

Zorio's Star

MIRELLA BANDINI

The work which Zorio has been doing since 1966 is marked by its being art as a process, as a never defined, continuous but interacting transformability, connectively extended to the dynamics of sensitivity.

It moves mainly along two constant direction-lines, the first of which is an anthropological and linguistic analysis of a number of primary etymologies like *il Confine, la Stella, l'Odio, la Fluidità Radicale* and *l'Evviva*, until their vital unconscious energy is made to emerge sharply. It is not an analysis in terms of linguistic specularity, but of searching into the thickness, into the stratification of common senses, of usual locutions, and of images of current language, with the aim of recovering the naturalness of an archetypal image.

In examining, verifying and re-questioning language, the artist's attitude today is always critical towards the artistic operation.

While sticking as closely as possible to form as an idea, Zorio visualizes in his work the energetic charge of the physicalness of a process in its mutation and fluidity, which has no perimeters but expands; and he situates himself before these possible metamorphoses, which he himself has primed, as a spectator. The second direction line of his work can be recognized in the openness and unfinished state of his works which, by acting in a real time and on the literary quality of a physical event thickened by its cultural dimension, necessitate the spectator's psycho-physical integration.

These works of his summon up situations whose transformability is projected and sent back to the spectator. These are not, therefore, fixed and static images, but images in a constant connotative instability, which may reach as far as the destruction (and regeneration) of the work itself.

« I would do the work », Zorio says, « and it would continue to amaze me (I too becoming its spectator) because it was a presence of life, a concentration of things; and it surpassed me as imagination. There is always this potential development of energy. And I can take part in the work; at the most I could commit suicide by touching the wire of the Incandescent Star ».

This interaction with the spectator is constant from his earliest up to his latest works. In « Rosa-blu », a semi-cylinder in eternit containing cobalt chloride, done in '67, the process-like quality of the chemical reactions is in a direct relation to the degree of humidity of the

room, determined by the mobility of the spectators. In « Scrittura che brucia » (« Writing that burns »), done in 1968-69, a page written in sympathetic ink by the spectator, is dropped onto a sheet of overheated copper. The lightning appearance of the writing is followed by its carbonization and destruction in a temporal identification between written and oral message.

In the recent « Stella Laser », 1975, the star shape is constructed by a laser beam. This beam is visible only in certain conditions; it runs on the floor and is reflected in four little mirrors within a diameter of approximately three metres. The work, however, attains its full energy only and through the relation with the audience, mediated by a memorizer which, after accumulating the passages of ten persons through the stellar route, sets off an impulse on a projector which for 15 seconds visualizes on a wall the last notes of the score of the « Internationale ».

The star's closed and dynamic route is then « opened » and coerced by the audience who in their turn realize another energy situation: the visualization of the musical writing (ordinary alphabetization) of one of the most famous and « international » anthems in the world. The presences in the environment are numerous and continuous but the visualization persists on the wall, in a direct quantitative relation. In this case there is a mingling of energy and of the energy, in concrete light, projected by the laser, which being reflected creates this mental schema. « The work functions through accumulation of energy », says Zorio again, « and the people become the Star, since they open it, stimulate it and make it work in a situation which is at once an energetic and a contingent one ».

The « recovery » of the star image was begun by Zorio in 1972, with the object of regaining its exact meaning and thickness, after the diffusing stratifications and after its consumption in various accepted senses and uses (flags, political and religious symbols, etc.).

Zorio in fact refuses the term symbol, in order to reconquer the « power of the image » (Jean Christophe Ammann) in reference to the myth. The form is that of the five-pointed star, as the commonest reading of stellar constellations presented to the spectator's eye, so that it draws lines among the various shining points, thereby forming an image which is also similar to his own body with its limbs spread out: head, arms and legs.

This present and immanent abstrac-

tion is concretized by Zorio in various works done since 1972. That was the year he did his « Star with javelin », in incandescent nickel chrome; it is seen suspended horizontally across the room on the level of the human eye, and it has the modular dimension of man with his arms and legs apart. One of the sides is substituted by an olympic steel javelin, likewise suspended. It is the image of action - in the highest concentration of physical and manual intelligence - of man projecting himself in it on his own scale. Here is what Zorio has to say about this work: « For thousands of years of history the javelin, which has now become an unsurpassed functional object, has been the extension of human thought in action. Combined with the star, it becomes the taking possession, and the projection, of man's energy into the star's energy, in a reciprocal valency. Since the tip, in stepping over the border, comes outwards against the eye of anybody looking, it can be gripped, ready for throwing; it is a projection and an involvement of human energy in a conscious and unconscious sense, in a physical and in a mental sense. Through energy, the star thus becomes the image of man joined to the sky ».

In « Stella di giavellotti » ('74) the image of the star suspended is formed by five olympic javelins as redundant signs of energy joined to the primary energy of the stellar archetype. A similar interpretation may be given to another of his works of that year: the « W » as the sign of the word EVVIVA (long live), recognized by Zorio within the pattern of a five-pointed star (by joining some points of the star and prolonging them, two capital Vs next to each other are obtained = VV). This sign, heavily laden with significations and energetic to the highest pitch, is given concrete shape by the artist with four suspended javelins. On each of these javelins, and in the three most important points (tip, handle and tail), are fixed three 500 Watt bulbs which flash violently and with explosive energy towards those looking at them. This translation of relations and non-visual realities into visual terms is sharpened by Zorio on the instrumental sign (the tip of the javelin) of a primary weapon of which the handle is emphasized almost by lightning flashes, with the violence of overcharged bulbs, which in turn form, in a kind of emphasis, or « acceleration » (as the author himself defines it), the double V of the word EVVIVA.

All his works on the star image can be « modified » by the spectator, in an

absolute openness towards them, in whose measure they have been produced. Some of them are work tools, like « Fluidità Radicale » ('69) and the Headgear of « Odio » ('71). They do not exist if they are not used. In these works the language is metaphor, in the sense that it not only accumulates but also translates experience from one form to another. Our faculties and our extended senses today constitute a unicum of experiences; the awareness of this extendibility of « the idea's thrust » is given to us by Zorio in both these works with the prolonging of the action from the thought to the arm (the imprint left by the action on the hand) or on the forehead (the plexiglass helmet with the writing ODIO impressed on the leather). To this same principle of visual quantification belongs the « Pugno » ('71) (concentration, closure, preparation for a sudden release), a reproduction of a forearm with a clenched fist in phosphorescent wax which, lit intermittently by two 500 Watt bulbs, is « charged with intelligence » and stands out, with a violence concentrated to the maximum, in a dark

room that cannot be approached by the public.

The analysis of the etymology of the word ODIO, in an anthropological-linguistic sense, and in the identification of the word with the action, is also conducted with the writing « Odio » on the wall ('69), obtained, as Zorio himself says, « with armed violence upon the wall » which is gradually stripped down - away with the stucco and plaster - to the bare bricks beneath the axe-blows that carve the letters; or with the insertion, with furious hammer-blows into a heavy lump of lead, of the same word formed by a cable.

In the analysis of the word-image, the « Confine » ('70), meaning the limit of human knowledge or the tragic nature of a limit, Zorio defines « the imaginary line realized with violence ». The words « Natural boundaries do not exist » are visualized as fluorescent writing on the wall, or else as an incandescent thread dividing an environment (and anyone touching it is burnt).

All these works, from 1969-70 up to today, are orientated towards the transfer

of words into action-images and they follow up the early period of his work which was aimed essentially at displaying energy and dynamics as processes in a constant self-reflection.

In these early works - from the « Chair » and « Bed » in 1966 to the « Leads » and « Lights » in 1968 (light bulbs inserted in two blocks of cement that contrast with one another), to the « Cow's skin » in 1969 - the materials, emptied of any technological function, are used in their chemical reaction, or in their obtuseness, as opposition, and as potential tension or energy.

« My problem », explains Zorio, « has always been working with energy and not matter. I have never been fond of materials; I have always done things that were useful to me at that moment. I am only interested in those elements that can be fully and as closely adapted as possible to the idea. Work that adheres to the whole of reality - subjective, objective, conscious, unconscious; external or internal. A revealing of the living reality of things ».

Mirella Bandini

Fly Concorde to the Pompidou Museum

INTERVIEW WITH PONTUS HULTEN

The Pompidou Museum is to be officially opened in January 1977 with a major exhibition of Marcel Duchamp's works. Why Duchamp, and how has this exhibition been envisaged?

Because as I see it Duchamp is the most important and at the same time the least known artist here, and because it will set the tone, you might say, for Beaubourg's future activities. We shall not be concerned so much with the fetishism of objects, paintings or sculptures as with a broader, more intriguing activity which will also be more closely involved with society. In the first part of the Duchamp exhibition there will simply be an introduction to the man himself; and then there will be all his work, with particular attention to the lesser known periods like Fauvism and the cubist paintings, and with the **Large Glass**, of course, as the main object. Then, the third part will be concerned with sources of inspiration - chess, esotericism, etc. The difference between this and other Duchamp shows is that we are treating him from a more European viewpoint than the current American anecdotism does.

We are relying on getting the whole of Duchamp's oeuvre from the United States, except of course, for the original **Large Glass**, which is untransportable, and the Philadelphia room which cannot be moved.

What is your broad exhibition programme policy?

Beaubourg's initial programmes are built on a sort of diptych. The first big exhibition deals with the relations between Paris and New York. The second is dedicated to relations between Paris and Eastern Europe, that's to say, with what happened in Leningrad, Moscow and also Berlin. These are two major theme-exhibitions on the role performed by Paris in the art of this century. To do this we felt it was necessary to show one or two key artists on a large scale. Thus we have had already the Picabia exhibition at the Grand Palais and are following this up with the Duchamp show, these being the two key personalities involved in trans-Atlantic relations. And as regards our other main theme - the Moscow-Berlin-Paris exhibition - we have already put on a Majakowsky exhibi-

tion and are doing another one on Malevitch, and also on Tatlin, we hope, prior to the main exhibition itself. All this, together with other exhibitions, forms a system that will keep Beaubourg busy for a year or two.

Are specialists from the various countries concerned giving their services for the major theme-exhibitions?

Yes, they are. I have just come back from Moscow where a group of Soviet experts are working on the organisation of the Moscow-Berlin-Paris exhibition which we have already been preparing for a year now.

So the Pompidou Museum is setting itself up as an imposing European and international organisation reaching beyond the French cultural borders.

Yes indeed. This is the very purpose of the Beaubourg operation. I think the lack of an institution like the Centre has been felt in Europe, due also to the influence that New York has gained in the situation of the past years. This can be important. When Beaubourg is criticised for being too big and too centralized,