

of architecture and town-planning as well as poetry and cinema. The psycho-geographic research — study of the laws and the exact effects of geographic environment, consciously willing or not, on the direct action of affective behavior of the individuals — has therefore a dual sense of active observation of the urban agglomerations of today and the hypothesis on the structure of a situationist city. The proof of a new way of behavior has already been obtained with the "dérive" which is the experience of alienation through the rapid change of the environment, and at the same time a means of study of the situational psycho-geography and psychology. The application of this possibility of performing creation must extend itself to all the known forms of human relationships. The immutable character of art is not part of our considerations».

(7) The first issue of this quarterly, edited by the section of the Situationist International and directed by Guy Debord, came out in June 1958. In July 1959, the S.I. also decided to come out with a new series of the information bulletin «Potlatch», already the organ of the french group of the Lettrist International between 1954 and 1957 (see note 3).

(8) «No painting is sustainable from the situationist point of view. This type of problem is no longer considered. And going further we say that a given painting can be applicable to a certain construction». Constant, in «Internationale Situationniste», no. 2, 1958. «In a society without classes you can say it will no longer have painters, rather situationists who, among other things, will make painting». G. Debord in «Report on the Construction of the Situations», 1957.

(9) This appeal in the situationist opposition to cultural eclecticism is a sharp attack on art criticism of the time, accused of «not having ever been able to conceive a cultural totality and the conditions of an experimental movement which exceeds it incessantly».

(10) Constant: «Le grand jeu à venir», in «Potlatch», no. 1 (new series), July 1959.

(11) Published in the bulletin of Notizie Gallery in Turin (directed by Elio Benoldi, Enrico Crispolti and Luciano Pistoï), no. 9, October 1959 and in «Internationale Situationniste», no. 3, December 1959.

(12) See Guy Debord, *La società dello spettacolo*, Bari, 1967. For a recent review of this movement see *I situazionisti* by M. Perniola, Rome 1972.

Giuseppe Spagnulo

by Gillo Dorfles

1) Political premise to a plastic work of art

Perhaps it is precisely the unfaltering will to keep his creative activity and his political-social involvement united that has allowed Spagnulo frequently to achieve plastic results whose meaning, also in a political sense, is peremptory, I would say, tangible. And it is no small achievement during a period when most of the time, art for art's sake has gotten the upper hand over art for life's sake, art for society, for behavior.

On the contrary, Spagnulo would aim to transform his artistic activity — today we say — «message» which is understood not just beyond and

outside the intellectual élites, but which may be a warning and an example in opposition to a certain sickening consumerism in which our technological society agitates itself. That this message is achieved through structure — in the past made of wood and prevalently «organic», today, usually made of metal and most of the time built with waste material, and scrap iron and steel — is the best demonstration of how Spagnulo has understood that the epoch of the anecdotal and sugary «art engagée» of the realistic type (even if apparently revolutionary) is passed, and that it is only with an actual language that it is possible to achieve a greater comprehension, a not just cerebral but also «passional» effectiveness. Look at some of the most genuine examples of his involvement: *Black Panther* (1970) and *Diagonal Ascent* dedicated to Angela Davis, as well as the diagonal tubes dedicated to the Londonderry uprisings (1972): «primary structures», we should say (if we wanted to label these works according to the schemes of the critic's jargon), but actually much more than that since their «semanticness» is not just iconic (for that part of an adherence to an analogy with the events from which the structures draw inspiration), but it is also translatable into precise ideological contents; his work calls to mind, if anything, certain south american artistic trends (like to so-called «arte de sistemas») which with all probability the author was unaware of and which derive from a similar will of those artists — from Argentina, Peru and Brazil — to fight against the systems and the political situation of their countries with those arms that today's art, even if only of a conceptual nature, offers them.

2) Identification of the denoting and connoting moment in Spagnulo's most recent works. Already in the past, Spagnulo had given a remarkable importance to the nature of the media he used: certain wood sculptures of 1965-68 (I recall his exhibition at Salone Annunciata in 1965 and his successive participation in the Premio Lissone of 1967) were in fact created according to the fate of the material with which they were made, by exploiting the knots and the anfractuosités of the wood; and for this reason they acquired an even too explicit organic nature, where the «naturalness» of the media prevailed on its expressive valence.

Then followed the series of imposing metal structures often gigantic, made by juxtaposing pre-fabricated elements, or often pre-found, like the «telescope» structures as *Black Panther* (1970), *The Big Flag* (1972), etc., where the unstable balance of the big metal mass originated a feeling of panic oscillation that made them especially significant; or, in *Diagonal Ascent*

for *Angela Davis*, it created a virtual space — free but enchained — within the powerful arms of the painted beams...

In all these cases one could not speak of «sculpture» in a traditional sense, and not even of a type of sculpture based on «found objects» or scrap metal used as mechanomorphic symbols (such as for instance, those of Colla or David Smith). In these cases as well, they were forms that wanted to suggest something rather precise (as the very titles indicated). There was then, in many of these works a relation between (plastic) *signifying* and (expressive-conceptual) *signified*; and once more one could notice how an «abstract work» hardly figurative, could harbor sufficiently precise and communicable «contents». A quality that we would like to define as provocative of not yet decanted images, but also as a result of meditation around the material and its intimate expressive implications. And here I believe, is the substantial difference with many works which in the last decades had already used scrap iron or the technological product in order to shape themselves. While in those cases the technological element was lived as *objet trouvé*, as ready-made, in the case of Spagnulo that element is the integrating part of a work in progress, which starts from a natural premise, similar to the one from which the work of modern technology starts, by turning it toward a different, more than that, opposite end. And in fact if we take into consideration the series of his latest works, based on lacerations, broken pieces, metal circles and cylinders bent and twisted, we will have the definite sensation of a violent and «personal» intervention which has acted in-depth over the amorphous material and has bent it to his creative will. The heaviness, the massive nature of the metal, on one side, and the fact of having been «ravished» against its very static nature (with facility, obviously apparent, which in the eyes of the onlooker presents itself as a personal and «easy» intervention of the artist, as if he had made pliable and ductile *with his own hands*, the compact mass of steel), constitutes perhaps one of the reasons of interest for these works (1971-73). Works that present themselves in their «nascent state», that is, still being developed, in a first phase of their metamorphosis from a piece of scrap to a concluded work. And after all, the very technique used proves that the result of these works corresponds to the operative moment of the same. To obtain them — I believe it is opportune to get into these details — Spagnulo used the oxyhydrogen flame with which he has cut and broken the metal sheets or the pieces of beams and cylinders. Then after having made them white hot, with the

help of a crane, he bent the metal so that — once cooled — they retained the mark of the effort to which they had been subjected: so that they *denoted*, therefore, at the same time connoted that physical and manual, besides mechanical effort. For this reason, for the direct intervention of the operator, these works present themselves as correspondence to an authentic idea and not as achievements made by a third party on the basis of simple schemes, of comfortable sketches, or indications that «came from nowhere».

3) Proportional relationship between the works of the last three years

The value of the proportional relationship in the ambit of visual art in general but especially of plastic art, has often been invoked; not always rightly so and not always properly. In the case of Spagnulo this relationship is particularly evident and often it is sufficient to single out one of the reasons of the being of each work. I refer as an example, to those already quoted (*Black Panther, A. Davis*), where the very dimension of the work is an end to itself and is able to determine its significance. (I recall the effect that these sculptures stirred in the courtyard of Palazzo Reale, in the square of Libreria Einaudi, in Milan, in front of the «am Ostwall Museum» in Dortmund and at the Venice Biennale).

It is not easy and often it obtains the opposite effect, to «magnify» a plastic work, if the latter was not conceived from the beginning for that particular size. In this case, precisely the «right» size is the one conceived and only in it the work has reached its authentic vitality. However, Spagnulo knows how to offer us with the same authority, examples of the opposite situation: that of certain works definitely small, of reduced dimensions, unusual in today's sculpture, brought as they are to the level of «knick knacks» (not of jewellery, I hasten to add: how often we were forced to state that certain statues were nothing but gulliverized jewellery, and that the jewellery was nothing but «lilliputian» monuments as far as many other artists are concerned), and notwithstanding this, they maintain intact all their rashness. Which rashness, far from diminishing, appears to grow because of the possibility the spectator has to grab and handle them directly. The spectator, in fact, lifts these pieces — with the instinctive impulse to «straighten them» — finds himself instead placed in front of the irremovable solidity of their cleavages, the gashes, and he senses with greater immediacy their meaning and value. Not only, but so reduced in size and «miniaturized», these that we could define as «materialized»

ideas, acquire a vaguely surreal connotation, which in a sense difficult to specify, almost relates them to certain *merz* by Schwitters or to certain «activated» ready-mades of the early surrealists.

Obviously: no effective relationship between these crude, brutal, spontaneous sculptures and the over elaborations of the early dada. But one fact is certain: even in this case, and not only in the big, monumental works with a precise political intention, Spagnulo allowed himself to be led by a will of adhesion and adaptation to the existent situation of our time: the violence, the split, intolerance, that so often agitate our daily existence; the latent rebellion against impositions from high places; and on the other hand the useless delinquent violence of organized crime, find in these recent works — broken, chipped, contorted, ready for an outburst that the immobility of the material would not seem to allow — one of their surprising reflections.

Gillo Dorfles

MARCEL DUCHAMP

alias

ROSE SELAVY

alias

MARCHAND DU SEL

alias

BELLE HALEINE

by Arturo Schwarz

The importance of anagrams in the alchemical tradition is as great as that of puns; this too is stressed by Fulcanelli and he mentions among other examples, Tiphaigne de la Roche, who concealed the title of his alchemical treatise published in 1753, *Alchimie ou la crème d'Aum* under the anagram *Amilec ou la graine d'hommes*. And these esoteric anagrams were not restricted to concealing the contents of the teachings or the titles of the works; they also involved the very names of the initiates.

Marchand du Sel (salt merchant), an anagram on Marcel Duchamp, is one of the three pseudonyms adopted by Duchamp; the other two are Rose Sélavy and Belle Haleine.

An analysis of these three pseudonyms can prove most rewarding.

Rose Sélavy

Duchamp's description of the circumstances that led him to coin this pseudonym and to add another «r» to Rose have already been related elsewhere, and here they are of no particular importance. Here we can concentrate on the analysis of the latent motivations that Duchamp did *not* reveal.

Rose (the Mystical Rose, to be precise) is but another name for the Philosopher's Stone. In this case Rose (a feminine name) implies for Duchamp a double sexual identity which is also one of the physical characteristics of the Rebis.

The Rebis, in turn, is, again, but

another name for the Stone. The creative and regenerative powers of the stone are hinted at in the double *r* of Rose. Cirlot reminds us that «the trilled *r* is onomatopoeic, alluding to thunder as the symbol of creative power (it is for this reason that most verbs in almost all languages contain the letter *r*)». This idea is further confirmed by the fact that the (eight-petalled) rose is a symbol of regeneration and of consummate achievement. The mythological significance of the rose enables Duchamp to give a highly poetic identification to the Bride. The flower (standing for the stone) reserved to the Adept in the closed garden of the Hesperides is a rose; and the rose is also the emblem of Venus. Since, as has already been mentioned, the Bride is to be identified with Venus, we recognize in the choice of Rose a further manifestation of the Bachelor's unconscious tendency to identify himself with the Bride. Sélavy sounds in French *c'est la vie* (that's life). Thus Duchamp's pseudonym reads: the Philosopher's Stone (Rose) is life (Sélavy) and/or the Bride is my life. But this is not all. Rose Sélavy also sounds *Eros c'est la vie*. We remember the importance attributed by Duchamp to eroticism. «Eroticism is a subject very dear to me, and I certainly applied this liking, this love, to my Glass. In fact, I thought the only excuse for doing anything is to introduce eroticism into life. Eroticism is close to life, closer than philosophy or anything like it». The anagram on the anagram equates not only life to Eros (taken in all its multiple alchemical and mythological meanings) but also Eros to the Bride (taken in both its exoteric and esoteric significance) since Rose (the Bride) is life (Eros). With the two simple words that compose his pseudonym which he transforms into his motto, Duchamp reveals and at the same time hides the philosophical premises of his life and of the Ready-mades. Just as the Philosopher's Stone, although «familiar to all men» since it is «under you, and near you, and above you and around you» (*Artis auriferae*), is recognized only by the initiate, life too is synonymous with the arcane magistry if only we can come to understand it. In several interviews, when Duchamp was asked about his occupation, he replied «I am a breather», and thus he equated his creative activities with the very fact of life itself. And further, the magistry — transmuting baser metals into gold — is paralleled by Duchamp's transmuting the common everyday object into a work of art. The perception of beauty, like the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone, is simply a question of higher consciousness. Duchamp invites us to acquire this awareness by opening our minds and our eyes to the