

by passport. I'm French because I have lived most of my life in France. I'm a vegetarian by choice. Our identities are hybrid. I will defend all of them.'

In simply describing his life, Kocache articulates a complex territory for negotiating forms of identity and belonging. This range of communities given, made and imagined is fascinatingly rich with possibility and eminently worth defending. An art that engages with, or that even makes itself from the many places, identities and cultures to be found therein, one that helps us to be cognisant of the whole, to get to know the particular places and histories embedded in the terrain, and to be part of their present and future, is a vital one for all of us.

The Globalisation of Art

Achille Bonito Oliva

The posthistory of art

We have grown accustomed to hearing European art theorists debate that the 'death of art' will be its absorption into the realm of philosophy. In any case, their common ground, whether Marxist or not, was a conception of creation as being progressively absorbed by all-consuming technical development. Nonetheless, all contemporary art, from Impressionism to the present day, from the second half of nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth, had sounded like the artist's challenge to an age characterised by technical reproducibility. The evolutionistic meaning of contemporaneity was thus supported by the ideology of 'linguistic Darwinism', stemming from conceiving research as linear and progress as historically determined. Historical progress and the development of artistic languages de facto converged, both pointing at a productive and experimental optimism about society and the art it expressed.

The paradigmatic crisis of the 1970s called for a revision in the artistic field: the movement from neo-avant-garde's 'evolutionary' linearity to trans-avant-garde's eclectic progression. To some, the end of the *grands récits* meant the much-longed-for 'death of art', absorbed by the inexorable analytic nature that undoubtedly characterises the culture of technology.

Credit goes to Arthur Danto for having immediately grasped this: the shifting of art from history to an inner posthistory that guaranteed its existence and granted it a happy discontinuous continuity. Through his complex philosophical pragmatism, the American scholar provided us with an original way of looking at art, granting its nomadic nature and a peculiar

investigative spirit. Though at first conceiving art as philosophy, Danto later settled for a more elaborate concept, since it is through art's inner development that the real philosophical question about the nature of art had emerged.

Danto followed an anti-European line of reasoning (the European conception, dominated by Croce's historicism and phenomenology, sees a cognitive experience in the aesthetic event) and developed a kind of theoretical continuity starting from Dewey and a philosophical pragmatism in which aesthetic and practical values, creative experience and daily life are never apart. That is why Danto affirms the value of contemporary art and its spiritual ability to influence our ways of living through its forms.

Within this theoretical framework, this American scholar fosters an anthropological conception following which the creative process, like a fertile metamorphosis, includes in itself evidence of its own reality through form. Form is transmuted into style in time, thereby constituting visual evidence that there has been a transformation of life.

Whereas socialist realism established itself as an apology of existence, an activity that is functional and a slave to the metaphysical entity constituted by ideology, Danto's theory states the ambivalence of art's autonomy and its interaction with the world that surrounds it.

It is not the superb hegemonic value of the creative process that is being celebrated here, rather it is the force with which the aesthetic experience modifies our daily experiences. Accordingly, it is pointed out how an artist's strategy can be permanently accompanied throughout the complexities of a universe dominated by telematics.

Telematics tends to inevitably develop an *anorexia principle*, whereby the substance of the object is dissolved, so that real data can be better and more easily irradiated as pure information. Art does not mimic the process through which the object disappears; on the contrary, it opposes it with a spirit of resistance, as, far from affirming a simple and statistical informative value, it displays the more complex value of communication.

This last occurs not only by way of linguistic elaboration, but also through effectively choosing a subject matter that exalts the *hic et nunc* of the artist in his or her context, in other words the spiritual elaboration of issues dealing with our life, such as sexuality and the problems related to the body and to illness.

It is here that plain information on world news is transformed into a *formal thesis* (Haim Steinbach) that can and does influence collective consciousness through art's creative process, which, in turn, never constitutes a statistical appearance, but rather a metamorphosis towards what is persistent. It is a work affirming a process from space into time, from gesture towards duration.

Thus, the *visibility of art* is measured through the texture of form, which can witness the happy and tiring burden of living and the redemption of the present's temporal verticality into the horizontal yet complex bounds of history. Posthistory is a good trick for defeating the destructive desperation of pure present through time.

The diaspora of art

The end of the twentieth century and of the second millennium, as well as the first decade of the third, are dominated by an internal tension created by a double movement: *globalisation* and *tribalisation*.

Technological development and telematics tend to unify all industrial and craftwork production, as well as economy and culture. A strong interdependence affects the development of society, placing it under the mark of standardisation and multiculturalism. The driving force behind productive dynamics is a horizontal trend, and this is what is weakening any attempt at diversifying the product and, as a consequence, its producer.

Globalisation threatens identity in that it eliminates any attempt at personalising one's existence. The counteraction is *tribalisation*, a frequently reactionary and regressive response, the rebirth of nationalisms and integralisms, and a new value attributed to stability. To the macro event bringing forth technological development, man answers with the micro event of his individual existence, linked both to a settling resistance and to a refusal of acknowledging the presence of any threatening micro events produced by individuals in the same environment.

Many contemporary artists straddle the fence, claiming their right to produce their own imagery saved from the two extremes of globalisation and tribalisation. They adopt a tactic marked by cultural nomadism to escape the perverse consequence of tribal identity and, at the same time, claim the creation of what is symbol against the commoditisation of global economy.

Thus, artists exercise their right to diaspora, their freedom to wander across the boundaries of various cultures, nations and media forms. They refuse the idea of belonging and choose to deny the value of space, habitat and related anthropology in favour of the value of time condensed in the form of their work.

Stoically, these artists freely choose diaspora, the tragic historical fate suffered by many populations of both East and West. In this sense, a work of art acquires a utopian quality in its etymological significance, that is, the preference for a 'non-place', a *dematerialised elsewhere* that does not require settlement or occupation.

Many artists develop the same concept of *decomposition*, the positive emancipation from conceiving a single formal option, the confirmation of the drift and the trespassing of the borders, through different languages, into complex works.

Painting, sculpture, photography, video, music, drawing and architecture all intermingle to create installations that are able to fill any space without running the risk of being totally integrated. The nomadic nature and eclectic style that support form help to define the gradual breaking down of both the productive moment – as to the spatial unity – and the contemplative moment – as to the temporal unity.

A work of art comes to function much like a mixer, blending together diverse languages while causing traditional aesthetic categories to dematerialise. It acts on the viewing public with the alienating force of reality in motion, by the ability to affirm its own lack of consensus. Its consistent nature of diaspora springs from a tradition going from the historical avant-garde to trans-avant-garde, and it witnesses that art is autonomous and that it cannot operate according to the principles of identification. Contemporary art successfully exploits the overcoming of traditional barriers, to gain access to the rapidity of itineraries that play on the principle of contamination. This principle counters the risk of standardisation, which is the consequence of telecommunication and globalisation. On the one hand, such a principle makes the most of trespassing and cultural interaction; on the other hand, it affirms that the individual artist has the right to produce unexpected and amazing forms, stemming from a symbolic scheme that is free from hierarchy.

Art operates also on a further level of decomposition, by asserting the

creative value of the singular 'I' as opposed to the quantitative value of the plural 'we'. The ordinary viewing public can contemplate the traces of its diaspora, those visible signs of trespassing that give the work of art a positively foreign appearance, when compared with the familiar televised images that daily pervade the private space of mass society. Diaspora implies a complexity of multiple references and the memories of the various relations characterising the artist's cultural nomadism, such complexity being designed against the spectacular simplification of images with which the small television screen bombards us every day.

The ambivalent nature of the work of art is an overt manifestation of these artists' resistance to the reality surrounding them; it is the formalisation of the hostility of an art form that has absolutely no desire to perform any informative service. Quite the opposite: this art aims to interrupt the trend of a universe that is based on the myth of information. And yet these artists are aware of the problem of communication, and they acknowledge that telecommunication controls the world. That is the reason why they absorb into their work the spurious diversity of differentiated languages, though forging it out and away from any immediate consumption. Communication, by definition, must in some way adopt techniques and materials belonging to the context in which we live. It means placing the diaspora system under the control of a discipline that would allow it to develop a contact with the public. After such a long diaspora, art wonders whether to have a break, to avoid the dangers of an abstract globalisation and the international fruition of art's system, promoting a balanced communication, away from the temptation of an easy tribal call.

Such a call always implies the acceptance of belonging, together with a notion of consumption that intertwines with a quest for consensus in some artistic forms. The balancing of form ensures that art does not become a mere object to be used and allows it to keep its *transient nature*, typical of a long journey in which only short breaks can be taken.

The art at the end of last century was to hold fast to its diaspora quality, the fate of an excellent never-ending movement, in order to witness its own structural attitude, which is both destructuring and cross-eyed. This was the only way that these artists could demonstrate the recognition they were giving time, by freezing a better time in works that clearly highlighted the faith they had in history.

Art

There is no such thing as an art's intellectual consciousness; rather, there exists the consciousness of a work of art that is able to formulate a vision of the world far beyond its creator. One clear example of this is the French writer Balzac, a conservative writer whose novels, like a fresco, are a critical and in-depth social description of his times.

In figurative art, it is mannerism that establishes a peculiar intellectual consciousness that meditates on its metalinguistic nature and the artist's relationship with the outside world. To better develop this position, which visually represents and interprets the world without being censored by authority, the mannerist artist assumes a lateral position from where she or he can observe the dynamics of history and elaborate a linguistic medium through which to represent her or his dissent. The metaphoric action of art, which lies within its representation, is by nature indirect and unlike practical action that requires determination and a frontal approach. By choosing a lateral position, the artist takes up the role typical of a traitor, who looks at the world without accepting it, who wants to change it, though without taking action. The artist rather produces an iconographic reservoir, a storehouse of images that express and protect the critical and self-reflective intellectual consciousness.

The stoic firmness of this position stems from the artist's awareness of his or her operating through metaphor and allegory, though this does not necessarily imply an agnostic or neutral attitude towards the world. The historical avant-garde movements of the twentieth century and their explicit manifestos, their declarations of collective poetics appealing to and able of drawing together crowds of artists, seemed determined to reverse their lateral strategy into a frontal declaration of war on society. It is the metalinguistic consciousness of art, whose reality is language, that persists in all these movements up to neo-avant-gardes and trans-avant-gardes, compelling artists to accept the inevitability of the power of image, bound to critical representation rather than to subversive action.

Up to the 1980s, art succeeded in creating itself as something different from show business society, thereby manifesting a clear and evident level of analysis. But just as telecommunication technology turns everyday life into something aesthetic, and every democracy into a 'tele-crazy', it is becoming

increasingly more difficult to keep a critical ratio clearly defined. Artistic form is under constant assault by an industrial production of images that creates a superficial synthesis of the arts, programmatically promoted by the historical avant-gardes as a way to release formal totality from everyday partiality.

But how can today's art preserve its intellectual consciousness and represent it, when technological research is being used by the industrial system as a means to achieve spectacular ends? In past times, experimenting with new techniques and materials was a symptom of such intellectual consciousness. Artists would work in a sort of 'workshop of images', and this was supposed to be the difference compared with everyday production: it was quality making a stand against the invasion of quantity. This was the case with art being produced from the postwar period up to the 1980s. Now it seems that the space for projects has become even more limited, and all that is left is the subjective intention of a work entrusted to the 'soft project' constituted by the creative process. What comes out of this is the making of a formal order that is meant to be visible moral resistance against a chaotic and fragmentary outside world.

Though tactically adopting the features of stylistic eclecticism – contamination, deconstructing, assemblage and reconversion of linguistic fragments coming from a variety of sources – the work of art always accepts a formal layout that serves a different intention in the end. This intention stems from the artist's need to express an explicit level of resistance through form.

This intention documents a broad conceptual ratio that neither weakens the temperature of the work nor reduces it to pure didactic declaration or platonic statement on poetics. It is precisely the achievement of a formal result that convincingly expresses the final outcome of the creative process, the passage from the artist's intention to the artwork's intention, and this results in a clear quality of resistance. This quality is even strengthened by a strong and meaningful conceptual support, acting like a skeleton holding up the weight of the flesh.

Now, at the beginning of the new millennium, art constitutes – at its best – the by-product of a sharp though cold intellectual awareness of the world. It does not fall into the metaphysical trap of formal production far removed from what is normally seen every day. Rather, it adopts a methodological inversion, assuming a lateral position, a kind of backing of daily life, which

camouflages it and preserves it. Adopting this tactic means using the strategy of an opportune betrayal, similar to that of the *torador* who, by sidestepping, is in a position where he may better wound the bull. Intellectual consciousness, therefore, means being aware of the enemy, having a clear vision of the complexities of the social system and of its international standardisation in a circuit where the eye is stimulated much more than consciousness is.

Certainly this involves a shifting of the artist from distant pathos to the position of a more cynical betrayal, motivated by his or her acceptance of a terrifying historical perdition, in which the artwork seems destined to undergo vicissitudes heralding mere exploitation.

And yet the artist keeps producing his or her forms and objects. Evidently, the artist feels he or she is accumulating traces of a subjective resistance by freezing the idea of art for future reference. This stoic exercise is not so much meant as a means to save a race on its way to extinction, but rather it springs from a need to keep the artist's role alive.

Art history provides us with numerous examples, passed down from the artwork's immortality, of a creative role wielded against the power of the present to defend future possibilities: time against space. This lesson seems to have been adopted by today's art, which continues to accumulate formal reservoirs inside a space that is already congested, probably hoping that a better – and perhaps less jumbled and contradictory – time will come. The artists' resistance is obvious here, the proof being in their production of forms that place greater emphasis on a conceptual level of internal difference than on that which is spectacularly external. By reducing its eventual metaphysical spectacularity, art aims at eliciting in the viewer the silent dignity of a slow and progressive reflection, the contemplation of a state of different visibility.

Seeing is believing. At a time when there seems to be no more room for any kind of belief, a lay suspicion of a better time appears. A time of transparency and simplicity, indulgent and inviting introspection, and the chance to organise everyday life into forms suitable to the inner view of a consciousness that brings the creator of art and his or her rewarded recipient together into one shared space.

Translated from Italian by Christine Anne di Staola and Rossella Pacilio

Belonging and *Not* Belonging¹

Laymert Garcia dos Santos

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze once wrote that 'in capitalism, only one thing is universal – the market.'² The statement may seem obvious, but its implications are far from trivial. For if the market is the ultimate reference, then abstract value is the only value that matters and the one against which all values are measured. This is why, after their late 1970s analysis of savage and barbarian societies in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Félix Guattari characterised civilised society as the *socius* ruled by decodification and deterritorialisation. Given that capitalism is the encounter between the salesman of abstract manpower and the representative of capital, there is no escaping an assault upon the dynamics of abstract valorisation (that is, value + value), which disqualifies every manner of belonging.

In the farthest reaches of the Amazon on the border between Brazil and Venezuela, amid the vastness of the tropical forest, Davi Kopenawa draws lines on the hard village soil in an attempt to explain the difference between his society and ours, which he understands to be the role of money. In so doing, he unwittingly appears to reinvent, before our astonished eyes, a sort of critique of political economy. In effect, what is the Indian chief doing if not opposing the values of his culture to value itself? The Yanomami are among the planet's most traditional peoples and were able to preserve their original society until just a few decades ago. As a semi-nomadic people, they still maintain a relationship with land that is the opposite of our own:

1. Portions of this text have been published in German as 'Europa aus der Sicht des Südens', in *Via Regia*, vol. 52–53, Erfurt, Europäischen Kultur- und Informationszentrum in Thüringen, July/August 1997–May 1998, pp. 31–8.

2. Gilles Deleuze, *Pourparlers* (Paris, Minuit, 1990), p. 233.