

mirror we find alongside *Luna*, what it reflects: *Sol*. And as far as the girl's hair is concerned, it is easy to understand the importance it acquires for Duchamp in the alchemical context of the hermaphrodite. The importance of the absence or the presence of hair has already been stressed when *Tonsure* and *L.H.O.O.Q.* were discussed. Let us remember that in *Belle Haleine*, it is the abundant long hair that characterizes Duchamp as a woman. What is still more striking is that the reflection of the young girl's hair in the mirror looks like the reflection of the Mona Lisa's and/or Belle Haleine's hair seen from the same point of view. This might hint at the fact that the Bachelor is the mirrorical return of the Bride (and vice-versa) — a fact that has already been mentioned when the Large Glass was discussed: the Bride's Domain is the mirrorical return of the Bachelor's (or vice-versa). Once again the monistic pattern of alchemical thought moulds the aesthetic pattern of Duchamp's symbolism: the Young Girl is at one and the same time Apollinaire, Suzanne and Marcel. Each of these three personages acquires the qualities of the other two, so that the final personage is both painter and poet, male and female, in a word, the hermaphroditic Rebis.

Arturo Schwarz

Dialogue with Fernando De Filippi

DE FILIPPI — This cycle of work began around 1969. Having exhausted the cycle of my previous exhibition, I tried to set myself another theme: the life of Lenin. At the beginning I gave it an almost epic interpretation, using the paintings of Soviet realism as material and presenting them again with contemporary techniques. It was like revisiting a particular phase of history and art form. As the work grew gradually clearer I began to get to know this character in a different measure — closer and yet more detached at the same time — and to live with him. I felt the need for the faithfulness of a document; the necessity of experiencing it through moments of reality and not through a hagiographic relationship. I felt that to evoke him in experienced moments of time would also serve to establish a mediumistic type of relationship and enable me to step into his shoes. So for two years I lived next to Lenin, or at any rate to what Lenin was for me, that is, the material I had got hold of, appropriated, and in which I recognised him. I have never seen Lenin but I have seen what information, books and printed evidence have told me about him.

TRINI — Your opening statement is that the current cycle on Lenin is the outcome of a ripening of your work and raises new questions in your painting. There is a new relationship

with the subject: an autobiographical rapport. The autobiography does not tell us about De Filippi as a man, who exists, but bears witness only to De Filippi as a painter. Formally speaking, the break with the past is clean.

The previous work was encrusted, if I may put it that way, by an «ideologism» which in turn was clad in a «pictorialism». I'm talking about the political intention and about the expressive intentions. The ideologism consisted of celebrating the revolutionary Lenin, as symbol of armed struggle or of class struggle; the pictorialism consisted of the expressionistic intentionality of the violence or abnormal situations; also in the use of colours. If you look carefully, in cases where a picture is built up out of ideological stereotypes, pictorialism always comes into it; that is to say, the comment by a person saying: yes, I've done a portrait of Stalin, but I'm a painter. It's the extreme corrective. Then, with the first paintings on Lenin the pictorialism diminished. Because you immediately resorted to stereotypes, to the red flag, the man leading the Masses, the hammer and sickle, etc., and in my opinion this brief interval of socialist realism was useful. In your new work the subject is Lenin, a private Lenin, but it is also your own long study of his iconography. The technique is realistic, positively photographic, the real accent is on the documentary intention. This documentation, however, is not mechanical; it is transcribed with the airgraph and grey or black colours. In short, it is painting that doesn't transcribe nature, but culture — the culture of old photographs retrieved from printed matter of that period. Clearly the ideology is there, but it is so plain that it does not need to be messed up beyond or against the painting. Since you portray Lenin, people know at once who you are, where you stand, what you want — and at the same time, however, their conscience is chased towards the language solutions you propose. So the ideology is your doing painting. You said that to the extent in which you made yourself familiar with Lenin's image, you altered your ideological and commemorative, point of view, which was whereas now it is documentary and much more mental. Yours is the realism of someone who wants to transcribe a pictorial experience in which he himself is definitely the leading figure.

DE FILIPPI — It's not a passive realism.

TRINI — You're right, it is not a passive realism. Mec-art is passive realism, and so is all figurative painting that contents itself with a purely naturalistic system. Your work is at the antipodes. This is why I would like you to tell me whether there are any differences between the resumption of a certain

kind of realism today and the social realism of the Forties.

DE FILIPPI — First of all one has to consider the connection and the differentiations with which neo-realism or, for example, the new German objectivity, make use of the real image, that is, the model. In the Italian instance there seems to me to be a link-up with a certain romanticism in painting, a certain passionate way of looking at painting. Whereas in the new German objectivity there is a more mental objectiveness than what in Italy is a burning situation, almost a political identification and a shrieking, impotent castration. In my case the subject is more detached.

What I give is not a poetic product but I would say it is almost a form of unnatural realism.

The colour used by the American photorealists is not natural but it is the colour of the four-colour print, just as this black and white is unnatural and determined by the scale of greys in the documents. You have a type of relationship with nature which is no longer direct but constrained by the transfer imposed on it by information tools. Taken to the extreme, when we watch television we are so accustomed to see an image in black and white that if we happened to see a character in the flesh we would not recognise him; and the same applies to the cinema or press. The documentary evidence in this case, therefore, becomes a memorial fact. So I do not see a passionate work but, on the contrary, an essentially mental operation that duly takes into account everything that the avant-garde has produced in the past years. The difference seems to me to be substantial.

TRINI — As the transcription of a photograph by means of painting, every new painting you do implies at least the alteration of the context. I mean, we come out of the context of the historiographic and political document, and enter into the context of art — and that means farewell to the realistic representation of reality. The other alteration is the unnaturalness of a painting devoid of colour or which at any rate imitates the gradations of grey found in black and white photographic reproduction. So this takes us quite a long way from the plane of realism. With the term realism, and then new objectivity, then nouveau réalisme, and now photo-realism or «relative realism», too many different experiences and indeed often conflicting experiences, have been covered for the notion of Realism still to be used with any effectiveness and point. It is a complementary notion to the *question of art*, just as the idea of reality is complementary to art. Philosophically speaking, realism in art stands for opposition and struggle against the idealistic substance of the whole artistic system.

But it has never seriously eliminated the inborn idealism of this system, unless we count the few times when the materialistic and dialectic method has been employed.

It follows that realism in art is a subjective condition; I would say, a «state of mind» equivalent in value to the impressionist, or expressionist, or symbolist and other such approaches.

As such, it recurs cyclically in the course of history similarly to the «oscillation of tastes». What do you say, on the contrary?

You say: «I do not paint Lenin as I believe he existed, because I can't know how he existed, and because even if I did know I wouldn't work on the reality of Lenin's life but rather on the idiom of my painting. I render Lenin as he exists for me, that is, through photographic or printed evidence, on a canvas stretched over a frame and on which I spread colours by hand. This is my realism».

After Pop art, after the photomontages of the Berlinese Dada, after Otto Dix, this goes without saying, but is not quite understood. The recent recourse to mec-art and to the techniques of mechanical reproduction, is in this respect a self-evident regression because it connects technique with language, in the incapacity to assert that language — when it is historicized as art — is a technique of communication in itself, autonomous and self-sufficient.

DE FILIPPI — I also wish to underline another aspect of my painting which I believe is of some importance in understanding the work. When I plan a particular work I always think on an intentional level of constructing developments of form and content in my own context. In other words, I choose to live next to the image of Lenin, reconstructing it point by point, not just to display what is called «professionalism» today but because it is the only way that allows me to establish a direct relationship in the strictest sense of the term, and hence also in the physical sense of communion.

What I mean is, when I build up Lenin's image, that is, when I choose the documentary evidence, I produce the drawing of it and then I paint the parts one by one, establishing a sequence of personal, autobiographical phases. I set my time and my existence in motion; I establish my moods together with the progress of this image. In showing this series of paintings I am showing two years of my own private situations, of mediumistic relations with this image I have chosen for myself and thus imposed on myself and which ultimately imposed itself on me.

TRINI — As always, it is a matter of thinking fluently and meditatively, that is to say, with theorized thoughts and not naturalistically, in

full accord with the progress of technical development. The art of the Sixties was characterized by an immoderate love of technology and the effects of technology. But technology has nothing to do with art. On the contrary, art survives the technocratic dimension of the age, which would willingly do without it. The Seventies will instead be the years in which art regains the use of its own techniques, even the most orthodox, traditional ones.

We're very careful nowadays about the conceptual aspect of the use of media, and not about their effects based on the dazzle of formal novelties. So my interest in your paintings goes beyond the possible study of their formal facts — the way you organise space in the painting, how you use colours, etc. Indeed, your documentary introduction is an explicit invitation to get over this kind of formalistic interpretation.

I base my thinking on two prejudicial choices made in your work: one is the idea of mechanical objectivity and the impersonality of the image; the other is the duration of the time you spend with your subject, or in other words, the idea of thematic autobiography incorporated in the decision to paint by hand, at length, what is at the outset a printed photograph. Why did you take this twofold decision?

DE FILIPPI — The decision to paint a photo, not just any photo but a historical record that belongs to me and has been with me for a long time, has entered into my daily life, which I come across in my books, on my table, and now in my work, is not dictated by the will to display a particular kind of professionalism but by the need to live next to this image. You were talking about setting thoughts in motion together with technical evolution. I would add the slow passing of time, of existence, of my gestures and my angry moments, and of everything I did in the period in which I did this series of portraits (because of course the work is meant to be taken as a whole) and which I transferred onto this thing called a canvas and which for me is no longer canvas but a further space for the isolation, the recognition of a particular period of my private history. If I had allowed this image to be carried out mechanically, I would have come out of this mediumistic and private relationship. In fact I would have undergone the operation. I would have been no longer the subject but the object. Moreover I consider these portraits an individual, autobiographical act, in that I choose for myself and determine for myself a priori (naturally the a priori side is only apparent inasmuch as I am affected by different factors ranging from the fixed habit of meeting certain pictures, to the myth and to the formal experiments of avant-garde art) an image to experience

and to produce. In other words, I carry out a rite, a partial or total development of my time and my everydayness.

TRINI — By painting ten portraits of Mao-Tse-tung, Warhol clearly chose a myth of the masses just as he did with Marilyn Monroe or Jacqueline Kennedy. You too are portraying a myth, but you do so by tracing it back to a private scale. And although Leninism is highly topical, the iconography of Lenin, unlike that of Mao, is not topical. Your Lenin is private for two reasons: in that he is portrayed as a man and an intellectual and not as a leader, depicted in the private moments, or as private as they could be in the daily life of Lenin; and private in that you have established a dialogue for two on the basis of your experience as a painter.

I am therefore stressing another opposition to the so-called mec-art — which mainly avails itself of massified stereotypes — and a certain difference from the American hyper-realists, who do resort to emblematic, in some ways universal, images, and hence their metaphysical background, which you don't have. But this does not by any means imply that your painting is private too.

DE FILIPPI — I think that reproposing a document with the necessary transfer (due to my making myself a reproducer or even using my body as a pantograph) is a kind of zero setting, a way of starting again from scratch. When I set myself the problem of producing these images I went back, in a way, to being a primitive and, in an attempt to get rid of all the cultural trappings which, in a sense, imposed a stylistic and poetic transposition on me, I obeyed the instinct to offer them again as faithfully as possible. Rather like the process of television, where an image in possessed by the recorder and then retransmitted by the apparatus onto the screen. So you see, my body worked a bit like a recording machine.

I tried to describe a rite, a substantially private (and therefore individual) act, with a necessarily detached, almost impersonal, formal result, as though its purpose were to measure the mental space between the appropriation of the image and its reproduction through the rite of painting.

TRINI — Many artists feel the temptation of anonymity, or rather, the impersonal. This cycle shows clearly that your impersonality consisted of zero setting your relation with painting, which is now no longer narrative or ornamental, but open to the recording of your intellectual attitude and your mind working. Here your relationship with Lenin has a thickness that is evidenced more than anything by the fact that you paint in black and white what belongs to black and white in visual culture: namely, the photos of Lenin in an epoch

closer to the daguerreotype than to the sophisticated Kodak colour transparencies served up by the American photorealists. The thickness of this new relationship lies in the fact that you, the painter, do not hide any longer behind the desire for political protest; you don't sacrifice of the painter, and no longer conceals the individual who practises it; but on the contrary, makes it possible to develop the whole creative potential and the whole political conscience, in addition, of course, to the whole linguistic awareness of the painter who knows he is the first and possibly the only character in the work: the protagonist. A protagonist who will never be reduced to mediation or artificiality.

**Stephen Antonakos:
«Five neons for the
San Francisco show»**
by Naomi Spector

The organization of the exhibition «WORKS IN SPACES», at the San Francisco Museum of Art, was begun early in 1972. In April, curator Suzanne Foley invited Stephen Antonakos to participate. The other artists in the show were Ronald Bladen, Sam Gilliam, Robert Irwin, and Dorothea Rockburne. The basic idea of «WORKS IN SPACES» was to find artists whose works would engage the spaces in the museum's beautiful large galleries in such a way that they would be an important part of the works themselves.

Antonakos had been in San Francisco early in the year and spent some time then getting to know the galleries. Soon after, it was determined that he and Ronald Bladen would share the largest of the galleries, which was 24 feet high, 110 feet long and 36 feet wide. Each knew the other's work well and felt they could work out a division of the space so that both could be seen in relation to their own area, and not in relation to each other's work.

For Antonakos the basic challenge was to find a way to keep the human scale of his neon sculptures and still control the space. The solution was a piece of architecture which was unassuming yet turned out to be in effect more than a structuring of space and a support for the neons: a tall room within the gallery itself, which afforded different spatial and temporal experiences inside and out. Its white walls were covered with no ceiling, but with a thin white fabric which let light into the room from the skylight above, but softened the look of its strong grid pattern. Each of the four outside corners held a corner neon; and, inside, the deeply curved wall opposite the entranceway supported a much larger fifth neon sculpture. Determining the proportions of the architecture and the scale of the neons was a very important part of the process of working out the

sculptures themselves. Antonakos finally decided on a room 16 feet high, 21 feet long, and 12 feet wide (outside dimensions). The interior space, not counting the entranceway, was 16 feet high, 14 feet long, and 11 feet wide.

This meant that there was about 4 feet of space between the top of the structure and the skylight, and that full advantage could be taken of the natural light for all five neons. There were no exhibition lights here, as Antonakos wanted only the differing natural light according to the different hours and weather and the light from the neons themselves. There was at least 12 feet of walking space between the outside walls of the neon room and the interior walls of the museum gallery, so viewers could experience the neons at a relative distance, as well as close up.

Antonakos has been thinking in terms relative to architecture for a few years now, but this room was the first he had made specifically to accommodate a group of neons which would all be viewed together, or consecutively as one walks around and inside the room, as well as individually as separate works. It was also the first time he used a curved, concave wall for a neon, as opposed to an inside or outside corner or a flat wall.

All the plans and drawings for the structure and the neons were made in New York between the first visit two and one half weeks before to San Francisco and the final trip, the opening. The specifications for the walls of the room had been mailed to the museum ahead of time, so that the materials could be gathered and ready.

The first stop for Antonakos on his arrival was at the San Francisco Neon shop. Here the precise pattern drawings were explained and discussed with the shop foreman and the glass blower. Then, during the days they were bending the tubes and pumping them with the gas (neon for red, argon for blue), the artist was back in the museum helping with the construction of his room.

Naomi Spector

**Bernar Venet
Postulat**

L'art n'existe qu'au niveau de la création.

La création n'apparaît qu'au moment de l'apport historique.

Apport historique = introduction de différences transformatrices.

Ensuite, l'activité de «l'artiste» se resume à une production de variations étrangères au problème de l'art.

De même qu'un artiste Y... peut copier un artiste X... qui a créé une oeuvre historique importante, l'artiste X... peut répéter sa propre période de création. Ces deux cas doivent être vus comme des activités stériles et inutiles, et les oeuvres qui en résultent ne méritent pas d'être considérées.

L'artiste ne doit pas créer pour satisfaire ses propres besoins, il doit créer pour satisfaire les besoins de l'art.

Aucun utilisateur de mediums tels que la peinture, la sculpture, etc., n'aborde le problème de l'art, s'il ne fait pas une investigation dans le champ artistique, s'il n'en donne pas de nouvelles définitions, s'il n'en pousse pas les limites connues. Pour démontrer la fonction de communication de l'art, ou fonction didactique, ma démarche s'est basée sur l'utilisation de méthodes objectives pour transmettre des connaissances objectives.

**Langage mathématique et
oeuvres monosémiques**

En juin 1966, je commençais à présenter une série d'oeuvres, sur différents supports (papier et toile), de manière impersonnelle, dont le contenu était constitué par des informations mathématiques. Ces informations choisies par des spécialistes en fonction de leur intérêt et de leur actualité, sont reportées de la page du livre au support, sans aucune transformation, si ce n'est un agrandissement proportionnel. Dans ce travail, je me référais à des disciplines scientifiques et extérieures à l'art, dont j'utilisais le système des signes, et plus particulièrement le code mathématique à cause de ses caractéristiques.

En effet, des textes publiés récemment pour justifier l'utilisation du langage par certains artistes, soulignaient que le code jusqu'à présent exploité, le code pictural, ne pouvait transmettre l'identité véritable de l'oeuvre, étant donné l'implication de différents niveaux sémantiques.

Pour éviter cette équivoque, considérée le plus souvent comme un aspect inhérent à l'art, mon activité depuis 1966 a consisté en la présentation d'oeuvres monosémiques, qui donnaient à leur signifié la propriété de n'avoir qu'un seul sens.

Le recours aux signes linguistiques ne s'averait pas suffisant, puisque leur signification est différentielle et dépend des rapports qu'ils entretiennent dans la chaîne linguistique. Le terme isolé présente une stratification de sens, et c'est de cette multiplicité que surgit l'image «poétique». Alors que le vocabulaire mathématique et ses symboles tendent à éliminer le caractère polysémique de cette image, en n'en donnant qu'une signification rigoureusement définie par l'univocité des termes employés.

Présentation de la connaissance objective scientifique
L'exploitation du code mathématique et l'utilisation de ses différentes applications impliquaient la présentation de sujets appartenant au domaine scientifique. J'agissais essentiellement au niveau du contenu de l'oeuvre. On comprend alors pourquoi les oeuvres qui en ont résulté marquent une rupture par