Arte povera - IM Spazio

(Galleria La Bertesca, Genoa, 1967)
Ambiente/Arte (Venice Biennale, 1976)

Presented by Germano Celant

19/10/2009 - Auditorium MACBA – 7 pm

Arte Povera - IM Spazio
September 27 to October 20, 1967
Genoa, Galleria La Bertesca


In the section “Im Spazio:” Umberto Bignardi, Mario Ceroli, Paolo Icaro, Renato Mambor, Eliseo Mattiacci, Cesare Tacchi

Curator: Germano Celant

“This was the first exhibition to apply the name ‘Arte Povera’ to this type of work. The exhibition was divided into two sections: ‘Arte Povera’, with contributions by Boetti, Fabro, Kounellis, Paolini, Pascali and Prini, and ‘Im spazio’, short for *immagine spazio*, featuring works by Umberto Bignardi, Mario Ceroli, Paolo Icaro, Renato Mambor, Eliseo Mattiacci and Cesare Tacchi. The exhibition as a whole reflected a particular interest in works exploring notions of space. Paolini’s contribution, *Lo spazio [Space]*, 1967, which was predicated on the physical perception of the room itself, spelled out the title of the exhibition in white lacquered letters hanging on the gallery walls. Similarly, in *Perimetro d’aria [Perimeter of air]*, 1967, Prini marked out the perimeter of the room using a relay of light and sound. In *Pavimento tautologia [Floor tautology]*, 1967, Fabro elevated everyday behaviour such as polishing a floor to the realm of art. Boetti’s work was a simple stack of asbestos bars, *Catasta [Pile]*, 1966-67. Pascali’s *1m3 di terra [1m3 of earth]*, 1967, *2m3 di terra [2m3 of earth]*, 1967, two measurements of earth in geometric, sculptural form mounted on the gallery walls, created a tension between chaos and order by contrasting the natural quality of the material with the artificial nature of the shape. Kounellis’ *Senza titolo [La carboniera] [Untitled (The coal bin)]*, 1967, a steel bin containing a heap of coal, played on a similar contrast.”

“What is happening? Banality is entering the arena of art. The insignificant is coming into being or, rather, it is beginning to imposing itself. Physical presence and behavior have themselves become art. (...) We are living in a period of deculturation. Iconographic conventions are collapsing, symbolic and conventional languages crumbling.”

*Germano Celant*

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Curator: Germano Celant

Total attendance of the 1976 Venice Biennale: 692,000

1976 Venice Biennale's general theme was “Ambiente, Partecipazione, Strutture Culturali” (Environment, Participation, Cultural Structures). Germano Celant’s exhibition **Ambiente/Arte** was located in the Central Pavilion and comprised a historical and a contemporary section. In the contemporary section, he commissioned artists such as Vito Acconci, Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Mario Merz and Dan Graham to interact with the indoor architecture of the Giardini. In the historical section, he reconstructed avant-garde and post-war environments called “ambiente”. Some reconstructions were made specifically for the biennale such as Man Ray’s *Exit* (1934), Yves Klein’s *Immaterialer Raum* (1961) and Arman’s *Le plein* (1960) which kept its original facade. The Jackson Pollock room did not include real Pollock paintings, it was an environment which gave a sense of Pollock’s way of working; there were six photographic enlargements of Pollock at work by Hans Namuth (1950), a life-size enlargement on the floor of *One, number 31* (1950) and Namuth’s film on Pollock. The concept of “ambiente” should be understood in relationship with Celant’s passionate interest in the history of avant-garde installation which led him to reflect on the context as integral to the work. In **Ambiente/Arte**, the context referred to the interior architecture, the internal structure of the space, its volume and surface. According to him, although mosaics and frescoes had already paved the way for such an assimilation, the historical avant-garde in the 1910s and 1920s produced environments whose integration of space into the work had become actively part of the creative process.

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“At the start of the twentieth century, within an artistic system that is directed towards objectivity, both in surface and in volume, the possibilities of an “ambient” choice were extremely limited. The artist was tied by the demand which urged him to operate on the monolithic scale of the picture and the sculpture and had few occasions to exceed the confines of the ambient space, defined by 4 walls, the ceiling and the floor. The uneasiness and intolerance caused by this conditioned situation, in which the object, from being only one of the many forms of art, had become the sole vehicle of expression, exploded from 1909 with the comprehensive vision of Futurism. This urged linguistic and physical movements beyond previous limits and opened a free procedural space from the strictly visual monopoly. (...) The aim is that of creating a field in space and time to make a “unicum”, where art bears witness to vital, ideological needs, and to physically and aesthetically integrate the existence of art with the concrete reality which surrounds it.”  

Germano Celant

Germano Celant, PhD in Contemporary Art and Theory, is internationally acknowledged for his theories on Arte Povera. He is the curator of hundreds of exhibitions in the most prominent international museums and institutions worldwide. Additionally, he is author of more than one hundred publications, including both books and catalogues. Since 1977 he has been a contributing editor to “Artforum”, in New York. In 1987 he received The Frank Jewett Mather Award from CAA, The College Art Association of America. Since 1989 till 2008 he has been the Senior Curator of Contemporary Art at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, in New York. In 1997 he was appointed Curator of the 47. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte. La Biennale di Venezia. Since 1995 he is the Director of Fondazione Prada, Milan. In 2001 he curated the Brazilian Pavilion at the 49. Esposizione Internazionale d’Arte, Venice. Since 2005 he is the Director of Fondazione Aldo Rossi, Milan and since 2008 he is the Curator of the Fondazione Annabianca e Emilio Vedova, Venice. Since 2009 he is the Curator of Art and Architecture at La Triennale di Milano, Milan. Since 1970 Celant has organized exhibitions and art events such as Conceptual Art Arte Povera Land Art, the Civic Museum, Turin 1970; Ambiente/Arte, the Venice Biennale, 1976; Identité italienne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1981. He co-directed Documenta 7, Kassel 1982 and together with Pontus Hultén he organized Futurismo & Futurismi, Palazzo Grassi, Venice 1986 and Arte italiana 1900-1945, Palazzo Grassi, Venice 1989; with Norman Rosenthal Italian Art in the XXth Century, the Royal Academy, London 1989; with Ida Gianelli Memoria del futuro, Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 1990; The Italian Metamorphosis 1943-1968, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1994; Brazil, Body & Soul, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2001; Unveiling the Prada Foundation, with OMA/Rem Koolhaas, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 2008.

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