

Title, The Hidden Face of Light

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"Désespérée, je ne le serai jamais, mais aujourd'hui, face à cette vague humaine écrasée de malheur, je me dis que toute ma vie j'ai bricolé avec mes faibles moyens et que l'heure n'est plus au bricolage. Ne restons pas là à dormir. Je supplie tout le monde à deux genoux de faire ce qu'il peut. Que chacun, devant sa conscience et devant les enfants qu'on massacre et qui meurent d'épuisement, se demande ce qu'il peut et doit faire". Sœur Emmanuelleⁱ

'Networks of Dust'ⁱⁱ evokes the misery throughout today's world, from Rwanda to ex-Yugoslavia, from Somalia to Chechnya: nationalist struggles and genocides, whether ethnic or religious. Two thirds of humanity will be totally excluded from entering the third millennium. A misery no longer south of our north but moving into our world with a devastating indifference, advancing and destroying all around us in silence. "This is not our problem!" we constantly say, clutching onto our privileges in a world that dictates inappropriate laws. It is an analytical and specific world that dissects and confines individuals and groups in rigidly defined structures, in parallel to a transcultural reality with previously unimagined communication networks.

Does one need to be very young to dare confront a system that contradicts the human condition so aggressively? Whatever happened to those ideals of youth, which strive to overcome? Have they been replaced by conformism and indifference and become social consensuses? Has the time of utopias disappeared to be replaced by materialism and an amoral capitalism, the inhuman values of this late century? Extreme poverty is the condition of the privileges of a very few. The law of the strongest has become the ideals of youth: a kind of Noah's Ark for those fortunate enough to be on board, preserved from the flood of poverty?

As we move blindly forward, those cast aside can only hope for a landslide to bring them prematurely to their death. Despair is overwhelming. In dominant countries, a youth without direction can expect to be supported in his future. Whereas, elsewhere in the world, there are people who do not even have the right to complain: the only possibilities open to them are passive acceptance, extreme resignation or the abandoning of the weakest on the endless road to exile. How can anyone accept such a system, a system that generates so much misery and exclusion? We are left with only powerless and overwhelmed humanitarian organisations to bear the load. Whatever happened to the visionary projects in society?

In France, like anywhere, are denounced a financial logic obsessed with short term profit, often with no morals, and a liberalism that urges to get rid of social obligations deemed abusive, as well as social gaps, the rise of individualism and the domination of sectarian theories that differentiate. Submission, despair, conformism, helplessness, indifference, low self-esteem and a drifting system all go against utopian ideals.

Rather than facing an apocalyptic end-of-century invaded by nihilism and dominated by pessimism, this diagnosis, on the contrary, allows us to evaluate the present, to take it into our own hands and to consider our future. A few people, like Martin Luther King, Helder Cámara, El Che, Gandhi and Mother Teresa amongst others, understood this very well. Their commitment made the transformation of dust into hope possible. "When misery is no longer in evidence, we quickly become indifferent to it," reminds us Abbé Pierre. Art should serve to reveal the hidden face of light, and heal the misery and the poverty hidden in the shadows, to flood new lands with light.

Nature as a source.

As urban conglomeration is intensified, man distances himself further from the landscape. Rhythms of work, the absence of time, competition and struggle, stress, information saturation, consumption and pollution desensitise more and more each day. With the disappearance of the landscape comes the loss of our spiritual values.

The landscape reveals the planet's formation, evolution, transformation and history. Its age expressed in billions of years puts into perspective the tiny flicker of human existence. Confronted by this complex process of evolution, how can we accept the incomparable and destructive speed at which man modifies, manipulates and mutilates it? The more we leave our footprints on the ground, the more the earth leaves its mark upon us.

In a time of spiritual drought, the landscape bathed in light is a call to reflect on our existence, its origin and its destiny. Originality is returning to one's origins were the words of Gaudi. Let's rediscover the great Temple of Nature and contemplate.

It is a temple with mountains for walls, the celestial vault for a dome, the light of the sun for windows, and music from the streams, the leaves rustling and animal song; a temple built by cosmic forces that brings us closer to Harmony.

As the sun gives way to the half-light, the sky is adorned with the most unpredictable colours. A moment since time began that invites contemplation. In this vast temple the light reveals the ephemeral within the infinite, the work of art crystallizes this union, a twinkling of mankind in the immensity of the sky.

Light frontiers.

Citizen-Art is a reaction against the closed circles of the art world, the absence of sense, the frivolity of private viewings, its arrogance and its self-sufficiency. It also confronts the intellectual guardians of an elitist art that is wary of an art form for the non-initiated.

A gap is growing between elitist and popular arts. This void fuels an obsession to establish bridges, to find anchoring points and to enlarge the audience. Art can only take on full value with the complicity of its contemporaries, communicating on several levels and searching for converging points amongst diversity.

Right from the beginning, the search for this other public meant abandoning the confines of the art world and finding a polysemic language whose poetic codes spoke to all people with a technology that measures our time. The action itself had to be shifted to meet its public where it regularly gathers. The work of art should be dramatized in a certain way to surmount these barriers, to become a kind of action-performance, as intended by Joseph Beuys, and to have such an impact as to attract attention in a few moments. Testigos Blancos, Rosario, 1982 and Imprints on the Andes, Machu Picchu, 1992 confirm this hypothesis.

This commitment begun in Argentina in the late '70's, with the first actions in public spaces and developed into huge light paintings in Paris at the end of the '80's with the mastering of new image projection technology. Image Cannons, extraordinary luminous paintbrushes, astonishing tools of a new scale illuminate both urban and rural sites. The opening out of the audience becomes the real justification of Citizen-Art.

A planetary alphabet.

During the mid 70's, under the military dictatorship in Argentina, the elaboration of a codified system of signs was later to become a poetic and visual 'planetary' alphabet. This alphabet is a utopian form of communication and dialogue, transcending linguistic barriers. It is a metaphorical crossroads of peoples and of their diverse cultures. Composed of thousands of universal signs originating from various parts of the world, this alphabet synthesises the past, the present and the future and the three time scales interact and overlap to define new utopias.

The alphabet is informed by the collective memory and has been organized into five levels: Ideogram Signs, Objects Signs, Meta-social Signs, Sound Signs and Textual Signs.

Each artwork is the pretext to create new signs on any one of these levels level.

Site visits and encounters with different cultures are important occasions for gathering contextual indicators that are in turn re-interpreted, re-created, categorised and transformed.

Ideogram Signs: transcriptions of a "world" legacy collected or inspired from various sources:

Natural - such as rocks, stones, erosive formations, silhouettes, geological faults, roots, branches, leaves, bark, fruit, flowers, feathers, colours and "sensations".

Cultural - such as rock carvings, museum archives, found objects, idiosyncratic designs and graphics, marks inscribed in architecture and contemporary life.

Metasocial Signs: images that interpret the contradictions and clashing forces within the reality of our contemporary society.

Object Signs: beyond their formal aspect, they are the living proof of a community, homage to memories and cultures.

Textual Signs: transcriptions of community memory in the form of words, phrases, oral expressions and written fragments. Assembled together, they constitute a new layer of writing, global and interchangeable.

Sound Signs: an archive of natural mummers, spoken accounts and interviews specific to each site. They can be transformed into image through digital trans-coding and vice versa into sound through the analysis of the morphological structure. This experiment challenges the correlation system, an intense fusion between the sound space and the visual space.

This growing sign system constitutes an infinite poetic alphabet. Its polysemic structure associated with the Light Cannons, locations and the general public contributes to Citizen-Art.

Conscience agitator.

The identity crisis experienced by the art world today calls for a rupture from current aesthetics and a profound change of its objectives, forms and means of expression. The art of provocation with dehumanisation as a model can only generate indifference and denial. Likewise, art for art's sake no longer corresponds to our times. Instead of observing the transformations that have long since overtaken it, art must once more run ahead and lead. The current crisis in the market illustrates well the 'Aesthetics of Doll-Art' and can only accelerate a profound questioning.

Networks of Dust is a voyage inside the wound opened by Lucio Fontana, who, bypassing the pictorial surface, enters the void beyond the canvas and stabs it. This bottomless gash questions an aestheticism that can no longer ease the pain of this world, the networks of dust.

Light Messenger deals with the latent forces opposing chaos and pessimism, in particular two remarkably efficient weapons: love and tolerance. These two utopias are the basis on which to construct the third millennium. They present a challenge to men of imagination and generosity looking for a better future. Its utopias, its great designs and models for progress revives a society. To build utopias is to search, to imagine and to undertake changes. Based upon fundamental principles, a utopia carries the notion of the infinite and the perfect. It announces victory over dust.

Agitator-Art.

Rather than dealing with the malfunctioning of the system, Agitator-Art acts with all available means of expression on every level, either spectacular large-scale projects or smaller more intimate works. The artist, like an alchemist, transforms dust into gold and ashes into life. Utopia is an energy that advances with the weakest. In reality, a true utopia is sound ethics. The artistic manifestation of these ethics becomes a living model for a new poetic life. "We need to introduce all the measures of art into our lives, not to create more art, ... but to create more life," wrote Malraux in the Human Condition.

Catalyst-Art

Catalyst-Art activates and accelerates the transformation process of the individual. The 'usefulness' of art ought to be seriously reconsidered: to make life into a revealing and transforming art form, whose degree of public impact, efficiency and pertinence can be measured. It is about staging an art form for a new society and contributing to the development of human creativity.

The main purpose of art is to bring to human beings a spiritual dimension that links the material world to the universe at large.

A Constructor-Art that becomes a source of energy, a life force full of hope and faith. The time has come. The challenge is now, *l'heure n'est plus au bricolage*.

For a Citizen-Art

For a Catalyst-Art

For a committed utopia

ⁱ "Desperate, I will never be, but today in the face of this wave of humanity crushed by misery, I am telling myself that I pottered around with my meagre means my whole life and that time has come to stop trying to patch things up. Don't stand there doing nothing. I implore everybody on my knees to do whatever they can. That, in front of children dying of exhaustion and massacred, each person may ask himself what he can and must do". Sister Emmanuelle.

ⁱⁱ Networks of Dust, Jorge Orta, XLVI Venice Biennale. Proposal for the installation of ephemeral light paintings on palaces along the Grand Canal