

Translations

The continuous

by Claudio Olivieri

The always more stringent and successive reductions which have taken place in my work these past years, the almost total cancelling of the linguistic instruments, if at the beginning they restricted the prospects in the sense of a direct creativeness, they subsequently allowed me to isolate the fundamental issues and more than that, those problems capable of acting also «in negative», «through» the language, rather than by way of the language.

Abstract expressionism was for me, and certainly also for the others, something fundamental, the fatal moment, critical of modern art. On one side, it freed a whole vitalistic and psychic load of individual pertinence that always represented under expressionist, surrealist, symbolist and other aspects, the alternative to the traditional line of the historic avant-garde: geometry, rationalistic rigor, esprit de clarté, without however, being able to dent power and prestige. On the other hand, there was inserted a process of deformatization, of syntactic zeroing and consequently, it opened a deep crisis in the use and in the finalization of the language.

This process continues even now and the result of it, through Duchamp, is all the different «exists» from the context, the syntactic, instrumental and rhetorical trespassings, from arte povera to land art to behavioral art, etc. As for painting, once the continuity in the use of a certain support was decided upon, the problem was to break the barrier of the otherness of the work of art, of its transforming itself into something that, after the operative cycle is closed, proposes a meaning, while the fact, in my opinion fundamental, is not the transgression of the meaning, as so many present tautologists seem to propose, but its close interaction with the linguistic instruments, which although in fact they always have constituted the typical problem of modern art, as they are today, synchronically nonstitutive of the structure of the meaning. The premise helps to clarify, and to clarify for myself the most important, and I think the first transformation which took place in my works of the sixties. That is, an everdeeper and irrefutable sensation of the impossibility of separation between objects, things, phenomena and space, which manifest themselves to me associated and as a unique flux, a unique time of appearance.

It was no longer possible for me to establish a priority between the seen object and its presumed spatial placement; the reciprocity between the two things was absolute.

From this I developed a distrust for the whole rationalistic, traditional structure of perception, based as it is on rhythm, separation and concatenation of the elements.

It all seemed to me superimposed on the real, formalized, schematic.

Tradition could not convince me nor could the new proposals, which through a kinetic acceleration of this rationality or by a drastic reduction of its elements, as with certain american artists, which kept re-proposing the same formalizing superstructures.

Therefore, space placed itself as protagonist, but also as subject to the same events as the objects that occupied it.

At this point, what is space? Certainly not perspective nor spatial illusion as it is generally understood, nor a particular dislocation, nor depth, but something that cannot be separated from the very experience of the doing and of the seeing. It is something which is not just found in a given structure but which persists within the work as well as in the way with which it places itself in order to be seen and lived, by its remaining as an extension of the conscience.

With this I believe I made clear that as far as I am concerned space is not the «space itself», but the continuous otherness of its doing and proposing itself. Such an idea has very much reduced the possibilities of a pictorial «gamma» and forced me to eliminate all that part of expressive means which suddenly appeared to me attributive and meaningless. Color then, cannot manifest itself other than as a function of this non-quantifiable spatiality, but attainable on behalf of a «qualitative» transformation of the space concept. A color will organize itself, I mean to say objectively, by placing itself as the most efficient visual vehicle of spatiality. Every part of the work is spatially qualified structure-color.

In my paintings a possible sign and color vary and alternate inasmuch as material invites its physical *state*, and not because they are two linguistically different instruments. That is, they identify themselves with the same synchronically immanent substance. For me one of the problems is to find a «state» of the material, one of its «fissions» which is as unweighted and unprejudicial

as possible, that is, not denoted by historically defined tools nor by my personal stimuli, transcribed in their immediacy. This total structural mobility and temporality is therefore closely connected to color and more than that, it is generated by it so much that sometimes I title my paintings «autochromies» or «tautochromies». To return to what I was saying about the objectivity of color I would like to stress that in fact I do not choose to use color, but color itself gives by itself a particular chromatic result and at the same time it defines its own structure, the extension to a more or less accentuated form, density, active or passive light.

It is evident that I start from a hypothesis, but as I proceed, the hypothesis becomes a causality and at a certain point faces me upside down in the sense that it is what I am doing that imposes the conditions of its own doing. Color has become a chromatic situation and it involves the whole space by making perceptible the surface and its physical and virtual extension within the environment. The surface becomes unstable, not definable with a single visual focus. The objectuality of the painting tends to dissolve itself by giving its indeterminateness as impetus to make itself perceived globally, as an active excursion and as little as possible as linguistic anamnesis.

It is the whole front of the «painting» which must move according to the tuning capacity of the mind.

I would like that no one point of the surface defines itself in a privileged way in respect to the others. All unfolds within the whole, there are neither details nor objectifications; to isolate a detail of one of my paintings has no sense, furthermore, it is impossible because the limit that one tries to define is immediately perceived as an arbitrary submultiple of a whole that does not admit its fractioning.

Color and space are also those which the onlooker assimilates and remembers by taking them away with him and it will not be our consent to a division of tasks between the author and the spectator (very demagogically paraded purpose) to make a work of art vital, but its real capacity to realize itself and confront itself with the worldly experiential, cognitive «otherness».

It is certainly one of today's misunderstandings to think of art as a mechanical becoming of operations that do nothing but follow one another according to an almost biological line, by making

it an ever more separate and irreversible thing.

The inertness of the premises adds itself to the consequent inertness of the choices and the ever narrower disciplinarity becomes auto-reification or exhibition of impossibility and of death. But it is a death which has nothing definite about it and connotes itself as the persistence of rituality of art and of its social role which precisely for this, has acquired a fundamental importance. Conceptual art has very well acted within the institutional and rhetorical terms of art, and its social and conventional meaning, but its contradiction was precisely this: an operation which loosens or cuts the relationships with a factual praxis (painting) must, in order to be singled out, resort to an even greater and an even more inter-acting conventionality, which can guarantee the identification of an act and of its esthetic intent.

I clarify immediately that to claim the factuality does not mean to give back privileges to craftsmanship and manualness in a hierarchy which by now is meaningless, but it signifies, at least for me, to give back importance to the praxis understood as doing, at a time and with a work capacity which are per se, in their immanence, verifying and dialectic.

With the greatest attention to the tools and the least necessary ability, without redundancies, manipulating wastes and bravura. That is, a doing which is verification and extension of meaning, and not just combinatorialness or pure disciplinary linguistic digression.

Perhaps one must deprive oneself of the guarantees which the avant-garde, with a typical contradiction, conceded usually, to its adepts. Perhaps, as we said, one must finally confront oneself with error (or with utopia). One must «form», not compose, with all that such a purpose involves.

Too often the so-called new painting appears to me heavily tributary of old rules or of scholastic rigors which often transform it into a case of reactionary restoration.

The rigor that serves (me at least) is certainly not the set of the various correct instrumental accomplishments, which can be read according to a conformity of theirs with an idea of perfection. Nothing seems to me more devoid of meaning. The rigor consists in the radicality of the interventions, in their weight in an economy of the work which does not allow stylistic ways out, which does not want and does not have behind it any conventionality to which one can go as a last resort. And rigor is also not to count on the static gratification of the present system which takes possession of everything by removing it in a halo of neutralizing separateness, but to endeavour to liberate, with all its possible autonomy, the provoking

capacity of the primary elements of seeing.

Painting means, that which it does.

Claudio Olivieri

Pinot-Gallizio: The first workshop of imagistic experiences of the movement for an imagistic Bauhaus (Alba 1955-57) and The experimental workshop of Alba of the Situationist International (1957-60)

by Mirella Bandini

Pinot-Gallizio was one of the few European artists actively inserted in the revolutionary cultural avant-garde at the end of the fifties: his activity, both artistic and theoretical, and unfortunately today practically forgotten (he died in 1964), is profoundly connected to the most advanced social problematics of the time. His actions, his declarations, provocative and always keyed to a fundamental re-definition of art — condensed and consummate in the last febrile decade of his life — synthesized a phenomenon of an artist experimenter, turned to the identity of an art-life praxis. The problematics of art criticism and its revolutionary surmounting (which was already pressing in the programming of futurism, dadism, early surrealism and Russian avant-garde) was the common trend of the European movements to which the activity of the Piedmontese artist was connected: the Cobra group (merged in the International Movement for an Imagistic Bauhaus), the Nuclear Movement, the Lettrism. He had a role as well in the founding of the Situationist International, of which he became one of the principal exponents (and not just of the Italian section) from '57 to '60.

The friendship and collaboration with Asger Jorn, Karel Appel, Constant, Guy Debord, Michèle Bernstein in those years led the group to program, clarify, synthesize ideologic and experimental positions that presents the genesis of some of today's artistic and social movements.

The meeting with Jorn in '55 at Albissola was determinant for both. Gallizio, by then in full maturity (53 years old), had behind him a past not as painter but as chemist, pharmacist, aromologist, archeologist, partisan, that led him to investigate nature and life; and his introduction into the artistic space — of which the former activity was the preparation — could be carried out only in an anthropological and social dimension. He brought to Jorn, which he rejected, a vitalistic and native impetus and an explosion of ideas and ferment.

In '54 at Albissola, Asger Jorn had founded the *International Movement for an Imagistic Bauhaus* aimed

polemically against the new Bauhaus directed by Max Bill at Ulm, uniting a fraction (Appel, Corneille) of the ex Cobra movement (1) with the Nuclear Movement (Enrico Baj and Sergio Dangelo) and with the collaboration of Matta, Emilio Scanavino as well as the presence of Lucio Fontana.

In this *Movement* the artistic theorization of the Cobra group pivoted on the free expressiveness and subjective and individual experimentation allowing for the possibility of automatism and chance (the surrealist derivation), and of the Nuclear group that had in common with it the polemic against the concrete of formally abstract experiences, were radicalized and directed by Jorn against the pedagogic conditioning of the artistic creativeness by industry pursued by the Bauhaus at Ulm.

The meeting of Gallizio with Jorn (2) resulted in the founding at Alba in Piedmont in September 1955, of the *First Workshop of Imagistic Experiences of the International Movement for an Imagistic Bauhaus* (signed by Asger Jorn, Pinot-Gallizio, Piero Simondo), with the technical direction of Gallizio, and of a periodical «Eristica» directed by P. Simondo.

It was polemically opposed by the Bauhaus at Ulm, as an «experimental workshop for free artistic research in which all attempt at pedagogic action was abandoned to direct oneself toward experimental activity», and vindicating the use of industrial machinery as «instrument and game for the free artists» rather than enslavement by it (3).

The basis of a more united organization came into effect during the Congress of the Movement organized by Gallizio, Jorn and Simondo at Alba in September 1956, and whose name became «First World Congress of Free Artists».

Exponents of the cultural currents of the avant-garde from eight nations participated: Algeria, Belgium, Denmark, France, England, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Italy and among them a fraction of the ex Cobra Movement (Jorn, Appel, Corneille, Constant), the Nuclear Group (Enrico Baj and Sergio Dangelo), Ettore Sottsass junior, Walter Olmo, Franco Garelli, Franco Assetto, Elena Verrone, a delegate of the International Lettrist (4) Gil J. Wolman and two Czech artists Rada and Kotik. Reconfirming the opposition to the Bauhaus of Ulm, the final declaration of the Congress (concluded with the expulsion of the Nuclear group) proclaimed the necessity of: a complete construction of life with a «Unitary Town-planning» that «must utilize together the arts and modern techniques; a renewing of art away from the traditional limits; the acknowledgement of an essential interdependence between Unitary Town-planning and a new style of life that should be placed within the