

move round you, or do you move round the houses? What does making a house mean? To get big (to grow): this is the house. Making a house means taking into account proportion which is part of biological life. He answered with the curve that expands in relation to the spiral — the mythical spatial formula introduced by Einstein into the calculation of probability in spatial physics.

This is an attempt to reconsider the mythical way. And this is how Ernst Cassirer has defined the mythological way of thinking referred to the origins of human thought:

While the myth sets out to include an organically structured totality and to « understand » it with the means of thought, it is in the habit of looking at this totality as the image of the human body and its organization. Often the form of this representation actually has to include the answer to the question on the mythical origins and thus dominates the entire mythical cosmography and cosmology.

The Architect

Mario Merz's greatest wish is to build a Fibonacci house. Such a house would not be constructed by starting from delimiting external numbers — but rather from the space requirements of those who would use it, expressed through the need to eat, sleep, work and, last but not least, the need for company. To satisfy these necessities the earth must be lifted towards the table and the bed. The reason for which the tables must be as large as possible is also represented by Fibonacci's numeric series whose parts — proportioned according to the golden section — connect space from certain points. One person needs one table for himself; two persons have sufficient space in one table, and so do three; but for a group of five people the table suddenly has to be much bigger. The sequel to the numeric series is directed, at big intervals, towards comprehensive facts. The growth symmetry of a leaf — 1.1.2.3... — is proportionate to the growth of the whole tree. Merz says: « In order to grow, a tree first of all needs time. Two trees need the same length of time but more space ».

Merz has also depicted spatial relations in human action in watercolours connected to each other: starting from the centre of the palm of the hand, he drew the five fingers as bundles of rays spreading rapidly into the external space. This is one of the possible ways of representing the growth spiral that develops proportionally from its centre. Merz's application of the first mathematical series in the symbology of spirals and bundles of rays corresponding to vital phenomena, corresponds to the modern theoretic knowledge of nature which resolves space and time in correlations of pure numbers.

Included among Paul Klee's manuscripts — under the heading « Progressions » — are numerous drawings of constructions in conformity with his maxim of 1924: « From the model image to the primitive image ». Klee says:

... Even the most destitute mind can grasp that the apparent possibility of calculating the relations between different parts and in respect to the totality corresponds to the most occult numeric relations which reside in other artificial and natural organisms. It is equally clear that these numbers have nothing cold about them; they breathe life.

Merz's explanatory installations objectify these indications by Klee, which are bio-logical and make it possible to perceive the proportions of change in existing space. Of these installations only the records, the igloos, the drawings and the paintings remain. Merz considers this disappearance at another level: « The world is a continuum of things and phenomena whose structure appears and disappears ». This is where the axiomatic beauty of his works springs from.

Merz has devoted himself to the theme of tables as the basis of a house ever since his stay in Berlin, in 1972. At the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and at the John Weber Gallery in New York, in 1973, he showed low rectangular tables on the basis of a spiral adapted to the shape of the table and of the room. In the exhibition prior to his departure from Berlin, at the Haus am Lützowplatz in 1974, Merz carried out the addition of rooms that were too small and separated into one large connected room. In the initial problem of not being able to exhibit plastic objects or large paintings in the separate rooms of that old private house, Merz perceived the possibility of showing how the habitation should expand if a large company of 55 persons wished to gather round a table. At the end of a flight of three rooms a little igloo, covered in bits of glass, was constructed; from its centre exploded a triangular table which grew at intervals and reached the room at the opposite end. Seen from the broad end of the table, the little glass igloo looked like a space capable of expanding in contrast with the house. The design drawing of the exhibition showed the potential further development of this installation in the overall space.

Merz believes that the table is the plain and simple portrait of human needs and relations. It brings the earth within reach for eating, drinking and working. The bed, too, is similar. These are anthropological, ethnographic representations, in that « since I am a social being, the table must have sufficiently large measurements for my company ». The most recent formulation of this idea is represented in his paintings of tables. On the huge canvas, 20 m. long and 6 m. high, painted in a farmhouse in Lombardy, the tables are in a proliferation on an imaginary, expanding spiral. The proliferation is related to the perspective of centralized rays, open in the lower part of the painting. This method reverses the vanishing point of the perspective from the centre and opens up the perspective towards the limits of the image. Moving in front of the painting, one gets the impression that the receding lines of the perspective of each table meet in the position of the person looking at them.

Used in a non-orthodox way, the historical media of art make the relations between different realities visual, and visible. Mario Merz shrinks from the idea of reforming the details of the existing social system. Like Beuys, he tends to think in terms of overall dimensions and to take into consideration man's potential in its entirety and of the whole of mankind. Both Merz and Beuys impregnate with materialism and socialism the neo-Platonic notion of drawing which throughout the Renaissance was

understood to mean the ideal image and spiritual sum of empirical experiences. This humanism considers the whole world with its components of political, industrial and scientific power. In Merz's piece written in 1970 in New York, we read:

Genesis: Original space was not saturated with science / Abstract space is not saturated with science / The space we live in is saturated with science.

Utopia / Remove the space we live in from the saturation of science / Talk about space and the quality of future space.

So Merz decided to be an architect and to build his own house, to fit his own reality. The house must fit into reality. The artist Merz contents himself with defining that reality of the house as necessary now. Its necessity today does not need to be proved — for it is in practice. The poetry of art has to be practically concrete in order to enable us to think, imagine and conceive the condition in which one lives and does not die during life.

Marlis Grüterich

Translation: Rodney Stringer

Bill Beckley

by Barbara Radice

« The death of Satan was a tragedy for the imagination. A capital negation destroyed him in his tenement and, with him, many blue phenomena ».

Wallace Stevens

In Beckley's words, the problem since 1968 was in these terms: « Everybody has been washed clean of content, so now it's time to ask: what happens after the bath? ».

The bath had begun with Frank Stella. People were washed clean not only of the passions of abstract expressionism, but also of the tradition of all European geometric painting. « The European geometric painters really strive for what I call relational painting. The basis of their whole idea is balance. You do something in one corner and you balance it with something in the other corner. Now the "new painting" is being characterized as symmetrical... but we use symmetry in a different way. It's non-relational ». And to quote Judd: « All that art (European) is based on systems built beforehand, a priori systems; they express a certain type of thinking and logic... » (1). With Frank Stella the work is almost completely conceptualized before it is done; one-shot decision is taken before starting symmetry and all the rest follows through. His painting refers to the surface, not only physically but primarily inasmuch as it seeks to abolish any reference to anything but what you see.

After Stella others went ahead in different ways. But in all minimal art a single decision is made beforehand, after which everything goes ahead along fixed tracks, with no adjustments based on taste or chance, until the idea is carried out to its logical conclusion.

This was the structure of a certain period. It is not true, of course, that Frank Stella's painting or minimal art lacked content. Nothing is without content. What was washed away in the bath mentioned by Bill Beckley is the direct reference to intuitive connotations, the reflection of an attitude of