitted to the screen present on both sides of the corridor, showing all the selfies taken during the exhibition display. As the public keep walking towards the exit, they are surrounded by the constant reproduction of other people's faces, understanding how they are all one, no one, and one hundred thousand.

By staring at other people's selfies, visitors come to acknowledge that, despite all their differences, they all undergo the same experience of depersonalization by letting a machine picture their identity.

At the final stage of the exhibition, piles of posters are placed immediately at the end of the interactive corridor. Visitors can get a copy for free as a report of the experience. The purpose of making stacks of copies of the same poster is to emphasize reproducibility as the intrinsic nature of photography.

Keywords: automatic portrait, reproducibility, color-coding, experience, medium.

ONE, NO ONE AND ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND

> ***Era proprio la mia immagine intravista in un lampo? Sono proprio così, io, di fuori, quando – vivendo- non mi penso? Dunque per gli altri sono quell'estraneo sorpreso nello specchio: quello, e non già io quale mi conosco; quell'uno lì che io stesso in prima, scorgendolo, non l'ho riconosciuto. Sono quell'estraneo che non posso veder vivere se non così, in un attimo impensato. Un estraneo che possono vedere e conoscere solamente gli altri, e io no.*** [1]
> **Luigi Pirandello, *Uno, Nessuno, Centomila* (1926)**

1 Was it really my own, that image glimpsed in a flash? Am I really like that, from the outside, when - all the while living - I do not think of myself? For others, then, I am that stranger whom I surprised in a mirror; I am he and not the I whom I know; I am that one there whom I myself at first, upon becoming aware of him, did not recognize. I am that stranger whom I am unable to see living except like that, in a thoughtless second. A stranger whom others alone can see and know, but I can't. Our translation.

What do you do?
His wife asks Vitangelo Moscarda, as he seems lost while looking at himself in front of the mirror. Since the myth of Narcissus, people have been looking at themselves through liquid surfaces and shiny metal layers until the arrival of smooth mirrors, accessible to the majority of the public only since the 19th century. The first half of this century witnessed the discovery of another medium strictly related to the appearance and identity of people: photography. It immortalizes moments where the subject's own construction delivers a certain memory of himself, depersonalizing his own being for the sake of the icon. From 1854, Disderi's *carte-de-visite* foregrounds agency in creating one's own self-portrait.

From the 1920s onwards, thanks to the introduction of photo booths, the performance of self-depiction escaped the photographic atelier, being now dictated by the choice of undergoing an irreversible and mechanical process, immortalized instantaneously in strips of pictures.

The collision between how we see ourselves and how others perceive us is globally relevant today, especially due to technologies that have eased the ability to take and share pictures. The old boundaries fixed by the device and the studio have been torn down.

To what extent does this shift in coordinates interact with the new possibility for subjects to become photographers and vice versa? And what does this imply with regard to the notion of 'icon'? The field of fashion, ontologically embedded with issues of appearance and representation, is the playground for the identity game that photography puts into motion, revealing its twofold identity:

> a certification of authenticity and a means for artificial self-construction, struggling with being faithful to someone's inner side while at the same time being judged from the outside.

CECIL BEATON: THE ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHER

2 While his academic career never took off, he did contribute greatly to the Amateur Dramatic Club (ADC) of Cambridge University.

3 A highlight of his extensive career are the three Oscars he won as a costume designer and set decorator in 1958 and 1963 for *Gigi* and *My Fair Lady.*

Cecil Beaton's love for theatre made him a world-famous photographer, known even today. For an aesthete like him, the stage was the place where he could experiment and express himself, flourishing during his years at Cambridge.[2] His skills in constructing dreamy and illusionary settings were clear throughout his entire lifetime, from the first photographs taken of his sisters to the high society portraits, and even in the film industry

field[3] or as a curator.[4] Cecil Beaton successfully entered the history of photography, making it possible to study his knowledge and legacy.

Certainly, he carried on Adolf de Meyer's heritage in regards to fashion portraiture and his relationship with socialites.

Instead, he distanced himself from amateur forms of voyeurism, as exemplified by Lewis Carroll. During his controversial career, Carroll thrived with the same tension between illusion and reality that can be admired in Beaton's photos.

While they share the same interest in the creation of a setting with the help of theatrical costumes, Carroll remained an amateur photographer keen on satisfying his impulses through the medium of the camera.

Beaton, on the contrary, exploited his childhood love for theatrical props and scenery (mirrors, garlands of flowers or gauze) and the capacity for creating illusions, which fed directly into his professional practice,working for Vogue and even for Buckingham Palace – one example in the display is the portrait of Princess Margaret.[5] Finally, he completed his production in the studio. In a curious image presented here, Beaton shows off his skill in photo retouching, turning his cleaner into a bejewelled dowager. Still, Beaton eschewed modernism and romanticized the country-house lifestyle of the aristocracy he chose to portray.

This is why, in a room surrounded by Beaton's photos, a viewer might perceive a sense of natural grace and innate elegance emerging from the pictures. Another phase of Beaton's career saw him as a war photographer during World War II. It had an impact on his portraiture, with some scholars highlighting how his portraits seemed less scenic after the conflict. Nevertheless, his staged settings were carried on to present the subject at his best, leaving him unaware of the process.

Ultimately, his appealing scenes never detract our gaze from the sitter, which explains why many of these pictures have acquired an iconic state. A flattering portrait enlivened by a finely tuned sense of relationship between the sitter, the costume, and the background is a successful work, therefore powerful and carrying Beaton's signature style.

His final goal was to show the sitters as they really were. All the surroundings were just an enhancing tool, since "Sometimes photographs are more like people than they are themselves" (Beaton 1972, 81), as he stated in his diaries. Considering the several exhibitions focused on specific periods or Beaton's works, the choice which has been made for this exhibition differs. Indeed, after presenting him as a creatively versatile icon portraitist, the aim is to show how he became iconic on his own.

Varying in periods and subjects, from Hollywoodian actresses to members of the royal family, the exhibited photos constitute a visual study of Beaton's style. Thanks to his devotion to work, his closeness to high society members and his knowledge of fashion, the man behind the lens became an institution. A photographer who elevated the status of the profession itself.

4 In 1971 he curated the exhibition *Fashion: An Anthology by Cecil Beaton* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, contributing to enlarge the museum fashion collection.

5 The portrait of the Princess was shot in 1949 and its peculiarity stands in the presence of Beaton himself in the picture as he is reflected in the mirror.

BIOGRAPHY OF CECIL BEATON

Iconic photographer Cecil Beaton, born in London in 1904, is one of the 20th century's most celebrated photographers. He started his career with his contribution to Vogue Magazine in 1931, and his reputation grew apace.

> *Beloved by society and the world of theatre, Beaton soon became a favourite of the Royal Family. Extremely ambitious, Beaton's superb aesthetic eye and flair for the theatrical allowed him to remain relevant over a 50-year career during which he regularly reinvented himself and his style. Beaton was also a set and costume designer who brought this theatricality into his photographs. He is famous for designing the costumes for the movies My Fair Lady and Gigi. He was knighted for his contribution to photography and the arts in 1972. He died in 1980.*

ANNIE LEIBOVITZ: THE LENS BEHIND THE MAGAZINE COVERS

Annie Leibovitz was a third-year student at the San Francisco Art Institute when her photos started appearing in the still small and rock-and-roll themed *Rolling Stones* magazine. She was not a fan of it, but, as she said:

> *It didn't matter what the subject was. What mattered was the photography. Being a photographer was my life* (Leibovitz 2008, 11).

Travelling the world since her childhood, Annie purchased her first camera in Japan in 1968:

> a Minolta SR-T 101. When photography began to acquire a major role in her life, she got a Nikon F with a 35mm lens.

Her first photographs were influenced by photographer Robert Frank,[6] whose *The Americans'* new edition came out when Annie was still a student. She was struck by how Frank documented American life: I immediately fell in love with the idea of working like Robert Frank (Leibovitz 2008, 13).

Annie started taking photos from the window of her car, looking for stories to report. Frank's photographs wanted to reproduce what the human eye saw in the most objective way possible, in order to get a '0 degree picture', a concept derived from Roland Barthes's dissertation on literature.[7]

The absence of authoriality and absolute faithfulness to reality were pivotal in mirroring the truth of the subject. And this is the kind of intimacy that Annie brings back into her portraits. Expert at capturing her subject's personality, her images reflect intimate moments and inner sides of her sitters. "When I say that I want to photograph someone, it actually means that I would like to get to know someone, examine their personality. To get the best shot possible, I need to get into context, into the situation. Perfect photography captures what surrounds you, a world of which you become part" (Leibovitz 2008).

By communicating with the subject, Annie strives to arrange the most suitable shooting setting for her portraits. Using an immediate and expressive language, her portraits are profoundly emotive , becoming exceptional in the history of photography. Imbued with lively energy, they become true icons, attracting celebrities to be photographed by her lens. Among them, Whoopi Goldberg was pictured in a bathtub full of milk, and Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi's blue-faced portrait, made on the occasion of the release of *The Blues Brothers* movie, appeared on

6 Robert Frank, *Les américains*, first published by French publisher Robert Delpire in Paris in 1958: a reportage of 83 black and white photos destined to change the direction and role of photography forever. A year later the text was also published in the United States (Frank Robert. 1959. *The Americans* (New York: Grove Press), reporting the two-year road trip Frank took across the United States, while portraying an unusual and shocking America of those years.

7 The topic is dealt with in Barthes, Roland. 1953. *Le degré zéro de l'écriture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil). The book was intended, as Barthes writes in the introduction, as 'no more than an introduction to what a history of writing might be'. A reaction against Existentialism, it combines Marxism in its critique of

the cover of *Rolling Stones*. After 142 covers and a 13-year relationship with *Rolling Stone*, Annie started collaborating with magazines like *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, becoming more and more involved with the fashion world. "What's great about doing the Vogue work is that it seems completely appropriate to go over the top. *Vogue* is about dreams and fantasies" (Leibovitz 2008, 131). Annie started organizing her work differently. For her *Alice in Wonderland* shooting she cast designers Stephan Jones and Christian Lacroix, together with Alice (Natalia Vodianova), in a specific role, like a small movie production (Leibovitz 2008, 131).

bourgeois literature and moves to a critique of what Barthes called literature, seeking a new non-ideological way of writing.

Annie plans everything precisely before going on set, which is now her *modus operand*i. The greatest operation consists of pre-production as well as post-production work, to enliven her images by simulating natural light. Through a storyboard with thumbnail pictures she makes sure that people' position will accordingly fit when printed in the magazine, proving how Annie's work influences and is influenced by its concern with fashion.

BIOGRAPHY OF ANNIE LEIBOVITZ

Born in Waterbury, Connecticut, in 1949, American Annie Leibovitz is best known for her engaging and dramatic celebrity portraits, expressing their true essence. In 1967, Leibowitz enrolled at the San Francisco Art Institute, where, although initially studying painting, she developed a love for photography. In 1970, she got a job at the magazine Rolling Stone. Within two years, the 23-year-old Leibovitz was promoted to chief photographer. Meanwhile, Leibovitz developed her trademark technique, involving the use of bold colors and surprising poses. In 1983, she left the Rolling Stones and began working for Vanity Fair, where, in contact with a wider series of popular subjects, she fixed her staged portrait style. She still regularly contributes to the magazine, as well as to Vogue. In 1991 she became the first woman ever to have a solo exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C, followed by the publication of a book accompanying the show titled Photographs: Annie Leibovitz 1970-1990 (**Washington: Harper Perennial, 1992**).

BILL CUNNINGHAM: THE ELUSIVE STREET PHOTOGRAPHER

As narrated in *Bill Cunningham. Fashion Climbing, A Memoir* (2018), since his childhood, Bill Cunningham has dreamed of 'creating beautiful women and placing them in fantastic surroundings' (Cunningham 2018, 10).

He builds up his own aesthetic guide by looking at street by-passers in New York, revealing in clothing-watching. His first camera was a little Pen-D half-frame Olympus, extremely suitable for catching many lively instants, getting 76 shots from a 36-photograph film. Moreover, he needs devices that are portable on the bike, fundamental when hitting the road. When he goes digital, he fancies Nikon products. Working for

different fashion magazines, Bill is keen on what a real person would wear: scrolling down the city, his pictures document a history of style. In an interview, Bill affirmed that he tries to be as discreet as possible (Cunningham 2016) in order to get more natural pictures.

Seeking vibrant snapshots of street fashion, he elusively (Bernstein 2016) immortalizes people oblivious to the camera. His pictures are born from the urban scenario, wherein Bill's eye is capable of finding the true personal style. Uninterested in the notoriety of the subject (Haryn 2016), he's struck by the clothing of unknown people, as well as the famous Anna Piaggi or Anna Wintour's. Cunningham understands how fashion is part of culture by creating a portrait of the popular identity of the late 20th and early 21st century New York. The set of the city is Bill's everyday reality, investigated in his project *Facades* (1968-76), which shows NYC's evolution through settings of the landmark locations fitting with the costume of his muse Editta Sherman. While these tableaux-vivants offer an unsullied version of a troubled city, the attempt to construct a positive relationship between the model and the background reveals a desire to preserve the historic heritage and to improve urban life (Newport Mansions n.d.).

This individual work fits into the oeuvres of a person who fell in love with New York City since his arrival at age 19, remembering himself rambling along 5th Avenue, where "the bright lights and imaginative window displays gave me new hope and thrill" (Cunningham 2018, 23).

An opposite reaction to the sparkling city is experienced by the photographer William Klein (New York, 1928). Against Henri Carter-Bresson's advice to not interfere within the 'decisive moment'[8], Klein instils his own violent and personal aesthetic (Langton 2014, 4) in his work, using manipulation and pictorial effects,[9] mixing different materials and cameras. Hired in 1954 by *Vogue* director Alexander Leberman (Langton 2014, 9), Klein embarked on *Life is Good & Good for you in New York.*

A trance reveals witness, an eight-month reportage (1954-1955) of the photographer's hometown after eight years' distance. The result is a sensorial and shocking documentation of a city commodified under the regime of mass media, seized into experiential snapshots by the means of his Leica. This set of anti-aesthetic pictures of 'indecisive moments' of such a postmodern crumbling city[10] would first be published in Paris in 1956.[11] Klein introduces the snapshot in the fashion world as well. With his "anything goes" (Polkagalerie 2018)[12] attitude, *Vogue* commissions him for a photoshoot in Rome in 1960, with models walking down and forth on a pedestrian crossing in Piazza di Spagna.

The telephoto lens, set far away from the models, documents the accidents that occur on this uncommon stage. In these 'hyperreal situations' the snapshot recreates a reality people compare to actual life (Sontag 1977, 120),[13] considering themselves as owners of the publicized commodities embodied by the models (Sontag 1977, 2).[14]

Despite Bill Cunningham and William Klein both playing in the streets and breaking with the rules from within, their experiences carry different scopes. If Bill pretends to democratize the realm of fashion by highlighting spontaneous and not institutionalized manifestations of personal style,[15] Klein dives into the mode field as part of the capitalistic society, from which he speaks up against the same system.

8 See Bresson, Henri Cartier. 1952, *L'image à la sauvette* (Paris: Verve).

9 William Klein has been a pupil of abstract painter Fernand Léger, being Klein stationed in France during the Second World War, and spending some time there afterwards.

10 A possible reference to Eugene Atget's Paris of the start of the XXth century, as noted in Clarke, Graham. 2009. *La fotografia. Una storia culturale e visuale*. Translated by Barbara del Mercato (Torino: Einaudi) 99-100.

11 William Klein, *Life is Good & Good for you in New York. Trance witness revels* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1956). In 1957 this same book earns the Nadar Prix. To be noted that a similar refusal in homeland is experienced by Robert

BIOGRAPHY OF BILL CUNNINGHAM

Born in a conservative catholic family in a suburb of Boston, Massachusetts, Bill Cunningham moved to New York in 1948, mesmerized by the creative freedom of the city. After a period as hat-designer under the nickname 'William J' he began taking fashion photographs on the streets for magazines such as Tribune and Women's Wear Daily. Since 1978, The New York Times has published his extemporaneous photographs regularly in Evening Hours and The Street columns. Designated as a living landmark of NYC in 2009, he conducted a humble life at Carnegie Hall, keeping biking around in the city until his death in 2016.
In 2010 he was the subject of the award-winning documentary film Bill Cunningham. New York, directed by Richard Press. A new documentary film on his career has been produced by Mark Bozek, The Times of Bill Cunningham (2018).

THE SHARED PHOTOGRAPHY

For most of the modern age, the only way to represent oneself was through painting and sculpture, which was a prerogative of a few wealthy people.

Now, anyone can take a picture by simply pulling their phone out of the pocket. The selfie as a method of self-fashioning and communication is extremely time-specific, bound to a certain technological development and accessibility. Particularly relevant was the introduction to the market of the iPhone 4 in 2010, the first globally-spread device to have a frontal camera. Taking a snap of oneself became a common practice, to the point that it led to the development of a proper sub-genre. This new category fits into the history of vernacular photography with a substantial difference compared to the past:

> the implication of a networked camera (Tifentale 2015). Indeed, smartphones are provided with cameras connected to the Internet, becoming new hybrid image-making and image-sharing devices.

Two outstanding examples of early attempts at staging self-portraiture are Hippolyte Bayard's *Self Portrait as a Drowned Man* (1840)[16] and the *carte-de-visite* format patented in 1854 by Parisian photographer Andre Adolphe Disdéri. According to the words of Michel Frizot, through the *carte de visite* photography exited the frame on the wall and entered the album on the table (Frizot 1998, 110). Nowadays, within the networked camera, the image enters directly into social media platforms.

Therefore, if photography was once consumed and exchanged with friends and family, now social networking systems facilitate self-representation as a condition of participation in Web 2.0, in which the user-photographer is part of a digital community (Klein 2016, 85-94). In this framework, the Selfie as a phenomenon of reshaping subjectivity is part of a process which dates back to the XX century (Tifentale 2015).

Frank's reportage on the living conditions of high and low strata of American people during the '50s. Doomed as anti-American and considered derogatory of national ideals, the work was published for the first time in 1958 under the label *Les Américains* in Paris, thanks to the intervention of Robert Delpire. *The Americans* will come out in the US only in 1959.

12 When Klein was back to New York, 'I was in a trance, dazed by the possibilities of what my camera could do. So I adopted the slogan "anything goes". This is what has always worked for me. No rules, no prohibitions and no limits', from *William Klein. William + Klein*, Accessed February 20, 2020, https://www.polkagalerie.com/en/exhibition-william-klein.htm.

13 As well-expressed in Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Strass and Giroux, 1977), 120: 'Such images are indeed able to usurp reality because first of all a photograph is not only an image (as a painting is an image), an interpretation of the real; it is also a trace; [...] the photograph is never less than the registering of an emanation'. 121: '[...]Photography is acquisition in several forms. In its simplest form, we have in a photograph surrogate possession of a cherished person or thing, a possession which gives photographs some of the

character of unique objects. Through photographs, we also have a consumer's relation to events, both to events which are part of our experience and to those which are not—a distinction between types of experience that such habit-forming consumership blurs. A third form of acquisition is that, through image-making and image-duplicating machines, we can acquire something as information (rather than experience). Indeed, the importance of photographic images as the medium through which more and more events enter our experience is, finally, only a by-product of their effectiveness in furnishing knowledge dissociated from and independent of experience', our emphasis.

14 Indeed, according to Susan Sontag, *On Photography,* 2: 'To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power', our emphasis.

15 For an interesting opinion which partly reevaluates Cunningham's liberal production of fashion pictures, see Szymanski, Adam. 2012. "Bill Cunningham, New York and the Political Potential of Fashion Documentary". *Film, Fashion and Consumption*, vol. 1, no. 3, (December): 289-304.

Through photographic self-portraiture artists and photographers exploited the automatism of the medium as a way to depict identity. The *Five-way Portrait* postcard of Marcel Duchamp is particularly relevant for this case. Taken in a Broadway Photo Studio in 1917, the readymade's father managed to obtain a multiple self-portrait thanks to the use of a mirror, depicting a fractured and unstable identity, as if to say that more 'I' existed within him (Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery 2009).

Then, from the '20s the surrealist photographer Claude Cahun used her body for experimentation, shaving off her hair and dressing in an extravagant or provocatively masculine style.

She considered gender identity as a performative and fluid construction, rather than a biological condition. If gender is the 'cultural meaning that the sexed body assumes' (Butler 1990, 6), Cahun does not appropriate masculine features; she creates a third sex (Knafo 2002, 43). In a similar way, the photographic self-portrait allowed Cindy Sherman to disguise herself as a cinema heroine in Hollywood films of the late '50s.

In her project *Untitled Film Stills* (1977-1980), photographs function as a mirror-mask that reflects back what Laura Mulvey defines as 'the male gaze', through which the female figure becomes the passive and sexual object of its desire (Mulvey 1989, 18). On the one hand, Cahun and Sherman's self-portraits allowed the artists to control their own representation as active subjects; on the other, they explored how photographic self-portraiture has the capacity to foreground the 'I' as other to itself and the subject as a performance. The self-portrait photograph is an example of the way in which technology not only mediates, but also produces subjectivities in the contemporary world (Jones 2002, 950).

So, who is the 'I' behind the networked camera? The answer requires a deep consideration of today's multifaceted society and online technologies. In any case, the Selfie as a photography sub-genre plays an important role in celebrities' and fashion icons' self-representation. In terms of content, the Selfie of a well-known character is considered to be a performance for his digital circle (Mirzoeff 2015, 47).

Through social media like Instagram, celebrities such as Kim Kardashian West, Kylie Jenner or Beyonce[17] have the opportunity to share with their online community some behind-the-scenes moments that are not part of the traditional on-stage performance. In this way the public can satisfy the voyeuristic need to spy on their icons' private lives, establishing a virtual relationship of closeness with them. Celebrity, indeed, is not an intrinsic characteristic, but rather an on-going performance (Marwick and Boyd 2011, 147), and the Selfie has become an indispensable means for self-representation and self-documentation in off-stage situations.

Therefore, while the circulation of cultural models in the visual field has always respected the top-down approach, Selfie witnesses an exemplary reversal of this dynamic, by introducing within public communication a vernacular practice representative of the private sphere (Gunthert 2015, 21). In conclusion, Selfies are the most striking example of how once elitist activities have become part of contemporary visual culture, becoming the first visual signature of the new global era.

SELFIE BIOGRAPHY

> ***The definition of a Selfie is 'a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website', and in 2013 it was declared "Word of the Year" by Oxford Dictionaries. The word Selfie has indeed generated great interest, reflecting the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of a particular time, showing its lasting potential as a word of cultural significance.***

16 A detailed historical analysis in Sapir, Michael. 1994. "The Impossible Photograph: Hippolyte Bayard's Self-Portrait as a Drowned Man". *Modern Fiction Studies*, 619-629.

17 In 2020 their Instagram accounts are the most followed worldwide according to the statista.com survey. Statista. 2021. "Most Instagram accounts with the most followers worldwide as of July 2021".

CONCLUSION

What do you do?
What should we reply to Moscarda's wife, staring at us, reflected in the same mirror in which we are looking ourselves up, watching and being watched? *One, no one and one hundred thousand* doesn't provide answers; rather, it invites people to dive into the conditions of photographing, along a chronological trajectory, and to consider the roles of icon, device and setting and their ever-changing interplay.

Perhaps, what we can genuinely do is to turn theory into practice, press the button and look at ourselves in the mirror.



Fig. 1 ***Atlas***, Collage, 2020.



Fig. 2 ***Exhibition Plan***, Plan, 2020.



Fig. 3 ***Exhibition Room***, Collage, 2020.

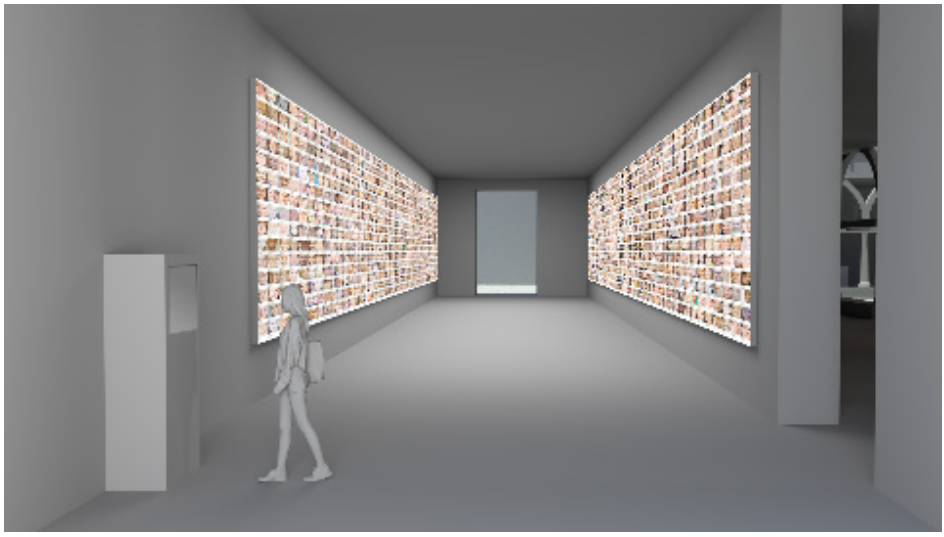


Fig. 4 ***Interactive Corridor***, Collage, 2020.

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One. No One. One Hundred Thousand.

GAZES

Portraits of women before photography

AUTHORS:

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FIRST SECTION:
The introduction of the photographic portrait.

SECOND SECTION:
Different looks in portraits

by male and female photographers.

THIRD SECTION:
Male vs Female.

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CURATORIAL ABSTRACT + 5 KEYWORDS

The exhibition catalogue Gazes is an exhibition that will take place in Santa Cristina, Bologna from September 2021 to January 2022. This exhibition is divided into four major parts that all aim to explore the historical evolution of the portrait, starting from the Renaissance and ending with today's fashion portrait in photography. Furthermore, the display offers a questioning on the female gaze, a recurring theme in female portraiture.

The exhibition will emphasize the differences between male and female gazes in photography. It will examine male dominance in photography and how it has changed in the recent past.

Through this timeline of portraits, all these notions will blend to help the viewer understand the evolution of this medium and appreciate the creativity of some of the most talented photographers of all time. The exhibition is meant to offer a new perspective and understanding of female portraits throughout history. How has fashion changed throughout time? But, most importantly, how has the male gaze changed? Are women posing differently? And how do we know that women are intended as an 'object' that's being observed rather than the subject of the artwork itself?
Keywords: automatic portrait, renaissance portrait, daguerreotype, carte-de-visite, objectifyinglooks.

THE DISPLAY PLAN:

The idea for the display was to arrange the photography collection in a way that allowed the visitor to get to know the journey of photography from its origin up to today's fashion industry, especially concentrating on the male and female gaze. The audience, after entering the building of Santa Cristina from the main entrance, is led to the first display room, the red aula, with the dominant subject of "The history of portrait", functioning as a brief introduction to the exhibition.

On the wall facing the entrance of the room, visitors can immediately see the male portraits of Antonello da Messina staring back arrogantly while, in contrast, on the side walls, the female portraits by Ghirlandaio, Pollaiuolo, and Leonardo are to be found. This order will make the viewer feel uncomfortable while looking at the male portraits, when, on the other hand, while staring at the female ones, he will feel more entitled to look, as the subject is not staring back.

Wandering through this room, visitors can easily become acquainted with the origins of portraiture from Renaissance paintings, which have been arranged with the goal of demonstrating the difference between male and female representation in the 1400s. Continuing to the purple room, a sequence of pictures will demonstrate the evolution from daguerreotype to the 20th century artistic portrait photography of Alfred Stieglitz. Later on, right after the main room, the blue one follows in the plan of the former monastery. Here, the difference between the male and female gaze is expressed by two enlarged modern photography portraits placed on two large sheets, hanging from the ceiling, in the middle of the room, staring at each other persistently, creating a sentiment of conflict.

On one side, there will be a self-portrait taken by the female photographer Cindy Sherman, and on the other side, a self-portrait by

the male photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. By focusing exclusively on the two of them, the viewer's attention will be drawn to the contrast in the ways the two artists portray themselves. Continuing to the last part of our exhibition, in the orange room we decided to dedicate ourselves to portraits of one specific figure captured by different photographers.

This person is Kate Moss and her image varies depending on the different gazes of the photographers upon her. Here, a triangular installation will be placed in the middle of the room with the portrait captured by Sorrenti (the same as the one we used on our cover page) taking a protagonist-like role. At the end of the exhibition, in the courtyard, we will build an ephemeral café that will offer coffees topped with foam-printed representations of their favourite portraits in the exhibition.

In addition, art books about the exhibition will be available to read and, if desired, purchase. Once the exhibition is closed in the evening, the outside area will be transformed into an outdoor cinema, where it will be possible to see several movies related to the fashion industry and portraits (Neon Demon by WindingRefn). After the evening projection, the space will be transformed once again to host an exclusive nightclub synonymous with fashion and glamour. This will attach to the exhibition a cache. DJs such as Charlotte de Witte, Amelie Lens, or Snts will enchant the crowds.

PORTRAITS OF WOMEN BEFORE PHOTOGRAPHY:

In a society that has always been ruled by men, it's inevitable that, as art historians, we deal with the history of art mostly from a male perspective. Therefore, every form of art that has ever tried to depict reality or give an interpretation of it, including photography, has done so from a male point of view. In this section, I am going to argue how photography is, in fact, an evolution of portrait painting, which was born during the Renaissance.

The aim of the exhibition itself is to give the visitor a broad perspective on the history of female portraits, narrowing down to fashion portraits nowadays. It should be mentioned that the idea of beauty has changed throughout the centuries due to the social environment, especially in Italy, which was extremely fragmented and divided into different semi-states. For example, in the 15th century painters in central Italy would add a sort of aura to female portraits. This aura was realized by adding a semi-divine light to the painting, that would elevate and idealize the idea of beauty. In fact, aristocratic women often resemble Madonnas in their portraits. In this painting by Raphael, for example, even if the woman is looking directly at the spectator, she does so in a non-provocative way. She doesn't establish any contact whatsoever with the spectator, who, on the other hand, is supposed to admire her.

She inspires a sense of respect in a motherly way. Until the late fifteenth century, there was little or no eye contact in portrait paintings, no reaction from the sitter to the observer, no smile. For a woman to indulge openly in sustained eye contact when meeting a man could have been interpreted as some kind of invitation.

This sense of decorum is respected in most 15th century painted portraits of women in Italy. Even with portrait busts, direct eye contact is generally avoided. Painting women in profiles became a trend to suggest a more elegant attitude, and their traits were often changed

according to what the sitter liked best, as we often do today when photoshopping an image. Profile paintings were also practical as they avoided any direct eye contact with the observer.

Domenico Veneziano, the Pollaiuolo brothers, and Domenico Ghirlandaio created profiles of the highest pictorial refinement. The avoidance of any direct communication with the viewer is consistent with the remoteness of the ladies worshipped by poets. We see this especially in Milan, at the court of Ludovico il Moro, where there was a cultural academy.

Art and poetry were extremely connected. Cecilia Gallerani, who was portrayed by Leonardo, was herself the subject of many poems. The most famous one was written by Bellincioni who dedicated an entire sonnet to the dama. In the painting *The Lady with an Ermine*, however full of allegories, we may notice that Cecilia is still not looking at the viewer.

She turns to look with a trace of a smile at an otherwise unseen arrival to her left. Men, on the other hand, were depicted in a much different way, as they were not the subject of 'painted poetry' or social restrictions.

Antonello da Messina paints his male sitters looking directly at the spectator, sometimes reacting with fierce smiles. Can photography be considered an evolution of art? This question has raised many discussions over the past century starting from the pictorialism artistic current that reinvented photography as an art form and strove to elevate photography to the same level as painting, what Lemagny refers to as seppellimento del reale (burying what is real). 10 Photographers and artists have always tried to find a link between the two arts, but photography was initially conceived as a scientific medium to capture reality.

As Walter Benjamin himself pointed out, "If photography is allowed to complement art in some of its functions, the latter will soon be ousted and ruined by it. Photography must return to its proper duty, which consists of being a servant to the sciences and the arts."

We do know however that science can be interpreted, therefore it is not always objective. Since the end of the 19th century, photography has been used as a support for absurd racist theories. Whether photography is a valid medium for depicting reality is still a very controversial matter. Does a photo filter reality or is it objective?

If the photographer picks one shot over another to exhibit in an exposition, that's a personal choice, therefore subjective. If we, as the public, interpret the picture in a certain way, it is partly because we have a common set of social values. It's interesting to look back to the times when photography didn't exist, only to find out that things haven't changed that much. Female portraits in photography are, in many cases, still subjected to sexual stereotypes. Therefore, both art and photography are reflections of society.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT:

> ***The portrait is ... a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity.***

With the birth of photography in 1839, along came the men's will to replace the traditional oil painting portraits with photographic ones.

This was due to the fact that oil painting was a time-consuming

study because it addressed bourgeois society. Photography, in contrast, used as a more accurate substitute, was able to function as a populist and democratic medium of representation, accessible to the majority of people. Studios were immediately created to accommodate this new technological discovery, giving people the opportunity to have a picture of their loved ones without having to commission painters.

The photographic portraits stood for the principles of representation and depiction of space. This suggests that the individual is given significance and definition within an everyday context. The result was a complex intertextuality between photographic significance and the social and cultural codes that define status and power. During the mid 19th century, an increase in portraiture requests took place, making the daguerreotype, which was supposed to be used by governments and official community services as an identifier of individuals, the most popular means of portraiture in the 1840s and 1850s. Following this success, Disderi's carte-de-visite introduced the use of photography to the business card typology, as a mark of identity and social significance.

It was a small portrait, obtained with a device using four lenses capable of taking four to eight small images that were printed on the same sheet. It became a photography hit among the general public, creating the 14 occasions for photography collection as well. Carte-de-visite was the inspiration for the later ID form portraits. In addition to portraits of family members and loved ones, portrait photography became a way to preserve history by witnessing national events of great importance or even battlefields during war periods. Due to the latter, photographic portraits were commonly used by soldiers before going to war, so their families would have an image of them in case they didn't come back.

Moreover, portraits of dead people were also common for some time. Because of the high mortality rate of people, especially children, during the Victorian age, and due to widespread diseases, people wanted a way to remember their loved ones before their burial. In reference now to the science field, criminal investigations and psychiatric clinics also used photography as a means to record criminals and vpatients, respectively, as it was widely believed that through their physiognomic characteristics it would be easier to create a classification, which would be helpful to recognize and distinguish future cases.

For that reason, they were captured both in profile and enface, creating clear content for the physiognomic analysis. The anthropology domain also used photographic portraits for physiognomic studies, the most popular of which being the colonial studies.

During this project, they were photographing the indigenous people (of Great Britain's colonies for example), as a means of cataloguing and examining human features, functioning as if they were historical records. Another use of photographic portraits can be detected in Nadar's work, whose photographs suggest a virtual Who's Who of nineteenth-century Parisian life, providing a more social content. At the end of the 19th century, photography became more common when the Eastman Kodak Company introduced the Kodak No. 1 camera in 1888. Kodak made photography easier for everyone by doing the developing and sending the reloaded camera and developed prints back to the customer.

These cameras made photography even more accessible to the general public. The turn of the century also embraced photography as

a form of ART. This period also saw the introduction of Alfred Stieglitz, one of the first people to become famous for making photography an art form.

Portrait was and still is an attempt to reflect reality through the photographic lens, for the sake of science and community, but also an attempt to turn on men's imagination towards life.

The significance of a portrait, according to Nadar just back in his days, can be found somewhere between extremes:

> "On the one hand, the passport image, an identity card which stamps itself as an authoritative image, and on the other, the studio portrait, which is offered as a study—the realization of the photographer's definitive attempt to reveal an interior and enigmatic personality".

Nowadays, though, the role of photographer is not only occupied by professionals but also by 'common people'.

DIFFERENT LOOKS IN PORTRAITS BY MALE AND FEMALE PHOTOGRAPHERS:

The significance of the portrait depends not only on the idea of who is being photographed, but also on who the photographer is.

Specifically, this is related to the gender of the photographer. The role of the photographer is also related to their social situation and how they are perceived by society in general. In this way, the view that a female photographer sees versus what a male photographer sees would likely be different given gender roles in society.

When it comes to photography, this difference in perspective can be seen from the point of the birth of photography as a new medium to capture the expression of an individual. It is perhaps even valid to say that this difference in perspective was even more prominent at the beginning of the history of the photograph in the nineteenth century, as at that time there was an even stronger gender divide in society. However, the trend is not new and specific to the art of photography, but has been present throughout history in all mediums of art. Where the photograph may differ slightly is in the manner that "the photographer imposes, steals, re-creates the scene/seen according to a cultural discourse" (Graham 29, 1997). Graham goes on to say that a photograph plays the role of helping the viewer to understand the world in a wider sense:

> historically, aesthetically, culturally, and socially. Part of the role that we play as viewers of photographs is to consider what it is that we are being asked to see and interpret.

In Clarke Graham's book The Photograph, he compares the works of two contemporary photographers, Robert Mapplethorpe and Cindy Sherman, the first male and the second female. Interestingly, each of them also tended to take portraits of models who were of the same gender as themselves and both tended to take many self-portraits reflecting their own experiences and personal perspectives. Even despite this similar approach 17 between the two artists in the way that they represent themselves in a personal way, we can still see the classical differences between works representing female models and those representing male ones.

Mapplethorpe presents himself staring directly at the camera in an assertive and idealised manner. As a male figure, he comes off as looking dominant and sure of himself. This is similar to many of his

works, which tend to have a sculptural look. The photograph is also taken in black and white, causing the viewer to recall classical Greek and Roman statues (101-102). Such a reference, along with outlining the physical features of the model, also suggests to the viewer traditional ideals of power and male beauty. Sherman's works "feature both social and sexual stereotypes fed by a consistent sense of individual ambiguity and self-questioning" (118-119). In her recent exhibition, Sherman presented herself in a way that shows her age and does not try to hide it.

Nonetheless, she still places herself at a sideways angle, which is typical of portraits of female models. While she takes her photographs with the intention of not shying away from the realities that she faces as an aging woman, she still cannot help but fall into the classical representation of having a female model appear less domineering than a male one. These ideas have always accompanied the art of photography.

An early female photographer, Julia Margaret Cameron, shows this clearly in the different ways in which she portrays her male and female subjects. These differences well represent the "influence of sexual stereotypes" (105) common to her time period of the mid-nineteenth century. However, when we compare her images of men and women to those of Mapplethorpe and Sherman, we can see similarities in the way that different genders are represented.

Similar to Mapplethorpe, Cameron captured men in the Victorian Era facing the camera directly and showing only their faces, not the entire body. Oppositely, when Cameron takes pictures of Victorian women, they are placed sideways, and the focus is not only on her face.

Specifically, the sideways angle shows the similarity to the later works of Sherman. In this way, it 19 seems that no matter who the photographer is, there will be some kind of underlying message regarding their sexuality and/or that of the model.

MALE VS FEMALE:

An insight about Kate Moss. Following our chronological retrospective of fashion portraits, we decided, as a gateway to present times, to focus our last exhibiting area on a fashion icon who has been photographed by the greatest photographers of the past 20 years. This model is none other than the infamous Kate Moss. Through her incredibly dense career, she has gathered a wide pool of portraits that help us explain the codes of today's fashion portrait. Placed as an atmosphere room in the continuity of our chronological journey, we hope to help the viewer understand how the history of portraiture has vastly influenced today's. Kate Moss was photographed many times by photographers such as Mario Testino, Corinne Day, or Mario Sorrenti. It is interesting to see the evolution over time as Kate Moss ages and becomes more experienced.

For example, when comparing Corinne Day's photos of her in 1990 for her breakthrough shoot and Mario Testino's Kate Moss at a much older age, it is remarkable to notice how her gaze has matured and reveals a much more confident woman. The fashion portrait offers an incomparable glimpse into the subject's inner self.

Kate Moss's fame brings the viewer ever so close to her intimacy. In Mari Sorrenti's 1991 series of Kate Moss, we see her passionately in love with the photographer. The timelessness of these essential

feelings is central to the notion of fashion portraits as through them the viewer associates himself with the brand. This is why Calvin Klein in 1993 hired Sorrenti to recreate the emotions of that initial shoot for an Obsession ad campaign. Calvin Klein hoped to recreate the sensuality so that its brand image would be associated with these praised feelings. Kate Moss was chosen since she 21 represented the Obsession's tagline:

> "Between love and madness lies obsession". Her young age and slender silhouette proved to revolutionize the beauty canons of her era.

The tremendous number of portraits of Kate Moss is explained by her fascinating gaze, which enthralls the viewer into a strong dialogue. It is not to be understood, as in the past, as a voyeuristic male gaze on the female subject, but quite the opposite. She stares down at the camera, seemingly tearing the viewer's gaze.

This evolution marks a real challenge to the typical male gaze and a very important change to the codes of female portraiture. In this space, we will arrange the photos in such a way that permits a dialogue between the older pictures and the more recent ones of Kate Moss. Furthermore, the photos resonate with the idea of femininity and how Kate Moss embodies it. As the icon of the heroin chic fashion era characterized by pale skin, a very skinny body, and an angular body structure, Kate Moss's ascension was fulgurant and was defining of the 1990's.

This room will therefore be an ode to this era's defining fashion features and a glimpse into its intricacies. On two written panels, the life of Kate Moss and her different projects throughout her career will be explained, together with the appearance and the development of the heroin chic trend. The two panels. in addition to the corpus of 9 photos of Kate Moss, will retrace an era influenced by the history of portraiture and influential in the further development of fashion photography.

The display will be arranged around a triangular structure in the center that will display an enlargement of a photo of Kate Moss innocently looking up towards the sky by Mario Sorrenti (Picture 1).

The use of multiple pictures by Sorrenti can be explained by his success in capturing Moss's youthful candidness. On the other two 22 panels of the structure explanations about her role and career will be found. On the walls surrounding it, different themes relating to:

> the passing of time on two walls (Pictures 2-5), the Obsession campaign (Pictures 6-8) and finally on the last wall before the exit, a soft, largely unerotic portrait of her by Peter Lindbergh in 2016 that closes the circle of the heroin chic that she embodied throughout her career.

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ART OF DESIRE

Man Ray's Portraiture Reaches Fashion Photography

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INTRODUCTION.

FIRST SECTION:
About Man Ray

SECOND SECTION:
The photographers

THIRD SECTION:
The brands

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CURATORIAL ABSTRACT + 5 KEY WORDS

The exhibition *Art of Desire – Man Ray's Portraiture Reaches Fashion Photography* focuses on the multifaceted concept of 'desire'.

In this sense, one of the main reasons people take pictures is to sublimate their desire of possessing the subject captured.

The fashion industry plays with this will of people by amplifying their need for consumption and acquisition of goods. The concept of 'desire' is also associated with the typology of photo shoot for which some photographers are known. In this case, the reference is to the provocative but successful aesthetics developed by Terry Richardson. To structure our discourse around the concept of 'desire', we decided therefore to start the reflection from one of the most known and flexible photographers:

Man Ray. The study of the techniques that he used and the commissions and projects that he elaborated permitted us to focus the attention on the specificity of portraiture.

Man Ray, in fact, did concentrate a major part of his photography on the genre of portrait, which can be distinguished in more private shoots as well as in fashion works. Thanks to a constant reflection on his modes of production and photographic techniques, the investigation was conducted through the analysis and comparison with the work by three fashion photographers – Kwame Brathwaite, Daniel Sannwald and Terry Richardson – and with three fashion brands:

Moncler, Ray-Ban and Chanel. The exhibition was intended to be a stage for the study of photographic portraiture as a carrier of meaning that, depending on the author of photographic shoots, can be indeed a decisive mark for an unreachable desire.

Keywords: fashion, desire, portrait, Man Ray, photography.

ABSTRACT EXPOSITION DESIGN + 5 KEY WORDS

With the aim of developing the audience's critical capacity to comprehend how much fashion photography has drawn from Man Ray's approach to the medium and from the automatic portrait in general, *Art of Desire* occupies the Santa Cristina's cloister displaying the photographs in two different sections: photographers and brands.

The exhibition path ends in the Aula Magna of the complex, where an interactive installation awaits the visitors, giving them the chance to re-enact the portraits that they saw on display. Since the exhibition is hosted outside and the display is mainly based on a play of light, summer nights are thought to be the best fitting option for its opening, so that all the pearls of the display can be appreciated. From the laser light projection at the show entrance to the actual works and a digital superposition in video, two symbolic artworks will accompany the viewer throughout the whole exhibition, constantly reminding of the main theme.

After an introductory section about the exhibition theme and Man Ray, the visitor will approach the main section of the exhibition, where the artworks are exposed. For the display of the pictures, black panels were the preferred choice, so that the photographs' colours would

be highlighted. To further enhance their chromatic qualities, the works are backlit, in order to avoid any direct, aggressive lighting and reach a soft and intimate atmosphere that well suits the nocturnal opening time.

With the aim of facilitating the visit by providing further information on the artworks displayed, *Art of Desire* implemented a Bring-Your-Own-Device strategy, which allows the visitor to download the exhibition app and scan the QR codes that can be found near the caption of each artwork. By using his own device, the visitor has a free guide and contributes to maintaining a soft, intimate ambience, already partially achieved with backlighting. The experience concludes with the last section of the exhibition that hosts an interactive installation, consisting of a wall made of phones that reproduces a digital superposition of the two symbolic artworks that the visitors have encountered during their visit.

The particularity of this wall is that the phones are unlockable and the audience have the chance of taking selfies re-enacting their favourite portraits seen on display. The pictures will then be printed out in a double copy:

> one will be a souvenir for the visitor and the other one will be attached to the internal corridor, thus recreating the Franco Vaccari's installation at the 36th Venice Biennale in 1972.

Keywords: light, photograph, phones, portrait, interactive.

INTRODUCTION

The exhibition *Art of Desire - Man Ray's Portraiture Reaches Fashion Photography* places itself in the research field concerning the history of automaticity in the photographic portrait, showing how typologies of representation and aesthetic convention can be found also in fashion photography.

To better understand the relevance and the development of this concept in photography, it is useful to mention that the seek for automaticity, for an impassive and detached capture of reality, has always been at the centre of the intellectual debate on this profession.

This impassiveness, usually perceived as coldness and almost reflecting a violent gaze, has directly originated from the very nature of the photographic means, which produces images based both on chemical and industrial processes.

A great push towards the establishment of automaticity and the democratisation of photography, challenging the Pictorialism of the XIX century, was given by Disdéri and his *carte-de-visite* (1854), which gave him the possibility to transform this ambiguous tool into something relatively cheap and popular.

Following the invention of the *carte-de-visite*, which permitted to print on the same sheet six or eight small photos that could fit into someone's pocket, we assisted to two important steps:

> the industrialisation of photography and the first example of true automaticity and abandonment of manual skills, which is the basis for the later creation of the Photomaton patented in New York City in 1924 by Anatol Marco Josepho.

On one hand, photography was used in scientific fields, as it was perfect for classifications in botanic studies for example (i.e. Karl Blossfeldt), as well as in criminology (bertillonnage 1890) [fig.3], psychiatry and anthropology;

on the other hand, in the artistic community there was an ongoing debate to decide whether photography could be considered at the same level as the traditional artistic practices or it was an inferior medium.

This dispute, however, never interested a notorious artist who embraced this new discipline simply as a new medium to express his creativity. This artist to whom we are referring is Man Ray, who is the protagonist of our exhibition.

ABOUT MAN RAY

Emmanuel Radnitzsky was born on 27 August 1890 in Philadelphia from immigrant parents. As soon as he could, he changed his name into Man Ray, since he saw in these two words his own fate:

> Man as a nickname of Emmanuel and Ray as the new light coming into the world.

From the beginning his artistic production took two parallel directions:

> the one of painting and the one of photography, which he would alternately develop throughout his life and career.

His life was characterised by lots of moves back and forth, from America to Europe, most of which are to attribute to the rampant rise of Nazism and the threat that this constituted for Jewish people like Man Ray.

Once the war ended, he spent his last years in Paris, where he died in 1976. Man Ray, even though he started his career as a painter, is mostly known for his photography and his approach to this new medium.

For him, the rivalry and competition between painting and photography did not exist and he considered the photographic medium as another instrument to use, just like a paintbrush.

As he stated to Arturo Schwartz in an interview:

> "I paint what it can't be photographed, and I photograph what I don't want to paint".

In 1928 André Breton wrote:

> "It required the most pot-on technician of photography, who also belongs to the painting community, to assign to photography its exact limits and to push it to serve other purposes than what it has been created for".

This definition given by Breton couldn't describe him any better. He took the photographic medium and was able to change it and make it cater to his needs, as a painter who is meddling with photography.

Rayographs, solarisations [fig.4], overdevelopment and enlargements are the innovations brought by Man Ray to the photographic field, some of which he exploited also in the portraiture domain.

Considering himself first as a painter gave Man Ray an advantage over the other photographers, since he had a greater understanding of the mechanisms of perspective and distortions.

He did his portraits at a considerable distance to avoid these technical complications and to guarantee himself an emotional and physical detachment from the subject. After that, to achieve the effect he wanted, he enlarged the shot. Bearing this overview in mind, we shall consider if there is a traceable connection between the photographic portraits of Man Ray, with the techniques employed, and some photographic examples from different fashion campaigns.

In order to do so, we organised the analysis by dividing the

research into two parts:

> a comparison between Man Ray and three modern photographers (Kwame Brathwaite, Daniel Sannwald and Terry Richardson) and one between Man Ray and three fashion brands (Moncler, Ray-Ban and Chanel).

THE PHOTOGRAPHERS

The first photographer taken into account is Kwame Brathwaite.

Born in 1938 to Barbadian immigrant parents, he firstly became interested in photography by watching his friends shoot show-goers in a jazz club of which he was a promoter. He joined a collective of artists, fashion designers and playwrights called *African Jazz-Art Society & Studios*, which promoted natural black beauty within the community.

They created the Grandassa Models, an agency of African American models that helped to spread the phrase "black is beautiful" in the 1950s and 1960s. From this general framework we extracted the picture for this exhibition, featuring a Grandassa model in her African inspired clothes and coiffures. We will focus on the portrait of Sikolo Brathwaite [N.1 Catalogue], the photographer's wife, wearing a headpiece designed by Carolee Prince, AJASS, Harlem, 1968, and on one of the many pictures taken for the 'Mode au Congo' photo shoot, done in 1937 by Man Ray [N.2 Catalogue]. Brathwaite chose to shoot a profile of his wife, wearing a headpiece designed by Carolee Price, on a yellow background.

The designer decided to craft this spellbinding piece with beads of different colours, referring to a specific tradition in a Western African tribe called Yoruba, in which the royal class wears crowns and headpieces entirely made of beads of different colours and materials.

Furthermore, the choice of a warm colour as background was aimed at enhancing the dark complexion of the model. Man Ray, thirty years before, had operated in a similar way, but choosing mostly white female models to portray a typical African fashion trend from the Republic of Congo. The model is wearing a beaded headpiece with a necklace to match, characterised by what seems to be some typical patterns of the area. The subjects also assume similar positions, mainly profiles, which are taken from a common photography domain: the automatic portrait.

In fact, the automatic portrait applies in different fields of study, one of which are the criminology files:

> the photos shot in profile recall the mug shots that are taken once the prisoners get caught by the police.

In conclusion, we can state that Kwame Brathwaite's pictures were devoted to a specific social cause, in particular to empower black women to wear their natural hair and skin complexion proudly, going against the segregation that was afflicting the States. Man Ray, on the other hand, while setting and consolidating some trends in the photographic portraiture, distanced himself from any type of cause and portrayed his subjects as objectively as possible. By adopting these features in conceiving his portraits, he contributed to solidifying these aspects in the portrait photography, so that other photographers in the future could benefit from them. The second photographer featured in the exhibition and compared to another set of pictures by Man Ray is Daniel Sannwald.

Sannwald was born in Germany and studied at the Royal

Academy of Fine Arts in Belgium, where the possibilities offered by the fashion world revealed to him. After this period of training, he has established himself in the fashion industry as one of the most requested photographers by major fashion magazines and brands, like Vogue, Dazed, Fendi, Dior or Prada. We can find some terms for comparison between Man Ray and Sannwald in the way they approach photography.

Both Sannwald and Man Ray have a very artistic approach, in the sense that they both use the medium of photography in an unconventional way. As for Man Ray, we have already seen how he used to adapt new techniques according to what or who he was going to photograph.

In the case of Sannwald, his use of violent contrasts between colours, aimed at highlighting some details over others (like the dark skin of the model in the photo shoot for Antidote Magazine), contributes to blurring the line between art and fashion. The fact of experimenting a lot is another trait shared by the two artists, even though they experiment in two different ways. Man Ray liked to play with light and chemical substances and create images with these new techniques. Sannwald, on the contrary, likes to try different cameras for his creations; in this way, he does not have a fixed modus operandi, but just a preliminary plan on which he can improvise in whichever way he feels in that moment.

Even considering the very conception of themselves as photographers, we can see a sort of resemblance. As previously stated, Man Ray never fully considered himself a photographer, but a painter who happened to also use photography as a means to create artworks. Daniel Sannwald has a very similar consideration of himself, as he defines himself as an 'image-maker'. The reason for this self-definition lies in the way he has to work in the fashion world, since there are some fixed parameters and rules to follow when producing covers for fashion magazines.

Since he is not completely free to create what he wants, he doesn't fully consider his creations for the fashion world as art. In some ways, Man Ray thought in an analogous way when it came to fashion shoots, since he primarily did it in order to have a financial gain.

Nevertheless, this striking resemblance both at a conceptual and technical level is evident in a comparison made between Man Ray's Tonsure (Marcel Duchamp), 1921, and Sannwald's Camper Fall/ Winter campaign in 2016, in particular the picture where the model is portrayed from the back. Both of the pictures show the subject viewed from the back, with the head shaved in a specific area, creating a particular configuration that is traceable to certain shapes. In Duchamp's portrait the shape created is a shooting star, whereas in Sannwald it reproduces the logo of the brand for which he was shooting.

The third and last photographer is particularly known for shooting various celebrities: Terry Richardson. Born in New York City in 1965 in a family of artists, he started to make punk music in his early life. Once he abandoned the punk music scene, he chose photography as his next creative outlet, documenting the night life of the East Village neighbourhood in New York. In this very particular milieu, he had his first 'big break', which then led him to shoot for major fashion brands and magazines like Vogue, Vanity Fair, Marc Jacobs or Supreme.

Unlike Sannwald, the similarities between Terry Richardson and Man Ray are narrowed down to formal ones. Terry Richardson is known for being the snapshot master, with his bare point-and-shoot aesthetics

based on overexposure and casualness of his subjects.

Through the systematic use of light, compact cameras and rawness, he is able to engage in the dynamics of his candid shoots.

This approach of documenting everything in a personal way, be it fashion or other photographic genres, is completely different from what Man Ray believed in. In Man Ray's shoots we can perceive a rigorousness and a cold objectivity, which is shown also by his choice to use mechanical elements to help him portraying people, like the telephoto lens.

While Man Ray's portraits give the impression of being very structured and the result of a hard and rigorous work, of which an example could be the portrait of Luis Bunuel (1929), the pictures taken by Richardson feel more like the capture of a moment (like in the editorial picture shot for i-D). The candidness and rawness of these pictures prevail over the actual pose or the technique used in that moment by the photographer, enhancing Richardson's tendency to document every moment he could catch from reality. What is immediately noticeable is the fact that the subjects chose the same expression:

> fixed gaze looking directly at the camera, with a bold stance as if they did not fear the lens and what it might capture. A type of gaze that did not let the viewer escape from it, petrifying him on that exact spot, unable to avert his eyes.

Finally, the light chosen by both of them emphasises the fair skin of the subjects, especially in Richardson's portrait, where the light is almost unforgiving, pointing out all the imperfections of the model.

THE BRANDS

Moving to the next set of comparisons concerning fashion brands, the first one we can observe is between an example from the Moncler 1952 VALEXTRA campaign (2019) and the photographic portrait of Luciano Anselmino made in 1975 by Man Ray. Anselmino owned the art gallery *Il Fauno* in Turin, opened in 1968, where he exhibited works especially by Surrealist artists and by Man Ray. After closing this first venue, he continued with this activity in Milan since 1975.

He died in tragic conditions in 1979. The first thing we can notice is that these photos share the same format. Both subjects are portrayed with a true close-up, forcing the viewer to concentrate only on their faces. Everything else is left outside the frame. In terms of plan and focus, we are immediately reminded of the serialisation of the photo-booth experience. It is not hard, in fact, to imagine other copies of the same picture applied on a single sheet, maybe obtained at a cheap price.

In this case, Man Ray seems not to capture Anselmino's soul, even though the glimpse of a melancholic eye is suggested. The same approach has been adopted for the Moncler campaign, with the female model assuming a blank expression, so that she could resemble more a mannequin than a person, which was also the aim of the photo shoot.

Because of this blank stare that links the two portraits, as viewers we are not able to extract any information about them, because they voluntarily avoided the connection between subject and viewer that could be established when looking at a work of art. But it is not just this kind of practice that both Man Ray and Moncler are hiding behind the camera. In fact, this kind of close-up capture and the motionless and fixed

faces recall the XIX century examples of bertillonnage, which itself is part of a larger tradition of photography employed into the scientific and criminology field. Man Ray and Moncler apply this kind of language even though the two intentions are inevitably different from those of Bertillon.

In the specific case of Moncler, we have already seen how this type of portrait is bended only to a utilitarian purpose, that is the advertisement and promotion of a coat in the fashion industry.

On the other hand, Man Ray developed Anselmino's portrait detaching himself from a long series of previous works where he had chosen to read the subject in a more Surrealist and playful way. Even when the photos imply some movement, or a direction different from the very traditional frontal view, both fashion photography and Man Ray's archive continue to provide some examples for comparison.

Here we have found a photo from the 2018 campaign of Ray-Ban eyeglasses and a portrait of Juliet – dancer, model and wife of Man Ray – collected in *The Fifty Faces of Juliet*, a book conceived at the beginning of the Fifties with photos of his wife from 1941 to 1955. It is clear that the attitudes of the two subjects are different. The model for Ray-Ban seems to stare directly at the photographic lens, even though his eyes are covered by the sunglasses. His posture suggests a provocative and aggressive approach reinforced by the dominant dark red background. Even if here we are in front of a simple diagonal axis, we are already distant from the stillness of the bertillonnage portraits.

In fact, Bertillon himself, underlining the mere functional purpose of legal identification photography, states that his work had to "mettre de côté toute considération esthétique et de ne s'occuper que du point de vue scientifique et plus spécialement policier. (...) Produire l'image la plus ressemblante possible"[1]. So, in this case, the reference is not the legal application of photography in the XIX century, but the association can be found in the exploitation of the photographic medium for studies in the psychiatric field. The correlation to psychiatric portraits is taken into account because of the freedom involved in the shot.

By looking at examples like those of Dr Hugh Welch Diamond [fig.5] or Guillaume Duchenne de Boulogne, if we exclude the difference in the behaviour due to patients' psychiatric conditions and the scientific purpose behind them, we would notice the unpremeditation and the lack of any type of plan behind these shots.

The patient, in front of the camera, moved with a higher dynamicity in comparison to the immobile shots taken by Bertillon. In this way, we can read the photographic portrait by Ray-Ban as a challenge to the stillness dictated by the gaze of the character, which takes on the camera and the public making the impression that he is coming forward.

And it is on this particular idea of implicit motion that the portrait of Juliet by Man Ray can be connected to our discourse. The impression that Juliet gives, in this private shot, is that of a proud woman, self-conscious even when absorbed in her thoughts. It is also necessary to point out how the motion is used and what it implies. In these subjects, it implies vitality. If Ray-Ban uses this vitality as a seductive tool to leave a mark on the viewer of the advertisement and convince him/her to buy those pair of glasses, Man Ray instead developed his relation with the vitality that emanates from Juliet's body as a sort of invisible force that detaches from the receiver. In conclusion, the two portraits give two very different

1 Trans. « (his work had to) set aside any aesthetic consideration and to just focus on the scientific and police-related side of the topic. [...] Producing the image as resembling as possible».

impressions to the viewer that analyses the artworks:

> the Ray-Ban campaign releases a centripetal force that attracts the viewer, while the other emanates the exact opposite force, a centrifugal one, rejecting any type of involvement with an external third party.

An important part of Man Ray's career was devoted to the creation of objects. His designs can be placed in an intermediate area between art and craftsmanship, between 'art' and 'anti-art'. He was able to mix these different attitudes together and, in the eyes of Dadaists, to provoke the public by distorting the classical canons of artistic creation.

He was therefore accepted in the Parisian Dadaist milieu in 1921, with examples such as *The Enigma of Isidore Ducasse* (1920) or *Le Cadeau* (1921). His works had to amuse, surprise and annoy in reference to the strict division of roles in the XVII century ideology on the artistic genres. So, we can contextualise the photomontage *Échiquier surréaliste* (Surrealist chessboard, 1934) following this type of production.

It consists, as the title suggests, of recalling a chessboard. Five rows of four head shots of famous Surrealist artists and writers taken by the photographer between 1929 and 1934, with alternating dark and light backgrounds, form together the complete board. At the bottom right of the composition, a solarised self-portrait of the artist with his camera ends the sequence as a mark of his authorship on the object. The images that we see in the board are cropped versions of the original.

Moreover, the enlargement of the close-ups becomes compulsory for structural reasons, in order to assemble a coherent chessboard. Even if we are in front of a well-prepared composition with a specific aim, that is recreating a chessboard, we can appreciate in it a language similar to that of the Photomaton (1924). The subjects are unique and not repeated, but the serialisation and the dynamicity in the changes of postures and expressions are almost the same. The Photomaton arrived, in fact, in Paris in 1928, thus before the production of this board.

In parallel, this particular layout has been used in fashion photography too, even by brands such as Chanel. Here we can see the example of the Chanel 2019 photo shoot featuring the actress Margot Robbie.

Playing with the camera, changing different attitudes and showing different personalities, the actress could actually be inside a Photomaton. Obviously, we do not see the photographer nor the studio, but the impression given by these sequential portraits is that of being taken into a small cabin. The idea of quickness is also implicit in the series of photos, as if she had little time between one pose and the other before the automatic camera captured her figure. Finally, also as a reference to our exhibition, the subject of this catalogue is not only restricted to the photographers and brands mentioned, but the analysis could be expanded.

In fact, the typology of the photographic portrait and the typology of the Photomaton experience are in constant evolution, having reached for instance the highly popular and portable means of the selfie.

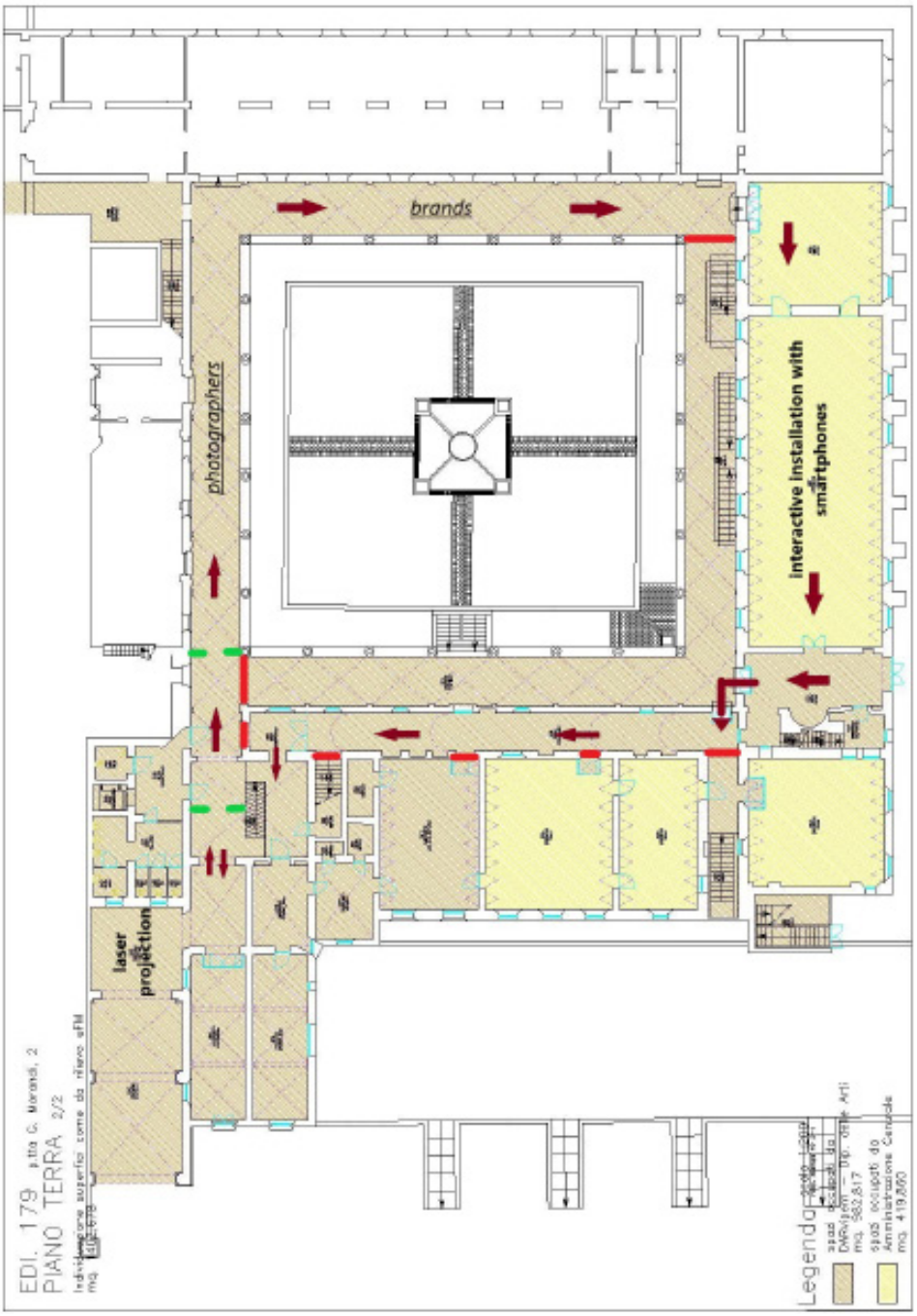


Fig. 1 ***Plan of the Art of Desire exhibition***, Plan, 2020.

artribune.com/attualita/2015/03/dialoghi-di-estetica-parola-a-franco-vaccari/attachment/franco-vaccari-esposizione-in-tempo-reale-n-4-1972/

Fig. 2 Franco Vaccari, *Esposizione in tempo reale n.4*, Venice Biennale, 1972.

https://www.moma.org/collection/works/46309

Fig. 4 Man Ray, *Self-portrait with camera*, New York, 1932.

romainkremer.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Romain_Kremer_Camper_Spring_Summer_2015_Daniel_Sannwald-1.jpg

Fig. 5 *Atlas - Photographs*, Collage, 2020.



Fig. 6 *Atlas - Interactive Installation Inspiration* , Collage, 2020.

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COURSE TITLE:

THE SYSTEM OF CONTEM-PORARY ART

HELD BY:

Clarissa Ricci

COURSE TIMETABLE:
I year, II semester.

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THE SYSTEM OF CONTEMPORARY ART AT THE TIME OF THE PANDEMIC

In Italy, the most dramatic moments of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency began in March 2020. During the following months, lockdowns were an immediate measure used by most governments to contain the virus.

Besides sanitary consequences, this had many effects on other aspects of society. Lockdowns, suspensions of fairs and events, and restrictions on activities marked a year in which the whole art system was turned upside down, and the art market declined to 2008 crisis levels. This was the context in which the course "The System of Contemporary Art" commenced in March 2020.

All the topics (i.e., art markets, fairs, biennials, journals, contemporary museums, and collectors), as well as everything and everybody, were affected by the pandemic. I could not ignore the situation.

The "Decameron option" of retiring in the countryside and inventing stories, despite all the information and technology available, was not an alternative. Therefore, the challenge of this course was to teach students the fundamental notions required to interpret the functioning mechanisms of the contemporary art system, which seemed to be changing before our eyes. For the students, this became an opportunity to directly record the first impact that this situation could have entailed. Moreover, over the months it became clear that the post-pandemic situation was going to coincide with the work situation students were expected to face at the end of their studies.

Aware of this, the class responded with earnest enthusiasm and seriousness to the assigned topic, as it was a proactive way for everyone to question their own future and their contribution to a world that, in some moments, seemed to be in need of a complete rebuilding.

The proposal made to the students was to conduct a survey in groups and then to personally convert it into a final paper.

The aim was for the students to learn to work effectively in a group and develop autonomous critical thinking. The class was divided into groups based on macro areas: Museum, Gallery, Artist, Market, and Journal. Within these clusters, each group chose a topic of investigation, with the exception of the Museum group, which dealt with different aspects of museum institutions, such as the relationship between museums and the public and their use of social media and didactic programs. Beyond the paper topic, the course was intended to offer students an immediate implementation of some characteristics of the study of the art system. First, the aim of the course was to train the students to complex thinking and to work as a team.

In particular, they were asked to collect data and conduct surveys. This led them to test different ways of investigating contemporaneity, such as through images, numbers, and questionnaires. This data collection phase was mostly carried out collectively and constituted the first phase of the assigned project. Each student shared their database or contributed to the assembly of a shared one.

This allowed students to gather a lot of information and compare their results with their colleagues before the completion and delivery phase, thus allowing each student to form a broad overview of their specific topic. The second phase was devoted to writing a report in bullet points. Once the students had collected their data,

I encouraged them to consider the data in the most analytical way possible.
The similar structure of the students' essays is due to the model they had to follow, which comprised an introduction of the group work, a methodological section (which had to underline difficulties or aporia in data collection), a final report, and a critical conclusion.

Significant space was given in the assignments to reflect on the methodology and to make use of tables and charts to help the reader navigate information and consider the parameters used by each student. Where data analysis was not applicable, a three-case comparison was adopted to test the students' initial hypotheses.

The nature of the following essays is inevitably temporal, as the research was performed between April and June 2020.
In some cases, at the time of publication, an attempt was made by some students to integrate data until the end of 2020 or the beginning of 2021. However, completeness was not one of the required criteria, as the task was to learn to take a critical approach starting from data and to identify appropriate research tools; thus, most of the time, students had to learn to use new methodologies for investigating contemporaneity. Students' endurance in pushing the whole volume to the end line is a positive indication of their ability to contribute to the consequences and changes that will radicalize the future art system.

THE PEGGY GUGGENHEIM COLLECTION & THE CIVIC MUSEUMS OF TREVISO

Two Similar Yet Distinct Institutions

AUTHOR:

Nicole Costella

FIRST SECTION:
Digitalization of content

SECOND SECTION:
Social media presence and education

THIRD SECTION:
Public response

FOURTH SECTION:
Conclusions

ABSTRACT

The following essay illustrates the public strategies adopted by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice and by the Musei Civici in Treviso, in order to keep their audience engaged in cultural activities in line with those of the museum, during this particularly difficult time created by the Covid-19. Due to their economic differences in terms of fundings and budgets, both institutions created a social media program according to their means. In particular, this article aims at highlighting the abilities of the Treviso museums, whose staff was capable of organizing various content and involving several personalities of the art world, despite having a restricted budget compared to the Peggy Guggenheim Collect.

INTRODUCTION

When investigating the different responses from Italian cultural institutions to the pandemic and the consequent period of forced closure, two institutions distinguished themselves from a creative standpoint: the Civic Museums of Treviso and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.
Both working on the contemporary scene, these museums succeeded in conceiving a varied digital program that catered to the different people composing their audiences, while having different areas of influence and financial situations:

> the Civic Museums being a public institution with a mainly national audience and the Peggy Guggenheim Collection being part of a private foundation with an international visitor base.

With this framework, this essay aims to break down the digital agendas adopted by the two cultural institutions during the first year of pandemic, questioning whether the differences in popularity and budget between the two museums work as limits to the creation of digital content. The methodology used to collect data is that of the spreadsheet, useful for a wider and complete view on the subject through comparison. To gather further information on the subjects of research, the method of the spreadsheet has been flanked by interviews, either previously published in other newspapers or done personally. Furthermore, to better approach the subject, the following essay will be divided into three sections, dealing with three main topics:

> digitalization of content, social media presence and educational activities, and the public response to all these initiatives.

DIGITALIZATION OF CONTENT

In 2019, ISTAT, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, published a report titled Italia dei Musei (Italy of museums) describing the situation of Italian museums in 2018.[1] One of the aspects surveyed was the process of digitalization, collecting information on who initiated the operation and on those who still didn't take action.

Being a costly operation that consists in transforming physical works into a digital format, only the 10,4% of all the institutions present on the national territory have succeeded in initiating the digital conversion process of their entire cultural heritage. Out of that percentage only

1 "Nonostante la progressiva diffusione e applicazione delle tecnologie digitali nel mondo museale, in Italia solo un museo su dieci (10,4%) ha

a third has successfully completed the process, whereas the remaining part have only covered half of their heritage.

Because of this technological gap, the forced closure of the museums, caused by Covid-19, acted as a sort of wake-up call on how much the future of cultural institutions will depend on digital technologies and how important it is to invest in these processes.

During the pandemic, in fact, those museums who previously invested into this type of activities were able to offer a further form of entertainment, which was the possibility to visit a museum from one's living room. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection was one of those institutions who had the possibility to invest in the digitalization of their works of art and in the renovation of their website (happened in March 2020).

The new site has been designed to provide to the visitors a starting point into the discovery of the contemporary art collection and exhibitions of the museum. The permanent collection has been, in fact, uploaded in a digitalised high-quality format, so that the public could virtually visit the museum from the comfort of their own homes.

As for exhibitions, the venetian institution usually hosts one temporary exhibition per year: *Migrating Objects* was the one scheduled for 2020.

Since it opened a few weeks before the first lockdown was implemented, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection provided some videos giving a tour of their temporary exhibition, to compensate for the impossibility of visit. With the combination of these two tools, people had a free instrument to broaden up their knowledge and education on contemporary art, matching up with the mission of the museum. The Civic Museums of Treviso, on the contrary, didn't have the chance to start the process in the months before the lockdown. Even though their site lacked this service, they counter-balanced it with a great social media project, called Art Delivery, which will be discussed in the following section concerning social media.

As the manager Paola Bonifacio stated,[2] the museum has already taken action and started planning some permanent solutions to integrate the virtual world within their collections:

> a selection of high-quality images of the main masterpieces is one of first solutions to be implemented, with the goal of enticing potential visitors to visit the museum and the city as well.

Even though still not achieved, the digitalization of the Civic Museums distances itself from that of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, for what concerns the choice of partial transformation of the collection in a digital format. Furthermore, different motives guide the two institutions:

> the Peggy Guggenheim Collection follow their general mission, which is to educate their visitors even virtually, whereas the Civic Museums choose to upload a selection to encourage the viewer to visit their own facility.

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE AND EDUCATION

In a time where people were confined in their own homes, unable to engage in different activities during their leisure time, social media established themselves as an escape from the pandemic and a source of free entertainment for kids and adults. Cultural institutions inserted themselves in this context playing a crucial role:

effettuato la catalogazione digitale del patrimonio posseduto. Di questi, circa un terzo (37,4%) ha già completato il processo di digitalizzazione, due terzi hanno avviato le attività di digitalizzazione ma hanno coperto circa il 50% dei beni e delle collezioni disponibili. [...]", Istat, *L'Italia dei musei*, year 2018. Published on December, 23rd 2019.

2 Costella, Nicole. 2020. "Interview to Paola Bonifacio." June 1, 2020

by creating new segments and editorial programs, they succeeded in engaging with their audience and entertaining them with fun facts and in-depth analysis on the artworks belonging to their different collections.

Focusing on the museums selected for this case-study analysis, both The Peggy Guggenheim Collection and the Civic Museums of Treviso were successful in implementing their already existing social media strategy with new content, adapting to the new trends imposed by the pandemic.

Starting with The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, the institution reorganized itself soon after the lockdown was implemented in March. They launched the project *La Collezione Peggy Guggenheim a casa tua* (trans. The Peggy Guggenheim Collection at home) (Peggy Guggenheim Collection 2020), where the public could find a weekly newsletter and a 7-day program on their Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn pages. From educational activities for kids to podcasts, to segments narrating different aspects of the collection and of the temporary exhibition, the institution had the opportunity to narrate the museum, its collection and the person who started it all, Peggy Guggenheim. Furthermore, through a skillful use of the hashtags #MySweetQuarantine and #MuseumsFromHome, their social media campaign was able to make their content circulate in a wider network, tapping into a pool of potential viewers that didn't know the institution but could be interested in learning more about it.

Once the museums had the permission of re-opening their doors to the public, the Collection maintained their social media schedule, implementing it with new segments celebrating both the different exhibitions hosted by the museum in 40 years of activity and the city of Venice, by showing various corners of the city, and with posts promoting their off-line activities. With the second lockdown beginning in November, the Italian museums experienced a new closure that lasted up until April 2021 which forced them to limit their action to their social media pages, putting out new content on their collections.

The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, as a result, continued with their editorial program, mixing some old segments, like "Lo sapevate che" (Did you know that) and "Kids Day", with new ones focusing on the artists present in the collection with "5 facts about" or on the artworks of the collection with "A Closer Look Into". On the educational activities side, the Collection organized different workshops and lectures targeting different audiences within their following. During the first lockdown, the museum organized "Incontri" (Encounters), a series of lessons on history of art, given exclusively in Italian (Peggy Guggenheim Collection 2020).

This project consisted of five paid lessons on Zoom, starting at the beginning of May, reserved to the members associated with the museum. The lessons were hosted by Alessandra Montalbetti from Pinacoteca di Brera, who orchestrated her lectures around some "encounters" between contemporary artists and the great masters of the past. In November, with the second closure of cultural institutions as a safety measure, new educational projects were put in place. A new cycle of lectures by Alessandra Montalbetti was organized, called Art is Life, connecting the discipline of history of art with themes like alchemy, advertisement, fashion, cinema, food, music, philosophy and literature. As the previous cycle, the 8 lessons had been held in Italian on Zoom for

people who have the museum's membership. Catering to the younger audience, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, in partnership with Swatch Art Peace Hotel of Shanghai, arranged the project "Overcoming", 4 workshops with 4 contemporary artists on different subjects:

> Jan Vormann with Castles made of glass; Stefano Ogliari Badessi with Who Looks At What?; Alice Pasquini with Beyond the Wall: Art and Context; Cilla Jansson with Explore the Distance.

The other institution taken into account in this analysis is the Civic Museums of Treviso.

Just like the previous museum, the Civic Museums joined the social media race by starting to set up a schedule, put in place by the end of march mainly on Facebook but also appearing on Instagram and YouTube. By involving different professionals working in the artworld, the museum was able to create a noteworthy palimpsest called Art Delivery, which discusses different aspects that the institution covers in their offline activities. From the videos curated by Denis Curti and Francesca Del Torre, explaining the artworks featured in the temporary exhibition "Natura in Posa" (Nature posing), to insights by Elisabetta Gerhandinger on the archaeological history of Treviso, to workshops designed for kids and families by Ilaria Simeoni, the content was differentiated catering to different audiences while also diversifying their offer over the three-month-period of the first lockdown, with a slow decrease in posting when approaching the first re-opening.

Once the Civic Museums reopened to the public, their social media schedule was reduced to two posts a week. By applying this social media strategy, the personnel were able to manage the offline events for the local community, like "Dentro il Quadro" (Inside the painting), a kid's activity combining the visit to the museum with didactic activities. Even though the second lockdown was implemented, the Civic Museums chose to focus on telling stories on the saints featured on the artworks present in the collection or sharing facts or anecdotes around the museum.

Their social media strategy also comprehended promotional activities for their projects and exhibitions and ad-hoc online themed-workshops for kids during the Christmas holidays. From a content standpoint, some similarities can be noticed between the two schedules. Both institutions have focused on three main aspects, from which all the different segments derived. The first one that can be pointed out is the portrayal of the museum's collections:

> not only several insights were given on the different artworks composing the corresponding collections, but also some segments on artists were organised, to better understand the process and the person behind the work.

Focusing on the museum's narration, a slight difference can be perceived on the approach taken:

> the Peggy Guggenheim Collection concentrated itself mostly around the figure of its founder Peggy Guggenheim, whereas the Civic Museums directed its aim towards the history of the city and the community of Treviso.

Lastly, another trend that can be seen in both social media pages is showing and analysing the temporary exhibition, with videos and tours portraying the shows closed.

The real striking difference is how the content has been spread throughout the period of quarantine.
The museum "trevigiano" decided, in fact, to tailor their digital schedule to the period they have to cover, showing a slow decrease in posting content with the reopening approaching. By doing so, they would still keep their digital agenda without it becoming a burden to the staff, busy with the reopening activities. Furthermore, with the loosening of the lockdown, those viewers who would watch the content also begin to work again, so it would be pointless to have a whole palimpsest just to be viewed by few people. This type of strategy hasn't been adopted by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

The schedule that has been put in place for the first months of lockdown has been maintained throughout the whole year, without showing a decrease in posting even during the times where the institution was allowed to reopen their doors. Subtle changes were made within the editorial program to differentiate the offer, so that culture and contemporary art could keep company during the forced periods of isolation.

In the education department, both institutions provided content for families with activities that combine art with craftsmanship, with the goal of recreating masterpieces with materials that can be found at home. As an alternative for their recreational activities, few cycles of paid lessons on contemporary art were offered by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, catering to the older section of their audience. A different strategy has been implemented by the Civic Museums, which consisted in sticking to giving free insights into several artworks, through the videos posted on their Facebook page.

PUBLIC RESPONSE

Strictly connected to the social media schedules, it's the public response to the content published. The subject of research is to analyse if this type of adaptation to an extreme situation was effective, if the museums have observed a consistent rise in followers and if the public interacted with the institution around the topics presented, sparking up conversations on different matters. From a general point of view, both museums reported a significant participation by the audience on their social media platforms, registering never-seen-before numbers in followers.

A thorough analysis on the public response was presented by The Peggy Guggenheim Collection, studying the feedback received from their online initiatives. Maria Rita Cerilli, social media manager of the museum, in an interview for the website culturefor.com (Corti 2020) reported all the data collected by analysing the social media pages. Taking into consideration the four platforms chosen by the museum for their digital program, the general audience has increased by 15k followers, +3,2% ever since the beginning of March. This data is particularly striking, when considering that usually their average growth amounts of +1% per month.

Furthermore, Cerilli also reported that the social media page that received much more attention, compared to the others, is their Instagram page which registered an increment of +10k followers, since the forced closing of the facility. This demonstrated that the page has

seen a raise of +4% in thirty days. Considering the time period from March to the 16th of April, the final number of followers on their Instagram page amounts of over 295k total. If we think about all the content that has been put out on Peggy Guggenheim Collection's social media pages, the Art Talk segment was the one that has been consumed the most, where they would analyse in depth a work of art present in their collection. These videos, in fact, collected an average of 20k views per video. In the case of the Civic Museums of Treviso, what has emerged after the interview with the manager of the museum Paola Bonifacio and through her interview with the Chinese newspaper Shen Xin Yu (Zhang 2020), is that their social media pages have noticed a conspicuous growth in visitors, who both watched the content and interacted on the comment section.

Unfortunately, more precise data hasn't been released on the matter, but nonetheless we can conclude that the Art Delivery project has been a success and that people loved it. Comparing the number of likes and interactions under their posts, the contents most loved are:

> "Le opere raccontano" (Narrating the artworks) curated by Paola Bonifacio, the videos concerning the temporary exhibition "Natura in Posa" (Nature posing) and those regarding activities for children.

Given the outcomes and the reactions received from the audience, it is possible to state that both museums successfully achieved the objectives set at the start of the project. For the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, apart from their educational purposes, the main mission of this project was to take advantage of the immense communicative power held by social media in order to create a relationship between the museum and the public, conceiving the viewer as a potential visitor.

With their immediacy and opportunity of discussion, social media could give the institution a wide user base, who can become, again, new visitors in the future. Started as an obligatory resource in response to the lockdown, social media platforms were soon spotted by the Civic Museums as new ways of communication that would help them give a signal of hope and strength to the community.

Beside the extreme situation and the limits of being a relatively small institution, they were able to build up a content schedule that could rival bigger institutions, allowing them to entertain their own community. Furthermore, they showed how minor public institutions with little means can still create and put out top-quality content within short notice, while still innovating their ways to engage with the audience due to these sudden circumstances.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the backgrounds and economic sources of income, it's quite common to be led to think that a major institution, like the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, has a consistent advantage over public institutions like the Civic Museums, where the budget offered by the state is quite limiting when it comes to concretizing ambitious or unexpected projects.

However, such unforeseen events taught us that money and economic means could help to a certain extent. The hunger to innovate and the strive to look for new models for cultural education are what drove the institutions during the pandemic. Thanks to the development of

new technologies and the access to a stable internet connection, nowadays, everyone is able to conceive a decent plan of action. This is mostly possible thanks to social media, on which you can cater your content to different ages without spending too much money. Furthermore, the quality of the content doesn't depend anymore only on the money invested in it but also and mostly on creativity. If we state the contrary, meaning that economic means have a dominant role in the conception and realization of a digital schedule, a relatively small institution like the Civic Museums of Treviso would have little to no chance to re-emerge. However, even though they are at a disadvantage if we consider their public economic income, they were able to conceive a program that could rival those of great institutions, like that of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection.

This new line of action also had the seal of approval by the main consumer, the general public, who preferred and actively requested this type of engagement from the institution itself. As Paola Bonifacio said during the interview, there has been an active participation and a positive feedback from the community in regard to the schedule created for the quarantine period. A line of action that the Civic Museums should implement in their communication plan is a use of social media catered to the younger audiences, constituting a substantial section of users that log in onto these platforms on a day-to-day basis. By seeking new innovative approaches, the institution is able to stay one step ahead on the path of communicating knowledge, instead of limping in the attempt of catching up with the new trends. A section where the weight of the different economic backgrounds is felt, is in the digitalisation department.

In 2018 Istat reported that there's a significant lack of digitalization of the cultural heritage in Italian museums. It's a fundamental factor that the museums of Treviso could take advantage of not only to compete with bigger institutions, but also to assure the preservation of artworks for posterity and to grant the possibility to study the works held in the collection to people who are unable to access the institution for various reasons. Unfortunately, this kind of operation requires a substantial budget in order to be achieved, establishing an obstacle for smaller institutions. However, the Civic Museums of Treviso is committed to get at least a portion of their collection digitized, so that everyone can experience and analyse extensively the Italian excellency in the history of art. By operating in such a manner, the institution also fulfills the mission which is to educate people and to guide them in the discovery of the cultural heritage of the Treviso's area.

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MUS.E FOR SCHOOLS IN LOCKDOWN

Cramming the Museum in an Online Classroom.

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FIRST SECTION:
The lockdown

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Challenges and Obstacles

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Solutions: the Digital Activities

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between museums and schools has been disrupted during the first quarantine of 2020, creating the necessity to provide new tools for educators. This essay analyses the Mus.e Association (Musei Civici di Firenze) as a case study. In particular, it takes into account the activities directed to schools and teachers. It examines how the association responded to the museums' lockdown, the distinctive features of its educational program and the challenges that led it to new practices.

The analysis concludes with an overview of the positive and negative features of the initiatives through the SWOT analysis model.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main roles of the museum is being a place for people to learn. Museums hold the memory of the past and the recording of the present, narrating both to the public. It is natural, then, that students are one of their main users, constituting a particular public that is systematically provided a selected offer of the museum content through a specific project of mediation. The youngest public is, in fact, especially in need of guidance in approaching the museum, but also the one who benefits the most from an object-based experience, which can actively engage students in the learning process. For this reason, museums have long developed a privileged relationship with schools, with the purpose of creating specific experiences, tailored on the age and the backgrounds of single school classes. The recent times, however, have been challenging for museums to keep the relationship with schools active and meaningful.

The global pandemic, the subsequent isolation and social distancing have forcibly prevented any activity which was part of the ordinary museum experience. This extraordinary situation has pressed the educational departments to find alternative solutions in order to grant a continuity in the fruition of the museum, especially for those students whose visit was already scheduled or foreseen within the school context.

This essay will draw on the relationship between the museum and the students, focusing on the adopted adjustments regarding the role of educators. This dialogue will be enlightened by the case of the Florentine Civic Museums association Mus.e and the subsidiary activities it put into practice, in particular those explicitly addressed to schools. Starting from their role and impact prior to the Covid-19 emergency, this study is going to review how the association responded to the lockdown and the distinctive features of its educational program, the challenges it had to overcome and the motives behind their new practices.

An overview of the positive and negative traits of the pursued initiatives will conclude the analysis.

THE LOCKDOWN

When the pandemic required a lockdown of all public activities, the museums of the association Mus.e were already relying on a solid catchment area and on a rich experience of educational projects.

Since 2013, the association's mission and activities were focused on the valorization of the heritage belonging to the Florentine

Civic Museums and on the realization of cultural projects, exhibitions and events with the purpose of promoting their content to the public.[1]

As it can be seen from their annual report on the public involvement, the overall turnout for 2019 was of 2.017.228 accesses to the 17 civic cultural sites on the Florentine territory, with an increase of 13% over the previous year (MUS.E 2019). The great participation of the public to the cultural offer depends not only on the unquestionable relevance of the Florence's cultural heritage, but also on the highly dynamic activity of the association, constantly proposing exhibitions and events to engage a wider audience, especially on three major museums: Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Museo Novecento and the Murate Art District. The engagement from temporary exhibitions and events of 2019 (doubled in quantity compared to the previous year) has proved itself to be particularly effective, as it induced an increase in number of visitors of 236% compared to the participation of 2018. However, this positive trend was abruptly interrupted in the first months of 2020 by the Covid-19 emergency. The quarantine which followed imposed a whole new set of challenges to all cultural institutions, forcing them to adapt in order to provide their audiences with the services they would normally offer. The most natural and more common solution adopted by almost all institutions has been that of reaching out to the public through the internet: more than ever websites, social media and other virtual channels have been operative and flooded with information, attempts of engagement and cultural content, all manipulated enough to fit a dematerialized format.

The data collected by ICOM show that during the lockdown many museums enhanced their digital activities, causing the digital communication activities to increase in at least 15% of the museums taken in analysis by the survey. In particular, "social media activities increased for more than half of the museums surveyed" (ICOM Report 2020, 2). Most museum professionals worked from home: in 84% of museums, the large majority of the staff was working remotely during the lockdowns.

According to the CECA Vocabulary, museum mediation is made by activities, tools and languages that 'translate' the knowledge of the heritage for all the audiences, making a link between heritage and visitors' while focusing on "activities and tools that facilitate the dialogue with the museum"(ICOM 2018, 22). Therefore, this interposing and compulsory distance between the museum and the visitor necessarily demanded the cultural experience to be delivered through new tools and activities; this implied accepting, first of all, that the "link" between heritage and visitors was becoming more and more often an "hyperlink".

CHALLENGES AND OBSTACLES

Approaching this new digital format certainly implied overcoming several difficulties. The main obstacles were in terms of resources, which were lacking in many areas. First of all, the educational department had little time to adjust to the sudden shift the lockdown had caused to the operational paradigm of delivering information and establishing a relationship with the public. The second more relevant deficiency was in terms of human resources: since the large majority of the employees had been laid back, the educational department had been drastically reduced to few heads. Furthermore, another major obstacle actually concerned the

1. MUS.E, statute of the association, 2010, Art. 2: Pratiche didattiche durante il lock-down - Report Preliminare (indire.it). Accessed on 28/06/2021.

availability of the technological resources. Naturally, the staff had to work from home, and was bound to use the means already available.[2]

Therefore, while examining the projects that have been developed in this unconventional period, we also have to keep in mind the conditions and the environment in which they have been realized.

Even with the proper instruments and the necessary adjustments, the transition from traditional to online-based educational activities required solving few organizational challenges. Since the Mus.e association covers several museum sites, the educational department could rely on a broad array of activities (around 50) before the Covid-19 emergency. The conversion to the online version implied operating a strict choice among these many activities, which has been reported to be -paradoxically, but understandably- one of the toughest decisions to take. Thus, the final selection has tried to cover, on one hand, all the major museums of the association and, on the other, all targets, divided by school grade. This distinction by target, however macroscopic, included a second challenge, which consisted in balancing uniformity and specificity within the activities. For instance, the adoption of a homogeneous format has led to the exclusion of those approaches which would have been more suitable for a specific target (for example sacrificing an audio-visual format for the youngest students).

Finally, it is noteworthy that the purpose of creating such content was entirely to benefit the museum's audience, since the work of the staff was not retributed as it would have normally been, for example, through guided tours. On the other hand, the realization of these projects was not entirely selfless, as its aim was that of maintaining the public engaged and aware of the museums, other than of their cultural content, so to reduce the chances of losing it throughout the quarantine period.

Nonetheless, it is remarkable that the association has decided to undergo such a time-consuming process in order to assure a continuity of function for its audience, and it has been considerate towards those schools who would have otherwise visited the Florentine museums.

SOLUTIONS: THE DIGITAL ACTIVITIES

The projects the association Mus.e has launched aimed at meeting their original mission – the organization and valorization of cultural activities on the Florentine territory – despite the lockdown, by changing the means of communication. The tools the association chose to stay in contact with their audiences are not much dissimilar from those employed by many other museums facing the same struggles. The content has been delivered through the association website and its social media:

the main channels have been YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, with the addition, in a later phase of the lockdown, of the video communication platform Zoom.

The produced material can be roughly divided into 3 categories, reflecting to the public envisaged:

families, individuals and schools.

The first category was also the first to be realized when the museums had to close; this format addresses the families through a series of YouTube videos that are in turn divided in two series, again according to the target:

2. The information regarding Mus.e educational programmes have been reported to me conducted on May 29th 2020 in an interview kindly granted by Valentina Zucchi, responsible for the cultural mediation area.

their names are in fact 'Museo Chiama Casa' (Museum Calls Home) and 'Museo Chiama Casa – speciale bambini' (Museum Calls Home – kids edition).

The first series of video is supposed to imitate what a guided tour would have been like inside some of the cultural sites belonging to the association.[3] The kids' edition, on the other hand, consists in a series of workshops and games to realize with everyday materials that can be easily found at home, in order to bring children closer to the artistic content, narrated in form of fairy tales. The videos only last a few minutes for a lighter fruition, and they are produced by the same tour guides who would usually work with the public leading it through the museum halls.[4]

The second proposal has been an experimental project for the association, which for the first time, starting from the 19th of May, engaged in an online cycle of lectures, delivered weekly via Zoom and lasting half an hour each, as a sort of insights on the artworks belonging to their museums, starting from those available on the platform Google Arts & Culture.[5] Finally, the third category – the more noteworthy for our research – consists in several proper lessons, appositely prepared for the teachers of any school grade. The material is divided in three clusters:

for the kindergarten and the first cycle of primary school, for the second cycle primary school and for the first and the second cycle of secondary school.

The topics are related to the major museums of the association, those the students would have otherwise visited during a school trip, and they range from medieval to contemporary art.[7] The lessons provided for the teachers consist in several presentations in pdf format, so they can be easily implemented during a lesson delivered online. The intention is exactly that of reproducing a part of what a visit to the museum would have looked like, leading the students across the cultural sites following a thematic path. For instance, the youngest children are taken to the discovery of the 'smells' in Santa Maria Novella through the flowers depicted all over the decorations, or they are introduced to the contemporary abstract painting and to the 'dripping' practice used by Pollock through the paintings in Museo Novecento.[8] With the more advanced grades, the lessons become longer and more specifically historical and art-historical, showing the students the architectural and urbanistic side of the city of Florence as well.[9] The latter initiative is outstanding because of its thoughtful concern towards a category that has been quite abandoned during the quarantine, especially during the first phase, namely that of the schoolteachers. As the lockdown was having place, in fact, the school year was not formally ended yet, so teachers had found themselves in the condition of having to continue with the same educational programme, but without all the proper competences to transpose the didactic projects on a virtual platform. The application of distance learning has been generally problematic for its abrupt imposition upon both teachers and students.

In such a delicate moment, it might have been tempting to ignore or disregard those school subjects considered less crucial to the completion of the school year. Art Education and Art History are usually considered among these.[10] However, this misconception – so deeply ingrained in our system of values – needs a resolute reassessment, as the teaching of art is proven pivotal for a healthy development of an individual's 'soft skills'. A research from 2013 support this position, showing

3. Available at: http://musefirenze.it/museo-chiama-casa-museichiusimuseiaperti/. Accessed on June 20, 2020.

4. Available at: http://musefirenze.it/museo-chiama-casa-speciale-bambini/. Accessed on June 28, 2020.

5. Available at: http://musefirenze.it/mezzora-darte/. Accessed on June 20, 2020.

6. Available at: http://musefirenze.it/schede-didattiche/. Accessed on June 20, 2020.

7. Available at: http://musefirenze.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Santa-Maria-Novella-Profumi-del-Paradiso.pdf. Accessed on June 20, 2020.

8. Available at: http://musefirenze.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Museo-chiama-scuola-Il-gesto-di-dipingere.pdf. Accessed on June 20, 2020.

9. Available at: http://musefirenze.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Visita-a-Palazzo-Vecchio.pdf. Accessed on June 20, 2020.

10. On the continuity of didactic programmes during the lockdown, INDIRE (Istituto Nazionale

how teaching art sparks creativity and increase 'critical thinking skills of observation, interpretation, association, comparison, flexible thinking, and evidence' (Bowen, Green and Kisida 2014, 37-44). The children exposed to art exhibited an increased historical empathy, higher levels of tolerance, and a greater taste for consuming art and culture. Against the deplorable trope of schools de-emphasizing culturally enriching field trips, many art educators underline how arts education has the important purpose to foster broad dispositions and habits of mind, especially the creative thinking, and the capacity to make connection, along with providing visual observation skills and opportunities for self-expression and self-exploration (Seidel et al. 2009). Within this framework, museums present themselves as the privileged classrooms to lead this kind of teaching, as they display the widest array of stimuli for children. Furthermore, museums visits are proven to actually facilitate and improve the learning abilities of the students, by helping them to build lateral thinking and problem-solving skills (Habiba 2019). The museum is the ideal medium for students to develop the ability to make interdisciplinary connections between concepts and ideas, across the curriculum subjects. Even when the museum is not dedicated to the arts, the exposure to the physicality of the artifact is pivotal in the learning process since objects-based learning stimulates and develops curiosity and capacity for children to make insightful and critical observations. With every new research, the importance of the educational mission of the museum, and therefore the relation with the school system, is proven to be increasingly relevant. In this context, the Mus.e didactic offer for schools positions itself as an encouragement to pursue the teaching of art history.

Moreover, this initiative can be judged as an effective way to maintain the association's relationship with schools active and it eventually proposes an opportunity to expand them beyond Florence's territory.

Documentazione, Innovazione, Ricerca Educativa) conducted a survey on the teachers' experience, from which emerges that the attitude towards the syllabus in most cases implied reducing it to the core or adapting it to treat topics related to the Coronavirus: Pratiche didattiche durante il lockdown - Report Preliminare. indire.it, accessed on 28/06/2021.

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

The following analysis of Mus.e's didactic activity during the museums' lockdown has been modelled upon the SWOT analysis scheme.

It is undoubtful that a distinctive trait of the Mus.e association is their powerful communication asset. Their very mission, in fact, comprehends the promotion of cultural activities to the larger public, and they did not fail to exploit this advantage in the transition to an exclusively online method of cultural mediation. Their approach has been successful in maintaining a tight relationship with their public, as proven by the feedbacks they have received,[11] thus the association could generally rely on an already receptive audience, familiar with their communication strategies on the different media. More strictly in relation to the educational projects, the dedicated department had as well a rather solid basis upon which reinvent and adapt their approach: the relationships between the association and the schools, the ones on the Florentine territory in particular, have a consolidated and successful history.

11. This information has been reported to me in the interview granted by Valentina Zucchi, responsible for the cultural mediation area.

An important aspect of the initiatives proposed online is their versatility. Now the public can benefit from the educational offer in a wide range of sites and platforms, experimenting with different formats and varying the nature of the didactic experience. Above all, is remarkable the

fact that these formats are differentiated according to a rich spectrum of age ranges – not just following a binary distinction between adults and children – a feature that we can witness more specifically with the didactic material offered to the teachers as an opportunity to enrich their distance teaching. This initiative specifically can be thought as easily implementable as a standard feature in the traditional scholastic program, an addition that could turn out to be more plausible than we think, given the easy access, the adaptability and especially the necessity of the material.

Finally, it is worth to mention that the free availability of the whole offer certainly contributes to make its fruition more attractive to the general public. These strengths pave the way to a wide set of opportunities, especially regarding the future application and development of activities born as a mere replacement of the standard experience in a situation of emergency. The intention is to turn these emergency measures into a long-term didactic offer, even after the reopening of the museums.

The activities proposed by the association are in many cases open to and seeking a feedback from the audience. Other than being a measure of their success and popularity, these feedbacks also offer the possibility to constitute an archive of the public's engagement. Furthermore, it is relevant to notice how the projects made up specifically to aid schools and teachers have been rarely found amongst other museums in the first stage of the lockdown, and therefore could claim a shortage of 'competitors' that offer the same service. The uniqueness of the project had led a new active section of didactical activities, born form the emergency, but systematized as a standard practice. Beside these appreciations of the reactive measures of the association Mus.e, we cannot deny that there are some inevitable vulnerabilities wired into the very notion of 'online education'. First of all, online learning will not ever replace the physical, immersive experience of the museums in a three-dimensional space. Moreover, a significant difference consists also in the quantity, other than the quality, of the information that can be delivered to the students. This has been proven by the difficulties the staff itself has encountered in the selection of the didactic material. The digital communication, more than the traditional one, has to be simple (or simplified) and immediate to be more effective, which inevitably leads to discard accessory information. But if on one side this might harm the effectiveness of the online projects, on the other it also prevents any risk that the physical cultural sites might experience a decrease in visits. Quite the contrary, in fact, might happen:

> if the educational activities are able to reach out to a wider audience of schools and students, they might as well count as a different kind of advertisement of the Florentine civic museums.

Nonetheless, the introduction of a separate, autonomous online mediation could still encounter threats from the outside of the institution. Above all, the digital divide is the more harmful to a widespread fruition of the material. According to recent ISTAT data, a third of Italian families does not own a computer or a tablet, and when it is owned in half of the cases the students must share it with the rest of the family, and only the 30% of them has elevated digital competences (ISTAT 2020).

Besides this disastrous framing of the Italian digital landscape, we must also consider that the main public addressed by the educational initiatives are students, and only the oldest part of this category is digitally autonomous and, even when disposing of a device, can independently benefit from the didactic opportunities. In all the other cases, an adult must also be available to guide the student through the websites.

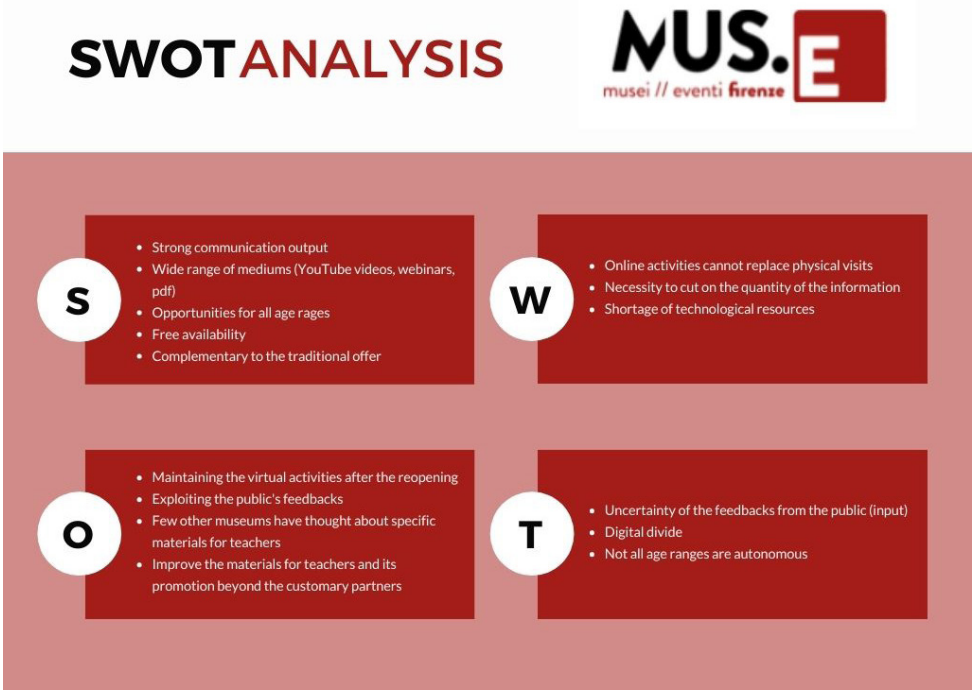
CONCLUSIONS AND 2021 UPDATES

The lockdown of museums imposed by the Covid-19 emergency had particularly affected the youngest of publics, the one that more than others enjoys and benefits from a real-life experience of culture.

The digital reality, so often used as an evasion, had become a constriction for students, forced to an experience learning through a screen. The museums' educational department had encountered obstacles similar to those faced by the school system, and the museum association Mus.e can provide an example of how the didactic activities could still be delivered not only to families and individuals, but also to teachers and schools, providing didactic content to be implemented in distance-teaching lectures. This model was effective in maintaining and strengthening the relationship between museums and schools – crucial to the educational mission of the association – by responding to a widespread need among teachers. A year later, the success of the initiative can be confirmed by the rapid and positive response of schoolteachers to the didactic activities, especially from outside Florence.

Therefore, the association decided to upgrade this project by turning it into an 'on-demand' opportunity delivered by a museum's guide, thus offering a personalized service, tailored on the class's specific needs. The new format has the benefit of being more versatile and adaptable, as it can work both in an online environment or in a classroom. Moreover, this model restores the personal relationship between the guide and the students, allowing them to directly ask the museum's staff any question, resulting in a more engaging experience.

In conclusion, this case study wanted to provide an example of how a cohesive museum collective, thanks to the work of a single department of communication, could provide an efficient yet flexible array of alternatives to the traditional museum experience.



Tab.1 Mus.e Swot Analysis Scheme



Fig. 1 Mus.e. '*Profumi dal Paradiso*'. *Museo Chiama Scuola*, screenshot, 2020.



Fig. 2 Mus.e. '*Palazzo Medici Riccardi*'. *Museo Chiama Scuola*, screenshot, 2020.

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ON IMMERSION AND INTERACTIVITY

Museum gaming in the Covid era

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FIRST SECTION:
Gamification during Covid:
Prisme 7

SECOND SECTION:
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ABSTRACT

In response to COVID-19, an increasing number of museums have been seeking innovative solutions to better exhibit and communicate their tangible and intangible collection, while establishing a stronger dialogue with the public in an educational yet leisure experience.

But how can museums effectively integrate technology into their exhibits? The case study investigates those initiatives that go beyond the simple digital copy of museum exhibitions and create innovative material designed with digital in mind, rather than as an afterthought of a physical exhibition. In particular, the project will study examples of museum video games, immersive Virtual Reality experiences and innovative exhibition design platforms, whose aim is to build a universal museum without walls. Could these technologies change the structure of the art world and make possible new forms of global exchange for an after-crisis future?

INTRODUCTION

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, an increasing number of museums have been seeking innovative solutions to better showcase their physical and virtual collections, while establishing a stronger dialogue with the public in an educational yet leisurely experience.

These initiatives – from social media engagement to an ever-growing catalogue of digital exhibitions – are all ways in which institutions hoped to hold the public's attention, as well as support individuals who needed a distraction from the terrifying daily news cycle. But how did museums effectively integrate technology into their exhibitions and still provide an immersive experience for their virtual audiences? The aim of this paper is to investigate those initiatives that went beyond simply providing a digital copy of museum exhibitions and instead created innovative material, designing it with the digital in mind rather than as an afterthought or surrogate for a physical exhibition. In particular, the project will study examples of museum video games – used by institutions to imagine new narratives for the history of art – as well as innovative exhibition design platforms, which are giving the visitor a more active role. The first section focuses on the Centre Pompidou's launch of the videogame Prisme 7, which took place in the first months of the pandemic.

The aim of the project is for the user to discover the main works of the museum as well as the principles of modern and contemporary artistic creation through a theme-based mission. This case study shows how a museum's physical display can be transposed into an interactive virtual experience through a personal interpretation of the museum collection in which the player is fully immersed. The second section illustrates two other examples of video games that were created some time before the COVID-19 crisis and tackle the issue of gaming inside a museum from a different point of view. The Italian game "Father and Son", created for the Archaeological Museum of Naples, has a narrative structure and a more 'romantic' design. In this case, game creators focused more on storytelling than on displaying the museum, with the intention of involving the user in a new mythical imagery linked to the archeological site of the museum. We will also consider an independent MMO game which allows players to put themselves in the shoes of

a curator and to create their own gallery with a customized display and collection. Despite their different approaches to museum gaming, these examples have some common points, such as their pedagogical goals and the idea of turning the user into a player, or even better, an "emancipated spectator", as Rancière would have said (Rancière 2007, 271).

The methodological approach I chose to adopt is mainly based on collecting qualitative information through interviews with the creators and designers of the video games analyzed in this paper. This allowed me not only to gather in-depth information about the projects, but also to collect the creators' personal opinions about the future of museums and gaming in a post-pandemic world. The information coming from the interviews has been integrated with and supplemented by official articles and live stream conferences on social media which were held in this period by a number of institutions active in the cultural world.

In addition to qualitative data, during lockdown I was able to examine a number of quantitative information through surveys released by official organizations such as NEMO, which has issued, since May 2020, a variety of questionnaires on how museums in Europe have started organizing their online activities after closing their doors to the public (NEMO 2020). These datasets have allowed a continuous update on the increased online presence of museums worldwide through open surveys or spreadsheets compiled by institutions and their audiences.

GAMIFICATION DURING COVID: PRISME 7

While most museums have considered online exhibitions the best solution for showcasing their collection during lockdown, this decision did not come without some criticism. Much of the disagreement has arisen because online exhibitions are often developed as supplements to physical exhibitions, and when you browse through them, you realize that the content is utterly editorial, with too much text and objects simply pasted on the website with little interpretation. If we look at the freedom of users, most of the time they are given a very limited choice as to how to navigate these virtual collections, which in turn cannot usually offer any particular emotional involvement, nor the awe-evoking experience that might be expected from a museum exhibition.[1] Starting from these considerations, we may conclude that digital products should not be limited to being digital copies of what exists in the gallery. As Rebecca Kahn states, "the key is to make use of the affordances of the medium, which includes autonomy, multi-layered multimedia, and linked content" (Kahn 2020).

Several museum professionals have suggested that art institutions should tell new stories on their virtual platforms through the use of new materials that are freely available online, such as digital archives and digitalized collections. This approach would allow museums to extend their action and influence beyond the physical walls of the exhibition space, and to provide innovative digital activities able to involve and educate users while also allowing them the freedom to act inside the virtual art world. One of the solutions that bring all these aspects together is the creation of museum games, and in particular the video game launched by the Centre Pompidou during lockdown. Given the current situation, the video game cultural industry, which has been expanding internationally in recent years, shows even more its incredible strength and

1. According to a survey led by our research group, with a total of 337 responses, 4.8% of interviewees felt bored by museum virtual tours, and 9% of them felt unsatisfied.
Full survey at: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1mFOpdxa-nUPJEcXzJ1q70KI7_E_9pD-vGfqDZfjDKm4Lc/edit#responses

ability to bring distant people together, to the extent that the WHO declared it a useful pastime in times of social distancing (Canales 2020). In the same way, the Ministry for national education in France decided to invest in innovative digital projects for the education of the user as well as the promotion of museum collections. It is interesting to note that video games can be considered the most contemporary art forms in our culture, but "paradoxically no game up to now has presented an artistic experience immersed in Modern and contemporary art" (Bounane 2020).

Prisme 7, designed by Abdel Bounane and his team at Bright, is in fact the first project worldwide aimed at linking contemporary art to an interactive virtual experience. The setting of Prisme 7 is minimal, with few elements of storytelling and a particular focus on design:

> the environment is based on various artworks from the collection of the museum and on the aesthetics of the building itself, with elements recalling the famous pipes that are visible outside the museum.

The user is free to move in this virtual universe while surrounded by continuous references to the collection, and is supposed to complete different missions in every level. The main themes of the game recall the very elements of a work of art, as they explore the relationship between colors and functions, light and immersion, turning the platform itself into an actual art form. The masterpieces of the Centre Pompidou, extracted from the museum context for the first time, gain a whole new meaning:

> the dialogue between the artworks, their size and their environment is completely altered, offering a new narrative to the history of the collection.

As Bounane describes it, the game mechanism is based on a progressive scheme of actions undertaken by the user:

> observe, understand, deconstruct and create.

Furthermore, the user is invited not only to play with the museum collection, but most importantly to act inside the virtual environment, thus acquiring an active role, which is often absent in a normal exhibition visit.

Another important aspect of Prisme 7 is its pedagogical focus, with resources specifically created for teachers and students, such as pedagogical folders, videos showing how the game can be used in the teaching field, and workshops that were conceived in connection with some high school programs and are aimed at foregrounding transdisciplinary activities (Art Daily 2020). The educational side of museums has always played a central role in the department system, but it is even more important at this particular time when it is not possible to offer in-person cultural activities, especially to the younger generation.

The idea of educating the audience through an immersive virtual experience can open new opportunities in a post-pandemic world, even after the reopening of museums, offering new ways to experience cultural heritage and to act inside the art world.

EXISTING CASE STUDIES: STORYTELLING AND DISPLAY

> ***Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn*** **(Benjamin Franklin).**

Today, we live in an era of interactive culture. Museum games are innovative tools that provide users with an immersive experience while also creating new cultural universes, an 'imaginary museum', as Malraux would have defined it (Malraux 1952).

Fabio Viola, founder of TuoMuseo and creator of "Father and Son" – the first video game created by a museum for a worldwide audience – states that 'cultural places should talk the language of contemporaneity and create new mythologies to renovate the old ones':[2]

> artworks, once displayed in a museum besides other elements, have written a new history of art, and in the same way museum gaming can now rewrite this story through a new distribution of images and new storytelling.

For instance, with "Father and Son" – a game conceived for the Archaeological Museum of Naples – Viola wants to provide an immersive experience where the user, by exploring the streets of Naples and the museum rooms, encounters stories through different eras, but with constant references to contemporary life. The player thus acquires an active role and has the power to leave traces of their *passaggio* (passage).

With this new phenomenon we witness the shift from homo sapiens to "homo ludens" (Huizinga 1938) as described by Huizinga, according to whom the play element is a necessary condition in the generation and fruition of culture. From this new perspective, the ludic element is not a distraction, but a tool for us to experience and enjoy our cultural heritage, even if we are not physically in the museum.

If we look at the data gathered between 2017 and 2020, we see that the Archaeological Museum of Naples had 1 million visitors, while the game just surpassed 4 million players. It is interesting to note that only 7% of the players are from Italy, while a large number comes from China or the US. This shows the potential of this platform, which turned the museum from a place where you consume culture, to a place of (international) cultural production. Digital initiatives such as "Father and Son" work on two areas which are hardly addressed by the experience of the physical exhibition alone:

> the pre- and post-visit experiences at the museum.

Seb Chan, a museum experience designer for the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in Melbourne, states that if we consider museums as "spaces for imagining alternative realities and alternative futures, then a post-visit experience is about extending the tendrils of that imagining out into the space and time after the museum visit is over".

The potential of museum gaming is that it can reach the audience before and especially after museum visits in order to leave a permanent trace. These two aspects must also be developed for a post-pandemic scenario, in order to offer experiences that complement the physical visit.

The main goal of "Father and Son" – that is, to turn the visitor into an actor inside the art system – is shared by Yarden Yaroshevski, founder of StikiPixels and creator of the MMO game "Occupy White Walls", released in 2018. Yaroshevski told *The New York Times* that multiple video games have centered around artworks, but few of them simulate the experience of curating and displaying collections.

In this game, not only does the player have the opportunity to learn about art and a specific museum space, but they can also become the actual curators of their own exhibition space:

2. Lecture during the event 'Turismo Immersivo, AR e Gamification', organised by BTM Puglia, February 22, 2020

> the game offers a choice of thousands of unique architectural elements and even more artworks, ranging from Old Master paintings to contemporary creations.

It is no coincidence that David Jaffe, former curator of the National Gallery in London, has worked with OWW to design virtual solo exhibitions of Impressionists and plan live online visits for other users. In addition to giving visitors an active role in a museum setting, Yaroshevski believes that this game can turn art into something universal. Indeed, museums usually display only 10% of their collection, and thus most artworks are kept in the archives. This is the main issue of our contemporary art establishment:

> only a few museum directors have control over the kind of art that is displayed, while it should be up to the public to choose the works they want to experience.

OWW has this militant approach to the art world, and its name might indeed be a reference to the "Occupy Wall Street" movement, but from a utopian artistic perspective. In this game, everyone is the one percent and everyone can claim priceless works of art for themselves.

Yaroshevski likes to clarify that OWW does not intend to do away with the present museum system, but its intention is to re-engineer it. Museums certainly have their strengths as physical places exhibiting real artworks, but at the same time we should strive to create alternative platforms that can make art more accessible in order to create Malraux's famous vision of a museum without walls.

CONCLUSION

Although many museums strive to create 'museums without walls', the potential of a truly disseminated, international 'collection of collections', promised by the web, remains largely unrealized.

However, the gap between the museum as a repository of knowledge and the museum as a place of cultural production might be narrowed by new immersive initiatives which allow a more effective understanding and learning of cultural contents through the visitors' engagement in playing an active role. Starting from the various case studies analyzed in this paper, the potential of museum gaming emerges as an activator of culture and at the same time as a work of art itself. The involvement of players is clear from their reviews of the different games, many of which say things like 'I was moved while playing'.

This emotional involvement will have a deeper impact on the visitor, who will feel encouraged to communicate and promote that experience with others. Interactive and immersive experiences based on the centrality of the displayed object are able to connect the visitor to the exhibition space in a new way, providing new narratives outside museums, but also raising greater awareness of what we are experiencing inside an art institution. If we ask ourselves about the future of these games after the pandemic and the reopening of physical art spaces, we need to keep in mind that this kind of immersive experience will continue to be useful to engage museum visitors before and after their physical visit.

At the same time, the perception of the exhibition will be enhanced by these platforms which offer a new perspective on museum collections. Therefore, interactivity should not be seen as an 'add-on' to museum displays, but should be conceived as a separate and

independently valuable production process. The global pandemic is giving us the extraordinary opportunity to maintain the elements of innovation that we have been forced to adopt, but it is also helping us realize that these tools will allow us to enhance the culture of a place, internalize it, and make it more accessible to a wider community worldwide.

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FIRST SECTION:
A pandemic education crisis and experiences of distance learning in museums

SECOND SECTION:
First experiences of virtual workshops in Musei Civici di Ancona and in GAMeC, Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo

THIRD SECTION:
Granelli di Laboratorio: a germinal virtual workshop for Museo Egizio visitors under 6

FOURTH SECTION:
Further developments during the second wave of COVID-19

MUSEUM WORKSHOPS VIA ZOOM AND GOOGLE MEET IN TIMES OF LOCKDOWN

Maison Petit, Art Room and Granelli di Laboratorio

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ABSTRACT

During the Covid-19 sanitary crisis, video communication platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet became essential to guarantee distance learning to school audiences. This essay aims to analyse how these tools were employed in the museum context to activate virtual workshops in a synchronic mode. The considered case studies are three:

> *Maison Petit*, offered by Musei Civici di Ancona; *Art Room*, launched by GAMeC-Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo; and *Granelli di Laboratorio*, proposed by The Egyptian Museum - Museo Egizio of Turin.

The research focuses on the first wave of spring 2020, but it also describes changes and evolutions that occurred during the second wave of the pandemic. Keywords: museum education, school, distance learning, virtual workshop

A PANDEMIC EDUCATION CRISIS AND EXPERIENCES OF DISTANCE LEARNING IN MUSEUMS

Museums and schools were among the first places to close due to the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. An emblematic case is Italy, the first European country seriously affected by the virus, where all the schools in the nation closed starting from 5 March 2020 and all museums had to stop their activities due to the DPCM (prime ministerial decree) of 8 March 2020. For both institutions, the lockdown period represented a test-bed in terms of digitalisation and participation since the traditional places of education were no longer available and it was necessary to find new strategies in order to fulfil their pedagogic purposes. Schools were forced to increase their use of DAD[1] while museums had to exploit digital resources such as social media and platforms to keep in touch with a wide audience and provide more cultural contents. In a certain sense, education shifted almost completely on-air, and schoolchildren had to face many obstacles. Distance learning had never been experienced in such a massive way and many students were not equipped with enough devices and good connection. In a global overview, starting from March 2020, the situation reported by UNESCO[2] was dramatic, with "over 1.5 billion learners in 165 countries [...] affected by COVID-19 school closures" (UNESCO 2020). During the second and third waves the situation became even more alarming:

> 100 million children and youth are projected to fall below the minimum proficiency level in reading because of COVID-19 (UNESCO 2021, 7).

In a closer perspective, the pandemic has emphasised the digital divide in the Italian social landscape: although only 4% of students did not have an internet connection at the beginning of the lockdown, even today we can say that the availability of devices for students is not guaranteed at all. At the beginning of the pandemic, 33.8% families did not have a computer, according to the ISTAT 2018-2019 (CENSIS 2020) statistical records.[3] During the sanitary crisis, funds were allocated to equip students with digital tools[4] (MIUR 2020). Nevertheless, about 8% of students in the year 2019-2020 were not included in the learning activities of DAD (ISTAT 2020, 2).

1 Didattica a distanza, Italian translation of distance learning.

2 UNESCO has established the Global Education Coalition to support learning continuity during the Pandemic. It is a platform whose aims are collecting data, monitoring the closure of schools and supporting countries to mitigate the effects of the disruption of learning.

Since education is an essential value for museums, as established by NEMO (Network European Museum Organisations), museums played an important role in this period of difficulty for the schooling system, and had the responsibility and duty to support the student population. However, museums themselves had to face the cultural and economic crisis provoked by the pandemic and the only support they could provide was via digital tools. In a short time, a wide range of activities were proposed by many institutions, as ICOM reports documented. However, meaningful data highlight the fact that only 32,01% of museums in Italy maintained their relationships with schools (ICOM Italia 2020), which is why keeping in touch with young visitors was not an easy task.

In this situation of education recession, it is highly significant to consider how museums have turned to schools since the very beginning of the crisis. A considerable number of educational suggestions such as tutorials or downloadable activities on official websites and social media profiles were immediately made available by the majority of museum institutions. However, synchronic virtual workshops via Zoom or Google Meet constituted a peculiar and unusual category during the first Italian lockdown, reproducing in the museum context the so criticised distance learning mode used in schools. In Spring 2020, this option was certainly not very popular, and it does not even appear as a specific section in the ICOM International report *Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19: first survey*. It might have been included in the section "Live events", but this label is vague and, at any rate, this option was not activated by 56.47% of the museums (ICOM May 2020, p. 10) that responded to the survey. It is important to notice that in the second ICOM poll (ICOM November 2020, p. 19), a specific "learning programs" section was introduced among the digital activities. Moreover, although the majority of museums did not activate them, if we consider the data of the second and third survey (ICOM 2021, 16), we see an increasing trend in institutions that started (from 17.6% up to 20.4%) or intensified (from 18.9% to 21.2%) digital learning programs. Therefore, during the second and third wave, ICOM registered and monitored the presence of educational programs among the online activities offered by museums, and it is plausible that the number of virtual workshops has also increased.

The purpose of this essay is to analyse three specific case studies in which educational departments decided to employ the tool of video conferencing platforms to provide a synchronic virtual workshop for children during the first wave of COVID-19. Specifically, the first two cases – *Art Room*, organised by GAMeC (Galleria D'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo) and *Maison Petit*, organised by Musei Civici di Ancona – were conceived as proper online workshops to carry on activities in a distance learning mode. By contrast, the third experience, *Granelli di laboratorio*, organised by Spazio ZeroSei Egizio of the Museo Egizio in Turin, used the tool of video communication platforms in a different way. The workshop was a moment of interaction between families and educators about the activities that were previously carried on at home, since it was up to each family to organise their activities.

These experiences offer important insights into how tools such as Zoom and Google Meet can be used by museums to address a specific young audience, providing a satisfactory substitute for in-person workshops in a situation of crisis. It is important to notice how these instruments,

3 La scuola e i suoi esclusi, available at https://www.censis.it/formazione/1-la-scuola-e-i-suoi-esclusi/la-scuola-e-i-suoi-esclusi. Accessed November 11, 2020.

4 In October 2020, the Italian government approved the "Decreto Ristori" allocating 85 million euros for digital devices and internet connections in order to support e-learning activities during the sanitary crisis.

whose effectiveness was highly questioned in the previous school context, can constitute a practical solution for museums, allowing them to reach a wider audience.
The aim of this research is therefore to investigate and compare distance-learning experiences and the related feedback offered during the first wave of Covid-19 by three specific museums which differ in terms of typology, audience and exhibition space. The inquiry is based on the collection of data and opinions obtained through interviews and questionnaires released by museum staff and educators from the aforementioned institutions.[5] Specifically, the analysis of data focuses on comparing the experiences of *Maison Petit* and *Art Room* through the SWOT analysis method[6] [Table 2] since both museums conceived the two activities as proper virtual workshops. The case of *Granelli di Laboratorio* is considered separately because the premises and goals of this activity were different, and a comparative examination with *Maison Petit* and *Art Room* would not be appropriate.[7]

FIRST EXPERIENCES OF VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS IN MUSEI CIVICI DI ANCONA AND IN GAMEC, GALLERIA D'ARTE MODERNA E CONTEMPORANEA DI BERGAMO

Maison Petit

Maison Petit was part of the educational offer proposed by Musei Civici di Ancona (Ancona City Museums) which are composed by Museo della Città di Ancona and Pinacoteca Civica F. Podesti.[8] Both institutions are managed by the cooperative "Macchine Celibi" in collaboration with the Culture department of the town of Ancona. The two museums, especially Pinacoteca Podesti, exhibit important collections of Renaissance masterpieces by Lorenzo Lotto, Tiziano Vecellio and Guercino as well as a 20th-century collection with works by Anselmo Bucci and Valeriano Trubbiani. However, they constitute a local entity with a small audience[9] and a relatively small exhibition space.[10] Nonetheless, the institution has always been very active, with a heterogenous range of activities being offered by the educational department MUSEDU which also keeps an online blog to share good practises concerning educational contents and experiences.
In the immediate aftermath of lockdown, the museum department had to adopt new strategies to keep in touch with school audiences bypassing the school institution itself. As reported by the education sector,[11] Musei Civici di Ancona had to reduce their contacts with schools and supported them by providing video contents for teachers, but the direct relationship with young students and schoolchildren was sharply interrupted. In this difficult situation, the department reacted with different proposals such as *Inquadrature*, namely interviews with artists addressed to high school students, or *Storie della Buonanotte*, consisting in stories for primary school children which were shared through videos on the institutional website as well as on official Instagram and Facebook pages. Nevertheless, the most experimental and challenging idea was meant for the youngest public, namely 3-6 year-olds, who were involved in virtual workshops via Jitsi and Zoom [Table 1]. Of the three case studies, MUSEDU was the first to use the tools employed in distance learning for an interactive workshop. *Maison Petit* [Figure 2], which started on 28

5 All interviews were made thanks to the collaboration of museum staff and further details are available in the Table of Contents [Table 1]

6 The SWOT analysis is a strategic planning method usually used in business to identify and evaluate strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the preliminary stages of a project. All these aspects are seen as the results of positive or negative factors combined with internal or external ones. This method well suits the analysis of the data collected for this piece of research. In fact, the activities that museums proposed during the first period of the sanitary crisis can be considered a test-bed for new possible paths that educational departments may follow in the future.

7 Granelli di Laboratorio was more a moment of interaction than a real virtual workshop, as reported by the Spazio ZeroSei Egizio staff. See Table of Contents [Table 1].

8 Pinacoteca Podesti is in Palazzo Bosdari since 1973, and a new wing has been added recently. Museo della città di Ancona is located

March 2020 and ended on 30 May, represents the digital evolution of the previous workshop *Musée Petit*, which had been active in the civic museums before the lockdown and was addressed to the same target of children [Figure 1]. *Maison Petit* involved around 50 families in heterogeneous activities such as storytelling and experiential games using objects, colours and recycled materials, which children could easily find in their houses.[12] According to the staff, this virtual workshop showed good results since it was the best way to address this type of audience, who would hardly have followed a video tutorial. Therefore, *Maison Petit* can be seen as a positive experiment for its use of distance learning via video communication platforms: these technological devices, whose potential is still highly questioned in the school context, can make up a valuable alternative for museums in times of lockdown.

Art Room

Art Room shared similar goals and results with *Maison Petit*, as can be deduced from *the Table of Contents* [Table 1]. The workshop was organised by the educational department of GAMeC, Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, in Bergamo. The museum, founded in 1991 and managed through a private-public partnership,[13] counts more than 3,000 artworks from the 20th century. Its collections[14] are mostly the result of private donations from citizens to the municipality of Bergamo. Therefore, the museum has always played a key role in the cultural landscape of the community by organising temporary exhibitions that have always attracted a significant number of visitors.[15] The educational value has always been one of the key elements of this institution, which used to have a close relationship with schools before the lockdown.

As we all know, the Covid-19 virus has affected the city of Bergamo in a dramatic way and GAMeC had to find solutions to stay close to the community, and particularly to young people. In this specific context, as elsewhere, children had to resort to distance learning, and the direct school-museum relationship was abruptly interrupted due to reasons of force majeure. GAMeC decided to focus their efforts on supporting one of the weakest categories: primary school children. The department activated *Art Room* [Figure 3], a virtual workshop via Google Meet which started on 7 April 2020 and ended on 22 May. The workshop was free, and families simply had to reserve one of the twenty available places. Each meeting was held by a museum educator who involved children in educational activities[16] based on the exhibition *Il suono del becco del Picchio*, which was about Antonio Rovaldi and was displayed in GAMeC before the beginning of the sanitary crisis. Even in this case, the general feedback was positive since it was possible to organise a participatory and interactive workshop using materials that could be easily found at home [Figure 4], as well as activities based on storytelling and role playing.

A comparative analysis

In order to conduct an accurate investigation of the experimental activities that *Maison Petit* and *Art Room* carried out during the first wave, it is useful to adopt a comparative approach and analyse the feedback from the museum staff through the SWOT analysis method [Table 2], stressing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

in the San Tommaso di Canterbury hospital (13th century) and in the old fish market.

9 Pinacoteca Podesti and Museo della Città di Ancona hosted 12.448 visitors in 2019. Data were provided by the museum staff.

10 Museo della Città di Ancona occupies only 600 m2 and Pinacoteca Podesti covers 2000 m^2. Data were provided by the museum staff.

11 Collected data are available in the Table of Contents [Table 1] thanks to Laura Lanari, founder and manager of MUSEDU-Musei Educativi, and Sara Agostinelli from Cooperativa Macchine Celibi.

12 For more details about the activities proposed during MUSEDU's virtual workshops, see Table of contents [Table 1].

13 It was founded in 1991 by order of the municipality of Bergamo. Since 2000, the museum has been managed by Associazione per la Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo. It was founded, among others, by the municipality of Bergamo and Tenaris Dalmine.

14 Spajani collection with works by Balla, Boccioni, De Chirico, Kandinskij, Morandi; Stucchi Collection with artworks from the 1950s and 1960s by Informel artists such as Burri, Fautrier,

Hartung; Manzù Collection; Collection of medals donated by Vittorio Lorioli; Nino Zucchelli Archive, Lanfranco Colombo Photographic Collection.

15 In 2018, the museum counted 136,077 visitors. This also includes the people who visited the Raffaello exhibition organised by Accademia Carrara, but hosted in the rooms of GAMeC. For more detailed information see https://gamec.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/BC-2018.pdf.

16 Further information is available in the Table of Contents [Table 1] by courtesy of Alessandra Beltrami, an educator involved in the Art Room project, and Giovanna Brambilla, manager of GAMeC's education department.

The two workshops present many common features in terms of purposes and structure of the activities. They both face the challenge of organising a proper virtual workshop with the aim of providing support for children that were affected by the school lockdown. The interaction was based on activities that included storytelling games and the exploration of colours and materials which children had at home. The main difference between the two experiences was the audience they chose to address. *Maison Petit* decided to involve three- to six-year-olds, while *Art Room* addressed primary school students, adding one meeting for children from the first year of secondary schools. It is interesting to underline that the GAMeC staff decided not to focus on pre-school children because they considered it excessively difficult to entertain the category of three- to six-year-olds in an online environment, whereas the MUSEDU department in Ancona decided to use the online modality exclusively for this target.

In relation to the feedback collected through interviews, several strengths emerged that are linked to the internal organisation of the two educational workshops. First, both museums were able to provide a quick response and a prompt planning: *Maison Petit* was inaugurated on 28 March 2020 and *Art Room* on 7 April 2020. Secondly, despite the limitations of the digital device, the staff pointed out that there was a good level of interaction between children and educators; this certainly allowed them to have a better relationship compared to video tutorials. Moreover, in both experiences, the video conference tool enabled the museums to address a wider, non-local audience, creating links with other nearby towns and regions.

However, internal weaknesses are also identifiable. In fact, although the educators observed positive and unexpected results, they still consider the online modality as a mere backup plan that cannot replace the in-person experience. Furthermore, despite the noticeable expansion of the public's geographic area of provenance, the GAMeC staff noted that, generally, only children whose families were already in touch with the museum were reached by the communication efforts of the institution.

From an external perspective, *Maison Petit* and *Art Room* offered interesting opportunities: the families involved were able to carry out a free activity and the only cost was for those materials they could easily find at home. Besides, the digital dimension represents an important opportunity of fruition for children who do not live near the institution.

The online engagement of children, however, also revealed negative aspects that constituted a threat to the proper fruition of the workshops. In fact, the interaction was often disturbed by communication problems: a poor internet connection could inevitably compromise the experience. In addition, the interaction between children was sometimes problematic since some of them were shy and got embarrassed in front of the screen.

GRANELLI DI LABORATORIO: A GERMINAL VIRTUAL WORKSHOP FOR MUSEO EGIZIO VISITORS UNDER 6

The third case considered in this research is *Granelli di Laboratorio.* The workshop was organised by Spazio ZeroSei Egizio, a cooperative organisation managed by Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo which conducts activities for children from birth to six years old in a dedicated space run

by Museo Egizio. Every Tuesday, the official social media pages of Spazio ZeroSei Egizio posted the topic of the week, on which children had to work, helped by their parents. On the following Saturday, it was possible to reserve a place for a Google meeting with the aim of sharing with other children and educators the installations and works created earlier during the week. Therefore, the activity provided by the cooperative was not a proper virtual workshop, but it was up to each family to introduce and organise an actual workshop [Figure 5] [Figure 6].

This choice, as the staff reported,[17] was based on the observation that it was problematic to entertain pre-school children in front of a webcam, and that it was in contrast with the educational philosophy of Spazio ZeroSei for 0-6 year-olds. As mentioned previously, *Granelli di Laboratorio* was not taken into account in the SWOT analysis, simply because the purpose and the structure of this activity were different from those of *Maison Petit* and *Art Room*. However, they shared the same kind of target and audience, hence they came up with similar observations. For example, each workshop was confronted with the challenging opportunity to broaden its audience and each of them had to deal with the problems of poor internet connection as well as the difficulty for children to interact in front of a webcam.

The case *Granelli di Laboratorio* is meaningful because it provides an insight into the choices made by a museum with international resonance which usually deals with archaeological collections rather than visual arts. The Museo Egizio is the 6th most visited museum in Italy with 853,230 visitors in the year 2019 (MIBACT 2019); it preserves almost 40,000 manufacts and has an exhibition space of 12,000 m^2 on four levels. During lockdown, the museum remained very active in producing contents, such as for example the digital version of *Le passeggiate del direttore*. In relation to educational activities addressed to the broad public of children, the number of contents proposed on the web page "Il Museo a casa tua" was proportionate to the offer of video tutorials[18] on the official YouTube, Facebook and Instagram pages of the museum. During the first wave of Covid-19, however, no specific virtual workshops were organised through video communication platforms. There are various reasons behind this choice and they are not always clearly distinguishable from one another. In the first period of the crisis, educational activities could not be planned as efficiently as in the following closures. Furthermore, much depends on the "nature" and aspirations of the museum: its collection influences the type of activities that can be introduced in workshops as well as the kind of materials required.

For modern and contemporary art museums, it was certainly much easier to organise an online workshop by asking children and their families to use colours and pencils at home, in a historical moment when even shops were closed. Obtaining the appropriate material for an archaeological workshop was, by contrast, a far less obvious task.[19]

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE SECOND WAVE OF COVID-19

In fall 2020, it became clear that the sanitary crisis was still in full swing, but by then the use of Zoom and Meet was already entirely normalised in the field of education. Virtual workshops were no longer quick solutions imposed by the crisis, but constituted a potential and valuable resource

17 All the information related to Granelli di Laboratorio is available in the Table of Contents [Table 1] by courtesy of Federica Corona and Maria Gigantino from the staff of Spazio ZeroSei Egizio.

18 The activities proposed to children consisted of video-tutorials such as "L'Antico Egitto Fai da te" or old episodes of "La Stelevisione", a news program produced by children before lockdown. For more detailed information, see https://museoegizio.it/esplora/notizie/il-museo-egizio-a-casa-tua/.

19 This information was verified thanks to the interview with Sasca Malabaila from the education department of the Museo Egizio.

to interact more directly with young audiences in case of closure. It is therefore significant to examine the choices made during the second wave by the three institutions considered in this essay.[20]

20 See section "Further developments during the second wave of Covid-19" in the Table of Contents [Table 1]

The feedback and impressions deriving from the first phase of experimentation led to different solutions and strategies in each museum. The new offer of virtual workshops proposed by MUSEDU in Musei Civici di Ancona was in line with the activities of the first lockdown. *Maison Petit* was renewed for 3-6 year-old and an additional workshop for 6-10 year-old was created. The staff reported positive feedback and children in particular showed greater confidence in using the digital device and its applications.

On the contrary, GAMeC did not propose either Art Room or other similar virtual workshops again. Despite the positive outcomes, the institution decided to focus as much as possible on re-establishing contact with the school audience in the Bergamo area. When possible, the museum mostly tried to carry out face-to-face activities such as guided tours or workshops held by educators in schools. Sometimes it switched to the online mode during distance learning periods in high and secondary schools, but a proper series of virtual workshops such as *Art Room* was not organised. After the first experiment, the museum considered its initiative as a positive experience and thought it could be offered again in the future. However, after the first lockdown, the museum wanted to bring back a direct experience with works and collections which the online modality could not offer. The case of *Granelli di laboratorio* is an interesting evolution of what constituted a feeble attempt in the March 2020 crisis. During the first wave of Covid-19, the activity offered by Spazio ZeroSei Egizio was not conceived as a workshop because there was little confidence in the effectiveness of this tool. In autumn 2020, however, the staff launched a proper series of online workshops called *Storie egizie della sera*: educators told myths and legends and children could connect via Zoom and send them the drawings they had made at home during the workshop.

According to the staff, the new format had a greater success than *Granelli di laboratorio* thanks to the timetable and the type of activities that were proposed, which attracted more than 8 thousand families from all over Europe.

AN OPEN CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the experience of virtual workshops can be an essential resource in times of crisis, and one that can be further developed in the future beyond the circumstances imposed by the pandemic. The general feedback from the three institutions analysed in this essay was positive, despite some hesitations in relation to the digital tool. It is true that, during the first lockdown, the offer of online workshops was considered merely as a backup plan and it is a matter of fact that virtual workshops cannot replace either physical guided tours or workshops held in museum spaces. However, online workshops do not claim to replace the physical experience, but constitute a valuable supplement to the digital content offered by museums. They allow for peer-to-peer communication in the virtual space, which is extremely effective, especially when it comes to interacting with 3-6 and 6-10 year-old. In case of a crisis, they constitute an essential tool for museums to fulfil their educational mission,

but potentially they are an important tool for museums to reach a wider audience, going beyond the restrictions imposed by the health crisis. The kind of interaction offered by virtual workshops is considerably more efficient than tutorials or other content provided on social media channels. These workshops can represent the keystone to enlarging the catchment area of museums by involving children that are connected from remote areas, as happened in all the three experiences analysed.[21] Therefore, it is to be hoped that the future will bring further developments, such as those that the choices and intentions of the three museums have already shown during the second wave. Musei Civici di Ancona have extended the offer of virtual workshops to 6-10 year-old children; Spazio Zero Sei Egizio has organised structured activities by transforming the previous experience into a real workshop and finally, although the GAMeC staff has not relaunched the *Art Room* series, the museum has suggested that online workshops are valuable contents to be used in the future.

21 See the section "Users' provenance" in the Table of Contents [Table 1]

TABLE OF CONTENTS - Virtual workshops

The Table of Contents displays all the data collected during interviews with the staff of the three museums. All the information related to each single virtual workshop is available by courtesy of:

- Laura Lanari and Sara Agostinelli, staff members of MUSEDU at Musei Civici di Ancona.
- Giovanna Brambilla, Alessandra Beltrami and Rachele Bellini, staff members of GAMeC – Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo.
- Federica Corona and Maria Gigantino, staff members of Spazio Zero Sei Egizio. Some additional information was provided by Sasca Malabaila, staff member at Museo Egizio.

	Maison Petit – Musei Civici di Ancona	Art Room - GAMeC	Granelli di Laboratorio-Spazio ZeroSei Egizio
What is it?	Online workshop	Online workshop	- Moment of sharing and interaction - The proper workshop was done previously at home, together with parents. It was based on the activity proposed on Tuesdays on the official social media pages
Timing	- 28 March-30 May - 10 online workshops - 60 minutes up to 100 minutes	- 7 April-22 May - 11 online workshops 60 minutes	- 20 April-31 May
Target	Children from pre-school (3-6 years old children)	Children from primary schools (6-11 years old) One meeting was reserved for secondary schools (11-14 years old)	- Children from pre-school (0-6 years old children)
Virtual Platform	Jitsi, Zoom	Google Meet	Google Meet

TAB. 1

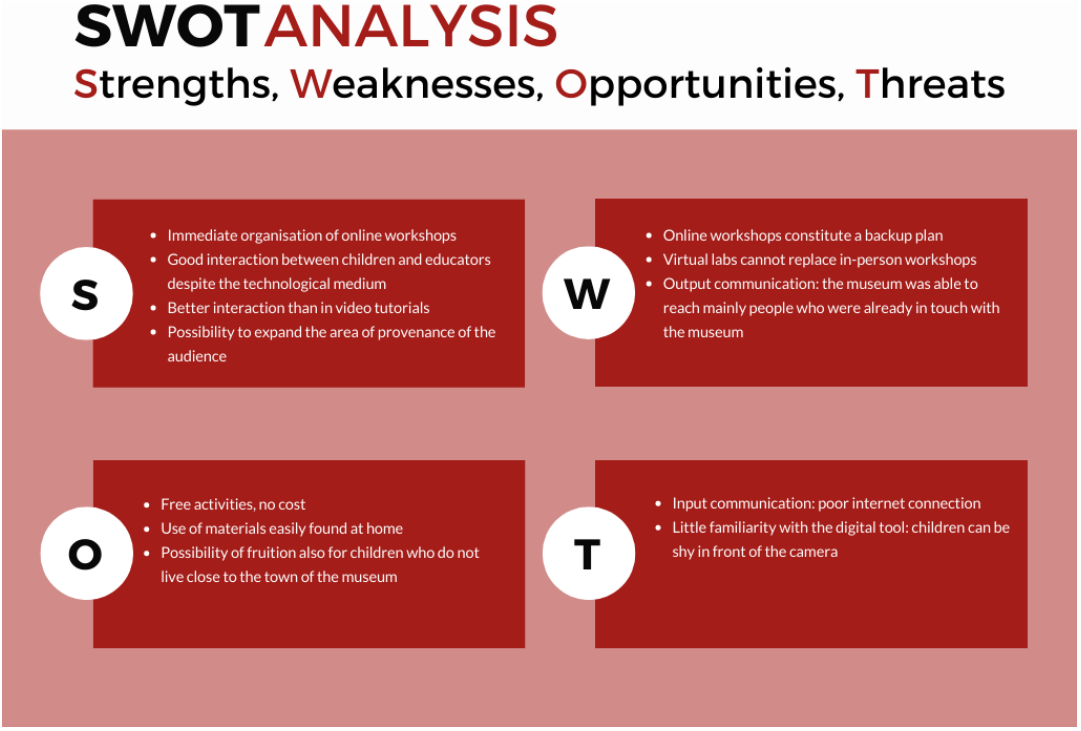
Types of activities	All activities proposed by museum educators had links with artworks and stories of the two Civic Museums in Ancona. The workshops offered different topics and manual activities: - archaeology: children had to dig in order to find a treasure hidden by their parents - salt dough, sculpture - the story of “piccolo blu” and “piccolo giallo” - collage technique applied to portraits or to primary forms with references to artworks displayed in the civic gallery - storytelling using objects that children could find in their houses making references to the “giuramento degli anconitani” - Dialogues between artworks of the Municipal Gallery and an illustrated album by Susy Lee using tempera - Use of recycled materials in relation to the development of the town	All activities were based on the exhibition Il suono del becco del picchio about Antonio Rovaldi, which was opened before the lockdown at GAMeC. During virtual workshops, museum educators stimulated kids with different kinds of activities: - Experiential approach with colours and objects that children could find at home - Storytelling and role playing	- Presentation of the works or installations created during the week by children at home with their family - Narration of a myth from Ancient Egypt by a museum educator
Feedback	50 families. Max 20 participants for each meeting	20 children for each meeting	60 participants. Maximum 10 for each meeting

TAB. 1

Users' provenance	Marche region and 4 users connected from Emilia-Romagna and Puglia	Town of Bergamo and nearby areas. Some users were from Brescia, Crema and Como	Italy, but also European Countries. One connection from Azerbaijan
Cost	Free	Free	Free
Positive aspects	- Use of easily available materials at home - Short stories, easily understandable by 3-6 year-olds, - Dialogue and active participation - Small groups	Thanks to technology it was possible to organise an engaging and participatory workshop which could offer interesting possibilities	It was a pleasant moment of interaction which did not require the same level of attention as a proper workshop
Negative aspects	- Not all children managed to follow the narrations - Lack of a good and stable Wi-Fi connection, especially in the first meetings	- output communication: only families which were already in touch and interested in the museum were intercepted - Wi-Fi connection: only those who could have a good connection were able to follow with no interruptions.	- No specific problems. Small groups of max 10 children were formed to facilitate interaction - Some children were shy in front of the webcam

TAB. 1

Further developments during the 2nd wave of COVID-19	Two virtual workshops were proposed from November to May: Maison Petit addressed to 3-6 year-old kids and a workshop for 6-10 year-olds. The workshops were free and lasted 75 minutes. The participants could vary from 4 to 30. The response from the audience was positive and there was a better confidence in using digital tools than in the first wave. The staff's feedback was similar to previous virtual workshops: they perceived the importance of having a place of interaction for families and children.	Art Room workshops and other similar virtual workshops were not proposed again. Despite the positive outcomes, the institution decided to focus on re-establishing physical contact with the school audience of the territory of Bergamo as far as possible. The museum mostly tried to carry out in-person activities such as guided tours, when possible, or workshops held by educators in schools. Sometimes, they switched to the online modality during the periods of DAD in high schools and secondary schools, but a proper series of virtual workshops such as Art Room was not organised. However, the museum staff did not exclude the possibility to organise Art Room workshops in the future.	In November 2020, Spazio ZeroSei Egizio launched the new format "Storie egizie della sera". The workshop took place every Saturday and Sunday on Zoom and it was able to attract more than 8 thousand families from all over Europe. Each single workshop lasted 60 minutes and educators narrated different stories about legends and myths of Ancient Egypt thanks to the method of Kamishibai. According to the staff, the feedback from the audience was even more positive than for Granelli di Laboratorio thanks to the new format, the timetable and the activities offered. Moreover, children could make drawings and then send them to the staff of Spazio ZeroSei Egizio.


SWOT ANALYSIS
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
S
Immediate organisation of online workshops
Good interaction between children and educators despite the technological medium
Better interaction than in video tutorials
Possibility to expand the area of provenance of the audience
W
Online workshops constitute a backup plan
Virtual labs cannot replace in-person workshops
Output communication: the museum was able to reach mainly people who were already in touch with the museum
O
Free activities, no cost
Use of materials easily found at home
Possibility of fruition also for children who do not live close to the town of the museum
T
Input communication: poor internet connection
Little familiarity with the digital tool: children can be shy in front of the camera

TAB. 2



Fig. 1 Musée Petit. Courtesy Musedu Musei Educativi



Fig. 2 Maison Petit, flyer. Courtesy MUSEDU Musei Educativi



Fig. 3 Art Room. Courtesy GAMeC- Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo



Fig. 4 Art Room. Courtesy GAMeC- Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo



Fig. 5 Granelli di Laboratorio. Courtesy Spazio ZeroSei Egizio



Fig. 6 Granelli di Laboratorio. Courtesy Spazio ZeroSei Egizio

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EXHIBITION ON LOCKDOWN

AUTHOR:

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FIRST SECTION:
Museum responses
to the Covid-19 crisis

SECOND SECTION:
Archiving past exhibitions

THIRD SECTION:
The narrative and the hype

FOURTH SECTION:
Engaging the spectator

ABSTRACT

Lockdown has revealed the unpreparedness of museums to deal with a dimension without an audience. The COVID-19 emergency has also shown big differences between institutions that had invested in online communication in the past and those that had to adapt. This study analyses how three exhibitions, designed to be enjoyed in person, communicated with their audiences during the months of forced closure.

These examples are useful to understand the different approaches that institutions adopted during lockdown, and which ones were the most effective and appreciated by the online public.

INTRODUCTION

> *I hardly think a few birds are going to bring about the end of the world* (*The Birds* by Alfred Hitchcock, 1963).

The feelings one might have while watching the movie *The Birds* by Hitchcock, can be used to describe our emotions and thoughts during the first months of the year 2020 regarding the COVID-19 virus.

Everything was calm and harmless at the beginning, and then a distant danger started to draw closer and closer. Initially, everything seemed to be under control, until we were bowled over by fear and unpreparedness. Under the pressure exercised by the pandemic, cultural and museum institutions started to show their cracks, too. The forced closure of the museum sector revealed that its existence is almost meaningless without a public, an audience.[1] This essay focuses on how exhibitions that were supposed to be held during the spring period responded to lockdown and to their forced closure. In particular, the three following shows will be analysed:

1) *Rembrandt and Amsterdam portraiture, 1590-1670*, Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid;
2) *Van Eyck, an optical illusion*, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent;
3) *Raffaello 1483-1520*, Scuderie del Quirinale, Rome;

The main goal of the text is to investigate what happens to an exhibition when its public is not present. What kind of digital devices have the curators chosen and for what purpose? Which one is the most effective in terms of engagement and narration? But, above all, after a digital visit of the exhibition, will visitors still have an idea of the physical display of the show?

The surveys and reports from UNESCO, ICOM and of NEMO[2] were key to answering these questions, because they provided an insight into what happened in the museum context during these months of lockdown, with some data that are also necessary to understand the exhibition world. As for the latter aspect, the survey made by the group of students MUSEUM-Display proved to be fundamental and effective.

1. MUSEUM RESPONSES TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

This last decade was marked by a significant raise in importance and use of social media, such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook (Ortiz-Ospina 2019). Even if almost 3.5 billion people are online and use Internet daily, this element does not seem to be relevant enough to many museums and

1 According to a UNESCO survey (https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373530), 90% of museums had to shut down their doors to their public during the global quarantine. As stated by the ICOM Report (https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Report-Museums-and-COVID-19.pdf), 47% of museum digital services were used to create content for social media in order to maintain a relationship and a conversation with the public.

2 UNESCO 2020, ICOM 2020 and NEMO 2020.

cultural institutions to properly start to invest in digital content. As Maria Elena Colombo claimed at the Museo Egizio in Turin, during the presentation of her book on the relationship between Culture and Digitalization, many museum directors are still quite sceptical about the online presence of their institutions, and they are also afraid that it could make them lose visitors rather than attracting them.[3] And this happens regardless of the 2015 UNESCO report, which suggests that "museums should be encouraged to use all means of communication to play an active part in society by, for example, organizing public events, taking part in relevant cultural activities and other interactions with the public in both physical and digital form" (UNESCO 2015, p.8). Hence the importance of the digital presence of cultural institutions not only in *increasing the interest* of visitors/users, but also in providing society with new kinds of contents.

However, during the spread of the COVID-19 virus, many countries started to go on total lockdown and shut down private and public institutions, such as museums and cultural centres. In order to survive, museums started to understand the importance of social media and of their own websites to maintain a relationship with their public.

This situation brought out the differences between those institutions that, over the years, had begun to invest in digital media - and that, therefore, already had the appropriate instruments and tools available[4] - and those who had to improvise. An example of this last type of museum is the Uffizi: one of the most visited and well-known museums in Italy and one of those that never considered its digital presence an important feature of their institution.

Indeed, the Uffizi realised its own official website only in 2015 and before the COVID-19 outbreak was not even on Facebook, the social media largely used by other museums as a tool of communication and information (Gonzalez 2017). Due to lockdown, director Eike Schmidt gave a strong impulse to the creation of digital content and lockdown finally became the excuse to create a profile on Facebook (Giraud 2020). This social network provided the Uffizi with a new platform to create a digital project of the museum called *Uffizi Decameron*.

It consists in a series of brief videos in which museum workers guide the visitor/user through the rooms of the Galleria and present its permanent collection. A similar activity was practiced by the Pinacoteca di Brera and MAXXI with the projects called *MyBrera* and *#ImStayingHome with MAXXI*. They both consist in brief videos in which the major artwork of the museum collection is explained by workers or by the director. Then we have other types of activities that imply more participation from the viewer. Some examples are the Museo Diocesano in Milan, which organized a weekly call on Zoom with its director, and the Pompidou Centre, which developed a video game called *Prisme 7*.

It not only allows the visitor to see the major works of art of the museum, but also implies the active participation of the audience in creating new content. In general, all types of activities developed by museums during lockdown were schematised by the UNESCO Report in the following way:

> 1) Use of previously digitized resources; 2) Digitization of planned activities during the months of lockdown; 3) Increased activity on social media; 4) Special activities created for lockdown; 5) Professional and scientific activities organized in

3 Museo Egizio di Torino, Facebook live streaming: "Incontri con gli autori. Musei e cultura digitale di Maria Elena Colombo." https://www.facebook.com/museoegizio/videos/425473738335976/?q=museo%20egizio%20maria%20elena&epa=SEARCH_BOX

4 We can mention the case of the Museo Egizio in Turin which, during the health crisis, started to use a format that it already had: *Le passeggiate del Direttore*. It consists in a little tour, for just thirty people, through the museum's rooms with the director himself as a guide. During lockdown, the museum continued to propose this activity as a video guide.

the context of lock-down (UNESCO 2020).
All these examples point to what Kajsa Hartig stated in her article, namely that the central point and aim of a museum should be c*onversation* and *audience engaging* (Hartig 2018): these two features should also be transported into the digital platform of the museum.
Starting from this point, we should say that museums and cultural institutions should start to invest more in the creation of digital content. To put it more simply:

> [...] *as long as the museum is not considering online as important as the exhibition, there will never be enough resources allocated for content, conversation and audience engagement delivered as online experiences.There will not be an incentive to build capacity for more than the marketing of exhibitions* (Hartig 2018).

Having provided a little overview of what museums did with their permanent collections during lockdown, this last quote introduces the main topic of this essay: exhibitions.

2. ARCHIVING PAST EXHIBITIONS

Usually, cultural institutions use their digital platform as a tool for spreading information about the opening of their exhibitions or the events they have organized. After the exhibition, little material remains online: each museum or gallery has its own online archive of the exhibitions organized, but each section consists only of a page of description of the show and a few documents such as the opening press conference.[5]
But things started to change due to the spread of COVID-19 and the lockdown that followed. During the spring period, many exhibitions were supposed to open or to take place, but due to the pandemic they had to close their doors just a few days after opening, or could not open at all. In order to maintain the hype and the interest in their exhibitions, these institutions had to rethink their communication plans. Thus, many exhibitions started to be visible and accessible online with activities such as: virtual tours, pre-recorded video guides with the directors/curators of the exhibition, live guides on Zoom or other video calling platforms, a series of video lessons about the artists or the themes characterizing the narration of the exhibition... all of these forms of "online presence" seem to have one thing in common: the video as a digital device.
It appears to be the only device capable of giving an idea of the display, the narration and the artworks of the exhibition. According to the survey by NEMO (Network of European Museum Organisations), the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza is considered one of the *Best Practice Examples* for its response to the COVID-19 emergency (NEMO 2020). Starting from March, the first month of lockdown, the museum posted online a series of virtual tours of the previously temporary exhibitions: some of them are also visible in Virtual Reality.
On the 13th of March 2020, it also made accessible, once again through a virtual tour, the exhibition dedicated to Rembrandt that was supposed to be held from the 18th of February to the 24th of May. It must be considered as a very important show because it was the first exhibition dedicated

5 As in the case of the Louvre's website.

to the Dutch artist in Spain, focusing completely on his activity as a portraitist. Another interesting feature of the exhibition is the fact that, along with 30 paintings by Rembrandt, it was supposed to include other works by Dutch artists to let the visitor familiarize with the artistic situation in Amsterdam during the 1630s. To allow the visitor/user to make a comparison and to get an idea of the different artistic figures that revolved around Rembrandt, the curator, Norbert E. Middelkoop, chose the virtual tour as the best way to let the visitor inside. This particular online experience differs from the other virtual tours presented by the museum: it makes it possible not only to navigate through the nine rooms of the show, but also to zoom into the pictures of the artworks and read the panels. The curators also integrated the audio guide in the virtual tour. It can be said that this is an authentic exhibition experience which was transported online. The Rembrandt exhibition was extended until the 30th of August, so that it was no longer necessary to maintain the virtual tours available on the website. But the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza has, for now, decided to leave all its digital content accessible online.

In my opinion, this decision could be seen as a new way of archiving exhibitions or, in general, any museum's projects. Indeed, each museum has its own physical and digital archive, which is usually open-access. But leaving the digital tour of the exhibitions available online can help to study and have an idea of the display and the dimension of the artworks, as well as their disposition in the room, even once the exhibition has closed. This element is important because we are usually informed of the content of past exhibitions only through their catalogues and, regarding the display, we can look at a selection of photos, and recently videos, of it. But it is always a selection of information, while in this case, at least, virtual tours make every element open-access and observable in its entirety.

3. THE NARRATIVE AND THE HYPE

The other two exhibitions that I would like to analyse are *Raffaello 1483-1520* at Scuderie del Quirinale in Rome and *Van Eyck, an optical illusion* at the Museum of Fine Arts of Ghent. The reason why I chose to compare these two shows is because they have many elements in common. First of all, their advertising campaigns and the stress of their importance have started in 2019 in a similar way: many articles were published about the two shows, claiming that they had to be considered the most important and biggest exhibitions about these artists in 2020,[6] and before the opening they released an enormous number of pre-booked tickets.[7] Furthermore, the exhibition dedicated to Raphael commemorates the 500th anniversary of his death and the show in Ghent is also part of a municipality project organized for the year 2020 and aimed at celebrating the figure of Van Eyck and his relationship with the city. The latter exhibition was supposed to display, for the first time, the polyptych *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (1420s) in its entirety, after the restoration of eight of its panels, which lasted three years. In the case of the show in Ghent, it was open for a few weeks in February, while the one in Rome only lasted three days. Due to the spread of the virus, they had to close their doors almost in the same moment. In both cases, their reopening was not sure. Therefore in March, in a situation of uncertainty, both organizations decided to

6 Van Eyck' exhibition in 2020 is officially the biggest ever, 2019; La maxi-mostra su Raffaello per il cinquecentenario: 200 opere alle Scuderie del Quirinale, 2019.

embrace the video as a way of reconnecting with the visitors who had already pre-booked their tickets as well as with prospective visitors. In the case of the Van Eyck exhibition, the director of the museum and curator of the event, Till-Holger Borchert, in collaboration with the organization *Visit Flanders*, produced a video guide tour through the thirteen rooms of the exhibition. The director guides the viewer in a very engaging and clear way. Not only does he explain the importance of the exhibition itself, but he also makes some reflections on other small paintings made by the artist, so as to give visitors/users an idea of his oeuvre and his ability to engage with different types of commissions and genres, such as the portrait and the religious painting. What emerges from this 30-minute video is the curator's will to communicate the narrative of the exhibition and the one inside the polyptych itself (Hallett 2020).

The exhibition *Raffaello 1483-1520* applied a different methodology with its initiative called #RaffelloOltrelamostra. Starting from the 26th of March, the curator and co-curator, Marzia Faietti and Matteo Lafranconi, uploaded on the website of Scuderie del Quirinale, and on its YouTube channel, 23 short videos with some interesting contributions about the Renaissance master and his oeuvre. If the timeframe of 5-6 minutes per video is ideal, the content and the modality were not.

The speakers were talking from their study at home, underlining the fact that the initiative was taking place during lockdown, and yet when they mentioned some artworks, whether they were part of the exhibition or not, there was no visual reference to them. It is very difficult to follow the short lecture if the viewer does not know what the speakers are talking about. Another problem that emerges from this series of videos is the language barrier: all lectures were in Italian without any official subtitles (not even in English).

The only English video was the one aimed at giving an overview of the exhibition. It seems that the audience of the Raphael exhibition was supposed to be mainly Italian, which is somewhat understandable; but since the exhibition was supposed to be the biggest event ever devoted to the artist, this exclusion of an international audience seems incoherent.

In contrast, in the case of Van Eyck, a unique platform was created on which the most important Flemish museums were invited to post videos about their collections or activities. This project, titled #Stayathome, had its digital content (text, videos, programmes) available in six languages (in videos, the speakers express themselves in English and there is the possibility to use subtitles in Italian, French, German, Spanish, and Dutch).

4. ENGAGING THE SPECTATOR

Finally, I would like to investigate which of the following two modes of online presence works best: the virtual tour or the video guide tour.

Thanks to the virtual tour, it is easy to have an idea of what the actual display consisted of, and which artworks were selected for the show. Also, since the three exhibitions analysed here presented artists and artworks form the early modern period, their visualization in a virtual tour allows the viewers to have an idea of the size of the items, which is not always so clear. However, while following the narration and the audio guide, visitors/

7 40,000 tickets pre-booked for the Van Eyck exhibition (https://www.artribune.com/arti-visive/archeologia-arte-antica/2020/04/il-museum-of-fine-arts-di-ghent-apre-online-la-grande-mostra-su-jan-van-eyck/) and 60,000 for Raphael already on the 3rd of March (http://www.avantionline.it/raffaello-prevendita-record-per-la-mostra-kolossal-delle-scuderie-del-quirinale/)

users could be bored by the duration of the visit and by the intricateness of the system. At the same time, the video guide tour, with the participation of the curators or director of the museum, preserves the possibility to have a narration about the artists' life and oeuvre, or about the theme of the exhibition. In order to have an insight into the visitors' perspective on these digital devices, my research group and I have created a survey that makes it possible to analyse personal data. We proposed it through the Facebook pages of the University of Bologna and other Italian institutions, particularly those with art history or visual art students.

What emerged from this survey is that the video guide tour with curators/director is the most popular and effective mode [Figure 1]. Despite this, we must underline that the main problems that emerged are distraction (35.2 %), as well as the lack of possibility to ask questions and to interact (35,9%) [Figure 2]. However, it should be kept in mind that the three case studies analysed were not meant to be visited online; the digital devices chosen were driven by the impossibility to have contacts with the visitors and by the necessity to let people know about the exhibition. The virtual and video tour of the show was also created with the idea of entertaining people who were obliged to stay at home during lockdown, and this intent could refer back to the quote from the 2015 UNESCO report that underlines the social importance and role of museums.

However, in the case of Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza and the Museum of Fine Arts, the investment made in these months could have a second meaning: a new way of archiving and transmitting knowledge in the future.

In fact, the Museum of Fine Arts of Ghent also uploaded, in the month of June, therefore after the end of lockdown, a virtual video tour of the exhibition with features very similar to the show dedicated to Rembrandt. In this case, this choice also has another meaning because the exhibition dedicated to Van Eyck had to be closed, so this virtual tour remains the only way to visit it.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the COVID-19 crisis could be seen as a new opportunity to rethink the definition of museums, but also their use and presence in the digital world. The idea of creating proper digital contents and leave them online, with free access or under some subscription, can be a starting point for a new role of cultural institutions in contemporary society. And all of this can also help to strengthen the public's interest in the activities of museums, such as exhibitions or other projects, while they are taking place, thus keeping alive the conversation and the relationship between Culture and Society.

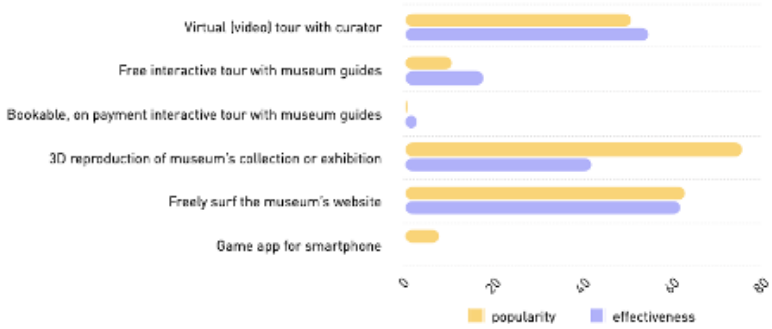


Fig. 1 *Online experience before and during lockdown*, screenshoot, 2020.



Fig. 2 *Problems and weak spots in the online visit*, screenshoot, 2020.

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CLOSING DOORS AND INCREASING AUDIENCE

New Strategies to Engage the Public in Bologna Musei

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FIRST SECTION:
Museums Network and Bologna Musei

SECOND SECTION:
Mambo

THIRD SECTION:
Museo civico medievale

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Museo del Risorgimento

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ABSTRACT

The research considers the civic institution Bologna Musei, the museum network of Bologna which includes thirteen museums within the city. After a brief introduction on the museum network and the pandemic, the essay focuses on the analysis of the strategic response of Bologna Musei and its museums following the first lockdown up until the end of 2020.

In particular, the Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna (Museum of Modern Art of Bologna), the Museo Civico d'Arte Medievale (Civic Museum of Medieval Art) and the Museo del Risorgimento (Museum of the Risorgimento) will be examined, taking into consideration the Bologna Musei guidelines and comparing both the digital and physical strategies that each museum applied to engage its public.

INTRODUCTION

After the closure of the spaces ordered on 8 March 2020 due to the COVID-19 virus, Italian museums quickly re-invented themselves so as to stay in touch with their public, increasing online programmes to promote cultural activities and entertainment on their digital platform.

Even if the Italian museums' income in 2020 decreased by 78,4% compared to previous years (Infodata 2021), the online engaging strategies, according to Lorenzo Balbi, encouraged people to come back inside the museums' physical space in the delicate and uncertain moment of reopening (Balbi 2021). However, at the beginning of lockdown, the use of digital communication as an information tool was a goal that many Italian museums were still trying to achieve and only a museum out of ten had uploaded the digital catalogue of its owned collections (Redazione Arte Magazine 2019). Undoubtedly, the process has improved since 2020 due to the pandemic and has increasingly brought results in museums' digitisation. This collective evolution is also due to common guidelines adopted by networks of Italian museums:[1]

> the ability of institutions to organise themselves online and promote a synergic response through the integration of resources and services has earned not only visibility and efficiency, but has also helped to counteract the pandemic crisis that strongly impacted the business of culture (Pirrelli 2019).

Emilia-Romagna is one of the Italian regions with the highest concentration of structures (454) and Bologna is one of the first ten cities in Italy with the richest historical-cultural, architectural and archaeological wealth (ISTAT 2019). The civic museums' network Bologna Musei (Bologna's Museums) is one of the biggest in the region and it is a pioneer of the digitalisation of contents for online audiences. Therefore, the case study will analyse how the Bologna Musei guidelines contributed to move towards a more digital approach with the public and how belonging to an organised system has guaranteed the survival of each institution of the Bologna's museums network. In particular three museums, with their new communication and entertainment strategies, will be examined:

> MAMbo (Museum of Modern Art of Bologna), Museo Civico d'Arte Medievale (Civic Museum of Medieval Art) and Museo del Risorgimento (Museum of the Risorgimento).

The information for this research has been collected by consulting online

1 In 2019 more than 40% of Italian cultural institutions were part of a network or an organised system. This trend was embraced in particular by public museums, in fact 72,6% were part of such a net, and it was increasing in private institutions as well (Pirrelli 2019).

materials from the website of Municipality of Bologna and through telephone interviews with managers responsible for each museum. What has emerged is that the civic museums' network has pushed all its museums to produce online contents, by improving communication not only with the public but also among the institutions themselves, and creating virtual places for discussion and interdisciplinary exchange of culture that did not exist before.

MUSEUMS NETWORK AND BOLOGNA MUSEI

Bologna Musei is a civic institution created by the Municipality of Bologna in 2012 which includes 13 museums in the city. Its centralised legal form is aimed at qualifying the museums' heritage by sharing knowledge and economic strategies. In fact, "the Institution is an instrumental body of the Municipality for the management and coordination of the municipal museum system" (Bologna Musei 2012). This local system is organised in six research areas that also represent the fields to which every museum belongs [Tab. 1]. Bologna Musei proposes an innovative vision that allows dialogue among museums, offering itself as a reference point for the protection of the city's heritage and pursuing the vision of Bologna as a *Museo Diffuso* (widespread museum) with a common educational policy for its audience (Bologna Musei 2012). The network is controlled by the directives of the central organisation, the Municipality, which distributes the resources to the various museums according to a regulated and proportional system of accountability and incentives (Maida 2020).

As specified in the financial report programme 2020-2022, Bologna Musei was already planning a digital marketing policy before quarantine aimed at reaching a younger audience, facilitating communication and improving the visibility of the Institution online through the promotion of a recognisable brand.[2] After the Ministerial Decree of 9 March, Bologna Musei encouraged museums to provide contents on their online platform and promoted them through the introduction of two new sections in its official website, www.bolognamusei.it, such as *Percorsi Online* (Online Paths), which gives access to the online resources available on the permanent collections of the museums, and *Video*, where videos uploaded on the various Museums' YouTube pages were collected (Bologna Musei 2020). Furthermore, pushing the collaboration among the institutions, Bologna Musei promoted moments of exchange within the museums, such as *Finestra sul Cortile* (Window on the Courtyard) – a series of short videos posted on the Facebook pages of Bologna's museums which opened an interdisciplinary dialogue between objects from the permanent collections of the various institutions (Bologna Musei 2020) – or reposted the other institutions' activities on its Instagram account using the hashtag campaigns #aportechiuse (#stutteddoors) and #laculturanonsiferma (#culturedoesntstop), followed by many Italian cultural institutions as well.

In the meanwhile, up until the present moment, Bologna Musei has kept publishing monthly the programme of each museum's initiatives on its website and promoting them on its social network accounts. Lately, although the frequency of publication of online contents has remained stable since the creation of the Instagram account of Bologna Musei in 2019 (4-5 posts per week), the type of contents has slightly changed:

2 The two years plan presented the renewal of the overall museum system through a digitalisation of the archives and collections of the individual museums, by allocating a fund of € 7.981,60 present under IT services and telecommunications with the goal of creating a database accessible to the online public, expanding the already existing website www.museibologna.it (Bologna Musei 2020).

while before quarantine the topics of Instagram and Facebook communication were more focused on historical facts and permanent collections' curiosities, during 2020 Bologna Musei developed a new social media strategy aimed at enhancing and promoting the institutions' activities.

MAMBO

MAMbo[3] [fig.1] is one of the main contemporary art museums in Italy and represents the cutting edge of the Bologna Musei network.

In the plan published for January 2020, MAMbo presented a rich programme of physical exhibitions with a list of events and collaborations with other institutions, for example the temporary exhibition curated by the director, Lorenzo Balbi, *AGAINandAGAINandAGAINand*, opened on 22 January and set up in the large *Sala delle Ciminiere*[4] of the Museum. Moreover, a rich schedule of events was planned in other museums such as the exhibition "Muntadas: Interconnections" at Villa delle Rose[5] and the first retrospective of Giorgio Morandi.

Communication and public involvement were based on face-to-face activities such as workshops and social events in the museum, while the use of social media was preferred for promotional rather than communicative purposes and without directly involving the audience [fig.2].

Following the invitation from Bologna Musei, after the closure of cultural institutions, MAMbo structured an online entertainment programme for its audience that tried to engage a wider target with the use of social media. For instance, *2 minuti di MAMbo*[6] (2 minutes of MAMbo), a new digital video format that began during quarantine:

> the videos were recorded with a smartphone inside the museum or remotely.

Every day from Tuesday to Sunday, a new contribution was published on the YouTube page MAMbo Channel and then shared on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Balbi 2020). Videos lasted from two to ten minutes in order to entertain the public without being too long, addressing different thematic talks, such as the temporary exhibition *AGAINandAGAINandAGAINand* streaming the Bonjour performance; the permanent MAMbo's collection; the educational department's new activity called "Educational KITS", designed for a younger audience (MAMbo 2020).

Those kits could be downloaded for free on the MAMbo website, offering ideas and sharing the work of users on the main webpage of the educational department. Another initiative of the educational department was *Favole al Telefono* (Telephone Tales), inspired by Gianni Rodari, in which many classes participated with sold out bookings and which consisted in receiving a call from a museum educator who told them an invented fable about a work from a permanent collection (Balbi 2021).

Starting from the reopening of museums, on 19 May 2020, the *2 minuti di MAMbo* publication programme slowed down, but still continued to combine online entertainment with the physical presence in the Museum. Since September, the format has evolved in *2 minuti di MAMbo Extended*: the videos have become longer, richest in content and more structured with curators, artists and art historians, with less frenetic publication rhythms, more suitable with the second lockdown audience's requests (ArtelcrewPlay 2021).

3 MAMbo coordinates all the museums that are part of Area Arte Moderna e Contemporanea. Its collections contain more than 5,000 works and tell the story of Italian art from 1945 until today. The museum promotes numerous initiatives to involve the public not only within its spaces but also through a constant presence on social networks.

4 MAMbo is located in an area of the city originally used for production and commercial activities. Today's complex includes the Museum (in the former Forno del Pane), the DAMS offices (in the former Tobacco Factory), the Cineteca (in the former Slaughterhouse) and the Cassero (in the former Salara). In particular, the former Forno del Pane has undergone an important architectural renovation carried out by Aldo Rossi and the Municipality of Bologna. The Sala delle Ciminiere, still surmounted by the fireplaces of the old bakery, is part of this space and, overlooking the Museum's entrance, is now used for the temporary exhibitions of MAMbo.

5 The villa, located in via Saragozza, was opened to

Furthermore, after the first lockdown, MAMbo redefined the exhibitions's programme presented at the beginning of the year through a new project aimed at evaluating artists and the territory: *Nuovo Forno del Pane* project (the New Bread Bakery), approved by Bologna Musei.

Lorenzo Balbi announced an open call for artists which, after a selection, would be given the possibility to use the empty space of *Sala delle Ciminiere* as an atelier for their artistic production. In this new perspective, the goal was to create relational activity through study visits and dialogues between artists and public just after the emergency (Bologna Musei 2020). This experiment was a ground-breaking initiative in Bologna and reinvented the museum as a place of artistic production, as Lorenzo Balbi said. The most effective outcome of this period is actually the creation of a new department inside the structure of MAMbo:

> alongside the curatorial and educational department, the artistic production department has been established and it is highly probable that this transformation will remain in the future (Balbi 2021).

The project of *Nuovo Forno del Pane* and all the online activities organised during the lockdown captured the attention of the public, who physically visited the Museum during the summer opening. In fact, despite the pandemic restrictions, MAMbo has maintained an average of 600 visitors a week, compared to the 1000 of last year: the 60% of the weekly average of the previous year (Balbi 2021).

MUSEO CIVICO MEDIEVALE

The Museo Civico Medievale[7] [fig. 3] had been offering online materials to its audience since 2018 and dealt with a wide range of audience composed especially of school groups. Indeed, in September 2019, the Museum launched Wunderbo game, a free app available on Google Play and Apple Store which virtually reproduces some of the permanent collections' works, in order to make young people discover the most famous pieces of the museums. Moreover, the virtual experiences were completed the same year with the MuseOn app, which proposes a virtual tour inside the spaces at the price of 2,00 euros. In addition, as reported in 2020-2022 programme of Bologna Musei, even before quarantine the Museo Civico Medievale wanted to complete the digitisation of the already existing database with the illuminated codes' collection, in order to make it accessible to a wider audience (Bologna Musei 2020).

Despite the technological choice of the video game and the digitalisation of the collections, the Museo Civico Medievale was unprepared to react to the first lockdown, hence the staff had to make efforts to maintain the communication with their public by structuring an online programme. Firstly, both apps of MuseOn and Wunderbo were made accessible for free from Bologna Musei web pages.

Afterwards, like MAMbo, the museums of Musei Civici d'Arte Antica started posting short videos on their social networks (Facebook and YouTube), which explained permanent collections and temporary exhibitions through the voices of curators and specialists (Bologna Musei 2020). It is noteworthy that, since the Museum hadn't hired any digital professional in its history, the administrations decided to invest in their employees, providing them with a video editing class in order to

the public only in 1925 with a collection rearranged and re-exhibited in 1936. Since 1989, following an extensive renovation, the Villa has reopened as an exhibition space under MAMbo administration.

6 Starting from 10 March and until 30 July 2020, 93 short videos were published, initially every day, from Tuesday to Sunday, symbolically on the ordinary opening days of the museums, at 3.00 pm.

7 The Museo Civico Medievale of Bologna has been located in Palazzo Ghislardi-Fava since 1985. The collections exhibited include materials collected by Palagi, manufacts from the Middle Age and early Renaissance and an important collection of illuminated codices from the 13th-16th centuries.

improve the amateur quality of contents (Medica e Maida 2021). The online policy adopted led to a significant increase of users and, consequentially, they continued to invest in online activities with the end of the first lockdown. In fact, also as a proof of museums' collaborations within the network, they joined the Bologna Musei initiative Finestra sul Cortile and decided to keep the MuseOn app freely accessible to their audience.

The Museo Civico Medievale [fig.4] reopened its spaces on 21 May and the programme started from the already set up exhibition "Imago splendida. Capolavori di scultura lignea dal Romanico al Duecento" (Imago splendida. Masterpieces of wooden sculpture from the Romanesque to the thirteenth century), which continued until September (Bologna Musei 2020). Although the public flow was numerically under the standards of the previous years, after the reopening the audience slowly came back into the museums,[8] which tried to adapt to the necessities of the public: for example, by changing the opening hours, extending them until 7 p.m. for working visitors so as to overcome the closure obligation during weekends (Medica e Maida 2021).

As for the educational services, online lessons have been available since September 2020 and more than two hundred classes have joined the initiative, therefore smart working with students will continue also in order to reach furthest schools (Maida 2020).

MUSEO DEL RISORGIMENTO

The Museo del Risorgimento[9] [fig.5] includes the the Certosa complex, the Storia e Memoria website and it owns the biggest library of the network's institutions. Before the lockdown, the Museum was used to communicate with the public through newsletter mails and Facebook posts and, according to the Bologna Musei programme, Museo del Risorgimento was seeking to bring young audiences closer to their online collections through a collaboration with the website www.14-18.it[10] (Bologna Musei 2020).

Despite the small size of the museum, the web portal www.storiaememoriadibologna.it, available since 2014, represents a huge archive with a multimedia database containing documents from the last two centuries (Storia e Memoria 2011). The relationship with the public was mainly based on guided tours proposed to school groups and the opening hours were structured to receive students in the Museum' space.

The online activity of the Museum increased considerably during quarantine through the publication of videos with *#aportechiuse* campaign, a hashtag used also by other museums of Bologna.

The videos were transmitted live on Facebook and then shared on YouTube. This initiative was in collaboration with regional websites including the *Dipartimento della Cultura e della Promozione della Città di Bologna* (Department of Culture and Promotion of the City of Bologna) and the *Dipartimento Regionale della Cultura e del Paesaggio dell'Emilia Romagna* (Regional Department of Culture and Landscape of Emilia-Romagna) with the website www.emiliaromagnacreativa.it, as well as the portal www.lepida.tv (Bologna 2020). The topics covered in the videos concerned the analysis of materials from the website www.storiaememoriadibibologna.it, with weekly virtual meetings for students organised by the educational department. The most impressive result from this daily schedule is the massive collection of videos that today represents

8 As Melissa La Maida specified, the audience of 2020 is not comparable to the previous years' visitors. In fact, while before the pandemic the public was mostly composed of tourists, the impact of Covid-19 has changed the category of museums' audience, which now consists of local and regional visitors.

9 Museo Civico del Risorgimento, inaugurated in 1893, is located since 1990 in Piazza Carducci. The museum heritage is divided into five thematic areas ranging from the French Revolution to the Great War, focusing on the events and protagonists of Bologna.

10 http://www.14-18.it/ functions as an archive of documents and images from the First World War promoted by Emilia-Romagna, the Culture Ministry of Italy and Europeana.

a playlist with more than four hundred free contents for the online users.

Furthermore, as the owner of the largest bookshop in the entire museum network, the Museum coordinated the organisation of the library loan system for all the museums belonging to Bologna Musei (Sangiorgi 2021). The Museo del Risorgimento [fig.6] has reopened its spaces since 22 May 2020 with the exhibition "Ebrei in camicia rossa. Mondo ebraico e tradizione garibaldina fra Risorgimento e Resistenza" (Jews in red shirts. Jewish world and Garibaldi tradition between the Risorgimento and the Resistance). The new offer aims to involve the local public by displaying pieces kept in the storage with little close-up on their existing collection, in order to attract local audience rather than tourists' attention through big exhibitions (Sangiorgi 2020). Moreover, on 12 September 2020, the Museo del Risorgimento with the collaboration of local cultural associations such as 8cento as for online communication, organised the Historical re-enactment of the Dance Party held in Bologna to support the Garibaldian enterprise:

> the event took place in Piazza Carducci with free entry according to the current anti-Covid regulations (Bologna Musei 2020) and was an occasion to meet the audience and attract the public to meet physically again.

The event was largely sponsored by the core pages of Bologna Musei. Lastly, nowadays the Museum has almost digitalised all its documents on the website and studied contents for schools, which remain the main target (Sangiorgi 2021). Nevertheless, a new programme for students started in smart-working, the PCTO,[11] namely *Percorsi per le Competenze Trasversali e per l'Orientamento* (Paths for Transversal Skills and Orientation), which involved seventy-five high-school students (Sangiorgi 2021). In addition, the museum will participate in the initiative *Finestra sul Cortile* promoted by Bologna Musei, it has opened an Instagram account and joined the app MuseOn, where 27 cards presenting the most important objects of its collection have been uploaded (Bologna Musei 2020).

CONCLUSION

The impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown period has generated a huge crisis not only in the cultural system but in the entire complex of our social and economic organisation.[12] Museums looked for a new type of entertainment based on new interactive formats that engage the viewer and create a virtual cultural community. As Lorenzo Balbi said, the museums' system has changed in a short period of time so, concerning the future of cultural institutions, quarantine has underlined the need to experiment new possibilities in order to create interactions and understand how the present changes the way in which the public relates with them (Balbi 2021).

In this sense Bologna Musei reacted to quarantine through the elaboration of a common strategy and overcame previous difficulties by writing common lines that all the museums were invited to follow, promoting their own peculiarities while moving online. Actually, Bologna Musei deals with different budgets and possibilities for each museum, which are distributed according to the annual incomes of each institution (Medica e Maida 2021). Despite the diversification of the different Museums not only in size and budget, but also in subjects, all the institutions tried to cooperate in order to survive the emergency as a unique

11 https://www.pcto.it/ is a former school-work alternance which provide students with the possibility to develop soft skills in the job context through direct experience, in order to orientate their future choices.

12 According to the International Museum Council (ICOM), more than 10% of museums may never open again (Giraud 2020).

body (Sangiorgi 2021). In fact, each museum took care of one aspect of the pandemic response according to their own particular features, while ameliorating the dialogue and the exchange all over the network.

In addition, this sharing attitude has also led to the development of exchange possibilities that otherwise wouldn't have happened, such as *Finestra sul Cortile*. Hence, thanks to the positive outcomes, Bologna Musei has planned to maintain and develop the online activities and educational offer, alternating it with physical initiatives (Bologna Musei 2020). After all, the successful museums' digital schedule after the first lockdown has increased the social medias' insight of Musei Civici d'Arte Antica by 50% and attracted 1.107 new users on MuseOn, whereas the Storia e Memoria di Bologna website has reached 118,539 visited sessions and the MAMbo YouTube channel has 884 new subscribers (Bologna Musei 2020). Lastly, the digital programme, coordinated by the Instagram profile of Bologna Musei and the website www.museidibologna.it, has been expanded with new sections and it has been structured following the disciplinary subject of each area. In conclusion, quarantine has significantly accelerated a digitalisation process which had already started in Bologna Musei, leading to the creation of an even more cohesive institution that seeks the dialogue with the public and also supports a synergy among the 13 museums, and it has brought attention to the need of a reflection on the museum, not only to attract again the public to its interior, but also to reform an innovative institution which proposes new ways of experiencing and promoting its museums.

Area of Research	Museums
Archeologia	Museo Civico Archeologico
Arte Antica	- Museo Civico Medievale; - Collezioni Comunali d'Arte; - Museo Civico d'Arte Industriale Galleria Davia Bargellini; - Museo del Tessuto e della Tappezzeria “Vittorio Zironi”
Arte Moderna e Contemporanea	- MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna Bologna; - Villa delle Rose; - Residenza per Artisti Sandra Natali; - Museo Morandi/Casa Morandi; - Museo per la Memoria di Ustica
Musica	Museo Internazionale e Biblioteca della Musica
Patrimonio Industriale e Cultura Tecnica	Museo del Patrimonio Industriale
Storia e Memoria	Museo e Biblioteca del Risorgimento

TAB 1



Fig.1 MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, External view, Photo by Roberto Serra, Courtesy Istituzione Bologna Musei



Fig.2 MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Permanent collection, View of the section Figurabilità. Pittura a Roma negli anni Sessanta (Figurability. Painting in Rome in the Sixties), Photo by Roberto Serra, Courtesy Istituzione Bologna Musei



Fig.3 Museo Civico Medievale, internal view, Courtesy Istituzione Bologna Musei



Fig.4 Museo Civico Medievale, internal view, Courtesy Istituzione Bologna Musei



Fig.5 Museo del Risorgimento, internal view, Courtesy Istituzione Bologna Musei



Fig.6 Museo del Risorgimento, internal view, Courtesy Istituzione Bologna Musei

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FIRST SECTION:
MuCa – Museo della Cantieristica di Monfalcone

SECOND SECTION:
Museo Revoltella, Trieste

THIRD SECTION:
Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Aquileia

MUSEUMS DURING LOCKDOWN

Three Examples in Friuli-Venezia Giulia: Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia, Museo Revoltella di Trieste e Museo della Cantieristica di Monfalcone

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ABSTRACT

This article will analyse the reality of three different museums in Friuli-Venezia Giulia following the sanitary crisis of Covid-19. The MuCa – Museo della Cantieristica di Monfalcone, the Museo Revoltella in Trieste and the MAN – Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia, will be the subjects of this topic since they represent three different typologies of museums due to their collection and historical period of interest.

From a local museum (MuCa), the attention will move towards museums of regional and national influence (Museo Revoltella and MAN).

The strategies of engagement with the public will be studied thanks to an analytical approach towards the means of communication used by such institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia has a variety of cultural and natural offers to explore within its small territory. It is possible to experience the wealth of nineteenth century Trieste as well as the ancient paths left in the Roman city of Aquileia. The aim of this paper is therefore to analyse three museums that can reassume the culture and history of the Region for the different type of collections that they contain.

The first one will be the MuCa – Museo della Cantieristica di Monfalcone. It is a museum of recent foundation (2017) that has immediately established itself as a singular reality in the Region. Then the focus will shift to the Museo Revoltella, Trieste, home of a large modern and contemporary art collection and seat of the baronial palace of Pasquale Revoltella, the original owner and founder of the building. Finally, the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia will end this study, allowing us to investigate another diverse typology in comparison to the two mentioned above. The goal of the paper is to study how these museums have fought against lockdown imposed by Covid-19, to see which strategies they entailed and to understand if the specific category of each institution had a role in choosing the strategies.

MUCA – MUSEO DELLA CANTIERISTICA DI MONFALCONE

The MuCa plays a fundamental role in the urban context of Monfalcone since it was part of a general requalification of a specific area of the city: the neighbourhood of Panzano.

More specifically, thanks to this museum the people and the urban fabric of the city are fully represented, creating a link between the more contemporary Monfalcone and the original side of the shipyard in the neighbourhood of Panzano. In this sense, the historic past of the city finds its home inside this museum and the people who worked in the shipyard and contributed to the wealth of Monfalcone find an official acknowledgement in it. In fact, the shipyard of the town has a long history dating back to the beginning of 1900, more precisely the 3rd of April 1908, when the wealthy ship-owner family of the Cosulich founded the 'Cantiere Navale Triestino' (Eng. 'Trieste Naval Shipyard') choosing Monfalcone as new seat of the shipyard. The nearby village of Panzano offered a vast territory into which to invest, and a large amount of willing manpower to train.

During World War I and World War II Trieste and its surrounding area suffered heavy bombardments. The shipyard too was damaged, but it managed to continue its production thanks to the commission of materials for the reconstruction of railways and aircrafts, enlarging therefore the capacity of the shipyard and the commissions before returning fully to the naval production. Some facts on the origin of this institution are worth remembering. The MuCa rises as a part of the larger project which started already in 2014, when the City Council of Monfalcone promoted the renovation of the village of Panzano by renovating the former hotel of workers (now seat of the museum). Thanks to the efforts of the Regione Autonoma Friuli-Venezia Giulia and funded through a European tender, the industrial archaeology museum of the Region would be structured.

The museum is located next to the entrance of the shipyard (now named after the company that owns it, Fincantieri) and presents itself with a vast collection of objects, ephemera, physical and digital models of the ships that marked the history of the naval industry in Monfalcone. Not only it is a precious testimony of the production and the economy of the region, but it also shows the social reality of the workers in the twenty-first century, with examples of uniforms, lunch boxes and personal belongings that were eventually left. Since the museum offers a digital reconstruction of the topography of Panzano through the years, this shows that technology as a tool represents an important feature of the institution [fig.1]. The MuCa develops itself also towards the urban area, with the possibility of participating in guided tours of the village of Panzano in the very nature of an 'ecomuseum'. It is spread in the neighbourhood, thus giving a more comprehensive overview of the topics it covers.

During lockdown, the guided tours through Panzano could not take place and this represented a massive obstacle in comparison to the ordinary schedule of the visits of the museum.

Dott.ssa Giulia Norbedo, curator of the MuCa, together with the staff of the institution, presented a well described editorial plan to cover the months of lockdown to maintain a link with the public. The activity of the MuCa was not, therefore, frozen because of the sanitary emergency, but it has been moved entirely on digital platforms and social media.

Already from the 9th of March (first day of lockdown in Italy) the action on social media got implemented. In particular, the Instagram account of the museum played a key role also for the fellow accounts of Twitter and Facebook, where the announcement of daily updates and posts was made. The MuCa participated in the *Il Museo da Casa* programme (that is 'Museum from home', a national invitation by the Ministry of Culture to continue with the activity even during lockdown restrictions) to optimise the visualisation and the exchange between public and institution choosing a more diluted approach for the month of March.

The first part of this project focused on the publication of videos and detailed studies on specific themes regarding the collection and the territory, chosen directly by members of the staff of the institution.

With the month of April, the attention shifted towards a more complete online service. The topics were re-organised under different and systematic tags. Among the various groups an example could be the so called Storie di Navi (Ship Stories) [fig.2] that every Sunday accompanied virtual visitors (through a social media post on Facebook and Instagram) to the study and exploration of famous or historical ships that

were built in the shipyard. Every video, topic or project was realised solely by the staff and the curator of the MuCa. Parallel to the activity of the museum, the MuCa also reflected upon the ongoing activity of the shipyard itself, thus presenting an insight on the maritime engineering industry.

This attention towards the context of the shipyard characterised the month of May. The offer proposed by this institution did not end on social networks, in fact the official website was, and still is, another fundamental tool to find information on the museum. If the social media pages of Instagram, Twitter and Facebook were devoted to a more instant communication with the public, the website revealed itself as a structured resource for further knowledge on the collection.

The digitization process of the museum started as soon as the institution opened its doors in 2017 and by 2020 contained more than 3,000 files to navigate [fig.3]. These files can be researched by category as photos, documents, videos, and audio files. Being it an archaeological-industrial museum, it also provides technical sheets on naval industry and single pieces built at the shipyard offering, therefore, an important research basin. One last notable element that characterises the MuCa is the MuCa App available through the App Store. It allows visitors to have a virtual tour of the museum giving them the possibility to visualise the map of the exhibition halls. Furthermore, the 'Panzano' link will function while the GPS is activated showing a map of the neighbourhood with the points of interest already marked on the screen. Clicking on one of them will enable Google Maps directions to reach the destination.

Finally, the options Visita IN and Visita OUT (Visit IN and Visit OUT) will give the visitor two ways to explore the museum. The IN option permits, through the photos and QR code scanning methods, to have further information directly inside the museum on specific items. The OUT link suggests, on the other hand, possible paths to follow in the village of Panzano. People can choose the path that better fits them, also comparing the duration and length of the tour with a certain degree of personalization.

MUSEO REVOLTELLA, TRIESTE

The Museo Revoltella in Trieste is the second institution that will be analysed in this paper. The museum is located in the heart of the city and, for its history and nature of the collection, represents a totally different reality in comparison to the one represented by the MuCa.

First of all, the palace that today is the seat of the museum, was originally the baronial palace of Baron Pasquale Revoltella (hence the name). Pasquale Revoltella (1795-1869) was an entrepreneur and financier. He distinguished himself among the aristocracy of Imperial Trieste and stood out as one of the first shareholders of the Assicurazioni Generali group, an Italian Insurance company founded in 1831 in Trieste.

Moreover, he was also member of the director board of the Austrian Lloyd in the city and participated as an investor to the opening of the Suez Canal with the aim of enriching Trieste's maritime economy. Today, the Revoltella museum is divided into three main buildings. Palazzo Revoltella was built as the residence of the Baron in 1872 and became the seat of the first civic museum Museo Revoltella di Belle Arti.

In 1992 the palace restored its original function of baronial residence. Palazzo Brunner (its original construction dates back to 1868)

is directly connected to the main building and since 1930 it represents the main hall of the art collection. It was restored between 1976 and 1991 following the project by Carlo Scarpa and is now home to the Modern Art Gallery of the museum. Finally, Palazzo Basevi (1865-1888) ends the triad by housing the direction board, offices, and the photo-library (Masau, Gregorat 2016). The museum presents itself as one of the main cultural and artistic attractions of the Region, for the beauty of the historical palaces and the vastness of its collection [fig.4 and fig.5], spacing from more local painters as Edgardo Sambo or Vito Timmel (some works by Vito Timmel can also be found at the MuCa), and reaching examples like De Chirico, Casorati and Pomodoro. To explore the strategies adopted by this particular institution, the filling of the spreadsheet helped to have a wider view on the activities of the museum, by using as a reference the website and the various social media pages.

But most importantly, the very useful and inspirational occasion was that of interviewing the curator Dott.ssa Susanna Gregorat who was very open and devoted to her museum and her role in it. The differences with the MuCa are quite evident also in the way lockdown was managed. The main focus for the staff of the Revoltella, in terms of engagement with the public through social media, was the Facebook page. On this platform, articles and the promotion through the 'Museum from Home' programme were published. The posts were uploaded four days a week and they varied from articles presenting biographies on some artists featured in the collection to the In Biblioteca (In the Library) topic where volumes and new books of the library were reviewed or simply shown for a possible future visit. The Facebook page was also enriched with the publication of short videos that, for example, analysed through the slideshow the details of specific paintings or gave an overview of the display.

As for the MuCa, posts were directly studied and realised by the staff of the museum. Lockdown presented the possibility of renewing the museum website. This project was part of a larger view that took into consideration other institutions of the Comune di Trieste, thus giving new life to the old websites of the Museo Revoltella, the Museo di Arte Orientale and the Museo Sartorio. The new layout is quite clean and easy to navigate but, what misses, is still a Media or Gallery section with an accurate digitalization of the collection. This could represent an obstacle to the virtual visitor, but a general idea of the museum is given through said Facebook page and the historical information that is provided through the website. The public of the museum on social media remained almost the same. The analysis of the Facebook page and the interview confirmed the fact that users who continued to stay in touch with the institution were almost the same, hence there has not been an increase in the number of the subscribed users to the page.

A wider spectrum of demographic users started to show already before the months of lockdown, with an increasing presence of foreigners on the web pages. But, as Gregorat underlines, this was a process that the museum was already experiencing before the Covid-19 emergency. What distinguishes the Revoltella in this fight against the isolation of the pandemic is that in any case it managed to continue the publication of a catalogue (Catalogue of the Fondo Gatteri, collecting around 400 drawings by the artist Giuseppe Lorenzo Gatteri) and managed also to end an important activity of cooperation with two other museums:

the Museo Sartorio and the Museo di Arte Orientale.
This cooperative project was highly advertised on the website of the Revoltella and on those of the other two institutions as well. The Musei a Trieste – Le opere e i giorni (Museums in Trieste – The works and the days) was an important initiative which consisted of a series of in-depth studies, as the curator reflects on some interventions of restoration on the works of the so-called Lanieri bequest. This was, therefore, a coordinated operation of restoration on never-before published artworks that, thanks to the Lanieri legacy, went in the Revoltella museum as well.

One last indication that is worth mentioning regarding the Revoltella is the attention put towards the didactic department. The museum incorporated its didactic by listing on the website a pattern that takes the form of a playful journey that can be followed by children, who will be able to explore specific paintings of the twentieth century with the accompaniment of music and play [fig.6]. Lastly, also the Revoltella presents the option of an App. Unfortunately, the App allowed a virtual tour only *in situ* and was not adequate during the months of lockdown.

The Revoltella focused primarily on the website as its fundamental tool for spreading the knowledge and communication towards the public. The second method that was chosen was the Facebook page that established a more instant and direct connection with the public also because of the content that was provided through this platform; hence articles and videos were the most immediate way to reach the public. The choice of giving very elementary and mute videos as headers of developed articles on the Facebook page could have worked as a good catch to hold and inspire the visitor to read and find further information about a specific topic that was proposed. This choice of the video could have been certainly better developed if the funds were enough to develop specific departments for specific purposes. This is a concept that emerged also from the official report realised by ICOM *Museums, museum professionals and COVID-19*. The forced temporary closure of museums during lockdowns suddenly brought digital communication with the public to the fore. We witnessed a surge in virtual tours, social media posts, remote interactions with the public, and much more.

While this demonstrates the reactivity and creativity that characterise the cultural sector, and its ability to adapt to the crisis, it also highlights some structural weaknesses that have for a long time affected cultural institutions, in terms of resources and staff dedicated to digital activities and communication, and the level of maturity of the content produced. (ICOM 2020)

MUSEO ARCHEOLOGICO NAZIONALE, AQUILEIA

The last subject that will complete the analysis of this paper, is the Museo Archeologico Nazionale in Aquileia. It is an archaeological museum founded in 1882 and it holds an extensive collection of antiquities that recalls the story of one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire [fig.7].

The first elements that were analysed for this research on the engagement of the public were, once again, the social media pages and the website. What immediately stands out is the fact that the MAN resides in the category of State museums and is therefore laying in the administration and organisation of MiBACT (Italian Ministry of Cultural

Heritage and Tourism). This results in a coordination that covers multiple platforms to give to the institution a real digital identity that can help the virtual public navigate the offer of the MAN. If we take for example the Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter profiles of this organisation we can clearly see that the content that is referred to on these platforms is the same. This action was taken also by the MuCa which emerged as a digital friendly entity from the beginning. But the discourse for the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia differs for the fact that it is also supported by national activities. On one side, the previous museums had to adapt to measures that the bigger institutions took in relation to lockdown and had to find ways to keep up with the new internet identity.

On the other side, museums such as the MAN were directly instructed by a web of communication that provided from the start a unitary action for the promotion and the engagement with the public. This resulted in a series of activities that were all more generally grouped under the name of Il Museo a Casa (The Museum from Home), coordinated at a national level. This 'container' of information was structured through a series of short videos meant to explain topics and works of the museum. The novelty is that every video-episode (for a total of fourteen) was then accompanied by a PDF sheet that was available to download, this was an idea that was for the majority directed towards children and therefore is an important part of the MAN didactic department.

The project of the sheets was to be considered as a moment of interaction where, once completed, the participants would send back the PDFs or post a photo of them with the completed file while mentioning the Museum in the photo. Continuing to explore the website and the social pages, what stands out is also the action taken towards a platform that was not contemplated in the previous examples. One year ago (on 16 August 2019) the MAN opened its official YouTube channel and really decided to make the most of it during lockdown. Here, all the episodes of the Il Museo a Casa project were published with other series as well.

The Parla l'esperto (The expert talks) [fig.8] series was dedicated to the Treasure of the museum, i. e. a series of videos where experts and researchers on some specific objects and artifacts of the collection exposed their knowledge on the topic, practically giving a short lesson to the virtual viewer. The offer that the MAN proposes, therefore, is studied also in relation to a diversified public, varying from activities more suitable for kids to information directed towards a more dedicated audience. The success of the strategy is covered also by the Instagram and Facebook pages which intensified enormously the upload of videos and posts, also with interactive games like quizzes, to appear as guides and central hubs for the different programs scheduled. The social media pages functioned well as a sort of menu to help the visitor understand the new digital identity of this institution. One thing that needs to be underlined is the fact that the website, at the time of lockdown, was not renovated with the new graphics and layout that characterise it today.

So, the navigation was captained by the social media pages at that time. An issue that seems to connect the MAN to the Museo Revoltella is the digitalization. The MAN provides the digital user with a quite small selection from the collection of the museum but the impossibility of enlarging or having more detailed information on some artworks comes in an inadequate form if we think about the months of

lockdown. Regarding this element, among the three museums, only the MuCa showed a more profound interest towards an attentive digitalization that, as already explained, started from the beginning of the launch of the institution itself in 2017.

CONCLUSION

This report helped to construct an overview of the different approaches adopted by three museums in the same Region to create and maintain a link with the public during lockdown.

The museums chosen (MuCa, Revoltella, MAN) were the representatives of three main categories that differ heavily for content of collection and period of foundation, and this reflects also in the various strategies chosen by the staff to manage the closure of such institutions and reach the public remotely. If on one side the MuCa offered a very public-driven approach supported by a solid website, the Museo Revotella can be considered as the one which struggled the most in order to adapt itself to this new system. The lack of a well-structured Instagram page, in my opinion, could have been one of the motifs of this difficulty to touch a wider audience since, today, a great amount of the museum as an institution passes through such social media for its immediacy and diffusion.

The MAN gave the insight from a national museum, and it was evident that the MiBACT support was mirrored on a more prompt and agile schedule of the Il Museo a Casa.

Finally, a relevant consideration deals with the usage of technological tools in order to develop a new way of keeping in touch with the public. Among the three museums, only the MuCa presented a more complete view on the topic, and this permitted a continuous relationship with the virtual visitor, whereas the other two institutions lacked coordination between the different systems that they adopted for this sanitary emergency.

http://www.saveindustrialheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/MuCa-8-1024x768.jpg

Fig. 1 View from one of the exhibition rooms of the MuCa.
In particular, the display of the urbanisation of the Panzano village.

https://www.instagram.com/p/CAlcPdnH-qO/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Fig. 2 Storie di Navi, Grand Princess. 2020.
Screenshot of the post from the official Instagram account @mucamuseodellacantieristica.

https://www.mucamonfalcone.it/archivio-produzione/#/

Fig. 3 Archive on the website of the MuCa museum.

https://museorevoltella.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/appartamenti3.jpg

https://museorevoltella.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/galleria_sesto-piano-1.jpg

Fig. 4-5 Views from the Museo Revoltella: the Blue Living Room from the Baronial Palace, and the sixth floor of the Modern Art Gallery.

https://museorevoltella.it/didattica/i-dipinti-dei-maestri-del-novecento-entrano-nelle-nostre-case/

Fig. 6 Explanation of the didactic offer during the lockdown.

https://www.artslife.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/aquileia-archeologico.jpg

Fig. 7 View of the exhibition display of the MAN.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqYza3VtdeLlvLYigkx2b-gXjVWB7MDhmh

Fig. 8 Official YouTube account of the MAN with the #parlalesperto playlist.

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Masau Dan, Maria (cur. By), Gregorat, Susanna. 2016. *Official guide of Museo Revoltella. La Galleria d'Arte Moderna*. Comune di Trieste, Museo Revoltella.

ONLINE RESOURCES

mucamonfalcone.it

Facebook page: @MuCaMonfalcone

Instagram page: @mucamuseodella cantieristica

museorevoltella.it

Facebook page: @revoltella

Twitter page: @revoltella

museo archeologico aquileia.beniculturali.it

Facebook page: @ museoarcheo aquileia

Instagram page: @ museoarcheo aquileia

Twitter page: @ MuseoAquileia

YouTube channel: LINK

STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE AUDIENCES!

A Focus on Museum Digital Engagement During Covid-19

AUTHOR:

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ABSTRACT

The paper will analyse the strategic actions carried out by three museums: the Pinacoteca di Brera, the Frick Collection and Sir John Soane's Museum, during the first months of the global pandemic.
The temporary closure of almost 90 per cent of the world's museums has given to these institutions the to rethink new forms of audience engagement. Through the analysis and comparison of primary and secondary data, provided by international institutions such as ICOM and NEMO, the research intends to analyse the digital engagement strategies proposed by museums in 2020. Specifically, the museums will be compared based on content type, engagement rate and popularity produced.

INTRODUCTION

'Museums are places that [...] represent changes in culture and in the demands of national imagination' (Buddensieg and Weibel 2007, 8). With these few words, Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg succeed in clearly testify and summarize what should be the true essence of a museum: the capability to be always aware and in touch with social issues and their audiences.
Due to the pandemic emergency, the need to reconsider the whole system of art and the role of the museum has become essential. If museums are the meeting places for the encounter between people and art, how can it be translated during a period of social distance?

Starting from an overview of the COVID-19's impact on the museum system, it has emerged that during the first months of the global pandemic, the majority of museums have started a process of rethinking their role and their communication strategies, as a way to maintain and enhance their presence. Needless to say, the common ground that has unified most museums was the use of the Internet and social media.

Even if the digital tools used are in most of the cases the same, how these tools are used is, indeed, the crucial point in order to create an more or less effective digital engagement. In this regard, the aim of this research lies in the willingness to depict different emerging digital communication strategies developed thanks to the examples of the Pinacoteca di Brera, the Sir John Soane's Museum and The Frick Collection, from May to December 2020. The possibility to compare these institutions is based on three common characteristics: the preexisting digitalized heritage, the medium budget and, furthermore, the use of cross-media communication; for this reason, in the text, there will be present only examples from Instagram and Youtube, since the contents that are published there are reposted on Facebook and Twitter.
In order to achieve a better comprehension on the emerging trend in the museum digital communication, the methodology used was based on direct surveys made of three open questions[1] sent to the institutions by direct email. The collection of the survey's submission has been supported by secondary data provided by international institutions, such as NEMO, ICOM and ICOM Italia, which have gathered information on the impact of COVID-19 on the museum system from a local and international point of

1 Was the digital communication strategy changed following the CoVID-19 emergency? How? Was it possible to reach a

view. Finally, these data have been compared with qualitative data related to the types of content published by the museums and with quantitative data on their engagement rate. The general outcome that emerged from this analysis is that from the first lockdown museums have started to create specific new contents for the Web with the main objective of creating an effective digital audience engagement as an opportunity to be perceived as still relatable and not close.

new audience during this period? If so, what kind of audience has been reached? [General target]
How will the ways of fruition and artistic mediation change? Will there be more use of digital tools by the museum?

STAY IN TOUCH WITH THE AUDIENCES! A FOCUS ON MUSEUM DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT DURING COVID-19

On 30 April 2020, The Italian International Council of Museums (ICOM Italia) published an article on their website called *Comunicazione digitale dei Musei ai tempi del COVID-19* (ICOM Italia 2020). ICOM Italia has investigated, through a survey, what museums have been doing, in terms of digital communication, since their closure. The first strong evidence provided by this research is that almost 90 per cent of museums have created specific digital contents for their platforms after being closed; even if only a third of the museums surveyed have implemented their online accounts. Moreover, concerning the budget, ICOM Italia affirmed that the majority of the museums, 83.90 per cent, have not used extra financial resources for digital communication activities, only 16.20 per cent have reinvested part of their budget. It should also be noticed that, from an international point of view, 81.8 per cent of museums have dedicated their staff, specifically, for digital activities, investing, most of them, between 1-5 per cent of their overall budget (ICOM 2020).

This last result is slightly counterintuitive, but it is extremely useful. In general, the survey has shown two trends in the communication strategy developed by museums during the first months of the pandemic. The first trend has shown the widespread use of digital communication tools. A second trend then has demonstrated a relation in the way in which museums are putting effort, and not budget, in producing specific new contents in order 'to make people want to come as soon as we reopen' (Belmont 2020) as stated by the communications manager of the museums of Allier, Delphine Desmard.

In the article called *Lockdown drives digital boom at French museums—but where's the business model?* Delphine Desmard has pointed out what is the final aim of digital communication. According to her point of view, digital communication is not a replacement for the visiting experience, but its aim lay in creating an effective engagement with people (Belmont 2020). The digitization of cultural heritage is a process that has started since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Even if the technology has been in constant evolution, with more advanced high-quality images, virtual tours, and virtual reality, all these technological experiments have not succeeded in replacing the real experience (Farago 2020). For this reason, the final goal of a good communication strategy and digital engagement is to maintain a personal connection with the audiences, not to replace the museum experience (ICOM, n.d.).

The emphasis of rethinking the way in which museums present themselves online is related to the fact that digital engagements could create a future income. Maintaining a customer relation, visitors can still buy tickets for virtual exhibitions or webinars, and also

give donations to the institution. Consequently, the possibility of maintaining an online conversation with visitors has become extremely helpful, especially nowadays, since the largest part of the museum incomes used to belong to the sale of tickets, souvenirs, café and other services that are not accessible anymore. According to the *Survey on the impact of the Covid-19 situation on museums in Europe* made by the Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO), 44 per cent of museums used to lose up to 1,000€ per week [chart 3], but sadly, the most affected ones are museums placed in capitals, losing up to 40,000€ of their incomes each week [chart 4] (NEMO 2020). Of course, this economic impact will have several repercussions on the longevity of museums, regarding the sources of incomes. In this sense, it is clear how digital communication can become a useful instrument to create and preserve a virtuous customer relation service. Generally speaking, the museums' response to the COVID-19 emergency has been successful in most of the cases:

> more than 40 per cent of museums have increased their online presence.

This increase in online visits can also be explained due to the intense use of social media, indeed as it has been reported by NEMO 79 per cent of museums have increased their social media engagement, just three weeks after their closure (NEMO 2020). The comparison of these secondary data has proven that the closing of 90 per cent of the worldwide museums has pointed out an important issue related to the budget and to the way in which it should be invested during this uncertain time (NEMO 2020).

Indeed, as reported by ICOM, in collaboration with UNESCO, from an international point of view "12.8 per cent of participants saying that their institution may close permanently, more than 80 per cent of programmes reduced and almost a third of museums forced to reduce their staff" (ICOM 2020). To sum up, everything that has been stated so far, during the beginning of the pandemic, museums were faced with two major challenges:

> the Covid-19 and its impact.

In this sense, in a situation where all the usual visitors could no longer enter the museums, it is important to analyse what have been the best practices of audience engagement that has allowed museums to keep an *online* active conversation that could not have continued.

In this regard, the examples of the Frick Collection, the Pinacoteca di Brera and the Soane's Museum can become a good benchmark to understand the actual strategy developed by museums. In the end, it is necessary to take into consideration how digital engagement practices should not be seen as an afterthought, as they can ensure visitors' loyalty to the museum, which is a valuable opportunity at a time of economic and social crisis.

The Frick Collection

Museums are huge institutions with a large staff and, even if they are closed they still have to support their employees, security and conservation.

For this reason in some cases, especially in America, philanthropic entities have launched new funds strategies. This alternative funding was developed by the American Federal Government in 1954.

Citizens have been encouraged to support cultural organizations in view of the fact that those contributions were categorized as

tax-deductible charitable donations (Hulst 2007, 18). A great example of updated donation strategies has been provided by the Frick Collection with an Instagram post published on the 13th of May. While they were promoting the new episode of their series *Travels with a Curator*, at the end of the post they put a link to their membership program:

> 'Members see it first' (@frickcollection, May 13, 2020). These were the catchy words used to promote the newest membership programs.

Frick was trying to adapt the exclusivity of a membership program in the online version, providing to their closest members special treats and interesting sneak peeks of future activities. The Frick Collection is a not-for-profit institution and, as it often happens, it relies on a variety of funding sources, including contributions donated by private entities (The Frick Collection, n.d.). Opened in 1935, the museum always aimed to provide access and enjoyment of the collection to the public through special exhibitions, publications, education, research, and public programs (The Frick Collection, n.d.). Since 1999, The Frick Collection has embraced the digital way starting with the digitalization of their work of art (The Frick Collection, n.d.). Virtual tours, high-quality images and mobile apps used to be already available for its audience. However, since the beginning of the quarantine, the digital offer has been enriched with different contents that explain not only the collection but that would also educate people on the history of art. The main online initiatives create during the first lockdown were:

- *Get Creative,* which is a weekly challenge that the museum proposes to its public: 'Exercise your creativity through art-making and writing' this is the task. In the Instagram post on 12 May, the museum has proposed a reflection of the still-life paintings starting from the work of art made by Chardin with the invitation to pay more attention to the things around us (@frickcollection, May 12, 2020).
- *Travel with a Curator* is an online series that aims to travel virtually all around the globe looking at monuments that could somehow be connected to the Frick, or looking at places that share histories or that are directly linked to The Frick Collection.[2]
- Similar is the series called *Cocktails with a Curator,* in which each Friday a video is going to be published with a cocktail recipe. In this way, people would enjoy at their home the same cocktail that the curator is drinking while they explain a work of art belonging to the Frick Collection.[3]
- *Frick Five* is a series where Frick curators pose five questions to guests. Question after question, people can discover new ways of seeing works of art. The personal experience of the works that guests provide with their answers is an interesting informal way to get in touch with the masterpiece of the history of art (The Frick Collection, n.d.).

As a first analysis, it can be affirmed that social media are used by Frick Collection as a way to share and communicate its activities and, at the same time, to create a direct connection with its audience.

2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4m49kqXqgo

3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YD8KxM1Ia9c

Pinacoteca di Brera

Call to actions are extremely effective and present on Frick's pages, encouraging reposting is a very useful practice as it can create tangible links between people and institution. During this quarantine, a great example was the participation to the challenge named #*NomiCoseNeiMusei*, which was created by Museo Poldi Pezzoli, in Milan (Corriere della Sera 2020). Pinacoteca di Brera has accepted Poldi Pezzoli's challenge [Figure 1], but, different from the Frick Collection, it has decided not to reveal the name of the works. In this way, the museum has created an inside challenge for its public who immediately accepted it and have started browsing the digital collection on the museum's website to find the names.[Fig. 1] The Pinacoteca di Brera is one of the most important institutions in Italy. Born in 1809, it hosts one of the most famous painting collections of the Venetian and Lombard schools, from the middle thirteenth century to the twentieth century (Pinacoteca di Brera, n.d.). According to the communicator manager of the Pinacoteca, Marco Toscano, the institution has never interrupted the conversation with its public.[4] This was possible thanks to a series of original online initiatives created specifically for the situation. The online initiatives are charged with presenting a museum that is inaccessible but in full swing.

They include explanations of works, reflections on elements of the exhibition, movements of paintings, musical performances, readings and games for children. The digital engagement also became a way to document the operations carried out in a closed museum, a way to rethink its various components, but also to testify the desire to remain open, visible, connected with the outside world and their visitors.

Four were the new initiatives designed to entertain the public of the Pinacoteca:

- *Brera come la vedo io* is a family experience that invites children and adults to explore the museum by being inspired by the activities suggested by a family guide of the museum.
- *Note a margine - Brera/Musica* is a series of videos that proposes performances taken from the wide and rich musical program of the Pinacoteca.
- *Voci dal museo - My Brera* is a series of short videos in which the employees of the Pinacoteca di Brera and the Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense talk about works or environment with a personal approach. In each episode, the public gets in touch with a member of the museum's staff who presents their work at the museum and their favourite works from the collection.
- *Appunti per una resistenza culturale* are short videos that illustrate the collection of the Pinacoteca, present elements of the exhibition, propose readings of fairy tales for children and document various activities taking place in the museum. Episode 41 is a DIY project created by the educational department, which describes step by step how to build a cardboard model of the temple that Raphael depicted in the Sposalizio della Vergine (Pinacoteca di Brera, n.d.). Another example is episode 29, where people can see how the Collection Zavattini has been returned to the museum and what are the steps that the museum must follow to check the status of the works.[5]

4 Interview with Marco Toscano, 6 May 2020.

5 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VpVACedu0ao

Even if the video is not super high-quality, according to Marco Toscano,[6] the public has immediately shown their appreciation of the museum's commitment to converting its cultural offer.

This positive reaction is understandable for two reasons. On one hand, videos are the most likeable type of content on the Internet because they can easily entertain the viewers; on the other hand, videos are not just promotional tools, they can be a presentation format in their own right. Video after video, post after post, the Pinacoteca di Brera is a perfect example of the importance of storytelling above the technological tools. Each post and hashtag, created and published during quarantine, has transformed visitors into users, leading them to be co-authors of what was going on inside the museum.

6 Interview with Marco Toscano, 6 May 2020.

7 Interview with Camilla Ravani, 17 March 2021.

The Sir John Soane's Museum

Digital storytelling is also fundamental in the communication of Sir John Soane's Museum. Established in 1833 from the personal collection of Sir John Soane, one of the most important architects of English neoclassicism, the mission of the museum is to welcome, engage, and inspire visitors through the narration of its founder's life and collection (Mayor of London, n.d.). The willingness to perpetuate the vision of Soane to create public education and give free access to it is clearly expressed in the type of free content upload (Mayor of London, n.d.). Virtual tour and 3D scanner of the works of art used to be already present on its website, as reported by the Development Officer Camilia Ravani:

> ***The Museum's virtual tour, Explore Soane, created in partnership with award-winning creative studio ScanLAB in 2016, gained a renewed prominence in the media for its virtual stimulation of a visit to the Soane, with coverage in publications including Wall Street Journal, The Telegraph, Apollo and Forbes.***[7]

Therefore Ravani affirmed that "following the Museum's first closure on 18 March, a new Digital Engagement Strategy was launched harness the potential of the Museum's digital channels and build on our mission to continue to engage audiences with our collections."[8] The museum digital strategy was implemented with 4 new activities:

- A series of a documentary called *Opening up the Soane* which reached over 270,000 views. This three-part series aired on London Live during lockdown, but now viewers can see the episodes published on the YouTube channel of the museum. The first episode tracks the restoration of the recesses on the Museum's central staircase. The second episode examines the restoration of Sir John Soane's Private Apartments. The third episode reveals the painstaking work that went into restoring artworks within the Museum, and the legacy of the project. (Sir John Soane Museum, n.d.) From the films' footage, the Museum also launched a new educational platform on the website, exploring the different craftspeople involved in the project, and examining particular conservation techniques.
- *Langlands & Bell: Degrees of Truth*, has been recreated as

8 Interview with Camilla Ravani, 17 March 2021.

an online exhibition. The online translation of the exhibition has been created with high-quality images. In the exhibition, the public can discover the complex relationships that link people and architecture and the coded systems of communication (Sir John Soane Museum, n.d.).

- *Soane Medal and Lecture* was established in 2017 to recognise architects, educators and critics who have made a major contribution to their field, producing an enrichment in the public's understanding of architecture. The Museum has been able to expand the scope of this ambitious award, by undertaking the creation of a new digital home for the Soane Medal within the existing website. As stated by Ravani 'The new platform integrates the voices of former medallists, and their work, with shorter texts by external contributors, to seek to establish the importance and enduring influence of each recipient, and the relevance of the medal within contemporary architecture and design'.[9]

- Blog articles want to share stories, objects, DIY projects, podcasts and book excerpts. (Sir John Soane Museum, n.d.)

The tone of voice of Soane's museum is rigorous and didactic but it is perfectly in line with the mission of the museum. Each Instagram post gives an inside view of the collection, providing pieces of information that are not only related to the historical sources, per se, but they give personal information about the life and career of John Soane.

For example, the post published on 14 of May describes the winged statue of Victory, placed in the breakfast room, which has been the last object that Soane collected before his death in 1837 [Figure 2]. Both the caption and the images are exemplification of a personal attitude with a strong historical background (@soanemuseum May 14, 2020). [Figure 2]

9 Interview with Camilla Ravani, 17 March 2021.

CONCLUSION

The examples of these three museums have shown not only different types of digital engagement but also the importance of building and maintaining a deep connection with the public, even if it is just an online relation. With their specificity, all these institutions have shown a common strategy:

to promote and communicate themselves through the storytelling of their institution, creating contents that still provide entertainment in a free and accessible way.

In addition, another common thread of all these activities is the activation of the audiences. The Frick Collection, the Pinacoteca di Brera and the Sir John Soane's Museum, like many other institutions, have entered in the houses of many citizens with DIY projects, lectures or readings, calming the tedious and uncertain days of early 2020.

These digital strategies can be proof that they have been successful for all three museums. It can be shown that the implementation of specific actions for the maintenance of the online conversation has led to a consequent increase in traffic on the institutions' social media profile. The Frick Collection with its lavish approach toward their public and their collection, between March and December 2020 has increased their

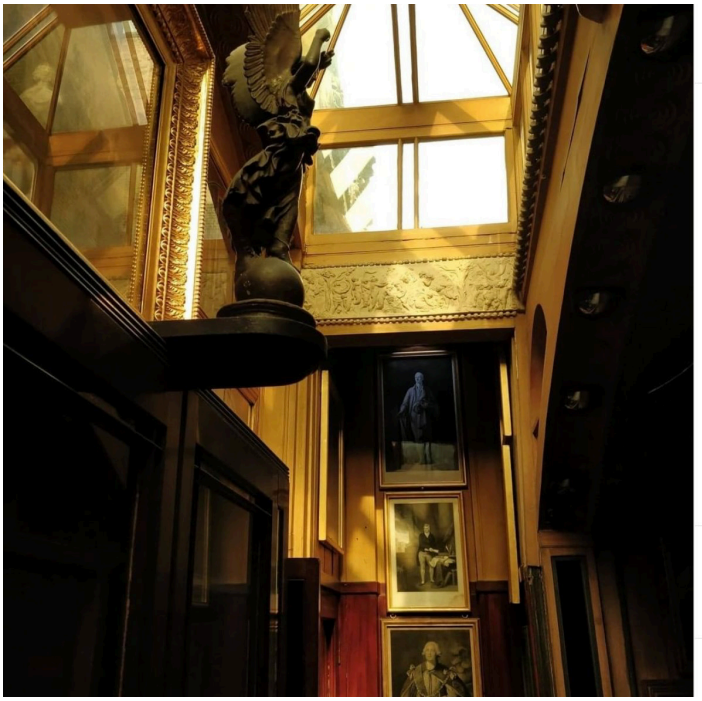
followers by 10.91 per cent, passing from 259,760 to 288,088, maintaining the engagement rate up to 0.71 per cent. Whereas, the Pinacoteca di Brera, which has used a much more informal and less serious tone of voice, has seen an increase of their followers of 75.48 per cent, starting from a fan-base of 24,052 followers to 42,206 with an engagement rate of 2.57 per cent. Finally, the Sir John Soane's Museum, the more didactic one, has raised its followers by 31.01 per cent reaching 33,150 followers, in fact, the Developer Officer Camilia Ravani shows how "it has been a period of impressive growth of the Museum's online presence with exciting, innovative digital projects, and attention from the international media".[10] In conclusion, it can be affirmed that even though online tools are never going to replace the live experience of being surrounded by masterpieces from the art world, it is necessary to state how these tools have succeeded in maintaining and creating new connections with visitors: an opportunity not so obvious at a time of social distancing.

10 Interview with Camilla Ravani, 17 March 2021.





Fig. 1 Screenshot



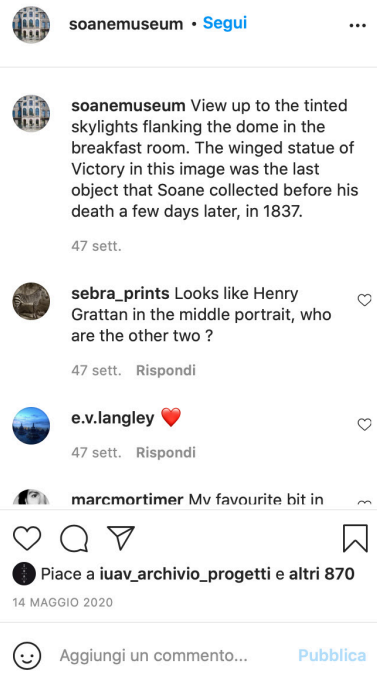


Fig. 2 Screenshot

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KNOWLEDGE AND ARTISTIC PRODUCTION IN CONFINEMENT

How Three Italian Museums of Contemporary Art are Responding to the Pandemic and Re-shaping their Roles for Their Communities

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Giorgia Tronconi

ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has represented a serious threat to the survival of museum institutions. At the same time, the limits induced by the health crisis have created the conditions for several museums to reflect on their cultural and social role, reacting to the situation with new initiatives.

This study aims to investigate the practices of three Italian contemporary art museums (Centro Pecci, MACRO, and MAMbo) by analysing the strategies they implemented during the lockdown periods to involve their audiences digitally and physically as well as to stimulate artistic production by commissioning specific projects.

The essay will be carried out with the support of primary sources collected during interviews with museum directors and the literature relating to the broader issues raised by the subjects of study, namely the participatory role of the public in museum dynamics and the relationship between cultural institutions dealing with contemporary art and artistic production.

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 crisis has raised a number of broader questions about the role of museums in today's society, leading them to reflect on their criticality as institutions. Are museums still able to create and foster communities? How is their relationship to artistic production developing? What are and will be the priorities and objectives of art museums? These are the main issues this essay aims to investigate through the analysis of three Italian contemporary art museums and their practices during lockdown. These are:

Centro Pecci (Prato), MACRO (Rome) and MAMbo (Bologna). The choice of these case studies was determined by the following reasons. First, they are all contemporary art institutions operating on the Italian territory and their directors have become just recently the leaders of these institutions, as they have been appointed in the course of the last four years.[1] Moreover, all three have proposed projects stimulating artistic production, alongside initiatives involving the participation of their audiences. The evolution of these strategies through the first and second waves of the pandemic will be the subject of analysis of the present study. Finally, I will consider how the opportunities provided by the new practices adopted by these institutions create fertile conditions for possible changes within the museums. The key arguments of the essay will be discussed with the use of primary information collected through interviews[2] with museum directors, as well as the relevant literature both on the current pandemic situation and on the more general topics raised by the case studies, namely the public's participation in museums and the relationship between cultural institutions and artistic production.

1 Cristiana Perella (1965-) has been the head of Centro Pecci since 2018; Luca Lo Pinto (1981-) was appointed artistic director of MACRO at the end of 2019; Lorenzo Balbi (1982-) became artistic director at MAMbo in April 2017.

2 All interviews were conducted in Italian. The extracts in this case study were translated in English by the author.

TOWARDS A MORE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION: THE DIGITAL WORLD

The knowledge produced within and by museums has historically been described as exclusive, and therefore promoting inequality within society. As Pierre Bordieu argues:

> *The museum "presents to all" but is reserved for those who, equipped with the ability to appropriate the works of art, have the privilege of making use of this freedom, and who thence find themselves legitimated in their privilege, that is, in their ownership of the means of appropriation of cultural goods* (**Bourdieu and Darbel 1991, 13**).

Yet, the progressive digitalisation of cultural contents has contributed to their democratisation and to the consequent reduction of the institution's elitism. As Claire Bishop suggests, "rather than thinking the museum collection as a storehouse of treasures, it can be re-imagined as an archive of the commons" (Bishop 2013, 56). Lockdown has speeded up this process, expanding the boundaries of museums, which have often made their collections and exhibitions available through digital platforms such as Google Arts&Culture, Facebook, Instagram and Youtube.

Professor Tommaso Casini (IULM, Milan) rightly points out that, "with the pandemic, the *musée imaginaire*, metaphysical, has found its full theoretical and practical application" (Casini 2020). Casini is referring to the *musée imaginaire* (often translated as the 'museum without walls') theorised by André Malraux in the 1950s:

> according to the French writer and politician, it consists of the ideal compilation of all works of art and artifacts which are accessible not only physically in museums, but also mentally and virtually through their reproductions.

The *musée imaginaire* is therefore a visual and imaginary experience of works of art, which has now become a reality with the development of technologies and means of communication.

At MAMbo, for instance, the initial reaction to the forced closure of the museum was the streaming of the performance *Bonjour* by Ragnar Kjartansson,[3] followed by "Due minuti di MAMbo", a series of two-minute videos shared on MAMbo's YouTube channel every day at the same time[4] and curated by artists, mediators and curators.

The museum director, Lorenzo Balbi, pointed out that the videos "were not intended to replace the real museum visit, but rather to offer further information about the collection and the temporary exhibition which couldn't be accessed at the time".[5] The success of this new format prompted the director to pursue the initiative even throughout the (short) re-opening periods, yet at a slower rate. With the second lockdown in November, the project turned into Due minuti di MAMbo Extended, a series of longer talks and interviews about the museum collection. The development of this initiative testifies to the role of the museum as an experimental centre, as well as to its flexibility in the face of the constantly changing and unstable pandemic scenario.Similarly, the project 'Pecci Extra' has been introduced at Centro Pecci:

> We have intensified the schedule of our Web Tv,[6] sharing a new content every day, museum director Cristiana Perella explains.

"In the first month, our activity essentially consisted in broadcasting rare materials from our archive, insights into current exhibitions and works from our collection, videos by artists, contributions from writers, artists, critics, and more; then, we started to look for more interaction with our followers through live meetings, with the possibility for the public to ask

3 The online streaming was purposely conceived as a 'partial' visit of the exhibition AGAINandAGAIN andAGAINand (23 January – 3 May 2020), aimed at capturing the public's curiosity and encouraging people to visit the full exhibition once the museum had reopened.

4 The videos were uploaded from Tuesday to Sunday, the regular opening days of the museum.

5 Interview with Lorenzo Balbi, 11 June 2020.

6 Centro Pecci's Web Tv has existed since 2016.

questions, and with tutorials addressed to children (but not only), where artists showed how to create small works of art that users could then photograph and send to us to share on our social media" (Conta 2020).

Pecci's digital programme also evolved after the new restrictions issued by the Italian government in November thanks to 'PecciON', a series of weekly online meetings featuring talks and webinars about the highlights of the museum. The need for museums to engage with their audience at home is also evident in the case of the MACRO museum in Rome. Its first exhibition under the new artistic director, Luca Lo Pinto (*Museum for preventive Imagination - EDITORIAL*), should have opened on 24 April 2020 and was postponed to 17 July 2020 due to the Covid crisis. During the first weeks of lockdown, the museum enriched the 'Extra' section of its website "to offer insights into the future programme of the museum through words, images, sounds and videos",[7] while the campaign 'How Can We Rethink A Contemporary Art Museum?' was launched on social media (starting from 2 March 2020) to present the curatorial manifesto of Lo Pinto's direction. His programme starts from the fundamental assumption that today's museums must be questioned as institutions:

> he proposes a museum that is constructed as a three-dimensional magazine where visitors can freely move between rooms as if they were the columns of a newspaper.

In September, MACRO also introduced Agorà,[8] which is defined on the museum's website as the discursive engine of the museum, dedicated to meetings, conferences, symposia, talks, presentations, interviews and screenings which took place both offline and online according to the new restrictions issued in autumn.

7 Interview with Luca Lo Pinto, 24 June 2020.

8 'Agorà' is divided into four different formats: 'A Story' invites artists to present their own personal 'art history'; 'An Exhibition' is dedicated to narrating an exhibition project; 'A Work' is developed in collaboration with Giuseppe Garrera to analyse philologically an artwork of his choice; 'A Folder' is a digital talk in which guests share their screen to narrate a specific collection.

TOWARDS A MORE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTION: PARTICIPATION

The initial phase of the pandemic also stimulated collaborative projects.

In the case of MACRO, the interaction between the museum and artist Olaf Nicolai consisted in the *Museum as Beareau of Communication* project, started in April 2020 and then revived in December with the second lockdown: shifting from the digital dimension to the physical one offers anyone the possibility to send an artist-postcard using the museum as a mediator.[9]

Each postcard was illustrated with a different work from the museum collection, selected on the basis of the message it conveyed, therefore creating (as explained on the museum's website) a communicative and interpretive thread between the sender, the museum and the addressee.

This example of a participatory initiative proves that museums specifically want to "animate [their audience] as a legitimate participant in the formation and distribution of knowledge within the art museum and the encounter with the artwork" (Walsh 2016, 14).

In this case, the process of democratisation does not only have to do with the online access to cultural content, but also with the possibility for visitors to interact with the content and contribute actively to its creation. MACRO's intention also seems to be shared by Centro Pecci, which later launched a project called *Soundtrack,* by artist Marinella Senatore. On 28 September 2020, people in Prato were invited to use WhatsApp to send the museum an audio fragment from their daily life in

9 Interview with Luca Lo Pinto, 24 June 2020.

the city. The artist, together with composer Emiliano Branda, then mixed the collected media into an original soundscape of Prato, which was presented on the online channels of the museum (on 5 December 2020).

The project shows the need for museums to interact with their local community through a mixed approach, where the Internet serves as a medium for a collective artistic action rather than as a container and distributor of information. As far as 'personalisation' and 'responsivity' are concerned, technology seems to offer a set of new, powerful tools to shift the balance of power in terms of knowledge production from the institution to its audience, thus creating a greater potential for emancipation. The latest initiative by MAMbo stems from a similar idea, that of establishing a form of correspondence between artists, the museum and citizens, which was developed outside its institutional spaces. Almost a year after the official beginning of the Covid crisis, the museum showed a new sign of resilience with *Dear You*: a project structured around six works by international artists[10] that were posted to whoever bought the exhibition ticket.[11]

Letters acted as a new form of access to these otherwise neglected works of art, which were thus introduced into the private, domestic space of an intimate encounter. "Artists reflect on fundamental and relevant topics of our contemporary world such as the loss of physical contact and the related consequences on our emotional lives," curator Caterina Molteni explains. "That is, the weakening of a shared social life and the need to create new strategies of relation and care beyond the digital experience"(Exibart 2021). In times of social distancing, when interpersonal relations happen almost exclusively in the digital space, a form of closeness is therefore restored through an analog engagement of the public.

It is interesting to notice that both MACRO and MAMbo chose two traditional media – the postcard and the letter – to re-establish an active and tangible relationship with their audience. This choice could point to a progressive loss of interest for merely digital initiatives, along with the will to foster a much-needed intimacy, a one-to-one relationship between the museum and its public where the digital dimension is not meant to replace the physical experience of art.

10 Dear you included works by Hamja Ahsan (London, 1981), Giulia Crispiani (Ancona, 1986), Ingo Niermann (Bielefeld, 1969), Allison Grimaldi Donahue (Middletown, 1984), Dora García (Valladolid, 1965) and David Horvitz (Los Angeles, 1982).

11 The letters were sent between March and May 2021.

AFTER COVID-19

Thinking about a post-pandemic future, the key assets of the future scenario seem to be a stronger social commitment to communities and their engagement, together with a return to 'slow looking'.

In fact, the approaches adopted by the museums considered here seem to promote a cultural knowledge based on experience, be it within or outside institutional spaces. In this sense, the 'museum without walls' that spread on the net during lockdown corresponds to an expansion of culture beyond its prescribed sites, into the domestic (and potentially the urban) space, as a possible site for learning, community building and creation. In times of lockdown, these museums have not only put into action Malraux's *musée immaginaire*, but also become closer to the "ignorant art museum" (Sitzia 2018), whose "main educational role", according to professor Emilie Sitzia, "[...] is to create a circle of learning that learners can navigate themselves, [...] choosing and

presenting objects in an engaging and stimulating way" (Sitzia 2018, 79). As a consequence, their visitors have turned into what Rancière called the 'emancipated spectator', a spectator with agency in terms of what and how they learn.

FROM KNOWLEDGE TO ARTISTIC PRODUCTION

As well as pedagogical and educational tools, contemporary art museums can also be interpreted as sites of experimentation and creation of art.

When considered from this angle, museums can be seen as activators of artistic (as well as knowledge) production. And if the 'participatory museum' of today's social-media era relies on a community of connected users, why can't this same institution also engage with the community of artists? This is the question that the three museums seem to have addressed during lockdown. In fact, both MACRO and Centro Pecci supported artistic production with their commissioned projects, respectively 'JOMO (Joy of Missing Out)' and 'Extra Flags'.

The case of MAMbo is quite different, as the museum announced the opening of 'Nuovo Forno del Pane', a site within the museum that was assigned to artists as their studio. Starting with the Roman museum, the project 'JOMO' is strictly bound to Luca Lo Pinto's vision of the 'Museum of Preventive Imagination'[12] as an 'experimental project taught as an ever-updating platform for knowledge production that reinforces the centrality of the relations with artists and their ideas'.[13]

It consists of a series of one-minute videos conceived by selected international artist[14] during lockdown and shared on the museum's Instagram TV. As Lo Pinto explains, the online channel becomes 'an extension of the museum, a place for artists not only to exhibit, but where they can potentially re-define boundaries and rules'.[15] On the other hand, Perella from Centro Pecci has preferred to stick to physical on-site artworks, asking ten Italian artists[16] to design a flag which would then be raised in front of the museum and eventually shared on social media.

According to the museum director, the project 'Extra Flags' was intended 'to send a tangible sign of vitality, resilience and hope' (Conta 2020). With the second lockdown in November, other artists designed flags[17] that were raised on the flagpole outside the museum to further mark the passing of time in the persistent situation of crisis. The first ten flags also became part of an exhibition (21 May – 11 October 2020) and materials for educational workshops for children and families. This way, production of knowledge and artistic production are condensed in a virtuous circle which benefits the communities of both museum 'producers' and 'consumers'.[18] Pushing this practice further, Lorenzo Balbi looks at the post-pandemic future with his 'Nuovo Forno del Pane':

> MAMbo was provided with artist studios, which turned the museum into a vital communal space, not just for observing or exhibiting, but also for creating.

Balbi has been interested in supporting the 'productive soul' of the museum[19] by challenging contemporary artists to create new artworks:

> "Bologna lacks a pole with studios [...] for them [artists] to produce and to which the public has the possibility to access periodically" (Wang 2019).

The reflections raised by the current situation add up to the motivations

12 The name of Lo Pinto's direction project, 'Museum for preventive imagination', comes directly from the 'Ufficio per l'immaginazione preventiva' ('Office for Preventive Imagination') founded in 1973 by Carlo Maurizio Benveduti, Tullio Catalano, Franco Falasca e Giancarlo Croce.

13 Interview with Luca Lo Pinto, 24 June 2020.

14 The artists participating in the 'JOMO' project were: Assume Vivid Astrofocus, Marcello Maloberti, Cara Benedetti, Luca Vitone, Phanos Kyriacou, Angelo Plessas, Ana Jotta, Eileen Mules, Antoine Catala, Daniel Blumberg, Carlo Lavagna, Marc Leschelier, Elisabetta Benassi, Olaf Nicolai, Laëtitia Badaut Haussmann, Hugo Canoilas, Emily Jacir, Carsten Nicolai, G.T. Pellizzi, Adriana Lara, Daniel Eatock, Pierre Charpin, Matilde Cassani and Lorenzo Vitturi.

behind the project:

> ***Our exhibition agenda has been interrupted, and I thought it made no sense to re-start from where we left a couple of months ago.*** [...] ***The artworks or the exhibitions themselves could have sounded at this time obsolete or lacking an analysis of the current context.***[20]

The result is a quite unprecedented initiative for a museum, one that is more typical of public and private institutions dealing with artist residences and studios[21] and of independent production centres led by artists. Besides, MAMbo as a museum is strongly bound to the history of its territory: it has always strived to become a centre of creativity, particularly in Bologna, and a meeting point between artists and citizens.

It was this goal (as well as the logistic impossibility of travelling) that led to the publication of an open call for twelve artists based in Bologna, providing them with the necessary space, the related equipment and an initial budget of two thousand euros each to help them produce their works.

The museum also acted as a link between artists and other agents of the art system, enabling curators and journalists to visit their studios and communicating the artists' activities within the museum through its digital platforms. This way, the museum renounces its role of institutional framing and resembles a 'factory' designed for the exchange and the active production of ideas. Of course, Balbi hopes to be able to eventually acquire some of the future artworks for MAMbo's collection or at least to place them in one of the collections in Bologna, but he also stresses that "this is absolutely not mandatory: what is produced inside the museum does not belong to the museum".

To mark the end of the artists' residency (February 2021), the catalogue 'Nuovo Forno del Pane - A Logbook' was published to retrace this experience through a collection of images, correspondence, notes and interviews. MAMbo is not the only museum to turn part of its physical space into a site of ongoing experimentation for artists.

In fact, with its re-opening in February 2021, MACRO launched its eight exhibitions, one of which is *REHEARSAL (PALESTRA)*. As described on the museum website, this is conceived as "a space made available to artists to test their works in progress or not yet fully finished, 'quasi-works' to present freely to the public without obligations of planning or design. A rehearsal room to train the mind to question the status of an artwork and exhibition making". The first artist invited to take part in this new format was Soshiro Matsubara (1980-), Japanese, with *Caresses* (February 3, 2021 - June 13, 2021), an exhibition characterised by ongoing changes in the installation of a personal *cabinet de curiosités*.

Similarly to MAMbo's Nuovo Forno del Pane, MACRO presents itself as a propeller for artistic production and, by making it accessible to the public, it shortens the distance between the creative process, the artwork and its fruition. This way, the ultimate function of the contemporary art museum seems to evolve from a mere window on artworks to an open field for research, dialogue and discoveries in an ever-updating cultural process. The approach to artistic production that has just been described highlights the need to re-think the role of cultural

15 Interview with Luca Lo Pinto, 24 June 2020.

16 The first ten artists involved in the 'Extra Flags' project were: Marinella Senatore, Nico Vascellari, Marzia Migliora, Eva Marisaldi, Flavio Favelli, Marcello Maloberti, Massimo Bartolini, Elena Mazzi, Andreco.

17 The artists involved in the second part of the 'Extra Flags' project were: mp5art, Thomas Hirschhorn, Gunes Terkol, Silence = Death Project, Pierre Bismuth, Jeremy Deller, kinkaleri collective.

18 This shift from production to preservation is something usual for the museum of Prato, whose collection is the result of its exhibition program and acquisitions, representing the history of the museum's activities and its projects with artists.

19 'I like the idea of a museum that "does things" rather than just exhibiting them', Balbi affirms (Interview with Lorenzo Balbi, 11 June 2020).

20 Interview with Lorenzo Balbi, 11 June 2020.

21 Balbi mentions as main references 'Via Farini', 'Fondazione Bevilacqua la Masa', 'Witte de With' among others: 'In Italy, the investigation on the territory is mostly demanded to independent centres of production or to

institutions and their relationships to artists. If artists are “citizens that have built their proficiency on the ability to imagine things differently, speculating on what still doesn’t exist, building on the diversity of new inclusive scenarios [...], what kind of society wouldn’t recognise such a resource (especially in times of crisis like this), assuring them forms of support, development and action?” (Guerisoli 2020). The provocation of independent curator Lucchetti does not suggest giving up on the conservation policy that characterises museums in general, but to reverse a common trend of the last few decades, i.e. the prominent shift towards conservation to the detriment of cultural production (Cominu and Santagata, n.d.).

Locked-down museums have been forced to look back at their primary reasons of existence, that is, not only visitors but also artists and their production. In their manifesto for the museum of the future, Sylvan Bellenger, Sergio Risaliti and Giovanni Iovanet also confirm the need to imagine new ways for museums to act "as dynamic campus or cultural hubs [...] considering the centrality of research and experimentation, of teaching and education, of cultural mediation and new digital production. [...] They will necessarily have to become interdisciplinary spaces for artistic residencies and creative workshops, institutions for education and training of curators, art conservators and mediators" (Artribune 2020).

CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the examples of Centro Pecci, MACRO and MAMbo represent an effective and stimulating response to the challenges presented by the lockdown and to the emerging difficulties of Italian contemporary art institutions in general in terms of knowledge and artistic production.

As for the relationship with their audience, the sanitary crisis has proved to be a time of experimentation for a wider online sharing of museum contents, as well as for the use of both digital platforms and traditional media as sites of additional engagement and participation of the public with respect to museum collections and artworks.

In all three cases, the will to refer to an interconnected community of visitors is mirrored in the necessity to re-establish an equal and active relationship with artists, who were stimulated with commissioned and ongoing projects. If museums work in close dialogue with artists, their approach could potentially bring about a positive renewal of the Italian contemporary art scene, together with its international repositioning within the art system. What is sure for now is that these museums have become, both virtually and physically, sites for emancipation and creativity, for artists as well as for the public. And if “creativity is a survival strategy” (Saltz 2021), as art critic Jerry Saltz observes, then looking at art could provide the art world with the necessary hope to ‘light up’ again.

artists-run spaces’, says Balbi, ‘These are real sites for community building: their energy and dynamics surely are attitudes to take up to become a point of reference for a community’. Interview with Lorenzo Balbi, 11 June 2020.

22 The selected artists who took part in ‘Nuovo Forno del Pane’ are: Ruth Beraha (1986, Milano), Paolo Bufalini (1994, Roma), Letizia Calori (1986, Bologna), Giuseppe De Mattia (1980, Bari), Allison Grimaldi Donahue (1984, Middletown, USA), Bekhbaatar Enkhtur (1994, UlaanBaatar, Mongolia), Eleonora Luccarini (1993, Bologna), Rachele Maistrello (1986, Vittorio Veneto), Francis Offman (1987, Butare, Rwanda), Mattia Pajè (1991, Melzo), Vincenzo Simone (1980, Seraing, Belgio), Filippo Tappi (1985, Cesena).

23 MAMbo also partnered with NEU Radio (the radio station of Associazione Humus), which temporarily moved its headquarters to the museum to announce the ‘Nuovo Forno del Pane’ project involving artists and special guests in their programme.

24 Interview with Lorenzo Balbi, 11 June 2020.

25 Sylvain Bellenger is the director of Museo di Capodimonte in Naples; Sergio Risaliti is the artistic director of Museo Novecento in Florence; Giovanni Ione is the head of the Brera Academy in Milan.

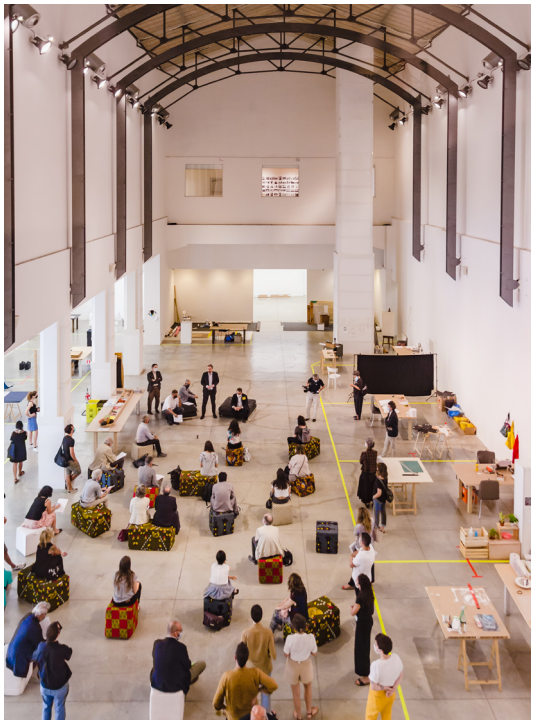






Fig. 1-3 Nuovo Forno del Pane, View at MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Photo by Valentina Cafarotti and Federico Landi, courtesy MAMbo



Fig. 4 Nico Vascellari, In Dark Times We Must Dream With Open Eyes (Flag), 2020, nautical fabric flag, 210 x 300 cm, Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, 25-31.03 2020, Photo by Margherita Villani, courtesy of the artist and Centro Pecci



Fig. 5 Andreco, ALL WE HAVE IS EACH OTHER – ECOCENTRISM AND MUTUAL AID, 2020 nautical fabric flag, 210 x 300 cm, Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, 20-26.05 2020 Photo by Margherita Villani, courtesy of the artist and Centro Pecci

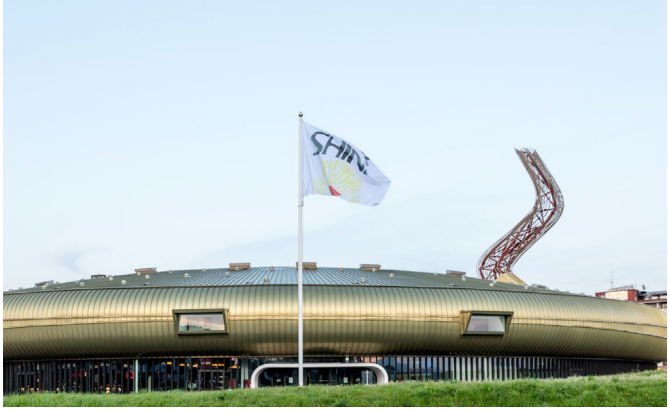


Fig. 6 Marinella Senatore, Shine, 2020, nautical fabric flag, 210 x 300 cm, Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, 18-24.03 2020, Photo by Margherita Villani, courtesy of the artist and Centro Pecci



Fig. 7 Extra Flags, Exhibition view, Centro per l'arte contemporanea Luigi Pecci, 21.05.2020-11.10.2020, Photo by Margherita Villani, courtesy Centro Pecci



Fig. 8 Marinella Senatore, Soundtrack, 28.09-25.10.2020, Courtesy Centro Pecci

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INTERVIEW: ABDEL BOUNANE

BY:

Noemi Dolci

The video game was invented thanks to the collaboration between the companies Bright and Games in Society. Was the idea proposed by the Centre Pompidou or did you already have this project in the pipeline and propose it to the museum?

The French Ministry of Education asked the Centre Pompidou to create an interactive project for the public with state funding. In this case, the Centre Pompidou was the intermediary between the state's proposal and the project conceived by Bright and Games in Society. Then it was the public market that proceeded with this project. It was indeed interesting to see the state proposing a project to democratize culture in an original way.

The video game was launched on April 23 but has already had great success. How many users have downloaded the game, and from which countries? Did you find unexpected statistics?

In one month, we have already had around 15,000 users, 80% of which are from France and the rest mostly from Europe. We are happy with the immediate popularity of the game, surely increased by its being linked to a very important cultural center in the art world. In order to make it more international, we intend to widen the choice of languages, which is now limited to French and English. This aspect will allow a lot more people around the world to play.

You probably didn't expect to launch the game during a pandemic. How did this period influence the release of the game?

Exactly, the project had already been under construction for months. Whatever happened, we would have to launch it, so there was no upheaval. The crisis of closed museums probably helped the game's development and increased its popularity.

Did you need any help from the museum staff regarding game conception and game design? If so, how did they contribute?

Yes. We first defined angles and themes that seemed sufficiently interesting for the first level, and in line with the works and the colors of the collection. Secondly, with the staff dealing with the public and the communication, we decided on the themes for both levels. In order to explain the mission and the works of the museums, game designers visited the permanent collection with guides. The communication staff explained the link between the works and the levels, thus allowing us to connect the works with the angles (7 angles, 2 for light and 5 for color). Then there was some editing work concerning texts related to angles (50 works related to angles with themes). After that, we had to work on the recovery of the rights to integrate them into the game.

In Prisme 7, we find references to the works exhibited at the Centre Pompidou, or rather their re-interpretation in digital form. What do you think is the connection between the collection of the Centre Pompidou and the design of the game?

> Our first mission was to design a videogame which was consistent with the museum's collection. Starting from the themes of color and light, we have reinterpreted the artworks of the collection with a minimalist approach.

With this game, you question the concept of the traditional art exhibition. Do you think that the artistic experience offered by a video game still maintains a connection with the physical display of the collection inside the museum? If so, how?

> It is important to note that the narrative side is almost absent, we didn't want there to be a narrative filter on the museum visit, which had to be quite minimal. With an accentuated narrative, we would have run the risk that the entire context and interpretation of the works would be polluted by a story that has nothing to do with the Centre Pompidou and its collection. It was almost superfluous to add a story. It was a bias for us. The graphics of the game suggest the idea that the virtual universe is always refined so that it is the pedagogy and the technical processes and the artistic phenomena that have the priority. It's already difficult to understand contemporary art, so we wanted something simple, very graphic, that could emerge in a sensitive and very obvious way. Something uncluttered, as long as everything is understandable. Our intention was not to "overwhelm" the visitor with too much information.

Let's conclude with a more general question. Prisme 7 made it clear that the power of digital is not simply making an interactive copy of an art collection displayed in a museum. What do you think is the future of museum gaming and other immersive experiences like Prisme 7 within art institutions? What can digital bring to museums?

> The contextualization of artworks does not necessarily have to adopt only one point of view, that is to say that of the artist or the curator who are expressing themselves. I think that VR and AR bring new forms of contextualization and understanding of the work, for example from the angle of colors, shapes, metadata, real-time connections to accessible works available on the Internet. It's interesting to see how digital can bring other contexts, as well as a new way of interpreting art. With another context and another point of view, it will be possible to have other paradigms.

INTERVIEW: YARDEN YAROSHEVSKI

BY:

Noemi Dolci

How did the team come up with the idea? Was there a specific interest in the art world or did you need the help of professionals like museum workers or architects?

I am an entrepreneur and a gamer, so I decided to start a company. We were looking for ideas for new games and we realised there were no games about art at all, so that's how the team and I started looking at art. Today, art works in a local way, like in Florence during the Renaissance, but doesn't work in a global way. If we think about the various elements of the art world, we have museums of course, and they are important, they do a good job, but they are having a lot of problems. The thing that bothers me the most is that they only show 5% of their collection on average, which is crazy. Imagine a phone that only works at 5% of its capacity. Secondly, it is incredibly difficult for artists to reach out to people and gain popularity. We now have some data from Daisy AI and we know that, on average, if you show an artwork to 1,000 people, no matter which one you choose, only one out of 1,000 will respond to that. It's OK of course, but for artists it is very frustrating. And for other people, too.

We live in a golden age for culture, we have access to any type of media, games, films, videos, platforms, except for art. There are a lot of people, educated middle-class people, who consume a lot of culture, go to museums, see a lot of stuff hanging on walls, and yet most of these things don't mean much to them. We go to the Tate for example, we see a lot of artworks of which a very small portion is relevant to us and, because of a series of factors, we think that we are not educated enough, but it's not like that. The only people that are happy with this system are people in the art market, the 5 oligarchs, the gallerists, and a very small number of artists. It doesn't work like that in the music industry, you can have artists that are not that successful, but they usually take part in small shows, they could live with that. As for music, you can either like it or not, you don't need to understand it.

Obviously, we are gamers, and as we say, 'To a man with a hammer everything looks like a nail', so we tried to think of what we could do about this situation. The game Occupy White Walls (OWW) proposes some solutions. Firstly, we thought we had to build an AI system that could understand that every person is an individual and could show them specific artworks that we think are interesting to them. We know from the stats that this system is working. But of course you can also buy artworks from other galleries in the game, through the chat, so it's a more accessible system, not like Facebook where you are in a bubble and you can only see your close friends. We implemented this AI system because we can't bore people, it is not an option. Otherwise, they will easily change game.

Another interesting question is the role of the visitor in a museum. For example, if you consider Spotify, you can decide what music you want. In the past, with the radio, you couldn't. You could only switch to another station. Now we have Spotify, Netflix... This reminds me of Marshall Mcluhan's theory, which says that people growing up with videogames get the impression that they have control, they have agency. In video games you are the hero: if you don't do anything, nothing will happen. In a way, museums are stuck: you go to museums, you see the displayed artworks, and you can't do anything with this. And if, for example, you like a painting in the museum, you can't acquire it. Your possibilities of expression are very limited. In OWW, it is totally different: the idea is that whenever you see an artwork that inspires you, you can immediately acquire a copy for yourself. We can say that we changed the world of art. In this game you can get your Mona Lisa, put it in your gallery and in your environment. What happens is that we transformed the Mona Lisa.

It is not the painting that matters, but why you chose to put it in that place as a curator. Suddenly, it's all about you, and the artwork is a tool to express yourself. In Minecraft we have blocks, here we have artworks that act as blocks of self-expression, and what's beautiful about art is that it means different things to different people. Suddenly you have agency, you have power. Once, we were talking about how it feels to visit a museum after playing OWW and somebody said 'If you visit the Tate, you are just visiting somebody else's gallery.' Everybody should have a museum of their own.

2. Since I'm studying the effect of this lockdown on digital initiatives linked to art, I wanted to ask you if there has been a rise in user numbers. How did numbers change during this lockdown period? Where are the users mainly from?

We see more people playing the game, but this is a general trend anyway. Not something specific to this period. We don't really keep track of numbers. In general, if you take platforms like Netflix, you see that people are using them more. We do see a lot of galleries trying to reach out to us, to collaborate. We are happy to do this, but there are some problems with art market galleries. They have an idea for doing a gallery, invite some artists, but then there will only be four people there to see it. This means missing the point. If you want to do a private thing, you can do it on your own. What really matters to us is the community.

On Kultura you can browse the whole art collection of the game. The numbers are amazing, there are a lot of emerging artists that no one has ever heard of, and people are buying their works on the game. So, it's a really big opportunity for

them. The point is that it's a platform, if you do something that not everyone can see, you are totally missing the point.

One of the things I really like is that, in the reviews, many people say 'I'm not an artsy person, but I just spent 4 hours playing this game'. This proves the point: if we create an environment in which we constantly try to interest you, we don't bore you with art, we don't judge you, and we give you freedom and agency so that you can get inspired by art and other players, even non-artsy people will spend their time on the game.

3. I followed the Q&A with curator David Jaffe and I really appreciate finding a museum professional dealing with the digital form of a museum. Why do you think museum curators like Jaffe are interested in designing a virtual art space on OWW?

He has liked the game concept since the beginning. He actually didn't build the space himself, he's old-school. But we decided to do some streaming with famous personalities, which is very popular within the community. We created a gallery with Cézanne's works for him, we navigated it during the streaming and he explained every work. I hope we'll do more of that in the future.

We are not against experts, against the art establishment, or at least not fully. Some people are patronising, they look at us in an ignorant way and don't understand our aim.
For example, 'Negative Space' was a sarcastic video and the people who didn't get the point were actual art theorists.

4. OWW's name is related to an activist approach (Occupy Wall Street); does it somehow mean you want to create a dialogue about authorship on the digital and on the open access dimension of the Internet, by also making available and sharable such a big collection of artworks in a digital form?

It's in part linked to OWS. We want to give the feeling that artists have been taken over by this art establishment. In the talk 'A caveman walks into the Tate', I explained the reason why institutions do it better than us. OWW is also MMO upside down, so it was kind of a joke for us.

We are not against the museum system. We just think it has to be re-engineered. Museums are museums, they have some strengths (being real places with real artworks) but there's also another art world. Our project is only different, it won't replace anything. The positive thing of OWW is that it makes art more accessible than if it was displayed at the Tate.

We see ourselves as a platform, like Spotify, we try to work with museums, but they are very old-school and very afraid

of new options. We have some big issues: for example, we talked with some museums and they were worried that some of their works might be displayed in a gallery next to works from other collections. I don't understand why this is an issue. Throughout history, many artworks have ended up in some collection quite randomly.

6. Following the previous question, do you need a specific authorization to upload artworks on your game or do you have a platform like Google Arts which provides you with the images for the digital collection?

It depends, there are 2 paths. We think of ourselves as a museum, we want to show artworks in real size. We also take care of metadata, we put links to collections when needed. Then we have living artists, we have a few of them in the system now, but we will open the system to the public soon. The idea is that we will then have contemporary artists uploading their artworks. They keep all their rights, but they just allow us to show their works on the game and on social media. Not only that, artists can also put links to their page and in a few cases players already contacted some artists and bought their works. We don't ask for commissions, we're not like a gallery. The point is that if you are an artist and want to advertise your work, you can't do it on social media, because there's a billion artists who do that already. OWW has the aim of promoting art and showing it to people that can appreciate it; there's a specific system for this and I hope it works.

Artists will pay 9 dollars to upload their works. This payment functions as a kind of selection, a sort of barrier not to have people uploading all kinds of stuff. Another interesting thing we are trying to develop is a 'patron system'. Some artists in the world, like in Russia or Brazil, are very skilled but don't have the money to promote themselves. So, what we do is allow people to buy artworks with a code; they will access the game and upload the works. Then we have this situation in which these patrons meet artists and obtain a *Kultura* page with all of the artists they discovered. This is the vision. It's not really an art market because we don't sell anything and we're not forcing people's tastes, it's more like a bazaar, because it's more accessible, more colourful, more 'uncurated'.

7. In conclusion, do you think OWW can also influence to a certain extent the way art is displayed in the physical Wworld? Looking into the future, is there a chance of a collaboration between Stickipixels and some art institutions for a 'custom' version of the game?

I definitely think there is space for new projects like OWW in the post-crisis setting and after the reopening of museums.

It's good to have an alternative like OWW. The main point is that we receive artworks from artists and we promote them. There's nothing like that in the real world, and although dealers say I will only show them to a few people, that's not the case.

There have been a lot of galleries looking for collaborations in this period, it's a good timing. It's not a problem for us to do specific, official galleries. We are definitely open to this. The only thing is that art that goes into the game is available to all players. And even if galleries don't agree with this, that's how it works.

An interesting case is that of *Google Arts*, where you're able to walk inside the museum space. But it's still missing the point, the aim is not to walk into a museum virtually but to create your own museum, and maybe one day we'll be able to get the art from there.

There's a forum in the game where you can recommend artworks so that people can get to know new artworks. It's great because it's a targeted way to upload art. In this way we really discover amazing stuff that is not known at all, such as a 17th-century Russian artist who was discovered through the forum.

INTERVIEW: LORENZO BALBI

BY:

Viviana Sacchi, Giorgia Tronconi

Interview with the artistic director of MAMbo (Museum of Contemporary Art of Bologna) Lorenzo Balbi (February 23rd, 2021) for the publication "The Art System and the Covid-19 Pandemic", curated by Professor Clarissa Ricci on the issue "CollegArti" of the Dipartimento di Belle Arti (Visual Arts Department) of the University of Bologna

What were the results of the projects launched by MAMbo during quarantine, such as "Nuovo Forno del Pane" (The New Bakery), "Due minuti di MAMbo" (Two Minutes of MAMbo), "Finestre sul Cortile" (Windows in the Courtyard)?There will be the opportunity to keep them going on in the future?

In these months we have tried to show adaptability to the situations we had to face. We wanted to convey the idea that the museum was not only a building that "contains things" but also a thinking organism, a production center of models and projects suited to the context in which it operates. This was a completely new way of thinking and working. In 45 years of history, from 1975 - when the Galleria d'Arte Moderna (GAM) opened - until last February, this museum had never closed. This change of mindset was not easy, and it forced us to wonder what it means to be a cultural institution in times of emergency. With a prompt reaction, we understood how the role of the museum is perceived nowadays, from the outside. As far as MAMbo is concerned, we formulated several responses that can be summarized in four steps.

The first is the streaming of the performance *Bonjour* by Ragnar Kiartansson. We were at the beginning of the emergency and we thought we would have reopened after a week and it happened, briefly. In the meanwhile, we gave the public the possibility to "peek" at the exhibition inside the closed museum through a live-broadcast consisting of a three-minute loop in which two actors, in front of a fountain, played a "Bonjour". This initiative showed we were ready to react with new models, engaging a different audience of young people, generally more accustomed to the technological medium.

The second step is represented by "Due Minuti di MAMbo", a column that underwent many changes and produced more than one hundred videos until the fall. The project began in March 2020 as a response to the lockdown:
every day at 3:00 p.m. we uploaded on MAMbo's social channels a 2–3-minute video on topics related to the current exhibition or the permanent collections. It became a sort of awaited appointment, like a radio broadcast with short, bright and fast content.

In May, when the museums reopened, we changed and adapted our schedule: since the physical proximity that we tried to evoke with the videos could be regained in presence, we decided to slow down. However, we continued the "Due

Minuti di MAMbo" with a reduced frequency because we liked them, and they constituted a possibility to provide additional content to what was being done inside the museum.

In November, with the second wave, we had to change this formula again. Besides the hope of the first lockdown disappearing, the loading and fruition of online content had become easier and simpler than in March. Our response was the "Due minuti di MAMbo" extended version, in which we deepened the contents through an archive of documents and interviews that show the Museum's role as a place of research. The third step is the "Nuovo Forno del Pane", thanks to which the museum went from being an exhibition center to a production center. We selected and took on artists who were interested in their working approach rather than the final output of their research. This has given a different perspective of the museum, which has been understood as a public space. I think the aim is to make use of our space (which is not ours, but it belongs to everyone) to bring about these kinds of initiatives, partnerships and projects .What might have seemed like something completely disconnected from the real society, has been bridged because there were people inside the spaces. In addition, the "Nuovo Forno del Pane" structurally changed the museum: it is as if in 2020, alongside the curatorial and educational department, the artistic production department was established too, and it is extremely likely that this transformation will remain in the future. We had the opportunity to create a community of artists that will remain a stakeholder for the museum. This experiment has served to show that an artists' collective exists in Bologna, giving them a visibility that would be unimaginable outside of this space.

The last step is the project we launched last week, "Dear You". We are once again in a situation where investing in the creation of exhibitions does not make sense, because the fruition by the public is still too complicated and too discontinuous. Therefore, we have decided to restore a medium that has been used a lot in the history of art, that of the letters: we are tired of the online, we would like to return to the normality of relationships, also restoring the artistic field the domestic, intimate, and physical dimension. For this reason, we decided to ask six artists to create a work that could be put inside an envelope and sent to all those who buy a ticket to the exhibition. Throughout this year, I have been fighting against virtual visits because I believe they cannot replace real ones. The virtual has never been a substitute for the real. I'm a big believer in new technologies and work with artists who use them consciously to produce projects designed for the virtual world. However, the works we have in the spaces of MAMbo are not conceived for the virtual space, but for physical proximity. So, what we have done in these

months is to deepen and give new content online, but always with the idea of recovering that physical experience. In the case of "Dear You", we thought that a new exhibition frontier could be people's homes.

Regarding the relationship between MAMBo and other visitors, the educational department developed various projects to entertain the youth and the students. Do you think that the educational offer presented by MAMBo might have influenced the youth's response? Is there more involvement today among them?

Absolutely. Having to close the open spaces and consequently shift all activities online gave more visibility to the educational department. I'd like to underline that this worked very well even before, but it was less popular, since in the pre-Covid 19 times we were not interested in sponsoring or increasing the visibility of its activities with schools, families and elders. The educational department was already central for us, with more than 4000 workshops in the Bologna Musei institution. In 2020 we just gave public visibility to those adaptive planning skills that I tried to illustrate with our initiatives. We should not consider the curatorial department separated from the educational one: the latter reacts with similar projects and follows the same stimulus. For example, there have been initiatives like "MAMbo Take Away" in which visitors came to MAMbo and could take a take-away bag, symbol of restaurants during the pandemic. In our bags there was not food, but materials to create workshops at home for children, starting from the museum collection's suggestions. Another initiative has been the "Favole al Telefono" (Fairy Tales on the Phone), inspired by Gianni Rodari, to which a lot of classes took part, with sold-out events, lots of replicas and probably another edition coming. Whoever participated received a phone call from a museum educator that told a fairy tale made up starting from an item of the collection. All these activities allowed us to avoid virtual surrogates, and to set up initiatives through which we could talk about our museum by creating similar experiences to those you can have inside the museum spaces but experimenting with new methods.

What was the reaction from the visitors community to the most recent initiatives such as "Mambo Quotidiano" (Daily MAMbo) and "Poeti nel Museo" (Poets in the Museum), both keen on bringing back people to the museum spaces?

First of all, we need to be aware of the fact that the public has changed completely and will keep doing it. We never suffered from a lack of public. We opened on January 20th, 2020, with a show that in a month has sold 13 thousand tickets, reaching the status of one of the most visited shows in the museum, even though it only lasted one month. Thus, we shut

down at a particularly appropriate moment, and then we reopened from July 19th to November 3rd. During this long summer only the permanent collection was accessible. The "Nuovo Forno del Pane" was not open to visitors, even though it was possible to peek at the artists working from the glass windows. Despite the circumstances, last summer we had an average of 600 visits per week, compared to the 1000 visits from the year before, thus 60% of the previous year. It's a public coming from local communities, whose 60-70% are from Bologna or Bologna-based, in any case well-acquainted with the museum. We realized that we wanted to communicate with this returning public, for whom many projects arose, such as the cycle "Recollecting", focused on the appropriation of the collections taking place in the museum: in this sense, works from MaMbo have been matched with those from other museums of the institution of Bologna Musei. This has also led to the rediscovery of some original works, stored in the depots. "Castagne Matte" (Crazy Chestnuts), for example, put together works from MaMbo with other pieces coming from the Museo Civico Archeologico (the Archeological Civic Museum) and from Casa Morandi. The idea was to mix together different creations, all part of a common public heritage, providing new ways to enjoy them thanks to original devices like the already available and free of charge app MuseON.

The communication strategy of MAMbo has contributed to offer a familiar environment again, inviting people to rediscover its spaces. Do you think there is a correspondence between the increase in online audience and the increase in visits to the museum?

As far as the local public is concerned, this is obvious. The activity on social media has for sure exponentially increased the number of people from Bologna who visited the museum. Last summer we had 1200 visitors per week, 60% being foreigners (about 400 Italians per week, and only less than a half of them came from Bologna), this summer we had 600, of which almost everyone came from Bologna or from the region. During the closing period we have introduced a lot of online activities, and this has certainly aroused curiosity in the public, as the numbers show. During this opening period in January, 300-400 people came in just one week, also to visit what they had seen online. I am glad that we have moved forward with digital activities. It will then be necessary to reposition MAMbo internationally, because this is what the history of the museum requires: to raise in the citizens the awareness of the museum as a production center capable of dealing with large international centers.

Talking beyond MAMbo, what is your opinion on what is happening within the museum system in general, and what do you think will remain of the initiatives launched during this emergency period?

The first and biggest step will be to distinguish between a "before" and an "after" the pandemic. This will already give us a different perspective. A certain way of enjoying artistic content is in fact not coming back, or at least not for a long time. There will be a new "normal" in which the enjoyment of cultural content will be completely different. We will no longer return to the 3000-person openings, but new models will have to be introduced: I already follow with great interest artists who are already experimenting with this vision, aware that the post-Covid era will be based on new habits. I do not argue that Covid is an opportunity: it is indeed a tragedy that has upset nations, economies and caused millions of deaths, but we must embrace the fact that nothing will be the same, and we must therefore offer possible and fair models. A revision of the art system dynamics should have been done even before Covid, given the bulimia of exhibitions and major events already underway. Looking at the present situation, we now must think of new alternatives for a reality in which this will not be possible or, at least, not for a long time.

DID COVID START A NEW LABOUR ERA FOR ARTISTS?

AUTHOR:

Eleonora Ianni

FIRST SECTION:
Old but Gold Artist Exploitation and Precariousness

SECOND SECTION:
AWI and the acknowledgement of the category of art workers

ABSTRACT

The pandemic has downsized the ego of the human being, who is slow in realizing how they are part of a balanced ecosystem. When one component from within starts exploiting resources, the balance is shattered, and coexistence doesn't function anymore. Zooming in a human-scale framework, this paper adopts the point of view of a segment of the population that has been heavily hit by the pandemic:

> the category of the visual artists. In face of the enduring misconception about the work of art and of its producers, which today perpetuates itself in the still missing acknowledgment of the working status of the artist, the association Art Workers Italia (AWI) stands up for the recognition of the category.

The pandemic has clearly exposed some of the abuses and injustices that have long been shaping our lives, and revealed how often those who are least valued by society are also crucial in sustaining it.

This paper adopts the point of view of a segment of the population who was heavily hit by the pandemic: visual artists. The enduring misconceptions about the art work and its practitioners – the idea, for instance, that art is passion and thus need not be properly recognized and compensated as work – result in a lack of acknowledgement of the status of artists as workers. In the face of this, the association Art Workers Italia (AWI) stands up for the recognition of this category.

INTRODUCTION

The lockdown, together with the long process of recovery, has manifested the social nature of the human being, who, craving connection with other people, consequently turned to digital networking platforms.

Human interaction was temporarily (?) transferred to social media. New apps, museum virtual tours, together with films, TV shows, music and streamed concerts somewhat relieved the burden of quarantine. Despite the shutdown of institutions, culture proved to be able to enrich our lives even remotely. Before Covid-19, the so-called Creative and Productive Cultural System in Italy (Sistema Produttivo Culturale e Creativo) constituted a pivotal economic engine for our country, reaching ninety-six billion euros, contributing 6.1 per cent of the national GDP, and employing 1.55 million people.[1] It is therefore not surprising that culture and creativity have been selected as the main factors to be included in the international plans.[2] In the name of inclusiveness and equality, instruments like Next Generation EU and the Green New Deal aim at helping and recovering the sectors which were hardest hit by the pandemic, in line with European objectives in terms of progress and sustainability. Nevertheless, the condition of the creative makers of culture is not equally prized. However, the measures adopted during the pandemic have thrown light on the inequality and precariousness within the contemporary art system. In Italy, for example, a portion of artists and cultural operators has been excluded from the debate on the recovery of the state and from the financial aid offered by the government.

This essay aims at pointing out the inequalities suffered by this segment of the art system, namely the workers engaged in the contemporary visual arts sector in Italy. In particular, the text addresses the

1 For further numbers and facts, see (Fondazione Symbola and Unioncamere 2019).

2 A plea has been made by Fondazione Symbola (Symbola Foundation), Associazione per il Disegno Industriale (Association for the Industrial Design), Federculture, Alleanza delle Cooperative Italiane Cultura (Alliance of Cultural Italian

activities by the Art Workers Italia (AWI) group, taking it as a case study.

According to AWI, the precarious, underpaid and exploited conditions of the art workers derive from a lack of legal, economic and social acknowledgment of this category as a working component of society.

OLD BUT GOLD ARTIST EXPLOITATION AND PRECARIOUSNESS

Reflections on the role of producers in culture, their relation with wages and the cleavage between art for art's sake and economic livelihood were already sprouting in the early twentieth century in the United States (Salazay 2000, 24-74). The claims made by AWI would resonate from the campaigns launched later on by the 1970s New-York based group Art Workers Coalition (AWC), which protested on the grounds that an artist should have the right to control the display and treatment of his or her work, and to get properly paid for it (Elligott 2013).

Over the course of time, some artistic manifestations have arisen out of the need to denounce the anti-democratic and imposed process of selection for exhibition showcases, as shown by Michelangelo Pistoletto at the Venice Biennale in 1968. The artist challenged the exclusiveness of artistic authorship by inviting the public to collaborate with him in the making of his own exhibit. However, due to the political unrest of that period, the initiative never took off (Pietronave 2020, 13).

Similarly, Cesare Pietroiusti, in the seat of the Quadriennale of Rome in 1996, challenged the selective structure of the artistic happening by inviting 200 more artists than expected (Pietronave 2020, 14). Furthermore, other various artists' productions have referred to a status of not being taken seriously, such as Adrian Piper's *Agreement of Original Transfer of Work of Art* (1997), which has accompanied and authenticated all works sold by Piper or by the Adrian Piper Research Archive Foundation since 1997. A possible inspirational draft for future artists' contracts.

Today, troubles and inequality experienced by artists are thus hardly surprising, especially after being affected by the pandemic and the consequent lockdown, since they have been excluded from national aid and deprived of any possibility of exhibiting in any physical space. This apparently intrinsic weakness and precariousness of the artist lies in a still lacking definition and an overall accepted consideration of the artist's professionality. As analysed by the scholar Pierre-Michel Menger, while in the past the access to employment in the art world was limited to those of a certain lineage and to those possessing a specific set of tools, with the introduction of new media and the broadening of cultural policies the concept of culture itself has expanded (Menger 1999, 544).

As a consequence, such expansion has raised the definitional issue of what artistic occupation is and who the professional artist is. In a cultural landscape where art is no longer strictly codified and conventional, the definition of the artist hinges on one's self-recognition as such. In other words, an artist is whoever makes art. In the name of this autonomy, the need for the artist to navigate time and space in such a way as to reach the most prominent showcase and prove his or her originality plays an important role in how the artist's labour is structured. In fact, according to Weick's notion of self-designing organisations, careers in such a labour system are subjectively patterned because they are committed to impermanence, to cumulative learning

Cooperatives), Fondazione Fitzcarraldo (Fitzcarraldo Foundation) to the Italian Government, asking them to provide the cultural industries' system with funds and legislative facilitations, which would help the country to overcome the crisis. See (Fondazione Symbola n.d.).

and exploration, rather than tied to external careers (Menger 1999, 551). In the present society of performance, the artistic labour is paradigmatic of the cognitive work, according to which the worker as a self-entrepreneur can never stop and struggles in distinguishing production from leisure time.[3] That is why self-employment is today the most frequent work status of art, displaying most of the attributes of the entrepreneurial career form, including motivation for deep commitment and high productivity, leading to a sense of control on and of personal achievement through the work. This career model has had as a by-product the creation of 'the labour of love' (Menger 1999, 554) argument and the possibly dangerous notion of 'calling'. This might create the misconception that occupational commitment and achievement in art cannot be matched to monetary considerations of a market economy of exchange, but should rather be conceived as skilled and sustained activities entailing a social value that artists carry out.

3 For a further analysis, author Franco Bifo Berardi deals with the society of performance and cognitive work in his book: Berardi, Franco Bifo. 2001. *La fabbrica dell'infelicità. New economy e movimento del cognitariato*. Roma: DeriveApprodi.

Thus, evading the monetary consideration leads to a very common trap regarding the position of the artist, which keeps art from being considered labour, and its exceptional status from being demystified. As Katja Praznic argues:

> ***Since art as an autonomous field has been established on the basis of artistic value connected to the art object rather than on artistic labour, there are no codified norms for assessing the artistic labour's value and proper remuneration.*** [...] ***The labour of artists is invisible, or at most, ascribed to artistic genius, talent, or creativity*** (Žmak 2017).

This perpetrates the mystification that hinders the compensation for such labour. The phenomenon is termed the paradox of unpaid labour:

> ***Although the field of art has secured relative autonomy for artists in determining the parameters of their work as a specialised profession, it has fostered an exploitative system characterised by irregular employment, wage inequality, and unreliable job security*** (Žmak 2017).

Praznick illustrates her point by comparing the situation of the artist to those in charge of domestic labour, on the grounds that women supposedly feel a 'calling' for housework, insofar as they are biologically equipped for taking care of others. The performance *The Smiling Workman*, embodied by Jim Dine in 1960 pouring on himself a bucket of blood-red paint, refraining the sentence 'I love what I'm doing', if originally meant as a critique against Abstract Expressionism, gives a face to the precariousness in the cultural sector and the dangers of the 'labor of love' argument.

For "there is nothing more conductive to exploitation than love for one's work", as brilliantly stated by art historian and independent researcher Federica Fontana (Daldanise and Pitattore 2019, 43-54). Committing oneself to a cause one believes in or to something one loves delegitimises the weight of the working hours and casts profit as something superfluous, and even immoral. Nobody would argue that the product of the artist's love doesn't have a social value, and yet almost nobody will assert that society therefore has an obligation to protect that

value by acknowledging, and compensating, the labour of the people who produce it (Scott 2014). This topic has been dealt with during the 2018 Bologna-based *Forum dell'Arte Contemporanea*, where one table led a discussion on the notions of amateurism and professionalism.

The fact that the former is more often associated with the figure of the artist than the latter misleads into associating the artist with unprofessionalism and unseriousness. On the other hand, a strict 'professionismo' doesn't fit in a possible artistic qualification, as culture can't be considered as a specific and single product (Fantin and Nassiri 2018, 20-21). Carrying such a burden, the artist should be entitled to a proper independence, in terms of definitions, work management, production and distribution.

AWI AND THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THE CATEGORY OF ART WORKERS

The focal point of this study resides in the struggle for the identification of the professional figures of the visual arts sector, whose coexistence in the political, economic and cultural spheres makes it hard to fully legitimise. Moreover, the steps taken to protect workers during the current Covid-19 emergency keep falling in the same trap, since they seem to be unable to clearly discern the functionality and the needs of this category, as demonstrated by the measures of the *Cura Italia* decree,[4] which paved the way for a series of following dispositions careless of art workers' conditions.[5] Nicola Fratoianni made manifest the urgency of an 'art wage' (reddito d'arte; A.G. 2020), a financial help to be given by the government to compensate an artist's past works and support future ones.

After a few months of lockdown, when it became clear that all possible forms of gatherings were to be avoided, this proposal was meant to financially compensate the artists excluded from national aid.

Such exclusion has been perpetrated by the Italian Ministry of Culture, which, under the guide of the minister Dario Franceschini, has allocated twenty million euros for all the performing activities bypassed by the FUS (Fondo Unico per lo Spettacolo) contributions, thus forgetful of the visual art sector (Maida 2020). If in relation to the entertainment domain the minister underlines how every element will be supported, the question whether a similar treatment will be reserved for the visual arts field remains open. The governmental decisions, without ever directly mentioning artists in a strict sense, have failed to remember that just as actors and singers are rightly upset for not having a stage to perform on, so are artists suffering from the lockdown of museums and galleries.

As Giulia Ronchi writes in an article for the magazine *Domus*, the institutions' apparent neglect for the work of visual artists stems in part from a belief that visual art is a niche and élite occupation, which does not directly contribute to a country's wealth and influence.

In conclusion, the approach of this government-issued financial support is somewhat a reflection of the perception people have of this category: marginal, difficult to frame and promote. And we are not talking about those who have made the history of the twentieth century reaching high quotations, or the few who have managed to establish themselves on the international market: we are talking about that medium-low range that is very consistent, and has been carrying on for

4 With the Cura Italia decree (March 2020), excluding autonomous workers provided with a VAT, the State has given a 600 euros bonus to seasonal, agricultural and entertainment employees. Two considerations need to be made on this action: firstly, no mention of artists was made at all, leaving those who are self-employed and without a VAT number highly damaged by the crisis. Secondly, the entertainment category is a unionised category, which nevertheless profited in a very small proportion from the bonus, as it was hard to fit the criteria of eligibility.

5 As listed in the official website of the Ministry of Culture, https://www.beniculturali.it/covid19, financial helps are mainly delivered to the entertainment sector, including theatres and cinemas, as well as to a brand-new digital platform to spread culture. This enterprise, already announced in April 2020, and known as Netflix della cultura (Netflix

decades a personal, existential research. And to know that their place is relegated to niche circuits, perceived as distant from the socio-economic hub of the country – and perhaps from its relaunch – is perhaps a problem that was there even before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic (Ronchi 2020a).[6] The current health crisis has not only created additional hardship for visual artists, but has most importantly highlighted a long-lived neglect for their labour and financial condition. In order to fight the anonymity and non-recognition of these workers, AWI, an informal, autonomous, non-partisan group of workers in the contemporary arts, today an association, works in coordination with other initiatives devoted to cultural work in Italy and abroad to reform the sector and make it more inclusive, sustainable, and transparent, fighting all different forms of precariousness and exploitation that currently characterise it. AWI acts for the recognition of work and its regulation, for a fairer distribution of resources and to promote accessibility to funds and opportunities.[7]

This grassroots initiative aims at including all those employed in the contemporary arts in order to initiate a much-needed dialogue – which would ideally expand beyond national borders – about the need to safeguard the labour of the arts. AWI's criticism towards the lack of social safety nets for artists and its demand that artists' digital contributions be remunerated have shed light on structurally unconventional and intermittent contractual dynamics, which lead to a sort of gig-economy and to a precariousness without institutional safeguards. In a field where high-end luxury coexists right next to minimum wage, where alternative contributions such as visibility and (possible) future gigs are offered in place of monetary remuneration, a system of self-exploitation comes into being and, in turn, creates strong dynamics of competition.

AWI's objectives are the recognition of the specificity of different professions within the field of contemporary art; the regulation of labour relations; the redistribution of resources; the reformation of the field at large, in conjunction with universities, foundations and cooperatives, in order to create a code of ethical conduct. Moreover, AWI has put forth a set of demands:

> some of them are specific to the Covid-19 pandemic, while others are more long-term, concerning mostly economic and juridical aspects of the profession.

A full list of the group's demands, together with a presentation of the association and their statements, is to be found in their Manifesto.[8] Many have shared similar requests;[9] especially, these issues were discussed thoroughly during the latest edition of the Forum dell'Arte Contemporanea (Forum of Contemporary Art), held online on 30 May 2020.[10]

For the purpose of this study, the most significant contribution made during this Forum was the urgent call for artists to practice self-awareness, in order to be then institutionally recognised.

As clearly stated by Francesca Guerisoli and Elena Mazzi, this difficult time for the severely hit contemporary art system can serve as the occasion to consider an alternative that could foster transparency, sustainability and professional recognition. The first step is the creation of self-awareness, which, as stated during the Forum, is necessary to defeat the widespread exploitation prompting unfair competition between colleagues and keeping artists invisible. In particular, Professor Alessandra Donati (author of *I diritti dell'arte contemporanea*, 2011) said:

of Culture), has gained 10 million euros, but it has raised much discontent, since it prefers sponsoring a form of culture on demand instead of taking care of the people behind that same culture. To get an insight, see (Tecce 2021).

6 Ronchi provided also an example of how visual artists, besides cultural prestige, have brought financial relief during the pandemic, as demonstrated by the initiative 100 Photographers for Bergamo, organised by Magazine Perimetro and Onlus Liveinslums, collecting over 700,000 euros to be donated to the Pope John XXIII Hospital in Bergamo in support of the health workers.

7 Art Workers Italia. N.d. "About Us". Accessed 15 January 2022. https://artworkersitalia.it/en/about-us/.

8 AWI's collectively written Manifesto is available at: Art Workers Italia. N.d. "Manifesto". Accessed 15 January 2022. https://artworkersitalia.it/en/manifesto/.

9 Among these, I point out artist Giada Pucci's Pasti d'Artista (Artist' Meals), 2013-2019: after acknowledging the existential and economic precariousness of the art workers she interviewed, she launched a contest to provide artists with free meal vouchers, calling attention

> *Non può esserci riconoscimento economico e remunerativo se non si viene percepiti come portatori di valore. Senza la percezione di questo valore, che passa prima dal riconoscimento di sé, è difficile emergere.*[11]

On a different occasion, she also added:

> *Sarebbe un errore istituire un elenco abilitante per l'esercizio della professione di artista: è un'importante conquista quella per cui il diritto d'autore spetta per il solo fatto della creazione. Mi pare necessario, invece, nella libertà di strutturazione della propria professione, prevedere un sistema fiscale e previdenziale dedicato, nel cui contesto definire misure di sostegno, quali ad esempio agevolazioni fiscali per il godimento di spazi di lavoro, studi d'artista o formazione professionale e il riconoscimento di agevolazioni fiscali specifiche.*[12]

Once those employed in the visual arts have reached a moment of self-awareness and of collaboration rather than competition, such recognition needs to be translated at the institutional level. The first step entails a recognition of these workers as a cohesive category.

Rather than configuring themselves as an enclosed order (such as the order of lawyers), artists should aim at presenting themselves as belonging to an associazione di categoria (or umbrella organisation), modelled on the EU document *The Social Status of Artists* (established in 2007 and, tellingly, not undersigned by the Italian representatives) and on the *List of regulated cultural professions* (ICOM, 2007) recognised by the Italian Ministry of Culture, which does not include visual artists yet. As eloquently stated by Professor Donati, the refusal of an association modelled on an enclosed order aims at fostering inclusivity in the artistic field, by maintaining that an artist is whoever makes art.

The establishment of such a category is crucial in allowing artists to submit to the government their formal requests and goals, which can be accomplished only through a reconsideration of the current contractual forms, the dismantling of the labour of love argument and of the misconception that an artist's labour can be compensated with visibility and similarly precarious fees. Ultimately, the creation of an organisation[13] which can precisely represent artists and their labour is crucial to realise the project and to address the issues delineated thus far. The matter of the acknowledgment of the category has been brought to surface also during the webinar, organised by the Italian cultural association Impasse and by Fondazione Santagata for the Economics of Culture, *Who's art for? #2. Nuovi modelli organizzativi contro il precariato culturale*, on 18 December 2020. In order to fight against isolation and (self) exploitation of the art workers, the idea was to nurture a dialogue between associations, institutions and other working categories, with whom to share needs and common solutions for fair working conditions.

Among the participants, AWI included, a representative of Giovani Artisti Italiani (Association for the circulation of young Italian artists) took the floor: in the current capitalist system, it seems that the cost of preserving cultural independence is to exist outside any institutional or

to the working status of the Italian art worker. This artistic intervention is reported in (Daldanise and Pittatore 2019, 126-127). See also Corriere della Sera journalist Pierluigi Battista's request to institute a fund for the visual arts sector (Marsala 2020).

10 The Forum is an informal organisation, established in Prato in 2015. The Forum is held every year in a different Italian city to discuss a variety of art-related issues. Structured in working stations, each of which was assigned a sub-topic to discuss, the 2020 edition focused on the effects and possible solutions to the health crisis that has affected the artistic sector.

11 'There cannot be economic recognition and remuneration if one is not perceived as a contributor of value. Without the perception of this value, which first implies self-awareness, it is difficult to emerge,' my translation.

12 'It would be wrong to impose a qualifying list to access the profession of artist: it is an important achievement that the author's right is due for the sole fact of creation. Instead, it seems to me that it is necessary, in the freedom to structure one's profession, to provide for a dedicated fiscal and social security system, which would encompass tax exemptions on the use of workspaces, the access to venues for

professional development and additional tax breaks especially for artists', my translation. The full article from which this excerpt comes can be found at (Guerisoli 2020).

13 Some attempts at this have been made by GAI (Giovani Artisti Italiani), AWI, Mi Riconosci?.

14 The project, founded by AWI and supported by the European Cultural Foundation and by Smart, Société Mutuelle pour Artistes (Insurance Company for Artists), has been structured around three round tables. Reports of these sessions are available on the Art Workers Italia website, "Tavole rotonde. "How to". N.d. Accessed 26 April 2021, https://artworker-sitalia.it/hyperunionisation/tavole-rotonde-how-to/.

15 It is no coincidence that at this point Irene Pittatore, the moderator of the webinar, mentioned the work by Federica Fontana, quoted above in this essay with reference to her argument about passion in cultural industries.

commercial jurisdiction, in a sort of unregulated realm where there are no working safeguards.

How is it possible to work as a self-employed, yet provided with rights and safety nets? One solution could be AWI's objective of interlacing and keeping alive an exchange of ideas with other groups equally characterised by intermittent employment and gig-economy. In the name of this intersectionality, AWI hosted in December 2020 Hyperunionisation,[14] a web-based platform, to promote a transnational network of groups, institutions and organisations engaged in the protection and safeguarding of the cultural workers' rights. The project constitutes a ground where it is possible to discuss and join forces. As sharply noted by the AWI member Vincenzo Estremo, guest at the webinar *Who's art for? #2,* what is common to art and gig workers is a similar concern for visibility and reputation.

Today the artist, in order to survive, performs both as a producer and as a promoter, in a process of self-branding accelerated by social media and digital platforms. In a world where the role and the production of the artist is not collectively accepted and respected, the reputational element becomes prominent as it is the factor which gives access to the work (or better to say, to gigs). As for artistic work, it is necessary to consider the preparatory process of reputation making, which is linked to the question of (self)representation and of the extent to which people are willing to sacrifice themselves for their job.[15]

This is why it is necessary to operate right now to gain an official recognition of the art workers' category. This is the very first step to take in order to develop a normative framework, in which art workers can rely on adequate contractual forms and appropriate remuneration standards.

CONCLUSION

The institutional neglect of and misconceptions about the status of visual artists' labour has caused them to be hardly hit by the economic difficulties brought about by the Covid-19 epidemic. In particular, cultural beliefs that put passion and remuneration against one another when it comes to artistic production, class biases about the artistic profession and a capitalist system's benefits in exploiting forms of gig-economy have prompted many to demand that this working condition be addressed and fixed. It is no coincidence that the 2020 *Forum of Arte Contemporanea* was held while other related flash mobs and demonstrations were taking place in the streets of different Italian cities (Guerrieri 2020, and Scarico 2020). Such an upheaval in the name of the protection of artistic and cognitive professions bears witness to the urgency to address the instability and invisibility of the arts, whose exploitative system mirrors the unsustainability of the capitalist model.

The intervention by AWI provides an emblematic and insightful case study for this issue: while prompted by the emergency caused by the pandemic, the group's agenda makes a point of showing that the problems affecting those employed in the visual arts are systemic

and not contingent upon the economic crisis due to the pandemic.
Especially valuable is AWI's plan to address the issues they raise, as it stresses the ideological importance of self-recognition and cooperation along with the crucial, financial and concrete steps that need to be taken. In doing so, it works towards the dismantling of the dangerous notion that one does not need to worry about the material conditions of the artist's work.

During the last Forum an idea originally formulated by Professor Paolo Venturi was reminded: culture is 'lievito generativo sociale', a form of yeast as a molecule which expands the perimeter and potentiality of anything it links with, functioning as an activator of people's mind.
Through a natural reaction, artists are entangled in society, which allows them to contribute to it and even change it from within.
Let then the artists be.

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VISUAL STUDY OF A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Shared patterns in worldwide street art

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FIRST SECTION:
One sample, four categories

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Virus-related icons

THIRD SECTION:
Health workers heroism

FOURTH SECTION:
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Social distancing

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Coronavirus pandemic:
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ABSTRACT

Between March and December 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic catalysed global attention, dominating both offline and online media.

Everyday life has been filled with images related to the emergency, following a virus-centric visual language. Many Street Artists around the world have narrated the emergency, representing not only their personal experience, but also a collective trauma. Surgical masks, doctors in superhero capes, rainbows and social distancing have become increasingly common elements in artistic narratives. In art history, iconography studies the range of images and symbols used by artists to convey particular meanings to a subject. Considering the Coronavirus as a new and compelling theme, this case study aims to investigate the development of a new globally shared iconography.

INTRODUCTION

Ironically, in April 2020, Banksy published on his Instagram profile a snapshot, commenting "my wife hates it when I bring work at home" (@banksy, April 15, 2020) [Fig. 6].[1] The picture shows a cross section of his bathroom, where his symbolic rat stencils play and interact with the furniture. This humorous example shows that, although cultural institutions have been temporarily closed, street artists have not stopped animating walls, turning them into silent narrators of the emergency. They keep telling stories about contagion, social isolation, and the enormous efforts of healthcare workers, in order to raise awareness of the changes the virus is forcing the entire world to uphold. Street artists are then witnesses of an unprecedented crisis, and they have not backed down:

> from Brazil to Russia, from Indonesia to Australia, they have brought stencils and spray cans into play.

Undoubtedly, since February 2020 a new and compelling subject has emerged, becoming an inspiring muse in the world of public art and graffiti. Starting from these premises, the intent of this case study is to investigate whether, in the context of the crisis, it is possible to identify on a global scale common patterns and shared concerns in the works of street artists. To pursue this objective, an extensive internet-based data collection has been carried out. It focused in particular on the aggregation of images, collected both from more institutional sources of information, such as newspapers of national and international relevance, and less institutional sources, such as the artists' Instagram accounts.

In this way, it was possible to lay down a classified and processed compilation of 76 street art works as a ground for the elaboration of the case study. Anyway, since the discourse examined here refers to a time when the pandemic was still under development, this case study is framed in a work-in-progress dynamic that leaves room for future possible interpretations and implementations. Is it possible to think that a pandemic, with global effects, has produced a shared language by putting street artists on the same page?

1 All images referred to in the text are accessible in the table of illustrations created on the open access platform 'Miro', see [Fig. 1]

ONE SAMPLE, FOUR CATEGORIES

The sample consists of a set of heterogeneous and international works, mixing established and less established artists (some of them unknown or uncertain) and produced between February and June 2020. As it is visible in the world-map graphic [Chart 1] and in the table [Table 1], the 76 works are distributed over 25 Countries, with a higher condensation in the UK (15) and USA (14), followed by Italy (7) and Indonesia (4).

The comparative analysis of the images has allowed the classification of shared iconographic subjects and themes of common interest. These findings have been conveyed through 4 characterising categories. The first one collects works distinguished by virus-related icons. The other three categories collect works related to specific aspects of the emergency, on the basis of specific shared elements: health workers's heroism, political criticism and social distancing.

In the following paragraphs, these classifications will be extensively explained with the support of examples extrapolated from the sample.

VIRUS-RELATED ICONS

As formerly mentioned, this first category delineates street artists' use of virus-related icons. Charles Peirce described icons as signs which stand for something (the object) because of a matter of resemblance (Pierce 1935, 362). According to this definition, it is possible to single out a series of 'objects' particularly significant for the pandemic, internalised by street artists and reproposed on cities' walls. More specifically, the icons detected by the sample analysis are:

health-protection devices (such as masks, latex gloves and sanitising gel), the pathogen cell and the toilet paper.

Virus-related objects are obviously a constant in the whole sample (for instance, surgical and gas masks are present in the 70% of the works collected), but this first category mostly focuses on works in which these specific icons represent the characterising element.

This is the case of iHeart's new piece in Vancouver [Fig. 9]. He became worldwide known in 2014 for his *Nobody likes me*,[2] a stencil mural of a child holding a smartphone, with the typical social network feed "0 comments, 0 likes, 0 followers" above his head. In 2020, the Canadian artist reproposed the same work with a small difference:

the surgical mask on the screaming kid's face.

Health-protection devices are nevertheless present in most of the works taken into consideration, as it is possible to see in the table of illustrations and in the following categories. Another detected icon is the virus itself, often depicted with a specific reference to its biological structure.

For example, in Depok, Indonesia, the street artists duo Yaya and Tio has created on a wide wall a cartoon-like germ surrounded by a city landscape [Fig. 11], while in Glasgow The Rebel Bear has painted the pathogen in the form of an iron ball tied to a boy's foot [Fig. 15].

Moreover, the same pattern has been identified in a construction zone of Miami, in Florida. The street artist HULA has created a Coronavirus cell on the edge of a breaking wall [Fig. 12]. The relation to crumbling foundations and debris is aimed at emphasising the

2 It was rated by Street Art News as the 2nd most popular street art piece of 2014, right after Banksy. https://streetartnews.net/2014/12/the-25-most-popular-street-art-pieces.html. Accessed June 29, 2020.

ground-breaking impact Coronavirus had on human life, disclosing the fragilities of the global system (Sayej 2020). In a different way, in Dublin, the virus has been paint-sprayed as a colourful and abstract living organism [Fig. 22]. Lastly, in the inventory of the virus-related icons another curious commodity is listed:

toilet paper.

This is explained by the massive stockpiling practice that has accompanied the first stages of the emergency. Despite governments' appeals to refrain from "panic buying", supermarkets' shelters have been emptied, to the point that some companies reported an increase of up to 700% in their sales (Garbe, Rau, and Toppe 2020, 7-9). French street artist Syro. one has perfectly illustrated this idea with his piece in Metz, representing the adventurous treasure hunter Indiana Jones admiring a roll of toilet paper, entirely covered in gold [Fig. 38]. This same idea of preciousness has been followed up by the German artist Eme Freethinker through his mural in Berlin [Fig. 1]. Toilet paper is there represented in the hands of Gollum, the famous character of J. R. R. Tolkien's masterpiece "The Lord of the Rings". The comparison with the precious and irreplaceable ring of power is quite evident. Then, Hijack Art's contribution in Los Angeles [Fig. 3] is particularly significant for this case study, because it summarises all the virus-related icons mentioned above. The mural portrays two armed individuals, wearing masks, protective suits, helmets and a backpack filled with toilet paper. Their weapons are not guns, but disinfectant, a vacuum cleaner bearing a "No Covid-19" symbol and a dustbuster. As reported by The Guardian, the artist has claimed:

> *I'm being told 'it feels like we're in wartime,' so I also wanted to add that element to the piece* (Sayej 2020).

HEALTH WORKERS HEROISM

The analysis of the sample has underscored a second category, characterised by artists encouraging their national healthcare system.

From an iconographic point of view, around the world doctors and nurses are being represented with angel and superhero features, with reference to their role on the front line of the fight against the pandemic. Among others, the American Hijack Art has created in Dallas a mural of two standing doctors [Fig. 46], who are wearing white lab coats and stethoscopes, while their black shadows depict them as heroes equipped with capes. Similarly, in Amsterdam, the street artist FAKE has created a stencil mural representing a nurse wearing a surgical mask adorned with Superman's logo [Fig. 43]. Instead, Austin Zucchini-Flower [Fig. 44] and TvBoy [Fig.50], respectively in Denver and Milan, have both devised a mural that represents doctors as protectors provided with angel wings. In some cases, the walls of hospitals themselves have been used by street artists to send messages of support and gratitude to the health personnel engaged in the crisis. At the University Hospital Centre of São João, in the city of Porto, Vhils has paid tribute to healthcare workers and to Portugal's National Health Service [Fig. 55].

The mural features ten faces representing doctors, nurses, administrators and assistants of the hospital as a way to "praise the courage and selflessness they showed by putting their lives at risk to defend

ours".[3] Similarly, on a wall of the city hospital of Bergamo [Fig. 54], the illustrator Franco Rivolli has created a hoarding showing a doctor holding Italy in her arms, as an act of protection towards the country. Then, two initiatives stand out in this category, undertaken by two globally recognised signatures of street art:

Banksy and Shepard Fairy.

The elusive street artist from Bristol, whose identity still remains unknown, has paid tribute to the National Healthcare Service (NHS) workers through the donation of an autograph painting entitled *Game Changer* to the Southampton General Hospital [Fig. 48].

The work depicts a kid playing with a toy nurse, bedecked in a face mask, fluttering cape and Red Cross emblem. Banksy's intention was to put the work up for auction in the autumn, so as to donate the proceeds to the hospital (Holmes 2020). If in this last case the objective was raising funds, the Shepard Fairy project's aim was raising awareness.

He participated in the Adobe campaign #HonorHeroes[4] with the illustration *Guts no Glory* [Fig. 49]. According to his own words, his intention was to "glorify those who don't seek glory, but rather to serve humanity when it is most challenged" (@obeygiant, April 14, 2020), inviting people to be aware of the enormous efforts of healthcare professionals.

POLITICAL CRITICISM

This category includes the works of street artists focused on the political dimension. As a matter of fact, the Coronavirus has been at the core of recent political discussion, becoming the object of claims and public statements. The Australian street artist Lushsux has given his contribution in Beijing, representing the face of the Chinese president Xi Jinping as a green germ [Fig. 64]. A similar mural has appeared in San Francisco, transforming the US president into the Coronavirus itself [Fig. 68].

Another example is the piece signed by John D'oh Art in Bristol [Fig. 66]. The stencil mural represents Donald Trump holding a disinfectant dispenser, accompanied by the words "the cure is here, money back guarantee (if you survive)". It is likely a reference to the president's dangerous statement on social networks that injections of disinfectant into the human body could help to combat the Coronavirus (Flefenheimer 2020). In Rio de Janeiro, the street artist Airaocrespo has created a mural portraying the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro with clown features, adding the words *Bolsonaro's mask against Coronavirus* [Fig. 65].

Even in this case, it is likely that the irony is due to his statements on the virus, which he defined as a "fantasy" and a "light flu" (Cowie 2020). So political criticism, often linked to the underestimation of the emergency, is conveyed from the iconographic point of view through the support of specific icons, such as the pathogen cell, surgical masks and sanitising devices.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

This last category is addressed to highlight street art works that directly refer to the dimension of social distancing, mirroring the lack of human contact. For example, the artist Maupal has created in Rome a mural of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's famous duo Tom and Jerry [Fig. 71].

3 Vhils' words reported by Street Art News, June 23, 2020, https://streetartnews.net/2020/06/vhils-in-university-hospital-center-of-sao-joao-portugal.html. Accessed June 28, 2020.

4 Adobe Company has undertaken the campaign partnering with iconic artists and creative luminaries from around the world to honour workers and volunteers who made a difference during the COVID-19 crisis. Along with the $4.5 million commitment Adobe has made to trusted organisations that are providing vital assistance to our communities – locally and globally – Adobe is pledging an additional $250k to Direct Relief as part of the Honor Heroes campaign. This donation is part of Adobe's overall efforts to supply necessary resources to help those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. More information on https://theblog.adobe.com/using-creativity-to-honorheroes-doing-extraordinary-things-during-covid-19/.
Accessed June 28, 2020.

Mimicking their comic sketch, the little mouse turns to his rival saying the words “a meter away!”. However, the most evident iconographic aspect of the works gathered seems to be the kiss. This is the case of the street artist Pobel, who has paint-sprayed in Bryne, Norway, a mural showing a couple kissing. His message to the citizens is that, even in struggles and hard times, there is still love and compassion (Suri 2020).

The Rebel Bear has realised in Glasgow a very similar mural, showing a couple kissing and taking off their masks [Fig. 76]. Moreover, TvBoy has realised in Milan the piece *Love in the time of Covid-19*, appropriating Francesco Hayez’s painting *The Kiss* of 1859. In this humorous interpretation, the two lovers wear surgical masks and hold sanitising gel in their hands.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC: SHARED PATTERNS

These categories are useful tools to identify what, since the last few months, street artists have been representing and how. However, categories are not to be understood as fixed structures, but rather as an attempt to classify data through an interconnected system open to dialogue.

In this respect, masks, toilet paper, the virus pathogen, sanitising devices, hero’s and angel’s features seem to be shared patterns, while health workers’ heroism, political criticism and social distancing seem to be recurring topics. Thus, the sample, which integrates street artists’ production from 25 countries, turns out to be a mosaic that pieces together a global situation. Not only are street artists describing the pandemic, but they are doing it in a very similar way, drawing attention to common concerns and uneasiness. Having to use the mask in public spaces, keeping the safety distances and accepting a routine constantly subjected to the risk of contagion, and to uncertain conditions, are therefore shared experiences.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari borrowed from botany the term “rhizome” (1987, 6-10) to describe a model for culture, in which everything moves under the ground in a non-hierarchical way, filling available spaces and developing without having a single control center.

This philosophical concept seems appropriate to describe the kind of artistic production that this case study tackles:

multiple, diffused and interconnected.

In a rhizome any point can be connected to any other, as an open map on which it is possible to trace infinite trajectories. In this sense, Coronavirus behaved like a root, moving underground and emerging simultaneously in different places in the form of the most responsive artistic production.

Besides, the effective breeding grounds for the spread of the virus as an iconographic subject have been mass media. In the period between January and June 2020, television, newspapers, online newspapers and social networks treated the virus as their ultimate subject. In addition, we must consider that images circulate faster and faster, and messages are transmitted through an extremely intertwined and, remembering Deleuze and Guattari’s expression, rhizomatic network. Looking at this context and at the effects that Covid-19 has had

(and is still having) on a global scale, it is possible to draw the conclusion that street artists have operated through an interrelated system of inputs, which has generated worldwide shared patterns as its main output.

The artists' immediate reaction to the pandemic lays emphasis on the fact, which can no longer be ignored, that major global problems lead to global consequences, with artistic production among them. Being so interconnected on different levels, from economics to culture, is a powerful sounding board. The Coronavirus pandemic, social injustice and climate change are examples of issues that don't have political boundaries, but highlight that everyone is in the same boat.

In 1972, the astronaut Jack Schmitt took a picture of the Earth from Apollo 17, showing the spherical globe dominated by blue oceans, green land masses and swirling clouds: the so-called *Blue Marble.*
In 2012, NASA created a new version of it. The new photograph was actually a composite assembled from a series of digital images produced by a satellite with no specific point of view. Such "tiled rendering" is a striking metaphor for how the world is visualised today: we assemble a world from pieces (Mirzoeff 2016, 4-9).
As in a puzzle, street artists' pieces are little fragments of a larger picture, whose contours are still blurred and evolving. Who knows where the next graffiti will appear, and which new elements it will develop? What is certain is that these testimonials will remain not only the tangible evidence of a crisis, but also indelible reminders for future generations.

https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVOTgEU-I=/?invite_link_id=197960407113

Fig. 1. Table of Illustrations

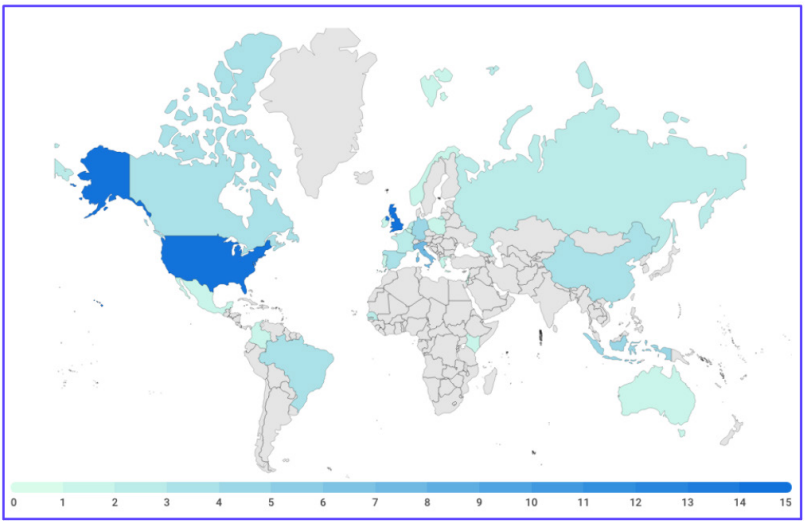


Fig. 2 Colour-coded infographic representing the distribution of the sample

Australia	1	Colombia	1	Ireland	1	Mexico	1	Russia	2
Belgium	1	France	2	Israel	1	Netherlands	2	Senegal	2
Brazil	3	Germany	4	Italy	7	Norway	1	Spain	3
Canada	3	Greece	1	Kenya	1	Poland	1	UK	15
China	3	Indonesia	4	Lebanon	1	Portugal	1	USA	14

Tab. 1 The sample

	Virus-related icons	Health workers heroism	Political criticism	Social distancing
Number of works	42	20	8	6
Table	1-42	43-62	63-70	71-76

Tab. 2 The four categories

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OUT OF THE CRISIS. OR RATHER AT ITS THRESHOLD

AUTHOR:

Livia Ficoroni

FIRST SECTION:
Ci Saranno Nuove Euforie

SECOND SECTION:
A New Solution for
an Unexpected Problem

THIRD SECTION:
A “Unique” Solution

In times of crisis, people need art, but in which modality? The digital alternative represents a viable solution, however more suitable for art colossuses than for small realities, unable to rely on the same resources.

In the months of lockdown and gradual re-opening, art galleries have variably adapted to the changed modalities of fruition, at times resorting to a pre-existing exhibition format, deeply rooted in the history of art and exhibition, but until then overlooked:

employing the windows of the art galleries as the space for the display.

Analysing two galleries that were born in this format (Massimo De Carlo Pièce Unique and Una Vetrina) and another one that found itself resorting to it during the lockdown (Fabbrica EOS), the present research sets to present it as a valuable solution to continue engaging the community, making people safely experience art, while being a concrete way to embellish the public space. On 9 March 2020, the world stopped for Italy, including the art world. Every museum, private gallery, or cultural institution closed down indefinitely. What to do next? The obvious choices were two:

either to wait for the storm to pass, or to move everything online.

As the former does not fit the style of the artworld, anchored as it is to contemporary reality, a remarking majority chose the second option, implementing the online communication, organising online events, virtual exhibitions, online sales, social media podcasts, talks, discussions, and Instagram Live. But when art faces a crisis and a subsequent revaluation of values, strategies, and methods, the system must be reorganised.

However, as Lawrence Alloway notes, "It is highly unlikely that any change will originate with the galleries which have never been remarkable either for 'degree of flexibility' or 'span of foresight'" (Alloway 1984, 13) as he quotes two criteria set by M.P. Schurzenberger for evaluating behaviour (Schurzenberger 1968, 205-213). This is probably true for the commercial galleries 'blockbusters', that have very rarely renounced to the idea of hiding the ultimate goal of selling works behind the façade of a traditional white cube exhibition, now only translated in a virtual form, whereas for alternative spaces or small realities the situation might be different. While resorting to the digital world is certainly a valid solution, interesting from many points of view, is it the only one? The debates on the possibilities of technology and the Internet in our contemporary Network Society have been ongoing for decades and the art world is no stranger to such discussions. That the Internet is a fair and just platform, providing for everyone equal possibility and visibility is an idea shared by many scholars, but Cass Sunstein certainly disagrees. In his book *Republic.com*, the former Administrator of the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Obama administration (2009-2012) explains how the Internet is not a democratic tool at all and does not help enrich our knowledge of differences and new things, for, on the Net, one tends to navigate only in perfectly known waters. In a search engine, it is impossible to look for something you don't already know.

> ***Without any difficulty, you are able to see exactly what you want to see, no more and no less.*** [...]
> ***When the power to filter is unlimited, people can decide, in advance and with perfect accuracy, what they will***

> *and will not encounter. They can design something very much like a communications universe of their own choosing* (**Sunstein** 2001, 3-5).

If this idea is applied to the gallery system, it implies a reiteration, if not an implementation, of the situation pre-COVID, with the powerful gallery colossuses gaining more audience, interaction, and visibility, and the small, local galleries becoming increasingly more invisible and falling further by the wayside. During a casual walk around a city, audiences might encounter shops and art galleries they didn't know before, especially given the fact that galleries tend to cluster, whereas the same does not happen online. Users tend to look for what they already know, and this, of course, favours the big names of the artworld. More importantly, smaller galleries do not have the same resources big galleries do to implement their digital presence, so such a solution might not be accessible to them.

To put up a compelling virtual exhibition requires extensive digital skills which may not usually figure in a smaller gallery's budget. That creates a great disparity between big and small galleries, but the only gallery actively addressing this inequality issue was David Zwirner, with the interesting project *Platform*, launched in April, creating a network of galleries located in New York and then repeated for the London area.

Since then, a similar project has been organised in Los Angeles, called *Gallery Platform L.A* (Giardini and Pirrelli 2020). Finally, small galleries might just as well not be interested in the online reality, feeling that the big international audience is not their main clientele. However, a survey run among twenty Italy-based galleries between April and June 2020 has seemingly proved the latter idea wrong ("Le Gallerie d'arte nell'era del Coronavirus," survey, 2020). The galleries were asked:

> *One of the trends of this period was to create virtual exhibitions. What is your opinion on them?*
> - It is certainly an interesting solution for the moment of crisis, and it could be just as useful once the emergency is over. Technology does not replace human relationships, but in the long term it will help create greater accessibility and sustainability for exhibitions,
> - It is an adequate solution for the time of crisis, but destined to end with the return to normality because nothing can replace the direct relationship with art,
> - We do not find it to be the most suitable solution, as it ignores that the situation has changed and represents a repetition of past paradigms, which do not bring evolution.

47,4 percent of them answered the first option, a rather surprising turn out, given that out of the nineteen galleries surveyed, the majority is relatively small, with just one or two locations and very few employees (only four having more than three employees). Although the survey seemed to point to the contrary, an industry based on creativity such as the arts should be able and willing to find more creative solutions than what seems obvious and face the challenges in unique ways. That is to say that digital reality is not – or rather, should not be - the sole viable way to deal with the ongoing health emergency crisis.

Indeed, there is another solution, deeply rooted in art history, to integrate the physical world into the COVID-crisis, while keeping

a safe distance and respecting the norms imposed by the government: to employ the windows of the art galleries as the space for the display. Some galleries analysed in the present research were born in this format, while some others found themselves adopting it during lockdown.

Either way, that the windows are not to take for granted many artists and institutions before have already proven so. In the past, the use of the windows might have been regarded by some as just another way to equate the art gallery to a department store, thus evidently transforming the artwork into a commodity. As Martin Braathen underlines in *The Commercial Significance of the Exhibition Space*, the idea of the link between art and commerce is not at all new, as it was discussed by both the Ukrainian American architect Frederick Kiesler (Kiesler 1930, 66) and Walter Benjamin (Benjamin 1999, 15) as early as in the 1930s. An exhibition space, such as a museum, and the department store then found a synthesis in the commercial gallery, emerged in the late nineteenth century, for it is at once a store for art and a space of display (Braathen 2013, 113).

> ***The gallery space is, and has always been, an inevitable site for commercial exchange, where artworks are changing hands and displayed as merchandise for potential customers. But it has also been – simultaneously - a site for critical struggle.*** [...] ***commercial circulation does not always negate critical potential*** (**Braathen 2013, 118**).

There have been, of course, critical voices, especially among the scholars, while in the same years, many artists found the same union of art and commerce a fertile ground to experiment with. Some of them started dealing with the windows, too, unafraid to cross the boundaries between commercial gallery/museum and department store. Some employed the windows to express a critique, as in Elmgreen and Dragset's *Prada Marfa* (2005), a project dealing with dislocation and the commercial function of galleries (Braathen 2013, 117), while others embraced the blurred and ambiguous boundaries between art and commerce and started working for department stores as window dressers. Noteworthy examples are the Surrealists Salvador Dalì and Max Ernst, and Pop Artists Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol (Mannequin Mall 2020).

Most of them were active especially in one particular New York department store, Bonwit Teller, from 1929 to 1980, thanks to the creative intuition of one Gene Moore. An artist himself, Geene was unable to make it as a painter in New York City, therefore he became the display director at the Bonwit Teller department store in 1945 (Wright 2020). Unlike artists like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, who also worked for Bonwit Teller but chose to employ pseudonyms for their window displays, probably fearing to tarnish their reputations as avant-garde artists, Andy Warhol was unafraid to have his name associated with the department store, creating a big store display in 1961. (Wright 2020) "Department stores are kind of like museums", (Warhol quoted by Friedberg 1993, 77) he will say. "The department store [in America] was the true introducer of modernism to the public at large. It revealed contemporary art to American commerce". (Kiesler 1930, 66)

As Frederick Kiesler argues, the role of the windows, big peepholes in the once-open markets, then sealed with walls and doors, has

always been that of engaging the passer-by, connecting the store and the street. "After the passer-by has halted, the silent window has a duty: to talk. To demonstrate. To explain. In short: to sell" (Kiesler 1930, 69). But in a time of crisis, selling the artworks on display should not be the only role the windows of an art gallery can take on. The ultimate aim of any commercial gallery will always be to eventually sell artworks, but artworks themselves are and always have been more than mere objects on the market. The windows should thus be employed to engage the community.

As much as art can be enjoyed virtually, as understood by David Zwirner, "The work of art in a physical space is different: it craves you. Looking at art is a communal act". (Zwirner quoted by Dickson 2020) Employing a window display project, instead, demonstrates how in a moment in which social distancing has become the "new normal," there are always new strategies and éscamotages available for artistic and cultural events, and, through them, it is possible to challenge and re-appropriate the physical space and the centrality of the body (Airoldi 2020).

The next part of the present research will focus on three specific case studies, narrowing them to Italian examples and widening the scope only for an Italian blue-chip gallery which has locations in Paris as well, here taken into consideration because of the inherently Italian idea behind the project itself. The first gallery analysed, Una Vetrina, was born with the idea of only showing artworks in their windows even before the pandemic. The second example, Fabbrica EOS, resorted to such a format temporarily, when the health emergency arose. Finally, the last example, MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique, will demonstrate how this solution, mainly identifiable among smaller galleries was found suitable after a whole year of experimentation, by a big name, too, therefore hopefully proving the answers in the survey wrong.

I.I. CI SARANNO NUOVE EUFORIE

Una Vetrina is a space born in Rome in 2013, from a project of Gianni Garrera, Giuseppe Garrera, and Carlo Pratis, as an alternative to the traditional gallery, which was for them a space too slow for experimentation and innovation. (Una Vetrina n.d.) Located in via del Consolato, in the historical Rione Ponte, on the other side of the Tiber River from the Vatican, it is defined by its creators as an unreliable place, stranger to the powers of the world and alone in its relation with art and artworks. It has hosted a great variety of artistic practices, from the more traditional ones, such as sculpture and painting, to installation, statement, and even performance.

> ***The exhibitions are taking place continuously, without warning, without asking who will watch them.*** [...] ***with no way out, yet persevering, always alive,*** [***the space***] ***prefers a solitary and random enjoyment, with no calls, no protocols nor invitations but only an approximate schedule of programs. Works and contributions are displayed and pilloried by those who pass. Everything that happens and is accepted in its window is its art and is already the museum*** (**Una Vetrina n.d.**).

The idea of isolation is thus already entangled in the mission and the philosophy of the gallery, making it a great case for this time of health emergency. During lockdown of Spring 2020, the gallery has produced two window shows. However, it is important to start with the exhibition set up at the dawn of the COVID-crisis, in those odd days before the lockdown, when life in Rome was still pretty much normal, but everyone was aware that something big was in the air. From 26 February 2020 to 7 March 2020, Una Vetrina exhibited *The Year of the Mirage* by F. Taylor Colantonio [Fig. 1], an Italian American furniture, object, and interior designer.

It consisted of an installation of a vase attached to an oval mirror on a vivid red drape. "I installed this at the exact moment it became clear that we had to shift focus. A longer view, clearer vision... I think I am finally starting to see something on the horizon," wrote Taylor Colantonio on his Instagram profile (@ftaylorc, April 16, 2020).

The focus on vision and the idea of the mirror is particularly interesting in the context of what would happen just two days after the exhibition wrapped, because, in a way, it foreshadowed that sense of intimacy of one's home, which became our very own little prison as much as safe space for months, and at the same time that drive towards introspection that being in a confined space necessarily brings.

Furthermore, a shift of focus, as the one Taylor Colantonio mentions, is now not only possibly forced, but very much needed. The two exhibitions made during the actual lockdown were sentences and quotations, the first of which was *A Chi La Tocca, La Tocca* [Fig. 2], excerpted from Alessandro Manzoni's *Promessi Sposi*, chapter XXXIII:

> La Peste, definitely actual, since it was installed the very first day of lockdown, 9 March.

This simple, yet powerful phrase, encapsulates all the feelings of void, fear, misfortune, and distress people were surely feeling at the time. The second exhibition in the lockdown phase, *La Vetrina. Oracolo [Figure 3]*, was, on the contrary, much more promising and hopeful:

> *Ci Saranno Nuove Euforie* (there will be new euphoria), Una Vetrina has pledged to us. There definitely will be.

I.II. A NEW SOLUTION FOR AN UNEXPECTED PROBLEM

After having discussed a gallery born in this format, it is important to analyse one that has adopted it in this time of crisis, as an alternative to closing down completely. Fabbrica EOS is a commercial art gallery, located in the centre of Milan. On 6 March, the gallery was supposed to host the opening of the photographer Davide Bramante's exhibition, *New York, New Delhi, New Old*. However, on the very last days of February, COVID-19 had already spread to Lombardy. Therefore, the gallery made the pre-emptive decision to change the format of the exhibition, in order to avoid big gatherings of people and thus actively promote social distancing, even weeks before the actual lockdown. (Finestre Sull'Arte 2020)

It was then decided to implement the communication online, especially employing Instagram, to digitally promote the exhibition, while at the same time not forgetting about the physical world, since it was established that every day there would be a new display in the window of the gallery, featuring one of Bramante's artworks [Fig. 4], so that every passer-by walking past the gallery could have a look at his art,

without fearing catching the virus by being in a small enclosed space with other people. (Finestre Sull'Arte 2020) In February, there were still no official governmental norms enforcing the closure of private activities such as art galleries, so it is important to appreciate the foresight shown by this small local gallery. By finding a new solution to an unexpected problem, Fabbrica EOS managed to be mentioned in many magazines and journals articles reporting the good practices adopted by galleries and other art institutions during the COVID crisis and its subsequent forced social distancing:

> Finestre sull'Arte, Ansa, Huffington Post, Elle Décor, Marie Claire and many others.

As Fabbrica EOS's director Giancarlo Pedrazzini has stated 'Perché l'arte non si ferma: l'arte per sua natura anticipa' (*Because art doesn't stop: by its nature, art anticipates*; Pedrazzini quoted by Premoli 2020).

I.III. A "UNIQUE" SOLUTION

On February 9, 2021, after a year of experimentations with different solutions, including the virtual one, with its new and much-acclaimed VSpace, Massimo De Carlo opened an uncommon space in Paris, at 57 Rue de Turenne, named MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique.

The space, renovated by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma in collaboration with PiM.studio Architects, is a single-room gallery with a big window, offering a single-work exhibition program, starting with Los Angeles-based Kaari Upson's *Clay Baby* [Fig. 5], visible day and night from the street. No openings, exclusive events, or else: it is an "event-free gallery" (Massimo De Carlo 2021) a program that resonates with Una Vetrina's.

The idea has its roots in Italian contemporary art history, as "Pièce Unique" was originally an adventurous space by the Neapolitan gallerist Lucio Amelio, opened in Paris, at Rue Callot, in collaboration with Cy Twombly in 1989. Massimo De Carlo has purchased the brand and reinterpreted it in the 21st century, adapting an already existing idea to a contemporary necessity. In an interview with Artribune, Massimo De Carlo himself has explained how, thirty years after the innovative idea by the ever-iconic Lucio Amelio, a gallery like this is more actual than ever. (De Carlo 2021)

The project sets to create "a new balance between physical projects and digital initiatives through an innovative website and its dedicated Instagram account." (Massimo De Carlo 2021) However, De Carlo explains, the project was actually in motion before the pandemic, with the acquisition of the brand Pièce Unique taking place already in December 2019. He thus defines MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique as a simple continuation of his program of continuous experimentation, of dissociation from the typical "white cube" gallery, and as "reaction non-reaction." Indeed, the only possible reaction he sees to the moment of crisis is to carry on with his projects and to meet the difficulties of the pandemic. The main goal behind such an initiative, however, surely is the idea of promoting the sustainability of exhibitions and exhibition spaces, one that the pandemic has highlighted greatly and should be of primary concern (De Carlo 2021). That a big name in the artworld as Massimo De Carlo has found suitable to create a space that takes into great consideration the windows of the gallery, although the move was not specifically

made because of the pandemic, testifies to the fact that perhaps, after a year of intensive experimentation on the virtual reality, art needs something different, something that in a way reclaims public spaces and the city itself and, most of all, that requires the body of the viewer.

I.IV. CONCLUSIONS

As argued, the idea of employing the window of an institution for the arts is not at all new. It is rather entrenched in the history of the arts, one that is interdisciplinary, with contributions coming from the fashion industry, commerce, and architecture, and is declined in different ways by different kinds of institutions. Indeed, this format is perfectly capable of creating a dialogue with and influencing other actors of the art system in this time of crisis. Primarily, the artists:

> from a certain point of view, it is the galleries' response to the renaissance of street art the visual arts are experiencing at this time as a way for art to reclaim its public role as a guide for the community.

Secondly, the audience, for example with the interesting project *ARTAPART:*

> *A City-Wide Gallery at a Distance* in Charlottesville, Virginia, where unknown artists and amateurs are asked to display their works in their windows and then signal their presence in the city so that the whole town is like a giant gallery. (The Bridge Progressive Arts Initiative 2020)

It perfectly shows how art can create a community. Finally, other types of spaces. One example is the rising foundation La Fondazione in Rome, located side by side Gagosian Gallery at via Francesco Crispi, and born in 2019 after an idea of Nicola Del Roscio. The foundation has a big glass entrance on the street, where, during its "lockdown exhibition," *Claire Fontaine | Pasquarosa | Marinella Senatore*, a screen was placed, running Senatore's *Sisterhood (The School of Narrative Dance, Sweden)* all day and night. But, widening the scope, one could also mention the history of museums, in which from time to time the windows have been employed to send important messages through art to reach the portion of the public that does not usually attend exhibitions.

One famous example of the past is the fundamental exhibition *Let the Record Show...* at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York in 1987-1988 to protest against the U.S. government's unwillingness to face the spread of AIDS in the 1980s. Perhaps it has come a time to resort to such a solution once again. In conclusion, the curation and maintenance of connections have to be the focus and the aim of the galleries in this time of crisis, whether it is the connection with the audience, clients, or artists. There must be art to look at for people, whether it is on their phones, on their computers, or in the street. In the end, as Jerry Saltz has wisely stated:

> "Viruses come - but viruses also go. *Ars longa*" (Saltz 2020).



Fig. 1 F. Taylor Colantonio, The Year of the Mirage, February - March 2020
Installation view, Roma, Una Vetrina, Courtesy of Una Vetrina



Fig. 2 A Chi La Tocca La Tocca, March 2020, Installation view, Roma, Una Vetrina
Courtesy of Una Vetrina



Fig.3 La Vetrina, Oracolo, April 2020, Installation view, Roma, Una Vetrina
Courtesy of Una Vetrina



Fig.4 Davide Bramante, New York, New Delhi, New Old, 2020, View of the exhibition
Milano, Fabbrica EOS, Courtesy of Fabbrica EOS

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TOWARDS A RENEWED SOCIAL EXHIBITION

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FIRST SECTION:
Exhibition home delivery.
An upside-down relationship

SECOND SECTION:
Salerooms and König Galerie

THIRD SECTION:
Virtual Reality and Hauser & Wirth Virtual Reality

FOURTH SECTION:
David Zwirner Online Viewing Room: Marcel Dzama's exhibition

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discuss how the breakout of the Coronavirus pandemic has impacted art galleries' activities, analysing some of the strategies adopted by different galleries in a period of resilience. In particular, the paper will focus on those changes that affected what is perhaps the primary activity of an art gallery, namely exhibiting. The obligatory digital shift forced galleries to think of new online ways to carry on with their 2020 exhibition calendar and provided us the unmissable chance to rethink some of the features that have been characterising art exhibitions in the art system to date. Through the analysis of three different online exhibiting strategies adopted by high-end galleries like König Galerie, Hauser & Wirth and David Zwirner, this paper aims to highlights those successful solutions that can represent the beginning of a renewed kind of exhibition, and to provide the understanding of the emergence of a more user-friendly, less sacred kind of digital exhibit.

1. EXHIBITION HOME DELIVERY. AN UPSIDE-DOWN RELATIONSHIP

Art galleries, aiming to carry on with their exhibitions' calendar, have developed innovative resilience strategies to cope with the new reality brought about by the pandemic. These involve mainly the use of the internet and the design of new ad hoc digital platforms and online counterparts of the physical exhibitions, whose doors were closed because of the pandemic.

Therefore, digital exhibit started to match physical ones and became available online on the galleries' websites to be browsed and enjoyed 24/7. Such an online presence, a choice once considered as a temporary solution to overcome the global lockdowns and the impossibility to visit the gallery physically, seems to have become the norm and a long-lasting presence inside the art world. Indeed, in the aftermath of the first moments of the pandemic, both small and big galleries – obviously facing totally different economic problems – became acquainted with this new digital scenario and with their new audience of users, which are ready to have a look at art from their sofa.

Such a population of users have been dealing with online exhibitions, which can somehow either reproduce or give a reinterpretation of the experience of visiting an exhibition. In this shift from physical reality to digital world, rules and laws, such as the relationships between the different stakeholders of the art world (gallery, audience collectors and professionals), could be redefined, and sometimes moved away from the patterns of power and hierarchy that reign in the physical space of an art gallery. Indeed, the gallery, "since this is a space where access to higher metaphysical realms is made to seem available, it must be sheltered from the appearance of change and time. This specially segregated space is a kind of non-space, ultra-space, or ideal space where the surrounding matrix of space-time is symbolically annulled" (McElly 1976, 7). Therefore, a visitor, once in the gallery, usually tries to grasp as much as he can from that holy space, placing himself in a position of subordinate. Prevented from showing their power to the audience by the pandemic, art galleries had to redefine their position within the relationship with their audience on the web. The substantial difference that has arisen from the shift from real to digital environment is that now it is

the high-end galleries' time to make the effort and reach the visitors. This was not always the case, since many galleries persisted with the idea of sacred art and of sacred space, even on their online platform.

1.1 SALEROOMS AND KÖNIG GALERIE

Since nowadays people are familiar with the use of the web to perform a series of services and actions, the arrival of the Salerooms on the net should not surprise much. During the first lockdown – that is to say in spring 2020 – some galleries, such as the König Galerie,[1] activated on their website a new page called Saleroom. The title could not have been more exhaustive, since it declares the death of art exhibitions and the birth of the indisputable kingdom of sales. König Galerie's Saleroom appears as an online page divided into two columns of links.

Under 'Current Exhibition' are reported all the physical exhibitions, while the column titled 'Online Exclusives' lists all the online 'alternatives'. Yet, one should wonder whether they can really be considered possible and valid alternatives to physical exhibitions. This separation immediately reveals the gallery's aim: since it is not possible to conceive an exhibition online, they move on to what they can still do, that is to say selling.

'Online Exclusive' lists a series of artists' names on which the user can click to browse their artworks, accompanied by a video of the 10AM series,[2] in which the gallerist holds a brief conversation with the artist. Once the artist's page opens [Fig. 1], the user finds himself in front of a database-like platform, which groups all the artworks as in the most common online shops, displayed side by side. There is even the chance of getting a 'quick info', available just by moving the cursor on the image you like the most. Hence, after the appearance of the artwork's title, year of production, dimensions and price (as clothes labels report size, price and place of origin), the commodification process is finally completed.

This is to announce the end of the art system as we know it, which results from the simultaneous and contradictory presence of art, market, culture and money. Yet, balancing this unbalanced formula, wiping the culture out of the system, would result in a heavy loss for the whole art system, deprived of its unpredictability and vitality.

Moreover, the actors that would suffer from this are those that the system needs the most, namely artists and visitors. The audience ends up overlapping the group of the wealthiest collectors.

The desire to completely exclude the common audience results also in the gallery's choice of not disguising the database-like page. A good art exhibition and all visitors know that some physical steps are required to follow the exhibition path from the beginning to the end. The path is the physical manifestation of the narrative, of the curator approach behind the exhibition. "Exhibiting art does not stop with the works on the wall" (Smith 2012, 255), since its essence is unveiled by the curatorial choices, the ideas and the research behind the exhibit itself.

Now, "the open nature of the web as a medium means that the websites never have to be complete, and they rarely are" (Manovich 2001, 220). They do not follow a path. They have neither a beginning nor an end as stories do. "They always grow" (Manovich 2001, 221). In addition, according to the scholar Lev Manovich, the computerisation of

1 See: https://www.koeniggalerie.com/saleroom/. Accessed March 26, 2020.

2 The 10AM SERIE developed by König Galerie was born as a resilient strategy to foster users' engagement with the gallery during the quarantine timeframe. Yet, its ultimate and primary purpose is that of growing the gallery's visibility on social networks in order to have a consequent increase in sales. There is no "We", but still the "I" of the gallery. Indeed, each video of the 10AM, appeared before on the IG via live and episodes and only in a second moment, videos were uploaded on the respective artist's pages. This shift in time highlights the fact that this solution has not been conceived as a long-term one.

culture also involves an algorithm that is just hidden behind the database. This structure allows the users of a database to follow different narratives online. However, the König Galerie's website does not provide users with different narratives until the moment when they click the link of the artist they are interested in. After that moment, visitors are prevented from moving along an online version of the physical exhibition's path, following the gallery's decision not to create an online counterpart which could have allowed users to hear the curatorial narration behind that artist. Depriving an exhibition of this aspect means leaving the object to mere economical contemplation. Unable to buy any artwork, the common visitor is not engaged in the exhibition. He will not activate any type of socialisation and he will comment neither with his friends nor with his family members. The money-oriented policy of the gallery became much more visible during the following waves of the pandemic.

In winter 2020, when the gallery realised that the pandemic was not just a temporary obstacle to overcome, its digital presence started to be further organised and structured to target a specific audience of art professionals and collectors online. Since König Galerie was forced to close its Katherine Grosse's exhibition *At 30 Paces She Could Split A Playing Card* at its Berlin St. Agnes venue in mid-November 2021, as a consequence of the development of the pandemic in Germany, the gallery started to integrate its website with 3D experiences and virtual exhibitions' tours. However, the most explicit digital market-oriented choice occurred on 21 March 2021, when König Galerie opened its first ever online exhibition *The Artist Is Online. Digital Paintings and Sculptures in a Virtual World*, in which 70 NFTs – a new kind of virtual artworks exploded in the art market during the pandemic – were auctioned by the gallery itself.

For this exhibition, the curators Anika Meier and Johann König worked to disguise the gallery's primary economic goal behind a bland curatorial theme created for the occasion which, according to the press release, aimed at presenting the artworks of fifty artists who 'digitize painting, visualize data sets and reflect the mobility of images' (König Galerie, n.d.) to investigate the new post-digital age. Thus, the gallery's choice to initiate its own auction can be read as an obvious attempt to grab new opportunities to make profits provided by the new global hype around NFTs. König Galerie's aspirations were nothing but paralleling the exponential growth experienced by auction houses during the pandemic.

1.2 VIRTUAL REALITY AND HAUSER & WIRTH VIRTUAL REALITY

A different solution to carry on with the exhibition calendar was developed by the colossus Hauser & Wirth. On 30 April 2020, the gallery inaugurated his "gallery of the future" (Flash Art 2020) in Menorca with the group exhibition *Beside Itself* [Fig.2] [Fig.3]. It was its first ever online exhibition applying its new technology Hauser & Wirth Virtual Reality (Hauser & Wirth, n.d.) (HWVR). VR is a technology developed by Jaron Lanier during the 80s, "interacting with people" (Lanier 1989), which has become globally popular and has been adopted in different fields through the use of electronic devices, such as smartphones, goggles and headsets.

In the art system, VR has been used to replace the physical experience of visiting an exhibition in museums, institutions and galleries, since it allows the audience to move inside a digital exhibition path

either with a cursor or just moving around the smartphone. It is not surprising that VR was used to substitute the physical experience also during the period of quarantine. There are many VR technologies that populate the web to date, but none of them has succeeded in replacing the physical experience of art. This is due to the fact that the digital visitor still faces many software-related problems when he tries to access the majority of VR exhibitions. This used to be the situation before HWVR came out. This VR uses a "bespoke technology-stack not found in any other industry. Drawing from techniques applied in architecture, construction and video-game design, the tool creates true-to-life scale and accuracy, as well as the authentic look, feel, and interactivity of our galleries" (Hauser & Wirth, n.d.). Since summer 2019,[3] H&W teams joined forces with Artlab to develop this innovative VR experience.

On the Hauser & Wirth webpage, it is possible to find a trailer of the future gallery in Menorca, a video about its conception and construction, as well as the exhibition *Beside Itself*. The exhibition, which gathers blue cheap artists like Lawrence Weiner, Louise Bourgeois, Glen Ligon, just to mention a few, is settled in two of the eight galleries that constituted the venue of Menorca. The user can move around easily between the different rooms and, by pointing at an artwork, he will be provided with its basic information. Yet, what is the secret to build an incredible VR experience? The answer lies in the amount of money the gallery is willing to spend on it. Thus, the law that regulates VR states:

> the more you spend, the more you get. It is not a matter of creativity, rather of software.

Hence, if we compare it with Massimo de Carlo VR exhibition (Massimo de Carlo, n.d.), it is evident that HWVR looks different from any other VR used to date, since it could afford to hire the best VR society, Artlab, which is also the most expensive one on the market. *Beside itself* is set in a silent, white, immaculate and empty space [Fig.4].

Everything seems perfect, not affected by the internet-related problems and suspended in a "limbo-like space" (McEvilley 1976, 7). No one dies or is born there. This VR exhibition is the perfect digital transposition of Brian O'Doherty's white cube space discussed in his book *Inside the Withe Cube*. According to O'Doherty, the gallery's space is a space "constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church." He points out that "the basic principle behind these laws is that the outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light... The art is free, as the saying" (McEvilley 1976, 7). Visitors are welcomed into the digital gallery providing that everyday reality must not corrupt the gallery's sacred environment. The user will end up replicating the same role once performed in the physical gallery. His position of inferiority has remained unchanged. Thereby, the digital visitor feels the same embarrassment and marginalisation while facing the transcendent environment of the digital gallery. The HWVR betrays the spirit of VR itself. Once Jaron Lanier said:

> "Other people are the life of the party in Virtual Reality. Other people are the unique" (Lanier 1989). VR has been created with socialisation as its main purpose.

Conversely, the antisocial appearance that characterises HWVR is emphasised by the absence of any curatorial information about the exhibit.

3 It is likely that Hauser & Wirth has decided to launch its HWVR now, preferring to show a partial project than a complete one, to surpass other galleries' VR strategies coming out on the web, such as PACE X by PACE GALLERY. See: https://www.art-insider.com/pace-gallery-launches-pacex-initiative-with-christy-maclear-as-its- ceo/932 Accessed March 26, 2020.

The artworks and the exhibition are just not up to visitors. Neither further discussions nor comments will be activated by the audience.

The VR has been used to change the old social hierarchies in the age of Web 3.0 and to digitally translate the white cube.[4] In a moment of our history when every aspect of society has been rethought, the art system, with the employ of a kind of VR that betrays its original purpose, seems to refuse to question itself.

4 See O'Doherty, Brian. 1976. Inside the White Cube:The Ideology of Gallery Space, San Francisco: The Lapis Press

1.3 DAVID ZWIRNER ONLINE VIEWING ROOM: MARCEL DZAMA'S EXHIBITION

The last exhibition strategy that this paper is going to analyse is the one adopted by David Zwirner gallery. Opened on April 23rd, Marcel Dzama's online exhibition *Pink Moon*[5] [Fig.5] has been chosen as a case study for its virtuous approach to the exhibiting activity. This exhibit shows the birth of a new visitor-friendly exhibition, an exhibition opened to speak with its audience at the expense of its sacredness. One must wonder which are the features that characterise this new social exhibition.

5 See more about the exhibition on David Zwirner Gallery's website: https://www.davidzwirner.com/viewing-room/marcel-dzama-pink-moon. Accessed March 26, 2020.

The renewed exhibition is engaging and eye-catching. It should grab the attention of its online audience. Given that users' current attention span is decreasing more and more, due to the overexposure to great quantities of data and contents, it has become more than crucial for a gallery to arouse visitors' curiosity in the time frame of a click.

To achieve such a purpose, a gallery must think and assess carefully the attractiveness of an online content, firstly meeting their audience's demand. Therefore, the best online exhibitions are not those whose artworks' quality is unchallenged, but those whose online presentation is able to recreate the mood and the experience of visiting an exhibition, so as to become worthy of users' attention. Online contents, indeed, rely more on the careful visual organisation of the information rather than their informative quality. Hence, in order to create a successful online exhibition, a gallery should readapt the communication of the exhibition to the new digital environment, seconding the multimedia language of the online communication. Then, to be both successful and appreciated, an art exhibition should adopt the multimedia language of the web, which uses its own syntax and grammar. Precisely for this reason, Dzama's exhibition has been integrated with photos of the artist's travels, videos and GIFs, proving the gallery's great ability to update its old vocabulary [Fig.6]. Indeed, it is not by chance that both the exhibition's title and artist's name welcome the users accessing the web page with a GIF that quickly summarises the 'mood' of the entire exhibition.

The language of the internet helps the visitors feel at their ease, through a format with which they are familiar and the contents they are going to find in the online viewing room. Accepting the embedded democracy of the web, Zwirner removes the first white cube's barrier to visitors, that of the gallery's entrance desk. The result is a renewed kind of communication between the gallery and its users, far from replicating those top-down patterns that belong to the physical world and appear every time a visitor enters the sacred space of a gallery.

The renewed exhibition pays attention to the medium of the artwork. It is not by chance that David Zwirner decided to open an online exhibition exclusively based on drawings and watercolours [Fig.7].

This technique is very familiar to and appreciated by the general public for its DIY quality. Everyone can use them, from children to adults, without either particular effort or economic expense. This is not to say that the digital shift has stated the end of conceptual art exhibition, rather its possible rethink into a new light and venue, where Danto's theory of art (Danto 1964, 571-584) is taught step by step to visitors throughout the experience of the exhibition. The renewed exhibition must be well curated and grounded in the present. The digital shift has revealed that art exhibitions cannot afford anymore to be only venues for displaying the latest artists' works. The new exhibition regains its function of storyteller and *Pink Moon* perfectly succeeds in doing so. Dzama's latest corpus of drawings, inspired by his recent travels to Morocco and Mexico, takes the visitors on an exotic journey and enables them to reach far and distant lands from their own sofa. Following a well-conceived curatorial idea, the visitor discovers new contents divided into chapters and parts, according to the places described inside Dzama's drawings. The activity of 'scrolling down' the screen has well replaced the physical movement characterising every exhibition path. The curated show is not an archive of images, yet the narration that they unfold. The exhibition's theme addresses how our way of moving has changed, providing an occasion to reflect on some difficulties that this pandemic has caused. From walking to scrolling, from moving to staying. This exhibition is not only the chance for visitors to make an imaginary journey out of their own house, in which they have been confined for so long. Here, the activity of exhibiting is conceived as a tool to both open to new worlds and present the one in which we are living, as an attempt to bridge the gap between physical immobility and psychical activity. The whole curatorial approach matches and enhances Marcel Dzama's attempt to "engage that deep, collective sense of wonder and discovery that we have temporarily lost."[6]

Pink Moon is an exhibition that talks to everyone, and that everyone can easily understand because it deals with a new domestic reality that we are all experiencing. At the end of the exhibition's webpage, the gallery concludes:

> "In acknowledgment of the families who are having to discover new ways to balance work, school and life while isolated at home together, he – the artist – has created Coloring the Moon Pink,[7] a coloring book made exclusively for this online presentation."[8]

The user, once an art consumer, has acquired the role of art producer. This colouring booklet is 'for all to enjoy'[9] without discrimination of age, gender, race, profession or social status. The user is invited to share with the member of his family a joyful moment all together. In addition, the visitor can share his booklet with the gallery itself, which will post all the booklets on its Instagram account.[10] Then, this exhibition provides a radical transformation of the role of the spectator:

> from the just achieved status of individual producer, he will end up to the one of prosumer.[11]

This active visitor contributes to the creation and the shape of the work itself. This states the end of the sacredness of the gallery and the birth of a new social, friendly and collective exhibition.

In conclusion, through the analysis of these three online solutions, this paper aims to show the birth of new interesting ways to

6 Marcel Dzama on his exhibition at David Zwirner Online Viewing Room. See more about the exhibition on David Zwirner Gallery's website: https://www.davidzwirner.com/viewing-room/marcel-dzama-pink-moon Accessed March 27, 2020.

7 To see and download the complete coloring book: https://dzprodcdn.azureedge.net/- /media/davidzwirner/viewingroom/2020/marcel-dzama/marcel-dzama_coloring-the-moon-pink.pdf?rev=1d7edb1afc69479fb-b27ea27e706bae7 Accessed March 28, 2020.

8 "Marcel Dzama," David Zwirner.

9 Ibid.

10 See on David Zwirner's Instagram account @davidzwirner, https://www.instagram.com/davidzwirner/ Accessed April 4, 2020.

11 For a complete description of the concept of "prosumer" see: Toffler, Alvin. 1980. 'The Third Wave', London: Morrow.

approach the exhibiting by using the net, which has been playing a crucial role in redefining and adjusting the relationship between galleries, visitors and collectors. Indeed, online curation and organisation of digital exhibitions, if considered as an opportunity to rethink the gallery's purposes and aims, are able to speak and reach a wider and socially diverse audience than before, helping to redefine the online exhibits as a new friendly and engaging space ready to welcome the visitors.

Even though the new employ of online exhibitions can help to make the visitors' approach to exhibitions more democratic, the exhibiting solutions described in this paper, like those adopted by Hauser & Wirth or König Galerie, could inform us of the rise of a new worrying digital art world that refuses to question itself, replicating and reinforcing the old social structure and system of power that is in force during the physical visit to a gallery on the net. In this case, it is envisaged a future where commercialisation, marketing and exhibition can happen on virtual platforms to accelerate the process of dematerialisation of art and make the art world an environment for rich and white individuals, that is those who can easily access the latest technologies and devices that will become fundamental to experience new digital art.

https://showrooms.artbutler.com/bddf5286/

Fig. 1 Kris Martin's Saleroom, König Galerie

https://www.vip-hauser-wirth.com/online-exhibitions/hauser-wirth-menorca-in-vr/

Fig. 2 Entrance to the virtual exhibition Beside Itself, Hauser & Wirth. Screenshot from Hauser & Wirth's website.

https://www.vip-hauserwirth.com/online-exhibitions/hauser-wirth-menorca-in-vr/

Fig. 3 Entrance to the virtual exhibition Beside Itself, Hauser & Wirth

https://www.vip-hauserwirth.com/online-exhibitions/hauser-wirth-menorca-in-vr/

Fig. 4 Installation view of the first exhibition gallery. Beside Itself, Hauser & Wirth

https://www.davidzwirner.com/viewing-room/2020/marcel-dzama-pink-moon

Fig. 5 Marcel Dzama, Pink Moon, partial view of the online exhibition, David Zwirner Gallery. Screenshot from David Zwirner's website

https://www.davidzwirner.com/viewing-room/2020/marcel-dzama-pink-moon

Fig. 6 Marcel Dzama, Pink Moon, partial view of the online exhibition, David Zwirner Gallery. Screenshot from David Zwirner's website

https://www.david-zwirner.com/viewing-room/2020/marcel-dza-ma-pink-moon

Fig. 7 Marcel Dzama, Pink Moon, partial view of the online exhibition, David Zwirner Gallery. Screenshot from David Zwirner's website

PUBLISHING AND FUNDRAISING

AUTHOR:

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FIRST SECTION:
Mainstream publishing for a wider reach

SECOND SECTION:
Selling Visibility

THIRD SECTION:
The magazine format as fundrsaising tool

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ABSTRACT

The article aims at retracing how various editorial experiences, all centered around art, decided to carry out initiatives during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic in order to help the struggling Italian healthcare sector. Ehbibart, Biancoscuro and Fine Zine, the three types of publication examined all differ from each other both in terms of editorial content and publication methods, as well as having very diverse audiences, but they all unite in the desire, which arose in the first six months of 2020, to contribute with their magazines to the health emergency that has seen hospitals around the world in enormous need of funds to be able to fight the spread of the virus. Three different ways of fundraising will be examined along the modalities through which they were carried out, exploring the concrete results that the initiatives have achieved in order to help their community and exploit a means that is as anomalous as it is effective in a crisis situation, the artistic publication.

INTRODUCTION

While we are used to seeing magazines as mere tools for reporting a reality that unfolds elsewhere, the Coronavirus pandemic that overturned the world and its social dynamics pushed some publishers to take on an active role and create campaigns that could have a positive impact on this health emergency. This article analyzes three different initiatives of crowdfunding, all launched and promoted by three different art journals to support the struggling health services and structures in spring 2020, during the first wave of Covid-19. It will analyze the activities promoted by Exibart, Biancoscuro Magazine and Fine Zine, who all used their platforms to take on different projects, all linked by the common goal of raising money through crowdfunding for health services using art as a tool to draw supporters. The aim of the paper is therefore to spark a critical reflection on the roles of publications in society, understanding how publishing can play a major part in situations of adversity, even if it is often regarded as an industry with a passive relationship with the world outside its pages, and how creativity and outside-the-box thinking are crucial for innovation. To investigate this question, a thorough quantitative research was carried out, based on materials collected from March to June 2020, the months of the first wave of the pandemic which found the sanitary system unprepared and in need of all the help it could get.

Together with this inquiry, the article will give voice to the very creators of the last project it will analyze, Fine Zine, whose editorial team members were kind enough to answer some questions during a conversation with the author. It has been well over a year since the dramatic moments of March 2020, when the world faced the so-called First wave of Covid-19, when sanitary institutions, highly unprepared to face such an unforeseeable event, were collapsing under our own eyes.

Many were the initiatives born in those months to help the Civil Protection to cope with the shortage of equipment, and among them there was the unusual case of art magazines, which used the creative nature of art together with the pragmatism of publishing to narrate the Covid-19 puzzling reality and support healthcare systems internationally. Contrarily to the common perception that we have of magazines

and other editorial experiences, namely being passive actors within the Art World, the initiatives we will see shortly acted as involved players, subverting this impression. Journals canonically report: this is their most engrained function, and this is the perception that, perhaps superficially, we have of them.

This is not to say that magazines must necessarily be in a passive position in respect of the art world; their influence can come through critique or innovative viewpoints that do provoke shifts. However, generally speaking, when talking about the art system, magazines and publications are not regarded as active members, the ones that move the clogs of the complex machine that is the Art World. They are often relegated to the sidelines, spectators whose biggest concern is to share the knowledge that others invent and display and, at best, give opinions. The interaction with the public is often limited to a very specialized elite, so much that, when talking about art critique, James Elkins has referred to it as "having ghosts for readers. Critics seldom know who reads their work beyond the gallerists who commission it and the artists about whom they write: and often that reading public is ghostly precisely because it does not exist" (Elkins 2003, 13).

And yet, the year 2020 saw enormous shifts in the social dynamics that move society, and these changes have interested relations in the art world as well. Museums, once places of education, divulgation, display, wonder, became impassable and empty hangars, containers without an audience. The whole world, deprived of real, face to face social interaction, had to slowly try to find its way online, in a territory that for most artistic institutions had barely ever explored. And while everyone was grasping for space, trying to understand the dynamics of digitalization, the publishing industry, for once, found itself ahead of everyone else.

The shift to a mostly digital form of communication was something that magazines had to do long before the pandemic, therefore they were very well prepared for the enormous surge in internet traffic prompted by the various lockdowns around the world (it has been estimated that, compared to the same period a year before, in March 2020 the amount of time spent actively scrolling, clicking, and reading articles online went up by 30%) (Kalim 2020). This implied a new kind of visibility that in turn triggered a new sense of awareness:

> magazines occupied a position of absolute advantage and, as such, three projects that exploited this moment of relevance were born to give back to the community.

These creative examples show how, with initiative and resourcefulness, journals managed to rethink themselves and their role, not just within the art world, but within society in general, to meet a goal that was unprecedented in the field of art publishing:

> funding the struggling health services.

The three projects analyzed here differ from each other both in the modalities throughout which they were carried out, and for their target. If Exibart, an established presence within the field of art publishing, created a project that was mainly aimed at its specialized readers, such as those who followed the magazine's other columns and were familiar with the art market, Biancoscuro magazine's call for help was not directed to its usual public, but to the artists. In a completely different approach,

Fine Zine sought to attract as many people as they could, with options in the crowdfunding even for the people who held no interest at all in the publication (or in art publications in general) but still wanted to support the cause. Three very different approaches to a common idea, that all developed to become successful examples of fundraising perpetuated through art publications.

MAINSTREAM PUBLISHING FOR A WIDER REACH

The most resonating project was the campaign promoted by Exibart. In the magazine they describe themselves as "the ones who made history of web information in the art sector. [...] the most efficient and widespread information and in-depth tool on art, architecture, design, fashion, education, cultural tourism... An editorial experience with a loyal community for over 18 years that has become a generator of culture and a movement of opinion" (Exibart 2019). Often regarded as one of the most widespread contemporary art magazines in Italy, Exibart is considered the most popular tool of information on exhibitions, events and current news on the art scene of the country. Started in 1996 as an online experience, it has since expanded on paper as well, with a quarterly issue, and has broadened its domains outside the frame of a simple magazine thanks to formats such as exibart.tv, a streaming channel accessible online, and an ongoing podcast series.

The magnitude of Exibart is also clear when looking at its readers:

> in a report conducted by the magazine itself on its reference target, it was estimated that 40% of the magazine readers (4.000.000 units) is constituted by 'people who follow art on an ongoing basis, who usually visit museums and galleries, who buy works of art, books and newspapers'[1] (Exibart, 2019).

These data are important to understand to whom Exibart thought about when conceiving their project. On April 21st, 2020, the magazine announced on its platform that, "to contrast the sense of helplessness that arose during the lockdown" (CharityStars 2020), they were going to join the *#VinciamoNoi* charity campaign, launched by CharityStars, a startup whose aim is to connect nonprofits, companies and donors, in order to support various charities around the world. The campaign sought to bring together numerous companies, sport clubs, entrepreneurs, and personalities from the entertainment world in a collective effort to raise funds for the health emergency, and Exibart decided to not only promote it through its information channels, which would have been a big enough endorsement alone, but also to actively take part in it. And they did so through the way that best represented them: art. The campaign began with selecting artists, illustrators, and cartoonists (some of which had already collaborated with the magazine for Exibart.talks, a column dedicated to comics and illustrations) that all responded with enthusiasm to the idea of joining the project and donated some of their works. The works were then auctioned off through the CharityStars' platform, and remained on sale until May 6th, 2020, raising more than two thousand euros, a sum that added to the more than seventy-seven thousand euros already donated thanks to #VinciamoNoi (Graziano, Riyahi 2020). The proceeds were all donated to the Italian Red Cross, the San Matteo Hospital Foundation in Pavia, the Sacco Hospital in Milan, and the Spallanzani

1 'Il 40% (4.000.000 unità) è costituito dai grandi appassionati. Contatti che seguono l'arte in modo continuativo, che frequentano abitualmente musei e gallerie, che acquistano opere, che comprano libri e giornali' translated by the author.

Hospital in Rome. They wanted to meet three objectives: to finance the purchase of ventilation equipment, to create new ICU and sub-intensive care beds and to guarantee health care and first intervention of medical aids at the forefront. The modality Exibart chose to collect donations is indicative of a newspaper which, as we can see from its presentation statement, is highly aware that its public is composed of a large number of art lovers who could be willing to buy a work of art. By choosing this modality, rather than devoting the profits from the sales of an editorial publication, the magazine was able to aim for higher proceeds, also thanks to the fitting auction method.

Furthermore, the fact that this magazine has aimed not to an open call, but to a selection of artists already known to its audience, highlights its ability to exploit existing relationships to incentivize the purchase. The promotion work was largely facilitated by the fact that the public already had a relationship with the selected artists, always mediated by the newspaper. With this project Exibart demonstrated a great self-awareness and knowledge of its audience, proving how essential it is to know who you are addressing when thinking about new projects, especially for such a meaningful cause.

SELLING VISIBILITY

Considerably less notorious among the crowded landscape of art journals, but equally willing to devote its resources to the cause, Biancoscuro Art Magazine thought of a brand-new way to get people to donate by individuating a new target for its crowdfunding campaign. The bimestrial publication, "devoted to artistic promotion in all its forms" with articles spacing from current art world-related events to overviews on more or less notorious artists, decided to play exactly on this aspect when envisioning their crowdfunding project, *Biancoscuro Virtual Gallery Solidale.*

The idea was to create a virtual gallery where artists could purchase a spot and then have their artworks (five or ten images depending on the entry fee of 100 or 200 euros) displayed online for 12 months. Biancoscuro then committed to donate 25% of the profit to the Civil Protection for the health emergency. The project was launched on April 3rd, 2020, and subscriptions were initially going to be accepted until the 9th. However the response was immediate, over 100 international emerging artists decided to display their artworks, and the program was extended, this time with proceedings devolved to the Italian Red Cross. In substance, what Biancoscuro put out for charity was its platform:

> its audience became the warranty the magazine offered when proposing to sell its visibility in exchange for a donation.

Essentially advertising for charitable purposes, this initiative can be said to be more similar to a transaction than a donation, with the added bonus that artists willing to buy a space are helping the sanitary system at the same time. Perhaps something that the campaign lacked was the possibility of donating a sum at the patron's discretion, an option that was available in Exibart's auction and in Fine Zine's mission. Without it, one could get the sense of a magazine that is taking advantage of young artists who need to be promoted and dispose of the means for it. Also, when browsing the gallery, the general sense permeating the array of displayed art was that a curatorial choice was missing:

> everyone had the chance to display their art, as long as they participated in the crowdfunding, a choice that matched the fundraising scope of collecting as many donations as possible but went against the art magazine's primary goal of bringing quality content to its readers.

What surely cannot be denied is that, thanks to this perhaps controversial idea, Biancoscuro Art magazine managed to raise two thousand euros for charity in total, a sum that matches the one collected by Exibart, a much larger platform with an affectionate public.

THE MAGAZINE FORMAT AS FUNDRSAISING TOOL

A different conception of crowdfunding, focused solely on the charity and non-profit aspect as the very core of the project, was the one offered by Fine Zine. This publication is perhaps the most significant one regarding fundraising for the pandemic, as it was specifically born from the need of concretely helping the healthcare sector through crowdfunding.

The goal of this project was to create and sell an editorial product - a magazine - that brought together artists from all over Italy, who donated their artworks to be published alongside a short text.

From an interview with the members of Fine Zine Collective, it emerged that the idea was born from Mattia Buracchi, a student of the academy of fine Arts in Rimini, when he saw a graphic studio using their 3D printers to create medical face shields for healthcare staff. "I thought - stated Mattia - if a discipline of this kind [artistic] can be put at the service of people in a time of crisis, why can't the rest of art also take action?". So, a team of five students from the Rimini Art Academy came together, also including Sara Pivetta, a graphic artist studying at the Academy of Venice, and with the supervision of Michele Ambroni, professor of photography at the Rimini Academy. They collectively decided that the medium they were going to be focusing on for conveying this will was the one of the editorial publication. The magazine here went from being a means of promotion and endorsement of a charity initiative, as we have seen for the two precedent cases, to being the actual reward for the donation, an appealing product to be offered in exchange for economic help to the institutions in need. The response to the call from the artistic community exceeded expectations:

> "We were assuming we were going to receive twenty or thirty submissions at best, but in the end, we received works from over 200 artists, 100 of which were suitable for publication', continued Mattia: 'We did not believe we had the authority to choose one work over another. The publication was born to welcome everyone and not to discard any donated work."

Despite this proposition, not all content was suitable for publication. "We tried to mediate a little" added Sara Pivetta "by identifying a common thread that would have broadly linked the works. For the first issue, which included 25 works out of the 100 selected, the theme was *Communicating Solidarity*. The selection wanted to encompass all disciplines [photography, painting, collages...], combining them in a harmonious sense between the various compositions and the various concepts. The exclusion from the first issue was not a qualitative one, what we did was try and relate works that fit well with each other and that, even while

talking about different feelings, maintained a certain coherence. We had to discard very powerful works because they did not link as well with the general sense of the issue." The primordial idea was to print a more consistent publication, a sort of catalogue, aimed precisely at including all the artists who had donated their works. However, the project was immediately destined to shrink for a purely practical reason:

> to be produced, an issue of this kind would have involved a considerably more substantial amount of money, and this would have entailed reducing too much the amount donated to the Civil Protection.

It was therefore decided to give priority to crowdfunding and curate an edition comprising only the twenty-five artists selected for it, trying to maintain a balance between creating a quality product and trying to spend as little as possible. To overcome this impasse, the editorial team had decided to extend the project over time, following the course of the pandemic, and issue other numbers with the artists that didn't make it into the first one.

The magazine format was the best possible solution to meet these fundamental criteria in order for the fundraising to be successful and ethically carried out. But then the summer came, and with the easing of the contagion containment measures, public interest in donations collapsed. If during the spring statistics on individual donors showed that 13 to 15 million Italians donated to help stop the Covid emergency, in the summer the pressure on the hospitals eased, and with it the urgency to raise funds. On the subject, Michele Ambroni remarked:

> "When you talk about charity, you are always linked to a trend. If that trend fails, the collective must be rethought in terms of organization."

Mattia Buracchio added:

> "We found ourselves somewhat with our hands tied, on the one hand we wanted to continue publishing but on the other hand there was the risk that, by creating a periodical publication, the charity aspect, which was the focus of the project, would disappear. We are still evaluating other opportunities, one idea was to continue with the publication of the magazine, with numbers related to issues that are in need of fundings but are not too discussed, in order to bring them to light'. 'We can publish something the moment we feel the need to say something. The collective might also evolve through other formats [exhibitions, workshops] but it will always keep its foundations, that is to do something for others."

In the meantime, the artists who had been excluded from Zine have found a place on social media, a sort of extension of the editorial project per se. The collective thought it was important to find a space that could adequately thank them while waiting for new possible projects. "The first donors were those who donated their works, not those who bought the Zine" said Elena Moro, adding also that all the artists were constantly in touch with all the stages of production and received periodical updates on the crowdfunding trend. The results achieved by Fine Zine have definitely surpassed all expectations:

> as a first-time publication coming from a newborn and unknown collective with virtually no platform to fall back on, the project managed to donate over one thousand euros.

The Zine entered the official archive and the historical register of the Italian Civil Protection and found a great deal of positive feedback from both the public and the institutions. It created a network that connected young artists from the whole country with the public and with each other, a testament that only through collaboration during dramatic moments can truly improve. With their creativity and initiative, Fine Zine, Exibart and Biancoscuro's projects have all done something unprecedented.

We can't know for sure the impact that these crowdfunding projects have had, but we can be quite certain that some lives would not have been saved without their help. It is touching to see how a community of both connoisseurs and amateurs, of artists, and even of general public responded so enthusiastically to targeted projects in a collective effort to save each-other, faithful of the fact that Art could have a concrete and truly fundamental impact on even the worst of the crisis.

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FASHION MAGAZINES AS ART PROMOTER ON LOCKDOWN

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ABSTRACT

This article will analyze the artistic strategies used by mainstream and independent fashion magazines during the 2020 pandemic. The aim of this research is to demonstrate how magazines have been an alternative site for exhibiting and promoting art during the lockdown.

The research considers six fashion journals and focuses on the different approaches adopted to support artistic production. The result of the study allowed us to identify two phenomena. Firstly, the use of the cover as an artistic medium; secondly the use of the magazine as an artistic tool for charitable causes.

> ***Magazines bring the world to you more than newspapers do and more than books do***[1] **(Graydon Carter, former editor of Vanity Fair).**

INTRODUCTION

Graydon Carter, former editor of *Vanity Fair*, argued that magazines are the ideal platform for reflecting and representing the main concerns of an historical and cultural period (Carter 2020). This statement perfectly represents what happened to the publishing industry during the pandemic upheaval. Since the beginning of the outbreak of Covid-19, fashion magazines have played a key role in representing the groundbreaking transformations that have involved the art system (Saltz 2020) and the publishing sector (Rajan 2020). The pandemic fortifies the long-standing ties that exist between fashion magazines and artistic practice (Marcadent 2020).

Indeed, with brick-and-mortar institutions closed, fashion magazines were just one of those institutions that offered artists alternative sites for exhibiting art. Furthermore, magazines have been powerful promoters of the artistic production thanks to the organization of charity initiatives. The aim of this research is to track artistic initiatives run by fashion magazines and to examine how these new editorial practices have resonance in the artworld. This goal was accomplished by conducting a detailed analysis of fashion magazines' printed issues, online blogsites, and social media campaigns from April 2020 onwards.

The result of this in-depth analysis into the intersection between the fashion publishing world and art leads to focus on few case studies used to illustrate two distinct phenomena. The first phenomenon is the transformation of the new fashion issues in a sort of artists' magazines. It was the case of *Vogue Italia*, *Dazed+* and *System,* in which the journals' pages were used as an artistic medium. *Vanity Fair*, *Twin*, and *Self Service* illustrate the second tendencey highlighted, in which artists' works were sold for charity. Open access content, collaborations with artists, patronage of artworks, creative collaborative networks are just a few of the new cultural initiatives headed by these magazines that enriched the artistic repertory and developed new challenging editorial choices.

1 BOF Team. 2020. "The BoF Podcast: Graydon Carter Says, 'There Is More Good Journalism Being Produced Now Than There Was 25 Years Ago." Business of Fashion, Accessed June 12, 2020. https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/podcasts/the-bof-podcast-graydon-carter-says-there-is-more-good-journalism-being-produced-now-than-there-was-25-years-ago.

LARGE SCALE MAGAZINES

The Magazine Cover as a Canvas: VOGUE ITALIA's White Issue

A phenomenon highlighted while carrying out this research is the tendency of fashion publishing to turn the magazine into an artistic medium in its own right (Gwen 2011), with artworks created expressly for the printed pages or the covers. This tendency reflects two main elements that lie in the inherent nature of these large-scale style publications. First, fashion magazines bridged together the field of art and fashion. The overlapping between the two sectors is due to a common sensitivity, that is creativity (Lynge-Jorlen 2009, 67). The design of a magazine, indeed, is curated by an art director that follows the esthetic creation of the printed edition. This is an attention that could be assimilated to the one of the curating practice (Marcadent 2020). Moreover, the graphic design practice and the conception of a magazine in its physical production require the same attention as traditional artworks (Gwen 2011).

Secondly, the field of fashion is hybrid. It was demonstrated that there is a thin line dividing the commercial nature of a fashion product from the artistic one (Moeran 2006). A proof of this commerce/art convergence is the fact that large-scale magazines, such as *Vogue Italia*, have historically worked as platforms to promote the fashion industry using the cover as a space for artistic experimentation.

Mainstream fashion magazines' 2020 covers[2] marked visually the difficulties of the pandemic and, more than ever, embraced art as a tool to narrate historical events. Vogue Italia's April issue is a perfect example of this trend in the art direction of the high-end Condé Nast publishing. This issue, which has been available at the newsstand since April 10th, brings novelties in the newspaper's traditional layout. For the first time in its history, *Vogue Italia* featured a blank white cover [Fig.1] created by Ferdinando Verderi, the creative director of the journal.

The revolutionary choice, highlighted in the editorial by the editor-in-chief Emanuele Farneti, is shocking for a public accustomed to colorful headlines and the appearance of supermodels (Hackney 2014), typical of the Condé Nast publications (Derrick, Muir 2009). The empty eye-catching cover dealt with different symbolic meanings, apart from being outstanding for its risk-taking design. Emanuele Farneti's statement explains better the aim of the monthly publication:

> "White is first of all respect. White is rebirth, the light after darkness, the sum of all colors. White is the color of the uniforms worn by those who put their own lives on the line to save ours. It represents space and time to think, as well as to stay silent' and 'Above all: white is not surrender, but a blank sheet waiting to be written, the title page of a new story that is about to begin" (Farneti 2020).

The magazine decided to step back from its role of publicizing and analyzing the world of fashion, renouncing these inappropriate topics in light of the recent dramatic events occurring around the world.

Because of the magazine's versatility as a medium, the solution found was to resort to its artistic potentiality. Vogue Italia envisioned a new mission for the publication, one that would be much more effective in times of crisis, as evidenced when discussing Covid-19's concerns through the lens of art. It has been documented, indeed, how

2 https://coverjunkie.com/ Accessed June 12, 2020.

art was used to combat, during the first lockdown, the current threat of the Coronavirus. As a result, the new issue changed its distinctive glossy appearance, enabling artistic involvement through contemporary art references. In particular, the magazine captured a tradition of symbolic concerns dealing with the white color (Staff 2015) in contemporary art practices. The white squares by Malevic, Robert Rauschenberg's canvases, Lucio Fontana's "Waitings" and "Le vide" by Yves Klein are the eminent iconographic sources from which the journal takes inspiration for its blank cover (Acocella 2020). With *Vogue Italia*'s experimentation, the front-page becomes a vehicle for a faster communication with the public.

Readers can easily understand the hidden symbolic meanings of the monochrome white cover as an act of creative design production and a wise strategy to link the issue to contemporary art references.

Carta Bianca Project by Valentina Ciarallo

During the following months, the White Cover was an occasion for an independent curatorial project wanted by Valentina Ciarallo. The Italian curator recruited 49 artists and asked them to reinvent the void cover.

Mario Airò, Stefano Arienti, Manfredi Beninati, Flavio Favelli, Guglielmo Castelli, Bea Bonafini and many others conceived, resorting to heterogenous techniques, innovative solutions using the renowned cover as a white canvas[3] (Benni 2020). The plethora of outputs are all marked by the willpower of avoiding the lack of visual imaginary, challenging the difficult historical period with their creativity. The main aim of the visionary coral project was to impress in the white issue a generative power, symbolizing the restart. The "page to be written" wished for by Emanuele Farneti found its most concrete realization with Valentina Ciarallo's initiatives. The journal became an artwork in itself, waiting to be exhibited in the future as declared by the curator Valentina Ciarallo.

THE VERSATILITY OF A MAGAZINE: VOGUE ITALIA'S ARTISTIC INITIATIVES

The White Issue was originally conceived with clear intents. Starting from its cover page, Vogue Italia n. 836 wanted to distinguish itself from previous editions, letting readers know in advance that the new content in the articles moved away from promoting commodities linked with fashion[4] (Fernandez 2020). "To speak of anything else – while people are dying, doctors and nurses are risking their lives and the world is changing forever – is not the DNA of *Vogue Italia*" (Vogue Italia Team 2020), Emanuele Farneti claimed. He revealed that the magazine was forced to drop projects on which they were working and to start again with a new issue able to question the new uncertain era.

In his statement, he made the position of *Vogue Italia* clear:

> being constantly in touch with the historic moment and with the time the readers are living in.

Furthermore, to legitimize the journal as a publication actively involved in present society, Chiara Bardelli Nonino's article titled *More Than Just a Fashion Magazine* highlighted the spirit of *Vogue*:

> being on the front line during multiple historical crises, as it happened for example during WWII.[5]

To restate the ability of the journal to range between different topics

3 "[...] Vogue Italia passava dall'essere prestigioso magazine cartaceo a supporto creativo – da contenuto a contenitore, insomma." Benni, Giorgio. 2020. "Tema Libero. La Copertina Bianca di Vogue Italia Interpretata da 49 Artisti." Vogue Italia. Accessed March 7, 2020. https://www.vogue.it/news/gallery/copertina-bianca-vogue-italia-49-artisti-foto?image=5ff31e8332fe7c02393f5228

4 "Glossy magazines around the world are confronting a similar identity crisis. Everything from their publishing cadence to their focus on luxury fashion risks feeling out of sync at best and tone-deaf at worst to readers isolated in their homes, who are tracking rapid-fire public health updates and worried about the economy" in Fernandez, Chantal. 2020. "For Fashion Magazines, It's Crunch Time." Business of Fashion. Accessed March 25 2020.

beside fashion, a special podcast, *Inside Vogue Italia*, was created with the aim of putting in the spotlight the masthead working in the backstage. Vogue Italia tried to adapt the journal to the current times by rebranding it through the marketing strategy of product reallocation:

> this attempt is evident in the transformation of the traditional *Vogue* cover and the new identity assumed by it.

Links with contemporary art concerns and the legitimization of the fashion magazine as socially active are not the only strategies carried out by the Italian journal to reinvent the magazine during the lockdown. The influence of the journal reached the artistic production, reducing the boundaries between fashion publishing and the artworld. For this special issue, that needed to be rethought in a more actual light, they asked different artists for their contribution. Behind the white cover is hidden one of the liveliest issues in the history of Vogue:

> 40 international artists were invited to fill the white sheets with their artworks and their reflections, too.

Assemblages, collages, photos and poems were the creative products published in the journal under the motto #Farawaysoclose. Vogue Italia commissioned site-specific works of art and gave them visibility in the journal. Some full-page collective works[6] (in total 4) [Fig.3], in the form of assemblages made with cut-off pieces of paper and with scrap materials, take turns with articles and advertisements. One of them introduces the second section of the journal, in which there are no more articles, and the journalistic aspect of the journal is turned into visual content.
In this section, full-page images are artworks or photographs created by artists from their own home:

> #Farawaysoclose is the slogan of the campaign again.

Models too were invited to participate, showing their creativity in making self-photo-shooting, as in the iconic one by Gigi Hadid. All these visionary images were gathered up in the flap of the cover that unfolds as in a portfolio. The high specter of new editorial initiatives associated with artistic involvement reveals the new ideology at the heart of Vogue Italia's April issue. The rhetoric hidden in the journal's symbology - readable both through visual evidence and linguistic aspects - is a statement about the possibility of 're'starting, 're'watching, 're'feeling. The changing in tone of a mainstream magazine such as Vogue and the development of different artistic projects attested the ability of the magazine to be a versatile support. The malleability of the periodical's category is evident with all these artistic strategies set up by the journal. *Vogue Italia* expanded the traditional function of a glossy reading through collaborations with artists for a creative campaign and by designing innovative covers, committing artworks, implementing digital offerings. They replied to a marketing's necessity: resort to art to talk about big concerns and transformations that will affect the publishing reality.

THE MAGAZINE AS A COLLECTOR ITEM: THE CASE OF VANITY FAIR BY FRANCESCO VEZZOLI

While *Vogue* helped artists with a sort of artistic patronage, giving visibility to selected ones and defining the topics, another Italian magazine - Vanity Fair Italy - used a completely different strategy to deal with Covid-19. The journal's idea was to mobilize art production to financially

https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/professional/fashion-print-magazines-coronavirus.

5 A similar article about this topic: La Ferla, Ruth. 2020. "Fashion Magazine Editors, Take a Page from Audrey Withers." New York Times. Accessed June 18, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/style/vogue-editor-england-audrey-withers-biography-dressed-for-war.html?auth=login-facebook.

6 Steven Klein, David Sims, Harley Weir, Oliver Hadlee Pearch, Emilie Kareh, Thomas De Kluvyer, Ibrahim Kamara, Charlotte Wales, Jack Davison, Max Pearmain, Laura Nash, Tyrone Lebon, Mert Alas, Marcus Piggott, Joe McKenna, Chris Simmonds, Larissa Hoffman, Drew Vickers, Tyler Mitchell, Roe Ethridge, Brianna Capozzi, Haley Wollens, Bella Hadid, Collier Schorr, Carlos Nazario, Ryan McGinley, Gigi Hadid, Sebastian Faena, Gray Sorrenti, Michael Bailey Gates, Glen Luchford, Paolo Roversi, Arnaud Lajeunie, Suzanne Koller, Ezra Petronio, Talia Chetrit, Andrea Artemisio, Petra Collins, Paloma Elsesser, Francesca Cisani, Willy Vanderperre, Olivier Rizzo, Rianne Van Rompaey, Isamaya Ffrench, Lindsey Wixon Young, Cyndia Harvey, Josh Olins, Stephanie Waknine and Paolo Ventura.

support Italian creative enterprises, recurring to art for charity.

Vanity Fair Italy launched in April a groundbreaking issue [Fig. 4], the last of a trilogy of special issues dedicated to the Italian emergency. Again, already from the cover, the changeover is evident. The front-page presents a tricolor Italian flag canvas with, on the central white band, an unmistakable cut in Lucio Fontana's style. This creative cover is a work by the Italian artist Francesco Vezzoli, who was able to recreate the atmosphere Italians were living using this symbolic image.

Once again, the cover is conceived thanks to artistic references that give it a symbolic meaning. "His work is the most symbolic and moving portrait of a difficult moment that we have the duty to face with hope and vision for tomorrow. We are honored to have hosted them on the cover of *Vanity Fair*, a newspaper and a network that increasingly wants to become a symposium of reflection and planning between art, current affairs, stories and entertainment (Editorial Staff- Vanity Fair 2020)", said Simone Marchetti, the Director of *Vanity Fair*. The canvas, titled #LItaliasiamonoi, used the cut as a metaphor of the Italian situation: an injury, but at the same time a glimmer of hope, praising Lucio Fontana's 'waiting' and Italian creativity. The artist declared that his work is an homage to Italy and could be explained through a verse by Leonard Cohen from 'Anthem':

"There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in".

100 numbered hardcover copies were later signed by the artist himself and sold on a charity auction, from April 19th till May 27th, with the support of Ebay, the e-commerce platform that offered its space to the journal for this campaign. The exclusive artworks realized by Vezzoli for *Vanity Fair* transformed the issue into a collector's item, and the proceeds of its sale backed the sodality campaign by Laps Foundation.

Since the date of publication, the work has been taken up by newspapers and social media, becoming a symbolic image of the pandemic hitting the world. The original canvas, being an icon, has been auctioned online by Sotheby's from the 4th to the 16th of June and was auctioned off for 87.000 euros. The proceeds of the auction were donated to the Covid Research Project 19 of the Operating Unit of Infectious Diseases of the Polyclinic of Milan. The original project by Vezzoli in collaboration with *Vanity Fair* developed into a unique result that reached the most important auction house in the contemporary artworld.

In this special issue, the magazine serves as a support for the reproduction of a real artwork that existed in an independent format but that was created for *Vanity Fair* front page. As a result, the cover is visually linked to the original canvas, assimilating its main features. As it happened for the real piece of art, the *Vanity Fair* issue gained an aura of uniqueness by being sold in a limited edition in an auction house.

At the same time, the novelty of this issue is that the magazine broadened its physical boundaries by being transformed into a much larger creative project. As pointed out by the Vanity Fair team, the pandemic has challenged the editorial content, forcing them to rethink "the future of a magazine, in its value, sense and influence" (Vanity Fair 2020).

NICHE FASHION MAGAZINES

Both *Vogue Italia* and *Vanity Fair* are headed by the same magazine

publishing company, the Condé Nast (Biondi 2020) colossus, and perhaps for this reason the two fashion journals, with different strategies, are working on a parallel axis. Vogue worked by engaging artworks by the artistic community; Vanity Fair by turning art into charity. These two Condé Nast products have a big budget to manage and could completely change their plan by involving big personalities of the artworld, but it seems to be a generalization considering only mainstream fashion magazines.

To analyze the fashion publishing sector and its approach to the pandemic through artistic practices, one must narrow down the analysis on fashion magazines, while at the same time consider small publishers, such as independent fashion magazines.[7] The main features of the small press editions are being most sought-after; having a selected audience;[8] and being outside the market profit logics.[9]

For independent fashion magazines facing the pandemic should be a sales disaster in the midst of the coronavirus out-break. Reinventing the magazine and starting a new issue was not a possibility for these publishers. The lockdown forced them to postpone release dates, to suspend print runs and to move to open-access archives or online website articles in order to catch readers. At the beginning, diverting to digital seemed to be the only possible solution for these self-sustaining enterprises. The coronavirus crisis, with its resulting economic fallout, has affected the publishing world. The crisis was an occasion for experimentation and a driving force for the history of publishing's development (Rajal 2020) due to the huge competition between different magazines that needed to show their value using different management approaches (Fernandez 2020). The most stouthearted niche magazines, deciding to drop down printed editions, launched ambitious online initiatives in the direction of artistic production.

MONTHLY PUBLICATIONS: DAZED'S PATNERSHIP WITH ARTISTS

Dazed+Confused is one of the most important small-press magazines to be active during this lockdown. It organized different opportunities to stimulate artistic creativity and create a network for the artistic community stuck at home. For its Spring issue, the British mag adopted the strategy of saving money postponing its print editions, moving the magazine to the website. The "World, Interrupted" issue [Fig. 5] was available for free on their platform and everyone could access it, after signing up.

The cover of the first-ever digital issue of *Dazed* featured the famous singer Billie Eilish photographed by Harmony Korine. The front-page was available to be downloaded as a pdf file and printed as a poster for the pop singer's fans. The *Dazed* staff called these initiatives "a gesture of solidarity to home-bound readers worldwide enduring this period of self-isolation"[10],expressing their support to all readers.

At the same time, it looked like a way to develop the journal's position, by offering the digital channel as well. This strategy was very successful, meaning that *Dazed* was looking at what had happened in the publishing world before the spread of Covid-19. Indeed, a survey by BlueToad conducted in mid-February 2020 confirms that 75% of readers already consumed magazines digitally, and the starting of social distancing stabilized readers' habits (Editorial Staff Blue Toad 2020). Alongside the online copies of the journal, they offered special digital

7 Independent magazines were called "niche media" in the academic field, using a term introduced in the fashion studies by David Muggleton who referred to I-D Magazine and other glossy publications of the Eighties. See Muggleton, David. 2000. Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style. New York: Berg.

8 For a more accurate analysis on the production and consumption of niche fashion magazines see Ane Lynge-Jorlén, Niche Fashion Magazines.

9 According to Saul Marcadent, independent magazines: "[...] are differentiated from periodicals of wide circulation by the fact that they are self-initiated, i.e. do not have the backing of a publisher, and have been characterized, especially in their early days, by a high degree of experimentation and a flat organization of the enterprise."

10 Dazed Digital. 2020. "Get a Free Digital Copy of Dazed's New Billie Eilish Issue and Poster." Dazed Online. Accessed March 24, 2020. https://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/48459/1/get-a-free-digital-copy-of-dazed-spring-summer-issue-billie-eilish.

projects. “We hope this issue will offer some much-needed inspiration to everybody in difficult times – and serve as a reminder that whilst we might be alone, we are in this together” claimed Isabella Burley, editor-in-chief of *Dazed+*. With the call for unity, they launched #Alonetogether, an “URL campaign” set up as a venue for workshops, online events and meetings with leading personalities of the creative world such as artists, singers, designers etc. Writing quarantine diaries, sharing videos from their homes, writing tracks live with fans and sharing art and cookery classes online are some examples of the initiatives that were promoted through this campaign in order to revitalize a creative world stuck at home. Readers were encouraged to share their feedback on the daily challenges with the #Alonetogether hashtag: the journal guaranteed that the contents will be collected in an archive that will document creativity during these difficult times.

This campaign was a great success in terms of public subscription and a driving force for a lot of artistic productions. It is interesting that 33 renowned artists responded to a roll call for their community with specific artworks in a poster format, showing that art could be the right tool to address pandemic concerns. This idea is well expressed in Thomas Gordon’s article (Gordon 2020) on the *Dazed* digital platform, when he says “[...] artists have always led the way when it comes to pulling back the curtain and seeing into the future. During this moment of stasis and sadness, upheaval and unity, we felt it important to call on our community of artists, musicians, and designers to create artworks that inspire and imagine the possibility of new worlds, explore humanity in the present climate, and demonstrate the power of art as a medium for political messages.”

The Dazed Poster Art Project - developed in partnership with artists such as Wolfgang Tillmans, Vivienne Westwood [Fig. 6], Jonas Lindstroem [Fig.7], 3D, Katharine Hamnett, Samuel Ross, Jefferson Hack, and Polly Nor - is composed of unique design posters based on big reflections around a dystopian future ranging from consumption to ecology, capitalistic economy and globalization. These colorful dystopian slogans are the result of a contribution by the fashion independent magazine *Dazed* to a group of artists who found in this initiative a way to express their creativity. The role of *Dazed+* did not stop here: it understood the potential of artworks in times of crisis as a special tool for gathering money from the audience and assigning it for sodality reasons to specialized institutions.
The journal, in fact, partnered up with Barts Charity, a healthcare organization that launched an emergency COVID-19 appeal to raise money for the British NHS.

INDEPENDENT PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS: SYSTEM, TWIN AND SELF-SERVICE

For what concerns annual, biannual and quarterly fashion magazines, their issues clearly showed the Covid-19 disruption. These publications have more diluted editorial timing and arrived at the newsstand for the first time in the summer of 2020. Those new issues were the first to be produced completely under lockdown. A common attitude of quarterly magazines is to stay in touch with readers, while waiting for the next issue,

through their blogsite which is continually updated by the editors.

They used to complement their issues with a daily updated blog on their website. During the covid pandemic this conventional attitude was essential to create a network with readers from home. These magazines are indicated by the *Business of Fashion* as those that lead the "print renaissance" (Matthews 2015) because their business model is based on digital contents to support the cover price and the luxury of material that featured independent magazines.

Twin magazine, an English biannual art and fashion journal, has a very curated blogsite continuously updated with articles. In April 2020, when the pandemic disrupted, the journal sponsored an artistic initiative consisting in a partnership with 10 artists[11] on their digital platform. The artists produced photographs that were donated for charity in honor of the National Health Service. The photographs will be printed in the highest quality and framed by *Twin*'s handmade sponsor G.F. Smith.

The cost of each print ranges from £125 to £175. Bringing together art and fashion with its unique hardback cover and glossy esthetic, Twin issues combined the categories of glossy publication with those of art books. Thanks to its large format, it is possible to showcase different art projects in its pages. In this scenario System, a biannual journal about the fashion industry, launched "its biggest-ever issue, produced entirely under lockdown" (Editorial Staff System 2020), offering a material renovated issue. The *System* issue is very innovative from a design perspective and it is an example of how art is not the only method to face the Covid-19 transformations. Readers are offered the opportunity to choose from 35 different covers:

> all the front-pages are photos shot by Juergen Teller during a series of Zoom conversations with important personalities during the quarantine period.

Once again, the cover embodied an artistic practice and it was used as a creative medium, turning the issue into a piece of art. Experimentation also arrived in independent fashion publishing:

> Self Service issue n. 53 found a remarkable alternative way to disseminate the content of the journal.

Alongside with a printed issue directed by the co-founder and editor-in-chief Ezra Petronio, *Self Service* presented an online version of the Fall/Winter issue in a video format. The magazine is browsable watching the video on YouTube[12] that is enriched with music, voice recordings and special effects. The project was ambitious from its premise:

> "I've been thinking about expanding what a magazine can be" explained Petronio in an interview for Business of Fashion (Williams 2020).

The two magazines, one printed and the following in film version, are ways to "recontextualize the narrative of our printed magazine in a multi-layered film experience, expanding our reach and vision beyond boundaries" as explained in the editorial by Petronio.

CONCLUSION

Understanding the function and the role of fashion magazines, during this unprecedent time, is not an easy task due to their ambivalent nature. The hybridization between fashion publishing and art makes it difficult

11 Benedict Brink, Ben Weller, Daisy Walker, Jo Metson Scott, Joyce NG, Julia Noni, Marianna Sanvito, Scott Trindle, Stefanie Moshammer & Yaniv Edry. https://www.twinfactory.co.uk/tag/print/.

12 "Issue n°53 — The Film | Self Service," published November 3, 2020 on YouTube. https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=NYXfiJB7Jgk&feature=emb_imp_woyt.

to categorize these publications, but at the same time makes it necessary to include their contributions to the art system. Glossy publications, thanks to the pandemic, legitimized themselves as a storehouse for art and culture, rejecting the prejudice of being just an object of consumer capitalism. The coronavirus crisis, indeed, was a springboard for fashion magazines and allowed them to demonstrate their versality as platforms for producing art forms. In between commodities and high art, the pandemic opened up possibilities to look at them with reverence.

www.google.com/search?q=vogue+italia+cover+bianca&rlz=1C1CHBF_itIT879IT879&sxsrf=AOaemvK-88CyZ97mF1OqP58FpUCIeYx1S-0g:1643025124708&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=2ahUKEwiazqjHqcr1AhVNHDQIHZUzDkUQ_AUoAXoECAEQAw&biw=1422&bih=632&dpr=1.35#imgrc=-2jvm1R-QGdQ6qM

Fig. 1 Vogue Italia's 2020 April Issue

https://www.google.com/search?q=vogue+italia+cover+bianca&tbm=isch&chips=q:vogue+italia+cover+bianca,online_chips:mario+air%C3%B2:bpMXhF65MXM%3D&rlz=1C1CHBF_itIT879IT879&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjf_NbJqcr1AhWH16QKHYhlC0YQ4lYoBnoECAEQKA&biw=1404&bih=633#imgrc=czG5X0QXk27cFM

Fig. 2 Maria Crispal, Maria Crispal, 2020.

www.google.com/search?q=vanity+-fair+italia+bandiera&rlz=1C1CHBF_itIT879IT879&hl=en&sxsrf=AOaemvJWDGM8yK4tijzXMVYCcNSfpvaGFw:1643025181966&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjFrM_iqcr1AhV2RvEDHT4NCCIQ_AUoAXoECAEQAw&biw=1422&bih=632&dpr=1.35#imgrc=iBEwSBKDvOAXOM

Fig. 3 Vanity Fair's April issue. Cover by Francesco Vezzoli. (2020)



Fig. 4 Vivienne Westwood, “Buy Less, Choose Well, Make it Last” for Dazed+. 2020

https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.galeriederouillon.com%2FPAST%2FJonas-Lindstro-em-Don-t-you-ever-wonder-if-we-are-the-best-we-could-be&psig=AOvVaw1ubHbmOoWB78IhhpqllL-4p&ust=1649534341480000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAo-QjRxqFwoTCLjNgta5kfcCFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD

Fig. 5 Jonas Lindstroem, “Dreams” for Dazed+. 2020.

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INTERVIEW: FRABS JOURNAL

BY:

Anna Allegri, Erika Dal Bon

Interview with Anna Frabotta, founder of Frab's Magazines & More, an online portal specialized in the sale of independent and collector's magazines.

First of all, thank you for taking the time to talk to us.
By exploring different ways through which magazines reacted to the pandemic we wanted to confront ourselves with a voice of the sector like yourself to better understand how the publishing world has organized itself, what it did in the most critical months of the pandemic and in the post-lockdown, and how the sector has evolved during this time. So, for starters, how was the crisis dealt with?
Have there been any delays in the releases, are there any publications that have moved online? Have there been many magazines that had to be closed or, on the contrary, has there been a proliferation of new editorial experiences?

Mainstream publishing has certainly managed to better ride the period of crisis, since having a shorter publication frequency (we are talking about weekly or monthly) means also having more opportunities to talk about Covid-19 and the pandemic, always sharing up-to-date news. As for the world of independent publishing, most of the publications are released every six months, if not annually. The focus of most publications at the beginning of 2020 was certainly not Covid, many had sustainability and environmental issues as their theme. The pandemic, of course, took everyone by surprise, including the publishing world. Many magazines have temporarily suspended publication, so some issues that were due to come out in March/April did not come out, mainly due to logistics problems. It was impossible to go to print and ship to distributors as everything was closed.
There was a moment of stagnation, and some publications failed to overcome the crisis and had to close permanently. An example is Novum, a historical graphics magazine that would have turned ninety-six, which unfortunately did not withstand the blow of the pandemic. There are other publications that have had to reduce production instead, such as Flow Magazine, between the mainstream and the independent, a Dutch magazine that also published in English. With the pandemic, Flow had to give up its English edition, despite it being very successful. These are the two most illustrious victims that come to mind, but there are so many magazines that I cannot say if they have permanently ceased publication or if they have just stopped momentarily and will resume in the future. Surely the blow was not light: like everyone else, the publishing sector has also suffered from the crisis.

On the other hand, it must be said that there has been a flourishing of new proposals that have emerged in the wake of the pandemic from the need to describe that particular moment. They are not improvised publications; we are talking about people who were already working in that direction and

probably had the push and time to publish. An example in Italy is Yogurt, created as an online project, which released an issue dedicated to quarantine, which they described only with photographs. They did a great curatorial work:
they made an open call, then they put together works by different photographers to create real narrative paths and they released this beautiful first issue which sold out right away, perhaps because a lot of people felt the need to concretize what we were experiencing, and this was a tool to do so.

So, do you think that magazines are an effective tool to concretize the pandemic?

Considering that, having everything moved online, we got used to talking to each other only mediated by technology, paradoxically, magazines are one of the few tangible things we have left. Even the television is still just images on a screen, which is what our life has become, from meetings with friends to work. With magazines we can hold something concrete. The brand-new editorial experiences were born to respond to this need. Obviously, all the magazines and publications that came out after Covid-19 talked about the pandemic, the issue was impossible not to address, and there wasn't a single magazine that didn't do it. There is someone who has done it more intelligently than others, perhaps by not talking about it directly but talking about closely related topics. Kaleidoscope comes to mind, which has dedicated an issue to public art, responding to the need to go out on the street while we are all forced into our house. Like any form of art, publishing has interpreted what we are experiencing. I am thinking of Perimeter, which is a photographic magazine that describes Milan as we have never seen it before. Every four issues it changes format, and the one that came out at the turn of the pandemic is called Block, and it graphically recalls the blocks of buildings, another way to talk about the house that has become our everything. Even "lighter" magazines, which perhaps talk about mindfulness, could be used as a moment of relief in a difficult time.

Travel magazines did very well, because they were a way to escape from our impossibility to move. The format has changed, almost all of them have focused on their country of origin, such as Cartography, which generally mentions very distant destinations and whose latest issue is dedicated to Italy and France. Obviously, when you cannot go far, you tell your readers what is close to you, which seems more reachable.

Even interior design magazines have found themselves having to represent the house in a different way from the canonic one. Since the first month of the pandemic, Frab's has been looking for something that could describe the lockdown in the most severe moments of quarantine, and therefore a

magazine that narrates the house as a real space, not as it is showed by interior design magazines, where the house is perfect, organized, empty and not lived in. We found a magazine that was about ten years old, Home Sapiens, and we were able to recover some unsold copies from the publisher. These showed a "real house", as a reflection of the owner's identity, and within a week they sold out, a sign of how this need was shared. Surely a magazine, like a book, helps to exorcise and understand what you are experiencing, with the advantage that, being a periodical, the magazine is faster in processing the present.

Are there any magazines that have chosen, precisely for logistical problems, to move completely to digital? Or who have implemented their content on digital platforms?

There are obviously magazines that have had to skip an issue, and almost all independent magazines have their own website and blog where they write regularly for their community. Certainly, the digital tool was used more. An Italian example is Quanto magazine, which during the lockdown gave life to this unique format on Instagram, which they called "Le Quantiche", in reference to Boccaccio, where they invited their readers to send short stories that were published in posts as mini novels, a very successful experiment. They postponed the publication of the second issue while continuing to create online content. Perimeter, the Milanese photography magazine, also launched an online initiative where they sold prints of their photographs to raise funds in favor of Bergamo's hospitals, an initiative that was so well received that even internationally renowned photographers chose to participate.

Concerning the reading public, how was the influx on a site like Frab's? Was there a greater interest in printed publications the moment everything moved online or, on the contrary, the convenience of the web prevailed?

We experienced exponential growth during the March lockdown. There has been a great deal of interest, the readers have increased a lot and now that the most critical moment is over, we are keeping the same high numbers of readers. The interest continues to exist, and I believe that, at a time when everything stopped and everything closed, we need to find things to do.

Those who offer publishing products delivered at home have seen a great increase in public and interest, and there has been a growing interest in independent publishing also on the part of mainstream publishing. In the last period, we at Frabs have received calls and interviews from Io Donna, L'inchiesta, Il Post but also from some radio stations. There was a revival,

a rediscovered interest in independent publishing that demonstrated how readers have changed. Mainstream publishing is mainly based on advertisers, and consequently, they do not always have high-quality content, and this mechanism feeds into the narration that the editorial object is not of quality itself. In independent publishing, on the other hand, the graphic aspect is given extreme importance and that is why it is kept on paper. The graphic layout of a magazine cannot be reproduced on a computer or on a Smartphone screen. Moreover, in an independent printed magazine the graphics are an important part of the content and hold the same value as the written text. The art director has the same importance as the editorial director, and this also determines a higher quality in the magazine itself. Such a well-finished product cannot be replaced with a web page or a digital product. It is further proof that printed paper cannot disappear. This phenomenon has been accentuated with the pandemic, during which readers have rediscovered the value of slower rhythms, and with this also the pleasure of reading paper. Even the younger generation, the digital natives, have gone through this process. With the pandemic, the average age of our readers has dropped significantly: now we deal with many high school students, many more than in the past, who write to us asking if we accept the 18App Bonus. Unfortunately, however, publishing is excluded from this provision, but such requests are symptomatic of the change in our audience. We have realized that many digital natives are approaching this world of independent publications since they need to enjoy tangible objects and collect them where they previously used them online. It is a new mode of use that arises from this need, the availability of something that is not necessarily and limitedly online. Initially, our audience was composed mostly of concerned professionals, like architects who bought architectural magazines, those who worked with or studied fashion were interested in fashion magazines, graphic designers who stayed up to date with graphics publications and so on, Now, however, we have really widened the audience. We can no longer define a typical customer because it is more varied.

Reading the text "Publishing as Curating" by Saul Marcadent sold on your platform, you can see how the author highlights an intrinsic combination of fashion and artistic practices in the editorial context. In this regard, is there any fashion magazine hosting artistic forms in its pages? Is it true that there is a union between art and fashion, almost as if it were a spontaneous and natural interconnection?

Actually, fashion as it is treated by independent magazines is already art. However, there are magazines such as *A Magazine Curated By* which has each issue edited by a different fashion designer who transforms the magazine into an Art Book, almost an Artist's Book. Each issue is the expression

of a different fashion designer who pours into the magazine all his creative sphere, sometimes beyond fashion. The latest issue edited by the Maison's artistic directors talked about the union between mother nature and human nature, hence they aren't always talking exclusively about fashion. Even mainstream fashion magazines such as Vogue often range in other fields. To cite a recent example, their latest cover with animals was a different way of treating fashion. I don't know if we can properly talk about art in fashion magazines here, but it is clear how the potential of fashion is exploited as if it were art.

Are there any fashion magazines you can think of that have invited artists to collaborate with them?

Yes, *Purple* for example brings to its pages a lot of art starting from the covers. In the second-last issue dedicated to the theme of love, we find 12 covers created by 12 different artists, not just fashion designers. So yes absolutely, in the independent world there is often this will to involve artists who are invited to collaborate in publications that go beyond the traditional fashion.

We were wondering if fashion magazines, that paraphs are less actively committed to a cause, could choose not to talk about the pandemic but instead propose alternative topics as a mean of evasion, light-hearted themes and contents.

Independent publishing has tried to tackle the issue of the pandemic but not necessarily by reporting the most dramatic events but. Instead, they chose to deal with the issue by talking about related topics such as the re-appropriation of space, reviewing the approach to artistic forms. Several magazines have based themselves on this. Black Lives Matter has also been dealt with a lot, because it is an issue that affects the whole world and that cannot be ignored. For mainstream magazines it is easier not to address the problem, to deal with it because it is due in a single issue and then go on as if nothing had happened, that after all that is also an answer, a solution because we must have moments of escape. Not giving answers could be an answer or better a choice because in an editorial office nothing is left to chance, but every choice is motivated and considered.

An independent magazine is more committed and tackles the issues more seriously. Even mainstream publishing has brought out very strong things that have a more powerful and strong message to share.

INTERVIEW: Frabs Journal

HOW THE CORONAVIRUS HAS IMPACTED SECONDARY MARKET FOCUSED GALLERIES

AUTHOR:

Alberto Bemer

FIRST SECTION:
The impacton the gallery sector

SECOND SECTION:
The Italian condition

THIRD SECTION:
The art galleries' panorama

FOURTH SECTION:
The Insiders Point of View

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 has had a heavy impact on the international art world, principally on the economic side. In Italy, the multiple lockdowns have produced an unprecedented crisis in the art gallery sector. The Italian art market, was still struggling to recover from the 2008 crisis, and with the unexpected total shutdown of all the in-presence activities, has aroused peculiar problems. The interviews to three gallerists from three different branches of the secondary market, has pointed out the rooted obstacles in the Italian system. These issues were the subject of the propositions submitted to the government by the Italian gallery association.

INTRODUCTION

Artworks tend to maintain their value over the years and the fluctuation of their prices has very long-time terms. For this reason, Art is commonly considered a 'safe-haven' asset. Goods of this kind are, notably, a worthy form of investment as they have a very controlled form of volatility.

In crisis times, safe-haven investments tend to maintain their value, unlike most of the other types of assets in other, more volatile, market environments (Borowski 2020, 33). As can be seen in the art market reports from 2006 to 2015, the market has, of course, suffered the 'Great Recession' that has affected the global economy since 2007.

However, it has also shown its capability of recover in a limited timeframe the pre-crisis levels and maintained it over the turbulences of the following years (McAndrew 2017, 35). Nevertheless, the economic crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak has unprecedented outcomes. Unlike the past ones, this crisis was not caused by the slump of a specific segment of the global economy. On the contrary, it was generated by a forced shutdown shared by almost every economic sector. So, even in the art market, the crisis made itself heard and aroused some specific reactions.

THE IMPACT ON THE GALLERY SECTOR

Because of the peculiar nature of art goods, the real impact on the market it is hard to be seen in a short time. Therefore, although we can measure some results, effective predictions are impossible to make. Unlike many economic crisis of the past, art galleries have suffered the recent circumstances in a similar way to other economic segments. Their business, indeed, relies heavily on face-to-face interactions and events with a large number of visitors like fairs and exhibitions. The forced period of halt, during the lockdown, and the social distancing have played a crucial role in the economy of art galleries since February 2020. The Art Basel & UBS Report recorded that the 83 per cent of the interviewed galleries have substantially decreased the value of their sales. At the end of the first semester of the year, galleries were caught unprepared by the outbreak of the pandemic: they were forced to close their spaces to the public, and almost all events and fairs were postponed or canceled.

Despite the strong response in terms of state support, one-third of businesses were forced to downsize their staff, with an average loss of four employees per gallery (McAndrews 2020, 22-30). In the first

half of the year, with almost every national government in the world declaring lockdowns and social distancing measures, galleries were forced to shut all the public activities. Their business, therefore, could only rely on private and online sales. In this period, galleries have suffered an average loss of 36 per cent in terms of the value of their sales (McAndrews 2020, 22-30).

THE ITALIAN CONDITION

Anecdotally, Italy seems to be in an even worst situation. Studying in detail the condition of the Italian art market is a challenge since there aren't any institution that carries on methodical reports. Thus, the main, and almost only, reliable source of reliable information remains the Art Basel-UBS art market annual report curated by Clare McAndrews (McAndrews 2021).

However, a recent study on the current situation of art galleries was carried on by the Associazione Nazionale Gallerie d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (ANGAMC), the Italian galleries' association, which counts about 200 associates. This internal survey has highlighted a very dramatic situation. The 40 per cent of the interviewed galleries have reported a loss of around the 70 per cent of their turnover in the first half of 2020, while another 25 per cent have reported a loss between 50 and 70 per cent (Maggi 2020). These percentages are very upsetting, considering that the average European loss in terms of turnover was 28 per cent, according to Art Basel (McAndrews 2021, 59).

There are almost 500 companies in the art market sector in Italy, employing almost 10,000 people both internally and from ancillary businesses. The ANGAMC report stated that almost 45 per cent of them are in a very risky financial position, with the possibility of a permanent closure not so far at the horizon. This eventuality will reduce the already low position of Italian share in the global market, which is, in fact, the 9 per cent of global transactions by volume and less than the 1 per cent by value. This underlines the marginality of the national market and its self-reflective nature (Pirrelli 2020).

THE ART GALLERIES' PANORAMA

Most galleries are located in Northern and Central Italy, with a minority in the South, where they are fewer and smaller. The city of Milan is, without doubt, the main center for contemporary art in the country; galleries are densely clustered inside the city, and, in the last few years, the city was the location of many secondary (in some cases, even primary) branches of galleries from other cities.

Only a part of Italian galleries is devoted exclusively to the secondary market, managing only artworks by artists who passed away at least fifty years ago or trading artworks that have been already on the market. Most art galleries in Italy, and especially the smallest ones, are focused on exhibiting living artists with whom they work, more or less steadily, dealing mainly on the primary market.

Even if in the eyes of the public these realities are fully devoted to promoting new art, relying on the income of the secondary market is a very common practice. As Olav Velthuis stated "most dealers feel reluctant to talk about this part of their business, and conduct these

activities out of sight of visitors in the front room. The reason is that trading on secondary market is as stigmatized as profitable: it makes the gallery resemble commercial establishments rather than cultural exhibition spaces" (Velthuis 2007, 36).

To trade artworks that are already on the market could be lucrative and, in many cases, essential for some galleries that rely on such income to keep the gallery alive, using the earnings that come from the secondary market to fund new projects and their relationships with artists (Velthuis 2012, 23-24). In 2019, dealers operating on both markets had an average split of sales by value of 56 per cent in the primary market and 44 per cent in the secondary market (McAndrews 2020, 86).

This percentage is expected to rise by a few points in the next years, with the spreading of the crisis and its consequences on art commerce. The secondary market, indeed, is a very common form to sustain the economy of the gallery in times of crisis. Collectors tend to invest their money in more established artists in order to lower the risk of their investment. This leads to a limitation in spending on younger artists.

THE INSIDERS POINT OF VIEW

Since aggregated data are few and not so precise, the best way to understand the real condition of secondary market galleries in Italy is to directly ask the gallerists. Hence, for a better view of the entire Italian market, it might be useful to hear the voice of three galleries, each representing a different branch of the market. These galleries come from diverse geographical areas, two from Tuscany and one from Campania, and have a different target in terms of clientele. The investigation over these galleries aims to cover almost all the types of secondary market-focused galleries in Italy, even if each gallery has a slightly different *modus operandi* both in terms of trading and exhibition activity.

By focusing on these three galleries, the intention is to discover what are the main difficulties they are facing, and what are the reforms that the Italian art system needs to recover from this crisis.

All the cases studied are members, or play managerial roles, in the national gallery association (ANGAMC). The first case study is the "Tornabuoni Arte" gallery in Florence. The gallery has a long story: founded in Florence in 1981 by Roberto Casamonti, today counts three exhibition venues in Italy and three abroad.

The founder's father was a collector of 19th-century Italian art, the son, Roberto, followed his footsteps becoming a collector himself and even opening a museum in Florence with his private collection.

Tornabuoni Arte is one of the biggest galleries in Italy. Its activity focus on internationally renowned artists like Rauschenberg or Basquiat and blue-chip Italian artists (Tornabuoni Arte 2020). During the pandemic lockdowns, the gallery has had to close their public spaces and lay off their employees but not dismiss any of them. The gallery has maintained all its staff and offices. The only headquarter that has suffered a closure was the London one, which would have been closed anyway due to difficulties caused by Brexit. Fairs have always played a crucial role in the economy of the gallery. These events are where most of the contacts with clients occur. They constitute an important opportunity to expand its international clientele. The missing of such a vital business occasion has

had a huge impact on the gallery's economy. Roberto Casamonti, however, is very confident that the market will recover very soon. He feels fervency in the market, especially in people who see art as an investment. In his words:

> "Art has always been a safe haven, so, in difficult moments there has always been confident in the art market, even if we do not see already this trend".

He believes that foreign investors will come back soon to invest in the Italian market. This is a good thing, but he thinks that the real reason could be the lowering of prices of Italian more historical art, so he has to stay alert. These economic conditions are a good opportunity not only for investors, but also for galleries who can invest in buying new artworks for their secondary market. On this topic Casamonti stated:

> "The artwork commerce is strictly linked to the historical conditions in which we live. We must consider that in times of troubles the market suffers fluctuations, and the supply and demand dynamic make possible to buy prestigious artworks".

Indeed, he took the opportunity to invest and purchase some good new artworks which, in ordinary times, he might not have been able to purchase. Tornabuoni Arte has always had an important portfolio of foreign customers, and overseas sales are a big part of their business.

In Italy, there have always been very strict rules regarding the export of art goods (D.lgs 42/2004, Capo V). After years of dispute, in 2017, the government modified the export regulations, narrowing the gap between Italy and other European nations. Artworks below 13,500 € in value and done less than 70 years ago can be freely traded.

For artworks that are beyond these limits, the state can exercise the preemptive right of buying or may prevent the good from leaving the state's territory, because it could be of cultural relevance for the country (D.lgs 42/2004; Pirrelli 2017, 22).

Casamonti thinks that the government must let commerce run more freely with less bureaucracy, especially with the goal of reviving the economy. In his case, an even less restricted set of rules regarding the export of artworks, like most of the other European nations have, could really make our market internationally competitive. Besides, he takes a strong position against the resale right, the law which gives artists and their heirs a percentage on every sale after the first one. This tax must then be added up to the VAT, which is one of the highest of the entire Eurozone.

In his opinion, the elimination, or reduction, of this rule could make more competitive prices empowering the market of Italian artists. According to Casamonti, these latter proposals would certainly help a lot the emerging realities that have opened in recent years which may now be in trouble (Roberto Casamonti, interviewed by the author, 2 June 2020 and 11 July 2021).

VAT rates and resale right are two of the many topics over which ANGAMC has suggested radical changes to the government in its letter on May 6th, 2020. On VAT rates, the debate was carried on among many countries in Europe. The German gallery association (BVDG) submitted to the national government a proposal for a unique European reduced fare for the art

market since, until now, each state could impose its own rates, with significant inequalities (BVDG 2021). This proposal was welcomed by the minister and brought by her to the European commission for a formal proposal on May 18th, 2021 (FEAGA 2021). Unlike Germany, in Italy no answer came from the government to the two letters submitted by ANGAMC.

The gallery association, whose aims are the strengthening of the Italian art market, creating a bond between galleries, and the undertaking of actions aimed at the proposal of legislative measures to help trade in the Italian art market, is presently chaired by Mauro Stefanini, founder of the Open Art gallery in Prato [Fig. 1].

The Open Art gallery was born in 2001. Since then, has concentrated its activity in two different lines of work: exhibiting mostly abstract expressionism and gesture painting of Scialoja, Schneider, Jenkins, Marca-Relli, Brooks, and Francis; and the Italian sculpture of the last century, exhibiting, among others, Somaini, Marini, Staccioli and Ghermandi (Galleria Open Art 2020). Questioned about the health of the gallery, Giovanni Carfagnini, Stefanini's assistant, stated that Italian galleries are already coming from a difficult period never having fully recovered from the aftermath of the 2007 crisis. Like other luxury businesses, the art market suffered the effects of crisis slightly later related to other sectors, and it was still in a slow expansion. Compared to the same trimester of 2019, the turnaround loss was about 50-60 per cent in 2020. The biggest impact on the business was certainly the impossibility of having eye-to-eye contact with clients and collectors.

But also, the missed income from fairs, which will not take place for a long time, and represents almost 60-70 per cent of the total turnover. Is it to be considered, however, that also the costs of the gallery's business have decreased. So, the fall in turnover was matched by a fall in costs, reducing the activity of the gallery without compromising its survival and maintaining stable the revenues. According to Carfagnini, the lack of fairs during these two years will bring collectors and art buyers directly to galleries and auction houses. With precarious sanitary conditions, people are discouraged or unable to attend public events like fairs. So, it could be counterproductive to take part in a fair where the audience flow will be minimum. In these conditions, an important factor fails:

> the enthusiasm of being involved in bargaining a piece of art is a crucial part of the entire art market, while, anxieties can discourage people from spending their money on art, even if they are in the position to do so (McAndrews 2020, 60).

Galleries activities in this period have moved energetically online, Open Art has done so too. They have renewed their website and have their communication strategies on social networks. They have also strengthened their online presence, especially on Artnet, one of the most used trading platforms for artworks. The gallery already had a presence on social media and online platforms, but the crisis was the occasion to strengthen these tools. This medium, as Giovanni said, needs particular care, because the audience is different and more international, compared to the people that visit the gallery in person. So, the gallery activity is more focused on internationally renowned artists over the internet and more on nationally relevant artists in the gallery spaces.

Considering the number of fairs, galleries, and auction

houses in Italy, the art market is almost saturated (Pirrelli 2016, 21). Dealers are many, while buyers and collectors are few. According to Carfagnini, one fact that could really change the Italian panorama could be the expansion of the users of the Art Bonus. Following the current legislation, companies can deduct 65 per cent of money they spent in public patronage from their taxes; expenses like sponsorships and restorations addressed to public institutions (Artbonus 2020). In the proposal made by the gallery, they suggested expanding the recipients of this incentive not only to the public institutions. In this way, private entrepreneurs would be encouraged to buy art getting a 35 per cent tax reduction on the artworks they make publicly available. Carfagnini stated that: 'in Italy, the desire to invest in art has always been there, but it was discouraged by the heavy bureaucracy of our legislative apparatus.

Art Bonus could be the right spring to investments freeing buyers from the psychological block of not making a good investment when we all know that art has always been a safe haven.

In the gallerist's intention, all the proposals the gallery has made are not to be viewed individually but as a whole. The proposals want to put generic attention to the gallery's world, not only on their business side but mostly considering galleries one of the main producers of art culture in the country (Giovanni Carfagnini, interview by the author, 23 June 2020, and 3 July 2021). The Open Art gallery played a pivotal role in drafting the proposition to submit to the government as the gallery association.

Therefore, they considered every aspect of the Italian art market, starting with smaller realities. These could find themselves in tangible economic troubles in the near future, and they could struggle to participate in the main national fairs. Participation in fairs, alongside the purchase of artworks for the secondary market, are the principal outgoings for galleries and one of the most fruitful business occasions.

Missing these events for companies in monetary difficulties is financially dangerous.

In the south of the country, the number of galleries is really tight. Most of them are strongly focused on the primary market. As we have seen above, some realities rely on the income of the secondary market to survive even if, to the general public, they appear totally devoted to the artists' production. One of the galleries of this kind is Paola Verrengia gallery in Salerno. The gallery was born in 1990 under the name of "Fovea Centralis" changing it only after three years when Verrengia took over the company, of which she was already a member. During its 30 years of activity, the gallery has exhibited artists from many of the principal art movements of post-war and contemporary international and Italian art. Its exhibition activity is focused on the primary market organizing mainly solo shows of artists with whom the gallery works regularly. Besides this kind of exhibitions, once a year, or twice in some cases, Verrengia arranges thematic exhibitions with artworks from the gallery's collection and some privates.

In her own activity, Verrengia does not feel a real difference between primary and secondary markets, having worked with many artists for thirty years. According to her, in her type of galleries, this is mostly a theoretical distinction made by economic researchers. Besides, the secondary market represents about 40 per cent of the turnover. This

percentage is expected to rise in the coming years, but without putting aside the focus to artists' production. It is normal in times of crisis to orientate us to the secondary market, and market request is also more focused on established artists. So, many realities will increase its activity on the secondary market but certainly without transforming the nature of the gallery.

Small galleries like Verrengia's ones have suffered a lot from the closures. The relationship with the public has progressively fallen apart. Only a few people entered the gallery, and, in the city, the fear is still high.

However, Paola has never given up. She is working on a project that will bring the gallery outside its spaces back to the public. This project will occupy the city's main public spaces with video art projections, rehabilitating the cultural heritage of the historical center of Salerno.

The current economic situation has hit the small gallery hard. Not being able to arrange exhibition and without fairs, the activity of the gallery was almost stopped. Indeed, Paola, has had to dismiss her assistant and was forced to work all alone. What weighs most on the gallery activity is the absence of fairs. Alongside the participation to many fairs abroad, these business opportunites represented almost 50 per cent of the activity turnover. These were occasions to work side by side with galleries from other European countries. This comparison clearly presents the limits of our national market. Dealing with the same artists, a German and an Italian gallery have very different costs over the same kind of artworks. This is because the Italian tax system is a greater burden, counting VAT close to double that of Germany, and the percentage of resale right to be added.

Dealing with fairs lately became an opportunity for Italian galleries to act as an union. In order to obtain the cancellation of the 2020 edition of the Miart fair, held in Milan, national participants joined in an appeal to the organizers. Verrengia appreciated this initiative very much, mostly because it is the first time that so many galleries talk to each other and take decisions together. This need to be united in order to achieve a result for the entire market is also underlined by Paola Verrengia as vice-president of the national gallery association, which, in the last year saw the participation of 35 new members. In this capacity, she highlights the proposals that the association has made, which, in her opinion, are all vital for the Italian art market. Moreover, she complains that the government did not consider enough all the cultural activities, including art galleries (Paola Verrengia interviewed by the author, 22 June 2020, and 8 July 2021).

CONCLUSIONS

The health of the Italian art market is critical. The crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed all the criticalities of the national economic system. Many business companies who deal with art are and will be at risk of closure, although most of the real effects of the crisis have yet to manifest themselves. Despite the extraordinary conditions of the recent years, the reasons for the gallery crisis in Italy will not be rooted only in the trauma of the lockdown or in the inability to make fairs and public events but it is more due to the nature of the Italian system.
When, as we have seen, the global art market was on continuous expansion,

reaching unprecedented height in terms of value and volume of transactions, the Italian market was still recovering from a slump that occurred ten years ago. The only way to make this crisis as short as possible is to make the Italian market competitive, closing the gap with other European countries in terms of regulations, and also, by stimulating as much as possible the internal demand for Italian contemporary art.

POST SCRIPTUM

Since the time the article was written (July 2021) there have been some developments about the relationship between the art gallery sector and the public institutions. ANGAMC alongside the Gruppo Apollo, an association that reunite auction houses, art galleries and antiquarians, have obtained the formation of a permanent table with the ministry of culture to discuss the various problem that affect the art market in Italy.[1] Although it has just been created this negotiation table has achieved the willingness to rediscuss the fiscal profile of the market. A law proposal to be submitted to the parliament is underway.

In the May 2022 ANGAMC has renovated its governing council and a new president was elected. Mauro Stefanini, who was unanimously praised for his enormous contribution to the association, was succeeded by Andrea Sirio Ortolani, from the Osart Gallery in Milano. The new president has stated: “We want to continue and increase, thanks to the foundations previously laid, the dialogue with the institutions to ensure that Italian galleries can find conditions and tools to grow and compete internationally”.[2] Paola Verrengia was confirmed as a member of the governing council of the association.

1 Michela Moro, "Finalmente Franceschini ascolta il Gruppo Apollo", *Il Giornale Dell'Arte*, December 14, 2021. https://www.ilgiornaledellarte.com/articoli/finalmente-franceschini-ascolta-il-gruppo-apollo/137768.html

2 ANGAMC, "Cambio ai vertici dell'ANGAMC", May 12, 2022. https://www.angamc.com/news/cambio-ai-vertici-dell%E2%80%99angamc.html

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AUCTION HOUSES AND THE PANDEMIC

Pros and Cons of Online Sales

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FIRST SECTION:
What happened
to the market in 2020

SECOND SECTION:
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ABSTRACT

Following will be an analysis on how the art market changed during the pandemic. The study case will be on auction houses and on how they reacted by changing their approach to sales. In fact, they went from postponing their auctions to developing an online (sometimes hybrid) strategy. The essay analyses the development of the situation from 2020 to 2021.

INTRODUCTION

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, the art market was already experiencing a crisis. In fact, it shrank by 5 percent in 2019 when the total amount of sales in the art world decreased to 64 billion dollars. while in 2018 the total sale amounted to 67.4 billion dollars (Sutton 2020). Overall, all the three biggest art markets – USA, China and the UK – saw a partial decline in 2019 which was partly due to the Brexit deal and the China trade war.

This loss was also experienced by auction houses, which had seen a 17 percent drop in auction sales since 2018. "Last year saw a total of 24.2 billion in sales of fine art, antiques, and decorative art at public auctions"(Sutton, 2020). In particular, auction sales suffered a drop that was considerable for the auction market with lots sold for more than 10 million dollars accounting for 20 per cent of all auction sales by value in 2019, compared to 28 per cent of all auction sales in 2018.

So year by year auction houses are experiencing a "drop in major lots". Hence, starting from the fact that 2019 registered a big fall in terms of year value, Mc Andrew said, the market was going quite well considering the fact that it basically declined (Sutton 2020). The most interesting factor relies on the fact that in 2019 private sales at Christie's and Phillip's increased. In fact, Christie's earned 811 million dollars more, while Phillip's 172 million dollars. At Sotheby's, private sales amounted to 1 billion dollars. "What we saw in the previous years, like 2016, is that when the general context is kind of uncertain and there's a lot of anxiety, people tend to either hold back completely, especially at the high end, or they do things that are perceived to be slightly safer, like selling things privately", McAndrew said (Sutton, 2020). As auction houses' executives explained, three primary benefits have been driving collectors towards private sales in recent years, and even more in 2020: discretion, speed of transaction and price control (Cohen 2020).
Sellers and buyers are comfortable with transacting online up to 1 million dollars.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MARKET IN 2020

Over the first few months of 2020, private sales at auction houses generated much more profit, mostly because public sales were no longer possible. It is valid to say that the online option had a huge success for collectors who kept buying. Sotheby's, for example, increased the number of viewers in 2020:

> in fact, while in the previous year the online visitors had been 40,000, in 2020 (up to June) the website received over 150,000 views.

Also, Christie's private sales in the first quarter of 2020 were up to 120

per cent compared to the same period in 2019 (Cohen 2020). In 2020, big auction houses like Sotheby's and Christie's postponed their auctions.

Some offices reopened in Asia and Europe, but they were still closed in the US. These two giants in particular had been accused for many years of being resilient to change. So, it is said that at that time they were forced to adopt changes. With the Covid crisis there was a shift to private sales, so auction houses, unlike fairs for example, which were experiencing a huge loss, continued to sell privately.

Christie's doubled the number of private sales between April and July compared to the previous year's private sales during the same period. At the same time, Sotheby's made 70 million dollars since March only in private sales (Rooks 2020a). Many argued that all that profit in private sales was not only due to the Covid crisis, but had already started in 2019, when the market was not as strong as before. In fact, according to the 2020 edition of 'Art Basel' on the Art Market Report written by Clare McAndrew, private sales at Christie's increased by 24 per cent from 2018 to 2019 (up to 811 million dollars, which was 15 per cent of the company's total sales). Similarly, Sotheby's private sales in 2019 reached 990 million dollars, which represented 17 per cent of the company's total revenue of that year (Cohen 2020). Private sales are important in a different way, because they allow auction houses to answer clients' needs more autonomously, while auctions are driven by sellers.

By collecting data about the online activities, it is evident that major auction houses' online strategies are similar. In fact, by comparing the approaches of Christie's, Sotheby's and Phillip's, it can be noticed that they all perceived online sales and online biddings as a compensation for the impossibility of in person affairs. As the fairs, they all have active profiles on social networks, catching the attention not only of the usual clients, but especially creating an online network of interested people who may not have the possibility of buying. Unlike the others, Phillip's didn't activate online VIP passes, demonstrating a more open-mined approach. Only Christie's offered online viewing rooms, but Sotheby's decided to keep the attention high through online lectures and a hybrid approach that combined online activities and the first post-Covid events. And what about the small auction houses?

Some of them focused on more traditional sales because they could not afford to cancel auctions. For example, Bassenge is a small auction house in Berlin that sells prints, drawings and books. "Bassenge is more focused on selling books right now. The showrooms can still be visited but by appointment and with the right precautions, such as masks and gloves". Online they hosted a virtual tour of their salerooms, although this allowed to show only the things hanging on the walls. Jennifer Augustyniak, head of the photography department, says that the majority of the usual clients were still buying, and the ones who could not come in were the collectors from France and the UK.

She said that over the years they had built a net of regular customers who were loyal to the business. "This confidence may be one of the company's most valuable assets during the crisis". This statement also underlines the importance of trusting relationships in the art world, especially for small companies (Rooks 2020a). Auctions are usually governed by strict rules. For instance, during the pandemic, Bassenge was limited to nine live bidders and even the staff handling the phones was

not in the room. So, while before the crisis the bidding room was normally very crowded, in that period only nine bidders were allowed to be in the salesroom at one time. Broadly speaking, there are two main ways through which auction houses make money:

> they take a commission from the seller and charge the buyer a fee on top of the hammer price.

Of course, an item that remains unsold does not generate profit.
A positive thing of small auction houses is their adaptability to the times, while their bigger competitors are often tied to old selling systems that do not point in a new direction. What Thimoty Rocks suggests in his article is that small auction houses should invest in technologies and build an online system. Despite the fact that up to 2020 the small 'fish' had the online advantage, there is still a deep gulf between small auction houses like Bassenge and Christie's and Sotheby's, which are basically an assurance brand. Selling things for a few thousand euros or even a book for €140,000 is not the same as buying multimillion-dollar artworks by Monet, Picasso or Francis Bacon sight unseen (Rooks 2020a).

Other auction houses such as Clive Emson, Britain's biggest independent regional firm of land and property auctioneers, held all their bids online. They live streamed all the March sales for a week.

James Emson, the managing director, said that "by live streaming our auctions, prospective bidders will be able to bid remotely online, by proxy or telephone" (Lane 2020). This analysis takes as an example the two major auction houses, Christie's and Sotheby's, in order to see which was the reaction of the market during the crisis. It is equally important to give attention to the regional auction houses around the world. The reader will find more specific information in the Antiques Trade Gazzette article titled *Coronavirus: latest changes to auction and fairs dates*.
The article goes through a list of events that were affected by the crisis and is very accurate in analysing all the changes linked to small auction houses as well.

2021'S SILVER LINING

Auction houses have seen a boost and most of them are now back to pre-pandemic financial stability. In fact, auction houses from Asia are recovering and the three pillars – Christie's, Sotheby's, and Phillips – have seen an increase by 405 per cent in sales during the second quarter of 2021, between the months of April and June (Villa 2021a).

Indeed, the second quarter of 2020 was the worst year after 2008 in financial terms. According to Christie's CEO Guillaume Cerutti, in 2020 auction houses struggled because "there was a very strong demand but the supply was more challenging" (Villa 2021a).

Recently, due to the fact that the market has basically returned to its pre-pandemic levels, there has been an ever-increasing demand from Asian clients. Chinese auctions have seen a peak this year, with 1.2 billion dollars (Villa 2021a). The USA, on the other hand, suffered a 16 per cent loss on sales in 2019. 2020 was the year of change:

> Charles Steward, CEO of Sotheby's, asserts that now "we know we can operate basically in a fully remote environment.

It is a question of looking at the adaptation and asking which portions of

that were really innovative, which do we want to make strategic and which were just trying to cope in the moment" (Maneker 2021).

Another auction house, Phillips, claims to have earned more than half a billion dollars in the first half of 2021, with a 25 per cent increase as compared to 2019 sales. The total profit from private sales amounted to 90.7 million dollars, with the auction sales in constant rise as well (15 per cent more than 2019 sales). As mentioned above, the Asian market is in constant demand and its growth is helping the global market. Houses' sales in Asia have increased by 107 per cent (Kinsella 2021).

Sotheby's list of eight predictions for 2021 foresaw that the Asian market would continue to grow because of the completely new buyers, which started investing in 2020, belonging to a different buyer base (Maneker 2021). The Asian market recovered pretty well, considering that when the pandemic started it suffered a major economic collapse. It was especially hard for the Chinese art market, which suffered a loss of 80 per cent (Benhamou-Huet, 2020a). In particular, Hong Kong is at the centre of the growing Asian art market, turning into a major art-hub. In total, China, the US and the UK accounted for over 80 per cent of the global art sales by value (Rooks 2020b). Overall, as mentioned above, auction houses have experienced a huge benefit from the constant demand for luxury goods ever since the start of the pandemic, with private sales reaching high peaks. This is partly due to the shift to online auctions, which have attracted a completely new audience (Kinsella 2021).

Sotheby's CEO Steward asserts that pre-Covid habits have changed and he is not sure that everything will return as it was. In fact, the auction house's shift to the online format caused quite a stir at the beginning. In his opinion, the online format makes it harder for users to understand who the experts are and why they should talk to them.

He also underlines the fact that online sales were not the only measure adopted to face the pandemic, although they were the most visible one. In its list of the eight predictions for the art market in 2021, Sotheby's mentioned the fact that the art world longed for in-person relationships and communication, which would be given priority once things would return to normal. Locations and events would also change, as it is expected a greater demand for exclusive events rather than large gatherings, together with the digital element (Maneker 2021).

The virtual world of auction houses has opened the door to many different buyers, along with a rapid technological transformation that has made transparency and communication easier on many levels, with the local now being global. Hybrid auctions, which were first introduced during the pandemic, are now taking place on a regular basis and will be kept as part of the selling system as they are very effective.

As mentioned above, the top three auction houses have returned to their pre-pandemic levels of selling, also thanks to Asian clients who have contributed to the lots. In terms of market share, Asia's growth is also far ahead of the US, the traditional leaders of the market, which instead have seen a 16 per cent drop in sales (Villa 2021b). At the beginning of the pandemic, the main question was:

> if many fairs have been postponed, will auction houses benefit from it?

Sotheby's private deals went surprisingly well and, according to Allan Schwartzman, vice president of Sotheby's, there are generally two kinds

of collectors: the ones that are speculative by nature and see opportunities in times of crisis and those who are exclusively driven by the compulsion of collecting (Benhamou-Huet 2020c).
The first ones normally buy in private sales, as they see new opportunities arising. Overall, in Schwartzman's opinion, there is much less impulse to buy. Auction houses had the advantage of knowing how to hold online sales, as they had been doing it for much longer than galleries and fairs for example. Philippe Garner, a Sotheby's auctioneer, says they operate on the principle of constant adaptation, especially in times of crisis, by managing sellers' expectations and setting reasonable estimates (Benhamou-Huet 2020b). Fairs instead are having a harder time going online because it is not only about random acquisitions, but also about the relationships between dealers and buyers. At the same time, it is also true that many prefer to have more time to surf the internet without having the pressure to decide on the spot. Collector Kylie Ying says that during the quarantine she participated in online auctions, browsed galleries and online viewing rooms. She is very satisfied with the online version as it gives her much more time to think about what she is going to acquire, with the perks that she can also bid more (Artsy editors 2020).

Overall, the art world has not been immune to the impact of Covid-19 and, while the initial response from institutions was to close their doors, gradually new methods were developed, mostly involving the online shift. High-end auction houses dramatically accelerated their online sales programme to ensure an alternative but solid method of selling. In fact, when the digital became the only option, even Christie's and Sotheby's, who were known to be reluctant to the online shift, opted for it and increased the number of sales. "Figures reported by ArtTactic would suggest this response to the pandemic was well received, as total online sales revenue increased by nearly 500 per cent compared to 2019 for Christie's, Sotheby's and Phillips in the first half of 2020" (Crozier 2021).

In general, the sudden online shift was forced upon institutions for their 'survival'. Over the past years, auction houses were mainly reluctant to go online, mostly because of their attachment to physical places and interpersonal relationships with clients. Many clients that bought from online auctions were already affiliated with that auction house. Sotheby's 70 per cent buyers and bidders were already clients of the house before the beginning of the pandemic. On the bright side, the auction house also reported a 30 per cent increase of buyers that are under 40, as the digital is an easier way for young people to access sales (Crozier 2021). The most well-known online sales battle took place at Sotheby's, when Francis Bacon's *Triptych* was sold for 84 million dollars.

This transaction in particular proved that online buyers were really confident about bidding high sums. In May, Giorgio Morandi's *Natura Morta* was sold for 1.6 million in Sotheby's "Impressionist and Modern Art Day Sale Online" and Ivan Aivazovsky's *The Bay of Naples* was sold for 2.3 million in June. Luxury goods are the most sought after by people when buying online. A bracelet by Cartier was sold for 1.3 million dollars in April, along with a Rolex that was sold for the same price (Sotheby's 2020). The very high sum of 421 million in sales was totalled by Christie's on its live-streamed auction that took place on 10 July. On the other hand, buying and bidding online is "less exciting" than doing it in person, says Anna Brady from the *Art Newspaper*. The fact that trusting relationships

lie at the basis of the art market makes the online transition harder.

Scott Reyburn, who writes about the art market for the *New York Times* as well as the *Art Newspaper*, agrees that this aspect was the reason why the art market was way behind in terms of digital sales and transformation, if compared to other markets. To provide an example, the music industry makes 80 per cent of music sales through online streaming, while in the art market, in 2019, "online sales represented just 9 per cent of the 64 billion international sales" (Reyburn 2020). There has been a considerable change if we consider that in 2020 artists exclusively depended on the online medium to sell their works. Even if some private deals were going well, auction houses, like the rest of the art market, experienced a huge financial loss. As Anna Brady points out, in April 2019 Phillip's, Sotheby and Christie's made 550 million in their live auctions, while in April 2020 they took 44 million. This means a loss of 90 per cent.

Many proposed a solution which would consist in projecting a live auction with no one in the room except for the guy proposing the bids, so the buyers can just watch it and call. This solution was already adopted in the past by Sotheby's, for example.

Another aspect that was mentioned before, and that must be taken into consideration, is the fact that periods of economic crisis usually generate also opportunities for the investors: *when the market is volatile that's when many investors will step in* says Brett Gorvy from the Levy Gorvy Gallery (Benhamou-Huet, 2020a).

Allan Schwartzman confirms that, looking back at previous crises, such as the 2008 economic collapse, Sotheby's had acquired many artworks. "In 2008 some of my clients were able to acquire some of the works now present in their collection because there were some people that had to sell things that otherwise wouldn't have been on the market, so we were able to benefit from that" (Benhamou-Huet, 2020c). And he goes on saying "I hear a lot of collectors say to buy art now actually makes a lot of sense because you have more time to decide and negotiate."

If the financial market shrinks, the art market grows. "Back in 2008, when people were really cautious with their money, we did acquire many artworks" (Benhamou-Huet 2020c). This attitude of spotting opportunities has been recurrent in previous crises as well. One of the most famous cases concerns the sale of Van Gogh's *Irises* painting back in 1987. The artwork, which had belonged for a long time to the writer Octave Mirbeau, was put on sale at Sotheby's New York for 53.9 million dollars, which was the higher amount ever paid for a painting, less than one month after the massive stock market crash on 19 October. The painting was acquired by Allan Bond, who could not pay for it and in 1990 sold it to the J. P. Getty Museum in Los Angeles (Abrams 2015). The gallery David Zwirner asserts that the pre-pandemic art market was getting out of hand with its crazy prices and that the digital has actually helped in that sense.

However, in May the total record of sales registered between Christie's, Sotheby's and Phillips has decreased by 97 per cent (Crozier 2021). Despite this, there have been positive takeaways from online auctions that have changed the way the market is perceived, which has been the most revolutionary aspect during the pandemic:

> the hybrid model is now part of the selling system and will probably remain for good in order to meet the demand of the buyers.

NEW ALLIANCES: ART FAIRS AND AUCTION HOUSES

Since almost all the world's leading art fairs were canceled, moved online or limited to reserved events, galleries' sales considerably diminished in 2020, as the Art Basel Report *The impact of Covid-19 on the Gallery Sector* highlights (McAndrew 2020). Even if the report is a midyear survey, published in September 2020, it offers a comprehensive view on the economic crisis that the art market was living. Galleries' losses were a consequence of the postponed art fairs, whose online versions did not compensate in-person events. Instead, the world's leading auction houses were able to survive through online auctions and events, which had definitely more affluence than online fairs' initiatives. In the second part of 2020, it became evident that fairs would not be able to face the emergency alone and survive to make new editions in the next years. The awareness of the gravity and the unexpected duration of the crisis brought new alliances aimed at surviving:

> between auction houses and galleries, galleries and art fairs, art fairs and auction houses.

As a way to support galleries during the pandemic, Sotheby's auction house announced the "Buy-now" partnership with the New York galleries (Gaskin 2020):

> in order to help collectors to have access to artworks and create its own galleries' network, the auction house introduced an online marketplace where it managed buy-now transactions between buyers and galleries.

On the other hand, big galleries could be a good support for young fairs, as did the mega-gallery Hauser & Wirth which sustained the "Basel June Fair", hosting it in its site and providing viewing rooms for the products.

> The event was in collaboration also with *ArtReview*, which integrated the offer with contents, talks and digital studio visit. Similarly, the cancelled "Volta New York 2019" was hosted by David Zwirner's spaces (Cascone 2019), the world's leading gallery which supported, during the pandemic, some younger New York galleries with the online "Platform: New York" in April 2020 (Kinsella, 2020).

The Platform project provided galleries with online viewing rooms and virtual sales spaces, without asking participatory or commission fees. After the New York success, other editions were organised during the health emergency with the aim of helping small young galleries which risked closure (Maida 2020). The African Art Fairs "1:54" took place in London in October 2020 in a reduced version, integrated by an online edition in collaboration with Christie's and Artsy, whose platforms hosted online sales and viewing rooms (Barrilà 2020). The physical fair opened as the only Autumn international 'offline' art fair in London, with great satisfaction of its director, Touria El Glaoui:

> "Given the incredible challenges and uncertainty posed by the global Covid-19 pandemic, we are delighted to have been able to find a way to welcome visitors back to our spiritual home at Somerset House in London this October, whilst also amplifying our online presence in partnership with Christie's to ensure that art lovers from all over the world will be able to join us too" (Shurvell 2020).

Another Christie's important partnership is the one with the Paris Biennial.

The fair took place online in September 2020 on Christie's platform (Harris 2020), but it didn't have the success that Christie's expected. For the cross-selling auction, the fair entrusted the 91 most important artworks to Christie's, but only 21 were sold, yielding to the auction house only one fifth of the expected revenue (Biglia 2020). The event was characterised by a new hybrid formula:

> lots were presented in virtual booths, but they were visible both online and physically at the gallery who owned the piece.

This was completed by a programme of talks and the special installation *Aloalo* by the non-profit organisation Azé (Roncati, 2021). It is not possible to state whether it was the new method or the quality of pieces to cause the low income. Anyway, the president of the Biennial, Georges De Jonckheere, defined the project as "innovative and brave", since it provided the fair with international visibility and represented the possibility of improving online selling strategies (Biglia, 2020). Despite the low profit, it seems that the event was a success in demonstrating the advantages of partnerships and experimenting new hybrid formats of art fair.

Furthermore, partnerships between auction houses were considered an occasion to carry on special projects. Christie's and China Guardian announced a partnership in April 2020 (Christie's Official Site, 2020b):

> it should have led to "2020+", a series of sales and exhibitions to innovate the Christie's auction in Shanghai in September 2020.

Unfortunately, both the auction and the events were cancelled because of the pandemic, but it may be in 2021 (Christie's Official Site, 2020c). Instead, Christie's auction in Hong Kong from 27 November to 5 December was really successful:

> not only did it establish the auction house as a global platform for international sales of 20th and 21st Century Art (Christie's Official Site, 2020a), but it also demonstrated the resilience of the eastern art market during the health emergency.

Besides these new alliances between actors of the art market, there are also partnerships aimed at raising patrimony through selling actions. The MCH group is the Switzerland manager of some of the world's leading art fairs, such as 'Art Basel' and 'Baselworld', and it is quoted on the Zurich stock exchange. The group was already in difficulty before the Covid-19 crisis, because of the resizing of 'Baselworld' (Terlizzi, 2020), and then it was heavily hit by the health emergency, which involved fairs, particularly 'Art Basel', at first postponed to December 2020 and then definitely cancelled (MCH Group, 2020). To avoid bankruptcy, the group announced in June 2020, and then confirmed in November, the decision to let the investment company of James Murdoch – the Lupa System – enter its capital, as a "defence and attempt to relaunch" (Terlizzi, 2020). The pandemic emergency raised a new sustainability in the market, as different actors started collaborating in partnerships to face the emergency and to assure their existence in the next difficult years. As Saara Pritchard, Senior Specialist of Contemporary Art at Sotheby's, said:

> "By uniting our different strengths, we believe this type of cooperative arrangement can be a model for success not only during the short-term, but also as a long-term reciprocal project to support all levels of the market" (Gaskin 2020).

On the contrary, Georges De Jonckheere considered the use of auction

houses' platforms by galleries a "temporary solution", while they waited for real art fairs (Biglia 2020). It is not possible right now to know if these market alliances will remain in the future of the art system, but they certainly represent a good compromise to immediately face the current economic crisis: unity is strength.

CONCLUSION

It has been shown how auction houses and the art market have developed during and after the pandemic. If initially sales drastically dropped, there was a quick recovery right after. Auction houses have introduced many positive innovations, like hybrid auctions that include a broader public, but there are also negative consequences, such as the incapability to rely on human interactions like before.

The shift of the market to other continents and the influence of the Asian market are also crucial to the economic investigation, since it represents a shift while the US market is decreasing. The important thing is that the market has changed its ways of communicating throughout the pandemic, and the new ways are now set and are more likely to stay. It was about time to update the old system Gallery-Auction Houses-Fairs. Let's see what the future will bring.

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ART FAIRS AND COVID-19

Issues and Problems of Going Online

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FIRST SECTION:
Sanitary emergency and art fairs

SECOND SECTION:
2020: the reaction of art fairs

THIRD SECTION:
2020: fairs online activities in time of social distancing

ABSTRACT

The current economic crisis - caused by Covid-19 pandemic - has inevitably influenced the art world. Particularly, art fairs have been seriously affected by social distance, which has not allowed physical events with large turnout for almost two years now. The only way to limit the damage was moving the fairs online, changing all the paradigms of the art fair itself and allowing an ostensible democratization of contemporary art.

Through an accurate analysis, the present essay points out when and how art fairs started to use online tools and what are the opinions about the new online tactics in art business. Moreover, it tracks the developing and adopting of different digital strategies to exhibit and sell artworks online during the pandemic. It offers an overview of the worst year of the pandemic - the 2020 - starting from the lockdown, in March.

The whole reflection finishes with a comment on the first months of 2021, forecasting a possible future scenario for art fairs.

INTRODUCTION

We are experiencing one of the worst crises that was ever written in history books and, according to economist Kristalina Georgieva, this has been the worst economic crisis to ever happen since the Great Depression of 1930 (*BBC News* 2020). April 2020 has been called the "black month" of the year because unemployment reached its global peak; travel restrictions forced the tourism and business trips to stop ; airline companies reduced drastically the number of flights; importation and exportation are facing the reduction of industrial activity and the regulation of movements (Jones, Palumbo and Brown 2021).

> *In these exceptionally troubled times, with part of the planet living in confinement in response to the life-threatening nature of the pandemic, as the entire world comes to a standstill, it might seem inappropriate to talk about the trivialities of the art market* (**Benhamou-Huet 2020c**).

In the almost incredible situation of a global pandemic, all the gears of the economic system need to adapt, even if they are struggling to survive in a changing world, facing new needs brought forward by different concepts of time and social distance. Even if "[t]he crisis (which is) sweeping the world today and affecting the economy and the art market is unique and unprecedented" (Benhamou-Huet 2020b), it shows that in time of crisis art does not follow the economic trend:

> it is a countercyclical asset, a product which can be sold even in difficult economic periods (Benhamou-Huet 2020c).

To face all the restrictions caused by the pandemic, the art world was forced to move to a display manner which was not taken into much consideration before: online. This shift became necessary due to the coronavirus limitations not only for the art industry but for all those industries that involve an artistic creation. This analysis aims to show which steps the art world has taken towards an inevitable online presence. As Scott Reyburn argues, the art system remained unchanged for many centuries,

focusing on exclusive relationships and networking (Reyburn 2020).

On the one hand, the shift online seems to enlarge the audience of art communication and buyers, offering the possibility to participate actively in events and sales to people outside the art world. New selling strategies and online visualization of artworks provide easier access to art information, making people feel closer to this exclusive world (Tabacchi, Diamond and Gustafsson 2020). On the other hand, some marketing online strategies, such as VIP passes, prevent some people from accessing more private biddings or sales. Therefore, accessibility remains a taboo in the art world:

> free access to the non-exclusive side of the art market, whereas VIP accesses are reserved to the élite, the most loyal and established actors.

The analysis starts by collecting data on the reaction of art fairs. As main distributors of artworks, together with the auction houses, their role is crucial for the survival of the market in times of crisis, and their strategies are a valid example of the adaptability and flexibility of the art business. The data clearly show the current volatility of the art market: tables and graphs are reporting information that could change rapidly, overturning or confirming the conclusions.

To define the different approaches to the shift online, it is possible to base the investigation on some online strategies of the art market:

- Through online sales it is possible for the buyers to both visualize the prizes of the artworks and to buy them;
- Online advertising on social networks allows the art world to reach a larger audience; at the same time, art organizations need a team constantly focused on the communication pages, stimulating the audience's attention;
- Through online viewing rooms it is possible to view an artwork in detail, but its price and selling modes are not always available;
- Through online biddings, auction houses have the possibility to offer an experience similar to the classic one, allowing buyers to participate to the auction;
- The hybrid approach tries to combine the real event experience with the financial one;
- More and more cultural realities are providing online lectures, offering the public the possibility to be updated on recent publications and artworks;
- Some realities are creating online 3D visits to provide the visitors with a more immersive and complete experience, also allowing a more precise and defined visualization of the products;
- VIP passes are adopted to regulate the accessibility to a preview or to special sales or biddings.

Fairs started to be postponed at the beginning of March 2020 (ATG Reporter 2020). Starting from the data relative to this period, the analysis moves to data relative to September of the same year, and in the end it offers a point of view on the 2021 situation. The aim of this chronological scheme is to find out the changing reactions and the adaptability and flexibility of the art market.

SANITARY EMERGENCY AND ART FAIRS

The 39th edition of ArcoMadrid opened at the end of February 2020, adopting the few hygienic preventions required during the very beginning of the pandemic (Sansom 2020). It was one of the last occasions to do business offline. The Armory Show in New York was also one of the last fairs of 2020:

> it opened on March 4th following the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization (Schwendener 2020).

"We put everything in place to take precautions, but the crowds speak for themselves," said Nicole Berry, the director of the Armory Show. "People are undeterred" (Battaglia, Durón and Greenberger 2020).

"At the end of February, I was still a "Happy Collector" visiting Arco in Madrid", said Virginie Puertolas-Syn (Puertolas 2020). Tefaf Maastricht opened on March 7th 2020 but closed in advance after one gallerist got infected (Muzzi 2020), just the same day in which the World Health Organization declared the passage from an epidemic to a pandemic emergence, March 11th.[1] These three events, Armory Show, ArcoMadrid and Tefaf, were probably the last "normal" fairs pre-Covid:

> in the period in which they took place all the other fairs had begun to be postponed.

Sometimes times of crisis also create opportunities for new businesses as well. Nick Simunovic, director of Hong Kong's Gagosian Gallery, is optimistic, as he states that in Asia their business had increased after the crisis of 2008. He then adds that he has noticed a higher demand in the field of impressionist and modern art (Benhamou-Huet 2020c).

Francois Curiel, chairman at the Europe and Asia group of Christie's, also recalls that during the SARS crisis of 2003 in Hong Kong art lovers showed an ever-greater interest in buying art after having been deprived of it for a while. These cases are not meant to make up for the crisis that is affecting the market, but they show that the art market is volatile and always changing. Previous crises are proof that art is a safe-haven asset that will never go out of fashion.

What Georgina Adams reflects upon in her article *What sort of art will we want after the pandemic ends*? is that there are forms of art that will suffer more, namely the non-traditional ones (Adam 2020).

For example, it is the case of performance art. Adams takes into consideration the fact that there could be a regression in art:

> since people are spending so much time at home, classical domestically sized paintings and displayable art could become fashionable again.

Another interesting consideration is that collectors may be interested in acquiring pieces which document the crisis made by artists during lockdown.

2020: THE REACTION OF ART FAIRS

Data clearly show that art fairs were deeply affected by the crisis. How would it be possible for fairs to take place with social distance regulations, since they are clearly based on face-to-face relations? The analysis started from the reaction of fairs in 2020, focusing on how many fairs

1 Jamie Ducharme in Time points out that "An epidemic refers to an uptick in the spread of a disease within a specific community. By contrast, the WHO defines a pandemic as the global spread of a new disease, though the specific threshold for meeting that criteria is fuzzy." (Ducharme, 2020)

were postponed, and how many of them were cancelled or moved online. After collecting the data, it was possible to show them in synthetic graphs. It was only after an accurate analysis of the graphs that it was possible to draw a more solid conclusion on the reaction of the fairs.

Fairs started to be postponed at the beginning of March, when the majority of countries were considering the lockdown as a solution to contain the infection. It is interesting to focus on the change of the reactions of the fairs during the development of the crisis:

> we can compare the pie chart updated on March 19th with the one updated on September 4th.

In chart 1, which reports the data updated to May 19th, we can see that most fairs have shifted to later dates in 2020, probably hoping that the crisis would end before the new year. Some fairs, the 7% of the sample, were initially postponed and finally cancelled or moved to 2021. Lots of fairs which were postponed to the following year provided extra online activities, to keep the interest for the event alive. Focusing on the second pie chart, we can easily identify a problem with the postposition periods:

> in fact, until May most fairs were being postponed to September, creating an accumulation of events, making it almost impossible to participate.

It would surely be amazing for the art workers to be gifted with this ubiquitous ability, but we haven't had proof of it yet. More importantly, even if the crisis had been over before the end of 2020, it was unlikely for people to participate in big crowded public events just after the end of the emergency, as Dominique Lévy points out:

> *I do not believe anyone will want to come to an art fair as long as we don't have a vaccine for this terrible situation.* [...] *Who will want in September,* [...] *to jump in a plane for an art fair, where there is all recycled air, where you are rubbing elbows, where social distance is impossible. I think it is time for the art world to be realistic. I know it is hard to hear* [...] *but right now our social responsibility and our social duties are much more important. I don't see any art fair before next year* (**Interview with art dealer Dominique Lévy on the art market post-coronavirus, 2020**).

It is possible to compare these conclusions with the results of the analysis on the same batch of fairs in September. The following charts were created using the data updated to September 4th, 2020, and they show a totally different situation from the previous one. Looking at chart 3, it is easy to notice the change from the conditions in May.

Most fairs were postponed to the end of 2020, but this optimistic view has been disappointing due to the evolution of the events. In fact, almost all of the fairs postponed to the end of 2020 have been cancelled, rescheduled for 2021, or moved online. For the same reason, most fairs that were already supposed to take place in August and September were cancelled as well. More and more fairs were gradually being moved online, and the ones that could not be moved online were being cancelled on a daily basis. Chart 4 shows that there were no more fairs planned for August, and the ones that were supposed to be held in

September shifted to October, November, and December. In 2020 phase 1 and phase 2 have caused many problems and doubts, especially about the introduction of anti Covid measures:

> social distancing, aerating spaces, wearing masks, sanitising surfaces, limiting attendance, regulating the flows, tracing the visitors...

According to the previous quote of Art Dealer Dominique Lévy, who would participate in fairs in such conditions? Online strategies adopted by fairs followed a similar pattern. The main goal was to keep people focused on the event while offering a substitute version. For example, the first edition of the online viewing rooms of Art Basel opened in March 2020, offering a substitution to the fair that had been postponed to the following year (*ArtLyst* 2020). As a matter of fact, the digital became the only way to maintain the presence of fair events in a moment when going online was the smartest option (Barrilà 2020b). "We are perfectly aware that our galleries are facing problems and economic difficulties without precedents, and we really hoped to sustain the art market recovery in September with a successful fair," said the global Art Basel director Marc Spiegler.

"Unfortunately, the uncertainties we are facing are too high" (Pirrelli 2020). They preferred moving the fair online, hoping for the Miami Beach and Hong Kong edition of the fair to be held, but at the end they were both cancelled:

> the Hong Kong edition was moved to March 2021, and it was then postponed again to May 2021 (Maida 2020); Art Basel Miami Beach was also moved to 2021, but the Miami Art Week 2020 took place in December as a more local and less crowded event (Sokol 2020).

Even if the art market suddenly came to a halt in April 2020, there was news about big sales, especially regarding the high price category:

> in Frieze viewing rooms, which substituted the May New York fair, various galleries registered sales of numerous artworks.

Usually, fairs are occasions to expand the network of a gallery, to meet new collectors and to update them about the art production development. "Since Art Basel Hong Kong to today we observed a growing dynamicity in our visitors in exploring the online art, and that is reflected in Frieze sells" (Barrilà 2020c), explains Samanthe Rubell, Senior Director of Pace Gallery in New York. During the VIP previews the most important and expensive works are sold, just like in actual fairs previews, as happened for the Gagosian Gallery in online Frieze.

2020: FAIRS ONLINE ACTIVITIES IN TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

Keeping the attention on the same batch, chart 6 shows that 28% of the fairs have improved online activity in the first semester through viewing rooms, lectures, and other methods to keep the attention high.

Chart 3 has already displayed an increase in the tendency of the fairs to move online. On the other hand, chart 5 spotlights which online activities are preferred by fairs. Almost every fair of the sample provides lectures, featured articles and videos, and is generally active on social networks. On the contrary, online sales are only planned on occasion of online fairs, but there are special cases, such as the Affordable Art Fair or the Other Art Fair, which, due to their target visitors and to the cheaper

artworks, always provide user-friendly online sales. Viewing rooms are becoming a much frequent online strategy:

> they keep alive the interest on artists and on the artworks, although the 3D visualization is still in its initial developing phase (only one case of the batch, the Enter Art Fair, already adopts this technique).

One of the main problems of switching to online sales is not being able to see the artwork in person. The problem arises when the majority of the gallerists and art dealers agree on the fact that they would never recommend an artwork without seeing it first. Thaddeus Ropac from the Ropac Gallery in Paris states "I am no big fan of online art as I always believed in its materiality of growing into space" (Benhamou-Huet 2020c).

As pictures on the internet are often reductive, more and more galleries are trying to develop a 3D scanning system of images that will allow the buyer to see even the tiniest details of the artwork (Benhamou-Huet 2020a). Right now, there is a general distrust in buying artworks online and most buyers reserve the artwork before actually buying it during the online fair. Liza Essers, the director of South Africa Goodman Gallery, which participated in the online Frieze fair, said that the majority of the conversations with their clients did not start on the Frieze viewing room platform (Sutton 2020a). Scott Reyburn also added that, since in art everything is unique and expensive, buyers often want to discuss what they're buying, and this creates a barrier for online sales (Reyburn 2020). This is why it was generally preferred a hybrid format, instead of only the online fair or the exhibition (Barrilà 2020a).

For example, at the end of 2020, both 1:54 Fair and Paris International in partnership with Christie's had online and physical versions, with all the needed restrictions. Art dealer Dominique Levy thinks that the viewing room of Art Basel Hong Kong was a very interesting experiment, but it cannot be compared to an actual fair. "Everyone rushed to see what it was but the art community feels like it is not friendly because you are forced to see something and buy it without having a conversation" (*Interview with art dealer Dominique Lévy on the art market post-coronavirus*, 2020). The majority of the viewers only stayed on the website for thirty minutes, and the concluded deals were about artworks launched by the gallery before the online fair, when they announced that the artworks would have been exposed during the event (*Interview with art dealer Dominique Lévy on the art market post-coronavirus*, 2020).

From this issue emerges the fact that the art market is fundamentally elitist. Scott Reyburn underlines that the eighteenth-century mode of doing business has remained unchanged because the industry is small, and it is based on trusting relationships (Luke 2020).

Initially the online fairs seemed a solution to be more inclusive, but the exclusivity was brought also in the online world:

> many important fairs, like Frieze and Art Basel, had a VIP section.

"This shows how exclusive the art world really is" underlines Anna Brady, Art Market editor for "The Art Newspaper." She adds that "each of the collectors that I know bought pieces already reserved before the show" (Reyburn 2020). Back in 2019, according to economist Clare McAndrew's report (McAndrew 2020), online sales were attracting a wider audience.

Furthermore, online viewing rooms offer a space for little

galleries to communicate artworks and to create selling chances without big costs (Sutton, 2020b). At the same time, the online swift offered the opportunity to create new art market platforms, founded as online realities, like The New Art Dealers Alliance. NADA is an online fair created through the collaboration of artists and galleries. It works as a communication and distribution platform, and the general idea is to cooperate to survive the crisis, in fact they adopt a collaborative approach:

> *Open to member and non-member galleries alike, for every sale made through Fair, 20 percent goes into a collective pool that's split evenly among all participating galleries. Another 20 percent is split among all of Fair's participating artists, and another 10 percent is given to NADA—the remaining 50 percent goes directly to the selling gallery and artist* (Lee 2020).

This example is the demonstration of how online fairs could represent an important support for the artistic community affected by the crisis:

> some fairs are organized directly online, because of how simple and economical it is to create an online platform, instead of organizing an actual event.

However, historic huge online platforms, like Artsy, had a great success during the lockdown, and are more and more affirmed today (*Artsy Official Website*, n. d.). They are reference points for collectors, gallerists and artists, since they are normally more affordable than art fairs, and they offer a wider range of choice and prices. In July 2020 the first Artsy Community was launched (Marchesoni 2020), partly as a consequence of the platform's success during the first months of the year.

CONCLUSION

A new takeout that emerged from the crisis is that millennials are the ones who are most likely to buy from online fairs. Scott Reyburn's statement is that millennial collectors are actually spending more money through online platforms than their parent's generation, as they feel more confident buying online. The biggest issue is that generally millennials have a lower income and, some say, a less consistent interest in buying physical art, as what they seek is more of an experience (Luke 2020). "There is a very profound change in consumer spending habits as the shift among millennials is towards experience rather than possession", says Margaret Carrigan, Deputy Art Market Editor at *The Art Newspaper*.

At the end of 2020, the crisis was prompting the creation of collaborations and partnerships, which thin the boundary between the different actors of the art world, as better stated in the next essay about auction houses (Brady 2020). 2020 speculations about a vaccine have become realities:

> now, to have access to art events and institutions people need to have the vaccine pass (*You'll need a vaccine passport to visit museums, galleries and art fairs in New York*, 2021).

This could be seen as a guarantee for a secure visit, but also as another exclusion method, which is now being criticized all over the world.

Despite the wish to be back in presence, different online

formats were still developed in the first months of 2021, like *Playlist*, the ArteFiera method applied to the 2021 fair (Barrilà 2021). As Silvia Barillà highlights, this phenomenon demonstrates the public need to have a different approach than the OVRs. Also, EXPO Chicago organized a hybrid format, with a climate symposium and partnerships with museums. Furthermore, all the postponed fairs began to be held in presence in 2021, as it was thought at the beginning of the year (*Settembre 2021 sarà il nuovo mese delle fiere? Dopo Art Basel, l'annuncio di TEFAF Maastricht*, 2021). Especially during the summer of 2021, until September, many big international art fairs have returned in presence, like Art Brussels, Frieze London, Vienna Contemporary, Art Paris, Liste Art Fair, MiArt and many others (Boch 2021). We're aware of the fact that the information reported above refers to a series of data directly linked to the "dark months" of the virus. The situation might have changed now, but overall, 2020 caused an evident loss in financial terms. While in 2019 art and antique sales value worldwide amounted to over 64 billion U.S. dollars (*Artmarket* 2020), in 2020 the global art market value dropped to roughly 50 billion U.S. dollars, experiencing a 22 percent decrease (*Statista* 2021).

In the first half of the following year, 51 percent of dealers surveyed reported an increase in sales in the first half of 2021, versus the same period in 2020 (McAndrew 2021). Overall, as we have seen, the art world was forced to move online. The implementation of digital tools and content during these months offered an interactive experience that opened the doors of the art world to a greater audience. The costs of post-lockdown reopenings are often not affordable for small realities, and in some cases, even for the bigger ones (Uttam, 2020). The online solution offers a real alternative, but also a complement to in-person activities that will surely remain active after the Covid crisis:

> these months offered a possibility to discover the online advantages.

2020 hasn't been a great year financially speaking, indeed the market almost collapsed. But on the bright side, it finally shook the institutions, and moved some "sacred pillars" that had been still for far too long.

If on the one hand the internet has made it possible for art to be accessible to a wider public, on the other hand the BLM movement had most museums rethink their priorities and promise a better policy in terms of racial and gender equality. At the same time, the closure of borders brought locals to art institutions: Director of Lehmann Maupin's Seoul space Emma Son said:

> ***During the worst periods, in late February and March, it was mostly Asian collectors who were buying, but Western collectors are now returning to the market*** (Uttam 2020).

This geographical move of art business is also pointed out by Marilena Pirrelli.[2] Dominique Levy, co-founder and partner of the Lévy Gorvy Gallery, expresses her worries regarding the future of the art market, but at the same time she is very hopeful as she is counting on the ability of the art market to adapt.

2 See Marilena Pirrelli interview at the end of this chapter.

> ***I feel like right now this is not important. The important thing that we should ask ourselves is: how am I going to be***

> ***a good ambassador for artists? How will I keep the interest alive? And right now I will not achieve that by putting an imposition of travelling and setting dates for art fairs*** **(Interview with art dealer Dominique Lévy on the art market post-coronavirus, 2020).**

What is for sure is that, especially in critical situations, it is essential to be able to reinvent old concepts into new ones. In this case, before the lockdown the art business had become unbearable, it had reached a speed that was too much even for galleries, collectors, and artists. So however tragic the situation is, says Levy, it can develop a posttraumatic growth, and the possibility to rethink our profession will come alongside it. As Stuart Shave, director of Modern Art gallery, London, stated, the pandemic "raises interesting questions about the future and what aspects of the business we will change to reflect this experience" (Brady 2020).

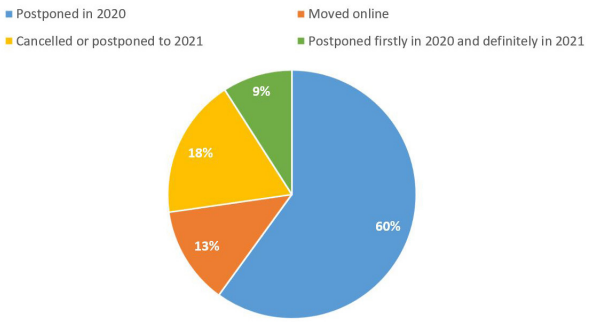


Chart 1 Change of fairs dates, updated May 19, 2020

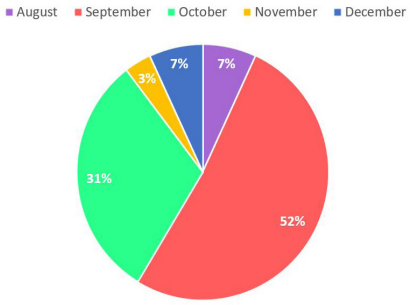


Chart 2 Fairs postponed to 2021, updated May 19, 2020

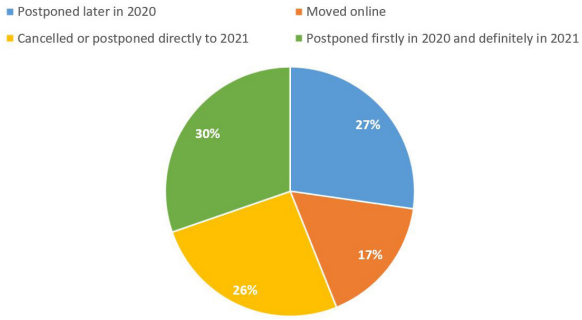


Chart 3 **Change of fairs dates, updated September 4, 2020**

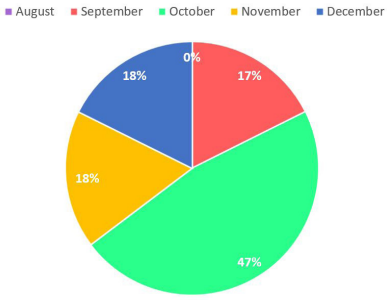


Chart 1 **Change of fairs dates, updated May 19, 2020**

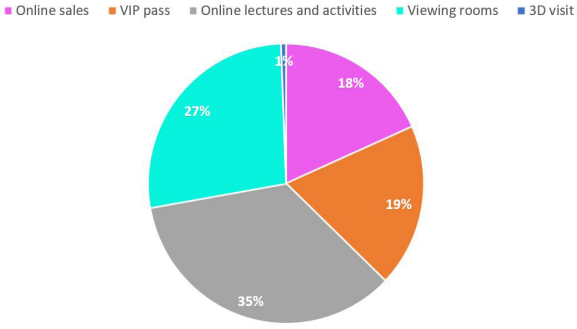


Chart 2 **Fairs postponed to 2021, updated May 19, 2020**

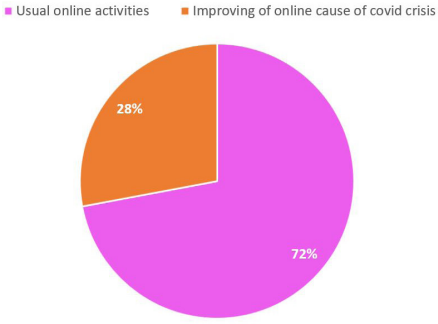


Chart 3 **Change of fairs dates, updated September 4, 2020**

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INTERVIEW: MARILENA PIRRELLI

BY:

Emma Mafalda Montella, Elena Righini

Tuesday 01.02.2021, 11:00-12:30, telephone interview

When were art fairs first postponed because of the pandemic?

Fairs are one of the most important meeting places in the art world. Back in March, all of them were planned and scheduled like every other year as the outbreak of a pandemic was not expected. The first Art Fair to have closed was Art Basel in Hong Kong, which was at first postponed, then cancelled. From then on, all the other fairs were steadily put off and rescheduled. Tefaf Maastricht was only open for seven days and was then forced to shut down because of the spread of the virus. The same goes for the other ones.
The only fairs that opened as scheduled were the Armory Show in New York and Arco in Madrid. Some art fairs, however, have shifted online, like Art Basel in Basel, which has opened an Online Viewing Room. Overall, 61 percent of the 365 scheduled fairs were cancelled, another 37 percent is now online, and the final 2 percent is in a hybrid format.

At first, the common belief was that all these fairs would still take place in September and October as they had been rescheduled for those months, but the situation got worse in summer 2020. How did art fairs react?

Back in September, everything that was supposed to be "live" was rescheduled. In Italy, miart was cancelled and Artissima was moved online. The online shift had a huge success starting from March up until May 2020, when everyone was at home working from their computer. Now each fair has its own Viewing Room, from which you can access the galleries' websites. Many galleries have chosen to become more monographic by picking a single work or by focusing on one artist. This way, the "catalogue effect" is avoided. Initially the online shift mainly involved contemporary and modern art, but it later started to include broader categories such as Old Masters art. This has made it easier for Masterpiece London and Tefaf NY to be completely online.

What are the pros and cons of online fairs?

Collectors were initially inclined to visit online fairs as they didn't have many alternatives. In the summer, several galleries reopened, making it possible for gallerists to re-establish relations with collectors. Meanwhile, the public was able to see the artworks through the Internet.
Many fairs encountered difficulties while experiencing the online shift. Many of them had to rewrite their contracts with galleries. Galleries themselves reduced the circulation of their works and began to invest in pre-existing online exposition platforms like Artsy. Things quickly changed as galleries made deals with other platforms or networks to better

develop their own online quality. Participating in an online art fair reduced the extent of visibility. This phase was critical as the risk of losing market operators was high and the roles of each stakeholder were not always clear.

How did auction houses react and how did their role in the market change over time?

Major auction houses such as Christie's and Sotheby's already had contacts they could rely on, so they just shifted their business online addressing the private sales sector (according to the 2021 Art Basel and UBS Art Market Report, this market is worth 20.8 billion dollars).
vThis allowed them to deal with the rich world of art collectors. Auction Houses launched both online and hybrid auctions while also developing partnerships with galleries (Sotheby's is an example) to create a connection between the artworks and the clientele. The situation being extremely difficult, roles within the market were made more fluid in the attempt to bring even important and valuable works online. Still, only 6 percent of online exchanges exceeded one million dollars. Auction houses also made deals with fairs (Christie's, for example, made a deal with the Biennale Des Antiquaires in Paris), but not all of them turned out to be successful. The greatest effort was bringing the high end of the market online, which generated contrasting results. In any case the online shift produced a new business which, considering fairs, auction houses and galleries, ended up generating 12.4 billion euros, twice as much as in 2019, gaining a market share of 25 percent of the total trade (50.1 billion dollars). Nonetheless, the lower end of the market kept seeing high volumes and low values.

Between Art Fairs and Auction Houses, who do you think had it the worst?

Fairs had the worst results in terms of performance: only 13 percent of gallerists recorded sales on online fairs, plus another 9 percent whose sales were made in the Online Viewing Rooms (OVRs) of the fair.
Only 38 percent of the over 365 scheduled fairs moved online proposing new formats. For instance, the 45th edition of Arte Fiera became a playlist where the cultural content was given more importance than trade exchanges. Besides being an alternative to real-life fairs, platforms turn out to be great places for debates, discussions and exchange through webinars, forums, and other tools. The viewing room becomes a place where art can be observed without necessarily being purchased: its cultural value is greater than the economic one. Many collectors, especially those who were accustomed to interpersonal relationships and were fond of that type of approach, got tired of buying art on online galleries.

Ultimately, their faith was restored when most of them started buying at auction, after studying and researching the artworks. The new market we are seeing is very dynamic and, most importantly, collectors are still willing to buy, which makes it even more exciting for art workers to be able to reopen soon.

At the start of 2021, the pandemic seems to have slowed down, also thanks to the new vaccines. How did this change help the art market if it did?

A recovery has been visible in auctions, while we were waiting for in-person events to be held again. Art Basel Hong Kong was postponed from March to the period between the 19th and the 23rd of May. In those dates, all the necessary measures will be taken. As for Art Basel in Basel, the June edition was rescheduled for the 21st of September, a date by which most of the population will have been vaccinated. In the meantime, Art Basel released a brand-new OVR called Pioneers. We still do not know how events will be rearranged and rescheduled based on vaccination plans. Clearly, companies that only rely on physical events have experienced a fall in turnover, as is the case with the Swiss MCH Group. The group had to sell a part of its shareholding to Lupa Systems, their new partner led by James Murdoch, who now owns 49 percent of the capital. The economic crisis should be a starting point for something new and it is necessary to understand which new business models best suit this goal. In Italy, fairs have adopted new strategies and tend to focus more on the local public instead of addressing a larger and more international audience, which would be harder to reach because of travel restrictions.

One of the main criticisms of online fairs is that they resemble shopping websites like Amazon. On the one hand, there is the risk that artworks might be compared to regular goods, therefore losing cultural value. On the other hand, could this make them more accessible to a larger audience, democratising some aspects of the art world?

Art that does not have a high market value can be found on platforms similar to Amazon and eBay. I personally don't think that possessing it would lead to a broader democratisation of art. One thing that is clear, though, is that price transparency attracts new buyers. This can lead the art market to informative symmetries within the art system. In any case, anyone who buys art is engaging in an economic transaction which transcends the cultural and artistic aspect. These platforms have simply broadened the public of collectors, not the knowledge of art.

Regarding galleries, has the online shift become a mandatory process or is it still possible to carry out in-person activities?

There is no going back from the online shift, mostly because of the quantity of information available on the web. Digitalization is something inevitable and if you are not on board with that, it means you are not keeping up with the present. You can stay afloat if you have regular clients, but you certainly won't grow your business.

The online shift has been a very important step for the art world. Will the physical dimension remain an important value for the art market?

Covid forced everyone to go digital. However, those who work within the art field still need to actually see artworks and understand them. The future will probably be "hybrid", some exchanges will remain physical while others will be digital. In my opinion the web makes them even more reliable. It's something added.

Overall, how did 2020 impact the art world? Are we witnessing a change in the geographical orientation of the market?

At the end of 2020, the US did lose market shares to China. Asia started to deal with the emergency earlier and managed to fight Covid more efficiently; art fairs and physical exchanges resumed way earlier and money flows were managed better. So, it's no surprise that fairs were held there in 2020.

What are the possible consequences of this shift on the art market?

Right now we could foresee two types of phenomena in the Asian scenario: art collections might grow due to the artworks bought from Europe, or there might be an increase in the value of local artists, which is in fact happening.

Going back to Europe: was the London art market influenced by Brexit?

London did not lose much in terms of market shares, but we still need to see how custom barriers with Europe will change and what effects this will have in the long run. The impact of Brexit is still not clear: the British market might liberalise some exchanges, mostly because market operators want to get rid of European directives on money laundering.

INTERVIEW: SIMONE MENEGOI

BY:

Eleonora Ianni, Beatrice Sartori

February 25th 2021

As director of Arte Fiera, what was your reaction when the national lockdown was imposed in March 2020?

Firstly, we worried about the health situation, which influenced the whole working sector, including the system of art. Our first reaction as a team of Arte Fiera was to create, in March 2020, an online project called 'In Galleria' (In the Gallery). This was the very first virtual initiative presented by an Italian art fair, which allowed the participating galleries to promote their works, exhibited in their physical spaces through texts and pictures. Over time, considering the loosening of restrictions during the summer and the possibility of going back focusing on in-person events, the attention towards 'In Galleria' declined. Fewer galleries exhibited their works on the platform, to the point that for a few weeks the number of member galleries was lower than expected. However, the initial response from the galleries was one of gratitude and appreciation: they felt considered and that they were given a possibility of being active again, free of charge, despite the lockdown.

Let's talk about 'Arte Fiera Playlist'[1], an online public program initiative which was launched to replace the physical fair held in Bologna.
It is a cultural initiative following a specific and personal format, different from anything from the past. What were its original objectives, and what results have been achieved?

1 'Arte Fiera Playlist', 21-24 January 2021. Divided in 5 sections: 'In Mostra' (On View), 'In Libreria' (In the bookshop), 'In Sala' (In the Theatre),'In Conversazione' (In Conversation), 'In Galleria' (In the Gallery), it is a free digital project which offers a transversal dialogue on the arts, in the shape of a favourites list, where what attracts the public is the proposed content as much as those who recommend it.

The aim of this initiative, based on needs and decisions taken beforehand, was twofold since the beginning. What was pivotal and clear from the outset is that we wanted to avoid doing an online fair; less banal was the decision not to reschedule the fair for another period of 2021.
For Arte Fiera, indeed, the January event is important, it is part of its identity, and it is also a matter of marketing. As a matter of fact, we are the first European art fair: everybody links the Bolognese fair to January. Thus, for the 2021 edition, we wanted to be present, visible and active in January, in order to claim our presence in that period. The format of the online fair has been bypassed. Besides the fact that it would have been impossible to keep it online because of a lack of material and organisation, we were tired of the virtual formula, and so were the exhibitors and the public. At this point, the range of possibilities was narrow: thus, we considered the public programme idea, which means offering cultural events in order to interact as much as possible with the galleries and the public. This is how 'Arte Fiera Playlist' was born: the selection committee, made up of gallerists and experts, approved the proposal immediately, agreeing on avoiding the online fair format. However, it was a pity that galleries were absent from this first draft of events. This gave an input to the organisation of a special edition of 'In Galleria', with the

aim of involving galleries by sponsoring their physical exhibitions. Through Arte Fiera Playlist, we wanted to spread curiosity and attention: did we succeed? Yes, we did, facts and figures are positive.[2] They show a high rate of visualisation, indicating that lots of users did not stop at the homepage but explored all the different sections, including our real-time streaming service, with 'In Galleria' being the most visited section. Nevertheless, the initiative has never brought a financial profit to the galleries, but they appreciated it. Not only did the 2020 exhibitors (the original target of 'In Galleria') take part in this idea, but some top galleries which usually don't participate in Arte Fiera joined the project, too. I wonder if this will later lead to a dialogue with these new participants!

2 See appendix 1

The online dimension leads to a rupture of the space-time dimension, as it is capable of providing content on demand, archiving it, and keeping it available. Why did you choose to keep contents available on the Arte Fiera website until the end of February? Does the space-time collapse of the virtual world bring benefits or does it have negative consequences?

We decided to keep almost all of the contents accessible on the website until February, except for 'In Galleria', which will be available until the end of March. Seeing as the online dimension doesn't limit itself to a specific time or space, online fairs like Art Brussels extended over long periods of time, going beyond the usual timeline of a physical fair.
In my view, the time expansion brought about by the Internet damages fairs, which live specifically thanks to their being an event, a not to be missed opportunity. If it wasn't so, fairs would not be able to stimulate the exciting competition between buyers which makes them such an irreplaceable arena. This is why we chose to keep some of the contents online for only 24 hours before removing them, as is the case with our 'In Sala' streaming videos.

Considering what has been said about the possibility of expanding the time schedule of the event, what do you expect the future of the fair system to be like?

Concerning the future, I am confident that we will go back to the physical dimension, and I believe I speak on behalf of the entire fair world, even of those who have agreed to follow the virtual path. The digital dimension is a backup plan, a palliative, as Frieze New York demonstrates. Even though Frieze delivered the most beautiful online fair in the world, the event lacked its typical live and ephemeral quality. Some fairs dared to fix dates for physical events during the summer. ARCOmadrid, for example, was scheduled for July; other fairs aimed for September. So, the only way to organise Arte Fiera as a physical fair was scheduling it for September,

at the same time as most of the other events of this kind: the competition would have been exhausting. I don't believe in a virtual future for fairs. Should the situation remain the same, we would face many problems, starting from the fact that the galleries' earnings from online activities are extremely low. There is no comparison between the economic exchanges a gallery makes in its everyday context and the interactions it creates during fairs: on average, 60 per cent of the business of a gallery depends upon the transactions made at fairs. From my point of view, there is no alternative to the physical fair, or at least no one has found one yet.

We will go back to normal, and we will define our lives in terms of before- and after-Covid-19. How do you picture it?

It will certainly be a different 'normality', leading to new modes of fruition. Even if many restrictions were imposed, such as masks, supervision and social distancing, I would do anything to deal with a physical fair. However, no one expects that fairs and similar events will be exactly as they used to, at least not by the end of this year, or even next year.

The pandemic functioned as a watershed, a moment in which we stayed still and reflected on our past, present and future. We wonder if this new perspective might help us reconsider the already existing problems the Covid-19 pandemic has shed light on.

Problems did exist before, and we were already aware of them. The sudden stop imposed by the pandemic represented a pause, a temporary suspension in which to think about the future. At the present time, we observe a series of problems connected to a total saturation of the fair world schedule. Operators are more and more frustrated but they cannot give up fairs, while collectors are eager for real-time updates on new trends and market quotations, thus contributing to a never-ending process of scouting for new emergent artists. The unbelievable and suffocating concentration of fairs was already evident. Italy is an example and parody of this, as it is the only European country with 3.5 fairs (half point goes to the fair of Verona). Nevertheless, the obsolete model of the fair is evolving thanks to public projects. This is the result of at least 20 years of continuous adjustments, in an atmosphere of fierce international competition.
Art Basel launched an initiative called 'Art Basel Cities', which seemed to be a possible way to enlarge the concept of fair. Presented for the Buenos Aires edition, it aimed at livening up the city with shows, events and performances thanks to a large-scale coordination between galleries. A sort of a Bolognese Art Weekend, only organised on a national level. The idea failed even before being put into practice, and this was when the Covid-19 pandemic had not broken out yet. Supposedly, it was not worth the effort and the expenses

necessary to enact it. With regard to the motivations behind this, Art Basel only announced the cancellation of the event without releasing any details. The fact is that the fair, in its traditional form, has not found worthy rivals yet, and that's for sure.

We live in a world that is difficult to imagine, where the future changes every week.

With all these events, we find it difficult to foresee an after-Covid; it is as if we were living in a bubble. Such insecurity characterises those who decide to devote themselves to studies that are not particularly suited to the needs of the current job market. Actually, professional uncertainty existed even before, particularly for those who decided to delve into the humanities, as in my case. Today, however, this attitude is shared by everybody: it is almost a relief to feel that we are all part of the same *Weltanschauung*. Personally, after graduating in aesthetic philosophy, I looked up to the young adults around me, and I was jealous of their confidence. Now that we are surrounded by instability, we can at least feel less lonely.



Fig. 1 Appendix 1

COURSE TITLE:

EXHIBITIONS, NEW MEDIA AND PERFOR-MANCE ART

Intercepting new trajectories through the lens of EXHIBITION HISTORY: exercises in exhibitions' reenactment

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HELD BY:

Eleonora Charans

COURSE TIMETABLE:
I year, II semester.

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Among the learning outcomes of the course, it was stated that the students had to develop methodological, historical and theoretical tools to understand the evolution of contemporary artistic practices and the problems concerning exhibition-making.

Starting from the critical awareness of the role that exhibitions have played since the end of the Sixties in terms of contemporary culture, a chronological selection of the most relevant case studies was presented to the class, with a peculiar distinction of the points of view and roles within the 'exhibition score' (artist vs curator, artist vs space, etc.). Particular emphasis was placed on the analysis and recognition of the different types of sources and archives with respect to the History of the Exhibitions, in order to arrive at an exhaustive comprehension and reconstruction of the curatorial concept and the exhibitory setting.

Thanks to the different case studies analysed during the course and the critical awareness acquired, students demonstrated to be able to carry out documentary and bibliographic research in paper and digital repertories and to produce original texts, as well as, hopefully, curatorial concepts and statements. Do these products show us an improving dissemination of contemporary artistic culture? If we scroll through the roundup of contributions in this section, with their fresh yet rigorous approaches, the answer comes easily to us.

As a professor, I chose to ask the class to work possibly in small groups and to focus on an exercise of Reenactment of a past exhibition, an exercise which is closer to the curatorial approach offered in particular by Jens Hoffmann Mesén (San José, Costa Rica, 1974).

As it is known, Hoffmann devoted a lot of his writing and curatorial production to revisiting, not just reconstructing, past exhibitions. Students were free to chose their starting point exhibition but they had to analyse it and motivate their choices. They also had to think spatially by choosing and describing the space in which they intended to display their show. Finally, they had to present and include a checklist of artists and artworks that they intended to expose.

The result was not only a research project but also a curatorial one with a practical request/constraint. Each group had to build a model, be it physical or digital; they had to test their ideas in a given space, that is why I chose the playful motto 'a show in a (shoes) box'.

In following this peculiar request, I encountered some resistance from the class, but in the end I believe they understood the aim of this exercise. The main didactic purpose was to build a bridge and allow them to familiarise with a museum practice in terms of the organisation of exhibitions and the rearrangement of contemporary art collections.

In view of this publication, I proposed an information file, which I specifically elaborated and designed, to organise the different research works.

The first part of the file is quite descriptive, presenting the title, the curators (namely, the students involved) and the location, followed by the curatorial statement or a sort of manifesto. The curatorial statement is therefore followed by an appropriate and reasoned

bibliography and checklist. The written part ends in the best possible way: with a series of images concerning the visual representations of the exhibition model. In these images, we can perceive the strength and the hope, the tensions and the interests of a new generation of curators in the making, who will certainly be able to contribute to the development and understanding of Contemporary art and to offer new trajectories in its way towards the public appreciation.

I am profoundly grateful to Alberta Valiante for the support and the coordination to this section.

MEN ON THE RISE

a Comprehensive Guide on the Degeneracy of Feminism

AUTHORS:

Nicole Costella, Ana Maria Sanfilippo

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Men on the rise: a comprehensive guide on the degeneracy of Feminism is an exhibition meant as a reenactment of the 'Entartete Kunst', a German exposition organized in Munich in 1937.
It has been conceived as a commemorative show for the 100th anniversary of the exposition, which is why the original location was maintained and now hosts the new show.

Two main reasons determined the choice of the *Entartete Kunst* as a starting point. A first motivation can be identified in the display conceived for the original exposition: by distancing itself from a layout reminding the Wunderkammer or the white cube aesthetic, the chaotic presentation of what the Reich deemed 'bad' art was inherently pioneering a new way of depicting a certain state of mind shared by a substantial portion of the population. From a different standpoint, the approach taken by the Nazi regime when displaying Modernist Art fits well with the concept chosen for the reenactment, that is, Feminist Art.

Due to the fact that several works of art - especially those dating between the 1960s and 1970s - use a strong, raw, violent visual idiom, the general public quickly dismiss the artistic movement as degenerate, since either they don't have the right tools or they don't want to fully comprehend what the artist wanted to express. By subscribing to this attitude, they are reproducing the exact same attitude applied by Hitler and his fellow Nazis when they created the original exhibition, forging a gap between 'good art' and 'bad art'.

Men on the rise translates this concept by utilizing a display that not only reflects this idea of degenerate and chaotic mess, but also plays with the feelings of displacement and disorientation. Of all the seven rooms composing the original exhibition, only the three central ones were selected: Room 3, Room 4, and Room 5.
From the point of view of the themes addressed by the artworks, a climax of decreasing intensity regulates the visitor's journey through the three rooms. Furthermore, through the use of degrading and out-of-context writings and via a placement of the artworks that does not follow any particular style, the visitor enters a space that overwhelms them with contradictory messages coming from both the paintings and the writings.

The visit starts with a warning extracted from the opening speech given by Adolf Ziegler, head of the Reich's Visual Arts Department, which prepares the viewers for what they are going to see upon entering the exhibition space. The first room to be approached is Room 3, whose name comes from the original plan of the 'Entartete Kunst'. It has been conceived as a 'period room', slightly modified following the concept of reenactment. Therefore, evident and powerful inscriptions will accompany the paintings, which are arranged following the idea of display originally planned by the Nazi curators. During the selection process, every sentence was chosen so as to reference either the artworks displayed or the artists. As a result, when the visitor approaches the writings on the wall, they will read decontextualized sentences written by Lea Vergine on Feminist Body Art; comments or statements made by people in power on women's issues; comments taken from Incel sites on feminism or even statements by judges on rape cases.

The path of the exhibition continues in Room 4 which has been studied to present the installation 'The Destruction of the Father' (1974) by Louise Bourgeois. The work occupies half of the room, and it

represents a denunciation of the patriarchal dynamics experienced by the artist in her domestic environment. The biographical background that lies behind the work is directly reported by Bourgeois herself.

Therefore, we decided to help the visitor understand the reason for such organic, raw, and alien shapes by presenting (on the opposite wall) a quotation by Bourgeois explaining the artwork.

The 'installation room' leads to Room 5, the final space of the exhibition. We decided to maintain a more conceptual and less aesthetically violent display, since the 1937 exhibition presented abstract works by Kandinsky or Mondrian at this stage. In this sense, the mockery of such artists was expressed by mismatching the captions and by means of incorrect forms of display that went against the artists' original purposes. For these reasons, we chose to introduce some artworks that still belong to Feminist Art but can be regarded as more theoretical and less graphic.

These works still contribute to the denunciation of women's categorization through different media: painting, video art, photography, poster art.

Lastly, the quotations on the wall will continue to function as derisory corollaries of the works, as in the case of the thoughts expressed by screenwriter Ben Hecht and associated with Cindy Sherman's work. Our final reflection consisted, therefore, in the use of irony to develop an exhibition that aimed to be an exploration of degeneracy as a conscious, expressive and communicative medium in the field of Feminist Art.



Fig. 1. *Aerial view of the model's plan*, photography, 2020.

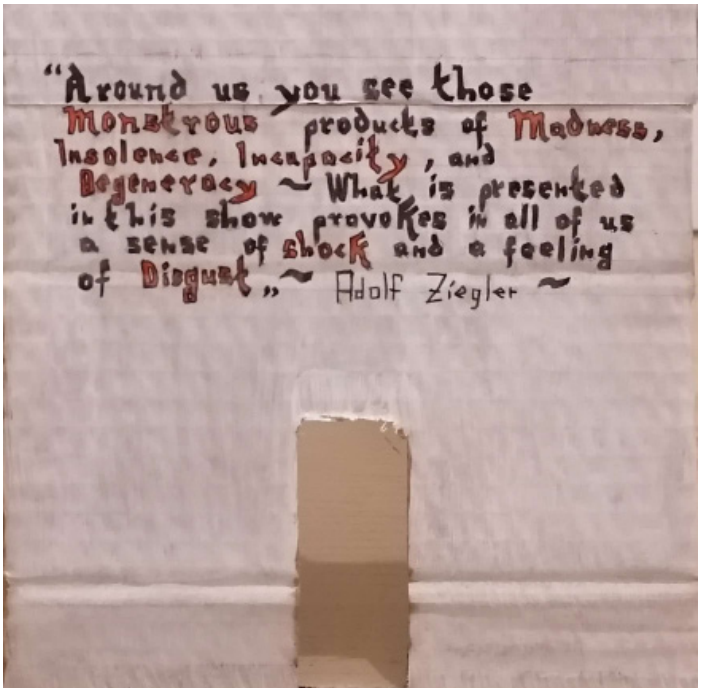


Fig. 2. *Entrance of the exhibition with the opening quote from Ziegler's speech*, photography, 2020.

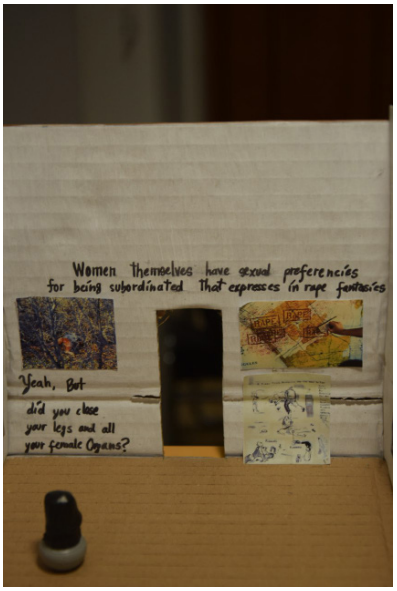


Fig. 3. *Room 3. Interior side of the entrance wall. Works by Mendieta, Williams and Lacy focusing on the theme of rape*, photography, 2020.

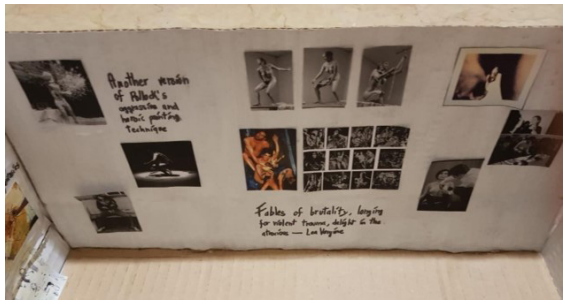


Fig.4. *Wall on the right. Works by Finley, Kubota, Export, Schneemann,* Chicago, Abramovic and Ono, photography, 2020.



Fig.5. *Wall on the left. Works by Giambrone*, Pane and Orlan, photography, 2020.

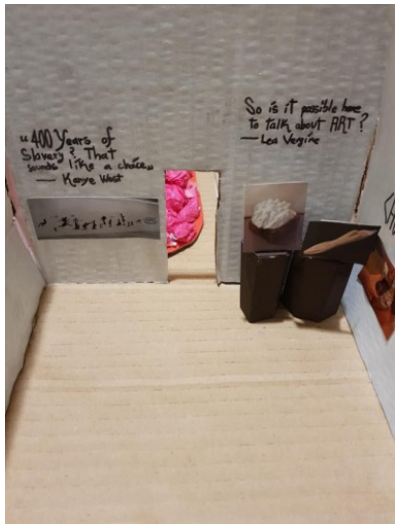


Fig.6. *Last wall. Works by Kara Walker (left) and Louise Bourgeois (right),* photography, 2020.

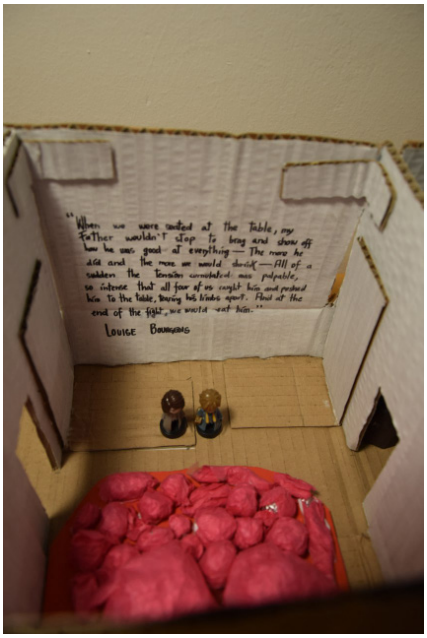


Fig.7. *Louise Bourgeois, The Destruction of the Father, 1974*, installation, photography, 2020.



Fig.8. *Inside of Room 5, on the back: Room 4. Video installations by Birnbaum, Rosler and Pindell*, photography, 2020.



Fig.9. *Wall on the right. Works by Kruger, Guerrilla Girls and Charlesworth*, photography, 2020.

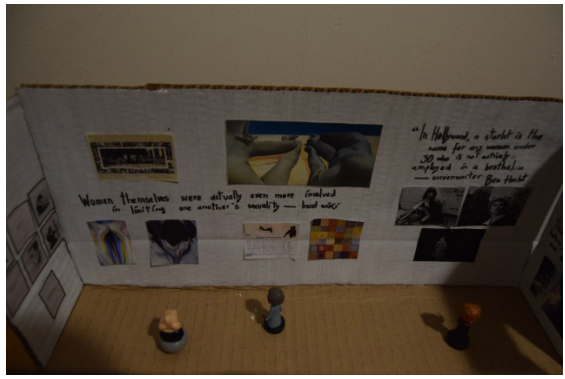


Fig.10. *Wall on the left. Works by Edelson, O'Keeffe, Semmel, Spero, Schapiro and Sherman*, photography, 2020.

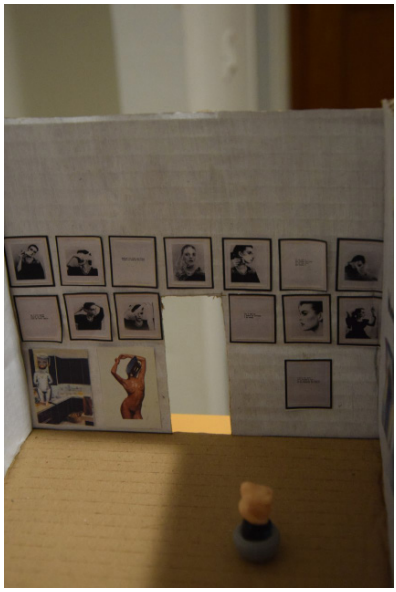


Fig.11. *Last wall of the exhibition. Side dedicated to works by Linder Sterling*, photography, 2020.

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GUTAI

Art in Parallel to Nature

AUTHORS:

Noemi Dolci,
Eleonora Ianni

> ***We are following the path that will lead us to an international common ground where the arts of the East and the West will influence each other. And this is the natural course of the history of art.*** **(Yoshihara Jiro, Gutai leader at Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, 1958)**

While in New York Solomon Guggenheim director James Johnson Sweeney (1952-1960) starts welcoming non-Western forms of art by institutionalizing the Guggenheim International Award, a similar need of exploration is experienced in Japan. In the region of Kansai, outside the established artistic centres of the country, Japanese artist Yoshihara Jiro (1905-1972), embedded with his local environment and keen on investigating new artistic domains, founds the group Gutai in 1954:

> on the agenda there is no kind of ideology or set of rules. The supreme aim is to express the self "by doing something never done before", when only war-themed realistic paintings are allowed and the rest is deemed mere "play" by the general opinion. Through destruction of the boundaries of the artistic media, the artist is going to reconstruct their personality shattered after the tragedy of World War II.

The choice of remaining in a considerably peripheral area with respect to artistic centres like Tokyo and Osaka is to be explained by the possibility of more operational freedom at the sides rather than working in the centre. The peripheral vision is more attuned to the changing environment than the central sight:

> at the edges vision includes more facets and angles in comparison with the linear and straightforward view.

Gutai's choice of periphery also allows them to intervene in varied places, where they unleash the experimentation with forms and materials, experiencing the outdoor and engaging spaces, time and physicality. Gutai group's life can be divided into two phases; in the proposed reenactment the focus is directed especially on the first one, considering the time span from 1954 until 1961. The original exhibition the reenactment looks at is the *1st Gutai Art Exhibition*, held in October 1955 and hosted at the Ohara Hall in Tokyo, the artistic capital of the country.

Another reference which proved to be extremely valuable for the staging of the reenactment is the *Experimental Outdoor Exhibition of Modern Art to Challenge the Midsummer Sun,* which takes place in a pine park in Ashyia, from July 25th until August 8th 1955. Born as a promotional event for the brand-new Gutai group and organized by the Ashyia Art City Association (to be noted the strong local attitude Gutai group has), the show features works created according to the surrounding context, which face huge scales and different materials, interacting with the accidental population of a public park. From *Please Walk In* by Shiraga Kazuo, a performance of the artist standing inside a cone made of logs and damaging with an axe the structure precariously balanced around him, where people are invited to walk in, through *Water* by Motonaga Sadamasa, consisting in a set of vinyl sheets hung up at branches and filled with coloured ink water, to *Challenging Mud* by Shiraga, an action in which the artist wrestles with a mixture made from wall plaster and cement, hurting himself in the process, or *Footprints* by Kanayama Akira, printed on a long paper roll which across the park, Gutai artists try to deal with an art in

coexistence with nature, where people can belong to, no matter if they're artists or random beholders. Gutai's performances, installations and objects stress on a mode of production which derives from the interconnection between the body of the artist, the materials and the context surrounding them. For artist Shiraga the living art is the one connected to the body consistency:

> that's why he starts picturing canvases with his feet, physically embracing the surface, and later on he moves to the total involvement of the body with the material as in *Challenging Mud*. At the exhibition in Tokyo, and reproposed in the reenactment, there is on view the remaining mud, as well as the remains of *Six Holes* by Muramaki Saburo: a set of stretched out sheets of paper lacerated when the artist walks through them. The experienced piece of work is meant for display, a totem of the liberating and vital force Gutai wants to express.

A reenactment of Gutai art is urgent as the action brought forth by Gutai has been for a long time solely associated with more established Western art trends, to the point that the Japanese group risks to lose their true originality. What emerges from studying the critical anthology on Gutai is indeed the continuous attempt to define a macro group under which it could be classified, and the alternatives have been many:

> from referring to Jackson Pollock's Abstract Expressionism through Allan Kaprow's Happening and Michel Tapiè's Art Informel. The proposal of this reenactment becomes fundamental in order to overcome this issue, being impossible to truly understand Gutai as long as it is conceived in Western terms.

A premise for this reenactment is thus the priority of thinking in contemporaneity terms, in a world participant of similar experiences but not necessarily giving birth to the same (artistic) expressions, where cross-fertilization is a key-work and invades every aspect of human life, while respecting the specific diversities. The choice of the setting of this reenactment falls on the Museum Insel Hombroich, in the green countryside outside Dusseldurf, Germany. Picking up a periphery of such an established centre wants to pay homage to the bold decision of Gutai artists of operating at the sides of the central cultural enterprises, allowing them a major amount of freedom. This site, a huge park equipped with different pavilions, offers interior and exterior spaces, striving for making art and nature a communal and sensory experience, in line with previous Gutai's expositions. For this specific reenactment the Alvaro Siza pavilion proposes itself as the most suitable, offering possibility for both indoor and outdoor exposition.

Particularly, the interior space quality allows an interconnected arrangement of the different works, respecting their own autonomy too. In this structure it has been made use of wooden and glass:

> these elements remind of Gutai's attitude toward nature, enhancing their idea of considering nature a co-author of their own works of art.

Moreover, the huge windows let the viewers be immersed in the environment and have a look at the installations outside of the building. Such overlapping of perception of inside and outside spaces is conceived inasmuch the aim is to let the public freely wander and explore the exhibition,

where they can feel part of a balanced ecosystem.

Art in Parallel to Nature, the motto of the Museum, which fosters the concept of creating a space as an ideal in both museum and landscape terms, names this reenactment. Moreover, considering that the museum itself had been converted into a missile Nato site in its past, marks a correspondence with Gutai's history.

The spirit of war hovers on its green fields; however, as a reaction to the destructive power of all the conflicts, this same place could be transformed into a field of creation, stating a perfect parallelism with Gutai's poetics for a reconstruction of art and identity after the Second World War.

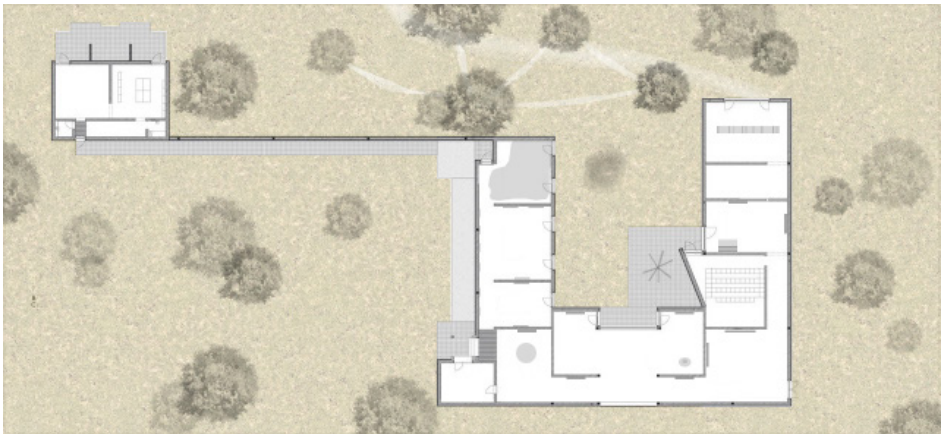


Fig. 1. *Plan of the exhibition*, Alvaro Siza Pavilion in Museum Insel Hombroich, Dusseldörf, Germany.



Fig. 2. *Courtyard view of Sky* (1955) and of *Challenging Mud* (1955) by Kazuo Shiraga at Hombroich Museum.



Fig. 3. *Exterior view of Water* (1955), by Motonaga Sadamasa.

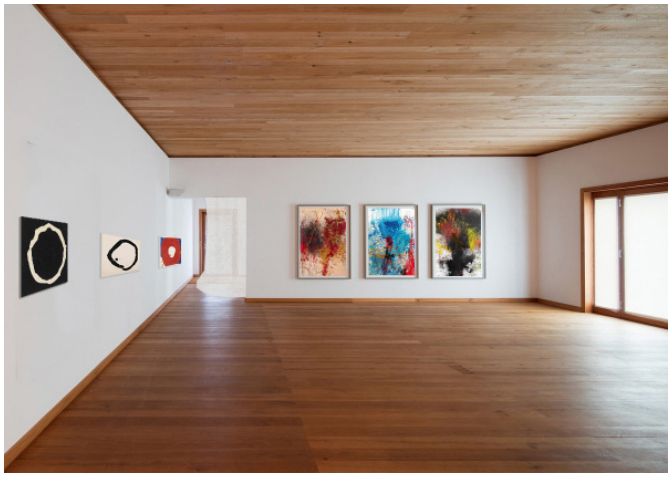


Fig. 4. Interior view with works by Jiro Yoshishara and Shozo Shimamoto.



Fig. 5. Views of the model, scale 1:100.



Fig. 6. Views of the model, scale 1:100.



Fig.7. Views of the model, scale 1:100.

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LULABY. LUDIC LABYRINTH

AUTHORS:

Melissa Macaluso, Emma Puliti, Elena Righini

The exhibition *Lulaby. Ludic Labyrinth* is a reenactment of *Dylaby. Dynamish Labyrinth*, presented in 1962 at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

The original exhibition was curated by the director of the museum himself, Willem Sandeberg (1897-1984), with the collaboration of Daniel Spoerri (1930-present) and Ad Petersen (1931-present). The show was conceived as a route of site-specific installations by six artists:

Per Olof Ultvedt, Robert Rauschenberg, Martial Raysse, Jean Tinguely, Niki de Saint Phalle, and Daniel Spoerri himself.

Lulaby will be located in Piazza Città di Lombardia in Milan, and it will take place from 30 August until 30 November 2022 on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of *Dylaby*. The choice of realizing a reenactment is closely related to the meaning of the title *Dynamish Labyrinth* which constitutes a starting point to reflect on the contemporary world. Actually, the concept of labyrinth can convey a complexity of meanings related to both a physical and a psychological reflection of reality. These considerations were at the core of *Dylaby* itself, especially in relation to the interactions of the audience who was immersed in a ludic environment.

> [*Dylaby is a*] *Labyrinthine construction, with elements from the amusement park and theater, combining an exhibition and a haunted house, with the intention of tear(ing) the viewer out of passivity. The show would surround the viewer with an exciting mix of visual, physical, and psychological sensations.* (**Willem Sandberg, 1962**)

In order to achieve this goal, the director chose seven rooms of the museum in which to set the exhibition. Each room was assigned to artist (or more than one) who had to realize a site-specific installation:

Niki De Saint Phalle's, *Shooting Gallery*, Daniel Spoerri, *90° Museum* and *Dark-Ligth Room*, Jean Tinguely, *Balloons' room*, Per Olof Ultveldt's, *Raised Platform*, Martial Raysse, *Raisse Beach*.

The reenactment *LuLaby* aims to modernize the exhibition of 1962 in contemporary terms, starting from a new interpretation of the idea of labyrinth and of some original site-specific installations. Moreover, the display of the new project is increased enriched with other evocative artworks.

The concept of labyrinth is at the basis of the project, starting from the plan. It takes inspiration from the famous unicursal symmetrical maze in the Cathedral of Chartres (France), built between the 12th and the 13th century. The quotation is not only meant to be structural, but also theoretical. In fact, the labyrinth can be considered as a metaphor to describe contemporary urban life. Despite the use of Google maps, the city seems to be an intricate place where people get lost and experience the world by chance, overwhelmed by multiple sensorial inputs. In the reenactment, the labyrinthic dimension of society is spontaneously evoked by the atmosphere and the installations. At the entrance, visitors can choose between two different directions, both leading to the center. It is a unique path because those who start the visit from the left entrance will exit from the right one and the other way around. In the maze, some little windows connect the interior with the exterior, just as in *Dylaby*: Sandberg located an elevated platform outside the museum which allowed people

to observe those visiting the exhibition. If visitors start the path from the left, they find the *Mirror Labyrinth* by the contemporary artist Jeppe Hein. Then, they walk through the reenactment of the *90 degrees' museum* by Spoerri, followed by an entire room with archival documents and images of *Dylaby*. The 4th room is a contemporary version of Saint-Phalle's work that leads visitors to the center of the maze. There, the audience is welcomed by a rhizome-shaped installation inspired by the philosophical thought of Deleuze and Guattari, which represents the interconnectivity of the web. Then, people continue their path by visiting the rooms of the second half of the labyrinth. The 6th room is an interpretation of the *Dark Room* by Spoerri with an integration of Flavin's neon lights and it is followed by an interactive space devoted to the sampling and remixing activity typical of the postmodern era. In the 7th room, there is a reenactment of Ultvedt's raised platform, and in the last one people are overwhelmed by the balloons of the Tinguely's installation.

The curatorial strategies of the project can be summed up in three peculiar aspects of the labyrinth itself:

- dis-orientation
- de-contextualization
- and playful maze.

For example, dis-orientation is evoked by the structure of the exhibition, a feeling of de-contextualization can be perceived by walking throughout Hein's *Mirror Labyrinth*, and the playful aspect of the maze lies in the *Shooting Gallery* by de Saint Phalle. All these curatorial strategies aim to engage the general public by providing an experience of edutainment. The visit is an active experience where people interact not only with artworks and installations but also with one another. At the same time, they can discover the history of the original 1962 exhibition and reflect on the meaning of reenactment.

In the *LuLaby* project, two matters of thought are introduced which were not present in *Dylaby*. Firstly, visitors are involved in an ecological reflection about mycelium, the material employed for the structure. It is an avant-garde material, presented for the first time in the 2020 Triennale of Milano. The production of mycelium bricks consists of fragments of mushroom roots put into a mold with nourishment. The choice of mycelium should draw the attention of the audience to the issue of the waste of materials employed in exhibitions. Secondly, the exhibition wants to engage the audience in a debate about the use of social networks such as Instagram and Facebook that allow users to see other people's life in real time. Right at the center of the labyrinth, a giant rhizome fills the circular room, evoking the intricate patterns of networking, which has no beginning, end or center. Furthermore, inside the maze there are different cameras and projection screens which recall the work of Bruce Nauman, *Live-Taped* corridor, 1970. The purpose is to emphasize the voyeuristic need to spy on other people in contemporary society. Specifically, all the cameras of the left part of the labyrinth broadcast their images in the projections of the right part and vice versa. In the same way, visitors in the labyrinth will have the feeling of spying those who are in the opposite part, and they will develop a voyeuristic desire to meet them within the exhibition.



Fig. 1. Exhibition flyer of LULABY, 2020.



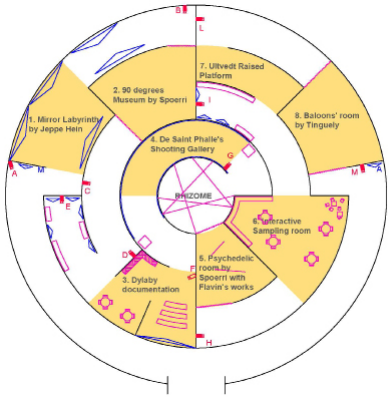


Fig. 2. Left: *Plan of the exhibition*, drawing, 2020.
Fig. 3. Right: *Plan of the exhibition with furniture*, drawing, 2020.



Fig. 4. *Aerial view of the exhibition space*, maquette, 2020.



Fig. 5. *View of the exhibition entrance*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 6. *View of the first corridor starting from the left*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 7. *View of the first room by Jeppe Hein, Mirror Labyrinth*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 8. *View of the second room by Daniel Spoerri, 90° Museum*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 9. *View of the third room, dedicated to the original Dylaby documentation*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 10. *View of the fourth room by Niki de Saint Phalle, Shooting Gallery*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 11. *View of the fifth room, the central rhizome*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 12. *View of the sixth room by Dan Flavin and Daniel Spoerri, Dark-Light Room*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 13. *View of the seventh room dedicated to interactive sampling*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 14. *View of the eighth room by Per Olof Ulvedt, Raised Platform*, maquette's detail, 2020.



Fig. 15. *View of the ninth room by Jean Tiguely, Balloons' Room*, maquette's detail, 2020.

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INFORMATION 1970-2020

AUTHORS:

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FIRST SECTION:
Why reenact this exhibition?

SECOND SECTION:
Hans Haacke, MoMA Poll

THIRD SECTION:
Group Frontera

FOURTH SECTION:
John Giorno, Dial a Poem

FIFTH SECTION:
Ettore Sottsass,
Olivetti Visual Jukebox

SIXTH SECTION:
Sol LeWitt,
Wall painting, information show

The exhibition Information, curated by Kynaston McShine, was held in 1970 at the MoMA in New York. Information was an all-encompassing international survey of conceptual art. Thanks to the themes it touched, it raised critical questions on the new mass media and the information society, while aiming at questioning traditional artistic categories and demonstrating the immaterial qualities of the works.

Thus, the title Information also reflected the Information Age and the era of mass media technology. It featured around 150 international artists, mostly from the USA and Europe, who worked with a wide variety of media. The exhibition was quite controversial and made many political allusions. To understand it, we have to take into consideration the political context of the year 1970, most importantly the Vietnam War.

It was in fact one of the first exhibitions in which both the museum and the public were politically engaged and denied the privilege of neutrality.

WHY REENACT THIS EXHIBITION?

We decided to reenact Information on its 50th anniversary in order to raise questions on parallels and evolutions. To this day, the exhibition has never been reenacted before, hence this project will give a wider public the chance to visit this landmark exhibition again.

We decided to set up the reenactment in a temporary pavilion built in Central Park, right in front of the MoMA.

Reflecting on the exhibition's topics again, in 2020, gives us the possibility not only to re-imagine some of these important artworks, but also to display them in a new light, drawing connections between the original and the contemporary artistic, political, and social context.

Our aim is to enable the viewer to draw comparisons between those artworks and our contemporary version, and question what has changed and in what way. Moreover, we think that the topic of Information could not be more suitable for our age, which is characterized more than ever by the extensive use of mass media, the rapid spread of information, and the virtual and immaterial communication on the Internet and digital technology. While reenacting Information, we focused on a selection of artworks following a specific set of topics that we chose among the most reasoning with our times. We explored the different aspects of information in thirteen selected artworks, in particular political information, poetic information, information by instruction and media information.
These topics are visible in the following samples of reenacted artworks.

HANS HAACKE, MOMA POLL

The MoMA Poll is the most subversive and controversial work of the entire exhibition, certainly the main one for which Information is remembered. Entering the museum, the public was immediately welcomed by a direct question, posed by an interactive device that required a personal engagement from the visitor. "Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina Policy be a reason for your not voting for him in November?" was the question the visitors answered by casting their vote in one of two transparent ballot boxes.

In the reenactment we maintained its original position at the

beginning of the display, in order to recall the same shock that 1970's users experienced. An extraordinary combination allows us to set this piece in a very similar political context:

> in 2020, as in 1970, America approaches its next presidential election. Thanks to this coincidence, we could easily mime the original query and adapt Haacke's directives to America's present political situation.

Our question would therefore be:

> "Would the fact that Trump assassinated a high-ranking Iranian leader under no military threat be a reason for your not voting for him in November?".

GROUP FRONTERA

Several pieces in the original exhibition required the active participation of the people, like the work of Group Frontera. The team decided to set up a television tape recording booth in the museum.

The aim of their work was to formulate a theory for the role of mass media in the definition of a society's culture. We decided to reenact this artwork to underline the strong impact that media still has on our society, however, we adapted the work to new contemporary technologies.

Visitors entering the booth would be invited to call "Siri" and answer her questions. We decided to keep the same questions planned by Group Frontera in 1970 since they are still extremely relevant in our time. The questions deal with the definition of power, how people define themselves, how they see the future, etc.

After answering the questions, the visitors would see and hear themselves recorded and displayed on the TV screen outside the booth.

JOHN GIORNO, DIAL A POEM

Dial-a-Poem was a telephonic artwork which allowed the public to access an archive of recorded contemporary poems from different genres, by calling a local telephone number through four phone lines. In the reenactment, the four telephones would be displayed as in the original exhibition, alongside a QR code to access the poems through a smartphone.

Our intention was to convey through the old artworks an updated way of communicating the same idea of "poetic information".

The users would be able to listen to the original poems, as well as pieces of modern stand-up poetry, being it the most similar genre to the one of the original selection, as they both address social issues and criticise the contemporary world.

ETTORE SOTTSASS, OLIVETTI VISUAL JUKEBOX

Sottsass' huge machine was composed of forty booths that projected ten movies at a time, that range from three minutes to eight hours. We decided to include this work in order to show an example of how media were, and still are, a perfect tool of communication and information.

For our reenactment, we reproduced the original machine, but changing some of the original movies showed in 1970. In particular, we introduced various types of 2020 videos from different sources, such

as movies, news, advertisements and documentaries, mixing them with some screenings of the original exhibition.

SOL LEWITT, WALL PAINTING, INFORMATION SHOW

This work is a great example of providing information through instruction. In the original exhibition, several works were included in the catalogue but not displayed, like Wall painting, information show by Sol LeWitt.

The catalogue entry gave precise directions on how the work should have been displayed. In our project we wanted to follow Sol LeWitt instructions and enact, rather than reenact, his artwork, finally showing it to the public. Moreover, for the first four opening days, we would transform his directions into a performance in order to make his idea visible.

Approaching the exit of the exhibition, visitors would be faced with some thought-provoking quotations by Andy Wharol and Stephen Kaltenbach, with the aim of inspiring them to participate in a re-enactment of Time-Information Idea #5 by Donald Burgy in the form of a traditional guestbook.

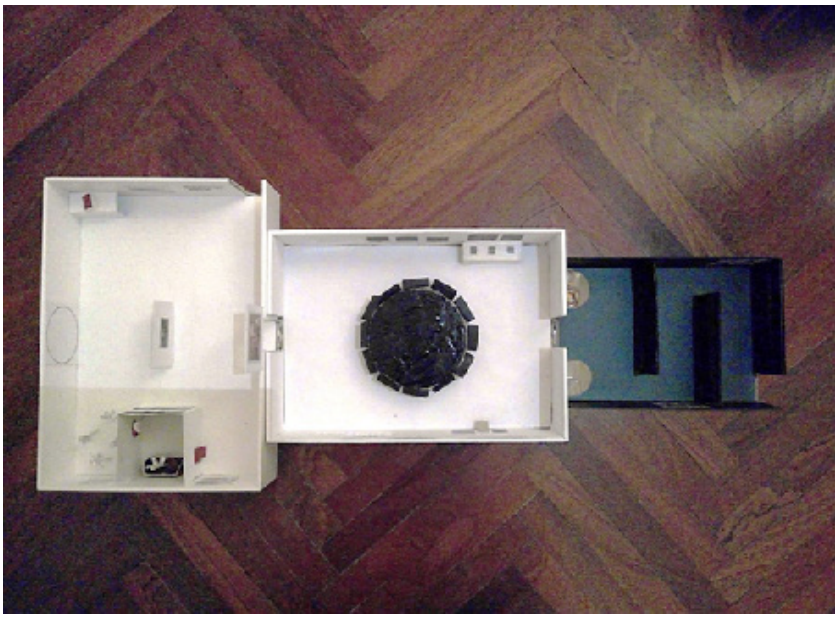


Fig. 1. *Aerial view of the maquette,* photography, 2020.



Fig. 2-3. *Maquette. View of the exhibition entrance*, photography, 2020.



Fig. 4. *Maquette. View of Room 1: Hans Haacke*, MoMA Poll, photography, 2020.

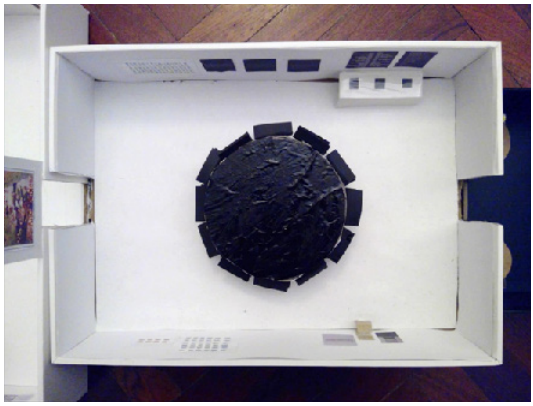


Fig. 5. *Maquette. View of Room 2: Ettore Sottass, Olivetti Visual Jukebox; Joseph Kosuth, Art As Idea As Idea; Joseph Kosuth, One And Three Chairs; John Giorno, Dial A Poem; On Kawara, I Got Up; Ira Joel Haber, Statement for information wall work*, photography, 2020.

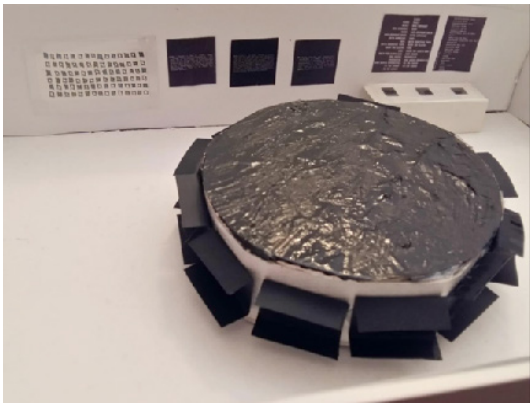


Fig. 6. *Maquette. View of Room 2: Ettore Sottass, Olivetti Visual Jukebox; Joseph Kosuth, Art As Idea As Idea; John Giorno, Dial A Poem; Ira Joel Haber, Statement for information wall work*, photography, 2020.



Fig. 7. *Maquette. View of Room 2 and 3: Art Workers Coalition, Q. And babies? A. And babies*, photography, 2020.

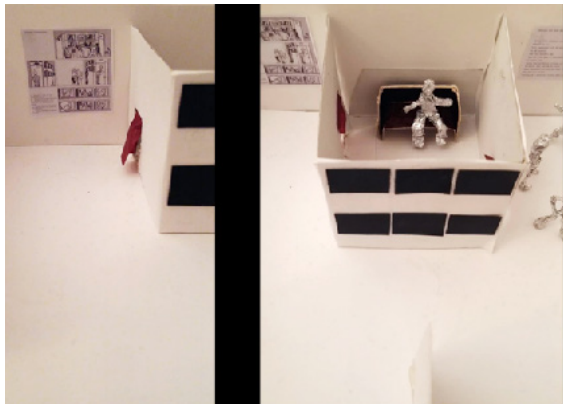


Fig. 8-9. *Maquette. View of Room 3: Group Frontera*, photography, 2020.

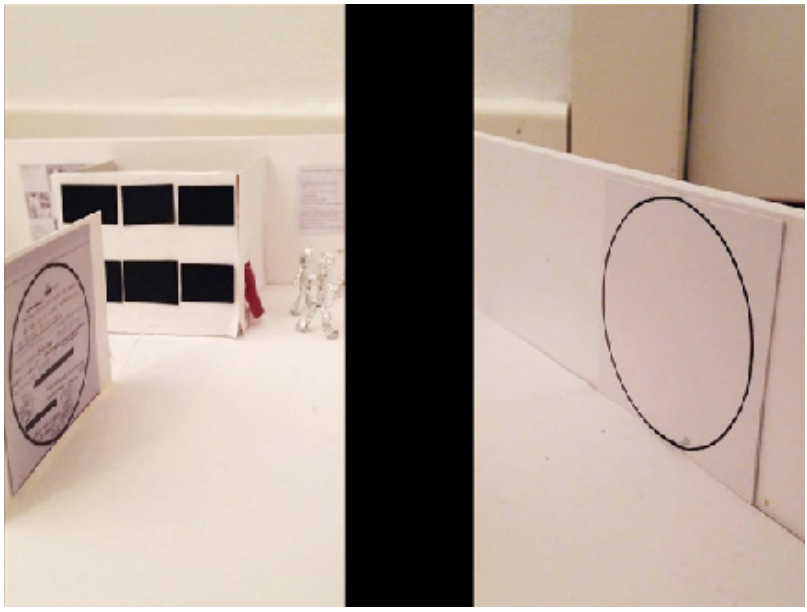


Fig. 10-11. *Maquette. View of Room 3: Sol LeWitt, Wall painting, information show*, photography, 2020.

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THE "STRADA NOVISSIMA"

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Emanuele Fontanesi

The first Biennale of architecture was entitled *The Presence of the Past* and took place between July 27th and October 19th, 1980. The *Strada Novissima*, as part of the exhibition, was set up in the newly reopened Arsenale, a vast three-aisled 16th-century pre-industrial space that was refurbished for the event. The area was the industrial heart of the city till the XVIII century, but it had been kept inaccessible to the public for centuries. Venetian institutions willingly accepted to open the space in order to exploit the commercial benefits of the manifestation thanks to the effects of the visitors on the local economy. The *Strada Novissima* consisted of twenty houses' façades on a 70 meters long street together with other sections inside the Corderie dell'Arsenale. Behind every façade each architect had his or her own private space to exploit.

The impossibility of presenting architecture as it appears in reality, forces architects to resort to two-dimensional representations or smaller-than-reality models. For the 1980's Biennale the curator Paolo Portoghesi offered a paradoxical solution to the problem.

He basically planned to overcome the problem of exhibiting architecture by exhibiting façades, which are at the same time images and architecture. The purpose was to provide architecture with the possibility to communicate, promote the architect's work and introduce the spectator to the space, individually conceived by each architect, behind the façades. The Biennale was conceived as a spectacle that connected the Biennale with the rest of the city aiming at involving citizens in a setting that had the main goal of bluring the boundaries between art and urban spaces. The reenactment will be held in Pré Saint-Gervais, a municipality north of Paris. If the Biennale was (also) a tool to capitalise on tourism and promote an abandoned area, we now face a different situation. Inside the municipality of Pré Saint-Gervais no vast green area exists. The space will be dedicated to the community, but it bears no strict links to the specificity of the place except for the materials employed and construction workers that will build it. The lot has been occupied by the factory Busso since the end of the Second World War and represented the industrial heart of the town for decades. The show will be held inside the industrial site that is going to be reconfigured as a public space. The space surrounding the street will be redesigned for the occasion.

As the Arsenale in Venice was brought back to life, the space where the reenactment will take place is a space that is going to be restructured as public garden. What was previously the main body of the factory will host the "Strada Novissima reloaded". In the South side of the park a theater will be built. It will be a *clin d'oeil* to Aldo Rossi's "Teatro del Mondo" and will host the weekly conference held for the exhibition opening. A column in the South side right after one of the two accesses to the park, the other being located on the Northern side.

The cross-like shape of the factory presents a terrace with a tower on the crossing section. A column will be placed where the tower was. The high column in the middle of the urban forest, with no purpose besides being there and taking the place of the previously present terrace, is there to communicate the refusal of a dominating gaze.

Man is not mastering the space, he is part of an environment. The structures are going to stay, and the maintenance will be assured by local authorities. It will be a public space, where the façades, instead of being promotional tool will just be images. In 1980, the street

recalled a shopping mall or a fair creating an event that had more to do with self-promotion and consumerism than with spatial matters.

For the reenactment people are invited to contemplation, playing and inaction. It's an invitation to a poetic experience linking old and new and contaminating memories with the present. Moore's irregular stairs in the original exhibition are exemplary of what the reenactment's purpose is about:

> pure events, one after the other that cannot even be considered discrete episodes in an inconclusive architectural narrative. They are, in a sense, pure events.

The *Strada Novissima Reloaded* could symbolically remind us of a new landscape where man is not dominating but part of a field of interrelated forces that overcome an anthropocentric vision of reality with its limited conception of life. The "Strada Novissima reloaded" is just an ensemble of signifiers that lost their promotional and individual aspects.

Architecture opens and connects itself to the environment. A space which is full of potential, function as a break from doing, a blank spot that is fueled and filled with people's presence.

Eventually, throughout the years, the façades will most likely be submerged by the living elements of the forest. I decided to carry on with the idea of the paradox which characterised the original show in order to build up different conditions, enhanced by the qualities and needs of the area and the future urban forest. My aim is to connect the show to ordinary life and create a space which gains meaning through its use and therefore becomes an inhabited spaces, a place, and eventually let the façades live as physical entities and images at the same time. The idea is to give space to the category of memory and imagination for a poetic experience which is at the core of the constitution of a community. Both postmodernism and the current historical moment share the need to reinvent categories following the questioning of the idea of project in order to recover from the enslaving forces behind algorithms.

This is perfectly expressed by Gilles Deleuze as he states, it's not the slumber of reason that engenders monsters, but vigilant and insomniac rationality.



Fig. 1. *Aerial view of the area*, photography, 2020.



Fig. 2. *Plan and view of the exhibition space*, photography, 2020.



Fig. 3. *Aerial view of the site.*



Fig. 4. ***Maquette. View from the north side***, photography, 2020.



Fig. 5. ***Maquette. View from south-east side***, photography, 2020.



Fig. 6. ***Maquette***. Photography, 2020.



Fig. 7. ***Maquette***. Photography, 2020.



Fig. 8. All the façades. LINK: inspirationnink.wordpress.com/2013/06/25/postmodernism-2/

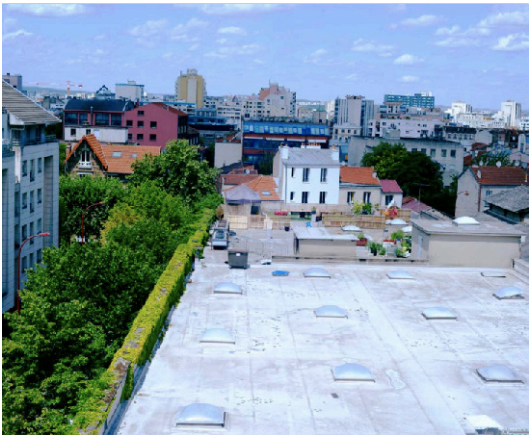


Fig. 9. Usine Busso, View from the terrace, photography 2020.

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TERRAE MOTUS

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In times of crisis such as the one the world has been facing since the start of 2020, it feels like, as many other times before in the history of humanity, the entire world is crumbling. In times like this, it is fundamental to remember the past, before rebuilding the future.

The past this reenactment sets to revive is not so far in time and space, but it is a past in which another catastrophe made people feel little and powerless. Nonetheless, the crisis was overcome thanks to someone screaming "We are the revolution" and preaching that art will unite us to save us all. The past to come back to today is an exhibition, unknown to most, but fundamental to all, titled *Terrae Motus*.

Terrae Motus is one of the largest monothematic contemporary art collections, gradually assembled, piece by piece, by the iconic Neapolitan gallerist Lucio Amelio, the "Vesuvian Eagle," in the aftermath of the Irpinia Earthquake of 1980. The collection, conceived as a work in progress that could be enriched through the years, was exhibited in different venues in a four-year span:

> the Institute of Contemporary Art of Boston (1983), Villa Campolieto in Ercolano (in 1984, 1986 and again in 1986) and the Grand Palais in Paris (1987).

Since 1994, the collection has found its permanent location at the Reggia di Caserta, following Amelio's last wishes, where it has been presented with little curatorial weight and often made inaccessible to the public.

Terrae Motus is a collection too important to be left in storage. Firstly, it owns an artistic and cultural weight which needs to be recognized, valorised, and made accessible. For too many years the collection was diminished, mistreated, and ignored, so much that it is completely unknown to most of the public, often even by art lovers. Secondly, the premises of *Terrae Motus* are still relevant today, as several natural and man-made catastrophes have recently hit Italy and the world, so much that people have grown accustomed to calamities.

Lastly, it is important even today to reactivate the original energy of the collection, a force capable of igniting dialogue around contemporary issues, which was the original aim of *Terrae Motus. Terrae Motus* was a fertile occasion to discern the relationship between Nature and Man, which is not a relationship between equals, as the earthquake clearly manifests the superiority of Nature. Nevertheless, men have always tried to find instruments to regain power against Nature and subjugate it to their needs. The consequences of these actions are more evident nowadays than ever.

> ***Art lives from its own time; and if time is pervaded by a presentiment, obsessed by a death libido, art can only try to neutralize the unconscious through a clear, but no-less tragic, image of death.*** (**Giulio Carlo Argan**)

Back then, the image of death that art needed to represent was that of men caused by Nature. Nowadays, the more evident image of death is that of the Earth caused by men. Even if today the roles are reversed, the aim of our *Terrae Motus* stays the same: "[...] to revive in this mortal anguish a vital hope" (Giulio Carlo Argan).

For all these reasons, it is time to reenact this wonderful and meaningful exhibition. The collection will initially be set in the same Villa of Lucio Amelio's exhibitions of 1984-1986, Villa Campolieto in Ercolano, for to reactivate the energy of the work in progress, it is important to start back from where it all began. Furthermore, it will be a way for the locals to rediscover an art historical past which they are mostly unaware of.

The entire collection will be on view, honouring Lucio Amelio's wishes. The original 73 artworks will be joined by a selection of works by 21st century artists, dealing with the theme of the environment and the damages Man is inflicting to the Planet, thus creating a stimulating dialogue between opposites with the original collection.

The new artists will be Olafur Eliasson, Katja Novitzkova, Pascale Marthine Tayou, and Mathilde Roussel. Moreover, two site-specific projects will be commissioned to Eve Mosher and Tamiko Thiel.

Terrae Motus' new exhibition design recalls that of the original exhibition, with artworks scattered across the entire villa, yet it features the courtyard and the external entrance as two new exhibition venues, presenting the works by Olafur Eliasson and Gabriel Orozco. However, what differs most from the original design is the first-floor hall, now reinterpreted as a rhomboidal white-cube room built around Giulio Paolini's *L'altra figura.* Finally, the exhibition will travel to other venues, as in the original intention of Lucio Amelio starting with MAXXI L'Aquila, Italy, recently opened after the disastrous earthquake of 2009.

Nonetheless, the collection will also be open to international loans, in order to further promote the collection on an international level, with the hope of encouraging the administration of the Reggia di Caserta to finally find a suitable place for the entire collection. This exhibition reenactment will be accompanied by the publication of a catalog conceived and designed as both an homage to the iconic original exhibition catalog and as a new essential toolkit to document the reenacted exhibition, where to enjoy the everlasting vitality of the original show, reactivated and reinterpreted through today's eyes.



Fig. 1. Exhibitions' catalog cover. *Terrae Motus*, Villa Campolieto, Ercolano, 1983.



Fig. 2. Exhibitions' catalog cover. *Terrae Motus*, Villa Campolieto Ercolano, 2020.



Fig. 3. Olafur Eliasson, *Ice Watch*, 2014, *Terrae Motus*, 2020. Installation view mockup.

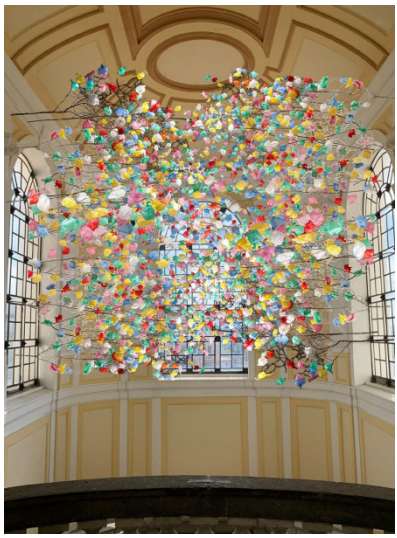


Fig. 4. Pascale Marthine Tayou, *Plastic Tree*, 2015, *Terrae Motus*, 2020. Installation view mockup.



Fig. 5. Mathilde Roussel, *Lives of Grass v3*, 2010-2012; Carlo Alfano, *Ecodiscesa*, 1981, *Terrae Motus*, 2020. Installation view mockup.



Fig. 6. Katja Novitskova, *Green Growth*, 2014, *Terrae Motus*, 2020. Installation view mockup.





Fig. 7-8. Partial view of the Maquette, photography, 2020.

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RECONSTRUCTING PROMETHEUS

Luigi Nono and Renzo Piano, a Tragedy about Listening

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FIRST SECTION:
The original project

SECOND SECTION:
The original scenography

THIRD SECTION:
Performances through the years

FOURTH SECTION:
Curatorial intents for reenactment

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THE ORIGINAL PROJECT

Prometheus. A Tragedy About Listening is a musical opera written between 1981 and 1984 by the Venetian electronic-music composer Luigi Nono. Starting from a libretto by the philosopher Massimo Cacciari, Prometheus was performed for the first time on 25th September 1984 in the deconsecrated Church of San Lorenzo in Venice, as an event promoted by the Music Biennale with the partnership of Teatro alla Scala and the Comune di Venezia. The play was based on the traditional tragedy about the Greek mythological hero Prometheus, but it was at the same time presented in an extremely innovative way, differing greatly from the classical type of representation. In fact, it was not conceived as a theatrical act:

> there is no stage action, and the score is not that of a canonical opera either, with no dialogues but only sounds. The show was meant to be a sound performance in which the central role, as the subtitle *A Tragedy About Listening* reveals, was given to the sound.

Being a form of live art, not a simple theatrical event, Prometheus was in line with Luigi Nono's poetics: the idea of preserving the sound and stressing the role of listening against the dimension of passive watching.
The original setting in which the event was performed was the desecrated Church of San Lorenzo in Venice, a perfect location both for its history as a space renowned for its ancient music tradition, and for its architectural structure. The church has a single nave with a double-sided altar divided in 3 arches closed by grates, a peculiar setting that retains a perfect acoustic.

THE ORIGINAL SCENOGRAPHY

The scenography for the execution of the play was an unconventional one and was designed by the architect Renzo Piano and the painter Emilio Vedova. Renzo Piano conceived a structure that aimed at enhancing the concept of Luigi Nono's work. The result was a wooden structure that was to be set in the main nave of the church, appearing like an ark or a boat.
The walls of the ark hosted three different levels of balconies reserved for the musicians and singers. The ground floor hosted the audience, thus reversing the traditional space disposition of the performers and the participants. The round surface of the walls allowed the sound to be modulated. This setting was conceived as a rejection of the traditional theatre form, where the orchestra sits in its designated area right before the stage and with the public facing it. Concerning Piano's ark and its setup, Massimo Cacciari stated:

> ***In Prometheus, music is not projected into perspective above the audiences as in traditional opera houses, but floods them.*** (**Cresta 2002, 28**)

Prometheus is a unique experience because for the first time an architectural space is conceived as an integral part of the same creative process that originated the work. Luigi Nono conceived the score starting from the space in which the music would be performed, keeping in mind the wrap-around sound effect produced by the ark.

PERFORMANCES THROUGH THE YEARS

Since 1984 there have been several performances of this opera, the most important being the one staged at the Teatro Farnese in Parma, directed by Marco Angius in May 2017. On this occasion, however, the public was not surrounded by the musicians as was originally planned by Luigi Nono.

Instead, the director opted for a more traditional division of the space, a choice that was highly criticized by the press.

In any case, no restaged version has ever used Renzo Piano's ark, obtaining an overall sound effect that was very different from the original one. For the first time since 1985, a new attempt to reinstall the ark was made on the occasion of Matera, Capital of the Culture in 2019. The ark was restored so as to be reassembled but, sadly, the event has never seen the light of the day. Currently, the ark has been placed in a warehouse in the town of Mezzago, while the church of San Lorenzo has become a cultural centre named Ocean Space.

CURATORIAL INTENTS FOR A REENACTMENT

The idea to reenact this performance was born from the failed attempt in Matera. The ark was originally conceived to be movable, therefore its structure is easily put together. Yet, it has been kept in a warehouse for the past 35 years. We believe it is time for it to serve its purpose again, bringing back to the public a musical masterpiece in its original format, complete with its elaborate virtuosity. As the setting of this reenactment, we selected the Pirelli HangarBicocca exhibition spaces in Milan. The Hangar was chosen for its size and characteristics:

> it is big enough to contain the ark, but also to host panels and an exhibition path around it. Furthermore, the space is empty, which facilitates the acoustics, and relatively dark, making it easy to project, which will be a substantial part of our new display.

The space of the Navate extends for 1,400 square meters, a vast enough area to comfortably fit the structure of the ark, which measures 915 square meters, plus the panels around it.

CURATORIAL PROJECT

This event will be conceived both as a re-execution of the work and an exhibition where visitors can retrace the stages of the creation of the work. The structure will be on display for a period of two months in the HangarBicocca space, and the reenactment will include three event nights during which Prometheus will be performed in its entirety for the first time since its first appearance in 1984, using the original ark, which was re-assembled for the occasion exactly as it was conceived.

We will ask the original singers and musicians to participate and try to recreate the event in a philological way, collaborating with the Luigi Nono Archive. Since it is not possible to have a complete live performance every day, the novelty of our reenactment will consist in a "sonorous setting":

> a sound system where a loudspeaker will be placed for each component of the orchestra, so that the sound effect will be

identical to the one of the live version.

Outside the structure, eight large-scale panels will host video projections, creating a path around the ark. The panels will be taken from the Studio Azzurro installation displayed in 2019 at the Emilio e Annabianca Vedova Foundation in the Magazzini del Sale (Venice), on the occasion of the exhibition *Progetti d'acqua di Renzo Piano*.

The projections will show drawings and sketches by Renzo Piano, as well as photographic archive material, music sheets and other material related to the conception of Prometheus, in a display that will change continuously in a non-static flow.

The Studio Azzurro panels will furthermore remind visitors of scenery flats, giving them the impression of entering a scenic space and creating an evocative setting that will plunge spectators in a fictional dimension typical of theatrical representations. The path will eventually lead them to the parterre of the ark, where the illusion will come to fruition thanks to the musical experience.

The ark will be illuminated by spotlights in order to allow visitors to appreciate its architectural peculiarities even from the outside, despite the dark space. The lighting will mirror Anselm Kiefer's *Seven Heavenly Palaces*, installed permanently in the side room of the Hangar and illuminated by spotlights from a height right over the artworks that emerge from the darkness, which enhances their monumentality.

The two installations will be put in a dialectic relationship that lies in the common symbolic background they share: the Hebrew tradition and religion. Ansem Kiefer's artwork owes its name to the palaces described in the ancient Hebrew treatise Sefer Hechalot, the *Book of Palaces/Sanctuaries*, which narrates the symbolic path of spiritual initiation that anyone who wants to become closer to God must undertake. Similarly, Renzo Piano's ark visually recalls Noah's Ark, a very important image for the Hebrew tradition.



Fig. 1. *Reenactment rendering: Renzo Piano's ark and luminous panels at Pirelli HangarBicocca*, Milan, rendering, 2020.

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THE UNILEVER SERIES

From Tate Modern to Fondazione Prada

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In the reenactment of the Unilever Series, the challenge is to re-create enormous and site-specific installations in a different specific site:

> from the Turbine Hall to the Fondazione Prada.

The curatorial process aims to adapt the works to pre-existing spaces, favoring the rendering of the experience for visitors as in a sort of amusement park. Moreover, curators consider each installation as a layering of meanings, all having the common feature of looking towards the future, in a world constituted by human relations. That is the reason why the Unilever Series could be considered as being always relevant to the present time. *The Unilever Series* is an art installation project that Tate Modern initiated after a sponsorship deal with the Anglo-Dutch company Unilever in 1999. Since the museum opened in 2000, a new piece has been commissioned each year for the Turbine Hall.

As the result of a successful 12-years partnership, it has never been shown as a whole, but only one artwork at a time. This challenging reenactment, in the year 2020, marks the celebration of the Tate's 20th anniversary. Displaying the artworks together is the representation of a milestone project. The 13 artists participated with different approaches in material, formal and conceptual aspects. The artworks then range from sculptures to video art, from mixed media installations to performances.

The strong connection between these 13 works lies in the awareness that they are presented in the Turbine Hall in the first place, a public space where contemporary art can be experienced.

Entering the Tate Modern is indeed entirely free, and visitors are welcomed into the Turbine Hall right from the South Bank renowned walkway. In 2012, this collaboration with Unilever came to an end because of the works for Tate's extension plan (now New Tate) and for economic reasons. The finale was assigned to Tino Sehgal, who came up with a performance and an app for iPad which brings together all the previous works. The core of the reenactment is that every installation per se has a strong immersive scope, which is the main feature that plays a role in creating a bond with the public. Therefore, the aim is to recreate these interactive environments in the spaces of Fondazione Prada, inviting visitors to experience the contemporary art installations all in the same exhibition tour instead of one by one, as in the original display.

This is linked to the curators' interest in Relational Aesthetics, as presented by French curator Nicholas Bourriaud, namely the tendency to make art inspired by human relations and to design it to facilitate a sense of community among participants (both artists and viewers). All the artworks in the Unilever Series are an example of Bourriaud's theory since they engage the audience and sometimes focus on personal interaction. Another pivotal aspect in this reenactment was to keep in mind why art installations at Tate turned out so well-received and successful:

> they connect contemporary art to the city. Hence the decision to also involve the Osservatorio Prada, which, together with the Fondazione, gives a defined identity to the city of Milan in the art scene.

It is useful to recall how the Turbine Hall has been conceived as a space for openness, for inclusion, for welcoming all comers. During the drawing up of the project, a questionnaire was sent to artists worldwide asking in which spaces they preferred to exhibit. This revealed that they favored day-lit conversions of existing buildings where architectural intervention

was minimal. Following this aspect, it is possible to focus on the industrial origin of both buildings, which have been re-qualified:

> the Tate once was a brick power station while the Fondazione used to be a distillery. A few architectural changes have been made in both cases, and it is striking how the raw, industrial and often quirky original qualities of the Fondazione have been retained. Koolhaas left some spaces untouched, while others were reconfigured but look like they haven't been touched.

In an interview for The New York Times, he said:

> ***People talk about preservation, and they talk about new architecture. But this is neither. Here new and old confront each other in a state of permanent interaction. They are not meant to be seen as one.***

More importantly, since the different artworks are using mixed media, the required space needed to be able to offer several types of display.

In fact, as stated by Germano Celant, Director of the Prada Foundation, the role and function of the space is to be devoted to the divulgation of contemporary artistic events; it should be a place of research on traditional as well as experimental techniques, so that the multimedia identity of artworks can be revealed. The Institution must be driven to re-invent and present itself as an open, polymorphous "territory" for the energetic unleashing of all languages, from art to architecture, design, cinema, fashion, philosophy, music and theater, so as to bring down the boundaries between the arts once and for all.

For this reason, the Foundation has strived since 1995 to create a "force field" in which all artistic languages could converge and radiate energies that reach beyond the walls containing them and into the urban context, thus achieving a national and global resonance.

The Osservatorio Prada is a branch of the Foundation, an exhibiting space right in the heart of Milan, next to Piazza Duomo. Due to its central position, the intention is to make it a connection between the city and the Fondazione Prada, located in Largo Isarco, in the south of Milan. This connection point is essential because, as was said before, it allows for the link between contemporary art and the city while drawing the general public to the main exhibition at the Fondazione.

Just as the Tate changed the area surrounding South Bank, the Osservatorio Prada is doing the same in guiding people to the Fondazione while presenting it in the city center, all of this with the aim of presenting contemporary art as understandable and participatory. The two floors of the Osservatorio are first devoted to the reenactment of the Tino Sehgal digital application of 2012, making it available again through mural touch screens. Then, the Osservatorio spaces will host talks and workshops, which will become an opportunity to involve the public and citizens of Milan even more. The goal is to enhance the experiential aspect of the exhibition and to narrate the reenactment by returning a 360 degree image.

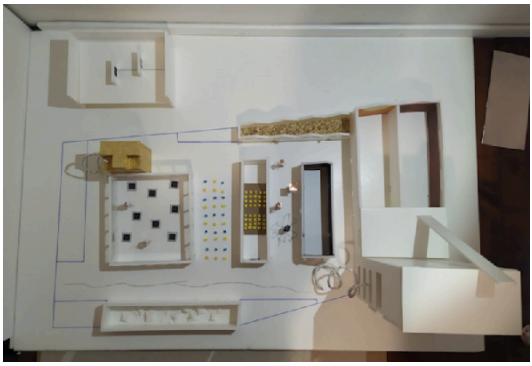


Fig. 1. *Fondazione Prada*, maquette.

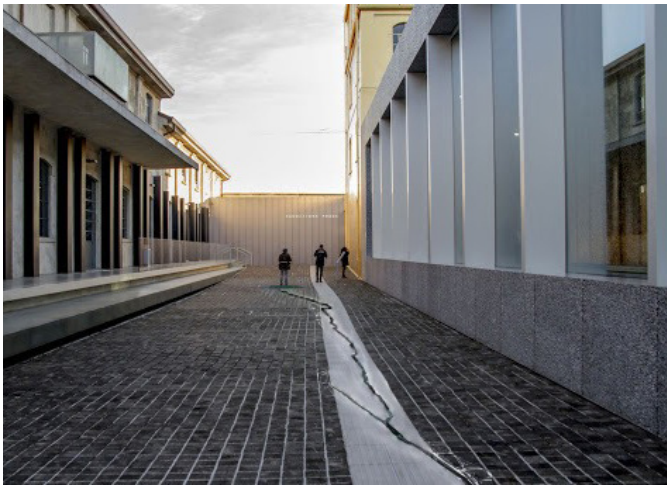


Fig. 2. Doris Salcedo, *Shibboleth*, 2020, collage, Fondazione Prada.



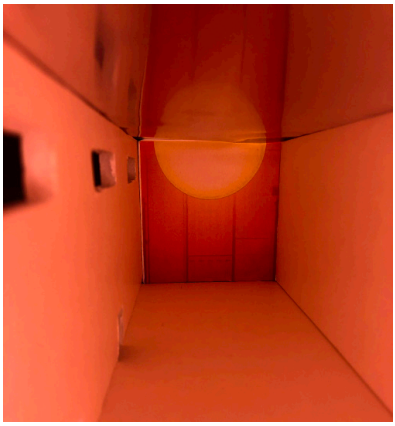


Fig. 3. Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, 2003 - 2004, Turbine Hall.
Fig. 4. Olafur Eliasson, *The Weather Project*, 2020, maquette, Fondazione Prada.



Fig. 5. Carsten Höller, Test Site, 2020, collage, Fondazione Prada.



Fig. 6. *Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster T.H. 2058*, 2008 - 2009, collage, Fondazione Prada.



Fig. 7. Rachel Whiteread, *Embankment*, 2005 - 2006, collage, Fondazione Prada.

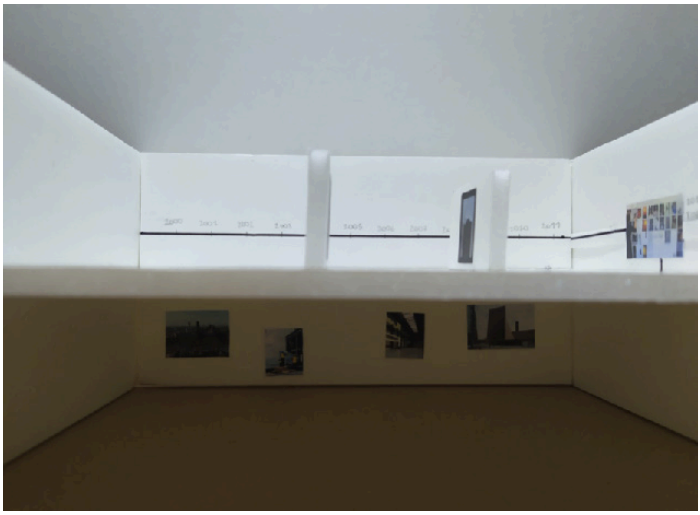


Fig. 8. *Osservatorio Prada*, interior, maquette.





Fig. 9. *Tino Sehgal's app*, reenacted interface.
Fig. 10. *Workshops*, flyers.

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COURSE TITLE:

COLLECTIONS, MUSÉES ET PUBLICS

HELD BY:

Sandra Costa

COURSE TIMETABLE:
II year, I semester.

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L'unité Musées et muséologie est l'une des trois options d'étude qu'il est possible de choisir lors de la deuxième année du parcours international AMaC. Comme dans les deux autres unités, la méthodologie adoptée vise à accompagner les étudiants à travers un système intégré de compétences capable de combiner des connaissances historiques et théoriques avec la compréhension des débats les plus actuels développés par la recherche internationale dans le domaine de la muséologie et de la muséographie, de l'éducation muséale et des aspects liés à l'organisation de la protection et de la valorisation du patrimoine historique et artistique promue par les institutions de la communauté européenne. L'unité Musées et muséologie soutient également un parcours d'expériences didactiques liées à des activités d'atelier dans lesquelles les étudiants, guidés par leurs enseignants et par des professionnels, ont l'occasion de découvrir et de mener des recherches personnelles et collectives, consacrées à des thèmes liés à la muséologie ou à la muséographie. L'objectif est de les impliquer dans un enseignement participatif, tant sur le plan théorique que pratique, afin de les préparer aux compétences et aux aptitudes requises par les profils professionnels liés aux besoins spécifiques de la muséologie.

Cette unité se compose de deux examens intégrés: dans le premier, *Art, musées et display*, la partie théorique est consacrée à l'analyse des relations historiques, sociales, esthétiques et culturelles qui se sont progressivement développées en Europe à partir de la création et de la mise en place de collections et de musées et à travers une attention, de plus en plus forte et maintenant incontournable, portée aux exigences des publics. Cet enseignement est complété par un cours caractérisé par une activité de laboratoire consacrée aux différentes formes, objectifs et outils de l'éducation muséale.

Le deuxième examen intégré, intitulé *Museum science,* comprend un cours théorique dédié à la muséologie contemporaine, et en particulier aux défis sociaux, éthiques et culturels des musées d'aujourd'hui, et un atelier sur les pratiques muséales en Europe, conçu pour offrir un horizon privilégié pour examiner l'organisation, le fonctionnement et les financements des musées dans le cadre de la politique culturelle de l'UE. Ainsi, l'unité Musées et muséologie s'inscrit-elle dans une géographie culturelle résolument internationale pour offrir des compétences théoriques et historiographiques incontournables afin de permettre aux étudiants d'affronter les questions professionnelles dans le domaine des musées, des institutions culturelles et de la dimension « curatoriale » de l'art.

Collections, musées et publics

Ce cours vise à approfondir la connaissance de la genèse et du développement des collections publiques et privées, des musées et de leurs publics, et s'attache particulièrement à l'évolution du débat critique et historiographique sur le rôle des institutions muséales en Europe.

Parmi les thèmes proposés à l'étude figurent l'histoire internationale des collections et des expositions consacrées à l'art et l'analyse de la transformation des critères d'organisation, d'aménagement et de commissariat d'exposition ; une attention particulière est également accordée à l'examen de l'évolution des formes architecturales et des choix de sélection et de conservation des collections.

Le débat muséologique contemporain exige, en effet, une réflexion sur

la relation entre l'institution muséale et son contexte historique, urbain, social et économique. Un contexte dont il faut reconnaître les racines historiques, vérifier les enjeux actuels et envisager un héritage pour le futur. En particulier, la multiplicité des publics et de leurs aspirations a été prise en compte dans son importance théorique et institutionnelle puisque les spectateurs sont désormais les protagonistes incontestés de nombreux champs de recherche consacrés aux fonctions et aux activités des musées. À plusieurs reprises, Krzysztof Pomian a mis en évidence les caractéristiques, qu'il juge paradoxales, du musée.

Il le décrit comme une institution récente, inutile, indispensable, et il a placé son succès international dans le cadre, plus large, du phénomène de la collection. En même temps, K. Pomian a souligné l'importance d'accorder une attention particulière à ce type d'échange entre des valeurs visibles et invisibles, entre la culture matérielle et une dimension symbolique qui a toujours constitué l'un des aspects fondamentaux de cette institution. L'une des définitions les plus connues de la muséologie a été proposée par Georges-Henri Rivière en 1981: "La muséologie: une science appliquée, la science du musée.

Elle étudie son histoire et son rôle dans la société, ses formes spécifiques de recherche, sa conservation physique, sa présentation, son animation, sa diffusion, son organisation, son fonctionnement, son architecture nouvelle ou muséalisée, les sites et les lieux reçus ou choisis, sa typologie, sa déontologie". Ainsi, depuis les années 1980, la muséologie est vue comme l'approfondissement d'une relation particulière entre l'homme et la réalité: le musée, donc, comme l'un des aspects tangibles d'un système de relations entre l'homme, la nature et la culture. Ainsi, la muséologie et la muséographie ne dépendent plus seulement de l'histoire de l'art et des techniques, ou de l'architecture, mais aussi des sciences sociales contribuant à la construction des relations sociologiques et à la compréhension de l'homme - et de ses cultures plurielles - au sein de la société, car le musée ne se contente pas d'exposer des objets, mais il en organise la perception: il ne se borne pas à exposer l'histoire mais il offre un système d'interprétation de la réalité. D'autre part, depuis le XIXe siècle, avec « l'Europe des Nations », l'objectif prioritaire des musées, dont l'horizon géographique et le champ disciplinaire s'élargissent progressivement, est la conservation des collections et leur communication: en ce sens, le changement des dispositifs d'exposition a toujours traduit l'évolution des débats disciplinaires autant que celle des besoins multiples des spectateurs. Dans ce contexte, pendant l'année académique 2020-2021, nous avons proposé une activité de séminaire qui visait à analyser - avec la participation active des étudiants - des aspects relatifs à l'évolution de la notion de public et à l'histoire de l'exposition et de la valorisation des collections d'un certain nombre de musées européens considérés comme exemplaires et sélectionnés par les étudiants eux-mêmes. L'objectif était d'analyser les modes de présentation et de médiation des collections adoptés par des institutions muséales européennes, chaque cas étant lié à la réception critique des collections, dans leurs dimensions historiques ou contemporaines. L'enjeu était de mettre en évidence la complexité des thèmes impliqués dans les choix conceptuels et esthétiques à la base des expositions: des questions politiques, historiques, esthétiques, de prestige social

ou, plus récemment, d'éducation muséale.

Les étudiants ont ainsi eu l'occasion de participer à des expériences de travail en équipe, de recherche d'archives, de confrontation directe avec les institutions et leur personnel et, enfin et surtout, d'organisation scientifique et de communication, car les différents groupes ont participé à un débat où ils ont présenté publiquement les résultats de leurs recherches. Les pages suivantes, élaborées *a posteriori* par des étudiants qui ont généreusement proposé d'enregistrer cet aspect du cours, offrent un fil rouge pour l'observation de quelques propositions culturelles de différents musées européens, mais aussi un bref aperçu des résultats pédagogiques.

Elles rendent surtout compte des justifications - rationnelles ou émotionnelles - des choix opérés par les étudiants et de leur approche méthodologique des différents thèmes: là encore, une dimension de réflexion collective a été privilégiée pour essayer de mettre en valeur la structure de recherche suivie par les différentes équipes et les acquis auxquels elles ont collectivement abouti.

FIRST SECTION:
Qui est le conservateur ?
Évolution d'une profession
et des compétences requises
entre le XVIIIe et le XXe siècle.

SECOND SECTION:

Muséophilie versus muséophobie

THIRD SECTION:
Les grands musées du XXe siècle

FOURTH SECTION:
Le Louvre d'Hubert Robert et
Vivant Denon

FIFTH SECTION:
Period Rooms versus White
Cube et retour: aspects critiques
et étude de cas exemplaires.

SIXTH SECTION:
Musée et public:
histoire critique d'une relation
aux XIXe et XXe siècles

COLLECTIONS, MUSÉES ET PUBLICS

AUTHORS:

Gaia De Palma, Miriam Gagelmann, Emma Puliti

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INTRODUCTION

Pour compléter les connaissances théoriques acquises pendant le cours *Collections, musées et publics*, une activité de séminaire a été ajoutée à l'enseignement, qui consistait en un travail de recherche, individuel ou en groupe, avec une présentation finale.

Cet exercice servait à consolider les compétences muséologiques sur des sujets exemplaires de muséologie. L'approche méthodologique consistait tout d'abord à choisir un cas d'étude pour illustrer le sujet, sur lequel ensuite on devait faire une recherche. Enfin, les résultats ont été partagés lors du cours sous forme de présentation ouverte à des questions et au débat avec les autres participant(e)s au séminaire. Cette publication a été créée afin de garder la trace du travail des étudiants, de façon à valoriser la composante recherche du travail effectué pour qu'elle puisse représenter un point de référence pour les futurs étudiants du cours AMaC, mais aussi un point de comparaison et de départ pour des analyses ultérieures.

Cette section de la publication a donc été créée comme un compendium écrit de présentations initialement structurées pour l'oral, à l'exception du support de quelques diapositives. Ainsi, afin de transposer les études des cas de manière correcte et cohérente, les autrices des études concernées – Miriam Gagelmann, Gaia De Palma et Emma Puliti – ont répondu à un questionnaire commun qui leur a permis de mettre en évidence la problématique de leur article, la méthodologie de recherche suivie, la raison du choix du cas d'étude et les principales conclusions tirées de l'analyse effectuée. Ces questionnaires et les diapositives produites par les élèves ont constitué le support principal pour la rédaction des textes qui suivent. Cependant, puisqu'au moment des présentations des recherches aucune transposition écrite n'était prévue, il n'a pas été possible de restituer la discussion qui a suivi chaque exposé. Tous les essais sont suivis d'une diapositive extraite de la présentation originale et de la bibliographie rédigée par chaque élève pour sa présentation.

Les études de cas représentent des échantillons de moments pertinents de l'histoire de la muséologie, couvrant les principales problématiques qui ont façonné la muséologie jusqu'à l'époque contemporaine. Les sujets abordés couvrent un large éventail d'aspects, centrés sur l'évolution des musées en Europe qui sont brièvement esquissés ici avant d'être analysés plus en détail dans les résumés.

Le premier thème traite le Louvre sous Hubert Robert et Vivant Denon. Livia Ficoroni a abordé le sujet du Louvre d'Hubert Robert et de Vivant Denon entre rêve, utopie et réalité dans la période entre la fin du XVIIIe et le début du XIXe siècle. Les aspects muséographiques tels que la division de l'espace et l'éclairage ont été analysés plus en détail au cours de l'histoire du Louvre. Un autre thème concerne l'évolution de certaines pratiques professionnelles dans les musées, notamment l'évolution historique de la condition et des compétences du conservateur au musée. Ilaria Benci et Chiara Alleva ont recherché comment cette profession a changé entre le XVIIIe et le XXe siècle.

Elles ont mis en évidence la manière dont cette profession s'est de plus en plus institutionnalisée et standardisée au sein du musée.

En outre, les questions socio-historiques de la relation entre le public et le musée ont été examinées. L'un des thèmes était celui du

rapport entre muséophilie et muséophobie. Beatrice Sartori et Eleonora Ianni ont souligné comment différents artistes et intellectuels se sont positionnés par rapport à l'institution muséale au fil du temps.

Elles ont notamment expliqué les positions extrêmes de la muséophilie d'une part, incluant aussi la forte critique, et de la muséophobie d'autre part, à l'aide de différents points de vue entre la fin du XVIIIe et le XXe siècle, à savoir ceux d'Alexandre Lenoir, Quatremère de Quincy, Vivant Denon, les futuristes italiens, jusqu'à André Malraux.

Ensuite, Gaia De Palma a examiné plus en détail la relation entre le musée et les publics au cours des XIXe et XXe siècles. Elle a choisi le British Museum comme cas d'étude, en analysant des aspects tels que le nombre de visiteurs, leur classe sociale et les stratégies de médiation culturelle. En outre, l'une des grandes questions de la présentation au musée est celle de l'affichage et du *display*. Irene Calvi et Emma Puliti ont proposé une présentation sur le thème Period Room versus White Cube. Elles ont travaillé sur les typologies des deux formes de présentation à l'aide d'exemples, afin de les comparer et les analyser de façon critique. Enfin, Emanuele Fontanesi et Miriam Gagelmann se sont penchés sur le thème de grands musées du XXe siècle.

Depuis le siècle dernier, ce sont surtout les questions de culture de masse, de maximisation de la fréquentation, de marketing et de stratégies de médiation numérique qui sont apparues. La comparaison entre le Centre Pompidou à Paris et la Kunsthalle Die Schirn à Francfort en Allemagne a permis de mettre en évidence des caractéristiques spécifiques et de les comparer dans une perspective binationale.

Dans ce qui suit, ces études de cas seront examinées de plus près, de manière chronologique, afin d'étudier de manière exemplaire les différentes facettes de l'institution muséale.

QUI EST LE CONSERVATEUR ? ÉVOLUTION D'UNE PROFESSION ET DES COMPÉTENCES REQUISES ENTRE LE XVIIIE ET LE XXE SIÈCLE.

Une des professions clé au musée est celle du conservateur et il est intéressant d'observer comment son rôle a évolué entre le XVIIIe et le XXe siècle. Chiara Alleva et Ilaria Benci ont présenté ce sujet complexe.

L'enquête consistait en l'analyse de l'évolution du rôle du conservateur qui est évidemment allée de pair avec l'évolution du musée. À partir de la définition contemporaine du conservateur, l'évolution est présentée en remontant le temps. Il en ressort que le conservateur est une figure qui a toujours été fondamentale, mais qui a eu des compétences différentes au cours des siècles, de collectionneur à critique d'art, et aujourd'hui également commissaire d'exposition.

L'étude de l'évolution du rôle du conservateur concerne surtout la France, depuis la création du Louvre à la fin du XVIIIe siècle jusqu'à la création d'un statut unitaire de conservateur en 1991. Des études de cas comparatives en Allemagne, notamment la Glyptothèque de Munich et l'Altes Museum de Berlin, permettent de situer les évolutions de la profession au XIXe siècle dans le contexte européen.

Le Louvre, qui a ouvert ses portes en 1793, a sans aucun doute marqué le début d'une nouvelle ère pour les musées. Au Louvre on voit également qu'à l'époque les conservateurs étaient d'abord des artistes. Le peintre et dessinateur français François Marius Granet en est

un exemple. En tant qu'élève de Jacques-Louis David et membre de l'entourage des peintres Anne-Louis Girodet et Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, il avait reçu une formation artistique néoclassique. En 1824, il est finalement devenu conservateur au Louvre.

Au fil du temps, les tâches des conservateurs se sont étendues aux domaines de l'histoire de l'art. Il s'agissait notamment de cataloguer, d'inventorier et d'acquérir de nouvelles œuvres. Le collectionneur et historien de l'art Frédéric Reiset, devenu conservateur du cabinet des dessins et chalcographies du Louvre en 1850, s'est par exemple chargé de l'ensemble de l'inventaire et du classement et a également mis en place une politique d'acquisitions pour le musée. Au XIXe siècle, deux exemples en Allemagne montrent également que le conservateur était devenu historien d'art, comme dans la Glyptothèque de Munich, où il était architecte et historien d'art. Avec la présence de l'historien de l'art comme gestionnaire des collections, une nouvelle science est née qui avait son centre dans le musée, comme l'illustre le cas de l'Altes Museum à Berlin. Le lien entre la discipline de conservation et l'architecture était forte dans ces deux cas, étant donné que l'architecte travaillait avec l'historien d'art, marquant une étape importante dans le rôle du conservateur.

Le XXe siècle a vu d'importantes évolutions vers la profession de conservateur telle que nous la connaissons aujourd'hui. La création de l'OIM (Office International des musées) en 1926 a favorisé la circulation de modèles d'organisation du travail au musée et de bonnes pratiques, ainsi que l'uniformisation des critères de légitimité scientifique et professionnelle. C'est à ce moment que les conservateurs français se sont organisés en association: l'Association des conservateurs des collections publiques de France est fondée en juillet 1922 par des conservateurs.
Fernand Guey, ancien élève de l'École du Louvre, était à l'origine de l'initiative. L'École du Louvre est dès lors au centre d'une large discussion.

Henri Verne, son directeur dès 1926, a été le protagoniste d'une réforme fondamentale de cette institution. Il insistait pour l'introduction de cours qui transmettaient des méthodes de classement et installation de collections pour arriver à une vraie «profession de conservateur».

Durant la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, la profession s'est stabilisée en France, alors que le musée est devenu peu à peu un lieu d'échange et de partage, offrant à des publics diversifiés une riche programmation d'événements, comme par exemple des expositions temporaires, des conférences ou des concerts. La figure du conservateur avait de plus en plus besoin d'une formation non seulement spécifique, mais aussi scientifique. Dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle, la profession de conservateur a continué à se stabiliser et plusieurs évolutions y ont contribué. La teneur des postes de conservation a changé: la prise en compte des impératifs importants de gestion, de diffusion, de commercialisation, l'extension du champ du musée à de nouveaux objets, ainsi que de nouvelles finalités (éducation, diffusion) ont impliqué de nouvelles compétences à caractère scientifique renforcé, comme la communication et le management. En même temps, le niveau moyen en histoire de l'art s'est élevé: un tiers des conservateurs recrutés dans cette période étaient titulaires d'une maîtrise. Finalement, en 1991, un statut unitaire est créé. Ces transformations du statut des conservateurs ont procédé des pouvoirs publics et ont été réalisées dans un cadre étatique – cadre

national par excellence.

Depuis 1991, le nouveau statut de « conservateur du patrimoine » a permis de réunir les différents organismes de conservation de l'État (musées, archives, monuments historiques, etc.) en un seul.

Pour devenir conservateur, une formation d'une durée de dix-huit mois à l'École nationale du patrimoine est requise. Le recrutement se fait à travers un concours. Les conservateurs ont le rôle de « directeur de l'établissement » et s'occupent de la gestion opérationnelle, la conservation et la valorisation des œuvres muséales. La profession de conservateur englobe donc aujourd'hui bien plus de compétences et de domaines partiels qu'à ses débuts. De plus, on assiste en France à l'établissement successif du statut de conservateur et d'historiens de l'art, qui ne peut être obtenu que par des formations adéquates et des concours nationaux.



Fig.1 Présentation de Chiara Alleva et Ilaria Benci, Screenshot, 2021.

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MUSÉOPHILIE VERSUS MUSÉOPHOBIE

Depuis sa naissance, l'institution du musée s'est confrontée à des opinions fortes et à des critiques. La muséophilie et la muséophobie représentent des attitudes divergentes envers le musée du XVIIIe au XXe siècle.

L'évolution wde différents types d'approche et de critique au musée a été étudiée par Eleonora Ianni et Beatrice Sartori. À partir des thèmes abordés pendant le cours, le groupe a voulu les enrichir avec des textes des principaux critiques qui ont traité ce sujet au cours des siècles. Compte tenu de la cohérence géographique – le contexte français – et de la période historique considérée, les cas ont été choisis pour donner une idée des problèmes conceptuels posés par le musée comme institution. La recherche commence en prenant en considération la *damnatio memoriae* que les objets d'art ont subi pendant la Révolution française, quand on voulait couper les liens avec le précédent régime monarchique et catholique. Ce n'est qu'à la fin de la Terreur que la Convention a décidé de créer des dépôts pour stocker les restes de l'iconoclasme révolutionnaire. Grâce à ces dépôts et à leurs responsables, notamment dans le cas du dépôt de Saint Augustin dirigé par Alexandre Lenoir, les objets «resémantisés» montrent les différentes étapes du développement artistique de manière dialectique, selon une conception hégélienne du progrès. En fait, ces artefacts, provenant de différents sites, témoignent d'un passé vandalisé et ont été rachetés par des sauveurs tels qu'Alexandre Lenoir, qui s'est servi de ces collections pour constituer le «grand livre des annales de France».

Après les actes iconoclastes de la Révolution française, Napoléon a étendu son empire sous la forme d'une conquête territoriale, mais aussi culturelle, s'appropriant les grands chefs-d'œuvre et les œuvres d'autres nations, notamment de l'Italie. Ces spoliations font l'objet des lettres envoyées par l'historien Quatremère de Quincy au général Francisco de Miranda, dans lesquelles il affirme que l'œuvre d'art remplit sa fonction éducative et bénéfique pour les étudiants et les artistes tant qu'elle est dans son contexte. Quatremère de Quincy est donc un porte-parole important pour le respect du contexte de l'œuvre d'art, contre sa sacralisation et dévaluation typiques du musée. D'autre part, dans ses *Lettres à Miranda*, la préoccupation principale de l'historien est la dispersion des œuvres, plus que le retrait du contexte. Ce n'est pas par hasard qu'il appelle Rome « museum », en étant « musée » qui assure une complète lecture de l'œuvre.

D'autre part Vivant Denon, Directeur Général des musées en 1802 et puis ministre des Beaux-Arts de l'Empire, soutenait la politique du prélèvement des chefs-d'œuvre artistiques dans les pays conquis dès 1794. Il justifiait cela grâce à la rhétorique de mettre fin aux jouissances des tyrans étrangers et de faire de Paris la Rome moderne, la capitale de la vertu républicaine: les ouvrages immortels n'étaient plus en terre étrangère, mais déposés dans la patrie des arts et du génie, de la liberté et de l'égalité.
Il a en outre démontré comment les œuvres d'art véhiculent des messages politiques, esthétiques et spirituels, selon les circonstances.

Si pendant le XIXe siècle on a commencé à avoir les premières critiques au musée, ce sera avec les avant-gardes qu'on verra

une forte aversion esthétique-politique pour l'institution. Un des premiers cas de muséophobie est présenté dans le *Manifesto* de 1909 du groupe futuriste italien, dans lequel ils se révoltent contre le musée, qu'ils décrivent comme un « cimetière public de l'art, dortoirs publics et abattoirs d'artistes », une institution qui manquait de la dynamique que le mouvement recherchait dans sa réflexion artistique. Un peu plus tard, Paul Valéry a critiqué les *displays* des musées, qui d'après lui ont provoqué la juxtaposition des œuvres, et le désenchantement de l'art suscité par leur mise-en-musée. En accord avec cette idée de présentation des objets muséaux, le groupe de recherche a cité le cas de Maurice Blanchot, qui vivait la visite du musée comme une sorte de malaise:

> *... éprouver cette sorte de mal du musée, analogue au mal de la montagne, fait de vertige et d'étouffement, auquel succombe rapidement tout bonheur de voir et tout désir de se laisser toucher* (Blanchot 1971).

En conclusion, en 1947, André Malraux a remarqué les limites du musée physique, même si pour lui c'était la comparaison des œuvres d'art qui était importante pour la recherche et la compréhension de l'histoire de l'art. Il a alors étendu la notion de musée en revendiquant un musée imaginaire comme compilation immatérielle de toute une série d'œuvres importantes, qui permet des comparaisons sans limites.



Fig.2 Présentation d' Eleonora Ianni et Beatrice Sartori, Screenshot, 2021.

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LES GRANDS MUSÉES DU XXE SIÈCLE

Les grands musées européens ont connu au XXe siècle des changements majeurs dans leur rapport avec les publics, des défis posés par le numérique, une affluence touristique croissante et le besoin de pouvoir monter de grandes expositions. À travers deux exemples – le Centre Pompidou à Paris et la Kunsthalle Die Schirn à Francfort en Allemagne – ces développements ont pu être abordés et comparés dans une perspective internationale. Le sujet traité par Emanuele Fontanesi et Miriam Gagelmann concerne la problématique générale des particularités de ces deux musées qui, en effet, se distinguent par certains aspects des musées traditionnels. La méthodologie choisie consiste en une recherche de fonds bibliographiques sur les deux musées et est donc caractérisée par une approche comparative. En effet, les deux études de cas ont été sélectionnées parce qu'elles sont relativement emblématiques pour les développements muséaux, vu que les deux musées ont été inaugurés dans la même période. De plus, ils ont des particularités partiellement dues aux politiques et aux contextes nationaux du moment de leur création et leur comparaison permet alors d'ouvrir une perspective européenne. Emanuele Fontanesi a effectué une analyse détaillée du Centre

Pompidou en se focalisant sur ses spécificités.

Le Centre Pompidou, ouvert à Paris en 1977, a été créé comme centre culturel interdisciplinaire comprenant le Musée National d'Art Moderne, l'IRCAM et une bibliothèque, qui sont abritées dans une architecture aussi bien spectaculaire que contestée conçue par l'architecte Renzo Piano. Une architecture sensationnelle et attrayante pour les visiteurs est en effet une caractéristique commune aux développements récents dans le secteur des musées. L'idée à la base de la création du Centre Pompidou est la possibilité d'offrir une collection exceptionnelle d'art moderne et, en même temps, un endroit pour la formation culturelle et la communication de l'art. Grâce à une politique bienveillante à la formation culturelle sous Georges Pompidou, la volonté de créer un nouvel espace culturel s'affirme, aussi pour dépasser l'idée culturelle restrictive d'une École de Paris comme au Palais de Tokyo et proposer aux Français une conception plus large et internationale de l'art moderne.

Même s'il pouvait vite s'imposer comme un succès, depuis sa création le Centre Pompidou a suscité des réactions diverses, de la célébration au mépris, pour son approche en matière d'accès à la culture ou pour son architecture qui aux critiques, notamment Baudrillard, rappelait plutôt un supermarché culturel. Néanmoins, le Centre Pompidou peut se targuer d'un grand succès et a organisé un certain nombre d'expositions incontournables, comme *Les Magiciens de la Terre* qui pour la première fois a présenté de l'art exclusivement non occidentale.

Le type muséal de la Kunsthalle se trouve surtout en Allemagne et caractérise des musées sans collection permanente. Cela permet une grande flexibilité et diversité d'expositions permanentes attractives et a le but de renforcer le panorama culturel d'une ville qui souvent ne dispose pas encore de beaucoup d'attractions culturelles. La Kunsthalle Die Schirn à Francfort a été inaugurée en 1986 par la municipalité de Francfort afin de revaloriser le centre-ville, qui demeurait dans un état négligé depuis longtemps après la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Ce nouveau musée sans collection permanente s'est vite établi comme lieu d'exposition de grands artistes, mais aussi de sujets moins connus, et bénéficie d'un échange international avec d'autres musées qui amène souvent à une circulation des expositions entre les musées. Les premières années, de grands artistes tels que Miró, Dubuffet et Chagall ont été présentés, mais il y a également eu des sujets moins connus, comme une exposition dédiée aux « femmes impressionnistes », qui n'avaient reçu que peu d'attention jusqu'alors. D'autres caractéristiques que l'on peut mettre en avant en analysant la Kunsthalle sont l'attention portée à l'offre de médiation numérique et les stratégies de publicité ou de marketing pour promouvoir sa propre production culturelle, afin de garantir une affluence permanente de visiteurs, qui d'ailleurs est nécessaire pour obtenir des financements publics. Cette stratégie montre alors la pression éprouvée par beaucoup de musées, surtout par les Kunsthallen en Allemagne qui, sans une collection à valoriser, doivent constamment démontrer leur rentabilité financière et leur relevance culturelle et sociale. La présence numérique de la Kunsthalle Die Schirn va des blogs, magazines en ligne et podcasts aux stratégies sophistiquées de médias sociaux qui sont considérés exceptionnels, au moins en Allemagne.

Ces deux musées servent alors d'exemple pour les développements du XXe siècle: des thèmes tels que la valorisation d'une ville

à travers une attraction culturelle, mais aussi une ouverture vers un public large et un tourisme culturel, souvent critiqué comme une culture de masse et une gestion trop concentrée sur le succès économique, sont des sujets récurrents.
Le focus sur de grandes expositions à peu près de format « Blockbuster » est devenu particulièrement clair en regardant la Kunsthalle, qui dans sa conception est presque dépendante des expositions « attrayantes ».
Le focus sur des sujets d'actualité sociale et des sujets plus représentatifs de la diversité, comme les *Magiciens de la terre* ou les Femmes impressionnistes, constituent également des caractéristiques nouvelles.
Leur médiation et ouverture sociale et culturelle se penchent beaucoup sur le numérique. Les deux se caractérisent par une forte volonté de formation du public, qui vise aussi à établir et promouvoir l'image publique du musée.



Fig. 3 Présentation d' Emanuele Fontanesi et Miriam Gagelmann, Screenshot, 2021.

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LE LOUVRE D'HUBERT ROBERT ET VIVANT DENON

Le Louvre, qui est aujourd'hui le musée le plus fréquenté du monde, a un long passé riche des moments clés pour des études muséologiques. En effet, son histoire commence déjà avant sa fondation et c'est une aventure sans fin de grands rêves et de plans pleins d'espoir qui souvent ne se sont réalisés qu'après beaucoup plus tard.

Livia Ficoroni a abordé le sujet du Louvre d'Hubert Robert et de Vivant Denon entre rêve, utopie et réalité dans la période entre la fin du XVIIIe et le début du XIXe siècle. Plus particulièrement, elle a exploré les choix muséographiques effectués dans et pour le musée parisien nouvellement créé pendant les années d'Hubert Robert et Vivant Denon,

en analysant les thèmes de la présentation, l'éclairage, l'accessibilité et la réalisation et en comparant les idées et les programmes originaux du musée avec ce qui a été concrétisé.

La méthodologie choisie consiste en un étude de l'histoire du musée, avec une attention particulière aux moments qui ont conduit à la fondation du musée pendant la Révolution et à la raison d'être de l'institution et de son organisation, en une recherche et lecture de matériel d'archives, y compris les documents de fondation, des témoignages originaux (tels que *La Décade Philosophique,* revue de la fin du XVIIIe siècle, contemporaine à la fondation du Louvre), ainsi que la recherche et lecture de catalogues plus actuels imprimés par le Louvre même, à savoir les *Mémoires du Louvre*, afin de comprendre comment le musée a choisi de représenter son propre parcours. Elle a décidé d'axer l'histoire très longue et les nombreuses questions entourant son sujet sur les thèmes de distribution des œuvres, l'éclairage et l'accessibilité.

L'une des questions clés de la pratique muséographique au Louvre était celle de l'éclairage. Hubert Robert a imaginé et dessiné des plans d'aménagement dès la fin du XVIIIe siècle. Après la rénovation de la Grande Galerie du Louvre entre 1805 et 1810, ces plans ont pu être mis en œuvre. La particularité des arcs de plafond avec de grandes fenêtres était l'éclairage zénithal. Les avantages de cette méthode avaient déjà été nommés par Vitruve et étaient considérés modernes au Louvre. Néanmoins, la question de comprendre si cette lumière était bénéfique pour les tableaux restait un grand débat, puisqu'ils n'étaient pas peints en considérant un éclairage de ce type, dont la réalisation, de plus, était très coûteuse. Il convient également de noter l'idée contemporaine à Hubert Robert de permettre aux jeunes artistes de faire des copies au Musée de la République, afin d'enseigner aux élèves et d'affiner leur goût et, par conséquent, celui de la Nation.

Dominique Vivant Denon est devenu en 1802 directeur du Musée Central des Arts, qui peut être considéré une version embryonnaire du Louvre actuel. Son objectif était d'améliorer le Louvre et d'établir sa renommée mondiale. Il a finalement suggéré le changement du nom en Musée Napoléon et a introduit un nouveau système d'accrochage.

Avec une ambition presque didactique, les tableaux devaient être disposés sur les murs de manière à rendre l'histoire de l'art visuellement compréhensible, en montrant par exemple l'évolution stylistique des artistes. Bien que des critères esthétiques tels que la symétrie et l'harmonie soient également essentiels pour Denon, cette approche refuse la conception évolutive du style artistique, qu'on trouve déjà chez Vasari, pour adopter en revanche un récit de l'histoire de l'art à partir des grands maîtres et leurs chefs-d'œuvre, organisés chronologiquement et par école. Pour conclure, Denon peut être considéré comme le prototype d'un directeur de musée moderne, connaisseur et diplomate, qui a marqué de manière décisive le Louvre, ainsi que les discours muséologiques. Néanmoins, après Waterloo et la défaite de Napoléon, les alliés ont réclamé la restitution des œuvres conquises.

Denon, en arguant des traités et des clauses de guerre, a résisté aux demandes, mais en vain, de sorte qu'il a assisté à la destruction de l'œuvre de treize années. En 1815, il a donné sa démission au roi et le Louvre a vu s'écrouler son rêve universel.



Fig. 4 Présentation de Livia Ficoroni, Screenshot, 2021.

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PERIOD ROOMS VERSUS WHITE CUBE ET RETOUR: ASPECTS CRITIQUES ET ÉTUDE DE CAS EXEMPLAIRES

À partir de la naissance et du développement du musée public, différents modes de présentation des objets ont été théorisés, certains dépassés et d'autres toujours d'actualité. Parmi ceux-ci, deux installations muséographiques, opposées dans la manière de voir l'espace et les objets, ont été au centre des débats du XXe siècle: les Period Rooms et le White Cube. Ce sujet a été présenté par Irene Calvi et Emma Puliti qui, après avoir fourni des informations générales sur les deux *displays*, ont expliqué leur diffusion et leur application dans le temps. Ce faisant, elles ont mis en évidence les principales caractéristiques, les difficultés et les critiques qu'ils suscitent, en montrant quelques exemples. La présentation se termine par une étude de cas sur l'application des deux installations.
Le premier exemple abordé est celui des Period Rooms, qui se sont diffusées en Europe et en Amérique du Nord à partir de la fin du XIXe siècle. Les Period Rooms visent à recréer une pièce du passé avec tout son contenu. Au cours de la présentation, il a été souligné que l'exposition d'ambiance historique présente un certain nombre de problèmes liés à son utilisation, notamment l'impossibilité d'analyser les objets individuellement, car ils font partie du mobilier, et le fait que souvent le visiteur doit observer la pièce à distance. En outre, la médiation est difficile à appliquer, car l'inclusion de panneaux explicatifs rompt l'atmosphère d'une époque révolue. Une dernière problématique avec ce genre d'exposition est liée à l'authenticité de la disposition et du choix des objets. Il n'est pas toujours possible de disposer de tous les objets d'origine d'une pièce, et souvent des éléments provenant d'autres contextes et périodes historiques sont ajoutés pour des raisons esthétiques.

Malgré ces problèmes, les Period Rooms du début du XXe siècle ont connu un grand succès non seulement au sein des institutions muséales, mais aussi auprès des critiques. L'un des premiers cas d'application muséale, en 1904, s'est produit à Berlin, au Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, aujourd'hui le Bode Museum, où on a tenté de présenter des œuvres d'art dans des structures architecturales susceptibles de donner au visiteur une idée du lieu où elles ont été conçues.La conférence de l'ICOM à Madrid en 1934 a constitué un moment décisif pour le débat autour des Period Rooms, qui ont été réputées un bon moyen de communiquer l'histoire au public. En effet, il a été considéré que ces pièces donnent au public la possibilité de « revivre le passé ». Si les salles historiques ont connu un grand succès à cette occasion, elles sont également devenues le centre d'un débat important et animé entre critiques, conservateurs et historiens de l'art italiens. En effet, on a assisté à l'opposition entre ceux qui soutenaient l'utilité des salles historiques (Francesco Malaguzzi Valeri, Ugo Ojetti, Roberto Paribeni) et une ligne plus formaliste (Roberto Longhi, Guglielmo Pacchioni, Cesare Brandi) souhaitant une exposition qui valorisait la valeur esthétique pour favoriser le « puro godimento » du public. En effet, c'est au cours des années 1940 que les Period Rooms ont connu leur premier moment de crise. L'esprit du temps n'était guère favorable: le désintérêt pour les questions de décoration, la fascination croissante exercée par les grands chefs-d'œuvre et la prédilection pour la mise en valeur d'œuvres détachées de tout contexte nuisaient aux ensembles décoratifs et aux présentations contextuelles.

Et c'est dans ce nouveau contexte culturel qu'un nouveau type d'installation muséographique s'est popularisé: le White Cube.
Ce *display* s'est développé avec la naissance de l'art abstrait, dont les œuvres colorées étaient valorisées si elles étaient placées sur un fond neutre, de façon à minimiser la distraction du visiteur. En effet, le White Cube, comme son nom l'indique, consiste en une salle blanche neutre conçue pour mettre en valeur et attirer l'attention du visiteur sur chaque œuvre. Une réflexion pertinente sur cet affichage a été développée par O'Doherty dans son célèbre texte *Inside the White Cube*. L'auteur traite ici de la relation entre le spectateur et l'espace, en général entre le contenu et le contenant, pour proposer comment dans le cas du White Cube, le spectateur est absent, car « il ne devient qu'un œil et se sent donc très désenchanté et non impliqué ». C'est précisément en rapport avec ce dernier point que l'on pourrait peut-être expliquer le retour des Period Rooms dans la muséologie contemporaine. En effet, on peut constater que des musées importants, tels que le Metropolitan Museum de New York et le Louvre de Paris, ont récemment agrandi et rénové leurs collections de Period Rooms. Enfin, la recherche se termine avec la présentation de deux cas emblématiques: le Palazzo Rosso et le Palazzo Bianco à Gênes. Ceux-ci, au cours des années 1950, grâce à Franco Albini et Caterina Marcenaro, ont élaboré une première application du White Cube en Italie et, en particulier, à une collection d'art ancien.

En fait, ce *display* était généralement appliqué pour la présentation de collections d'art contemporain. Malgré son succès initial et l'appréciation du public, cette installation était destinée à ne pas durer et ne durera pas longtemps. En ce moment, par exemple, le Palazzo Rosso présente une installation mixte entre Period Rooms et White Cube.



Fig. 5 Présentation d' Irene Calvi et Emma Puliti, Screenshot, 2021.

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MUSÉE ET PUBLIC: HISTOIRE CRITIQUE D'UNE RELATION AUX XIXE ET XXE SIÈCLES

Aujourd'hui on sait que tout le public est le destinataire principal et privilégié du musée, donc c'est naturel que la priorité des musées soit aussi celle d'aller vers le visiteur, mais cela n'a pas toujours été le cas.

À partir de la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle, un nouvel idéal d'usage public du musée est développé, focalisé à réveiller l'esprit public et l'amour de la patrie. Cependant, les conditions d'ouverture et les modalités de visite étaient souvent très inconfortables, comme on voit dans le cas du British Museum. Ce sujet, abordé par Gaia De Palma, a intéressé surtout l'interaction entre le monde institutionnel de l'art et le grand public, en illustrant un souci progressif pour les visiteurs, considérés d'abord presque un inconvénient, pour arriver à la sollicitude croissante pour les différents types de public qui a caractérisé la muséologie contemporaine à partir des dernières décennies du XXe siècle. La méthodologie adoptée consiste en une analyse théorique du sujet à partir de l'approche de Pierre Bourdieu et Alain Darbel dans *L'Amour de l'Art* (1966), suivie, dans la deuxième partie, par une recherche des conditions de visite au British Museum dès son inauguration à la fin du XXe siècle. Ce cas d'étude a été choisi précisément pour sa représentativité de l'ouverture graduelle au public, en particulier envers les classes sociales inférieures. Toutefois, ce soin pour l'inclusivité des visiteurs n'a pas été linéaire, comme on pourrait s'attendre d'un des plus importants musées du monde. En effet, le British Museum, par rapport à son ouverture au public, a vécu une alternance entre avant-garde et résistance aux changements. En ce qui concerne la centralité du public pour les institutions muséales, elle est difficilement quantifiable pour le XIXe siècle:

> généralement on n'a pas de documentation explicite à ce propos, donc on doit s'appuyer sur l'interprétation des indices marginaux, comme par exemple la considération des visiteurs à l'intérieur des guides de voyage.

Cependant, on peut remarquer une première distinction dans la perception des publics diversifiés: les musées étaient concernés par la différence entre les genres et se posaient surtout le souci de la visite des femmes. Par exemple, la femme devait se détourner des images jugées malhonnêtes, tandis que l'homme pouvait en jouir. Pour les premières études sur le public on doit attendre les années 1960: une contribution essentielle dans ce domaine a été apportée par Pierre Bourdieu et Alain Darbel en 1966.

L'Amour de l'Art avait pour objectif de définir les principales caractéristiques du public des musées français, à partir d'une série d'enquêtes menées par le Centre de Sociologie Européenne dès 1964 à 1966 sur un échantillon représentatif, en présentant une analyse empirique du mécanisme social de la diffusion culturelle. Au moment où Bourdieu écrivait, en 1966, le musée ne s'intéressait pas à la diversification des visiteurs par classe sociale, nationalité, instruction et ainsi de suite, et jugeait une enquête de ce type inutile. L'opinion générale était en effet que les classes populaires n'aimaient pas visiter le musée autant que les classes moyennes, même lorsque l'accès aux musées était ouvert à tous, et cela indiquerait que l'amour de l'art est quelque chose d'inné et lié à la personnalité. Cependant, les résultats de l'étude de Bourdieu et Darbel ont montré une réalité très différente. L'analyse des données statistiques a permis de dégager l'existence d'une « classe cultivée » composée d'individus qui bénéficient de tous les avantages aussi bien en matière d'éducation que de fréquentation et de familiarité avec les œuvres d'art.

L'étude des caractéristiques des visiteurs a conduit à affirmer que « les relations observées entre la fréquentation du musée et des variables telles que la catégorie socio-professionnelle, l'âge ou l'habitat se réduisent presque totalement à la relation entre le niveau d'instruction et la fréquentation » (Bourdieu 1966, 44). C'est donc l'instruction (ou la culture scolaire) d'un individu qui apparaît comme la condition *sine qua non* de l'existence du besoin culturel. Dans cette enquête, le niveau d'instruction a été mesuré à partir des diplômes possédés.

L'histoire du British Museum est représentative de la progressive disparition des préjugés à l'égard des classes subalternes, qui se reflète dans l'ouverture graduelle à différentes catégories de public et dans l'évolution des dispositifs de médiation et d'accueil. Lors de son ouverture à tous les « érudits et curieux », le British Museum appliquait en réalité une série de restrictions qui rendait la procédure d'admission au musée pénible.

En 1758, les administrateurs ont décidé d'ouvrir le musée au public, mais, comme David Wilson a dit clairement dans son histoire du musée, ils avaient des réserves quant à qui devait être admis. En particulier, il y avait des doutes sérieux sur les serviteurs et les membres des classes inférieures, dont la présence pouvait offenser les visiteurs des niveaux supérieurs de l'échelle sociale. Aucun ivrogne n'était le bienvenu et alors, pour la sécurité des collections, il a été prévu que les visiteurs devaient avoir l'approbation des agents du musée. Le problème majeur était représenté donc par les classes populaires, qui étaient presque systématiquement exclues. En effet, le public perçu était la petite

bourgeoisie, mais on recevait fréquemment des plaintes puisque les niveaux inférieurs devaient se mêler aux supérieurs. La tentative d'éviter l'accès des classes sociales les plus basses et la constatation d'un manque d'argent ont conduit à la décision d'augmenter les tarifs d'entrée.

De plus, les curateurs essayaient de réduire l'affluence des visiteurs de niveau social inférieur en imposant un code vestimentaire, de façon à ne pas admettre ceux qui avaient un comportement ou une apparence douteuse. En 1784 finalement la question du billet gratuit a été soulevée et on a décidé de rendre l'entrée gratuite. En outre, l'augmentation progressive des jours d'ouverture a fait redoubler le nombre de visiteurs, jusqu'en 1895, quand le musée a été ouvert tous les jours, dimanche compris. Par rapport aux dispositifs de médiation, qui étaient très rare ou presque inexistante au début XIXe siècle, il faudra attendre la deuxième moitié du siècle pour les premiers efforts afin de rendre le musée plus accessible aux visiteurs, tels que la tentative d'inclure des activités didactiques dans les galeries d'archéologie et histoire naturelle.

Mais seulement en 1911 on a eu l'institution des guides-conférenciers officiels, généralement des diplômés universitaires. Quelques années plus tard, en 1915, suivant l'exemple du V&A, on a aussi commencé à produire des guides, qui ont eu un grand succès.

Au tournant du siècle, la labellisation de la collection était une tâche permanente, mais les légendes étaient peu informatives, indiquant seulement la provenance, la date et le matériel des objets, car on supposait que le visiteur qui voudrait en savoir plus pouvait se référer aux guides de la galerie. Au début du XXe siècle, il n'y avait pas encore de panneaux explicatifs, seulement certaines vitrines avaient un titre général. Par contre, à partir du février 1889, l'électricité a été installée dans toutes les galeries, permettant l'extension des horaires d'ouverture de 8h à 22h. Après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, le British Museum avait été presque totalement reconstruit et à la fin des années 1960 et dans les années 1970 le public a commencé à exiger un affichage plus complet et au même temps plus accessible. Ce n'est qu'en 1964 que le musée a fait appel à un décorateur d'intérieur professionnel. De plus, dans les années 1970, le musée a saisi l'occasion d'exploiter les moyens de plus en plus populaires comme la télévision pour atteindre son public. On a également payé des membres du personnel pour produire des livrets synthétiques sur des sujets spéciaux. Dans les années 1970, le British Museum s'est interrogé sur le thème de l'accessibilité et des différents publics.

Après la première enquête sur le public du musée en octobre-décembre 1971, le musée a réfléchi au domaine de l'accès des personnes en situation de handicap, concernant les ascenseurs et les parcours qui leur sont dédiées, l'aide aux malvoyants, la médiation dans la langue des signes et autres, aboutissant à former tout le département de l'éducation aux handicaps. Pour conclure, chacune de ces étapes pour faciliter l'accès au British Museum et améliorer l'expérience de visite a contribué à l'élargissement des catégories de visiteurs, jusqu'à la plus récente augmentation des visiteurs dans les dernières décennies du XXe siècle, grâce à la prise en considération des groupes minoritaires et à la spécialisation du département éducatif.



Fig. 6 Présentation de Gaia De Palma, Screenshot, 2021.

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CONCLUSION

Les autrices de ce texte – Miriam Gagelmann, Gaia De Palma et Emma Puliti – se sont chargés de rédiger le résumé des études de cas au nom de la classe. En regardant les présentations et le questionnaire soumis, nous avons remarqué que les styles d'élaboration des sujets étaient très différents les uns des autres. Le défi de ce travail était donc de tout mettre dans un format homogène qui pourrait également rendre justice aux intentions de l'auteur original. Grâce à ces outils, les diapositives et le questionnaire, nous avons eu la possibilité de réunir toutes les présentations dans un seul texte. L'élément fondamental qui ressort de ce travail de didactique participative et d'analyse fait à l'occasion du séminaire du cours *Collections, musées et publics* est que la relation entre les musées, les collections, le public et l'espace évolue à travers la remise en question constante de ces éléments. On a pu également s'intéresser à l'évolution progressive de ces éléments et de la gestion du musée à travers la formation de pratiques muséologiques.

COURSE TITLE:

LAB - MÉDIATION CULTURELLE DANS LES MUSÉES

HELD BY:

Chiara Tartarini

COURSE TIMETABLE:
II year, II semester.

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Depuis plusieurs décennies, dans le domaine de l'éducation et la médiation muséale on nous dit sans cesse qu'il faut franchir les limites de la communication linéaire émetteur-récepteur au profit de modèles « interprétatifs », aidant le dialogue entre le musée et ses visiteurs. En effet, si d'un point de vue étymologique le médiateur est celui qui est censé se poser entre deux parties afin de réduire leur distance, dans le domaine de la culture, on le sait, son rôle est plutôt de prévenir leur indifférence mutuelle. Par conséquent, si l'on met l'accent sur la centralité et la participation des publics, la première tâche de la médiation devrait être celle de connaître les « visiteurs », qui évidemment ne constituent en aucun cas une catégorie homogène, et de comprendre au mieux leurs divers besoins. Parfois on peut même supposer que certains d'entre eux (et peut-être même un bon nombre) pourraient en avoir assez des sollicitations à l'hyperactivité, et que très souvent le fait de pouvoir bien entendre et comprendre la voix du musée pourrait être leur premier souhait. Pendant le Lab, on a donc considéré le rôle des textes expographiques, véritables médiateurs prototypiques.
Le sujet, à notre avis, est encore plus important pour des étudiants du curriculum AMaC: en France et au Royaume-Uni, en effet, plusieurs recherches sur ce sujet ont été développées depuis les années 1980 (dans le premier cas avec plus de propension à l'analyse théorique, dans le deuxième en mettant l'accent sur les pratiques), tandis qu'en Italie on les a menées de manière plus sporadique.
Dans ce domaine, les controverses entre ceux qui estimaient que les panneaux sont toujours trop nombreux, trop longs et superflus car très peu lus, et ceux qui, au contraire, y accordaient une fonction essentielle dans l'expérience du visiteur – réclamant, à cet égard, une véritable professionnalisation – a vu prévaloir presque partout les raisons de ces derniers. Bien que le musée communique en principe à travers les objets exposés et les textes n'aient pas de sens en eux-mêmes, les panneaux sont désormais considérés comme des acteurs muséographiques à part entière, participant à la construction du sens dans le parcours de visite. Et, pour être de bons panneaux, ils devraient transmettre aux publics les savoirs du musée (pas tous, bien évidemment) de la façon la plus recevable possible, en évitant de forcer le visiteur – celui qui voit et revoit, peut-être – à se traduire péniblement en lecteur – celui qui lit, bien-sûr, mais debout, entouré par d'autres et en tout cas dans un espace où il devrait être bien plus intéressant de regarder des objets que de lire des mots. Conformément à notre projet, les élèves auraient dû analyser trois panneaux de leur choix provenant de trois musées de Bologne, après quoi ils auraient dû en présenter une refonte devant la classe. Or, après la fermeture des musées en raison de la pandémie, j'ai proposé aux étudiants, la plupart desquels étaient en distanciel, de travailler sur les sites et sur les réseaux sociaux des musées, et de présenter leurs écrits devant la classe virtuelle (on sait que la lecture « exophasique » nous permet de nous placer plus aisément à la place de l'autre, dans notre cas à la place du visiteur cible).
Bref, il a fallu faire de nécessité vertu – et ces vertus, en y repensant, n'étaient pas rares. Ici je ne propose que deux réflexions. En premier lieu, on relève certaines similitudes entre l'écriture « pour le web » et l'écriture « pour le musée ». On nous dit toujours que les panneaux ne sont pas des pages d'un livre accrochées au mur et que leur tâche est

d'obtenir le maximum de résultat communicatif avec le maximum d'économie de mots. Le visiteur/lecteur, celui qui très souvent ne regarde pas un objet pendant plus de dix secondes et n'est pas familier avec la terminologie de l'art, s'attend à un quick pay off.
La haute densité sémantique du texte expographique, qui devrait être « more like a tweet than a tome » (Serrell), requiert de prêter beaucoup d'attention à la hiérarchie des informations, à la formulation et à la ponctuation, et même à la métrique, tout comme pour un poème. C'est-à-dire qu'il faut employer toute une série de stratégies spécifiques qui, entre autres choses, nous conduisent assez fréquemment à remettre en question nos habitudes lexicales et à « tuer nos chéris ».
Deuxièmement, on dit qu'un bon écrit muséal est celui qui informe, qui répond à quelques questions et en suscite des autres, qui sollicite la curiosité et l'imagination des visiteurs et, surtout, qui les aide à mieux regarder: en ce sens, on pourrait dire que l'écrit au musée devrait toujours, virtuellement, être un hypertexte, capable d'établir un rapport de médiation, un lien, entre visiteur et objets, tout comme ce qui caractérise depuis longtemps l'écriture pour le web.
Les études de cas examinées par les étudiants ont été très variées: des sites des Musées du Capitole, du MAXXI à Rome, de Brera à Milan, du Musée d'art décoratifs-MAD à Paris, par exemple, aux comptes Instagram du Centre Pompidou, des Staatliche Museen à Berlin ou bien celui du Musée de Cluny, qui a fait l'objet de la présentation de Gaia De Palma. Son texte, qui suit, témoigne l'engagement et le soin de l'auteur dans l'analyse et la refonte des panneaux en ligne, cent soixante-quinze ans après ces mots de Baudelaire (Salon de 1846): « [...] le meilleur compte rendu d'un tableau pourra être un sonnet ou une élégie».

MUSÉE DE CLUNY

Analyse de Panneaux en Ligne

AUTHOR:

Gaia De Palma

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Pour le laboratoire *Médiation culturelle dans les musées*, le sujet de cette étude de cas a été le Musée de Cluny. Le Musée national du Moyen Âge, autrement connu comme Musée de Cluny, est la collection d'art médiéval européen la plus importante et la plus complète au monde.

Situé à Paris, il est installé dans deux bâtiments contigus de grande importance historique et culturelle: les anciens thermes romains et l'Hôtel de Cluny (Palais de Cluny). Le Musée de Cluny constitue une étude de cas particulière dans le cadre des musées d'art médiéval, car il s'agit d'une institution extrêmement avant-gardiste en matière de stratégies numériques. Sur son site web et sur les réseaux sociaux, Instagram en particulier, le musée a adopté une approche captivante, légère et ironique, qui se reflète dans le ton donné à ses paroles.

À partir du printemps 2020, les musées du monde entier ont dû s'adapter à la condition d'être fermés au public en proposant une variété d'activités susceptibles de maintenir l'intérêt du public. Ces activités devaient nécessairement être proposées en ligne, via les sites web des musées ou leurs réseaux sociaux. Dans ce contexte, le choix du musée de Cluny comme étude de cas pour l'analyse de la communication en ligne d'une collection n'est pas fortuit. En effet, le musée se trouvait dans une position particulièrement avantageuse dans le contexte mondial, notamment dans le contexte des musées d'art médiéval. D'une part, la communication en ligne du musée était déjà très structurée et bénéficiait d'une large audience, grâce à son ton typiquement informel et à son activité constante sur chaque plateforme. D'autre part, dans un contexte où presque tous les musées ont dû se tourner de manière inattendue vers le numérique, le Musée de Cluny s'est trouvé dans la position exceptionnelle d'avoir déjà préparé une stratégie numérique en prévision des années de fermeture.

En effet, le musée fait actuellement l'objet d'une rénovation de ses espaces qui a commencé en 2015 et a nécessité une fermeture temporaire dès septembre 2019, prévue jusqu'au printemps 2022.

Malgré la fermeture aux visiteurs, le musée n'a pas totalement suspendu ses activités de communication et, si possible, il les a même renforcées grâce aux médias sociaux. Ainsi, ce qui était initialement considéré comme un moment de faiblesse – le fait de rester fermé au public pendant près de deux ans – est devenu un avantage dans la situation globale qui a déterminé la fermeture de tous les musées.

Néanmoins, si le musée avait prévu une stratégie numérique pour la fermeture, il n'avait certainement pas envisagé une pandémie, qui ne pouvait être ignorée. Non seulement le musée a réinventé sa stratégie de communication et l'a adaptée à l'actualité, mais il a également promu un certain nombre de comportements vertueux et prudents à adopter en cas de pandémie. À cette fin, le principal véhicule était celui des réseaux sociaux, sur lesquels la stratégie proposée a démontré une parfaite maîtrise du support et du langage en ligne.

Par exemple, à travers les *stories* de son compte Instagram, le musée a donné la parole aux œuvres de sa collection pour promouvoir de nouvelles habitudes, telles que la distanciation sociale et l'hygiène fréquente des mains, mais aussi pour communiquer la réglementation nationale concernant les activités autorisées à l'extérieur du domicile. Pour le musée de Cluny, le compte Instagram en particulier est un espace dynamique lié à l'actualité, aussi bien dans la collection du musée qu'au

niveau national. Dans le *feed*, le musée s'adresse aux utilisateurs avec des contenus concernant les nouveautés du musée, par exemple les travaux de rénovation de l'infrastructure muséale, et généralement des contenus d'actualité. En effet, si les médias sociaux sont un canal idéal pour partager avec le public les coulisses de la rénovation du musée, il y a également eu des références aux conditions de la pandémie en France.

Ceci est particulièrement évident dans des initiatives telles que le "parcours confinement" dont le but était d'établir des liens empathiques entre les followers enfermés à la maison en raison de la pandémie de Covid-19 et les œuvres du musée, elles aussi "confinées" pour leur protection lors de la rénovation des établissements. Le lien entre les œuvres, emballées pour leur sécurité pendant les travaux dans le musée, et les visiteurs, confinés chez eux pour leur santé, a été exceptionnellement illustré à travers les photographies qui montraient le processus de rénovation des espaces. Le compte Instagram du Musée de Cluny montre également qu'il peut tirer le meilleur parti de l'outil *stories*, dans lesquelles il maintient le ton informel du compte, qui permet de s'orienter vers un humour plus explicite et parfois irrévérencieux, minimisant le caractère sacré de l'œuvre d'art et rapprochant ainsi l'œuvre de l'utilisateur.

Chaque jeudi, par exemple, la chaîne Instagram propose le "Guess Who?", un mode interactif pour engager les followers à la reconnaissance des œuvres de la collection, en leur fournissant des informations sur l'œuvre en question, telles que le matériel, la technique de réalisation et le sujet. Cette initiative, qui se répète tous les jeudis, est une manière ludique d'apprendre aux followers les moindres détails d'une œuvre, grâce à la fonction quiz disponible dans les *stories*.

L'utilisateur est invité à répondre à des questions (généralement sur le matériel, la technique, la chronologie, etc.) à propos d'une œuvre semi-cachée qui est progressivement dévoilée au fil du jeu. À la fin du quiz, l'œuvre est entièrement dévoilée et des informations supplémentaires sont données sur son histoire. Ce qui est louable dans cette initiative n'est pas seulement l'utilisation de l'expérience ludique rapide pour fournir des informations techniques qui seraient autrement inintéressantes, mais aussi le fait que les questions sont soigneusement destinées à un public de niveau intermédiaire, c'est-à-dire qu'elles ne sont pas trop simples et donc ennuyeuses, ni trop difficiles pour décourager le joueur, mais suffisamment difficiles pour être intéressantes.

Bien que le ton ludique atteigne son apogée sur les réseaux sociaux, le langage informel est également la signature de la communication du site web. De l' "appel à l'action" enthousiaste adressé à l'utilisateur, au *chatbot* humoristique qui accueille ses questions et ses curiosités, le site web du musée montre immédiatement qu'il ne s'agit pas seulement d'un catalogue de la collection. Le site semble tout aussi dynamique dans la façon dont il organise et propose les informations.

Il est structuré comme un lieu de découverte et d'approfondissement de la collection, proposant de nombreuses "visites guidées" pour l'explorer selon différents axes thématiques. Disposer le texte sur une plateforme en ligne présente de nombreux avantages tels que la création d'hypertextes et l'emploi de liens entre différentes catégories d'information. En outre, cela permet d'établir une claire hiérarchie des sections. Grâce à ces possibilités offertes par le support numérique, l'utilisateur

peut également choisir le degré d'approfondissement d'un thème ou d'un objet spécifique: il peut souhaiter n'avoir qu'une connaissance générale d'un objet, mais aussi exploiter le site pour une véritable recherche sur un sujet. En effet, le site est riche en dossiers d'information, parcours thématiques et textes d'introduction aux œuvres qui peuvent bien remplacer les panneaux explicatifs comme ceux d'une salle muséale. D'abord, la page d'accueil s'articule autour de quatre bannières qui renvoient aux sections les plus pertinentes:

une section avec les principales actualités, *Les œuvres incontournables*, *Les dossiers thématiques* et *Les œuvres dans le temps*.

Ces rubriques se retrouvent également dans le menu en haut de la page, qui est bien sûr beaucoup plus riche et répartit le contenu en cinq grands dossiers: *Collection, Lieu, Visiter, Activités, Ressources*.

La section *Collection* est, comme le reste du site, entièrement consacrée à la transparence: pas un seul détail n'est laissé dans l'ombre sur les objets qui leur sont confiés et qui sont également utilisés comme une incitation à aborder la vie médiévale au sens large.

Le principe de transparence est aussi la raison d'être des pages *Actualité* des collections et *Acquisitions récentes*, où l'utilisateur peut s'informer sur les nouvelles acquisitions, les prêts et les dépôts d'œuvres d'art et sur leurs déplacements dans le monde. Il est intéressant de noter que presque tous les objets de la collection ont leur propre fiche sur le site web, avec une description concise, la date d'estimation, la date d'acquisition et d'autres informations techniques telles que les dimensions, le numéro d'inventaire, le matériau et la technique. L'utilisateur peut parcourir l'ensemble de la collection de manière chronologique grâce à la page *Les œuvres*, où elles sont disposées sur une ligne de temps utile incluant les liens à leurs pages individuelles pour plus d'informations. L'analyse du laboratoire s'est concentrée sur ces derniers textes numériques.

L'analyse des panneaux d'œuvre en ligne s'est limitée à trois textes échantillons portant sur trois œuvres différentes par technique:

un vitrail, une sculpture en bois et une œuvre d'orfèvrerie.

En particulier, les œuvres sélectionnées sont:

- *Les Joueurs d'échecs* (vitrail);
- *La Sainte Famille* (sculpture en bois);
- *Châsse de l'Adoration des Mages* (orfèvrerie).

La méthode utilisée pour évaluer la bonté de la médiation du texte est celle des dix critères proposés par le Victoria & Albert Museum pour l'écriture des légendes d'œuvres (Trench 2007).

Bien que les dix règles du V&A soient conçues pour réglementer la rédaction dans les salles de musée, elles peuvent aussi être utiles de manière plus générale lors de la présentation d'un contenu spécialisé à un public large et varié.[1] L'analyse s'est donc concentrée sur la comparaison entre des normes spécifiques pour l'écriture des panneaux de salle élaborées par l'un des plus grands musées anglais et la rédaction de textes descriptifs des œuvres sur le site web d'un musée français. Cette méthode a été choisie pour l'originalité et la polyvalence de l'approche proposée, dont les effets sont engageants et efficaces, grâce à un ton informel qui fait déjà partie de la communication en ligne du

1 Les dix critères du V&A, en résumé, stipulent: "1. Know your audience; 2.Write as you would speak; 3. Be active, not passive; 4. Keep it short and snappy; 5. Organise your information; 6. Engage with the object; 7.

Musée de Cluny.
Comme mentionné ci-dessus, la stratégie de communication du Musée de Cluny est particulièrement efficace, donc il n'est pas surprenant que, à une première évaluation, les textes proposés par le Musée de Cluny étaient déjà en grande partie conformes aux directives proposées par le V&A Museum. Par conséquent, l'activité de laboratoire s'est limitée à identifier des marges d'amélioration et des alternatives possibles aux textes proposés par le musée. Bien que la brièveté soit une qualité incontournable d'un texte d'exposition, les alternatives proposées se caractérisent par une longueur légèrement supérieure à l'original, mais cette concession se justifie par la nature numérique du texte, selon la supposition que ces panneaux virtuels, étant sur le site web du musée et non dans une salle muséale, sont activement recherchés par les utilisateurs.

Bring in the human element; 8. Sketch in the background; 9. Admit uncertainty; 10. Remember Orwell's Six Rules".

En outre, contrairement à un panneau physique, ces textes peuvent être plus facilement utilisés par les appareils privés des intéressés à des fins de recherche. En effet, comme le rappellent les dix règles du V&A, visant à guider la rédaction des panneaux de salle, la brièveté suggérée pour la salle se justifie précisément par la présence de multiples niveaux d'information, notamment le site web, qui remplit la fonction d'approfondir l'information pour la visite in situ (Trench 2007).

On trouvera ci-après le processus de réécriture des trois textes pris en analyse, dont le premier est le panneau concernant *Les Joueurs d'échecs.* Le panneau original explique:

> ***Ce vitrail civil réalisé au 15e siècle provient de l'hôtel de la Bessée à Villefranche-sur-Saône. Il montre une partie d'échec qui est, aussi, la codification d'une joute amoureuse. La Dame semble feindre la surprise face à son soupirant distrait. Cette scène courtoise riche de détails est d'une exécution soignée: les techniques de grisaille et de jaune d'argent sont employées sur un verre blanc. Très appréciés des élites aristocratiques cultivées, peu de vitraux civils de ce type nous sont toutefois parvenus.*** [*81 mots*]

Comme il est évident, le panneau concis applique efficacement les conseils recueillis dans les commandements du V&A, complétés par l'utilisation d'hypertextes en correspondance des termes spécifiques qui ne sont pas d'usage courant, tels que 'grisaille' et 'jeune d'argent'.

Ces hypertextes renvoient au *Glossaire*, une page du site spécifiquement consacrée à l'explication des termes techniques. Le *Glossaire* est un moyen simple mais efficace de guider les utilisateurs à travers le jargon difficile ou inconnu qui caractérise souvent les écrits d'histoire de l'art. Sur l'ensemble du site, mais en particulier dans la fiche descriptive de chaque œuvre d'art, des mots spécifiques sont mis en évidence sous forme d'hyperliens qui renvoient à la page du glossaire. Autrement, une brève explication du terme est accordée. Cette stratégie explicative est exceptionnellement efficace pour familiariser le visiteur avec le vocabulaire technique, tout en étant non-invasive pour la lecture des textes interprétatifs des œuvres. De plus, l'outil *Glossaire* autorise et justifie l'utilisation de termes spécifiques dans les panneaux virtuels, ce qui permet d'une part d'éviter de longues explications dans le texte, et d'autre part

d'éveiller la curiosité du lecteur.

La seule critique à ce premier texte repose sur la possibilité sous-exploitée d'apporter plus d'élément humaine dans un thème qui est certainement engageant sur le plan émotionnel. La réécriture proposée s'est donc concentrée sur cet aspect:

> ***Ce type rare de vitrail civil fut réalisé au 15e siècle et provient de l'hôtel de la Bessée à Villefranche-sur-Saône. La scène semble représenter une partie d'échecs, mais en regardant mieux, il est évident que le gentilhomme est bien plus intéressé par la Dame que par le jeu, et lui présente un pion particulier: la Reine. Il s'agit donc d'une joute amoureuse. Donnée sa surprise, la jeune fille semble le saisir clairement et même l'encourager: avec la gauche, la Dame tire vers elle son adversaire. Cette scène courtoise riche de détails est d'une exécution soignée: les techniques de grisaille et de jaune d'argent sont employées sur un verre blanc.*** [***112 mots***]

Dans cette œuvre du XVe siècle, ce qui attire l'attention est le thème sentimental. Dans cette première réécriture, il s'agissait de faire comprendre à un spectateur non sensibilisé à l'iconographie du sujet le symbolisme impliqué par les détails de la scène.

Dans ce cas, il ne s'agirait pas d'une description excessive, mais d'une tentative de guider le regard du lecteur pour lui faire saisir des détails qui seraient autrement difficiles à interpréter. Le deuxième panneau examiné décrit une sculpture en bois intitulée *La Sainte Famille*:

> ***La Sainte Famille apparaît de manière très vivante: Marie, joliment coiffée d'un turban qui laisse échapper de longues mèches de cheveux, fait la lecture à son fils tandis que Joseph est assoupi. Échappant à la vigilance maternelle, l'enfant turbulent, debout sur les genoux des adultes, empoigne le visage de Joseph pour le tirer du sommeil tandis que, de la main gauche, Marie prévient son époux. Les drapés spectaculaires, tout comme la position dynamique de l'Enfant, permettent de rattacher ce relief à la production souabe.*** [***85 mots***]

Suivant les indications proposées par le V&A, le point 4 de leur «décalogue» prescrit «Dialoguer avec l'objet». Cela signifie qu'une bonne étiquette doit s'adresser à l'objet, mais elle doit aussi encourager les visiteurs à regarder, à comprendre et à trouver leur propre récompense, qu'elle soit esthétique, intellectuelle ou personnelle. Pour ce faire, le visiteur doit s'engager pleinement dans l'objet, ce qui signifie bien sûr le regarder, de préférence en vrai, mais aussi à travers une photographie. Donc, la description doit attirer le lecteur, mais sans souligner l'évidence. Ce panneau numérique, en revanche, est très descriptif, se substituant presque au regard du spectateur pour lui parler de l'œuvre, alors qu'il pourrait lui-même disposer de l'espace nécessaire pour y projeter ses

propres sentiments et réflexions. Par conséquent, la réécriture proposée se concentre sur certains aspects stylistiques qui pourraient échapper au spectateur, aspects sur lesquels le site du musée a tout à fait une chance d'éduquer. De plus, quelques mots supplémentaires ont été utilisés pour développer le concept de "production de Souabe" mentionné dans l'original:

> ***La Sainte Famille est ici capturée dans un instant de vraie vie: pendant que Marie essaie de faire la lecture à son fils, il échappe la vigilance maternelle pour réveiller Joseph assoupi. Les drapés à la mode, le dynamisme des gestes et l'expressivité sincère appellent à une intimité familiale universelle qui traverse les siècles et capte l'attention même aujourd'hui. La sensibilité délicate et la force expressive sont distinctives des artistes de la Souabe, une région du sud de l'Allemagne théâtre d'une production sculptée de haute qualité entre les années 1460 et 1530.*** [*93 mots*]

Enfin, le troisième panneau choisi a pour sujet la *Châsse de l'Adoration des Mages*. Le texte original dit:

> ***Ce coffret destiné à abriter des reliques est un bel exemple des créations des artistes de Limoges, à l'apogée de leur art. Création rare, évocatrice et raffinée par son iconographie, précieuse et chatoyante par le travail des émaux, elle se distingue par un dynamisme particulier. Sur le toit les Rois mages et les chevaux en cuivre doré, gravés et ciselés, avec têtes appliquées en demi-relief, semblent engagés dans une course allègre; sur le flanc, leur procession devant la Vierge et l'Enfant est calme et majestueuse.*** [*86 mots*]

Dans ce cas, le texte présente de manière synthétique et claire le contexte dans lequel l'objet doit se situer et le ton informel facilite la compréhension. Cependant, on peut faire quelques remarques relatives aux points 3 (organiser l'information) et 6 (apporter l'élément humain) de la guide du V&A Museum. Par exemple, le thème des Rois Mages, qui donne le titre à l'œuvre, serait beaucoup plus pertinent pour comprendre le contexte dévotionnel qui a conduit à la réalisation de ce coffret.

De plus, en termes de style, la deuxième phrase de la description ne respecte pas le point 8 (écrire comme on parlerait), car elle donne une série d'adjectifs qui ne qualifient que subjectivement l'objet, sans communiquer une information précise à son sujet. La réécriture proposée du panneau est donc la suivante:

> ***Ce coffret destiné à abriter des reliques présente toutes les caractéristiques de la meilleure production de l'émaillerie limousine à son apogée. Sur le toit, les Rois mages engagent une course allègre sur leurs chevaux de cuivre doré,***

comme impatients d'arriver devant la Vierge et son enfant. Ces derniers apparaissent sur le flanc dessous, où le rythme de la procession se fait bien plus calme et majestueux. Le thème de l'Adoration des mages est parmi les sujets narratifs les plus répandus sur les châsses de l'Œuvre de Limoges, peut-être parce que lié aux usages liturgiques limousins du 12e siècle. Le thème des mages représentait le triomphe de la Chrétienté, mais il évoquait en général le pouvoir et le contrôle. [*117 mots*]

Dans ce panneau, on a tenté d'entraîner le spectateur dans le mouvement des personnages, plutôt que d'affirmer trivialement que la composition est dynamique; en outre, on offre plus d'informations sur le rôle dévotionnel des mages, en élargissant la compréhension du contexte.

Ce que le laboratoire a fait ressortir, c'est la complexité pratique de l'écriture des panneaux d'œuvre, dont la plus grande qualité, mais aussi la plus difficile à réaliser, est de distiller les informations essentielles et de les rendre non seulement exploitables, mais aussi engageantes pour le lecteur. Contrairement au panneau de salle, le texte en ligne a l'avantage de pouvoir être consulté dans des conditions plus confortables que dans une salle de musée et d'être toujours disponible en ligne, mais de son côté il doit faire face aux attentes de dynamisme et d'implication du contexte en ligne. Le site web du Musée de Cluny a sans aucun doute démontré d'avoir compris ces besoins, en profitant au mieux des opportunités offertes par l'environnement numérique, au moyen d'hypertextes, de parcours thématiques et de la création d'un glossaire regroupant tous les termes spécifiques.



Fig. 1. Présentation de Gaia De Palma, Screenshot, 2021.

COURSE TITLE:

MUSEOLOGY IN THE CONTEMPORARY AGE

Contemporary Museology

HELD BY:

Dominique Poulot

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The papers in this collection attempt to comment on recent transformations in museums around the world, in particular through the reading of major contemporary texts, especially from the English-speaking tradition. In this regard, the philosophers and aestheticians John Dewey and Arthur Danto are mentioned in several papers. Starting from their work, the essays analyse the tradition of museums and their relationship with the community and democracy, on the one hand, and their condition in the historicity of art and creation on the other. This line of thought offers a general framework for the topic of temporality when it comes to thinking about the museum institution and anticipating its uncertain future. Several students have drawn up a panoramic of the museums that have been imagined, expected or hoped for over the last few decades. This framework makes it possible to reflect on the museums' transformation/role through time, by trying to examine the question of the contemporary in the museum and its relationship to the future.

The second theme is that of the museum institution as an organisation, and the political or economic issues that underlie its dynamics, particularly for the decades to come. In the face of the crisis, new forms of cooperation both between museums and between the museum and its ecosystem are being considered. The aim here is to look more broadly at the new models and management strategies in the face of developments that shake up the traditional functioning of museums, with an international perspective. Some papers reconsider the Bilbao effect, focusing in particular on the future of museums in relation to the evolution of urban structures. A question is raised whether the disappearance of the museum institution as we know it has allowed it to anchor its necessity in the city and find new shapes. One challenge posed by the urban and heritage world is that of museum-type curating in a public space: it is a matter of thinking differently about the common, the notion of inhabiting, notably by calling on participation. The famous example of the urban location of *Tilted Arc* is mentioned, through Danto's discussion of it, as a symptom of crisis.

Finally, a third line of thought examines the museum's societal commitment, putting into perspective the strong trends observed in the first quarter of the 21st century. First of all, the notion of societal commitment raises the question of the museum's attitude towards the injunctions of social, democratic or environmental activism. It then confronts the museum with the question of ethics, as a potential factor for transforming relations with collections and communities. Finally, it suggests the possibility of a new social role for museums when, faced with the memory of violence or trauma, they become a place of collective reparation. The role played by the active participation of visitors, and even by the elicitation of their emotions, appears in many respects to be essential in the general economy of the institution.

Of course, the idea of a sentimental museum is not new, and is linked to the legacy of artists', collectors' or authors' museums. In other words, to a long-existing modern and contemporary collecting tradition in the West. But its current version goes beyond the idiosyncrasy of

the 'collection-maker' or 'atmosphere-maker' to evoke a collective commitment. Through these types of commitment, feelings of belonging (or not) to a community are played out, which become the springboard for the valorisation of museums.
The figure of Adam Verver, the hero of Henry James' novel *The Golden Bowl*, an American tycoon and art collector, is present in the representations of the classical age of museums. Who will succeed him in the field of contemporary imagination? The proposals are hardly convincing at this stage, as if the imagination of contemporary novelists or essayists had not yet created characters remarkable enough to be associated with the landscape of contemporary museums. Moreover, it is perhaps at the opposite end of the spectrum from this figure of belonging and ownership that we must look for a form of imagination that is specifically developed around the contemporary museum.

The situation that contemporary museums find themselves in is indeed complex in the context of societies marked by migration and displacement, whether forced or not. In this respect, the students worked on various recent works about migration museums, in particular on the results of different European research programmes, such as *MeLa* and *CoHere*. All of them try to define the ruptures that are taking place today, to mark out the uncertainties that many museographies and museologies try to measure, with very different ambitions and results. The claim to curatorial subjectivity is in any case an important element of contemporary thinking, which willingly plays with the levers and brakes, internal or external, that hold back the potential for societal innovation within museum institutions. Could indocility and impertinence be the basis for a new model of a museum institution rooted in activism?

The evocation of literature about the museum, but also of contemporary exhibitions dedicated to pop music and fashion in the references used by the students' works suggest that a utopian and idealized vision of museums could inspire the real museum of the future.
New ways of collaboration can also be imagined, not only between the museum and the artists, but also between the museum and other institutions, in order to sketch out the possible contours of an imaginary museum. It is a matter of re-imagining the museum's functions, of envisaging new hybrid forms or new museum experiences.
An effort to study prospective reading is made here and there to imagine the future of visitors' experiences in the museum.

All of the papers in this section consider the new horizons of the museum institution, whether it be new professional practices and professions, the evolution of training, or the museum as a place of experimentation, experience, and visit, and finally the museum as a place of creation. At a time when new professional rhythms are being imposed on museums (due to the Covid crisis) and when adaptation has become the only possible response to uncertainty, promotion has attempted to imagine new models. We can now observe two different types of museums: on the one hand, the museum stuck in its traditions;

on the other, the museum in search of a new definition, even when it means putting aside its collections, as we can see in the recent ICOM debates. Imagining the museum of the future is a great challenge for students of museology today!

"Could indocility and impertinence be the basis for a new model of a museum institution rooted in activism?"

THE VALUE OF UNDER-STANDING THE SENSE OF BELONGING IN MUSEUMS STUDIES

AUTHOR:

Irene Calvi

FIRST SECTION:
Understanding

SECOND SECTION:
Dialogue

THIRD SECTION:
Personal experience in Genova, Italy

INTRODUCTION

The reading of Susannah Eckersley's contribution for the *Anthropological Journal of European Cultures* struck me for the accurate description of dynamics that I'd already faced, but were presented here in an unexpected context. I found it crucial because it offered a 360-degree view on one of the issues I investigate as a museology student and that I might face in the museum environment:

> the existence of different perceptions of 'home' as tangible and intangible heritage. Indeed, while reading the article, I could not help thinking about an experience that I had: when I helped in the creation of the exhibition *Paesaggi Interiori/ Landscapes from Within* at Castello D'Albertis Museum of World Cultures in Genova, Italy.

Therefore, in this commentary I will highlight the meaning and importance of Understanding and Dialogue, focusing at the end on how my experience at the museum confirms what is stated by Eckersley.

UNDERSTANDING

The article written by Susannah Eckersley is a study leading to a broader project, *MeLa*, linked to Research Field 01 of the European Museum in an Age of Migrations. The aim of the project is also explained in the introduction to a book published to show the preliminary finding of the first research phase (Whitehead and Eckersley 2012). The case study presented in the article follows a methodology of qualitative and quantitative collection of data regarding the city of Görlitz-Zgorzelec and the Silesian Museum in Görlitz. The city is split in half on the border between Germany and Poland, and the cultural history museum has the key role to foster inclusiveness towards visitors.

The author claimed, during an interview with the museum director, that migration, identity and belonging were indeed the predominant issues that the museum focused on, making it a fertile ground for research. I particularly appreciated the exhaustive explanation of the methodology used and the outcomes of focus groups, as it made the reading a good source of ideas. As stated, it is extremely important to examine how museum practices of representing place and identity influence the relationship with the visitors, starting from the actual understanding of the topic. Furthermore, the museums will have sufficient knowledge to carry out an evaluation of the congruence or incongruence of the display through the visitors' sense of identity, whether it be from an individual or collective point of view. The first phase is where terminology becomes central in the understanding process. Susannah Eckersley reflects on the word 'home' and the two meanings that can be attributed to it:

> if it's used for indicating the country where you are from ("homeland") or the place where you feel you belong because of emotional attachment (a concept known as "Heimat" in German).

I'm grateful that the author actually mentioned the academic literature related to her consideration, because in this way, she both gives a broader context and the opportunity to be aware of other studies through which the reader can deepen his or her knowledge on the subject. Indeed, after analysing the meaning of 'home', she worked on the contradictory

definition of 'space' and 'place', coming to the conclusion that the use of these words depends on what people associate them to, according to their personal or communal understanding of the word.

Because of this research and my personal experience, I would also add a few words about the differences between migrants and internally displaced people (IDP). According to UNHCR,[1] there are 79.5 million forcibly displaced people around the world, but not all of them are in the same situation. 'Migrants' is the definition for someone leaving their country, either to look for a better future or to escape violence.

1. Data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): https://www.unhcr.org/.

Often the term is wrongfully used when referring to 'refugees', which is instead the to attribute to someone who was forced to flee the country due to conflict or violence and is unwilling to return to it.

Whereas migrants and immigrants both move to another country, internally displaced people (IDP) are forced to flee their homes, but remain within their country's borders. However, their temporary home might change several times, increasing their feeling of displacement. Since IDP is a descriptive term with no legal value, internally displaced people are not granted rights under international law and the responsibility for their assistance falls into the hands of their government, which is usually unwilling or unable to help in any way, forcing IDPs into camps.

This necessary premise was needed to introduce the unexpected theme that I faced while reading this article. Halfway through her research, Eckersley addressed some studies that focused particularly on memory and on the collective memory of a place.

The intangible sense of belonging is strictly related to memory, and it might be triggered even more intensely when a person no longer has emotional or geographical connections to a place. I considered a few experiences which could be, in my opinion, related to this concept, such as the indigenous artists that I met at Castello D'Albertis in Genova (tribes living in reservations have actually been IDPs for centuries) or the migrant emergency that we are currently living and that we see every day with our own eyes, on our coasts. However, I had never considered one of the examples included in the article, of the German post-war generation which did not feel at home in their own country. This has helped me reevaluate the importance of having an understanding of these dynamics not only when referring to a specific cluster of people, but also when considering other groups as well, because many regional museums and communities might face similar issues in other countries where the sense of belonging is nowadays taken for granted.

At the end of this discussion, Eckersley connects the aforementioned concepts, ending her study with a further consideration on the framework of three nodes (people, place, process) proposed by Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, which is clearly explained in a few sentences:

> *This framework includes within 'person' both individual and collective entities (such as groups or cultures). 'Place' is articulated as both physical and social (linking to the discussions over the term 'place' and 'space'). Finally, 'process' is divided into effect, cognition and behaviour – which include memory, meaning, emotions and activities* (Eckersley 2017, 14).

In conclusion, we can simplify the concept stating that the different meanings, words and ideas depend on the subject:

> those who have experienced forced migration and displacement will have a different sense of belonging towards a place compared to someone who has never had to face these situations.

It is important to keep this in mind now that we are moving to the next section, dedicated to the museum environment.

DIALOGUE

For this paragraph, I'm using as reference Kathleen McLean's "Museums Exhibitions and the Dynamics of Dialogue" (McLean 1999, 83-107), because in this other article the author addresses some of the issues which Eckersley linked to the People-Place-Process framework, as we can read in these lines:

> ***People with different lifestyles and learning styles, cultural backgrounds and social perspectives are being enticed into museums. Whether they return will depend, to a great extent, on whether they can make personal connections and see something of themselves within*** (**McLean 1999, 83-107**).

Museums have a role in this and Eckersley's analysis, on the Silesian Museum of Görlitz, demonstrates how to build a relationship between past and present and between people. Taking into account tangible and intangible heritage, she borrows three terms from other scholars which I found particularly captivating. The first one is 'past presencing' (from Sharon Macdonald), which the author uses in reference to the museum display of an underlying constant narrative. It refers to the fact that the museums behold the heritage of a past which is also someone's present and will be someone else's future. In my opinion, the term should be always be used when talking about museums' narratives.

The second one is 'transitional objects' (Parking), which I found extremely fitting for IDPs or anyone suffering from displacement. It is important to display this kind of objects along the museum itinerary as well, because they are full of meaning. In fact, they were carried by their owners, while they were moving from one place to another.

This emotional meaning might trigger the memory of somebody visiting the museum who lived the same experience. They will feel represented, thus the connection with the museum space will be stronger. The third and last one is 'testimonial objects' (Hirsch and Spitzer), which refers to being a witness of a specific history. I love to think that museums will display more and more of these, becoming collections of stories. With the help of new technologies, it is easier than ever to put on display a language, a song or a sound and, as a consequence, some will feel like they're being welcomed into a very private room of the house, while others will feel finally at 'home'. Indeed, the encounter in the Silesian Museum with personal objects and the recorded sound of dialects triggered memories and emotions connected to the visitors' loved ones.

Returning to McLean's article, she cites a quote from Stephen

Greenblatt defining the concepts of 'resonance' and 'wonder'.

> ***By resonance, I mean the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it might be taken by a viewer to stand. By wonder I mean the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention*** (**Greenblatt 2012 , 42**).

I think this relates to Eckersley and Görlitz's Silesian Museum, because in a museum where memories and histories are displayed 'resonance' and 'wonder' will work differently. The viewer will not be stopped in his/her tracks by a masterpiece, but by something which they might relate to because of its unique personal history, and will be curious to see why this specific object is displayed in a museum vitrine. 'Resonance' is embedded in the display of objects related to memories and places, in settings like Castello D'Albertis Museum of World Cultures the viewer will truly have the impression of having travelled, following the Captain's destinations and the cultures he encountered. Especially for what concerns museography, 'resonance' is better evoked through audio and visuals materials, or with the help of a local tour guide truly interested in showing a story that he/she relates to.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN GENOVA, ITALY

> ***The immigrant, the exile, the tourist, and the urban wanderer are the dominant figures of contemporary culture*** (**Bourriaud 2009**).

In 2018, I had the chance to help set up the exhibition *Landscapes from Within* at Castello D'Albertis Museum of World Cultures. The museum is located in my home town, Genova, and is an anthropological museum, which used to be the home of sea captain Enrico Alberto D'Albertis.

The exhibition was a joint partnership between the museum and Soul of Nations, an American foundation aiming to uplift indigenous youth and communities through the arts. Since I could talk about this experience from several points of view, I have decided to select just two key aspects, which connect to Eckersley's study. I deliberately didn't focus on the contemporary paintings and photos displayed in the exhibition, nor on the museum collection, because I think they would deserve an article written specifically on the topic. On one hand, the key concept of 'understanding' hit strong when we first started to work and organize both the exhibition and the collateral activities. For example, we went to university courses, giving young students the chance to meet one of the artists, Antoinette Thompson [Image at the end], who introduced herself in her native language leaving everyone baffled and capturing us with the unknown harmonic sounds of her dialect. Silesian dialects are now either extinct or at risk of dying out as the populations who spoke them were expelled from Silesia and dispersed across post-war Germany, suffering the same fate of all theindigenous languages. She then taught the students terms they had never heard before (as a form of displacement) and asked them to identify clear symbols in her contemporary

abstract paintings. Even if the students recognized arrowheads, they did not know the meanings that they had for Antoinette and her tribe. On the other hand, the intent was also to establish an open dialogue with the Genovese community and visitors. Two installation techniques resulted from this, which were employed in the exhibition gallery. One was the transformation of the vitrines into "Totem Talks" [Image] and the other was the integration of audio materials for the visitors to listen to [Image]. "Totem Talks" were our solution to create an open dialogue between the indigenous artists and the public. The artists and curators (Jaque Fragua, Delaney Keshena, Antoinette Thompson, Ernest Hill and Maria Camilla De Palma) chose a series of questions to write on the painted vitrines:

> ***What does "Sacred Land" mean to you?***
> ***What does it mean to be "indigenous"?***
> ***What does "decolonization" look like to you?***
> ***How has the exhibition changed your thoughts or emotions on Native Americans?***
> ***Why did European colonize America?***
> ***What does "displacement" mean to you?***

These were deliberately provocative questions, which were directed at the Genovese public especially. The Castle and the city were in fact chosen because they are in Christopher Columbus' homeland.

Various conversations started in the days following the opening. I have been there many times with and without the artists and I saw how people acted differently as well. When the artists were present, they only wanted to listen to them, they were actively asking questions regarding the art pieces and their relationship to the artists' personal histories.

Instead, when I was alone, they were curious about what "displacement" means and about and asked why they wanted to know what was sacred to us ("Isn't it obvious?", someone said). I particularly loved the way the rules of the museum display were intentionally broken and the subsequent transformation of the vitrines into an open "chat" between the artists and the curators, the artists and the visitors, the visitors and other visitors. In the room next to the gallery, there were 3 other vitrines which we decided to transform into something special.

During the opening, Antoinette Thompson created a beautiful artwork for the central one, whereas we managed to display the actual voices of the artists in the other two. Through two small tablets, we showed the artworks and translations of the artists' interviews, which we thought were unmissable because of their deeply touching and personal nature. The room itself is small and was separated from the paintings and the Totem Talks, being a space where the visitor could meet the artists personally and privately, listening to their stories and learning about their cultures.

CONCLUSION

The multiple topics mentioned in this short commentary show just the tip of the iceberg of the complex theme of belonging. However, I'm deeply interested in continuing this research and in further expanding my knowledge through readings, which are an essential tool for every museum

studies' student. Thanks to the work of many scholars, Eckersley among them, we are moving towards the display of multiple perception within museum spaces and away from a single-minded point of view, welcoming stories, objects and cultures from the past, present and future.

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Fig. 1. *Totem Talks in the exhibition gallery*, photography, 2019.



Fig. 2. *People writing on the Totem Talks*, photography, 2019.



Fig. 3. *Vitrines displaying videos of the artists and Antoinette Thompson's artwork*, photography, 2019.



Fig. 4. *Antoinette Thompson in the classroom*, photography, 2019.

ON SENTIMENTAL MUSEOGRAPHY

AUTHOR:

Emanuele Fontanesi

FIRST SECTION:
On Sentimental Museography

SECOND SECTION:
Pills of history

THIRD SECTION:
Sentimental museography

ON SENTIMENTAL MUSEOGRAPHY

In this paper I plan to ponder over the notion of Sentimental Museography, which is also the title of an article written by Barnaby Drabble and Federica Martini where the two authors shift through three case studies to engage in "emotional, imaginative and at times narrative reflections on museology" (Drabble and Martini 2017, 1). In the current panorama driven by the worldwide implementation of powerful, giant institutions and blockbuster exhibitions, are museums fostering this kind of approach bound to die?

It would seem that they are not, since both their numbers and their public are growing year after year. But is their existence legitimate or is it just an accident, a trend that history will eventually consider a remnant of a bizarre past? After discussing this topic, I will elaborate on certain aspects and consequences of this methodology and how it might trigger effects on social grounds.

Even though to foster wonder represents one of the major aims of contemporary art practices, nevertheless the museum seems to follow its evolutionary path and often to identify with the very notion of organisation and control that qualified its birth. As a consequence, a plethora of big museums and temporary exhibitions that inherently contrast with the curatorial projects explored by the writers, is dominating the art scene. Barnaby and Martini focus on what they define as "artist's museums", but in view of what I want to express I'd rather name them "author's museums". For the sake of my analysis, it's pivotal to stress how no essential differences between artists, collectors, and curators subsist.

These figures blend into the notion of author, who can be defined as the individual capable of producing effects through a subjective approach to a specific practice. In this case, the practice consists in shaping spaces and foster a peculiar kind of experience by connecting and confronting people with objects. Inside these spaces, pieces of art and everyday objects are supposed to act on the spectator on an affective level. Hierarchies of values are overcome and blurred are the lines between the classic dichotomies that usually define art history:

high and low, intellect and emotion, private and collective just to name a few.

Inside "author's museums", fine and applied arts dialogue and an intimate connection with the genius loci, as well as with the author's biography, is built and fostered. These museums are often inhabited by everyday objects which are likely to trigger the visitor's response not because of their intrinsic aspects or ethical qualities, but through contiguity.

Therefore, are these practices aiming at undermining the institutional and civilising qualities that go along with the institution? How can individual narratives conveying affects, besides being legit, have a social impact? I believe that touching on a small variety of the topics discussed in the essay would lead the readers to deepen their questioning about progress and to consider reason, as appropriate tools for social impact beyond ideological agendas. Backing the arguments supported in the text, I intend to stress the important role of the experience offered by this curatorial approach for social well-being which, to quote Lacan, might consist in not betraying people's own desire (Lacan 1958, 79), their singularity and, - but this is just a side effect - possibly, as a consequence, provide society with 'good citizens', whatever that might mean. I decided

to focus mainly on two of the three case studies introduced in the article.

In the first one, the work of exhibition-maker Harald Szeemann "Grossvater – Ein Pionier wie wir" was taken as an illustrative example of his desire to subjectively work with(in) intimacy to objectively impact society. More generally, Szeemann ascribed a strong subjective dimension to exhibition-making. The "Musée sentimental" by artists Daniel Spoerri and historian Marie-Louise Von Plessen, instead, was an alternative museum where everyday objects were arranged following the alphabet order and consequently generated awkward de/re-contextualisations.

The declared purpose behind the projects was to convey affects through a specific object arrangement rooted in the pre-rational system of displaying of the *Wunderkammer*.

PILLS OF HISTORY

In the nineteenth century, art became an object of historical expertise, controlled by newly established institutions such as the Academia.

The scientific paradigm founding the notion of museum did not exclusively aim at presenting the artists' works, the main purpose being to develop an artistic historical vision. On the contrary, throughout the twentieth century art constantly changed its appearance and consequently modified its relation with the museum institution. Artists attempted to blend art and life, refused materiality, left museums and eventually questioned their legitimacy. Museums have been conceived as tools whose ideologically driven purposes and symbolic power were hijacked by artistic practices through attempts to deconstruct as an act of consciousness. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, "art as experience" referred both to the overwhelming success of museums as places targeted by mass audiences and to the major success reached by artistic practices whose purpose was to foster an intimate and sometimes physical experience at the expense of the traditional distance required between spectators and the work of art. Drabble and Martini stress how:

> *these exhibition experiments invert the nineteenth-century museum's urge to exclude the body and its affects, they foreground the whimsy and impulse of collecting, evoke the intimate former life of the objects they display and provoke the visitors to address their own ongoing body- object-body immersion in the world* (**Drabble and Martini 2017, 3**).

The *Wunderkammer* model was also a useful tool in the hands of museum practitioners because it shifted the emphasis from texts to objects.

Contemporary cabinets allowed items to be seen as ensembles of artefacts open to interpretation, therefore contributing to the rewriting the history of material culture. One of the aspects of the *Wunderkammer* display revisited in contemporary age was the rejection of the nineteenth-century institutional goal to represent the world in an instrumental way. Its model seemed to support the validity of an all-englobing approach to knowledge, as opposed to the selective approach of the scientific museum. Referring back to *Wunderkammer* meant putting at stake reason as the legitimate and suitable tool to bring together people and objects inside the museum. It meant questioning the validity of

distance as satisfactory to have an experience of the items displayed and consequently questioning, but not necessarily denying, the role of both knowledge and instrumental reason inside the museum. The cabinet's arrangement was and is organised around metaphors and allegories, not always rational (by modern standards) associations between its objects, making the production of meaning a sort of poetic act.

SENTIMENTAL MUSEOGRAPHY

A *Sentimental Museography* seems to be defined by its stirred up processes more than the items it gathers, whose activating presence remains nevertheless crucial. This is also what differentiates the situations explored from another trend of the contemporary art scene characterised by dematerialisation. Author's museums strongly rely on subjectivity and make use of artefacts and artworks to bring in fiction through contiguity. All of this happens in an intimate space that is traversed and characterised by these activating relations. "The exhibition is 'renewed' as an affective space of unresolved and processual resonance" (Drabble and Martini 2017, 6). In this regard, the authors of the essay warn us about how essential it is to differentiate between the personal (feelings and emotions) and the pre-personal and autonomic (affects), which consists in:

> *the persistent proof of a body's never less than ongoing immersion in and among the world's obstinacies and rhythms, its refusals as much as its invitations* (...) *Affect is in many ways synonymous with force or forces of encounter* (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 1).

Nevertheless, they stress the difficulty of drawing boundaries that separate affects and emotions:

> as exemplified by Nam June Paik's comment on his visit to Spoerri's "Sentimental museum", laugh and intensity, contiguity and intimacy, work on a different register and aim at provoking a different kind of knowledge which is nevertheless framed by the limit of the experience, breaking the walls of expectations and memory.

Contiguity stands out as the defining quality when it comes to deciphering how the "affective turn", another related concept, seems to sustain a different and beyond institutional approach to curating, currently known as "the curatorial", shaping a space of both intended and unintended relations. The 'curatorial' implies an understanding of curating as the production of and engagement with knowledge. Thus 'knowing' is not the absorption of information and materials - not simply an analysis and interpretation - but rather something actively produced through practice and thanks to the effects on the spectator of contiguity among objects. Objects don't hold inherent value, but gain it by relating to each other.

Therefore, the focus lays on the 'affective sphere' where the distance between subject and object is cancelled through the intimacy of the encounter. The value of the objects resides in the triggering effect of their associations with informal stories, shared memories and oral histories. I find it necessary to discard the idea of excluding emotions from museography for being incoherent with the call to rationality, objectivity and

the scientific approach that characterised much of the historical trajectory of the museum as institution. Historically, museums have been conceived as tools in a larger narrative that ideologically shaped and helped sustain the world; thanks to the philosophy of science and anthropology, multiple perspectives and differences among cultures have been legitimised, while museums stopped being conceived as exclusive spaces to fit in and instead started to be employed for their metaphorical potential.

If the museum has been a space dedicated to the production of a new subjectivity, that of the subject coerced through the promise of becoming 'civilised' to adopt a specific set of behaviours, associated with bourgeois social norms, on the contrary a sentimental museography is attempting to foster encounters and invest in creating a space essentially focused on feelings.

CONCLUSION

Sentimental Museography explores fiction as a modus operandi and as an approach to experience the world, a less conventional way by which the displaying and circulation of visual knowledge is conceptualised, pursued and sustained through specific epistemic values brought about by affects. In "author's museums" representation is substituted by the poetic presentation of a microcosm, a world of knowledge constituted by analogies and without reference to a model situated outside the relation between elements inside the given space. As already stressed, it questions dichotomies and blurs the lines between what is authentic and what is not. But what is more trustworthy and legit than something that refers to itself and has nothing beyond its presentation?

Additionally, the way contemporary art exhibitions, even those with a focus on participation, can still possess normative qualities, strikes in particular. In fact, to bring justice is not just a matter of freeing individuals from given definitions and interpretational frameworks, allowing them to assert their right to observe reality from their own perspective. This approach, as suggested by Wendy Brown:

> *manages the demands of marginal groups in ways that incorporate them without disturbing the hegemony of the norms that marginalised them since often the cross-cultural approach of museum and galleries has become a weapon to mediate between elites of different cultures* (**Bennett 2017, 90**).

Instead, it would be wise to invoke the emancipation of the visitors by legitimising the pivotal role of the encounter between (their) story and the objects exhibited. Besides stating the possibility of questioning the validity of considering the experience of art as an explicit political tool to improve social relations, I want to underline how sentimental museography might foster a sense of community by focusing on notions such as embodiment, sense of place and memory.

At the same time, if some curators favour artifactual density, unusual juxtapositions, and the use of metaphors and allegorical themes, could the reason for this revival be that the contemporary *Wunderkammer*'s qualities have much in common with the current crisis

of representation? In fact *Wunderkammer*, despite being created for the owner's delight, was also the union of various modes of representation and performed a public function. From a philosophical point of view, two antithetical perspectives on life are at stake with the different approaches to museology I focus on:

> being already in the truth and simply walking or needing to walk towards it.

Sentimental museography should not be condemned to disappear by the progress of museology because it is the very notion of progress as the (only) possibility of impacting consciousness that is put at risk through its action. Denying the legitimacy of a progressive museology is probably inappropriate, but this should not condemn different strategies aimed at offering an experience to disappear. Hence, the cracked parquet that Dario Gamboni and Orhan Pamuk stood on in Gustave Moreau Musée (Gamboni 2020, 43), a space that must also be familiar to Szeemann, Spoerri and von Plessen, might be the highest achievement of a re-framed relationship between objects, the museum and its public(s) and emblematic one of the most meaningful contributes to society by art.

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THE LOCAL GENIUS

How Art, Meaning and Place Intersect

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at drawing some considerations around the consistency of the museum when it faces changes occurring in the art worlds and more broadly in society. Starting from the words by Arthur Danto in his *After the End of Art*, the museum, under the thrust of new technologies and forms of art, is no more a golden cage of humankind masterpieces, but it is asked to actively interact and be accountable for how it represents the world and its communities. As a public space, the museum has the responsibility for the messages it brings forth, which can be sometimes controversial, as demonstrated by the demolitions of public symbols taking place in many North American and North European countries.

This study tries to tackle the dynamic idea of 'community' and how they can have a fulfilling experience of the space if the genius loci, as theorized by architect Christian Norberg-Schulz, is respected. Finally, a fil rouge between Danto's and Norberg-Schulz's arguments around the importance of identification and partecipation makes clear how experience acts as the mechanism thanks to which people feel represented and give meaning to the museum.

THE LOCAL GENIUS: HOW ART, MEANING AND PLACE INTERSECT

Arthur Danto conjugates his two greatest loves in the philosophical dissertations he wrote on the role of art in his present day. In *After the End of Art,* dating back to 1998, he foresees possible developments of and solutions for present and future artistic forms. The philosopher has long been engaged in a reflection on the lifecycle of art, with special attention to its latest manifestations; most notably, in 1964 he declared the end of the narrative art. Andy Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*, exhibited at the Stable Gallery in New York City in that same year, made manifest how certain theories of art belie and inform the artworld, and put a firm end to the so-called imitation theory, keen on mimesis, on the grounds that it was replaced by the reality theory. From the 60's of last century onwards, new forms of art have prevailed on the stage, interweaving with new fields outside the realm of art per se, such as advertisement, architecture, all the way to multimedia and digital technologies.

According to Danto, the reason for this shift lies in a change in people's mindset. With highly-detailed and precise representations of reality made possible by the discovery and implementation of photography and film, the audience started to seek a new meaning in art.

This revolution affects the museum, the art institution by definition, which has been idealized as the place where people can have life-changing experiences and be spiritually elevated by looking at great art. Conceived as a place for delectation and education, the museum is justified in its existence by the simple possibility for contemplative conversions it offers. What is then the new meaning people are striving to find today? It is a meaning the current museum failed to convey, because it proved incapable of communicating on a personal level with its visitors, who are not interested in passively absorbing the beauty and perfection of museums masterpieces – a beauty they no longer recognize in their own lives. People seek an art which gives meaning to their own life. Yet, Danto affirms that the traditional museum dictated the works to collect

and display, following the hegemonies that shape the museum itself:

> these works don't communicate with the people, nor with the public time and space.

What could fulfill people's desire, according to Danto's opinion, is instead a community-based and participatory art:

> a means for breaking down the barriers of knowledge and for expanding the field of art.

People are tired of looking at what they have around, either inside or outside the museums, but nevertheless institutionally imposed as a form of art. In his writing, Danto proposed the example of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981) in Foley Federal Plaza in Manhattan, New York, as an act of forced colonization of public space 'under the veto of the *curatoriat*' (Danto 1998, 181) (which is quite different from the concept of *curatorial* as a space for different individuals' affective relations the curator takes care of, by configuring a sentimental sphere in the exhibition itself rather than subordinating the visitors to an imposed explicative claim.

It is no coincidence that the root of the word, *cura*, comes from the Latin, and means 'care, concern') (Draddle and Martini 2017, 1).

Speaking of public space, the US boasts a great tradition of commemorative monuments in their cities:

> reading about the controversies caused by Serra's installation, I couldn't keep myself from thinking about the recent demolitions of some controversial public symbols in many American cities.

If we look back at history, it's easy to realize how destruction is the norm as a statement for rebellion, replacement of a previous ruling system and for many other political and cultural turnovers. The recent attacks on statues, for a great part witnesses (and banners) of colonial or segregationist periods, put into question our nations and societies. Statues represent the point of view of the dominant player:

> placed in public spaces, they claim that their version of history is the official one, and that they are the representatives of the identity of the place.

However, different communities sharing a same place can have different points of view on history and identity, and it is this discrepancy that has driven many to knock down statues which were symbols of oppression and slavery (the examples are many:

> one for all could be the removal of the statue of Confederate President Jefferson Davis in Richmond, Virginia, in July 2020).

However, here comes a second critical issue:

> what exactly is a community? Is it possible to define it?

Along the rise and consolidation of the new museology from the 80s onwards, museums started conducting audience development practices in order to better meet the public expectations. In order to identify their target, they started developing definitions and ideas of what a community can be. As clearly argued in the report developed by museum experts Peter Van Mensch and Léontine Meijer outlining communities may be perceived as an act of control within the heritage sector, which is 'dominated by a particular notion of community, one that overlooks the fact that representation of reality can have powerful effects on any group under construction', to the point that 'real life communities are not only misrecognized but misrepresentations of identity become institutionalized

in the heritage process'(Van Mensch and Meijer-Van Mensch 2015, 92). If on the one hand making clear what communities are is instrumental for achieving a high degree of participation in museums, on the other this practice offers no guarantee for equality between the represented communities, but can instead re-enact hegemonic and oppressive dynamics (Van Mensch and Meijer- Van Mensch 2015, 94).

To allow the participants themselves to design how they can take part in the museum activity is thus pivotal, and is emblematic of the ethics that today's museum wants to embody as a participatory and experimental hub. As a matter of fact, legislations and guidelines have spent many words on the activist approach museum should adopt in the face of social inequalities and environmental concerns (Van Mensch and Meijer-Van Mensch 2015, 104) emphasizing how the museum is an organization which rejects all forms of intolerance and discrimination, as confirmed by different ICOM and European conferences.[1] Bearing in mind such responsibility, the museum must never forget how much its collections, displays and interpretation have social effects and consequences.

The moral agency of the museum must thus confront new, dynamic societies, which can be seen as ever-changing melting pots of communities and organizations. Their identities are never limited entirely to stable and single segments of society or to a homogeneous cultural and historical background. They can be conceived as a continuous set of efforts made by a certain group of people to defend their actions -- actions through which to assign to themselves a common and shared identifying definition.[2] If we previously stated that the legitimation of the traditional museum derives from its moral power of spiritual elevation, in today's civil society museums are perceived as places for defining who people and communities are, to the point that museums justify their existence on the grounds that they play a major role in expressing, understanding, developing and preserving the objects, values and savoir-faire that civil society gives importance to and on which it depends (Karp 1992, 5).

However, I believe that if the museum aims at acting as a social agent within society, it must challenge its own presumptions and beliefs which can be stereotyped or imposed from above by other state institutions. More than a harmless mosaic, civil society is an arena in which different values struggle for being legitimized. The museum, by its very nature of a repository of knowledge and principles, represents and corroborates ideas about art, science, taste, legacy, and society at large, by displaying them in accordance with the extent to which they are essential or marginal to the consistency and identity of its collections and communities. Given that museums have such a prominence within our society, they can be identified as (at least partially) responsible for negative tendencies such as discrimination and injustice:

> the museum is not immune from a continuous self-questioning about its coherence and its mission.

A moral dilemma arises when the social responsibilities museums have with regard to communities are acknowledged:

> how to manage the communities' wish for representation on the museum stage? What if a request by one community oppresses another group? Furthermore, who is the actual spokesman of a given community? Are all demands equally valid? (Karp 1992, 10).

1. For a more in-depth analysis, Draddle, Barnaby and Martini, Federica. 2017. "Sentimental Museography". *Studies of Visual Arts and Communication: an International Journal 4*, no. 1: 2-11.

2. See the *Cultural Diversity Charter* adopted by the ICOM in 2010 after the 25th General Assembly, or the ICOM Rio 2013 General Conference, titled *Museum (Memory + Creativity) = Social Change*. More recently, during an ICOM conference in 2019, a debate occurred around the definition of 'museum', to further stress the democratic and inclusive approach museums should adopt.

The museum experience is supposed to be private and personally transforming, as Danto clearly suggests when presenting Adam Verver, the main character of Henry James's novel *The Golden Bowl*.

Communities are the setting in which the skills for appreciating museums are acquired, but museums' audiences belong to many communities, often simultaneously, who seek to influence and control the acting and behavior of the museum. Communities are engaged in a struggle over identity, which is measured to the degree to which they are accorded an 'official' representation in the social space (Karp 1992, 14).

This gives a reason to the embroilment of museums in communities' competition for self-definition and representation. A clear focal point is that the terms of personal, cultural identity and community must be considered as dynamic concepts:

> within this frame, how can we begin to understand what the most significant features of a certain community are, and how to transpose them in museums? (Davis 2007, 53-75).

At this point, I believe it can be beneficial to take into consideration some insights on the concept of space in order to link my arguments back to Danto's considerations on the end of art. What communities and museums, which are in the very first place buildings,[3] share is a connection to a certain location. Starting from the (truthful) assumption that, by watching the physical context, events and heritage in all their complexity can be better understood, the physical place deserves a deep observation, as it has been carried out in the realm of phenomenological architecture by Christian Norberg-Schulz. For the purpose of my argument here, I'm keen on taking into account how the architect describes the notion of space and place as concrete things and systems of relations.

Furthermore, I will turn later on to the phenomenological aspect, as experience has a great relevance in Danto's arguments as well.

I will instead leave out the architectural part treated by Schultz, as it is not immediately relevant to this paper. Physical places are part of everyday life, where relations and exchanges take place; they are denoted by a specific character, an atmosphere which fits certain actions or experiences; at the same time places themselves are a concrete and perceptual entity. A place, as argued by professor of Museology Peter Davis in one of his contributions, is "a web of understanding between people and the environment, between people and their neighbors, between people and their history" (Davis 2007, 70). People build structures where to make experiences to complement what is missing in nature and to symbolize their understanding of nature itself. Common Ground uses the term 'local distinctiveness' to indicate what makes a specific geographical area special. To Common Ground local distinctiveness is about everywhere, not just beautiful places:

> it is about details, patina [fragments of previous lives and landscapes] and meaning, the things which create identity [...] it is about accumulation and assemblages ... accommodation and change (Davis 2007, 70).

This same 'local distinctiveness' is what, according to Schulz, people want to throw light on when they contribute to making the place character manifest: in this way a person concretizes their *imago mundi.*

The existential purpose of architecture is indeed to make a location a place, which means, for Schulz, to uncover the meanings potentially present

3. A striking consideration on the fluidity of the concept of identity can be found in Stuart, Hall. 1990. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In *Identity, culture, difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, 222-237. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

in the given environment. To feel truly in a place, one needs to be able to identify and locate himself or herself:

> this relation is named 'dwelling'[4] (Norberg-Schulz 1980, 5) and takes place when one feels at home in a given environment, where architecture has adopted and brought forth the essential characteristics of a place, concretizing its *genius loci*.

The *genius loci* manifests the identity of the human settlement, and it indicates the condition in which people perceive the place as experience, with an awareness of all the interconnections between different identifying elements. In the modern human-made place, the *genius loci* ought to comprise the spirit of the locality and a general interest coming from the necessity to communicate with other different places.

Within the boundaries of the modern settlement, man seeks a meaningful experience which entails sharing the characteristics of a given place, while feeling located and open to the world at the same time. But what happens when a historical, social, political change occurs? In order to preserve the *genius loci*, the human settlements need to be treated as individual places, where living tradition can be kept up thanks to a creative participation conducted by the people living in that same place.

Such participation means to concretize the basic meanings of a place under the ever-changing new circumstances. It requires labor, the capacity of seeing these meanings and of being sympathetic with them in order to set and preserve the basis for dwelling.

Finally, looking back at Danto's consideration about the end of art and the twenty-first-century quest for a new meaning, I'd like to draw a parallel which points out the prominence of experience in the dynamics I've sketched out so far. The same need people try to fulfill in modern cities, namely getting the experience of a sense of recognition and identification, is the same urgency felt by the visitors of Danto.

Being maker and participant of such a fulfilling experience could resolve the incapacity reported by Danto, according to whom museums fall short in talking to a multicultural America, insofar as they are incapable of identifying and feeling sympathetic to people's identity. People are thirsty for meaning in the form of a lively fount rather than a static dispenser of knowledge. An emancipation toward a community-based art production occurred in the context of an exhibition Danto mentions, *Culture in action,* a public art program which took place in Chicago in 1993, featuring eight different projects where the process of collaboration became as important as the final result. The question around the definition of community remains a central contemporary issue, to the point that it has been selected as the central focus of the sixteenth Italy-based *Giornata del Contemporaneo* (the Day of Contemporary Art), which occurred on 5 December 2020. Among the many proposals delivered by the member institutions, Kunst Merano Merano Arte has launched the project by artist Barbara Gamper, together with black feminist activist Fouzia Wamaitha Kinyanjui, *At the point of subversion (constituting the new normal)* (Gamper and Kinyanjui 2020). Intertwining artistic and activist practices, the project sets up a dialogue which challenges power sharing, and questions the identity of who is asking questions, on whose behalf, and of who is answering. A question naturally follows:

> how to give voice to the silent and neglected ones? The project takes the shape of a video which combines different

4. Christian Norberg Schulz, Genius Loci. Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture, p.5. The author admits he owes the word 'dwelling' to the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who has also been fundamental for linking the concept of 'experience' to the idea and purpose of architecture. 'Man dwells when he can orientate himself within and identify himself with an environment or, in short, when he experiences the environment as meaningful'.

modes of expression.

On the one hand, multiple voices speak in different languages, scattering a sense of both belonging and exclusion in the public, depending on whether they be familiar or not with the language spoken; on the other, a bodily performative voice is enacted by the artist.

The video aims at establishing a starting point for a broader task which intends to be inclusive and participatory, and to reflect on the ideas of community, individuality, people's rights and accountability. In conclusion, in front of the demand for meaning people presented in the 90s with Danto as well as in nowadays society, I argued that a possible answer can lie in a sense of belonging to the *genius loci*. In particular, a solution could be that of ensuring and activating actions and policies in order to protect and preserve the local distinctiveness of a place, by entitling people to take care of it, starting from the local folk. Both in Danto's vision on current museums and codified art, and in Schulz's opinion on man as immersed in an environment, experience acts as the mechanism thanks to which people do feel represented and identified, both as individuals and as a part of a larger community. Given this realization that communities do indeed deserve to be part of the artistic production, be it institutionalized or not, I believe the consequent benefit can be twofold.

The communities would develop and strengthen a proper sense of self-identity, without stepping over other groups, being aware of and respecting diversities; moreover, people would feel more curious and encouraged to protect, preserve and share knowledge about the places they live in. In the Kunst Merano clip different streams of communication are put into action, where the current dominant rules of power are reversed as the speechless white body seems to move and obey to the background voice speaking in Swahili and Kikuyu. White supremacy stands as a superimposed dogma, against which voices of many communities are doomed to crush if things keep staying the same. "Any change requires the break-up of the world as one has always known it; the loss of all that gave one an identity, the end of safety":

the video ends with this quote by James Baldwin, who has greatly dealt with identity and its implications.

Similarly, all the art which doesn't speak to the people, far away from their present time but still attached to an already dead artworld, is a legacy we need to question, and, if necessarily (according to Danto this was for the case of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arch* indeed), to remove. Can the same be the case for the torn-down statues all around the US and in other former colonialist countries? That is hard to say, but, as the last shot of the video shows, this is just episode 1.

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THE AMERICAN DISPLAY OF PERIOD ROOMS

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> *The period room recreates the totality of a room and all its contents as it was furnished and used by its original occupant, or as it is likely to have been equipped and lived in at the time* (Parr 1963, 335).

This quote from Albert Parr's article is a good and clear definition of the particular museum practice called *period rooms*. This kind of museum display has developed during the XIX century and has known a moment of success and diffusion at the beginning of the XX century, in particular in the US.

The American use of the period rooms is the object of Edward P. Alexander's essay *Artistic and Historical Period Rooms*, director of the Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. The director studies the applications of period rooms in American museums and, in doing so, it is possible to understand the fundamental characteristics of this museum practice and the issues that it raises. This essay from 1964 provides us with some points of reflection that are still relevant today, not only on period rooms, why are again considered valuable nowadays after a period of indifference in the second half of the XX century, but also to museography in general. His analysis starts with the three main sources of the American preservation movement: the first one "stressed the importance of saving the major structures of a nation's culture" (Alexander 1964, 263) and was developed in France during the 1830s by Eugène Emanuel Viollet-le-Duc, who taught the relevance of preserving a historical building as an inspiration source for the future generations. The second source is represented by folk museums or ethnographic parks such as the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm founded by Artur Hazelius in 1873, which we are going to analyze in the following paragraphs.

The last one is related to the idea of preserving historical houses for educational and patriotic purposes and it was developed in the US. For this last source, Alexander mentions the case of the Mount Vernon Museum in Virginia which until 1910 was arranged by the Vice Regents of the Ladies' Association who:

> *relied upon her judgment in furnishing the room in her charge, and unfortunately this was in "a day of taste unadulterated by knowledge* (Alexander 1964, 264).

This example makes us think of a specific problem inherent to period rooms: authenticity. The authenticity of this display is not only related to the presence in the same room of objects produced in the same period, but also to their arrangements. If a museum installation is intended to give to visitors an idea of a Banquet Hall in 1899 (to quote an example that the author gives; Alexander 1964, 264), it must be presented after extensive research of documents and inventory, and all the furniture and objects must be arranged according to the period's taste rather than the contemporary one. Still, the most emblematic American case is the one linked to George Francis Dow, the secretary of the Essex Institute at Salem in Massachusetts. In 1907, the Institute presented three-period rooms: a New England kitchen from 1750, a parlor, and a bedroom from 1800. The display was based on precise and accurate research that aimed to give the room an "illusion of daily occupancy" (Pilgrim 1978, 8) However, to fulfil this illusion, besides all the historical research, Dow decided to

use some reproductions, which in the end betrayed his intent to have a historical and authentic room. Anyway, the case of the Essex Institute proved to be inspirational for other museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of New York, that, in 1909, began displaying and realizing expositions dedicated to American furniture and everyday objects.

This interest in *Americana* culminated into the opening of the American Wing in 1924: a wing of the museum that has continued to widen its collection of historical rooms throughout the years.

We must remember that period rooms experienced moment of criticism by curators and art historians from the end of WWII until the 1980s. As a matter of fact, one registered in this period:

> *Le désintérêt pour les questions de décor, la fascination croissante exercée par les grands chefs-d'œuvre et la prédilection pour la mise en valeur d'objets détachés de tout contexte nuisirent aux ensembles décoratifs et aux présentations contextuelles.* (Dassas 2018, 151)

This means that it is quite odd that the Metropolitan continued, during this quiet phase (Montebello 1996, 10), to enrich its collection of period rooms even though a new museum practice, the White Cube, took the scene. Such a curatorial choice could be seen as wise today, since period rooms return nowadays to be reevaluated by experts because of their ability to immerse visitors into another historical period and for their educational purposes. On the second source of the American preservation movement, Alexander mentions the pioneering case of the ethnographic museum founded by Hezielius in 1873, the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm. The main goal of this museum was to show the everyday life of the Scandinavian people, to "stimulate the national sentiment to the visitors" (Poulot 2009, 36). This aim is linked to another characteristic of period rooms: to augment the pride of citizens about their past.

As a matter of fact, through this type of setting, visitors have the opportunity to "immerse themselves" into their nation's past and get to know the most eminent personalities, and admire the elegance and the beauty of the artisanal production of the past. In connection to the figure of Hezelius, there is also the foundation in Skansen of an open-air museum, that must be considered as a branch of the Nordiska Museet.

This project is considered a turning point for museum practice because the concept of period rooms was here applied to the outdoors: Hazelius realized a Swedish village of the pre-industrialization period with the possibility of seeing all the activities of the time.

Hazelius who had already used mannequins in his period rooms to give a perception of reality, tried to heighter the feeling of realness by using, in this case, guides in costume who walked visitors around, and illustrated the daily routine of that period as well as the different crafts (Pilgrim 1978, 6). The presence of guides in costume can be considered a good way to transmit knowledge and notions without breaking the illusion of being in the past. It is important to underline this early educational intent in this new type of setting. Indeed, education is strictly linked to the display of period rooms, since when they were first developed at the end of the XIX century, they were used, as well as to teach about a national glorious past, to show a past artisanal "saper fare" (Costa 2016, 37). In

this way, period rooms became a place of formation and education not only for the general public but also for new craftworkers during the industrial era. Alexander concludes with the topic that gives the title to his essay: the difference between artistic and historical period rooms.

This distinction is typical of American period rooms, which developed during the first decades of the XX century (Alexander 1964, 272). The artistic period room has an aesthetic goal: it aims to enlighten the beauty of the single objects displayed and to generally the cultural period. It is quite common that, in this particular typology of installation, for curators to put more objects "than any room of the period would have actually possessed" (Alexander 1964, 273), to stress the presentation's beauty and taste more than to give an authentic and faithful depiction of the room. To better understand this typology, we can report the example of the author of the Westmoreland County Museum of Art at Greensburg, Pennsylvania, where facsimile Victorian wallpaper was used, and the objects' arrangements was guided by the taste of the director of the museum and his collaborator (Alexander 1964, 276).

Besides, in the historical period rooms, the aim is to provide a room with all the accessories, furniture, and objects that would have been present there at the time it was lived and used. To do so, curators have to search through inventories, documentation, and catalogs to find some evidence of the presence of certain objects and their location in the room.

> ***For its stricter standard of authenticity,*** [***the historical period room***] ***may display fewer objects than the artistic period room and will probably be furnishing objects of the earlier periods because homes often contain and mingle material from several periods*** (**Alexander, 1964, 276**).

With this last quote, the author allows us to make a series of reflections: what is the most essential quality of a period room? Its authenticity or its beauty? The artistic period room appears to be driven by the setting concept of *varietas* setting concept: through the variety of objects displayed and their artistic quality and value, curators are trying to enchant visitors.

The second typology identified by Alexander instead seems to follow a completely different concept: that of *decorum* or clarity, in which the main aim is educational. In both cases, another factor emerges that must be considered when we are talking about period rooms: the fruition of artworks. In a museum room such as the reconstruction of a private room, it is difficult for a visitor to admire and analyze objects displayed in their entirety. For this reason, the historical period room could be considered more valid than the other one because it displayed fewer objects, and this gives the possibility to appreciate everything without getting lost in the variety of things presented by the artistic period rooms.

But what is the main purpose of a period room? Is it to impress or to educate the public? And is it possible to do so with an archaeological goal? These questions are still valid today, more than ever, since this type of display is once again fashionable in our contemporary museums, with the double aim of letting visitors "immerse into the past" and of producing amusement. It can be said that the problems of fruition and

authenticity might be solved by the use of technological devices, such as augmented reality (AR), which could allow visitors to learn about the history of single objects while also recognizing if there are elements added to the room that are not related to that specific period.

Regarding this last topic, we can mention the case of the Bandini Icon: an application realized in 2016 for the Bandini Museum in Fiesole, Italy.[1] It was realized with the aim of providing visitors a more entertaining museum experience. The app works by being pointed to the artworks displayed; the camera takes a picture of the object and lets elements such as videos and insights appears on the smartphone's display.

This allows visitors to obtain those pieces of information that would be too boring to read from a panel and, furthermore, to access additional info, such as the previous conservation status of an artwork, and see the differences between before and after the restoration. Using technological devices inside a period room can also be, in some cases, the only way to see an object. In fact, some museums do not allow visitors to walk around the room, but only to see it behind a fence or a rope.

This curatorial choice is explained by the need for protection for the objects displayed, but it damages the illusion of immersion and complete fruition of the room. In brief, the essay of Edward P. Alexander gives, through several examples, an idea of the evolution of the American use of the period room. This type of installation implies different types of complications that caused its neglect during the second half of the XX century.

First, there is a problem of authenticity not only in relation to the artworks but also to their arrangement. Second, the difficulty of fruition of the objects displayed led art historians and curators to move on to another type of museum practice: the White cube.

This particular display was theorized by Brian O'Doherty in 1976 (O'Doherty 1976) and spread immediately all around the world. It was considered a better display strategy than the historical setting since it allowed an increased valorization of the masterpieces displayed, while isolating them from the rest of the artworks displayed, as well as clearer fruition of the single objects. However, at the beginning of the XXI century, museum directors and researchers have started to reconsider the period rooms as valuable museum installations because of their potential in combining education and amusement, which could be also implemented by the use of technology, such as AR.

1 https://www.museidifiesole.it/cat-it/informazioni/app-bandini-icon

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PERFORMANCE AND CONTEMPORARY MUSEUMS

How performance could solve the oxymora of the visitor

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In Valerie Casey's opinion, the performances' introduction in contemporary museums was due to the needs of the new contemporary viewer (Casey 2005). In fact, the contemporary spectator, not only the one involved in the museum but also the visitor of a festival, or, more simply, a web page, gradually changed his status, from passive content consumer to active participant in the creation process. Ruggero Eugeni pointed out a neologism, defining this new postmodern spectator as a *prosumer* (Eugeni 2015):

> a person who is both consumer and producer of contents.

The improvement of new devices like smartphones, personal computers, and tablets, allows each of us to create our own productions, thanks also to the more and more widespread social networks, through which it is possible to share and publish content, building our own little hall of fame.

This recent conviction of being able to create and to display our production is based on the cult of individuals born in the 20th century, when this new type of participant viewer had fostered a new consciousness of the self. How is the role of the museum changing in this complex context in which people are inserted into a network of information and can play an alternatively passive and active role in our cultural production? Casey focuses on the role of performances, spectacles, and reenactments as occasions for keeping the visitor's attention and letting him actively take part in museum projects. While in traditional museums, the visit is the presentation of a series of objects, contemporary museums started to be organized in order to provide a special experience (Casey 2005), a real *ambiance* (Bégot 2020) in which people live in a one-time situation. The French neologism *ambience*, born at the end of the 19th century, could surely be used to define the visitor situation inside museums:

> Bruce Bégout defines these conditions as "climats affectifs qui imprègnent toutes les situations de la vie."[1]

1. "affective climates which saturate all the situations of life." (Bégout 2020, 14)

In the contemporary museum, it has become more and more important to offer the visitor an *ambiance*, a place to have an intimate relationship with objects, a personal experience in an *endroit* erected in culture and history. Each visitor will have a unique moment, depending on space, time, enjoyment, humor. As Casey points out:

> ***Today's museum installations give greater attention to the visitor's perceptual and aesthetic experiences*** [...], ***rather than the former attention given to presenting an authoritative cultural narrative*** [...] (Casey 2005).

The author argues that museums have always been elaborate staging, and that performance can open up the museal experience, rather than disrupting the objects' contemplative circuit. She organized the development of performance in museums in three different categories:

> the legislated museum, the interpreting meaning museum, and the orchestrated museum.

The first category took as an example Schinkel's design for the Altes Museum, based on some traits which will become distinctive of modern museums:

> monumentality, spatial hierarchy, and cultural authority.

The display of the objects and the organization of the architectural space

resemble a theatrical scenography, in which the visitor performs a dramatic piece:

> the architecture guides the viewer in experiencing the objects, in a drama of active participation.

Visitors lived what Le Corbusier defined as *promenade architectural* (Bruno 2002, 58)*:*

> architecture engages seeing in relation to movement, making the visitor a literal *viewer* of the space, a *voyeur* who enjoys the staging to better experience museum objects.

In this way, the organization of space is *legislated* in the sense that the Altes Museum provides an obligatory and well-defined display to create a specific experience. Through his walking in the architectural space, the visitor creates his own intimate story, his hagiographic tale:

> he is a pilgrim wandering in the space-time of the museum, admiring the objects along a defined route.

The path itself is narrativized:

> the itinerary of the tourist-pilgrim makes "stories out of spatial trajectories and itineraries out of stories" (Bruno 2002, 62).

People in the modern city are always tourists:

> the impossibility of knowing the space deeply, always in *panta rei,*[2] and the emergence of completely living the time, make citizens eternal *flâneurs* (Trione 2014).

They are meandering in the constantly changing city, unable to find order in the entropy of streets, shops, noises, lights, visual stimuli. As well in a video montage, they deal with a multiplicity of perspectives, "traveling shots" (Bruno 2002, 62) which offer different points of view and rhythms:

> they are pilgrims of the city's "cinematic architecture" (Bruno 2002, 62).

The museum could be the natural continuation of the city's disorder, or it could be the occasion to follow a prepared plan, a comforting defined path, for one time created by someone else, with beginning and ending.

From this first role of legislating meaning and contents, the museum changed, also because of the growing importance of curators' role, focusing on interpreting meaning. Museum professionals started reflecting on the significance of culture, history, geography, and all the themes a museum's collection affords. In this different context, a new museum was born, focusing on the importance of the curatorial role of interpretation. To appeal to an advanced audience, which normally deals with media and communication strategies, museums started employing interactive tools and technologies based on different media.

The aim is to create a special immersive environment that shows the interpretation of the subject by curators and makes the visitors aware of the research behind the staging.[3] As previously defined, the postmodern viewer needs to be at the center of the museum scene; the *prosumer* finds comfort in his "inner stage:

> He is actor and director, spectator and participant. This is only one of the reasons which brought to the development of the third museum analyzed by Casey: the orchestrated museum.

The confluence of two elements changed the way of staging museums:

> first, the spectator's need to have self-reflection; second, the

2. *Panta Rei* means a never-ending change. It is a philosophical expression attributed to Heraclitus that probably takes origins from one of the most famous Plato's dialogues, the *Cratylus* (5th-4th century b.c.), in which the main character says that you cannot step into the same river twice because the river is always changing and the water you touch couldn't be the same twice (Blackburn, 2008).

3. According to Casey, "in the contemporary museum, the visitor does not experience the object, but the performance of the object," so the way in which there are exposed (Casey 2005, 85).

4. Consumer's personal way of seeing. He/ Sherequires custom-made contents to satisfy a specific demand (McLuhan 1951, 97).

> emergence of having performance displayed in museums as an autonomous object that can be subject to criticism.

The author focused on the live programming of the Colonial Williamsburg Museum, which provides a living version of the capital of Virginia in 1699.

It offers a unique opportunity to fully live the history and lets visitors play a role in it as an active participant in the museum environment (*Colonial Williamsburg Official Site*, N.d.). Lots of actors and actresses are involved in the program:

> they speak to visitors as real personages of the city, building an overall narration.

In this performance, spectators are also performers because they are really involved in a sort of *inverted spectacle* (Casey 2005, 87), in which they can read their own role in this orchestrated past. Jacques Rancière, in his essay, *The Emancipated Spectator*, points out the paradox of the spectator (Rancière 2007):

> there are no theatre-less spectators, but at the same time their role is considered passive, almost useless.

He argues that there could be two different relations between the spectator, who is passively viewing, and the performer, who is actively showing. There could be *stultification*:

> the two bits of intelligence are unequal, they are put in a hierarchical situation in which the spectator plays no role.

On the other hand, there could be *emancipation*:

in a situation of equality of intelligence, in which the theatre is a community, the spectator is an active participant of the show, which provokes him, stimulating his critical attention. The final advice of the author is to reject borders, blurring hierarchies:

> between disciplines, between actor and spectator, between consumer and producer, and, of course, between museum and audience. Also, in land artist Robert Smithson's opinion:

> ***Actually, our older museums*** [...] ***were ripped out of total artistic structures, given a whole new classification and then categorized. The categorization of art into painting, architecture, and sculpture seems to be one of the most unfortunate things that happened. All these categories are now splintering into even more categories, like an interminable avalanche of categories*** (Flam 1967, 43–51).

The role of the performance inside the museum could really break down boundaries and visitors could have a role in the production of their own culture and history, which too often seems to be on a distant plan. Culture and history are definitely part of people themselves, who need to feel a sense of belonging when entering a museum's doors.

The enormous distance often perceived in cultural and artistic places is a check on cultural progress and development. How could performance revolutionize this feeling of sacral distance?

First of all, like in the legislated museum, the mythology of the modern museum could be decoded by the viewer thanks to the display (Casey 2005, 89). Second , it could be differently presented through the interpreting meaning of contemporary curators:

> the right to evaluate contents, to change the hierarchical

> modern order, and to critically analyse archives, became possible thanks to the contemporary deconsecrating viewpoint on museums.

In particular, as Rancière points out, a less hierarchical overture in addressing issues , is at the foundation of critically interpreting sources. Third, the case of the Colonial Williamsburg Museum proves a new method:

> we can testify to our past, saving traditions, in an interactive way that puts at the center the museum's performance, instead of objects.

Furthermore, in the 70s, performance began to affirm itself as a new expressive and artistic medium, becoming today a common form of a work of art. Of course, this involves new storytelling, an ephemeral artwork that cannot be simply "exposed," but definitely staged. Performances offer the visitor a one-time piece of art, inscribed in the museum's context.

Performance could be the occasion of creating a specific museum event, as with *Urgent* Dance in 1996, in which Marina Abramovich performed an Argentinian tango with the director of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Ghent (SMAK), Jan Hoet (Baele, 2012).

In this case, the performance was the occasion both for organizing a special event, and for showing the collaboration between the artist and a member of the museum institution. For the occasion, there were very strict rules for the 450 participants, who really took part in the dance, which became a community performance (Abramovic, 2014). Here, visitors were involved directly in contemporary art:

> they were asked to learn the dance, and to dress in a specific way to actively perform the piece.

On the other hand, performances could be inserted into the classic museum environment in an unexpected way. An example could be the performance (almost a happening) organized by Martin Creed in 2008 at Tate Britain.The artwork, called work no. 850, consisted of people running in the Neoclassical gallery every 40 seconds (Martin Creed's Work No. 850 | TateShots, 2008). The gallery was a perfect "theatre" for the Tate runners, who performed the movement of art, the "living" experience of art, opposite to death (*Tate.org,* 2008). In this case, performance is an occasion to activate the attention of viewers on a normal day of museum visiting. As Creed said:

> The experience of looking at a painting is always an alive one (*Martin Creed's Work No. 850 | TateShots*, 2008).

He highlights this concept through his work: as also Casey said, we are creating a personal path of time and space when moving into museum architecture. Furthermore, he definitely wanted to create a sense of estrangement, a funny situation in which to discuss the apparently static role of the museum. Performance is definitely changing museums:

> it could be a communication strategy to better display objects in space; it could be the performance of curators interpreting the meanings of these objects; it could be a way to represent the past and let the visitors live it; it could be an artwork which involves the museum's space in different ways.

> ***There was once an art which was conceived for the museums, and the fact that the museums look like mausoleums may actually reveal to us the attitude we've had***

> ***to art in the past. It was a form of paying respect to the dead*** **(Flam 1967, 43–51).**

This was said by Allan Kaprow in 1967, more than half a century ago. Is performance revolutionizing this viewpoint on museums? How could the museum's future be? Will the performance have a role in it?

According to Peter Weibel, there are three possible paths for the museum's development (Weibel and Buddensieg 2007, 30-32). First of all, museums will still rely on permanent collections, on their potential and continuity. "The time-based variants of contemporary art already represent a departure from collections that were object-based and space dependent," and museums will not move far away from that.

Secondly, the globalization of contemporary art will more and more be reflected in different forms of collections, depending on geographical and local activities. Lastly, museums will move from the role of mausoleums, and spaces for object exhibitions, to temporary events. Ephemeral activities, such as performances, will keep museums "alive," even if they will never materialize in a collection. Therefore, different forms of performances which involve the postmodern viewer in museum activities will probably assure the presence of an interested public and an active transmission of meanings.

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VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE AS SUBJECT

Emerging Trends in Audience Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Starting from the article *Designing 'Critical' Heritage Experiences: Immersion, Enchantment and Autonomy* by Colin Sterling, this paper wants to analyse the emergent solutions in cultural heritage experiences, underlining the common features. In particular, the notions of *Immersive* design by Kidd, the Bishop's idea of *Autonomy* and the aspect of *Enchantment* proposed by Perry.

The text wants to briefly illustrate an overview of the participatory experience practice, trying to depict the risks and values of visitors' engagement. Lastly, the paper will focus on Constructivism approach, taking as an example the itinerant exhibition *David Bowie is*, curated by Victoria and Albert Museum and hosted in the Museum of Modern Art of Bologna (MamBo) in 2016.

VISITOR'S EXPERIENCE AS SUBJECT

The article by Colin Sterling introduces the two-year research project *New Trajectories in Curatorial Experience Design* (Feb 19 - Jan 21), which aims to analyse the emerging trends in experiential design in the heritage field. During the past months, the research coordinated by Sterling explored how heritage thinking and practices in museums have embraced the immersive turn to enhance audience engagement and shape innovative experience design as a way to stimulate creativity, emotions, and active learning through participation and the use of digital support (Sterling 2020). One of the main aspects that emerged from this research is the importance of the visitor's experience in cultural heritage practices. Hassenzahl defines an experience as a story emerging from the dialogue of a person with her or his world through action (Hassenzahl 2013). His point of view can be linked to Pline and Gilmore's thought:

> nowadays, we live in the post-materialistic culture, customers are more oriented to experiment , they prefer meaningful engagement and activities rather than owning tangible objects.

In this way, the new *Experience Economy focuses* on the development of devices that create meaningful experiences for the users, shaping a dialogue between the object and the customer (Pline and Gilmore, 2011).

So, in such a panorama, *Experience Design* is a field of research that aims to provide a communicative exchange in which the customer has to act consciously, shaping his or her behaviour, in order to complete the device's task. According to those trends, Museums and Cultural Institutions noticed that their public has shown a willingness to pay for out-of-the-ordinary cultural encounters:

> this important consideration has driven institutions to invest in immersive experience practices.

Kidd tried to define what 'immersive' meant by referring to other scholars. For example, he quotes Nandita Dines, who describes immersive theatre as multi-sensorial encounters that privilege a participatory aesthetic.

Indeed, in his article *"Immersive" Heritage Encounter*, Kidd describes the immersive practice as story-led and audience-centred, multimodal, site-specific, and attuned to its environment (Kidd 2018). Furthermore, he refers to many case studies. In particular, he mentions

The Lost Palace, an interactive experience commissioned by Historic Royal Palace that ran over the summers of 2016 and 2017. The experience was a combination of immersive audio theatre, interactive technology, architectural installations, and performance. Visitors had a wooden device, connected to headphones, which guided them through the streets of London. 90% of visitors rated the technology used as very useful and impactive for its storytelling power and practical fruition (Rosier 2018). To summarize , the immersive approach provides a communicative and interactive experience and creates a narrative dimension that technological devices might support. So, visitors are invited to enjoy and complete the story-led part with their subjective and conscious actions, as Hassenzahl underlines when talking about the purpose of *Experience Design*. Sterling also quotes Dewey's idea of the experience.

In one of his masterpieces, *Art as Experience,* Dewey defines it as the result of the interactions between the individual and the environment in which, through his sensations, he or she directly participates. In other words, the participatory act turns into communication only when the material object is used as a vehicle to create meaning (Dewey 1934).

The artistic experience has an aesthetic value given by the individual that brings together an intellectual part, which provides the meaning, and a practical approach. These aspects create the streams of emotions and feelings that fulfill the experience, creating in the visitor a sense of wholeness. The relationship between art and aesthetic experience is controversial, but Dewey believes that art can be used as a tool to improve community sense of awareness and unity thanks to experiences which help build meaningful states of existence.

Regarding this social function of art, Bishop introduces a reflection on the *Social Turn* of contemporary art:

> since '90, the art world has been characterised by the research for a renewed relationship among artists, objects, and the public that no longer considers the latter as a mere spectator, but as a co-producer.

So, participatory art is perceived as a way to bring positive social change (Bishop 2012). Starting from this assumption, Bishop attempts to study this approach by taking into consideration the risks of moralising art by promoting ethical criteria toward impersonal interactions that turn into norms to judge art. Further to this point, Rancière talks about *aisthesis*, which is the perception of artistic culture that each individual builds up.

In this sense, aesthetic perception should always be considered as linked to the viewer's own ethic. Indeed, feelings of enjoyment or dissatisfaction are dependent on the autonomy of one's personal experience and the interpretation of art (Bishop 2012). In other words, the desire to engage the public in participatory art is a call to emancipate it from a state of self-suppression and social obligation, induced by the dominant ideological order. Therefore, as well as in politics, feelings like discomfort, contradiction, euphoria, and absurdity are crucial for the artistic experience in order to have a constructive impact on the audience.

Hence, in each type of art that involves people as vehicles , the aesthetic of the experience lies in the subjective perception of participants who autonomously shape their behaviour according to their personal ethics. In this sense, Jeremy Deller's re-enactment of *The Battle of Orgreave*, on June 17th, 2001, should be noteworthy. The 1984 political

miners' strike has been re-imagined as a participatory experience with a social and artistic resonance:

> the artist described this project as a historical painting of the working class which represents both historical awareness and political labor.

As the feature-length film by Mike Figg shows, *The Battle of the Orgreave combines* violence with entertainment:

> the visual and the dramatic characters are caught in the expression of emotions based on genuine social interactions and emotive involvement (Bishop 2012).

Back to Cultural Institutions, they are facing the issue that Bishop underlined, trying to think of the audience first, discovering approaches for the development of interactive exhibitions that are aimed at the making of meaning rather than aesthetic contemplation. This purpose involves a rethinking of the relationship between museums, visitors, and their learning process. Since cultural institutions are now considered part of the *Experience Economy*, they've invested in the development of displays and experiences that are willing to create what Witcomb called *Dialogical Interactivity* (Witcomb 2006). In order to build a dialogue not influenced by the invisible power of institutions that may affect the audience's autonomy, dialogical interactive exhibitions try to involve visitors by using an open-ended narrative and by providing spaces in which they can perceive themselves as part of the story (suiting the Kidd's notion of immersive experience), giving them the possibility to complete the meaning with a ective and aesthetic responses (Witcomb 2015).

Emotional engagement plays a fundamental role in this process and Perry tries to describe how it works by referring to *Archeological Enchantment* (Perry 2019). Emotion-oriented research is already a broad field in cultural heritage, and enchantment has been experimented with in order to promote ethically-minded actions by visitors.

One of the main study cases that Perry mentions is the European Project *EMOTIVE*, a three-year- research project (from 2016 to 2019) that investigates how emotional engagement in heritage might produce social conscience and welfare. This initiative matches the participatory values already mentioned involving digital technologies such as chatbots, 3D paintings, apps, and VR. Digital interfaces are used to provoke conversations and physical interactions among visitors, but their use as facilitators has a double feature:

> on one hand, digital media, if applied superficially, replicates the institution's invisible power , on the other hand, it can work along with the logic of *Experience Design* that Hassenzahl explained: by engaging visitors and shaping their behaviour.

Even if Sterling doesn't clearly mention it, there is a fill-rouge that runs through all the positions that he discusses:

> the *Constructivism* approach. Austin, describing the constructivist position, wrote that we construct our identities starting from the interaction among self, others, and the world, so people incorporate events into personal narratives and consequently rationalise experiences as an ongoing story.

In other words, everyone is constructing a self-narrative at all times (Austin 2018). As such, the narrative environment of an exhibition should be considered as a way to communicate with visitors, and since they are

asking more and more for non-ordinary experiences, exhibition designers should focus on a multisensory union of space and time to communicate implicitly the story-led (Sterling 2019). There isn't a strict line dividing the psychical space from the individual's mental perception.

Therefore, the exhibition path is a promenade in which the visitor catches the narration and completes it with his or her personal story. This means the spectator becomes the subject who's looking for his/her own expression in the narration's space. Toward emotive stimulation and an engaging immersive display, visitors participate in an aesthetic and relevant experience, building their personal meanings and learning through dialogical interaction. A relevant example of this kind of exhibition is *Their Mortal Remains*, a blockbuster project curated by the Victoria and Albert Museum that ran from 13 May 2017 to 15 October 2017.

The exhibition showed the development of the Pink Floyd band with chronological accounts. The display was conceived by Stufish Entertainment Architects, founded by Mark Fisher, known for combining architecture, theater, and music to create a total experience.

The first half of the exhibition was thought to evoke the beginning of the journey of the band so, it was composed mainly of tunnel rooms that recalled the psychedelic aesthetic, while the second part was highly theatrical with scenographic projections and effect (Austin 2019). The immersive approach was set up thanks to several choices, like the video screen, graphic information, photos, and objects. Moreover, each visitor was given headphones that played Pink Floyd music and explanations. One last experience worth mentioning is the itinerant exhibition *David Bowie,* hosted by the Museum of Modern Art of Bologna (MamBo) from 14 July to 13 November in 2016 (Comune di Bologna, 2016). The exhibition debuted for the first time in 2013 at the Victoria and Albert Museum and was aimed at showing to the audience the path of the musician from the beginning of his career to the end of his life.

The collection exhibited was composed of a selection of more than sixty items belonging to Bowie, plus original costumes and pieces of paper written by Bowie himself (Victoria and Albert Museum 2013). The display created an immersive environment with storyboards with 3D special effects, light installations, and a screen to reproduce his concerts. Moreover, headphones were provided to the visitors to let them listen to the most famous songs of the singer in chronological order. In this spatial narrative form, visitors followed the narrative path, discovering step by step Bowie's career and the personal life development of the artist (MamBo 2016). Each space communicated with the next one, without allowing the viewer to see the room that was about to come:

> in order to maintain the surprise, the so-called 'enchantment', effect.

The journey inside the story-led was guided through technological interactions and music that provided an immersive ambient and emotive transport. The whole experience was a narrative environment that helped visitors to discover David Bowie's life toward a multisensorial display where he became the subject seeking the object, discovering and constructing his own meanings. David *Bowie* followed the same structure of *Their Mortal Remains,* representing a successful example of *Experience Design* in the heritage field, and it received more than 130.511 visitors in Bologna (Santacatterina 2016). Sterling concludes his article by quoting

Kidd. According to him, those new practices should be considered as the next step of Museology and exhibition-making. Despite the fairly standardised experience that cultural institutions propose in their spaces (Sterling 2020), the actual exhibition design takes into account the challenge of providing a truly dynamic moment to the individual, which, nevertheless, balances entertainment with education.

Therefore, audience participation and experience design need to be studied in order to structure a method that will expand and experiment with the models mentioned above, redefining a conceptual framework for a heritage experience based on autonomy and interaction.

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THE ART OF DETRIBALIZE ART

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Danto's essay *Museum and the Thirsting Millions* is part of a broader reflection on the role and new meaning of art in his society, extensively investigated in his late '90s publication *After the end of Art*.

The philosopher's reasoning begins by presenting Adam Verver's greater ambition to create the museum of museums, as narrated by Henry James in his novel *The Golden Bowl.* In the wealthy collector's mind, there was the desire to gather the highest quality works of art in one unique space, in order to make them accessible to his fellow citizens, the so-called "thirsting millions". What James describes is a kind of Wunderkammer, which contains all that is beautiful in the world, making the binomial beauty-knowledge inevitable. In a certain sense, this image is reminiscent of the medieval iconography of the *hortus conclusus*, intended as the heavenly garden encircled by walls that marks the boundary between beauty and ugliness, between knowledge and ignorance. Danto's question is:

> is this really the kind of art that the museum's audience is now thirsting for?

A paradigm such as Verver's seems to be unsuitable for American society in the late XXI century. Actually, what they thirst for is something that museums have so far not been able to provide them with: art *for their own*. Starting from these premises, this paper intends to comment on the main aspects discussed in the essay, implementing considerations on the challenges that museums are facing in the post-colonial age. In particular, I would like to broaden Danto's reflection on the need to detribalize art in the light of the overcoming dominant narratives of the Western world.

As the philosopher points out in the volume's introduction, from the 1960s on, artistic production has been characterized by a paroxysm of styles, which marked the end of Modernism as understood by Greenberg.[1] A notable watershed can be seen in what Danto himself experienced in New York at the Stable Gallery in 1964, looking at the famous Warhol's *Brillo Boxes*. Every connection with the natural world was broken, and the nature of art was such only in relation to a certain artistic theory, namely the Artworld (Danto 1964). That is to say that the profound changes in artistic production led to an important modification of established canons and narratives in art history. If, on the one hand, contemporary art is too pluralistic in its mediums and meanings to allow itself to be captured along a single dimension, it is nevertheless reasonable to affirm that its primary ambitions are not aesthetic. Indeed, it engages directly with people's lives e, establishing relations that consider the viewer an active participant more than a passive receiver of the beauty exhibited in the museum's galleries. Regarding the public of art, understood in its broadest sense as society itself, it is relevant to consider the new transformations to which it is subjected. As reported by the author in the text, Michael Brenson affirmed that even if modernist painting and sculpture will always offer an indispensable aesthetic experience, "it can now do very little to respond to the social and political traumas of American life" (Brenson 1965). At this point, the crucial question is if the museum, as a meaningful and long-lasting institution, is able to convey the renewed art's intentions and the urgent social claims. If what people thirst for is art on their own, it has to be art that speaks to them directly. Yet, there is the risk of running into the situation of Mohammed and the mountain:

> if the public does not go to the museum, the museum will go

1. In The Modernist Painting published in the "Art Yearbook 4" in 1961, Clement Greenberg states that "the essence of Modernism lies, as I see, in the use of characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence".

to the public.
This was the case of the controversial Richard Serra's installation *Tilted Arch*, which was removed from New York's Federal Plaza in 1989.

The 120-foot-long steel sculpture has coped with very polemic feedback both from institutions and civilians. Danto was one of the removal supporters, denouncing the *curatoriat* approach as the assumption that it was art experts' prerogative to determine what was right or wrong for the benefit of the public. Instead, the philosopher proposes a community-based art, where the community is an active participant in the production, but also a valuable subject in terms of representation. That's exactly what Mary Jane Jacob had in mind when she took over as guest curator of Sculpture Chicago in 1993 with *Culture In Action*. This landmark exhibition in the development of public art saw artists engaging in long-term relationships with the citizens and collaborating in the realization of eight projects spread across the urban fabric of the city.

Culture in Action was particularly significant as it went beyond the *curatoriat*, providing forums for culture in otherwise underserved communities by generating culture from within the communities themselves, as opposed to simply serving up a local statue or mural (Scanlan 1993). The success of the exhibition is, therefore, to be found in the type of representation it provided of the Chicagoan community, as witnessed by the candy bar called "We Got It!", realized by the Local n° 552 of the "Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers' International Union of America". As underlined by Danto, the question here is not whether those candies are art, but whether they are *art for their own for a specific them*.

Would it be possible to imagine this candy bar within the walls of a museum? At this point, I would like to dwell on what Danto calls the tribalization of art and its implications. As suggested by the American philosopher, the natural outcome of the *art of their own* is a *museum of their* own. This means considering the audience divided into many tribes, for whom a certain type of artistic production is a vehicle of meaning and representation. In anthropology, a tribe is described as a human social organization defined by traditions of common descent, language, culture, and ideology.[2] From a certain perspective, museums have always been tribalized as institutions created by a specific social group at a given historical moment. In other words, they mirror the traditions and the ideologies of a community. As Danto points out introducing *After the End of Art,* America has seen two generations of museums. The first, which echoes Adam Verver's ambition, is that of the great American museums conceived as receptacles of treasures, that visitors would enter to enjoy the spiritual truth of great visual beauty. Subsequently, it followed the generation of museums in which the works of art are positioned within a linear and progressive narration of history. However, this narration is not neutral, but it is representative of the dominant western-centric gaze.

2. Here I'm referring to the definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary.

In his publication, *Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age* Hans Belting presents New York's Museum of Modern Art as the emblem of what he calls the *modernist myth*, bringing as a striking example the well-known exhibition *The Family Man*, curated by Edward Steichen in 1955. Part of its prominence has been to allow photography to invade the modernist realms of painting and sculpture, but the aim was to offer a global view of what Steichen called the *essential oneness of humankind*. Indeed, this show represented all cultures and all kinds of

people, but, seen in retrospect, it proves that at the time the camera was still "mostly in Western hands" (Belting 2012).

The presence of a dominant narrative resulted in a power game that led to the suppression of those who did not have the leverage.

Much has changed in the last seventy years, but the triumph of the dominant narratives over minor ones (not only as of the non-western world, but also those based on religion, sex, economic development, etc.) has to deal with its responsibilities even today. Here, a discourse on colonial dynamics finds its space, a system that led the western colonizers to fill their museums' halls with artifacts stolen from the colonized countries, irremediably cutting the connection between the pieces and their community of origin. In relation to this deprivation, Belting borrows the expression used by Professor Mamadou Diowara, which defines colonial museums as "cemeteries of lifeless things" (Belting 2012, 18).

This expression brings to mind the documentary "Les Statues Meurent Aussi" (Statues Die Also), shot in 1953 by Alain Resnais and Chris Marker in the galleries of the African collections of the Musée de l'Homme and the Museum of the Belgian Congo. The film is an elegant denunciation of the mechanisms of the cultural oppression that colonialism has brought forth in the museums, where the exhibition of black art is consumed without its context and losing its original meaning, swallowed by the Western gaze. The challenge of decolonization does not end with the transfer of ownership of cultural assets but pushes the need to actively confront the massive legacies of a chapter of history too often confined to an embarrassed silence that has stifled the voice of the oppressed, the losers of colonialism. Hence, the museum stops being a simple container of objects with an uncertain destiny and becomes an active actor called to reformulate the narratives within it, confronting the diversity of meanings that the artifacts on display assume for the communities to which they belong. The museums' decolonization issue is known to be a very complex and delicate one, and the objective here is not that to be exhaustive in this sense. It is preferable to consider it as the macroscopic dimension in which the detribalization of art, according to Danto's words, is still a relevant issue today. In fact, the processes of decolonization and detribalization both share the need for representation of a given community and problematize the museum as their *recervoir*.

Let's look in more detail at what the American philosopher means by detribalization of art, giving again the example of "We Got It!". He states that despite being "art for their own", the candy bar is not art only for those whose identity it is embodied in the artwork as a community.

On the contrary, it is "art" even for those who believe and appreciate community-based artistic productions, such as Michael Brenson, who definitely was not one of the workers in the Local n° 552.

Therefore, as pointed out by Danto, "We Got It!" It is a kind of art that belongs to everyone and, for this reason, it deserves to be preserved in a museum for future generations. From this point of view, the importance of detribalization of art, and consequently museums, is relevant as it gives communities a voice within a cultural institution that has silenced them for a long time. In this way, the museum listens to its public, growing simultaneously with it. Community-based art is a powerful tool in terms of representation because it reverses the perspective of the *curatoriat*. By this, I mean that empowering the community can offer the

museum the opportunity to portray a better image of the world in which they exist. In conclusion, if today's challenge is to decolonize museum collections from the oppressors' act of force, setting the goal of avoiding producing new dominant narratives or marginalization is fundamental.

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COURSE TITLE:

LAB - MUSEUM PRACTICES IN EUROPE

HELD BY:

Margherita Sani

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Working in a European perspective can raise the quality of museum work and bring better access and excellence to museum audiences, real and potential. Unfortunately, the number of museums taking advantage of European funds is still too low if compared to the opportunities offered by the EU programmes. The research commissioned by NEMO in 2019 to analyse museums' participation in four centralised EU funding programmes (Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Europe for Citizens) shows that only 6% of the Creative Europe budget is used by museums participating in projects, a percentage that drops to less than 1% if considering the Erasmus+, Horizon 2020 and Europe for Citizens programmes. It also points out that it is pretty much the same organisations which take advantage of EU funding, confirming that for many museums, especially the small ones, being active in the European scene is too demanding in terms of administrative and operational effort.
The Lab 'Museum Practices in Europe' of the academic year 2020-21 aimed to offer students an insight into the museum landscape and its functioning in Europe, paying special attention to European cultural policies and programmes to provide them with the essential tools to understand the ongoing debate and participate in EU funded collaboration projects.Being informed about funding opportunities, identifying the appropriate calls, filling in an application using the right language, documenting the project and doing the reporting can be very challenging for any museum entering the European scene for the first time, and much more so for university students.
After a quick overview of possible EU funding strands and an analysis of the Creative Europe Call for Proposals' priorities, the Lab students engaged in drafting the concept of a project to be possibly submitted to the EU for funding, thereby defining objectives, tasks and outputs, a timeframe - in other words a workplan - and coupling it with a tentative budget. All prerequisites for writing a successful application, which would come as the next step. And they used, some of them for the first time, some planning or project management tools, like the Context and Stakeholder analyses, the Logical framework matrix or the Work Breakdown Structure. Coming to terms with the technicalities of the EU application forms and with the European jargon is very challenging, but the students' response was very positive, as they saw the benefits of entering a new field which could provide them with interesting skills and a competitive advantage in their future both at professional and at personal level. And indeed, this is what all museums agree upon when it comes to participating in international projects: it can be demanding and challenging, it requires a structured approach, a rigorous mindset and a lot of effort, but it bears invaluable fruits in terms of organisational growth and professional development.
There are a variety of ways in which museums can become active in international partnerships: being involved in research projects, collaborating with the creative industries to develop new products or services, organising international events or travelling exhibitions, experimenting in new business models or ways to address the public. Depending on the nature of the project, its goals and the role played by the museum, the benefits deriving from international cooperation can be:

- Raising the profile of the institution both locally, nationally and internationally
- Introducing new and different perspectives on the collections and on the museum's work
- Developing a broader understanding of current museological issues
- Gaining an insight into practices tested in other countries or in other sectors to adapt them to the local use
- Developing skills and knowledge
- Sharing resources
- Benchmarking one's practices against best practices in other countries
- Developing new audiences
- Building and becoming part of an international museum community
- Introducing new approaches to benefit local audiences
- Generating new products and services

Working internationally is mainly an exercise in sharing and mutual learning and at the same time it generates cultural understanding and promotes European values. In recent times, during the Covid-19 crisis, the sharing of resources has proved essential in helping museums continue to provide services to the public while closed. The exchange of practices and the sharing of know-how on how to engage the public digitally, for example, has shown once again that international cooperation is very important, not only to increase knowledge and develop new ideas, but also to deliver to local audiences.

"The exchange of practices and the sharing of know-how on how to engage the public digitally has shown once again that international cooperation is very important, not only to increase knowledge and develop new ideas, but also to deliver to local audiences."

LAB - MUSEUM PRACTICES IN EUROPE

The theoretical framework

AUTHOR:

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FIRST SECTION:
The Theoretical Framework

SECOND SECTION:
The Laboratorial Part

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THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Rather than talking about 'museum', first of all we should consider adopting the plural version of the noun, 'museums'. Although the use of the singular underlines the outliving of the necessity and therefore permanence of this kind of institution for human beings, the reasons for building museums are extremely diverse, often interlaced one with the other.

Museums are repositories of old glories and successes, express a certain idea of beauty, shape people's mindset around a specific idea of citizenship or inspire new concepts through propaganda.

They speak of the past, the present and the future; their collections and displays reveal specific opinions around universal entities such as those of aesthetics, truth, identity and history, applied to human-scale contexts. They play active roles by influencing our perceptions and at the same time they are shaped by (certain) groups of people, who express a particular version of identity through the museum.

The contemporary museum, made up of different actors, is a multifunctional system which should be balanced in managing its activities of protection, interpretation and promotion, and in keeping into account the different needs of all its components, from the people behind the organization to the exhibition subject matter and the visitors.

This inevitably turns the museum into an enduring field or debate, a battleground even, between different people's assets:

> thanks to museums, challenges arise and issues about individual and societal co-living can be debated.

Confrontation already starts around the very nature of the museum, as demonstrated by the recent controversy about the consistency of the ICOM definition:[1]

> the proposal wanted to stress the democratizing and inclusive aspects of the museum through participation, to the point of reaching equal rights and fair consideration.

Nevertheless, the plea was denied, as some very important aspects of the museum, such as education, were shadowed by this allegedly over-politicized statement. It is important here to make a point about which values museums are attached to by looking at the research enacted by the Netherlands Museums Association, *More than Worth it. The Social Significance of Museum*[2] It has identified 5 values which together make up the significance of the museum and through which it contributes to society:

- Collection value
- Connecting value
- Educational value
- Experience value
- Economic value

These values relate to the important premise offered by the insight of scholar John Holden (Bollo 2013, 11),[3] according to whom culture is connotated by:

- An intrinsic meaning, related to the artistic/cultural content per se
- An instrumental meaning, when culture is used as a tool to achieve other aims
- An institutional meaning, when culture connotes

1 In 2019 the Executive Board of ICOM selected a new alternative museum definition for a vote to be held in the same year at ICOM's Extraordinary General Assembly to be held in the same year in Kyoto, Japan. The entire proposal at ICOM International Council of Museums. 2019. "ICOM announces the alternative museum definition that will be subject to vote". Accessed 3 September 2021. https://icom.museum/en/news/icom-announces-the-alternative-museum-definition-that-will-be-subject-to-a-vote/.

2 Museums Vereniging. n.d. "Museums Association". Accessed 4 September 2021: 'we are the trade

the relation between institutions and the public

These multiple values are generated by the museum's existence. They relate to the general groups of economic, social (either *individual* and *societal*) and cultural interests the museum has, where the term value is necessarily linked to certain impacts it causes. According to these values, museums should accomplish certain outputs desirable by their stakeholders (but who are they? Museum professionals, the general public, historians and museum experts, but also founders and policymakers).

If these outputs turn out successfully, they engender impacts on the involved groups:

> the closer the result of the impacts to the values declared by the museum, the more justified is the museum's social significance.

Before delving into some considerations around the strategy, measures and consistency of how to evaluate these impacts, it is essential to consider the first tool through which the museum communicates with the public:

> *the collection*(s). If originally collections were exclusively evidence-based, taken outside their original context, showcased because of celebrating a certain idea of beauty or for propaganda reasons, today the act of musealization is critically revisited in the process of *dynamic preservation*.

Authenticity and original context are respected, and a form of shared ownership between the museum and the creator community (the people behind the production of the collection) is prioritized. The focus has been transferred from the objects themselves to the relations these objects spur into the so-called *heritage community,* involved in all the processes regarding the state and the keeping up of the collection, from actual preservation to documentation. Respect for physical righteousness is more and more replaced by respect for functional and conceptual integrity, an idea which is clear to see when it is about immaterial, or digital-based collections.

The relations the museum draws between its collections and its public lead to a broader understanding of ourselves and of the world around us. The museum proves to be a suitable field where one can actively engage with the surrounding environment:

> by experiencing the contents offered by the museum, people make sense of their world and feel compelled to learn more.

Beyond merely providing notions about the showcased object, the contemporary museum is keen on offering an active discovering and transformative learning place. Bearing in mind that learning is influenced by external factors like one's motivation, and connected to the emotions one feels, museums opt for immersive environments and sentimental expography capable of provoking sensations in the visitors.

Together with personalizing the journey one can go through in the museum, *empathy* becomes the activator for the most effective museum visit, highlighting how the focus has shifted from the collection to the people, where the emotional aspect becomes central to the visitor's experience. Empathy, which is reached through collection, display, storytelling and related activities, shows how the didactic and the emotional aspects go together and strengthen one another within the museum.

This attention directed towards the inclusion of the audience is part of the more general *democratic turn* the social justice museum

association of over 400 museums in the Netherlands. We put the public interest of museums first. To connect a permanent bond of all residents of the Netherlands with museum collections.' In line with their mission, DSP-groep on behalf of the Netherlands Museums Association. 2011. "More than worth it. The Social Significance of Museums". Accessed 3 September 2021. https://www.museumvereniging.nl/media/nmv_more_than_worth_it.pdf. Museums, public resources founded by either private and public entities, are stewards to our public heritage. In order to find a balance between private initiative, government and the market, 'an understanding of the actual significance of the museum sector to society is essential to this mission'.

3 The topic is dealt with in Holden, John. 2004. *Capturing Cultural Value. How culture has become a tool of government policy.* London: Demos.

wants to outreach. *The social justice museum* is one of the three models theorized by the ex-director of the Glasgow Museum Mark O'Neill.

After the elitist and the welfare models, where the former is based on an elitist concept of culture, keen on storing collections for the sake of intellectual and aesthetic pleasure, and the latter encapsulates some educational services, but it is still mainly focused on the collection, the social justice museum identifies itself with a social institution, and as such has the mission to meet the society's standards of justice.

More specifically, it tries to respond to the needs of the public concerning issues of:

- Accessibility, in physical terms and regarding social inclusivity,
- Representation, which needs to be accorded by the museum together with the communities represented,
- Participation, a keyword from the *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* held in Faro in 2005, during which the value and potential of cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable development of society have been emphasized.

Furthermore, it acknowledged the individual and collective responsibility towards cultural heritage; hence the coinage of the already mentioned "heritage community" concept and the call for participatory governance within museums and the management and protection of cultural heritage.

However, agreeing on the fact that the museum is a social institution among others, it is important to claim that the museum is not the single and unique centre of knowledge within our society, but it is to be considered as one actor in the network providing it. The contemporary museums want to be democratic and polyphonic, giving voice to the unheard and helping in deconstructing stereotypes still pending on some communities. To sum up, *the socially purposeful museum* is run according to a participatory governance established by the museum together with the heritage community, which functions also through the mechanism of subsidiarity for long-term sustainability. Such a people-centered process increases accountability, transparency and trust in policy decisions and management of resources. If the museum is created and managed with the visitors, we should ask ourselves how this partnership works.

With the wave of the New Museology a new perspective is brought to the surface, according to which the curator should act as a facilitator, keen on mediating between the public and the museum.

A figure to be translated on the larger scale into the *cultural heritage broker* (Van Mensch 2015, 60), the one who arranges transactions between the general public and cultural heritage organisations. However, a museum professional is tied to an institution, its rules and hierarchies. To what extent a museum professional should be independent?

One extreme position in the spectrum is the old-fashioned curator, like the world-famous Harald Szeeman, autonomous from any kind of institution; on the opposite side stand the workers of a community museum, who see themselves just as the executors of the contemporary community. The museum professional lies in between, as they cannot be totally neutral,[4] but at the same time they need to be accountable and transparent. It is important here to mention the inputs the digital dimension can add to the participation scheme through dynamics such as the

4 Museum expert Maria Vlachou, a Cultural Management and

one of crowdsourcing, thanks to which people are asked to actively contribute to projects with their own ideas. Considering the broadening and the variety of actors entering the contemporary museum, the new forms collections take, either physical or immaterial, the expanding pool of participant visitors, all of it in a global perspective, it comes to mind how needed it is today to adopt an *integrated approach towards heritage.*

The term 'integrated museum', coined by UNESCO in 1972, gives credit to the attitude museums adopt when they integrate the subject matter with the different museum disciplines and tasks, demonstrating to be relevant for society at large. Such interdisciplinarity calls for a topographical approach:

> by watching the physical context, heritage in all its complexity can be better understood. This process has been accelerated with the so-called *Web 3.0* (Van Mensch 2015, 84), thanks to which all the databases related to heritage are connected, inasmuch they are able through shared data (namely LOD, Linked Open Data) to create narratives respectful of the cultural, physical, digital, environmental, human and social dimensions.

A scent of this topographical turn is offered by the *musei diffusi*[5] (Van Mensch 2015, 82):

> these are extended museums which go beyond their walls, conscious of their inner content and of the external context. This synergy recalls the *liquid museum*, a definition inspired by philosopher Bauman Zygmunt and theorized by Fiona Cameron (Van Mensch 2015, 84).

A liquid museum is no longer hierarchical, closed and fixed to a specific location, but causes the dissolution of the existing institutional structures and boundaries, where dynamic interactions between various elements are ensured. The integrated approach and the respect for the context and the heritage community refer to standards of ethics the museum needs to stick to, as declared in the ICOM *Code of Ethics for Museums* dating back to 2004. Faithful to the concepts of transparency and social responsibility, museums reject all forms of intolerance and discrimination, to respect and celebrate all diversities. This last part recalls the proposals of the ICOM-associated organization *Federation of International Human Rights Museum*,[6] stating that human rights are the key concern. The decisions museums take in terms of collection, display and interpretation have social effects and consequences. That is how to make *change agents* out of museums. Together with transparency and social responsibility, ethics lie also in the *guardianship* or *stewardship* of the museum, namely the responsibility of the museum regarding heritage, considering its legal and intellectual ownership:

> this includes rightful ownership, permanence, documentation, accessibility, and responsible disposal.

Nevertheless, despite the social mission the contemporary museum strives to engage with, there are some problems concerning the goal of democratizing the museum. First of all, the museum plays a role immersed in a context shared by multiple and diverse communities, each of them with different backgrounds and needs. Foremostly, who draws the line upon a community? Who defines them? Defining a certain community can be already perceived as an act of power, to the point that real-life

Communications consultant, has delved into the issue of museum neutrality, specifically with regard to the relation between museums and migration. Moreover, the global advocacy initiative #Museumsarenotneutral has been launched in 2017, to spot a light on inequalities and misrepresentations existing within museums, being themselves part of the status quo. To see more about this initiative: Museums are not Neutral. 2021. "Museums are not neutral. Keynote webinar". Accessed 4 September 2021. https://www.museumsarenotneutral.com/learn-more/keynote-museums-are-not-neutral.

5 The Siena Charter on Museums and Cultural Landscapes, a document proposed by ICOM Italy in 2014, after acknowledging the fragmentation and risk for dispersion of the Italian heritage when loose from its original context and landscape, proposes that museums cover the role of "regional offices for active protection of cultural heritage. [...] Involving the museums in the management and care of the cultural landscape means to develop their natural vocation, by extending their responsibility from their collections to the cultural heritage and surroundings: their local towns, villages and communities". Here the full text: ICOM Italia. 2014. "The Siena Charter. Museums and Cultural Landscapes". Accessed 3

communities are not only misrecognized but misrepresentations of identity become institutionalized. This makes it even harder for these communities to get rid of certain stereotypes dictated by the status quo if it pervades the decisions of the museum.

> Here comes the second point:
> the *control of content*, the respect for copyright and authorship.

The museum is responsible for the choice, the good maintenance, the interpretation and dissemination coming from the objects it decides to put on exhibit. However, by borrowing the expression of philosopher Krzysztof Pomian, objects turn into semiophores when they are removed from their original context and casted in a museum collection. The more these artifacts are charged with a meaning which fits the museum's intentions, the greater its value. These carriers of histories and identities, which happen to be manipulated by the museum as long as the museum alienates them from their natural environment, reveal thus certain ideas around concepts of beauty, history and truth.

Linked to the preference of which items to showcase, we should mention the issue of *repatriation*:

> if more recently this has become a quite common practice, there are still debates going on around the consistency of certain museums' collections, very often remains of hard-to-forget colonial pasts.

The problem of repatriation plays at every level, from local to international scale, in the context of Europe as well as world-wide. This means that a big deal of legislative work should be enacted in order to, at least, try to make the best out of the present and to give justice to the depredated populations.

In the greater picture it is important, for the sake of transparency and accountability, to have shared tools *to measure museum performances*. That explains the *raison d'être* of a report produced within the Europe-founded project *The Learning Museum* (LEM),[7] which aims at making the museum a truly learning place, and willing to learn itself from the diverse intelligences coming from the public. *Measuring museum impacts* takes the form of a publication, considering real-life research on audiences in different sites, and of a website, constituting itself as a dynamic forum where to provide knowledge and to network with other realities, escalating up to a virtual learning environment and a community building tool, intersecting the heritage and the educational sector.

Measuring museum impacts wants to be a handbook, a practical tool, which investigates the multifaceted and multidimensional values museums bring. Recalling the different values scholar Holden assigns to culture, it is important to understand that the concept of museum value changes according to the involved stakeholders. If the museum has to respond to museum professionals' expectations, to be reliable and honest with regard to its audience, to meet policy makers' programs in order to get extra funding, then it is necessary to find a balance between the intrinsic, instrumental and institutional aspects of the culture the museum brings forward.

Different people can lead the evaluation of museums, each of them from different perspectives and with different aims:

> from museum management staff (keen on understanding

September 2021. https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Carta_di_Siena_EN_final.pdf.

6 To look at what they do, here is the link to their website: "FIHRM - Federation of International Human Rights Museums". Accessed 3 September 2021. https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/FIHRM.

7 LEM Project. Tech Learning Museum. n.d. "The Project". Accessed 3 September 2021. https://www.lemproject.eu/the-project/. From the website: 'LEM- The Learning Museum is a network project funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme Grundtvig (2010-2013) which aims to establish a permanent network and webspace for museums and adult educators to participate in a learning society and in a knowledge-based Europe.To keep up with change, museums are not only expected to be learning places, but learning

the contribution to the development of this specific cultural form, and the impact on the community, thus dealing with the *intrinsic, institutional, instrumental* value of culture), to policy makers (to assess the contribution of a specific institution in a broad set of political priorities, thus dealing with i*nstrumental* value), to funders and donors, (with their own specific demands: dealing with *institutional and instrumental* value).

If originally the first attempt to measure museum impacts was exclusively dedicated to the economic aspect, in the last decade a more holistic approach has been adopted, which includes also environmental issues and sustainability. We can thus classify museum impacts into:

- Economic impacts
- Social impacts
- Environmental impacts

The *economic impact* is the economic contribution a museum provides, in monetary terms but also considering its offspring, namely its consequences and effects on employability rates, investments, real estate and urban regeneration, distribution of population and eventually related social inequalities. Unlike the economic, the *social impacts* are harder to assess and to gather evidence from. We can consider social impacts as the if and how a museum can play a role in both personal and societal development, thus how it contributes to social outcomes through the development of individual human capital in terms of learning and self-realization, and through activities improving the social capital.

> *Arts and culture contribute to the overall health and welfare of communities by stimulating civic participation, building social and human capital, and serving as assets that contribute to local economies and support other community-building processes* (Bollo 2013, 23).

Lastly, the *environmental impacts* are about not only the actual sustainability of the museum as such (which encompasses direct and indirect emissions, with the former deriving from actual museum activities, the latter influencing the energetic consumption caused by the museum, its staff and its activities). Moreover, museums can be ecologically relevant if capable of raising awareness about the importance of adopting smart and eco-friendly behaviors, in order to develop stronger eco-consciousness.

In face of the present time, characterized by a digital shift hardly paralleled to a correspondent social development, the ever-changing and mobile communities demand for civic rights and institutional transparency. Museums can be adequate spokespersons for raising awareness on the complex and multifaceted societies we are inhabiting by situating themselves against their historical and cultural background and questioning themselves about the consistency of their collections, their relation to the surrounding context and the concerned communities. Lastly, deciding to adopt shared measures to evaluate their role and performance, not only do they acknowledge the impacts they exercise on society, but hopefully they make a statement about improving themselves for the sake of all possible museum participants.

organisations themselves: learning from the communities, from the public, from their stakeholders, and also from other agencies, with whom they have to build alliances to accomplish the ambitious objectives set by policies at national and European level and meet the challenges of the future decades'.

THE LABORATORIAL PART

The contemporary museum is a complex actor in the civil arena. As an institution, it is still going under change, witnessing and giving a portrait of the development of society; at the same time, it tries to stick to 5 fundamental values, as pointed out by the Netherlands Museum Association:

- collection
- connecting
- educational
- experience
- economic

all of them referring to the intrinsic, instrumental and institutional aspects of culture. The impacts the museum can have on our society at an economic, social and environmental level are the reason why international entities such as the European Union are keen on investing in the museum.

More specifically, during the course a practical approach has been enacted when the students exercised on delivering reasonable and fair proposals which could fit a call of Creative Europe. Creative Europe is the European Commission's flagship programme to support the culture and audiovisual sectors. Divided in Culture, Media, and Cross-sectoral strands, it invests in actions that reinforce cultural diversity and respond to the needs and challenges of the cultural and creative sectors.

In the seat of the course an old call for applications made by Creative Europe has been taken into consideration. The class, split into three groups, focused on what it takes to shape a coherent project:

in addition to the idea, each group thought of a title, with an effective acronym, then the aims and objectives.

Moreover, they also targeted possible partners (also considering the economic side, which means finding sponsors) and stakeholders. Then, the students drew on how to enact the project by conceiving activities, which helped the groups think of the possible deliverables coming from the proposal as a whole. Here follow the three ideas generated by the groups:

DISVIM:

the project aims at the creation of an App that will guide visually impaired visitors in participating in museums through an audio-descriptive guide conceived for them.

The use and diffusion of this app contribute to the emancipation of users with visual impairment, allowing them to enjoy the museum experience and heritage in autonomy, and making them feel part of a community that cares for them. Moreover, it would speak of an important digitization step through which possibly sharing common models, approaches and guidelines within the European network, providing a new tool for the museum to work with the visually impaired community.

MusEU+:

the initiative aims at creating a network of university museums in order to enhance their potential as centres of creative, economic and social exchanges.

Students are in charge of creating new collections, interpreting the existing ones and making them relevant for the audience, through local synergies but also enclosing partnerships with international institutions,

along the lines of the already-existing European Erasmus programme. This is how students can build their own capabilities and develop new ones, strengthen community ties, and help in raising awareness on the local and European cultural heritage.

Recovart:

> the project is based on creating a network of museums to give comfort and help to the people who have harshly suffered/are suffering from the pandemic.

The targeted people are as follows:

> people who have lost relatives, jobs, medical staff and disabled people.

These museums, in partnership with local entities, conduct laboratories and workshops, from art therapy to doing embroidery and yoga:

> the outcome is to help people socialize, acquire new skills and gain a psychological benefit in order to help them get back on track, within the frame of a more cooperative dimension among local and European institutions.

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COURSE TITLE:

VALORIZATION OF THE ARTS LAB - DE L'ARCHIVE À L'EXPOSITION

méthodes, pratiques et narration

HELD BY:

Gianluca del Monaco, Fabio Massaccesi

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The course "Valorisation du patrimoine artistique" consisted of two parts, a theoretical section called "Valorisation de l'art médiéval et de la première Renaissance", taught by Fabio Massaccesi, and a practical one named "LAB - De l'archive à l'exposition: méthodes, pratiques et narration", taught by Gianluca del Monaco.
The following article presents the results of the first edition attended by AMaC students during the 2020-2021 a.y.
The theoretical part of the course was intended to convey how "Digital Disruption" has recently changed our idea of museums and cultural heritage, introducing students to up-to-date approaches in museum management (user centricity, Omnichannel etc...). The students have focused on the benefits of the digitization of cultural heritage: preservation, data accessibility, the public's engagement, profit for cultural institutions. The last point covered by the course was related to the creation of a digital archive, involving three main steps: the study of the collection owned by the institution, the digitization of the physical items, the cataloguing of the digital objects. These stages lay the foundation for the engaging promotion and communication of the peculiar values of the collection, also through the production of virtual exhibitions. Indeed, the second part was dedicated to the creation of a digital collection and a virtual exhibition on the photo archive of art historian Carlo Volpe (1926–1984), Roberto Longhi's pupil and one of the most important teachers in the history of the Institute of Art History at the University of Bologna. Nowadays, Volpe's collection of photographs reproducing mainly Italian artworks from the 13th to the 18th century, which were important tools of research for the scholar, is one of the four sections of the Fototeca I.B. Supino in the Biblioteca delle Arti (University of Bologna). The students have dealt with six folders of photographs reproducing artworks made in 14th-century Bologna. They were divided into groups, each working on one aspect of the project, namely: the investigation of the artworks on the basis of the related bibliography, the scanning of photographs (recto and verso) according to international standards, the cataloguing of artworks ("Scheda opera") and photographs ("Scheda foto") on the web-based open-resource platform Archiui (a customization of Collective Access developed by Promemoria Group), the digital exhibition, and the communication of the project on an Instagram page. The students carried out the cataloguing process on the back end of Archiui, while the contents were made accessible on the front end, i.e. a website. They learned how to build a hierarchy mirroring the physical archive, as well as to establish relations among the digital items. The online exhibition *Carlo Volpe Archive 2020* displayed six paintings chosen among those reproduced in the digitized black-and-white photos from Volpe's folders, accompanied by colour pictures. In the texts, the students tried to give account of Volpe's critical assessment of the Trecento in Bologna as delivered in his 1980 pivotal essay.
The whole course benefited from the collaboration of professionals working in the field, such as Daniele Benati (University of Bologna), Caterina Cosetto and Angela Sampognaro (Biblioteca delle Arti), Giovanni Pescarmona (University of Florence), and Corrado Trione (Promemoria Group). Benati, Pescarmona, and Trione have also been interviewed by the students (see the boxes in the article). We must

especially express our gratitude to Promemoria Group for granting us the free use of their platform Archiui thanks to a formal agreement with the Dipartimento delle Arti (DAR), which will also allow future generations of students to acquire and improve digital skills for cultural heritage. Last but not least, we should appreciate with gratitude all the efforts made by our students involved in the development of the project during such a demanding period as the last few years, which were marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. We thank especially those who decided to work harder even after the course for the final completion of the project (public website and virtual exhibition) and the writing of the present article. We believe that this activity has proved to be extremely fruitful, allowing students to learn an effective methodological approach and acquire a deeper knowledge of the cultural heritage held at our University.

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BEYOND CARLO VOLPE'S ARCHIVE

a valorisation digital project for XIV century Bolognese painting

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Emma Puliti, Martina Trocano, Alberta Valiante

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THEORETICAL COURSE - NICOLE COSTELLA, MARTINA TROCANO

The following paragraphs will explain some key concepts that the course of *Valorisation de l'art médiéval et de la Renaissance*, taught by Professor Fabio Massaccesi, provided to students so that they could better comprehend the different ways in which we can preserve and promote our cultural heritage, that of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

The use of digital technology is crucial in order to better manage the collection of an institution and create a structured digital archive that is easy to navigate and caters to the needs of its visitors.

Digital Technology and Museums

A content management system (CMS) is a computer software used to manage the creation and modification of digital content (Kostur and Manning 2003). The point of CMS in cultural institutions is to modify museums in order to embrace three core ideas:

1) Disintermediation, which means removing the barriers between the audience and museum experts;
2) Informalization, that is, a change in tone and communication;
3) Audience participation, or creating avenues for conversation.

The role of museums changes in a broader society. People who visit museums are not passive visitors, but are expected to be proactive members of multiple communities in terms of geography and interests.

As the director of the British Museums Hartwig Fischer said in a recent interview, *The museum itself is technology*; it has existed for over half a century, it is a driver of civic development, and it has developed as it must keep developing if it wants to survive. We are living in a *Digital Age* that has created new opportunities for communication; an example is provided by the Uffizi Gallery and its virtual exhibitions called *Ipervisioni*, where people could enjoy not only exclusive tangible contents but also virtual contents (www.uffizi.it/mostre-virtuali). In the digital age, museums use new approaches like mobile apps, websites, learning resources, virtual exhibitions or shops. The sum of all of them is known as Omnichannel. Omnichannel museums place visitors at the centre of their activities. Visitors encounter contents and experiences whenever they like and wherever they are. Omnichannel therefore means user centricity. It is a public-focused marketing strategy that attributes an important role to social media, disintermediation, informalization, audience participation and data, which is the driving force behind user centricity.

User Experience and Visitor Experience

The new technological shift involving cultural institutions is also affecting the visitor's experience, moulding it into a constant connection with the museum that accompanies the person from the start of their visit until they leave the building. These new forms of media facilitate learning processes, allowing people to integrate new concepts and facts about the objects held in the collection. In the past few years, museums have acknowledged the importance of these new tools and have integrated them in the exhibition fabric through apps, QR codes, augmented/virtual reality, and other digital tools. The characteristics of these new technologies are

very important as they allow for versatility and the possibility of greater public involvement. Furthermore, these integrations benefit the physical museum visit without letting the digital side of the experience take over.

Most institutions have decided to utilise the "Bring Your Own Device" strategy and created mobile apps that visitors can download on their own smartphones to have a customised experience that depends on their interests, time and learning preferences. It is safe to say, though, that apps must be designed so as to be complementary to the physical experience, in order to make sure that the public does not focus solely on their devices. Another possibility is to use wearable technology like voice activation, gesture or eye-tracking software that prevent visitors from focusing solely on their devices. Moreover, this also helps with accessibility for people with physical or mental disabilities.

Lastly, augmented and virtual reality are helpful tools in the field of valorisation, as they provide further information and the visual representation of the different artworks that are displayed in the institution.

A great example of this type of technology is the Bandini Icon App, created by Giovanni Pescarmona and Marcello Massida for the museums of Fiesole. The app combines AR technology with the BYOD strategy, allowing people, for example, to see a polyptych in its entirety, even though only a few panels are preserved in the museum.

The benefits of digitalization

Creating a digital archive via the digitization of cultural heritage comes with a series of advantages that benefit the community in various respects. The possibility to increase and enhance the public's engagement with museums and collections could be considered as one of the first benefits, granting accessibility to the works of art even to those who do not have the chance to experience them in person. Furthermore, having digital copies of analogue material is useful to preserve an intact rendition of the original material in case any damage occurs. More specifically, digitalization is very helpful with light-sensitive materials such as photographs, as these are very easy to alter if they are not preserved properly.

Using digital technology to catalogue and archive cultural material also increases productivity within the organization. It helps trace information on preserved objects and makes it easier to find data for research and collaborations between institutions. Lastly, another advantage of digitalization is the possibility to commercialize cultural assets, making it possible to profit from the objects that are catalogued in the digital archive.

The different phases of a digital archive

An archive is an important part of a cultural institution; it can be presented in a physical or digital form. In the latter case, it could be possible to find different kinds of materials such as the digital copy of the original documents or the one that was already created digitally.

One of the important functions of an archive is to connect collections to different audiences. This process can take various forms including exhibitions, workshops, publications and educational programs. New technology offers new and creative ways to present archival material to audiences. But first, we must know that it takes three different phases to create a digital archive:

knowing and studying the subject matter deeply, in our case fourteenth-century art in Bologna; scanning and cataloguing photos from Carlo Volpe's archive, and creating a virtual exhibition.

The first activity is the digitalization and standard classification. In the process of digitalization, we meticulously scanned photos in 300 DPI (dots per inches) wearing special gloves to avoid ruining them.

The second activity was to create the concept of the exhibition. In this phase, in the middle of the second wave of Covid-19, we met both in person and virtually and did a lot of brainstorming to create the idea of the exhibition. The last activity was split in three parts:

creating a list of contents, writing the text for the description of works of art, and creating and curating social network activities.

Cataloguing

Once the digital archive has been formed, the subsequent crucial operation to carry out is cataloguing. This activity is pivotal because it organizes the information gathered via the digitalization process in a sensible manner, so that it will facilitate further research on the subjects present in the archive. For the work to be carried out correctly, the interpretation and the communication of knowledge are needed. Performing this procedure not only demands access to both information and the collection of objects, but also necessitates a certain expertise in processing data.

Those who manage data are considered primary users, having open access to the information as well as the possibility to arrange it according to different criteria. A secondary pool of users has access to the cataloguing process, but with restricted access:

their task is to promote, market, and finance the content of the digital archive while addressing the visitors.

Interview with Giovanni Pescarmona
Ph.D Candidate - Digital Art History
University of Florence.

How much can analogue photography help the visitor to understand and grasp the preservation history of an artwork and how has this been applied within the Bandini Icon app?

Historical photographs are a great passion of mine, and I wanted to include them in the application. They are fundamental because they are proof of a state of preservation and material biography of artworks. As we move forward in time, we can consider the photographs as points on the timeline. With the *Bandini Icon* experience we made an overlay with the timeline to show the different moments of restoration of certain artworks. These, in my opinion, are circumstances that are very interesting to transmit to the public who, without specialist knowledge, do not have the perception that

artworks change their appearance several times during their life. The Bandini Museum has many stories to tell because all of its artworks have a tormented collecting history, to say the least. After all, Bandini as a collector cut them up, sawed them, put them together, and had them repainted. Then, they were moved from the Oratory of Sant'Ansano to the Bandini Museum, and in the Oratory of Sant'Ansano they had been there more or less 100 years in a precarious condition, where they had been exposed to the damp. The only documentation we have are restoration reports and photographs.

https://trecentobolognese.archiui.com/percorsi/interview-with-giovanni-pescarmona

LABORATORY COURSE
- ERIKA DAL BON, LINDA FOSSATI, ALBERTA VALIANTE

The laboratory, led by Professor Gianluca del Monaco after his theoretical lessons, provided us with an excellent opportunity to put into practice the principles of archival funds management that we learned in class.

Indeed, the goal of the workshop was to digitalize, catalogue and valorize – through the creation of a digital exhibition – a portion of the photographic collection of professor and art historian Carlo Volpe, housed in the archival collection of "I.B. Supino Library" in the Santa Cristina Complex in Bologna.

Carlo Volpe's Photographic Collection

The photos of artworks collected by Carlo Volpe are part of the Fototeca Supino, which was founded by scholar Igino Benvenuto Supino in collaboration with the Istituto di Storia dell'Arte of the University of Bologna. Containing essential documents and tools for art history research, the archive now counts 71.000 photographs divided into 4 sections: Fototeca Supino, Archivio Croci, Fototeca Volpe and Miscellanea Istituto di Storia dell'Arte. Due to the complexity and breadth of the collection, we selected a specific topic investigated by Carlo Volpe with his photographic collection:

the artistic production in Bologna during the fourteenth century. As a result, our digitalization campaign focused on cataloguing six folders in the collection related to that topic [Fig. 1].

We planned our project in stages, dividing into teams based on the tasks we needed to complete:

- Researching the bibliography using volumes and books in the Supino Library and in the Fondazione Zeri;
- Managing the digitalization process using a specific scanning machine;
- Organizing the cataloguing process by referring to specific standards with the platform Archiui;
- Conceiving the curatorial project for the digital exhibition;
- Organizing a communication campaign on social media so that people could follow our work.

Conservation

The primary sources for our project were the real photos that are conserved and preserved in the archive, respecting their nature of fragile objects.

The pictures were originally inventoried and catalogued with the insertion of a specific inventory number that reveals their current location in the Fototeca. The position of each photo reflects the organization of the archive, which we must keep in mind during the digitalization process.

Pictures were placed in acid-free folders and boxes and kept in an air-conditioned room to maintain the proper temperature and humidity for preservation. When starting to digitalize photos, we must make sure that we handle these materials with care, wearing cotton gloves.

Digitalization

The digitalization process must be very precise. We scanned each photo using a specific scanning machine which creates a digital copy of the analogue photograph whose *recto* and *verso* must be reproduced.

Once the digital copy was saved in the PC, the post-production and quality control work began, adhering to a set of reference standards and parameters. The master file of the photo was saved by reporting its cataloguing number, and was at the same time catalogued in the content management system we chose to manage the documents: Archiui. [Fig.2].

Cataloguing with Archiui

Archiui is the first digital platform dedicated to historical archives. Developed by Promemoria Group, its main goal is to organize and enhance the historical and cultural heritage of brands, companies and institutions. The platform performs the analysis of the heritage and its arrangement into categories, then develops organization systems and vocabularies tailored to each institution. Archiui gave us the possibility to arrange the inventory, in which we created the virtual versions of the physical folders; in each of them, we uploaded all the previously scanned works, in the forms of “Scheda opera” and “Scheda foto” (see Appendix 1).

We placed in the “Scheda opera” all the entries with information regarding the work, such as author, year, location, type of work, materials etc., while the “Scheda foto” included all the entries related to the photograph itself, such as identification, type of photograph, author, year, etc. [Fig. 3]. Based on collective access, Archiui allowed us to build up connections between the different items and helped us render the system of relations of the works. The cataloguing part is carried out in the back end of Archiui, and it is where the digitalized works took shape.

The user will then be able to visualize the catalogued photographs in the front-end section of the website. In this section it is possible to browse through the catalogued collections and folders, letting oneself be inspired by the images in the archive.

Social Media/Communication

The Instagram page of the project has been used to share and promote the work produced by the students during the workshop of *Valorisation de l’art médiéval et de la Renaissance*. During the first part of the course, we considered the social media strategies of international museums and

the latest innovations in promotion of cultural heritage since the spread of social media. In our Instagram page, we tried to apply some of these strategies to the project on Carlo Volpe's archive [Fig. 4].
The structure of the Instagram page has been conceived so as to be visually coherent and pleasing to users. A common graphic and a logo were created in order to present a unique style for the feed. As for the posts, they focused both on the content of the online exhibition on Archui and on the documentation of the activities carried out by the students during classes, specifically the process of digitalization of Carlo Volpe's archive.

Interviews with students and professors were included in the feed, aiming to share diverse points of view about the importance of the valorisation and digitalization of cultural heritage.
The Instagram feed was divided into three visual columns:

the one on the right was dedicated to interviews with professors and professionals in the field of Medieval Art History.
The central column was completely dedicated to the digitalization of the archive, showing the process that is necessary for the digitalization of a photo archive. Lastly, the left column was open to students so that they could share their experiences and thoughts about the link between the valorisation and the digitalization of the archive. Through Instagram stories, we tried to arouse the users' curiosity by posting quizzes about some of the works from Carlo Volpe's archive and photos showing the students working in class.

Interview with Daniele Benati
Professor of Medieval and Early Modern Art,
University of Bologna

During an interview with Professor Daniele Benati, a pupil of Carlo Volpe, we discussed a picture that has emerged while cataloguing the archive. The photograph disclosed on its verso side an interesting inscription, reporting the comment "Guai a te se la perdi!" (Woe to you if you lose it!) in Volpe's handwriting. This affectionate comment witnesses the care and attention put into the preservation of Volpe's collection of photographs. In fact, as Benati reported, there was this saying that those who might lose Volpe's prized possessions would face the cutting off of one's hands. This playful comment, together with the "Guai a te se la perdi!" makes us understand the importance of the photographic resources during those years. In a time when the internet and modern technologies were a mirage, photographs were one of the primary sources of information for academic research. This type of feeling of *hic et nunc* got lost with the continuous improvement of technology, making a photographic image infinitely reproducible and long-lasting.

https://trecentobolognese.archiui.com/percorsi/interview-with-professor-benati

VIRTUAL EXHIBITION
- GAIA DE PALMA, MELISSA MACALUSO, EMMA PULITI

Carlo Volpe Archive 2020 aims to take advantage of all the opportunities that online archives offer in terms of fruition. Having a virtual space facilitates the access to contents since the audience can benefit from a well-organized catalogue of items by browsing all its different entries.

Moreover, the user experience design of Archiui allows users to explore the archive from various perspectives thanks to tools like timelines and maps. The most interesting instrument provided by Archiui (and other CMSs) is the possibility of creating a virtual exhibition to valorise the archive, enhancing specific aspects of the collection.

The storytelling tool turns out to be extremely effective since it transforms the archive from a "pure catalogue" into a captivating and engaging experience. This approach provides users with a narrative and encourages them to navigate the archive with a critical point of view.

The archives of art historians are complex by nature, since they usually are an active instrument of study and research. Therefore, narrative options are often multiple and varied. This paper aims to analyse the virtual exhibition section of *Carlo Volpe Archive 2020* and illustrate the choices made with regard to storytelling. Specifically, the essay will consider the target, the subjects and the curatorial approach that were selected.

Target

When it came to organizing and planning the exhibition on the Archiui web-site, one of the first things we discussed was the target audience. Given the nature of the archive and the items it displays, the most natural choice was to address an audience that was already interested in that subject. Indeed, as the archive presents historical photos of medieval art objects, it can be an interesting source for research in that field.

Nonetheless, we did not want to exclude a wider public from enjoying the exhibition. In the catalogue, we tried to use simple and clear language, with explanations that can be understood even by those who do not work in the field. Moreover, within the structure of the Archiui website, it was possible to create a "Historytelling" section for in-depth studies outside the exhibition layout. Two types of content were created in this section of the website:

> "Spin-offs", which is meant for a visitor who is curious about different types of topics such as fashion, iconography, photography; and "Getting to know", aimed at introducing the curators.

Subject/Contents

The rationale behind the curatorial choices that were made for the exhibition lies in Carlo Volpe's essay *La pittura emiliana del Trecento* (1980). This text was key to reconstructing the history of fourteenth-century painting in Bologna, since it gave historical consistency to an artistic period that had been previously rediscovered thanks to Volpe's master, Roberto Longhi. Following Volpe's analysis, the exhibition features a selection of six masterpieces produced in Bologna during the fourteenth century:

- the frescoes in San Giacomo Maggiore

- Giotto's polyptych (1333-34) in the Pinacoteca di Bologna
- the triptych by the "Master of 1333"
- Vitale's Saint George and the dragon
- Vitale's frescoes from Mezzaratta
- The Crucifixion by Pseudo-Dalmasio, in the Pinacoteca di Bologna

Photographs reproducing each painting have been selected from one of the six photographic folders of the Fototeca Carlo Volpe.

With this choice, we aimed to chronologically reconstruct the pictorial development that took place in Bologna in the fourteenth century, while also providing a concise but comprehensive overview of the main figures in this artistic scenario. However, the exhibition focused not only on this pictorial evolution, but more specifically on the importance of Volpe's examinations for the development of art-historical critique. Hence, each section of the exhibition opens with a quote from Volpe's essay related to a specific work of art, in order to highlight his pivotal role in the critical re-evaluation of Bologna's artistic scene.

Similarly, the panels feature the colour pictures of the selected artworks along with the related black-and-white photographs from Carlo Volpe's archive, which we scanned and catalogued during the workshop.

Interview with Corrado Trione
Account Relationship Manager for Promemoria Group

How has digital technology impacted the traditional archive? How has it made it more dynamic and accessible?

The change has been total and concerns many aspects, for example, the channel through which you can reach your audience. This seems obvious, but it is not. Let's think about the accessibility of people with disabilities who can now consult documents in an easier way. But also, people who are geographically distant, now can partly consult an archive or at least know what is in it. In addition, the archivists' working tools themselves have changed. Thanks to software, they can have tools that have simplified some operations that were previously very time-consuming, such as reordering the mass of data. There are now cloud systems that allow teamwork, cooperation, and the sharing of knowledge in a much faster and easier manner. Also, the design and the general idea about an archive has changed. The archive is made up of a *network of hierarchical relationships* like fonds, series, files, and then individual documents. But then there are also *internal relations*: each document must deal with someone, and this person has to do with another person or a place.

This way of representing archives is difficult with the paper version. Whereas in the case of a digital archive, a researcher can search in any direction within these relations. Then regarding cataloguing standards, in the past, everyone used the method they preferred to use, whereas now, thanks to the use of shared standards and compatible systems

the work that is done will last. Finally, thanks to the digital innovations the classical concepts of the archive have changed. The archive goes through three phases. The current archive is when you are using it (you have a note you put it in your drawer and continue the next day). Then we have the deposit archive which is when you put things away waiting to be sorted out. Lastly, we have the historical archive: a discard is made, what is needed is kept and then it is organised.

The digital archive crosses these barriers. For example, in the case of the architect Renzo Piano's archive, a drawing is sent to the archive to be reused later in a project. It is almost a current archive that becomes historical and then becomes useful again in a new project. In companies' archives, packaging designs from three years ago or shoe designs from a fashion house can become fashionable or inspirational again. It's an archive that therefore becomes contemporary and so it's a continuous flow to the historical and from the historical to the present. You can do this especially within the digital environment. Another important thing is that thanks to said digital environment we can file intangible heritage like places, events, or entities. We work a lot with the theatre's archives that catalogue their seasons and performances. These materials are not physically in their archives, but it is their real historical heritage.

https://trecentobolognese.archiui.com/percorsi/interview-with-corrado-trione

Scheda Opera	
Identification	Related collections, Typology, Title, Date, Author, Client
Analytical Data	Identification of the Subject
Technical description	Material and technique, Dimensions, Conservation status
Localization and relations	Related places, Registering body, Related files
Media and Documentation	Media Representations

Scheda Fotografica	
Identification	Related collections, Category, Chromatism, Nature, Title, Date, Inventory number, Author, Inscriptions
Analytical data	Subject Identification
Localization and relations	Linked locations, Indexing body, Linked folders
Media and documentation	Media representations

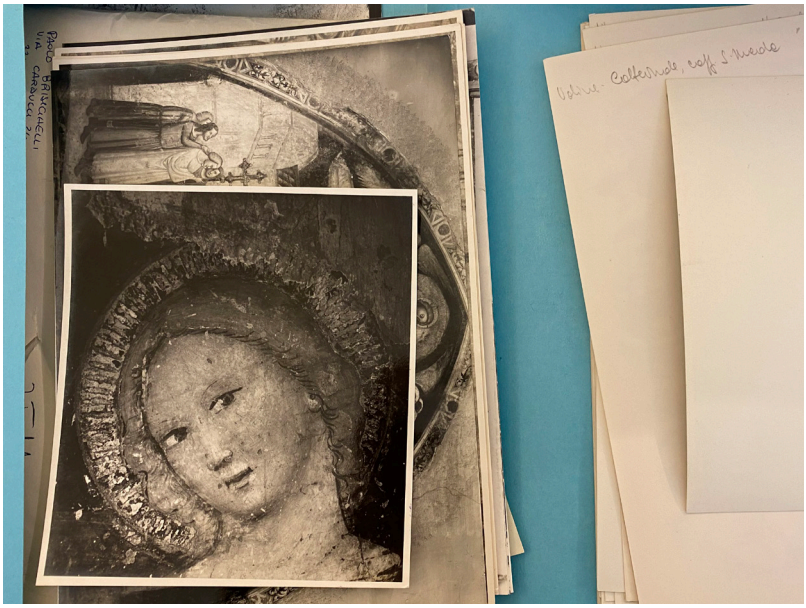


Fig. 1 *The inside of a folder*, photography, 2020.



Fig. 2 *The digitization process*, photography, 2020.

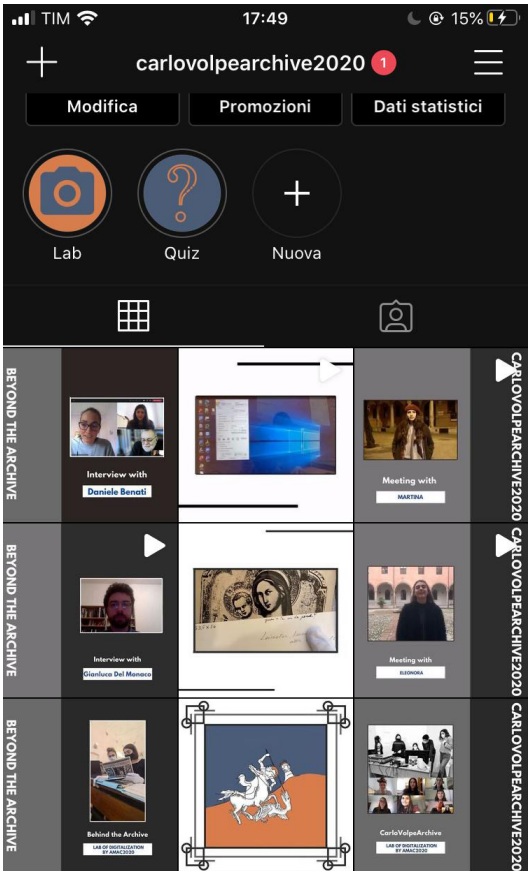


Fig. 4 Instagram page of Carlo Volpe's archive project, screenshot, 2020.

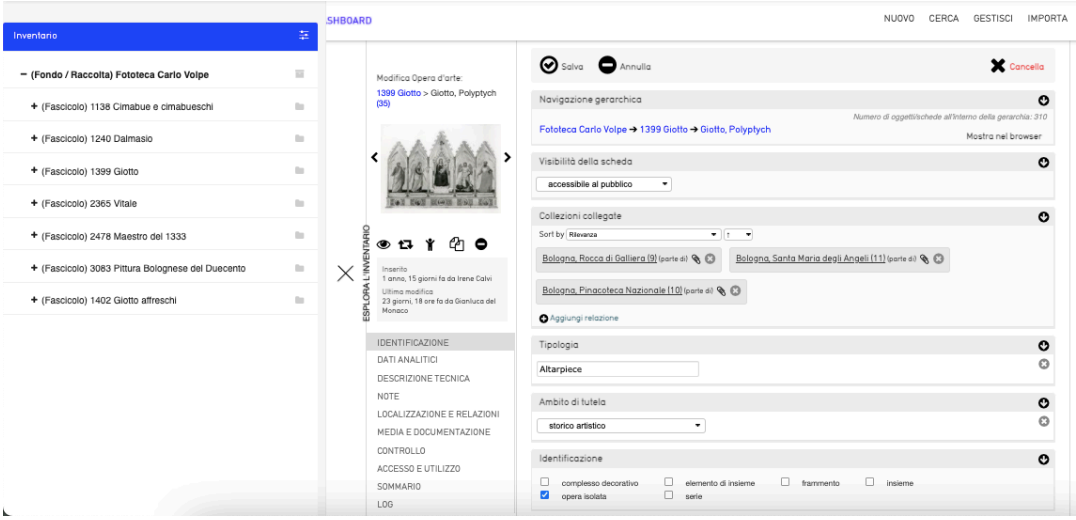


Fig. 3 *Archiui's backend*, screenshot, 2020.

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COURSE TITLE:

LAB - BOÎTE À MIRACLE

Form As Thought - What Can Be An Art Exhibition?

HELD BY:

Éric Lapierre, Patrícia Barbas

COURSE TIMETABLE:
II year, II semester.

567

The studio “Form As Thought - What Can Be An Art Exhibition?” has considered the relationship between form and content and, beyond that, between space and art, through the case study of conceiving the design of a series of monographic art exhibitions. Each of the exhibitions has been held in the main pavilion of Mies van der Rohe’s Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, which reopened last April following an extensive, five-year renovation by David Chipperfield Architects. Students worked in groups; each group designed a specific exhibition for a specific artist with a curatorial proposal and chose which pieces to exhibit. The first part of the studio became a pretext to study the work of each of those artists to understand its meaning and development in the long term. During this period, graphic elements of Mies van der Rohe’s Neue Nationalgalerie have been given to the students, with the aim of understanding the building’s logic. Then, it focused on the pieces chosen by the students, the main core of the exhibition, that must have a coherent discourse from a curatorial point of view. The design of the exhibition was created in order to reinforce the meaning and clarity of the curatorial choices made at the previous stage. For the final critic, students have shown mainly an atlas of the curatorial proposal, a plan of their exhibition and a collage of an interior perspective, allowing to understand immediately the result in terms of space. The quality of the work has been evaluated upon the link between the curatorial decisions and the spatial organization that was able to improve and to allow them to be better understood by the audience, while making better use of the specificity of the place.

Design Studio - FS 2020
© Patrícia Barbas and Éric Lapierre for AMaC,
University of Bologna, February 2021

The studio has considered the relationship between form and content and, beyond that, between space and art

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE: WHEN PAINTING MEETS NATURE

AUTHORS:

Nicole Costella, Linda Fossati, Penelopi Papakonstantinou

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CURATORIAL STATEMENT

'Georgia O'Keeffe: when painting meets nature' is an exhibition hosted by the newly renovated Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin. As the title already discloses, the show combines elements of nature with O'Keeffe's paintings, creating an immersive experience for the visitors.

Consequently, Mies Van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie lends itself perfectly to the show, working as a key location for the definition of the exhibit's concept. The starting point for the creation of the exhibition can be found in the aesthetic and philosophy of the two protagonists of 'Georgia O'Keeffe: when painting meets nature':

Georgia O'Keeffe and Mies Van der Rohe.

Van der Rohe's way of conceiving his architectural spaces formed a solid base on which the exhibition was built. When talking about the modus operandi of Van der Rohe, in the book *Mies Van der Rohe. The Built Work"* (2014), Krohn Carsten reported that, in order to have the perfect synthesis between art and life, the exhibition spaces need to integrate sculptures and landscape within their structures. As a result, their surroundings are incorporated into the realm of art and vice versa. Within this context, Georgia O'Keeffe's quote plays an important role in further defining the final concept of the exhibition. In 1946, during an interview for the New York Post on her flower paintings, O'Keeffe said:

> ***When you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for the moment. I want to give that world to someone else. Most people in the city rush around, so they have no time to look at a flower. I want them to see it whether they want to or not.***

Through her words, O'Keeffe wanted to transmit the moments of serenity that she gets from admiring the beauty of nature to those people that are conditioned from the hectic rhythm of the city. In front of her delicate flowers, the city inhabitants can take a moment to relax and forget their anxieties, even just for a moment. Focusing on this naturalistic aspect shared by the two personalities, the selection process for the paintings to be included in the exhibit was quite immediate, with the decision falling onto the series of artworks depicting different species of flowers encountered during her numerous trips. With this framework in mind, the main idea for the exhibition project was to transform the Neue Nationalgalerie into a sort of garden-house, or, more accurately, into a flower shop, making plants, flowers and paintings coexist harmoniously in the exhibition space. Their aim was to create a little green oasis within the Berlin urban landscape, so references from artists and existing places were taken into consideration, with the purpose of understanding which direction to take in terms of aesthetic and display.

Rebecca Louise Law and Thomas Saraceno's artworks with plants have been considered elements of inspiration for creative plant arrangements; in particular, the suspension of plants and flowers from the ceiling was a solution that was deemed useful, especially in a location like the Neue Nationalgalerie. As for the general arrangement of vegetation and plants, places like the Barbican's Conservatory in London and the Grand Palais in Paris were taken as an example to decide which direction

to take with the organization of the garden:

> a more disorganised, chaotic one or a neater and more orderly one.

After considering the various references and options, the flower garden aesthetic was thought to be the most fitting solution for the space and for the aim that was intended to be achieved.

The exhibition wants to reflect Georgia O'Keeffe's vision of the flower paintings as a chance for the people living in the city to slow down their pace and enjoy some moments of tranquillity. As a result, the plan was crafted so that the inhabitants of Berlin could relax and appreciate the artworks while being immersed in nature, forgetting for a few moments the frenetic rhythm of the city. The path surrounding the flowerbeds was heavily inspired by the intricate plan of the Versailles gardens.

In particular, the triangular shapes that compose the French gardens were of great interest. The geometric figure of the triangle, when associated with the feminine figure, symbolises the womb and the female reproductive system in general. One of the main interpretations Georgia O'Keeffe received of her flower paintings concerned their resemblance with female genitalia and a possible connection with feminism and sexual liberation. Consequently, the conception of a plan that employs triangular figures is a way to connect the exhibition display with the paintings exhibited, creating coherence and unity between the two parts.

Moreover, to further stress this link between artworks and the exhibition setting, the flowerbeds are organised to contain the typology of flower that is represented in the paintings displayed in that area. For instance, in the irises area a visitor can find all the iris species painted on the canvas hung in that section. In this way the visitor can make a comparison between the actual flower and the artistic rendition made by O'Keeffe. Besides, at the centre of the exhibition there's a rotunda, defined by a thin suspended curtain of vegetation, where visitors can find benches to rest and contemplate the colourful sight in front of their eyes.

sRegarding the type of display, the paintings are hung in a structure deriving directly from Lina Bo Bardi and her way of exhibiting artworks at the MASP in Sao Paulo. The canvases are hung in a clear glass panel, which is anchored to a block of concrete. This solution was adopted for two main reasons:

> the first one concerning the possibility of still seeing the sea of flowers laying behind the painting; the second reason regards the material aspect, since glass and concrete are materials that are also prevalently used in Mies Van der Rohe architectural production.

Lastly, the exhibition also offers an alternative visiting path, specifically thought for passers-by and bystanders. As a matter of fact, it is possible to experience some parts of the exposition without entering the building, but by simply walking around the Neue Nationalgalerie and appreciating the paintings through the large glass windows surrounding the building. In this way the gallery truly functions as a glass garden house that allows people to peek into it and admire the wonders that are sealed inside.

KEYWORDS

O'Keeffe – garden – flowers – Lina Bo Bardi – Berlin

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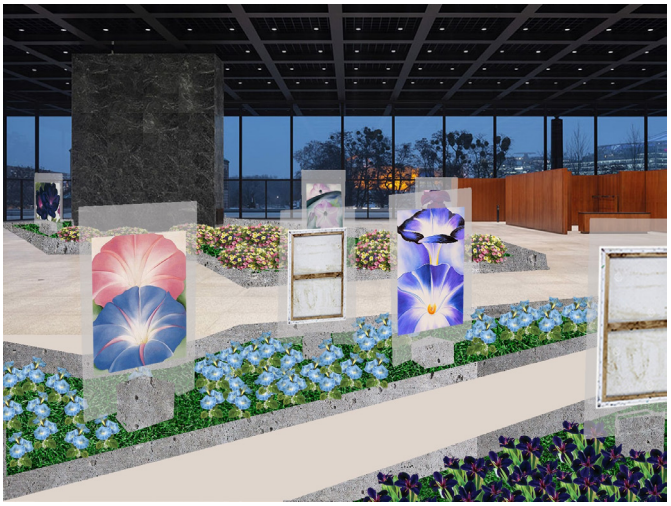


Fig. 1. *Inside View*, Collage, 2021.

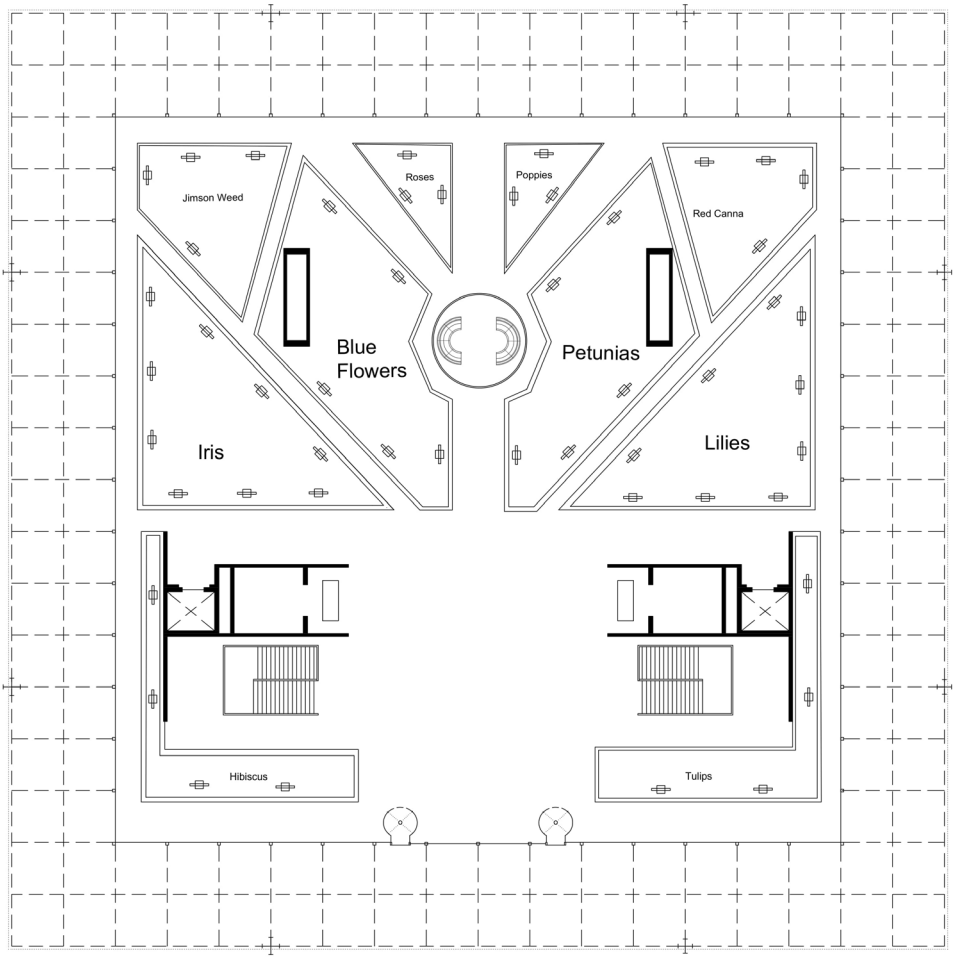


Fig. 2. *Plan*, Drawing, 2021.

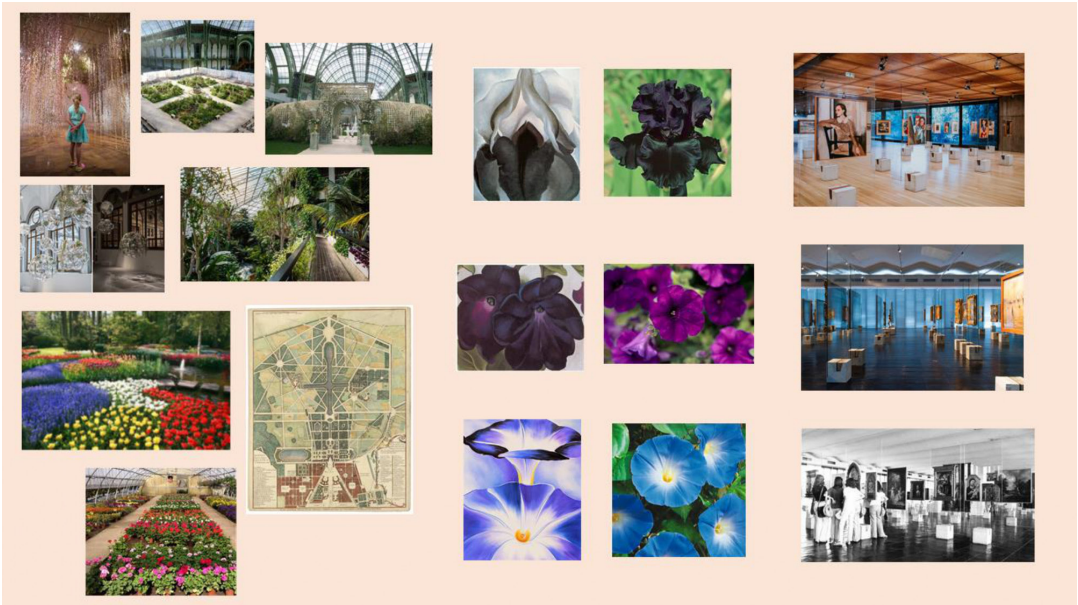


Fig. 3. *Atlas*, Collage, 2021.

LUIGI GHIRRI: MINIMAL JOURNEYS

AUTHORS:

Emanuele Fontanesi, Ana Maria Sanfilippo

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CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Through our curatorial choices, we aimed at creating tension between what can be considered an ultimate example of Modernist architecture and the photography of Luigi Ghirri, whose work can be qualified as post-modern. The space of the museum has been taken over and turned into specific sites in order to invite spectators to experience one's own relationship with the world through the photography of Luigi Ghirri.

We decided to organise for the viewers both physically and mentally minimal journeys, as his Sunday's escapades with the camera have been called. Every space was characterised by a choice of pictures based on a specific theme, though the arbitrariness of the division was stressed by the presence of alien pictures conceptually belonging to other sections. Our desire was to stress the fundamental unity of his work. In order to achieve this, we organised the space by precisely distributing the works to build an ideal path, without in any way preventing the spectators from creating their own journey [fig.1]. As it goes for mathematical addictions, changing the order of the addends does not change the sum.

The spectators were welcomed by a giant billboard that introduced right away the core of Ghirri's work:

the relationship between reality and its representation explored from a conceptual and poetic point of view.

At the same time, the image was located there to impede the passage and force the spectators to turn right once the journey inside the museum was concluded and to invite them to follow a specific direction. Once inside the museum, the spectators faced an apse-like structure. The sacredness of this structure, which was supposed to foster intimacy inside this modernist temple, was stressed by the presence of an image of clouds, a subject that particularly interested both Ghirri and a modernist photographer such as Alfred Stieglitz. Additionally, it was a *coin d'œil* to Ghirri's American counterpart, William Eggleston, whose colored image of a cloud was supposed to represent a new beginning for American photography in the 1970s in an exhibition that took place in Paris in 2009.

The apse was semi-transparent also to recall a panopticon, not as an instrument of control but as a way to stress the complexity of our world saturated of images, where the image (almost) living presence, enhanced by today's mediascape, makes the spectator wonder who's looking at who. The structure was built slightly on the left side of the museum to invite the spectators to continue their journey towards the next space, which was organised inside the wardrobe [fig.2]. We chose it to stress intimacy and bearing in mind the interiors that Ghirri took pictures of throughout the years, with a reference to the cabinets of curiosity with their specific approach to encyclopaedic collecting. Once out of the wardrobe the spectators were invited to enter a long alley flanking the façade on the left and a series of window-shops on the right [fig.3].

These window-shops were also a reference to Ghirri belonging to a generation of conceptual artists that often dealt with spaces to propose a different version of the institutional museum. Our aim was to create a tension between the intimacy of the Atlas [fig.4], as a site of contemplation and poetic reverie, and the Parisian passages, realm of consumption but also symbolic of a time where the relation between men and the images surrounding them deeply mutated. The spectators were

invited to reconsider their position in relation to the banality of their image-saturated present. The spectators walked along the windows on the side of the Nationalgalerie. Both the pictures and the spectators were also visible from the outside in order to stress the window-like quality and the dimension of the observer as observed. To experience it from the outside, the spectators were invited to make a right by the presence of the giant billboard. But again, no path was mandatory, and the surprise is welcomed by our curatorial intentions. Once at the corner, facing the vast void of the Nationalgalerie, the spectators might feel the opposition with the previously experienced small and intimate places.

This empty space is supposed to counter the modernist space with the postmodern quality of Ghirri's work. To enhance this tension, in the corner opposite the spectator is located a structure whose shape occupies and colonises the entire corner, that is thus englobed and disappears in a reproduction of " Teatro del Mondo" by Aldo Rossi.

The spectators were invited to walk inside the structure [fig.5]. The windows of the museum are used as walls where pictures are displayed, some visible from the inside, some from the outside.

Once out of the structure, the spectators were confronted with the choice of walking along the transparent façade, and in doing so experiencing just the surface of the building, or wandering inside it, looking at the other side of the scenography and therefore enhancing the tension between the nature of photography and the building itself, a documenting device and a representational tool with its own language which is never a mere copy of the world that lays beyond its frame.

Outside, another small reproduction of the Teatro del Mondo floats freely on the water, mimicking the original Teatro del Mondo arrived in Venice by sea. For us, it perfectly symbolises the ability of Luigi Ghirri to detect poetry in situations that others might observe with irony.

As demonstrated by the plan, we decided to use just the surface of the Nationalgalerie as if an attempt to conquer a modern space took place but never really succeeded. Along with irony and failure, proof of the highest respect for the museum, an element that qualifies postmodernism, came the poetic quality of the work of Ghirri and our curatorial choices that turn a modern symbol into a scenography for a poetic experience.

KEYWORDS:

Photography - Ghirri - Neue Nationalgalerie - Teatro del Mondo

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Luigi Ghirri, *Atlante*, 1973 (Atlante, 1973).

Luigi Ghirri, *Atlante*, 1973 (Atlante, 1973).

Luigi Ghirri, *Modena*, 1973 (km 0.25, 1973).

Luigi Ghirri, *Infinito*, 1974 (Infinito, 1974).

Luigi Ghirri, *Rimini*, 1977.

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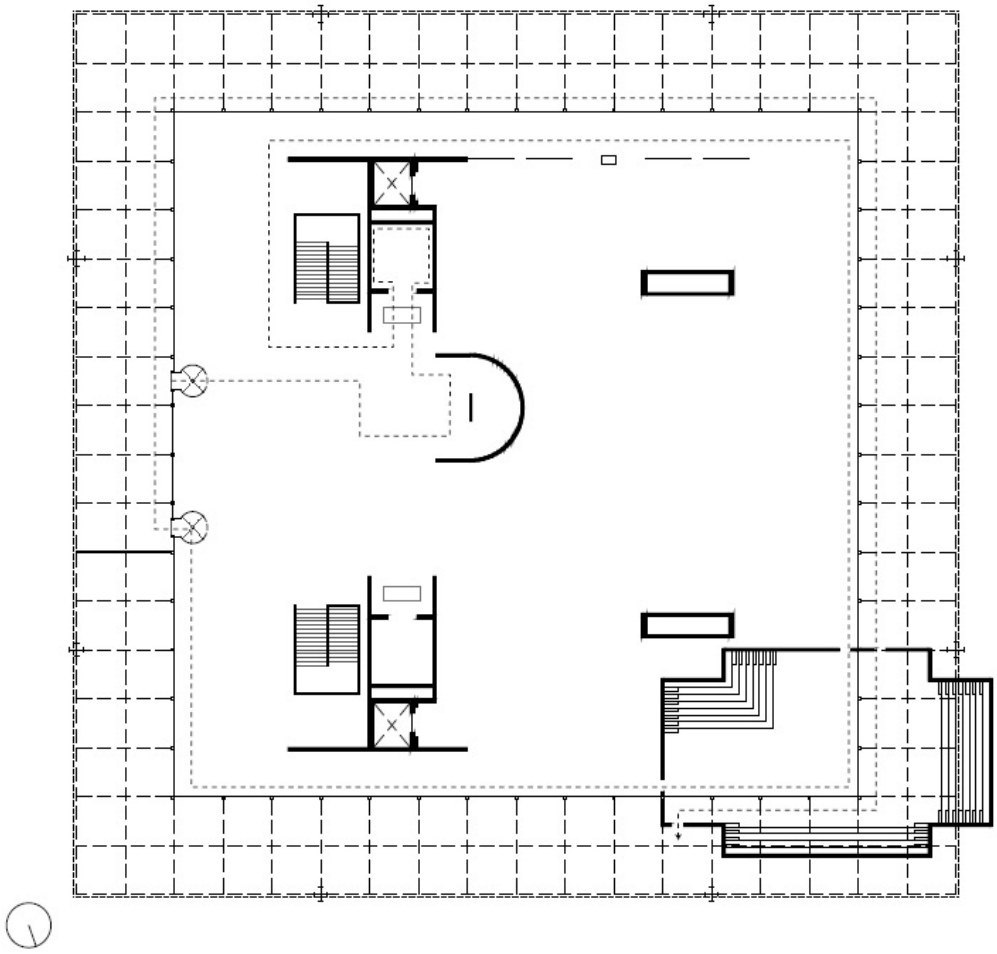


Fig. 1. *Plan*, Drawing, 2021.



Fig. 2. *Inside View: The Wardrobe*, Collage, 2021.

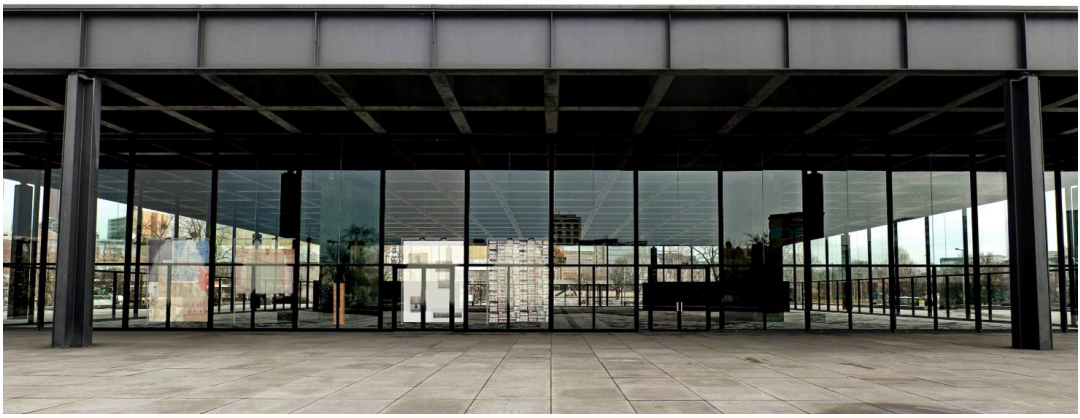


Fig. 3. *Inside View: The Window Shops*, Collage, 2021.

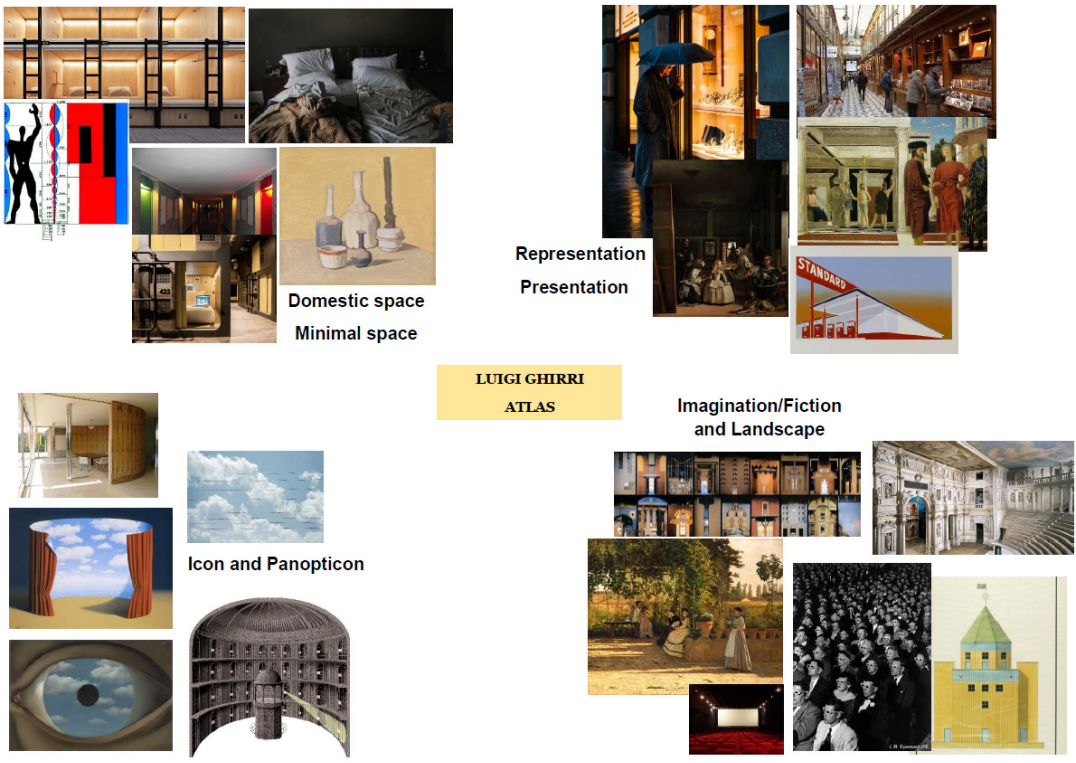


Fig. 4. *Atlas*, Collage, 2021.

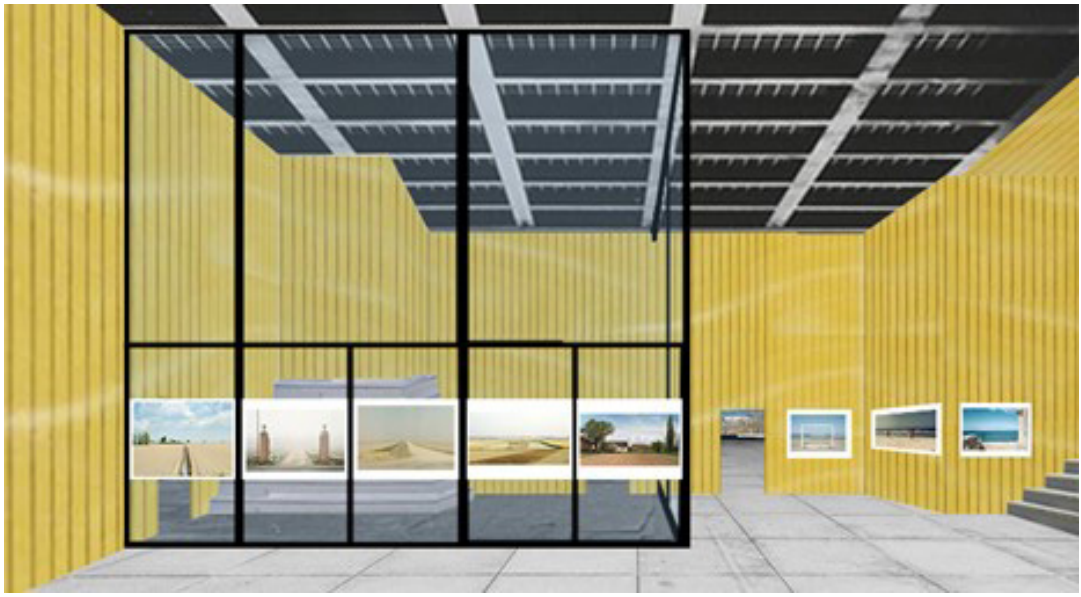


Fig. 5. *Outside View: The "Teatro del Mondo" by Aldo Rossi and its display*, Collage, 2021.

JENNY HOLZER: COUNTER - ATTACK

AUTHORS:

Concetta Luise, Maria Chiara Mazzoni, Elena Righini

CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Counterattack aims at providing a different vision of the art of Jenny Holzer. Born in 1950, the neo-conceptual American artist is well-known worldwide for her sharp tongue. Being an artist of the Picture Generation, her activity during the 1980s and 1990s was strictly connected to the popular visual representation means of communication of that time:

> posters, slogans, plaques. Marketing communication strategies became for Holzer's art mediums to discuss the political and social structure.

Counterattack has as its starting point Jenny Holzer's 2002 exhibition at Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin, an exhibition which focused on creating a coherent and geometrical relation between Holzer's art and Mies Van der Rohe's modernist gallery. Conversely, this show aims at highlighting contrasts between the two figures, employing Holzer's artworks to divide and transform the architect's free plan. The transparent building is thus obscured by Holzer's posters, which totally covered the back and partially covered the front and sides [Fig. 3]. Visitors and people outside are thus lured into the voyeurism of looking through the holes through colorful papers. The space is divided right in the middle [Fig. 1 and 2].

The first half has been left empty, only filled with three trucks from the series *It is Guns.* Displayed works by Holzer are often limited to her Truitisms and plaques, yet for this exhibition curators aimed at inserting outdoor elements inside an institutional venue where arts are showcased. These trucks were used by Holzer to spread messages around different cities, stimulating people to act, vote, and take a political standpoint. This fight against complacency is thus heated within the institution, to discuss it and encourage the art system to join the protest.

The second space is dark, separated from the other by a black wall printed with Holzer's gigantic phrase 'I'm fucking empty', which has also been taken out from her series of trucks. Two corridors connect the two spaces, providing separated entries and exits, allowing restricted access [Fig. 6]. The reason behind the choice of the phrase 'I'm fucking empty' are manifold. Firstly, it is an affront to the architecture of Mies Van Der Rohe, which is supposed to be empty and undivided. Secondly, it is an oxymoron because it is written on the wall of the dark room, full of Holzer's neon lights, hence definitely not empty. Thirdly, it totally respects the meaning that the artist attributed to it, between physical and psychological levels. Inside the dark room, it has been installed a 'forest of neon lights' putting together many neon artworks by Holzer in a way in which visitors really feel surrounded by them [Fig. 5]. Both the forest of neon lights and the voyeurism built up through the new colorful exterior of the gallery are attempts to stimulate participation and curiosity, as well as the contemporary need of taking photos in particular environments.

In the aftermath of the outbreak of the pandemic, where people have experienced a forced lockdown, this dark room becomes a place to rediscover interaction and play, a chance to enjoy physical reality again. The exhibition aims at responding to the visitors' urgent need for new and more immersive experiences in real life. Introducing the dark room, there are the two functional marble pilasters by Van der Rohe here used to show some Holzer's projections. In her projections' series, she displays written texts and phrases on buildings, walls and museums,

always communicating a complex message through concise words. The show is both didactic and entertaining. The two corridors, in fact, provide space for written panels about the artist, as well as the wooden walls of stairs and wardrobe. The first view the visitor gets when entering the exhibition space is meant to be strong and impressive [Fig. 4].

The big trucks appear with the background of 'I'm fucking empty', all surrounded by colorful posters. The whole exhibition offers a special point of view on the artist. The displayed works, indeed, are all artworks about politics, rooting the exhibition in the beginning of Jenny Holzer's practice. The title of the exhibition, *Jenny Holzer Counterattack,* refers to the counterculture of the 1970s, when Holzer started her protest, mostly through the posters which are one of the main characters of the show. At the same time, it is a pun which highlights how art can be a 'counterattack' to the cultural and social system. For this curatorial project, curators created the exhibition's plan, as well as a synthetic and pop plan to give to the visitors. They also made renderings of the exhibition space, starting from some both indoor and outdoor images of the Neue Nationalgalerie. To visualise the process of analysis and connections of content, they created an atlas to collect all the ideas involved in the birth of the exhibition. Lastly, an A4 double faced flayer complemented the exhibition [Fig. 7 and 8]. On one side, it contains brief information about the show, while on the other it features a small poster with the white phrase 'I'm fucking empty' printed on black paper.

Folded in 8 parts, the brochure becomes a small, handy and pretty object to be carried around by visitors.

KEYWORDS

Jenny Holzer - Truism - Counterculture - Square - Politics

CHECKLIST / ARTISTS

All the displayed artworks are by Jenny Holzer.

Three Trucks from the series *It is Guns*, 2018

Truisms and Inflammatory Essays, from 1977

Leds, from 1989

Projections, from 1996

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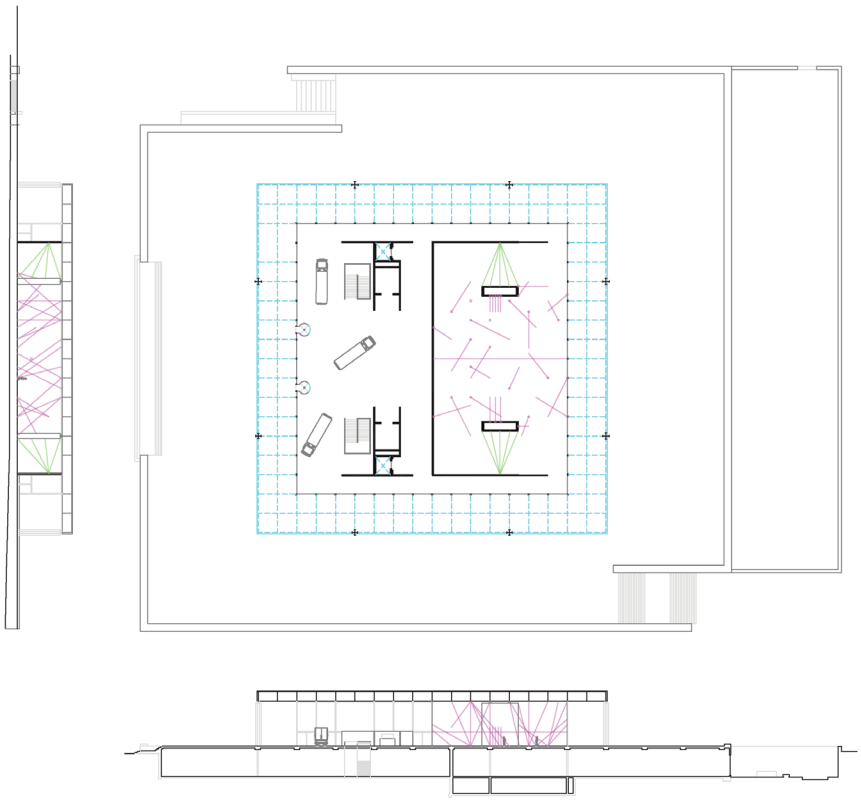


Fig. 1. *Plan and prospects of the exhibition space*, drawings, 2021.

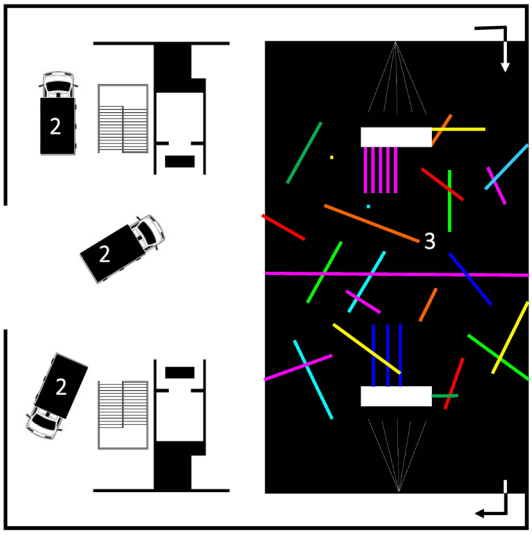


Fig 2. *Synthetic plan of the exhibition space*, drawing, 2021.



Fig. 3. *External view of the exhibition space*, rendering, 2021.



Fig. 4. *Internal view of the exhibition space from the entrance*, rendering, 2021.



Fig. 5. *Internal view of the exhibition dark space*, rendering, 2021.

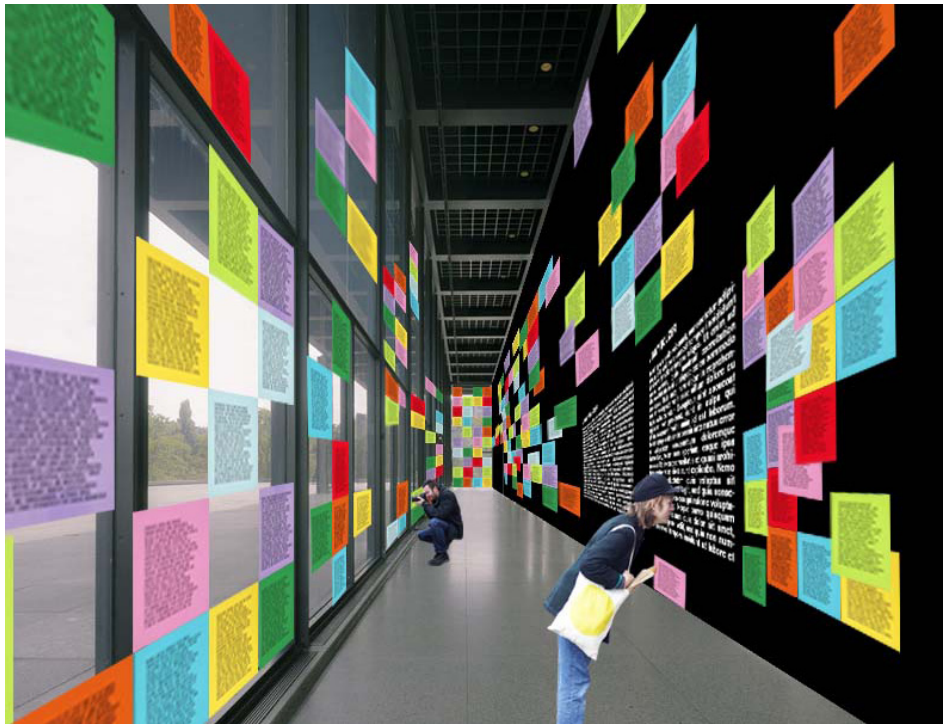


Fig. 6. Internal view of the exhibition space. Detail of the connecting corridor between the light and dark space, rendering, 2021.

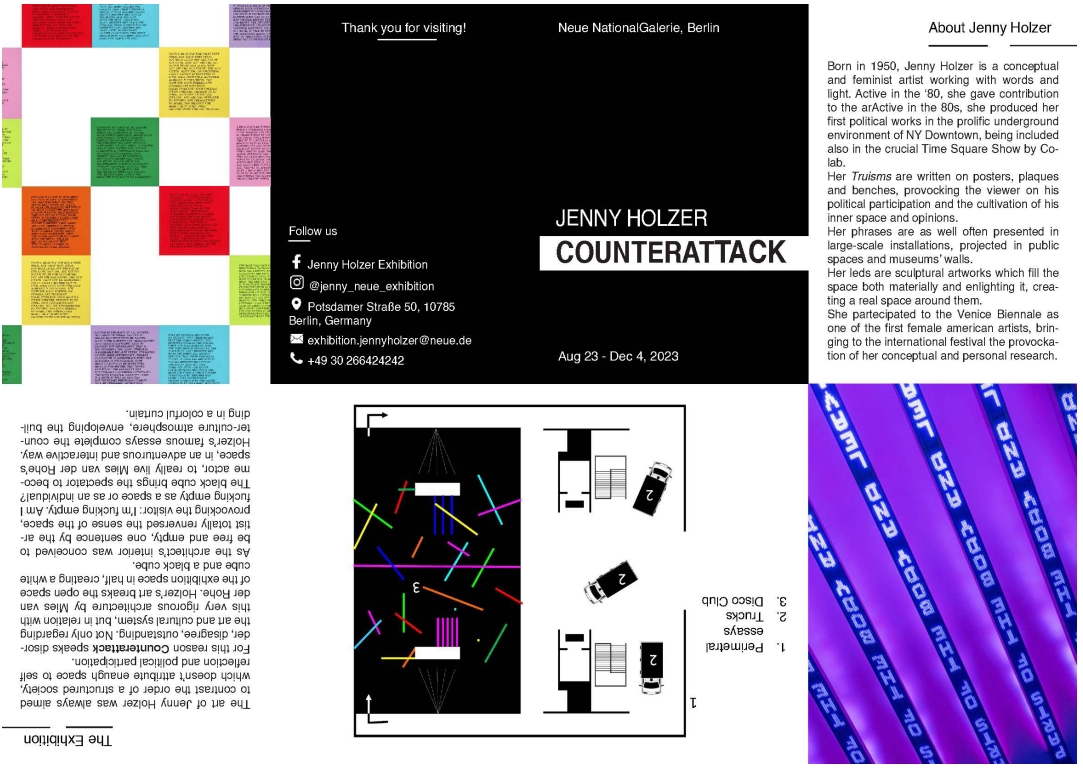


Fig. 7. *Front of the brochure*, collage, 2021.



Fig. 8. *Back of the brochure*, collage, 2021.



Fig. 9. *Exhibition's Atlas*, collage, 2021.

BILL VIOLA: THE SUBLIME

AUTHORS:

Viviana Sacchi, Beatrice Sartori, Paolo Spagnoletti

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CURATORIAL STATEMENT

In April 1982, Jean-François Lyotard perfectly depicted art's ability to represent the absolute, through the concept of the Sublime.

According to the philosopher, when art is 'an ungraspable allusion to the invisible within the visible', it might produce what he refers to as the Sublime. This physical and spiritual artistic effect is not based on the concept of beauty; instead, it is based on tension and the process created by the juxtaposition of different polar points. Lyotard's vision was the philosophical concept that influenced the curatorial choices for the display and presentation of the work of the Italian-American artist Bill Viola at the Neue Nationalgalerie. Bill Viola was born in New York in 1951 and, in the early '70s, he started to create video art installations aimed at attracting the viewer's gaze in real, immersive environments.

Usually, his works were placed in dark places with videos and special effects aiming to investigate human existence. In his works, some recurring themes can be found. Some topics are life, death, transcendence and all matters of moral importance for human beings. Through his videos, Bill proposes mystical themes for the spectators, inviting them to develop a deeper knowledge and an inner consciousness through a private and subjective experience. Secondly, Viola has focused on individual empathic involvement through the use of slow motion. This technique is used to extend the duration of actions to create an unnatural emotional expression. The purpose is to make the unconscious aspects of our inner essence, that would otherwise be unnoticed and ungraspable, visible to the viewer's eyes. Moreover, he uses the elements of nature as a metaphor for the human condition, in particular water, which is considered as a veil that helps to go beyond the surface of things, a threshold that has to be overcome to explore the individual's spirituality. Therefore, Viola also tries to create a spiritual and religious environment, often referring to Christianity and Renaissance, which earned him the name of "electronic painter". Indeed, his video installations include large-scale images which are projected on plasma or LCD screens, evoking the type of intimacy of religious art, from altarpieces to the intimate dimension of votive paintings. For these reasons, the project aims at proposing a spiritual journey across a series of chapels, during which the visitor is encouraged to contemplate universal questions about the human condition, passing the threshold of the Neue Nationalgalerie designed by Mies van der Rohe.

The chapels were chosen due to the necessity to create a spiritual threshold, thanks to which the visitor can experience an environment without any spatial-temporal relations, enhanced by the darkness of the space. In this way, the exhibition location became a liminal space that could allow the visitors to enter a universal condition.

Following the curatorial vision, the construction of the plan looked at the shapes created by the movement of water. In fact, the decision to mimic the shape of drops is a reference to an important leitmotif in Viola's work and also to spirituality. The organic circular pattern created by the water has also been combined with the concept of the central plan church. In order to display the flow of the water and the pattern of the chapels, the architectonic work of Saana's Project, with its organic circular shapes, and Petra Blaisse's sinuous and curved curtains, resembling a long and continuous wave, were used as inspirations. Both

present panels which divide the space into sections, creating a very picturesque/charming environment. The exhibition path is composed of four parts. *The Threshold* is the first section, a common area outside the real exhibition, completely devoted to the mediation. The public is provided with wireless headphones to isolate themselves and tablets with information about the main theme of the exhibition and the artists' works.

This way, the visitor will not be bothered by any distractions in the exhibition space. Once visitors have passed *The Threshold*, they will be ready to start their spiritual journey across the two sections of *Spiritual Sublime* and *Human Sublime*. The space is characterized by darkness and is defined by semicircular chapels, making the works of art look like religious icons. This is the space dedicated to the visitor's spiritual journey. Since the walls reach the ceiling, the sinuous structure will be covered with a mirror to reflect the light of the videos, creating an interplay of light in an endless space. At the end of the path, there will be three chapels where the viewer can experiment with the methodology of works created by Bill Viola. The whole exhibition aims at being an individual path, enhanced by the use of headphones in order to experience the concept of the Sublime in different ways:

through sound, visually and emotionally.

The construction of the plan has been a progressive effort in establishing a dialogue with the miesian space. We are still researching and working with the plan in order to obtain a curved and homogeneous structure which follows one system of representation and that would incorporate the architectural elements of the museum. The Neue Nationalgalerie will be filled with an 8-metres irregular mirroring structure that creates a distorted and ungraspable reflecting effect that multiplies the environment around the viewer, who can walk around the perimetrical space. This reflective structure is the highest representation of the Sublime:

a form impossible to understand in its entirety.

KEYWORDS:

Threshold, - Bill Viola - Spiritual journey

CHECKLIST / ARTISTS

Bill Viola, The Nantes Tryptich, 1992

Bill Viola, The World of Appearances, 2000

Bill Viola, Emergence, 2002

Bill Viola, Ocean Without a Shore, 2007

Bill Viola, Tristano et Isotta - Ascension, 2015

Bill Viola, Martyrs, 2014

Bill Viola, The Veiling, 1995

Bill Viola, Catherine's room, 2001

Bill Viola, Dolorosa, 2000

Bill Viola, Basin of Tears, 2005

Bill Viola, The Sleepers, 1992

Bill Viola, The Raft, 2004

Bill Viola, Quintet of the Silent, 2000

Bill Viola, Heaven and Earth, 1992

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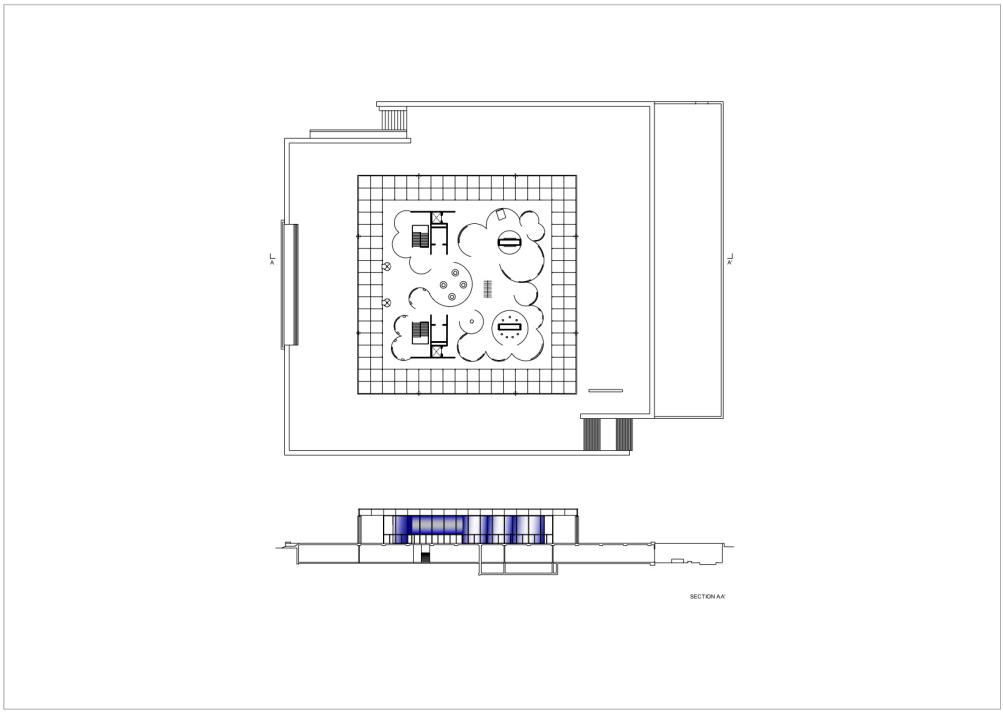


Fig. 1. *Plan*, Drawings, 2021.



Fig. 2. *Outside*, Collage, 2021.



Fig. 3. *Inside*, Collage, 2021.

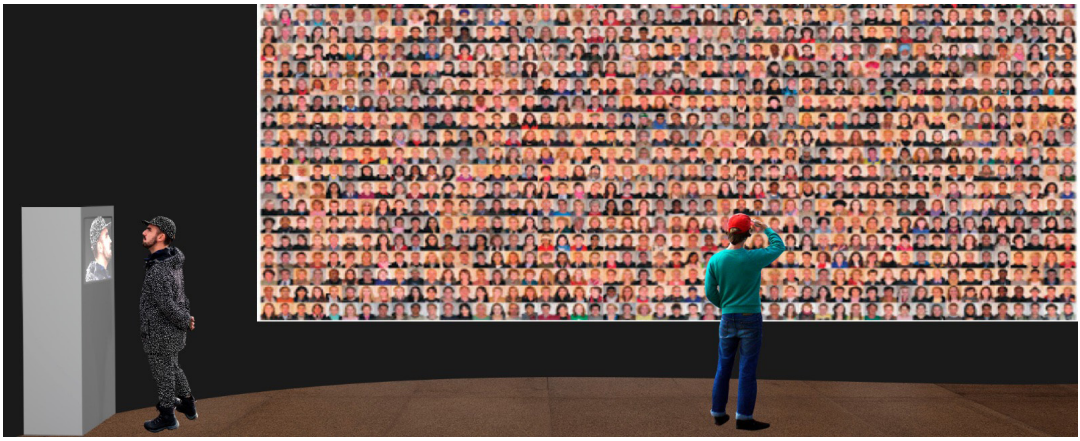


Fig. 4. *Interactive Space*, Collage, 2021.

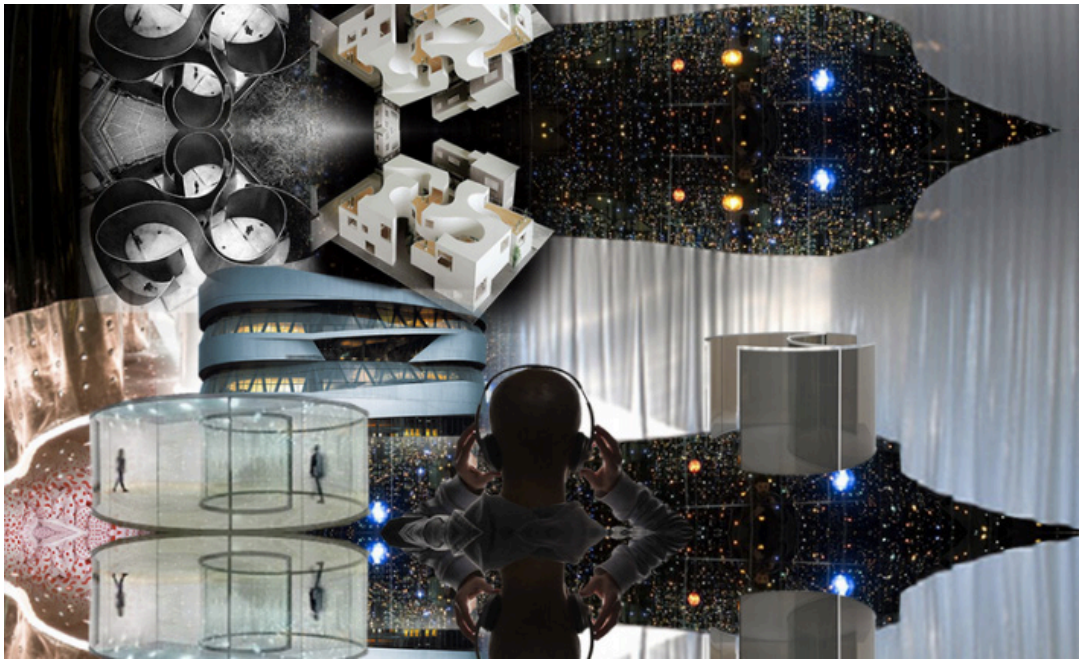


Fig. 5. *Atlas 1*, Collage, 2021.



Fig. 6. *Atlas 2*, Collage, 2021.

COURSE TITLE:

CURATORIAL PRACTICES & CONTEMPO-RARY ART

Reflections on art in public and shared spaces

HELD BY:

Roberto Pinto

COURSE TIMETABLE:
II year, II semester.

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The course “Curating the Contemporary” focused on art created in public and shared spaces, and how it has changed in recent decades, not only in its forms but also in the role it acquired. Throughout the twentieth century - as we have seen, for instance, with the most recent Black Lives Matter popular protest episodes - the long and important history of monuments, which were traditionally placed in squares and in symbolic places of the city to be admired and appreciated by the citizens, has been questioned by the changing nature of society itself.

Although the monument hasn’t completely disappeared and its function hasn’t been completely emptied, it doesn’t play the central role it was assigned in the past anymore. In fact, more and more, there are occasions in which traditional sculptures have been replaced by innovative artistic practices, which no longer aim to celebrate economic and political power but rather to create artistic forms that relate more closely to the places where they are located, not only in terms of their architectural and symbolic configuration but also taking into consideration the history and traditions that characterize them, and, above all, trying to establish a more concrete and participatory dialogue with the various communities and the many individuals who inhabit those spaces in which the artists intend to work and intervene.

The whole course, therefore, reflected on how art has reacted to the transformation of public space and how it has sometimes contributed to it, wondering how such artistic experimentation has partly changed the hierarchy of values and perspectives of contemporary art.

In particular, the laboratory part of the course aimed to involve students in the analysis of contemporary, sometimes recently realized, artistic works/events. Each of them chose a case study as a personal insight, a topic that was then submitted to the class for public debate during a presentation. All the artistic interventions chosen were therefore means of comparison and exchange among the students as well. Collectively, these case studies broadened the topics of discussion and, at the same time, were a useful critical exercise. They served to re-discuss the boundaries and the concept of art itself, making us go deeper into the transformation and the role that this particular cultural expression has assumed in the last decades, above all, trying to understand how art has acquired a more conscious political dimension through the contributions of individual artists.

Some of the students in this course have therefore started from the case study tackled in class and the debate that often followed to propose the text which is to be found in this volume. These texts cannot, nor do they intend to, restore the complexity of the multifaceted range of cases examined (nor even less so of the production of art linked to public spaces), but they do represent interesting cores of a situation that is magmatically evolving but which turns out to be an interesting point of observation of current art and of the ever-increasing variety of knowledge and learning that are necessary to deal with when it comes to contemporary art.

“Although the monument hasn’t completely disappeared and its function hasn’t been completely emptied, it doesn’t play the central role it was assigned in the past anymore.”

SOPHIE KRIER / SCHOOL OF VERTICALITY

Mending connections in an ever-changing ethos

AUTHOR:

Anna Allegri

In *Problems and Transformations in Critical Art*, French philosopher Jacques Rancière stated that "art no longer wants to respond to the excess of commodities and signs, but to a lack of connections" (Rancière 2009, 73).

In fact, the limited communication between communities, ethnic groups and cultures is unfortunately indicative of contemporary society, where diversity is often received with hostility, and instead of welcoming new cultures, understanding them and benefitting from an exchange with them, the general tendency is to marginalize less dominant groups and to confine everyone into the cage of their "own culture", a tight container that is inaccessible to anyone who was not born inside of it.

The Italian region of South Tyrol has been intensively experiencing this cultural division. Italians and Germans, the two ethnic and linguistic groups that coexist on the territory, , often have no meeting and exchange points, despite the fact that they find themselves sharing the territory, the cities and generally every aspect of daily life. It is to try to overcome this lack of connections that the *School of Verticality* project was created by Belgian artist Sophie Krier. This series of meetings was aimed at bringing together the various communities present in the area, as well as helping them to get back in touch with their land and with practices which are now in decline. Sophie Krier was born in 1976 in Halle, Belgium, but she grew up in the Netherlands, and is now living and working between the Netherlands and France. Having always been in contact with a multitude of cultures, Krier decided to center her work around sociological research. In fact, she interweaves biographies of beings and places through the creation of tools and situations aimed at collective narration and reflection (Krier, 2020). She often begins her research with a first phase that involves intense periods of fieldwork with local communities, a practice she calls "place acupuncture". This consists in the development of a series of targeted events designed to reveal the hidden peculiarities of the territory, including them in the artistic practice and sharing them with the community. In the past, she studied weaving, an activity that strongly influenced all of her following works. In her own words:

> «I think now all I do is weave: weaving means crossing and creating links between different things. I always do this, but it takes many different forms: making bread, exchanging seeds, making a loom: the base of everything is intertwining» (Radio Alto Adige, 2019).

School of Verticality can be seen as the culmination of her poetic, already present, even if not as well-developed, in some of her previous projects. The traces of the events created in South Tyrol can be seen in *Champs Libre*, an installation designed by Krier in 2005, consisting of a platform which was placed in a public park in Luxembourg. The creation was meant to be an echo of the city warlike architecture that seeked to divert the defensive-aggressive mindset embedded in such structures into a generous principle and it resulted in a site that became a meeting point.

In 2017 she returned to the idea of creating a community space with *Metamorfose Lokaal,* an outdoor public classroom in which various types of lectures could be held for whomever desired to take part.[1] Krier describes herself as a relational artist, researcher, educator and editor (Krier, 2020). Her practice mirrors the words of Claire Bishop from her anthology of essays on community-based art practices, *Participation,*

1 To see more of Krier's works and how she focuses on community in

a text that has notably inspired Krier. Here Claire Bishop explains that the salient point for reading community artworks is:

> *the social dimension of participation - rather than activation of the individual viewer in so-called 'interactive' art and installation* [...] *those artistic practices that appropriate social forms as a way to bring art closer to everyday life: intangible experiences.* (**Bishop 2006, 10**)

The social dimension of participation is central to Krier's works and it is the feature that attracted the attention of Lungomare, a cultural association based in Bolzano, which for years has been committed to cultural promotion on the territory in which it operates, South Tyrol.[2]

Throughout the years, the association has promoted a series of long-term residency projects, in which the artists who were invited had the chance to engage and interact within the context of the region, while keeping in consideration the three main principles of the association:

> specific attention to the context in which the projects are undertaken, the trans-disciplinary approach that distinguishes these projects, and a reflection on the role of Lungomare as a cultural institution in connection with the region in which it operates (Lungomare, 2021).

This need was born out of the peculiar ethos of the region, whose demographic structure has been characterized for a long time by the coexistence of two populations, one speaking German and the other speaking Italian. This specificity has generated a unique mix of cultures which have a singular relationship with a territory that is culturally Austrian but politically Italian.[3] Moreover, in recent years the social and demographic composition of South Tyrol has seen some changes, with migrants arriving from all over the world, adding even more variety to the complex mix of cultures that influence every aspect of life in the valley.

Integration is often hard, and even mutual exchanges between the two indigenous populations are more often than not hindered by cultural factors that risk to undermine the creation of a more cohesive community. Roberto Gigliotti, a member of Lungomare's staff, explained that they thought about what it means to move and migrate, and that Sophie Krier expanded the issue more broadly by no longer focusing solely on social phenomena but discussing nature in its entirety as well: migrating as sharing stories, crossing society and nature (Radio Alto Adige, 2019). According to Nicolas Bourriaud, who theorized *Relational Aesthetics* in 1998, contemporaneity has pushed artists:

> (*to*) *produce linked artistic practices: an art form where the substrate is formed by intersubjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme. The "encounter" between beholder and picture and the collective elaboration of meaning.* (**Bourriaud 2002, 15**)

These residencies are in fact conceived as occasions for the artists involved to create experiences, the aim isn't to produce an object but to investigate cultural and socio-political processes relating to the territory and to transpose them into a cultural event. Since «art tightens the space of

her practice: *Sophie Krier Official Website*. Accessed July 10, 2021. https://sophiekrier.com/.

2 The first of the series of residencies was held in 2014, when Turkish artist Can Altay confronted similar issues, the socio-cultural complexities of Bolzano and South Tyrol through his project Radical Hospitality. Here he scrutinized, questioned and engaged with issues surrounding hospitality as the temporary condition of relational and social space through exhibitions, panel discussions and poster campaigns aimed at raising awareness on issues such as homing rights, territorial claims, the urban imagination and the experience of boundaries. To know more about *Radical Hospitality* and on Lungomare's other long-term residencies: *Lungomare Official Website*. Accessed July 9, 2021. https://www.lungomare.org/archive/project/lungomare-residency-radical-hospitality-can-altay/.

3 To learn more about the history of South Tyrol and the sociological processes that characterize the region see the dedicated bibliography.

relations» (Bourriard, 2002:14), the artistic practice does not aim at making an object, but at becoming a mediator between cultures. *School of Verticality* was conceived following all of these principles, integrated with Krier's usual approach of creating an artistic experience through the interaction with the community. The first step in bringing together the project for the Lungomare residence was a comprehensive research collected under the name of *Where on Earth do we belong?.*

For it, the artist spent four months (from May to August 2018) traveling the region and familiarizing with it. During this preliminary fieldwork, which served to identify the critical issues around which to center the enterprise, Krier attempted to map multiple life directions related to the territory through encounters with both the population and their locations.

Subsequently, the resulting biographies were put into a collective story, woven with the landscape and then arranged as to «enunciate alternative cosmographies of the Trentino-Alto Adige region» (Lungomare, 2021). To achieve this geography of life, the artist held countless meetings and discussions with people all around the South Tyrol area, speaking to farmers, weavers, bakers, craftsmen as well as archeologists, anthropologists and about various topics, such as traditional textile crafts, the coexistence of "new" and "old" South Tyroleans, the material culture and the historical dimensions of the territory.

This in-depth analysis was integrated with talks and round tables organized in order to better understand how to «stimulate the gathering and sharing of knowledge between the different cultures that come into contact with the territory» (ibid.). At a lecture held on June 5th 2018, Krier presented the project developed after all her research and investigation, starting from the two main questions that she wanted to discuss in order to explore a new aspect of the link between a territory and its inhabitants:

> where on earth do we belong? What already forgotten forms of life and work can we visualize and reinvent together? This is how *School of Verticality* was born.

The project was presented as a «format in which knowledge meets in a process of mutual enrichment of all participants» (ibid.). The "verticality" present in the title refers to «an investigation that crosses the layers of society, extending from the bottom of the valley to the top of the mountains, interweaving history, culture, and geomorphology» (ibid).

School of Verticality was divided into three chapters, for a total of four parts. Each corresponded to an event with specific activities aimed at obtaining the participation of the population living in specific areas. From the main cities, to more rural areas up to the altitude of a mountaintop, the events took place in different settings, carefully selected to present an overview of different living conditions in relation to nature and land. The participants of this public artistic experience were not the archetypical target audience of the art world, and the events took place in settings that are very far from a normal artistic environment.

Instead, Krier selected urban gardens, fairs, alpine refuges and altogether meaningful community spaces, also bearing in mind the need to pay particular attention to the relationship said community had with the territory, a link hard to comprehend for an "outsider" like herself. Indeed, one of the challenges of this project had to do with the fact that the artist appointed herself with the task of representing a community she wasn't a part of, and whose strong sense of belonging made it

a seemingly impassable group. The solution to this problem manifested the very moment the recipients of the enterprise were defined:

> *School of Verticality*'s aim was not just to represent the majority of the public through art. Instead, art needed to connect with all of the people who interacted with it, whichever their background might be.

Only in this way could the contribution be meaningful, because its goal was to tie together different communities whose only common ground was the space they shared, the territory, contributing to the creation of a wider, more inclusive, and empowered society that benefited from the cultural contributions that different backgrounds could offer. *School of Verticality* was a concept that grew upwards: each meeting, as suggested by the name of the project itself, took place at an ever-greater altitude.

Starting from the bottom, the first chapter, *Weaving Stories*, was held right in the middle of the main city of the province, Bolzano. The location chosen was the community garden Semirurali, a significant venue because of its social value:

> the park hosts a shared harvesting garden, a communal space located in a low-income housing neighborhood with a high prevalence of immigration. Here, residents can work their land together in a collective effort that truly bears fruits, thus benefiting the entire community (Corriere dell'Alto Adige, n.d.). This place was born out of the need to share and interact through the agricultural practice, which has been crucial to the region's economy for hundreds of years, and which is being increasingly abandoned in favor of growing urbanization.

For *Weaving Gardens*, Sophie Krier created a permanent intervention that was presented and inaugurated on September 22nd, 2018:

> a vertical loom in a garden designed to create fragments of a fabric that depicted stories and memories of the garden [fig.1]. The covered loom, as well as the fabric resulting from the weaving process, was devised to remain on site as a permanent structure that could be used for multiple purposes (music podium, storage) and that, over the next few seasons, could intertwine with the vegetation cultivated in the garden.

The aim of the installation was to invite visitors to «weave their personal stories and ideas of a garden on an outdoor loom using the inclusive technique of plain weave, in a joint weaving action lasting for months after the inauguration». Several women's groups from the Donne Nissà network, a cross-cultural association of women who cultivate the values of hospitality, diversity, sustainability and sharing (Donne Nissà, 2021), helped participants in sketching their design and subsequently weaving it on the loom, perpetuating the tradition of a nowadays lesser-known practice steeped in great historical value. Thus, the fabric grew, enriched by the stories of gardens from all over the world, all coming together mediated by the local tradition of weaving. In fact this practice, which has historically been very present on the territory, is nowadays being slowly forgotten and substituted by industrial weaving. One of the talks that accompanied the inauguration intended to investigate precisely this phenomenon. The subject was the gendered history of weaving in South Tyrol, a dialogue with Meranese weaver Cornelia Larcher. For her it is evident how much weaving is intrinsic to the identity of South Tyrolean women:

> *Language carries with it traces of the central role it has played, as emerges from numerous expressions that refer to it: fare il filo a qualcuno, perdere il filo del discorso, fare la spola da un posto all'altro, trovare il bandolo della matassa, dare filo da torcere; 4 in peasant society the expression fare filò referred to that moment of the day when, usually in the stables during the winter evenings, you could meet up with other people, be in company and have a chat. Even the English term commonly used to indicate the means of transport called shuttle derives from a weaving tool that contains the yarn and carries it from one side of the warp to the other. Threads, fabrics and motifs accompany us in everyday life.* (Larcher 2018)

4 The aforementioned sentences are all colloquialisms that incorporate weaving lexicon into everyday expressions.

Following this first reflection on the significance of social practices as a means to connect with history and cultures, the second chapter of *School of Verticality* discussed landscape, landscape management, and farming in two distinct workshops focusing on the coexistence of diversity and tradition. Chapter II was therefore divided into two parts, the first one being *Seeding Stories* [fig. 2]. The context this first meeting was developed around was the very first edition of Semen-Fest, an event that takes place in a more rural setting compared to the urban loom, in a mountain town where the population is predominantly involved with agriculture and farming. The event was created to give farmers the opportunity to buy and exchange various types of seeds necessary for harvest.

Here, as well as in Bolzano, Krier wanted to explore how the community had transformed in recent years, and to discover if the changes had somehow impacted farming traditions or if, instead, the potential novelties brought by migrations had not interfered with them. The event was set out to answer one question:

> can we imagine and experience new ways of learning from each other by looking at local practices such as seeding, harvesting, processing, bread baking and eating? (Seeding Stories 2019).

Seeding Stories wanted to implement the opportunity of exchange offered by the event with a reflection on cultural contamination. As Krier put it:

> "I am interested in exchanging stories and biographies as well as seeds" (Radio Alto Adige 2019).

Hoping that exchange could be perceived as a form of new, added knowledge, and considering each seed as a story, she created an envelope, a container for foreign seeds selected together with an ethnobotanist. Furthermore, whoever desired to give their contribution could download the form to donate a story, along with a seed that was meaningful to them.[5] The forms turned out to be small books that described the seed that they contained, how this could be put to good use to obtain species of plants that were not native to the territory, and contained the story that the person who decided to share the seed wanted to tell, with the intent to collect different narrations and then to pluck the fruit of this gemination.

Breaking Bread, the second part of Chapter II, also related to harvesting practices and sharing traditions, took place on April 14th,

5 To download the template for *Seeding Stories: Lungomare Official Website*. Accessed July 10, 2021. https://www.lungomare.org/archive/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/SoV_A4SeedPackaging.DEF-DEF-DEF.pdf.

2019, in the frame of the *Hier und da* festival in Schludern, an eventthat has as its main objective to re-think the rural areas of the future and present initiatives to build network and stimulate participants through cultural excursions, concerts, interactions in public space and much more (Hier und Da Festival, 2019). For this festival, Krier asked the public to join her at the Kulturhaus and, helped by a local baker, to bake bread with her. Breads of various types from all over the world were baked, resulting in another exchange of knowledge between cultures that found themselves in the same place. A significant result came from combining the recipe of the loaf of traditional bread from South Tyrol mixed together with an Arab recipe. These were weaved together as an example of how the two cultures can not only coexist, but enrich one another, while also giving birth to something new. Roberto Gigliotti stated that:

> "Despite having a well-defined aesthetic dimension, interventions of this type can be a seed to actually transform what is happening" (Radio Alto Adige 2019). But how can such an experience be assimilated as a lesson that can become a meaningful part of everyday life? Baking bread is perhaps the most human and unifying act: it is an activity that is shared all over the world and, even if it differs from one region to the other, it is a daily renewal of tradition. By making bread, we connect with our own heritage, and at the same time we share a practice with the rest of humanity. Through this artistic process this relation is made tangible and translatable into a sense of empathy towards others that will accompany the participants in their day-to-day lives.

For the last chapter of *School of Verticality*, Sophie Krier's source of inspiration was American artist Allan Kaprow's happening *OVERTIME* (1968).

On this occasion Kaprow gathered a group of students who, following his instructions, collectively moved a 60-meter wooden snow fence 1 mile westwards, an effort to explicitly critique capitalist labour (Darko 1970, 125-144). 51 years later Krier re-staged this happening on the Villanderer Alm [fig. 3], giving it new meaning by relating it to the context in which it was recreated. The goal was to move a 60-metre snow fence over a distance of 1.6 kilometres thanks to the collective efforts of 31 "happeners", beginning at sunset and then continuing to move the fence throughout the night. The action's goal wasto visualize a border and then express its ephemerality. What *Overtime Happening* wanted to demonstrate is that there is no definite border and every boundary is mobile.

The experience was communal and the night was an opportunity to create connections between participants and realize that there isn't any real, physical separation between people from different backgrounds. Krier (Krier, Christel 2021, 157) explained the value of reenacting this happening in South Tyrol as an act that is intrinsic to the very characteristics of the region itself:

> ***It says a lot about one of the borders, or boundaries, which is very tangible in everyday life in South Tyrol and plays an important role in how society and education is structured, that is, the linguistic one. So to me, the South Tyrol region is defined by its borders and boundaries: geological, natural, linguistic, cultural. But there are also other borders that were***

> ***more painful to witness, for instance the immigration border. South Tyrol has become a bottleneck for immigrants from Africa and the Middle East who are trying to get to northern European countries like Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Even if they enter Europe from the south of Italy, they will encounter another border between Italy and Austria at the Brenner–Brennero frontier, which is increasingly militarized and even locked down at times. And last but not least, there is the ecological boundary across nature and culture that is slowly shifting the landscape from a traditional polycultural way of farming to an industrialized monocultural use of the land.***

The ephemerality of this last chapter stresses the purely relational aspect of the artistic experience. In the words of Claire Bishop (2006, 10):

> ***Although the photographic documentation of these projects implies a relationship to performance art, they differ in striving to collapse the distinction between performer and audience, professional and amateur, production and reception. Their emphasis is on collaboration, and the collective dimension of social experience.***

And it is precisely the collective dimension of *School of Verticality* that held the potential to empower the community and positively affect society. Sophie Krier aimed at promoting interchange by creating links among the people who participated in her projects, bonds that will grow like the seeds that were exchanged, effectively promoting collaboration between all the ethnic groups present in the region. One year after the project, Krier sent the participants some postcards that showed a picture from the happening on one side and a sentence said by one of the "happeners" during the night on the other. One of them reads: «at the end I thought: now we can start». The significance of the statement lies in its ability to perfectly sum up Krier's resolution: "My work is about mending relationships between beings and places" (Krier 2020). Therefore, the aim of the interventions was to pave the way to the creation of a more inclusive and aware community, where tradition welcomes novelty while not forgetting itself. In the words of Claire Bishop (2006, 12), art practices of participation show a deep desire to create an active subject:

> ***One who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation. The hope is that the newly-emancipated subjects of participation will find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality. An aesthetic of participation therefore derives legitimacy from a (desired) causal relationship between the experience of a work of art and individual/collective agency [...] to produce a more positive and non-hierarchical social model.***

> ***It involves a perceived crisis in community and collective responsibility.*** [...] ***One of the main impetuses behind participatory art has therefore been a restoration of the social bond through a collective elaboration of meaning.***

Being a temporary activity that had permanent consequences, *School of Verticality* was for South Tyrol a much needed reminder that we can only grow stronger by learning from each other, and that cooperation is necessary in order to evolve as a society.

https://sophiekrier.com/portfolio/school-of-verticality-weaving-gardens/

Fig. 1. Sophie Krier, Weaving Gardens, 2018, opening event of the installation. From Weaving Gardens, Sophie Krier Official Website, accessed January, 13, 2022.

https://sophiekrier.com/portfolio/school-of-verticality-seeding-stories/

Fig. 2. Sophie Krier, Seeding Stories, February 23, 2019, pictures of the event. From Seeding Stories, Sophie Krier Official Website, accessed January, 13, 2022.

https://sophiekrier.com/portfolio/school-of-verticality-overtime/

Fig. 3. Sophie Krier, OVERTIME, May 25, 2019, pictures of the happening. From OVERTIME, Sophie Krier Official Website, accessed January, 13, 2022.

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DISEMPOWE-RING THE WALL

Teeter-totter, an artistic intervention by Rael San Fratello

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FIRST SECTION:
U.S. - Mexico Border wall:
an evolving context.

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Alfredo Jaar and JR.

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This paper's aim is to acknowledge the importance of art meant as a tool to tear down barriers, acting as a new peaceful weapon to define new resilient strategies and new cross-border policy. The research will focus on some tricky issues around the border wall that divides the US and Mexico, in order to unveil the potential of art to *detour* or even – in a few of the best practices – disempower the border wall. In this respect, the paper will analyze different artistic interventions occurred on the border fence – or in its immediate proximity – that have tried to either commemorate, denounce, or shed light on the social tragedies communities and migrants have been experiencing due to the politics of the wall.

In particular, the paper will try to highlight the importance of a recent artistic intervention that was carried out at the border, *Teeter-totter* (2019), designed by architects Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello, to show how profoundly it differs from other artistic interventions and to acknowledge its unique resilient strategy that has disempowered the wall.

1. U.S.-MEXICO BORDER WALL: AN EVOLVING CONTEXT

> ***There was a time when there was no wall. There was a time when the wall was just an idea for national security, there was a time when the wall began to be proposed, and now there's a time when the wall is clearly fixed within our cultural identity.*** (**Rael 2021**)

There is an invisible "imaginary" line that crosses the world at the level of the equator highlighting "a corridor of global conflict between 30 and 3 degrees north" (Cruz 2017). Teddy Cruz appropriately called it the "Political Equator". There, the world's most contended borders are located. Thus, imagining to move along this line, one would come across the Strait of Gibraltar, the Israeli-Palestinian border and the Tijuana-San Diego wall, which represent the major migratory routes of our age.

Building a wall between two countries was, is and will always be a purely political decision. Indeed, after political acts and treaties were signed to decide the location of the border, barriers of all types were raised on the political threshold. The border wall that divides the U.S. and Mexico has always existed; it was officialized with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (Rael 2017, 10), but it started to become a real political issue in the 1990s, leading to an escalation of acts and laws aimed at speeding up the process of construction of the wall (Rael 2017).

The erection of the border fence was legitimized because of national security, aiming at reducing illegal migration and cutting drug routes from Mexico. As a result of 20 years during which the matter was handled poorly and – no other alternative solutions were found other than the construction of such a medieval barrier, now the lands cut through by the Great Wall of Mexico have to deal with a number of serious issues concerning the environment, the culture, the economy and, especially, the quality of life of the communities that inhabit them.

Moreover, with the strengthening of the checks at the border, the implementation of video surveillance, and the increase in the number of patrol agents, the line that divides the two countries has become a border of terror and horror. Every year, moved by the desire to reach the U.S., hundreds of Mexicans attempt to traverse the border, risking their own

lives. What Franklin Delano Roosevelt once said of "the United States as a nation [that] has at all times maintained the opposition – clear, defined opposition – to any attempt to lock us in behind an ancient Chinese wall" (Rael 2017) could not ever be further from what is currently happening.

Indeed, as argued by Ronald Rael, the wall "in its current form reflects precisely the inflexibility and ancient strategy of the wall as a singular means of security" (Rael 2017, 10). Now the border wall recalls a medieval barrier which, precisely like all ancient ineffective divisive elements, does not represent a good solution to problems that affect the areas surrounding it. In this respect, the multiple social implications complementary to the construction of such a primitive structure could have been mitigated by borrowing alternative tools and ideas from architecture and design. Both disciplines, which are used to produce things intended to have tangible effects on people's lives, can merge into art - which is known to employ more conceptual tools - to reflect and highlight the wall's current issues and future scenarios. Without a doubt, it is not easy for architects, designers, and artists to create works related to the border fence, mainly due to the controversy that such a kind of construction carries within itself. Indeed, as one of the oldest and most elemental forms of construction, walls carry both literal and figurative meaning.

Walls subdivide spaces into two zones, for protecting one side from another. Yet, a wall's presence represents more than its corporeal reality; it can also signify power, isolation, and restriction" (Brownell 2017). In these side-effects lay the main obstacles that have prevented many architects and designers to effectively deal with the wall.

When pure architecture and design think too practically, focusing only on the wall's physical implications leaving aside the conceptual ones, they usually fail to draw projects which reimagine and grasp the wall's real potential successfully. Since the wall is also a conceptual line, a conceptual scar in the middle of borderland, every project concerning this type of construction must be dealt with conceptually first, rather than physically. Precisely for its conceptual nature, art can be pointed out as a great weapon to address issues that have to do with the border.

To start an exhaustive analysis on the possibilities of a successful rethinking of a barrier, or wall, it is necessary to keep in mind two main reference points. On the one hand, one could not deal with walls as architectural elements without referring to Rem Koolhaas's pivotal architectural project *Exodus (1972)* [Fig.1]. Though being only his final dissertation project, *Exodus* is crucial to understand the role that art could play in opening up possible speculative scenarios for a new use of the wall.

Indeed, Koolhaas dealt conceptually with the possibility of inhabiting a grim area such as the one of the Berlin Wall, creating a completely new world enclosed by the two sides of the wall. The architect attempted to provide a new utopian alternative scenario to the reality of the city he was living in (London), encompassing in his project both the tangible issues related to the physical existence of the wall and the immaterial effects that a border wall can produce on the people living in its surroundings. Encompassing both aspects, the physical and immaterial qualities of the wall, Exodus becomes a comprehensive proposal for change as well as a tool to address the problems raised by the construction of a wall. Similarly to Berlin's, the U.S. - Mexico border wall has incorporated anything during its life, incorporating older

buildings, lands and ecosystems and, as in the case of Germany, it presents itself as very fragmented in its appearance, with "additional walls some really massive and modern, others more ephemeral all together contributing to an enormous zone" (Obrist 2003, 507-528). More precisely, there is an area of "paradox" at both sides of the border, which are stuck in a game of power made of actions and reactions between two nations. So, architects that investigate this topic - like Koolhaas and Rael San Fratello, whose work will be presented later -,supporting their projects theatrically, could grasp the needs of the inhabitants of the borderland. Accordingly to what architect Hassan Fathy once said:

> *Architects do not design walls, but the spaces between them* (TEDxTalk 2017).

On the other hand, one should consider the role that the audience could perform in the process of creation of an artwork that deals with the border wall. Clair Bishop and her words concerning participatory art and the politics of spectatorship are particularly useful to understand some interventions made along the U.S-Mexico border fence. According to the scholar, a successful participatory art project should not have as its primary goal that of fixing social problems so to provide immediate tangible solutions. Indeed, Bishop highlighted the inevitable failure that derives from adopting an exclusively sociological approach to produce art, according to which an artistic intervention is employed as any other means in a statal program for social regeneration. Instead, every artistic participatory intervention, like those conceived across the U.S-Mexico border, must develop in the realm of art, with the artist working with local communities as a catalysator of the existing interpersonal dynamics and providing a poignant visual configuration for his or her artwork.

The artistic quality of a work should not be subjugated in favor of measurable tangible results, and consequently it should not give up on the artist's authorship in favor of a participant's multiple authorships. Finally, in order to be successful, an art project on the border needs to combine solid speculative thinking with a good visual manifestation of it.

2. ARTISTIC PROJECTS ACROSS THE BORDER WALL: ALFREDO JAAR AND JR

The question to which an answer will be provided aims at understanding what an artistic intervention can do about this fence of conflict.

Art can do a lot to address a variety of important issues surrounding the U.S.- Mexico border, sometimes working as a powerful catalysator of global attention, sometimes as a tool to use to remember and commemorate the dramatic events that happened along and across it, and in other few cases it contributes to the creation of resilient actions aimed at dismantling the wall conceptually. Moreover, in all these cases, people inhabiting the regions near the fence are often called to take part in the action. Across the last 20 years, there have been many international artists working on the U.S.-Mexico border, whose projects can be analyzed in this context to prove how art can work as a successful resilience strategy. On October 14 2000, a white cloud of balloons had been seen floating on the border fence as the melodies of Vivaldi and Bach played. *The Cloud (La Nube)* was an art installation by Chilean artist Alfredo Jaar, which took part in InSite2000 [Fig.2]. It consisted of an

"ephemeral monument in memory of the migrants who had died during the previous ten years while trying to cross the border between Mexico and the US" (The UC San Diego Library Digital Collections, n.d). The piece was made of over one thousand white balloons held together, looking "as a large cloud" above the border wall at Valle del Matador/Goat Ganyon, near Tijuana. A touchy ceremony took place there, which saw the participation of musicians, poets and a bi-national audience and that ended with the release of the balloons, reaching the sky one by one "as symbols of the souls of the dead migrants" (The UC San Diego Library Digital Collections, n.d). Nevertheless, it may feel like something is missing.

In *The Cloud*, Jaar seemed to limit himself to the reproduction of a tragic collective mourning, full of pathos, but of little critical weight. Indeed, Jaar's intervention on the U.S.–Mexico border fence appears less powerful both in strength and depth if compared with some of his previous works, such as those conceived for the genocide in Rwanda. While on the one hand Jaar's *Rwanda Project* aimed at giving visibility to a humanitarian crisis, similarly to the aim of *The Cloud*, on the other hand, for each of the twenty-one pieces of which *Rwanda Project* is made of, Jaar employed different art mediums and perspectives to show the African drama under a new and unknown critical poignancy which, though present, is less obvious in his Mexican project because of the theatrical form of the commemorative event. The approach chosen by the street artist JR, however, was completely different.

In September 2017, he installed "a monumental photograph of Kikito, a smiling toddler, pasted onto a special scaffolding placed just behind the border fence with California" (Schwartz 2017).
According to JR himself, he met Kikito in his dream first, and only later in person, in a house near the border fence in Tacate, Mexico. Just as the kid of his dream was "looking over the border", Kikito "was looking out at us from his crib" (Schwartz 2017). A gigantic photo of Kikito was thus installed on the Mexican side of the border near the house of the kid's own family [Fig.3]. JR explained his work as follows:

> "It didn't bring a political conversation, but a human conversation" (JR 2017). The toddler invited the viewer to imagine what was going on in the mind of a child living near the border fence. "What is this kid thinking? What would any kid think? We know that a one-year-old doesn't have a political vision, or any political point of view. He doesn't see walls as we see them" (JR 2017). Ideally, through this intervention, the artist wanted people to look at the border from a different perspective, one that speaks of love. He said:
>
> "it was really just a love message. No hate debates" (JR 2017).

JR, having taken part in the creation of the visual identity of several movements in situations of conflict and protest all around the world, knows very well how difficult and delicate working in a political conflict zone is. Yet, as underlined by the artist, people's reaction is as significant as the work and for this reason, his work has a social impact that needs to be considered too. JR posted photos of the installation on his Instagram account, followed by the localization on Google Maps so to invite people to go there and see with their own eyes those of the giant Kikito. But one must wonder whether this dull virtual sociality – based on the instant engagement of tweets, likes and comments – does effectively involve people. Because of the massive mediatization and virality that almost every

one of JR's project had experienced, Kikito could have had a bigger impact online than in its real, physical location. Thus, this giant toddler wasn't of much use to the inhabitants of the borderland. This gigantic cardboard on the border wall speaks mostly to the highly digitally-connected world, but not so much to the people of the borderland.

In this respect, JR's installation could be evaluated positively only for and from the perspective of a privileged, free and, ultimately, white audience. More precisely, one far from the reality of the border wall. In addition, JR's superficial knowledge of the dynamics around the border wall is worth being discussed, since his brief on-site research lasted just a few months, during which the artist was only present occasionally.

If JR had not opted for a later addition to his project, the intervention would have been perceived exclusively as a pure spectacular action worth appearing on the cover of a magazine. Instead, on October 8, JR organized a bi-national picnic across the border, before having the installation dismantled. This second part, known as *Migrants, Picnic across the border*[1], changed profoundly the status and the social weight of the artwork. A piece of cloth with the "les yeux d'un rêveur" (JR-art n.d) printed on it went from one side to the other of the border wall, serving as a tablecloth for a huge picnic. For a couple of hours, people reunited "to share a meal together[...] eating the same food, sharing the same water, [...] forgetting the wall for a few moments" (Galerie Perrotin n.d).

The work is a reflection of those resilient actions of everyday activism that people across the border constantly do in order to reclaim the wall from themselves. Thus, overall, JR's work is commendable, since it acts as a catalysator of the energy already existing around the wall, finding a perfect balance between social issues and artistic concerns. Its worth lays not in simply having people actively involved – according to a polar idea of spectatorship made of passivity and activity[2] – yet in the spontaneous unfolding of the project that only a conscious artistic idea can create. Ethical concerns are perfectly balanced with good artistic visual manifestation, complying with Bishop's vision.

1 See "Migrants, Picnic across the border," JR Art, Accessed May 3, 2021, https://www.jr-art.net/projects/migrants-picnic-across-the-border.

2 See Jacques Rancièr, trans, Gregory Elliot, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London: Verso Book, 2009).

3. TEETER-TOTTER: AN ARTISTIC INTERVENTION BY RAEL SAN FRATELLO

> ***For just under twenty minutes on 28 July 2019, residents of El Paso and the Anapra community in Mexico could, for the first time, unite through play.*** **(Virginia San Fratello 2021)**

The teeter-totter designed by the architect-duo Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello is proof that art can redesign and conceptually balance an unbalanced relationship, even between two nations.

It was summer 2019 when, across the wall, between El Paso and Anapra, a pink teeter-totter was installed. The construction was carried out in silence and quickly, trying to avoid border patrols and video surveillance, and it saw the architects and some collaborators working illegally on the U.S soil, helped by the Mexican collective Chopeke completing the assemblage from the Mexican side. In order to analyze and really grasp the unicity behind this project, and what distinguishes it from both Jaar's and JR interventions, it is important to unveil the origins of the project. Indeed, the work is backed by many years of research – differing

from JR's approach – and studies along the border fence.

Hence, since the early 2000, the architects' duo "have been travelling along the United States-Mexico border, collecting memories and stories" from the people and places they met along this journey (Rael and San Fratello 2014). The more they got engaged with the wall and people whose lives were divided by it, the more they became convinced that design could bring "to light the problems that the border wall was creating" (Rael 2017). With the aim of intervening in the region of the borderland, respecting its territory and its peculiar desertic environment, Rael and San Fratello started to draw prototypes of "buildings made out of mud" (Rael 2017), following the construction traditions of the land. Moreover, because of the lack of infrastructures, Rael San Fratello thought of several proposals to find other uses for the wall, both "medieval" and resourceful, offering alternatives which saw the wall as a place for producing solar energy, treating and collecting water. Their investigation and action on the borderland culminated in an artistic project in collaboration with Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset entitled *Prada Marfa* (2005).

It consisted in the creation of a faux store, which was plopped right in the middle of Marfa Desert. It accurately reproduced a Prada shop containing real shoes and purses, like any shop of the luxury brand.

Yet, hidden behind its glossy appearance, was a construction made of mud and earth, created using the traditional building techniques of the land near the border wall. According to Rael, the work "epitomizes and exaggerates the cultural and geopolitical dichotomies of the borderland" (Rael 2017, 3). *Prada Marfa* is an object which doesn't belong in the borderland and that, through its esthetic quality and strong visual presence, can effectively address a whole set of economic, political and social contradictions present in the land. The Prada store does not belong in the borderland like the border wall does, and precisely like the latter, it became a hot spot that condenses around a single building the main polar issues of the land. After *Prada Marfa*, Rael and San Fratello decided to shift their intervention from the borderland to the borderwall itself. During their own Grand Tour of the border fence, they discovered and witnessed a whole new world at the feet of the wall (Rael and San Fratello, 2014). Indeed, people living in his immediate nearby have been trying for decades to reappropriate the land of the border wall throughout direct activism and conscious resilience. The duo came to understand that, while could not be turned down, at least it could be conceptually disempowered through art. They heard enchanted stories about "group activities"as bi-national yoga classes, and volleyball (*wall y ball*), capable of creating "social capital" and "cross-border understanding" (Rael 2017, 72-73). They heard stories on how common "exchanging food at the barrier" or going to a bilingual Christian mass is in the area (Rael 2017, 86).

The "collected experiences" documenting real and imaginary scenarios, were "represented as snow globes:

> souvenirs, or recuerdos - a Spanish term that defines both the trinkets one might purchase at tourist shops and memories" (Rael and San Fratello 2014).

Rael and San Fratello described them as "tragic, sublime, and absurd, occasionally hyperbolized, but in all cases based on our own experiences and actual events in the liminal space that defines the boundary between the United States and Mexico" (Rael and San Fratello 2014, 98).

Among these *recuerdos*, some stand out for interpreting the different relationships people could entertain with the wall in a playful, critical and ironic way. These types of recuerdos are perfect examples of how art can take inspiration from something as grim as the wall, which is a symbol of fear and xenophobia, and still create something playful out of it. Indeed, Rael San Fratello took inspiration from an episode of *The Simpsons* in which Homer mistakes 'xenophobia' for 'xylophobia', to highlight how the fear of what's different from us "is as unreasonable as his fear of xylophones" (Rael 2017, 81-84) [Fig.4]. They imagined a Xylophone Wall, capable of transforming the barrier into an enormous music instrument to be played during "binational group performances" (Rael, 2017, 81-84), as well as a wall that was crossed by a teeter-totter, that children from both sides could use to play together. The cheerful teeter-totter appeared for the first time as a miniature, under the bell jar of an impossible recuerdo, and it is the image that best represents and encompasses the unstable relationship between the two sides of the wall.

The work *Teeter-totter* (2019), which saw three teeter-totters installed last year on the wall between El Paso and Tijguana, stands – as already said above – as a worthy culmination of a decade of proposals and utopian projects for the wall. What prompted the architects to move from theoretical speculation to practice was the election of Donald Trump as President of The United States in 2017. His "pro-wall"[3] presidential campaign and his "family separation policy compelled Rael San Fratello to bring one of their proposals to life."[4] The first drawings and sketches of the teeter-totter "show people lifted up in the air like 18 or 20 feet" (Rael and San Fratello 2020). Yet, the teeter-totter "looks really dangerous like you're going to launch a person across the border" (Rael and San Fratello 2020), confesses Virginia San Fratello.

Therefore, a shorter version of the teeter-totter of "14 feet long instead of 40 feet long" with people "lifted off the ground of 4 feet" was eventually chosen (Rael and San Fratello 2020). The teeter-totter was ultimately painted in shocking pink to commemorate the women murdered in the femicide in Juarez. Then, this brightly-colored object was carried by a truck till the border fence, ready to be installed. "It felt like we were going to battle, and our weapons were these pink teeter-totters and we literally just started running with the teeter-totter. [...]" revealed Rael when interviewed (Rael 2020). As soon as the teeter-totters were ready, kids started gathering curiously around them and,in the blink of an eye, they were playing with them. "I don't think it was more than a second that I locked that thing in place that there was already a kid with his leg coming over the seat" (Rael 2020). The entire event lasted for twenty minutes before the arrival of the border patrols, yet the illegal intervention was already concluded. Virginia San Fratello said that they ended "the event because the children were tired of playing on the teeter-totter like they would at any park" (Rael 2020) [Fig.5].

The work had the ability to convey a sense of joy and normality even if just for a few minutes, a sense of freedom which is normally alien to both the wall and its southern inhabitants, and precisely for such a reason it represents a unique and powerful artistic intervention. Indeed, it was not conceived as a sensational installation aimed at getting public approval, but as a subtle and simple action exclusively addressed to the people living on the border fence. In this respect, *Teeter-totter* distances

3 See Bruce Sterling, "Borderwall as Architecture will polarise opinion on Trump's wall", *New Scientist*, Accessed May 10, 2017, https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23431250-800-will-polarise-opinion-on-trumps-wall/.

4 See "What is Contemporary Art?", *Coursera*. Accessed March 10, 2021, https://www.coursera.org/learn/contemporary-art/supplement/ipVO9/rael-san-fratello-teeter-totter-wall-2014.

itself from Alfredo Jaar's dramatic commemoration along the border, presenting instead some characteristics of JR's artwork.

Indeed, both Rael San Fratello's and JR's interventions on the wall exploit the artist's individual authorship as a means to catalyze the energy already present along the wall, doing nothing but supporting behaviors already condensed along the border fence. In both works, the actions manifest themselves spontaneously, though in different ways. Indeed, Rael San Fratello's installation unfolds spontaneously from its very beginning rather than relegating the shared enjoyment at the end of the work as for the JR's final picnic. However, the great difference between JR's and Rael San Fratello's installations is to be found in the depth and in the quality of the study that preceded the physical creation of their works. Indeed, Rael San Fratello's intervention was developed from a larger conceptual basis than JR's installation's, which led the architect duo to travel through the borderland to grasp the peculiar dynamics of the site. For such a reason, *Teeter-totter* appears as the culmination of a ten-year-long period of research in the borderland.

Rael and San Fratello's actions are far beyond mirroring those of a schoolmaster. They do not teach anything; they do not reproduce an unbalanced master-pupil relationship. With *Teeter-totter*, it is of no use to try and understand whether its authorship is individual or collective – since kids participated in the project. There's no good or bad authorship, just what the artist produces. As claimed by Ronald Barthes, "the authorships (of all types) are multiple and continually indebted to the others. What matters are the ideas, the experiences and the possibilities which are the results of these interactions" (Barthes, 2012, 21). Moreover, one should ask themselves what *Teeter-totter* can really convey.

This playful object is overall a metaphor for the unbalanced relationship between U.S. and Mexico, which has the border as its "symbolic and literal fulcrum" (Rael 2017, 105). According to Rael, the teeter-totter makes visible "the mutually dependent relationship between United States and Mexico" that goes up and down as in every teeter-totter, where "actions that take place on one side of a teeter-totter [having] direct consequence on the other side" (Bradison and Cameron 2020) [Fig.6].

The teeter-totter clearly acknowledges the symbolic weight of the wall as it decides to intervene primarily on those separative political ideas and interest-oriented concepts that have been supporting its construction for decades. Rael and his friends used their creation to pierce through the wall,acting like medieval soldiers opening a breach into the city gate with a battering ram. As soon as the passage has been opened, with the soldiers entering the city as the children appropriate the teeter-totter, the object ceases to exist in its physicality in favor of the playful experience and ideas it produces. Disempowering the wall means exactly reducing the importance that the border fence exerts on people's life and on the perception of the world. Rael and San Fratello have reached this goal through a simple gesture capable of transforming the already existing energy of the wall into a joyful resource.

Teeter-totter and, more in general, art, can exploit precisely this subversion, transforming sadness into happiness, division into unity, opposition into collaboration and, in addition, it makes achieving difficult and even impossible changes look simple. Art has the power of envisioning and visualizing the change before it has occurred, accelerating the

process toward the fall of the border wall as an obstacle, to transform it into a resourceful infrastructure. Art, if applied to architecture – as in this case –, to design, and even to create urban plans, is able to discuss different and, sometimes, polarizing topics like the U.S.–Mexico wall, with such straightforwardness and visual strength to the point of becoming more effective than any interventions that plan to act on the border wall exclusively addressing its physicality. Rael commented his experience of seeing the teeter-totter in action as follows:

> "It demonstrated to me that architecture could communicate ideas that are much more politically and culturally complex, that architecture could be satirical and serious at the same time and it could speak to the disparities between wealth and poverty and what's local and what's foreign" (Rael 2017).

After all, "every wall is a door" (Ralph Waldo Emerson), which art can help to break through.

https://www.moma.org/collection/works/104692

Fig. 1. Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zanghelis, Madelon Vriesendorp, Zoe Zanghelis, Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture: The Strip (Aerial Perspective). 1972 | MoMA

highlike.org/media/2013/12/Alfredo-Jaar-the-cloud.jpg

Fig. 2. Alfredo Jaar, La Nube (The Cloud). InSite2000, October 14, 2000.

https://www.francetvinfo.fr/pictures/cwwha72aHrzFzC-SiZzLp2O8nb4Y/1200x900/2019/04/12/014_70907177_1.jpg



Fig. 3. JR, Kikito, Tacate, 2017.

images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/5fbdf09aabaecd3318off-95b/1606541318038-WXK-K04ZM2EU3K3ACZRIF/moleskin13-FINAL.jpg?format=1500w



Fig. 4. Rael San Fratello, The Xylophone Wall (Recuerdos).

https://www.designbuzz.it/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/altale-na-usa-messico-601x300.jpg

Fig. 5. Rael San Fratello, Teeter-totter, El Paso, July 2019.

images.squarespace-cdn.com/content/v1/5fbdf09aabaecd3318off-95b/1614662583446-ZV1T8OO8Z-8CY823YEMLS/aerial.jpg?format=2500w

Fig. 6. Rael San Fratello, Teeter-totter, El Paso, July 2019.

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WHEATFIELD / A CONFRONTA-TION

AUTHOR:

Elena Righini

FIRST SECTION:
1982 - Battery Park Landfill,
Downtown Manhattan.

SECOND SECTION:
2015 - Porta Nuova, Milano.

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1982 - BATTERY PARK LANDFILL, DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN

The most famous work by Agnes Denes is *Wheatfield – A Confrontation*, created in 1982 in New York, Downtown Manhattan, and considered by Alex Greenberger, senior editor of Art News, as one of the 20 best Environmentalist Artworks of the past 50 years (Greenberger, 2020) [Fig. 1]. The artwork deals with numerous issues, such as gentrification, public participation, radical gardening, world hunger, mass food production and distribution, rural and urban life, social effects of urban development plans. It criticizes global warming and economic inequality, in line with the complex and multifaceted context of Manhattan (Public Delivery, 2019).

> *I realized that art had to change in a world drastically changing, when humanity was facing major decisions in order to survive on the planet while striving to maintain moral values and quality of life. I wanted to cleanse art from its elitist self-involvement, to achieve greater universal validity.* (Denes 2005)

Denes developed her *Philosophy of the Land* to delve into universal issues through large-scale ecological environmental works. Before *Wheatfield*, she presented *Rice/Tree/Burial* (1968), her first large-scale experimentation. Following her *Visual Philosophy* theory,[1] this type of installation can explore the paradoxes of human existence.

Furthermore, it makes invisible processes - human logic, evolution, time, mathematics, etc. - evident. It has the expressive ability to communicate complex patterns of thought through one aesthetic act. *Wheatfield* can be considered as a land project, but first of all it is a public art operation. It was in fact commissioned and sponsored by the Public Art Fund (The Public Art Fund Official Website, n.d.), in the larger context of The Urban Environmental Site Program, which focused on bringing attention to the abandoned empty spaces of New York's waterfront.

Even if the work can be placed in the context of the development of American Land Art, it appears to be totally different from it. While the all-male Land Art world – Robert Smithson, Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer – was operating in deserts and wild areas, leaving monumental marks on the earth with often minimalistic purposes, Denes' work is centered around the urban environment, focusing on public participation and raising awareness. It could be better linked to Alan Sonfist or Herbert Bayer's experimentation, for its early ecological concern and meaningful site specificity. More specifically, this work was carried out in Battery Park Landfill, which is located in the Lower West Side of Manhattan and is today a business and financial center. In 1982 the space was empty and badly managed, since it was a sandy riverbank landfill created with the construction of the World Trade Center (1970-1973).

People would go there on sunny days to spend time together on the public beach, and enjoy the riverside (Giles 2019). As an empty space, this dystopian beach with skyscrapers and commercial buildings in the background hosted many artworks and events until its renovation (Giles 2019), confirming itself as a site for art installations in the 1970s and 80s. Many short-lived urban plans were devoted to the recovery of the site from the 1920s until the beginning of the construction of the Twin

1 According to Denes' Visual Philosophy, art has the power to cross boundaries between disciplines, providing a comprehensive representation of multifaceted issues.
The artist dedicated her life to the research of the most effective medium to communicate broad concepts through one visual representation, which she eventually found in public environmental artworks (Denes, 1978).

Towers in the early 1970s, and even in the following years, but they were all abandoned because of lack of funds. The reconstruction of the landfill finally started in 1984 (Goodman 1984). The value of the land raised during fifty years of bad management, until it became one of the most expensive real estate of the world.

> ***Planting and harvesting a field of wheat on land worth $4.5 billion created a powerful paradox. Wheatfield was a symbol, a universal concept, it represented food, energy, commerce, world trade, economics. It referred to mismanagement, waste, world hunger and ecological concerns. It called attention to our misplaced priorities.*** (**The Public Art Fund Official Website n.d.**)

As expressed by the title, the work consisted in planting a wheat field in the area, occupying the expensive terrain through one of the oldest activities related to the earth:

> agriculture. A field worth a couple hundred dollars was planted in a $4.5 billion real estate. It was placed near the waterfront, a block from Wall Street, with the Twin Towers in the background and facing the Statue of Liberty. Thus, the position is extremely significant, between the new financial center under construction, and the symbols of both the past and the present of the city, which show its historical progress.

Battery Park was not suitable for agriculture, since it was a "dirty landfill full of rusty metals, boulders, old tires, and overcoats" (Denes, 1982). The artist struggled to choose a site: the Public Art Fund encouraged her to grow wheat in the quieter borough of Queens. She refused, setting her sights instead on the 92-acre Battery Park landfill (Jacobs, 2018). Her decision was due to many elements, mostly Denes' interest in highlighting humanity's paradoxes, which are evident in Wheatfield. The first paradox (and act of audacity) is deciding to plant and harvest a two-acre wheat field in a valuable estate, obstructing the 'machinery' by going against the system (Denes 1982).

The second paradox has to do with New York's temporary opening of the urban landscape, the momentary break in the city's orthogonal grid. This vulnerability was quickly resolved with the activation of the new urban plan, which reshaped the landfill in Battery Park City. The city "closed itself once again" (Denes 1982), confirming its contradiction:

> on one side the vulnerability of the four-acre abandoned areas, on the other side the impenetrable metropolis, the billion-dollar luxury complex.

On the 1st of May 1982, the project was initiated. Denes, two assistants who followed the whole project, and many volunteers began the first phase of the operation. This consisted in a long process aimed at preparing the ground for the plantation, which also meant cleaning up the area (Denes 1982). *Wheatfield* was thus an act of requalification, even if the project was mainly focused on its conceptual value, and on raising public attention. According to Denes' "Eco-Logic," "making art today is synonymous with assuming responsibility to our fellow humans" (Denes 1993). Since, in the Anthropocene Era, humanity's actions are inevitably affecting the planet's ecosystem (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000), our

concern must be to monitor them, always verifying their impact. Denes' words are a call for action directed at governments, the commerce, the public, as well as individuals and their personal and common values.

Our responsibility, according to the artist's opinion, is to think about our future, of both the planet and human beings, considering our actions as part of a bigger chain of causes and consequences.

> ***Art in the public sphere can assume an important role. It can affect intelligent collaboration and integration of disciplines, and it can offer benign problem solving. A well-conceived work can motivate people and influence how things are perceived.*** (**Denes 1993**)

The artistic act and the visual form that concepts can take become communication tools, expressions of human values. The cleaning process that the four-acre Battery Park Landfill area had to undergo is a reflection of what cultivations need and a metaphor of the bigger impact of landfills in general. As in many artworks by Denes, starting from one site and one action, the artist manages to discuss global issues and awaken people's conscience. The monumental scale of *Wheatfield* transforms the terrain into a landmark, aimed at spreading messages, drawing a relationship between individual creation and social awareness (*Mi-Tomorrow* 2015).

After the soil preparation, the following step of the project, which was carried out in May 1984, involved seeding by hand, as well as the creation of irrigation and fertilization systems. John Ameroso took on the role of Denes agricultural adviser, since a project of the size of *Wheatfield* involved many people with different competencies, which are *beyond the technique of art: soil science, forestry, landscape architecture, etc* (Denes 2005).

The wheat grew between June and July, going from green to golden amber, with the whole city watching and waiting. During the harvesting, in August, "1000 pounds of healthy, golden wheat" (Denes 1992, 22-23) were collected and distributed after The International Art Show for the End of the Word Hunger, in which this work participated. The yield produced served mainly as horse feed for the city's mounted police, while the grains traveled around the world, to the 28 cities involved in the exhibition (Cohen 2019). On the last day of the exhibition, the seeds were put in thousands of little packets, which were taken by individuals, in order to allow the wheat to grow in personal and community contexts within the metropolis.

The aesthetic value of *Wheatfield* is revealed through the image depicting the World Trade Center on the background, which succeeds to illustrate the paradox of the installation and to really represent the "confrontation", which was surely evident in August 1982.

Placing her artwork in that site, Denes intended to carry out "a meaningful attack on the divide between rich and poor, between the pastoral and the technocratic, and how people embrace progress" (Jacobs 2018). The project can thus be considered as a land art operation, but the fact that it was located in Battery Park Landfill and all the implications of this choice, made it definitely a public art intervention. Looking at the image of the artwork in which the Statue of Liberty seems to be looking directly at the wheat field, the impression of being in

a context completely different from New York City, in a countryside landscape, is strong and immersive. "To look across this wheat field is to see the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and boat traffic as in a surreal illusion" (Haberman and Johnston 1982) [Fig. 2].

Wheatfield was "an intrusion of the country into the metropolis" (Denes 1987, 84-87), to question the mechanism of the city, land and real estate speculation. The artist admitted that, because of the work in progress in the area, when she made *Wheatfield* she had to "make compromises when it came to money and space" (Miller 2019). The work clearly criticized the Battery Park City urban development project, and it wasn't initially welcomed by the site (Denes 2005). Despite of the many problems that the project had to face, from the moment the first wheat shoots came out people started to gradually let go of their hostility.

The wheat field kept growing and its life force finally became visible and real (Denes 2005). There was no vandalism, Denes stated. Even when half a million people came to the landfill to see the fireworks at the Statue of Liberty the 4th of July, they totally respected the work, demonstrating its value for the whole community. Addressing the role and the meaning of *Wheatfield – A Confrontation*, it is essential to focus on the site-specificity of the installation. The both physical and theoretical link between the work and the site create a mixture in which the artwork itself doesn't exist anywhere. If moved, it will change its substantial meaning, inextricably attached to the environment. I considered *Wheatfield* as a radical gardening temporary installation, a unique public art project questioning both the formality of the site and its value in representing (the loss of) contemporary human values.

Denes' particular focus on public spaces and the participatory dimension of her environmental projects allows us to place her production in the wide realm of public art. To involve the public sphere means to involve the identity and the history of the sites, which become a fundamental part of the work itself. The installation doesn't exist without its setting. As Richard Serra claims in 1985, "Site-specific works deal with the environmental components of given places. The scale, size, and location of site-specific works are determined by the topography of the site, whether it be urban or landscape or architectural enclosure" (Serra 1989). Similarly to how the site influences the artwork, the work visually interferes with the landscape's current appearance, affecting the visitors' impression on it. Following the new meaning of public art, according to which the site "is imagined as a social and political construct as well as a physical one" (Kwon 2002). the work builds a contrasting dialogue with the site, as *Wheatfield* did. "My decision to plant a wheat field in Manhattan instead of design just another public sculpture grew up out of the long-lasting need to call attention to our misplaced priorities and deteriorating human values" (Denes 1982).

Thanks to Denes' work, a wheat field, which would normally be found in the countryside, was cultivated in an urban place like Battery Park Landfill. It was one of the most expensive real estate in the world, but there, the most humble and old activity related to the earth was practiced:

> agriculture. As *Tilted Arc*, Denes' installation criticizes the space hosting it, while never going against it. Furthermore, the installation was temporary, as the site, which transformed into Battery Park City. As Serra said, site-specific works

are definitely connected to their environment and they cannot exist in another place carrying the same meaning. For this reason, *Wheatfield* could only be developed in the landfill, to create a narration around its space, before disappearing as soon as the site changed.

One important theme addressed by *Wheatfield* was gentrification, which was also the main topic of radical exhibitions as *The Real Estate Show* and *The Times Square Show* (1980) by Colab. In the same period, the Shapolsky problem and the exploitation of urban areas were attracting the attention of the institutional critique. The Shapolsky family was in fact holding the majority of real estate in New York City, though not always legal activities. It was the subject of Hans Haacke's 1971 work *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, now at Whitney Museum (Whitney Museum of American Art Official Website, n.d.). In New York City many urban plans were changing the landscape, not always considering the consequences.

Gentrification is defined by Cambridge Dictionary as "the process by which a place, especially part of a city, changes from being a poor area to a richer one, where people from a higher social class live" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) On one side, transforming the neighborhood into a beautiful residential or shopping area would surely make it more vibrant, thanks to the influx of richer individuals, both residents and business people. More infrastructures and a more stable security create places with lower crime rates and higher incomes.

On the other side, this process forces population migration, caused by the increasing prices in renting and housing, industrial displacement, community conflicts. Social diversity may diminish, with the consequence of worsening the social conditions of other neighborhoods. For these reasons, gentrification is a relevant urban redevelopment strategy, which can be positive as well as dangerous. By choosing to carry out her project in Battery Park Landfill, where urban plans were dramatically changing both the area and its social environment, Agnes Denes raised doubts on the consequences of the renewal. The main element of *Wheatfield – A Confrontation* is undoubtedly wheat. As a historical symbol of food, growth, agriculture, nature force, it is a recurrent theme in artistic production as well as in ancient decorations and architectures. In addition to the positive meaning of this cereal, it makes reference in contemporary times to world hunger and intensive agriculture (Hoban, 2019), while also discussing human beings' relationship with nature, based on the first alliance between the two: agriculture.

> ***The harvested grain traveled to twenty-eight cities around the world in an exhibition called "The International Art Show for the End of World Hunger", organized by the Minnesota Museum of Art (1987-90). The seeds were carried away by people who planted them in many parts of the globe.*** **(Agnes Denes Official Site, n.d.)**

Wheatfield – A Confrontation was created by Denes for The International Art Show for the End of the World Hunger, a worldwide exhibition held in 1982 to question inertia and indifference, both political and individual, of wealthy nations around. Several renowned artists from different parts of

the world participated in the exhibition, presenting many kinds of installations and contributions. The common aim was to spread a message through the great variety of their statements, reflecting both the diversity of art expression and the magnitude of the hunger problem (Stringer 1987, 33–43). Anyway, the relation between art and hunger could seem contrasting, since, as Patterson Sims wrote, "perhaps all the money and effort exerted for this show might be better spent to directly assist those in need" (Sims 1987, 28–30). Of course we, "the fed" (Schjeldahl 1987, 23–27), are supposed to buy the exhibition's catalogue, to see the artworks involved, to reflect on the meaning of art, while reflecting about world hunger. A starving man or woman would surely look for food instead.

This discourse doesn't question the ability of art to raise awareness or discuss global issues, however, it highlights the fact that the ones who need to be aware of what hunger is, are us, the fed.

Making an international exhibition on this topic in a place where hunger is an issue to this day won't be useful. The real challenge would be to discuss it with people who don't know what starving means. The change will start from the ones who have power on food production, not from the ones who deserve it.

2015 - PORTA NUOVA, MILANO

Wheatfield was reenacted in 2015 in Milan, in the Porta Nuova district. As Battery Park City, Porta Nuova was, and still is, an area which is quickly evolving. In 2003, an urban plan involving the site was accepted.
It was aimed at connecting three Milan neighborhoods through pedestrian zones:

> Porta Nuova, Porta Garibaldi (where the Garibaldi train station is located) and Isola (Alfieri 2009). The development project began in 2005 and it is still ongoing, even if the main elements were completed in 2018. The key component of the area is a park called Biblioteca degli Alberi (Library of Trees), now located where Agnes Denes created her second *Wheatfield* in 2015.

When she created it, the landscape of the area was quite different. The urban plan had begun more than 10 years before and it was almost completed. At the time, in the area there were the newly inaugurated Gae Aulenti Square, which connects Porta Garibaldi railway station to Porta Nuova, the UniCredit Tower, the highest skyscraper in Italy, the UniCredit pavilion, the Bosco Verticale (Vertical Wood), designed by the architect Stefano Boeri, now director of the Triennale di Milano.

The ecological artwork by Denes is thus a part of this requalification project, aimed at creating a new green lung for the city, an open space to live community moments and share experiences. At the same time, it is also a business center, with the UniCredit Tower and many office buildings, among the residential structures. What remains unsolved in this apparently wonderful project, is the gentrification issue.

As in the lower West Side of Manhattan, there was significant social diversity in Porta Nuova too, which was unfortunately partially lost after the development of this project. Everybody can visit and use the new public spaces, but the prices of housing and rents are now affordable only for the upper class. This caused a social shift in the area, which

was before inhabited by low and middle class people.

At the same time, the site had a bad reputation, and the renovation reduced crime rates considerably. In the last decade, it has totally changed and it is now one of the hippest neighborhoods of the city, well-connected to Corso Como, one of the most famous nightlife streets of Milan. In 2015, Milan hosted the world Expo *Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life* (Coppola 2015). This theme can surely be related to the development project in Porta Nuova, since its aim is to create a *polmone verde* (green lung) for the city, a green area producing oxygen, having little impact on city pollution and above all, creating a biodiversed ecosystem in an urban context. Right before the beginning of the Expo, which took place from the 1st of May to the 31st October, MiArt 2015 was also held, from 10th to 12th of April (Villa 2015). Since *Wheatfield* was a four-month long installation and it lasted from March to July, it was present during both events. On one side, it discusses food production and distribution, as well as global warming and climate change, placing itself in the context of the world Expo. On the other side, it is an art installation made by an international renowned artist. Surely, many people came to Milan to both visit MiArt in Milano Fiera and see Denes' work, which was placed in one of the most famous, innovative and trendy Milan districts.

Furthermore, the Expo itself is a controversial event, since it was held to address the food and ecological problems. However, in order to organize the event, resources were exploited for the creation and promotion of a new city. *Wheatfield* is thus in the middle of a constantly changing environment, which could be criticized for a number of reasons. As for Battery Park Landfill, the public attention was focused on the site in transformation, as well as on the events the city was hosting in the same period. The artwork was supported by the Riccardo Catella Foundation,[2] with the help of Confagricoltura[3] and the Nicola Trussardi Foundation.[4]

The site-specificity of the artwork had changed as its environment had changed, and so had its meaning. Placing it in a site already transformed has as a consequence the loss of the political and critical meaning in favor of a more evident ecological concern. The artwork thus became a justification of the site's modification, more than a critical interpretation of it. The project started, as in Battery Park Landfill, with the soil preparation. The area of the future Biblioteca degli Alberi is 12 acres wide and to make it suitable for a wheat plantation, 15,500 cube meters of cultivation soil were brought to the site. For the sowing, 1,250 kilos of seeds of the Odisseo variety were used, together with 5,000 kilos of fertilizer (Fondazione Nicola Trussardi Official Website, n.d.).

After this step, the seeding could begin as a community act, on the 28th of February. While in Battery Park there were volunteers helping the artist with her work, in Porta Nuova she decided to officially involve the public, creating not only a symbolic act, but a social and public event. A press release by *Artribune*, published on the 9th of April, communicated the inauguration of the installation on the 11th of April, during MiArt, inviting all citizens to have an active role in it, stimulating social engagement and community building (*Artribune* 2015).

In Italy, especially in the context of Expo 2015, wheat has value because it is the most eaten cereal in the country, being at the base of the Mediterranean diet. It seems that, with this artwork, nature can take the city back to its origins. Furthermore, as Porta Nuova park is one of the

2 The foundation was founded in 2007 with the aim of "promoting the culture of responsible and sustainable territorial development by actively contributing to the improvement of urban and green spaces through civic and cultural programs. "About Riccardo Catella Foundation." (Fondazione Riccardo Catella Official Website, n.d.)

3 Confagricoltura is the Confederazione Generale dell'Agricoltura Italiana (General Confederation of the Italian Agriculture). Since 1920 it is a public association of farmers

cornerstones of Milanese life, agriculture regained the place it had many years ago as the main character of our landscape (Fondazione Nicola Trussardi Official Website, n.d.). It is an invitation to return to the concrete simplicity of the earth, from which life, growth and prosperity begin.

The land was reaped using both traditional and modern agricultural techniques, to promote different wheat cultivation methods (Senda, 2015). After some months [Fig. 3], the golden wheat was growing and a ceremony was organized on the 9th of July to celebrate harvesting (Confagricoltura Official Website, n.d.). It was both an occasion for having a public event, and for involving everybody personally in the project, letting them take home a bundle of wheat or a bag of seeds to sow their own wheat field. In an interview she granted on the 8th of July, Denes explained how, in her opinion, humanity is losing its values, and *Wheatfield* could be a symbol of them. Her work does not only deal with the issue of food, but also with our relationship with Planet Earth.

It shows contradiction, creating an aesthetic experience where the field is violently entering the urban context, in the same way as the metropolis harshly exploited the natural landscape. It is a monumental installation because it needs to speak to people, to involve them and raise awareness. In the opinion of Denes, art doesn't need to be elitist. Instead, it needs to communicate in an efficient way (*Mi-Tomorrow*, 2015). For this reason, she developed her concepts through many forms of media and methods, in order to express them in the most incisive way possible thorugh her personal Visual Philosophy, which she is able to apply on big-scale environmental works.

> ***Wheatfield faces the avidity and the false priorities imposed by the global society. A simple jest, like let the whet grow up in the center of a big city, become a call to individual and social responsibility. It represents food, energy, commercial trade, international relationships, global economy. It is an appeal to solve the big issues of social inequality and resources distribution which troubled our planet and menace our future.*** (Mi-Tomorrow 2015)

To conclude, both *Wheatfield*'s by Agnes Denes were relevant participatory projects of public art. They raise awareness towards ecology and are based on the feminist concept of fertility and growth. The 1982 installation foresees global warming, which became the subject of the re-enactment. Nowadays, the issue of climate change is widely discussed internationally, while in the 80s it didn't have relevance. For this reason, *Wheatfield* is one of the first eco-earthworks, dealing with food mass production and its impact on the ecosystem (Takac 2020).

The two works were created in urban contexts, more specifically in the business and financial center of the metropolises involved. The sites enhance the theme of the artwork, dealing with the capitalistic system and its involvement in bringing the product from the earth to the supermarket and, finally, to our dishes. Becoming aware of the processes of food production and distribution can bring people to a more conscious food consumption, as well as raise awareness about the unbalanced resource distribution causing world hunger. As recently written by Alina Cohen in occasion of Denes' retrospective at The Shed (New York)

and agriculturists. (Confagricoltura Official Website, n.d.)

4 Founded in 1996 in Milan, the Trussardi Foundation is a "non-profit institution for the promotion of contemporary culture." It is not a museum, it has not a collection, but it is an agency supporting and producing contemporary art. It often sustains public art projects in the city of Milan. (Fondazione Nicola Trussardi Official Website, n.d.)

in 2019, in an article about *Wheatfield – A Confrontation,* the meaning of the work hasn't changed in forty years. Furthermore, it may be more poignant today. "The issues have not been resolved," said Denes. "There is still world hunger, mismanagement of resources, mismanagement and misuse of our spaces and environments" (Cohen 2019). The project has thus conserved its relevance for almost forty years, being today a manifesto of the expressive power of contemporary art. As the artist said, the paradoxes and issues it raises are not solved today, and they probably won't be solved for many years. That's why we still need *Wheatfield – A Confrontation.*

http://www.agnesdenesstudio.com/works7.html



Fig. 1. Agnes Denes, Wheatfield – A Confrontation, August 1982, view of the wheat with the World Trade Center and Wall Street on the background. From "Wheatfield - A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill, Downtown Manhattan," Agnes Denes Official Site, accessed May 17, 2021.

www.nytimes.com/2019/11/07/arts/design/agnes-denes-the-shed-review.html



Fig. 2. Agnes Denes, Wheatfield – A Confrontation, August 1982, view of the wheat with the Statue of Liberty in the background. From Holland Cotter, "At 88, Agnes Denes Finally Gets the Retrospective She Deserves," The New York Times, November 7, 2019.

www.designboom.com/art/agnes-denes-wheatfield-fondazione-nicola-trussardi-07-15-2015/



Fig. 3. View of the golden wheat with Bosco Verticale and UniCredit Tower in the background, Wheatfield – A Confrontation, Porta Nuova, Milan, 2015. From Shuhei Senda, "Agnes Denes Plants a 5 Hectare Wheatfield amongst Milan's Porta Nuova Skyscrapers," Designboom, July 15, 2015.

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THE MAINTE-NANCE ART OF M. L. UKELES

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There have been no great female artists, not for lack of talent, inventiveness or originality, but because of a corrupt society, based on the supremacy of the male artistic enlightenment upon the female's one (Nochlin 1989). This was the conclusion drawn by Linda Nochlin in the essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?,* published in 1971. The psychological bias that the patriarchal education has imposed on society to establish and then maintain its power has relegated the artistic production of the female artists to a status of decorative practices or leisure activities (Nochlin 1989). In a woman's life art production became a stage between the maiden and married life.

Even if this kind of talk on gender discrimination seems to belong to a past and distant era, it is fair to underline how difficult it is to eradicate some biases are from social habits. It was precisely from these types of discrimination that Mierle Laderman Ukeles had to defend herself, as well as her works, during the years of her training as an art student at Pratt University, New York.

She got married in 1966 and after two years, in 1968, she got pregnant, and for her, it was the greatest blessing she could ever receive (Moore College of Art & Design, 2019). She was extremely determined to complete her university career and become a professional artist. Unfortunately, while she was attending a sculpture class, her respected male mentor proclaimed:

> ***Well, Mierle, I guess you know you can't be an artist now. And I thought, 'What are you talking about?' I wanted to be a mother; it was a great blessing. But I was in a panic that it meant I couldn't be an artist.*** (Liss 2009, 51)

For many people, women especially, this claim would be the signature of the end of their career, but for Ukeles this was the starting point of her work as a full-time artist. In 1968 she had her first daughter Yael, the first of three children, and Ukeles became a full-time mother, as well as a full-time artist. However, like so many women she struggled to find the time to be both.

During a lecture she gave on the 4th of November 2019 for the 50th Anniversary Celebrating Moore College of Art & Design she affirmed:

"I was in full crisis. I felt in two people's bodies: the free inferred artist, and the mother maintenance worker" (Moore College of Art & Design, 2019).

But from this spiritual a psychological crisis, as she declared, "a light turned on. [...] If I am the boss of my freedom then I name *Maintenance* art. I can claim freedom, in its opposite. I name necessity art, I name survival art, in a quiet range, in one sitting in October 1969, in Philadelphia, I wrote the *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!*" (Moore College of Art & Design, 2019). [fig. 1]

Instead of giving up her dream and goal, Ukeles responded to the patriarchy of the Artworld with one of the most iconic instruments an artist can use:

> a manifesto. An instrument of self-establishment and self-declaration. The *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!* was used to "overturn the avant-garde presumption [...] that freedom in art is grounded in originality – that is, the 'artist-genius' never repeats (him)self" (Wadsworth Atheneum, 1998).

As Liss (2009, 53) explains, Ukeles assumed a wise and scandalous position that placed her maternal work as a practice and material from which artistic practices and cultural reflections could be drawn.
The *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!* is a typewritten document consisting of three and a half pages, divided into two parts. In the first part Ukeles lays out the distinction between what she calls "two basic systems: Development and Maintenance" (Ukeles 1969), and then, in the second part, she articulates a proposal for a possible exhibition entitled *Care*.
According to Ukeles, the Development system is a production of the capitalistic society linked with the individualistic idea of the self-made man or the so-called breadwinner. Indeed, Ukeles describes it as a "pure individual creation; the new; change; progress, advance, excitement, flight or fleeing" (Ukeles 1969). The other basic social system, the Maintenance system, corresponds to what generally is associated with female and domestic workers' activities:

> *keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight.* (**Ukeles 1969**)

According to Jillian Steinhauer (2017) the problem that Ukeles wanted to underline was how in our society and culture, the most valuable activities correspond to the Development system rather than Maintenance, which "takes all the fucking time" (Ukeles 1969).
The solution for this unbalanced situation was outlined in the second part of the *Manifesto* with a proposal for an exhibition that "would zero in on pure maintenance, exhibiting it as contemporary art" (Ukeles 1969). The show, entitled *Care*, was conceived in three sections. In the first section, called *Personal*, Ukeles decided to simply do the maintenance of everyday things inside the museum and exhibit them as Art:

> MY WORKING WILL BE THE WORK (Ukeles 1969).

In the second section, entitled *General*, Ukeles wanted to realize a series of interviews, divided into two groups:

> the first group would be named *Previous individual interviews, typed and exhibited* which would consist of interviewing "50 different classes and kinds of occupations that run a gamut from maintenance" (Ukeles 1969), while the second group, named *Interview Room - for spectators at the Exhibition*, would be a room where professional would interview the visitors at the exhibition asking the same questions[1] as typed interviews, which would be then taped and replayed throughout the exhibition area.

The final part entitled *Earth Maintenance* was conceived in order to propose various kinds of refuse delivered to the exhibition, where they could be recycled. Nonetheless, the exhibition did not want to be just an exercise in style, but a real feasible artistic project. Indeed, Ukeles sent her manifesto to various cultural institutions but, unfortunately, it was never accepted. Museums were sceptical of her project, so sceptical that some even advised her to propose this kind of artistic action to art galleries before trying to reach museum institutions (Moore College

1 The questions conceived by Ukeles were:
- What do you think maintenance is?
- How do you feel about spending whatever parts of your life you spend on maintenance activities?
- What is the relationship between maintenance and freedom?
- What is the relationship between maintenance and life's dreams?

of Art & Design, 2019). As stated by Ukeles, even though museums were sceptical and would not display and host her shows (Moore College of Art & Design, 2019), the *Manifesto* caught the attention of the art writer Jack Burnham, who decided to publish the *Manifesto* in the international, New York-based art magazine, *Artforum,* in its January 1971 issue.

This publication allowed the project to be discovered by the art critic Lucy Lippard, who was at that time specifically starting to work with only female artists (Liss 2009). Between 1969 and 1973, Lucy Lippard went from self-identifying as a "critic and curator" to a "politically engaged socialist feminist" (Butler, et al. 2012, p. 70). However, before deciding to dedicate and focus her curatorial work on the feminist artistic production, Lippard already used to organized major exhibitions for well-known international artists like Sol LeWitt, Hans Haacke, Carl Andre, and Vito Acconci, all artists united by the production of conceptual art (Renjilian 2017).

At the time, if the production of the male conceptual artists was already well established in the art system, the female counterpart was not so legitimate, because there was a general idea that women were not able to create valid conceptual art pieces (Smith College, n.d.).

For this reason, in response to the patriarchy of the Artworld, in 1973 Lippard organized an international art show based on the production of only female conceptual artists, entitled *c. 7,500*.[2]

Consequently, after the publication on *Artforum*, Lippard decided to invite Ukeles to participate in the exhibition, since her artistic research, together with the other conceptual artists, were presenting an innovative and interesting point of view regarding how 'formal or decorative values are secondary' (Smith College, n.d.) in the production of conceptual work of art. In this regard, the common attitude found by Lippard was not concerning a feminist attitude or a common ethos inside the female production, rather it was their take as young artists on social issues, artistic production, knowledge and education that have made it possible to collect them in one exhibition (Smith College, n.d.). *c. 7,500* was meant to explore the border of conceptual art, and as a result Lippard was able to defy new standards in museum practices. Following the example of the *Womanhouse,*[3] the exhibition was organized at the newly founded California Institute of the Arts, located in Valencia, California.

Inside the Institute Lippard grouped several artists in a travelling exhibition, which would be shown from the United States to London, from May 1973 to February 1974. In the summer of 1973, the exhibition took place at the Wadsworth Atheneum, Connecticut, and this was for Ukeles the first chance to show her project in a museum space. What she proposed to the Wadsworth Museum was a series of four performances that would take place on two days in the summer of 1973:

July 20 and July 22.

As reported by the Wadsworth Atheneum (1998) the first performance was *Transfer:*

> *The Maintenance of the Art Object*. Ukeles used the vitrine housing an Egyptian mummy, one of the most popular objects of the museum's collection, to engineer a three-part role exchange between maintenance worker, artist, and conservator [fig. 2].

The mummy embodied the fear of the dead and the uncomfortable relation that people usually have with it. Moreover, the mummy was also

2 Interesting is the reason behind the title of Lippard's exhibition. Since 1969, she used to name them using the number of the population where the exhibition was taking place. Examples are the show held in Seattle entitled *557,087*, the show *955,000* in Vancouver or the exhibition *2,972,453* in Buenos Aires. All these shows were connected by the presentation of conceptual art practices. In the case of *c.* 7500, the show continued to use the same nomenclature since it can be inscribed as the fourth example of the series of conceptual art exhibition, for this reason the title was referring to the population in Valencia, California. See *c.7,5000: An Exhibition Organized by Lucy R. Lippard, 1974* at https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/items/detail/c7500-exhibition-organized-lucy-r-lippard-14060

3 *Womanhouse* opened in Los Angeles on the 30th of January 1972 for one month

the perfect example of the importance of maintenance work, since the preservation of the human body was possible only thanks to the maintenance work of the ancient Egyptians. For Ukeles, this actively demonstrated how art institutions assign different values to the same action:

> museums underestimate the maintenance work of their employees, but respect and enhance the work of the past Egyptian maintenance workers.

In the second performance, called *The Keeping of the Keys:*

> *Maintenance as Security*, Ukeles took temporary control of the guards' keys and, during the opening hours, she closed various galleries, sometimes with people still inside, to secure the museum.

The visitors were informed of the artistic performance and in this way, they became active participants in the process. The aim of this second performative action was to make clear the power relationship between the different working classes present inside the museum, which was exposed by reversing the authority's hierarchy. It can be said that Ukeles has made herself an embodiment of the Hegelian self-awareness concept which allows to understand the interdependence power relation and social structure between the servant and the master,[4] as well as the interdependence between maintenance workers and the developer ones. The third performance was *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance:*

> *Outside* which is, without any doubt, the most iconic performance of the series. It took place on the morning of July 22 at the main entrance of the museum on Main Street [fig.3]. The performance lasted four hours and it was a type of ancient purification ritual. In wielding her mop, pouring water, scrubbing the pavement with a rag, Ukeles turned the sidewalk of the main entrance into her white canvas, where the dripping of the water on the surface became her way to turn the methodology and aesthetic of action painting into a maintenance work.

Finally, the fourth performance was *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance:*

> *Inside* which took place on the afternoon of July 22 over a period of four hours. On this occasion, Ukeles was right on visitors' heels trying to erase their evidence of intrusion inside the museum space (Wadsworth Atheneum, 1998).

According to Liss, in performing these acts of maintenance both as a woman and as an artist, Ukeles made a deep connection between her work and the corresponding "invisible work of female domestic labor" (Liss 2009, 49). Ukeles' interest in issues of class, gender, power, and control was born from the extremely religious environment in which she was raised and from her early difficult experiences as a feminist mother and artist.[5] As it has been said before, the education of Ukeles was rich and rooted in the history of art as well as in the artistic production.

She got a degree in history and internationals from Barnard College and a fifth-year certificate in teaching art at the Pratt University of New York (Wadsworth Atheneum 1998, 3). For this reason, it is easy to find in her work precedent artistic derivation and references. According to the historical reconstruction of Willoughby (2013), there are two important precedent works that have not been a direct source for Ukeles but have anticipated and developed an artistic process closer to the issue present

until February 28th.
It has been a groundbreaking project, the first of its kind: it was organized at first by Judy Chicago, who had first formed the Feminist Art Program at Fresno State College, before partnering with CalArt professor Miriam Schapiro.

4 See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *La fenomenologia dello spirito,* a cura di Gianluca Garelli, Einaudi, Torino, 2008

5 Ukeles was the daughter of an Orthodox rabbi, and both of her parents were fully engaged in civic improvement. Remarkable is the examples of her mother who founded the Denver Symphony, and the one of her father who has served for several years as a chair of the city boards of health. It is evident how

family education together with the discriminatory experiences she had during the university years have forged a specific sensitivity in Ukeles towards these issues. See Wadsworth Atheneum, (1998) *Mierle Landerman Ukeles*. MATRIX 137 ed. Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum.

in Ukeles' research. The first precedent in the history of art are the two performance sidewalk cleaning pieces organized by the art group Hi Red Center,[6] who share the same ethos of Ukeles in creating an event that can "shake up the bored but affluent middle class" (Havens 2006, 148-149), and are willing to critique the established power (Enström 2020).

The first event was held on October 16, 1964, in Ginza, Tokyo, and was entitled *Movement to Promote the Cleanup of the Metropolitan Area (Be Clean!)*. Here the group of artists have meticulously cleaned a section of the street as a response to the policy of beautification of the capital held by the Japan Government during the Tokyo Olympic Games.[7]

The second cleaning event was conducted two years later, on the first of July 1966 around Grand Army Plaza in New York City. Co-organized by George Maciunas (Enström 2020), it was entitled *Street Cleaning Event,* performed during *Fluxfest Presents* (MoMA, s.d.).

All these performance pieces were conducted with the appearance and rigour of art conservation, almost in a pseudo-scientific rigour, aiming at 'transforming a daily activity to a matter of national health' (Enström, 2020). The second artistic precedent that Willoughby (2013) reported, is the series of iconic photographs made by Gordon Parks, in 1942. In *American Gothic, Washington, D.C.*, Parks depicts Ella Watson, a Farm Security Administration maintenance worker. Thanks to his art he spoke about the exploitation of maintenance workers, focusing on the issue of race and gender. The title and the pose of Watson with her mop and broom under an American flag is a clear reference to the Grant Wood painting *American Gothic*, 1930, which was a symbol of the puritan American citizen. However, Watson, with her sternly gaze, is accusing and judging a society which continues "to divide its liberties along lines of race, gender, and association with maintenance work" (Willoughby 2013, 190).

Although there is no evidence that Ukeles was aware of these past practices, thanks to her university studies other direct sources can be found inside her methodological art practices. Indeed, the theoretical and methodological debt she felt with the artistic figures of Marcel Duchamp, Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko was honestly reported during the 50th Anniversary Celebrating Moore College of Art & Design (Moore College of Art & Design, 2019). According to her words:

> from Pollock's legacy, she has understood the freedom of the body to act within the artwork; thanks to Rothko's example she has assimilated the freedom to pass from one dimension to another; and finally, thanks to Duchamp's legacy she has discovered the freedom to name and the power of rename.

Above all, the demand for the self-establishment of one's artistic practice is crucial in the dialectic that Ukeles has created within the world of art.

Having already been not recognized as an artist from the patriarchy of the Artworld, since she was also a mother, Ukeles has not demanded but has firmly asserted the legitimation of her art. This ability and power to name and self-determinate her work was given to her, regardless of her gender, because of her artistic status. In the same way, decades before Duchamp had elevated the ready-made to art, shattering the idea of what can be named art. In this regard, it was not anymore the Artworld that could legitimize and validate what can and cannot be art, but it was the – female – artist who reestablished her power and social

6 Hi Red Center was a radical art collective founded between 1963 and 1964, in Tokyo by the artists Genpei Akasegawa, Natsuyuki Nakanishi and Jiro Takamatsu. Following the examples of Japan's Neo-Dada movement and Fluxus, and being influence by the social condition of Japan after the Second War World, Hi Red Center have created happenings that consisted of ironic actions aiming at questioning the government's demands and policy. For further information see https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/h/hi-red-center

7 For further information on the Hi Red Center happening, see the article Cameron Cortez (2016), *Be Clean, Rio* in the Avery Review 17, https://averyreview.com/issues/17/be-clean-rio, Doryun Chong (2012), *Tokyo 1955–1970: A New Avant- Garde*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, or Warren Enström (2020), *Restaging Hi Red Center's Cleaning Event*, Burnaby, Comparative Media Arts Journal.

position in order to legitimize it. Consequently, if the dominant society does not legitimize the work of the working class, according to Ukeles, it must be legitimized by the suppressed class through a process of self-awareness which would lead to a self-determining status.

These references are the starting point that can explain the revolutionary impact that the *Manifesto* had in the history of art. It is clear how it has established a fundamental precedent both theoretically and practically not only in female artistic creations but also from the perspective of what can be called art at the beginning of the Seventies. Trying to define feminist art tout-court is a difficult task.

According to Renjilian, it can be said that "feminist art explored what it meant to be a woman and an artist, whether that meant living in a female body, working with mediums that were traditionally the realm of women like textiles and ceramics, or performing the labor typically associated with women" (Renjilian 2017, 28). However, this definition corresponds to a specific idea of feminism that emerged in the United States in the Seventies, which was based on the daily experiences of women's lives and bodies, operated in an empirical logic (Molesworth 1999, 107). In the artistic production, this used to be translated with works aiming at representing a positive image of women exploring their bodies and sexuality. Although these artistic experiences were 'denigrated as "essentialist" by feminists' (Molesworth 1999, 107) because they referred to a cohesive identity of "woman", in the Eighties this perspective was overcome by the post-structuralist philosophy. This perspective had the relevancy to underline how the concepts of man and woman are just a stiff social construction in need of a disarticulation. In Ukeles' work, the disarticulation has become the tool capable of creating a critique that can reflect and show the power relation within the museum context and, as a microcosm that embodies the macrocosm, the society.

Ukeles has explained her methodology as a "dismapping" of the form of the city in order to recreate a new mapping of the entire living city (Moore College of Art & Design, 2019). The city that Ukeles takes into consideration is not only the location she is intervening in, but it is the more general cultural framework defined by the institutions of art (Know 2002, 13). For this exact purpose, Ukeles considers the contingent situation in order to decode and recode it, producing a visualization of the hidden operations and the relationship between the work and its site.

To sum up everything that has been stated so far, it can be said that feminist practices of the Seventies made a huge contribution in putting in crisis the Fordian model and in opening the dialogue on social differences relating to race and gender, but also the relations of production in the capitalist society (Ponzio 2020). It is precisely in this vein that Ukeles' work is placed to connect to neoliberal economy, Marxist feminist[8] and the global flows of labour. Bringing the discussion into the present, the women's liberation movement in the United States has increased the women entering wage-relations and the workforce outside of the household, presenting a pool of available labour to perform cleaning/care jobs for households in wealthy capitalist core countries (Ponzio 2020).

As a result, nowadays materialist feminists tend to analyze not the unpaid forms of work, but its paid forms outside the household, focusing on the racialization and illegalization that support accumulation through the economic and social devaluation of workers. Françoise Vergès (2019) discusses the racialization of cleaning and caring work in

8 See Silvia Federici, *Wages against housework,* Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, London, 1975

today's society, taking into consideration the environmental history of colonialism. Vergès reworks feminist theories of reproduction by mapping the dialectic of the visible white "performing male body" and the invisible "racialized female exhausted body" (Vergès 2019). According to her, nowadays it is the work of black migrant and refugee women that is invisible and naturalized in order to support neoliberal and patriarchal economic capitalism to ensure that the "upper class, white, neoliberal, and even liberal people must enter these spaces without having to acknowledge, to think of, to imagine, the work of cleaning/caring" (Vergès 2019). As a result, the neoliberal male body performs, while the racialized female body circulates in an economy of exhaustion, because of the historical logic extending from colonial slavery (Ponzio 2020).

The innovation of Ukeles' work lies in the artistic process itself, which has expanded from the personal sphere to a broader social sphere. Her artistic methodology can be divided in this way into two periods: in the first one, which can be inscribed as a personal reflection, she perfectly succeeds in responding to the contingent discussion of the subordination of the figure of the woman within the system of social maintenance, because she decoded and recoded the cultural framework, underling the specific social issue presented within the Artworld.

Consequently, it can be argued that her work was not simply a critique, but the performance series became a means to make evident the corrupt social construction based on the privileged "performing male body" (Vergès, 2019) that owns and rules the economic system.

Differently from what the usual modernist artist role was, the one who has been called by Patricia Cato as *bad modernism* (Gablik 1995). Following the feminist ideas of the Seventies about how the personal sphere is still a political issue, in the second period Ukeles from a personal journey brought her awareness outside her own perspective by considering the social sphere of the other maintenance workers. These second action led to the creation of artistic projects such as *I Made Maintenance Art One Hour Every Day*, 1976, or *Touch Sanitation,* 1978. The importance of this evolution is based on the social aspect present in them which present the willingness to spread a reflection on the self-establishmed artistic perspective, in order to develop a specific connection within the environment that is a critique of the artist.

Similarly, today, through the writings of Ponzio and Vergès, it is clear how there is still a need to reflect and rethink the relationship between power dynamics and invisibility within neoliberal society because what has changed is not the social underestimation of maintenance systems, but rather the target population that has become their passive subjects. According to Ponzio (2020), the turn to neoliberal capitalism has increased corporate office space and global mass tourism that needs a globalized and massive service force. As a result, since 2010, a new feminist movement has emerged to fight for the current economic and social conditions damaged by the ideology of incessant productivity.

In this regard, the development of the power relationship between two basic systems, the Development and the Maintenance, has been investigated by contemporary artists who have shown in different ways the legacy of Ukeles and the new discourse on the neoliberal issues. *Cleaning Condition* by Suzanne Lacy at the Manchester Art Gallery and

Manchester Arts Festival in 2013 was a reflection on the ironic reinvention of Kaprow in 1995, where teams of "sweepers" from labour and immigration organizations cleaned galleries every day following Kaprow's instructions and distributing a very visible "litter" of political printed materials onto the floors (Lacy 2013). In 2016, Patricia Kaersenhout performed at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam *The Clean Up Woman*. Within the performance, the artist appears cleaner, sharply addressing the racialized feminization of caring labour in the global art system with its inclusions and exclusions of people of colour, immigrants, diasporic or indigenous people (Ponzio 2020). Both performances raise the issue of maintenance in the public sphere of the museum, which becomes a place of conviviality and social exchange. Ultimately, the value of Ukeles' research and method is visible in the shareability and repeatability of the process which can be adapted in different times and places, such as the contemporary experience of Lacy and Kaersenhout, but the most important value is related to the creation of awareness from which freedom and self-determination can be derived.

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ALAN WEXLER

Tables or anti-gravity machines

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The actions of Allan Wexler are mainly based on common objects with an infinite layering of interpretations. By this strategy his works are highly inclusive for the spectators, engaging them naturally to a deeper understanding of our civilisation's bases. He described his work in a recent series from 2012 of twenty *Calling Cards* entitled *What Kind of Work Do You Do?,* prepared for a Cocktail Party, where the question is every time the same but the answer refers to different types of his projects, different behaviours in his process as an architect, an artist or both etc. All these cards share an eccentric conception of his action, with points of irony and humour. A remaining point is an obsession for the same topics and a development of experiences until he reaches the state of "physically exhausted at the same rate as I become intellectually exhausted" (Wexler 2012).

This goal can be reached only through a strict pragmatic methodology, as a devoted scientist would use for his experiments, to allow unexpected surprises. All this exploration of our fundaments begins from a blank page, the tabula rasa, where the artist constructs a very subjective unfinished narration oriented by incidents, errors and imperfections. Focusing on his relationship with the public action, it becomes interesting to analyse one of his biggest explorations about the most basic furniture:

> tables. This obsession is a very long process maturing all along his career through decades and which will never come to a result.

This permanent question raises various central aspects of our social contract through the prosaic iconography of individual's uses and habits, the personal position in contemporary society and a way to invent and imagine an alternative to our historical achievements. It's significant to underline that Allan Wexler got his education in the seventies, building his practice on the contentious legacy of the sixties, putting in crisis all historical institutions in art and architecture fields but also tackling the frozen condition of construction and sculpture. In an era where borders have been studied to be crossed, the artistic production became free from constraints and critics to offer exponential ways of practice. "I am an architect in an artist's body" (Wexler 2012). This assumption contains two concepts describing faithfully the artist. He graduated from the Rhode Island School of Design with a Bachelor in Architecture in 1972 and from the Pratt Institute with a Master in Architecture in 1976, but even when his supervisor of Bachelor thesis requested *a true architectural building* from him, he successfully found a way to develop a new university educational system for a student campus designed on mobile classes plug into Motor Lodges, all justified by a sensible social analysis of the campus.

His work attempts to deconstruct the borders of what is traditionally considered architecture to offer solutions better suitable to their contemporaneity; in a conservative term he never properly conceived architectural projects. On the other hand his artistic practice is ruled by an architectonic perception of his environment, with a high degree of sensibility to materials, a phenomenological approach which also characterises a revolution in this period replacing the human at the centre of architectural discourse. The artist cultivates a hybrid practice receptive to human's emotions and reactions. In this adopted scientific behaviour we recognise the experimental patterns from a laboratory. First, a clear dichotomy between a *perfect* virtual ideal theory compared with an imperfect and unpredictable true reality, and second, the process of reasoning

by negation to define a content and its essence. From this methodological framework, the artist adds few constraints as in the process *Chair a Day,*[1] where the limit was temporal and the border of the execution which he kept going until a physical and intellectual exhaustion of the exercise.

In this way, the practice promotes a philosophy of *Do It Yourself* before its renewing hegemony of our era. Constraints are a tool to build the research and the aesthetic result of it allows the spectator to identify and project themselves with no trouble into artworks constructed around a simple and expressive structure. This intuitive approach meets the one of Tadashi Kawamata,[2] where the idea of creating anti-gravity structures by accumulation is also very present:

> the projects always place the spectator in an active position, encouraging a playful atmosphere which is central to all of Wexler's production.The appearance of a ruff conception is enlightened by the poetry of the material and the artistic vision. All projects begin with a patient observation of the action environment, from there the artist raises a few questions about the topic which could be discussed and starts a process of experiments. The results provided and subjectively interpreted are not an end but a basis for discussion and often further development.

For example, the tables we are focusing on are an elementary object of the human condition, they are a flat top around which people sit to often share a meal, a drink, a discussion, a social experience. From this Allan Wexler begins to study how reacts a table to stay a flat top in an accidental environment in the Hypar Room for the Contemporary Art Centre of Cincinnati in 1999. Or how users become part of the furniture itself by wearing it in *Four People Wearing a Table,* about 1996, where only the the split top of the table remains. These projects similar to events, where the process is a form of performance reveal that shows the artist's links with the work of John Cage[3] and the movement of Fluxus, one of the rare references directly made by Wexler in his character of hermit.

As a very advanced concretization of this study, we can detail the artwork *Two Too Large Tables* commissioned by the municipality in the Hudson River Park,[5] New York City in 2006, which offers a synthesis of many parameters the artist has known. In this case study we can understand Wexler's artistic approach and working process, because once again the topic is the most basic furniture, a table with chairs. The structure of the table connects it to the ground to offer a flat top, and the chairs are attached to the ground with the feet to offer a seat plan related to the previous flat top, subsequently the height of the two are interdependent. Until then, almost everybody should agree with these constraints to make the table usable in a traditional way. Since the two heights are interdependent, here the chairs become the very structure of the table, in a behaviour of material economy and an attitude of becoming part of the object for the users.

From these subjective constraints an idea developed through drafts, models as the ones of the *Table for the Utopian Café*[6] around 2001 and finally a prototype built in wood and showed in the Feldman Gallery in 2002 as a *Too Large Table*. Since the goal of the artist is to provide a *utopian* interpretation of the functional object through his eccentric imagination, this process requires extraordinary skills in technologies and crafts to move from the traditional constructing technique. At each step,

1 « Influenced by Cage, I made 16 chairs in 16 days. Timing myself to an eight-hour day I began early each morning making a chair and worked directly in wood. The dimensions of each chair were standard but the design and form were impulsive and unplanned.» Allan Wexler about *Chair a Day*, 1990, wood, auto body paint, wax.

2 « Influenced by Cage, I made 16 chairs in 16 days. Timing myself to an eight-hour day I began early each morning making a chair and worked directly in wood. The dimensions of each chair were standard but the design and form were impulsive and unplanned. » Allan Wexler about *Chair a Day*, 1990, wood, auto body paint, wax.

3 "Allan Wexler: Cocktail Party Response # 16: «What kind of work do you do?» Influenced by John Cage's book, *Silence*, and his use of Chance Operations to create music, I predetermine a set of construction rules, materials, quantities, time, overall dimensions and function in order to invent new forms for utensils, furniture and buildings. These strict rules free me from preconceptions. Logic used to build illogically. I work in a James Joyce, Stream of Consciousness way. Buildings flow directly from mind through hand. I form buildings the way a potter raises a pot from

spinning clay? In the manner of Sumi-e water colourist I build fluidly without hesitation." From *What Kind of Work Do You Do Calling Cards* series, 2012, Allan Wexler

4 As attested by his cabin, Summer Studio, isolated and lost in the forest of the end of Long Island in opposition to his workshop located in South Manhattan close to the Highline.

5 This commission is part of a program of Public Art and Memorials and it began with the opening in 1998 and today regroups 11 pieces.

6 Shown in 2002 at the exhibition in Feldman Gallery with the prototype.

new constraints appear and from a very simple idea at the beginning, super complex realisations follow to reach the point of public artwork. It is perhaps where Allan Wexler shows a singularity in the art world by promoting an attitude of non-compromise to his artistic vision, not as an artist's whim but as a vector of clever adaptations thanks to inventor's behaviour.

The model is an early way to give a materiality, a structure and a texture to the project, many details are defined at this stage but the weight of the parts, the global stability, the relationship with the space are still at a theoretical level. The prototype becomes the one-to-one scale model in a different material than the final one in order to be cheaper and a working base for modifications, Allan Wexler is an expert in this stage which can totally transform the work. Thanks to his training in architecture and his craft skills, he has a perfect command of the assemblies, the details between parts and the sensible selection of materials, by not subcontracting this procedure he keeps a full control on the artwork and proposes a total work of art. But he confessed that the last step is the most difficult, the prototype couldn't survive through the effect of time, although many of his research remain at this stage because they become the beginning of a new research and not an end, but in this specific case of a public command it should have a final delivery, and at this point the utopia is undermined. The project confronts to a large "set of difficulties not present in the context of a gallery installation - weatherproofing, structural engineering, handicap accessibility, construction drawings and documents, zoning, legal concerns, graffiti, pigeon nesting, public safety and long-term maintenance" (Wexler 2017).

As the artist declares, "perhaps the most difficult aspect is the struggle to create a successful permanent public work without compromising creative vision" (Wexler 2017).

And that the crucial twist which makes this piece a very convincing and faithful execution of the original concept, by all the work and research, not noticeable by the user when well done, which has been done to stick with the essence of the project, a pure simplicity.

"The positioning of the chairs creates atypical juxtapositions; users sit at angles and negotiate new relationships" (Wexler 2012). A major inquiry of the work of Allan Wexler is our social constructions and the relationship we have with the group of people surrounding us. It brings the user in a subjective position where they are obliged to take a side.

This quote about the work *Two Too Large Tables* is an affirmation of this, in fact referring to the seat chosen by the user, he adopts a posture regarding the other seats, either turning away, in a situation of isolation and loneliness maybe more favourable to the contemplation of the landscape and the reflection, or turning away as a group of seats, appropriate for the discussion, to share a meal, play cards or any other social experiences with known people or strangers as a form of meeting point.

Between these two extreme points there are a lot of different ambiguous positions to experience relating to the environment, the weather, the time of day, the other users etc. In these layers of use certain people would not even seat around this table since the malicious sculptor chose the cheeky number of thirteen chairs to compose the structure and the biblical reference is rather obvious, thus criticizing further our social fundaments in the western civilisation, other superstitious minds will see in this piece an ominous sign. These considerations around the table are

not physical but elementary in its societal stance. This work is also a synthetic depiction of an abundant study beginning at the very first instant of the artist's career, with the project *ID Shirt* in 1971; the wish to locate people in the urban mass of New York city is clear, few settings allow the participants to find similarities, create ties and exist as an individual entity.

Later, in 1985, he proposed an appealing description of American society through its landscape via the project *Picket Fence Furniture*,[7] this recurring element of the American daily life symbolizes a boundary between private and public spheres usually very distinct.

But here, as in the project of the two tables, various shades could be adopted in between the two extremes, the wall or nothing.

The fences are transformed into furniture or propose connecting events with the interior or some forms of windows inviting the exterior to enter in a new form of semi-private space at a border with curiosity.

This anthropological exploration of human relationship is also concretely applied to the design of furniture such as the table project *Four White Shirts Sewn Into a Tablecloth* in 1991 in which the table is investigated as an extension of the bodies of four different people retaining only a partially flat central surface. This physical connection between users in many different techniques, influences and concepts is a source of experiences, such as *Coffee Seeks Its Own Level*, 1990, where the happening turns into a game for the users who, following the basic physical principle "water seeks its own level", have to move simultaneously if they want to succeed in drinking their coffee. The result is a dynamic choreography that attempts to coordinate a group action to reach a goal, plus a tablecloth full of stains that the artist will reuse as the basis for a new work on cup shapes. Wexler interpreted it as his "American version of the Japanese tea ceremony" (Wexler 2017), obviously inscribing it in a strong socio-cultural context. More broadly, he considers his public action as "Choreographing Interactions and Causing Disruptions" (Wexler 2017) and says that his «work is less concerned with creating spaces and more with the human spirit them» (Wexler, 2017). In this sense we can inscribe his career in a wider framework of engaged social practises involving people with the ultimate goal of questioning our preconditions in order to imagine another vision of the future. By inhabiting a materialisation of relationship, we could see some shared attentions with the *Nexus Architecture* series[8] created by Orta Studio, also blurring the boundaries between architecture, art, ethnography, sociology, sculpture or performance, this project choreographs contemporary questions about urban subjects and the social constructions ruling our exchanges.

The technique of a wearable architecture has been developed in the same decades that Allan Wexler witnessed the impulse to destroy classical boundaries. All these forms of discourses are broadly inclusive in terms of users going beyond the conventional audience of contemporary art. For this reason, his action goes in the direction of a larger democratisation of art, like the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn in the *Musée Précaire d'Albinet*,[9] Aubervillier in 2004, a format later repeated several times, where the goal is to open access to the debate on contemporary art to all social classes usually excluded of it.

This action makes sense when we consider the field of art as a place of debate, critics and improvement of our societies, such a case is extreme compared to the production of Wexler but plays an important

7 The densification of the uses in space is a recurrent topic in the artistic practice of Allan Wexler. In this case the uniform material bends its structure to welcome some seats, tables or chairs offering modular possibilities.

8 The work proposes a live sculpture through a unique cloth interconnecting all participant as a unique piece created by a multi-faceted human chain. The idea of performing a common voice for a collective action is to combine forces at the service of social activism. It recalls the standards of fashion shows, carnival history and the practice of pacific demonstration and occupation of public space. The political purpose of the work diverges a bit from the Wexler's discourse who risks our social constructions less militant engaged.

role in the key conception of art for people, not only as an entertainment but as a tool of expression and discussion in which each of us has to take responsibility. This mission of information, education and debate is elegantly brought into the work of the artist with a sense of humour.

"I am a teacher, I encourage people to see what is too close. I help people to break habits. I help students become beginners again" (Wexler 2012). The main strategy of Allan Wexler is to unsettle the user by deconstructing his assets, often through an absurd discourse, in order to bring him in a position of loss of bearings. He brings all the spectators on an equal footing ready to listen to something very different, eccentric and a new way to perceive the everyday reality. If he used a frontal, brutal, way to criticise a strong social fundament, most viewers would consider him as an inexplicably revolted fringe character, instead his pedagogic behaviour brings the viewer to a state of play and amusement, positive at a process of learning and education.

This open-minded attitude welcomes any event in the project's process as a surprise enriching a pragmatic research.

A part of the irony reveals some irrational aspects of our era when they are decontextualized from their fundamental habits and rituals by creating subjective borders. And the effect of the artwork is a collapse of our self-referentiality by abandoning ourselves to our instinct of curiosity and discovery. In the case of the *Two Too Large Tables* two tops are constituting the global morphology of the work with different references to the floor level, the first one is at an ordinary height, making clear its possibility to be used as a table, the primary function, and the second one two meters above the ground becomes a form of shelter from meteorological hazards, an intimate place bringing people under the same roof.

But the principle of this second table is the same as the first one, resting on top of the chairs which are themselves at the same exact position, except that our perception of it changes radically.

The choice of this mirroring surface gives an abstraction to the form reflecting the landscape as does the river just a few meters from it, the feeling produced to face a non-defined material, an unidentified form of spaceship, elicits the imagination of the visitors who can picture it as an urban mirror, a dining place, a sculpture sublimating the effect of water, a futuristic playground, and many others. This delicate poetry of the artefact is an open gate for idiosyncratic appropriations breaking down any prosaic iconography. Once again, it is an attitude defining all the activity of Wexler since his first projects, almost in a Dadaist behaviour.

Another even more evident public commission on this topic is *Tables of Content*, Douglas Park, Santa Monica, California.

In 2000 he proposes a series of new functional park elements based on the design of the traditional picnic tables to become a bridge, a shelter, a playground and more. This attitude to engage the spectator with a large part of the second degree could be related to the practice of Vito Acconci[10] in the second period of his career dedicated to public art.

Social critics have been the groundwork of his practice for a few decades, often in an offensive form, and the transition to a new form of expression has also been a conversion to a transversal shape of the speech keeping the strong meanings in a less confrontational arrogance but more as a suggestive debate.[11] The remaining topic of the definition of daily life's objects[12] is also a well-used tool to propose an alternative

9 «Les préoccupations sociales et politiques de Thomas Hirschhorn culminent en 2004 dans l'ouverture du Musée précaire Albinet, à Aubervilliers, qui fut une manière de "faire exister l'art au-delà des espaces qui lui sont consacrés". Un musée inhabituel, en préfabriqué, dont les employés et animateurs étaient des habitants du quartier et dont les éphémères cimaises ont exposé trois mois durant des chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art du 20ème siècle, signés Duchamp, Malevitch, Mondrian, Dali, Beuys, Warhol, Léger... empruntés pour la plupart au Centre Pompidou.» see: https://www.centre-pompidou.fr/fr/programme/agenda/evenement/ck4gG6p.

10 In 1980s, Vito Acconci turned his performance practice into a production of sculptures and installations.

11 His first temporary installation *Instant House* in

social vision to the crisis faced by modern times. The main goal of the art world in this case is to empower each citizen in inventing new perspectives to improve our human condition and avoid to unconsciously perpetuate established conventions.

This educational function is a pilar in Allan Wexler's practice. The criteria which embody the quality of the artistic production of Allan Wexler are numerous, in many different fields and until advanced details, this allows him to control a utopian realm where the visitor could pass over any border to discover infinite ways to improve his daily life. All his artworks are strong vectors of social exchange, debate and exploration.

The research process is organised through a patient observation of the natural environment and sensitive human emotions and reactions, shifting the cultural repairs to an unknown location to discover astonishment. In order to construct his eccentric posture, the artist does not claim a predominant artistic affiliation but, more like a hermit, he tries to deconstruct his preconceived notions of the world around him, releasing an increasingly overflowing subjective imagination fueled by obsessions.[13] This approach is more than ever the salvation of a way of life that is ultra-centred on an ever-expandingoffer ready to be consumed before the need has even been expressed, the place for imagination is engulfed by a vain multiplication of unfulfillable desires.

The singular point of view of Allan Wexler on our social constructions and daily life rituals is an incredible pedagogic instrument to constantly question our positions and in this way improve our human condition. Wexler's work brings the human back to the centre of our society and relationships with a benevolent assurance.

"My work explores the other side of function. The poetry of chair, table, cup, floor, nut and bold. I want the second floor to challenge gravity and of the staircase to ascend from the grave. I want windows to become eyes filtering and transforming the world outside. I want to become a different person on the other side of the door. I want to read a door. I want to believe in a wall. I want to have a conversation with a chair. I want a corridor to be a symphony, to tell a story. I want the corridor to have a beginning and an end. I want the corridor to be endless and to have an end. I want a faucet to become a waterfall. I want a light bulb to carve away the darkness" (Wexler 2012).

1980 explores the concepts of public / private permeable spaces in keeping in view the world's bipolarity at this time.

12 As in his piece *Untitled* 1994 in Tokyo, where he used the car's shape to transform its conventional use into the public space.

13 As testified by the 54 Studies for Chair Transformations in 2007, the never ending research process about this furniture, centre of a large proportion of the Wexler's production.

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BARBARA KRUGER

"We don't need another hero" - A Postmodernist Manifesto

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Barbara Kruger's style, with her red-framed black and white images, has become famous to a point of being appropriated by the mass media and industries, like the brand Supreme, which has appropriated Kruger's format to create its own design. This notoriety represents a consequence of Kruger's action of appropriating advertising format and strategy, with the goal of transforming the meaningless space of mass media into something significant. In this essay, it will be analyzed one specific work of Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (We don't need another hero)*, a billboard which was shown in fourteen cities around the United Kingdom, as well as in some cities in the United States in 1987. Through the analysis of Kruger's billboard, this essay wants to address the two main aspects that come along with the work. Firstly, how this work exemplifies the existence of two generations of feminist artists and their different concerns and artistic approaches.

Secondly, Kruger's work shows a renovated relationship with the public space. Kruger indeed reveals the space of the public as essentially a space of commerce, and she appropriates the formal qualities of advertisement for her public artworks. However, her appropriation is more than an appropriation, it is an action of subversion of commercial strategies of public advertisement, since she aims to create new meanings which are directed towards empowerment instead of promoting consumerism. These sides of contemporary art practice are embodied in *Untitled (We don't need another hero)* and both are symptoms of the so-called postmodernist condition of which Barbara Kruger can be considered a pioneer. In this sense Kruger's work can be defined as *A Postmodernism Manifesto*.

Barbara Kruger was born in Newark, New Jersey in 1945. After high school, she started attending the Syracuse University, but she dropped out after her father's death. She then attended the Parsons School of Design in New York, which had a big impact on Kruger's carrier.

Indeed, Parsons was the first university to offer degrees in advertising, graphic and fashion design, and during her time there, Kruger started to become known for her design works in magazines, book covers, and occasionally photo-editing.

She was also a writer and passionate about poetry. As an artist, she started out with paintings, creating abstract canvases that were supposed to be sexually suggestive, such as *2 A.M cookie (BIG)* shown at the Whitney Biennial in 1973.

She took a break from art, and she began to teach at the University of California, an experience that inspired her to include writing in her work. In the late 1970s, she returned to art, and she elaborated a peculiar style to which she remained faithful during all her further production.

In the 1980s, Kruger started developing her new format of large-scale photomontages in shiny red frames with black-and-white vintage photographs, mainly appropriated form 1950s mass media, accompanied by short declaration statements in red Futura Bold Italic typeface.

An example is *Untitled (We are your circumstantial evidence)*, 1983, which is, as most of her work, gender and feminist related.

Indeed, the artist claimed that her goal was «to ruin certain representations, to displace the subject and to welcome a female spectator into the audience of men». What Kruger does with her "selected" images and her own texts is to destroy a certain order of representation; the task of her work is a political displacement of the tradition/dominant mode

of representation, a task she accomplishes through reappropriation [...] Kruger creates a new hierarchy and a non-synchronous relation between the "male-view" images and a woman's text [...] she challenges not only the dominant mode of representation but also the dominant ideology (bourgeois/patriarchal/sexist). (Masako Kamimura 1987, 41).

Furthermore, through her red-framed images, Kruger operates a displacement of the subject, the woman who is constructed as subject, and of the spectator. Indeed, Kruger works require an active participation of the viewer, who needs to interpret both the image and the text and their relationship. In an interview with W.J.T. Mitchell she stated: "I like people to sort of generate their own meanings, too, and if I start naming, 'Well this is what I meant here and this is...' it's too tied to the conversation of a close reading" (Mitchell 1991, 439). At the end, her aim is "to construct another kind of spectator who has not yet been seen or heard [...] someone who in fact has not had control over the devices of their own representation." (Mitchell 1991, 435) To understand Kruger's works, it must be acknowledged the artistic context in which her artistic discourse developed. She is part of the Picture Generation, which is not a proper movement, instead it represents a generation of artists based in the US who work in similar ways, through appropriation and collage of images taken from the media.[1]

The Picture Generation developed at the beginning of the 1970s, a time when the image-based post-consumer culture was expanding rapidly, and the US economy was moving towards a consumerism economy whose strategies worked at the deepest level of the individual and his reality.

So, these artists were immersed in the media culture "which for them constituted a sort of fifth element or prevailing kind of weather" (Eklund 2009, 17). The Picture Generation vision of the society of images[2] was filtered by the writings of the French philosophers Michael Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Julia Kristeva, whose masterpieces had started to circulate in the Anglo-Saxons Nations thanks to the English translations made in those years. The central idea of these three philosophers was that identity was not innate, instead it was determined by social constructions of race, nationality, gender, and sexuality; moreover, these constructions are embedded in social institutions and show their effects through the mass media.

Therefore, the artists of the Picture Generation appropriated images and moved images with the final purpose of exposing the existing trope of mass media culture, highlighting how it contributes to the construction of specific identities within the society, identities which are superimpose and consequently discriminatory.

Among the discriminated category there are women, who not casually are a privileged subject of the works of the Picture Generation artists. *Untitled (We don't need another hero)* fits into the discourse carried out by the Picture Generation by challenging and exposing language and representation as instruments of imposition of power. *We don't need another hero* was first shown as a billboard in 1987.[3]

As usually, Kruger appropriates and decontextualizes existing images, mainly from the 1950s culture; in this case, she chooses a black and white image of a girl and a less-gender-defined child, who could be a young boy as well as a young woman. This latter bents the arm showing the muscle, while the former is looking and pointing at the

1 There are also some art historians and critics who believe the Picture Group represent the last of the movements of contemporary art born from a commixture of Conceptualism and Pop Art. (Eklund 2009, 133).

2 The "society of the images" can be associated with Guy Debord concept of *society of the spectacle* in which we assist at «the decline of *being* into *having*, and *having* into merely *appearing*.», (Debord 1994, 17).

3 *We don't need another hero* was also shown as a panel in several gallery and museums exhibitions, for example at the Whitney

Museum's exhibition "Progress" in 2009. This fact enables a reflection around the relationship between Kruger's work and the space of display. Indeed, this relation is wide open, since Kruger does not think as her works suitable for one place only, instead she is interested in experimenting with the way in which the meaning of a work slightly changes when the context of display is not the same. In the interview with W.T. J. Mitchell, she declared that she aimed to occupy as many places and audiences as possible (Mitchel, Kruger 1991, 438).

other's gesture. The origin of the photograph is unknown; however, it appears a clear reference to the wartime poster by J. Howard Miller, *We Can Do It!* (1943), which had circulated during World War II to encourage women to work in the military industry, since men were fighting the war.

The reference to Miller's propaganda poster is not rash if related to the United States political context of the mid-1980s when Kruger made her billboards. Indeed, the Reagan administration was sending troops to Grenada, fearing the naissance of a Socialistic government, and at the same time it was selling military resources to Iran to overthrow the government of Nicaragua, an action which resulted in a conflict from 1980 to 1988.

In this regard, *We don't need another hero* reveals an intrinsic political critique; following this interpretation, the "hero" in the title could be easily associated with military heroism, and the overall statement would be an explicit declaration against war politics and the spectacularization of conflicts. However, it must be noted that Kruger uses the word "hero" and not "heroine", highlighting the gender-specificity of her proposition.

In this sense, *We don't need another hero* could be read as more than an anti-war manifesto; the hero to which Kruger refers could indicate the world of men in general, meaning the Western society which is built around powerful male figures and male ideologies.

The same world which produces politics, culture, and the means through which the world and its protagonist are represented by mass media. Then, the "we" in *We don't need another hero* could refer to that part of society who have not male power, the ones who are subjugated by male politics, ideologies, culture and modes of representation.

Women are certainly included in this category, and in Kruger's work particularly women figure as the emblem of discrimination and misrepresentation in Western male society. Feminist concerns enter Kruger public works also in other occasions, demonstrating an ongoing interest in addressing the female subject in the public space. An example is the work *Untitled (Your body is a battleground)* which Kruger designed in 1989 for the Women's March in Washington D.C.

The work shows a front photograph of a woman's face, half printed in negative, with the word "your body is a battleground" printed in Kruger's traditional red Futura Bold font. In 1991, the same work was exported in Poland and translated into Polish, since women's rights, such as abortion, had been negated. In 2020, anti-government protesters returned to Kruger's work and one hundred posters of *Your body is a battleground* were hanged in the city of Szczecin. Seen from a feminist point of view, *We don't need another hero* enables a consideration around Anglo-American feminist art practice in the 1980s.

Particularly, Kruger's work, alongside the other female protagonists of the Picture Generation,[4] signs a change in art's approach to feminism developed after Conceptualism, which shows a renewed interest on «how ideology of women discrimination is concealed within texts and images of everyday existence and in the structure of the narrative and representation where they are embedded.» (Eklund 2009, 144)

One of the first formulation of the idea of two distinct generations of feminist artists is found in an article wrote by Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews: *The Feminist Critique of Art History* (1987). In this text, the authors describe the development of feminist art practice as well as feminist art history and criticism.

4 Some of the Picture Generation female artists are Erika Beckman, Dara Birnbaum, Sarah Charlesworth, Jenny Holzer, Louis Lawler, and Sherrie Levine.

What emerges from this essay is the recognition of a first wave of feminist artists in the 1970s, developed as a consequence of the counterculture and feminist movement of the end of the 1960s, and a second wave of feminist artists in the 1980s. The first generation was primarily concerned with a reevaluation of women working in the art world and a critique of the existing cultural institutions and the lack of women representation in museums, exhibitions, and galleries. As Gouma-Peterson and Mathews point out "women artists of the first generation were concerned with issues pertaining to the nature, evaluation, and status of female artistic production." (Gouma-Peterson and Mathews 1987, 329)

From the point of view of art history and art criticism, the first generation of women artists can be associated with the article by Linda Nochlin *Why Are There No Great Women Artists?* (1971), in which she blames the structure of social, cultural, and academic institutions for the underrepresentation of women artists in the art world. In the end, the aim of Nochlin's essay is "to prove that women have been as accomplished, even if not "great" as men, and to try to place women artists within the traditional historical framework" (Gouma-Peterson and Mathews 1987, 327).

This period also coincides with the creation of the first non-profit spaces, galleries and exhibition spaces devoted exclusively to women artists.[5] Another aspect of the first generation of feminist artists was the research of the possibility of a female sensibility and a female aesthetic «the self-conscious investigation of female body imagery, and of female experience generally. » (Gouma-Peterson and Mathews 1987, 334)

At the beginning of the 1980s, however, women artists moved to an approach informed by the methodologies of semiotics, post-structuralism, and psychoanalysis that recognize as fundamental the question around how representation and language contribute to gender difference and representation of women in general. As Gouma-Peterson and Mathews note "A second generation of feminists had abandoned the issue of female sexuality, and of female sensibility, in favor of an investigation of the workings and interactions of gender differences than the nature of specifically female". (Gouma-Peterson and Mathews 1997, 338)

This is to say that feminism took a postmodernist direction, where postmodernism must be intended not merely as the loss of a master narrative (the Western narrative), but as the loss of the narrative of the mastery (the white Western male). Craig Owens, in his essay *The Discourse of Others:*

> *Feminists and Postmodernism (1983) explores the connection between the feminist critique of patriarchy and postmodernist critique of representation; what they have in common is a need of exposing "that system of power that authorizes certain representations, while blocking, prohibiting or invalidating others."* (Owens 1994, 56)

However, from Owens's point of view, postmodernist theories have failed to address the issue of sexual difference; when Jean-François Lyotard claims that "Thinking by means of opposition does not correspond to the liveliest modes of postmodern knowledge" (Lyotard 1979, 29) he is failing to include feminist discourse that, on the contrary, stresses on the existence of sexual difference and incommensurability. And for Owens

5 Some of these new institutions devoted to women artists are: in New York the Women in the Arts (WIA) founded in 1971, the Women's Interart Center of 1972 and the on-going Feminist Art Institute in 1979. In Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Woman's Building in. Also, the 1970s sought the rise of women artists dedicated magazines and publications; the Feminist Art Journal of the East Coast in 1972, the Women Artists Newsletter in 1975, and re Helicon Nine, A Journal of Women's Art and Let to name a few.

"the absence of discussion of sexual difference in writings about postmodernism [...] suggests that postmodernism may be another masculine invention engineered to exclude women" (Owens 1994, 56). At the end, Owens's postmodernist has to be reconsidered in the light of feminist critique of narrative of mastery and representation of mastery as essentially based on the concept of difference. Barbara Kruger's work exemplifies the evolution of a second generation since she works to expose the link between issues on gender and sexuality to the system of power that informs representation and language. Moreover, *We don't need another hero* can be read as a postmodernist-feminist declaration of refusal of both a modernist and a postmodernist male-oriented narrative.

The "hero" is the reiteration of the same system of power that both modernism and postmodernism have tried to perpetuate.
For a complete analysis of *We don't need another hero*, another aspect of the work must be considered, that is the relation to the public space.

We don't need another hero, as well as other works by Kruger, is shown in the form of a billboard and displayed in a public avenue.

By appropriating the strategy of advertising, both from a formal point of view and of display, Kruger is making a statement about public space being essentially a commercial space. In the interview with W. J. T. Mitchell, she states:

> ***I live and speak through a body which is constructed by moment which are formed by the velocity of power and money. So, I don't see the division between what is commercial and what is not commercial. I see rather a broad, nonending flow of moments which are informed if not motored by exchange.*** **(W.J.T. Mitchell 1991, 435)**

Indeed, Kruger uses the commercial public space, the space of mass media and advertising, to subvert one of its main features, that is the use of images and words to create a message that is easily readable.

However, in the end the public space of mass media results as completely deprived of meaning. The public space of mass media is what Baudrillard called *the space of fascination* and Kruger adds that "stupidity is fascinating" (W.J.T. Mitchell 1991, 447). In the end, Kruger's work wants "to take the formalities of the spectacle and put some meaning into it" (W.J.T. Mitchell 1991, 447), transforming the public-commercial space into something meaningful. This consideration arises from Mitchell's question about the evolution of public art, from the traditional concept of monument as universally readable to the modernist monument which, Mitchell says «seems to be a kind of private symbol which has been inserted into the public space [...] its placement in a public site, but it eliminated the public access to meaning.» (W.J.T. Mitchell 1991, 447)
What Kruger is doing with her public art intervention is a new kind of public art which is both readable and meaningful:

> ***Whereas modernism was meaningless to people because of its inaccessibility, what the media have done today is make a thing meaningless through its accessibility. And what I'm interested in is taking that accessibility and making meaning. »*** **(*W.J.T. Mitchell 1991, 448*)**

This analysis of *We don't need another hero* by Barbara Kruger has highlighted how this work, along with other Barbara Kruger's works and that of the Picture Generation artists in general, marks a moment of profound change in contemporary art:

> from an art world of masterpiece images to one of appropriated images; from a supposed neutrality of the exhibition space to an incorporation of art in the commercial space of mass media.

These transformations of the art world are still evolving today in the digital age; the 1980s consumerist and image-based society has shifted into the digital, enabling contemporary artists to question the potentiality and controversy of digital representation and the public-digital space which, at the end, has revealed itself to be essentially a commercial space.

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THE CASE OF ODA PROJESI

The Aesthetic of Istanbul

AUTHOR:

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Since the beginning of the nineties, a global interest has been noted for participative and collaborative art practices which reshaped the role of the artist and the audience (Bishop 2012):

> according to Claire Bishop, this trend can be defined as the Social Turn of contemporary art, namely participatory projects structured by the collaboration between the artist, who is the creator of the meaning, and the participants, the audience composed by a group of people who may share socio-political issues and actually realise the work.

Considering this strong social element, Susan Lacy traced the history of these practices describing the rise of the so-called New Genre Public Art as "different avant-garde groups such as feminist activism, ethnic, Marxist, and media artists who share an interest in left-wing politics, social activism, and public redefinition, community relevance, and collaborative methodology" (Lacy 1995). The Lacy's New Genre Public Art, Bishop's Social Turn - but also other scholars' definitions such as Miwon Know and Arlene Raven's Art in the Public Interest - are different labels to describe a common artistic phenomenon which focuses on the valorisation of the group dynamics and the value of the experience during the process rather than an object-based production.

This change of perspectives also requires a rethinking of the traditional ways to critique art, studying new modalities to find meaning to what public practices bring on social dimension and in the art world.

Indeed, Claire Bishop underlines the controversies of this type of art which takes risks by considering only the social aspect, losing sight of the aesthetic value that should identify these new practices as art.

According to the author, it is difficult to judge participatory projects aesthetically, because the social aspect seems to be positive anyway. In other words, these projects seem to bring an unproved social improvement that has no critical terms in contemporary art and therefore leads to consider these practices positive regardless (Bishop 2012).

The role of the artist has changed as well, in fact the new public artist has gone from being a producer of aesthetic objects to an educator, coordinator and facilitator. According to Bishop, this is one of the reasons that leads to judge the artist's work in ethical rather than aesthetic terms, renouncing the authorship and reducing it to social work, judging his or her practices on the ability to create relationships. To corroborate her thesis, Bishop wrote about numerous participatory projects of Western artists; among them there is an artists' collective from Istanbul which departed from the object-based practices of Turkey's art world:

> their name is Oda Projesi (the Room Project). The scholar has commented their work as difficult to distinguish from the simple work of any museum's educational department because it aimed to create contexts of dialogue and social relationship integrated with the surrounding space.

Beyond this, what Bishop underlines in Oda Projesi is their lack of aesthetics, quoting the artists themselves who spoke about aesthetics as a "dangerous word" (Bishop, 2012). Although the comment on participatory practices of public art falls very often in sociology rather than in aesthetic criticism, Claire Bishop's words seem not to consider the different contexts which separate Oda Projesi from the artistic collectives of the Western world, loyal to an idea of sociality and aesthetics which is

familiar to Bishop, but not sharable with Turkey's society. Therefore, from this lack of specifications about the Istanbul environment and connection with Oda Projesi, some questions arise:

> what does public-social practice and aesthetic mean for a collective such as Oda Projesi, outside the social scheme typical of Western society? What is the reading key for the aesthetic of a participatory project that functions as described by Lacy, Kwon and Bishop, but works in a completely different context, such as Istanbul?

This essay is an attempt to answer those questions describing the work of Oda Projesi since the beginning of the collective and trying to understand their position on public art and social practice in Istanbul. The analysis will take into consideration three different projects realized by the artists in collaborations with their neighbours in Istanbul from 2000 up to 2005.

Oda Projesi is a female-run project officially started in 2000, when they declared themselves a collective, but its story dates back to 1997 when three newly graduate artists, Özge Açıkkol, Güneş Savaş and Seçil Yersel,[1] were looking for a space to experiment their artistic practices out of their parental homes. In 1990, at the beginning of a series of business projects which radicalised the gentrification in Istanbul, the three artists met during their studies at the Marmana University, Faculty of Fine Arts (Kosova 2005). Once graduated, they decided to rent a ground floor apartment[2] in Şahkulu street in Galata, an historical and multicultural neighbourhood inhabited mostly by low-middle class immigrants in Istanbul (Özkan 2011):

> for over five years the apartment has functioned as a non-profit space, a platform to explore and expand the possibilities of face-to-face encounters with neighbours, challenging the activation of both physical and non-physical space through the participation of the locals and producing urban social life (Özkan 2008).

For Oda Projesi's projects the relation with their public, rather than with their co-producers, created a situation where authorship became unimportant and the roles of the artists and the participants join in a *translationship*[3] to create a common language (Özkan 2011).

Even if the apartment-based project had to stop on March 15th 2005 - when the artists' collective was evicted from the flat due to the gentrification process that was being carried out in Beyoğlu[4] - the three women continue to work both as independent artists and as a collective between Istanbul and Berlin (Yersel, Oda Projesi 2008).

The practice of Oda Projesi has been described by the artists as an "everyday life performance both shaping and being shaped by relationships between people and spaces" (Özkan 2008). The collaboration with the neighbours started naturally:

> during the first three years, the artists spent their days between their studio and the outside space, knowing the families of the neighbourhood and looking after their children.

Although not on purpose, the apartment became a reference point for the mothers, local merchants and people from different generations which started to become closest to the artists, sharing their daily life and creating a *togetherness,*[5] an empathic relationship based on sharing and caring for each other. In other words, the apartment became a cooperative

1 They share a common family's background from urban middle-class and their formative years have been influenced by the progressive and optimistic atmosphere of the seventies, in which the Turkish middle class possessed social purposes as sharing, gathering, visiting neighbors and relatives (Kosova 2005).

2 The apartment was a three room space of 45 square meters that the artists initially used as a studio for their works. The space was facing a private Italian courtyard surrounded by a building that previously belonged to a rich Jewish family. The characteristic of the courtyard was its semi-public environment: in fact, the little garden at the end of Şahkulu street was linked to the road through two broken doors that made it accessible just to the locals who knew the neighborhood (Yersel and Açıkkol 2021).

3 The term has been used

by Özke Açikkol to talk about the authorship in the frame of Oda Projesi: the three artists evolve a sort of common language, a process to apply in order to activate the dynamics in a space and with the people living in it. The goal of this *translationship* is to arrive at an outcome from an intention passing through a non-controlled process started by artists themselves. In this sense, the translation could be intended as a personal proposal of the original text in a second language, the neighbours' language who develop the artists' proposal. Therefore, *translationship* is an interpretation that avoids the rigid definitions of authorship and could have infinite possibilities. Given this, the work in the neighbourhood results from a mediation process within the original artists' idea and the concrete action of participants.

4 Beyoğlu is a district of Istanbul situated on the coast of the Bosporus channel, it contains 45 neighbourhoods and a population of 225000 residents. Galata is part of the present day Beyoğlu municipal district which is also a centre of business, entertainment, art and culture (Özkan, 2008).

5 This word has been used by Özge Açikkol to describe relationships with people living in the neighbourhood based on empathy, the fundamental prerequisite to understand

environment for social practices were the artists and the local community[6] were stressing the boundaries between private and public space, reshaping the definition of participation (Özkan 2011).

Since the official opening of the space, on 22nd January of the same year, they started to involve actively the neighbourhood, inviting other artists into their space and hosting nearly thirty projects[7] (Yersel 2008). As it has been said, Oda Projesi shares common aspects with the Western world of public art, especially those artistic practices such as the use of art as a way to start a social process as if the relationship between the work and the public is the work itself (Lind 2004). In fact, their projects are more process-based than aimed to create an artistic production:

> the actions in the courtyard were not thought to be shown in a second stage, but to be lived in the present moment (Yersel and Açıkkol 2021) resulting in an ungraspable action difficult to reassemble for posterity.

Moreover, the importance given to 'others' daily life and to the sharing value link Oda Projesi to the nineties' artistic practices which find their theoretical basis in the New Genre Public Art and Relational Aesthetics, or rather those who interact with diversified audience about issues directly relevant for their lives, structuring artworks not exclusively as an aesthetic or political action, but a collaboration resulted by the empathy[8] between the artist and the audience (Lacy 1995).

Nevertheless, there is an evident political and aesthetical subtext in Oda Projesi's practices which lies in the link between the understanding of Istanbul's misused space and how its inhabitants activate its potentials transforming and adapting the urban environment as an act of resistance to gentrification[9] (Lind 2004; Özkan 2008).

Further on this connection, the project realised for the 8th Istanbul Biennal in 2003, *Ada* (Island), consists of a serie of works such as a *Gecekondu*, a shanty erected building, lacking elementary comfort conditions and constructed abusively; the second edition of *Annex*, the Oda Projesi's newspaper realised to talk about the *gecekondu* phenomenon and an estate advertisement to sell the abusive structure (Özkan 2011). Focusing on the *Gecekondu*, the artists intended to underline the social and spatial dynamic that contributed to the development of Istanbul as a city built by its inhabitants. Indeed, *gecekondu* means 'land by night' and for some decades they were representative of the poor's dwelling situation in Istanbul, where low-class people were looking for a space where to live in because of the rapid urbanisation[10] (Yersel and Açıkkol, 2021). Oda Projesi wants to offer a new perspective on this type of constructions:

> *gecekondu* are not only shanty structures to treat as an illegal assemblage of improvised materials or a social problem resulted by the 'crude urbanization' of cities, but it's also the proof of the adaptation-capacity of people who lived there and have to answer to their own necessities on a self-help base (Özkan 2014).

In fact, each *gecekondu*, according to Oda Projesi, represents an architectural heritage which has an aesthetic value that stands by itself and belongs to the locals' tradition. Hence, the challenge was to change the social perception of such an accomodation, making it pleasing and attractive to the side of society who saw *gecekondu* just as a 'problem' rather than somebody's home. In this regard, they called Mustafa Tetik, a

gecekondu builder, who decided to reproduce the first illegal house he built in 1985 when he arrived in Istanbul with his family (Yersel 2008).

The Biennial's *Gecekondu* was completed in three days and was placed in the Galata's harbour (Özkan 2014), a popular place crossed by people from both Easter and Western world who could face the typical slum house of Istanbul.

Thus, Oda Projesi combined place-making practice and public art in the production of the site, providing greater visibility to repressed realities and marginalized groups and initiating the rediscovery of places ignored - rather than rejected - by the dominant culture (Kwon 2015). As Hande Birkalan wrote, *gecekondu* is a place-making strategy which expresses the conflict within high culture and migrants culture between the globalisation and the vernacular in the city (Birkalan 2003). Given that, Oda Projesi played with this double label and published a local advertisement with a commercial language for a 'gecekondu for rent', to look at a shanty construction as an attempted dwelling opportunity with an amazing view on the Bosphorus, inverting *gecekondu*'s heterotopian essence.[11] The impact of the construction of a Gecekondu in the Biennial's context was anything but disconnected from aesthetics.

In fact, contrary to Bishop's opinion, Sibel Yardımcı, a Turkish sociologist, criticised Oda Projesi for aestheticisingand commodifying the most sensational symbol of Istanbul poverty (Yersel and Açıkkol 2021). Despite the criticisms, Oda Projesi portrayed the uniqueness of the city itself giving it both political and aesthetic substance.

As well as for *Ada,* the work of Oda Projesi in Şahkulu Street reflected the daily life of living in Istanbul (Yersel and Açıkkol 2021). Perhaps, this heterotopic lack of control in Istanbul, the organic city which pushes its inhabitants to imagine and build their own space to live, is the inner reason that allows Oda Projesi to exist. While the gentrification was changing Galata, those artists reflected on the possibility to produce physical as well as an invisible stage for encounters, trying to enhance the very last misused space left in the city by starting an abusive radio program in the central room of the apartment.

The radio project *101.7 EFEM* is the last work of Oda Projesi before moving out of the neighbourhood:

> just before leaving the courtyard they transformed the apartment into a radio studio from February 19th to March 16th, 2005 (Yersel and Açıkkol, 2021).

The *101.7 EFEM* station functioned as a proper radio channel:

> the broadcast was starting early in the morning and going on until evening.

Aside from the topic of gentrification, which was aimed at understanding the ongoing changes in the life of the neighbourhood, there were also weather previsions, local shops advertisements and neighbours invited to lead the programs. This experiment worked as a process "to turn on the death air" (Yersel 2008), creating each day unique contents that reflected the daily life of the neighbours talking about gossip, hearsay, cooking and letting them make their own broadcasting (Yersel 2008).

The "to cause to happen as a tactic" (Yersel 2008) and thinking about what makes people come together in daily life are both part of the Oda Projesi methodology to enhance the authentic experience of the process. Yet, the major risk of this type of practices lies in the creation of

the others and create a *togetherness*: «I am talking about a mutual empathy, for sure. Without it how can I relate to anyone other than myself? If a relationship emerges in the absence of empathy, it would be absolutely superficial. Empathy is something which relates to what has been experienced [...]. The first three years in the neighbourhood, which were not marked by art projects, attests to this fact. One question has remained significant throughout: "How can I establish togetherness with someone who is different?" The neighbourhood had also this dimension. Empathy is a precondition for establishing this togetherness» (Özkan, 2011).

6 As Özkan clarifies, for the social composition and diversification of people living near the apartment, is proper to define Oda Projesi's practice as neighbourhood based, more than community based. Neighbourhood, in fact, also involve a spatial notion that touches both the private and the public sphere (Özkan, 2011).

7 Few examples of hosted projects: their works are the collective action entitled *April 23 Paintings with Komet*, project by Nadi Güler, Oda Projesi space, September 9th 2001, where 13 original paintings from the famous Turkish artist Komet were worked on by children living in the neighborhood and exhibited

a power relationship where the artist is the spokesman of the community.

However, Oda Projesi tried to deal with power by putting it aside and limiting themselves to create another stage. Hence, the final goal of this project was not to build up a "community radio" directed by the artists, but to create another possible space for non-physical encounters (Oda Projesi 2010). Once again, the artists push the boundaries between public sphere and private intimacy according to the Istanbul dynamics, pursuing a working model based on social creativity and the self-expression of the audience (Lind 2004).

In other words, in the case of Oda Projesi the participants themselves became constitutive factors of content; even if the authorship lied in the artists' original idea, the project is carried out as a *translationship*, with a collaboration between the producers and the receivers who became the significant developers of the work. Throughout the experiment, the radio became another self-made space where they could apply the tactics and strategies developed in Galata's apartment to start a social process, claiming the air as a new possible space for invisible daily encounters toward the space-making practices of Istanbul.

To this regard, the very last project in collaboration with the inhabitants of Şahkulu Street is perhaps the most representative example concerning the perception of space in Istanbul.

Once again, the neighbours were involved by the artists to reflect, this time on how to develop the inner space of the courtyard and the building, thinking about the best solution to make it adaptable to their daily life necessities. In 2005, Oda Projesi participated in the *Collective Creativity:*

> *Common Ideas for Life and Politics* exhibition organized in Kassel, Germany. The exhibition was set up in the Kunsthalle Fridericianum (Kassel) and focused on showing the heterogeneity of the idea of collectivism in different contexts and dynamics, trying to understand the common social tensions and what type of sociability and changes the collective groups could generate (Absolutearts.com 2004).

The show involved forty-five international artists who, as the title suggests, dealt with different forms of collective artistic creativity by sharing common programs, ways of life, methodologies or political standpoints (E-Flux 2005). Oda Projesi participated in an exhibition called *From Place to Space* resulting from an architectural contest organized by the artists and held on the balcony of the Şahkulu Street building.

The project consisted in an open call to architects in order to rethink the courtyard starting from the daily life experiences of that space. The neighbours were asked to judge the architects' projects as a professional contest jury, listening to their ideas and looking at their drawings. The project of the contest's winner, the one who would be able to "imagine new places by taking life experiences in an already existing place as the basic criterion and by reversing the architectural process" (Oda Projesi 2005), would be applied in a room at the Kunsthalle Fridericianum, while the other projects would be presented as well in the exhibition in Kassel.

For Oda Projesi, the contest represented an opportunity to define the relationship between the architectural flexibility of the space and the empowerment of social relations. Moreover, the details concerning the relationship within the neighbours and the courtyard have been

in a commercial art gallery in Istiklal Street for the National 23rd April Children Day; or the *Picnic* project by Erik Göngrich, Oda Projesi courtyard, Galata (June, 10th 2001) aimed to redefine the courtyard as a neighborhood's living room representing both private and public spaces for encounters; or *So Far So Good - So Weit So Gut* project, by Nadin Reschke, Oda Projesi space, Galata (June, 29th 2004), a collective work where the women of the neighborhood and Reschke embroidered together with the tent that would be the hub used for storytelling of the whole day (Oda-Projesi, 2004).

8 Empathy and exchange are keywords for New Genre Public Art as well as for Oda Projesi's work. This type of art is not based on one-self-expression, but it can be fully realized only through dialogue, and active experience where the audience are part of the process (Lacy, Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art 1995; Gablik, 1995). In short, empathy becomes the ability to feel and witness the reality taking place around the subjects, the understanding of context rooted in listening and sharing experience into a community, as Özge said 'experiencing a situation by inhabiting a place, induces empathy' (Özkan, 2011).

9 The gentrification of Beyoğlu slowly started in the 1980s, with the end of the closed market economy

provided to the architects through the brief text wrote by Oda Projesi in accordance with the jury, a comprehensive program structured in eleven articles which meticulously described the condition of the buildings, the socio-political situation of the inhabitants, the topography and the climatic conditions depending on geography, the activities people used to do in the different spaces, the rules of the contest, the delivery conditions of projects, the names of the jury and the evaluation criteria.

According to the latter, the goal of the contest wasn't to solve the problems of the courtyard or to impose a better solution where they could live, but to respect the condition and the functions of the daily life space by creating new possibilities of use and sharing.[12]

Given those conditions, within the six architects who applied the winner chosen by the neighbours was Tolga Adanir,who did not present any plan or project, but just declared his availability to spend his time with the inhabitants of the courtyard in order to listen and understand what they truly needed without imposing any preconceived structure to their daily life.[13] In short, *From Place to Space* has been another example of not only the participatory methodology of Oda Projesi, but also another confirmation of the way they perceive the space for the neighbours, which reflects the space-making practice of a city. In this context, Oda Projesi represented a way to approach the space experiencing it in the present moment, without structuring a program but accepting its changes according to the needs of its residents. About that, as one of the architects who participated in the contest declared in front of the jury,

"the best way to understand the experience and lifestyle here is to search for the traces on the spaces and the formation process of the place. Everyone who lives here adds something of their own. Every common experience penetrates deeply into the place and it is only when it is perceived" (Boğaçhan Dündaralp 2011). Studying Oda Projesi, it is evident that their relationship with the urban environment of Istanbul has been very intense during all the Galata period, not only because of the empathic relationship with the neighbours, but also because of the way the artists' process replicated the city's lack of control.

In the *From Place to Space* contest, in which Özge, Güneş and Seçil managed the initial purpose of the contest through a brief, the final result came out through the discussion between the jury and each architect, and it confirmed the *translationship* social process that the collective adopted as methodology. In this sense, the projects of Oda Projesi had no pre-defined ends or authorship, the collective were just facilitators in the process such as in radio *101.7 EFEM,* where neighbours were called to guide their own broadcasts in an invisible self-made space.

In retrospect, the work of Oda Projesi can even be interpreted as an act of resistance to gentrification (Özkan 2011) or as a political statement that gives voice to a low-middle class community which exists and occupies space, or rather, creates it itself. Oda Projesi somehow reflected the Rancière's 'aesthetics of politics' which, above all, frames a *we*:

> a collective demonstration of the 'parts who have no parts' (Rancière 2010) such as in the *Gecekondu* project, which divided the opinions between a work of art that aestheticized the poverty and a slum house which underlined a social issue without any aesthetic value.

Even so, in both cases it questioned the aesthetic value of bringing on the

controlled by the State and the liberalization of the import trade which lead Istanbul toward the globalization that changed the lifestyle of the city (Coskun e Yalcin, 2007) and generates high-speed urbanization which also lead to abusive constructions such as *Gecekondu* (Özkan, 2008). At that time, Galata was populated mostly by migrants who came from small Anatolian cities after 1950: those people moved in the inward of Istanbul looking for cheap-rent houses or abandoned buildings where to live with a small income and adapt the space to their necessities. During the nineties numerous young artists, attracted by the cultural background and the low-price cost of life of Galata, moved to live next to the migrants, creating a multiethnic and diversified context in which artists' studios and other independent spaces, such as Oda Projesi, rose (Rowland e Gary, 2005). However, subsequently to the renovation program of Beyoğlu promoted by the Municipality, the spatial concentration of job and cultural facilities create a new dwelling demand and pushed the gentrification of the housing system between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Rowland e Gary, 2005). Due to the rent price' increase by the beginning of 2000s, low-income inhabitants but also artists - especially those without any permanent financial support- had to leave (Özkan, 2008).

stage the perspective of "others" and enhancing the uniqueness of such a construction which identifies the heterotopic vernacular in Istanbul. Indeed, the non-linear urban development and the crude urbanization of Istanbul lead to rethink the spatial practices of urban inhabitants as a socio-political activation of the space (Özkan 2008). So, the urban environment in Istanbul developed in the second half of the twentieth century can't be considered as aesthetically pleasing or rational:

> the "being chaotic" of the city is part of its inner aesthetic.

In a similar way, Oda Projesi has often no defined authorship nor clear documentation, their works happen naturally, following the interpretations, or rather the live translations, made by the participants.

This lack of control has no declared aim, only the curiosity to see the evolution of the processes initiated by the three artists as a research for unforeseen relational possibilities (Özkan 2011), which is far from the Western's comprehension of aesthetic. To this regard, Seçil Yersel answered to Claire Bishop saying that it is quite ineffective to use terms like "social work" or "community based relational project", which are words that do not even have a direct translation in Turkish and of which there are still no sufficient examples in Turkey's art world (Yersel 2008).

Both the understanding of ethic and aesthetic for Oda Projesi pass toward a shared experience which is not aimed at bringing a social change or any type of goal, because the goal is the process itself (Özkan 2011). Perhaps "being chaotic", as well as an Istanbul dynamic, is part of the Oda Projesi inner aesthetic of *translationship.*

Therefore, Bishop's criticisms of the absence of aesthetics in favour of social purposes seems to misunderstand Oda Projesi's works.

In conclusion, even if Oda Projesi present more than a few similarities with Western Public Art practices related with the Social Turn, it is necessary to know and study the specificity of the site in which the three artists worked and the daily life experiences they built with the neighbours.

Oda Projesi's perception of aesthetics doesn't need to be declared as a purpose but emerges by looking at the process, among the lack of control and the spontaneous gestures that create visible or invisible space for new relations and encounters in the frame of Istanbul.

10 After the 1950 elections, Turkey was trying to integrate itself into the global capitalist economy and Istanbul was living a redefinition of urban culture called 'crude urbanization'. One of the signs of this process was the appearance of *gecekondu*, as spontaneous fulfillment of the need for housing by poor people, indeed this term has been coined by urban inhabitants from high social class with negative implication as a reaction to the influx of villagers on the urbanization (Özkan, 2008). Nevertheless, the State tolerated this abusive phenomenon and in the 1980s, following the neoliberal urbanism, Ozal's government normalised and legalized the *gecekondu* with a series of building amnesties laws (Özkan, 2008). For example, one of those regulations granted the property's land to those who had built on the land itself, hence people building *gecekondu* were overcoming the owner's authorization and rights ensuring the ownership of the land (Yersel and Açıkkol, 2021).

11 The advertisement post showed this message "*Gecekondu* for Sale: Homes in Beautiful City *Gecekondus*, in coherence with the complexity of the city, open to modification in case of necessity. Two options in size: one bedroom or two bedrooms. Open a space for yourself." (Özkan, 2011) Inviting to reconsider the abusive and precarious shape of this structure has added values that depict the nature of Istanbul, revealing the vernacular side of the city - dominated by the marginals - as the most authentic one. Not by chance, Güven Arif Sargin used the word 'Heterotopia' to explain other's appropriation of space, based upon spatial transformation and reinterpretation outside (Sargin, 2003). In other words, *gecekondu* is the emancipatory counter-place that represents the outsiders, the public intervention of the excluded: therefore, *gecekondu* is both a private and public space which represents their political positions.

12 As Oda Projesi underlined in the brief, «during the project phase, it is obligatory to stay loyal to the daily life conditions of the quarter, no matter if positive or negative. The main purpose is not to present a way of solution. The main aim is to create a new place by making use of all possibilities and by not turning the conditions into "problems"» (Oda Projesi 2005).

13 The complete text that Tolga Adanir wrote for the *From Place to Space* contest on 24 April, 2005:

«As Maurice Merleau-Ponty advised us, we have to renounce some visible parts in something to make it visible... this renunciation process establishes the perspective meanwhile... of which to be renounced and the determination of exceptional is the discourse of power... any discourse on space is this "perspectiveness" itself... and "Architecture" is the process of tyranny of a certain discourse in this sense... and invents its legitimacy over the rigidness and stability of this discourse... and just for this, it is the moment of suspension and suppression of collectivity on behalf of a certain interpretation to supply its validity and meaning... because, experience of space is the cancellation process of this trompe-l'oeil, it is the zero degree created by the indetermination of the everydayness of the user, it is a call for rejection to this discourse...
Oda Projesi made a call for collectivity between the user and architect by the mediation of "Italian Courtyard"... just for all of these told, what architect should do might be to look for ways to make the space and everydayness of the space speak for itself rather than to look for an answer over architecture, to make all the other answers possible... who knows, not to propose anything might be a clean access to answer to how a creative collectivity can be possible...»

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CONCLUSIONS

BY:

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Focusing on the conclusions of this extensive project, we want to share some final thoughts as students. The international master's program in Arts, Museology and Curatorship (AMaC), besides being part of the Visual Arts Department, is a path full of opportunities to develop practical skills and approaches.
This first publication maps the processes and results of the various courses which compose the AMaC curriculum. Taking part in the class gave us the chance to connect and discuss with our colleagues, teachers and external professionals, thanks to whom we were able to frame issues and dynamics of the art sector in the present-day context. The different assignments we delivered for each class, whether they be an essay, a group work, a maquette or an exhibition plan, besides responding to institutional requirements, reflect ideas and proposals we have thought of over the two-year-long master. Despite them only being academic exercises, our productions mirror the current status of things and the development of the contemporary art world. Thanks to this project, we could put together our considerations, and learn to give value to different critical perspectives.
This has not been easy all the time, as the conceiving, the assembling and the refining of this publication tested our ability to work together, develop skills of reciprocal learning, and empathise with each other . Moreover, having to communicate almost exclusively online posed extra challenges to us. Nevertheless, the organisational difficulties and the forced distance due to the pandemic did not prevent students from fulfilling all the tasks of the project and forming a network outside their field of study. Indeed, together with the AMaC group, students from the Department of Interpreting and Translation (DIT) were involved in correcting and reviewing the texts, while other Digital Humanities and Digital Knowledge (DHDK) students took care of the creation of the digital archive. The cooperation and determination they manifested, which characterised this collaboration from the outset, made it possible to complete this publication, and to learn from each other. From this already ambitious idea, an even bigger and more long-lasting project arose.
We created a space for an on-going dialogue, a digital archive featuring our works, and aimed at storing the creations of future AMaC students, in order to maintain a platform that will nurture the exchange of ideas in the next generations as well. This archive will bring together current and future projects of AMaC students and make their coexistence possible. New narratives are likely to emerge from intergenerational encounters, which would truthfully portray the academic evolution.
We feel it is important to explore the possibilities of digital publishing and online archiving, as they favour a high rate of participation and sharing, thanks to them being open access, proposing themselves as alternatives to the traditional, at times bureaucratic and therefore complex, academic resources. Finally, this publication will be introduced and presented through a Public Program, curated in collaboration with Adiacenze, a non-profit exhibition space in Bologna directed by Amerigo Mariotti and Daniela Tozzi. Here, a series of meetings dedicated to the themes of the *AMaC Yearbook*, as well as the inauguration of the AMaC digital archive, will take place. Moreover, AMaC students have programmed an array of round tables about the topics covered by the

publication, creating an occasion for dialogue with the audience. The participants will be encouraged to use an interdisciplinary approach and to find connections with the outside context.

We end this project with the hopeful wish that it may be the beginning of a new way of understanding students' research and assessments as valuable occasions to address the ever-evolving issues in the world of art and culture at large.

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We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the AMaC's professors. We, the students, engaged in a continuous confrontation with the professors, and, despite the various changes the structure of this publication went through, this annuary ultimately reflects the framework and consistency of AMaC's various courses. Among the professors, Sandra Costa approved our proposal to publish our yearbook on AlmaDL and advised us on the requirements and specificities of our University Library System. In line with the code of practice of AlmaDL, we adhere to and support the Open Access ethic, meaning that knowledge and research outputs should be available to everyone. In this light, we hope that our publication will reach out as widely as possible, for it captures a snapshot of a specific context in which we lived .

We are deeply grateful to Alex Dillo for the graphic rendering of our works. Without his professional skills, it would have not been possible to create and conceive such sophisticated designs for the archive and publication.

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Moreover, we would like to thank the Adiacenze exhibition space for welcoming the presentation of the AMaC Yearbook, giving further consistency to the project. Thanks to them, our work was able to have a tangible and shareable return with the students of the AMaC course.

Finally, we want to express our gratitude to those interested in reading our texts, and to those who will keep nurturing the dialogue and exchange of ideas we could experiment with during our AMaC years.

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