

Flows of events and experiences, types of discourse, and ways of classifying and pigeon-holing reality converge in each of the works in this exhibition, constantly evoking the themes of the subject and its social activity, the problems of individual intentions and of the social subject. We shouldn't expect them to simply transmit a critical reflection on everyday life experience in contemporary societies, but, above all, to generate a more aware and critical attitude towards these experiences. In fact, all these works insist on restraining the fascinating power of indifference which governs our societies through a persistent attempt to inscribe the attitude against them, their interpretation, in a wide field of awareness.

The spectator has been invited to a constant drift between each and every one of the elements in play - statistics, videos, photographs, documents - in which the latter and their possible attributes obey a relationship of absolute mobility, of interchange, of remote modification. What is established among these sometimes forcefully distanced compartments are not so much relationships of causality as, rather, relationships of 'drift'. Not in vain, in the processes of critical exploration of the social behaviour which these works reference, the strategy of juxtaposition puts an end to all perspectivist temporality.

In a particularly remarkable way, the merger of before and after, of memory and expectation becomes the protagonist of the work *More Living Dead than Ever*. An attempt to face the veiled past on new grounds, inviting us to read its most hidden secrets in a moment of coincidence of the time of the spectator and the narrated time. A temporal simultaneity which is also an existential one, it turns into a trip to the past in an 'already-been-there', 'already-being-there', with no departure, where desires and preoccupations, vitality and death, are found together, in a timeless realization, or in time projected forward into the future of an eternal present.

The remains of historical memory reappear here inserted in a space of personal reconstruction of memory and time. Here, the production of memory, of the memories of all those forced by violence to postpone their present indefinitely, is also an intense reflection of what is dead and what remains alive in images. In fact, the most influential part of the visual configuration of this work, a tableau vivant of Degas' *La Coiffure*, is to the original what memory of a painting is to a painting itself, a distorted and softened, allusive, reorganised and dense image. When watching this video we simultaneously remember and dis-remember what we're seeing. We think of the images that remind us of the history of men and women, while at the same time we can't help thinking of the history of the images themselves (and, therefore, of the history of art).

A site of convergence of multiple elements and references, *More Living Dead than Ever* never avoids the association of woman to her historical consideration as a concourse of different forms of submission to power and desire. Accurately, the

work suggest that what is at stake nowadays is not the repression of subjectivity, but, above all, its regulation. Thus the work strives towards an effective experience of individuality as multiplicity. If we understand the latter as an equivalence between subjectivity and the collective, it can only manifest itself in a rite of accompaniment, an otherwise fairly recurrent metaphor in most of the works in this exhibition.

More Living Dead than Ever suggests the possibilities of social and psychic cohesion which understand feminine identity as mapped out on a collective junction, in the insistence of feeling towards and for the others, which is by all means opposed to the historical identity of patriarchy, premised on separation, evolution, substitution, or replacement and independence. In fact, the peculiar presence throughout the video of the Russian *matrioshka* dolls, each of which contains another one, is nothing else but a reference to an identity universe capable of engulfing other worlds, to the social and collective character of identity, where death is the revelation of other living beings, and so on ad *infinitum*, and in which identity is not premised on difference as much as on the repetition of circumstances and motives for struggle throughout time.

Neither does this work hide away its critique of these contemporary times in which the dramatic understanding of history has given way to the tragic, to that which is experienced without bearing in mind its contradictions and which nowadays defines the very fundamentals of being-together. And what is more, death, war, and human suffering, far from being the most painful revelation of reality, are now the perfect scenery for media society, which has adopted the horror of catastrophe not as a denial of the spectacle, but simply as a denial of the real. This is probably the reason why the presence of a *tableau vivant*, a representation of a representation, a fiction of a fiction, that is suggested as an the spark that sets off the piece, following the old slogan that *only fiction allows an analysis of the conditions of reality*¹.

The result of all this is that the criticism launched by *More Living Dead than Ever* is above all a criticism of the means of production of meaning which operate in historical discourse, of their politics, of what they exclude, of their unresolved contradictions which are reconciled in the process of their operation. Thus political analysis and identity crisis can only be posited and stated, as in this work, from the vantage point of the victim.

On the other hand, *W: La Force du Bio-travail* refers to a certain way of "*understanding life as pure and simple survival*"², of a post-cultural era not of speed but of inertia, of that movement induced by the accumulated force of an already spent source of energy, of silent movement, the interruption of which can only be calculated on the basis of friction and wear and tear. It is not in vain - and this is not to say there is a pretence at developing an ontology of existence in a new society of production - the piece concentrates, first of all, on detecting the new categories of absence in the world.

It is particularly interesting that the critical reflection on life is translated in this work in a permanent silencing of the protagonists, only compensated by the subtitles which seem to play with an unlikely translation of an unused, unspoken language. Thus the work takes over a void which, nevertheless, won't be Mallarmé's blank page - a space where any hypothesis could spend the time of its realisation - but a confusing page, scratched with an overwriting which, in its vain attempt at self-affirmation leaves no definition but that of doubt and regret. A strange silence which, rather in the sense of Lyotard's definition of difference, is a marked impossibility of the very language revealed by emotion.

If the aphasic silence mentioned by Theodor W. Adorno was still a sign of a possibility ("...the modern is art by imitation of the hardened and the strange, and this is how it becomes eloquent; not by its negation of what has been silenced"³) for the characters in this piece, it nevertheless becomes the result of a dispossession of the means of argumentation, the unstable state and the instant of language in which something needs to be expressed in propositions cannot be worded yet. Certainly, what used to be called emotion would point, according to Lyotard, to that state as one where "*one just doesn't find the right words*"⁴. Thus this work, as is the case with the aim of all literature and philosophy, would try to point out these "differences" by finding languages for them.

It is also likely that this silencing would eventually refer precisely to the linguistic solution to all conflict, to all critical process of personal constitution. It is not surprising that, therefore, that here the locus of truth, the becoming-aware of a "chosen crisis" would be generated through this negation, through an inner exclusion. We should bear in mind that, for Marcel Broodthaers, the only thing the subject can experiment with regard to the real was "the impossibility of speech"⁵, a trapping between the enunciation and the enunciated.

The value judgments on life which the subtitles, as if in an uncanny translation of the language of feelings impose on the characters in their dialogue, end up being recognised as simple linguistic explorations, attempts at moving forward in the exploration of what is, probably, unfathomable.

* * * *

The fundamental basis of information, which for the Situationist slogans could not be but language which had lost all immediate reference to totality, is the paradigm of the political strategy of today, and also one of the main areas of reference of *The Morning Changes Names...*; a project which is particularly revealing of the determination of the logic of power and the forms of administering it in our era.

The progression of the main protagonist towards producing the crisis of the world he has inhabited reveals to what extent desire for power doesn't exist, since power itself is the desire. Power as an assemblage, with the gears and cog wheels of a machine, only intelligible as practice and operation. It is from the different states of this machine where the divisions between oppressor and oppressed, repressor and repressed, stem from. This is why individuals are no longer the objects of the exercise of power, but, rather, its vehicle.⁶

In its continuous appropriation of images and sequences from the world of news media, the work insists, again and again, on how the mutual relationship of the linguistic system of media visibility and social practices is negotiated, that is, how the controlling systematisation of language and knowledge takes shape⁷; how the irresponsible use of language and information is put in practice at the service of political power.

Thus the work adopts a role far more developed than the reflection on the systems of constitution of the exercise of power, drifting almost surreptitiously towards an ambitious and much wider process of analysis and criticism of the processes of inclusion of the subject in media society, of the permanent modification and adjustment of the subject to it. The crisis provoked by the protagonist's self-recognition generates a terrible doubt in us as to whether it has to be criticism or the heart that needs to think socially nowadays.

In fact, media society would have changed very little since its origins had it not been for the processes of administering of the reality-effects. In any case, it is still a question of a turbulent life, transformed by dreams. Nowadays, the place of the subject is always in the periphery, orbiting around a centre occupied only by anxiety and pleasure. By accepting this, *The Morning Changes the Names...* seems to propose the consideration of political action not as the forecast of actions, but as an action in response to the actions of the others.

* * * *

Maybe it would be impossible to sustain, from the standpoint of the ever-growing and continuous connection of interests and activities, that nowadays human beings relate to each other fundamentally through their objects of desire. In fact, what imposes the new patterns of relationship is new practices and dynamics of desire (and not new object of desire). There is no doubt that nowadays many "love" each other by in fact "loving" the common machine constituted by the new telecommunication media. And there is no doubt that the latter are becoming increasingly efficient in their task of informing and controlling the scales of human association and action. Therefore, communication technology is no longer an instrument of domination, but, probably, it is domination itself.

Precisely for this reason, the work *European Friendship & Telecommunications* induces us to question whether media haven't in fact already acquired the capacity to establish the basis of communication. If, for example, answering the mobile phone is not, above all, answering the call that the phone itself is dialing, or if connecting to the Net is not the pretence of establishing some kind of flow of information or affective exchange but rather accounting to the existence of the medium itself, to this offering of the justification which it needs and which is made possible by our connection.

This is probably the reason why any cultural or social revolution must attempt to produce us, rather than things which might be useful for us, in sharp opposition to the intense pretences of the current informational and telecommunicational

revolution. Not in vain, *European Friendship & Telecommunications* attempts to substitute the human/machine interaction with the human/machine/human interaction; to contradict the most generalising proposal of the least interesting electronic art, which consists of the reiterated insistence on a reflection - not devoid of a certain rejoicing - on the arrival of an inevitable indifferenciation of humans and machines. In this work, the increasing tendency towards control in the world of media networks is overcome by a much more fertile and necessary one, oriented towards the production of a commons.

In any case, nowadays everything takes place in the sending, in the transmission. Thus *European Friendship & Telecommunications* is premised on a permanent practice of distribution, displacement, and transmission. We must bear in mind that in the art of today the value of the sign always resides fundamentally in its drift value.

The installation doesn't hide the already common suspicion that the new telecommunication media could really ease the development of the desired understanding of the subject not as a "being", but rather as a "process" in the act of communication and dialogue. In fact, it is becoming increasingly difficult to define exactly what is presumed to be social about new telecommunication technologies. In this sense, everything related to affective production appears as an inscrutable territory. Even more so, the development of friendship, the main object of analysis of *European Friendship & Telecommunications*, seems to be increasingly complicated in the new informational media society, since, generally speaking, in this media society the task is not to interpret, only to consider offers of signification. Friendship appears here poignantly stripped of the power nodes among its elements, since its relationships are not ones of necessity, but always of attraction, with variable intensities, and provisional in their agreements.

It wouldn't be exaggerated to even declare that what is made evident nowadays in the new telecommunication networks is a certain form of denial of the existence of subjects and subjectivities; that, in fact, there doesn't seem to be much more than limited interlocutors. Let us not forget that chatrooms and SMS-messaging are the language-games par excellence of today, in which personal communication becomes a mere game which competes with, or maybe even complements the computer games of violence and destruction. Once reason and all forms of affection are placed in this network of changing languages, with no fixed limits and closed transitions, it is no wonder that critical analysis would drift, as it happens in this piece, towards a permanent re-assessment of communicational interactions.

If there is no "me" and no "you" behind a short message in your mobile terminal or behind a chatroom nickname, if these are only the walls in the midst of which interaction takes place, devoid of any commitment to sense or to any notion of truth, the affective production in this field will not be the product of a simulation anymore, but the result and effect of a set of false attributions which nevertheless never cease to invoke the weight of a *real* future disappearance.

NOTES:

1. Broodthaers, M., Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles, *Documenta 5, Catalogue*, Kassel, 1972.
2. Virilio, P., *Cibermundo ¿una política suicida?*, Dolmen Ensayo, Providencia, Santiago, 1997, p. 32.
3. Adorno, T.W., *Teoría Estética*, Taurus, Madrid, 1977, p. 36.
4. Lyotard, J.F., *La diferencia*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1991, p. 26.
5. Pelzer, B., *Los indicios del intercambio*, in Marcel Broodthaers, (exh. catalogue), MNCARS, Madrid, 1992, p. 29.
6. Foucault, M., in C. Gordon, (ed.), *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge*, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1980, p. 98.
7. Kosuth, J. , "Within the Context: *Modernism and Critical Practice*, in *Joseph Kosuth, Writings 1967-88, Coupure*, Ghent 1977, p. 194.