

The Art Curator and The Reversed Narcissus

"At last!" the old critic would proclaim "at last the art world has lifted completely its head from the narcissistic pool in which it has been reflecting itself for centuries! At last Art, Narcissus is standing with his head up, no longer numb but completely aware of its surrounding!!". Reflecting on the political turn of contemporary culture in the last decade, one may really, at first glance, claim such a shift, a shift that sees the artist no longer absorbed in his own subjectivity but completely and actively involved in the contemporary reality. After such a claim, two questions come to mind. First, is it really the artist we are talking about now, or the institution manipulated artist, or worst the very figure of the curator who is taking over the vanity and pride of the exhibition world? Second, is it really reality this sort of politicized contemporary art is engaging with or is it rather a mediated reality perceived through the means of mass communication?

Attending a cutting edge Culture Studies conference in an exclusive English university, the German curator is likely to show us the work he has curated on surveillance technology and more particularly on the drones who have successfully targeted and killed a bunch of terrorists in the past months. All the public is likely to grow very indignant of the situation, very indignant about the American military and politicians. Another form of indignation may however arise, and this mostly addressed towards the very curator who is not aware of the misery surrounding the very exclusive university in which he is giving the talk.

The actual artist, aware and intrigued of the real surrounding, might have, in fact exposed himself to the surrounding of the very university in which the exclusive conference is taking place. He might have taking early, explorative walks in the very neighborhoods where the cream of the English white trashness lies, where people really need a curator to curate the state of abandonment of their dwellings, and particularly where young people with some talent should be sproned to pursue their skills and follow their artistic institutions which the very curator could facilitate.

We may thus elect as the model for our curator the figure of the young Pier Paolo Pasolini, immersing himself in the very destituted neighborhood of Rome. We may elect him as the artist aware of his surrounding, as self-depicted in his movie "Decameron" but particularly in the movie "Accattone" in which he engages with non-professional actors from the very neighborhood.

The contemporary curator looking at distant political issues is, in other words, a Narcissus who is still with his head bent on the narcissistic pool (this also thinking of the pride they take on their social media profiles), and is only aware of the surrounding reflected around his very portrait, literally the clouds conceived through mass media, which is the celestial vault oppressing and compressing contemporary humans.

Thus, to lift one's head and look in the real reality around is totally different, and we may now seek for "real" artists who not only do that but react upon it. Such an artist might in fact not avoid subjective issues which are at the base of any artistic undertaking, he might not avoid them as they are not in fashion but might, through such subjective initiation, slowly become aware and make his contemporaneity, filtering and reflecting it through his art. In this sense, the better service the "philanthropic" curator can possibly do to society is showing the local artist with whatever artistic willing he or she has created to endure reality.

This take over of Political art seems in fact orchestrated by mostly curators with a Eastern European background, coming from a Communist oppressed reality and spreading the rage back onto the West. It is interesting here to notice the reluctance of the eastern European and mostly Russian authors of the 19th century to embrace the Philosophy of the West which in fact has turned into grave consequences (e.g. embracing Hegel rather than Schopenhauer). Is this, in a Tolstoyan view of history, an inevitable wave back? Interestingly also that among these highly politicized "cultural" figures coming from Eastern Europe, we find totally opposite exception which corresponds more to the figure of the ascetic like, among others, the poetic work of Roman Opalka, painting numbers to the end of his life (and beyond).

To conclude, another observation is that paradoxically, the work of art nowadays, with the many media the intuitive and non-conventionally educated artist has at his disposal, do not require the external figure of the curator. The artist himself become the curator of the many expressions he can manifest through the various range of media he can adopt to pursue a concept. The usage of media itself makes him more aware of his practice and undertaking, thus also turning obsolete the figure of the art critic. These can be found in the group of artist turning into research rather than following the dead game of the main stream art. Despite this trend, educations for art curators and all other "political" figures who comes to moderate the communication between the artists and the public, keep proliferating, turning however into a meta discourse where again it is micro and macro politics what is really discussed.